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In memory of their parents Dr. Irving & Mrs. Bernice Mehler & Mr. Gedalja & Mrs. Miriam Zupnik

לעילוי נשמת ר' יצחק מאיר בן אליהו וברינתא בת אברהם ע"ה ור' גדליה בן אברהם מנחם הכהן ומרים בת ישראל ע"ה

Mezonos Rolls

Rosh Kollel Rabbi Shachne Sommers

Is the proper bracha on mezonos rolls indeed mezonos?

Is there a difference if one is eating such a roll as a meal versus as a snack?

Recently, while traveling, I was confronted with one of the more controversial issues in halacha.

I ordered a special kosher airline meal, and it included what was, to all appearances, a common roll in a cellophane wrap. However, written in large letters on the wrapper, alongside the symbols of the kosher certifying agencies, was the word *mezonos*. This indicated that this was a specially-prepared roll that substitutes another liquid, such as fruit juice, for water in its recipe. The purpose of this substitution is to ensure that the rolls do not require a *bracha* of *hamotzi* and the full *birchas hamazon* after eating it. Rather, the proper *brachos* would be *mezonos* and *al hamichya*. This would be particularly helpful when traveling, when washing for *hamotzi* may be difficult.

However, many dispute the *mezonos* claim and say that this type of bread and rolls is actually no different than any other, and requires *hamotzi* and full *birchas hamazon*.

This article will explore the basis for this dispute and suggest a practical approach that considers both sides of this debate.

The Gemara (Brachos 41b-42a) states that on a certain bread-type food called *pas haba'a bikisnin*, one makes a *mezonos*, unless one eats a large amount – meaning the amount that people typically eat at a large meal – in which case, one makes *hamotzi*.

The reason for this halacha, explains Rashi (ibid. 41b s.v. *pas*) is that unlike standard bread, these types of breads are not typically eaten in large amounts as the mainstay of a meal but, rather, in smaller amounts as snacks, and are therefore not halachically considered bread unless a meal-sized amount is eaten.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 168:7) lists three types of “bread” that fall into this category. One of them is bread to which other ingredients besides flour and water are added to the dough, such as honey. As far as how much of the other ingredients need to be added in order to attain this status, the Rema (Orach Chaim ibid.) says that a large amount needs to be added, to the point that the other ingredients are almost primary.

There is a question as to how to understand the Rema’s criterion of a large amount of the other ingredient. Does the Rema mean the other ingredient provides a distinctly different taste to the baked item, or is it that the other ingredient is the majority?¹ The Mishna Berura (ibid.:33) says that *mezonos* is only appropriate when there is a very strong taste

¹ When dealing with liquids, it seems this means the majority of the liquid used in the dough. If the additional ingredient is a solid (e.g., sugar), it is less clear what is considered a majority.

of the other ingredients. The Maharsham (Da’as Torah 168:7) says that if the other ingredients are in the majority, that suffices, even if they do not give a strong taste.

There is another relevant issue that must be explored. Rashi was cited earlier as explaining that the underlying concept of *pas haba'a bikisnin* is that it is not generally used as the mainstay of a meal, but as a snack. The question arises, what if there is currently another type of bread that does not fit into any of the categories of *pas haba'a bikisnin* listed in Shulchan Aruch but, nevertheless, is not typically used for a meal but as a snack; would it be *hamotzi* or *mezonos*? In other words, is *pas haba'a bikisnin* defined primarily by the specifically-defined conditions, or by its typical snack-food function?

A real-life example of this question is the question of the proper *bracha* on a soft pretzel. Its bread-like ingredients would define it as bread and not *pas haba'a bikisnin*. However, similar to *pas haba'a bikisnin*, its primary function is as a snack.

This question is subject to dispute as well. The Emek Brocha (Birchas Hanehenin) says that only items that fit the actual criteria described by the Shulchan Aruch are included in *pas haba'a bikisnin*. Otherwise, the *bracha* is *hamotzi*, despite it being a snack-type food. Accordingly, the soft pretzel is *hamotzi*. However, the Nesivos Hamishpat (Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum, in his Hagaddas Ma’aseh Nissim Kuntres Birchas Hanehenin) rules that any type of bread that is typically a snack food would be called *pas haba'a bikisnin*. Thus, the pretzel is *mezonos*.

This same dispute would apply in the reverse case as well. Suppose there is a type of bread that, by virtue of its ingredients, fits into the category of *pas haba'a bikisnin*. However, unlike *pas haba'a bikisnin*, it typically functions as the mainstay of a meal. In that case, the Emek Brocha would say that the ingredients make it *mezonos*, while the Nesivos Hamishpat would say that it’s *hamotzi* due to its function. This has direct ramifications for *mezonos* bread, as shall be explained.

Let us apply what has been discussed until now to the issue of *mezonos* rolls.

The advocates of *mezonos* bread base themselves upon the assumption that bread made with a majority of fruit juice or the like is *pas haba'a bikisnin*.

The counter argument to this is based on 2 factors.

1) *Mezonos* bread does not taste significantly different than regular bread, and would therefore require *hamotzi*².

² Some dispute this assertion. See Responsa Shevet Halevi 8:22.

2) A roll that is specifically produced as a substitute for a standard meal-type roll is, by definition, not *pas haba'a bikisnin*, regardless of the recipe. Its typical function is not as a snack, but as standard bread; thus, it is *hamotzi*.

The validity of these objections hinges on the two halachic disputes mentioned above. The objections follow the opinions of the Mishna Berura and the Nesivos Hamishpat respectively. However, according to the Emek Brocha that *pas haba'a bikisnin* is defined by ingredients as opposed to function, then objection two is not valid. If one follows the approach of the Maharsham that the majority of ingredients is the determining factor regardless of taste, then objection one disappears³.

As a matter of practical Halacha, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is cited (Sefer Vizos Habracha pg. 215) as saying that common practice is to follow the opinion of the Nesivos Hamishpat and make *mezonos* on the likes of soft pretzels, which usually function as a snack, regardless of ingredients. As mentioned, this reasoning would have one make *hamotzi* on *mezonos* rolls, because they generally function as meal-type bread despite their more snack-like ingredients. Indeed, many make this very argument against the entire concept of *mezonos* bread. If it's meant to function as bread, by definition it cannot be *mezonos* (see Halachos of Brachos by Rabbi Binyomin Forst pg. 254).

A possible way to counter this argument would be to treat the aforementioned dispute between the Emek Bracha and Nesivos Hamishpat as an unresolved halachic doubt. According to most opinions (see Kaf Hachaim 168:63 based on Bais Yosef Orach Chaim 163), the proper course of action when in a situation of halachic doubt if something qualifies as *pas haba'a bikisnin* or regular bread is to say *mezonos*. Based on this, there could be grounds to say *mezonos* on both soft pretzels and *mezonos* bread, despite the seeming adherence to contradictory views, because the proper *bracha* of each is in doubt. (Even according to this approach, if one eats both *mezonos* bread and a soft pretzel together, it seems that one would certainly need to say recite *hamotzi* and *birchas hamazon*, because one of the two items is certainly *hamotzi*.)

However, even if one accepts the controversial assertion that a *mezonos* roll is actually *pas haba'a bikisnin*, there is still one more criterion to deal with before making *mezonos* and not *hamotzi*.

As mentioned earlier, *pas haba'a bikisnin* is not always *mezonos*. When eating an amount that people would typically eat at a large meal, the proper *brachos* are *hamotzi* and *birchas hamazon*. What constitutes such an amount is again a matter of dispute. The Magen Avraham (see Mishna Berura 168:24) says that if one eats *pas haba'a bikisnin* with other foods and, along with those foods, eats the amount that would typically constitute a filling meal, then *hamotzi* must be said. Although some disagree with the Magen Avraham (Birkei Yosef 167:6; Aruch Hashulchan 167:17), his opinion is followed by most authorities, including the Mishna Berura (ibid.) and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 3:32).

³ However, Responsa Minchas Yitzchok 9:17 and others assert that even the Maharsham's criterion would not be fulfilled by a majority of fruit juice made from concentrate, as in that case the majority liquid would still be water. Accordingly, "*mezonos*" bread made with such juice would certainly be *hamotzi*.

However, there is a debate as to how far to take the Magen Avraham's principle. Rabbi Feinstein (ibid.) cautions that if one eats even a relatively small amount of cake at a wedding meal, *hamotzi* may be required due to the large amount of other foods eaten. However, the Nesivos Hamishpat (ibid.) and others limit the Magen Avraham's principle and apply it only to cases where the *pas haba'a bikisnin* is actually eaten together with the other foods; it would not apply to cake, which is generally eaten separately⁴. Common practice seems to follow the latter opinion.

According to this, even if we consider *mezonos* bread to be *pas haba'a bikisnin*, it would still be unacceptable to make a *mezonos* when it is functioning in place of standard bread and being eaten with other foods as part of a large dinner. According to the Magen Avraham, Mishna Berura and Igros Moshe, the proper *bracha* in that context would likely be *hamotzi*, regardless of its *mezonos* status⁵.

To counter this, there are two approaches to possibly justify making *mezonos* even under such circumstances.

One approach is to rely on those authorities who disagree with the Magen Avraham and don't include the other foods eaten with bread in the calculation of the meal-sized portion.

The second approach would be to follow the opinion of some *poskim* (see Shulchan Aruch Harav 168:8 and Aruch Hashulchan 168:16) that the size of a halachic meal in this regard is approximately the volume of 21 eggs, which is very often much a much larger amount than the meal served with the roll.

Both of these justifications, however, are difficult to rely upon, because they are based on minority opinions that are rejected by the consensus of authorities.

In summation, *mezonos* rolls may well not be *mezonos* at all⁶. Due to their questionable status, it is best to avoid eating them if there is no particular need⁷. If one does eat them, most leading *poskim* say that they should be treated as regular bread, and one should wash his hands and recite *hamotzi*.

However, there are *poskim* who rule that they are *mezonos*⁸. As explained, relying on this leniency is particularly problematic when the roll is eaten as part of a large dinner-like meal (as opposed to a lighter meal typical of breakfast or lunch), which likely constitutes a halachic full meal. If doing so, it would be advisable to eat the roll separately, before or after the other food. In that case, according to many authorities, the Magen Avraham would agree that the other foods are not counted together with the bread, and it would not be considered eating the roll as part of a meal.

⁴ Interestingly, Rabbi Micha Cohn quotes Rabbi Dovid Feinstein shlita as concurring with the Nesivos Hamishpat. See also Shemiras Shabbos Khilchasa 54:132 quoting Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

⁵ See Shevet Halevi ibid. and Rabbi Yechezkel Roth in his approbation to Laws of Brachos (by Rabbi Binyamin Forst) who stress this point.

⁶ If the fruit juice used is made from concentrate, this author is not aware of any leading authority who considers them *mezonos*.

⁷ See letter from the *bais din* of Rabbi Shmuel Wosner printed in Rabbi Nissim Karelitz's Chut Shani expressing opposition to the practice of serving *mezonos* rolls at events.

⁸ This seems to be the opinion of the Badatz Eidah Hacharaidis and other kashrus agencies that certify *mezonos* bread and rolls.

Points to Ponder:

If one already made a mezonos on such a roll, should one wash and recite hamotzi on the rest of the roll?

If one inadvertently made mezonos on such a roll and ate it, what bracha should be recited after eating?

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Please consult with a qualified halachic authority for all practical questions of halacha

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