

**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**  
**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY**

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**Shiur #21: The Prohibition of Eating on Yom Kippur**

Eating is one of the five activities prohibited on Yom Kippur. However, the Torah does not explicitly articulate that eating is forbidden; rather, it describes a general mandate to deprive your body from enjoyment, “*ta’anu et nafshoteichem*.” This unusual formulation raises an interesting question: Is eating forbidden on Yom Kippur in the same sense that formal eating is forbidden in other contexts? Or is the prohibition of food pivoted around the cessation of deprivation caused by ingesting food?

The first clue that the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur is different from the classic prohibition of eating is the *shiur* of food that is forbidden. In general, regarding formal prohibitions of eating, it is prohibited to eat a *kezayit* of that item, but on Yom Kippur, only a larger quantity of food, a *kotevet*, is forbidden. This may indicate that eating on Yom Kippur is not defined in the classic manner, but is rather forbidden due to the satiation it provides. If eating were forbidden in the classic manner, the quantity of food that violates the prohibition should reflect the classic *kezayit* size. Since the prohibition stems from the satiation that results from eating, only a larger amount that is capable of providing satiation is forbidden.

However, the existence of a different *shiur* may not be sufficient to redefine the prohibition as one of “enjoyment” as opposed to a prohibition of eating. Perhaps the *issur* of Yom Kippur is indeed one of classic eating, but just in a more augmented fashion. Eating is the primary prohibition, but it is only forbidden if it is a significant enough consumption to disrupt the experience of *inuy*. Only a large *kotevet* (large date) “intensifies” the act of eating to be considered a “satiating” consumption. Ultimately, however, Yom Kippur is only violated through a classic act of *akhila*, presuming it is an augmented one **capable** of satiating.

In fact, the role of satiation and the need for a larger quantity appears to play only an ancillary role in defining the prohibition. The *gemara* (*Yoma* 80b) ponders a situation in which a heavy person and a lighter person each violate Yom Kippur by consuming the same quantity of food. Presumably, their levels of satiation are discrepant; logically, the larger person only reaches full satiation with a larger quantity of food. In response to this question, Abaye acknowledges that only minimal or symbolic satiation is necessary to violate the prohibition, and even larger people reach this condition by eating the *shiur* of a *kotevet* or large date. Abaye may be making this very point: Since the satiation does not represent the core of the prohibition, even minimal levels are sufficient to constitute a violation. The core definition of the issue is classic consumption provided it is capable of providing even minimal satiation.

Perhaps the most familiar inquiry surrounding this question was posed by the *Minchat Chinukh* (313). R. Yochanan and Reish Lakish (*Chullin* 103b) famously debate whether eating is gauged by intestinal experience or the pleasure gained by chewing and swallowing. Halakha rules in accordance with R. Yochanan that the food intake pleasure comprises the prohibition. Thus, for example, food that remains lodged between teeth can still contribute to the requisite *shiur* of *kezayit* to violate the prohibition. Even though this food never reached the intestines, it was still part of the chewing process. Would the same principle apply to Yom Kippur? Would the act of chewing severed from intestinal digestion constitute a prohibition? Would food lodged between teeth contribute to the requisite *shiur* of *kotevet*? This query is an extension of the question that we raised above. If the prohibition on Yom Kippur mirrors the classic prohibition of eating (with augmentation), any food involved in chewing would contribute to the prohibition. If, however, the primary issue consists of satiation, it would seem likely that only food that is absorbed can disrupt the deprivation and factor into the requisite *shiur*.

Ironically, disassociating the prohibition on Yom Kippur from classic prohibitions of *akhila* may also reduce the requirements for violation, rather than increase them as outlined above. The Ravyah permits tasting food and spitting it out on a *ta'anit* based on the *gemara* in *Berakhot* (14). In contrast, he prohibits tasting or chewing gum on Yom Kippur, arguing that Yom Kippur does not prohibit eating, but rather enjoyment – not only the enjoyment of digestion and satiation, but even the enjoyment of taste. Although taste alone does not constitute a classic violation of eating, it does disrupt the *inuy* on Yom Kippur.

Essentially, the Ravyah and *Minchat Chinukh* propose polar opposite ideas that stem from identical logic. Classic eating entails chewing and swallowing. If eating is prohibited on Yom Kippur, that prohibition should follow the same form, but if we define the prohibition as the disruption of *inuy*, the components of the process would be different. In theory, it could require **more serious** ingestion, as the *Minchat Chinukh* claims; alternatively, it could demand lesser levels of eating provided that some enjoyment is provided, as the Ravyah claims. The *Minchat Chinukh* suggests a higher standard for Yom Kippur violation and adds requirements beyond the classic activity of eating (of merely), whereas the Ravyah asserts lower standards for Yom Kippur when compared to classic *issurei akhila*. Mere tasting may violate the *inuy* of Yom Kippur, even though it would not classify as an act of *akhila*.

The spirit of the Ravyah's approach can be detected in an interesting *machloket Tanna'im* regarding the ingestion of vinegar on Yom Kippur (*Yoma* 80b). Since consuming large quantities of vinegar is abnormal, it would not classify as a halakhic act of eating and should not be Biblically forbidden on Yom Kippur. Indeed, R. Gidal (an early *Amora* who was a *talmid* of Rav) claims that no Yom Kippur violation entails. By contrast, Rebbi claims that drinking vinegar would indeed violate the command of *inuy*, and it is therefore forbidden. Even though a classic halakhic act of eating did not occur, "satiation has occurred" (a loose paraphrase of Rebbi's language), justifying his *chumra*. Both Rebbi and the Ravyah view the prohibition on Yom Kippur as autonomous of any act of eating, and they were therefore willing to prohibit forms of eating that are permissible in other contexts.

Based largely on this *gemara*, the Sha'agat Aryeh (76) considers that many forms of *akhila she-lo ke-darka* (irregular manner of ingestion, which are typically not forbidden) may be prohibited on Yom Kippur, as they disrupt the *inuy* even without constituting a classic act of eating.

It seems that the Vilna Gaon also developed a *chumra* based on disassociating the prohibition of Yom Kippur from the formal act of eating. Reish Lakish and R. Yochanan engaged in (another) well known debate about consuming less than a minimum quantity of forbidden food, a *chatzi shiur* (literally, half a requisite quantity). R. Yochanan believes that ingesting less than a minimum *shiur* would violate an *issur* (although it would not warrant *malkut*), whereas Reish Lakish believes that it would not be Biblically forbidden. An intriguing Yerushalmi (*Terumot* 6:1) claims that Reish Lakish would concede that eating less than a *shiur* of food would be Biblically forbidden on Yom Kippur. In

his comments to that Yerushalmi, the Vilna Gaon attributes this *chumra* to the unique status of the eating prohibition on Yom Kippur. Generally, a formal act of eating is necessary, and Reish Lakish believes that less than a *kezayit* does not constitute a halakhic process of eating. On Yom Kippur, however, mere disruption of *inuy* is sufficient to create a violation, and even less than *shiur* provides some disruption of deprivation. Again, the disassociation between the classic *issur* of *akhila* and the unique *issur* of disrupting *inuy* on Yom Kippur may lead to stringencies in applying the prohibition of Yom Kippur.

This question may also influence the nature of the prohibition of derivative acts of eating. The *gemara* (76a) prohibits drinking on Yom Kippur, and presumably this extension is based on the general principle that equates drinking to a formal act of eating (*shetiya ke-akhila*), even though the biological process is slightly different. If, however, the prohibition on Yom Kippur is not at all based on an act of eating, perhaps the act of drinking is **inherently** forbidden, and not because it is considered equivalent to eating. In other words, is drinking forbidden on Yom Kippur because it classically resembles eating or because it breaks the *inuy*?

The question of why drinking is forbidden may influence the scope of the drinking prohibition. For example, a *gemara* in *Chullin* (120a) implies that liquefying solid food and drinking it would not be considered an act of drinking equivalent to eating, since it is an irregular drinking. Would this impact the prohibition of drinking liquefied food on Yom Kippur? Presumably, if the food yields satiation, it should be forbidden regardless of whether this particular act of drinking can be compared to formal eating.