

## Grinding (*Tohen*)

### What is the labor of Grinding?

After the wheat kernels are separated from the waste, one can grind them and transform them into flour. The essence of the labor of Grinding is the division of one entity into several parts. The *Rishonim* disagreed with regard to whether the prohibition of Grinding is in effect only in a case where one transforms an item into powder or minuscule crumbs, as with grinding kernels into flour, or even in a case where one cuts an item into small pieces. The root of the dispute is the understanding of the passage in the **Gemara** (74b):

Rav Pappa said: One who chops [*defarim*] beets is liable due to Grinding.

The **Rambam** (7:5) understands that this refers to one who cut the beets into thin slices. That is the explanation of **Rashi** (74b) as well. By contrast, **Rabbeinu Hananel** (74b) writes that *farim* is “similar to crushing and not similar to cutting,” indicating that only actual grinding is prohibited by Torah law, and not finely cutting. That is also clear from the words of the **Rosh** (7:5).

Consequently, according to Rashi and the Rambam, cutting finely is prohibited by Torah law as a subcategory of Grinding, while according to Rabbeinu Hananel and the Rosh, the prohibition of Grinding applies only to actual crushing. It is possible that according to Rabbeinu Hananel and the Rosh, the essence of the prohibition of Grinding is that the item loses its identity and a new identity is formed. That situation exists only when the item is completely crushed. According to the Rambam, the prohibition of Grinding includes any division of an item into small parts. Alternatively, it is possible that the Rambam agrees that the prohibition of Grinding applies only to the creation of a new identity, but he holds that cutting finely also, at times, creates a new identity.

Some hold that indeed, cutting finely is prohibited, but only if it is done as a prelude to cooking (so it appears in the **Rambam**), or only

if it is impossible to eat the item without cutting it (**Ri and Ramban**, and that is the opinion of *Magen Avraham* 321:14).

In terms of the *halakha*, the *Shulhan Arukh* (321:12) rules that it is prohibited to cut finely in any case, even if it is not done for the purpose of cooking, and that is the conclusion of the *Mishna Berura* (321:38) and in *Beur Halakha* (s.v. *lifnei*) (pp. 965–970).

## Primary category and subcategory

**PRIMARY CATEGORY:** The primary category of this labor is in effect when two conditions are fulfilled: (1) The item is ground and it is transformed into powder. (2) This action renders the item ready for cooking or consumption.

**SUBCATEGORY:** The subcategory is in effect when only one of the two conditions is fulfilled, e.g., when one cuts a vegetable in order to cook it or to eat it; the second condition is met, but the first condition is not, as it is not actual crushing. Another example is if one crushes metal; the first condition is fulfilled, as the metal is crushed, but the second condition is not met, as the grinding is not for the purpose of cooking or eating (pp. 959–962).

## Where was Grinding performed in the Tabernacle?

In the Tabernacle, the dye plants were ground in order to prepare dye from them.

## Practical ramifications of the labor of Grinding

### Is it permitted to cut a salad finely?

As stated, the *Shulhan Arukh* (321:12) rules: “One who cuts a vegetable finely is liable due to Grinding.” What is the measure of cutting “finely”? *Berit Olam* (*Tohen* 20) writes that with regard to all items, **the manner in which they are cut** during the week is considered “finely”; therefore on Shabbat one should cut larger pieces than usual.

There is another way to define Grinding. From several sources, it seems that Grinding is **creation of a new identity**. Therefore, perhaps the prohibition is to cut an item in a manner in which it would be difficult to discern the identity of the original item and it is converted into a mass of small pieces. When it is cut in a manner in which it is difficult to distinguish between a small bit of cucumber and a bit of green pepper or between a small bit of tomato and a bit of red pepper or the like, that is the cutting “finely” that is prohibited. By contrast, when cutting vegetables for a salad, which are cut into larger pieces, although they are small, one does not violate the prohibition of Grinding. Nevertheless, it is advisable to prepare even a salad of that kind just before the meal, and thereby add the additional leniency factor of immediacy, which will be discussed below (pp. 970–974).

### **If someone cut a salad finely, is it permitted to eat it?**

If the salad was cut just before the meal, it is certainly permitted to eat it, as there are those who permit one to prepare it in that manner, as will be explained below. If the salad was cut an hour or two before the meal, the *Mishna Berura* (321:45) writes in the name of the *Hayei Adam* that one should be stringent and not eat it, but many authorities write that it is permitted, after the fact (*bediavad*), to eat the vegetables that were cut. That is a reasonable ruling, as many *Rishonim* permit slicing produce very thin. This is also the ruling of *Rav Ovadia Yosef* (*Leviyat Hen* 63) (p. 970).

### **Is it permitted to slice thin slices or strips?**

It is permitted to slice vegetables **into slices** even for later consumption, and that is clear from a responsum of *Rav Moshe Feinstein* (*Iggerot Moshe, Oraḥ Hayim* 4:74, *Tohen* 3). With regard to **strips** of vegetables, there is room to distinguish between two types of strips: Cutting **thin narrow strips**, like those found in a carrot salad, is certainly prohibited, since the strips are eaten as a **single entity** (and that is the opinion of *Rav Elyashiv*, cited in *Orehot Shabbat* 5, note 12). Cutting **thicker strips** with the objective of eating **each strip**

separately is permitted, and it is not at all comparable to Grinding (pp. 973–975).

### Is it permitted to grind for immediate use?

In the **Responsa of the Rashba** (4:75), he writes that just as it is permitted to select just before eating or just before a meal, likewise it is permitted to grind **for immediate use**. By contrast, the *Shiltei HaGiborim* (32a Rif, 3) disagrees with the Rashba and prohibits grinding even for immediate use. The **Rema** (321:12) rules leniently in accordance with the opinion of the Rashba, while the *Beit Yosef* (321, s.v. *asur lahtokh*) writes that although fundamentally the *halakha* is to be lenient, it is advisable to slice slightly larger pieces. In terms of the *halakha*, according to **most Aharonim**, grinding for immediate use is permitted, although the *Hazon Ish* (57) questions that ruling and limits it. **Rav Moshe Feinstein** (*Iggerot Moshe, Oraḥ Ḥayim* 4:74, *Toḥen* 2) writes that fundamentally the *halakha* is that it is permitted to cut very small pieces just before the meal, but if there is no great need to do so, it is preferable to cut larger slices.

**IN PRACTICE:** One who prepares a finely cut salad has authorities on whom to rely, but must make certain to prepare it just before the meal. It is preferable to cut pieces that are not very small, e.g., where it is easy to distinguish which piece is tomato and which is red pepper, and to cut the vegetables just before the meal (pp. 977–984).

### Is it permitted to mash a banana or an avocado?

In mashing a banana or an avocado, the fruit remains a single entity and is not separated into separate crumbs. Does the prohibition of Grinding apply in that situation? The *Hazon Ish* (57, s.v. *le'inyan*) holds that this action too is prohibited due to Grinding, while the *Iggerot Moshe* (*Oraḥ Ḥayim* 4:74, *Toḥen* 2) disagrees, and permits mashing a banana. In his opinion, the **prohibition of Grinding applies only when one takes a single entity and transforms it into several parts**, but by taking an item and mashing it so that it remains a single unit, one does not violate the prohibition of Grinding.

IN PRACTICE, it is preferable to mash the banana or avocado in an unusual manner, e.g., with a spoon or with the handle of the fork. Nevertheless, one who mashes with the tines (prongs) of the fork has authorities on whom to rely. It is preferable that one mash an avocado directly onto the bread and **just before eating** it. If the banana or avocado is very soft, to the extent that if one holds part of it the other part will fall, everyone agrees that it is permitted to mash it in the standard manner, as the fruit is considered to be already mashed, and there is no grinding after grinding, as we will see below (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 6:7) (pp. 985–988).

### Is it permitted to grind with a utensil?

It is prohibited to grind by means of a **utensil designated for grinding**, e.g., a grinder or a grater, even if one does so for immediate use, both due to the prohibition of Grinding and due to its status as a weekday action (*Shulhan Arukh* 321:10, based on the *Rivash*). If it is a utensil designated for home use in a manner where there is no prohibition of Grinding, contingent on the size of the pieces, the problem of weekday actions does not apply. Therefore, it is permitted to use an **egg slicer** or a device that slices cheese (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach cited in *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhata* 6, note 12). From the ruling of Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe, Oraḥ Hayim* 4:74, *Tohen* 4) it appears that one may be lenient and use devices of this kind for the purpose of slicing, but one may not use a **manual vegetable chopper** that cuts the vegetables very small (pp. 998–990).

### Summary: How does one prepare salad on Shabbat?

Preparing salad with a **regular knife**: Fundamentally, the *halakha* is that it is permitted to cut the vegetables even into very small pieces, if one does so just before the meal. Nevertheless, it is preferable to cut slightly larger pieces (p. 984).

Preparing salad with a **manual vegetable chopper**: It is prohibited to use a set of blades that produces a finely cut salad, or a slicer

that is likely to produce a finely cut salad. There is room to rely on the lenient opinions and use a set of blades to produce larger pieces that are not characterized as “very thin,” especially if one does so just before the meal. In all cases it is preferable to use a knife (pp. 994–996).

### **Is there a prohibition of Grinding with items that do not grow from the ground?**

There are two different circumstances:

1. An item that is inedible without grinding (e.g., raw meat for birds): It is prohibited to grind it even if it does not grow from the ground, but it is permitted to grind it just before its use.
2. An item that is edible even without grinding: If it is not an item that grows from the ground there is no prohibition of Grinding, and it is permitted to grind it even for later use. Grinding for the benefit of small children or the elderly is permitted even though they cannot eat the food without it being ground if most people can eat those foods without them being ground (all this is according to *Terumat HaDeshen* 56; *Shulhan Arukh* 321:9; and *Mishna Berura* 321:9).

In both cases, it is prohibited to **grind using a utensil designated for grinding**. Therefore, one may not grate an egg in a grater (though one may use an egg slicer, as explained above) (pp. 997–1000).

### **Is there a prohibition of Grinding with cooked items?**

From the **Rambam** (responsum 305; and likewise in 21:13) it is clear that the prohibition of Grinding does not apply to an item that was cooked and softened, and that is the *halakha* cited in the *Shulhan Arukh* (321:19). What is the reason for this ruling? Is there fundamentally no prohibition of Grinding with regard to items that were cooked? Or are cooked, soft items considered already ground, and additional grinding is insignificant in their regard?

## IN PRACTICE:

1. **Mashing that is not just before the meal:** It is advisable to mash only the fruit or vegetables that are so well cooked that they are very soft and easily mashed, and it is preferable that they should be mashed before Shabbat.
2. **Mashing that is just before the meal:** One may be lenient and mash soft, cooked fruit and vegetables that can easily be mashed with little effort, even if they were not yet mashed, since it is possible to incorporate the opinions that even actual grinding is permitted for immediate use.

It is permitted to mash several different types of soft, cooked vegetables together, even though this creates a single mixture, as we will explain in the context of the *halakhot* of Kneading. It is also permitted to spread fruit marmalade on bread, even though it contains fruit pieces that were not yet dissolved (pp. 1001–1006).

### Is it permitted to grind in an unusual manner (*beShinui*)?

The **Gemara** (141a) cites the opinion of **Rava** that it is permitted to crush even a large number of peppers with the handle of a knife, and that is the ruling of the **Rambam** (21:20) and the *Shulhan Arukh* (321:7).

If so, even though it is prohibited to grind on Shabbat, it is permitted to do so in **an unusual manner**, with the handle of a knife or a spoon. It should be done at the table, in a plate or a bowl, but not in a vessel designated for grinding such as the bowl of a food processor, and it is preferable to do so just before the meal (pp. 1008–1012).

### Grinding after grinding

The *Yere'im* (274) writes in the name of the **Rashbam** that it is permitted to crumble bread on Shabbat because it is made of flour that was already ground and “we do not find grinding after grinding,” and that is the ruling of the **Rema** (321:12) as well. In terms of the reason for this principle, the *Hazon Ish* (57, s.v. *inyan*) writes that the



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## HALAKHIC OVERVIEW

prohibition of Grinding applies only to the dissolution of a naturally formed connection, not to dissolution of a man-made connection.

Therefore, it is permitted to grind bread, cookies, or the like, and likewise, it is permitted to crumble lumps of sugar, salt, pills, or chocolate. Nevertheless, one may not do so with a utensil designated for grinding. In addition, it is prohibited to render the item into a state where it is ground more finely than it was originally. Therefore, it is prohibited to transform sugar into powdered sugar (pp. 1013–1021).