

The Kashrut of Insects in Modern Times

Approved on November 12, 2025, by a vote of 19-0-2. Voting in favor: Rabbis Aaron Alexander, Adam Baldachin, Pamela Barmash, Emily Barton, Chaya Bender, Suzanne Brody, Nate Crane, Aviva Fellman, David J. Fine, Joshua Heller, Barry Leff, Matthew S. Nover, Micah Peltz, Joel Pitkowsky, Avram Reisner, Rachel Safman, Robert Scheinberg, Stewart Vogel, and Raysh Weiss.. Voting Against: None. Abstaining: Rabbis Karen Reiss Medwed and Miriam T. Spitzer.¹

שאלה (Question)

May Jews intentionally eat insect-based foods, including those from non-kosher insects? Is there a difference between whole insects and powdered ones, or between artificial, synthetic, or natural insect proteins? What requirements are there for supervision, and are insects meat, dairy, or pareve?²

תשובה (Response)

Why Eat Bugs?

As the population of the world increases, finding nutritious sources of food that are sustainable is becoming more difficult. A report from the UN FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization) explains that “80% of the world’s farmland is used to raise and feed livestock, even though animals only account for 18% of global calorie consumption.” The raising of livestock for food is also a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.³ Both of these indicate that the current food system is not sustainable, and alternative solutions must be found. One suggestion seems to have merit: insects.

In a recent review of the literature, scientists noted that the industrial production of insects has comparably minimal space requirements and lower environmental impact, compared to traditional animal protein production.⁴ Even more important, the “protein content of edible insects ranges 35%-60% dry weight... which are higher than plant protein sources... At the

¹ The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly provides guidance in matters of halakhah for the Conservative movement. Individual rabbis, however, are authorized to interpret and apply halakhah for their communities.

² This teshuvah will not cover lab created synthetic or artificial proteins. Additionally, this teshuvah is not meant to permit the accidental consumption of non-kosher insects. Rather, this teshuvah will focus solely on food that uses insects, whether whole or processed.

³ <https://time.com/5942290/eat-insects-save-planet/>

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/food-system-impacts-biodiversity-loss/02-how-todays-food-system-drives-biodiversity-loss>

⁴ Kim, T. K., Yong, H. I., Kim, Y. B., Kim, H. W., & Choi, Y. S. (2019). Edible Insects as a Protein Source: A Review of Public Perception, Processing Technology, and Research Trends. *Food science of animal resources*, 39(4), 521–540. <https://doi.org/10.5851/kosfa.2019.e53> accessed <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6728817/>

upper range, insects provide more protein than even meat and chicken eggs.⁵” Simply put, insects as a commonplace food source could have a major impact on both food security and environmental conservation. As insects have a potential to become a more widespread ingredient, it is preferable to think about its kosher status now, so that it can be integrated into food seamlessly.

Current Uses of Insect-Based Protein

At this moment, insect proteins are being used in a variety of ways. In addition to whole insects, some insects are processed into powders which are then sold on their own or incorporated into other foods, as well as for other culinary purposes, such as foaming agents, gelling agents, and emulsifying agents⁶. At what point though, does the protein from the insect become its own, independent substance, a *d'var hadash*, rather than continuing to be considered in the same category as the insect from whence it came?

When speaking about sourcing materials, it is necessary to be precise. There are three main terms used to describe the source of a particular chemical/ protein/ material: natural, synthetic, and artificial. Natural is a material produced in the natural world, and extracted from those natural sources.⁷ Synthetic is the chemically identical equivalent of that natural material, but man made. Artificial materials, however, are substances not found in nature and completely man made, but often serve the same function (such as artificial sweeteners.) These categories have a significant impact on the kashrut of insect-based protein.

For artificial and synthetic insect-based protein, i.e. protein grown in a lab independent of the original animal, the kashrut concerns are of a different category entirely. It no longer matters whether they are modeled after proteins found in non-kosher insects, because they are only modeled after them, not sourced from them. The kashrut concerns of these materials are of an entirely different nature, and would more resemble a question of whether one can eat an artificial sweetener, rather than whether the original insect the protein is modeled after is kosher.

The kashrut of natural insect proteins depends both on the manufacturing process and the source of the protein. Before delving into the identification and debate surrounding the kashrut of whole insects, it is worth a brief diversion into the manufacturing process, and the concept of *d'var hadash*.

Rabbi Kassel Abelson and Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz define the halakhic concept of *d'var hadash* as “a new compound formed by the breaking of old chemical bonds and the forming of new chemical bonds.”⁸ This new definition means that a shape change, filtration, sorting, or state change is not enough to differentiate a derivative substance from its original source. Rather, there

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Kim (2019)

⁷ Nielsen P. E. (2010). Natural - synthetic - artificial!. *Artificial DNA, PNA & XNA*, 1(1), 58–59.
<https://doi.org/10.4161/adna.1.1.12934>

⁸ Rabbi Kassel Abelson and Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz, “Definition of *Davar Hadash*.”

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20012004/33.pdf>

must be a specific, significant, change on the level of chemical bonds. If that change does not occur, then the new substance is not a *d'var hadash*.

The manufacturing process for insect-based proteins depends somewhat on the desired end product. “Insect flours are typically produced by dehydrating or roasting whole insects followed by grinding them into a fine powder form referred to as flour.”⁹ Additional steps are then taken to improve the shelf life and “techno-functionality” of the powder, including removing the proteins associated with chitin¹⁰, removing water, and removing fat. However, while the chitin removal process involves the breaking of old bonds and forming of new bonds, perhaps creating the potential for a *d'var hadash*, this is for the purpose of the removal of chitin only, and the preservation of the majority of the original substance. As such, to this author it appears that this step would only modify a single compound, leaving the rest close enough to their original substance to have effected only a shape change, but not a chemical change that reaches the threshold of a *d'var hadash*.

Therefore, any insect-based proteins, whether of whole insects or milled insect flours, would not count as *d'var hadash* and would need to be sourced from kosher insects.

Identification of Permitted Bugs

Halakhah is very clear that the vast majority of insects are not kosher. It does, however, identify some theoretical signs, as well as specific names, of permitted insects. The application of those signs and the identification of those names has become somewhat confused over time.

Insects in the Torah

The Torah generally prohibits the consumption of insects and other things that swarm on the ground; it does permit several specific species that have certain attributes.

כל שרץ העוף ההלך על-ארבע שֶׁקֶץ הוא לָכֶם: אֵךְ אֶת־זֶה תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל שֶׁרֶץ הָעוֹף הַהֹלֵךְ עַל־אַרְבַּע
אֲשֶׁר־[לוֹ] (לא) כְּרָעִים מִמַּעַל לָרַגְלָיו לְנִתֵּר בָּהֶן עַל־הָאָרֶץ: אֶת־אַלֶּה מֵהֶם תֹאכְלוּ אֶת־הָאַרְבֶּה לְמִינֵהּ
וְאֶת־הַסִּלְעָם לְמִינֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַתְּרָגֵל לְמִינֵהוּ וְאֶת־הַחֲבִיב לְמִינֵהוּ: וְכָל שֶׁרֶץ הָעוֹף אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אַרְבַּע רַגְלָיִם
שֶׁקֶץ הוא לָכֶם:

(20) All winged swarming things that walk on fours shall be an abomination for you. (21) But these you may eat among all the winged swarming things that walk on fours: all that have, above their feet, jointed legs to leap with on the ground— (22) of these you may eat the following: *arbeh* of every variety; all varieties of the *sol'am*; the *hargol* of every variety; and all varieties of *hagav*. (23) But all other winged swarming things that have four legs shall be an abomination for you. (Leviticus 11:20-23)¹¹

⁹ Liceaga, A. M. (2021). Processing insects for use in the food and feed industry. *Current Opinion in Insect Science*, 48, 32–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cois.2021.08.002>

¹⁰ Chitin is a structural polysaccharide present in the vast majority of insects. Its presence in insect flours creates issues with the flours functional properties (Liceaga, 2021)

¹¹ A parallel passage in Deuteronomy (Deut 14:19) does not include any reference to the physical characteristics that would render an insect kosher, or list any kosher species of insects.

This set of verses identifies permitted species of insect by name. This format of the list, however, does not quite match the style of qualifications for birds,¹² which are listed with names only, domesticated beasts,¹³ which begins the list with specific physical characteristics that render a mammal kosher and follows with names of prohibited animals and reasons behind their prohibition, or fish, which have a list of signs, but no names.¹⁴ Here, for insects, the Torah gives signs and names of permitted insects. This has led to some confusion and conflict among later scholars. Are signs enough, or must it be a specific species? If it is not listed, can it be eaten? This is one of the major debates that still surround the kashrut of insects.

Insects in the Mishnah

In the Mishnah, the major discussion on determining the kashrut of insects is found in Masekhet *Hullin*.

ובחגבים, כל שיש לו ארבע רגלים, וארבע כנפים, וקרקסלים, וכןפיו חופין את רבו. רבי יוסי אומר, וישמו חגב.

And with regard to *hagavim*: Any that has four legs, and four wings, and jumping legs, and whose wings cover most of its [body]. Rabbi Yosei says: And its name is *hagav*. (m. *Hullin* 3:7)¹⁵

Later, in m. *Hullin* 8:1, a *hagav* is delineated as *pareve*:

כל הבשר אסור לבשל בחלב, חוץ מבשר דגים וחגבים. ואסור להעלותו עם הגבינה על השלחן, חוץ מבשר דגים וחגבים. הנודר מן הבשר, מתיר בבשר דגים וחגבים.

It is prohibited to cook any meat in milk, except for the meat of fish and *hagav*. And it is prohibited to place [meat] together with cheese on a table, except for the meat of fish and *hagav*. One who takes a vow to refrain from eating meat is permitted with regard to the meat of fish and *hagav*. (m. *Hullin* 8:1)

Thus, it appears that, early on in rabbinic literature, the *hagav* is considered kosher without question, is differentiated from other types of animal protein, and is considered *pareve*.

The Talmud itself explores this mishnah by bringing in a series of *baraitot*, sources contemporary with the Mishnah but not included in it. The question of the halakhic relevancy of each *baraita* seems to be debated by the *Rishonim*.

Insects in the Talmud

In the Babylonian Talmud tractate of *Hullin*, two *baraitot* (early rabbinic sources contemporaneous with the Mishnah) are brought that explore the usefulness of the signs and

¹² Leviticus 11: 13-19, Deuteronomy 14: 11-18

¹³ Leviticus 11:3-7, Deuteronomy 14:4-8

¹⁴ Leviticus 11:9-12, Deuteronomy 14: 9-10

¹⁵ In b *Hullin* 59a the text of the mishnah reads קרסולים rather than קרסולים. Neither the Klein Biblical Hebrew Dictionary nor the Jastrow Dictionary recognize any significant difference, although both translate it as “ankle.”

names, and four new species are introduced: the *tziporat keramim*, the Jerusalem *Yohana*, the *Artzuveya* and the *Ratzbanit*. Each *baraita* also explores the reason for superfluous repetition in the Torah of the word “למינהו,” coming to different conclusions about their purpose¹⁶. The first *baraita* brought is referred to later in the same *sugya* as “a *baraita* of the study hall.”¹⁷

ת"ר (ויקרא יא, כב) את אלה מהם תאכלו את הארבה וגו' ארבה זה גובאי סלעם זה רשון חרגול זה
ניפול חגב זה גדיאן מה ת"ל (ויקרא יא, טו) למינו למינהו למינהו למינהו ד' פעמים להביא ציפורת
כרמים ויוחנא ירושלמית והערצוביא והרזבנית

The Sages taught in a *baraita* that the verse states: “These of them you may eat: The *arbeh* ... (Leviticus 11:22). The *arbeh* is the insect known as the *govai*. The *solam* is the *rashon*. The *hargol* is the *nippul*. The *hagav* is the *gadyan*. Why must the verse state: “After its kinds,” “after its kinds,” “after its kinds,” and “after its kinds,” four times? It is to include four similar species: The vineyard bird, and the Jerusalem *yohana*, and the *artzuveya*, and the *razbanit*, which are also kosher. (BT Hullin 65a)

Here the discussion concludes that the four seemingly superfluous repetitions of “of its kind” in the relevant verses in Leviticus are to include four additional, unmentioned species. It specifically ignores Rabbi Yosi’s additional requirement that in addition to the signs of the animal, there must also be a tradition that the insect is named *hagav*. Therefore, according to this school of thought, the name of the insect is irrelevant to its kosher status. Rather, it all depends on whether it possesses the four signs, and the names of the insects are given to show examples, much like the list of kosher land animals.

The *baraita* attributed to the “school of Rabbi Yishmael” has a rather different interpretation.

דבי ר' ישמעאל תנא אלו כללי כללות ואלו פרטי פרטות ארבה זה גובאי למינו להביא ציפורת כרמים
אין לי אלא הבא ואין לו גבחת הבא ויש לו גבחת מנין ת"ל (ויקרא יא, כב) סלעם זה ניפול למינהו
להביא את האושכף ואין לי אלא הבא ואין לו גבחת הבא ויש לו גבחת הבא ואין לו זנב הבא ויש לו
זנב מנין ת"ל חרגול זה רשון למינהו להביא את הכרספת ואת השחלנית ואין לי אלא הבא ואין לו
בחת הבא ויש לו גבחת הבא ואין לו זנב הבא ויש לו זנב הבא ואין ראשו ארוך הבא וראשו ארוך
מנין?

אמרת הרי אתה דן בנין אב משלשתן לא ראי ארבה כראי חרגול ולא ראי חרגול כראי ארבה ולא ראי
שניהם כראי סלעם ולא ראי סלעם כראי שניהם הצד השווה שבהן שיש לו ד' רגלים וארבע כנפים
וקרצולים וכנפיו חופין את רובו אף כל שיש לו ארבע רגלים וארבע כנפים וקרצולים וכנפיו חופין
את רובו והלא הצרצור הזה יש לו ארבע רגלים וד' כנפים וקרצולים וכנפיו חופין את רובו יכול יהא
מותר ת"ל חגב ששמו חגב אי שמו חגב יכול אין בו כל הסימנים הללו ת"ל למינהו עד שיהא בו כל
הסימנים הללו

The School of Rabbi Yishmael taught [in a *baraita*]: These are generalizations, and these are details. “*Arbeh*” is [the same as] “*Govai*” [after] its kind. [Why is it

¹⁶ The rabbis generally understand the presence of superfluous words in the Torah as an indication that there is an additional meaning or connection present that is not explicitly mentioned.

¹⁷ במאי קמפלגי תנא דבי רב ותנא דבי רבי ישמעאל

Regarding what do the Baraita of the *Bei Rav* (study house) and the baraita of the school of Rabbi Yishmael disagree.

repeated?] To include the *tziporat keramim*. I have only derived that a species that is brought and does not have a smooth head [is permissible to eat.] From where is it derived that it must have a smooth head? Scripture teaches: “*Solam*,” which is “*nippul*” “As its kind” [is used] to indicate the “*ushkaf*.” And I have only derived that a type that comes and does not have a smooth head, or that comes and has a smooth head but does not have a tail is permissible. From where is it derived that one with a tail is permissible? Scripture states “*hargol*,” which is “*rashon*” Another use of “Of its kind” implied the “*karsefet*” and the “*shalhanit*.” And I have only derived that one that is brought without a smooth forehead, or with a smooth forehead, or with a tail, or without a tail or that has a head that is not long is permissible. From where is it derived that even with a long head is permissible?

You may say, “ See, you derive a category from the three [mentioned in the verse].” The aspect of the *arbeh*, is not like that of the *hargol*, nor is the aspect of the *hargol* like that of the *arbeh*, and neither are like that of the *solam*, nor is the *solam* like the aspects of either of the other two. What is similar between them is that they have 4 legs, 4 wings, jumping legs, and wings cover most of its body. But then would not the *tzartzur* (cricket,) that has 4 legs, 4 wings, jumping legs, and wings that cover most [of its body, meaning that it has all 4 signs of a kosher insect] be permitted? Scripture states “*hagav*” [to indicate] that its name must be *hagav*. If its name is not *hagav*, [one might] permit it without any of the signs. Scripture states “According to its kind” unless it has all of these signs.
(BT Hullin 65a-b)

The *baraita* of Rabbi Yishmael argues that the signs given in the Torah are derived from three of the four species named. The reason for the fourth species is to indicate an additional sign, that its name must be *hagav*, agreeing with Rabbi Yosi’s additional stipulation. In other words, this is the exact opposite derivation of the previous *baraita*. There, the species given were examples of the properties of kosher insects. Here the properties of kosher insects are derived from the examples. Since only three of the species provide a new relevant characteristic, the relevance of the last species named must be based not on its biological properties, but on its name.

In fact, the original structure of the Mishnah itself presents its own difficulty. Normally, when a minority and majority opinion are mentioned, the halakhah follows the majority. However, that rule may (or may not) be suspended when the minority is voiced by Rabbi Yosi. Masekhet Eiruvim 46b brings some rules of interpretation for the Mishnah. The Rif (Rabbi Yitzchak ben Ya’akov al Fasi, North Africa and Spain, 1013-1103) and the Rosh (Rabbenu Asher Ben Yechiel, Germany and Spain, 1250-1327 CE), however, seem to have different versions of the text about rules for interpretation. The Rif comments regarding Rabbi Yosi “כר' יוסי מחבירו” however, the Rosh comments “כר' יוסי מחביריו” Thus, according to the Rif, Rabbi Yosi’s opinion is the halakhah only when it is his opinion against a single other rabbi. However, according to the Rosh, Rabbi Yosi’s opinion wins even against a majority.¹⁸ This disagreement about the primacy of Rabbi Yosi is the basis for the Rishonim whether or not a species must be named “*hagav*” in order to be kosher.

¹⁸ For further discussion, see Halichot Olam, 5:1:1, including commentaries. <https://hebrewbooks.org/14769>

Rishonim

Perhaps the most enduring and widespread challenge comes from Rashi (Rabbi Solomon Yitzhaki, France, 1040-1105.) Rashi comments on the list of kosher insects both in his Torah commentary and his Talmud Commentary to *Hullin* 59a. There, he explains that *qarsulim* (קַרְסָלִים or in other texts קַרְצוּלִין) are “שני רגלים ארוכין לבד הארבעה והם סמוך לצוארו ממעל לרגליו לנתר” “These are two long legs beyond the four [other ones] and are near the neck above its legs to jump with them when it wants to leap.”

He uses this same term in his commentary to Leviticus 11:21:

ממעל לרגליו. סמוך לצוארו יש לו כמין שתי רגלים לבד ארבע רגליו, וכשרוצה לעוף ולקפץ מן הארץ מתחזק באותן שני כרעים ופורה, ויש הרבה — כאותן שקורין לנגו"שטא — אבל אין אנו בקיאים בהן, שארבעה סימני טהרה נאמרו בהם ארבע רגלים וארבע כנפים וקסולין — אלו כרעים הכתובים כאן — וכנפיו חופין את רבו, וכל סימנין הללו מצויים באותן שבינותינו, אבל יש שראשן ארך ויש שאין להם זנב, וצריך שיהא שמו חגב, ובזה אין אנו יודעים להבדיל ביניהן: “Above its legs”. Close to its neck it has something like two legs beyond its four legs. And when it wants to fly and to jump from the ground it strengthens these two legs and flies, and there are many [animals like these] like those that are called langousta [langoustine in Old French] but we do not examine them, for there are four signs of purity [meaning kosher] that were spoken about them: four legs, and four wings and *qarsulin* (קַרְסָלִין) - these are the legs that were written about here - and its wings cover its majority [the majority of its body], and all of these signs are found in those [grasshopper/ locust/ cricket type insects] that are among us, but there are some that have long heads, and some that do not have a tail, and it is necessary that its name be *hagav*, and this we do not know how to differentiate between them.

Rashi added a particular distinction to the definition of קַרְסָלִים, which he alludes to in his biblical commentary and defines in his Talmudic commentary. Specifically, that these legs specially made for jumping must be attached near the neck. However, this explanation of the location of the leg connections seems to be Rashi's own innovation. Other commentators and translators prior to Rashi understood it in different ways. While later commentators followed Rashi's direction, earlier commentators and other rabbinic authorities do not include this.

Targum Onkelos translates Leviticus 11:20 as

בְּרֵם יֵת דִּין תִּיכְלוּן מִכָּל רִחְשָׂא דְּעוֹפָא דְּמַהֲלָהּ עַל אַרְבַּע דִּי לִיהּ קַרְצוּלִין מַעְלֵי רִגְלוֹהִי לְקַפְצָא בְּהוֹן
עַל אַרְעָא:

But there are these that walk from all insects that fly that walk on four [legs and] have joints above its legs to jump with them on the ground

Here, קרצילין is explained as legs with knees extending above the rest of the legs, and that these legs are used for jumping. No mention is made of where these legs are located on the body except that they project upwards.

Targum Yonatan¹⁹ translates similarly

רם ית דין תיכלון מן כל ריחשא דעופא דמהלך על ארבע כל דאית ליה קרסולין מלעיל לריגלוי
למישרג בהון על ארעא

But there are these that walk from all insects that fly that walk on four [legs.] All that have joints above its legs to leap with them on the ground.

Both Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonatan define קרסולין as jumping legs with joints above the feet. No mention is made of a location on the body.

It does not appear that other commentators, *sugyot*, or rabbinic authorities prior to Rashi explore the word קרסולין or its other forms in a significant way. While absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, it appears that only since Rashi have rabbis ruled that קרסולין must be jumping legs attached near the neck.

Rashi's innovation, however, creates an insect that has yet to be discovered in the natural world, meaning that his interpretation forbids all insects, and the majority of Aḥaronim follow him.

The Rif

The Rif also considers the kashrut of insects in his commentary/ code to Ḥullin. Yet, he specifically excludes the entirety of the Talmudic discussion as to what the signs and names of the different types of permitted insects are, as well as excluding all discussion as to whether or not a species must be named *ḥagav*. His discussion of the kashrut of insects is on his commentary to b. Ḥullin 22b-23a

מתני' ובחגבים כל שיש לו ד' רגלים וד' כנפים וקרסולים וכנפיו חופין את רובו רבי יוסי
אומר ושמו חגב [...]

גמ' מאי רובו אמר רב יהודה אמר רב רוב ארכו ואמרי לה רוב היקפו אמר רב פפא
הילכך בעינן רוב ארכו ורוב היקפו: ת"ר אין לו עכשיו ועתיד לגדל אחר זמן כגון הזחל הזה מותר
רבי אליעזר ברבי יוסי אומר אשר לו כרעים ממעל לרגליו אף על פי שאין לו עכשיו ועתיד לגדל
אחר זמן:

Mishnah: And in [regard to] *ḥagavim*, all that have four legs, and four wings and קרסולים and its wings cover the majority of its [body]. Rabbi Yosi says “And its name is *ḥagav*. [...]”

Gemara: What is “majority of its [body]”? Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav, “The majority of its length.” And [other traditions have a different version that] says “the majority of its circumference.” Rav Pappa says therefore in this context [it means both] the majority of its length and the majority of its circumference [must be covered by the wings]. The Rabbis taught: If it does not have [wings] now but it will grow [them] in the future, like the *zaḥal*, this is

¹⁹ Also known as Targum Yerushalmi or Targum Pseudo-Yonatan

permitted. Rabbi Eliezer son of Rabbi Yosi said, “That which has joints above its feet’ even though it does not have those now, but in the future it will grow them.”

The standard format of the Rif’s commentary was to use the wording of the Talmud, but to excise irrelevant discussion and material, leaving only that relevant to halakhic decision making.²⁰ Commentaries vary as to why the Rif excludes the majority of the talmudic discussion. The Ran (Rabbenu Nissim ben Reuven, Barcelona, 1290-1376 CE,) in his commentary, seems to argue that this is to show that only the four physical signs are necessary, and agrees with Rashi’s explanation of קרסולין.²¹ Shiltei HaGibborim (Rabbi Yehoshua Boaz ben Shimon Baruch, Italy, d. 1557) disagrees, and seems to indicate that the Rif follows the opinion of Rabbi Yosi, as he includes that quote from the mishnah at this location.²²

The Rif would seem to permit the eating of insects with the proper signs. However, different commentators disagree as to whether the Rif requires one of those signs to be a tradition that the name of the specific insect species is *hagav*.

Rambam

Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, Morocco and Egypt, 1137-1204 CE), in the Mishneh Torah identifies eight species of Kosher insects, some of which are subspecies.

ומיני חגבים שהתירה תורה שמונה. ואלו הן. א. חגב. ב. מין חגב והוא הרזבנית. ג. חרגל. ד. ומין חרגל והוא ערצוביזא. ה. ארבה. ו. ומין ארבה והיא צפרת פרמים. ז. סלעם. ח. ומין סלעם והיא יוחנא ירושלמית:

There are eight species of *hagav* that the Torah permitted:

a) *hagav*, b) a type of *hagav*, the *razbenit*, c) the *Hargol*, d) a typer of *Hargol*, the *artzubiya*, e) the *arbeh*, d) a type of *arbeh*, the “*tziporat keramim*”, f) the *sol’am*, g) a type of *sol’am*, the *yochanah* of Jerusalem. (MT Forbidden Foods 1:21)

מי שהוא פקי פהו ובשמותיהו אוכל. והצייד נאמן עליהו פעוף. ומי שאינו פקי פהו בודק בסמניו. ושלשה סימניו יש פהו. כל שיש לו ארבע רגלים. וארבע פנפים שחופות רב ארף.

²⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isaac-ben-Jacob-Alfasi>

²¹

מתני' ובהגבים. זהו סימן טהרתן כל שיש לו ארבע רגלים וארבע כנפים וקרסולין הם שני רגלים ארוכין לבד הארבעה והם סמוך לצוארו ממעל לרגליו לנתר בהם כשהוא רוצה לקפוץ מתעצם בהם וקופץ וכנפיו חופין את רובו והם ארבעה סימניו. הכי גרסינן כל שיש לו ארבע רגלים וארבע כנפים וקרסולין וכנפיו חופין את רובו ולא גרסי' וקרסוליו וכנפיו. וסימניו הללו מהם שנתפרשו בתורה ומהם שנאמר פירושן מדברי סופרים ארבע רגלים וקרסולין הרי הן מפורשין כל הולך על ארבע אשר לו כרעים ממעל לרגליו לנתר בהם על הארץ והכרעים הם הקרסולין שמתעצם בהם וקופץ וארבע כנפיו חופים את רובו ילפינן להו בגמרא בכלל ופרט וכלל שהפרטות האמורות בתורה דהיינו ארבה וסלעם ואינדג כולם יש בהם ארבע סימניו הללו: (RAN to RIF 22b)

²²

הרא"ש פסק כן בפ"ק די"ט וצ"ע כי בפ' אלו טרפות פסק להדיא כרבנן דאמרי כיון שיצא לאויר העולם שרי וכלשון הרי"ף שם ממש: כתב ריא"ז לפיכך אין אנו אוכלים חגבים בזמן הזה לפי שאין אנו יודעים מי הוא חגב ומי אין שמו חגב החגב הטהור אסור לאכלו כשהוא חי לפי שהוא דבר מאוס ועובר משום אל תשקצו את נפשותיכם כמבואר בפ' ר' עקיבא: (Shiltei Haggiborim to Rif 22)

גופו ורוב הקוף גופו. ויגש לו שני כרעים לנותר בהם הרי זה מין טהור. ואף על פי שראשו ארוך ויגש לו זנב אם היה שמו חגב טהור:

One who is familiar with [insects] and their names may eat them. And a hunter is believed regarding them like [is the case with] birds. And one who is not familiar with them checks their signs. And there are three signs that they have. All [kosher insects] have four legs. And [all have] four wings that cover the majority of their length of their body and the circumference of their body. And all have two legs to jump with. All of these are of a kosher species. And even if its head is not elongated, and it has a tail, if its name is *hagav*, it is kosher. (MT Forbidden Foods 1:22)

He additionally gives specific identifying signs, but notes that even when those signs are not currently present on the insects, they are still considered kosher (MT Forbidden Foods 1:23). The additional four types of insects named are included in BT. Chullin 65a, based on the “Baraita of the Study Hall,” which explores the use of the superfluous words “of its kind.” Rambam seems to have a different interpretation regarding the requirement of Rabbi Yosi regarding its name. Either one may rely on the signs, or one may rely on the tradition of the name. According to the end of MT 1:22, the name can permit an insect even with a lack of signs or other knowledge. He does not seem to prohibit an insect if its name is not *hagav*. As at the beginning of his discussion, he refers to all of the permitted species as *hagav*, perhaps as we in modern times refer to many species as grasshoppers, rather than identifying their exact name. In other words, the name is meant to simplify things into a general category, and does not add an additional requirement.

The Rosh

The Rosh also speaks specifically regarding the *hagav* in his code/ commentary to BT Chullin. Notably, he cites the baraita the Rif excluded.

ופליגי תנא דבי רב ותנא דבי רבי ישמעאל דתנא דבי רבי ישמעאל דריש בכללי ופרטי ואיתר ליה סלעם לרבות ראשו ארוך. ואיתר ליה חגב לומר דבעינן שמו חגב. ותנא דבי רב לא דריש כללי ופרטי. אלא למינהו מרבה לכל אחד הדומה לו וליכא יתורא הילכך בעינן חמשה סימנים. וגם לא מצריך שמו חגב. הילכך נראה דהלכתא כתנא דבי רבי ישמעאל דמתניתין אתיא כוותיה דלא קתני אלא ארבע סימנים. ומתוך זה היה אומר הריב"ם ז"ל דרבי יוסי דמתניתין מפרש דברי ת"ק ולא פליג מדאכשר ת"ק בארבע סימנים ולא בעי אין ראשו ארוך א"כ סבר כתנא דבי רבי ישמעאל ואיתר ליה חגב לרבות שמו חגב. הלכך האידנא אפילו חגב הבא בארבע סימנים אין לאוכלו אלא במסורת עד שיהא מקובל ששמו חגב. (פסקי הרא"ש על חולין ג' ס"ו:ב')

And there was a disagreement between the “*Baraita of the Study Hall*” and the “*Baraita of the School of Rabbi Yishmael*,” as the *Tanna* of The School of Rabbi Ishmael interpreted according to the principle of *K'lall u'Prat* (General to specific) and for it, the word “*Sol'am*” is superfluous [Therefore it was included in order to] expand [the interpretation and include among the list of signs] an

elongated head. The word *ḥagav* is superfluous [in order to say] that a major concept (sign) is that its name is *ḥagav*.

And the *Baraita of the Study Hall* did not interpret according to the principle of *K'llal u' Prat* [meaning "general to specific,"] but rather "according to its type" for each one that is similar to it, but there is not a basis to expand [the category.] Therefore there are five signs [of a kosher insect] and it does not need to be named "*ḥagav*"

Therefore, it seems that the halakhah is like that of the school of Rabbi Yishmael who taught that it is derived according to the one who taught that there are only four signs. And it was from this that the *Ribam* said that Rabbi Yosi taught expanding on the words of the first *tanna* and he did not distinguish from one who declared it fit as the first *tanna* did with [only] four signs. And he did not pose a problem if its head was not elongated. If so, he explains it according to the *tanna* of Rabbi Yishmael, who derived that the [superfluous word] *ḥagav* is [included] to include [the requirement] that its name is *ḥagav*. Therefore nowadays, even if a *ḥagav* comes with all four signs, we do not eat it unless there is a tradition that its received name is "*ḥagav*."

(Rulings of the Rosh on *Hullin* 3:66:2)

The Rosh places immense importance on Rabbi Yosi's requirement, and Rabbi Yishmael's baraita, disagreeing with both the Rif and the Rambam, but agreeing with Rashi that the name of the insect must be "*ḥagav*." The Rosh does not include Rashi's innovation on the location of the leg's connection to the body.

The Rosh also believed strongly that a person should follow the custom of their ancestors. He explores a similar kashrut issue, that of birds. Birds, according to the mishnah, have certain signs that indicate whether it is a kosher bird. In the Torah itself, however, only a list of permitted birds is provided, and no signs are given. In a teshuvah, he explains:

אני לא הייתי אוכל על פי המסורת שלהם כי אני מחזיק את המסורת שלנו וקבלת אבותינו ז"ל חכמי אשכנז שהייתה התורה ירושה להם מאבותיהם מימות החרבן וכן קבלת אבותינו רבותינו בצרפת יותר מקבלת בני הארץ הזאת והא דאמרינן (חולין ס"ג) עוף טהור נאכל במסורת היינו בעוף שאין אדם מכיר אותו ואם יבא למקום שאוכלין אותו ויאמרו לו מקובלין אנו שהוא טהור יסמוך עליהם ויאכל עמהם אבל בעוף המקובל מחכמי ישראל שהוא טמא לא יאכלנו על פי מסורת אחרים הפחותים מהם.

I would not eat [birds] according to their tradition, for I follow our tradition and that received from our ancestors, the Sages of Ashkenaz, that their Torah was inherited from their ancestors from the days of the destruction [of the Temple], and therefore that which was received by our ancestors, our rabbis in France rather than that which was received by the people of this land [Spain] as it is said (*Chullin* 63) "A kosher bird is eaten by tradition. If there was a bird that a person did not know, and if he came to a place where they eat it, and they said to him 'We have received [a tradition] that it is kosher,' he may rely on them and he may eat with them. But a bird that had a received tradition that it was not kosher, and

the tradition came from the Sages of Israel, we do not eat it according to the tradition of those who are less than them. (תשובות הרא"ש כ"כ:א')

This argument, that the only birds that are permitted to be eaten are those that are named in the Torah, or for which there is a tradition that they may be eaten, is the one advanced by the Rosh. He further argues here that if there was a tradition that was in direct conflict with his own received Ashkenazi tradition, he would elevate the Ashkenazi tradition over the local one. He further applies the same logic to that of insects, which have no Ashkenazi tradition, and, in his opinion, would therefore be forbidden.

The Rif and Rambam seem to agree with each other, and are active in the same area geographically. The Rosh, coming from a significantly different time and geographic location seems to follow a different set of interpretive rules. He also bans the eating of insects based on a lack of clear chain of tradition in his community. Rashi, though not directly making a ruling, agrees in his Torah commentary with the all of the other Rishonim about the four required signs, agrees with the Rosh about the requirement of the name, and in his Talmudic commentary, introduces a new twist to the definition of קרסולין that requires the jumping legs to be attached to the body near the neck.

The Shulhan Arukh

The Shulhan Arukh (Rabbi Joseph Karo, Israel, 1478-1565) also gives specific signs for kosher locusts. He writes:

סימני חגבים כל שיש לו ד' רגלים וד' כנפים וכנפיו חופין את רוב אורך גופו ורוב היקפו ויש לו שני כרעים לנתר (פי' לקפץ ולהעתיק ממקום למקום) בהם ואפילו אין לו עכשיו ועתיד לגדלם לאחר זמן ואע"פ שיש בו כל הסימנים הללו אינו מותר אלא אם כן שמו חגב או שיש להם מסורת ששמו חגב:

Signs of kosher locusts: All that have four legs and four wings, and its wings cover most of the length of its body and its circumference, and has two legs to jump with (commentary: meaning to jump and to move from place to place), even if it doesn't have them now, but is destined to grow them after a time. And even if it has all these signs, it is not permitted unless its name is "*hagav*", or they have a tradition that its name is "*hagav*." (SA YD 85:1)

This ruling follows the Rosh with a slight change, agreeing with the Rosh's stipulation that the name must be *hagav*. Or, failing that test (and differing slightly with the Rosh,) if the person has a tradition that this species' name is *hagav*. This requirement of a chain of tradition is key in the understanding of why the majority of world Jewry does not consume insects. It is not because of a change in custom, or any disagreement about whether the insect is kosher in principle. Rather it depends solely on whether there is a local expert who knows the name of the insect, or whether it is traditionally considered permitted. Ashkenazi, and most Sephardi, communities lost that expertise.

Note, however, that this ruling does not include the word קרסולין, using the biblical term instead, and says nothing about where the legs must be attached, allowing for differing opinions on the

definition of what these special legs are. It does, however, agree with the Mishnah in declaring that insects do not require kosher slaughter.

Aḥaronim

Perhaps the most influential ruling on this is from Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (Morocco, 1696-1743,) author of the Torah Commentary Or haḤayyim, who also wrote a treatise on *Yoreh Deah* titled *Pri Toar*; where he specifically examines the Moroccan tradition of eating locusts. He summarizes it in his commentary to Vayikra 11:21

אשר לו כרעים. כבר הארכתי בחיבורי על טור ויורה דעה (סי' פה) שהעיקר כפירש"י בזה שצריך שיהיו לו כרעים הארוכים סמוכים לצוארו. והטועים להתירה כי אין מין זה בנמצא, אף אני השיבותי אותו גם אין מצויים אלא מין א' מהד' שהם שמנה אשר רשם ה' בטהרה (חולין סה.), גם אינם מצויים לפנינו מינים הטמאים שאין להם הכרעים בדרך זה, והם הרבים, למה שקדם לנו (שם סג) כי לא ימנה הכתוב אלא המועטים, וכאן מנה הטהורים אם כן הטמאים הם המרובין, ומעתה אין ראיה ממה שאין מצוי מין זה לומר שאיננו בעולם שהרי יש מינים הרבה ודאי ואינם מצויים כל עיקר אצלנו, לכן כל ירא וחרד ירא ויפחד לבל יושיט ידו לשקץ זה, וימחה בשולחי יד. והנה מיום שנשמעו דברי במערב ופירשו מהם הרבים לא נגע ה' עוד במכה זו ולא נראו זה יותר מ"ב שנה, כי תורה ומעשים טובים כתריס בפני הפורענות:

אשר לו כרעים. which have legs

I have already written at length in my essay on the Tur and Yoreh Deah (Siman 85) that the meaning is like the commentary of Rashi, in that there is a need [for the insect] to have long jointed legs near the neck. And those that mistakenly permit it, for there are none like this [as described by Rashi that may] be found, I have responded [to this concern], and of the four ([expanded to] eight [species]) listed by God as kosher [in the Torah] (b. Hullin 65), and I have not found before us unkosher species that do not have the jointed legs in this way, and these are the majority, for what are before us. For Scripture will only list the few, and thus the kosher species, if the unkosher species are numerous. And there is no proof [to be taken from the fact] that this species is not found [by us], to conclude that it doesn't exist in the world. For behold, there are many species, and not all of them are found near us. Therefore all who [are in] awe [of G-d] and tremble [are pious] and fear [G-d] will not extend their hand to this swarming thing, and will cease from sending out their hand. And from today [on], when my words were heard in the West and the majority [of the people] separated from [the practice of eatings locusts], G-d has not sent a plague [of locusts] in this way again. And we have not seen this [plague] for 12 years, for Torah and good deeds [act] as a shield against disaster. (Or haḤayyim to Vayikra 11:21)

In the *Pri Toar*, his above mentioned commentary to Yoreh Deah (YD 85), he relates his task of trying to find the source of the tradition that permitted the citizens of his city in Morocco to eat insects. He explains that he was never able to find a tradition, except that when there was a time of trouble (i.e. locusts eating the crops) it was permitted to eat the locusts. However, since the locusts in his locale did not match the signs as described by Rashi, he forbade their eating. He

details all of the questions he asked, and his finding that the ones who claim to know which insects are kosher lack the requisite knowledge, as they are unable to differentiate between some of the different species, the gender of these insects, and explain differences in the insects' color. This, in addition to being unable to find any insect that matches Rashi's description, leads him to believe that the locusts in his locale are not kosher, and that there is no one left who can identify them as kosher. Therefore, he prohibited them; however, this was not universally accepted, and other communities in North Africa continued to eat insects that their experts identified as kosher.²³ This prohibition spread throughout much of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi world, and Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef and Rabbi Menashe Klein both agree with the prohibition.²⁴ However, there is another community that had an unbroken tradition of eating insects: the Yemenite Jewish community

Yemenite source

Rabbi David Mishreqi (Yemen, d. 1771) explains the Yemenite interpretation in his work *Rashei Besamim*, a commentary to the *Yoreh Deah*.

ומי שהוא בקי בהם ובשמותיהם אוכל והצייד נאמן עליהם כעוף ובמקומות אלו אוכלין המין המקובל
ע"פ המסורת אבל אין שמו חגב ואפשר שסמכו על פשט דברי הרמב"ם ... שהקדמונים היה להם
מסורת ששמו חגב ... ורבנן פליגי וקי"ל כרבנן דלא בעינן שמו חגב

One who is familiar with [insects] and their names eats [them] and a hunter is believed about them as with birds. And in these places [Yemen] they eat a species that is accepted according to the tradition, but its name is not *hagav*, and it is possible that they relied on the literal interpretation of the Rambam... that the ones before them had a tradition that its name was *hagav*... and we hold like the rabbis, that we do not require that its name is *hagav*... (Rashei Besamim to SA YD 85:2)

In other words, the Yemenite community had two justifications for their practice. The first is to rely on a literal reading of the Rambam, and hold that even the ones that they eat that are not named *hagav* had an ancient tradition that did name them *hagav*. The second was to rely on the words of the Rif as interpreted by the Ran, and hold that the signs of kosher insects are all that is needed, relying on the opinion of the Rabbis instead of the singular opinion of Rabbi Yosi. Additionally, it treats this in direct parallel to birds, which have their own complicated categorization of kashrut status.

Permission to rely on expertise of other Jewish Communities

Rabbi Yosef Qapach (Yemen and Israel, 1917-2000) further explains that it is permitted for all Jews to rely on the tradition of the Yemenite Jewry.

²³ . הוצאת אוניברסיטת בר-אילן (2004). *הארבה במסורת ישראל*. See 56-101 for other communities that eat insects, and specifically p74-79 for modern examples from North Africa that continued to eat insects.

²⁴ See Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, *Yalkut Yosef* 85:2, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and Rabbi Yehudah Naki *Me'ein Omer* Vol 4, 2:12-13, Rabbi Menashe Klein, *Mishneh Halachot* 16:8

"ולדעתי כיון שאין לשאר עדות מסורת בהן לאסור, אין להם מסורת לאכלן כי לא הכירוהם/ יכולים להם לסמוך על מסורת אמת נפוצה מאז משה רבנו ולאכלם"²⁵

"And in my opinion, since none of the other communities [meaning Ashkenazi or Sephardi] have a tradition to forbid [locusts], [but rather] they have a tradition to not eat them, because they are not familiar with them. It is permitted for them to rely on the true, common tradition that is from Moshe Rabeinu and eat them.

According to Rabbi Eliezer Melamed (Israel, 1961-), it is permissible to rely on their tradition.

מסורת הכשרות על הסימנים ועל השם נותרה בידי זקני תימן ומרוקו, והוא על מין ה'ארבה', המתרבה בלהקות, שהוא המין הראשון מארבעת מיני החגבים הטוהרים שנזכרו בתורה. ונתנו בו סימן שיש כצורת 'ח' על לוחית הגחון שלו. ואף שבני עדות אחרות לא נהגו לאוכלם, מצד הדין הם כשרים לכל, שנאמנים הם בעלי המסורת בזה.

The tradition of the kashrut (of insects) through signs and the name is permitted through the elders of Yemen and Morocco, and it is regarding the species "*arbeh*" that travels in swarms, which is the first species of the four types of pure "*hagavim*" mentioned in the Torah. And it has a sign, in that it has the shape of the [hebrew letter] *chet* on its belly plate. And even though members of other communities are not accustomed to eating them, strictly according to the law, they are kosher for everyone, as the Yemenites are believed for they still have this tradition. (Peninei Halakhah, Hilchot Kashrut Footnote to 17:8)²⁶

This is not permission to adopt the customs of other communities, but rather permission to rely on their expertise. The common objections have been a lack of communal knowledge and tradition. See for example the Taz (Rabbi David HaLevi Segal, Ostroh, 1586-1667) to SA YD 85

ועכשיו נוהגין שלא לאכול שום חגב אפ'ל בידוע ששמו חגב לפי שאין אנו בקיין בשמותיהן
And now it is not customary to eat any *hagav* even if it is known that its name is *hagav*, because we do not have any experts in their names.

The custom of the Ashkenazi prohibition is clearly based on the lack of experts in the geographical area. And the Moroccan prohibition, as discussed above, was also clearly based on a lack of demonstrable expertise. However, when that barrier is overcome, there is no blanket prohibition.

Birds: a Useful Paradigm

²⁵ (Ed.). (n.d.). (Vol. 9). מכון מש"ה. p 81 Additionally, in this volume the authors quote a letter from Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef (Israel, 1920-1913) who also prohibits the consumption of insects. In this letter, he added that "cooking such insects do not prohibit the utensils [used to cook them.]" This language is the same as used for kitniyot (p82)

²⁶ Notably, the tradition of the Chet was first mentioned to the author by one of his congregants Esther Schlesinger who explained that when she lived in Morocco, they used to identify kosher locusts by the presence of the Chet. They would then boil and peel them, and would eat them as an aperitif.

The reliance on another community's expertise is in fact part of the Halakhic system. The major paradigm it is used for is in a discussion of kosher birds. As mentioned earlier, the Torah gives only a list of names of prohibited species of birds. The signs that designate permitted species are given in the Mishnah, along with a debate about whether there must be an accompanying tradition. The Shulchan Arukh explains

מי שהוא ממקום שנוהגין איסור בעוף אחד מפני שאין להם מסורת והלך למקום שיש להם בו מסורת יכול לאכלו במקום שהלך שם ואפילו דעתו לחזור ואם יצא ממקום שיש להם מסורת והלך למקום שאין להם מסורת מותר לאכלו:

One who is from a place where they are accustomed to a prohibition regarding a single bird [species] because they do not have a tradition, and he went to a place where they do have a tradition, he is able to eat [that bird] in the place where he went, even if his intention to return [to his original location.] And if he went from a place that does have a tradition and he went to a place that does not have a tradition, it is permitted for him to eat it. (SA YD 82:4)

Based on this, it is certainly permitted to rely on a tradition of another community, as long as the animal possesses the appropriate signs. This is what permits many Jews to eat turkey today.

Professor Anne Lapidus Lerner (2015) explains that there was a significant debate about the permissibility of eating turkey, as this animal is not named in the Torah's list of permitted or prohibited birds. Therefore, there could not be a tradition associated with it. She follows the tradition of her ancestor, Rabbi Yom-Tov Lippman Heller (Poland, 1579-1654), who prohibited the bird for all of his descendants. She hypothesizes, "Part of the answer may lie in their obscure provenance. When first imported to England the birds became known as 'turkeys' because the merchants who brought them were from the Turkish Empire, that is, from the eastern Mediterranean. In many other languages, including Hebrew and Yiddish, the name comes from India."^{27, 28}

Furthermore, in general, a hunter is believed with regard to birds

ונאמן צייד לומר עוף זה התיר לי רבי הצייד והוא שיוחזק אותו צייד שהוא בקי במינים הטמאים האמורים בתורה ובשמותיהם.

²⁷ "The Liberated Bird: Let's Talk Turkey." <https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/the-liberated-bird-lets-talk-turkey/> Accessed August 9, 2023.

²⁸ Rabbi Naftali Tzi Yehudah Berlin (Belarus, 1816-1893) also discusses this in Meishiv Davar (2.22), concluding that if he had been asked originally, it would be prohibited, but now that it is widely considered kosher and there is no specific evidence to retract that permission, it is too late to prohibit it. Custom and practice therefore seem to override the stringency and permit the leniency.

איברא כ"ז אם היה בא לפני מראש, אבל אחר שכבר נהגו לאכלם ומסתמא גם אז היה עפ"י הוראת חכם שנראה לו שהוא מין אווז הטהור והוחזק בזה להיתרא, אין לנו לאסרם ולהוציא לעז על אבותינו שאכלו עוף טמא ח"ו, והרי תרנגולתא דאטמא שאכלו מסתמא לא היה אפילו מסורה שהוא כשר, אלא שהיו מדומים שהוא מין תרנגול עד שראו טעותם, הא אי לא נודע שדורסים לא מיהו בהם אחר שכבר יצאו בהיתר, ומכש"כ באווז שכף רגליהם רחב דאיכא קבלת בעל המאור שאין לחוש שמא הוא דורס, ותדע שהיתר העוף אינדיק שאנו אוכלין היו הרבה מערערים עליהם בשעה שהביאום מאינדיא ולא היה מסורת על כשרותם, וגם עוד היום יש מחמירים ופורשים מהם, ומ"מ כבר נהגו להיתר ואין פוצה פה, והוא משום שכבר הוחזקו להיתרא ואין ראייה לאסרם,...

A hunter is believed [when they] say, “This bird is permitted to me by my hunting rabbi,” this is evidence enough, for a hunter is well aware of the prohibited types that are mentioned in the Torah and in their names. (SA YD 82:2)²⁹

Thus, to prohibit the eating of locusts for which the Moroccan and Yemenite community have an unbroken tradition is to call into question the validity of an entire community's observance of Judaism.

Mass Production

If this protein source becomes more popular, there are certain to be kashrut issues as it enters mass production. One Israeli company, Hargol Food Tech, began mass production and received kashrut certification from the Israeli rabbinate for “locust powder,” with some restrictions.

1. There must be an expert present who is able to identify the appropriate species of insect (the only currently Chief Rabbinate approved species is the Migratory Locust, *locusta migratoria*.)
2. Only this specific product from this specific species in this specific form is permitted.
3. The certification is only for those who already have a tradition of eating insects.³⁰

Hargol takes additional steps to ensure that no other insects can enter into the facility³¹, in addition to having an expert identify the insects at hand. This would seem to be necessary, given not only the size of the insects but the disagreements about which species are kosher. However, as seen through the examination of sources above, the last restriction (only one who already has a tradition of eating insects may eat kosher insects) is a stringency that may be dismissed.

Conclusion

Finding new sustainable sources of food and protein is necessary for environmental and economic reasons, and insects are a promising avenue of exploration.

There is little disagreement that there are kosher insects. The cessation of the practice of eating them is not based on a change in law, or on local custom. It seems to be a practical concession to the fact that among many communities, there were no longer experts in identifying insects, and therefore practically, there was no way to identify kosher species.

With the advent of instant, world-wide communication, and the mass movement of Jews throughout the world, Jews now have access to the expertise that was lost in the Ashkenazi and

²⁹ Sifteï Kohen notes that this specificity is necessary. If a hunter says that it is by a famous or wise rabbi, that is not enough. Evidently, having a “hunting rabbi” may be evidence that this person is trained appropriately.

³⁰ ההלכות ועדת כשרות בנושא ייצור תוסף תזונה מחלבון חגבים , Chief Rabbinate of Israel, December 14, 2020; provided by Hargol

³¹ Personal Communication with Dror Tamir, CEO and founder of Hargol, July 3, 2023.

Sephardi worlds. Given that there was never a custom of prohibiting insects, nor was there a change in the law, as long as certain practices are followed in the supervision of kosher, insect-based goods, including a properly trained identifier of insects, those goods should be permitted to all Jews.

פסקי דין /Ruling:

1. It is permissible for all Jews to rely on the traditional identification of kosher insects, though this must be done by experts trained by Jews knowledgeable in the identification of kosher insects.
2. Insects identified in this way may be eaten in any form, whether powdered or whole. Insects not identified in this way still remain prohibited, whether powdered or whole.
3. The mass production of insect-based proteins must have strict supervision procedures, including an expert in identifying the specific species.
4. Kosher insects are pareve, and do not require *shechitah*.