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{ TOPIC }

Wax Coating on Fruits



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► Halachically Speaking is a monthly publication compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits, a former *chaver kollel* of *Yeshiva Torah Vodaath* and a *musmach* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky zt"l*. Rabbi Lebovits currently works as the Rabbinical Administrator for the KOF-K Kosher Supervision.

► Each issue reviews a different area of contemporary *halacha* with an emphasis on practical applications of the principles discussed. Significant time is spent ensuring the inclusion of all relevant *shittos* on each topic, as well as the *psak* of *Harav Yisroel Belsky, zt"l* on current issues.

WHERE TO SEE HALACHICALLY SPEAKING

► Halachically Speaking is distributed to many shuls. It can be seen in Flatbush, Lakewood, Five Towns, Far Rockaway, and Queens, The Flatbush Jewish Journal, baltimorejewishlife.com, The Jewish Home, chazaq.org, and frumtoronto.com. It is sent via email to subscribers across the world.

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Wax Coating on Fruits

Wax is applied to many fruits and vegetables, for many reasons. Wax helps retain moisture in fruits and vegetables, prevents mold growth, and enhances the fruit or vegetable's appearance. (Wax from natural sources is also used on candies, pastries, and gum.) Wax generally comes from plants, food-grade petroleum products, or insects. The wax that is used on fruits and vegetables is regulated by the government and considered safe. Waxes are indigestible, which means that they move through the body without breaking down or being absorbed. Generally, wax cannot be removed by washing.¹

The following are some fruits and vegetables that may have wax: apples, avocados, cantaloupes, cucumbers, eggplants, grapefruits, lemons, melons, oranges, parsnips, peaches, pineapples, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and turnips.

Wax from Insects

As mentioned, some types of wax may be derived from insects. This may pose a kashrus concern. The most common waxes are shellac, carnauba wax, and petroleum-based wax.

Shellac is a product that is imported from India and derived from the secretions of a tiny lac insect. The lac insect sucks out sap from a tree's bark, twigs or branches, and secretes lac-resin from its pores onto the tree. The resin

¹ Refer to www.pma.com/issues/Waxes.cfm, OU document I-84, OU Guide to Preparing Fruits and Vegetables, page 18.

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is then gathered, crushed, washed and purified into shellac. This is then applied to fruit and vegetables.²

The opinion of Harav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*³ is that shellac is kosher and permitted to be used.

Carnauba wax is derived from palm trees and is used to coat fruits. This does not pose any kashrus concerns.

Petroleum-based wax is also primarily comprised of kosher ingredients.

Other Additives

Aside from the wax itself, other additives may be added to finished wax coatings. This includes oleic acid, emulsifiers, and proteins. Oleic acid may be derived from animal or vegetable derivatives.⁴ Many manufacturers claim to use kosher oleic acid.⁵ This is true for emulsifiers as well. However, there is no way to ensure that this practice will continue.⁶

Even if some of the additives are not kosher, they are permitted for the following reasons: The percentage of the possible non-kosher additives is much less than half the coating. The opinion of Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky *zt"l* is that in a non-food item, a non-kosher ingredient would be *batel b'rov*. In light of this, waxes for the most part are kosher and pose no kashrus concerns. Therefore, even if additives are added they are *batel b'rov*.⁷

2 Refer to Kashrus Kurrents from the Star-K.

3 Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:24; see Minchas Yitzchak 10:65. Refer to Bedikas Hamazon K'halachah, page 149, who brings those who argue.

4 Refer to OU document I-84:page 2.

5 The Laws of Pesach: A Digest, 2006, page 597.

6 Refer to Kashrus Kurrents from the Star-K.

7 This is the opinion of the poskim at the OU, as expressed in I-83. Refer to OU madrich, pages 108-109.



Waxes in America

Most of the waxes that are placed on fruits and vegetables are not a kashrus concern. Imported waxes may be different.⁸

Washing Off the Wax

Produce with wax can be scrubbed briefly with a vegetable brush in lukewarm water and rinsed before eating to remove wax and surface dirt. One can also peel the fruit, thereby removing any kashrus concern, although some nutrients will be lost along with the peel.

The Bottom Line

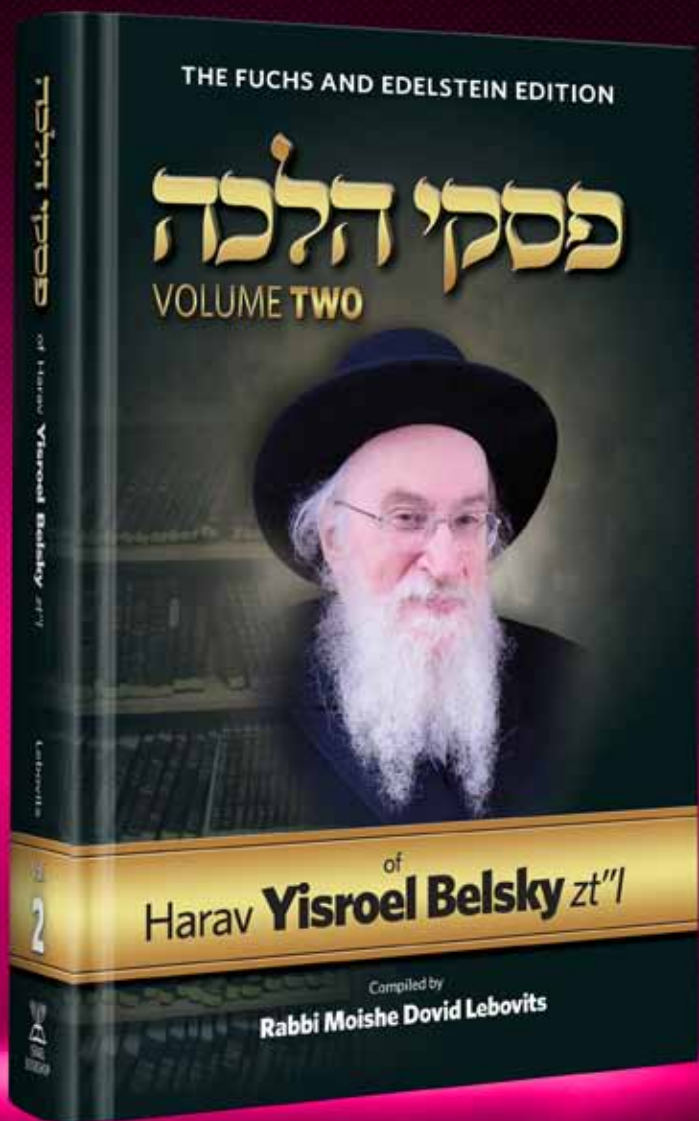
Although there are convincing reasons to be lenient with the wax on fruits and vegetables,⁹ the opinion of Harav Yisroel Belsky, *zt"l*, is that it would be very fitting for a *hechsher* to be given on these waxes.¹⁰

8 Opinion of Harav Yisroel Belsky, *zt"l*.

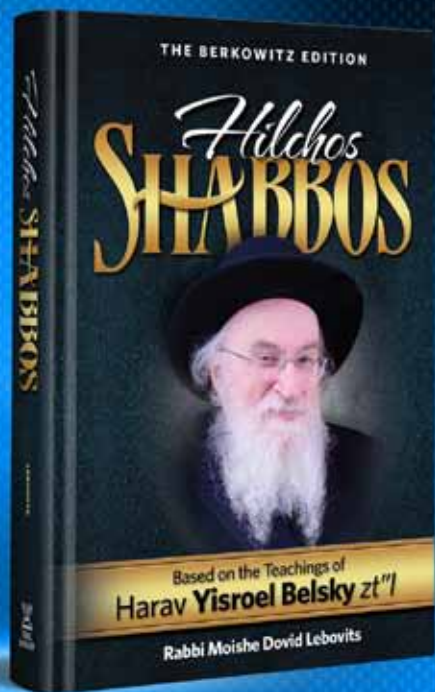
9 Refer to Kashrus Kurrents from the Star-K for an additional reason to permit waxes on fruits and vegetables.

10 OU document, *ibid*. Refer to *Minchas Yitzchak* 10:66, *Ohr Yisrael* 48:pages 127-138 in great depth.

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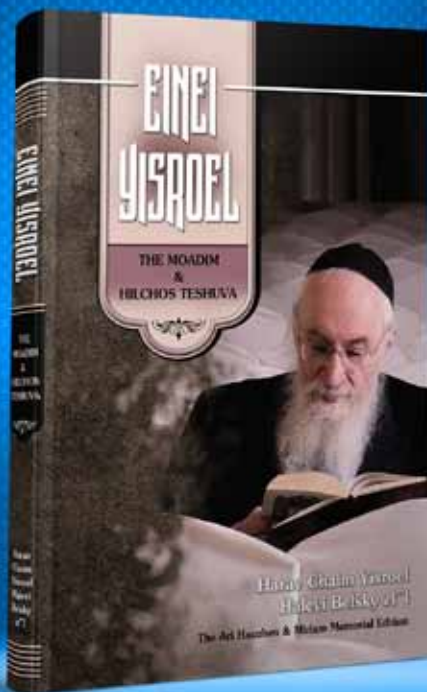
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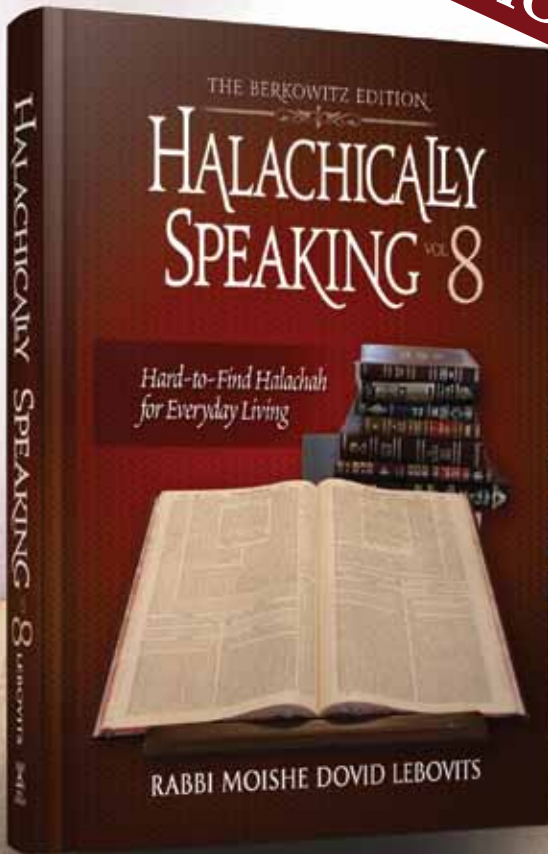

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