



This shiur was given by Dayan Steiner and can be listened to on the shiurim page of this website

## MILKY HONEY?

### BUYER 'BEEWARE'

Several years ago, one kashrus organisation notified the community that a particular brand of honey should be treated as milky.

This notice of caution was of significant practical relevance, particularly at this time of the year, when many nashim tzidkoniyyos add honey to their chicken or meat dishes.

The information I received upon contacting the kashrus organisation was that the honey in question is processed in a factory that also produces milky products. The honey and the milky products shared the same production equipment. Therefore, in the opinion of the kashrus organisation, the honey produced at that plant was to be considered milky.

You may be wondering why honey, produced by bees, should end up in a factory. It is therefore worth explaining the difference between premium honey and the typically runny, cheaper honey that is more commonly used.

### CHEAP VS EXPENSIVE HONEY

Premium honey, such as Manuka honey, is generally raw and unpasteurised. (As a result, it has many more health benefits compared to cheaper honey, since boiling honey causes the loss of many of its beneficial nutrients.)

In contrast, cheaper, regular honey is produced from a mixture of honeys originating in various countries, including outside the EU. Common sources of this type of honey include China, Vietnam and India, among others.

At the stage of being imported, these honeys most often contain the bees' body parts, such as their legs, which are obviously not kosher.



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Therefore, if these would still be identifiable in the honey, one would need to remove them. However, once the honey is boiled, it is considered that the body parts detract from the flavour of honey rather than enhancing it, as the Shulchan Aruch (YD 81:8) explains.

To arrive at the clear honey found on the shop shelf, the imported honey undergoes a filtering process. The filtering process removes the bees' body parts and leaves the honey with a more transparent look.

As part of that process, the honey is pasteurised. (In addition, regular honey often has added sweeteners, such as high-fructose corn syrup<sup>1</sup> or glucose syrup, and honey is said to be one of the most adulterated foodstuffs globally.)

What types of products containing milk would be produced in the same factory as a honey factory?

Without direct access to the factory, one can only speculate. One possibility may be spreads, such as jam or lemon curd, for example, the latter of which contains butter.

### **SHARED PRODUCTION LINE = SAME STATUS?**

Now, we must consider whether sharing production facilities with milk products actually renders the honey milky.

Where honey is processed at a high temperature on the same machinery as a milk product, it would be treated as having absorbed the flavour of the milk and therefore may be considered milky.

One factor to consider is whether combining honey and milk results in an enhanced taste or if the combination produces a less desirable one. A similar matter is debated by the poskim regarding whether the flavour of meat is enhanced by honey or not. There is also a discussion regarding wine mixed with honey.

<sup>1</sup> This may pose a problem at Pesach time, as corn is a legume which is considered kitniyos



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If the honey's flavour is enhanced by the milk flavour it absorbs, then the honey may well be considered milky.

One source for milk and honey resulting in an enhanced flavour is that the Torah itself is described as "Devash Vechalav Tachas Leshoneich" (honey and milk beneath your tongue), which would indicate that the two complement each other.

(It is possible that this would depend on the milk-honey ratio, similar to what the poskim discuss regarding honey enhancing or detracting from the flavour of meat, that this would possibly depend on how much of each is in the mixture.)

One would also need to verify if the machinery used in the honey production is a ben yomo (was used for the milk product within the past 24 hours) or not. The general principle is that where a flavour was absorbed by a container more than 24 hours prior, then that flavour will not enhance the taste of the food which is subsequently cooked in it.

### Therefore:

- It is praiseworthy in the first instance to buy honey with a reputable hechsher. The hechsher should also ideally confirm that the honey is parev.
- Regarding cheap runny honeys, although they are kosher and permitted to be used on Challah or in cake, one should avoid using them as an ingredient in meat or poultry dishes, unless one can somehow ascertain that it is raw and unadulterated.

As a final point, one must also be aware of potential issues of flavoured honey, as well as the fact that some honeys also contain Royal Jelly, which should also be avoided, as, in the opinion of many poskim, it is prohibited.