

## Halacha Challenge



### What's the Bracha on the Cheesecake?



"I think we need a break," said Chaim to his chavrusa Shimon on *leil* Shavuos. "I agree, Chaim. Let's go and see if there are any cheesecakes left in the kitchen."

When they entered the shul's kitchen they discovered exactly two slices of cheesecake there. They turned to each other and smiled.

"I recognize this cheesecake. It's the one that Levi baked!" said Chaim.

"Oh right," agreed Shimon! "I actually just saw him learning in this Beis

Midrash! We'll thank him after we eat it."

When Chaim lifted his piece of cake and was about to make a bracha he paused and started wondering what bracha he should say on the cake.

"Shimon, do you know which bracha we say on it - Shehakol or Mezonos?" asked Chaim.

"Good question, Chaim!" replied Shimon. "Even though, it's a cake, almost the whole thing is cheese. There is just a thin layer of crust on the bottom."

"Oh, and also after we eat it, what bracha do we say for bracha *achrona*!?" added Chaim.

"Good Yom Tov, Chaim and Shimon!" shouted Levi his greeting as he walked into the kitchen.

Chaim and Shimon replied to the greeting, turned to each other and smiled.

"I feel honored that you'll be eating my cheesecake," said Levi. "Oh, and in case you are like many others who came over to me tonight asking me what bracha they should make on the cake, you should just know that I baked it with that thin layer of crust just so that it will be able to hold the cheese."

**Question:** Which *bracha rishona* and *bracha achrona* should Chaim and Shimon say on that cheesecake?

(Try to solve it yourself first, and then compare your answer to the answer below that's based Mishna Berura and sefer Zos HaBracha)

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**ANSWER |** Bracha Rishona: Shehakol. Bracha Achrona: Borei Nefashos. It's interesting to note that even if the bracha on that cake was mezonos, if a *k'zais* of cake was eaten *bichdei achilas pras* (i.e., with 4 minutes), but a *k'zais* of the crust was not eaten *bichdei achilas pras*, then the *bracha achrona* on it would also be Borei Nefashos. (Sources: Mishna Berura 168:45, Sefer Zos HaBracha 5:7, 11:10)

\* This Halacha Challenge article is intended to be used for discussions and as a base for further learning, and not as an authoritative halachic guidance. Opinions cited in the article might not agree with opinions of other halachic works or the minhag of your community.

# Rhymes for Kids



On Shavuos we eat cheesecakes and drink yummy soda,  
 Because on this day we received Hashem's precious \_\_\_\_!"  
 For Matan Torah we're are ready on this day, which is so *nechmad*,  
 Because today, together we are standing *k'ish echad b'lev* \_\_\_\_\_!

# Shavuos Trivia



1. *True or False?* The reason why there used to be a minhag to put trees in shuls on Shavuos was to remember that Har Sinai blossomed with vegetation when we received the Torah on it.
2. *Choose the Right Answer* The Rama (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 494) tells us that for Shavuos people have a minhag to: (A) Decorate homes with flowers. (B) Put flowers around the Aron Kodosh in shul. (C) Hang branches around the house and in shuls. (D) Put grass as a rug on the floor of shuls and homes.
3. *Choose the Right Answer* If a person is allergic to milk, no worries, because on Shavuos there is also a minhag to eat: (A) Celery. (B) Apples. (C) Nuts. (D) Honey.
4. *Choose the Right Answer* One of the main reasons for the minhag of eating milchicks on Shavuos, is because: (A) It enables us to add more delicious things to the menu. (B) It's for a remembrance of the *Shtei HaLechem* (two challos) that were offered on Shavuos in the Beis HaMikdash (C) It reminds us of how Avraham served butter and milk to his guests (in parshas Vayeira) and thus, it reminds us that Torah wants us to do acts of kindness.

According to the Mishna Berura, the minhag on Shavuos is to have a *seuda* with two courses: a *milchik* course followed by a fleishig course.

5. *Yes or No* Does one need to *bench* between those two courses?
6. *Fill in the blank* Between those two courses, besides the food utensils, one should also change the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. *Choose the right answer* Between those two courses, one should: (A) Rinse his mouth (B) Eat something solid (parve) and drink something (parve) (C) Nothing needs to be done.
8. *Choose the right answer* How much time should one wait between those two courses: (A) 15 minutes, (B) half an hour (C) no need to wait (if a person fulfilled "B" in Q.7)

**ANSWERS |** Question 1: False. The reason for that minhag is because on Shavuos the fruits of the trees are judged (M.B. 494:10), Question 2: D (Rama O.C. 494:3), Question 3: D (M.B. 494:13), Question 4: B (Rama ibid.) Question 5: No (if he didn't eat "hard cheese") (M.B. 494:16), Question 6: tablecloth (M.B. ibid.), Question 7: B (M.B. ibid.), Question 8: C (this appears to be the answer based on M.B. 494:16) This Halacha Challenge article is intended to be used for discussions and as a base for further learning, and not as an authoritative halachic guidance. Opinions cited in the article might not agree with opinions of other halachic works or the minhag of your community.

## Why?!



The Torah tells us in parshas Yisro that on the day of Matan Torah there was a sound of shofar. Why?!

# Short & Sweet

## Avodas Avoda

כָּל-הַפְּקָדִים אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וְנָשִׂיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-הַלְוִיִּם... לְעֵבֶד עֲבֹדַת עֲבֹדָה וְעֲבַדְתָּ מִשָּׂא בְּאֵהָל מוֹעֵד.

*All the numbers of the Levites whom by Moshe, Aaron, and the nesi'im of Israel counted ...*

What is this “*avodas avoda*” (service of the service) that the Levites had to do?!

Rashi (Bamidbar 4:47) explains: *שהיא עבודה לעבודה אחרת, הוא השיר במצלותים וכנורות* - *This refers to the singing with cymbals and harps, which is a service for another service.*

We learn from this *peirush* Rashi that “*avodas avoda*” is referring to singing and music of the Levites in the Mishkan. There are many reasons why *HaShem* wanted singing and music in the Mishkan (and in the Beis HaMikdash.) It seems that one of those reasons was to help a Jew who would come to the Mishkan feel elevated and inspired, since bringing Jewish people close to their Father in Shamayim was the essence of the Mishkan.

Hence, we see from here that in the eyes of the Torah singing that brings a Jew close to his Creator is not “just singing”, it’s an *avoda*! Therefore, on Shabbos and Yom Tov - the times dedicated to raise our love for HaKadosh Boruch Hu and become closely attached to him - we should make sure to sing *z’miros*. It is a type of our *avoda*!



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Here are a few interesting things about *z’miros*:

- The *Mishna Berura* cites the *Roke'ach* that speaks about the minhag of the singing *zemiros* on Shabbos.<sup>1</sup>
- Especially the songs that appear in the benchers should be sung. We have a tradition that those Shabbos *zemiros* were composed with *ruach hakodesh*! As such, they should be sung in an honorable fashion.<sup>2</sup>
- From the Gemorah it appears that the main time to sing *zemiros* 🎵 and say *divrei* Torah is at the end of the *seuda*<sup>3</sup> - i.e., after dessert, because this is when the atmosphere of *simcha* reaches its peak.
- In the home of Chasam Sofer, all *zemiros* of the standard Shabbos *zemiros* were sung every Shabbos.<sup>4</sup>
- A Shabbos *seuda* should be eaten in a calm, relaxed manner, with a pleasant, joyous atmosphere – just like royalty would conduct their meals.<sup>5</sup> Shabbos *zemiros* help to accomplish that.
- In case you’re looking for segulos, Shabbos singing *zemiros* is a segulah for “sweetening” strict Heavenly judgments and to bring down to us Hashem’s mercy and *chessed*.<sup>6</sup>

1. *Mishna Berura* (289:5) 2. *Piskei Teshuvos* 289:9 3. *Megilla* 12b. 4. *Piskei Teshuvos* *ibid.*, note 72 5. see *Piskei Teshuvos* *ibid.* 6. *ibid.*

# Story



*There was again a story with one non-Jew that came in front of Shamai. He said to him: “Convert me, on a condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot”. Shamai pushed him away with a beam of the house. He came in front of Hillel [and said, “Convert me, on a condition that you teach me the entire Torah, while I am standing on one foot”]. He converted him. He (Hillel) said to him: “**What is hated to you, don’t do to your friend.** This is the entire Torah. The rest is explanation. Go learn.” (Gemora Shabbos 31a)*

On the words of Hillel, Rashi comments: *“Your friend and the friend of your father, do not abandon.” (Mishlei ch. 27). “Your Friend” is referring to HaKadosh Boruch Hu. Don’t transgress His word, because you would hate it if your friend would transgress your word.”*

Hillel’s words are not just for that convert but for every one of us as well! It teaches us the approach—the heart that we should have—anytime we are about to fulfill a mitzva of the Torah.

## Torah's Life Lessons

Our stay at Har Sinai lasted for about one year (see Rashi to Bamidbar 10:11). What were we doing there? We were with *HaShem*! We prepared for Matan Torah, we heard His expression of love - His Torah spoken to us directly (see Rashi to Shir HaShirim 1:2), we engaged in the study of Torah there, and we build the Mishkan. When we came to Har Sinai - the beginning of this close engagement with HaKadosh Boruch Hu, the Torah says the following beautiful and cherished words: **וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל** - *“And Yisroel encamped there”*. Does the Torah say, “And Yisroel came by to Har Sinai, ready to do whatever they would need to do there and then move on”? No. The Torah says, **וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל** - when we came to be with Hashem, we “stationed” ourselves there.

This is a lesson for us, forever. When a person is about to make a bracha, to daven, to engage in learning Torah, to do any mitzva, he should not rush or think about moving on after doing this activity. Rather, the words **וַיִּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל** should resound in his heart and he should think, “I am about to do *avodas HaShem*. I am “encamping” myself here. I will be with *HaShem*.”

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