

# COVERING THE CHALLOS FOR KIDDUSH

*by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt*

**QUESTION:** Must the challos which will be used for Lechem Mishneh on Friday night be placed on the table before Kiddush is recited, or may they be brought to the table after Kiddush?

**DISCUSSION:** According to the basic halachah, there is no need for the challos to be on the table during Kiddush. As a matter of fact, it may be preferable that they not be there during Kiddush at all. This is based on the Talmud's statement<sup>(1)</sup> that one should cover the food on the table before reciting Kiddush on Friday night. Why? The basic explanation given by the Rishonim<sup>(2)</sup> is: Yikra de-Shabata, the glory of Shabbos. It is considered a far greater honor to Shabbos if Kiddush is recited first, and only then is the Shabbos food brought to the table in honor of Shabbos which has just been sanctified by reciting Kiddush. By covering the challos during Kiddush and uncovering them once Kiddush is over, we act as if the challos were not really there during Kiddush and were actually "brought to the table" after Kiddush was recited.

Based on the above, it would seem that instead of placing the challos on the table and then "hiding" them, it would be best not to bring the challos at all to the table until after Kiddush is recited. Indeed, that is the opinion of some poskim,<sup>(3)</sup> and some families observe that custom.<sup>(4)</sup>

But most homes follow the traditional custom of placing the challos on the table before Kiddush and keeping them covered (at least) until after Kiddush is recited. While the exact source for this custom is not clear,<sup>(5)</sup> there are a number of possible explanations as to its origin:

1. To honor Shabbos by having challos on the table throughout the entire Shabbos, even when it is not meal time.<sup>(6)</sup>
2. To allow the table to be moved after the Shabbos candles have burnt out. (7) By placing challos on the table before Shabbos begins, the table becomes a basis (a base) for the challos as well as for the candles and it is therefore permitted to be moved.<sup>(8)</sup>
3. To properly fulfill Shulchan Aruch's ruling of "setting the Shabbos table" in anticipation of Shabbos.<sup>(9)</sup> Since challos are a main part of the meal, the table is not considered "set" unless the challos are on it.<sup>(10)</sup>
4. According to Kabbalistic teachings, placing the challos on the table enhances the holiness of the table.<sup>(11)</sup>

**QUESTION:** Based on the aforementioned, should other Shabbos foods be brought to the table

before or after Kiddush?

**DISCUSSION:** Since we have established that for the sake of yikra de- Shabata we cover the challos to make it appear as if they are not on the table, it follows that all other Shabbos foods should only be brought to the table after Kiddush is recited.(12) Indeed, there are many people who are careful to do so.(13)

But this concept applies only on Friday night; on Shabbos morning, yikra de-Shabata does not apply.(14) It therefore makes no difference when the Shabbos food is placed on the table on Shabbos morning.

**QUESTION:** If yikra de-Shabata does not apply to Shabbos morning, why, then, do we cover the challos during the Shabbos morning Kiddush?

**DISCUSSION:** Although yikra de-Shabata does not apply on Shabbos morning, there are other explanations given by the Rishonim [for the Talmudic statement mentioned earlier that food on the table must be covered during Kiddush on Friday night] that apply to Shabbos morning as well as to Friday night:

5. So as to "hide the shame" of the challos. Normally, ha-motzi is the first berachah to be recited and bread is the first food eaten at a meal. When Kiddush is recited, the wine "usurps" the place of the bread, so to "hide" the "shame" of the challos, we cover them.(15)
6. So as to remember the miracle of the Manna, which fell from Heaven wrapped in layers of dew.(16)

**QUESTION:** When cakes or pastries are being served at a Shabbos morning Kiddush, do they need to be covered as well?

**DISCUSSION:** Two of the three previously mentioned reasons do not apply in this case. Yikra de-Shabata does not apply on Shabbos morning at all, and remembrance of the Manna applies only to Lechem Mishneh, not to mezonos items. But the other reason, the one regarding the "shame" of the challos, applies to mezonos as well, since ordinarily the blessing of mezonos is recited before the blessing of ha-gafen. Indeed, some poskim rule that cakes and pastries should be covered during the recital of the morning Kiddush.(17)

But not all poskim agree. Some(18) hold that mezonos items do not need to be covered during Kiddush because only challos - which can be used for Kiddush and are being bypassed in favor of wine - are being "shamed." Mezonos items, however, are generally not eligible to have Kiddush recited over them, so they cannot be "shamed" by the wine taking precedence over them.(19)

**QUESTION:** May the challos be uncovered right after Kiddush or must they remain covered until after the ha-motzi blessing is recited?

**DISCUSSION:** Here, too, the answer depends on the exact reasoning behind the halachah. If the main purpose of covering the challos is yikra de- Shabata, then once Kiddush is recited, there is no

longer any reason to keep them covered; on the contrary, the challos should be immediately uncovered. Similarly, if the primary reason for the halachah is to "hide the shame" of the challos, then there is no longer any reason to keep them covered once ha-gafen has been said. But if the reason to cover the challos is to commemorate the miracle of the Manna, then it is appropriate to leave the challos covered until after ha-motzi is recited, since that is when the mitzvah of Lechem Mishneh is fulfilled.(20)

In practice, everyone should follow his family's custom, as there are conflicting views(21) and customs and all have valid sources. One who has no family custom should adopt the following procedure: On Friday night, he should leave the challos covered until after ha-motzi.(22) On Shabbos morning, the challos should be completely covered during Kiddush and partly uncovered for ha-motzi.(23) For Seudah Shelishis, the challos should not be covered at all.(24)

**QUESTION:** May the challah cover be made from a see-through material? May the cover be perforated or made from a mesh-like material (which will make the challos visible)?

**DISCUSSION:** L'chatchilah, no, since the challos can be seen. If no other cover is available, such covers may be used.(25)

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

1 *Pesachim, 100a.*

2 Rashbam and Tosafos, *Pesachim* 100b, quoting *She'iltos*. This explanation is quoted by the *Tur* O.C. 271:9, *Magen Avraham* 271:7 and *Mishnah Berurah* 271:15 as the primary reason for covering the challos during Kiddush Friday night. See also *Sha'ar ha-Tziyun* 271:48.

3 The Gaon of Vilna, quoted in *Ma'asei Rav* 118. This was also the custom during Talmudic times, when each participant at a meal was served at his own individual table. Food was laid on the tables in advance, but the tables were not brought into the dining area until after Kiddush was recited.

4 As attested to by *Aruch ha-Shulchan* 271:22 (who objects to this custom). See also *Nefesh ha-Rav*, pg. 158.

5 See *Tosafos*, *Pesachim* 100b, s.v. who write that already in their day it had become customary for the challos to be brought to the table and then covered. *Tosafos*, however, do not explain why the challos could not be brought to the table after Kiddush was recited.

6 See *Taz* Y.D. 178:7 that it is customary to honor the Shabbos in this way. See *Be'er Heitev* O.C. 180:2.

7 *Rav Chayim of Valozhin*, quoted in *Keser Rosh* 92.

8 As explained in *Mishnah Berurah* 277:18.

9 O.C. 262:1.

10 Minchas Yitzchak 3:13-10.

11 Ben Ish Chai, Vayeira 17, quoted in Kaf ha-Chayim 262:21.

12 See Toras Shabbos 271:8 and Peri Megadim (Eishel 271:7 and Mishbetzos 12) and that for yikra de-Shabata to be properly fulfilled, all of the foods on the table should be covered.

13 See Misgeres ha-Shulchan 77:1. See also Mi-Peninei ha-Rav, pg. 69

14 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 271:49 quoting Mordechai; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 47, note 125).

15 Tur O.C. 271, quoting Yerushalmi.

16 Tosafos, Pesachim 100b. Based on this reason, Shulchan Aruch writes that one should cover the challos underneath as well to symbolize the underlying layer of dew. Many people use a challah board or tray for this purpose.

17 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 55:5; Teshuvos Levushei Mordechai O.C. kamma, 46. Even according to this view, however, only the person making Kiddush [and others who are partaking of the wine] needs to cover his mezonos items. All other participants do not need to cover their mezonos, since they are not "shaming" the mezonos by listening to Kiddush; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 47, note 125).

18 Eishel Avraham O.C. 182.

19 Ta'amei ha-Minhagim, 365, Kuntress Acharon; Az Nidberu 2:8.

20 Mishnah Berurah 271:41 quoting Chayei Adam. Peri Megadim (quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 48), however, maintains that even according to this reason it is sufficient to cover the challos until after Kiddush.

21 Note that some poskim are of the opinion that the challos should not be covered during ha-motzi, since a blessing should be made on an item which is visible, not hidden from sight; see Peri Megadim (Mishbetzos) 271:12.

22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 271:22.

23 Nimukei Orchos Chayim O.C. 271.

24 Aruch ha-Shulchan 291:10 and 299:14; Shulchan Shelomo, addendum to vol. 1, pg. 27.

25 See Minchas Shabbos (Shiyurei ha-Minchah 77:8), Tikunim u'Milluim 47, note 116 and Bris Olam, Kiddush 34.

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