

SHAVUOS: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: What are the Yom Tov restrictions in regard to flowers?

Discussion: Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle[1].

Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos and Yom Tov[2]. They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds[3].

One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water[4]. Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming.

Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos[5]. On Yom Tov, however, a small amount of water may be added but not changed [6].

Flowers should be placed in water before Yom Tov. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Yom Tov while others do not[7].

One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water[8].

Question: Does one recite a blessing over the pleasant fragrance exuded from flowers in a vase?

Discussion: Just as one may not derive pleasure from food or drink before reciting a proper blessing, so too, one may not enjoy a pleasant fragrance before reciting the appropriate blessing[9]. There are two different types of blessings that can be recited over pleasant[10] fragrances exuded from flowers:

1. Borei atzei vesamim: Recited over fragrant shrubs and trees or their flowers (e.g., myrtle, roses[11]).
2. Borei isvei vesamim: Recited over fragrant herbs, grasses or flowers.

The blessing is recited immediately before one intends to smell the pleasant fragrance. B'diavad, one may recite the blessing within a few seconds after he smelled a pleasant fragrance [12].

But a blessing over a pleasant fragrance is recited only over an object whose purpose is to exude a

pleasant fragrance. If the object is primarily for another purpose — even if the object is sweet-smelling — no blessing is recited[13]. Although flowers in a vase exude a pleasant fragrance, since people usually buy flowers for their beauty, one who walks by and smells them does not recite a blessing. If, however, the flowers are picked up and smelled, a blessing must be recited.

Question: Within the same meal, may one eat cheese or other dairy food and then eat meat immediately thereafter?

Discussion: According to the basic halachah it is permitted to eat meat or chicken immediately after eating cheese or any other dairy food, even during the same meal; there is no requirement to recite Birkas ha-mazon or a berachah acharonah between the dairy and the meat. The only separation required is to clean and rinse the mouth and teeth, wash the hands and clean the table (or change the tablecloth) to make sure that no dairy residue or crumbs remain. While there are scrupulous individuals who wait at least an hour[14] between eating dairy and meat in addition to reciting Birkas ha-mazon or a berachah acharonah between them — and their custom is based on the Zohar and quoted by several poskim[15] — it is not required by the halacha[16].

Question: Does the same halachah apply to hard cheese as well?

Discussion: When "hard" cheese is eaten, the halachah is different. Shulchan Aruch quotes an opinion that requires one to wait a full six hours between eating hard cheese and meat. This view maintains that the taste and oily residue of hard cheese lingers in the mouth long after the cheese has been consumed, just as the taste and residue of meat lingers long after consumption[17]. In addition, other poskim hold that hard cheese can get stuck between the teeth just as pieces of meat do[18]. While other poskim do not consider either of these issues to be a problem with hard cheese and permit eating meat immediately after eating hard cheese, Rama and the later poskim[19] recommend that one be stringent and wait six hours between consuming hard[20] cheese, and meat or poultry. (See tomorrow's Discussion for a definition of "hard cheese.")

Question: How do we define "hard" cheese concerning this halachah?

Discussion: Exactly how to define "hard" cheese is another controversial subject. All poskim agree that cheese which has been cured for at least six months before being packaged and refrigerated is considered hard cheese[21]. While many of the hard cheeses sold in the United States are not aged for six months, there are several brands of cheese that advertise that they have been cured for ten months or longer and those are surely considered hard cheeses. Parmesan cheese, for instance, is aged for at least a year, if not longer. The poskim are also in agreement that cheeses that are not aged six months but are cured long enough to become wormy[22] are considered "hard" cheese[23].

There are, however, some poskim who maintain that all hard cheeses, including all kinds of American (yellow) cheese, etc., are considered hard cheese and one who eats them should wait six hours before eating meat[24]. While some individuals follow this opinion, the widespread custom follows the more lenient view[25]. It is appropriate, though, to wait at least one hour between eating

any hard cheese and meat[26].

Question: Why do some women omit the blessing of shehecheyanu when they light Yom Tov candles?

Discussion: The validity of the custom to recite shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time, a prevalent long-standing custom[27], has been extensively debated by the poskim[28]. The preferred time to recite shehecheyanu is right after the recitation of Kiddush, while the cup of wine is still being held aloft. Since ladies listen and answer amen to the shehecheyanu which is recited after Kiddush, there is no halachic reason for them to recite this very blessing when they light candles. There are other halachic objections as well. Still, since many women are inspired by the important mitzvah of candle-lighting and feel the need to express their joy at that time, the custom evolved of reciting shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time. Most poskim feel that while we do not encourage this practice, we need not object to it and the ladies who recite their own shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time may continue to do so[29].

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1. Mishnah Berurah 336:48.
 2. Rav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64).
 3. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73); Bris Olam, pg. 32.
 4. Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26:26.
 5. Mishnah Berurah 336:54.
 6. O.C. 654:1 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 654:2; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26:26.
 7. See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:48; Shulchan Shlomo 336:12; Yechaveh Da'as 2:53.
 8. Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:73.
 9. O.C. 216:1. A berachah acharonah, however, was not instituted for pleasant fragrances; Mishnah Berurah 216:4.
 10. One who does not enjoy a particular fragrance does not recite a blessing.
 11. Mishnah Berurah 216:17.
 12. Halichos Shlomo 1:23-38.
 13. O.C. 217:2. See also Mishnah Berurah 217:1; 216:11.
 14. Some wait an half an hour; see Peri Hadar on Peri Megadim, Y.D. 89:16.
 15. See Minchas Yaakov 76:5 and Beir ha-Gra, Y.D. 89:2. See Darchei Teshuvah 89:14 who rules like these poskim. See also Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:160.

16. Mishnah Berurah 494:16; Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 89:9.
17. Taz, Y.D. 89:4.
18. Peri Chadash, Y.D. 89:2.
19. Chochmas Adam 40:13; Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 89: and Mishnah Berurah 494:16 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 15. Sefaradim, however, do not follow this stringency; see Yabia Omer, Y.D. 6:7.
20. If the hard cheese is softened through boiling or cooking, it is no longer considered hard cheese; Darchei Teshuvah 89:43. But if it is merely fried or baked (as in pizza), it is still considered hard cheese; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Me'or ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 426).
21. Shach, Y.D. 89:15.
22. These "worms" are kosher and are permitted to be eaten as long as they remain within the cheese; see Rama, Y.D. 84:16.
23. Taz, Y.D. 89:4; Chochmas Adam 40:13.
24. Rav Y.Y. Weiss, quoted in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos, Y.D. 1:388; Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Me'or ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 427; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Shevet ha-Levi 2:35.
25. Ma'asei Ish 5, pg. 22, quoting Chazon Ish; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (Feiffer), pg. 138, quoting Rav A. Kotler; Yagel Yaakov, pg. 148, quoting Rav M. Feinstein; Debreciner Rav in Pischei Halachah, pg. 108; Mi-Beis Levi 6; Rav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Nezer ha-Chayim, pg. 213; Mesorah, vol. 20, pg. 91, ruling by Rav Y. Belsky.
26. Rav Y.E. Henkin, written ruling published in Yagel Yaakov, pg. 148.
27. Mateh Efrayim 581:4; 619:4.
28. See Sh'eilas Ya'avetz 107, Kaf ha-Chayim 263:40 and Moadim u'Zemanim 7:117 quoting the Brisker Rav.
29. Sha'arei Teshuvah 263:5; Mishnah Berurah 263:23; Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:12; Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 585:2; Halichos Shlomo, Moadim 2:9-22.

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