

Voice OF THE VAAAD

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There is a well-established custom codified in the Shulchan Aruch¹ to consume dairy products on Shavous. Numerous reasons are offered for this practice², and I would like to offer my own as well.

When *Moshe Rabbeinu* first spoke to *Hashem* at the burning bush, *Hashem* told him³, “I have noticed the plight of my people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings. I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, **a land flowing with milk and honey**, the region of the Canaanites...”

We see that *Eretz Yisroel* is referred to as a land flowing with “milk and honey,” but why are these two food products being singled out to praise the land? The simple understanding of these words is the reassurance that we will have an abundance of foodstuffs in *Eretz Yisroel*⁴. However, I would like to suggest that these two items are singled out because they are a reference to Torah study and its ability to uplift the individual from the challenges of this world.

Let us start with the honey. We all know the natural sweetness and pleasant taste of honey.

More than that the *Chofetz Chaim*⁵ quotes the *passuk* which describes *Torah* as⁶ “...sweeter than honey and the honeycomb” and asks why *Torah* is compared to the sweetness of honey? He explains based on a fascinating *halachah*. Typically, if a piece of non-kosher meat falls into a pot of kosher food, we need to evaluate if there was enough food in the pot to nullify the flavor of the non-kosher item (*bitul b’shishim*). However, when it comes to honey a different set of rules come into play. If a non-kosher piece of meat falls into a vat of honey, regardless of the size, the honey remains kosher.⁷ The reason for this different rule



is that the overpowering sweetness of honey automatically transforms all that comes into its territory into honey. We don’t need to evaluate whether the non-kosher flavor is imparted into the honey, because it’s impossible to change honey; honey changes all that falls into it. Says the *Chofetz Chaim*, this is what the *passuk* in *Tehillim* is teaching us. *Torah* also has an unbelievable transformative energy. If a person dedicates himself to be focused on delving into *Torah* and its laws, even if his nature until then has not been in line with the *Torah*, he will be transformed. As the *Mishna*⁸ teaches us, “[*Torah*] it prepares him to be righteous, devout, upright and trustworthy...”

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Aged Cheese & Cheese Powders: New Discussion of an Age-Old Issue

By: Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer - Rabbinic Coordinator, OU Kosher

We are familiar with the rule of refraining from consuming meat after eating certain types of cheese. In Yoreh Deah (89:2), the Rama writes, “And there are those who are strict and do not consume meat after eating cheese and such is our minhag, that we do not eat any meat, even poultry, after hard cheese...”

This is the basis for waiting the same time period after eating certain cheeses before then partaking of meat that one waits after eating meat before then partaking of dairy.

The *Shach* (ibid. s.k. 15) explains that “hard cheese” as referenced by the *Rama* means cheese which has aged (approximately) six months. *Poskim* note that after eating pungent, strong-tasting cheeses, one should similarly wait before eating meat, regardless of the cheese’s age. (cf *Taz* ibid. s.k. 4.)

Advanced food technology and a mushrooming kosher market have resulted in a proliferation of products that contain cheese powder, such as Parmesan-coated popcorn, cheddar cheese crackers and mashed potatoes with real cheese seasoning. Consumer questions commonly arise as to whether or not one must wait after eating such foods that are coated with or contain cheese powder, before consuming meat.

Let’s take a look at how cheese powder is made, and then analyze the *halacha*.

The halachic discussion below is for informational purposes only; each reader should consult a competent *rav* to provide personal guidance for him or her on this matter.

Real cheese powder – as opposed to “cheese-flavored powder”, used in non-dairy and in very inexpensive cheese-flavored foods, and as opposed to grated or shredded fresh cheese, which is sprinkled onto some foods (including one brand of crackers) in the form of real cheese bits – is made from cut-up cheese (usually fresh, non-aged cheddar), unless specified otherwise. The cut-up cheese is mixed with water and blending agents and is heated to a liquid, after which it is dried into powder in large, multi-storey spray-dryers.

The truth is that even though Parmesan cheese intended for use in its natural form is aged for at least ten months, Parmesan cheese powder is commonly made from Parmesan that was only aged for a few months at most, as the same basic flavor can be achieved in far fewer than ten months, and the brittle, easy-to-grate texture for which Parmesan is known and which takes at least ten months to develop, is not necessary to achieve when

the Parmesan is going to be liquefied and powdered. Hence, unless a product that contains cheese powder states specifically that it is made from aged cheese, there is no basis to assume that the cheese powder is made from cheese that is halachically “aged”. (Aging cheese costs money, and companies do not allow their cheese to age unless necessary.)



What about cheese powders made from very pungent cheeses? And what about cheese powders made from cheeses which are enzymatically treated in order to develop very strong flavors? Since one should wait after eating such cheeses in their natural form, due to “*meshichas ta’am*” (lingering aftertaste), does one need to wait after eating potato chips coated with strong, “very cheesy” cheddar powder?

The *Aruch Ha-Shulchan* (Yoreh Deah 89:11), in discussing waiting after consuming such powerful-tasting cheeses (in their natural form), writes that one should wait after cheeses such as “...Swiss and Hollander

cheese, which have a lot of fat and their taste endures for a long time”. This parallels *Rashi* on *Chullin* (105 a), who explains that one must wait after eating meat before then partaking of milk, “because meat releases fat, which adheres to the mouth and creates a prolonged taste”. It is clear that this concern does not pertain to cheese powder that is lightly sprinkled onto foods or that is added to a seasoning blend, as there is obviously an absence of a fat-emitting mass that leaves a long-term aftertaste.

Thus far, it would not seem that one would need to wait after eating foods that contain cheese powder, as 1) cheese powder is not normally made from aged cheese, and 2) “*meshichas ta’am*” applies to chunks of real, fatty cheese, and not to lightly-sprinkled cheese powder.

But what if a food in fact contains cheese powder made from real aged cheese?

This seems to be more of a *machlokes*. On the one hand, many *poskim*, including the OU’s *poskim*, rule like the *Yad Yehudah* (YD ibid., s. 30 in *Peirush Ha-Katzar*), that aged cheese which is melted

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into foods does not necessitate waiting; more on this later. On the other hand, some poskim do not accept the *Yad Yehudah's* position and require one to wait after eating aged cheese in any form. According to this latter position, one would have to wait after eating products that contain aged cheese powder. (Again, unless a product specifically states that its cheese powder is made from aged cheese, one should assume that the cheese is not aged.)

The *Yad Yehudah* presents his axiom in the context of discussing foods into which cheese is melted and blended somewhat indiscernibly, and does not address the issue of melted cheese that is not blended into other foods. Some thus interpret the *Yad Yehudah* as limiting his *heter* to the case of, for example, aged cheese melted into soup, such that the cheese's presence is not fully visible. However, since the logic of the *Yad Yehudah* is that melting aged cheese removes its brittle status and hence its halachic stringency, one can argue with the above limited

interpretation. In fact, the *Badei Ha-Shulchan* (YD 89:3 in *Bi'urim*) understands the *Yad Yehudah* to not require waiting after melted cheese and does not stipulate that the *heter* only applies to melted cheese which is mixed into another dish, and other *poskim* as well seem to have a similar understanding, as quoted in *Mesorah Journal* 20, p. 92.

Based on the above reasoning and sources, even aged cheese powder that is sprinkled onto a food (and is still fully discernible and independent) would not require waiting before partaking of meat, if one adopts the latter approach to the *Yad Yehudah*, as the aged cheese has lost its unique texture that was the basis of the *chumra* (stringency) to wait. (Again, everyone should ask his or her rav for halachic guidance, as this is an issue of overall dispute.)

This article originally appeared in the Daf HaKashrus of OU Kosher and is reprinted here with kind permission of the author.

Spotlight on Food Science:

What is whey and why is it becoming so prevalent in our food?

Whey is the liquid remaining after milk has been curdled and strained.¹

Whey has gone from being a waste product from cheesemaking to a highly valued coproduct. Traditionally, cheesemakers considered whey a waste product and looked for the most economical way to dispose of it. Generally, it was discharged into waterways. However, growing concerns about the impact on the environment prompted governments to impose restrictions on its disposal.²

Cheesemaking typically generates large volumes of whey. Today, about 80% of the volume of milk used to make cheese remains as whey. It's now widely used in the food industry for its nutritional and functional benefits.

Given that whey is high in protein and is a rich source of amino



acids it is being utilized in a variety of "health products". The qualities of whey make it a valuable ingredient for health and wellbeing. Some of the nutritional benefits of whey include³ - sports nutrition (helps body recover from exercise), weight loss (increases satiety and helps maintain lean body mass) and healthy body aging (helps build and maintain muscle mass).

The functionality of whey also makes it a valuable ingredient in commercial food production.⁴ In baked products it is used as a flavor enhancer as well as a gelling agent. In snack products the use of whey can help extend shelf-life and preserve the other flavors added.

One last tidbit about whey: promising results were published in a medical journal⁵ for the use of whey protein concentrate in certain cancer treatment. Although more research is needed, this is a breakthrough in medical research.

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whey>

² <https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/832-uses-of-whey>

³ See <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2010.1818> which questions the scientific proofs to these claims

⁴ http://usdec.files.cms-plus.com/PDFs/2008Monographs/WheySnacksAndSeasonings_English.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11205219>

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We see from this idea of the *Chofetz Chaim* the power of *Torah* to completely encase a person with its sweetness and change him for the better.

Let us now explore the connection between *Torah* study and milk. In the blessing *Yaakov* gave to *Yehuda* before he passed away, he said⁹ “His eyes are darker than wine; his teeth are whiter than milk.” The *Malbim* explains the depth of this *passuk* by correlating it with another *passuk* in *Shir HaShirim* (5:1) “... Eaten my honey and honeycomb, drunk my wine and my milk...” Why does each *passuk* first mention wine and then mention milk? He explains that while wine tends to rile a person up, its effect can be countered by milk, which has the tendency to calm him down and put him at peace with his surroundings. Similarly, the *Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh*¹⁰ explains that milk symbolizes the attributes of kindness and compassion Hashem will implant within us.

Furthermore, the *passuk* in *Shir HaShirim* (5:12) tells us “His eyes are like doves by watercourses, bathed in milk, set by a brimming pool.” The *Midrash Lekach Tov* explains that this *passuk* is all a reference to people studying *Torah*. “Bathed in milk” concludes the *Midrash*, refers to the learning and understanding of *Torah* to its fullest. The *Radak*¹¹ explains the comparison between milk and *Torah* as follows. Just as milk provides us with proper nourishment to maintains our physical growth, so too *Torah* study continuously nourishes us and propels us to new spiritual heights.

1 Shulchan Aruch - Rema OC 494:3

2 See article by Rabbi Shraga Simmons at <https://bit.ly/2Kpyd8u>

3 Shemos 3:8

4 See gemara in Kesubos 112a how this blessing is actually fulfilled

5 Introduction to Sefer Likutei Halachos

6 Tehillim 19:11

7 This halacha has qualifications that are beyond the scope of this article, however please keep in mind that honey requires proper kosher certification.

Moreover, the *Alshich* explains the *passuk*¹² “... buy food without money, wine and milk without cost” as a reference to the stages of proper *Torah* study. First one fills himself with food/bread, which is a hint to the written *Torah*. Afterwards one needs to drink water to help digest the bread; which is a hint to the *Mishneh*. After the water one is ready for his wine to settle his meal; this is a reference to *Gemara*. Once one has his fill of wine/*Gemara* he is ready for his refreshing dessert: a cup of milk. The milk in this *passuk* is referring to the highest level of *Torah*—“sod”—the secrets of *Torah*. The *passuk* describes the progression of how one should study *Torah*, with the last step being milk.

We see that milk has numerous attributes in *Torah* sources. It represents kindness, compassion, the nourishing component of its study and the highest level of *Torah* study. This is the message Hashem tells *Moshe* at the bush. The land of *Eretz Yisroel* is flowing with “milk and honey”, and as *Rabeinu Bachya*¹³ explains all the physical attributes ascribed to *Eretz Yisroel* hint that there will be tremendous opportunities for *Torah* learning and spiritual growth in *Eretz Yisroel*.

Perhaps this is yet another reason why on *Shavous*, precisely when we are celebrating our receiving of the *Torah*, we have the custom of consuming milk products. The hint to lofty *Torah* qualities of milk we yearn to achieve are hinted to in this custom.

Wishing you all a sweet and tasty Yom Tov!

8 Avos 6:1

9 Bereishis 49:12

10 Ad loc

11 Yeshaya 55:1

12 Yeshaya 55:1

13 Shemos 3:8

Halacha Corner

Q. Our custom is to have a dairy meal on *Shavous*. I typically bake my own challah in my “fleishig” oven. Can I use that challah for my dairy meal?

A. Yes. Although the halachah is that one cannot bake dairy or meaty bread,¹ the status of the challah in this case is presumingly pareve. Assuming that there was no meat (with liquid, open) in the oven at the same time and the oven had no meat residue or spills, the bread does not become fleishig.²

1 See SA YD 97:1 with Kaf HaChaim #1 for further details

2 See Igros Moshe YD 1:40

3 Rema YD 92:8

4 See Darkei Teshuva YD 92:179 who explains that a towel is like a utensil



Q. I used my kitchen towel to wipe up a milk spill in the morning. Later in the evening I used the same towel (inadvertently) to pick up a hot meat pot. Does the pot need to be kashered? Is the food allowed to be eaten? What do I do with the towel?

A. The pot does not need to be kashered, the food is kosher and the towel should be washed. This is assuming that in the case described above the towel has already dried. The halacha is that two utensils that touch each other do not transfer their taam without a liquid medium³. Since in this case the towel was dry, the pot remains in its meat status.⁴