

# Shoel U'Mashiv

## Cake with Writing at Kiddush

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**Q** - In honor of their child's birthday, someone bought a cake for *Kiddush*. However, the cake has writing on top of it, how can we eat it?

**A** - What is the problem?

Before launching into the solution, we need to first define the problem. *Rashi* in the *Gemara Shabbos 73A* explains how the beams of the *Mishkan* were labeled to make it easier for them to rebuild the *Mishkan* as they traveled through the desert. Sometimes a beam was mismarked and in such a case, they would have to erase the mark in order to correct the mistake. Based on this the *Mishnah Berurah 240:22* defines the *Melacha* of *Kosev* (writing) as writing on an enduring surface using an enduring material and the *Melacha* of *Mochek* (erasing) as erasing enduring material from an enduring surface.

What about lettering on a cake?

Based on what we just said, the letters of the cake are not an enduring material, nor are they on an enduring surface. The *Mishnah Berurah 340:18* says it still constitutes a Rabbinic prohibition to write and erase if the writing will not endure or the surface will not endure or both. Further, the *Rema 340:3* says one should not break apart a cake or a cookie that has lettering on it. He considers this to be a problem of erasing. The *Mishnah Berurah 340:17* says one may, however, eat a cake or cookie with letters on it because the act of eating is not considered erasing. The *Shaar HaTzion 340:5* quotes the *Dagul Mervavah* who says it is absolutely allowed to cut a cake or cookie that has lettering on it.

How can we eat our cake at *Kiddush*?

The *Shemiras Shabbos Kahilchasah* gives 2 suggestions for how to deal with a cake with lettering on it. In 9:21 he says to remove the letters before *Shabbos* and in 11:7 he says to cut between the letters. Both solutions, however, are impractical for our *Kiddush* cake. The *Mishnah Berurah 307:8* says that anything a Jew cannot do on *Shabbos*, a non-Jew cannot do on their behalf, but anything that is a custom or a stringency, a Jew can ask a non-Jew to do. As we stated before whether you can cut a cake or cookie with lettering on it is a disagreement between the *Rema* and the *Dagul Mervavah*. Therefore, our actions are a stringency and we would be able to ask a non-Jew to either smear the letters or cut the cake—which is exactly what we do when such a cake is brought for *Kiddush*.