



# CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

Nov 14-Nov 15, 2014 ■ 22 Cheshvan, 5775 ■ Shabbos Chayei Soroh  
Candlelighting: 5:08P ■ Shabbos Ends 6:15P

Kiddush this Shabbos is sponsored by Rabbi Yaakov & Rebbetzin Susan Rich in honor of the Chasson Torah kibbud this past Simchas Torah. Shalosh Seudos this Shabbos is sponsored by the shul. Please contact Rabbi Yaakov Rich at 972-835-6016 if you are interested in sponsoring kiddush or shalosh seudos in the future.

## ■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

### Friday Night, Nov 14<sup>th</sup>

- » Candlelighting-5:08P
- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv-5:05P

### Shabbos Day, Nov 15<sup>th</sup>

- » Shacharis-8:30A
- » Junior Congregation for boys-9:30A at shul
- » Mommy & Me at Sutkin Home (BYOS)-9:45A
- » Chumash Shiur (for men & women)-3:55P
- » Mincha-4:55P
- » Shabbos Ends-6:15P
- » Avos U'Banim-7:15P (Suggested Min. Donation \$5)

## ■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Sunday Shacharis-8A
- » Supercharge Your Sundays-8:45A (for men)
- » Weekday Shacharis-6:40A
- » Mincha-5:05P / Maariv-9:00P (Sunday-Thursday)

## ■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

### MEN

- » Yitzchok ben Klara (Mechutan to Sandy Kadish)
- » Yoseif Yitzchok ben Yehudis Chaya (Brother in Law of Yoseif Meir Rich)
- » Mattisyahu Chaim ben Ettel (HaRav Mattisyahu Solomon)

### WOMEN

- » Brocha bas Sora (Mother of Hadassah Klug)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmell)
- » Chava Fruma bas Bryna (Mother in Law of Sandy Kadish)

## ■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **Taharas Hamishpacha Refresher Course for Married Women:** Congregation Toras Chaim is very pleased to offer to the women of our community a refresher course on Taharas Hamishpacha: The Laws of Family Purity. This course, taught by Mrs. Batya Epstein, is for married women only. Mrs. Epstein is one of the foremost teachers and speakers in Dallas, TX. She is engaging, exciting and entertaining. Taharas Hamishpacha is the foundation of the Jewish family and kedushas Yisroel, the sanctity of the Jewish people. This course is a must for all married Jewish women, as the laws of Taharas Hamishpacha are complicated and need constant review. **A word to the husbands.** This is as important to you as it is to your wife. Please encourage your wife to attend by making yourself available to babysit and take care of other family matters during the time the course is being taught. There will be a refresher course for the men in the not-to-distant future, as well.

- What: Refresher Course in Taharas Hamishpacha
- When: Sunday, November 23 and December 7, 10-11:45 AM
- Where: Congregation Toras Chaim, 7103 Mumford Ct., Dallas 75252
- Who: For married women only
- Cost: Free

- » **The Art of Digital Scrapbooking** with Tricia Sutkin. A Project of the CTC Sisterhood. CTC Sisterhood Kickoff Event, Sunday, November 23, 2014, Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5775. Join us for our first monthly Rosh Chodesh Schmooze.

- When: Every Rosh Chodesh, 8:00 PM
- Where: Tricia Sutkins home, 7335 Briarnoll
- What: This month Tricia will teach us the simple and time-saving savvy of learning to scrapbook instantly with your Smartphone or iPad! Bring your devices with the free app, Picframe, preloaded. Join us for fellowship even if your phones aren't smart :) More details to follow.

## ■ ACTUAL ANGEL FOOD: RABBI LABEL LAM

And the servant said to him, "Perhaps (ULAI) the woman will not wish to go after me to this land. Shall I return your son to the land from which you came?" (Breishis 24:5)

And he (Lavan) said, "Come, you who are blessed of HASHEM. Why should you stand outside, when I have cleared the house, and a place for the camels?" ...And he (Eliezer) said, "A servant of Avraham, am I!" (Breishis 24:31-34)

And I said to my master, 'Perhaps (ULAI- spelled Aylai) the

woman will not follow me?' (Breishis 24:39)

Perhaps the woman will not follow me: It [the word aylai (perhaps)] is written [without a "vav" and may be read] ulai (to me). Eliezer had a daughter, and he was looking for a pretext so that Avraham would tell him, to turn to him, to marry off his daughter to him (Yitzchok). Avraham said to him, "My son is blessed, and you are cursed [Eliezer was a descendant of Canaan who had been cursed by Noah], and an accursed one cannot unite with a blessed one." (Rashi)

Perhaps the woman will not follow me: It [the word ulai (perhaps)] is written [without a "vav" and may be read] aylai (to me). Eliezer had a daughter, and he was looking for a pretext so that Abraham would tell him, to turn to him, to marry off his daughter to him (Isaac). Abraham said to him, "My son is blessed, and you are cursed [Eliezer was a descendant of Canaan who had been cursed by Noah], and an accursed one cannot unite with a blessed one."

Let us piece together as simply as possible the tidbits of conversation recorded here. Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, whose name is not mentioned in the entire portion, is about to be sent on a sacred mission to find a wife for his master's son Yitzchok. Before he goes he is sworn to bring back the proper mate, because Yitzchok, for whatever reason cannot go there, to a foreign land. Eliezer asks a practical question, "And what if the woman will not wish to go after me to this land?" No problem so far.

Later when Eliezer is recounting the whole story of his mission to Lavan and the family of Rivka so that they will be willing to send her with confidence, he recalls the dialogue he had with Avraham and he repeats almost word for word the same exchange, "And what if the woman will not wish to go after me to this land?" Here's the first evidence of a problem. In the spelling of the word for "with me" -ULAI, it is spelled without a vuv rendering the pronunciation (according to the written appearance) AYLAI - to me. Our sages detect here that Eliezer had a conflict as it is explained in Rashi above. He had a daughter he felt would be a suitable match for Yitzchok, but Avraham quieted that thought with a blunt remark. "Blessed does bond with cursed!" It's not a good match.

Now a great question, not my own. The Sefas Emes asks why Eliezer betrays his internal conflict here, in the retelling part. Why is that not mentioned at the address of the original conversation with Avraham? Why is it mentioned here, in his repetition of the episode? He answers profoundly. Something happened in between. Eliezer was the living definition of loyalty. His entire identity was subsumed to Abraham. Since he was from a cursed origin, and he was to be a servant, he elected to serve the most blessed individual of his day, Avraham. That was his greatness. If he couldn't draw spiritual waters from the source himself, then he could assist those who had greatest access to the fountains of spirituality. He was blocked from that direct connection, which is a state of being cursed, and he correctly recognized it and nobly accepted it.

However, when Lavan welcomed him, "Come, you who are blessed of HASHEM!" - a giant test was aroused within him. Now it seems he is being recognized as being blessed. "Maybe something has changed! Maybe now my daughter is a valid match!" Just then he arrested himself and responded immediately, "A servant of Avraham, am I!" "That is the source of my even being identified as blessed." In his later recollection he reveals this fault line of his wavering loyalty that he eventually overcame. Maybe... in a hopeful way the girl won't come with! There was no test initially! It only woke up with Lavan's praise, referring to him as blessed of HASHEM!

This is the nature of the test of success. How many different versions of the same joke are there? The fellow in desperation pledges increasingly larger sums of charity if HASHEM will only help him find a parking place. When he finds a parking place, he looks up to Heaven and brazenly declares, "G-d I already found a parking spot by myself!" Eliezer, Boruch HASHEM, had the wisdom to appreciate the value of his parking place.

## ■ MAYIM ACHRONIM, CHOVA? RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

In Parshas Lech Lecha, we are introduced to an interesting personality named Bera, Melech S'dom, the King of S'dom. While he was certainly not known for his morality and impeccable character, nonetheless, his title, as well as the destruction of his home town using salt, described in Parshas Vayera, seemingly references a catalyst to a Mitzvah that many are wholly unfamiliar with: its homonym, 'Melach S'domis' or S'dom Salt.

The Mitzva I am referring to is Mayim Acharonim, the handwashing before Birchas HaMazon.

**Mitzva?! I** am sure that many readers are shaking their heads in disbelief, wondering how I can call this known chumra a Mitzva. This common, but slightly mistaken, belief was made evident to this author when a neighborhood housewife recently asked an interesting sheilah. Apparently, after hosting several friends and relatives for a Shabbos Seudah, she washed Mayim Acharonim along with the men, earning her much scorn and ridicule. The incredulous men commented that their washing Mayim Acharonim was only a chumra, and there obviously was no basis for a woman to do it as well. Our distraught domestic denizen wanted to know who acted correctly, and was astounded when I replied that technically speaking they both were.

**A Bit of Background** Mayim Acharonim has an interesting background, as it actually has two entirely different sources and rationales mandating it. The first, in Gemara Brachos, discussing the source for ritual handwashing, explains that one can not make a bracha with dirty hands, and cites the pasuk in Parshas Kedoshim “V’hiskadeeshtem, V’heyisem Kedoshim”, “And you shall sanctify yourselves, and be holy”. The Gemara clarifies that “And you shall sanctify yourselves” refers to washing the hands before the meal, Mayim Rishonim, and “and be holy” refers to washing the hands after the meal, Mayim Acharonim. In other words, by washing our hands before making a bracha (in this case before Bentching), we are properly sanctifying ourselves.

The second source, Gemara Chullin, on the other hand, refers to Mayim Acharonim as a “chova”, an outright obligation. The Gemara elucidates that there is a certain type of salt in the world, called ‘Melach S’domis’, (actually one of the additions needed to make the Ketores properly) that is so caustic, that if it gets into a person’s eyes, it can cause blindness r”l. Since one is supposed to have salt at his table at every meal, Chazal were worried that this specific type of salt may have found its way onto our tables and consequently could cause someone to become blind if he rubs his eyes after eating. Therefore, as a way to mitigate this salt’s potentially devastating effects, they mandated handwashing after eating, known colloquially as Mayim Acharonim.

In fact, the Gemara’s words are codified as halacha by the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, stating simply “Mayim Acharonim Chova”. The Rambam as well, writes that it is an obligation due to the potential Sakana involved. As an aside, the Ben Ish Chai posits that when eating, one should say this three word formula, and that way fulfill the halacha of speaking Divrei Torah at a meal.

**Chova?** Well, if the Gemara, and even the Shulchan Aruch, consider washing Mayim Acharonim an actual obligation, then why do many treat it as a mere stringency? Furthermore, there are those (many of Germanic origin) who claim that their custom is to specifically not wash Mayim Acharonim! Additionally, if it is a binding halacha, why don’t women generally observe this washing?

The answer lies in the commentary of the Ba’alei Tosafos to both aforementioned Gemaras. Tosafos comments that ‘nowadays, that ‘Melach S’domis’ is no longer found amongst us, we no longer are accustomed to washing Mayim Acharonim, and one may Bentch without first washing his hands’. In other words, Tosafos maintains that although washing Mayim Acharonim used to be an obligation, since the problematic S’dom Salt was no longer prevalent already in their days, one is no longer required to wash Mayim Acharonim. In fact, not washing for Mayim Acharonim is cited as the common minhag by several Ashkenazic Rishonim, as well as the Levush and the Rema.

An additional rationale for leniency is put forward by the famed Rav Yaakov Emden. He points out that ever since the advent of cutlery, most civilized people (hopefully) do not do the bulk of their eating with their hands, rather with a fork and spoon. Therefore, he explains, one who eats with silverware (or even plasticware) and did not actually touch his

food, has no need to wash Mayim Acharonim.

Interestingly, the Shulchan Aruch cites Tosafos’ lenient view as well, at the end of the very same siman where he rules that “Mayim Acharonim Chova”! Several authorities explain his seemingly contradictory intent that indeed nowadays one is no longer mandated to wash Mayim Acharonim. Yet, the Shulchan Aruch is telling us that nevertheless, we still should strive to do this important Mitzvah.

This view is cited by many halachic decisors including the Chayei Adam, Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Aruch Hashulchan, and Mishna Berura, who relate that although Mayim Acharonim may no longer be obligated by the strict letter of the law, nonetheless, one still should be very stringent with its adherence. Other authorities cite Kabbalistic reasons to be strict with its observance. The Vilna Gaon was known to be extremely makpid on this halacha, referring to it as both, a “Chova” and a “Mitzva”, even nowadays.

**Wash This Way!** Interestingly, authorities debate the proper way to perform washing Mayim Acharonim. One machlokes involves how much water to use. The basic halacha is that this handwashing has no set limit or minimum, rather even a small amount of water is sufficient. However, the Kabbalistic approach mandates only using a small amount of water. Conversely, the Vilna Gaon was makpid to use a full Reviis of water, as he considered Mayim Acharonim a full washing, akin to the Netillas Yadayim required before eating bread (Mayim Rishonim).

Another machlokes revolves around how much of the hand must be washed by Mayim Acharonim. Although the basic halacha only requires from the finger tips to the second knuckle, nevertheless, Kabbalistically speaking, one should wash the entire fingers. A third opinion, that of the Vilna Gaon, is that the whole hand should be washed, as he considered Mayim Acharonim a full Netillas Yadayim. The unifying thread of these disparate shittos is their mandating adherence to the strict performance of Mayim Acharonim.

**Women’s Role** Yet, so far, none of this explains why women commonly do not wash Mayim Acharonim. This “custom” seems to be an anomaly, as technically, women and men share the same obligation in this Mitzvah, and we do not find a halachic codifier making such a distinction.

Several contemporary authorities, including Rav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner and Rav Moshe Sternbuch offer a possible justification. They explain that although women and men were both equally obligated in this Mitzvah, nevertheless, since it is no longer mandated as a strict requirement due to the dearth of ‘Melach S’domis’, but rather as a proper “minhag”, it is entirely possible that women collectively never accepted this stringency upon themselves. Therefore, nowadays they are not required to wash Mayim Acharonim. Indeed, Rav Yonah Mertzbach (Rosh Yeshivas Kol Torah) was quoted as stating that the common minhag for women in Ashkenaz, even among ‘Chareidim LDvar Hashem’, was not to wash Mayim Acharonim.

However, many other contemporary halachic decisors, including Rav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Rav Ovadia Yosef, Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, the Rivevos Efraim, and the Shevet HaKehasi, all rule that regardless of the rationale, women still should be vigilant with washing Mayim Acharonim.

**To Wash or Not to Wash?** Back to our dilemma. This background is why I informed that harried housewife that technically speaking both she and her relatives were correct. She undeniably had what to rely upon not to wash Mayim Acharonim. Yet, she was definitely correct in making sure to do so anyway. As the Pele Yoetz explains, even if there no longer is a danger posed from salt that blinds our eyes, nevertheless, we still have an obligation to listen to the words of our Chachamim, and not blind ourselves to their wisdom.

# Good Shabbos

## ■ SHABBOS SCHEDULE

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» Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv–5:05P

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■ WEEKLY CLASSES (see website for more detail)

- » Morning Gemara Megillah for men (M-Fr, 6-6:35A)
- » Not Quite Daf HaYomi for men (Sunday-Thursday 8-9P)
- » Chumash for men & women (Shabbos one hr before mincha)
- » Hilchos Taaruvos for men (Sunday 6:30-8:00A)
- » Supercharge Your Sundays for men (Sunday after Shacharis for 45 mins. with R’ Noach Klug)
- » Marriage Made in Heaven for men (Monday 7:15-8:00P)
- » Marriage Made in Heaven for women (Tuesday 7:15-8:00P)

All classes at 7103 Mumford Ct., except where indicated