



CONGREGATION TORAS CHAIM

An intimate space...Grow at your pace.

December 2-3, 2016 ▪ 3 Kislev, 5777 ▪ Shabbos Toldos
Mincha: 5:00P / Candlelighting: 5:02P ▪ Shabbos Ends 6:10P

KIDDUSH this Shabbos is sponsored by the members of the Guarantee Kiddush Club: Wes & Tricia Sutkin, Yaakov & Susan Rich, Ben & Lauren Nise, Jeff & Suzanne Luftig, Chana Esther Day, Ari & Naomi Goldberg, Eli Goldberg and Ibriy & Amy Martin. **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, December 2nd

- » Mincha/Kabbalos Shabbos/Maariv – 5:00P
- » Candlelighting – 5:02P

Shabbos Day, December 3rd

- » Shacharis followed by Kiddush–8:30A
- » Mommy & Me with Tricia Sutkin–10:15A-End of Service
- » Chumash/Pirkei Avos Shiur (M&W)–3:50P
- » Mincha/Shalosh Seudos for men in shul – 4:50P
- » Shalosh Seudos for women & young children at the Rich home – 4:50P
- » Maariv/Shabbos Ends–6:10P
- » Avos U'Banim–7:15P

■ WEEKDAY SCHEDULE

- » Weekday Shacharis–6:40A
- » Mincha–5:05P
- » Gemara Shiur (Kesuvos)–8P
- » Maariv followed by 5-min halacha shiur–9P

■ REFUAH SHELAIMA

MEN

- » Aryeh Laibel ben Leah (Friend of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Yisroel Michoel ben Shulamis (Father of Chani Tkatch)
- » Zoosav ben Lipke (Father of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Yechiel Mordechai ben Devorah (Brother of Ken Jarmel)
- » Itai ben Shoshana (Son of Ehoud & Shoshana Wilson)

WOMEN

- » Chana Shulamis bas Sara Feiga (Mother of Tricia Sutkin)
- » Chaya Gittel bas Shandel (Friend of Suzanne Luftig)
- » Leah Esther bas Yenta Leah (Lori Jarmel)
- » Yenta Leah bas Shayna (Mother of Lori Jarmel)

■ WHAT'S NU AT CTC

- » **Chanukah Melava Malka:** Motzei Shabbos, December 24, First night of Chanukah, CTC will host a Melava Malka including: Catered Chinese food and open bar with specialty drinks, Rabbi Eliyahu Heller as guest speaker, and Dovid Rosenfield playing the violin. Cost: Member Price \$20/person, \$36/couple. Non-Member Price \$36/person, \$50/couple.

■ THE MAIN THING: RABBI LABEL LAM

And Yitzchok loved Eisav because he trapped him with his mouth, but Rivka loves Yakov. (Breishis 25:28) with his mouth: As the Targum renders: with Yitzchok's mouth. The Midrashic interpretation is: with Eisav's mouth, for he would entrap him and deceive him with his words. – Rashi

How did Eisav trap his father Yitzchok? One approach, "his" implies Yitzchok's mouth. Eisav brought him delicious meat from the animals he trapped. In a second way the antecedent to the pronoun "his" is in reference to Eisav's mouth. He tricked, trapped and deceived his father into thinking he was sincerely interested in learning, like his brother Yaakov by asking his father intriguing questions.

The Midrash famously spells out Eisav's style of inquiry, "how do I tithe salt or straw?" He happens to have picked two items that do not require tithing. It may seem to demonstrate an extra zeal to go beyond the letter of the law.

The Shem M'Shmuel has a completely different take on what we learn about Eisav from the Sage's description of Eisav's style of questioning. He wonders why Eisav asks about such meaningless things. He does not seek out council on how to write a Mezuza or Shecht an animal. These would be practical Mitzvah questions. Rather, what does Eisav choose to focus on? Matters of lesser importance!

Even when trying to induce his father into thinking he is hyper concerned about Torah and Mitzvos, he betrays his character in these words. He is preoccupied with the superficial and the secondary. The stuff of primary value is lost on him like, "The primary wisdom is fear of HASHEM!"

It would be too easy to bash Eisav at this point. He's an easy target for us but his problem is symptomatic and emblematic of a more common and ubiquitous dilemma.

When my wife and I were engaged we went to visit on Shabbos, a great person, the Tzadik of Monsey, Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl. to receive his blessing. Approaching his house we noticed him exiting and making his way to Yeshiva. We crossed the street and headed him off at the pass.

When we greeted him and told him our special news, he lit up with enormous and genuine joy, and as he exulted, and repeated a phrase, a peculiar statement. I later learned from close family this was his signature Brocho, "The Simcha should be with Simcha! Ah! Ah! Ah! The Simcha should be with Simcha!" He repeated and walked on excitedly.

We stood in stunned silence having experienced the personality of a real Tzadik. Afterwards, though, we were left with the riddle of that Blessing, "The Simcha should be with Simcha!" What did that mean? As we walked and talked it became clear to the point that that phrase became our banner, our theme for the entire wedding process and beyond.

We realized that there is the noun, "the Simcha", which includes a whole host of other nouns, such as the menu, the venue, the flowers, the gowns, the booze, the band etc. They can easily be mistaken for overwhelm and eclipse the essential "Simcha".

That's what can happen when matters of secondary importance - the "TOFEL" become the primary focus- the "IKAR". Eisav's syndrome manifests itself in an ultra-concern for the red-red color of the soup. He lives a life distracted by the packaging, the tinsel of this world. Like a child reveling over the wrapping paper and ignoring the present it delivers, Eisav believes in this world and this world alone. He rejects the most important thing, the ultimate payload of existence, an eternal relationship with HASHEM in the "World to Come".

Yaakov appreciates that the more elaborate and grand the packaging, the greater the nature of the gift within. Maybe Steven Covey said it best when he said, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing!"

■ 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 hometown 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 Gemaros. Tosafos comments that 'nowadays, when '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 using only 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, 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 Vosner 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 Merzbach (pronounced Mertzbach; Founder and 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 Sonnenfeld, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, Rav Ovadia Yosef, Rav Mordechai Elyahu, 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.

Postscript: Although the Vilna Gaon is the machmir shitta in the three separate Mayim Acharonim related machlokasim cited above, there is one regarding Mayim Acharonim where he is quoted as being the lenient opinion: talking between Mayim Acharonim and Bentching. This issue of talking before Bentching is a large topic in its own right. The Gemara Brachos (42a) writes that one may not be mafsik (make a separation) between the washing and the Birkas Hamazon. There is a machlokes Rishonim how to understand the Gemara. Rashi (ad loc.), as well as the Rambam (Hilchos Brachos Ch. 6, 20) understand that this means that one may not eat [there is a whole separate machlokes Rishonim whether or not this includes drinking] and this is how the Tur and Shulchan Aruch cite the halacha as well (Orach Chaim 179, 1). According to the Kesef Mishna (on Rambam ad loc.) - this understanding excludes talking - meaning the only problematic hefsek is eating and / or drinking; ergo talking would be permitted.

Yet, the Rosh (in Brachos ad loc.) understands the Gemara's rule as meaning that once one performs Mayim Acharonim, it is as if he answered the zimun (i.e. akin to have started Bentching). If so, then talking would be proscribed as well. Other Rishonim seem to accept the Rosh as well.

What is interesting is that in his Beis Yosef commentary (Orach Chaim 179 s.v. yesh lidakdek), the Kesef Mishna retracted his opinion, ruling akin to the Rosh - that even speaking in between Mayim Acharonim and Bentching is prohibited.

On that, the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 181, 1) takes him to task for his retraction, and seemingly ruling like the Kesef Mishna that talking between Mayim Acharonim and Bentching is permitted. Yet, there is some confusion as to whether or not this was his actual maskana lemaaseh. In fact, that is how the Baer Heitiv (Orach Chaim 179, 1) cites the Magen Avraham - as ruling leniently; yet, the Mishna Berura (Shaar Hatziyun 179, 1) argues, maintaining that the Magen Avraham's conclusion was truly like the Beis Yosef, to be machmir - like the Rosh, and not like what he wrote in Kesef Mishna like the Rambam.

Most poskim in fact rule this way, that is therefore assur to talk between Mayim Acharonim and Bentching, including the Bach (Orach Chaim 181, 4), Elya Rabba (ad loc. 9), Chayei Adam (vol. 1, 44, 1), Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Parshas Shelach 15), Mishna Berura (179, 1 and 181, 24), and Kaf Hachaim (Orach Chaim 179, 1 and 181, 20). In fact, the Mishna Berura implies (Shaar Hatziyun 179, 7) that talking might be considered a bigger problem than eating - as if one eats - we seem to follow the synthesis opinion of the Pri Megadim (Orach Chaim 179, Eshel Avraham 1) that it cancelled out the first Mayim Acharonim - but we can simply wash again before Bentching; whereas since it is not so clear cut that talking is a hefsek, it is unclear whether one is allowed to wash again to Bentch - he might now not be allowed to Bentch! [Although it is important to note that this is not the normative halacha.] The Mishna Berura also seems to hold that talking after Mayim Acharonim is more strict than talking after Mayim Rishonim (for Hamotzie).

An additional factor is that the Arizal (Shaar Hamitzvos, Parshas Eikev) was machmir with this and drove the point home with an interesting tale about one who had unexplained shoulder pain. The Arizal instructed him not to talk between Mayim Acharonim and Bentching and the pain subsequently went away. He explained that "Netilla Teikef L'Bracha" (washing immediately prior to Bentching), is connected to Katef and therefore one should be stringent. The Chida (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim 181, 3), quoting his ancestor, Rav Avraham Azulai, citing the Yeushalmi) avers that regarding one who is makpid on reciting Bentching immediately after Mayim Acharonim, the Satan will not have the ability to level accusations against him during that meal.

A middle-ground opinion is found in the Shulchan Aruch HaRav (Orach Chaim 181, 6), who writes that a few necessary words are permitted, as 'Hefsek' is only referring to only Divrei Torah or a conversation.

So where does the Gr"a fit in? In Biur HaGr"a (Orach Chaim 179, 2) he cites the whole background to the machlokes, citing the many Rishonim and the shakla v'tarya. Yet, he concludes simply that in Chullin (Ch. 6, 2 s.v. d'amar) the Rosh seems to have been chozer from his stringent position and concludes that "v'chein daas kol haposkim". In other words, the Vilna Gaon held that since there is a seeming contradiction in the Rosh, and all of the machmir opinions are based on his shitta, one need not be machmir with the no talking before Bentching rule.

However, and although the Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 181, 1) seems to rule this way and declares that talking is not the hefsek that the Rishonim were debating, he nevertheless concludes (Orach Chaim 181, 9) that "lechatchilla aino kedai lehafsik" as "Teikif L'Netilla Bracha" and therefore "mikol makom aino kedai laasos kein", it is not worthwhile to do so.

Good Shabbos

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■ CLASSES

» Hilchos Niddah for men (Sunday 7-8A)

» Before Shacharis Gemara Yevamos for men (M-Fr, 6-6:40A)

» NQ Daf HaYomi Kesuvos for men (Sunday-Thursday following Maariv)

» Pirkei Avos/Chumash for men & women (Shabbos 60 mins before mincha)

» Marriage Chaburah for women (Tuesday 7:15-8:00P)

» In-Depth Hilchos Shabbos for women (TBD)