



Overview

Halacha Highlight

Siman 180 Seif 4:

Although it is permitted to destroy crumbs that contain less than the volume of an olive it is harmful to do so since it leads to poverty.

- ❖ Trampling crumbs is the issue since it is degrading but it is permitted to throw them into water. Some are stringent when the volume of all the crumbs equals the volume of an olive. (M.B. 10)

Siman 180 Seif 5:

The custom is to cover the knife during birkas hamazon but on Shabbos and Yom Tov the custom is not to cover the knife.

- ❖ Bais Yosef gives two explanations. Iron shortens a person's life and it is incongruent for such an object to be on the table that is comparable to the altar that extends a person's life. The second explanation is that it was a reaction to an incident in which a person became so distraught about the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash that he thrust the knife into his stomach. (M.B. 11)

Siman 181 Seif 1:

Mayim acharonim is obligatory.

- ❖ One's hands are dirty and thus invalid for the recitation of a beracha. Even if one's hands are not dirty he must wash out of concern for Sedom salt that could cause blindness. Although this type of salt is not common we are concerned for another salt that may share the same character. (M.B. 1)
- ❖ If one has a limited supply of water he should use less for mayim rishonim so that he will have water for mayim acharonim. If one only has the quantity necessary for mayim rishonim he should use it for that purpose. According to some authorities one should not eat unless he knows that he has water for mayim acharonim. However, the obligation is not greater than the obligation for mayim rishonim and one need not travel more than 4 mil ahead or one mil backwards to obtain water. If one recited birkas hamazon without washing he should wash when he obtains water out of concern for Sedom salt. (M.B. 2)

Siman 181 Seif 2:

Mayim acharonim should not be done over the ground; rather it should be poured into a vessel since ruach ra'ah rests on the water. If one does not have a vessel he should wash over small pieces of wood or something similar.

- ❖ One should not wash by immersing his hands in water. (M.B. 3)
- ❖ The ruach ra'ah is potentially dangerous. It is acceptable to wash under the table since generally people do not walk there even though sometimes the table is moved since the water should be dried up at that point. (M.B. 4)
- ❖ For example, small stones or thorns into which the water is absorbed rather than pools together. Some allow pouring the water over the floor but one should be stringent about this matter. (M.B. 6)

Covering knives for birkas hamazon

Shulchan Aruch Siman 180 Seif 5
נוהגים לכסות הסכין בשעת ברכת המזון

The custom is to cover the knife during birkas hamazon

The Mishnah in Midos (36) teaches that the stones that were used in the construction of the altar were taken from the virgin soil in the valley of Beis Kerem. The stones were removed from the ground whole and if they were touched by iron the stone becomes invalid for use in the altar. The reason is that iron was created to shorten the life of man while the altar was created to lengthen the life of man and it is not right that the material designed to shorten man's life should come in contact with that which lengthens a person's life.

Beis Yosef (בית יוסף ארי"ח סי' קי"ב ד"ה כתב הרוקח) in the name of Rokeach writes that while reciting birkas hamazon one must cover the knives that were on the table. The Torah warns against iron touching the stones of the altar and since in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash the table upon which we eat is comparable to the altar, it is inappropriate for a knife to be on the table. Magen Avrohom (מג"א שם סק"ד) notes that if the rationale is based on the comparison between the altar and the table the restriction will only apply to knives that are made from iron. Orchos Chaim (ארחות חיים ה' ברהמ"ז אות ח') in the name of Shibolei Haleket cites another reason to remove or cover the knives for birkas hamazon. It happened once that someone was reciting birkas hamazon and when he reached the beracha of בונה ירושלים he became so distraught that he took a knife from the table and thrust it into his stomach. This incident became the reason for the start of this custom.

Beis Yosef (ב"י שם) writes that the custom on Shabbos and Yom Tov is that the knives are not covered. Although based on the reason mentioned by Orchos Chaim there is no reason to distinguish between Shabbos and Yom Tov on the one hand and the rest of the week on the other hand, nevertheless, the customs of the Jewish People are considered law and must be followed. Mishnah Berurah (מ"ב שם ס"ק י"ב) also writes that the custom is that knives are not covered while reciting birkas hamazon on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

invited to come back for a meal during the week he happily agreed. Again he had a great time asking many questions to which he received eye-opening answers.

When he noticed the host covering the knife before bentching he asked why this was done. "I have seen several reasons why we do this. Perhaps the most inspiring reason is brought in the Rokeach and the Tashbatz. They explain that the knife alludes to the sword of the angel of death. We remove or at least cover any knives on the table before reciting these blessings since they impart life and nullify the sword of the angel of death. The Mateh Yehudah adds that this reminds us of the vast power of birchas hamazon right before it is recited."

מטה יהודה, סי' קי"ב

But the guest asked another important question. "But when I was at your home on Shabbos you left the knife uncovered. Why is that?"

"The Chessed L'Avraham explains that Shabbos is compared to the next world when death will be abolished. (מובא בברכת יוסף, סי' קי"ב, ס"ק ד'). Because Shabbos is such a special time—and a seudas mitzvah—we do not require this reminder like we do during the week."

מטה יהודה, שם

Stories to Share

Covering the Knife

שי"ע סי' קי"ב, ה': "נוהגין לכסות הסכין בשעת ברהמ"ז..."

One uninitiated Jew had his first Shabbos meal at a rabbi's home. While there he noticed every detail and questioned much of the many halachos he saw in action. This man was so inspired that when he was