

## **To Bentsch or Not to Bentsch (Between Milk & Meat)**

*Rabbi Yehuda Spitz*

Several recent articles touched upon the topic of dairy food items and what needs to be done before one is permitted to partake in a meat meal [1]. The Shulchan Aruch mandates that one who has partaken of milk products must do a personal three step process [2]: kinuach - palate cleansing by eating a hard food item (ex. cracker), rechitza - hand washing [3], and hadacha - rinsing out of the mouth, as well as removing any remnants and leftovers of the dairy meal, all before being able to have a meat meal.

Yet, that is all that the Shulchan Aruch necessitates. If so, why do many people also wait a half hour before eating anything meaty? And, why are many people particular to also recite Birkas HaMazon between a dairy and a meat meal? Is the Shulchan Aruch's ruling not good enough for them?

Zohar Zehirus

The answer to the first question actually predates the Shulchan Aruch by quite a bit and lies in a cryptic comment found in the Zohar. The Zohar writes [4] that everyone should wait between dairy and meat meals "one meal or one hour". Although there are many interpretations offered for this enigmatic remark [5], the most common one is that "one hour" is referring to mandating a waiting period of one hour even after eating dairy [6]. Several authorities, including the Pri Chadash, actually rule like this[7], and the Shulchan Aruch himself, in his Beis Yosef

commentary [8], implied this way as well. Yet, when it came down to the practical ruling, the Shulchan Aruch did not mandate following the Zohar's view.

That is why according to the basic halacha no actual waiting period is required after partaking of dairy foods. Nevertheless, there are those who try to take the Zohar's opinion into account and at least "meet him halfway", as we find in several places in the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature that the majority of an hour is akin to an hour[9]. Therefore, as an added stringency, a custom has developed among several groups to wait a half-hour between a dairy meal and a meat one.

#### Bentching Brouhaha

The matter of whether Birkas HaMazon is also required after a dairy meal is addressed by the Magen Avraham in the Laws of Shavuos [10]. Since it is customary on the holiday of Shavuos to eat milchigs aside from the traditional meat seudah [11], a common question is whether one may have them as part of the same meal, by merely doing the basic rinsing, washing and palate cleansing mandated by the Shulchan Aruch, or whether one must have the milk dishes and meat dishes each as part of a separate seudah.

The Magen Avraham rules that unless one ate hard cheese, which would require a full 6 hour wait [12], one need not have the dairy dishes and following meat dishes as separate meals. Thus, no bentching is required. Many authorities follow the

Magen Avraham's ruling, and do not require Birkas HaMazon between a dairy and a meat meal [13].

However, many other decisors, including the Knesses HaGedolah and Shla"h, disagree and mandate Bentching. The Ba'er Mayim Chaim [14] even maintains that the Magen Avraham's opinion must have been a printing mistake and that certainly one may not eat milk and meat as part of the same meal. To add another wrinkle, anyone who follows the Zohar's view of waiting even after dairy would undoubtedly require Birkas HaMazon as well, as he maintains a higher degree of separation. Therefore, many later and contemporary authorities rule that one should bentsch after milchigs if at all possible, even though it may not be required by the letter of the Law [15].

Still, others, ardently defend the Magen Avraham's position, and refer to this bentsching as a "chumra yeseira" [16]. Additionally, if it were truly a printing mistake, the Magen Avraham's son-in-law, Rav Moshe Yekusiel Kaufman-Cohen, would have corrected it in his comprehensive sefer onhalacha and minhag, Chukey Chaim. Yet, instead he rules exactly as his father-in-law did [17]. This is also the final ruling of the Aruch Hashulchan and Mishna Berura, that one is not required to make two separate meals out of his different dishes, unless one ate hard cheese [18].

In the final analysis, all one needs to do after partaking of a dairy item is the rinsing, washing and palate cleansing prescribed in halacha. One is not required to wait an extra hour, nor half-hour, nor bentch before a meat meal. Nevertheless, many have the custom do some or all of the enumerated, to go "above and beyond" the letter of the Law to properly ensure that their meat and milk stay distinctly separate, and "ne'er the twain shall meet". But it is equally important that one should never lose sight of what is actual codified halacha and what is truly a chumra [19].

[1] Including "Hard Cheese Complexities", "The Halachic Challenges of the Cheesecake", "The Halachic Power of a Diyuk", and "Ma'aseh Avos = Halacha L'Ma'aseh".

[2] Y"D 89, 2 & 4.

[3] Although most civilized people generally use utensils such as forks and knives to eat and their hands remain clean, and therefore may not actually require handwashing [Pri Chadash (Y"D 89, 20), Shulchan Gavoaah (ad loc. 8), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. end 13), Rashash (Chullin 103), Mor U'Ketziah (end 181), Aruch Hashulchan (Y"D 89, 8)], nevertheless, many authorities feel that since handwashing involves minimal effort, one should still do so, even after eating dairy items with proper utensils (cheesecake, anyone?) [Including the Pri Megadim (Y"D 89 S.D. 20), Pischei Teshuva (ad loc. 4), Chida (Shiyurei Bracha ad loc 15), Atzei

Ha'Olah (Hilchos BB"C 3, 12 & Chukei Chaim 9), Ben Ish Chai (Year 2, Parshas Shlach 14), and Kaf HaChaim (Y"D 89, 34). See also Chaguras Shmuel (ad loc. 25) who maintains that even when one eats with a fork it is inevitable that some residue will remain on his hands]. See recent article titled: " The Halachic Power of a Diyuk".

[4] Zohar (Parshas Mishpatim pg. 125, 1) cited in Biur HaGr"a (Y"D 89, 11).

[5] See Chemdas HaYamim (Shabbos Ch. 8, Sod Seudas Shabbos, end s.v. umah), Levush (O.C. 173, 1), Pri Toar (Y"D 89, 6), Kreisi U'Pleisi (Y"D 89, 3), and Chaguras Shmuel (Y"D 89, 18), who each have a completely different approach to understanding the Zohar's intent.

[6] See Beis Yosef (O.C. 173, s.v. V'yesh machmirin), Shach (Y"D 89, 15), Pri Chadash (Y"D 89, 6), Gr"a (ibid.), Chida (Shiyurei Bracha Y"D 89, 6, s.v. v'ani and Kikar L'Aden 5, Likutim, 8), and Ikrei HaDa"t (Ikrei Dinim Y"D 10, 5).

[7] Including the Pri Chadash (ibid.), Pri Toar (ibid.), Shulchan HaTahor (173, 2), Shu"t Kol Gadol (64). See also Shiyurei Bracha (ibid. 13) and Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos (vol. 2, 390) who cite waiting an hour as a proper minhag. Yet, several authorities, including the Pri Chadash, Pri Toar, Ya'avetz (Mor U'Ketzieh end 173)

and Aruch Hashulchan (Y"D 89, 11) qualify this ruling, that the one hour waiting period does not apply before eating fowl.

[8] Beis Yosef (O.C. 173, s.v. V'yesh machmirin).

[9] See Matteh Reuven (186), Shu"t Maharshag (vol. 1, Y"D 13, s.v. amnam), Shu"t Divrei Chachamim (Y"D 1, 3 - quoting Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky), Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos (Vol. 2, 390), Shu"t Shraga HaMeir (vol. 7, 105, 2), Netei Gavriel (Shavuos Ch. 31, 5), Shu"t Maadanei Melachim (85, 3), Shu"t Mishneh Halachos (vol. 10, 135), Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 2, Ch. 12, footnote 49), Kovetz M'Beis Levi (on Y"D pg. 35, 15), and sefer Minhag Yisrael Torah (O.C. vol. 3, 494, 8 s.v. v'hinei).

[10] Magen Avraham (O.C. 494, 6).

[11] See recent article titled: "The Halachic Challenges of the Cheesecake".

[12] See recent article titled: "Hard Cheese Complexities".

[13] Including Levush (ad loc.), Matteh Yonason (ad loc.), and Machatzis Hashekel (O.C. 494, 6). See also Shu"t Rivash (vol. 1, 384, cited in Shaarei Teshuva O.C. 206, end 1).

[14] Shiyurei Knesses HaGedolah (O.C. 493, 3, cited in Darchei Teshuva Y"D 89, 14), Shla"h (Shavuos, Ner Mitzvah, 8), Ba'er Mayim Chayim (Parshas Vayera Ch. 18, 8, cited in Pischei Teshuva vol. 3, 287, 1). Other authorities who rule this way include the Minchas Yaakov (76, 5), Pri Chadash (Y"D 89, 6), Pri Megadim (ad loc. S.D. 6 & 15), Elyah Rabbah (O.C. 173, 8 & Elyah Zuta O.C. 494, 6), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (46, 11) and the Kaf Hachaim (Falag'i 24, 25).

[15] See Shu"t Maharshag (ibid.), Shu"t VaYa'an David (vol. 1, Y"D 115), Shu"t Beis Yisrael (O.C. 97), Shu"t Maharsham (vol. 3, end 126 s.v. umah), Shu"t Igros Moshe (O.C. vol. 1, 160), Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos (ibid.), Shu"t az Nidberu (vol. 4, 42), and Netei Gavriel (Shavuos Ch. 31, 1).

[16] Including Matteh Reuven (187), Shu"t Melamed L'Hoyeel (vol. 2, 23), Shu"t Keren L'David (140), Shu"t Mishnas Sachir (vol. 1, 29) and Shu"t Yad Yitzchak (vol. 3, 189).

[17] Chukei Chaim (Os Shin, 2, Dinei Chag HaShavuot, pg. 112a) " d'eino tzarich lehafsik b'Birkas HaMazon im aino ochel gevina kasheh, v'yizaher likach mapah acheres".

[18] Aruch Hashulchan (Y"D 89, 9), Mishna Berura (494, 15). The chumra to bentch after milchigs is also noticeably absent from the Chochmas Adam, who only cites the lenient ikar din. Other contemporary authorities who are lenient include the She'arim Metzuyanim B'Halacha (vol. 1, 46, 6), Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlit"a (cited in Kuntress Ma'aneh Ra"Ch pg. 54, 446 - 447), and the Badei Hashulchan (Y"D 89, 75).

[19] See Shu"t Yabia Omer (vol. 6, Y"D 7, 4 & 5) and Shu"t Yechaveh Daas (vol. 3, 58).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda.

