



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem



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This Issue Contains:

1. A Pointed Question
2. 'Two Yuds' - a Second Look
3. Answer to Yiddle Riddle

Binyomin S Altman
< bsalt1@penfold.cc.monash.edu.au > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

There is a custom to remove a knife from the table before Birkat Hamazon (Blessing after Meals). Does this include plastic knives?

Dear Binyomin,

There are two main reasons for removing the knife prior to *Birkat Hamazon*. One is based on the following incident: A person was once reciting *Birkat Hamazon* when he came to the third blessing, the blessing in which we ask Hashem to rebuild Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. He became so distraught at the thought of the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile, he picked up the knife and stabbed himself.

The custom to remove the knife was patterned after this incident. Since it occurred during the week, the custom applies only during the week, but not on Shabbat. In the same vein (no pun intended), the custom wouldn't apply to plastic knives, since the incident didn't involve a plastic knife, and since plastic knives aren't 'lethal' in the classic sense.

Another reason for removing the knife: A table is compared to the Altar in the Holy Temple. Just as it is forbidden to use any iron utensil when hewing the stones for the Altar, so too, we remove any metal knives prior to *Birkat Hamazon*.

I asked Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch, *shlita*, who concurred that you need not remove plastic knives before *Birkat Hamazon*.

Sources:

- *Shulchan Aruch* 180:5
- *Aruch Hashulchan* 180:5
- *Rokeach* 332

Shelly Zeitlin < Zeitlins@aol.com > wrote:

You wrote recently about the reason for using two Yuds as a substitute for writing the Name of Hashem. I've heard (no doubt from Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss of Staten Island) the following reason: Yud is the only purely 'spiritual' letter, i.e., it is written entirely above the line. Two 'Yuds' (Jews) together, side by side -- both spiritually engaged, experience the presence of Hashem. [This idea is expressed in the verse "Love your neighbor as yourself, I am Hashem (Leviticus 19:18)."] When there is love and respect between two people, Hashem's presence can be felt. — T.R.]

Binyamin Yaakov Schwartz < avik@jer1.co.il > wrote:

I heard not long ago a different reason from my father in Boca Raton, Florida. He told me that the *siddurim* used to abbreviate Hashem's Name by putting two yuds together, with a small letter 'vav' lying horizontally on top. The reason was that the numerical value of two yuds plus one vav equals 26, which is the same as the numerical value of the Name of Hashem.

Sources:

See *Melamed Hatalmidim L'Rabeinu Yaakov Antoly*, p.118

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

Which *mitzvah* is done on Wednesday or Thursday only?
(Thanks to Joel Eisenman for the question < Joel@telaviv.ddddd.com >)

Answer: *Eruv Tavshilin*. On Yom Tov (festival) it is permitted to cook and prepare food; but only food cooked in honor of Yom Tov itself. Preparing for the weekday is forbidden. What happens when Yom Tov falls on Friday? How are you able to prepare for Shabbat?

The answer: *Eruv Tavshilin*. The Sages enacted *Eruv Tavshilin* as a way of beginning Shabbat preparations **Thursday**, thus allowing you to **continue** preparing on Yom Tov itself. Essentially, *Eruv Tavshilin* means setting aside two food items -- one baked and one boiled -- in preparation for Shabbat. When a two-day Yom Tov falls on Thursday and Friday, the *Eruv Tavshilin* is set aside on Wednesday.

Source:

- *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 527:1,2

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