



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem



This Issue Contains:

1. Extinguish and Distinguish
2. Another Workout
3. Yiddle Riddle

Brian Connack from Jerusalem wrote:

I would like to ask the rabbi a question. I have noticed that when people put out their havdalah candles after Shabbat, rather than blowing the candle out they put it out in the spilled wine. I was also at a birthday party recently and the hostess insisted that the birthday boy not blow out the candles, rather she put them out by hand. I would like to know if there is any basis to this custom and if there is, what is the difference between blowing out a candle and extinguishing it by hand.

Dear Brian,

There are actually three customs here:

- **Extinguishing** the havdalah candle after havdalah
- Extinguishing it in **wine**
- Not **blowing** out candles in general

Before light bulbs were invented, they used candles! Extinguishing the havdalah candle immediately after havdalah demonstrated that it was lit solely for a mitzvah, and not as a regular source of light.

"Wine spilling like water," says the Talmud, "is a sign of blessing." In order to start the week off right, we fill the cup of havdalah so that a little spills out. And not only do we spill wine, but we spill it 'like water.' That is, we use it lavishly -- to put out a flame; something you would never think of doing with wine.

As for not blowing out candles in general, the following reason has been said in the name of Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky (the 'Steipler'), *zatza*:

There's an angel whose name is the same as the sound produced when you blow out with force. According to Kabbalistic tradition, it's improper to make use of the names of holy angels. Many people, therefore, extinguish candles by hand in order not to pronounce the name of this angel.

Another explanation: The Torah depicts man's soul as being a 'breath' from Hashem. The soul is also compared to a flame. Using your breath to blow out a candle is an ironic gesture, using one 'soul' to extinguish another.

I know a rabbi who puts out candles by saying the word 'Purim,' forcefully emphasizing the letter 'P'. And a friend of mine saw his Kung Fu instructor put out a candle by punching it!

Sources:

- Rama, Orach Chaim 296:1*
- Shulchan Aruch HaRav 296:5*
- Kaf Hachaim, Yoreh De'ah chapter 116 halacha 115*
- Responsa Rivevot Ephraim IV 45:35, that one shouldn't blow out a flame*

Follow-up:

In Ask The Rabbi #102, we answered Yoel's question about whether he is obligated to exercise upon the insistence of his parents.

Gili Houpt, Yeshiva University
<houpt@yu1.yu.edu> wrote:

...I just wanted to say that it's very refreshing to hear a rabbi giving such advice. I'm a Yeshiva U. student who's been involved with kiruv (Jewish education). Sometimes I see ba'alei t'shuva who feel they must reject everything that won't directly enhance their quest for spiritual perfection. Also — you might suggest to Yoel that he try learning Torah while on the treadmill. I've found this a very useful way to 'kill two birds with one stone.'

Regarding our "flabby" comments, Yonasan R. of Jerusalem commented:

"Weren't you a bit too tough on that poor guy?"

Thanks, Gili and Yonasan and everyone else who commented.

Yiddle Riddle:

Reuven Davis <davisr@cs.man.ac.uk> sent in the following riddle, which he heard from Avigdor Frankenhauser

Which verse do we say every day in the prayers, that starts and ends with the same three words in the same order!"

(Answer next week)

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to ohr@jer1.co.il. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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