

### Mayim Megulim – Uncovered Water

1. The Chachamim prohibited a number of practices due to the perceived danger they entailed. One example is the prohibition of drinking water left uncovered, known as "Mayim Megulim," as a snake may have drunk from the water and replaced it with venom.<sup>1</sup>
2. Many Rishonim write that nowadays, snakes are not so common, so these Halachot do not apply.<sup>2</sup> Others argue that the Halachot should apply even nowadays.<sup>3</sup> Some claim that in various locations, including Morocco and Eretz Yisrael, it is somewhat common for snakes to hang around the drinking water.<sup>4</sup>
3. Beverages left in refrigerators and water in an urn are not subject to gilui<sup>5</sup>
4. Some poskim assume that even if you are strict to avoid drinking water that was left uncovered, you don't need to avoid using that water for Netilat Yadayim.<sup>6</sup>
5. One should not use wine that was left uncovered for Kiddush. This is true even nowadays where snakes aren't commonly found.<sup>7</sup> The reason is that it is not honorable to use wine that is left uncovered because it will smell.<sup>8</sup> The same applies to Havdala.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gemara Nidda 17a, Mishna Terumot 8:4. see also Chullin 49b and Avoda Zara 30A-B for some of the discussion about which beverage it applies to and the external factors that should be taken into account. See further on the Halachipedia.com page on [Mayim Megulim](#). In general, the Rambam Hilchot Rotzeach U'Shemirat Hanefesh 11:5 writes that one who violates the health injunctions of the Chachamim flagrantly and says that he's willing to endanger himself and doesn't care what other people say is punishable by Makkat Mardut.

<sup>2</sup> Tosafot Avodah Zarah 35a ("Chada Katani"). The Rambam (Hilchot Rotzeach 11:5-16), Rashba (Torat HaBayit Bayit 3 Shaar 5), and Tur (Yoreh Deah 116:1) all write comprehensive lists of the rules of Gilui and conclude with this point. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 116:1), on the other hand, doesn't even write the details and just says that it's no longer applicable. Tosafot explain that although enactments of Chazal are generally unequivocal (Lo Pelug Rabbanan), they only prohibited water left uncovered in areas where snakes are common. In areas where snakes are uncommon, the prohibition never applied in the first place. see also Taz, Biur HaGra, Pri Chadash, Mateh Yehonatan, Kaf HaChaim ad loc. and Shu"t Minchat Asher 3:22

<sup>3</sup> Maaseh Rav 95, Pitchei Teshuvah (Yoreh Deah 116:1), Kaf Hachaim (Yoreh Deah 116:6). In the older editions, the Maaseh Rav adds that he said that there are other hidden reasons behind gilui in addition to the danger of snakes. In the Tosefet Maaseh Rav it quotes the Pe'at HaShulchan who details how the GRA said he keeps it because mayim megulim cause one to get distracted during Tefillah, and how the

GRA went to incredible lengths to keep it. One time, in a storm, when his shamash lied and said that the water he brought was not meguleh, the GRA drank it and then remanded him after praying, as it clearly caused him to get distracted during his prayer. Orchos Rabbeinu 1: pg. 206:17 says the Steipler was very careful with this.

<sup>4</sup> The Pri Chadash (Yoreh Deah 116:1) argues that snakes are common in the west (Morocco), and they're not too uncommon in Yerushalayim and its surroundings. He recommends every Yarei Shamayim be strict. In fact, he says, one year a whole family in Egypt got sick because of mayim megulim. Therefore, the Pri Chadash reintroduces the details of mayim megulim into the Shulchan Aruch. The Chida (Shiyurei Beracha Yoreh Deah 116:3) testifies that the minhag is to be machmir in Eretz Yisrael like the Pri Chadash.

<sup>5</sup> [Shu"t Avnei Derech 5:6](#). Note the well-written introductory survey of the issue.

<sup>6</sup> Mishna Berura 160:23, and Kaf Hachaim OC 160:2 and YD 116:8 (although he adds that if possible one should be careful). See however Kaf Hachaim Palachi 8:11 who is strict about this.

<sup>7</sup> Shulchan Aruch OC 272:1.

<sup>8</sup> Mishna Berura 272:3 cites the pasuk הקריבוהו גא לפחתך. He writes that if it was only left uncovered for a short time it is permitted as long as it doesn't smell bad.

<sup>9</sup> Yalkut Yosef 272:1, Kaf Hachaim 272:8