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**Shiur#0**7**: *Netilat Yadayim* (2)**

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**Introduction**

Last week, we introduced the *mitzva* of *netilat yadayim*, the ritual washing of one’s hands before eating bread. We noted that the Talmud attributes great importance to this *mitzva*.

The *gemara* suggests two reasons for this enactment. One passage (*Chullin* 105b–106a) relates *netilat yadayim* to the laws of *tuma* and *tahara*; in order to accustom *kohanim* to purify their hands before eating *teruma* (see *Shabbat* 13b and *Eiruvin* 21b), the Rabbis obligated everyone to wash their hands before eating bread. This enactment is observed even after the destruction of the *Beit Ha-Mikdash* so that we will be ready for the speedy rebuilding of the Temple. Another passage (*Berakhot* 53b) describes the ritual washing of the hands as an act of “sanctification.”

We questioned whether one must wash his hands for even a small quantity of bread, a *ke-zayit*, or only for a piece of bread the volume of a *ke*-*beitza*. The Shulchan Arukh cites the view of the Sefer Ha-Roke’ach, ruling that “if one eats less than a *ke-beitza*, one should wash without recited the blessing” (158:2). Finally, we noted that the Mishna Berura (158:10) concludes that one should preferably follow the more stringent opinions and wash without a blessing even for bread less than the size of a *ke-zayit*. The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (158:3) reports that that was apparently not the custom.

This week we will discuss the manner in which *netilat yadayim* is performed.

***Netilat Yadayim* From a *Keli* (Vessel)**

*Netilat Yadayim* may be performed from a vessel or by immersing one’s hands in a valid *mikve*, river, lake, or sea.

The Talmud (*Chullin* 107) discusses the types of vessels that may be used for *netilat yadayim*. The Rashba (s.v. *megufat*) explains that the Rabbis required a vessel for *netilat yadayim* before eating bread, just as there is a requirement of a vessel for the “*mei chatat*” (the water sprinkled during the purification process involving the *para aduma*) and the “*kiddush yadayim ve-raglayim*,” the ritual washing of the hands and feet performed by the *kohanim* in the *Beit Ha-Mikdash*.

The vessel, often known as the “*natla*,” must contain at least a *revi’it* (86 ml; some require 150 ml) of water (*Chullin* 107a). A vessel which contains less than a *revi’it* of water cannot be used for *netilat yadayim*.

The *mishna* (*Yadayim* 1:2) teaches that “water may be poured over the hands out of any kind of vessel, even out of vessels made of animal ordure, out of vessels made of stone, or out of vessels made of clay.” The Rash Mi-Shantz, in his commentary to this *mishna*, notes that even vessels which are not susceptible to the laws of *tuma* are considered vessels for *netilat yadayim* (see also *Para* 5:5). The *Acharonim* (*Tzitz Eliezer* 12:23; *Az Nidberu* 6:48) write that one may even use a disposable plastic or paper cup for *netilat yadayim*.

One should preferably use a vessel which has no cracks or holes. If there is a hole in the vessel that is “*kones mashkeh*” – that is, if water would enter the vessel through the hole were the vessel to be immersed in water – the vessel is invalid. The Mishna Berura (7) explains that if drops of water continuously leak from the hole when the vessel if filled with water, the vessel is considered to be “*kones mashkeh*” and is invalid.

If the hole is so large than one can pour water through it, if the vessel contains a *revi’it* of water under the hole, one may wash his hands by pouring water through the hole onto his hands.

Similarly, if there is a hole in the rim of the vessel or if there is a spout, as long as the vessel contains a *revi’it* of water under the hole or spout, one may wash his hand with the vessel, pouring the water through the hole of spout (Shulchan Arukh 159:2-3). One may not pour the water from the higher part of the rim, as that section of the vessel is not considered to be part of the *keli*, as it cannot contain water.

A vessel which cannot stand on its own and can only contain a *revi’it* if it leans on another vessel or a wall may not be used for *netilat yadayim*. However, if the vessel was intentionally made this way, such as a ladle, it may be used for *netilat yadayim* (Shulchan Arukh 159:5).

Leather canteens which collapse when emptied may not be used for *netilat* *yadayim* (see *Mishna Berura* 18). Similarly, plastic bags may not be used for *netilat yadayim*.

A vessel which was not intended to hold liquids may not be used for *netilat ydayim.* Therefore, one may not wash one’s hands from a hat or yarmulka (Shulchan Arukh 159:4; see Mishna Berura 20). The Mishna Berura (15) cites a debate regarding whether one may wash his hands from a pot cover that is occasionally used to hold liquids.

One may wash his hands from a water bottle, as long at the water covers the entire hand. Preferably, there should be a continual (even if slow) flow of water.

**Washing One’s Hands in a *Ma’ayan* or *Mikve***

In order to purify one’s hands before eating bread, one may also immerse them in a natural spring, river, sea, or a kosher *mikve*.

The *gemara* (*Chullin* 106a) cites R. Papa, who asserts that all agree that one may immerse his hands in a natural spring, such as the hot springs of Tiberias (*chamei Tiveria*). The Shulchan Arukh (159:14; see also *Mikva’ot* 1:7) rules that one may even immerse one’s hands in a *ma’ayan* that contains less than 40 *se’ah*, the minimum amount of water required when one immerses his body in a *mikve*.

Similarly, one can immerse his hands in an ocean or lake, or even in a *mikve*. The *Rishonim* debate whether in this case the *mikve*, which collects standing rain water, must contain a minimum of 40 *se’ah*. Some *Rishonim* (Rashi, *Chullin* 106a, s.v. *chamei*, and *Chagiga* 18b, *s.v. u-lekodesh*; Mordekhai, *Berakhot* 202) explain that one must immerse his hands in a *mikve* that contains enough water in which to immerse one’s body, a minimum of 40 *se’ah*. However, the Beit Yosef (159) cites the Talmidei Rabbenu Yona (*Berakhot* 41a, s.v. *ve-nireh*), who insist that although forty *se’ah* are required *mi-derabbanan* when immersing vessels (*tevilat keilim*) in a *mikve*, the Rabbis did not require forty *se’ah* for the ritual washing of one’s hands. Rather, as long as one covers his hands completely in a *revi’it* of water, one fulfills the obligation of *netilat yadayim*. The Beit Yosef (15) suggests that these *Rishonim* may also differ as to whether one may immerse his hands in less than 40 *se’ah* of running rain water that is not collected in an “*ashboren*” (a standing pool).

The *Rishonim* also disagree regarding whether one may immerse his hands in a pool of 40 *se’ah* of *mayim she’uvim*, “drawn water,” which is generally invalid for a *mikve*. While the Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 6:5) writes that one may not immerse his hands in a *mikve* containing less than 40 *se’ah* or in a collection of *mayim she’uvim* of more than 40 *se’ah*, the Ra’avad disagrees in his glosses to the Rambam. All agree that one may not immerse in 40 *se’ah* of *mayim she’uvim* collected in a vessel, such as a bathtub, that is attached to the ground.

The Shulchan Arukh (159) relates to each of these cases. Regarding whether one may immerse his hands in less than 40 *se’ah* of spring water (*ma’ayan*), the Shulchan Arukh (14) cites both opinions and concludes that the *halakha* is in accordance with the more lenient opinion. The Rema, however, writes that preferably one should be stringent. The Shulchan Arukh (15) also cites the doubt regarding immersing one’s hands in less than 40 *se’ah* of running rain water. Regarding *mayim she’uvim*, the Shulchan Arukh (16) cites the debate between the Rambam and Ra’avad regarding whether one may immerse one’s hands in 40 *se’ah* of standing *mayim she’uvim*. In practice, one may immerse one’s hands in a valid *mikve*, a spring containing 40 *se’ah*, a river, lake, or sea.

The *Rishonim* disagree as to what blessing one who immerses his hands should recite. The Rashba (*Chullin* 107a; see also Responsa 1:190 and 7:534), as well as the Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona (*Berakhot* 41a, s.v. *u-leinyan*), rules that one should always recite “*al netilat yadayim.*” The Shulchan Arukh (159:19) rules in accordance with this view. Other *Rishonim* (Mordekhai, *Berakhot* 202; Agur, *Hilkhot Netilat Yadayim* 199) write that one should recite “*al tevilat yadayim*” or even “*al shetifat yadayim.*” R. Moshe Isselis, in his comments on the Tur (Darkhei Moshe 159), cites these views, and implies that one should say “*al shetifat yadayim*” before immersing one’s hands. In his comments to the Shulchan Arukh (Rema 159:19), he writes that one should say either “*al shetifat yadayim*” or “*al tevilat yadayim*.” The Mishna Berura (97) records that the *Acharonim* conclude that the blessing “*al netilat yadayim*” should always be said, even if one immerses his hands.

Interestingly, the Mordekhai (*Berakhot* 202) writes that one who immerses his hands does not need to immerse the hands two times or raise his hands, and, based upon the Tosefta (*Yadayim* 2:1), does not need to dry his hands. The Shulchan Arukh (159:20) records this as well.

Next week, we will discuss the significance of washing one’s hands twice, drying them, and then raising one’s hands, and why these practices would not be necessary when immersing one’s hands.