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**Shiur#08: *Netilat Yadayim* (3)**

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**Introduction**

Last week, we discussed two methods of performing *netilat yadayim*. The most common manner is to wash one’s hands from a vessel. We learned that one must wash from a vessel which contains at least a *revi’it* of water (*Chullin* 107a). This vessel may be made from any material, and one may even wash his hands from a disposable cup (*Tzitz Eliezer* 12:23; *Az Nidberu* 6:48). Preferably, one should wash from a vessel that has no cracks or holes. However, if there is a hole so large than one can pour water through it, one may wash one’s hands by pouring water through the hole onto his hands as long as the vessel contains a *revi’it* of water under the hole. Furthermore, 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 one’s hands with the vessel, pouring the water through the hole or spout (Shulchan Arukh 159:2-3). However, one may not pour the water from the higher part of the rim; that section of the vessel is not considered to be part of the *keli*, as it cannot contain water.

One may also perform *netilat yadayim* through immersing one’s hands in a

valid *mikveh*, a spring containing 40 *se’ah*, a river, lake, or sea. The *Rishonim* disagree as to whether one should say “*al netilat yadayim*” upon immersing one’s hands (Rashba, *Chullin* 107a and Responsa 1:190 and 7:534; see also the Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona, *Berakhot* 41a, *u-leinyan*), or “*al tevilat yadayim*” or even “*al shetifat yadayim*” (Mordekhai, *Berakhot* 202; Agur, *Hilkhot Netilat Yadayim* 199). We noted that while the Shulchan Arukh (159:19) rules that one should say *al netilat yadayim*, the Rema (159:19) 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.

Last week, we noted that one must wash one’s hands with at least a *revi’it* of water. We did not, however, discuss the type of water one may use for *netilat yadayim*.

**Water Which May be Used for *Netilat Yadayim***

The Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 6:7) lists four qualities that disqualify water from being used for *netilat yadayim*.

There are four matters that render water unacceptable: a change in its color, its being left exposed, its having been used for work, and its becoming spoiled to the point that an animal would not drink from it.

As we are no longer concerned with water left uncovered (see Tur 160), there remain three types of water that may not be used for *netilat yadayim*: water whose color has changed, water that was used for a *melakha*, and water that is unfit to be drunk by cattle.

The *mishna* (*Yadayim* 1:3) teaches that “if there fell into it ink, resin, or vitriol and its color changed, it is invalid.” The Shulchan Arukh (160:1) therefore rules that water whose appearance has changed cannot be used for *netilat yadayim*. The Mishna Berura notes that if the water is simply clouded by dirt, then it may be used (see Shulchan Arukh 160:9).

The *mishna* also teaches that “if a person did any work with it or soaked his bread therein, it is invalid.” The Shulchan Arukh (160:2) rules that water with which a *melakha* was performed, within which one dipped bread, or which one used for washing dishes may not be used for *netilat yadayim*. Similarly, one may not use water that was used to heat a bottle or food. However, water that condensed from an air conditioner may be used for *netilat yadayim* (see *Piskei Teshuvot* 160:5).

The *mishna* also teaches that “if water has become so unfit that it cannot be drunk by cattle, if it was in a vessel, it is invalid.” The Rif (*Pesachim* 41a) cites two interpretations of this passage. According to one view, the *mishna* refers to water that is so salty that it is unfit for canine consumption. Another view, however, maintains that the *mishna* refers to water that is cloudy, similar to mud. Although the Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 6:10) explains that water which is not fit to be drunk by an animal, including water that is either bitter or muddy, may not be used for *netilat yadayim*, the Rosh (*Chullin* 8:19; see also Peirush Ha-Rosh, *Yadayim* 1:3) proves that the *mishna* must refer to water that is spoiled and therefore unfit for consumption, but not to muddy water.

The Shulchan Arukh (160:9) disqualifies water that is either too bitter or salty for consumption, as well as water that is too dirty for consumption.

**Hot Water for *Netilat Yadayim***

May one use hot water for *netilat yadayim*? The *gemara* (*Chullin* 106a) cites a Tannaitic debate regarding whether one may wash his hands with water that was heated by a fire (as opposed to the naturally hot Tiberias Springs). Furthermore, the *Amoraim* (*Chullin* 105a-b) debate whether R. Yochanan, who permits washing with water heating by a fire, permits washing with water hotter than *yad soledet bo* (the temperature at which one’s hand recoils).

Some *Rishonim* (Rosh, *Chullin* 8:6; Rashba, *Chullin* 106a; Mordekhai, *Berakhot* 193) rule that one may even wash one’s hands with water whose temperature is above *yad soledet bo*. Others (see Semag, *Asin* 17; Semak 181) rule that one may not wash with water hotter than *yad soledet bo*. The Shulchan Arukh (160:6) rules that one may wash his hands with hot water. The Mishna Berura (27), however, suggests that one allow hot water to cool down before using it for *netilat yadayim*, out of concern for those opinions which prohibit washing in water hotter than *yad soledet bo*.

**Using Other Liquids for *Netilat Yadayim***

May one use other liquids, besides water, for *netilat yadayim*? The Rosh (*Berakhot* 7:31), and the Raavad (cited by the Rosh) maintain that only water may be used for *netilat yadayim*. Indeed, they write, even water whose appearance has changed cannot be used for *netilat yadayim*. The Rashba (*Torat Ha-Bayit*, *Bayit* 6, *Sha’ar* 6), however, disagrees and rules that theoretically one may use wine for *netilat yadayim*. He concludes that practically one should not use wine, as it would be perceived as disrespectful to use such an important beverage. Rashi (*Berakhot* 50b), implies that one may wash one’s hands with fruit juice. (Apparently while water whose appearance has changed may not be used for *netilat yadayim*, as long as the fruit juice’s natural appearance has not changed, it may be used.) The Hagahot Asheri (*Berakhot* 2:11) cites the Or Zaru’a (1:60), who rules that one may wash his hands with beer or cooked honey in extenuating circumstances.

The Shulchan Arukh (160:12) cites these three opinions –the view which limits *netilat yadayim* to water, the opinion which permits using wine for *netilat yadayim* (the Rema limits this to white wine), and the view which permits using all juices in extenuating circumstances. The Rema adds that even beer or cooked honey may be used, if necessary. The Mishna Berura (63) rules that one should be strict regarding wine, but one may use fruit juice “*bi-she’at ha-dechak.*” R. Moshe Stern writes in his Be’er Moshe (5:40) that one may use coffee or tea as well for *netilat yadayim*.

**How Much of One’s Hand Must One Wash**

The *Rishonim* disagree as to how much of one’s hand one must wash during *netilat yadayim*. The Rosh (*Chullin* 8:11) cites the Rif, who maintains that one must wash the entire hand until the wrist. The Rosh describes this view as an “unnecessary stringency” (*chumra yeteira*), and records that the custom is not in accordance with this opinion. Rather, he rules that one need only wash his fingers until the knuckles, where the fingers meet the hands.

The Beit Yosef (161) suggests that since washing one’s entire hand is somewhat effortless, one should preferably wash his entire hand, in the spirit of R. Chisda’s statement, “I washed with full handfuls of water and was granted full handfuls of prosperity.” In his Shulchan Arukh (161:4), he cites both opinions, and concludes that it is appropriate to act in accordance with the stricter opinion. The Bi’ur Halakha (s.v. *ve-ra’ui linhog*) records that some *Acharonim* understand that the *halakha* is actually in accordance with the lenient opinion and that washing one’s entire hand is to be considered a stringency. However, he insists, many *Rishonim* maintain that one must wash one’s entire hand, and therefore one should really only be lenient in extenuating circumstances.

On Yom Kippur, when one is not permitted to wash oneself, one should only wash until the top of his fingers upon waking in the morning (Shulchan Arukh 613:2). However, *kohanim* wash their entire hands before the *Birkat Kohanim*, as the *kohanim* in the *Beit Ha-Mikdash* would wash their entire hands (*Chullin* 106b). Furthermore, one who cannot wash his upper hand due to an injury or bandage should wash until the tops of his fingers.

Next week, we will discuss that manner in which the water is poured over one’s hands, including the requirement of “*ko’ach gavra*” and the number of times each hand must be washed.