The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן ד' סעיף א'

Overview

Siman 4 Seif 1:

One should wash his hands and recite the beracha על נטילת ידים. According to some opinions one should also recite אשר יצר even if he did not relieve himself and that is the custom. **Water that is unfit for washing for a meal** (see siman 160) **is fit for washing one's hands for davening but there is an opinion who maintains that a beracha should not be recited when washing with such water.**

- According to Rosh washing is required because while sleeping one touches parts of the body the necessitate washing. According to Rashba it is an expression of thanks to Hashem that He created us. (M.B. 1)
- If one did not recite נטילת ידים before davening it may not be recited after davening. (M.B. 1)
- One may recite the beracha immediately after washing and it is unnecessary to wait to dry one's hands although there are those who are stringent and recite the beracha after drying their hands. (M.B. 2)
- According to some one should not touch his clothing before washing but that is not the implication of the Gemara. One should wash his hands and face every day to give honor to Hashem. (M.B. 2)
- The preferred approach is for one to wash his hands three times, relieve himself and upon exiting the bathroom he should wash a second time and recite אשר יצר. It is also preferable to wait to recite נטילת ידים until after the second washing, especially if one felt the urge to relieve himself upon waking. (M.B. 4)

Stories to Share

Sanctifying the Hands and Feet

מ"ב ד', א': "אחר השינה אנו נעשים כבריה חדשה..."

The Rashba, zt"l, explains that we wash our hands each morning like a kohein must wash his hands and feet to prepare to serve in the mikdash. The Baal Shem Tov, zt"l, explained the significance of this mitzvah.

"When the verse warns that we should not fall into arrogance, it states that we should not mistakenly think, כחי ועצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה—My power and the force of my hands brought me all this wealth.' We see that feeling hubris comes from a mistaken attitude regarding our actions which are the work of our hands. The kohein sanctified his hands to wash away such mistaken attitudes and understand that Hashem gives us the strength and enables us to do his will.

"The kohein also sanctified his feet to symbolize that we are washing away the הרגל, our tendency to do things by rote without thinking about it and without freshness. In order for avodah to be kosher it must be done with humility and with freshness, never by rote."

The Mekor Chaim, zt"l, explained why we do not wash our feet every morning as well as our hands. "Although washing each morning represents sanctifying ourselves like the kohein who was obligated to wash from the כיור each day, those who do not go barefoot are not required to wash their feet, unlike a kohein in the beis hamikdash. This is because now that the beis hamikdash has been destroyed it is very difficult to purify our feet. Although we can learn to act with humility it is virtually impossible to completely purify ourselves from acting by rote."

Halacha Highlights

Washing one's face, hands and feet in the morning

Mishnah Berurah Siman 4 Seif Katan 2

אמרינן בגמרא רוחץ אדם פניו ידיו ורגליו בכל יום משום כבוד קונו

The Gemara relates that one should wash his face, hands and feet every day to give honor to his Creator.

Rashi explains that the purpose of washing one's face, hands and feet is to give honor to the Creator who made us in his image. Accordingly, one should also arrange his beard and payos in their place and this is also a fulfillment of זה א-לי ואנוהו—This is my G-d and I will glorify Him (ע' פסקי תשובות סי' ד' אות ו'). Meiri writes that even a Torah scholar should follow this practice even if his intent is to improve his appearance. The reason is that one should strive to look nice in the eyes of others so that his appearance should not cause a desecration of Hashem's name.

When Rambam (פ"ד מהלכי תפילה ה"ג) records this halacha he includes the requirement to wash one's feet that was mentioned in the Gemara. Ra'avad, however, disagrees and questions the necessity for a person to wash his feet nowadays. Noda B'Yehudah (שו"ת נוב"י תנינא סי' ק"מ) records a suggestion that the disagreement between Rambam and Ra'avad relates to the disagreement between Rashba and Rosh regarding the rationale for washing hands in the morning. Rambam follows Rashba who equated washing in the morning to the washing the kohen would do in the Bais HaMikdash before beginning the daily service, therefore, it is necessary to wash one's feet as well. Ra'avad, on the other hand, holds like Rosh that washing is to prepare one's hands for davening that touched a covered part of the body over the course of the night and according to that reason there is no reason for one to wash his feet in the morning. Bais Yosef (סי' צ"ב) seems to follow the position of Ra'avad that one is not required to wash his feet in the morning. Mishnah Berurah (סי' ד' סק"ב) cites Pri Megadim who maintains that in our countries that people do not walk around barefoot it is unnecessary for a person to wash his feet in the morning.