The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן קנ"ט סעיף ג'-ד'

Overview

Siman 159 Seif 3:

A utensil that holds a revi'is if it is supported but if it is not supported the water will spill out leaving less than a revi'is is not considered a utensil. Therefore, the cover of a barrel that comes to a point and cannot contain a revi'is if it is not supported may not be used for washing. If one widened the bottom so that it can contain a revi'is while it sits without support, it may be used for washing.

- Tur and Bais Yosef assert that the same halacha is true regarding a broken piece of a utensil. If it holds a revi'is without support it may be used for washing. Others contend that such a utensil may be used only if the broken piece is designated for use as a utensil. Magen Avrohom maintains that a broken piece of a utensil should not be used. (M.B. 12)
- If the top of a utensil broke off but can still stand on its own and hold a revi'is without support it may be used for washing if one has no other utensil. One must be careful to pour the water out of the shortest part of the utensil since according to many authorities the part above the shortest point is not considered a utensil since that part cannot hold liquid. If such a utensil later developed a hole even if it only allows liquid to seep out it may not be used for washing. (M.B. 12)

Siman 114 Seif 4:

A חמת or a כפישה which are types of leather pouches which were made with a stand may be used for washing. A שק or a קפה that were made to sit without support and coated with pitch so that they could contain liquids may not be used to wash one's hands since they are not designed to contain liquids. The same is true for a hat made from felt, even if it is hard enough that it could hold water without it seeping out since it was not made to hold water. In a pressing circumstance they may be used since travelers regularly drink from them.

- The allowance b'dieved is when they are hard and could contain a liquid. Maharshal disagrees and maintains that a hat may not be used. Chaye Adam rules that when one is travelling and has no alternative he should wash without reciting the beracha but in normal circumstances one should be stringent since travelers nowadays do not drink from them. (M.B. 21)

Stories to Share

The One Mitzvah

ש"ע ס' קנ"ט, ג': "כלי שמחזיק רביעית..."

Today's amud continues discussing the washing cup that should be used to wash one's hands before partaking of bread.

Rav Aharon of Belz, toward the end of his life, told a fascinating story about washing for bread at his Shabbos tisch. "Once there was a man who, unfortunately, went off the derech. When I say he was completely wicked, I mean he really was wicked. He basically kept nothing at all with one lonely exception: he would always wash for bread before eating. He would never eat a meal without bread, and was always careful to wash before every meal.

"One Pesach he needed to travel to a distant place. He packed the provisions necessary for the trip. He brought along some matzah, but if there was chometz included in his food supply, I cannot say. As always, he brought along a washing cup and relied on being able to find water on the way. There had been less rain than usual, however, and he failed to find water along the way. He kept riding, hoping against hope to find some water.

"As he got more and more hungry, he felt very tempted to just eat without washing. After all, he violated everything else; but he was very reluctant to let go of the one mizvah he had always kept. Strange as it may sound, he did that one mitzvah for Hashem and felt that if he let go of it, even once, he would lose it forever.

"He decided that he would rather die than violate the mitzvah. Eventually he came to a path that led to a fairly big water supply. But he knew that there were bandits in that part of the forest who might kill him if he was caught in their territory. He reasoned, 'I am anyway a debased sinner, and it is not as though I don't deserve to die. If they catch me, my death should atone for my sins.'

"He travelled to the river and placing his cup in the water he washed his hands with great devotion. As he was about to eat, a bandit came and killed him in cold blood."

Rav Aharon became very emotional. "I can tell you that that man's death atoned for all of his sins. In the merit of his one rabbinic mitzvah, this man made it to olam haba. How much more so will someone who is careful with all of Hashem's mitzvos attain greatness in the next world!"

פאר מקדושים, ע' 38

Halacha Highlight

Washing out of cardboard

Shulchan Aruch Siman 159 Seif 4

לפי שאינם עשויים לקבל משקים

Since they were not made to hold liquids

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ד') discusses the permissibility of using a bag or box (שק וקופה) for washing. He rules that even if one added an attachment that allows the bag or box to stand on its own without outside support and one lined it with pitch so that it should be able to retain water it may nevertheless not be used for washing. The reason he gives is that these items were not made to hold liquids. This statement seems inconsistent with an earlier ruling of Mishnah Berurah (סק"י). When discussing the permissibility of using a utensil with a hole, Mishnah Berurah ruled that if one has an earthenware utensil designed for food which does not lose its status as a utensil until the hole is large enough to permit an olive to fall out, all opinions would agree that one may wash out of the hole. This clearly indicates that it is not necessary for the utensil used for washing to be used for liquids. The answer to this apparent contradiction is that Mishnah Berurah's earlier ruling referred to a utensil that is designed for holding food but is capable of holding a liquid. In our seif, Shulchan Aruch refers to materials that are not capable of retaining a liquid since the liquid would just seep out. Such materials do not qualify as a kli for washing even if one lined them with pitch.

Based on this, Poskim write that one may not wash his hands out of a utensil made from cardboard or similar materials. Although they may be capable of retaining liquid for short periods of time, the liquid will eventually seep out and in this regard it is comparable to Shulchan Aruch's case of washing from a bag or box that is unfit for washing since it is incapable of retaining liquids. Even if one were to coat the cardboard with a substance that allows it to retain liquid, it remains invalid just like coating the bag or box with pitch does not make them into a kli that could be used for washing (פסקי תשובות אות י"ג).