The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן ק"ס סעיף י"ב

Overview

Siman 160 Seif 12:

Snow, hail, frozen rain, ice (meaning, water that froze from the cold) **and salt that were ground into liquid may be used for washing or for immersing one's hands if there is a sufficient volume of them** (See Yoreh Deah 201:30). **There is an opinion that maintains that one may only use water. Some maintain that wine may be used for washing one's hands regardless of whether one added water or not. However, it is prohibited *l'chatchila* to do so that one should not disrespect something important which has changed for the better** (meaning for praise) **to the point that it has its own unique beracha.** (Some say that this is limited to white wine as opposed to red wine.) **There is an opinion that maintains that any fruit juice may be used for washing in a pressing circumstance** (and it is certainly permitted in a pressing circumstance to wash with beer or cooked honey water which is primarily water.

- Salt may only be used to immerse one's hands but not for washing. (M.B. 57)
- If these materials were not ground they may not be used for washing. In a pressing circumstance they may be used for immersing if one has the minimum quantity for a *mikvah* and no water is available. One should be able to completely immerse his hands in the liquid. (M.B. 58)
- This opinion maintains that fruit juice and certainly wine may not be used for washing one's hands. (M.B. 59)
- The opinion that permits wine certainly allows the use of fruit juice and other liquids since this opinion does not require specifically water. (M.B. 60)
- Other liquids and fruit juices may be used even *l'chatchila* according to this position since they do not become elevated and have their own beracha. (M.B. 62)
- If the wine was white and made red by adding a coloring agent it seems that according to all opinions it is unfit for washing. (M.B. 63)
- This represents a third opinion that maintains that wine is invalid even *b'dieved* but fruit juice may be used in a pressing circumstance. This opinion is the one that should be followed. (M.B. 64)
- This opinion is not concerned about the change in color since a change for the better is not considered a change. (M.B. 65)

Halacha Highlight

Washing with other beverages

Shulchan Aruch Siman 160 Seif 12

שאין נטילת מים ראשונים אלא במים בלבד

One does not wash before a meal with anything other than water

Shulchan Aruch presents three different opinions about the effectiveness of washing with liquids other than water. Obviously, if it is possible for one to obtain water for washing one should make an effort to do so. It is not clear whether the requirement to travel four *mil* ahead or a single *mil* backwards applies when one has an alternative liquid available (פסקי תשובות אות כ"א). Soda water is preferable to juice or wine since the introduction of carbonation does not change the essence of water. Some authorities maintain that soda water may be used even *l'chatchila*. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ס"ד) rules that one should be strict in accordance with the third opinion. This means that one should not use wine for washing but one may be lenient with regards to fruit juice in a pressing circumstance. Therefore, one who does not have water available and is pressed to eat bread may use liquids whose primary ingredients is water. Rema references beer and honey water as examples of this category. In our days, examples of this liquid are: tea, coffee and all different varieties of soft drinks. When washing with these liquids one should not recite the *beracha* on that washing.

In the event that one of these beverages is not available, the next choice should be fruit juice that does not have water poured in. Included in this category are juices that don't have water added and milk. Wine should not be used unless one has no other beverage available and it is a pressing circumstance. Oil and honey may never be used since they do not clean one's hands. In the event that one washed with a beverage other than water and then water becomes available, one should wash again without reciting the *beracha* (פסקי תשובות שם).

Stories to Share

The Mikveh in Luban

ש"ע ק"ס, י"ב: "וטובלים בהם אם יש בהם כשיעור..."

On today's amud we find that one can immerse his hands in a mikveh made of snow.

During the Communist purges of 1932, Soviet officials closed many mikvaos. They also wished to demolish the mikveh building in Luban on the pretext that it was unhygienic. In its place, they planned to build a bathhouse—designated for mixed swimming.

Rav Moshe Feinstein approached the appropriate officials in an effort to secretly reestablish the mikveh. If the officials harbored even a trace of suspicion against him, they would deport him to Siberia at best. The gadol put forth a convincing argument. "These new ways may be good for most people, I do not know. However, Jews have always lived with a deeply ingrained sense of modesty and won't bathe in a mixed bathhouse. This stands to endanger everyone since not bathing for long periods of time tends to breed all sorts of disease. The best solution is to allow separate bathing at least once a week." The officials acquiesced.

As the construction progressed, Rav Moshe bribed the architect to arrange to have ice or snow placed in the empty bath. The pool was initiated with forty se'ah of kosher water, since when there's no choice one may even place snow in the empty mikveh via vessels. Since numerous leniencies had to be relied upon to validate the new mikveh, Rav Moshe himself never relied on it throughout the remainder of his time in Luban. Even so, his rebbitzen went every month to since it was vital that the rest of the Jews of Luban have confidence in the kashrus of the mikveh.

In the entire region surrounding Minsk, a radius of hundred of kilometers, Luban possessed the only mikveh. Since people didn't have access to transportation from many areas, there were women who walked all the way to Luban, in some cases a journey of three days, to fulfill this precious mitzvah!

מובא בהקדמה לאג"מ, חלק ח'