The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן קס"ב סעיף ב'-ג'

Halacha Highlight

Drying one's hand before washing

Shulchan Aruch Siman 162 Seif 3

נטל מקצת ידו וכו'

If one washed part of his hand etc.

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ג') discusses a person who washed his hand in two stages. In the first stage he washed only a part of his hand and in the second stage he washed the other part of his hand. The halacha is that washing in this manner is ineffective and his hands are tamei just as they were before he started washing. If the first part of his hand was still wet when he poured water over the second half of his hand then his hand is tahor. The reason is that as long as the first part of his hand is wet the second pouring is considered a continuation of the original washing and thus it is as if he washed his entire hand once (מ"ב ס"ק כ"ט).

In the event that one washed his hand in stages in a manner in which the washing was ineffective and his hands remain tamei, he must re-wash his hand but he is not required to dry his hand before he re-washes his hand (מ"ב ס"ק כ"ז). Chazon Ish (או"ח סי' כ"ד ס"ק כ"ב) disagrees and rules that whenever one has water on his hands, whether from an invalid washing or if they are wet from an independent source of water that had nothing to do with netilas yadayim, he must dry his hands before washing. The rationale behind this ruling is that water that is not effective at making one's hands tahor is tamei and makes one's hands tamei as well. Moreover, the water that one pours on his hands to make them tahor is ineffective at making the invalid water that is already on his hand tahor. Rav Chaim Kanievsky, in fact, reports that when he would wash and some water would get on his hand the Chazon Ish would tell him to dry his hand and wash again (ארחות רבינו ח"ג עמ' ר"י"ט).

Stories to Share

The Proper Practice

ש"ע קס"ב, א': "צריך לשפשפם זו בזו..."

One man learned the halachos of netilas yadayim carefully and was always surprised to find out new things he had never known. For example, he noticed that many people lift up their hands after washing despite the sources stating that this is only necessary when one washes with less than a revi'is. When he asked someone about this, he was immediately given a source and reason for this practice. "The Kaf Hachaim brings that the Arizal recommends always lifting up one's hands after washing. He explains that the Talmudic statement that one who washes his hands with an abundance of water will be blessed with abundant goodness alludes especially to spiritual bounty. We lift up our hands after washing to receive Hashem's blessing."

When he learned on today's amud that one should rub his hands together even if one washes with a revi'is, he wondered why he had never seen anyone actually do so. Was this the practical intent of the halachah?

When this question reached Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt"l, he ruled that one need not rub his hands together. "This was only relevant during Talmudic times or when there is a lack of water and one washes with less than a revi'is. But one who washes with a revi'is need not rub his hands together. Even I do not rub my hands together when I wash!"

תפארת בנים, ס' מ', ע' רס"ו-רס"ז

Overview

Siman 162 Seif 2:

When washing one should pour some of the revi'is to remove the dirt and any substance that could constitute an interposition. He should then pour a second time and this water is tamei. When he pours water a third time he makes the water on his hands tahor. If his hands are not dirty and have no intervening substance he may wash both hands with a revi'is and does not have to pour a second time. Similarly, if one has an abundance of water he may wash first to remove the dirt and then pour an entire revi'is without the need for pouring a third time. One who washes his hands must rub them together.

- The minimum quantity of water for washing is no less than a revi'is for both hands. If one's hands are dirty and he only has a revi'is he should first use a small quantity of that water to clean his hands and then use the rest for netilas yadayim. (M.B. 17)
- Masseches Yadayim writes that one who washes his hands must pour water two times, even if they are clean from dirt, since the first pouring makes one's hands tahor and the second washing makes the water tahor. Bais Yosef in the name of many Poskim writes that one who pours a full revi'is on his two hands and certainly if one pours a full revi'is on each hand does not need to pour water a second time since there is no tamei water. (M.B. 19)
- The allowance to pour a full revi'is in three steps is limited to where the water gets poured over the entire surface of one's hands, even if it takes two pourings. (M.B. 20)
- A full revi'is is comparable to a mikvah that makes one tahor. Some authorities maintain that two pourings are always required and a person with only a revi'is must pour it in two stages. Chaye Adam rules that one should pour twice but this applies l'chatchila when one has water that is available but if water is not readily available one is not required to trouble oneself to obtain additional water for this purpose. (M.B. 21)
- This means that one has enough water to clean his hands and have a revi'is leftover. (M.B. 22)
- The obligation to rub one's hands applies even if one washes each hand with a revi'is or if he immerses his hands. (M.B. 23)

Siman 162 Seif 3:

If one washed part of his hand and then washed the remaining portion of his hand, his hand is tamei as it was originally since hands cannot be washed in halves. If his hand was still wet (טופח על מנת להטפיח) when he poured water on the second part of his hand it is tahor. This applies to the first pouring but regarding the second pouring it is acceptable to wash one part of the hand and then the other part.

- One must wash his hands in accordance with the laws of netilas yadayim and he is not required to dry them first. (M.B. 27)
- Wet is defined as wet enough that one could touch a surface that will itself be wet enough to wet another surface. Under such circumstances the first washing has not ceased and combines with the subsequent washing. (M.B. 29)
- Some authorities write that it is only b'dieved that one is not required to wash again but l'chatchila he should wash his entire hand at once. Even two washings would be sufficient as long as he does not delay between one washing and the other. (M.B. 30)
- The second pouring is performed to make the water on one's hands tahor. (M.B. 31)