The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן קס"ב סעיף ד'

Halacha Highlight

Drying the handle before washing

Shulchan Aruch Siman 162 Seif 4

ואם נטל כל יד ברביעית

And if one washed his entire hand with a revi'is

Shulchan Aruch describes many different ways a person who is in the process of washing his hands can make his hands tamei again, requiring him to dry his hands and wash them again. One example is a person who washed one hand and then rubbed his hands together. When he touched his wet hand to the hand that was not wet some of the tamei water makes his second hand tamei. As he continues to rub his hands the tumah from the second hand is imparted back to the first hand and washing again will not rinse off that tumah. The only option is to dry one's hands and start again (מ"ב ס"ק ל"ה). After presenting different scenarios such as the one described and methods to avoid one from making his hand/s tamei while washing, Shulchan Aruch concludes that one who washes with a revi'is of water need not be concerned with these matters. His reasoning is that a revi'is is comparable to a mikvah and as such the water does not become tamei (מ"ב ס"ק כ"א).

Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק מ"ט) in the name of later authorities writes that if after washing one's right hand once he touches the handle of the vessel with his wet hand he imparts tumah to the handle of the utensil. If he grasps the handle with his left hand to wash his right hand again his left hand becomes tamei. Once his hand is tamei from that water he must dry his hand before washing that hand so that it will be effective. Again the way to avoid this issue is to make sure to use at least a revi'is when washing so that the water that comes off of his hand will not be tamei. Sha'ar HaTzion (ס"ק מ"א) cites authorities who maintain that if before one even begins to wash he realizes that the handle is already wet he should dry the handle. The concern is that when he touches the handle the water will become tamei and then when his washed hand touches that water it will make his hand tamei again. Sha'ar HaTzion disagrees and cited numerous authorities who maintain that one's dry hand would not make the water that was already on the utensil tamei and thus there is no reason for concern (חיי משה).

Overview

Siman 162 Seif 4:

If one poured water onto one hand and rubbed that hand on the other he has not effectively washed his hands, even if afterwards he poured water on both of his hands. The reason is that the water he poured on his first hand became tamei and when he rubbed his hands together he made his second hand tamei and the second pouring of water only makes tahor the water that became tamei from that hand but not water that came from a second hand. Therefore, one who pours water from a vessel onto his hand and rubs his hand's together must dry his hands and wash them again correctly. Accordingly, when washing one should have another person pour water on his hands. If another person is not available he should hold the vessel with his fingertips and pour the water onto his two hands at once. Alternatively, he could pour a full revi'is on each hand. Afterwards he should rub his hands together since after pouring a full revi'is it is not necessary to pour a second time being that a revi'is is comparable to immersion which does not require two times. If someone who did not wash his hands touches someone who washed his hands before they were dried he must rewash his hands since the other person's hands made them tamei via the water. For this reason one must be cautious when pouring a third time, which is the second time besides the first pouring, to not touch his other hand until he pours water on the second hand. Alternatively, one may pour water on both hands together. If one washes each hand with a revi'is this issue is not a concern.

- Shulchan Aruch refers to pouring the first time a small amount of the revi'is and then rubbing one's second hand that was not washed. (M.B. 32)
- The first hand also becomes tamei by touching the second hand. (M.B. 33)
- This tumah from this water is worse than had he not washed altogether since this tumah is not removed by pouring water onto one's hands. (M.B. 35)
- Both hands must be dried since they are both tamei and washing again does not make something tahor that is tamei from anything other than the tumah of one's hands. The same halacha is true if one poured water once on each hand and then rubbed them together. (M.B. 36)
- The other person should pour water on both of his hands at once. (M.B. 39)
- Being washed by someone else is preferable to washing both hands at once by one's self. (M.B. 40)
- Shulchan Aruch means that once one followed one of the three options he may rub his hands together without concern for making one's hands tamei. (M.B. 43)
- Even though one washed his hands properly if a person who did not wash his hands touches the first person's hands he must dry them and wash again. (M.B. 45)
- There is a disagreement whether one who properly washed one hand must dry his hands and wash again if his hands touched one another after the first washing. (M.B. 48)
- Later authorities write that if one touched the handle of a utensil with his hand that was washed once the water on the handle becomes tamei and when the other hand touches that water it becomes tamei, therefore, one must dry the handle. The way to avoid this issue is to wash with a full revi'is on each hand or to wash the first and second washings on one hand before washing the other hand. (M.B. 49)

Stories to Share

The Rabbi's Priorities

ש"ע קס"ב, ד': "שהשופך רביעית כאחד..."

The Eliyahu Rabbah writes that one who is on the road should make sure to bring water with him—both to drink and to purify his hands to eat bread.

אליהו רבא, ס' ק"י, ס"ז

Rav Avraham Yehoshua Freund was renowned as a gaon and tzaddik. He was always very careful to take water along with him on every journey to ensure that he had it if needed. During תרפ"ה there were many students who were disgruntled and decided to take out their frustration on Jews by beating them up whenever they found them. Once, when Rav Freund was on the train, a group of students got on and decided to toss the diminutive rabbi off the speeding train.

The moment the Jews saw this, they immediately rushed to the conductor to ask that he stop the train since the rav might need to go to the hospital. The conductor contacted the police who ordered that he stop the train. The Jews who rushed to check on the rav were relieved to see that he had landed on a grassy slope and, although he was covered in bruises, he did not need the hospital.

But they were shocked to see that Rav Freund was not distressed by his many wounds as much as he was by the fact that his water container had broken in the fall. After enduring such a traumatic experience all he could think of was how to conserve any water left and finding a way to replace what he had lost!

תפארת בנים, ח"א, ע' רס"ז-רס"ח