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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן רל"ג סעיף ב'

Halacha Highlight

Washing before davening

Shulchan Aruch Siman 233 Seif 2
צריך לטל ידיו כדי להתפלל
He must wash his hands in order to daven

Shulchan Aruch writes that one who has water available must wash his hands before davening even though he does not know them to be dirty. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ט"ו) explains that this ruling applies whether one is about to daven mincha or ma'ariv. In both circumstances it is necessary for one to wash since there is a mitzvah for one to wash before davening. In the event that water is not available, one is not required to wash his hands. Mishnah Berurah (סק"כ) writes that even though water is not available he must wipe his hands on a surface that could clean his hands. He then adds that this applies only when one does not recall specifically that his hands are dirty but in the event that one relieved himself or touched a dirty part of the body he must certainly wash his hands and must even travel to obtain water for this purpose (See siman 92:4 for details related to the distance one must travel to obtain water).

Rema writes that even one who was previously studying Torah and thus it is assumed that he kept his hands clean; nevertheless, he is obligated to wash his hands before davening. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"ח) cites Elya Rabba who maintains that once one washed his hands before studying Torah as long as he did not leave the Bais HaMidrash he is not required to wash his hands again. Mishnah Berurah confirms that this, in fact, is the custom. Aruch HaShulchan adds that the same is true if one washed his hands to daven but delayed a long time before davening. As long as he did not leave the Bais HaMidrash he is not required to wash his hands again before davening. In contrast, if one washed his hands before a meal and during the meal goes to daven he must wash his hands even though he was obligated to keep his hands clean during the meal. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"ט) in the name of Magen Avrohom explains that since his washing was not with the intent to daven it does not count towards that purpose.

Overview

Siman 233 Seif 2:

If one has water he must wash his hands before davening even though he doesn't know that his hands are dirty. A beracha is not recited on this washing. (See above siman 92:5) Even if one was previously learning he should wash his hands for davening. If one does not have water available he is not required to wash.

- One must wash before davening mincha and ma'ariv since there is a mitzvah to wash before davening. (M.B. 15)
- If one washed before mincha and did not lose concentration on his hands it is unnecessary to wash again for ma'ariv. (M.B. 16)
- It is assumed that one did not touch something dirty while studying Torah but nevertheless it is a mitzvah to wash before davening. (M.B. 18)
- Even if one washed his hands to eat bread and did not lose focus on his hands it is necessary for him to wash before davening. If one washed in the morning when he arose and did not lose focus on his hands he is not required to wash again. (M.B. 19)
- One should merely wipe his hands on a surface that will clean them. If one touched a dirty part of the body or went to the bathroom he must wash his hands. (M.B. 20)