

# WASHING HANDS FOR BREAD (PART 2)

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

*The following is a discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.*

*When you will eat of the bread of the Land... (15:19)*

**QUESTION:** Is it important to make sure that one's hands are completely dry before washing? Is it important to make sure that the handle of the vessel is completely dry?

**ANSWER:** According to the Mishnah Berurah, neither of these is a concern. It is permitted to wash one's hands even though they were just wet<sup>(1)</sup>, and it does not matter if the handle of the vessel is wet or not<sup>(2)</sup>.

The Chazon Ish<sup>(3)</sup>, however, disagrees on both counts and requires that the hands be totally dry before the washing takes place. In his opinion, even b'dieved the washing may not be valid if the hands were not completely dry before being washed. It has become customary for G-d fearing people to carefully dry their hands completely before washing for a meal<sup>(4)</sup>.

**QUESTION:** Is it permitted to wash hands for a meal directly from the sink [without using a vessel] by turning the faucet on and off directly over each hand?

**ANSWER:** No. There are two basic requirements for how the water must reach the hands: a) from a utensil, a keli; b) manually, koach gavra (lit., "by human force"). Although turning the faucet on and off satisfies the requirement of koach gavra, since a "human force" allows the water to be poured over the hand by turning the faucet on, it still does not satisfy the requirement that the water must come from a keli. Since the water comes from the pipe directly on to the hands, it is not considered as if one washed from a keli, for a pipe is not a keli<sup>(5)</sup>.

In a case where the water for netilas yadayim is coming from a keli such as an urn, and a vessel with which to wash the hands is not available, then it is permitted to place the hand directly underneath the spigot, press the spigot and allow the first flow of water to fall directly on the hand. The procedure is then repeated for the second hand<sup>(6)</sup>.

**QUESTION:** What should one do if he is traveling on the highway and has no water with which to wash his hands?

**ANSWER:** He can use any other beverage, such as soda or fruit juice, except wine. No blessing, however, is recited(7).

If no other beverage is available, he must travel 72 minutes ahead [or back up for 18 minutes] to look for water(8). If still no water can be found, one may wear gloves or wrap his hands in a plastic bag, etc. If he cannot find something which will keep his hands covered, he may eat the bread with a fork, being very careful not to allow his hands to touch the breadg.

**QUESTION:** Is it permitted to dry the hands with an electric dryer?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Although the hands must be dried before the bread is eaten(10), our main concern is that the hands will be dried, not the manner which is used to dry them. It is also permitted, therefore, to let the hands drip dry(11).

**QUESTION:** Can the obligation of netilas yadayim be discharged by dipping the hands in water?

**ANSWER:** Dipping the hands in water is valid only if the hands are dipped

In a wellspring, hot or cold. There must be enough water in the spring to cover both hands at one time(12);

A running river or a natural lake. If the water is discolored because of smoke, pollution or debris, it is invalid. If it is discolored because of sand or other natural particles, it is valid(13).

A sea. Even if the water is too salty for a dog to drink from, it is still valid(14). The water, however, may not be discolored, as stated above.

A man-made lake or swimming pool(15) with a volume of 40 se'ah of water [approximately 180-190(16) U.S. gallons]. The water must be piped into the lake through pipes which are built on or under the ground. If the lake or pool is filled in some other way, it is invalid(17).

### **A kosher mikveh.**

The hands could be dipped one at a time or both together(18). They need to be dipped in one time only. Drying the hands is not required, unless the residual wetness will make the food unappetizing(19). The regular blessing of Al netilas yadayim is then recited(20).

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## **FOOTNOTES**

1. Beirur Halachah 162:2.
2. Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 162:41.
3. O.C. 24:20. [Shulchan Aruch Harav agrees with this view in his Siddur but not in his Shulchan Aruch.]

4. Ketzos ha-Shulchan 33:13.
5. Teshuvos Zekan Aharon 1 (quoted in She'arim Metzuyanin b'Halachah 40:5) and Minchas Yitzchak 4:21 based on Magen Avraham 159:4 and Mishnah Berurah 47. See also Taharas Mayim, pg. 319-320. See, however, Yaskil Avdi 5:26 and Tzitz Eliezer 8:7 who rule that under extenuating circumstances, we may consider the pipe a keli and it would be permitted to wash from it.
6. Mishnah Berurah 159:64; 162:30.
7. Mishnah Berurah 160: 64 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 69.
8. Beiur Halachah 163:1.
9. Mishnah Berurah 163:7.
10. O.C. 158:12.
11. Chazon Ish O.C. 25:10. See She'arim Metzuyanin b'Halachah 40:5.
12. O.C. 159:14.
13. Mishnah Berurah 160:3.
14. Mishnah Berurah 160:38, 40. Salty water, however, may not be used when washing hands with a vessel.
15. The filter must be turned off.
16. See Siddur Minchas Yerushalayim and Taharas Mayim, pg. 22.
17. O.C. 159:16 and Beiur Halachah.
18. Mishnah Berurah 159:80.
19. Ibid. 158:46.
20. Ibid. 159:97 and Chazon Ish O.C. 23:13.

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