

SHE'AILOS U'TESHUVOS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

QUESTION: Is it preferable to use kosher soap for washing oneself?

DISCUSSION: There is a view⁽¹⁾ that prohibits the use of non-kosher soap for washing, based on the Talmudic⁽²⁾ principle of sicha k'shesiya (anointing oneself on Yom Kippur is like drinking on Yom Kippur). Other poskim⁽³⁾ rule leniently, however, since soap is not fit for consumption. The Mishnah Berurah⁽⁴⁾ says that if kosher soap is readily available, one should conduct himself according to the more stringent view.

QUESTION: How mandatory is Chazal's advisory that a guest should not change his customary lodging place?

DISCUSSION: Rashi⁽⁵⁾ explains that there are two reasons behind this advisory:

* Switching lodgings discredits the guest, since he will be considered hard to please or disreputable in some way.

* Switching lodgings harms the host's reputation, since it gives the impression that his lodgings were unsatisfactory.⁽⁶⁾

It follows, therefore, that if a guest has a bona fide reason to change his lodging place, the halachah will not restrict him from doing so. For example, if a guest customarily lodged at a certain home, but came to town for a simchah and wants to stay at the home of the ba'al simchah, that would be permitted. If a guest customarily lodged at a certain home, but upon his return visit the original host was out-of-town, indisposed, or no longer had the space for guests, the halachic advisory would not apply and the guest could stay elsewhere.⁽⁷⁾

QUESTION: If one wants to cool off boiling hot tea or soup on Shabbos, may he put an ice cube into the cup or bowl?

DISCUSSION: If the tea cup or the soup bowl is a keli shelishi, as is most often the case, then it is permitted according to all views to put an ice cube in it. If, however, the cup or bowl is only a keli sheini and the tea or soup is piping hot, putting ice in may be a possible issur min ha-Torah and should be avoided.⁽⁸⁾

QUESTION: Are men or women required to remove their rings before washing their hands for the morning netilas yadayim (negel vasser)?

DISCUSSION: L'chatchilah, all the rules that govern netilas yadayim for a meal apply to the morning netilas yadayim as well.(9) Just as a chatzitzah (halachic obstruction) invalidates netilas yadayim for a meal, so, too, it invalidates negel vasser, l'chatchilah. Generally, a ring is considered a chatzitzah since the water cannot easily touch all parts of the finger when a ring is on the finger. Even though a loose-fitting ring does allow the water to reach all parts of the finger, the poskim maintain that it is difficult to assess what, exactly, is considered loose and what is considered tight. All rings, therefore, should be removed before washing negel vasser.(10) But b'diavad, a chatzitzah does not invalidate the morning netilas yadayim and a woman who forgot or failed to remove her rings need not repeat the washing.(11) Moreover, if a woman has a hard time removing the ring from her finger, she may leave it on when washing netilas yadayim in the morning.

A ring is considered a chatzitzah only for men or women who sometimes, even on rare occasions, remove it from their finger. The occasional removal signifies that the person is sometimes particular about having the ring on his finger, rendering it a chatzitzah. But men or women who never take their rings off, even when kneading dough, swimming or performing manual labor, may l'chatchilah wash their hands while wearing a ring.(12)

QUESTION: What may be done if one realizes on Shabbos or Yom Tov that his car lights - either the headlights or the dome lights - were mistakenly left on?

DISCUSSION: In order of halachic preference, the following may be done:

* If a non-Jew who sees the lights on offers to shut them off, it is permitted to accept his offer. Although generally it is forbidden to directly benefit from an action of a non-Jew on Shabbos even if he offers to do a forbidden Labor on his own, shutting off lights is considered an indirect benefit - a preventive action, which is permitted.(13)

* If there is no non-Jew who offers to shut off the lights, it is permitted to hint to a non-Jew that the lights should be turned off, e.g., it is a pity that the battery is going to die.

* If the hint will not be understood, and if the battery will in all probability die and cause a substantial loss to the owner of the vehicle, it is permitted to ask the non-Jew directly to extinguish the lights. This is permitted because most poskim hold that extinguishing a light on Shabbos is merely a Rabbinical prohibition,(14) and the basic Halachah(15) is that it is permitted to ask a non-Jew to perform a rabbinical prohibition on one's behalf in order to prevent a substantial loss.(16)

QUESTION: Some cookie recipes do not have any water, wine, grape juice, olive oil, milk or bee's honey as an ingredient. What are the halachos of hafroschas challah regarding such dough?

DISCUSSION: L'chatchilah, a dough of 10 cups or more of flour that contains none of these liquids should not be made at all.(17) A small amount of water should be mixed in during the kneading process even if the recipe does not call for it.(18)

B'diavad, if such a dough was prepared, challah is taken but no blessing is recited. Unlike standard

challah, however, this challah cannot be disposed of by burning. Rather, it must be buried in the ground.(19)

FOOTNOTES:

1 Shach Y.D. 117 in Nekudos ha-Kesef.

2 Yoma 76b.

3 Pri Chadash 117:4, Aruch ha-Shulchan 117:29; Kaf ha-Chayim O.C. 326:45; Yechaveh Da'as 4:43.

4 Beur Halachah 326:10. This is also the ruling of Darkei Teshuvah 117:33.

5 Erchin 16b.

6 Accordingly, one should not change even from one Jewish-owned hotel to another as it discredits the hotel where he stayed, unless he has a bona fide reason for doing so.

7 See Piskei Teshuvos 170:6 quoting Ahalecha B'amitecha.

8 Based on Mishnah Berurah 318:48, Chazon Ish O.C. 52:19, Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74-4 and Minchas Shelomo 2:34-22.

9 O.C. 4:7.

10 Igros Chazon Ish 1:4.

11 See Eishel Avraham O.C. 4.

12 Based on Mishnah Berurah 161:19 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 161:6. [A woman who removes her ring only when immersing in a mikveh may still wash with a ring on her finger.]

13 Based on O.C. 307:2 and Mishnah Berurah 11 and O.C. 334:25 and Mishnah Berurah 61. See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 124-128 for an in- depth explanation of this issue.

14 See Mishnah Berurah 278:3.

15 See Mishnah Berurah 307:22 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 334:57.

16 Melachim Omnayich 4:8 and 6, note 4. See Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 30, note 14.

17 Y.D. 329:10 and Shach 7.

18 See Mishnah Berurah 462:20 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 27.

19 Chazon Ish, Shevi'is 5:10, quoted in Derech Emunah, Bikurim 6:84. Nowadays, there is some flour that is produced from grain that was soaked in water. Challah separated from dough made from such flour may be disposed of by burning; see Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 329:3.

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