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ד' סיון תשפ"ה
פרשת במדבר

Netilas Yadayim

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BACKGROUND — REASONS FOR WASHING

The Rishonim and Acharonim discuss the various reasons for washing Netilas Yadayim in the morning. The following are the main opinions:

1. The Rashba¹ says that we wash our hands because we are recreated every day, and every day is new day of avodah (service of Hashem). Much like the Kohanim washed their hands in the Beis Hamikdash to start each day, we do the same.
2. The Rosh² suggests that the reason why we wash our hands is because one's hands are active during the night, and they likely touched a normally covered part of the body. One would need to wash hands to be able to daven.
3. The Zohar gives a third reason, brought by the Bais Yosef³, that a ruach raah (impure spirit) comes on people's hands during the night and one would need to wash his hands to remove this "ruach". Within this reason, there is a discussion whether the night creates the ruach raah⁴, or if sleep brings the ruach raah⁵.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE OPINIONS

There are several nafkos minna (resulting differences) between the reasons given —

- A. Bracha** — According to the reasons of the Rashba and the Rosh, the washing should be done with a bracha. According to the reason of ruach raah, no bracha should be said.
- B. Sirugin** — According to the reason of ruach raah, the washing should be done b'sirugin (alternating between hands — right, left, etc.). According to the reasons of the Rashba and the Rosh, any washing would suffice.
- C. Using a Cup** — According to the Rashba's reason and the reason of ruach raah, a cup would need to be used. According to the reason of the Rosh, it

would be sufficient to wash his hands straight from a faucet.

- D. Daytime Nap** — According to the Rashba, no netilah would be warranted after a daytime nap being that it is not a new day of avodah. According to the Rosh, however, if one took a nap in a bed during the day, he should wash his hands. According to the reason of ruach raah, it depends if sleep or night brings on the ruach raah.
- E. Slept with Gloves** — According to the Rosh, no netilah would be needed, being that his hands never touched anything unclean. According to the other reasons, a netilah would still be needed.
- F. Stayed Up All Night** — The Rosh's opinion certainly doesn't apply, according to many⁶ the Rashba's opinion doesn't apply either. There is even a debate if there is ruach raah.⁷

HALACHA L'MAASEH

Halacha L'maaseh, for washing we are machmir like all opinions, and one should wash his hands if any of the three reasons apply. However, for the bracha, we pasken "safeik brachos l'hakeil" and no bracha is said unless both the Rosh's and Rashba's reasons apply.

Therefore, in the above scenarios, the halacha is as follows —

- A. Bracha** — One should only say a bracha if both the Rosh's and the Rashba's reasons apply.
- B. Sirugin** — To be concerned for the opinion that we wash because of ruach raah, one should wash his hands in the morning b'sirugin.
- C. Using a Cup** — A cup should be used every time one washes nagel vasser.
- D. Daytime Nap** — If one took a nap during the day for 30 minutes or more, he should wash his hands b'sirugin (because of the Rosh), but without a

bracha (because of the Rashba).

- E. **Slept with Gloves** — If someone slept overnight with gloves, he should wash his hands in the morning (because of the Rashba), but no bracha should be said (because of the Rosh). If one takes a nap during the day with gloves on, when he wakes up, he should still wash his hands with a cup b'sirugin, because even though neither the reason of the Rashba nor the Rosh applies, there still may be a ruach raah (which may be generated by sleep alone).
- F. **Stayed up All Night** — As mentioned above, only the Rashba's reason applies.

Shulchan Aruch⁸ paskens that it is a safeik and the Rama writes that halacha l'maaseh one should wash without a bracha. Mishna Berurah⁹ comments that many Acharonim are of the opinion that a bracha in fact should be said and adds that if one also used the washroom everyone agrees that a bracha should be said. He, therefore, suggests that in order to avoid a shailah, one who stays up all night should use the washroom in the morning and intentionally touch that part of the body. This would then allow him to wash with a bracha. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹⁰ writes that just touching a normally covered part of the body without using the washroom may not be sufficient to avoid the safeik¹¹. Therefore, one should specifically use the washroom in this scenario.

If for some reason, one is unable to use the washroom before washing and there is no one available to be motzi him in the bracha, it is noteworthy that the Bach¹², Vilna Gaon¹³, Aruch HaShulchan¹⁴ and Rav Moshe Feinstein¹⁵ all are of the opinion that a bracha can be said even without using the washroom.

An additional factor to bear in mind is that the Shulchan Aruch¹⁶ writes that if one washes his hands before alos, he should wash them again after alos (without a bracha) because the ruach raah may be generated at the end of the night. For this reason, the most advisable practice is to wait until alos, use the washroom and then wash nagel vasser with a bracha.

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT DISCUSSIONS

Walking Daled Amos — Normally there is an issur to walk 4 amos (cubits — 1.5–2 feet each for a total of 6–8 feet) before washing nagel vasser in the morning. The Eishel Avraham¹⁷ paskens that this issur only applies if all the reasons for washing apply. Therefore, for example, if one took a nap in the middle of the day, or if someone stayed up all night past alos, there would be no issur to walk daled amos before he manages to wash his hands. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹⁸ is also lenient.

Washing Immediately — If one is in the middle of learning at the time of alos, most poskim are of the opinion that he does not need to stop learning to wash his hands right away, it would be sufficient to wash when he stops learning to prepare for davening. This is the opinion of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach¹⁹ and Rav Moshe Shternbuch²⁰ amongst others. The Shulchan Aruch Harav²¹, however, seems to disagree, because he writes כשיאיר ידיו מיד כשיאיר היום. L'maaseh, the minhag is to be maikel.

Touching Openings — Normally, one should not touch the orifices of his body (eyes, mouth, nose, etc.) until after he washes nagel vasser. Rav Chaim Kanievsky²² is of the opinion that this would apply to someone who stayed up all night. Therefore, according to him, one who will be learning past alos should be careful in the meantime not to touch any of the openings of his body. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach²³, however, is lenient.

1 שו"ת הרשב"א חלק א' סי' קצ"א

2 ברכות פרק ט' סי' כ"ג

3 או"ח סי' ד'

4 אורחות חיים ה"ד בבית יוסף סי' ד'

5 זוהר

6 ט"ז או"ח ד:ט, מגן אברהם או"ח שם ס"ק י"א, ביאור הגר"א שם ס"ק י"ג, ומשנה

ברורה שם ס"ק כ"ח

7 שערי תשובה שם ס"ק י"ג, חיי אדם כלל ב' הלכה ד'; ומשנה ברורה שם

8 או"ח סימן ד' סעי' י"ג.

9 שם ס"ק ל'

10 הליכות שלמה שבועות פרק י"ב סעי' ה'

11 בנו הגר"מ מאיר שמחה שליט"א הגיד לי שזה מדויק בדברי המשנה ברורה שצריך

ללכת הידים יותר מסתם נגיעה במקום המכוסה

12 או"ח סי' ד'

13 ספר מעשה רב סעי' ב'

14 או"ח סי' ד' סעי' י"ב

15 דין הגר"ר שמואל פירסט שליט"א בשמו

16 סימן ד' סעיף י"ד

17 אשל אברהם מבוטשאטש (סי' ד' ד"ה "מנו"ח")

18 הליכות שלמה שבועות פרק י"ב סעי' ד'

19 מבקשי תורה סיון תשנ"ה

20 שו"ת תשובות והנהגות חלק ב' סי' ב'

21 סי' ד' סעי' ג'

22 ספר אשי ישראל פרק ב' הערה צ"ו

23 הליכות שלמה שבועות פרק י"ב סעי' ד'



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