סימן ד

דיני נטילת ידים

א. בכל יום אחר שיקום ממטתו, צריך ליטול ידיו במים מתוך הכלי, ויברך קודם הניגוב: "ברוך אתה ה', אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על נטילת ידים".

אופן הנטילה

ב. צריך לערות על ידיו מים שלש פעמים, כדי להעביר רוח רעה ששורה עליהן. [ש"ע ס"ב].

וכך היא צורת הנטילה: בתחילה יטול כלי המים בידו הימנית, וימסרנו לידו השמאלית, ואחר כך ישפוך מים מהכלי שבידו השמאלית על ידו הימנית, ואחר כך יאחז הכלי בידו הימנית וישפוך על ידו השמאלית, הרי פעם אחת. וחוזר כסדר הזה פעם שנית ופעם שלישית, באופן שירחץ על כל יד ויד שלש פעמים. ולא ירחץ לכל יד בפני עצמה שלש פעמים בזה אחר זה, כי לא תיעקר רוח רעה אלא דוקא ברחיצה של סירוגין, כאשר כתבנו. [בא"ח תולדות ה"א]

Siman 4

The Morning *Netillat Yadayim*

The mitzvah

1) The halakha demands that each person wash his hands each morning upon waking up. He must pour water on his hands from a container, and before drying them he recites the blessing, "בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדָיִם – May You be blessed, God our Master, King of the universe, Who sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us regarding *netillat yadayim*."

Day 48

Netillat Yadayim – Step by Step

The procedure

2) In order to cleanse the hands of the harmful forces attached to them, it is necessary to pour water over them three times. The procedure is as follows:

First the person should pick up the container of water with his right hand and transfer it to his left hand. Then he pours water on his right hand. Then he transfers the container back to his right hand and pours water on his left hand. This procedure is repeated two more times, so that he has poured water on both hands alternately three times.

It is not possible to fulfill this mitzvah by pouring water three times on the right hand and then three times on the left hand. The harmful forces cannot be dispelled from the hands unless the water is poured on the hands alternately, as explained here.[158]

158. The Talmud (*Shabbat* 109a) teaches: Ribbi Natan said that the harmful forces on one's hands are "haughty and independent." The *Arukh* and Rabbenu Hanan'el (cited by Rashi) explained that in the realm of demons and spirits,

וכל הנוטל ואינו מהפך ידיו אנה ואנה בשעת נטילה, הרי זה קרוב לודאי שאין המים באים על כל היד וכנראה בחוש הריאות, לכן יזהר להפך ידיו בשעת נטילה אנה ואנה כדי שיבואו המים על כל היד.

[באו"ח פ' שמיני ה"ג]

It is important to turn one's hands to both sides while performing *netillat yadayim* to ensure that the water will reach all the hands' surfaces. If someone fails to do this, it is almost certain that a portion of his hand will remain dry. Anyone will see that this is so upon experimenting.

this one is held in high esteem. Therefore, it demands that *netillat yadayim* be performed three times alternately on each hand before it can be dispelled from the person's hands.

The proper procedure

Maran in the *Bet Yosef* pointed out that the holy *Zohar* (*parashat Vayeshev*) states that one must pour the water on one's right hand first, but in another passage (*parashat Teruma*) it states that one first pours the water on one's left hand. Maran offered two ways to reconcile this contradiction. One is that there is a difference between *netillat yadayim* performed upon waking up in the morning and *netillat yadayim* performed in preparation for a meal. Upon waking in the morning, one's hands are infected with harmful forces [which emanate from the spiritual realm of "the left"]. If someone would pour water on his left hand before pouring on his right hand, it would seem that the right side is subordinate to the left [since the right hand pours the water on the left hand]. Therefore, it is important to first use the left hand to pour water on the right hand. But when someone wishes to eat a meal, his hands are not infected with any harmful forces. We perform *netillat yadayim* before eating as a way of sanctifying ourselves. In this case, it is proper to first use the right hand to pour water on the left hand.

Maran then offered a second solution that satisfied him better: In every instance of *netillat yadayim*, whether upon waking in the morning or upon beginning a meal, one first uses the left hand to pour water on the right hand, and this is the plain meaning of the passage in *parashat Vayeshev*. The passage in *parashat Teruma* does not contradict this. It teaches that one must always pick up the container of water first with the right hand and then transfer it to the left hand.

The *Migdal David* (cited in the *Eliya Rabba* 4:5) concurred with the first solution offered by the *Bet Yosef*. The *Eliya Rabba* then pointed out that the holy *Zohar* on *Megillat Rut* states clearly that when performing *netillat yadayim* to begin a meal one must first pour water on the right hand using the left hand. Based on this passage of the *Zohar*, the *Bene Haye* Algazi supported the second solution offered by the *Bet Yosef*. He testified that this is the procedure that everyone follows. The *Yafe Lalev* (*Yosher Levav* #7) concurred with this, proving it through the *Shulhan Arukh* (4:10) that states clearly that one first picks up the container of water with the right hand and transfers it to the left hand so that the water is poured first on the right hand.

In conclusion, the correct procedure of *netillat yadayim* is to begin by picking up the container of water with the right hand and transfer it to the left hand. It is incorrect to pick up the empty container with the left hand and hold it under the faucet to fill up and then pour the water on the right hand.

Three times

The Talmud (*Shabbat* 109a) and the *Shulhan Arukh* (4:2) both state that it is necessary to pour water on each hand three times. They did not specify, however, whether this means to pour water on the right hand three times and then on the left hand three times, or if one must alternate – right, left, right, left, right and left.

The *Zekhor le'Avraham* (*ma'arekhet Netillat Yadayim* in the Morning) taught that according to the Arizal, one must pour the water three times alternately on the right hand and left hand. According to the *Seder Hayom*, however, one must pour the water three times on the right hand and then three times on the left hand. The *Zekhor le'Avraham* recommended fulfilling the mitzvah according to both opinions. That is, first one should pour water three times on the right hand and then three times on the left hand. After that, one should pour water two more times on each hand, but alternately – right, left, right and left.

The *Minhat Aharon* and the *Petah Hadevir* were not satisfied with this solution. Therefore, the *Petah Hadevir* recommended pouring the water three times on the right, three times on the left hand, and then to pour water another three times alternately on the right and left hands. The *Kaf Hahayim* Palachi (8:22) and the *Yafe Lalev* (4:7) concurred with this, and the latter brought proof from Harav Yaakov of Emden. He commented that he believed that if the *Zekhor le'Avraham* would have known of the comments of

ג. יש מדקדקים שלא תקבל יד הימנית את הכלי מיד השמאלית בשום פעם, אלא יד השמאלית אחר שתשפוך על הימנית תניח את הכלי בארץ [או על השלחן או על הכיור], ואז הימנית תקחהו משם וישפוך על השמאלית, אבל הימנית בכל פעם היא תתן את הכלי לשמאלית כדי שתשפוך בו עליה, להראות הכנעה לשמאלית כנגד הימנית, שהוא כאדון הגוזר על עבדו לשמשו. [באי"ח שם]

ד. איטר יד נוטל את ידיו כסדר כל אדם, ואין לשנות להקדים יד שמאל. [ראה משנ"ב ס"ק כב, כה"ח ס"ק לה, ילקו"י עמ' שיט]

Preference for the right hand

3) According to some *Poskim*, it is incorrect to transfer the container from the left hand to the right hand. Instead, after pouring water on the right hand, the person should put the container down on the floor, on the table or in the sink. He then picks up the container with his right hand and pours water on the left hand.

One must never pick up the container with the left hand to pour water on the right hand. One should pick up the container with the right hand and transfer it to the left hand. In this way, we demonstrate that the right side [the powers of *hesed* and mercy] dominates the left side [the powers of punishment] and tells it what to do, and that the left side cannot dictate to the right side.

Left-handed people

4) The identical procedure should be followed by left-handed people. They must not give preference to the left hand.[159]

Harav Yaakov of Emden, he would have retracted his ruling.

The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (4:8; 4:12), however, insisted that the correct procedure is as the Arizal taught – to pour the water on each hand three times alternately. The opinion of the *Seder Hayom* may be disregarded. This is likewise the ruling of the *Halakha Berura* (page 65).

Four times

The *Mishna Berura* (4:10) cited the *Ma'ase Rav* testifying that Harav Eliyahu of Vilna had the practice of pouring water alternately on each hand four times – three times to remove the harmful forces from the hands and a fourth time to rinse off the water that was contaminated by those harmful forces. The earliest source for this practice is the *Sefer Hakane*.

The *Yalkut Yosef* (page 317) commented that the common custom of Sefardic Jews is to pour the water three times alternately on each hand. Nevertheless, he recommended parenthetically that people refrain from wiping their faces with their wet hands if they poured the water on each only three times. People should either pour water on each hand a fourth time or dry their hands before rinsing their faces.

The handles of the container used for *netillat yadayim*

The *Seder Hayom*, cited in *Pit'he Olam* (4:13) warned that until one completes the mitzvah of the morning *netillat yadayim*, one must avoid touching any wet surface on the container being used for this mitzvah. This is because that water will become contaminated once the person touches it, so that his act of *netillat yadayim* will fail to dispel the harmful forces from his hands.

The *Od Yosef Hai* (*parashat Toledot* halakha 7) disagreed with this stringency, explaining that the Arizal taught that it is unnecessary. He explained that the harmful forces do not contaminate the bit of moisture on the container's handles since it is an insignificant amount of water. The "spirit" who controls these harmful forces is haughty and considers this moisture unworthy of its attention. Therefore, one may touch the wet surfaces of the container while performing *netillat yadayim*.

159. The reason for giving preference to the right hand is not because it is the dominant hand. It is because the right side represents the powers of *hesed* while the left side represents the powers of punishment. Therefore even left-handed people must follow the identical procedure. These are the instructions of the *Artzot Hahayim*, the *Mishna Berura* and the *Kaf Hahayim*.