**כו.** אם לא בירך קודם הניגוב, אינו רשאי לברך אחר הניגוב, שכל המצוות כולן מברך עליהן עובר לעשייתן. ולדעת הרמב"ם ורוב הראשונים ומרן השלחן ערוך והאחרונים, היינו לעיכובא. ואם מברך על המצוה לאחר עשייתה, ברכה לבטלה היא. ואפילו אם נזכר בתוך כדי דיבור שלא בירך, לא יברך אחר הניגוב. [הליכו"ע ח"א עמ' שיז]

Day 28

**Reciting blessing after drying hands**

**26)** If someone failed to recite the blessing until after he has dried his hands, it is no longer possible to recite it, following the rule that one must recite the blessing before fulfilling the mitzvah and not afterward. According to Rambam and most *Rishonim*, including Maran in the *Shulḥan Arukh*, if someone would recite this blessing after he has dried his hands it would be a blessing recited in vain. Even if he realized his mistake less than a second after he finished drying his hands, he may no longer recite the blessing.[24] The Sefardic *Aḥaronim* concurred with this ruling.

practice in this manner as long as he knows that his hands are already clean enough to enable him to recite a blessing.

Nowadays, the universal custom is to recite the blessing after pouring the water on the hands and before drying them. The *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (158:83) added that this is the recommended practice according to the Arizal as well. See also the *Ben Ish Ḥai* (*parashat Shemini* halakha 5).

**24.** The Rama (gloss to 158:11) wrote that if someone forgot to recite the blessing until he had dried his hands he may still recite it. The *Ture Zahav* disagreed with this, ruling that once he has fulfilled the mitzvah completely it is no longer possible to recite the blessing.

**Rambam's principle:** Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 11:6) stated a cardinal principle that it is forbidden to recite a blessing over a mitzvah after it has been fulfilled completely. The *Hagahot Asheri*, citing the *Or Zaru'a*, disagreed with this principle, explaining that although the Talmud rules that one must recite the blessings before fulfilling the mitzvot, that is only the ideal formula for performing mitzvot. If someone had failed to recite the blessing before performing the mitzvah, however, he may still recite it afterward. Rama cited the *Hagahot Asheri* as the source for his ruling regarding reciting the blessing of *al netillat yadayim* after drying one's hands. Harav Eliyahu of Vilna (158:24) ruled otherwise, basing his decision on the Rambam's principle. The *Matte Yehuda* likewise explained that the *Aḥaronim* followed Rambam's opinion whereas Rama followed that of *Hagahot Asheri*. He then cited the *Sifte Kohen* (*Y.D.* 19:2) ruling in favor of Rambam in this matter, citing other *Rishonim* who concurred with this principle. He concluded that although the *Peri Ḥadash* took issue with the *Sifte Kohen*, we are powerless to decide in favor of either side of this debate. Therefore, we must assume that the halakha is indeed according to Rambam's rule. The *Aḥaronim* (*Peri To'ar*, *Tevu'ot Shor*, *Kereti*, *Tal Orot*, *Tif'eret Tzevi*, *Erekh Hashulḥan*, *Bet Me'ir*, *Peri Megadim*, *Zivḥe Tzedek* 19:2, *Ben Ish Ḥai parashat Vayeshev* halakha 10 and *parashat Shemini* halakha 7, and Harav Yosef Yedid in *Birkat Yosef* Vol. III, page 178) concurred that one may not recite the blessing after drying the hands. This, therefore, is the conclusion of Maran the Rishon Letziyon in *Halikhot Olam* (Vol. I, page 317).

Maran the Rishon Letziyon then pointed out that although Rama cited the *Hagahot Asheri* as the source for the common custom, he could have stated that the common custom agrees with Rambam's general principle, but that we follow the rationale cited in Tosafot that the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim* is an exception. As explained above, the Tosafot suggested that our Sages permitted the blessing of *al netillat yadayim* to be recited after fulfilling the mitzvah since sometimes one's hands are dirty and unfit for reciting any blessing until after being washed. Nevertheless, Rama did not use this reasoning. This might be because there is no Talmudic source for it and Rambam disagreed with it out of hand.

Nevertheless, it is possible to build a *safek sefeka* based on the Tosafot to permit reciting the blessing after drying one's hands. First of all, the halakha might follow the opinion of the *Hagahot Asheri* permitting one to recite the blessing after performing any mitzvah. Even if the halakha follows Rambam's principle, it might be that the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim* is an exception as Tosafot suggested. Nevertheless, the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* applies even when there is a *safek sefeka* to allow reciting the blessing, and therefore we must refrain from reciting the blessing after drying the hands.

**Within one second of drying the hands**

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Halikhot Olam* Vol. I, footnote on page 319) cited *Poskim* (*Kereti Ufleti*, *Tevu'ot Shor*, *Erekh Hashulḥan*) who ruled that once someone finishes drying his hands he may not recite the blessing even if it is within one second (*tokh kede dibur*) after he dried

**ומכל מקום נראה שאם ידיו רטובות אפילו במקצת, יכול עדיין לברך, שכיון שצריך לנגב על כל פנים מקצתן, לא חשיב נגמרה מצותן.** [אור לציון ח"ב עמ' צא בהערה]

If someone began drying his hands before he recited the blessing but he stopped drying them before they became completely dry, he may still recite the blessing. The mitzvah is not finished until his hands are dried completely.

his hands. We follow this opinion based on the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*.

**Rendering the hands unfit and requiring a second *netillat yadayim***

The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Shemini* halakha 7, cited as the halakha by the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 158:85) ruled that if someone forgot to recite the blessing until after he dried his hands, he should wash his hands again and recite the blessing. This procedure, the *Ben Ish Hai* added, does not infringe on the halakha prohibiting a *berakha she'enah tzerikha*, but before performing *netillat yadayim* the second time he should touch his skin underneath his clothes, thus necessitating the second washing. Then, he may recite the blessing before drying his hands.

The *Yalkut Yosef* (Vol. III, page 21) disagreed with this ruling, stating that this person must not scratch his head or touch his skin under his clothes in order to necessitate another *netillat yadayim*. He cited a note handwritten by Maran the Rishon Letziyon taking issue with the ruling of the *Ben Ish Hai* regarding this matter. He expressed his surprise at this ruling, since the *Ben Ish Hai* always ruled to avoid reciting a blessing whenever there is any doubt of its necessity, even if Maran in the *Shulhan Arukh* ruled that one must recite the blessing. If so, how could he have ruled that the person should wash his hands again and recite the blessing in this case? Even if he does touch his skin, there are *Poskim* (Harav Shelomo Luria, *Ture Zahav*, *Magen Avraham*) who ruled that one may not recite any blessing when washing the hands a second time. Therefore, the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* must be applied. It is true that there is a compound doubt, a *safek sefeka*, to permit reciting the blessing in this case, since there are *Poskim* who ruled that one may recite the blessing after drying the hands, and there are *Poskim* who ruled that after touching one's skin it is necessary to wash hands again and recite the blessing again. In fact, the *Peri Megadim* ruled that one should recite the blessing in this case because of this *safek sefeka*. It is well-known, however, that the *Ben Ish Hai* himself maintained that the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* overrides any *safek sefeka*. If so, one must certainly not recite the blessing after performing *netilllat yadayim* a second time.

This handwritten gloss on the *Ben Ish Hai*, however, does not appear in the *Halikhot Olam*, which is a collection of Maran the Rishon Letziyon's arguments against those rulings of the *Ben Ish Hai* that he decided are incorrect. This makes the ruling of the *Yalkut Yosef* untenable.

The *Yalkut Yosef* complained that if this person will touch his skin so that he needs to wash hands again, he will be guilty of causing a *berakha she'enah tzerikha*. This is not exactly correct. The true reason is that even if he does touch his skin he might not be eligible to recite the blessing when washing the second time, and the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel* applies even though there is a *safek sefeka* to justify reciting the blessing, as explained in the previous paragraph.

There are two problems, however, with the passage in the handwritten gloss cited by the *Yalkut Yosef*. First of all, Maran the Rishon Letziyon established a rule (responsa *Hazon Ovadya* Vol. I, page 114; Vol. II, page 864) that wherever there is a *safek sefeka* to permit reciting a blessing and the ruling of the *Shulhan Arukh* also calls for the blessing to be recited, one may recite the blessing despite the principle of *safek berakhot lehakel*. In a case where someone touches his skin after performing *netillat yadayim*, Maran in the *Shulhan Arukh* ruled that he must perform *netillat yadayim* again and recite the blessing. Added to the fact that some *Rishonim* ruled that one may always recite the blessing of *al netillat yadayim* after performing the mitzvah, we have a *safek sefeka* to permit reciting the blessing in our case, plus the fact that Maran ruled to recite it. Therefore, the halakha should be as the *Ben Ish Hai* ruled.

Furthermore, although Harav Shelomo Luria ruled that if someone touches his skin during a meal and needs to perform *netillat yadayim* again he must not recite the blessing, it could be that this is only when he has already begun eating. In the case discussed here, where he has just washed and dried his hands and has not yet begun to eat, even Rav Shelomo Luria might agree that if he touches his skin at this time he must perform *netillat yadayim* again and recite the blessing. Indeed, the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (158:85) made this distinction. According to this, all *Poskim* agree that if someone touches his skin before beginning to eat, he must perform *netillat yadayim* again and recite the blessing. This also justifies the ruling of the *Ben Ish Hai*. In this case, the person is not guilty of causing a *berakha she'enah tzerikha* either, since many *Poskim* ruled that he is obligated to recite this blessing even before he touched his skin.

In contrast to *Yalkut Yosef*, the *Halakha Berura* (pages 77, 78) concurred with the ruling of *Ben Ish Hai*, and he wrote that his father, Maran the Rishon Letziyon, agreed

**כז.** אם נטל ידיו ואינו יודע אם בירך אינו חוזר ומברך. [כה"ח סופר ס"ק פו]. והיינו אפילו אם נסתפק קודם הניגוב.

**כח.** יש נוהגים לומר אחר הנטילה קודם הברכה פסוק "שאו ידיכם קודש וברכו את ה'" (תהלים קלד, ב). ויש אומרים שאין לאומרו, מחשש הפסק. והמיקל בזה לאומרו אין למחות בידו שיש לו על מה שיסמוך, ומכל מקום שב ואל תעשה עדיף שלא להפסיק באמירתו בין הנטילה לברכה. [ראה יבי"א ח"ח סי' כ אות ו]



**Unsure whether recited the blessing**

**27)** If someone performed *netillat yadayim* and he is unsure whether or not he recited the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*, he may not recite it. This applies even if he has not yet dried his hands.

**Reciting verse before blessing**

**28)** Many people have the custom to recite the verse שְׂאוּ יְדֵיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ וּבָרְכוּ אֶת ה' – "Raise your hands in sanctity and bless God" (*Tehillim* 134:2) just before reciting the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*. Some *Poskim* protested that this practice is problematic since it constitutes an interruption between the performing of the mitzvah and the blessing. Nevertheless, there is a basis to permit it and there is no reason to protest the practice. It is best, however, to refrain from this practice and not to recite this verse before reciting the blessing.[25]

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with him. Apparently, Maran the Rishon Letziyon himself retracted his ruling written in his gloss on the *Ben Ish Hai* and for that reason it does not appear in the *Halikhot Olam*.

**In conclusion**, if someone realized after drying his hands that he had forgotten to recite the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*, he may touch his skin under his clothes so that he must wash hands again and then he may recite the blessing.

**Custom of Ashkenazic Jews**

This entire discussion is pertinent for Sefardic Jews, since we follow the ruling of Rambam and the *Shulhan Arukh* that one may not recite the blessing after drying one's hands. The custom of Ashkenazic Jews, however, follows the ruling of Rama that one may recite the blessing even after drying the hands if one forgot to recite it before drying them. The *Mishna Berura* (158:44) commented that even according to the Ashkenazic custom, if someone forgot to recite the blessing of *al netillat yadayim* until after he recited the blessing of *hamotzi* he may no longer recite the blessing that he forgot. In any case, the *Halakha Berura* (pages 73 and 77) wrote that it is better to follow the advice of the *Ben Ish Hai* and touch the skin under the clothes and perform *netillat yadayim* again and recite the blessing before drying them.

**25.** The *Shene Luhot Haberit* (cited in the *Eliya Rabba* 162:1) stated, "I have a tradition that, after performing *netillat yadayim* and raising my hands, I recite the verse of שְׂאוּ יְדֵיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ וּבָרְכוּ אֶת ה' before reciting the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*. As the Arizal explained, one must raise the hands before drying them." The *Mishna Berura* (158:44) mentioned this custom as well, and the *sefer Netive Am* (#164) testified that this is a common practice in Yerushalayim.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. VIII, #20:6) commented that although there is no source for this practice in the Talmud or in the *Rishonim*, it is not considered an unnecessary interruption between the performing of the mitzvah and the blessing. He brought proof for this from the *Da'at Kedoshim* (#166, cited in responsa of Mahara"m Brisk Vol. III, #39:5) who ruled that although it is forbidden to interrupt once one dries the hands until after reciting the blessing of *hamotzi*, it is permissible to interrupt before drying the hands. Likewise, one may take as much time as one wishes between washing the hands and drying them. The responsa *Oneg Yom Tov* (#18) likewise ruled that if someone speaks before drying his hands it is not considered an interruption since the act of drying the hands is the final stage of the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim*. This is based on the Tosafot and Rabbenu Asher (*Pesahim* 7b) who ruled that as long as a person recites the blessing of *al netillat yadayim* before drying his hands, he has fulfilled the rule of reciting the blessing before performing the mitzvah.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon pointed out, however, that Maran in the *Bet Yosef* (*Siman* 165) ruled that if someone were to recite the blessing of *asher yatzar* after washing his hands and just before reciting the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*, it would be considered an interruption. Furthermore, he cited the *Ru'ah Hayim* Palachi (*Siman* 166) and the *Hesed La'alafim* (*Siman* 166), cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 162:8, stating that according to the Kabbalah one should recite this verse before beginning to wash hands