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

כט. הנוטל ידיו לסעודה ותיכף שמע ברכה או דברים שבקדושה, צריך לענות אמן ושאר דברים שבקדושה, כל עוד לא בירך "על נטילת ידים". ואפילו להאומרים שאין לומר פסוק "שאו ידיכם קודש" מפני שחוששים משום הפסק (כמבואר בהלכה הקודמת), מכל מקום גם הם יודו שצריך לענות אמן ושאר דברים שבקדושה, ולא שייך להחמיר בזה ולומר שלא יענה, דחומרא דאתי לידי קולא היא. אבל אם בירך כבר "על נטילת ידים" לא יענה עד שיתחיל לנגב ידיו, ויהרהר אמן ודברים שבקדושה בלבו. [ביו"א ח"ח סי' כ]

Responding Amen before the blessing

29) If someone washed his hands and then before he recited the blessing he heard someone recite a blessing or he heard a kaddish or *Kedusha*, he must respond Amen or *yehe shemeh rabbah* before reciting the blessing. Although many *Poskim* frowned upon the practice of reciting the verse of שְׂאוּ יְדֵיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ וּבָרְכוּ אֶת ה' at this point, they would agree that one must respond Amen in this case. One may not decide to be stringent and not respond, since by doing so one would sin by failing to fulfill the mitzvah of responding Amen.

If someone has recited the blessing of *al netillat yadayim* and then he heard a blessing or kaddish before he has dried his hands, he may not respond Amen. In such a case he should think the appropriate response without mouthing the words.

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rather than after washing them. These sources are cited as well in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (162:8).

The *Nimuke Orah Hayim* (158:4) stated that according to the *Poskim* who explained that drying the hands is an essential part of the mitzvah and that by reciting the blessing before drying them one fulfills the requirement of reciting the blessing before fulfilling the mitzvah, one must not interrupt by reciting any verse after performing *netillat yadayim* and before drying the hands. This perspective is the exact opposite of that of the *Da'at Kedoshim*. He testified that the custom is not to recite any verse after washing and before drying the hands – nothing is to be recited other than the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*. He explained that reciting a verse before drying the hands would be akin to a *mohel* speaking after cutting an infant's foreskin but before performing the second stage of the mitzvah, the *peri'a*.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon pointed out that the great *Aharonim* (*Eliya Rabba* and *Shene Luhot Haberit*) supported this custom and did not consider it to be an interruption. One cannot brush their opinion aside without strong proof. It could be that they consider this verse to be essential to the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim* and that therefore reciting it is not considered a fatal interruption.

The *Yalkut Yosef* (Vol. III, footnote on page 24) cited a handwritten gloss from Maran the Rishon Letziyon stating that he himself used to practice as the *Shene Luhot Haberit* instructed, and he would recite this verse before the blessing. He later changed his mind to recite only the blessing and then to dry his hands. This is because a number of *Aharonim*, including the *Hesed La'alafim*, regarded this practice to be an interruption between performing the mitzvah and reciting the blessing.

Comment of the *Halakha Berura*

The *Halakha Berura* pointed out that according to Maran in the *Shulhan Arukh*, if someone pours *revi'it* of water onto each hand at one time it is not necessary to dry his hands before eating his bread. Despite this, our practice is to recite the blessing after washing and before drying since we rely on the *Poskim* who ruled that one may recite this blessing after performing the mitzvah. If someone pours *revi'it* of water onto each hand and he would then recite the verse of שְׂאוּ יְדֵיכֶם קֹדֶשׁ וּבָרְכוּ אֶת ה', however, it would definitely be an interruption between the mitzvah and the blessing.

It seems improbable, however, that the *Shene Luhot Haberit* was referring only to people who make sure to pour less than *revi'it* of water on each hand. Certainly, when Maran the Rishon Letziyon used to follow this practice and recite the verse, he poured *revi'it* on each hand. It is only logical to say that this practice was recommended whether or not one poured *revi'it* of water on each hand, relying on the justification found in responsa *Yabia Omer*.

Speaking after drying the hands and before reciting *hamotzi*

Below in *Siman* 166, it will be explained that technically it is permissible to speak after reciting the blessing of *netillat yadayim* and drying the hands even before reciting the blessing of *hamotzi*. It is a recommended practice, however, to refrain from speaking at that time. It is much worse to interrupt between the acts of washing the hands and drying them, as is explained in *Derashot Tziyun Lenefesh Haya* (essay 4:22).