היה דרכו של זה להקפיד וזה אין דרכו להקפיד, למי שדרכו להקפיד חוצץ, למי שאין דרכו להקפיד אינו חוצץ. ולכן צבעי שרגיל שידיו מלוכלכות תמיד בצבע, אין הצבע שעל ידיו חוצץ. [ש"ע סי' קסא ס"ב], ויתבאר לקמן הלכה י"ח.

צפרניים

ד. צפרניים נקיות, אפילו שהן גדולות ועודפות על הבשר, אינן חוצצות. ואף שלענין טבילה נהגו הנשים להחמיר ליטול צפורניהם בשעת טבילה, דשמא יש שם צואה הנדבקת (ראה יבי"א ח"ב חיו"ד סי' יג), מכל מקום לענין נטילה לא שייך האי חומרא ליטול צפרניו בכל נטילה ונטילה. [ש"ך יו"ד סי' קצח ס"ק כב

In a case where one group of people feel one way about having a substance on their skin and another goup feels another way, the halakha is determined by each individual's feeling. Someone who minds having the substance attached to him permanently must consider it to be a *hatzitza* whereas someone who does not mind it may ignore it and perform *netillat yadayim* without removing it from his skin.

For example, a painter or artist whose hands are constantly spotted with paint can perform *netillat yadayim* without cleaning the paint from his hands. Another person with similar spots of paint on his hands must consider the paint to be a *hatzitza*. This will be explained below in halakha 18.

Day 66

Fingernails

Long fingernails

4) Even if someone's fingernails are overgrown, they do not constitute a *hatzitza* for the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim* as long as they are clean. Regarding a woman immersing in a mikveh, the custom is to make sure that the fingernails and toenails are cut short for fear that there might be some dirt stuck underneath a nail. For the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim*, however, there is no such custom. It would be highly impractical to have to trim one's fingernails daily in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim*.

Rabbenu Shlomo Luria wrote that there is no question that the individual must remove the substance since he does not want it to remain on his hands permanently, and this is clearly the opinion of Rama (gloss to 161:1) since he ruled that the dirt under the fingernails is not a *hatzitza* since no one minds it remaining there, *but if someone does mind it he must remove the dirt from under the nails*. The *Magen Avraham* (161:6) deduced from this that we must take the individual's feelings into consideration. Nevertheless, the *Magen Avraham* cited the *sefer Pene Yitzhak* ruling that since the Rashba considered this to be a doubt in the halakha we may rule leniently. This is likewise the ruling of Harav Zalman (161:3).

In practice, it is proper to be stringent in such a case since Maran remained undecided about it. This is the ruling of the *Mishna Berura* (161:10) and the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (161:18). The *Mishna Berura* added, however, that if the dirt under the fingernails is moist or if it is loose, it is not necessary to be stringent about it. This is especially so if this individual did not mind leaving the dirt there all day long until he decided to perform *netillat yadayim*.

ואחרון]. ומכל מקום לדעת המקובלים גידול הצפרניים הוא קשה ומר לנפש האדם, וגורם תגבורת ויניקה לחיצונים. [ראה בא"ח פי קדושים הלכה כד]. וגם נכון ליטול הצפרניים בכל ערב שבת משום כבוד שבת. [של"ה הובא בכה"ח ס"ק יג]

ה. לכלוך שתחת הצפורן, אם הוא שלא כנגד הבשר, שהצפורן גדולה ועודפת על בשר האצבע, הרי זה חוצץ, משום שדרך רוב בני אדם להקפיד לנקותם משום מיאוס. וצריך להסיר אותה הזוהמא קודם נטילה. [ש"ע סי' קסא ס"א, משנ"ב ס"ק ג וס"ק ט, כה"ח ס"ק יג]. אבל אם היה לכלוך זה כנגד הבשר אינו חוצץ, משום דהוי כמיעוטו שאינו מקפיד, כי אין מקפידים על זה לנטילה. אבל אם היה מקפיד הוא צריך לנקרן, אף שהוא כנגד הבשר. [רמ"א שם]

ויש מקילין אפילו בלכלוך שאינו כנגד הבשר, משום שאינו נדבק. [רש"ל, ב"ח, א"ר סק"ה, וראה שעה"צ סק"ט]. ואף שיש מקום לסמוך על זה היכא שהוא עצמו אינו מקפיד, אף שהעולם מקפידים [ראה הלכה ברורה עמ' רכז].

Nevertheless, the Kabbalists have taught us that the practice of allowing the fingernails to grow long is damaging to one's spiritual health. It enables the forces of evil to latch onto the person's soul and to leech his spiritual strength. Besides this, it is proper to trim one's fingernails each Friday in honor of Shabbat.

Dirt underneath fingernails

5) If someone's fingernails are long enough to protrude further than the ends of his fingers and there is dirt attached to the inside of that extended portion of the nail, it constitutes a *hatzitza*. This is because most people would not want this dirt to remain attached to their nails. He must at least remove the dirt before performing *netillat yadayim*.

If the dirt is attached to the fingernail at a point within the length of the fingertips, however, it is not considered a *hatzitza*. This is because most people do not mind leaving this dirt where it is; thus it is a substance covering a minor portion of one's hands that people do not mind remaining there, which means it is not a halakhic *hatzitza*. If this person does mind having this dirt under his fingernail, however, it is a *hatzitza* and he must remove it before performing the mitzvah.

Some *Poskim* ruled that one can be lenient even if there is dirt attached to the fingernail at a point beyond the end of the fingertip as long as that dirt is not firmly stuck in place. It is possible to argue that as long as the person does not mind this dirt remaining attached to his fingernail he may leave it there although most people would mind having it there.[115]

115. The plain understanding of the *Shulhan Arukh* is that if there is dirt attached to a fingernail in a place that protrudes beyond the fingertip it is a *hatzitza* since most people mind dirt being there, even if this person does not mind it. This is likewise the explanation offered by the *Mishna Berura* (161:3).

The Rama commented that it is not customary to bother cleaning out the mud stuck underneath the fingernails [within the length of the fingertip] according to the *Magen Avraham* (161:5)] since most people do not mind it remaining there and it covers only a small portion of one's hand. If this person does mind it, however, he should make sure to remove the *hatzitza* before performing this mitzvah. If the dirt is attached at a point beyond the length of the fingertips, it certainly constitutes a *hatzitza* since most people mind the dirt being there. The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat*

מכל מקום נכון שלא יגדל אדם צפרניו, כדי שלא לבא לידי מכשול בנטילת ידים בחציצה. וגם אינו נכון על פי הקבלה, כמבואר לעיל.

ו. בצק שתחת הצפורן, חוצץ, אפילו כנגד הבשר [ש"ע שם]. כי דרך העולם להקפיד אפילו כנגד הבשר.

[משנ"ב סק"ג]

Nevertheless, it is certainly best to avoid such questions and always keep one's fingernails cut short. In this way, one avoids any questions regarding his performance of the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim*. Besides, this is certainly the preferred practice according to the Kabbalah as explained above.

Dough on fingernails

6) If dough is attached anywhere on a fingernail, it is a *hatzitza* since most people would mind it remaining there.

Kedoshim halakha 24) and the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (161:13) both concurred that any dirt attached to the fingernail beyond the length of the fingertip constitutes a *hatzitza*.

The *Bayit Hadash* and the *Eliya Rabba* ruled that all the above applies only to dirt that is firmly stuck to the fingernail. If it is not firmly attached, one may perform *netillat yadayim* without removing it even if it is beyond the length of the fingertip. Since it is not firmly attached, it does not constitute a *hatzitza* whatsoever; the water penetrates the dirt to the fingernail's surface. See above in the footnote to halakha 3.

Can we rely on this leniency in practice? The *Halakha Berura* (page 227) suggested that we can if the person himself does not mind having this dirt attached to his fingernails all the time. As explained above in the footnote to halakha 3, the *Poskim* debated the halakha about any *hatzitza* covering a minor portion of the hand if most people would mind it remaining there permanently but this particular person does not mind it remaining there permanently. If we combine the lenient opinion in that matter with the leniency of the *Bayit Hadash*, we have a strong enough basis to rely upon in practice. This is the position of the *Halakha Berura*.

The *Shulhan Arukh*, however, does not seem to agree. It states that "dirt attached to the fingernail protruding beyond the fingertip is a *hatzitza*" without suggesting that we can differentiate between one type of dirt and another. The *Halakha Berura* (pages 223 and 224) realized this and attempted to reconcile the *Shulhan Arukh* with his leniency, but this does not conform to the simple reading of the text. Besides, how can someone know for sure that the dirt under his fingernail will allow the water to penetrate it?

The *Mishna Berura* (161:10) ruled that one may be lenient if one knows the dirt attached to the fingernail is moist mud or dry earth, but if someone does not know what it is there is no basis for leniency, in particular if it is attached to the nail beyond the length of the fingertip. Therefore, the halakha stated here follows the ruling of the *Ben Ish Hai* and the *Kaf Hahayim*.

In our times, this is even more compelling since in our societies we are so aware of cleanliness and hygiene. Nobody wants other people to see that they have dirt of any kind stuck to their fingernails. It is likely that in our society we must remove any dirt from under our fingernails, even if it is within the length of the fingertips.

Ideally, everyone should follow the practice of trimming their nails short regularly and keeping them clean. If someone has a reason to grow his or her fingernails long, he or she must make sure that they are clean all the time. This is practical advice for a mourner who may not trim his fingernails with a clipper, or for a *shohet* or *mohel* who needs to have longer fingernails for his profession.

Cleaning fingernails on Shabbat

The *Magen Avraham* (161:5) ruled that it is forbidden on Shabbat to scrape the dirt out from under the fingernails; one may only rinse it off with water. The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Kedoshim* halakha 24) concurred with this ruling. On the other hand, the *Eliya Rabba* (161:5), citing the *Tashbe"tz* (#284), ruled that there is nothing wrong with scraping off the dirt; it is prohibited only to scrape off a layer of the nail itself. This is likewise the ruling of Harav Zalman and the *Derekh Hahayim*, cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer, and several other *Aharonim*. See responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. II, *Y.D.* #13:4).