TUM'A: REMOVAL: HOW TO WASH HANDS

HANDWASHING FOR TUM'A: GENERAL CONCEPTS

Tum'a and Drying Hands before Handwashing

To wash hands from *tum'a* or all other purposes, you do not need to dry your hands first--except before washing for bread, and then ONLY if the person who washed hands before you:

- Did not use a *revi'it* of water (per hand) to wash his/her hands, AND
- Only poured once on each hand.

In sum, you almost never need to dry your hands before washing them!

However, if the person before you had *tum'a* on his or her hands and poured only once, the *tum'a* will be transferred from his/her hands to the cup.

Tum'a and From What To Pour

When washing your hands using the *One-Time Method*, in all cases except when washing for bread, here is what to use:

- Best: Cup that holds at least a *revi'it* of water.
- Next Best: Wash hands from a spigot within 12" of the ground, turning the spigot off and on between hands.
- Third Choice: If the spigot is more than 12" above the ground, simply hold your hands under a regular faucet in the flow of water so that your hands get wet all over. No need to turn the water on and off.

  NOTE This is a *b'di'avad* case.

- Fourth Choice: If there is no water, say whatever blessings you need to say anyway (for example, *asher yatzar*) rather than not saying the blessing at all. You will still have the tum'a on your hands (but you should rub your hands on cloth of clothing first).

NOTE This does NOT apply to washing before eating bread or to any cases where you must wash using the *Three-Times Method*. Removing *tum'a* in these cases requires a cup.

NOTE If you need to wash your hands after using the toilet, there is no need to go 18 minutes to find the water, (unlike the requirement for washing for bread).

Minimum Amount of Hand Coverage

When washing to remove tum'a, the ideal is to pour water over your hand up to your wrist; the minimum is to pour up to the knuckles adjacent to the palms of your hands.

EXCEPTIONS On *Yom Kippur* and Tish'a B'*Av*, wash only up to your knuckles (but if you accidentally pour water further up on your hand, it is not a problem).

Tum'a and Which Hand To Wash First

To remove *tum'a* from hands, it is preferable to wash the right hand first.

NOTE If you washed the left first, it is OK and you do not need to rewash the left hand.

Tum'a and Pouring Backhanded

To wash hands from *tum'a*, there is no problem with pouring water backhanded.

Tum'a and Hot Water

You may wash your hands with hot water for any ritual purpose except for *mayim achronim*.

Tum'a and Where To Wash

You may wash your hands inside a bathroom for any purpose, even before eating bread.

NOTE You may not say any blessings while inside the bathroom.

HANDWASHING: ONE-TIME METHOD

ONE-TIME METHOD: WHEN TO WASH

When To Use the One-Time Handwashing Method

Use the *One-Time Method* to wash hands from *tum'a*:
Before…

- Eating bread.
- Prayer services.

After…

- Cutting fingernails or toenails.
- Getting a haircut or shaving.
- Giving blood.
- Urinating or defecating.
- Scratching the hair on your head.
- Touching leather shoes (not after touching synthetic or cloth shoes).
- Touching normally covered parts of your body.
- Touching a pet.

ONE-TIME METHOD: HOW TO WASH

How To Wash Hands the One-Time Method

To wash hands the *One-Time Method*:

- Fill the washing cup with at least 3.3 fl. oz. (99 ml) of water.
- Pour enough water (may be as little as 1.3 fl. oz.--39 ml, or 1/6 cup) from the washing cup to completely cover your entire first hand (either hand may be first but it is proper to wash your right hand first).
- Pour enough water to completely cover the second hand.

NOTE You do not need to pour any more than that or to break up the *revi'it* into two pours.

Drying Hands after Washing for Bread

When washing your hands before eating bread, the ideal procedure is to wash, say the blessing *al netilat yadayim*, and then dry your hands (since the drying is part of the washing procedure). Many people have the custom of pouring water onto each hand twice but only before eating bread.

NOTE If you washed your hands, dried them, and then said the blessing *al netilat yadayim*, *b'di'avad* you are covered. But if you washed your hands and dried them but did not yet say the blessing *al netilat yadayim*, you should touch a normally covered part of your body, wash your hands again, say *al netilat yadayim*, and go on to say *ha'motzi* on bread.

HANDWASHING: THREE-TIMES METHOD

THREE-TIMES METHOD: WHEN TO WASH

When To Use the Three-Times Method

Use the *Three-Times Method* to wash hands from *tum'a* after…

- Sleeping 30 minutes or more,
- Intercourse,
- Touching a dead person,
- Being in a building with a dead person,
- Being in a funeral procession,
- Visiting a cemetery.

These are the only times we wash the three-times way.

THREE-TIMES METHOD: HOW TO WASH

How To Wash Hands Using the Three-Times Method

To wash hands the *Three-Times Method*:

- Fill the washing cup with at least 3.3 fl. oz. (99 ml) of water for the first pair of pours.
- Pour enough water (may be as little as 1.3 fl. oz.--39 ml, or 1/6 cup) from the washing cup to completely cover your entire first hand (either hand may be first, but it is proper to wash your right hand first).
- Pour enough water to completely cover the second hand.
- Repeat the pouring twice more, alternating hands, until each hand has been completely covered a total of three times.

NOTE There is no minimum required volume for the subsequent pours, and you may refill the cup in order to have enough water to cover each hand for all three pairs of pours.

TUM'A: REMOVAL: WASHING CUP

Tum'a: Washing Cup Spout

If a washing utensil has a spout that is lower than the rim, pour only from the spout. If the spout is higher than the rim, pour off of the side or back, opposite the lowest edge level.

REASON The principle is that water may only be poured from the lowest level that can hold water.

Tum'a: Squeeze Bottle as Washing Cup

You may wash your hands for any *halachic* purpose using a squeeze bottle.

TUM'A: REMOVAL: WASHING WATER

Tum'a: Evaporated Washing Water

Washing water does not have any residual *tum'a* once it has evaporated.

Tum'a: Reusing Washing Water

You may re-use washing water for other purposes (ex., to irrigate plants) EXCEPT for water used after waking from sleep and the other three-time handwashing categories (which have higher levels of *tum'a*).

Tum'a: Praying if No Water for Handwashing

If there is no water to wash hands, even after sleeping, you still say blessings and prayers. You should say *asher yatzar* even if you can't wash, but do not say *al netilat yadayim* in *shacharit*!

NOTE Even if you do not have water with which to wash your hands, you should wipe them off on a towel or some substance that can rub off any physical impurities that you may have gotten on them while sleeping.

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