Parshas Devarim-Chazon 5772 Vol. XV No. 40 בס"ד

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

Someone gets his hands soiled at work, to the point that he is unable to clean them thoroughly. When he eats, he prefers not to touch his food. When he washes *netilas yadayim*, should he refrain from reciting the *brocha*, since he will not be handling the bread?

The issues:

In last week's issue:

A) *Netilas yadayim*, washing hands for bread

B) *Krichas mapah,* covering the hands when no water is available

In this week's issue:

C) *Chatzitza*, removing adhesions before washing

D) Our case

C) Chatzitza

Netilas yadayim is a type of ritual cleansing, modeled on the Scriptural *tevilah*, ritual immersion. Accordingly, the rules of *tevilah* on the entire body are applied here to the hands. The water must reach all parts of the body, and in our case, the hands. A *chatzitza,* adhesion, prevents the water from reaching the spot under it. The consensus is to apply all the rules of *chatzitza* to *netilas yadayim.* There is a minority view that maintains that for *netilas yadayim* no rules of *chatzitza* apply. This view is invoked to justify some questionable practices. However, this only serves to save those practitioners from obvious condemnation. The practices are nonetheless rejected by most poskim.

Scripturally, if the adhesion only covers a minority of the surface area, it does not prevent the *tevilah* from taking effect. Rabbinically, this leniency is only applied when the nature of the *chatzitza* is such that one cares about its presence. This rule, called *makpid*, applies when the normal person would be concerned. If normal people are not concerned, though the adhesion is still quite obvious, it does not disqualify the *tevilah* or *netilah* unless it covers the majority of the surface area. In that case, it disqualifies the *tevilah* Rabbinically.

One who washed without removing a known *chatzitzah* has not fulfilled his obligation. The water is assumed not to have penetrated through the adhesion. In addition, the water used to wash can easily attain the *tumah*, uncleanliness, that is on the hands to begin with. This will then invalidate the *netilah*. The way this is avoided is by ensuring that the *netilah* is done with the correct amount of water and over the entire hand at one time. This is similar to *tevilah*, that must be done to the entire body at one time, and one must immerse in a *mikvah*, a body of water of a minimum size. *Netilah* must be done with a vessel that holds a minimum of a *revi'is*, a few ounces.

The majority view validates pouring an entire *revi'is* on the hand in one action. Or

one pours some of it twice in a row. The first pouring washes off the *tumah,* and the second pouring removes the water that has become contaminated. For this to work properly, the first water must be in contact with the hand when the second water is poured. Water spreads from one part of the hand to the next by itself. If one has a *chatzitza*, it will probably get some of the first water on it from the rest of the hand. If the area of the *chatzitza* is wet, it cannot be purified by the second pouring. It will then return to the rest of the hand, causing it to be recontaminated. Therefore, in the few instances when a *chatzitza* is not removed, it must always be kept dry. Alternatively, one may pour a complete *revi'is* on the whole hand at one time.

An example of this is a wound dressing. If the wound has healed to the point that one might remove he dressing at any time, or if it fell off one would not replace it, it is a *chatzitza.* True, the washer has no intention to remove it at the time. He could claim that that part of the hand will not touch the food. Therefore, it should count as a *chatzitza* that one does not care to remove. Nonetheless, there is a concern that he might anyhow remove it or that it might fall off. Then, the part of his hand that was never cleansed will touch the food. If it is a fresh enough wound that one wants to keep it covered, it is not considered a regular *chatzitza*. It is considered as though that part of the hand has been cut off, and is impossible to include in the *netilah.* However, one must make an attempt to keep it dry when washing the rest of the hand. In addition, one should cover the dressing after *netilah* so that any dirt on that dressing is kept from touching the food. This dirt is indeed a *chatzitza*, but since the dressing area could not be washed, it is exempt. Nonetheless, it is a form of '*tumah*' that should not be allowed to touch food. Furthermore, the medications should not touch the food. [This additional covering will have the additional advantage of *krichas mapah* on that spot.]

If a *chatzitza* is found later on, the assumption is that it came later. Nonetheless, it is incumbent on the person to examine his hands before *netilah.* It is especially common for people to have dirt that has adhered to sweat. If there is enough of this, it counts as a *chatzitza. Halachically,* one may use a little of the revi'is to wash of dirt, before the actual two pours of the *netilah.* Some people wash their hands with soap but without a vessel first. This counts as an examination, and since they do not use the vessel, they may still fulfill the *mitzvah* of *netilas yadayim* afterwards.

Various categories of *chatzitza* are discussed. Indeed, some specific examples are cited by the poskim. However, there is a debate on why these examples are used. In one view, it is because these are presumed to be *chatzitzos* by all normal people. Therefore, if one claims to be unconcerned about one of these, he is considered abnormal. Such abnormality is not taken into consideration when determining *halacha.* Therefore, the *chatzitza* invalidates even this person's *netilah.* Others maintain that even in these specific examples, if an individual claims to be unconcerned about this type of adhesion, he may elect to leave it on his skin during *netilah*.

The aforementioned wound dressing is an example of a *chatzitza* that could be considered *makpid* or not. If it is a fresh wound, one is actually *makpid* not to remove it. The reasons for this are that it is painful to remove, and that its removal will cause pain to the wound as well. Medically, one wishes to keep the wound dressed in order to heal it prop-

erly. Thus, if there is a reason similar to this that one would insist on an adhesion on his skin, it could be exempted from the rules of *chatzitza.* A similar issue arises with regard to women who dye their hands, to nail polish or to overgrown fingernails. These are removed periodically. At the time of the *netilah*, the person is interested in keeping them attached to the skin or nails. She will not want to remove them during the meal. Therefore, they are considered 'reverse *makpid.*'

Some types of *chatzitza* can depend on the part of the surface to which they adhere. Dirt on a fingernail would be removed. If it is under the part of the nail closest to the fingertip, people do not bother removing it. Some also distinguish between the back of the hand and the palms or the insides of the fingers. Since the insides of the hands touch food, some maintain that on these areas anything is considered a *chatzitza.* The rationale is that every normal person would be *makpid* that this dirt should not touch the food. This reasoning might change if the nature of the adhesion is something edible, such as material left on the hands by the person who prepared the meal, or even raw dough. Nonetheless, these would anyhow be considered *chatzitza* by normal people. Though this view is not widely held, it could pertain to our case.

If a person's work involves constant contact with materials that would otherwise be a *chatzitza,* he does not usually bother washing his hands thoroughly to remove the materials. *Makpid* depends on the person and his usual concern. Examples of this include a dyer who has dye on his hands at all times, a butcher who has fat and blood, a potter or brickmaker who has clay on his hands, and the like. [Bakers who have dough on their hands are not mentioned directly by the poskim. Perhaps it is assumed that they do clean their hands well after finishing their work.] Our case should logically be included in this category. The only problem is that this particular worker happens to be *makpid* on the grime. Accordingly, the entire premise for the dispensation should not apply to him.

There is some debate on how much may adhere to the hands of these professionals. Some say that in this case, even if it covers the majority of the hand, it is not considered a *chatzitza.* Others maintain that this dispensation only works on a minority of the surface area. The 'area' is also subject to debate. Some say it includes the whole hand, while others include only the fingers. Thus, if most of the fingers are covered, but a minority of the surface area of the hand, this stringent view would call it a *chatzitza.* We may follow the lenient view in this Rabbinic institution. Our case involves grime on the fingers that probably spreads when it is removed (or mostly removed). This dispensation is only needed for adhesions on the surface. Absorbed dyes or inks do not constitute a *chatzitza,* even for those not involved in this work. Similarly, even if absorbed dye covers the entire hand, all would agree that it is not considered a *chatzitza*.

What if a particular individual is *makpid* on absorbed ink? This might also have a bearing on our case. The person feels squeamish about eating food touched by his hands with the absorbed dye, because he thinks it might come off on the food. However, it is not *halachically* recognized as a *chatzitza* at all. From the fact that the poskim openly permit this even where a regular *chatzitza* would pose problems, it seems that it is not even a matter of personal *hakpadah* either. In our case as well, the person has washed his hands as much as is physically possible. The ingrained dirt should be considered beneath

the surface or absorbed. He is personally squeamish about it, but it should not be a *chatzitza.* On the other hand, perhaps anything that could conceivably come off later might still be considered a *chatzitza.* It might depend on the individual *makpid.*

The aforementioned view that one must always remove dirt adhering to the inside of the palms is based on a variant reading of another ruling. While a butcher need not remove blood and fat that he is not *makpid* about, some say that blood must be removed from the palms. This is because blood is a forbidden food. It may not be eaten, and if one does not remove it, he might eat it with his bread. This has little to do with the laws of *netilas yadayim*, yet it is cited as a rule of *chatzitza.* It would appear from this view that when something may not come into contact with the food for other reasons, it attains the level of *makpid.* Since it must be removed before eating, it is a *chatzitza* in the *netilah.*

One could extend this idea to our case as well. Since the individual is wary of letting the grime touch his food, it becomes a *chatzitza, de facto*. The difference is that in the case of the blood there is a *chatzitza.* In our case, the grime has been removed to the best of the individual's ability. [See Eruvin 4b Zvachim 98b Chulin 105a-106b etc. Nidah 67a-b Mikvaos 8:5 9:1-4 [Tosefta 6:4-5] Yadayim 1:1 2:1-2, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 161:1-2 162:1-2, commentaries. Ketzos Hashulchan 33, Badei 7.]

D) Our case

Our case poses a new problem. Assuming that it is deemed a *chatzitza,* but it cannot be removed, may the person wash and eat bread at all? A hang-nail or partially attached fingernail must be removed before *netilah.* On *Shabbos,* when removal is not an option, some say that he should wash with a *brocha,* omitting the Names of Hashem.

Perhaps our case is similar to a wound dressing. One washes the rest of the hand, and then covers the dressing. In a similar way, this person may wash, with a full *revi'is,* and then cover his hand. However, in our case, the grime covers so much area that the person does not wish to touch the bread at all. If he has no intention of touching it, how may he recite a *brocha* on washing? Should he wash without a *brocha*? On the other hand, one may not rely on *krichas mapah* except in emergencies. Otherwise, there is an obligation to wash. Whenever there is a clear obligation, there is a *brocha* as well. Furthermore, since the *chatzitza* might not even count, he certainly has an obligation to wash the entire hands. On the other hand, since he is personally *makpid*, maybe it counts as a personal *chatzitza.* There is clearly some grime, albeit not removable with standard cleansers. There is clearly some concern that it will come off on the food. The question is whether this counts as surface adhesions or absorbed dye.

The following suggestion should work. The person should not intend to rely on regular *krichas mapah.* He should have in mind to wrap the bread, rather than his hands. In this case, he will still have the full obligation to wash. He may recite a *brocha*. If he chooses, later on, to wear a glove, he has not invalidated his original *netilah* and *brocha.*

In conclusion, he should pour a complete *revi'is* to wash, with a *brocha.* He may intend to wrap the bread. He may then change to gloves later, if he so wishes.

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