



Tractate Mikvaos Chapter Seven

מסכת מקואות פרק שביעי

Introduction

A person or utensil that has contracted Tumah (ritual uncleanness) can—in most cases—remove that Tumah by being immersed in a kosher (valid, qualified) Mikvah (ritualarium). In order to be kosher, the Mikvah must consist of and contain 40 Sa'ah (approximately 200 gallons) or more of water, and be built into the ground or into the structure of a building that is built into the ground. If it consists of another liquid; if the water is discolored by a foreign substance such as wine; or if there is less than 40 Sa'ah of water, the Mikvah is disqualified. Additionally, the water must have arrived into the pool naturally via a spring or rainfall, either directly, or by means of a pipe or other conduit that is not considered a “vessel” (i.e., the pipe has no cavity that can “hold” the water; the water only passes through it). If, however, the water was in a vessel before coming into the Mikvah it becomes “Sheuvin” (“drawn”) and the Mikvah becomes invalid.

Sheuvin water invalidates a Mikvah in one of two ways.

1. Sheuvin water whose volume is less than three Log (approximately 24 ounces; [cf. Vayikra 14:10 et al]) invalidates a Mikvah—because it is an absence of natural water. Thus, if a Mikvah contains exactly 40 Sa'ah of which even the smallest amount is Sheuvin water, the Mikvah is invalidated—there is not enough natural water. This problem is easily corrected, however, simply by adding natural water until the Mikvah has 40 Sa'ah of natural water.

2. Sheuvin water whose volume is three Log or more completely invalidates a Mikvah so that even the Mikvah's natural water may no longer be used. In this case the entire Mikvah must be drained and the Mikvah must be refilled from scratch with natural water.



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Significantly, Shevin is problematic only for a Mikvah that has less than 40 Sa'ah of natural water—the requisite amount—at the time that the Shevin water enters it. If the Mikvah has 40 Sa'ah or more of natural water at the time that the Shevin enters it, the Shevin water does no damage to the Mikvah's validity. In other words, once the validity of the Mikvah has been established, because it contains 40 Sa'ah of natural water, it becomes immune to complications of Shevin.

Even where a Mikvah is kosher, it can only remove Tumah from a person or utensil if the person or utensil undergoes a proper immersion. This entails that the person's entire body, or the entire utensil, be submerged in the water at the same time. If, for example, one immerses the blade of a knife with the handle out of the water, and then reverses it and immerses the handle with the blade out of the water, the immersion is invalid even though every part of the knife was submerged at some point. The knife must be reimmersed, with its entirety in the water at a single moment of time.



Mishnah Four: The Partially discolored Mikvah

נ **נִפְלַ** *If wine or olive water fell into [a Mikvah] and changed a portion of its appearance¹, if less than 40 Sa'ah looks like water one may not immerse in it².* **נ**

נִפְלַ לְתוֹכוֹ יַיִן אֹו מַחֵל, וְשֵׁנֹו מִקְצֵת מְרָאִיו, אִם אֵין בּוֹ מְרָאֵה מִיִּם אַרְבָּעִים סָאָה – הֲרִי זֶה לֹא יִטְבּוֹל בּוֹ.

1. i.e., one area of the water became discolored and another area retained a water appearance. 2. i.e., unlike other disqualifiers, such as three Log of Sheuvin, which invalidate even the kosher part of the Mikvah, discoloration only affects the water which is actually discolored, and the remaining water remains kosher. Thus, if the remaining water is 40 Sa'ah or more, that part of the Mikvah remains kosher for immersion. If the remaining water is less than 40 Sa'ah, even that part of the Mikvah becomes invalidated, for it does not contain the requisite 40 Sa'ah.



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Mishnah Five: Sheuvin Water Mixed With Another Liquid

ש **שְׁלֹשָׁה** [If you have] three Log of Sheuvin water and a Kortov¹ of wine fell into them--and they look like wine--and then they fell into a Mikvah², they do not invalidate it³. [Similarly, if you have] three Log of Sheuvin water, minus a Kortov¹, and a Kortov¹ of milk fell into them--and they look like water⁴--and then they fell into a Mikvah⁵ they do not invalidate it⁶. Rabbi Yochanan Ben Nuri says, "Everything depends on the appearance⁷."

ש **שְׁלֹשָׁה** לָגִין מֵיִם, וְנָפַל לְתוֹכָן קֶרְטוֹב יַיִן, וְהָרִי מְרֵאִיהֶן כְּמֵרֵאֵה הַיַּיִן, וְנָפְלוּ לַמִּקְוָה – לֹא פְסָלוּהוּ. שְׁלֹשָׁה לָגִין מֵיִם חָסֵר קֶרְטוֹב, וְנָפַל לְתוֹכָן קֶרְטוֹב חֵלֶב, וְהָרִי מְרֵאִיהֶן כְּמֵרֵאֵה הַמַּיִם, וְנָפְלוּ לַמִּקְוָה – לֹא פְסָלוּהוּ. רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נוּרִי אוֹמֵר: הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אַחֲרֵי הַמֵּרֵאֵה.

1. a small measure, approximately 1/8 ounce. 2. before it had 40 Sa'ah, but there was enough water so that the overall Mikvah retains a water appearance. 3. just as wine disqualifies a Mikvah (as in the previous Mishnah) so too it neutralizes Sheuvin water—once Sheuvin water takes on a wine appearance, it no longer invalidates a Mikvah. 4. i.e., milk is white and will not change the appearance of a much larger amount of water, as opposed to wine above, whose darkness causes a discoloration of the three Log of water. 5. before it had 40 Sa'ah. 6. i.e., although after the milk falls into the water, it appears that we have a complete three Log of Sheuvin, since in fact part of the three Log is not water but milk, the Mikvah is not rendered invalid. Note that according to this opinion Sheuvin disqualifies a Mikvah only if (a) there are three Log of actual water and (b) it has a water appearance. Thus in the case of wine despite that there are three Log of actual water, the Mikvah is not disqualified, because there is no water appearance. In the case of milk the Mikvah is likewise not disqualified but for the opposite reason. Although there is a water appearance, since the actual water is less than three Log, the Mikvah is not invalidated. 7. thus in the case of wine he agrees with the first opinion that the Mikvah is not invalidated since it looks like wine. In the second case, however, he disagrees. Although the actual water is less than three Log, once the milk is added it creates a mixture that has the appearance of three Log of water and the Mikvah is thus invalidated.



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Mishnah Six: The Lessening of the Exact Mikvah

מ **מִקְוֵה** [If] a Mikvah contains exactly 40 Sa'ah [of water] and two [ritually unclean] people went down and immersed themselves, one after the other, the first person becomes Tahor¹ and the second person remains Tamei². Rabbi Yehudah says, "If the first person's feet are still touching the water then even the second person becomes Tahor^{1, 3}." If one immerses a Sagoss⁴ in it⁵, and takes it out, [but] part of the Sagoss is still in the water⁶, he⁷ is Tahor¹. [If one immerses] a leather cushion or mattress^{8*} [into a Mikvah of exactly 40 Sa'ah], as soon as one lifts their edges out of the water⁹, the water inside them becomes Sheuvin. [When it falls back into the Mikvah, it invalidates the Mikvah.] What should one do [to avoid this problem]? He should lift them out by way of their bottoms¹⁰.

מ **מִקְוֵה** שֵׁשׁ בּוֹ אַרְבַּעִים סָאָה מְכוֹנוֹת, יָרְדוּ שְׁנַיִם וְטָבְלוּ זֶה אַחֲרֵי זֶה – הָרִאשׁוֹן טָהוֹר, וְהַשֵּׁנִי טָמֵא. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: אִם הָיָו רַגְלָיו שֶׁל רִאשׁוֹן נֹגְעוֹת בַּמַּיִם – אֵף הַשֵּׁנִי טָהוֹר. הַטָּבִיל בּוֹ אֶת הַסָּגוֹס, וְהֶעֱלָהוּ, מִקְצָתוֹ נֹגַע בַּמַּיִם – טָהוֹר. הַכֹּר וְהִקְסַת שֶׁל עוֹר, בֵּינָן שֶׁהִגְבִּיּוֹת שִׁפְתוֹתֵיהֶם מִן הַמַּיִם – הַמַּיִם שִׁפְתוֹכָן שְׂאוּבִינֵן. בֵּיצֵד יַעֲשֶׂה? מִטָּבִילָן וּמֵעֲלָה אוֹתָם דְּרָךְ שׁוֹלִיָּהֶם.

1. ritually cleansed. 2. in a state of Tumah, i.e., he remains ritually unclean. This is because the first person immersed in a Mikvah of 40 Sa'ah, but when he exited the Mikvah some of the water remained on his body and the Mikvah is left with less than 40 Sa'ah for the second person's immersion. 3. the water on the first person's body is seen as connected to the Mikvah and the Mikvah thus has the requisite 40 Sa'ah. 4. a type of garment. 5. i.e., a Mikvah of exactly 40 Sa'ah. 6. i.e., if the Sagoss is completely removed from the water the Mikvah becomes invalidated, as there is no longer 40 Sa'ah left in it, (as in the case above where the first person completely exited the Mikvah). 7. i.e., one who immerses while the Sagoss is in this position. 8*. [cf. Tosfos Yom Tov to Mikvaos 10:2 and Tiferes Yisrael to Keilim 20:1.] 9. leaving the Mikvah with less than 40 Sa'ah. 10. i.e., with their bottoms upward so that no water collects inside of them so as to become Sheuvin, but rather immediately returns to the Mikvah and retains its status as natural Mikvah water.



Mishnah Seven: The Shallow Mikvah

ה הַטְבִּיל *If one immerses a bed into a [shallow, mud bottomed, Mikvah] even if the legs sink into the mud¹, [the bed] becomes Tahor² because the water is there first³. A Mikvah whose water is shallow⁴ and spread over a wide area, one presses even bundles of wood and even bundles of reeds [into the water on one side of the Mikvah] so that the water rises, and goes down and immerses [on the side without the wood and reeds]. If a needle is placed on the steps of a [water filled] cave⁵, if one moves the water to and fro⁶, as soon as [this causes] a wave to wash over [the needle], it becomes Tahor².*

ה הַטְבִּיל *בו את המטה, אף על פי שרגליה שוקעות בטיט העבה – טהורה, מפני שהמים מקדמין. מקוה שמימיו מרדדין, פובש אפלו חבילי עצים, אפלו חבילי קנים, כדי שיתפחו המים, ויורד וטובל. מחט שהיא נתונה על מעלות המערה, היה מוליך ומביא במים, כיון שעבר עליה הגל – טהורה.*

1. i.e., the bed is too tall to be submerged into the shallow water; it can only be submerged if the legs are pressed into the mud. 2. ritually cleansed. 3. i.e., we need not be concerned that when the legs press into the mud they are no longer in the water, for the water enters the mud around the legs so that the entire bed is in the water. 4. i.e., too shallow for immersion. 5. i.e., and the needle is slightly above the water level. 6. i.e., with one's hand.