

In a case that there isn't a sufficient amount of water (*revi'it*) for two or more people to properly wash their hands before eating bread, what should they do?

The *Shulchan Aruch - Orach Chayim Siman 160, Sa'eef 13* says the following: There needs to be a *revi'is* of water for one person to wash his hands. But if two people wash their hands as one, the second person doesn't require a second *revi'is*, even if they wash in sequence, as long as there is no interruption of the flow of water.

How? If there was a *revi'is* of water in a vessel and one person stretched out his hands under it and it pours on his hands, and a second person stretches forth his hands under and near the hands of the first person, and the stream flows on the hands of the first onto the hands of the second that is underneath- both of their hands are pure. This is even though that there is less than a *revi'is* that will reach the second person's hands, since it came from a vessel that had a *revi'is*- the hands are all pure. Some permit this even if it is one after the other since when the first one started, there was a *revi'is* in the cup, that full volume works for the second person as well to purify him. In this way, with two *revi'is* volume of water you can wash three or four peoples hands, or with four *revi'is* volume you could wash many people's hands, as long as there is enough water to pour three times on each person's hands. By the same reasoning, you could put four or five hands next to each other or on top of each other and wash them all together as long as they are loose enough that the water will get to all of them.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (ט"ד ק"ט) adds that both people must have the proper intent to be washing together, otherwise it will be considered as if the second person had washed with “dirty (used) water”! And, in *Halacha Berurah* (אות לט), he adds that the water, especially if there are four or five people washing from the same water, should reach their knuckles at minimum!

*Shaylot U'Teshuvot Shaol Sha'al She'elah* (Responsa from Kollel members of *Giv'at Ezer* in Ashdod, Israel) 84 adds in the name of the Beit Yosef and the *RaShBa* (Rabbi Solomon Ben Abraham Aderet) that the entire basis for this *yeter* (permission) is that since the water is flowing from one to the other, it is likened to the *Mishna Masechet Yadayim* Chapter 1 Mishnah 1 where it says that you can even wash four or five pairs of hands with a small amount of water. Maimonides and others held the opinion that this is allowed only for the second pouring – when we wash the second time on our hands. Additionally, it is very clear from the *Bei'ur Halacha* on *Mishna Brura* 160:13 (ד"ה הואיל) that *bedieved* (acceptable after the fact) and *b'sha'at ha'da'cha* (in extenuating circumstances) we can definitely rely on the opinion of those who allow it.

How do we determine which opinion is the one that we follow, if the *Shulchan Arukh* brings two opposing opinions. Like in the Talmud, the rule is that the opinion that has the “last word” is the one we follow!

In conclusion, if there isn't enough water for everyone, we don't have to have a lottery to see who the “lucky one” is, but, rather, they should group up and make sure that the flow of water doesn't stop!

-Yosef Goldman