



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 “Shevin” (“drawn”) and the Mikvah becomes invalid.

Shevin water invalidates a Mikvah in one of two ways.

1. Shevin 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 Shevin 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. Shevin 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 One: Liquids and Objects Which Qualify for the Mikvah

י *Certain things make a Mikvah kosher and do not disqualify it; certain things disqualify a Mikvah and do not make it kosher; certain things do not make a Mikvah kosher nor do they disqualify it. These make a Mikvah kosher and do not disqualify it: snow, hail, sleet, ice, salt, and liquid mud¹. Rabbi Akiva said, “Rabbi Yishmael contended with me, saying, ‘snow cannot make a Mikvah kosher’; but the people of Maidva testified in his name that he had told them, ‘go out and bring snow and [use it to] make a Mikvah from the start².’” Rabbi Yochanan Ben Nuri says, “A hailstone is like [Sheuvin] water³.” How do they make a Mikvah kosher and not disqualify it? [If] a Mikvah has 40 Sa’ah minus one [Sa’ah], and a Sa’ah of one of these falls into it—they make it kosher. Thus, they make the Mikvah kosher and do not disqualify it.*

י *מַעְלִין אֶת הַמְקוֹה וְלֹא פוֹסְלִין, פוֹסְלִין וְלֹא מַעְלִין, לֹא מַעְלִין וְלֹא פוֹסְלִין. אֵלוּ מַעְלִין וְלֹא פוֹסְלִין: הַשֶּׁלֶג, וְהַבָּרָד, וְהַכֶּפֹּר, וְהַגְּלִיד, וְהַמְּלַח, וְהַטֵּיט הַנְּרוֹק. אָמַר רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא: הֲיֵה רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל דֵּן כְּנֶגְדֵי לוֹמַר: הַשֶּׁלֶג אֵינוֹ מַעְלֵה אֶת הַמְקוֹה. וְהַעִידוּ אַנְשֵׁי מִיַּדְבָּא מִשְׁמוֹ, שְׂאָמַר לָהֶם: צְאוּ וְהַבִּיאוּ שֶׁלֶג וַעֲשׂוּ מְקוֹה בַּתְּחִלָּה. רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נוּרִי אוֹמֵר: אֲבָן הַבָּרָד כַּמִּים. כִּי־צַד מַעְלִין וְלֹא פוֹסְלִין? מְקוֹה שְׂיֵשׁ בּוֹ אַרְבַּעִים סָאָה חֹסֵר אַחַת, נִפְל מֵהֶם סָאָה לְתוֹכוֹ, וְהַעֲלֵתוּ, נִמְצְאוּ מַעְלִין וְלֹא פוֹסְלִין.*

1. snow, hail, sleet, and ice consist of water, and salt and liquid mud are found in certain types of natural water. 2. i.e., Rabbi Yishmael’s final decision qualifies snow for the Mikvah. 3. and disqualified for the Mikvah.



Mishnah Two: Liquids Which May Disqualify, or Be Disqualified for the Mikvah

אֵלוֹ *These disqualify a Mikvah and do not make it kosher: [Sheevin] water—whether it had or had not contracted ritual uncleanness--, pickling juice, water used to stew vegetables, and unfermented marc¹. How do they disqualify a Mikvah and not make it kosher? [If] a Mikvah has 40 Sa'ah minus one Kortov², and a Kortov of one of these falls into it—they do not make it kosher; if three Log of one of these falls into it—[the entire Mikvah] becomes disqualified. The other liquids³, however, and fruit juice and fish fat and fermented marc¹—at certain times they make the Mikvah kosher, but at other times do not make the Mikvah kosher. How is this? [If] a Mikvah has 40 Sa'ah minus one [Sa'ah], and a Sa'ah of one of these falls into it—they do not make it kosher⁴; [if] the Mikvah has 40 [complete] Sa'ah [or more], and one puts in [to the Mikvah] a Sa'ah of one of these and then takes a Sa'ah out—they make it kosher⁵.*

אֵלוֹ פּוֹסְלִין וְלֹא מַעֲלִין:
הַמַּיִם בֵּין טַמְאִים בֵּין טְהוֹרִים, וּמֵי כִבְשִׁים, וּמֵי שְׁלֻקוֹת, וְהַתְּמָד עַד שְׁלֹא הַחֲמִיץ. בֵּיצֵד פּוֹסְלִין וְלֹא מַעֲלִין? מִקְוֵה שֵׁשׁ בּוֹ אַרְבָּעִים סָאָה חָסֵר קֶרְטוֹב, וְנִפְל מֵהֵן קֶרְטוֹב לְתוֹכוֹ – לֹא הֶעֱלָהוּ; פּוֹסְלוֹ בְּשִׁלְשָׁה לֶגִין. אֲבָל שְׂאֵר הַמִּשְׁקִין, וּמֵי פְרוֹת, וְהַצִּיר, וְהַמְרִיס, וְהַתְּמָד מִשְׁהַחֲמִיץ – פְּעָמִים מַעֲלִין וּפְעָמִים שְׂאִינֵן מַעֲלִין. בֵּיצֵד? מִקְוֵה שֵׁשׁ בּוֹ אַרְבָּעִים סָאָה חָסֵר אַחַת, נִפְל לְתוֹכוֹ סָאָה מֶהֶם – לֹא הֶעֱלָתוֹ. הֵיוּ בּוֹ אַרְבָּעִים סָאָה, נָתַן סָאָה וְנִטַּל סָאָה – הָרִי זֶה כָּשֵׁר.

1. a liquid made of water into which grape skins and seeds are soaked. Unfermented marc is considered a type of water; when it ferments it is considered to have transformed into a new liquid and becomes like juice and the other liquids. 2. a small measure, approximately 1/8 ounce. 3. i.e. wine, honey, olive oil, milk, dew, and blood, which, with water, are the “seven liquids” of Torah law. 4. these liquids cannot create a ‘completed’ Mikvah where none had been before. 5. once the Mikvah is completed, these liquids qualify to maintain the Mikvah’s validity.



Mishnah Three: The Discolored Mikvah

הַדְרִיחַ *If one rinsed olive baskets or grape baskets in [a Mikvah], and its appearance changed—it remains kosher¹. Rabbi Yosie says, “Dyed water disqualifies [a Mikvah] if it is three Log², but does not disqualify it because of the color change³.” If wine or olive water fell into [the Mikvah] and changed its appearance—it becomes disqualified⁴. What should one do [that this Mikvah should requalify]? He should wait until rain falls and the [Mikvah’s] appearance should return to that of water⁵. If [the discolored Mikvah] was of 40 Sa’ah⁶, he can [also] load up his shoulder [with vessels of water]⁷ and empty them into [the Mikvah] until it regains a water appearance⁸.*

הַדְרִיחַ בּוֹ סְלֵי זַיִתִּים וְסְלֵי עֲנָבִים, וְשָׁנּוּ אֶת מְרָאֵיו - כְּשֶׁר. רַבִּי יוֹסִי אוֹמֵר: מִי הֶצְבַּע פּוֹסְלִין אוֹתוֹ בְּשִׁלְשָׁה לֶגִין, וְאֵינָן פּוֹסְלִין אוֹתוֹ בְּשָׁנּוּי מְרָאֵהוּ. נִפְלַל לְתוֹכוֹ יַיִן וּמַחֲל, וְשָׁנּוּ אֶת מְרָאֵיו - פְּסוּל. בֵּי צַד יַעֲשֶׂה? יִמְתִּין לוֹ עַד שְׂיִרְדּוּ גְשָׁמִים, וְיִחְזְרוּ מְרָאֵיהֶן לְמְרָאֵה הַמַּיִם. הָיָו בּוֹ אֲרָבַעִים סָאָה, מְמַלֵּא בְּבִתְרוֹ וְנוֹתֵן לְתוֹכוֹ, עַד שְׂיִחְזְרוּ מְרָאֵיהֶן לְמְרָאֵה הַמַּיִם.

1. since the discoloring agent—the wine or olive oil which had been in these baskets—does not itself cause the discoloration, rather, it is caused by their residue which had adhered to and/or stained the walls of the baskets, such discoloration does not disqualify the Mikvah. 2. i.e., this is the standard disqualification of Sheuvin. 3. dyed water is essentially water, the dye is inconsequential; such discoloration does not affect the Mikvah’s validity. 4. wine and olive water are essential discoloring agents; they therefore disqualify the Mikvah. 5. Note that rain water can remedy a discolored Mikvah both where the Mikvah had contained 40 Sa’ah and where it had contained less than 40 Sa’ah. In the case of 40 Sa’ah, the rain water simply removes the discoloration. In the case of less than 40 Sa’ah, it serves not only to remove the discoloration, but also to combine with the pre-existing water so as to establish the 40 Sa’ah necessary to validate the Mikvah. 6. but not less; see note 8. 7. i.e., Sheuvin water. 8. since the Mikvah has 40 Sa’ah, its status as kosher is unharmed by Sheuvin. Once the Sheuvin is harmless in this regard, it can be used to advantage in removing discoloration. For a Mikvah of less than 40 Sa’ah, however, this is obviously not an option, for although the problem of discoloration would be removed, the Mikvah would acquire a new problem—that of Sheuvin.



Mishnah Four: The Partially discolored Mikvah

נַפְלָה 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.

נַפְלָה לתוכו יין או מחל, ושנו מקצת מראיו, אם אין בו מראה מים ארבעים סאה - הרי זה לא יטבול בו.

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 Shevin, 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** לֵגִין מִיָּם, וְנָפַל לְתוֹכָן קֶרְטוֹב יַיִן, וְהָרִי מְרֵאִיהֶן כְּמֵרֵאָה הַיַּיִן, וְנָפְלוּ לַמִּקְוָה – לֹא פְסָלוּהוּ. שְׁלֹשָׁה לֵגִין מִיָּם חָסַר קֶרְטוֹב, וְנָפַל לְתוֹכָן קֶרְטוֹב חֵלֶב, וְהָרִי מְרֵאִיהֶן כְּמֵרֵאָה הַמַּיִם, וְנָפְלוּ לַמִּקְוָה – לֹא פְסָלוּהוּ. רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן נוּרִי אָמַר: הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אַחַר הַמֵּרֵאָה.

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 אַרְבָּעִים סָאָה מְכוֹנוֹת, יָרְדוּ שְׁנַיִם וְטָבְלוּ זֶה אַחֲרֵי זֶה – הָרִאשׁוֹן טָהוֹר, וְהַשֵּׁנִי טָמֵא. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: אִם הָיָה רִגְלָיו שֶׁל רִאשׁוֹן נֹגְעוֹת בַּמַּיִם – אַף הַשֵּׁנִי טָהוֹר. הַטָּבִיל בּוֹ אֶת הַסְּגוֹס, וְהֵעֵלָהּ, מִקְצָתוֹ נֹגַע בַּמַּיִם – טָהוֹר. הַכֹּר וְהִפְסֵת שֶׁל עוֹר, בֵּינָן שֶׁהִגְבִּיָּה שִׁפְתוֹתֵיהֶם מִן הַמַּיִם – הַמַּיִם שִׁבְתוֹכָן שְׂאוּבִין. בֵּיצֵד יַעֲשֶׂה? מִטָּבִילָן וּמֵעֵלָה אוֹתָם דֶּרֶךְ שׁוּלֵיהֶם.

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 הַטְּבִיל *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 הַטְּבִיל בּוֹ אֶת הַמָּטָה, אֶף עַל פִּי שְׂרָגְלֶיהָ שׁוֹקְעוֹת בְּטֵיט הָעֵבָה – טְהוֹרָה, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהַמַּיִם מְקַדְּמִין. מִקְוֵה שְׂמִימֵי מְרַדְּדִין, כּוֹבֵשׁ אֶפְלוֹ חֲבִילֵי עֵצִים, אֶפְלוֹ חֲבִילֵי קָנִים, בְּדֵי שְׂתִתְּפוּחוֹ הַמַּיִם, וַיִּזְרַד וְטוֹבֵל. מַחֵט שֶׁהֵיא נִתְּוֵנָה עַל מַעְלוֹת הַמְּעָרָה, הִיא מוֹלִיךְ וּמְבִיא בַּמַּיִם, בֵּיזוֹן שֶׁעָבַר עָלֶיהָ הַגֵּל – טְהוֹרָה.

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.