



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. Immersion in Flakes
2. Who is a Prophet?
3. Yiddle Riddle



Edward Simon < esimon@bilbo.bio.purdue.edu > wrote:

I have heard on good authority from my son Rashi that it is permissible to use snow to tovel (ritually immerse) new dishes. On the other hand, my son Hillel says that although it is permissible, it is not advisable to do so. What is the actual halachah and procedure? With much of American Jewry currently blanketed in snow, this is a question of general interest and some urgency.

Dear Edward Simon,

Mikveh means 'a gathering.' A *mikveh* is basically a pool of naturally-gathered waters, i.e., rainwater, which was never drawn or contained in a vessel. A *mikveh* must have a volume of at least 40 *se'ah* (a *se'ah* is a measure of volume.)

Not only rain-water, but melted snow as well can be used for a *mikveh*. Putting snow in a *mikveh* and letting it melt is in fact one of the methods sometimes used to fill a *mikveh*. I hear that during dry spells in Arizona they sometimes truck in snow from the Sierra Mountains to fill *mikvehs*.

But your question is about **unmelted** snow. Can you use unmelted snow as a *mikveh*?

Rashi (your son) is consistent with Rashi (the 11th century commentator)! Rashi and other authorities say "Yes, unmelted snow is valid." The snow wouldn't have to be in a '*mikveh*' per se -- rather you could just go out and stick your dishes into the snow. Of course, you would need 40 *se'ah* of contiguous snow (excluding air). And you would need to make sure to cover the dish **completely** in snow, even on top.

Other *poskim* disagree. They rule that snow in its unmelted state is invalid as a *mikveh*.

As for the halacha, most authorities rule that unmelted snow shouldn't be used. In extenuating circumstances, however, you can use it to *tovel* glass or clay vessels, because this is a Rabbinic obligation. Similarly, you can stick your hands in the snow for *netilat yadayim*, if, for example, you're skiing cross-country and there's no water available.

Stories of the '96 blizzard are piling up. Here's one from < asubar@aol.com > :

As the snow came down, inch by inch, my children were discussing what they would do once the snow stopped and they would be able to go outside. One was planning a snow fort, another a snow angel, and so on. Our three-year-old, never to be outdone, began telling *his* plans for the snow. My wife, however, had different plans. The snow would be higher than our son was tall, and she didn't think it a good idea that he be allowed out.

"You know," she said, "you might get lost in the snow and we might not be able to find you!!"

"Yes we will," piped up our six-year old. "In the summer!"

Sources:

- Mishna Mikvaot 7:1
- Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 201:30
- Yoreh Deah 201:71, Shach; 120:4, Pitchei Teshuvah
- Tractate Shabbat 154b, Rashi

Tzilah Bernstein < tsb@haven.ios.com > wrote:

I understand that there were many more prophets than those listed in the Tanach (Bible). What then is the criteria for a prophet to be considered one of the 48 prophets in the Tanach and his prophecy to be considered necessary for future for generations?

Dear Tzilah Bernstein,

As you wrote, there were many prophets, over a million. Most of them received a personal prophecy directed solely to them, or to specific others. For example, when Saul's father lost some donkeys, Saul went to a prophet to find out where they were.

The main purpose of these prophecies was not the message, but rather the prophetic experience itself. During prophecy, the prophet shed himself of everything physical and reached incredible heights of awareness and connection to Hashem.

A prophecy needed for future generations was all of the above. But, **in addition**, it contains a message that either clarifies some halachic detail, or encourages the Jewish People to return to the ways of Torah.

- Tractate Megilla 14a, Rashi
- Shmuel I 9:6
- Derech Hashem, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato
- Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 7

Yiddle Riddle

Who in *Bereshit* was his sister's son-in-law?

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Moshe Lazerus, Rabbi Benzion Bamberger, Rabbi Reuven Subar, Rabbi Avrohom Lefkowitz and other Rabbis at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

General Editor: **Rabbi Moshe Newman**

Production Design: **Lev Seltzer**

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22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel
38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA
613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

972-2-810-315 fax: 972-2-812-890
1-212-213-3100 fax: 1-212-213-8717
1-905-886-5730 fax: 1-905-886-6065

ohr@jer1.co.il
RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Gramercy.ios.com
avram.rothman@canrem.com

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