**Yadayim, Chapter One, Mishnah One**

**Introduction**

The first mishnah of Yadayim is about how much water is necessary for the ritual washing of one's hands. A log is about 1/2 a liter of water. So the basic amount of 1/4 log works out to about 100 grams of water, a third of a can of Coke for those who drink that stuff.

We should note that the Mishnah expresses washing one's hands by referring to a servant doing the work. The servant literally gives water to the diner's hands. This is expressive of the setting of a formal banquet. In other words the Hebrew phrase "netilat yadayim" or "notnim leyadim"—used in this Mishnah—are translations of common Greek words. It shows how much influence eating customs had on the Jews of the period.

**Mishnah One**

1. [A minimum of] a quarter [of a log] of water must be poured over the hands for one [person] and even for two.
2. A minimum of half a log must be poured over the hands for three or four persons.
3. A minimum of one log [is sufficient] for five, ten, or one hundred persons.
4. Rabbi Yose says: as long as there is not less than a quarter of a log left for the last person among them.
5. More [water] may be added to the second water, but more may not be added to the first water.

***Explanation***

**Section one**: For two people it is sufficient to have one quarter log of water. Although there won't be this amount left for the second person who has water put over his hands, since the second pouring comes from an amount that was originally sufficient, and the original amount was used to purify, the lesser amount of water still remaining is effective.

We should note that 1/4 of a log is really a very little amount of water. It would not be effective to truly clean one's hands. It seems to have ritual function only.

**Section two**: For three or four persons they must double the amount to half a log.

**Section three**: According to this opinion, once we get to a higher number, even 100, one log is sufficient. There need not be 1/4 of a log per person.

**Section four**: Rabbi Yose disagrees with the previous three sections. There must always be 1/4 of a log left over for each person. Many people could wash from the same washing cup (or whatever they used) but there has to be 1/4 of a log for each and every one.

**Section five**: When one pours water over one's hands their need to be 2 pourings. For the first pouring the water must go up to the joint, which is interpreted either as the second joint of the fingers or the joint attaching the fingers to the hand (we will see this in 2:3). The problem is that his fingers now defile the water that is on them. To fix this problem he then washes off the water with more water. We will learn more about this process in chapter two.

If the first washing didn't reach all the way to the joint, he is not allowed to pour the second pouring in a place where the first one didn't reach. Rather, he would have to redo the whole thing. But if the second pouring didn't reach the joint, he can just add water to the spots he missed.