

"The hands are susceptible to uncleanness, and they are rendered clean by the pouring over them of water up to the wrist. Thus if a man had poured the first water up to the wrist and the second water beyond the wrist, and the water flowed back to the hand, the hand became clean; but if he poured both the first water and the second beyond the wrist, and the water flowed back to the hand, the hand remains unclean . . . . The water may be poured over the hands of four or five persons side by side or one above the other, provided that they lie but loosely together so that the water may flow between them."

And in Yadaim 1(1) we find the following:

"To render the hands clean a quarter-log or more of water must be poured over the hands to suffice for one person or even two; a half-log or more suffices for three persons or for four; one log or more suffices for five or for ten or for a hundred" (a quarter-log is equal in bulk to an egg and a half; thus a log would be equal to the contents of six eggs)

It is likely that this ceremonial cleansing was the kind employed to purify scrupulous Jews from the uncleanness they were likely to contract in the market place.

Luke 11:38 tells us that "when the Pharisee saw it (Jesus going into the Pharisee's house and reclining at the table for lunch), he was surprised that He had not first washed (BAPTIZO) before the meal." (We have already noted Matthew 15:2, in which the Jews asked Jesus, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.")

These washings of the hands do not refer to hygienic cleansing, but to ceremonial cleansing. It was not physical dirt about which the Pharisees were concerned, but ceremonial defilement. Thus the quotations from the Mishnah above (in connection with Mark 7:4) again come into play.

John 3:23 tells us that "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there were many waters there." The "much water" or "many waters" are often urged in favor of the mode of immersion, since it would seem to make little sense to say that John was baptizing by sprinkling or pouring in Aenon because there was much water there.

This contention appears very strong until we place ourselves in a Jewish context and recall the emphasis on the need of "living" or running water for ceremonial cleansings. The ritual cleansings and bathings among the Essenes and Pharisees could not be accomplished by means of stagnant water, but only by flowing, moving water (so that uncleanness could be carried away and a clean supply be available). Rivers and springs and fountains fulfilled this requirement, as did water poured over the hands or the feet or the head.

Acts 8:26-39 tells us that an Ethiopian eunuch who had travelled to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel was now returning to his own country via the desert road to Gaza, met Philip, who volunteered to help the eunuch understand a portion of Isaiah. In verse 31 we discover that the eunuch invited Philip