

# Urchatz

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Source:

We perform a ritual washing of our hands WITHOUT reciting the blessing traditionally associated with the washing of hands. Why no blessing you might ask? Jews are required to recite the blessing for hand washing prior to reciting the HaMotzi blessing and eating bread. Because we are eating parsley at this point in the Seder, we need not recite the blessing for hand washing. So why wash our hands at all?? An excellent question!! Remember when the Seder was formulated...around the time of the Second Temple. Jews of this time period were OBSESSED with ritual purity and tried to do everything in a state of ritual cleanliness. Purification involved bathing or washing with water. The homes of the day were built with individual Mikvehs (Ritual Baths) so Jews could cleanse themselves regularly. Eating was considered a holy act that should be engaged in in a state of purity. Hence, Jews of the day washed themselves prior to eating. Over the centuries this custom has been lost, but it is retained for posterity at this point in the Seder.