

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** The Talmud tells us that Avrohom Avinu instituted tefilas shacharis. (Brachos 26b, as cited by Rav A.D.M. Bayer) A mitzvah always retains a connection with the person who originally began the mitzvah. For example, someone who donates money to build a yeshiva forever has a part in all the Torah learning which takes place in that yeshiva. Because Avrohom Avinu instituted the mitzvah of praying the morning prayers, the soul of Avrohom Avinu is forever linked with the morning prayers. (Koyach hapoel b-nifal) Therefore, when a Jew says the morning prayers, he unifies his soul with the soul of Avrohom Avinu.

Opening up a prayer book we see that one the first mitzvahs of the morning is the mitzvah to wash the hands upon waking up in the morning. We wash our hands in the morning to remove from our hands the impurity, which attaches to our hands during sleeping. The mitzvah of netilas yodayim is hinted to our Torah portion this week Lech-Lecha. The gematria of Lech-Lecha is 100. The gematria of mayim is 90, while the mitzvah of netilas yodayim involves all 10 fingers. So, the 90 from mayim along with the 10 fingers is 100, the same gematria of Lech-Lecha.

There are many reasons for the mitzvah of netilas yodayim. To begin with, one is generally obligated to wash his hands if he touches a part of his body which is normally covered, an activity which is likely to happen while sleeping. (See Orach Chayim 4:19,20) Therefore upon waking up in the morning, we immediately have the obligation to wash our hands. (See Mishna Berura 4:1) Another reason given for netilas yodayim is that in the morning we ready ourselves to serve Hashem. Just as the Kohen washed his hands in preparation for his Holy Service, so too does every Jew wash his hands in preparation for the service of Hashem. (Ibid.) A third reason involves the deepest level of mysticism. Because of the activity of the soul while a person is sleeping, an impurity attaches to the fingers.

It is preferable to wash the hands as soon as possible after waking up. Therefore many people are meticulous to keep a basin and a cup of water next to the bed, so that they need not even walk to the sink to wash their hands. In any case, it is important to wash each hand at least three times in order to remove the impurity. (Ibid., 4:10) The following amazing true story illustrates the tremendous spiritual power of the mitzvah of netilas yodayim in the morning.

Once, a family member of Reb Mordecai Shain was forced to be in the hospital over Shabbos. Reb Mordecai decided to move into the Bikur Cholim guestroom for Shabbos, in order to keep the family member company. It was about seven in the morning on Shabbos, when Reb Mordecai decided to check on the patient before praying his morning prayers. Reb Mordecai was passing the intensive care unit when an agitated nurse ran out.

"Do you mind coming inside for just a minute?" asked the nurse. "We have a Jewish patient here who keeps on making strange motions with his hands. We do not understand what the patient wants, and he will not allow us to give him his medication."

Reb Mordecai quickly followed the nurse inside. Lying on the bed was a Sephardic Jew who obviously spoke only Hebrew. After watching him for a moment, Reb Mordecai realized that the patient wanted to wash his hands in the morning. Reb Mordecai quickly brought over a cup of water and a basin and helped the man wash his hands. The grateful nurses were then able to administer the medication.

Speaking with the man in Hebrew, Reb Mordecai asked the man why he was in the hospital.

"I am visiting here from Eretz Yisroel." Said the man. "Just yesterday, I collapsed on the street, and I was brought here. The tests they ran show that I have a large growth in my head, and they need to operate immediately. But there is no surgeon available until Monday morning."

The patient went on to insist that his condition was life-threatening, and that he needed to be transferred to a facility where the surgery could be performed immediately. Reb Mordecai dashed out of the room and got in touch with the local Bikur Cholim. After explaining the dangerous situation of the man. Bikur Cholim got to work on the problem. The man was transferred to a different hospital where a specialist agreed to perform the surgery immediately.

Fortunately, the operation was a success, and the life of the man was saved - all because of the mitzvah of negel vasser! (Visions of Greatness, p. 225, Rav Y. Weiss.) So, when we begin the morning with our hand washing, we will be refreshed and ready to serve Hashem with happiness. Then, when we pray the morning prayers, we will be infused the soul of Avrohom Avinu. Because the spiritual power of Avrohom Avinu is eternally bound to the morning prayers. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**