

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 202

Ki Tisa | Removing Evil Through Handwashing and Purity



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

פרשת כי תשא | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parashat Ki Tisa

Emotional Detachment from Torah

Soft knocks were heard in the home of the local rabbi, and soon afterward, a young man nearing his 30s entered the house.

"My name is Binyamin," he began, "and since I was 7 years old, I have been learning Gemara, and I have since continued learning for the past twenty years already."

"To be honest," he continued, "I am considered one of the brighter Torah scholars in town. Yet, despite having studied Torah for so many years, I have not merited to

feel and experience the sacredness inherent in Torah study.

I have never felt that wondrous, uplifting feeling that my friends talk about."

I looked at him silently.

"Perhaps we should study a page of Gemara together," I suggested. Binyamin readily agreed, and we began to learn.

During our study session, I already understood everything I needed to know, and I now knew the reason for Binyamin's feeling of emptiness, as I shall share below.¹

Wellsprings of Wisdom

1. When a Jew merits to taste the sweetness of Torah, he will desire nothing else. He will no longer seek power or honor, nor will he be drawn to other desires or illusions. If it is decreed that he must take upon himself the yoke of rabbinic leadership, he will not do so eagerly. They must practically 'tear' him away from his world of Torah, filled with light and joy,

and lead him to be involved with worldly affairs.

In this connection we bring the following tale ('Besod Avadecha', Part 7, page 265):

Even in his youth, the rare talents and the budding brilliance of Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Manheimer — who later became the rabbi of Ungvar and the author of 'Ein

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HaBedolach' responsa — were already evident, and inspired amazement.

At the tender age of nine, he was already regarded as a regular Torah student in the esteemed yeshiva of the brilliant Rabbi Kapel Charif.

During his first year of study in Rabbi Kapel Charif's yeshiva, young Chaim Tzvi stood amidst the assembly that filled the study hall and listened intently to his teacher's Shabbat HaGadol sermon.

During the sermon, Rabbi Kapel posed twelve profound questions on the topic under discussion and provided twelve answers, showcasing his renowned sharpness. The learned listeners were left in awe of the astonishing genius, and after the sermon, they returned to review the teachings and revel in them.

Young Chaim Tzvi approached his teacher and offered to accompany him on his way home from the sermon. With graceful humility, in a soft yet clear and fluent voice, he presented his comments and raised questions on the intricate reasoning of the sermon. His brilliant and sharp teacher, acknowledged — later even publicly — that his statements in the sermon had been overturned and his conclusions were refuted by the young prodigy.

The Rabbi's joy knew no bounds. He bent down and planted a kiss on the boy's forehead, expressing the delight that filled his entire being at the triumph of his young student. In high spirits, the Rabbi humorously remarked to the boy: "All of

your words are true and just. However, I wonder: where have we ever found that 'a child who is permitted to eat on Yom Kippur' could have the courage and power to refute a Rabbi's sermon?"

From that moment, the young prodigy was playfully nicknamed "the one who eats on Yom Kippur."

Before long he was recognized as a prominent student in the renowned yeshiva of Rabbi Binyamin Ze'ev, and even before reaching the age of thirteen, he was accepted into the famed Pressburg Yeshiva and became a cherished student of Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the 'Chatam Sofer'.

In addition to his genius and Torah greatness, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi excelled in practical wisdom and righteousness akin to that of a divine angel. During his subsequent years as a rabbi and leader, individuals from all corners of the land flocked to his door seeking his counsel and wisdom.

His advice was trusted across all strata of society, from the leaders to the common folk. Even judges in secular courts would not shy away from seeking his advice when faced with difficult and complex cases requiring resolution.

One such case involved a Jewish villager from his region who traveled to town to purchase a dairy cow. He encountered a gentile acquaintance who was leading a cow for sale. After negotiating, they reached an agreement, and the Jew paid the agreed price, completing the deal.

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As the gentile prepared to leave, the Jew asked him: "Since I still need to buy a few more items while in town, could you kindly take the cow with you on your way and deliver it to my home in the nearby village?" "Why not?" the gentile replied obligingly. He took the cow by its halter and went on his way.

Later that evening, after completing his errands, the Jew returned home cheerful and excited. Entering the house, he called out joyfully to his wife: "Well, what do you think of the cow I bought?" "What cow?" she asked in bewilderment. "I haven't seen or heard of a cow."

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed in panic. "Didn't the gentile neighbor deliver his cow to our house?"

"I haven't seen him at all!" she replied.

The Jew immediately ran to the gentile's house to inquire about the cow.

The gentile feigned complete innocence, shrugging his shoulders, and spreading out his hands. "Are you out of your mind? What cow? What are you talking about? I didn't even see you today at all!"

Realizing he had been deceived, the Jew stormed out, slammed the door, and hurried to the city's police station to file a complaint about the stolen cow.

The police officers listened to his grievance and issued him a summons for investigation, which he was to deliver to the accused gentile. However, during the police interrogation, the gentile denied having any business connection with the Jew.

The police, recognizing the sincerity and truthfulness of the Jew's claims, took pity on him and referred the case to the city judge to decide, given the gentile's absolute and stubborn denial.

Even the judge was exhausted by his many efforts to overcome the seller's obstinacy, and he whispered to the Jew that he should visit Rabbi Manheimer, the rabbi of the Jewish community, and seek his counsel on how to extract a confession from the unyielding cow seller.

The Jew presented his case before Rabbi Manheimer, and even before hearing the complete story, he had already formulated his advice.

"Go and tell the judge," the rabbi instructed in a pleasant tone, "to request that the police chief send a squad of officers to the gentile's home to search for counterfeit coins."

"But what does counterfeit money have to do with my stolen cow?" the Jew asked in confusion.

"Do not delay," the rabbi urged. "Go and act as I have instructed, and with G-d's help, everything will work out."

The judge, hearing the rabbi's suggestion, was also puzzled but, knowing the rabbi's great wisdom, agreed to follow the advice.

When the police squad arrived at the gentile's home and informed him of their intent to search for counterfeit coins, the gentile began shouting: "By my faith and my word, I possess no other money except the coins I received yesterday from the Jew

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who purchased the cow from me. If any counterfeit coins are found here, they must have come from him; my hands are clean!"

The gentile's admission to selling the cow was promptly utilized by the police, and within a short time, the cow was ceremoniously returned to the Jewish buyer's home.

Just as Rabbi Manheimer, with his divine wisdom, rescued the Jewish victim from the gentile oppressor, he did not hesitate to save an oppressed gentile from a Jewish oppressor when the situation was reversed.

One such incident occurred with a gentile basket-seller in the rabbi's town. After successfully selling his entire stock, the gentile ended his day at the tavern of a Jewish innkeeper. Since the gentile had a strong liking to alcoholic beverages, he lingered in the tavern, consuming glass after glass.

Hours passed, and the intoxicated gentile was unable to stand up and leave.

When he did try to leave, he fell and slipped and remained asleep on the tavern floor.

Before locking up for the night, the innkeeper dragged the gentile outside to sleep on the doorstep.

By morning, the gentile awoke outside the tavern. He reached into his pocket for his money pouch, only to find it missing. Realizing the pouch was gone, he concluded the innkeeper must have taken it while dragging him outside.

He rushed to confront the innkeeper, demanding his money back with pleas and threats, but to no avail. "I never saw your pouch!" the innkeeper exclaimed angrily, accusing the gentile of unjust suspicion.

The gentile, left with no alternative, turned to the police. Investigations were fruitless, as the innkeeper steadfastly denied any wrongdoing.

The case eventually reached the judge, who, like the police, made no progress. The judge then discreetly advised the gentile to seek Rabbi Manheimer's wisdom.

With no other choice, the gentile approached Rabbi Manheimer and explained his situation. The rabbi immediately summoned the innkeeper to appear before him for a *din Torah* (Jewish court hearing).

After the gentile presented his case, the innkeeper began reciting his well-rehearsed denial.

The rabbi, feigning helplessness, turned to the gentile and said: "Understand, my dear fellow, that in light of the innkeeper's firm denial and the lack of solid evidence, I cannot obligate him to compensate you."

Disheartened, the gentile nodded in resignation and began to leave. But before he exited, the rabbi added, "Nevertheless, I am confident in the innkeeper's generosity and believe he would be willing to donate five gold coins as a gesture of goodwill."

"Of course!" the innkeeper responded warmly. "If the rabbi commands it, I will certainly donate!"

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As the two men prepared to leave, the rabbi signaled for the innkeeper to remain behind. Once alone, the rabbi approached the innkeeper and whispered, "Be cautious. Do not give him five coins from his own pouch, lest he recognize them and return to accuse you before the police !"

The innkeeper, taken aback, protested: "Does the rabbi think I'm such a fool ? Of course, I'll use other money and not his !"

"Ah !" thundered the rabbi suddenly, "so his pouch is in your possession ! Hurry and return it to him immediately, without missing a single coin !"

Ashamed, the innkeeper returned the pouch, while the gentile could not stop praising the rabbi's integrity, wisdom, and the majesty of the Jewish faith.

The story spread through the police station and the courts, leaving a remarkable sanctification of G-d's name in its wake.

Such was the genius and wisdom of Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, author of *Ein HaBedolach*. However, his profound humility exceeded even these attributes.

After his marriage and his time of study in the Pressburg Yeshiva, offers for rabbinic positions poured in from various communities, but Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, in his great humility, adamantly refused to take on the mantle of the rabbinate.

For a time, he relied on the support of his wealthy father-in-law in the town of Gropa, later turning to trade.

Despite his business endeavors, he never abandoned his Torah study, often learning even while traveling on a merchant's wagon in business pursuits.

Periodically, he would visit Pressburg to see his teacher, the Chatam Sofer, and present the Torah insights he had written in the interim. During these visits, profound discussions would ensue between the teacher and his student.

On one occasion, a business trip coincided with his usual visit to his teacher. Preferring not to delay his study, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi first traveled to Pressburg to bask in his teacher's wisdom before continuing to the business fair.

On that occasion, following a long Torah discussion that filled the *Chatam Sofer* with great satisfaction from his esteemed student, the *Chatam Sofer* remarked: "My son, I see that the time has come for you to don the garments of priesthood and ascend to gloriously serve on the rabbinic throne !"

Hearing these words, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, overcome with humility that was ingrained in his very being, turned pale and blushed alternately. "Rabbi," he exclaimed with heartfelt emotion, "such a thought has never crossed my mind ! Who am I, and what am I, so insignificant and unworthy, that I should dare ascend to the heights of the rabbinate and stand in the place of great men ? Heaven forbid that I should take such a step !"

The Chatam Sofer continued to urge him, and Rabbi Chaim Tzvi summoned additional arguments to dissuade his

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teacher. "Rabbi," he said, "thank G-d, I have a livelihood that provides me with honor and comfort. Why should I covet a position that could sustain another student in need, someone without my means of subsistence, and who is truly worthy of such a role?"

When these arguments failed to convince, the Chatam Sofer replied, "I fear, my son, that if you do not willingly accept the yoke of the rabbinate, you may be forced to take it upon yourself against your will!"

Rabbi Chaim Tzvi viewed himself so far removed from considering the mantle of the rabbinate, that even such a foreboding statement from his teacher did not sway him. He took his leave with great affection and set out for the marketplace in Olmutz.

While traveling on a desolate road near a dense forest, not far from Olmutz, a gang of armed robbers emerged from the woods, attacking his wagon and surrounding it. Their blood-chilling cries filled the air as they demanded money, and there seemed to be no escape.

This was a notorious gang of highwaymen who had terrorized travelers in the region for some time, evading capture despite the authorities' efforts. Their boldness and cruelty had only grown with time.

Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, in addition to his wisdom, was also blessed with strength and courage. Even in the face of imminent danger, he remained calm and resourceful. Using his sharp wit, he began reasoning with the greedy and ruthless men, explaining that his oxen had been sent ahead to Olmutz by a

different route, while he traveled alone to sell them there. "Attacking me now," he said, "is unwise, as my pockets are empty. It would be better for you to wait until I return from the market, when my pockets will be full, and I will gladly share generously with you."

His goal was to secure temporary safety, planning to take an alternate route on his return to avoid the robbers. To his great relief, his explanation convinced them, and they retreated into the forest. Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, though skeptical of their naivety, cautiously continued to Olmutz, ensuring they were truly gone before proceeding.

After conducting his business and earning a profit, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi prepared to return home. Though he had nearly forgotten the incident, the memory resurfaced as he set out. He quickly sought a safer route to avoid crossing paths with the robbers again.

Upon safely returning home, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, as was his custom, immediately immersed himself in Torah study. Lost in the depths of the study before him, he forgot the world around him and felt no fatigue from his recent travels. Midnight came and went, yet he continued learning.

Suddenly, a deafening knock shattered the stillness, shaking the wooden door as though it were paper. A group of fierce robbers burst into the house, unabashedly exposing their faces. "Since you failed to keep your promise to return after the market and share your profits with us," they declared, "we have come to collect our dues! Had you come willingly, we would have taken only a

What Is Hidden Behind the Picture ?

The intense energy in the Cohen household reached a peak. That evening, their eldest daughter was going to get married. The entire family mobilized to take part in the final preparations. All of the family, that is, except for the youngest member, Eli, who sat off to the side and focused on his

drawing. None of the commotion surrounding him seemed to be noticed by him as he sat quietly.

His father understood him well. Eli was closely attached to his sister, and now he felt he would be abandoned by her marriage and moving out of the house, so his father let him be and didn't say a word.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

small portion of your earnings. Now, because you deceived us, we demand everything — every coin, including what you have hidden !"

Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, in his courage, refused to yield, and the robbers called reinforcements waiting outside, and a violent struggle ensued in the house.

After looting every visible and hidden item, leaving nothing behind, the robbers departed as suddenly as they had come, leaving the house stripped bare and its occupants bruised and battered.

At that moment, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi vowed to G-d that he would accept the first offer of a rabbinate that came his way, without hesitation.

A few days later, as the local police chief and his team conducted another futile investigation at the ransacked home, the

postman arrived with a letter. Seeing the Pressburg postal stamp, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi, overcome with emotion, eagerly opened it.

The letter, short and direct, read: "Did I not implore you to accept the yoke of the rabbinate willingly ? You did not listen to me. Now, it is clear that a heavenly decree has been issued, and you have no choice but to take up the mantle and serve as a shepherd to the Jewish people."

Not long after, a delegation from the Shottelsdorf community arrived at Rabbi Chaim Tzvi's door with a formal rabbinic appointment, and without hesitation, he accepted it, and the community rejoiced.

From there, Rabbi Chaim Tzvi eventually ascended to the rabbinate of the holy community of Verbo, where he had studied in his youth; and ultimately he was called to serve as the illustrious rabbi of the prestigious Jewish community of Ungvar.

Parashat Ki Tisa - What Is Hidden Behind the Picture ?

His father looked over Eli's shoulder and saw that he illustrated a wonderful picture of a Kohen (priest) regally dressed in the required four garments. Eli was unaware of his father's gaze and diligently added details and colors to the image.

The father's gaze lingered on the picture, and he momentarily forgot the hectic rush of the wedding day that he was in the midst of. He allowed his thoughts to wander, and suddenly spoke up, sharing a meaningful moment with his son Eli:

"The Kohen in the times of the Temple would wear four garments: the ephod vest, the tunic, the trousers, and the sash. These garments would cover his body and sanctify him for the Divine service.

Yet," his father continued, "as you accurately depicted in the illustration, part of the Kohen's body remains uncovered: his face, hands, and feet.

These uncovered areas of the body must have also required a degree of sanctification, but what was the sanctification that they

received to enable them to perform the divine service?"

The commentary of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, of blessed memory, states the following (Exodus 30:17):

"All parts of the body aside from the hands and feet come under the cloak of the priesthood by being garbed and clothed in the priestly garments. The hands and feet, however, which are the primary means and tools through which a person acts and effects change, remain uncovered by these garments.

Instead, they are washed and rinsed with water drawn from the basin in the Temple.

The holy waters of the basin thus 'clothe' one's hands and feet with the sanctity of the Temple, just as the holy garments of the Kohanim did for the rest of their body.

This is why a Kohen who had not washed his hands and feet was considered equal in transgression to a Kohen who did the service in the Temple while lacking the required priestly garments."

Sanctifying Hands and Feet

We continue on this subject and quote from 'Gut Shabbos Moscow' (p. 229):

Our Parsha — 'Ki Tisa' — comes after the two previous Torah portions of "Terumah" and "Tetzaveh," in which the Jewish people were commanded to build the vessels of the Mishkan and the Mishkan itself, where the Holy One, blessed be He, would dwell and rest His Presence.

Our Parsha also briefly discusses the vessels and the Mishkan but also adds a new vessel that was not mentioned previously: the copper 'kiyor', or wash basin, which was designated for the rinsing and sanctification of the hands and feet of the Kohanim before they began their daily service in the Mishkan:

"You shall make a copper basin and its copper base for washing; place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water there. Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet from it; when they come into the

Tent of Meeting they shall wash with water" (Exodus 30:18-20).

The Kohanim were commanded to sanctify their hands and feet before beginning their divine service every morning, as the Rambam says:

"It is a positive command for the Kohen performing the service to sanctify his hands and feet beforehand, as it says: 'Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet from it' (Exodus 30:19).

A Kohen who served without first sanctifying his hands and feet in the morning is liable to death by Heaven, as it says: 'They shall wash with water and they will not die' (Exodus 30:20). His service is also invalid, whether he is the High Priest or an ordinary Kohen.

From where do we learn that his service is invalid? It says: 'It shall be for them a statute forever, to him and to his descendants throughout their generations' (Exodus 30:21), and regarding the priestly garments, it similarly says: 'They shall have the priesthood as

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a statute perpetually' (Exodus 29:9) - just as one who is missing any of the priestly garments invalidates the service, so too one who has not washed his hands and feet."

Thus, the bodies of the Kohanim were sanctified by wearing the priestly garments, and their hands and feet were sanctified by washing them in the basin.

If we examine the details related to the basin, we will notice at least four things in which the basin differs from the other vessels of the Mishkan:

1. No measurements were given for the basin, unlike all other vessels, which have detailed specifications for their size.

2. The basin's function was to wash and sanctify the hands and feet of the Kohanim before the beginning of their daily service in the Temple. As such, the basin should have been placed right at the entrance to the Mishkan, or perhaps even before the entrance, where it would enable entry to the Mishkan yard in purity.

In practice, however, its location was far inside, beyond the

altar of sacrifices, as it is stated: "You shall place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar."

3. For all the other vessels, the Jewish people donated a wide variety of materials: gold, silver, and copper.

But for the unique vessel of the basin, only the Jewish women donated, and their contributions consisted of the copper mirrors that they had used during the Egyptian exile: "He made the copper basin and its copper base out of the mirrors of the women who had gathered at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting" (Exodus 38:8).

4. The following is a ruling of the Rambam (Temple Vessels 1:18):

"The menorah and its utensils, the table and its utensils, and the golden altar and all of the service vessels may only be made of metal. If they made them out of wood, bone, stone, or glass, they are invalid.

If the public was poor, they may even be made of tin, and if they later become wealthy again, they must make them of gold — even the

Parashat Ki Tisa - The Five Letters of Severity

sprinkling basins, forks, and shovels of the altar and of measuring, if the public can afford it, they must make entirely out of gold. Even the gates of the courtyard must be plated with gold if affordable."

Indeed, there were periods when the Jewish people were wealthy and made these vessels of gold. Yet, regardless of the changes in wealth, the basin

never changed; it was always made of copper.

We find in the days of King Solomon: "He made ten copper basins" (I Kings 7:38); although King Solomon was extraordinarily wealthy and gold was as plentiful as sand in his time, despite that, he made ten basins for the purification of the Kohanim, all from copper, not even one was made out of gold.

The Five Letters of Severity

The thought may occur: Did the faces of the Kohanim, which were also uncovered require sanctification, and if so, how was it done?

The body is more connected to physicality and understandably requires sanctification.

But the face which has the most refined limbs — the eyes that study the letters of the Torah, and the ears that hear the words of Torah — perhaps it is elevated and purified enough and requires no further sanctification?"

However, the Zohar clearly states otherwise (Idra Rabba - Naso 137b):

"It was taught: There are five powers of severity in this small countenance (Z'eir Anpin), and they are further subdivided into 1,400 powers of severity and extend into the nose, mouth, arms, hands, and fingers."

These five severities are the root of all judgments and severities and correspond to the five letters **ה, ו, ז, ט, י**.

These letters (which all have a second form, as final letters) equal numerically 280, which is a number that represents judgments.

Parashat Ki Tisa - The Sin of Aaron's Sons

These letters are manifest in the five limbs of the body mentioned above:

In the nose, the letter 'מ'; in the mouth, the letter 'פ'; in the arms, the letter 'ג'; in the palms of the hands, the letter 'ך'; and in the fingers, the letter 'צ'.

There is great depth and wisdom in all of this, and it is elaborated upon extensively in many books of Kabbalah.

As far as the practical implications which concern us, we must be careful every single morning to contend with these forces of impurity.

As it states in the holy Zohar (Vayeshev 184b):

When a Jew goes to sleep at night, their Divine soul departs and ascends on high to be renewed and to receive new strength.

Once the soul departs from the person, forces of impurity cling

to him and impose and place their own spirit of impurity upon him.

When the Divine soul returns to the person upon waking in the morning, the holiness and the sanctity of the returning soul causes the forces of impurity to flee.

More precisely, the forces of impurity do not vanish completely; rather, they withdraw from the entire body and concentrate at the fingertips. Thus, even though one is now wide awake — his hands remain impure from his previous state of slumber.

The Zohar concludes by saying: The only way to remove these impurities is by properly washing the hands (netilat yadayim).

Only in this way can the power of impurity be driven away from the hands, and the person will attain complete purity.

The Sin of Aaron's Sons

We go back in time.

On the 15th of Nissan in the year 2448 to Creation, the Jewish

people left Egypt, and a year later, on the first of Nissan, the Mishkan was erected, and Aaron

Parashat Ki Tisa - The Sin of Aaron's Sons

the Kohen Gadol began serving there.

That same day, "Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took a firepan, put fire in it and placed incense on it, and offered before G-d a foreign fire that He had not commanded them. And a fire went out before G-d and consumed them, and they died before G-d." (Leviticus 10:1-2).

Because it was a foreign fire, they were punished: two threads of fire emerged from the Holy of Holies and split into four — two entering the nostrils of Nadav and two into the nostrils of Avihu — and they were burned to death (Sanhedrin 52a).

Although the verse clarifies that their sin involved offering a foreign fire, a sacrifice which G-d had not commanded, we find in the Midrash that there was a preceding sin to this which ultimately led them to offer the foreign fire:

They had entered the Mishkan without first washing their hands and feet from the basin.

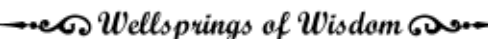
To quote the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 20:9)

"For four reasons, the sons of Aaron died, one being that they entered without washing their hands and feet."

Rabbi Yaakov Tennenbaum, of blessed memory, explained the severity of their transgression:²

It is known from the teachings of the Arizal that through washing one's hands, one separates the impure powers and negative forces that cling to the ten fingers. Since Nadav and Avihu did not sanctify their hands, they did not remove those negative forces. This ultimately caused them to offer a foreign fire before G-d.

The importance of washing the hands in the morning is great, and we will therefore expand upon this topic a bit more.



2. Shemen Afarsimon (Parshat Acharei; See there further on the words of the Midrash).

How to Perform Netilat Yadayim

In "Chelev Ha'aretz" (Part I, p. 359), we discuss this subject at length, and we shall add here an excerpt:

The holy Zohar explains that when a Jew awakens from sleep, an evil spirit (ruach ra'ah) rests upon their hands.

This evil spirit does not depart from a person's hands until they pour water on them three times alternately.

When water is poured on one hand, the evil spirit is repelled to the other; doing it to the other hand causes it to return to the original hand; only after three alternating pours is the evil spirit completely uprooted and removed.

One must be careful that the water covers all of the fingers and the entire surface area of the hand, up until the wrist joint (on Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av only until the knuckles).

The Poskim (halachic legal authorities) write that when one washes their hands in the

morning, they must first fill the vessel with the right hand, and then pass it to the left hand to pour on the right hand first, then take the vessel back in the right hand and pour on the left, and repeat this alternating action three times.

It is advisable and preferred not to pass the vessel directly from the left to the right hand but rather to place it down on the floor or counter and then pick it up with the right hand to show and demonstrate that the right side is dominant and that the left side is subservient.

After washing hands alternately three times, one should rub their hands together three times, raise them with the fingers upward to head-level, and recite the blessing of "Al Netilat Yadayim."

One must keep the hands raised upright until the completion of the blessing, as "netilat yadayim" also implies lifting of the hands, as the verse says: "Va'yinatlem

Parashat Ki Tisa - Immediate Rinsing and Purity

va'yinas'em" — "He lifted them and carried them" (Isaiah 63:9). One should also make an effort when raising both hands, that both upper arms be placed toward the

inner body, with the palms open wide as if to receive something, and symbolic of the reception of purity. All of these practices have deep mystical significance.

Immediate Rinsing and Purity

It happened many years after Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai wrote the Zohar and after the Jewish world discovered the great mystery of performing the morning hand-washing according to the law to completely remove the forces of impurity from the body and bring upon oneself a spirit of holiness and purity.

Although they had succeeded in removing the impurity from the body, the world at large retreated backward in giant steps. Winds of impurity, heresy, and immorality began to blow throughout the world, capturing and ensnaring Jewish souls by the tens of thousands.

The Holy One, blessed be He, decided that the time had come to reveal to His children how to wield the "weapon" called "netilat yadayim" even more potently. He revealed this secret

through Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli, of blessed memory ('Agra D'Pirka,' letter 9):

When a person awakens from his sleep, he must be careful not to lower his feet from the bed before washing his hands. For if a person places his feet on the ground without washing, G-d forbid, he gives power to the animalistic soul to chase after him and to entice him.

This is hinted in the verse: "Iniquity he plots upon his bed, he stands in a path that is not good, evil he does not despise" (Psalms 36:5) - when a Jew lowers his feet to the ground before washing his hands, he will soon find that he "stands in a path that is not good," and this can lead him, G-d forbid, to wicked traits and that "evil he does not despise" — instead of living a

Parashat Ki Tisa - Washing One's Face, Hands, and Feet

life of Torah and holiness, he will be led to a life of materialism and untoward desires that day.

The five severities are the root of all judgments and severities, and they appear in the body in five places — the nose, the mouth, the arms, the palms, and the fingers.

Washing One's Face, Hands, and Feet

In the Tractate of Shabbat (50b), it is stated the following: "It was taught in a Baraita: A person must wash his face, hands, and feet every day in honor of his Creator, as it is said: 'All of G-d's deeds are for His sake' (Proverbs 16:4)."

The Rambam quotes this Baraita as law:³ "In the morning, one washes his face, hands, and feet, and only then prays."

The Arizal writes in Sha'ar HaKavanot:⁴

"One must also wash the face and hands because all these places are where the unholy powers

We subdue them daily through the morning netilat yadayim, and in the Temple times, they would subdue them through the sanctification of the hands and feet in the basin.

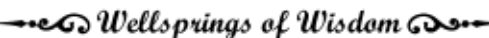
The forces of judgment also dwell in the nose and the mouth — and these must also be subdued.

grasp the holiness of a person in the lowest world of Asiyah."

In "Chelev Ha'aretz" (Part II, p. 47), we elaborated upon this and wrote as follows:

Drawing holiness and having the Divine Presence rest upon a person depends greatly on the preparation before each mitzvah in the three aspects of thought, speech, and action. It begins with physical preparation and continues with the preparation of the soul.

A person who fears the word of G-d and desires his closeness should be careful to immediately



3. Hilchot Tefillah U'Nesiat Kapayim (4:3).

4. Derushei Seder Shabbat (Derush 1).

Parashat Ki Tisa - Washing One's Face, Hands, and Feet

prepare himself properly upon arising from sleep to stand before his Creator with a clean and dignified body and with a respectable appearance, as it is written: "Bless the L-rd, my soul, and all that is within me, shall bless His holy Name" (Psalms 103:1).

For this reason, the Poskim have written that as part of the preparatory actions, one should be careful each morning, after washing their hands properly, to also wash the face and rinse out the mouth, to clean one's body from waste, and maintain an overall neat and tidy appearance.

It is known that the primary method of cleansing and purification of a person is specifically through water.

This is true both for parts of the body, such as the face and hands, as well as for the entirety of the body, immersing in water.

Our Sages explain the reason that purification is specifically through water:

1. Only with water does the body become thoroughly clean of

any stain or dirt, making the person more fit to stand before the Creator.

2. It is known that the evil spirit and the unholy powers do not depart from a person except through washing them thoroughly with water, which symbolizes kindness and purity.

3. Only water has the quality to bring upon a person added holiness. Just as the Kohen who worked in the Temple would wash his hands and feet with water every morning before the divine service, so too every Jew who stands to serve G-d must cleanse and purify his body with water. 'Water' specifically has the power to purify and sanctify a person.

Hence, the first preparation a person must make upon rising from sleep is to wash his face and hands every morning.

As the Gemara (Shabbat 50b) says: "A person washes his face, hands, and feet every day for the sake of his Creator," as is written: "All of G-d's deeds are for His sake" (Proverbs 16:4).

The 'Kav HaYashar' (Chapter 13) gives an additional reason for

Parashat Ki Tisa - The Virtue of Immersion in a Mikveh

the requirement of washing one's face and hands each morning: to remove the evil spirit that comes upon a person when he sleeps. It is known that the evil spirit departs the person only by washing with water and pouring water alternately three times.

In many places it has become a mistaken practice to think that washing the face in the morning is not obligatory, believing that only hand-washing is required. As a result, some do not wash their face upon rising, or at most splash a tiny bit of water that is insufficient to wash even one hand, and they insist on using the meager measure for both the hands and the face.

The Virtue of Immersion in a Mikveh

We quote from Rabbi Shalom Perlow, of blessed memory, who wrote about the advantages of immersion in a Mikveh ('Mishmeret Shalom,' p. 3, new edition):

One who immerses in a mikveh before the morning prayer fulfills the opinion

Similarly, when resting during the day, many are not aware of the obligation to wash their face at all. Worse still, some wash their hands in a sink located inside the bathroom, which is an improper practice and does not remove the evil spirit; washing one's hands and face in a bathroom only adds to impurity rather than removing it.

Instead, one should wash his hands in a room that is not used as a bathroom, and it is where one must wash his face.

A person should properly wash their hands in the morning immediately upon arising and then wash his face properly to remove all traces of sleep and impurity that hinder the holiness of the Torah.

of the Rambam, who says one should wash their face, hands, and feet every day.

We also bring the words of my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, of blessed memory ('Betzur Yarum,' vol. 9, p. 65):

Parashat Ki Tisa - The Virtue of Immersion in a Mikveh

It is written about the Jewish people: "You shall be My treasure from among all the nations, for all of the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5).

The special quality of the Jewish people over all other nations is not only that they possess a holy soul but also that their physical body is holy.

A person's body comprises four parts: skin, flesh, sinews,

and bones. The more a person sanctifies himself, the more holiness penetrates the innermost parts of his body, including even his bones.

This is why many are meticulous to immerse in a mikveh every day before the morning prayers. They will not forgo it for anything because they do not want the holiness to depart them.⁵

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

5. See 'Imrei Noam' (Parshat Ki Tetze – Ma'amar 1), that as long as the limbs of a person's body are not properly purified, the mitzvot performed with them are disqualified and do not ascend favorably before G-d.

Rabbi Avraham of Sochatchov (the 'Avnei Nezer') compares it to a Kohen who performed the Temple service with sacred vessels that were impure — and his service is disqualified. In order for the Kohen's service to be accepted with favor before G-d, it is necessary that it be done with sacred and pure vessels.

Similarly, only when a Jew's spiritual service of G-d is performed with holy and purified limbs (which are like sacred vessels), is it accepted favorably before G-d.

Therefore, the holy Baal Shem Tov, instituted that all those who follow his path immerse their bodies in a mikveh every single day before they pray and engage in Torah study. This immersion

purifies the limbs of their body from any trace of blemish, and they become like sacred vessels that are holy and pure. Consequently, all the spiritual service they perform with them throughout the day will be accepted favorably before G-d.

The Ramchal, wrote (Otzrot Ramchal – page 315) and testified about himself, that all of the wondrous spiritual attainments and awe-inspiring revelations he merited, came about because he was extremely careful to always retain his purity through immersion in the mikveh.

However, when a person learns Torah and prays without purity and immersion in a mikveh, impurity and the evil powers rule over all of his actions, and this may cause him to have evil thoughts, foreign desires, and even to come to heresy, G-d forbid.

As written in 'Ma'or Vashemesh' (beginning of Parshat Emor): Shabtai Tzvi and his followers fell into heresy and to denial of

A person's body and limbs are given to them as a loan during their lifespan, and when one's time is up, the Holy One, blessed be He, takes them back, and the person passes away. Therefore, as long as one still has this "loan" of limbs, it is wise to use them for holy deeds and not waste them on frivolity, G-d forbid.

A person must utilize the precious gift that they have received — his limbs — and strive to learn with them all four parts of the Torah: Pshat (simple meaning), Remez (allusion), Drash (homiletics), and Sod (mystical secrets), which are known collectively as the 'Pardes.'

By doing so, one sanctifies his body, composed of four parts — skin, flesh, sinews, and bones — that correspond to these four parts of the Torah.

Each part of the Torah protects its corresponding part of the body in the grave; the Pshat protects the skin, Remez protects the flesh, Drash protects the bones, and Sod protects the sinews.

Thus, it is said about true tzaddikim who have merited to study all four parts of the Torah: "My flesh, too, will dwell secure" (Psalms 16:9), and worms and decay cannot rule over them.⁶

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

G-d and His Torah — even though they were outstanding Torah scholars and great Kabbalists — because they were not careful to purify themselves through immersion in a mikveh, and they engaged in Torah study without purity.

6. Additionally, the righteous have the power to protect other Jews.

In this regard, the story is told about Rabbi Mordechai Dov of Hornosteipel.

While he was still a child, he was orphaned from his parents and went to

live with his grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Twerski.

It was late evening, as young Rabbi Mordechai Dov sat diligently studying the Talmud. Suddenly, sounds of weeping were heard in the house. At the threshold of the house, stood a poor Jew who explained that he had not paid the poritz (the non-Jewish nobleman) the lease money for the tavern, and the poritz had sent his servant to inform him that he must pay the money by the end of the month or else. Meanwhile, to ensure that the Jew would not benefit from the tavern until

Parashat Ki Tisa - The Virtue of Immersion in a Mikveh

he repaid the debt, the poritz ordered that all of the windows be removed from it.

The Jew continued, sobbing: "Without windows, it is terribly cold for my children. The chill and frost will penetrate my home. Without money to pay the debt, my heart is heavy with worry; how will I cope with the cruelty of the poritz?"

The rebbetzin, wife of Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael, told the Jew: The Rebbe Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael is not at home, but if you listen to me, go to my grandson Rabbi Mordechai Dov — he too will be able to help you.

The Jew did so. He entered Rabbi Mordechai Dov's room - then just about twelve years old - and found him immersed in his studies. He told the young lad the whole story.

Rabbi Mordechai Dov sighed and said: If my grandfather were here, he would save you, but what can I do? How can I help you?

The Jew burst into bitter tears and said: If you truly cannot help me, I have no complaint against you. But if you have the ability to do me a favor and you do not do it — I will not forgive you.

Rabbi Mordechai Dov trembled and said to the Jew: Do not cry. Light the lantern and let us go to the mikveh. It was a late hour of the night. An intense cold prevailed outside, and the waters of the mikveh were nearly frozen. When they reached the mikveh, Rabbi Mordechai Dov entered and immersed himself.

A long time passed, and Rabbi Mordechai Dov did not emerge from the

water. The Jew began to fear for Rabbi Mordechai Dov's life.

The Jew removed his clothing and wanted to go down to the waters to attempt to rescue him when suddenly he felt a hand restraining him and keeping him in his place. A long, nerve-wracking hour passed, and suddenly he saw the young Rabbi Mordechai Dov emerge from the mikveh. Rabbi Mordechai Dov said to the Jew: Do not fear. Go home. With G-d's help, the poritz will do you no harm.

The Jew returned home, and his wife said to him: The poritz is urgently looking for you. The Jew went to the poritz, who told him: Tonight when I prepared to go to sleep, I suddenly felt a pair of hands gripping my throat, attempting to strangle me. I was terrified and tried to free myself, but I could not.

Cold sweat covered my face, and fear, anxiety, and dread filled my heart. Then the thought occurred to me that this must be Heavenly punishment for having tormented you and leaving your family to freeze in the cold and snow.

I decided in my thoughts to waive the debt you owe to me and to reinstall the windows that my men have removed.

At that very moment when I decided this in my heart, the hands which strangled me, left my throat.

The emotionally moved Jew returned to Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael's home and found him standing there. When he finished telling the grandfather what his righteous grandson had done, Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael

Parashat Ki Tisa - Things That Require the Washing of the Hands

Some years ago, they transferred the body of Rabbi Moshe Kalfon HaCohen, of righteous memory, from Tunisia to be buried in the Land of Israel after he had been buried there for about sixty years.

When they opened his grave, they found his body to be whole and fresh, like that of a living person.

Rabbi Moshe Kalfon was thoroughly versed in all parts of the Torah, including its secret dimensions, and the Torah he learned protected his body in the grave.

We must never take lightly any part of the Torah's four aspects. It is our duty to learn all parts of the Torah. One must thoroughly learn the Written Torah with the commentary of Rashi, as well as the Mishnah, Gemara, and Halachah — both broadly and in depth — each person according to his ability.

Afterward, one should endeavor to learn the hidden dimension of Torah, as well as Chassidut.

But whoever lacks a particular part of Torah knowledge will have to return in a reincarnation to complete it.

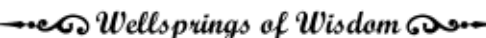
Things That Require the Washing of the Hands

The Shulchan Aruch arranged the laws of washing one's hands in chapter 4. At the end of the chapter, are comprehensively listed the actions after which one must wash one's hands (ibid. paragraphs 18-19):

One who rises from his bed;
One who enters a bathroom or bathhouse; One who trims his

nails; One who removes his shoes;
One who touches their feet or another covered part of the body;
One who goes to the cemetery.

One who is not meticulous to wash their hands when required to, if they are a Torah scholar, their Torah knowledge will be forgotten.



sighed and said: The young boy has already hastened to greatly risk his life to save

others ('Kuntres HaMikveh' – page 52, by Rabbi Mordechai Vosner).

Purity Is the Gateway to Torah

We return to the tale we started with.

When the rabbi sat and studied with Binyamin, he noticed that during the learning session, Binyamin slipped his hand inside his shirt and scratched his back, something that requires washing of the hands. As they continued studying, he also began scratching his head.

When he saw this, he understood very well why Binyamin had not merited to feel the true delight in his learning.

To quote the words of Rabbi Yochanan David Solomon (Be'ayin Yehudit, Part II, p. 58):

“There is no doubt that one who engages in Torah study is thereby elevated. Through Torah study, one refines his soul and purifies his mind with the recognition of the will of the Creator until a lofty spiritual state descends upon him from on high, together with an exalted feeling and an elevated sense.

One then delights in the pleasure of noble wisdom; his soul rises above the clamor of the world to the very heights of the heavens, and he is then able to enjoy the radiance of G-d's supreme wisdom and rejoice in an elevated understanding that brings joy to the heart and soul” (quote from ‘Letters of the Chazon Ish,’ Part I, Letter 9).

This wondrous and lofty process, which is the very pinnacle of a person's spiritual potential, however, has prerequisite conditions — physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional. Indeed, our Sages teach us these prerequisites, and the purification of the body is foremost among them.

Let us ponder the case of Yigal, an Israeli high school student. He sits in a Gemara lesson, focused on the book before him and on the words of his teacher.

Yigal is a typical Israeli teenager. He sits wearing shorts, and from time to time, he touches or scratches his legs. True, Yigal has learned more than once the laws of washing one's hands in the

Parashat Ki Tisa - Purity Is the Gateway to Torah

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. He even scored a 90 in a test on these laws.

But still, when the sandal strap presses too hard into his feet, he sticks out his hand to loosen it — even in the middle of a halachah class, and during prayer as well.

It is no wonder then, that by the time he finishes twelfth grade, he will claim, with sincerity and based on personal experience, that he never felt any special spiritual feeling during his religious studies more so than in his secular studies.

Similarly, let us consider Yonatan, a yeshiva student who does not study halachot from the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch.

He is a genuine Torah scholar and has direct access to the fine print of the Shulchan Aruch itself.

He studied Orach Chaim chapters 4 and 92 and knows the various details and requirements of personal hygiene and cleanliness when studying Torah and praying.

But when he is immersed in a difficult Talmudic passage, he

scratches his head, which is an act that is forbidden during Torah study and which requires washing of the hands.

When contemplating a difficult passage in the Rambam, he bites his nails and spits them out. On Shabbat, this habit is additionally considered desecrating the Shabbat.

After years of yeshiva study, Yonatan may claim that he has personally never felt any sense of holiness in Torah study.

We can certainly believe him — he, indeed, has never felt it.

It is a pity, a great pity for these unfortunate individuals.

They resemble an amateur photographer who made an extensive tour of the Far East and took dozens of rolls of film. Upon returning to his home country, he sent them for development, only to find that there was nothing on them.

He had forgotten to remove the lens cap while photographing. No light rays entered the camera lens; no impression was left on the film.

Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. One who engages in Torah study is elevated; through Torah study, one refines their soul and purifies their mind with the recognition of the will of the Creator.

One's soul rises above the commotion and clamor of worldly affairs to the celestial heights of heaven and enjoys the radiance of G-d's supreme wisdom, which brings joy to heart and soul.

An exalted spiritual feeling and a great delight in the divine wisdom then descends upon him from on high.

2. This wondrous experience is the pinnacle of a person's quest for spirituality, but to reach it requires several prerequisites — both physical and spiritual, intellectual and emotional.

Our Sages teach many of these prerequisites, and the purification of the hands and body is listed chief among them.

3. When a Jew goes to sleep, his Divine soul departs and ascends on high to be renewed and receive fresh

strength. The evil forces then attach themselves to the person's body and impart upon him a spirit of impurity.

When the Divine soul returns to him upon awakening, these forces of impurity flee from the holiness of the soul that returns to enter his body.

However, these impure powers do not vanish completely, rather, they withdraw from all parts of the body and concentrate at the tips of one's fingers.

The hands remain impure, and the only way to remove them and attain purity is by properly washing them.

4. When a person awakens from his sleep, they must be careful not to lower their feet to the floor before washing the hands; doing so gives power to the animal soul within the person (nefesh habahamit) to pursue and entice them, G-d forbid.

This is hinted in the verse: "Iniquity he plots upon his bed, he stands in a path that is not good, evil he does not despise" (Psalms 36:5) - when a Jew lowers his feet to the ground

Parashat Ki Tisa - Summary and Practical Conclusions

before washing his hands, he will soon find that he “stands in a path that is not good,” and this can lead him, G-d forbid, to wicked traits and that “evil he does not despise” — instead of living a life of Torah and holiness, he will be led to a life of materialism and untoward desires that day.

5. The following scenarios require one to wash the hands with water:
 One who rises from his bed; One who enters a bathroom or bathhouse; One who trims his nails; One who removes his shoes; One who touches their feet or another covered part of the body;
 One who goes to the cemetery.

One who is not meticulous to wash their hands when required to, if they are a Torah scholar, their Torah knowledge will be forgotten.

6. The holiness of the Jewish people does not only manifest itself in their soul, but also in their physical body which is holy, and called “holy flesh,” and the more a person sanctifies himself, the more holiness penetrates their physical body.

Many are scrupulous to immerse themselves daily in a mikveh and purify themselves before the morning prayer, and this is indeed one of the most effective ways to sanctify one’s body.

Shabbat Shalom!



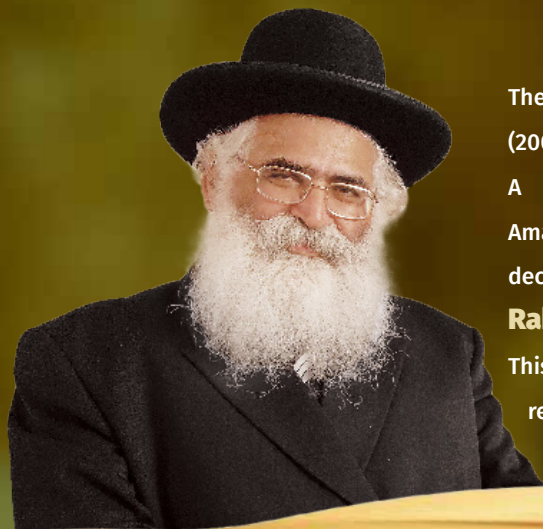
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Ki Tisa

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City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	6:44 pm	7:43 pm	8:15 pm
Miami	7:11 pm	8:04 pm	8:42 pm
Los Angeles	6:43 pm	7:39 pm	8:14 pm
Montreal	6:41 pm	7:44 pm	8:13 pm
Toronto	7:05 pm	8:07 pm	8:36 pm
London	5:46 pm	6:55 pm	7:17 pm
Jerusalem	5:31 pm	6:22 pm	7:04 pm
Tel Aviv	5:28 pm	6:20 pm	7:01 pm
Haifa	5:27 pm	6:21 pm	7:03 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:28 pm	6:22 pm	7:04 pm

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From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

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