



## DAILY LIVING - CLASS #26



HALACHA GUIDES EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES.

BASED ON THE RESEARCH OF  
RABBI DOV LEV

*This class contains multi-media segments  
that are available online.*

© 2007 JewishPathways.com



## Waking Up

We all need sleep to reinvigorate our tired bodies and give us strength to make the most out of life. But we should not overdo it. Each person should sleep the minimum amount necessary to be healthy and productive.<sup>1</sup> In any case, a healthy person should not indulge in more than eight hours of sleep each night.<sup>2</sup>

“One should strengthen himself like a lion to get up in the morning to serve his Creator.” These are the opening words of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the standard code of Jewish law. A Jew should not be lazy, but rather have an excited, upbeat attitude about the upcoming morning prayers, and toward life in general.

The Talmud says that since a person’s soul goes up to heaven each night, sleep is “one-sixtieth of death.”<sup>3</sup> The day should begin by contemplating God’s kindness of allowing him to awake, refreshed and revitalized.<sup>4</sup> As such, you should recite “*Modeh Ani*” immediately, even before washing your hands.<sup>5</sup>

מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, Modeh ani l'fânechâ,  
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם, Melech chai v'kayâm,  
שֶׁהֵחֵזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמַתִּי בְּחַמְלָה she'heh'chezartâ bi nishmâti b'chemlâ  
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ. Rabâ emunâ'techâ.

I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King, for  
You have returned my soul within me, with compassion.  
Abundant is your faithfulness.

<sup>1</sup> Mishnah Berurah 238:2. Great scholars used to train their bodies to need very little sleep. The legendary Vilna Gaon slept only two hours each day, and never for more than half an hour consecutively! (Introduction to Bi'ur HaGra on Shulchan Aruch)

<sup>2</sup> Rambam (Deyot 4:4)

<sup>3</sup> Brachot 57b

<sup>4</sup> Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 1:2

<sup>5</sup> Mishnah Berurah 1:8

## Netilat Yadayim

The Sages decreed that every Jew must wash his hands upon awakening. This process is called *netilat yadayim*. A number of reasons are given for this practice:

- During the night, it is assumed that a person's hands will have touched some unclean part of his body. Therefore, everyone must wash his hands before praying.<sup>6</sup>
- We sanctify our hands as we celebrate the "new life" with which we were endowed upon awakening.<sup>7</sup>
- *Netilat yadayim* serves to remove the *tumah*, the negative spirituality that cleaves to a person when he is asleep.<sup>8</sup>

Water may be left under a bed to be used for *netilat yadayim* in the morning, though it is preferable to cover it.<sup>9</sup> It is forbidden to leave food or drink underneath the bed in which you sleep, as the *tumah* emitted from slumbering people has a negative spiritual impact on the food.<sup>10</sup>

It is ideal to wash your hands as soon as you wake up, to remove the *tumah* as soon as possible.<sup>11</sup> This washing is done without saying a blessing. Then, after relieving oneself and/or getting dressed, a person should wash again with the blessing.<sup>12</sup>

Before washing *netilat yadayim*, you should try not to directly touch the water you plan to use for *netilat yadayim*.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Mishnah Berurah 4:1

<sup>7</sup> Mishnah Berurah 4:1

<sup>8</sup> According to Mishnah Berurah 4:8, this reason is secondary, and not the basis for the decree.

<sup>9</sup> Shu"t Shevet HaLevi 3:23.3

<sup>10</sup> Yoreh De'ah 116:5

<sup>11</sup> Magen Avraham 4:1

<sup>12</sup> Mishnah Berurah 4:4; see Shu"t Yabia Omer 5:1

<sup>13</sup> As heard from Rav Yitzchak Berkovits

Ideally, a Jew (even a child) who has not yet performed *netilat yadayim*, should not directly touch any food. There is no problem of a non-Jew handling food without washing *netilat yadayim*, since he is not required to do so.<sup>14</sup>

One must be careful not to touch any of the openings of his body before washing *netilat yadayim*.<sup>15</sup>

The washing process is as follows:

- Fill a large cup.
- First pour water on your right hand and then on your left hand.
- Repeat this process for a total of three times on each hand.<sup>16</sup>

Ideally, wash your entire hand up to the wrist. However, if this is impossible, it is sufficient to wash the fingers up until the knuckles.<sup>17</sup> If your hand is bandaged, you need to only wash your healthy hand.<sup>18</sup>

One's hands should be washed in a place that is clean and odorless. Today, most private bathrooms meet this standard. The problem arises when using a public bathroom – e.g. in an airplane.

If you have difficulty procuring a utensil with which to wash, you may wash with tap water by turning on the tap three times over each hand.<sup>19</sup>

After performing *netilat yadayim* in the morning, it is proper to wash one's face<sup>20</sup> and rinse one's mouth.<sup>21</sup>

One should dry his hands and face on a towel.<sup>22</sup> To dry them on a garment is considered undignified and is forbidden.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Mishnah Berurah 4:10

<sup>15</sup> Orach Chaim 4:3

<sup>16</sup> Orach Chaim 4:2 and Mishnah Berurah

<sup>17</sup> Mishnah Berurah 4:38

<sup>18</sup> Shu"t Yechaveh Daat 2:19

<sup>19</sup> Yalkut Yosef (Shearit Yosef 1:4:8)

<sup>20</sup> Yalkut Yosef (Shearit Yosef, vol. I, pg. 70); cf. Orach Chaim 46:1

<sup>21</sup> Orach Chaim 4:17

<sup>22</sup> Orach Chaim 4:20

<sup>23</sup> Mishnah Berurah 158:45); Shemirat HaGuf ViHanefesh (ch. 57)

Immediately after washing your hands, recite the blessing.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, you may recite the blessing in the synagogue along with the other morning blessings.<sup>25</sup> The blessing should be recited outside the bathroom.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Bâruch Atà Adonoy,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,	Eloheinu Melech hâ'olâm,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו	asher kidishânu bi'mitzvo'tâv,
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.	vi'tzivânu al netilat yâdâyim.

Blessed are You, God, our Lord, King of the universe,  
Who has sanctified us with His commandments,  
and commanded us regarding washing the hands.

## The Restroom

Holding back from relieving himself when needed is harmful to one's health, and is thus forbidden.<sup>26</sup> It is certainly forbidden to pray, recite blessings or study Torah in such a state. However, if the need is not pressing and you are in the middle of studying Torah, you need not interrupt your studies immediately.<sup>27</sup>

Even in the bathroom, dignity and privacy must be maintained.<sup>28</sup> (See "Daily Living - Kosher Clothes" for a discussion of the Jewish concept of dignity.)

From a Jewish perspective, every place has appropriate and inappropriate behavior. A bathroom is for taking care of bodily needs. Since a bathroom is intrinsically an unclean place, many things are considered out-of-place or even profane to do there:

<sup>24</sup> Orach Chaim 4:1

<sup>25</sup> Orach Chaim 6:2

<sup>26</sup> Talmud - Tamid 27b; Orach Chaim 3:17

<sup>27</sup> Yalkut Yosef (Shearit Yosef 1:3:15)

<sup>28</sup> Orach Chaim 3:2

- It is forbidden to bring food or drink in the bathroom. If food was brought there, it may be eaten after it has been taken out.<sup>29</sup>
- It is improper to engage in conversation in the bathroom.<sup>30</sup> However, if there is something pressing that needs to be said, you may do so providing that you are not involved in relieving yourself.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, you may answer your cellular phone if you are concerned that it may be an important call. In such a case, the conversation should be kept to a minimum.<sup>32</sup>
- It is forbidden to utter any Name of God in a bathroom. Even the word "Shalom" is considered a name of God, as is evident from Judges 6:24. However, one may utter this word if referring to a person named Shalom.<sup>33</sup>
- It is prohibited to contemplate matters of Torah in the bathroom.<sup>34</sup> One may, however, think about giving charity<sup>35</sup> or how to perform act of kindness for other people.<sup>36</sup> There are also stories of great Torah scholars who studied scientific topics when in the bathroom.<sup>37</sup>

After relieving oneself, the blessing *Asher Yatzar* is recited immediately upon exiting the restroom (after washing).<sup>38</sup> If you forgot to do so, you may still recite it for up to 72 minutes, providing you do not yet feel the urge to relieve yourself again.<sup>39</sup> The text of the blessing appears on the following page.

Since this blessing thanks God for the wonders of the human body, reciting it with proper intent is considered a merit for good health.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Shu"t Yabia Omer 4:5

<sup>30</sup> Rema - Orach Chaim 3:2

<sup>31</sup> Mishnah Berurah 3:4

<sup>32</sup> Yalkut Yosef (Shearit Yosef 1:3:3)

<sup>33</sup> Orach Chaim 84:1, Mishnah Berurah 84:6

<sup>34</sup> Orach Chaim 85:2

<sup>35</sup> Yalkut Yosef (Shearit Yosef 1:3:3)

<sup>36</sup> As heard from Rav Yitzchak Berkovits

<sup>37</sup> The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer) authored the mathematical work, *Ayil Meshulash* during his time in the bathroom. Some also attribute the mathematical theorem, Cramer's Rule, to him. See [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) (Vilna Gaon).

<sup>38</sup> Mishnah Berurah 8:6

<sup>39</sup> Shu"t Yechaveh Daat 4:5

<sup>40</sup> *Sefer VaHarachata Yamim* 159, by Rabbi Yaakov Chizkiyahu Fish

## Asher Yatzar

*After using the bathroom, wash your hands and say:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Bâruch Atâ Adonoy,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,	Eloheinu Melech hâ'olâm,
אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה,	asher yâtzar et hâ'âdâm b'châchmâ,
וּבְרָא בּוֹ נִקְבִּים נִקְבִּים,	u'vârâ voe n'kâvim n'kâvim
חֻלּוּלִים חֻלּוּלִים.	chalulim chalulim.
גָּלוּי וַיְדוּעַ לְפָנֶי כֶּסֶף כְּבוֹדְךָ,	Gâlui v'yâdu'ah lifnei chisei ch'voe'decha,
שָׂאֵם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם,	she'im yipâ'taye'ach echâd may'hem,
אוֹ יִסָּתֵם אֶחָד מֵהֶם,	oe yisâ'tame echâd may'hem,
אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם וְלַעֲמוֹד לְפָנֶיךָ.	ee efshar l'hit'kayaim v'la'amode l'fânechâ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Bâruch Atâ Adonoy,
רוֹפֵא כָּל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.	rofay chol bâsâr u'mafli la'asote.



Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe,

Who fashioned man with wisdom, and created

within him many openings and many cavities.

It is obvious and known before Your throne of glory,

that if but one of them were to be ruptured,

or but one of them were to be blocked, it would

be impossible to survive and to stand before You.

Blessed are You, God, Who heals all flesh and acts wondrously.