

HALACHA V'HALICHA... By Rav Chaim Schabes

Moshe Rabbeinu was naturally humble; however, as a leader, he had to present himself with strength and confidence while hiding his true personality. This cover-up of himself obviously was unnecessary when communicating with Hashem, who knows the fundamental nature of a person; thus, he proceeded with his modesty and unassuming nature, which was his complete and true essence. This is how Rav Akiva Eiger understands the last pasuk in our parsha: ובבא משה לפני ה' לדבר אתו יסיר את המסוה עד צאתו. When Moshe came to speak in front of Hashem, he would remove the "mask" that covered up his humility in front of the nation, and he would present himself in his pristine humility as long as he was standing in front of the sh'chinah.

If one will be eating less than a k'baizah (the size of two medium eggs) of bread, the b'racha of "al netillas yadayim" is not said (OC 158:2). One must wash from a utensil that is not cracked, and the k'li should not have any indentations or parts that are higher than the rest of it. If the only k'li that is available is one that has a spout that is higher than the rest, then one should wash from the other side of it. The same is true if he only has a cup that is lower on one side than the rest of it - he should make sure to wash specifically from that lower part. If the utensil cannot stand on its own to hold liquids, like for example, the cover of a pot, one should not use it to wash. One should use a reviiis (approx. 3 oz.) for each hand; R' Chisdah used to say that because he used plenty of water for washing, he was rewarded with wealth (ibid 10). If the k'li does not hold a reviiis, it is not considered a k'li, and he must wash again with a b'racha, and it doesn't help if he pours several times to reach a reviiis. Many Poskim allow the use of disposable plastic cups for washing (Be'er Moshe 1:49, Tzitz Eliezer 12:23, Az Nidb'ru 6:45, etc.), however, since many others disagree (Igros Moshe 3:39, Ohel Moshe 5, letter from R' YY Weiss, etc.), one should not use such a cup unless nothing else is available. The right hand should be washed first (MB 4), and even a lefty washes the regular right hand first (Aishel Avraham §158, MB 4:22). We make sure that we cover the entire hand with water, and we must hold the hand in a way that the water can reach every place of it, separating the fingers and tilting them slightly upwards, and the water should reach all in a single "pour". Therefore, one should not use a bottle or other utensil that has too narrow an opening. Then, one should rub both hands together, lift both hands (netilah means lifting), and before drying them, recite the b'racha. Many people are not aware that after washing the hands, it is not permitted to speak before one says the b'racha (Tzlach Drush 4, Sh. A. Harav 165:1), and one should be careful not to speak even between the washing of both hands. If after he washed one hand, he or someone else touches it, he must dry it, and wash it again. If this happened after he washed both hands but before he said the b'racha, he should dry and wash his hands again. However, once he said the b'racha, he should not repeat it. One should not dry his hands on clothing because it is kashe l'shikcha (one may forget his learning) (MB 45). If one touched the water before washing, it does not become tamei (impure); therefore, one would be allowed to draw some water out of a barrel with his hands. However, if one scrubbed even one finger in the water, it becomes invalid for washing because melacha (work) was done with the water. One must ensure that there is no dirt under his nails, because it may be a chatzitzah (interference), and if part of a nail is off, one must cut it. During the course of the meal, one should not touch places of his body that are normally covered, nor scratch his head, because if one does, he must wash again w/o a b'racha. If one went to the bathroom, he should also wash again properly, and the MB holds (164:13) that if one touched the soiling of a diaper, or similar filth, one must wash again with a b'racha. If one said hamotzi, and he reminded himself that he didn't wash, he should wash without a b'racha (MB 44).

THOUGHTS ON THE HAFTARAH ... By Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro (Yechezkel 36:16-38)

We continue the reading of the Four Parshiyos this week with Parshas Parah. In our haftara we find the famous passuk וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים. The Navi describes how at the time of the geulah Hashem will cleanse us of our sins. For most of us, some of our earliest memories are of our parents and teachers telling us that in order to realize our greatest dream, that of the coming of Mashiah, we must constantly become better Jews through observing the mitzvos and doing teshuva. In this passuk, Yechezkel reveals to us that ultimately, even if we do not reach the level of kedusha expected of us, all is not lost! Hashem can, and will, bring us to that level as effortlessly as one becomes purified with the ashes of the Parah Aduma! In the following passuk we further find the words ונתתי לכם לב חדש. Yechezkel refers here to our ultimate perfection when Hashem will totally cleanse us from sin. What can be greater than complete forgiveness for all of our sins? The Ramban explains that these words refer to a pure desire to fulfill Hashem's will. In the time of Moshiah we will revert back to man's perfect state before the sin of אדם הראשון and its devastating effects. We will totally detach ourselves from the physical world and only desire a closer relationship with Hashem. Thus not only will our sins be forgiven; there will also no longer be any sin (see Da'as T'vunos 3:40). This haftara is always read before Rosh Chodesh Nissan to emphasize the words of Chazal, that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt in the month of Nissan and will be ultimately redeemed in the month of Nissan. Let us pray that we merit the long awaited geulah and that great moment when our only desire is to serve Hashem.

ON LANGUAGE... By R' Moshe Orlian

In the 13 Middos we say (Shmos 33:7) נוצר חסד לאלפים (kamatz under the prefix-ל). This is in contrast to what it says in the Aseres Hadibros (Shmos 19:6) עושה חסד לאלפים (patach under the prefix-ל). There is a difference in meaning as the prefix-ל with the kamatz subsumes the definite article (ה' הידיעה), and therefore it would be translated as "to the (specifically known) thousands". However, in לאלפים there is no definite article and the word would be translated simply as "to thousands". In this latter case, the patach appears only because the prefix-ל cannot take its normal shva, since the א already has a chataf-patach, which is equivalent to a shva, and two shva'im cannot appear consecutively at the beginning of a word.

