

## **Ki Sisa- Kiyor, Preparation for Serving our King** **By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

In Shemos 30:18 we are told about the construction of the kiyor, basin for the Kohanim to wash from before doing the service of Korbonos. It was made of copper and so was its base. Till this washing was done, the Kohanim could not do any of the service, enter the Ohel Moed or even ascend the altar.

We are told in the Gemara Zevachim 21b that the minimum amount of water to be put into this basin was the amount for four people to wash their hands and feet. Interestingly, the Gemara understands this from the first day Chanukas Hamishkan, the dedication when Moshe, Aharon and his two sons washed from the Kiyor as we find in Shemos 40:31. The right hand was placed over the right and washed and afterwards the left hand and foot were washed in the same way. One way we can understand this washing is that the entire body was hallowed for Hashem's service from head to toe. The hands achieve the greatest height as they can be lifted over the head and the feet are the lowest part of the body. Rav Mordecai Tandler, Shlita, grandson of Rav Moshe Feinstein, Zt"l, explains that this washing symbolizes the entire body serving Hashem. There is no 'holy part' and 'unholy part' of our bodies as we use our entire bodies to serve Hashem. For the purpose of modesty which is a human need we have halachos regarding covering certain parts of the body. However, this is not at all meant to suggest that certain parts of the body are intrinsically less holy or 'dirty' as we find in Christological orientation. This fine line between their orientation and ours is important to bear in mind as we view all human existence as holy. It is just that certain things are meant to be kept more hidden because as humans we need to make a distinction between what is proper to be exposed openly and when and what is not.

From a halachic standpoint an explanation is required as to how the Kohanim did avodah after washing their feet. This should require an additional washing since after one touches any part of the body that is usually covered, the hands must be washed. Perhaps we can say as follows. Kohanim went barefoot. So the feet in the Bais Hamikdash become an 'exposed part' and not a covered part of the body. Even if after the Kohanim would leave the Bais Hamikdash area they would put on shoes, in the Bais Hamikdash and certainly at the time of their

service they were required to be barefoot. [It should be stressed that this is a halachic proposal but not a psak and when the Bais Hamikdash is rebuilt, bimhaira veyameinu, the matter will be clarified by the Sanhedrin of that time.]

Rabbeinu Bachaya, in his commentary on the Torah explains that this washing is preparation to serve the king. In a royal court the servants wash their hands before beginning to serve the king as the hands are constantly busy and the feet are washed because service of the king was done barefoot. Rabbeinu Bachaya also writes that, on a kabbalistic level, the fingers of the hands and feet respectively are a hint to the ten sefiros. This is similar to what he writes regarding Birkas Kohanim and Moshe's lifting his hands in prayer to Hashem during the war with Amalek. In both of these instances, the ten fingers have a special power in bringing down Hashem's brachos to Am Yisroel. Rabbeinu Bachaya further cites over here that in Kabbala there is a general concept of the human form representing the divine form. We find such an idea in the beginning of the Tomer Devorah by Rabbi Moshe Cordevero that a person must work on perfecting his character traits because if he/she does not, he is falsifying the divine form by having the image but not the actions. This is not to be understood in any physical terms. The simple explanation of the concept is that Hashem made the human form as it is because every part of it corresponds to higher ideas and our job is to maintain the divine image with our actions and thoughts and to be like Hashem in the way that it is possible for a human being to do so.

With the above theme in mind, Rabbeinu Bachaya states that Chazal ordained washing hands for prayer. He cites the Targum for washing in this parsha is *Veyekadshin* which is suggestive of sanctifying the physical as well as the ten sefiros of the spiritual worlds. Usually the Targum translates *viysachun* which means washing or cleaning.

Although, sadly, we do not have the Bais Hamikdash today, these concepts discussed above can be applied to us as we prepare for our davening especially after Rabbeinu Bachaya mentioned our washing before davening as an enactment of Chazal. Washing our hands before davening is a halachic requirement. We also wash our hands when we wake up every morning by pouring a cup three times on each hand. One of the reasons brought down is that we are new creations ready to serve Hashem and wash our hands just as the Kohanim did to serve in the Bais Hamikdash.

We can apply the same idea to all of our tefillos. Tefillos were instituted in place of korbonos. As we prepare to daven, we should see ourselves as preparing to do Hashem's service just like Kohanim in the Bais Hamikdash. We even end every Shmone Esrei with a tefilla for the Bais Hamikdash to be rebuilt. So the connection of Tefilla and korbonos should remain with us throughout our davening. In merit of our washing our hands and preparing to serve our creator properly, may we be worthy to experience the total service of Hashem, in our rebuilt Bais Hamikdash bimhaira veaymainu. Amen.