מב. אין לגעת בספרי קודש קודם נטילת ידים שחרית. [ילקו"י עמ' שסג, עפמ"ש באחרו' ובמשנ"ב סי' קמז סק"ג]

להתלבש ולילך ד' אמות קודם נטילה

מג. הקם ממטתו בבוקר, מותר לו לגעת במלבושיו קודם נטילת ידים שחרית. ולכן מותר ללבוש בגדיו קודם נטילת ידים שחרית. והמחמיר בזה תבוא עליו ברכה. ואם הולך לישון אחר חצות הלילה, יש להקל בזה בפשיטות, ללבוש בגדיו קודם נטילת ידים שחרית. [הליכו"ע ח"א עמ' לב, וע"ע יבי"א ח"ה סי' א]

Touching Torah books

42) One should not touch books of Torah content before performing the mitzvah of the morning *netillat yadayim*.

Getting Dressed and Walking About

Touching clothes

43) It is permissible to touch one's clothes before performing the morning *netillat yadayim*. Therefore, one may get dressed before performing this mitzvah, but anyone who refrains from doing so will receive a special blessing from Heaven. If someone goes to bed later than the halakhic midnight, however, there is no need for stringency in this matter. He may get dressed before *netillat yadayim*.[190]

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the *Poskim* who ruled that in modern times there are no harmful spiritual forces at all.

190. The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Toledot* halakha 6) cited the Arizal teaching that one must perform *netillat yadayim* before touching one's garments. Based on this, he complained about those people who put on socks in the cold winter before performing *netillat yadayim*.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. V, #1; *Halikhot Olam* Vol. I, page 32) challenged this ruling. He noted that the *Magen Avraham* (4:1) cited the *Seder Hayom* ruling that a person must not touch his garments until after performing *netillat yadayim*, and he commented that this seems to contradict a passage in the Talmud. It states (*Berakhot* 60b): "When someone puts on his garments, he must recite the blessing of *malbish arumim*.... When he performs *netillat yadayim*, he must recite the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*." Apparently, the common practice was to get dressed before performing *netillat yadayim*. Maran the Rishon Letziyon noted that this is not a conclusive proof since some *Rishonim* (Rabbenu Aharon Halevi, the *Shita Mekubetzet*) asserted that a person's morning activities do not necessarily appear in this passage in the order that they take place, and the blessings may be recited in a different order than they appear in this passage.

It appears that Harav Yosef Hayim later retracted this stringent ruling. In his *Od Yosef Hai* (*parashat Toledot* halakha 10) he cited the *Minhat Aharon* who ruled that it is forbidden to touch one's garments before *netillat yadayim*, and then he commented that very few people, if any, follow this ruling in practice. After admitting that it is difficult to observe this stringency, he asserted that the harmful forces do not contaminate garments at all, nor do they contaminate wooden or metal utensils. They have the power to contaminate foods and beverages only. If this would not be so, then how would it be possible to perform the mitzvah of *netillat yadayim*? As soon as someone would pick up the container of water, he would contaminate the container and its contents. Furthermore, it is not possible to avoid touching one's pillow and bedsheets. According to the *Minhat Aharon*, it should be necessary to launder one's bedding every day. It must be, therefore, that the harmful forces do not contaminate utensils or garments, and this is why we need not observe this stringency.

In the *Od Yosef Hai*, Rav Yosef ignored the fact that the Arizal himself instructed us to perform *netillat yadayim* before touching our garments. In fact, it appears from the *Zohar* (*Bereshit* page 53b) that the harmful forces can contaminate utensils and garments. It must be, therefore, that we rely on the argument of the *Lehem Mishne* (*Hilkhot Shevitat Asor* 3:2) that according to Rambam these harmful spiritual forces no longer exist. This concept follows the precedent of the Tosafot (*Yoma* 77b and *Hullin* 107b) that various forms of evil spirits and harmful forces have become

והמחמיר ליטול ידיו סמוך למיטתו עם הקיצו משנתו, כדברי המקובלים, תבוא עליו ברכה. [ילקו"י מהדו"ק עמ' א]. ולא נאמרו דברים אלו אלא למצניעיהם. [הליכו"ע ח"ח עמ' שכג]. רק שיזהר לכתחלה שלא להניח הכלי עם המים תחת המטה שישנים עליה. [ילקו"י עמ' שפד] כמבואר לעיל הלכה י"ח.

מד. רבותינו המקובלים החמירו שלא ילך אדם ד' אמות קודם שיטול ידיו שחרית. ובאחרונים הביאו כמה סברות להקל. (שכל הבית נחשב כד' אמות, ושאין רוח רעה מצוי כל כך ביננו, ושיש מתירים לילך ד' אמות בלא נטילת ידים). ובמקום צורך אפשר לסמוך על סברות אלו, וכל שכן ההולך לישון אחר חצות הלילה, שיש לו על מה שיסמוך. [ראה הלכה ברורה עמ' נד]

According to the Kabbalah, one should perform *netillat yadayim* at one's bedside before climbing out of bed. Anyone who follows this stringency will certainly receive a special blessing from Heaven, but this practice is reserved for the extremely pious and modest. One must take care, however, not to store the container of water underneath a bed where someone sleeps, as explained above in halakha 18.

Walking about before *netillat yadayim*

44) According to the Kabbalah, it is very important to refrain from walking the distance of four cubits before performing the morning *netillat yadayim*. Technically, there are several bases for leniency in this matter, as explained by the *Aharonim*. Some argued that as long as one remains inside a building, it is as if he remains within his original four cubits. Others maintained that there are no longer any harmful spiritual forces in modern times, and therefore no harm will come of walking about before performing *netillat yadayim*. When it is necessary, one may rely on these lenient rulings. If someone goes to bed later than the halakhic midnight, there is a broad basis for leniency.[191]

extinct. We may assume that if we ignore these harmful forces, they will ignore us as well, based on the Talmud's assertion in *Pesahim* 110b.

The responsa *Yen Hatov* (#11) noted that the *Od Yosef Hai* contradicts the *Ben Ish Hai* regarding this matter, and he offered this as proof that the works of Harav Yosef Hayim that have been published posthumously are not reliable as being his own work. It is known that he passed away while preparing the *Od Yosef Hai* for publication, and therefore it must be that one of his disciples made changes and additions to its text. The work, therefore, is unreliable.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon refuted this supposition, explaining that it is a known fact that Harav Ben Tziyon Hazan was the person in charge of the proofreading and publication of the *Ben Ish Hai's* works. He was famous for his impeccable righteousness and honesty, and it is unthinkable to accuse him of distorting his mentor's works.

191. The *Tola'at Yaakov* cited the holy *Zohar* teaching that it is a capital crime (meaning that the harmful forces might strike one fatally) to walk four cubits before performing the morning *netillat yadayim*. He explained that this is the halakha, at least in the Land of Yisrael. Many *Aharonim* cited this ruling.

Harav HIDA (*Birke Yosef*) added that if someone wakes up to find that there is no water available within arm's length, he should walk two or three steps, totaling less than the distance of four cubits, and then pause. Then he may repeat this procedure as many times as it is necessary to reach water for *netillat yadayim*.

The *Sha'are Teshuva* (1:2) disagreed with this. He ruled that in such a case the person should run as quickly as possible to the water so that he cleanses his hands of the harmful forces as soon as possible. The *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Toledot* halakha 7) and other *Aharonim* ruled in favor of Harav HIDA's solution.

Many *Aharonim* pointed out that there is no such passage in the editions of *Zohar* in our possession. Harav

עשיית צרכיו קודם נטילת ידים

מה. יש המחמירים להניח בלילה ליד מטתם נטלה עם מים וקערה, ונוטלים ידיהם תחלה ג' פעמים בלא ברכה, ואחר כך הולכים להתפנות, וכשיוצאים מבית הכסא, נוטלים שוב את ידיהם ג' פעמים, ומברכים על נטילת ידים ואשר יצר (ראה משנ"ב סי' ד ס"ק ד, בא"ח פי' ויצא ה"ב). ותבוא עליהם ברכה.

Using the Restroom Before *Netillat Yadayim*

Pan of water next to one's bed

45) Some people practice the stringency of keeping a container filled with water and an empty pan next to their beds so that they can perform *netillat yadayim* even before they climb out of bed in the morning. They do not recite the blessing at this time, however. After this *netillat yadayim*, they go to the restroom and relieve themselves, and then they repeat *netillat yadayim* to recite the blessings of *al netillat yadayim* and *asher yatzar*. This is a commendable practice; those people will receive a special blessing from Heaven.

HIDA, however, testified that he found in a handwritten manuscript of the *Zohar* (introduction, page 10).

The *Shevut Yaakov* (Vol. III, #1) suggested that as long as a person remains indoors he is not considered to have gone a distance of four cubits, and so it is permissible to walk about in one's home before performing *netillat yadayim*. The *Eliya Rabba* (1:4) disagreed with this ruling, and the *Sha'are Teshuva* (1:2) and *Mishna Berura* (1:2) concluded that one may rely on it only when there is no other choice.

The *Bayit Hadash* pointed out that Maran failed to mention this halakha in the *Bet Yosef* or the *Shulhan Arukh*. The *Damesek Eliezer*, cited by the *Eliya Rabba*, suggested that it is because there are no harmful spiritual forces in modern times. The *Eliya Rabba* added that this is apparently why most people do not observe this halakha in our times. Harav HIDA (*Birke Yosef* 1:1), however, testified that in his area most people do observe this halakha. The *Ben Ish Hai* likewise ruled accordingly, citing the Arizal. He added that people should make sure to prepare water before they go to sleep and to keep it ready by their bedsides.

The *Artzot Hahayim* (4:22) claimed that according to the Talmud there is no such prohibition. He pointed out that the Talmud teaches (*Berakhot* 60b) that when one begins to walk in the morning he must recite the blessing of *hamekhin mitz'ade gaver*.... When he performs *netillat yadayim*, he must recite the blessing of *al netillat yadayim*. Many *Rishonim* understood that the Talmud lists the blessings and acts in the order they are to be performed. If so, it must be that one may walk about before performing *netillat yadayim*.

The *Halakha Berura* (*Otzerot Yosef* page 7) refuted this argument, suggesting that the Talmud might mean to walk two or three short steps totaling less than four cubits. Despite this, he concluded that one may be lenient in this matter in the light of the rulings of the *Shevut Yaakov* and the *Eliya Rabba*. This appears to be the position of Maran the Rishon Letziyon as well, as is evident from responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. IV, #2-4).

After midnight

Maran the Rishon Letziyon told his son, Harav David, that one may certainly be lenient in this matter if one remained awake until after the halakhic midnight. This is based on the comment of the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (4:4) that if someone woke from his sleep before the halakhic midnight he may walk about before performing *netillat yadayim* since the halakha forbidding it applies "*only to someone who was asleep at the moment of midnight*." According to this, if someone remained awake until after that time he may likewise walk about before performing *netillat yadayim*. Maran the Rishon Letziyon was accustomed to be lenient, and this is because he almost never went to sleep before midnight during the weekdays. Although he retired earlier on Shabbat, there is a strong basis to be lenient in this matter on Shabbat and *Yom Tov*, since the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (1:9) explained that the harmful forces are less virulent on these holy days.