

# Tefillah Thoughts

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Inspiring thoughts promoting appropriate decorum and kavanah during davening

## Pirush Ha'Milos:

”זכרו לעולם בריתו דבר צוה לאלף דור“  
*“Remember His covenant forever, the word which He has commanded to a thousand generations.”*

The Midrash relates, that Hashem initially thought of creating the world 1000 generations prior to “His covenant”. Ultimately Hashem wiped out a large portion of those generations. There are two opinions regarding the meaning of “Covenant” in this passuk, and the actual amount of generations that were removed:

- 1) Hashem removed 974 generations. According to this opinion “His covenant” and “the word which He has commanded” mentioned in this passuk, are referring to the “**Torah**”, which was given twenty six generations from the creation of the world. (1000 – 26 = 974).
- 2) Hashem removed 980 generations. According to this opinion “His covenant” and “the word which He has commanded” mentioned in this passuk, are referring to “**Bris Milah**”, which was given to Avrohom Avinu, twenty generations from the creation of the world. (1000 – 20 = 980).

(Ohr Ha'Tefillah vol. 3)

## POINTS OF INTEREST:

“In Chassidic Shuls, the words “know before whom you stand”, are not written above the amud, rather engraved in the mind and heart.”

(Likutei Diburim vol. 4)

## Avodas Ha'Tefillah:

To facilitate contemplation during prayer, a person is advised to habituate himself to concentrating deeply on a concept at other times of the day as well. In other words, he ought to designate a time, for about an hour or two, during which to concentrate earnestly and thoroughly on a given concept of Chassidus while secluded. Over the course of time, after continuous practice, it will be easy for him to prolong his meditation and to concentrate deeply during his prayers.

(Kuntres Ha'Tefillah)



## Laws and customs:

One should determine a fixed place in which to pray, and not change it unless there is great necessity. Indeed, “whoever establishes a fixed place for prayer will have the G-d of Avraham assist him.” We find that Avraham established a fixed place for prayer, as it is written “And Avrohom rose early in the morning, (going) to the place where he stood.”

(The Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Oruch: sec. 90:18)

In Ahavas olam, at the words והביאינו לשלום bring together the two front tzitzis. Then join to them the tzitzis of the left back corner, then the tzitzis of the right back corner, holding them together between the little finger and ring finger of the left hand.

Kiss the tzitzis six times, at the words: tzitzis, tzitzis, le'tzitzis, emes, kayemes and la'ad.

(Hayom Yom: Sivan 22)

## A Chassidische Story:

The Baal Shem Tov himself, while traveling with some of his students came into a village. They entered one of the big Shuls to pray with a *minyán*. Upon entering the large Shul with its large group of worshippers' involved in the daily prayer service, the Baal Shem Tov motioned to his followers to leave the Shul. He explained to his students that this Shul is filled with prayers. The group then walked to the next Shul and entered. Again they found the Shul filled with men saying their morning prayers. The Baal Shem Tov paused, and then motioned for his small group of students to leave. This Shul, also, is too filled with prayers. The group then went to the third Shul. This was a small Shul with only a handful of men. The Baal Shem Tov entered and paused to feel the tempo of prayer. He told his students that this would be the place for them to pray since this little Shul is not filled with prayers.

After the prayer service, the students sat down to eat with their teacher. They asked him: what was the reason that he chose not to pray in the first two Shuls. Was it because those Shuls were filled with the prayers and they didn't need more prayers, yet the last little Shul did not have enough men and prayers? The Baal Shem Tov replied that it was just the opposite. The first two Shuls were too full from the prayers, that is to say that the prayers of the assembled did not go up into the heavens. The prayers remained down in the Shul and made it too stuffy. The last little Shul was empty of prayers, meaning that the men who prayed there had elevated their prayers up to the heavens and therefore the Shul was empty of lingering prayer that did not rise up.

The message is simple and elementary: Prayers must be sincere. If the prayers are mere lip service, then they are not accepted. The emphasis is on service from the heart; that the heart and the head be in synch. We learn from this story in a graphic and illustrative manner the terrible consequence of insincere prayers.



## ***Biur Tefillah: “Al Netilas Yodayim”***

This is the very first blessing we make in the morning, and we say it after we washed our hands in the proper manner, before drying them. Having, immediately upon awakening, thanked Hashem for restoring our Neshama to us, we realize that we must submit ourselves to His will and obey His commands. And the washing of our hands is the first expression of our obedience, and this brings us into a closer relationship with Hashem, whom we may now call *our* G-d. There are several reasons why we are commanded to wash our hands in the morning. We are ready to begin a new day of service to Hashem. The Kohanim, before they began their service in the bet Hamikdash, were commanded to wash their hands (and also feet). We, Jews, are “kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” and the washing of our hands reminds us about it.

Another reason is that during our sleep, when our Divine soul departs, an “unclean” spirit takes over (sometimes giving rise to unclean thoughts or dreams). We therefore wash our hands of that unclean spirit, to restore the purity and cleanliness to our body and mind.

There is a simple word in Hebrew for “washing” (*rachatz*), but this word is not used in the text of the bracha. Instead the words “Netillas Yadayim” are used, because the word “Natal” also means “raise” and “uplift”. This is, again, symbolic of the sacred nature of this washing of the hands, to indicate that we are lifting up and dedicating our hands, as well as the work of our hands, to Hashem.

(My Prayer)

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