

CHAPTER 1 - SLEEPING, ARISING, AND WASHING

by Rabbi Dr. Azriel Rosenfeld

A person should not sleep too long (see 4:16) and should not lie down to sleep in the east-west direction (3:6;240:17). It is proper to feel sad about the destruction of the Temple and the exile and to express these feelings in prayer; the ends of the first, second, and third thirds of the night are especially appropriate for such prayers (1:2-4).

A person should keep in mind that G-d is always observing him; when he wakes up in the morning, he should get up promptly and prepare himself to serve G-d (1:1;2:2). He should cover himself with a garment before getting up and should take care that the garment not turn inside out (2:1,3). He should put on his right shoe first and take it off last (2:4-5) and should not go barefoot (2:6). He should stand in a humble posture and should not walk four cubits with an uncovered head (2:6).

A person should check whether he needs to use the toilet (2:6;3:17) and should behave modestly there (3:2,4,12). On proper toilet habits see 3:1-3,5,7-11,13-16. Every morning, and each time he has used the toilet, a person recites the blessing "...Who formed man in wisdom..." (4:1;6:1;7:1-4).

When a person gets up in the morning he must wash his hands and recite the blessing "...Who commanded us about washing the hands" (4:1). Even if he has been up all night, gets up before dawn, or sleeps during the day, he must wash, but without reciting the blessing (4:13-15). Water should be poured over the hands three times (4:2); the right hand should be washed first (see 4:10). The water should not be poured onto the ground and must be disposed of (4:8-9). Some things that are required in washing the hands before eating, regarding the amount and type of water and the method of pouring (see Ch.12), are not essential when washing in the morning; see 4:1,6-7,11-12,22. Some also wash their mouths out in the morning (4:17); on drying the face see 4:20. On things that should not be touched before (or even after) washing the hands see 4:3-5,21. On other situations, such as going to the toilet, that require washing the hands see 4:18-19,23.

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