

PERSONAL NEEDS

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

"It is forbidden for a person to attend to his personal needs before he prays to Hashem, as the verse in Tehillim [85,14] says, Tzedek [tefillah] shall go before him, before he sets forth on his ways" (Berachos 14a). Why must tefillah precede taking care of one's other needs?

Any action that a person performs makes him susceptible to forgetting that Hashem is the true Source of success. While praying we express that Hashem is the Source of everything, and that we are merely recipients of His kindness. After this recognition has been firmly planted in our hearts, we are ready to take care of all of our physical needs (Rashi).

Others infer from this verse the implication that one should not set off on a journey before prayer. By praying beforehand, one will secure Hashem's accompaniment, ensuring him a successful trip. Both of these explanations are accepted, and the practical halachah in most situations is that one should not attend to his own needs or set out on a trip before praying.

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