

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## OUR BEST BEHAVIOR

Anyone who learns Torah must excel in showing love for other people, even non-Jews. A student of Torah must show honor and respect to all other human beings.

As religious Jews, we all have the obligation to live up to this standard. And the more a person is perceived by others as having studied and absorbed the Torah, the greater is his obligation to be a model of proper interactions with other people.

I was once in a kosher supermarket in Minneapolis, where I watched as a yarmulke-wearing customer was greeted by a worker behind the counter who spoke a broken English.

In response to her question of “What can I do for you?” the person snapped, “You could learn how to speak English!”

I was deeply perturbed. “My friend,” I wanted to rebuke him, “you should take off your yarmulke! I don’t care if you go to seder on time or that you wear tzitzis; people need to see that you are kind and patient.”

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gem

OF THE WEEK

## NETILAS YADAYIM: WHY?

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

These *parshiyos* deal with the *halachos* of *tumah* and *tahara*. True, they are only obligatory when it comes to the *mikdash*—a non-*kohen* may come in contact with *tumah*, and it is permitted to be *metamei* ordinary food. Nevertheless, all of *klal Yisrael* sets aside *bikurim*, *maaser*, *terumah* and *challah*, all of which must be kept *tahor*. Moreover, each person is obligated to be *metaher* in preparation for *aliyah l’regel*. Three times a year, the foundation was laid for national *tahara* awareness. Everything had to be kept safe from *tumah* for its sake.

Picturing the full life of the people—their leisure and work, their national life and their home life—we see that everything falls under the umbrella of *tumah* and *tahara*, and we can begin to appreciate the influence these laws had.

Under the laws of *tumah* and *tahara*, holiness extended to everything he created. All his work was dedicated to becoming close to God. Hammers and needles, looms and stoves—all of them were directed by the law. The

*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER



YOTZER OHR:  
THE WORLD IS HIS

The *bracha* of Yotzer Hameoros does not just discuss the lights—we also say “*Mah rabu maasecha Hashem...malah ha’aretz kinyanecha*.” How great are Your deeds, Hashem...the world is full of Your possessions!

The daily renewal of the sun reminds us that the entire world is Hashem’s creation, maintained and guided by Him.

This *bracha* also describes the *shira* of the *malachim*. It is the longest *bracha* in the *siddur*.

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*



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Soon!**

## WHY NOT THEM?

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

“How do we know that we are right and everyone else is wrong?” This is another common question. After all, we are a tiny percentage of the human race. How can we claim that we have the only truth, and eight billion others are mistaken?

I usually give a simple response: “Do you know what those other people say about themselves?” A simple description of their belief systems is enough. With common sense, it is clear that they are empty, devoid of any substance.

Eleven years before the Churban, a group of exiles was taken to Bavel. Yirmiyahu Hanavi sent them a letter instructing them how to respond to the overtures of idolators. “Tell them that idols do nothing, and Hashem is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. When they are visited upon, they will perish.” The simple meaning of this *pasuk* is that the idols will someday disappear. But Radak quotes the Kuzari: “When you study them carefully, you will see there is nothing there, like a forgery that is apparent upon examination. But as for matters related to Hashem—however you look, you find it as gold.” These words are as true today as they were then, and as they were in the time of Yirmiyahu. If one takes the time to investigate the claims of various religions and philosophies, they find falsehoods, inconsistencies, and assorted nonsense.

The ancient historian Josephus records a story that appears to have been well-known in his time. About 500 years earlier, the *navi* Daniel served as a high-ranking official in the court of Daryavesh I, the Persian emperor. Daryavesh was insistent that Daniel worship his idol. It was alive, he claimed. Every night the priests would set before it trays of food, then lock the doors to the temple. In the morning, the trays were empty. Surely the idol had eaten the offerings!

Daniel requested to see this supernatural event with his own eyes, so Daryavesh took him to the temple, where he saw the priests place trays of food before the idols and lock the doors. But Daniel then had an unusual request: he asked Daryavesh to have a servant spread ashes across the temple floor. Daryavesh consented. The next morning the offering had once again been eaten—but there were footprints in the ashes on the temple floor.

The emperor summoned the priests. “Tell me the truth, and I will spare your lives,” he said. Faced with execution, the priests admitted that they had a secret entrance to the temple. Every night, they brought their families to eat all the food. With a little bit of investigation, the falsity of the idols was clear.

So too will happen with the ideologies of our day. While they have perpetrated a hoax upon mankind, the illusion collapses when questioned. In the coming weeks, this column will explore a few such examples. Recognizing the absolute falsehood of others can strengthen our belief in the truth of our Torah. 🔥

lowliest working people, men and women, were uplifted by the awareness that their labor was holy, shaped by the spirit of the Torah. Under the rule of *tahara*, vulgarity disappeared, self-deprecation vanished. Everyone stood tall, knowing they were a *goy kadosh* — a holy nation of holy people.

In the time of Shaul and David, we are told that even common soldiers observed the laws of *tahara* in their everyday lives. These spiritual giants lived all their lives in compliance with *tumah* and *tahara* laws prescribed only to the Sanctuary: *hayu ochlim chuleihen b'tahara*, they ate their ordinary food in purity. They lived their lives, even the mundane, as though they were in the presence of the Sanctuary. At every moment, it was a living reminder of man's calling.

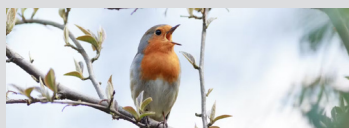
Though we do not have a *mikdash* any longer, *achilas chulin b'tahara* has remained a regular practice among the Jewish people, and is still the mark of an observant Jew—*netilas yadayim*, washing hands before meals. Rising to the heights of *tahara* depends on *netilas yadayim*, for it lends the aspiring *metaher* wings. The very term *netilas yadayim* is indicative of an uplifting: *natal* is the Aramaic equivalent of *nasa*. The literal meaning of *netilas yadayim* is “lifting the hands.” The vessel used for it is even called a *natla*, which literally means “lifting.” *Netilas yadayim l'seudah* elevates our meal from the realm of bodily gratification and makes it a human, holy act. Indeed, the sanctification of physical acts is the first prerequisite for the sanctification of Jewish life. 🔥

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



## wonder WORLD

### CHATTERBOX



### What do birds' songs mean?

In Parshas Metzorah, two birds are brought as part of the *taharah* process. Rashi explains that this is because birds chatter, just like the person who spoke *lashon hara*. But why do they chirp? Birds use songs to communicate; each sound has a purpose. Some claim a bird's territory, others warn of danger nearby. A special kind of song is used to talk to chicks in the nest. Some birds have different calls for different predators—one for a cat, another for a hawk. Baby birds learn to sing by listening to the adults, just like we learn to talk. When you hear birds singing, listen carefully. You might be overhearing a conversation in another language, just another example of how Hashem filled the world with amazing sounds and creatures. 🔥

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