The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן ג' סעיף ג'-ז'

Overview

Siman 3 Seif 3:

If one will rub his anus to stimulate movement of his waste he should do so before sitting since once he sits it is dangerous due to witchcraft.

Siman 3 Seif 4:

A man should only uncover one tefach from behind and two tefachim in front. A woman should uncover a tefach from behind and nothing in front.

- One should be cautious not to soil his garments, body or shoes. (M.B. 6)

Siman 3 Seif 5:

When one defecates in a place that does not have walls he should face north or south but should not align himself east or west. One may urinate facing any direction.

- According to some opinions when defecating one should face south rather than north and it is correct to follow this view. (M.B. 9)

Siman 3 Seif 6:

One should not sleep together with his wife aligned between east and west and one should be cautious even when his wife is not with him.

- The head of one's bed should be to the north. Teshuva Rama MiPano follows the Zohar that the head of one's bed should be to the west but Mishnah Berurah states that it is better to follow Shulchan Aruch's position. (M.B. 11)

Siman 3 Seif 7:

One who urinates, once he is inside of Tzofim (A place where one could see Har HaBayis) he should not sit facing towards the Holy place; rather he should turn to the north or south or position the Holy place to his side.

Stories to Share

Fine Details

ש"ע סי' ג', ג': "לא יגלה עצמו כי אם לאחוריו טפח..."

On today's amud we find a discussion regarding the halachos of how one should comport himself in the bathroom. Many wonder the exact purpose of these halachos—why are they really necessary?

A certain meshumad was once talking to a priest about why he hated Jewish laws and customs. "Can you believe that they have rules and regulations for every action throughout the day? Why, they even have a whole batch of rules for how to act in the bathroom! Can you imagine anything more petty?"

Although this meshumad had really intended to provoke the priest's Jew-hatred with this, the cleric actually disagreed. "I must say that I believe that such laws are high praise for the Jewish nation. We all believe that the purpose of life to serve G-d. That being so, can there be any higher fulfillment of this lofty goal than to do every act in a manner that will optimally bring him closer to the Divine?"

Halacha Highlights

The correct alignment of one's bed

Shulchan Aruch Siman 3 Seif 6

וכן אסור לישן בין מזרח למערב אם אשתו עמו

It is also prohibited to sleep between east and west while with one's wife.

The source of this halacha is the Gemara Berachos (5b) where Abba Binyomin relates that he was particular to have his bed between north and south. Tosafos (ד"ה כל הנותן) writes that this halacha is limited to when one is together with his wife. Since the Divine Presence is aligned between east and west it is disrespectful for one to be with one's wife aligned in that direction. Rambam (פי"ז מהלי' בית הבחירה ה"ט), however cites the Gemara without adding this qualification.

Regarding the alignment of the bed, Rashi (ד"ה צפון לדרום) explains that one's head and feet should be north and south. Magen Avrohom (סק"ז) references Rama MiPano who follows the Zohar that one's head and feet should be aligned to the east and west. Nimukei Orach Chaim (סימן ג' אות א') cites Rav Yaakov Emden (שו"ת שאילת יעב"ץ ח"א סי' מ"ז) who reported that his father, the Chacham Tzvi, aligned his bed east/west in accordance with the Zohar. He went on to explain that this practice was not inconsistent with Chacham Tzvi's position that when there is a contradiction between the Talmud Bavli and Kabbalah that halacha follows the position of Talmud Bavli. That rule, Rav Emden explains, applies only when the two sources are in direct conflict of one another. If however, the passage in the Talmud Bavli can be interpreted in more than one way Kabbalah can be utilized to provide that definition. The Gemara states that Abba Binyomin had his bed between north and south but did not specify if it was the head and foot of the bed that was aligned between north and south or the sides of the bed were aligned between the north and south. Since either interpretation is valid the Zohar can determine which one should be followed. Mishnah Berurah(ס"ק י"א) writes that it is better to follow the opinion of Shulchan Aruch since Vilna Gaon maintained that the Zohar should be understood in accordance with Shulchan Aruch's position rather than in accordance with Rama MiPano's position.