The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Mon, May 11, 2026 ■ כ"ד אייר, תשפ"ו
סימן ע"ו סעיף ד'-ו'

Overview

Siman 76 Seif 4:

If one has waste on his skin but it is covered by a garment or if one reaches his hand into a bathroom through a hole and does not smell anything foul, there are those who maintain that he may read *shema* and others prohibit reading *shema*. According to some the opinion that permits covered waste limits his position to where it is covered without the need for a garment to cover it, e.g. in his armpit. It is correct to follow the stringent opinion. *Zera* on one's skin is the same as waste.

- If one's hands became dirty after wiping but there is no actual substance of waste and it no longer smells one may read *shema* in its presence. This is effective only in the presence of someone else's hand but if one's own hand is dirty it is no worse than having touched sweat or scratching one's head that it is prohibited to read *shema* or say *shemone esrei* until he washes his hands or at least wipes them on a surface if water is not available. (M.B. 10)
- The lenient opinion maintains that all that is required is for one's mouth and nose to be clean but other limbs are inconsequential whereas the stringent opinion maintains that all of one's limbs must be clean. (M.B. 12)
- If there is waste on one's garment but is covered all opinions agree that one may read *shema*, however, one should always make an effort to have clean clothes while *davening*. (M.B. 12)
- When necessary one may rely upon the lenient opinion. (M.B. 14)
- According to Rema one must be certain that he does not have *zera* on his skin and if it is on a garment it must be covered. Some maintain that *zera* is not comparable to waste. Sefer Chassidim emphasizes the importance of cleaning off *zera* even if it is on one's garment for *davening*. (M.B. 15)

Siman 76 Seif 5:

It is prohibited according to all opinions to read *shema* if one has waste in his *pi taba'as* even if it is covered. Even if it is not visible while standing and only becomes visible when he sits he may not read *shema*.

- Someone suffering from a stomach ailment and blood with some waste that smells drips out of his body may not recite a *davar she-b'kedusha* as long as these fluids flow from his body. (M.B. 16)
- If one read *shema* with waste on his *pi taba'as* he must reread *shema* and it is not clear whether he must repeat *shemone esrei* but many authorities maintain that he must repeat *shemone esrei*. (M.B. 17)
- One must be very careful that his *pi taba'as* is clean and he should wash the area to assure that no waste remains. (M.B. 18)
- If the waste is not even visible when a person sits one may read *shema*. (M.B. 19)

Siman 76 Seif 6:

If there was some waste in front of a person he may nullify it by spitting on it and then he may read *shema*. This is effective only if the spit is thick. Nullification only works temporarily but if he does not read immediately and the spit becomes absorbed into the waste it is not nullified.

- Even the slightest amount of waste prohibits one from reading *shema*. (M.B. 20)
- Rav Akiva Eiger notes that there is no requirement to distance one's self from vomit. (M.B. 20)
- Putting water on waste is ineffective unless the water is dirty so that the waste is not visible. Therefore, one must be careful not to read *shema* in front of a pail filled with water into which children's soiled clothing was thrown. (M.B. 21)

Halacha Highlight

Assuring a clean body

Shulchan Aruch Siman 76 Seif 4

צואה בפי הטבעת אפילו היא מכוסה אסור לקרות

If there is waste on one's *pi hataba'as* one may not read *shema* even if it is covered

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ה') writes that one may not read *shema* if one did not fully clean one's self after relieving himself. In the event that one did not clean himself properly he must repeat *shema* and although Chaye Adam is uncertain whether one is required to repeat *shemone esrei* the majority of authorities maintain that one is required to repeat *shemone esrei* (מ"ב ס"ק י"ז). Because of this concern, Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"ח) stresses the importance of washing that area with water to assure that the place is clean so that the individual could recite *berachos, daven* and learn.

Poskim disagree whether it is obligatory for one to clean one's self with water or whether it is merely an expression of piety (מדת חסידות). Sefer Piskei Teshuvos (אות ז' הע' 36) cites numerous authorities who maintain that even in previous generations it was not mandated that a person use water to clean himself and certainly in our times that we use soft toilet paper one can easily clean himself without water. Nevertheless, Teshuvas Or L'Tzion (ח"ב פמ"ד אות ב') maintained that one should moisten the toilet paper with some water, even on Shabbos, in order to be certain that one is clean.

In a famous letter the Steipler Gaon (קריינא דאיגרתא סי' שע"ג) wrote that although it is appropriate for one to clean himself as many time as necessary to be certain that nothing remains on one's body, nevertheless, one need to become obsessive with the thought that perhaps he is not fully clean. Additionally, those who do so run the risk of harming themselves. The reason one need not be overly cautious about this matter is that whenever there is a doubt whether one is fully clean or not *halacha* indicates that he could be lenient. For this reason if a child who is old enough to clean himself recites a *beracha* one may אמן to his *beracha* since it may be assumed that he cleaned himself properly.