The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן פ"ד סעיף א'

Halacha Highlight

Reciting *berachos* in a dressing room

Shulchan Aruch Siman 84 Seif 1

ובא;מצעי שקצת העומדין שם לבושים וקצת ערומים וכו'

And in the middle room where some people are dressed and some are not etc.

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') mentions that there are three different areas of a bathhouse and each one has a separate set of *halachos*. In the outer room where people generally are clothed it is permitted to even read *shema*. In the inner room where people are not clothed, not only is prohibited to read *shema* there, but one may not even greet people with the term שלום. In the middle room, where some people are clothed and others are not, one may not read *shema* or recite *shemone esrei* but it is permitted to greet people with the term שלום.There is a disagreement whether one is permitted to recite *devarim she-b'kedusha* in the middle room if at the moment everyone is clothed. According to Bach, since the area is designated for people who are clothed and unclothed it remains the middle room of a bathhouse and one may not recite *devarim she-b'kedusha*. According to Elya Rabba and Pri Megadim, as long as at the moment everyone is dressed it is permitted since the place itself is not filthy (ע' חיי משה).

Sefer Piskei Teshuvos (אות ב') writes that the dressing room of a *mikvah* or locker room is comparable to the middle room of a bathhouse assuming the following conditions are met. The first condition is that the dressing room must be set apart from the showers or *mikvah*. It is not necessary for a door to separate the two rooms. A second condition is that the dressing room cannot fill with steam. If, for example, there are numerous people using the showers and steam fills the dressing room it is considered for that period of time similar to the inner room in which one may not even greet a friend with the term שלום.

Stories to Share

The Names of Hashem

ש"ע סי' ע"ד, א': "אפילו שאילת שלום אסור..."

A certain man did his utmost to carefully fulfill every detail of halachah with joy. When he was in the bathroom or mikveh he was careful never to greet his friend with the word "shalom," as we find on today's amud.

One Shabbos when this man was in the mikveh, someone wished him a good Shabbos. Naturally, he replied in kind. But then he realized that this may not be permitted for him. After all, those who prohibit saying shalom explain that Shalom is the Name of Hashem—doesn't the Zohar state that Shabbos is also the Name of Hashem? If he was stringent in one aspect, shouldn't he be careful in another? On the other hand, perhaps it would be improper for him to fail to reply to his friend's greeting. Maybe for that reason alone, he had acted correctly by replying with a warm, "Good Shabbos."

When this question reached the Kaf Hachaim he explained that it was actually two separate questions. "Your first question is whether Shabbos is the same as Shalom in this regard? The answer is a resounding yes. As you correctly reasoned, saying Shabbos in the bathroom or mikveh is the same as saying Shalom.

"The second question is a bit more complex. If one is greeted with Shalom in the bathhouse, should he respond in kind? This is a machlokes in Meseches Derech Eretz and we hold that one should not respond in kind. Yet you need not be rude. Instead of wishing him a good Shabbos, why not say something like, 'You should have all the blessings and good?'"

The Kaf Hachaim, added one point to this. "If you see someone violating Shabbos in the mikveh, however, you can call out Shabbos so that he will realize and cease. Yet it is better to swallow the tav and say 'Shavah,' since this will probably be enough to give him pause."

כף החיים, ס' פ"ד, ס"ק ז' וח'

Overview

Siman 84 Seif 1:

It is permitted to read *shema* in a new bathhouse that was never used. Regarding an old bathhouse – in the outer room where people are clothed it is permitted to read *shema*, in the middle room where some people are dressed and some people are not one may greet others but he may not read *shema* or *daven* and it is permitted to contemplate Torah matters there. **In the inner room where people are not covered even greeting others is prohibited.** (It is prohibited to answer אמן in a bathhouse.)

- Shulchan Aruch refers to where it was not used for bathing even once. (M.B. 1)
- There is a disagreement whether one could read *shema* in the middle room if everyone is dressed but in the inner room all agree that one may not read *shema* even if no one is undressed. (M.B. 3)
- If one physically changes a bathhouse or even a bathroom with the intention that it will no longer serve its previous function one may affix a mezuzah to the doorway and *daven* there. (M.B. 3)
- Taz implies that if one did read *shema* or *daven* in the middle room he is not required to repeat his *tefila* if there was no one undressed nearby at the time. Concerning an immersion room Taz maintains that it has the same status as the middle room of a bathhouse and one should not recite any *beracha* there other than the *beracha* on immersion. If a *mikvah* is located in a bathhouse it is prohibited to recite the *beracha* on immersion there. (M.B. 4)
- The reason it is permitted to contemplate Torah matters is that there is no prohibition against contemplating Torah matters in front of an *ervah*. (M.B. 5)
- One may also not wish "Shalom" to a friend in a dirty street since it is treated like the inner room of a bathhouse. (M.B. 6)
- There is a disagreement whether one could refer to a person named Shalom in a bathhouse. *Halacha* follows the lenient opinion but one who is G-d fearing will be stringent. Similarly, one should avoid writing the word Shalom on a letter that will be thrown away. (M.B. 6)
- The restriction against answering אמן is limited to the inner room but it is permitted in the middle room. (M.B. 7)
- If one is asked a *halachic* question while in the inner room one may only respond, "This is a bathhouse." In the middle room there is a dispute whether one could say, "One cannot answer *halachic* questions in the bathhouse" and in an effort to promote peace one may be lenient. (M.B. 7)
- One should not drink in a bathhouse since it is prohibited to recite a *beracha* there. If necessary one should recite the *beracha* in the outer room. (M.B. 7)
- Later authorities indicate that a bath in one's home must be treated the same as the inner room of a bathhouse. (M.B. 7)