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Mishna Berura
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סימן פ"ד סעיף א'

Halacha Highlight

Thinking about Torah matters in the bathroom

Shulchan Aruch Siman 85 Seif 2

אפילו להרהר בדברי תורה אסור בבית הכסא

It is prohibited to even think about Torah related matters while in the bathroom

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ב') teaches that not only is one not permitted to recite *devarim she-b'kedusha* in a bathroom or other dirty place, but one is not even permitted to think about Torah related matters in these places. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ח) writes in the name of Bais Yosef that it is permitted for one who is fluent in Torah to think about Torah related matters while in the bathroom or bathhouse since he is considered an *ones* regarding this matter. Mishnah Berurah explains that when Bais Yosef writes that it is permitted he does not mean that such a person is permitted to intentionally contemplate Torah related matters while in the bathroom. What he means is that if such a person is incapable of distracting himself from Torah related matters while in the bathroom he is not categorized as a sinner since he is an *ones* regarding this matter. He is obligated though to make an effort to not think about Torah related matters while in the bathroom.

Sefer Mikor Chaim writes that one who can hear words of Torah while in the bathroom is also considered an *ones* and does not violate a prohibition. Rav Chaim Palagi (ספר לב חיים ח"ג סי' ו') also permits a person to enter a bathroom that is adjacent to a Bais Midrash. His reasoning is that a Torah scholar will take the necessary precautions to assure that he will not think about the words of Torah that can be heard from the bathroom. Someone who is not a Torah scholar is considered an *ones* since he has not choice but to go to the bathroom when the need arises. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (שו"ת יביע אומר ח"ה או"ח סי' י"א) rules that there is no prohibition against listening to a Torah lecture while in a bathroom. He explains that a bathroom is comparable to the middle room of a bathhouse in which it is permitted for one to contemplate Torah matters.

Stories to Share

A Question of Time and Place

ש"ע ס' פ"ה, ב': "אפלו להרהר בדברי תורה אסור בית הכסא ובבית המרחץ..."

A certain man purchased many new dishes for his growing family. He was able to carry them around with some difficulty and the moment he got into his car, he began to wonder where he would immerse them. Although he knew of a men's mikveh which he assumed was kosher to immerse vessels, he also knew that a men's mikveh need not be kosher for keilim. In any event, he hoped that there would be a mikveh set aside for vessels in his new hometown. But when he made inquiries, he found that there was no mikveh specifically for keilim, although the mikveh for men was completely kosher and could be used for vessels as well.

But then he realized that he had a problem: when would he make the blessing on the immersion? The mikveh was quite spacious and if he made the blessing outside it would be a while until he got to the water; perhaps this constitutes a hefsek? He also knew that it was certainly forbidden to make a berachah inside a mikveh even at a time when the mikveh was empty. When he asked if there was a keilim mikveh in the environs, he was told that there was one in the next town which was a fair distance. Perhaps he was required to go there and use a mikveh which would not involve a hefsek?

When this question reached Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zt"l, he ruled to use the local mikveh. "One who needs to immerse vessels in a men's mikveh which is kosher for vessels should make the blessing while still outside the mikveh. He should then walk as quickly as he can to the mikveh and immerse the vessels. The walking itself does not constitute a hefsek."

הלכות טבילת כלים, סע' ע"ד

Overview

Siman 85 Seif 1:

One may not walk through a dirty alleyway and put his hand over his mouth to read *shema*. Even if one was reading *shema* as he approached the alleyway he must interrupt when he reaches there. When he exits he resumes from where he paused even if he was in the alleyway for the amount of time needed to finish all of *shema*. Some maintain that he must return to the beginning and that is the *halacha*.

- One may not even read so quietly that one cannot even tell that he is reading *shema*. (M.B. 1)
- As soon as he is within four *amos* of the alleyway he must stop reading *shema*. (M.B. 2)

Siman 85 Seif 2:

It is prohibited to even think about Torah matters in a bathroom, bathhouse or dirty place, meaning one that has waste or *mei raglayim*. One may not even study the *halachos* related to a bathhouse in the bathhouse. **Mundane matters may be discussed even in *lashon kodesh*. Similarly, nicknames of Hashem like רחום and נאמן may be pronounced in these places but names that may not be erased may not be mentioned there. If it is necessary to restrain a person from doing something that is prohibited there it is permitted even in *lashon kodesh* and even regarding sacred matters.** In places where one is permitted to think about Torah matters it is also permitted to issue a *halachic* ruling as long as one does not explain the rationale behind the ruling.

- It is also prohibited to research grammar related matters since it will inevitably lead to thinking about *pesukim*. (M.B. 5)
- In the bathroom one should contemplate his financial matters and on Shabbos he should think about buildings and beautiful drawings. (M.B. 6)
- One may not even think about Torah related matters within four *amos* of where the smell dissipates from a bathroom. (M.B. 7)
- Sefer Tosefes Yerushalayim rules that a tanner may not *daven* in his tannery or mention *devarim she-b'kedusha* once the hide begins treatment and the area smells. (M.B. 7)
- Someone who is so fluent in Torah that he cannot separate himself from thinking about Torah matters is permitted to contemplate Torah in these places. This means that he is not a sinner for doing so but he is certainly expected to make an effort to restrain himself from doing so. There is a disagreement whether he is permitted to speak words of Torah as well. (M.B. 8)
- It is pious for a person to refrain from speaking *lashon kodesh* in these places. (M.B. 9)
- Ra'avad prohibits mentioning the name רחום but one may use a translation of that name. However, words of Torah and names of Hashem that may not be erased may not be pronounced in these places even in foreign languages. (M.B. 10)
- It is prohibited to say הרחום ירחם עליך, since it is comparable to greeting someone with Hashem's name. (M.B. 11)
- If one has sinful thoughts he may contemplate Torah matters to save himself from those thoughts. (M.B. 13)
- There is a disagreement whether one could say, "It is prohibited to do that" or whether one should say, "That is not done." If the person will not understand if one speaks tersely it is permitted to elaborate to make sure that he does not sin. (M.B. 14)
- Examples of circumstances in which one is only permitted to think about Torah are one standing in the middle room of the bathhouse or if one touched with his hands covered parts of his body. (M.B. 15)