The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Tues, Jun 2, 2026 ■ ט"ז אב, תשפ"ו
סימן פ"ח סעיף א'

Overview

Siman 88 Seif 1:

Anyone who is *tamei* may study Torah, read *shema* or *daven* except for the *ba'al keri*. Ezra excluded the *ba'al keri* from all others who are *tamei* and prohibited them from studying Torah, reading *shema* and *davening* until they immerse so that the Torah scholars would not be together with wives like chickens. Later they nullified the enactment and restored the original *halacha* that even a *ba'al keri* may study Torah, read *shema* and *daven* without immersing or washing in nine *kav* of water and this is our custom. Some write that while a woman is experiencing a flow she should not enter the *Bais HaKnesses*, *daven*, mention Hashem's Name or touch a *Sefer Torah*. Others maintain that she is permitted in all of these activities and that is the position to be followed. The custom in these countries, however, is in accordance with the first opinion. During her clean days the custom is to be lenient. Even in those places that are stringent, on the *yomim noraim* or days that are similar when many people gather together in the *Bais HaKnesses* women are allowed to go to the *Bais HaKnesses* with the other women since it would be a cause of sadness for everyone to gather together and for them to be outside..

- Torah study requires fear and awe and the cause of becoming a *ba'al keri* is lightheaded behavior. (M.B. 1)
- One who wants to be stringent and immerse should be blessed but it should not be the cause of missing the correct time for *shema* or *tefila b'tzibbur*. (M.B. 2)
- Pious people are careful in their observance of this matter and when they cannot immerse they pour nine *kav* of water over themselves. Later authorities write that 40 *seah* of drawn water is effective for this matter and the nine *kav* could also be drawn water and it may be poured from different utensils as long as the flow of water is continuous. Mateh Ephraim writes that one should not press his limbs against his body when the nine *kav* are being poured. (M.B. 4)
- Magen Avrohom writes that one who became a *ba'al keri* as a result of illness is not required to do anything other than clean the area of the body that has the *keri* on it. (M.B. 4)
- Binyomin Zev maintains that the custom is only to refrain from going to the *Bais HaKnesses*, gazing at a *sefer torah* and when she *davens* she does not stand in front of her friends. All of this is customary and does not involve a prohibition. (M.B. 6)
- In our countries the custom is that women recite *berachos* and *daven* but they do not gaze at the *sefer torah* when it is lifted nor do they visit a cemetery until they immerse. (M.B. 7)
- The first day of *selichos* and beyond is already considered the *yomim noraim*. (M.B. 8)

Halacha Highlight

Bathing in nine *kav* of water

Shulchan Aruch Siman 88 Seif 1
בלא טבילה ובלא רחיצה דתשעה קבין
Without immersing and without washing in nine *kav*

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') relates that a *tamei* person is permitted to study Torah and *daven*. However, a special enactment was made by Ezra that a person who is a *ba'al keri* was restricted against studying Torah and *davening* until he immerses to remove the *tumah*. Later the enactment was nullified and the *halacha* was restored to its original state that a *ba'al keri* is not required to immerse and Shulchan Aruch testifies that this is the common custom. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ד) reports that pious individuals continue to immerse themselves to remove *tumas keri*. And if they are unable to immerse themselves they should at least bathe in nine *kavim* of water.

The process of bathing in nine *kavim* of water involves pouring the water rather than immersing in the water. There is a disagreement regarding the amount of water in nine *kavim*. According to Chazon Ish (ספר מידות ושיעורי תורה) nine *kav* is 21.6 liter or 5.7 gallons. Rav Avrohom Chaim No'eh (שיעורי תורה אות לי) maintains that there is 12.44 liter or 3.3 gallons in nine *kav*. Teshuvas Shevet HaLevi (ח"א סי' כ"ד) and Minchas Yitzchok (ח"ד סי' כ"א) assert that a shower may be used for this procedure. Minchas Yitzchok adds that the water must flow uninterrupted and it is preferable for a person to stand under the shower before he turns on the water. Rav Chaim Kanievski (ספר מנוחת המת סי' כ"ד סק"י) reports that Chazon Ish was of the opinion that a shower does not effectively serve the purpose of pouring nine *kavim*. Sefer Moznai Tzedek (ch. 16 section 15) relates that he ran experiments to determine the length of time one must remain in the shower to have bathed in nine *kavim*. According to Rav Avrohom Chaim No'eh a shower with moderate pressure will give out 3.3 gallons in less than 2.5 minutes. In order to fulfill Chazon Ish's requirement one must remain in the water for less than four minutes.

Stories to Share

Mitigating Circumstances

מ"ב, ס' פ"ח, ס"ק ב': "ומכל מקום מי שירצה לנהג ולטבל תבוא עליו ברכה..."

A chassid once approached his rebbe, Rav Yizchak of Vorke, in a very broken-hearted manner. He had a physical ailment that was severely exacerbated by contact with water. When he had been ill the doctor had declared with certainty that his illness was the result of such contact, so it was not surprising that they absolutely forbade him from going to the mikveh even after he recovered.

Chassidim are generally very careful about Ezra's decree that a ba'al keri must go to the mikveh, especially before davening. Although the halachah is that they nullified this gezeirah, the Mishnah Berurah on today's amud along with many other authorities rule that one who fulfills this decree will be blessed.

בסימן פ"ח בשם הפמ"ג

In addition, many pre-chassidic sources mention that observing this takanah is essential for true spiritual development. Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, brings a list of some of these luminaries, including the Arizal, the Beis Yosef via the Maggid, and the Reishis Chochmah.

עיין אורחות יושר, טהרה, עמוד מ'

With all these sources it is no wonder that the young man felt frustrated by his inability to maintain this practice. The Vorkever Rebbe turned to his young follower and said, "Our sages famously teach: 'אונס רחמנא פטריה— The Merciful One absolves those constrained by mitigating circumstances.' This seems superfluous. Why not just say that one who is constrained by mitigating circumstances is absolved? In addition, who cares if he is פטורsince he didn't fulfill the mitzvah?

The rebbe answered his own question: "Hashem sees into a man's heart. If a person yearns to do a mitzvah but truly cannot, it is as though the Torah itself fulfills the mitzvah for him!"

The chassid lingered in his rebbe's presence, obviously unsatisfied with this response. He clearly was hoping to receive a blessing that he would, in fact, be able to immerse in the mikveh.

The rebbe admonished him, "Why are you still standing here? Who will do the mitzvah better—you, or the Torah?"

גדולת הצדיקים, עמ' נ"ה