The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן צ"ב סעיף א'

Overview

Siman 92 Seif 1:

If one feels the urge to relieve himself he may not *daven* and if he *davened* his *tefila* is an abomination and he must *daven* again. This assumes that he would not be able to restrain himself the time it takes to walk a *parsa* but if he would be able to restrain himself for the time it takes to walk a *parsa*, *b'dieved*, he fulfilled the *mitzvah*. *L'chatchila* one should not *daven* until he checked to see if he needs to relieve himself. Someone who feels the need to relieve himself may not even study Torah as long as his body is filthy with waste.

- There is a disagreement whether the requirement to *daven* again applies even when one felt the urge to urinate. (M.B. 2)
- A *parsah* is four *mil*. (M.B. 3)
- Shulchan Aruch means that when he started *davening* he had the ability to restrain himself for this period of time. The implication is that even if after he finished *davening* he went to relieve himself within this period of time he has *b'dieved* fulfilled his obligation. (M.B. 4)
- Even if by assuring his cleanliness he will not be able to *daven* with the *tzibbur* he should make sure that he is clean. If he fears that he will miss the correct time for *davening* Magen Avrohom and others agree that he may *daven* as long as it seems that he will not have to relieve himself in the next 72 minutes. (M.B. 5)
- One should certainly not read *shema* or recite other *berachos* if he feels the urge to relieve himself. *B'dieved* one is not required to *daven* a second time. (M.B. 6)
- If a person can restrain himself for 72 minutes there is a disagreement whether he may read *shema*. If one is teaching others or giving a *drosha* and he feels the need to relieve himself he may restrain himself so that he could finish. (M.B. 7)

Halacha Highlight

Assuring a clean body for *davening*

Shulchan Aruch Siman 92 Seif 1

היה צריך לנקביו אל יתפלל

One who feels the urge to relieve himself may not *daven*

Sefer Piskei Teshuvas gives an important introduction to this topic. Chazal divided the urge to relieve oneself into three categories. The first category is one who feels the need to relieve himself but also estimates that he could restrain himself for the next 72 minutes or more. The next category is a person who feels the urge to relieve himself and estimates that he will not be able to restrain himself for 72 minutes. The last category is one who feels the need to relieve himself urgently and by not doing so he violates the prohibition of בל תשקצו.

He then points out that our lifestyle is dramatically different than the lifestyle of previous generations and regarding this topic it is manifest in two ways. In previous generations people's eating habits were very consistent. What people ate, how much they ate and when they ate was for the most part consistent without much deviation. Nowadays, it is the opposite. It is rare for a person to eat the same food at the same time and the same quantity two days in a row. Additionally, there are snacks that people eat throughout the course of the day. The second major difference is that in previous generations the bathroom was outside of town or at least distant from where the people lived and as a result people accustomed themselves to relieve themselves at set times. Generally, this involved going to the bathroom in the morning and in the evening. Nowadays, with indoor plumbing and numerous bathrooms in homes, people relieve themselves much more often.

As a result of these differences, people no longer have a strong sense of whether they can restrain themselves for 72 minutes or not. Additionally, there are people who constantly worry that they will need to relieve themselves and they end up wasting a lot of time checking and rechecking to assure that they have a clean body. Therefore, he writes that when one feels the urge to relieve himself but if he were distracted by something that urge would go away it proves that he really does not have the urge to relieve himself that is an impediment to *davening*. Additionally, an urge to pass gas is not the same as an urge to relieve one's self and the two should not be confused with one another.

Stories to Share

Avoiding Obsession

ש"ע סי' צ"ב, א': "היה צריך לנקביו אל יתפלל..."

In recent generations, the phenomenon o what is known in Yiddish as "nerven" has become more common. A parallel medical term would be obsessive-compulsive disorder. Sometimes this manifests itself in a person continuously washing his hands. He may protest—even to himself—that he is washing repeatedly for religious reasons, but everyone around him knows very well that there is something unhealthy about his behavior.

Sometimes this ailment manifests itself in a subject found on today's amud. The person learns that it is forbidden to daven if one needs the bathroom and he immediately begins spending many hours each day in the bathroom in an obsessive attempt to be "sufficiently clean." Although such people act as though they are merely being scrupulous in their observance, the reality is that they are ill.

The Steipler Gaon famously made efforts to help such people, telling one man who continuously washed his hands that he was ill and needed to stop. "This has nothing to do with religion. It is a psychological condition."

On another occasion when a person with such leanings explained that he spent at least an hour in the bathroom each day before davening, the Steipler Gaon offered clear halachic guidance. "You do not need to worry about this. If you tried to use the bathroom but still feel a slight need, ignore this completely."

קריינא דאגרתא, ח"א, אגרת שע"ה

The author of She'eilas Rav wondered about this ruling. "Does this only apply to one who has a condition but normal people must check themselves even if they have a slight need? Or is this relevant to everyone?"

When he asked Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, he answered "יש מקום להקל"-There is room for leniency."

שאלת רב, ע' קפ"ד