The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Mon, Oct 26, 2026 ■ ט"ו חשון, תשפ"ז
סימן קל"א סעיף ח'

Overview

Siman 131 Seif 8:

An important person is not permitted to "fall on his face" when he *davens* with a *tzibbur* unless he is certain that his *tefila* will be answered as was Yehoshua ben Nun. It is prohibited for anyone to "fall on his face" by spreading out his hands and feet even if he is not on a flooring stone. If he turns to the side it is permitted if he is not on a flooring stone. This practice should be followed on Yom Kippur when people "fall on their faces" or they should spread out grass to separate between themselves and the floor and this is the custom.

- Shulchan Aruch refers to one who will bow, even though it is not on a stone floor, in the form of קידה—falling on one's face without spreading out his hands and feet – which is permitted for others but an important person may not do so. If he leans to the side it is permitted even if the floor is stone since this is not considered "falling on one's face." Certainly the manner in which we "fall on our face" – i.e. tilting our head and covering our face [for *tachanun*] - is permitted. (M.B. 37)
- Shulchan Aruch refers to where he is *davening* together with the *tzibbur* and when he *davens* with the *tzibbur* the restriction is in place when he is the only one who falls on his face. (M.B. 38)
- *Poskim* explain that the Biblical prohibition applies when one spreads out his hands and feet and does so on a stone floor. If he bows in the קידה method or if he stretches out his hands and feet on a surface that is not stone it is only Rabbinically prohibited. One may do קידה on a non-stone floor. (M.B. 40)
- If there is a stone floor one may not even bow using the קידה method if his face actually touches the floor. The prohibition applies only if the floor is made from stone but not if it is made from brick. (M.B. 41)
- Rema means that when one stretches out his hands and feet even if he is not on stone he must tilt to the side and if the floor is stone and he is bowing in the קידה manner he must also tilt to the side. (M.B. 43)
- If one puts grass down on the floor it is permitted to bow even without tilting to one side. (M.B. 44)

Halacha Highlight

Bowing on the floor

Rema Siman 131 Seif 8

וכן יעשו ביום כפור כשנופלין על פניהם

And this is what should be done on Yom Kippur when people fall on their face

Rema teaches that it is prohibited for one to prostrate with outstretched hands and feet even if he is not on flooring stone. Mishnah Berurah (סק"מ) presents an introduction to these *halachos*. He writes that Biblically one violates a prohibition if he prostrates without stretched hands and feet on a stone floor. If one is on a stone floor but does not have his hands and feet outstretched or if he is outstretched but not on a stone floor he is violation of a Rabbinic injunction. If he is not on a stone floor and does not stretch out his hands and feet it is permitted. Rema adds that it is permitted for a person to prostrate himself with outstretched hands and feet if he turns on his side slightly and is not on a stone floor. On Yom Kippur when people prostrate themselves with outstretched hands and feet on a floor that is not made of stone they should follow this approach and turn onto their side. An alternative approach is to spread out grass on the ground where one intends to bow. When following this approach it is unnecessary for one to turn on his side as he bows.

Mateh Ephraim (סי' תרכ"א סע' י"ד) notes that technically it is only necessary to place a separation between one's self and the floor when bowing on one's face without outstretched hands and feet if the store is made of stone. However, the custom is to be stringent regarding other materials as well so that people will not mistakenly bow on a stone floor as well. Therefore, even if the floor of the *Bais HaKnesses* is carpeted it is necessary for one to put something on the ground where he will bow. Teshuvas Avnei Yashfei (ח"ב סי' ז') notes that the material that one places down as a separation should primarily be under one's face rather than under one's knees as people erroneously think. Additionally, using one's garments between his face and the floor is ineffective and even a *talis* may be used only in a pressing circumstance (ע' פסקי תשובות אות כ"ז).

Stories to Share

Prostrated in Prayer

מ"ב ס' קל"א, ס"ק ל"ח: "אבל בביתו אפילו מתפלל על הציבור מותר..."

On today's amud we find that an important person may prostrate himself while he prays privately.

Rav Yaakov of Lisa, zt"l, the author of the famed Nesivos, had a very unusual custom. Before he gave his shiur he would close himself in a room without any seforim. Everyone wondered what he was doing all alone in this room for such a long time. There were many speculations. Some felt that was davening for success while others believed he was reviewing the shiur by heart and testing its mettle to see if there were any weaknesses. One curious student couldn't control himself: he secreted himself in the room to see what the Nesivos would do. What he saw didn't leave him until his dying day.

The Nesivos, zt"l, entered the room and locked the door. He then prostrated himself on a thin board on the floor and started to admonish himself in a powerful voice repeating again and again the verse in Tehilim (50: 16): ולרשע אמר אלוקים מה לך לספר חקי ותשא בריתי עלי פיך—And Hashem said to the wicked: Why should you speak of my laws and bear the covenant of My Torah upon your mouth?"

For the entire half hour he continued to intone this with more and more feeling. At the end of the half hour, the rav stood up and took some water out of a cup to rinse away his tears. After drying off the water, the rav went to give his shiur, completely oblivious to the student whose life he had completely changed.