The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן רכ"ה סעיף ח'-י'

Overview

Siman 225 Seif 8:

When one sees someone with a dark complexion, a גיחור who is someone with a red complexion, a לוקן, someone with a very white complexion, a קפח, someone with a large stomach and as a result of his thickness his stature appears bent, a midget, a דרקונה, someone filled with blisters, someone פתויי הראש, whose hairs are attached to one another, an elephant, or a monkey recites ברוך אתה ה' וכו' משנה הבריות.

- The Gemara Bechoros implies that it is someone tall and thin and since he is thin he cannot hold up his height and thus appears bent over. (M.B. 20)

Siman 225 Seif 9:

One who sees someone lame, with severed hands, blind, filled with sores, בהקנין, who is someone speckled with small dots, if they have these conditions from birth one recites משנה הבריות and if they developed the condition after birth one recites דין האמת. One opinion contends that this is true only if the person is distressed by his condition but if it is an idolater the beracha is not recited. The beracha is recited only the first time one sees the person since the unusual condition stands out in his mind. Some say that it can be recited every thirty days.

- Shulchan Aruch refers to someone blind in both eyes. (M.B. 23)
- The person has small red dots similar to lentils and between the dots his skin is bright white. If many people have this condition it seems that it is not embarrassing or something unusual that would mandate the recitation of a beracha. (M.B. 24)
- Having the condition from birth applies to all the conditions except for the one whose hand was severed. (M.B. 25)
- דין האמת is recited since one's sin caused the condition. (M.B. 26)
- Shulchan Aruch refers to the beracha of משנה הבריות and teaches that once one recited the beracha on someone with a dark complexion one does not recite the beracha again even if one sees another such person and even if it is after thirty days. The reason is that the beracha is recited only when the change sticks out most in his mind which is the first time he sees it. There is a disagreement whether this applies to דין האמת that is recited if a close friend or relative developed such a condition after birth. (M.B. 29)
- The halacha is that the beracha should be recited after thirty days without mention of Hashem's Name or Kingdom. (M.B. 30)

Halacha Highlight

Reciting a beracha on deformed people and animals

Shulchan Aruch Siman 225 Seif 8

הרואה כושי

One who sees a dark skinned person

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ח') discusses the recitation of the beracha of משנה הבריות—that Hashem varies the creatures. The first deformity that is mentioned is a person with dark skin. Chaye Adam (כלל ס"ג סע' א' במוסגר) notes that nowadays we do not recite this beracha when we see dark skinned people. The reason is that we are used to seeing such people and it is no longer an unusual sight that warrants the recitation of the beracha. Others explain that the Gemara and Shulchan Aruch do not refer to someone who is dark skinned born to parents who are dark skinned; rather the reference is to a child who is born dark skinned to parents who are fair skinned. Such an occurrence is unusual and warrants the recitation of the beracha. Poskim also note that the list is not exhaustive and one should recite the beracha on other unusual looking people as well, e.g. someone very tall or Siamese twins (פסקי תשובות אות כ').

After listing a number of deformities that require a person to recite this beracha, Shulchan Aruch also mentions one who sees an elephant and a monkey. Sefer Meleches Shamayim (כלאים פ"ח מ"ו ד"ה הפיל והקוף בשם חסיד מקובל ר"ש) explains that during the time of the flood Hashem punished some people by transforming them into elephants and monkeys. Monkeys resemble people and elephants understand when humans speak. It is for that reason that we recite משנה הבריות on these animals specifically because Hashem changed them from what they were originally. A similar though is found in Meiri (ברכות נ"ח: ד"ה הרואה פיל). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (הליכות שלמה עמ' ר"צ), however, wrote that one recites the beracha on any unusual looking animal. In fact, it is reported that many Gedolim went out of their way to visit a zoo so that they should be able to see animals so that they could recite this beracha (פסקי תשובות אות כ"א הע' 144).

Siman 225 Seif 10:

One who sees beautiful trees or creatures, even if it is an idolater or animal, recites: ברוך אתה ה' שככה לו בעולמו. This beracha is recited only the first time and is not repeated on that creature or even another unless the second one is more beautiful.

- It doesn't matter whether it is a male or female. Nowadays the custom is not to recite this beracha but it is proper to recite it without mentioning Hashem's Name or Kingdom. (M.B. 32)
- The prohibition of לא תחנם prohibits commenting, "How beautiful is that idolater." (M.B. 33)