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Brachos Daf 25

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Reciting Prayers in Unclean Places

It has been stated: If there is some excrement on a man's flesh, or if his hand is inside a latrine (*by inserting his hand through a window*), Rav Huna says that he is permitted to say the *Shema*, while Rav Chisda says that he is forbidden to say the *Shema*.

Rava said: What is Rav Huna's reason? It is because it is written: *Let everything that breathes praise God (so it is only the mouth and the nose that need to be clean in order to praise God; the other organs do not need to be)*. And Rav Chisda says that it is forbidden to say the *Shema*. What is Rav Chisda's reason? It is because it is written: *All my bones shall say, "God, who is like You?"*

It has been stated: If there is a putrid smell proceeding from a tangible source (*excrement lying on the ground*), Rav Huna says that one distances himself four *amos* from the source of the smell and there, he may recite the *Shema*, whereas Rav Chisda says that he must distance himself four *amos* from the place where the smell has ceased, and only then may he recite the *Shema*.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa* that has been taught in accordance with Rav Chisda: A man should not recite the *Shema* either opposite human excrement, or opposite the excrement of dogs, or opposite the excrement of pigs, or opposite the excrement of chickens, or opposite a garbage heap which is giving off a putrid smell. If, however, it is in a place ten *tefachim* above him or ten *tefachim* below him, he can sit at the side of it and recite the *Shema* (*for it is regarded as if he and the excrement are located in two different domains*), but if not, he distances himself out of sight of it; and similarly for the *Tefillah*. If there is a putrid smell proceeding from a tangible object, he must distance himself four *amos* from the place

where the smell has ceased, and only then may he recite the *Shema*.

Rava said: The *halachah* is not as stated in this *braisa*, but rather, the *halachah* follows that which has been taught in the following *braisa*: A man should not recite the *Shema* either opposite human excrement, or opposite the excrement of pigs, or opposite the excrement of dogs; however, this only applies when he puts hides in them (*for then the smell is exceptionally putrid*).

They inquired of Rav Sheishes: What of a putrid smell which has no tangible source? [*Can the shema be recited there?*]

He said to them: Come and see these mats in the study hall; some doze on them (*and pass gas*) while others study.

The *Gemora* qualifies this ruling: This, however, applies only to Torah study, but not to the *Shema*. And even regarding Torah study, it applies only if the smell is caused by another, but not if it is made by himself (*for then, he will need to wait until the smell dissipates*).

It has been stated: If excrement is passing by (*it is being carried by someone in a vessel*), Abaye says that it is permitted to recite the *Shema*, while Rava says that it is forbidden to recite the *Shema*.

The *Gemora* explains: Abaye said: From where do I derive my opinion? It is because we have learned in a *Mishna*: If a *tamei* person (*a metzora*) is standing under a tree and a *tahor* one passes by (*under the tree*), the person becomes *tamei* (*through tumas ohel - if the tumah source and a person or object is under the same roof; this is providing that the metzora is stationary*).



If a *tahor* person is standing under a tree and a *tamei* one passes by (*under the tree*), he remains *tahor* (*because he cannot create a tumas ohel unless he is stationary*). But if the *tamei* person (*stops and*) stands (*under the tree*), the *tahor* one will become *tamei*. And similarly with a stone of *tzaraas* (*if one is carrying it, he will create tumas ohel only if he is stationary*). [*This proves that a person or object is not regarded as being in that location unless they are stationary.*]

The *Gemora* notes that Rava can reply that there, the determining factor is the permanence of that which is *tamei*, as it is written: He shall dwell in isolation; his dwelling shall be outside the camp (*and "dwelling" indicates some type of permanence; therefore, the tamei person transmits tumah through ohel only if he is stationary*), but in this case, the Torah has said: And your camp shall be holy, and (*when there is excrement – even when it's just passing by*) this condition is not fulfilled.

Rav Pappa said: The mouth of a pig is like excrement passing by.

The *Gemora* asks: Isn't this obvious (*for there is always excrement in a pig's mouth*)?

The *Gemora* answers: It required to be stated, to show that it applies even if the pig is emerging from the river. (25a)

Cases of Uncertainty

Rav Yehudah said: If there is a doubt about the presence of excrement, it is forbidden (*to recite the Shema or Tefillah*); if there is a doubt about the presence of urine, it is permitted.

There were those who said that Rav Yehudah said: If there is a doubt about excrement in the house, it is permitted; (*if there is a doubt*) in the garbage heap, it is forbidden. If there is a doubt about urine, it is permitted - even in the garbage heap.

The *Gemora* explains that Rav Yehudah agrees with the view of Rav Hamnuna, for Rav Hamnuna said: The Torah forbade (*the recital of the Shema and Shemoneh Esrei*) only opposite the stream of urine (*and not after it collects on the ground*). And he is in agreement with Rabbi Yonasan, for Rabbi Yonasan noted a contradiction between two texts. It is written: *You shall have a place outside the camp, and to it you shall go out (to relieve yourself)*, and it is also written: *And you shall have a shovel ...*

and you shall cover that which comes out from you. How are these two verses to be reconciled (*for the first verse did not mention anything about covering*)? The answer is that the latter verse refers to excrement (*which must be covered before the recital of sacred words*), and the former refers to urine. This proves that urine was not forbidden by the Torah only opposite the stream of urine (*and not after it collects on the ground*).

The *Gemora* concludes its explanation of Rav Yehudah's ruling: Once it (*the urine*) has fallen to the ground, it is permitted, and it is the Rabbis who decreed a further prohibition, and when they did so, it was only in a case of certainty, but not in a case of doubt. [*However, regarding excrement, which is a Biblical prohibition, it is forbidden even in a case of doubt.*] (25a)

For how Long is it Forbidden?

The *Gemora* asks: And in a case of certainty, how long is it (*the urine on the ground*) forbidden?

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: So long as it moistens (*other things that come into contact with it*). And so said Rabbah bar bar Chanah in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: So long as it moistens. And so said Ulla: So long as it moistens.

Geniva said in the name of Rav: So long as the mark (*of the urine*) is (*still*) discernible (*on the ground*).

Rav Yosef said: May Geniva be forgiven by his Master (*for reporting a false ruling in the name of Rav*)! Now, even regarding excrement, Rav Yehudah has said in the name of Rav that as soon as its surface has crusted it is permitted, is there any question about urine (*that in order to be forbidden, it needs to be able to moisten other objects*)!?

Abaye said to him: What reason do you have for relying on this statement? Rather, rely on this one, which was made by Rabbah bar bar Chanah in the name of Rav: Even if excrement is (*dried*) like earthenware, it is forbidden (*so perhaps urine will be forbidden as long as its mark is discernible*).

The *Gemora* asks: What are the circumstances of its being as dry as earthenware?

The *Gemora* answers: So long as one can throw it and it does not crumble (*if, however, it does crumble when thrown, it will be permitted*).



There were those who said: So long as one can roll it and it does not crumble. [*This version is stricter than the previous one, for it holds that even if it would crumble when thrown, it is still regarded as being moist and it would be forbidden, for it does not crumble when it is rolled.*]

Ravina said: I was once standing before Rav Yehudah of Difti, and he saw excrement, and he said to me: Go see if its surface has crusted or not.

Some say that what he said to him was this: Go see if it has formed cracks.

The *Gemora* asks: What is the final ruling (*regarding urine and excrement*)?

The *Gemora* answers: It has been stated: When excrement is (dried) like earthenware, Ameimar says that it is forbidden, and Mar Zutra says that it is permitted. Rava said: The *halachah* is that if excrement is (*as dry*) like earthenware, it is forbidden, and in the case of urine - as long as it moistens (*other things that come into contact with it*).

The *Gemora* asks from a *braisa*: Regarding urine – if it moistens, it is forbidden; if it has been absorbed (*in the ground*) or has evaporated (*on stones, due to the sun*), it is permitted. Now, are we not to understand that ‘absorption’ here is compared to ‘evaporating,’ and that just as after it evaporates, there is no mark left, so too after absorption, there is no mark left, and that if there is still a mark, it is forbidden, even though it no longer moistens? [*This contradicts Rava, who permitted in a case where the urine cannot moisten!?*]

The *Gemora* counters: But according to your reasoning, let us consider the first clause: Regarding urine – if it moistens, it is forbidden, which implies that if there is a mark, it is permitted (*which is apparently in contradiction to the implication of the second clause*)!?

Rather, the *Gemora* concludes that from this *braisa*, we cannot infer anything. [*Rashi elsewhere writes that, when faced with such a braisa, where two implications contradict each other, one of them was intended and the other was only written in such a manner on account of symmetry; and since we do not*

know which of the two statements were written for the intended implication, we cannot conclude anything from the braisa.]

The *Gemora* suggests that the *Tannaim* elsewhere disagree on this point, for it was taught in a *braisa*: If urine has been poured out of a vessel (*which generally contains urine*), it is forbidden to recite the *Shema* in front of that vessel. And regarding the urine itself, if it has been absorbed (*in the ground*) it is permitted, but if it has not been absorbed, it is forbidden. Rabbi Yosi says: So long as it moistens.

Now, the *Gemora* analyzes, what is meant by the ‘absorbed’ and ‘not absorbed’ mentioned by the *Tanna Kamma*? If you say that ‘absorbed’ means that it does not moisten, and that ‘not absorbed’ means that it does moisten (*and that is when it is forbidden*), and Rabbi Yosi came and said that so long as it moistens, it is forbidden, but (*the implication is that*) if only the mark is discernible, it is permitted; this, then, would be the same as what the *Tanna Kamma* says!

Rather, we must therefore say then that ‘absorbed’ means that the mark is not discernible, and ‘not absorbed’ means that the mark is discernible, and Rabbi Yosi came and said that so long as it moistens, it is forbidden, but (*the implication is that*) if only the mark is discernible, it is permitted. [*It would emerge that these Tannaim argue about this exact point: if the mark is discernible, the Tanna Kamma holds that one is forbidden to pray, while Rabbi Yosi holds that it is still permitted.*]

The *Gemora* disagrees with this interpretation, and explains as follows: Both *Tannaim* agree that so long as it moistens, it is forbidden, and if only the mark is discernible, it is permitted, and here the difference between them is whether it must be wet enough that when it moistens something, that thing is able to moisten even something else. (25a – 25b)

Sunrise

The *Mishna* had stated: If one went down to immerse himself (*and it was immediately before the time for the recital of Shema was about to pass*), the *halachah* is as follows: if he is able to come up (*from the mikvah*) [*and cover himself and recite the Shema before sunrise, he should go up, cover himself and recite the Shema, but if not (if he does not have time), he should cover himself with the water and recite*].



The *Gemora* asks: May we say that the *Mishna* teaches anonymously the same as Rabbi Eliezer, who said (*previously*) that (*the morning Shema may be recited*) until sunrise?

The *Gemora* answers: You may even say that it is in accordance with Rabbi Yehoshua, and perhaps the *Mishna* is referring to the “*vasikin*” (*the devoted ones*), for Rabbi Yochanan said: The *vasikin* used to finish the recital (*of Shema*) with the rising of the sun. (25b)

Heart and Heel Seeing his Ervah

The *Mishna* had stated: But if not, he should cover himself with the water and recite.

The *Gemora* asks: But in this case, his heart sees his nakedness (*for there is nothing separating the two*)?

Rabbi Elozar said, or as some say, Rabbi Acha bar Abba bar Acha said in the name of our teacher (*Rav*): The *Mishna* is referring to cloudy water, which is like solid earth, causing the result that his heart does not see his nakedness.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: If the water is clear, he may sit in it up to his neck and recite the *Shema*; but others say: He should cloud the waters (*by stirring it up*) with his foot.

The *Gemora* asks: But the *Tanna Kamma* - his heart sees his nakedness?

The *Gemora* answers: He held that if his heart sees his nakedness, it is, nevertheless, permitted.

The *Gemora* asks: But his heel (*an organ, which generally is separate from his ervah*) sees his nakedness?

The *Gemora* answers: He held that if his heel sees his nakedness, it is, nevertheless, permitted.

It has been stated: If his heel sees his nakedness, it is permitted. If it (*his heel*) touches (*his ervah*), Abaye says it is forbidden, and Rava says it is permitted.

The *Gemora* notes that the above is the way in which Rav Zevid taught this discussion. Rav Chinena the son of Rav Ika taught it as follows: If (*his heel*) touches (*his ervah*), all agree that it is forbidden. If it sees, Abaye says that it is forbidden, and Rava

says that it is permitted, for the Torah was not given to the ministering angels (*who do not have an ervah; and it is too much must to expect of human beings to be so careful that their heel should not see their ervah*).

The *Gemora* rules: The *halachah* is that if it (*his heel*) touches (*his ervah*), it is forbidden (*to recite the Shema*), but if it sees, it is permitted. (25b)

Seen through Glass

Rava said: If one sees excrement through a lantern (*where the excrement is visible through a glass partition*), he may recite the *Shema* opposite it; if one sees nakedness through a lantern, he may not recite the *Shema* opposite it.

The *Gemora* explains: If he sees excrement through a lantern, he may recite the *Shema* opposite it, because (*with respect of reciting the Shema*) in the case of excrement, (*its permission*) depends on whether it is covered (*or not*), and here, it is covered (*by the glass partition*). If one sees nakedness through a lantern, he may not recite the *Shema* opposite it, because the Merciful One said: *and He shall not see in you a matter of nakedness*, and here, it (*his nakedness*) is seen. (25b)

Nullifying

Abaye said: A little excrement may be nullified with spittle.

Rava added: It must be thick spittle.

Rava said: If the excrement is in a hole, he may put his sandal over it and recite the *Shema*.

Mar the son of Ravina inquired: What is the *halachah* if there is some excrement sticking to his sandal? The *Gemora* leaves this question unresolved. (25b)

Ervah of an Idolater

Rav Yehudah said: It is forbidden to recite the *Shema* opposite a naked idolater.

The *Gemora* asks: Why mention an idolater? The same *halachah* would apply to a Jew as well!?

The *Gemora* answers: In the case of a Jew, it is obvious to him that it is forbidden (*and it was unnecessary for him to even state it*), but the law regarding an idolater needed to be stated, for you might have thought that since the Torah writes

regarding them: *whose flesh (the Egyptians) is as the flesh of donkeys*, and therefore he is just like a mere donkey (*which would then allow one to recite the Shema opposite his nakedness – just like the law is regarding an animal*); therefore we are informed that their flesh (*genitals*) is called ‘nakedness’ as well, as it is written (*by Noach and his sons*): *And they did not see their father’s nakedness.* (25b)

Nullifying with Water

The *Mishna* had stated: He should not, however, cover himself - not with foul water and not with water in which flax has been steeped until he pours more water into it.

The *Gemora* asks: How much water must he go on pouring? [*How can he possibly nullify such a quantity of water?*]

The *Gemora* answers: The *Mishna* means as follows: He should not cover himself with foul water and not with water in which flax has been steeped at all (*for there will be no possibility of nullifying it*); and regarding (*a vessel of*) urine – (*it is forbidden to recite the Shema opposite it*) until he pours water into it.

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: How much water must he pour into it? Any amount (*is sufficient*). Rabbi Zakkai said: A *revi’is* (*a quarter of a log; approximately four ounces*).

Rav Nachman said: Where they disagree is when the water is poured in last (*after the urine is already in the vessel*), but if the water was there first, (*even R’ Zakkai would agree that*) any amount is sufficient. [*This is based upon the principle of “kama kama batel – each drop of urine becomes nullified as it falls into the water.*] Rav Yosef, however, said: Where they disagree is when the water was there first, but if the water was poured in afterwards, they both agree that there must be a *revi’is*.

Rav Yosef once said to his attendant: Bring me a *revi’is* of water (*to nullify the urine*), in accordance with (*the viewpoint of*) Rabbi Zakkai. (25b)

In Front or Behind the Bed

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: It is forbidden to recite the *Shema* opposite a chamber pot for excrement or urine - even if there is nothing in it; and regarding urine itself (*if it is in another vessel – one that wasn’t designated for urine*) – (*it is forbidden*) until he pours water into it. How much water must he pour? Any amount (*is sufficient*). Rabbi Zakkai said: A *revi’is*. [*These laws*

apply] whether it (*the vessel*) is in front of the bed (*where there is nothing between the person and the vessel*) or behind the bed (*where the bed is separating between the person and the vessel*). Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: If it is behind the bed, he may recite the *Shema*; if it is in front of the bed, he may not recite, but he must distance himself four *amos* (*away from the vessel*) and then recite. Rabbi Shimon ben Elozar says: Even if the room is a hundred *amos* long, he should not recite the *Shema* in it until he takes it (*the vessel*) out (*of the house*) or places it under the bed.

They inquired: What did he (*Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel*) mean (*when he ruled that one must distance himself four amos from the vessel*)? Did he mean that if it is behind the bed, he may recite the *Shema* immediately, and that if it is in front of the bed, he must distance himself four *amos* and then recite? Or perhaps, he meant that if it is behind the bed, he must distance himself four *amos*, but if it is in front of the bed, he may not recite at all?

The *Gemora* attempts to prove it from that which has been taught in the following *braisa*: Rabbi Shimon ben Elozar says: If it is behind the bed, he may recite immediately; if it is in front of the bed, he must distance himself four *amos*. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Even if the room is a hundred *amos* long, he should not recite the *Shema* in it until he takes it (*the vessel*) out (*of the house*) or places it under the bed. [*Now, from the first opinion cited in the braisa, it is clear that the distancing of four amos is needed when the vessel is in front of the bed, but when it is behind the bed, no distancing is necessary.*]

The *Gemora* notes: Our inquiry has been answered, but there is a contradiction between the *braisos* (*regarding the specific opinions of the Tannaim*)!?

The *Gemora* answers: Reverse the names in the latter *braisa*.

The *Gemora* asks: What reason do you have for reversing the second one; perhaps the first one should be reversed?

The *Gemora* answers: About whom have you heard that he said that the entire room is like four *amos*? It is Rabbi Shimon ben Elozar. [*Rashi writes that he is not aware as to regarding what specific issue did Rabbi Shimon ben Elozar state this.*] (25b)



HALACHAH FROM THE DAF

Through a Window or with Glasses

The Rashb"a proves from our Gemora that seeing something through glass is regarded halachically as "seeing." Therefore he rules that if one sees the fire from the havdalah candle through a glass, he has discharged his obligation.

The Magen Avraham rules like this as well, and he explains one stringent ruling of the Shulchan Aruch to be referring to a case where the candle was encased in a metal container with holes in it; however, if it would be made completely out of glass, there would be no concern.

The Bi'ur Halachah disagrees and states that although seeing through glass is regarded halachically as "seeing," nevertheless, regarding the brachah of borei me'orei ha'eish, seeing through glass will not be sufficient. He explains that the brachah was instituted on fire that is exposed without any covering – similar to the way it was at the time that it was created.

The Ketzos Hashulchan rules that even according to the Bi'ur Halachah, one who wears glasses, has fulfilled his obligation by seeing the candle, and he is not required to remove them and see the fire with his eyes. This is because the purpose of glasses are to enable a person to see better.

The Hilchos Ketanos rules, based upon our Gemora, that one who reads from a Sefer Torah with glasses, has fulfilled his obligation. He adds that so it would be if one sees an elder passing by through a window, he is obligated to stand up out of respect for him.

The Dvar Shmuel writes that one who sees the moon through a glass – it is not regarded as "seeing." Nevertheless, he is permitted to recite the blessing because other people see it – similar to the halachah which applies to a blind person.

DAILY MASHAL

Knowing the Torah Like the Angels

One must always be exceedingly vigilant to avoid embarrassing any human being. Chazal compare doing so to murder, and

they prescribed that one cast himself into a fiery furnace rather than fall into this prohibition. Although some Rishomin write that this is merely a middas chassidus, Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurebach, zt"l, rules like most Rishonim who take this at face value.

This is one reason why Rav Fischer, zt"l, refused to test children while their teachers were present. Not only that, but he would test each student separately, lest one who was less prepared be shamed in front of his friends. When the melamed would naturally ask after their performance, Dayan Fischer would invariably reply, "They knew the material." He would immediately add, "Some knew more and some less, but they all knew..."

A certain father was very proud of his unmarried son who was studying for the first chelek of Yoreh Deiah in the hopes of becoming a rav. When the young man finished the first one hundred and eleven simanim—the customary test for a rav in those days—his father took him to the famous Rav Aizel of Slonim, zt"l, to be tested for semichah. However, although the young man had covered all of the material, his method had hardly been thorough. Sadly, his "good answers" proved that he was not nearly ready for the rigorous test which was the only way to obtain semichah from Rav Aizel.

The test had not been given in a public place, but there were several scholars waiting to speak with Rav Aizel there who witnessed the young man's performance. They wondered how Rav Aizel would manage to reject him without shaming him or his father. But they could never have guessed what the Rav's response would actually be. He turned to the father and said, "Although I cannot give your son semichah now, you should know that he is a malach, an angel." The father was thrilled with this approbation, and floated from the room.

Afterward, one puzzled scholar asked Rav Aizel, "Whatever did you mean? The boy is clearly an am ha'aretz!" Rav Aizel replied with a twinkle in his eye, "Does it not say in Brachos 25b that the Torah was not given to the ministering angels?"

Cited in Daf Digest and in Meoros HaDaf HaYomi