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Bathing on Shabbos

Bathing in Hot Water

- Gezeirah against bathing in hot water.** Chazal (גמל שבת דף ל"ט ע"ב) made a gezeirah not to wash the entire body or most of the body (מ"ב ס"י ש"ו) in hot water on Shabbos. They did this because the attendants in charge of the bathhouses would claim they heated water before Shabbos, but they would really heat water on Shabbos, violating the issurim of havarah [lighting a fire] and bishul [cooking]. To prevent people from heating water in a forbidden way on Shabbos, Chazal forbade bathing in hot water on Shabbos even if no melachah [e.g., bishul or havarah] was done with the water (גמל שם דף מ"א ע"א).
- Water heated before Shabbos.** With water heated before Shabbos, Chazal only forbade washing the entire body or most of the body, but one may wash his face, hands, and feet with it (גמל שם דף מ"א ע"א). One may also wash other limbs that constitute the minority of the body (רמ"א א"ו"ח ס"י ש"ו ס"א).
- It is important to point out that this is only regarding the halacha about washing the body with hot water on Shabbos. However, turning on the hot water from the tap on Shabbos usually entails a separate issur of havarah of the boiler and bishul of the cold water that replaces the water in the hot water tank. Thus, the whole heter of washing part of the body is only if there is a permissible way of getting hot water from the tap (see Issue 205, par. 5)
- Water heated on Shabbos.** One may not wash even a single limb of the body with water heated on Shabbos (גמל שם). This is true even if the water was heated in a mutar way, e.g., by a non-Jew [in a mutar fashion] (רא"ש פ"ט שבת סוף ס"ב); it is not only if the water was heated through an issur (מ"ב שם ס"ק"ז).

Temperature of Water Forbidden for Bathing

- People consider it hot.** Some hold that one may not bathe on Shabbos in water that people consider hot, but if it is cooler than that, one may bathe in it. Obviously, this is only when there is no possible issur involved in heating the water. Thus, these poskim allow adding some hot water to cold water to make it less cold as long as it is still not called "hot water" (שו"ת חכם צבי ס"י י"א, סדרי טהרה ס"י קצ"ו ס"ק"ט).
- Others argue. They hold the gezeirah forbids bathing even with water that was merely made less cold. Since this requires lighting a fire, the gezeirah about the bathhouse attendants remains in place (בית מאיר ס"י ש"ו, שו"ת רע"א ס"י י"ז).
- Lukewarm.** Some allow bathing in lukewarm water (שו"ת נודב"י), but the definition of this is unclear. Some hold it is body temperature [37°C/98.6°F], or when one can feel a bit of warmth in the water (תרוה"ד, שביתת השבת מלאכת ביטול הע"י קכ"ה).
- Cooler than during the week.** Others hold it can be allowed as long as the water is noticeably cooler than water people bathe in during the week (אג"מ א"ו"ח ח"ד סוף ס"י ע"ד). It could be this is up to 38°C/100.4°F (ארחות שבת פכ"א ע"י).

Water Heated through a Shabbos Clock

- The consensus of the poskim is that water heated automatically without a person's action does not have the status of water heated on Shabbos. It is like water heated before Shabbos, and accordingly, one may wash with it the minority of his body or a limb, but not his whole body (ע"פ ח"י רע"א שו"ע על המג"א ס"י ש"ו ס"ק"ד).

Showering on Shabbos

- Hot water.** One may not wash his whole body on Shabbos with hot water. Even in a case where one may turn on the hot water, he still may not take a hot shower on Shabbos, as the very act of washing the whole body is forbidden, as discussed. It is certainly assur if turning on the hot water will turn the boiler on or cause cold water to enter the tank, due to the issurim of havarah and bishul.
- Cold water.** Strictly speaking, on Shabbos one may wash even his entire body with cold water since Chazal did not make a gezeirah on this (שו"ע שם ס"א). However, some poskim write that the minhag is not to wash with cold water, as doing so may lead to squeezing water out of the hair or going into a reshus harabim / karmelis with water on the body (תרומת הדשן ס"י רנ"ה, שו"ת מהר"ל ס"י קל"ט, מג"א ס"ק"ח), (מ"ב ס"י ש"ו ס"ק"א). Anything resembling bathing in a river is included in this, e.g., bathing in a bathtub or pool.
- Shower.** Some poskim say that since cold water in a shower pours onto a person and rolls right off, showering does not resemble bathing in a entity of water. It is not included in the minhag not to wash the whole body even in cold water since the reasons not to bathe in a river do not apply; thus, one may take a cold shower (שו"ת אג"מ ח"ד ס"י ע"ד אות ג', שם ס"י ע"ה).
- Nevertheless, the consensus of the poskim is that this should only be allowed in private, e.g., at home, for using nine kav of water to become tahor (שו"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ט ס"י ל"ד), or for someone who is very bothered by the heat, odor, or sweat; or to remove dirt (שו"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ו ס"י ל"ב, תשובות והנהגות ח"א ס"י רכ"ב). Still, it is best not to wash the entire body. This should also not be done in public, e.g., in a mikvah's shower room, as that is disrespectful to the kedusha of Shabbos.
- Single-lever mixer tap.** Taps today are often have a single spout and lever for both hot and cold water. When the lever is turned to the right, the water is cold; to the left, the water is hot. With this type of tap, even when taking a cold shower, one must make sure before lifting the lever that it is positioned all the way to the cold side. Otherwise, some hot water might come out, easily leading to the issurim of havarah and bishul. On some taps, it is unclear which side is for hot water and which side is for cold. In such a case, one should not use the tap at all (See Issue 205, par. 12 and on).
- Uses electricity.** Sometimes, even the cold water is turned on with buttons that use electricity. It is obvious that this is assur. But there was a case in Yerushalayim where the shower pressure was low, so a pump was installed for the water system. Only after six months in which people used the cold showers on Shabbos did they realize that every time the cold water tap was turned on, the pump was activated. In other words, issurim were violated.

Tevilah on Shabbos

Potential Issues with Tevilah on Shabbos

- Many people are careful to go to the mikvah Shabbos morning to get extra kedusha for Shabbos day, whose kedusha is different than that of Friday night, for which they toveiled before Shabbos. This is based on the Arizal (שער הכוונות שחרית של שבת דף ע"ג). Some refrain from going to the mikvah Shabbos day due to common concerns. Each person should follow his minhag. In any event, we will discuss various angles and halachos on this topic.

The Seforim of Chukai Chaim Part 1 & 2, Hebrew and English can be obtained in the following places:

England: Manchester - 07779 327 024
Golders Green - 07946 370 936
Stamford Hill - 07984 673 724

U.S.A: Boro Park - 347 636 4442
Monsey - 845 538 7012

17. Regarding use of a hot mikvah on Shabbos, the poskim discuss multiple issues. First, is tevilah in hot water included in Chazal's gezeirah forbidding bathing in hot water on Shabbos? Or perhaps tevilah in a mikvah is not considered bathing in hot water and does not fall under the gezeirah. They also discuss the concerns of sechitah [squeezing] and carrying the water remaining on the body for four amos in a karmelis. They further discuss the concern that tevilah looks like mesakein, as it "fixes" a person's tumah. We will discuss these one by one.

Like Bathing in Hot Water

18. **Tevilah in hot water is mutar.** Some hold that tevilah in hot water is not included in the gezeirah against bathing in hot water. Accordingly, it is mutar l'chatchilah to toivel in a hot mikvah (רבוּן נתנאל על הרא"ש פ"ב שבת סי' כ"ב, שו"ת דברי יציב או"ח סי' קס"ב).
19. **Tevilah in hot water is assur.** However, most poskim hold that tevilah in hot water is included in the gezeirah against bathing in hot water. Accordingly, it is assur in a mikvah at a temperature high enough to be under the issur (בית מאיר או"ח סי' י"א, בית חכם צבי סי' י"א, שו"ת חכם חיים סי' י"ז, שו"ת רע"א סי"ז, חכ"א כלל קכ"ב סי"ב, שו"ת נודב"י תנינא או"ח סי' כ"ד, שו"ת דברי חיים ח"ב או"ח סי' כ"ו, מ"ב שכו"י סק"ז).
20. **Tevilah d'oraisa.** Some hold that for a tevilah d'oraisa (סדר טהרה), if people are meikel where it is not possible to use a cold or lukewarm mikvah, one should not object. They can rely on the above Korban Nesanel, that tevilah is not like bathing – let Yidden be meikel rather than fail to do d'oraisa tevilah, ח"ו. This is what people do in practice for d'oraisa tevilos. But these poskim only b'dieved allow d'oraisa tevilos, not other tevilos (סדר טהרה שם, שו"ת דברי חיים שם ועוד).
21. **Heat controls closed off.** Some stipulate that when there is a heter to use hot water for tevilah, there must not be easy access to the control panel, e.g., it should be in a closed room or covered in a closed cabinet. This minimizes the concern that the attendant will adjust the heat on Shabbos if the water is not hot enough (עי"פ שו"ת אבני צדק או"ח סי' ל"ז, אסיפת דברי יואל).

Sechitah

22. Some people refrain from washing their whole body even in cold water (above, 11) and from going to the mikvah on Shabbos due to the potential issue of sechitah of the hair (תרימות הדשן סי' רנ"ה, הגר"א שו"ת מהר"ל החדשות סי' צ"ו, ביאה"ל סי' שכ"ו סי"ח סוד"ה אדם מותר, חזו"א).
23. However, many people do not refrain from going to the mikvah because of this since this concept does not appear in early sefarim (הגר"ח וולוז'ין, ערוך השלחן, האדרת, הגר"י קנייבסקי, הגר"ח קנייבסקי (ועוד, כל שכן הגדולים החסידים).
24. **Caution for sechitah.** Still, everyone agrees one must in fact be careful about sechitah. One should not dry areas with a concentration of hair by rubbing. For example, one should just place his towel on his head and let the water get absorbed in the towel on its own (הגרשו"א, שש"כ פ"ב העל סי' ס"ו, שלהן שלמה סי' שכ"ו אות י', ג).
25. **Peyos.** Similarly, those who curl their peyos may not twirl their peyos around their finger as they normally do after the mikvah; this violates the issur of sechitah on hair. One should also not tie his peyos tightly (see Issue 71, par. 46). Many people are lax in this. One may certainly not use a comb to curl his peyos on Shabbos – we see young bochorim who are completely unaware of this too (See *ibid.*, par. 43).
26. **Sechitah with the towel.** One must also be careful not to end up doing sechitah to his towel. It is proper to first shake excess water off the body before drying off with a towel. Then, there is only a small amount of water on the body for the towel, and the amount absorbed in the towel will not be so much that will lead to sechitah.

Carrying Four Amos

27. **River.** When people used to bathe and toivel in rivers, they needed to be careful not to have too much water on them when emerging from the water to avoid carrying four amos in a karmelis (שו"ת סי' מ"ב סק"ב). Some people had the minhag not to bathe in a river on Shabbos in the first place due to these concerns (מ"ב סק"א).
28. **Mikvah.** However, this concern does not apply to tevilah in a mikvah, after which people dry themselves somewhat with a towel. Even for those who do not dry themselves at all, by the time they get dressed, there is not a lot of water on them. The little water that is left is not a cause for concern – it is not more than water that falls on a person when it is raining, which Chazal were not concerned about (שו"ת שם ומ"ב סק"ג).

Looks Like Mesakein

29. **Looks like cooling off.** The Gemara says that even according to the opinion that the issur to toivel tamei utensils on Shabbos is because removing a utensil's tumah looks like fixing it, a person is allowed to toivel on Shabbos to remove his tumah as it just looks like he is cooling himself off in the water, not toiveling because of tumah (גמ' ביצה דף י"ח ע"א).
30. However, some point out, based on the poskim we cited above (11) that the minhag is not to wash the entire body even with cold water, that we no longer have the heter that it looks like cooling off as we do not bathe in cold water (ביאור הגר"א סי' שכ"ו סקט"ו, מעשה רב סי' קכ"ה).
31. Nevertheless, most poskim argue with this. They follow the basic halacha that one may toivel on Shabbos relying on the heter that it looks like cooling off.
32. Since many people go to the mikvah on Shabbos for extra kedusha based on the Arizal, there is no concern that one who does tevilas Ezra to remove his tumah looks like he is fixing something since it could be he is only toiveling for extra kedusha, which is no issue of mesakein. This is true even according to the Gra's opinion (above, 30) קצוה"ש סי' קל"ג הע' ח', שו"ת מנחת יצחק, שו"ת באר משה ח"א סוף סי' ל"א, (תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' ר

In Practice

33. **Cold water.** The best and most l'chatchilah way to avoid all uncertainties and questions about the heter and definition of lukewarm water is by toiveling in cold water, which involves no concerns for the issur of washing in hot water. To some extent, doing this fulfills true middas chassidus. It involves sacrificing comfort for tevilah, similar [in a small way] to how our rabbanim would break through ice to toivel in a mikvah.
34. **Lukewarm.** One who cannot toivel in cold water, e.g., someone who is sensitive to cold, has a cold, or is elderly, should at least toivel in lukewarm water [at most 38°C/100.4°F] which is still not considered hot water according to most opinions.
35. **Mikvah attendant's responsibility.** It is the responsibility of the mikvah attendant and the rav in charge to ensure there is a mikvah with lukewarm water so that the general public can toivel according to halacha. If, during the week, the mikvah is a bit hotter than lukewarm, the thermostat must be set before Shabbos to a temperature lower than it normally is during the week. The mikvah attendant is responsible for people to toivel according to halacha, not according to their personal pleasure preferences.
36. In the past, it was hard to heat a mikvah, and when it was heated, it was hard to set it at a specific temperature. Sometimes, too much hot water was added, and it was hard to remove hot water, so they had poskim to rely on (כמבואר בשו"ת נודב"י ה"ל). But today, it is the easiest thing to heat water precisely to the desired temperature with electricity, timers, sensors, and thermostats set before Shabbos.
37. **Hot water.** According to nearly all poskim, one should not toivel in a hot mikvah on Shabbos as there is no reason not to toivel in lukewarm water. Certainly if there are multiple mikva'os in the facility, e.g., a cold, a lukewarm, and a hot mikvah, there is no heter to toivel specifically in the hot mikvah when there is a lukewarm mikvah right there. Sadly, we see people who choose l'chatchilah to toivel in the hot mikvah to get extra kedusha while simultaneously violating halacha according to most poskim. My Rebbi, Rav Meir Bransdorfer once shut a Mikvah on Shabbos because the water was too hot.
38. Multiple tzaddikim allowed toiveling in a hot mikvah l'chatchilah. They feared that otherwise, the general public would stop toiveling on Shabbos because they might worry that the mikvah was cold that Shabbos or that it was not able to be heated by a non-Jew. Another reason was because everyone is considered a choleh when it comes to the cold. It truly is a lofty tevilah based on the Arizal that cannot be compromised. But nowadays, everything is set with timers and there are usually no halachic pitfalls involved in heating a mikvah. Also, lukewarm water is warm enough not to harm people. That being the case, one should make sure to toivel only in lukewarm water (שו"ת שבט הלוי ח"ה סי' מ"ד).
39. If a facility only has one mikvah, but it is hot because the attendant forgot to make sure it was at the halachically desired temperature before Shabbos, given no other option and in a pressing situation, one can toivel and rely b'dieved on the meikel opinion (above, 18). He must enter, toivel, and come right out; he should not spend any time there. This way, he shows that he is in fact just toiveling, not using the mikvah as a bath, which is assur (שו"ת אבני נור או"ח סי' תקנ"ו). We see many people who are lax about this too and do not leave the hot Mikvah before letting out a sigh – "aaahh..."