



Parshas Eikev 5763

August 14, '03
Volume II Issue 42

Is one permitted to take a hot shower on Shabbos?

When discussing the issue of taking hot showers on Shabbos, two factors must be taken into consideration. The first deals with use of a **hot water system**, which incidentally would not make a difference whether it is used for washing one's hands, washing dishes or a person's body. The second deals with washing one's body with hot water.

Opening the hot water faucet on Shabbos can easily involve an *issur d'oraisso* – a biblical violation, depending on the type of hot water system. Without entering that complicated subject, the general halachik rule is that one must not open the hot water tap on Shabbos, regardless of which system is in operation.

The second issue is the focal point of our discussion. For argument sake, and for want of avoiding the issue of using a hot water system on Shabbos, we will talk about taking a hot bath in a bathtub that was filled with hot water before Shabbos.

Seemingly there can be nothing wrong. However the gemora *Shabbos* 39b says that one may not wash one's entire body with hot water on Shabbos, regardless of when the water was heated.

What is the reason for this prohibition?

Chazal instituted this *g'zeira* because if one would be permitted to bathe in hot water,

there is fear that one would heat water for that purpose, which of course involves an *issur d'oraisso*.¹

Why do you say that one may not wash one's entire body?

Chazal only prohibited the washing of the greater part of one's body with water that was heated before Shabbos. One may wash one's face hands and feet (or limited areas of one's body for that matter) with water that was heated **before** Shabbos.² As stated, we are avoiding the issue of opening a hot water tap and are therefore referring to hot water in a bath or in a basin from before Shabbos. Water on the Shabbos hot-plate (obviously from before Shabbos) is considered heated before Shabbos, not on Shabbos.

Is the halacha different for a person who is ill?

A person who has a minor illness and would benefit from washing his body with hot water that was heated before Shabbos may do so.³ The reason is because the entire prohibition is an *issur d'rabanan* and *Chazal* did not institute this *g'zeira* when illness was involved.

What is the halacha with regards to water that was heated on Shabbos?

¹ *Simon* 326:1 and *M"B* 1.

² *Ibid*.

³ *Bi'ur Halacha* in the name of R' Akiva Eiger.

One may not wash even one limb with water that was heated on Shabbos. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach זצ"ל defines water heated on Shabbos as water that was actively placed on Shabbos in a place where it heated up. However, water that was placed on a hot-plate before Shabbos and heated up on Shabbos is called water that was heated before Shabbos.

May one warm one's wet body next to a fire?

First we must state that as the water is not heated to the degree of *yad soledes bo*⁴ because that would be cooking the water, it is heated below that temperature. Second, we must understand and analyze the problem. Is this heated water considered as water heated on Shabbos, thus prohibiting even the warming of one's wet hands, or is it not considered heated on Shabbos?

We find a *machlokes* regarding this matter. The *Rambam* holds⁵ that when one wishes to wash one's body with hot water one does not wet one's body and stand next to a fire, therefore he classifies the water as heated 'before Shabbos'. Accordingly one may warm one's hands (provided that the water does not reach *yad soledes bo*) next to a fire but not one's wet body.

The *Rosh*⁶ however classifies the water as heated on Shabbos and thus one may not warm even one's wet hands next to a fire on Shabbos. Accordingly one may not warm wet hands on the heating unit on Shabbos. The *Bi'ur Halacha* adds that one should take care not to warm wet hands on a hot wall that radiates heat next to a heater.

⁴ 40°-45°C or 104° - 113°F.

⁵ As quoted by the *Mechaber* in *simon* 326:4.

⁶ As quoted by the *Mechaber* in *simon* 326:5, and explained in *M"B* 17.

Vort on the Parsha

The *Possuk* teaches us that we must *walk in the ways of Hashem* (10:12). The gemora says that this means that a person must acquire *Hashem's* superior traits, just as He is merciful, so you too must be merciful. Just as He gives without demanding payment so you too must. Just as He is Holy, so you too must be Holy.

R' Yitzchak of Volozin asked that one of *Hashem's* attributes is that He is the G-d of Vengeance, so why should you not follow suit?

He answers that the *Yerushalmi* says that *Hashem* says that He controls vengeance and vengeance does not control Him. This is a trait that only *Hashem* is able to control, whereas man is incapable of *controlling* vengeance and therefore it is not possible for man to follow *Hashem's* trait of being the G-d of vengeance.⁷

Food For Thought

How is one to mix hot water and cold in order to wash one's hands or face?

If a gentile heated water on Shabbos for an ill person, may someone else wash with that water?

Is one permitted to take a cold shower on Shabbos?

What is the halacha with regards to using a hot water bottle on Shabbos?

Answers coming next week.

⁷ טללי אורות

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Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.