



THE SHABBOS WEEKLY

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These halachos were shown by Rabbi Ostroff to **HaGaon HaRau Moshe Sternbuch, shlita**



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

A hot water bottle is used either to warm one's bed in the winter or is placed on the abdomen to ease a stomach pain. There does not seem to be any halachik reason why one should not be able to use it to warm one's bed. However, if we transport ourselves to a time when there were no pre-manufactured hot-water bottles and people would use an open vessel and place it on their stomach, we will understand what the *Shulchan Aruch* is referring to.

The *Mechaber* says ¹ that it is forbidden to place a *k'li* with hot water on one's stomach even during the week. The reason is because the water might be boiling hot and endanger the person. *Rashi* adds ² that on Shabbos it is doubly *ossur* because the water might spill on one's body resulting in a person bathing on Shabbos in hot water. We are referring to water heated on Shabbos and therefore one may not wash even a small portion of one's body with this water. ³

Is there a problem using a closed k'li?

We find a *machlokes Rishonim*. According to *Rashi* who holds that the problem is that we are concerned lest the water spills on one's body. If the *k'li* is closed, like contemporary

hot water bottles, there is no problem. According to *Tosefos* who holds that one may not place a *k'li* with hot water on one's abdomen because it is considered using medication, even a closed bottle is prohibited. Accordingly, when one's intention is merely to warm one's bed, one may use a closed water bottle.

Does that mean that it is forbidden to ease a stomach ache with a hot water bottle?

If a person is classified as ill, which means that he is either bedridden, ⁴ or his entire body aches, ⁵ he may use a hot water bottle. If one is not classified as ill, one may not use any medication, and since placing a HWB on one's stomach is a type of medication one may not use it. However, in the winter months, where it is common that one places a HWB in one's bed for warmth, one may do the same when one has a stomach ache. This is based on a rule, which says that one may administer medication when it is something that healthy people do as well. ⁶ For example, healthy people drink brandy, therefore one who has a sore throat or a toothache may drink brandy in the normal manner, even though one's intention is to ease the sore throat. One may not gargle with the brandy because then it becomes

¹ *Simon* 326:6.

² See *M"B* 326:19.

³ *Sha'ar Ha'tsim* 326:9.

⁴ Or at least in a situation where one should go to bed.

⁵ *Simon* 328:17.

⁶ *Simon* 328:37.

noticeable that one's intention is for medicinal purposes.

Hence, in the winter months one may place a HWB in one's bed even when one's intention is medicinal because healthy people do so as well.⁷

One may nevertheless heat a towel and place it on one's stomach, as that is not something associated with medicine.⁸

Is one permitted to immerse oneself in a mikveh on Shabbos?

The *Mechaber* says that one may immerse in a mikveh on Shabbos. This *heter* dispels two problems. The main problem is that although we rule that it is forbidden to immerse a *tameh* vessel in a mikveh on Shabbos,⁹ nevertheless a person may immerse himself in a mikveh.¹⁰ The second problem is that although our custom is not to bathe even in cold water on Shabbos, immersion is permitted.

According to many *poskim*, men¹¹ who immerse on Shabbos morning should try and avoid the hot water mikveh. This is because bathing in hot water is a rabbinical prohibition, and although we find *poskim*¹² who permitted it and made a distinction between bathing and immersing, yet we see that the *Mishna Berura Simon* 326:7 says that the mikveh should only be lukewarm (and colder) but not hot.

⁷ See the *SS"K* 34:11.

⁸ *M"B* 326:20.

⁹ *M"B* 323:33.

¹⁰ The reason is because often a person would rinse oneself in cold water on Shabbos (before it was accepted not to bathe) and when one bathed for mikveh purposes it was not noticeable. See the *M"B* 326:24.

¹¹ It is customary for the other gender to immerse in hot water as well, see the *SS"K* 14 footnote 4.

¹² קרבן נתנאל פ"ב דשבת סי' כב אות ק'.

May one make use of a sauna on Shabbos?

Subsequent to the *g'zeira* prohibiting hot bathing on Shabbos, *Chazal* prohibited the use of a sauna on Shabbos. This was because people would still bathe after the institution of the *g'zeira* and when caught 'red-handed' they would say that they were merely using the sauna.

Vort on the Parsha

Seeing someone engage in something which could be interpreted favorably or negatively, one instantly judges in the negative mode. When on the other hand you yourself do the very same action, you rationalize favorably. R' Eliyahu Dushnitzer זצ"ל would comment that when the *posuke* (25:15) teaches us not to have two different stones (weights), one for buying – the larger one, which would net you more merchandise and sell with the smaller one. So too when you judge your fellow man – you must judge him just as you would yourself. Give him the same credit you would give yourself. Don't have two stones, one for the other person and one for yourself!

Food For Thought

What about the use of a sauna after Shabbos, which was heated on Shabbos?

Is one permitted to rub oil on chapped hands?

May one smear oil on one's body for pleasure?

May one climb a tree on Shabbos?

Answers coming next week.

In memory of Yehudis bas Avraham Shmuel, 6th Ellul.

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If you would like to send a question to Rav Ostroff, you can write to him at shabbosweekly@shemayisrael.com.

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.