

HALAKHA

Immersion on Yom Kippur – טבילה ביום הכפורים – An obligatory immersion is permitted on Yom Kippur if that is its proper time. Nowadays, however, the obligation to immerse in most cases is not considered to have a proper time, since sacrifices and purification rites are no longer performed. Furthermore, Ezra's decree, which mandates that one who had a seminal emission may not pray or study Torah until he has immersed, has been abolished. Consequently, nowadays one may not immerse on Yom Kippur (*Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim* 613:12).

God's name is written on one's flesh – שם כתוב על – בשרו: One who has God's name written on his skin may not wash, smear himself with oil, or stand in a filthy place. If he requires immersion, he should wrap a reed around the writing or cover it in some other way to ensure that the letters will not be exposed (*Rambam Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah* 6:6).

NOTES

Immersion for prayer – טבילה לתפילה – Ezra the Scribe decreed that one who had a seminal emission may not pray or study Torah until he has immersed. Commentaries debate the conditions of this decree and whether it applies to involuntary or intentional emission. However, in the late tannaic and early amoraic periods, this decree was abolished for various reasons. In modern times, many Jews do have the custom to immerse before prayer. Some people immersed for emissions even on Yom Kippur (see *Me'iri*).

Immersion at its proper time is a mitzva – טבילה בזמנה מצוה: There is a mitzva to immerse at the proper time, even when one is not completely purified by the immersion. For example, if one has emitted semen and has contracted another type of ritual impurity as well, or if for some reason he needs to immerse a second time, it is nevertheless a mitzva to immerse on time.

God's name is written on one's flesh – שם כתוב על – בשרו: According to Rashi, the reason one covers the writing is to prevent God's name from being erased during the immersion. Other commentaries explain that the reason one covers it is to avoid being naked in the presence of God's name.

מפני שצריך לומר הבדלה בחוגן הדעת. תנאי היא, דתנאי: כל חיובי טבילות טובלין בדרבן ביום הכפורים. נדה ויולדת טובלות בדרבן בלילי יום הכפורים.

בעל קרי טובל והולך עד המנחה. רבי יוסי אומר: כל היום כולו.

ורמינהו: הזב והזבה המצורע והמצורעת ובו על נדה וטמא מת – טובלין בדרבן ביום הכפורים. נדה ויולדת טובלות בדרבן בלילי יום הכפורים. בעל קרי טובל והולך כל היום כולו. רבי יוסי אומר: מן המנחה ולמעלה אין יכול לטבול.

לא קשיא, הא – דצלי תפלת נעילה, הא – דלא צלי.

אי דצלי – מאי טעמייהו דרבנן? קא סברי רבנן: טבילה בזמנה מצוה.

מכלל דרבי יוסי סבר לאו מצוה? והתנאי: הרי שהיה שם כתוב על בשרו הרי זה לא ירחץ ולא יסוך ולא יעמוד במקום הטנופת, נדמנה לו טבילת מצוה – כורך עליו גמי ויורד וטובל. רבי יוסי אומר: יורד וטובל בדרבו, ובלבד שלא ישפישן.

because he must recite *havdala* in the blessing: Who graciously grants knowledge, and there is nowhere to insert this prayer in the abridged *Amida*. This indicates that these *tanna'im* maintained that *ne'ila* does not exempt one from the evening prayer. The Gemara answers: It is a dispute between *tanna'im*, as it was taught in a *baraita*: **Anyone who requires immersion immerses in his usual manner on Yom Kippur**, as this act does not violate the prohibition against washing.^h **A menstruating woman and a new mother**, who immerse at night, immerse in their usual manner on the night of Yom Kippur.

The *baraita* continues: **One who had a seminal emission during Yom Kippur before the afternoon prayer may immerse at any point in the day until the afternoon prayer**, in order to be able to recite it.ⁿ Ezra decreed that a man who has had a seminal emission must immerse in order to pray and study Torah. If the emission occurred after the afternoon prayer, he should not immerse then but should wait until darkness falls. Since the time for *ne'ila* is at night, this individual should wait and immerse after the fast has concluded, so as to avoid violation of the prohibition of washing on Yom Kippur, and then pray afterward. This indicates that *ne'ila* is a nighttime prayer, and therefore its recitation exempts one from the weekday evening prayer. **Rabbi Yosei says: He may immerse at any point in the day.** According to his opinion, the *ne'ila* prayer is recited while it is still daytime, and therefore the individual must immerse in the daytime in order to be able to recite it. Consequently, Rabbi Yosei holds that *ne'ila* does not exempt one from the evening prayer.

The Gemara raises a contradiction with regard to this *baraita* from that which was taught: In the case of the *zav*, and the *zava*, the male and female leper, and one who had relations with a menstruating woman, and one who is ritually impure through contact with a corpse, if their time has come for purification, they immerse in their usual manner on Yom Kippur. **A menstruating woman and a woman after childbirth immerse in their usual manner on the night of Yom Kippur. One who had a seminal emission immerses at any point in the day. Rabbi Yosei says: From the time of the afternoon prayer onward he is not able to immerse.** This contradicts Rabbi Yosei's statement in the previous *baraita*.

The Gemara answers: This is **not difficult**. This statement, in which Rabbi Yosei says that one may not immerse during the day, is referring to a case where he had already prayed the *ne'ila* prayer before he noticed his seminal emission. That statement, in which Rabbi Yosei says that one may immerse during the day, is referring to a case where he had not yet prayed the *ne'ila* prayer when he noticed his seminal emission, and he therefore immerses in order to pray *ne'ila*.

The Gemara asks: **If he had already prayed *ne'ila*** before he noticed his seminal emission, **what is the reasoning of the Rabbis**, who permit him to immerse on Yom Kippur? The immersion seems to have no purpose. The Gemara answers: **The Rabbis hold that immersion at its proper time is a mitzva**,ⁿ even when one does not need to immerse to pray. Therefore, if the time for immersion falls on Yom Kippur, the individual should immerse as usual.

The Gemara asks: **By inference, Rabbi Yosei holds that immersion at its proper time is not a mitzva. But wasn't it taught in a *baraita*: If God's name is written in ink on one's flesh,^{hn} he may not wash and he may not smear it with oil lest he erase the name, and he may not stand in a filthy place out of respect for the name. If his time came for an immersion that is a mitzva, he must try to ensure that the name not be erased. He therefore wraps a reed around it and descends and immerses. Rabbi Yosei says: He descends and immerses in his usual manner and need not worry about erasing the name, provided he does not rub the place where the name is written.**

One who sees an emission of semen on Yom Kippur – הַרְוָאָה קָרַי בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים: Nowadays, one who sees an emission of semen on Yom Kippur should wipe it off himself if it is wet. If it is dry or dirty on his skin, he should wash off only that part of his body. Such an individual may not immerse, even if his custom throughout the year is to immerse before prayer (*Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 613:11).

NOTES

Should worry the whole year – יָדָאג כָּל הַשָּׁנָה בּוֹלָה – Some commentaries add that the worry itself is what atones for his sins (*Mikhtam*).

Know...and he is satiated – תָּדַע...וְהוּא שָׂבַע – The Maharsha writes that seminal emissions on Yom Kippur can serve both as negative and positive signs. If one does not survive the year, it shows that he was not permitted to complete his fast by refraining from lust completely. If one does live through the year, it means that God was helping him avoid suffering during his fast.

One will live a long life, grow, and raise others – מִפִּישׁ חַיִּי, סָגַי וּמִסָּגִי: Some commentaries write that Rashi and *Tosafot* disagreed as to whether the words “he might see his seed” are merely an allusion to what happened to this person, or whether these words are part of the blessing that he will merit seeing his children and children’s children (*Tosefet Yom HaKippurim*).

וְקַיִּמָּא לֵן דְּבִטְבִּילָהּ בְּזִמְנָהּ מִצְוָה פְּלִיגִי!

And we maintain that they disagree as to whether or not immersion at its proper time is a mitzva. According to the Rabbis, immersion at its proper time is not a mitzva. Therefore, if the individual has no reed, he should wait even until the following day rather than immerse without it. However, Rabbi Yosei maintains that immersion at its proper time is a mitzva. Therefore, it must be done at its proper time, even if that requires immersion without covering God’s name.

הָיָא רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְּרַי יְהוּדָה הָיָא. דְּתַנָּא, רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְּרַי יְהוּדָה אָמַר: דִּיָּה לְטְבִּילָהּ שְׂתֵּתָא בְּאַחֲרוֹנָה.

The Gemara answers: This Rabbi Yosei mentioned in the *baraita* is actually Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda, and this resolves the contradiction, as it was taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda says: It is sufficient for the immersion to be at the end. According to one opinion, if a menstruating woman is uncertain on which day to immerse, she immerses multiple times to ensure that the required immersion is at its proper time. However, according to Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda, it is sufficient for her to immerse once at a point when she is certainly pure. Consequently, according to his opinion, there is no mitzva to immerse at the proper time.

תַּנּוּ רַבְנֵי: הַרְוָאָה קָרַי בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים – יוֹרֵד וְטוֹבֵל, וְלָעֵרֵב יִשְׁפֹּשֵׁף. לָעֵרֵב? מֵאִי דְהוּא הָיָא! אֵלָּא אֵימָא: מִבְּעֵרֵב יִשְׁפֹּשֵׁף. (קָא סָבַר מִצְוָה לְשִׁפְשֹׁף).

The Sages taught: One who sees an emission of semen on Yom Kippurⁿ descends and immerses. And in the evening, he should rub his skin to remove anything that might obstruct the immersion. The Gemara is surprised at this: Why should he do that in the evening? What was, was. Since he has already immersed, how will removing interpositions afterward benefit the immersion? Rather, say that he should rub his skin from the evening before Yom Kippur to remove any obstructions, in case it becomes necessary to immerse on Yom Kippur. The Gemara comments: This Master holds that it is a mitzva to rub.

תַּנִּי תַנָּא קַמֵּיהּ דְּרַב נַחֲמָן: הַרְוָאָה קָרַי בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים – עֲגוּנָתוֹ מְחוּלִין לֹא. וְהַתַּנָּא: עֲגוּנָתוֹ סְדוּרִין! מֵאִי סְדוּרִין – סְדוּרִין לִימְחַל.

Ḥ Apropos the *halakhot* of immersion for one who has had a seminal emission on Yom Kippur, the Gemara relates: A *tanna* taught a *baraita* before Rav Nahman: With regard to one who sees an emission of semen on Yom Kippur, his sins are forgiven. The Gemara asks: But wasn’t it taught in a *baraita*: His sins are arranged before him? The Gemara answers: What is the meaning of arranged? They are arranged to be forgiven.

תַּנָּא דְּבִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל: הַרְוָאָה קָרַי בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים – יָדָאג כָּל הַשָּׁנָה בּוֹלָה, וְאִם עֲלֵתָהּ לֹא שָׁנָה – מוֹבְטָח לֹא שְׂהוּא בִּין הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בְּרַי יִצְחָק: תָּדַע, שְׂכַל הָעוֹלָם כּוֹלֵו רַעֲב וְהוּא שָׂבַע. כִּי אָתָּא רַב דִּימִי אָמַר: מִפִּישׁ חַיִּי, סָגִי וּמִסָּגִי.

The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: One who sees an emission of semen on Yom Kippur should worry the whole yearⁿ that perhaps he was given a sign that he and his fast were rejected. But if he survives the year, he can be assured that his good deeds protected him and ensured for him a share in the World-to-Come. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: Know that it is so, as the whole world is hungry due to refraining from conjugal relations, and he is satiatedⁿ since he emitted semen and his lust was subdued. Since the issue was involuntary and not intentional, it is a sign that he has merited divine compassion. When Rav Dimi came from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia he said: Seeing semen on Yom Kippur is a sign that one will live a long life, grow, and raise others.ⁿ An allusion to that is the verse: “That he might see his seed and prolong his days” (*Isaiah* 53:10).

הַדָּרֵן עַלֶּךָ יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים וְסִלִּיקָא לָהּ מִסַּכַּת יוֹמָא