

OVERVIEW of the Daf

1) Health issues (cont.)

The Gemara concludes its discussion of various health related issues.

2) Basting a roast

Zeiri and Chiya bar Ashi disagreed whether it is permissible to baste a roast with oil and whisked eggs on Shabbos.

3) Medical treatments

Mar Ukva rules: It is permitted to use wine to reduce the swelling of an injury on Shabbos. Concerning the use of vinegar, R' Hillel reported that it is forbidden.

Rava qualified Mar Ukva's ruling and stated that in Mechuza even the use of wine is prohibited due to their sensitive nature.

4) Bathing for therapeutic purposes

Details regarding bathing for therapeutic reasons are clarified.

5) MISHNAH: Consuming food for therapeutic reasons is discussed with a number of examples.

6) איזביון

The Gemara distinguishes between איזביון mentioned in the Mishnah and אזור mentioned in the Torah. Three different definitions of אזור are presented.

The therapeutic use of איזביון is explained.

7) יעזר

Yoezer is identified. Its therapeutic use is to treat worms in the liver.

The Gemara explains where liver worms come from and alternative treatments that will cure a person suffering from liver worms.

8) אבנרואה

Abuvroeh is identified. Its therapeutic value is to treat someone who drank exposed water.

Alternative treatments for drinking exposed water are presented.

Treatments for swallowing a snake and snake bites are spelled out. ■

REVIEW and Remember

1. What is the only procedure that removes the evil spirit from one's hands in the morning?
2. Why is it permitted to use wine to reduce swelling on Shabbos?
3. May one bathe in the Great Sea on Shabbos for therapeutic purposes?
4. How does one remove a snake that was swallowed?

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Gemara GEM

Submerging and Soreness

אבל לא בים הגדול

Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 21:29) writes that the Gemara lists specific bodies of water in which it is prohibited to bathe on Shabbos. These bodies of water each have a specific issue related to it which causes some ill-effect to a person who immerses in it. On the one hand, the overall effect of these pursuits is one of comfort, and there is even a therapeutic benefit which results. Yet Shabbos is defined by the concept of "וקראת לשבת עונג" – we must indulge in aspects of physical enjoyment". The very fact that the means to achieve these goals is by experiencing some degree of pain, these measures are inherently prohibited on Shabbos.

According to Rambam, the reason we cannot bathe in these waters is not necessarily due to the rabbinic restrictions against using medicinal remedies, but it is the discomfort involved which results in it being unlawful on Shabbos. This is also why Rambam understands why it is only an extended period in the water that is prohibited, while a momentary dip is allowed.

The rule, therefore, is that any activity which involves some degree of pain must be avoided on Shabbos. The Minchas Yitzchok (Vol. 5, #32) uses this concept as a factor in considering why sunbathing is prohibited on Shabbos. Among other factors, during the process of getting a tan a person subjects himself to the scorching rays of the sun, often to the point where there is actual discomfort involved. Although the person chooses to endure the ache and soreness associated with sitting in the sun for an extended period (both during and after the exposure), this does not mean that Shabbos is willing to overlook this imposition on its day (see Daf Digest, Shabbos 95).

Bi'ur Halacha (O.C. 344:44 - אלא לרפואה), however, presents a Tosefta which clearly identifies the issue with submerging in these bodies of water with the medicinal aspect they offer, and not with the issue of pain, as Rambam writes. According to the Tosefta, it is only prohibited when a person intends to achieve the therapeutic benefit involved, but if a person enters the water to purify himself from tum'ah, it would be allowed. ■

HALACHAH Highlight

Medicating on Shabbos¹

כל האוכלין אוכל אדם לרפואה וכל המשקין שותה

Although the Sages prohibited medications and therapies on Shabbos, the ordinance does not necessarily exclude all forms of treatment. Only a treatment that is;

- medicinal in nature, or
- lends to the appearance of therapeutic treatment;

can be defined as an act of Refuah. Obviously, not every corrective act that one takes to eliminate a physical or emotional discomfort can be Halachically defined as "therapy".

For example, if one is suffering an eye irritation because of

(Continued on page 2)

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too much sunlight, closing the shade would be perfectly permitted and could not be defined as an act of Refuah.

Similarly, the Sages did not extend this ordinance to prohibit ordinary foods or activities on account of the fact that they are sometimes also used for therapeutic purposes.

For example, it is known that hot tea with honey is effective for soothing a sore throat. Similarly, taking a leisurely walk can help ease one's tension and improve digestion.

These foods and activities are nevertheless permitted on Shabbos, even for therapeutic purposes, because the Sages did not forbid one from eating ordinary foods or engaging in ordinary activities, just because he happens to suffer from a condition that will be improved in this manner. This exemption is known as *Derech Briyim* (the conduct of healthy persons). The sages did not forbid foods and activities of ordinary, healthy persons, even to an ill person.

These two concepts are vital for understanding the various exemptions that are the basis for permitting numerous corrective treatments.

A) The concept of "medicinal" treatment

As stated earlier, only a treatment that has a systemic or similar curative effect on the body is subject to the restriction of Refuah on Shabbos. However, any treatment that merely eliminates an outside nuisance or negative effect is not defined as Refuah and is permitted, as shall be elaborated further:

A-1) Removing an insect sting or splinter

Removing an insect sting or splinter is not a form of Refuah because it is not a form of cure, but merely the extraction of an outside affliction. One may therefore remove it on Shabbos.

One may also rinse the sore area with diluted vinegar, lemon juice, or ice water to prevent irritation, because this minor procedure does not convey the appearance of Refuah.

However, one may not soak the area in water or solution, because doing so is an overt form of therapy.

A-2) Puncturing an abscess boil or pus-pimple

The Talmud states clearly that, in circumstances where one is suffering substantial pain, it is permitted to puncture an abscess to drain the pus or fluids to relieve the pressure. This is permitted even if the individual is not ill as a result and would not be permitted to take any medications for the same condition.

Puncturing the abscess is not a form of Refuah because it merely

eradicates the painful pressure but does not involve any medical change in the body.

A-3) Stanching bleeding

Halting bleeding is not a form of Refuah and is permitted for any wound, even if the person with the wound is neither in danger, nor suffering great pain. Accordingly, one may apply a styptic powder to a bleeding wound to stop the bleeding.

B) The concept of Derech Briyim

As explained earlier, the Chazal only prohibited foods or activities which are associated with medical therapy, or are at least *perceived* to be associated with medicinal therapy. Ordinary foods eaten by healthy persons as part of their regular diet are not forbidden on Shabbos, even to cure a mildly ill person. Similarly, any activity which is done by healthy people as a matter of course, is also not restricted on Shabbos, even to an ill person who may benefit therapeutically from its effect.

B-1) Drinking wine or whisky to relax one's nerves, relieve pain

One is permitted to drink wine or a moderate amount of any other alcoholic beverage to calm his nerves or to induce drowsiness.

One who is suffering from a toothache may sip whisky or vodka and allow it to swirl around the painful tooth to deaden the nerve. However, the drink must be swallowed and not expelled, because expelling the drink would reveal actively that it is being used for only therapeutic, not food purposes.

B-2) Drinking hot tea or milk with honey

One who is suffering from the discomforts of a common cold may not take aspirin or other medications for relief, but is permitted to obtain relief by eating foods, such as honey, or hot drinks such as hot tea with lemon, milk, etc.

B-3) Smearing oil or liquid-lotion on dry or mildly chapped skin

One whose skin is itchy or mildly irritated may smear oil or lotion (but not cream or ointments) directly on the affected area. This is permitted because the skin is basically healthy, and people commonly smear oil or lotion on healthy skin as an emollient and to add to their comfort. It is therefore classified as a *Derech Briyim* practice, and not as a medical therapy. ■

1 The 39 Melachos, by Rabbi Dovid Ribiat, pages 477-482. Used with permission of the author.

Distinctive INSIGHT

Is a Snakebite Lethal?

האי מאן דטרקיה חייוא ליתי עוברא וכו'

Our Gemara reveals the antidote for a snake bite. The Pischei Teshuva (Even Hoezer 17, #92) cites a question which arises from the Gemara in Yevamos (121a). There, the Gemara rules that if a married man is seen falling into a pit filled with snakes, those who witness this horrible tragedy can testify that

the man is dead. Although they do not see his actual death, the Gemara is of the opinion that being exposed to snake bites results in certain death. However, our Gemara relates that there is a remedy for this condition. How is this to be understood?

The Pischei Teshuva answers that although our sages have determined that one can be cured from a snake bite, this is not the case where one is smitten by many snakes, which is the case in the Gemara in Yevamos. Alternately, perhaps the Gemara in Yevamos which portends certain death is

speaking about a case where the man fell into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions. This is a situation where he cannot escape death, and it is due to the scorpions which will attack him, and not due to the snakes. Finally, the Gemara there could be speaking about where the victim who fell into the pit cannot get out without assistance. The remedy offered in our Gemara in Shabbos is only helpful if applied within a reasonable time framework. There, however, the person will not be able to free himself in time, and by then he will have died. ■

Daf Digest is published by the Chicago Center, under the leadership of

HaRav Yehoshua Eichenstein, shlit"a

HaRav Pinchas Eichenstein, Nasi; HaRav Zalmen L. Eichenstein, Rosh Kollel; Rabbi Tzvi Bider, Executive Director, edited by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand.

Daf Yomi Digest has been made possible through the generosity of Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Ruben.