

## Babylonian Talmud, *Berachot* 62a

It has been taught: R. Akiba said: Once I went in after R. Joshua to a latrine, and I learned from him three things. I learned that one does not sit east and west but north and south; I learned that one evacuates not standing but sitting; and I learned that it is proper to wipe with the left hand and not with the right. Said Ben Azzai to him: Did you dare to take such liberties with your master? He replied: It was a matter of Torah, and I required to learn.

It has been taught: Ben Azzai said: Once I went in after R. Akiba to a latrine, and I learned from him three things. I learned that one does not evacuate east and west but north and south. I also learned that one evacuates sitting and not standing. I also learned it is proper to wipe with the left hand and not with the right. Said R. Judah to him: Did you dare to take such liberties with your master? — He replied: It was a matter of Torah, and I required to learn.

R. Kahana once went in and hid under Rab's bed. He heard him chatting [with his wife] and joking and doing what he required. He said to him: Abba's mouth is like one that has not swallowed food! He said to him: Kahana, are you here? Go out, because it is rude. He replied: It is a matter of Torah, and I require to learn.

Why should one wipe with the left hand and not with the right? — Raba said: Because the Torah was given with the right hand, as it says, *At His right hand was a fiery law unto them* (Dt. 33:2). Rabbah b. Hanah said: Because it (food) is brought to the mouth [with the right hand]. R. Simeon b. Lakish said: Because one binds the tefillin [on the left arm] with it. R. Nahman b. Isaac said: Because he points to the accents in the scroll with it. A similar difference of opinion is found among Tannaim. R. Eliezer says, because one eats with it; R. Joshua says, because one writes with it; R. Akiba says, because one points with it to the accents in the scroll.

R. Tanhum b. Hanilai said: Whoever behaves modestly in a latrine is delivered from three things: from snakes, from scorpions, and from evil spirits. Some say also that he will not have disturbing dreams. There was a certain latrine in Tiberias which if two persons entered together even by day, they came to harm. R. Ammi and R. Assi used to enter it separately, and they suffered no harm. The Rabbis said to them, Are you not afraid? They replied: We have learned a certain tradition. The tradition for [avoiding harm in] the latrine is modesty and silence; the tradition relating to sufferings is silence and prayer. The mother of Abaye trained for him a lamb to go with him into the latrine [as protection against evil spirits]. She should rather have trained for him a goat [that also protects against evil spirits]? A satyr (in Greek mythology a half-human half-beast) might be changed into a goat. Before Raba became head of the Academy, the daughter of R. Hisda (Raba's wife) used to rattle a nut in a brass dish [to frighten away evil spirits]. After he became head, she made a window for him, [reached through the hole,] and put her hand on his head.

Ulla said: Behind a fence one may ease himself immediately; in an open field, so long as he can break wind without anyone hearing it. Issi b. Nathan reported thus: Behind a fence, as long as he can break wind without anyone hearing it; in an open field, as long as he cannot be seen by anyone. An objection was raised: [The watchers - the men who watched the olive oil press to see that no unclean person entered] may go out by the door of the olive press and ease themselves behind a fence and [the olives] remain clean! — For the sake of ritual purity they made a concession. Come and hear: How far can one go without affecting the cleanness [of the olive press]? Any distance as long as he can still see it! — The case of food-stuffs prepared in purity is different, as the Rabbis made a concession for them. R. Ashi said: What is meant by the words “as long as he cannot be seen by anyone” used by Issi b. Nathan? As long as the exposed part of his body cannot be seen; but the man himself may be seen.

A certain funeral orator went down in the presence of R. Nahman [to deliver an address] and said: This man was modest in all his ways. Said R. Nahman to him: Did you ever follow him into a latrine so that you should know whether he was modest or not? For it has been taught: A man is called modest only if he is such in the latrine. And why was R. Nahman so much concerned about it? Because it has been taught: Just as the dead are punished [if they were sinners], so the funeral orators are punished [for uttering false eulogies] and those who answer [Amen] after them.

Our Rabbis taught: Who is a modest man? One who eases himself by night in the place where he eased himself by day. Is that so? Has not Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: A man should always accustom himself [to consult nature] in the early morning and in the evening so that he may have no need to go a long distance? And again, in the day-time Raba used to go as far as a mile, but at night he said to his attendant, Clear me a spot in the street of the town, and so too R. Zera said to his attendant, See if there is anyone behind the Seminary as I wish to ease myself? — Do not read “in the place”, but read, “in the same way as he eases himself by day” (i.e., modestly). R. Ashi said, You may even retain the reading “place,” the reference being to a private corner [to be used by night as well as by day].

The [above] text [states:] “Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: A man should always accustom himself to consult nature morning and evening so that he may have no need to go a long distance.” It has been taught similarly, Ben Azzai said: Go forth before dawn and after dark, so that you should not have to go far. Feel yourself before sitting, but do not sit and then feel yourself, for if one sits and then feels himself, should witchcraft be used against him even as far away as Spain, he will not be immune from it. And if he forgets and does sit and then feels, what is his remedy? — When he rises he should say, thus: Not upon me, not upon me; not *tahim* nor *tahtim*; not these nor any part of these; neither the sorceries of sorcerers nor the sorceries of sorceresses!