כב. לא ילך יחף. [ראה רמ"א סו"ס ב]. דאמרו רבותינו ז"ל (שבת קכט ע"א). לעולם ימכור אדם קורות ביתו, ויקח מנעלים לרגליו. כי המונע מנעלים מרגליו הוא מנודה למקום. [באו"ח סו"פ וישלח]. ומכל מקום בביתו, רשאי לילך יחף.

Going barefoot

22) One should never go barefoot. Our Sages taught (*Shabbat* 129a), "Everyone must acquire shoes to wear on his feet, even if he must sell the ceiling beams of his house in order to do so." Our Sages added (*Pesahim* 113b), "Anyone who goes about barefoot is excommunicated by God." Nonetheless, it is permissible to go barefoot inside one's home.[89]

89. Why not go barefoot?

One reason for this prohibition, offered by Rashi, is that there is nothing more undignified than the practice of going out barefoot in public. The Maharsh"a suggested that it is a health hazard to go barefoot, since the feet are highly susceptible to parasites that can cause serious illnesses. For this reason, the Talmud states (*Yoma* 78b) that during the first thirty days after childbirth a woman may wear sandals even on Yom Kippur. The Talmud tells us that it is better to sell one's roof beams and be exposed to the sun and rain all day long rather than endanger one's health by going barefoot.

The *Or Zaru'a* (*Hilkhot Shabbat* #84, cited in the *Darkhe MosheSiman* 2) cited a Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 19:4) teaching that when someone fails to cover his head properly, he is susceptible to catch a cold. If he fails to cover his body properly, he is susceptible to skin disorders. The *Or Zaru'a* commented that this teaches us that we must be fully clothed and we must not go barefoot, concurring with the explanation of Maharsh"a.

A third reason, offered by the *Ru'ah Hayim* Palachi (554:2), is that if people go about barefoot they are liable to get hurt. Commenting on the practice of going barefoot on Yom Kippur, he stated, "In our communities, Sefardic Jews never go about barefoot. There are many reasons for this, one being that if one's feet are not protected, one might step on a thorn or become stung by some venomous creature."

Harav Avraham Azulai, cited by responsa *Ma'ase Avraham* (*O.H.* #4) offered a kabbalistic reason for this halakha. God cursed the Primordial snake, sentencing it to eat the soil on the ground all its life. Because of the ground's connection to the snake, it is spiritually contaminated. Therefore, it is important to wear shoes as a barrier between the person and this contamination so that it will not affect his soul.

The *Ru'ah Hayim* mentioned this reason as well, and added that this is the reason why one must wash hands after touching shoes. Citing his son, Harav Avraham, he noted that the Hebrew word for shoe – נַעַל – is the initial letters of the words "נָחָשׁ עָפָר לַחְמוֹ – a snake's food is the soil" (*Yeshayahu* 65:25).

In Tropic Climates

The *Eliya Rabba* (2:5), cited by the *Mishna Berura* (2:14), ruled that the rule prohibiting going barefoot applies in continental Europe but not in the countries of Arabia. This distinction makes sense according to Rashi's explanation of the halakha. Since people commonly go about barefoot in those countries, it is not considered to be undignified. Likewise, according to the Maharsh"a's reasoning one can argue that in places where it is very hot and dry there is no danger of becoming ill because of one's going barefoot, at least during the summer months. Furthermore, it is not immodest to go about barefoot in those countries since it is the common practice. According to the reason offered by the *Ru'ah Hayim*, however, it should be forbidden in all countries since the dangers of thorns or venomous creatures exist in Arabia at least as much as elsewhere. And, of course, the kabbalistic reason explained above applies everywhere, regardless of the climate.

Socks

Rashi's reasoning might not apply to someone who is at least wearing socks, since his appearance is far more dignified than someone who is completely barefoot. There is some degree of lack of dignity, nonetheless. Wearing socks may offer some protection for the health concerns cited by the Maharsh"a, and the issue of spiritual contamination does not apply as long as one is not actually barefoot. The concern of getting hurt or stung remains, however.

At home

None of the reasons mentioned above apply to someone going about in the privacy of his own home. It is not undignified, nor is there a danger of contracting an illness unless the house is unheated and the floor is cold. There are

כג. בעל תשובה הרוצה לסגף את עצמו ולילך יחף לצורך כפרה על עוונותיו. יש לייעץ לו שלא ינהג כן, והתיקון הטוב ביותר לכפרת עוונותיו הוא להרבות בלימוד התורה יותר ויותר. [ילקו"י עמ' רנ, ועי' שו"ת לב חיים ח"א סי' נט]

Atoning for sins

23) If someone wishes to go barefoot as part of his attempts to atone for sins that he has committed in the past, he should be discouraged from such a practice. It is much more effective to atone for sins by devoting oneself intensely to Torah study.[90]

no thorns to step on in one's home if it is swept clean regularly, and venomous creatures are unlikely to appear inside. Since our homes have floors, there is no issue of spiritual contamination from the ground. This is the ruling of Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. V, #1:4), explaining that the harmful spiritual forces that exist in the ground do not penetrate a floor. There is no problem of immodesty either since it has become common practice for people to go about barefoot in their own homes. The *Halakha Berura* (page 34) likewise ruled that it is permissible to go barefoot at home.

On the road

The responsa *Lev Hayim* (Vol. I, #59) discussed the issue of traveling by foot without shoes. He cited the Talmud (*Ta'anit* 23b) relating that Abba Hilkiya used to travel carrying his shoes in his hands. When he needed to wade through a river, however, he put on his shoes since he could not see what he is stepping on while in the water. It seems from this that the prohibition of going barefoot applies only inside the city and not when traveling. His conclusion is that there is a basis for leniency when traveling on the road, at least in the Land of Yisrael where the ground is not spiritually contaminated (see the following footnote).

Shabbat and *Yom Tov*

The *Mishna Berura* (301:64) deduced from the *Darkhe Moshe* that even in societies where the custom is to go barefoot, one should wear shoes on Shabbat to remain aware that this is a special day. The *Bayit Hadash* added that the same applies to *Yom Tov*.

90. Going barefoot for atonement

The *Shene Luhot Haberit*, cited by the *Mishna Berura* (2:14), ruled that it is permissible to go barefoot as a means of atoning for one's sins. In light of the above discussion, there does not seem to be any basis for such a leniency. It must be, therefore, that this leniency applies to going barefoot where there is no issue of contracting any illness or getting hurt. Although it is undignified, it may be that this is desired in order to achieve atonement. The *Shene Luhot Haberit* supported this ruling from the fact that King David went barefoot while he fled from his son Avshalom. King David did this to behumble himself for whatever sins he had committed that brought about this tragic situation.

What about the issue of the ground being spiritually contaminated? King David did not have to be concerned with this since he was in the Land of Yisrael. The *Hesed le'Avraham* explained that this contamination exists only outside the Land of Yisrael. In other countries, it should be possible to go barefoot only where there is flooring or pavement. See the responsa *Yabia Omer* (Vol. V, #1:4).

The responsa *Lev Hayim* (Vol. I, #59) discussed the ruling of the *Shene Luhot Haberit* at length. His conclusion is that the ruling is technically correct, but that in our times no one should follow this practice.

Maran the Rishon Letziyon (responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. I, #14:14) taught that nowadays the correct way to atone for one's past sins is to devote oneself to Torah study. He pointed out that there is no source in the Talmud or Midrash for fasting as a means of achieving atonement. On the contrary, the Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 25:1) teaches: "If someone has committed sins for which Heaven sentences people to death, what can he do to remain alive? If until now he used to recite one page [each day], he should begin reciting two pages. If he used to review one chapter of Mishna, he should begin reviewing two chapters. If he does not know how to recite the Torah or review the Mishna, he should volunteer his services to collect charity on behalf of his community. In this way, he will remain alive."

The Torah shields and protects those who study it. There is no better way to occupy one's time. Torah achieves

כד. הקם ממטתו בבוקר, מותר לו לגעת במלבושיו קודם נטילת ידים שחרית. ולכן מותר ללבוש בגדיו קודם נטילת ידים שחרית. והמחמיר בזה תבוא עליו ברכה. (ואם הולך לישון אחר חצות הלילה, יש להקל בזה בפשיטות, ללבוש בגדיו קודם נטילת ידים שחרית). [הליכו"ע ח"א עמ' לב, יבי"א ח"ה סי' א]. ויתבאר לקמן בסימן ד'.

Dressing before *netillat yadayim*

24) Upon awakening in the morning, it is permissible to touch one's garments even before performing the morning *netillat yadayim*. Therefore, one may get dressed beforehand as well. If someone chooses to be stringent and always perform *netillat yadayim* before dressing, he will receive a special blessing from Heaven. If someone only goes to sleep after the halakhic midnight, it is definitely permissible for him to get dressed upon awakening before performing *netillat yadayim*. This will explained below in *Siman* 4.

atonement for even the most felonious sins. The Talmud teaches (*Menahot* 110): Whoever studies Torah has no need for a *korban ola*, a *korban minha*, a *korban hatat* or a *korban asham*. Furthermore, the Talmud teaches (*Arakhin* 15b): Torah achieves atonement for the sin of *lashon hara*, despite the fact that it is equal to the sins of idolatry, immoral sex acts and murder combined. Likewise, the holy *Zohar* teaches that Torah study achieves atonement for the sin of onanism. Harav Hayim of Volozhin wrote that people asked Harav Eliyahu of Vilna what to do if they are guilty of the sin of willful onanism, and he replied that if they devote themselves to Torah study they have nothing to worry about.