ו. המונע עצמו מלהפיח, אינו עובר באיסור בל תשקצו. [משנ"ב ס"ק לא, כה"ח ס"ק מז]. ולכן מותר להעמיד עצמו מלהפיח במקום שיש שם אנשים, כשהדבר גורם לו בושה, או גורם צער לאחרים. [ילקו"י עמ' רנח]. וכן צריך להזהר שלא יפיח כשהתפילין מונחים עליו, ואם אינו יכול להעמיד עצמו, יזיז מעט את התפילין של ראש וינתקם ממקומם, ואחר כך יחזירם. [שם]

ז. יש אומרים שבכלל איסור בל תשקצו שלא ישהה נקביו, נכלל גם שלא ישהה צואת האף, מדכתיב (בראשית ז, כב) "כל אשר נשמת רוח באפיו". [שלחן שלמה סי' ג אות יא]

Day 37

Breaking wind

6) It is permissible to postpone breaking wind. The prohibition of *bal teshaketzu* does not apply to this at all.[118] Therefore, if someone needs to break wind but he is embarrassed to do it in the presence of others or if he knows that it would be bothersome to the others, he may postpone it until he leaves their presence. Likewise, when someone is wearing tefillin he must make sure not to break wind until removing them. If that is impossible, he must at least move his *tefillin shel rosh* out of place momentarily.

Blowing one's nose

7) According to some *Poskim*, the prohibition of *bal teshaketzu* applies as well to someone who fails to blow his nose when there is mucus built up in one's nostrils. They based this ruling on the verse (*Bereshit* 7:22), "All whose life-spirit is in his nostrils."[119]

back to sleep. All he needs to do is to wipe his hands clean before reciting the blessing for the water. See below in *Siman* 4:52.

118. This is the ruling of the *Terumat Hadeshen* (#16), cited by Maran in the *Bet Yosef* (*Siman* 103:2), the *Peri Megadim*, Harav Akiva Eiger, the *Sha'are Teshuva* and the *Mishna Berura* (all at the end of *Siman* 3). The *Mishna Berura* repeated this ruling in *Siman* 103:3.

119. The *Yalkut Yosef* (page 256) and the *Ketzine Eretz* (page 3) cited this halakha in the name of the *Misgeret Zahav* (glosses on the *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh* Ganzfried, *Siman* 4). The original source is the *Shulhan Shelomo* (3:11). It is unclear how he derived this halakha from the verse he cited, however. In all likelihood, he did not mean that the verse is a source for the halakha, but only an allusion to it.

Although the *Shulhan Shelomo* seems to equate the need to blow one's nose clean with the acts of urinating and defecating, it is difficult to agree with this position. The *Aharonim* debated whether it is necessary to wash hands after touching nasal mucus as if it is excrement, as explained in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (4:97), the *Mishna Berura* (92:30) and the *Yalkut Yosef* (page 424). The *Shulhan Shelomo* ruled stringently regarding this, and that, apparently, is the basis for this ruling. Since most other *Poskim* ruled that nasal mucus is not the same as excrement, it is unlikely that the prohibition of *bal teshaketzu* applies to it. The prohibition of *bal teshaketzu* is not a Torah mitzvah; it is an institution of our Sages, and as such there is room for leniency.

Furthermore, the *Poskim* instructed us to clear our mouths and noses of mucus and spittle before beginning the *Amida* so that those things will not interfere with our prayers. It seems from this that at other times there is no halakhic urgency to empty one's nose of its mucus.

The responsa *Rivevot Efrayim* suggested that there is support for the position of the *Shulhan Shelomo* from the *sefer Yesod Veshoresh Ha'avoda* (author's will #22): "I was always careful to wipe my nose immediately with a handkerchief when it was necessary, even if I was in the middle of something important. I felt that it would be extremely disrespectful to stand before my Creator with filth on my nose. God must be honored in every situation. This is even more important while studying the holy Torah and certainly when praying or reciting a blessing. I was always careful about this matter for these reasons.

It could be that this was due to the author's extreme piety and not that he felt any halakhic need for this habit. Furthermore, it seems that he meant that he always wiped his nose immediately when the mucus was already coming

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ח. בזמן רבותינו חכמי התלמוד, קודם שנכנסו לבית הכסא, היו נוהגים לומר "התכבדו מכובדים וכו'" (ברכות ס ע"ב). **וכיום לא נהגו לאומרו.** [ש"ע ס"א, חיד"א, פתה"ד, יפ"ל, עוד יוסף חי ועוד]

Behavior in a Restroom

Asking angels' permission

8) During the era of the Talmudic Sages, the common practice was to beg permission from one's accompanying angels before entering a restroom. This practice has long been discontinued.[120]

out of his nostrils. He did not say that he always blew his nose clean when it was stuffed.

At any rate, if possible if it recommended to try to empty one's nose of built-up mucus. See more about this in the *Birur Halakha* Zilber. On an aside, the *Mekor Hayim* (*Siman* 3) mentioned that he witnessed people who took care never to clean their noses with the right hand. He discounted this stringency totally, claiming that it is a display of boorishness, not genuine piety. See below in the footnotes to halakha 23 and 24.

120. The Talmud states (*Berakhot* 60b) that when someone wishes to enter a restroom, he should say, "*Hitkabedu mekhubadim* – O honored ones, holy ones, Heavenly ministers, be honored! Give honor to the God of Yisrael. Wait for me until I go in here and tend to my needs and return to you." That is, before entering the restroom, the person excuses himself from the angels who accompany him constantly to protect him, and he asks them to wait until he comes back outside.

Rabbenu David Abudarham, cited by Maran in the *Bet Yosef* (*Siman* 3), ruled that "this declaration is meant only for someone who possesses true fear of Heaven and is so devout that the Shekhina rests upon him. Other people may not adopt this practice; if they do, it displays haughtiness [as if this person believes that he is so devout that the Shekhina rests on him, unlike the average person]." Maran commented that for this reason no one in our generations follows this practice anymore. In the *Shulhan Arukh* (3:1) he wrote, "Nowadays the custom is not to say this."

Harav HIDA (*Mahazik Berakha* 3:1) explained, citing the *Mekor Hayim*, that even nowadays each of us has accompanying angels at all times. Nevertheless, we do not recite *Hitkabedu mekhubadim* because it would appear that we are displaying that we consider ourselves holy people. In the following entry, however, he cited the *Matzat Shimurim* ruling that even nowadays we should make this declaration each time we go to a restroom because this helps to dispel impure spirits and bad thoughts from our minds. In this way, our hearts will be more attuned to study the Torah in sanctity and purity. Likewise, he cited Mahara"m Papirash who claimed that the Arizal reinstated the practice of declaring *Hitkabedu mekhubadim* since it helps to stop one from thinking about Torah topics while in the restroom.

The *Ru'ah Hayim* Palachi (3:1) cited the *Maggid Mesharim* (*parashat Mattot*) where the angel instructed Maran to adopt this practice.

The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer cited all these sources and concluded that these instructions are correct for very special individuals who devote all their time to Torah study, but others must refrain from doing so. Then he presented another angle to this issue, since the *Pit'he Teshuva* (*Y.D.* 246:10) ruled that the problem of appearing haughty applies only to practices performed in public view, but not to a practice such as this. If so, anyone may adopt the practice of reciting *hitkabedu mekhubadim*.

This seems to contradict the opinion of Rabbenu David Abudarham, who wrote clearly that the issue of appearing haughty does apply to this practice. Besides, Harav Shelomo Luria (*Yam Shel Shelomo*, commentary to *Bava Kama* 7:41, cited by the *Yafe Lalev* Vol. I, 3:4) ruled that the prohibition of doing things that appear to display haughtiness applies even when one is in total privacy.

If the problem here is that the person observing this practice appears to be haughty, logic dictates that it no longer applies since the Arizal taught that it is necessary to declare *Hitkabedu mekhubadim* in order to have the self-control not to think of Torah topics while in the restroom. Based on this, several *Aharonim* (the *Hesed La'alafim*, the *Lev Hayim*, the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer, *Ketzine Eretz*) ruled that one should adopt this practice in our times.

Harav HIDA (*Birke Yosef* 3:1) concluded his discussion citing Harav Yaakov of Emden explaining that the Arizal gave these instructions only for people who use a restroom in a wilderness. In such a place this declaration is necessary to protect the person from evil forces that might harm him, but in a city it is not necessary. Likewise, in his *Kikar La'aden* (commentary to tractate *Derekh Eretz Rabba*) Harav HIDA commented that as far as he knows, even

ט. הנפנה לגדולים במקום מגולה שאין בו מחיצות, יכוין עצמו שיהיו פניו לדרום ואחוריו לצפון, או להיפך, אבל אסור לפנות עצמו בין מזרח למערב. [ש"ע ס"ה] וטעם הדבר, מפני שהשכינה שורה במערב. ואפילו אם מחזיר פניו למערב ואחוריו למזרח אסור, דמזרח שהוא נגד מערב יש לו גם כן קדושה. [ב"י לד' הרמב"ם ואחרי]

Day 38

Which direction to face

9) If someone needs to defecate outdoors where he is not enclosed by any walls, he should position himself to face either north or south, but not east or west. Our Sages taught that the Shekhina is positioned to the west of the world, the west is the seat of holiness. It would be disrespectful to defecate to the west. Even if someone faces west and defecates to the east, it is likewise disrespectful since in perspective the east corresponds to the west [being that the earth is a globe].

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the kabbalists do not observe this practice. The *Yafe Lalev* (3:4) concurred, writing that the Arizal's words applied only in his times when restrooms were located in the open fields, but in our times when restrooms are available close to our homes even the most pious scholars, those who punctiliously follow the Arizal's instructions, do not observe this practice. This is likewise the opinion of the *Petah Hadevir* (3:6).

Harav Hayim Vital (*Etz Hada'at Tov*, commentary on *Tehillim* 22:20) wrote that we do not observe the practice of excusing ourselves from the angels when entering a restroom since we do not possess the merit necessary for this declaration to protect us from the evil forces. This is further evidence that the common practice is not to make this declaration. This appears to be the opinion of Harav Yosef Hayim (*Od Yosef Hai*, *Rav Pe'alim* Vol. II, *Sod Yesharim* #9) as well.

Comparison to the Friday evening angels

Harav HIDA (*Birke Yosef* 3:1) cited Harav Yehi'el Kasteltz who pointed out what seems to be a contradiction. Maran wrote in the *Bet Yosef* that we no longer observe the practice of *Hitkabedu mekhubadim* since we no longer have the Shechina with us and we no longer have angels hovering over us. If so, Rav Yehi'el asked, why is it necessary to prepare a beautiful table and couch for Friday evening to honor the two angels who accompany us from the synagogue? According to Maran, there are no angels with us anymore! Furthermore, why is it still forbidden to walk about upright or bareheaded? There is no Shekhina present and we would not be dishonoring Him! Also, why did Maran pass judgment on everyone in his generation, saying that their spiritual level has descended to such a low?

Harav HIDA strongly criticized Rav Yehi'el for daring to challenge Maran. It was not Maran who instructed everyone to stop observing this practice; he only testified that it is no longer observed and suggested an explanation why this happened. The Rama made the identical observation. Regarding our Friday evening practices, a number of solutions can be suggested.

For example, the *Od Yosef Hai* (end of *parashat Vayetze*) explained that when the angels accompany us home from the synagogue on Friday evening, it is not for our honor but for the honor of the Shabbat Queen. This is similar to our Sages' teaching that the Prophet Eliyahu comes to honor every circumcision. He does not come in honor of the infant's father or the *mohel*, only in honor of the mitzvah. In contrast, the declaration made when entering a restroom is based on the assumption that one has accompanying angels for his own honor and protection. Anyone in our times who thinks that he deserves this honor and protection as if he is as holy and devout as the Sages of earlier generations is obviously guilty of haughtiness.

On Yom Kippur

The *Od Yosef Hai* (cited in responsa *Yabia Omer* Vol. IX, #95:2) added that it is permissible to recite *Hitkabedu mekhubadim* on Yom Kippur. There is no issue of haughtiness on this day since all Jews have been forgiven their sins and even the satan admits that the Jewish nation is akin to angels. Just as the angels do not eat, drink or wear shoes, the Jews do the same on Yom Kippur. Even so, if someone chooses to recite it, he should not say it out loud. The *Yalkut Yosef* (page 260) wrote that although it appears from the *Yabia Omer* that this is the correct practice, he never noticed his father, Maran the Rishon Letziyon, observing it even on Yom Kippur.

The *Yalkut Yosef* (page 258) wrote that according to Maran in the *Shulhan Arukh* we should not recite *Hitkabedu mekhubadim* since it is an act of haughtiness. Parenthetically, he added that according to the Arizal people should recite it, and at least on Yom Kippur.

As demonstrated above, the Arizal's opinion is unclear. The custom in practice is never to recite it, as stated in the halakha here.