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.

ובית הכסא שבבית או שמוקף מחיצות, מותר לפנות אפילו בין מזרח למערב. [ראה ש"ע ס"ה, ואחרו']
ולקטנים בכל אופן מותר לפנות, אפילו בין מזרח למערב, ואפילו שנפנה בשדה. [ב"י, רמ"א ואחרו']
ולגבי מיטתו, רשאי לסדרה לאיזה צד שירצה. [או"צ ריש ח"ב, הלכה ברורה עמ' מג בשם מרן הראש"ל]

When in a restroom, it does not matter in which direction one sits since one is enclosed by walls. One may sit facing east or west.[121]

It is permissible to urinate while facing any direction, even east or west and even outdoors. A married couple may set up their beds in any direction as well.[122]

121. The source for this leniency is the Tosafot (*Berakhot* 61b) and Rabbenu Asher (commentary to *Berakhot*). Rambam made no distinction between someone outdoors and someone in an enclosed restroom, however. Even so, Maran wrote in the *Bet Yosef* that the plain understanding of the Talmud is as Tosafot explained it, and this is his ruling in the *Shulhan Arukh* (3:5).

Harav Zalman (3:7), the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Vayetze* halakha 9) and the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (3:15) noted that there is an opinion that it is forbidden to face east or west even in a walled structure, and they recommended being stringent. Harav Zalman added that when constructing a restroom, it should be done in a way that enables people to use it facing north or south. The *Ben Ish Hai* testified that this was the common practice in Baghdad as well.

The *Halakha Berura* (page 41), however, ruled leniently like the *Shulhan Arukh* that in a walled structure one may defecate in any direction. Nevertheless, one should be aware of the stringent opinion, and when constructing a house, it is best to plan for the toilet seats to be positioned north or south.

Walls far apart from one another

Harav Yitzhak Abuhav ruled that if someone defecates in a walled yard and the walls are far from one another, one must not face east or west even though the yard is surrounded by walls. Maran in the *Bet Yosef* ruled leniently in this case. The *Ture Zahav* agreed with Rav Abuhav, while the *Magen Avraham* concurred with Maran. The *Halakha Berura* (page 41) ruled leniently as well.

Inside a walled city

The *Magen Avraham* added that although Maran ruled leniently regarding a walled-in yard, he agreed that one must be stringent when defecating outdoors inside a walled city. The *Neve Shalom* (cited in the *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer 3:14), however, interpreted Maran's opinion to be that one must be careful about one's position only when defecating in an open field, but in a walled city it does not matter. The *Halakha Berura* (page 42) ruled stringently in this matter since the *Peri Megadim* demonstrated that the correct interpretation of Maran's words in the *Bet Yosef* is as the *Magen Avraham* stated.

When there is only one wall

If someone is outdoors in a place where there is one wall to the west but no other walls in other directions, it is permissible to defecate facing east or west. This is the ruling of Maran in the *Bet Yosef*. Harav Zalman (3:8) and the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Vayetze* halakha 9) ruled that if there is one wall to the east, one may defecate with one's back to the wall. See the *Halakha Berura* (page 41).

122. In the Talmudic era

The Talmud teaches (*Berakhot* 5b): Abba Binyamin said, "All my life I was careful about two things. One was that my bed should be positioned between north and south. This is based on the teaching of Ribbi Hama beRibbi Hanina in the name of Ribbi Yitzhak: Anyone who positions his bed between north and south will be rewarded with male children."

Rashi explained that this means to position the head and foot of the bed facing either north or south. He added that since the Shekhina is in the west of the world or the east, it is proper to position one's bed so that one conducts marital relations in other directions. It seems from his words that it does not matter whether the head of the bed faces north or south.

The disciples of Rabbenu Yona, however, explained that the reason for this positioning is that the Menorah was placed on the south side of the *Bet Hamikdash* while the Table of the showbread was placed on the north side. By positioning their bed between north and south, the parents enhance their prayer that their children will succeed in their Torah studies and that they will be wealthy. One might think that according to this it is best to position the head of the bed to the south since Torah is more important than material wealth, but the *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, introduction) explained that it does not matter whether the bed's head is on the north or the south even according to Rabbenu Yona.

Rambam (*Hilkhot Bet Habehira* 7:9) wrote: "It is forbidden to ever defecate or sleep in a position between

י. הנפנה בשדה במקום מגולה יתרחק עד מקום שלא יוכל חבירו לראות פירועו, מה שמגלה מבשרו מלפניו ומאחריו, ואין צריך להתרחק עד כדי שלא יראה את גופו כלל, אלא הוא רק שלא יראה פירועו. [ראה ש"ע ס"ח, באו"ח ויצא ה"ז]

Modesty when outdoors

10) If someone needs to defecate outside in the open, he must go to a place where passersby will not see his nakedness. He does not have to go to a place where he cannot be seen at all, however.[123]

east and west." Maran, in the *Bet Yosef* (*Siman* 3), asked that it seems just the opposite from the Talmud, that it is forbidden to position the bed between east and west. Even according to Ribbi Hama beRibbi Hanina, it is at least preferable to position the bed between north and south so that one will be granted male children. Maran offered two answers to this question.

Maran added that according to Rambam one must position one's bed between north and south even when sleeping alone, but that according to Tosafot this applies only when a couple sleeps together in bed. Maran concluded that he noticed that most people follow Tosafot's opinion, but that is because very few people bother to study Rambam. He strongly recommended following Rambam's opinion since he is the pillar of halakhic ruling.

In the *Shulhan Arukh* (3:6), Maran wrote, "It is forbidden to sleep with one's wife between east and west, and the correct choice is to avoid this even when sleeping alone." Again in *Siman* 240, he wrote, "The bed upon which a married couple sleeps must be positioned with its head and foot to the north and south."

According to Kabbalah

The holy *Zohar* (*parashat Bemidbar* page 118) states that the head of one's bed must be positioned to the east and the foot to the west. The kabbalists adopted this ruling, although it is opposite that of Rashi. The responsa *She'elat Ya'abetz* (#47), cited by Harav HIDA (*Birke Yosef* 3:2) claimed that Rashi retracted his ruling in favor of that of the *Zohar*. The *Kaf Hahayim* Sofer (3:16) likewise instructed us to follow the opinion of the Arizal to place the bed's head to the east and its foot to the west.

Harav Eliyahu of Vilna (cited by the *Mishna Berura* 3:11) and the responsa *Binyan shel Shelomo* (#3), however, interpreted the *Zohar* to agree with the Talmud. Nevertheless, the Arizal understood that the *Zohar* disagrees with the Talmud. In fact, the *Or Letziyon* (Vol. II, introduction) suggested that the Talmud can be interpreted in a way that agrees with the *Zohar*, so that both the Talmud and the *Zohar* mean that the bed's head must be placed to the east and its foot to the west. This is just the opposite of the position of Harav Eliyahu of Vilna.

In practice

The *Sheyare Kenesset Hagedola* (glosses to *Bet Yosef* 3:4) testified that in our times no one pays any attention to this halakha. Since the *Zohar* states one opinion and the Talmud states the opposite [and each one can be interpreted in more than one way] whatever one does it correct according to one opinion and incorrect according to another. Therefore, each person can act as he pleases in this matter. The *Arukh Hashulhan* likewise wrote that because of the many opinions regarding this halakha, everyone can do whatever is convenient for him. This is likewise the ruling of Harav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in *Ve'alehu Lo Yibol* page 51), adding that there are *Poskim* who ruled that this halakha applies only when sleeping outside but not inside a house.

The *Or Letziyon* agreed with this in principle, but he recommended following the instructions of the Arizal if it will not pose any difficulties. The *Yalkut Yosef* (page 291) concurred with this, but the *Halakha Berura* (page 44) wrote simply that one may position the bed in any direction, and he did not recommend following the *Arizal*.

123. This is the ruling of the *Shulhan Arukh* (3:8) and the *Ben Ish Hai* (*parashat Vayetze* halakha 7).

Within hearing distance

The *Ben Ish Hai* added that a person may simply go behind a fence or a wall and defecate there. Even though people on the other side of the fence might hear the sounds he makes while defecating, there is nothing indecent about that. It is not a breach of modesty to allow others to hear such sounds, although it might be embarrassing. Harav Zalman wrote that it is clear that in the Talmudic era people did not mind that others heard them relieving themselves. See the responsa *Even Hen* (Vol. I, #1).