

1. Bathing

דִּינֵי רְחִיצָה בַּשַּׁבָּת

1. You are not allowed to wash your entire body or even the greater part of it in hot water, even if the water was heated before Shabbat.¹ This is forbidden even if you do not wash yourself all at once, but only a part at a time. You are also not permitted to enter a bathhouse for the express purpose of sweating. However, you may wash your face, hands and feet with water that was heated before Shabbat.

2. You are permitted to bathe—even immersing your entire body—in water flowing hot naturally from its source in the ground, such as the hot springs of Tiberias, provided the water is still in the ground

1. **Bathing on Shabbat** The prohibition of bathing or washing your whole body, or most of it, with hot water on Shabbat is an enactment of *Chazal* to prevent people from heating water on Shabbat. It applies to water that is of a temperature normally considered to be hot, but not to lukewarm water. You are permitted to wash your face, hands and feet, or any body part, as long as you do not wash the majority of your body. For example, you may soak aching feet or take a sitz bath to relieve a hemorrhoid condition. In special circumstances, however, as when you might be suffering from an ailment, you may even bathe to relieve discomfort. A baby may be bathed on Shabbat. A woman may perform *tevilah*, immersing herself in a *mikveh* at the appointed time following her *niddah* cycle. The *mikveh* should preferably be lukewarm. In such instances the rabbinic ruling is not invoked, providing the water was heated before Shabbat; see Part II, *Melachah* 11, note 7.

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and the place is not covered over with a roof. However, if the water is in a vessel or the place is roofed it is forbidden. Some permit bathing there even if the place is roofed, so long as the water is in the ground.

3. You are permitted to bathe your entire body in cold water,² but you may not stand in front of a hot oven to warm up afterward, as that would be like washing with hot water. Even if you only washed your hands, you should not warm them by an oven while they are still moist, as it would be like washing with water that was heated that day. Rather, you should first rub your hands together to remove most of the water, and then dry them well before warming them.

4. When bathing, you should be careful not to squeeze the water from your hair.³ You must also refrain from swimming,⁴ as it is forbidden to swim on Shabbat and on Yom Tov. Likewise, you are forbidden from floating anything, such as a piece of wood, on the water. If you are bathing in a place where you are not permitted to carry, you must also be careful to shake the water from your body and hair, and dry yourself

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2. **Bathing and Showering in Hot Weather** The accepted custom is not to bathe on Shabbat even in cold water. This likely extends to showering as well, as most people abstain from showering in cold water on Shabbat. Some permit showering or bathing in cold or lukewarm water to relieve discomfort, as in very hot weather. You should take care, however, not to squeeze the water from your hair.
 3. **Washing and Drying Yourself** You may wash yourself, including a beard and the hair on your head, provided that you do not press the water out of your hair. You should not wash with a washcloth or a sponge, as the water is absorbed and then squeezed out, involving the prohibition of *sechitah*. When drying yourself with a towel, you should take care not to press the water out of the towel. You may use a paper towel or a paper napkin to dry your hands, even if it is likely to tear, as that is not your intention.
 4. **Swimming on Shabbat** Technically, the prohibition of swimming or floating something on the water would not strictly apply in the case of a private pool, as such a pool is considered like a vessel and not an open body of water since the water is contained within its walls and cannot flow beyond its enclosure. However, because of the likely involvement of other violations of Shabbat, bathing or swimming in a pool, with or without a bathing suit, or in any body of water other than in a *mikveh* for the purpose of purity or sanctity, has been generally regarded as an activity prohibited on Shabbat. In addition, a person should be mindful of the sanctity of Shabbat even when engaging in activities which do not violate any of the *melachot*; see *Melachah* 38, note 18.

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well so that you will not carry the water from one domain to another.⁵ Even while in the river itself, you must be careful not to carry the water, even on your body, a distance of four *amot*, as the river is considered a *karmelit*. Since not everyone is sufficiently informed to be careful in these matters, the prevailing *minhag* is not to bathe at all on Shabbat even in cold water, unless it is for the sake of a *mitzvah*.⁶

5. You may stand on a riverbank and place your hands in the river, as there is no prohibition in lifting the water on your hands from the river to the riverbank, since the river and its bank are each considered a *karmelit*, and it is permissible to carry from one *karmelit* to another a distance less than four *amot*. But you should take care to dry them well before walking a distance of four *amot*.

6. You are permitted to rub your hands to clean them with something abrasive, such as coarse bran, even when they are wet, provided you do not pour the water on the bran itself, as that would violate the *Melachah* of Kneading. However, you are forbidden to rub your hands with salt, and certainly not with soap,⁷ because it melts.⁸

7. You may not bathe on Shabbat in murky waters where it is not usual to bathe except for medical purposes. The prohibition applies when you remain in the water for a while and it is evident that you are indeed

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5. **Walking in Rain and Snow** Following this logic, you may be tempted to argue that walking in snow or rain should also be prohibited as you are carrying the water. However, since it not possible to avoid this, as it often rains suddenly, *Chazal* didn't prohibit it.
 6. **Bathing in a Mikveh for Purification and Sanctification** Some pious people are accustomed to bathe in a *mikveh* for sanctification before *tefillot* on Shabbat morning. Care should be taken that the water in the *mikveh* is only lukewarm when immersing on Shabbat, whether for sanctification, or for purification following the *niddah* cycle or for *tevillat kerit*.
 7. **Use of Soap Made of Animal Fat** Some refrain from using soap made from non-kosher ingredients, such as animal fat. While commendable if other soap is available, it is generally accepted practice to use soap made from non-kosher ingredients.
 8. **Washing with Soap** *Poskim* differ on the use of soap on Shabbat. Sefardim follow a lenient view, while Ashkenazim have adopted a strict view and forbid the use of soap unless it is necessary for hygienic reasons, as a doctor who must wash his hands with soap in examining a patient. Liquid soap prepared before Shabbat is generally permitted.

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bathing for healing purposes. But it is permitted if you do not remain in the water, as it is apparent that your intention is merely to cool off. In waters such as the hot springs of Tiberias, where it is not usual to bathe except for healing, you may not bathe on Shabbat for medical purposes, even if you do not remain in the water for a while.⁹

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9. **Bathing for Reasons of Health** Bathing on Shabbat for therapeutic purposes is not permitted for a healthy person who is only somewhat indisposed. Someone who is ill and must bathe for the treatment of a disease or for safeguarding his or her health may do so.