The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן רל"ב סעיף ב'-ג'

Overview

Siman 232 Seif 2 (b):

Other authorities disagree and maintain that a small meal is permitted and only a meal at a wedding or bris is prohibited. Some contend that one may even eat a large meal close to mincha gedolah. Some authorities write that a small meal is permitted even before mincha ketanah. The custom is to be lenient in accordance with these two opinions, meaning, to eat a large meal before mincha gedolah or a small meal before mincha ketanah. Perhaps the reason is that nowadays people are called to come to the Bais HaKnesses and we are not concerned for negligence and one will forget to daven. One should be stringent regarding a large meal and should not begin even before mincha gedolah. Even if one began the meal earlier when mincha ketanah arrives and the time will pass one must get up and daven.

- According to this opinion regular haircuts are permitted as is just taking a shvitz, and issuing a final ruling in a court case. (M.B. 21)
- It is permitted until mincha ketanah but once it is close to mincha ketanah all these activities are prohibited and even if one began, he must interrupt in order to daven. (M.B. 22)
- The same is true regarding the meal of a pidyon haben. A Shabbos and Yom Tov meal are not considered "big meals." (M.B. 24)
- There is a disagreement whether according to this opinion one may begin a small meal before mincha ketanah. (M.B. 26)
- This leniency applies only if one goes to the Bais HaKnesses to daven with the tzibbur but if one davens at home the leniency does not apply. (M.B. 28)
- One must go to the Bais HaKnesses immediately upon being called. We rely upon the call to the Bais HaKnesses only for a small meal but not to begin a large meal before mincha ketanah. The implication is that one may rely on the call to the Bais HaKnesses even for the other activities, therefore, one may go to the bathhouse on erev Shabbos even after the time for mincha arrived. However, there are pious people who daven before they go to the bathhouse but there is no reason to protest against those who follow the lenient opinion. (M.B. 29)
- In other words if one calculates that the meal will continue into the night he should daven right away. (M.B. 32)
- This applies only to large meals where there is a concern that one will become intoxicated but at a small meal there is no reason to stop immediately since one may rely on the call of the shamash as a reminder to daven. (M.B. 33)

Siman 232 Seif 3:

The prohibition against eating a small meal is when one sits for a meal but snacking, meaning to eat fruit is permitted. It is also permitted to bread if it is less than the volume of an egg in the manner that people eat food without a meal.

- Even if one eats a lot of fruit it is still not a meal. Cooked grains are also permitted since people do not make a meal out of it. (M.B. 34)
- One may not drink more than egg's volume of an intoxicating beverage but one may drink other beverages even more than an egg's volume. (M.B. 35)

Halacha Highlight

Eating before davening mincha

Rema Siman 232 Seif 2 (b)
משום דעכשיו קורין לבית הכנסת
Because nowadays people are called to the Bais HaKnesses

Rema remarks that despite the restriction against eating that applies before davening mincha, the custom is to be lenient in accordance with two of the lenient opinions. This means that people may begin even large meals close to mincha gedolah or a small meal close to mincha ketanah. He suggests that the basis of the practice is that since everyone is called to the Bais HaKnesses to daven there is no concern that someone will be negligent and not daven. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק כ"ח) explains that even according to Rema this leniency is limited to those people who daven with the tzibbur in the Bais HaKnesses, but if one davens by himself at home the leniency does not apply. Furthermore, in order to rely on this leniency it is necessary for one to go to the Bais HaKnesses to daven as soon as one hears the announcement, but if one does not respond immediately one may not eat before davening. Poskim write that it seems that setting an alarm should also be an effective reminder of davening and after setting an alarm it should be permitted to engage in these activities before davening. What is less clear is whether writing a note to serve as a reminder is effective (חיי משה).

Poskim also discuss whether having davening at a set time is comparable to having a shamash to remind one to daven. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein (אג"מ או"ח ח"ד סי' צ"ט) and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (מנחת שלמה ח"ב סי' ד' אות ל"ב) it is permitted to eat before davening even though there is no shamash to call people to daven. They maintain that it is similar to the halacha that allows one to study Torah before davening (סי' פ"ט סע' ו'). Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (שבות יצחק ח"ב פכ"ג אות ו') disagreed and asserts that the leniency is limited to one studying Torah before davening and does not extend to one who wants to eat before davening.