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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן רמ"ט סעיף ג'-ד'

Overview

Siman 249 Seif 3:

It is the habit of virtuous people to fast on erev Shabbos.

- Bach, Magen Avrohom and others write that one should not fast on erev Shabbos so that one does not begin Shabbos in a state of suffering. (M.B. 18)

Siman 249 Seif 4:

If one accepted upon himself to fast on erev Shabbos one must fast until tzeis hakochavim unless he specified when he accepted upon himself to fast that he would only fast until the tzibbur finishes davening. Some maintain that he should not finish the fast; rather as soon as the tzibbur leaves the Bais HaKnesses he should eat. Therefore, for a private fast one should not "complete" the fast and it is best if he stipulates this when he accepts upon himself the fast but for a public fast he should "complete" the fast and this is the custom. **When fasting for a bad dream one must fast until tzeis hakochavim.**

- If one specified one may eat even if it is still day. Similarly, if one stipulated that he would fast until after minchah gedolah, the stipulation is effective. (M.B. 20)
- This opinion maintains that for private and public fasts one should only fast until the tzibbur finishes davening since it is already Shabbos. The same is true on erev Yom Tov. Rema ruled that for a private fast one may rely upon the lenient opinion but it is preferred if one stipulates when he accepts upon himself the fast. Regarding a public fast one must "complete" the fast and his stipulation is ineffective since the issue is not in his hands. (M.B. 21)
- An example of a private fast is one who fasts for a yahrtzeit. Magen Avrohom writes that one who fasts regularly on erev Shabbos and the first week he "completed" the fast he must forever "complete" the fast. L'chatchila, it is preferred if he does not "complete" the fast the first time so that he does not become obligated to always complete the fast. If the first time one fasted on a yahrtzeit or other private fast it occurred during the week and one "completed" the fast there are poskim who maintain that even when it occurs on erev Shabbos one must fast since it is assumed that his intent was always to "complete" the fast. Others disagree and assume that his intent did not include when the fast occurs on erev Shabbos. One who experiences distress may follow the lenient opinion and eat immediately after davening. (M.B. 22)
- All opinions agree to this ruling since one may even fast on Shabbos for a bad dream. Some Poskim maintain that even in this case one may be lenient and eat immediately after davening but later authorities agree that one should follow Shulchan Aruch's ruling. (M.B. 23)

Halacha Highlight

Fasting on erev Shabbos

Shulchan Aruch Siman 249 Seif 4
צריך להתענות עד צאת הכוכבים
He must fast until tzeis hakochavim

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ד') discusses when a fast is over when one is fasting on erev Shabbos. He rules that one must fast until tzeis hakochavim unless he stipulated when he accepted upon himself to fast to end the fast earlier. The rationale is that fasting on erev Shabbos should be no different than fasting during the rest of the week. On any other day of the week the fast ends at tzeis hakochavim, and there is no reason that on erev Shabbos it should end any earlier. The fact that one begins Shabbos while fasting does not violate the prohibition against fasting on Shabbos (מ"ב ס"ק י"ט). Rema cites authorities who maintain that one should not complete the fast; rather once davening is completed and people head home the fast is completed even though it is still day. The rationale is that once one davened ma'ariv and accepted Shabbos the fast is completed. Rema decides that when it comes to a private fast one may adopt the lenient approach and consider the fast to be completed when one heads home from the Bais HaKnesses. However, it is still preferable for one to stipulate when he accepts upon himself the fast that it should end after he davens ma'ariv. Concerning a public fast, one should adopt the stringent position and should continue fasting until after tzeis hakochavim. The reason to adopt a more stringent position concerning a public fast is that it is not in an individual's control to set up the parameters of a public fast (מ"ב ס"ק כ"א).

The most common example of a private fast that could occur on erev Shabbos is a yahrtzeit. It is best for one to not wait until after tzeis hakochavim to eat. Rather one should daven some time after plag hamincha, recite kiddush and then eat. Preferably when the first yahrtzeit falls on erev Shabbos one should stipulate that he does not intend to "complete" the fast. If the first yahrtzeit falls during the week one should stipulate that when the yahrtzeit falls on erev Shabbos he does intend to complete the fast. If he did not make this stipulation it is best to perform a hataras nedarim to avoid the question of whether he is obligated to "complete" the fast (פסקי תשובות אות ו').