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Digest
Mishna Berura
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סימן רנ"א סעיף א'

Halacha Highlight

Performing melacha on Friday afternoon

Shulchan Aruch Siman 251 Seif 1
העושה מלאכה בערב שבת מן המנחה ולמעלה
One who performs melacha on erev Shabbos after mincha time

Shulchan Aruch writes that one who performs melacha from after mincha time will not see a blessing from that work (מ"ב סק"ב). Mishnah Berurah (שם) explains that even if initially one does profit from that melacha, Hashem will arrange for him to lose elsewhere so that in the bottom line he will not have benefited from the melacha that was done. Rema adds that this restriction is in force specifically when one performs melacha in a regular manner – קבע, but when work is done in a casual manner – עראי—it is permitted. Rav Nissim Karelitz (חוט השני ח"א פ"ו סק"א) explains that קבע is melacha that requires one's attention, and עראי is work that could be done thoughtlessly. Accordingly, sewing a button is considered קבע since it requires attention, even though the task could be performed in a small amount of time. Therefore, it is prohibited to sew a button on a garment on Friday afternoon after mincha time if the garment will not be used for Shabbos. However, if one needs the garment for Shabbos it is permitted since Shulchan Aruch HaRav (סע' ג') writes that one may perform a קבע melacha Friday afternoon when it is necessary for Shabbos. Biur Halacha (סע' ב' ד"ה לתקן) also implies that melacha that is necessary for Shabbos may be performed on Friday afternoon even though it is קבע.

Shulchan Aruch records a dispute whether the restriction begins from mincha gedolah (6 ½ hours into the day) or mincha ketanah (9 ½ hours into the day). Mishnah Berurah (סק"ג) writes that one who relies on the lenient opinion does not lose.

Overview

Siman 251 Seif 1:

One who performs melacha on erev Shabbos after mincha time will not see blessing from that melacha. Some assume that this refers to mincha gedolah while others assume that it refers to mincha ketanah. This applies when one does regular work but when it is done in a casual manner, for the moment and it is not permanent it is permitted. For that reason it is permitted to write a friendly letter and anything similar.

- Business is permitted; nevertheless the Gemara implies that shops were closed before candle lighting time. (M.B. 1)
- One will not see blessing from that melacha and if one profits from that activity he will lose money elsewhere. (M.B. 2)
- One who relies upon the lenient opinion loses nothing. This applies when one is working for himself but an employee works until close to sunset and is sent home with enough time to return home, fill a barrel of water, roast a small fish and kindle Shabbos lights. If there is a custom to go home earlier employees are sent home at that time. (M.B. 3)
- This applies even if he is paid for this work. (M.B. 4)

Interestingly, Mishnah Berurah (סי' רנ"ו סק"א) writes that the time for mincha ketanah is calculated from tzeis hakochavim. This produces a significant leniency as far as how late into the day it is permitted to perform melacha. It is noted that regarding this halacha Mishnah Berurah does not even mention the opinion that calculates mincha ketanah from sunset. The reason is that this restriction is only Rabbinic and one need not be stringent (פסקי תשובות אות א' הע' 5).