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

Overview

Siman 263 Seif 2:

Both men and women must have lights kindled in their home for Shabbos. Even someone who does not have food to eat should borrow from neighbors to obtain oil to kindle his lamp since this is part of oneg Shabbos.

- Shulchan Aruch does not refer to one who has no food to eat since in such a case it is better to collect money for bread with which he can recite kiddush and have a meal. Rather he refers to one who is supported by tzedaka and even he must borrow money to obtain oil for the Shabbos lights. Obtaining bread is the highest priority and obtaining Shabbos lights comes ahead of obtaining other foods. However, obtaining one light is sufficient and the remainder of the money should be used to obtain other foods. (M.B. 9)

Siman 263 Seif 3:

Women are more obligated in this mitzvah than men since they are around and are involved in the household needs. If one does not have the funds for Shabbos lights and wine for kiddush the money should be used to obtain the Shabbos lights. Similarly, if one cannot afford Shabbos lights and Chanukah lights, Shabbos lights take precedence since they promote peace since there is no peace without light. (If one cannot afford wine for kiddush and lights for Chanukah see below siman 678.)

- Even if the husband wants to kindle the lights his wife takes precedence. The first Shabbos after a woman gives birth her husband kindles the lights and recites the beracha. (M.B. 11)
- Another reason is that Chava extinguished the first light of the world by causing the death of Adam HaRishon. However, it is preferable for the man to prepare the lights. (M.B. 12)
- One light is sufficient for shalom bayis and the remaining money should be spent on kiddush or Chanukah lights and even for Chanukah a single light is sufficient. (M.B. 14)
- Magen Avrohom writes that a blind woman may also recite the beracha on the Shabbos lights since she benefits from the light but if she is married it is preferable for her husband to kindle the lights. If she is eating with others who kindled lights and recited the beracha she should not recite the beracha. (M.B. 14)

Halacha Highlight

A woman's obligation to kindle Shabbos lights

Shulchan Aruch Siman 263 Seif 3
הנשים מזהרת בו יותר
The instruction is directed more towards women

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ג') writes that although the obligation to kindle Shabbos lights rests on men and women equally (סע' ב'), nevertheless, women are instructed to kindle the lights more than men since they are present in the home more often than the men and the needs of the household rest on their shoulders. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"ב) adds another reason why women carry out the obligation rather than men and that is that since Chava extinguished the light of the world, i.e. Adam HaRishon, women rectify that sin by kindling Shabbos lights. He adds in the name of Arizal that the man should prepare the lights for the woman to kindle. In the past this involved men lighting the wicks and then extinguishing them so that when it came time for the woman to kindle the lights the wick would ignite quickly. Since nowadays that is not an issue, there is no obligation for the man to prepare the lights. However, some Poskim maintain that even setting up the lights or purchasing the candleholders is a fulfillment of this obligation of the man to prepare the lights (פסקי תשובות אות י"ג).

Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק י"א) mentions the custom that on the first Shabbos after giving birth the father rather than the mother kindles Shabbos lights. Poskim note that this custom applied in the past when it was common for women to stay in bed for an extended period of time following childbirth. Nowadays that women are up and about shortly after childbirth, there is no reason for a woman who is postpartum to kindle the Shabbos lights. There are some authorities who suggest that even nowadays it is appropriate for the man to kindle the Shabbos lights the first Shabbos after a woman gave birth. As mentioned, one of the reasons that woman rather than men kindle Shabbos lights is due to the fact that Chava extinguished the light of the world by introducing death. The week following childbirth a woman is not subject to that since she just brought a new life into the world and thus the obligation shifts to her husband (פסקי תשובות אות י' והע' 97).