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

Overview

Siman 264 Seif 1:

One may not make a wick for Shabbos, whether for the lamp on the table or whether it is placed anywhere else in the house from material to which the flame will not attach but will merely envelope or whose flame flickers, e.g. wool, hair or something similar. Instead the wick should allow the flame to attach to it, for example, combed flax, a linen cloth, cotton, hemp or something similar. If one kindled the light with one of the prohibited wicks, one may not use that light. According to some authorities if one lamp is fueled with material that is permitted it is permitted to use the lamps lit with prohibited wicks. Similarly, in a place that does not require light one may use lamps that use forbidden materials and when necessary for Shabbos one may be lenient, b'dieved.

- The concern is that one will tip the utensil so that the oil will reach the wick and violate the prohibition of מבעיר. (M.B. 1)
- Elya Rabba maintained that when another material is available one should not use hemp. (M.B. 2)
- Rema refers to disqualified wicks and oils. (M.B. 3)
- This includes even an activity that does not require looking at something closely. Taz writes that even if one has another lamp it is prohibited out of concern that he will tip this lamp. (M.B. 4)
- According to this opinion even if the lamps are in other rooms it is permitted as long as there is one good lamp. Elya Rabba asserts that Rema refers to other lamps in the same room as the good lamp and later authorities find support for Elya Rabba's position. (M.B. 5)
- There is a disagreement whether this opinion requires a good lamp elsewhere in the house. (M.B. 7)
- Although one who kindled a good lamp next to a bad lamp may use the combined light even for non-Shabbos needs, nevertheless, one should not l'chatchila kindle a good lamp next to a bad lamp. (M.B. 8)

Siman 264 Seif 2:

If one wrapped material that may be used around material that may not be used and the intent was to thicken the wick in order to increase the light, it is prohibited. If the intent was to strengthen the wick so that it stands upright and does not droop, it is permitted. For this reason it is permitted to wrap usable material around bark or straw in order to place the wick into glass. It is permitted to place a grain of salt or a split bean on the opening of a lamp on erev Shabbos so that the fire will burn nicely on Shabbos.

- This is prohibited out of concern that he will use the inferior quality wick by itself. (M.B. 9)
- Since one does not intend to kindle it as a wick, it is permitted. (M.B. 10)
- Salt clarifies the oil so that it should be drawn after the wick. (M.B. 11)

Halacha Highlight

Kindling balsam oil on Yom Tov

Shulchan Aruch Siman 264 Seif 1
אין עושין לפתילה לנר של שבת
One may not make a wick for the Shabbos lights etc.

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' א') discusses various materials that may not be used for wicks for the Shabbos lights. The reason Chazal forbade the use of some materials for wicks is that they do not produce a good quality light, generally because the fire does not take hold of the wick fully, and there is a concern that in order to produce a better quality flame one may tilt the lamp and thereby violate the prohibition of מבעיר—kindling a fire. In the event that one used one of the inferior quality wicks, Rema rules that one may not benefit from the light produced by that lamp. He then cites other authorities who maintain that as long as there is another lamp that contains a superior quality wick one may also benefit from the lamp that has the inferior quality wick.

Biur Halacha (ד"ה לנר של שבת) notes that on Yom Tov one may use any one of the inferior quality wicks or oils since there is no prohibition of מבעיר when the flame serves a Yom Tov need. At the end of his comments he relates that Pri Megadim was uncertain whether one may use balsam oil on Yom Tov. The basis for his uncertainty is that the Gemara presents two reasons why one may not use balsam oil to fuel one's Shabbos lights. One concern is that since balsam oil produces a fragrant aroma one may be tempted to take some of the oil for consumption and thereby violate the prohibition of extinguishing the fire. The second concern is that the oil is volatile and may cause the house to burn down thereby tempting the person to extinguish the fire. Pri Megadim explains that the permissibility to use balsam oil depends upon these two explanations. The concern that the house will burn down is not applicable on Yom Tov since there are authorities who permit extinguishing a fire on Yom Tov if one has no other place to eat. The concern that one will take some of the oil and thereby extinguish the flame does apply on Yom Tov since it is prohibited to extinguish a flame even if it is for eating purposes.