Mishna Berura DIGEST
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
מרכז תורה וחסד דשיקאגו CHICAGO CENTER for Torah & Chesed
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סימן רס"ד סעיף ג'-ו'

Overview

Siman 264 Seif 3:

One may only kindle the Shabbos lights with oil that is drawn after the wick; therefore, one may not use pitch, wax, cotton-seed oil, tail grease or cheilev. One may also not use resin that has a foul odor that will cause people to leave nor may one use balsam oil that a fragrant odor, out of concern that one will take some oil and thus violate the prohibition against extinguishing a fire.

- One may not use oil sediment since it is not drawn after the wick. (M.B. 13)
- It would seem that it is acceptable to mix some oil into butter and then it may be used for fuel for the Shabbos lights. However, one must be cautious when other oils are available since it is common for fat to remain in the lamp and when burning the butter one may violate the prohibition against cooking meat and milk together. (M.B. 14)
- The Gemara also expresses concern that balsam produces a blazing fire that may ignite the walls of the house and since a person is overwhelmed at the possibility that his house will burn down he will extinguish the fire. (M.B. 17)

Siman 264 Seif 4:

Even if one added some olive oil to these other oils so that they are now drawn after the wick they may not be used.

- If the majority of the mixture was acceptable oil it may be used. (M.B. 18)
- The concern is that one may use the inferior quality oil by itself. (M.B. 19)

Siman 264 Seif 5:

One may not kindle with liquid cheilev or fish entrails but if one added some acceptable oil one may kindle that mixture.

- If the cheilev congealed one may not use it for fuel for the Shabbos lights even if one added acceptable oil. (M.B. 20)
- Clear oil manufactured from fish eyes or fish meat may be used even by itself. (M.B. 21)

Siman 264 Seif 6:

Oils other than the ones mentioned may be used but it is preferable to use olive oil.

- When olive oil is not available other oils are preferred to wax candles. Everything really depends on the lamp and the primary criteria are that one should use materials that produce a good quality and bright flame. (M.B. 23)

Halacha Highlight

Kindling Shabbos lights with olive oil

Shulchan Aruch Siman 264 Seif 6
ומכל מקום שמן זית מצוה מן המובחר
Nevertheless, kindling with olive oil is preferred

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' ו') writes that other than the oils mentioned in the previous seifim that are unfit for use for the Shabbos lights, all other oils may be used to fuel one's Shabbos lights. Biur Halacha (ד"ה חוץ מאלו) points out that one may also not use oil that is prohibited from benefit. Although there is a general principle מצות לאו להנות נתנו—mitzvos were not given for our benefit, in this case it does not apply. Since the purpose of the mitzvah of kindling Shabbos lights is to enhance one's Shabbos experience – oneg Shabbos, that benefit cannot be ignored and as such one may not use oils that are prohibited for benefit.

Shulchan Aruch adds that the preferred manner to fulfill the mitzvah is to use olive oil. Mishnah Berurah explains that olive oil is drawn into the wick nicely making it an appropriate oil to use. Sefer Chassidim (אות ער"ב) relates that there was once a person who lived until he was very old and people could not figure out what he did to manage to earn many years except that on erev Shabbos he did not use cheilev as fuel to kindle his Shabbos lights; he specifically used olive oil. Machazik Beracha (סק"ב) references the Gemara in Sanhedrin (24a) that describes Torah scholars as "olive oil" and draws from this that one who is careful to kindle his Shabbos lights with olive oil will merit to have male children who enlighten the world with their Torah. All of these great advantages notwithstanding, there were many Torah scholars who were not particular to kindle their Shabbos lights specifically with olive oil perhaps out of concern that even with olive oil one may be tempted to tip the lamp. Even those people who are particular to kindle Shabbos lights with olive oil in their home, when they are staying at someone else's home on Shabbos they are not required to go out of their way to kindle olive oil (פסקי תשובות אות ה').