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Mishna Berura
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סימן ש"ו סעיף ז'-ח'

Halacha Highlight

Taking one's temperature on Shabbos

Shulchan Aruch Siman 306 Seif 7

מתר למדד בשבת מדידה של מצוה

It is permitted to measure on Shabbos if it is for a mitzvah

Shulchan Aruch (סע' ז') rules that it is permitted to measure items that are needed for a mitzvah on Shabbos. For example, it is permitted to measure a mikvah on Shabbos to determine whether it contains 40 seah. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ל"ד) notes that generally we do not suspend Rabbinic injunctions for the sake of a mitzvah. In this case it is permitted since measuring is not such a weighty prohibition since it is prohibited due to the fact that it is a weekday activity and therefore, for the sake of a mitzvah it is permitted. Similarly, it is permitted for women to measure with the belt of someone who is ill and recite incantations over the measuring since this is also considered measurement for the sake of a mitzvah. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ל"ו) explains that since this measurement assists in curing the patient, it is considered measuring for the sake of a mitzvah since healing someone ill is a mitzvah.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (אג"מ או"ח ח"א סי' קכ"ח) ruled that it is permitted even for a healthy person to use a non-digital thermometer. As mentioned, the reason measuring is prohibited is that it is considered a weekday activity and thus is prohibited when done as a weekday activity, for example, measuring for household needs. When taking one's temperature he is not engaged in a weekday activity and thus is permitted. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (ביצחק יקרא סי' שכ"ג) also ruled that it is permitted to take the temperature of healthy people on Shabbos. An activity does not constitute a weekday activity unless the action is performed in the same manner that one performs that activity during the week for something that is prohibited on Shabbos. Taking one's temperature is not done for business or some other weekday activity. It is done primarily to know whether someone is ill or the extent of their illness. For this reason he rules that a thermometer is not muktzah since it is considered a utensil whose primary use is permitted on Shabbos (שמירת שבת כהלכתה פ"מ הע' ג').

Overview

Siman 306 Seif 7:

It is permitted to measure items for the sake of a mitzvah, for example, to measure whether a mikvah contains forty seah. It is also permitted to measure with the belt of someone who is ill and recite incantations as women are accustomed to do since this is also a measuring for the sake of a mitzvah.

- Measuring is prohibited because it is a weekday activity and thus for the sake of a mitzvah it is permitted. (M.B. 34)
- Measuring has a healing affect which is a mitzvah. (M.B. 36)

Siman 306 Seif 8:

Thinking about one's weekday activities is permitted, however, in order to better enjoy Shabbos it is a mitzvah to avoid thinking about them and one should consider all of his weekday activities completed.

- It should certainly be avoided if thinking about these matters will cause one distress and worry. (M.B. 38)