The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן ש"ז סעיף י"ב-י"ד

Overview

Siman 307 Seif 12:

If one invited guests and prepared portions of food and wrote down how many people he invited and how many portions he prepared, it is prohibited to read the list on Shabbos. Even if the list was written on a high place on the wall it is prohibited out of concern that it will lead to reading שטרי הדיוטות which are financial documents. Even looking at it without reading it is prohibited. **However, if one carved the list in the wall and the script is inscribed it is permitted but on a tablet or ledger, even if the writing is engraved it is prohibited.**

- Two reasons are given for this injunction. One reason is the concern that one will erase something from the list and the second is that it may lead to reading financial documents. Although there are people who are lenient and permit a waiter rather than the host to read such a list, one should be stringent about the matter unless it is a seudas mitzvah. (M.B. 47)
- There is no concern that he will erase something from the list since it is engraved and no one will confuse a list written on a wall with other financial documents. (M.B. 49)
- If the writing protrudes it is prohibited. It is improper for customers to send notes on Shabbos that contains the amount that he owes for merchandise that was taken before Shabbos but if it does not reference prices it is permitted. (M.B. 50)

Siman 307 Seif 13:

It is prohibited to read שטרי הדיוטות which are financial documents or letters of greeting and even to look at them without reading them is prohibited.

- Some maintain it is prohibited because of ממצוא חפצך and others maintain the issue is out of concern that he will erase something. (M.B. 51)
- It is impossible to look it over and not make calculations related to the document. (M.B. 53)

Siman 307 Seif 14:

If one received a letter and does not know the content of the letter it is permitted to read it but he should not read it with his mouth, he should just look it over. If the letter was brought from beyond the techum it is best to be cautious and not touch it.

- It is permitted since there is a possibility that it contains information that will be beneficial to his physical well-being. (M.B. 54)
- The issue is muktzah in that it was brought from outside of the techum. Although generally one may not benefit from something brought for him from beyond the techum, the reason is that we are concerned that it will lead him to ask a gentile directly to bring something to him but that rationale does not apply to a letter since one does not know when someone will send him a letter. Additionally, it may not be considered benefit since he does not benefit from the melacha that was performed on his behalf. (M.B. 55)
- Later authorities agree that it is not muktzah. If one is particular to put the letter away in a safe place it is muktzah and it may not be moved. The custom is not to take a letter delivered by a gentile and instead he should be instructed to place it down on the ground or on a table. If the letter is sealed one may say to the gentile that he cannot read it as long as it is sealed even though the gentile will understand that he should open it. In a case of great necessity one may directly ask a gentile to open it. (M.B. 56)

Halacha Highlight

Reading lists of names

Shulchan Aruch Siman 307 Seif 12

אסור לקרותו בשבת

It is prohibited to read it on Shabbos

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' י"ב) writes that one who invited guests for a meal and prepared portions of food to serve each guest and recorded a list of who he invited and the number of portions that he prepared may not read that list on Shabbos. The Gemara records two reasons for this restriction. One concern is that one will realize on Shabbos that he did not prepare enough portions for all the people that he wished to invite so he will erase some of the names on the list so that when his servant goes out to invite the guests he will not invite the people whose names were erased. Alternatively, the concern is that if he reads these lists he may end up reading financial documents as well (מ"ב סי"ק מ"ז). Even if the list is written high up on the wall so that there is no concern that he will erase what is there, it is prohibited out of concern that it will lead to reading financial documents.

Sha'arei Ephraim (שער י' סעי' ל"ג בפתחי שערים) permits a gabbai to review the list of members to see who received an aliyah in the recent past to determine who should receive an aliyah this Shabbos. Since his purpose in reading those names is to determine what happened in the past, there is no reason for him to erase one of the names on the list. Furthermore, since there are many people present in the bais haknesses, they will watch him and assure that he does not erase anything from this list. Rav Nissim Karelitz (איל משולש שטרי הדיוטות פ"ג סעי' י"א) permits a gabbai to read a list of names to include in a מי שברך when someone is celebrating a simcha. Firstly, he is not concerned that the gabbai will erase any of the names and there is also a mitzvah element to assure that he does not forget to mention someone on the list. Similarly, he permits reading a list of names of ill people so that one does not forget to include them in the מי שברך for ill people (שם הע' מ').