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

Overview

Siman 399 Seif 1:

The *techum* of a city is measured with a linen rope that is 50 *amos*. It may not be shorter which would be stretchable, nor may it be longer since it would not stretch sufficiently.

- This would cause the measurement to be too long or too short. (M.B. 2)

Siman 399 Seif 2

If there is a river 75 *amos* away, after measuring 50 *amos* they should walk back 25 *amos* and measure again from there so that they could use the proper length of the rope until the river.

- The same rope is then used to measure to the other side of the river. If the river is greater than 50 *amos* wide see Yerushalmi in כיצד מעברין. (M.B. 4)

Siman 399 Seif 3:

The rope is held against his heart and stretched with all his might.

- Chazal wanted to avoid one person holding it by his neck and the other by his feet since that will shorten the distance. (M.B. 5)
- Due to its weight in the center it will not stretch fully unless they pull with all their might. (M.B. 6)

Siman 399 Seif 4:

One should only measure opposite the city. Even if there are mountains and valleys one should not move to the side so that one could measure on ground level and then walk back to opposite the city, rather the measurement is done opposite the city. When they reach a mountain, if the slope is great enough that if they were to drop a plumb line from the top it would not move horizontally four *amos*, it is not necessary to measure the slope unless there is a flat area on top. If there is no flat area on top it is not measured at all. If the rope does move horizontally four *amos* and the slope rises ten *tefachim* in the span of five *amos*, meaning as one walks five *amos* up the slope he will have ascended ten *tefachim* we have to see whether from one end of the mountain to the other is 50 *amos*. If it does not, we incorporate the entire mountain in one measurement of 50 *amos* by erecting one wooden pole on one side and one on the other side and stretch out the rope between the two poles. If it cannot be measured with a rope of 50 *amos* it is measured with a rope of four *amos*. The procedure is that two people stand four *amos* apart and the lower one holds the rope against his heart and the higher one at his feet. The lower one then stands where the upper one stood and the upper one ascends higher and they measure again. They continue to follow this procedure until they have measured the entire mountain. If the slope is greater so that in the course of four *amos* it rises ten *tefachim*, we are lenient and do not require them to use a 50 *amah* rope and poles. If the mountain is less than 50 *amos* they should estimate its length to the best of their ability and if it is more than 50 *amos* it is measured with a rope of four *amos* in increments.

- The valley and mountain are not so wide so that it could be measured using the "incorporation" method but the person would find it easier to move to the side instead. (M.B. 8)
- If there is flat ground opposite the city it is preferred to measure from there. (M.B. 9)
- Since the slope is so great, it is not necessary to include the slope in the measurement. (M.B. 10)
- When the slope is easily traversable we use the "incorporation" method but when it is not, we estimate the distance. (M.B. 12)
- Meaning we incorporate the slope as Shulchan Aruch goes on to explain. (M.B. 13)
- The mountain is wide and does not narrow to fifty *amos* within the *techum*. (M.B. 15)
- Biur Halacha references many *Poskim* who maintain that even when it rises ten *tefachim* in four *amos* one may estimate. (M.B. 17)

Halacha Highlight

Measuring the *techum* as they approach a river

Shulchan Aruch Siman 399 Seif 2

אם יש נהר לפניו

If there is a river before them

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' ב') addresses the procedure for measuring the *techum* when they come upon a river that is seventy five *amos* from the town. The difficulty with measuring is that the measurement of the *techum* must be done with a 50 *amah* linen rope and it may not be possible to properly measure from within the river. Therefore, Shulchan Aruch writes that they should first measure a full 50 *amos*. One of the surveyors should then walk back 25 *amos* and from there measure another 50 *amos* which will get them to the river's edge. Assuming that the river is not more than 50 *amos* across, they could stretch the 50 *amah* rope over the river and then continue measuring normally (מ"ב סק"ד).

Regarding the procedure for counting back 25 *amos*, Machatzis HaShekel (סק"א) writes that one of the surveyors could simply count out 25 average sized steps and from there will measure out the next 50 *amos*. Sefer Birurei HaMidos offers an alternative suggestion. Since the rope is fifty *amos* what they should do is after stretching the rope its full length they should fold it in half since that will be 25 *amos*. He notes that this will not provide an exact measurement of 25 *amos* since they will not be able to stretch the rope that is folded in half and only 25 *amos* long but nevertheless, it is an acceptable means of measuring the *techum* in such a circumstance.