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

Halacha Highlight

Working before the search for chometz

Shulchan Aruch Siman 431 Seif 2
יזהר כל אדם שלא יתחיל בשום מלאכה
Each person must be careful not to start any work etc.

Shulchan Aruch emphasizes that one may not begin work before completing the search for chometz. Mishnah Berurah (סק"ה) adds that one may not begin working even half an hour before nightfall since we are afraid that one may become engaged in that activity and forget to search for chometz. Furthermore, even if one began during the day when it was permitted to begin working (ע' מ"ב סק"ט), Rema rules that one must cease that work so that he could search for chometz (ע' מ"ב ס"ק י"ב). Accordingly, merchants and storeowners should close their store early, if necessary, so that they can daven and search for chometz at nightfall.

Those who do not own their own business do not necessarily have the option to leave work early in order to search for chometz immediately when nightfall arrives and therefore should appoint a member of their household as their agent to search for chometz on their behalf. One may even appoint one's wife to perform the search for chometz. Although Mishnah Berurah (סי' תל"ב סק"ח) writes that one should preferably not rely upon women to search for chometz, nevertheless, Poskim point to the fact that Aruch HaShulchan (סי' תל"ז סע' ז') writes that nowadays women are very meticulous when they search for chometz(ע' פסקי תשובות אות ה').

In the event that one is interested in performing the mitzvah personally, (ע' מ"ב סי' תל"ב סק"ח) he should appoint an agent to search his residence for chometz at nightfall except for one room but tell him that if he (the homeowner) does not return home by a set time (the time when he expects to return home) he should search that room as well. By doing so he is permitted to work since an agent was appointed to search even that room if necessary but at the same time assuming that he will return home at the expected time he will be able to fulfill the mitzvah of searching for chometz (ע' שו"ת תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' ר"י"ד).

Stories to Share

A Common Oversight

ש"ע תל"ב א' "כדי שישים על לבו לבדוק בכל המקומות..."

On today's amud we find that the Rishonim ruled that one should not speak during the bedikah to ensure that he not forget a place which requires probing for chometz. Overlooking a place which requires bedikah is easier than many realize, as the following story illustrates.

One year shortly before Pesach the Chofetz Chaim became very ill with a splitting headache. His wife was naturally worried about this and convinced him to go to a specialist in Vilna for an examination. The week before Pesach was a time when the snows where melting, a very treacherous time to travel, yet what choice did he have?

When the Chofetz Chaim arrived in Vilna he immediately sent a telegram to his family. Receiving this communication was very worrisome for them since it was prohibitively expensive and the Choftez Chaim was very careful to only spend money on essentials.

But the moment they opened it their fears were allayed. "The roads are very difficult and I cannot be sure if I will make it back home in time for bedikas chometz. L'maan Hashem! I ask you not to forget to check for chometz in my room in the attic since it is plausible that I brought chometz into it."

This room was the room that the Chofetz Chaim used for private communion with Hashem. Although it seemed unlikely that he brought chometz into it, it was still possible. He was afraid his family would assume the room was chometz-free and fail to check it. To avoid the possibility of such an error, the Chofetz Chaim readily paid for the costly telegram.

החפץ חיים חייו ופעליו, ח"ג, ע' תתקכ"ט

Overview

Siman 431 Seif 2:

One should be careful not to begin any work or eat until the search is completed. Even one who has a set time to learn should not learn until he searches for *chometz*. If, however, he began to study while it was yet day he is not required to stop learning to search for *chometz*. According to some opinions one must stop learning and that appears correct.

- One should not do work even within half an hour before nightfall out of concern that the activity will continue past nightfall and one must also avoid all the activities that are prohibited before davening Mincha. (M.B. 5)
- Tasting, meaning eating less than an egg's volume of bread or fruit, is permitted. Eating a lot of fruit is only permitted during the half hour before nightfall but after nightfall one should not delay too much to eat fruit. (M.B. 6)
- There is a disagreement whether one may learn during the half hour before nightfall but even according to the stringent position it is only learning in one's home that is restricted. (M.B. 7)
- Those who normally daven with a *tzibbur* at the beginning of the night should daven before the search. One who will daven at home should appoint someone else to do the search so that he could daven immediately but if there is no one else to do the search he should daven first. If, however, he commonly davens by himself he should search for *chometz* first although Chok Yaakov maintains that one should always daven first. (M.B. 8)
- If one began an activity during the time that it was prohibited to start that activity, he must stop to search for *chometz*. (M.B. 10)
- According to Rema one must stop learning when the time for the search arrives even if he began learning during a time in which it was permitted. (M.B. 11)

Siman 432 Seif 1:

Before one begins the search for *chometz* one should recite the *beracha* of על בעור חמץ. If one began the search without having recited the *beracha* he may recite the *beracha* as long as he has not completed the search. **One must be careful not to speak between the *beracha* and the beginning of the search and it is appropriate to avoid talking about other matters until the search is completed so that one will be able pay attention to search all the places that must be searched.**

- If one finished the search without reciting the *beracha* he should recite the *beracha* at the time he will burn the *chometz*. According to others the *beracha* was enacted for the search and if it is recited at the time of the burning of the chometz it should be recited without שם ומלכות. One should not protest against one who chooses to rely upon the opinion that one may recite the *beracha*. (M.B. 4)
- If one spoke between the *beracha* and the beginning of the search he must repeat the *beracha*. (M.B. 5)
- During the search one may discuss matters related to the search even *l'chatchila*. (M.B. 6)