The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן ת"ע סעיף א'-ג'

Overview

Siman 470 Seif 1:

First-borns fast on *erev* Pesach, whether they are first-born on their father's side or on their mother's side. Some maintain that even female first-borns fast (but the custom is not in accordance with that opinion).

- The fast is to commemorate the miracle that they were saved in מכת בכורות. (M.B. 1)
- The oldest in the household does not have to fast. One born after a miscarriage must fast since he is the first-born for inheritances but this is limited to where it is certain that the first fetus was a stillborn but if the first child died after going full term, even if the baby died within its first 30 days, the subsequent child is not obligated to fast. First-born *kohanim* and *levi'im* are required to fast. Maharil writes that the first-born should complete the fast since it is considered a communal fast but if one's head or eyes hurt he is not required to fast. Similarly, if fasting is difficult for someone and afterwards he will only be able to eat light foods in very small quantities and consequently will likely be unable to eat the necessary volume of *matzah*, *marror* and the four cups of wine, it is better that he not fast so that he will be able to fulfill the *mitzvos* of the night properly. First-borns that fast should recite עננו in the *beracha* of שמע קולנו during *mincha*. (M.B. 2)
- The reason is that מכת בכורות was directed towards them as well. (M.B. 3)
- The Torah did not give females the sanctity of being first-borns for any matter. (M.B. 4)

Siman 470 Seif 2:

When *erev* Pesach falls on Shabbos, some maintain that the first-born fast on Thursday and others maintain that they do not fast altogether. The custom is in accordance with the first opinion. The custom is that when a father is a first-born, the mother fasts on behalf of her son who is a first-born while he is yet a minor. If the father is not a first-born he fasts on behalf of his son until he is an adult.

- If fasting on Thursday is difficult since one must search for *chometz* that night and at times people have many rooms to search and one may not eat before searching for *chometz*, one may eat a bit before the search or instruct someone else to search for *chometz* and he may then eat. (M.B. 6)
- The fast is only a custom and once it was pushed off it is pushed off entirely. (M.B. 7)
- Some maintain that the mother does not have to fast and the father's fast counts for them both and if the mother will be discomforted, one may be lenient. (M.B. 9)
- If the child is less than 30 days old there is no reason to fast on his behalf. There are different customs whether a first-born may eat at a *seudas mitzvah* and in places where the custom is to be stringent, he would have to annul his vow to be able to eat at such a meal. The *mohel, sandak* and father would not have to annul their vow since it is a Yom Tov for them but they must make up the fast after Pesach. The custom nowadays in most places is to be lenient and eat at a *siyum* of a *masseches* even if the first-born did not complete the *masseches*. The custom is to gather with the one finishing before he completes the *massechta* so that they could hear the *siyum* and then eat the meal. (M.B. 10)

Siman 470 Seif 3:

A delicate person fasts on *erev* Pesach so that he could eat the *matzah* with an appetite.

- When *erev* Pesach falls on Shabbos one should not skip the Shabbos *seudah* altogether out of this concern but instead should eat a small amount to fulfill his obligation. (M.B. 11)

Halacha Highlight

Participating in a *siyum*

Mishnah Berurah Siman 470 Seif Koton 10
ואחר כך עושין סעודה
And afterwards they make their meal

Mishnah Berurah (סק"י) discusses the allowance for a first-born to participate in a *seudas mitzvah* and thereby become exempt from fasting. He notes that the issue is subject to debate but observes that nowadays in many places the custom is in accordance with the lenient opinion. As such, it is commonplace for first-borns to participate in a *siyum* and eat at the celebratory meal even though they did not complete the course of learning. As long as they are present when the *siyum* is made they are permitted to eat. He then writes that the custom is to gather together with the one who will make the *siyum* who then completes the *massechta* in their presence so that they join him for the end of the *massechta* and then they eat the meal.

Poskim write that it is not necessary to eat specifically bread at the *siyum* and it is acceptable to serve *mezonos* or even fruit but the firstborns who are participating in the *siyum* should make sure to eat at least the volume of a large date (close to the volume of an egg) or drink at least a cheekful of a beverage. If one of the firstborns does not consume that quantity of food or beverage he has not exempted himself from fasting the remainder of the day (ע' שו"ע סי' תקס"ח סע' א'). Accordingly, there are authorities who write that the firstborn should be particular to eat either bread or *mezonos* since according to some authorities eating other foods would not exempt him from the obligation to fast. It is clear from this discussion that first-borns who want to exempt themselves from fasting by participating in a *siyum* must participate in the celebratory meal following the *siyum*. Other authorities disagree and contend that one need not eat at the *siyum* and it is sufficient to be present at the *siyum*. As long as one was allowed to eat he is exempt from fasting, even if he did not actually eat at the *siyum* (פסקי תשובות אות י"א).