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Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
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סימן תקי"ד סעיף ג'

Overview

Siman 514 Seif 3:

If one wishes to kindle a wax candle on Yom Tov but does not wish that it should spread may place around it before kindling the flame a substance that will prevent the fire from spreading so that it will extinguish when it reaches that point. Some authorities permit cutting the candle with fire by kindling the bottom to shorten it and this is the custom. Using a knife for this purpose is prohibited. It is permitted to place a lamp where wind will blow so that it extinguishes but it is prohibited to place it there if the wind is already blowing.

- Cutting the candle into two is prohibited since one thereby makes two candles and violates the prohibition of making a utensil (מתקן מנא). (M.B. 19)
- Shulchan Aruch maintains that since one is manipulating the wax directly or places something around the candle so that it should extinguish it is prohibited. Other authorities maintain that it is permitted even while the flame is burning to manipulate the wax or place something around the candle so that it should extinguish provided that one does not place it in contact with the flame. (M.B. 20)
- For example, to place sand around the candle or insert the candle into sand is permitted, assuming that one does not violate a prohibition by making a hole. (M.B. 21)
- Their rationale is that the prohibition regarding the oil is that at the moment one removes the oil the flame dims. When one cuts the bottom of a candle that is burning he does not cause the flame to dim, it will merely extinguish faster and that is categorized as indirect extinguishing that is permitted. (M.B. 22)
- A number of authorities write that one should adopt the stringent approach. (M.B. 23)
- By cutting it one creates a wick that could be kindled which involves making a utensil even if that is not his intent. (M.B. 24)
- The wind may extinguish it when it blows and the reasoning is that it constitutes indirect extinguishing. Some authorities are stringent since the wind is always blowing. (M.B. 25)

Halacha Highlight

Moving the clip on a timer

Shulchan Aruch Siman 514 Seif 3

יכול לתן סביבו קדם שידליקנו דבר המונע מלשרף

Before it is kindled one may place around it a material that will prevent it from burning

Shulchan Aruch writes that one who will kindle a candle but is concerned that the fire may spread may place something around the candle that will extinguish it provided that he places that material around the candle before kindling the fire. Rema cites authorities who permit shortening a candle so that it burns for a shorter period of time by kindling the bottom of the candle. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק כ"ב) emphasizes that this is permitted even while the candle is burning. However, Rema notes that one may not shorten the candle by cutting away part of it with a utensil. The reason is that cutting the candle generates an additional wick which did not previously exist and thus violates the prohibition against making a new utensil. Mishnah Berurah (סק"כ) summarizes the dispute as follows. Shulchan Aruch maintains that although indirectly extinguishing a fire is permitted, that leniency is limited to circumstances in which one does not touch the material that is burning. It is prohibited to cause a flame to extinguish if it involves manipulating the burning material. Other authorities disagree and assert that it is permitted to place something that will indirectly cause the flame to extinguish provided that one does not extinguish the flame directly.

These positions can be applied to the question of the permissibility of moving a clip on a timer so that a light will turn off sooner. Since this manner of turning off the light entails indirect extinguishing of the light, according to Rema and the authorities who follow his position, it is permitted. According to Shulchan Aruch, however, if the action is performed while the light is on it is prohibited since it involves manipulating the flow of electricity which is comparable to manipulating the wax of a candle. Since Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק כ"ג) writes that one should adopt a stringent approach, barring an extenuating circumstance one should not move the clip on a timer that is running. However, if the timer is off and one wishes to move the clip so that after it turns on it should go off sooner, it is permitted since at that time there is no flow of electricity (פסקי תשובות אות ז').