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Digest
Mishna Berura
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Halacha Highlight

Fasting for a trouble that passed

Shulchan Aruch Siman 569 Seif 1
יחיד המתענה על צרה ועברה
An individual who fasts for a trouble that passed

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') draws a distinction between an individual who commits to fast in response to a trouble that passes and a *tzibbur* that commits to fast in response to a trouble that passes. When, for example, an individual commits to fast on behalf of one who is ill and that patient either recovers of dies, the individual must follow through with his commitment and fast all of the fasts included in his initial commitment. In contrast, when a *tzibbur* commits to fast in response to a trouble and their prayers are answered before midday of the day they are fasting, they are not required to complete the fast.

The Mishnah Berurah (סק"א) gives two reasons why a *tzibbur* is not obligated to complete the fast. The first explanation is that it is assumed that *bais din* had in mind this stipulation that if the trouble passes they would not complete the fast. The Magid Mishnah (פ"א מהלי תענית הט"ז), the source for this *halacha*, explains that when *bais din* decided to issue the decree to fast, they had this condition in mind and concerning a *tzibbur*, intent for this condition is sufficient. Regarding an individual, even if he had this stipulation in mind it is not effective since regarding individuals we apply the principle *devarim she'b'leiv ainam devarim* – a person's intent is not significant. The second explanation is that when it comes to a *tzibbur* we do not wish to overburden them as opposed to individuals who can be burdened to fast even though the trouble has passed.

Mishnah Berurah (סק"ד) references Rema's ruling in Yoreh Deah (220:15) that an individual must follow through with his commitment only when he did not stipulate otherwise but if, for example, he said, "If Ploni lives I will fast (or give money to *tzedaka*)" and Ploni dies he is not obligated to fast (or give to *tzedaka*). Rema there also notes that this stipulation is binding even if he did not "double" the stipulation (תנאי כפול) by stating explicitly that if Ploni dies he will not fast. The reason it is not necessary to "double" a stipulation in this instance is that when it comes to a vow we take his intent into account even though it was not articulated.

Overview

Siman 569 Seif 1:

An individual who fasts for a tragedy and it passes or for one who is ill and he recovers or dies, he must nevertheless, complete all the fasts he committed to fast. However, when a community fasts for a particular reason and their *tefilos* are answered before *midday* they are not required to complete the fast but if Torah scholars and the majority of the *tzibbur* wish to complete the fast, an individual may not separate from their decision.

- It is assumed that *bais din* makes a stipulation to suspend the fast plus we also do not want to burden the *tzibbur*. (M.B. 1)
- Since he committed to fast without stipulating, it is assumed that he figured that his commitment to fast will cause his prayers for the person or tragedy to be accepted. (M.B. 2)
- Even if one committed to many fasts he must observe them all and the same is true concerning commitments to give *tzedaka*. However, if one said, "If so-and-so lives I will fast or give *tzedaka*," and the person dies he is not obligated to fast or give the *tzedaka*. (M.B. 4)
- The implication is that they are not required to observe the fast only when their *tefilos* were answered but if they fasted so that someone ill should recover and he died, even the *tzibbur* is obligated to complete the fast even if he died before midday but others are lenient even in this case. (M.B. 5)

Siman 569 Seif 2:

An individual who fasts in response to a tragedy and then discovers that it had passed even before he committed to fast is not required to complete the fast. The same is true if a *tzibbur* hears after midday that they mistakenly committed to fast and are not required to complete the fast.

- If it passed after they committed to fast, they must fast even if they did not yet begin to fast. (M.B. 7)
- Since the commitment was made in error there is no reason for a Torah scholar or the majority of the *tzibbur* to be stringent. (M.B. 9)