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

Overview

Siman 576 Seif 1:

Just like we fast and blow blasts regarding rain, so too we fast for other troubles, for example, if gentiles have come to wage battle with Jews, collect taxes, to confiscate their land, to decree a trouble on even regarding a minor *mitzvah*, they fast and blow blasts until they receive mercy. The surrounding cities fast but do not blow blasts unless the purpose is to gather people to gather for assistance. Even if their intent is to pass through the land to battle with another gentile nation and want to merely pass through Jewish land, they fast and blow blasts.

- Rambam writes that there is a positive command to cry out to Hashem in times of distress and it works as a tool towards repentance. Those who do not cry out because they feel that these occurrences are part of nature are behaving cruelly since it allows them to continue their sinful ways and will ultimately generate additional troubles. Magen Avrohom questions why we no longer follow this approach and leaves the matter unresolved. Some authorities answer that this approach is limited to Eretz Yisroel while others add that we also must be in control of our land. Another approach contends that it is a *mitzvah* when the trouble affects the majority of the Jewish People. (M.B. 1)

Siman 576 Seif 2:

The same is true concerning a plague. What qualifies as a plague? If a city can produce 500 foot soldiers and three people died over three consecutive days, it is considered a plague. If they died in a single day or over four days, it is not a plague. If there are 1000 foot soldiers and six people die in three consecutive days, it is a plague but if they die in a single day or over the course of four days it is not a plague and this is the proportion for all numbers. Women, children and elders who stopped working are not included in this population for this calculation. If there is a plague in Eretz Yisroel, the exiles fast with them (Specifically when the plague is throughout the land but not when it is limited to a particular area). **If there was a plague in one country and caravans travel from there to other countries, both fast even though they are distant from one another.**

- Nowadays we do not fast at all when there is a plague because fasting weakens one's body thereby making him more susceptible to illness. (M.B. 2)
- These people are naturally weak. Levush adds that these people also do not count towards the number of 500 or 1000. (M.B. 5)
- If caravans do not travel back and forth, distant places do not fast but the surrounding areas fast although they do not blow blasts in order to join with those in distress. (M.B. 10)

Halacha Highlight

Blowing trumpets in response to tragedy

Shulchan Aruch Siman 576 Seif 1
כשם שמתענים ומתריעים
Just like we fast and blow blasts

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') teaches that just as we fast and blow blasts for rain, so too we fast and blow blasts when other tragedies strike. Mishnah Berurah (סק"א) quotes Rambam who writes that it is a positive command to cry out and blast trumpets for every tragedy that occurs. Magen Avrohom questions why we no longer have the practice to blow trumpets when tragedies occur. Even if we assume that we do not have communal fasts outside of Eretz Yisroel, nevertheless, since blowing trumpet blasts is a Biblical obligation there is no reason it should not be performed even nowadays in response to tragedy. He leaves the matter unresolved. Rav Yaakov Emden (מור וקציעה) answers that the beginning of the *pasuk* that contains this *mitzvah* begins with the words וכי תבואו מלחמה בארצכם when a war comes to your land clearly indicating that the *mitzvah* only applies in Eretz Yisroel. Mishnah Berurah (שם) adds that there are some authorities who write that even in Eretz Yisroel the *mitzvah* is limited to when we have sovereignty over the land but when that is not the case the *mitzvah* is not in force. Alternatively, the *mitzvah* applies only when the tragedy affects the majority of the Jewish People but when that is not the case the *mitzvah* does not apply.

Sefer Avi Ezri (פי"ג מהל' כלי המקדש ה"ה) maintains that the *mitzvah* to blast a trumpet during times of distress is related to the *mitzvah* of blasting a trumpet while *korbanos* are offered. Consequently, when *korbanos* are not being offered the *mitzvah* to blast the trumpet even in times of distress does not apply. Rav Moshe Feinstein (אג"מ או"ח ח"א סי' קס"ט) also maintains that there is one *mitzvah* and the same trumpet that is blown in the *Bais HaMikdash* is blown in response to tragedy. Therefore, since we do not have the trumpet of the *Bais HaMikdash* we also do not blast trumpets in response to tragedy.

Siman 576 Seif 3:

If there was a plague effecting pigs we fast since their intestinal systems are similar to ours and certainly when gentiles are suffering from a plague but not Jews, we fast.

Siman 576 Seif 4:

We also fast when there is a collapsed building in a city. What are the circumstances? If in a city many strong walls collapsed that are not adjacent to a river, it is considered a trouble and they fast and blow blasts. The same is true when there are storms or winds that collapse buildings killing people, they fast and blow blasts.

- It is possible that the minimum number of houses is three. (M.B. 11)