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

Overview

Siman 670 Seif 1:

It is prohibited to eulogize or fast on Chanukah. *Melachah* is permitted but women have the custom to refrain from *melacha* while the candles are lit.

- A brief history of Chanukah. (M.B. 1)
- Only women refrain from work since the miracle came about through them. (M.B. 3)
- The reason women refrain from work is to show that it is prohibited to benefit from the Chanukah lights and the duration of the restriction is about half an hour. (M.B. 4)

Siman 670 Seif 2:

Additional meals are optional since the day was not established for meals and joy. According to some there is somewhat of a mitzvah to have additional meals. The custom is to add songs and praise at these meals to elevate them to a *seudas mitzvah.* There is a custom to eat cheese on Chanukah.

- The distinction between the celebration of Purim and Chanukah is explained. (M.B. 6)
- Maharshal maintains that any meal whose purpose is to praise Hashem or publicize the miracle is considered a *seudas mitzvah*.

Stories to Share

"A Little Bit of a Mitzvah"

ש"ע סי' תע"ר: "וי"א שיש קצת מצוה ברבוי הסעודות..."

Although the Shulchan Aruch rules that making festive meals on Chanukah is not a mitzvah and even the Rema rules that they are merely a little bit of a mitzvah, the custom of many groups is to make special gatherings on Chanukah. Whether it is a party or a tisch, such celebrations are regular events that are often quite elaborate. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz, zt"l, for example, would make a resplendent milchig tisch each night of Chanukah and another one each day. Each tisch would be enlivened with zemiros and inspiring words of Torah.

But some authorities frowned upon what appeared to be a case of mistaken priorities. When the Brisker Rav asked the Beis Yisrael of Gur, zt"l, about the source of this practice. "Why do your chassidim make a big celebration each night of Chanukah, spending hours singing zemiros? After all, the Rema rules that such meals are merely a little bit of a mitzvah..."

The Beis Yisrael replied with characteristic sharpness. "I teach my chassidim that even קצת עבירה, what may objectively be viewed as a little sin, is really a very big deal and should be treated like a big transgression. Is it any wonder that when the Rema calls making meals on Chanukah a little mitzvah, they make big celebrations?"

Halacha Highlight

The prohibition against *melacha* while the candles are burning

Mishnah Berurah s.k. 3

דוקא נשים לפי שנעשה נס על ידיהם

Specifically the women since the miracle came about through them

Taz (סק"ב) suggests that the prohibition against performing *melacha* while the candles are lit will parallel Rosh Chodesh (see Shulchan Aruch 417). On Rosh Chodesh it is technically permitted for women to perform *melacha*; nevertheless, since the custom was instituted that they do not perform *melacha* it is appropriate for them to follow that custom. The basis of the custom is that it is a reward for not having given their gold jewelry for the golden calf. So too on Chanukah, since the miracle came about through the effort of a woman it is appropriate for them to refrain from performing *melacha* while the candles are burning. Bach finds a hint to the custom of refraining from *melacha* within the word חנוכה. When broken apart it says חנו—they rested, כה—on the 25th of Kislev. It is difficult to assume that it refers to resting from the battle (ע' ברכי יוסף שהשיג עליו); therefore it must refer to refraining from *melacha*.

The exact parameters of the restriction against *melacha* during this time were not set by earlier Poskim. Teshuvas Rivevos Ephraim (שו"ת רבבות אפרים ח"א סי' תל"ו) cites Dayan Fisher who maintains that in Yerushalayim the custom restricts all *melacha*, even cooking and baking, while the candles are lit. Other opinions (ע' חיי משה להלכות חנוכה סי' תר"ע הע' א') maintain that the prohibition will be similar to the prohibition against *melacha* during *Chol HaMoed*. According to this approach, it is permitted for a woman to prepare dinner since cooking is permitted on *Chol Hamoed*. Teshuvas Mishnah Sachir (שו"ת משנה שכיר דבק טוב סי' ג' ד"ה אגב) maintains that the only *melachos* that are prohibited are ironing, laundry and knitting.