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

Overview

Siman 673 Seif 1 (a):

One may use any oil or wicks for the Chanukah wicks. Even if the oil is not drawn well after the wick and the fire does not hold well on the wick. It is preferable to use olive oil and if olive oil is not available it is a mitzvah to use oil that produces a clear, clean flame. The custom in these countries is to wax candles since they produce a clear flame similar to oil. **It is even permitted to light inferior oils and wicks that may not be used for Shabbos lights on Shabbos during Chanukah if** one does not add more than the minimal amount of oil necessary for the mitzvah **since it is prohibited to benefit from the Chanukah lights, whether on Shabbos or during the week. One may not even examine or count money by the light of the Chanukah lights; one may not even engage in a sacred activity, e.g. studying Torah, by the Chanukah lights.**

- The reason any oil or wick may be used is that if the flame goes out there is no obligation to rekindle it because the mitzvah is fulfilled as soon as the flame is lit. (M.B. 1)
- It is preferable to use cotton or linen wicks. (M.B. 2)
- One may not use fat mixed together with milk for the Chanukah lights. (M.B. 2)
- One who adds a new light each night must assure that the additional light is made of the same material as the primary light. If one lights a different light for each member of the household they do not have to be from the same material. (M.B. 2)
- On Shabbos Chanukah the shamash must be from oil and wicks that one may use for reading on Shabbos since there is a fear that one may tilt the light to be able to see better. (M.B. 3)
- Kindling oil is preferable to wax candles since the miracle happened with oil. (M.B. 4)
- Even temporary use of the light is prohibited and Magen Avrohom and Taz agree that counting money from a distance from the light is also prohibited. (M.B. 10)
- Use even temporarily is prohibited but if one is not using the light it is permitted to remain in the room with the Chanukah lights. (M.B. 11)
- According to Taz this opinion maintains that learning temporarily in front of the Chanukah lights is prohibited. (M.B. 12)
- It is also prohibited to benefit from the candles in the Bais HaKnesses even for sacred purposes. (M.B. 13)

Halacha Highlight

Using oil that is prohibited for benefit for Chanukah lights

Mishnah Berurah Siman 673 Seif Koton 2

שומן אן חלב הנאסר מבשר בחלב וכו'

Fats that became prohibited because of basar b'cholov etc.

Mishnah Berurah (סק"ב) rules that fat that became prohibited because it was cooked together with milk may not be used as fuel for the Chanukah lights. Sha'arei Teshuvah (סק"א) references Sha'ar Ephraim who discusses another example of this question. Someone cooked butter in a fleishig meat pot that had been used to cook meat on that day – בן יומו. He rules that the butter is prohibited for fuel for Chanukah lights due to the fact that the butter is prohibited because it is basar b'cholov. Even though it is prohibited to benefit from the Chanukah lights, and mitzvos are not even designed to provide a person with benefit – מצוות לאו ליהנות ניתנו, nevertheless, it is prohibited to use the butter. The reason that butter with a fleishig taste or fat cooked with milk may not be used for the Chanukah lights is that the fulfillment of the mitzvah requires a specific measure of oil or fuel and since basar b'cholov is prohibited for benefit it is considered to be lacking that minimal measurement necessary for fulfillment of the mitzvah.

Other authorities contend that the principle that mitzvos require a minimal measurement does not apply to Chanukah lights. It is only regarding mitzvos that require a tangible measurement, e.g. lulav, shofar and hadasim, that such a requirement exists but regarding Chanukah lights the obligation is to have oil that can burn for a minimal period of time. Since the mitzvah does not require a minimum quantity of oil, even oil that is prohibited for benefit may be used. The conclusion of the Poskim is that preferably one should not use oil that is prohibited for benefit for fuel for the Chanukah lights. B'dieved, if one does not have any other fuel or if one already kindled the Chanukah lights with such oil the mitzvah was fulfilled and it is unnecessary to kindle the lights again (פסקי תשובות אות ג').

Stories to Share

Which Oil?

ש"ע סי' תרע"ג, א': "כל השמנים והפתילות כשרים לנר חנוכה..."

One problem that farmers have in Israel is what to do with shemitah products. An orchard of olives yields a huge quantity of oil. While it used to be that people used the oil for household lighting, nowadays people use electricity. So what is one to do with shemitah oil? One farmer thought he had a great answer. "Why not use it the oil to light the Chanukah lights?" he wondered.

As we find on today's amud, the rule is that we can light our Chanukah lights with any type of oil. Yet like virtually all other rules, there are certainly exceptions to this guideline. The farmer wondered if shemitah oil was also an exception.

When this question reached Rav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zt"l, he ruled that it is forbidden. "One may not light his Chanukah menorah with shemitah oil, even if he is careful with all the halachos of using shemittah produce. This is prohibited since it is forbidden to use the light from the Chanukah lamps. And shemitah products may be used only if they provide benefit to the person using them."

גלאט, תשס"ח, ע' 150