

Overview

Halacha Highlight

Siman 571 Seif 1:

If one fasts and can withstand the fast he is called קדוש but if not, for example, he is not healthy and strong, he is called a חוטא.

- ❖ Regarding known transgressions as discussed by Rokeach and Arizal one must fast all of the days they specify even if it is difficult and Shulchan Aruch refers to fasts one committed to observe for atonement for transgressions that people commonly overlook. (M.B. 1)
- ❖ Sifrei Mussar write that one who restrains himself from eating everything on his plate has undergone suffering and it atones for his sins. Some authorities maintain that it is preferred to refrain from talking rather than eating. (M.B. 2)

Siman 571 Seif 2:

A Torah scholar may not fast since it limits his service of Hashem unless the *tzibbur* is fasting in which case he may not separate from the *tzibbur*. Those who teach children share the same *halacha* as a Torah scholar.

- ❖ One whose Torah study is his full time occupation qualifies for this ruling, even nowadays. (M.B. 3)
- ❖ For well-known transgressions for which one must fast, even a Torah scholar must fast even though it will be difficult for him. However, he need not afflict himself by fasting and instead should study more than he is accustomed to study. (M.B. 4)

Siman 571 Seif 3:

If a city is under siege by Cutheans or if an individual is being pursued by a violent person, armed robbers or a harmful spirit, he may not fast so that he should lose his strength, rather he should commit to fast a certain number of times after he is saved. Similarly, if a decree was issued and they also decreed that one may not fast, they should commit to fast a specified number of times when the decree passes.

Torah scholars fasting

Shulchan Aruch Siman 571 Seif 2
תלמיד חכם אינו רשאי לישב בתענית

A Torah scholar is not permitted to fast

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' א') writes that the value of fasting depends on the individual. Someone who can handle fasting is called קדוש since fasting has the capacity to cleanse a person of his sins (מ"ב סק"י"א). Maharal (נתיב) explains that the fast is not intended to serve as a feeling of discomfort to counter the inclination that led a person to sin in the first place, rather by refraining from eating and drinking one becomes elevated to the status of an Angel that has no physical body. On the other hand, one who fasts who is not healthy or strong is considered a sinner. The reason he is considered a sinner is that he is weakening his body (מ"ב סק"י"ב). Maharal explains that the term חוטא always refers to something that is diminished and one who fasts diminishes himself similar, although on a much smaller scale, to one who kills himself who is also called a חוטא since he diminished himself.

In *seif 2* Shulchan Aruch states that a Torah scholar may not fast since it will limit his service of Hashem. However, when the *tzibbur* is fasting he must fast as well since it is prohibited for him to separate from them. The definition of a Torah scholar for this *halacha* is one whose Torah study is his occupation. Although for many *halachos* we do not have people who are considered Torah scholars, for this *halacha* anyone who learns full time qualifies. Sefer Pele Yoetz (ערך) (אג"מ יו"ד ח"ג and Rav Moshe Feinstein) and תענית עמי שטי"ו) write that even if fasting does not decrease the amount time that one studies Torah, it will, nevertheless, diminish the quality (איכות) of the Torah that he studies and that is also not desired. However, if the Torah scholars has עונות ידועים he must fast even though it will diminish his Torah study. Sefer Reishis Chochmah (שער התשובה פי"ג אות מ"ב) explains that since his soul has become soiled Hashem is not interested in his Torah study until he cleanses himself from those transgressions.