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WOMEN AND WORKING ON ROSH CHODESH



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WOMEN AND WORKING ON ROSH CHODESH

There is a custom that women do not do work on Rosh Chodesh. Why is this so? Which type of work is prohibited? Is this for all women? Does this custom apply to men as well? All these and other questions will be addressed in this issue.

Women and Rosh Chodesh

Rosh Chodesh is a Yom Tov, which in some ways was given exclusively to women. There are many reasons given for this. The *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer*¹ explains that women did not give their jewelry for the construction of the *Egel*. This reason is quoted in many other sources as well.² Others say the following: The Yom Tov of Pesach represents Avraham,³ Shavuot represents Yitzchak,⁴ Sukkos represents Yaakov,⁵ and the twelve months of the year represent the twelve *shevatim*. When they sinned with the *Egel*, it was given to the women.⁶ The *Avudraham*⁷ says the women gave very

1. 45.

2. *Tosafos Maseches Megillah* 22b "v'shein," *Rosh Hashanah* 23a "m'shum," *Rashi Maseches Megillah* ibid "v'shein," *Ritva Maseches Megillah* ibid, *Mordechai Maseches Shabbos* 2:278, *Rashba Maseches Rosh Hashanah* 23a "gezeirah," *Yerushalmi Maseches Pesachim* 4:1, *Rokeach* 228, *Ohr Zarua* 454, *Kol Bo* 43, *Avudraham Seder Rosh Chodesh*, *Mordechai Maseches Megillah* 3:806, *Tur O.C.* 417, *Levush* 417:1, *Taz* 1, *Magen Avraham* 2, *Pri Chadash* 1, *Be'er Heitiv* 2, *Elyah Rabbah* 1, *Mishnah Berurah* 3, *Aruch Hashulchan* 10, *Likutei Maharich* 3:page 466 (new), *Ta'amei Haminhagim* 335:page 194.

3. Refer to *Bereishis* 8:6, *Tosafos Rosh Hashanah* 11a "eleh."

4. Refer to *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer* 31.

5. *Bereishis* 33:17.

6. *Avudraham Seder Rosh Chodesh*, *Tur* in the name of his brother, *Levush* 417:1, *Taz* 1, *Ben Ish Chai Vayikra* 2:1, *Likutei Maharich* 3:page 466 (new), *Ta'amei Haminhagim* 335:page 194:footnote 5. Refer to *Beis Yosef*, *Bach*, *Taz* 1, and *Elyah Rabbah* 3 on what it means Rosh Chodesh was given to women. See *Rivevos Ephraim* 2:125:10.

7. *Seder Rosh Chodesh*.

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enthusiastically to the Mishkan, as opposed to the men. Since the Mishkan was erected on the first of Nissan, women were given Rosh Chodesh. The *Ohr Zarua*⁸ says that every month a married woman is permitted to her husband (after she ends her impure state), and she is as special to him as the day of their wedding. The moon is renewed each month as well, and we yearn to see it. Therefore, the Yom Tov of Rosh Chodesh was given to women. The *Machatzis Hashekel*⁹ suggests that Rosh Chodesh can be considered a mitzvah which is bound by time, and women are exempt from it. Nevertheless, they were given Rosh Chodesh because of their unwillingness to partake in the *Egel*. The *Levush*¹⁰ offers his own reason and says the following: Since Rosh Chodesh has holiness to it by the fact that *korbanos* are brought, it is like a Yom Tov (and women do not do work). The *Turei Even*¹¹ explains that in the time of the Beis Hamikdash a *Korban Mussaf* was brought, and work was not allowed (the last two reasons do not apply exclusively for women; see below).

Work on Rosh Chodesh

According to the letter of the law, work is permitted on Rosh Chodesh.¹² The *Levush*¹³ explains that married women are obligated to their husbands, and if their husbands wish that they work, they must do so. However, based upon the

8. 454. Also quoted in *Darchoi Moshe* 417, *Prishah* 1, *Elyah Rabbah* 1, *Pri Megadim M.Z.* 1, *Sefer Matanim* page 64:9 (new), *Likutei Maharich* 3:page 466 (new).

9. 417:2. See *Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham* 417:2.

10. 417:1.

11. *Maseches Megillah* page 118 (old).

12. *Maseches Chagigah* 18a, *Shabbos* 24a, *Arachin* 10b, *Maseches Chagigah* 18a "rosh," *Shulchan Aruch* 417:1, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 97:3, *Aruch Hashulchan* 10.

13. 417:1.

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reasons quoted above, the custom is that women do not do work on Rosh Chodesh.¹⁴ The *poskim*¹⁵ call it a “good custom.”

Single Girls

Although some of the reasons do not apply to a single girl,¹⁶ the custom is that it applies to a single girl as well.¹⁷

Two Days

The consensus of the *poskim* is that when Rosh Chodesh is two days, women do not work on both days.¹⁸ Others are lenient¹⁹ on the first day of Rosh Chodesh, but the second day is the main day of Rosh Chodesh, and women should not work.²⁰ Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt”l*²¹ is quoted as stating that it depends on the custom of people.

Is This for All Women

There is a discussion in the *poskim* if this custom is for

14. Refer to *Tosafos Maseches Chagigah* 18a “*rosh*,” *Daas Zekanim M’Baalei Tosafos Shemos* 35:22, *Rif Maseches Pesachim* page 17a, *Mordechai Maseches Shabbos* 2:278, *Kol Bo* 43, *Avudraham Seder Rosh Chodesh*, *Ohr Zarua* 454, *Rosh Maseches Moed Kattan* 1:1, *Megillah* 3:4, *Rabbeinu Yerucham Nesiv* 11:1, *Shibolei Haleket* 169, *Tur* 417, *Beis Yosef* 417, *Shulchan Aruch* 1, *Kaf Hachaim Palagi* 34:18, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 97:3, *Aruch Hashulchan* 10. Refer to *Yerushalmi Maseches Taanis* 1:6. Refer to *Rashi Maseches Megillah* 22b “*v’shein*.”

15. *Shulchan Aruch* 417:1, *Levush* 1, *Pri Megadim M.Z.* 417:1. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 97:3 calls it a “fitting custom and they cannot be lenient.”

16. According to the reason that they did not give their jewelry to the *Egel* it would apply to single girls as well. According to the reason that each month they are permitted to their husbands it would not apply to single girls (*Likutei Maharich* 3:page 466 new).

17. *Yosef Ometz* 682, *Shevet Hakehasi* 1:135:4, *Yalkut Yosef (Dinei Isha)* 36:1.

18. *Rokeach* 228, *Beis Yosef*, *Levush* 417:1, *Daas Torah* 417, *Mishnah Berurah* 4, *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:22, *Shevet Hakehasi* 1:135:2.

19. *Shibolei Haleket* 168, *Pri Chadash* 417:1.

20. *Mor U’ketziah* 417, *Mishnah Berurah* 4.

21. *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 24, *Shalmi Moed* page 11. The *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:22 says it applies both days.

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all women or only for those who have a family custom.²² It appears that this custom is for all women.²³

Does This Apply to Men as Well?

The Gemara²⁴ maintains that more than three people are called up to the Torah on days when work is not done, which would include Rosh Chodesh. Elsewhere, it permits work on Rosh Chodesh.²⁵ *Tosafos*²⁶ explains that the restriction from work is limited to women. Therefore, men are permitted to do work on Rosh Chodesh.²⁷ The *Birchei Yosef*²⁸ explains that the Yom Tov of Rosh Chodesh was taken away from them; therefore, they should not refrain from work.²⁹ However, there are those who maintain that men should not do work that involves heavy lifting.³⁰

At Night

There is a discussion in the *poskim* if the custom applies at night, or only during the day.³¹ The opinion of the *Ya'avetz* is to be lenient.³² Some explain the reason for this as follows: if one forgets *Ya'aleh V'yavo* on Rosh Chodesh at night, he does not repeat *Shemoneh Esrei* because we are not

22. Refer to *Biur Halachah* 417 "v'hanashim."

23. Ibid, opinion of Harav Elyashiv s"zt"l quoted in *Bshvilei Haparshah* page 162:1.

24. *Megillah* 22b.

25. *Maseches Chagigah* 18a.

26. *Maseches Megillah* 22b "v'shein."

27. *Mordechai Maseches Megillah* 3:806, *Ritva Maseches Megillah* 22b, *Rokeach* 228, *Beis Yosef* 417, *Pri Chadash* 1, *Birchei Yosef* 4, *Machzik Brachah* 4, *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 3, *Likutei Maharich* 3:page 466 (new), *Mishnah Berurah* 2, *Biur Halachah* "minhag tov," *Yalkut Yosef (Dinei Isha)* 36:1. Refer to *Tosafos Maseches Megillah* 23a "mishum, Shabbos 24a "oh," *Ohr L'tzion* 3:1:1.

28. 417:4.

29. However, he adds that if a man wishes to refrain from doing work on Rosh Chodesh he may (*Ben Ish Chai Yayikra* 2:2).

30. *Mordechai Maseches Megillah* 3:806, *Levush* 417:1.

31. Refer to *Mor U'ketziah* 7, *Biur Halachah* "minhag tov."

32. *Mor U'ketziah* 417. See *Birur Halachah* 417.

mekadesh the month at night.³³ Therefore, work may be done on the night of Rosh Chodesh.³⁴

The *Biur Halachah*³⁵ says that he does not know if we hold like the *Ya'avetz* in this regard. The opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l*³⁶ (and others)³⁷ is that the custom of not doing work applies at night as well as during the day.

Which Work

Refraining from work depends on the custom.³⁸ If women accepted as a custom from their mothers not to do any work then they must follow the custom.³⁹ The opinion of the *Elyah Rabbah*⁴⁰ is that women should refrain from any work on Rosh Chodesh.

Making Money

There are those who maintain that women need only refrain from work that earns money, but common household work such as sewing and fixing certain household items is permitted.⁴¹ This is not the accepted custom.

Housewives and Working Women

In earlier years, women were not found outside of their homes. They cooked, cleaned and took care of their children. Today many women are out in the work force, working to

33. *Shulchan Aruch* 422:1.

34. *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 20, opinion of Harav Elyashiv *s"zt"l* quoted in *B'shvilei Haparshah* page 162:3.

35. 417 "*minhag tov*." See *Shevet Halevi* 6:50:1.

36. *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 22, *Shalmei Moed* page 11, *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:22.

37. *Shevet Hakehasi* 1:135:3.

38. *Shulchan Aruch* 417:1, *Magen Avraham* 3.

39. *Beis Yosef*, *Biur Halachah* *ibid*, *Aruch Hashulchan* 10.

40. 417:5. Refer to *Rabbeinu Yerucham Nesiv* 11:1, *Chessed Lalafim* 417:1.

41. *Beis Yosef* 417, *Levush* 417:1. Refer to *Mor U'ketziah* 417.

אינן לל להקציב"ה בעולמו אלא יד אמות של הלכה בלבד... (ברכות מ)

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make a living. The *Aruch Hashulchan*⁴² maintains that a housewife should refrain from work (except for cooking, etc.). However, a career woman may do work on Rosh Chodesh since the custom does not require her to lose out on *parnassah*.⁴³ This is especially true today in many circles where the husband learns and the wife works to support the family.⁴⁴

Sewing / Spinning / Knitting / Weaving

As mentioned above, the custom in some places is that sewing is permitted.⁴⁵ However, spinning is prohibited.⁴⁶ In Yerushalayim the custom is that women do not sew.⁴⁷ This is the custom nowadays in other places as well.⁴⁸ Knitting and weaving should be avoided as well.⁴⁹

Washing by Hand / Washing Machine

The custom is that women do not wash clothing on Rosh Chodesh.⁵⁰ Some question this custom since washing clothing is one of the tasks mentioned in the Gemara⁵¹ that

42. 417:10.

43. *Shevet Hakehasi* 1:135:5

44. Opinion of Harav Yisroel Pesach Feinhandler *s"z"l. s"*Therefore, a woman can teach children in a school on Rosh Chodesh (*Ohr L'tzion* 3:1:1:footnote 1).

45. *Tashbatz* 3:244, *Avnei Yushpei* 5:74:3.

46. *Rabbeinu Yeruchan Nesiv* 11:1, *Tashbatz* 3:244, *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 3.

47. Opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* quoted in *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 11. Refer to *Orchos Rabbeinu* 1:page 177:23.

48. *Da'as Torah* 417, *Likutei Maharich* 3:page 466 (new), *Rivevos Ephraim* 3:298, *Shevet Halevi* 6:50:1, *Siach Yitzchak* 325, opinion of Harav Elyashiv *shlit'a* quoted in *B'shvilei Haparshah* page 162:1.

49. *Rivevos Ephraim* 3:298, *Avnei Yushpei* 5:74:3, *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:22.

50. Opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* quoted in *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 10. Refer to *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 10 quoting the opinion of Harav Chaim Kanievsky *shlit'a*.

51. *Maseches Kesubos* 59b.

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a woman does for her husband, which would mean that she can do it on Rosh Chodesh as well.⁵²

Washing clothing in earlier years required hours of washing by hand and was very burdensome. However, today one just has to place the clothing in the washing machine and push the button. The question is if such washing is also prohibited on Rosh Chodesh. There are *poskim* who maintain that the prohibition applies even today,⁵³ while others are lenient.⁵⁴

According to the stringent opinion, a woman could place the clothing in the washing machine and the man can press the button.⁵⁵ Others permit the woman to prepare the load of clothing before Rosh Chodesh and then press the button on Rosh Chodesh.⁵⁶

Drying

Those *poskim* who permit washing clothes in a washing machine would permit drying them as well.⁵⁷

Work Not Done for the Husband

There is an opinion in the *poskim* that any work that a wife does not do for her husband should not be done on

52. *Avnei Yushpei* 5:74:1, opinion of Harav Yisroel Pesach Feinhandler *s"zt"Is*. The *Orchos Rabbeinu* 1:page 177:23 quotes that in the Steipler *zt"Is* home washing clothing was done.

53. *Ateres Paz O.C.* 1:6 "agav," *Ko Somar L'Bais Yaakov* page 65, *Halichos Bas Yisrael* 16:footnote 4, opinions of Harav Elyashiv *shlit"a* and Harav Chaim Kanievsky *shlit"a* quoted in *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 18, opinion of Harav Elyashiv *shlit"a* quoted in *B'shvilei Haparshah* page 162:2. See *Halichos Bas Yisrael* 16:footnote 3, opinion of Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky *zt"l* quoted in *Emes L'Yaakov* 417:footnote 417. Refer to *Ohr L'tzion* 3:1:1.

54. *Rivevos Ephraim* 3:298, opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* quoted in *Rosh Chodesh* 11:footnote 19, *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:footnote 34, *Divrei Chachamim* 32:page 142:402, *Yalkut Yosef (Dinei Isha)* 36:1, *Birur Halachah* 417.

55. *Halichos Chaim* 2:page 95:183, *Ohr L'tzion* 3:1:1, *Rivevos Ephraim* 7:270. This is also the opinion of Harav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg *s"zt"l* quoted in *ibid*:footnote 153.

56. *Shevet Hakehasi* 1:135.

57. Refer to *Ohr L'tzion* 3:1:1:footnote 1.

Rosh Chodesh. This includes gardening, fixing the car or broken utensils, and painting.⁵⁸

Ironing

Women may iron clothing on Rosh Chodesh.⁵⁹ In the home of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* ironing was not done.⁶⁰

Tying Bows

There is an opinion in the *poskim* that tying bows is permitted on Rosh Chodesh.⁶¹ However, the custom is not in accordance with this opinion.⁶²

Needed for Rosh Chodesh

There is an opinion in the *poskim* that whatever is needed for Rosh Chodesh is permitted (i.e. washing, etc.).⁶³ In addition, if the job cannot be done after Rosh Chodesh, a woman may do it on Rosh Chodesh.⁶⁴

Conclusion

We have seen the various customs pertaining to women working on Rosh Chodesh. In many circles, women have the custom to refrain from work. However, there are circles that do not have this custom. In part it could be that women work today, and it is difficult to find a job where one takes

58. Opinion of Harav Yisroel Pesach Feinhandler *s"zt"l. s"*

59. *Avnei Yushpei* 5:74:2, opinion of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* quoted in Rosh Chodesh 11:footnote 13, *Shalmei Moed* page 11, *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:16, opinion of Harav Yisroel Pesach Feinhandler *s"zt"l. s"*

60. *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:22.

61. *Eishel Avraham Butchatch* 417.

62. *Likutei Maharich* 3:page 466 (new).

63. *Eishel Avraham Butchatch Tanina* 417, *Mor U'ketziah* 417, *Shevet Hakehasi* 1:135:5, *Halichos Shlomo Moadim* 1:footnote 34.

64. *Bartenura Maseches Megillah* 4:2. The *Ya'avetz* adds if a man cannot do the work for you (*Mor U'ketziah* 417).

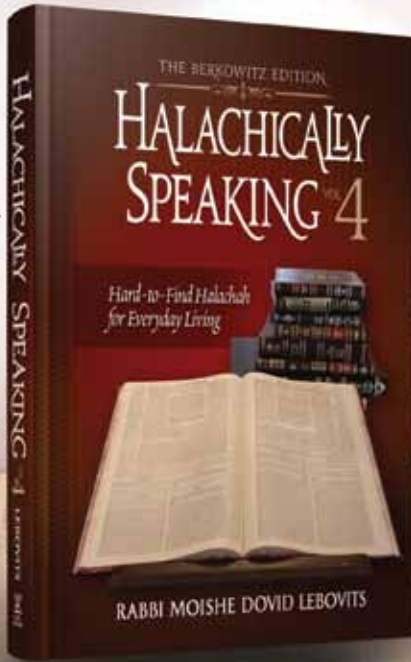
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off once a month (besides weekends). Practically speaking, there are only a few “*melachos*” which women refrain from on Rosh Chodesh (i.e. sewing, and work not done for her husband).

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