



PO Box 1076 Jerusalem 91009 * Tel. 972-2-628-4101

Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

The Torah of Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner

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Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

RavAviner-subscribe@yahogroups.com

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Tzahal soldier lighting chanukiyah

Q: I am a soldier in Tzahal and cannot always light the chanukiyah. What do I do?

A: You are exempt from lighting the chanukiyah. "Someone who is involved with one mitzvah is exempt from another mitzvah." You are involved in the mitzvah of serving as a guard in Tzahal, you are therefore exempt from the mitzvah of lighting the chanukiyah. Here it is not only that you are performing a mitzvah, but it is a great mitzvah of protecting the Nation and Land of Israel and sanctifying Hashem's Name. As a soldier, it is certainly not the first time you cannot perform a mitzvah. Sometimes you cannot daven, say Kiddush, etc... If you can light, great; but if not, you are exempt. I remember that there was once a discussion in the yeshiva. A soldier on guard duty asked about davening Minchah. One Rabbi said that he was exempt because he was fulfilling a mitzvah. Another Rabbi said that it is forbidden for him to daven because he will not be able to guard properly!

Maximum distance between Chanukah lights

Q: What is the maximum distance the Chanukah lights can be from one another?

A: I have never seen this discussed, but reason tells me that as long as they appear as one, it is permissible. These types of things are dependent on reality. For example, if the chanukiyah is on the roof and they are far apart and we are far away, they will appear as one. We do not fulfill our obligation with these, but if we did, here is an example. Our Sages did not give a definition. The Gemara in Shabbat (22a) says that the maximum height for the Chanukah lights is 20 amah (10 meters or 30 feet), so that the eye can see them. Perhaps we can say that since 20 amah is the maximum height, it is also the maximum width, so that the eye can see them.

Reciting "Shehechyanu" more than once on Chanukah lights

Q: I will be lighting the Chanukiyah for my mother and then returning to my house, where I live alone. Do I recite the blessing of "Shehechyanu" a second time at home?

A: No, the "Shehechyanu" is only recited at your mother's house, but the other blessings are recited a second time.

"Magdil" or "Migdol"

Q: Do we say "Magdil" or "Migdol" in birkat ha-mazon (blessing after eating) on Chanukah?

A: "Magdil" as usual. It is printed in all of the siddurim and bentches.

Shabbat Chanukah after from home (This question was asked five times this week!)

Q: I am spending Shabbat with at my in-law's (or brother's, friend's) house, do I light Chanukah lights at home or at my host's house?

A: You can light at either place, whichever you wish.

Waiting between Chanukah and Shabbat lights

Q: Can I wait a little bit between lighting Chanukah lights and the Shabbat candles?

A: Yes, you can rest in between.

Lighting chanukiyah at work

Q: I work in a hotel and I light the chanukiyah for the guests in the lobby. Do I light again at home?

A: Yes, the Chanukah lights are to be lit at home. If you have a family, you also have to light for your wife, children, etc...

Woman lighting chanukiyah

Q: My husband is not home, should I light?

A: Yes, you are obligated.

Q: Can my 13 year old son light for me?

A: Yes, he can light for you.

Late-night lighting

Q: It is 11:00 PM and I live alone, should I still light the chanukiyah?

A: Yes, you can light until "No one is left in the market" (Shabbat 21b). If people are still passing by, you can still light with a blessing.

Lighting in home where there are no people

Q: My mother is in the hospital, and we lit the chanukiyah for her there. Should we also light at her house?

A: If no one is in the house, you do not need to light. If she wants you to light there, do so without a blessing.

Cemetery on Chanukah

Q: Can I visit a cemetery during Chanukah?

A: Some have the custom to go and some have the custom not to go. You can do as you wish.

Lighting outside

Q: In the Talmud, our Sages originally decreed that the chanukiyah be lit outside, but then they ruled that we should light inside because of the fear of non-Jews. Today most people in Israel light outside. How can this be – don't you need a rabbinic court that is greater in wisdom and number to change the decree?

A: One of the Achronim (later authorities) – I think the Davar Yeshoshua – actually rules this way. He says that after there was a decree to light inside, we should continue to do so even if there is no longer a problem with non-Jews. All of the authorities disagree with him. They give two possible answers: 1. The Rabbis originally made two decrees: Light outside if there is no danger and light inside if there is danger. 2. The decree to light inside was only in a place where there was danger. This is like the ruling of "Mayim Megulim" (exposed water). The Rabbis ruled that it is forbidden to drink water which was left uncovered because a snake could have put its venom in it. Tosafot ask, how then do we drink uncovered water today? They explain that the decree was only in place where there are snakes. Similarly, the decree to light inside was only for a place where there is danger.

Fake oil

Q: Every time I light my chanukiyah, it goes out. What do I do?

A: There are people who sell fake oil. They deceive people and sell fake oil for a high price. Check on the internet site of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. They had a list of fake oils. You can also use candles. It is a glorification to use olive oil, but you do not have to be strict. We are not strict about everything.

Where to light

Q: I am eating for Shabbat at one place and sleeping at another place. Where should I light the chanukiyah?

A: In the place you sleep. It is clearer that that is your place.

Window or door

Q: I live in an apartment building. Is it better to light in the window which faces the public domain or at the door across from the mezuzah?

A: Some authorities rule one way and others rule the other way. You can do as you wish.

Following different opinions in one house

Q: My son is coming for Shabbat. I light the chanukiyah in the window and he lights in at the door. Is there a problem of "Lo titgodedu – do not make different groups"?

A: No, this is only when there is a dispute. Here, there are different positions.

Best place to put chanukiyah

Q: I have two windows. One is higher than 20 amah (10 meters or 30 feet) and one lower than 20 amah. The chanukiyah must be lower than 20 amah so that people will see it. But if I put it in the window that is higher than 20 amah more people will see it. What should I do?

A: Our Sages made certain decrees and we say "Lo pelug" – we do not make distinctions. This principle is so that we have clear and simple laws, and we do not have to engage in complicated calculations to decide every situation. Here, the Rabbis gave rules and it is not to figure out where more people will see it. There is also a dispute as to whether the 20 amah is counted from the ground or from the floor of the room where you are lighting..

Moving chanukiyah

Q: Can I light the chanukiyah inside and carry it outside?

A: Yes, because both places are acceptable places to light. You cannot light it in a place which is not okay and move it to an acceptable place or visa-versa.

Rabbenu Tam Tefillin by accident

Q: If someone accidentally says the blessing and puts on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin instead of Rashi Tefillin, do you have to say another bless?

A: Yes, you must say the blessing again because there was "Hesech Ha-Da'at" – you took your mind off of the blessing, and also because much time has passed. Even if you put on another pair of Rashi Tefillin, you would have to say another bless. Furthermore, you do not usually say a blessing on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin because it is stricture and you therefore did not plan to have the blessing on the second set of Tefillin. It is like says a blessing on an apple and

you are not planning to eat another apple. If you decide to eat a second apple, you have to say another blessing. Despite all of this, putting on Tefillin even without a blessing in a mitzvah as it says, "A lack of blessing does not impede fulfilling the mitzvot."

Hashem forgiving Yosef's brothers

Q: If Yosef forgave his brothers, why didn't Hashem? We see that Hashem did not forgive them because of the Ten Martyrs which were killed during by the Romans as a spiritual repair for the sin of Yosef's brothers.

A: When Yosef forgave his brothers it was going beyond the letter of the law. He was a supreme righteous person. Hashem, however, did not forgive them. For example, someone is killed and right before he dies he forgives them. The murderer nonetheless receives capital punishment. We do not forgive him. All of the years that Yosef was with Yaacov he did tell him when he arrived in Egypt, and he avoided being alone with Yaacov so that he would not ask. He comforted him. It says at the end of Massechet Yoma that some sins are forgiven after repentance, some sins require repentance and Yom Kippur, some sins require repentance, Yom Kippur and suffering and some sins require repentance, Yom Kippur, suffering and death. We learn how to properly repent from Achan (Sanhedrin 43b) who received capital punishment. How did repentance benefit him? He went to the Garden of Eden instead of Gehinom (purgatory). The President of Lithuania once visited Israel and he apologized for his country's part in the Holocaust. What a joke! You think you can apologize for something someone else did and we can forgive you for the six million Jews who were murdered? The brothers almost killed Yosef and sold him. Yosef understood that this was part of a divine plan, but they did not know this and Hashem therefore did not forgive them.

Non-Jewish calendar

Q: It is forbidden to use the Christian date because it is related to idol worship, but what about using a different non-Jewish date?

A: We are Jews and we need to use the Jewish calendar date.

Kashering a pork factory

Q: Is it permissible to buy a factory which prepares pork and turn it into a kosher factory?

A: There is no problem. While pork is completely treif and to have a pork factory here is a great desecration of Hashem's Name, if he enters and kashers everything, he is performing a great mitzvah. He is transforming a treif place into a kosher place. The place is not impure because pork was there.