



Parashat Miketz - Chanukah 5772 - #214

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Rav Aviner on... Q&A on the Laws of Chanukah

Simcha - Joy

If someone forgot "Al HaNissim" in the Birkat Ha-Mazon, what is the law?

If he remembers before he mentions G-d's Name, he goes back, but if he doesn't, he doesn't go back. Even then, however, it's still good for him to recite it with the "Ha-Rachaman"s.

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Do women recite Hallel on Chanukah?

If they wish to. Ashkenazic women recite it with a blessing, and Sefardic women without, as with any time-dependent Mitzvah.

Do a bride and groom fast if their wedding day falls on Chanukah?

No.

At funerals/memorials/yahrzeits that fall on Chanukah, may we eulogize the dead?

Only praise that won't make people cry. A Torah scholar can be eulogized at his funeral.

May we visit graves?

There are different customs, and everyone should follow his family custom. But visiting the graves of the righteous (Kivrei Tzadikim) is permitted.

Is there a Mitzvah to eat festive meals on Chanukah?

There is no obligation but doing so is a Mitzvah. Meat and wine are not required. Including words of Torah is a fine practice.

Is there an obligation to eat jelly donuts?

There's a custom to consume dairy dishes and fried foods, but no obligation.

Is it permissible to do work while the candles are lit?

Men can. Women refrain from types of work that are forbidden for half an hour after candle lighting.

Chanukah Candles

Are women obligated to light Chanukah candles?

Yes. A married woman meets her obligation through her husband.

If a person is alone, such that if he lights candles no one will see them, and he won't be publicizing the miracle, is he obligated to light them?

Yes. The decree is a general one.

Do young boys light separately?

Ashkenazic boys light with a blessing. Sefardic boys, if they wish to light, do so without a blessing, using a Menorah distanced from their father's.

How about girls?

The same.

When is “Ha-Nerot Halalu” begun?

Once the first candle is lit.

Must the whole household be present during the lighting?

No, but it is preferable.

Which is better, candles or oil?

Each has its advantage. Candles emit better light, but the miracle occurred with oil.

May one light partly with oil and partly with candles?

No, because then it looks as though they are the lights of two different people.

Can one use electric lights instead of candles?

Yes, without a blessing, if one has no other choice. But they are permissible for Shabbat candles.

If the candles go out, must one relight them?

Not if they burned long enough and were lit in the right location. If, however, a candle went out during the first half hour, it should be relit. If the wind blew it out, one must light it again without a blessing.

Can the candles be moved elsewhere once they are lit?

No. See Shulchan Aruch 675:1.

What does one do with the oil and wicks or with the candles that are left over in the Menorah?

It is forbidden to use them. Rather, they must be disposed of in a respectable manner, such as placing them in a bag and throwing them into the trash receptacle.

What about the oil left in the bottle?

That can be used for anything. The same goes for candles left in the box.

Must one buy a silver Menorah?

No. Just that as with any Mitzvah, it should be performed in a seemly manner.

Can a Chanukah Menorah be formed in a circle?

Yes, as long as you can tell where the candles start and end.

Does the Shammes have to stand alone?

Yes. It should be distinguishable from the other candles, either higher or removed from them.

Is one allowed to eat before the lighting?

Yes, if it's just a bit of food, or if there is someone to remind them when candle lighting time arrives.

And how about work? And Torah learning?

One should have a friend remind them to light. Or one can use an alarm clock.

Can one light Chanukah candles at a party, an assembly, a wedding or a Bar Mitzvah?

Some allow it if Minchah or Ma'ariv is also recited there, because then the affair takes on the laws of a Shul. One can also do so if there are people there who otherwise won't light at all.

Must one purchase a glass cage so one can light outside?

It's appropriate, but one doesn't have to.

If someone's home has two doors, does one have to light at both?

We do not do so nowadays. Since many people light inside, no suspicion is created that one didn't light at all.

If no one can see the entrance to one's home, should one still light there, considering that the miracle won't be publicized?

Yes, the decree is a general one.

If a house opens on a courtyard, should one light outside one's door or in the courtyard?

It depends on the type of courtyard. Outside one's door is better.

If one lives in an apartment building, where should he light?

Some say he should light below in the street; others say he should light outside his door in the stairwell; still others say he should light in the window facing the public thoroughfare. The last idea is best.

If someone is used to reciting Ma'ariv late, should he recite Ma'ariv earlier on Chanukah?

No. he should recite Ma'ariv when he usually does. Only those who recite Ma'ariv and light at nightfall should recite Ma'ariv first.

When should one light on Friday afternoon?

Before lighting Shabbat candles. One should make sure to have longer Chanukah candles, or at least one longer candle.

When is the latest that one can light?

As long as people are still on the street, and that varies from place to place. If someone lights inside, he can light as long as someone is awake in his house. After that, he should light without a blessing.

What is better: for a woman to wait for her husband who is coming home late, or for her to light on time? And should a husband wait for his wife?

It's better to light on time, but they can wait if they want to, especially if they are lighting indoors.

If someone has to travel, what's the earliest he can light?

Starting at Plag Ha-Minchah, about an hour and a quarter before nightfall (i.e. halachic hours). In other words, fifty minutes before sunset, using long candles.

In a pinch, which is better: Plag Ha-Minchah or late at night?

There's a controversy over that. Late night is better.

People Away from Home

If someone is visiting a friend's house for the evening, should he meet his obligation through the friend's lighting?

No. He should light when he comes home, unless others in his family lit there earlier.

What if he spends the night at his friend's home?

He can suffice with his friend's lighting. His host should give him a share in a candle. And if he's Ashkenazic, he should light there by himself.

And if he's coming home after Shabbat ends, where should he light?

Either place is fine.

Does a soldier in the army have to light?

An Ashkenazi should light with a blessing. One Sefardi should light for all the other Sefardim.

Does a yeshiva student have to light in yeshiva? What about a university student?

The same as above.

And a patient in a hospital?

The same.

And where should a hotel guest light?

In his room. And He should supervise his candles for a half hour, and then snuff them out.

And does a traveler on a ship have to light there?

Yes, if he has a roof, and the same goes for a train. And the same goes for someone sleeping in a car on a camping trip.

What about someone sleeping in the field?

He's exempt. He has no home.

And someone is sleeping in a tent?

Yes. And that includes a pup tent.

What side of the tent should he light on?

The right side, because there's no Mezuzah.

If a soldier is not allowed to light in a structure or a tent, where should he light?

Outside in a glass container, or in the dining room. He should wait until supper time when everyone is together, but a soldier should be left on "guard" duty. Letting the flame burn for half an hour suffices.

If a soldier has no candles, does he have to trouble himself to attain them?

Yes, as long as this doesn't impair his functioning as a soldier.

Does a soldier sleeping in a tank on field maneuvers have to light?

Yes. Likewise if he's sleeping in a car.

And a soldier sleeping in a ditch?

Yes, if a roof has been spread over the ditch.

And if he's in a guard booth?

Yes, whether it's at the main gate or at a roadblock.

Is he allowed to light using unkosher oil?

Yes.

And what about oil that hasn't yet had Terumot and Ma'aserot [tithes] removed?

That's forbidden.

Is one allowed to light candles without a Menorah if one doesn't have one?

Yes. One should keep the candles equidistant, so it doesn't look like different people's candles.

If someone missed lighting on the first night, should he recite "Shehechyanu" on the second night?

Yes.

Can a soldier hurrying off to a mission light for several minutes and then extinguish the candles?

Yes, but without a blessing. This ruling is based on the view that the half hour established by our Sages is not how long the candles must burn, but the time-span in which one is allowed to light (see Shabbat 21b).

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