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Collection of Laws of Rosh Hashanah – Part 1

[Shut She'eilat Shlomo 1:235]

1. Lighting Candles

We recite the blessing of Shehechyanu on both nights of Rosh Hashanah, even if one does not have a new piece of clothing or a new fruit (which he did not yet eat this season) before him. It is preferable, however, that there be a new piece of clothing or a new fruit (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 600:2).

Question: Is it permissible to attach the candles in the candlesticks on Rosh Hashanah?

Answer: Attaching the candles to the candlesticks for the second night is forbidden on account of [the prohibition of] "leveling" (Shemirat Shabbat Ke-Hilchata p. 76 #18), and this prohibition is no less important than the actual commandment of lighting the candles. One should therefore prepare two additional candlesticks before Rosh Hashanah or stick them into the candlesticks without attaching them on the holiday.

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, one may not prepare the candlesticks before the stars come out (definite nightfall), since we may not prepare on the

first day of Rosh Hashanah for the second day. But it is permissible to light the candles before sunset, since one benefits from their light on the first day itself.

Addition to the revised edition

Question: I saw in the book "Am Ke-Lavi" (the original name of this volume of She'eilat Shlomo) that it is permissible to light on the first day of Rosh Hashanah before sunset (for the second day) because it is not considered preparation for the next day, since we benefit from the lights on the first day as well. What is the source for this law, since it does not follow the opinion of the Mateh Ephraim (599:9-11)?

Answer: The Be'er Heitev writes: "The Levush (503:4) wrote: We customarily light the candles when it gets dark even before [reciting the prayer] "Barechu." And the Or Zarua wrote that there are women who recite the blessing before they go to Shul (for Maariv of the second day). And it is also written in the Shelah that it is a greater Mitzvah to do this than to light upon returning to their house since they would return to a dark house. And in Shul it is customary to light even when it is still day time since in a Shul it is always a Mitzvah to light candles, even in the day." And this is the ruling in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 514:5): "It is forbidden to light an idle light which one does not need, but [a light] of a Shul is not considered idle. It is permissible to light one even on the second day after Minchah and this is not considered preparing for a weekday, since in lighting it there is a Mitzvah for that time." And the Mishnah Berurah (#33) wrote: "There is a Mitzvah...that is to say, even if one does not need the light while it is still day, even so there is a Mitzvah to light it because of the honor of the Shul, and if it is already close to dark it is even permissible in one's house since he needs it at that time."

2. Annulment of Vows

It is customary to release ones vows on Erev Rosh Hashanah or Erev Yom Kippur, but it is also possible to do this during the entire Ten Days of

Repentance. One who is unable to do this should be released before three individuals when the opportunity arises (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:10).

3. Eating before the Shofar Blasts

Question: Is our custom of eating before the Shofar blasts in consonance with Jewish Law?

Answer:

1) In general, when it is incumbent upon a Jew to fulfill a Mitzvah he should first fulfill the Mitzvah and then eat afterwards. Nevertheless the basic law is that only an actual meal is forbidden before the fulfillment of a Mitzvah, and a small snack is permissible. But in the generations of the Achronim, they were very strict regarding eating a snack, and they only permitted it for someone who was extremely feeble (See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:9. Sha'arei Teshuvah 584 #3).

2) It is now customary in all places, even amongst the pious, to permit eating a small amount. They support this on the basis of the law that a small snack is permissible. There is therefore no basis to prohibit it. See the comprehensive article of Rabbi Y. Segal in Noam vol. 14, which states that someone who has difficulty with not eating, and whose Davening continues until after midday – is permitted to eat something small.

Summary: It is certainly preferable not to eat, in particular on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, since these Shofar blasts are a Torah Mitzvah, but for one who has difficulty waiting until the end, and whose ability to pray with proper concentration will be disturbed, it is permissible to eat something light. And one should obviously do so with awe and fear, and not for an inappropriate reason (In Shut Bnei Banim #14, Rav Yehudah Herzl Henkin disagrees with the above, but one can counter his argument).

4. Question: Is one required to recite another blessing over a Talit after the break between Shacharit and Musaf?

Answer: Yes, since this is a significant interruption and the person's mind will be distracted from the Mitzvah of Talit (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 8, Mishnah Berurah #37).