

HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's question:

On *Chanukah*, and especially *Shabbos-Chnukah*, it is customary to visit friends and relatives and spend the evening away from one's home. How does this affect the *mitzvah* of *nair Chanukah*? How does it affect the regular *mitzvah* of *nair Shabbos*?

The issues:

A) *Nair Chanukah* – where, when, and for how long?

B) *Nair Shabbos*; changing locations

A) *Nair Chanukah*

The objective of the *mitzvah* of *nair Chanukah* is *pirsumei nisa*, to publicize the miracle of the oil that burned seven days longer than naturally expected. To publicize this with a lamplight, kindling and displaying would need to be after dark, when it can be seen. The Talmud gives a time range, interpreted as both the optimum kindling time and minimum length of displaying time. If it is extinguished before this time, it need not be rekindled. However, enough oil must be placed there to last this long. If one wishes to, he may rekindle it, but without reciting a *brocha*. On *Erev Shabbos*, this is preferred.

In practice, the optimum time for kindling is debated. Opinions range from sunset to seventy-two minutes later, with various stages in-between. The latest times are based on passersby seeing the light. Nowadays, people are still out and about late into the night, and most people kindle indoors for those at home. Therefore, many consider the optimum time to stretch on. In real emergency situations, one may kindle as early as *plag hamincha*, a seasonal hour and a quarter before evening, and as late as all night long, provided someone else is awake to see the light. On *Erev Shabbos*, one may not kindle after dark, for obvious reasons. The optimum time is right before one kindles *Shabbos* lights. It is not really considered the next day, *Shabbos*, evidenced by the fact that one has not kindled *Shabbos* lights. Nonetheless, it is fine for the kindling of these lights. Enough oil must be left to remain for the minimum length of time. This is a half-hour after the earliest kindling opinion, sunset. Ideally, enough oil should be left to burn through a half-hour past the latest optimum kindling time of seventy-two minutes past sunset.

Incidentally, the *menora* in the *Bais Hamikdash* was kindled before sunset – some say at *plag hamincha*. While *nair Chanukah* is not modeled directly on the menorah, its dating is modeled on it. Accordingly, some say that the first night of *Chanukah* actually began before sunset. Thus, while it might not be optimum for visibility purposes, kindling before sunset does not necessarily raise the issue of kindling on the wrong day.

The ideal *mitzvah* of *ner chanukah* applies to the home. Each additional member of the home can also kindle lights. However, the *mitzvah* remains in the home. To further publicize the miracle there is a *mitzvah* to kindle them in *shul*. There is no *mitzvah* to kindle them anywhere else. Since it is primarily to publicize the miracle, the lights should be

somewhere that people outside the house can see them. Thus, to show which house they are associated with and also be in a public place they are placed at the entrance from the public thoroughfare to the home. In Talmudic times this was the entrance to the courtyard. Nowadays, partly due to antisemitism, the prevailing practice is to kindle them indoors. The miracle is publicized internally, for members of the household. According to some poskim, this was an official institution due to specific circumstances, and still applies nowadays. They would say that nowadays one can not fulfill the obligation outdoors. Within the home, one could kindle them on the table. The most ideal place for them is in a doorway, on the side opposite the *mezuzah*. Thus, one entering the room or home passes between the two *mitzvos* connected to the home. The ideal height for the lights is between three and ten *tefachim*. [A *tefach* is subject to debate, ranging to about four inches.] They may not be placed higher up than twenty cubits. They would then be outside the range of vision, and the miracle would not be publicized. Many follow the practice of placing the lights in a window. This way they can also be seen by the public.

In choosing a room to kindle them, the most used area of the home is considered the center of the home. The idea is to publicize the miracle to all members of the house. Therefore, the area must be common to everybody. This would be the eating room. Either the doorway, a table used by all, or a window in this area would be ideal.

The lights are not for benefit, which is actually forbidden. The requirement is to see them, on which one of the *brochos* is said. Thus, if one kindled his lights, he obviously saw them. He need not stay nearby to see them afterwards. Many people leave to *shul*, even on weekdays, and certainly on *Erev Shabbos*. They might not be alight when one returns. This does not diminish the *mitzvah*. Ideally, they should be available for viewing for the entire minimum period, and even for the ideal period. This does not place any obligation on anyone in particular to stay and look at them. It is a commendable practice to sit by the lights and watch them. The prevailing custom is for women not to do any chores for the minimum period. [See *Shabbos* 21b-22a 23a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 670:1 671:5-8 672 677: TZ 2 679, commentaries.]

B) Nair Shabbos

According to most poskim, the *mitzvah* to kindle *Shabbos* lights is not Scriptural. Many consider it *midivrei sofrim*, a Prophetic *mitzvah*. Some Rabbinical *mitzvos*, such as Chanukah and Purim, could only have been instituted long after the giving of the Torah. Others were instituted by *Moshe Rabeinu*, and yet others were instituted earlier, such as by the court of *Shem*, for those who had accepted the observance of the Torah, including the *Avos*. Reference is made to the *Shabbos* lights of *Sarah Imainu* and of *Rivkah Imainu*. A minority consider this *mitzvah* Scriptural.

A number of different but connected ideas are cited as the basis for this *mitzvah*. It appears that kindling *Shabbos* lights is considered a *mitzvah* in its own right. It is also part of a larger *mitzvah*, but is significant enough to merit its own *brocha*, according to the majority of poskim. The two main sources for the *mitzvah* are *kavod* and *oneg Shabbos*. Both are based on the verses in the *Navi Yeshaya*, making reference to long-standing observances, dating back, at least, to the times of the Exodus. *Kavod Shabbos* is the *mitzvah* to honor *Shabbos* by preparing specially for it. This includes dressing specially nicely and cleaning, tidying and arranging the home. *Oneg Shabbos* refers to enjoying oneself

on *Shabbos*, specifically in the physical sense. This includes enjoying special foods and resting. Some say this refers to having the entire home well lit. This way, people will not stumble and trip, but will feel comfortable moving about at ease – *oneg*. Having the table set with lights is part of *kavod Shabbos*. Another view agrees in practice, but maintains that the opposite is true in theory. Having the home well lit is part of *kavod*. Eating is enjoyed when the dining area is well lit, – *oneg*. Based on this, all would agree that one must kindle lights in both the living and dining areas. In practice, lamps kindled in the dining area with a *brocha* incorporate other lit-up living areas in the *mitzvah*.

Some other bases for the lights seem to be outgrowths of these. The best known is *shalom bayis*, domestic harmony. *Shabbos* is the time for *shalom*. The first instance of domestic discord took place right before the first *Shabbos*. Adam and Eve argued about who was responsible for the sin of eating of the tree of knowledge. In essence, if people are unable to navigate the house easily, there will inevitably be a lack of *shalom bayis*. Since one may not kindle lights on *Shabbos* itself, it is essential to kindle them before *Shabbos*. With the addition of this idea, the obligation is expanded. It now includes areas that do not appear to be part of the general living or dining areas. On the other hand, were the obligation based purely on *shalom bayis*, the lights would be unnecessary in a home that is already well lit. To fulfill *kavod* or *oneg Shabbos*, one must kindle lights specially.

This last matter is debated. One view maintains that one need not recite a *brocha* on these lights, since one need not always kindle them. If there is light in the home without these special lights, one has no further obligation. Therefore, even if one needs to specially supply the light, this kind of obligation could not be considered a *mitzvah* in its own right, with its own *brocha*. The other view rejects this, maintaining that on the contrary, one would extinguish the existing lights and rekindle them for *Shabbos*.

By kindling the lights, one ushers in his or her personal *Shabbos*. As we discussed last week, one should try to begin *Shabbos* a little early. In order to satisfy the view that one must kindle special lights for *Shabbos*, they must be kindled at a time that this is evident: after the earliest time that *Shabbos* can be ushered in (*plag hamincha*) and before *Shabbos* actually begins (*shkia*). They are the ideal way to start *Shabbos*. The *brocha* is the *kabalah* of *Shabbos*. The woman of the house accepts *Shabbos* this way. A man can do the same, but since he is obligated to participate in the service of *kabolas Shabbos*, he would have in mind that his kindling should not be considered his personal acceptance. This idea is not really a reason to kindle as much as a result of the other reasons. Since these are *Shabbos* lights, their kindling or the *brocha* recited on it is an indication of one's personal ushering in of *Shabbos*.

Another reason only arose in later times. Sects of Jews began to preach a misleading version of the *mitzvah* forbidding kindling fires on *Shabbos*. The text of the verse states: 'You shall not burn fire in your homes.' The deviant sects translated this to mean that one may not have artificial light in the home, even if it was kindled before *Shabbos*. The true meaning is that one may not do the *melacha* on *Shabbos* to produce the light. The deviant sects were opposed to traditional Judaism and to the Rabbis. To show that one follows the Rabbis, one must kindle these lights before *Shabbos*, which is entirely permissible. The source for this reason is an almost explicit Scriptural reference to the *mitzvah*. The Torah says: You shall not kindle a fire in your homes **on the day of *Shabbos***', implying

that one may kindle it before *Shabbos* and let it burn on into *Shabbos*.

Esoteric connections are made between *Shabbos* and light. The most basic of these is that the Midrash says that when Hashem blessed *Shabbos* at Creation, it was with light.

Given the various reasons, which lights should be kindled with a *brocha*? Assuming one kindles lights in all the locations around the home, should he recite the *brocha* on the *kavod*, the *oneg*, the *shalom bayis*, and which location counts for these? The consensus is to recite the *brocha* where one eats. If there is already light there, such as when one woman has already kindled in that room, many maintain that another may kindle with a *brocha* elsewhere. Many others maintain that there is always more *oneg* or *kavod* with extra lights, even in the same room. If one will not be eating at home, he or she may recite a *brocha* on lights that are kindled anywhere in the home, provided that they will be alight later when the person can benefit from them. For this reason, some say that if one will be unable to benefit (*oneg*) from the light that were kindled with the *brocha*, (he or she will not see them after dark) benefiting from lights elsewhere satisfies this requirement. In order to include them in the *mitzvah*, one should extinguish them and re-ignite them (see above). [Some allow this even with electric lighting, since the purpose is not only the physical lamp, but also the presence of the lighting.] The act of kindling satisfies the requirement to kindle specially (*kavod*) and to recite a *brocha*. To satisfy stringent views, some kindle an extra long burning lamp, such as a long candle or a *yahrzeit* candle, or use more oil. On *Chanukah*, the *shamash* lamp's purpose is benefit. One could have it in mind when kindling the *Shabbos* lamps. He or she could even kindle it at the same time. It would thus be included in the *mitzvah*. By adding oil to this lamp, one could ensure that there is still light from his *mitzvah* when he returns home.

In one home, one person kindles for all members of the household. A guest or lodger may participate in the household's lights by buying a small part of them. [See Vayakhel 35:3 Mechilta, Yeshaya 58:13-14, commentaries. *Shabbos*, second perek, Poskim. *Beraishis Rabah* 60:15, Rashi 24:67, commentaries. *Avudraham Lail Shabbos*. *Tur Sh Ar OC* 263, commentaries. *Behag mitzvos kum ase* 138. *Sefer Chasidim* 1147. *Bais Halevi* 11. *Tzitz Eliezer* I:20:11. *Mikraei Kodesh Chanukah* 20.]

In conclusion, one need not be concerned that he will not be home to see *nairos Chanukah*. To fully satisfy all views on *nairos Shabbos*, one should leave enough oil to burn until he arrives home later. One may also leave enough oil in the *shamash* to last until later. Then one could kindle the *shamash* with the *nairos Shabbos*. According to some, one could turn on some living area electric lighting at candle-lighting.

On the Parsha ... the sun, the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me ... [37:9] The stars cannot be seen until the sun has set! Perhaps this refers to stars seen at, or even right before, sunset. The light of the sun at these times is red [see *Rashbam* 38:30]. The moon and stars are white, against the darkening sky and the red sun. Perhaps this is why one may kindle *nair Chanukah*, and specifically the menorah in the *Bais Hamikdash*, after *plag hamincha*.

🕯️ Sponsored by Jeff Garrett and Elana Bloom in memory of his mother, Chava bas Baruch

a"h, Evelyn Garrett, whose *yahrzeit* is on the 20th of Kislev. 🕯️

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