

SHABBOS CHANUKAH: LAWS AND CUSTOMS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Lighting Chanukah candles on erev Shabbos and on motzaei Shabbos entails halachos that do not apply on weekday nights. The following is a summary of the special halachos that apply to Shabbos Chanukah.

Preparations

If possible, one should daven Minchah on Friday before lighting Chanukah candles.[1] There are two reasons for davening Minchah first: 1) The afternoon Tamid sacrifice, which corresponds to our Minchah service, was always brought before the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis ha-Mikdash[2]; 2) Davening Minchah after lighting Chanukah candles appears contradictory, since Minchah "belongs" to Friday, while the Chanukah candles "belong" to Shabbos[3]. But if no early minyan is available, then it is better to light first and daven with a minyan afterwards[4].

The oil or candles should be able to burn for at least one hour and forty-five minutes[5]. If the oil and candles cannot possibly burn that long, one does not fulfill the mitzvah even b'diavad, according to some opinions.

Enough oil (or long enough candles) to burn for at least one hour and forty-five minutes must be placed in the menorah before it is lit. If one neglected to put in enough oil and realized his error only after lighting the menorah, he may not add more oil. He must rather extinguish the flame, add oil, and then re-kindle the wick. The blessings, however, are not repeated[6].

One who does not have enough oil for all the wicks to burn for an hour and forty-five minutes must make sure that at least one light has enough oil to burn that long[7]. If, for example, Shabbos falls on the sixth night of Chanukah, and there is only enough oil for five lights to burn for the required length of time instead of the six that are required, most poskim maintain that only one should be lit, while a minority opinion holds that five should be lit[8].]

The custom in many homes that children under bar mitzvah light Chanukah candles should be observed on erev Shabbos as well. Preferably, the child's menorah should also have enough oil (or long enough candles) to burn an hour and forty-five minutes. If, however, it is difficult or impractical to do so, many poskim permit a child to light with the blessings even though his lights will not last for the full length of time[9].

The menorah should be placed in a spot where opening or closing a door [or window] will not fan or

extinguish the flame[10].

A guest who is eating and sleeping over lights his menorah at the home of his host even if his own home is in the same city. Preferably, he should leave his home before plag ha-Minchah[11].

The time of lighting on erev Shabbos

All preparations for Shabbos should be completed before Chanukah candles are lit so that all members of the household - including women and children - are present at the lighting[12].

There are two points to remember about lighting Chanukah candles on Friday afternoon: 1) Chanukah candles are always lit before Shabbos candles; 2) Chanukah candles are lit as close as possible to Shabbos. The procedure, therefore, is as follows:

L'chatchilah, Chanukah candles are lit immediately before lighting Shabbos candles. B'diavad, or under extenuating circumstances, they may be lit at any time after plag ha-Minchah[13]. Depending on the locale, plag ha-Minchah on erev Shabbos Chanukah is generally a few minutes less or few minutes more than an hour before sunset[14].

In most homes, where the husband lights Chanukah candles and the wife lights Shabbos candles, the correct procedure is to light Chanukah candles five minutes or so[15] (depending on the number of people in the house who are lighting Chanukah candles) before lighting Shabbos candles. As soon as Chanukah candles have been lit, the wife lights the Shabbos candles.

If many people are lighting and time is running short, a wife does not need to wait for everyone to finish lighting Chanukah candles; rather, she should light her Shabbos candles immediately[16]. If sunset is fast approaching, the wife should light Shabbos candles regardless of whether or not the Chanukah candles have been lit by her husband. If she sees that her husband will not light his menorah on time, she should light the Chanukah menorah herself, followed by Shabbos candles.]

In a home where the man lights both the Chanukah and the Shabbos candles [e.g., the man lives alone; the wife is away for Shabbos], the same procedure is followed. If, by mistake, he lit Shabbos candles before Chanukah candles, he should light his Chanukah candles anyway [as long as he did not have in mind to accept the Shabbos].

In a home where the woman lights both Chanukah and Shabbos candles [e.g., the woman lives alone; the husband is away for Shabbos], she must light Chanukah candles first. If, by mistake, she lit Shabbos candles first, she may no longer light Chanukah candles. She must ask another person - a man or a woman - who has not yet accepted the Shabbos to light for her. The other person must recite the blessing of lehadlik ner shel Chanukah, but she can recite the blessing of she'asah nissim [and shehecheyanu if it is the first night][17].

If, after lighting the Shabbos candles but before the onset of Shabbos, the Chanukah candles blew out, one must re-kindle them. One who has already accepted the Shabbos should ask another

person who has not yet accepted the Shabbos to do so[18].

On Shabbos

The menorah may not be moved with one's hands for any reason, neither while the lights are burning nor after they are extinguished[19]. When necessary, the menorah may be moved with one's foot, body or elbow[20] after the lights have burned out. If the place where the menorah is standing is needed for another purpose, a non-Jew may be asked to move the menorah after the lights have burned out[21].

If Al ha-nissim is mistakenly omitted, the Shemoneh Esrei or Birkas ha-Mazon is not repeated.

Children should be discouraged from playing dreidel games on Shabbos, even when playing with candy, etc.[22] A dreidel, however, is not muktzeh[23].

Oil may be pressed out of latkes on Shabbos, either by hand or with a utensil[24].

Chanukah gifts may not be given or received, unless they are needed for Shabbos use[25].

On Motzaei Shabbos

Candle lighting must take place as close as possible to the end of Shabbos[26]. Indeed, some have the custom of lighting Chanukah candles even before havdalah, while others light them immediately after havdalah. All agree that any further delay in lighting Chanukah candles is improper. Therefore, one should hurry home from shul and immediately recite havdalah or light Chanukah candles.

A Shabbos guest who lives nearby and must go home immediately after Shabbos is over, should light in his home[27]. If, however, he does not leave immediately after Shabbos, he should light at the home of his host[28]. Preferably, he should also eat melaveh malkah there[29].

1. Mishnah Berurah 679:2. Many people, though, are not particular about this, since it is difficult to arrange for a minyan on such a short day.

Sha'arei Teshuvah 679:1, quoting Birkei Yosef.

3. Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 679:7, quoting Peri Megadim.

4. Birkei Yosef 679:2; Yechaveh Da'as 1:74.

5. See Beiur Halachah 672:1. The breakdown [in this case] is as follows: 20 minutes before sunset, 50 minutes till the stars are out, and an additional half hour for the candles to burn at night. Those who wait 72 minutes between sunset and tzeis ha-kochavim should put in oil to last for an additional 22 minutes at least.

6. O.C. 675:2 and Mishnah Berurah 8.

7. Mishnah Berurah 679:2.
8. Mishnah Berurah 671:5 (based on Chayei Adam and Kesav Sofer) maintains that when the "correct" number of candles is not available, only one candle should be lit. See also Beis ha-Levi, Chanukah. Rav E.M. Shach (Avi Ezri, Chanukah), however, strongly disagrees with that ruling.
9. Based on Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:95, Y.D. 1:137 and Y.D. 3:52-2. See also Eishel Avraham (Tanina) O.C. 679 who permits this.
10. O.C. 680:1.
11. See Chovas ha-Dar 1:12.
12. Mishnah Berurah 672:10. See also Chovas ha-Dar 1:10.
13. See Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:62.
14. Note that only on erev Shabbos is it permitted to light this early; during the week, plag ha-Minchah should be figured at about an hour before tzeis ha-kochavim, and not one hour before sunset.
15. For one half hour before this time, it is not permitted to learn or eat.
16. Ben Ish Chai, Vayeishev 20.
17. Mishnah Berurah 679:1.
18. Mishnah Berurah 673:26, 27. [Concerning asking a non-Jew to light; see Rambam (Hilchos Chanukah 4:9), Ohr Gadol (Mishnah Megillah 2:4), Da'as Torah 673:2 and Har Tzvi, O.C. vol. 2, pg. 258.]
19. O.C. 279:1.
20. Mishnah Berurah 308:13; 311:30; Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:22-6. Chazon Ish O.C. 47:13, however, does not agree with this leniency.
21. Mishnah Berurah 279:14.
22. See Mishnah Berurah 322:22.
23. See Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:22-10.
24. Mishnah Berurah 320:24, 25.
25. Mishnah Berurah 306:33.
26. Those who wait 72 minutes to end Shabbos all year round, should do so on Shabbos Chanukah as well; Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:62. But those who wait 72 minutes only on occasion should not wait 72 minutes on motzaei Shabbos Chanukah; Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shevus Yitzchak, pg. 75).

27. Chovas ha-Dar 1, note 65.

28. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Piskei Teshuvos, pg. 498). See also Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 28.

29. Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 677, note 590.

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