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Candle Lighting: 4:17pm

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HALACHIC GUIDELINES FOR LIGHTING CHANUKAH CANDLES WHILE TRAVELING

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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From My Upcoming Sefer: *The Traveler's Guide*

If a person is traveling and their spouse or children light the Chanukah candles at home, they fulfill their obligation through that lighting. However, there is a halachic debate regarding whether the traveler can deliberately opt not to fulfill their obligation through the family's lighting and instead light candles themselves at their place of lodging.

The Rema (677:3) cites:

"If one wishes to be stringent and light candles themselves, they may light and recite the blessings."

The Mishnah Berurah (677:15) elaborates:

"This means that although, according to the strict halacha, one is exempt from lighting because the obligation is fulfilled through the lighting at home, if they wish to be stringent and light their own candles, they may do so. However, they must intend beforehand not to fulfill their obligation through the family's lighting. By doing so, the obligation to light remains upon them, and the blessings they recite are not considered in vain."

The Mishnah Berurah adds:

"Many later authorities have ruled in this way. However, some halachic authorities argue that since Chazal exempted a person through their spouse's lighting, they cannot decide to negate that exemption and light with a blessing. While one should not protest against those who follow the practice of reciting blessings, as many later authorities support this, it is preferable to hear the blessings from another person, respond 'Amen' with the intention to fulfill the obligation, and then light one's own candles. Alternatively, one can calculate the timing and light their candles with blessings some time before the spouse lights at home."

Lighting Chanukah Candles in a Hotel

A person staying in a hotel during Chanukah should light the menorah in their private room with a blessing and not in the dining hall or a shared space for all guests. Even in hotels where lighting is explicitly prohibited in private rooms, one should not light in the dining hall.



When renting a room in a hotel, the room is considered their temporary home for the duration of their stay, similar to a regular rental home. The Maharsham (4, 146) supports this, ruling that a rented train cabin for an overnight journey is considered one's home for the purpose of lighting Chanukah candles.

It is clear that one should not light in the lobby or hallway, as these are not designated private spaces.

Likewise, the dining hall, a shared space, cannot be used for lighting since it is not exclusively designated for the individual, even though they have permission to use it as part of their stay. This differs from some modern sources that suggest lighting in the dining hall based on the Rema's ruling (677:1) to light where one eats. However, as explained, the lighting must be in a space that is personally designated.

Rav Elyashiv (Ashrei Ha'ish, 39, 11) ruled that one may not light on a table in the lobby. He added that if lighting outside the room is prohibited, the person must find another suitable location, implying that no other place in the hotel would be valid for lighting. Similarly, Rav Abba Shaul (Or LeTzion, 4, p. 289) ruled that one does not fulfill the obligation by lighting in the dining hall but must light in their private room, as that is where they sleep, and the room is rented exclusively to them.

Rav Elyashiv further stated that if the hotel explicitly prohibits lighting candles in the room, it is forbidden to light there. If one lights without permission, it is considered theft, and they do not fulfill

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their obligation. This is because the rental agreement included a condition prohibiting lighting, and violating this condition renders their stay akin to unauthorized use of the room.

Lighting Chanukah Candles with Electric Lights

In places where traditional candle lighting is prohibited, one should not rely on electric lights to fulfill the mitzvah of Chanukah candles, as most authorities rule they do not fulfill the obligation. However, some permit it under pressing circumstances.

The *Kaf HaChaim* (673:19) provides several reasons to disqualify electric lights:

1. They do not resemble the miracle of the Temple, which involved lighting oil with a wick. Electric lights lack a physical flame or substance resembling oil and wick.
2. In the Temple, the wicks were lit manually, while electric lights function through a machine.

The continuous light in electric lamps resembles a large flame or torch, which is not considered a proper candle.

Nonetheless, some authorities have been lenient under extenuating circumstances:

- Rav Elyashiv (*Kovetz Teshuvot*, Vol. 3, 103) permitted using electric lights only in pressing situations, provided there is clear intent that the lighting is for Chanukah.
- Rabbi Auerbach (*Halichot Shlomo*, Chanukah, p. 283) expressed uncertainty about whether electric lights are valid but allowed their use when no other option exists; provided it is evident they are being lit for the mitzvah.

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia*, Chanukah, p. 97) disagreed, arguing that because of doubt, blessings should not be recited on electric lights.

A fundamental issue lies in the requirement for a visible flame (*shalevet*). The *Maharshag* (Vol. 2, 107) emphasized that even if one does not require oil and a wick like the Temple menorah, a flame is essential. Electric lights, lacking a flame, are thus invalid.

Rabbi Abba Shaul (*Or LeTzion*, Vol. 4, p. 267) suggested a distinction between electric lights and battery-powered lamps. He argued that battery-powered lamps might be valid because the energy source (battery) is present and finite, unlike electric lights where energy is continuously generated.

Chanukah Candle Lighting for Travelers and Campers

A traveler who has no home to light Chanukah candles is exempt from lighting, even if sleeping in an open field. However, if camping overnight and pitching a tent for lodging, they may light candles there with a blessing.

Chanukah candles are lit only in a person's dwelling. If one has no home or is away and no one is lighting on their behalf at home, they are exempt from lighting. This aligns with the halachic analysis presented by the *Sefat Emet* (Shabbat 21b): Is the obligation of Chanukah candles personal (*chovat gavra*), requiring each individual to light or join others through participation, or is it a home-based obligation (*chovat cheftza*), akin to mezuzah, which mandates a home to fulfill the mitzvah?

The distinction has practical implications. If it is a personal

obligation, one might need to rent a place to light. If it is a home-based obligation, lacking a home exempts the individual. Several sources support the latter view—that the mitzvah is house-centered and not individual—but a full exploration is beyond the scope of this article.

Practically, Rav Abba Shaul (p. 288) concluded, based on the Beit Yosef (671:7), that one without a home is exempt, as shown by the custom of lighting in shuls for travelers lacking a home.

When camping overnight, if the tent serves as lodging, it qualifies as a home for lighting. Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'ish*, Vol. 3, p. 267) ruled that a tent with proper walls is considered a home, allowing one to light with a blessing. However, a temporary tent used for only a few hours does not suffice unless slept in overnight.

A Guest and the Obligation to Contribute to the Host's Chanukah Lights

A guest whose household is not lighting on their behalf should participate in the host's Chanukah lighting by contributing the value of a prutah. There is a dispute among the poskim regarding the specific cases where this applies. Some maintain that a paying guest fulfills this requirement by virtue of their payment, while a non-paying guest must explicitly contribute a prutah to the host. Others argue the reverse: a paying guest must still contribute a prutah, whereas a non-paying guest, fully reliant on the host, is exempt. To fulfill all opinions, it is advisable for any guest to participate by giving the host the value of a prutah.

The Shulchan Aruch (677:1) rules: "A guest, whose household is not lighting for him, must give a prutah to the host to join in the oil for the Chanukah lights."

The rationale for this contribution is to acquire a share in the oil and thereby partake in the mitzvah of lighting.

The Maharsham (4:146) writes that a paying guest is considered a renter, making the space akin to their own, and they are therefore exempt from contributing a prutah. Conversely, the *Kaf HaChaim* (677:3) and *Or LeTzion* (vol. 4, p. 285) argue that a paying guest is the one classified as an *achsanai* obligated to contribute. In contrast, a non-paying guest, fully dependent on the host's provisions, is considered part of the household and does not need to contribute at all.

In continuation of the Shulchan Aruch's ruling on a guest, which states that if a guest has a separate entrance, he must light at his own entrance, the *Ohr L'Tzion* (Ch. 4, p. 274) teaches that if a guest has a private room that no one else uses, even minimally, he should light in his room with a blessing. It is preferable, however, that he hear the blessings from the host and then immediately go to his room to light.

Rav Elyashiv holds that a Sephardi guest staying with Ashkenazim should not change his custom and fulfills the mitzvah with the host's lighting. An Ashkenazi guest staying with Sephardim may light his own menorah, though some say the Sephardi host may object to this practice.

HALACHIC GUIDELINES FOR LIGHTING CHANUKAH CANDLES WHILE TRAVELING

A person spending Shabbat Hanukkah outside their city with the intention of returning home on Motsaei Shabbat faces a debate among halachic authorities

Is it preferable to stay longer and light candles where they spent Shabbat, or to return home and light there? *Mikdash Yisrael* (Hanukkah, 83) discusses this dispute. Rav Auerbach held that if the person plans to remain about half an hour after lighting in their Shabbat location, they should light there, as the place is temporarily considered their home until they leave. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (*Emet L'Yaakov*, 677) agreed and added that it is preferable to stay even longer, and if possible, to eat the *Melaveh Malka* meal there.

On the other hand, the *Pe'at Sadecha* (2, O.C. 136) disagreed, arguing that since the person plans to leave shortly, the location is not considered their home, and they should return and light at their actual home. This view is also held by the *Chazon Ish* (*Orchot Rabbeinu*, Hanukkah, 96).



One who spends the entire night in their car and has no one lighting on their behalf at home may light candles in the car, though it is preferable not to recite a blessing.

This is because, for the time being, the car is considered their "home." Rav Menashe Klein (*Mishneh Halachot*, 7, 86) argued that a proper "home" is not necessary for the mitzvah; rather, it suffices to have a designated location.

Mikdash Yisrael (Hanukkah, 74) cited opinions of later authorities permitting lighting in a car and concluded that one traveling all night may light in the car with a blessing. However, Rav David Yosef (*Torat HaMo'adim*, Hanukkah, 2:18) wrote that due to the halachic dispute, it is preferable to light without a blessing.

Additionally, *Mikdash Yisrael* states that one who hires a taxi for an overnight journey should not light in the taxi. This contrasts with the suggestion in one sefer that paying for the ride makes the taxi like their own domain. Rav Harfenes clarifies that the payment is for the ride, not for the car itself.

A guest staying in a place entirely populated by non-Jews, where no other Jew is present, should light can-

dles with a blessing, even if someone is lighting on their behalf at home. It is proper for them to intend not to fulfill their obligation through the lighting of their household.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (677:3) states: "Some say that even if candles are being lit on their behalf at home, if they are in a place where no other Jew is present, they must light with a blessing."

Although the *Pri Chadash* (677:3) disagrees, maintaining that if candles are lit on their behalf at home, they have fulfilled their obligation and should not recite a blessing, Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Chazon Ovadia*, Hanukkah, p. 158) extensively supports the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch*. He writes that in a place entirely inhabited by non-Jews, where the guest does not see any Hanukkah candles, they must light with a blessing due to the principle of *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle).

There is no obligation to light Hanukkah candles in a menorah; it suffices to place the candles in any clean and respectable vessel. If one lacks a menorah, they may use any suitable container, ensuring the flames do not touch each other.

It is clear that the requirement is only to light candles and arrange them side by side, not necessarily in a menorah. While the Temple had a menorah, and Hanukkah candles parallel the Temple menorah, nowhere in the Talmud is there a mention of a menorah being required for the mitzvah of lighting Hanukkah candles.

The *Chesed Le'Avraham* (cited in *Sha'arei Teshuva* 673:13 and *Avnei Nezer* 500:6) writes that those who stick wax or tallow candles together without placing them in a vessel do not fulfill their obligation. Similarly, placing candles in eggshells or crafting candles from potatoes is not considered using a proper vessel, and such practices do not fulfill the mitzvah.

This view contrasts with the *Admat Kodesh* (O.C. II, 7), who entertained the possibility of permitting the use of eggshells, but the *Kaf HaChaim* (673:61) rules according to the *Chesed Le'Avraham*, prohibiting such practices.

The *Kaf HaChaim* (673:62) further criticizes those who light Hanukkah candles in broken clay vessels, lemon peels, or onion skins, as these practices are considered a disgrace to the mitzvah.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE MIND: REFLECTING OUR WORLD THROUGH SELF-PERCEPTION

When we want to describe someone as extremely unattractive, we often use the expression that they "look like a cow." A cow symbolizes physicality and clumsiness—large, lacking grace, drooling, and emitting an unpleasant odor. With this imagery in mind, we turn to the beginning of our parasha (Mikets), where Pharaoh

dreams of standing by the Nile, and seven cows described as "beautiful in appearance" emerge from the river. This raises a perplexing question: how can cows be described as beautiful? One might argue that "beautiful" here refers to being fat and healthy. However, this cannot be the case, as the second description explic

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE MIND: REFLECTING OUR WORLD THROUGH SELF-PERCEPTION

itly states that they were "healthy-looking and fat." This question extends to the skinny cows: why are they considered ugly, and what makes fat cows appear better-looking? Furthermore, isn't it healthier and more appealing to be lean rather than fat? Rashi provides a different perspective on the meaning of "beautiful looking." He explains that the description symbolizes a time of wealth, during which people perceive one another in a positive light. In times of prosperity, even the fat cows are seen as good-looking. Conversely, during times of famine, when people are hungry and unhappy, they view everything negatively. As a result, even the skinny cows—arguably better than the fat ones—are perceived as unattractive.

This idea is not only about our current state but also about our mindset and self-perception. It teaches us that the way we feel about ourselves shapes how we see the world around us. When we view ourselves negatively, we often project that negativity onto our surroundings.



This reminds me of a story about a man unhappy in his town who decided to search for a happier place to live. On his journey, he stopped a wise man and asked if the people in the next town were happy. The wise man replied, "Before I answer, tell me about the people in your town." The man said they were sad, angry, and moody. The wise man responded, "You'll find the people here are just the same."

While they were speaking, another traveler approached the wise man with the same question about the town. The wise man again asked about the people in the traveler's previous town. This traveler replied, "The people there are kind and caring." The wise man smiled and said, "You'll find the people here are also kind and caring." The first man, puzzled, asked why he had given two different answers. The wise man explained, "The way you perceive people in one place is how you'll perceive them in any place. Moreover, the way you perceive yourself influences how you see others. If you feel good about yourself, you'll see others in a positive light too."

הנמצא במקום שמתנגנים בו ניגונים של עבודה זרה

דאורייתא דאין בו ממש, מכל מקום אסור מדרבנן (עיין בפסחים דף כ"ו), ובר"ה (דף כ"ח) משמע דאסור מדאורייתא עיי"ש. ואם רק ניגון מאנשים שמזמרים לעכו"ם לא נמצא שיהיה אה"נ, אבל ודאי אסור להתכוין לשמוע כדי ליהנות או כדי להתבונן בעבודתם. אך לשמוע הניגון הזה מפי אנשים כאלו שאין מתכוונים לעבודה זרה אלא לזמר בעלמא, אף שאין בזה איסור אם הוא בלא המלים שמשבחין להבליהם, מ"מ מכווער הדבר. ואם מזמרים בהמלים של שבחי ההבל אסור אף באין מתכוונים לע"ז. ואם הכלי שיר אין מיוחדים לע"ז והמנגנים הם אנשים שאין מתכוונים לע"ז ליכא גם כן איסור."

הנמצא במקום שמתנגנים בו ניגונים של עבודה זרה כנהוג בתקופת חגי הנוצרים במקומות רבים, אין איסור לשמוע אותם, ומהיות טוב ימנע מלהנות מהם שמכווער הדבר.

בשולחן ערוך (יו"ד סימן קמב סעיף טו): "אסור לשמוע כלי שיר של אלילים או להסתכל בנוי אלילים כיון שנהנה בראיה". וכוונת השולחן ערוך היא כלי שיר המנגנים עבור העבודה זרה, ולא שירים המתנגנים לענג את שומעם ולהשרות אורת חג. וזאת נלמד מדברי השלטי גיבורים, שכתב בפירוש שהאיסור הוא בניגון לפני העבודה זרה, "אם היה רואה נויי העבודה זרה או שהיה שומע נגינות הכומרים המנגנים לפני העבודה זרה, אם אינו מתכוון להנות שאינו חפץ בהנאה זו ואינו צריך לה מותר, ואם היה מתכוון להנות אסור, שאף הקול והמראה אף על פי שאין בהם ממש, אסור ליהנות בהם".

והגר"מ פינשטיין בשו"ת אגרות משה (יו"ד ח"ב סימן קיא) כתב: "ובדבר לשמוע הניגונים שמנגנין לעבודה זרה ודאי אסור, דהא המנגן לעבודה זרה אף לאלו שאין דרכן בכך עובר בלאו שהוא דרך כבוד, כמו מנשק וכדומה בסנהדרין (דף ס"ג), ואיפסק ברמב"ם (פ"ג ה"ו), שכן כל כיוצא בדברי כבוד האלו. ובהיתה דרך עבודתו חייב מיתה, ואם כן ודאי אסור להתכוין לשמוע, ואם מכלי שיר יש בזה איסור הנאה אם הכלי שיר מיוחדים לזמר לעכו"ם, ואף אם אין בקול איסור

ולכן בניגונות הנשמעים ברמקולים ולא על ידי תזמורת חיה אין זה בכלל האיסור, ורק מכווער הדבר. וכתב הרמ"א שדבר שאינו מתכוין מותר.



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