

גליון הלכתי - כושולתן הפוסקים



מרכז גבוה להוראה ודיינות לשנת הפוסקים מיסודו של רשכבה"ג מן שר התורה הגר"ח קניבסקי זיע"א

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Gilyon 21

תשפ"ד Chanukah

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Halachos of Chanukah

The Gemara in Shabbos asks the question, "Mai Chanukah?" - "What is Chanukah?" In response, the Gemara explains the essence of Chanukah and the relevant halachos that apply during this time. The Gemara finishes off, that Chanukah was instituted as a Yom Tov for singing and praising Hashem.

Rashi's explanation of this is puzzling. Rashi elucidates that Chazal did not enact any prohibition on labor during Chanukah. Instead, they established it as a time for singing and giving thanks to Hashem. It may seem perplexing why Rashi felt the need to clarify that work is allowed during Chanukah, as there seems to be no indication to the contrary.

According to the Derech Hashem, Rashi's teachings can be better understood. The Derech Hashem writes that humans cannot separate themselves completely from materialism as it is necessary for their survival in this world. However, the Torah commands us to disconnect somewhat from these physical pleasures and warns us to be mindful of our indulgences.

Furthermore, He explains that the commandments and prohibitions we follow throughout the year are based on the level of holiness of that particular day. The holier the day, the more we must disconnect from materialism on that level. Hence, Yom Kippur, being the highest level of holiness, has the most restrictions on labor compared to other days of the year. This is followed by the rest of the Yomim Tovim, then Chol Hamoed, Rosh Chodesh followed by Chanukah which does not have any restrictions on labor only to praise Hashem.

In summary, the Derech Hashem teaches us that the holier the day, the more reason to distance ourselves from work and labor and focus on spiritual pursuits instead.

From his words, we can learn that on Chanukah, true there are no actual restrictions on labor and work. However, the way to distance oneself from materialism is through praising Hashem.

This helps us understand the meaning behind Rashi's words. Rashi is directing us to the fact that, during Chanukah, we can distance ourselves from materialism through singing and praising, which usually requires us to restrict ourselves from doing work or labor.

✧ Preparation for the Mitzva ✧

1. As we approach Yomim Tovim that were commanded to us in the Torah, we are commanded to prepare by studying the relevant Halachos of the Yom Tov. Although this obligation pertains to the Yomim Tovim of Pesach and Succos (and some hold that Shavuot too), there is no such requirement for Purim and Chanukah. However, apart from the segulos associated with preparation and connection to the Yom Tov, the Balei Avodah emphasize the importance of studying the halachos of Chanukah at length. This is because studying the halachos helps us become familiar with the mitzvos, perform them with greater beauty, and understand their significance.
2. There is a practice of lecturing and emphasizing the significance of the day during Chanukah, similar to other Yomim Tovim.
3. One who is careful with mitzvos, should prepare their menorah a few days before Chanukah.
4. The lighting of the menorah during Chanukah is similar in many ways to the kindling of the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash. Although any adult male was permitted to perform the actual kindling, the cleaning and preparing process needed to be done through a Kohen. This teaches us the importance of preparing for mitzvos in general and, particularly, in regard to lighting the menorah on Chanukah.

5. It is a common practice for people to light the candles for Shabbos before actually performing the mitzvah and then extinguishing them. This is because it makes it easier for one's wife to light the candles later on. Some people follow the same method for Chanukah candles, but it is not commonly practiced.
6. It is not necessary to keep the Chanukah candles burning for longer than the time when no more people are passing by on the street (תכלה רגל מן השוק). Keeping the candles burning for a longer period does not necessarily fulfill an additional mitzvah (although the spirit of the mitzvah is extended).
7. It is permissible to reuse the cups of oil from the previous night and there is no obligation to clean the cups (unless they are extremely blackened).
8. Similarly, one is allowed to reuse the wicks from night to night as long as they are still usable. However, some people prefer to use new wicks each night as a custom.
9. Before lighting the candles, one should gather their family around to spread the significance of the miracles.

✧ Halachos Relating to the Time of Lighting ✧

10. At the time of lighting, it is prohibited to engage in any time-consuming work or learning. Additionally, one must refrain from eating or sleeping from this time onwards. Even if one has started

such activities before the time of lighting, they must stop immediately when the time of lighting comes.

11. It is our custom to be careful in the above prohibition beginning from a half hour before the time of lighting.
12. People who have the custom of lighting between sunset and nightfall must refrain from these activities from a half hour before sunset. However, those who have the custom of lighting at nightfall must only refrain from these activities for a half hour before they usually light.
13. Although one may light the menorah on Friday from Plag, it is not forbidden to eat from Plag, only from right before lighting. However, some people choose to refrain from these activities for half an hour before lighting, as they do on all other nights.
14. Snacking (fruits, metzonos less than the measurement of a kabeitza, etc.) is permitted during this time.
15. It is permitted to drink Havdalah wine on motzai Shabbos, as it is for the sake of a mitzvah.
16. One should not go to sleep before the time of lighting without making sure they have a way to wake up (e.g., alarm clock, etc.).
17. A woman that has someone lighting on her behalf, does not need to refrain from these activities during this time.
18. These halachos apply even to workers in stores, who are required to refrain from eating unless they have a reminder to light candles. However, if someone is in a position that doesn't allow them to take time off from work, they are exempt from this rule as it's considered beyond their control.
19. Even if one is in the middle of a meal or learning, one must pause to light candles.
20. If someone is on their way home to light candles, they should not eat if it's already time to light. However, they do not need to be strict about refraining from eating during the half-hour leading up to the time to light.
21. In a scenario that one must eat, one should set a reminder to light candles.
22. One should not start learning [in depth] within the half hour leading up to the time of lighting. However, if one has already begun learning before this half hour, they do not need to pause their learning only when the actual time for lighting arrives.

❁ The Custom of Refraining from Working for Women ❁

23. Engaging in daily jobs and labor is permissible during the days of Chanukah as there is no prohibition on doing work or labor on these days. The significance of Chanukah lies in the obligation to light the menorah, sing and praise Hashem. Those who refrain from doing work on Chanukah are mistaken and their custom should be ended.
24. As women played a central role in the miracles of Chanukah, it is customary for them to refrain from work for half an hour after lighting the candles (or until half an hour after nightfall).
25. The purpose of this custom is to remind people not to use the candles for pleasure and to focus on remembering the miracles.
26. There are various reasons given as to why the tradition of refraining from working activities during the time of lighting Chanukah candles is only for women. Firstly, it signifies that women were also a part of the miracle. Secondly, Yehudis, a woman, played a central role in the fight against the Greeks. Thirdly, the first decree in the Chanukah story was directed towards women. Fourthly, since the mitzvah is performed through lighting, and women do not light themselves, their part in the mitzvah is performed through spreading awareness of the miracles. Lastly, women are essentially obligated to perform the mitzvah, but are exempt from it as it is meant to be performed outside, which goes against their natural

tendency to be confined. Therefore, as a gesture of being part of the mitzvah, women choose to refrain from working during this time.

27. The custom is to refrain from work associated with women, such as sewing and laundry, similar to Rosh Chodesh. However, this custom does not apply to cooking or baking. Nevertheless, the Yerushalmi minhag is to refrain from these activities as well. The common practice is to only avoid labor that is forbidden on Chol Hamoed, and work that requires extensive effort. Writing and cooking are permitted, and many opinions allow pressing the button on a washing machine.
28. Since this practice is only a custom taken upon by women, not rooted in the essence of the law, in a scenario of great need a woman may be lenient.
29. Even where the custom is to light the menorah outside without the presence of the women (as commonly found in Eretz Yisrael), the women abide by the abovementioned custom.
30. If someone lights the menorah on behalf of their wife or daughter, and they are not present at the time of lighting, they should still refrain from performing these activities for half an hour after their father or husband has lit the menorah. It is preferable for the girl to try to find a replacement so that she can attend the actual lighting.
31. A child does not need to refrain from these activities.
32. If one lights extra early (from plag) or late (after nightfall), even if their wife fulfills her obligation through his lighting, she does not need to refrain from these activities.
33. A woman may leave her home after her husband lights the menorah to do errands, even though it will cause her to get distracted from remembering the miracles.

❁ Customs on Chanukah ❁

34. There is a widely followed custom to play dreidel on Chanukah. There is a disagreement amongst the poskim whether it is permitted to play with actual money. The Sefardim follow the opinion to be stringent on the matter, while Ashkenazim follow the opinion that permits it.
35. Even when a woman is not in her purity stage she may still play with her husband.
36. If one commonly plays dreidel with money, the dreidel becomes muktzah on Shabbos. However, if one does not usually play with money, it is not deemed muktzah.
37. Playing dreidel for the sole purpose of making profit is prohibited.
38. There is no issue with giving Chanukah gifts, and there is no concern that the practice originated from non-Jews. Rather, it seems that non-Jews copied the Jews on this matter.
39. One should not play card games with money, since it is considered gambling.
40. There is a custom to grant Chanukah gelt on Chanukah.
41. Engaging in parties focused on praise to Hashem, along with dvrei torah is in fact a seudas mitzva. Hence this shouldn't be on the time typically designated for torah study.
42. These meals do not need to include meat and wines, which are normally a staple at a seudas mitzva. In fact, the custom is to have milchigs.
43. There is old minhag to include foods made with oil (fried latkes, doughnuts etc.) on Chanukah, as the miracles happened with oil.
44. Since these days are ones of miracles, there are those that go around to collect tzedakah for the poor. One should therefore see to add to their tzedaka on Chanukah.
45. The Greeks tried to impact our torah study along with other mitzvas. Chanukah are days which one can come to great accomplishments in their study. One should try to engage in more learning during these days, and definitely not to minimize.

**Comments to the author, or to be added to a distribution list,
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