



Parshas Mishpatim 5765

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Which are preferred, regular candles or olive oil?

The *halacha* is that all oils and candles that burn satisfactorily may be used to light the Shabbos candles - yet the Shulchan Aruch writes ¹ that olive oil is a *mitzvah min hamuvchar* – a plus. The *Mishna Berura* ² explains that the advantage of olive oil is that it is a clean fuel and thus easily absorbed by the wick. The *Chida* ³ however says that one should light with olive oil as this will assure having children learned in Torah, because the Torah is compared to olive oil.

Must one light candles if one is going out and there is a danger of fire, or a smoke alarm going off?

This is a common problem for people staying in hotels over Shabbos, where the management does not permit lighting Shabbos candles in the rooms. The only other option is to light in the hotel dining room, in order to benefit and enjoy the candles during one's meal. If the hotel does not permit that either and allocates a place for lighting somewhere in the lobby or passageway, one may not light there with a *b'racha* and it is possible to say that it is a *b'racha levatala* (a *b'racha* in vain).

The reason is because *Chazal* said that lighting next to one's meal adds festivity to the meal and even if the electric lights are burning in any case, the candles add somewhat. But in the passageway or lobby, where there are lights in any case, the candles do not add to this

ambience at all and there is no *mitzvah* to light in those places.

In such an event one should turn on the lights in the passage etc. having in mind that those lights are for the sake of *shalom bayis* (as mentioned in the previous shiur). It is a *machlokes* whether one may make a *b'racha* on electric lights and one must ask one's rav. ⁴

Why is it customary that the lady of the household light the Shabbos candles?

It is wrong to think that lighting Shabbos candles is a women's *mitzvah*. The obligation to light Shabbos candles is equal to women as it is to men, only that it is customary for the wife to light the Shabbos candles and even if the husband wants to light, the wife takes precedence. ⁵

The reason for this is because the wife is usually at home more than the husband and she deals with the domestic matters. ⁶ Another reason is because Chava brought about death to man – whose *neschama* is compared to a candle – and as a token measure she is responsible to kindle the candles for Shabbos.

In order for the husband to have a share in the *mitzvah* of Shabbos candles, it is customary that he prepares them for lighting. ⁷

If one's wife is not home must the husband light the candles?

¹ Simon 264:6.

² Simon 264:23.

³ *Machzik B'racha* simon 264:2, see the *Kaf HaChaim* 264:38.

⁴ See the *SS"K* chapter 43:4 footnote 22.

⁵ Simon 263:3 and *M"B* 11, unless there are several candles to light in which case he may light as well.

⁶ *Mechaber* simon 263:3.

⁷ *M"B* simon 263:12.

Seeing that men are obligated to light Shabbos candles as much as women are, if the wife is not present it is up to the husband to light the Shabbos candles.

If, for example, the wife is in hospital, the husband must light the Shabbos candles at home, with a *b'racha*. This lighting will serve for the entire household as well, and in certain cases the wife will not need to light in the hospital:

A) When there are lights in her room in the hospital she need not light at all, as she is considered as having lit Shabbos candles from the fact that her husband is lighting at home. B) If the hospital policy is that one may light candles in one's room or in the dining room, she may light Shabbos candles with a *b'racha*.⁸

If the husband is staying at his parents for that Shabbos, while his wife is in hospital, what are his obligations?

The husband may either purchase a share in his parents' candles, and this is done by handing them a coin, or he may light his own candles. The wife in such a case will possibly not be part of her husband's lighting because he is not lighting at home and she must then make an effort to light candles in hospital, either in her room or in the dining room. If that is not possible, she should turn on the room lights and as for a *b'racha* she should ask a rav.

Does the husband light in the same manner as his wife?

It is customary for many Sephardic women to first make the *b'racha* and then light the candles just like every other *mitzvah*, where one first recites the *b'racha* and follows up with the *mitzvah*.⁹ Ashkenazi women first light, cover their eyes and make the *b'racha* and then enjoy the light. The reason for this custom is because we are concerned that by reciting the *b'racha* she will have accepted Shabbos and she will be prohibited to light the candles. She therefore first lights and only then recites the *b'racha* and

accepts the Shabbos. Men, on the other hand, do not usually accept the Shabbos with the lighting and therefore they may first recite the *b'racha* and then light the candles and such is the custom.¹⁰

Vort on the Parsha

The *posuk* says *Hashem's* cloud covered the mountain for six days and then *Hashem* called Moshe from within the cloud on the seventh day (24:16). *Rashi* says that this teaches us that one must abstain from mundane matters for six days before entering the encampment of *Hashem*. The Radomsker rebbe (*Tiferes Shlomo*) learns from this that if one wishes to gain the holiness of Shabbos, which is equated to the encampment of the *shechina*, one must have that in mind throughout the six days of the week, and take care not to do anything that could prevent one from entering the holiness of the *shechina* – the Shabbos. This would be another understanding of the famous idiom – one who prepares oneself on *erev* Shabbos will enjoy the Shabbos itself.

Food For Thought

If it is getting late, should the husband light the candles?

If a couple are eating out on Friday night, but are sleeping at home, where should they light?

If a couple are invited out for Shabbos and are sleeping in a separate apartment, where should they light?

Answers coming be"H next week.

⁸ See the *SS"K* 45:6 and footnote 32.

⁹ *M"B simon* 263:26.

¹⁰ See *SS"K* 43:30.

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Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.