

Hilchot Hanuka: When Dad Gets Home Late

Rabbi: Hey Joe what's that you're doing there?

Joe SY: Studying for the Hanuka quiz... its tomorrow!

Sarah SY: Really? It's so easy... same halachot every year!

Joe SY: Yeah most of the halachot are easy, but I have a tough question for you Rabbi. **My father never gets home from work before 8:00, from what I'm learning here the best time to light is way before that. Are we supposed to light without him??**

Nathan Shami: No question is too tough for the Rabbi!

Rabbi: Why the sudden kissing up Nathan? You're not even in school anymore!

Nathan Shami: I have a paper due for college on Sephardic Hazanut. Could use some help Rabbi!

Al Sitt: You should have joined the Hazzanut Club while you were in school! Best club in the school.

Capt. Sari: Nope! It's Torah Bowl!

Rabbi: Nathan, we'll talk later... & thank you guys! Now let's get to Joe's question. We'll start with the **'proper time' (לכתחילה) to light**. When does that begin?

Danielle S: I know! **צאת הכוכבים**! Like 15 minutes after sunset, but some say it's 25.

Joe SY: I knew that!

Rabbi: When does the 'proper time' end?

Joe SY: Half an hour after **צאת הכוכבים**, but I always wondered- why does the 'proper time' to light end so early?

Rabbi: Well... back then, once it got dark people pretty much didn't leave their houses. Hachamim wanted people to see the Nerot Hanuka for *'Pirsum Hanes'*.

Sari SY: Ooh I know what *Pirsum Hanes* means! Publicizing the miracle.

Joe SY: So who was walking around for that half hour after **צאת הכוכבים**?

Danielle S: I know! People who got home and realized that they didn't have candles, would go out to buy candles for the night.

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Joe SY: So, what time would the ‘proper time’ to light be this year?

Rabbi: Sunset next week will be around at 4:35, plus 15 minutes, so צאת הכוכבים is 4:50. So proper time to light is around **4:50-5:20**. Except the first night of Hanuka which is Sat. night, when one can’t light until Shabbat is over at around 5:15.

Joe SY: That’s so early! I don’t get it... today people are on the streets till all hours of the night! Well in Brooklyn at least... not so sure about Deal... there’s lots of deer though, do they count?

Rabbi: No, unfortunately they don’t... and **the halacha is you have the whole night to light, up until dawn, but it's still not considered the ‘proper time’ (לכתחילה) to light.**

Joe SY: Ok... but now it’s so early that most fathers aren’t home on time to light then. **So isn’t the halacha that the family lights without the father?**

Albert EG: I read a halacha like that in Torat Hamoadim by Hacham David Yosef Shlit”a: *If the husband knows that he won’t be home for the proper time to light, even if he will be home later that night, **it’s proper that he appoints his wife to light at the proper time, and his obligation will be fulfilled even if he’s not there...***

David EG: You’re wife can light for you and it counts? What!

Danielle S: Of course! Women are obligated to light Nerot Hanuka just like men. They took a vital role in bringing about the victory for Am Yisrael.

Rabbi: David, she’s right. Albert, I’m familiar with that halacha, but there’s a very important disclaimer here. **The halacha only refers to a situation when the husband is usually home each night** to light Nerot Hanuka on time. If there’s one night when he can’t make it on time he should tell his wife to light for him.

However, if he can’t make it home on time any night, then he should NOT tell his wife to light. Rather, the family should wait until he comes home to light.

Joe SY: Really? Why is that?

Rabbi: If the children only see their mother lighting Nerot Hanuka each night, the mitzvah will become unimportant in their eyes. There’s a certain importance lent to the mitzvah when the father leads the family in performing the mitzvah.

Joe SY: Who says that?

Rabbi: Both Hagaon Ribbi Meir Mazouz Shlit”a and Hacham Shimon Alouf Shlit”a explained that that is the true intention of Hacham Obadia Yosef ZS”L.

Danielle S: Wow I never knew that Rabbi.

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Rabbi: Danielle, pretty impressive tonight... btw did you see my halacha notes? I can't seem to find them anywhere!

Danielle S: Here you go Rabbi. I just 'borrowed' them for a bit...

Rabbi: Thank you! & good luck on the quiz everyone!

Rabbi: How was the Hanuka quiz Joe?

Joe SY: Umm not so great... I just passed. I'm still confused on some of the laws of lighting the *Menorah*... can we go over a few things?

Rabbi: What did you call it?!

Yosele Ashkenaz: He said *menorah*... isn't that what it's called?!

Rabbi: Yes, the Ashkenazim call it a *menorah*, but the Sepharadim have a different name for it.

Joe SY: What do you mean? Are we supposed to call it a *Hanukia*?

Yoni IS: Allo... ma haba'ya! That's what I call it!

Rabbi: True that's the Modern Hebrew term, but the Sepharadim usually called it either "*Nerot Hanuka*" or simply the "*Hanuka*". The term "*Menora*" is reserved for the candelabra in the Bet Hamikdash (which only had 7 stems).

Joe SY: Wow! Never knew that... but it kind of ruins the song "*Oh Hanuka oh Hanukah let's light the menorah...*" now you're telling me it should be "*Oh Hanuka oh Hanuka let's light the Hanuka...*"

Rabbi: Well it's not exactly a Sephardic song is it?

Joe SY: Good point. Ok so first, where is the... ready? the Hanuka... BAM! Where is it supposed to be placed? The doorway or the window?

Rabbi: The Halacha is that it should be placed **at the door in order to publicize the miracle** (פרסום הנס). As well, Hazal tell us that when we do so, we are surrounded by mitzvot as we enter the house- *Mezuzah* on the right and *Hanuka* on the left.

Joe SY: But didn't that change?

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Rabbi: Yes, there were times of “*sacana*” during our long exile. The goyim would persecute the Jews when they saw the *Hanuka* lit by the door. In fact, **the goyim sometimes explicitly forbade the Jews from lighting Nerot Hanuka.**

During those times, the practice developed to light inside the home on the table, in order to publicize the miracle to the members of the house. **There are many families in our community who continue to do so in our times,** and there minhag is well founded.

Joe SY: But I don’t see anyone lighting by the doorway today. Most people I know light by the window.

Rabbi: Those who light by the window are able to publicize the miracle to both those outside passing by, as well as to the family inside. But great caution must be taken to ensure there’s no fire-hazard. Unfortunately, there have been a number of stories where people were not careful and a fire broke out... Hashem Yasilenu

Joe SY: Rabbi, do you think it’s safe to light by the window in our times? I mean Anti-Semitism is rapidly spreading, there are more acts of terror, and Anti-Israel sentiments are becoming ever popular each day...

Rabbi: Yes these are certainly frightening times... but I’d say in predominantly Jewish communities it’s still safe to light by the window. If Jews are sparse where one lives, he’s better off lighting inside.

Joe SY: My grandpa lives in a condo in Turnberry in the winter. He’s on a very high floor where people won’t be able to see the menorah

Rabbi: Ahem hem...

Joe SY: Oops! Hanuka... gonna take some getting used to... anyway where should he light?

Rabbi: If he can light by the **entrance of his apartment** then he should do so, as it publicizes the miracle to those on his floor. Otherwise, he can light in his condo and it will still be considered **פרסום הנג** for his family.

Joe SY: Thanks! I’ll tell him... last question my aunt is in the hospital. Her son (my cousin) is sleeping in the room to tend to her overnight. Obviously he can’t light real Nerot Hanuka there. Can he use an **electric Hanuka** and say the berachot?

Rabbi: A beracha may not be said on an Electric *Hanukiya*.

Hacham Obadia Z”L explains that an Electric *Hanukiya* is not similar enough to the menorah of the Bet Hamikdash. In the Temple they used to light with oil and the miracle was done with oil, hence it’s proper to light with oil. Even if one uses candles, the light they give off is still similar to the light of the Menora. Electric light is very different.

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Joe SY: Wait Rabbi why are you calling it a Hanukiya?!

Yoni IS: Allo... he like it! Ma ata rotzel!

Rabbi: Actually, as I said, *Hanukiyah* is the modern term, and we're talking about an electric one which was developed in modern times!

Yoni IS: Yaani... it's ok, I know you like it better Rabbi...

Joe SY: Makes sense... Thank You Rabbi! Hanuka Sameah!

*Dedicated in memory of **Morenu Hacham Obadia Yosef ben Gorgieh** ZS"L*