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30 Kislew 5779/Dec' 8 '18 Miqqes

Halakha

Lighting an Electric Menorah

Even though some oils are preferred over others, all oils are considered acceptable for lighting the Hanukkah lights. This includes oils that may not be used for Shabbath lights. But can one fulfill one's obligation of lighting the Hanukkah Menorah by lighting an electric Menorah of the type commonly seen in homes and businesses? The Kaf Haḥayyim states that it appears that it cannot be permitted and gives a few reasons.

One reason is that the purpose of lighting is to remember the miracle that occurred when they lit the Menorah for eight days when there was only sufficient oil for one day. That miracle occurred through a wick and oil, neither of which exist in an electric Menorah. (This is also why oil is preferred over candles, since the miracle occurred through oil.

Additionally, the miracle that we are commemorating was done through the action of a human being who lit the Menorah and wick. When lighting an electric Menorah, even though a human being turns on a switch, the actual lighting is being done by a machine and not a human being.

(See Kaf Haḥayyim 673, Oth 19.

Mishnah Brura ibid:4)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

5779 פרשת מקץ

Parasha

Miqqes: Joseph's Advice on How to Overcome the Greeks

It says in Parashath Miqqes that Yoseph Haṣṣaddiq (Joseph) 'a"h, locked away his brothers for three days. Then it says that on the third day he said to them: זאת עשו וחי Zoth 'Asu Wiḥyu, (Do this and live).

The Mefarshim explain, that Galuth Yawan (the Greek subjugation of the Jewish people), was on account of the sale of Joseph by his brothers. As we well know, the Greeks tried to nullify three very important Miṣwoth, which were

- (1) the keeping of Shabbath,
- (2) Rosh Ḥodesh (the new moon), and
- (3) Milah.

Joseph, by locking away his brothers for three days in a ward, was hinting at these three Miṣwoth that the Greeks in the future would try to prevent Israel from keeping.

But Yoseph Hassadiq gives his brothers advice on how to overcome this Gezerah (decree) of the Greeks. He said Zoth 'Asu, "Do this". The word Zoth in Hebrew is made up of three letters, Zahn, Aleph, Taw. The letter Zahn's numerical value is seven. Seven refers to Shabbath the seventh day of the week. Aleph the second letter, is equal to one. One refers to the first day of the month, Rosh Ḥodesh. And the letter Taw represents the Milah.

So Joseph tells his brothers, keep these three things and you will overcome the Gezerah of the Greeks.

(See Addereth Eliyahu, Parashath Miqqes)

For the Refuah Shelemah of
Yeshayahu Ben Regina

Relighting a Used Wick on Hanukkah

The question is often asked during Hanukkah, whether one may relight a wick or a candle that was used on the previous day of Hanukkah.

The answer is that it is permitted. Indeed, there is an opinion that it is actually preferable, because the flame will burn better. However, there are those who say that the correct way to perform the precept is to light a new wick (or candle) every day, because each day was a new miracle and, additionally, this is how it was done in the Beth Hamiqdash (Temple).

In practice, each person should kindle the lights in a manner that will have the most honor for the candle lighting itself as well as for the publicizing and endearment of the commandment.

(See Sh. 'A 673:4. Kaf Haḥayyim ibid Oth 71 & 72. Mishnah Berurah ibid, 31. Maamar Mordekhai [Eliyahu], Hilkhoth Haggim 58:49)

Repeating 'Al Hanissim on Shabbath Because of Reṣei

The special portion for Shabbath of *Reṣei* must be said in the Birkath Hamazon (Grace after meals) on Shabbath. If one forgot to say it during the Birkath Hamazon of the Friday night or Shabbath morning meal, the Birkath Hamazon must be repeated.

On Hanukkah, the portion of 'Al Hanissim is also included in the Birkath Hamazon. However, if one forgot to include 'Al Hanissim, one does not repeat the Birkath Hamazon for it. If one forgot to say Reṣei in the Birkath Hamazon and, therefore, has to repeat it as we have just mentioned, one must also repeat the 'Al Hanissim.

The same rule applies to Ya'aleh Wayabo on Rosh Hodesh also. If the Birkath Hamazon needs to be repeated because Reṣei was not said, both 'Al Hanissim and Ya'aleh Weyabo also need to be repeated, even though they were inserted correctly the first time.

(See Maamar Mordekhai [Eliyahu], Hilkhoth Haggim 60:7)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"ḥ

By the Women in the Tent Will She Be Blessed, Part 2

Deborah the prophetess, 'a"ḥ, uses the following phrase in connection with Ya'el who killed Sisera: *Blessed by women is Yael ... by the women in the tent will she be blessed* (Judges 5:24). How can we explain the fact that we use the above phrase to refer to any Jewish woman, considering Ya'el's unconventional behavior?

Perhaps an answer to this question is hidden within another question. We would expect that if Ya'el had no choice in the matter but to carry out her mission of delivering the Jewish people, she would logically use a sword or similar weapon. She consciously chose to use a hammer and a peg instead. Why?

In Debarim (Deuteronomy, 22:5), the Torah instructs women not to wear men's clothing. This does not only apply to clothing but to utensils also. Even during those difficult times of oppression, Ya'el sought to find a solution that would enable her to proudly hold on to her sacred role of being a Jewish woman. One could reasonably argue that those times justified flexibility in this matter, but Ya'el was uncompromising about her essential essence as a Jewish woman, and did what was required of her without giving up her holy values.

For this she deserves to be praised by women in the tent. She wisely preserved her feminine role, defined by the Torah, yet was proactive, leading the entire Jewish nation into the gate of victory.