

# HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

If a woman forgets to kindle her Shabbos lights, she is penalized. What if she forgets to kindle Yomtov lights? Is she penalized, and is it the same penalty?

The issues:

- A) *Nairos Shabbos VeYomtov*
- B) The *Kenass*, penalty, for *Shabbos*
- C) Possible differences for *Yomtov*

## A) *Nairos Shabbos VeYomtov*

According to most poskim, the *mitzvah* to kindle *Shabbos* lights is not Scriptural. Many consider it *midivrei sofrim*, a Prophetic *mitzvah*. Some Rabbinical *mitzvos*, such as Chanukah and Purim, could only have been instituted long after the giving of the Torah. Others were instituted by *Moshe Rabeinu*, and yet others were instituted earlier, such as by the court of *Shem*, for those who had accepted the observance of the Torah, including the *Avos*. Reference is made to the *Shabbos* lights of *Sarah Imainu* and of *Rivkah Imainu*. A minority consider this *mitzvah* Scriptural.

A number of different but connected ideas are cited as the basis for this *mitzvah*. It appears that kindling *Shabbos* lights is considered a *mitzvah* in its own right. It is also part of a larger *mitzvah*, but is significant enough to merit its own *brocha*, according to the majority of poskim. The two main sources for the *mitzvah* are *kavod* and *oneg Shabbos*. Both are based on the verses in the *Navi Yeshaya*, making reference to long-standing observances, dating back, at least, to the times of the Exodus. *Kavod Shabbos* is the *mitzvah* to honor *Shabbos* by preparing specially for it. This includes dressing specially nicely and cleaning, tidying and arranging the home. *Oneg Shabbos* refers to enjoying oneself on *Shabbos*, specifically in the physical sense. This includes enjoying special foods and resting. Some say this refers to having the entire home well lit. This way, people will not stumble and trip, but will feel comfortable moving about at ease. Having the table set with lights is part of *kavod Shabbos*. Another view agrees in practice, but maintains that the opposite is true in theory. Having the home well lit is part of *kavod*. Eating is enjoyed when the dining area is lit. Based on this, all would agree that one must kindle lights in both the living and dining areas.

Some other bases for the lights seem to be outgrowths of these. The best known is *shalom bayis*, domestic harmony. *Shabbos* is the time for *shalom*. The first instance of domestic discord took place right before the first *Shabbos*. Adam and Eve argued about who was responsible for the sin of eating of the tree of knowledge. In essence, if people are unable to navigate the house easily, there will inevitably be a lack of *shalom bayis*. Since one may not kindle lights on *Shabbos* itself, it is essential to kindle them before *Shabbos*. With the addition of this idea, the obligation is expanded. It now includes areas

that do not appear to be part of the general living or dining areas. On the other hand, were the obligation based purely on *shalom bayis*, the lights would be unnecessary in a home that is already well lit. To fulfill *kavod* or *oneg Shabbos*, one must kindle lights specially.

This last matter is debated. A minority view says that one need not recite a *brocha* on these lights, since one need not always kindle them. If there is light in the home without these special lights, one has no further obligation. Therefore, even if one needs to specially supply the light, this kind of obligation could not be considered a *mitzvah* in its own right, with its own *brocha*. The majority view rejects this, maintaining that on the contrary, one would extinguish the existing lights and rekindle them for *Shabbos*.

By kindling the lights, one ushers in his or her personal *Shabbos*. As we discussed last week, one should try to begin *Shabbos* a little early. In order to satisfy the view that one must kindle special lights for *Shabbos*, they must be kindled at a time that this is evident: after the earliest time that *Shabbos* can be ushered in (*plag hamincha*) and before *Shabbos* actually begins (*shkia*). They are the ideal way to start *Shabbos*. The *brocha* is the *kabalah* of *Shabbos*. The woman of the house accepts *Shabbos* this way. A man can do the same, but since he is obligated to participate in the service of *kabolas Shabbos*, he would have in mind that his kindling should not be considered his personal acceptance. This idea is not really a reason to kindle as much as a result of the other reasons. Since these are *Shabbos* lights, their kindling or the *brocha* recited on it is an indication of one's personal ushering in of *Shabbos*.

Another reason only arose in later times. Sects of Jews began to preach a misleading version of the *mitzvah* forbidding kindling fires on *Shabbos*. The text of the verse states: 'You shall not burn fire in your homes.' The deviant sects translated this to mean that one may not have artificial light in the home, even if it was kindled before *Shabbos*. The true meaning is that one may not do the *melacha* on *Shabbos* to produce the light. The deviant sects were opposed to traditional Judaism and to the Rabbis. To show that one follows the Rabbis, one must kindle these lights before *Shabbos*, which is entirely permissible. The source for this reason is an almost explicit Scriptural reference to the *mitzvah*. The Torah says: You shall not kindle a fire in your homes **on the day of *Shabbos***, implying that one may kindle it before *Shabbos* and let it burn on into *Shabbos*.

Esoteric connections are made between *Shabbos* and light. The most basic of these is that the Midrash says that when Hashem blessed *Shabbos* at Creation, it was with light.

The prevailing custom is to consider the lights kindled for *Yomtov* to be a part of the same *mitzvah*. On *Yomtov* there is a *mitzvah* of *kavod*. Instead of *oneg*, a Rabbinical *mitzvah* according to most, *Yomtov* has the Scriptural *mitzvah* of *simcha*, rejoicing. Therefore, one must kindle lights in the various places in the home to satisfy the respective views mentioned earlier. The main *shalom bayis* on *Shabbos* is that one can not kindle lights on *Shabbos* itself. This is what makes it a *mitzvah* to kindle them beforehand. On *Yomtov* one may kindle lights for use. Therefore, this issue is somewhat less of a specific *mitzvah* of kindling lights. [Of course, *shalom bayis* is always a *mitzvah*, that applies to all other areas as well, all the time.] Since one may kindle lights after the onset of *Yomtov*, there is no specific obligation to kindle them as an indication of one's ushering in *Yomtov*. Nonetheless, it is indeed a preferred way to usher in *Yomtov* early. It appears that the deviant sects did not practice the same stringencies on *Yomtov* as on *Shabbos* in regard to

kindling lights. There is no purpose in having lights kindled before *Yomtov* to defy these sects. The association of *Shabbos* with light could also be connected to *Yomtov*.

Given the various reasons, which lights should be kindled with a *brocha*? Assuming one kindles lights in all the locations around the home, should he recite the *brocha* on the *kavod*, the *oneg*, the *shalom bayis*, and which location counts for these? The consensus is to recite the *brocha* where one eats. If there is already light there, such as when one woman has already kindled in that room, many maintain that another may kindle with a *brocha* elsewhere. If one will not be eating at home, he or she may recite a *brocha* on lights that are kindled anywhere in the home, provided that they will be alight later when the person can benefit from them. The obligation applies to all Jews. In one home, one person kindles for all members of the household. A guest or lodger may participate in the household's lights by buying a small part of them. [See Vayakhel 35:3 Mechilta, Yeshaya 58:13-14, commentaries. *Shabbos* entire second perek, Poskim. Beraishis Rabah 60:15, Rashi 24:67, commentaries. Avudraham Lail *Shabbos*. Tur Sh Ar OC 263, commentaries. Behag mitzvos kum aseil 138. Sefer Chasidim 1147. Bais Halevi 11.]

### **B) The Kenass for *Shabbos***

The later poskim cite a *minhag* that a woman who forgot to kindle *Shabbos* lights one week should kindle an extra light for the rest of her life. Various explanations are offered for this. It could be seen as *tashlumin*, to make up for her omission. Some suggest that it is a *kapara*, to atone for the missed week. The reason commonly accepted is that it is a reminder to her to keep *kavod Shabbos* in mind, so she should never again forget. Based on this reason, if she did not forget, but was unable to fulfill it, she is not penalized. If it were *tashlumin*, she would need to make it up anyhow.

A few questions are raised about this *minhag*. First, it is relatively recent, not being mentioned by earlier poskim. Second, it is unusually harsh for an atonement (as a reminder, it makes more sense). Third, apparently, it only applies to women. Fourth, there are *minhagim* on the exact number of lights to kindle. The question is whether one may add to the number. The last issue is debated, and the prevailing custom is to permit it. It has been suggested that since the punishment for laxity in this *mitzvah* is death in childbirth, this strong *kenass* was instituted so that she may protect herself from this forever.

If a woman can not afford an extra light, she may add oil or use a longer candle. If a woman forgot one of her usual number of candles, some impose the *kenass*. Others say that this is a *minhag*, and it is best not to add to the original custom. The original *mitzvah* was to dispel the darkness. Nowadays, we have electric lights on, except in locations where Jews are producing the electricity. Accordingly, in terms of *shalom bayis* or to defy the deviant sects, even if one forgot to kindle special lights, there is still light in the house. Moreover, the main *kavod* and *oneg* comes from the electric lights. The candles are added for ambiance, a small aspect of *kavod* or *oneg*. Some even question the validity of reciting the *brocha* on these candles. Accordingly, some contemporary *poskim* ponder whether the *kenass* should apply in this situation. In reality, since she would normally kindle with a *brocha* despite her electric lights, she should probably adhere to the *kenass*. [See Darkei Moshe, Bach, Rema, Levush OC 263:1, commentaries.]

### **C) Possible differences for *Yomtov***

We have mentioned the differences between *Shabbos* and *Yomtov* regarding the

*mitzvah* of kindling lights. There is debate on whether there is a *brocha* on the *Yomtov* lights. A source is cited, but modern versions of the text cited omit this ruling. We follow the view that it is recited, but the debate shows that there is less certainty about *Yomtov*. Based on these differences, there might be no *kenass* for *Yomtov*. Some poskim do not distinguish between *Shabbos* and *Yomtov*, but apply the *kenass* universally. Others suggest that since the lights may be kindled later, during the meal, it is uncommon to forget totally. The rule is that uncommon situations are usually excluded from instituted customs and decrees. [See Tur, Sh Ar OC 263:5, commentaries. Piskei Teshuvos 263:2.]

[One would think that the entire situation is uncommon, especially in a house where there is no electric lighting. Why then, did they make the institution. Apparently, in those days, it was not common to kindle lights every night, other than *Shabbos*. Forgetting meant forgetting about *Shabbos* itself, until it was too late.] One could add: lights can be kindled at any time during the night that there is a risk to *shalom bayis*, or that there is a feeling of lack of *oneg* or *kavod*. While the *brocha* for these is debatable, it should certainly mitigate the *kenass*. Taking into account the existence of the electric lighting, it would appear that the omission is not so serious. However, considering the fact that there is always electric lighting, forgetting is really like forgetting about *Yomtov*. (In fact, some raise questions of unnecessary *melacha* when kindling on *Yomtov* when the candles are not needed.) Furthermore, while on *Shabbos* one who remembers during the *seuda* cannot kindle then, on *Yomtov* one may do so. Forgetting on *Yomtov* means forgetting altogether, until the next morning. Nonetheless, the idea that we do not extend the *kenass* may be invoked. The *kenass* on *Yomtov* is only raised by contemporary poskim. Apparently, earlier poskim were either not concerned, or did not distinguish. Perhaps, in the absence of electric lighting, one usually remembered during the *seuda*. On *Shabbos* this was too late. On *Yomtov*, there was still time to correct it. Therefore, there never was a *kenass* for *Yomtov*. Thus, we may say that we do not extend this more than the original.

**On the Parsha ...** *May Hashem bless you and protect you. May Hashem light up His countenance toward you and give you grace. May Hashem ... give you peace ... [6:24-26]* R. Chanina Segan *Hakohanim* said 'May He grant peace in your home.' [Sifri] Why would the peace mean specifically the home? In simple terms, the most important and basic place for peace is in the home. On a deeper level, the first argument took place between Adam and Eve, in the home. Peace in the home is dependent on the people living there. Sometimes someone might forget, or do something that causes discord. What should be done to bring back the peace? The *brocha* of light precedes the *brocha* of peace. By bringing *Shabbos* light into the home, the daughters of *Chava* restore the domestic harmony that was lost at Creation. This is why the woman is given this *mitzvah*. If the woman then forgets her *mitzvah*, there is likely to be more loss of domestic harmony. Perhaps this is another reason for the *kenass* of the additional light. Adding a light for all future *Shabbosos* might be to restore this loss of harmony on a more personal level.

Good Shabbos and Yomtov!

♠ Sponsored in memory of. ♠

© Rabbi Shimon Silver, June 2008.

Subscriptions and Sponsorships available. (412) 421-0508. [halochoscope@hotmail.com](mailto:halochoscope@hotmail.com)