The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Shabbos, December 20, 2025 ■ ל' כסלו, תשפ"ו
סימן תרע"ב סעיף א'

Overview

Siman 672 Seif 1:

The Chanukah lights are not kindled before the sun sets; rather it is at the end of sunset, it should not be earlier or later. There is an opinion that maintains that if a person is occupied he may kindle the lights from plag hamincha and onwards as long as one places enough oil that the light will burn until foot traffic in the market place is over.

- The "end of sunset" refers to the appearance of stars. Many Rishonim disagree with Shulchan Aruch and contend that the correct time to kindle lights is a quarter hour before the emergence of stars. Biur Halacha explains that those who daven ma'ariv at the time of the emergence of stars should kindle first and daven afterwards but they must add enough oil that could burn until half an hour after the emergence of stars. If he did not kindle at that time and the time of the emergence of stars arrives he should daven first. (M.B. 1)
- Even those who kindle the lights after ma'ariv, the preparations for kindling should be completed before davening. (M.B. 1)
- Plag hamincha is an hour and a quarter before the emergence of stars. (M.B. 3)
- If one did not add sufficient oil when kindling after plag hamincha and the lights go out before the correct time he should add more oil and kindle the lights again but without a beracha. (M.B. 4)

Stories to Share

Occupied with a Mitzvah

ש"ע, ס' תרע"ב, א': "לא מאחרים ולא מקדימים ויש מי שאומר שאם הוא טרוד"

On today's amud we learn that there is a specific time when one should light his Chanukah candles—not before or after. Although there is an opinion that one may light earlier—and the halachah follows this opinion—it is sometimes impossible to actually light at any halachic time.

This often comes up in the life of physicians. Very often they work long shifts and are unable to leave for home in the middle of their shift. One doctor had to work from early in the afternoon until after dawn the next day. He wondered whether he was required to find a way to light the menorah. How could he miss this important mitzvah? Surely there was no halachic basis for not lighting. But his supervisor was very unsympathetic toward religious observance and would surely ignore any attempt to switch shifts on this basis. He wondered what he should do and whether there was a halachically sound way to fulfill the mitzvah even though he could not be home.

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt"l, ruled as follows. "A doctor who treats patients when the time to light the menorah arrives should first finish his shift, and then go home and light. In the case of a doctor who works a long shift in the hospital which encompasses the entire time that it is possible for him to light the menorah… Since he cannot go home in the middle because he is busy working the entire time, he is absolved from the mitzvah. This falls under the category of one who is involved in a mitzvah who is discharged from other mitzvos during this time.

Rav Elyashiv added an essential point. "This is only true regarding one who lives alone. If the doctor has family he should instruct them to light when the time comes and he is discharged even if he comes home while it is still possible to light. And even if he lives alone he is obligated to designate a messenger to light for him when the time comes."

קונטרס הלכות חנוכה, ע' 2

Halacha Highlight

Lighting after plag hamincha

Shulchan Aruch Siman 672 Seif 1

יכול להקדים מפלג המנחה ולמעלה

One may kindle the lights as early as plag hamincha

Shulchan Aruch (סע' א') rules that one should not kindle the Chanukah lights before shekiah; rather one should kindle the lights at the end of shekiah. Mishnah Berurah (סק"א) explains that when Shulchan Aruch refers to the end of shekiah he refers to tzeis hakochavim – the emergence of stars. That is the time that people are in the streets and thus the miracle will be publicized. He then notes that according to many Rishonim the intent of the Gemara is that one should kindle the lights at the beginning of the second shekiah which is about a quarter of an hour before tzeis hakochavim. Poskim write that if one kindles the lights within half an hour of sunset (shekiah according to Gaonim) and they remain lit until half an hour after tzeis hakochavim one fulfills both opinions (חיי משה בשם שו"ת ארץ צבי סי' קכ"א ושו"ת אג"מ ח"ד סי' ק"א אות ו' וכתב שם דעדיף להדליק עשר דקות אחר שקיעה).

Shulchan Aruch writes that one who is busy may light as early as plag hamincha which Mishnah Berurah (סק"ג) defines as an hour and a quarter before tzeis hakochavim (ע' פסקי תשובות אות ב' הע' 10 דאם הדליק שעה ורביע קודם השקיעה דיחזור וידליק אבל לא יברך שוב). In the event that one has two options; he could either kindle the lights personally after plag hamincha or he could appoint an agent to kindle the lights on his behalf at the ideal time, Teshuvas Shevet HaLevi (ח"ד סי' ס"ו) rules that it is preferable to have the agent kindle the lights on his behalf at the proper time. His reasoning is that all opinions agree that one fulfills the mitzvah if he has an agent light on his behalf at the correct time but not all opinions agree that one fulfills the mitzvah if he kindles the lights after plag hamincha.