**Where Should a Traveler or Student Light Chanuka Candles?**

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**An *Akhsanai***

The Gemara (Shabbat 23a) teaches:

"R. Sheshet said: A lodger is obligated in *ner Chanuka*. R. Zeira said: At first, when I would visit the house of Rav, I would share the costs with the host. After I was married, I concluded that now I certainly don’t need [to light], as [she] is lighting for me at my home…"

Two *halakhot* emerge from this passage:

1) A guest may fulfill his obligation by sharing the costs of the Chanuka lights with the host.

2) A traveler may fulfill his obligation through the lighting performed by somebody else in his home.

Regarding the first *halakha*, the Ran (10a in the Rif) explains that R. Sheshet initially equated the obligation of *hadlakat neirot* with *mezuza*, a pure *chovat bayit* (obligation of the house, as opposed to a personal obligation), and therefore thought that a guest would not be obligated to light *neirot Chanuka* at all. He ultimately concluded that a guest is, in fact, obligated. It remains unclear, however, which aspect of his initial assumption he rejected. He perhaps concluded that *hadlakat neirot* is in fact a *chovat gavra* (personal obligation), and therefore remains binding even if one resides in another person's home, or, he may have accepted the classification of *ner Chanuka* as a *chovat bayit*, but nevertheless held that it applies even to a traveler, who must participate in the host’s expenses in order to fulfill this *mitzva*.

In any event, the *Shulchan Arukh* (677:1) rules in accordance with this Gemara, teaching that a guest who has nobody lighting for him back home, and who does not have a separate entrance where he lodges, should fulfill his obligation by sharing in the host’s expenses for the oil. The *Acharonim* discuss the question of whether or not the host must actually add some oil as the guest's share (see *Magen Avraham* 677:1). The *Magen Avraham* also comments that the guest may pay for the additional oil, or the host may give him an extra portion as a gift.

R. Yaakov Chaim Sofer (1870-1939), in his *Kaf Ha-chayim*, writes that the guest should explicitly state that he gives the money to the host to acquire a share in the costs of the lights. The host should then respond that he transfers a portion of the lights in exchange for the money he received.

Nowadays, it is customary among Ashkenazim to kindle their own Chanuka lights rather than rely upon the lighting of the *ba'al ha-bayit* (host). One possible explanation for this practice is that it stems from the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* standard, which requires each member of the household to light. Even if a guest fulfills the basic obligation through the host’s lighting, the higher standard of *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* might require him to light his own candles.

R. Yaakov b. Moshe Moellin (the Maharil), in his responsa (145), records the custom among guests in his day (14th century) not to share the costs of the host's lights, and to instead light personally. He attributes this to the concern that people might suspect that he did not light (and not to the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice). Others (*Darkhei Moshe* 677) imply that despite this custom, one may still share the costs with the host, and need not be concerned with the possibility of suspicion.

The *Mishna Berura* (677:7) cites the view requiring guests to kindle their own lights in order to avoid suspicion, but he then dismisses this argument. He rules in accordance with the view of the *Magen Avraham* (3) that only guests who stay in quarters with a separate entrance must light their own lights. Nevertheless, the Mishna Berura concludes that a guest should kindle his own lights, whenever possible, in order to fulfill the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin*.

Although this is indeed the common practice, R. Eliyahu Schlesinger, in his compendium *Ner Ish U-Veito* (p. 368), suggests that that a lodger’s lighting might be halakhically meaningless if he does not formally join his host's household. The obligation of *ner Chanuka* requires lighting in one’s *bayit* (a home), and a guest does not have a “home” where to light unless he becomes part of his host’s household. R. Schlesinger therefore suggests, in contrast to the *Mishna Berura's* position, that a lodger must share the costs of the lights in order to fulfill the *mitzva*!

If a man is traveling and his wife lights for him at home, may he still light his own candles where he sleeps?

As we saw in the Gemara, if a person has a wife or other family member back home who lights the Chanuka candles, he need not participate in the costs of his host’s lights. The *Terumat Ha-deshen* (101) cites two opinions as to whether this lodger may kindle his own lights with the *berakhot*. The Maharil (*Teshuvot* 145) observed that most guests in his time lit on their own even in such situations. He held that a guest in this case may even recite the *berakhot*, as he presumably has in mind not to fulfill his obligation through his wife's lighting. The Beit Yosef (677) disagree, and renders his blessing a "*berakha le-vatala*" (a blessing in vain).

Ostensibly, one might relate this question to our definition of *mehadin min ha-mehadrin*. According the Sefardic tradition, which demands that only the head of the household lights, then once one's wife lights a home, her husband should have no reason to light his own candles. According the Ashkenzic tradition, however, which mandates that each and every member of the household should light, then seemingly even if one's wife lit at home, he should still light his own *neirot Chanuka*!

Indeed, the *Eliya Raba* (677:4) cites the *Sha'ar Efraim*, who suggested this interpretation. The *Eliya Raba*, as well as the *Peri Megadim*, rejects this reasoning, and suggests other reasons why even according to Ashkenazic tradition a traveler whose wife lights for him at home might not be encouraged to light his own candles.

The Rema (677:3) rules that a traveler whose family lights for him back home may still light, with the *berakhot*. The *Levush* (1), *Taz* (1), *Magen Avraham* (1) and other *Acharonim* rule in accordance with the Rema, whereas the Maharshal and *Peri Chadash* disagree.

The *Mishna Berura* (15), while not censuring those who light with the *berakhot* in such a case, suggests that one should listen to somebody else’s *berakhot* rather than recite them personally, given the difference of opinion among the authorities in this regard.

**Defining One's Home – One who Eats and Sleeps in Different Places**

Clearly, one who eats and sleeps at home should light *neirot Chanuka* at his own home. The *Taz* (677:2) criticizes the mistaken practice of dinner guests who light in their hosts' homes instead of their own, for "this is no different than if they had been standing in the street during candle lighting, where lighting is certainly not applicable." (Later we will discuss the case of one who has no home.) Clearly, then, if one visits friends or family for dinner and plans to return home, he must light Chanuka candles at home, and not with his hosts.

A more complex question involves guests who sleep in one place but eat somewhere else. Where should one light Chanuka candles in such a case?

The *Tur* (677) cites his father, the Rosh, as ruling that a person in this instance should light in the place where he sleeps, for otherwise, if he lights in the house where he eats, people might suspect that he didn't light *neirot Chanuka* at all.

The Rema, in his *Darkhei Moshe* commentary to the *Tur*, notes that the Rashba (*Teshuvot* 1:542) disagrees, and rules that one who eats in somebody else's house must share in the host’s lighting expenses, even if he sleeps elsewhere. In other words, he understands that the place where one eats determines his status regarding the obligation of *hadlakat neirot*.

R. Yosef Karo, in his *Shulchan Arukh* (677:1), rules that one who has a private entrance to his residence should light there, even if he regularly eats elsewhere. The Rema disagrees, citing the Rashba, and writes, "Some say that nowadays, when we light inside the house, one should light in the place where he eats, and such is the custom…"

The *Acharonim*, as we shall see, debate the practical question of whether the *halakha* follows the Rosh or the Rashba.

This debate may also affect one who stays at a hotel during Chanuka, and sleeps in his room but eats in the hotel’s dining hall. According to the Rosh, he should seemingly light in the place where he sleeps. The Rashba, however, might rule that one should light in the dining room. However, since the entrance to the building might likely be considered the "entrance of one's courtyard adjacent to the *reshut ha-rabim*," it may be the preferred location for lighting. This indeed seems to be the custom in many hotels, especially due to fire safety concerns. (One should keep in mind that one who travels alone, leaving his family back home, may in any event rely on the their lighting at home, if necessary.)

A similar question arises when one travels for just one night. When one goes away for Shabbat, for example, and returns home on Saturday night, where should he light Chanuka candles that night? Is his status determined by the place where he slept the night before, or the place where he intends to sleep that night? Some suggest that if one can return home in time to light while there are still people outside, then he should quickly return home after Shabbat and light there (see *Chovat Ha-dar*, chapter 1, note 65). Others, however, maintain that one may light in his host’s house, before returning home, particularly if he will be returning home late (*Yemei Hallel Ve-hoda'ah*, p. 274, in the name of R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

**Dormitory Students**

Much has been written regarding the question of where yeshiva students should light Chanuka candles. In another shiur, we briefly discussed whether Sephardic students should light, or whether their obligation is fulfilled through their families’ lighting at home (see <http://etzion.org.il/en/ner-chanuka-who-lights-and-how-many-candles>). Students of Ashkenazic descent, however, should certainly light, either to fulfill the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* standard, or quite possibly even to fulfill the basic *mitzva* of *ner ish u-veito*, which they likely no longer fulfill through their parents’ lighting back home, as they fundamentally live independently from their parents.

Very often, students eat and sleep at their school or yeshiva in different rooms, or even in different buildings (if the cafeteria and dormitory are situated in different places on the campus, as is frequently the case). Where should one light in such a situation?

R. Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe*, Y.D. 3, 14:5, and O.C. 4, 70:3) maintains that students should light where they sleep, as the dining room is communal and not designated specifically for any particular student. He also advises students to "draw lots" to determine who should stay and watch the lights, to prevent a fire. R. Yitzchak Weiss (*Minchat Yitzchak* 7:48), R. Binyamin Zilber (*Az Nidberu* 5, 38:2) and R. Shmuel Wosner (*Shevet Ha-levi* 3:83) concur. Some suggest one who lights in a dormitory room should light at the door, facing outward towards the hallway, while others prefer lighting at the window (R. Feinstein).

By contrast, the *Chazon Is*h (see *Teshuvot Ve-hanhagot* 2 342:11) and R. Aharon Kotler (cited by R. Shimon Eider in his *Halakhos of Chanukah*, p. 37) rule that one should light where he eats, in accordance with the aforementioned ruling of the Rema.

R. Moshe Harari, in his *Mikra’ei Kodesh* (Chanuka, p. 100, note 101), cites R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach as commenting (in personal conversation with R. Harari) that students may light *neirot Chanuka* either in the entrance to their dormitory building or the cafeteria, but not in their rooms, due to safety concerns. This is, indeed, the custom in R. Auerbach’s yeshiva, Kol Torah, in Jerusalem. Students at Yeshiva University also light at the entrance to their dormitory buildings.

**On the Road – One Who Travels Without a Home**

May one fulfill the *mitzva* of *ner Chanuka* outside of a house? For example, may one traveling on a train, or camping in an open field, light *neirot Chanuka*?

In another *shiur* (<http://etzion.org.il/en/proper-place-light-chanuka-candles>), we questioned whether we should define the *mitzva* of *ner Chanuka* as a *chovat bayit* – an obligation upon the house, similar to *mezuza* – or a *chovat gavra* – a personal *mitzva* performed in the home. Clearly, one who views the obligation as a *chovat bayit* would not require lighting in the situations mentioned (just as one is obviously not obligated in *mezuza* if he has no home). If, however, we view the obligation as a *chovat gavra*, then the question arises as to whether the obligation remains applicable even in the absence of a home.

Although the *Rishonim* do not explicitly address this question, later authorities inferred from a number of sources that the obligation of *ner Chanuka* requires a house. Tosafot (*Sukka 46b s.v. ha-ro’eh*) explain that the *berakha* of "*she-asa nissim*" was instituted to enable "those who do not have houses and who are unable to fulfill the *mitzva*" to participate in the *mitzva* of Chanuka. This comment assumes that people without homes do not light Chanuka candles. Similarly, Rashi (*Shabbat* 23a s.v. *ha-ro’eh*) explains that this *berakha* is intended for one who has not yet lit in his house, and for one traveling by boat, who does not light. Rashi does not explain, however, why a boat is not considered a house. Furthermore, the Rambam (4:1) writes that "the *mitzva* [of Chanuka] entails that each and every house light,” implying that the *mitzva* must be performed in (or by) a house.

By contrast, the Ran (Shabbat 10a s.v. *amar*), as cited earlier, seemingly understood the Gemara as establishing that the mitzva is not a *chovat bayit*, but rather a personal obligation.

The *Acharonim* indeed address this question. Earlier, we cited the *Taz* (677:2) as criticizing the mistaken practice of dinner guests who light in their hosts' homes instead of their own, noting that "this is no different than if they had been standing in the street during candle lighting, where lighting is certainly not applicable." This certainly implies that one without a house may not light Chanuka candles. R. Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe* Y.D. 3, 14:5) and R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichot Shelmo,* p. 257) rule accordingly.

Some *Acharonim* maintain that although one must light in a "house,” even a temporary residence may be considered a “house” in this respect. For example, R. Shalom Mordechai ben Moshe Shvadron (the Maharsham, 1835–1911), in his responsa (4:146), writes that one may light while traveling on a train, because he in effect "rents" his cabin. The *Arukh Ha-shulchan* (677:5) concurs.

Interestingly, R. Aharon Lichtenstein (<http://etzion.org.il/en/lighting-chanuka-candles-soldiers-and-travellers>) accepts the assumption that one may light only in a "*bayit*,” yet questions whether a "*bayit*" must, by definition, be a roofed enclosure, or whether any fixed dwelling place, even without a roof, would suffice. Furthermore, he insists that one must have dwelled in this place for a minimum amount of time, either a week or thirty days, and therefore campers who sleep in a certain place for less than a week should not light *neirot Chanuka*, and should instead rely on the lighting performed in their homes. R. Auerbach apparently also shared this doubt, as he ruled that while soldiers who sleep in the open fields should not light, those sleeping in trenches should light without reciting the *berakhot*.

Others maintain that the requirement of "*bayit*" is optimal, but not mandatory, and therefore, one may even light without a house. R. Eliezer Waldenberg, for example, in his *Tzitz Eliezer* (15:29), defines the *mitzva* as one which is incumbent "*a-karkafta de-gavra*,” upon each and every head, and thus does not depend upon a house. R. Binyamin Zilber (*Az Nidberu* 6:75) concurs.

Regarding soldiers, R. Waldenberg (above) maintains that they should light, next to their beds, with the *berakhot*. R. Tzvi Pesach Frank (*Mikra’ei Kodesh* – Chanuka, 18, note 3) ruled in 1974 that while soldiers who sleep in tents which protect them from the rain may light *neirot Chanuka*, those who sleep in open fields should not. R. Ovadya Yosef (*Chazon Ovadya*, p. 156) rules that soldiers sleeping outside should light without reciting the *berakhot*.

R. Yosef Zvi Rimon analyzes this question at length in his article "*Ner Chanuka Le-Chayal Ve-la’mateyel*" (*Be-orekha Nireh Or*, 2004).

**Lighting in Synagogues and other Public Places**

The custom to light Chanuka candles in the synagogue is mentioned already by the *Rishonim*. R. Yitzchak ben Abba Mari (12th century, France), for example, in his *Sefer Ha-ittur* (Chanuka 114), discusses this practice and cites different customs as to whether the lights are kindled in the center of the synagogue or in the entrance.

The *Rishonim* suggest numerous reasons for this practice. R. Avraham b. R. Natan (Provence, 12th century) explains that we light in the “mini-*Mikdash*” (see Megilla 29a) to publicize the miracle that occurred in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. The Ritva (Shabbat 23a) explains that we light in a synagogue "to publicize the miracle in a public place." Some *Rishonim* (*Mikhtam*,Pesachim 101b; *Abudraham* – *Seder Ma'ariv shel Shabbat*) suggest that the synagogue lighting enables those who have no house to at least recite the *berakhot* upon seeing the lights, just as *kiddush* is recited in the synagogue for the sake of those who will not recite *kiddush* on their own.

Interestingly, the *Rivash* (111) suggests that once it became customary to light *neirot Chanuka* indoors, out of fear of the surrounding non-Jews, the authorities enacted that communities should light in their synagogues, in order to properly publicize the miracles of Chanuka.

R. Tzidkiya b. Avraham Ha-Rofei (13th century, Italy), in his *Shibolei Ha-leket*, asserts that lighting in the synagogue is halakhically superfluous, and therefore questions whether the *berakhot* should be recited upon this lighting. The *Shulchan Arukh* (671:1), however, codifies the practice of lighting in the synagogue with the *berakhot*, explaining that this lighting serves the purpose of *pirsumei nisa*. The Rema adds that these candles are lit in between the *Mincha* and *Maariv* prayers.

Some *Acharonim* (R. Moshe Feinstein, *Iggerot Moshe* O.C. 1:190) write that the one who lights in the synagogue repeats all the *berakhot* – including *she-asa nissim* and *she-hechiyanu* – upon kindling his own lights at home. Others (R. Ovadya Yosef, *Yechave Da'at* 2:77) rule that he omits these two *berakhot*, unless he recites them for his family.

In some communities, it is customary to kindle Chanuka lights with the *berakhot* in all public places. This issue should seemingly depend upon the reason for the synagogue lighting. If we light in the synagogue to commemorate the lighting in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, or for the sake of those with no home, then certainly there is no reason to light with *berakhot* in other public settings. However, the Ritva's reasoning, that we light in a synagogue to publicize the miracle, might apply to other public areas, as well.

The *Minchat Yitzchak* (6 65:3) and *Tzitz Eliezer* (15 30; 22 37:1) object to this practice, while R. Binyamin Zilber (*Az Nidberu* 5:37) supports the custom. R. Ovadya Yosef (*Yabia Omer* 7, 57:6; *Chazon Ovadya*, p. 47) defends the practice, though he recommends praying at the site of the lighting to lend it the status of a “synagogue” in this respect.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi [Menachem Mendel Schneerson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menachem_Mendel_Schneerson) (1902–1994), encouraged his followers to light in public places in order to publicize the miracles of Chanuka, in line with the reasoning of the Ritva (cited above).

It is customary to light at the Western Wall, as it functions as a synagogue year round (*Az Nidberu* 6, p. 137; *Chazon Ovadya*, p. 47).