



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

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19 December 1998
Issue #218
Parshat Miketz

YOUR FIRST DEGREE

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Where should I light Chanuka candles if I'm not allowed to light them in my room? The dorm policy in my dorm at U. of M. is that we're not allowed to smoke, light candles, etc., in the dorm rooms. Should I light anyway? Or should I not do it at all? Thanks.

Dear Name@Withheld,

Your dormitory policy is very sensible. It's obviously intended to ensure that the first degree you get will be a piece of paper, not a burn. Breaking this rule endangers you and others, besides the fact that it is simply against the rules.

I recommend that you light your menorah at the entrance to the dorm building, or if that's not possible then in the dining room.

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 671:5

STRAIGHT ANSWER

Allan Grant <agrants@pop.mindspring.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Where can I, a complete novice, find the rabbinic or halachic rulings on the construction of a chanukia (chanuka menorah)? I've enclosed a photo of a chanukia that I had custom-built for my wife and I can't find anyone to give me a straight answer.

I have been told that they've got to be in a straight line, that there is no variation from this style. But I've also been told that there can be different shapes

and alignments as long as each candle is separate and can be viewed as such. Obviously, I'm confused.

I've been told that there are rules and regulations in the Talmud, Shabbat 23b, but I don't have a Talmud near me, and the closest shuls are more than 20 miles from here, so that's out.

What are the requirements? Where can a layman find them? How do the above opinions get resolved? Where do I go? HELP!! Please help with a good explanation, not just a one word sentence that doesn't tell me why.

Dear Allan Grant,

Traditionally and ideally, the *chanukia* is a straight line. The one pictured which you made is also OK, because each candle is distinct from the others.

The idea is, that the onlooker can see which night of Chanuka it is by looking at the candles, which is easiest if in a straight line. For the same reason, the *shamash* must be distinct, preferably a little higher than the other candles.

Sources:

- Rema, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 671:4
- Mishna Berura ibid. 17

WHERE IN BLAZES?

Evan Sehgal <Bns357@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

In the Shulchan Aruch it says a chanukia must be no higher than 20 amos (cubits). Is this height measured from the base of the chanukia, the base of the candle, the base of the flame or the top of the flame? Is this an issue as the candle burns down?

If you have E-Mail and a question, you can submit it to Ask The Rabbi for possible inclusion in a future edition. Just write your question using your E-Mail program, set the subject to "Ask The Rabbi" and send it to info@ohr.org.il. Or use our form at <http://www.ohr.org.il/ask/page/ask.htm>. We can't include all questions submitted, but we do try to respond to everyone.

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Does this have implications for the giant menorahs lit in public places?

Dear Evan Sehgal,

The flame must not be higher than 20 amos (approximately 30-40 feet) above ground level of the public thoroughfare. If the flame is higher, the person has not fulfilled the mitzvah. Large public menorahs are anyway not intended to fulfill the mitzvah because they are not in or next to any individual's dwelling. The mitzvah is to light the menorah at home.

GLOWING REPORT

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

How soon after the Maccabean victory was Chanuka celebrated on an annual basis? When were the first chanukiot created and used? When was the ban on constructing a seven-branched menorah rescinded?

Feldi3 <Feldi3@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have to do a project for my Torah teacher on the menorah, could you send me some pictures, and information on the menorah. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Feldi3

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can you give me information on the significance of the 7-branched menorah, as opposed to the 9-branched chanukia?

Dear Feldi3 and Names@Withheld,

The original Menorah was the golden candelabra that G-d commanded the Jewish People to make and place in the Holy Temple. It had six branches and a stem, making seven lamps in all. The *kohanim* (priests) lit it once a day. The Torah relates its measurements and design in Exodus 25:31-40.

The Sages teach that the Menorah was the vessel that G-d used to blend the spiritual light of the World to Come with the physical light of this world. For this reason, the windows in the Temple were narrow on the inside and wide on the outside — to spread out this blended light to the world.

There is a prohibition against making a metal seven-branched menorah. This prohibition is part of the general prohibition against making vessels like those of the Holy Temple, and it was never rescinded.

Chanuka was instituted as an annual holiday the very first year after the Maccabean victory (165 BCE) to celebrate the victory and the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days.

The Chanuka menorah has place for eight candles and for a ninth candle set off somewhat from the rest. The eight candles commemorate the miracle of the oil while the ninth candle, the *shamash*, is for light. The first use of an eight-armed menorah for Chanuka is not known, although there are some dating back over 500 years.

There's no absolute *requirement* to use a Chanuka menorah, because you can fulfill the minimal requirement with one candle per night. But since it's ideal to add a candle each night, the custom arose to use an eight-branched menorah. A friend of mine from Yeshiva used to line up eight soda cans as his menorah!

For more information, look at Ohr Somayach's Chanuka web pages at:

www.ohr.org/special/chanuka/index.htm

And Feldi, let me know what grade I get, er, I mean, what grade *you* get, on the report!

Sources:

- Tractate Shabbat 21b
- Tractate Avoda Zara 43a
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 141:2
- See also Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 3:33

RUDOLF THE RED-NOSED ROAST BEEF

Heather Coats from Anchorage, Alaska
<hcoats@micronet.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Do you know if reindeer sausage is kosher? It is made locally at Indian Valley Meats. Thank you.

Dear Heather Coats,

Reindeer is a kosher-type animal. But, like all kosher-type animals, it isn't actually kosher until it is ritually slaughtered and goes through a special process. If it doesn't go through this process, then it's not kosher. That's why all meat needs Rabbinic supervision.

If it's difficult in Anchorage to find meat that is actually kosher, I am including an address of a Rabbi in Anchorage who will be able to help you obtain kosher food (*address omitted from published version*).

HASMONEAN KINGS

Russell Gold from Bala Cynwyd, PA
< russgold@acm.org > wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why was the Davidic line not restored to the throne after the Maccabean revolt overthrew the Syrian-Greek occupation? Why did the people accept the Hasmonean line instead?

Dear Russell Gold,

The Hasmoneans were the military commanders of the coup; they kept the throne for themselves being the family in power who had the capability of maintaining law and order. In fact they were punished for not returning the throne to the house of David, and eventually not only lost the throne but the whole family died out. The people themselves had little to say about the matter, as the monarchy could not have been retrieved by force (i.e., a civil war) out of gratitude to the Hasmoneans.

Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked: This riddle is attributed to the Ibn Ezra. Two characters in Tanach: one's name makes him sound as though he's his own uncle, and the other's would have him appear to be his own grandfather. Who are they?

Answer: King Achav ("Ach" means brother, "av" means father; hence "Achav" means "Brother of father" or "uncle.") (*Melachim I 16:28*) Avner son of Ner ("Avner" sounds like "the father" (av) of Ner). (*Shmuel I 26:5*)

Riddle submitted by Dovid Solomon < dsolomon@actcom.co.il >

Yiddle Riddle Special

As a Chanuka present to our readers, we're offering you another riddle this week, including the answer!

Avraham Rosenthal < rosentha@netvision.net.il > wrote:

Here is a Yiddle Riddle which I heard from a prominent *cheder rebbi* in *Yerushalayim*: Name four people in *Sefer Bereishis* (Genesis) whose names consist of two words.

Answer:

Tuval Kayin (*Bereishet 4:22*); May Zahav (*Bereishet 36:39*); Poti Fera (*Bereishet 41:45*); Tsafnas Panayach (*Bereishet 41:45*).

Ohrnet Notes:

What about *Adam HaRishon*? (Just kidding.) But on a more serious note: Ben Oni! That was Rachel's name for her son Binyamin. (*Bereishet 25:18*) And what about Malki Tzedek, king of Shalem? (*Bereishet 14:18*)

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

*Comments, quibbles, and reactions
concerning previous "Ask-the-Rabbi" features*

Re: Providence:

This isn't a question but it's a true story that I heard that I'd like to share. My friend received a 500 Rand inheritance and decided to give 50 Rand to charity. His parents said they thought that was too much but he told them that whatever you give to charity, Hashem gives back to you. So he gave it to charity and later, when cleaning his drawers and going through cards from his past birthdays, he found a 50 Rand note that he had not seen.

R. Berzack from South Africa <robert.berzack@pixie.co.za>

what we are about to write, but it's not an absolute requirement. I've never noticed anyone writing it when they write a check."

An interesting thing just happened to me before I read the above. A gentleman from Spain came into my Judaica store and wrote "beis samech dalet" above his signature on the credit card slip. He said that he has officially incorporated it as a legal part of his signature and showed me that it appears above his name on his driver's license and on other documents.

Michael Katz <M613K@aol.com>

Re: Sanctifying the Moon Versus Moon-Worship (Ohrnet Vayera):

Many people are careful to face away from the moon while saying Kiddush Levana. The reason is to avoid giving the appearance of moon worship.

*Rabbi Yitzchok D. Frankel, Cedarhurst, NY
<Ydfrankel@aol.com>*

Re: B'SD (Ohrnet Vayeitze):

In a recent Ask the Rabbi regarding the letters "beit, samech, dalet," you wrote: *"It's a custom to write it on top of the page as a prayer for success in*

I'd like to note that Rabbi Yitzchak Karo in his sefer "Toldot Yitzchak" (Vayikra 14:34) says that the reason to write either "beit hey" or "samech dalet" is from the verse in Mishle (3:6) "In all your ways know Him..." However, if writing "beit hey" one should be careful not to put the paper in the garbage (see Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:138).

Also what you wrote about using the names of people from before Avraham, see Pitchei Teshuva Yoreh Deah 365:6 in the name of Teshuva Me'ahava (1:35) that one may do so, and not like the Mabit (1:276). Thanks for your wonderful weekly newsletter.

Moshe Reich, Kiryat Sefer, Israel

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