

The Weekly Daf



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Shabbos 23-29

Week of 23-29 Kislev 5758 / 22-28 December 1997
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Since the dates for those pages of the Talmud dealing with Chanukah this year come so close to the days when we celebrate this miracle, we shall dedicate this week's selections to Chanukah topics.

A Tale of Two Miracles

Even though the general rule is that women are exempt from time-related *mitzvos*, women are obligated in the *mitzvah* of Chanukah lighting, declared Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, because they too were involved in the miracle.

Rashi seems to combine the following explanations of Rashbam and of Tosafos regarding why women are obligated in time-related *mitzvos*, such as reading the *Megillah* on Purim and drinking four cups of wine on Pesach Eve.

Rashbam's approach is that the women were the catalysts for these miracles — Esther for Purim, Yehudis for Chanukah and the righteous women of Israel for the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt. Tosafos takes a different line and stresses the fact that women were as exposed to danger from the enemy decrees as were the men, and must therefore equally celebrate the miracle which redeemed them.

Rashi cites both the evil decree of the Greeks affecting the purity of Jewish women on the threshold of marriage and the fact that a miraculous victory over the Greeks was sparked by a woman.

The difficulty with understanding either approach is that on *daf 21b* the gemara explains that the miracle for which the holiday of Chanukah was established was that a one-day supply of olive oil lasted for eight days of *Menorah* lighting in the *Beis Hamikdash* until the victorious Maccabee forces could secure a new supply of uncontaminated oil. If this was the miracle, why is the woman's connection to the Chanukah miracle discussed in terms of spiritual danger and redemption from it?

In the "*Al Hanissim*" praise we add to our prayers and grace after meals on Chanukah, we stress the miracle of the military triumph over "the mighty by the weak and the many by the few," while the miracle of the oil is merely hinted at. The inescapable conclusion is that Chanukah is a celebration of both the military miracle and that of the oil. We will mention but one of the explanations how each of these miracles complements the other. Military victories over superior forces have been ascribed by historians to the brilliance of generals and the fighting ability of soldiers, and their purpose was political independence. Such explanations might have been given for the triumph of the Maccabees had the miracle of the oil not delivered a Divine message that it was only a Heavenly miracle, whose purpose was to achieve spiritual security.

Shabbos 23a

Which Comes First

In every eight days of Chanukah there must be at least one Shabbos. Before that Shabbos begins we have two *mitzvos* related to candles — Shabbos lights and Chanukah lights.

Which comes first in importance and which in order of performance?

The issue of relative importance arises in a situation where one has limited funds and can afford to buy only candles for Shabbos or Chanukah. Which deserves priority?

Resolution of this issue, declared the Sage Rava, is a simple matter. Shabbos candles take priority because of "*Shalom bayis*" (the family is uncomfortable sitting in the dark — Rashi). This ruling, codified in the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 678:1)*, is modified by the later authorities who write that although it is proper to light at least two candles in honor of Shabbos, in a case of limited funds it is preferable to make do with only one Shabbos candle and to use the remaining funds to purchase a candle for Chanukah.

When there are sufficient funds for both, but it is only a question of the order of performance, the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 579:1)* rules that the Chanukah candles should be lit before the Shabbos ones. The reason for this is because there is a halachic opinion that once you light the Shabbos candles you have accepted upon yourself the sanctity of the Sabbath and are now forbidden to light the fire necessary for the Chanukah lights.

Since a man does not customarily light the Shabbos candles, his lighting them by mistake before the Chanukah ones will not prevent him from subsequently lighting the Chanukah candles unless he expressly thought of accepting the sanctity of the Sabbath. If it is a woman lighting the Chanukah candles because her husband is away, we consider her lighting of Shabbos candles as an acceptance of Sabbath sanctity just as it is every *erev* Shabbos throughout the year. If she mistakenly lights the Shabbos candles first she should therefore ask someone else to light the Chanukah ones for her, and also to say the first blessing upon them. She herself should say the other one (or two if it's the first night of Chanukah).

Shabbos 23b

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