

Seed

HHCT Family Learning Programme

21 June 2020 / 29 Sivan 5780

Shabbat Candles in the 21st Century



Scenario: Louise and Jonathan check in to their hotel in Reykjavik, Iceland early on Thursday. Louise is pleased that they have arrived in good time for Shabbat. They will be eating in their hotel room on Friday night and then at the newly opened Chabad house on Shabbat day. Louise places the tea lights she has brought for Shabbat candles on the table in their room. "You can't light those" says Jonathan, "you'll set off the fire alarm!" Louise looks sheepish "I guess you're right" she says, "so how will I light Shabbat candles?"

1) Why do we light Shabbat candles? Study the Gemara below with Rashi's commentary. Try to summarise with your study partner what reasons are given for lighting Shabbat candles. Can you think of a practical difference between these reasons?

Gemora Shabbos 25b

רבי ישמעאל אומר כו': מאי טעמא אמר רבא מתוך שריחו רע גזרה שמא יניחנה ויצא אמר ליה אביי ויצא אמר ליה שאני אומר הדלקת נר בשבת חובה

We learned in the mishna that **Rabbi Yishmael says** that kindling a lamp on Shabbat with tar is prohibited. The Gemara asks: **What is the reason** for this? **Rava said: Because its odour is bad** the Sages issued a **decree** prohibiting the use of tar, **lest one forsake the light and leave. Abaye said to him: And let him leave.** What obligation is there to sit next to the light? **Rava said to him: Because I say that kindling Shabbat lights is an obligation**

Rashi

חובה - כבוד שבת הוא, שאין סעודה חשובה אלא במקום אור כעין יממא.

It is the honour of Shabbos since every important meal is illuminated

Tosafos

הדלקת נר בשבת חובה - פי' במקום סעודה דחובה היא שיסעוד במקום הנר משום עונג

At the place where one eats, since it is an obligation to eat next to the candles because of **enjoyment** of Shabbos

Gemora Shabbos 23b

אמר רבא, פשיטא לי: נר ביתו ונר חנוכה - נר ביתו עדיף, משום שלום ביתו

Rava says: If one can only afford Shabbos candles or Chanukah candles, Shabbos candles take precedence because of serenity in one's home.

Rashi

שלום ביתו - ותזנח משלום נפשי זו הדלקת נר בשבת שבני ביתו מצטערין לישב בחשך

People in one's home are distressed to sit in the dark

2) *The source below is Rambam (Maimonides). What detail does he add to the process of lighting Shabbat Candles?*

Rambam Hilchos Shabbos 5:1

ואחד אנשים ואחד נשים חביבין להיות בבתיהן נר דלוק בשבת. אפלו אין לו מה יאכל שואל על הפתחים ולוקח שמן ומדליק את הנר שזה בכלל ענג שבת. וחיב לברך קודם הדלקה ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת. כדרך שמברך על כל הדברים שהוא חיב בהם מדברי סופרים:

It is a duty, binding on men and women alike; they are obligated to have lights burning in their homes on Sabbath eve. Even if one has nothing to eat, let him go request from others, buy oil, and light a lamp, as this forms an integral part of Sabbath enjoyment (*oneg shabbath*). Before lighting, one should recite a blessing: "**Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with his commandments, and commanded us to light the Sabbath lights.**" This is on the same principle that one recites a benediction over all duties introduced by the sages.

3) *In the following source Rambam states that the prohibition of kindling a fire includes heating a metal on Shabbat. Why is this the case?*

Rambam Shabbos 12:1

המחמם את הברזל כדי לצרפו במים הרי זה תולדת מבעיר וחייב

One who heats metal in order to strengthen it is a subcategory of kindling a fire and is forbidden

4) *Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Aurbach (d. 1995) rules that one may use electric lights for Shabbat Candles if necessary. Can you see from the source above where he derived this? Why do you think he emphasises that one may make a blessing?*

Shmiras Shabbos 43:4

והמדליק נרות שבת וי"ט בנורות חשמל יש לו על מי לסמוך וגם יברך על הדלקה זו

One who lights Shabbat or Yom Tov candles with an electric light if necessary. He may also make a blessing on this lighting.

Do you think it makes a difference which type of electric light is used i.e. filament bulb, fluorescent or LED?

Based on these sources, discuss with you study partner whether you can help Louise and Jonathan find a solution to lighting Shabbat Candles.

Appendix

Rambam above seems to say only heating metal to strengthen it is prohibited. What about heating metal for light?

שו"ת מנחת שלמה חלק א סימן יב

וכיון שכן איך אפשר לחלק בין מתכוין לצרף ובין מתכוין לבשל ולהאיר, בו בזמן שהבערת אש לצורך חימום בישול ואור הרבה יותר מצוי מהבערה ע"מ לצרף דליתא אלא במתכת

Since nowadays heating metal is usually to cook or for light there is no distinction between this and strengthening it