



פרשת נשא  
סיון תשפ"ג  
שנת הקהל



## HAKHEL IN THE PARSHA

Chapter seven of Mesechta Sotah discusses which passages must be recited in Lashon Hakodesh and which may be said in any language.

Two of the passages that must be recited in Lashon Hakodesh are Birkas Kohanim - the blessing of the Kohanim which is recorded in this week's Parsha, and the Parsha of the king, referring to the public reading of the king at Hakhel.

The Sages discuss the source from where we derive that these sections must be said in Lashon Hakodesh. Birkas Kohanim is recited in Lashon Kodesh because the Pasuk says "thus shall you bless" - *כה תברכו*, alluding to the fact that it must be recited as recorded in the Torah.

The Sages do not teach the source for why the Hakhel passage to be recited in Lashon Hakodesh.

A possible explanation; the other passages in the Mishna were recitations performed at different times. Whilst they quoted words from the Torah, they were not read from the Torah. Therefore a source is required for why they must be recited in Lashon Hakodesh. An example of this is Birkas Kohanim.

In contrast, the Mitzvah of Hakhel (as the Torah itself specifies) is to read from the passage from the Torah scroll itself, which would obviously be in Lashon Kodesh.

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## The Chassidus of Wedding Gifts

Why is it customary to give gifts to a Chosson and Kallah for their marriage? In this week's Chassidish Parsha, the Alter Rebbe presents a mystical explanation based on the teachings of Chassidus.

At the end of Parshas Nasso we read the Chanukas Hamizbeach, the inauguration or induction of the Mizbeach in the Mishkan.

The daily, ongoing Avodah that was performed on the Mizbeach was the Korbanos. This Avodah entailed taking animals and elevating on high as they were burned up by the fire of the altar. In a broader sense, it represents the elevation of physicality and our own personal animalism to become holy, uniting physicality and spirituality.

In order to be able to affect this Avodah in an ongoing manner, the Mizbeach required a Chinuch. The need for this Chinuch is because our sages teach that "all beginnings are difficult". In order to have the power and strength to begin its life-long Avodah, the Mizbeach required something more powerful than just the regular Avodah; a one-off extra boost of energy.

This was in the form of the gifts brought by the princes of the Tribes. One of the inauguration gifts given by each Nasi, was a golden spoon filled with Ketores.

In the Temple Avodah, Ketores would be burned each day, but only ever on the inner altar. The Ketores brought by the princes was offered on the external altar, the only time that this was ever done.

This offering of Ketores on the outer Mizbeach when the Mishkan was first setup, was the Chinuch. The Ketores is more lofty than the Korbanos, evidenced by the fact that it was brought on the inner altar

whereas the Korbanos were on the external altar.

The Korbanos are likened to food and are referred to as Lechem, the bread of Hashem. When we eat food, it becomes ingested and internalised. The Korbanos elicit the G-dly that is internalised within the worlds, each according to its level. This light is referred to as Memaleh Kol Almin.

In contrast, fragrance is something that is not internalised. Fragrance pervades and surrounds us. The Ketores elicits the Divine light of Sovev Kol Almin, the light that transcends the worlds entirely. This is a much loftier Hamshacha.

Offering the Ketores of the Nesiim drew down this transcendent light into the sacrificial altar, to give it the ability to effect the daily ongoing Avodah of Korbanos, elevating the physicality and animalism of the world.

The Alter Rebbe explains that this is why we give gifts to a bride and groom on their wedding.

As male and female, husband and wife are two opposites; not only physically, but in their spiritual nature as well. Marriage is about the two becoming one, to unite together in peace, harmony and oneness. This is their life-long Avodah.

The wedding celebration and particularly the gifts that we give, are like the gifts of the Nesiim. This is the Chinuch that provides the extra-boost of joy, inspiration and commitment, that will help the Chosson and Kallah to take their first, 'difficult' steps together, setting them on the path of their lifelong journey of growing together to become one.

1. Rambam Hilchos Shabbos 5:1
2. Shulchan Aruch Harav 263 Kuntres Acharon 2
3. Rambam ibid 5:3
4. Yerushalmi Shabbos 2:6. Midrash Rabbah Breishis 17. Rashi Shabbos 31a
5. Shabbos 31a
6. Mateh Moshe. Magen Avraham 263:6, Shulchan Aruch Harav 263:5
7. Aruch Hashulchan 263:7. Some suggest that the Magen Avraham and Alter Rebbe follow this reason, because they then qualify that it only applies to after birth, but a woman who is in a regular state of Niddah still lights the candles and makes the blessing. Others suggest that because there is no reason to

- distinguish between the impurity of a Yoledes and a Niddah, the Alter Rebbe and Magen Avraham are hinting to us that impurity is not the reason for the custom.
8. The difficulty with this reason is that since the accepted Halacha is that a woman who is ritually impure is required to Daven and make all of the blessings and does light Shabbos candles, why is a Yoledes different? Further, the custom is limited to the first Shabbos, even though her impurity from birth remains until she immerses in the Mikvah.
9. Imrei Baruch
10. Be'er Moshe 8:66
11. See Kaf Hachaim 263:23 quoting Shayarei

- Kneses Hagedolah who writes that this is a Minhag Yafah – a nice custom.
12. Birkei Yosef quoting Rabbi Yitzchak Levi Vahl. This may be the entire reason for the custom of the husband lighting on the Shabbos after birth, see Tehillah Ledovid 88:3.
13. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein ruling as quoted in "The Radiance of Shabbos", Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach quoted in Halichos Bas Yisroel. Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa 43:9
14. Mateh Efraim 599:9.
15. 74:13
16. See Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa 43:4 and the sources quoted there.
17. Acharonim

# Lighting Shabbos Candles After Giving Birth

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

The Mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles is a requirement for the home. This responsibility devolves upon men and women equally<sup>1</sup>.

Technically, the husband should be the one to light the candles. This is because of two reasons. Firstly, as the head of the household, the obligations of the home rest upon the husband. Additionally, the primary responsibility for creating Shalom Bayis rests on the husband. Nonetheless, precedence in lighting the candles is entrusted to the lady of the household and she lights them as the representative (Shlucha) of her husband<sup>2</sup>.

The reason that this Mitzvah is entrusted to the lady of the household is because she is generally the one present and she oversees the running of the home<sup>3</sup>. Another reason that she should light the candles, is as a Tik-kun (correction) for the sin of the Eitz Hadaas (the Tree of Knowledge), which Chavah brought about<sup>4</sup>.

Additionally, the Mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles, together with the separation of Chalah and the laws of Taharas Hamishpacha (Family Purity), serve as a protection for a woman at the time of childbirth<sup>5</sup>.

## The first Shabbos after giving birth

The Acharonim<sup>6</sup> record the custom that on the Shabbos after giving birth, the husband should light the candles instead of his wife.

There are different reasons suggested for this custom. Some suggest that it is because the Yoledes is ritually impure after giving birth<sup>7</sup>. This reason is difficult to understand based on a number of questions<sup>8</sup>.

Others suggest<sup>9</sup> that the custom evolved because in former times, after giving birth, the Yoledes would not leave her room while she was recuperating. This was the medical advice and practise. As such, she would be unable to light the candles in their place by the table.

There is an additional reason brought in the Poskim<sup>10</sup>. As mentioned above, one of the reasons that the Mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles is entrusted to the lady of the household, rather than her husband, is because lighting Shabbos candles is a Tik-kun for Chavah's role in the Sin of the Eitz Hadaas which brought death to the world. In the

words of the sages, she lights Shabbos candles because "she extinguished the candle of the world" - a reference to the soul of Adam.

After giving birth and bringing a new Neshama into the world, she does not require the candle-lighting as a Tik-kun that week. Once the Tik-kun is no longer required, the Mitzvah of candle-lighting reverts back to the husband.

There are a number of practical differences in Halacha that arise, depending on what the reason for the custom is.

According to the second reason, that it is because the Yoledes would remain in bed, if the Yoledes is already able to leave her room and move around the house as is common nowadays, she would be obligated to light the candles as per usual. According to the other two reasons, the fact that she can leave her room would not matter and the husband would still light the candles.

According to the third reason, that it is because she does not require the Tik-kun and so the Mitzvah reverts back to the husband, if the husband were to defer to her and ask her to light instead of him, she would be able to light the candles. According to the first and second reasons, she would not be able to light.

## Dissenting opinions

Some Acharonim<sup>11</sup> disagree with this custom entirely. They record that the custom was to bring the candles into the room of the Yoledes for her to light, after which they would be brought to the table. Others<sup>12</sup> question this practise because according to the Rambam and Ram"o, the candles must be lit in their place i.e. where they will be left for Shabbos. In order to avoid this concern, this custom is being followed, in order to be Yotzai with the lighting next to her bed, the candles should be left for a short time next to her bed where they were lit.

(It is questionable how this helps, because the primary place for lighting candles and the candles over which the blessings should recited, should be the candles by the table where one will eat the Shabbos meals).

It is recorded that the Rebbe said that this is the custom; that when the Yoledes is unable to get up, the candles are brought in for her to light and that this was the practise of one of the Chabad Rebbeim after their wife gave birth.

If this is so even if the Yoledes is in bed, it would certainly be permissible according to these authorities is the woman was able to light by the table. This is the approach of the major contemporary Acharonim<sup>13</sup> who write that nowadays when women do get up and move around after birth, they do light the candles on the first Shabbos after giving birth.

## Yomtov Candles

The Acharonim write that the custom applies to lighting Yomtov candles as well<sup>14</sup>.

The Ketzos Hashulchan<sup>15</sup> writes that it is unclear whether the custom was specifically for the first Shabbos or for the first candle-lighting. The practical difference would arise in a week where a woman gives birth before Yomtov and the husband lit the candles on Yomtov. Would he also light the candles on the first Shabbos or does it revert back to the wife?

## Lighting in hospital

Even when in hospital, a Yoledes has an obligation to light Shabbos candles in her room. However, most hospitals, due to safety concerns, will not permit lighting a naked flame.

The preferred option would be to light a pair of two incandescent light bulbs, which according to many authorities have the status of a flame. There is a dispute whether a Bracha may be recited when lighting electric lights<sup>16</sup>. According to all authorities, one would not make a Bracha when lighting fluorescent or LED lights.

If there are no light bulbs or lamps available, at the time of candle-lighting, she should turn off the room light and turn them on again, having in mind that this is being done for the honour of Shabbos<sup>17</sup>.

Even if the Yoledes will be lighting in hospital, the husband remains obligated to light candles at home. If the husband will be in the hospital with his wife, someone else in the home should light the Shabbos candles. If no one will be home over Shabbos, there is no need to light candles in the house.