

# Practical Halacha

## Guide for Shavuot

Based on the halachic rulings of Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshiva and Rosh Kollel, RIETS

Compiled by Rabbi Shay Schachter

Annotated by Rabbi Yehuda Turetsky and Rabbi Etan Schnall

### Eating a Meal on Erev Yom Tov:

- One should refrain from eating a large meal on erev Yom Tov in order to eat the Yom Tov meal with an appetite.<sup>1</sup> It is best not to eat a meal in the late afternoon, even if the meal is not elaborate.<sup>2</sup> In all instances, one should not eat meat on erev Yom Tov.<sup>3</sup>

### Candle Lighting:

- There are two opinions as to whether the bracha on Yom Tov candles should be recited before or after the candles are lit. The generally accepted practice is to recite the bracha **before** lighting the candles.<sup>4</sup>
- The bracha of Shehechyanu: There is no requirement to recite the bracha of Shehechyanu in conjunction with Kiddush. However, the Talmud (*Eruvin* 40b) states that the significance of the bracha is enhanced when it is recited in conjunction with Kiddush, and common practice is to act accordingly. R. Akiva Eiger (*O.C.* 263:5) quotes the opinion of R. Yaakov Emden that women should not recite Shehechyanu when lighting Yom Tov candles, but should instead wait until Kiddush to satisfy the requirement to recite the bracha.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 249:2) states this explicitly in regard to erev Shabbat. This is included in the mitzva of honoring Shabbat, which includes preparations done before Shabbat begins. Rema (*S29:1*) rules that this halacha applies to erev Yom Tov as well, for there is also an obligation to honor Yom Tov (see below). See *Mishna Berura* (249:10) for an additional reason to prohibit large meals.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* *Shulchan Aruch* states that it is a mitzva to avoid eating a standard weekday meal after the ninth halachic hours has passed. *Biur Halacha* explains that this refers to eating what is sufficient to satisfy him during the week. However, one need not refrain from eating enough to simply quiet his feelings of hunger.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding eating meat at a *seudat brit milah* on erev Shabbat, see *Magen Avraham* (249:6) who cites a disagreement among the Poskim.

<sup>4</sup> *Magen Avraham* (*O.C.* 263:12) quotes the Drisha's son who records that his mother's practice was to recite the bracha before lighting the candles. While *Magen Avraham* argues that one should recite the bracha after lighting, the accepted practice is not in accordance with his opinion. See *Mishna Berura* (263:27).

<sup>5</sup> R. Yaakov Emden's position is recorded in his *Shut Sheilat Ya'avetz* (1:107) and has been accepted by many poskim. *Mishna Berura* (263:23) rules that one should not protest against those whose custom is to recite Shehechyanu at the time of candle lighting. Achronim present justifications for this practice; see *Aruch HaShulchan* (263:12) and *Moadim U'Zmanim* (7:117).

- The mitzvah to light Yom Tov candles should ideally take place in one's home. If one is staying in a hotel, one's private guest room is one's "home." However, hotels prohibit lighting candles in guest rooms because this poses a fire hazard.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the obligation is best fulfilled by turning on an electric light in one's room, provided that it is incandescent (not neon or fluorescent, etc.), as many poskim maintain that a bracha may be recited on a light bulb that contains a filament.<sup>7</sup> It does not appear proper to light candles in a place where no one will benefit from the light of the candles, and a bracha may not be made in this scenario.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Yahrtzeit Candles:**

- Some poskim question whether one is permitted to light a yahrtzeit candle on the second day of Yom Tov in honor of Yizkor. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (98:1) cites poskim on both sides of the issue and concludes that one should not light such a candle on Yom Tov. He views it as a "*ner shel avtala*," a candle whose light does not provide benefit on Yom Tov, and as such may not be lit. Therefore, one should ideally light a yahrtzeit candle on erev Yom Tov (see footnote).<sup>9</sup>

#### **The Shavuot Meal:**

- There is a long-standing custom to eat dairy on Shavuot.<sup>10</sup> *Mishna Berura* (O.C. 494:16, *Sha'ar HaTziyun* 15) notes the long-standing custom to wait six hours before eating meat if

---

<sup>6</sup> R. Schachter cautions that one who lights a candle in a guest room without permission violates the prohibition of theft, as hotel administration does not authorize guests to use rooms in this manner. See R. Asher Weiss, *Kovetz Darkei Hora'ah* (4:94).

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that this mitzva can be fulfilled by turning on a closet or bathroom light (the bracha must be recited outside of the bathroom). For a summary of poskim who discuss whether one fulfills the mitzva by lighting electric lights, see *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata* (chap. 43, note 22).

<sup>8</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 263:9).

<sup>9</sup> Many other poskim accept the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch's* ruling; see also *Da'at Torah* (O.C. 515:5). *Shut Ketav Sofer* (O.C. 65) permits one to light a yahrtzeit candle on Yom Tov, though he believes that it should be lit inside the shul. In his discussion of the issue, *Biur Halacha* (514 s.v. Ner) writes that if one neglected to light a yahrtzeit candle on erev Yom Tov, it is best to light it in shul or at least in the place where one eats in order to benefit from the additional light. Some later poskim have questioned whether *Biur Halacha's* logic still applies, as it is unlikely that a candle will significantly increase the light in the room in a contemporary setting. *Biur Halacha* concludes that one may perhaps be lenient in a pressing situation to light the candle because the aforementioned *Ketav Sofer* argues that a yahrtzeit candle is considered a permissible *ner shel mitzvah*, and not a *ner shel avtala*, as it provides honor to one's parents. It should be noted that most poskim assume that it is only a custom to light a yahrtzeit candle and not a halachic requirement; see *Shut Yechave Da'at* (5:60). See also *Mishna Berura* (261:16) quoting Maharshal who permits one to instruct a non-Jew to light a yahrtzeit candle during *bein hashmashot* of erev Shabbat, due to the unique importance that many associate with this custom.

<sup>10</sup> This custom is recorded by Rema (O.C. 494:2). Various reasons are offered for this custom; see Rema and *Mishna Berura* (ibid.).

one ate hard cheese.<sup>11</sup> R. Soloveitchik ruled that American cheese is certainly not included in the custom.<sup>12</sup>

### Staying Up All Night:

- Many question whether a person who remains awake the entire night is obligated to wash his or her hands in the morning. The common practice is to wash one's hands without a bracha. However, if one uses the bathroom prior to washing, one may recite the bracha of *Al Netilat Yadayim*.<sup>13</sup>
- A similar question exists regarding the *Birchot HaTorah*. Common practice is to fulfill the obligation by answering amen to the brachot of one who did sleep. One should not recite amen after the phrase "*la'asok b'divrei Torah*," but after the entire paragraph of "*v'ha'arev na*" is completed.<sup>14</sup>
- It is likewise unclear whether one who remains awake all night may recite the brachot of *Elokai Nishama* and *HaMa'avir Sheina Me'ainai*. Here, as well, common practice is to find someone who did sleep the previous night and answer amen to that individual's brachot.<sup>15</sup> Amen following *HaMa'avir Sheina* should not be said until after the bracha that concludes the *Yehi Ratzon* prayer.
- Those who daven at sunrise (*vatikin*) should not recite a bracha on the tallit before the halachic time known as *mishe'yakir*. R. Moshe Feinstein states that in the New York area, this time is approximately 35-40 minutes before sunrise.<sup>16</sup> Because of this concern, the *B'nei Yissoschar* recommends waiting to don the tallit until the completion of *Korbanot* (before *Baruch She'amar*) in order to ensure that one does not don his tallit or make the bracha too early.

### Shavuot Davening:

- Staying up late to learn Torah does not exempt one from reciting Keriat Shema in its proper time. The mitzvah of Keriat Shema should ideally be fulfilled during davening—in order to recite Keriat Shema together with the *Birchot Keriat Shema*—and not beforehand. R.

---

<sup>11</sup> The custom to wait after eating hard cheese is recorded by Rema (*Y.D.* 89:2). For this purpose, hard cheese includes types that are aged and somewhat sharp. While *Shach* (89:17) quotes the Maharshal, who forcefully rejects this stringency, most poskim do not accept his opinion; see, for example, *Biur HaGra* (89:11). *Shach* (89:15), *Taz* (89:4), *Yad Yehuda* (89:30) and other poskim discuss how to define "hard cheese" for purposes of this halacha.

<sup>12</sup> As reported by R. Schachter in *Mesorah Journal* (vol. 20, pg. 92). For an updated list of contemporary cheeses that may pose a problem, see May 2012 edition of "Daf HaKashrus," published by the Orthodox Union Kashrus Division ([http://www.oukasher.org/index.php/learn/daf\\_ha-kashrus](http://www.oukasher.org/index.php/learn/daf_ha-kashrus)).

<sup>13</sup> Rema (*O.C.* 4:13) requires one to wash without a bracha. *Mishna Berura* (4:30) notes that later poskim debate whether to accept Rema's ruling or to wash with a bracha. However, poskim agree that one can recite a bracha in this scenario if he or she uses the bathroom first. This appears to be common practice.

<sup>14</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 47:12) and *Mishna Berura* (*ibid.*). *Mishna Berura* also cites the ruling of R. Akiva Eiger that one who slept in bed the previous day (prior to staying up the entire night) may recite *Birchot HaTorah* in the morning according to all opinions. Although some poskim question R. Akiva Eiger's opinion, many poskim endorse this ruling (see *Shut Tshuvot V'Hanhagot* 3:149, citing the Brisker Rav).

<sup>15</sup> *Sha'arei Tshuva* (*O.C.* 46:7) and *Mishna Berura* (*O.C.* 46:24).

<sup>16</sup> See *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 18:3) and *Shut Igrot Moshe* (*O.C.* 4:6). Shemoneh Esrei is scheduled to begin at sunrise, as per *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 89:1).

Soloveitchik and many other poskim maintain that it is better to daven without a minyan before *sof zman Keriat Shema* (the end of the period during which one may recite Keriat Shema) rather than daven with a minyan after this time has elapsed.<sup>17</sup>

- Many have the custom to follow the *Ba'al HaTanya's* practice to recite “*ushnei se'irim l'chaper*” (as opposed to “*v'sa'ir l'chaper*”) in the Mussaf Amida, in order to make mention of the *korban chatat* (sin offering) that was offered with the *shte halechem* (ritual loaves of bread) of Shavuot.<sup>18</sup>
- Megillat Rut is read on the second day of Yom Tov. The custom in our Yeshiva is to read the megilla from a *klaf* (parchment). Poskim differ as to whether the brachot of *Al Mikra Megilla* and *Shehechyanu* are recited when a *klaf* is used.<sup>19</sup>
- When the *ba'al koreh* reads Megillat Rut from a printed Tanach, etc. it is preferable for individuals to read along quietly. This applies to the reading of the haftarah throughout the year, as well.<sup>20</sup>
- The aliyah of maftir on the first day of Shavuot should be reserved for an outstanding talmid chacham.<sup>21</sup>
- The custom of our Yeshiva is to omit the recitation of “*Yetziv Pitgam*” on the second day of Yom Tov.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *Nefesh HaRav* (pg. 114). For more on this subject, see *Shut Pri Yitzchak* (1:1) and *Shut Binyan Olam* (O.C. 4).

<sup>18</sup> See *Siddur Ba'al HaTanya* where this practice is recorded. For an alternative perspective, see *Shut Igrot Moshe* (Y.D. 3:129:7).

<sup>19</sup> See Rema (490:9), *Levush* (490:5), *Ma'aseh Rav* of the Vilna Gaon (175), *Mishna Berura* (490:19) and *Hilchot Chag B'Chag* (Shavuot chap. 8, note 79).

<sup>20</sup> See *Mishna Berura* (284:1) and *Shut Chatam Sofer* (O.C. 68). See also *Magen Avraham* (284:5), *Sha'arei Ephraim* (9:33, cited in *Biur Halacha* 284:5, s.v. *Trei* and *Mishna Berura* 494:4).

<sup>21</sup> *Chok Yaakov* (494:4). See also *Mishna Berura* (494:4).

<sup>22</sup> See *Levush* (O.C. 494).