

# Sources on Hanukkah for DC Beit Midrash

## December 19, 2011

By Rachel Rosenthal

### #1 – Pirsumei Nisa

“The mitzvah of pirsumei nisa – publicizing the miracle- is central to the Hannukah experience. Our law codes, beginning with the Talmud (Shabbat 21b), indicate that we must strive to create opportunities for the general public to witness the burning of the Hannukah candles. If one’s doorway or courtyard abutted a public thoroughfare, then the inhabitant of this dwelling was instructed to place one’s lit Hannukah candles at the outer entranceway of one’s home. If one’s home was not on the ground floor of a building, and thus one’s doorway did not lead directly into the public domain, then this person was instructed to place the lit Hannukah candles in a window overlooking the street. The rabbis also allowed for the lighting and placement of the Hannukah candles on one’s table in the home, away from the eyes of the public, but only if placing them in the sight of the public might endanger the resident of the home.”

Excerpt from posting on Camp Ramah Darom’s website:

<http://www.ramahdarom.com/index.cfm?FuseAction=Main.NewsDetail&newsArticleID=56>

### #2 – Shulchan Aruch, 671:4 [Rema in brackets]

“Consider the case where one fills a vessel with oil and surrounded the inside with wicks. If one turned upside down a vessel over it then all the wicks count as one. However, if one did not turn a vessel over it then it does not even count as one lamp. The reason is that it is considered like a torch. [Therefore one must be careful to arrange the candles in an even line and not in a circle (for if these requirements are not met) then it would be like a torch. It is permitted to light threads called "Lafa" after all the candles are at largely different levels than their neighbors. One must be careful upon lighting the candles, even if they are on the same level, not to light them at the same time since it would be like a torch. Even with the Shabbat candles and Yom Tov candles one must be careful not to do this.]”

Translation by Dr. Jay Dinovitser, ShulchanArach.com

#3 – Excerpt from Noam Zion, *Designing a Hanukkah Menorah: Historical and Halachic Guidelines from the Menorah to the Hanukkiyah*, pp. 215, 217 (bold in original)

“In the middle ages there were many circular menorahs with separate multiple wicks as in the hanging star-shaped European “Jewish star” lamp. However, in the later Middle Ages menorahs were usually designed with rows of candles. **Still, as long as it does not appear like a bonfire, a round menorah is perfectly halachically kosher.**”

In *A Different Light: the Big Book of Hanukkah*, edited by Noam Zion and Barbara Spectre (Bold in original)

#4 – Excerpt from *A Mosaic of Israel’s traditions: holidays, feasts, fasts* by Esther Shkalim

“In the past, round candelabras suspended from the ceiling were used for indoor lighting in Europe by Jews and Christians alike. When non-Jews stopped using them, they remained in use in various Jewish communities, where they were used for lighting candles on Shabbat and Jewish holidays. In Germany, these lamps were nicknamed “Judenstern,” which means “Jewish star” in German. On Chanukah, Jews would hang such a lamp from the ceiling near the entrance to their homes, and they would use it to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles.” Pp.143-44

#5 – Excerpt from Shiur of Rabbi David Sedley on Shabbat Laws (from internet)

## #6 – Dictionary Break

## #7 – Excerpt from Lawrence Kushner and Nehemia Polen on Bidding Shabbat Farewell, p.175

“The *Havdalah* candle has multiple wicks or is braided. Some explain that the reason is because of the blessing recited. According to the School of Shammai, we should say, *borei m’or ha’eish*, “who creates the *light* of fire” (singular). The School of Hillel, on the other hand (and their opinion is always normative), says the blessing should be *borei m’orei ha’eish*, “who creates the *lights* of fire” (plural).

Tractate Berakhot 52b notes that the light of fire is composed of white, red, yellow, and blue, which might also explain the reason for a multi-wick candle—one wick for each color. Along this same logic, the *Zohar*, commenting on the verse “Adonai your G!d is a consuming fire . . . “ (Deut. 4:24; 9:3), suggests that multiple wicks would ensure the intermingling of many different colors. Indeed, such a braided candle might create enough individual colors to correspond to each of the ten *s’firot* (emanations or dimensions of the divine psyche) described in the Kabbalah.” P.175 Lawrence Kushner and Nehemia Polen

In My People’s Prayer Book, Volume 7, Shabbat at Home, edited by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman

#8 – Excerpt from Schottenstein edition of the Talmud, Tractate Succah, 51a, 52b-53a

Mishnah: Whosoever did not see the Celebration of the Place of [Water] Drawing never saw rejoicing in his life. At the conclusion of the first day of the festival of Succos, the Kohanim and Leviim went down to the Women's Courtyard, where they made an arrangement of great benefit. There were golden candelabra there to illuminate the proceedings, and there were four golden bowls atop each of them to contain oil . . . There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not illumniated by the light of the Celebration of the Place of the [Water]Drawing.”

Gemara: It was taught in a Baraisa: A woman could sort grain by the light of the [Water] Drawing Celebration.

#9 – from Wikipedia

**Simchat Beit Hashoeivah** . . . is a special celebration held by Jews during the Intermediate days of Sukkot . . . When the Temple in Jerusalem stood, a unique service was performed every morning throughout the Sukkot holiday: the *Nisuch ha-Mayim* (lit. "Pouring of the water") or Water Libation Ceremony. According to the Talmud, Sukkot is the time of year in which God judges the world for rainfall; therefore this ceremony, like the taking of the Four Species, invokes God's blessing for rain in its proper time. The water for the libation ceremony was drawn from the Pool of Siloam (Hebrew: Breikhat HaShiloah) in the City of David and carried up the Jerusalem pilgrim road to the Temple. The joy that accompanied this procedure was palpable. (This is the source for the verse in Isaiah: "And you shall draw waters with joy from the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3). // Afterwards, every night in the outer Temple courtyard, tens of thousands of spectators would gather to watch the *Simchat Beit HaShoeivah* (Rejoicing at the Place of the Water-Drawing), as the most pious members of the community danced and sang songs of praise to God. . . According to the Mishnah, (Tractate Sukkah), "He who has not seen the rejoicing at the Place of the Water-Drawing has never seen rejoicing in his life."

#10 – Except from Solomon Ganzfried, Laws Concerning Hanukkah, p.92

“Work is permitted on Hanukkah; however, women refrain from work during the entire time the lights are burning, and they should not be deterred [from this obligation]. . . .”

In A Hanukkah Anthology by Philip Goodman

#11 – Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Megillah and Hanukkah, page 91 and translated in A Hanukkah Anthology by Philip Goodman

“If such a poor man needs oil for both a Sabbath lamp and a Hanukkah lamp, or oil for a Sabbath lamp and wine for the Sanctification benediction, the Sabbath lamp should have priority, for the sake of peace in the household [since the household members would be discomfited by sitting in darkness], seeing that even a divine Name might be erased to make peace between husband and wife.”

(Find these trade-offs interesting? Check out Shabbat 23b for further discussion.)

Translated in A Hanukkah Anthology by Philip Goodman

#12 – Mei Hashiloah