



Ask The Rabbi

Researched at Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem

This Issue Contains:

1. The Ninth Night of Chanukah
2. Clarification



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Issue #88

Randy from Battle Creek Michigan wrote:

My bride-to-be is flying here for a 'meet-the-bride' party which my parents are making. It just so happens that the party will be the night after Chanukah, so my mother wants the party to have the 'Chanukah motif' with Chanukah decorations, etc. The problem is this: my mother said that she thought it would be nice if sometime during the party I would light the Chanukah Menorah with all the candles in it. I thought this would be a problem of bal tosif [the prohibition against adding to a mitzvah] since it's not Chanukah. What should I do?

Akiva Miller < keeves@aol.com >
wrote:

Dear Rabbi:

Does Bal Tosif apply to a Rabbinic mitzvah?

Dear Randy and Akiva,

Literally, '*bal tosif*' means 'don't add.' Rather than a ban on second-grade arithmetic, *bal tosif* is a prohibition against adding to the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah.

The Dubno Maggid explains the concept of *bal tosif* with a parable: A man once borrowed a silver fork from his neighbor. When the time came to return it, he gave him two: "Your fork had a baby!" he explained. The next week he borrowed two silver candlesticks, but returned three. "Mazel Tov!" he said. "Your candlesticks had a baby!"

The following week he approached his neighbor again, this time asking to borrow his *entire set* of silverware. The neighbor was only too delighted to comply.

The next day, however, he was outraged to hear that during the night his entire set of silverware had tragically died during childbirth. "Died!" he cried. "You expect me to believe that my silverware died?!"

"Well, you believed me when I said it gave birth," said his neighbor.

The Dubno Maggid concludes: The Torah is perfect. Anyone who tries to 'add' to the 613 *mitzvot* denies this perfection and thereby detracts from it.

Now, lighting Chanukah candles is **not** one of the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah. Rather, it is a Rabbinic *mitzvah* that was enacted by the Sanhedrin (Supreme Torah Court) during the Second Temple period. Since it is not one of the 613 *mitzvot*, *bal tosif* would not seem to apply.

On the other hand, the blessing we say when we light the Chanukah candles — *V'tzivanu L'hadlik Ner Shel Chanukah* — means that Hashem commanded us to light them! How can we say that Hashem commanded us to perform a Rabbinic *mitzvah*?

The answer is this: Since one of the 613 *mitzvot* is the commandment to obey the Sanhedrin (Deuteronomy 17:11), and since the Sanhedrin enacted the lighting of Chanukah candles, therefore lighting the candles is indeed like a commandment from Hashem.

This being the case, it's reasonable to assert that *bal tosif* applies: Lighting on the 'ninth night' of Chanukah would be **adding** to the Torah command to heed the Sages who enacted lighting for only eight nights. But on the other hand, the Torah doesn't **directly** command you to light Chanukah candles. Therefore, lighting on the 'ninth night' would be only an **indirect** addition to the Torah, and perhaps *bal tosif* wouldn't apply.

Whether *bal tosif* actually applies to a Rabbinic *mitzvah* is a discussion amongst the *Poskim*. I asked Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, *shlita*, and he leans towards the opinion that *bal tosif* does not apply.

However, Rabbi Scheinberg said that to light the menorah after Chanukah is absurd and runs contrary to the words of the Sages who said to light for only eight nights. Therefore, my suggestion to you is to play *dreidel* instead!

Sources:

- Tractates Rosh Hashanah 28b, Shabbat 23a
- *Sefer Mordechai to Megilla; Mashiv Davar*

In Ask the Rabbi #86 we wrote: "In general, food cooked on Shabbat by mistake -- *b'shogeg* -- cannot be eaten." However, in a **case of need**, one may rely on the opinion that permits food cooked *b'shogeg*.

Source:

- Mishnah Berurah 318:1:7

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