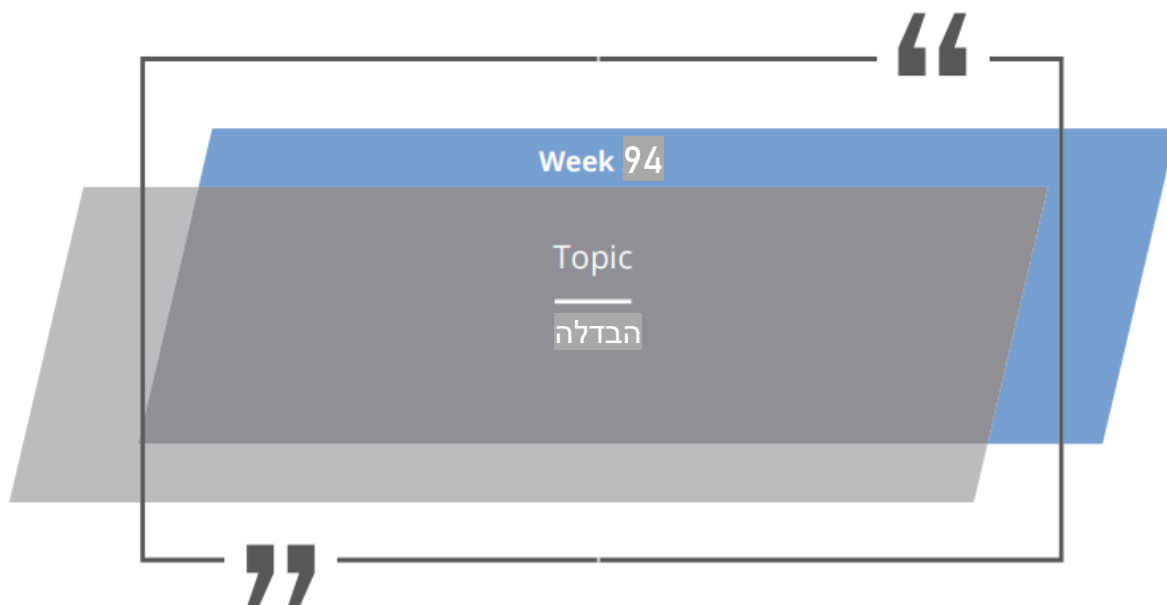




Laws of Havdalla

In honor of Rabbi Moshe Bussu



Havdala Without Besamim and a Candle

Question: One Motza'ei Shabbat when we were on vacation in the summer, we were not able to procure Besamim (a fragrant object) and a candle. Is it permissible to recite the order of Havdala without Besamim and a candle?

This law is discussed by the Gemara (Berachot 53a): “Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: One need not search for a candle on Motza'ei Shabbat the way one search for other Mitzvot.” This means that if one does not have a candle for Havdala, one need not go and look for a candle; rather, one may recite Havdala immediately without reciting the blessing on the candle.

[illegible]

— ואין מברכין על הנר עד שיאותו — WE DO NOT RECITE THE BLESSING OVER A FLAME UNTIL BENEFIT IS DERIVED from its illumination.

The Gemara explains

— לא יאותו יאותו ממש: Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: — אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב — The term “UNTIL BENEFIT IS DERIVED from its illumination” does **not** mean that **benefit** must **actually be derived** from the flame.^[1] — אֲלֵא כָּל שֶׁאִילּוּ עוֹמֵד בְּקֶרֶב וּמִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ לְאוֹרָה — Rather, it means to include **any [flame]** whose illumination is strong enough **so that** if **one stands** near it he can use its illumination, וְאִפִּילוּ בְּרֹחוֹק מְקוֹם — **even though** he is actually standing **in a place far away** from it where he himself cannot benefit from it.^[2] — וְכֵן אָמַר רַב — And so, too, did Rav Ashi say: — בְּרֹחוֹק מְקוֹם שְׁנֵינוּ — [The Mishnah] teaches us here of one who is standing **in a place far away** from the light, where he himself does not actually benefit from it.^[3]

The Gemara presents a challenge from a Baraisa:

הֵיטָה לֹו נֵר טְמוּנָה בְּחִיקוֹ אוֹ — **They challenged** this ruling from the following Baraisa: אוֹ שָׂרָא שְׁלֵהֶבֶת וְלֹא נִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ — **If ONE HAS A FLAME HIDDEN IN HIS LAP**^[4] OR IN A LANTERN,^[5] אוֹ נִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ לְאוֹרָה וְלֹא רָאָה — **OR IF HE SAW A FLAME BUT DID NOT USE ITS ILLUMINATION**, לְאוֹרָה — **OR IF HE USED ITS ILLUMINATION BUT DID NOT SEE THE FLAME**, — **in all** — אֵינוֹ מְבַרֵךְ — **in all these cases HE DOES NOT RECITE THE BLESSING**; עַד שִׂירָאָה שְׁלֵהֶבֶת וְנִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ לְאוֹרָה — **for no blessing can be recited UNTIL HE both SEES THE FLAME AND USES ITS ILLUMINATION.**

Having cited the Baraisa, the Gemara proceeds with its challenge:

משכחת לה דקיימא בקרן זוית, ולא ראה שלהבת — Now, the Baraisa's case of **one who uses its illumination but did not see the flame is understandable**, as such a situation **can be found when the flame is located on the other side of the corner** of a building.^[6] אלא ראה שלהבת ולא נשתמש לאורה היכי משכחת לה — **But where can we find an instance of one who saw the flame but did not use its illumination?** לאו דמרחקא — **Is it not when the flame is far away**, where he sees the flame but cannot use its illumination? And thus, the Baraisa's ruling that one does not recite a blessing in such an instance contradicts the ruling of Rav Yehudah in the name of Rav. — ? —

The Gemara answers:

לא כגון דעמיא ואזלא — **No!** The Baraisa is dealing with **where the flame is growing progressively dimmer**, in which case even those standing near the fire cannot use its illumination.^[7]

1. I.e. it does not mean that one must actually derive benefit from its illumination in order to recite the *borei me'orei ha'esh* blessing, as a simple reading of the Mishnah would suggest. Rather, the intent of the Mishnah is that we do not recite a blessing over a light unless its illumination is suitable for use, i.e. that one who stands close to the light *could* derive benefit from its illumination (see *Rashi*).

4. Where he neither sees the flame nor uses its illumination (*Rashba*). [Even if the flame is warming his body, so that he is receiving benefit from it, the blessing may not be recited, for in order to make the blessing one must receive (or be able to receive) benefit from the *light* of the flame (*Ritva*).

[See *Sheleimah Mishnaso*, who states that according to *Rashi* the Baraisa speaks of a single case — one who has a flame hidden in a lantern in his lap — for it is difficult to simply keep a fire in one's lap.]

תנו רבנן — **The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: לוחשות** — If we see **GLOWING COALS**^[8] on Saturday night, מברכין עליהן — **WE MAY RECITE THE BLESSING OVER THEM**. אוממות — If we see **DIMMING COALS**,^[9] however, אין מברכין עליהן — **WE MAY NOT RECITE THE BLESSING OVER THEM**.

The Gemara explains:

היכי דמי לוחשות — **What are considered glowing coals**, over which a blessing is recited? כל שאילו מכניס לתוכן קיסם ודולקת מאליה — **Wherever the coals are still so hot that should one insert a splinter between [the coals], it would ignite on its own** from the heat of the coals.

The Gemara discusses the proper spelling of the word אוממות, *dimming*:

אוממות או עוממות — Should the word *omemos* be spelled אוממות (with an *aleph*), or עוממות (with an *ayin*)? תא שמע דאמר רב — **They (the scholars of the academy) inquired:** תא שמע דאמר רב — **Should the word *omemos* be spelled אוממות (with an *aleph*), or עוממות (with an *ayin*)?** ארזים לא — **Come, hear that which Rav Chisda bar Avdimi said:**^[10] חסדא בר אבדימי — **Come, hear that which Rav Chisda bar Avdimi said:** עממוהו בגן-אלהים — **The verse states: Cedars will not dim his [splendor] (amamuhu) in the garden of the Lord.**^[11] In this verse, the word *amamuhu*, spelled with an *ayin*, means to dim; similarly, the word for partially extinguished coals, which are dimmed from their previous brightness, should be spelled with an *ayin*.

The Gemara cites a second opinion regarding the Mishnah's ruling that a blessing cannot be made over the flame "until benefit is derived from its illumination":

וְרָבָא אָמַר — But Rava said: יָאוּתוּ מִמּוֹשׁ — The Mishnah's ruling that we do not recite the blessing over light until benefit is derived from its illumination teaches that one does not recite the blessing unless he is standing close enough to the fire so that **he can actually benefit** ^[12] from its illumination.

The Gemara explains:

וְכַמָּה — And how [close] must he be ^[13] in order to recite the blessing? אָמַר עוּלָא — Ulla said: כְּדִי שִׁיבִיר בֵּין אִיסָר לְפּוּנְדִיּוֹן — So that he could distinguish between an *issar* and a *pundyon*. ^[14] חִזְקִיָּיָה אָמַר — Chizkiyah said: שֶׁל טְבֵרְיָה לְמִלּוּזְמָא שֶׁל צְפוּרִי — So that he could distinguish between a *meluzma* of Tiberias and a *meluzma* of Tzipori. ^[15]

The Gemara relates:

רַב יְהוּדָה מְבָרֵךְ אֲדָבִי אָדָּא דִּיילָא — Rav Yehudah would recite the blessing over the light of the house of Ada Dayala. ^[16] רָבָא מְבָרֵךְ אֲדָבִי גּוּרְיָא בַר חָמָא — Rava would recite the blessing over the light of the house of Guria bar Chama. ^[17] אַבְיֵי מְבָרֵךְ אֲדָבִי בַר אַבוּהָ — Abaye would recite the blessing over the light of the house of Bar Avuha. ^[18]

14. An *issar* and a *pundyon* are two different small coins; a *pundyon* is worth two *issars* (see [Kiddushin 12a](#)).

This ruling is the source for the custom of looking at one's fingernails when the blessing over the flame is made during Havdalah; distinguishing between the nail and the surrounding flesh is akin to distinguishing between two similar coins (*Tos. HaRosh*; see *Meiri* for another explanation of this custom).

The Gemara cites an Amoraic ruling:

אֵין מַחְזְרִין עַל הָאוּר כְּדֶרֶךְ — Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב

שֶׁמַּחְזְרִים עַל הַמְצוֹת — We do not search after a flame over which to recite the blessing in the manner that we search after mitzvos. ^[19] אָמַר רַבִּי זֵירָא — R' Zeira said: מְרִישׁ הָיָה — Initially, I would search after a flame over which to recite the blessing. כִּיּוֹן — But once I heard this statement of Rav Yehudah in the name of Rav, אֲנִי לֹא מְהַדְרֵנָּא — I, too, do not search after a fire over which to recite the blessing; אֶלָּא אִי מְקַלַּע לִי מִמִּילָא מְבָרִיכְנָא — rather, only when I happen to come upon a flame do I recite the blessing.

לאור דברי הגמרא, ברור לנו מה הדין לגבי נר, שמי שאין לו נר להבדלה, רשאי להבדיל גם בלי נר. אך נותר לנו לברר את הדין לגבי מי שאין לו בשמים, האם רשאי להבדיל בלי בשמים?

The Gemara therefore clearly dictates the law regarding the Havdala candles. We must still discuss the law regarding Besamim. May one recite Havdala without reciting the blessing on the fragrant object?

ורבינו הרשב"א בחדושי' כתב בשם הראב"ד, שאין מחזרים אחר האור במוצאי שבת, "וכל שכן שאין מחזרים על הבשמים, שאינם אלא הנאת עצמו". כלומר, סובר הראב"ד, שממה שאמרו רבותינו שאין חובה לחזר אחרי ה"אור" במוצאי שבת, נוכל ללמוד שאין חובה לחזר אחר הבשמים, שהרי ברכת בורא מאורי האש במוצאי שבת, כולה שבח לה' יתברך על מציאות האש. ואילו ברכת הבשמים, היא ברכה על ההנאה שיש לאדם מהבשמים. ואם ברכת השבח לה' אינה חובה במוצאי שבת, בודאי שגם ברכת הבשמים אינה חובה במוצאי שבת למי שאין לו בשמים.

The Rashba in his commentary quotes the Ra'avad who comments on the Gemara regarding not having to search for a candle on Motza'ei Shabbat, "This is certainly the case regarding searching for Besamim, for this is only for one's own personal benefit." This means that the Ra'avad maintained that if the Gemara states that one need not search for fire on Motza'ei Shabbat and the blessing of "Me'orei Ha'esh" is completely a blessing of praise to Hashem, certainly one need not search for Besamim if one does not have it on Motza'ei Shabbat, for this is a blessing for one's own enjoyment. If a blessing praising Hashem is not compulsory on Motza'ei Shabbat, certainly the blessing upon Besamim on Motza'ei Shabbat is not compulsory for one who does not have it.

אולם לעומת זאת, רבינו המאירי כתב, שנראה לו שדוקא על ה"אור", לא חייבו חכמים לחזר ולחפש אש כדי שיוכל לברך עליה, אבל הבשמים, חובה לחזר אחריהם ולברך, שהרי ברכת הבשמים במוצאי שבת היא לכבוד השבת, שכן ידוע, שהטעם שמברכים על הבשמים במוצאי שבת, הוא משום שלאחר השבת מסתלקת הנשמה היתירה שיש לכל יהודי בשבת, וכדי להרגיע את הנפש, מריחים מהבשמים. לפיכך כתב המאירי, שאין לוותר על ברכת בשמים במוצאי שבת. ואפילו מי שאין לו בשמים, חייב ללכת ולחפש ולהשיג בשמים למוצאי שבת.

On the other hand, the Meiri writes that it seems to him that only with regards to fire did our Sages not obligate one to go and search for it in order to make a blessing on it; however, one must search for Besamim to recite a blessing on during Havdala since the Besamim is taken in honor of Shabbat as it is well-known that the reason why we recite the blessing on Besamim on Motza'ei Shabbat is because upon the conclusion of Shabbat, the extra soul every Jew receives on Shabbat departs and in order to comfort the regular soul, we smell fragrant objects. Thus, writes the Meiri, even one who does not have Besamim must go and actively search for Besamim to recite the blessing on during Havdala on Motza'ei Shabbat.

נמצא שיש בדבר מחלוקת בין הראב"ד והמאירי. ולהלכה פסק מרן השלחן ערוך (סימן רצז), שאין חובה לחזר במוצאי שבת, לא אחר האור ולא אחר הבשמים, וכדעת הראב"ד.

ולכן להלכה, מי שאין לו בשמים או נר במוצאי שבת, יבדיל בלי בשמים או נר. ואינו חייב ללכת ולחפש בשמים ונר. אך נכון לכתחילה שכל אדם ידאג שיהיו לו נר ובשמים למוצאי שבת. ופעם כשהיינו בצל קורתו של מרן זצ"ל, ולא היו לו בשמים למוצאי שבת, ביקש שיביאו לו לימון, ובירך עליו בהבדלה, "הנותן ריח טוב בפירות". ופעם בירך על בקבוק בושם. ולא ויתר בקלות על ברכת הבשמים במוצאי שבת. ישמע חכם ויוסף לקח

Therefore, this issue is subject to a disagreement between the Ra'avad and Meiri. Halachically speaking, Maran Ha'Shulchan Aruch (Chapter 297) rules that one need not actively search for either a candle or Besamim on Motza'ei Shabbat, in accordance with the Ra'avad's opinion.

Thus, if one does not have Besamim or a candle on Motza'ei Shabbat, one should recite Havdala without these items and one need not go out and actively search for a candle or Besamim to recite a blessing on. Nevertheless, one should preferably take care to have Besamim and a candle for Motza'ei Shabbat. Once, after spending Shabbat with Maran zt"l, there was no Besamim for Havdala. He then requested a lemon and he recited the blessing of "Ha'Noten Re'ach Tov Ba'Perot" on it. Another time, he recited the blessing on a bottle of perfume. We see how Maran zt"l would not give up easily on the blessing of Besamim on Motza'ei Shabbat.

Nice idea:

The Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, legendary Kabbalist, Egypt-Tzefat, 16th century) maintained that for Besamim one should use three Hadasim (myrtle branches, as we use on Succot), and they should conform to the specifications required for the Hadasim used on Succot. After Havdalah, one should not discard the Hadasim used for Besamim; he should rather put them aside until they wilt, at which point they are no longer suitable for the Beracha and may thus be discarded. Some people have the practice of leaving them until Erev Pesach and burning them with the Chametz.

The Halacha is that one that lost the ability to smell should not make a Bracha on Besomim. But there are three scenarios that can change the the way you would make Havdala this week.

If there are no household members that can smell, don't make a Bracha on the Besomim(1). (Just skip it, the rest of the Havdala is the same.)

If there are other members of the household that are over Bar/Bas Mitzva, and did not lose the sense of smell, let them make the Bracha on the Besomim, since you can't be Motzie them(2). In this case make sure not to say Amen on their Bracha(3). (Since that would be a Hefsek between your Hagafen and the drinking of the wine.)

If the only one that did not lose the sense of smell is a child under Bar/Bas Mitzva, but old enough to understand the need for Havdala, (which is around the age of 7), you should make the Bracha to be Motzie the child(4).

שו"ע או"ח סימן רצ"ז ס"ה 1

משנה ברורה שם ס"ק י"ג 2

עיין בשערי תשובה קס"ז ס"ק י"א 3

שו"ע או"ח סימן רצ"ז ס"ה 4