

בית הוראה דעתראי

BAIS HORA AH OF DETROIT

HALACHA HOTLINE

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF HaRav Shmuel Irons שליט"א VAAD HALACHA Rav Aharon Yoel Sorscher • Rav Yissachar Wolf • Rav Boruch Miller

ISSUE #36 – Havdalah FAQs

Below are some common questions and answers based on psakim from the rabbonim of the Bais Horaah. Please note: if one believes they have heard a different opinion in the past, one's family posek should always be consulted. Mareh mekomos for any of the answers below are available by email request to ask@bhdetroit.org.

- **Are women obligated in Havdalah?**
 - According to most poskim, women **are** obligated in Havdalah in the same way as men.
 - If a man who has not yet recited Havdalah is not available, a woman should recite the full Havdalah **herself** and **drink the wine**.
- **Can a man recite Havdalah a second time for someone who has not yet heard it?**
 - A man may recite Havdalah a second time for another **man** or a young **boy**. In that case, a woman or girl may **also** be yotzei. He should not, however, repeat it **solely** for a woman or girl.
- **Can a woman be yotzei over the phone or Zoom?**
 - According to most poskim, this may **not** be done. Instead, when necessary, she can follow along and say the words **herself** over her own **cup of wine**.
- **May a woman make Havdalah before her husband returns home on Motzai Yom Kippur?**
 - Yes. It is permitted for her to make her **own Havdalah**. If she simply wants to quench her thirst, she may drink **water** before hearing Havdalah.
- **What should I do if I don't have besamim or a candle?**
 - As long as one has a cup of wine, or an acceptable alternative (see below), Havdalah is recited **without the bracha** for whichever other item is missing.
 - If the missing item becomes available later that night, the bracha **should be made then**. A woman should try to make up the bracha for besamim. However, she is **not required** to make up the bracha for the candle.
- **May spices other than cloves be used?**
 - **Aromatic spices** may be used, as long as you enjoy the smell. It is preferable to **designate specific spices** to be used exclusively for besamim.
- **May a perfume, scent diffuser or potpourri bowl be used for besamim?**
 - **No**. The bracha may only be made on something that has **its own natural scent**. Most of these products have infused or synthetically produced scents that do not qualify.
- **If someone has no sense of smell, e.g., he has a cold, should he still make the bracha?**
 - He **should not make the bracha**. Instead, he should pause and allow **another participant** over Bar or Bas Mitzvah to make the bracha for everyone.
- **Are besamim always part of Havdalah?**
 - **No**. Besamim are **omitted** from Havdalah on motzai Yom Tov and when motzai Shabbos falls on Yom Tov.
 - On motzai Yom Kippur, besamim are **only used when it is also motzai Shabbos**.
- **What should be done with one's fingers near the flame?**
 - Bend the **four fingers of the right hand** into the palm, covering the thumb. Look at the **reflection of the flame's light** on the fingernails, noting the contrast between nail and skin. Then look at the skin of the palm and examine its **creases**. Finally, turn the hand over, **extend the fingers**, and examine the nails in the light.
- **Should the lights be turned off?**
 - The room lights **do not need to be turned off**, as long as all participants are close enough to see the reflection of the flame on their fingernails.
- **May a candle that was lit for a yahrtzeit or a gas burner be used?**
 - A yahrtzeit candle **may not be used**. A Havdalah candle must have been lit to provide light. Neither a yahrtzeit candle nor a gas burner is lit for that purpose. It is also preferable for the candle to have **at least two wicks**. If such a candle is not available, a gas burner or single-wicked candle may be used. However, it must have been **lit specially to provide light** (for example, for Havdalah).

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- **What should be done with the candle for yaknehaz?**
 - If one has a specially made **yaknehaz candle**, he may use that. Otherwise, **two Yom Tov candlesticks** should be moved close together without tipping them or attempting to merge the flames. During yaknehaz, the common minhag is to **look directly at the flame only**, not at the fingers at all.
- **If someone is in the hospital, can an electric bulb be used?**
 - An **incandescent bulb** (not fluorescent or LED) can be used. It **must not be frosted**, so that the filament should be visible. This type of bulb is now uncommon, especially in a hospital, unless one specifically arranges to have one available. **Bikkur Cholim of Detroit** does have battery-powered incandescent lights available.
- **What is different about Havdalah on motzai Yom Kippur compared to motzai Shabbos?**
 - The flame must come from one that was **lit before Yom Kippur**, unlike on motzai Shabbos, where **any lit flame may be used**.
 - If one does not have such a flame available on motzai Yom Kippur, he should still make Havdalah, but **omit the bracha of Borei Meorei Ha'aish**. He should make an effort to find such a flame later and make that bracha then. On motzai Shabbos, by contrast, if one does not have a flame, he is **not required to seek one out**. If motzai Yom Kippur is also motzai Shabbos, he may make the bracha even on a flame that was not lit before Yom Kippur.
 - **Only one wick** is needed, unlike the two wicks preferred on motzai Shabbos.
- **On motzai Yom Kippur, can a yizkor candle be used as the flame?**
 - The yizkor candle itself **may not be used directly**. A flame lit from it may be used.
- **What drinks may be used for Havdalah?**
 - **Wine is the best option**, followed by **grape juice**. If both are not available, **beer or coffee** may be used, as long as it is cool enough to drink quickly.
- **How much does the cup need to hold?**
 - The cup needs to hold only **3 ounces** for Havdalah.
- **How much does one need to drink?**
 - One needs to drink **1.6 ounces** to be yotzei, but drinking **3 ounces within 15 seconds** removes any safek regarding bracha achrona.
- **May one eat before Havdalah?**
 - **No**. However, if the meal had already started on Shabbos, one **may continue**.
 - **Water**, however, may be drunk before Havdalah, unlike before Kiddush.
- **If someone is an onein, what should be done about Havdalah?**
 - An onein **should not hear or recite Havdalah** until the shiva begins. If the shiva begins before sunset on Tuesday, he recites **hagefen and the bracha of hamavdil** over a cup of wine and drinks it. The other brachos and pesukim are omitted. If he mistakenly heard Havdalah during aninus, **he is yotzei**.
- **Should children under Bar or Bas Mitzvah whose bedtime is before Havdalah recite it on Sunday morning?**
 - They are **not required** to hear it on Sunday morning.
- **If someone missed Havdalah on motzai Shabbos or Yom Tov, what should be done?**
 - On motzai Shabbos, Havdalah can be said **until sunset on Tuesday**. Only **hagefen and hamavdil** are said.
 - On motzai Yom Tov, Havdalah can only be said **until sunset the next day**.

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