

Laws of Candle Lighting

The lighting of candles in every Jewish home prior to the onset of Shabbos is a rabbinical obligation according to most opinions.

Reasons for Candle Lighting

1. **Oneg Shabbos:** In order to enjoy one's food at the Shabbos meal, it helps to be able to see the food. Therefore, the light was intended to enhance the enjoyment of Shabbos.
2. **Kavod Shabbos :** It adds to the honor of Shabbos, and to the honor of the seuda, to have candles on the table.
3. **Shalom Bayis:** If the home is dark, it is likely that one will trip and hurt oneself, so the light was in order to promote harmony in the home, by providing illumination.

Number of Candles

1. According to the absolute requirement, only one candle needs to be lit to fulfill the obligation to light Shabbos lights. However, the custom is to light a minimum of two candles.
2. The two candles represent the two words the Torah uses to describe Shabbos observance, "Zachor and Shamor."
3. The two lights also symbolize husband and wife. The amount of limbs in a male body is 248, while women have 252. Together it equals 500 – also the gematria of *Ner* (candle=250)x2.
4. Some people light ten candles, representing the Aseres Hadibros, the Ten Commandments. Others light seven candles, representing the days of the week.
5. The prevalent custom is to start off lighting two candles, and to add an additional candle for each subsequent child that is born to the family, e.g. a family with four children lights six candles.
6. Even those that light additional candles each Erev Shabbos when at home, need to only light two candles when lighting as a guest in someone else's home.
7. However, whenever lighting at home the amount that is usually lit must be adhered to, and may not be lessened. Even if the woman of the house is not present and the husband or another family member is lighting, they must light the same amount of candles that the woman usually lights every week in that home.
8. If one week, a woman is negligent and does not light Shabbos candles, then she is penalized in that she needs to light an additional candle on every future Shabbos. If she was unable to light candles due to circumstances beyond her control (e.g. she was caring for a sick child and could not stop to light), then she is not penalized. According to most opinions, this does not apply on Yom Tov.

The Light of the Candles

1. The main Mitzvah of Neiros Shabbos is to have them lit and standing on or near the table during the Shabbos evening meal as to derive pleasure from their light. The candles on or near the table should be long enough so that they remain lit for the duration of the Seudah. Thus it is important to buy extra-long candles - or use oil -

for the Pesach Seder, the eve of Simchas Torah and any other times when the Shabbos or Yom Tov Seudah extends later into the night than usual.

2. There should also be light in all areas of the house that will be used, as part of the reasons of Shalom Bayis, as mentioned above. The turning on of these lights is a form of lighting candles.
3. Therefore, in certain situations, in addition to lighting candles, the woman will also turn on the electric lights as part of the mitzvah.

How to Light

1. Prior to lighting, all Shabbos preparations should be complete.
2. A woman should already have showered and be dressed in Shabbos clothes. (If she is running late, she should light on time even if she is still wearing weekday clothes.)
3. It is praiseworthy to give tzedaka. It is correct to daven mincha prior to lighting.
 - a. The woman should first turn on the lights in the dining room. (Other lights in the house should already be on, and the husband can do that to be part of the mitzvah.)
 - b. The Ashkenazi custom is to light the candles first (and extinguish the match), cover the eyes, recite the Bracha and then uncover the eyes to have enjoyment from the lights. Some Sefardim have the custom to say the beracha and then light the candles.
 - c. The reason for this is that like all brachos on Mitzvos, the beracha should be recited before the kindling. However, there is a concern that once the Bracha is recited it may be considered an acceptance of Shabbos and then it will be prohibited to kindle a flame. Thus the custom developed to light the flame first and cover the eyes while reciting the Bracha and that is considered as if the Bracha has been recited before kindling the flame. Since this is not a problem on Yom Tov, on Yom Tov some say the beracha first and then light the candles.
 - d. The Bracha recited when lighting the Shabbos candles is "Baruch Ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech HaOlam Asher Kidshanu B'Mitzvosav V'Tzivanu L'Hadlik Ner Shel Shabbos... Blessed are You Hashem, our G-d, Master of the world, who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Shabbos."
 - e. When lighting Neiros before the onset of Yom Tov that falls out on a weekday, the Bracha recited is "Baruch Ata Hashem... L'Hadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov." When Yom Tov falls out on Shabbos, the Bracha recited is "Baruch Ata Hashem...L'Hadlik Ner Shel Shabbos V'Shel Yom Tov"
4. When kindling the Shabbos candles, the match should be held to the candle until the flame is strong and burning on its own, just as it was done in the Bais HaMikdash.
5. One is permitted to light one Shabbos candle directly from another without the aid of a match or other igniter, since they are all for mitzvah purposes. However, it is prohibited to light a match or a non-Mitzvah candle directly from

the fire of a burning Shabbos candle, even if the purpose of lighting this match is to then light another Shabbos candle. If there is no other flame in the house, then one can use a candle to light oil candles.

6. *It is proper for every Jewish woman, after she kindles and recites the Bracha on the Shabbos candles, to daven to Hashem to bless her with children who will illuminate the world with their Torah, i.e. children who are Talmidei Chachamim, Torah scholars.*
7. Women who experience difficult labor when giving birth, and especially women that have not yet merited having children, should recite the Haftarah of the first day of Rosh Hashanah [which details the story of Chana's childlessness and her ultimate giving birth to her son Shmuel the prophet] each Friday evening after lighting the Shabbos candles. This Segulah works best when the woman understands what she is saying, and not simply reading the words.

Women and Candle Lighting

1. Although the obligation to light Shabbos candles in every Jewish home is for both men and women, traditionally it has become a Mitzvah for the women to light and thus exempt their husbands and other members of the household. This is because:
 - a. The woman is in charge of the household needs, and so this household Mitzvah was given to her.
 - b. This rectifies the sin of Chava, who "extinguished the candle of the world," by bringing death to the world, and women correct this by illuminating the world with the Shabbos lights.
2. Since the man of the house is also obligated in the performance of this Mitzvah, he should prepare the candles for the woman by inserting the candles/oil into the candelabra or similar preparations, to at least have some part in the Mitzvah.
3. In the event that there is no woman present in the home to light, the man of the house is obligated to light Shabbos candles. (A girl below the age of Bas Mitzvah may not exempt the household with the lighting of Shabbos candles.)

Type of Candles

1. Shabbos candles must be lit using wicks and a burning substance that produces a nice and even flame.
2. The ideal way to perform the Mitzvah of Shabbos candles is by using olive oil. *One who is scrupulous to use olive oil to light the Shabbos candles will merit children who will light up the world with their Torah [knowledge], which is compared to olive oil.*
3. The next best option is to use regular (paraffin) candles. It is preferable to use longer candles than shorter ones, since they are more elegant and enhance the beauty of the mitzvah.
4. One may not switch from olive oil to candles, without doing *hararas nedarim*. If one week she does not have oil, she may use candles for that one occasion.
5. One may switch from candles to oil (since this is preferred), but if she is not sure that she will do so permanently, she should have in mind to do it "bli neder" the first time she lights with olive oil.
6. One may place olive oil over water.

7. One may use leftover oil or candles after Shabbos. One may throw out the wicks, but it is praiseworthy to wrap it in a plastic bag.

After Lighting

1. Once a woman lights candles, it is Shabbos for her and she may not do any more melacha.
2. In cases of great necessity (e.g. to finish mikveh preparations or drive to the mikveh), she may sometimes light candles and *stipulate that she is not accepting Shabbos with this lighting*, and then she would be allowed to do melacha after lighting. However, a Rav must be consulted whether this is permitted in her situation.
3. After lighting candles, a woman may no longer daven the weekday mincha, since it is already Shabbos for her. She may drink water after lighting (or tea if necessary), but may not eat food. If she is very hungry, she may make Kiddush and eat a kezayis of mezonos.

Where to Light

1. The candles should be lit in the room where the meal will be eaten.
2. One should not light them near a window or door that will be opened lest a draft cause them to blow out.
3. The Shabbos candles should ideally remain in the same spot where they were kindled, and should not be moved to another spot after they are lit. In cases of necessity when they must be moved, they can only be moved within the same house, and even then only from one place that will be used to another place where they will be used.
4. On Sukkos one should light in the Sukkah. If one is concerned that a draft will blow the candles out, one may light in the house, preferably in a spot which can be seen from the Sukkah (e.g. near a window). If this is not possible, they may be lit anywhere in the house.
5. If one is not lighting in the sukkah, then prior to lighting, she should turn on the light in the sukkah and then light in the house.

Other Laws Relating to Shabbos Candles

1. It is important not to act in a disrespectful way in the presence of the Shabbos candles. (This also applies with regard to a havdala candle.) This includes:
 - a. Changing a diaper
 - b. Undressing a child
 - c. Placing a child on a potty.

Lighting Candles When Eating or Sleeping Away From Home

Eating and Sleeping at Home	Light in Dining Room. Light electric lights where needed.
Sleeping at Home, but Eating Out	Light before you leave and enjoy the candles for a few minutes. Also leave lights on around house.
	If driving to location, leave on lights at home and light where eating, or ask to be included in the hostess's lighting. This can be done by giving her a coin to "pay" for your portion of the mitzvah or by lifting up the candles or oil to "acquire halachic ownership" of it.
Sleeping and Eating in Other's Home	Light with hostess in Dining Room, preferably not very close to where she lights.
Sleeping in one location (not home) and eating in another	If possible, light where sleeping and enjoy candles there before going to the meal. One can also light candles (or oil) which will last until they return. If they are concerned to leave the candles unattended, they can light in the home where they are eating the meal (and make sure to leave lights on in the place they are sleeping).
Sleeping and Eating in Hotel	Leave on lights in room. If possible, light in bedroom. If not, try to light as close to table as possible. If not possible, try to benefit from lights of candles and eat something near the table. (Ashkenazim say a beracha; Sefardim do not.)