

SHABBOS CANDLES: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: PART 2

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

QUESTION: Once they are lit, may the Shabbos candles be moved [by one who has not yet "accepted" the Shabbos] from one spot on the table or in the room to another?

DISCUSSION: L'chatchilah, no. The candles should remain where they were lit and not be moved from place to place, even within the same room. It is, therefore, incorrect to light candles in the Succah and then bring them into the house before the meal is served. But b'diavad, if there is a compelling reason to move the candles to another place in the same room, (1) they may be moved.(2)

[There are poskim who maintain that once Shabbos candles have been lit they should not be moved(3) at all [even by those who did not yet "accept" the Shabbos] even if they will be returned to the same place.(4) Other poskim, however, do not consider this to be an issue.(5) and the custom seems to follow the more lenient opinion.(6) Still, unless there is a pressing need, the candles should not be moved at all in deference to the more stringent opinions.(7)]

QUESTION: Is it permitted to light one candle from another?

DISCUSSION: Yes, it is permitted. While it is not permitted to use a lit Shabbos candle to ignite a match or to melt the bottom of another candle so that it should adhere to the candlestick, it is permitted to use a lit candle to light another candle.(8) The best way to do this is to pick up the unlit candle, light it, and then put that candle back into its candlestick.(9)

QUESTION: Is it preferable to kindle the Shabbos lights with olive oil rather than with wax candles?

DISCUSSION: Many early sources speak about olive oil as being the preferred medium for the Shabbos lights,(10) as the flame that it produces is the clearest and the purest. On Shabbos, when we want to avoid anything that could lead to tampering with the wicks or adjusting the light source, the Sages preferred the use of olive oil because the light it casts is superior to that of other oils. Nowadays, however, when wax candles cast as good - or even better - a light as olive oil, there is no advantage in using olive oil rather than candles.(11)

QUESTION: What should a lady do if, after kindling the candles, a gust of wind blows them out, or they tip over and are extinguished?

DISCUSSION: That depends on the particulars:

1. If some or all of the candles blow out before the lady recites the blessing over them, she should relight the candles and recite the blessing.(12)
2. If some or all of the candles blow out after the blessing is recited, she should instruct a household member who did not yet "accept" the Shabbos to rekindle the candles on her behalf.(13)No blessing is recited over the second lighting.
3. If there are no household members available to can kindle the lights for her, or if the candles blow out after sunset (or even before sunset but after Shabbos has begun for the entire community), she should do nothing.(14)If, however, she will be distressed or even merely upset about not having lit candles for Shabbos, she may instruct a non-Jew to relight the candles on her behalf.(15)

QUESTION: How has electrical lighting affected the traditional way of lighting Shabbos candles?

DISCUSSION: The universal use of electric lights has had a twofold effect on the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. On the one hand, it has made it easier to perform. On the other hand, it has introduced several halachic questions explain:

At the time that electricity became commonplace, the poskim debated whether the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles could be fulfilled by turning on electric lights. There were three different opinions: 1) It is permissible to use electricity for Shabbos candles and the proper blessing may be recited(16;) 2) It is not proper to use electric lights for this mitzvah(17;) 3) It is permissible to use electrical lights, but the blessing should not be recited over them.(18)Since there is no final and definitive ruling on this issue, we must look at the prevailing custom, which - upon reflection - is a compromise among the three views:

Although the blessing is recited over the traditional candles or oil- based lights that are lit in the area where the Friday night meal will be eaten, we nevertheless rely on electricity for the other part of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The halachah clearly states that one is obligated to have light in any room that will be used on Friday night. (19) Our Sages instituted this so that household members would be able to safely navigate in the house without fear of injury that would disrupt the harmony of Shabbos. Today, most homes rely on some electrical source (night-light, bathroom-light, etc.) to illuminate the areas in which they will find themselves on Friday night. Thus, they fulfill this part of the mitzvah.(20)

The appropriate procedure, then, is as follows. When the wife is ready to light candles in the dining room, all the electrical lights which will be used on Friday night should be shut off. The lights which

are going to be used on Shabbos should then be turned on, with the intention that they are being turned on for the sake of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The candles should then be lit and the blessing recited over all the lights in the house, both electrical and otherwise. In this manner, one fulfills the mitzvah according to all views.

In a situation where using candles would be difficult or dangerous, such as in a hospital, the poskim agree that one should rely on the electric lights for Shabbos candles. They should be turned off and then turned on again for the sake of the mitzvah.(21) Whether a blessing is recited depends on views 1 and 3 quoted above.(22)No clear-cut custom exists and one should follow his rav's directives.

Students residing in a dormitory or guests staying at a hotel are obligated to light Shabbos candles. Even if they light candles in the dining hall, they are still required to light in the area where they sleep. Since it is considered unsafe, however, to allow candles to burn in a dormitory or in a hotel room, we must rely on the electric lights to fulfill that part of the mitzvah. A small light should, therefore, be turned off and on in honor of Shabbos before the arrival of the Shabbos. A blessing, however, should not be made, since the blessing is recited over the candles which are lit in the main dining room.

Shabbos guests staying at another person's home can technically fulfill the mitzvah through the lighting of their hosts. Even though they do not need to light a special candle of their own, it has nevertheless become customary that all married women light their own candles. Since the guests are required to have some light in their sleeping area, however, the proper procedure for them is as follows: Light an electric light in or near their sleeping quarters, proceed quickly to the dining room and light candles, and allow the blessing to apply to both acts of lighting.(23)

An additional issue concerning electricity and Shabbos candles is the concern of some poskim(24)whether it is permitted to light candles with a blessing when the electric lights are on, since in reality one is not adding any light to the room. Although some poskim defend our practice, (25)it is best to shut off the lights in the room before the candles are lit. They should then be turned on by the husband after the candles have been lit by the wife but before she recites the blessing.(26) Alternatively, the wife can do both, but she must turn the lights on first and then light the candles.(27)

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FOOTNOTES:

1 Or to another room (in the same house) which is being used on Friday night. See Chovas ha-dar,Neiros Shabbos, 2.

2 Mishnah Berurah 263:4. See also Kinyan Torah 4:26, who opines that nowadays, when it is obvious that the candles were lit in honor of Shabbos, it is permitted to move them.

3 And, according to some opinions, even touched; see Beur Halachah 263:14 (s.v. liga).

4 O.C. 263:14, as explained by Magen Avraham, Derech ha-Chayim and Pri Megadim, quoted by Mishnah Berurah 263:57, who agrees, except when moving the candles is needed for the sake of performing a mitzvah.

5 Chayei Adam and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch do not mention this prohibition at all. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:25 who rejects this stringency.

6 Tehillah l'David 263:12

7 Minchas Shabbos 75:27.

8 Mishnah Berurah 263:4.

9 To satisfy the opinion mentioned earlier that once lit, Shabbos candles should not be moved.

10 See Tosfos, Shabbos 23a (s.v. mereish), Sefer Chasidim 272, and Ma'asei Rav quoting the custom of the Gaon of Vilna.

11 Mishnah Berurah 264:23. See Az Nidberu 3:4.

12 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 4, note 183).

13 O.C. 263:17.

14 She would not be required to add an additional candle in subsequent weeks, since her failure to light candles was no her fault.

15 Based on Beur Halachah 263:1 (s.v. lehadlik).

16 Teshuvos Beis Yitzchak Y.D. 120; Machaze Avraham 41; Melamed Leho'il 47; Harav Y.Y. Henkin (Eidus l'Yisrael, pg. 122).

17 Teshuvos Levushei Mordechai O.C. 3:59; Maharshag 2:107; Pekudas Elazer 22; Tchebiner Rav (quoted in Shraga ha-Meir 5:11).

- 18** Har Tzvi 2:114 quoting the Rogatchover Gaon; Mishpatei Uziel O.C. 1:7; Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, 2, note 26); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43 note 22) maintains that a blessing could be made over a flashlight but not over other lights.
- 19** Mishnah Berurah 263:2,29,31.
- 20** Harav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14 and pg. 36).
- 21** Rama O.C. 263:4 concerning candles; Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:157) concerning electricity.
- 22** Harav A. Kotler (quoted in Kochvei Yitzchak 1:2) ruled that a woman who gave birth in the hospital may light electric candles with a blessing. Harav M. Feinstein (ibid.) rules that no blessing should be recited.
- 23** Harav Y. Kamenetsky recommended this procedure for hotel guests as well; Emes L'yaakov O.C. 263, note 274.
- 24** Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-30; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 166 and 171); Az Nidberu 1:79; 3:12.
- 25** See responsum of Harav Y. Halberstam (Kloizenberger Rebbe) in Pnei Shabbos 263, and addendum to Shulchan Shelomo, vol. 1, pg. 20.
- 26** Custom at the home of Harav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes L'yaakov, O.C. 263, note 274). Harav S.Z. Auerbach (after his wife's passing) turned off the lights, lit the candles and then turned on the lights, so that the blessing is said on both sources of energy (reported by his grandson in Kol ha-Torah, vol. 40, pg. 16).
- 27** Custom at the home of Harav M. Feinstein (The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 20).

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