

# CANDLE - LIGHTING ON SHAVUOS

*by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt*

**QUESTION:** On erev Shavuos, when should ladies light the Yom Tov candles?

**DISCUSSION:** There are two basic customs regarding the time of candle-lighting on Yom Tov. Since it is permissible to light candles on Yom Tov proper, there are two options. Some women<sup>(1)</sup> light at the same time that they light every erev Shabbos, approximately 18 minutes before sunset. Although they could delay the lighting till later, it is meritorious to usher in the Yom Tov by lighting candles as is done on every erev Shabbos. Others<sup>(2)</sup> light candles on Yom Tov after the men come home from shul and before the meal begins. Since the purpose of candle lighting is primarily to enhance and honor the meal, they light as close to the meal as possible. Each one of these customs has valid halachic sources and reasons, and women should continue the practice of their mothers.

Some<sup>(3)</sup> suggest that on the Yom Tov of Shavuos it is advisable for women to light candles on Yom Tov itself and not before sunset. This is because the Torah commands that Shavuos commence on the fiftieth day of the counting of the Omer. The fiftieth day does not begin until nightfall. Since many women have the custom of reciting the blessing of shehecheyanu along with their candle-lighting, and the recitation of shehecheyanu represents the unconditional acceptance of the Yom Tov,<sup>(4)</sup> if they were to light before sunset it would be considered as if Shavuos had begun for them before nightfall of the fiftieth day.<sup>(5)</sup> It would be preferable, therefore, to light candles after nightfall. But other poskim do not consider this to be an issue and permit candle-lighting before sunset.<sup>(6)</sup> The custom follows their opinion.

A lady lighting candles after sunset should recite the blessing first and then light the candles.<sup>(7)</sup> A lady lighting candles before sunset has the choice to light first and then recite the blessing as she does every Shabbos, or to recite the blessing first and then light the candles. Both customs have legitimate sources and reasons.<sup>(8)</sup>

When Shavuos (or any Yom Tov) falls on Friday night, and women light candles for both Shabbos and Yom Tov, the blessing must be said for both occasions. If a woman forgot that it is also Shabbos and lit candles for Yom Tov only, she must light another candle and recite the blessing over Shabbos and Yom Tov<sup>(9)</sup>. If she forgot that it is Yom Tov and lit candles for Shabbos only, she should ask her husband or another person to light candles for Yom Tov and that person should make the blessing<sup>(10)</sup>.

**QUESTION:** We mentioned previously that many women recite shehecheyanu when they light Yom

Tov candles. Why do some women omit this blessing?

**DISCUSSION:** The validity of the custom to recite shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time, a prevalent long-standing custom,<sup>(11)</sup> has been extensively debated by the poskim.<sup>(12)</sup> The preferred time to recite shehecheyanu is right after the recitation of Kiddush, while the cup of wine is still being held aloft. Since ladies listen and answer amen to the shehecheyanu which is recited after Kiddush, there is no halachic reason for them to recite this very blessing when they light candles. There are other halachic objections as well. Still, since many women are inspired by the important mitzvah of candle-lighting and feel the need to express their joy at that time, the custom evolved of reciting shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time. Most poskim feel that while we do not encourage this practice, we need not object to it and the ladies who recite their own shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time may continue to do so.<sup>(13)</sup>

**QUESTION:** Some women do not blow out the flame of the match, lighter, etc. after lighting candles on erev Shabbos; instead, they allow the flame to extinguish on its own. They do this in order to avoid transgressing a Shabbos Labor - "Extinguishing" - once they have accepted Shabbos with the kindling of the candles. Should all women observe this custom?

**DISCUSSION:** No, they need not do so. It is permitted to extinguish the flame after lighting candles as long as one does so before reciting the blessing of l'hadlik ner shel Shabbos. Although Shulchan Aruch does note the custom of "some" women who are careful not to put out the flame after lighting candles,<sup>(14)</sup> this custom no longer applies today when all women (who follow the Ashkenazi custom<sup>(15)</sup>) recite the blessing over the candles after kindling them. Since Shabbos does not begin until after the blessing is recited, there is ample time to blow out the flame before reciting the blessing.<sup>(16)</sup>

**QUESTION:** Does the same halachah apply to Yom Tov?

**DISCUSSION:** On Yom Tov when many women follow the custom of reciting the blessing before lighting candles,<sup>(17)</sup> care should be taken not to put out the flame after lighting them. This is because once Yom Tov has begun, it is forbidden to extinguish a fire. The match, therefore, should be carefully put aside and allowed to extinguish on its own or she may hand it over to another person to extinguish it.<sup>(18)</sup> [A woman who is afraid to allow a match to extinguish on its own should light her candles first, blow out the match, and then recite the blessing, as she does on a regular erev Shabbos.<sup>(19)</sup> Of course, she may do this only if she lit candles before sunset. If she is lighting after Yom Tov has begun, she may not put out the flame.]

**QUESTION:** On Yom Tov, may one use a match to transfer a flame from one place to another?

**DISCUSSION:** The general rule is that on Yom Tov it is prohibited to create a new fire,<sup>(20)</sup> but it is permitted to transfer an existing fire from one place to the next. The application of this principle is as follows:

\* It is forbidden to strike a match to create a new fire.(21)

\* It is permitted to place a match on a red-hot electric coil in order to ignite the match. This is considered transferring an existing fire from place to place, for a red-hot coil is halachically equivalent to fire.(22)

\* It is forbidden to place a match near or on a hot electric coil in order to ignite the match. This is considered creating a new fire,(23) since the hot coil is merely a heat source and not actually "fire," as a red-hot coil would be.

It is questionable whether or not it is permitted to ignite a match by placing it near a red-hot coil (or by touching it to a hot light bulb). Some poskim permit it, since an existing fire (the red-hot coil or the "fire" in the bulb) is merely being transferred; nothing new is being created.(24) Others, however, hold that transferring a fire is permitted only when the fire itself is being transferred, but not when one is transferring the heat which emanates from that fire.(25)

#### FOOTNOTES:

1 Mateh Efrayim (625:33); Be'er Heitev 503:4 quoting the Shelah.

2 Minchas Shmuel (30). See Mishnas Ya'avetz (34) for a full explanation of the two customs.

3 See Piskei Teshuvos 494:2, based on Luach Eretz Yisrael.

4 Consequently, some poskim maintain that women should not make a precondition that they are not accepting the Yom Tov at candle-lighting (which otherwise may be done when needed) if shehecheyanu will be recited at the time; see Kaf ha-Chayim 514:112, and Tzitz Eliezer 10:19.

5 See Lehoros Nasan 7:31 who explains that even if women are exempt from the counting of the Omer, they are still commanded to accept the day of Shavuos on the fiftieth day of the counting.

6 Halichos Shelomo, Moadim 2:12-2.

7 Mateh Efrayim 625:33 and Elef l'Mateh 50.

8 Mishnah Berurah 263:27.

9 Responsa Maharam Brisk 2:44. See also Kinyan Torah 6:11.

10 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 44:5.

11 Mateh Efrayim 581:4; 619:4.

12 See Sh'eilas Ya'avetz 107, Kaf ha-Chayim 263:40 and Moadim u'Zemanim 7:117 quoting the Brisker Rav.

13 Sha'arei Teshuvah 263:5; Mishnah Berurah 263:23; Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:12; Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 585:2; Halichos Shelomo, Moadim 2:9-22.

14 O.C. 263:10.

15 Most Sefaradim, however, recite the blessing before kindling; Yechaveh Da'as 2:33.

16 Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:14; Yechaveh Da'as 2:33, quoting Mateh Yehudah 263:2. [Note that Mishnah Berurah does not disagree with this; indeed, he repeatedly rules that Shabbos begins after the blessing is recited; see 263:21 and 27. See also Da'as Torah 263:5 (s.v. v'yesh).] Chayei Adam and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, too, do not mention the custom of allowing the flame to extinguish by itself. See also addendum to Shulchan Shelomo, vol. 1, pg. 19.

17 As ruled by Mishnah Berurah 263:27.

18 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasah 43, note 179).

19 Based on the ruling of the Magen Avraham (263:12) and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (75:4), who rule that women should light on erev Yom Tov exactly as they do on erev Shabbos: first light the candles and then recite the blessing.

20 Because of the prohibition of molid - creating a new entity. For this reason it is forbidden to turn on an electric light or appliance on Yom Tov.

21 Mishnah Berurah 502:4. Under extenuating circumstances, it is permitted to ask a non-Jew to do so; Shevet ha-Levi 8:121.

22 Chazon Ish (quoted in Imrei Yosher, Nashim 70 and in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 2, pg. 104); Igros Moshe, Y.D. 2:75.

23 Mishnah Berurah 502:4. See Az Nidberu 7:61.

24 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasah 13:3 and note 13); Yabia Omer 2:27.

25 Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 2, pg. 104); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Hilchos ha-Mo'adim 8, note 10); Tzitz Eliezer 7:27-5.

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