

LIGHTING SHABBOS CANDLES PART 2

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: In regard to Shabbos candle-lighting, whose customs should a woman follow—her husband's or her mother's?

Discussion: There is a general rule that once a woman gets married, she must follow her husband's customs—both leniencies and stringencies. Marriage signifies a wife's entrance into her husband's domain, and that entry obligates her to follow his customs [1].

It is possible, though, that there may be an exception to this rule in regard to Shabbos candle-lighting. Many women follow the example set by their mothers in matters of custom, such as the number of candles to light, the appropriate time to light candles on Yom Tov, etc. Often, their husbands do not object even though their own mothers followed a different custom. Is this contrary to the aforementioned rule?

It seems that there is a halachic source for women following their mother's custom. To prove this point, let us examine a well-known custom which is connected to the mitzvah of candle-lighting:

It is customary for many women to recite the blessing of shehecheyanu when they light candles for Yom Tov. Although this custom has no source or basis in Halachah—indeed, it may be halachically objectionable [2] —it has nevertheless become almost universally accepted.

Rav Yaakov Emden reports [3] that he, personally, objects to this custom. Indeed, he rules that if a woman does not have the definite custom of reciting shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time, she should not do so. Nevertheless, he says, his wife—who saw this custom in her parents' home—does so, and he does not object. Since it is not halachically forbidden, he does not feel compelled to reject her minhag which she witnessed in her home.

Surely, Rav Emden was aware that upon marriage, a woman ought to change her customs to follow her husband's. Still, he did not insist that his wife abandon her mother's custom and adopt his own. Perhaps Rav Emden held that customs pertaining to candle-lighting are an exception to the general rule. Since, as mentioned above, our Sages made it the woman's responsibility to light candles, it becomes "her" mitzvah, to be followed according to her customs [4]. Apparently, it is not incumbent upon the husband to insist that his wife alter the customs which she learned from her mother. Although she may do so if she likes, she is not required to do so [5].

Question: May a woman daven Minchah after she has lit candles on Friday night?

Discussion: L'chatchilah, all poskim agree that she should daven Minchah before lighting candles. When a woman lights candles, she automatically accepts upon herself the restrictions and obligations of the Shabbos day. This precludes her davening the previous day's Minchah. If, however, a woman is running late and has not davened Minchah by candle-lighting time, the poskim differ as to what she should do. There are three views:

1. She should go ahead and light candles. She should then daven the Shemoneh Esrei of the Shabbos Ma'ariv twice to compensate for the lost Minchah [6]. Even though women do not usually daven Ma'ariv, she may do so in this case in order to make up the lost Minchah [7].
2. Before lighting, she should stipulate that she is not accepting the Shabbos until after she has davened Minchah [8]. This should not be done on Yom Tov if she recited shehecheyanu at the candle-lighting [9].
3. Some poskim rule that she may daven Minchah after lighting candles even if she did not stipulate that she was not accepting the Shabbos [10].

Note that when men light candles, they do not automatically accept the Shabbos with their candle-lighting [11]. They may, therefore, daven Minchah after lighting candles. Question: How many candles should a woman light on erev Shabbos?

Discussion: This depends on family custom. While the basic halachah mandates that a minimum of one candle be lit [12], it is universally accepted that no one lights fewer than two candles, representing the dual aspects of Shabbos—Zachor and Shamor [13]. Some women light seven candles, others ten [14], while others light the number of candles corresponding to the number of people (parents plus children) in the family [15]. All customs are halachically acceptable, and each woman should follow her custom and not vary from week to week [16]. Should a woman, however, find herself away from home on Shabbos or Yom Tov, she may light just two candles even if she lights more when she is home [17].

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 [18], this custom no longer applies today when all women (who follow the Ashkenazi custom [19]) 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

[20].

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 [21], 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 [22]. [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 [23]. 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.]

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1. Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:158; E.H. 1:59; Minchas Yitzchak 4:83; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 187).
 2. See Discussion on Parashas Bamidbar.
 3. Teshuvos Ya'avetz 107.
 4. Similarly, see Igros Moshe, E.H. 2:12 who rules that a wife need not listen to a husband who holds that a wig is not enough of a hair-covering, since this is "her" mitzvah. See also Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:32-10; 4:100-4.
 5. According to Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 188; Halichos Shelomo 1:1-7), a husband may allow his wife to keep her former customs in all cases. For instance, she does not have to change her nusach of davening after her marriage.
 6. This appears to be the view of the Mishnah Berurah 263:43; see Chut Shani, Shabbos, vol. 4, pg. 70.
 7. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:110). But she may only do so if she davens Minchah on a regular basis; Shulchan Shelomo, addendum to vol. 1, pg. 22.
 8. Eishel Avraham 263:10; Kaf ha-Chayim 263:35; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfe, Tefillah, pg. 201).
 9. Tzitz Eliezer 10:19-5. This is because several poskim hold that one cannot recite shehecheyanu, which celebrates the arrival of the Yom Tov, and at the same time stipulate that he is not accepting Yom Tov's arrival.
 10. Several poskim quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 128. 11. Mishnah Berurah 263:42. It is still, however, preferable even for men to verbally stipulate that they are not mekabel Shabbos when lighting candles. 12. And, indeed, under extenuating circumstances, one may light only one candle and recite the blessing over it; Mishnah Berurah 263:9.

13. Based on Rama, O.C. 263:1.
14. Mishnah Berurah 263:6.
15. This custom, although widespread, is not mentioned in any of the classical sources.
16. Based on Beiur Halachah 263:1 (s.v. she'shachechah).
17. She'arim Metzuyanin b'Halachah 75:13.
18. O.C. 263:10.
19. Most Sefaradim, however, recite the blessing before kindling; Yechaveh Da'as 2:33.
20. 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.
21. As ruled by Mishnah Berurah 263:27.
22. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasah 43, note 179).
23. 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.

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