

THE SHABBOS CANDLES: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

The following is a discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

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(3) reports 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 Yaakov 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 Yaakov 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).

MINCHAH AFTER CANDLE LIGHTING

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

DISCUSSION: L'chatchilah, all poskim agree that women must recite 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). When necessary, women may rely in this view¹¹.

Note that when men light candles, they do not automatically accept the Shabbos with their candle-lighting(12). They may daven Minchah after lighting candles.

QUESTION: If the wife is away from home for Shabbos, who should light the candles?

DISCUSSION: If one's wife is not home for Shabbos, it is preferable that the husband himself light candles and not one of the daughters(13). If, however, a daughter who is over twelve years old lights for him, he fulfills the mitzvah through her lighting. One cannot, however, fulfill his obligation by having a daughter under twelve light candles for him(14).

In the event that a brother and sister are at home without their parents, it is preferable that the sister light the candles(15).

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Igros Moshe O.C. 1:158; E.H. 1:59; Minchas Yitzchak 4:83; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 187).

² See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, vol. 2, pg. 360.

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" halachah. See also Igros Moshe E.H.

4:32-10; 4:100-4.

5 According to Harav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 188), 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 is the view of the Mishnah Berurah 263:43.

7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 110).

8 Eishel Avraham 263:10; Kaf ha-Chayim 263:35; Harav Y. S. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfe on Tefillah, 2nd edition, 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 Minchas Yitzchak 9:20.

12 Mishnah Berurah 263:42. It is still, however, preferable even for men to stipulate that they are not mekabel Shabbos when lighting candles.

13 Oral ruling by Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 7); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43 note 46.

14 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:7.

15 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 45 note 34).

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