



Managing Your Mitzvos Class #2 – Kindling the Shabbos Lights:

The following notes reflect the laws and customs that were covered during a class given by Rabbi Yossi Michalowicz on Monday Nov. 14th. During the class there was a lot of time spent on explaining why these laws and customs are necessary in order to maximize our ability to enjoy the Shabbos. If you have any questions, please feel free to either contact the Rabbi or borrow a copy of a tape of the class from our library in the Routes Jewish Centre.

1. The first Mitzvah when Shabbos is ushered in is the kindling of the Shabbos candles.
2. On Friday afternoon, the wicks of the Shabbos lights should be charred [lit and extinguished] so that they ignite easily. The custom is that the man of the house should do this.
3. The men prepare the Shabbos lights so they have a share in the Mitzvah. One should make sure that the candles are securely fixed in the holders. This demonstrates that the kindling is done for the sake of the Mitzvah.
4. The custom is for the men to wait to go to Shul until after candle lighting, to make sure that his wife does it on time.
5. The Mitzvah of kindling the lights has devolved upon the woman of the house. The Zohar says that a woman should rejoice over being able to kindle the lights and illuminate the Shabbos. The Satmar Rav said that a woman should wear all her jewelry when she kindles the Shabbos lights, in honor of the Mitzvah.
6. It is customary for women to wear a white kerchief and a white apron when kindling the Shabbos lights.
7. It is a Mitzvah to give Tzedakah with joy before kindling the Shabbos lights. It is customary for women to place some coins in a charity box before lighting. For mystical reasons it is recommended that a woman gives three small coins for Tzedakah.
8. At the time that she lights the Shabbos lights, a woman prays for her husband and children.
9. One must make sure to kindle the lights in their proper place at the time of lighting, and not move them to another place afterwards. It is preferable to kindle the lights on the Shabbat table or somewhere in that room.
10. Care should be taken to ensure that there is sufficient lighting [via any source of illumination] throughout the house in any areas that will be used.
11. **There are different customs about exactly when to light. The different opinions are 15, 18, and 20 minutes before sunset. The time posted in our Shul bulletin reflects the 18 minute opinion.**
12. **In an extreme emergency, [or if one forgot earlier] one may still light candles even 2 minutes before sunset. It is forbidden to light candles after sunset.**

13. One is permitted to kindle the Shabbos lights earlier than the above said times. The earliest one may light candles is 1 ¼ Halachik hours before sunset.
14. It is customary for the wife to begin kindling two lights, and to kindle an additional light for each child that is born.
15. If for any reason the wife can not light the Shabbos lights, the husband should light. When the husband lights, he makes the blessing before lighting, and it is assumed that he has not brought in the sanctity of Shabbos with his lighting. [e.g. he can still drive to Shul before sunset.]
16. The Mitzvah is done to perfection when one uses olive oil. The Arizal says that at least two Shabbos lights should burn olive oil. [Regular candles that burn brightly are also acceptable.]
17. It is commendable for woman to kindle the Shabbos lights with a wax candle instead of a match. [Matches are also acceptable.]
18. After kindling the lights, the woman first places her hands in front of the lights, and then she encircles the lights with her hands, and finally covers her hands with her face. At that moment, she makes the blessing on the lights. [See Artscroll Siddur page 296.] She removes her hands from her eyes after the blessing is concluded. **At this point, she has brought in the sanctity of the Shabbos, and is prohibited from doing any Halachikly defined work on Shabbos.**
19. When kindling the lights, the woman should set fire to most of the wick so that the flame will be burning well by the time she removes her hand after completing the lighting.
20. Under certain circumstances a woman may delay the acceptance of Shabbos until just before sunset, even though she already lit the candles. Under those special circumstances, she must stipulate either verbally or mentally that in spite of the fact that she is lighting the candles she does not accept Shabbos until just before sunset. Such stipulations would enable her to drive a car to Shul or to say the Mincha prayer before sunset. In these circumstances she should first make the blessing and then light.
21. There are different opinions as to what to do with the match or candle that were used for kindling the lights. Some women put out that fire, others do not.
22. Women say a special prayer after kindling the lights. A woman who lights the candles in a joyful frame of mind receives the power to have her prayers answered at this time. [Artscroll Siddur pg.296]
23. When the Shabbos lights are the only source of light, it is best to use candles that are long enough [or sufficient oil is used] to last until after the meal.
24. There is custom to draw the curtains after kindling the Shabbos lights. The special holiness of Shabbos is meant only for the home – unlike the lights of Hanukah.
25. The Shabbos light are very special. We should try to glance at them as often as we can.
26. If a woman does not kindle the lights for Shabbos due to her own negligence, she must light an additional light for the rest of her life.