

CANDLE LIGHTING

סדר הדלקת נרות

As we move from the “number 6” (competitive and often self-absorbed school or work week—“nice guys finish last”) to the “number 7” kedushah and shalom, peace and wholeness of Shabbos (see the Introduction to this siddur), we give some tzedakah and light candles.

FAQ:

Great explanation! But you clearly have not been in my house! There is **no** shalom, peace, or harmony at all! It is a nightmare. A war zone. So what I am supposed to think about during candle lighting?

FAQ:

Beautiful explanation! But I am all alone! So what am I supposed to think about during candle lighting?

ANSWER to both:

Ouch! Great questions—and unfortunately more common than you realize! See Appendix 13.

FAQ:

If both men and women are obligated to ensure that Shabbos candles are lit in the house, why is this mitzvah done primarily by women? And why do they make such a big deal out of it?

ANSWER:

Very famous and sensitive question! See Appendix 11-B.

Why tzedakah? Money often represents power, control, and a sign of personal conquest. (As a famous folk saying goes, “He who dies with the most toys wins!” My students once bought me a magnet that had the last word crossed out, but they altered it to read, “He who dies with the most toys still dies!”) In contrast, we, as Hashem’s Chosen People with our unique mission, view money as simply a tool Hashem gives us in order to increase kedushah and do mitzvos. Shabbos reinforces that value, and thus as we are about to begin Shabbos, we put that value into practice and take some of “our” money and use it to help others.

Why the Shabbos candles? And why does the Gemara refer to them as “candles of shalom”? Light is unique. Even when you are lighting a candle just for yourself because YOU want light, it still shines on others! There is no way to keep light all for yourself because the nature of light is to spread to all those in the area. Light always spreads automatically. (You cannot be a self-absorbed “number 6” when it comes to light!) That is one reason why our neshamah is referred to as “the candle of Hashem,” for it too seeks to learn from and give to others.

The custom is to light a minimum of two Shabbos candles (though you do fulfill the mitzvah with just one). Why? One reason (among many) is that it symbolizes the beautiful constructive power that exists when there is shalom—unity and harmony between man and woman, husband and wife. The word for “man” (אִישׁ) and the word for “woman” (אִשָּׁה) each contains the letters א and ש, which spell אש, fire. Fire can be destructive and consuming, or it can provide light, warmth, and comfort. It all depends how you use it! The י in אִישׁ and the ה in אִשָּׁה spell one of the Names of Hashem. When the אִישׁ and the אִשָּׁה (husband and wife) work in harmony by bringing Torah values and kedushah into their relationship, the אש becomes warmth and light that spreads throughout the entire household, dispelling the self-absorbed competitiveness “fire” of the school/work week.

In addition, the two candles symbolize the two dimensions of Shabbos: זְכוּר (doing all the positive commands of Shabbos) and שְׂמור (being careful not to transgress any of the prohibitions of Shabbos), thus bringing shalom-harmony between these two very different but crucial parts of our avodas Hashem.

Also, most women have a custom to light a candle for each of their children to remind themselves **and** to show their children that each and every child is a neshamah of light and infinite potential—not just “a report card”—thus creating shalom-harmony within the family unit as a whole.

But why not simply turn on an electric light? Doesn't that accomplish all the above? Good question! A candle is special because it is similar to our neshamah in two ways. One is that just like the flame depends on the physical candle, similarly, our neshamah needs our physical body in order to express itself in this material world. (Therefore, we must treat our body with the respect it deserves but realize that it is merely a tool toward an end, not an end in and of itself!) In addition, the nature of a flame is to reach upward. So too, our neshamah is always striving upward to attain higher spiritual levels.

To sum up: Giving some of “our” money to tzedakah and lighting a flame help us step away from all the very “number 6” stuff of the week and focus on “number 7,” infusing the material world with kedushah and meaning, thus strengthening our neshamah. With that, we can create the most important and elusive shalom—inner peace! Once you can get along with yourself, you can get along with others!

It is customary to give some tzedakah before lighting the candles as explained above.

For detailed instructions regarding the laws of candle lighting for both men and women, on Shabbos (and Yom Tov), please see Appendix 12:9.

ברוך אתה יהוה—You, Hashem, are the Source of everything; אלהינו—You take care of us; מלך העולם—and You rule the entire world; אשר קדשנו אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ—and through Your mitzvos You elevated us; יְצַנְנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שָׁבָת—and You commanded us to kindle the light of Shabbos.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וַיְצַנְנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר
שֶׁל שַׁבָּת:

Tefillos for after Candle Lighting

תפילה לאשה אחר הדלקת הנרות

The merit of having done a mitzvah (giving tzedakah and lighting the Shabbos candles) together with the shalom-peace, harmony, and sanctity of Shabbos that now descends on the home as a result of the Shabbos candles, makes this a particularly auspicious and opportune time for tefillah. What tefillah? Whatever pours out of your heart! Hashem understands all languages! Take a moment to thank Hashem for everything He has given you and ask for all that you desire for the future—your future and that of your family. And don't forget to use this time to daven for others who need physical and/or mental health, relief from pain, or any other need. I have included here the two most common tefillos that women say at this time, but there are others that can be found in the many different booklets that deal specifically with candle lighting and tefillos for special occasions.

In addition, some women say “Tefillas Chanah” as a zechus for someone experiencing difficulty in having children, and/or in raising their children. (This is

the tefillah of Chanah, the wife of Elkanah, who gave birth to the navi Shmuel after many years of being childless.) It is the Haftarah read on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, Shmuel I, from 1:1 though 2:10.

יְהי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה—May it be
Your will, Hashem, וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ—Who controls everything
and has taken care of Bnei Yisrael
throughout our history, שְׂיִבְנָה בֵּית
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּיָמֵינוּ—that the Beis

Hamikdash be rebuilt quickly in our days; וְתֵן חֵלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ—and help us find our
unique connection to Your Torah. וְשָׁם נַעֲבֹדְךָ בִּירְאָה כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכַשְׁנִים קְדְמוֹנוֹת—And
there (*in the Beis Hamikdash*) we will be able to serve You with proper respect, as it
was in the days of old. וְעֶרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנַּחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם. (*And when Mashiach arrives
and rebuilds the Beis Hamikdash*), then the korbanos of Yehudah and Yerushalayim
will be accepted by Hashem; כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכַשְׁנִים קְדְמוֹנוֹת—as it was in the days of old.

יְהי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה—May it be Your will,
Hashem, Who controls everything
and has taken care of Bnei Yisrael
throughout our history, that You
do kindness with me (and my hus-
band/children/father/mother) and
all my relatives; and grant us and all
of Bnei Yisrael a long and good life.
Grant us goodness, blessings, and
deliverance (*from all our difficulties*),
even if we are not deserving; and
bless us with blessings that are great
and complete; and make our homes
peaceful and harmonious; and may
Your Presence be felt in our homes.
May I merit to raise children and
grandchildren who are wise and
understanding, who love and fear
Hashem, who are truthful and
trustworthy, holy offspring who
are constantly attached to Hashem,
and who will illuminate the world
through their Torah knowledge,
good deeds and all they accomplish
in their service of Hashem. Please

Hashem, listen to my requests at this time (*of the lighting of the Shabbos candles*) in
the merit of our matriarchs, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah. May our light shine
and never be extinguished, and may Your Presence shine forth and be felt (*by all*) so
that we will be saved (*from all our difficulties*). Amen!

יְהי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
שְׂיִבְנָה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּיָמֵינוּ, וְתֵן חֵלְקֵנוּ
בְּתוֹרָתְךָ; וְשָׁם נַעֲבֹדְךָ בִּירְאָה כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכַשְׁנִים
קְדְמוֹנוֹת: וְעֶרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנַּחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.
כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכַשְׁנִים קְדְמוֹנוֹת:

יְהי רָצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵי, שְׂתַחֲוֶנָּה אוֹתִי (וְאֶת אִשִּׁי/
וְאֶת בְּנִי/וְאֶת אָבִי/וְאֶת אִמִּי) וְאֶת כָּל
קְרוֹבֵי, וְתֵתֵן לָנוּ וּלְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל חַיִּים
טוֹבִים וְאַרְפִּים, וְתִזְכְּרֵנוּ בְּזִכְרוֹן טוֹבָה
וּבְרָכָה, וְתִפְקֹדֵנוּ בְּפִקְדוֹת יְשׁוּעָה
וְרַחֲמִים, וְתִבְרַכְנוּ בְּרָכוֹת גְּדוּלוֹת,
וְתִשְׁלִים בְּתִינוּ, וְתִשְׁכֵּן שְׂכִינְתְּךָ
בֵּינֵינוּ: וְזַכֵּנִי לְגִדּוֹל בָּנִים וּבָנֵי בָנִים
חַכְמִים וְנְבוֹנִים, אוֹהֲבֵי יְהוָה, יִרְאֵי
אֱלֹהִים, אֲנִשֵּׁי אֱמֶת, זֵרֵעַ קֹדֶשׁ, בִּיהוּה
דְּבָקִים, וּמְאִירִים אֶת הָעוֹלָם בְּתוֹרָה
וּבְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים וּבְכָל מְלָאכָת
עֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרָא: אֲנִי שֹׁמֵעַ אֶת תְּחִנּוֹתֵי
בַּעַת הַזֹּאת, בְּזִכְרוֹת שְׂרָה וְרִבְקָה וְרָחֵל
וְלֵאָה אֲמוֹתֵינוּ, וְהָאֵר נִרְנֹה שְׁלֹא יִכָּבֶה
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, וְהָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ וְנוֹשְׁעָה. אָמֵן: