



A College Student's Guide to Halacha

the wiki-how of relevant Halacha for college students



This week's question:

Where should I light Shabbat candles if fire is prohibited in my dorm?

DISCLAIMER: *Please be aware every situation is different and this only shows a limited number of halachic opinions. If unsure, ask your local rabbi.*

Introduction by Rav Binyamin Shalom:

It is a rabbinic commandment to light a lamp in honor of Shabbat; there are three reasons for this commandment according to the Shulkhan Arukh (Ora'h 'Haim 263,2)

a) the reverence due to Shabbat (kevod Shabbat), because it is our principle that every important meal must be illuminated;

b) the delight derived from Shabbat (oneg Shabbat), since the pleasantness derived from a meal is not complete as long as one cannot see the food he eats;

c) peace at home (shlom bayit), since when one can't see one's furniture and belongings, one stumbles over them, and gets seriously annoyed or angry. Our sages knew that we Jews tend to be short-fused— it's only a matter of how

short the fuse is— and had a very interesting sense of humor.

It is so important to light the Shabbat table that, as our sages have decided, if one who does not have money to purchase a lamp to light for themselves, one should ask for charity. According to the Talmud, (Shabbat 23b) the one who is diligent when kindling his Shabbat candles will beget children who are Talmidey 'Hachamim (students of Torah scholars).

Edot HaMizrach

Rav Kobi Gigi

לכתחילה צריך להדליק איפה שאוכלים, אבל מכיוון שיש שם כבר נרות אז לשיטת הספרדים הדבר הנכון הוא להדליק איפה שישנים מכיוון שאי אפשר ולהרבה פוסקים תאורת חשמל מוגדרת כנר לעניין שבת ראוי להשאיר שם מנורה דולקת אבל המנהג הוא לברך על הדלקה באש ולכן למעשה: להדליק במקום שבו ישנים תאורת חשמל עם חוט להט, ולהדליק במקום שבו אוכלים נר לברך עליו ולכוון להוציא גם את המנורה. אם במקרה יש מקום שבו אוכלים ואין בו נרות אז להדליק שם.

*translated by team

It is LeChatchila (See Definitions, S.D.) better to light where you are eating, but since someone has already lit candles there, according to Sfaradi Halacha, the correct thing to do is to light candles in your dorm, since you likely will not be the first to light where you are eating. [Sfaradi Halacha holds that more than one person cannot light in any given location.] There are also many who say that an electric candle with a chut lahat (S.D.) is like a regular candle for the purpose of Shabbat candle

lighting, and it is proper to leave an electric candle lit. However, the minhag (S.D.) is to say a bracha on the lighting of a candle with fire. Therefore, one should light an electric candle in your dorm with a chut lahat (S.D.) in honor of Shabbat without saying the bracha, and light a candle where you are eating and say a bracha on it, keeping in mind the electric candle. If there are no candles already lit in the place where you are eating your Shabbat meal, light there¹.

¹ Shulchan Aruch Chayim 263, 10 [Rama]; [רמ"א]; שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן רסג י [רמ"א]
 a Mishna Brurah 263, 45; (משנה ברורה סימן רסג ס"ק מה)
 b Mishna Brurah 263, 2; (משנה ברורה סימן רסג ס"ק ב)

US Ashkenaz:

Rabbi Daniel Feldman

Regarding Shabbos candles, unmarried people who have parents who light at home are exempt from the primary obligation of lighting. It is a good idea to turn on some kind of electric light in the room, for the sake of Shabbos, without a bracha. There is a basis to

light where you are either living or eating, but better to light where you are living. In the dorm, where you can only use electric light, R. Willig feels you can make a bracha on that lighting too.

Israeli Ashkenaz

Rav Meir Nehorai

הדלקת נר שבת היא חובה (שבת כה ע"ב) ורש"י מסביר שעיקר המצוה היא להדליק במקום הסעודה. וכך הוא כותב: "שאין סעודה חשובה אלא במקום אור". וכך פוסק הרמ"א (רסג, י). לכן לכתחילה יש להדליק סט אחד של נרות שבת במקום שבו אוכלים. אם זה אפשרי באוניברסיטה זה מצוין. השאר יכולים לצאת ידי חובה בהדלקה הזו. כמו כן אם יש מעוניינות להדליק ולברך או נשים נשואות ניתן להדליק גם על ידי חשמל ובמיוחד שיש "חוט להט" שזה דומה לאש. היו פוסקים שאסרו משום שהחשמל עלול להיפסק (הרב עוזיאל) ומסיבות נוספות אולם פוסקים אחרים התירו וניתן לסמוך עליהם. עיינו **הבית יצחק** (יו"ד א, קכ) **הרב פרנק** (הר צבי או"ח קמג) **והרב עובדיה** (יביע אומר או"ח ב, יז),

*translated by team

There is a chiyuv (See Definitions, S.D.) to light Shabbat candles¹. Rashi explains that the primary obligation of the mitzvah (S.D.) is to light the candles where you are having your Shabbat meal. To that extent, Rashi writes, "It is not a proper meal except in the presence of light." The Ramah² agrees with this ruling. Based on this, the best place to light a set of candles is where you are dining. If this is possible in university, that's excellent. Everyone else [that is eating at that meal] can be yoztei (S.D.) with this candle lighting. Also, if there are married or non married women interested in

lighting and saying the bracha (S.D.), they are also allowed to light with electric candles if need be, especially if there is a "chut lahat/ thread of intense heat" (S.D.) because that is similar to fire. There are also those who posit that using electric lights as Shabbat candles is not allowed because the electricity might potentially stop working³.

For additional reasons, there are other [Rabbanim] who are reliable that give a heter (S.D.) for this. One can learn more in the Beit Yitzchak⁴, Rav Peranik⁵, and Rav Ovadiah⁶.

¹ Shabbat 25B (שבת כה ע"ב)

² Ramah, 263, 10; (הרמ"א רסג, י)

³ Rav Oziel; (הרב עוזיאל)

⁴ Yoreh Deah 1, 120; (יו"ד א, קכ)

⁵ Har Tzvi Orech Chayim 143; (הר צבי אר"ח קמג)

⁶ Yeviah Omer Orech Chayim 2, 17; (יביע אומר או"ח ב, יז)

Chabad

Rabbi Shaya Shagalow

Students should light in the room that they are eating. If not possible, use an electric **lahav** [flame] without a bracha in the bedroom and

spend some time there at some point in the evening.

Sfaradi

Rav Binyamin Shalom

The mitzvah consists of having light in all the rooms one must use on the Shabbat eve, so that the members of the household will not stumble in their path. However, since nowadays all rooms are illuminated with electric lamps, the mitzvah will be essentially fulfilled by lighting the candles in the dining-room to illuminate it. By having the evening meal under their light, one honors (kavod) Shabbat and enjoys it (oneg); therefore, it is on lamps near the Shabbat meal that the blessing of candle-lighting is recited.

In our case, it would be preferable to kindle the shabbat candles in one's room, with no blessings, and in the dining room, the place where the meal is to be consumed, with the blessing, or at least in the place dedicated to candle lighting.

When the above is not feasible, in places such as hotels or dormitories where fire alarms are usually activated and a real danger of fire exists, the halacha even forbids one to light their candles there, as that would be considered akin to theft.

Some opinions in such cases consider electricity to be made of real fire, and this is why electric lamps are forbidden on shabbat for that would be the equivalent of kindling a fire. If this is the case, an Incandescent light bulb (not neon) should also be suitable for the Shabbat candle-lighting blessing. There is plenty more to be commented on that subject: such as the use of regular lamps fixed on the ceiling that add nothing to the room lights, or in Israel, the fact that electricity is produced by Jews and that benefiting from the work of Jews on Shabbat is not something to

be taken lightly. That latter point is not relevant in exile in countries other than Israel, and a special lamp for shabbat can be purchased for that purpose, especially when the main reason for the candle lighting in the rooms is Shalom Bayt. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef was once asked if someone could rely on turning on the restroom's light and making the blessings over it, and his answer was negative, understandably. According to our custom, when a wife kindles shabbat candles in the dining-room, her husband might kindle shabbat candles in the sleeping room with no blessing, and candles lit in the sleeping room or dormitory should not be the ones we bless for the mitzvah. Rabbi Ben-Tsion Meir Uziel, Chief-Rabbi of Israel for the Sfaradim in the early 20th century, rejected the idea that light bulbs could be used instead of oil and wick candles. He ruled that the electrical stream could be interrupted at any moment, thus disturbing the Oneg Shabbat. Nevertheless, in most places, it seems that would hardly be an issue. These are his words:

ואפשר לומר עוד דאפילו להרמב"ם ומרן אין יוצאים ידי חובת הדלקת נר שבת בנר החשמל, הואיל ועלול הוא להפסק באמצע הסעודה על ידי הפסקת הזרם ממקורו ומתבטל עונג שבת, והרי זה דומה לעטרן שאמר רבי ישמעאל אין מדליקין מפני כבוד השבת, מאי טעמא? אמר רבא: מתוך שריחו רע גזרה שמה יניחנה ויצא. אמ"ל אביי: ויצא! אמ"ל: שאני אומר הדלקת נר בשבת חובה, פירוש במקום סעודה דחובה היא שיסעוד במקום הנר (שבת כ"ה ע"ב ותוד"ה "הדלקת"). והוא הדין בנר החשמל שהוא עלול להפסק הזרם ממקורו ולכבות הנר באמצע הסעודה, אין מדליקין בו

Therefore, Shabbat candles that the bracha will be made on ought to be kindled in the dining room, in a secure place prepared for that, everyone lighting together if possible.

Glossary:

Term: ***Definition:***

<i>Chiyuv:</i>	strict requirement
<i>Mitzvah:</i>	commandment
<i>Yotzei:</i>	fulfill their requirement in the mitzvah
<i>Bracha:</i>	blessing
<i>Chut Lahat:</i>	thread of intense heat: the filament in certain types of lightbulbs that when heated, glows white hot and illuminates the bulb
<i>Heter:</i>	an allowance for doing a mitzvah through a less preferred method in cases of great need
<i>Menorat lahat:</i>	an incandescent, electric lightbulb with a chut lahat
<i>Hadlakat Nerot:</i>	Lighting of the candles (usually for Shabbat)
<i>LeChatchila:</i>	better, in ideal conditions
<i>Minhag:</i>	the customary way of performing a mitzvah in a given community

Have a question you want answered?

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