

A Shabbat Candle for Every Family Member

By: ZVI RON

Shulhan Arukh (*Orah Hayyim* 263:1) writes regarding the Shabbat candles, “One should be meticulous to make a beautiful lamp. There are those who use two wicks, one representing ‘Remember’ and one representing ‘Observe.’” R. Moshe Isserles adds, “One may add and light three or four, and this is customary.” He then goes on to discuss the custom for a woman who forgot to light Shabbat candles to light an additional candle beyond what she had lit previously.

Today, many, if not most, women light one candle for every member of their family, adding a candle whenever a new child is born. This practice is not mentioned in the *Shulhan Arukh* or any early sources.¹ It does not even appear in many classic books that describe and explain Jewish customs, such as *Sefer Ta’amei ha-Minbagim u-Mekorei ha-Dinim*,² *Otzar Kol Minbagei Yeshurun*³ and *Otzar Ta’amei ha-Minbagim*.⁴ In this article we will trace the origin of this custom that has come to dominate Shabbat candle lighting.

Two or More Shabbat Candles

The Talmud always refers to the Shabbat lamp in the singular, and the legal obligation was always understood by authorities to be to light just

¹ Simcha Rabinovitch, *Piskei Teshuvot*, vol. 3, part 1 (Jerusalem: 2009), p. 187, 263:2.

² Abraham Sperling, *Sefer Ta’amei ha-Minbagim u-Mekorei ha-Dinim* (Jerusalem: Shai Lamora, 1999), p. 124, only brings the custom to light two Shabbat candles.

³ Avraham Hershovitz, *Otzar Kol Minbagei Yeshurun* (Vilna: 1898), p. 45, *siman* 77, only writes that it is customary to light many Shabbat candles and brings reasons to light seven candles.

⁴ Shmuel Gelbard, *Otzar Ta’amei ha-Minbagim* (Petach Tikva: Mifal Rashi, 1996), pp. 127–128, only discusses the custom to light two candles.

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one lamp.⁵ The custom of lighting two lamps is recorded in the early Ashkenazic Rishonim, and would only be adopted by Sephardic communities later on.⁶

The earliest reference to two candles on Shabbat is R. Eliezer ben Yoel Ha-Levi of Bonn (Ra'aviah; 1140–1225). He gives two reasons for this practice. The first explanation is that using one candle to eat by is normative so another should be added to indicate that they are being lit for a special reason, Shabbat. The second reason is that the two candles represent 'Remember' and 'Observe', the two terms used in the two versions of the commandment to keep Shabbat in the Decalogue.⁷ R. Avraham ben Azriel, in his work *Arugat ha-Bosem*, written c. 1234, also gives two reasons for lighting two Shabbat candles. One, that the numerical value of the word *ner* (candle) is equivalent to 250, twice that is 500, which is the sum total of the traditional number of body parts of a man (248) and woman (252) added together, and so two candles indicate that the couple should merit to have male and female children. The second reason he gives is that they represent 'Remember' and 'Observe'.⁸ This second reason would become the most popular explanation for the practice. It is noted in *Tur* (*Orah Hayyim* 263:1) and from there in the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Orah Hayyim* 263:1). It should be noted though that this custom took a while to become universal, as R. Yaakov Landau (d. 1493) in his *Agur* writes that "the world is not careful about" lighting two Shabbat candles.⁹

Another popular explanation for lighting two Shabbat candles is the idea found in the midrash that on Shabbat many things are doubled.¹⁰ Although the midrash does not mention two candles, *Kolbo* (*siman* 24) writes that this was understood to be the basis for the custom as record-

⁵ Gedalia Oberlander, *Minbag Avotenu b-Yadenu—Shabbat Kodesh* (Monsey: Merkaz Halacha, 2010), p. 11.

⁶ Israel Ta-Shma, *Early Franco-German Ritual and Custom* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999), p. 126. See there chapter 2 where he gives the historical reasons why that was the case. A summary can be found in Daniel Sperber, *Minbagei Yisrael*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1994), pp. 77–78.

⁷ Avigdor Aptowitz, ed., *Sefer Ra'aviah*, vol. 1 (Berlin: 1912), p. 265, *siman* 199.

⁸ Ephraim Urbach, ed., *Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Hevrat Mektize Nirdamim, 1962), p. 121.

⁹ Yaakov Landau, *Agur* (Piotrków: 1883), p. 37, *siman* 358.

¹⁰ He writes that this is from *Midrash Tanhuma*, but it does not appear in the versions of that midrash that we have today. However, a similar, though not exactly the same, version of this appears in *Midrash Tebillim*, 92:1. See *Sefer Minbagot* in Simcha Assaf, ed., *Sifran shel Rishonim* (Jerusalem: Mekitzei Nirdamim, 1934), p. 178, note 14.

ed in *Sefer Minbagot*, although this particular section of *Sefer Minbagot* is lost today.¹¹ This explanation was popularized by being quoted in *Beit Yosef* (*Orah Hayyim* 263:1).

R. Moshe Isserles, when discussing the custom brought by R. Yaakov Moelin (Maharil, 1365–1427) for a woman who forgot to light Shabbat candles one time to always add an extra candle, notes that adding candles actually does not appear to be a good thing, as the special symbolism of two Shabbat candles is no longer apparent.¹² He does note that authorities permitted adding to a fixed number, and based on that in his glosses to the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Orah Hayyim* 263:1) R. Moshe Isserles writes that one may add candles beyond the set symbolic number.

Once it was established that more than two candles may be lit, other symbolic numbers were also chosen for the Shabbat candles, especially for kabbalistic reasons. The most popular numbers were seven and ten as mentioned in *Shnei Lubot ha-Brit*¹³ and later in *Magen Avraham* (263:2). Other larger numbers are also found.¹⁴ None of these sources mention the custom that the number of candles should be based on the number of family members.

Yom Kippur Candles

Lighting lamps for Yom Kippur depends on local custom, as described in the mishnah on TB *Pesahim* 53b, “In a place where people are accustomed to light a lamp on Yom Kippur evenings, one lights. In a place where people are accustomed not to light a lamp, one does not light. However, one always lights in synagogues and study halls and dark alleyways and next to the sick.” While lighting Shabbat and Yom Tov candles in the home is a legal obligation, lighting Yom Kippur candles is a custom. The Talmud there explains the reason for the custom, “It was taught: Whether they said to light or they said not to light, they both intended to achieve the same objective.” This objective is stated by Rashi there, to distance people from marital relations which are prohibited on Yom Kippur. Those who lit felt that since people do not engage

¹¹ See *Sefer Minbagot* in Simcha Assaf, ed., *Sifran shel Rishonim* (Jerusalem: Mekitzei Nirdamim, 1934), pp. 125–126, 178.

¹² *Darkei Moshe* (*Orah Hayyim* 263:1).

¹³ Isaiah Horowitz, *Shnei Lubot ha-Brit* (Jerusalem: Oz v-Hadar, 1992), p. 131, *Shabbat: Torah Or, siman* 29.

¹⁴ Moshe Hallamish, *Kabbalistic Customs of Shabbat* (Jerusalem: Orchot, 2005), p. 171; Gedalia Oberlander, *Minbag Avotenu b-Yadenu—Shabbat Kodesh* (Monsey: Merkaz Halacha, 2010), pp. 16–18.

in relations when there is light, the lamp will discourage intimacy. Those who did not light felt that if the couple were not able to see each other, they will not be tempted to engage in marital relations, and so it was better not to have lamps lit.

Maharil writes that it is now customary to light Yom Kippur lamps, and they should be lit in the bedroom. If they are lit elsewhere in the home and the bedroom is kept dark it creates the worst situation, defeating the purpose of both those who discouraged relations by lighting and by not lighting, as “he will see her in the house all decorated and will desire her, and when he enters the (bed)room there will be no reminder.”¹⁵ This is noted by R. Moshe Isserles (*Orah Hayyim* 610:1) who rules that one who has a lamp lit in his house must also have light in his bedroom.

Because lighting Yom Kippur lamps is a custom, there was a debate about whether a blessing should be said over these lamps. For example, Rosh ruled to recite the blessing, and Mordechai and Maharil ruled not to.¹⁶ Ultimately *Shulhan Arukh* (*Orah Hayyim* 610:2) sided with the opinion of Rosh writing, “Some say that one recites a blessing over lighting Yom Kippur lamps.”

Other sources refer to lighting lamps on Yom Kippur not connected to the prohibition on marital relations, but rather to insure survival in the upcoming year. *Mabzor Vitry* quotes *Tanbuma* (*Emor* 17) regarding the eternal flame in the Sanctuary, “Do I need your flame? Rather it is to protect your souls, since the soul is compared to a lamp, as it is said: “The soul of a man is a lamp of God” (Proverbs 20:27). *Mabzor Vitry* concludes that this is the reason it is customary to light lamps on Yom Kippur, for protection.¹⁷ Similarly, R. Avraham ben Azriel, in his *Arugat ha-Bosem*,¹⁸ writes that one of the reasons to light lamps on Yom Kippur eve is “because of the day of judgment; a soul is called a lamp, as it is

¹⁵ Shlomo Spitzer, *Sefer Maharil* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1989), p. 321, *Hilchot Erev Yom Kippur* 12.

¹⁶ See *Tur Orah Hayyim* 610:2 and *Beit Yosef* and *Darkei Moshe* there. Shlomo Spitzer, *Sefer Maharil* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1989), p. 320, *Hilchot Erev Yom Kippur* 11.

¹⁷ Simon Hurwitz, ed., *Mabzor Vitry* (Nuremberg: J. Bulka, 1923), *siman* 340, p. 373. On the authorship of *Mabzor Vitry*, see Avraham Grossman, *The Early Sages of France: Their Lives, Leadership and Works* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2001), pp. 395–402 (Hebrew); Aryeh Goldschmidt, ed., *Mabzor Vitry* – vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Otzar haPoskim, 2004), pp. 23–25.

¹⁸ Ephraim Urbach, ed., *Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Chevrat Mekitze Nirdamim, 1939), p. 11.

said, “The soul of a man is a lamp of God” (Proverbs 20:27).¹⁹

In the early 13th century work *Sefer haManbig*, R. Abraham ben Nathan (HaYarchi) brings a version of the same quote from *Tanbuma* as a support for the custom “of all Israel” to light a Yom Kippur lamp, beyond the halachic reason to use that fire for *Havdalah* after Yom Kippur. He adds another support for the practice from TB *Kritot* 5b and *Horiot* 12a, “R. Ami said: A person who seeks to know if he will complete his year or if he will not (whether or not he will remain alive in the coming year), let him light a lamp during the ten days that are between Rosh Ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, in a room in which wind does not blow. If its light continues to burn, he knows that he will complete his year.”²⁰ Although the practice in the Talmud is connected to the Ten Days of Repentance, HaYarchi associates it with Yom Kippur eve specifically.²¹ From all these sources we see that there was an association between a lit lamp for Yom Kippur and protection and survival during the upcoming year.²²

This candle representing a person’s fate was taken very seriously. R. Yehudah, the son of the Rosh, writes that in the year 1264 his grandfather’s Yom Kippur candle blew out early in the night and he died that year on *Hol Ha-Moed Sukkot*.²³ Due to the perceived gravity of a Yom Kippur candle blowing out, R. Moshe Isserles (*Orah Hayyim* 610: 4) had to specifically warn people not to instruct a non-Jew to relight a Yom Kippur candle that was extinguished. Although *Hayei Adam* (144:17), later quoted in *Mishnah Berurah* (610:14), writes that one should not be concerned if their Yom Kippur candle blows out, he does note that people do take it very seriously, and advises that it is best if the candle is placed somewhere where it cannot be seen so as not to make people worried and perhaps be tempted to ask a non-Jew to relight it.

¹⁹ Ephraim Urbach, ed., *Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Chevrat Mekitze Nirdamim, 1962), p. 572.

²⁰ Yitzchak Rafael (ed.), *Sefer ha-Manbig l’Rabbi Avraham Brebbi Natan Ha-Yarchi* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 362–363. Regarding when the book was written, see the introduction there, page 20.

²¹ See Shlomi Raiskin, “Lighting Lamps on Yom Kippur Eve in the Synagogue,” *Magal* 15 (2007), p. 228.

²² On the powerful symbolism of candles in Judaism in general, see Daniel Sperber, *Minbagei Yisrael*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1994), pp. 140–141.

²³ Israel Abrahams, *Hebrew Ethical Wills* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976), p. 186. See also the story brought in Daniel Sperber, *Minbagei Yisrael*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1994), p. 142.

Another reason to light Yom Kippur lamps is an expression of honoring the day. Mordechai ben Hillel (the Mordechai, 1250–1298) in his comments to TB *Yoma* (*siman* 725) writes that in addition to the lamps lit in rooms in order to discourage marital relations, “We light lamps on the table and set the table like on Shabbat” since Yom Kippur is called “Shabbat Shabbaton” (Lev. 23:32). While this is the most well known reference to this custom, as it is quoted in *Beit Yosef* (*Orah Hayyim* 610:2), the same teaching was mentioned earlier by R. Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi of Bonn (Ra’aviah; 1140–1225)²⁴ and by Samuel ben Baruch of Bamberg (c. 1220).²⁵ This is in addition to the widespread and early custom of lighting lamps in the synagogue for Yom Kippur, as noted in the *mishnah*.²⁶

The idea of lighting candles at home would later be found in Maharil as well, though he cautions not to say a blessing over it, following his view not to say a blessing over Yom Kippur candles as it is only a custom, unless it also happens to be Shabbat, in which case it is obligatory.²⁷ This warning was appropriate since these candles were being lit in the same place as the Shabbat candles. Thus, the legal distinction between the two candle lightings could be blurred and they could easily be treated the same, with a blessing.

Yom Kippur Candles for Every Family Member

Rabbi Eliyahu Spira in his *Elijah Rabbah* (*Orah Hayyim* 610:4) writes that lighting lamps for every member of the family on Yom Kippur eve is an ancient custom, as the early Ashkenazic work *Amarcal*²⁸ writes that it is mentioned in the *Targum Sheni* of *Megillat Esther*, a work from the Geonic era,²⁹ as part of Haman’s description of what he considered negative

²⁴ David Devlitzky, ed., *Sefer Ra’aviah*, vol. 2 (Bnei Brak: 2004), Laws of Yom Kippur, *siman* 528:9, p. 126.

²⁵ Shmuel Eliezer Stern, ed., *Meorot ha-Rishonim*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 2001), p. 115. For biographical information about R. Baruch, see there p. 112.

²⁶ For a full discussion of that practice, see Shlomi Raiskin, “Lighting Lamps on Yom Kippur Eve in the Synagogue,” *Magal* 15 (2007), pp. 226–258.

²⁷ Shlomo Spitzer, *Sefer Maharil* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1989), p. 320, *Hilchot Erev Yom Kippur* 11.

²⁸ Regarding the date and authorship of *Amarcal*, see Michael Higger, “Sefer Amarcal al Hilchot Pesachim” in *Sefer ha-Yovel l-Alexander Marx* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950), pp. 144–145.

²⁹ Regarding the dating of *Targum Sheni*, see Bernard Grossfeld, *The Two Targums of Esther* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), p. 20.

Jewish customs. Haman's long list of Jewish practices appears in *Targum Sheni* to Esther 3:8,³⁰ but our current editions of *Targum Sheni* have no reference to lamp lighting on Yom Kippur,³¹ although there may have been a textual variant that included this.³² The quote also does not appear in any editions of *Amarcal* that we have today.³³ Other works on Esther have been claimed as containing a reference to this custom,³⁴ but it does not appear in any early work that we have connected to Esther.³⁵

Still, the custom to light lamps on Yom Kippur for all family members is very old. Mordechai ben Hillel in his comments to TB *Yoma* (*siman* 723) writes that "At this time it is customary to light on Yom Kippur a lamp for each and every one because it is the conclusion of judgment." This was popularized by being included in *Beit Yosef* (620: 4). On this R. Moshe Isserles adds in his *Darkei Moshe* (*Orah Hayyim* 620:4) the reference from *Horiot* 12a about determining survival for the year based on a lamp lit at this time of year. Thus, it was customary to light a candle for every family member on Yom Kippur as a mechanism to insure their survival in the upcoming year.

Many early authorities, such as R. Meir of Rothenburg,³⁶ Mahari Weil³⁷ and Maharil³⁸ talk about lighting candles only for male family

³⁰ See Paulus Cassel, An explanatory commentary on Esther: with four appendices consisting of the second Targum translated from the Aramaic with notes: Mithra: the winged bulls of Persepolis: and Zoroaster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1888), p. 310; Mordechai Leib Katzenelbogen, ed., *Torat Hayyim, Megillat Esther* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2006), p. 247.

³¹ Yissachar Tamar, *Alei Tamar, Yerushalmi: Seder Moed*, vol. 1 (Alon Shvut: Chorev, 1991), p. 244, *Pesahim* 4:4.

³² Yaakov Reifman, "Notes on Targum Megillat Esther and Kohelet," *Zion: Ephemerides Hebraicae* (1840–1841), p. 198; Ephraim Zilber, *Sde Yerushalayim* (Tchernowitz: 1883), p. 13.

³³ Jacob Freiman, "Sefer Amarcal al Hilkhot Yayin Nesech" in *L-David Zvi* (Berlin: 1914), p. 423, note 8.

³⁴ For example, R. Yosef Chaim David Azulay, *Maḥẓik Berakhab, Orah Hayyim*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Yahadut, 1989), 610:3, p. 92, writes that it is in "Haggadah d-Esther."

³⁵ Isaac Sternhell, *Kokhvei Yitzchak*, vol. 1 (Brooklyn: Balshon Printing, 1969), p. 14, *siman* 1.

³⁶ Israel Elfenbein, *Sefer Minhagim d-bei Rabbi Meir ben Baruch m-Rothenburg* (New York: 1938), p. 53.

³⁷ Yonatan Shraga Domb, ed., *Shu"t Rabbenu Ya'akov Weil*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 2000), *siman* 191, p. 250, *siman* 192, p. 260.

³⁸ Shlomo Spitzer, *Sefer Maharil* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1989), p. 322, *Hilkhot Erev Yom Kippur* 13.

members,³⁹ giving various reasons why women are not included in this custom.⁴⁰ This is the approach found in R. Moshe Isserles' comments to the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Orah Hayyim* 610:4), with *Magen Avraham* (610:3) bringing in the explanations offered by Mahari Weil and Maharil and adding that "now only married people light a candle,"⁴¹ a view also found in *Arukh ha-Shulhan* (*Orah Hayyim* 610:6).⁴² Other sources, for example *Chayei Adam* (144:15), mention the custom to only light one candle per household.⁴³

Another version of this practice was to light a candle for every family member in the synagogue. This is the custom recorded by Mordecai Jaffe (c. 1530–1612) in his *Levush Malkhut* (610:3). This version of the custom is found in various communities. For example, it was the custom of R. Chaim Elazar Spira (1868–1937) the Rebbe of Munkacz,⁴⁴ and the communities of Djerba,⁴⁵ Libya⁴⁶ and Yemen.⁴⁷ Other variations of this custom have one wick for every family member, placed in a few candles.⁴⁸

Shabbat Candles for Every Family Member

The earliest references to a custom for a woman to light a Shabbat candle for every member of the family are found in the context of particular

³⁹ This is also the custom described by R. Yehudah, son of the Rosh, Israel Abrahams, *Hebrew Ethical Wills* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976), p. 186.

⁴⁰ For an overview of these reasons, see Shlomi Raitskin, "Lighting Lamps on Yom Kippur Eve in the Synagogue," *Magal* 15 (2007), pp. 255–256.

⁴¹ See Shlomi Raitskin, "Lighting Lamps on Yom Kippur Eve in the Synagogue," *Magal* 15 (2007), p. 238 for an innovative alternate reading of *Magen Avraham*.

⁴² For an overview of the reasons only married men would light, see Shlomi Raitskin, "Lighting Lamps on Yom Kippur Eve in the Synagogue," *Magal* 15 (2007), pp. 256–258.

⁴³ See also Daniel Sperber, *Minbagei Yisrael*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1995), p. 52, note 4.

⁴⁴ Yechiel Michel Gold, *Darkei Hayyim v-Shalom* (Munkacz: 1940), p. 288, *siman* 743.

⁴⁵ See Shlomi Raitskin, "Lighting Lamps on Yom Kippur Eve in the Synagogue," *Magal* 15 (2007), p. 244, note 87.

⁴⁶ Eliyahu Bitton, *Nahalat Avot* (Biria: 2006), p. 135, *siman* 11; Refael Zrok, *Zekhor l-Refael* (Bat Yam: 2009), p. 8.

⁴⁷ Yitzchak Ratzabi, *Shulhan Arukh ha-Mekutzar* (Bnei Brak: 1995), 112:8, p. 194, especially note 21.

⁴⁸ This is described in Yair Chaim Bachrach, *Mekor Hayyim*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1983), *Kitzur Halakhot* 605:1, p. 509; Avraham Zis, *Minbagei Komarna* (Tel Aviv: 1964), pp. 94–95, *siman* 447, 448.

family customs. For example, it is found in the ethical will of R. Efraim Segal (1750–1831), head of the rabbinical court in Kolo, Poland. This was first published in 1891 in a limited edition of one hundred copies. It was later republished in 1908 at the end of *Pithei Shearim*, written by his son-in-law R. Yissakhar of Chenstochov.⁴⁹ R. Segal asks his offspring to “accustom yourselves to light every Shabbat for each child that will be born and that you have.”⁵⁰ He does not offer a reason for this other than a general idea to add candles in order to honor Shabbat.⁵¹ This was meant as a directive for his family, and does not represent a widespread custom.

Similarly, it was reported that in the home of R. Yehoshua Heschel Rabinowitz, the first Rebbe of Monstrich (1869–1924), even in difficult times thirteen Shabbat candles were lit corresponding to the members of the family.⁵² This too was a personal custom.

The earliest reference to this as a general custom is in the second volume of *Likkutei Maharish*, first published in 1899. The author, R. Yisrael Chaim Friedman of Rachov (1852–1922), writes that “the custom of women is that when they give birth to a son or daughter they add a candle,” based on *TB Shabbat* 23b, where R. Huna states that one who is accustomed to kindle lights on Shabbat will be rewarded by having children who are Torah scholars. Thus, when a child is born a Shabbat candle is added so that the parents “will merit to have sons and sons-in-law who are Torah scholars.”⁵³ According to this, the candles do not actually represent the children of the woman lighting, but rather her sons and future (and current?) sons-in-law.

Another early mention of the custom is by R. Yaakov Shalom Sofer (1855–1921) in the fourth volume of his *Torat Hayyim*, first published in 1911. There it is included as one of the various Shabbat candle lighting customs, but with no explicit reason for the practice.⁵⁴

R. Menashe Klein (1923–2011) connected the candle for every child with the custom that a woman who neglected to light Shabbat candles

⁴⁹ Moshe Rosenfeld, ed., *Birkat Efraim* (London: 1979), p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19, *siman* 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31, *siman* 46.

⁵² Yehoshua Heschel Rabinowitz, *Erchei Yehoshua* (Jerusalem: 1995), p. 241, *Perah Shoshanim*, *siman* 55.

⁵³ Yisrael Chaim Friedman, *Likkutei Maharish*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: 1965), p. 26 (13b). This book was first published in 1899.

⁵⁴ Yaakov Shalom Sofer, *Torat Hayyim*, vol. 4 (Paks: 1911), *siman* 263:4, p. 86a.

one week must always add an extra candle as a penalty,⁵⁵ since women would generally not light on the Shabbat right after giving birth when they were recuperating. Although a woman who just gave birth and is not feeling well would not be penalized for not lighting candles, there is a variant text of the Maharil which states that a woman who missed candle lighting even due to illness must add an extra candle every week. R. Klein proposes that this is how the custom originated.⁵⁶ Similarly, R. Avigdor Nebenzahl suggested that women may have consistently refrained from lighting right after giving birth, as doctors would tell them to rest, and the extra candle is actually to make up for missing candle lighting on that Shabbat.⁵⁷

However, that textual variant of Maharil is considered to be inaccurate, and the correct text is talking only about a woman who forgot to light candles, not one who could not light.⁵⁸ R. Moshe Isserles and other authorities quoted the accurate text of Maharil, that the penalty only applies to a woman who forgot to light, not who was sick, so that the standard practice is not to penalize a woman who could not light due to a situation that was out of her control, such as illness or recovering from giving birth.⁵⁹ Furthermore, *Mishnah Berurah* (263:11) writes that the first Shabbat after giving birth the husband should light instead of the wife,⁶⁰ and if her husband lit for her that Shabbat, there is no need to penalize her.⁶¹

R. Klein and R. Moshe Sternbuch have also suggested that the custom may be related to the Rambam's approach that the head of the household lights Chanukah candles on behalf of the entire family, and

⁵⁵ Regarding this practice see *Darkei Moshe* (Orah Hayyim 263:1) *Shulhan Arukh* (Orah Hayyim 263:1), *Mishnah Berurah* 263:7 and *Shaarei Teshuvah* 263:3.

⁵⁶ Menashe Klein, *Meshane Halakhot*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: 2008), p. 69, *siman* 35.

⁵⁷ Elchanan Printz, *Annei Derekh*, vol. 8 (Jerusalem: 2014), p. 173. See also the formulation of this idea in Elchanan Printz, *Annei Derech* vol. 7 (Jerusalem: 2013), p. 128.

⁵⁸ Shlomo Spitzer, *Sefer Maharil* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1989), p. 201, *Hilchot Shabbat* 1, note 15.

⁵⁹ *Darkei Moshe* (Orah Hayyim 263:1) *Shulhan Arukh* (Orah Hayyim 263:1), *Mishnah Berurah* 263:7 and *Shaarei Teshuvah* 263:3.

⁶⁰ See also *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, Orah Hayyim 263:7; Binyamin Zilber, *Az Nidabru*, vol. 11 (Bnei Brak: 1980), pp. 9–10, *siman* 2; Yitzchak Zilberstein and Moshe Rothchild, *Torat ha-Yoledet* (Bnei Brak: Machon Halachah v-Refuah, 2011), pp. 180–181, 38:6 and especially note 7.

⁶¹ Yehoshua Neuwirth, *Shmirat Shabbat k-Hilkhatat*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Moriah, 1988), p. 38, 43:9, end of note 51.

so on Shabbat the woman also lights for every member of the family,⁶² although if this were the case there would seem to be no need to light on behalf of newborn babies and very young children who are not yet obligated in *mitzvot*.⁶³

The simplest explanation for the custom on Shabbat to light a candle for every family member is that it spread from the custom to light candles on Yom Kippur representing each member of the family.

Shabbat and Yom Kippur

R. Avigdor Nebenzahl reported that in his family the same number of candles was lit on Yom Kippur as on Shabbat.⁶⁴ This seems to be the prevalent custom today in most households. We have seen that the idea of lighting candles for every family member on Yom Kippur is already attested to by Ashkenazic Rishonim, with symbolism associated with protection on judgment day and survival for the upcoming year. There was no particular symbolism on Shabbat for a candle lit for each family member, but since it was customary to light at home on Yom Kippur in the same place that the Shabbat candles were lit, and with a blessing, the distinction between Yom Kippur and Shabbat candles became blurred. Yom Kippur candles are now viewed by most people as just another occasion of candle lighting, like any other holiday and Shabbat. This may have contributed to the decline of the ancient custom of lighting Yom Kippur candles in the synagogue. The fact that Yom Kippur candles are only a custom, and that there is a difference of opinion regarding whether a blessing should be recited over them, is something most people are not aware of today.

This situation has led to a conflation of Yom Kippur and Shabbat candles, so that the Yom Kippur custom of a candle for every family member became a Shabbat and Yom Tov practice as well. This was noted by R. Yehudah Blum, in a responsum from 1911, where he writes that “In my humble opinion the custom of women to add candles has nothing to do with honoring Shabbat, it is a new teaching (תורה חדשה) that they developed that when a new baby is born or when a baby is sick they add candles, and I did not see in any place that there is even a hint of a mitzvah here.” He goes on to say that lighting a candle for every

⁶² Menashe Klein, *Meshane Halakhot*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: 2008), p. 69, *siman* 35.

⁶³ See Moshe Sternbuch, *Teshuvot v-Hanbagot* (Jerusalem: 1993), p. 123, *siman* 157:10.

⁶⁴ Moshe Harrari, *Mikraei Kodesh, Yom Kippur* (Jerusalem: 2003), p. 60, note 90.

family member is connected to Yom Kippur only and not Shabbat.⁶⁵ Although some modern sources give *Targum Shevi* as quoted by *Elijah Rabbah* as the source for lighting a candle for every family member on Shabbat,⁶⁶ that source only discussed Yom Kippur, and the actual reason is a conflation of these two candle lighting occasions.

Though nowadays lighting a candle for every family member is very widespread and appears to be the dominant Ashkenazic custom, even as recently as pre-World War II Europe there were many different local customs in different communities. For example, in the Siebengemeinden, the seven Jewish communities in Eisenstadt and the surrounding area, the communities of Eisenstadt, Frauenkirchen and Deutschkreutz (Tzeilem) are reported to have lit a candle for every family member, Lackenbach and Kittsee lit three and Mattersdorf lit ten.⁶⁷

Why is this custom only reported beginning in the later 1800s? It would seem to be related to the fact that advances in candle making technology made candles more affordable at that time, so that people could allow themselves the luxury of burning multiple candles. In 1834 Joseph Morgan, considered one of the “innovators of the Industrial Revolution,” invented a candle molding machine which allowed for the continuous production of candles, up to 1,500 an hour, lowering costs considerably.⁶⁸ Added to this was the discovery of paraffin in the mid-1800s which revolutionized candles and their manufacture.⁶⁹ Paraffin is a waxy substance produced as residue from the petroleum refinement process, which “burned brightly, consistently and relatively cleanly. It left no odor and was less costly to produce than any other candle fuel of the time.”⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Yehudah Zvi Blum, *She'erit Yehudah* (Jerusalem: 1972), p. 14, *siman* 23.

⁶⁶ See Eliyakim Devoraks, *b-Shvilei ha-Minbag*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Imrei David, 1997), p. 45; Elchanan Printz, *Arnei Derekh*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: 2013), p. 128, and *Arnei Derekh*, vol. 8 (Jerusalem: 2014), p. 173.

⁶⁷ Yechezkel Goldhaber, *Sefer Minhagei ha-Kehilot*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: 2007), p. 173, note 12b.

⁶⁸ Kristin Hutchins, “Candle Making” in Wendy Martin, ed., *All Things Dickinson: An Encyclopedia of Emily Dickinson’s World*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2014), p. 147; Paul Wanning, *Brief History of Candle Making* (Mossy Feet Books: 2012), p. 5.

⁶⁹ Robert Routledge, *Discoveries and Inventions of the Nineteenth Century* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1876), pp. 547–549; Mark Anthony Benvenuto, *Industrial Organic Chemistry* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), p. 67.

⁷⁰ Kristin Hutchins, “Candle Making” in Wendy Martin, ed., *All Things Dickinson: An Encyclopedia of Emily Dickinson’s World*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2014), p. 146.

It appears that the custom of lighting a Shabbat candle for every member of the family began as the custom of a few families, viewed as something nice and meaningful and originally borrowed from Yom Kippur. The custom caught on and spread because it resonated with people and was inexpensive to take on. Within a few generations it has become the most dominant candle lighting custom despite the fact that unlike Yom Kippur there is no actual traditional symbolism for lighting a Shabbat candle for every member of the family.

Borrowing from the High Holy Days

Candles for every family member is not the only practice that made its way from Yom Kippur to more general usage. The powerful declaration *Aleinu* is now used as the concluding prayer of the three daily services as well as other occasions, such as the circumcision ceremony and *Kiddush Levanah*. Originally it only served as part of the Rosh Ha-Shanah *Amidah* of *Musaf*, and in its repetition, as well as in the repetition of the Yom Kippur *Musaf Amidah*. It was also included in France and Germany as part of the *ma'amadot* prayers recited by individuals after the regular morning service concluded, and over time became one of the parts of the *ma'amadot* prayers that became included in the service itself.⁷¹ It was included in the 11th-century work *Mahzor Vitry*,⁷² and by R. Yehudah he-Chassid (1150–1217)⁷³ and his student R. Elazar of Worms (c.1176–1238)⁷⁴ as the conclusion of the daily morning service.⁷⁵ The practice to say it at the end of daily services took some time to catch on fully, and only spread to Spanish Jews later.⁷⁶ R. Yoel Sirkes (*Bayit Hadash, Oraḥ Hayyim* 133:1) explains that *Aleinu* was added to the daily service “in order to fix in our hearts before we return home the Oneness of God’s kingship, and to strengthen our faith that He will one day remove de-

⁷¹ Israel Ta-Shma, *The Early Ashkenazic Prayer: Literary and Historical Aspects* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003), pp. 143–144.

⁷² S. Hurwitz, ed., *Mahzor Vitry* (Nuremberg: J. Bulka, 1926), p. 75, *siman* 99. On this reference, see Israel Ta-Shma, *The Early Ashkenazic Prayer: Literary and Historical Aspects* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003), p. 140, n. 4.

⁷³ Ephraim Urbach, ed., *Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Hevrat Mekitze Nirdamim, 1963), p. 98, n. 65.

⁷⁴ Elazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Rokeaḥ haGadol* (Jerusalem: 1966), p. 221, *siman* 324.

⁷⁵ See also Barry Freundel, *Why We Pray What We Pray* (Jerusalem: Urim, 2010), p. 227, n. 94.

⁷⁶ Israel Ta-Shma, *The Early Ashkenazic Prayer: Literary and Historical Aspects* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003), pp. 140–141.

testable idolatry from the earth and false gods will be utterly cut off” and also that despite Jewish people’s daily business dealings with gentiles they should not have doubts about their faith. This prayer had “high religious significance” and so became part of the daily service.⁷⁷

Candle lighting for every family member and daily *Aleinu* both began as High Holiday practices that Ashkenazic Jews shifted to more common use due to the fact that they were considered particularly meaningful. So much so that by now, for many people they are associated more with Shabbat and daily prayers than their holiday of origin. ❧

⁷⁷ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy, A Comprehensive History* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993), p. 71.