

הלכה of the Week

~ שַׁבָּת ~

The מצוה of Lighting the שַׁבָּת Candles

- One lights candles before שַׁבָּת begins. The candlelight creates an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in the home. It is also one of the ways in which we honour שַׁבָּת and demonstrate its importance.
- The main מצוה is to light candles in the room where the שַׁבָּת meal will be served.
- The correct בְּרָכָה is recited after the candles have been lit: "וַאֲנִי לְהַדְלִיק יְרֵךְ שַׁבָּת."
- There must also be sufficient light in the other rooms of the house that will be used.
- The מצוה to light the Shabbat candles is mainly the woman's.
- Every member of the household fulfills his מצוה to light the Shabbat candles when the woman lights her שַׁבָּת candles.
- It is proper and praiseworthy for the husband to place the candles in the candlesticks and prepare them for his wife to light.
- When there is no woman in the house the man lights the שַׁבָּת candles.
- From the moment a woman lights the candles, she must observe the sanctity of Shabbat and refrain from doing things that are forbidden on שַׁבָּת.
- A woman who normally recites מִנְחָה must do so before she lights the candles, because once she has accepted the sanctity of Shabbat she may no longer recite weekday prayers.

History Snippet of the Week

The Fall of the Persian Empire

The period of stability during the reign of King Darius of Persia did not last, for the continent was conquered by a new empire emerging from Greece under Alexander the Great.

Alexander permitted freedom of worship in Eretz Yisrael, and Greek rule was at first kind to the Jewish People. Furthermore, Alexander encouraged Jews to settle throughout his empire, promising equality and opportunity, for wherever Jews settled they created economic wealth.

Jews came and settled throughout his empire, especially in Alexandria, Egypt, which became a great trading city and the largest Jewish settlement outside of Eretz Yisrael. However, some Jews were attracted by the Greek way of life, and Greek culture, or Hellenism, began to make inroads into Jewish life.

With the death of Alexander, his empire was divided between his three generals, and in Judea a new ruler came to power. The new ruler was called Antiochus Epiphanes (the Madman) by his own people. Antiochus was determined to force Greek culture on the Jews, and on pain of death, he forbade many Jewish practices.

He desecrated the Beit HaMikdash and erected a statue of a Greek god there, and throughout the land Jews were forced to bow down to pagan idols. *(But things were about to change...)*