

***Shabbos Candlelighting: Whose customs should a woman follow—husband or mother?***

There is a general rule that once a woman marries, she must follow her husband's customs—both leniencies and stringencies. Marriage signifies a wife's entrance into her husband's domain, and that entry obligates her to follow his customs.

It is possible, though, that there may be an exception to this rule in regard to Shabbos candle-lighting. Many women follow the example set by their mothers in matters of custom, such as the number of candles to light, the appropriate time to light candles on Yom Tov, etc. Often, their husbands do not object even though their own mothers followed a different custom. Is this contrary to the aforementioned rule?

It seems that there is a halachic source for women following their mother's custom. To prove this point, let us examine a well-known custom which is connected to the mitzvah of candle-lighting:

It is customary for many women to recite the blessing of shehecheyanu when they light candles for Yom Tov. Although this custom has no source or basis in Halachah—indeed, it may be halachically objectionable—it has nevertheless become almost universally accepted.

Rav Yaakov Emden reports that he, personally, objects to this custom. Indeed, he rules that if a woman does not have the definite custom of reciting shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time, she should not do so. Nevertheless, he says, his wife—who saw this custom in her parents' home—does so, and he does not object. Since it is not halachically forbidden, he does not feel compelled to reject her minhag which she witnessed in her home.

Surely, Rav Emden was aware that upon marriage, a woman ought to change her customs to follow her husband's. Still, he did not insist that his wife abandon her mother's custom and adopt his own. Perhaps Rav Emden held that customs pertaining to candle-lighting are an exception to the general rule. Since, as mentioned above, our Sages made it the woman's responsibility to light candles, it becomes "her" mitzvah, to be followed according to her customs [4]. Apparently, it is not incumbent upon the husband to insist that his wife alter the customs which she learned from her mother. Although she may do so if she likes, she is not required to do so.

*(Daniel Neustadt; torah.org For final rulings, consult your Rav)*