

JEWISH FESTIVALS: CANDLES: WHEN TO LIGHT

Jewish Festivals: Candles: Earliest Time To Light

You may not light Jewish festival (or Shabbat) candles before plag ha'mincha. The candles must burn until at least dark (tzeit ha'kochavim) and someone must be there to see the light from the candles after dark.

SITUATION Mincha minyan begins at plag ha'mincha. You cannot light candles at home and still get to mincha minyan on time.

WHAT TO DO You may light a candle without a blessing, just so you can have a flame for after the festival has begun. You go to synagogue and after ma'ariv you return home and light the candles from the flame which was burning from before sunset. If you will not have a flame burning from before sunset, you must say mincha on your own (anytime from half an hour after mid-day until sunset). You will light candles after plag ha'mincha but before sunset and not join the mincha minyan. Women should skip mincha and light candles either 18 minutes before sunset or have a flame burning from before sunset and light candles from that flame once the festival has begun (but she may not light from a new flame or a match).

Jewish Festivals: Candle-Lighting Times

In most countries, candle lighting time is 18 minutes before sunset. In Jerusalem, many people have the custom of lighting candles 40 minutes before sunset.

Jewish Festivals: Candles: Lighting Two Days

The custom is to light candles:

- Before sunset on the first day of a Jewish festival, and
- After dark on the Jewish festival's second day (except when the second day coincides with Shabbat!).

Jewish Festivals: Candles: Lighting after Sunset

Men and women may light candles after sunset on Jewish festivals, with these conditions:

- You may light only from an already-burning flame.
- You may not light Jewish festival candles after sunset on Friday nor on the evening before Yom Kippur begins.

Jewish Festivals: Candles: Lighting with Delay until Sunset

As on Shabbat, you may say “I am lighting Jewish festival candles but not starting the Jewish festival until sunset” to delay observing the Jewish festival until sunset, but this in only b'diavad.

NOTE As for Shabbat, women should not routinely start Jewish festivals at sunset since the proper time for women to begin Jewish festivals is at candle lighting (typically 18 minutes before sunset).