

ASK THE RABBI

Question: Rabbi, What time does Shabbat start? I've heard at candle lighting, but then I see my husband can drive to shul after I light candles. When does Shabbat REALLY start?

Answer: Great question. Shabbat starts at the exact moment after sunset and before the stars come out. The problem with this standard is that only God knows when it occurs. To ensure that we aren't violating Shabbat when that moment occurs we start Shabbat at sunset. To be even more careful we light candles 18 minutes before that time. By lighting candles a woman has generally accepted Shabbat. From that point and on she is not allowed to violate Shabbat.

A man has not accepted Shabbat when his wife lights candles (although he can, and in fact the Chafetz Chaim advises he do so a half an hour before sunset - twelve minutes before his wife lights candles). He therefore has an extra 18 minutes before Shabbat starts, and he can drive to Shul.