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New KosherLamp brand shabbos lamp sheds light on a familiar Sabbath dilemma

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It may not prove as popular as the strobe light or as hip as the lava lamp, but a new kosher product may shed some light on an age-old problem. What do you do when you're lying awake in bed on a Friday night waiting for your Shabbat timer to turn off the light?

If you have a KosherLamp™ brand shabbos lamp, your tzuris could be over.

Planning ahead long has been a hallmark for Sabbath observers, who don't use electrical appliances on the Sabbath. That means that before sunset on Friday, observant Jews must decide whether to leave lights, stoves, air conditioners and other appliances on or off for the duration of the Sabbath — or set timers to control them.

But one rabbi-turned-entrepreneur hopes his new invention, a lamp that can be “turned” on and off without violating Sabbath restrictions, will revolutionize Shabbat convenience.

“People are not used to having on-demand lighting on the Sabbath,” says Rabbi Shmuel Veffor, who invented the patent-pending device. “This is a revolutionary product for the Sabbath-observant community.”

The bedside lamp can be turned on and off by twisting a cylinder that functions as a sort of shade, covering the light. The bulb itself actually stays on inside the enclosed lamp, which is made of non-flammable material.

“This is low-tech,” says Veffor, an associate rabbi at the Village Shul/Aish HaTorah Learning Center in Toronto, “but it's creativity and imaginative thinking.”

The first shipment of the lamps, which were manufactured in China, are going out this week in North America. The product's Web site already includes raving product testimonials — as well as a detailed halachic explanation of why the lamp does not violate Jewish law.

Rabbi Shlomo Eliyahu Miller, director of the Toronto yeshiva Kollel Avreichim, explains that though the lamp base is “muktza” — an object that may not be moved on the Sabbath — the

non-electric cylinder, which functions as the lamp's shade, is considered a separate object and may be twisted on the Sabbath to eliminate light.

A rabbinic letter of approval is included with The KosherLamp™ brand shabbos lamp, which retails at \$29.95. The package also comes with a refrigerator magnet checklist for pre-Shabbat activities such as shining shoes, ripping toilet paper and setting lights.

“It's no different than closing the closet door, it's just better!” One KosherLamp™ brand shabbos lamp fan, Rabbi Yitzchak Kalsmith, writes on the company's Web site.

“Incredible! My husband will be so thrilled he can sleep in the dark again,” writes another.

Veffer says his wife was the inspiration for his lamp idea.

“My wife has been asking for something like this for years,” he says. “She wanted to be able to read in bed on a Friday night. So I decided one Sunday afternoon to go with my son to the hardware store to see if we could come up with something.”

The first model took only a few hours to put together, Veffer says. The lamp went through several more incarnations before the final prototype was ready to market.

The lamp is more utilitarian than slick, with a dark bronze, six-sided frame and a distinctly old-world look. Veffer says he sought to create something that would “match with the more traditional bedroom decor that our customers would have.”

Based on the interest the lamp has generated, Veffer, who has worked in computer hardware, says he hopes to roll out more Sabbath-friendly products in the coming years.

“I was trained as a problem-solver,” he said. “That's why I became a rabbi.”