



Illumination and Inspiration

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E7)

Many Jewish practices have suffered from the cruel effects of widespread Jewish ignorance. But the practice of Jewish women lighting Shabbos candles has persisted. What is the secret behind its durability? Why can no Jewish home be without those precious candles?

Shabbos candles and Aishes Chayil

In the Aishes Chayil, the closing chapter of Mishlei, which follows the order of the Alef-Bais and extols the merits of the Jewish woman, Shlomo HaMelech does not make a direct reference to Shabbos candles. Instead, there is a somewhat cryptic reference to candles in the Posuk beginning with the letter Tes. We read:

טְעָמָה כִּי טוֹב סְחָרָה לֹא יִכָּבֵה בַלַּיְלָה נֵרָה.

She senses that her enterprise is good, her candle is not extinguished at night.

Her candle is not extinguished

A simple reading of this half of the Posuk is a reference to a woman's remarkable diligence. She works tirelessly at all hours to ensure that everything that can be done is taken care of. We would not be wrong to understand the Posuk this way. But perhaps there is more.

At night

Another implication to the expression that her 'candle is not extinguished at night' is that 'night' does not only refer to nighttime. It can also refer to dark times, times when people are dispirited and disheartened. It is at those times when we get to see the strength of the Jewish woman's

candle. The Jewish men in Mitzrayim had lost the will to be with their wives and bring forth another generation. All looked bleak and dark. There was nothing to look forward to; redemption seemed unimaginable. It was precisely in that darkness that the Jewish women saw a glimmer of light. They carried the torch of faith in the promised redemption. They were able to relate to the coming dawn even while all around there was only darkness.

The gift of positivity

This quality, exemplified in Mitzrayim, has been a hallmark of righteous Jewish women throughout the ages and is alive and well today, as well. The ability to see past the darkness requires a special kind of candle, and Shlomo HaMelech is attesting to the Aishes Chayil possessing a durable, positive,

forward-looking candle. The candle of *Bitachon*.

A light of Kedusha

Rabbi Gershon Ribner of Lakewood reported learning from Rav Yaakov Hillel that the role of the Jewish woman is to bring a spirit of Kedusha into the home. A home is a fortress bracing against the winds of impurity that blow all around it.

The ability to see past darkness requires a special kind of candle which the Jewish woman possesses.



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The candles are a symbol of that Kedusha. Apart from the familiar association of Kedusha with candles (we light a candle which impacts and connects with that which is purely spiritual, such as a Neshama), the *location* of the candles speak to the spiritual function that they serve. The candles are set in the focal point of the home, giving light to the table. There the family gathers to bask in the light and sanctity that she has kindled there.

By contrast, pointed out Rabbi Ribner, a man lights Chanukah candles outside. He ventures

forth into the world to sanctify Hashem's Great Name in public. All the while, though, he is drawing from the Kedusha that is found in his home, where his wife has lit Shabbos candles.

The Shabbos candles in a Jewish home are durable because they hold the secret to Jewish endurance. They flicker with the light of *Bitachon* – a certainty that the light which Hashem has promised will dispel any and all darkness – and the light of *Kedusha* – that our lives are only meaningful to the extent that they are infused with sanctity.

Takeaway: I will try to take note of the Shabbos candles to 'see' the spirit of positivity and sanctity.