



The Privileged Role of a Woman

By Rav Pinches Friedman shlita (Shiur E10)

Why are Shabbos candles, and the spirit of Shabbos generally, attributed to women to a greater degree than to men?

All are obligated

The Halacha¹ teaches us that both men and women are obligated to light Shabbos candles. On that level there is no difference. Yet, the tradition is that women perform this Mitzvah since the home is their abode.

The Mishna Berura cites the Zohar that adds another reason why this Mitzvah devolves on women. Lighting the Shabbos candles, says the holy Zohar, is a form of 'great correction' for the sin of the first woman, חווה, who gave עץ הדעת to eat from the אדם הראשון. That act brought death into the world. As the Midrash puts it, "she extinguished the light of the world and now she has the opportunity to bring light to the world."

Therefore, it is known as a woman's Mitzvah to bring the light of the Shabbos candles into the home.

Preventing friction

The Gemara associates the Shabbos candles with bringing peace into the home. Darkness causes friction as people are uncertain. Nerves get frayed when people do not know where they are going. Today we have electric lights which, it

would seem, make the role of the Shabbos candles unnecessary. But that is hardly the case. Anyone who has looked at the Shabbos candles will report that they are soothing to the soul. They represent the light of the תורה היים – the Torah of life and Kedusha.

Eishes Chayil

There is a widespread custom to say, chant or sing the last chapter of Mishlei which begins with Eishes Chayil. [Rashi points out that Eishes Chayil is an allusion to the Torah itself hence it being ordered in the Alef-Bais covering all 22 letters of the Torah. The fact that Shlomo Hamelech chose to compare the Torah itself to the Eishes Chayil speaks volumes.] We sing it before Kiddush. It is tied to Sholom Aleichem.

The connection is likely because Sholom Aleichem refers to the account in the Gemara² where we learn that two angels accompany a man into his home on Friday night. One focuses on the negative and one seeks out the positive. If the home is in peace and in order, with candles lit, table prepared and beds made, the positive angel can pray/bleed the home that the same should repeat next week and the negative angel

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¹ שו"ע או"ח סימן רס"ג סעיף ג'

² שבת קיט:



KI HEIM CHAYEINU

כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

is forced to say Omein. The opposite story plays out if the home is unprepared for Shabbos.

Given that the traditional role of the woman is in the home, it is the woman who facilitates the blessing that is given by the angels. It is therefore appropriate to pause after Sholom Aleichem to acknowledge and thank the women who bring Shabbos and blessing into the home.

Speak to the women first

When HKBH called out to Moshe Rabeinu at Matan Torah He instructed Moshe:

כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יִצְחָק וְתִגִּיד לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

This is what you should relate to the 'Bais Yaakov' and tell the 'Bnei Yisrael.'

Rashi points out that the 'Bais Yaakov' refers to the women. Why is it important that Moshe speak to the women first?

Takeaway: I will pause to acknowledge and celebrate the facilitator role of the Jewish woman in the destiny of Klal Yisroel.

This is likely an acknowledgement that the influence and encouraging role of the Jewish woman can spell the difference between success and failure in the Chinuch endeavor of the home. Everyone likes company and certainly a woman is entitled to her husband's company. Her willingness to bless his going out to a Shiur and to Daven is often the factor that tips the scales in favor of the lofty goal.

The same is true regarding her children. As we read in Eishes Chayil:

וְתָקַם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וְתָתַן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחָק לְנַצְרָתֶיהָ

She rises when it is still dark and gives food to her household and instruction to her daughters.

The tireless role of the facilitator is often unsung as the accolades go to the public performer. The Torah's call for gratitude gives us the pause needed to acknowledge that without the facilitator, the Torah would not be learned and the mission of Klal Yisroel would be neglected.