



Light of Peace

By Rebbetzin Shira Smiles (Shiur E6)

What does the expression Shalom Bayis mean and what role do Shabbos candles play?

Three Mitzvos

We are taught that women have a special relationship with the three Mitzvos of נדה, חלה, and והדלקת הנר. These three Mitzvos 'belong' to women. In what sense is candle-lighting a woman's Mitzvah given that both men and women are equally obligated to light Shabbos candles?

Correction for the sin of Chava

The Midrash provides us with an answer that lends itself to interpretation. The Midrash says, "she extinguished the candle of the world as it is written נר ה' נשמת אדם – the candle of Hashem is the soul of a person – let her keep the Mitzvah of Shabbos candles.

On a simple level it would imply that the original mother turned out the lights (by bringing a death sentence to אדם הראשון thus extinguishing his divine Neshama-light) and so her daughters should take responsibility for kindling light on Shabbos.

But is that all there is to it? Why not put the woman in charge of the lights all week long?

Candles and Shalom Bayis

The Gemara¹ connects Shabbos candles with Shalom Bayis. On an obvious level, friction can result when people cannot see where they are going, what they are doing or what they are passing to another at the table.

On another level, though, we learn (from Rav C.Y. Goldvicht זצ"ל in his *אסופות מערכות*) that

Shalom Bayis is an internal peace between one's נשמה and one's גוף. The struggle between the soul and the body did not start with Creation; it began with the חטא. In man's original and ideal state, the Neshama provides the fuel, infuses the body with its vitality and thus enables the person to live forever. The barrier that went up between the body and soul is what blocks the Shalom Bayis in each of

us. If so, what does lighting Shabbos candles have to do with restoring the proper relationship between the body and the soul?

The role of the 'extra' Neshama

The נשמה יתירה – the extra Neshama with which we are imbued on Shabbos affords a taste of the world to come where the body-soul relationship will be restored. When a woman lights the candles, she invokes the sanctity of Shabbos,

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¹ שבת כג: א



KI HEIM
CHAYEINU
כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

and with it the spiritual capacity to put the Neshama in charge of the body. With the Neshama in its proper place a person can eat and drink and rest and can manage it all for the sake of the holiness of the day.

As Rashi points out, the נשמה יתירה allows us to eat and drink and not be revolted by the indulgence. Typically, when a person indulges, his Neshama is revolted by the petty needs of the body. But on Shabbos, when those needs are used only to serve and glorify the holy Shabbos, לכבוד שבת קודש, the Neshama derives pleasure from the eating and the drinking. That is authentic Shalom Bayis – the restored relationship between the soul and the body – that the woman invokes when she lights Shabbos candles.

The Shechina – the divine presence

Another aspect of the Shalom Bayis that the woman introduces when she lights the candles has to do with the שכונה. Rav M. M. Bernstein in his תכלית אור relates to this aspect of the candle lighting.

Chazal tell us that when husband and wife are in harmony (Shalom Bayis) the Shechina is present in the home. In that sense, both husband and wife are partners in this endeavor. Indeed, that is why it is the custom that the husband prepares the candles, and the wife lights them.

But there is an aspect of the Shechina, says the Zohar, that the woman is responsible for. That is the direct result of her devotion and dedication

to creating a place where the Shechina is 'at home.' When חוה sinned, she pushed the Shechina higher up, away from the daily goings-on down here. By lighting the Shabbos candles, the woman brings the Shechina back down into her home. She brings the beautiful presence of the Shechina into our lives, thereby providing a correction for the sin of חוה.

Still another aspect of Shalom Bayis

Rav Z. Leff, in *Outlooks and Insights* suggests that Shalom Bayis is not limited to harmony between husband and wife. Shalom Bayis is when all the members of the household feel that they are an integral part of the team that does the will of Hashem.

It is customary to add a candle when a new child comes into the home. The child grows to see that they are the cause for extra light, for additional כבוד שמים. As a family, together, we can advance the cause of Heaven. In that sense Shalom Bayis is not just about harmony; it is about unity.

Unique contributions

Each of us is meant to notice and highlight the unique contribution of each member of our household. Each one is an integral part of our household, of an extended family, and ultimately has an indispensable role to play in the mission of Klal Yisroel. Each of us, given our unique skillset is poised to contribute to the כבוד שמים which is the mission of Klal Yisroel. And by doing so, each one brings נהנה רוח to the Ribono Shel Olam.

Takeaway: I will focus on the transcendent nature of Shabbos and tap into the spirit of Shalom Bayis.