



## Lighting the Future

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E32)

*The simple wave of the arms at candle lighting – there are no insignificant מנהגים*

### *Candles in the Home have a history*

The Posuk<sup>1</sup> relates that יצחק אבינו brought רבקה into his mother's tent. The Midrash,<sup>2</sup> cited in part by Rashi<sup>3</sup> teaches that there were traits of אמנו which Yitzchok saw in Rivka. Among those is that a candle stayed lit from one Friday night to the next. With such a history, it is not an exaggeration to say that candles on Friday night are a symbol of a Jewish home.

### *Oneg Shabbos and Kavod Shabbos*

Our מנהגים are never 'just' מנהגים. Authentic מנהגים are packed with meaning. Let us begin with the basics.

Two aspects of candle lighting highlight our relationship with Shabbos. שבת כבוד refers to that which we do to give Shabbos distinction. As it refers to Shabbos candles, we light the candles to give the Shabbos table a regal touch. No matter how much electricity is available, there is nothing that turns a meal into a regal dinner more surely than candles.

שבת עונג refers to that which we do to bring joy and pleasantness into our homes and lives on Shabbos. As it refers to Shabbos candles, we light the candles to push away the darkness that brings a depressive air into the home. On a practical level, the light also protects those who

would otherwise trip over this and that from the frustration of groping about in the dark.

עונג שבת could be accomplished with any light, lit anywhere. But כבוד שבת pushes us towards the table, or at least nearby where lighting on the table is not practical. One should be able to see and benefit from the candles for both reasons.

### *The wave*

As universal as is the candle lighting is the custom of Jewish women to wave their hands in a circular motion towards themselves. They then close their eyes (often covering them with their hands), recite the Brocha and open their eyes.

*Her truth  
beat out his  
progressive  
world. She  
won.*

### *First the הלכה*

While the הלכה does not explain the hand waving, it does explain why women close their eyes and only open them upon reciting the ברכה. That is owing to a principle of הלכה that ברכות are to be recited עובר לעשייתן – immediately prior to performing a Mitzvah. Per that rule, a woman should recite שבת נר של שבת and then light the candles. The problem with that arrangement is that the Brocha of שבת נר של שבת constitutes a woman's קבלת שבת. And now that it is Shabbos, she cannot light the candles. The problem is circumvented by covering her eyes, reciting the

<sup>1</sup> בראשית כד: טז

<sup>2</sup> מדרש רבה בראשית ט: ט"ז

<sup>3</sup> שם



# KI HEIM CHAYEINU

כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy  
of Shabbos

Brocha and then opening her eyes to the candles as if they are now being lit.

### *And the wave*

Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky שליט"א quoted his mother who explained that she waved her hands in an inclusive way to indicate her desire to include *all* the lights in the house (not just those she is in front of and lighting) in the Mitzvos of עונג שבת and כבוד.

Others have explained that with this hand motion they are gathering and drawing in the קדושת שבת. Whatever the reason, this motion is highly evocative and elicits deep emotion. It, and the subsequent covering of the eyes, are often associated with prayers from the depth of the woman's heart, even with tears for their fulfilment. Those who are present for that moment are invariably touched by the sanctity of that moment. The following story gives expression to the specialness of that moment.

### *From Mogalev to Queens*

The last time that Tzippy and her brother, Shraga Feivele spent Shabbos with their parents was when Tzippy was eight and her brother was 14. The Nazis ישר" came to their town in Romania and took the family to the Ukraine, the town of Mogalev. There they killed her father (who was then wearing ותפילין) and treated them horribly, as was their evil custom. Their mother cried out her grief and died two weeks later.

The Hand of Providence caused them to survive in Mogalev, against any דרך הטבע. By the time the dust settled, though, there were 900

orphaned children in Mogalev. It is fitting to remember the kind deeds of Mr. Ira Hirshman, the representative of the US War Refugee Board. He was based in Istanbul, Turkey and did not sit idly by upon hearing of the plight of these orphans. He came to Mogalev and oversaw the transport of the children to Israel. Many of the orphans were stateless and without documents but Mr. Hirshman did not stop until they were on board a boat to Turkey, then on to Lebanon and then to the port of Haifa. Ira Hirshman merited to be Hashem's agent to save Tzippy, Shraga Feivele and hundreds of other orphans.

### *The welcome to Israel*

A tragic chapter in Jewish history is being written by those who abandon Torah, Mitzvos and מנהגים and denounce the uniqueness of Klal Yisrael. They want to modernize and become like all other nations. Such people do whatever they can to lure from children away from their holy heritage. The opportunity to grab these orphans away was tempting and so they grabbed it. While the older orphans, like Shraga Feivele, were permitted to choose where they wished to be absorbed, the younger orphans were sent off to Kibbutzim where any trace of their past was eradicated. Tzippy was too young to choose for herself.

A nice man, representing one such Kibbutz, approached little Tzippy with gifts of a doll and a watch. What treasures for a little girl to clutch a doll after so long and could proudly look down on the watch that the man put on her wrist! He gently told her to come with him and she would be well looked after with other children, new friends. Somehow, though, from a voice that



# KI HEIM CHAYEINU

כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy  
of Shabbos

spoke from the depths of her being, Tzippy sensed that something was not right. She stopped the man and asked him if where he was taking her was a place where they wave their hands and cover their eyes in front of the candles.

The man did not need any interpreter to understand her question and the motion that she made with her hands was etched in his memory from his childhood as it was etched in hers. He feebly tried to convince her that the future is different from those parts of her past, but Tzippy could not be fooled. She took off her new watch and handed the watch and the doll back to the man. She would not go with him. Not to a place where the women did not wave and cover their eyes at candle lighting.

The man could not hold back his tears. He knew well that her truth beat out his progressive world. She won. He would not send her off to the spiritual gallows of the secular Kibbutz. He was so moved that he took Tzippy over to the dispatcher and gave instructions that she be put on the bus to a *מוסד עליה* Kibbutz called *שומר שבת*. She did not have a doll or a watch, but she had her mother's Shabbos candles and the wave associated with it.

***Takeaway: I will try to upgrade my reverence for our holy Minhagim, and remember the wave.***

## ***Reunited***

As *השגחה* would have it, Shraga Feivele had chosen to go to *מוסד עליה* as well. They were reunited on the bus from the port to the Kibbutz and remained together on the Kibbutz until they both moved to the US. Little Tzippy became Mrs. Tzipporah Adler. She took an active role in the Torah community of Queens. She served for years on the *חברא קדישא* of Queens together with my wife and it was in the context of their doing *Chesed* together that Mrs. Adler shared her story with my wife.

## ***Choosing Eternity over Modernity***

Perhaps each woman is drawing something unique to herself when she waves her hands inward at candle lighting. For one, she is including all the lights in her home. For another, she is drawing in all future generations, her descendants, to gather with her under the canopy of the Shabbos lights. Mrs. Adler's late mother drew in her daughter and, hence, by extension, her descendants remained loyal to the Torah all their lives.

*No Minhag is 'just' a Minhag.*