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Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

A Friday Night Tradition

By HaRav Eli Mansour (Shiur E15)

Do you kiss your mother's hand on Friday night? If so, you are part of a distinguished tradition. If not, there is a tradition waiting for you.

A Friday night מנהג

In the Sephardic community, when we come out of the *Beit Knesset*, we head over to our mother's home. It could be that we will be eating the *Seudah* there, but even if not, that is our first stop. The mission is not simply to wish her *Shalom*. The mission is to kiss her hand and to receive her *B'racha*.

Custom based in קבלה

This tradition is not new. The *Magen Avraham* mentions it¹ in the name of the *Seder* of R' Chaim Vital, who cites this practice in the name of the holy *Arizal*. And while the fine tuning of their explanation may be reserved for experts in *Qבלה*, we can paint the broad brushstrokes to try to understand what the message behind the custom is.

Elevating ourselves on שבת

The story of kissing one's mother's hand begins with the spiritual elevation which we are meant to experience over the course of *Shabbos*. We begin on the weekday ground-level which, *Al Pi Qבלה*, is called *Ne'iy*, an abbreviation of the lower *Sefirot* of *Isod*, *Hod*, *Netsah*. We move up on Friday night to *Chochma*, *Gבורה*, *Tפארת*, *חג"ת*. These

Sefirot are considered on the 'right' side and they are called *Amma*.

We thereby give tangible expression to the spiritual opportunity presented by Friday night by kissing the right hand of our *Amma*.

Kisses make the ברכה flow

The potency of a ברכה is a function of the full heart with which it is given.

When *Yehoshua* wanted to bestow his blessings on his son (whom he later learned was *Yeqob Avinu*) he asked his son to draw near and kiss him. *B'racha* flows through the medium of a kiss. That is why our request for *B'rachot* is preceded with a kiss.

The kiss and ברכה of the ר"י מיגאש

The *Seder* *Chid"א* relates, in his *Hagdolim*, an anecdote about the *Ramb"ם*. When the *Ramb"ם* was six years old he was brought to visit the famous *R"י מיגאש* (R' Yehosef ben Meir HaLevi 1077-1141, the prized Talmid of the *R"י* and the Rebbe of, among others, R' Maimon, the father of the *Ramb"ם*). The elderly Rav and the youngster shared a kiss, and the young Moshe received a *B'racha*. The *Ramb"ם* later ascribed his success in Torah to that *B'racha*. Throughout his life he would refer to the *R"י מיגאש* as *R"י ומורי* although he

¹ מגן אברהם או"ח סימן רע"ד



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never learned directly from him. He had received his ברכה.

The ברכה of a parent

There is special weight given to the ברכה of a parent. That is because the ברכה of a parent is given with a full heart, without reservation.

Takeaway: I will try to receive the ברכה of those who care about me and give ברכות to those I care about.

The potency of a ברכה is a function of the full heart with which it is given.

And so, as we wish one another a שבת שלום it is fitting to add, שבת שלום ומבורך!