



Based on a Fascinating Teaching in the Zohar HaKadosh

## Women Light Candles for Shabbas to Restore the “Candle of the World”—the Holy Shechinah that Departed as a Result of the Cheit Eitz HaDa’as

On the auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh of parshas Yisro, we will read the Aseres HaDibros which HKB”H spoke to Yisrael at the momentous event of Matan Torah at Har Sinai. It is worth noting that prior to delivering the Dibrot, HKB”H mentions the women before the men. Here is the passuk (Shemos 19, 3): **”כה תאמר לבית יעקב ותגיד לבני ישראל:—so shall you say to the house of Yaakov and tell the sons of Yisrael.** Rashi comments in the name of the Mechilta: **”To the house of Yaakov”—these are the women;** regarding them, the Torah says: **”say to them,” using gentle language. “And tell the sons of Yisrael”—matters of punishments and specific details should be explained explicitly to the men, matters as harsh as sinews (bitter herbs).**

At first glance, this might seem surprising, since one might think that Matan Torah was directed primarily to the men, especially since they are obligated to fulfill all the mitzvos of the Torah—even one’s with time restrictions and constraints. Additionally, the Gemara (Kiddushin 29b) teaches that only men are commanded to observe the mitzvah of Torah-study, while the women are free of this obligation and commitment. Yet, as a preface to Matan Torah, HKB”H chose to mention the women first!

Our blessed sages address this issue in the Midrash (S.R. 28, 2): **Why are the women addressed first? Because they perform mitzvos with alacrity. Alternatively, so that they will guide their children to Torah . . . HKB”H said, “When I created the world, I commanded only Adam HaRishon (not to eat from Eitz HaDa’as), and afterwards Chava was commanded; and she transgressed and corrupted the world. Now, if I do not summon the women first, they will nullify the Torah.” That is why it says: “So you shall say to the house of Yaakov.”**

Clearly, Chazal are emphasizing the important role women play in the management of a household—for better or for worse. On the one hand, we see the consequences resulting from the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” where HKB”H only addressed Adam HaRishon and not Chava. She failed to appreciate the gravity of the transgression and caused permanent damage to all of creation. On the other hand, her vital influence on her household is undeniable. In fact, because of it, women are guaranteed a greater reward in Olam HaBa than men. Here is the pertinent passage in the Gemara (Berachos 17a):

**”גדולה הבטחה שהבטיחן הקדוש ברוך הוא לנשים יותר מן האנשים, שנאמר: נשים שאננות קמנה שמענה קולי בנות בטחות האזנה אמרתי.” אמר ליה רב לרבי חייא: נשים במאי זכיין? באקרויין בגייהו לבי כנישתא, ובאתנויין גברייהו בי רבנן, ונטרין לגברייהו עד דאתו מבי רבנן.”**

**Greater is the promise that HKB”H made to women than to men, as it is stated (Yeshayah 32, 9): “Rise up, women at ease and hear My voice; confident daughters, listen to what I say.”** This promise of ease and confidence of attaining Olam HaBa is not given to men. **Rav said to Rabbi Chiya: By what virtue do women merit this reward? For bringing their children to the Beis Kenesses to learn Scripture, and for sending their husbands to study (Talmud) in the study hall, and for waiting for their husbands until they return from the study hall.**

**It Is a Wonderful Segulah for a Woman to Pray for Children Who Are Torah Scholars when She Lights Shabbas Candles**

Concerning the amazing power HKB”H granted righteous women—the positive influence she is able to exert on her

household—it behooves us to present what the Magen Avraham (263, 11) writes in the name of the Mateh Moshe and in the name of Rabeinu Bachaye (Yisro): **It is worthwhile for a woman to pray at the time she is lighting that HKB”H grant her sons illuminated with Torah.** Here are the inspirational words of Rabeinu Bachaye:

**The reason Hashem told Moshe to address the women first was to teach them ethics and general rules of conduct. Additionally, in order to make the women receptive for further Torah legislation, Moses gave them an overview of the headings and subject matters that the Torah contains. They needed special preparation for all this as their minds function differently from the minds of men, seeing that their daily tasks did not allow them so much free time to think about their spiritual needs as did the minds of the men. Moreover, a good woman is the main reason Torah has a future. The mother encourages her young son to go to the Beis Midrash; seeing she is at home throughout the day, she is the one who responds to the various needs, both real and imagined, of her children. She protects them against all kinds of dangers. She does all this so that he will be drawn to the path of Torah from his youth and he will not abandon it when he becomes old (Mishlei 22,6).**

**This is why it is incumbent upon a woman to pray to Hashem, blessed is He, at the time she lights the Shabbas candles, a mitzvah which is primarily hers, that He may grant her children who will learn Torah and be guided by its precepts. For, any tefilah is more likely to be heard when it is offered at a time when one is performing a mitzvah. And in the merit of lighting the Shabbas candles, which provides physical light, she will merit having children who become learned in Torah, which is referred to as light, as it states (Mishlei 6, 23): “For a mitzvah is a lamp, and the Torah is light.” We find a similar exposition from Chazal (Shabbas 23b): One who lights candles (Rashi: Shabbas and Chanukah) religiously (consistently) will have sons who are talmidei-chachamim.**

With immense pleasure, we will elaborate further on the mitzvah of lighting candles in honor of Shabbas Kodesh—a mitzvah, which was given to women, but which men are also obligated to perform. A source for this minhag is found in the Mishnah (ibid. 34a). We are taught that one of the three things

a man must say in his home on Erev Shabbas as it gets dark is **“הדליקו את הנר” —light the candle.** The Gemara explains that this is derived from the passuk (Iyov 5, 24): **“וידעת כי שלום” —you will know that your tent is at peace.** Rabeinu Chananel comments that there cannot be “shalom” (peace) without light.

Furthermore, we have learned in the Gemara (ibid. 25b): **“הדלקת נר בשבת חובה” —lighting candles on Shabbas is obligatory.** Further on, the Gemara focuses on the passuk (Eichah 3, 17): **“מאי ותזנה משלום נפשי, אמר רבי אבהו זו: “הדלקת נר בשבת.”** **“My soul despaired of having peace; I have forgotten goodness.”** To what loss does “my soul despaired of having peace” refer? Rabbi Abahu said: This refers to lighting a candle on Shabbas. Rashi explains: That he did not have with what to kindle, and without (a Shabbas) light, there is no peace; for while walking around in darkness, one is likely to stumble. According to the version of the Bach, it is unsettling to eat in darkness.

## The Obligation Applies More to Women than to Men because the Woman Extinguished the “Lamp of the World”

In reality, the obligation to light candles in honor of Shabbas applies also to the man. Here is the ruling in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 263, 2): **Both men and women are obligated to have a lit candle in their homes on Shabbas.** Notwithstanding, the prevalent Jewish minhag is for the woman to light the candles. The rationale for this minhag is explained there (ibid. 3): **The women are more obligated, since they are present in the home and take care of the needs of the home.** In fact, the Magen Avraham (ibid. 6) writes in the name of the Bach: **And even if the husband wishes to light himself, the wife takes precedence.**

The Magen Avraham (ibid. 7) goes on to add another reason for the women taking precedence: **Because the woman extinguished “the lamp/candle of the world.”** The MACHASZIS HaSHEKEL explains his meaning: **By causing Adam HaRishon to sin, she darkened his neshamah, which is referred to as a candle, as it is written (Mishlei 20, 27): “A man’s neshamah is the candle of Hashem.” And his neshamah was the lamp (light, candle) of the world, since all the neshamos were contained in the makeup (measure, composition) of Adam HaRishon.**

The source for this rationale is found in the Tur (ibid.): **The women are more obligated in it** (the mitzvah of “hadlakat haner”), **as explained in the Midrash, because she extinguished the “lamp of the world”—i.e., she caused the death of Adam HaRishon.** He is referring to the following Midrash related to the mitzvah of lighting candles on Shabbas (Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishis 32): **Why was it given to the woman? Because she extinguished the “lamp of the world” ... Therefore, it is incumbent upon her to observe the mitzvah of the candles.**

Additionally, the Magen Avraham writes the following in the name of the Arizal (Sha’ar HaKavanos): **Nevertheless, the husband should prepare the candles.** Explained simply, since the obligation to light candles on Shabbas is also incumbent on the man, he should at least participate in the mitzvah by preparing the candles. Furthermore, his participation reminds him that he was also culpable in the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” for following his wife’s lead and counsel.

## The Rationale for Lighting Two Candles in Honor of Shabbas

Halachically, one can fulfill the obligation of “hadlakat ner Shabbas” with a single candle. Nevertheless, the prevalent minhag is to light a minimum of two candles. This is what the michaber writes in the Shulchan Aruch (ibid. 1): **Take care to prepare a nice candle (lamp); some purposely set up two wicks—one corresponding to “zachor” and one corresponding to “shamor.”** In other words, one candle commemorates the formula of the mitzvah regarding Shabbas-observance that appears in the first set of dibros (Shemos 20, 8): “זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ”, while the second candle commemorates the formula of the mitzvah that appears in the second set of dibros (Devarim 5, 12): “שָׁמֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ”. The former employs the term “zachor” (remember), whereas the latter employs the term “shamor” (guard); these are the two ways in which we sanctify the day of Shabbas.

The source for this practice is the Tur, who writes (ibid.): **One should heed to make a nice lamp (candle). For, Rav Huna said: One who regularly makes an effort to make a nice lamp for Shabbas will have sons who are talmidei-chachamim. There are some who purposely (by design) make two wicks—one corresponding to “zachor” and one corresponding to “shamor.”**

This explains very nicely what the Gemara (ibid.) relates about Rav Huna. He would regularly pass by the doorway of Rabbi Avin the carpenter; he saw that Rabbi Avin had the custom of lighting many candles in honor of Shabbas. Rav Huna proclaimed, **“Two great men will emerge from here”—i.e., two great Torah scholars are destined to come out of this house.** And, in fact, **Rav Idi bar Avin and Rav Chiya bar Avin came from them.** We can posit that he was rewarded in this manner, since he could have legitimately sufficed with a single Shabbas candle; yet he scrupulously lit two candles every Shabbas—one for “zachor” and one for “shamor”; he was rewarded, therefore, to have two sons who were renowned Torah scholars.

In keeping with this discussion, we can propose a rationale for the practice of many Jewish women to add a candle for every child in the family. They want every son to become a great Torah scholar and every daughter to be privileged to marry a great Torah scholar.

## Lighting Candles for Shabbas to Draw the Presence of the Shechinah

It is now my privilege and honor to present a novel explanation to our royal audience gleaned from a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh. It asserts that lighting the candle represents the light of the holy Shechinah that HKB”H rests on a Jewish home in the merit of the women of the house. Here is a translation of the pertinent passage (Bereishis 50a): **Come and see. When a man is in his home, the mainstay of the home is his wife. For, in her merit, the Shechinah does not leave the home, as we have learned in relation to that which is written (Bereishis 24, 67): “And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother,” where a candle burned. For what reason? Because the Shechinah came to the home.**

This teaching is based on an elucidation in the Midrash (B.R. 60, 16): **For the entire time that Sarah was alive, a lamp burned from the nights of Shabbas to the nights of Shabbas, but when she died, it stopped burning; and when Rivkah came, it (the miraculous, continuous, burning lamp) returned.** The Zohar hakadosh explains that the lamp that burned from one Shabbas evening to the next was an indication of the presence of the Shechinah illuminating the home throughout the week.



Elsewhere, we find another related teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Chaye Sarah 133a): **"ויביאה יצחק האהלה שרה אמו"** (**"And Yitzchak brought her into the tent of Sarah, his mother"**). **Rabbi Yossi said: This passuk is difficult. Instead of "האהלה", it should have simply said "לאהל שרה אמו". Why does it say "האהלה"? It is because the Shechinah returned there. For, as long as Sarah was alive, the Shechinah did not leave her, and the lamp burned from erev Shabbas to erev Shabbas and would provide illumination for all the days of that week. After she died, the lamp was extinguished. But when Rivkah came, the Shechinah returned and the lamp was rekindled. The words "Sarah, his mother" indicate that she (Rivkah) resembled Sarah in all her deeds.**

I believe we can interpret this passage in the Zohar based on another statement in the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 231b) related to the passuk (Mishlei 20, 27): **"נר ה' נשמת אדם"—a man's neshamah is the lamp of Hashem; this is the holy Shechinah.** In the gloss of Rabeinu Chaim Vital on the Zohar (9), he writes: **The Shechinah is called the "lamp of Hashem"; she is the neshamah of Yisrael that is called man ("adam").** This is the gist of what the author of the Tanya wrote in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 41). He teaches that the name **"Shechinah"** indicates **that she dwells ("shochenet") and clothes herself within all the worlds to provide them with life and sustain them.**

Thus, we learn the significance of the fact that Sarah Imeinu and Rivkah Imeinu lit a lamp in honor of Shabbas that burned from one erev Shabbas to the next. This indicated that on account of their incredible kedushah, the presence of the Shechinah was drawn into their home and remained there for the entire week. This phenomenon recurred every erev Shabbas with the kindling of the lamp.

## An Intriguing Combination of the Midrash and the Zohar HaKadosh

I had a wonderful idea to combine the explanations of the Zohar hakadosh and the Midrash. The Zohar teaches us that women light candles in honor of Shabbas to draw the presence of the Shechinah into their homes. The Midrash teaches us that women light candles in honor of Shabbas because they are responsible for extinguishing the **"lamp of the world,"** since Chava played a vital role in the **"cheit Eitz HaDa'as,"** which introduced death into the world, thereby extinguishing man's neshamah, which is referred to as the **"lamp of Hashem."**

First, we will introduce a precious insight from the impeccable teachings of the Alshich hakadosh (Bechukosai), which will shed light for us on several matters. He interprets the passuk (Vayikra 26, 11): **"ונתתי משכני בתוכם ולא תגעל נפשי אתכם—I will place My Tabernacle among you, and My soul (spirit) will not loathe (reject) you—based on a teaching of Chazal in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim 150) on the last passuk in sefer Tehillim:**

The passuk says: **"כל הנשמה תהלל י"ה"—let all souls praise G-d.** According to this Midrash, man's neshamah is constantly trying to leave the body—ascending and descending. What prevents her from doing so? She sees HKB"Y, her Maker, and returns. As a result, the neshamah praises Hashem; for she recognizes all the wonders He performs on our behalf.

The Alshich hakadosh explains the Midrash as follows: **Everything draws from its source . . . Hence, when the neshamah considers where she comes from, that she is a part of the (divine) Almighty, and goes back down and sees that she is embedded in foul (repulsive) material, she desires to get out with each and every breath. Yet, when she sees her Maker, Who despite all of His spiritual kedushah is present in the lowly world, and His glory fills the world, she, too, returns, is consoled, and remains in the human being.**

In this light, he interprets the passuk: **"ונתתי משכני בתוכם"**. If you follow the precepts of Hashem, you will merit having My Shechinah dwell in your midst. As a result: **"ולא תגעל נפשי אתכם"**—the soul will not be loathe to remain in the human body and yearn to leave it. For, since HKB"Y Himself rests His Shechinah on mankind, what right does a neshamah have to protest being placed in a physical body below. Furthermore, even while she is in the human body, she remains attached to her source—i.e., the Shechinah that rests on the person.

## Departure of the Shechinah Precipitated the Death Decree on Adam HaRishon

In this manner, the Alshich hakadosh explains why Adam HaRishon had to die after sinning with the Eitz HaDa'as—fulfilling the pronouncement (Bereishis 2, 17): **"ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות—but of the Eitz HaDa'as Tov VaRa, you must not eat thereof, for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.** Here is a pertinent

passage from the Midrash Tanchuma (Nasso 16): **When HKB”H created the world, He yearned to have an abode among those below like He has among those above. He created the man, and commanded him, and said to him: “Of every tree of the garden you may eat freely; but of the Eitz HaDa’as Tov VaRa, you must not eat thereof.” But he transgressed His command. HKB”H said to him, “This is what I longed for, that I should have a dwelling among those below like I have among those above. One thing have I commanded you, and you have neglected to keep it.” HKB”H immediately removed His Shechinah to the first firmament.**

Now, we know that before Adam HaRishon sinned, his body was pure and refined; it did not have any negative inclinations. This is evident from Rashi’s comment (Bereishis 2, 25): **“לא נתן בו יצר הרע עד אכלו מן העץ ונכנס בו יצר הרע וידע מה בין טוב לרע—he was not endowed with a yetzer hara until he ate from the tree; then the yetzer hara entered his being; then he knew the difference between good and bad.** Thus, prior to partaking of the Eitz HaDa’as, he was not destined to die, since the divine soul within him had no reason to loathe its physical abode, which was pure and holy. Furthermore, it did not yearn to abandon the human body and reattach itself to its divine source, since HKB”H longed to dwell down below. Indeed, after creating Adam, He rested His Shechinah down below.

However, after Adam HaRishon sinned by eating from the Eitz HaDa’as, he brought about two negative consequences: **1)** The yetzer hara entered his being, and his body was contaminated by the perversion of the nachash and **2)** the Shechinah departed the earth and ascended to the first firmament. At that point, the neshamah began to loathe its abode in the human body, which it found to be foul and repulsive. And seeing as the Shechinah had also left Adam, there was nothing preventing it from also leaving. Hence, she yearned to abandon the body. Nevertheless, she remained, because she was bound to comply with her Creator’s decree. This then is the implication of HKB”H’s warning to Adam HaRishon: **“For on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die,”** because the neshamah in your body will loathe its situation and will flee in order to reattach itself to the Creator above. This is the gist of his comments.

With much joy, we can now appreciate the combination of these two rationales for women lighting candles in honor of Shabbas. Because the woman induced Adam HaRishon to eat from the Eitz HaDa’as, the Shechinah abandoned him. As

a consequence, death became a reality of life in this world, because the neshamah yearns to abandon the body and to reattach to the Creator. Thus, the two rationales complement each other beautifully.

This also explains very nicely why the Midrash describes the death caused by the woman as: **“She extinguished the lamp (candle) of the world.”** They did not simply say: **“She extinguished the lamp (candle) of man”**—as it is described in the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 1). They wished to emphasize that as a consequence of her sin and causing Adam HaRishon to sin, **“she extinguished the lamp of the world”**—namely, the holy Shechinah with which HKB”H illuminates all of creation. In the aftermath of the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as,” it left the earth and returned to the heavens. Therefore, it is the woman’s responsibility to rekindle the light of the world in order to bring back the Shechinah through the mitzvah of kindling the candles.

## Women Light Candles for Shabbas to Restore the Shechinah that Departed on the Sixth Day as Shabbas Approached

We can now truly appreciate the wonders of the Torah. We learned from the Zohar hakadosh that the women light candles in honor of Shabbas to attract the presence of the Shechinah that departed on account of the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as.” This explains the rationale for lighting candles on Friday as Shabbas is about to enter. For, Chazal teach us that on the sixth day of creation, the day on which Adam and Chava were created, toward the end of the day, as Shabbas approached, they sinned by partaking of the Eitz HaDa’as. If not for the Shabbas advocating on their behalf, they would have died immediately on that same day. Let us refer to the passage in the Midrash Shochar Tov related to **“מזמור שיר ליום השבת”** (Tehillim Mizmor 92). The first part of the Midrash depicts what transpired on the erev Shabbas of creation, hour by hour—man’s creation, his sin, his judgment, and his banishment. It then describes how the Shabbas came to his defense: **It argued before HKB”H, “Master of the Universe, You did not punish man during the six days of creation; yet, on me, You are starting. This is my kedushah and this is my respite.” On account of the Shabbas, he was saved from the sentence of Gehinnom. Upon witnessing the power of Shabbas, Adam proceeded to recite a hymn for Shabbas: “מזמור שיר ליום השבת”.**

It teaches us two significant chiddushim. Firstly, we learn that Adam and Chava ate from the Eitz HaDa'as in the tenth hour of the sixth day of creation—three hours before Shabbas. Secondly, because the day of Shabbas advocated on behalf of Adam and Chava, they were not punished immediately and remained alive. This explains fabulously the rationale for lighting candles specifically on Friday in honor of Shabbas Kodesh. In addition to rekindling the **“lamp of the world”**—the holy Shechinah that departed on the sixth day of creation prior to Shabbas—we wish to honor the Shabbas and express our gratitude for advocating on behalf of Adam and Chava.

It gives me immense pleasure to conclude this important topic with a teaching in the Gemara (B.M. 59a): **“לעולם יהא אדם זהיר בכבוד אשתו, שאין ברכה מצויה בתוך ביתו של אדם אלא בשביל אשתו, שנאמר ולאברם היטיב בעבורה, והיינו דאמר להו רבא לבני מחוזה אוקירו לנשיכו כי היכי דתתעתרו.”** **A man should always be careful about his wife’s honor, because berachah is found in a person’s house only on account of his wife, as it states** (Bereishis 12, 16):

**“He treated Avram well on account of her.”** Thus, Rava told the people of Mechoza: **Honor your wives, so that you may become wealthy.**

In keeping with this discussion, let us explain. Wherever the Shechinah is present, we are privileged to receive every form of berachah. As it is written (Shemos 20, 21): **“בכל”** **המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיך—wherever I permit My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.** The Targum Onkelos renders this as: **Wherever I rest My Shechinah, to there I will send My blessing to you, and I will bless you.** Therefore, it is a wonderful segulah for righteous women to pray while they are lighting the candles for sons to be talmidei-chachamim and for abundant berachah and success in their homes in all matters. For, in the merit of rekindling the **“candle of the world,”** bringing the Shechinah back into our homes, we will be privileged to receive all material and spiritual Berachos!



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