



TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

SHABBOS

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI
Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



Candle Lighting

As the clock strikes 6:52pm, the extreme rush and stress right before Shabbos comes to a sudden and abrupt halt as the Shabbos candles are lit, instantaneously bringing with them a beautiful peace and serenity to the home.

What is the meaning behind the Shabbos candles and how do they cause such a transformation?

Gemara Shabbos 25b brings down that there is a Rabbinic obligation to light Shabbos candles. The **Shulchan Aruch 263:2** writes that this mitzvah is of such importance that if one doesn't have enough money to buy candles, he would be obligated to go door to door and to collect money in order to buy candles!

What is so important about this mitzvah? The commentaries explain that the Shabbos candles provide three very significant aspects:

1. כבוד שבת (honor to Shabbos) - Every meal of importance takes place with light. By obligating us to eat in the light of the candles, we are making a statement that Shabbos is of utmost importance.

2. עונג שבת (enjoyment of Shabbos) - When one eats in the dark, he cannot really enjoy his food. Lighting candles

ensures that we will enjoy our Shabbos meal to the fullest.

3. שלום בית (peace in the home) - Darkness causes strife. When people can't see where they're going and they start tripping over the furniture, it causes frustration and irritability. On Shabbos, we want there to be peace and serenity in the house.

Rav Eliezer Melamed in his book **Prinei Halacha** explains beautifully - בנרות שבת "ישנו בטוי עמוק למהותה של שבת" The idea behind the Shabbos candles really mirrors the whole concept of Shabbos. It's hard for us to imagine because we live in a world of electricity. But imagine life before electricity (or life in a Yishuv where there are frequent power outages ☹). When the sun goes down, the entire world is pitch black. In the olden days, people generally went to sleep once the sun went down. But on Shabbos, the meal only began after dark. Picture the scenario if there were no Shabbos candles - as the family is serving the food, finding their seats, settling down to eat, they cannot see a thing. Their normal safe home has now become chaotic. They can't find anything, they're bumping into each other, and tripping over their own furniture. But the moment the Shabbos candles are lit, peace descends upon the home. Everything is calm and in its proper place.

The same is true of the world. During the week, when we look out at the world from a superficial perspective, everything

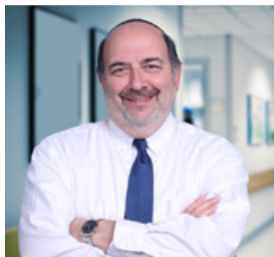
seems hopeless. There's a lot of chaos and difficulty, and we can't figure out what's going on. But on Shabbos, we're able to take a step back and look at the world with a more long-term perspective. We remember that Hashem is running the world and that there is a master plan behind all that is happening, there is purpose to all the confusion and strife. When we light the candles, we remind ourselves that we can help to bring some measure of peace to the world by adding the light of Torah and bringing good values to the world.

Rav Melamed concludes as follows –
 "זוהי מגמתה של השבת, להוסיף אור של אמונה ותורה בעולם. כמדומה שזאת הסיבה לחיבה היתרה שהמוני בית ישראל מחבבים את מצוות הדלקת נרות שבת, שיש בה רמז למגמה הכללית של ישראל - לעשות שלום על ידי תוספת אור."

This is the goal of Shabbat – to add the light of faith and Torah to the world. It seems that this is the reason for the great love that all Jews have for the mitzvah of Shabbat candles: It alludes to the overarching goal of the Jewish people – to make peace by adding light.

As we light the candles this coming Shabbos, let's try to take a moment to remind ourselves of this very meaningful message. ■

Arthur Samuels, DPM



PODIATRIST
 Over 30 years experience
 Licensed in Israel
 & America
053-427-6363

ArthurMSamuels@gmail.com

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