



# TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

## SHABBOS

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## זוכני לגדל בנים ובני בנים

When I first got married, my Shabbos candle lighting experience started out as a pretty straightforward mitzvah. Quickly strike a match, light two candles, make the bracha, and the mitzvah was done. But over the years, this mitzvah has taken on a life of its own. Not only do my candles usher in the Shabbos, but they symbolize a special time to daven for my children. As my family has grown, ב"ה, so has the amount of candles that I light<sup>1</sup>, and so now my weekly Shabbos candle lighting is even more involved than a 'Chanukiyah-on-the-last-day-of Chanukah' experience.

A couple of weeks ago, as I lit the 8th candle, my ten-year-old son stood there staring at me and finally asked – "That one's for me, right?" And he was right. Over time, I've developed my own little routine. First, I light the two big candles – one for me and one for my husband. I need to allow my own light to ignite, in order to be there for my husband. And then I move on to the other nine, trying to transfer over as much koach and bracha as I can to each child.

When I finish 'lighting everyone' and

making the bracha, I recite the famous yehi ratzon, asking בתינו ותשכן "ותשלם - שכינתך בינינו וזכני לגדל בנים..." Hashem, help us to always have peace in our home so that your Shechina can rest here, and in turn, we can be successful in our parenting and be able to bring up our children to be עובדי ה'. And then I sing the famous song of זוכני and I have a chance to give 'quality Tefilla time' to each and every one of my children. I sing the song and request from Hashem that my children be אוהבי ה' (be full of love for Hashem) יראי אלוקים (G-d Fearing), that they should be דבקים בה' (clinging to Hashem) and מאירים את העולם (they should light up the world with all of their Torah learning and good deeds and their service of Hashem). My gaze shifts from candle to candle, from child to child, as I focus on the challenges they are going through and the requests that I have for them. I finish my routine with a few other special Tefillot about raising children.

I can feel the special power inherent in these moments; there's something almost palpable in the air. Where does this *koach* come from and why is there such a widespread minhag to daven for our children after candle lighting?

**Rabbenu Bechaye** (Shemot 19:3) writes that since lighting Shabbat candles is a mitzvah incumbent mainly on women, the time of lighting is an auspicious one

1. Based on the Minhag to light an additional candle for each child brought down by the Likutei Maharich

for women to daven (as Tefilla is heard more during the time of doing a *mitzvah*). There are many things that women can and should daven for during this time, but the Chinuch of our children is especially apropos.

האישה הטובה היא סיבה לתורה, שהיא יכולה להמשיך את בנה לבית המדרש

He writes that women are really the ones responsible for instilling their children with love of Hashem and His Torah during the formative years. They are often the ones to get their kids ready for school in the morning and it's their compassion and encouragement that motivate them in their Torah learning and spiritual growth. He writes that since Torah is compared to light, it only makes sense that while lighting the Shabbos candles, women should seize the opportunity to daven for their children to cling to the light of the Torah. In fact, it says in **Gemara Shabbat 23b** - "האי מאן דרגיל בשרגי - הויין ליה בנים תלמידי" - *"One who is careful regarding the candles will have children who are Talmidei Chachamim."*

Often, we might feel that our Tefillot for our children go unanswered but the following story illustrates how our Tefillot are never in vain.

*Rav Baruch Heimann is a well-respected Baal Teshuva and Talmid Chacham who lives in Yerushalayim. A few years ago, he explained how he merited to grow so much in his Avodat Hashem. He explained that his grandfather, Zalman Aran, was the Minister of Education during the earliest years of the state of Israel and was a very close associate and confidant of Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. Rabbi Heimann explained that*

*though his grandparents were completely secular, the one tradition they held on to was that his grandmother always lit the Shabbos candles. She knew this was a special time to pray for one's children and so she would daven that her children grow up to be like the most respected man she knew....David Ben Gurion. One day, Ben Gurion met with the Chazon Ish to discuss the draft law. He was so impressed by the Chazon Ish that he shared his impressions with his friend Zalman Aran and concluded that the 'Chazon Ish is more like an angel than a human being'. Zalman repeated everything he had heard to his wife. The next Shabbos, when Mrs. Aran lit her candles, she thought to herself - If Ben Gurion has so much respect for the Chazon Ish, I might as well daven that my children grow up to be like the Chazon Ish. And so she did, week after week. Rabbi Heimann explained that it was in the merit of his grandmother's Tefilla that he and many of her other grandchildren were zocheh to become Baalei Teshuva.*

The **Gemara (Berachot 32b)** says - כל המאריך בתפלתו אין תפלתו חוזרת ריקם that no tefilla recited will ever return empty-handed; it will always have some effect even if it's not until much later. May we all be zocheh to see how the Tefillot we say by the Shabbos candles impact on our children and grandchildren for many years to come. ■

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