

נשי
ובנות
חב"ד

SHEVAT

N'SHEI
U'BNOS
CHABAD

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נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו
מרת לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו
שפאלטר

A BEAUTIFUL HOME

The farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Bo 5752 took place four days before Yud Shevat, and the Rebbe spoke about the theme of the maamar Basi L'Gani: the reason for the descent of the neshama into this world.

Speaking in particular of the neshamos of women, the Rebbe referred to the fact that the Friediker Rebbe encouraged the education of women and girls; to the prerogative of women in being the first to welcome the Shabbos into every Jewish home; and to the fact that this is done by the kindling of lights, which carry well-known connotations of tranquil joy and spiritual enlightenment.

DESCENT FOR THE SAKE OF ASCENT

The phrase from the *possuk*, "As a rose among the thorns," refers to the soul as it descends into this material world, and on a larger scale, to the existence of the Jewish people within *galus*. For both the soul and the Jewish people, this involves a formidable descent, a descent fraught with danger. At times, the path of life appears to be obstructed by brambles: events sometimes occur which our limited human intellect cannot comprehend. Paradoxically, however, it is through this very process of descent that both the soul and the Jews ultimately climb to their most complete level of perfection.

This is not to imply that the world is in itself negative. Quite the contrary, the words "*Basi l'gani*" (I have come into My garden) are used as an analogy to describe the return of the *Shechina* to this world. This indicates that the world is Hashem's own garden, a place which grants Him pleasure and satisfaction. Nevertheless, we are often unable

to perceive this positive quality. And this reflects the task and mission with which the Jewish people have been charged. Holding aloft “the lamp of a mitzvah and the light of the Torah,” they illuminate the world and reveal the good which is concealed within.

WOMEN AS LUMINARIES

In particular, this quality is manifest in those mitzvos that are associated with producing actual light, for example, the kindling of Shabbos candles. The visible light which they generate reflects how every mitzvah, and in a wider sense, every positive activity a Jew performs, such as a friendly word or an act of kindness, increases the light of *Elokus* within the world.

The mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles has been entrusted to Jewish women; it is they who draw Hashem’s light into the home and introduce the atmosphere of Shabbos and holiness.

On a cosmic scale, the world has been described as Hashem’s dwelling—His home, as it were, and the Jewish people, as His bride. Developing these analogies: Just as the Shabbos candles are lit before the actual commencement of the Shabbos, our present performance of mitzvos in *galus* kindles the light that will illuminate the world in the time of Moshiach, which is referred to as “the Day which is entirely Shabbos.” This connection also highlights the role of Jewish women, for the prophecies associated with that age point out the superior qualities which Jewish women possess.

IN THE MERIT OF THE WOMEN

Chazal tell us that “In the merit of righteous women, the Jews were redeemed from Mitzrayim.” Similarly, the subsequent redemptions are also associated with the merit of Jewish women. We have been promised, “As in the days of your exodus from Mitzrayim, I will show you wonders.” The Arizal emphasizes that the future *geula* will follow the pattern of the *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and thus will also come as a result of the merit of the righteous women of that generation.

A HOME FOR A FAMILY: A MIKDASH FOR HASHEM

The role of the Jewish people, and in particular of Jewish women, in preparing the world for the *geula*, is analogous to the role of a woman in her own home. The Midrash teaches that Hashem created the world so that He would have a dwelling place in this lowly world, which will be fully materialized when Moshiach comes.


To develop this analogy: A person desires not merely to possess a dwelling, but that his dwelling be attractive and tastefully furnished. Generally, this task of shaping the home environment is the province of the woman of the house. Similarly, in the mission of making this world a dwelling for Hashem, it is Jewish women who make His dwelling attractive and radiant.

This greater role played by women within the world should also be mirrored in the activity of every woman within her own home. It is largely through the efforts of the woman of the house that every home is transformed into a “*Mikdash Me’at*,” a place where *Elokus* is revealed in a way which parallels and leads to the revelation that will permeate the entire world in the times of Moshiach.

These efforts are reflected, not only in the spiritual influences which a woman instills within the home, but also in the manner in which she structures its interior design, for example, making sure that every member of the household possesses a Siddur, a Chumash, a Tanya, and a *tzedakah pushka* which is proudly displayed. Even the rooms of infants should be decorated with Jewish symbols, e.g., a “*Shir Hamaalos*.” These efforts mirror the way in which Yiddishkeit permeates even the material environment in which we live.

LIGHTING UP THE HOME: ILLUMINATING THE MIKDASH

Shabbos is referred to as a “microcosm of the world to come” (*mei’ein olam haba*) and conversely, the times of Moshiach are referred to as “the Day which is entirely Shabbos, and rest for life everlasting.” It is the woman of the house who introduces the atmosphere of Shabbos by lighting its Shabbos candles. Thus, to recall the analogy of the world as Hashem’s dwelling, it is the women who must usher the light of *geula* into the world.

The very same mitzvah, the kindling of Shabbos candles, is a powerful medium to accomplish this goal. For the visible light which the candles generate reflects how every mitzvah and, in a wider sense, every positive activity a Jew performs, such as a friendly word or an act of kindness, increases the Hashem’s light within the world.¹ 

1. Adapted from Shabbos Parshas Bo and Beshalach 5752; Hisvaaduyos 5752 vol. 2, p. 183. Translation by Sichos In English (with slight variations).