



Compiled By: Rabbi Levi Greenberg (OH)

Written By: Rabbi Mendel Jacobs

לזכות החיילים בצבאות ה'  
**מנחם מענדל** בן ח' מושקא שי'  
לרגל יום הולדתו ז' **מר-חשון**  
**אסתר הנ'** רחל בת ח' מושקא תחי'  
לרגל יום הולדתה י"א **מר-חשון**

**שמעון** בן ח' מושקא שי'  
**שיינא** בת ח' מושקא תחי'  
**אליהו שמואל** בן ח' מושקא שיחי'  
**צבי הירש אייזיק** בן ח' מושקא שיחי'  
יה"ר שיגדלו חי"לים בצבא כ"ק **אדמו"ר**  
מתוך שמחה, בריאות והרחבה

# Can I Be Like Rivka?

## On Young Girls Lighting Shabbos Candles

At the farbrengen of Chof Cheshvan 5735, the Rebbe spoke about a special lesson we can learn from Rivka Imeinu as related in Parshas Chayei Sara: Although she was (according to Rashi) only three years old at the time, she still lit Shabbos candles in the place of Sara Imeinu. This is a lesson for girls in our time that they too should light Shabbos candles as soon as they understand the meaning of this mitzvah, even before becoming Halachic adults.<sup>1</sup>

After a portion of this *sicha* was published in the *Algemeiner Journal*, the Rebbe received a letter from Rabbi Meir Blumenfeld, a *gaon* and *rav* in Maplewood, NJ, with several questions.

The Rebbe responded to each of the questions in his holy handwriting on the margins of the original letter; the response was later formulated as a proper letter.<sup>2</sup>

לפניך האבות ריחות אבל אנו שמן תורק שמך (שהש"ר עה"פ לריח שמניך) – וידוע ביאור אדמו"ר הזקן בזה שקודם הציווי במ"ת ה' קיום המצות כפי ובמדת הכחות של **הבנ"א** מקיים המצוה – משא"כ לאחר מ"ת מקיים זה **כאו"א בשליחותו** של נותן התורה כביכול ובכחות של **המצווה**. ועוד נקודה בדבר (שקל יותר הקיום) שלאחרי שהי' מעשה אבות (נעשה עי"ז) סימן (וסיוע) לבנים. **[ב. רבקה ע"ה הדליקה אחר הנשואין.]**

מחלוקת בזה. ואדרבה רוב הדעות שהי' קודם לנישואין וכמפורש בפדר"א פ"ז ועוד (הובאו בתו"ש) וזהו פשוטו של מקרא ולא העיר רש"י אחרת. וק"ל. ולהעיר שגם להדיעה **דמעשה** ההדלקה ה' לאחרי הנישואין – אין זה מכריח **כלל** לאפושי פלוגתא ולומר דפליג ג"כ בנוגע **לחיוב** ההדלקה. ועוד וג"ז עיקר – גם לאחרי הנישואין בהיותה (לפרש"י ועוד) בת ג"ש – אין ההדלקה אלא ענין דחינוך.

במענה... [למכתב כת"ר מיום ועש"ק פ' חיי שרה],  
ממהר הנני לענות כיון שתקותי חזקה שגם כת"ר ינצל כל השפעתו שניתנה לו בהשגח"פ – להפצת הענין הדה"נ ע"י **כל** נשי ובנות ישראל מתחיל מגיל חינוך, וכמדובר בארוכה ע"ד גודל חשיבות הענין וכו' וכו' בכו"כ הזדמנויות, ובודאי לדכוותי דכת"ר א"צ בכתיבה עד"ז כ"א רק להעתיק מחז"ל דאין מזרזין אלא למזורזין וכל עש"ק עולם (במובן דזמן) מלא הוא.  
וע"ס מכל כת"ר:

**[א. איך אפשר להשוות בכלל להאמהות נערות ותנוקות להדליק נרות של שבת?]**

תקנו תקנה והנהיגו מנהג ופשט הדבר בכל ישראל (בל' הרמב"ם הל' ממרים רפ"ב) **שכאו"א** יאמר אחרי אמירת תהלים **ובנוגע לעצמו** שתהא אמירתו כאילו אמרם דוד מלך ישראל בעצמו. יתרה מזו בנוגע **לנדו"ד** אמחז"ל (מאמר נפלא ביותר): כל המצוות שעשו



important to work on this campaign immediately, for every opportunity wasted is an incalculable loss.]

[As to your questions, I will answer them] in the order of your letter:

[1. How can you compare young girls and toddlers to the *Imahos* [the Matriarchs of our nation] that they too should light Shabbos candles?]

An ordinance has been established and a custom instituted... and the practice has spread throughout the Jewish people ([to borrow] the term used by the Rambam in *Hilchos Mamrim*, beginning of ch. 2<sup>3</sup>) that **each and every one** should [pray], after reciting Tehillim, **for themselves**, “May [my] recital be as if recited by Dovid Melech Yisroel himself.”

Furthermore, and specifically with regard **to our subject at hand**, *Chazal* said (a most incredible statement): All the *mitzvos* performed by our Forefathers were [merely] the “fragrance” [i.e. a smell without a substance], however our [performance of *mitzvos*] are “your name is oil poured forth” [i.e. our deeds are the real thing] (*Shir Hashirim* Rabba on the *possuk* “*Lrei'ach sh'manecha*”). The Alter Rebbe's explanation on this is well known: Before [Hashem] commanded us at Matan Torah [to perform them], fulfillment of the *mitzvos* [only] measured as far as the power of **the human being** fulfilling the mitzvah [could reach]. However, after Matan Torah, **each and every person** fulfills the *mitzvos* **on behalf** of the Giver of the Torah, so-to-speak, with the power of **the One Who commanded** [us to do these *mitzvos*—Hashem Himself].

Additionally: Once our ancestors [blazed the trail with their own] actions, they [i.e. the actions] show (and grant the assistance to) their descendants [to follow in their ways]. (For this reason, it is easier to fulfill [these *mitzvos*].)<sup>4</sup>

[2. Rivka [only] lit candles after getting married. [How then is the Rebbe advocating even for unmarried girls to do so?]

This is the subject of a dispute [among the Torah's commentators]. On the contrary, most opinions maintain that [her lighting candles] was before her marriage, as explicitly stated in *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer* ch. 16 and other sources (cited in *Torah Shleima*). This is the basic meaning of the *possuk*, and Rashi does not comment otherwise. This is easy to understand.

It should be noted that even according to the opinion **that the act** of lighting candles happened after getting married, it doesn't **at all** necessitate [us] to magnify the difference of opinion and say that they argue [not only about her *actions* but also] about **the obligation** to light the candles [at a

young age] as well.

Another essential point: Even after she got married, being [only] three years old at the time (according to Rashi and others), the whole premise of her lighting candles was only an act of *chinuch*.<sup>5</sup>

[You may want to ask from what] *Chazal* say, that we learn from [the story of] Rivka that one may not marry off a girl without her consent.<sup>6</sup> (*Bereishis Rabba* 60:12, cited also in Rashi on the *possuk*).

This is not applicable to our subject,<sup>7</sup> and does not contradict what we're saying.

On the contrary: [we learn from Rivka's story by applying the logic of] *kal v'chomer*: If [Rivka, as] a minor, when it came to agreeing to the general idea [of this *shidduch*] even before the actual marriage, we needed her consent, certainly [when it comes to an adult woman, and when we're speaking about *actual marriage*, we must have the woman's consent].

See also Rashi on the Rif, beginning of *Perek Ha'ish Mekadesh*.<sup>8</sup>

As to [the question that] we cannot learn [halacha] from occurrences before Matan Torah etc.: This has already been discussed at length in many [sources]. [See *Encyclopedia Talmudis* in this entry, where this issue is addressed].

There is much more to say about all of the above.

With esteem and blessings.<sup>9</sup>

1. Published in *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 15, pp. 163–173.

2. Published in *Igros Kodesh* vol. 30, pp. 24–27.

3. There the Rambam writes that “When a Beis-Din issued a decree, instituted an edict, or established a custom and this practice spread throughout the Jewish people,” it cannot easily be undone.

4. I.e. the question as to how we can compare to our ancestors is not valid, since their fulfillment of the same *mitzvos* is precisely what gives us the power to emulate their ways.

5. I.e. even if she was married, as a minor she was not obligated to light candles but did so nonetheless. We can certainly deduce from her conduct that girls today can light as well, even if they aren't yet obligated.

6. The question is: *Chazal* learn from the fact that Rivka was asked before leaving Charan whether or not she wanted to go along, that one must not marry off a girl without her consent. This seems to imply that she was married off earlier, even before leaving Charan. Hence, when she lit Shabbos candles in Sara's tent, she was already married—which contradicts the Rebbe's premise that she lit even before marriage.

7. The way the Rebbe explains this *Chazal*, Rivka was asked whether or not she agreed to the general idea of the *shidduch*, even though she would not be married until after traveling to Yitzchok later on.

8. *Kiddushin* 16b (*Rif* pages). Rashi applies the *possuk* about Rivka to the halacha that one should not accept *kiddushin* on behalf of his daughter while she is a minor.

9. Special thanks to Rabbi Sholom Ber Levine and Rabbi Leima Wilhelm for their assistance in preparing this article.