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By the Hakham

Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe, 'a"h

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Why Light Shabbath Candles if There Is Electric Light?

The reason for lighting the Shabbath candles in the room where one eats, is so that there will be light when reciting the Qiddush and eating the meal. This is all part of delighting in the Shabbath.

Nowadays, everyone uses electric lights that are so much more powerful than the candles, that the light of the candles is comparatively insignificant. The question is whether, as a result, there is any need to light candles anymore.

It says in Sefer Meqabshiel that in the summer months they used to eat on the roof (the roofs were flat because people would go there to keep cool in the summer months). The light of the moon (especially if it was a full moon), was so bright, that the light of the candles was quite unnecessary. He writes that, nevertheless, candles needed to be lit in honor of Shabbath. Apart from the simple reason for lighting candles, which is for peace in the home, there is also a hidden Kabbalistic reason for it.

Therefore, even where there is other light, the Shabbath candles must be lit with a blessing.

(See Meqabshiel, 2nd year, Nowah, Oth 2, 4)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

5782 פֶּרֶשֶׁת בְּהַר סִינַי

Pirquei Aboth 4: The Dangers of Jealousy

הַקִּנְיָאָה וְהַתַּאֲוָה וְהַכְּבוֹד, מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם

"Jealousy, desire and honor, take a man out of the world" (Aboth 4:21).

Jealousy is when someone is jealous of another who has more wealth than he has. Such jealousy knows no bounds, because even if a person acquires the same riches as the person he was jealous of, he will then desire to have what an even richer person has. There is no end to it. Desire means that a person is not jealous of another, but just desires more and more. Here too, there is no limit. Both of these traits affect the health of a person, and that is how they cause him to leave the world.

There is a story about a jealous person and another who constantly desired more, who were walking together and got into an argument. G-d sent them an angel who said to them, "Don't fight. Just ask for what you want and it shall be given to you. The first will get whatever he asks for and the other will receive double". Of course, neither one of them wanted to be first, since their nature made them desirous to have double. In the end the jealous one went first. And what was his request? He said, "I wish to be blinded in one eye".

We see how bad these character traits are, that a person is even willing to harm himself so that his friend will not have more than he has.

(See 'Aẓereth Raḥel, Pirquei Aboth 4:21)

For the 'Ilui Neshamah of
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יעקב אליהו עבדאללה פרג' חיים בן רחל, ע"ה

Unable to Sleep After the Shema'

The Rama states that after saying the Shema' that is read before going to sleep (שְׁעַל הַמַּטָּה), one must not eat, drink or speak, but must go to sleep immediately. He adds that if one is unable to sleep, he should repeat the Shema' over and over until he falls asleep.

The Mishnah Berurah comments that this refers to the first passage of the Shema'. He adds, however, that the very first verse should not be repeated. He mentions further that one can say any verses connected to mercy.

The Ben Ish Hai states that if a person has read the (entire) Shema' and the passages that he ordinarily reads, but is still unable to sleep, he should force himself to think about words of Torah in order to fall asleep in the midst of words of Torah. In this way he will "satisfy himself with words of Torah which give life to those who keep it, and those who find it, find life".

(See Rama 239:1. Ben Ish Hai, 1st year, Parashath Pequdei, Oth 15. Mishnah Berurah 239:7.

See also A Torah Minute™ *Not being able to fall asleep after the Shema'*)

Kissing Relatives

A man must not touch another woman or even her clothing. The Torah says that no man may approach close relatives to uncover their nakedness.

The Shelah HaQaddosh says that whatever is forbidden with a man's wife who is Niddah (at the time when she is not permitted to him) is also forbidden by a Qal Waḥomer (an a fortiori logical argument) with a married woman who is not his wife. The logic is that if a man is permitted to be alone with his own wife when she is Niddah but is forbidden to be alone with another woman at any time, it stands to reason that whatever is forbidden with one's wife who is Niddah is also forbidden with the other woman at all times.

Some people think that it is permissible to kiss any relative (not just those permitted such as one's mother or daughter and so on) and this is a grave error of judgement. If she is a Niddah the transgression is doubled. There is one transgression for touching the person whom one is not permitted to touch and a second because the Torah tells us that a man may not approach a (any) woman who is a Niddah.

(See Qarnoth Şaddiq [H"R Eliyahu Mani], 2, Oth 11)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"n

The Power of Speech & the Promises We Make (continued from last week)

[Recap: Speech is a special gift that was given to us by HaQadosh Barukh Hu. It actually comes from within us, from our Neshama (soul), which was breathed into us by HaQadosh Barukh Hu directly.]

So we, who were created Beşelem Eloqim, in the image of G-d, obviously have to make sure that we emulate Him and follow in His footsteps. In addition, we must always remember that speech is a gift that represents something very holy and very, very special. The fact that we can't see it doesn't take away from it. The fact that it's not something tangible, something physical, doesn't mean that we have to look at it lightly. We are told that since speech is so powerful, so holy, even though we don't see it, it makes an impression all the way up in Heaven. The next time we want to use our ability to speak, such as to make a promise, we must remember what immense power it carries with it and work to emulate our Creator in being true to our word, and follow through on what we say.

May we always be blessed with the ability to use this great gift of speech in a way that will bring beauty and joy to the world, and for us to be blessed with the strength to follow through with what we said we would do.