



Likkutei Sichos

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Candles for a Broken World

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1.

THE METZORA'S DWELLING

The verse,¹ “All the days that the affliction is upon him, he shall remain impure... He shall stay in isolation; his dwelling shall be outside the camp,” teaches us that the *metzora*'s dwelling becomes impure.²

When a *metzora*³ enters his **friend's** house, the mishnah teaches:⁴ “Utensils {in the house} immediately become impure. Rabbi Yehudah says: ‘Only if the *metzora* remained in the house long enough to light a candle.’” The commentators⁵ explain that Rabbi Yehudah's opinion applies specifically in a case when the *metzora* enters his friend's house without permission.

— When the *metzora* enters with permission (of the homeowner), Rabbi Yehudah would agree that the other person's house immediately becomes the *metzora*'s “dwelling” (and thus, utensils “immediately become impure”) —

For this reason, Rabbi Yehudah allows the homeowner some time (“long enough to light a candle”) to ask the *metzora* to leave. If, however, the *metzora* remains in the house for this amount of time, and the homeowner does not remove him, the house becomes the “dwelling” of the *metzora*. (For in this scenario, we consider it as if the *metzora* has tacitly received the homeowner's permission.) Therefore, all the utensils in the house become impure.

The reason we give the homeowner this measure of time, “long enough to light a candle,” to turn out the *metzora* is as follows: It is possible that when the *metzora* had entered, the homeowner was busy lighting a candle. For **this** reason, the homeowner did not yet ask the *metzora* to leave (and the *metzora* was in the house **without** permission). Therefore, we wait for “long enough to light a candle.”

¹ *Vayikra* 13:46.

² *Toras Kohanim*, commenting on this verse; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Tumas Tzaraas*,” ch. 10, near the end.

³ {A person afflicted with *tzaraas* — a spiritual illness with physical symptoms affecting the skin.}

⁴ *Nega'im* ch. 13, mishnah 11.

⁵ *Peirush Rabbeinu Shimshon Mishantz*; *Peirush HaRosh*; and *Peirush Rabbeinu Ovadia Bartenura*.

2.

WHY A CANDLE?

Everything in Torah is absolutely precise. There are many activities that a homeowner could be busy doing that the mishnah could have chosen. But the mishnah chose “long enough to light a candle.”

Moreover, the mishnah does not mean that the homeowner was actually lighting a candle. As *Rosh* explains: “Sometimes the homeowner is busy lighting a candle, or doing **some other chore.**” Furthermore, people usually only light candles when it is dark. However, the time-frame, “long enough to light a candle” applies even when the *metzora* enters his friend’s house **during the day.** (As the commentators⁶ explain, the reason for this is that the Sages formulated a blanket rule that applies under all circumstances).

This shows that there is a connection between lighting candles and the mishnah’s law that until this time elapses, the utensils in the house do not become impure.

My father⁷ explains this matter in his gloss to the aforementioned mishnah:⁸ “House” refers to the *sefirah* of *malchus*.⁹ Impurity results from the “withdrawal of the light of *chochmah*.”¹⁰ [For this reason, a *metzora* is considered dead,¹¹ for¹² “wisdom gives life.”]¹³ Therefore, as long as the homeowner is busy lighting a candle — “lighting a candle refers to the effusion of the light of *chochmah*” — the impurity of the *metzora* cannot spread throughout the house. This also explains why specifically a kohen oversees the process of purifying a *metzora*: “He shall be brought to the kohen; the kohen shall go

⁶ *Tosfos Yom Tov*.

⁷ {Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the Rebbe’s father.}

⁸ *Toras Levi Yitzchak*, p. 358, ff.

⁹ {Lit., “monarchy,” is the lowest *sefirah* of each spiritual world. *Sefiros* are divine emanations or modalities of Divine revelations.. }

¹⁰ {Lit., “wisdom,” the highest of the ten *sefiros*.}

¹¹ *Nedarim* 64b.

¹² *Koheles* 7:12.

¹³ *Eitz Chaim, shaar* 38, ch. 7; quoted in *Likkutei Torah, “Tazria,”* 23b and the beginning of “*Metzora.*”

outside the camp....”¹⁴ This is because the kohen elicits the light of *chochmah*, as explained in *Likkutei Torah*.¹⁵

3.

SHABBOS CANDLES

The law that the utensils in the house become defiled specifically after the time it takes “to light a candle” elapses raises the following question: Despite the homeowner being occupied with lighting a candle, seemingly, this task is not so demanding that it would delay him from asking the *metzora* to leave.

The answer is given:¹⁶ The time frame, “long enough to light a candle,” refers to “lighting the candles at twilight”¹⁷ — lighting the holy Shabbos candles. Because we are dealing with the Shabbos candles, the homeowner cannot **interrupt** his lighting to tell the *metzora* to leave. Since the Shabbos candles require a certain amount of uninterrupted time, the Sages enacted the same measure of time for the other days of the week, “long enough to light a candle,” in order to create a blanket rule that applies under all circumstances.

Based on my father’s explanation — that the reason for the time frame, “long enough to light a candle,” is because lighting the candle prevents the spreading of the *metzora*’s impurity — it emerges that the power to prevent this impurity from spreading stems primarily from “lighting the candles **at twilight**” {i.e., lighting Shabbos candles}. This is because the measure of this time-span is derived from **this** candle lighting.

The explanation:

The mishnah discusses not the *metzora*’s impurity, per se, but how the impurity of the *metzora* pervades the **house**. Therefore, this subject is related

¹⁴ *Vayikra* 14:1-2.

¹⁵ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Tazria*,” 23b and beg. of “*Metzora*.”

¹⁶ *Tiferes Yisrael*.

¹⁷ *Rabbeinu Shimshon MiShantz* (and similar wording by *Rabbeinu Ovadya Bartenura*.)

primarily to Shabbos candles, since their unique purpose is to foster **peace in the home**.¹⁸ The Shabbos candles are meant to illuminate the home “so that no one will stumble on a stick or a stone,”¹⁹ offering protection, so that nothing undesirable occurs in the house. Therefore, they also prevent the impurity from spreading throughout the house.

4.

THE CANDLE AND ITS LIGHT ARE TORAH AND MITZVOS

But one may still ask:

By their **physical** light, Shabbos candles foster peace in the home. Seemingly, **every** candle in the house, even those not lit to fulfill a mitzvah, illuminates the house, preventing its occupants from stumbling, and bringing peace to the home. What, then, is the unique quality of the Shabbos candles in that they specifically become the primary lights that avert (discord — and also) the spread of impurity?

The truth, however, is that this is not the case: The light of ordinary candles — candles unrelated to a mitzvah — is not (always) conducive to peace. Sometimes the opposite may happen: Sometimes, with the added light, a person may see someone (or certain movements or features of his) in a way that the person can't tolerate. In this way, the light may very well engender discord.

Only genuine light — the light referred to in the verse,²⁰ “For a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light,” and “the entire Torah was given to make peace in the world”²¹ — is the true and trusted source of (unity and) peace — peace in the home.

¹⁸ *Shabbos 23b; Mishneh Torah, “Hilchos Chanukah,”* ch. 4, par. 14; *Tur and Shulchan Aruch, “Orach Chaim,”* sec. 263, par. 3; Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, “Orach Chaim,”* sec. 263, par. 1.

¹⁹ *Magen Avraham*, commenting on *Shulchan Aruch*, loc. cit., sub-sec. 13-14 (citing *Mordechai on Shabbos*, ch. 2, sec. 294); see also Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, “Orach Chaim,”* sec. 263, par. 1.

²⁰ *Mishlei 6:23*.

²¹ *Mishneh Torah, “Hilchos Chanukah,”* ch. 4, par. 14.

5.

AN ACTUAL CANDLE

This all explains the connection between Shabbos candles and the prevention of **any** impurity from spreading throughout the house. However, the time frame, “long enough to light a candle,” is mentioned specifically in the context of the impurity of a *metzora*. This shows that protecting oneself from **this** severe impurity has a unique connection with Shabbos candles.

On a simple level, we can suggest: One reason²² a person is afflicted with *tzaraas* is because he violated the sin of *lashon hara*,²³ causing **discord**. Thus, the antidote is Shabbos candles, the purpose of which is primarily to engender **peace** in the home, as discussed.

The explanation according to the inner dimension of Torah — we can clarify this by prefacing with a teaching of our Sages:²⁴ “One accustomed to light candles will have children who are Torah scholars.” Rashi clarifies, “As Scripture says,²⁵ ‘For a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light’ — through the mitzvah-candles of Shabbos and Chanukah, the light of Torah will come.” This indicates that although when Scripture says, “a mitzvah is a candle,” it refers to **all** mitzvos — for every mitzvah a person performs illuminates him and his surroundings — nevertheless, in this regard, the mitzvos involving actual physical light enjoy a certain advantage. This is because **these** mitzvos illustrate more clearly the idea that “a mitzvah is a candle.”

Regarding other mitzvos, the statement that “a mitzvah is a **candle**” is true only in a spiritual sense, and thus, it has no visible impact on the world’s physicality. In contrast, in the case of **these** mitzvos, the idea that “a mitzvah is a candle” is connected to the light of a **physical** candle. Therefore, the impact of the spiritual light (“for a mitzvah is a candle”) occurs in a manner whereby it is visible in this world’s physicality.

²² *Arachin* 16a; Rashi on *Vayikra* 13:46 and *Vayikra* 14:4.

²³ {*Lashon hara* denotes speaking derogatorily about another person.}

²⁴ *Shabbos* 23b.

²⁵ *Mishlei* 6:23.

6.

QUESTIONS ON THE GEMARA ABOUT THE *NER MAARAVI* IN THE *BEIS HAMIKDASH*

On this basis, we can also understand what the Gemara²⁶ says concerning the *ner maaravi*²⁷ in the *Beis HaMikdash*: “It is testimony to the people of the world that the Divine Presence rests among Israel.” (This refers to the miracle that occurred in the *Beis HaMikdash* involving the *ner maaravi*: “He would light the others from it and with it he would conclude.”)²⁸

Seemingly, this is difficult to understand: Many miracles occurred in the *Beis HaMikdash*. As the mishnah says,²⁹ “Ten miracles happened for our forefathers in the *Beis HaMikdash*.” Why, then, is the miracle of the *ner maaravi* singled out from all the other miracles, because it serves as testimony that Hashem’s Presence rests among the Jewish people?

Furthermore, the menorah was placed in the “*Heichal*”³⁰ — not in the “*Ulam*”³¹ {within the *Heichal*} — but the place within the *Heichal* that is referred to as the “*Kodesh*.”³² Not all people could enter the *Kodesh*. In contrast, some of the other “ten miracles” occurred constantly in the Courtyard.³³ [Some miracles actually occurred in Jerusalem outside of the Temple Courtyard.] These other miracles were more “widely known.”³⁴ Why, then, do we say that the miracle of the *ner maaravi* specifically, which occurred **inside the *Kodesh***, served as testimony “**to the people of the world** that the Divine Presence rests among Israel”?

²⁶ *Shabbos* 22b.

²⁷ {The Western Lamp of the menorah.}

²⁸ {All the lamps were filled with the same amount of oil, yet the Western Lamp would continue burning throughout the day after all the others were extinguished. The rest of the lamps burned only at night, and each night, the kohen would rekindle the rest of the lamps from the westernmost lamp.}

²⁹ *Avos* ch. 5, mishnah 5.

³⁰ {The *Heichal* refers to the structure that contained both the *Ulam* and the *Kodesh*. The menorah, the Golden Altar, and the Showbread Table were in the *Kodesh*.}

³¹ {The *Ulam* was the antechamber leading into the *Kodesh*.}

³² *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Beis Habechirah*,” ch. 1, par. 6.

³³ {The Courtyard was the outdoor area of the *Beis HaMikdash* where the large altar, the wash basin, and the slaughtering rings were situated. All Jews were allowed to enter certain parts of the Courtyard.}

³⁴ Rashi on *Yoma* 21a (end) s.v., “*devarai*.”

The explanation is, as discussed above: The Divine light of the *ner maaravi* manifested itself also in physical light. Therefore, it had a stronger effect in illuminating the physical world than the other elements (and miracles) of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Accordingly, specifically, **this** miracle influenced (and served as **testimony** for) “the people of the **world**,” causing them to recognize that the Divine Presence rests among Israel.

On this basis, we can also appreciate a certain unique quality of the Shabbos candles:

Regarding the entire Torah, it says, “The entire Torah was given to make peace in the world.” Meaning, the entire Torah creates peace in the world, but this peace is (primarily) spiritual, unlike the peace generated by Shabbos candles. The peace that the mitzvah of Shabbos candles engenders manifests (also) in **actual** peace in the home. This itself indicates that this mitzvah generates a more powerful peace in the world. [Note that Rambam³⁵ cites the dictum, “The entire Torah was given to make peace in the world,” when he discusses the domestic harmony induced by the Shabbos candles.]

7.

THE TORAH WAS GIVEN TO PROMOTE PEACE BETWEEN THE WORLD AND G-DLINESS

The explanation: One interpretation of the teaching, “The entire Torah was given to make peace in the world,” is as follows: The true reality of the world is G-dliness. As the Alter Rebbe explains at length in *Tanya*:³⁶ The world exists by Hashem recreating it every moment from **nothing** to something.

However, since Divine energy affects the world covertly, the world appears to be an independent existence. In fact, a person might think that “this palace has no supervisor,”³⁷ G-d forbid.

³⁵ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Chanukah*,” ch. 4, par. 14.

³⁶ *Tanya*, “*Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*,” ch. 1 ff.

³⁷ *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 39, par. 1.

This, then, is the novelty and purpose of the idea that “a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is a light.” By studying Torah and performing mitzvos, we illuminate the reality of the world — in the analogy, “the Proprietor of the palace peered down upon it” — and we then can recognize the truth: This palace does have a Supervisor, and, in fact, nothing exists besides Hashem.

This explains the nuance in the dictum, “The entire Torah was *given* to make peace in the world.” The Torah being “given,” **handed down** (here, below in this world), was in order to make peace in the world — by making peace between the world and Hashem. We should see how the world does not oppose G-dliness. Moreover, the purpose of the world is to serve as a home for Hashem. This is accomplished through the Torah and *avodah* performed by the Jewish people.

8.

NO STICK OR STONE IDOLS

On this basis, we can also appreciate the unique quality of the Shabbos candles in that they also bring peace to the world in a more powerful manner (as discussed above in Section 6). Shabbos candles bring about peace in the world — they cause people to see that the true reality of the world is G-dliness — to a greater extent than other mitzvos. [As the *Zohar* says,³⁸ “*For a mitzvah is a candle* — what is meant by ‘a mitzvah is a candle, נר מצוה {lit., “a mitzvah-candle}’? **This refers to...** the Shabbos candles.” The idea of “a mitzvah-candle” — lighting up the world — is embodied in Shabbos candles more powerfully than in other mitzvos, even those mitzvos involving physical candles.]

This explains the deeper reason why, concerning the peace in the home brought about by the Shabbos candles, our Sages use the wording, “so that no one will stumble on a stick or stone.” Why mention specifically a “stick” and a

³⁸ *Zohar*, vol. 2, 166a.

“stone”? By wording it this way, however, the Sages allude to the verse,³⁹ “They said to **wood**: ‘You are my father’; and to **stone**: ‘You have borne me.’” This refers to those who transform sticks and stones into icons, Heaven forbid. This, then, is the accomplishment of the Shabbos candles — “**so that no one** will stumble on a stick or stone.” Meaning, a stick or a stone itself (if not for the illumination provided by Shabbos candles) can cause a person to stumble — to believe that it (the stick or the stone) is an independent entity, with its own power. In fact, a person may call the stick, “father,” and say to the stone, “you have borne me” (turning it into an idolatrous object, Heaven forbid).

Through the light irradiated by the candles — whose properties of “a mitzvah-candle” and (effecting) “peace in the world” are visibly discernible in the world’s physicality — we are assured “that no one will stumble on a stick or stone.” Because people see, with the light of Shabbos candles, that sticks and stones (and everything else in the world) are managed by the Proprietor of the palace, and that sticks and stones, too, should be used for holy matters.

9.

SHABBOS CANDLES AS THE SOLUTION FOR TZARAAS

Based on all the above, we can also appreciate the unique connection between the *metzora*’s purification process and Shabbos candles:

The *metzora*’s impurity is one of the most severe. For this reason, “He shall stay in isolation; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.” A *metzora* is removed from all three camps. Moreover, “he shall stay in **isolation**,” so he may not keep company with even other impure people.⁴⁰ The *metzora*’s place needs to be outside the campsites of even **other impure people**. In other words, he is completely banished from the holy camp.

³⁹ *Yirmiyahu* 2:27.

⁴⁰ Rashi on *Vayikra* 13:46.

The reason: The sin which brings *tzaraas* upon a person — *lashon hara* — is very severe. This sin causes a person (as Rambam writes),⁴¹ “to speak {disparagingly} about G-d, and then to deny His existence out-right.” Meaning, through this sin, a person may eventually, G-d forbid, become cut off completely from Hashem.

For this reason, Shabbos candles specifically can forestall the spread of this impurity. This is because the Shabbos candles have a strong impact on the physicality of the world, to the extent that they ensure that “no one will stumble on a stick or stone” — no one will succumb to idol worship — Heaven forbid (as discussed above at length). Therefore, the Shabbos candles prevent the *metzora’s* impurity from spreading, the impurity that is connected with speaking negatively of G-d and then denying His existence.

10.

ILLUMINATING THE DARKNESS OF EXILE

Based on my father’s explanation in his notes that candle lighting is conceptually similar to the **purification** process of the *metzora* performed by the kohen (discussed in Section 2), we can also appreciate this idea in our context: The power of the Shabbos candles is not limited to their ability to **prevent** the spread of the *metzora’s* impurity. Rather, they also have the power to ensure that utensils remain pure (from the impurity of the *metzora*).

In a similar way, the purity brought about by the kohen resembles the transformation of darkness into light: “One’s intentional sins are counted for him as merits.”⁴² Meaning, the negative consequence described by the verse, “he shall stay in isolation” — the lowest possible descent (as discussed above in Section 9) — is transformed into a positive form of “solitude,” as it says: “It is a

⁴¹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Tumas Tzaraas*,” ch. 16, par. 10.

⁴² *Yoma* 86b.

nation that will dwell in **solitude**”;⁴³ “securely, in **solitude**, in the likeness of Yaakov.”⁴⁴ This is the greatest blessing.

The same applies to the darkness of exile, and specifically to the doubled and redoubled darkness of the generation of the “heels” of Moshiach. The “light” of the Shabbos candles will illuminate the darkness of the exile and nullify it. Moreover, we will arrive at the redemption and the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, “I will show you the candles of Zion,”⁴⁵ and, “Hashem will be an eternal light for you,”⁴⁶ to the extent that very darkness of exile itself will be transformed into light — “Night will shine like the day.”⁴⁷

* * *

11.

ENCOURAGING ALL GIRLS TO LIGHT SHABBOS CANDLES

Based on all the above, we can appreciate how nowadays, when the darkness of the world is so thick and daunting, it is especially important that **every** Jewish daughter, as soon as she reaches the age of education (meaning, from the age at which she can understand the significance of Shabbos and Yom Tov candles)⁴⁸ should light her own candles with a blessing. (This also applies in communities where, until now, girls were not accustomed to light candles from the age of education. Instead, they began lighting Shabbos candles after marriage, and until then, they would fulfill their obligation with their mother’s candle-lighting.)⁴⁹

The light of the Shabbos candles, together with the blessing that she will make upon it, will illuminate her entire life. She will know and recall (as she says

⁴³ *Bamidbar* 23:9.

⁴⁴ *Devarim* 33:28.

⁴⁵ *Yalkut Shimoni*, beg. of “*Behaaloscha*.”

⁴⁶ *Yeshayahu* 60:19.

⁴⁷ *Tehillim* 139:12.

⁴⁸ See the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 343, par. 3.

⁴⁹ **Note — and this is also crucial: In homes, where for whatever reason, the mother does not light the candles — according to all authorities, the daughter must do so (at least from the age of *bat-mitzvah* [12]). Thus, we need to do all we can to ensure this happens. And if the houses of families in her surroundings that are Torah-observant do not do so, certainly, the success of this endeavor will be seriously compromised, as is evident. A word to the wise....**

in the blessing) that Hashem is the “King of the universe.” This will ensure that when she does marry, “Hashem will be an **eternal** light” for her. She, as “the **mainstay** of the home”⁵⁰ — will build and establish her home on the foundations of Torah and mitzvos, aligned with Hashem’s will.

12.

MARRIAGE

Another reason it is necessary for **all** Jewish daughters to light Shabbos candles:

As discussed above (in Section 5), by lighting Shabbos candles, a woman will merit to have children (and sons-in-law)⁵¹ who are Torah scholars. Therefore, in previous generations, when parents would typically arrange the *shidduchim* of their daughters, it was in the mother's merit of lighting Shabbos candles that a daughter would marry a Torah scholar.

However, nowadays, when for whatever reason, **in fact** — whether or not desirable — proposed matches are decided primarily by the daughters, it is even more necessary that the girl herself light Shabbos candles. In the merit of her lighting the mitzvah-candle, she will marry a Torah scholar.

Nowadays — when even in observant homes, we cannot always be sure that parents will have a definite say in their daughter’s life when she grows older — we all need to strive for and try to ensure, **in an even greater measure**, that as early as possible, as soon as a girl reaches the age when she can be educated about lighting Shabbos candles, she should light candles on the eve of every Shabbos and Yom Tov.

This will strengthen Torah’s assurance that she will be raised “to Torah,⁵² marriage, and good deeds”⁵³ and that she will marry a Torah scholar.

— Based on talks delivered on *Shabbos parshas Metzora* 5736 (1976) and *Shabbos parshas Haazinu* 5735 (1974)

⁵⁰ {*Tehillim* 113:9.}

⁵¹ Rashi on *Shabbos* 23b.

⁵² This is the wording also used in connection with the birth of a daughter, based on a letter of the Rebbe Rashab (based on *Berachos* 17a).

⁵³ From the text of the “*MiShebeirach*” said upon the birth of a son or daughter.