



## Parshat Tetzaveh

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### STARTING POINT

**"His Sound Will Be Heard... And He Will Not Die" - by Rabbi Amnon Bazak**

In the description of the cloak worn by the High Priest, we are told, "And you shall make on its edges pomegranates of blue, purple, and red wool, all around the edges, with golden bells between them, all around... And this will be on Aharon when he performs the service, and his sound will be heard when he enters the holy site before G-d and when he leaves, and he will not die." [Shemot 28:33-35]. This verse is somewhat surprising. Why are the bells so important, such that if they are not on the cloak and their sound is missing the High Priest may receive a sentence of death?

The Ramban explains that the death penalty stems from the requirement of respect for the Temple. "It was commanded that he make a noise in the holy site, as if asking for permission to enter before his master, just as one who enters the palace of a king without warning is put to death in accordance with royal laws, as was seen with respect to Achashverosh." That is, to enter the holy site suddenly, without making the sound of the bells, is a sign of disrespect. This is true in both an earthly kingdom and in the kingdom of heaven.

The Rashbam takes a different approach. "Since the Almighty commanded, 'And no man shall be in the Tent of Meeting from when he enters to atone at the Sanctuary, until he leaves' [Vayikra 16:17], He also commanded that 'his sound will be heard when he comes' and those who hear the sound will move away." That is, the obligation to make the noise of bells does not stem from respect for the holiness but from the responsibility of the High Priest for the people of Yisrael. Since the other people are forbidden to be in the Tabernacle together with him, he must announce to all the others when he enters, and if he does not fulfill this obligation he is liable to die.

This second approach taken by the Rashbam seems to correspond best to the simple interpretation of the passage, both for linguistic and conceptual reasons. Based on comparing the texts, a clear correspondence can be seen between the current verse – "and his sound will be heard when he enters the holy site before G-d and when he leaves, and he will not die" – and that quoted by the Rashbam – "no man shall be in the Tent of Meeting from when he enters to atone at the holy site, until he leaves." These are the only two verses in the Torah which contain the contrasting pair, "when he enters... when/until he leaves."

As far as the concept is concerned, the explanation given by the Rashbam helps to complete our understanding of the garments of the High Priest. With respect to the other three garments,

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the link between the item and Bnei Yisrael is clearly noted in the Torah. With respect to the Ephod, it is written, "You shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the Ephod, stones of memory for Bnei Yisrael, and Aharon will carry their names before G-d on his two shoulders, in memory" [Shemot 28:12]. About the Choshen, "And Aharon will carry the names of Bnei Yisrael in the Choshen of Law on his heart when he enters the Sanctuary, as a permanent memory before G-d" [28:29]. And for the Tzitz, it is written, "Let it be on Aharon's forehead, and Aharon will bear the sin of the sacrifices that Bnei Yisrael will consecrate... Let it be on his forehead forever, to bring them favor before G-d" [28:38]. We now see that the cloak also has a direct role to play with respect to Bnei Yisrael, making sure that they do not go into the Temple when the High Priest has entered to atone for their sins.

In summary, even though the purpose of the garments is for "honor and glory" [28:2], the one who wears them must always keep in mind that the honor is that of Bnei Yisrael, and that there is no limit to the high level of responsibility that he must show for the people.

### POINT OF VIEW

**"Does He Need Its Light?" - by Prof. Shalom Rozenberg**

"And you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they take for you pure olive oil... to constantly light a flame, in the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain before the Ark of Testimony..." [Shemot 27:20-21]. The sages remarked, "Does Hashem need its light? Didn't He provide His own light which Bnei Yisrael followed during the forty years that they were in the desert?" [Shabbat 22b]. Our sages answer that this is similar to another passage in the Talmud: "'Take for you' but not 'for me' – I do not need the light, as is true for the table in the north and the Menorah in the south. Rabbi Zerika said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, I do not need food and I do not need light." [Menachot 86b]. Another part of the answer to this question is given in relation to the verse, "And he made for the Temple... sealed transparent windows" [I Melachim 6:4]. "Rabbi Chanina said, There were windows in the Temple through which light would go out into the world, as is written, 'sealed transparent windows.' They were narrow on the inside and wide on the outside, so that the light would spread out in the world."

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[Vayikra Rabba 31:7]. The sages were not sure of the exact configuration of these windows. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that according to Rabbi Chanina the structure was the opposite of the normal principles of optics and architecture, based on the usual assumption that their purpose would be to provide light for the inside of the Temple.

Does He need its light? These words are part of the war of the sages against humanization of G-d and against the mythological approach, based as it is on what is known in psychology as "projection." The idolatrous man projected the natural and social world onto his gods, and this is especially true of his own internal world. He believed that the gods demonstrated exaggerated feelings of such human traits as jealousy, lust, and the desire for honor. The concept of "the image of G-d" [Bereishit 1:27] is the exact opposite. It does not attempt to sanctify our own feelings but rather reveals the ethical norms and practices which should guide our actions. "You shall be holy, for I, your G-d, am holy" [Vayikra 19:2]. Holiness is only one aspect of the general approach, "You shall follow in his path" [Devarim 28:9]. This is the basis of Jewish ethics, "Just as the Almighty shows passion and forgives, so shall you have passion and forgive" [Sifri, Eikev 13].

What should serve as the basis for man's ethics and morality? Among the many answers that have been proposed, one of the most prominent is the classical attempt to find the roots of ethics within nature. According to this approach, we must learn the ways of nature and imitate them. This is the root of the harsh dispute between Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. It is written, "The evil one Turnusroufus asked Rabbi Akiva: Whose actions are nicer, those of the Almighty or those of flesh and blood? He replied, human activity is to be preferred... He said to him, why do you perform the act of circumcision? Rabbi Akiva brought him sheaves of wheat and bread, and he said: this is the work of G-d, and this is the work of man... Isn't the bread an improvement over the wheat? ... Turnusroufus said to him, If G-d wants circumcision, why is a child not born circumcised? Rabbi Akiva said, Why should the umbilical cord come out with the child, so that it hangs from his stomach and his mother must cut it? As to your question, 'why is a child not born circumcised' – this is because G-d only gave the mitzvot to Yisrael in order for them to improve themselves through them..." [Tanchuma Tazria 5].

The mitzva of circumcision is an example of the Jewish principle that nature must be improved, and that raw nature is not appropriate as a model showing the proper path to follow. For this reason, we have been told, "And the wolf will dwell with the sheep, and a tiger will frolic with a goat... and a lion will eat hay like cattle" [Yeshayahu 11:6-7]. We should not try to learn from the laws of the jungle that exist in nature. The Torah has provided a different approach for man, as if we were able to rise above the world and accept a different outlook based on an approach that is external to it. This is a Divine outlook, which allows us to criticize nature, since it contains both good and bad.

Light was always considered a symbol of knowledge. It does not enter the Temple from the outside but bursts out from the Temple. We do not learn ethics from nature. Rather, what we

must do is to project onto nature the principles that we learn from the Temple. The Talmud in Shabbat, quoted above, ends with a commentary on the words, "outside the curtain before the Ark of Witness" – "This bears testimony to the creatures of the world that the Shechina dwells within Yisrael." The Talmud explains, "What is the testimony? Rab (or possibly Rava) said, This refers to the western lamp, where he places the same amount of oil as in the other lamps. He would light the others from this lamp and he would use it to finish the adjustment of the lamps." Lighting the lamps in the Temple, like lighting the Chanukah lamps, involves a miracle. Whether this is an overt miracle or one that is hidden, it is an expression of the Almighty's control over nature. When man lights the lamps, he also serves as a source of the miracle. Acting with an ethical approach is a miracle, with man rising above his nature. And this is the meaning of the phrase, "G-d only gave the mitzvot to Yisrael in order for them to improve themselves with them." G-d has no need for the mitzvot. We need them, in order to live better lives, as a way to free ourselves not only from the temptations but also from the moral hypocrisy that surrounds us.

### SERMON BY A GUEST

**"Let Our Eyes See a King in His Beauty"-by Rabbi Ronen Neuwirth, Central Shaliach of Bnei Akiva North America**

The simple meaning of the relevant passages implies that the purpose of the priestly garments is to glorify those who wear them. "And you shall make holy clothing for your brother Aharon and his sons, for glory and splendor [Shemot 28:2] – so that the priests will be honored and magnificent, in clothing that is glorious and magnificent" [Ramban]. A deeper look shows that the garments play a more central role, not only as a means to an end but as a goal in themselves. This is clearly shown by the fact that a Kohen who does not wear the garments while he performs the holy service is worthy of being put to death: "One who performs the rituals without the proper clothing will be punished by death" [Rashi, Shemot 28:43].

In their commentaries, the sages describe a parallel between the creation of the world and the construction of the Tabernacle. When he enters the Tabernacle, the High Priest is similar to Adam. Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, and he was punished with the concept of death, he received clothing from the Almighty, and he was also expelled from the Garden. When the High Priest, whose task is to reverse the process of sin and punishment, enters the Tabernacle, where the Shechina dwells, (as it did in the Garden of Eden), he is required to wear proper clothing in order to avoid death. Thus, the garments of the High Priest correspond to Adam's clothing.

"And G-d made cloaks of **leather (עור)** for Adam and his wife and dressed them" [Bereishit 3:21]. In Rabbi Meir's Torah scroll, what was written was "cloaks of **light (אור)**" [Breshit Rabba 20:12] (**אור** spelled with an aleph instead of **עור** which is spelled with an ayin). After Adam sinned, the Divine light was stored away, and the spiritual resources were diminished. Body and soul were no longer intimately linked as before, leading directly to the possibility of death. In the future, when death

will cease to exist, full spiritual reality will once again be revealed: "And all **flesh** together will see that the mouth of G-d has spoken" [Yeshayahu 40:5]. Until then, the clothing worn by Adam provided the means to reveal the **light** that had been removed and stored within the rough **skin** made into **leather**; (skin and leather share the same Hebrew word: עוֹר). This was the only way in this World to see the Divine **light**, where the glory of the Shechina is concealed.

And this explains why the idea of a lack of modesty is only revealed to Adam & Eve after the sin in Eden. The consequence of the sin was that man's vision became external only, and it was difficult to see the light because of the obstruction of the skin - the external appearance took on greater importance. Physical beauty, which is skin-deep, may be eye-catching, but it is deceiving, and it does not allow the light and fear of G-d to be perceived. Only an outer garment gives the possibility of a deeper and more insightful vision, filled with the light and fear of G-d: "Grace is a lie and beauty is vain, a woman who fears G-d should be praised" [Mishlei 31:30]. The objective of modesty is not to cause ugliness but to bring about moderation. Beauty is an important value, it can broaden man's understanding. The purpose of modesty, however, is to provide a partial cover of external beauty so that a larger amount of internal beauty will be without becoming hidden by the external glare.

Adam's clothing, a modest garment that allows him to struggle with the contrast between the physical and the spiritual, has been passed on to the High Priest. According to the sages, the High Priest had many material advantages. He was at a higher level than his brothers in good looks, wealth, and strength. These external benefits could have clouded the ability to distinguish between what is of highest importance and what is of secondary importance. Therefore, the High Priest needs special garments to help him redirect his physical attributes towards the service of G-d, to enhance the spiritual glory and magnificence - **לכבוד ולתפארת**. The garments of the High Priest show how even unrefined beauty can be transformed into an implement of Divine glory. These modest clothes refine and elevate the external beauty of the High Priest and give it spiritual significance, as it been said: "מלך ביפיו תחזינה עיניך".

## TORAH, SOCIETY, AND GOVERNMENT

### Eating on the Temple Mount - by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

"And Aharon and his sons will eat... at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting" [Shemot 29:32]. In contrast, "One should not be frivolous in a synagogue; one should not eat or drink there" [Megillah 28a]. Since a synagogue is a model of the Temple, how can it be that the priests are permitted to act frivolously by eating in the Temple, something which is forbidden in a synagogue?

On the other hand, "a man is permitted to enter a synagogue wearing his shoes and his coat, and with dust on his feet. If he must spit, he can do so in the synagogue." [Rambam, Hilchot Tefilah 11:10]. One who enters the Temple Mount must remove his shoes and wash his hands and feet from the Basin. In a synagogue, it is a mitzva to sit down ("Happy are those

who sit in your home" [Tehillim 84:5]), while in the Temple only kings from the House of David are permitted to sit.

The key to understanding these differences is the concept of "Kalut rosh" – lightheadedness or frivolity. In every case, a specific action must be carefully analyzed to determine whether under the circumstances it constitutes a lighthearted approach and humiliation of the place. Take, for example, a cemetery, where it is also forbidden to eat and drink, but in addition "study and review are not permitted" [Hilchot Avel 14:13]. Clearly, in a synagogue study is permitted (otherwise, why would one want to go to a synagogue, where else will he learn and study?). It is also permitted on the Temple Mount, as can be seen from Rabban Gamliel, who was on the Mount when he asked to read something from the Book of Iyov (see Shabbat 115a). In the Temple, eating and drinking are part of the holy rituals, in fact the Kohanim eat so that the owners of the sacrifice achieve atonement. This is a holy act, performance of a mitzva, and in no way does it imply a frivolous approach. In a synagogue (and in a cemetery), eating and drinking is often part of a festive meal where a frivolous attitude might prevail.

Similar ideas might be relevant to the question of sleeping in the Temple and in a synagogue. It is forbidden to sleep in a synagogue, while on the other hand we are told that Shmuel was lying "in the Temple of G-d, where the Ark of G-d was situated" [I Shmuel 3:3]. In addition, the Kohanim go to sleep in a specific room, called Beit Hamoked (Tamid 1:1). Perhaps this is because the Temple is inside a large area, and requiring the people to leave in order to sleep, eat, and drink might lead to the area being abandoned, in contrast to the mitzva that the Temple must be guarded at all times. In a synagogue, a person who feels a need to eat or sleep does not have to go very far. Perhaps this is also the reason that a rest room can be found within the area of the Temple Mount but not inside a synagogue.

Reference: Rabbi Yosef Elbaum, "Techumin," volume 24, pages 489-491

## A LESSON FOR THE CHILDREN

### The Holy Land (Part 2) - by Rabbi Yikhat Rozen, Merkaz Neria, Kiryat Malachi

Summary of Part 1: Shimon, the young immigrant from Yemen, was sent to receive his education on a nonreligious kibbutz. There he enjoyed the good life, although his life was devoid of Torah and mitzvot. He matured, and everything seemed to be going very well, until the day when his entire world crashed around him.

When it came to their children, Shimon and his wife Iris did not hold back in any way. Their sole desire was for the children to grow up as intelligent people who knew how to make a comfortable living for themselves. To achieve this goal they were willing to do anything. The only thing that the children did not receive at all was a Jewish education. In the home of Shimon and Iris the children never saw such things as a siddur or a copy of the Tanach, Tefillin, or Shabbat candles. Out of a feeling of respect the family maintained the traditions of the

holidays and there was a mezuzah on the doorpost, but in every other way the home operated in the spirit of the kibbutz where Shimon was raised, in a completely secular way.

To all appearances, the dream of the parents was fulfilled. And then, one day...

Years passed. The oldest son, Doron, grew up. He finished his army service and entered the Technion to study medicine. One day he arrived home with a young woman, both of them smiling from ear to ear. Doron greeted his parents in a festive voice: "Meet my best friend, my future wife. We have just decided to be married and we came here to tell you the good news. She comes from a good home. Her father is a famous lawyer and her mother is a teacher. She is studying medicine together with me in the Technion. This is a girl with a heart of gold, who is also smart and serious."

"We are very happy," his father said, and he turned to the girl. "What is your name? Where are you from?"

The girl, who had been silent until then, replied with a thick accent: "I give you my greetings. I am very happy to meet Doron's father and mother. My name is Udah, and I live in the village Daliat-Al-Carmel, near Haifa."

The silence that suddenly descended on the room could have been sliced with a knife. Everybody knew that this was a village where no Jews lived. It is one of the Druze villages in the region of the Gallil. It is true that the Druze people have a reputation for being pleasant and friendly to our people. A large number of the men serve in the IDF, and many Jews who live near them have developed friendships and business relationships. However, marriage was a different matter! Could it be that Doron had brought a Gentile woman home and that he really wanted to marry her? What difference did it make if her father was a lawyer and her mother was a teacher? They were still Gentiles! They were not descended from Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov. They had not been together with the Jewish nation through all the many years of success on one hand and oppression on the other. They had not taken part in the experience of "being Jewish." They had not suffered in Yemen from the mockery and the blows of the Gentile children. They had not lived in a camp for immigrants, a "ma'abara," and they were not partners in building the kibbutz movement and the future generations. No! They were not part of us! What did they have to do with Doron?

The amazement turned to anger. Who was this Udah, who had come to steal their Doron, the future grandchildren, and everything that was dear to them? Who had allowed her to study together with their son in the first place? She must leave this house at once! Nobody ever gave her permission to cross the threshold of this house! Let her leave immediately, together with the rest of her people!

Shimon was attacked by his own thoughts without mercy. His voice almost erupted in shouts, and he clenched his fists in a gesture of warning. His anger increased moment by moment, but the oppressive silence remained in the room, and he could not find anything to say. The silence continued for a short time,

until Doron and Udah quietly left the house without saying goodbye.

(To be continued next week.)

## THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS (Pirkei Avot)

### Chapter 5 Mishna 22 - by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv

"Whoever has three traits is a disciple of Avraham, our forefather; while one who has the three opposite traits is a disciple of Bilam, the evil one. One who has a good eye, a low spirit, and a modest soul is a disciple of Avraham. One who has an evil eye, a proud spirit, and a broad soul is a disciple of Bilam."

The discussion here is centered not on the figures from the Torah but rather on their students, and it is clear that a disciple is not only one who directly studies lessons given by the teacher but also one who has learned to absorb the teacher's traits.

In any case, we are given a contrast between (the students of) Avraham and (the students of) Bilam. At first glance, it might be more appropriate to look at Moshe as opposed to Bilam, since they both lived at the same time. While it might be that the fact that Moshe was mentioned in the previous Mishna led to a preference to mention somebody else now, there is also a great degree of similarity between Avraham and Bilam that places even more emphasis on the contrasts between the two.

Both Avraham and Bilam were prophets who operated within the realm of the nations of the world. While Avraham was indeed the father of Yisrael, at the same time he was "the father of many nations" [Bereishit 17:5].

Both Avraham and Bilam were given the key to blessings. The Almighty promised Avraham, "There will be a blessing" [12:2], that is, "You will bless whomever you want" [Rashi]. Bilam has the same power, as Balak says, "For I know that whomever you bless will be blessed, and whomever you curse will be cursed" [Bamidbar 22:6]. This already shows an important difference between the two: Avraham is involved only in blessings, while Bilam also curses, in addition to giving blessings.

The Torah tells us about Bilam's journey, and in some of the details this is reminiscent of Avraham's journey to the binding of Yitzchak. Avraham rises early in the morning to get his donkey ready for the trip, and Bilam does the same. Avraham takes "his two servant boys with him" [Bereishit 22:3], and Bilam also takes "his two servant boys with him" [Bamidbar 22:22].

Not only are some of the details the same, it seems at first glance – and this seems terrible indeed – that both of them are involved in similar tasks. Both of them are on their way to destroy the nation of Yisrael. Bilam has explicitly accepted this mission, while Avraham seems to be headed for the same result, although not on purpose. If he had indeed offered Yitzchak as a sacrifice, this might well have brought about the end of the nation of Yisrael, which was to have descended from him.

Bilam boasts that he knows the will of G-d (Bamidbar 24:16). But this turns out to be an empty boast. Anybody who studies the Torah portion can clearly see how far removed Bilam was from true knowledge of G-d's will, in that he thought that G-d would agree to curse Bnei Yisrael. It would seem that Avraham also did not fully understand G-d's will, thinking that he was to kill Yitzchak, which was evidently never the intention of the Almighty.

There is one vital point that separates the two journeys, such that in the end Avraham's trip was lofty and exalted, while that of Bilam became a symbol of insult and ridicule. Avraham's objective in the journey was to fulfill the will of G-d. His own desire, love, and pity, indeed his entire world outlook and everything that he had done in life until that point, were all set aside in order to completely perform what G-d had commanded him to do. Bilam, on the other hand, hurried to fulfill his own desires. He tried to "bend" or even to completely cancel out the true will of G-d, in an effort to "force" the Almighty to conform to his wishes.

(To be continued next week.)

## LAND OF MY BIRTH

### Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar in Eretz Yisrael - by Zev Wallack

Near Rosh Hashanah 5502 (1741) Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar finally arrived at the coast of Acco, accompanied by thirty of his students and their families. This was not a simple matter; after all, there was none greater and awe-inspiring than the learned rabbi, renowned for his commentary on the Torah, which earned him the title "the Holy Or HaChaim." His main desire was of course to immediately go to Jerusalem and settle there, but at the time there was a terrible epidemic in the area.

With no other option, the rabbi remained for the time being in the port city of Acco, which had a good Jewish community for those times, consisting of about 100 families. Thanks to his dependent student, Rabbi Avraham Yishmael Chai Sanguiniti, who maintained a record of the rabbi's voyage, we know the details of the trip. (This was published by N. Spriel and Rabbi Moshe Avidan.) Immediately after the holiday, during the Ten Days of Penitence, Rabbi Chaim and his students went to visit graves of righteous men of the past. On their way, they passed the village Yashiv, described as follows:

"We found about ten (Jewish) families, whose occupation is planting and harvesting. They observe the ritual of giving maaser and they burn the teruma, and this year... they have not planted because it is Shemitta. They have no remnant of exile, rather they live as we did in the distant past, in freedom and in great peace... They have water like no other in the entire world. There is no jealousy, hate, or competition of any kind among them, for each and every one dwells under his or her own vine and fig tree..."

The group spent Yom Kippur at the Cave of Eliyahu at the Carmel Mountains, experiencing a great spiritual uplifting. The Ne'ila prayer ended with the cry that had been heard many

years before in this area, "G-d is the Almighty!" [I Melachim 18:39]. And on their own initiative they added a new request, "Respond to us just as you responded to Eliyahu on Mount Carmel!" When he returned to Acco, Rabbi Chaim opened a yeshiva, called Knesset Yisrael, attended by students from all the different local Jewish communities. The yeshiva operated until the end of the month of Iyar, but after the unexpected deaths of two of the students, Rabbi Chaim decided to leave Acco, "which was perhaps not in Eretz Yisrael," and to move to the village of Peki'in.

Rabbi Chaim Abulafia, the head of the yeshiva in Teveria, had come to the land one year before, from Izmir. Showing his humility, he invited Rabbi Ben Attar to join him in Teveria and take over his position as head of the yeshiva. The rabbi described his reaction to the offer:

"The distinguished Rabbi Chaim Abulafia has tried to convince me to settle in Teveria, for he said that he is old, may G-d watch over him, and he is no longer able to participate in the struggle for Torah, which is the main task in building the city. He wanted me to go there, and to give me complete authority... I said to him that the matter depends on my colleagues who have volunteered to finance the Beit Midrash, and that we had made a decision that the place would be built in Jerusalem..."

Indeed, at the end of his first year in Eretz Yisrael, when he was told that the epidemic had subsided in the area of Yehuda, Rabbi Chaim and his yeshiva moved to Jerusalem. Here he found a small and poor Jewish community that subsisted mainly on contributions from abroad. He was of course welcomed in great honor, and he established the Midreshet Knesset Yisrael. In this yeshiva, he was mainly involved in studying the rulings of the Talmud and the Rambam, and he summarized these studies in his book, "Rishon L'Tzion."

Together with his deep study Rabbi Chaim never abandoned his efforts to bring the time of redemption closer. For this purpose, the students of his Beit Midrash were occupied in such matters as Chassidic thought, abstinence and fasting, increased prayer, "Tikun," and "Zi'ara" – visiting graves of the ancient sages. In his time he was one of the very few who felt the urgent need to leave the dangers of the exile and return to the promised land. He urged the complacent inhabitants of the Diaspora, "Is it good for you to live on the outside, exiles from your father's table? How can you feel that your life is pleasant?" He wrote a special prayer, as follows:

"Remember our love and our attraction, and return your Shechina to our Temple, and come to be happy with us as in the days of old, for your separation from us is as difficult as separating our soul from our spirit."

Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar lived in Jerusalem for only ten months. He had lived in Eretz Yisrael for less than two years. He was taken to heaven at the age of 47. However, in the end he served as a pillar of fire who preceded the rest of the nation in its return to Zion.

## THE CHAIN OF HALACHA

### Why Is It the Woman Who Lights Candles? - by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, Rabbi of Southern Alon Shevut and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion

It is written, "Both men and women are obligated to have a candle lit for Shabbat in the home" [Orach Chaim 263:3]. That is, men are obligated just like women. However, in the writings of the sages it is clear that this mitzva is most relevant for the women. "Women die in childbirth because of three sins, if they are not careful with menstrual blood, setting aside challah from dough, and lighting candles." [Mishna Shabbat 6:2]. Why have the women been singled out? Several reasons have been given:

(1) Rambam: "Specifically women have been warned about this because they spend their time in the home and are responsible for the affairs of the home" [Hilchot Shabbat 5:2, repeated in Orach Chaim 263:3]. This is not just a technical explanation. The link between the home and the candles would seem to be related to the essence of the matter. The essence of the candles is related to peace in the home, as can be seen from the Rambam: "If one must choose between a candle for the home and a candle for Chanukah, the candle for the home is given preference, because of the need for peace in the home." [Hilchot Chanukah]. The woman holds the main responsibility for peace in the home, in terms of education and external appearance, and she was therefore given the privilege of lighting candles, which maintain the peace and tranquility of the house. My father told me that the woman lights the candles in the home and thereby prepares it to achieve peace and tranquility, while the man recites the "Havdalah" at the end of Shabbat, thereby transferring the people of the home back to weekday pursuits.

(2) Midrash: "Why have women been commanded to light the Shabbat candles? It is because G-d is the candle of the world, as is written, 'The soul of man is the candle of G-d' [Mishlei 20:27]. But Chava arrived and extinguished the flame. So the Almighty said: Let her have the mitzva of the candle, in order to atone for the flame she extinguished." [Bereishit Rabba 17:7, quoted by Rashi, Shabbat 32a]. This is related to the fact that G-d has included in the world a mechanism for repentance. Our entire existence is an attempt to atone for the sin of Adam and Chava. Evidently there are some faults which can best be repaired by men, while other faults which can best be mended by women. Lighting candles adds to sanctity and leads to the mending of the world, and the woman has been privileged with the obligation to perform this mitzva.

The candle symbolizes the root of Shabbat and the foundation of the world. G-d has caused spiritual holiness to descend into the physical world, and the candle symbolizes the combination of spiritual light and physical fuel. In lighting the candle, we expand the light and the holiness in our physical world, and this is also related to the roots of Shabbat.

(3) The Zohar brings another reason: "She is required to light the candles on Shabbat eve, in order to ignite the torch of love for her husband... The kindling of the heat of Shabbat eve by

the woman must include love and fear." [Tikunei Zohar 16]. The candle is meant to join man and woman together and to enhance the love between them. As is written, "With respect to a man and a woman, if they succeed, the Shechina dwells between them, and if they do not succeed, they will be consumed by fire" [Sotta 17a]. Thus, the candles serve as a way to broaden the element of Shechina and holiness between a woman and her husband. This is a link that ties the entire family together in Divine sanctity.



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## Religious Zionists of America – Mizrachi, Upcoming events

March 16<sup>th</sup>

Part III of our series

“Israel, 100 Years From 1948...”

continues with

**Daniel Goldhagen**

on the future of the  
JEWISH STATE

at the Jewish Center at 8:00 PM

131 West 86<sup>th</sup> Street

April 5<sup>th</sup>

Save the Date

We look forward to having you join us at our

**Annual Dinner**

May 26<sup>th</sup>

**RZA's MISSION TO ISRAEL**

**“MIZRACHI ULTIMATE ADVENTURE”**

“קום התהלך בארץ...” (בראשית י"ג, י"ז)

“Arise. Walk through the Land...”

EXPERIENCE ISRAEL LIKE YOU NEVER HAVE BEFORE  
Walk, Hike, Jeep, Raft, Climb, Explore, Learn

SEVEN DAYS OF ULTIMATE ISRAEL

(FOR ADULTS WHO CAN HACK IT)

MAY 26<sup>TH</sup> THRU JUNE 2<sup>ND</sup> (WITH A JUNE 5<sup>TH</sup> OPTION)

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 212-465-9234