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Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

Fire of Anger on Shabbat

By HaRav Eli Mansour (shiur E7)

Changing a Middah is tricky; only the choice few people have done it. But what if we had a great incentive to change our anger into peace? Would we focus on that incentive to help us make the shift from irritable to peaceful?

Learning the Perek במה מדליקין

Many communities, like the Syrian community, have the custom to learn the second Perek of Masechet Shabbat, במה מדליקין, after welcoming the Shabbat with the Perek of Tehillim that invokes the Shabbat – מזמור שיר ליום השבת.

We might wonder why, out of 24 Perakim that are contained in Masechet Shabbat, did חז"ל choose this Perek.

A simple answer might be that since we lit candles just a short while ago it is a דבר בעתו – a timely message – to learn about Hadlaket Neiroi. But that is hardly satisfying. After all, we also just put up a pot to cook over Shabbat (במה טומנין), we checked our pockets to make sure that we are not carrying anything which is forbidden to carry on Shabbat, and so on. Many Perakim are timely as Shabbat begins.

How we are to light the candles

Perhaps the choice of במה מדליקין is so that we can answer the question of *how* we are to light the candles, and the answer to that question

carries on throughout Shabbat. The last Mishna teaches:

שלושה דברים צריך אדם לומר בתוך ביתו ערב שבת עם חשיכה: עישרתם? עירבתם? הדליקו את הנר.

There are three things which a person must say in his home at the onset of Shabbat. (1) Did you take tithes (produce of the land of Israel from which tithes have not been removed are Tevel and may not be consumed; removing the tithes on Shabbat is problematic)? (2) Did you set the Eruv (one may not carry from one private domain to another without having set aside the food for the Eruv)? And (3) 'light the candles' (since one may not light candles on Shabbat and one should not sit in the dark when eating the Shabbat meal).

The last of the three is not a question; it is an instruction. Now that we have checked off the other items which cannot be done once we have welcomed the Shabbat, we are ready to light the candles and invoke the sanctity of the Shabbat.

Give instructions gently

The Gemara points out that this instruction, and by extension, any instruction, must be given gently.¹ A home needs a leader and decision

*A home needs a
leader and
decision maker –
not a terrorist.*

¹ צריך למימרינהו בניחותא ומובא בהלכה או"ח סימן ר"ס סעיף ב'.



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maker, not a terrorist.² Presumably, the Gemara draws this from the language of the Mishna which says that these three things should be said 'in one's house.' That means that the words should be contained, restrained, and gentle, as befits one who is 'in one's house.' It also implies that the neighbors are not alerted to what one is saying in one's house. Raised voices do not only disrupt one's home; they disrupt others' homes as well. A wise, gently spoken instruction carries far more weight than a bark. It may be a challenge to realize that in the moment, but the payoff of being aware is endless.

The fire of גיהנום

The של"ה הקדוש comments on the words of the Pasuk:

לא תבערו אש בכל משבתיכם ביום השבת (שמות לה: ג)

Do not kindle fire in any of your residences on Shabbat

On the face of it, the Torah is informing us that we may not light a fire on Shabbat. But the words take on additional meaning when we learn from the Zohar that the Pasuk refers to *any* fire, even the spiritual fire of Gehinnom. Hashem, so to speak, also refrains from lighting fire on Shabbat. Even the evildoers who are condemned to Gehinnom get a break on Shabbat.

The של"ה הקדוש reminds us that each of our actions causes a reaction. If we kindle the 'fire' of anger on Shabbat, then the spiritual flames of

Gehinnom are also kindled on Shabbat. Those fires affect one while one is still among the living as well as that person when they are no longer among the living.³ The incentive for working on shifting aggravation to calm and acceptance is strong, indeed.

Anger brings Tum'ah

The אריז"ל points out that one who gets angry is surrounded with a form of טומאה and he advised one who got angry to immerse in a מקוה. The Gematria of כעס (+1 for the word itself) equals מקוה.

Satan has a stake in the home

The בן איש חי goes to great lengths to remind us that anything which seems to promote discord on ערב שבת should not be attributed to the presenting cause. Things go wrong on ערב שבת. Ask electricians, plumbers, and appliance repair people when the frantic calls come in. The largest number come in on ערב שבת. But, teaches the בן איש חי, do not blame the person or the machine. The presenting cause is nothing but the machinations of Satan who knows what is really at stake.

The Satan wants to force the good angel's hand

If the Satan can disrupt the harmony of the home, then he can force the good angel to answer אמן when the person enters his home on the eve of Shabbat.⁴ The Satan looks for disarray

² לעולם אל יטיל אדם אימה יתירה בתוך ביתו (גיטין ג).

³ ed note: אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן כל הכועס כל מיני גיהנם שולטין בו

⁴ שבת דף קיט: רבי יוסי בר יהודה אומר: שני מלאכי השרת מלוין לו לאדם בערב שבת מבית הכנסת לביתו, אחד טוב ואחד רע. וכשבא לביתו ומצא נר דלוק ושלחן ערוך ומטתו מוצעת, מלאך טוב אומר: יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כך. ומלאך רע עונה אמן בעל כרחו. ואם



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in the home, and there could hardly be more disarray than disharmony. The moment when a man enters his home on the eve of Shabbat is a potential flash point, and the Satan tries to capitalize on the potential for discord and tension.

Politics in Shul – another flashpoint

Another potential flash point for discord is in Shul. I have often thought that the Satan takes up residence in the thermostat of the Shul. That would explain why so many people are drawn into arguing over getting the temperature right. Again, special attention needs to be given to

cooling the 'heat' of discord in Shul to prevent inevitable 'politics' from disrupting the peace of Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom

Perhaps the reason that we repeat over and again **שבת שלום** is to provide us with steady reminders to keep our sights set on peace and tranquility on the sacred day of Shabbat.

Anger is never a good idea. It wreaks havoc any day of the week. But Shabbat is a guest and if we argue in front of the guest it could cause the guest to be uncomfortable and not want to return to bring its blessings into the home.

Takeaway: I will put special focus on containing my tension on Erev Shabbat so that I can ensure a peaceful environment then and throughout Shabbat.

לאו, מלאך רע אומר: יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כך, ומלאך טוב עונה אמן בעל כרחו.