



Blessing the Palace

By Rebbetzin Shira Smiles (Shiur E9)

What is the significance of having the house ready for Shabbos?

The Angels

The Gemara teaches:

תניא, 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 לאו, מלאך רע אומר: יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כך, ומלאך טוב עונה: אמן בעל כרחו. (שבת קיט:)

Two ministering angels escort a person home from Shul on Friday night. One is good, the other bad. When one enters one's home and finds candles lit, the table set and the bed made, the good angel declares, 'May it be His will that it should be so for another Shabbos.' The bad angel is compelled to respond Omein. The opposite happens if those are not found in the home.

Why do we need more than the food?

We are left wondering why, so long as there is food for the Seudah, does the rest of the home, the beds, the table, and the candles make such a difference? Surely, we can take care of those as we go along.

כבוד שבת

Rav Moshe Meir Bernstein, in his ספר תכלית אור, points out that the issue at hand is כבוד שבת. The angels see whether the home reflects a desire for, an appreciation of, and an anticipation of the coming שבת as a distinguished guest.

If one were going to host a גדול הדור, we would get a glimpse of what anticipation means. No stone of preparation would be left unturned and the freshly bathed children waiting at the window would attest to the spirit of excitement that filled the house. That image gives us a sense of the spirit with which we are meant to welcome and anticipate the שבת קודש.

(Surely, the table would be covered and set. Indeed, all the tables in the house would be adorned with a special covering that announces the special honor of hosting the precious guest. Indeed, the מנהג is for the dining room table to be covered at all times, even the top tablecloth is being replaced for cleaning or when nobody is eating there.)

The angels bring the שכינה into your home with them.

The angels bring the שכינה

The תיקוני זוהר says that the angels do not simply come and check if the home is ready for Shabbos; they bring the שכינה into the home with them. And so, at issue in our preparation is the degree to which we hold the שכינה to be precious. The anticipation of שבת is a spiritual pulse check.

You are leaving home on the שבת transport

The נתיבות שלום (the previous Slonimer Rebbe compared the arrival of שבת קודש to a ride which transports us out of our homes and into a



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different dimension. We are transported כביכול into the מלך של מלך – into the King's palace. We will be spending שבת קודש in the courtyard of the King. There are many implications to that idea.

It is the King's meal

The Gemara teaches:

אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל: בני, לוו עלי וקדשו קדושת היום, והאמינו בי ואני פורע. (ביצה טו:)

Hashem says to Klal Yisroel, 'my children, take loans and sanctify the שבת and trust in Me that I will repay (the loans).

One of the implications of our being transported to the courtyard of the King is that the festive meal is sponsored by the King. Those who eat the סעודה for the sake of the שבת קודש can be assured that the expense will be borne by the Court.

What we touch

Another implication of the idea that we are being transported to the palace has to do with what we do and what we touch. When we or our children are guests, we do not touch the ornaments or take anything from the pantry without permission; we keep our hands to ourselves. Hence, the Halachos of מוקצה (as well as the מלאכות in general) take on a new meaning. In the palace we do not just do whatever occurs to us or touch whatever happens to be at hand.

It is reported that great בעלי מוסר could be seen with their hands shaking as the sun set on Friday. They were focused on what they were

Takeaway: I will try to focus on my relationship with Hashem as I anticipate the arrival of the שכינה.

going to touch and what they were going to avoid touching and the concern made its way to their nervous system – their hands spoke to their developed שמים.

The אמהות look for the מלאכים

We are taught that there were qualities which characterized the tents of the אמהות (חז"ל) שרה אמינו regarding specifically describe them (בראשית כ"ד, טז) on רש"י see רבקה אמינו and

וַיְבָאֵהָ יִצְחָק הָאֵהָלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רֵבְקָה וַתְהִי־לָוּ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּאָהֲבֶהָ וַיִּנָּחַם יִצְחָק אֶת־רֵי אִמּוֹ:

רש"י מבאר: האהלה שרה אמו. ויביאה האהלה ונעשית דוגמת שרה אמו, כלומר והרי היא שרה אמו, שכל זמן ששרה קיימת היה נר דלוק מערב שבת לערב שבת, וברכה מצויה בעיסה, וענן קשור על האהל, ומשמתה פסקו, וכשבאת רבקה חזרו.

and those are the qualities which the מלאכים are checking for in our homes. The ברכה מצויה בעיסה is the set table, the נר דלוק מע"ש לע"ש is the lit candle and the ענן קשור is the reference to the presence of the שכינה, a function of בית שלום, the harmony between husband and wife which brings the שכינה, which the 'made beds' represent.

When the מלאכים see the qualities of the אמהות they give a Brocha that this should be a preamble to the שבת אחרת which does not only mean next week, but the eternal שבת of הבא עולם. It is a blessing that this family should experience the ultimate שבת. As we know, מי שטרם בערב שבת, שכינה בא – anticipating the arrival of the שכינה here is a signal that one has a relationship with eternity