

Dear Friends,

It's erev Shabbos. Somehow, we've made it through another difficult week. For each one of us, that meant something different. All of us shouldered different burdens and carried our own unique set of worries, and all of us needed to draw on different strengths and inner resources to get through. Some moments were easier and some were harder. **But now, it's time to usher in Shabbos.**

Of course, we do that through the mitzvah of hadlakas neiros, licht bentchen.

The Gemara tells us that one of the reasons for the mitzvah of hadlakas neiros is to bring shalom bayis:

Ein shalom elah b'ner, shemeiar vayar Elokim as h'ohr ki tov—*There is no peace, but with a ner, as it says, 'And Hashem saw the light and it was good'.*

So we see that we need an extra light on Shabbos, because light is connected with peace, shalom. Light is connected with tov, as it says in the Torah.

I wonder how many of us have experienced true darkness in its rawest physical form. In the city, we have streetlamps and headlights, and the lights which beam out from every home. The darkness is thus mitigated. In remote spots, , where there is almost no civilization, **the darkness of the night is so profound that it presses into you.** You hold out your arm in front of you and you can't even see your hand. You can barely even feel your own body, so dark is it. And there's also a kind of dizziness that comes with that disconnect.

Darkness - choshech, prevents us from interfacing with the world. Relationships cease. We're not even able to be in touch with ourselves.

In contrast, light -ohr is what enables us to connect, to ourselves and to form relationships, to feel a sense of inner shalom, wholeness and peace. That's why it's tov. That's why it brings shalom, peace. When the world is illuminated, we can be productive, filled with energy. We can forge the bonds that come of understanding each other and supporting each other.

Shabbos is the crescendo of creation. It's the point of arrival—the destination after a week of journeying. **That point of arrival is a place of light.** A place where we feel unified, close, a kirvas halev with the people around us. **That's why Shabbos is associated with light, and that's why Shabbos is associated with peace.**

But what happens when we come to hadlakas neiros and our insides are churning? When we're being squeezed by a feeling of quiet desperation? What if we're just very very sad?

The Arizal provides an answer.

The word ner, made up of the letters nun and reish, has the gematria of 250. The Arizal tells us that 250 corresponds to the limbs of a woman. How is that? we know that a woman has 248 limbs, not 250?

The Arizal explains: at the time when a woman lights ner Shabbos, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Kivyocheh, puts His arms around the woman and He lights along with her. **He stands with her as He entrusts her with the mission to bring light into the world.**

We're in a period of choshech. And increasingly, it's not just comparable to the darkness of the city. It's like the pitch darkness of the remote country road. It presses down on us. It squeezes our hearts.

This week, before we strike the match, before we kindle the ner, let's take a moment. Let's feel that we have 250 limbs, instead of 248. Let's close our eyes and linger for just a moment, as we feel Hakadosh Baruch Hu's arms around us, lighting the neiros together with us. Let's savor that, take it into our hearts, **let it calm, soothe, and illuminate.**

Wishing all of us a beautiful Shabbos, filled with light and peace, in our homes and in our hearts. **Wishing all of us the comfort that comes from feeling Hashem's arms around us.**

Gut Shabbos,

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