

קבלת שבת - קבלת פני שכינה

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## *Welcoming Shabbos Is Akin to Greeting the Shechinah*

### *Not Just a Mitzvah*

ONE OF THE MOST beautiful aspects of Shabbos is greeting and receiving Shabbos when it begins, and escorting it out when it ends.

No Yom Tov or any other special time receives a welcome like this. It is only on the holy day of Shabbos that we have this special mitzvah of *Kabbalas Shabbos*, where we greet the Shabbos Queen. We address her as if she were a person, and say: *Bo'i Kallah, Bo'i Kallah, Shabbos Malkesa!*

And when Shabbos ends, we escort her out with a special meal called the *Melaveh Malkah*, "the escorting of the Queen." Perhaps there's a mitzvah to eat a meal after Yom Tov too, but that meal isn't called a *Melaveh Malkah*. Only Shabbos do we escort and address as "Queen."

*Chazal* frequently refer to Shabbos as a definite being. For instance:

Shabbos said to HaKadosh Baruch Hu: "*Ribbono shel Olam*, to all of them You gave a mate. [Each of the weekdays, of which there are an even number, pairs off with another, forming a couple.] But I have no mate."

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HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to her: "Knesses Yisrael is your mate."<sup>1</sup>

We see that Shabbos conducts itself as a person. She comes and leaves. She speaks up and makes claims. We honor her and take care not to insult her. And according to *Sefer Yerei'im* there is a special mitzvah of fearing Shabbos: We are to be in fear and awe of her greatness.<sup>2</sup>

But what is the meaning of all this? Why is Shabbos in particular treated as an actual individual? We refer to Shabbos as a guest in our home. None of the Yomim Tovim or other mitzvos are depicted as personalities, besides Shabbos. Tefillin is a mitzvah, mezuzah is a mitzvah, and Pesach and Shavuos are also mitzvos.

Shabbos is a personality.

If so, let us understand who Shabbos is. Whom are we welcoming when the sun sets on Friday? We are not asking, "What is Shabbos?" Rather, we are asking, "Who is Shabbos?"

### *Three Halachos of Receiving the Shechinah*

The Brisker Rav, *zt"l*, wrote something astounding about *Kabbalas Shabbos*.<sup>3</sup> This "reception ceremony" is actually learned from what took place when the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai. There, the Jewish people greeted and received the *Shechinah* in the same manner that a king is greeted and received.

He explains that there are three halachos of *Kabbalas Shabbos*, resembling the three instructions given to the Jews when they received the *Shechinah* at Har Sinai.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Bereishis Rabbah* 11:8.

2. *Siman* 410.

3. See *Gry"z al HaTorah, parashas Yisro*.

4. *Shemos* 19:9-7.

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1. "They shall wash their garments." When one comes to greet the King, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, one must don nice clothing in His honor.

2. "And they shall be ready for the third day." When Hashem arrives, one must be ready as if a great king were expected to arrive. One should be sitting and waiting for Hashem, lest He arrive while one is busy with other matters.

3. "Moshe brought the people out to greet God." There is a special halachah to go out and greet the *Shechinah*.

These three halachos, says the Brisker Rav, apply to *Kabbalas Shabbos* as well.

The first is to don nice clothing. Men observe this halachah pretty well, because they are usually dressed in their Shabbos clothes when Shabbos arrives. But it is important for women to know about this halachah as well. Often a woman is still dressed in a simple weekday robe when she lights Shabbos candles. But really by the time Shabbos begins, we should *already* be wearing our finest clothing; we shouldn't put them on just for the meal, because at the time of candle-lighting, the *Shechinah* is already arriving.

The second halachah is not to be busy when Shabbos arrives. This is something men should know. Many men utilize the moments before candle-lighting to take care of last-minute details. They are busy putting *muktzeh* items away and completing various small tasks. But this is not the proper way; one should be sitting and waiting for *Shabbos Kodesh* to arrive. The Rambam also speaks about this:

And one should be sitting respectfully and looking forward to greeting Shabbos as one would go to greet the king.<sup>5</sup>

5. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Shabbos 30:2.*

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The third halachah is to go out to greet Shabbos — *bo'u v'neitzei likras kallah*. The Rambam says about this:

The earlier Sages would gather their *talmidim* on *erev Shabbos* and don their cloaks and say: "Come, let us go out to greet Shabbos, the King!"<sup>6</sup>

Our generation is not accustomed to doing this. If we were to go out into our streets as they are today, it is not Shabbos we would find there...Nevertheless, we can and should find Shabbos within our homes.

***Focusing  
on Greeting  
Hashem***

Why is it that we have this special halachah of *Kabbalas Shabbos*, greeting Shabbos?

There are two kinds of mitzvos. The majority of mitzvos, such as eating matzah or putting on tefillin, fall into the first category. When we fulfill these mitzvos, the main focus is that we are doing as Hashem commanded.

But there is another kind of mitzvah. For example, "*Three times a year, all your males shall appear before Hashem, your God, in the place He will choose.*"<sup>7</sup> This is the mitzvah of coming to the Beis HaMikdash for the *Shalosh Regalim* in order to "see" Hashem's presence and be "seen" by Him. Here, fulfilling the mitzvah is more than just doing as Hashem commanded. It is actually greeting and receiving Hashem's presence. It is a personal relationship with Hashem.

So it is with *Shabbos Kodesh*. It is the main mitzvah in which we develop a personal relationship with Hashem.

When we greet Shabbos, we are actually greeting the *Shechinah*. Some commentaries explain that when we say the words *bo'i kallah* in the *piyut* of *Lecha Dodi*, the word *kallah* refers

6. Ibid.

7. *Devarim* 16:16.