



Protecting Your Teshuvah Investment

In today's financially uncertain times, people look for ways to protect their investments. No one wants to lose his hard-earned money in some bad investment.

When we think about the amount of time we spend on *teshuvah* each year, we might expect people to take similar care of protecting that investment. And yet one of the themes that you commonly hear from people during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is the problem of recidivism. People tend to feel that even if they put their most earnest efforts into doing *teshuvah*, their investment will only last for a limited time. "Come the end of Succos," a little voice in our head says to us, "you'll slide back into the very same person you were before Rosh Hashanah."

And then that little voice follows up with the most frightening two words: "Why bother?"

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Why go through all the trouble of doing *teshuvah* if we know that in a few weeks, we will be in an inexorable backslide to where we were beforehand?

I would like to take a new approach to this problem — one that doesn't initially seem to have any bearing on *teshuvah*: I would like to suggest that we can protect our carefully invested *teshuvah* hours by beginning to keep Shabbos.

Keep Shabbos? You're probably thinking. *I keep Shabbos every week!*

Let me share a story to explain what I mean.

There was a family in Baltimore that got into one car accident after another. After five traffic accidents in the course of two years, this family's insurer wanted to revoke their automobile insurance policy. Their insurance agent, who was also a member

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of the *frum* community, contacted the insurance company and pointed out that his client was not at fault in four out of five of the accidents. The insurance company replied that the family must have "bad karma," and that was the reason why they had been in so many accidents. The insurance agent suggested that the head of the family, who was a fine *talmid chacham*, visit Rav Yaakov Weinberg, Rosh HaYeshivah of Ner Yisrael. Rav Weinberg listened to the details of the accidents, and remarked that the descriptions reminded him of the Torah's capital punishment of *sekilah* (lit., *stoning*). He suggested that perhaps the family was involved in some sort of transgression that would incur the punishment of *sekilah* and that's why they kept getting into such accidents.

What on earth could a *frum* family be doing that would incur *sekilah*?

Rav Weinberg presumed that the only thing he could imagine them doing that would fall into that category was *chillul Shabbos*.

“*Chillul Shabbos?*” the head of the family asked in shock. “In our family?”

“What’s your house like on *Erev Shabbos?*” Rav Weinberg asked.

“Well,” this man began, “there’s a lot of tension, a lot of screaming and yelling.”

“What time does your wife light the candles?” Rav Weinberg continued.

“Usually pretty late,” the man admitted. “Sometimes only a few minutes before *shekiah* (sundown).”

“That’s the kind of *chillul Shabbos* I’m referring to,” Rav Weinberg explained. “I’m not accusing you of actually transgressing anything that’s prohibited, but of being guilty of things that *shmek* (waft) of *chillul Shabbos*.”

“From now on,” he suggested, “the entire family should try to be ready a full half-hour before Shabbos. No cleaning, no cooking, no showers from half an hour before Shabbos. Be completely ready, and then sit and learn a *sefer* until Shabbos.”

The family implemented Rav Weinberg’s suggestion, and lo and behold, the accidents stopped.

The insurance agent then returned to the insurance company and said that it wasn’t a driving issue, it was a religious issue. The same company that was ready to revoke the policy due to karma was willing to accept the religion card, and they renewed the policy.

This is what I’m referring to when I suggest that we start keeping Shabbos.

I’m not suggesting that anyone is remiss in keeping the basic *halachos*, but I’m referring to keeping Shabbos “for real.”

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A Contradiction?

Rav Weinberg’s explanation that there are two levels of keeping Shabbos also resolves an apparent contradiction between

two passages from *Chazal*.

In Talmud Bavli (*Shabbos* 118b), the Gemara states that if Klal Yisrael would keep two Shabbosos *kehilchasan*, they would merit immediate redemption.

Talmud Yerushalmi (*Taanis* 1:1) states that if Klal Yisrael would keep *one* Shabbos *ketiknah*, Mashiach would come immediately.

Which one is it? Do we have to keep two Shabbosos to merit redemption, or is one enough?

If you pay close attention to the words, the difference is obvious. Talmud Bavli states that if people would keep Shabbos *kehilchasan*, according to halachah — i.e., to the letter of the law — they will merit redemption. This is referring to people who are careful not to do any of the 39 *melachos* (prohibited actions) or any of the *d'rabbanans* (rabbinic prohibitions) on Shabbos. If Klal Yisrael keeps Shabbos at that level, they can merit redemption — but only after two Shabbosos.

It is a level to reach for, but it's not the ultimate.

The ultimate level is the one the Yerushalmi refers to: keeping Shabbos *ketiknah*, as it's meant to be kept. If we can keep Shabbos at that level, we need to keep only one Shabbos in order to merit redemption.

Shabbos shouldn't be only about avoiding transgressing the halachos; there has to be a higher level of Shabbos observance that we're trying to attain.

The Chofetz Chaim finds an allusion to these two forms of Shabbos in a *zemer* we sing at the night *seudah*: כָּל מְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁבִיעֵי בְרָאוּי לוֹ, כָּל שׁוֹמֵר שֶׁבֶת בְּדַת מְהַלְלוֹ. The second half of this phrase refers to those who keep Shabbos *kehilchasan*, according to its laws, taking care to avoid *chillul Shabbos*. The first half speaks of those who sanctify Shabbos *ketiknah*, as is appropriate.

Because Shabbos shouldn't be only about avoiding transgressing the *halachos*; there has to be a higher level of Shabbos observance that we're trying to attain.

Shabbos and Teshuvah

Now, what is the correlation between Shabbos and *teshuvah*?

A Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 22:13) alludes to a strong connection between the two.

After Kayin killed Hevel, part of his punishment was: נַע וְנָדַד בְּאֶרֶץ, *You shall become a vagrant and a wanderer on earth* (*Bereishis* 4:12). When Kayin heard this, he asked Hashem: הֲנִחֵהוּ אֱלֹהִים מִפְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה וּמִפְּנֵיךָ אֶסְתֵּר וְהִייתִי נַע וְנָדַד בְּאֶרֶץ וְהָיָה כָּל גֹּרֶשֶׁת אֹתִי הַיּוֹם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה וּמִפְּנֵיךָ אֶסְתֵּר וְהִייתִי נַע וְנָדַד בְּאֶרֶץ וְהָיָה כָּל מִצְאֵי יַהֲרַגְנִי, *“Behold, You have banished me this day from the face of the earth — can I be hidden from Your presence? I must become a vagrant and a wanderer on earth; whoever meets me will kill me!”* (ibid. v. 14).

Hashem replies: לָכֵן כָּל הַרְג קַיִן שְׂבָעִים יָמִים יִקָּם וְיִשָּׂם ה' לְקַיִן אוֹת, *“Therefore, whoever slays Kayin, before seven generations have passed he will be punished.”* And Hashem placed a mark upon Kayin, so that none that meet him might kill him (ibid. v. 15).

The Torah’s narrative ends with the words: וַיֵּצֵא קַיִן מִלְּפָנֵי ה' וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ נוֹד קְדֵמַת עֵדֵן, *Kayin left the presence of Hashem and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden* (ibid. v. 16).

The Midrash takes note of the odd use of the words וַיֵּצֵא קַיִן in this *pasuk*. “Where was he leaving from?” wonders the Midrash.

The Midrash answers that he was leaving from his “trial” before Hashem joyously because he had received a favorable verdict. The Midrash says that Adam HaRishon asked his son Kayin what his verdict was, and Kayin’s answer was: עָשִׂיתִי וְנִתְפַּשְׁרְתִּי, *“I did teshuvah, and I reached a compromise.”*

Adam HaRishon found this verdict so favorable, in fact, that he clapped his hands to his face and said, “Such is the power of *teshuvah* and I was never aware of it!” He immediately broke out in praise of Hashem, composing the psalm *Mizmor Shir Leyom HaShabbos*.

There are several significant questions regarding this Midrash.

First, did Adam HaRishon not know that there was such a

thing as *teshuvah*? Wasn't he doing *teshuvah* for the monumental sin of eating from the Eitz HaDaas?

Second, Kayin's description of his verdict — "I did *teshuvah*, and I reached a compromise" — is astounding. Hashem is not a lawyer or a judge with whom you can reach a compromise; His judgments are purely just. What did Kayin mean?

Third, we can understand that Adam HaRishon was excited about Kayin's verdict, but of all the words he could use to praise Hashem for it, why would he compose the psalm *Mizmor Shir Leyom HaShabbos*? What does Kayin's *teshuvah* have to do with Shabbos?

In *Nesivos Shalom*, the Slonimer Rebbe explains this Midrash beautifully.

He writes that when Kayin said, הֵן גִּרְשֵׁת אֶתִּי הַיּוֹם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ וּמִפְּנֵי אֶסְתֵּר וְהִיִּיתִי נֹעַ וְנָד בְּאֶרֶץ וְהָיָה כָּל מֵצְאֵי יְהַרְגֵנִי, "Behold, You have banished me this day from the face of the earth — can I be hidden from Your presence? I must become a vagrant and a wanderer on earth; whoever meets me will kill me," he wasn't referring only to physical death; he was referring primarily to spiritual death. He told Hashem, "If You are banishing me from

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before You, and I am forced to wander in this physical, tempting, and materialistic world — what will happen to my *neshamah*? How will I survive spiritually? The temptations of this world will destroy me!"

The Ribbono Shel Olam threw Kayin a lifeline, a way to curb his temptations. What is that lifeline? וַיִּשָּׂם ה' לָקֵן אוֹת לְבִלְתִּי הַכּוֹת אֹתוֹ כָּל מֵצְאוֹ אֶךְ אֵת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, *However, you must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you (Shemos 31:13)*. Shabbos is an *os*, a

lifeline for a *neshamah* that would otherwise be lost here on earth.

Six days a week, we are out in a tempting world, an alluring world, but then we have one day each week in which we can rejuvenate and replenish our *neshamah*.

That's the "compromise" Kayin reached. He would have to pay for his sin of killing his brother by wandering through the world six days each week, looking out not only for his physical safety, but also for his spiritual safety. But he would have an *os*, a lifeline, a weekly break during which his soul would find respite.

This is what excited Adam HaRishon so much. He knew the *koach* of *teshuvah*, but he didn't realize the power of Shabbos as part of the *teshuvah* process.

We may not realize this, but when we sin, it does something to our souls. If a person has a stroke, *rachmana litzlan*, and the oxygen supply to his brain is cut off, he will generally lose some motor control of his body, because the corresponding cells in his brain have been damaged.

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An *aveirah* is the metaphysical equivalent of a stroke. It damages a portion of the *neshamah*. But whereas in the physical world, it can take many months or years of therapy to restore function — *if* it can be restored altogether — in the spiritual world we have a weekly opportunity to repair the damage done to our *neshamos* during a week of wandering.

When Adam HaRishon heard about this opportunity, he spontaneously broke out in praise of Shabbos: *Mizmor Shir Leyom HaShabbos*.

Channeling Kayin

Shabbos can play the very same role in our lives as it did in Kayin's life after his sin.

We, too, live in a mundane, temptation-filled world. In fact, I daresay that Kayin didn't have nearly the same level of distractions as we do in the 21st century. He didn't hear the filth on regular news reports, he didn't have to avoid billboards hanging in the subway, or the worst kind of depravity just one click away.

How do we, in our morally bankrupt society, maintain a closeness to Hashem?

The answer is that every mitzvah protects our souls to some extent, but Hashem gives us one great mitzvah that can do more to rejuvenate our *neshamos* than any other mitzvah: Shabbos. This is why Hashem told Moshe that he has a *מְתִנָּה טוֹבָה*, a great gift, in his storehouse, *וְשָׁבַת שְׁמֵהּ*, it's called Shabbos. *לְךָ יְהוּדֵי־עָם*, Go inform them. When Hashem instructed Moshe to inform Klal Yisrael about this gift, He wasn't referring merely to the existence of Shabbos, but to the curative and restorative power of Shabbos, the day when we can repair the damage wrought to our *neshamos* during the weekdays.

In fact, the *Zohar* calls Shabbos *Yoma D'Nishmasa*, because it is the day of the soul, not the day of the body.

Pining for Hashem

A rav from Forest Hills, New York, who originally served as a rabbi in Irvine, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, told me that one of his congregants was a woman who had converted to Judaism. Each week at *Seudah Shlishis*, they would sing *Yedid Nefesh*, and each week this woman would begin to cry when they reached the words, "*Nafshi cholas ahavasecha* — my soul pines for Your love." No matter which tune they sang to those words, this woman would have tears rolling down her face.

Why was this woman so overwhelmed by these words? I think it's because the very same inborn spirituality that sent her searching for holiness in Eretz Yisrael and eventually led to her conversion also made her pine for Hashem. And each week, as Shabbos came to a close and her soul had to return to the earthiness

of this world, she felt a void. Shabbos was a day for her soul, and those tears were a manifestation of her soul crying out as it contemplated having to return to the mundane pursuits of the week. She understood what life is without the holiness of Shabbos.

Rav Soloveitchik would give yearly *teshuvah derashos* that were attended by thousands of followers. One year, he told the following story.

“Not far from where we lived,” he related, “there was a Modzitzer *shtiebel*.”

You don’t have to know much about Chassidus to know that Modzitz is particularly renowned for its music and singing.

“The chassidim would sing repeatedly *bnei heichala dichsifin* and *Mizmor l’Dovid, Hashem ro’i lo echsar*. It occurred to me that they were not singing because they wanted to sing, but because they didn’t want Shabbos to leave.

It occurred to me that they were not singing because they wanted to sing, but because they didn't want Shabbos to leave.

“I remember being at that *shtiebel* as a young child, and one of the men who had been singing most enthusiastically came over to me and asked me if I recognized him. I told him I didn’t. He then introduced himself as *Yankeleh der tregger*, Yankeleh the porter.”

If you’ve ever seen Roman Vishniac’s photographs capturing *shtetl* life, you might remember the image of the *tregger* — an occupation for which one needed only two things: a length of rope and a strong back. Before the days of cars and trucks, when someone needed a heavy load moved from one place to another, he would hire the *tregger* to tie the box or boxes onto his back and move them.

“During the week,” Rav Soloveitchik continued, “I knew Yankeleh as a man who walked around in very shabby clothes, dangling his rope. I could not imagine that this individual with such a regal bearing was that same person — that on Shabbos he wore a *kapoteh* and a *shtreimel*.”

“That is because his soul wasn’t ‘Yankeleh the porter’; it was ‘Yankeleh the prince.’ ”

Truth be told, on Shabbos, this simple Jew wasn’t the same person. Shabbos is *Yoma D’Nishmasa*, and on Shabbos, Yankeleh’s soul shone through.

“After nightfall,” Rav Soloveitchik concluded, “I naively asked him, ‘When do we daven Maariv?’ (a question that a quintessential *Litvak* would ask!).

“ ‘Do you miss the weekday so much,’ Yankeleh replied, ‘that you can’t wait for Maariv?’ ”

This is how a simple Jew of yesteryear loved the *Yoma D’Nishmasa*, the *matanah tovah* from Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The Munkaczer’s Newsreel

In the olden days, before and after a movie was played at a theater, they would show newsreels, highlighting interesting events that had occurred in exotic places all over the globe.

It might be hard to believe, but in movie theaters in America during the 1930s, they played a newsreel from a wedding — that of the daughter of the Munkaczer Rebbe, the Minchas Elazar. It was a grand event, with white horses pulling the Rebbe’s carriage, a huge entourage — a “royal wedding” of sorts that captured the imaginations of Americans attending the movies.

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There are two versions about what happened. It’s clear that the Munkaczer Rebbe, who was extremely opposed to people taking as much as a still photograph of him, would have been ideologically opposed to having a movie made of him speaking. Nevertheless, he is seen delivering a message to the Jews of America. Some say that he was duped; the people who

approached him told him that his voice was being broadcast, without telling him that he was also being filmed.

Another version is that the Munkaczer Rebbe was so concerned about the state of Jewry in America that he agreed to be filmed.

Either way, his message resounds until today. “My dear brothers in America,” he beseeched, “keep Shabbos, and things will go well for you. And I don’t just mean going to daven and then going to work.”

I still remember, growing up as a child, the dozens of Yidden who would come to shul on Shabbos and then get into their cars and head off to work. This phenomenon was almost universal during the 1930s, when the motto was, “If you don’t come to work on Saturday, don’t bother coming in on Monday.” The Munkaczer Rebbe’s message was that Shabbos had to be kept fully.

In our times, that message has to be adapted. Because our challenge goes beyond keeping the technical halachos of Shabbos; it’s about treating Shabbos as a special gift from Hashem and gaining the greatest spiritual bounty we can from this day.

I’ll never be confused with being a chassid. I spent the last half-century in Litvishe yeshivos; I eat *gebrochts* on Pesach; I don *tefillin* on Chol HaMoed as was the custom of my ancestors in Frankfurt, Germany.

But there’s at least one area in which I envy chassidim: the manner in which they observe — or perhaps “celebrate” would be a more accurate term — Shabbos. If you want to know what a Shabbos really is, go to New Square. You can show up 10 minutes before candle-lighting, and they’ll welcome you like a prince. They will dine you and fete you, and you will experience an authentic Shabbos. Or if you’re ever in Eretz Yisrael, I recommend that you visit the Belzer community and see how they celebrate Shabbos.

A rebbi told me that he asked Rav

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Elya Svei whether he should take his class to visit New Square. He was concerned that seeing the chassidim beginning to daven at 10 in the morning might send a negative message that one can daven after the *zman* has passed. Rav Elya answered that it's still worthwhile, as long as they read *Krias Shema* before davening, because they would get to experience genuine *yiras Shamayim*, and they'll see what a Shabbos is supposed to look like.

Enhanced Shabbos

Does this mean that it's an all-or-none proposition? Is all lost for those of us unwilling to become a full-fledged chassid?

The answer is no. You don't have to change everything about the way you live. But I can promise you that the more you invest into your Shabbos experience, the stronger your *neshamah* will become, and the more chance that the *teshuvah* you do now will carry forward through the year. Because you will have a weekly opportunity to return to where you were during your *teshuvah* process, and you'll reaffirm your commitment to get better each week.

This only works, however, if Shabbos is more than just a day to crash. If Shabbos to you is a weekly effort to set a new indoor speed record for the home-from-shul to asleep-in-bed race, then it won't do anything to bolster your *neshamah*.

One of the challenges we have to overcome in order to make Shabbos work for us is the *nisayon* of viewing Shabbos as just another event that happens 52 times a year. Rather, we have to begin to look at it through the eyes of a non-Jew from Topeka, Kansas.

Rav Yaakov Bender, the Rosh Yeshivah of Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, related a story that occurred to him on an airplane.

[As an aside, I always wonder why some people have all the luck. Rabbi Wein and Rabbi Bender constantly tell stories that occur with their seatmates on planes. I spend hours upon hours traveling each year, and the closest I can come to some

your forefather Jacob, for the word of Hashem has spoken (ibid. v. 14).

So this is something worth working on, but how?

Shabbos Strategies

The first thing we can do to make our Shabbosos special is to learn about it. Rav Dessler teaches that studying about any subject is a tried-and-true method of breaking routine. If you delve into the subject of Shabbos, you will find yourself thinking about it and looking forward to it.

Whether you're able to handle the sublime teachings of Rav Shimshon Pincus in *Shabbos Malkesa*, or you need something a little lighter, there are many *sefarim* — even in English — that can help you gain an appreciation of Shabbos. And the specific focus of the book can vary; whether the book you choose discusses the concepts, the halachos, or the philosophies of Shabbos, it will have you more focused on the uniqueness of the day and you will be more attuned to Shabbos.

A second approach is to make practical changes to make our Shabbosos more meaningful.

During the week, many people choose *minyanim* based on which one has the shortest davening. On Shabbos, choose a slower *minyan*. There's no rush. You have nowhere to go. You can even come 15 minutes before davening and say some *Tehillim* until davening starts.

Limit your reading material to things that are Shabbos'dik. We now have a variety of Shabbos-appropriate books and periodicals to chose from. Refrain from speaking about things that are not Shabbos'dik, such as sports or the stock market. No business conversation on Shabbos. The words, "*Nisht oif Shabbos geredt, BUT ...*" should not cross our lips.

And maybe you should try attending one of the later *minyanim* for Maariv on Motza'ei Shabbos instead of running to the first and quickest *minyan*.

Finally, and most importantly, *prepare* for Shabbos.

Most *mitzvos* in the Torah require an actual action: you have to *eat* the matzah, you have to *blow* the *shofar*, you have to *don* the *tefillin*.

Shabbos is an exception. You don't have to do *anything*. The Ribbono Shel Olam comes to visit you. He says, "I'm going to come with My holy *Shechinah* and dwell among you, and make you holier.

"There's only one thing I ask from you: I want you to long for Shabbos. Anticipate it. Show Me that you want the gift!"

Perhaps this is why Rashi (*Beitzah* 2b) states that the preparation for Shabbos is in itself a Torah-mandated mitzvah. By preparing, we show that we want Shabbos. And as Rav Shimshon Pincus writes, "The primary *kedushah* of Shabbos rests on those who want it."

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Knowing that this is a mitzvah will infuse your Shabbos preparations with much more meaning. Instead of cooking and baking and cleaning just as a matter of routine, think, "I'm preparing for Shabbos."

You're no longer just peeling potatoes and sautéing onions; you're preparing to host Hashem's *Shechinah*.

The Chatzos Challenge

I once spoke about Shabbos in Highland Park, NJ, and I read an essay, not realizing that the writer of that essay, a woman by the name of Mrs. Azriella Jaffe, was in the audience.

She wrote how she makes a point of being ready for Shabbos every single week before *chatzos* (midday) on Friday. When I start speaking about this to women, their general reaction is to either laugh or to look at me like I'm insane. But after I spoke in

Highland Park, Mrs. Jaffe wrote to me to explain how this came about.

She wrote that one Friday, her daughter remarked, "Oy, tonight is Shabbos. I wish it wasn't Shabbos."

Do you know why she made that comment? Because Friday meant chores. Friday meant chaos. Friday meant a tense mother.

So Mrs. Jaffe accepted upon herself that by *chatzos* on Friday, everything would be ready. *EVERYTHING!*

This means that, in her words, "The food is prepared, the table is set, the candelabra is ready, and when my kids come off the bus from school, instead of coming home to Shabbos chores and to a tense mother trying to cook and clean and make the deadline, they come home to a happy mother, a clean house, the smells of Shabbos in the air, and a free afternoon to relax.

"When my husband comes home from a long day at work, he comes home to serenity, not chaos."

"But to do *chatzos* right," she adds, "you can't start at midnight on Thursday night. You need to prepare for Shabbos every day of the week.

"My children now think that it's normal to make a new batch of *challos* on Motza'ei Shabbos. Or to plan a Shabbos menu on Sunday. They're accustomed to asking me if the chicken cooking in the oven at 7 a.m. on Friday is for Shabbos."

Listen to the icing on the cake:
"Shabbos is on our minds all week long. When Friday comes around, our house is one of beauty and serenity, and anticipation of Shabbos, rather than the former feeling of, 'Oh no, when is candle lighting?'"

Mrs. Jaffe started a support group with three women, but she now has women all over the world — in England, Eretz Yisrael, and Australia — in her support group.

Once again, this is not an all-or-none deal. Whether a woman wants to be ready at *chatzos*, or maybe just an hour early, or

even just to be ready on time rather than late, it's worth planning ahead.

A woman from New York wrote that she set a goal of being ready *five minutes* before the *zman*, accepting upon herself to be ready 23 minutes before *shekiah* rather than the standard 18 minutes.

This already sends the message to Hashem: Shabbos is something I want, something I look forward to.

Men's Preparation

So men may have just read the previous section with a feeling of relief. Although some men do handle some of the shopping or cleaning, in general, the activities we were discussing until this point fall into the women's realm.

Sorry, dear gentlemen, to burst your bubble, but we must also do something to prepare for Shabbos. And to do so, we have to take a page from our own Pesach playbook. Almost every man prepares before Pesach, some even buy a new Haggadah each year, so that they can come to the Seder prepared.

We have to do the very same for Shabbos. We cannot plop ourselves down at the table Friday night unprepared and yet expect to have a meaningful Shabbos. Especially for those who have children at home — you *must* make Shabbos special for them. Whether it means singing with your children if you're a *baal menagen* or telling stories to keep young children interested, you have to make it special for them.

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A friend from Silver Spring came to show me a notebook in which he writes down riddles for his kids during the week. Friday night at the meal, they have family time trying to work out the riddles. Another person told me that at the *seudah* in his

home, each person has to say a special thing Hashem did for them during the week. They don't have to say a *vort* or read from their *parashah* sheet, which most people don't pay attention to. All they have to say is one episode in which they noticed the Hand of Hashem in their lives.

Bottom line, we have to instill in our children a sense of specialness about Shabbos, which will leave a long-lasting impact on every area of their lives.

A Shabbos Legacy

Commenting on the *pasuk*: וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת, אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתֵם בְּרִית עִוְלָם, *The Children of Israel shall observe the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations* (Shemos 31:16), the Ohr HaChaim notes that the word שמר is occasionally used in the Torah to connote "awaiting," as it is used in the verse, וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת הַדָּבָר, *But his father awaited the matter* (Bereishis 37:11).

Do you know what the reward is for looking forward to Shabbos and awaiting it?

לְדֹרֹתֵם בְּרִית עִוְלָם, we will merit that our descendants will always keep Shabbos.

Your Shabbos legacy can be more concrete. Mrs. Miriam Weiss, the daughter of master *mechanech* Rav Binyamin Steinberg, wrote to me that shortly after her father had contracted cancer, he and his sons sang his Shabbos *niggunim* into a tape recorder, so that he could leave his Shabbos *niggunim* as a legacy for his family.

There was a fellow by the name of Mr. Abe Schmell who was *niftar* a few years back. Abe immigrated to America at the age of six, and by the time he was eleven the Great Depression had struck, and he had to go to work. He starting apprenticing in a bakery by washing the baking pans and cleaning, and eventually he learned the trade and opened his own bakery in Baltimore.

At Abe Schmell's *levayah*, his son said that his father did not

know much more than how to be *maavir sedra* and maybe learn a few Mishnayos, because he had not had the opportunity to go to *cheder*. He would work 70 hour weeks, and on Thursday nights he would get to the bakery at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. By the time he came to the table Friday night, he was bone tired.

But you know what he did at that table? He sang Shabbos *niggunim* with all his heart and soul. This was his Shabbos. No insights into the *parashah*. But a *niggun*!

Do you know where his children are today? They are fine *talmidei chachamim*, *bnei Torah*, and *n'shei chayil*, because he instilled in them the uniqueness of Shabbos.

Shabbos as an Anchor

I often remark to my wife that I'm glad that we're out of the child-rearing business. You're never out of the *parenting* business, because you're parents to your children even when they are adults, but I'm glad I'm not *raising* children in today's society. How difficult it must be to raise children in times when they have such terrible temptations — with the click of a button, they can be in places we shudder to think about.

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Rav Mattisyahu Salomon points out that Shabbos will make our children greater *maaminim*, and that will keep them closer to Hashem. He bases this concept on the Gemara that states that if a person keeps Shabbos properly, even if he has worshiped idols, he will be forgiven. In his glosses on *Shulchan Aruch*, the Taz wonders what sort of person we are discussing. If this is a person who hasn't done *teshuvah* for his idolatry, why should he be forgiven just because he keeps Shabbos. And if he *has* done *teshuvah*, then what does he accomplish through his

Shabbos observance that he hasn't already through his repentance?

It must be, answers the Taz, that this person must have done *teshuvah*. But what happens to the damage the *aveirah* has done to his *neshamah*? Isn't that indelible?

The answer is Shabbos. A person who keeps Shabbos properly will purify his mind and his *neshamah* that were tainted during the week.

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Our children, who are exposed to the *shmutz* out there every day of their lives, need Shabbos as an anchor to keep them *frum*.

In Rav Mattisyahu Salomon's words: "The *kedushah* of Shabbos has the power to cleanse the soul. We live in dangerous times. The influence of the outside world is so pervasive, it tugs at the eyes and the hearts and the minds of our children. By making Shabbos special, we give our children a strong foundation of *emunah* that will last throughout their lifetime."

And if you want an example of what Rav Mattisyahu Salomon is talking about, I'll conclude with one more story. It's a Holocaust story — but perhaps one of the most atypical Holocaust stories you'll ever read.

The story appears in a book called *The Lilac Bush*, written by Judith Mandel-Novac. She was born in Hungary, in a little town called Gerla. Born Judith Cohen, she married a man named Mandel, and after he passed away, she remarried a man named Novac.

In *The Lilac Bush*, she describes her upbringing in Hungary, one of seven girls in her family. She recounts the way her family celebrated Shabbos in Gerla. During the week, they would speak Hungarian in the home, but on Shabbos, they spoke only Yiddish. She describes the beautiful and relaxed atmosphere in her home on Shabbos, and how she and her sisters would sing the Shabbos *niggunim*.

In 1944, her idyllic existence came to an abrupt end. The Nazis

started deporting Hungarian Jewry to the death camps, where she lost all six of her sisters.

After the war, she joined a group of survivors heading back to Gerla. Sitting on the train, she wondered to herself, “*Why am I going back? To what am I going back?*”

She was broken, depressed, and angry.

In their bitterness, this group of survivors decided that when they got off the train, they would head straight to the shul in Gerla and throw rocks at it, to show the One Above just how furious they were.

Judith Mandel-Novac writes that as she was about to throw her first stone at the shul, she had a sudden flashback to Shabbos in her parents’ home. She remembered the *niggunim* at the Shabbos table, and the atmosphere in the home, and she thought to herself, *How can I go through the rest of my life without Shabbos?*

She put down the stone, and she remained a *frum* Jew.

This is what Shabbos can do for our children if we make it meaningful and special. It can keep them *frum* for the rest of their lives.

The *sefarim* state that each of the seven days between Rosh Hashanah

and Yom Kippur can atone for the corresponding day of the week in the previous year. Shabbos Shuvah, then, has the power to repair the Shabbosos of the previous year, and to reinvigorate our Shabbosos with excitement.

Let’s start now.

Let’s make our Shabbosos the *Yoma D’Nishmasa*, the day for the *neshamah*, the day when we reconnect with our spiritual side, so that when we return to Aseres Yemei Teshuvah next year, we find ourselves with lasting results from the *teshuvah* we did this year.

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