

Inspiring True Stories that Warm the Heart and Uplift the Soul



Celebrating **SHABBOS**

The Mizrahi Family Edition

Edited by
Rosally Saltsman & Robin Meyerson

Celebrating Shabbos

Inspiring True Stories that Warm the Heart and Uplift the Soul

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Shabbat, the seventh day of the week, has a double sanctity. In the painting this is characterized by the table with candles that seems to be rising upward, reflecting the uplifting power of Shabbat. But Shabbat is also a gift from Above crowning us with Divine light. The crowns look like bowls holding blessings that flow down onto the Shabbat table. The Zohar says that the blessings of the week are dependent on and inspired by Shabbat.

Manufactured in the United States of America

In memory of

my beloved father,
Natan ben Shoshana Levi —
The best teacher I ever had.
He taught me everything I know.

The Mizrachi Family



Any community dedicated to
heaven will endure forever

TALMUD, Ethics of the Fathers 4:14

כל כנסיה שהיא לשם שמים

סופה להתקיים

פרקי אבות ד:יד

29 August 2017

7 Elul 5777

Shabbos has a natural spiritual energy that has the power to change lives and alter the course of Jewish destiny. *Celebrating Shabbos* brings to its readers stories of how some people's lives have been transformed and uplifted by Shabbos. These stories remind us of what Shabbos can do for us all. They remind us of the Divine gift that Shabbos is and how grateful we need to be for having it as part of our lives. These stories give us a glimpse into how Shabbos impacts on people in the most profound way, how its light and joy dispels darkness and sorrow, and how its inspiration and meaning dispels apathy and emptiness. May Hashem bless the noble endeavors of the editors of this book, Rosally Saltsman and Robin Meyerson, with success in bringing the message of the inspiration of Shabbos to as many people as possible.

With blessings,

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein

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As I sat there, I realized that I was feeling sort of sad that I'd missed out on Shabbat all these years. Like I'd been gypped or something. I wished this night could go on forever. Then I remembered it would come again next week and every week after that!

From *Candles in My Window*, Beth Firestone

Shabbat Shalom

(From a song by Rosally Saltsman and Linda Tomer)

Voices mingle together warmly in the starry night
Embracing one another in the soft candles' light
The angels are praying kindly for our peace and happiness
And wish us a Sabbath that is Heaven blessed

A day of rest
And inspiration
Beyond the sphere of commonplace
Spiritual elevation
Basking in God's grace

Shabbat Shalom
Umevorach
Breathe the scent of Shabbos in the air
And I can feel
My soul is longing
To connect with Hashem's love everywhere

Acknowledgments

We thank *Hashem* (God) for allowing us to complete this work and hope that it serves as inspiration for all who read it.

We would like to thank all the talented writers who shared their experiences and inspiration with us as well as everyone who contributed to this project through thought, deed, speech and spirit.

Special thanks to Farla Klaiman, an editor's editor.

We thank the publications that allowed us to reprint some of the stories with their permission.

We are privileged and honored to have Yoram Raanan's artwork on our cover.

We owe a debt of gratitude to everyone at the Shabbos Project.

May we merit a day that is all Shabbos when *Mashiach* (the Messiah) comes. May it be soon.

Preface

I was reading Rabbi Yissocher Frand's book *We're All in This Together* when he spoke about Shabbos.

"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." (p. 159)

And I thought, *Celebrating Shabbos* — what a great name for a book! I immediately contacted Robin Meyerson, with whom I edited *From This World to the Next: Amazing True Stories about Jewish Burial and the Afterlife*, and asked if she was interested in putting together a book of inspiring stories about Shabbos.

And she said, "Sure!"

Inasmuch as Shabbos is considered to be one-sixtieth of the Next World, this book follows nicely on its predecessor. "Gut Shabbos." "Shabbat Shalom." "Good Sabbath." However you greet each other upon the arrival of the Shabbos Queen, Shabbos is a time for revelation, relaxation, inspiration and ... celebration!

So let's begin!

Rosally Saltzman

About Pronunciation

Different groups of religious (and secular) Jews pronounce Hebrew and Yiddish words differently based on their ethnicity and their upbringing. To remain true to the voice of each of the stories, we have included all pronunciations. A glossary appears at the end of the book for further clarification. In the course of reading this book, you may feel like you are learning a whole new language. That's because you are. Welcome to *Yiddishkeit!*

This book contains words of Torah. Please do not read this book in the bathroom, rest it on the floor, or dispose of any part of it.

Introduction

Shabbat — Heaven on Earth

by Rabbi Noah Weinberg

For three millennia, Shabbat has been the Jewish oasis in time. Find out what's behind this weekly day off.

Shabbat is the name for the seventh day of the week. The Torah tells us, “Six days you shall work, and the seventh day is Shabbat, for the Lord your God” (Deut. 5:13).

In Judaism, the other days of the week (Sunday, Monday, etc.) don't have special names of their own. Rather, we refer to these weekdays as “the first day toward Shabbat,” “the second day toward Shabbat,” etc. Each day is known only by its relation to Shabbat. In this way, we remind ourselves daily of the centrality of Shabbat.

We anticipate its arrival. We set aside special food and clothing for it. Shabbat is at the very center of Jewish consciousness. It is repeated more times than any other mitzvah in the Torah, and it is the only ritual observance which is part of the Ten Commandments.

Observant Jews will tell you that Shabbat is one of the greatest sources of inspiration. And, paradoxically, Shabbat is often the greatest hurdle to those testing the waters of Judaism.

What is it about Shabbat that makes it so important to the Jewish people, so powerful to the individual — and yet so mystifying to those who haven't experienced it?

Taste of the “World to Come”

The Midrash says: When the Jewish people were gathered at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, God told them that Heaven would be their reward for keeping the commandments. The Jews asked God, “How do we know that Heaven is so great? How about a free sample to see if it’s worthwhile?” (Apparently, Jews have always been astute businessmen.)

God wasn’t upset. He knew that Heaven is where we experience the pure and unadulterated pleasure of the infinite God. So He said, “No problem. I’ll send you a sample. Shabbat.”

Thus the Sages say: Shabbat is “a taste of Heaven on Earth.” If Heaven is pure spirituality, then Shabbat is a taste of that experience.

The Two Shabbat Commandments

There are two central commandments which teach us how to observe Shabbat.

The first commandment is not to work on Shabbat. The Torah says, “Six days you shall work, and the seventh day is Shabbat to the Lord your God. [On that day] you shall not do any *melacha*” (Exodus 20:9). (Melacha is a type of work which we will define later.)

The second is a positive action commandment to rest on Shabbat: “And on the seventh day you shall rest” (Exodus 23:12).

One commandment is not to do any *melacha*, and the second commandment is to rest. But why do we need both? If the Torah tells us “not to work,” obviously we’re going to get a lot of rest and relaxation. Why would we need a second, positive action commandment telling us to rest?

If the Torah has to give us two separate commandments, then clearly, one is not the automatic, instantaneous result of the other. The fact that refraining from work is not sufficient to automatically

include rest implies that the “resting” we do on Shabbat must be something extra, something that goes beyond the natural outcome of not working. Apparently the goal of Shabbat is not simply to put our feet up, get a suntan and sip cocktails.

So what is the real point of these commandments?

Why “No Work” on Shabbat?

In *Breakfast of Champions*, a novel by Kurt Vonnegut, the main character of the story is in a bar one evening nursing a drink. All of a sudden, he’s consumed by anxiety. Someone he very much wants to meet, yet is somehow threatened by, has just walked into the bar and is coming closer and closer to his table. He turns to hide his face. Suddenly, he feels a tap on his shoulder. As he turns around, he comes face-to-face with the author of the book in which he is the main character.

His deepest fears have just become reality. Having cherished the hope that he is master of his own destiny, he now has to face the fact that he lives and dies by a stroke of the author’s pen.

Vonnegut’s story depicts the conflict faced by every human being.

On one hand, we all yearn to make contact with the reality of God’s existence, to be close to this All-Powerful Being Who created everything and sustains us daily.

On the other hand, we all live with the nagging fear of confronting the fact that we are not the captains of our ships. Each of us would like to be Number One. Our ego would prefer to see ourselves at the center of the universe, in total control of our own lives, our own destiny, and the world. So we try convincing ourselves that we are, and in the process we push away God.

Shabbat is the Jewish tool to make sure we don’t misunderstand our place in the universe. Refraining from work is the first step toward accomplishing this goal. God gave mankind the power to ma-

nipulate and change the world. Because of this, we are easily lulled into thinking that we are in control of the world.

Then comes Shabbat. Once every seven days, we step back from the world and make a statement to ourselves and humanity that we are not in charge of this world. We stop all creative work and acknowledge that it is God's world, not ours. We can manipulate the world, but we don't own it. God gives us clear guidelines for how we may shape the world, but it's not ours to do with as we see fit all the time.

When we refrain from work on Shabbat, we regain clarity and understanding as to Who is the true Creator.

The Primary Goal of Shabbat

Once we've extracted ourselves from the illusions of our own power and prominence (i.e., once we realize we're not God), we free ourselves to reach out and experience the primary goal of Shabbat: getting in touch with God. While it is true that we can get in touch with God and spirituality during the week, it only happens if we make a particular effort to partake of these experiences. We have to fight off the influences of the mundane workday in order to break through to the spiritual.

On Shabbat, however, the spiritual level of the world is intensified. God immerses us in a spiritual environment, and our perception of His closeness is heightened. It's as if the static has been lifted.

On Shabbat, as I cease to create, I no longer feel the need to compete with the world around me. I don't drive my car, I don't work my animal, I don't even pluck a blade of grass. Instead of imposing our will upon the world, we are in harmony with it.

On Shabbat, we are all kings. We take advantage of the extra spirituality infused in the Shabbat day to focus on our spiritual goals, which we express through the prayer service, the learning of

Torah, festive meals, and time spent with family and friends. For one day, there is no competition. There is only flow.

This is what is referred to in the second commandment as “resting.” On Shabbat, the hard effort to get in touch with God comes naturally. The soul has what it’s seeking. It’s at rest.

Shabbat is our break. It empowers us, not to discard our workaday world, but to retain our ability to be independent from it. Shabbat gives balance and perspective to our lives and to our week. A cube, which has six sides, receives form and substance from its solid center. So too, the six days of our week are balanced by Shabbat — the inner dimension.

The Tabernacle Connection

If we’re going to refrain from work on Shabbat, we need to know how the Torah defines “work.” The rules may surprise you: Lugging a 50-pound sack of potatoes from room to room on Shabbat is technically permissible, while flicking on a light switch is forbidden.

It is not “work” which is prohibited on Shabbat; rather it is the special category of work called *melacha*. This term refers to the 39 types of creative activities which were used to build the Tabernacle, the portable sanctuary used by the Jews during the time of Moses and Joshua. These 39 activities include, for example, planting, cooking, and writing.

The Tabernacle was the physical place where the experience of God was more directly tangible than at any other place on earth. Similarly, Shabbat is the period of time in which God’s presence is felt more intensely than at any other time during the week. In other words, just as the Tabernacle is holiness in “space,” Shabbat is holiness in “time.”

On Shabbat, therefore, the activities used to build the Tabernacle are completely unnecessary, since Shabbat is already a “sanctuary

in time.” Shabbat has stability and permanence that transcend the limitations of space. It’s an anywhere-in-the-world, expense-free vacation — no travel agent required. God’s presence is with us simply by virtue of the atmosphere Shabbat brings.

This explains why on Shabbat we are not supposed to concern ourselves with any unfinished business left over from the weekday. Instead, we are supposed to feel that everything is complete. Shabbat itself marks a completion of our goals.

The Bang of Shabbat

What is the experience of Shabbat, and how do you get in touch with it?

Imagine you’re in a room with someone who says, “I want to be able to tell if it’s light or dark in this room. How should I do that?” You say, “That’s easy. Just open your eyes and see if it’s light or dark.” He says, “You don’t understand. Anyone can do that. I want to be able to smell the difference between light and dark.” You say, “You can’t smell the difference between light and dark.” He says, “How about tasting it?” “You can’t taste the difference.” In order to tell the difference between light and dark, you have to use your eyes.

That’s exactly the problem with Shabbat. It’s a different experience than what we may be used to. To connect with Shabbat, you have to get in touch with your sixth sense. With your soul.

At the end of Shabbat, we have a ceremony called Havdalah, which means “separation.” We make a blessing to thank God for separating between the holy and the mundane, and between light and dark.

The difference between the holy and the mundane is as clear as day and night. “Mundane” is the static and distractions of daily activities — shopping, commuting, computing. “Holy” is the soul yearning for contact with its Creator. Your soul doesn’t want food or

sleep. Your soul is nourished through spirituality, and it will not feel fulfilled until it gets it.

Shabbat is designed to facilitate the soul's contact with spirituality — with God. We free our attention from the pressures of the workday and focus on our spiritual goals, which are built into the fabric of the day through the prayer services, the festive meals, the learning of Torah, time spent with family and friends.

Keeping Shabbat

Shabbat is not only Judaism's best spiritual tool, but historically it has also been the litmus test of whether an individual or family will remain a vibrant part of the Jewish people. The famous maxim says:

“More than the Jew has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jew.”

A true story:

Bnei Brak is a city in Israel with a largely religious population. There once was a fellow living there who wasn't a religious man, but since he lived in the area, he sent his daughter to a yeshiva. After learning for a few years in yeshiva, the daughter decided she wanted to observe the Shabbat. Since the family did not want to observe Shabbat, fights broke out every week between the parents and their daughter.

One Friday afternoon, the daughter went to the local store to buy candles for Shabbat. The storeowner, who knew that the family did not observe the Shabbat, assumed the girl wanted *yahrzeit* candles and gave her two of them. (*Yahrzeit* candles are lit in memory of the deceased on the date of his or her death.)

That night, while her parents were downstairs, the girl went quietly to her room to light the candles. After awhile, her parents went to check on her. As they opened the door, they saw the *yahrzeit* candles burning. “Who are these for?” they asked.

“One is for Daddy,” she said, “and one is for Mommy.”

The irony of their daughter’s words hit home. Without the Shabbat, they came to realize, it’s only a matter of time before their connection to Jewish continuity would die forever. Slowly the parents began to make their way back to a stronger, more vibrant Jewish lifestyle.

A Practical Way to Start

If Shabbat seems like a daunting undertaking, remember that in Judaism it’s not “all or nothing.” Even one moment of consciously refraining from doing *melacha* on Shabbat is a powerful opportunity to get in touch with yourself and God.

How to start? Have your friends over for Friday night dinner. Light the candles, make Kiddush, sing some songs, and share words of Torah. (You can discuss the “Portion of the Week,” or pick a topic like “Free Will” or “The Afterlife.”)

But make one rule: No outside entertainment. No radio, no television, no telephone, no Internet. Try it for a few hours, and increase the amount of time as you feel more comfortable. The key is to relinquish control of the universe and get in touch with the Almighty.

Finally, here’s an exercise that can really get you in the mood. At sundown this Friday, take a minute and do the following: Clench your fists tight for 60 seconds. Then let go.

That, my friends, is Shabbat.

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It's Almost Shabbos

Rosally Saltsman

Arise and depart from the upheaval; too long have you dwelled in the valley of weeping. He will shower compassion upon you. Come my beloved to greet the bride – the Sabbath presence, let us welcome!

(Lecha Dodi prayer, Kabbalat Shabbat)

Howard Margol was 21 years old in April 1945. He was a gunman with the 42nd Infantry Rainbow division of the U.S. 7th Army advancing through southern Germany. In the early morning hours of April 28, 1945, his unit moved into position near Dachau, a few kilometers north of Munich. Earlier that morning, Lt. Heinrich, the S.S. officer left in charge after his superiors had fled, surrendered Dachau to the Allied Forces.

Margol didn't know anything about the camp or concentration camps in general. But a smell reached him where his gun position was located. "It reminded me of when my mother used to burn the pinfeathers off the chickens before she'd cook them, the smell of the skin of the chicken being singed." A fellow soldier told him to come see the camp of over thirty thousand prisoners, the majority Jews. And he did. He remembers the thirty railroad boxcars packed with the corpses of the Jews who didn't make it to Dachau alive.

In July, Margol was on occupation duty in Austria. "We were ordered to take a group of Jews who had come out of the camps to Hofgastein and Badgastein," Austrian resort towns where it was

hoped they would begin to recover. There, hot mineral water gushed out of the mountains and the elegance and refinement reflected no trace of the brutality that had created the barracks and crematoria of the camps.

The convoy of 150 army trucks each carrying 10-20 people had been traveling all day. All of a sudden, throughout the entire convoy of trucks, the soldiers heard yelling and screaming. The drivers stopped to see what the problem was. The time was sunset Friday afternoon.

The leaders of the group said, "It's almost Shabbos; we can't go on." Margol and the other soldiers who were Jewish said that they understood but that they'd be at their destination in twenty minutes, where warm beds and hot food awaited them.

"We can't go on. It's almost Shabbos."

The liberated prisoners left the trucks and sat down at the edge of the road. The army brought out blankets and tents and a field kitchen and prepared hot food for them. They remained there all Shabbos. After the sun went down the next day and the first stars came out, they loaded up the trucks again to complete their twenty-minute journey.

"I had the feeling that the main reason they wanted to keep Shabbos was that many of those Jews couldn't observe their Judaism the whole time they were in the camps and now that they were free, they wanted to practice everything as best they could. It gave them something to hold on to."

In 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Dachau, Margol spoke of his experiences at a conference at Drew University in New Jersey. He told the story of the convoy held up for Shabbos. After many speakers, the 3500-member audience had begun growing restless but at the end of his speech, they gave him a standing ovation. "It had a great impact."

Who knows how many of those people from the convoy are still living? But they made a *Kiddush Hashem* of enormous proportions. They were no longer the victims of the barbaric German army. They weren't even taking orders from the American army. They were serving in Hashem's army.

Margol said, "It was a far greater emotional experience for me than Dachau itself."

This story first appeared in the now defunct *International Yated Ne'eman* and was republished in *The Beauty of the Story*, edited by Rosally Saltsman (Judaica Press).

Signs, Wonders and Tablecloths

Ben Goldfarb

During the Temple period, sinners atoned for their crimes when bringing sacrifices. Nowadays we can atone for our wrongs through our table; by inviting guests to our table and sharing precious words of our tradition, we turn the table into an altar.

(B. Hagigah 27a)

The same day she received the wedding invitation from her ex-boyfriend, she went to a fancy store to buy a gift for the new couple. It had been years since they broke up, and she was truly happy for him. So why was she crying when she got back into her car with the tablecloth she just purchased?

It wasn't just an ordinary tablecloth either. It was decorated with a plethora of Jewish and family symbols that evoked strong emotions.

"This tablecloth should be on our Shabbat table, not in his home with some stranger," she wailed as she fumbled with her car keys. She hadn't thought of her ex-boyfriend in romantic terms in years. Besides, she was dating someone at the time. These thoughts were as foreign to her as philosophical discussions on MTV.

She pulled herself together, mailed the tablecloth to Jerusalem with a thoughtful card, and went on with her life.

Her ex-boyfriend received the gift and placed it in one of his boxes of socks for his upcoming move from his bachelor pad to his

new apartment. He thought it was really kind of his ex-girlfriend to send a gift. She even apologized for not being able to come to the wedding.

Three weeks later, he got married.

Some marriages, like exotic plants in non-indigenous environments, don't "take." Their union lacked the soil, nutrients and water it needed to thrive.

A few months later, the ex-boyfriend turned ex-husband found himself moving out of his new apartment, back into yet another bachelor pad. Once again, he was surrounded by other single guys who whined about how much they wanted to get married, but, fortunately, not to each other.

As he was sifting through his boxes, he saw the unopened tablecloth. He didn't think much of this discovery at the time and just kept it sandwiched between his used books, journals, and socks. Lots and lots of socks.

Three years went by. He went out with many women, but no one even came close to becoming his second Mrs. Right. His blind dates taught him a lot about the human condition and his increasing pain threshold.

He found out that his ex-girlfriend was now someone else's ex-girlfriend. He also learned that she was planning on moving to Israel.

Like any other fellow Jew, he wanted to help make her immigration to Israel as easy as possible. He picked her up at the airport and helped her get settled at a friend's house. They agreed to meet for coffee the next day.

While he had fantasies of getting back together with her, she was fed up with men and wanted to focus on her profession in her new country. She saw herself as being an honorary aunt to his future children.

As planned, they got together at a quaint outdoor café the next day. They spoke. They laughed. They split the bill and the tip. They got married five months later.

Friday afternoon before their first Shabbat together, he took her still unopened wedding gift out of its hiding place and handed it to her.

“Do you want to help me set the table?” he asked.

They opened the present together and spread it on the table.

When she saw the set table, she started crying, and it wasn't just because she finally got him to help around the house. She remembered her tears in that parking lot in America three years ago. Her prayer had come true. The gift really was meant for their Shabbat table after all.

He started crying, too. While he was caught up in the emotion of the moment, he was also worried that he had created a dangerous precedent by helping with the housework.

This article first appeared in *The Jerusalem Post*.

Ben Goldfarb is a student at Kollel HaKol.

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The Velvet Tablecloth

Shayna Hunt

*More than Jewish people have kept Shabbat,
Shabbat has kept the Jewish people.*

(Ahad Ha'am — Asher Ginsberg)

For most children of Holocaust survivors, the lack of extended family connections and even the lack of family information is an agonizing common factor. Being the daughter of a child survivor, I am not immune to the deep-seated pain of having very little extended family.

My mother was three-years-old when her family managed to escape France by being smuggled into Switzerland during the Holocaust. Some years after the war, when my mother was ten, she and her immediate family emigrated from Belgium to America, leaving behind them a small group of extended relatives who eventually scattered themselves to Canada and Australia. Only a very few remained in Belgium.

Sadly, the Holocaust emotionally affected my mother's immediate family so severely that they were not close while she grew up. So by the time I was born, I had very little connection to the few aunts, uncles and cousins that I did have in America.

When my husband and I were making a bat mitzvah party for our first daughter, it pained me that only three people (outside of my husband and our three daughters) would actually be my family

members. Whereas it's true that I am blessed with so many friends, the little girl inside of me was crying out for family connections. I needed something that I had never had, and the pain and resentment of that void caused me tremendous anguish.

Searching for strength, I contacted my only known *frum* relative, fellow writer and first cousin-once-removed Rosally Saltsman. Though she lives in Israel, we are fortunate to stay in touch via the Internet and I am glad to say that our friendship has been such a gift! Through countless emails that were sent back and forth, she transferred to me some much-needed *chizuk*. The result of that immense strength rekindled my passion for Torah and helped me to reach out to the only other extended family I have in Chicago.

I bravely sent an invitation to my mother's brother and his wife. I have to admit that after having virtually no relationship with my aunt, she must have found it strange to be invited to something so out of the blue. I can't even imagine what she must have been thinking when they received the invitation, but I was pleasantly surprised when she replied that they'd be happy to attend.



I think the best result happened after the bat mitzvah celebration. My aunt and uncle live, interestingly enough, in the same area of Chicago that I do. Since they live within walking distance from me, I decided to invite them for a Rosh Hashanah meal and they accepted. I have to admit that right after they arrived, it was a bit awkward. Not only had we been out of touch since I was a little girl but I am now religious and it might have taken a little getting used to at first. Nevertheless, by the time we were eating the meal, we were all talking and sharing like old friends — like family. It felt good.

In the middle of the meal, my uncle (who was only seven when the Holocaust began) started to cry in deep, wrenching gulps.

My aunt was horrified and embarrassed. She tried to stop him but I interrupted her. It felt right to simply say, “We’re family, let him cry. I am sure if he’s crying this hard, he must need to. Don’t be embarrassed!”

So my aunt, my husband, my children and I waited in the silence that was punctuated by my uncle’s heartbroken sobs.

“My grandfather,” began my uncle as he attempted to dry the tears that cascaded down his face, “was a very special man. He was very religious. I grew up living in the apartment complex that my grandfather owned. My mother, my father and I had our own apartment, but we would eat with my grandparents. And I remember *Shabbos*.”

My uncle cried as he told beautiful tales of my great-grandfather and of the holidays and the *Shabbatot* that he remembered as a boy. “My mother and her mother would light the *Shabbos licht* every Friday night. They lit their candles on a dining room table that was covered with a beautiful brocade velvet tablecloth that had been a wedding gift to my mother and father from my father’s parents.” He halted briefly and then continued sadly. “After the war we came back to our apartment only to find that our relatives, including my beloved grandfather, had been murdered and our belongings stolen,” my uncle paused and he began to cry again. I wasn’t seeing him as a man in his early 70s, but as a young boy whose safe and happy world had been turned into a living nightmare that would haunt him for a lifetime.

“My mother found an aunt who was still alive,” he continued. “Apparently this aunt had somehow managed to rescue two things from our apartment before everything had been taken, and gave them to my mother. They were a mantelpiece clock wrapped in the *Shabbos* tablecloth. When I got married, my parents gave them both to me. They are precious antiques that represent what we had before

the war murdered and destroyed our family. I had always thought I would give them to one of my children. But my oldest is married to a Catholic girl and I wouldn't dare give it to them because they wouldn't understand what that tablecloth means. My other son is not religious and he wouldn't appreciate the sentimental value."

My uncle paused a moment as he looked pointedly to my husband and me. Then he tapped my table that was decorated with my best *Shabbosdik* finery. "This," my uncle said, "is the table that the tablecloth belongs on. Here, it will see Shabbos again."

I received the tablecloth the following *Erev* Yom Kippur. When I placed it on my table, my children, along with my husband and I, stood running our hands across its rich plush surface. We thought of the relatives who had once touched it. I thought of Rosally. It was her grandparents who had given my grandparents this tablecloth as a wedding gift. It bonded Rosally and me together on a deeper level. I felt as if I had come home. As I ran my hand across its surface, I connected with my relatives who knew the meaning of being Torah Jews. I was finally touching something that they had touched.

My oldest daughter was the first to speak as we silently absorbed the tablecloth's "energy." With her hands placed reverently on the middle of the tablecloth she said, "I think it was right here that our great-grandmothers kindled their *licht*."

I am humbled to say that the velvet tablecloth resides peacefully in my home anticipating the next Shabbos. My family and I had been given a gift — a peaceful embrace from generations long ago that seemed to cry out approvingly, "Here, we will see Shabbos again."

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Shabbat Shira (The Shabbat of Songs)

Rosally Saltsman

The blossoms are seen in the land, the time of the nightingale has arrived and the song of the turtledove is heard in the land.

(Song of Songs 2:12)

Shabbat Shira (Sabbath [of] song) is the name given to the Shabbat when the Torah portion Beshalach is read. The Torah reading of the week contains the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1–18). This was the song sung by the Children of Israel after God split the Reed Sea for them. The haftarah includes the Song of Deborah. It is customary to feed wild birds on this Shabbat, in gratitude for their not having eaten the manna that fell as food for 40 years when the Jews wandered in the desert.

Birds have figured prominently in our long tradition since the fifth day of creation. The dove has been the sign of peace since it brought the good tidings to Noah that the land had sprouted olive branches. The birds were quiet when the Torah was given and they didn't eat the manna in the desert either, except when Dasan and Aviram tried to make it look like manna fell on Shabbos. The quail flew in without quailing to feed the multitudes for forty years. Crows brought food to Eliyahu Hanavi (The Prophet Elijah), and Shlomo Hamelech (King Solomon) kept peacocks around the pal-

ace. The turtledove proclaims spring with its song, God delivered us on the wings of eagles and the phoenix continues to rise up from the ashes, much like the Jewish people. And what is Friday night without chicken soup?

My mother's pet mitzvah, excuse the pun, was our neighborhood birds. She fed them every day, even and especially in Montreal's worst snowstorms. The neighborhood birds received their daily manna from my mother. When we went to Florida on vacation, she paid some neighborhood girls to feed them the loaves of bread she had bought and cut up just for them. She built them a house comparable to our own with her own two hands and put a birdbath in the garden. On Pesach, she fed them matzah. When my mother was in the hospital, another animal-loving neighbor from across the street came over every day to feed the birds so they would not feel her absence. And when my mother returned her soul to Heaven, we had two birds carved on either side of the stone marking her grave.

On my last visit to Montreal, I went by my old house that I sold over a decade ago. The house bears no resemblance to the place I grew up in. The bushes surrounding the house are gone, the doors and windows have been replaced, a fence has been put in. But, strangely enough, the rope that had held the birdhouse secure to the tree in our front yard is still there. The house I grew up in has changed hands three times, I heard, since I sold it but for some reason, some unearthly reason, no one has removed the rope from the tree. It still bears witness to my mother's devotion to her flighty little charges. For her, every day was Shabbat Shira.

Feeding the birds on Shabbat Shira is certainly a lesson in *kal vachomer*. If we are to show gratitude to the great-great-grandchicks of the birds who perched silently at Sinai, certainly we are meant to reward and remember greater acts of kindness done by those higher up on the food chain. Besides being a lesson in gratitude, feeding the

birds is meant to teach us kindness. Shabbat Shira falls in the winter, when in most countries, the birds are very grateful for any crumbs they get. In Australia, it might be kind to give them water too as it's 40 degrees.

(I personally, don't regularly feed the birds like my mother *a"h* did; it's much more appropriate in Israel to feed the cats. This is also indirectly doing *chesed* (kindness) to the birds, since it prevents them from being eaten.)

In the same way that the birds of this generation are recipients of kindness due to their ancestors' actions, acts of kindness to animals as well as people have flowed down from my mother to me and to my son, who has also learned to show respect and kindness to all Hashem's creatures.

Remembering an act of kindness, whether it was done three millennia ago or three decades ago, and commemorating it by doing more acts of kindness epitomizes the Jewish nation. It is what God expects of us. And as we remember this on Shabbat Shira by feeding the birds and maybe a guest or two, the angels as well as the birds will be flapping their wings in celebration.

This was excerpted from *A Portion of Kindness* by
Rosally Saltsman, Melech Publications.

The Sweet Taste of Shabbat

Rosally Saltsman

They said about Shamai the Elder that every day he ate in honor of Shabbat: If he found a good quality animal he would say, "This is for Shabbat." If he found an even better one, he would save the second one [for Shabbat] and eat the first one.

A friend's daughter made a birthday party for her little girl. The party was Friday afternoon a few hours before Shabbat. She invited friends, family, neighbors. My friend noticed among the guests a little girl of about four who wasn't eating anything. There was cake, candy, snacks, a potpourri of sweet and salty things to choose from. So my friend asked her, "Why aren't you eating anything?" Her answer was priceless. "Soon it's Shabbat and I have to save room for the food in honor of Shabbat." Imagine the self-discipline of this little girl! Now it could be she wasn't sure if the food was kosher enough or it could be her mother told her not to eat anything. But besides her discipline and self control, her respect for her parents and for Shabbat, she honored Shabbat and did a Kiddush Hashem by saving her appetite for Shabbat.

Grandma's Lost Challah, Found

Carol Ungar

The woman, the pillar of the Jewish home, has been gifted with three special mitzvot that are the foundation of Jewish living: kindling the Shabbat and festive candles; taking challah, and by extension, the laws of keeping kosher; the laws of family life and purity.

How I discovered a recipe for the sourdough bread my grandmother made before she died in the Holocaust

My mother had always insisted that her mother was an amazing baker, and her *challah* was second to none. So, when I first started baking *challah*, I wanted my grandmother's recipe. But my grandmother wasn't available for asking. She was dead, murdered by the Nazis.

Back in the late 1980s, when I was a new bride, I phoned my mother long distance, from my home in Jerusalem to her home in New York. "I don't have a recipe," she told me. "Why *potchke*? Buy! The bakery makes such good *challahs*."

But I wanted to bake. I wanted to stretch my muscles, dirty my fingers, and knead my prayers into my dough as I imagined my grandmother had done.

"Are you sure you don't remember?" I prodded.

My mother remembered one detail about my grandmother's technique: "She used to save a piece from the dough and put it into the next week's dough."

From Torah classes, I knew about the Showbread of the Holy Temple, the *Lechem HaPanim*, and about the Matriarch Sarah's *challah* — both of which remained fresh throughout the week. Since my grandmother was a rabbi's daughter, I imagined that by saving this piece, my grandmother was copying Sarah and the ancient Temple priests. But who could be sure? I never imagined that I'd solve the mystery of this esoteric ritual — and that it would lead me to a deeper connection with my grandmother.



Born at the turn of the 20th century in Czenger, in northeastern Hungary, Cecilia Tzirel Blau was the fourth of six children. An intelligent child, she attended school until she was sixteen, a long time in those days. In her early twenties, she married Chaim Bleier, a handsome former yeshiva student and World War I veteran who was ten years her senior. Less than a year later, she gave birth to a son and named him after Theodor Herzl; he died in infancy.

During childbirth, my grandmother contracted puerperal, or childbed fever, which almost killed her. Her doctor ordered her to stop having children, but the following year she became pregnant again. Like the biblical matriarchs, her desire to give life outweighed her desire to live. Again, she became ill, but this time both she and the baby survived. That baby was my mother, my grandmother's only child.

In 1930, my grandfather immigrated to America illegally. He planned to bring over the rest of the family, but by the time he could afford boat tickets, war had broken out. In the spring of 1944, my mother and grandmother were deported. Upon their arrival at Auschwitz, a man approached them. "Nisht a tochter und a mama — shverstern," he said. "You aren't mother and daughter — tell the Nazis that you are sisters." The Nazis were only interested in keeping

young people alive, so they could work; if they'd known my grandmother's actual age, she would have been sent to the gas chambers.

The scam nearly worked. My grandmother survived for six months. Then in October 1944, as she and my mother were being moved to another camp, my grandmother vanished. "I turned around and she was gone," my mother recalled. No one knows whether she was shot or gassed or beaten to death. Every year on the day after Simchat Torah, my mother lights a *yahrzeit* candle.

I am my mother's first child and only daughter. From my grandmother, I inherited my name — Carol is an Anglicization of Tzirel — my high cheekbones, my curly hair, my love of books and, according to my mother, a passion for baking *challah*.

Over time, I've learned about other *challah* recipes, shapes, and braiding techniques. I've heard of 12-braid *challah*, *challah* baked with chocolate chips, *challah* shaped like a hangman's noose (for Purim), but I could never find a recipe that mentioned my grandmother's practice of saving dough.

Until now. Reading *Inside the Jewish Bakery: Recipes and Memories from the Golden Age of Jewish Baking*, which came out several months ago, I found a sentence in the *challah* chapter that seemed to bop me over the head: "In the west of the Yiddishe *heym* — Germany, Austria, Hungary ... *Barches* were ... leavened with wild yeast, giving it a pronounced sourdough flavor."



From my own research into Jewish culinary history, I knew that *barches* was a European name for *challah*, an acronym of the phrase *birkat Hashem hi teasher* — the Lord's blessing brings riches. But I'd never heard of sourdough *challah*. I knew enough about baking, however, to know that sourdough involves a starter, essentially a bit of fermented dough that's saved from week to week. Could it be, I

wondered, that my grandmother's saved piece of dough was actually sourdough starter?

I phoned my mother. Like a detective ferreting out evidence, I was careful in my questioning.

"That dough your mother saved," I asked, "what kind of container did she store it in?"

That would be a telltale sign. Sourdough starter required an earthenware or glass home to survive.

"It was a crock," she told me.

That was it. My story about my grandmother emulating Sarah the Matriarch, carrying on the ancient tradition of the Showbread from Temple days, was as phony as Bernie Madoff's stock fund. But I didn't care. I was thrilled! There was no grave to visit, and only some photographs and tablecloths as mementos of a woman I never met, so this recipe would take me as close as I could ever get to her.

I got to work making my first-ever batch of sourdough starter. Following the instructions in *Joy of Cooking*, I combined flour, water, and yeast into a substance that looked suspiciously similar to beige house paint. For a week, my starter sat on my windowsill shrouded with a white dishtowel. Like an anxious mother of a newborn, I checked it constantly, stirring it every so often with a wooden spoon to bring on the desired chemical reaction.

As Irma Rombauer writes in *Joy of Cooking*, sourdough is for the "adventurous, persistent and leisurely cook." After a full week, my starter bubbled and let out a strong smell, which I hoped indicated that the desired fermentation had occurred.

Using the starter, I tried the Rich Sourdough Barches recipe from *Inside the Jewish Bakery*, which the authors say is adapted from the *Trumat HaDeshen*, the writings of 15th-century sage Rabbi Israel ben Petachiah Isserlein. Excited as I was to be taking this journey into culinary history, the cookbook's description of a "pronounced

sourdough flavor” made me fear that my *challah* would taste acidic, and the dough’s firmness and long rising time made me worry that my *barches* would be tough. So, I hedged my bet and made sourdough *barches* rolls instead. Since rolls weren’t quite as majestic as full-sized *challahs*, I reckoned that I wouldn’t feel quite as devastated if they ended up in the trash.

Throughout the baking, I kept opening the oven door to check that my rolls were rising. When they finally puffed up, I could hardly wait to taste them. I hoped they’d be good; I didn’t want to think that my grandmother, in whose memory I was doing this, baked lousy bread.

I wasn’t disappointed. Savory and strongly flavored, the rolls were wonderfully hearty, like good country bread. The following Thursday, I used the recipe to bake two wonderful loaves of *challah*. Since then, I’ve become a little addicted to sourdough, replenishing the starter and baking every week.

They say that the dead know the affairs of the living. Could it be that my grandmother watches me as I try to copy her? If she is, I hope she’s smiling.

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Between the Braids

Bracha Goetz

What's in the spaces between the braids
Of these new *challahs* I just made?
How much of me is hidden there?
Between the braids my thoughts appear.

“Shabbos Kodesh ... Shabbos Kodesh,”
My lips whisper, hands knead the dough.
Let me see my work is holy,
Raising high what seems so low.

I've heard that Sarah, our first mother,
Once had the right recipe.
What happened to it through the years —
Is there a copy left for me?

“Shabbos Kodesh ... Shabbos Kodesh,”
My lips whisper, hands knead the dough.
Let me see my work is holy,
Open my eyes, so I can grow.

On Friday night, my husband
Makes a blessing, and I know
Just what's inside those *challahs* —
Though I wouldn't tell him so.

He cuts them up, we eat them,
And I can't help but smile,
For all that work, I used to think,
They last such a short while.

But this time, I see what's left,
I know what's hidden there.
In the empty spaces between the braids,
That's where my thoughts appear.

When every crumb
Has vanished from
The *challahs* that I made,
What will remain?
Just my secret prayers,
Offered up between the braids.

Bracha Goetz is the author of over 30 Jewish children's books, including *Hashem's Candy Store*, *The Invisible Book*, and *Let's Appreciate Everyone!* Her books can be found on the Bracha Goetz Amazon Author page and in Judaica stores.

Dream of a Shabbos

Sara Y. Landesman

Both Shabbos and sleep are compared to one-sixtieth of the World to Come.

My grandmother Frayda *a"h* passed away in her eighties. Although it's been over twenty years since I saw her last, I can still feel her comfort, love and total pride in me. She had tens of grandchildren, but we had a special relationship and she made a deep impact on my spiritual life. Having always been fond of elderly people and fascinated with their life stories, I used to spend many a Shabbos at her home in my teen years. Nowadays, the idea of being ready for Shabbos by Friday midday has been widely publicized by Mrs. Azriella Jaffe, aka the *chatzos (midday)* lady. But for us this is not a novel idea. We sisters reminisce often about our Babby Frayda as she was a central figure in our childhood.

She was the proverbial *Chatzos Lady*, ready for Shabbos way ahead of time. Babby Frayda was in fact all about Shabbos. Walking into her spic-and-span home at 1:00 p.m. on a given Friday afternoon was a delight for the body and soul. A freshly laundered, pure white damask tablecloth and fine china and silverware graced the rectangular mahogany table. The delicious aroma of freshly baked *challahs*, peeking out from under an elegantly embroidered cover, teased your nostrils, begging for a bite. Babby *a"h* was invariably sitting at the table, *Tehillim* (Psalms) in hand staring longingly at

the sparkling candelabras in front of her. She wore the same blue skirt, white shirt and white headscarf, all impeccable and perfectly starched. She smelled heavenly and wore an otherworldly expression on her smooth-skinned face.

She was a paradox of sorts; simple yet elegant, uneducated because she took care of her sickly mother from a young age and then the Holocaust had stolen the remainder of her youth, yet she possessed deep wisdom and intelligence. She was gentle and kind and always had some homemade treats and candies ready for us. Perhaps the scars of her childhood left her somewhat somber as she hardly let her emotions show. However, her genuine, loving smile was enough to warm my heart and told me how much she adored me.

And then I had an awesome dream about her. At first, I didn't even notice her. My friend and I walked up the familiar stone path leading into the nursing home we frequented as teenagers. It was a typical Shabbos afternoon and we looked forward to seeing our senior friends. They always received us with cheery smiles and effusive love in exchange for the daughters they wished they had. White lily of the valleys and colorful petunias were neatly arranged in front of stately boxwood hedges on both sides, emitting a heavenly scent.

We walked right in the massive double glass doors of the facility, ready to begin our rounds, when I did a double take. A huge *badeken* (the ceremony before a wedding when the groom covers his wife's face with her veil) was taking place at a distance. Thousands of women, bedecked in their finest, were standing on what looked like an endless number of bleachers. They were looking on intently as the bride's face was covered. I understood intuitively they were all already deceased and curiously scanned the myriad faces. I immediately spotted my grandmother Frayda even though she was with her back to me. As soon as I sensed her presence, she turned around to greet me.

Now my grandmother was a beautiful woman with bright, rosy cheeks even at age eighty, so as she turned to face me that's exactly how I expected her to look. When she faced me, I was so surprised when Babby appeared as a twenty-year-old. Her face was wreathed in effusive smiles and she wore the elegant head covering I had seen her in when I was a young child. For a second we stood there staring and smiling at each other.

It was then that I recalled that she had passed on and being the type to think about the afterlife, I communicated to her by means of telepathy without speech in Yiddish, the language we had always spoken.

"Babby, how are you being treated up there? Are you in a good place of eternal reward?"

I was thinking about the piety of this woman who was most scrupulous in keeping the commandments, modest in her ways, kind and caring to all around her. To me she epitomized the Woman of Valor extolled so beautifully in the hymn of King Solomon, sung by Jews all over on Shabbos eve. Somehow so many things about my grandmother seemed to be pointing in the direction of the holy Shabbos. Even the members of the Burial Society commented that it was most unusual that they had no work to do on Babby's body in preparation for the burial as her nails were clipped and she was entirely fresh. Babby had passed away in her sleep on Friday morning after she had already washed up for Shabbos!

With these mental pictures going through my mind, I waited for my grandmother's answer eagerly. *Babby* looked at me lovingly and answered in a calm, secure manner, "Everything is in best order; everything in the merit of honoring the holy Shabbos!"

I stood there mesmerized, basking in my grandmother's loving gaze for a while, feeling comforted and assured, reluctant to let go. She however turned around as if to say good-bye and I woke up sud-

denly, startled by the wail of my neighbor's car alarm. Looking at the clock revealed that it was 4:00 a.m. Friday morning. My husband, ever the realist and affirmer that dreams are nonsense, reacted unexpectedly when he heard my dream.

“Accept to do something in honor of Shabbos after such a significant dream,” was his suggestion and I could feel that he was touched deeply by my story.

Thus began an ongoing journey of upgrading the quality and quantity of our own Shabbos preparations, from which we have only seen blessings.

Since the dream we have made sure to welcome Shabbos in calmly, have added dishes — both utensils and menu additions — for the day, and try to do something special during the week to prepare for Shabbos, like polishing the silver candlesticks.

Also, I asked my daughter to change the tablecloth for Shabbos on Thursday nights, which she typically does. One Thursday night she was tired and went to sleep when my father, of blessed memory, appeared to her in a dream. He was standing in a large auditorium on a stage and he said to her, “If you'd know the difference between putting on the tablecloth Thursday night and putting it on Friday, you'd always have energy and wouldn't fall asleep without changing the tablecloths.”

My daughter remembered that her grandfather was deceased and took her camera to snap a photo, when a hand appeared suddenly and erased the photo from her camera.

Needless to say, she now is meticulous about putting the tablecloth on the table Thursday night.

Shared Blessings

(From a song by Rosally Saltsman and Bracha ben Avraham)

My grandpa and grandma came here long ago
I came here much later than they
But I light the same candles my grandmother lit
And I say the same blessings she'd say

There are some things that time is unable to change
I have the same dreams that my grandmother dreamt
And I light the same candles and say the same words
And I know that she knew what they meant

Blessed be our family and the home that we've made
Blessed be our efforts and the prayers we've prayed
Thank you for our family seen by soft candlelight
Thank you for the children whom we bless Friday night

Grandma and Grandpa left this world long ago
My son was born in the month of Av
What my grandfather knew my son will soon learn
And he'll say the same blessings with love

There are some things that time is unable to change
No matter how people may try
There are things that we know from the day we are born
And we do till the day that we die

Blessed be our family and the home that we've made
Blessed be our efforts and the prayers we've prayed
Thank you for our family seen by soft candlelight
Thank you for the children whom we bless Friday night

There are some things that time is unable to change
I have the same dreams that my grandmother dreamt
And I light the same candles and say the same words
And I know that she knew what they meant

Grandfather Clauses

Fayge Young

*And Zaidy made a Kiddush Friday night
And Zaidy, oh my Zaidy, how I love him so
And Zaidy used to teach me wrong from right*

(Moshe Yess)

The standard legal dictionary defines “grandfather clause” as “a portion of a statute that provides that the law is not applicable in certain circumstances due to preexisting facts.” In early 20th century America, far too many people used the grandfather clause as an excuse to abandon Shabbos. But my grandfathers had their own clauses. They understood “preexisting facts” to be the preexistence and immutability of Hashem’s Torah, and no, the law on the street did not apply.

Noted educator and speaker Rabbi Yissocher Frand tells a story about Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Heschel, Rebbe of the Chassidic dynasty of Kopyczynitz in the mid-20th century. In his earlier years he was a businessman. When approached by a young man who wanted to enter the field for leads, he gave the young man a long list of names. The young man asked, “Which names should I call?”

Rav Heschel said, “All of them.”

The young man was shocked. Rav Heschel said, “The Creator can provide parnassa [sustenance] for all of us. Please, go ahead.”

At this point, Rabbi Frand says that he was advised not to share

this story as it was something only a person of such stature could and would do. But Rabbi Frand shared the story in public, and one time a regular, simple person (as if there is such a thing as a regular, simple Jew) told him that he himself had given his Rolodex to someone starting out in his field.

As did my paternal grandfather, Morris Siegel.

Morris Siegel, may his memory be a blessing, came of age with the support of an unusual *landsmanschafft* (Jewish benefit society), the Adas. The single entry criterion to the Adas was not one's birthplace but one's commitment to Shabbos. Indeed, the motto of early 20th-century Baltimore's Adas was "Judaism in general, the Sabbath in particular." Commitment to Shabbos led to a home centered on Torah growth, a commitment passed on by his children to their descendants — his crowning achievement.

Growing up in my grandfather's house, I detected a wistfulness and sympathy toward those who chose otherwise, an understanding of the crushing poverty and attendant difficulties that could seemingly be alleviated by working on Shabbos. We heard of the pressures families faced. My grandfather's sister, who worked to support the family, as did most of her siblings, was offered an enticing fifty-cent-a-week raise if she would work on Shabbos. This was a torturously difficult decision to make. She decided to accept the offer, of course not telling her parents, but walked to work to minimize her Shabbos violation. And as soon as she got there, she turned around and walked home.

Missionaries were responsible for some of the era's attrition, preying on vulnerable immigrant families, particularly on the children left to their own devices while their parents worked on Shabbos. To counter this, the Adas started a Shabbos youth group offering refreshments and camaraderie. And my grandfather couldn't miss long-running serials.

Grandpa, all five foot six of him, could come across as larger than life, with his infectious smile, pleasure in good food (one might have done well buying stock in Schmell's Bakery during certain decades, definitely a side effect of his early lean years), and open heart. A quintessential example: Determining that running his own business would allow him the opportunity to remain Sabbath-observant, the scrappy young man who quit high school to help out his parents ran that business according to a credo not taught in contemporary MBA programs. Grandpa would readily give out his customer base list to others starting similar businesses. After all, they weren't competitors; they all needed each other's moral support in their primary business of serving God.

The story of Leibush Bucher, of blessed memory, my maternal grandfather, is another brightly shining facet of the many-sided gem that precious Jews offered to God, composed of acts of *messirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) to remain Torah-true.

Did Zaidy make me laugh and sing? To this day I regret that I didn't work harder to overcome my shyness around him. But with awe and gratitude he made Kiddush Friday night and Seder on Pesach. I know he loved us so, and he truly taught us wrong from right. (With thanks to Moshe Yess z"l, whose iconic song "Zaidy" taught us all so much about grandparenthood.)

He escaped the poverty and ever-present danger of interbellum Poland, only to land in America at the start of the Depression. Unlike Grandpa, he didn't have the support of extended family. His chief contact was a distant cousin, who offered my grandfather, an experienced butcher, a job in that field. But Shabbos was the deal-breaker.

Then he heard of a set-your-own-hours job opportunity: act as officiating rabbi at weddings. He obtained a *chuppa* and got his first gig. He took the elevated train, toting *chuppa* and poles, and arrived at the hall. But after some preliminary questions, he realized that he

would not be comfortable officiating. Back to square one. Yet again.

So Zaidy, beloved son and respected member of the community in *der heim* ... became a rag picker. No job was beneath his dignity if it allowed him to put food on the table honestly and remain *shomer Shabbos*. Because if one can maintain his principles, it is axiomatic that he lives with dignity. Another grandfather's clause.

Shabbos was a haven, fortifying those who cherished it to face the maelstrom of the rest of the week. At some point, my grandfather made a decision that when circumstances would allow, he would be ready for Shabbos by *chatzos* (halachic midday) on Friday. It was a sweet dream that helped him get through those demoralizing years of pounding the pavement every *Erev Shabbos* in search of a new job. Zaidy would say, "We don't keep Shabbos waiting; we wait for Shabbos," and he longed for a time when he could welcome Shabbos with serenity.

Ultimately, Zaidy was able to use his skills to provide the New York community with kosher meat of the highest standards. Shabbos observance was, happily, a given part of his job description. His daughters remembered a hefty list of chores to accomplish *Erev Shabbos* while their parents tended the store and they also remembered how their home, with its joyous Shabbos atmosphere, was the Shabbos gathering spot for family who later joined them in America.

Many people have dreams and great plans for their retirement years. For Zaidy, it was a chance to greet Shabbos in the style it deserved. By about *chatzos* he would be ready and waiting for Shabbos. He usually spent Shabbos in his daughter's home and his greatest pleasure was to shop in the morning for delicacies to bring with him. When he got to my aunt's home he happily helped in any way he could, but his own personal preparations were complete. When Zaidy was no longer up to the job of vacuuming, he would sit in his

chair and direct others to do the job as meticulously as he would have. Well, at least we tried to.

I am immensely blessed to be part of such a chain and have these phenomenal first-hand memories. But significantly absent from these memories are my grandmothers. I do know that they were behind, with, and protectively ahead of my grandfathers every step of the way. It is my joy and privilege to be able to pass on these memories to, and create new ones for, my children, grandchildren, and, with God's help, generations beyond.

This eager anticipation of Shabbos, joyful, grateful and unrushed preparation, is a most precious legacy, and within the purview of all those whose activities contribute to producing the family unit's Shabbos experience. We may sing in different keys, but we are all singing the same song of welcoming Shabbos with excitement, love, and serenity.

Light Sleeper

Rosally Saltsman

Wake up! Wake up! For your light has come, rise up and shine.

(Lecha Dodi prayer, Kabbalat Shabbat)

Irena immigrated to Petach Tikvah, Israel, in 1964 with her husband and two sons from Dej in Rumania. She was thirty-eight years old and had survived three concentration camps, where she had lost her entire family, and then spent fifteen years waiting for an exit visa to immigrate to Israel.

After her children were born, she took upon herself to light six candles for Shabbat; two for herself and two for the two sets of parents she and her husband had lost in the Holocaust.

When they arrived in Israel, they had practically nothing and conditions were very difficult. Irena and her family lived on as little as they could, with Irena saving money however she could. Irena thought that maybe she could save some money by lighting only two candles on Shabbat instead of six. So that Shabbat, she lit only two.

That night, her mother-in-law, Yenta, who was also her aunt, came to her in a dream, and, in an angry voice, told her she should continue to light six candles and not alter her custom. Apparently, she had brought light to the souls of her dear departed family and they were missing that light.

The next Shabbat Irena lit six candles and has been doing so ever since.

And Yenta has never complained again.

This story previously appeared in *From This World to the Next: Amazing True Stories about Jewish Burial and the Afterlife*, edited by Rosally Saltsman and Robin Meyerson.

Night Watch-Bird

(Villanelle)

Ruth Fogelman

At the Western Wall on Friday night,
Above the heads of those who pray,
A lone pigeon, pure-white.

I look up in case I might
See him peck his wing or play
At the Western Wall on Friday night.

He stands statuesque, no sign of flight
From the Western Wall ledge, above those who pray,
A lone pigeon, pure-white.

Worshippers bathed in light,
In surge of song and prayer they sway
At the Western Wall on Friday night,

In Sabbath dress, in colors bright.
But on the ledge, as still as clay —
A lone pigeon, pure-white.

After all have left, will he stay?
Will he flap his wings and fly away?
A lone pigeon, pure-white
At the Western Wall on Friday night.

The First Rain

(Villanelle)

Ruth Fogelman

The first rain falls on me
Unexpectedly on Friday night
At the Kotel, while I sing “Lecha Dodi.”

As I stand with my community
Kabbalat Shabbat is my delight
Until the first rain falls on me.

I hear the echoes of history
As I stand, bathed in bright light
At the Kotel, while I sing “Lecha Dodi.”

Though the men maintain their melody,
The drops wet my book and I shut it tight
When the first rain falls on me.

The *nigun* continues in ecstasy,
But from the rain, I want respite
At the Kotel, while I sing “Lecha Dodi.”

I’m cold and wet. I ask my friend, “Need we
Stay? Would leaving be all right?”
For at the Kotel, while I sing “Lecha Dodi”
The first rain falls on me.

Both poems appear in Ruth Fogelman's book, *Cradled in God's Arms*. Ruth Fogelman was born in England and has lived in Jerusalem's Old City for most of her life. She is the author of three books. Her poems, articles, short stories and photography have appeared in anthologies and various publications in Israel, USA and India. Ruth holds a master's degree from the Creative Writing Program of Bar Ilan University and leads the Pri Hadash Women's Writing Workshop in Jerusalem. Visit her website at <http://jerusalemilives.weebly.com/>.

Welcome Home

Rosally Saltsman

The son of a duck is a floater.

(Arab Proverb)

Shul was not the usual venue for Nasser. The mosque was his venue of choice. Well, perhaps not but it was the place he was used to. So what was Nasser doing in a *shul* on Friday night? He was listening to them sing “Lecha Dodi” and loved the song. In fact he was ready to come back the next Friday night just to hear it again.

Nasser was from Ramallah and when he started expressing interest in exploring religions on his own in a search for truth, his mother confided that she was in fact Jewish from Tzfat and had married a Muslim man. By Jewish law, Nasser was Jewish.

One day he met someone from Arachim (a *kiruv* organization) and asked if he could experience a Jewish Shabbat. He loved it and within a short time he started learning Torah.

Nasser changed his name and enrolled in yeshiva in Jerusalem, where he studied diligently to “catch up” on his Jewish education. He got married to a nice Jewish girl and gained popularity as a lecturer, recounting his dramatic story. He eventually had to flee Israel, due to threats against his life by members of his Arab family.

Along his journey, Nasser made an amazing discovery. His great-great-great-grandfather was Rav Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz, who had composed “Lecha Dodi” in the 16th century and is buried in Tzfat.

The author's name Shlomo Halevi is formed by the acrostic of the first eight stanzas. That was why he was so drawn to the song. And to his people.

Striking a Match

Batsheva Rosen

Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.

(Anne Frank)

My daughter Estie was “in *shidduchim*” and there were no prospects in sight. Her younger sister, Miri, who was in Israel at the time, went to see Rebbetzin Kolodetzsky (Rav Chaim Kanievsky’s daughter) and asked for a *bracha* for her older sister. The Rebbetzin gave her a *bracha* and said we should bring in Shabbos ten minutes early and if we did, she would be engaged by Pesach.

Well, we didn’t know if she meant I, the mother, should light early, or Estie herself, or her sister, or maybe her father as well. Since we didn’t know, we ALL started doing it, including my youngest daughter and my son in yeshiva in Lakewood. It was in the winter when Shabbos comes in very early, but we did it anyway.

It was really very challenging but we felt very blessed to have that extra time on Shabbos. Well, guess what? Estie got engaged Rosh Chodesh Adar (six weeks before Pesach)! And then Estie’s brother Yitzy got engaged ten days later. We really took on something hard but doable and it paid off big time. Those extra ten minutes were serene and beautiful and definitely worth it, even without the blessing of the two engagements.

Soul Music

Shayna Hunt

*To the Cutler Family for singing such sweet zemiros!
There is a crack in everything; that's how the light gets in.*

(Leonard Cohen)

It never ceases to amaze me how what we might consider to be the trivial aspects in life sometimes turn out to be quite significant. And every so often, just doing the inconsequential everyday things can become a most momentous *Kiddush Hashem*.

My friend Lisa, who was at that time also my neighbor, and I were talking one warm summer day some years ago, when she happened to mention what street her in-laws, the Cutler family, lived on. I had never met her in-laws but I knew the street well. My uncle and aunt have lived there for as long as I can remember and as a young girl I had visited them every now and again. But when my friend mentioned exactly which house her in-laws lived in, I couldn't help but wonder if they were indeed the family I had thought about so often during my long road to becoming religious.

I grew up secular in a non-traditional Jewish family. Being deprived of what it really meant to be Jewish, much of my youth seemed to be spent searching for something I couldn't quite name, yet I knew it was always just beyond my reach, waiting to be discovered.

When I was about twelve or thirteen years old, my family was visiting my uncle and aunt who lived in Chicago. While the adults

chatted, I wandered out of their house to play with their puppy. It was a warm spring day and it was so peaceful out. Then I heard it, the most enthralling singing. I was quite literally lured to discover where it was coming from. I had never heard anything entirely like it before and by the time I had reached the house next door to my uncle and aunt's, I was captivated by what I heard. Hiding under their dining room window, as the china clanked with the noises of supper being served, I listened to the large family as they laughed, ate, joked, talked and most importantly, sang. And that's how my mother found me, crouched under a stranger's window as if I was a burglar casing the joint for a robbery.

As she ushered me away, I couldn't stop the questions. I wanted to know all about what they were doing and what that special singing meant. My mother clipped out her terse answer that it was "their" Sabbath and that they were a different kind of Jew than what I was. I was lead away with much confusion as to why I didn't have the Jewish Sabbath if I too was a Jew. I felt like someone had offered me candy only to have yanked it away as my hand reached out to take it.

Years went by and my life took a lot of different turns and detours along the way. And every so often that one sliver of a song-filled memory would float in and out at the most interesting times. And when I had finally found my way to being *frum*, I entertained the idea of sharing with that family how much their singing had inspired me. I wanted to share with them that I had discovered what they already knew. I was one of them; I had my own Shabbos now. But instead I felt silly to actually approach a stranger with such deep lofty sentiments, and I never contacted them.

So when my neighbor Lisa mentioned her in-laws and where they lived, I wondered if indeed they could be the people from my memory that had made such a deep impression upon me. After fig-

uring out the year I had been to my uncle and aunt's, and the years her in-laws lived there, it was without a doubt indeed the same family. But it must not have been the right time to share with them my story because I just couldn't see myself ringing their doorbell and blurting it all out.

It was on Shabbos *parshas* Emor, sometime after the discovery, when one of my daughters was doing her *parsha* sheet at the afternoon meal and we were all discussing what makes a *Kiddush Hashem*. In my head I thought of the Cutler family and how their impression on me was indeed a profound *Kiddush Hashem*.

So it was truly Divine intervention when later that very day, as my family and I were out for a Shabbos walk, we ran into Lisa, who introduced me to her in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. Cutler. It was the first time I had ever met them. I felt like I wanted to embrace my friend's mother-in-law. Meeting her somehow made me relive that intense, unique moment under their window, and as I attempted to clear my thoughts enough to share with her how much she meant to me, they were leaving and wishing us a good Shabbos. My heart fell. I had lost my chance to share my story with them.

I was wrong, because about forty-five minutes later we ran into them yet again, this time at a local park. I went and sat with Lisa as her mother-in-law stood talking with her husband. All at once I turned to Lisa and proceeded to tell her my small but meaningful connection to her in-laws. I was overjoyed that my friend felt the importance of such a unique experience. So much so that she excitedly brought her mother-in-law over to me on the park bench. I was encouraged to at long last share with her how a young girl searching for her heritage sought solace under a stranger's window as the magic of a family's Shabbos *zemiro*s made an unforgettable *Kiddush Hashem*.

This appeared in *Horizons Magazine* and in *The Jewish Press*.

Postscript: Subsequently, Lisa became my BEST friend ever — so much so that our kids feel like they are cousins to each other and she's sister of my soul! We've been through so much together.

Hashem is amazing!

A New Dawn

Rosally Saltsman

*To the Conductor, the morning star; (the dawning
of the redemption of the Jewish people)*
(Psalms 22:1)

*May you shine a new light on Zion, and
may we all speedily merit its light*
(Morning Prayers)

A *brit* (circumcision) is always an emotional event, especially for the family. In my community, where many people marry young, they have as extended family not only uncles and aunts, grandmothers and grandfathers, but the extended families of the yeshivas and *ulpanas* they have recently graduated from and the youth groups they attended that watched them grow from children to adults.

This particular couple, barely out of childhood themselves, were married last year and have just been blessed with their first child (*ken yirbu*), a little boy. The couple met at Ezra, one of the aforementioned religious youth groups. In fact all the wife's siblings are alumni or members of Ezra. And all their members are devotees. My son is a counselor in this youth group, with which he has been affiliated since fourth grade, and through school, Ezra, *shul* and the neighborhood, our lives have been meshed with this family's for

many years. So it was with particular joy that I attended the welcoming of this child into the *brit* of Avraham Avinu.

But the most moving moment of this Shabbos morning *brit* was the naming of the child. Well, actually not the naming but the explanation of the naming. The child was named Shachar Eliyahu, which means Dawn of Eliyahu. Eliyahu was in honor of the wife's father's father *z"l*. The name also alluded to the dawn of the messianic era, heralded by Eliyahu Hanavi, who is an honored guest at every *brit*. A lovely and appropriate name. But there's more. You see, the parents met at Ezra. When the children complete their time as pupils, each group takes on a name (both the boys and girls group have the same name) and they become counselors. The name of the parents' group was ... Shachar.

With *baruch Hashem* three grandparents and both sets of parents in attendance (there's an advantage to getting married young), the young couple had more freedom in choosing a name so they sought to thank the *shadchan* (matchmaker), which in this case was their youth group, and this particular *Garin* (group; literally, seed, and metaphorically in this case, the seed of their budding relationship, which had begun bearing fruit in the Israeli Spring).

The name is even more significant because it fulfills the mitzvah of *hakarot hatov*, showing gratitude. Even though the *shadchan* in this case was an organization and not a person (although as *shadchans* go, Ezra has a better record than most), the young couple thought it meritorious to show their appreciation.

Moshe Rabbeinu showed *hakarot hatov* to the sands of Egypt and the waters of the Nile, the former for hiding the body of the Egyptian he killed and the latter for harboring him during the storm of Pharaoh's evil decree against the first-born. Eighty years later, he didn't forget his debt.

Eliyahu Hanavi traditionally attends every Passover *seder* and

every *brit*. He is the symbol of hope and redemption. It is as if he visits every *brit* to check if this new child will be Mashiach. May the time come soon when he makes his physical presence known. In the meantime, the birth of every new child brings hope of the dawn of a new era. May the proud parents raise their sweet new son to Torah, *chuppa* and *ma'asim tovim*, till 120. May they merit too to be present at the *brits* of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and may Eliyahu Hanavi by then be a physical as well as a spiritual presence.

First appeared in *The Jewish Press*.

A Cause for Celebration

Rosally Saltsman

*Almost heaven, West Virginia, Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah
River ... Take me home, country roads, to the place I belong*
(John Denver)

We were recently at a bar mitzvah that, falling during the Three Weeks, was held at a youth hostel in Jerusalem on Shabbat. The bar mitzvah boy had the year's longest *parsha* and handled it beautifully! He shared the stage, or rather the *bima*, with a *Sefer Torah* that received almost as much attention as he did. But I don't think he minded because at this bar mitzvah the Torah scroll and the bar mitzvah boy were intertwined in more than just a spiritual way. They were remarkably connected on a physical level as well.

Shenandoah, in Eastern Pennsylvania, used to have a thriving Jewish community but now there are only a few elderly Jews left and the *shul* is selling off its contents. Among the things up for sale was a 92-year-old Torah scroll. It was dedicated in 1912, the same year David Aranoff, the boy's grandfather, was born. He lived in Shenandoah until 1956. Being a Kohen, he was probably called up to this Torah innumerable times and it is conceivable that it is from this very Torah that he read his own bar mitzvah portion. Chanan was David's first grandson to be born a Kohen.

One of the cousins heard about the *shul* selling off its Torah

scrolls and suggested its acquisition as a project to the boy's aunt. The family appealed to have the Torah brought to Israel so the *shul* waived half its fee, and the aunt and uncle paid to have the Torah brought to Israel. Chanan and his family formed a welcoming committee at the airport to welcome the Torah scroll home. It had been a long journey. The first *sofer* who saw it recognized the calligraphy as belonging to a *sofer* who had written *Sifrei Torah* in Europe. A *sofer* in Jerusalem worked on it day and night for five weeks. The main corrections were in the *Yamim Noraim parshas*, attesting to the sad fact that the Torah had probably only been read from during the High Holidays for the last few decades. Appropriately enough, the name of the *shul* that the scroll came from was Kehillas Yisrael (Congregation of Israel). It is from this Torah that the bar mitzvah boy read so beautifully.

There will be an official *hachnassat Sefer Torah* around the time of David Aranoff's *yahrzeit*. Its new home will be in Lapid. Lapid means torch and it is there where the light of this Torah scroll will be rekindled. It wasn't easy getting the *Sefer Torah* ready in time. The family had to contend with negotiations, travel arrangements, customs, bureaucracy and technical details. The corrections were completed just in time. One can't help but marvel at the Divine Providence here.

There's a lesson to be learned here as well. Nowadays, people are looking for gimmicks to make their celebrations special. There's nothing wrong with that, as making a celebration special and memorable is a perfectly reasonable goal. The problem crops up, though, with the ways some try to make the affair extraordinary.

Jugglers, five star hotels and gold-plated *bentchers* are nice, but what Jewish celebrations are supposed to emphasize, especially bar mitzvahs, is our eternal and profound bond with Hashem's Torah and that couldn't be more emphasized than with the restoration of

a Torah scroll that had been part of a flourishing Jewish community and a growing family for almost a hundred years.

Many of Chanan's family preceded the Sefer Torah to Israel, including a great-aunt (the grandfather's sister) and uncle who have recently come on *Aliyah* in their eighties. And now, joining them, was a 92-year-old eternal Torah scroll. That eternal connection between us and the Torah through generations, over continents and across the waves of history is what a bar mitzvah celebration is truly about. Chanan and his grandfather, the Sefer Torah and Israel have reconnected.

May the bar mitzvah boy and the Sefer Torah share many *parshas* together, till 120!

First appeared in *The Jewish Press*.

A Fearless Shabbos

Paula Steen

Fear God and keep His commandments, for that is man's whole duty

(Ecclesiastes 12:13)

What is Shabbos if not an opportunity to feel part of the eternal? On my first Shabbos, for a brief moment, I understood the relief of rising out of my own life to be part of Hashem's plan. It was a change, indeed, from the dread of my days beginning almost a year earlier.

Then it had been a doctor's call that began the cascade of fear. The day had started as an ordinary July morning. I walked my sons, five-year-old Josh and three-year-old Noah, to day camp. When I returned home, the call came. I hadn't even been worried about the biopsy. I knew, just *knew*, things like this couldn't happen to *me*.

The doctor's voice on the phone, saying the biopsy was positive, had been calm and soft, controlled, as though he feared I would become hysterical. He made an appointment for my husband, Sam, and me to discuss "options" with a surgeon.

I hung up the phone and sat in shock. When the boys came home I gave them a snack and sent them to play at the neighbor's. We all had dinner together. It was only after they were in bed, that I told Sam. I'd never seen him cry before.

"I've looked at your tests," the surgeon told us two weeks later. "There's a new procedure where we only remove the tissue around

the tumor. It's called a lumpectomy. It has almost the same survival rate as the more radical surgery. But it depends on your priorities." She raised her eyebrows and looked at me.

"I want to live long enough to raise my children," I said and I started to cry. "Whatever will give me the best survival chance. I don't want my boys to grow up without a mother."

My heart clenched in fear, not so much for my life, but for my family. If the worst happened, who would take care of them? Who would love my children as much as I did? How would Sam cope with everything alone?

We only told our families. They began calling every evening to ask, "How are you doing?" "When will the surgery be?" After the surgery in August, they wanted to know, "How far did it spread?" "When will the chemotherapy begin?" "What's the prognosis?"

Sam couldn't bear it. "Why can't they leave us alone?"

But I needed their calls. They were the only ones I could talk to. If I passed out of their lives, I needed to know there were more people who cared, to whom my life had meant something. I knew my children would not remember me.

At home, life went on. In autumn, our small Conservative synagogue only had a "Sunday School" class for our older son, but none for our younger son. While Josh resisted going, Noah complained it wasn't fair that his brother got to go and he didn't. We heard about a Yeshiva in a nearby town that ran a Sunday outreach program. When Sunday school began, I took Josh to our synagogue while Sam drove Noah weekly to the Yeshiva. On the first morning at the outreach program, Noah happily sat with a young man learning *Chumash*. Sam pulled out his New York Times and sat down to wait. Before he finished Section A, another young man approached him.

"I would be happy to learn with you." Sam put away the newspaper.

After all these years, I still feel the chill of the chemotherapy room as I entered it for the first time in November. Seven or eight patients reclined in high-backed chairs scattered around the walls, their eyes shut, IV lines attached to their arms. It was quiet in the room except for a whirr of wheels as IV poles moved and the clink of needles tossed into trays. In a corner by the door, a nurse was applying hot towels to one woman's arm.

I chose a chair and a nurse approached. "Is this your first appointment?" she asked softly, taking my name.

"Yes." My voice was hoarse, as though I hadn't used it in a while.

Pulling out a clipboard, she rolled a stool closer and sat next to me.

"Before we get started," she smiled, "let me get some information. How old are you?"

"Thirty-four."

"Family history?"

"No. I'm the only one, so far."

As the nurse continued with her questions, she leaned forward. Her stethoscope clattered against the clipboard and I noticed a little furry monkey toy hooked to one side.

"I'm a pediatric oncology nurse," she said in response to my question. "Today I'm subbing here in adult oncology."

My breath caught in my chest. Better me, I thought, and not my kids.

The nurse finished her questions. "Let me look at your arm," she said, pushing up my sleeve. "If I find more than one good vein, do you have a preference? I want to give you some control over this."

Control? I didn't know that word anymore. Once upon a time I thought I could order my life. If I lived a "good" life, only good would happen to me. How naive I had been.

The nurse placed the needle correctly on the first try, taped the line to my arm and set the drip.

By the third chemo treatment, my hair had fallen out. I sobbed when I looked in the mirror. After a chemo administration, I was nauseous for a week. My sons knew that Mommy was sick, but we told them the doctors were giving me medicine to make me well. We hoped it was true.

I returned every two weeks for another treatment. Soon I recognized some of the other patients. We never spoke, just sat silently in our chairs, waiting for the bags of medication hanging from our IVs to empty so we could go home.

During those weeks, then months, Sam and Noah traveled Sunday mornings to the next town. Both were fascinated with what they were learning. A great change began in my husband. I was offering my arm up to receive chemotherapy. Sam was offering his mind up to be filled with spiritual “medicine.” It became his source of strength.

In February, the doctors decided my body wasn’t recovering from the meds quickly enough. I had to wait three weeks. In March, they extended it to four weeks. By now it was harder for them to find veins for the needles and I was the one sitting with warm towels on my arm. I barely spoke to Sam about it, but the fear inside me grew. I thought again and again about Josh and Noah growing up without their mother.

I watched the change in Sam as well. The longer he participated in the outreach program, the more serious he became about issues he had ignored before. It was perplexing to me. I was the one who had grown up in a “traditional” family with a kosher home. Suddenly he wanted to keep kosher. The chemo weakened me so it was hard even to put together food for the kids, but he wanted a special dinner Erev Shabbos with the boys sitting quietly through the whole meal. I was the one who had felt everything would be okay because God made things work out. He was the one who told me, shortly

after our marriage, “God is not a man on a cloud with a white beard! It’s a force in the universe.” I resented his whole change.

In April, my chemotherapy ended. I couldn’t handle further treatments. The oncologist assured me that the chemo had done all it could, but fear for my sons was my constant companion.

One balmy May evening, the boys were out playing in the yard. Sam and I were washing the dishes and I tried to discuss the future, the options if “things” turned out badly. His response was, “Don’t worry. Everything will be okay. God will make it okay.”

“How can you say such a thing?” I burst out. “All my life I believed that. I believed you could pray for things! But not now!” I heard the unaccustomed sarcasm in my voice as I said, “After all, God is not a man in a white beard sitting on a cloud. It’s a force in the universe!”

He didn’t respond. I couldn’t stop myself. “If there is a God, how could he do this to our kids? How could he leave them without a mother? There’s no one in charge, Sam. There is no safety net!” I tossed down the dish brush and rushed out the door. In the yard, I took a deep breath. I turned and saw Josh in our little sandbox, but I didn’t see Noah.

We searched all over the house. We asked the neighbors. My heart was pounding. The habits of childhood are strong and I stood in the kitchen praying, saying over and over, “I don’t care what happens to me. Just make him come back safely.”

Sam was about to call the police, when the back door opened and Noah walked in. We pounced on him, hugged him.

“Where were you?” I asked, relieved and angry at the same time.

“I got a haircut!” he beamed, leaning down for us to see his head. “I sat on the ducky chair!”

With no one paying attention to him, Noah decided to go around the block, no streets to cross, to our regular barber shop. Bob the

barber was finishing up with a customer and Noah climbed up onto the kids' chair, which was shaped like a duck. The barber, assuming one of us was outside waiting, gave him a haircut and put it on our tab.

We were so relieved and afterwards, even amused. But at that moment, all I could think inside was, "Thank You, thank You!"

A couple of weeks later, the Goldmans, Sam's new friends from the Yeshiva, invited us to spend a Shabbos with them. I was hesitant, but Sam assured me that this family often had non-frum people as guests.

Mrs. Goldman was finishing a few last-minute preparations when we arrived on Friday afternoon. Noah and Josh ran off to bunk down in one of the children's rooms. When the men and older boys went off to shul, our sons played with the two youngest children of the family.

Mrs. Goldman and I lit candles. I could still remember the prayer my grandmother had taught me. Later we sat on the deck, savoring the pleasant evening. I was gaining strength. My hair, still very fine, was a couple inches long. I hoped it looked "normal."

"Thank you so much for inviting us," I began.

"It's a pleasure. Your husband has become so interested in the learning that my husband thought he would enjoy participating in a complete Shabbos. And my sons enjoy playing with yours. They have so much spirit."

I thought of the ducky chair but only smiled.

We chatted about this and that. Somehow, we began talking about Mrs. Goldman's parents. They had survived the Holocaust by fleeing to Siberia. She spoke of their experiences. Their sufferings, it seemed, were so much worse than my illness. Each day for them was an uncertainty. Would they live till the next day? Would their children survive the rigors there? I had a battery of doctors fighting

on my side. Her family had been surrounded by enemies. I had my family with me. Hers didn't know where their sisters, brothers, parents were. Mine was only one life at risk. For them whole families were at risk. My doctors were optimistic. How did her family cope with the constant dread?

When the men returned from shul, we all gathered at the table. Even the young children joined in for Kiddush and *Hamotzi*. Then some wandered away to play, wandered back for soup or fish or dessert. Everyone joined in the singing, even Sam and Noah. As the men's voices rose and fell, I felt such comfort in their tones. Suddenly it was as if the burden of fear had lifted. How could sitting here with these strangers make any difference to me? But for the rest of that evening and even part of the next day, the fear stayed away.

In the car, on the way home Sunday morning, as the boys argued over a toy in the back seat, Sam asked, "Did you like it?"

"They are nice." I was hesitant. "But it's nothing like what you asked me to do. They take it so easy. They didn't demand that the kids stay at the table all the time. They didn't get nervous if something was missing or didn't go just right. And she has big daughters and sons to help."

Sam was silent for a moment. The boys had stopped arguing in the back and were listening.

"How about this," Sam said. "It would really mean a lot to me to have Friday evening in a religious way. I'll help prepare everything. You just make a list of what needs to be done. And on Saturday, if you keep the boys entertained so I can just do the morning prayers, then we can have lunch and I'll take them for the rest of the day so you can rest. Maybe we'll go out for a walk."

"Yeah! Do that!" Josh piped up from the back.

Sam and I laughed.

"Oh, all right," I gave in. "We can do the Shabbos, but don't think

I'm going to suddenly believe in everything you believe in now."

He looked a little disappointed, but then he nodded. "That's okay. If you do it now, maybe you'll believe later."

With that compromise, we started keeping Shabbos.

When my daughter was born five years later, the oncologist was concerned that the influx of hormones could reignite problems. But we were fortunate.

More than 30 years have passed since our first Shabbos. Today is Erev Pesach, a sunny day. I sit by the kitchen window. osh, now with grey flecks in his hair, is sitting on the other side of the table with his oldest son, checking romaine leaves. At the sink, Noah and my husband laugh as they grate horseradish, tears streaming down their cheeks. My daughter and daughters-in-law stand in the doorway, their voices rising and falling almost in musical harmony.

I reach out and grab my youngest grandchild as she is about to dash out the door. I don't know what will be tomorrow, or how many tomorrows there will be for me. Today is enough. Fear has been gone for a long time now, and I know His kindness never ends.

Just One Marble

Rabbi Michael Gros

It's not about the marbles, but about the game.

(Dutch proverb)

On New Year's Eve at the close of 1999 Mira Bergen of Atlanta, Georgia, found herself at a crossroads. She had been coming to the local Orthodox community in the Toco Hills neighborhood for Shabbos on and off for over 10 years and loved it. She especially cherished the warmth of the Shabbos table and seeing families spending quality time together. But as much as she was attracted to the lifestyle, she was unable to commit to keeping Shabbos.

However, in 1999, as everyone was talking about the New Millennium and Y2K, Mira saw something else. She had always been interested in New Age ideas and pop spirituality. When New Year's Eve fell on a Friday night, Mira saw the intersection of Shabbos and the new millennium as a sign from God that it was time to observe the Sabbath and become Shomer Shabbos. But she found it too intimidating to give herself that title, so she decided to celebrate just one Shabbos at a time. She resolved to make December 31st her first one.

"I saw the new millennium and said OK, time to start being Shabbos observant. But I can't be Shomer Shabbos. I can't use that label," Mira said. So she decided to keep just that one Shabbos. "I'm making a commitment one Shabbos at a time."

Mira learned the lesson from her mother, who taught her that if you're trying to cut a roll of salami it can be overwhelming to do it all at once. But if you slice it one bit at a time, it's much easier to do it.

"Many people think that observing Judaism is an all-or-nothing action, that you must take on all the obligations at once. But growth in Judaism is really about constant baby steps, about taking on small commitments," Mira said. "God appreciates anything we do to get closer."

For Mira this meant making one commitment at a time. In every area of her Jewish growth she heeded her mother's advice and cut off only a small bit at a time.

"If someone is not ready to keep Shabbos each week, why not try to keep it only for an hour? If someone is not ready to keep kosher full time, then try to give up only one particular food," Mira said. "People think they have to do everything at once. They don't know that God looks highly at everything we do. You're making a distinction; you're trying to have a relationship with Hashem."

So on Friday night, December 31, she was sitting with a local family watching the clock as it struck midnight. It was the first time she had ever spent New Year's Eve not watching the ball drop in New York on television. But instead of lamenting that she was missing the televised celebrations, Mira felt wonderful as she reflected on the start of the new millennium quietly and in God's way. The frenzied revelry of the secular New Year had been replaced by the spiritual bliss of Shabbos.

That one Shabbos turned into two and within a short time she had kept Shabbos for a month. She kept track of each Shabbos by placing a marble into a wine decanter. By now she has over 900 marbles.

With each marble she added, the number of that Shabbos also took on a deeper meaning. Each Shabbos she looked for a connection

between the week's number and an idea in the Torah portion of the week or other current event. Every number is significant in Judaism and has a particular meaning, and members of the community began pointing out some of the deeper connections of the number of her marbles.

On Shabbos number 13, her rabbi taught her about the 13 Attributes of Hashem. Mira's 40th Shabbos was Rosh Hashanah. The number 40 is deeply related to birth and new beginnings, so it was a perfect timing.

On Mira's 50th Shabbos the family she was staying with baked a special challah in the shape of the Hebrew letter Nun, which has the numerical value 50. When she traveled to Israel and spent three Shabboses there, she added three unique items to her collection: a small blue chamsah "hand," a blue glass circle and a blue fish. For her 100th Shabbos she put a battery into the jar because "Shabbos keeps me going!" People in the community have bought other special marbles for various Shabboses, such as the handmade marbles a friend recently brought her from China.

Mira originally collected marbles as a way to make herself accountable and maintain her Shabbos observance, but soon she began looking forward to each Shabbos and especially to putting another marble into the decanter. With each new marble, Mira gained a deeper level of appreciation for Shabbos.

"A lot of people don't understand. They think that I live the most rigid life, full of shoulds and have to's, that I have to do this and this. However my life is filled with such pleasure and joy and laughter," Mira said. "God loves me so much because He gave me Shabbos."



When Hashem decided to give the gift of Shabbos to the Jewish people, he told Moshe to bring it to the Jewish people:

“I have a beautiful gift called Shabbos in my storehouse that I want to give to the Jews. Go and tell them.”

What was the purpose of this special gift? Rashi says that Hashem gave us the gift of Shabbos to make us holy. And what specific element was Moshe to tell the Jews? About the immeasurable reward for people who observe Shabbos (Gemara, Shabbos 10b).

It took more than a decade for Mira to commit to observing Shabbos. But since making the decision to do so, she has constantly grown in her excitement and sheer thrill of keeping it, repeatedly seeing the beautiful rewards of its observance.

Excerpted from *Homeward Bound: Inspiring Stories of Return*
(Feldheim Distribution) by Rabbi Michael Gros.

Cast Iron Faith

Tova Younger

He sustains the living with kindness, resuscitates the dead with abundant mercy, supports the fallen, heals the sick, releases the confined, and maintains His faith with those asleep in the dust

(Shmoneh Esrei, Morning Prayers)

My mother came to America a young orphaned survivor, as was my father. Although Hitler had torn away their parents and home, their faith remained intact, including their keeping the *mitzvot*. Of course, *shmiras Shabbos* was paramount.

When their firstborn came into the world, parenting groups were unheard of. Mothers, generally unemployed, were totally devoted to their families and homes. They relied on instinct and tradition and dedicated their lives to their young ones. One ironclad rule was the baby must have fresh air! Babies were fed, homes were tidied, and mothers were in the park with their little ones by 10:00 a.m., without exception. Without exception for most, it was, but not for my mother. On Shabbos, her baby had to manage with the air coming in through the windows.

“What are you doing to the poor child?” asked a still single friend. “Everyone else is outside, with their babies in their carriages. Are you sure it’s considered carrying?”

“I’m positive. I can’t go by what others do, I know it is *ossur*.”

Don't worry, my dear *bechor* will survive." Her friend truly thought this was a form of child abuse, but as that term was not well known in those days, she did nothing more than try to convince my mother to change her mind, Baruch Hashem, unsuccessfully.

How did my mother stay firm under the pressure, ignoring the way others looked at her? Perhaps it was the example she grew up with. In Riskava, a small village in the Carpathian Mountains, most families were *shomrei Shabbos*. When Hitler reached that area, one of the first decrees he enacted was to sell fuel only on Shabbos. He already knew how to demoralize us. My mother vividly recalls that first Shabbos, looking out the window with her family ... to their great surprise, they watched several families queuing up for fuel. They turned to their father to hear his response; he was adamant. "We will sit in the dark. We will never buy fuel on Shabbos." Final.

How would I measure up? Educated in a *frum* school, living in a *shomer Shabbos* neighborhood, would I be challenged with *shmiras Shabbos*? My turn came when one of my children hurt her leg; of course, it would happen Friday afternoon. I drove down to our local medical center, pleasantly informing them that although I did not expect them to take us in first, I would leave, no matter what, two hours before sunset. They acknowledged and continued helping others; I took a seat and began to wait. Half an hour later, I reminded them of my situation. "Sure, no problem, soon, take a seat ..." A few minutes before my self-imposed deadline, I gave them my final "warning." That worked — they whisked us in and quickly took an x-ray. "Okay, great, thanks, be in touch!" I said and gathered up my belongings.

"What do you mean?" asked the startled nurse. "You have to wait now; a doctor will tell you if you need a cast!"

"I am so sorry, but it's not a medical emergency; a cast can wait. Bye!" I dashed out, ignoring the astonished expressions. We arrived

home with enough time for me to complete my *erev* Shabbos preparations and jump into the shower. Predictably, the doctor called, putting my ten-year-old daughter into a panic. “Mommy! The doctor says you have to come back right now! They need to put on a cast!”

“*Mamale*, just tell them we will come in after Shabbos!”

“Mommy! They say you have to come! Talk to them! Please!”

I realized this was beyond her abilities and managed to take the phone. “So sorry it worked out this way, but I will not come back now.”

The doctor was incredulous. “You can’t travel on your Shabbos for medical attention?”

“Really, no. Only for life and death, and this is far from that.”

Of course I held my ground, and we welcomed Shabbos right on time. Interestingly, when I returned to the medical center after Shabbos, the doctor on duty read the x-rays and said, “There is no need for a cast.” Oh, my.

Years later, my daughter told me how impressed she was with this incident, which gladdened my heart. It brought me back to my mother’s impressive story. Especially impressive because when her single friend married and had her own baby, she shyly let my mother know, “... I’m managing with my baby, taking him out to the park every day — every day, but Shabbos.”

This story appeared in *Hamodia*.

Note: You are allowed to seek medical attention if you need to on Shabbos. Please do not diagnose the injury yourself but consult a doctor or a Rav before withholding treatment. The writer became aware of this after the fact when she consulted a Rav. However, since God is called The Healer of All Flesh, He

obviously appreciated her efforts and made the cast redundant.

Carrying outside on Shabbos is prohibited. Nowadays most communities, and homes, have an *eruv*, making it possible to carry.

The Longest Shabbos Walk

D. B. Estrin

To make known Your way on earth.

(Tehillim 67)

M*enn tracht und Gott Lacht* (Man plans and God laughs) — well, this was a good one then, because we were now making Kiddush on beer and an apple in the attic room of a Christian Freemason whereas we were supposed to be surrounded by hundreds of Bais Yaakov campers.

The four of us had started out on our journey to Camp Sternberg reasonably early, but with only fair directions. “I think I remember how to get there” has failed me before and it was about to trip me up again. Perhaps we were too entranced by the winding forested mountain roads and relishing in our camaraderie to notice a crucial turnoff. Regardless of the how, the unmistakable what was that we were terribly lost. This was pre-cell phones age, so we were left to asking for directions. Only on this quiet stretch of countryside, the only movement was the intermittent plodding of cows.

We kept driving while the sun seemed to be racing us as it sat low in the sky aligned with the car’s side windows. We were invited up to Camp Sternberg for Shabbos to consider the “Pioneer” counselor positions for the upcoming summer session. The others came along for a Shabbos out of Monsey. I felt particularly responsible as I had been the one of the four of us with the most Shabbos expe-

rience, which wasn't even too much after a year and a half of adult Torah learning. The others were more recent *Ba'alei Teshuvah* — all of us from Rabbi Tauber's new seminary in Monsey.

"What do we do now?" Aviva asked as we began to admit our defeat to bad directions and endless farmlands.

"We need to pull over," I said as confidently as possible. My heart sank in concurrence with my letting go of the gas pedal and we slowed to a halt. "That's it. We can't drive anymore." Ayelet, the one Israeli of the group, was so new to all of this that we had to explain our predicament.

We had lost our way so long before and had driven so aimlessly that we weren't even sure if we were in the right county, guessing that we could be hours from our destination. "We need to hide the keys," I explained. "They're *muktzeh*."

Beyond that, I didn't know what we were supposed to do so we did the only thing left to do. We started walking. With pumpkin fields to our right and an occasional farmhouse to the left, we began to deliberate over our options. There weren't many. As the hues of evening became deeper, we decided to approach the next farmhouse we came to. There were two, not so distant from each other. We stood there taking in the possibilities "There," I said pointing to a stone and white paneled home with a porch wrapped around the sides.

That was it — we tentatively crossed the lawn, climbed the stairs to the porch and knocked all while I prepared my introduction and a description of our dilemma. Nothing sounded normal in rehearsal and even less so when the words actually came out as I described Shabbos and driving and getting lost and no more driving, to a stout woman in a flower print country dress. She called her husband over, apparently to have him help make sense of the scene before her.

I tried to read the expression on his face and decided it was a mix

of wariness and intrigue. “Come in,” the man said. Feeling led by the bizarre circumstances, we filed in past the couple into the foyer. We explained in more detail how we ended up stranded at the onset of Shabbos and after husband and wife discussed the issue that landed at their doorstep the man asked, “What’s the place you were trying to get to?”

“It’s a camp. It’s called Sternberg.” I told him, expecting an impassive “oh” in return.

“Camp Sternberg?” he said with interest, “My daughter works there.”

Bizarre was being taken to a new level.

“Your daughter works there?” I repeated incredulously.

“Yes, she works in the kitchen. It’s about 17 miles north of here,” he informed us. Suddenly I began to feel very hungry. “I’ll drive you there.”

“Thank you,” I said, “but the laws of Shabbos don’t allow us to drive ... or be driven. But we appreciate it very much.” I considered the distance and while glancing at the others said, “I think we could walk it. Could you give us directions?” (We weren’t aware of the laws of *tchum* then — the distance you’re permitted to walk on Shabbos).

He absorbed this point for a moment and said, “O.K., well then, you can stay in the upstairs room. And in the morning I’ll show you the way to go.”

Meanwhile his wife prepared linens for us to take upstairs. After a circuitous discussion of food possibilities, we were only able to accept two items. And so our Friday night fare consisted of fruit and beer for Kiddush. As we made our way upstairs, the man, imposing in both physical stature and tone, said, pointing to me, “You seem to be the most knowledgeable of this group. After you get settled, I would like you to come downstairs. I have questions

about your religion that I would like to ask.”

Arranging the very few items of our stay didn't take long and we turned to the inevitable. Leaving the comfort of our own company we left the musky wood attic room and ventured down to face the “questions.”

“I know other Jews and they don't do what you do for Shabbos,” our host said. I gave him a short history lesson, which outlined the breakdown of Torah observance in America. He asked about Shabbos, Israel and various laws with genuine interest. I answered his list of queries as best I could and when he seemed satisfied, he turned to his own beliefs.

“I belong to a assembly called Freemasons. We trace our teachings back to the building of the Temple of Solomon,” he began.

The Masonic Order is a kind of clandestine society and, thank God, the teachings are deemed secret, so we heard blessedly little about this fraternity. We were free to go and make our Shabbos upstairs. We shared our meager fare, sang some *zemiros* and fell asleep to a chorus of crickets, rising from the tall grasses surrounding the lawn.

We woke early to begin our trek before it got too hot. We met Mandy, and sure enough she knew all about Camp Sternberg, having worked there for weeks. She was amused by the whole episode and how we couldn't just hop in a car and be there already. But they graciously mapped out our route and we thanked them and set out.

The last bit of peculiar information we had to tell our hosts was about not carrying and why we had to decline their offerings of food snacks for the way. With a mix of gratitude and relief we started down the country road. “Quite a Shabbos walk,” I joked to lighten the atmosphere.

On the first leg of the journey, though we enjoyed light banter

and the slowly passing pastoral scenery, I felt a cloud of uncertainty hovering above, shadowing our every step and questioning our ambitious decision. After three hours of steady walking, we were tired, hungry and only guessing how long the entire distance would take. We made sure, conferring among ourselves about direction decisions so as not to make any mistakes. We realized it would have disastrous consequences if we did. But there were not too many turns to consider as the route led down long stretches of alternating open road and forest. One questionable fork in the road set us ill at ease for a while until we recognized the next landmark.

Six hours later we dragged ourselves, hungry and spent, down the last stretch of road that led into the camp. Heads turned at the bedraggled troupe that entered the campgrounds in the middle of Shabbos. Pia Weinstein, one of the camp directors, came out to see the commotion and met us smiling with questioning astonishment. “We were wondering what happened to you. We were expecting you yesterday. What happened and where did you come from now?” We began our tale over juice and finished telling the whole story over the third Shabbos meal to campers and counselors alike.

That certainly was the tastiest third meal I remember, accentuated as it was by our prior hunger, and the *Mizmor l'Dovid* poignantly mirrored our own experience of walking through a slight “valley of death” to enter triumphantly into the holy embrace of Shabbos among our own.

We gained a strong lesson about setting out for Friday travel — early, and with precise directions.

Pia Weinstein gained a great camp story that she was known to tell over to thousands of campers for many years to come.

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Youth Hostel* — True adventures in the Old City of Jerusalem

A Healing Shabbos

Penina Neiman

Shabbos waits for no man.

Erev Shabbos can become a dizzying race against the clock as we try to get that pot of soup up, or just one more cake in the oven, before the kids come home. But some of the serenity of Shabbos may fall by the wayside if we greet Shabbos like women who just escaped the clutches of a treadmill gone haywire.

Unfortunately, it is moments of crisis that have the greatest power to throw us into an alternate state of mind and give us some precious moments of introspection. That's when life slows down and all those pressing things that generally keep us busy suddenly become so unimportant, opening a window into a whole new dimension. That was my experience one *Erev* Shabbos nearly two years ago.

It was a mere two hours before Shabbos, and I had just been diagnosed with appendicitis. My husband sat beside me, holding our infant daughter, as we tried to make some plans. The doctors insisted that there was no way I would be able to feed my baby for at least 24 hours post-op. We had to get the baby back home before Shabbos, where my friends and neighbors would be able to help care for her. However, there would be no way for my husband to get home and then back to Yerushalayim to spend Shabbos in the hospital with me. Fortunately, I was able to contact a friend, who readily agreed to come out to the hospital to spend Shabbos by my bedside.

It was with mixed feelings that I watched my husband wheel my baby down the corridor and out of the hospital. On the one hand, I was happy that my baby would be well taken care of when I would be out of commission, but on the other hand, I couldn't help but feel somewhat abandoned. Resignedly, I turned around and hobbled back to my little cubicle in the impersonal emergency room, where I was no longer a housewife preparing to usher in Shabbos, but an anonymous woman about to undergo emergency surgery.

I signed the surgical consent forms, requesting only that the surgery be put off until my friend would arrive. I was unable to passively submit myself to the trauma of having surgery without a familiar face to support me through the pre-op and recovery. Once the forms were signed, I began to receive intravenous fluids and medication. It had been a stressful Friday, but now there was nothing left for me to do, and so I lay back on my gurney and dozed off.

As I lay uncomfortably upon my stretcher, the inspiring words of Pearl Benisch, in her book *To Vanquish the Dragon*, came to mind. She described her arrival in Auschwitz on a Friday night. As she and her fellow group of Bais Yaakov girls were about to be marched to their barracks, Tzila Orlean approached them and wished them a *gut Shabbos*. Mrs. Benisch questioned how a woman could greet her friends in such a manner in front of the smoke stacks of Auschwitz. Her answer gave me much strength on that challenging Shabbos:

Good Shabbos. How do those two words sound ... when said amidst the stench of burning human flesh? But it was Shabbos in the whole world, including this living inferno. Even here, God, it was Your holy Shabbos, and your children remembered it ...

If those *tzidkanios* (holy women) were able to acknowledge the arrival of Shabbos in Auschwitz, then certainly I could feel the arrival of Shabbos in Shaarei Tzedek Hospital. As I lay in my little cubicle waiting for surgery, I felt fortunate to be in a *frum* hospital

in Yerushalayim, surrounded by *Yidden* (Jews). I felt the peaceful radiance of the Shabbos Queen, and I knew that I was in Hashem's hands.

Before long my friend Tova arrived. I perked up upon seeing her, so grateful for being rescued from isolation. With a caring friend to spend Shabbos with, even a medical emergency could become a somewhat pleasant experience.

As the sun began its slow descent and the day turned into twilight, the siren sounded throughout Yerushalayim, announcing the arrival of Shabbos. I made my way to the nurse's station to *bentch licht*, grateful that at least this hadn't been denied me. *Baruch Hashem*, the medication I had received relieved my pain, and I was in a good frame of mind as I beseeched Hashem to help me and my young baby get through the coming Shabbos. Thus began a most unusual Shabbos experience.

Although I was relegated to a narrow gurney in the emergency room, with my purse and cell phone resting at my feet, Shabbos had nevertheless arrived. That Shabbos, I participated in *seudas Shabbos* through sight, smell, and sound only. I answered "Amen" to the Kiddush said in the emergency room, without tasting the wine. I dozed on and off as Tova sat by my bedside and partook of the *seudas Shabbos* provided by the hospital's cafeteria. I savored the reassuring scent of chicken soup. Shabbos brought a secure feeling of stability with it. Although one can never know what the next day will bring, we do know that Shabbos will always be there — nothing will hold back her weekly arrival.

It was after midnight when I was finally wheeled into the operating room. Even there, I was struck by the comforting radiance of Shabbos. The regular hustle and bustle of this stark and sterile place, with its cold metal machinery and masked personnel, was absent. Instead, a peaceful calm permeated the atmosphere. I felt

reassured when my *tichel*-clad anesthesiologist walked into the operating room, and when the surgical team greeted me with a “Shabbat Shalom,” I didn’t feel so alone and vulnerable. After all, I wasn’t alone. The presence of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* was keenly felt while I was under the care of fellow Jews, enveloped by *kedushas Shabbos*.

A mere two months later, Tishrei was upon us, and as I went from Erev Shabbos to Erev Yom Tov and back again, I fought with myself to keep the myriad tasks awaiting my attention in perspective. I knew that I must hold on to that sense of serenity that I had experienced on that unforgettable Shabbos spent in the hospital.

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Staying Put for Shabbos

Shevi Furst

How beloved are Your dwelling places, God of Legions.

(Psalms 84:2)

My father, Chaskel Steuer, was just a teenager when World War II broke out and he *r"l* lost his entire family. He went through a few different concentration camps and was finally liberated from Bergen-Belsen at the end of the war. He didn't know of any surviving relatives.

One Shabbos, shortly after Pesach in 1945, my father was approached in the Bergen-Belsen DP camp by a French soldier who asked him to confirm his name, which he did. The soldier told him he was sent by my father's (not-*frum*) cousin to bring him to the cousin's house in Paris. The soldier had come by motorcycle and had brought along an extra soldier's uniform for my father to don so nobody would notice him and it wouldn't look strange having him ride the motorcycle with this soldier. My father told the soldier he couldn't leave till that night because it was Shabbos. The soldier said he didn't know what my father's talking about, all he knew was that this cousin had paid him a lot of money to leave his brigade and go pick up my father. My father again explained to him that it was his Shabbos and he couldn't leave until nightfall. The soldier said he couldn't wait until then because if they noticed him missing from his brigade he could get into big trouble. My father refused to leave and the soldier refused to wait.

At the end, the soldier left without my father! It took my father another six months until he was finally able to take a train to Belgium, from where he continued on to Paris to this cousin's house. When he arrived, he koshered the whole kitchen, bought two new sets of dishes, and ended up staying there four and a half years until he finally got a visa to come to America in 1950.

To me, the clincher is that when I heard the story (my father mentioned it once “in passing,” telling how he ended up at this cousin, not thinking he did anything special), I asked my father how he had the ability, after everything he had been through, to stay so strong. He looked at me incredulously and said, “I don't understand your question! I was brought up in a *frum* house, it was Shabbos, the war was over — what's the question?”

May he and my mother live and merit to greet Mashiach with all Jews soon!

Seven Days without Shabbos Makes One Weak

Sara Sumner

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

(Lao Tsu)

At sixteen, I was elected to a prominent position on my youth group executive. I was going to change the world. Make a difference. Show every other Jewish high school student in Toronto the beauty of Judaism. But first, I was told, I would have to change myself.

My Jewish observance at that point was entirely virtual. Being a Jew was about what I felt, not what I did. But the youth group had different ideas. At our very first executive meeting, we sat around a long table in the main Toronto office. On one end sat Chana, the president, Jonathan, the vice-president, and Daniel, in charge of religious education. I sat at the other end with my friends Sam, Joseph and Rob; those who lived by Torah on one end of the table and those who enjoyed its easy perks on the other.

Chana explained that our constitution had a set of rules that must be strictly adhered to as we were to be representing the organization. Although they had never been taken seriously before, there would be a zero tolerance policy now. The previous year, someone had been impeached for dating a gentile. The youth group did not

want a repeat of such an embarrassing incident.

The rules were simple:

1. No executive member may date a non-Jew.
2. All executive members must keep Shabbat outside of their own homes.
3. All executive members must keep kosher outside of their own homes.

After the meeting, my friends and I discussed the situation while Chana, Jonathan and Daniel packed up their notes. They had no issue as they already kept all three rules.

“Well, rule number one is easy enough,” Rob said. None of us had any interest in dating a non-Jew.

“But what about two and three?” I asked.

Joseph crossed his arms and leaned back in his chair. “I don’t keep Shabbat and I don’t keep kosher. They can’t make me and I have no interest in being a hypocrite.”

“But, Joe,” I said, “they’ll impeach you.”

Joseph laughed. “Let them. They can find someone else to do my work.”

“Joe, just toe the line,” Sam said. “Is it really that big a deal for us if we do what they want? On the outside, I’ll follow their rules. At home, I can keep on doing what I have always done. Sounds easy enough to me.”

Rob nodded. “I’m with Sam, I don’t make waves for no reason.”

I looked at my friends trying to decide where to throw my dice. From the corner of my eye, I saw Daniel waiting to walk home with us. I agreed with Joseph. How could I set an example for a Jewish organization if I didn’t even follow the Jewish rules? “I can’t lie either,” I told them. “I’ll just have to begin keeping Shabbat.”

When I arrived home, I told my parents of my decision to keep Shabbat. My mother had a fit. My father went out and bought a

package of nightlights for my “passing phase.” That week my mother and I lit Shabbat candles, we had Shabbat dinner as always, and then my parents and sister went to the living room to watch TV. I went to my room.

For a month, I spent Shabbat trapped in my room. I was keeping Shabbat — or rather, it kept me. I did not break the rules but there was nothing positive to it. I hated Shabbat. The magic I had experienced at *Shabbatons* never surfaced. I began to count the hours, the minutes, the seconds until I could be normal again. I was too attached to my Saturday to trade it in for Shabbat. It didn’t take long for me to forget the whole experiment.

My mother made comments when I began watching TV again. My father sat silently, smiling. The passing phase was finished. Now we could get on with normalcy.

For months, I lived a double life and I hated it. I was pretending to be something I was not. I didn’t have the courage of Joseph who ignored the rules altogether. When the youth group threatened him with impeachment, he laughed. “Do it. I will not say I’m something I’m not.”

I had far more respect for him than myself. He was not doing what was best, but at least he didn’t lie about it.

My best friend, Tova, and I discussed the dilemma. We both believed in God and the Torah, but couldn’t bring ourselves to take the giant leap towards observance. Cold turkey had been a failure for both of us. Observance was not an on/off switch. The only way we would reach our goal was one baby step at a time. But how to begin?

Then, we came up with a plan. We wrote a list that fateful Thursday on the phone. The list had all the things we considered to be not allowed on Shabbat. We ranked them from easiest to hardest. At first, we would take on a new prohibition every week. As they got harder, we accepted them every other week. If we succeeded, then

by the end of six months we would be fully Shabbat observant.

Week after week I checked another thing of my list. I no longer turned on and off lights, I stopped writing, I didn't go shopping and even stopped watching TV. The Saturday before we gave up the telephone, we talked to each other for six hours. I called her when I came home from synagogue and we talked until the end of the day. Neither of us has ever spoken on the phone on Shabbat since.

In addition, I had learned from my first experience. Although the "don'ts" are very important, I could not forget the "dos." I pulled my family into Shabbat. We would play board games and do puzzles. I would walk to friends' houses in the afternoon or invite friends to come stay with me for Shabbat. I'd grown up doing enjoyable things on Saturday, why did that have to disappear with the introduction of Shabbat?

Weeks flowed into months, months into years and still Tova and I clung to Shabbat. Today, Tova and I live geographically miles apart. Spiritually, we are right next door to each other. With our husbands and children, we enjoy the pleasures of taking one day out of seven to reflect on greater things. Shabbat is a spiritual rejuvenation I look forward to every week and have been for twenty-two years and counting.

Journey to Shabbos

Miriam Sarnov

He who observes the Sabbath, it's as though he created it.

(Mechilta)

When I first came to Israel, just over 24 years ago, for a Bnei Akiva year-long program, I was living in the settlement of Ofra, near Ramallah. Coming from a traditional family, affiliated with the New Zealand Jewish community of Wellington, I was quite far from home in all respects. Here I was in a religious settlement, on a program with Australians, South Africans, Brazilians, and of course, fellow New Zealanders.

I had been a full-fledged member of Bnei Akiva since I was about seven years old and had participated in camps and *Shabbatons* in New Zealand. But here in Israel, I felt that I could grow more in my Judaism. Especially in this Jewish environment. I wasn't totally alone in Israel, as I have a lot of relatives throughout the country. So I initially used to go to them on a free Shabbat or days off from the program. But somewhere along the line, when I decided to commit to keeping Shabbat properly, I found it much more challenging to do so among people who weren't observant. Of course, people tried to accommodate me, but the atmosphere wasn't conducive to Shabbat. I also had a handful of challenges, which I wasn't always able to stand up to.

After three months in Ofra, our group moved to Jerusalem, and

then down south to Kibbutz. Toward the end of our program, the girls from our group learned for three months in the Old City, which was the most inspiring part of all.

Before I knew it, our program had come to a close, and I went to learn for a month at Neve Yerushalayim (a girls' seminary for *Ba'alei Teshuvah*). Toward the end of my stay, I needed to do the rounds and say goodbye before returning to New Zealand. Needless to say, my Shabbat observance was much stronger. But there was a lot of family pressure for me to go to my relatives for my birthday, which fell on Shabbat. I was in a bind. I felt that I needed to be in a place where Shabbat was observed. Suddenly, I remembered Ofra, and the family I was close with there. I rang them up and arranged to be by them for that Shabbat. I also told my relatives up north that I would go to them straight after Shabbat. Somehow, I'd try to make it.

After Shabbat was over, their older children sped me in their car toward Yerushalayim. I got a bus to Tel Aviv, and, thank God, the last bus to Nazareth Ilit! From there I rang my parents for my birthday. I had managed to keep Shabbat and keep everyone happy as well.

I don't know if it was the incredible feeling I had, or the *zechus* of Shabbat standing by me, but a month later, I was still in Israel, having forfeited my return trip, and I've been in Israel ever since.

I would like to dedicate this story as a zechus for my Aunt, Elizabeth bas Yosef, a"h.

Absorbing Shabbos

Chava Dumas

I think people have to sharpen their eyes and look. I always feel like a big sponge: I feel like I learn lots of things by osmosis, and I feel that I'm always absorbing.

(Iris Apfel)

Shabbos was the highlight in our week. On Thursday nights we went to the Machane Yehuda farmer's market and joined the cornucopia of shoppers busy buying super-reduced produce. All shades of green, red, orange, yellow, pink and purple vegetables and fruits greeted us along the alleyways full of vendors squawking out their best prices, competing with one another in their ongoing neighborly competition that had existed for years.

The fragrances of freshly sliced and ground herbs and spices, the bustling falafel shops, the endless provisions for anything possibly needed for Shabbos contributed to the exciting atmosphere of people preparing for the holiness that was fast approaching in less than twenty-four hours.

We were new immigrants, joined together with the vast array of Jews from all corners of the world, caught up in the unique energy that was entirely ours to celebrate.

And we enjoyed sharing our precious discovery of the specialness of Shabbos with Jewish travelers we would meet at the Kotel on Friday night and Shabbos morning, or whom Jeff Seidel and Rabbi

Meir Schuster *zt"l* had arranged to come to us. It wasn't so long before we were married that we, too, were wearing backpacks, traveling and exploring the wide world in search of deeper meaning. We finally arrived in Jerusalem, the spiritual center of the earth, which had beckoned us to include her in our journey.

So we had lots in common and lots to discuss with the guests who came to our tiny apartment, who joined us for our simple, vegetarian meals of bean soups and grains, Middle Eastern salads and home-baked *challahs*. Hours absorbed in eternity would fly by in engaging conversations on wide-ranging topics of pertinence to the purpose and destiny of our Jewish souls. We welcomed controversial subjects and enjoyed addressing any questions our guests broached.

The overriding issue that apparently bothered a substantial amount of the thinking Jews who came in our door was the role of *Halacha* (Jewish laws) in our lives. Many of our discussions eventually evolved to this point of contention: *Halacha impacts on all our actions! Halachic guidelines annoyingly intervened in every aspect of how we interact with the world!*

We heard many outbursts. "There are so many restrictions and regulations!"

"How come we can't marry whomever we want?"

"Who cares what food we eat? Does it really matter to God?"

"Do you think God actually hears what I say, or cares what I think?"

"Why do you have to cover your hair when you're married?"

"Why is there this *mechitza* in the middle of the synagogue separating men and women?!"

"You wear skirts and dresses all the time?!"

"Are we allowed to flush the toilet on Shabbos?"

Interspersed in the midst of the seriousness of hair-splitting dia-

logues, there were also light, humorous moments. An image of three South American youths comes to mind.

Jeff Seidel and Rabbi Meir Schuster *zt"l* sent us guests every Shabbos and this was their first Shabbos meal in their entire lives. We were their great introduction! So there we were sitting around our small wooden table, tucked into a wee area called a *pinat ochel* — truly a little “eating corner” — surrounded by the old painted walls of our rented apartment, with a bright ceramic vase on the windowsill displaying brilliant purple and magenta poppies. The Shabbos candlesticks stood near the vase, with the wind sneaking through the cracks of the old wooden window frame, making the flames dance furiously and the wax melt faster, forming unusual shapes as it slid down the sides of the candles. Shadows flickered on our faces, while our guest, Daniel, sputtered in thickly accented English:

“...but I don’t understand! How can you bring total strangers into your house and feed them?! You don’t know who they are or what they are capable of doing to you! They could be dangerous! Aren’t you worried? Aren’t you afraid??”

My husband looked levelly at Daniel and answered, “Well, have you considered that you just came home with us? How do *you* know that *we* aren’t dangerous?!”

Daniel’s big brown eyes widened considerably as he gasped, clutched his heart and fell back in his chair, nearly hitting the wall close behind him.

“Oh my God! You’re right!” He yelled, looking terrified, while his two friends, flanking both his sides, burst out laughing.

When he recovered, our conversations then naturally flowed into a pros and cons discourse on the mitzvah of hospitality as exemplified by Abraham and Sarah’s open tent.

With everyone we met, we tried to respond to their questions

with sympathetic understanding and always attempted our best to give in-depth, intelligent answers to all the queries on every topic we covered. There was no doubt in our minds that meeting new people from different countries was a very rewarding, uplifting weekly event.

Picking one day out of seven to suspend one's normal hectic life provided the chance to focus on strengthening human relationships. We experienced Shabbos as a beneficial gift from a benevolent God, designed to rejuvenate and reinvest our lives with meaning. In the usual rush of work, study, laundry, phone calls, dishes, shopping, cooking, cleaning, errands and other "urgent" tasks, the mental clutter that could accumulate needed a weekly clearing with the peaceful soul-enriching rest that Shabbos offered.

I could therefore personally testify that I found that *Halacha* was life-saving. The best example was Shabbos itself. What looked like unnecessary, burdensome regulations that placed "restrictions and limitations" on one's behavior, were actually the frame, the borders for creating an island in time that would be impossible to set up without a Higher Authority.

No phone. No TV. No driving. No work meetings. No computers. No utilizing the numerous electrical gadgets and appliances, radios and stereos that occupy so much of our day to day life and provide so much distraction.... All those "no's" added up to a big "Yes!" Yes for time together without all those distractions! There was time to talk, time to walk, time to sit and really listen to each other in a relaxed environment, time to eat without rushing, time to stop and think, contemplate and consider where we are going, in which direction we are heading, and the worthiness of the destination. Time as a big break, time celebrated as a festive occasion! Time for *genuine connection!*

The ambiance of our typical Shabbos table scenario didn't just

happen by itself; it was the adherence to a set form that gave the structure for what went on within, and it was this God-given Torah with its well-formulated *Halacha* that we had to thank.

So with all this gratitude and appreciation in mind, you would think that I would have been more accepting of the news that my husband brought home from yeshiva one day, about a year and a half after we were married.

“You know, I have to tell you, the Rav was reviewing the laws of *dosh* on Shabbos, and we can’t use the sponge we’ve been using.”

“What are you talking about?” I said with a queasy feeling already rising in my stomach. “What’s wrong with the sponge we use? It hardly absorbs water!”

“Well, the Rav brought in a few examples to show us and one of them was the one we’ve been using.”

I could feel my fingers tightening and my face muscles tensing into a grimace. Ugh.

Dovid strode purposefully into the kitchen toward the sink counter to look for the questionable sponge. He picked up the offending piece and brought it over to show me.

“You see how small the fibers are? I’m surprised we didn’t notice before. It’s no good,” he said in his usual reasonable tone of voice.

My eyes rolled up to the ceiling and fixated on a dusty spider’s web. “But ... but what will I use to clean off the plates and utensils ... and the cups!?” I protested vehemently. No, there had to be a leniency for sponges!

“Well, doesn’t Ruth use her hands and soapy water?” Dovid offered.

“She only does that so she won’t scratch their fine heirloom silverware. For plates she uses a sponge just like ours!” I whined. “I’m sure it’s the same!”

“Well, we better check this out. I don’t think we can rely on

just what we think we see other people doing. We have to learn and understand the *Halacha* and ask a Rav what is permissible and what's not. It's that simple." He continued, even more rationally than before.

Who wants to be rational? This was an emotional issue! Every now and then some previously unknown, unfamiliar custom or commandment would present itself and it was my job to adjust, to accommodate, assimilate and internalize this new bit of information that supposedly affected my spiritual well-being.

"Ugh! This is too much for me! I can't stand it! I don't squeeze when I'm scrubbing!" I continued to complain, while clutching the precious, useful, friendly sponge from which I did not want to part.

No way. My head felt heavy. Covering my hair, elbows and knees, not singing in public, not swimming in mixed company, checking food for bugs, not writing on Shabbos... I could think of lots of powerful *Halachic* obligations I'd incorporated into my life since becoming *frum* and all that stuff was *easy*.

This was impossible. "Does God really care what kind of sponge I use!?" I continued to wail. "Oh no! I can't do this. I need my sponge."

"I'm sorry that I had to tell you like this, but now we know, so we don't have any excuse. We aren't going to compromise in this minor area. How is this *Halacha* different from any other *Halacha* we've learned about in the last two years?" he continued in his intelligent way, which only exacerbated my overreaction.

"Yeah, but why didn't anyone tell us about it before? Why now, after I'm already used to using it and think it's OK?"

The tears were forming in the corners of my eyes. This was ludicrous. What was happening to me? Why was I getting so emotional about ... *a sponge*?

Dovid tried to reassure me. "I'm sure there's something suitable available. People have been washing their dishes on Shabbos for

eons, right? We will find a solution before Friday, OK?”

No time for allowing me to wallow in self-pity, Dovid was already halfway out the door to head to the Machane Yehuda housewares shops in the nearby shuk.

“C’mon, let’s go. The stores are still open,” he beckoned.

And off we went to search the alleyways of the farmer’s market for the store that would sell us some kind of sponge for enhancing this crucial ingredient of our Shabbos enjoyment.

When we did indeed discover the bin of red and blue “Shabbos sponges” as the store owner declared them to be, I did not look fondly upon this new piece of plastic that was to take a permanent place on my kitchen counter.

However, at some point along our journey, I did let the fact filter into my brain, that finding a *Halachically* permissible alternative was further proof of a great teaching: *that every mundane act we Jews perform can connect us to a Higher Source.*

Here I was holding a silly, simple *sponge* in my hand, facing a stack of soapy plates, bowls, knives, forks and spoons, about to embark on a new adventure in heightened consciousness. Use of my old beloved sponge fell into its own special category of prohibited work. By avoiding transgression of one of the 39 categories of *melochas*, in this case “threshing” — and a related area, “squeezing” — I was reminding myself of the *Mishkan* our ancestors constructed in the wilderness 3000 years ago. All 39 categories of proscribed *melochas* were part of the processes revolving around activities in the *Mishkan*.

And what was this *Mishkan*? A center of holiness that strengthened the bond between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and us.

This slight mental adjustment — suspending my antipathy toward hearing new *Halachas* — furthered my awareness that the littlest things count, an applicable lesson for many more situations to come.

So there I was that first Shabbos after Dovid's big announcement, standing next to a full sink of the remaining reminders of a Friday night *seudah* pleasantly spent in good conversation, the remnants of a meal that provided both spiritual and physical sustenance.

I was suddenly aware at that moment that my seemingly minuscule choice of sponge to utilize in the task of cleaning dishes was imbued with tremendous significance. I was thus presented with an opportunity to connect with my Creator while washing dishes!

My volition linked me directly back to Sinai, to the acknowledgment that God gave His people a Torah, and with it the discernment necessary to understand and implement its instructions in every facet of our lives. For some that may be a daunting inclusiveness. For others it can be experienced as a liberating: Yes!

In every realm and every aspect of our lives, what we do matters! That's pretty incredible! And by extension, this perception enhances our appreciation that in every word spoken, as well as in every move we make, we can align ourselves with a code of holiness that will have ripple effects and a widening influence that will, *b'ezras Hashem*, help to restore that center of *kedusha*, our yearned-for *Beis Hamikdash*, *bimheira b'yameinu*.

Originally appeared in *Binah Magazine*.

The Freedom of Shabbat

Bracha Goetz

A being is free only when it can determine and limit its activity.

(Karl Barth)

They had Shabbat in the sleep-away camp I went to when I was ten, and I wanted to take it home with me. I made a pretty *challah* cover in arts and crafts, and carefully packed it in my suitcase to try to take Shabbat home, but it didn't work. The *challah* cover just stayed on a shelf in the linen closet after I unpacked it.

Years later, I found the lavender and white, carefully needle-pointed cover still neatly folded up in the back of the closet, when I returned from a trip to Israel one summer. I pulled it out and again tried to bring the Shabbat I had experienced in Israel into our home. This time it lasted for two sweet Friday night dinners. Then I must have forgotten about the *challah* cover again. Other stuff seemed much more important.

It wasn't until I began, as a young adult, to live within a community of people who observed Shabbat that I finally got to experience it on a weekly basis. Theoretically, I had wanted to have Shabbat for quite a while, but practically it just wasn't happening on my own.

For a person who is very driven, it was — from when I first discovered Shabbat — and it still is, a very healing oasis. I don't think there is anything but a higher spiritual purpose that could get me to

stop from wanting to get more things accomplished.

When I finally began to welcome Shabbat in on a weekly basis, I heard the expression that Shabbat is the “pause that refreshes” and that just fit so perfectly.

But it fits even more now than ever before. Now, it’s perhaps, most of all, a chance to unplug from all the ways in which we are wired. This past Shabbat — my chance to think — I was just pondering how Shabbat becomes even more noticeably distinguishable from every other day of the week as we progress technologically. Shabbat moves in, and we lay down all the gadgets that accompany us all week long. We are left with just ourselves — and the people right around us. It feels so gloriously natural and old-fashioned, but there is no way I would free myself up in this way without a strong spiritual incentive motivating me.

It’s kind of ironic because from the outside, it may look like those of us who observe Shabbat are being restrictive and curtailing our freedom on Shabbat, but I know there is no other way to be able to willingly release ourselves from all our gadgets. We are actually choosing to “disconnect” in order to more fully reconnect spiritually one day each week.

I was also thinking about the common expression that people use when they say they are “observing Shabbat.” Observing Shabbat means trying to follow the instructions that enable Shabbat to be special. But “observe” is also an even more appropriate word to use now, more than ever before, because our lives have become so enwrapped in global technology that Shabbat becomes the only chance we give ourselves each week to slow down and observe the people and places that are beside us. It provides us with time, which we seem to deeply need nowadays, to more fully appreciate and savor all the blessings we can see (like candles shining) and feel (like welcoming hugs) and taste (like warm *challah*) and smell (like chicken

soup simmering) and hear (like singing together, and even conversing with a real live person next to us).

We're all here on our unique spiritual journeys, searching for different missing parts. Shabbat also gives us the sacred time and space to be mindful and observe where we are on our journeys. When we slow down to a Shabbat pace, we can pause to reflect upon the week that has passed, what its highlights were, and, hopefully, reconnect with our salient purpose in life. The distractions have subsided, and it's almost like we become a tourist in our own bodies and in our own souls, one pleurably elevated day each week.

That *challah* cover I once made in camp got used so many times after I got married and was blessed with children, that it became irreparably stained with lots of spilled cups of wine and grape juice through the years. We eventually bought a new one to replace it, and for awhile our little ones used to still play pretend "Shabbat" with my old stained *challah* cover on regular weekdays. It had served its purpose all right.

We get lost from our purpose again and again in our lives. It's coming back to it that is miraculous.

Bracha Goetz is the Harvard-educated author of more than 30 Jewish children's books, including *Remarkable Park*, *What Do You See in Your Neighborhood?* and *The Invisible Book*.

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As told to Rochel Burstyn

And the Children of Israel observed the Sabbath to make the Sabbath for generations an eternal covenant.

(Exodus 31:16; Shabbos morning Kiddush)

I selected a few groceries at the local supermarket during my weekly shopping trip, headed to the supermarket and then whipped out my wallet to pay. I flipped it open and that's when I realized my credit card wasn't there. I pulled out all my other cards, but nope, it had disappeared.

Oh no. I started reeling back, trying to recall when I had last used it. I hadn't used it for a while. The last time was likely the previous Wednesday or Thursday, when I'd filled up my car with gas. Suddenly I remembered it all clearly: I'd swiped my card, placed my card on the ledge as I filled up my car ... and then driven off without my card!

I hastily explained to the cashier that I couldn't pay and would have to return later — how embarrassing! — and promptly zipped off to the gas station, hoping against hope that some honest finder had turned it in. But nope again. They had a lost pair of gloves and even a forgotten set of car keys, but no credit card.

I rushed home, looked up the number of the credit card company and quickly dialed.

“I lost my credit card and want to cancel my account,” I told the lady who answered.

“Sure thing,” she replied and at my request, looked over my last purchases. “Well, you’re in luck,” she told me. “Looks like there hasn’t been any unusual activity on your account at all.”

I breathed a sigh of relief.

“In fact,” she continued, “I see you even used it earlier today.”

“What?! No, I didn’t!”

As calmly as possible, I told her the last time I’d used the card was for a gas purchase last week.

She said, “Yes, I see two purchases at the gas station.”

“Well, that proves it!” I exclaimed. “I filled up and the first thing the thief bought with my card was gas, too!”

“I don’t know,” the lady replied skeptically. “I don’t think it proves anything, but let me pass you on to my manager.”

A few minutes later I was pleading my case to a very patient-sounding manager, who explained that unfortunately as the thief had been using my card in stores that I commonly frequented, it was hard to prove that the card had really been stolen and they couldn’t do anything without proof. I was practically bug-eyed at the idea that one day in the past week, I might have been in line at a local store behind the very thief who was using my card!

Suddenly, I had an idea.

“You said purchases had been made *every* single day of the week since Wednesday?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well,” I began tentatively, not sure if it would work, but figuring it was worth a try,

“I’m an orthodox Jew and we keep the Sabbath. That means that I have never, not once, used my credit card from sundown on Friday until Saturday night. You can check — in all the ten years that I’ve

had this account with you, I've never used it on my Sabbath. And you said it was used this past Saturday? I'd never do that. Is that proof enough?"

"Just one second, sir."

And then a few minutes later, the manager was back on the line, explaining that yes, he saw I was right, I'd never charged anything on Shabbos before, he was so sorry my card was stolen but not to worry, as of right now the account was blocked and all the charges that the thief had made were being waived.

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A Shabbat to Remember

Esther Fein

A little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

It was November of 1956 during the Hungarian revolution. The devastation was most evident in Budapest, the capital, with bullet holes in buildings, shattered windows and Russian tanks everywhere. A fifty-year-old Jewish mother with her two young daughters was preparing to escape from communist Hungary. She was leaving her husband behind, as well as an older married daughter and her family. They were all to follow her out of the country later.

This mother was going to flee from her home with her eight and nine-year-old daughters, to bring them to a free land, where they could grow up without the persecution that she had endured.

It was Friday afternoon in the city of Gyorgy. She and her children were in a crowded waiting room at the train station. They did not carry any luggage so as not to alert the authorities. The only thing they had were the warm clothes on their backs. The children did not really understand where they were going. The mother reassured them that Elijah the Prophet was present with the Jews at such time of need and crisis.

The mother and daughters boarded the train before sunset. The older daughter remembers that her mother took from her purse two

Shabbat candles. She stuck them onto the little table-like tray protruding from the train window. Then the mother lit those candles and said the blessing. The candles brightened up the cabin as the train rolled away, heading toward the Austrian border, toward freedom. The following night, with the guidance of a farmer, they secretly crossed the border on foot.

Today, over half a century later, that older daughter is here to tell this story and to continue to brighten up her family's life with her own Shabbat candles.

Just as my mother Blima Markovits traveled with her Shabbos candles 61 years ago ... so do I continue to travel with my own Shabbos candles and have the *zechut* to see my children do the same.

And so the Mitzvah and the tradition live on ...

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A Fine Line

Carved from Jerusalem Stone: Aliya Poems

What Daughters-in-Law Really Say About Their Mothers-in-Law

Her books are available in the Jerusalem OU Center library or from their receptionist. or can be viewed on her publisher's website: www.bitzaron.com.

Journey to Shabbat

Rahel Sherman

And Hashem spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak you also to the children of Israel, saying, Verily ye shall keep My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am Hashem Who sanctifies you.

(Exodus 31:13)

Raised by a loving Jewish mum and heroic Catholic dad, I attended Catholic schools from age eleven to eighteen. That meant the Latin mass on Sunday, scents of incense, ringing of bells, colorful priestly vestments, catechisms, statues, crosses, communion. There were no Torah customs in our home. Yet it is all from Above.

In college, through a Seventh Day Sabbath church, I learned the biblical day of worship was Friday evening until Saturday evening, not Sunday. The Sunday-keeping churches had changed it for their own purposes, not always honorable.

The above words in Exodus were powerful to me as a young adult, even though I didn't know I was Jewish when I read them. Somehow, I overlooked that they were addressed specifically to Israel and felt (rightly so) they were meant for me. Little did I know. All I knew was I wanted the relationship with God that came with Shabbat as a perpetual covenant, the one that was a sign between Him and me.

In 1971, I began to keep Shabbat as I understood it from a King James bible. No shopping. No employment. Bible study. No major cooking but I warmed up food. I searched for a “spiritual home,” reaching out to different churches that kept the seventh day Shabbat. Sometimes we “seekers” met together in our apartments and studied, sang, ate. I told employers I could not work on that day. I loved Shabbat.

In 1976, I met my darling Barak. He told me his family history included rumors they had Jewish heritage. He had been a Baptist minister but he too believed Shabbat was Saturday. He even argued about it, he said, with teachers in the Baptist seminary.

We wed in 1977 with a civil marriage and he joined me on my spiritual journey.

In the late 1980s, staff from Jews for Judaism and Outreach Judaism taught us a Jewish view of Christianity’s proof texts. They said church doctrines exist because of Christianity’s mistranslations of the Bible and teachings removed from their original context. We were shocked to the core. My husband and I both agreed with the Jewish interpretations. We put the beliefs of Christianity and Messianic Judaism behind us and sought our way into the Jewish community.

One of the big challenges was the Oral Law. I learned the Oral Law said I was a Jew, not a “half Jew.” This persuaded me to explore Jewish tradition outside of the biblical text. It was a big step. We had been taught not to add or subtract from God’s given Torah. The groups we had associated with vigorously eschewed the Talmud.

Where did all these extra rules come from anyhow? No electricity on Shabbat? No writing or driving on Shabbat? How could I pray “who has commanded us to lights the lights of Shabbat” when I don’t see it in the Tanach? I even wondered if we were meant to be Samaritans or Karaites. Trouble is, those groups did not adhere to

matrilineal descent so that didn't work. Maybe God really wanted us to take the Orthodox path.

I have nothing against candles, quite the opposite. Still, after seventeen years of keeping Shabbat without candles, this would be a change.

Almost as a mystical experiment, one Friday before sunset in 1988, I lit the *menorah* of my namesake, my mum's Orthodox mum. Circling the light with my hands, covering my face like Golda did in *Fiddler on the Roof*, I said the *bracha*.

Baruch Ata Hashem, Elokeynu Melech HaOlam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vetzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

It was astounding! It was as if the air changed around me. I viscerally felt the ushering of tranquility, and in memory connected to my grandmother and other Jewish women, globally and historically, who brought light into the Shabbat. I hadn't expected lighting candles to do that.

"There is really something to this," I said to my honey. He agreed. My mum had given me the *menorah* so she too had a part in this generational Shabbat light; she was tucked between me and her mother in the Shabbat link.

We learned more about the Oral Law in time. Ahh, there is a memorized oral tradition that was passed down from Moses and the elders. There was also permission for later judges to interpret it. The Oral Law was finally written down after the destruction of the Temple. One can't totally understand the written Torah without the Oral Law. It says to slaughter animals as God commanded but doesn't give written instruction, for example. And what is written in *tefillin* or *mezuzoth*? The Oral Law fills in the gaps. Without the Oral Law, the people assimilate. Without the oral traditions, one can't even read Hebrew.

My husband converted in 1992 and subsequently, in midlife, we

remarried under a *chuppa*. Warm-hearted Chabad, Sephardic and Ashkenazic friends invited us to their homes for Shabbat. It was always amazing. One dear man knelt before his beloved wife and recited *Eshet Chayil* (Proverbs 31) in English. This was their practice for their many decades-long marriage. They certainly made Judaism look beautiful in our eyes. We learned how to make Kiddush to sanctify Shabbat, we attended services, memorized the musical Grace after Meals and learned about Havdallah with its spice box, twisted candle and wine to say farewell to Shabbat. The songs, the lively conversations, and delicious food were often very different in each house but the peaceful Shabbat lights were similar everywhere.

We stopped driving and cooking and turning on electricity on Shabbat. Instead of being a burden or restriction, there was a freedom in pausing the hustle and bustle.

We kept Shabbat in our country home, in Rochester, Syracuse and Manhattan, as well as in Tzfat, Shiloh, and Yerushalayim, Israel. The lights, the prayers, the foods, the songs, the rest, the teaching of Torah from one generation to another all delight and refresh the soul, the emotions, mind and the body, week after week, decade after decade.

In our rural home, the love overflowed with my honey tenderly singing *Eshet Chayil* to me weekly, with the glow of my grandmother's menorah, and the abundance of Mideast-style food I prepared. My husband loved the food! When we had foster children, we blessed and kissed them and they joined in our songs and talks. We read and discussed everything from the Rebbe's Chassidut, parsha, R. Soloveitchik, *mussar*, Zamir Cohen and stories of *ba'alei teshuva* at our table. It was wonderful. Sometimes we had guests, sometimes we didn't and sometimes we were guests of others. It was always wonderful.

The children have grown. I'm a widow now, a "senior citizen,"

and live alone. I keep Shabbat at the table surrounded by such warm memories, the *neshamot* of my dear ones and the flickering lights from my grandmother's *menorah*. In my heart, my honey lovingly still sings *Eshet Chayil*. Shabbat ... a perpetual covenant between Hashem and our people, between Him and me and my soul mate. On Shabbat I recall how my mum and my grandmother, through the vessel of the *menorah*, helped bring me home.

Encounter with Shabbos

As told to Sheindel Weinbach

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it. The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they were gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, and have vanished. The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities, of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert but aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jews; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

(Mark Twain)

... *Baruch Hamavdil bein kodesh lechol.*

So now can we light up?" our guest asked eagerly. My husband and I nodded and he fished out a package of cigarettes from his pocket, which had nestled there for 25 long hours, handed one to his wife, took one for himself and inhaled deeply.

It was still *shalosh seudos*, but already night and the end of a long Shabbos — a long time waiting for that cigarette as well as all the experiences that had filled it for the Nir family.

We had hosted Shachaf, Gai and their two daughters from a coastal kibbutz in central Eretz Yisrael, and after *Havdallah*, it was time for a quick summing up and warm thank-yous.

Six-year-old Shirli piped up, "You know, Ima, we played so nicely together that I didn't even miss the TV. Who needs it?"

Shachaf was even more generous. "Do you realize, Shirli and Hod, that you didn't fight for the whole Shabbat? And you never said you were bored, either. I can't believe it!"

Shabbat was her weekly nemesis. As cultural coordinator of their kibbutz, Shachaf had programs and activities running throughout the week, afternoon and evening. Shabbat was supposed to be family time, with nothing structured, on purpose. For the Nirs, it was *gehinnom*.

In summer, they spend the whole day at the beach, which was right nearby. No picnic; after an hour or two, it gets boring and the kids start fighting or whining. It's no better in winter either. They'd go somewhere with the car, looking for adventure or acquisition (shopping), but everything quickly pales, becomes meaningless, and again the girls begin whining. Dining didn't interest them, either

"This Shabbat was so different, from the very moment we lit candles, right, girls?"

Yes, I noticed that. The tight lines around Shachaf's mouth had relaxed into a surprised and blissful smile. You could feel her savor-

ing the Shabbos ambience that had descended on our house.

My husband Shragi took Gai to shul. People came over casually and wished them both a friendly but hearty “Good Shabbos.” That, and *Lecha Dodi*, had a tremendous impact on him. Interesting — Gai came from an altogether secular background. A generations-old product of kibbutz life, he was well-read and knew about *datiyim*, book knowledge, but *siddur* knowledge and *shul* exposure was a deliciously novel experience.

Shachaf’s grandmother was Polish, so she knew about *gefilte fish*, but Shachaf knew much less about Judaism. Shabbos took her by pleasant surprise. At one point, during *shalosh seudos*, she burst out, “Oh, why did they do this to us? Why did they deny us this?” Referring to the kibbutz’s calculated anti-religious brainwashing.



It all began with an innocent phone call three years ago, I tell Sheindel, from an organization calling itself *Mudaut* (Awareness). It screens possible outreach candidates to pair them off with random phone book entries listed under kibbutzim. Remember pen-pals? These are phone-pals. *Mudaut* asks kibbutzniks if they would like to engage in informal discussions with *chareidi* people. Doesn’t sound threatening, and “you needn’t continue.” Besides, “they” are usually very curious about *us*, how we live, cope with large families. If we are altogether normal according to their broad definition. In this modern day, they may have encountered “cultured” *chareidim*, too, and they have lots of questions.

We hit it off together right away, Shachaf and I. From our very first conversation, which lasted two hours into the night, we discovered that we were born five days apart and shared the same *mazal* (Horoscope sign). It does count for something, notwithstanding all the differences.

Besides having something in common, age, we found other similarities in temperament. Shachaf thinks deeply and seriously, is open to ideas but only after internalizing them.

At first, she didn't realize that I was out to do *kiruv* — she wasn't supposed to. We just talked and she had plenty of questions, which I fielded. We were very open, up to a certain point, but my first score, which took time, of course, was to get her to keep *taharas hamishpachah*, which she does to this day.

“And you really wear that straw on your head?” She couldn't believe I wore a wig and when I invited her for a visit, that was one of the attractions — to see how I really looked since I sounded so “with it.”

And she came. She came one morning while I was still home on maternity leave. Of course she looked me up and down, not feeling at all uncomfortable in her ... ahem ... summery outfit — until Chaimke came home from *cheder*. I hadn't expected her to stay so long and hadn't really prepared the children for a real live *chilonit*

“His eyes doubled their size and he stood there like he was seeing a ghost,” she recapped upon the next occasion, when she came fully clad, even her hair covered with a hat she had bought or borrowed. Indeed, for this Shabbos, the whole family passed muster, not only in clothing but in behavior.

Shachaf has visited me several times, each time bringing a gift. I can't help smiling at her good intentions

The first time, she brought a very nice set of ceramic mugs. “I made them myself in the kibbutz workshop. They're practically new; I've used them maybe once or twice.” OK, so I could use them for kitchen decoration. The next time she brought me a book, supposedly for religious people. Which I was even afraid to open ...

On her third visit, it was a plant — but it was already *shemitah*. I hope she wasn't looking for it this time. We invited her for

Chanukah and she brought a beautiful *havdallah* candle. I turned it over and saw a sticker with the company's name and their logo: Producing Candles Seven Days a Week.

How could she have been expected to know ...?

Before coming for Shabbos, they had called up and asked if they could bring some excellent imported wine sold in a nearby kibbutz. Good thing they asked.



They are ready for the next step. They have signed up for an Arachim seminar two weeks from now. I think the transition will be welcome.

First appeared in the now defunct *International Yated Ne'eman*.

A Lesson in Shabbos

Ira Somers

Be the change that you wish to see in the world.

(Mahatma Gandhi)

I began observing Shabbos in January 2001.

The year before, I took my first step in the life-changing (for the better) event of learning Torah. I met Rabbi Yochanon Goldman in Philadelphia, and after a few elementary lessons, purchased a blue Stone *Chumash* and began reading it in English. It took me several months to read the *Five Books of Moses*, and as I progressed through the parshiot (Torah portions), one phrase began to stick out, most likely because of its redundancy: Keep the Shabbat.

Maybe it was my New Year's resolution for 2001 or maybe it was just a good starting point; I don't remember. But when the sun went down that first Friday in 2001, I "kept" the Shabbos — to the best of my ability then.

Not long after this, I lost my job in marketing and I decided to freelance, which went nowhere fast but it took me months to realize. Then it was summer, and my parents encouraged me to become a school teacher. At the time, the School District of Philadelphia instituted a program to decrease class size by installing a second teacher, a "literacy intern." It involved teaching during the day, alongside a certified teacher, and obtaining a teaching certificate at night. It offered people like me a chance at a second career.

I went for it.

I filled out the paperwork, wrote the relevant essays, and sent in the application package. Days later, I got the response. I was accepted! I was invited to come to the school district building for an interview. I checked the date and looked on the calendar to see what day it was. Saturday! The interviews were on Shabbos!

What a dilemma. I'd been keeping Shabbos for seven months, unemployed for most of them, and now I had a chance at a viable second career. People advised me that I should "take off" that one Shabbos, go for the interview and then resume my newfound religiosity the following weekend. I also learned that over a hundred people were interviewing for the position of literacy intern. If I did not show up, what hope would I have? (In the years to come, I would learn that when we do God's will, He paves the way for us. I did not know this at the time).

I put logic and rationale to the side and ignored the advice. I called a phone number on the letter and explained that for "religious reasons" I could not meet on a Saturday.

There was a slight pause and then the woman on the other end of the line said, "Can you come in tomorrow?"

My jaw dropped and my spirit soared.

The next day, I arrived with a handful of others (including one Jew) who also, presumably, could not meet on a Saturday. They gave me a test, interviewed me, and then sent me home.

Not only did I finish the interview process before the hundred-plus other candidates showed up the following Saturday, I got a phone call from my interviewer that I got placed. I got the job!!! Not only that, I was placed in a great school. And not only *that*, I was placed with an amazing mentor. Tracy was cool and she was a gifted teacher. We worked so well together for the next two years and she taught me *so* much.

All the while, I kept Shabbos, and I continued learning more and more about how miraculous and incredibly spiritual Judaism is. I also began wearing *tzitzit* (the four-cornered garment with strings dangling from the sides), which made me an anomaly at the Roman Catholic university where I chose to obtain my teaching degree.

By the time I walked down the aisle to receive my master's degree in elementary education, handed to me by the head nun, I had already booked a flight to study at Aish HaTorah Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Minyan at the Mountain

Rabbi Mordechai Bulua

On the mountain was a treasure buried deep beneath a stone.

(Dennis Lambert and Brian Potter *One Tin Soldier*)

When my kids were young, we took them on vacation one summer to the Green Mountains of Vermont. We stayed at a place called Jay Peak, which in the winter is a ski resort. Before the end of the first week, I told my wife that I would try to get a *minyan* (a quorum of ten men) for Shabbos. My wife was very skeptical, as there aren't many Jews living in Vermont and it was the off-season. Besides the hotel, there were chalets on site that were rented out. I received a list of names of the people staying in them from the office and called every last name that sounded Jewish. When all was said and done, I ended up with seven men in total, including me. One man wasn't home, but his wife said he'd call me back later. Even with him, we'd be short two men. Still, I didn't give up hope. I remembered how my rebbe in yeshiva once homiletically interpreted the words of the Talmud "*Yeush shehlo midaas*" (referring to an owner of a lost item who doesn't realize yet that it is lost), that if someone gives up hope, he's not thinking straight.

The following evening, I received a call from the man who was returning my call. He said he would be delighted to attend, as would two of his buddies who were also Jewish! I hadn't called them as

they didn't have Jewish-sounding last names. I made a quick calculation and realized if everybody who said they would come was true to their word, we would have, God willing, exactly ten men for a *minyan*!

Friday morning, I went back to the city, a two-hour drive, to get a *sefer Torah*, *talleisim*, *siddurim*, *chumashim* and *yarmulkes*. I made a big Shabbat Shalom sign with a mountain peak in the background, which I later taped to the front door of our townhouse. For the lectern, we put one nesting table on top of another. We spread a *tallis* over the kitchen serving counter from where we would read the Torah, and my wife prepared a Kiddush in the dining room. Shacharis was called for 10:00 a.m. We were on vacation, after all. By 10:05, the entire *minyan* had arrived. We even had a *Kohen*! The men were mostly retirees from Florida. They came dressed in Bermuda shorts! Even though the *yarmulkes* were displayed prominently, they didn't remove the baseball caps they were wearing. They looked like they had just come from a round of golf.

The men showed great respect for the *shul* and there was no talking. During the *davening* (prayers), one of the men came over to me and told me not to give an *Aliyah* (the honor of being called to the Torah) to one of the men because he didn't know Hebrew and hadn't been in a *shul* in more than 70 years. I decided then and there that come what may, this man was definitely going to get an *Aliyah*. When I called him up, he didn't budge. I went over to him and told him I would help him say the blessings. Hesitantly, he slowly got up and went to the *bima*. After the concluding blessing, he started crying in front of everybody. No one could console him. I took him into another room and asked him what was wrong and if I could be of any help. He told me that he hadn't stepped into a *shul* in over 70 years and his emotions overcame him. He explained that he had made a vow never to enter a *shul* again because a rabbi once publicly

shamed him in *shul* for running around. He wasn't going to come to *shul* that morning, but his friends convinced him that it was more an "experience" not to be missed.

He admitted that he never had a bar mitzvah, when I asked him. I then told him that by having just received his first ever *Aliyah*, he could now be considered to have had an "official" bar mitzvah. With tears in his eyes, the man told me he couldn't wait to tell his grandchildren. I turned to the worshippers and told them that the Kiddush that morning was in honor of this man's bar mitzvah! There wasn't a dry eye.

The following Shabbos, we once again had our *minyan*. However, this time, the men all came dressed in long pants, and they all removed their baseball caps and put on yarmulkes! My wife remarked to me that there was more talking going on than on the previous Shabbos. To which I jokingly replied, "Now, we're a real *shul*!"

Editor's note: The gematriya (numeral equivalent) of the author's full Hebrew name, Mordechai Yosef ben Kalman, is 702. Amazingly, it's the same gematriya as Shabbos! And he was born on Shabbos!!

Previously published in *The Jewish Press*.

An Orange Shabbat

Susan de la Fuente

*Wherever conflict is found, there's an obligation
to reciprocate with kindness.*

(Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach)

*I have a great gift in My treasure house; Shabbat
is its name, and I want to give it to Israel.*

(Beitzah 16a)

I painted Shabbat in orange and other colors on this, the coldest, rainiest weekend of the year. As I especially wanted Shabbat to be warm and colorful, I took the trouble to adorn the table with some flowers. A few sprigs of bougainvillea in purple-pink, some dark red leaves and a couple of white roses for contrast looked pretty in a sky-blue vase. I also arranged a few kumquats and miniature lemons as a centerpiece. I needed a colorful Shabbat to escape the ache in my lower jaw from a tooth extraction earlier in the week. Besides that, a tendon in my foot I never knew existed had flared up and made walking painful. On the positive side, I could now relate well to Rav Kook's description of our ability to balance and walk on the narrow base formed by the soles of the feet as a "wonder of wonders" (*Olat Reiya* Rav Kook).

Another downer was the hassle we had had that week as heads of the house committee our *va'ad bayit*. Though we're an apartment

house of only twelve families, most of us veterans of over twenty years in the building, it's hard to get everyone to agree. Now that we have to fix the elevator, there's a real need to install a Shabbat mechanism for neighbors that can barely walk stairs to get to synagogue. A battle immediately begins over this planned feature and the prospect of its limited use. Some call it religious coercion — the building will now be branded as a religious building, they fear. Another is more considerate but equally paranoid: "Before long you'll be closing the common driveway to Shabbat traffic, too!" Yet still, it seems healthier to me to live in a building with a variety of people and not in a religious ghetto.

On the subject of controversy about Shabbat issues, this week I learned of an apt comment made about it by the renowned Rebbe of Kotsk. The specific Torah prohibition against Jews kindling fire on Shabbat is unique in being a biblical prohibition, whereas the other categories of work are defined in the Oral Law. "Don't use this holy day to kindle the fires of controversy among yourselves," was in effect the Kotsker Rebbe's interpretation of the biblical verse telling us not to kindle fire in all our habitations. Issues of status sometimes loom large on our day of rest, especially in the synagogue. When my husband was *gabbai* in New York one year, he found out that as an office holder it's hard to avoid offending people.

With rain coming down in abundance this particular Friday night, I was afraid one couple wouldn't arrive in the downpour. However, they hailed originally from Dublin, Ireland, and the Irish are usually not deterred by rain. Although a layer of hail frosted the streets when they arrived, and they were so drenched that we had to fit them out in some dry clothing, a good mood prevailed. The husband of another friend was headed for knee replacement surgery, and the jolly gathering cheered them up.

Dinner began with an appetizer of orange segments, avocado

chunks and a sprinkling of unsweetened cranberries, which was well received. I had never made this dish before but must have read about it somewhere. I followed that up with orange soup, which was a puree of pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot, regular potato and vegetable broth. You add salt and pepper to taste and a small amount of sweet spices — cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves. To give it more body I had added small cubes of baby turnip sautéed with finely chopped red Spanish onion (I always try to have some soup ready-made in the freezer to overcome the hurdle of short Fridays). I also kept some chicken soup with noodles on the side for an unadventurous family member! My window boxes, dried up chaff in the summer, come to life and flourish in the winter. They had yielded a fine harvest of cress with small leaves, so I added some to the salad. For dessert I included tangerine sorbet. After a round with the hand blender that morning the frozen mixture took on a beautiful shade of peach, though I had dared to add brown sugar to the syrup. I also added a fine dice of kumquat peel as flavorful zest.

So, let's not underestimate the restorative power of Shabbat, which can transform our lives. Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888) of blessed memory wrote that if our Heavenly Father had not given us this day of rest, we would have had to beg for it on bended knees. He believed that Shabbat saves us and our children “from self-deification and denial of God” in the modern world. Rabbi Hirsch wrote prior to the obsessive media blitz of our technological age, but his perspective then is every bit as relevant now:

The more you realize that today business captures all our interest, every social relationship; the more you feel imprisoned by the march of industry, the more you must tremble before the thought that you and your son may remain completely submerged in it, running the danger of losing your God in it and any dignity of the human personality.

Thus, however important commerce is for you; however more valuable ... time becomes; however much more your gain or loss depend on days, hours and minutes; however stronger the chains of industry become, the greater must be the Shabbat offering, the more zealously you must grasp the cup of the Shabbat Kiddush, and with how much more harmony you must gather your wife and children and all the members of your family around you and sanctify the Shabbat, extol it and give fervent thanks for this gift.

Celebrating Shabbat enthusiastically each week is a way to strengthen family ties and have a break from the relentless pace of modern life. Everyone should lend a hand with preparations.

Even if the weather is on the chill side here, and homes are draughty, the cooler season is generally delightful. The glow of citrus fruits of all varieties brightens the trees and the store shelves — lemons of all sizes and shapes, oranges, grapefruits, pomelos, kumquats and tangerines. The moment the rain ends the air is fresh, the sun warms the earth, and the dead sticks of the almond trees magically blossom once more. In between showers we enjoy blue skies and brilliant sunshine.

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The Chicken Lady

C.B. Gavant

*On Shabbat something happens to the world
— it becomes infinite again.*

(Shlomo Carlebach)

In 1926, when Clara turned sixteen, Meir [Clara's father] decided to move the family to the more Jewish environment of New York, so that Clara could continue her Jewish studies.

To help support the family, Clara looked for work in the sweatshops on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. She found a job in a clothing factory on Canal Street, cutting extra threads off the garments and making sure the seams were sewn properly. Ignoring the cramped, airless quarters and the grinding machinery, she sang while she worked, happy to be continuing her Jewish studies at night.

The first Shabbos into her new job, Clara stayed home, observing the holy day with her father and younger siblings. Monday morning, she walked into the shop and sat down in her place as if nothing had happened.

The foreman sauntered over. "Where were you on Saturday, Clara?"

Her answer well-rehearsed, Clara whispered hoarsely, "I had a bad throat, so I couldn't come."

The foreman said nothing, just asked one of the girls to bring her work. The other employees raised their eyebrows, but no one said a word.

The following week, Shabbos was observed as usual in the Resnick home. Clara knew, though, that it would be harder to hide the truth from her boss this time. When she walked in on Monday morning, he approached immediately, bearing down on her like a lion stalking his prey.

“Where were you Saturday?” he demanded.

The normally composed Clara began to cry. How could she explain her convictions to the foreman, who was most likely a Jew himself? “I don’t work on Shabbos,” she said.

“You don’t?” He glared at her. “Well then, get your coat and get out.”

Accepting her paltry wages, Clara found herself out on the street, her shoulders still shaking. The dismissal stung, but how could it be otherwise? She knew she couldn’t work on Shabbos.

Garment factories were plentiful in the area. Clara entered another building bearing a sign that read “Girl Wanted.” An intelligent girl with a regal bearing, she was hired immediately. The next Monday, however, the same scene repeated itself. Like so many other Jews of that era, Clara was told, “If you don’t show up Saturday, we don’t want you Monday.”

Yet her determined nature refused to allow her to succumb to the temptation of violating the Sabbath. As Clara never considered working on Shabbos, she found herself searching for a new job every Monday morning.

Unfortunately, many of Clara’s relatives did not share her principles, and she was often told, “Oh Claruni, this is America! We’re not in the old country anymore.” She refused to allow these well-meaning exhortations to budge her.

One day she chanced upon an ad in the *Tageblatt*, an Orthodox Yiddish newspaper, announcing that the Young Israel movement had opened an employment agency to help *shomer Shabbos* people find

work. Clara hurried to the office to register. The secretary recorded her details on a small card.

“Phone number, please?”

“We don’t have one,” Clara replied.

The secretary nodded understandingly. Many immigrant families couldn’t afford a telephone. “You’ll have to call us to check if there’s anything,” she said.

Clara called the office every day to see if there were any updates. In the meantime, she attended evening classes at the Teachers’ Institute, working toward a teaching degree. Her English was improving greatly, but Hebrew was the language she loved, and it was this that she wanted to teach.

Excerpted from *The Chicken Lady* of Jerusalem: A Life of giving by C.B. Gavant (Feldheim Publications)

When most people are well into their retirement, Clara Hammer began her career as the Chicken Lady of Jerusalem (and later its suburbs) when she noticed a little girl being given scraps at the butcher’s for her family’s meal because they couldn’t afford a whole chicken. She then instructed the butcher to give the family two chickens every week and put it on her tab. That was the beginning of her chicken dynasty.

Clara Chaya Hammer *a”h*, who enjoyed the sobriquet of the legendary Chicken Lady of Jerusalem, returned her feather-white soul to her Maker a month short of her one-hundredth birthday. Two hundred and fifty families depended on her for the chickens that they ate. For thirty years Clara Hammer made good on Herbert Hoover’s promise of a chicken in every pot.

Today, the Chicken Fund is being run by her daughter Rebbetzin Chana Homnick and her great-granddaughters Elisheva and Shira.

To read more about The Chicken Fund:
chickenladyofjerusalem.com

To make donations to The Chicken Fund:
Contributions can be sent to:
The Clara Hammer Chicken Fund
POB 18602
Jerusalem 91185

Contributions can also be deposited at:
Bank Leumi
Branch 905
Ramat Eshkol
Jerusalem
Acct no. 4341-94

When I was in my early twenties, I was the frequent guest for Shabbos (and holidays) at two homes, two families both named Cohen. If not for these Mrs. Cohens, I might not be writing this book about Shabbos or even have become *shomeret* Shabbat. I have much to thank these hospitable, vivacious and warm ladies for and so I offer a short story by each. — Rosally Saltsman

Familiar Guests

Faith Cohen

There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't yet met.

(William Butler Yeats)

Too many years have gone by to recall stories about our Montreal Shabbat table in Ville St. Laurent. Here is one I do recall. I used to do bookbinding work for the library of the Shaar Hashamayim synagogue in Westmount. One day, a man rushed in out of breath asking, “Where is the chapel? I am late for Kaddish.” I told him to follow me as I knew my way around the labyrinthian layout of that old building. I am running, he is running, and suddenly he says, “I know you. I was stranded in your area over a Shabbat a long time ago, and your husband, seeing a stranger in *shul*, brought me home to eat lunch. You don’t remember me?”

I still feel funny about not recognizing him, but how is possible to remember every person who honored us during those years with their Shabbat presence at our table?

Fired Up for Shabbos

Miriam Cohen

When you pass through water, I am with you; through rivers, they will not wash you away; when you walk through fire, you will not be singed, and no flame will burn you. (Isaiah 43:2)

The Torah is likened to water. When you immerse yourself in the waters of Torah, no flame can singe you.

My husband and I had always kept a kosher home but often used our free time on Friday night to go out to a café, shopped on Saturdays, and went to *shul* on the High Holidays and Succoth. We ate out at favorite restaurants, certainly not kosher ones.

Rabbi David Hartman *z"l* and several of our close friends had a profound influence on us. They showed us how meaningful a life of commitment was and slowly, slowly, we began to observe Shabbat as it should be kept. To celebrate our first real Shabbat, i.e., on time, *licht-benching et al.*, we invited another family who had trod this path before us. We opened our dinette table, proudly placed the beautiful candlesticks in the middle and lit the candles. As we finished the blessings, we saw to our horror the candlesticks with the lit candles disappearing, sinking, and the table-

cloth on fire. It seems I had not locked the center board in place firmly. Well, Shabbat or not, we had to put out the fire. Our guests laughed so hard they could barely stop. It certainly was a memorable beginning!

Lighting the Way

Lois Greene Stone

We light two candles for Shabbat because they correspond to the two forms of the mitzvah of Shabbat. In Exodus we are told, "Remember (zachor) the day of Shabbat and make it holy." (Exodus 20:8) This encompasses all of the positive commandments associated with sanctifying Shabbat.

In Deuteronomy we are instructed, "Keep (shamor) the day of Shabbat and make it holy." (Deuteronomy 5:12) This encompasses all of the negative prohibitions associated with Shabbat. To represent our acceptance of both aspects of Shabbat observance, we light two candles. (Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 263:1) There is a custom of lighting an additional candle for each child.

Minsk sounded odd, and the word Pinsk made me giggle. Were my maternal grandparents making up the names of the towns in Russia they once called home? Had to, I thought.

While she sipped tea from a tall glass, and a sugar cube was dipped into the hot brew on and off, I heard that Grandma left Russia, alone, snuck out of her village in a wooden cart with wooden wheels, and got to America; she was sixteen. She carried brass candlesticks. She didn't tell me how she secretly got into a big ship's steerage for the journey across the ocean, and I didn't ask. Her mother wanted the Sabbath symbol, associated also with Jewish women,

to be used and continue through generations the mother would never be able to see or speak to herself. The brass would represent both what was left behind and the meaningful day-of-rest to come for her daughter, Rebecca.

Covering her head, shielding her eyes, moving her arms a certain way was exactly what my mother did also. I didn't realize, when I first listened while wondering how a very hot glass didn't burn my grandmother's fingers, that ritual and something-tangible-yet-important was part of women's obligation.

"I have given you the match. Only you can light your own candle," said the Rebbe Schneerson. A softcover book called *Seeds of Wisdom*, by Mendel Kalmenson, has this bit of philosophy inked on a page. Now I understand the meaning has more to do with how we impact life and our choices, but, given the tools of Judaism in childhood, perhaps as we light our way we've a legacy of values.

While we are precious and unique, my mother said that ritual joins us and time doesn't exist. Friday night at sundown, Jewish women were all starting the transition from daylight the very same way. Our dining room always got quiet for a few moments and my sisters and I actually stopped picking on one another; we watched the wooden match strike and listened to the Hebrew. It seemed odd that girls could not learn that language in those years, yet we could recite in it. While I sat in a balcony of the *shul* as a little girl, I felt my being a girl was important at the Shabbos table. My mother ushered in the rest-day with light and words she made us recite in Hebrew but gave us the English translation.

When my father's sister died (years after my dad was buried), items from her apartment were dispersed; she had no children. There were bisque figurines and lead crystal, but family members argued over brass candlesticks brought by her mother from Lithuania, my paternal grandma's birthplace. How my younger sister won out sur-

prised me, but the dull metal was the trophy taken by the smallest person in the room. At home, my mother polished the finish and her third daughter carried them into the future.

My sterling “special” candlesticks began, in 1956, to contain the short, white cylinders with the white wicks. Different sterling holders have tall, decorative, beeswax candles snugly sitting in the indented places that secure the items. No prayers are passed between lips, nor eyes shielded, as these are ornaments to beautify a table setting.

The Rebbe said, “The flame is the fire of Torah.” As I polish my special sterling ones, I often relive my *chuppa*, opening many silver items but selecting this received gift for the Shabbos-only ones as I started my journey as a married woman, my mother and paternal grandmother holding hands as if their mingling of fingers allowed my dead father to witness my rite. I also think of my daughter learning to perform this meaningful age-old ritual of welcoming the Sabbath, passing this to her daughter.

May each Shabbos be good: the continuity of Jewish life is precious.

Lois Greene Stone, writer and poet, has been syndicated worldwide. Poetry and personal essays have been included in hard & softcover book anthologies. Collections of her personal items, photos, and memorabilia are in major museums, including twelve different divisions of The Smithsonian.

A Krakow Shabbat Story

Rabbi Avi Baumol

Your people are my people, and your God is my God.

(Ruth 1:16)

Rabbi, I've decided that I would like to observe Shabbat for the first time in my life. It seems so different from anything I have experienced and I want to give it a try — but I don't know how to do it. I know that in a few months we will be starting to learn the laws of Shabbat, but I want to try and keep an entire Shabbat correctly this week. So please, can you tell me everything I need to know to observe this coming Shabbat properly?"

This was the gist of the phone call I received in Krakow from a young woman, Elizaveta, who had been in my class for only a few months. She was converting because only her father was Jewish. Usually I stagger my students' observance so as not to frighten them with a radical change in lifestyle right at the beginning. I ask the students to try first the positive aspects of Shabbat and then slowly to cover the prohibitions as well, reminding them about the practice of violating one law throughout the entire process until the conversion.

But here, after witnessing all the various parts of our Shabbat in Krakow, Elizaveta wanted to try it all out. Shabbat in Krakow is very special; it is the focal point of the development of each student in the program. It begins with Shabbat services at the Izaak Synagogue, followed by a festive dinner at the JCC, where old and young join

together in great food, conversation and Torah. After dinner I give a lecture in the winter time for two hours, usually on a contemporary relevant topic. In the morning after *davening* and Kiddush at *shul* we come back to the JCC and study, learn, sing, study, learn, sing ... basically until Shabbat ends. We usually include a “Shabbat spatzer” (Shabbat walk), in which we stretch our legs and walk through the streets of Krakow. After Mincha and *seudah shlishit* we make havdallah.

It truly is all-encompassing and Elizaveta wanted to do it right just once. I helped her find a place to stay within walking distance of the Jewish community and then wrote her a list of every detail relating to the observance of Shabbat: what’s *muktzeh*, what prayers, about candles, about *Eruv* ... I even told her about cutting toilet paper before Shabbat so she would not have to violate any detail on the day.

And so it was. She was beaming the entire day and we shared a remarkable Shabbat together with the entire Jewish community. We prayed, sang, ate, walked, and learned a lot — in English, Hebrew, Polish, Russian and any other language we could use.

All was going great until the end of the day when I noticed Elizaveta’s face darkened. I couldn’t understand why she was nearing tears on what should have been the most beautiful experience of her life. I went over to her and asked her what happened: did she not feel well? Did she hear some bad news? Why was she so sad?

Her response was precious: “Rabbi, you prepared me for every moment of this amazing gift called Shabbat but you left out one detail. You didn’t tell me how sad I would feel as it comes to an end. I feel like crying”

Wow.

I was speechless. What a *zechut* for me to witness Shabbat through the eyes of Elizaveta. The pure joy of her experiencing the

extra soul of Shabbat was infectious; yet the sadness she emitted when she realized she would have to wait six more days to feel this again ... that truly touched my heart.

I told Elizaveta about *Havdallah* and the idea that the *besamim* are there to literally revive us from the sad stupor we fall in to as our extra *neshama* departs but we both knew that some nice-smelling cloves would not solve her mini-crisis of Shabbat's ebbing away.

The only remedy is the countdown of six more days to Shabbat and the magical feeling that it lies just around the corner. Ever since that first Shabbat Elizaveta has been hooked. Today she is a proud member of the Jewish people and her Shabbat has never faltered. It still breathes life and spiritual joy into her week, and is a constant in her religious expression. And yes, as the sun sets, Elizaveta still feels a bit down, realizing that the extra soul is departing and the waiting period begins again

Today Elizaveta is observant and moving to Israel.

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Touring Alaska: Shabbat in the Inside Passage

Faygie Levy Holt

Cold hands, warm heart.

(Anon)

My husband loves going on cruises. Me, not so much. But there was one destination we both agreed we had to see from the deck of a ship: Alaska's Inside Passage. While I looked forward to the majestic scenery, I wasn't exactly excited by the frozen kosher meals I had arranged for us to dine on during our Alaskan adventure. And if the meals we received the first night on board our cruise were any indication, it was going to be a long trip with us feasting on nothing but peanut-butter sandwiches, fresh fruit and veggies.

Thankfully, God had another plan.

The next morning, as I was standing near a bank of elevators, someone came over to me and asked if my husband and I were the other "kosher" couple. I answered that yes, we keep kosher.

"We've been looking for you!" he said, explaining that there were five other couples on the cruise ship who were Shabbat- and kosher-observant, and they were eating their meals together. Not only that, but a tour group from Israel was also on board. The group, which numbered about thirty or forty people, had arranged for daily

minyans and kosher meals. We were invited to join them for breakfast and dinner every day — meals that included freshly baked bread, salmon and eggs.

Needless to say, I was more than a little excited to relay this information to my husband. Goodbye, peanut butter! Hello scrambled eggs, roasted veggies and toast with butter!

Still, the food didn't compare to the beauty that we enjoyed during our one Shabbat at sea. Just after lighting Shabbat candles (though we could not light an actual candle at sea), my husband and I went down to join the Friday night prayers. I ended up standing by the door to a card room that the tour group had transformed into a makeshift synagogue.

Throughout Minchah and Kabbalat Shabbat, the door to the room remained open, drawing some curious glances from cruise-goers on their way to dinner or a show. A few people peeked in and smiled. One woman broke off from her group and asked if she could join us for services. I didn't hesitate to welcome her and share my *siddur*.

A few minutes later, a man came in with his children and asked if he could pray with us. His two daughters sat behind me, while he and his son joined the men. An extra *siddur* was somehow found for father and son.

Then there was the older gentleman. Well-dressed and obviously on his way somewhere, he was drawn to the doorway by the Jewish tunes and Hebrew words.

He stood quietly, sadness in his eyes as he listened to the prayers. I asked him if he wanted to join us. He shook his head. "It's been many, many years since I've been inside a synagogue."

I assured him it would be fine if he came inside the room, but he turned and left. The look in his eyes said it all: His Jewish soul had called out and, for those few minutes, he had answered it.

It wasn't just the praying that turned into a welcoming gathering for Jews on board. As our little group settled down for Friday night dinner at our usual table — where, to my delight, loaves of fresh-baked *challah* were waiting for us — I happened to glance around the room. Sitting right behind us, at the very next table, was the father who had brought his children to our services. The rest of his family was there, too.

After a little chit-chat and the recitation of Kiddush by one of the men in our group, the mother at the other table said, “I didn't even think of getting *challah* for Shabbat.”

I reached into the basket on our table, pulled out several *challah* rolls and passed them to the other family. They were unbelievably happy to have this little taste of Shabbat on vacation.

Needless to say, what was supposed to be a cruise full of packaged meals and solo praying became one of the most moving, inspiring and amazing Shabbat experiences of my life.

Editor's Note: If you will be traveling on a cruise over Shabbat, consult a competent rabbinic authority.

Faygie Holt is an award-winning journalist and regular contributor to Chabad.org and other media outlets. She is also the author of *The New Girl* and *Trouble Ahead*, the first two novels in her Achdus Club book series for girls. Learn more at: <http://www.faygielevy.com/>.

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A Shabbos Oasis in New York

Miriam Malowitzky

The purpose of the Jewish people [the people of Israel] is to unite the world into one family.

(Rabbi Avraham Itzhak HaCohen Kook)

Shabbos has the potential to be a family day. One can imagine children of all ages seated round the table eagerly sharing stories with their parents. Anecdotes of the week gone by are communicated in good cheer. Melodious *zemiros* are sung and *divrei Torah* are thoughtfully imparted. The table is set in the finest and delicious food is plentiful. For the average family, *Shabbos* is a time to bond and rejuvenate from the stressors of the week before and recharge for the week to come. (I realize I am painting a very rosy picture.)

For singles living on their own, in New York, *Shabbos* can be a challenging day. Singles, especially those who have come from “out of town” communities, do not have the structure of the family unit. Many have come from other states and even other countries to make a life for themselves, looking for *shidduchim*, jobs and other opportunities. For singles, finding a meal for *Shabbos* can be an added pressure to an already stressful week.

Many singles feel different because of their singlehood, living in a society that revolves around family life. They want to find families that are accepting, warm and non-judgmental. Too many personal

questions can make singles feel uncomfortable and in the “spotlight.” Of course, interest on the part of the family is welcome in a non-intrusive manner. Making singles feel welcome and important to a family’s Shabbos table is invaluable.

That brings me to the Kleins (name has been changed). Personally, I met this family in a roundabout, unexpected way. I had been suggested as a *shidduch* for a guy who eats at the Kleins’ on *Shabbos*, and Mr. Klein was given as a reference. I dutifully called him up and after he filled me in about what I was inquiring, he invited me to come to his home on any *Shabbos*. He proceeded to tell me in his trademark (as I would soon learn), humorous and heart-warming style, that he and his wife have many guests and that I am always welcome to join them. Being new to the community, I felt like I had just hit the jackpot and enthusiastically wrote down his phone number.

A few weeks later, I remembered the welcoming invitation I had received and promptly invited myself to the Kleins’ for a *Shabbos* meal. Walking there, I have to admit, I was nervous about going to new people whom I knew nothing about. At the same time, I was armed with the warm conversation that I had shared with Mr. Klein, so I summoned up the courage, tentatively walked up the steps and knocked on the door, even though it was invitingly open.

Immediately I was greeted with a chorus of “Good *Shabbos*” from all the other guests who had already gathered. Loudest of all was Mr. Klein who affectionately said, “You must be Miriam.” Assuming that he was the host, I thanked him for his hospitality, to which he responded that I was enhancing his *Shabbos* by joining him and his wife (who I was soon to learn is the backbone of their generosity) for the *Shabbos* meal.

And some meal it was! You know that uneasy feeling that you get when you are a guest in someone’s home and the meal is about

to start and you don't know where to sit?! Well, that anxious feeling is nowhere to be had in the Kleins' home. Mrs. Klein makes seating cards for each of the guests she and her husband are expecting, so the guests know exactly where to sit, without feeling like they are intruding on someone else's place. The more I went to their home, the more it became clear to me that Mrs. Klein took special care in seating her guests where she thought they would feel most comfortable.

There is a joke in the Kleins' home that newcomers hear from other guests and that is "pace yourself." Meaning, the food is non-stop. There are three kinds of fish from which to choose with condiments for all tastes. For those accustomed to having egg salad or chopped liver, those delicacies are served as well. Wine is served at the table, sometimes graciously brought by some of the guests, and beer is offered as well, which only the men seem to drink much to Mr. Klein's chagrin. The next course is packed with salads of every variety. There is a meat *cholent* and a vegetarian one to accommodate those watching their meat intake. Often Mrs. Klein will prepare other vegetarian dishes for specific people who she is aware do not eat animal products. I will not overwhelm you with the details of the rest of the menu. Needless to say, participants at the Kleins' *Shabbos* meal do not leave with a grumble in their stomachs.

Of course, the Klein guests are treated to abundant spirituality as well. There is always a *dvar torah* that graces the *Shabbos* table, which often leads to heated discussion afterwards. Anyone in the crowd who wants to share a Torah thought is encouraged to do so, making the guests feel like an integral part of the meal. Since there are people of all shapes and sizes, different backgrounds and varying religious spectrums, this leads to hearing interesting musings and ideas. *Zemiros* are sung enthusiastically, with a medley of voices joining together. The guests leave feeling not only physically satiated,

but as importantly, if not more so, spiritually gratified as well.

Having had my share of tough Shabbos invites, where I have either felt ignored, interrogated or simply uncomfortable, I can understand why singles may be apprehensive to be a guest at someone's *Shabbos* table. At the same time, I can say confidently that every one of us singles can use a "Klein family." I urge you all to seek until you find. Ask friends about their positive *Shabbos* experiences and go along with them, until you either get an invitation or you feel brave enough to invite yourself. No matter where you live, I guarantee that there is a "Klein family" in your community who will be happy to share their *Shabbos* table with you. I can assure you, it is better than eating tuna out of a can (the one who understands, understands).

I have been going to the Kleins' for about three years now. I feel wanted and embraced when I enter their home. They have even set me up with men on numerous occasions, albeit I am still single, much to the Kleins' bewilderment. I am amazed how every single week, including *Yom Tov*, Mrs. Klein shops, prepares and cooks with love in her heart for the guests who consider the Klein home a Shabbos oasis in their hectic New York lives. Some quotes I have heard from guests at their home: "He makes me feel like I am doing him a favor by coming here"; "It is so reassuring to know that I can always count on the Kleins for a delicious, uplifting, relaxed *Shabbos* meal."

Go ahead, find your own "Klein family" until, God-willing, you have your own and you can become that "Klein family" for someone else.

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Crash Course in Yiddishkeit

Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

*It doesn't matter how long the journey as long as you're
on the right road. It doesn't matter how long the road
as long as you're going in the right direction.*

(Rosally Saltsman)

Shlomo HaMelech writes (*Koheles* 3:1) that all things have their proper time. Citing examples of contrasting and conflicting elements, he notes that there is a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. Essentially, man must use his maturity and intelligence to guide him how and when to act.

Yet there is much that transpires both in our personal lives and in world events that seem beyond our control. At times, events seem to occur randomly, without any forethought regarding time or reason. In this story, retold by Dr. Daniel Sukenik of Kew Gardens, New York, we come to realize, among other things, that events indeed happen at specific times because whether we realize it at the time or not, there is a Master Plan.

For Gadi Biton (the name has been changed), the beauty of life was personified by the rip-roaring rides he took on his motorcycle every opportunity he had. Gadi lived in the Galil, the northern part of *Eretz Yisrael*, and every afternoon, or whenever time allowed, he would race along the rolling ribbon of black-topped roadways that lace the magnificent mountains of the Galil. He knew every little

town and hamlet in that part of the region, and people in each one of them had seen and heard him thunder by in a blur of metal and chrome.

One afternoon, as he was riding through a small town, Gadi made his way towards an approaching intersection and decided to turn right at the upcoming corner. Coming out of his turn at a fast pace, he was startled to see a little girl directly in his path. There was no time to stop, nor could he swerve to avoid her. He slammed into the poor child and she went hurtling across the street, right into a brick wall. In a moment she was knocked unconscious.

Gadi screeched to a halt, jumped off his motorcycle and, surrounded by the hysterical screams of the child's mother and other pedestrians, quickly ran to the child. Everyone started giving everyone else orders as the little girl lay unconscious. After several excruciatingly long minutes, an ambulance appeared on the scene. As there was no hospital in that particular small town, the ambulance rushed the mother and child to the nearest medical center, a few miles away.

At the hospital, the little girl remained in a coma for days. The parents of the child were besides themselves with grief, and Gadi himself went about his business troubled and bewildered. He was deeply sorry about what had happened, but he rationalized that it really wasn't his fault because, as he had been told, the little girl had let go of her mother's hand and scampered into the middle of the road. Over and over Gadi kept repeating to anyone who would listen that he too was a victim of this horrible accident. He could neither sleep at night nor concentrate by day. All he thought about was the condition of the poor, innocent child.

One afternoon the child began to awaken from her coma. First she recognized her parents, and then slowly her memory returned and soon she could talk and think normally, just as she had before. A

few days later, the doctor announced to the child's mother that the little girl would suffer no permanent damage and that she would be released from the hospital shortly.

The last day that the girl was in the hospital, Gadi made his way to her room. As he approached the room he noticed the girl's mother sitting outside. Gadi went over to her and began to speak softly. He knew that the mother recognized him and so he got straight to the point.

"I want you to know," he said, almost inaudibly, "how terrible I feel about what happened. I know that it was not my fault completely, as your daughter ran out into the middle of the street. However," he continued, "I feel terrible about the accident and I do want to do something for you and your daughter. I myself don't know what I can do. I am not a wealthy person, but whatever you tell me, I am ready to do for the benefit of either one of you."

The young mother looked up at Gadi and said softly, "The day that you were riding your motorcycle was Shabbos. Promise me that you will never ride your motorcycle on Shabbos again."

Gadi was stunned! It never occurred to him that the day of the accident was Shabbos and besides, what did that have to do with anything? "Is that all you really want of me?" he asked.

"Yes," the mother replied in her quiet manner. "If you promise me that, it will mean everything to both me and my daughter."

Gadi nodded his head in the affirmative and then turned away. He left the hospital in a daze. Of all the things he had imagined that she would tell him, the thought about Shabbos had never even crossed his mind.

The following Shabbos, as he was about to mount his motorcycle, Gadi remembered the promise he had made. He went back into his apartment building and knocked on the first door that he noticed had a mezuzah. A child came to the door and invited him in. As

he entered, he saw a family sitting together at a table eating their Shabbos *seudah* (meal).

“I was wondering...,” Gadi began haltingly, as he addressed the man seated at the head of the table. “Perhaps you could explain to me why I am not allowed to ride a motorcycle on Shabbos?”

“Shabbos is a day of rest,” the man answered pleasantly.

“But that is my form of rest and relaxation,” Gadi protested. “Riding in the mountains is both exhilarating and calming.”

A conversation ensued as the two men verbally fenced with each other. Finally the gentleman got up and said to Gadi, “Look, I am not the most learned of men, but I do know that down the block from us lives a very nice rabbi. You should go to him and he will explain to you why you can’t ride your motorcycle on Shabbos.”

That sounded reasonable enough, so Gadi made his way to the rabbi, who cordially greeted him. He invited Gadi to join in his Shabbos *seudah* and throughout the meal they spoke about many different topics. The rabbi did not lecture or admonish Gadi, and invited him to come back another time.

Gadi began to visit him regularly, and soon they were having study sessions together twice a week. After a few months, though, Gadi announced that he was going on vacation. “I can’t stay around here right now,” he announced. “I need a change.”

“Where are you headed?” the rabbi asked.

“No place in particular,” Gadi replied. “I just want to travel throughout the country.”

“Listen,” the rabbi said. “Today is Thursday. Why don’t you go to Jerusalem for Shabbos and stay at a Yeshiva called Ohr Somayach (a yeshiva which specializes in reaching young men who have little religious background)? If you stay in that particular yeshiva for one Shabbos, you will understand forever why you can’t ride a motorcycle on Shabbos. I will make all the arrangements for you.”

Gadi thought that it might be an interesting experience and consented to go. He came to Yeshiva Or Somayach and didn't leave for two weeks! He spent his entire vacation there.

Gadi returned to live in his hometown in the Galil. A few months later he went to his friend the rabbi and told him that he had decided to leave the town for good. His two weeks at Ohr Somayach had opened up a vista to the world he never knew before. From now on the driving force in his life would be the study of Torah and the observance of *mitzvos*. He enrolled in Or Somayach, where he applied himself to his learning full throttle. He stayed on for a number of years, became a *talmid chacham* (Torah scholar) and changed the course of his life forever.

We cannot know the reason Hashem deemed it necessary for the little girl and her family to suffer the pain and anguish they did. However, the timing of the incident, Shabbos afternoon, seems almost obvious. It was the catalyst for a young man to take a road he had never taken before — the road home.

This story appears in *In The Footsteps of the Maggid*
by Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn. Reprinted with permission
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Note: Even though driving is not permitted on Shabbos, it is in life-threatening situations, which is why it is permissible to drive or ride in an ambulance or any emergency vehicle.

Writing Exclusive

Rebecca (Feldbaum) Steier

Get the truth and print it.

(John S. Knight)

When I walked into the newsroom, I had to catch my breath. Was I really here or was it a dream? I felt like I was in a scene of one of my favorite movies, *All the President's Men*, where two ace reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, used their writing savvy and detective skills to uncover what would become known as *Watergate*.

Yes, there I was in the extremely bustling offices of the *Washington Post*. I remember pinching myself to make sure it was real. All those years of excelling at writing in grade school, getting 'A's' for my papers in middle school, being one of the reporters on our high school newspaper and keeping a private writing journal were finally paying off. During college, I could never quite decide what field I should go into — journalism or advertising. I just knew I wanted a job where I could write! And now, here I was exploring my options and looking at a world I had only imagined before.

Not sure quite where to settle after college, I thought I would try the community of Silver Spring, Maryland. Having lived in a dormitory in Manhattan for many years, I was tired of city life. I was always interested in politics, so Silver Spring seemed the right choice for me with its close proximity to Washington, D.C.

I had a huge smile on my face as I stood among the reporters who were busily running around and heard the endless *click click click* of typewriters everywhere. There were also very large TV screens on many floors with the sound on mute just so people could keep abreast of what was going on in the world. (Yes, this was way before everyone had a PC).

I suddenly knew what it felt like to be Alice in Wonderland! I was breathing in this world, taking in everything as sharply as I could through all my senses! I was being given a private tour by a woman who had worked her way up in *The Washington Post* and, believe it or not, became religious as a separate, personal journey. I think she could see how excited I was to be among my *landsmen* — fellow writers!

From floor to floor we walked and I took it all in. Afterwards, my guide took me to her office where we had lunch and discussed what I had seen. Since she was a senior staff member, she told me that she could offer me a position right away — writing obituaries — but then I could work my way up. And she was very candid with me about knowing my religious boundaries before I accepted this position. When we parted I thanked her for all the time she spent with me and her kind advice about everything.

Out on the street, reality hit! Here I was being offered a starting position in a place I knew I would love. But, if truth be told, her words rang true to my heart. I was pondering the question: If a breaking story came up on Shabbos or Yom Tov, what would I do?

As I took a long walk home and debated that question, I realized, a bit heartbroken I must say, that if I was not certain I could answer that question, I was not ready to accept this job. Yes, I had fantasized for many years about working for a major newspaper but there was something I had also done that was, in my eyes, much more important: I had decided what kind of lifestyle I wanted to live.

I had grown up in the Southern town of Little Rock, Arkansas, where, through the youth group N.C.S.Y., I had become *shomeret Shabbos* while going to a predominantly Baptist high school. I had made the choice to go to a religious college, Touro College, and not the University of Missouri with its fabulous journalism program. I spent my junior year in Israel attending Neve Yerushalayim. I worked hard to achieve the religious goals I had set for myself.

Not accepting the job offer at the *Washington Post* was one of the hardest things I have ever done. And even today, almost 40 years later, I still feel a twinge of sadness. I am in awe of the many observant writers who have stayed true to their Orthodox roots while having highly successful careers. Looking back, I now see I just didn't have the confidence to make that commitment — but it definitely can be done.

It is said that when one door is closed to you, God opens up another one. And through the years I have been able to write for many Jewish periodicals and help with PR for many different Jewish organizations.

Life certainly has its challenges and mine have not been easy. My wonderful first husband died at an early age and I was left a widow with four small children. I guess my crowning glory (besides my children, grandchildren and the joy of a happy remarriage) is the fact that I had two books published and have spoken in different communities all over the United States and Canada. My books, which guide family and friends on the best way to help families who have suffered a devastating loss, have received many heart-felt accolades.

I realize I did achieve my dream of being a writer — just not in the way I originally thought I would. And, quite honestly, when I sit at a Shabbos or Yom Tov table, surrounded by my religious children and grandchildren, I feel that any sacrifice I may have felt I made way back then was all worth it!

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Captain of His Ship

Ruchoma Shain

Everyone has baggage; maybe we should help each other carry it.

(Rob Liano)

It was on August 16, 1939, that Papa and Mama began their voyage to Eretz Yisrael. They were scheduled to dock at Haifa port on Wednesday, August 30th. Arrangements were made for Papa and Mama to stay in Haifa for a few days at the home of Rabbi and Mrs. Alfa, where Avremal was boarding. In mid-route, the captain received orders to sail in a circuitous route in case the waters of the Mediterranean Sea had been mined because of the impending war. And so, instead of arriving on Wednesday as scheduled, the boat docked on Friday, September 7th, one hour before sunset. A few hours before that, World War II had erupted with the German invasion of Poland. From the loudspeakers came the announcement that passengers were to disembark immediately. All the baggage from the hold of the ship would be unloaded onto the pier, and the passengers would be responsible for having it removed as quickly as possible.

Pandemonium reigned. Papa and Mama were terribly upset. It would soon be Shabbos! How could they take care of their baggage when they would have to leave the port immediately in order to get to Rabbi Alfa's house in time for Shabbos? Papa grabbed the suitcase that contained his *sefer* Torah and his *tallis* and *tefillin*, and Mama took only her pocketbook. They edged their way through the pier and asked to be shown to the head customs officer. A tall English

officer listened as Papa explained to him, "I cannot deal with our baggage now. I have never desecrated the Sabbath in my life. To arrive in the Holy Land and desecrate it here is impossible!" Tears rolled down Papa's cheeks.

The officer answered curtly, "Rabbi, this is war. You must make allowances."

"Just stamp our passports and let us through. We'll pick up our baggage after the Sabbath," Papa pleaded.

"That will not be possible. We are removing all the baggage from the ship and leaving it on the pier."

"I don't care about our baggage! Please, just stamp our passports so we can leave."

The officer looked at Papa quizzically. "How much baggage do you have?"

"Sixteen crates in the hold and nine suitcases in our cabin."

"What?! Do you realize that once you leave here, your baggage will be on the pier with no one responsible for it? By tomorrow night, I assure you, you will not find a shred of your belongings. The Arabs will have stolen them all," the officer said emphatically.

"I have no alternative. It's almost time for the Sabbath, and we cannot travel on the Sabbath. Please, please, just clear our passports and let us go," Papa's voice rose in desperation.

The officer, incredulous, called to another English officer, "Stamp their passports and let them through. This rabbi is willing to lose all his belongings in order to get to where he's going in time for their Sabbath." The second officer stared at Papa in amazement, as he stamped their passports and cleared their papers. Papa, clutching the suitcase with his *sefer* Torah, and Mama, holding on to her pocketbook, grabbed a taxi and arrived at Rabbi Alfa's house just in time for Mama to light the Shabbos candles.

That entire Shabbos, Papa was spiritually elated. Over and over

again he repeated to Mama, “The Boss does everything for me. What could I ever do for Him? Now at last I have the *zechus* to give all for the Boss for His mitzvah of Shabbos and to be *mekaddesh Hashem*.”

For Mama it was difficult to share his elation fully. She was physically exhausted and bereft emotionally. The loneliness for her children weighed heavily on her mind and heart. The additional loss of all her worldly possessions was not an easy pill to swallow. But Mama did not complain, and being with Avremal comforted her.

Saturday night, after Papa had waited the seventy-two minutes after sunset to say his evening prayers and then make Havdallah, Rabbi Alfa suggested to him, “Let’s go to the port. Maybe some of your crates are still there.”

Papa and Mama did not share his optimism, but they went along with him. It was pitch dark at the port. However, they spied a little light at the far end of the pier. As they neared the lighted area, a clipped English voice rang out, “Who goes there?”

Papa called out, “Some passengers from the boat that docked late yesterday afternoon.”

The English guard approached them. “What is your name?” he asked tersely.

“Jacob J. Herman,” Papa answered.

“Well, well, Rabbi, it’s about time you put in your appearance. I was assured that you would be here the minute the sun set. You are a little late. I have been responsible for your baggage for more than twenty-four hours. My commanding officer said he would have my head if any of your baggage was missing. Kindly check to see that all is in order and sign these papers. Please remove it all as quickly as possible. I am exhausted!”

Excerpted from *All for the Boss* by Ruchama Shain.

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An IDF Shabbos

Yaacov Levy

Ours is a country built more on people than on territory. The Jews will come from everywhere: from France, from Russia, from America, from Yemen ... Their faith is their passport.

(David Ben-Gurion)

During Operation Peace for Galilee, in the summer of 1982, the cease-fire went into effect on Friday, Shabbos Eve, the 20th of Sivan (June 11, 1982). This was 35 years ago; there were no cellphones or email. At that time not even everyone had a phone. During that Shabbat, when we were in the central sector of the Suf mountains, they announced to all the soldiers that someone was travelling from Lebanon to Israel and all the soldiers were to write a postcard to their parents or girlfriends so that they wouldn't worry.

A group of us religious soldiers said that we couldn't do it as we don't write on Shabbat. With us was a young rabbi, a military chaplain, who told us we could ask a Druze soldier to be our Shabbos goy for this purpose. The Druze soldier wrote the letters for us as we dictated them (and even wrote that he was writing so that the parents wouldn't worry when they saw a different handwriting).

The young rabbi with us was Benny Alon *zt"l* who died a week ago on the 9th of Iyar, 5777.

During our service, we were stationed in a fortress on the

Hermon. As we did everywhere we were on Shabbat, we made for ourselves an *eruv* around the fortress.

One Shabbat, the local officer showed up, a brigade commander with the rank of Colonel. And he asked, “What’s that string at the entrance to the fortress?” He had been forced to lower the antenna of his jeep so as not to get caught in it. A soldier standing next to the colonel explained to him that it was an *eruv* and that its purpose is to contain an area on Shabbat, creating a domain to allow carrying, etc.

That soldier was a Druze who had become so close to the *Hesder* soldiers that he was able to give a lesson on Shabbat to the officer.

Another Friday, at one in the afternoon, I was told I had a furlough home. At the time, I was in Lebanon and it was very far from home. I got a few lifts but the time for Shabbat was drawing nearer. As I saw the time for Shabbat approaching, when I was in Ra’anana, even though I had a lift, I asked the driver to stop. I got out and continued on foot to Petach Tikvah (about 13 miles). The whole way, I was carrying my army bag and rifle, people stopped to offer me a lift. I wished them Shabbat Shalom nicely and continued on foot to my parents’ home. I got there at 10:00 p.m. as they were singing *Shir Hama’alot* at the end of the meal.

Note: As mentioned above, carrying is not allowed beyond a certain domain on Shabbat. However, since the soldier was carrying his rifle and his military gear, he couldn’t abandon them on the highway.

A Shabbat Salute

Adina Hershberg

Our policy is very simple. The Jewish state was set up to defend Jewish lives, and we always reserve the right to defend ourselves.

(Binyamin "Bibi" Netanyahu)

They come in assorted shapes, sizes, and colors: male and female, Jews and non-Jews, young and middle-age, quiet and talkative, religious and non-religious. The common denominator is that they all come in military uniform and they are guests at our Shabbat table. Some of them wear their rifles on their shoulders during the meal, some place the rifles under their feet and others place their weapons in our front coat closet.

When we left the city life (Jerusalem) and moved out to the country we knew that we would enjoy the quiet, the awe-inspiring views, and the slower pace of life. A great benefit, which we were unaware of before we moved, turned out to be the wonderful opportunity to host the soldiers stationed in Rosh Tzurim for Shabbat and *Yom Tov* (holiday) meals. Their stint usually runs for one week, but there are times when the soldiers are stationed for three weeks.

The soldiers' accommodations, a small structure called a *caravan* in Hebrew, are situated on the western side of Rosh Tzurim. They have a stunning view of the sunset as well as a view, on a clear night, from Gaza in the south to Holon in the north. On a clear day they can see the Mediterranean Sea and ships. Depending on the

direction of the wind, they get more than just a whiff of the nearby turkey coops. You have to be brave to stay downwind from the turkey coops for a week.

The head of security, Shlomo, sees to it that “his boys” and “girls” are well-fed and given some good ol’ home hospitality. He arranges for those soldiers who would like to eat a Shabbat night meal with a local family to do so.

Our children know to set a place at our Shabbat table in case we get a *chayal*, a soldier. Sometimes we even get two, a double share like the Shabbat manna! Every so often we don’t get a *chayal* because either they all want to eat together in their own quarters or because other families get them. We are very disappointed!

The majority of our guests in uniform are not religious. By hosting them for a Shabbat meal they see a religious family in action. My husband Abe and I underwent the process of becoming religious when we were young. Shabbat is our favorite day of the week, as well as the favorite day of the week for all of our children. What can be better than sitting with family and guests at a beautifully set Shabbat table, partaking of delicious Shabbat food, singing Shabbat songs, conversing with the children and guests and hearing words of Torah?

Out of the several hundred or so *chayalim* we have hosted, some stand out in my mind and in my heart. Many of the soldiers are originally from the former USSR. Sasha, an outgoing, smiley, pretty soldier, made aliyah at the age of four from Tashkent. She and her family lived on a non-religious kibbutz until they decided to relocate to Luxemburg. When it was time for military duty Sasha decided to return to Israel to serve in the army. She left behind her parents and a sister who is twelve years her junior. When Sasha spoke I felt like I was listening to a smiley Ms. Israel who loves her land and its people. With her outgoing personality and intelligence, it’s no won-

der that she works as a liaison officer with guests from abroad. Sasha expressed her appreciation of the hot chocolate and other “goodies” given to the soldiers at the gate by people in our community.

Daniella, a pretty sabra soldier came to us a year ago on Shabbat Zachor (the Shabbat before Purim). She is studying chemical engineering at the Technion in Haifa. She plans to work in chemical defense warfare. She is from a traditional home. Her parents are divorced and her father remarried. About five years ago her father became religious. As she spoke about her family and her new siblings, there were tears in her eyes. Apparently the divorce and all the changes that followed are still painful for her. It is during times like these that my social work skills come in handy.

Biana made aliyah from the Ukraine when she was three. Unlike most of the soldiers from the former USSR, Biana sounds totally Israeli. Although her parents are not religious they sent Biana to a religious girl’s school from seventh through twelfth grade. Her parents did not like the values of the non-religious crowd and wanted Biana to get a generous helping of Judaism’s values. She, like Sasha, totes a great smile, which is so refreshing. She is studying medicine at the University of Ben Gurion.

Idan is a young communications officer. I was impressed by his listening skills, his openness to hearing about other outlooks and by his deep thinking. Although he grew up in a non-religious environment, he wants to learn more about Judaism. I described several yeshivot and he felt that Machon Meir, a religious Zionist yeshiva in Jerusalem, would be suitable for him. Later that week I brought him the Machon Meir website address.

We were surprised when fair-complexioned commander Uri told us that he is Yemenite on his father’s side. Uri is from a very small moshav in the Arava. There is no synagogue, but Uri’s father tries to introduce some aspects of Shabbat into their home. Uri said that

he is not interested and on Shabbat he usually goes on trips with his army friends. Also present at our Shabbat table was another non-religious soldier. Uri asked him why he was willing to come to a family that he doesn't know. "Why not?" the soldier responded. "It's nice to be with families and have a Shabbat meal. It reminds me of home."

Most of the time the soldiers need to return to duty at a specific time, such as in an hour or two. Twenty-one-year-old Yuval had no such limitation. During the meal our youngest child, Yisrael Meir, asked Yuval to play cards with him. Of all the choices of card games our son chose a card game on the topic of Shabbat! During the game Yuval needed to ask Yisrael Meir questions such as, "Do you have the card with a *havdallah* candle?" and "Do you have the card with the *aron kodesh* (Holy Ark)?"

After the meal was over, Yuval stayed and played cards with our next to youngest child, Elyahu Yeshaya. They were later joined by others. We never had a soldier stay for so long after a Shabbat meal!

That Monday evening I brought some hot soup over to the soldiers. I gave the thermos to the soldier on duty and asked him to send regards to Yuval. The soldier said, "Yuval doesn't stop talking about Shabbat in your home."

It is rare that a soldier comes for more than one Shabbat or *Yom Tov* meal because of their schedule. Dovid was an exception. A dark, Sephardic Jew from a poor southern development town, Dovid is divorced with a young daughter. He told us that he was becoming more interested in Judaism. He loves to bless people and afterwards he would kiss his own hands and stretch them out Heavenward. Our children told me that when Dovid left the synagogue he walked backwards so as not to turn his back to the ark. He was stationed in our community for three weeks and he kept coming back to our Shabbat table.

Our most recent soldier guest was Elad, a young soldier from

Tivon near Haifa. It was interesting to watch him. He seemed to take in every detail of the people present as well as of the room and the Shabbat table. Perhaps one day he will put his observations into practice.

First appeared on the OU website.

A Little Piece of Heaven

Rosally Saltsman

Every second is a mitzvah.

(Joshua Israel Geller)

Both Shabbos and sleep are compared to a fraction of the next world, one sixtieth, to be precise. That means that the pleasure and peace, the contentment and spiritual elevation that we experience at those times, are a taste of things to come.

On the other hand, we are also familiar with that feeling on Shabbos when we spill something on our favorite dress and can't do anything to save it, or when someone accidentally turns something on and it can't be turned off, or when we remember we forgot to prepare something we needed for Shabbos. There's that feeling of frustration and helplessness when we have to stay put.

I don't believe that the metaphor of one-sixtieth of the World to Come is only a positive one. Truth is, when we get to the Next World we're pretty much stuck at the place we arrive at. We are possibly elevated by the deeds of our progeny and their descendents on our behalf, but we ourselves can no longer do anything else. Our Sages tell us that this is a pretty painful predicament — much worse than being unable to clean the dress or turn off the light.

Every week when we delight in the pleasures of Shabbos, and every night when we fall into bed exhausted, we can, and should, relish the tranquility and relief of rest and relaxation of the body and

spirit. But, it is also a good daily and weekly reminder that we only have a certain amount of time allotted to us to be all we can be and achieve all we can achieve. Then, we enjoy the fruits of our labor. How much we derive is in keeping with our efforts. As the dictum says, “He who toils on Erev Shabbos, will eat on Shabbos.” They weren’t only talking about *cholent*.

In the banquet of mitzvoth, we have to load up our plates during our time in this world because when we sit down to the feast of *Leviasan*, all we’ll have is what we put on our plates.

Bete'avon! Bon appetit!

Appeared in the now defunct *International Yated Ne'eman*.

Small Acts of Kindness

David Bogner

*The world depends on three things, on Torah study,
on the service (of God) and on kind deeds*
(Ethics of the Fathers 1:2)

Setting: Standing on line in a bakery on Friday afternoon, somewhere in Jerusalem, casually eavesdropping on two women having a conversation behind me.

Woman 1: I'm running really late today ... I wonder if they've already locked the cash registers.

Woman 2: "Locked the cash registers?" What does that mean ... they won't take our money?

W1: Yeah ... basically. Thirty to forty minutes before they officially close, the owner goes around to each cash register and locks the drawers ... and then goes home. The cashiers have instructions to tell anyone coming after the drawers are locked that they have no way to accept money, so whatever the customers have picked out is free.

W2: I don't get it ... why would the owner do that?

W1: Don't you see? It's just like in Machane Yehuda [*the open air produce market in Jerusalem*] where a lot of the vendors who sell perishables slash their prices an hour before closing for Shabbat. That way the poor people can "buy" the things they need for Shabbat

with dignity ... and the vendors basically give things that can't be stored over Shabbat to a worthy cause. And because some of the people doing last-minute shopping really are simply running late, there is no shame for the poor because nobody knows who is who.

W2: Wait, so you're telling me it's an open secret that poor people come here during the last hour before closing and they get their baked goods for free?

W1: Exactly, only everyone's dignity is protected by the fact that some shoppers are actually running late ... and by the owner's little charade of the locked cash registers. This way everyone wins — the owner of the bakery performs a *chesed*, the cashiers get to take part in the act and the recipients can just as easily be genuinely running late as poor so there is no embarrassment to anyone at being on the receiving end of the act.

W2: [after a brief pause] Y'know ... sometimes I love this country!

[*Author's note:* Me too!]

While driving home from the bakery my mind replayed the conversation I had just heard ... and then wandered to a memory of a wonderful fish restaurant in Brooklyn that Zahava and I used to frequent. This kitschy little kosher seafood place had an incredibly wide selection of really fresh fish on the menu at all times, and the owner would often come to the table to recommend new selections or advise diners on interesting new ways to have their old favorites prepared.

After one of our dinners, there I was raving about the place to a friend who also knew the place and wondering aloud how this little restaurant could afford to have so many different kinds of fresh fish on the menu. Surely the law of averages suggested that they must end up throwing out a lot of fish since not every portion of every type of fish would be ordered by the customers every day.

My friend's reply was an eye-opener.

He explained that every night at “closing time,” many of the poor and homeless people from the neighborhood knew to come to the restaurant. The manager personally seated them at tables set with clean linen tablecloths and napkins, and had his chef prepare for them whatever fish would not be perfectly fresh the following evening. Rather than let the fish go “off” and be thrown away, he opted to have his chef work an extra hour preparing it for people in need of a good meal.

Fiscally speaking, TurboTax is not going to find any extra deductions for this service and a cost accountant wouldn't really care about where the “wasted” food went at the end of the day ... because gone is gone, and an old loaf of *challah* is the same as day-old fish to someone looking only at a ledger.

I like to think that these business owners are keeping two sets of books (and not in the criminal sense): one that tells them how they are doing right now ... and one that will only be checked when they are audited at the end of their days.

I'm sure there must be thousands — maybe even tens of thousands — of stories like these floating around out there. Such “small” acts of kindness must occur every day under our very noses, yet unless we overhear someone talking about them in a bakery line or have a friend fill us in about what happens to leftover fish at our favorite restaurant, we may never hear about them.

And that's a shame.

Two Summers' Earnings for Shabbos

Binyamin Lieb

The Tur emphasizes that when it comes to honoring Shabbat, one must not withhold funds out of concern for his livelihood. The Talmud states that when God assigns a person's livelihood on Rosh Hashanah for the coming year, his Shabbat and Yom Tov expenses are not taken into account. Meaning, whatever money one spends towards the honor and celebration of Shabbat and Yom Tov will be repaid by the Almighty; these funds are not deducted from the sum allocated for that person at the beginning of the year. Therefore, one should purchase the finest delicacies and clothing for Shabbat and Yom Tov, and trust that these funds will be repaid to him in full.

You've probably heard about teenagers who work a summer job to pay for some dream car, expensive trip, or other youthful pastime. Well, for two summers when I was fifteen and sixteen, I too saved up all my earnings from my monotonous job at a small arcade in the Catskills, but I didn't blow them all on some fleeting pursuit. Instead, all the money I earned those two years I spent for Shabbos.

When I was fourteen, I started keeping Shabbos. I had spent a month with Orthodox cousins at their summer house in the Catskills and decided to maintain the observances that I'd picked up in their

company when I returned to my parents' home. Aside from the obvious upheaval such a decision causes in an unobservant American Jewish family, a particular detail about my parents' divorce agreement made it even more complicated. In order to visit my father for the weekend, on Friday after school my brother and I were shuttled from our mother's house in Northern Westchester, a suburb of New York City, to Brooklyn, a drive of two hours if traffic was light. Since Shabbos was one of the major facets of my new lifestyle, traveling after sundown was no longer possible.

Spending Shabbos in Westchester was not really an option either. The closest synagogue was more than an hour's walk away and wasn't as particular about Shabbos observance as I was striving to be. Because my family didn't necessarily embrace my new stringencies, to remain in the house for Shabbos was to essentially become a Sadducee: not opening the fridge, going to the bathroom in the dark, and being confined to the upstairs rooms when the alarm system wasn't deactivated or when the televisions were on. I was also too young to start spending Shabbos with complete strangers in an Orthodox community closer to my mother's house — if there had been one. In comparison, the neighborhood in Brooklyn where my father lived was paradise. There were kosher restaurants and groceries around every corner, as opposed to the only kosher products (besides for bread, cereal, and pasta) being confined to the only supermarket in town a fifteen-minute drive away. Also in my father's neighborhood were my observant cousins and a *shul* I felt comfortable in, especially because a number of its congregants would fight over the chance to spoil me with lavish Shabbos meals. Brooklyn was therefore the only place I could properly spend Shabbos.

However, many hurdles prevented me from easily getting there without violating Shabbos. The first was that I could only leave after school ended at 1:36 p.m., and my parents were not happy with

the idea of letting me off a whole day of school every week; at the time I wasn't either. When school ended, I had no real way of getting out of our town. My mother only came home at 3:15 p.m., and even if she had been home, she wasn't willing to drive me anywhere closer to the city when she already had to get my brother to my father when he finished work after 5:30 p.m. While there was public transportation, it wasn't really of help, certainly not with my limited timeframe. The only commuter bus ran infrequently and ended its route in White Plains, not very close to where I needed to be. Our town was flanked by two commuter railroad lines that terminated in Manhattan but both were only reachable by car. With dead ends in all directions, for about a year I didn't get into Brooklyn before Shabbos, having to lie to people in *shul* about where I was the night before.

When the summer came around, I gladly spent it at my cousins' summer house in Woodbourne again and got a job in a game room cleaning machines, selling tokens, and basically relieving the semi-retired owners from having to man the store all day. By the end of the summer, I'd saved up a nice-sized chunk of money (for a fifteen-year-old) and with my new economic status, I reexamined my Shabbos dilemma. I worked out that if I hired a car service to take me from my house to get a 2:19 p.m. train, I would reach Manhattan at 3:24 p.m. and have forty minutes to get to Brooklyn by subway. It was cutting it close, but it was doable.

However, being simple middle-class people, my parents were not keen on financing such an unnecessary expense. At that time, the cab cost \$15 with tip, the train \$5.50 off-peak, and another \$1.50 for the subway. If I spent \$22 for every week of the winter when Shabbos started so early, I was looking at spending about \$450 every year just on tickets — forget about candy bars, magazines, or any other impulse items I might want. Since being in Brooklyn for

Shabbos meant so much to me, I informed my parents that I would pay for the tickets myself with my summer earnings. They thought I was wasting my money, told me I was taking my observance too far, and feared for my life every time I went, but they saw I was determined and didn't stop me.

While the decision to give up all my money for taxi fare and train tickets was one thing, executing the trip itself was another. Nothing about it was pleasant, not even the wide backseats of the gypsy cabs. The entire two-hours-plus of traveling were a nerves-on-end, multi-layered journey that few teenagers would agree to do more than once. It started the night before when I would order a cab for 2:00 p.m. exactly. This would give me about five minutes from when the school bus would drop me off at home to change into my Shabbos clothing before the cab would come. Since my whole trip would bring me into Brooklyn only a few minutes before Shabbos, I tried to push up as much as I could; sometimes I would even wear my suit to school, which looked very strange amid the dress styles of high school students in a secular, suburban public school in the late 1990s. On Friday morning I would have to pack my bag, or often an overloaded suitcase, with everything I needed for the weekend and leave it by the front door before the bus to school would get me at 6:50 a.m. When my last class ended, I bolted to the school bus that would bring me home sometimes just before the cab came, and sometimes to find it already waiting in the driveway.

If I had a few minutes, I would grab something to eat — usually just cookies or fruit because anything else took too long to prepare — and would watch the driveway from the front window with nervous anticipation. Even if the cab came when I told it to, I only had fifteen minutes to get to the station, unload my suitcase, and lug it up the stairs to the platform before 2:19 p.m.; I couldn't miss that train because the next one came only an hour later. After arriving

at the station, I then waited on the platform, which was completely unprotected from the river winds of the winter, and watched the huge clock by the station building remind me how little time I had to spare. When it arrived — sometimes on time but often late — I found a seat, rested my suitcase between my legs for protection and held my ticket in my hand for the conductor to take should I fall asleep. When the pressure wouldn't allow me to doze off, I would simply stare out the window at the sun hovering dangerously low above the Palisades across the Hudson River and count how many more stations there were before I had to start worrying about the next leg of the journey.

Once we entered the tunnel in Manhattan, I gathered my things and prepared for the mad dash to the subway. Ceremoniously, I stood up when the train reached the glass encasings to the stairwells to the northern entrances of the platforms and tried to be the first by the doors. When we docked and the doors opened, I would run towards the subway, quickly deciding which line I would try my fate with. The 4/5 was just under Grand Central but had more stops and required me to switch at Atlantic Avenue, while the D at Sixth Avenue was a shorter trip but three long New York City avenues away. I didn't like having to rely on catching two trains, so most of the time I jettisoned through busy 42nd Street pedestrian traffic toward the D, often in inclement weather. I quickly became an expert at running through the crowds and down the subway stairs with very little time. If I didn't have to buy a token (this was before Metrocards), I squeezed my luggage through the turnstile, dashed down to the subway platform, and eagerly waited for the subway. At this point I had maybe half-an-hour before candle lighting and had no idea when the train would arrive. New York City subways were notorious for intermittent delays, something my cutthroat schedule could not afford. Once in Brooklyn, I would have to again run down

the stairs from the platform, run another ten minutes to my father's house, open the door without stepping on the dog, empty my pockets, close the light in the refrigerator, maybe brush my teeth, and hurry to nonetheless be late to *shul*.

Though I had no qualms blowing all my money on what others might consider an unnecessary expense, in the end, it didn't cost me as much as I had anticipated. After two summers pushing tokens at the game room to pay for my pre-Shabbos travel, my parents saw that I was serious and indirectly helped me pay for the some of my expenses. Also, there was a nice girl from my high school who would drive me to the train station once she got her licence. I don't even know for sure if she was Jewish; once she said something about eating together with her family on Friday nights, maybe she mentioned lighting candles. The rest of my help came straight from Hashem. I did this for three years before I went away to college, and one day I reflected back and realized that I'd never once missed the train because of traffic or the cab coming too late, and I never had to get off the subway because a prolonged delay encroached into Shabbos. I like to think that since I was prepared to make that initial monetary sacrifice, God was very kind in alleviating the financial burden of the travel once He saw that I was dedicated.



Today, almost twenty years later, I have my own family and my own home, and so getting to Shabbos doesn't require such a long commute or such a financial expense (although getting to candle lighting is still sometimes a bit pressured). My experience during those years gave me a deep appreciation for Shabbos, and I'm still very glad that once it comes in, for a whole day I have nowhere to rush to.

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Y2K on Shabbat: An Added Gift

Batsheva Pomerantz

Man is still the most extraordinary computer of all.

(John F. Kennedy)

Predictions circulated about the potential harmful effects of Y2K months before January 1, 2000, unfurled on the calendar. Y2K was the abbreviated, futuristic name given to this date. Dire forecasts warned us about impending doom out of fear that computers would misinterpret the two last digits “00” of the approaching year 2000. The main fear of Y2K pessimists was that computer programs would decipher “00” as the year 1900, therefore wreaking havoc on major utilities, airplane flights, and financial institutions — to name but a few scenarios.

The prophecies provided ample material for speculative journalists, employment opportunities for software companies, and emergency drills for major utility providers.

As the countdown began towards January 1, 2000, I was aware that it would fall on a Shabbat. As a Shabbat-observing Jew, I was relieved that I would be spared the media avalanche and the extravaganza surrounding the onset of another Gregorian year, which even during regular years seems contrived. The celebrations at the onset of the year 2000 seemed particularly artificial, serving as a distraction from the issues facing the world.

On a national level, the leaders of my country, Israel, took the

Y2K threats seriously enough to mobilize extra workers who never work on Shabbat, just in case one of the major utilities would fail.

On Friday evening, as the hours of the old millennium were peering out, my family and I ushered in the Shabbat, Hashem's eternal gift to the Jewish people.

After the festive Shabbat meal, I was oblivious to the clock's ticking towards midnight, while billions of people around the globe were glued to their watches and timepieces. I felt secure that I was honoring my day of rest, as many Jews around the world were doing. My ancestors had done this for thousands of years, and future generations will continue cherishing the Shabbat.

Nonetheless, after months of doomsday-type predictions, I was curious about whether the world would be the same.

Morning came. I awoke and immediately noticed the lights were on (from the pre-set Shabbat timer). "*Vayehi Ohr* — and there was light!", I muttered to myself with a sense of relief that this major utility was working.

Cool water flowed from the faucet on cue.

I walked to the synagogue and saw the clear, blue sky and the occasional bird in flight and cat ambling by. I realized the sky was intact, animals still roamed, and nothing had changed.

While many had been predicting chaos in the world, I gained an appreciation about the order in the world, which was created according to Hashem's plans. This is felt on the holiest day of the week — the Shabbat. On this day, we can contemplate Hashem as Creator of the world, including the creation of the Shabbat, and His role in our lives.

Man, who attempts to be in control of his own little world during the week, realizes when observing Shabbat that Hashem is in total control. During the months preceding Y2K, modern man, armed with the latest technology, was anxious not only about im-

pending chaos — hinging on two digits — but also about the loss of his control.

As a Jew who observes Shabbat, I felt that it was a gift from Hashem that Y2K fell on this day, providing me with reinforcement about a significant aspect of the positive experience of the Sabbath. And a Jew receives this dose of inspiration every week, not after a millennium!

The above is dedicated to the memory of my dear grandfather, Mordechai Max Rubin z”l. He passed away on Motzei Shabbat, 24 Tevet 5760 or January 1, 2000, at the age of 95. He had always been ahead of his times and lived until this futuristic date.

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Also by Batsheva Pomerantz: *To Walk Four Cubits: Forty Pieces in Honor of Forty Years in Israel* (2009).

White Sabbath

As told by Deborah Danan to Leah Gebber

*Faith is taking the first step even when you
don't see the whole staircase.*

(Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

I suppose my story starts when I moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. I was single at the time, and though I loved Yerushalayim with all my heart and soul, my job took me to the White City.

One week, come Friday afternoon, I still didn't have an invite for that night's Shabbat *seuda*. That had never happened in Yerushalayim. If worst comes to worst and you're not sorted out, then you go to *shul* and have a million different invitations right there. But Tel Aviv's not like that. In the end, on Friday afternoon, I was set up with a family. It was a really uncomfortable experience — I suppose that they were marking Shabbat the way that they knew how, but when I went into the kitchen to help serve, I saw that the fridge light went on as my hostess swung open the door. There were no *divrei Torah*, no *zemirot*. I pushed my food around on my plate, as I couldn't be sure of the *kashrus* standards. So that got me thinking: how many people were, like me, in the position to need a Shabbat meal and not have one? And how many people wanted an authentic Shabbat experience and simply did not have access to it?

But maybe the story starts earlier, as a teenager. I can't say all my Shabbat memories are rosy: I mean, which teen really wants to be

dragged out of bed Shabbat morning — in the sevens, no less — to go to *shul*? And I wouldn't say that my hometown was a fount of inspiring experiences. Still, my mother's love for Shabbat was so clear, and my father's and brothers' *zemirot* and *divrei Torah* meant that our Shabbat table was meaningful and, if not always that tuneful, definitely rhythmic.

Back to Tel Aviv. That Shabbat meal left me disappointed, but more than that — determined that, whoever else was in a position similar to mine shouldn't go without. After all, in a place like Tel Aviv, where Shabbat is what you make of it, it would be far too easy for people who are less committed to simply take their Friday night repast in a bar or café. I found out about an organization, White City Shabbat, which basically made *shidduchim* between guests and hosts. Great. But it had petered out, wasn't really functioning much.

I contacted the director and suggested running monthly Shabbat meals. He was great with the idea, and the next thing I did was contact the NCIS *shul* on *Rehov* Ben Yehuda to ask them if we could use their premises. They were happy to help — after all, they were interested in rejuvenating Jewish life in Tel Aviv. I called a caterer, got people to sign up, and two weeks later was co-hosting our first Shabbat meal. We had around 35 people.

Sweet success! There was a great atmosphere, and we decided that this would work. Well, before long we outgrew the 135-seat premises and moved to the Goren Shul where we now host over 200 people and another 100 or so who are put on a waiting list (many of whom come after the meal for dessert and singing).

I'm not a natural organizer (far from it), and I think that I would never have gotten this off the ground in Yerushalayim. While in the Holy City, there's a sacred feeling of heritage and tradition, Tel Aviv's atmosphere is one of entrepreneurship—that is to say, let's just wing it. So I winged it. Made plenty of mistakes along the way — we

charge 70 shekels per person, and there were times I had to dip into my own pocket to make up a shortfall, and there were times when I had to refund whole tables because I had ordered too few portions. There was the time when the electricity was off, and we were stuck in a dark, stifling hall with cold chicken. There were hiccups, lots of them, but there was also energy and that's what carried us along.

Each Shabbat meal has its own atmosphere, and I was careful not to package this as a spiritual experience or a *kiruv*-style meal. After all, there's Aish and there's Chabad and then there are all those people — an entire nation of people — who have been given the gift of Shabbat and are unaware of the treasure that is right there before them. I just wanted to help people feel this gift. Because it belongs to all of us, the whole nation, no matter who they are and what they believe. The atmosphere is non-threatening: we have a short *dvar Torah* and *zemirot*, but no one's there clapping in your face, trying to get you into it. We have singles but it's not a singles event, we have lone soldiers (who eat for free), we have young families, older people — anyone who wants to come together and celebrate the gift of Shabbat.

As the year moved along, we tossed out an idea: how cool would it be to construct the world's largest *sukkah*, for our *yom tov* meals. We approached the municipality, and, amazingly, got permission to use Kikar Rabin for the purpose. But then election campaigns got in the way, the idea was shelved, and out of all that effort came a wisp — if not the world's largest *sukkah*, then how about the world's largest Shabbat meal?

Just for the shtick of it, really, we called the Guinness Book of World Records. They told us that no record yet existed for the largest Shabbat meal, and if we wanted to make an attempt, they would compile a list of rules. A few days later, the list of rules pinged into my inbox. I scanned them: they were laughably diverse — from the

rule that any mention of their name had to be in upper case and followed by a trademark symbol, to that the meal had to take place in a *Shabbosdig* environment. It made me laugh to think that in some drab office in gray-skied London a group of non-Jewish workers had decided that *chillul Shabbos* was a no-no. The food, they stipulated, had to be kosher and traditional Shabbat fare — no cheese lasagna. Those were easy — funny that we were already on the same page. Some of the rules, though were more tricky. Like the fact that all diners had to remain in the hall for the duration of the meal (which they declared had to be at least 55 minutes long). I wondered how that would work with our Israeli crowd, accustomed to the casual, walk in and out atmosphere that reigns in the Mediterranean.

Years before, I had participated in a Chabad Pesach Seder in Nepal, where 2,000 people were present. I was sure that we could pull this off. We set a date, eight months away, and sat down and tried to figure out the logistics of it all.

Gulp. What in the world had we gotten ourselves into? Okay. Breathe.

First thing: money. Although we charged for our monthly Shabbat meals, I really felt that this was a communal gift, and I wanted people to have Shabbat without strings — like the way Hashem gave it to us, I guess. I am not a fundraiser. I hate asking for money. Have no idea about how to do it, either. Eventually, we launched a crowd-funding campaign, which was a lot of hard work. We budgeted 25,000 dollars, and after 60 grueling days of sending out emails and progress reports, we got it.

Next we had to look for a venue. Well, that was relatively simple. The owner of Hangar 11, the biggest venue in Tel Aviv, right down by the port, is a *frum* guy who *davens* in the Goren Shul. As well, as a Shabbat observer, the place is always closed on Shabbat. He agreed to give us the place at cost price.

Food. Here's where it got a little complicated. To comply with Guinness's regulations, the menu had to follow a regular Shabbat menu. Which meant that we had to fax it to the overseer, have it approved as being sufficiently "traditional" and "standard" and then give the caterer the go-ahead. It was a juggle — budget versus a sumptuous meal, traditional enough for Guinness, and yet with options for those people who emailed me with requests for vegetarian, gluten-free, soy-free, Atkins (okay, no one went *that* far). We settled on a starter of salmon and salads. And here I came to another Israel-England divide. Guinness informed me that everyone had to have a piece of fish, even if they had no intention of eating it. Even if they hated the stuff, or were allergic, or whatever, fish constituted the first course and so had to be on every plate — within five minutes of the meal's commencement. How British.

Meanwhile, people kept signing up. We had space for 3,000, and 3,500 on the waiting list — I was receiving around 100 calls and emails a day, asking me if there was any way I could squeeze in "just one more soul." And S-day kept getting nearer. But there was this energy, like it was carrying itself. We had many people who helped us along the way, either with sponsorships or moral support. Golan Winery, who has always been a great friend of White City Shabbat and sponsors all of our meals, agreed to give us wine at a vastly reduced price: we needed a staggering 800 bottles. We ordered 1,800 pieces of chicken, 1,000 pieces of beef, hundreds of vegetarian portions It went on and on and on.

Guinness told us that every attendant had to have a bracelet with a number. That way, they could count just how many people were there. Of course, that wouldn't pose a problem on a weekday — we could simply print paper or card bracelets that people would tear off right after. But, of course, that wasn't okay for a Shabbat meal. Further panic ensued as we tried to find a place that would manu-

facture plastic bracelets, each with an individual number. I found somewhere in China, but the shipment wouldn't arrive on time ... I found somewhere in the States, but they wanted \$15 per bracelet, as each of them had a different number ... We got them, eventually, from yet another factory in China, but it was like every detail had to be worked through and figured out and, literally, cried over.

Toward the end, my co-organizer Eytan White and I were panicking, literally, so we got more people in to help. Which was great and not so great. You know what they say: two Jews, three opinions. Well, for this project there were at least three opinions per person. Which led to a lot of tears, a lot of frustration, and sometimes even some resentment. Many times I had to remind myself that ego was not a factor here, that I was doing this *l'shem Shamayim* and to get into arguments was surely not what Hashem wanted from me.

My husband (we hadn't been married long by then) stood by my side, even when I became intolerable from stress. He listened to my kvetching, comforted me through the tears and ups and downs and was so supportive. I wouldn't have managed to get there without him.

Just as things were shaping up, we learned that our scheduled date coincided with a secular event that was probably the antithesis of the holiness we were trying to highlight. More panic. Should we put it off? Cancel? We asked a *rav*, who told us that no, the Shabbat meal should run as planned—that it would be even more meaningful to have the light of Shabbat in the midst of the darkness. In fact, we learned that people planned to come from one event to the other, which was a little mind-blowing.

The event had to be organized to the minute, literally. After a pre-Shabbat concert, the men gathered in one area for *davening* and the women went upstairs to a specially prepared gallery to light Shabbat candles. I looked around and saw hundreds and hundreds

of flickering candles, glowing majestically. That was a life-changing moment. I lit my own candles and I broke down. Eight months of tension and frustration and disappointment and contingency plans and trying again and trying harder and trying different, and here we were. I thanked Hashem, and took a minute to savor what I must have lost sight of along the bumps in the road — that Shabbat is the gift of all Jews and the amazing, astounding privilege it was to be part of this. Thousands of Shabbat candles twinkled and glowed and it was unreal — there, in what might be called the most secular city in the world, we had brought Shabbat to thousands.

I didn't have long to ride the wave. One of Guinness's rules was that, once Kiddush and Hamotzi were over, participants had to receive the first course within five minutes. Five minutes! To serve 3,000 people! It was absurd. Crazy. Mind-blowing. Hundreds of waiters stood by, holding huge serving platters laden with steaming salmon. Hamotzi was made and they zoomed around those tables, handing out the fish and the energy was electric — everyone cheered them on.

The meal proceeded, and we were graced with such an eclectic group of people — the former chief rabbi, Rav Yisrael Meir Lau, graced us with his presence, as did lawyers, politicians — every type you could think of. My parents stayed with me that Shabbat, which entailed a two-hour walk from Tel Aviv port to my house when the meal was finally over. My brother Raphael also came along to support me, and he was awesome, volunteering help wherever it was needed. It meant so much to me to have my family by my side.

After 55 minutes had passed — the Guinness definition of the length of a meal — Mr. Pravin Pate, the Guinness World Records adjudicator flown in from London, was able to officially announce the new record: a staggering 2,226 people had officially entered the world's biggest Shabbat *seuda*.

A deafening cheer went up, and then the sound of singing emerged: “Am Yisrael Chai.” It was a crazy moment, I literally had shivers right through me. There was this euphoria in the room: we’d done the impossible and we’d brought Shabbat out of the shadows and into the spotlight. People grabbed my arms and were screaming, “This is magical. Show stopping.”

I couldn’t even reply.

I thought back to my first weeks in Tel Aviv, when, walking to *shul* Shabbat morning you’d smile at the other *shul*-goers people you saw, because there you were, lone ambassadors for Shabbat. You shared this little bubble of sanctity in the midst of this secular city.

And I knew that for this one, eternal day, Shabbat had won.

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Thank You for Saving My Life

Michael Kaufman

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a wood and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference*

(Robert Frost)

For 25 years, Michael and Marcia Kaufman lived in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City opposite the Western Wall, where they hosted for Shabbat meals many thousands of Jewish university students who were studying, or visiting, in Israel. They provided the students, 25–50 at each meal, hospitality with a traditional Jewish family, exposed them to the beauty and meaningfulness of Shabbat and the Jewish tradition, and encouraged them to take time out during their stay in Jerusalem to learn about their Jewish heritage. Their Shabbat at the Kaufmans had a profound impact upon these young Jews in their formative years, and for many the Shabbat experience started them on a significant transformation in their lives.

At work in my study one afternoon, I received a phone call from someone whom I shall call Marnie. Sounding tense and agitated, she asked if she could come over to talk with me about something. I checked my calendar and suggested the following Wednesday.

“Can’t you see me now?” she asked.

“Can you tell me why it’s so urgent?”

“I want to thank you for saving my life.”

“Oh, I see. Well, with a line like that, you can come any time.”

About an hour later, a young woman in her early twenties – whose face seemed familiar to me somehow – was looking down at the Western Wall from the windows of our home, in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City, apparently trying to compose herself.

“Two years ago,” she began, “I was traveling through Europe with my fiancé, when he suggested we visit Israel. John had just finished studies in Salt Lake City to become a Mormon minister, and the two of us were going to do missionary work together. That was our dream, for the rest of our lives. He thought that before starting out on his ministry, and beginning our new life together, it would be inspiring to visit the Holy Land.

“When we got to Jerusalem, someone told us we’d probably enjoy going to the Western Wall on Friday night around sunset, when the Jews have their Sabbath eve services. We liked that idea, so we went, and we were standing there in the big crowded plaza in front of the Wall, just looking around at all the people, when a tall man dressed all in black, with a black hat and beard, came up to us and started talking, asking us about ourselves. I told him I was Jewish and that John was Christian, and what we were doing here. He said he was a rabbi — he looked like my image of what a rabbi should look like — and said his name was Meir. Then he asked if we’d like to join a Jewish family for a traditional Sabbath meal.

“Well, John and I gave each other a look, and I was feeling like, hey, this is too good to be true, we lucked out. But John, who is more cautious and practical than I, first wanted to know how much it would cost. The rabbi said it was free, and he told us to meet him in 25 minutes. So I said to him, ‘You’re on.’”

By this time in Marnie's narrative, I had recalled quite well this young woman and her fiancé, whom Reb Meir Schuster had brought to my home two years before. But first, a word about Reb Meir.

For more than three decades, Rabbi Meir's second home, so to speak, was at the Western Wall. He spent untold hours there, seven days a week, greeting Jewish visitors to Israel — for the most part young people — seeking to connect them to their Judaism. His central *modus operandi* was to place English-speakers in the homes of observant Jerusalemite Anglos for Shabbos meals. Our apartment — so conveniently close to the Wall — was thus usually filled each week with about two dozen or more non-observant young men and women.

Our hospitality, however, was aimed at Jews. We were not, God forbid, unsympathetic toward non-Jews, nor were we xenophobic, but one of the subjects that often came up in discussions around our Shabbos table was that of intermarriage. Keeping our guests from entering into such unions was a major *raison d'être* of our open house, and we had found over the years that the presence of a non-Jew — even more so a mixed couple — was often discomfiting. Not only did it serve to inhibit the free flow and exchange of ideas, but such conversation could alienate and unnecessarily hurt the feelings of the non-Jewish guest.

On this occasion, though, two factors induced me to make an exception. Firstly, Reb Meir had told me that this young woman was about to marry her non-Jewish fiancé. So, of course, I knew that everything possible should be done to dissuade her. A traditional Shabbos meal with an observant Jewish family, in the company of other Jewish youngsters, certainly wouldn't hurt. Secondly, it was a "slow" winter evening, as Reb Meir had found only a few people for meal placement. So I agreed.

Sitting now on our living room couch, two years later, Marnie

seemed to take it for granted that I would have forgotten her and her fiancé's visit. She continued: "The rabbi had us join this little group he'd assembled of other Americans about our own age, and all of us climbed the stairs from the plaza up to your home. When we trooped into your dining room, you seated me next to you and your wife, and you put John at the other end of the table. I thought you'd made a mistake, so I got up to join him, but you asked me to please stay put.

"The Shabbos table at your home was amazing: the candles in the middle of the table, the way you sang to your wife — you told us it was a hymn thanking her for her work — and the way you blessed each of your kids, whispered something to each one, and kissed them. It all really made an impression on me. And I saw how your kids ran around helping to serve and clear the dishes, how they sang along and participated in conversation, how happy everyone seemed.

"The meal took a really long time, and it was very late, but I remember I didn't want it to end. There was so much great discussion. And such wonderful singing of Jewish songs at the table. When it was over and everyone was getting up to go, I told you what an incredible experience it was, and you said —"

I interrupted her now. "I said, 'That's wonderful, Marnie. But you have to know that if you remain a Jew, you'll have this experience again and again, every week of your life. And if you marry John, this will be the last time for you, as long as you live.'"

Surprised that I remembered the incident, Marnie's expression reminded me now of the look on her face that evening, but then there had been in her eyes a stricken expression, akin to shock. Our other guests were by that time out of their seats and mingling, but Marnie just sat there. Her fiancé came around the table and took her arm. She didn't look well, which he seemed to notice, and she said she had to use the bathroom. She almost stumbled slightly as she

walked, holding onto him, and she stayed in the bathroom a long time, as her fiancé waited. Much later, after everyone had gone, she came out and the two of them left, and I didn't see her again, until now.

Marnie now filled me in with what happened afterwards.

“John and I walked back to the hotel in complete silence, all the way. He knew something had happened to me and was apprehensive — he is a sensitive guy — but I didn't feel like talking. When we got to the hotel, I told him I wasn't going in, that I had to be by myself, and I spent that whole night wandering around the streets of Jerusalem. I'd never done anything like that before in my life. I think I felt alone and scared that night in a way I'd never felt before. It was a turning point. I didn't know where to go from there, but I knew one thing — that I was not going to marry John and help him in his work. In the morning, I said to him, 'John, it's over.' We talked about it, but I was sure.

“When I flew back to LA, I couldn't get that *Shabbos* out of my head, and what you'd said about learning about our heritage — to know at least as much about Judaism, and about myself as a Jew, as I know about everything else in life. Then, one day, I was walking along Pico Boulevard, when I noticed a big sign in a store window. It advertised classes on the Jewish approach to love and dating, and I thought, 'Wow, that's what I'm looking for,' and I walked in.

“The place was called Aish HaTorah. I signed up for a series of lectures, and I began learning. The teachers were all about my own age or a little older. It turned out that most of them had once been like me: totally ignorant about Judaism, and a few of them had undergone some kind of awakening, like me, when they were in Israel.

“After going there for a while, I heard about this wonderful Aish HaTorah supporter, Richard Horowitz, who was giving away airplane tickets to people who would commit to learning Torah in

Jerusalem for a certain amount of time. I decided to go for it.

“I flew out to Israel and went to study at Eyaht, the women’s seminary associated with Aish HaTorah, headed by Rebbetzin Weinberg. I’ve been there now about six months — it’s total immersion, and I’m absorbing everything I can. I love it.

“So what happened is that this morning, I was in the hall outside a classroom, talking with one of the teachers, Gila Manolson, when she asked me what got me to explore Judaism. So I told her the story of my experience at your home. She said, ‘You’ve thanked Mr. Kaufman, of course, haven’t you?’ So I told her no, I’d be too embarrassed. How could I face him again, knowing what I know now? She said, ‘How can you *not* thank him?!’ She told me that *hakarat hatov*, expressing grateful appreciation, is a basic Jewish concept, and that now that I understand what you had done that night, I should thank you for bringing about the transformation of my life. She was emphatic: ‘Don’t delay.’

“So that’s when I phoned you. To ask if I could come see you in person and thank you for saving my life.”

After that conversation I followed Marnie’s progress. She continued learning and eventually was introduced by a *shadchan* to a young man studying at the Aish HaTorah yeshiva. They were married in the ruins of the now rebuilt Churvah Synagogue in the Old City, and after they both completed their studies in Jerusalem, they returned to the United States, where he resumed his professional studies at a prestigious northeastern university.

Today, together with their children, they are hosting young people at their own Shabbos table.

Excerpted from *In One Era, Out the Other* by Michael Kaufman.

The Miracle Shabbos Pants

Robin Meyerson

God is in the details.

In the summer of 2010 we went on a vacation to Palo Alto, California. A friend had arranged that we could spend Shabbos in the home of a family named the Felsens, who were out of town. We had never met them, but they were gracious enough to lend us their home, nonetheless.

We arrived on Friday afternoon and began preparing for Shabbos. After my three girls had finished their baths and gotten dressed for Shabbos, it was time for my nine-year-old son Rory to go next. As he was in the bath, I looked through the suitcase to lay out his Shabbos clothes for him. I found his suit coat, tie, shirt, socks and shoes — but no Shabbos pants. I pulled out all the clothes from the suitcase and searched again — but still no Shabbos pants.

Now, my son is quite sensitive and I knew that if he didn't have his Shabbos pants he would be truly hurt and might even cry. He is very sweet, and even at nine years old, he was very serious about how he dressed for Shabbos. As I combed through the suitcase one last time, I thought to myself, *perhaps the Felsens have a son who is near Rory's age and I could look in his room to find some pants for him to borrow*. But no, I thought, there was no way I could justify doing that with them out of town. So I put it out of my mind.

In dismay at still not finding the pants, I looked up from the

suitcase and noticed a little plaque above the dresser with a special poem, entitled, *Welcome to our Home*. The last line read, “*If there is anything you need — just ask,*” so I said to myself — I need some Shabbos pants for my son! After a few seconds, I decided to pull a piece of paper from my folder and copy down this sweet poem so I could post it in our guest room back at home.

As I was in the middle of copying it down, I heard my husband opening the front door and speaking to someone. We were not expecting anyone, so I walked down the hallway to see who it was, and lo and behold, it was a little boy about my son’s age. My husband introduced him. “This is Moishy Felsen,” he said. “The rest of his family went to New York, but he stayed behind and is spending Shabbos with a friend nearby. He just came home to take a shower and get ready for Shabbos.”

I approached Moishy and said, “Can I ask you a question? How old are you?” He answered that he was ten. I said, “Moishy, I have a request for you. My little boy is nine years old and he is in the bath right now. I packed his suit coat, shirt and tie, but I forgot his Shabbos pants.”

Before I could say more, little Moishy said in a very grown-up way, “Would you like to borrow some Shabbos pants?” He ran to his room and came back with three pairs of pants in two seconds flat. He went to take a shower to prepare for Shabbos and then he was gone.

At that moment, my son was getting out of the bath. I pulled him aside and said, “Rory, can you forgive mommy? I packed your coat, shirt and tie but I forgot your Shabbos pants. But God performed a miracle just for you. He heard mommy’s plea as she read the Felsens’ note. It said, “*Welcome guests, young and old ... your request is our command, we’d feel honored to help you in any way we can ... So please ... just ask!!!*” The next thing I knew, I told him, Moishy Felsen came home and, like the answer to a prayer,

offered to lend you a pair of his Shabbos pants.

My son just stared up at me with his big wide blue eyes and asked, “Is he skinny like me?” With a smile, I said, try these pants on and let’s see. So even though my little Rory normally wears size eight slim, that Shabbos, size ten slim fit perfectly!

So you see, an open miracle as plain as plain can be happened to us through little Moishy Felsen while his entire family was away in New York and we enjoyed Shabbos in their California home.

Shabbos Guests

Robin Meyerson

“Do you know what Mama and I are doing, Esther? We ‘cornered the market’ on this great mitzvah! All the many ‘dividends’ that we shall earn from it will remain with our family forever and ever. You are a very rich girl, for you help Mama with the orchim. Your children and grandchildren will also be wealthy because of our outstanding ‘business of hachnosas orchim.’

“You will go with Mama someplace another time, but when you earn millions within a short while, you grasp the opportunity. You do not let it slip through your fingers.”

(From *All for the Boss* by Ruchama Shain)

Having Shabbos guests is not only a rewarding experience for the hosts and the guests for the duration of twenty-six hours. *but there are many other benefits that accrue to both from the shared mitzvah and beyond. The following stories by Robin Meyerson highlight the dividends of that special connection.*

Our Shabbos Guest and the \$100,000 Scholarship Donation

One Shabbos, we had a man and his two adult sons stay with us from Friday through Sunday. The Daitchmans were a delightful family, and we greatly enjoyed their company and listening to their stories of Chicago. Most guests usually stay just for Friday night and leave after Shabbos. But in this case, David Daitchman and his sons

were staying one more night in order to wake up early on Sunday morning to sell peanuts and popcorn as volunteers at the Super Bowl, which happened to take place that year in Arizona. They were quite excited, since they had been selected from hundreds of applicants for this “job,” in which they could watch the Super Bowl in person for free.

After Shabbos, I sat down and began to check my email, as it was a particularly busy time for the JTO (Jewish Tuition Organization), a scholarship granting organization of which I am a board member. David asked me what I was doing, so I explained how Arizona provides a tax credit for donations to qualified scholarship organizations, including one for Jewish students attending a group of private Jewish day schools.

David had never heard about such a law and was astounded at how valuable this tax credit was for students. He asked me a few more questions, inquiring about whether corporations could take advantage of the tax credit if they made a donation to the JTO. I said yes, companies could do this but that we had not yet received any corporate contributions. David practically jumped up and down with excitement and shouted, “You must hire someone to solicit for these contributions and obtain these funds!”

Due to his enthusiasm, I sent an email to our JTO board to suggest his idea and even suggested someone we could hire to do the job. Within a week, the decision was approved and the person I suggested was busy on the phone soliciting for corporate contributions. Shortly thereafter, we obtained a scholarship contribution for \$100,000 — and it was all due to our Shabbos guest David Daitchman!

The Woman with the Two Children

We often do not know our Shabbos guests when they first arrive, but spending twenty-five hours of quality time together in the

beautiful environment of Shabbos very quickly leads to warm, close relationships. One Shabbos, we had a lovely family with two kids of approximately the same age as two of my children, providing them built-in playmates for Shabbos. The house was filled with their joyous sounds.

The wife shared with me that the large age gap between her first and second child was due to certain medical conditions that had made it difficult for her to have children. They had been trying to have another child for a while, but without success. I marveled at her strength and bravery as she confided her personal situation to me. Secretly thanking God for my own health, I prayed that she would soon have her prayers answered for more children.

Guests come and go and we sometimes get emails or calls from them thanking us for our hospitality. But one call, from the woman with the two children, was especially precious to me when I received it about nine months later. It seems our house had been blessed by a small miracle. The woman with the two children was calling to tell me that she was now the mother with the *three* children! She wanted us to know she was making a *bris* for her new miracle baby, who was born just a little more than nine months after she stayed at our house!

T-Bird Memories

Every once in a while, I think back to my “former” life, in corporate America. I am a T-Bird, which means I have a master’s degree from the Thunderbird School of Global Management, a highly regarded business school with alumni all over the world. I had worked in sales and marketing for fifteen years before deciding to follow my heart and return home to focus on my family and, eventually, to become a *ba’alas teshuvah*.

One particular Thursday afternoon, as I was stirring some con-

coction on the stove for dinner, I thought to myself, *I wonder if there are any Shabbos observant T-birds. I just wonder.* It seemed like the two worlds just couldn't possibly overlap. As much as I love my life now, a small piece of me longed for the glamour of the "T-bird life" I had left so long ago. In some way, I still missed the fast-paced international job I had left, and the big paycheck I used to bring home.

Just then, the phone rang and I was jolted out of my daydream. I answered the phone and it was Dr. Jeff Becker, a board member of our *shul* calling with a hospitality request. I handle hospitality for our *shul* and nearly every Shabbos we have guests from all over who either sleep or eat at our house. Dr. Becker apologized for the lateness of his call but I said, "No problem. What do you need?"

He explained that he had met a young man from out of town that week who attends Thunderbird School of Global Management. He was Shabbos observant and was interested in a place to stay for Shabbos so he could check out our community. Could we host him?

That's what's called Divine Providence to a T.

Our Little Red Shabbos House

Robin Meyerson

*It's not very spacious or gracious or grand
We don't have a lake or an acre of land
Just a wide open door and a welcoming hand
And it feels lilke home
And it feels like home
And it feels like home*

(Tom Chapin)

We began observing Shabbos while we still lived in our home on Le Marche Drive in Scottsdale, Arizona. It was a lovely home, but it was two and a half miles away from our *shul*. Every Thursday, I would begin to agonize over how far Charlie would have to walk, dreading the anxiety of being left home alone with four little children under seven-years-old.

For three years, we looked for a house that was close to *shul*, but each one was either beyond our budget or just not that appealing. I loved our house. When we bought it, I had actually visualized it being our house forever. I had lovingly decorated every nook and cranny and had brought each of my four newborn children home there. I had always longed for roots, and in that home, which held so many important family memories, I finally felt I had established them.

But something was missing. I had a hole in my heart and so did Charlie. We were just too far from our *shul* and adopted community.

We tried listing our house, and I kept it spotless for the various visitors who came to look at it, but we never had any bites.

Finally, one day, I decided I had had it and was going to find the prettiest, cheapest, closest house to the *shul* that we could and we would just buy it and let God do the rest. And that's exactly what we did.

When we all first pulled up to the little, red Shabbos house that I had found after three years of painstaking research, the kids and Charlie exclaimed in unison, "What? We're not living in this tomato house!" They were right. The house was painted a bright, red color that was not entirely unlike a tomato. But I tried to reassure them that this was the best house I could find and that it would be great. Despite my pleas, Charlie was not convinced and neither were the children. The yard in back was much smaller than ours and the one in front was undeniably ugly. There were two fewer bathrooms and, well, it really was painted red, like a tomato.

Finally, I gave in to their objections. "Okay. Let's go back and look through all the other houses I've seen," I said. Charlie made a spreadsheet of pros and cons. The tomato house had way too many cons, but it still beat out the other options. "This is the best one there is!" I explained. The discussions seemed to take forever, but I finally won them over. So, we packed up our things and moved to the little tomato house. We just left the Le Marche house and that was it (we soon found renters).

As we began to get settled into our new "Shabbos Tomato House," as it became affectionately known, I began to marvel at the many coincidences I kept discovering. The number of mezuzahs was exactly the same as our previous house, even though the other house was so much bigger. My kitchen table is black granite and it matched the new house's kitchen counters exactly. The dining room curtains were burgundy, my favorite color, and they matched my dining room

chairs and couches perfectly. And (once we gave about two truckloads of furniture to charity), our furniture fit into place as though we had picked it out just for the new house. The master bedroom was a bit of a tight squeeze at first to fit the beds and nightstands, but somehow, over time, the walls seem to have expanded. We've been living here now for more than five years and not one of us has ever looked back. In the heart of our community and close to *shul*, everything has been a perfect fit in our little, red "Shabbos home."

The Blessing of a Shabbos Guest-Room

When we moved into our red Shabbos home, it had four bedrooms and two bathrooms but was still almost 1,000 square feet smaller than our previous house (and had two fewer bathrooms). We had to make adjustments as a family, learning to take turns in the bathroom and finding new ways to enjoy quiet and privacy, as well. Such lessons are important ones, and I think they have made our family stronger, and more mature, loving people. Plus, I have less to clean!

Being closer to *shul* also meant we were more attractive to Shabbos guests. This was part of the joy of being close but also part of the challenge of having less space, and required that we move the kids around to accommodate the increased number of people in the house. The kids were good sports, but eventually, we made the decision to close in our covered patio to make a guest room.

The expense was not so outrageous, since we already had two walls and a roof. All we needed was two more walls, paint, some insulation and a proper floor, windows and a door. So we got started on the renovations and soon had a great new room with more than 300 square feet to accommodate all our honored guests. The room is airy and bright and full of space and sunshine.

Over the last three-plus years, we have made a steady stream

of new friends through that room — people who have enriched our lives in so many ways. Especially meaningful to us have been the college students we've met through JAC (Jewish Arizonans on Campus, run by Rabbi and Mrs. Brumer), who have stayed with us as they learned about Shabbos and began to observe it themselves. We have grown to love these college kids, and to our great delight, we have been witness to about a dozen weddings in the past year alone. What a *bracha* (blessing)!

Going with the Flow

Rosally Saltsman

*Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it.*

(Ecclesiastes 11:1)

A must-do activity in the north of Israel is going rafting, inner tubing, or kayaking on the Jordan River in the Upper Galilee. There are a few places that offer that thrill. And it isn't available year-round either but depends on how much water is flowing. The rafting season is from winter to spring, when you can enjoy floating along the mildly rushing waters of the Jordan river as it flows through peaceful banks, lush with vegetation for twelve kilometers, dropping over 200 meters until its outlet in Bet Zayda Valley on the banks of Lake Kinneret.

Since rafting is a seasonal sport, these tourist sites rely on customers seven days a week. That is until recently. Jordan River Rafting (Rafting Nahar HaYarden) run by three brothers, Uri, Eran and Yaniv Gigi, has recently closed its doors on Shabbat in favor of a more traditional day spent with family.

Shabbat is a big day for business for these water adventure sites, but despite the looming threat of business losses and threats from disappointed tourists, business is booming.

“Whoever has faith isn't afraid,” they say.

Well, their faith has been rewarded because in the weeks since

they've closed they've seen amazing Divine Providence. For example, one weekday, a group of 200 Arabs had planned a day of rafting adventure at Kfar Blum, another rafting location nearby. Only the check was "mistakenly" made out to Jordan River Rafting, so the lucrative group had no choice but to enjoy the services of Jordan River Rafting instead.

A rabbi who heard of their decision brought 200 people down to enjoy a ride on the Jordan River to give the brothers *chizuk* along with a handsome income.

An *avrech* from America came to the brothers, gave them a hundred dollars and asked that they buy wine with it and bless him when they do. "You're bringing merit to thousands of people," he told them. The kiosk worker also had to close up on Shabbat as well as all the other people working for them.

Who knows what lies around the river bend? But in the meantime, the Gigis are not regretting their decision and their business is going ... swimmingly.

To contact Jordan River Rafting: <http://www.rafting.co.il>
and click on the American flag for English.

Bat Melech

Sue Tourkin Komet

In an Ashkenazic *shul* in Old Katamon Jerusalem
Beit HaKnesset HaKlalli — I found *your* name.
You'd written "1976."

I came late for *Kabbalat Shabbat* but before *Lecha Dodi*.
The Women's Gallery up stone stairs, claustrophobic.
There was an intense, holy atmosphere — and quiet.

Many young women, and middle-aged, and few elderly.
Most prayer books were taken from the shelves already.

So I fingered through the abandoned ones.
Most were for the High Holy Days or Psalms —
Not what I needed and not what I wanted.

Not what I sought and not what I hunted.
Finally! A leather-bound winter green Sabbath Prayer Book
In Romanian and Hebrew.

My soul *knew* that was *the* moment the Master of the Universe
Wanted me to sing to think to pray to meditate my way
And accept that Shabbat —in Romanian and Hebrew.

... Not that I knew Romanian ...

I knew it to be a spiritual challenge for me
 To dredge up my soul power and get “into it”
 When I read Gothic words like *Dominus*.
 But first! I had to be an archaeologist
 And anthropologist

And read The Title Page.
 All I found on the inside page was “*Carolina Melech*, 1976.”
 No more, no less. In a childish Hebrew script.

Was it written in Romania in a Talmud Torah?
 Were you tutored by a teacher at a Kibbutz Ulpan?
 Or was it embedded on the page in Jerusalem?

“*Carolina Melech*” — a queenly first name a la Caroline Kennedy.
 Ah! — but your Family Name *Melech*/ King
 Is our real King’s name *Melech* in the Holy Tongue.

Carolina Melech — Did you birth holy Jewish children?
 Did you remain in Israel? Did you wed a “royal” Jew?
 And did *you* ever own another prayer book — to inscribe *your*
 name into?

Appeared in *Poetica Magazine*, 2006,
 edited by Michal Mahgrefteh.

Sue (*née* Tourkin) Komet was born and raised in Washington,
 D.C. While living in Jerusalem from 1968 until she passed
 away in 2017, Sue was a social worker, matchmaker and part-
 time artist. Her journalism, prose, and poetry have been

published in some 30 publications. In 2005 she was awarded a Literary Grant by *Keren Amos*, the Amos Fund of the Office of the President of Israel, for the publication of *Jerusalem Out Front, Bethlehem Outback: Prose & Poetry* (2017).

To Kindle the Shabbat Candles

Dvorah Stone

*Light a candle, Light a candle with me;
A thousand candles in the dark, Will open our hearts.*

(Yoav Ginai)

It's something she had always done. It was a family tradition that she accepted but truly never delved into it. Maria asked her date to wait a moment while she went into a hidden crevice in her home where she lit candles the way she did every Friday at sundown.

Her astonished date asked her what she was doing, and Maria, a South American Catholic woman, was surprised at his inquiry. Only when she said that it was something that all Spanish Catholic women do and was told that there is no such custom among the majority of these women that she got the first inkling that she was different. The mitzvah of lighting the Shabbos candles, that endured centuries beyond her family's conscious knowledge of its meaning and origin, was the spark that ignited Maria's trek back through history where she uncovered her Jewish roots.

The King of Spain bragged to the head Inquisitor how successful they were in eradicating and forcefully converting the Jews in his kingdom. The Inquisitor asked the King to look at the panoramic view of Toledo that bleak, freezing Friday night when anyone and everyone would have lit a fire in their home to diminish the frigid weather. "Look out at all those chimneys from which no smoke

arises!” replied the Inquisitor to the astonished King. Every single smokeless chimney is the home of Jews who still keep Shabbos.

Women who were unceremoniously dragged out of their homes in the Ghetto of Nazi Europe grabbed their Shabbos candles, which they lit in the cattle cars that were speeding them toward their demise.

When my dearest Aunt Chanie was desperately ill, I offered to set up her Shabbos candles for her, thinking that I would be helping her. There was no way she would allow me to do it. She fought with her last ebbing strength to raise herself from her bed and set up the candles herself.

Dvora always was careful to light the Shabbos candles and they were invariably the first thing she packed for any trip. One Friday evening, she did not light the Shabbos candles. As the moments toward the final time to light the candles marched imminently closer, she was kneeling in a hospital emergency holding her mother’s legs off the floor. From this position her eyes locked onto the flickering lights illuminating a sign near the ceiling, and that is the light upon which she made the *bracha*, *LeHadleek Ner Shel Shabbos Kodesh*.

A senior-aged American woman was sharing a *Bikur Cholim* apartment, an apartment given to people who need to be close to a hospital for treatment or caregiving, with two religious women. When it came time to light the Shabbos candles, the religious women most certainly did not wish to impose their tradition upon the other woman, but they gently explained to her that when a woman lights the Shabbos candles, she has a special connection with God, and chance to pray for her loved ones. The woman, who had never lit candles before, was sensitive and wise enough to grab the chance to pray for her husband’s recovery.

Before she lit the candles, she instinctively covered herself, without being told, and ascended to a spiritual level I don’t think she

ever experienced before. The unmistakable radiance and peace that transformed her appearance is a vision that remains in my soul.

These seemingly unrelated sparks, lit across the centuries throughout history, in honor of Shabbos Kodesh, the holy Sabbath, by women whose affiliations stretch across the varied continuum of Jewish affiliation, are actually one glowing flame, each one contributing an essential spark necessary to create the stupendous cosmic illumination that will glow with ethereal radiance on the day that will be *Yom Shekulo Shabbos*, a day that is only Shabbos.

Shamor: Standing Guard for Shabbos

Dvora Chavkin

*There are some things so dear, some things so precious,
some things so eternally true, that they are worth dying
for. And I submit to you that if a man has not discovered
something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.*

(Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)

They came to his door. The notables in the picturesque New England town came to his door, but he wasn't available. An honor guard including the Mayor and Chief of Police came to invite and escort the town Rabbi to take part in the town's annual Memorial Day Parade. It was certainly intended as a demonstration of respect to invite him. There was nothing to think about. The Rabbi would not participate.

When I asked the Rabbi, my dear Uncle Chaim, why couldn't he walk in the parade he didn't answer me. He knew that I would not understand. It took me many, many years to discern the depths of his silence. What I thought, then, would be an obvious demonstration of respect for Shabbos (Memorial Day wasn't always on the last Monday in May) truly was not the highest expression of truth.

Yocheved was a distinguished academic with impressive credentials: she had a doctorate in languages from one of the world's

most prestigious universities, and was a certified psychologist and rebbetzin of a prominent rabbinic dynasty. Among her accomplishments was a compensation program, based on her research and documentation, granted to Dutch children who had been traumatized by their treatment during the Holocaust.

Yocheved was scheduled to receive a coveted award for this accomplishment. The presentation was scheduled to take place Friday morning in Vatican City. There were several delays in scheduling the presentation and it was requested that she come Friday afternoon instead. Yocheved skipped the presentation. It was too close to Shabbos so she didn't go. The most impressive and enviable credentials before and after her name did not deflect from her connecting to her most important essence. Shabbos came before it all.

Professor Robert Aumann was scheduled to receive his Nobel Prize from the King of Sweden, King Karl XVI Gustaf. The presentation was scheduled for Shabbos afternoon and of course he didn't go. In a breach of long-standing protocol, the King of Sweden waited for Professor Aumann and made the presentation to him Saturday night, after Shabbos. There are no words to describe the admiration and awe that enveloped the King of Sweden's face as he enveloped Professor Aumann's hands in his own when he congratulated him. The King's expression broadcast his admiration of this man, who he knew was truly royal and loyal to The King.

The Mayor, the Chief, the Dignitaries and the King all waited for these precious accomplished personalities who refused to chip away even an imperceptible sliver of Shabbos. Their egos were no match for the purity of their souls.

They were Loyal Shomrim (Guards) who stood Guard for Shabbos. Fortunate are we if our portion is with theirs.

The Guardian of the Doors of Israel

Rabbi Mordechai Bulua

*God says, "Open for Me an opening the size of the eye of a needle,
and I will open for you an opening the size of a great hall."*

(Midrash on Song of Songs)

When our two eldest children were toddlers, we lived in an apartment building. One *Leil Shabbos*, we invited guests for the *Shabbos seuda*. After waiting quite some time, my wife and I decided to step outside our apartment into the hallway to see, or hear, if they were coming. As we stepped out, the door slammed shut behind us, locking us out of our apartment. Our children, who were inside, started crying.

With the *Shabbos* candles burning, we realized how dangerous the situation was. I asked my wife if she had given a copy of the front door key to any of our neighbors. She hadn't. Neither, for that matter, had I. I told her that I would go to the building superintendent and ask him to open the door. My wife reminded me, however, that we had put a new lock on the door ourselves to which the superintendent had no key. I was about to knock on a neighbor's door to contact the fire department to break down the door, when my wife remembered that just that *Erev Shabbos*, she left her house key at her mother's apartment, which was right around the corner from where we lived.

I ran to her mother's apartment, got the key, and gave it to a non-

Jew in the lobby, who followed me back to our apartment where my wife and I found our children safe and sound, *baruch Hashem*.

When we calmed down a bit, I asked my wife how she had managed to leave her key at her mother's apartment that very day, something she had never previously done.

Her answer floored me. That Friday, my wife had accompanied her mother to the hospital for a series of tests. My wife had done her cooking for *Shabbos* on Thursday, knowing she would be busy with her mother the following day. At the hospital, there were the usual procedural and bureaucratic delays, and by the time the last test was done, it was very close to *Shabbos*. Knowing that my wife would be delayed, I lit candles myself.

My wife took her mother home by taxi. When they arrived at my mother-in-law's apartment, my wife looked at the clock. It was exactly eighteen minutes before sunset, the time one is supposed to light the candles. My wife had never in her life done any *melacha* (proscribed *Shabbos* work) during the eighteen minutes before sunset. Even though my wife knew she could carry within the eighteen minutes, as she hadn't *bentsched licht*, she felt it would be inappropriate to carry at a time when women don't do *melacha*. Furthermore, someone might wonder why she is carrying during the eighteen minutes, and she was worried about *maris ayin* (what people might say).

In one of the *zemiros* we sing on *Shabbos* morning, it says "*Kodesh hi lachem Shabbos HaMalka, el toch bateichem l'haniach beracha ...*" (The *Shabbos* Queen is holy to you, into your homes it places a blessing ...). I am sure that it was only because of my wife's meticulous observance of the holy *Shabbos* that we were able enter into our home to receive the greatest blessing of all, healthy children!

Hashem is indeed, as one of His appellations refers to Him, "*Shomer Dlatos Yisroel*," the Guardian of the Doors of Israel!

N.B. On Shabbat, a Jew is not allowed to carry in a public domain and that is why I handed the key to a non-Jew. If no non-Jew was available, I would have been allowed to carry it myself because of the danger to the lives of our children, which takes precedence over Shabbat laws.

The Shabbos Shadchan

Dvora Stone

*A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time
to mourn and a time to dance*

(Ecclesiastes 3:4)

I couldn't believe it. How could a person change so instantly? Just a moment ago my grandmother was immersed in the deepest sorrow. Her husband with whom she shared her life for more than half a century, had just passed away a few hours ago. She was a woman of deep sensitivity and was not one who would censure or mask her feelings easily. Though I was a child, I could grasp how deeply she was affected. Her tears seem to hover precariously on the precipice of losing control and then in a moment — a moment of inchoate transformation — she stopped. The moment may have occurred when her son bent down over her and said ever so quiet and gently, "It's time to *bentch licht*." Then before my uncomprehending eyes she composed herself and stopped crying.

I watched my grandmother the entire Shabbos with an intense and unremitting scrutiny. She sat and *davened* in her usual manner the entire Shabbos, sitting next to her window overlooking the familiar Williamsburg street she lived on, her *siddur* perched before her as she devoured every word deliberately and patiently, as always. Was she the same person who had been crying so desperately on Erev Shabbos? Maybe she forgot what happened? Maybe old

people forget and that is why she stopped crying?

She didn't forget at all! The moment Havdallah was over, she continued crying with the same intensity, continuing where she left off as if she had never stopped. Though I was a child, I could feel that the moment after Havdallah when she resumed crying, was connected, a continuum of the same wave of emotion that engulfed her on Erev Shabbos. It was suspended and relegated to another sphere over Shabbos because on Shabbos you aren't allowed to cry.

Shabbos, it seems, was to manifest itself as a pivotal presence in their lives. It was a portentous part of their parting just as it was of their first meeting. Shabbos, you see, was their *shadchan* (matchmaker).

Their parents emigrated from Galicia to America at the beginning of the last century when remaining a *Shomer Shabbos* was perhaps the single greatest hurdle that their generation of emigrants had to contend with. The choices available to them to survive financially fell in the range from none to few. My grandfather Zvi Asher Gross took one of the few options that enabled him to remain a *Shomer Shabbos*; he had established his own business by the time he was seventeen years old. My grandmother Yocheved Gruner went from business to business in an elusive quest to find a job where she wouldn't have to work on Shabbos. She found her job and life-long partner when she came to my grandfather's shop. Even after they were married for years, my grandfather welcomed her presence and urged her to join him in his shop.

The perseverance of that generation, in those lean years, when people walked from Harlem, then a nice Jewish neighborhood, to the Lower East Side miles away, to save the carfare can hardly be appreciated today. Years later, during the nineteen-thirties, there were pioneer businesses that enabled many others to observe Shabbos, such as B.I.B. Wholesale Clothiers, Leon Cohen, and Lampert

Brothers. The indefatigable and beloved personality, Chaim Gelb, was a salesman for B.I.B. Wholesalers and the legendary Mike Tress was the manager of Lampert Brothers.

Many immigrants attained great success and amassed fortunes in the span of a few years. They attained envious lifestyles and were obvious winners in the race to acclimate themselves and gain enviable portions of the sweet American pie. Their success however, was at great cost.

Even the modest fortune that my great-grandmother put together was lost. She had accumulated \$150, not a king's ransom but an enviable amount of money to have in one's possession at that time. Since no sane person would entrust a bank with their hard-earned fortune, Ruchel hid the cache in a much safer place. She put it inside their couch. Her husband Yoel was a fastidious man and decided to surprise his wife with a clean, new couch. The surprise was on him when he unknowingly threw away the family's fortune along with the old couch.

My grandmother's engagement ring went literally and irretrievably down the drain when she wore it while washing the dishes. The riches that my grandfather achieved had come and gone long before his descendants could reap their benefit. The treasure, the true, irradant, timeless treasure that he and his family guarded and preserved against the voracious demands of American society, however, is still intact.

It is far easier to take for granted what is ours and what we are used to than to begin to appreciate or understand what our lives would be without it. A middle-aged American woman who was born and nurtured in one of the New York neighborhoods that was known as a bastion of Jewish life told me that she had never lit Shabbos candles and neither had her mother. She had recently reversed the direction of her life, the inexorable direction towards

extinction, charted by her parent's climb up the ladder of success. She was overjoyed at having come to this level of understanding and observance and was looking forward to progressing further. I could sense the near vertiginous verve that accompanied her telling me that she started to light Shabbos candles. She was so happy that she could share this with someone who would understand.

If not for my grandparents keeping watch and guarding their real treasures, I could have been her, another casualty of too much success, looking desperately for entrée into the lost world that belonged to me but was invisible. Because I stand on my grandparents' shoulders, I can welcome her home.

As an adult I am still amazed at the instantaneous transformation that enabled my grandmother to pick herself up from a very deep sorrow into a state of calm, *lichvod Shabbos*.

You can define a person according to what makes them laugh. Perhaps you can also define their essence according to what makes them cry. My mother did not cry easily. When a family member was expected home from a trip and the time for *bentching licht* was approaching, my mother was beside herself. The thought of their coming late was unbearable. When someone who had been waiting outside came in and announced that they had just driven up, my mother was so relieved and overjoyed that they came on time before Shabbos, she burst into tears and blessed the one who gave her the good news.

May her memory, *Liba Bas Zvi Asher HaKohen*, and the memories of my staunch grandparents and great-grandparents who honored Shabbos, be for a blessing.

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Trailing Shabbos

As told to Rosally Saltsman

*Do not go where the path may lead, go instead
where there is no path and leave a trail.*

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

*Home is by your side forever.
Paths I tried following led nowhere I want to be.
Home is when you're with me.*

(From a song by Rosally Saltsman and Michael Gilman)

The exactness of Shabbat observance, to traditional Jews, is measured in minutes so that the lighting of candles to herald the commencement of the Sabbath day is calculated an hour before sunset. That ensures no errors should ever be committed when entering the Holy Day.

Traditional Jewish observance of the Sabbath includes prohibition of travel in a motor vehicle, limitation of even walking a distance in excess of approximately 1,200 meters beyond city limits, carrying anything from public to private property, as well as many other prohibitions obligating every Jew to rest to the fullest on the Holiest of days.

While recent technology may have streamlined air travel in recent decades, one thing has not changed much: unexpected delays. While delays in flights might be irksome at the best of times, they

are downright critical at others. Ask any traveler trying to make it home in time for Shabbat and you'll know why.

While most people who are *shomer Shabbat* don't cut it too close when planning flights on Friday, leaving plenty of room for unexpected occurrences, time zones, inclement weather, air traffic jams and a host of other problems sometimes conspire to make it a very close call despite the best of intentions.

In the late 1970s, Manuel Sand flew from Israel to Florida to attend the bar mitzvah of a relative on *Shabbat Shuva* and lend his resonant voice to the proceedings. Almost a week later, having left plenty of time for unforeseen eventualities, he boarded a plane at Kennedy airport Thursday night to return home in time for Shabbat.

Back at home, his wife, Esther Ella, was spending the day Friday nervously noting the continued delays of her husband's flight. The plane hadn't made its scheduled stopover in London but had been rerouted to Amsterdam because of foggy conditions. This delayed the flight. Manuel wanted to stay in Amsterdam to avoid possibly landing on Shabbat but a steward assured him they would be leaving momentarily.

His wife started to get nervous. Her younger son, Baruch, said, "Let's go take the trailer and make Shabbos at the airport." His mother responded, "But I don't know to drive the trailer!" However, with the encouragement of Baruch and his little sister, Chanaleh, they succeeded in convincing their mother to hook it up to their station wagon and drive to the airport.

Esther Ella and her children arrived in full Shabbos regalia, with three festive meals she had cooked for all of them in record time, and parked their trailer and station wagon in the airport parking lot. She had just lit candles when Manuel's plane made its, not a moment too soon, landing on Israel's holy tarmac.

The stewardess let him deplane first and he whisked through

customs and made arrangements to leave his bags at the airport over Shabbos. “Oh my goodness, it’s Shabbos!” he said. But what was he going to do?

Jetlagged, confused and worried, he was stuck on Shabbos at the airport, with no way to inform his wife (this was pre-cellphone days, and it was already Shabbos anyway), no food, no arrangements, no *minyán* to pray with. So, it was with utter shock, wonder and increased confusion when he heard two of his children calling him jubilantly as he exited the airport.

“Daddy, Daddy!”

“What are you two doing here?” he cried. “It’s Shabbat already! Where’s your mother?!”

“She’s making sure the security guard doesn’t tow away the trailer.”

“Yeah, she’s just lit candles,” they informed him.

“What?! What do you mean? What?!”

As they led their father towards their improvised Shabbos home, they explained in excited exclamations what had transpired and that he needn’t worry, they’re all set to spend Shabbos at the airport. Esther Ella had brought buckets full of ice for refrigeration, blankets and sheets and all the accoutrements of home.

They walked to the parking lot and there, from approximately 200 meters, Manuel saw their trailer sitting alone in the parking lot attached to their station wagon. Bright candlelight poured through the open window. At this moment, it finally struck him that his wife had brought the house trailer and car, parked it in the parking lot and prepared the whole Sabbath for celebration at the airport.

Manuel was overwhelmed with gratitude to his wife who had brought Shabbos to him. Needless to say, it was beautiful. The trailer wasn’t towed, the security guard finally having made peace with the situation. The kids ran around the airport, having a ball, and Manuel

Sand had a welcome home Shabbos that became family legend.

And that Friday night, when Manuel sang *Eshet Chayil* (Woman of Valor), the song praising the Jewish woman on Friday night, he had no doubt that no one deserved it more than Esther Ella, “for distinctive in the gates” — of the airport — “was her husband.”

In retrospect, when he thought back to the time they had purchased their caravan house trailer, nine years previously, he realized that they had used it not more than two weeks during those nine years. It was clear to him that Divine Providence had guided him in this purchase so that they would be able to observe the Sabbath on that fateful and faithful Friday.

The Shabbat Challenge

Ruth Zimberg

*Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aaron, took the drum in her hand
and all the women went forth after her with drums and dances.*

(Exodus 15:20)

I was the music and dance counselor at a summer camp. Not just any summer camp; this was a camp for Senior Citizens. The Jewish Laurentian Fresh Air Camp gave seniors two-week vacations in the mountains north of Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The “campers” were all aged 55 and over, and the staff were college kids. Just like in a children’s camp, we had arts and crafts, swimming, singing and folk dancing, masquerade balls, mock weddings, and even a model UN.

The food at the camp was kosher, and Shabbat observance was possible but optional. The campers came from a wide variety of Jewish observance. At this point, I was becoming more observant of Shabbat, and it was important to me to continue this at camp.

The first Friday of the season arrived. Some of the veteran campers informed me that the camp always played recorded music on Friday nights for the evening program, and they had a dance party. This was not quite what I had in mind for a celebration of Shabbat.

I was in a rather awkward position. Here I was, an eighteen-year-old teenager, who was new on the job. I was given the responsibility of planning the program for people old enough to be my grandpar-

ents. I had to be respectful, yet I didn't feel comfortable running things their way.

I suggested they try the Friday night program "my way" this time. If they were very dissatisfied, we would change things the following week.

I had to make this work!

After Friday night dinner, everyone gathered in the social hall, where the women had earlier lit the glowing Shabbat candles. At the front of the hall, I took my place, dressed in a white Shabbat dress. Quietly, the campers came in and took their places. After welcoming everyone, I began to sing songs everyone knew, so they could join in: Shabbat songs, Yiddish songs, Hebrew songs, English songs. We made circles and danced as we sang *David Melech Yisrael* and *Am Yisrael Chai*. Everyone had come together, joining hands and hearts.

The veterans agreed that the following week we could welcome back the Shabbat Queen.

Baruch Hashem!

Ruth Zimberg made *aliyah* from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, to Israel in 2001. She lives in Tzfat with her husband, Avraham.

Shabbat Blessings

Ruth Zimberg

*May you be like Ruth and like Esther.
May you be deserving of praise.
Strengthen them, Oh Lord,
And keep them from the strangers' ways.
Jerry Bock, "Sabbath Prayer"*

I grew up in a traditional home. On Friday nights, my father recited the Kiddush and said *Hamotsi* over the *challah*. But he did not bless us children. I guess it just wasn't something he had grown up with.

When I grew up, married and had my own children, my husband and I took on the custom of blessing each of our sons Friday nights. We placed our hands on their heads and recited the ancient prayer:

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe (the sons of Joseph who had grown up in Egypt, yet stayed true to the ways of the Israelites). (For girls, say: *May God make you like Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah.*)

For all children, continue:

May the LORD bless you and guard you —

יְבָרֶכֶךָ ה', וַיִּשְׁמְרֶכָּךְ

(*Yevarechecha Adonai, veyishmerecha*)

May the LORD make His face shine light upon you and be gracious to you —

יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֵיךָ, וַיַּחַנְךָ

(*Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha, vichuneka*)

May the LORD lift up His face to you and give you peace —

יְשַׁא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֵיךָ, וַיַּשֶּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

(*Yisa Adonai panav eilecha, veyasem lecha shalom*)

It is a special time for each child to feel the special love of their parents.

It wasn't until many years later, when I was already a grandmother, that my father gave me the blessing. We were at a Shabbat dinner with my brother's family. After he had blessed *his* children, I asked my father if he would bless me. As I felt his hands upon my head, and heard him recite the prayer, I was so grateful to receive the blessing. Thank you, Dad.

Stepping Stones to Eternity

Dvora Stone

Because of technology, we don't develop telepathy. We don't use telepathy, but use, you know, the mobile phones. Why?

(Marina Abramovic)

He understood what the incessant ringing of the phone meant. The caller's intended message was obvious even without answering the phone. Decades ago, a generation before answering machines and most certainly before cell phones, the message of an incessant ring, even without caller ID, was obvious.

Yerachmiel had just returned from *shul* on that blustery cold winter Shabbos morning. His mother was in a hospital on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, and it was obvious what he needed to do. As I recall, he did not stop even to make Kiddush but rushed out from where he lived in Brooklyn to walk to the hospital, miles away. The turbulent weather just echoed the chill and dread in his heart that told him what he could expect to find at the hospital. It turned out one bridge connecting Brooklyn to Manhattan was inaccessible and he had to backtrack and access Manhattan through another bridge, making the miles-long trek even longer. When he got to the hospital, his mother's bed was empty and he gasped. It turned out that she was just not in her room at the moment he arrived. Thankfully she was still there that Shabbos but she passed away several days later on

the eve of Moshe Rabbenu's *yahrzeit*. It seems that she never realized that her son had walked all those miles on Shabbos to see her.

Years later, with an irony whose essence can only be orchestrated by Heaven, the phone of his son-in-law, Yeshaya, was ringing. It was Shabbos and his son-in-law's father was in the hospital. Yeshaya too understood what incessant ringing meant but the hospital was located many highways away and it would be impossible to walk there. It was not easy entertaining the likely possibility that he may not see father again, but Shabbos was Shabbos. The moment Shabbos was over, he hurried over to the hospital, knowing full well that he was racing against time.

When he got to his father's hospital room, late Saturday night, his father's bed was empty. His father's roommate relieved his panic and told him, "You're Sam's son? Your father has been waiting for you the whole day." He had not spoken to his father to arrange a visit and tell him that he would be coming, but his father knew that he would be there. His father walked back into the hospital room, welcomed his son, blessed him and collapsed. He was gone.

Though we cannot know with certainty what the Heavenly calculations entail, I have no doubt that Yeshaya's father's life was extended until after Shabbos, in the merit of his son waiting until after Shabbos to go to him, in spite of it being a difficult challenge.

When Yerachmiel attended Columbia University, in the era when open and obvious discrimination was extant, there was no social or legal reason to try to his roots. Still he was accepted to the university's wrestling team, a nice and promising accomplishment to have achieved. He loved to quip that he never lost a fight! He never lost a fight because he never got to compete in even one match. All the matches were on Shabbos. He understood, even as a young man, that the one who appears to be the loser, actually may, in the long run, be the ultimate winner.

Our tradition teaches us that one whose soul departs this world on Shabbos is given a direct route to Heaven and his judgment is reduced because of the holiness of the day. Another firm tradition is the principle of *Midda K'neged Midda*, that we are repaid in kind for our kindness and goodness. And certainly in the Heavenly ledger nothing is forgotten or overlooked. Decades after Yeshaya waited till Shabbos was over to rush out to see his father, he himself ascended to the Next World ... on Shabbos!

The arduous trek that Yerachmiel took, and the one that Yeshaya refrained from taking in honor of Shabbos, were journeys not just to the obvious destinations. Every step, every block in the miles' long trip across the streets and bridges and highways were stepping stones to eternity, where the reward for protecting and observing Shabbos generates an ethereal radiance that envelops and enriches one's soul for all eternity.

Sanctifying Shabbos

Rosally Saltsman

We don't thrive on military acts. We do them because we have to, and thank God we are efficient.

(Golda Meir)

On Thursday, June 12, 2014, three Israeli teenagers, Naftali Frenkel (16, from Nof Ayalon), Gilad Shaer (16, from Talmon), and Eyal Yifrah (19, from Elad) were hitchhiking home for Shabbat from their yeshivas near Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion. The three boys never made it home; they were kidnapped by Hamas terrorists.

For eighteen days, the country united in prayer, hope and tears for “the three boys” until their bodies were found in a ditch in a field where they had been dumped after being shot. Three pure and holy souls, shot Erev Shabbat.

Following this, the IDF initiated Operation Brother’s Keeper to arrest militant terrorist leaders. Hamas fired thousands of rockets into Israel and in response, on July 8, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge.

On July 17, the operation was expanded to an Israeli ground invasion of Gaza with the stated aim of destroying Gaza’s tunnel system, which had aided terrorist infiltration into Israel. Sixty-six soldiers lost their lives in the operation, plus the three boys. In Gematria, 69 is מכאוב (*mach’ov*, pain).

On Friday, July 25, 2014, First Lieutenant Chaim Alster, 23, serving in the combat engineering corps as part of his *Hesder* service in the army (yeshiva learning combined with army service), led a unit of four soldiers into Gaza. In the exchange of fire that followed, Guy Boiland z"l was killed and Chaim took three bullets, one entering near his shoulder and exiting his back, only a couple of millimeters from his spinal cord.

His mother, Etti, was about to bring in Shabbat earlier than usual to give merit to her son (in Petach Tikvah, Shabbat is usually brought in early as it was settled by Jews from Jerusalem who bring in Shabbat fifteen minutes earlier than everyone else as an added measure of holiness). She had the matches to light candles in her hand when her husband's cell phone rang. They had been living in tremendous tension with their son in the middle of the fighting. The voice on the other end of the line identified himself as Chaim but his father, Ilan, didn't recognize it. A doctor got on the phone, told him that Chaim had been wounded and that the army were sending a car to bring them to Soroka Medical Center in Beer Sheva where Chaim was hospitalized.

Trying to keep Shabbat desecration to a minimum, even in the emergency, Etti, grabbed only her *Tehillim* (Psalms) and her cell phone.

Chaim's reaction when he saw his mother was, "Please don't cry!"

Etti cried many tears during that time, but soon she was crying tears of joy and gratitude. Chaim's being alive was a total and complete miracle! He spent the next six days in the hospital, surrounded by well-wishers from all over the world and Israeli entertainers and media celebrities who came to heap love and gratitude on the wounded soldiers. After another five months of rehabilitation, even though his military profile had now dropped to the minimum, Chaim returned to his unit just one day after celebrating his engagement.

After he was wounded, Chaim had been airlifted by helicopter to Soroka. The attending doctor came afterwards to Chaim's parents specially to tell them that Chaim had asked three questions when he was drifting in and out of consciousness during that flight.

"Will I live?" he asked. The doctor assured him he would, even though at the time it was highly doubtful. But thank God Chaim survived.

"Do I still have my left leg?" was his next question. Chaim's leg had been injured, though not seriously, but the medical team had tied the tourniquets so tightly he couldn't feel his leg. They assured him that his leg was fine.

Then he asked what day it was. They told him it was Shabbat. "I want to make Kiddush," he said, before losing consciousness again.

Although Chaim was hooked up to many medical contraptions, his father made Kiddush for him and his mother late that night in the hospital.

Imagine, a soldier almost mortally injured in combat, tenuously hanging on to his life, barely conscious, and after ascertaining he would survive, his first thought was to make Kiddush because it was Shabbat.

That's because first and foremost Chaim Alster is a soldier in God's army.

You can see part of his inspiring story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6rkBvoIzOE>

The Foundation of Shabbos

Chaim Finkelstein

Shabbos — a sanctuary in Time.

I have the great privilege of living in New York's Lower East Side. I grew up here, in the same neighborhood where my parents, and grandparents grew up. Every day, I walk the same streets they did. One advantage of this is that all the stories I heard while growing up are very easy to visualize. I often think of them as I walk past the place they happened. One of my favorite stories growing up was my grandmother's story about Mr. Jackson.

When I was growing up, there was one thing that I knew for sure. I knew that my bubby Rivka Leah was very proud of her father, Reb Yehuda Leib Rubin *zt"l*. She was proud that he was the Rav of the Minsk Chayey Adam *Shul* on the Lower East Side. She was proud of his Torah learning. She was proud of his standards of *kashrus*. Most of all, however, she was proud of his dedication to *Shmiras Shabbos*, and the *Kiddush Hashem* that he once made as a result. Bubby's favorite story about her father was the story of Mr. Jackson.

In the early nineteen-twenties, the Rubin family lived on the Lower East Side. Reb Yehuda Leib Rubin and his family lived in a small building at 150 East Broadway. When he wasn't praying and giving classes in his shul, Yehuda Leib could be found in his office at the bottom floor of his building. Besides being a Rabbi, Yehuda Leib was also a contractor, a person that got paid to build buildings for people.

One day, there was a knock on his office door. Yehuda Leib opened the door and let his visitor in. It was Mr. Jackson, a very wealthy man who owned many buildings. He often hired The Rubin Construction Company to do building projects for him. He knew that Mr. Rubin was very honest and did excellent work.

Mr. Jackson looked very excited. He took a long puff of his expensive cigar before speaking.

“Mr. Rubin,” he began. “Have I got a great project for you! You’re gonna love this job!”

“What’s the project?” asked Yehuda Leib.

Mr. Jackson quickly threw his cigar down and stomped it out with one of his fancy boots. Then, with a flourish, he reached into his deep coat pocket and pulled out a very important rolled-up piece of paper.

“These, Mr. Rubin,” he continued, “are the plans for my best building yet, and I want YOU to build it for me.”

Mr. Jackson laid the plans down on Yehuda Leib’s desk and carefully unrolled them.

Yehuda Leib took one look at the plans and realized that this was going to be one very big, very expensive project. The building would be huge and take a lot of work to build.

Mr. Jackson smiled. “Yes, yes, Mr. Rubin,” he said in a smug voice. “I can see that you are very impressed with my project. If you can get this job done in time, we will both make a lot of money from it.”

“How much are you willing to pay for such a building?” asked Yehuda Leib.

Mr. Jackson smiled. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a little notebook. He quickly flipped through the pages until he came to a page with a number written on it. With his smile growing bigger by the minute, he held the page open before Yehuda Leib’s eyes.

Yehuda Leib looked at the number scrawled on the paper and

gasped out loud. Mr. Jackson was offering to pay a very, very large amount of money to build this building.

"I can see that you are pretty impressed, Mr. Rubin," he chuckled.

Yehuda Leib swallowed hard. This was definitely a lot more money than he had ever been offered for any project in his life. "Yes, I am impressed," answered Yehuda Leib carefully, "but I just don't understand. Why are you offering so much money?"

"Mr. Rubin," he answered, "I need this building built very quickly. I need it finished in seven months."

Yehuda Leib's eyes grew wide. "SEVEN MONTHS?" he cried. Yehuda Leib quickly grabbed the building plans and studied them carefully. "Seven months is nowhere near enough time to put together a building this big. Why, in order to build it THAT fast, a person would have to work very long hours a day, six days a week."

Mr Jackson smiled smugly. "That's exactly what I want you to do, Mr. Rubin," he said. "I want you to work on my building six days a week, and I'm sure you will be able to finish it on time."

Yehuda Leib turned and took a long look at Mr. Jackson, while he scratched his head in confusion.

"Mr. Jackson," he said, "you are not making any sense at all. You know very well that in New York City, it is against the law to build buildings on Sundays. How could you expect me to work six days a week?"

Mr. Jackson's smiled slyly at Yehuda Leib. "My dear Mr. Rubin," he began, "I never said anything about doing work on Sundays."

"I don't understand," he said. "How could you possibly expect me to work six days a week if I don't work on Sundays?"

Mr. Jackson put his arm around Yehuda Leib's shoulder. "Mr. Rubin," he said, "you know very well that there are six other days to do work BESIDES Sunday."

Suddenly it dawned on Yehuda Leib what Mr. Jackson was hint-

ing at. He gasped out loud because he felt like someone had just punched him in the stomach.

“Y ... You ... you mean, you want me to work on S ... S ... SATURDAYS????” he stammered.

Mr. Jackson’s smile reached from one ear to another, as he nodded his head up and down. Yehuda Leib felt like he was going to faint. He couldn’t believe that someone actually expected him to work on Shabbos. He took a deep breath and grasped the edge of his desk tightly.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Jackson,” he said in a loud, confident voice. “I cannot build your building for you.” Yehuda Leib rolled up the plans on the desk and held them out to Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Jackson’s jaw fell open in shock.

“W ... what do you mean you can’t build it?” he cried. “Why on Earth not? Didn’t you see how much money I’m offering you?”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Jackson,” he said. “It doesn’t matter how much money you offer me, I don’t work on Saturdays. That day is Shabbos; the Jewish people are forbidden to work on the Shabbos.”

Mr. Jackson didn’t know what Shabbos was, but he couldn’t imagine it was more important than money. In fact, Mr. Jackson couldn’t imagine *anything* worth more than money.

His face scrunched up into a deep frown as he began to think fast and furiously. He really didn’t want to trust such an important job to anyone but Rubin. On the other hand, Mr. Rubin was refusing to do the job.

“Hmm,” he thought to himself, “this Rubin is a lot smarter than I thought. It must be that he wants more money?” Suddenly, the smile popped back onto Mr. Jackson’s face. He laughed goodnaturedly, while slapping Yehuda Leib on the back. “That was a good one!”

Yehuda Leib looked confused. He had no idea what Mr. Jackson was talking about.

“Yes!” laughed Mr. Jackson. “For a minute there you had me believing that you just wanted a day off on Saturdays. But I know what you really want.”

“Y ... You do?” asked Yehuda Leib.

“Of course!” cried Mr. Jackson. “You want me to offer you more money.”

“N ... N ... N ... No!” cried Yehuda Leib, “you don’t understand.”

“Oh yes, I certainly do,” answered Mr. Jackson smugly.

Mr. Jackson reached into his pocket once again and pulled out his little notebook. He pulled out a pencil and furiously began scribbling numbers on the page.

“You see,” he continued, “I just realized I should have offered you more money for a job this size. “Here, Mr. Rubin,” he cried. Yehuda Leib tried to protest, but Mr. Jackson simply ignored him and stuck the open notebook page in front of his eyes. When Yehuda Leib saw the huge number on the page, he almost fainted.

Mr. Jackson noticed Yehuda Leib’s reaction to the number. “Okay, Mr. Rubin,” he chuckled. “I guess we have a deal now. When can you start working?”

Yehuda Leib caught his breath and tried to speak calmly. He was beginning to lose patience with this Mr. Jackson.

“Mr. Jackson,” he said in a loud but calm voice. “I told you before. **I do not work on Saturdays.** It doesn’t matter HOW MUCH money you offer me, I cannot, and will not, take this job.”

Mr. Jackson was stunned. His face grew dark red. “Are you playing games with me, Rubin!” he cried angrily.

“Not at all,” answered Yehuda Leib, “I am simply repeating to you that Shabbos is my day of rest. I spend the day in my synagogue praying and at home with my family. I DO NOT go to work. No matter how much money I am offered.”

Mr. Jackson’s face grew even redder than before. He had thought

Mr. Rubin was an honest man. How could he stand there and lie right to Mr. Jackson's face.

"No one gives up *that much* money for a day of rest!" he thought to himself. "Good bye, Mr. Rubin," he said loudly as he turned and stormed out of the office. The door slammed loudly behind him.

Yehuda Leib watched Mr. Jackson leave. He felt bad that he had just lost a good customer, but Shabbos was more important than anything.

"Oh well," he sighed while shrugging his shoulders, "Hashem is in charge of *parnassah*, not Mr. Jackson."

With that, Yehuda Leib began to get ready for Mincha.

As Yehuda Leib walked to shul, Mr. Jackson sat in his fancy new car heading up town. As he drove, his mind worked furiously trying to figure out what had gone wrong. Something didn't make sense. Why would Mr. Rubin do that to him? Of course he spoke about a day of rest, but it simply wasn't possible for someone to give up that much money for a day of rest. Suddenly, it hit him.

"Of course!" Mr. Jackson cried out loud to his empty car. "It's so simple! It's so obvious! "That Rubin fellow was playing games with me. He acts like such a holy guy, talking about a day of rest. I know why he said no to my job. He must already have a different job, working on an even bigger project already. Well, nobody makes a fool out of Harvey Jackson!"

"I know what I'll do," he thought to himself. "I'm gonna show up at the Rubin home this Saturday and catch that Rubin fellow in the act. Let's see what he says about his day of rest when I catch him working on Saturday."

That Shabbos morning, like every other Shabbos morning, Yehuda Leib Rubin woke up early to learn, and then said Good Shabbos to his family and headed out to *shul*.

At home, the Rubin children were waking up and getting ready to join their father in *shul*.

Young Rivka Leah was busy helping her mother set the Shabbos table for the family *seuda* after *davening*. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door.

Rivka Leah looked up at her mother. Her mother looked worried. This was unusual. Who would be knocking on their door, early Shabbos morning?

Mrs. Rubin ran to open the door. When she opened the door, she was shocked to find Mr. Jackson standing there.

“Mr. Jackson!” she cried. “What are you doing here on Shabbos?”

Mr. Jackson smiled. “I’m here to see your husband, of course,” answered Mr. Jackson sweetly.

“My husband?” cried Mrs. Rubin. “My husband can’t speak to you now. You’ll have to come back another day.”

Mr. Jackson peered into the apartment. “Why can’t I speak to your husband now? Isn’t he home?”

“No, he’s not home!” answered Mrs. Rubin. “He is somewhere very important right now.”

“AHA!” cried Mr. Jackson triumphantly. “I knew it! What’s the address of the job he’s at? I’ll go find him there.”

“No, no, no,” answered Mrs. Rubin. “He’s not at a job. He’s at the synagogue praying.”

“I don’t believe you,” Mr. Jackson smiled wider than the Rubin family Seder plate.

Mrs. Rubin was shocked. “What do you mean, you don’t believe me?” she asked.

“I don’t believe you that he’s at the synagogue. I don’t think you’re telling me the truth. I bet he is out working on a new building, somewhere in the city.”

Mrs. Rubin was furious. “How dare you?!” she cried. “My husband would never work on Shabbos. He is in the synagogue praying like I told you.”

“Oh yeah?” challenged a smug Mr. Jackson. “Prove it! Take me to him right now. I won’t believe it until I see it.”

Mrs. Rubin worked hard to contain her anger. She turned to her daughter Rivka Leah. “Rivka Leah, please take Mr. Jackson to Tatty.”

Rivka Leah’s eyes grew wide. “I should take him to *shul*?” she asked incredibly. She couldn’t imagine her mother would want her to bring this man to *shul* on Shabbos.

“Yes, Maidelah,” answered her mother. “Please take Mr. Jackson to Tatty right now.”

Rivka Leah shrugged her shoulders. “Okay, Mamma,” she answered.

“Please follow my daughter, Mr. Jackson. She will bring you to my husband. He’s only a few blocks away.”

“Oh, he’s doing a local job,” chuckled Mr. Jackson. “How convenient.”

Rivka Leah slipped on her coat and led Mr. Jackson down the steps out onto the street. They quickly crossed East Broadway and headed for Rutgers Street.

Poor Rivka Leah was very nervous. She had never disturbed her father in the middle of Shabbos *davening* before. She didn’t like the idea of doing it now.

Mr. Jackson was the happiest man around. As they turned the corner onto Rutgers Street, he scanned the area looking for the signs of a construction site. He couldn’t wait to see the look on Mr. Rubin’s face when he surprised him at work on his so-called “day of rest.”

One block later, Rivka Leah stopped in front of a low building. The front window of the ground floor had a sign over it with Hebrew lettering.

“Hmm,” thought Mr. Jackson. “I don’t see any construction. I guess this job he’s working on is still in the planning stages.”

Rivka Leah walked up the front steps and motioned for Mr.

Jackson to follow. When they entered the front hallway of the *shul*, Rivka Leah motioned for Mr. Jackson to wait there. She would go inside and call out her father.

Mr. Jackson stood there in the hallway rubbing his hands with glee. He happily imagined the embarrassment on his face when he was caught working. Seconds later, the doors to the *shul* opened. Rivka Leah held the door open.

Mr. Jackson's jaw fell open in shock at what he saw. There stood Yehuda Leib Rubin, his *tallis* draped over his head, his face glowing with holiness. Mr. Jackson had never seen anything like it in his life. This person looked as if from a different world.

Luckily, the *shul* was up to a part of *davening* that allowed for talking.

"Mr. Jackson," began Yehuda Leib. "What are you doing here?"

Mr. Jackson was speechless. His eyes widened, his jaw hung open. It took a few seconds before he could talk.

"Mr. Rubin!" he cried, "I don't believe it! You really did give up all that money just for Shabbos!" Yehuda Leib didn't answer. "I ... I ... I'm sorry, Mr. Rubin," Mr. Jackson stammered. "I ... guess I'll come speak to you another time."

Yehuda Leib turned and walked back into *shul*. Mr. Jackson turned and quickly ran out of the building.

The next day, Sunday morning, the Rubin family was sitting around their breakfast table discussing what happened on Shabbos. Suddenly, their conversation was interrupted by a loud TOOTING noise from outside. The entire family ran out to the front steps to see the cause of the commotion.

There, parked in front of their building, was a car. In the front seat of the car sat Mr. Jackson tooting the horn loudly. When he saw Yehuda Leib, he came out of the car and walked right over.

"Mr. Rubin," he began, "please forgive me for accusing you of

lying. Now I know you are a holy man who keeps his day of rest. In return for your forgiveness, I have bought you a present — this Studebaker. It's a fine car and I'm sure your family will enjoy it. I will return tomorrow to discuss that building job with you again. Maybe we can find a way to do it without disturbing your day of rest."

Bubby Rivka Leah proudly told us how her father and brothers proudly drove that Studebaker around for many years to come. The car wasn't just a mode of transportation. It was a symbol of their dedication to Shabbos — the fuel of all their lives.

A Perilous Risk

Rabbi Michael Gros

All of a person's earnings are fixed in the time from Rosh Hashana until (and including) Yom Kippur, except for his expenses for Shabbat and holidays and expenses incurred in teaching his children Torah.

(Beitza 16a)

Aaron (Anthony) and Rivka Rose faced the test of their lives. They owned a small cosmetics company in England, which was riding a wave of success in the early '80s as the world began to crave natural makeup products. They were set to attend a major industry tradeshow at which they garnered a significant amount of income each year. However, there was one major hitch — the most important day of the exhibition was on Saturday, and Aaron and Rivka had just committed to observing Shabbos.

They knew that missing the exhibition was akin to business suicide. But they had made a commitment in their hearts to observe Shabbos. Was their recent commitment strong enough to prevail against this dramatic test? Did they have the strength to persevere?

Aaron (Anthony) and Rivka had each spent years searching for meaning within Eastern religions before finding each other and the truth of Judaism at a Shabbos table in Tzefat and at a subsequent seminar in Yerushalayim sponsored by the Arachim organization.

Following that trip in 1985, they returned to their home in Edinburgh, Scotland, with a solid commitment to become observant

but with little knowledge of how to do so. With no one to teach or guide them in the spiritual desert of Edinburgh, they reached out to Rabbi Mordechai Bamburger, who headed a community *kollel* in the city of Glasgow. Two hours away from them, the city was home to a small *frum* community. Aaron and Rivka began traveling to his home each Shabbos, finding both a knowledgeable *rav* to answer their many questions and a warm family to guide their journey.

Rivka had founded the natural-products cosmetics company Faith in Nature in 1972 as a one-woman company. She manufactured a slew of natural products, including seaweed shampoo, facial cream made from carrots, and products made from oranges, cucumbers and other items. The products were sold through retail stores under the company's label. After they met and began dating, Aaron joined the company to oversee and expand its business operations, while Rivka continued to focus on the manufacturing. They ran the company from two small stores and a connecting basement.

In the year following their return to England, Aaron and Rivka were on a steady ascent of accepting *mitzvos*. However, when they made the decision to become *shomer Shabbos*, they completely forgot about the Natural Products Show, scheduled for several months later in Brighton, on the south coast of England.

The trade show attracted hundreds of manufacturers, suppliers and retail stores each year. Major agreements were signed and deals were made there. Each year, Faith in Nature typically received orders representing a large portion of their income at the event. The convention was critical both for driving sales and for building and maintaining relationships with customers.

The exhibition ran from Friday afternoon through Sunday morning. In a typical year, Aaron and Rivka packed up their samples on the Wednesday prior, drove the seven hours to Brighton on Thursday and set up their booth on Friday morning before the event opened.

But that year as the date of the event loomed close, Aaron and Rivka were torn between the reality of the need to attend and the importance of their commitment to their observance.

“We went back and forth. We said, ‘Let’s just do the exhibition and then we’ll keep Shabbos afterwards.’ Then we thought that we had just decided to keep Shabbos, we had just made this commitment, we thought we ought to fulfill it. We knew that we would lose our deposit and would the lose money that always came in. It was always around 470 pounds,” Aaron said.

They turned to Rabbi Bamburger for advice. He did not provide a specific answer but simply told them, “You won’t lose by not going.”

As the weeks progressed, Aaron and Rivka continued to deliberate. They finally made the critical decision of their lives and decided to skip the exhibition.

They accepted the loss but felt content in knowing that they had made the correct decision. They settled in for what they expected would be a quiet Shabbos at home in Edinburgh.

Hashem had other plans.

“On the Thursday that we were supposed to be on the way down to London, a lady called the office. She said she had a natural cosmetics shop. Her normal supplier had let her down and she wanted to know if we had any cosmetics to sell her.”

Aaron told the woman that they sold their products under their own brand, but the woman said she needed products under her label only. Aaron wrote down her contact details and the items she wanted, and said he would investigate if there was any way they could help her. The order was extremely large.

As he hung up the phone, Aaron thought of one possible solution.

“A few months earlier, a company had approached us about the possibility of manufacturing items for them. We had made lots of

samples for them. They paid us but didn't want to go ahead with it. We were left with all of the samples and didn't have a use for them, so at the time I had packed them up and put them in the basement."

Aaron went downstairs. There he found dozens of boxes, filled with hundreds of samples still carefully packaged, untouched and with blank labels. He compiled a list of the items and called the woman back to see if any of them would be of use to her.

She said, "Great, I'll take it all."

Aaron nearly fell out of his seat as he heard her words. He then sat down to calculate the cost of the items.

The total: 470 pounds, the amount they earned at the trade show each year.

"That was a story that clearly taught us that you won't lose by not going. It was just as Rabbi Bamburger had said.

"This was an absolutely clear sign of the power of keeping Shabbos. We were used to working on Shabbos. That was one of our biggest tests. As a manufacturer we didn't have to sell, but we were always busy making things. We could not imagine how we could stop working. How in five days of working could we make as much as on six days?"

Aaron said they never heard from the woman again. Hashem had sent her at just that moment, just when she was needed, to give them a clear verification of the correctness of their decision.

From the episode, they also learned an unambiguous lesson about the source of their income — Hashem decides to the last pound how much money they will receive each year, and He dictates the exact source of that income. The decision, which at first seemed to be a tremendous risk, in fact taught them a critical message: the only way to properly earn one's income is by following, and not flaunting, Hashem's rules.

Faith in Nature has long outgrown its office in the Rose home

and its warehouse in their basement. It now has a staff of 50 and a factory of 26,000 square feet. The company exports to 20 international markets (including to the USA under the Ahold Group name).

The Gemara (*Shabbat* 119a) records: Rebbi asked Rabi Yishmael bar Rabbi Yosi to identify which spiritual merits provide wealth to Jews in various locations. Among his answers was honoring Shabbos.

Such has been the merit of Aaron and Rivka Rose. They struggled in the early days of their commitment to Shabbos. On one side stood the absolute beauty of the day and their eagerness to uphold their decision to observe its rules. On the other side they could not understand how they could survive without working on it.

But when they gathered up their courage and commitment to their observance, they overcame the daunting challenge. Through doing so, they beautified the day of Shabbos, and they continue to do so each week. They have been guided through other tests by the critical message of that first hurdle — make the correct choice, and Hashem will take care of the rest.

First appeared in *The Jewish Press*.

More stories like this can be read in *Homeward Bound: Inspiring Stories of Return* by Rabbi Michael Gros (Feldheim Distribution).

Honoring Shabbos with Chatzos

Azriela Jaffe

*It is a mitzvah to always remember Shabbos every day
and never to forget it nor confuse it with another day ...
This is an important tenet of faith in Hashem.*

(Ramban Parshos Yisro 20:8)

In 2008, when I took on the commitment of being entirely ready for Shabbos by *chatzos* (midday) each Friday, there was no one in my life — friend, husband or rabbi — who thought this was a smart idea. “You’re so busy already, how are you going to manage that? Who can possibly be ready for Shabbos by midday every week?” I set out on my adventure anyway, and nine years later, I expect, *b’ezras Hashem*, to be ready for Shabbos by *chatzos* all the rest of my life. Here’s why:

The seeds for this new commitment were planted in me one Friday morning. My children did not look forward to Erev Shabbos. Friday was correlated with Shabbos chores. One morning, my then eleven-year-old daughter, Elana, groaned, “Oy, tonight is Shabbos. I wish it wasn’t Shabbos!” She quickly clarified — it was the cleaning she dreaded, not Shabbos, but still, it hurt my heart. For my kids’ sake, I had to disconnect Erev Shabbos from cleaning.

During this time, I read about the practice some Jews have of embellishing a mitzvah as a *zechus* for a personal need. Although my children were then ages 9, 11, and 13, all of the “*shidduch* crisis” ar-

ticles and letters to the editor were weighing on my mind. The idea formulated in my mind: I'll be ready for Shabbos by *chatzos* every week, and when I am, I'll ask Hashem that this extra mitzvah be a *zechus* for *shidduchim* for my children.

Lest you think I just continued my normal Shabbos practices but crammed all the activities in before noon, that would have been impossible. To pull it off, I had to spread out my Shabbos prep and cleaning all week long. Motzei Shabbos and Sunday became times for menu planning, grocery shopping, and baking *challah* or deserts for the following week. I would make one or two dishes for Shabbos each day of the week so that all Shabbos cooking was done by Thursday. We did all of the household cleaning for Shabbos on Wednesday and Thursday. My husband loves coming home from work on Thursday evening with the table set for Shabbos, and the house in Shabbos-mode. In the early days of *chatzos*, I spent Friday morning with last-minute cleaning and food preparation. As I got well practiced in the *chatzos* approach to Shabbos, eventually I moved up all of my preparations to be finished on Thursday night. When we go to sleep on Thursday night, the table is set, the food is prepared, the candles are ready for lighting, the house is clean, and our home is waiting for Shabbos, instead of racing into Shabbos like a *shmatta* on Friday night.

Only Hashem knows if there is indeed a correlation between our great *mazal*, as we joyously walked each of our daughters to the *chuppah* at the age of 19. I have since learned how to use the principles of *chatzos* to prepare for *yamim tovim* with greater organization and calm, and it has been many years since anyone in our family can even remember the old days, when we were frantic on Friday afternoon. *chatzos* is a way of life, and one I will never waiver from.

It was my distinct privilege and pleasure to speak about *chatzos* to hundreds of women around the world in the past ten years, and to

establish a website, www.chatzos.com, to teach other women about the beauty of this practice.

I no longer wake up on Friday mornings and say to myself “Oy, it’s Friday.” Rather, I go into Shabbos greeting the Shabbos Queen with calm instead of chaos, and joy instead of *oy*. I began this practice offering *chatzos* readiness as a gift to Hashem, to honor His Shabbos. In turn, *chatzos* has gifted me with an approach to Shabbos preparations that eases my mind, organizes my life, and gives Hashem honor for His Shabbos. What better way can I express my *hakoras hatov* for all that Hashem has blessed me and our family with over my lifetime? Each week, I get the opportunity to do it again.

You can reach the author at: chatzoslady@gmail.com.

An Otherworldly Shabbos

Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz

And the way to sing the song of joy is by seeking the good in all people, especially in our selves. Each good point is one more note in the song of life.

(Rebbe Nachman of Breslov)

The change from being a classically trained chef in Manhattan to being a dairy farmer on Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu was so drastic that the implications of leading a religious lifestyle were easily ignored as just one of the trappings I had adopted when changing continents. I had changed languages, careers, and so many other important things, the religious “stuff” had no greater significance. For five years, I was able to convince myself this was true, while I happily went through the motions of Shabbat, *kashrut*, and the holidays. Even prayer was a nice ritual, a socially accepted method of goldbricking, avoiding work while still getting brownie points in the community.

But after five years, the muck that I had ignored in the depths of my soul rebelled, making me uncomfortable in the kibbutz that had become my home and family. I simply couldn't stay. I knew that I couldn't go on living a lie. I had to either get serious about my soul and my religion or kick it away. I chose the latter. With about one hundred dollars in my pocket, I took my *kippa* off my head and set off to build a new life.

I went to live with an army buddy in Jerusalem, finding a cooking job with enough hours to allow me to hide from myself and from anyone who might come looking. To my utter astonishment, someone did.

The restaurant was on Ushiskin Road, right near Nachlaot. Leah Glazer, a young lady I remembered as a cute hippie chick who liked the cows, called me one day. She got my number from a concerned kibbutz friend who told her I needed friends in the city and Leah lived in Nachalaot. Leah was now very religious, married to a rabbi, and had just given birth to her first child, a little girl. She insisted on coordinating her afternoon walks with the baby so they would coincide with my afternoon breaks. My soul was trying to hide, but it wasn't so far gone that a baby's smile couldn't reach it. Those afternoon breaks seemed odd to me, since I couldn't imagine why a happily married ultra-Orthodox woman, even a former acquaintance, would go out of her way to connect. But she did. And as much as a part of me tried to reject this human contact, I found myself enjoying it, even looking forward to her visits.

Her husband was an enigma to me. I had never interacted with Jews who wore black. He was a rabbi at a yeshiva, and since "Rabbi" was a job description and I had no money to pay, I didn't want to take his time. I wasn't sure what Leah wanted from me, and I certainly didn't trust her husband. So when they invited me for Shabbat lunch, I did a quick calculation in my head how much it would cost them and bought a bottle of wine that would offset the cost. After all, there was nothing else I had to offer them.

At the appointed time, I walked to their small apartment and was shocked to find a long table full of shiny young yeshiva men in nice suits. Yom Tov had invited some of his students, newly religious but diligent and enthusiastic. They were post-college and had taken a break from their career-oriented agenda to explore their Jewish

roots. I felt like a gorilla at a cocktail party — too old, too unsuccessful, and already jaded from my five-year stint at Judaism.

But Yom Tov sat me at his side, acting as if we were long-lost friends. And the other men were far too cognizant of the laws of modesty to engage Leah in conversation. Somehow, against my better judgment, I became a regular guest.

Except for my weekly dose of gastronomic Judaism, my plan to become secular was moving along nicely. I was literally working seven days a week, locking up the kitchen a few moments before the Shabbat siren, and heading off to open the restaurant well before three stars appeared. Judaism was a luxury, and I didn't have time to search for the remnants of my soul in the mess of my psyche.

And then I got fired. In my flight from religion, I had found the only kosher restaurant in Jerusalem owned by a left-wing fanatic. She liked that I was rejecting the religion, but my very presence in the kitchen was too painful a reminder of Benjamin Netanyahu's last-minute miracle victory over Shimon Peres. Excuses and apologies were made, but the reality was clear: I was not one of them.

When I joined the Glazers for Shabbat lunch, I was their only guest. I explained that I was now unemployed, and Yom Tov responded in a way that illustrated how our perceptions of reality differed in essential ways. He was overjoyed.

"Since you aren't working after Shabbat, you can come with me to Mincha!" he exclaimed. My experience of the Sabbath afternoon prayer at the kibbutz had not prepared me for his enthusiasm. Fifteen minutes of mumbling was nothing to get excited about. It was dead winter and Shabbat ended early, so shortly after clearing the table, we walked to the Pinsk Carlin Shul in Meah Shearim.

Dingy on the outside, the inside of the shul had been garishly decorated. Walking in was certainly one of the strangest experiences of my life. My Hebrew was fluent, but here, in the heart of

Jerusalem, not a word of Hebrew was spoken. Only Yiddish. I was a tiny dot of color adrift in a sea of black. Yom Tov disappeared into the crowd and suddenly the murmurs of the crowd pressing in around me ratcheted up to a focused roar, signaling the beginning of prayer time. My attempts to pray were lost, as I had no point of reference in my five years on kibbutz. I comforted myself by saying that this was an act of courtesy that amounted to no more than a small detour on my way out of the religion.

Suddenly, as quickly as it began, it was over. The crowd ran around, every person seeming to know his appointed task. Chairs disappeared, replaced by long tables covered in gleaming white tablecloths. The younger Chasidim began to roll heavy, three-tiered bleachers into place, turning the head of the table, set with absurdly garish silver utensils, into home plate. For all I knew, the Chasidic world series was about to begin. A young boy with the wispy beginnings of a beard grabbed my elbow and led me on a perilous climb up the side of the swaying bleachers. I was wedged in by black suits, a stranger in a truly strange land, searching for a way out.

The *rebbe* hobbled out, bringing an instant silence to the large room. He launched into a long rambling speech of which I understood not a word, though the men around me were spellbound. As the speech wore on, I realized that there were no lights in the larger room and the tall windows set high in the wall were growing steadily darker as the afternoon wore on.

Finally, I was standing in the dark, anonymous bodies pressing in on me from all sides. At the point when the room was as dark as it could possibly be, the *rebbe's* speech suddenly ended. No one moved and it was clear that everyone was waiting, though being lost in time and space, I had no idea what to expect. A gentle voice floated up from below and suddenly the crowd was singing, a rolling tune with no words. The crowd began to sway, and with little choice, I joined in.

I admit that I was tired, but the experience of the music flowing over me was real, like standing in shallow surf and having the waves wash past. I envisioned myself as a point in my life's timeline, with infinite threads of possibility branching out into the endless space that lay ahead. No job, normally a terrifying reality, meant I was free to take any job. Or not. No religion meant I was free to relate to God in any manner I chose. Or not at all. Language was a variable, changing with place and time. Visions of possibility flowed across my closed eyes as I felt the bleachers sway under my feet. At one point, the experience grew to be too much for me, yet it went on, and I suddenly realized that even that was fine, actually the best of all possibilities.

A small point of soft light suddenly appeared. It was followed by ten other points, and then by twenty more. The enormous multi-tiered chandelier high up in the center of the room began to fill with light. I was swept down off the bleachers and, once again, I was surrounded by a loud jumble of prayer. But this time I prayed as well, repeating the one line of *Shema* over and over until it no longer made sense. The prayers ended as quickly as they began and I was pushed out onto the street like Jonah, exhausted, a fugitive compelled to heed the unmistakable will of his Creator. But unlike Jonah, I knew not in which direction Nineveh lay.

I felt someone take my hand and I looked over to see Yom Tov smiling at me. "Havdallah," he said. "It's time to return to the real world."

And yet, I wondered.

Adam Eliyhau Berkowitz now lives in Katsrin with his wife and family. He is the author of the novel *The Hope Merchant*

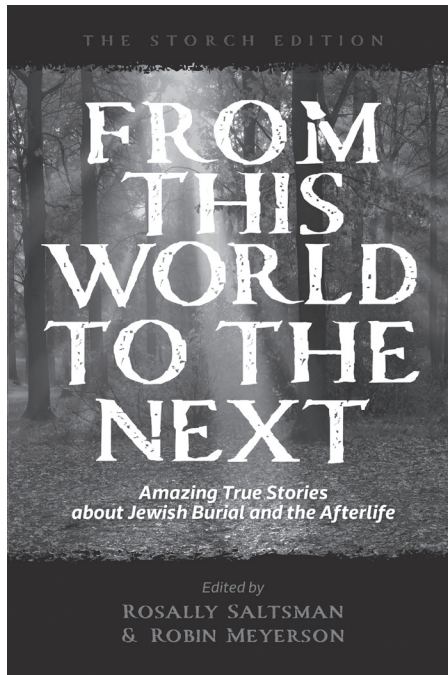
[<http://www.amazon.com/The-Hope-Merchant-Every-Purchase/dp/188192730X>] and the soon to be published collection of short stories *Dolphins on the Moon*.

For Further Reading:

Friday Night and Beyond: The Shabbat Experience Step-by-Step, Lori Palatnik

The Shabbos Companion, Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. (Artscroll)

Other books by Rosally Saltsman and Robin Meyerson:



Available at:

<https://www.nasck.org/product/from-this-world-to-the-next-amazing-true-stories-about-jewish-burial-and-the-afterlife/>

About the Artist

YORAM RAANAN is one of Israel's most successful contemporary Jewish artists today. Inspired by the land of Israel's beauty, heritage and people, Raanan's art has brought him international acclaim. He currently has paintings on exhibit at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Jerusalem, the Wolfson Museum of Jewish Art in Jerusalem, and in museums, galleries and private collections around the world. Raanan's paintings are an expression of Jewish collective consciousness, and contain a strong sense of light, depth color and spirituality. His work often reflects the Bible, nature, and the Land of Israel.

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Glossary of Hebrew, Yiddish and Aramaic Terms

- A"h – *Alav/aleiha hashalom*, May he/she rest in peace
- Adar – The sixth month in the Hebrew calendar
- Aliyah – Immigration to Israel; also the honor of being called to the Torah
(lit., ascent)
- Aron Kodesh – Ark where Torah scrolls are kept in a synagogue
- Avraham Avinu – Our father (patriarch) Abraham
- Avrech – A man learning in *kollel*
- Ba'al Teshuvah (Ba'alei Teshuvah) – A returnee to Judaism
- Baruch Hashem – May God be blessed (Thank God)
- Bat Melech – Daughter of the King, Princess
- Bechor – Firstborn
- Bedekken – Part of the wedding ceremony where the groom covers his
bride's face with her veil
- Beis Hamikdash – The Temple
- Bentcher – Booklet containing the Grace after Meals
- Bentch licht– Light Shabbat candles
- Besamim – Spices used during *Havdallah* to revive the spirit after the end
of Shabbos
- Bete'avon – Bon Appetit!
- B'ezras Hashem – God-willing
- Bikur cholim – The mitzvah of visiting the sick; also an organization to
help families dealing with illness, God forbid
- Bima – Platform where the Torah is read
- Bimheira B'yameinu – Soon and in our days

- Bnei Akiva – Name of a youth group
- Bracha – Blessing
- Brit/bris – Circumcision ceremony
- Chareidi – Ultra-Orthodox
- Chatzos – Midday or night
- Chayal – Soldier
- Cheder – Boys' elementary school
- Chesed – Kindness
- Chiloni/t – Secular person
- Chillul Shabbos – Desecrating Shabbos
- Chizuk – Support, strengthening
- Cholent – A meat stew cooked overnight. Also called Hamin. It prepares you well for a Shabbos nap.
- Chumash – The Five Books of Moses, the Torah
- Chuppa – Wedding canopy/ceremony
- Datiim – Religious people
- Davening – Praying
- Der heim – Home (country)
- Dosh – Threshing, one of the 39 types of work prohibited on Shabbos
- Dvar Torah/Divrei Torah – Torah thoughts
- Eliyahu Hanavi – Elijah the Prophet
- Eretz Yisrael – The (biblically defined) Land of Israel
- Erev – Eve
- Erev Shabbos – Friday/Friday night
- Eruv – A closing off of a domain, turning it from public to private by enclosing it in some way
- Eshet Chayil – Woman of Valor; a song sung in honor of the Jewish woman
Friday nights (Proverbs 31: 10-31)
- Frum – Religious
- Gabbai – Synagogue manager
- Garin – Lit., seed; a group
- Gehinnom – purgatory
- Gematria – Jewish numerology where letters are assigned numbers

Hachnosos Orchim – Welcoming guests

Hachnassat Sefer Torah – Dedication ceremony of a new Torah scroll

Haftarah – Portion from the Prophets read each week following the Torah reading

HaKadosh Baruch Hu – He who Is Holy; God

Hakarat Hatov – Gratitude (Lit., recognizing the good)

Halacha – Jewish law

Halachic – Pertaining to Jewish law

Hashem – God; lit., the name

Hamotzi – Blessing made over bread (on Shabbat *challah*)

Havdallah – The prayer said at the end of Shabbat

Hesder – A program in which soldiers in the IDF combine yeshiva study with army service for a period of five years instead of three

Heym – Home (usually used to refer to home country)

Ima – Mother

In shidduchim – Dating for marriage

Kabbalat Shabbat – A series of prayers and songs welcoming the Sabbath

Kaddish – A prayer said in praise of God and in memory of the dead

Kal Vachomer – By exegesis

Kashrus/kashrut – Keeping kosher

Kedusha/s – Holiness

Ken Yirbu – May they multiply

Kiddush – Blessing over wine made before Shabbat meals

Kiddush Hashem – Sanctifying God's name

Kippa – Skullcap

Kiruv – Bringing closer; drawing people closer to Judaism

Kodesh/Kadosh – Holy

Kollel– A yeshiva for married men

Kotel – The Western Wall

Lecha Dodi – To my Beloved, a prayer welcoming the Sabbath

Lechem HaPanim – The showbread in the Temple

Leil Shabbos – Friday night

Leviasan – A sea creature that will be served during Messianic Times

- Lichvod Shabbos – In honor of Shabbos
- Licht – Lights
- L'Shem Shamayim – For the honor of Heaven
- Maasim Tovim – Good deeds
- Maidelah – Girl, used as a term of endearment
- Mamale – A term of endearment
- Maris Ayin – A mistaken bad impression
- Mashiach – The Messiah
- Mazal – Fortune/astrological sign
- Matzah – Unleavened bread
- Mechitza – Partition separating men and women in *shul* or at certain social events
- Mekaddesh – To sanctify
- Melacha/ Melocha – Work; one of 39 types of creative work prohibited on Shabbat
- Messirus Nefesh – Self-sacrifice
- Menorah – Seven-candle candelabra
- Mezuzah/ot – A case containing verses from the Torah put on doorposts for protection
- Midda k'neged midda – lit., measure for measure; what goes around comes around
- Midrash – Allegorical interpretation
- Mincha –The afternoon prayer
- Minyan – Quorum of ten men needed for certain prayers
- Mishkan – Tabernacle
- Mitzvah/Mitzvoth – Commandment/s, good deed/s
- Mizmor l'David – Psalm 23, usually sung at the third Shabbos meal
- Moshe Rabbeinu – Moses our Teacher
- Motzei Shabbat – The night following Shabbat
- Muktzeh – Something not permissible to touch on Shabbat
- Mussar – Ethical teachings
- Neshama/ot – Soul/s
- Nigun – Melody, usually Chassidic or liturgical

Orchim – Guests

Ossur/Assur – Forbidden

Parnassa – Livelihood

Parsha – Torah Portion

Pesach – Passover

Potchke – Mess around

Rav – Rabbi

Reb – a variation of rabbi, but it could also be used as a term of respect for an ordinary person

Rebbe – Chassidic Rabbi or teacher

Rebbetzin – The wife of a rabbi; a learned woman

Rehov – Street

Ribbon Shel Olam – Master of the Universe

R”L – Rachmana Litzlan, Aramaic for May God save us

Rosh Chodesh – The beginning of the Hebrew month

Sefer Torah – Torah scroll (pl. Sifrei Torah)

Seudah/Seudas – Meal, one of three Shabbos meals

Seudah Shlishit – The third Shabbat meal

Shabbat/Shabbos – The Sabbath, Saturday

Shabbat Shalom/Gut Shabbos — A peaceful Shabbos/ A good Shabbos

Shabbaton – An organized, fun Shabbat event

Shabbosdik/g – Befitting Shabbos

Shabbos goy – A non-Jew permitted, under certain circumstances, to do an act forbidden to a Jew on Shabbos

Shachar – Dawn (also a name)

Shacharis/t – The morning prayer

Shabbat Shuva – The Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Shadchan (Shadchanit) – Matchmaker

Shalosh Seudos – The third Shabbos meal

Shemittah – The seventh year of a seven-year cycle in which no agricultural work is done to allow the land to lie fallow

Shidduch – Arranged match

Shiva – a seven-day mourning period

Shmatta –Rag
Shomer/shomeret – Guard or keeper of
Shmiras/shomrei – Keeper/s of
Shuk – Market
Shul – Synagogue
Siddur – Prayer book
Sofer – Scribe
Sukkah – A structure built for the holiday of Sukkoth where families eat
and sleep
Taharas Hamishpachah – Laws of family purity
Tallis/eisim – Prayer shawl(s)
Talmid Chacham – Torah scholar
Tatty – Father
Tchum – A delineated area
Tefillin– Phylacteries
Tehillim – Book of Psalms. Psalms are recited during prayer, during times
of crisis or danger, for someone who's sick or in labor, when you have a
few minutes ...
Tichel – Scarf (worn by married women as a religious head covering)
Tishrei – First month of the Jewish year
Tzidkanios – Holy women
Tzitzit – A fringed garment
Ulpana – A religious girls' high school
Umevorach/Umevorechet – And blessed
Va'ad Bayit – (Apartment) House committee
Yahrzeit – The Hebrew date commemorating someone's death
Yamim Noraim – The High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur and
the days in between)
Yerushalayim – Jerusalem
Yeshiva – A school of Jewish learning
Yidden – Jews
Yiddishkeit – Judaism (in Yiddish)
Yom Tov – Holiday; pl. Yamim Tovim

Zaidy – Grandfather

Zechus/zechut – Merit

Zemirot/Zemiros – Shabbos Songs

Z”l – Zichrono Livracha, May his memory be for a blessing

Zt”l – Zecher Tzaddik Livracha, May the Tzaddik’s memory be for a blessing

Zohar – Book of Kabbalistic thought