



Just One Shabbos

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E12)

A story can help us go where we want to go. For that, you need two ingredients, a goal, and a story.

The power of dedication¹

Much has been written about the spiritual bravery of Jews during the inferno of World War II. Among the many heroes of the spirit was the Klausenberger Rebbe, whose dedication to Hashem while suffering the travails of Iyov helps us define the term עבד ה' – servant of Hashem. Volumes have been written describing his selfless dedication to serving Hashem and his fellow Jews and many more can and should be written.

Learn from the spiritually vibrant

There is much to be gained from those who never said no to their soul's yearning for dedication to Hashem.

There are many books that describe the destruction, but never enough that detail the triumph of the נשמה.

Far more can be learned by studying the fire of faith that burned in their hearts than from recounting the fire that consumed their bodies.

The first שבת

It was the first Shabbos after the liberation of Jews from the torment and torture of the concentration camps in 1945. Survivors had been sent to various D.P. (Displaced Persons) camps. In the Feldafing camp near Munich, the Klausenberger Rebbe, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam (1905-1994), was going through the camp calling out to people, "Men geit firren Shabbos (We will conduct Shabbos)." The Rebbe knew that the most vital step in liberation is freeing the spirit to relate to Hashem properly.

The heavenly gift called restoration of the dead souls began in that room.

Most people viewed him scornfully. How could anyone be interested in Shabbos or any aspect of Yiddishkeit after what they had suffered? People had nothing but the shabby clothes on their emaciated bodies. The Rebbe had lost his wife and 10 children (he did not yet know that his 11th child had survived but had succumbed to illness in a D.P. camp). Many thought that if he could still feel an affinity towards the Almighty, so be it, but it was not for them. They were too angry and too embittered to even think about observing a Shabbos or performing Mitzvos.²

¹ Heard from Rabbi Nosson Mueller, the Menahel of Yeshiva Toras Emes in Brooklyn.

² Years later the Rebbe reported, 'After the great devastation of our generation, many thought, at first, that Yahadus had become extinct. When I was liberated at Feldafing, where they designated a room



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Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

Offer warm food and they will come

The Rebbe saw there was not much interest. He played a card which has been played for ages to encourage people to participate in spiritual events: he told them that they would be treated to warm food on Shabbos. That works well in most circles but was especially true for the famished survivors. To make good on this promise the Rebbe located some beans and potatoes and had someone cook them so they would be ready for the Shabbos morning seudah.

A long table was set up for those who would come to the Friday-night seudah. Barely a minyan came to daven, but, as the Rebbe predicted, there were close to 50 people at the table for some warm food.

Two worlds meet

The broken people who had gathered were just waiting for the food, but the Rebbe was deeply involved in the spirit of Shabbos. The contrast between those sitting around the table and the Rebbe was striking. The Rebbe had entered eternity and they were stuck in their present misfortune.

Started with שלום עליכם

for davening, a group of sincere youths attached themselves to me and, together, we cleaned it up and readied the room for use as a Beis Midrash. There were, however, others who were opposed to this, complaining that we were inciting another potential Hitler (G-d forbid). In addition, when we had begun to put up Chuppahs to conduct weddings, some Jewish folks pelted us with stones. In the end, Boruch Hashem, we prevailed. A spirit of teshuva came from

They watched as the Rebbe began singing שלום עליכם. He was filled with deep emotion as he welcomed the peaceful, holy angels. Those angels would now replace the angels of death that had stalked, plagued, and overtaken His people throughout the preceding years. Two or three people meekly joined him in song while the others stood around, heads uncovered, unmoved. The Rebbe bid farewell to the angels of peace. Those angels had brought with them a glow of Shabbos that had not been experienced in what seemed like forever.

רבון כל העולמים

Then the Rebbe began chanting the prayer רבון ארון כל. When he came to the words, כל העולמים – Master of all souls, he was beside himself with grief. He allowed himself to experience the torrent of anguish for the countless lost souls, during what would later be termed the Holocaust. He had seen the deaths of thousands. Yet, now, in what seemed like an unbelievable affirmation of faith to those who were present, he turned to His Creator, 'the Blessed King, who redeems and rescues.' He continued the Tefilah, 'I gratefully thank You, Hashem for all the kindness You have done with me...'

above, which inspired a great many Jews who we had thought were beyond reach We may not have possessed any great tzaddikim who could revive us with a tal shel techia (dew of life). It came straight from heaven in a wondrous way.' (Jewish Observer Nov 1994 p.12 Translated by Yisroel Yehuda Pollack)



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The heavenly gift called restoration of the dead souls began in the room. Some people wiped tears from their eyes. Here was a man who suffered so much thanking Hashem for His kindness. His belief and faith were incomprehensible! But the Rebbe carried on with the moving words — and carried some of the people with him.

'Please, O King, instruct Your angels to consider me with mercy.' He then recited the words in which the petitioner presents his merit for making this request:

כי הדלקתי נרותי והצעתי מטתי – 'For I have kindled my lights and made my bed.' And lifting his hands up to Heaven, the Rebbe interrupted himself, and began speaking to directly to his Creator: 'Holy Creator, I say just the opposite, הדלקת מטתי – You have burned my family, my wife, and my children – yet still, הצעתי נרותי, I will set my candles, because Holy Creator, I believe in You and Your ways.'

Setting the candle

The Rebbe allowed his pain to emerge in prayer before Hashem and he repeated his inversion of the original prayer. As Shlomo HaMelech writes, נר ה' נשמת אדם – A man's soul is the candle of Hashem.³ The Rebbe affirmed that he would reset Hashem's candle on many levels.

Takeaway: I will try to mark this Shabbos as though it is not another Shabbos, but my first Shabbos.

Not only would he rebuild his family, but he would rebuild his community.

The miracle of restoration

By now almost everyone in the room was crying with him. It was only one Shabbos, but the experience of that Friday night re-opened the door to faith for many of the people who were present. They and their children and grandchildren who would be born in the years ahead would emerge as observant Jews from the spark that was ignited at that Shabbos table.

It was but one שבת

When telling this story, Rabbi Mueller concluded with the suggestion that this transformation is hinted at in the Posuk ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת – The Children of Israel shall observe *the* Shabbos. It is written in singular, one Shabbos, for when one Shabbos is kept with such intensity and inspiration, it will lead to לעשות את השבת לדורותם – the Shabbos being kept for generations.⁴

This Friday night when you say the words, כי הדלקתי נרותי והצעתי מטתי, try to connect to how the Rebbe said them that Friday night in the Feldafing D.P. camp. Many in that era *died* על קידוש השם – for the sanctification of His Name. We who live in free countries with limitless opportunities should make it our life's goal to *live* to sanctify His Name.

³ משלי כ: כז

⁴ שמות לא: טז-יז