



Discover the Joy of Shabbos

Explore the deeper meaning of the Zemiros, Tefillos and Hanhagos of Shabbos.



The Reward of Return

By HaRav Paysach Krohn (Shiur E2)

Adapted by Ephraim D. Becker

Shabbos is an opportunity to refresh our tired souls. Have you thought of Shabbos as a form of Yom Kippur? An awareness of this aspect of Shabbos can unleash its power for you.

Shabbos and Teshuva

When we think of שבת, we generally think of the words rest and cessation from מלאכה, both of which are contained in the word שבת, as the Pasuk tells us that on Shabbos the Creator rested or ceased from Creating the world. But there is another thought that should come to mind when thinking of שבת, which alludes to returning or restoring something to its origin. We speak of השבת – returning a lost object, thus restoring it to its original owner. Similarly, ¹ the Pasuk highlights the fact that at the end of the bitter exile we will come back:

בַּצֹּר לְךָ וּמִצָּאוּךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים
וְשָׁבְתָה עִד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלוֹ. (דברים ד: ל)

When you are afflicted by all these sufferings at the end of days, you will return (וְשָׁבְתָה) to Hashem and you will heed His voice.

וְשָׁבְתָה עִד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ – we will be restored to our original alliance with Hashem. Again, the key word is וְשָׁבְתָה, where we can readily see the word שבת. Indeed, *Shabbos can be called not only a day of rest, but a day of returning, a day of restoring and thus a day of*

reconnecting with our original source, Hashem, and the Torah.

Shabbos and Teshuva are intimately linked. You cannot have one without the other. Shabbos lends itself to Teshuva because on Shabbos we are not resting, we are restoring.

Adam discovers Teshuva from Kayin

A fascinating Midrash² underscores this point. The Midrash reports that Adam met Kayin after the latter was sentenced for having murdered Hevel. Adam noted that Kayin did not seem broken in spirit. Indeed, his countenance was light and, seemingly, had joy. Adam could not contain his curiosity. He asked Kayin what

happened at his sentencing? Kayin responded עֲשִׂיתִי תְשׁוּבָה וְנִתְפַּשְׁרָתִי – I did Teshuva and I received a commuted (compromised or halved) sentence. Adam struck his head in shock and disbelief at how he could not have known that there was a force in the world such as Teshuva!

The Midrash concludes that, upon making this great discovery, Adam proclaimed the

chapter of Tehillim known as שִׁיר לַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת! The discovery of Teshuva led him to Shabbos. The connection, once again, is absolute. Shabbos is newsworthy in that it informs us that a person, though steeped in physicality, can transcend and touch eternity. So, too, is Teshuva newsworthy in that a man steeped in

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¹ בשם החיד"א בנחל קידומים

² בראשית רבה כב אות יג



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error and misdirection, can return to the correct path, and restore his relationship with his Source.

A Story Connecting Shabbos and Teshuva

A man named Jacobo Sherem from Mexico told me his remarkable story during one of his learning visits to Lakewood. By way of background, Jacobo is a highly regarded Mexican architect who would design and build buildings, sell them, and use the proceeds to build even larger buildings, to sell them as well. In the beginning of 1985, he completed a magnificent edifice in downtown Mexico City, but he had to take a large mortgage to complete the project and, as a result, he had difficulty finding a buyer.

At the same time, Jacobo began becoming more involved religiously. He had begun studying with R' Shia Deutch in a Kollel in his neighborhood called the Aram Tzoba Kollel. R' Shia encouraged him to start coming to shul on Friday nights. He was not yet observant, but he was starting out on the road by attending Davening on Friday night. This he did for two weeks running and the next step was a turning point for his religious life. He was about to endure a test of his newfound religious commitment.

On the following Thursday two people from overseas came to discuss a purchase of the building with him. The meeting on Thursday carried on to Friday and while the prospective buyers seemed interested, they were conducting a very, perhaps overly, thorough inspection of the building and the legal and financial paperwork associated with it. Jacobo noticed the hour was getting late, and he did not want to miss going to shul on Friday night. He politely told the men that their inspections and negotiations would have to conclude by 3 pm as he would be leaving at that time. They would

be welcome to pick it up again after the weekend. The men told him, "We are traveling back tomorrow. It must be completed today." They knew how desperate Jacobo was for a buyer, and they indeed felt they had the upper hand. With just an hour left until shul, Jacobo apologized and indicated that he must leave, inviting them, once again, to come back after the weekend. They told him, "Absolutely not, we're leaving tomorrow. No deal."

While he was resolute at the time, went home and got ready to go to shul, he began questioning his decision when reviewing it with his wife later that evening. "Have I lost my mind? True, I've gone a couple of weeks in a row to shul. But what would have been so bad if I missed once? Imagine, we could have sold that building. I would then go back to shul next week and start again fresh." The doubts plagued him even as a core part of him knew that his decision to prioritize Shabbos over business was the right one.

It would not be long before the matter would be clarified for him absolutely. Two weeks later, on September 19th, 1985, Mexico City experienced the worst earthquake in its history. Nearly all the buildings in downtown Mexico were leveled, but Jacobo's building was standing, a testimony to the Providence that gave him the know-how to build advanced earthquake resistance into the plans. It did not take long for the government to realize that they needed space to operate and companies large and small were desperate for office space. Jacobo was able to rent out every inch of space at top rental prices. Not long thereafter he sold the building for a price higher than he could have imagined and was thereby transformed into a wealthy man.



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Jacobo went on to become a fully observant Jew. And while it was common knowledge that he had sold the building, no one knew the details until he made his first Siyum Masechet which he finished with R' Shia Deutch. At the Siyum he shared this story and even showed aerial photos of Mexico City highlighting the devastation and the single standing building.

Shabbos and Teshuva are intimate, inseparable friends.

Takeaway: I will try to see Shabbos as not just an opportunity to rest but to restore my soul in Teshuva.



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