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Discover the Joy  
of Shabbos

## A Story of Mesiras Nefesh

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E34)

*The preciousness of Shabbos is, of course, related to the price one is prepared to pay to observe it.*

### *Precious Shabbos from a Precious Source*

This story is very close to my heart given that the protagonist of the story is my late, revered mother, Mrs. Hindy Krohn, ע"ה. She wrote this story in her book, *The Way it Was* (Artscroll) where she talks about growing up in Jewish Philadelphia in the 1920's and 1930's.

The story would be a testimony to anyone's relationship with Shabbos, but to get its proper impact one should bear in mind that there was no בית יעקב in Philadelphia in those years, and that my mother was but sixteen years old at the time of the story.

She was schooled in the public schools, but she was educated in her parents' home where she imbibed the values of a true daughter of Israel. The depth of that חינוך will become evident when you think about the story.

### *Everyone needed a job*

In the early 30's, after the Great Depression, there was a need for everyone to have a job. Few people had the luxury to afford higher education and young people went to work very young. At sixteen, my mother ע"ה had the training needed to get a job as a bookkeeper in Mr. Stein's company. Given the job market, Mr. Stein could afford to choose the best and the brightest and my mother ע"ה qualified. She was as tenacious

as she was bright and whatever she chose to do she pursued without holding back.

The first weeks went well as she was hired in the summer when שקיעה allowed one to work until 6:30pm every day, including Friday, without jeopardizing Shabbos. She had time to make the hour-and-a-half trek home on the trolleys and arrive before candle lighting.

But long days do not last and as the season changed it became increasingly difficult to finish her work and get home in time.

*Until there was just no time*

The tension over leaving early on Friday was brought to the boiling point one Friday when Mr. Stein walked over to her desk, pointed at the mountain of work that sat waiting for her and asked, in his less-than-gentle way, "Edith, how long are you going to be here today?"

When she promised to do her best but that she needs to get home for Shabbos, he said (demanded would describe it more accurately), "You can stay until 3:30 and you will be able to finish the work." And with that he stalked off and walked out of the office.

She knew that this was a mission impossible. The math did not add up. Candle lighting was at 4:18 that afternoon.

*He muttered, half  
under his breath,  
"sometimes you can  
learn something  
even from a kid."*



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### *Trial and Failure?*

She began to plan her commute home. She knew which trolley she needed to take to the stop not far from her home. She would walk home from there. Knowing that it would already be Shabbos by then she stored her purse in the office, taking only one trolley token with her so that she would not carry past שקיעה. She could lose her job, but she would not lose Shabbos.

But the expected trolley did not come as expected. She realized that she needed a Plan B. But this plan was far more radical than the first. She would run home. She had two good feet and six brothers who had taught her how to use them as a boy would, to run like the wind. But first she had to get rid of the token. And just as she knew how to run with her feet, she knew how to throw with a strong arm. She pitched the token like a pro into the distance and said, "this one is for you, הקב"ה." And with that she ran through the many streets of Philadelphia.

She hopes that the lady forgave her when she was bowled over by the flying Edith, dropping her packages. And she made it home.

### *A mother saves the day*

As she entered her home the reality began to set in that she had missed the entry of שבת קודש. Her father (my namesake) ע"ה had already left for Shul. And when she saw her mother, she thought she would burst into tears. But her mother was a wise woman, and she took her daughter into her arms. She let the wonderful aroma and

atmosphere of Shabbos fill the moment of her daughter's pain. She assured my mother ע"ה that she figured that she had to walk. There were no hard feelings, only the love and warmth of שבת קודש. As has been the case so many times in our history, a wise mother saved the day.

They enjoyed a beautiful Shabbos for which Edith had sacrificed so much, even knowing that her choice could cost her job.

### *A different week*

Nothing went according to plan when she went back to work. She expected to be fired first thing Monday morning, but she was not. Mr. Stein only asked her how long she stayed on Friday. Instead of answering directly, she told him that she stayed so long that she had to walk home for Shabbos.

Mr. Stein was incredulous. He knew the distance involved. "You walked home?!" he exclaimed. And that was the last word she heard from him all week.

All week, that is, until Friday at about noon. He came over to her desk and, in terms far humbler than she had ever heard him speak before, he told her that he never wanted her to have to walk home again. She could leave two hours before candle lighting to get home. Her מסירה נפש had even touched Mr. Stein.

As he walked away from her desk he muttered to another worker, half under his breath, "sometimes you can learn something even from a kid."

**Takeaway: I will consider the price that I am prepared to pay for Shabbos.**