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Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

Eminence and Elevation through Erev Shabbos

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E15)

Erev Shabbos is a time to set the tone for Shabbos. A story can help us keep Erev Shabbos in mind.

A Rav in צפת was a Bochur in Mir

Rav Avraham Simcha HaCohen Kaplan (1911-1989) was the respected Rov of Tzfas for nearly half a century. He would often relate this story about the precious significance of preparing for Shabbos on Erev Shabbos.

When Rav Kaplan was a bochur he learned in the famous Mirer Yeshiva in Mir, Poland. At that time most of the Yeshivos were still operating on a system whereby a bochur would pay to reside by, and often eat at the home of a local family. R' Avraham Simcha got to know his hosts quite well over the course of the years that he spent in their home.

Admonishing about ערב שבת

On one Friday morning R' Avraham Simcha overheard his hostess bidding farewell to her husband who was heading out to do some shopping for Shabbos. She reminded him to be back by noon since it was Erev Shabbos.

A single reminder would likely have been more than enough given that her husband was an *ehrlicher yid* for whom Shabbos was inviolate and given that his shopping trip would not take him far from home. But she not only provided one such reminder, she also provided several, one more urgent than the next.

After her husband left, R' Avraham Simcha plucked up his courage and asked his hostess about the need to provide repeated reminders about a matter that seemed 'covered' by the facts that her husband was a careful Yid, that his trip was short, and that the day was long.

A story about ערב שבת

His hostess shared with R' Avraham Simcha the story behind her special care about ערב שבת.

She and her husband were childless for many years and with great *סעייתא דשמיא* they were blessed with a son. Soon after, however, they noticed that their newborn was not developing properly *ר"ל*.

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They went up the chain of medical experts, none of whom had very promising words to say. She finally traveled from Mir and reached the expert in the field in Vienna who gave her the grim, and seemingly final, prognosis. Their son's days were numbered.

She recalls leaving the doctor's office sobbing in the street clutching her baby in her arms. She did not even notice the impact that her sobbing was having on the street around her. But one Jew did not just turn away, he approached her and asked why she was wailing. She told her story and wept at the prospect of losing her only child.



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Go to the Chofetz Chaim

The bystander listened carefully and gave her advice: On your way back to Mir you must make a stop in Radin and seek a Brocha from the holy Chofetz Chaim. When the woman indicated that she understood that the Chofetz Chaim no longer was seeing people the bystander insisted. You must go and try.

Indeed, she made a stop in Radin and, as expected, she was turned away at the door. The Chofetz Chaim was not receiving people. Her cries upon hearing that the door to a Brocha was closed made their way to one of the attendants who inquired as to the nature of her concern. When he heard that at issue was her only long-awaited child, he brought her into the Chofetz Chaim.

A Lesson in ערב שבת

The Chofetz Chaim apologized for his inability to help. He was too old to undertake fasts on their behalf, etc. But when the attendant indicated to the Chofetz Chaim the nature of the pending tragedy the Chofetz Chaim began to speak. He told her what she must accept, and their son would be healed בעזרה.

The Chofetz Chaim gave the following prescription:

1. By midday on ערב שבת the tablecloth and candlesticks must be set on the table.
2. She must light candles per the time that is customary for הדלקת נרות.
3. Once she lights candles there is to be no more מלאכה done in the home at all; it is to be Shabbos for everyone.

Now you understand

With that background, R' Avraham Simcha understood that the stakes for his hostess were no less than the life of her only child, who began to thrive from the time they came home and undertook their new regimen for ערב שבת.

What it means to be a שומר שבת

This touching story is not just about a faraway place and time and the Brocha of a great Tzaddik. This story relates to our homes every week.

We generally associate being a שומר שבת with being cautious not to violate any of the איסורים associated with the holy day. But the word שומר implies not just guarding but anticipating. The Posuk (בראשית לז:יא) says that when Yaakov Avinu heard Yosef's dreams, ואביו שמר את הדבר, Yaakov Avinu, his father, looked forward to the fulfillment of the prophecy of Yosef's rise to greatness, מתי יבוא when will it come, as Rashi there points out.

Being a שומר שבת means *anticipating* the arrival of שבת קודש as one would look forward to the most rewarding event coming up. That creates an atmosphere of joyful anticipation that dissipates the tendency of many to step on one another's toes on ערב שבת. Setting the Shabbos table early does not just signal that one is ahead of the frantic preparation game; it invokes a spirit of שבת קודש into the home on Friday.

ערב שבת and שטן

My Rav, Rav Dovid Cohen שליט"א, suggested that when the first couple, אדם וחוה, came to



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discord on the first ערב שבת, they did not just have the world's first domestic spat. They opened the door for the שטן to get a foothold into the door of every Jewish home on ערב שבת. (He pointed out the note of the ערוך השלחן אר"ח רסב:ה who asserts, based on the Gemara גיטין נב. that the שטן has special access to disrupt on ערב שבת.) From that first ערב שבת onward we have an extra

task on our plate. We do not just have to prepare for Shabbos, we must do so in peace and harmony to provide a תיקון, a correction for that first quarrel. By carefully attending to the peaceful preparation for Shabbos we invite Shabbos, the מקור הברכה, into our homes. In the end, that which is most precious to us can well be at stake.

Takeaway: I will look for ways to help the spirit of שבת permeate my home.