



Discover the Joy of Shabbos

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



Preparing for Shabbos

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If you have ever prepared for a Simcha, for a business meeting, for the arrival of many guests, for a large purchase, or for a vacation, then you know what preparation feels like. Compare those feelings with your preparation for spirit-building moments, for reciting a Brocha, for Shabbos. How do they compare? Do you prepare for eternity?

One of the surest ways of doing a pulse-check and to know what is important to you is by seeing how much energy you invest preparing for it.

We have been speaking about the fact that Shabbos is our glimpse of eternity; it is a spiritual high-water mark in our calendar and lives, to adjust to the splendor of eternity so that our future transition into the light of a fully spiritual existence does not blind us. We can get above and beyond our temporal existence and use Shabbos to get a sense of what eternity is like. Now we turn our attention to how we can use Shabbos to check our spiritual alignment.

If you want to get to know a person (especially yourself), ask the person what he is looking forward to; what he is planning for. Sadly, in a society that has lost its moral compass, the answer will often be nothing at all. He wants everything to be good and fun, but he has no goals, is planning for nothing, and is waiting for the lottery win. But now is not the moment to bemoan the loss of striving in the modern world.

People with a plan are more alive than those without

If there is an answer, you will notice a spark in his eyes, a thoughtful look, a focus of attention and energy. He is planning for something; and he is looking forward to it. Whatever it is speaks to him and warrants his concerted efforts. He does not consider the time spent planning to be wasted; it is time well spent in pursuit of that which is precious to him. He cannot put it out of his mind and just let things happen. If the planning involves architecture, he knows that the bridge will not just 'get built' and one day cars will 'just' go over and cross the river. Meticulous planning is needed and is warranted.

The higher the stakes, the more the planning

The longer the effect of the event is meant to last, or if the consequences of an error would be life-threatening, the more meticulous will be the planning. If the bridge is to last for a century, then painstaking attention to every detail of the construction will precede the first step and will accompany every step along the way. Details are not left to chance. We will be sure to check and double-check to the extent humanly possible.

So, if Shabbos gives us a glimpse into eternity, then how much preparation does eternity require?

They tried to grab eternity when the chance was gone

We are not meant to slip into the quicksand of the material world and then, somehow, like a jack-in-the-box, pop up into a transcendent Shabbos.



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The Gemara¹ refers to eternity, the next world, as Shabbos. The Gemara relates that those who failed to serve Hashem in this world will request to be given Mitzvos in the next world (after the party is over) and they will then fulfil His will! To which Hashem responds that it does not work that way. Instead, says Hashem, 'one who toils on Erev Shabbos will eat on Shabbos.' They did not prepare on Erev Shabbos (in this world) and here is the only place to prepare. One cannot prepare for Shabbos once it is already Shabbos. Our weekly food preparation for Shabbos represents the spiritual preparation that takes place in this world for the next. Eternity and Shabbos are interchangeable terms.

Remember Shabbos all week long

The Ramban² cites the Sifrei on the famous words זכור את יום השבת לקדשו as requiring us to prepare for Shabbos all week long. Indeed, per the Ramban, this commandment obligates us to say 'היום יום ראשון, שני, שלישי וכו' בשבת. We must see each day of the week as an integral part of the spiritual preparation for Shabbos. Each day adds to our awareness that we are here in the world to prepare for Shabbos. We are not meant to slip into the quicksand of the material world and then, somehow, like a jack-in-the-box, pop up into Shabbos with an awareness that transcendence and connection with eternity is our purpose. It has been tried over and again – it will not work.

Everything contributes to Shabbos

Rather, our learning during the week creates a bond with Torah, which is our strongest connection with our

Creator. Our Davening is designed to enhance our consciousness of our Creator. Every part of the week is meant to create the mindset and mood where we yearn for nothing but the union with the Creator on Shabbos.

A hint to the weekdays as preparatory to Shabbos

The six workdays are comprised of 144 hours. Dedicating those 144 hours to preparing for Shabbos is alluded to by the great Kabbalist, Rav Shlomo Alkabetz, in Lecha Dodi. He writes לקראת שבת לכו ונלכה, the preparation to greet the Shabbos starts מראש מקדם. The word קדם equals 144.

Do not leave the spiritual heavy lifting for Shabbos

The Chasam Sofer homiletically interpreted the פסוקים:

ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש שבת שבתון לה' קל תעשה בו מלאכה יומת. לא תבערו אש בכל משבתים ביום השבת.³

Creative activity shall be done for six days and the seventh day shall be holy for you...do not ignite a flame on Shabbos.

Says the Chasam Sofer, you need a flame to have a connection with the Creator. The flame of love, of focus, of intensity and purpose. But the Pasuk hints that we must not try to ignite the flame on Shabbos. That flame will not support the connection with the Creator. The flame must be ignited during the six days which preceded Shabbos.

Takeaway: I will look for opportunities during the week to upgrade my readiness for Shabbos, be they learning, davening, reciting Brochos or reflecting.

¹ עבודה זרה ג.

² רמב"ן על שמות כז.

³ שמות לה:ב-ג.

