



Discover the Joy of Shabbos

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



Erev Shabbos

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Do we argue about issues? Do our arguments improve anyone's life? Could there be another force at work when we argue? Do we want to be a pawn of that other force?

Upgrading our preparation

We spend six days preparing for Shabbos. But as much as we prepare during the week, the intensity of our preparation moves into high gear of Friday, Erev Shabbos. The Torah teaches¹ that as of the very first Shabbos as a People, we were told to prepare the Manna for Shabbos.

Our preparation is not only about food

The Ariza"l wrote extensively about the requirement to use Erev Shabbos to prepare oneself to receive the קדושה – the sanctity of Shabbos. In that vein, he focused on the Halacha which requires one to bathe oneself on Erev Shabbos, adding Tevila to that Halacha. He also focused the requirement of שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום – of reviewing the Torah reading that will be read on the coming holy day – to Erev Shabbos.

How to view Erev Shabbos

In a word, Erev Shabbos is not the sixth day of the week; it is the first day of Shabbos, the day of preparation. All success in both the material and

spiritual realms is poured into one's life on Shabbos, and all in a direct relation to one's preparation for Shabbos.

The Erev Shabbos instructions

The Mishna in Shabbos² gives us an Erev Shabbos checklist. First is עשרתם – did you separate the required tithes from the foods that we are going to eat on

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Shabbos (food which was not tithed is called טבל which is forbidden, and one cannot tithed it on Shabbos)? Second, ערבתם – did you set up the required Eruvin (which join the properties to permit carrying in the private domain, or the Eruv which allows one to walk 2000 Amos beyond the normal boundaries and Eruvin cannot be set on Shabbos)? And third, הדליקו את הנר – light candles (since

one may not light candles on Shabbos and one should not sit in the dark when eating the Shabbos meal). This last item on the checklist is not a question, it is an instruction. The Gemara goes on to point out that this instruction, and by extension, any instruction, must be given gently.³

Peace in the home

The stakes of maintaining a peaceful spirit in the home are high. Likely higher than we can possibly imagine.

¹ וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי וְהָכִינוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר יִבְיֵאוּ... (שמות טז:ה) אֶת אֲשֶׁר תֹּאפּוּ אַפּוֹ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר תִּבְשְׁלוּ בְשֵׁלוֹ (שם טז:כג)

² שבת לד.

³ צריך למימרינהו בניחותא ומובא בהלכה או"ח סימן ר"ס סעיף ב'



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The Gemara relates an incident which illuminates just how vital harmony on Erev Shabbos is.

Satan has a stake in the home

The Gemara⁴ retells that a certain couple could not break the nasty habit of bickering on Erev Shabbos. It seemed that no matter what they did they ended up arguing over something. Behind the scenes, the Gemara tells us, Satan was stirring up the pot every week, giving cause for friction between them. The couple turned to the saintly R' Meir, who had a reputation for helping bring peace where it had been disrupted.

R' Meir came to visit their home on Erev Shabbos and his presence served as a reminder for them to overlook the causes for friction. Having been successful one week, R' Meir came back the next week and then on the third. When the holy Shabbos arrived on that third week Satan could be heard announcing, 'R' Meir has banished me from this house.'

Satan's interest

What is Satan's stake in generating discord in the home? And why especially on Erev Shabbos? The Chasam Sofer answers that all discord between us is harmful, but discord in the home on Erev Shabbos blocks the pipeline of blessing and bounty which would otherwise be opened on Shabbos. Those stakes are high because what is meant to arrive on Shabbos are not simply the material goods needed for our lives; our spiritual lives depend on the bounty of Shabbos as well. And without spiritual blessing we cannot achieve our mission and thus be redeemed. Satan is fighting for his life.

⁴ גיטין נב.

Our strategy

Our strategy in this battle must be clear; there will be harmony. We will invoke a peaceful atmosphere with deep calm and pleasantness. The Chida and the Ben Ish Chai go to great lengths to remind us that anything which seems to promote discord on Erev Shabbos should not be attributed to the presenting cause. The presenting cause is nothing but the machinations of Satan who knows what is really at stake.

The utensil for blessings

The Chasam Sofer points out that the very last Mishna⁵ written by the holy hands of the saintly author of Mishna, רבנו הקדוש, teaches us that a broken utensil cannot hold blessing; the contents will spill away and be lost no matter how valuable they are. Only a whole vessel can hold blessing. And Hashem, says the Mishna, found no whole intact vessel other than Peace. Peace and harmony allow all other blessings to be contained. There is no other vessel. A house can be magnificent, but without harmony it cannot contain blessing.

Takeaway: I will intensify my awareness on Erev Shabbos to ensure that I enter Shabbos in harmony.

⁵ אמר רבי שמעון בן חלפתא, לא מצא הקדוש ברוך הוא כלי מחזיק ברכה לישאל אלא השלום (עוקצין ג:יב)