

The Jewish Weekly

The Magic of Shabbat – A Signal from Heaven

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

The Chatam Sofer tells us that if one is asked to perform a chessed (kindness) or a mitzvah it is a signal from heaven that one has the capacity and the talent to accomplish it.

A number of years ago I was very surprised to receive a call before the summer season to spend Shabbat in a Federation camp. The contact person was very enthusiastic about the concept and implored me to accept the invitation.

This was a very large camp of over 500 young people from diverse Jewish backgrounds. For many, their only affiliation with Judaism was through birth, and this would be a unique opportunity for me to reach out and kindle that innate spark of Yiddishkeit (Jewishness).

To say the least, I was skeptical, and hesitant to respond in the affirmative. There were many considerations to take into account. What type of Shabbat would this be? What was the ambiance in the camp? Who could give assurance about the kashrut of the food? What kind of davening (prayer services) could I anticipate?

After the third or fourth call encouraging me to participate in this innovative plan for a Federation camp, my resistance was worn down. The administration sincerely wanted to create an authentic Shabbat experience in the camp, and believed that my visit would have a great impact on the lives of all concerned. I agreed to be their Shabbat guest.

The camp driver picked me up early Friday morning. On the way he gave me some more information about the culture and the environment of the camp. He elaborated on the camp's activities and the facilities that were available. Special preparations had been made to accommodate me, in deference to specific requests that I had made.

We began Friday night with an unprecedented gathering for davening. For many this was their first exposure to praying with a minyan. Although attendance was not mandatory, the administration was shocked when every staff member and camper came to the minyan.

The setup in the area designated for the service was not adequate, and the services had to be moved outdoors. In fact, most of the participants had to sit on the grass as it was not a practical idea to begin shlepping benches from the dining room which was some distance away.

Those who were familiar with the prayers began to raise their voices in heartfelt unison, singing the familiar niggunim (melodies) and responding to the baal tefillah's (one who leads the prayer service) intonations. An aura of reverence and admiration pervaded the air as each participant joined in his own way.

It would be difficult to sufficiently describe the special Shabbat spirit that was created that

weekend. After the Friday night meal, I conducted a "tisch", lasting late into the night, exclusively for the staff members, to imbue them with Shabbat "dessert" and to draw them closer.

Before I sat down at the tisch, I went into the kitchen to thank the staff for preparing such a beautiful Shabbat meal and attention to detail.

When I walked in, some of the kitchen staff were "schmoozing," and I noticed that one young man looked familiar. I recalled that he had attended a Jewish day school in my neighborhood. Just then, he turned towards the commercial dishwasher at his side, and his hand reached out to flip on the switch. I instinctively shouted, "Wait! You can't do that! It's Shabbat!"

He looked up at me in disbelief, and said that he was on kitchen duty, and it was his job to make sure that all the dishes were clean. It was a yeoman task and he had to take care of it immediately, he insisted.

"But you can't do it," I said

"Why not?" he angrily demanded

"Because it's Shabbat," I gently explained.

He told me he was not religious so it made no difference to him

"It makes no difference," I told him

"This is my job," he belligerently asserted, "and I have every intention of doing it.

"You can't," I said again.

"Tell me again why not," he challenged.

"Because if you will wash the dishes it will affect the kashrut of the dishes," I said.

He looked at me dubiously and said, "So you're telling me that I'm not allowed to do my job."

"Not right now," I answered.

After a few tense moments, he removed his apron, threw it down on top of the table and left. The silence that overwhelmed the kitchen was deafening, as I stood there stunned.

I spent much time ruminating about the conversation that had taken place in the kitchen. Obviously, there was no way I could refrain from speaking up against the destined chilul Shabbat (desecration of the Sabbath). Notwithstanding the Rambam's instruction that if one sees his fellow man doing a transgression, he should admonish him (hochei'ach tochi'ach et amitecha), I nevertheless regretted the ill-fated interaction.

Although I kept an eye out for the young man, I didn't see him again the entire Shabbat. On Motzoei Shabbat, I once again spent an inspirational evening with the staff at a seudat Melave Malka of Torah thoughts and inspiration. It was a most memorable occasion.

The hour was getting late, and as we were beginning to wind down, I requested some volunteers to help me out in the kitchen. Within one minute I had twenty volunteers. The staff immediately got to

It Once Happened...

work. The dishwasher was turned on, the pots were scrubbed and put away, and the counters were wiped clean. When the last load was finished, every piece of cutlery and every dish was quickly put in its proper place. Within a short time, the kitchen was immaculate.

Just as we were shutting the lights, the young man in charge of the kitchen walked in. He looked around, noted the spotlessly clean kitchen, and wordlessly walked out.

Before I left the next morning, I once again tried to find the young man. I had the deepest desire to placate him so that there were no hard feelings between us. Unfortunately, no one seemed to know his whereabouts.

For a long time I was troubled by the thought that my words may have negatively affected any possible reconnection with Yiddishkeit on his part. I really wanted to have the opportunity to explain what had happened a little more clearly and to ask for his forgiveness. I tried to find him, but he seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

Time passed and, every once in a while, I would recall the incident and wonder if there was any possibility, chas v'shalom, that I might have been instrumental in pushing him further away from Judaism.

Years later I was invited to address a large gathering in Passaic on behalf of Bonei Olam. When I entered the building, some people were milling around in the front. Suddenly a man approached me and said, "Rabbi Goldwasser, I am sure you don't recognize me. I was the individual at the Federation camp who was about to turn on the dishwasher on Friday night in the kitchen. I want you to know how strongly your gentle words affected me. No one had ever stopped me from pursuing my weekday activities on Shabbat until you came along. There was something in your tone, your words, your sincerity, your care and concern that made a tremendous impact. You stood up for what is right. Little by little, I began my journey back to Torah observance. It is thanks to you that I am here today with my eishet chayil (wife of valor). She is a true Bait Yaakov girl."

We read in Kohelet that "for everything there is a time ... a time to be silent and a time to speak" (3:7). The Yismach Yisrael notes that this certainly does not refer to engaging in forbidden speech or idle chatter. One is commanded to always refrain from such speech.

Rather, Shlomo HaMelech is telling us that even when it is necessary to verbalize or express certain thoughts — such as mussar (rebuke) that may be harsh — there is a time to be silent. Sometimes it is preferable that an individual opt not to speak his mind, for it may not be an opportune moment.

Reprinted from website of Hidabroot.com.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Noach

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:39	6:51	7:31
Tel Aviv	5:54	6:52	
Haifa	5:45	6:51	
Be'er Sheva	5:57	6:53	



The Shabbat on the Battlefield That Saved the Soldier's Life

By Rabbi David Bibi

There are countless stories of people's lives being saved through observing Shabbat, from Rose Goldstein who was among the minority of those who survived the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire on Saturday, March 25, 1911, To the email exchange shared by Dan's Deals of the man whose decision to refrain from travelling on Shabbat saved him from the Malaysia Air Flight 370 tragedy.

I heard a wonderful story from Rabbi Shmuel Gurewicz, he is the director of The Rabbinical College of Australia and New Zealand and a former member of the IDF.

Rabbi Shmuel Gurewicz was born in Soviet Russia and escaped with hundreds of others after the war to Paris. In 1949 his family was sent by the then Lubavitcher Rebbe to Australia to help establish educational institutions there.

In 1960 he married an Israeli girl and in 1964, made Aliya and along with everyone else was conscripted to the Israeli army in 1965 for national training. Two years later he was assigned to the reserves.

In May 1967, when Colonel Nasser, the Egyptian President massed troops in Sinai on the Israeli border and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, Israel regarded this as a declaration of war. While the diplomats were running around between Washington, London, Paris and Tel Aviv, the Israeli public was preparing for war and expected the worst. The Arab leaders were inciting their populations with dramatic promises that they will "push the Jews into the sea."

In Israel the army started a general mobilization. First the pilots were called up and the armored corps. Then more and more reserves were called up. More and more homes were left without their fathers/husbands. People were really frightened and very concerned for the future. Israel was outnumbered one hundred to one. The Egyptians had German scientists developing missiles and the Russians supplying them with tanks, combat jet planes. The French who supplied Israel with the Mirage fighter planes, declared an embargo on the supplies to Israel with the excuse of not supplying arms to a combat zone.

The Chevra Kadisha (burial society) of Tel Aviv alone dug fifteen thousand graves to be ready for civilian casualties.

Rabbi Gurewicz was called up on the 25th May to report for duty on Friday, the 26th. On Sunday they were moved to a hill, 150 meters from a Jordanian village called Budrus. On the following Friday, their officer Victor came and announced that 10% of the soldiers can go home for Shabbat for a 24-hour leave.

He writes: "We were 130 soldiers and the first to go on that leave were meant to be fathers of three children and above. And I fell into this category. Unfortunately,

the truck which came to take us back to civilization came at 7.00pm, twenty-five minutes before candle lighting time for Shabbat. So, I could not go as I would have to break Shabbat by travelling. The following day, Saturday, again another thirteen soldiers could go home and I was hoping that this time I would be able to go. But again, the truck came at 7.00pm when it was still Shabbat. Once again, I missed out.

"Victor, my commanding officer, who was not a religious man, took pity on me and said that since I missed out on my leave because of my religious principles, he would let me go on Sunday night for 48 hours. To me this was like an eternity! I was waiting for the day to pass impatiently.

On Sunday afternoon we heard on the radio that Iraq sent two armored divisions into Jordan to bolster their army for the forthcoming war with Israel. A little later, Victor came to announce that all leave is canceled. Since we were in the center line having to defend Israel from Jordan, therefore the readiness level had to be put up onto the highest level. I was terribly disappointed, not so much because of the prospect of the war but because my leave of 48 hours (to see my wife and children) was now canceled!

On Monday (5th June) morning at 5.00am, I went to Victor's tent and begged him to let me go and see my family even if for a short period of time. Victor then told me that he will let me go but only for eight hours. I must be back by 3.00pm. It must be pointed out that no one knew that the war was to begin in about two hours. Even Victor who was our commanding officer did not know. I did not wait to argue about the eight hours. I took my rifle, my Talit and Tefilin in my backpack and ran!

Very soon I got a lift with a motorcyclist and arrived in Jerusalem, at about 8.30am. One can imagine the reunion with my wife and children! After a while the radio reported that heavy fighting has broken out in the south and we were at war.

In Jerusalem, people felt safe. No one believed that Jordan would start any hostilities. Jerusalem was then a divided city. The distance from East Jerusalem under Jordanian control was the same as from West Jerusalem under Israeli control. But at about 11.00, the Jordanians started shelling West Jerusalem. We all went down to the air raid shelter. I ended up again the only soldier with a whole shelter full of women and children.

A little later I called up the city commander and was told to return to my unit. Making my way to the main road, I got a ride with a police car which dropped me off in Ramle. From there I had to walk about 2 hours to join my unit on that hill near Budrus. All the way, shells were exploding in the distance and also nearby.

I got to my unit at about 5.00pm. I tried to find my fox hole to take cover but could not find it. Something changed there since I left that morning. I found Victor and reported that I returned. He looked at his watch and sternly told me off for being 2 hours late. I began excusing myself that I got stuck in Jerusalem and so on....

He then turned to me with a smiling face and with tears in his eyes: "now I know that there is a G-d in heaven! At exactly 3.00pm, a shell fell and exploded in your fox hole!"

He realized that had I taken leave on the previous Friday night; I would not have been away on that Monday! And I would have not been here telling this story. Shabbat saved my life!

More than we honor the Shabbat, the Shabbat honors us.

Reprinted from an email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.



We all have our ups and our downs, we try to do good, and sometimes we fall. We just experienced an Elul, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Hoshanah Raba, Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. We are hopefully trying to start our year in a way that Hashem will be proud of us. There are times we feel like we messed up and we feel all torn like the world will come to an end because of us.

When Hashem promises that he will not bring another flood Hashem says, "כי יצר לב האדם רע מנעוריו" The desires of man are bad from his youth. This is part of our nature.

The Ohr Hachaim writes, that while this is true that we have bad character traits from when we are young, it is our mission to identify those traits and work on fixing them.

The Ramban tells us that in reality, people do not develop bad character traits when they are older, they may come out at a later stage of life stronger than earlier on, but it was always part of the person's nature.

Let's remember, Hashem knows our evil inclinations, as He created said inclinations and created us with those desires, He knows us so well, that He says "I want you to do the right thing, but remember I know you are human. Humans mess up and make mistakes" When we do something wrong we need to do Teshuva for it, but don't ever think Hashem hates you now because you did something wrong. He loves you and understands you more than you understand yourself.

We are also told by Chazal that a person should always ask himself, "When will my actions reach the actions of my predecessors?" While this is a very big point, which we should always contemplate, we must remember that Noach was a Tzadik in "His Generation" and as Rashi says, this infers that had Noach lived in the times of Avraham, he would not have been considered a tzaddik at all. So true while we must always ask ourselves when we will reach the top, and we should strive to reach the top! We should also think about Yishmael when Avraham Avinu sent him out on Sarah's command. When Yishmael was dehydrating, his mother cried out to Hashem to save him, and Hashem answered her by making a well of water appear. The gemara analyzes this story and asks why Hashem saved him. Didn't Hashem see all the things Yishmael's grandchildren would do in the future. Why did Hashem save him and allow that to occur? The Gemara answers that at this point Yishmael was neither a tzaddik or a rashah, and since at the time he cried out he was not a rashah, he did not deserve to die.

The same is true with us, even if we have not reached the heights of our predecessors. We must realize that they may have had different circumstances. In our generation with the challenges we face, if a person is overcoming these obstacles, he must realize his greatness in a humbling, and awesome way: "Wow! Look at what I am accomplishing!" If we have this mindset, we can grow from it. but realize that "Noach was a Tzadik in his circumstances as well." With that we will also merit "נה מצא הן בעיני ה" - Noach found favor in the eyes of Hashem" We have to realize that Hashem loves and appreciates all the deeds we do on our own level.

So let's strengthen our relationship with Hashem, and let's pray for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual and sweet Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: None

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 153

NUMBER OF WORDS: 1861

NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6907

HAFTORA:

Ashkenazim: Yeshayah 54:1 - 55:5

Sephardim & Chabad: Yeshayah 54:1-10

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