

“G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” (2:3)

The average person understands the negative aspect of Shabbos, the various acts of labor that are forbidden. What about the positive side of Shabbos? How does one "celebrate" Shabbos? How does one act "Shabbosdik"? We all know that one is required to have an oneg Shabbos. What does "oneg," enjoyment, mean? Horav Sholom Schwadron, z.l., contends that the idea of oneg Shabbos can have many definitions, based upon the individual and his religious/spiritual perspective. Some will enjoy Shabbos on a spiritual plane, with Torah and tefillah, heightened Torah study and prayer. Others will enjoy its physical/material aspect either through relaxation, sleep and peace of mind. Alternatively, is the individual who goes to the extreme, stuffing himself with the Shabbos delights and foods.

Each of the above fulfills oneg Shabbos; they all enjoy the Shabbos. The difference between them lies in what is the ikar, primary, and what is the tafel, secondary. It all depends on one's priorities during the week. For an individual who devotes his week to the spiritual, his oneg Shabbos will also be of a spiritual nature. One who spends his week gratifying his physical desires will also do so on Shabbos, l'kavod Shabbos kodesh. Everybody has his own priorities. Some prefer the Shabbos Davening, while others appreciate the songs that are sung, and yet others just feel good about greeting their friends with a hearty Gut Shabbos! It is not much different when it comes to the Shabbos meal. Everybody eats a special meal and sings zemiros, special Shabbos songs. Some, however, view the food as a priority, while others consider the opportunity to sit with family and friends at a relaxed, festive meal the high point of their week. We should not forget about the relaxation that Shabbos affords us. To some, the serenity avails them more time to study Torah in a peaceful, low-key setting. Others might seize the opportunity to sleep around the clock, only stirring to fill their bellies and make an appearance in shul.

Everyone has his individual perception of the meaning of Shabbos. Horav Schwadron feels that the tefillah, "Yismechu b'Malchuscha", "They shall rejoice in Your kingship," which is recited in the Shabbos Shemoneh Esrai, alludes to three groups of individuals and their varied perspectives on how to enjoy the Shabbos. The Chayei Adam explains that Shabbos is a reference to Malchus Shomayim, the Heavenly Kingdom. Thus, when we say, "Yismechu b'Malchuscha," we are asking that our joy should be "b'malchuscha," in "Your Heavenly Kingdom." In other words, the way we enjoy Shabbos in this world should provide a precedence for the way we will repose in the eternal world of Olam Haba.

There are three levels: First, are the Shomrei Shabbos, those who observe the Shabbos. These are followed by the Korei Oneg, those who call Shabbos a delight. Last, we have the "Am Mekadshai Shevii," "the People that sanctifies the seventh day." The Jewish People are composed of three groups: the righteous, the average and the common simple Jew. Shabbos observance and the attitude towards its observance may similarly be perceived through three distinct orientations:

The tzaddikim, righteous, are the Shomrei Shabbos, who observe and guard Shabbos. They see to it that Shabbos retains its spiritual flavor, they wait all week for Shabbos, since it is the zenith of their joy: Yismechu b'Malchuscha, "They shall rejoice in Your Kingship, in Your Heavenly Kingdom." For the righteous, the enjoyment is only in G-d's Kingship.

The beinonim, average Jews, are the "Korei Oneg, those who call Shabbos a delight. They are not on the level to observe Shabbos like the righteous. They are asked to sanctify the physical, so that when they eat the Shabbos foods they should delight in Shabbos. By infusing an element of spirituality into their physical enjoyment, they elevate their pleasure and make it worthy of b'Malchuscha. They are eating and drinking for the sake of Heaven.

The common Jews, who comprise the hamon am, have a difficult time understanding the true nature of Shabbos. They are "Mekadesh Shevii," they sanctify the seventh day. They understand that the seventh day of the week is special; it is a gift from Hashem. For them, the seventh day is an escape from the other six days of the week. They do not work; they can rest and relax. They at least know that it is "zeicher 1'maasei Bereishis," a remembrance of Creation. They also share in the holiness of Shabbos, but each on his own simple level.

When the members of the various groups claim their portion in the World to Come, it will be commensurate with their Shabbos observance. In other words, the individual who made sure that he filled his belly on Shabbos and read every newspaper, will be given an Olam Haba in which he will have access to every newspaper from the beginning of Creation! Every Jew has a designated portion in Olam Haba. He designates his portion in accordance with the way he establishes his priorities in this world. The way we spend our Shabbos in this world is the way we will enjoy the Heavenly Kingdom.

Had I put the smaller objects in first, I could never have fit the large rocks in."

In our daily living we must prioritize between what is major and what is relatively minor, between what is important and what is trivial. If we do not prioritize, we neglect the major items. The same idea applies to the spiritual versus the mundane. We must learn to respect and appreciate the important things that grant us eternal life. Unfortunately, some of us have confused our priorities.

I once heard an insightful analogy regarding the importance of establishing priorities. Seeking to teach its workers the importance of time management, a large corporation hired a college professor, whose specialty was to instruct the management team in the finer points of managing their day for greater effectiveness. The instructor entered the room and proceeded to the lectern. He produced a wide-mouth jar and filled it with rocks. "Is this jar full?" he asked the group. "Certainly," the group responded in unison. He then took a few fistfuls of gravel and put it in the jar. He now asked the class, "Is the jar full?" They responded in the affirmative. Apparently, they were wrong the first time, since there had been room for the gravel. "What about now?" The instructor seemed to ignore their answer, as he took two handfuls of sand and poured it into the jar. The sand found its way into the spaces left over by the large rocks and the gravel. "Now, I ask you, is the jar full?" "Of course, it is full," they practically shouted. Hearing this, the professor smiled as he produced a pitcher of water and began pouring the water into the seemingly "full" jar. He looked at the group and declared, "Now, it is full." He was not finished. He had one more question to ask them. "What lesson did I just teach you?" he asked. As expected, they all responded, "Time management," to which he responded with a big: "No. The lesson I wanted to teach is a very simple one – always put the large rocks in first. By first putting in the large rocks, there is room left for everything.

