

This first Shabbos after the clocks change always arrives as something of a shock. After we have finally settled into a post yom tov routine, we are forced suddenly to face existential questions that strike at the core of our being. How many hours of sleep can you possibly get in one night? Why is Shacharis taking so long if it is almost time for Shalosh Seudos? Is Friday night cholent really as good as we told ourselves it was before Shabbos? As Torah Jews, we never shy away from confronting important issues.

This makes it all the more meaningful to note that this Shabbos is the annual Shabbos Project. Like everything else, it looks a lot different this year. But every year, the Shabbos Project gives a welcome chance to look at this חמדה גנוזה, this treasure of Shabbos, with fresh eyes. And as the winter stretches ahead of us with only Shabbos, for the most part, to give us extra spiritual strength, we owe it to ourselves to learn how to nurture our relationship with Shabbos. Rav Shimshon Pincus, who wrote one of the classic modern works on Shabbos, would say that if Shabbos happened only once a year, we would spend weeks and weeks preparing for it and learning about it; instead, we have it every week and we simply take it for granted. We should try, like we always should, to do a little better.

There is a statement of the *chachamim* in the Mechilta, one of the Tannaic commentaries on the Torah, which sums up both the opportunity and the challenge of Shabbos. ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך -- the Torah tells us that we should work for six days, finish all of our work, and then rest on the seventh day. But is it possible, the *chachamim* ask, for someone to finish all their work every six days? Instead, the Sages say, שבות כאילו כל מלאכתך עשויה -- rest as though all your work is already finished. You do not have to finish everything; you have to tell yourself that everything is finished.

This is the great gift of Shabbos. It is not physical rest alone that Shabbos asks of us; it demands, primarily, the kind of rest that is in your mind. Experiencing Shabbos requires the ability to turn off your preoccupations, put your concerns to the side, and devote your mind to Hashem. It requires the perspective and the depth that allows you to step away from the world in which everything seems unfinished and into a world where everything is already perfect.

Rav Moshe Shapiro would say that if someone rests from physical labor all Shabbos but spends the day thinking about his business, it is possible that you did not engage in *chilul Shabbos*, a violation of Shabbos. He would stress again: it is possible. But you certainly have not fulfilled the mitzvah and the ideal of what Shabbos is meant to be.

Even before there was something called Covid 19, there was something called anxiety. And by all accounts, one of the most prevalent mental health challenges we face in this generation -- a challenge which can only have multiplied exponentially in the past few

months -- is anxiety. To be clear, anxiety can be a clinical condition, sometimes deeply debilitating, requiring professional intervention, and in those instances, it is not something you can simply turn off when Shabbos comes. But for many people, there are a host of lower-level uncertainties that plague our subconscious more than we realize. Shabbos is for us the perspective that helps us deal with the unknown. On Shabbos, our desperate need to know what will happen tomorrow, when the package will arrive, when the challenge will turn around, who the president will be -- all that is something we learn to put to the side. Instead of worrying about what will be, we give ourselves the gift of focusing on what is -- the gift of focusing on the people who are counting on our attention, the treasures that have already been delivered to us, and on how much Hashem is a part of our lives.

The Vilna Gaon notes that while all six days of Creation close with the phrase ויהי ערב ויהי בקר, *it was evening and it was morning*, it does not say this about the seventh day. The reason, he says, is because Shabbos is a taste of the day of which the *navi* Zechariah says that it will be neither evening or morning. Evening stands for things that are dark and difficult; morning stands for things that are bright and pleasant. The day of Moshiach will be a day in which there will be neither night nor day because we will already have arrived at our destination -- there will be no more ups and downs to worry about. And that is Shabbos. It is a day in which we have a taste of what it means to arrive at our destination.

We will have plenty to worry about this winter, and plenty of uncertainty will hang over our heads. I apologize in advance if we even talk about some of it on Shabbos. But Shabbos is the gift that helps us overcome. And until that day where there is no more night, I hope our Shabbos is full of light, and that we learn to experience fully the peace of mind to know that our work is already done.