



# THE SHABBOS CHRONICLES

RECOUNTS OF SHABBOS EXPERIENCES THAT  
TOUCHED THE LIVES OF BETH JACOB MEMBERS

THE SHABBAT PROJECT | 10 CHESVON 5776

# Good Shabbos Beth Jacob Atlanta!

We are very excited to be participating in the World Wide Shabbos Project 2015. As part of Beth Jacob's unique expression and celebration of Shabbos, we are pleased to publish this compendium of our own members' Shabbos thoughts and experiences. Inside, you will find touching stories, meaningful experiences and humorous Shabbos occasions that together express how Shabbos has impacted our community. I would like to personally thank all of the authors who, prodded with nothing more than a shul email inviting them to do so, put pen to paper to share with all of us these beautiful thoughts and ideas. I am sure you will enjoy.

I would also like to thank Lisa Stroll for contributing her masterful editor's skill to this publication. We received, as you can see, a significant number of contributions and had very little time to get everything done. Thank you!

Many thanks as well go to Faith Cohen who is responsible for the beautiful appearance of this booklet, both the elegant design of our cover and the attractive layout of each article. Faith is a true professional and we all benefit from her work. In addition, Faith and Jeff are sponsoring this publication in memory of Faith's father, Shlomo Avraham ben Yosef (Saul Tanenbaum), on the occasion of his 8<sup>th</sup> yartzheit next week. Saul has left many special Shabbos memories that were rekindled by this wonderful publication.

Lastly, I would also like to thank Rabbi Shlomo and Sarah Faygie Berkowitz for sponsoring this compendium of Shabbos stories in memory of Sarah Faygie's grandfather, Harav Moshe ben HaRav Shlomo Carmen, z"l. May the inspiration this booklet brings and the honor and sanctity it adds to Shabbos be an everlasting merit to his soul.

Have a great, or special, or maybe just plain good Shabbos!  
(see page 3)

Rabbi Yechezkel Freundlich

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# The Hyperbolic Shabbos

BY RABBI EMANUEL FELDMAN

Once upon a time, just as Shabbos was approaching, a person greeted his friend and said, “Have a good Shabbos.” That was once upon a time and long ago. Today, to have merely a good Shabbos is not enough. Today what you hear is: “Have a fabulous Shabbos,” “a wonderful Shabbos,” “a terrific Shabbos,” or at the very least, “a great Shabbos.” As for “Have a good Shabbos,” that is passé.

A parallel dialogue occurs after Shabbos. Someone will inevitably ask, “How was your Shabbos?” If you say simply that it was good or fine, that comes across, in today’s hyperbolic times, as if you barely made it through the day: Good? You only had a good Shabbos? You mean it wasn’t amazing or fantastic or terrific or even great? Only good? Sorry to hear that. Maybe next week will be better.

So in order not to be a killjoy, and in order to satisfy your interlocutor, you say, “Baruch Hashem, great” or “fabulous” or “wonderful” or “terrific.” But just between us, what do these adjectives mean? “Great” could mean that halachically you

violated no Shabbos laws, or that neither the davening nor the drashah took too long — which is rather minimal. “Fabulous” is a step higher, and could mean that the cholent was excellent or that your Shabbos nap was long and satisfying. “Wonderful” could refer to the chicken and kugel, and “terrific” could refer to the very special salad served at Seudah Shlishis or that you had very interesting guests for the meals.

Of course, “terrific” could refer to the vort you heard at the seudah, “fabulous” could refer to the zemirots and the atmosphere of holiness around the table. These terms could signify that you were able to slow down and fully realize what Shabbos means in essence: that G-d created the world and that He is the Author of everything. That would truly be “great-fabulous-wonderful-terrific.”

But then again, why is the plain, simple, unadorned, unaffected, classical “good Shabbos” considered inadequate? After all, when G-d created the world, the Torah does not say, “And G-d saw that it was amazing,” even though it was. Nor does it say, “And He saw that it was fantastic/

terrific.” It doesn’t even say that it was “great.” G-d Himself is content with the simplest of terms: “And He saw that it was tov,” which means unvarnished, old-fashioned “good.” And when He is extremely pleased, as when He views all of creation after the sixth day, even there He does not say “terrific.” He simply says “tov me’od — very good.”

The fact is that every single Shabbos is by definition good. It is the day that G-d blessed and sanctified — Vayevarech ... Vayekadesh — and on which He paused from His creative endeavors. Shabbos is a precious gift to us from on high: the opportunity to shift gears, to focus on things other than ordinary mundane pursuits. But the essence of Shabbos is that it is an intimation of the World to Come, and thus it cannot be reduced to transient human vocabulary.

**Shabbos is a precious gift to us from on high: the opportunity to shift gears, to focus on things other than ordinary mundane pursuits.**

For us sophisticated moderns, however, “good” is insufficient. We have

relegated it to the dustbin, tossed it off the wagon without so much as a “fare thee well,” an innocent victim of our contemporary verbal inflation in which good is not good enough and must be transmogrified into fabulous and its puffed-up, self-important cousins.

In truth, the question — “How was your Shabbos? — cannot really be answered adequately. How does one measure, calibrate, judge, form an opinion about “how” a Shabbos was? Still, as a service to our loyal readers, here is a suggested, all-purpose answer: Thank G-d there is a Shabbos in the world for us to experience. We tried to keep it, maintain it, protect it, and honor it in every appropriate way. It was our entrance to another realm, a realm of spirituality that was enhanced — because we are after all only physical creatures — by fine food and some extra physical rest. But we tried to

remember, as we let go of the physical world of gadgets and things and electronics that entrap us, that G-d created the world, that He is still in charge, and still the

Author of everything. So thank you for asking. It was in fact an amazing

Shabbos, and fantastic and wonderful and terrific and great and extraordinary and remarkable and stupendous and unparalleled and literally out of this world. But most of all, it was tov/good.

Friendly warning: Try this answer only on good friends. If you try it on anyone else, be prepared for the possibility that you will never, ever be asked to join them even for a light Seudah Shlishis snack. They will certainly never, ever again inquire about your Shabbos.

Until then, have a very good Shabbos.

*Reprinted with permission from Mishpacha Magazine, March 2014*

## Shabbos, Sweet Shabbos

BY TZIPORAH WAYNE

*In Memory of Rebbetzin Henny Machlis z"l*

It was my first Shabbos in Jerusalem. 1996. Hard to believe it was almost 20 years ago. Here is some context. I was the Youth Director at Congregation Shearith Israel, worked at the JCC and was dating a nice non-Jewish guy, the son of a Southern Baptist Minister. Yes, you could say the various parts of my life were a bit disconnected.

As the Youth Director, I had to purchase food that had funny symbols on it, was told I couldn't carry an umbrella on Shabbos and a bunch of other rules that didn't make sense to me. I wanted to know why. This led me to sign up for the three-week program of Livnot v'Lehibanot, which consisted of learning, hiking and community service. Three weeks was not too long and not too short. Just right.

The Shabbos before the program began, I was staying at the Ben Yehuda Hostel and was told to find Jeff Seidel at the Kotel since he set people up for Shabbos meals. One of the non-Jewish gals at the hostel

wanted to join me. Great, I had company. Together we walked to the Kotel and joined a very large group of those looking to be matched with a host. What an adventure! I had no idea what to expect.

If my memory serves me well, we took what seemed like a long walk to an apartment that, once we walked in, revealed over 10 set tables and bunches of people waiting to be seated. This was the Machlis's home, and they served well over 60 people that Shabbos. It could have been closer to 100. The place was packed. I later learned that the Machlises hosted large crowds EVERY Shabbos. It was not just the number of people they served wonderful, hot food to that astounded me. In the middle of the meal, the power went out. A bunch of strangers had a very intimate candlelit meal.

Rabbi Machlis then got up and spoke so beautifully that his words still touch me to this day. In the dimly lit room, Rabbi Machlis spoke about the beauty of the Shabbos candles; how light was designed to go up, defying gravity; how with



# Making Kiddush: A Different Kind Of Opera

BY JOEL ALPERT

Years ago I spent many of my Friday nights traveling around town exploring the synagogues and temples of Atlanta with “Shabbat Sam.”

Sam Fistel had wanted to go to Friday night services. And he wanted people to go with him. At first he called a small group of friends and told them where he was going and invited them to come along. When the list of interested people grew too big for phone calls, email took over, and the list grew to 900+ people, some of whom might join the group on any particular Friday night. It became an important way to connect for many of us.

During those times, I experienced the way lots of our fellow Jews celebrate Shabbos at three dozen or more synagogues and temples of every conceivable denomination and style all around the metro region. When services were over, our Friday Night Dinner options included pot luck at someone’s house, an occasional catered dinner at the shul... or most often, a private room at a nearby restaurant.

At the restaurants we went to, I usually led Kiddush when I was there. My dad, Binyomin ben Avigdor HaLevi, z”l, was a cantor, and my brother Stan and I were brought up shomer shabbos in what would be known these days as a Conservadox home...and I always enjoyed hearing his melodic tenor voice make Kiddush on Friday nights. That tradition stayed with me. I appreciated both the meaning and melody of Kiddush, and how we were entrusted to sanctify Shabbos with Kiddush. And the meals with Shabbat Sam’s group were no different.

Since I was able to, and loved making Kiddush, I evolved into the “designated driver” for this activity with Sam’s Group. Frequently I explained a small piece of background about Kiddush...including themes such as creation, yetziat mitzrayim, or the concept that people could sanctify something that Hashem had already sanctified.

So here we are, on a Friday night at Macaroni Grill, just north of Perimeter Mall on Ashford-Dunwoody Road. The main room was very large, perhaps 75-90 tables — but

this night was different from (most) other (Friday) nights of the year...we did not get our usual private room. We were lined up in one straight line, about 45 of us of us, at a very long connected series of tables. Sam asks, “Joel, will you make Kiddush for us?” And of course I say, “Sure.” I’m not sure I had thought it through at that point.

From the white canvas bag, which a participant had made for Sam, embroidered with the blue letters “Shabbat Sam,” came the grape juice and challah, plate, cover and knife, and a bencher. I assembled all, starting to become conscious of the environment. I was in a large public restaurant, in a large room. Not in a private room. I put on my kippah.

I pushed back my chair to stand up, and gained the attention of our group. I engaged my hamstrings to get up. And I stopped.

Just at that moment, another voice rang clear, from across the room. It was something like:

E Izaghi ed Izanami, Sarundasio e Kami...  
[stopping short]  
Oh! la mia testa!  
[she rings the bell to invoke the attention of the Gods]  
E tu...Ten-Sjoo-daj  
[in tearful tones, looking at

Butterfly]  
fate che Butterfly...non pianga più, mai più, mai più!...”

It was from Madame Butterfly, being sung by a zoftig blonde contralto wearing a horned Viking hat, performing opera at this sort-of Italian (franchise) restaurant. Hey, it was Friday night. The place was packed. And they were selling enough pasta and veal to warrant spending some lira on an opera singer to entertain the crowd. And the Madame herself was voicing a number of characters involved in the creation of that opera.

She sang for about 5 minutes. She wasn’t bad. Nobody choked on a chicken bone. And then she stopped.

My crowd was getting restless, they were hungry. I got the eyebrows-up “Nu, go ahead and do it, Joel” look from Sam. The restaurant din had quickly returned to its previous level of jovial thankfulness that “It’s Friday and the work week is done” conversation about this, that, and the other.

With pensive caution I pushed back my chair. I knew I was “following another act,” and I knew I was making Kiddush. I knew I had to sing loud enough to be heard by about 20+ people to my left, and 20+ to my

right, across the width of our wide shabbos dinner table.

“...Yom Hashishi...Vayichulu hashamayim vha’aretz bechol tzivaam...” I sang, loud enough to be heard by our group. And that was loud enough to be heard by most of the people in the room, if they had been listening. Most were not.

But quickly — by the time I hit “vayichal elokim bayom hashvee-ee...” — the volume knob on the restaurant din was turning itself down again, to the point where those relatively smaller group of people who were still talking, spoke in hushed tones.

## He looked into my eyes intently and said in a knowing way, “Good Shabbos.”

I was making Kiddush at Macaroni Grill, I reminded myself. Frequently while making Kiddush I close my eyes to fully focus on the words and meaning of this massively impactful declaration. And I did so that night, mid-paragraph. I certainly needed to tune out the din and distraction, I wanted to focus on

what I was doing on behalf of the group. And I was aware that I was a baritone act following a contralto act, to some people. But I was making Kiddush.

After the first paragraph, as I opened my eyes for the first brachah, over the wine...I noticed a man at the table next to ours, staring at me. I wasn’t sure if he was annoyed with me for interrupting his dinner. He stared in a sort of trance, I thought. And by the time I completed the blessing “...boray pri hagafen” (creator of the fruit of the vine)...he mumbled loud enough for me to hear, “Amen.”

I thought his pronunciation for a non-Jew of “aw-mayn” was pretty decent.... he probably just mimicked the hushed “amen” that my fellow Friday Nighters had intoned. I continued with the second large paragraph. “Ahser kiddishanuh b’mitzvosav, v’ratzah vanoo...” a prelude to the singing section which follows...where participants join the leader... “Ki vanuh bachartah, v’osanu kidashtah, mikol ha’amim...” (You chose us, and sanctified us, from among the nations”)...

...and when I reached that group singing section ... “Ki vanuh bachartah...” a scattered few of my fellow Friday Nighters tentatively joined in quietly. One guy at the end of my table sang a bit louder, making his point of joining in. Something strange happened in those moment — maybe because I was self-conscious, or maybe because I was fully conscious — like something from a sci-fi movie — my experience of time became hallucinogenic, not easily describable, but I felt past, present and future came together in a disjointed yet unified way.

Way across the room to the far left, I heard the voices of a man, woman, and young boy join in. And somewhere behind me, not too far away to my right, a man with a deep basso voice hummed the melody. Some people watched. Some people ate. Some people seemed to try to eat while watching. And I thought I heard the melody of Kiddush being hummed closer to our big table. But my focus was in multiple eras at once, and I wanted to stick with that experience.

I finished, as per plan, with “...mikadesh haShabbos” (Blessed are you Hashem, Who sanctifies the Sabbath)...I sit. Pour. Drink. Pour.

Pass. We scrambled for washing and motzi, and got back to the table. The food that we ordered started to arrive.

When I swiveled in my chair to try to catch the eye of the guy at the next table, he didn’t seem to meet my glance. They were almost done with dinner, and were calculating a tip. No problem. I got involved with conversation at the table again.

Then I felt a tap on my right shoulder. It was the guy from the next table. He smiled. He looked into my eyes intently and said in a knowing way, “Good Shabbos.” I was surprised for a microsecond, but I smiled. I said, “Good Shabbos.” Nothing else needed to be said.

I caught up with my breathing, wiped the corner of my eye. And soon lead the group in a quiet bentching.



# The Shabbos that Almost Wasn't

BY SUSAN ROBINSON

The advantage of coming to Judaism as an adult is that the first Shabbos is always memorable. Can I say that I will always remember visiting a shul, followed by a Shabbos meal at a friend's apartment? Of course. The day seemed to go on forever: chatting, eating, singing, eating some more, until three stars finally made their appearance.

Can I say that I will always remember my Shabbos with a group of Bobover Hasidic women in Borough Park? Most certainly. The feeling of love among the women was astounding. I was staying by myself, without my husband and children, in a complete stranger's apartment. I met my hostess, her mother, her daughter and all of her friends. What surprised me was how friendly and talkative the women were. Without ever uttering one word of Lashon Hara, these women were great conversationalists, careful to find topics that would include me.

And, will I always remember my Shabbos in Dublin? No doubt. My husband and I enjoyed a Bar Mitzvah celebration and two delicious meals. Just as Shabbos was ending, we

went to a family-style congregational Seudat Shlishit where a visiting Israeli tourist gave a detailed account of the Laws of Shmitah. We discovered that Ireland imports cucumbers, tomatoes and even potatoes from Israel. Amazing! Because it was summer, sundown didn't occur until very late. Havdalah was at 11:10 PM! Another memory.

As time goes by, however, what my husband and I truly appreciate is a family Shabbos. Children. Grandchildren. Sharing old jokes and new.

And yet, one of the most memorable of all was the Shabbos where there was no community, almost no food, no shul services.

Approximately three months after the tragedy of the Twin Towers in New York City, my mother's health took a turn for the worse. She had stayed with us in Atlanta several months earlier so she could receive treatment at Emory. Now, she was very sick and not expected to live much longer. I got a flight and stayed with her in her home town just outside NYC for two weeks before she passed away. Days after the funeral,

I needed to change my return ticket to Atlanta. Because of the 9/11 security concerns, it was impossible to handle the ticket change over the phone. I was told to come to the Delta terminal at the small airport in my mother's town on Friday and change the ticket. The clerk told me I had to come at 2:00 PM and wait in the designated line, and they would give me a ticket to fly out of LaGuardia for the following Monday.

Of course, it was not as simple as all that. At 2:00 PM, I arrived at the small airport. I found the line easily enough. And then I waited, and waited, and waited. By the time I got to the counter it was 3:00 PM. The clerk was not eager to make a

**“Look, lady, my sister is an Orthodox Jew and she has to be back at my house in an hour. Will you, or will you not, change her ticket?”**

ticket change. So, with my pointer finger, I tapped on the counter and said, “Look, I was told . . . why will you not issue me a ticket to leave on Sunday? Who else can I talk to?” With each statement and /or question, I tapped, tapped, tapped my

finger on the counter.

My sister, who had accompanied me to the airport, whispered in my ear. “Susan,” she said, “Calm down, or this lady will call security on you.” She then turned to the woman, tapped her finger on the counter and said, “Look, lady, my sister is an Orthodox Jew and she has to be back at my house in an hour. Will you, or will you not, change her ticket?”

3:15 PM. I had no choice but to quickly leave the airport and head back to my sister's house. My sister would wait at the airport counter to change the ticket. I ran out of the airport and found the taxi line.

There was only one taxi. The cab driver got out of his car, took a look at me and said, “Where's your luggage?” I explained I was only at the airport to change a ticket.

“So where's your ticket?” he demanded. I didn't have it. He then said, “How come you didn't come in your own car?”

The driver was reluctant to take me. With no luggage, no ticket, and a somewhat frazzled appearance, I

must have looked like a suspicious person. Finally, perhaps because I'm only 5'1", he decided I was safe enough to be his passenger.

I arrived at my sister's house. But in all the commotion, I didn't have the key. I didn't have a phone. I was forced to sit outside, on the stoop in the cold. As I watched the sun go down, I went over the events of the day. I thought of everything that had occurred over the past two weeks: my mother's death, the funeral, my cousins and my mother's friends arriving to comfort my sisters and me. I thought of the Shabbos hospitality I had arranged for my husband and daughter in Brooklyn. I should have gone with them, yet I needed to spend some time alone with my sister. It hadn't occurred to me that I could get locked out, and left in the cold. I berated myself for not anticipating the time crunch. After a while, I decided to sit quietly, simply breathe, and watch as the sky became dark. In time, my sister would arrive, with or without my ticket. I would not have to spend a cold December evening outside; I had no reason to worry. This certainly would not be the standard memorable Shabbos, full of all sorts of good things. Instead, it would be a quiet time, a

time to simply share memories with my sister as we looked through family albums. The time for rushing around was over. I was alone, but not lonely. Shabbos had come.

## The Gift That Keeps on Giving

BY MIRA D. BERGEN

On the eve of the new millennium, Friday, December 31, 1999, at midnight, instead of sitting in front of my TV, watching the ball drop in New York City's Times Square, as was usual for me, I sat with the Siegelman family in their home, looking at the clock and talking about the choice I made to commit consciously to receive the Gift of Shabbos from the Creator of the Universe.

Little did I realize at the time that not only did I want to be closer to G-d, but G-d also wanted to be closer to me.

I started coming to Congregation Beth Jacob in 1988, participating in Rabbi David Silverman's Beginner's Service, being inspired by The Discovery Weekend given in Atlanta, going to classes and learning in Israel. At the time, I was not really striving to be kosher or Sabbath observant, I just wanted to be around these wonderful role models who were! These role models and mentors were, and still

are, the Rabbis, wives and families of the Atlanta Scholars Kollel, Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, Rabbi Ilan Feldman and Rabbi Yossi and Dasia New with Congregation Beth Tefillah. I was and continue to be inspired by the wonderful community members who have truly become my spiritual family.

I kept learning and growing, as I learned to make "distinctions" in honor of Shabbos: I remember

turning my radio "OFF" in the car while driving to shul on Shabbos to acknowledge that I knew it was the day G-d gave His gift of Shabbos to the Jewish people and in my own way, I was letting our Creator

know, I got it! I remember so vividly in the old social hall at Beth Jacob when I told Rabbi Rosenbaum at a Kiddush that I was keeping Shabbos that day because I turned my radio OFF in the car, and he joyfully acknowledged me. People sensed I was growing. The absolute NOURISHMENT and non-judgmental attitude in this community made me thirst for MORE! I wanted what THEY had!

Little did I realize at the time that not only did I want to be closer to G-d, but G-d also wanted to be closer to me. I realize now that this is the reason I started to make distinctions in the minutiae that would one day manifest in creating another Jew (me) accepting the Gift of Shabbos.

I spent many Sabbaths in the community and a few Yom Tovim (holidays). One Rosh Hashanah I dropped by the Feldman's home with some wine for a meal I was having with them. Miriam asked if I would like to stay for the entire three day Yom Tov holiday. I told her that I could not because I had a cat. She said, "Bring the cat!" Do you know what taking a cat means? It means I am traveling with a toddler: the litter box, the food, the bags, the toys, the scratching post, the leash (Yes, my cat walked on a leash and Dovid Feldman, their son, walked him!).

So, after I lugged all this to the Feldman's, anticipating my first three-day holiday, my beautiful white long haired large cat, Mazel Tov, made himself comfortable in the living room of the home of my Rabbi and his family. Rabbi Ilan came home and said, "Where's the cat?" I told him. He looked in the living room, came to me, and said, "He's perfect

for Rosh Hashanah: He already has a Kittel (white traditional robe) on!

The Feldman family hosted my cat, Mazel Tov, and me in their home three Rosh Hashanahs in a row before I moved to the community.

I started to make more distinctions by looking at labels and consciously buying and eating kosher foods.

When my father died in 1997, Rabbi Binyomin Friedman, also of ASK, told me that, in essence, when a parent dies, it is life altering and each Jew should also spiritually commit to something life altering so that the parent's neshama (soul) will get "credit" for this. I decided to kasher (kosher) my kitchen in his memory - another distinction that I was consciously making. With this I felt my relationship to our Creator getting closer, as I was honoring my father's memory with this mitzvah.

When I saw in 1999, that the date of the new millennium was going to commence on the Sabbath, I sensed that G-d was indicating that it was time for me to accept His gift of Shabbos every week: I must commit to being a Sabbath observant Jew and "guard" the Sabbath: I must become "Shomer Shabbos."

This was a very scary word for me. This meant that for the rest of my life I would be Sabbath observant. This thought was overwhelming and I started to cry because this was just too difficult to fathom.

I did know what I could take on because of the advice of my Mother when I had something to accomplish that seemed unsurmountable, to just cut off one piece at a time. She said, "One Slice of Salami at a Time."

This became for me One Sabbath at a Time.

I put a marble in a decanter and thanked our Creator for the Gift of that particular Shabbos that I had just celebrated: "Thank you, Hashem, for giving me..."

Shabbos #1  
Shabbos #2  
Shabbos #3  
Etc. etc...etc. etc. ....

On this evening of this Shabbos Project, October 23, 2015, I am excited to receive the Gift of: Shabbos # 827.

After Havdalah, I will thank Hashem for giving me the Gift of my 827<sup>th</sup> Shabbos.

Now, stating I am "Shomer Shabbos" is not scary, it is a privilege and honor to accept this absolute TREASURE from the Creator of our universe every week.

I find so much meaning in my life because of Shabbos and know that G-d is so happy I am opening His present every week. I look forward to every step in my journey to get closer to G-d and celebrating Shabbos is the greatest distinction one can experience.

One Shabbos at a Time has changed my life. It is The Gift that Keeps on Giving.

Good Shabbos # 827!

# A Shabbaton in Midtown Manhattan

BY CHAYA LEAH STARKMAN

When I was in middle school, in the early 1960's, I attended Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (or Bruer's) and had my very first Shabbaton in Midtown Manhattan (around 80-85th St.)

My friend Batsheva and I were invited to stay with our friend Shoshana at her home. When we arrived at her apartment, we met her Aunt who had just come from the Soviet Union to visit for a week.

Growing up from from birth, I only knew the world of keeping Shabbos and mitzvot. Didn't everyone do that?

Friday night, at candle lighting, I watched this woman in her mid-50's light the Shabbos candles. She said the bracha so slowly cherishing every word. Then I saw her crying.

I wondered why she was crying. I found out later during Shabbat, that this was the first time in 20 years that she had the opportunity to light Shabbos candles.

I didn't understand much that

Shabbos because we were not exposed yet to the oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union and its allied network of countries.

As I got older and saw Rabbi Meir Kahane and Rabbi Avi Weiss bring the issue of Soviet Jewry and the Refuseniks into the limelight, with rallies, chaining themselves outside the United Nations, it brought awareness to all.

We here in the United States have freedom, that precious gift that we take so for granted (of course Eretz Yisroel too, our Biblical land). For us it is just "natural" to light our Shabbos candles, peer into the lights and welcome the kedusha of Shabbos, reaffirming our connection to H-shem, to Creation, to our Torah and our Mesorah (heritage).

This woman cried because she did not have this freedom. Weddings, lighting of Shabbos/Chanuka candles, a bris, davening in a shul, learning our holy seforim and Torah was highly risky if found out. The notorious KGB (secret police) had spies everywhere. Neighbors would tattletale on Jews. If found out,

Growing up from from birth, I only knew the world of keeping Shabbos and mitzvot. Didn't everyone do that?

Jews would be jailed, or worse, be sent to Siberia.

How many Jews travelling to the Soviet Union would try to smuggle in prayer books, Chumashim, tall-esim, and other Jewish ritual items during those dark days.

We think nothing of just taking out our silver lechters and lighting our Shabbos candles. But think of the many Soviet Jews who could not.

So next time you light your Shabbos candles, thank H-shem. Thank Him for the liberty and freedoms we do have. Say your bracha with deep concentration (kavana) on the words that you recite. Enjoy the light of the candles and enjoy Shabbos.

Remember always from the shirt house factory that burned in the lower East Side that killed many Jewish girls working there in the 1920's, one girl did not go to work that day but went to the park. She always was "sick" and would not work on our holy Shabbos.

This girl remembered what her father told her when he put her on

the ship alone from Poland to her aunt and uncle in the States. He told her, "Remember, if you keep Shabbos, Shabbos will keep you."

I wish you all an inspiring, spiritual, and joyous Shabbos.



# Come for Shabbos

BY ADINA HIRSCH

Growing up in the Hirsch household, we were always told to bring people home for Shabbos. Even as young children, we would scan the aisles for new faces, approach them, and ask them to come for Shabbos. The assumption was that there was always room for one more, and that Shabbos was a phenomenon to be shared with others.

So, when I left home and moved to Israel and then Eugene, Oregon, of course, I, like my other siblings, kept up the tradition of inviting people for Shabbos on a regular basis.

I did not recognize the power of those three words, “Come for Shabbos,” until I heard the following story:

**The assumption was that there was always room for one more, and that Shabbos was a phenomenon to be shared with others.**

In the mid-1990s, my mother got a letter from her friend, Becky Epstein from Jerusalem. Becky and David Epstein had lived in Atlanta in the 1960s and 70s, had taught at the He-

brew Academy, and had made Aliya in the late 1970s. Their apartment was close to the Ohr Sameach Yeshiva, a Ba'al Teshuva yeshiva. They would often invite the young men learning at the Yeshiva for Shabbos lunch, and during the lull between the gefilte fish and the cholent, they would ask these young men what had made them decide to become Ba'alei Teshuva (literally returnees to the faith).

On one particular Shabbos, two young men (buchurim) joined them for the meal. When they asked the question to the first bochur, he said, “Well, I had a Passover Seder at the Hirsch’s house in Atlanta, Georgia, and that made me decide to become frum.” The Epsteins exclaimed with delight that they had lived in Atlanta and actually knew the Hirsches quite well. They then asked the second bochur, and he said that

he had had a Shabbos meal at my house in Eugene, Oregon, and that’s what made him decide to return to Orthodoxy. Now, these two young men did not know each other prior

to coming to learn in the yeshiva, and they did not know that I was related to the Hirsches of Atlanta. Only the Epsteins knew the connection and recognized the incredible impact that sharing a holiday or Shabbos meal could have on two unrelated strangers.

There are many opportunities for kiruv these days: classes, shiurim, books, Israel programs...etc. But I have found that the most effective and powerful way to introduce Jews to the beauty and meaning of Judaism is through three simple words: “Come for Shabbos!”

## Sparks of Shabbos

BETSY AND MICHAEL CENKER  
(WRITTEN BY BY R.M.GROSSBLATT FOR THE AJC)

Every Friday night, Betsy Gerson Cener lights Shabbos candles in the dining room of her home on Bramble Road. At almost the same time, her husband Michael sings Lecho Dodi with the congregation at Kabbalos Shabbos services at Beth Jacob. Then he walks home on LaVista Road to join his family for Kiddush, challah, and chicken soup. Betsy describes Shabbos as a time for “family, friends, and rejuvenation.”

Though neither Betsy nor Michael grew up Shabbos observant, both families, living near Georgia Baptist Hospital, affiliated with orthodox synagogues. As a young girl, Betsy often attended Shabbos Services at Shearith Israel. Michael, who was in kindergarten and then first grade, at the Hebrew Academy, attended services at Beth Jacob, but only on the High Holy Days.

When Beth Jacob moved to LaVista Road and started building their present sanctuary, Michael’s family moved to Burton Drive. In 1958, within a mile of Beth Jacob, Michael, a third grader, started walking to BJ every Shabbos with Ben Hirsch who,

with his wife Jacquie, lived across the street. Michael remembers many Shabbos mornings in the temporary building at Beth Jacob waiting for the 10<sup>th</sup> man to arrive.

Although they didn’t know each other, Betsy and Michael both attended the Hebrew Institute, a white columned building on the corner of University Avenue. By the time they were in high school, they met and started to get interested in Shabbos – and each other. As president of the National Council of Synagogue Youth at Shearith Israel, Betsy and her chapter members would often attend NCSY’s weekly meetings at Beth Jacob, and Michael, president of BJ’s NCSY chapter, attended weekly meetings at Shearith Israel.

“NCSY sparked us,” says Betsy explaining that the youth group gave them a taste of Shabbos. “It made us familiar with it.” Though neither one of them was committed to full observance, Michael relates that he would attend synagogue in the morning and then work at Colonial Grocers in Toco Hills in the afternoon. During their college years –Michael at Georgia

Betsy describes Shabbos as a time for  
“family, friends, and rejuvenation.”

Tech and Betsy at Marsh Draughn Business School – put Shabbos on hold. “We had other priorities,” says Betsy. But once they were married, their interest in Shabbos was rekindled.

In 1972, Betsy and Michael were married and moved to Buford Highway, where, in the early 70’s, many young couples started out. With no synagogues in walking distance, Betsy would drive to her parents’ house before Shabbos and stay there until it was over. “Betsy was always a step ahead of me in observance,” says Michael smiling. “She really led the way.”

Leading the way included the next step of moving closer to a shul. “When we moved to Kenco LaVista apartments (near North Druid Hills Road), we knew we wanted to keep Shabbos,” says Betsy. Every Saturday morning, she and Michael walked the mile or so to Beth Jacob on gravel road, long before there were sidewalks. Still, according to Michael, they lived far enough away to be able to do whatever they wanted to do in the afternoons.

Then the families in the community reached out and invited them for meals. In turn, the Cenkers hosted Shabbos meals in their apartment.

They attribute much of their growth at this time to the interest by Rabbi Herbert Cohen, then assistant rabbi at Beth Jacob and later principal of Yeshiva Atlanta, and his first wife, the late Sandy Cohen a”h, for which they named one of their children.

When they moved to their first house on Rogeretta, the Cenkers became more involved. “We wanted the children to have an anchor,” says Betsy who, along with Michael, became very active as youth advisors and in other leadership roles at BJ.

Still, in observance, they took things slowly. When her children came home from day school and told Betsy what to do differently, she said firmly, “Let me grow at my own pace.”

Pace is what Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, then senior rabbi at Beth Jacob, helped them with all along. He encouraged them to take on one thing at a time. “‘Take a step, get comfortable’,” Betsy quotes Rabbi Feldman saying, “‘then get uncomfortable and take the next step’.”

“We’re still growing in our Shabbos observance,” says Betsy.

# 'Twas the Shabbat Before Christmas

BY BOBBY WEINMANN

As Facebook would say, my relationship with Shabbat is complicated. When I was a kid, we drove through the Orthodox neighborhood in Cleveland Heights (which we called Little Israel) on Shabbat on the way to the movies and saw some weirdos walking around. In my teens, I started doing Shabbat, sort of, by myself, with no idea what I was doing. No meal, no singing (which for those who know me, is not necessarily a bad thing), and usually no company. It mainly consisted of staying at home and not watching TV.

In college there was HOPE... and former Yeshiva Atlanta girls. Georgia started the HOPE scholarship around that time, which got several kids from the community to go to Georgia Tech instead of a fun school. Rabbi Friedman drew the short straw among the Kollel rabbis and was appointed to come teach Torah to engineers. Thanks to all of them, especially Meira Katz and family, I had places to stay and good food and Shabbat became enjoyable.

Looking back, a lot of my life has revolved around Shabbat. I met

my wife on Shabbat; the one time I had to take my daughter to the emergency room was on Shabbat (B"H, she was fine); I was Shabbat Hospitality Guy for 4 1/2 years and wrote a little weekly email a few people read and liked (and if you didn't like those, you can stop reading now; you won't like this either). I'm always a little amazed when I reconnect with the world on Saturday night that it wasn't "Shabbat" for everyone; that somehow they weren't in our little Twilight Zone. Or should I say Shabbat Zone?

All this leads me to one of my favorite stories, and my little war with Christmas (not to be confused with Bill O'Reilly's War on Christmas - I'm not crazy). Christmas is this non-Jewish holiday that falls on December 25, but because of Yom Tov sheni shel galiyot, extends from the Friday before and begins with everyone taking his car to the nearest highway and just sitting there. I never really took much notice of this halacha, having not celebrated said holiday as an adult, until I was stuck on GA-400 with Shabbat looming. Atlanta traffic is notorious at the best of times and the Friday before Christmas is not the best of times.

So I inched my way forward calculating again and again, when was the last possible moment I could ditch my car without violating Shabbat.

I was very relieved to finally make it off GA-400 at Sydney Marcus with about 3 minutes to spare. At least this way, I could park in a parking lot and not have to walk on the highway. Now I had to make the decision of where to park. The two most promising were the old Home Depot - and yes, I've been in Atlanta long enough that I give directions based on landmarks which no longer exist - and a strip mall which had largely been turned over to... Big John's Christmas trees. Aha! The guilty party sitting there, mocking me. I figured the least they could do in return was watch my car.

**As Facebook would say, my relationship with Shabbat is complicated.**

B"H, I had a cellphone, so I could at least let Julie know what was going on. I hate to think what it'd be like if I just didn't show up for dinner. How did we exist before Steve Jobs invented the cellphone?

While Julie understood why I was ditching my car, Big John (or whoever I talked to), just kinda said, "Sure." I locked the aforementioned phone, and my keys in the aforementioned car in front of the aforementioned Big John's, and set out for home. About 4 miles, through the snow, uphill both ways. I may have exaggerated about that, but it was cold, it took a couple hours and I had to be careful, because there is no eruv out there, and even taking off my gloves for a few feet would be a Torah prohibition.

I know it wasn't much, and others have sacrificed much more, but I feel like, in a way, I earned Shabbat with that experience. It certainly marked where I was. When I was a kid, I celebrated Christmas and Shabbat was something some weirdos did. Now, celebrating Shabbat is second nature, and I'm only aware of Christmas as something some weirdos do. But I do remember to get off the road early when they do.



# Rochel & Yente and the Triangle Shirt Fire

BY LEVI GRAISER

*It was Shabbos, 25 Adar 5671, March 25th, 1911. Two young Jewish immigrant sisters were about to have their paths in life diverge forever. Rochel was struggling to earn a meager living in the New World. She was not able to resist the incredibly intense spiritual test (nisayon) regarding working on Shabbos in a society that was completely unsupportive of such “irrational” choices. Yente, likewise struggling to pay for the basics in life, remained steadfast to Shabbos observance and has a rich legacy to tell her story.*

Yente was my great grandmother. She and her sister came to New York in 1909 as young, single European Jewish immigrants through the gates of Ellis Island. She and her sister Rochel found employment at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Manhattan. Though Rochel, like so many immigrants, unfortunately gave up Shabbos observance in order to work a full six day workweek, Yente maintained her Shabbos observance as she had been taught at home. So, on that fateful Shabbos afternoon, March 25th, 1911, Rochel was in the factory when the deadly fire broke out and Yente was

not. Rochel perished. Because she was Shabbos observant, Yente was not present in the factory at that time and was saved.

Yente decided to return home to Europe. Before this horrifying event in Yente’s life, she already saw and felt that America was the “Treife Medinah” (“Non-Kosher” country), as it lacked the basic infrastructure of a Jewish community (that in 2015 we are so blessed with). Following the Shiva period for her sister, Yente returned to Europe. Ultimately, she was to be killed in Auschwitz, but would be blessed with the opportunity to first start a family, so her descendants live on to tell her legacy.

In 1918 her future husband, Hirsch, became engaged to another young lady. He then went off to serve in the Austro-Hungarian army in WWI, rising to the rank of Sergeant. He returned home to find that his parents had died in the Influenza Epidemic of 1918, leaving him with 6 young siblings to raise. His fiancé, upon hearing that Hirsch was bringing such a unique “dowry” into their new life, suggested that he “dump them in the river.” Well, he

Because she was Shabbos observant, Yente was not present in the factory at that time and was saved.

“dumped” her and broke the engagement, and after a short while was introduced to Yente, who said “your siblings are my children.”

Hirsch and Yente had 6 children of their own in addition to the 6 they began married life with. Tuvia, their 3rd son was my maternal grandfather. Yente made her son Tuvia promise never to go to the “Treife Medinah.” However, after being taken to the Ghetto following Pesach in 1944, she wrote to Tuvia that “if we live this through we will meet in the United States,” thus releasing him from this promise. Yente and most of the family were killed shortly before Shavuuous in 1944, but Tuvia, being in Budapest, followed a different path and survived. He came to the US in 1947 and started a family. And the “rest is (family) history.”

We cannot imagine the difficulties that our immigrant ancestors faced here at the turn of the century regarding Shabbos observance. I know that I can tell my boss on Friday afternoon, “I need to leave now, see you Monday,” without much concern for the security of my position. So I often wonder on a Friday night, following Challah and Kugel, whether I have the strength to with-

stand the difficult test of Shabbos observance that was the norm 100+ years ago. I try, through my weekly observance of Shabbos, to foster in myself the rock-solid trust and belief in G-d our Creator that would allow me to withstand such a test.

Yente had such strength. She knew that G-d alone provides and directs life, and her Shabbos observance saved her life. Perhaps it was this same strength that allowed her to adopt 6 young orphans as she started married life in the war-ravaged Czechoslovakia of 1919. This strength followed her to the ghetto and gas chambers as she gave up her life to the G-d Whose Shabbos she kept so faithfully at any cost in any location. And I hope her strength inspires you, as it does me, to meet our spiritual challenges with strength and faith, and with the smile that I see in her picture on my wall.

*And it cannot be other than G-d’s hand that my 3rd son was born on 25 Adar, 5771, EXACTLY 100 years to the day of the Triangle Shirt Fire!*



# Wine on Wednesday Just Won't Do

BY ERIKA NEEDLEMAN

My first year of college, I bonded with a very special group of women all of whom lived on my floor in the campus dorms. We were from completely different backgrounds and ethnicities, but we loved one another very much and came to treasure our time together. After our first year, we were no longer all living on campus, our time together became fragmented, and our ability to meet as a group became almost impossible. Through lamenting this dispersion of a community so easily gained and lost, I came up with a solution: Wine Wednesdays. It happened that none of us had a class on Wednesday evenings, we all loved wine, and we had all sensed a need for one another's companionship and support as we ventured through this exciting time in our lives as we tried to figure out what and who we wanted to be when we grew up.

And so I made a pitch to my girlfriends that we would meet every Wednesday night, drink wine, no phones, no movies, no boys allowed. It was 'us' time. And so began a very special ritual in all of our lives. We met almost every Wednesday through our undergrad years for

up to five hours to reconnect with one another and ourselves. It was pretty awesome.

Three years after starting Wine Wednesdays, I found myself sitting at a Shabbos table for the first time in my life. I was at Brandeis for the summer working as a Jewish Feminist studies intern, and I had been invited by one of the professors, along with the other interns, to enjoy a 'traditional Shabbos.' Oh boy.

When I arrived at the professor's house, I was instructed that I would be turning off my cell phone and computer for 25 hours. Double oh boy. Despite my knowing quite a lot about Jewish feminism, I hadn't a clue when it came to the religious ritual of keeping Shabbos. At first thought I was mildly petrified at the thought of "disconnecting" from the world for a whole day, but upon second thought I became very excited and even, dare I say it, relieved to be allowed to take a momentary pause from the devices to which I had become so inextricably bound. It was in the years before the iPhone and Androids, but even with my dinky slide phone, I had become

quite attached. I quickly sent out a mass text warning all who I thought may want to get in touch in the next day that no, I had not died, but was turning off my phone for a whole day for experimental Jewish observance reasons. "Don't worry," I soothed my dumbfounded friends and family, "I'll call you Saturday night."

When I would later explain this to my Chabad Rabbi on campus he said something to me about my "holy Neshama (soul)," and I probably responded with something like "Whatever, Rabbi"! But looking back, I cannot help but nod my head and laugh. It turns out that I do have a holy neshama, a soul inside of me that was yearning to connect

to something greater, to create a place and time where I could 'be' instead of 'do'. And I found it. In Shabbos.

**My Wine Wednesday friends were my way of connecting to myself and others, but until Shabbos I had no way of connecting with my Creator or to my inner self.**

To my amazement, Shabbos was absolutely glorious. The food was fantastic, the conversation enthralling, and the time to sit and contemplate instead of type and click was utterly profound. About halfway through the Shabbos, it suddenly dawned on me that a part of me had been longing for Shabbos for the last three years (at least). I had created Wine Wednesday as a naïve and unconscious attempt at keeping Shabbos. My Wine Wednesday friends were my way of connecting to myself and others, but until Shabbos I had no way of connecting with my Creator or to my inner self.

# TGIF

BY HELEN GERCHIKOV

I used to live for Fridays, or Friday nights I should say. It was the highlight of my week growing up: the start of the weekend. There would be no school for two whole days and I would have a chance to hang out with my friends, stay up late, and sleep in. Any homework would be relegated to Sunday night. It was great.

My family would do the Friday night Shabbat meal, but as soon as dessert was over, I would wave goodbye and go meet my friends either at the bowling alley or at the movies. I didn't think much about Shabbat; it was just a fancier dinner.

**Now when the havdalah candle is extinguished at the end of Shabbos, I am a little sad that Shabbos has ended.**

The first time I spent a Shabbos, really observing it, was when I was in college. I had no idea it would take so long. It was in June and must have been the longest Saturday of the year. I had my suitcase packed

and by the door as soon as it was dark, and my car keys were out. "Wouldn't you like to stay for havdalah," my hostess asked. "There's more?" I thought. But I stayed, and as soon as the havdalah flame was extinguished, I thanked my hosts and left. I was headed for the movies to meet my friends.

A funny thing has happened since then. I started to spend more Shabboses really observing Shabbos. What changed? I realized I wasn't missing anything. My own family gathered together every Friday night. But...Shabbos was more than the Friday night meal. It was a chance to really connect. The whole day, the

whole 25-hour period was set aside to connect as a family and with Hashem. Was I really connecting with my friends at the movie theater? I remember my host family, who were very patient with me, not

running off to the next thing to have fun or to watch a movie. Really, they could do that any time. Shabbos was set aside to be different. It was almost a springboard for living. Whereas I was going to the movies

to escape whatever was going on, Shabbos was a day to gather in. No escape hatches needed.

Now when the havdalah candle is extinguished at the end of Shabbos, I am a little sad that Shabbos has ended. But I am also satisfied, knowing that the day was used to live in connection with Hashem and the people around me. Friday night is still a fancier dinner, but it is a Shabbos dinner with no one running off after dessert. I look forward to Fridays still, but now it is with the knowledge that Shabbos is coming and there is no need to escape it, just a need to run to it. TGIF, or, now I think it's better to say, THIS: Thank Hashem it's Shabbos!

# Good Shabbos to the Person Across the Mechitza

BY JULIE WEINMANN

I don't remember the date when I first observed Shabbat fully for the first time. Nor have I marked each Shabbat by dropping a marble in a jar, as a close friend of mine does. But I do remember having seen my now husband in shul on Shabbat, and so I will begin there.

We both attended the beginner's minyan with Rabbi Dave Silverman. At the end of each service Rabbi Dave would say, "Say hello and good Shabbos to the person across the mechitza." Bobby loves to tell the story of how I would walk slowly up to the front of the room with my siddur to put it away, hoping to get there exactly at the same time he did. I remember eating lunch with a couple who lived up Briarcliff in The Park apartments. I can't remember their names, but I do remember that that was our first Shabbat lunch together. Eventually I caught his eye and the rest is history... almost 19 years and to quote In Living Color, "we're still together"!

Moving into the neighborhood was a big step for me, and one I took slowly in terms of observing Shabbat. The warmth and acceptance of

this community is the reason I am here now. Many people helped me take those baby steps. I was always amazed how many people approached me on any given Shabbos to make sure I had a place to go.

Many years and a daughter later, I became Mrs. Hospitality (because of Bobby being Hospitality Guy). For 4 ½ years we were blessed to be able to welcome guests into our home in an "official" capacity. It made me realize how wonderful it feels when someone calls or asks if they can come to your home for a meal. I realized that sometimes a person may have gone home alone had it not been for our invitation. I was never quite sure who might appear at the front door with Bobby on Shabbat, and as nerve wracking as that could be – most were pleasant, but there were a few "interesting" ones - I do miss it.

Now that our daughter, Shani, is in seminary, our Shabbatot are quieter. Not lonelier as I thought they might be, just different. I miss having our daughter's friends come for lunch and hanging out all afternoon... then rummaging through our pantry later

in the day! Who said teenage girls don't eat??

We now enjoy having friends over who we know so well that we can remember "he's not fond of eggplant, she doesn't like olives and he loves pumpkin pie any time of year!!"

Now, we are back to the way we were years ago when we were first married. Just the two of us. Yes, I guess we are empty nesters, so break out the Rummikub and Bananagrams before a long Shabbat nap!

At the end of each service Rabbi Dave would say, "Say hello and good Shabbos to the person across the mechitza."

# Shabbos Priorities

BY RABBI NORM SCHLOSS

Around 10 years ago, our family went on a cruise to Alaska. This was not a Kosher cruise, but the cruise line was most accommodating in getting us Kosher meals and meeting all of our requirements.

I guess Hashem rewarded me for having my Shabbos priorities in line!

On Shabbos, the ship docked offshore in College Fjord, where we spent the day enjoying Hashem's wonders as we gazed at the glaciers.

We had just finished eating our Shabbos lunch when we heard an announcement that if we went on deck we could witness the glacier calving (breaking and sliding into the water). Lydia and the kids proceeded to go up on deck while I went in the opposite direction to go to our cabin.

"Where are you going?" they all asked.

I answered, "It's Shabbos – I'm going to my cabin for my Shabbos nap."

"Dad," they insisted, "how many times are you going to be in Alaska? You can forego your Shabbos nap."

But I was adamant. It was Shabbos and I was going to my cabin. As I was getting ready to lie down, I heard a tremendous roar out of my cabin window. I rushed to look out of the window just in time to see the entire glacier break off and slide into the water. It was a truly breathtaking sight.

Twenty minutes later, everyone came down to the cabin.

"Did you see the glacier calving?" I excitedly asked. "It was fantastic!"

"Well, no," they said. "There were so many people on deck that we couldn't see anything."

I guess Hashem rewarded me for having my Shabbos priorities in line!

# Bringing on the evening twilight

BY PAM WILLIAMS

For the last couple of years, Mom and Dad (both in their 80's) have been tirelessly going through photos of their last fifty plus years together. In a computer file dated 1960, there are two pictures of me celebrating my first Shabbat. In one, I'm being held by my Mom and in the other, I'm being held by my Dad.

The candles on the small kitchen table are lit. The candlesticks were crafted by Ludwig Wolpert, an Israeli who was an artisan in residence at the Jewish Museum in New York City. When my mom purchased my dad's Kiddush cup for their wedding, Mr. Wolpert gave my parents the candlesticks because he liked the idea that my mom was getting a Kiddush cup for her groom. Next to the candlesticks is the challah, covered with a chalasudik crocheted by my dad's grandmother, my Bubbe. The two Kiddush cups on the table are the same ones that my parents use today. There is the one my mom gave to my dad. My mom's Kiddush cup was a wedding present from my Bubbe. There is also an empty baby bottle on the table. I look content.

My parents gave me the gift of Shabbat. I have never known a time

without Shabbat. And, for that I am truly thankful to them and know that I was blessed. My observance level has evolved, but I have always celebrated Shabbat in some fashion or another.

I really do not have a favorite Shabbat or a favorite guest because all of them have been special.

I see in my mind's eye snippets of different Shabbats over the years:

Shabbats of my youth surrounded by my parents, siblings, and my incredibly wonderful Grandma who lived nearby, singing songs from our Grossinger Resort Zemirots booklets

Sitting in the synagogue discussing the Parsha of the week with my dad.

Our first Shabbat as a married couple and realizing that I was not much of a cook.

Having single friends join us for Shabbat. They endured my experiential and barely expanding repertoire of meals.

The first Shabbats of each of our four sons.

My parents gave me the gift of Shabbat. I have never known a time without Shabbat. And, for that I am truly thankful to them and know that I was blessed.

The moment our sons knew Shabbat was something special (about six months old.)

Our first year of Shabbats in Atlanta with our cousin Ronit from Israel who was studying for her MBA at Georgia Tech and lived across the street in the apartment complex from us. Family in town at last. Now one of our sons lives near Ronit in Tel Aviv and celebrates Shabbat there.

And, the first time my husband used the blessing for a girl as he blessed our daughter-in-law-to-be at our Shabbat table.

On Shabbat, one dog sits on either side of my husband waiting for a taste of Shabbat chicken. Initially we instituted a “no feeding the dogs from the table” rule, but even they know when it’s Shabbat.

Shabbats whenever we are with our sons and daughter-in-law, parents, and siblings and their families.

What stands out most in my mind are the Shabbats we had when we had been married for four years. We lived in Oklahoma City and both worked downtown. On

our long drive home on Friday evenings, we would first join the small endearing Jewish conservative community of Oklahoma City at Emanuel Synagogue to welcome Shabbat.

As we recited this poetic blessing:

Blessed are You, Lord our G-D, Ruler of the universe,  
Who creates the evening,  
Skillfully opens the gates,  
Thoughtfully alters the time and changes the seasons,  
And arranges the stars in their heavenly courses according to plan.  
You are Creator of day and night,  
Rolling light away from darkness and darkness from light,  
Transforming day into night and distinguishing one from the other.  
A-donai is your Name.  
Ever-living G-D, may You reign continually over us into eternity.  
Blessed are you, A-donai, who brings on the evening twilight.

A unique sense of peace entered our souls. That sense of peace is called Shabbat.

## The Turning Point

BY MICHAEL GRAISER

In many ways, I was a typical Long Island Jewish boy when I made my way north as a freshman to my upstate New York college in August of 1973. I graduated public high school with honors, was an overachiever, and wanted to solve the problems of the world. I made plenty of time for extra-curricular activities and had my taste of first love. And yes, I was more than a little excited about the prospects of really being away from home for the first time. But in one way I was quite different. Somehow, despite my being raised in an assimilated Jewish home, my Judaism meant a whole lot to me. For several years I felt an increasing sense of frustration and isolation in wanting to deepen my exploration of Judaism. Yet, my social environment – family, friends and Reform - temple were all holding me back. It was therefore a pleasant surprise when I learned that my college offered a kosher meal plan. Little did I realize that checking that one box for the kosher option was the start of a complete life transformation. As a freshman, signing up for a university meal plan was mandatory, and the meal card choice needed a parent’s signature. Okay, so I told my mother a little

white lie when, after she asked me why I signed up for the kosher plan, I told her that I thought it was a good way to meet other Jewish kids. The truth was that I struggled for the last year or so of high school to secretly maintain some semblance of keeping kosher at home and I was happy to learn that I could finally be kosher, at least at school.

It must have been from a fellow kosher diner that I learned of a Friday evening Shabbat service at the student union. From my experiences at my Reform temple, I envisioned what the service might look like and decided to give it a try. So for the first time that week, the cut-off jeans, sandals, and polo shirt were traded in for a pair of dress slacks, shirt, jacket, tie and shoes. I was surprised by the large turnout of fellow students and found a place near the back of the room, glad that there were still extra copies of the handout, pages copied from an English-Hebrew prayer book. After a brief glance, I realized that this was not the Reform Union prayer book that I grew up with but was open to the new experience. The service had a lot more Hebrew than

I was accustomed to and included melodies that I didn't know. Then something happened which really threw me. Suddenly in the middle of one of the melodies everyone did a 180 degree turn and instead of facing the front of the room was now facing the back. As I was standing near the back of the room, I became very self-conscious, feeling that everyone now facing the back was staring at me who was still facing the front. The momentary panic started fading away when they turned around, and I once again melted into the crowd. The rest of the service no longer registers in my memory but that deer-in-the-headlights moment of facing one direction with everyone else in the opposite direction and able to see how clueless I was would be another transformational event in my life.

As I lie awake in bed that night, I was focused on that one uncomfortable moment at the Shabbat service. I kept asking myself, "How could it be that these were all Jews in the room, just like me, and yet I had no idea what that turning around was all about?" Up to that point, I considered my Jewish education and affinity to adequately prepare me for Jewish life. Back home, my rabbi was my hero and I

was his class favorite. I even defied my parents' wishes by continuing my Sunday school education after confirmation, as my plans to continue at the temple were in conflict with their desire to drop their temple membership after the bar mitzvahs of my younger brothers. In my senior year, I broke up with my non-Jewish girlfriend, finally getting the courage to tell her that I was no longer interested in non-Jewish girls. So I was feeling proud and confident as a Jew, but that one little moment a few hours ago completely shook my confidence - in my rabbi, in the entire Reform movement, and in me.

My first order of business was to find out what that turning around was all about. I was moved to learn about the significance of turning around to figuratively greet the Shabbat Queen. But that was just the beginning. I felt that I was a committed Jew but kept asking myself, "What am I really committed to?" I had always believed that G-d had written the Bible but did I really know much about what was inside it? I would spend the next two years learning all about what G-d expected of me and living my life accordingly. I would be assisted and encouraged by what became

Somehow, despite my being raised in an assimilated Jewish home, my Judaism meant a whole lot to me.

a close circle of friends at school, fellow travelers who themselves were on similar journeys of exploration with their Judaism. I would eventually marry one of these friends and know the joy of building and sharing a traditional Torah home with her. I was eager to dive into deeper waters of Jewish study and after two years transferred to Yeshiva University in Manhattan where I was enrolled in a dual program combining Judaic and secular subjects. After years of yearning and searching, I knew that I had finally arrived home.

In looking back over my journey, I am profoundly grateful for HaShem's hand in the rescue of my neshama, my Jewish soul. In my mind, I never even intended to attend that upstate New York college that I did. I had applied for early admissions to and had been accepted by Emory University here in Atlanta. But the lack of scholarship precluded my attendance, and I very reluctantly had to decline their offer of admission (funny irony that many years later, as an employee of Emory, their employee courtesy scholarship program enabled both myself as a graduate student and my son as an undergrad to attend Emory tuition-free). But HaShem decided

that my Jewish soul, after years of sputtering, after years of dealing with my diluted version of Judaism, needed a dramatic rescue. His stage was set with the checking of a tiny box for selecting a meal plan at a university that I really didn't intend on attending. Soon afterwards there was a Friday night service with a tiny moment of a turnaround. It provided the fuel to make me open my eyes to the fact that what I thought was a reasonable knowledge of Judaism was just a speck of information, and even misinformation about my people, our G-d and His holy Torah. It gave me the courage to face the truth of the lies that my upbringing had supplied me with, which were all intended to deny me my full heritage and keep me away from my life's purpose - which is to serve the Almighty and to bring honor to His name.

Today, my wife and I are preparing for a little party celebrating the second birthday of one of our precious grandchildren. Maybe one day she and all the rest of our grandchildren will realize that their Torah lives are due in part to a turnabout at a Friday night Shabbat service that their Zeidy attended many, many years ago.



## But It's Shabbos

BY RUBY M. GROSSBLATT

One Saturday morning when I was newly married, I opened the door to my apartment at almost the same time that my neighbor opened hers.

"Mrs. Grossblatt," said Mrs. Needleman, a round little lady with white hair and kind eyes. "What are you doing?"

Balancing a filled laundry basket, detergent, and a handful of quarters, I thought it was obvious what I was doing. "I'm washing clothes."

"But it's Shabbos," she said.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Needleman," I replied. "I teach all week and this is my only day to wash."

"But it's Shabbos," she repeated softly.

"I'm sorry," I said again, but I wasn't really. I didn't understand what she was saying. Shabbos had no meaning for me. It was a day to go shopping after I finished the clothes. So I headed for the laundry room and put Mrs. Needleman out of my mind -- until the High Holy Days.

My husband and I didn't observe Shabbos, but we did go to shul on

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. At one of those services, Rabbi Jacob Max challenged everyone in the congregation to take on one mitzvah.

When we got home, we couldn't figure out what mitzvah to choose. Then I remembered Mrs. Needleman. "Maybe we should stop washing clothes on Saturday," I told my husband. And that's exactly how we came to Atlanta, Georgia, about three years later -- not washing clothes on Shabbos.

There's a saying, that if you make an opening like the eye of a needle, G-d will do the rest. Soon we were settled into a house behind a huge Baptist Church. The first neighbor to welcome us arrived with a wiggling, green gelatin mold and an invitation to come to church with her.

My husband and I looked at each other and said, "We don't go to church."

"Where do you go?" she asked.

"To synagogue," I told her but actually we only went there twice a year.

Actually, Shabbos isn't about not washing clothes, snapping photos, or shopping. It's not about restrictions, but about connections.

"Come anyway," she replied. "They'll be happy to have you."

We were sure they'd be happy to have us, but we weren't going. Instead we looked at our two little boys playing on the floor and decided that we had to do something for them -- not for us of course - but for them. The next Friday night we had our first Shabbos dinner. Fortunately, my husband attended day school through the 8th grade so he could recite Kiddush. I have a picture of him at our Shabbos table with our 3 year old son, both holding their cups high. Who knew that we shouldn't take pictures on Shabbos?

Actually, Shabbos isn't about not washing clothes, snapping photos, or shopping. It's not about restrictions, but about connections. By not doing what is defined by the Torah as "work," we jump off the treadmill and connect to our souls. When Mrs. Needleman, with pain in her voice said, "But it's Shabbos," she was pleading with me to remember who I am. When Rabbi Max asked the congregation to do more, he was urging us to connect to our heritage - one mitzvah at a time.

It took several years, before my

beloved husband and I became Shomrei Shabbos. Thank G-d, we did. Because now that my husband is gone, I still feel connected, especially when I light Shabbos candles.

Dressed in my best clothes, standing near the table that's set for a festive meal, and smelling the sweet chicken soup from the kitchen, I cover my eyes and recite the blessing. Then when I uncover my eyes, another part of me emerges. That part is connected to something outside of the physical world. For 25 hours, I'm free from the need to care for the house, catch the sale at the mall, or exercise at the gym. Shabbos is a gift that I don't know what I'd do without.

Now, I understand what Mrs. Needleman meant when she said, "But it's Shabbos." Ironically, after that one encounter with her, I didn't see her again. My neighbor, who loved Shabbos, never knew that I stopped washing clothes on Saturday. But years later, when I was researching our family tree and interviewing Bubby Schlachman, my husband's grandmother, she told me that her parents and grandparents were tailors in Poland. And her grandmother's last name was Needleman.

# Journey to Shabbos Observance

BY BEV FERMON

What does it take for someone to become Shabbos observant?

Shabbos was always special to me when I was growing up. Friday night meant Family night at the Fermons and I lit the candles. I loved going to shul on Friday night after dinner. I would sit beside my father and play with the strings on his tallis. I delighted in the sermons. I liked following the path of the stories and marveling at how the rabbi brought the story back together at the end.

On some Friday nights we would go to my grandparents' house. It had the delicious smell of cumin. My grandfather would wind the clock with a key and my grandmother would call me "Choneybunch" (Honeybunch).

I gazed at the tiny flames that glowed from tips of the seven cotton balls of cotton she had twisted into the shape of Hershey kisses, dipped in oil, and set in a pan of oil on her stove.

"Bubbie, why do you have seven Shabbos lights?"

"One for each of my sons," she answered in with her thick Spanish-Turkish accent.

At summer camp, Shabbos was also special in a different way. On Friday afternoon, after we showered, we dressed in white shorts and white tops. One of us would be the Shabbos queen and carry a lit candle down the aisle during Lecha Dodi. Saturday mornings were the best. We had services outside on the ground in the pine grove. During the silent meditation, I expressed gratitude for the nature all around me. Shabbos was part of my childhood.

In college, Shabbos just faded away. I was the only Jewish girl in my dorm. I just did not think about Shabbos.

When I came to Atlanta, the Hillel rabbi held free services at Glenn Memorial on the Emory Campus, and he invited the unaffiliated to come for free. I went. He sang something called a niggun, a song without words that would carry whatever was in my heart to Hashem. (What's a niggun, I thought, and who is

"Hashem"?) That rabbi invited us to come to Hillel. He said we did not need to be a student. I went.

The music of the prayers was familiar and uplifting. Something in me stirred. I felt connected. At one point in the service, he turned and said, "You may not believe it, but the Angel of the Sabbath just came in." (What angel? Jews believe in angels?)

One thing led to another. There were Shabbos lunches at Hillel with lots of singing and lots of learning. Then there was the Shabbaton at Lake Lanier. That was my first real 25-hour Shabbos. At some point during the weekend I walked past my car and felt freedom. The car was there to serve me. It would sit and wait.

Was that what brought me to observance? Was it the Hillel rabbi saying, "Just light candles, that's all. Just light candles."

Was it the Chabad of Milwaukee that adopted me during my year of Montessori elementary training in Wisconsin? Each week they made sure I had a family to be with on Saturdays.

Was it parking my car on Jody Lane and walking from there to Rabbi

Silverman's beginner service? Was it watching Jan Siegleman blessing his children on Friday nights? Was it Rachael's challa?

Was it the Lipschutz family who invited me to lunch, when I was seeing if I could walk to their house from my house? They showed me a shortcut through Briar Oaks. I figured if I made it to their house, I could make it to shul.

Was it the older woman, bundled in a raincoat and hat, walking with a cane, passing me as I walked to the beginner service? "Good Shabbos," she said. She didn't even know me.

I am observant now, and have been for a long time. I can't imagine life without Shabbos. I wouldn't want to.

In Rabbi Ken Spiro's book, *World-Perfect*, he asks, what identifies the Jews? Is it a nation? Is it a religion? Is it a people with a common language or homeland? He suggests: It is an extended family, descending from Avraham Avinu.

What does it take to bring someone to Shabbos Observance? It takes a village.



