



SHABBOS 2.0

Taking Shabbos to the next level

BY ROBERT SUSSMAN



Rebbetzin Gourarie's table set for Shabbos, check out the Kosher Gourmet on page 68!

I HAD BEEN IN LAW SCHOOL FOR ABOUT A MONTH when a panicked classmate who hailed from, of all places, Alaska approached me with a look of grave concern on his face. "Do you mean to tell me that you don't do any – ANY – work for law school on Saturdays!?" He had obviously been speaking with other students about the fact that I was a Sabbath observant Jew, the implications of which had clearly dawned on him. A smile spread over my face, as I shook my head in the affirmative and calmly uttered, "That's correct," and waited for his reaction. Utterly flabbergasted, a look of complete disbelief on his face, he now stood before me, shaking his head from side-to-side saying, "I don't know how you get by!" There are moments in our lives

where we get the response right on the very first try (and not just later on in our imagination after we replay things multiple times). I sat forward and asked him, "Do you mean to tell me that you do work for law school seven days a week?" He proudly responded in the affirmative. I pressed him, "You never take a day off?" "No!" he enthusiastically announced. It was now my turn to express absolute shock and disbelief, albeit with a bit of a wry smile, "I don't know how you get by!"

The truth is I really don't know how people "get by" without Shabbos each week. And I'm not talking about just taking a day off from work or unplugging for 24 hours and enjoying some real human, face-to-face contact and conversation. I'm talking

about experiencing a Shabbos each week, a day which requires us to disconnect from our normal weekday activities – the things we do all week, as well as the way in which we do those things – and to focus our energies in a completely different way, channelling those energies into other areas and relationships which would otherwise suffer from neglect. Like most things in life, however, our connection to Shabbos is very much about both the perspective that we bring to it and what we actually put into it. People who choose not to keep Shabbos generally think of that day in the negative – in terms of the things that we are not permitted to do on it. Funnily enough, I have never met anyone who regularly keeps Shabbos who thinks of it in that way at all. Rather than hyper-focusing on such details and seeing them as detracting from the day, someone familiar with what Shabbos is all about sees such things in their larger context and recognises that refraining from such activities actually has the opposite effect, helping to enhance the experience of that day.

Although Shabbos is certainly counted among the many mitzvos contained in the Torah, and even famously inscribed on the tablets containing the Ten Commandments which Moshe carried down from Mount Sinai, Hashem also informed Moshe that Shabbos was His gift to us – and not just any gift, but an incredibly precious one, worthy of being stored in Hashem's own storehouse of treasures. To appreciate this gift, we need to do more than just show up to the table with a hearty appetite. Shabbos requires preparation and not just regarding the obvious things we need to do in advance because we cannot do them on that day. I'm talking about our entire approach to Shabbos. Shabbos is meant to be something savoured, something special, which we look forward to and think about all week long – an oasis in time. What follows are two very different approaches to enhancing our experience of Shabbos: the first focuses directly on preparing and investing in our Shabbos table and the second focuses on changing our weekday dining routine in order to, indirectly, enrich our Shabbos dining experience as a result.

Making Shabbos MEMORABLE



A small investment yields big returns

RABBI SENDER GROSSNASS, MAGGID SHIUR (lecturer) at the Kollel Yad Shaul, explains that preparing for Shabbos means more than just making sure that the food is cooked, the house is cleaned, and the table is set. "A person also has to prepare the spirituality of Shabbos," he notes. "There has to be preparation for the table of Shabbos like a teacher has to prepare a lesson." Practically speaking, this means that a father has to set aside some time on Wednesday and Thursday each week to sit down and prepare two lessons for his family, one for the Friday night meal and one for the Shabbos day meal. It cannot wait until the Friday rush, when there is simply no time for such things. "A person has to stop and think: what am I going to say after each course? What type of vort (words of To-



A growing range
of quality products
brought to you by



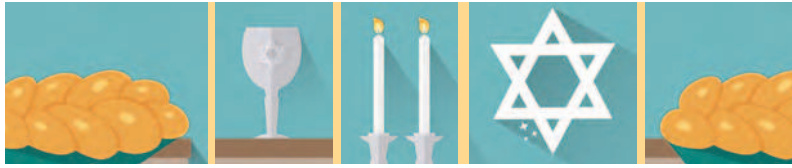
on your table every day



Calaska Trading 29 (Pty) Ltd t/a Adam International Group, Est 1976

Telephone: +27 11 466 2994 | Fax: +27 11 466 1719
yehudah@adamint.co.za | www.adaminternational.co.za
Unit 5, Tuscan Place | 138 Dytchley Rd, Kyalami, Johannesburg

AVAILABLE TO YOU ALL YEAR ROUND AT PICK N PAY, SPAR SANDRINGHAM,
SPAR NORWOOD, FRESHFELLA'S & THRUPPS



“IT’S EASY FOR PARENTS TO GET UPSET WITH THEIR CHILDREN BECAUSE IT’S A VERY CONCENTRATED AMOUNT OF TIME TOGETHER DURING WHICH THINGS CAN SPILL AND BREAK AND EVERYONE IS HUNGRY, ESPECIALLY BEFORE KIDDUSH, AND TEMPER CAN OFTEN FLARE.”

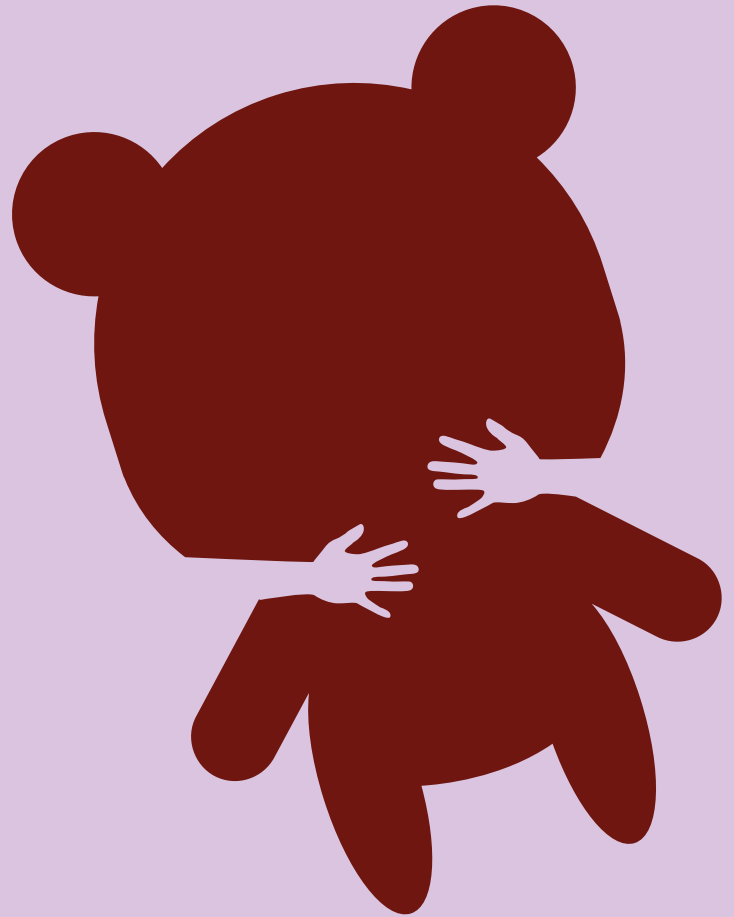
rah) am I going to say?” And, just as with a teacher, we have to do our best to entertain and engage our audience – to make the Shabbos meal and the learning come alive, inspiring the children and keeping their interest.

“It’s also important to keep in mind,” Rabbi Grossnass says, “that just like adults have a mitzvah of oneg Shabbos (of enjoying ourselves on Shabbos), so too our children deserve to enjoy Shabbos.” Accordingly, Rabbi Grossnass cautions, “we must take extra care not to get angry with our children at this special time. It’s easy for parents to get upset with their children because it’s a very concentrated amount of time together during which things can spill and break and everyone is hungry, especially before kiddush, and tempers can often flare. We must be patient and ensure that our children enjoy Shabbos, so that they will cherish their memories of the Shabbos table.”

Rabbi Grossnass’ suggestions for preparing the spiritual atmosphere of the Shabbos table each week:

- We need to get a good story book and keep it under lock and key. It must be a book that the children have not yet read and with which they are not familiar, so that it will be fresh and exciting for them. Each week, we should only read a few pages, deciding ahead of time where we will start and stop. Naturally, we need to read it with drama and in an exciting manner.
- Prepare some simple, sweet words (a vort) on the parsha – nothing complicated. There are many great English books to look at by authors such as Rabbi Frand, Rabbi Pam, etc. It’s very important, however, to keep in mind our audience and to speak on a level that includes the understanding of our children. To emphasise the importance of this, Rabbi Grossnass tells of when Rabbi Moshe Shmuel Shapiro z”l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Be’er Yaakov, once invited a yeshiva bochur to eat at his Shabbos table. This guest prepared a complex idea, explaining a difficult

**It’s not just
a fluffy bear,
It’s a friend.**



Help our children find love and security by donating a fluffy animal.

Because it’s not just a toy, it’s a treasure.

www.buildarcadia.co.za

**LET'S
BUILD
ARCADIA**

**Arcadia**



Rambam. After the bochur spoke, Rabbi Shapiro did not react, so the guest asked, “The Rabbi didn’t like my vort?” Rabbi Shapiro responded, “There are other people sitting here. Are they going to gain anything from your explanation of the Rambam? Rather, come to me after the meal and I would be delighted to discuss the Rambam with you. This isn’t the right time for it.”

- The Torah tells us that we must “remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it”, and Rashi explains that part of always remembering Shabbos is that if we chance upon food that is especially nice, we should set it aside to eat on Shabbos. Similarly, when we hear some nice words of Torah during the week – perhaps an insight that the Rav shares between Mincha and Maariv, or something we hear in a shiur, or even an inspirational story – we must make a note of it and save it for Shabbos.
- If we hear a humorous anecdote during the week, we must write it down and save it to tell over on Shabbos. Yes, it’s important to smile on Shabbos. Maybe save it for

the end of the meal or even after the meal. And we can even discuss the message of the anecdote and receive input from our children.

- In addition to sharing words of Torah, it is important to sing zemiros (aka Shabbos songs) at the Shabbos table. We need to prepare in advance the songs that we’re going to sing. We may not enjoy the latest melodies for these songs, but no doubt our children do and we need to sing along with them.
- Depending on the age of our children, we may even need to prepare a game for the Shabbos table, such as “I Spy”, etc. Rav Matisyahu Salomon, the mashgiach ruchani of the Beth Medrash Govoha Yeshiva in Lakewood, once explained in an address to women that they should encourage their husbands not to test their children on Shabbos because the children also need to enjoy Shabbos and not be made to feel bad or uncomfortable. Rabbi Grossnass recalls: “Once we had a family at our Shabbos table and the child remembered that his family had been with us for a meal the previous year for the very same parsha. How come the child remembered

this? The child told his parents that he remembered how I had asked him a question on this very parsha and he had not known the answer. A year later he still remembered this incident! Since then, I don’t ask questions at the Shabbos table.”

- Acquire a book like *Vehaarev Na* by Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein (available in both Hebrew and English), which contains unusual, funny, and interesting stories that lead up to questions in Jewish law. It serves as a springboard for great discussions at the Shabbos table, while simultaneously instilling in children the importance of recognizing that when such questions arise, they require us to consult an expert in Jewish law to be able to determine what to do.
- Last, but not least: we need to pay a visit to the local kosher sweet shop and buy some treats for our children. Regardless of what happened that week – whether our child knew his lessons, didn’t know his lessons, behaved himself, didn’t behave himself – Shabbos treats have to be unconditional, so give the child a sweet at the end of each Shabbos meal with love.

Rabbi Grossnass is sure that his suggestions will be met with some resistance: “Rabbi, you want me to do this every week?” And he’s quick with a response: “Firstly, your wife puts tremendous effort into preparing delicious Shabbos meals every single week. Secondly, imagine if your child came home from school and said that the teacher’s lessons were boring, that the teacher did not prepare any lessons or worksheets. What would you do? You’d probably go to the principal and complain about that teacher, ‘What kind of teacher is this? Where is his preparation? Where are the worksheets?’ And that’s for a teacher who is teaching children who aren’t even his own children. And now for your own children, you’re giving them two lessons each week and you don’t want to prepare anything?”

Rabbi Grossnass notes that there are

“EVEN THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN NEED TO MAKE SPECIAL EFFORTS, PREPARING THINGS TO SAY AND TO LEARN AT THE TABLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ONE’S WIFE AND GUESTS.”

many side benefits to doing all of this. By preparing lessons for the Shabbos table, a person needs to learn the parsha a bit and perhaps even other areas of Torah. It will also add to the atmosphere in our homes, enhancing the level of shalom bayis (the peace in the home), as the wife will take pride in the efforts of her husband, and this will help to draw the family closer together. Even those who do not have young children need to make special efforts, preparing things to say and to learn at the table for the benefit of one’s wife and guests.

It is in our power to make Shabbos into something truly inspirational and enjoyable. By preparing for the Shabbos table, we give honour to Shabbos, just as we would do so if we were expecting an important guest. With a little effort, we can create a memorable experience; after all, everyone deserves to have an oneg Shabbos – to enjoy and to be inspired on Shabbos.

Thank you to Charles Krengel for this story idea.

PART 2

HAPPY MEALS, Jewish-style

Cutting down in order to enhance

BY RABBI AVI SHAFRAN



UNLESS YOU'RE READING THIS IN A THIRD-WORLD country, you have more choices about what to eat – and likely eat considerably more every day – than 99.9% of the human beings who ever walked the face of the earth. Even a time-traveller from only a mere century ago, taken for a tour of a typical supermarket today, and then to a simple restaurant for a meal, would be dumbfounded at the sight of what's available on the shelves and on the menu. And those of us living now? Meh. We're not so impressed. We're busy plodding on our hedonic treadmills, taking our bounty of food for granted, and casually overindulging in it even as we stay on the lookout for new food adventures to try to keep things exciting.

Ironically, though, despite – or, perhaps, because of – all our available gastronomic pleasures (and expanding waistlines), we rarely, if ever, experience the delight that our time-traveller experienced in the early 1900s when he suddenly found himself in possession of, say, a can of tuna. A hamburger was probably something closer to heaven. Which brings

us to the fact that there's something – and something Jewish, too, as it happens – to be said for wilfully denying ourselves foods, at least at times.

Recent research, in fact, has provided evidence that temporarily giving up something pleasurable may provide a route to greater delight in the deferred treat when it's finally enjoyed. Participants in a study published last year in *Social Psychological and Personality Science* were asked to eat a piece of chocolate on two occasions, a week apart. During the week, one group was assigned to eat as much chocolate as possible; a second group, to eat none at all; and a third group, the control, was given no particular instructions. Those in the second group, perhaps unsurprisingly but significantly, reported enjoying the end-of-week chocolate more, and experiencing a more positive mood when consuming it, than either of the other groups.

The great medieval Jewish sage Maimonides counselled something most modern nutritionists would agree with, and most of us today would do well to adopt:

eating only when hungry and, even then, not eating to full satiation. Now there's a diet that, whatever you decide to eat, is pretty much guaranteed to keep you fit. What you eat, of course, is important too. Whole grains, vegetables, and fruits are what experts say should make up the bulk of our daily food. Meat, sweets, and fats, not so much. As it happens, it is clear from a number of passages in the Talmud that, while eating meat is permitted by Judaism, it was eaten back then – and, presumably, meant to be eaten – as a sort of relish to accompany bread, any meal's mainstay. It is unlikely that a steak would have been regarded by the rabbis of old as a meal unto itself (even with vegetables on the side). Meat, in fact, was considered a special food, one with which to honour the Sabbath and holidays.

The author of the classical Jewish moral treatise the “*Peleh Yo'etz*”, first published in Constantinople in 1824, advises against eating meat (unless one's health requires it – a rare situation these days) other than on such special occasions. Now there's a thought. Reserving meat and sweets and other less-than-healthy delectable indulgences for the Sabbath will not only benefit our health but, simply because they are abstained from the rest of the week, make us, when we do indulge in them, happier eaters. Shabbos, in fact, is a day that Judaism teaches us to honour, in particular by reserving the nicest things we have – whether clothing or dishes or foods – for it. Even physical pleasures are rendered holy when indulged on the Sabbath. In olden days, Jews would scrimp the entire week to be able to afford a piece of fish or meat for the Sabbath. The Talmud tells how the great sage, Shammai, when he found some special delicacy in the marketplace, would purchase it and put it aside for the Sabbath.

Imagine – no, consider – taking meat and baked sweets off your menu for weekdays, and making them part of your honouring of the Sabbath. Your enjoyment of the foods will be intensified, and it will yield benefits to your health, physical and spiritual alike.

Part Two, “Happy meals, Jewish-style”, is reprinted with permission from simpletoremember.com 