

Infusing the Mundane with the Spirit of Shabbos

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Perhaps one of the most common concerns about Shabbos, shared pretty much by every Shabbos observer, are the parameters of the Shabbos itself – what time does Shabbos start and what time is Shabbos over. And for good reason. It's very important to know what time Shabbos starts and ends so that we use our time efficiently to prepare beforehand and don't run afoul of any Shabbos laws. But this focus could lead one to the conclusion that Shabbos is a static entity, constrained by the clock to a once-a-week experience within specific parameters. Rebbe Nachman teaches us that this does not have to be the case, and that we can live a spiritually richer life all week long by actually taking Shabbos with us.

The concept of the week is a concept of work and toil, atzvus – gloominess. We're preoccupied with survival, and awareness of Hashem's true presence can be muted, yielding to the distracting demands of a busy workweek. Our relationship with Hashem during the weekdays can feel distant, like the relationship between a slave and his master.

Shabbos, on the other hand, is a concept of rest and joy. We are no longer living the curse of Adam HaRishon, having to

work for our bread, but rather enter a veritable Gan Eden, where everything is prepared and waiting for us to enjoy. We are released from our work-a-day toil, and are free to experience Hashem's special closeness on this day. Our relationship with Him is like a parent and child, and we have access to the most sublime of human experiences on Shabbos.

How can we hold onto this?

The Rebbe teaches us that Shabbos and speech are very strongly connected, as both possess the elements of k'dusha, holiness, and bracha, blessing. A key component to Shabbos observance is that our Shabbos speech should not be like our weekday speech. By being more conscientious of the words we use and the types of conversations we have on Shabbos, we elevate our speech to the level of lashon hakodesh, holy speech, infused with k'dusha and bracha. That speech then binds itself to the k'dusha and bracha of Shabbos. When Shabbos is over and we continue using speech imbued with k'dusha and bracha, it draws the joy of Shabbos along with it right into the weekday. The power to do this lies literally in our own mouths!

(Based on Likutei Moharan, Tinyana 2)