

Shabbos – Our Internal Gatekeeper

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November 6, 2022



The idea of the gatekeeper in modern society evokes both positive and negative reactions. For a busy executive who measures his time by the minute, the gatekeeper can keep non-essential interruptions to a minimum and maximize productivity, but for those trying to contact that very same executive, it can be a frustrating barrier. When it comes to our personal lives, most of us would bristle at the thought of a gatekeeper deciding what we are and aren't privy to. Why should we deny ourselves any particular worldly experience? Yet, in order to fulfill our spiritual potential, we must be willing to be our own gatekeeper, as not all things we encounter are in our best spiritual interest. Discretion must be applied to what we eat, say, listen to, look at, et cetera, to the best of our ability.

An important time to activate our internal gatekeeper is on Shabbos. Shabbos is the spiritual apex of the week, and is so holy that it offers the same sublime pleasure as Olam Haba'a, the World to Come. But one must be available in order to access it.

The Shulchan Aruch, Code of Jewish Law, teaches that partners in a courtyard may compel one another to contribute to the installation of protective measures, such as a lock, for the collective benefit of the courtyard. Additionally, the Shulchan Aruch teaches that a vertical beam and crossbeam must be placed at the entrance of a shared courtyard in order to permit the residents of the courtyard to transfer items from their homes back and forth to the courtyard on Shabbos. The lock serves as a physical protection from the outside, and the beams serve as a visual reminder that carrying in the courtyard is permissible, but carrying in the r'shus ha'rabim, public domain, is not.

On a deeper level, why is the lock or the crossbeam so important? Conceptually, the things we hold most precious and wish to protect we keep closest – in the home and protected courtyard. In these areas there is unity and safety, and it is easier to strive to be our best and attain k'dusha, holiness. In stark contrast lies the r'shus ha'rabim, where anything can and does happen due to the sheer diversity of its makeup. We are not as safe there, and finding the k'dusha embedded in it is a greater challenge. We must employ creative activities, melachos, to achieve this goal.

During the week, we venture from our homes to the public domain to earn a livelihood and bring home the best of what it has to offer. On Shabbos, however, we refrain from such activities. Hashem has given us the gift of access to k'dusha without the need to perform melachos to extract it.

The lock and the beam remind us to be selective about what we allow into our homes, hearts and minds on Shabbos. When we do

so, we are unified in purpose and that connects us with the oneness of Hashem Himself.

(Based on Likutey Halachos, Choshen Mishpat, hilchos shutafim b'karka 2)