

# Virtual Shabbat

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Nowadays, everyone talks about the value of a healthy psyche. Newspapers and magazines are filled with advertisements for various mental techniques and services. Some of these ads claim their services will deliver success in business, while others promise better relationships and a happy marriage. Yet others claim that a positive mindset is the key to longevity and overcoming disease. All agree that the mind is an extremely powerful tool. Yet few of us realize that a healthy psyche is the main ingredient in a spiritually-prosperous relationship with God.

Do you ever find yourself striving for more, desperate to increase your mitzvah observance or to study more Torah, but in the end always seem to be dragged into a familiar routine? Perhaps just a few days ago, on the joyous holiday of Purim, you were able to break out your usual self for a few hours. Each of us experiences times of intense motivation for positive change, yet they are always short-lived. This is precisely the plan of the evil inclination. While most people envision the forces of evil as being some external test or challenge, their main staging ground is in our minds.

Let's take, for example, a challenge we often face: the pursuit of money. We have been raised from birth to expect a pampered life where our every need and want is satisfied. As a

result, as soon as we receive something we desire, we usually start thinking about acquiring something greater. We lease a car, and a few years later we're counting the days for the lease to expire so we can get that newer model. Weren't we thrilled that first day we drove the car off the lot? Aren't the car and its features still fully functional? Yes, but ... it's natural to want more, isn't it?

If luxuries (or so-called necessities) aren't your fancy, what about food or intimacy? Are we ever truly satisfied, or are our thoughts always jumping to something bigger and greater? We want a more spiritual life, we want to break out of our routine and experience something higher and more meaningful, but our thoughts pull us down, time and again.

This week's *parashah* states, "Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have sanctity" (Exodus 35:2). In the plain sense, this means that even if we are swamped with work as Shabbat arrives, we are to close down our business, thereby affirming our belief that God created the world and can give us what we need even if we don't work for it.

But Reb Noson takes this further. Shabbat isn't just about the hours between Friday evening and Saturday night, nor is it about physical labor. The concept of Shabbat extends into the work week, into the day-to-day situations where we are striving for more, when we seek to connect with God and to create a Shabbat break. There, too, we must transplant the spirituality and faith of Shabbat into our minds. How do we do this?

Our thoughts are powerful; they have the ability to overwhelm us. Trying to argue with them is counter-intuitive. But just as we can drop everything when Shabbat arrives and affirm our faith in God, so too, we have the ability to take a deep breath and relax when nagging thoughts come along. We can "rest" the mind by focusing on God and His Infinite Light, and then the negative thoughts will pass away on their own.

By thinking of God and His higher realm, we can quiet down our mind's "temper tantrum." And by remembering Shabbat in the middle of the week, we utilize the most important technique of all for a healthy psyche and eternal success. Training starts today!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shabbat 7*