

HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS

The well-known mitzvah of *bris milah* appears in our *parshah*, *Parshas Tazria*.¹ Eight days from the birth of a boy, the boy undergoes a *bris milah*, fulfilling a mitzvah that Jews have performed since it was given to Avraham Avinu, over 3,500 years ago.

This mitzvah is so important, the Torah repeats the word '*bris*' thirteen times when the mitzvah was given to Avraham.² In fact, the world exists in the merit of *bris milah*,³ and a Jewish male who does not have *bris milah* is not allowed certain activities, like eating from the *Korban Pesach*.⁴

People are familiar with the idea that the *bris* must take place on the eighth day, but not many know exactly why this is so. Of the many reasons given, the Taz⁵ (Rabbi Dovid Halevi Segal, 1586 - 1667) quotes a *Medrash*⁶ that compares the wait of eight days to a king who travelled to a city and was receiving visitors. The king ordered that before anyone should meet him, they should first greet the queen. Similarly, Hashem states that one should not perform a *bris milah* without first 'meeting' Shabbos.

How great is Shabbos! Despite the importance and centrality of *bris milah*, and indeed the fact that we even violate Shabbos to perform a *bris milah*, nevertheless, the baby must first experience a Shabbos before having a *bris milah*, as it would simply not be proper to greet the King without first going through the Queen.

Shabbos is an all-important day. Shabbos is a great day to catch our breath from a busy work or school week, but there's so much more. Shabbos gives us a chance to connect to Hashem on a deeper level, without the distractions that distance us from Hashem, our family, and even ourselves.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Shabbos gives us whatever we put into it. How can we create a Shabbos atmosphere that is positive, one where we feel excited about Shabbos and look forward to its coming?

We are very susceptible to the actions that we take - our thoughts and feelings follow.¹

If a person doesn't feel excited by the prospect of Shabbos, they can do things that enhance their excitement. During the week, set aside something special - a food, special time to spend with a child or parent, or anything else that interests you. Tying Shabbos to something special will inevitably enhance one's feelings towards Shabbos.

On Shabbos itself, a person may find that they are at a loss as to what to do. That may turn into boredom, and simply waiting for Shabbos to end. Instead of allowing these thoughts to linger, use the time as an opportunity for growth! This is a chance to grow closer to your friends, family, and Hashem. You might find that you'll actually start looking forward to the peace that Shabbos brings.

¹ *Mesillas Yesarim* Chap. 7

¹ *Vayikrah* 12:3

² *Berachos* 49a

³ *Nedarim* 32a

⁴ *Shemos* 12:48

⁵ *Yoreh Deah* 265:13

⁶ *Vayikrah Rabbah* 27:10

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..Mussar is the very foundation, the bedrock of the yiddeshe neshama...

- R' Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz zt"l,
Kovetz Igros Maran HaChazon Ish, vol. 1,
letter 154

WHAT WE ALL NEED

Robert and Lisa Sender* were a typical American family - 2 children, a dog, and a house in the suburbs. Though Jewish, the Senders both knew very little of their heritage. Shabbos was a day for getting things done around the house, catching up on odd jobs that had waited all week.

All that changed about two years ago, when Robert ran into a friendly man at the local supermarket. The man was standing in the kosher aisle, and was obviously Jewish from his attire. Robert was simply passing through, but the man stopped him, asking if he knew where a certain product was. Robert indeed did, and walked the man through the store to the aisle where it was located. As they walked, the man introduced himself as Rabbi Tzvi Polinsky, recently arrived in town. He came to teach Torah, Jewish education and tradition to anyone who would be interested. Robert was indeed interested, and they soon began studying together.

Lisa later started studying with Mrs. Chana Polinsky, and after two years of growth, Robert and Lisa decided that this week, they will keep their first Shabbos. No phones, no computer, no car, and no lawn mower. Just a focus on each other, their children, and a chance to connect to Hashem.

Before Shabbos, Robert drove to the local *shul* which was about a half a mile from his house. Lisa set the table, lit the candles as Mrs. Polinsky had instructed her, and sat down to wait for her husband. Lisa waited, waited, and waited some more. Something was wrong - she was told he would be out for an hour and half at most, yet here we were, passing the two hour mark, and he was nowhere to be seen.

Lisa stepped outside to look down the street. In the darkness, she saw her usually stoic husband slowly walking to the house, tears streaming down his face. Shocked, she ran to him. "What's wrong? Is everything ok?" she urgently asked.

Catching his breath, Robert responded, "Yes, everything is perfect. I'm just overcome with emotion; all my life I was missing something so special, and I simply had no idea. I just didn't know what I was missing."

With tears in their eyes, they turned back to their house, ready to enjoy the Shabbos experience together.

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Shabbos is a weekly reminder that Hashem runs the world, and that our labor is a ruse - everything truly comes from Hashem.¹
- By going through Shabbos, a child is given a spiritual strength, allowing him to receive a *bris milah*.²
- Since the *melave malka* after Shabbos is a meal to escort the Shabbos Queen as she leaves, one should try to have this meal soon after Shabbos ends.³

1 R' S. R. Hirsch on *Shemos* 20:10

2 *Ohr Hachaim* on *Vayikra* 12:3

3 *Mishnah Berurah* 300:2. Of course, one should not eat before *havdalah*.