

כ"ס ז

THE SHABBAT PRIMER

Getting Ready for Shabbat



הועתק והוכנס לאינטרנט
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ע"י חיים תשס"ז

by
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and
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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

In honor of the first yartzeit of Nechoma Greisman נ"ע, we are publishing *The Shabbat Primer*. Among her many other projects, Nechoma was writing a book with Chana Ne'eman which was meant to give down to earth guidance to women new to keeping Shabbat. Sadly, she passed away on the 23rd of Shvat, 5752 at the age of 39, leaving her family and her beautiful life's work before her plans were fulfilled.

Even though the book remained incomplete, we now present you with Chapters III and V, which were already written. They stand on their own, filled with Nechoma Greisman's warm and practical insight and helpful advice. After the "Table of Contents," we have placed a section entitled *What Was Meant to Be Included in this Book*. This was the plan for the larger book, showing the tremendous breadth of subjects that Nechoma had hoped to cover.

Shmuel Greisman has worked selflessly to bring his wife's writing to the public. He has worked on every aspect of this project with total devotion. May this work bring zchus to the neshoma of Nechoma נ"ע bas Mordechai שיח"י, and may he be comforted by the One who comforts and blessed to greet the face of Moshiach revealed now.

We would like to acknowledge Laya Klein who worked tirelessly to organize this project. We thank Uri Kaploun and Chana Rachel Schusterman who edited the manuscript. Yitzchok Turner is responsible for the layout and typography, and Avrohom Weg designed the cover. We thank Yonah Avtzon who masterfully put it all together and made this volume a reality.

Machon Chaya Mushka

22 Shevat, 5753

5th Yartzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka נ"ע

FOREWORD

For two years, whenever her time permitted it, Nechoma נ"ח and I collaborated on a book about keeping Shabbat. Aimed primarily at beginners — women, men, singles, marrieds — it was to be a guide to the practicalities of observing this precious, but complex mitzva.

The following chapters would have been at the heart of our book. True, the insights of experience of many resource women contributed greatly to its content. But the guiding soul was Nechoma's. She brought to the project her profound knowledge, life experience, enthusiasm, and utter devotion. These, one might say, were the prerequisites for the job, the credentials which made her an "authority." But her special contribution lay in her unique, typically Nechoma qualities — her humor, tolerance, all-embracing warmth, and great common sense.

I brought to the project some writing-editing experience and all the questions of a beginner. Essentially, though, I was Nechoma's second pair of hands. While she mended, washed dishes, chopped vegetables, and poured out her ideas, I scribbled down notes, later to be written up, tossed about with Nechoma, and finally polished.

Unfortunately, our book was destined to remain unfinished. But I have no regrets. Learning with Nechoma — just being in her presence — was a great privilege and joy.

Through the chapters that we have here, Nechoma's personality shines through everywhere. She advises on handling shy guests, scheduling family laundry, involving small children, making Shabbat as a single person, and many other topics. But the section I most looked forward to seeing she never wrote. It would have come at the very end of the book, and she entitled it, "Your Will Only?"

Nechoma knew in every fiber of her being that there is One Whose will always comes first, and she ran to fulfill each of His mitzvot. She was all of one piece. She had absolute integrity. And her radiance lit thousands of hearts.

May these chapters serve as a memorial and a blessing. If they help to enrich your Shabbat observance, that is just what she wished.

Chana Ne'eman

תשנ"ג

INTRODUCTION: HOW WE CAME TO WRITE THIS BOOK

Chana:

Once there was a book I searched for everywhere, but could not find. This, I hope, is the book.

I never intended to write it. In fact, if you had suggested to me two years ago that I publish a guide to Shabbat observance, I would, like Mother Sarah, have laughed incredulously. “What, me? And aren’t there enough books about Shabbat around already?” After all, most of the greatest minds and souls Judaism ever produced over thousands of years have contributed volumes on the subject. But this very abundance, I soon found, is part of the problem of beginning Shabbat observance today.

That problem became my personal concern just a few years ago when I discovered that I did not know all there was to know about “making Shabbat.” As I grew more serious about my Jewish studies and practices, as I experienced the authentic Shabbat in Torah-observant settings, I came to realize that “The Day of the Queen” involves far more than lighting candles, eating a special dinner, and — possibly — going to synagogue. It is really a whole world which is created anew every week, and for very good reasons Jews over the centuries have invested tremendously in it. Resources which other nations pour into a great artistic tradition, individual career advancement, or a first-rate technological society, Torah-centered Judaism invests in Shabbat, and adds to it all joy, love, and complete devotion. I never imagined Shabbat could be so involving — and so demanding. I was captivated; I knew I wanted Shabbat in my life always. I set out to learn how to do it.

Almost from the start, however, my search was frustrated. As a result of my invitations to observant homes, I saw that a great deal of knowledge and experience lay behind the seemingly effortless Shabbat joy. My hostesses were glad to explain some of the procedures to me, but, as I came to realize, what I needed was something more like an apprenticeship or a four-year B.A. course. I was reluctant to ask any busy woman if I could hang around her kitchen every Shabbat for a year, so I sought help from books.

As I read, I soon discovered that my sources divided into three general categories, none of which gave me what I needed. In one

category were the authoritative halachic works which set forth all the talmudic minutiae of Shabbat fulfillment. They left me feeling overwhelmed, gasping, not knowing where to begin. In the second category fell the uplift tracts. Some, like Aryeh Kaplan's *Sabbath Day of Eternity*, were beautifully written and genuinely inspiring, but they also gave me little help in learning how to actually *do* Shabbat. Finally, in the third category, were a few practical guides to Shabbat observance; however, they either did not go far enough in assisting me to make the full traditional Shabbat I sought, or else they focused almost exclusively on the synagogue-ritual aspect of Shabbat observance. In each of the three categories were some valuable books, and we recommend them in our bibliography. Nevertheless, there was no one source which offered a beginner in the ways of a traditional Shabbat enough detailed help.

In addition, some troublesome personal problems arose. As I found out later, this was far from unusual. A beginner may well encounter difficulties with Shabbat observance which neither the talmudic tomes, nor the uplift tracts, nor the existing practical guides admit to — problems of boredom, perhaps, or of hostile family members, or of sabotage by the children.

As my circle of both novice and experienced Shabbat observers widened, I found that many other people shared my quest — and my frustrations. As a result of my talks with them, I began consciously to formulate the questions and problems of a person searching for a way to create the traditional Shabbat. I had the questions; what remained was to find the content. Obviously, it was not to be found in the available books. What I needed was a good teacher and “translator,” someone with the knowledge, experience, involvement, and grace necessary to explain things in terms that someone with my background could understand. If I were really lucky, she might also be warm-hearted, humorous, and deeply inspiring.

I found my ideal teacher and translator in the person of Nechoma Greisman. That it happened as it did was...well, as Nechoma would say, “Nothing is a coincidence.”

In conclusion, then, as I have said, writing this book was not part of my life plan. But, like many another unplanned baby, it has become a blessing. May *The Shabbat Primer* prove to be the book *you* have also been searching for.

Nechoma:

In contrast to Chana, I sometimes think this book has been evolving within me my whole life. Even in my earliest childhood, the experience of sharing Shabbat with our fellow Jews was absolutely central to me.

My parents risked long years of imprisonment, perhaps even their lives, to keep Shabbat. Whereas many of their acquaintances in their native Russia succumbed to the state's fierce anti-religious policies, my parents struggled to keep every aspect of their Jewishness. It was very deep within them, after all. My mother's father was a disciple of the famed "Chafetz Chaim." My father, a rabbi, was educated in the underground Chabad *cheders* of Russia. Ever since my parents arrived in the U.S. just after World War II, my father has been *baal koreh* (Torah reader) for the Lubavitcher Rebbe, *shlita*, in Brooklyn.

My parents imbued all six of their children with a great love for Torah and the mitzvot. But especially dear to them — and us — was Shabbat. Because the way of Chabad-Lubavitch Hassidism has always been to reach out to other Jews, nearly every Shabbat my parents offered their hospitality to guests, many of them non-observant. Invited well in advance, invited at the last minute, or completely self-invited, they were always expected and welcome. For the non-observant guests especially, Shabbat with us was a potent experience; they often remarked that they'd "never imagined it could be so wonderful." And for us, Shabbat became just that much more precious because of them.

As I grew to be a teenager, I encountered more and more Jews everywhere who wished "somehow" to bring more *Yiddishkeit* into their lives. Whether it was on a New York subway, in a camp, a school room, an institute for women beginners to Judaism, my own home, or an Israeli women's prison; in New York, Minnesota, Florida, California, Safed, Jerusalem — wherever I have travelled and lived — I have found this desire.

When I imagined myself in these people's footsteps, though, I began to see how daunting the problem could be. Their longing to become more observant was great, but they often felt overwhelmed. It seemed such a huge hurdle — all that knowledge and experience to acquire, all that patience to develop. Where should they even start?

A logical starting point — and the one which in fact most beginners choose — is Shabbat. A central mitzva to Judaism, it is also both available to everybody and personally fulfilling. When Jews think of where they want to be, it is usually the Shabbat world they long for.

By now, then, Shabbat and the problems of transition to a new way of life were merging in my mind. I was meeting, counseling, and hostessing hundreds of seeking Jews, but I feared I was not giving them the detailed, unhurried help they needed. For my Shabbat guests I always wanted to provide a pleasant, non-pressured experience, never a heavy cramming session. G-d forbid they should leave our home gasping, “Oh, that Shabbat with the Greismans...” And yet I hated to leave them floundering when they sought my help for all their Shabbatot to come.

I began to wish I could offer all the seeking Jews I met a good guidebook to read, one which would take them step-by-step at their own comfortable pace and would always be available for review. I couldn't find one, however, which I felt was sufficiently faithful to Torah, detailed, and yet suited to beginners' home observance. I wished such a book existed, but with all the demands of my busy life, I never seriously considered writing it myself. Then, one day, Chana approached me with the idea of our doing just such a guide together. My response was, “How did you know....?”

But, of course, *you* know by now that I don't believe in coincidences. A great Hassidic master, the Baal Shem Tov, taught that nothing, not even the most seemingly insignificant event, happens by chance.¹ How much *less* coincidental, then, is the meeting of two women, both inspired by the same cause, to help other Jews. But that's only as it should be. According to another of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings, whenever two Jews meet, there is a “G-dly wink” of Divine providence. From that meeting, then, something of real spiritual benefit should result.²

In writing this book, I share with Chana the hope that our different, but complementary experiences will contribute practical help to all of you who are considering a life of greater and more fulfilling Shabbat observance.

1. *Keter Shem Tov*, “Hosafot” (“Addenda”): (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Kehot Publishing Society, 1972), sec. 119ff.

2. *Ibid.*, sec. 126.

ABOUT OUR MAXIMALIST APPROACH

“Is it for me?” “Could I try it?” “Maybe I could do a little more?”

Everywhere today one senses a questioning, a longing in the Jewish community to return to its tradition. A growing number of Jewish enrichment seminars, *baalei teshuva* yeshivas, and yarmulkas at board of directors meetings attest to this desire. *The New York Times Magazine* (Sept. 30, 1984) reported on the mushrooming numbers and greater maturity of the 1980’s “returnees” to Orthodoxy. Books on Jewish self-discovery, such as Paul Cowan’s *An Orphan in History* and Lis Harris’ *Holy Days*, attract surprisingly wide interest. Everywhere there are signs that thousands in this generation want to come home.

And they are succeeding. One of this book’s co-authors, Nechoma, has herself met, taught, and counseled hundreds of Jews who were raised in families with very little Jewish awareness. Many of these Jews are now as Torah-observant as those born to families in which the tradition was never eroded.

How does a Jew go from non-observance to full observance? Judging from her experience, Nechoma believes that the change usually culminates years of yearning to be a complete Jew, and the new lifestyle undertaken, although seemingly more restrictive, brings a feeling of true peace and wholeness. At last there is no dichotomy between feeling like a Jew and acting like a Jew. Gone is the embarrassment about “what will they think?” Instead, the conviction grows that I am a Jew and I am going to live like one, without apologies or shame. When a person comes to this conclusion, he usually forms a new commitment toward fulfilling the halacha as well.



Against this background of an increasing desire among today’s Jews for a fuller Jewish life we have written our book. On first leafing through it, you may think we are asking a great deal. You will probably find more halacha cited in these pages than in any other Shabbat guide for beginners you’ve read. Let us explain why.

Our book takes this approach because we make two assumptions the other guides don't make: we take you seriously, and we take halacha seriously. Taking you seriously means that we have faith in your sincerity of purpose and desire to grow in your Shabbat observance. Just as important, it means that we take you seriously as a Jew. We are not writing this book for "Orthodox people"; we are writing it for *you*.

By setting out the full demands of halacha (within reason), we avoid short-changing you. We are not prejudging how far you can go. What we try to do is give you an overview of what you need to create a satisfying traditional Shabbat. We want to present as wide-ranging and complete a guide as possible for both beginners and intermediates. We hope to give you a guide that you can grow with and not soon outgrow.

In striving for an appropriate level of completeness, however, we've tried to avoid discouraging the beginners. We urge you, again and again, not to let yourself feel overwhelmed. Each one of you can choose to take things at his own pace, beginning with the aspects of Shabbat observance closest to his heart and building from there.

Given that each person will begin with the mitzvot that draw him most, there is still a crucial point to be made: he should intend to build upon those mitzvot, doing more and more as soon as he can. The reason for this insistence on not standing still lies in the nature of halacha.

As we mentioned earlier, we take halacha seriously. That means that we view its prescribed actions and prohibitions, not as optional "customs and ceremonies," but as *obligations* for every Jewish life. We believe that the halacha (which in fact means "the way" or "the going," not merely "the law") was given to *all* the Jewish People, including you, wherever you stand now. Nobody, however pious, learned, and observant, has a monopoly on the halacha. But by the same token, to have full effect, halacha has to be freely accepted as obligatory by every Jew. Even if it's extremely unlikely that you'll ever actually perform a certain mitzva, you must still intend to fulfill it and see its performance as binding upon you.

In addition, the mitzvot are characterized by definite rules. For Shabbat to be Shabbat it is not enough to sing Jewish songs and serve cholent. It is misleading, as well as unfair, to give the

impression that partial observance is sufficient. Shabbat must be observed *both* by carrying out the injunctions and by refraining from the prohibitions. Only then does it have its full impact upon the Jew.



While we're on the subject of halacha and its observance, we'd like to explain certain terms we use which may otherwise be misinterpreted. First, some terms we're allergic to: "orthodox" (or "Orthodox") and its even worse Israeli counterpart, "religious." Is a man who merely keeps up his membership in his parents' synagogue "Orthodox?" Is a man in a black coat with a long beard who is in shul davening because that's where his wife expects him to be "religious?" On the other hand, some as yet "unaffiliated" Jews may be very religious in their orientation. Although we find these adjectives sloppy and even deceptive, we sometimes bow to common usage and employ them. We much prefer, however, the more precise adjectives used by the "Orthodox" world itself, such as "Torah-observant," "*shomer Shabbat*" (keeping the laws of Shabbat), and "*shomer mitzvot*" (keeping the mitzvot). In the same vein, when we say, "Ask your local rabbi," we mean a fully Torah-observant rabbi. His decades of studying and living in the world of the Torah make him the most trustworthy guide for you.



And now, in conclusion, we want to express our hopes for you and this book. To the veteran Shabbat observers among our readers, we hope this book will clarify and enrich your present practices. To the many beginners, we hope it will ease your first steps. And to the thousands who are still hesitating before the door, we hope this book will encourage you to come in and feel at home.

Finally, since *The Shabbat Primer* is far from a complete guide to Shabbat observance, we send a blessing that you outgrow it as quickly as possible — and press on!

CHAPTER III.
PRACTICALITIES

ORGANIZATION AND CREATIVITY

INTRODUCTION

A deeply satisfying Shabbat never just happens. It is always a careful construction made up of devotion, forethought, and attention to details. Devotion, of course, is your most personal contribution. But it need not be the only creative one. As we hope to show in this chapter and the next, the forethought and attention to details required by the halachot of Shabbat also provide opportunities for your own special contribution.

This claim may be hard to believe; in fact, just the reverse seems true. A major obstacle for Jews considering traditional Shabbat observance for the first time is that the admittedly complex halachic framework is perceived as both overwhelming and stultifying. Of these two perceptions, the first, that “it’s just too much,” is relatively easy to counter. Fortunately, the sense of being overwhelmed is almost always conquered by practice. As in learning to drive a standard-shift car or play a piano well, the many little motions you once had to concentrate upon so carefully finally merge smoothly and become automatic. The action comes under your control; you just “do it.” In the same way, with experience, the many little Shabbat motions also come under your control. You learn to light your home, pour your tea, and even tie your shoelaces naturally in a Shabbat way. Then, at last, you are in accord with the true intent of the halachot. You find yourself aware, not of the overwhelming complexity, but of the specialness of everything about this day.

The second common reaction to the halachot is that they stultify originality. As we said before, we hope to convince you by examples that this is anything but the truth. There is a kind of creativity which lies at the point where allegiance and individuality conflict. Whenever important problems arise, such as an apparent clash between the demands of halacha and the basic desires of a particular human being, a chance exists for creative solutions.

In this chapter and those following we will discuss some of the ingenious answers that Jewish law offers to such problems. In addition, we will share with you several practical tricks that our

resource women and other Jewish homemakers, working within the halacha, have implemented to smooth the busy period before, during, and after Shabbat.

BEING ORGANIZED

In the face of all the organizational genius we encountered interviewing for this chapter, it was tempting to write a complete guide to Jewish housekeeping. That, however, is beyond the scope of this book. For general housekeeping organization there are a number of fine guides available.¹ We will focus on just what applies directly to the preparations for and observance of Shabbat itself.

The top priorities, the “musts” of Shabbat preparation, are in most cases determined by the requirements of halacha. For example, your cooking must be completed, your makeup applied, and your appliances switched off by candlelighting time, because these activities are forbidden on Shabbat by Jewish law. Then, in addition, you will have your personal priorities to consider, such as reading over the *parshah* or phoning your family to wish them “good Shabbat” before candlelighting. Time must be budgeted for these activities, too. Obviously, with different personal priorities, different family sizes, and different financial circumstances, no two Jewish homemakers will have exactly the same schedule for pre-Shabbat tasks.

Generally speaking, though, the basic required ones fall into three categories: preparing your home or physical surroundings, preparing the Shabbat meals, and preparing yourself and your family. Although the division is definitely artificial, we concentrate on the home and the physical aspects of personal preparations in this chapter, leaving “spiritual” preparations for a separate one. Food preparations we discuss in the next chapter.

Many readers will argue — and we agree with them — that every “physical” or “practical” activity done “*lichvod* Shabbat,” for

1. Some examples: *Hints from Heloise*; *The I Hate to Housekeep Book* by Peg Bracken; *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life* by Alan Lakein; *Sidetracked Home Executives* by Pam Young and Peggy Jones; *The Jewish Home* by Evelyn Rose, which is an excellent guide to general home organization. See The Nechoma Greisman Anthology, Section 4: The Jewish Home.

the honor of Shabbat, entails spiritual involvement as well. So every “practical” preparation is also in fact a spiritual one.

FOUR WOMEN’S SCHEDULES

What follows is an overview of how certain experienced Shabbat-observing women organize all those pre-Shabbat activities necessitated by halacha.

Naturally, women who have large families and/or work outside the home usually have the tightest schedules. Shaina, for example, a mother of eight and an active volunteer must make good use of every minute, especially in the latter half of the week. While cautioning that her routine constantly changes with circumstances and the seasons, she sketched out for us her typical pre-Shabbat days.

“Any baking I do early in the week — Sunday or Monday — and freeze it. If the cake isn’t baked by Wednesday, forget it. I’ll *buy* something for dessert. I have the shopping done by Wednesday, except for odds and ends, dairy products, and the challot. My cleaning woman comes on Wednesday to do the overall cleaning; before I had her, I cleaned on Thursday. On Friday I just do a touch-up anywhere it’s needed in the hall, kitchen, and bathrooms.

I don’t do the actual cooking before Friday for a number of reasons. We often eat the soup and other dishes on Sunday and Monday, too, and it tastes too old if it was cooked on Thursday. Also, I don’t like to have to take up so much room in my refrigerator with all those dishes for Shabbat. And finally, though the cooking does take time, the kids take even more on Friday. Caring for them and getting them ready is the real time-consumer.

What I try to do is to finish all the *preparations* for cooking on Thursday — the peeling, chopping, parboiling, mixing, flavoring, and so forth — so that I only have to put the food on the fire or do the finishing touches on Friday. With potato salad, for example, on Thursday, I’ll peel and cook the potatoes and add all the ingredients except the mayonnaise which I add at the last moment before serving. Early Friday morning, I start cooking things that don’t require my attention while I give my family breakfast and get them off to school and work. I do volunteering work on Friday, too, so

when I come home, I just have time to turn on the burners to finish the cooking, get showered, and dressed.

Whenever I cook, I like to start several dishes at once. You get more done that way and finish quicker. Start several things, and you'll complete them. Keep the fires going constantly and all the burners in use at the same time.

I have three other common-sense bits of advice for Shabbat planning. First, try to get everything possible out of the way. Do on Wednesday what you can do on Thursday, and do on Tuesday what you can do on Wednesday. Second, unless it's something pressing, try not to make appointments for yourself or the kids on Thursday or Friday. Routine dental check-ups, etc., can wait. Finally, have a good husband. Mine does whatever has to be done to get the house and family ready. It's just too much for one person. In our home everybody over the age of three knows that for us all to enjoy Shabbat, we all have to pitch in."



This, then, is Shaina's pre-Shabbat schedule. As we said earlier, however, each woman's circumstances, abilities, and personal preferences are different. Nechoma, for example, likes to complete all her major cooking and washing up on Thursday. "I'm not as efficient about cleaning up as Shaina, and also my husband isn't home Friday to help me. If I have all those pots to wash on Friday afternoon, it's a real job, so I do most of my cleaning on Thursday mornings. I start cooking in the afternoon while a baby-sitter takes my little kids out. Thursday night is bath time for all the kids and more cooking for me. On Friday I finish the cooking and the last odds and ends of cleaning."

Chana, with only one child, is less pressured to make good use of every minute. "Still, because I get nervous when time is tight, I try to get an early jump on Shabbat. I like to come to the table as fresh and calm as I can. So on Thursday I do my baking and all dishes that can be cooked ahead of time and just reheated. Friday morning is my time for cleaning the apartment. In the afternoon I make salads, noodles or rice, and any vegetables that require only quick frying or boiling. My husband bathes our son, and the two of them set the table and prepare the candles for lighting. Somehow,

especially in winter when Shabbat comes in early, it's still a rush for everyone to shower and do all the last-minute things that have to be done. But I'm finding that with experience I'm less and less driven to brinkmanship tactics and I find, to my astonishment, that I'm actually calm and ready for candlelighting."



Devorah, too, has a more-or-less standard schedule. "Thursday morning, I take a chicken out of the freezer (two if we have company) and by the evening it's ready to be cleaned and marinated overnight. Thursday night, I clean the chicken and make the cholent. I sort out red beans, garbanzo beans, wheat berries (everybody likes this the best), and one or two other kinds of beans. I put them in the pot after making sure they're clean and boil water. I let them soak in that boiled water all night and then pour out the old water Friday morning. Supposedly, this is supposed to de-gas the beans so that they don't upset the stomach. Seems to work! I put in fresh water on Friday morning along with lots of spices (cumin, curry, pepper, soy sauce, salt) and sauteed onions and garlic. Later on I start to cook the chicken.

I try to clean everything on Friday morning and set the table. I try to do as much as possible ahead of time since there's always a mad rush no matter what. The less of a rush the better. I tell myself that Shabbat starts half an hour earlier than it really does, and that helps me get everything together."

FILLING YOUR WEEK WITH SHABBAT

The pre-Shabbat schedules of these four women may seem to you very crowded. It's only fair to "warn" you that yours may become just the same. As you grow more and more involved in making Shabbat, you may well find that your preparations begin earlier and earlier in the week. This is not only a practical organizing measure, it is a sign that, more and more, Shabbat is permeating your week days — and your life. Your existence is no longer split between six-sevenths weekday-secular and one-seventh Shabbat-kodesh.

Torah sources in fact commend the person who fills his week with Shabbat. “Remember the day of Shabbat: you should remember the Shabbat on Sunday so that if you happen upon a delicacy, prepare it for the sake of Shabbat.”² The great Shammai, we are told, would thus “eat all his days ‘*lichvod* Shabbat.’ ”³

In the same way you can dedicate every preparatory job you do, no matter how early in the week, to Shabbat. You can begin even on Saturday night by washing the special tablecloth, saying, “*lichvod* Shabbat.” On Sunday you might do your baking “*lichvod* Shabbat.” On Monday you can invite guests “*lichvod* Shabbat,” and so forth. Then some of the Shabbat spirit has entered into every day of your life.



2. *The Code of Jewish Law*, chap. 72:45; *Mechilta Yitro*, p. 20.

3. Talmud, *Beitza*, p. 16a.

PREPARING YOUR HOME

CLEANING

According to Torah sources,⁴ the home should be as clean and presentable as possible for Shabbat, so that the entire family feels ready to greet the presence of the Shabbat Queen. An orderly, shining-clean home adds immeasurably, even to the spiritual atmosphere of the day.

What this means in practice varies from person to person. We are fully aware that our readers may range from renters of studio apartments to owners of twelve-room houses. Our one bit of general advice, then, is to pick a time slot in the second half of the week for cleaning and stick to it. If you have hired help, try to arrange for him or her to come between Wednesday and Friday. If you have a fairly large house or apartment, you can do the bedrooms in the early part of the week and the kitchen, bathrooms, entrance way, and dining-room closer to Shabbat. Or, if the human traffic warrants it, you might clean the entire home earlier in the week and do a last-minute touch-up of the more public areas on Friday.

The point is, you are the best authority on your home. You know what it requires, whether to scrub the floors or merely to sweep them. You know if your bathrooms will stay clean from Thursday until Shabbat or not. Unless you're Wonderwoman or live in a "bed-sitter" (studio apartment), however, don't attempt to cram all the cleaning and all the cooking into the last hours of Friday.

You may also have to decide at times which is the higher priority for you, a thorough cleaning job or another two side-dishes for dinner. We asked our resource women what their choice would be in such a case, and their response was unanimous. On the theory that a well-fed family member or guest will rarely fault one for a few fingerprints on the woodwork, they said that they would make the meals their first priority. "I take as much time as I need on Thursday for the cooking," says Sarah, "I want to make sure that's really done well. Then I use whatever time is available on Friday for cleaning. So what doesn't get polished doesn't get polished, but at least a good Shabbat dinner and lunch are ready."

4. *Code of Jewish Law*, chap. 72:7.

“My cooking is usually done Thursday night,” says Rachel. “On Friday I do just a quick touch-up cleaning, rather than putting everything away properly and getting things really clean. That I try to do Wednesday. Also, especially with little kids around, there are always unexpected things happening at the last minute, like the milk spilling. I generally react with action rather than emotion at those times. No use crying!”

In the same practical vein, most of our resource women had few qualms about delegating the cleaning chores. Those with older children put them to work. Those with several young children almost always found paid help, even if only a teenaged girl living in the building. A woman renowned for her open-hearted hostessing told us that when her eight children were little, she had a cleaning woman every day. In contrast to what we might expect, then, these *balabustes* have little pride invested in playing Superwoman. They unreservedly advise, “If you hate to clean or don’t have the time, get paid help, for heaven’s sake! The extra expense is worth it.”

Unpaid help, too, is often readily at hand. Husbands can pitch in with some of the chores, and, in fact, they are enjoined to do so in Torah sources.⁵ Children, even very young children, can participate in getting the home neat and ready for Shabbat. Rachel, for example, has taught her little kids to wipe fingerprints off the closets, dust the chairs, and scour sinks that are within their reach. According to one homemaking guide, even a three-year-old can put away his pajamas, make his bed, fold small laundry articles, empty the dishwasher and the wastebaskets, pick up his toys before bed, and clear the dishes off the table.⁶

Two tricks for enlisting children’s good-humored involvement in Shabbat cleaning are Chana’s adaptations of the “Silent Butler Box” and “The Maid.”⁷ In the “Silent Butler Box” a parent announces that he or she is giving a five-minute warning that the Silent Butler is coming. (It is wise to explain the game, as well as the meaning of “butler”, beforehand.) At the end of five minutes, the “Butler” (said parent) walks around the house and, without

5. “Every man, even one who has many servants, must do something himself in honor of Shabbat.... Rav Chisda used to cut the vegetables very thin. Rabbah and Rav Yosef used to chop wood for cooking....” Other examples are also given. *Code of Jewish Law*, chap. 72:5.

6. Young and Jones, *Sidetracked Home Executives*, p. 153.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

saying a word, puts anything left out by anyone into a special Silent Butler Box. These items remain in the box for a week, at which time they can be bought back, either by (allowance) money or by doing chores. The Butler might come around every day or, if you're less rigorous, one particular day of the week, such as Wednesdays. On Fridays, however, everything is reversed. A *child* becomes the Butler, with full rights to charge his parents, as well as the other kids, for any items of theirs put into the box. Part or all of the money collected could go into the tzedakah box.

"The Maid" works on much the same principle of gleeful revenge. During the week, "The Maid" (Mother) announces that she is about to do her rounds and that every misplaced item she picks up can be reclaimed for five cents (or whatever amount you choose). On Friday, again, one of the children gets to play "the Maid" and charge his parents for their sloppiness.

There may be children who respond to sound motivational devices, such as letting them choose from a list of necessary chores, or to more altruistic appeals for pitching in on the cleaning, but these two games win almost any kid's cooperation.

We mentioned earlier that any task can be done any day of the week "*lichvod* Shabbat." Not everything must be done on Friday. There is also a matter of priorities. In Chana's opinion, for example, polishing can sometimes be skipped, but the bed sheets and pajamas *must* be changed on Friday. Lying down between fresh, smooth sheets is, to her, an essential part of Shabbat. Others, however, consider it too much of a hassle to bother with the bedding on a short, busy day. They have different priorities. Leah regards polishing the Shabbat items each week as essential, while the sheets can be changed another day. This is obviously a matter of your own personal preference, the time available, and your constitutional makeup.

What's important when it comes to Shabbat cleaning is to live within your energy level. While having an orderly, clean home will certainly enhance your enjoyment of Shabbat, working yourself into a frazzle can ruin it. And if you have small children who promptly undo a whole morning's scrubbing, you need a philosophy to cope with it. Tell yourself you'll do your best. When the kids get older, it will be easier. Make your home as pleasant as you can now, under your personal circumstances. And remember, what counts toward

everyone's Shabbat pleasure is not so much the details as the atmosphere.

Try not to compare yourself with others, As Sarah says, "Nobody should think it's perfect at the home of the next person." More than once, for example, she's had to stuff a whole load of laundry under the sofa or the baby's tub.

Our final word about housecleaning lies in a parable, "The Drudge in the Palace and the Princess in the Sty." In this parable, one husband returns from work at the end of a long day to find his home gleaming and immaculate, but his wife slumped, exhausted and disheveled, in a chair. "What is this poor drudge doing in this splendid palace?" he wonders.

The same evening, another husband returns home from work to his run-down, sloppy home. He is greeted at the door, however, by his radiant wife, looking her best to welcome him. "What is this lovely princess doing in this sty?" he wonders.

Neither husband, of course, would be content very long with the state of things in his home. But if you have to choose a general direction, the parable implies, be a princess.

LAUNDRY FOR FAMILIES

Laundry is a fact of life, particularly for large families and those with young children. However, laundry is not merely throwing the clothes into the machine. It usually entails sorting the clothes, drying them, folding them, putting them back into drawers and closets, and perhaps some touch-up ironing or mending, as well. All this is time-consuming. Many women, however, have discovered that, with planning, they can keep the mountains of dirty clothing at bay.

In this section we will describe several time-saving ideas we've either heard about or practiced ourselves. Perhaps one will work well for you.

First, a few words on what *not* to do. A counter-productive bit of advice handed down to us from our grandmothers' era recommends setting aside one particular day just for laundry. Perhaps this was good counsel in the days of scrub boards and wringer washers. Today, however, it no longer holds true. There's no need to give

laundry great amounts of energy or exclusive attention. Shabbat observance also affects your laundry schedule and makes a special laundry day impractical. Obviously, Saturday is out. The need to have fresh clothes, tablecloth, and perhaps bed linens by Friday evening puts a certain time pressure on things, too, as do the cleaning and cooking requirements of Thursdays and Fridays. For all these reasons, then, it's more efficient to find regular slots of time during the week for doing the laundry, rather than scheduling a particular day for it.

Turning now to the actual laundry routine, we first confront sorting. Here we discovered that with a clever arrangement you can almost eliminate your clothes sorting time. For example, a friend with a large family set up a system using three laundry baskets: one for whites, one for colors, and one for baby clothes. So that even her littlest kids could follow the system, she painted a white patch on the first basket and a red patch on the second. The baby clothes basket she fills herself. You might want to try this idea with some variations, such as a basket for delicate items, or a basket for Shabbat clothes and tablecloths that must be finished by your Thursday deadline.

As for mending, it should be done at moments when your brain is employed elsewhere — while you're conversing with family or friends, watching TV, waiting to pick up a child, or even when your husband is chauffeuring you somewhere. In short, then, mending should ideally be relegated to "hands time" only and never take up precious minutes of "head time."

In the course of our interviews we found several efficient methods of handling the washing itself. Shaina sorts her clothes and fills the machine at night after dinner. Then, after rising the next morning, she just pushes the "start" button. Her load is finished by the end of breakfast and ready to hang up or transfer to the dryer. Aviva, who doesn't own a dryer, starts a load in the evening as her family sits down to dinner. Then, sometime after dishwashing, the laundry is ready to be hung. By morning the laundry is dry. These are two good ideas for convenient laundry time slots during the day. Shabbat observance, however, also imposes a deadline, so some attention should be given to a weekly rhythm of doing the wash. Rachel tries to finish all her laundry on Thursday so that Friday is open for other Shabbat preparations. "I sort all the laundry

Thursday morning, and any subsequent laundry is for after Shabbat. The laundry basket is not empty when Shabbat arrives, but I have set a deadline on Thursday morning, and I know that all the laundry from before that is folded and put away. This changes the laundry from being infinite to being finite. Even though laundry never finishes, I feel *I* have finished for the week.” Sarah also avoids doing laundry on Friday, leaving any in the basket for later. Saturday night she does her first load of the week. “And if anyone’s still washing diapers,” she adds, “don’t bother folding them. Just drape them smoothly in a single stack over the side of the crib.”

Nechoma credits a busy friend for giving her the secret of laundry organization. It goes like this: all the week’s laundry gets done from Saturday night through Tuesday. Any wash piling up in the hamper after Tuesday waits until the coming Saturday night. If there are a few vital items that *must* be done between Wednesday and Friday afternoon, she washes them quickly by hand. That prevents the temptation to wash some more items by machine. That will begin the cycle of doing a whole load, then another. Of course throwing a load into the machine also means drying and removing the clothes, possibly ironing them, folding them and putting them away, thus taking up precious minutes on Erev Shabbat.

In practice, Nechoma’s system is to do a major laundry session Saturday night, washing the Shabbat tablecloths, everyone’s Shabbat outfits, and anything else remaining in the hamper. On Tuesday she does all the wash that has accumulated since Sunday. And that’s it until the next Saturday night. If you’ve planned well, Nechoma says, you’ll rarely have to do even those few urgent last-minute items.

“Granted, this system requires discipline,” she continues, “but after I tried it, I found it was liberating. Except for occasional exceptions, I was no longer folding laundry on Friday afternoons when there were other urgent things to do for Shabbat. And as long as the dirty laundry was out of sight, I found I was not bothered by it. I knew its time would come — when it was convenient for me.”

ELECTRICAL DEVICES AND APPLIANCES

As we mentioned in Chapter One, there is very widespread misunderstanding about what “work” on Shabbat means. And perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of the whole concept is the halacha’s prohibition against operating electricity on Shabbat. After all, isn’t it more work to walk than to drive? And what work is involved in switching on a light bulb? To one who thinks only in terms of the amount of effort being expended and the number of calories burned, the whole thing seems baffling.

Effort and calories, however, are not what the halacha is concerned with when it forbids the lighting of fires and electricity on Shabbat.

The Sabbath is the time when we rest from participating with G-d in creating and shaping the universe. It is a time when we delight in G-d and know that we are His creature. It is a time for joyful humility which is a welcome respite from the work week in a technological society where man can over-estimate the power of his control.

In fact, one of the acts most liable to induce hubris is the operation of electricity. It is perhaps the closest we come to G-d-like power. In a fiat reminiscent of the Creator’s in Genesis, we only have to think “Let there be light,” flick a switch, “And there is light.” Against the danger of this kind of overweening pride Shabbat provides the remedy — and a great many compensations besides. On Shabbat, therefore, we make no impositions upon the natural world. We let the electric force alone.

It is important, however, to understand what the prohibition really entails. The prohibition on Shabbat is against directly manipulating buttons so that one is actively causing an electrical appliance to start or stop. Even the most scrupulous halachic authorities, though, permit the use of timers which are preset before candlelighting and allow for electrical appliances to be activated and deactivated during Shabbat without direct human intervention. We are permitted to utilize the benefits of electricity but not to operate it actively on the Shabbat.

How is this actually achieved? In practice, it means having to do some advance planning and having to find new resources. Since

all washing machines, dryers, dish washers, and hair dryers are turned off before candlelighting, even if in mid-cycle, you have to schedule all your housework and personal grooming for an earlier time slot. Since all cars, TV's, videos, computers, electronic games, radios, and phonographs are silent on Shabbat, you have to find new sources of entertainment for yourself and your children.

Certain gas and electrical devices, however — electric lights, electric clocks, stoves and other food-warmers, electric blankets and sheets, heaters and air-conditioners, elevators, burglar alarms, and the like — are necessary for one's comfort and safety. Under proper halachic conditions, they may all be used.

The first decision to make is whether you want the device or appliance to run through all the 25 hours of Shabbat. You may well choose to have electric clocks, heaters, air-conditioners and refrigerators on constantly. There's nothing to be done, then, except to be sure the device is turned on before candlelighting and doesn't get switched off until after havdalah. (If it is somehow switched off, you may not reactivate it yourself.)

Matters get more complicated in the case of electrical appliances that you want to be running just some of the time on Shabbat, such as most household lighting, electric blankets and sheets and vaporizers. Here too, there are practical halachic solutions.

Depending upon how your home is wired, you can have the central panel which governs the electric flow in several rooms connected to a timer ("Shabbat clock"), which switches the electricity on and off at preset hours. You have the option of connecting it to one or more of the circuits. Another possibility is to have individual devices switched on and off by timers plugged into outlets. With the first option you will have to plan carefully what your needs will be for Shabbat before you call the electrician. Chana had to call hers back twice after the first visit to connect outlets she'd overlooked.

The plan she finally settled on has proved quite workable. About an hour-and-a-half before sunset the Shabbat clock switches on two overhead lights and a reading lamp in the living-dining room, one central light in the kitchen, and one in the main bathroom. The clock then switches everything off at about 11:30 at night and on again Shabbat afternoon. A separate Shabbat clock switches the central heater on and off at about the same times.

(Israelis rarely operate heating stoves throughout the 25 hours.) The Shabbat clock does not govern any of the outlets in the kitchen, where the refrigerator, hot plate, and hot water kettle operate all Shabbat.

Nechoma uses a similar arrangement, but with variations suitable to a home with very young children and frequent overnight guests. The following appliances remain on all Shabbat: the refrigerator (no light inside), the freezer, a light in one bathroom that illuminates the hallway off the bedrooms and also helps anyone who needs the bathroom in the middle of the night, a small light in the kitchen for a baby who needs night feedings and perhaps medicine, the hotplate or *blech*, and a night light in bedrooms where young children or guests are sleeping. Lights in the bedrooms stay off all Shabbat, since there is enough light from the bathroom to prepare the beds and change into pajamas. The lights in the dining room, living room, and large bathroom are regulated by the Shabbat clock. They are generally on from candlelighting until about midnight and then switch on again during the late afternoon until the end of Shabbat. Air conditioners, heaters, and vaporizers, she adds, could be used with a timer, since they usually aren't needed for the entire Shabbat. "It's not so complicated once you've worked out your plan," says Nechoma. "Play around with different arrangements until you find the one which is best for you."

It may seem that all this business with Shabbat clocks would be incredibly byzantine and hard to adjust to. But actually in practice, it isn't. When Chana's family first started using the system, she carefully taped all the wall switches to prevent absentmindedly flicking them on and off (a step you may also want to take). She found, however, that after the first two weeks everyone's awareness of Shabbat was so deep that she never had to tape the switches again. "I always get a special pleasure from the Shabbat clock," says Chana, "though it's hard to say exactly why. Part of it is the feeling of absolute rest, of the world's going about all its functions for a day without any effort on my part."

Having discussed the Shabbat clock, there still remain some special cases of electrical devices to consider. One is the refrigerator light. Although we usually want the refrigerator itself to run throughout Shabbat, we violate the halacha by causing the inside bulb to be switched on and off whenever we open and close the

door. Therefore, observant Jews either unscrew the bulb before Shabbat or remove it permanently. Telephones and answering machines should be unplugged, the phone put into a drawer with the receiver off the hook, or its rings simply unanswered. Elevators should be avoided unless they are programmed to stop automatically at every floor (and are thus termed “Shabbat elevators.”)

Most crucial are devices which are necessary for one’s personal well-being and security. These are given careful attention by halachic authorities. All monitoring devices for medical needs, for example, if essential for maintaining one’s health, may be operated on Shabbat. Consult a Torah-observant doctor and rabbi to discuss your particular case. Knowledgeable authorities should be consulted about proper use of burglar alarms, intercoms and smoke alarms.

If you have an unusual need for an electrical device not mentioned here, please consult with a rabbi. We can assure you that you won’t be the first person to have asked. Torah provides for all *necessary* activities on Shabbat. If Torah prohibits it, it must be possible to live without it, at least for one day.



Perhaps by now you feel that keeping Shabbat is nothing short of a return to the Stone Age. How can anyone manage comfortably without the TV, telephone, dishwasher, or car? Why *should* anyone?

First of all, we assure you that all the really important needs are provided for. You can enjoy delicious, warm meals and keep your home at a comfortable temperature summer or winter. If you wish, you can have plenty of family and friends around you.

There is no need to suffer from boredom, even without canned amusements. Radios, TV’s, videos, and the like are technically permissible if turned on before candlelighting and left running all Shabbat, or if switched on and off by a preset timer. Nevertheless, we strongly agree with almost all halachic authorities that the very act of operating them is not in the spirit of Shabbat. At least one day a week we should learn to wean ourselves away from electronic and secular entertainment. In our age there are enough activities, both pleasurable and permissible, available so that one need not “die of boredom” on Shabbat. Invest in some enjoyable games and a library

of Jewish books. There are hundreds of books in English today on all levels and subjects for adults and children. It's very rewarding to spend one day a week delving into Jewish thought and telling Jewish stories to your kids.

We don't mean to gloss over the difficulties of beginning Shabbat observance. Many families do discover that, after the initial trial period, what was thought at first to be an intolerable restriction turns out to be a blessing. Weekend restlessness gradually disappears. Family conversation resurfaces, board games make a comeback, and distant friends agree happily to stay over with you.

When you see how well you can get along without most technological aids and amusements, you experience a new strength and resourcefulness. After the raucous symphony of telephones, TV's, and washing machines ceases, you can truly hear human voices — and silence — again.

Shabbat is in fact anything but a return to some dismal Stone Age. After all, for thousands of years, Jews have called it “the day of *Light*.”

THE ERUV: CARRYING ON SHABBAT

Halacha forbids the carrying of objects from the private to the public domain and vice versa on Shabbat. Carrying anything out of the house to the street, regardless of weight or appropriateness to Shabbat — a key, handkerchief, siddur, or baby — is to be avoided.

Needless to say, this creates difficulties. The halacha, however, also provides workable answers. The simplest is to have the objects you need ready at your destination. For example, cakes to be served at the synagogue kiddush or dishes to be contributed to a pot luck dinner on Shabbat can be brought to the synagogue or your host's home before candle-lighting. Although a talit and kipa may be *worn* (and thus not carried), the synagogue often provides talitot, kipot, siddurim, and chumashim for all worshippers to borrow, so that carrying is avoided.

This solution, however, does not answer the problem of items you will want to have with you when you return home, such as your door key. What can be done in this case is to have the key made into a piece of jewelry and wear it on a lapel or dress. Any jeweler

can silver- or gold-plate a key and attach a pin. In New York City — and probably in other places as well — beautiful keys have been designed incorporating initials and other ornaments.

Since, according to halacha, a man does not wear jewelry, however, another solution had to be found which men could use. One answer is for a man to wear his key as a tie clasp. Another, available to both men and women, is to wear the key as part of a belt. There are two important conditions, though: first, that the key belt cannot be worn on a garment which already has a belt, and second, that the key must be an integral part of the belt and not just hung from it. The way this is done is to have one or two holes punched in the key and then to string a piece of elastic or ribbon through them. Then the key functions as the buckle which holds the ends of the belt together.



The ultimate solution to the carrying problem on Shabbat, and one which allows for all sorts of conveniences, is the *eruv*. For example, with an eruv created, a woman can walk with her baby in a stroller instead of always staying home or depending upon a baby-sitter. A man can carry his own siddur to synagogue. A child can play several games outside which he couldn't otherwise on Shabbat. Life becomes much easier.

The eruv appears to be nothing but a wire attached at many places to the telephone lines which encircles a whole town or Jewish neighborhood. Its legal effect, however, as explained in the Talmud, is to give a public domain the status of an extended private domain, within which a Jew can carry or move items from one place to another as if he were in his own home. The limiting conditions: one may not carry a muktzeh item or one that is not necessary for that Shabbat. One may not, for example, bring a friend something she will need on Wednesday.

A word of warning: Do not try to construct an eruv yourself. The laws are intricate and confusing to a novice. Ask an observant rabbi for guidance and help in this area.



One of the problems in writing a book like this for people who are perhaps just beginning their religious observance is that the inner experience of living a full Jewish life is often very different from the way it appears on the outside. Take the case of not carrying on Shabbat. It may seem that the Torah goes to exaggerated lengths to make us avoid it, which should alert us to the importance of the prohibition. But let us consider the inner experience. The feeling that you have nothing on you but the clothes on your back, nothing in your hands or in your pockets, not even a single coin, can allow you to feel totally unencumbered and free of the world. Wherever you go on this day, you are bringing only yourself, not any of your accretions or accomplishments. And if, thanks to an eruv, you *are* holding a baby or a siddur, it helps remind you not to take the carrying for granted. Awareness of the eruv can deepen your satisfaction in being part of a community wholly dedicated to living within the Jewish tradition.

DISHWASHING ON SHABBAT

According to halacha, one may only wash dishes on Shabbat that are needed for use again on that Shabbat.⁸ Does this give you visions of an impossibly messy kitchen with stacks of greasy dishes on the counters? Don't worry. Halachic authorities have interpreted this ruling quite liberally, so that you can usually find a solution which suits both the halachic requirements and your own needs. After all, Jewish *balebustas* have found ways for thousands of years to maintain clean and neat kitchens, even on Shabbat. In fact, in modern times things are much easier. Here are some solutions others have found helpful. Pick whichever ones fit your lifestyle and inclinations.

(a) If you want to avoid dishwashing altogether on Shabbat, which is most preferable, acquire a large enough supply of dishes to last all through the day under normal circumstances. After Havdalah, you can do them in the dishwasher or by hand using hot water and suds (prohibited on Shabbat). During Shabbat itself you can hide the dirty dishes in the dishwasher or on a shelf set aside for the purpose in a closed cabinet.

8. *Code of Jewish Law, Hilchot Shabbat*, chap. 323:6.

You may soak the dirty dishes in a tub of water and liquid soap prepared *before* Shabbat.⁹ If you have forgotten to prepare the tub before Shabbat, you may not do so afterwards, except in summer, when there is a risk of odor and bugs. Rinsing (not washing) the dishes under running cold water from the faucet is likewise permitted *in summer* for the same reasons. If, however, it is very repulsive to you to leave your dishes unwashed, some authorities hold that you may wash them in cold water and liquid soap, regardless of the season and even if only a few hours remain until the end of Shabbat.

What we have, then, in the case of dishes not needed again for Shabbat is a descending scale of preference and acceptability. Most widely accepted by the halachic authorities is to simply put them away until after Shabbat ends. Most of these authorities also accept soaking the dishes in a tub of water prepared before Shabbat — and so on down the scale. If, however, you find it extremely difficult to postpone your dishwashing, some authorities allow you to wash the dishes rather than to have them ruin your Shabbat.

(b) If you must wash dishes for use again on Shabbat, consider a number of halachic solutions. For example, even if you will probably be needing only a few of the dishes used, say, on Friday night for lunch on Saturday, you may wash *all* of them, since you are allowed to choose from all those used Friday night which dishes you want to set out for lunch the next day. Glasses and tea or coffee cups, moreover, may always be washed, on the assumption that you never know when unexpected guests will drop by later on. Pots, however, may not be washed, because clearly you will not need them again on that Shabbat to prepare food.

There are some additional rules to keep in mind. One is not allowed to use hot water from a faucet, cream or bar soap (some authorities permit liquid soap), or any material, such as a sponge, from which water will be squeezed out. Also, in drying dishes, one should avoid squeezing water from the towel. And, of course, there should be no use of electrical appliances such as dishwashers or sink disposals.

9. This and the rest of the statements about dishwashing made in the upcoming paragraphs are drawn from the work by Rabbi Padawer, *Piskey Hilchot Shabbat*, 3 vols. (N.Y.: no pub., 5742), vol. III, chap. 2, p.12 and on. A highly recommended source; also available in English translation.

Now for some practical hints about Shabbat dishwashing. You can try washing your dishes after each course, before they pile up, in cold water and liquid soap. Meanwhile the rest of the family and the guests can sing and converse — Shabbat is one occasion when you shouldn't rush through the meal. You will only be gone five or ten minutes, and then you can rejoin them.

If you wash dishes immediately after use they get very clean, even in cold water. Greasy dishes which will be needed should not be allowed to remain unwashed, because then they are much harder to clean later. Rubber gloves are helpful if you are sensitive to cold water or liquid soap. Alternatively, as we mentioned before, you can prepare a large pot of soapy water before Shabbat and place it on the blech or hotplate. When dishwashing time comes, you can pour the hot water from the pot into a large plastic dishpan, soak the dishes, and rinse them off. They will come out spotless, and you will have done your dishes in a *Shabbatdik* way.

After washing, the best thing to do is to let the dishes air dry in a dish drainer overnight. But if you *must* hand dry them, let them drip a few minutes in the drainer and then towel dry. The slight delay prevents the towel from getting so wet that you must squeeze out the water, which is forbidden.

After Shabbat lunch, when it is clear that you will not be needing the dishes again, stack them in the sink, a cabinet, or any other convenient place. You may soak or cover them if you wish, and *forget about them* until Shabbat is over. This is one day when you will not allow the dishes to rule over you!

(c) Use paper plates. Today there is a wide selection of lovely patterns available, some might, at first glance, even be mistaken for china. If you use such attractive paper plates, you need not feel that you are “insulting the Shabbat.” The advantage is obvious. You will not have to deal with dirty dishes at any time during or after the day.

OPENING PACKAGES

There is a general restriction against opening packages in the usual way on Shabbat. To be more specific, one should avoid the following: (1) Erasing letters. Most boxes, bags, and wrappers have

words printed on them, and words may not be “erased” by tearing between letters. (2) Ungluing. Glue may not be unglued. For example, the top of a potato chips bag may not be separated. (3) Creating a vessel. One may not “create a vessel” on Shabbat. Thus, one is prohibited from opening a carton or can in such a manner as to allow that container to be used again as a vessel after its original contents are consumed. (4) Tearing along perforated lines.

Again, we repeat, don’t despair. There are plenty of solutions available. The most obvious one is to have someone — this is a suitable Erev Shabbat job for children — open all the cans, boxes, and bags to be used that Shabbat. Even ice pops should have their wrappers unglued or torn before candlelighting. Be sure to remember milk and juice cartons, soda bottles (if they are the kind that requires breaking a seal with words, but the type that requires a can opener is no problem on Shabbat), bags of potato chips, cookies, candies, treats, cans of food you will be using, bottles of wine, packaged bread and so on. Not only food items, but all other items to be used on Shabbat, such as boxes of disposable diapers, bandages, tissues, paper plates, napkins, etc. should be opened as well. Make a list and post it where you can refer to it every Erev Shabbat.

If you have forgotten a container, however, and must open it on Shabbat, there’s no need for panic. You may open it in a special Shabbat way. Just bear in mind the following points. It is preferable to *tear* the wrapper rather than to unglue it, but take care not to break any words. If opening a container would “create a vessel,” as in the case of a milk carton or can, open it in such a way as to make the vessel unfit for future use. For example, a small hole should be punctured with a can opener in the other side of the can so that, as you’re opening the top with a manual can opener, the contents are slowly dripping out of the other end. Put a bowl or pitcher underneath the can to catch the liquid. If what you’re opening is a cardboard container, cut an opening in the side or bottom and transfer the contents to a pitcher.

REMEMBER

When doing things on Shabbat, the primary goal is not to do them the “easy, quick way,” but rather in a manner that does not

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violate the thirty-nine forbidden categories of melacha, and therefore to keep the sanctity of Shabbat.



PRE-SHABBAT MEALS

THURSDAY DINNER AND FRIDAY LUNCH

By Thursday night, and certainly by lunch time on Friday, you are probably up to your neck in Shabbat preparations. When all your thoughts and energies are focussed on finishing a glorious carrot kugel, three side-dishes, and a new Moroccan cholent recipe, the last thing you need is to devote hours to pre-Shabbat meals.

The answer is literally “Let ‘em eat cake.” There’s a well established and very practical custom in traditional Jewish homes to “taste of the Shabbat” before it actually comes. “Those who savor it (the Shabbat) will merit eternal life.”¹⁰ Thus, in observant homes there is often a delicious dish from the Shabbat dinner to come, a bit of the kugel, for example, sitting in the kitchen on Friday for kids and adults alike to “nosh” on. Offering just a preview of the upcoming feast, it nevertheless satisfies afternoon hunger pangs and keeps whining children off a busy mother’s back.

There are other tactics for reducing demands on you at this hectic time. Eating dinner out on Thursday night is, of course, the most convenient of all, if you can manage it. Families who go out to eat one night a week can choose to make it Thursday. The only disadvantage is that, with the mother’s thoughts on all her work at home, dinner may be rushed and not very enjoyable. In many cases, then, the most practical solution is for the father to take all the kids out to a kosher fast-food restaurant, bring the mother’s meal home, and let her get on with her work. In our neighborhood in Jerusalem that’s just what many families do. The local pizza parlor is jammed on Thursday night with unescorted fathers and their broods. A slightly less convenient solution is to buy several carry-out dishes from a kosher restaurant and have a quick, easy dinner at your own table, perhaps using paper plates.

If, on the other hand, you are cooking Thursday night dinner yourself, make it *simple*. After all, you’re not neglecting anybody. You’ll demonstrate your love for your family with the next night’s meal, and you’re also heightening their anticipation of it. Chana, for

10. From the Shabbat Musaf Amidah prayers. On the custom of tasting food before Shabbat, see *Magen Avraham*, 250.

example, serves yogurts, cottage cheese and noodles, canned fruit salad, cheese sandwiches — anything that involves just opening a container. Shaina serves “kosher pizza, pareve (vegetarian) hot dogs — whatever is store-bought and ready.” A quick cold “breakfast at night” is fun sometimes. Sarah makes a giant pot of vegetable soup on Wednesday which she serves Wednesday, Thursday, and sometimes Friday lunch as well. And finally, of course, there are countless “heat and serve” kosher packaged dinners which don’t dirty even a single pot.

At Friday lunch time the pace quickens still more, and it’s even less advisable to fuss. As we mentioned before, many women give their family something from the Shabbat night meal they have already cooked. Leftovers, chicken from the soup, and sandwiches are good choices, too. If you are at the bakery anyway buying challah or cake, you might pick up something for lunch, such as bourekas or filled pastries.

Our resource women with small children almost unanimously recommend an easy, but *filling* lunch, such as kugel, spaghetti, chicken from the soup, or hefty sandwiches. This accomplishes two things. First, as we said earlier, it assures that their lunch will hold them until dinner time without additional attention on your part. Second, it soothes any guilt pangs you may have about whether they’ve been adequately nourished that day. Then, if a child just nibbles at the challah or soup at Shabbat dinner, as often happens, and refuses anything else, at least you know that he was well fed at lunch.

Rachel adds a word of sage advice: “Don’t make extra dirty dishes at this time. If you don’t have a dishwasher, use paper plates.”

LATE AFTERNOON SNACKS

Since adults are not permitted to eat between candle-lighting and kiddush at dinner, you might also want to have a light snack on hand in the late afternoon, especially for guests who have travelled some distance and arrived before Shabbat begins. On those summer days when kiddush doesn’t begin until seven o’clock or later, your family will appreciate a late afternoon snack, too.

If sensible steps like these are taken, you will save energy, and your family and guests will arrive at the Shabbat dinner table, not famished, but eagerly awaiting the feast.



BABY AND TODDLER CARE ON SHABBAT

When one is first learning to keep Shabbat *and* has a baby to care for at the same time, one has to adapt to two major life changes simultaneously. This is certainly not easy. We hope, however, that with a little knowledge, you will overcome most of the difficulties of a two-fold change and focus instead on the opportunities.

Obviously, no book can substitute for human guidance. The best way by far to learn about infant and child care on Shabbat is to spend the day with observant families that have young children, watch carefully how things are done, and ask questions. Use your resources to locate and get in touch with such families near you. In the meantime, we will touch upon the general halachic and practical issues of baby care on Shabbat and suggest some well-tried solutions.

DAILY ROUTINE CHANGES

One of the differences you will find is that since driving is forbidden and since you have new priorities for Shabbat, more time will be spent in or near the home. It therefore becomes desirable to rearrange the child's schedule as much as possible so that it won't interfere with everyone else's.

Very young babies are hard to schedule. You can try to feed them before the family eats so that during the meal the baby will be content and, hopefully, after the meal, sleepy. Then it might be possible for you to get some rest, too.

It's awkward to keep everyone waiting for kiddush while Mommy's nursing, but if it occasionally happens, there's no reason for panic. If the family and guests would like to wait until you're done, fine. Otherwise, you can go ahead with kiddush and then serve some cake or cookies to hold everyone until you're ready to join them for the meal. Alternatively, your family and guests can wash, do *hamotzie*, and eat one course while waiting for you, or, if you like, they can simply go ahead with the entire meal, not waiting for any particular course when you can join them. It all depends on the ages of your children, your husband's willingness to take over, and your own preference.

It's very trying to attempt to serve dinner to family and guests while a small child is starving and demanding his meal. In order to avoid such crankiness at the table and to give your little ones the attention they need, give children up to age four or five their Shabbat dinner early. Later on they can have some challah, soup, or dessert with the family.

Even before children reach their first year it is desirable to plan their schedules so that they are awake for at least the beginning of the Shabbat meals. It's important for them to see the kiddush, drink a bit of wine, and absorb the Shabbat experience.

When the child's bed time falls during the meal, it's perfectly all right to excuse yourself for a short time to tuck him in. (The adults will appreciate the ensuing quiet.) When Shabbat comes in late, you can dress little kids in clean pajamas before or after candlelighting. Then, when they conk out, you can just carry them straight to bed. Nechoma adds, "When we have guests with small children for Shabbat dinner or lunch, we usually take an intermission at some point during the meal. While the parents put the little ones to bed, everyone else converses and sings. The rest of the meal resumes about half an hour later, calmly and quietly."

GENERAL HEALTH CARE PRINCIPLES

While always striving to preserve the integrity of Shabbat, halacha is nevertheless extremely flexible when it comes to the health of small children. Thus, certain medications and procedures normally forbidden to others on Shabbat are allowed, under special conditions, in the case of baby care. For example, although one should normally avoid taking non-essential medications on Shabbat, one is permitted to give a baby vitamins, calcium tablets, cod liver oil, and the like if the doctor prescribes them for daily consumption.¹¹ *Liquid* oil may be applied to areas affected by diaper rash and head scales, if it is applied by hand and not by using cotton. (No creams of any kind may be used, however, on Shabbat.)¹² Although adults are subject to certain time restrictions, little

11. Shoshana Matzner-Bekerman, *The Jewish Child: Halakhic Perspectives* (N.Y.: Ktav, 1984), p. 87; Y.Y. Neuwirth, *Shemirat Shabbat KeHilkhato*, chap. 24:3.

12. *Ibid.*

children are not. Unlike adults, for example, young children may be fed before kiddush on Shabbat, if necessary.¹³ If a little child requires milk after a meat meal, he need wait only one hour, not the six hours usually required of an adult.¹⁴

One is allowed to take normally forbidden measures on Shabbat as well in order to protect a child's safety. For example, muktzeh items which might cause a baby or toddler injury, such as broken glass, pencils, nails or pins, which are in places where the child might crawl may be removed.¹⁵ Similarly, a baby may be weighed on Shabbat, even though this is normally prohibited, if its weight must be monitored daily.¹⁶

It is always preferable, if one can foresee the need, to prepare before candlelighting all the foods, diapers, ointments, medications, bandages, that will be used during Shabbat. If, however, the child unexpectedly becomes unwell, one can still help him in a Shabbat-dik way.

BREAST FEEDING

There are differences of opinion among the various authorities over some of the issues concerning breast feeding on Shabbat. If any of these problems arise for you, it's best to consult a qualified rabbi.

For example, if a baby who requires or is accustomed to mother's milk cannot nurse, some authorities say that the mother may expel her milk into a container for the baby.¹⁷ Others maintain that a rabbi should be consulted for each particular case.¹⁸

There seems to be general agreement that a mother may empty her breasts to prevent engorgement and pain, but that she should empty them some place where the milk will go to waste — never into a vessel.¹⁹ Some authorities add that the milk may be expelled only by hand and not by a breast pump, unless something is placed

13. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 98; Shlomo Ganzfried, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, chap. 165:4.

14. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 98.

15. Rabbi S. Wagschal, *Care of Children on the Sabbath and Yom Tov* (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim, 1958), sixth edition, p. 30.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

17. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 81, based on Neuwirth, chap. 23:15.

18. Wagschal, p. 15.

19. Matzner-Bekerman, pp. 80-81; Wagschal, p. 14.

beforehand into the pump or vessel to make the milk unfit to drink.²⁰ A nursing mother may wash her nipples before nursing, but only by hand with tap water. Cotton balls or swabs are not permitted.²¹ If her breasts are infected, a nursing mother may, however, prepare cotton or cloth with medicated cream before Shabbat to be used on Shabbat.²² She may also take medicine and shots on Shabbat to prevent infection.²³

A nursing mother is required to fast on Yom Kippur, but if she risks losing her milk supply, she may drink 40-45 grams of water at intervals of at least nine minutes. However, she should avoid attending synagogue services in this case.²⁴ On other fast days she may break the fast if necessary to keep her milk supply for a dependent child.

FOOD PREPARATION

Preparing for a small child's Shabbat meals requires some forethought, but it is not especially difficult. Since one may not sterilize bottles on Shabbat by boiling — unless it is a matter of possible danger to life (see chapter on "Illness on Shabbat") — all bottles must be readied before candlelighting.²⁵ If you will need hot water for baby cereals, powdered foods, and the like, you must have plenty of boiled water set aside on the hotplate or blech. You should also be sure to have all the jars of baby food that you will need and have all cartons opened in advance. If you want to give the child freshly-squeezed juice to drink, the squeezing must be done before Shabbat begins.

If, however, you have forgotten to make one of these preparations or have run out of hot water or baby food, there is usually a halachic solution available. You may ask a non-Jew to bring you hot water or baby food from the house of a Jew, or, if this is not possible, to prepare the hot water or baby food in your home. You may also, as a last resort, ask a non-Jew to buy baby food for you if

20. Wagschal, pp. 14-15.

21. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 81.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 99; Neuwirth chap. 12:4, 13.

necessary and repay him or her after Shabbat. You may not help him in any way, though.²⁶ If you live within an eruv (see earlier in this chapter), then you may carry the necessary food from another Jew's home.



In the actual preparation of the various foods, the main principle is to do it in a different manner, in recognition of Shabbat. For example, if you are mixing a liquid with fine solids (milk powder, baby cereals, or mashed vegetables), you do it in the opposite order from the way you usually do it during the week. If you normally add the liquid to the solids, you reverse the order on Shabbat. If you normally add the solids to the liquid, you reverse that order on Shabbat. Similarly, you stir the food in a different manner in recognition of Shabbat, in straight movements backwards and forwards or in criss-cross movements, taking the spoon out after each stroke. Stirring should be done gently.²⁷

Food for a young child may be warmed in several ways, but the use of an electric bottle-warming device is prohibited on Shabbat.²⁸ Food may be placed near warm stove burners or a hotplate for several hours to warm it.²⁹ Alternatively, the pot with food may be placed on a pot with boiled water which has been set on a hotplate or blech before Shabbat. A bottle of milk may be heated by placing it in a dish or deep bowl and pouring hot water which was left on a hotplate or blech from before Shabbat over it. Of course, this works much better if you've taken the bottle out of the refrigerator some hours before and let it warm to room temperature. Even better, let it remain close to the hotplate for several hours before pouring boiling water over it. In any case, the water should not completely cover the bottle.³⁰ There are many other specifications and methods of warming various foods. The reader should consult Rabbi Wagschal's *Care of Children on the Sabbath and Yom Tov* for authoritative and clear guidance.

26. Wagschal, p. 1.

27. Ibid., p. 2.

28. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 99; Neuwirth chap. 1:44,50.

29. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 99.

30. Ibid.; Neuwirth chap. 1: 44, 50.

Ordinarily, one may not mash fresh fruits (some authorities say fresh *or* cooked fruits) and vegetables on Shabbat, but one may do so for young babies if necessary for their health. Fresh fruits and vegetables may be finely chopped, however, for older children. Eggs, meat, fish, and cheese may be cut very fine or scraped with a knife. Any chopping or mashing must be done immediately before the meal.³¹ As was mentioned earlier, one may not squeeze juice from fresh fruits (by hand or by any device) into a container for drinking, but one may squeeze juice by hand onto a solid food, such as a salad, to improve its taste.³²

HOLIDAYS AND SHABBAT FOOD PREPARATION

When holidays coincide with Shabbat, Shabbat generally takes precedence. Therefore, the more stringent halachot of Shabbat food preparation also take precedence.

The one exception is Yom Kippur, “the Shabbat of Shabbats.” When Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat, it is the only time a fast day is neither advanced nor postponed. How the Yom Kippur fast affects the nursing mother was discussed earlier. The only other relevant point is that one may feed a child who is below the age when fasting is required (twelve for girls, thirteen for boys) and may wash one’s hands before doing so.³³

When a holiday falls on Friday, one may prepare food for the upcoming Shabbat for both adults and children by means of an *eruv tavshilin*.

BATHING AND WASHING

It is, generally speaking, not permitted to bathe a child completely on Shabbat. However, a non-Jewish nurse may bathe a baby during its first few weeks, or you yourself may bathe the baby if it is very uncomfortably hot in summer or if the doctor believes it necessary to bathe the child. When doing so, the baby should be bathed using only your hands and liquid soap. Sponges, damp

31. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 98; *Mishneh Brurah*, 45.

32. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 99; Wagschal, p. 9.

33. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 89; Neuwirth chap. 32:40.

cloths, cotton, brushes, and solid soaps are not permitted.³⁴ It is always permissible to wash each limb separately with water warmed before Shabbat or to sit a baby in a tub with water warmed before Shabbat, as long as the water covers no more than the legs.³⁵ Since squeezing water out is not allowed, the baby's hair should not be washed.³⁶

As for after the bath care, one may use baby powder, liquid lotion, or oil, but no baby cream or ointment (except in the case of soreness), and no absorptive materials, like cotton. If there is soreness or diaper rash, ointment should be applied to a bit of cotton *before* Shabbat and then just dabbed on the spot during Shabbat without rubbing.³⁷ Combing, braiding, and unbraiding hair are all prohibited, but one may smooth a baby's hair with a soft brush on Shabbat and use a very small amount of liquid hair oil.³⁸

Teeth should not be brushed on Shabbat, but one may rinse the mouth with a mouthwash. In the case of very young children this is probably unnecessary in any case.

One may remove bits of food and food stains from a child's mouth and face. The accepted procedure is to rinse the stains by hand first and then use a paper towel.³⁹

CLEANING UP AFTER A BABY

It's wise to prepare in advance for the almost inevitable spills and messes a baby is likely to make on Shabbat. Have dry rags available which may get wet or dirty when wiping up stains and spills. You might consider, too, covering (at least) the baby's area of the tablecloth with plastic. You should also be careful not to pick up a baby on Shabbat without wearing a protective covering, such as a plastic apron which covers the entire front of your dress to the knees, and cloth diapers for your shoulder and sleeve. The reasons will soon become obvious.

34. Wagschal, p. 15.

35. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 87; Neuwirth chap. 32:40.

36. Wagschal, p. 15.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 16; Matzner-Bekerman, p. 87.

38. Wagschal, p. 16.

39. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 87; Wagschal, p. 20; Neuwirth chap. 13:15.

If the baby spills water, you may only blot it up with a clean, dry rag. You may not scrub, wring, or squeeze out the water.⁴⁰ If the child spills any other liquid or urinates on the floor, you may blot it with a cloth. Again, the cloth must not be squeezed. The same holds true with spills on the tablecloth.⁴¹

If the baby spills on or stains your dress, you may not use water or spittle to clean it. You may only rub the dress lightly with a dry cloth.⁴² Dried dirt may not be scratched off, nor a clothes brush used.⁴³

In conclusion, “Be prepared!”

DIAPERS

Much of the upcoming information has been obviated by the widespread daily use of disposable diapers. Even if you do not use disposables the rest of the week, you might consider using them on Shabbat.

Disposable diaper tapes may not be opened for the first time on Shabbat. There is a halachic opinion that tapes can be opened and closed before Shabbat to prepare them for being opened and used on Shabbat. According to this opinion, after they have been opened once, the second opening and closing are permitted. Those who do not permit this advise using safety pins. Check with your rabbi.⁴⁴

Whether you use disposables or cloth diapers, the following halachic points apply. Soaking them in water is not permitted, but feces may be removed without the use of water.⁴⁵ Cloth diapers can then be kept in a special closed container or plastic bag and deodorized with Lysol to keep all insects away until the end of Shabbat, when they may be washed.⁴⁶ Disposables can be thrown into the garbage at once. Plastic pants, rubber sheets, clothes made of pure synthetics, or anything made from leather may be soaked or wiped clean with a dry cloth on Shabbat, but squeezing out water is not

40. Wagschal, p. 70.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 88; Neuwirth chap. 14:5.

45. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 88.

46. Ibid.

allowed.⁴⁷ These items may be hung to dry for use again on Shabbat, but should not be hung near a furnace or other fire for the purpose.⁴⁸

Cloth diapers washed before Shabbat may not be hung up to dry on Shabbat unless needed again that day. Diapers and baby clothes may be removed from the line on Shabbat if already dry and needed for that day.⁴⁹ If not actually needed again, they should be left hanging until after Shabbat ends.

WALKS

Where there is an eruv, one may walk with a baby in a carriage or stroller, but hoods, fly nets, etc. may not be added to or removed from the carriage on Shabbat. If they were affixed before Shabbat, they may be opened or closed.⁵⁰ Where there is no eruv, one is not permitted to carry a baby or walk it in a stroller.⁵¹ As to whether a Jew may have a non-Jew walk the baby in a carriage, one should consult a rabbi in each particular case.⁵²

A child who can walk if led by the hand may be taken for a stroll, on the condition that you neither lift nor pull him along.⁵³ It is sensible not to take him too far from home. If he is too tired to continue, you may give him a rest by holding him in your arms while standing still.

If the child becomes ill, it is preferable to ask a non-Jew to carry him home or to a doctor. If that is not possible, you may carry him yourself, but try to do so in an unusual way.⁵⁴ If there is danger to his life, *any* measure should be taken, including hailing a taxi, which will get him medical aid as quickly as possible.

47. Ibid., Wagschal, p. 19; Neuwirth chap. 14:6,10.

48. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 88; Wagschal, p. 99.

49. Ibid.

50. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 88; Wagschal, p. 23.

51. Ibid.

52. Wagschal, p. 23.

53. Ibid., p. 22.

54. Ibid.

BABY-SITTERS

One may engage a baby-sitter to stay with the child if he or she is hired before Shabbat and paid on a weekday.⁵⁵ If the baby-sitter is a non-Jew, he or she may perform actions forbidden Jews which are important for a young child's well-being in accordance with its status. These actions should be limited, however, only to whatever is really necessary; for example, a night light may be lit for a frightened child, but a TV should not be switched on for him.⁵⁶

TOYS AND GAMES

The halacha is most liberal regarding the toys and games of very young children; it grows progressively stricter with the increasing age and level of responsibility of the child. In this chapter we will discuss toys and games relevant to children up to about three years.

Below three years children have little conception of what Shabbat is and can exercise no responsibility in keeping it. Halacha reflects this fact. Thus, most authorities allow babies to play with their rattles and other noise-producing toys on Shabbat, though adults may not shake or even touch them.⁵⁷ Similarly, small children may play with soap bubbles on Shabbat, whereas adults may not make them at all.

As they grow older, children play with an ever larger variety of toys, and a good many of them are permitted on Shabbat as well. For example, balls (but not inflated ones) may be played with indoors and, if there is an eruv, also outdoors.⁵⁸ Wind-up toys, if they do not make musical sounds and do not run on batteries, are permitted. Blocks are allowed, if they do not attach permanently together. Permitted, too, are beads and strings, as long as no knot is made in them; out-door games not involving carrying; running and jumping games; swings (unless attached to a tree); and tricycles — if the custom is to ride them in your community, if there is an eruv,

55. Matzner-Bekerman, p. 89.

56. Ibid.

57. Matzner-Bekerman, pp. 83-84; Neuwirth chap. 15, Wagschal, p. 21.

58. All examples given here are from Matzner-Bekerman, p. 84, and Wagschal, p. 21.

and if the bell is removed. Trikes may be ridden indoors, in any case. Playing in a sandbox is controversial. Wagschal states flatly that playing with sand is forbidden on Shabbat. Matzner-Beckerman, on the other hand, says that playing with sand in a sandbox (not on the beach) is permitted, as long as children are not allowed to mix it with water, which constitutes kneading, one of the 39 forbidden categories of melacha. Consult your rabbi on this issue.

The following toys and games relevant to babies and toddlers are *not* permitted on Shabbat: clay, play-dough, wax, pencils, crayons, paints, and — according to many authorities — Legos and puzzles. Once again, if you have a question about these two or any other toy or game not mentioned in this book, consult your rabbi.

EDUCATION FOR MITZVOT OBSERVANCE

Complete Shabbat care requires attention both to the child's physical *and* spiritual needs. In childhood the foundation is laid for a lifetime of mitzvot observance. Much of it does not yet involve formal instruction, but the small child is for the most part absorbing impressions from the environment around him. What he is absorbing, however, is probably the deepest, most fundamental part of his education, "that which remains when everything you've learned is forgotten." The baby and toddler haven't yet "learned" in the cognitive sense we usually think of, but they are very busy becoming aware Jews nevertheless. A friend tells of coming out into her livingroom early one morning and seeing her grown son davening. Rocking beside him to the same rhythm was *his* little son, age two, a dish towel draped over his head and shoulders.

What the child is absorbing from Shabbat is of tremendous importance even though it still takes the form of undigested impressions. The repeated experiences of candles glowing, tranquil faces and movements, sounds and sights of new people in the home, chanting, delicious smells and tastes, laughter, singing, books with beautiful coverings and golden letters, games with Mommy and Daddy, and then more candlelight, chanting, and lovely smells — all this shapes a child's Shabbat world for a lifetime.

When he begins the age of speech and comprehension of sequences, the child can move beyond undigested impressions. He

can now be taught to do mitzvot, both what they mean and how to do them. Of course, we don't sit him down and lecture him, "A mitzva is an action commanded by Hashem that you must do every time you are in such-and-such a time or circumstances." He makes the connection subconsciously. When he is taught, for example, that every time he is handed this particular food he must say these particular words, he intuits that the food, the words of the blessing and the connection between the two must all be important because they are always the same and so carefully done.

The first mitzvot a child is taught are usually both very fundamental and appropriate for his age. Thus, from about age two he is taught the Shema, other short prayers, and the berachot over food. It's at this time that training in Shabbat mitzvot also begins. As soon as a child can understand simple commands, his parents start gradually and gently to restrain him from playing with forbidden toys and from carrying outside when there is no eruv. A little girl of three is often taught to light her own Shabbat candle. Children of both sexes may begin helping to welcome guests by passing around snacks. There are plenty of opportunities, when the time is ripe, to begin the child's education in mitzvot observance.



YOUR PERSONAL PREPARATIONS

MIKVA AND SHABBAT

It can be inconvenient when your mikva night falls on Thursday or Friday. Still, it is usually possible, since you're aware of your mikva schedule ahead of time, to prepare in advance and thereby lessen the time pressure. For example, when you are preparing the upcoming Shabbat dinner the Shabbat a week before you expect to go to the mikva, you can make double portions and freeze those intended for next week's dinner.

If your mikva night is Thursday, it is sensible to serve a very simple dinner Thursday night and plan to do some of your regular Thursday chores on Wednesday or Friday. If your mikva night is Friday, it might be easier not to invite guests — or at least to invite only a few understanding ones — since you will have to be away from the house between candle lighting and the meal. Also, you will be busy on Friday afternoon with the pre-mikva preparations. In any case, start extra early that week, plan an especially easy Shabbat menu, or simply cut a few corners in your usual routine.

If you are new to mikva observance, don't hesitate to discuss it with a more experienced mikva goer, a Torah-observant rabbi's wife, or the observant rabbi nearest you. Any one of these people can be of real help.

CLOTHING

If possible, the clothes we wear on Shabbat should be special for the day. Children, too, should have at least one Shabbat outfit. As an additional token of the day's specialness, appropriate new clothes bought during the week should be worn for the first time on Shabbat.

Anything that must be done to clothing you want to wear on Shabbat — washing, dry cleaning, ironing, mending, polishing, etc. — should be completed before candlelighting. Knots may not be tied on Shabbat, but single bows are permitted.

Shabbat clothing need not be terribly costly. In fact, obviously expensive garments are in bad taste. So, too, are pants on women,

plunging necklines, backless or sleeveless tops, and skirts above the knee. For men, jeans, shorts, and jogging suits are totally inappropriate for Shabbat. For both sexes simple, elegant clothes are best. The standards of conservative good taste in the office are usually appropriate on Shabbat.

Just how dressed up you should be, however, depends in large part on your community. In most cities of North America and Europe proper Shabbat dress is often more formal than in Israel or on college campuses. In any case, proper dress should not preclude comfort. After all, a central theme of Shabbat is pleasure and rest. It's hard to feel either if your tie is choking you or your high heeled shoes are pinching.

For women an excellent solution to the problem of appearing festive in a minimum of time and with a maximum of comfort is the "Shabbat robe." This is a long, loose, comfortable, but especially beautiful robe or dress which you can slip into quickly for candle-lighting and, if you choose, wear all Shabbat night. It shouldn't look like a bathrobe and it should be appropriately modest, but other than that, there's no prescribed style. It can be a lovely caftan or hostess gown. Many we've seen look less like a robe than a long, loose-fitting dress. In any case, the "Shabbat robe" should be reserved for Shabbat only; part of the special ease and grace of the day.

Having a special Shabbat scarf for candlelighting also enhances the moment for you and your family. Some women are lucky enough to have inherited one from their mother or grandmother. If you haven't, maybe you could buy or embroider one yourself that could become a family heirloom.

HEADCOVERINGS

Since we have just mentioned Shabbat scarves, perhaps a note on women's headcoverings in general is in order.

The custom of men's headcovering is very conspicuous in Judaism. What is less well-known is that there is an equally strong custom (actually, a law) in Jewish tradition for *women* to cover

their heads.⁵⁹ The rationale is somewhat different in each case. A man's skullcap or hat is Judaism's way of showing reverence for Hashem and submission to His will, while a woman's covering her hair with a wig, scarf, or hat symbolizes both reverence for Hashem and sexual modesty as well. There is a common denominator for both sexes. Covering the head signifies humility and a certain reserve.

Single women need not cover their hair, but married, divorced, or widowed women should preferably do so at all times. (One may consult with a Rabbi to find out how this applies and to whom.) If you have not yet taken on this mitzva, it is a fine custom, at least, to cover your hair when praying, when making a blessing (such as candlelighting), when in a holy place (shul, cemetery, etc.), when attending a Jewish ceremony (brit, bar mitzva, wedding), and when visiting the home of Torah observant people, as a courtesy and a way to make them feel more comfortable.

The letter of the law requires that all the hair be covered. This mitzva should pose no problem, however, even for the fashion conscious. There are beautiful ways to accomplish it with colorful and elegant scarves, berets, and hats. Today, too, there is a wig industry so sophisticated that it is often hard to detect who is wearing one. A wig is actually the ideal hair covering because it covers all the hair.

Incidentally, there is no halachic indication whatsoever that hair covering is supposed to detract from a woman's beauty. The intention of the halacha was to protect her *modesty*, not to smother her natural G-d-given attractiveness. Our ancestors, apparently, had no difficulty in imagining a healthy woman of *both* beauty and reticence. In our "if you've got it, flaunt it" society, we often find our ancestors' attitude incomprehensible. But a glance at the gorgeous headcoverings medieval and Yemenite Jewish women once wore should convince even the most skeptical.

Similarly, with today's natural-looking wigs many women feel that they would never have gotten their own locks to look as attractive. Nechoma, a veteran wig wearer, sees many other advantages in it:

59. On men's headcoverings, see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 2:6 and *Talmud, Shabbat* 156b. On women's headcoverings, see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 75:2 and *Even HaEzer* 25:2.

Wearing a wig means you can look beautiful in a minute. There's no need to set, comb, and fuss right before you're going out. I go to the wig salon when it's convenient for me, and then I have my hairdo waiting for me. On Friday night I light candles in my "Shabbat tichel" (Shabbat scarf) and special Shabbat robe. Then I lie down and rest while my sons and husband are in shul. When they come back, I put on my wig and feel festive and lovely. I never worry about my hair looking messy. I always have a stylish, ready-combed wig or two in the closet. It's a great liberator!

PERSONAL GROOMING

Many actions which are essential to personal grooming violate categories of forbidden melacha on Shabbat and are therefore forbidden. Applying makeup, using creams, plucking eyebrows and cutting hair, are not permissible between candlelighting and havdalah. As we have mentioned elsewhere, bathing, combing hair and the like are also to be avoided.

The solution, as usual, lies in readying yourself before Shabbat. Bathe or shower, arrange your hair, and apply your makeup before candle-lighting. You may seem a bit pale by the next day, and your hair will not look the way it did when you stepped out of the salon (unless you wear a wig), but you and everyone around you will know you're doing it for Shabbat. As one mother says, "When my daughter's braids are a bit messed up in the morning and I know it's because of Shabbat, she's even more beautiful to me."

If the idea of appearing in public un-madeup is just too appalling to you, remember that there is a clear fixative available which can be sprayed on freshly applied makeup. Women who use it say that it keeps the colors intact for the whole night and next day. Such a fixative applied before Shabbat is permissible, as are roll-on deodorants and loose, neutral-colored face powders applied on Shabbat. Things to be avoided are sprays, creams, and makeup which colors the face in any way.

All of this may be difficult for you if you're one of those women who can't face the world without eye makeup, blusher, and

lipstick. But we must remember our Jewish priorities and realize that violating some of the superficial doctrines of our secular culture is not a cardinal sin. It won't kill you if you don't apply your cream one night, and you won't wither away if you occasionally forego your morning makeup ritual. Perhaps it's healthy to try facing the world once a week with your own face.



USHERING SHABBAT IN AND OUT

The few hours just before and after Shabbat arrives and departs are special transition times. Each period has a recognized mood and name. The hour of Shabbat's imminent arrival is full of bustling and happy anticipation — it is “Kabbalat Shabbat,” the time of “Greeting the Shabbat.” By contrast, the hour of Shabbat's departure is often a bit wistful and sad. It is “Melaveh Malka,” the time of “Escorting the Queen Out.” In order to show her out in style and to try to hold on to the Shabbat mood a bit longer, Melaveh Malka often becomes a celebration in itself. In this way we circle Shabbat with joy.

USHERING SHABBAT IN

The hour or so before candlelighting is hectic, true, but it should also be a time of spiritual preparation. Men sometimes take the opportunity to review the weekly Bible portion. Women, if they've planned well, can also make time for study and meditation. In most cases, though, women's spiritual uplift comes through doing the many down-to-earth mitzvot necessary to “make Shabbat.” A good thing to keep in mind is the variety of *active* meditation possibilities in Judaism available to anyone — man, woman, or child — who is busy with his or her hands making Shabbat. You can inwardly intend and devote each act *“lichvod Shabbat.”* You can stop now and then, as Rachel suggests, take a deep breath, and “send a thought-arrow to Hashem.” You can listen to a cassette of Torah commentary. And, of course, you can heighten everyone's joy with some lively Shabbat songs.

Just before candlelighting it's customary to give tzedakah, at least double the amount you usually give. Don't keep this a private act. Be sure your children see you do it and, just as important, give each one coins of his own to drop into the box.

DRESSING THE CHILDREN

There's no need to worry about having your children all dressed by candlelighting, though of course it's preferable. Rachel says, “I

dress only those children who will cooperate. After I light candles, I try to dress the others, if any. Actually, I find that my children know how to dress themselves in Shabbat clothes long before they can dress themselves for school....”

Nechoma and other mothers we interviewed feel it’s a waste of energy to dress very young children who go to bed early anyway, in Shabbat finery. They just put on the kids’ best “Shabbat pajamas,” and take them to bed right after kiddush.

Shaina, ever efficient, has streamlined both the dressing and bathing schedules of her children. In winter the kids are all bathed Thursday night, but in summer they simply go to the swimming pool Friday afternoon and shower afterwards in the changing room there. Upon their return home, Shaina dresses her little boys in p.j.’s and her little girls in p.j.’s under pretty Shabbat robes. Then, when they fall asleep, she just takes off their robes and puts them straight into bed.

Batya also tries to bathe all her young children before Friday. The older boys go to the mikva Friday afternoon and come home “thoroughly clean, physically and spiritually.”

But on the subject of bathing and dressing children for Shabbat, the last word belongs to Sarah: “Get them independent as early as possible!”

LATE SHABBATOT

Thanks to Summer Time, Shabbat can begin as late as ten o’clock in many parts of the world. While this hour may be convenient for commuters, it poses problems for families with young children, and for anyone who dislikes eating dinner at the “fashionable” hour of eleven at night.

Fortunately, there is a halachic solution to this difficulty. Since we can *add* weekday time to Shabbat (but not subtract from it), many communities move candlelighting back to 7:00 and recite the Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat Maariv prayers before nightfall, in contrast to the usual practice. Only the Shema must then be repeated later after dark.

If this solution has not been agreed upon in your community or is otherwise impractical, you can try something else. You might

feed everyone, but especially the little kids, the main course at your normal dinner time. Later, the younger children may just participate in the kiddush, have some soup, and then go to bed. At least you will know they've already eaten well.

USHERING SHABBAT OUT

The sun is setting, and the Shabbat Queen is preparing to leave. There's a gentle, faintly sad mood about the hour. Seuda Shlishit, Maariv prayers, and Havdalah are over, but we long to hold on to the Shabbat a bit longer, to bring its spirit into the week.

Some people fulfill these desires by observing the Melaveh Malka, an "escorting the Queen out" celebration after Shabbat ends. Melaveh Malka can take forms as varied as the ecstatic dancing and singing of hundreds at a synagogue or yeshiva, an intimate gathering of a few friends at home, or almost anything in between. What is appropriate for all of them is words of Torah, stories of the sages and the Chassidic masters, friendly conversation, and, now that Shabbat is over, joyous singing with optional musical accompaniment. Everyone's stomach is well-filled from the previous twenty-four hours, so refreshments are usually simple.

Melaveh Malka is an ideal opportunity to create an alternative "Saturday night" experience. Instead of rushing out to a movie or flopping before the TV at home — and thus abruptly dumping the Shabbat world for the weekday one — a Jew celebrating Melaveh Malka blends the two worlds. Many people feel completely recharged after a total immersion in Shabbat. They are ready for some excitement, some movement, and a different kind of social life. Melaveh Malka provides all this while retaining the Shabbat spirit of kedusha.

If it is not being observed now, you might consider initiating a Melaveh Malka at your synagogue, Hillel House, or Jewish Center. In many ways Motzei Shabbat is a better time for such a gathering than the more usual Friday night Oneg Shabbat. People are rested by Motzei Shabbat, whereas on Friday night they're often tired from the week. Women, too, both organizers and guests, can travel to the shul, bring refreshments, and set up more conveniently on

Saturday night. Musical instruments are allowed as well, adding to the spirit of the evening.

There is plenty of room for imaginative programming at a Melaveh Malka. One of the most memorable ones Chana has ever attended began with some lively Shabbat songs accompanied by guitar, continued with a thought-provoking dvar Torah by the rabbi with discussion afterwards, a slide-talk by a congregant whose hobby was Jewish genealogy, refreshments, and then dancing to the music of a talented local *klezmer* band.

Try inviting a few friends to a home Melaveh Malka, as well. The emphasis is on the spirit of the evening, not the food, so in addition to all its other advantages, Melaveh Malka is an ideal occasion for the informal or inexperienced hostess.

Although there's certainly nothing wrong with a purely social evening in which everyone sits in a circle and chats, it's desirable to make it something more. From experience we have found that for this to happen the group requires a leader, someone who will start a dvar Torah or other discussion of Jewish issues, initiate the singing, and so forth. Not too much direction is called for; people just need someone to make the first move. With just a bit of forethought and structure, then, the group can be nudged above the kibbitzing-and-nashing level to a true Melaveh Malka celebration.



YOUR PRE-SHABBAT CHECKLIST

This list is meant to be helpful, not definitive. You may wish to add or omit some items, or make your own list. Our only bit of advice is that you try to assign jobs and do each item as early in the week as possible.

HOME RELATED TASKS

| | Deadline Day (Friday: by What time) | Check when completed |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Overall cleaning, putting away clothing, tidying up, etc. Your breakdown of tasks and deadlines: | | |
| Change sheets. | | |
| Fresh sheets and towels for sleepover guests. | | |
| Polish Shabbat items (candlesticks, kiddush cups, etc.) | | |
| Do touch-up cleaning. | | |
| Put fresh tablecloth on table; see that candlesticks and candles are ready to be lit; two challot are in tray on table and covered with special cloth. (This is all that is necessary by candlelighting time; the table can be set later.) | | |
| Cut flowers and place in vase(s) on table. | | |
| Note candlelighting time. | | |

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| See that all appliances intended to operate entire Shabbat are on, others are switched off. Don't forget telephone, refrigerator light, burglar alarms, etc. Set Shabbat timers ("Shabbat clocks.") | | |
|---|--|--|

List appliances:

| To run all Shabbat | To be turned off all Shabbat | To run on timers |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
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Tape switches, if necessary

| | Deadline Day (Friday: by What time) | Check when completed |
|---|--|----------------------|
| Bring in anything outside that should be brought in (unless you have an eruv). | | |
| Set out garbage. Separate garbage bags to be used on Shabbat. | | |
| Tear toilet paper and have it in place; tissues separated and ready. | | |
| Water plants, turn off sprinklers. | | |
| If necessary, put away forbidden toys and games, replace with Shabbat toys and games. | | |

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|---|--|--|
| Put away or cover <i>muktzeh</i> items (pens, money, purses, etc.) Your list: | | |
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| | | |
| Open any necessary packages and wrappers whose contents are to be used on Shabbat. (Food and personal items listed separately.) List: | | |
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FOOD-RELATED TASKS

| | Deadline Day (Friday: by What time) | Check when completed |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Shop for all food, supplies. | | |
| Complete baking, including challot. | | |
| Finish cooking. | | |
| Freeze ice cubes. | | |
| Sharpen knives. | | |
| Wash pots and dishes not needed again during Shabbat, if possible. Otherwise, put out of sight. (Dishes needed again during Shabbat can be washed on Shabbat.) | | |
| Clean and ready pots to be placed on hot-plate or blech. | | |

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| Grate vegetables; squeeze juices, if needed. | | |
| Open all necessary packages, cans, wrappers, baby food jars, bottles, seals, etc. List: | | |
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| Put blech or hotplate in place and heat. | | |
| Boil water and set on hotplate/blech or have ready in urn, electric kettle, thermos. | | |
| Set up tub for soaking dishes. | | |
| Prepare tea essence, salads. (Salads may also be prepared after candlelighting, under certain conditions.) | | |

FOOD-PREPARATION APPLIANCES

| To run all Shabbat | To be turned off all Shabbat | To run on timers |
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| Rewarm food and place on hotplate/blech. | | |
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| Set out snacks, drinks if kiddush is late. Feed little kids early, if necessary. Have “a foretaste of Paradise”; taste all your Shabbat dishes. | | |
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PERSONAL PREPARATIONS

| | Deadline Day (Friday: by What time) | Check when completed |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Invite guests | | |
| Wash, iron, mend, polish, dry-clean all Shabbat clothes | | |
| Bathe Kids | | |
| Contact guests; give last-minute directions, instructions, if necessary. | | |
| Open any necessary packages and wrappers (exs. bandages, baby ointments, cotton swabs, diapers, etc.) List: | | |
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| Polish shoes | | |
| Finish letters, make any phone calls that won't wait. Make any “Shabbat shalom” calls to parents, and so forth. | | |
| Leave off any occupational work involving your salaried job, homework, etc. Put yourself into a Shabbat frame of mind. | | |

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| Put away all <i>muktzeh</i> items; empty out pockets of clothes and coats to be worn on Shabbat (a good job for kids). | | |
| Untie double knots in clothes and shoes to be worn on Shabbat (also a good job for kids). | | |
| Cut hair and nails. | | |
| Shower or bathe, shampoo, apply creams and deodorant, brush teeth. | | |
| Apply makeup, arrange hair. | | |
| Set out pajamas if bedroom lights to be left off. | | |
| Mikva (men in the afternoon; women, between candle-lighting and kiddush). | | |
| Study Torah portion (women, after candle-lighting). | | |
| Davven Mincha (women before candle-lighting; men, after). | | |
| Give tzedakah with kids. | | |
| Take medicines and vitamins in advance of Shabbat, if not necessary daily; give also to kids. | | |
| Dress for candle-lighting. (You can finish dressing or change later.) | | |
| Light candles by the set time. If you don't make it — to the minute — don't light them. Resolve to be more punctual next week. | | |

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| Take a deep breath, relax, and enter Shabbat. You should feel as if all your work is done now; don't worry about what isn't done. For twenty-five hours you don't have a care in the world. Shabbat shalom! | | |
|---|--|--|

LIST YOUR PERSONAL APPLIANCES

| To run all Shabbat | To be turned off all Shabbat | To run on timers |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
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HOUSEWORK PERMITTED ON SHABBAT

Although all your major preparations should be done by candle-lighting, there are a few light household jobs that are permitted afterwards, if necessary. They include the following:

1. Sweeping the floor (but not washing or vacuuming it).
2. Setting the table (with silverware, dishes, etc.) The tablecloth, two challot with their cover, the candlesticks and candles must have been set in place by candlelighting.
3. Cutting fruit or vegetables for salads, with these three precautions:
 - a. The cutting should be done close to the mealtime.
 - b. The fruit or vegetables should not be cut into very small pieces.
 - c. No mechanical or electrical devices may be used.
4. Completing your dressing, except for makeup and hair combing, which must be finished before candlelighting. A girl or woman performing the mitzva of candle-lighting should be decently dressed for the occasion (not in pants or messy work clothes) and a married woman should cover her head. However, if you do not customarily cover it and you find yourself without a covering, you may proceed to light the candles. Afterwards you may change your clothes or finish dressing.
5. Washing dishes *needed during the same Shabbat*. For example, dirty dishes left in the sink before candlelighting that you need to serve a meal, or dirty dishes from Shabbat dinner that you need for lunch the next day may be washed in cold water with liquid soap and nylon net (no sponge or cloth that retains water). Any dirty pots or dishes *definitely* not needed again for Shabbat use should be put out of sight until after havdalah.
6. Making beds Shabbat morning. This is permitted because it is part of keeping the home pleasant for Shabbat.
7. Changing guests' bedding.
8. Removing and changing bedding soiled by a child or a sick adult. The bedding may not be soaked or washed, however. Put it into a covered pail or a plastic bag to prevent odors.
9. Taking out garbage, if there is an eruv.

10. Blotting liquid spilt on the floor, table, or chairs, by placing cloths, napkins, pre-torn paper towels, tissues, etc. on the wet spot. These may not be wrung out.
11. Putting away *already folded* laundry.



AFTERWARD: WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

No chapter on the practicalities of Shabbat preparation would be complete without some consideration of set-backs. Throughout this book we discuss what to do about such typical problems as illness, a failed meal, spilled food, and uncooperative family members. In fact, however, the *most* practical defense against fiascos one can have is a wise attitude toward Shabbat itself.

Shaina puts it well. “When you keep Shabbat, you have to put yourself into a different frame of mind. Things I couldn’t stand during the week affect me in an entirely different way on Shabbat. Suddenly, I have a longer-range, deeper perspective.

As you know, I’m something of a compulsive housekeeper. Normally, during the week if food gets spilled or mud tracks are left on the floor, I rush over to clean the mess up. I can’t tolerate it for five minutes.

Well, one Shabbat a few years ago, my toddler urinated all over the seat of the sofa we’d just reupholstered. I couldn’t scrub the stain or do anything about it. All I could do was throw a towel over the spot until after havdalah. I took a deep breath and thought, ‘It’s for Shabbat,’ and walked away. It was a big test for me, being able to take that stain in stride, and I grew from it. Only on Shabbat....”



CHAPTER V.
THE MITZVA OF HOSPITALITY:
BEING A HOST

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MITZVA

The mitzva of *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality) is as old as the first Jew, Avraham Avinu. Among all the great personalities of the Torah he stands out, not only as a man of faith, but also as a man of chesed (lovingkindness). According to the Torah commentaries, he would sit at the doorway of his tent ready to welcome any passers-by. While doing his utmost to provide every physical comfort, he would also uplift his guests spiritually through his radiant kindness. Indeed, we are taught that Abraham and Sarah separately converted hundreds of men and women to following G-d by their example and by their teaching. Perhaps it is because these two very effective methods for deepening love of Judaism and other Jews are present so naturally in *hachnasat orchim* that it is such a central mitzva in Judaism.

Jews have always needed the hospitality of other Jews for religious survival and even, during dark centuries of persecution, for physical survival. But there is a devotion to the mitzva of hospitality in traditional Jewish life which far exceeds the demands of necessity. Tales about impoverished sages and plain people who go to almost superhuman lengths to welcome strangers for Shabbat abound in the classic sources. Real-life accounts of Jews in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union who took great personal risks hosting a Seder meal are just as common in our own era. Jews have always known that “if I am for myself alone, what am I?”⁶⁰

Most Jews in most times, however, have not had to regard the mitzva as such a critical proposition. The main — and sufficient — reason for inviting guests is simply that it increases Shabbat joy, for host and guest alike. A table with just the family around it feels quite adequately full every other day of the week, but on Shabbat it can feel somehow empty, lacking. We miss the new voices singing and laughing with us.

A guest also enables a host to be more conscious of the beauty and educational value of Shabbat. If the guest is less observant than the host, there may be lots of teaching to do, which usually ends up benefiting the host as well. Teaching in this way helps him learn, reformulate, and re-learn. As the saying goes, “More than the host

60. *Pirkei Avot* (“Ethics of the Fathers”), 1:14.

does for the poor man [meaning poor in money, knowledge, spirit, or anything else] the poor man does for the host.”⁶¹

For the host’s children, the experience of having frequent Shabbat guests is invaluable. It teaches in the most powerful way, by vivid examples and without preaching, that they have something special in Shabbat, something that other people want to learn about and share with them. Some of Nechoma’s earliest Shabbat memories are of her mother explaining to guests about hand washing, of guests asking questions, and, through their answers to the guests, of her parents teaching her along with them. Seeing kiddush, for example, through their guests’ eyes made her appreciate its beauty even more.

Children absorb much more than the explicit content of their parents’ teachings. They absorb implicit context as well. Nechoma also feels that she learned from her parents a total hosting style, of teaching guests naturally, of being oneself with guests, of welcoming them with joy, and of regarding them as an integral part of her life — so integral, in fact, that one of her first purchases after marriage was a sofa-bed for company.

At a time when most Jewish children are brought up with one other child at most in a large, comfortable home with “no room for guests,” this traditional Jewish way of hospitality is rarely experienced and badly needed. It develops the child’s openness and an interest in others, in short, how to be a Jewish social being.



61. *Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra (Leviticus), 34:10.*

STARTING OUT

HOW TO BEGIN AND WITH WHOM

Conventional wisdom suggests that anyone new to Shabbat hosting should begin modestly and build from there. But in fact there is another school of thought on the matter which advocates just the opposite approach, throwing yourself in. We spoke with some hostesses who began practicing the mitzva gradually and with others who began with a completely open home. Both groups felt satisfied with the way they had chosen. The decision really depends upon your disposition and the expectations of those you live with.

Most people, especially those lacking memories of a hospitable childhood home, probably find the gradual approach more suitable. If this is your situation, then the first step is to experience Shabbat as a guest several times. Find a general style you like and can adopt as your own. Practice it in your family until you feel you have a happy, comfortable Shabbat atmosphere. Not perfect, just happy and comfortable. At the same time you might be learning more songs and customs to enrich your Shabbat.

Now you're ready to start inviting your first guests. If you're extremely nervous about the prospect, start with the least intimidating program you can imagine. Chana began by regularly inviting one of her young son's friends to Shabbat lunch. Inviting a single seven-year-old for lunch is admittedly bedrock hospitality, but it's at least a beginning. Then, one Shabbat morning at shul, Chana spontaneously asked a divorced mother with a young son to come home for lunch. Chana liked the mother and wanted to get to know her better. The fact that their two sons were friends at school helped, too. The situation was completely comfortable. Nobody had great expectations from such a spontaneous invitation, and the unpretentious cholent lunch was just fine under the circumstances. If it had been a planned invitation, Chana says, she would have cooked, fretted, and stewed for days beforehand.

This, then, is the kind of approach you can take. Begin with a child, or one or two congenial adults. You might in fact find it easier to host two people at a time, particularly if you are busy with small children. The guests can then help entertain each other,

freeing you from some of the responsibility. Very gradually, taking all the time you need, increasingly open your home — more guests, more often, for more time. At last, hard as it is to believe now, you might find yourself a genuine *baalat hamitzva* whose home is open to every Jew seeking Shabbat hospitality.

In the same way, you can build gradually with the kinds of guests you invite. Naturally, you start with the least intimidating, your most comfortable friends. Then you progress to less intimate friends or people you'd like to get to know better. They should be people, however, who you feel can contribute something to the Shabbat. Pleasant bridge partners, if that's all they are, can wait for another evening. Finally, when you feel secure in your Shabbat observance and experienced enough as a hostess, you may want to include students, newcomers, strangers in town — all your newly discovered fellow Jews.

This is the “sensible” approach to beginning Shabbat hosting. Others, however, recommend the diametrically opposite approach. “Just jump right in,” says Malka, one of our most seasoned resource women, “The water's fine! I was a bit nervous at first, but I got over it very quickly. And I feel I made much faster progress than if I had been more cautious.” Sarah, Batya, and Esther all told us they had always wanted a home open to guests, but shyness held them back. It was their outgoing hospitable husbands who gave them the necessary push.

“Soon after we were married,” says Batya, “my husband invited five guests for Shabbat dinner without consulting me first. His mother is a warm, casual person who always loved to have lots of guests in the house, so he thought nothing of it. But I freaked out. After I saw that I could cope, though, I just kept on with it. As the satisfaction grows, your desire to keep inviting people grows.”

Devorah agrees with the plunging-right-in approach, if you're the type of person who can take it. She adds one proviso, however. “I think husbands who sail into the mitzva of hospitality should be sensitive to their wives and be prepared to help out. It's not right that he should bask in the joy of all their extra guests and leave *her* with all the extra dishes!”

WHEN AND HOW TO INVITE GUESTS

If at all possible, try to invite Shabbat guests you already know by Wednesday night. This gives them the feeling that you have been thinking about them and that they are your first choice. If you invite them later in the week, try to offer a decent excuse. Otherwise, they may feel they've been asked in place of preferred guests who cancelled. For less experienced or nervous hostesses it's also comforting to know early on exactly how many to prepare for.

Strangers seeking Shabbat hospitality and hosts running open homes don't expect such formality. A Jew from out of town will be delighted with a spontaneous invitation offered just before Shabbat comes in or right after Shabbat morning services. The experienced hostess routinely has extra portions ready for such an eventuality. "My husband once invited seven men to come back with him from shul," says Devorah. "Ever since that day, I've been *prepared*." Now she always makes three or four additional portions which she has available for guests, the freezer, or weekday leftovers, as the case may be.

If you want to practice the mitzva of hachnasat orchim fully and open your home to other Jews, there are many places to start. If there is a college or university in town, you can contact the Hillel House rabbi. Or if there is any other place where Jewish students gather — a synagogue, reading room, dormitory, or deli — you can post an index card and spread the word. If you keep a strictly kosher and observant home, get yourself on the hospitality list of the nearest Chabad House. Most synagogues and central Jewish agencies have hospitality lists or committees as well. Hadassah and other women's groups will want to hear of you. And, of course, you can always keep your eyes open at synagogue services for new faces. Once you let it be known that you are happy to have guests, you will probably never have to go looking.

Just remember, your manner is very important. In telling uninformed guests the few "rules of the house" they need to know, keep it casual and pleasant. (See "Uninformed Guests" section later in this chapter.) And be sure you're ready to offer a warm, *sincere* invitation.



IMPEDIMENTS TO INVITING GUESTS

MAJOR INCONVENIENCES

Most of us recognize the very real benefits of *hachnasat orchim*. Why, then, do many of us find the mitzva so difficult to carry out, so burdensome, in fact, that we all too often avoid practicing it? There are plenty of possible obstacles in the way of one's desire to invite Shabbat guests. It can be a true inconvenience, both in the short- and long-run. You may tire from all the demanding preparations. These particular guests may prove to be nudniks and threaten to ruin your Shabbat. You might have to put the guests up all night and the next day, keeping them fed and entertained. Maybe you're tired of being a fountain of Yiddishkeit for others. For most women, though, the two main obstacles, we suspect, are simply the desire to spend the Shabbat privately with their family and, looming above all others, the fear of being judged. Let's examine each of these in turn.

For many people, even those most willing to practice it, extending hospitality often involves putting oneself out. Furniture may have to be shifted all around, family members may have to give up their beds and closets, children may have to sleep doubled up. After they get used to it, the children may well take all this in stride and even miss the commotion when a guestless Shabbat falls.⁶² But, at least in the beginning, they may complain loudly.

For the adults, too, it can be inconvenient. If you need order in your home life, putting up guests frequently can be unsettling. The added expense can also be a worry. Even more daunting, you may be opening yourself up for much more involvement in other people's lives than you bargained for. As Chana Sharfstein writes, "One might become involved in the search for a suitable dwelling, roommate, decent job, even *shidduch*. The mitzvah of *Hochnosos Orchim* can be a demanding one extending into all areas of life."⁶³ You can give a person his first real taste of Shabbat, bring him closer to Judaism, even change his whole world around, but in the

62. Recommended for kids: *1000 Guests for Shabbat*.

63. "The Taker the Giver, the Giver the Taker," *The Jewish Home (Di Yiddishe Heim)*, 17, No. 3 (Winter 5738, 1977), 20.

process a lot of beds may go unmade and dishes pile up in the corner.

How does one deal with such a sense of inconvenience? By being honest about one's capacity, by keeping one's priorities straight, and, finally, by building on experience.

Look honestly at what you can take *now*. You may have an ideal in your head of a home packed with sleepover guests every Shabbat, singing around a huge, laden table. It seems so beautiful, so true to Shabbat and the way Jews should be. But you've tried it once — or even just imagined doing it once — and it left you with incipient colitis. Or perhaps you've been excited about the thought of drawing young alienated Jews closer to their Judaism, only to find that you've been sucked into being a psychotherapist and your home, a youth hostel.

It's far better to be honest about your ability to extend hospitality at this point. After all, your limits of today are not engraved in stone; with experience, they may well expand. Consider inviting only one or two extra people to join you just for Seuda Shlishit, Melaveh Malka, or Shabbat lunch. Or maybe it would be helpful to set boundaries, such as, "the number I can feed without putting an extra leaf in my table," or "the number I can feed for \$15 more," or "the amount of time I can hostess, say, 2-1/2 hours." Avoid talk which will result in your becoming "volunteered" to help with problems you just aren't willing to take on. After all, there's so much good conversation to make and singing to do that you'll hardly be neglecting your guests' pleasure.

Please remember, we are not saying that what you are comfortable with today is enough. The goal is to grow. Many baalot teshuva who never saw hospitality in their parents' home and who quaked at inviting even one guest for dinner have now reached the point where they can "put up another ten" without batting an eye. Involving themselves in helping uninformed Jews, moreover, has become a central purpose of their lives. But it took time, perhaps even years to reach that level, and it took a beginning, somewhere.

What keeps you pushing against your limits is, as always, setting your priorities straight. It's hard. We're inundated with photos of *Architectural Digest* dining-rooms, immaculate, pristinely orderly, with every twig of the Japanese flower arrangement in perfect alignment — and with never a person in sight. Who would

bring an extra non-coordinated chair into a room like that? Especially one crowned by peanut butter globs and a wad of gum stuck under the seat.

Overcoming our expectations in this area takes lots of consciousness-raising and struggling with a part of ourselves. What does a guest *really* need? Many of us have been taught to believe that to have a guest requires a separate guest room with bed and closet, plenty of space, order, devoted attention, gourmet meals, and, of course, a matching chair at that elegant table. Ironically, the homes most exactingly equipped by architects for guests often have them the least.

By contrast, real Jewish hospitality is casual, often lacking in decorum or private space, yet wonderfully natural. Much better to have *you* at the table, it's believed, than another matching, but empty chair. You fit in as you want, you sleep wherever there's space, you're treated almost as part of the family, and nobody stands on ceremony. The experience is unique, usually indescribably comfortable and warm-hearted. It may take many tries at being a guest and later a host to learn how to do it, but to offer that kind of experience should be our first priority.

Finally, one overcomes the feeling of being inconvenienced by building on experience. You streamline your routine as the months pass. Then, after experimenting a few times, you may feel up to adding to the complexity of your preparations, or, conversely, you may find many things you can just as well drop. As Sarah says,

I used to spend hours baking for Shabbat, but then my oven broke down and couldn't be fixed for weeks. I discovered that everybody was quite content with bought cookies or cake. I also used to spend a lot of time cutting up fresh fruit into pretty little pieces for a compot. Now I just put a bowl of whole fresh fruit on the table, same thing with fresh salads. Now that I have guests every single Shabbat, I open lots of cans of assorted pickles, olives, etc. And you know what? I've noticed that nobody misses anything. The atmosphere and the Shabbat feeling is what they come for and, please G-d, come away with.

The important thing, then, is the *spirit* of your welcome. As Rabbi Nathan says, "Lavish hospitality accompanied by a sour

disposition means far less than modest hospitality extended cheerfully.”⁶⁴

The sense of being inconvenienced should lessen with practice. If it doesn't, maybe you're trying too hard. Temporarily limiting the number of guests you invite or the amount of time they stay may help. Or you could go back temporarily to inviting guests for a less demanding Shabbat meal, Seuda Shlishit “tea” or Melaveh Malka with snacks only. Having a pot-luck Shabbat dinner with your guests supplying some of the dishes also lessens the load. Just be sure everything is kosher and bought before Shabbat. Or, if you're uneasy about cooking in general, buy several take-out dishes from a kosher deli or restaurant. Few will notice or mind.

If you feel inconvenienced because of the people themselves, maybe you need to revise your guest list. For now forget about people you “ought to invite.” Ask only the people you really *want*, those who can contribute something. Later on when you're more experienced and can generate much of the Shabbat atmosphere yourselves, you may not feel inconvenienced by hosting guests you know less well. In the end you come to see that much of the “inconvenience” of Shabbat hosting arises from the exaggerated expectations and false priorities instilled in us by a non-Jewish culture.

ALL-SHABBAT (SLEEPOVER) GUESTS

Certainly the thought of entertaining guests in one's home for over 25 hours gives one pause. Especially so if one has no resort to TV, shopping, or going for a drive as back-up relief. For many people it sounds like a real-life scenario of *No Exit*. Yet this is a condition of hospitality which Torah-observant hosts often face, since their guests frequently don't live within comfortable walking distance of their home. How is it that observant hosts can actually view this demanding situation with equanimity, and even with pleasure?

Part of the solution, according to our resource women, lies in rejecting the very concept of “entertaining” guests. Of course, the host and hostess are “on call” throughout Shabbat, particularly at

64. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, I.

meal times, and feel a certain responsibility for their guests' pleasure and comfort. Nevertheless, the traditional Jewish outlook on hospitality is, as we have said, quite different from that of the non-Jewish world. In that world, the host has many duties. He is supposed to do everything possible to provide his guests with "a good time." In this sense, the verb "entertain," with all its connotations of a performer on one side and a spectator on the other, is apt. The host is supposed to exhibit a lot of invested consideration and planning, if not necessarily expense. It's his obligation to "keep things going," to seat the compatible people together, to try to ensure a lively conversation for everyone, and to ply his guests with plenty of good food and drink. By contrast, the guest is relatively passive. He must only appear to be enjoying himself so as not to embarrass his host. It's a heavy burden for the host. No wonder many hesitate to take it on even six times a year, let alone for 25 hours almost every week.

According to the Jewish outlook, however, the host is providing not so much an entertainment as a venue. It's not that one drums up the pleasure and the other enjoys it. Both host and guest have the same duties to perform, the same mitzvot to carry out. They are both obligated to create the joy and holiness of Shabbat to the same extent, and they are together because they have a shared mission. With this in mind, the observant host and hostess can be more relaxed about all-day guests. They must only provide the basic conditions for Shabbat to be celebrated; the guests have the responsibility to do as much to create Shabbat as they would at home.

Then, too, large blocks of time out of the 25 hours are already allocated for certain purposes — for leisurely meals, for bentsching, for singing, for davening at shul and at home, for learning Torah — even for napping. With the day so structured by tradition, the hosts don't have much of a burden of entertaining left to them and can manage comfortably even within the Shabbat prohibitions.

Let us look at some specific ways in which our individual resource women cope with frequent all-day hosting. Some, of course, do it rather sparingly. In fact, there is one category of Jews which is seldom expected to host others. Our resource women strongly support the traditional practice that newlyweds should not invite guests often during their first year or two of marriage, and

especially not for the whole Shabbat day. They will have many years to welcome guests to their Shabbat table. Now is the time to build their life together, and for that they need their privacy.

Even some of our long-married resource women seldom have all-day guests. “If possible,” says Malka, “I prefer to have guests for just Friday night dinner or for Shabbat lunch, or even to have two different groups of guests for the two meals. I need private time on Shabbat, or at least the stimulation of a new group of faces. It’s hard to have the same people for a whole day. Of course, there are times when you want to talk and talk with certain people, or when your guests live too far away to walk home. But in general, I like short-term guests.” So Malka tends to invite just those families who live nearby and can walk home after the meal.

Other women will invite all-day guests, but only if certain conditions are met. “I don’t invite people for all of Shabbat if I know they have noisy, active little kids,” says Devorah, “at least not at this time in my life. You have to know yourself and your limits. I have noisy, active little kids of my own; I just can’t take too much additional din. Shabbat is the day I rest up from all the strain of the week. I suffer if I don’t get that rest. Maybe in a few years I’ll be up to more little kids for a whole day, but not at this point.” Tamar feels freer to invite guests for the whole day now that she has a private place for them. “When we lived in our one-bedroom apartment, I really felt reluctant to have guests all Shabbat. I need to get away for my private rest, and I think a guest does, too. Since we moved and have an extra room we can use for company, I invite people more often.” Nevertheless, Tamar invites only good friends, relatives, or people she feels truly congenial with for the whole Shabbat. She is happy to welcome others, but just for a limited time.

Finally, there are those women who are truly baalot hamitzva and have sleep-over guests in their homes almost every Shabbat. What’s their secret? In part, it’s the Jewish attitude toward hosting mentioned earlier. These experienced Shabbat hostesses simply have a more relaxed, easygoing outlook on the matter. They focus on what they *can* provide, never trying to compete with a five-star hotel. They assume, too, that their guests will hold up their end of things, take initiative for their own enjoyment, and fit in as they will.

“When we had a tiny one-bedroom apartment,” says Esther, “we sometimes even had people sleeping under the table. That’s O.K. It doesn’t kill anybody for one night. We gave them the experience of Shabbat. That’s what they really came for.” “I don’t feel I have to be glued to my guests or ‘make their Shabbat’ for them,” says Devorah. “I usually excuse myself for a nap after lunch and go out later for a walk with the kids in the afternoon. I think the only way I could invite guests for all Shabbat as often as I do is to let Shabbat and Hashem take some of the responsibility. It’s not all up to me.”

The other secret of these women’s open-hearted hospitality lies in their attitude toward the guests themselves. As Nechoma says, “For me it’s simply a way of life I’m used to, and a real pleasure. It’s not something I have to ‘cope with.’ Guests bring us so much extra interest and joy over Shabbat. I realize that for Jews who didn’t grow up as I did, it’s hard to think of facing a lot of different ‘strangers’ over breakfast every Shabbat. But for us, they’re not strangers, but family. It’s an entirely different attitude. Of course, you have to know your limits. But keep trying it, building up gradually, and I think you’ll begin to see things the same way. Sometimes 25 hours seems much too short a time....”

Notes on some practicalities of hosting overnight guests:

Even if you can’t provide a V.I.P. suite, make sure your guests have as comfortable beds as possible, clean linen, and clean towels. Don’t sleep guests with babies or children who wake up at night. It’s unfair. Try, if you can, to give guests some private space. Nechoma usually gives her guests the children’s room and sleeps the kids on the livingroom couch.

COULD RUIN YOUR SHABBAT

Who can ruin Shabbat for you? The answer, depending on the way you see things, ranges from “almost anybody” to “almost nobody.” To exhausted people, perfectionists, nervous, shy, or highly “territorial” people, the idea of having even one guest ties their stomach up in Gordian knots. To those of us occupying the central 95% of the bell curve, certain types of people could do the

job — bores, depressives, spoiled brats, princesses complaining of peas, hostile relatives. To those few at the highest extreme of the spectrum, almost nobody can detract from their Shabbat joy.

How do you overcome your own reluctance to invite problematic guests? Unfortunately, there is no easy way, especially for those with neurotic impediments. Devorah's husband, for example, is both shy and fiercely "territorial," as she puts it. He doesn't like other people invading his turf, sitting in his favorite place, making confusion around his house. Devorah, on the other hand, is more outgoing and wants to have guests over almost every Shabbat. The only answer is compromise, says Devorah. "We have to accept each other as we are. My husband has come a long way, but he'll probably never be a social animal. We started off inviting one or two guests for one meal, once every three weeks. Gradually we've built up to inviting more people, more often. I think knowing his 'ordeal' was limited helped my husband actually go ahead and invite guests. The big push, though, came from the mitzva. I'm sure that without it, and other mitzvot like it, we would never get the inner strength to overcome our inertia and fears and make progress working on our characters."

Keeping in mind both that "this too will pass" and the importance of the mitzva also gives others the necessary push. "Ninety-five per cent of my guests are a pleasure," says Mira, "but if I sometimes just *have* to invite somebody, I keep remembering, 'It's only one Shabbat. It's uncomfortable, but not dangerous. I can get through it.'" "I accept inviting such a guest like I do fasting," says Devorah, "It's hard, but having a difficult person gives me a chance to work on my *middot*. Whenever the guest provokes something in me, I know that's just the trait I have to work on."

For Leah, the vital importance of carrying out the mitzvot of hospitality and of observing Shabbat gives her both the incentive to invite a difficult guest and the ability not to be fazed by him or her. "We often invite a certain young woman," she says, "frankly just because we know she's lonely and has nowhere else to go. She's extremely depressed and just sits there silently throughout the meal. We've tried all sorts of things to cheer her up, but nothing seems to work. So what should we do? Let her ruin our Shabbat? We just go ahead and do what we always do, with her or without her joining in. And because we are able to do that, we can keep on inviting her."

TIREDNESS

Erev Shabbat exhaustion is a very real problem which should be combatted whether you have guests or not. Nevertheless, avoiding tiredness at this time is much easier to advocate than to achieve. All the accumulated tension before candlelighting is normal and understandable. The pressures *are* there; nobody can deny it. Some even believe that shrieking, rushing, and working to fever pitch are an integral part of the subsequent Shabbat peace. As we state many times in this book, however, we reject this view. And frankly, if you are reading it, you may well be hoping to find a way to join us.....

Half of the solution lies in better organization, and earlier on we suggested several tactics to achieve that. The other half lies in a changed attitude. You deserve *your* Shabbat, too; you deserve to be relaxed, joyful, and alert on this day of all days. Remember, *the Shabbat was created for wo/mankind, and not the other way around*. Chana has taken to writing this thought on a card and taping it above her stove Friday mornings. Then, whenever Guilt seizes her, nagging in her ear, “You need another vegetable dish,” she runs to read the card. With her last ounce of strength, she staggers to a chair and for fifteen minutes *does nothing*. Guilt is defeated.



Our resource women have a number of ways for tackling the tiredness problem. Some use inspirational pick-me-ups. Devorah says:

I used to get the “pre-Shabbat blues” when the kids were little and I had to deal with them and guests at the same time. I’d sit in the kitchen Friday morning not having any zest for anything. It was very hard to get started. Then when I found out that many other women felt the same way, I realized that my feelings were normal. What helped was to put on tapes of Rabbi Miller and other rabbis — (Rebbetzin Esther Leah Avner is also excellent) — or some Shabbat music, and that would get me going. I would take every step one at a time and tell myself that it was more important for me to be calm than to have an extra cake. When I was

pregnant with my fourth and unable to walk during the last three months, that's when I learned to keep it simple. K.I.S.: Keep it simple!

Then there are those who just push on, counting on the exhilaration of Shabbat to refresh them in the end. There is, in fact, a natural moment for revival in the routine of Shabbat preparations. When, at last, after all the racing about, the time for candlelighting comes and the woman stands before those rising flames, she feels a great weight drop off her back. At that moment she experiences a deep sense of peace, satisfaction, and unity with all Jewish women. Chana claims she actually hears thousands of female voices all at the same second breathing, "aaah...." Blu Greenberg writes, "...I heave a sigh of relief, ... and feel the stress and strain of the week begin to drain out of my body. ... Once again, we've made it. ..."65

Because of the need for rest after such a busy day, almost all the married women we interviewed spoke unapologetically about not attending synagogue Friday night. With the men and some of the children away at shul, this was their time to finish dressing, unwind, perhaps pray at home, and chat with the women guests. "I was taught that maximum davening is not a 'must' for a young mother," says Nechoma, "or rather, that we can choose according to circumstances between 'local' and 'express' davening. I usually do the main prayers and then rest." Adds Blu Greenberg, "We should go more often, because the Friday-night shul davening (prayer) is the most beautiful of all, with more communal singing than at any other time. But on Friday night I like to luxuriate in the sudden peacefulness of the house between candlelighting and dinner and in the prayer with my daughters, parts of which we sing together."66 By the time the men return, the women feel revived.

Some women feel they can't make it without a Friday rest. They manage to get it by better organization (doing more on Thursday, for example), by simplifying their dinner menu, and by scheduling a nap as one of their necessities. Ilana lies down after lighting the candles, Rachel says, "I nap on Erev Shabbat. Otherwise the day is just too long. In summer I take my kids to the

65. "Celebrating Shabbat," *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p 57.

66. *Ibid.*, p 63.

playground about 3:00. We get home at 4:00, I nap until 5:00, and I still have time to finish my preparations. The cooking was done Thursday night.” Some women need even more recovery time. Sarah says, “Sometimes I ignore the house for two or three days and rest instead. Then I feel renewed energy for Shabbat.”

Nearly all the married women count on the help of their husbands. “Thankfully, my husband gives the three small boys a bath Friday afternoon,” says Devorah. “Husbands should help and not go off to their mothers at this time!” Their help continues to be vital during the Shabbat daytime hours. “I think every husband owes it to his wife to take the kids off her hands so that she can get a really good rest on Shabbat,” Devorah continues. “He should take a walk with them, read to them, relate to them, get to know them.” “I’m lucky I have a sensitive husband,” Nechoma adds. “He’s with the kids for breakfast and lets me sleep in. Then he takes the older boys with him to shul. He naps in the early afternoon and makes sure I get my reading and nap time later in the day by watching the kids. So we ‘spell each other’ with the children, and both of us get a Shabbat rest.”

A closing observation from Devorah on the subject of tiredness: “Some women purposely exhaust themselves so that they’re too tired to have to relate to anyone. Then they have an excuse to explode or withdraw from human contact.”

“JUST THE FAMILY”

Sometimes the desire just to be alone with the family prevents our inviting guests. Paradoxically, this is seldom a problem for those who one would expect should feel it the most. We who were brought up in comparatively closed homes imagine that Jews regularly practicing *hachnasat orchim* must always be feeling anxious and overloaded. “How can they survive without any privacy, even on Shabbat?” we ask ourselves. But in fact, all our resource women told us that they rarely tire of having guests and don’t feel their privacy invaded. On the contrary, they feel a Shabbat with just the family is lacking something for them.

Of course, there are limits. Every one of our resource women admitted to occasionally feeling “over-guested” and having to take

a short vacation from hostessing. One young mother says she was told to take off one Shabbat a month. But all our respondents maintain that they return to welcoming guests as soon as they can, and with renewed zest.

The desire just to be alone with the family, then, seems to be an issue mainly for those of us who are in some sense struggling with the mitzva. What really lies behind this reluctance?

In fact, if you listen to people say “I just want to be alone with my family,” what you often hear is tiredness and the fear of being judged. We feel a special effort is required, we don’t want to push ourselves again, we want to “let go” — and it’s only within the family circle that we feel we can. If this is indeed the case, it bears a closer look. What is putting so much pressure on us? How could we change our priorities so that we would be less tired and have more time for our family? And why do we find it so necessary to perform? We discuss these issues in the sections on “Tiredness” and “The Fear of Being Judged”; here, let us look at the family schedule itself.

Some families in fact see very little of each other during the week. Dinner time, the only natural meeting hour, is often a gobble-and-bolt affair. Children from about age six always have some better place to be, whether it is with friends, homework, or the TV screen. Their parents, too, have phone calls to make and more work to do. Teenagers have been known to disappear for weeks on end. So Shabbat (if a family like this manages to observe it) takes on the aura of a nature preserve, in which the herd huddle together away from the outside world. This is a legitimate response at times. But if it becomes habitual, it chokes off social life.

Try to find creative solutions. Maybe you could spend a brown-bag lunch hour together at someone’s work place. Maybe you could get up earlier and have a leisurely breakfast, davening session, and chat together. Set appointments with family members as conscientiously as you set work appointments — and keep them.

Above all, make opportunities for confidences. If you do that, you have provided for the crucial element in family closeness in the eyes of children. For little kids, just before bedtime is often a good moment. Instead of reading a goodnight story every evening, Chana sometimes asks her young son while they are cuddling on the sofa, “Anything you want to talk about tonight?” After the familiar

catalog of “who-hit-whom-today,” surprising confidences often emerge. For older kids and teenagers, the best moment might be later at night, maybe even after midnight. (Whoever said parenting was restful?!) For husband and wife, a half hour might be made after the children have left the table or gone to bed. Devorah and her husband find the opportunity right after their regular nightly fifteen minutes of Torah study. There is always a pocket of time somewhere.

If, then, you have made opportunities for confidences, you have also provided for the one thing you can't do with company about. Otherwise, it is entirely possible to be with your family in a close, authentic way in the presence of guests. Love doesn't require exclusive, one-to-one attention. A person can also love through others, as parents love each other through their children. In fact, sharing a good Shabbat experience with guests is one of the best ways for a Jewish family to be together.

A FOUNTAIN OF YIDDISHKEIT

“I sometimes get so tired of explaining,” confesses Aviva, “that I just want to invite people on a higher level than we are — people who can explain to *us*!”

Is it a problem for those who practice *hachnasat orchim* regularly always to be serving as fountains of Yiddishkeit for others? In fact, we discovered, Aviva's response is atypical. According to our other resource women, it is no problem at all.

“I never get tired of any of it,” says Malka. “Maybe we *are* examples of Yiddishkeit for uninformed people; I hope we are. But we never work at it. We don't drum up anything. We certainly never put on a show, like singing when we don't usually do it. And I don't get tired of explaining or answering questions. They're different enough each time so that it doesn't get boring, and it helps *me* to have to formulate Judaism ‘on one leg.’ Also, it's the best kind of education for my kids. Often they answer the questions, and then I really *kvell*.”

“For me,” says Esther, “teaching is the main pleasure of having Shabbat guests. It can be so stimulating. We often talk until three or four in the morning. My husband just knows how to put things, how

to reach people. And our great reward comes when our guests say, 'I never thought of it like that. I never in a million years thought Judaism was so deep.'"

There are those, however, who are not comfortable in the teaching role. In that case, they simply decide not to do it. "We tried 'educating' for a while," says Devorah, "but we soon felt it wasn't natural for us, so we gave it up. Of course, we answer any questions our guests ask. But we don't teach or 'missionize.' We feel the example of a happy family speaks for itself. So many non-observant Jews think that Judaism is all drabness and dutiful praying. We want to show them it's happiness and joy. We don't have to work at that."

Rachel sums it up: "I think that those who are real fountains of Yiddishkeit never run dry."

THE FEAR OF BEING JUDGED: YOUR COOKING & YOUR EGO

This, we suspect, is the big one. If a woman feels any psychological barrier to inviting guests, it is likely to be her fear of being judged and found wanting as a cook or housekeeper. When it comes to her domestic skills, almost no woman seems genuinely confident. It's amazing. We spoke with women in cheerfully disordered homes and in immaculate, whistle-clean homes. Not one could, by any stretch of the imagination, be called a slob. Yet virtually every one apologized at some point for "the mess — all the kids, you know."

It's not so much that a woman fears open criticism, though some have experienced that, too. "The worst Shabbat of my life," says Devorah, "was when I got stuck with a fanatical Shabbat guest. She sneered and snooped into every corner of my house, criticizing this and complaining about that. Nothing was kosher enough for her. She was really sick." This kind of attack is rare, however. What most women expect will happen is that their guests will be outwardly complimentary, but inwardly critical. Few expect to know what their guests *really* think about their orderliness or their menus, but many apparently anticipate the worst.

Behind most of our perfectionists stands a Supermom. Esther is a perfectionist and daughter of a perfectionist. "My mother didn't

have many guests,” she says. “It was always such a great burden for her. She was nervous for days beforehand. After I got married, I really had to work hard at first to reach the level of hospitality I wanted for us. I’ve made it, but I’m still critical of myself. My husband jokes that if I say something’s ‘ruined,’ it’s the best that ever was!”

Rivka’s fears of being judged sometimes prevent her from inviting guests. She chastises herself,

Why do I let it be an obstacle? It’s so silly! I never think that way when *I’m* a guest. I never pick over somebody’s menu in my mind or blame her for a towel dropped on the floor. I guess I’m always comparing myself to my mother as a hostess. She was terrific at it, and she never made it seem the least bit of effort. The food was excellent and original, and she just made everything “flow.” She was always so graceful, too. People loved coming to our home. I know I’m trying to provide something different, but I still can’t get her out of my mind.

Aviva, who runs an extremely tasteful, immaculate home, still doesn’t think she’s grade A. “My mother used to wash the *walls* each week when she cleaned our house. Who could ever measure up to that?!” And so it goes, with woman after woman.

Nevertheless, they refuse to be stymied by their fears. Again, what helps them overcome their reluctance is the mitzva. “It gets easier with practice, it really does,” says Leah. “But I’m sure that without the mitzva in mind — its beauty, its vital importance, and the fact that it’s a mitzva — I wouldn’t have the incentive to push myself hard enough to overcome my hesitation.” Says Batya,

I was always inwardly afraid of being judged. At first I worked on myself to invite people because I thought having lots of guests was beautiful. It was what I wanted. Now I do it more because of the mitzva, because I know it’s what Hashem wants. If you have willpower or a spouse who really wants lots of guests, you can go quite far just working at it on your own. I’m not saying you can’t. But keeping in mind that it’s a mitzva forces you to keep trying, even when your willpower or your spouse wants to rest. In the end, you’re grateful for the mitzva. I don’t want to make

it sound so heavy, either. It's a beautiful mitzva. When I reflect on it, I feel happy and excited about inviting guests.

From many of our women, too, one picks up a distinct note of defiance. It's as though they know they can't entirely rid themselves of their nervousness, so they've decided deliberately to put themselves into the very situation they fear. It seems a good, workable tactic.

"I used to compete," says Devorah, "and knocked myself out making spectacular dinners. But my difficult fourth pregnancy and my varicose veins ended all that. It's just not worth it. I've stopped worrying about whether people approve of me or not. Now I make simple Shabbat meals and invite more guests. It's a much richer experience for everyone." Says Rachel, "If you really work at it, you can get over that fear of being judged. Very few people come to pick you over, and those few aren't worth worrying about. They're just competitive and insecure."

Woman after woman reports a decision like Devorah's and Rachel's to be less demanding of herself, to make things simpler, and to bravely ignore the critics. But their very vehemence reveals how hard it was.

The reverse side of the fear of being judged, as our resource women have realized, is the polishing of one's ego. Vanity, ego, reputation, and competition are what all too often produce those showy meals. Genuine delight in cooking does exist, of course, but it's a rare gift. If we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that love of our guests and the desire to please them is not usually the main reason we knock ourselves out for three days before a dinner party. The real reasons are not measuring up and the need to impress.

Devorah, as usual, puts everything into the right perspectives:

It saddens me that there is so much emphasis on extravagant meals and super cleanliness. First of all, the heavy meals are not healthy, especially at night. No one needs to eat an eight course meal topped off with a rich dessert. So, if you're thinking of your physical health, it's best to have a simple meal with lean meat or chicken and a salad in the evening. And there's no law that says you have to have cake. A lot of people would be better off with fruit, nuts,

and seeds for dessert. We don't need to add sugar and fat to our diets. It's no chesed to help people ruin their health.

And those who make Pesach every Friday usually have no time or energy left for the kids who need a calm, rested mother much more than they need a fancy cake. We need to get our priorities straight. Shabbat is for people — to relax and relate to each other, to elevate ourselves and those around us by sharing and caring. Sure, there's a certain amount of drudgery involved. Maybe 20-30% of a woman's Shabbat may not be on the positive side if she's overworked. But if she feels really depressed every Shabbat and the kids are not getting any special attention because she's too wiped out, she has to examine her priorities. At a certain point I stop and say, "This is it. Whatever didn't get done didn't get done." Condemnations are like a destructive fire. You shouldn't light a fire on Shabbat — even in your own mind.

Shabbat has been celebrated in concentration camps on a crust of bread, and it may have had more significance than our super-fancy Shabbatot that we celebrate in the midst of plenty.



KEEPING YOUR HOSPITALITY GROWING

RECALL THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MITZVA AND ITS EFFECT ON OTHERS

Some of our resource women are especially moved to invite guests when they consider the vital place of home hospitality in our tradition. “The home has been neglected as the center of Jewish life,” says Esther. “We’ve replaced it with the Jewish center and the synagogue. That’s really an imitation of Christianity and a distortion of Judaism. I want to restore the home to its rightful place, and an important part of doing that is inviting lots of guests.”

“Now that I’m here in Jerusalem,” says Shoshanna, “I feel inspired to invite guests. I think of our long pilgrimage history when, especially at Succot, Pesach, and Shavuot, hundreds of thousands of Jews came up to the Temple and were guests of the people who lived here. I feel I’m continuing that tradition, and it’s very satisfying for me. It’s a way to connect yourself and your company with *Klal Yisrael*, with all the People of Israel, past and present.”

Remembering when their hospitality really made a difference also gives our women a strong push to invite guests. Too many people are in fact emotional orphans. This is painfully obvious in all those young people whose “Shabbat families” are closer to them than their real families. Shoshanna continues,

Whenever I feel tired or reluctant to extend myself again, I remember two or three people whose lives were changed by spending Shabbat with me. I think of one girl, especially. She was a stranger who showed up just fifteen minutes before candlelighting time. She seemed very nice, and we had a lot in common. But it was clear at once that she wasn’t Jewish.

I kept wondering, “Who *is* she? a convert? a missionary? a Mormon or Jew for Jesus?” She never gave a clear answer. But something made me feel that this Shabbat was extremely important for her. Thank G-d, I picked that up and didn’t turn her away.

A month later she invited me over, promising me kosher food. Then, on Erev Tu BeShvat I got a call that she'd just been to the mikva and completed her conversion. She told me that I was her first contact with Judaism aside from her boyfriend, who was indifferent to his religion and never pushed her to convert. She wanted to experience Judaism directly, without him, to see if it was what she herself wanted.

They were married in the U.S. and later made aliyah with their baby. They're both keeping more and more of the mitzvot now. And every time they have a simcha, they invite me.

You know, I feel that a convert is a close analogy to a baal teshuva. Both want to find a place in Judaism. Maybe that's why I felt something in common with her from the start.

Anyhow, whenever I feel discouraged or hesitant about inviting guests, I think of her.

REMEMBER YOUR GOOD TIMES

If at any time you feel reluctant to invite guests, recalling all your good Shabbat moments will help pick you up. Remember how much others gave you when they included you at their table, and remember, too, how much you contributed to your guests in the past. Maybe it was a stranger's invitation to Shabbat dinner that opened your eyes to the beauty of Judaism in the first place. Maybe you have done the same for another seeking Jew or could do it now.

At times of reluctance, it also helps to choose your memories selectively. Remember how well a super-easy meal turned out or how everything ended up all right, even though you made every possible mistake. Rachel carried it off well:

I once planned to serve curried chicken on rice. The boneless chicken pieces were sauteed, but I had no time to finish the seasoning or add the vegetables. But I realized that Shabbat could still be Shabbat with something to eat even

though white chicken on white rice is not so attractive or tasty. At the meal I served without apology or embarrassment, and everyone complimented me on the delicious food. What can you say but “thank G-d!”

Helpful memories may arise from surprising sources. “Strange as it may seem,” Batya says, “my memories of the late ‘sixties in America help my Shabbat hostessing today. It was a totally different world for me then, before I became frum. But the ‘sixties counterculture had at least one good feature; it emphasized a totally open, easy hospitality. Everyone was free to flop on everyone else’s floor, and whatever we had, we all shared. It started me on the way to an open home. Sometimes when I get uptight now about how much I should be providing my guests, I think of those days and relax. I put more of my concern into caring about the mitzva and less into worrying about details.”

PACE YOURSELF

Asked for her advice to novice Shabbat observers, woman after woman among our experts replied, “Pace yourself.” This is a theme we repeat over and over in this book. It bears, though, on every aspect of your Shabbat preparation. And when it comes to getting yourself in the frame of mind to invite guests, the pace you set for yourself can be decisive. Memories of a well-organized, relaxed Shabbat dinner encourage you to keep advancing in the mitzva. Memories of a frantic, disorganized evening could set you back for months.

Baalei teshuva in particular can become overly eager in their practice of hachnasat orchim. In many cases, they have drifted about for years and have married relatively late. With a fresh history of rootlessness and with a home of their own now at last, they often jump headlong into the mitzva. They feel overjoyed to be able to perform it. But sometimes, in their burning zeal, they outpace themselves.

After their marriage, Shulamit and her husband couldn’t wait to invite guests. Both had studied about hachnasat orchim at their respective yeshivot and found that it really spoke to them. Having just discovered the beauty of Judaism for themselves, they were

eager to bring others close to it, too. In spite of the fact that Shulamit could barely boil water, her husband invited twenty guests for the traditional Purim feast. “I was horribly nervous,” she says, “I don’t know how I got through it. And of course I communicated my nervousness to our guests, so that not many people had a good time. It was a big mistake, and it put me off hostessing for a long time, I can tell you.”

Keep in mind, then, both your hopes and your present limitations. Try to be honest with yourself when it comes to the number and kinds of guests you can invite, how long you want them to stay, and the amount of effort you can expend. If you can comfortably go gourmet, by all means do so. But that’s not the most important thing, by far. Don’t compare yourself with others. Leave yourself plenty of time, at least one-third more than your conservative estimate. See how much you *don’t* have to do. Focus, instead, on the really important ingredients of Shabbat.

Dr. Jud Landes of Palo Alto, California, once said to Nechoma, “You call yourselves Lubavitchers. That means that you ought to follow your Rebbe’s example, right? Well, if you remember, a number of years ago the Rebbe, may he live for many, good days, suffered a serious heart attack. His doctors advised him to eliminate or cut down on certain activities, to pace himself more carefully. Since then he has followed his doctors’ advice to the letter. And what the Rebbe does, you should do. Pace yourselves.”



HANDLING PROBLEMATIC GUESTS

INVITE ONLY SINCERELY

What if you have a strong suspicion that that lonely-looking bachelor or those third cousins from out of town you know you should invite may well be total bores who will dampen your Shabbat? Even worse, what if the person you feel obligated to include at your table is an amateur anthropologist doing fieldwork on “exotic fossil peoples surviving in today’s urban society” (i.e. an alienated Jew), a parent or other relative hostile to your new “fanatical” ways, an intimidating in-law, a shy, withdrawn student, or a couple who are terrified by the thought of spending the first Shabbat of their lives in a “really Orthodox” home? Any one of these prospects can be daunting indeed, regardless of how experienced you are in your Jewish observance or your role as Shabbat host(ess).

It is one of those obvious truths often obscured by a false sense of duty that an invitation should only be offered *sincerely*. If you are deeply reluctant to invite someone, ask yourself if you absolutely must. Not “ought to” for the sake of the family or the mitzva, but *must*. Will it make a real difference in that person’s life or yours a year from now if you didn’t? In fact, with the possible exception of the close relative or in-law, none of these prospective guests *has* to be included at your Shabbat table at all.

If, however, you have made the decision to invite him or find the problem guest already upon you, there are ways to cope. Let us start with one of the less harrowing, if more stultifying problem guests, the bore.

BORES

As Barbara Walters has observed, bores often know they’re bores.⁶⁷ This realization, however, doesn’t help their hostesses very much. Trying to elicit the interesting real person behind the “uh-huh, uh-uh” silent bore or the totally unfocused, yaketty bore is

67. “Difficult People,” *How to Talk with Practically Anybody about Practically Anything* (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., 1979), p. 110.

extremely hard work. In a sense, you have to assume the responsibility which the bore himself has neglected, the responsibility of listening to himself and discovering who he is. Most of us have done that job at least to some extent; that's how we can express more or less succinctly our opinions about a certain subject. The bore, on the other hand, has not done his spade-work.

Here we need to distinguish between the nervous talker and the true bore. The nervous talker can usually be calmed down by a good question, lively singing — anything which allows him to forget himself. The bore, however, needs to find himself. And that requires the kind of attention which few busy hostesses can spare.

Our resource women generally use two methods in dealing with bores, the first pragmatic and the second, philosophic. If they feel they have really tried to no avail with this particular guest, they politely retreat. They offer him more to eat, books to read, somebody else to talk with, a child to read to, photo albums to peruse — anything that allows them to slip away gracefully. Children are a great escape hatch; nobody begrudges it if you have to “go take care of the kids.” If they're not so little, you may suddenly remember it's story time. During the day, you can also plead tiredness and go take a nap.

Barbara Walters tells of an excellent technique the late Truman Capote used.⁶⁸ First he tried analyzing exactly what it was that made this person so boring — what he lacked, what he hadn't done in life. Then Capote speculated about all sorts of things — what kind of wife this person had, his likes and dislikes, what kind of childhood he'd experienced. Then Capote tried asking these questions aloud. By that time he usually found he was no longer bored.

A second approach to use with bores is the philosophic or, more accurately, the compassionate one. We Jews all share a common neshama, our resource women remind us. We must learn to overlook the externals of this person's boring mannerisms and concentrate on the fact of his oneness with us. “If you had a long-lost brother who suddenly returned home, would he be a bore to you? This person is your brother.”

Nechoma reflects, “If this person is so difficult, something must have happened to him. He must have a real problem. I have to put

68. Ibid., pp. 113-114.

up with him only one Shabbat, but he has to put up with himself a whole lifetime.”

A sad experience also colors Nechoma’s attitude toward bores. A certain girl studying at an institute for baalot teshuva was conspicuous because of her lethargy. She hardly ever came to classes on time, cut many of them altogether, had few friends, and appeared totally uninvolved. One day when she failed to show up at all for breakfast and early lectures, one of the rabbis felt a sense of foreboding. He and some of the girls rushed to her room, unlocked the door, and found her unconscious. An empty bottle of sleeping pills stood by her bed. Fortunately, the doctors revived her in time, but her classmates felt terribly guilty.

The director of the institute devoted his weekly Shabbat talk to the case of this young woman. “When Hashem gave the Torah on Mt. Sinai, He didn’t give it only to the beautiful, successful, or popular. He gave it to all of us, *for* all of us. Now, whom do we usually want for guests? Those who we feel will appreciate us and our efforts, those who will be interesting or amusing. But these people will *always* find a place to be invited for Shabbat; the others won’t. A mitzva is done because Hashem commanded it. We don’t do it just because it’s rewarding for us. It’s tempting to avoid so-and-so saying, ‘Not her!’ But then who am I doing the mitzva for? Only myself.”

Thoughts like these help experienced Jewish hostesses cope with bores and, indeed, with all problematic guests.

ALIENATED JEWS

Nearly every observant host has had at least one alienated Jew at his Shabbat table. In the case of baalei teshuva, the alienated Jew is usually a family member. In the case of everyone, baalei teshuva or not, who opens his home to Shabbat guests, he is typically a young adult uninformed about Jewish matters who is attending college nearby or passing through town. Sometimes, he is even a Jew who has abandoned Judaism completely.

Our resource women had to comb their memories hard to recall him. In their experience, the scores of guests eager to learn about and participate in Shabbat dominate. The alienated Jew is rare.

Often he passes notice just by his silence. But eventually, every woman replied, “Oh, yes, I had one.....” Nechoma’s turned out to be a Jew for Jesus. Sarah’s turned out to be mentally ill. Malka’s kept the family up one Seder night till 4:00 a.m. pushing his contentious views of Judaism. Rachel’s was a doctrinaire secular Zionist. And everybody dredged up at least one anti-religious Humanist.

Except for hostile relatives, whom we will discuss later, the occasional alienated Jewish guest is not a looming problem. In most cases, our resource women say, he warms toward Judaism after experiencing a real Shabbat. And if he does not, he probably won’t be back to bother you again.

What helps her deal with an alienated Jew, says Malka, is wondering why he is with her in the first place. Either he is trying to convert *her* to something, to make her see the light — in which case he will simply fail — or else deep down he really wants to be convinced. Even those Jews who come simply out of curiosity she assigns to the second category.

Sarah, who opens her doors to unknown Shabbat guests nearly every week, claims to have encountered very few truly alienated ones. “You feed them, you teach a little *Tanya*, you sincerely answer their questions. If you show warmth and acceptance, you touch almost everyone. You plant seeds. Sometimes it takes a year or more for the seeds to sprout, but you’ve planted them. I believe that no good word is lost.”

Esther has a similar faith in the power of truth and good communication. “We’ve had people with us who have had prejudices against Hassidism,” she says, “but David, my husband, can explain things in their terms. Usually they end up saying, ‘Is this Hassidism?’ It’s so interesting!”

Not everything is a matter of teaching, though. Esther gets her guests, alienated or not, into the swing of Shabbat by asking them to help out with the last-minute chores and by putting on rousing cassettes. “Sometimes guests just want caring, light talk,” she suggests, “not only Torah.”

All our resource women emphasize keeping one’s cool when under attack. “Listen and be polite,” advises Rachel, who confesses to being irritated by dogmatic secular Zionists. “Instead of scoring points, I’d rather listen between the lines. If you attack someone, he will usually defend himself strongly. Nothing is gained. So lay off.

Set a good example. Arouse curiosity.” Ilana is calm with guests who make fun of her torn toilet paper and unscrewed refrigerator bulb. “I just try to explain and go on,” she says. ‘Actually I tend to stay away from too much Judaism talk with unobservant guests. I answer any questions, and just let the relaxed, friendly atmosphere speak for itself.’ Chana finds that many belligerent guests are disarmed by frankness and humor. “I felt it was weird, too, when I first started,” she will confess. “Sometimes I still feel that way. But it’s part of the whole of Shabbat, and it works for me.”

Children can often contribute. Some Jews who are distant from their Judaism are taken aback by seeing the kids’ obvious enthusiasm and joy in Shabbat. It may start them re-thinking. Then, too, alienated guests are often less hostile if children explain the Shabbat laws. It’s a less potentially argumentative situation than if such a guest hears them from another adult.

Finally, advises Rivka, be alert to the currents underneath. She tells of a cousin who was always asking questions in a challenging, but not antagonistic way. “He seemed afraid of his interest,” she says. “He still does.”

Perhaps Shabbat has ended now, and your confirmed alienated Jew remains a confirmed alienated Jew. If you feel somehow depressed or irritated, try to take it philosophically. You’ve done what you needed to do. “It isn’t all up to us,” Sarah reminds us. “Some of it is up to Hashem. At least you can think that if this alienated Jew has had a good experience with you, he won’t go around saying, ‘All those Orthodox Jews are so — .’ Maybe you’ve opened the door a crack.”

HOSTILE RELATIVES

We were interested to discover during the course of our interviews that it is not only baalei teshuva who have serious religious disagreements with close relatives. One woman who was raised in an observant home — “but without Torah” — encounters pointed barbs from both her parents and her now unobservant sister as she becomes more “ultra-Orthodox.” Another woman from a non-Hassidic family always has to smooth ruffled feathers since she’s moved into the Chabad Hassidic world.

It is the baalei teshuva, however, who experience the problem of hostile relatives most painfully. As they move ever farther into a different world, into a different way of evaluating almost everything, both the baalei teshuva and their families can feel an ever-widening gulf opening between them. Parents interpret their child's choice as rejection of them and everything they stand for, which may, in some cases, be the truth. Brothers and sisters can't comprehend this "crazy extremism" which puts the right sets of dishes before visits with the family. In some cases there is no closing the gap, so the baal teshuva and his relatives split permanently. Fortunately, however, this is not usually the case. The baal teshuva wants to remain close with his family. His increased happiness and new sense of peace within himself may even allow him to love them more than before.

As the experience of our resource people suggests, much depends upon the closeness of the family before the baal teshuva's decision, upon the time that has elapsed since, and upon the tolerance of both sides. Ruth, who comes from an observant family, nevertheless feels her parents' annoyance from time to time as she moves "right" along the Jewish religious spectrum. But since she's had a reasonably comfortable relationship with them all her life, she can handle it. When her father once snapped at her that she was "becoming a fanatic," she replied, "Daddy, I'm just doing what your mother did." He came to approve after a time. "Be friendly and warm," she advises, "so they'll know they haven't lost you." Anyhow, you're not supposed to bear the whole burden of keeping close to your family. Let the others do it, too.

Rivka, who started becoming observant about thirteen years ago, comes from a casually Conservative home. Her parents kept kashrut and lit candles, but that was about the extent of their observance. At first they were pleased with her interest in doing more, but as time went by they began to feel threatened. When she started unscrewing the refrigerator bulb before Shabbat, they were convinced she'd gone crazy! However, since she's always had a good relationship with them and with her non-observant older sister, they've been able to get along. Her parents agreed to certain kashrut changes and held more traditional Shabbat meals. They would watch TV in their room, and she would read in hers. Their

discussions with her remained generally calm, although some tensions arose between her and her mother.

The change began when her parents moved from New York to Florida. Suddenly her mother “saw” things Rivka had been doing for years. “Why do you have to wear those long sleeves?” she fretted. Rivka realized that her mother was now seeing things through the eyes, not of people who had always known and liked their family, but of new neighbors whose acceptance still had to be won.

Last summer she was to spend a whole month with her parents in Florida, and she felt nervous. The Shabbat days were long. There was no reliable kosher butcher. At last she decided to speak with a Chabad rabbi, and he gave her advice which worked beautifully with her parents. For example, the family used paper plates throughout the visit, and on Shabbat she went to stay with a Chabad family. This approach was helpful, Rivka feels, because it was not “Rivka the fanatic” who was laying all these strictures on them, but a respected neutral authority.

Rivka and her parents continue to have a tacit live-and-let-live arrangement when together. Her parents try not to violate Shabbat in her presence. They watch TV privately in their room, and her father steps out for his smoke. It works because of their good relationship, confidence, and mutual tolerance.

Rachel is not as close to her parents as is Rivka. Still, with determined patience, she manages to keep things fairly smooth. With her father she can discuss things calmly enough, but with her mother she doesn't always succeed. Whenever possible she tries to be pleasant in discussing religious issues, but sometimes her mother “makes stabs,” and “unfortunately,” she admits, “I sometimes stab back.” Now, occasionally, her mother comes before Shabbat, tastes everything, and leaves. At other times, when Rachel, her husband, and her children stay with her parents, they have a tacit understanding. If her parents want to use the phone or watch TV, Rachel takes the kids out for a walk. “We should have the same tolerance for the non-observant family member as we do for the non-observant man in the street,” Rachel says. Besides, she claims she sees subtle gains in the family, even with the additional friction. “There's a certain awareness of Jewish matters that wouldn't be there otherwise.”

Esther tells the ultimate baal teshuva-parents culture clash story. Once she and her husband were staying with Esther's parents in California during a time when Shabbat was followed immediately by a two-day yom tov. They had completed all the cooking and arranged everything so that no work need be done and no lights lit for the three-day period. Just as they were finishing the Friday night meal, however, Esther's mother remembered the burglar alarm sensor which flicked on whenever anyone moved about the room. The family sat there aghast. What could they do? If they moved away from the table, they would activate the sensor and violate Shabbat. Obviously, they couldn't phone a rabbi to ask his advice; they couldn't even go out to get a non-Jew to turn off the alarm. Her parents yelled that it was absurd. How could they stay there in their chairs for three days? But Esther and her husband insisted on sleeping on the carpet under the table. When they woke up in the morning, they found the alarm turned off.

Today Esther can chuckle about the story. Relations between a baal teshuva and his family, however, are not always such a laughing matter. Some of our resource women reported bitter arguments, frequent "cheating" by parents who had promised to keep the Shabbat "house rules," and even refusals of parents to stay with their children on Shabbat. One woman told us that her mother is extremely upset that her grandchildren will not attend services at their grandparents' temple. Another grandmother is obsessed by the thought that her grandchildren, who are Cohanim, can't attend her funeral. In yet another case, the grandparents were so afraid of being exposed to ridicule because of the mechitza at their grandson's bar mitzva that they celebrated the event without inviting any other relatives.

There is no end of horror stories. But what can one do about the problem? Obviously, it extends far beyond hosting and visiting with one's parents on Shabbat. But Shabbat tends to be the flash point.

The experiences of our resource women show the range of possible solutions. Some family members, including parents, will be able to maintain a tolerant connection, especially if grandchildren strengthen the incentive. They will listen attentively to their children's explanations, share in their Shabbat, and even acknowledge that their new life is beautiful, "though not for US." When their children visit them, they will keep kosher pots and dishes on

hand. As Rivka's experience shows, the authority of a respected third party, the rabbi, may also help. Sometimes, if parents aren't willing to abide completely by the Shabbat house rules, their children will be able to tolerate it, as long as the parents act privately and discreetly.

Some parents have come around, but only after years of watching their children's growing happiness. "You have to be persistent," says Malka. "It took us over ten years to convince our parents we wouldn't revert." Many times, however, the parents don't become reconciled to their children's observance at all. Batya's artist mother who rejects any "limitations on freedom" found a single Shabbat in Batya's home "depressing." She never returned for another. In that case, the only solution is to develop a philosophy of loss.

"At first," Batya says, "most baalei teshuva keep trying to 'educate' or 'enlighten' their parents. I did the same thing, but then I could see in their eyes that they were slipping farther and farther away. So I stopped. It's just as well. You can't live in your world and their world at the same time." But it hurts, she admits. "As you progress in Yiddishkeit, you learn about and feel more and more the centrality of the family in Judaism. Baalei teshuva want closeness with their families maybe more than anybody else, especially when they're always seeing big, happy frum families about them. Maybe it just can't be, though, at least not in *this* world."

"It's very painful, and it never stops," says Devorah. "You're always explaining. I think it's a great test of a baal teshuva to remain respectful toward his parents. It can feel like a spiritual emergency room, always having to decide instantly about things. I can tell you, though, that I've learned to be more assertive over the years. Now I can say, 'No, you can't call a cab while the kids are watching.'"

Although Batya and Devorah have been able to keep some links with their parents and welcome them into their homes, at least on weekdays, others cannot do even that. Every one of our baalei teshuva resource women knew of at least one person who had had to move away from his family entirely. For some, the break made their decision to come on aliyah to Israel that much easier. And they have found some compensation. "We have five sets of foster parents now in Jerusalem," says one baal teshuva, "and a big circle

of substitute relatives among each other. But nobody ever quite replaces your *real* family. I hope we don't have to wait until Mashiach comes for our family to be with us again."

SHY STRANGERS

The best way to handle shy people, suggests Chana, who considers herself one, is not to focus on them. Don't draw a lot of eyes to them, at least not in the beginning. Until they can forget themselves, shy people suffer under attention.

In our gregarious society we tend to assume that unless somebody is "actively participating," he isn't enjoying himself. A hostess feels duty-bound to bring everyone in, to see that everybody talks and therefore is "part of things." Now it's true that a shy person who can be brought to forget himself and talk comfortably feels much better about himself afterward. But a shy person can also be enjoying herself, even if he doesn't talk much. He can be taking in the atmosphere of the group and listening intently to what everybody is saying. The one thing that *will* make him unhappy is to feel that he "made a total ass of himself when everybody was looking." So if there are more than, say, two other people around him, it's better to let the shy person judge for himself if and when he wants to dive in. If the general conversation is engrossing, if the singing and smiles are warm, he probably will, sooner or later. Otherwise, don't worry about him. Shy people can often generate their own private sense of pleasure.

Outside the large group setting, there are many things you can do to set a shy guest at ease. If you don't know him well and sense he could be shy, you might suggest he bring a friend along. Ask him or her to help you with something — the more tasks, the better. A shy person dreads having to stand by the wall, not knowing how to begin talking with people. He'll usually be delighted to have an excuse to move about and seem busy.

He can be a real help to you, the hostess, as well. Esther says that when her guests arrive, she is at the peak of the pre-Shabbat rush and truly needs their hands. Guests have swept her floors, bathed her little daughters, chopped her salads, and performed any number of other vital last-minute jobs. She noticed that they almost

always join in gladly and feel more at home, especially the shy ones.

Children are a great help with a withdrawn guest. A shy person often blossoms with children. You can send a child over to talk with him or ask the guest to read or play with your pre-schooler. A good opener you might suggest to your guest is for him to ask to see the child's favorite Shabbat toy or book. An older child could approach the guest under the guise of showing him "what we'll do tonight." Or perhaps the child might ask the guest what his Jewish education was like when he was a kid. That could lead to a lively discussion.

The hostess can also try to get the guest involved in a pleasant one-to-one conversation. Maybe she can chat with a woman visitor alone in the kitchen for a bit as she bustles about. As was mentioned before, bustle, casualness, and lack of riveting attention often puts a shy person more at ease. If the hostess talks about absorbing, but not overly personal topics, the guest may well be drawn in. You might discuss issues concerning the kids' Jewish education. If you're a baalat teshuva, you can talk about how learning to make Shabbat was for you. Or you, the hostess, might ask your guest in a friendly, casual way (no inquisition please!) how she feels about her Jewish life now, what she's looking for, etc. A host can engage his male guest in the same sort of conversation.

In general, shy people are most comfortable with warm, gentle peers of their own sex, children, and motherly or fatherly older people. This is not a hard and fast rule, but it's a good base to start from in finding a first conversation partner for a shy guest. Of course, if you know that two people share a common interest, introduce them and mention it. But don't be too eager to rush in with somebody else for the shy guest to meet. Shy people need time to get into gear with someone and, once they do, are quite content to stay where they are. They don't require variety. In fact, it's difficult for them to begin all over with somebody new. One good connection for an evening is quite satisfying enough, and usually more than they're used to.

The actual meal part of the visit is often the most pleasurable time for the shy guest. This is what he's there for, to see, experience, and learn about Shabbat. He'll enjoy the host's teaching, the divrei Torah, the schnapps (especially helpful for a withdrawn guest), the singing — all those things he can share in without being

the focus of attention. Encourage questions from him and everyone else, but when you answer *his* questions, don't keep your eyes fixed on his. Glance briefly at him as well as at everyone else as you answer.

If the shy guest is staying with you all Shabbat, you can probably expect one of two things to happen. He may emerge from his cocoon and want to talk with you about all sorts of issues connected with Shabbat and Yiddishkeit. Shy people are usually miserable making small talk, but become happily engrossed in deeper matters in which they can lose themselves. They may prefer to let you do most of the talking while they listen, but it could still be a real give-and-take. The other thing that may happen is a sudden return of shyness and a desire to withdraw. Your customary Shabbat rest will be a welcome time for the shy guest to take a break from all the unaccustomed socializing, relax in privacy, and recoup his energy for more life with people.

You will probably find the shy guest easy to entertain. He'll be happy with a good book and without your exclusive attention. Later on you may hear that his Shabbat experience with you has affected him deeply.

UNINFORMED GUESTS

The nervousness many religiously illiterate guests feel upon being invited to a "really Orthodox" home is a common problem for the observant host who wants to extend genuine Shabbat hospitality. Ironically, the nervousness may be greater if the guest has some knowledge of Jewish rituals than if he is almost totally ignorant. The host who senses this may, as a result, feel uncomfortable and self-conscious.

In such a case, both host and guest should try to remember why they are together. The host is extending his invitation out of love of Shabbat and the desire to share it with someone he sincerely wants to include. The guest is there, despite all his nervousness, because he at least feels some curiosity about what he has heard is a beautiful experience. He may feel much more — a sense of lacking something basic in his life, a longing for something he can only faintly imagine. If he has had some Jewish experience, he may now

want to learn how to go deeper and farther. Both the host and the guest have a desire to overcome the obstacles and make Shabbat together.

Fortunately, there are several practical steps the host can take to ease the situation. If possible, the host can explain to the guest beforehand a few of the basic ground rules. If this is done in a friendly, non-authoritarian manner, the guest will probably be relieved to have an idea of what will be expected of him. You might want to tell your guests in advance about showering before coming, proper dress, the necessity of arriving before candlelighting time and walking home at the end of the visit, and of not carrying anything after candlelighting time. When the guest has arrived, you can casually tell him about not switching lights on or off, where to put the meat and milk dishes, and about hand washing. Try to keep the list to the basic minimum unless the guest asks about something else. Don't throw the entire *Shulchan Aruch* at him on his first Shabbat experience. If the first one is positive, he will presumably want to learn more. If it is negative, he may have no desire to come near Shabbat again. Tone is also very important. A few remarks in a warm, casual voice go farther than a solemn lecture. Remember, the guest may already be concerned about offending in these matters and will take your words to heart.

When your company has arrived, try to be natural. Be yourself. Guests need friendliness and warmth. Nobody needs formality and elaborate meals, which, all too often, make for tension on both sides. You may feel that you're an ambassador for Yiddishkeit, but you don't have to entertain like one. If you don't normally use an eight-piece place setting and a solid silver soup tureen, there is no need to try to impress.

There are several good ways of countering stiffness. You could let the guest help in the preparations before, during, and after the meal (with a few short, gentle directions to avoid transgressing mitzvot). You could be your usual distracted self and let the guest read to or play with the little kids. Batya sometimes mentions to her guests that she was terribly nervous the first time she was at a Shabbat table. Just being yourself and doing all the things you *usually* do on Shabbat will make the guest feel at home, like part of the family. If rousing singing isn't your Shabbat style, it won't do to pretend that it is for the sake of somebody's ideal.

With uninformed guests, it is also very important to be a good teacher. Let visitors know that you would be pleased to answer any questions they have. Then keep the climate conducive. Don't act shocked, appalled, or tight-lipped. Even if you can't believe the ignorance of your Jewish guests, don't respond with a gaping mouth and "you mean you've never heard of...?" It is certainly not their fault that they've "never heard of" and, in any case, now they *are* trying to hear of. In a world in which a Los Angeles Chabad rabbi was asked if sniffing cocaine, which contains milk powder, is permissible after a meat meal, anything is possible....

What's more, neglecting to take the initiative in explaining what's going on can have some bizarre consequences. Nechoma once noticed that her young student Shabbat guest was drinking glass after glass of water, so that she was continually refilling the pitcher. Puzzled, she asked if the meat was too salty for him. "No," he replied, "but how do you religious Jews stand it, eating bread with salt before each bite of your dinner?" Nechoma at once reassured him that "religious Jews" have the same water balance as anyone else; they simply eat bread with salt *once*, after the blessing on bread which precedes the meal.

In many cases it is good that the guest spoke up and asked his questions, otherwise, he or she might come away with misconceptions about important mitzvot. A young woman who stayed with Nechoma's family all day one Shabbat sometimes saw Nechoma wearing a scarf and sometimes a wig. Apparently believing that the wig was Nechoma's own hair, the guest asked Nechoma why she kept covering and uncovering it. Taken aback, Nechoma told her that Torah-observant women who cover their hair as a sign of modesty do so *all* the time.

As much as one wants to avert misconceptions, however, it's hard always to nip them in the bud. All one can do is to explain briefly as much as is comfortable and hope that the guest will see it as his responsibility to ask and to learn more about the mitzvot later.

Inadvertent transgressions should be handled tactfully. Remember, "One who publicly humiliates his fellow man...has no share in the world to come."⁶⁹ A baal teshuva, now a professor,

69. *Pirke Avot*, III:11.

recalls how Rabbi Krinsky of Chabad in Brooklyn once invited him to spend a yom tov in the rabbi's home. Unaware that he was violating several central mitzvot, the guest arrived with his suitcase in a taxi after sundown. Without saying a word about the transgressions, the rabbi greeted him warmly and carried his guest's bags upstairs. Only much later did the young man realize the greatness of what the rabbi had done.

When one invites uninformed guests for Shabbat, one should be prepared for inadvertent violations of mitzvot and be prepared to accept that calmly. Remember that your intention in performing the mitzva of hospitality far outweighs any unintentional mistakes and that your grace at such moments may have far-reaching consequences.

Fortunately, there are things one can do to minimize mistakes. You can, of course, tape the light switches and briefly explain why. You can say to your guests, who will probably be carrying muktzeh items, "would you mind putting your purse (or wallet) up here?" Then explain — and don't check on them. You can tell them where to put the milchik and fleishik dishes.

If you see a woman guest slip into the bathroom Shabbat morning with her make-up kit, you needn't correct her and give her a lecture about how applying make-up on Shabbat is considered dyeing. Try not to overwhelm your guest. Her make-up will not affect anything essential in the kedusha of your home. In general, nagging, forcing a mitzva on your guests, or following up on them should be *avoided*. Nothing is more certain to leave a bad taste and turn them off to Torah observance.

One guiding principle from the Sages helps to keep us realistic on this point. "Better they should be sinning unintentionally than intentionally."⁷⁰ That is, if you know that a person is going to be doing something anyway, it is better to keep it unintentional. Stick to helping the guest perform "doable" mitzvot for him or her, and you will have performed a real service.

But what about the effect on your children if they see guests transgressing fundamental mitzvot? Some people are so concerned about this possibility that they will only invite people who they know are 100% "positive" models. This, we believe, is a mistake.

70. *Talmud*, Tractate Shabbat 145.

First of all, few children are so completely naive and isolated from the facts of life that they would be surprised by the behavior of uninformed Jews. At any rate, the parents can and should explain to them in advance about “our guests who are coming to learn about Shabbat with us, because they never had a chance to learn about it when they were your age.”

This, then, becomes a perfect opportunity to involve the children and give them a feeling of doing a mitzva. It can be their responsibility to help the guests with hand washing, blessings, and the like. Many people find it more face-saving to be guided by children than by adults in these things. Children’s matter-of-fact, gentle seriousness can be totally disarming to them.

Finally, when children see that such guests are genuinely welcome and *wanted* in their home, and that they contribute greatly to Shabbat joy, it becomes the most effective lesson of all in hachnasat orchim and ahavat yisrael.

CONCLUSION: WHO SHALL WE INVITE?

Among our resource women, there were some who invite only those guests they think their families will enjoy. “I don’t invite good friends only,” says Rachel, for example, “but I don’t take just anyone from the bus station, either. I feel the need to be a bit selective.” Others, though, open their homes on Shabbat unconditionally. “I rarely invite guests anymore,” says Sarah. “They come to me now.” And so they do, every week, complete strangers, approached perhaps at the Western Wall or the bus station, or referred by Jewish hospitality groups.

Women like Sarah, who remain a marvel no matter how many of them one interviews, are indeed mistresses of hachnasat orchim. They brush off praise with a shrug, however. “It’s our way of life.” “We’re used to it, and we love it.” “What’s Shabbat without guests?” “They give us at least as much as we give them.”

Nechoma concludes, “No guest is a ‘problem.’ He’s your fellow Jew. And even closer than that. We are all one — one body, one mind, one heart. He is me. How can I view him as a problem? He is always welcome.”



SINGLES AS HOSTS

Single people may feel uncomfortable with the mitzva of hospitality. Some of these feelings may arise from their concept of traditional Jewish attitudes, and some are simply inherent in the role of being a single host. In either case, with initiative and acceptance of themselves, singles can overcome these problems and enjoy offering others a truly satisfying Shabbat.

Chief among the obstacles for singles is the sense that they don't quite have the right, at least not yet, to be a host. Somewhere inside they believe that their natural role is to be guests at someone else's table. They find it extremely difficult to imagine themselves at the head of their own table. Even singles in their late thirties told us that they and their single friends rarely invite Shabbat guests, but, rather, go regularly to the homes of married friends.

The main reason for this appears to be the traditional Jewish ideal of what Shabbat should be. It's striking that our singles feel quite comfortable hosting friends for other occasions during the week. They all frequently invite friends to drop by during week nights for coffee or for an informal supper. But hosting Shabbat dinner seems to demand qualifications they feel they lack. Without Father at the head chanting kiddush and giving a dvar Torah talk, Mother serving course after course of traditional delicacies, and all the children and guests clustered about in between — what is Shabbat? Even talented, innovative Jewish singles who excel in their professions find it hard to imagine that they could offer a satisfying Shabbat experience in their own way.

Divorced and widowed singles can have a particularly difficult time getting up the courage to be a host on Shabbat. They may have beautiful memories of a time when things were more “the way they should be” at the Shabbat table. Now they just don't have the heart to host an experience which will probably be lacking in their own eyes. They're “grown-ups,” but there's always the temptation to revert and just be invited to someone else's home. Then, too, after sharing the tasks with a spouse for years, making Shabbat all by themselves can seem overwhelming. If, however, they have several children, they rarely have any other option *but* to be the hosts, and the load is all on their one pair of shoulders.

Jewish singles, both the never-married and the formerly-married, often project their attitudes upon their potential guests. They may believe that guests would really prefer to go to a “complete” family, where they could experience the “real Shabbat” they’re seeking. “I’d like to invite neighbors and strangers who need a place to go for Shabbat,” says Rivka, “but I hesitate to give my name to the volunteer hospitality groups. I just always think that these people want to go to a family where they can learn about Shabbat. I don’t feel I can really educate them.” Shoshanna sometimes senses disappointment in the groups of overseas teenagers she hostesses. “They’re stuck with me instead of a family,” is the message she picks up.

Another obstacle mentioned by our unmarried resource women who don’t have roommates is the need to perform all the Shabbat roles oneself. Rivka remarks that she would feel silly, like a one-woman three-ring circus, if she tried to serve the food, keep up the conversation, lead the singing, chant the kiddush, pour the schnapps, give the dvar Torah, and answer questions all by herself. She’s come to accept the Shabbat *she* can provide, but she still feels that certain ingredients are missing. For some reason she’s never tried the obvious solution of asking someone to co-hostess.

There are, then, some definite obstacles for the single host to contend with. Underlying all of them is a feeling of lacking legitimate status, aggravated, one must admit, by traditional Jewish attitudes toward the single life. “Singleness is far from ideal in the eyes of the frum (religious) world,” says Shoshanna. “There are certain aspersions cast upon single women. That may be the reason I’m not wholly part of that world. People think it’s somehow odd and deviant that I would buy my own flat, rather than rent and wait for a husband. I justified it to myself at the time by saying I would have lots of guests.”

The most successful among our single resource people recognize the problems, accept them as enduring, not temporary, and take hold of their life as it is. By so doing, they are able to find workable solutions. Rivka, for example, looks for new opportunities to be a hostess. For Shabbat she seeks out people from her neighborhood who she wants to know better. Twice, she held a home Purim Megillah reading which was great fun for everyone, particularly for her elderly guests. “It’s a fine way to break into single hostessing,”

she says, “because so many rules and rigid expectations blow out the window at Purim.” Other happy occasions, such as Succot, Lag BaOmer, and the singles’ holiday par excellence, Tu B’Av, also offer good openings for beginners.

Rivka enjoys her group of single friends who share Shabbat together by taking turns at each one’s homes. But she also suggests, “Take the initiative with your married friends. Invite *them*. Don’t always sit back and wait for them to invite you. And if you feel Shabbat is lacking without kids, invite families living close by. I can tell you from experience that couples with more than three kids are *thrilled* to be invited. Their friends usually also have lots of kids, so they’re always hosting singles who can be fitted in. But nobody asks *them*.”

If you feel depressed or inadequate hosting as a single, get support. Ask a close friend to co-host with you. Or, once again, consider being part of a Shabbat workshop. Such a framework is excellent for seeing that you get the encouragement and push you to actually carry out your good intentions. Having to take on all the traditional Shabbat roles oneself is, understandably, daunting to a single. To repeat, the solution can be to co-host(ess). Then one of you can pour schnapps and keep the guests company while the other dishes out in the kitchen. If you’re embarrassed asking a friend of the opposite sex to perform a mitzva traditionally done by a spouse, try Shoshanna’s solution. She invites a mixed group of married couples and singles and then spreads the honors among the different men present. One says kiddush, one gives a dvar Torah, and so on.

Inviting a mixed group of married couples and singles also alleviates any problems with the laws of modesty. Some of our singles say they see no necessity for married “chaperones.” They feel perfectly free inviting only other singles in a mixed sex group. Three of our resource women, though, single and married, said they invited only couples or singles of the same sex. Among mixed single groups, one claimed, there were “undertones” which, though certainly not immoral, “undermined concentration on the Shabbat experience.”

In conclusion, the essence of the matter is for you as a single to refuse to remain passive. There are basically two challenges. The first is to accept your Shabbat as a legitimate alternative to the

classic ideal. Some guests may even prefer it. Not everybody wants to be “educated” at every Shabbat table, and younger guests, especially, may feel more at home with you than with an awesome Torah-observant family of twelve. Also, let us admit the plain fact that Shabbat dinner with kids is not always what it’s cracked up to be. Young children can be intrusive, interfering, and distracting — not at all conducive to a good discussion of Torah commentaries. So your Shabbat table can offer a welcome quiet, a sophisticated atmosphere for *adults*. There is also an opportunity here of developing an alternative singles model of Shabbat. Retaining most of the traditional features, it could nevertheless be more relevant to you and your single guests.

The second challenge is to accept yourself as a legitimate Jewish adult. Shoshanna says, “If I spend week after week as a guest, I start to feel like Little Orphan Annie. I’m *also* a Jew celebrating what is central to every Jew, Shabbat. I hope my singleness won’t be a permanent state, but I’m living *my* life at the moment. Life is with people. People know I enjoy having them, so I get plenty of guests.”

Adds Ilana, “The mitzva of hachnasat orchim was given to every Jew, single or married. I’m well over bat mitzva age. It’s up to me to be a hostess, and not only a guest. Besides, I get so much more out of Shabbat when *I’m* the one offering it.”



GUIDELINES FOR HOSTS AND HOSTESSES

In the section on hosting uninformed guests earlier in this chapter, we offered several guidelines which apply especially to that type of guest. In brief, we suggested that you explain the basic “ground rules” of your home, but in a natural way, that you be yourself, that you try to be a good teacher and not close off the discussion by acting shocked or critical, that you handle unintentional transgressions of mitzvot tactfully, and that you not worry about their effects on your children. These guidelines also have relevance here, and we refer you back to them.

In this section we will discuss some guidelines applicable to the more general host-guest situation. They were suggested by our resource women who have been frequent guests in observant homes. Many of these guidelines, you’ll notice, have the ring of unhappy experience about them. Our hope is to alert hosts and hostesses to mistakes which their guests frequently encounter.

First some conversational pointers. Most important among them, our respondents agree, is to be sensitive with your questions. Many hostesses, in their eagerness to help a guest feel at home — or in their fear of awkward silences — deluge their guests with questions, barely letting them come up for air. “Be slow and simple in your approach,” says Ruth. “Don’t rush over and overwhelm a newcomer.” Nechoma agrees. “Don’t ply your guest with questions. If you’re trying to break the ice, a better way is to ask about one or two general things and then request the person’s help in chopping the salad.”

There’s another reason for caution. Sometimes even the most innocuous-sounding questions can backfire. “Tell me about your family,” seems safe enough, but it could prove painful. A person may be recently divorced or estranged from his parents. A mother may not have a husband. A child may have just died. Sounds overdramatic? Our resource women report encountering just such cases. The “family” is not so “normal” anymore.

Ruth warns about a certain nosiness among some of the life-long observant when it comes to recent baalei teshuva which she hopes our readers will avoid. “There’s a tendency to ask you everything about yourself. I was a vegetarian for many years. But I got so tired of being asked why I was a vegetarian and being told ‘it isn’t

Shabbatdik' or even Jewish, that I gave it up whenever I was a Shabbat guest." Ruth urges observant hostesses not to push their baalei teshuva guests to "tell all," and, by the same token, she reminds the newcomers that they're not obligated to spill out their whole life story. "It's important to realize the gulf between the two cultures, one which prizes 'openness,' and one which may look down upon such outpourings," says Ruth. A lonely young woman, for example, overcome by what she perceived as her ultra-Orthodox hosts' love and acceptance of her, finally admitted how hard it was for her after she became religious to break up with her black lover. Her hosts were appalled, as much by her verbal as by her actual indiscretion.

Rivka advises hostesses, "Don't preach about observance levels and 'what you should be doing now.' It isn't necessary to speak about Torah topics all the time. And it becomes really annoying for the baal teshuva to be constantly advised as to which yeshiva or teacher he should be studying with now."

Well, then, after all these conversational "don'ts," what kinds of questions *should* one ask? Nechoma suggests asking a few general questions ("Where are you from?" "What are you doing now in Jerusalem?"), depending on the guest. Then be sensitive and let the guest lead. "A student may not want to talk about his studies; a new mother may not want to talk about her baby. I like to create a warm, neutral environment and pick up on what the guest says."

The good questions for a hostess to ask, says Ruth, are the *now* questions. "Is there something special you're looking for in Jerusalem? Do you feel you're finding it? Are you surprised by anything?" The way is then open for an involving, but not overly personal conversation.

Besides those conversational pointers, our single resource women raise other matters they feel observant hostesses should be alert to. The first is the conflict these women say they feel between wanting to help and wanting to learn. On one hand, they like to be "one of the family" by assisting the hostess in preparing, serving, and clearing away the meal. "I feel more comfortable if I help," says Ilana, "and frankly, there's also a feeling of guilt if I don't." On the other hand, though, the assisting may cause them to lose out on what they came for. "I feel so frustrated," says Ruth, "if I miss the dvar Torah, for example. I come as a guest because I need to see

how people make Shabbat on a level I want to reach. So if the fish plates are being carried off at the time of the singing or the dvar Torah, I feel torn. I want to take it all in. I think a guest should be able to tell her hostess that she's new to keeping Shabbat and wants to be able to watch and learn as much as possible. Even better, I think the hostess should coordinate her clearing, serving, etc. with her husband's teaching. It's not courteous to the Torah or to her guests if she doesn't. Very often people who have been observant for years are blase about this."

Rivka adds, "I like to help out and be part of things. But I do feel that guests need to be entertained as guests, too, and not just viewed as the fulfillment of a mitzva. Guests need to feel that they are interesting and wanted for themselves. Otherwise, I can make my own chicken, thank you!"

Rivka also reminds hosts to be sensitive to the position of the uninformed guest. "I've been pushed to make a bracha and urged to learn at 'X' Yeshiva. I've even been asked, politely, to change into longer sleeves, though what I was wearing seemed quite modest to me. The woman was nice about it, but I felt too mortified ever to come back. I can't tell you how important it is to be sensitive to the newcomer."

Finally, asked for their advice to beginning Shabbat hosts and hostesses, our resource women stressed a joyful attitude. "I want my guest to come away with "that's lovely — and I can do it, too," says Esther. "Be as cheerful as possible," agrees Devorah. "Don't be serious or perfectionist. Being a saint won't help the situation or make people like you more. Have a good time." "Internalize the idea that you have something wonderful to share," says Batya. "If you feel nervous, remember the guest probably feels just the same. Hachnasat orchim is such a wonderful mitzva. Do it, and know that Hashem is helping you."



PARTIAL GLOSSARY

Note: Because these are transliterations of Hebrew and Yiddish terms which are also pronounced differently in the various Jewish communities, different English spellings of the same word often appear, for example, “Shabbat” and “Shabbat.”

aliyah — “Ascent”; in particular, (a) the honor of being one of those called up to recite one of the blessings over the Torah; (b) immigration to the Land of Israel.

Ashkenazi — A Jew of European origin; pertaining to such Jews.

avera — pl. *averot*. A transgression of one of the laws of the Torah.

Avraham Avinu — Our Father Abraham.

baalat hamitzva — pl. *baalot hamitzva*. Lit.: “mistress of the mitzva.” A woman who has put a great deal of devotion into performing a mitzva fully and has succeeded.

baal teshuva — pl. *baalei teshuva*, fem. *baalat teshuva*, fem. pl. *baalot teshuva*. Lit.: “master of returning,” “one who returns.” Any Jewish penitent, but especially a Jew of secular or not fully observant background who has decided to undertake full Torah observance.

bentching — English corruption of Yiddish *bentschen*. Blessing or saying grace after meals.

bracha — pl. *brachot*. Any kind of blessing or praise of G-d. In formal liturgy, it opens or closes with the Hebrew for “Blessed art Thou O L-rd.”

chavurah — pl. *chavurot*. A voluntary society or fellowship of Jews who gather for the purpose of learning, celebrating, or carrying out certain charitable mitzvot.

chesed — “Lovingkindness”; acts of lovingkindness.

cholent — A casserole-like dish prepared before the start of Shabbat and kept warm, usually for Shabbat lunch. It was developed to avoid the prohibitions against cooking on Shabbat.

chumash — The Five Books of Moses (the Pentateuch).

clal Yisrael — The entire People or Community of Israel.

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Cohanim — Descendants of the priests of the Temple. Some of the privileges and prohibitions that applied to them in Temple times, such as prohibitions against contact with a corpse, are still valid.

dvar Torah — pl. *divrei Torah*. A brief oral commentary on a topic from the Torah.

daven or davenen — Yiddish for “pray.” “Davening” is an English corruption.

erev — Evening, or the day preceding; the beginning of holy days, which in Judaism start in the evening. Friday is often referred to as “Erev Shabbat.”

fleishik — Pertaining to meat or poultry; a category of the *kashrut* laws.

frum — Lit. “pious”. One who is fully observant of the Torah laws.

hachnasat orchim — Lit. “bringing in guests.” Hospitality.

halacha — Jewish law and way of life.

hamotzie — Key word of blessing pronounced before eating bread.

Hashem or haShem — “The Name”; one of the references to G-d, whose proper name is never pronounced by observant Jews in regular conversation or written.

havdalah — Blessings pronounced over wine at nightfall at the conclusion of a Shabbat or festival to mark it off from the ordinary weekdays that follow.

kashrut — The Jewish dietary laws.

kedusha — Holiness.

kiddush — The sanctification prayer for Shabbat and the festivals recited over a cup of wine.

kvell — (Yiddish) To take great pride and pleasure; a peculiarly Jewish thrill most often associated with the accomplishments of one’s family members.

Ladino — A Spanish dialect spoken by many Sephardic Jews; referring to songs, literature, etc. in Ladino.

Mashiach or Moshiach — The Messiah.

mechitza — A physical divider set up between men and women in the synagogue and other places designated by halacha for the purpose of concentrating better and preserving *tzniut*.

- Megillah — A parchment scroll, usually referring to the Book (Scroll) of Esther, read on Purim,
- Melaveh Malka — Ushering out the Shabbat; a festive meal held after the end of Shabbat on Saturday night.
- middot — One's personality or character traits.
- Midrash — One of the classical interpretations of the Torah on a non-literal or mystical level.
- mikva — The ritual bath for immersing and purifying people and utensils.
- milchik — Pertaining to milk and its by-products; a category of the *kashrut* laws.
- muktzeh — Objects which one may not handle or be concerned with on Shabbat and festivals.
- Nachshon — The first person to leap into the Red Sea when the Jews were being pursued by the Egyptians, thus a paradigm of faith.
- negel vasser — (Yiddish). Ritual hand-washing done upon arising in the morning.
- nash — (Yiddish). Candy, sweets.
- niggun — pl. *niggunim*. A melody, often wordless and repeated several times, which is intended to express and stir one's soul.
- parshah or parashah — pl. *parshiot*. The weekly Torah portion.
- Purim — A joyous festival celebrating the saving of the Jews of the Persian Empire. The story is told in the Book of Esther, which is read during Purim.
- rebbe — A spiritual leader and teacher of a Jewish community, particularly a Hassidic one. Sometimes a rebbe is accepted as a leader by many communities and individuals outside his own.
- Sephardi — A Jew of South European or North African origin; pertaining to such a Jew.
- Seuda Shlishit — "Third Meal." The last of the three festive meals of Shabbat.
- Shabbat or Shabbes — Ashkenazi pronunciation of "Shabbat."
- Shabbatdik — Appropriate for or in the spirit of Shabbat.
- shidduch — A match, especially for marriage.

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shul — Yiddish for synagogue.

Shulchan Aruch — “*Prepared Table*.” The standard code of Jewish law and practice compiled by Joseph Karo.

Siddur — “Order (of prayer).” The complete traditional prayer book.

simcha — “Joy.” A happy festival or Jewish life-cycle celebration, e.g., bar mitzva.

talit — Shawl worn by males during prayer and fringed with tzitzis.

tameh — Impure according to halacha.

Tanya — The basic written source for Chabad Hassidic philosophy, written by the movement’s founder, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi in the 18th century.

treif, terephah, or trefeh — Food forbidden by the kashrut laws.

tzniut — Modesty in dress and behavior.

yeshiva — An academy for the study of Torah. Today there are also numerous separate yeshivot for women.

yichud — The Torah laws whose purpose is to prevent the development of close contact with members of the opposite sex to whom one is not closely related or married.

yom tov — A festival or holiday.

zemirot or z’mirot — Shabbat and festival songs generally sung around the table.

