

THE PATH OF THE JUST - CHAPTER 19:7

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

There are certain areas in our lives that call for special attention and should have particular honor bestowed on them, like the Shabbos and Holy Days. For not only are we to honor them with deep devotion and satisfaction, we're also to pay homage to them with our finest clothes, dishes, and the like. And the pious would pay particular and loving attention to those details.

(Don't forget that our Tradition asks us to consciously celebrate those times with good food, drink, and other accouterments. For, being pious from a Jewish perspective doesn't simply charge one with taking stringencies upon him or herself; it requires one to surrender his or her human longings and penchants to G-d's will. The point is that on Shabbos and the Holy Days that means enjoying good food, drink, relation, and more.)

There are many such ways to honor the Shabbos in fact, but overall it comes down to "doing anything that would underscore the importance of the Shabbos". As such, aside from serving your best dishes on your finest china, wearing your best clothes and the like, you'd also be expected to side-step your own honor and to do your own part to show respect for the Shabbos.

And so we're taught that illustrious and upstanding figures did all sorts of menial labor for the glory of the Shabbos.

"Rabbi Abbahu would sit on a stool of ivory and stoke the fire (to be used on the Shabbos), for example; Rav Saffra would singe the head of a cow for the (Shabbos) meal; Rava would salt carp (beforehand); Rav Hunah would light a fire (beforehand); Rav Papa would ready the wicks (for the Shabbos lights); Rav Chisda would shred beets (for the meals); Rabbah and Rav Yoseph would chop wood (for the fire); and Rav Nachman would carry things in and out on his shoulders (that would be needed for the Shabbos); and that "Rav Annan would purposefully dress in over-alls on Friday... so as to make it clear on the Shabbos that he was dressed in fine clothing (in its honor)" (Shabbat 119a).

We're to follow their lead and contribute to it as well, thinking more of the honor of the Shabbos than of our own.

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