

THE FONZ & THE HAPPY DAYS OF REST

by Jon Erlbaum

Hi all - welcome back to the beginning! As our Torah begins anew in Genesis ("Breishis"), we are invited once again to become wide-eyed witnesses to the wonders of Creation: culminating with the formation of humanity and climaxing with a day devoted to "Rest"...

- This Week's **RRR** (Relevant Religious Reference): **"G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it..."** - (Genesis 2:3)
- This Week's **SSC** (Suitable Secular Citation): **"Sunday, Monday, Happy Days... Saturday, what a day, groovin' all week with you! These days are ours, happy and free, oh Happy Days!"** - "Happy Days" Theme Song

RESTING UP FOR THE DAY OF REST?

If Shabbos (AKA the Sabbath) is known as the "Day of Rest", then why do some Rabbis strongly suggest taking a nap on Friday afternoon, BEFORE Shabbos begins? What kind of advice is that? "Come on, Jew! You've really got to rest up - you've got a big day of...REST ahead of you!" Unless we assume that these Rabbis had 1 too many L'chaims (AKA Jewish toasts involving alcohol), the fact that they recommend a pre-Shabbos snooze suggests that taking a nap is somehow different from experiencing Shabbos "Rest". So what exactly is this "Rest" on Shabbos that we're going for?

□ SUNDAY, MONDAY... □

If the "Great Doctor in the Sky" prescribed some remedy called "Rest" on Shabbos, it's probably because we're susceptible to some malady called "UNREST" throughout the week. Does this mean that G-d is prejudiced against the other 6 weekdays? Not at all! Just ask Arthur Fonzarelli (the Fonz - who is not only Jewish but even made it into Adam Sandler's Chanukah song). He'd be the first to assure you that "Sunday" and "Monday" are also "Happy Days!" And Judaism is cool with Fonzie's assessment, assuring us that spiritual bliss and purposeful focus are certainly accessible all throughout the week. Even when it's not Shabbos, G-d is available 24-6. The question is, are WE accessible and available?

Let's quickly diagnose the symptoms of our weekday weaknesses - our "UNREST" - and perhaps then we will clearly appreciate our need for Shabbos strengthening. What happens during the

week? Our spiritual sensibilities get covered up by the pervasive demands of our task lists, cell phones, and inboxes, causing us to lose perspective on what's truly important (family, becoming a better person, etc.)! Once our higher-purpose clarity becomes replaced with lower-level lenses, we lose focus and have to strain to keep our "eyes on the ball". Crucial distinctions become blurred between the means and the ends, between the paramount and the peripheral. And all too often, we end up getting sucked into a vicious cycle of relative meaninglessness!

□ SATURDAY, WHAT A DAY... □

Shabbos brings us back and helps us re-establish our priorities. As we said above, all throughout the week we are capable of accessing our purposeful focus: our built-in homing mechanism that keeps us connected to "what it's all about". But once we get into our somewhat robotic routines, it takes tremendous effort and exertion to access that focus. Our spiritual vision during the week is compared to the clarity one has when watching a TV SCREEN - pre-digital era - on which the program is almost completely blocked by static. While the picture is certainly being broadcast behind that static, our reception is faulty and we have to struggle in order to perceive the picture clearly (by adjusting the antenna, straining our eyes, etc.). But when Shabbos comes around, the static is removed and we can readily perceive the picture of reality, with vivid clarity and without strain. Now we can relate to one idea of what Shabbos "Rest" is: we rest from having to work so hard to find our spiritual center. When we truly let go of the physical trappings that control us during the week, we allow our souls to rise back to the surface - like a window thrown open inside us, allowing fresh air to finally come in.[1]

□ ...GROOVIN' ALL WEEK WITH YOU! □

Jewish mysticism informs us that we receive an extra Soul on Shabbos², which may offer us another insight into Shabbos "Rest". Think FOOTBALL: during the week, we've got 1 elevated Soul vs. 1 self-absorbed Body³, and the Soul must use a single coverage, 1-on-1 defensive formation in order to "defend the faith". But with the extra Soul on Shabbos, the defense can shift to a double coverage, 2-on-1 formation - and now the original "defender" of the faith doesn't have to work quite as hard to do its job. Or, if HOCKEY is your sport of choice, Shabbos "Rest" can be seen as a power play for the Soul team.

But the more awake we are to experience our Shabbos "Rest" (hence, the ideal of a pre-Shabbos nap), the more our peaceful sense of meaningful focus can "spill over" into the week. This is why, by the way, we make sure the wine "spills over" when we do Havdalah, the ceremony that formally ends Shabbos and leads us back into the weekday. By energizing ourselves to receive the Shabbos with vigor, the remedy of true "Rest" can remain in our system throughout the entire week, making sure that we can experience TRULY HAPPY DAYS!

Have a Wonderful Shabbos! Love, Jon Erlbaum & The Chevra

1. From On Judaism by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, p.169
 2. Perhaps the extra Shabbos Soul explains the increase of our Friday night appetite!
 3. Important: Judaism does not view the Body as being irredeemably evil and does not dismiss physicality as being meaningless & trivial. The Body is viewed more as a self-absorbed child, which if led by the parental influence of the Soul, can become holy as well!
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