

# BUILDING A SPIRITUAL PIPELINE

*by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann*

*"And it will be that on the sixth day - they shall prepare what they will bring." [16:5]*

According to the great teachers of Chassidus, the hachanah (preparation) for a mitzvah is equal to, or perhaps even greater in importance than the mitzvah itself! A prime example of hachanah - one which is Torah mandated - is the mitzvah of Shabbos. In the words of the Shulchan Aruch: "One should arise early Friday morning to make preparations for Shabbos. Even if one has many servants, he should make a point of personally preparing for Shabbos - this accords honour to Shabbos. Rav Chisdah used to cut up the vegetables (for Shabbos). Rabbah and Rav Yosef would chop the firewood. Rabbi Zeirah would light the fire. Rav Nachman would put away the weekday tableware and take out the Shabbos tableware. Every person should learn from them: No one should say, 'It's beneath me [to perform menial tasks of preparation], - it should be an honour for him to accord honour to Shabbos." [Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 250:1] The mitzvah of preparing for Shabbos is found in this week's Sidrah, "And it will be that on the sixth day - they shall prepare what they will bring."

When a person cries out from the depths of his heart, Hashem gathers his tears and uses them to wash away his sins. The same is true, says the Arizal (quoted in Shaarei Teshuvah [Orach Chaim 250:2]), when one perspires while preparing for Shabbos; his beads of sweat are placed in a special container, and used to wash away his iniquities.

Above all though, "Shabbos Kodesh" is undeniably a day of spirituality. And what could be more befitting for a day of spirituality than for one to make "spiritual preparations." The Mishnah Berurah (in the same chapter that the laws of Shabbos preparations are discussed) notes, "Sefarim write that on Erev Shabbos, one should examine his deeds and perform teshuvah (repentance). Shabbos is referred to as a queen, 'The Shabbos Queen.' When Shabbos comes, one goes out to 'receive the Shabbos Queen.' And how inappropriate it is to receive the queen with sullied, worn-out [spiritual] clothing!"

Rabbi Chaim of Tshernovitz, author of Be'er Mayim Chaim, was renowned for his great love for the mitzvah of Shabbos. He asks the following question: If, as it is explained in the holy Zohar, the sanctity of Shabbos descends directly from above, completely independent of our worthiness, then why doesn't Shabbos influence everyone in the same way? As he puts it, "The tzaddik (righteous) together with the rasha (wicked), the great and the lowly - all should be equal when the day of Shabbos comes." Yet it is painfully obvious that it just isn't so. For some Shabbos is a day of great

spiritual elevation and sanctity, while for others it is no more than a day of sleep, and a break from work. Why is this so?

He answers with a simple mashal (parable). Once a man was digging in his yard, and came across a deep well of sweet, clear, spring water. Some time later, he served some of his friends a glass of his well water. They were duly impressed by its sweet, pure taste. "How can you keep this tasty water all to yourself?" they asked. "There's no shortage," he answered, "you're more than welcome to construct for yourselves a channel connecting my well water to your homes."

And so they did. Each of the friends went out and purchased supplies to construct a pipeline joining his house with the well. Some of the friends had foresight; they made sure to purchase only the best materials. They gave extra special care to seal-off all the joints of their pipeline, and insulate all the pipes, so that nothing could possibly spoil their supply of pure spring water. When they were finished, their families were able to enjoy the water arriving at their houses just as sweet and as clear as it had been straight from the well.

Then there were others who were not as careful. They saved money by using second-grade materials, and their sealing and insulation were of poor quality and workmanship. Almost immediately, small stones, dirt, and even insects began to seep into the water flowing to their homes. Their families berated them for wasting their time and effort on such bitter, impure water. They were at a loss to explain "what had happened to the water."

This mashal can help us to understand, explains the Be'er Mayim Chaim, what happens with regard to Shabbos. In truth, the kedushah of Shabbos is sent from Heaven equally for each and every Jew. But, throughout the week, we each construct our own "spiritual pipeline" through our mitzvos and our conduct. If our weekdays were pure from sin, then our spiritual-pipes ("tzinoros") remain clean and completely sealed from all impurities, and Shabbos can enter our homes and our hearts just as it left Shamayim. If, however, our spiritual pipelines have become clogged with iniquities, if there are gaping holes in our weekday conduct, these in turn introduce "impurities" into the "taste" of Shabbos which Hashem sends down to us each week. It doesn't end up feeling the way it was supposed to feel.

Erev Shabbos is our last chance to do teshuvah and repent for anything that might have gone wrong during the week. This, perhaps, is the most important form of preparation of all. So, this Erev Shabbos, as you busily tend to your last-minute shopping and household chores, don't forget to take a few moments to reflect on this past week - what went right and what went wrong - and make sure your neshama is just as ready for Shabbos as your home!

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