

# DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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There is a famous *Gemara* in *Masechet Shabbat* 10b that brings two ideas within this week's *Torah* readings to life:

*Rav said, One who gives a gift to another must inform him that he is giving it to him. As it is stated, "Only keep my Shabbatot for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations to know that I am God Who sanctifies you," (Shemot 31:13). When the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave Shabbat to Israel, He told Moshe to inform them about it. That was also taught in a baraita - the verse states: "For I am God Who sanctifies you," meaning that the Holy One, Blessed Be He said to Moshe: **I have a good gift in My treasure house and Shabbat is its name, and I seek to give it to Israel. Go inform them about it.***

I am continuously touched by the beauty of the phrase "מתנה טובה יש לי בבית גנזי ושבתי שמה", translated to mean, "*I have a good gift in My*

*treasure house and Shabbat is its name.*" It challenges me to reevaluate my relationship to Shabbat and think about how best to help my children appreciate the gift that it is. As technology becomes more integrated into our lives, Shabbat can become a difficult experience as we struggle to unplug.

We have become inundated with technology that demands our time and attention. Personally, I find this to be exhausting as my life becomes increasingly filled with distractions. At a given moment I can find myself walking down the street while perusing an article, sending a voice note to a colleague while remembering to hit send on an email that is sitting in my drafts. With all these distractions I might not even notice the beautiful weather outside - or worse, forget to say a *bracha achrona* after the snack I ate on the go!

Because of this reality I have come to appreciate the brilliance in how Shabbat is presented to Am Yisrael in this week's parsha - something I previously struggled with. In the presentation of Shabbat, the *Torah* details what we cannot do, rather than showing us what we can do. An example of this can be found in *Vayakhel* when the *Torah* tells us, "לאִתְּבַעְרוּ אֵשׁ בְּכָל מִשְׁכְּנֵיכֶם בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת", which means, "*You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the Shabbat day.*" Why not focus on what we can do and simply say, 'On Shabbat, enjoy the natural light of the moon and sun that HaShem created?'

Moreover, *sefer Shemot* concludes with

My Husband  
**Shmuel Chaim Lux z"l**  
שמואל חיים לוקס ז"ל  
5th Yahrzeit, תשע"ח

My Father  
**Benjamin David Cogan z"l**  
בנימין דויד כוגן ז"ל  
52nd Yahrzeit, תשל"א

Remembered, Remembered, Remembered, By Love, By Love, By Love  
Remembered, Remembered, Remembered, By Love, By Love, By Love  
Remembered, Remembered, Remembered, By Love, By Love, By Love

the building of the *Mishkan*, from which our *rabbanim* created the 39 *Melachot*, which provide strict parameters as to how Shabbat must be observed. Once again, each *melacha* details what we cannot do rather than what we can do, and so the question remains. Why not focus on the periods of rest the builders of the *Mishkan* might have enjoyed between breaks, and highlight the rest we will experience in keeping Shabbat?

I've come to understand that the presentation of Shabbat and the *Mishkan* teaches us that in order for our lives to be enhanced, we must invest in beautifying God-given parameters. *Parshat Vayakhel* and *Pekudei* therefore serve as critical reminders that Shabbat is a gift we must invest in, and herein lies how to teach our children about Shabbat.

The root of "*chinuch*" can be found in "*chanukat HaMishkan*," which is how



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*sefer Shemot* concludes. Parents and educators know the dangers of always saying yes to children. For children to develop *mid-dot*, appreciation and maturity, they must recognize that there are limits in life - and within them, we thrive. I'd go as far as to say that the restrictions of Shabbat are felt more deeply by today's younger generation, when the addiction of social media has become so severe and they cannot recall a time when technology wasn't the center of their universe. However, the limits of Shabbat reduce our distractions, presenting us with an opportunity to foster spiritual growth and meaningful connection.

As *ovdei HaShem* we must remain vigilant so that we do not lose sight of what is important. Without time to pause and reflect on what truly matters, we can easily slip into lives that are devoid of meaning, authenticity, connection or a sense of purpose and mission. In this way, I believe that Shabbat is quite literally saving our *neshamot* from unending distraction and illusion, requiring that we disconnect in order to reconnect with our deepest self and values.

On Shabbat, as we shift our attention to building our relationship with HaShem, we can think about ways to infuse the week ahead with meaning. May we tap into the power of Shabbat, experience the gift that it is, and maximize the opportunities the holy day presents.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

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