



**RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER**

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS

**HA'AZINU/SHABBAT SHUVA**

# Erev Shabbat with Rav Kook and His Students

In one of the beautiful teachings in his classic work on teshuva, *Orot HaTeshuva*, Rav Kook identifies a unique time each week for reflection and repentance: Erev Shabbat. As we prepare to enter Shabbat, we have a special opportunity to look back on the week that has passed and clear away whatever may stand between us and the holiness of the day:

“On the eve of Shabbat one must do teshuva for all that transpired in the course of the week, in order to welcome the Shabbat without any impediments of sin or wrongdoing.” (*Orot HaTeshuva* 14:33)

Rav Kook’s teaching invites us to consider not only how we observe Shabbat, but how we enter it. The twenty-four hours of Shabbat can be profoundly shaped by the thoughts, emotions, and practices we cultivate in the hours immediately preceding it. Erev Shabbat is not merely a race to finish the week; it is the

gateway through which we enter a different spiritual reality.

## **NOT OPENING THE MAIL**

This sensitivity to the way we prepare for Shabbat was beautifully expressed by Rav Kook’s beloved friend and student, Rav Aryeh Levin, who maintained a remarkable practice: he did not read his mail on Friday afternoon.

Rav Aryeh regularly received letters and notes describing heartbreaking situations from people seeking his guidance or financial assistance. As the *tzaddik of Yerushalayim*, he somehow seemed never to turn anyone away. Yet he was careful not to allow the sorrow and anguish contained in those letters to accompany him into Shabbat.

He wanted to preserve the unique character of the day - to enter Shabbat with a sense of joy, serenity, and honor, giving the holiness of Shabbat its rightful place. (*Derech Avot*, Sternberg, p. 168)

His practice teaches a powerful lesson: sometimes preparing for Shabbat means deciding what not to bring into it.

## **RAV CHARLOP ENTERING SHABBAT**

Another practice among the students and disciples of Rav Kook that enriched the experience of welcoming Shabbat was the recitation of *Shir HaShirim* during the hour preceding Shabbat.

26<sup>th</sup> yearzeit of  
**Lesley Berelowitz a”h**  
**ליאורה ליבנה רחל בת יעקב ע”ה**

**Aliya Lakever on Wednesday,  
September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 17:45  
Har HaMenuchot  
*The Family***

A young student at the famed Etz Chaim Yeshiva near the Shuk in Jerusalem once accompanied a friend to the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood, where the eminent Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop served as rabbi. He wanted to witness how Rav Charlop prepared himself for Shabbat.

He later recalled:

“I made a special effort to come early before the beginning of Shabbat and saw Rav Charlop reciting Shir Hashirim in his home. His recital of Shir Hashirim, after he had immersed in the mikvah, as he wore his elegant white Shabbat garments, was for me like seeing the angels singing before God’s throne in heaven. Rav Charlop recited the words with a full voice and in deep concentration. When he recited certain verses tears ran down his cheeks.” (*Shirat HaYam*, Yair Charlop, pp. 205–206)

For Rav Charlop, Shabbat did not simply arrive. He entered it - with preparation, anticipation, purity, and profound emotion.

### READING TOGETHER: RAV CHAIM BERLIN AND RAV ARYEH LEVIN

Former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi David Lau, *shlita*, is fond of relating a story about two great rabbis who would spend Friday afternoons together in Jerusalem nearly a century ago.

“Two tzadikim, an elder rabbi and a young rabbi. They were Rabbi Chaim Berlin, the son of the Netziv, who sat every Friday afternoon with a young Rabbi Aryeh Levin. They said together the Shir HaShirim, which Rabbi Akiva said was the Kodesh HaKodashim of songs.”

Rav Chaim Berlin would weep when they

reached the words, “Your eyes are like doves” (*Shir HaShirim* 4:1). Out of respect, Rav Aryeh did not ask him why. After several weeks, however, his mentor revealed the reason, recalling an episode from his years as Chief Rabbi of Moscow during the Russian Empire.

“I was a *mohel*. I knew that one day I would pay for it,” he said. “I heard a knock on my door. It was a soldier, a big officer.”



The officer ordered Rabbi Berlin to pack and accompany him the following morning, instructing him to bring his *brit milah* instruments.

“I took my knife, tefillin, and sid-dur. I said goodbye, and I did not know for how long.”

The officer brought him to a house deep in a forest, where a woman was holding a newborn baby. Rabbi Berlin performed the *brit milah*. Two nights later, the officer thanked him and offered to pay.

Assuming that the officer was not Jewish, Rabbi Berlin asked why he had been summoned to perform a *brit milah*. The officer replied, “My parents and the parents of my wife are Jews. I’m a child of the Tsar.” Yet despite his loyalty to the despot, he added, “Maybe one day he’ll ask himself where he came from.”

Dedicated In memory of  
**Mrs. Anna Lipschitz OBM**  
**Chana bat**  
**HaRav Yoel Summer**  
**– The Linever Rav**  
**On her 31<sup>st</sup> yartzeit**  
*By Hedy & Ben Lipschitz*

Rav Chaim Berlin explained that a pure eye instinctively searches for the good in another person. This is the deeper meaning of the verse, "Your eyes are like doves." The Midrash teaches that one must learn to see the beauty, faith, and commitment of the Jewish people even when their righteousness is not immediately apparent. (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 4:1; Queens Jewish Link, Kadinsky, "Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel Visits West Hempstead")

Perhaps this is why those words moved Rav Chaim Berlin to tears. When one learns to look at another Jew with the eyes of a *yonah*, one begins to see what may be hidden beneath the surface - the Jewish soul, its potential, and its enduring connection to Hashem.

### CLOSENESS WITH THE CREATOR

The stories of Rav Charlop, Rav Chaim Berlin, and Rav Aryeh Levin bring Rav Kook's teaching to life. Each of these great figures understood that the spiritual experience of Shabbat begins before Shabbat begins.

They did not simply wait for Shabbat to arrive. They prepared themselves to receive it.

For Rav Aryeh Levin, that meant setting aside painful letters and refusing to carry the burdens of the week into the holy day. For Rav Charlop, it meant immersing himself in

the mikvah, donning his Shabbat garments, and reciting *Shir HaShirim* with such intensity that tears streamed down his face. For Rav Chaim Berlin and Rav Aryeh Levin, it meant spending the final moments before Shabbat together contemplating the deepest love and holiness expressed in *Shir HaShirim*.

We often find ourselves rushing through the final moments of the week, trying to finish one last task before Shabbat arrives. But these spiritual masters, who brought their extraordinary light to Yerushalayim only a generation or two ago, offer us another model. They teach us that the quality of our Shabbat can be transformed by the way we prepare for it.

A few quiet moments of reflection. A conscious decision about what to leave behind. A chapter of *Shir HaShirim*. A moment to put on Shabbat clothes with anticipation. A decision to enter the day with joy rather than anxiety. These seemingly small acts can become a doorway to something much greater. And when we enter it with intention, purity, joy, and longing, we create the space to experience what Rav Kook understood so deeply: that the preparation for Shabbat itself can become a path toward greater closeness with the Creator. ■

May the Torah Learned from this TT  
be in loving memory of

**Morris (Zaidie) Galitzer ז"ל**

לע"נ ר' משה ב"ר חיים ז"ל  
י"א תשרי

**Walter Lilie ז"ל**

לע"נ ר' יצחק ב"ר צבי ז"ל  
כ"ב תשרי

*Shimon & Chana Galitzer and family*



**Rabbi Goldscheider's** most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at [aarong@ouisrael.org](mailto:aarong@ouisrael.org) at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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