

Good Shabbos Everyone. Dr. Abraham Twerski, the noted mental health expert who is a practicing orthodox Jew, was once lecturing to a mixed audience of Jews and non-Jews alike. During the course of his technical and scientific discussion, Dr. Twerski mentioned something about the soul. One of the surprised listeners piped up and asked, "Dr. Twerski, do you mean to suggest that you have a soul?" "No," said Dr. Twerski. "I am a soul." (Heard from Rabbi Label Lamm)

The Jewish soul is a holy spark of the Eternal One from Above. The body however is made up from the dust of the earth. After the soul leaves the body, the body returns to its source in the ground and the soul returns to its source in Eternity. The focus of our lives as Jews is therefore the spiritual growth of the eternal soul. By investing in the soul, we invest in Eternity. The highlight of the Jewish soul in this life is Shabbos. On Shabbos the neshomah – soul experiences a taste of the eternal bliss of the World to Come.

Hashem tells us: "I have a good gift in my storehouse, and its name is Shabbos." (Shabbos 10b) As we read in this week's parsha Beshalach, Moshe tells the Bnai Yisroel "See, Hashem has given you the Shabbos." (Shemos 16:29) Every week Jews around the world celebrate the gift of Shabbos with uplifting prayer, sumptuous meals, song, inspiring words of Torah and rest. The more a Jew separates himself from weekday activities, weekday thought and weekday speech on Shabbos, the more he will feel the special happiness of the Holy Day.

On Shabbos we have the custom of greeting each other with "Good Shabbos" or "Shabbat Shalom." The Shlah teaches us that whatever greetings we may use during the week, such as "hello," "good morning," and "good night," etc., are replaced by "Good Shabbos." The holiness of Shabbos pervades the Jewish world on the seventh day. The following story shows the spiritual power of Shabbos.

Eight-year-old Melissa Berger stopped short at the doorway to her home. The room seemed to be filled with boxes— boxes and boxes of books. Melissa peered into one container, then another. Yes, all of them were filled with books. And strangely enough, every book seemed to be in Hebrew! Melissa was the product of a traditional Jewish home. Her family kept a "kosher style" kitchen, and Melissa attended Hebrew school. So she immediately recognized the Hebrew letters.

"Mom," she called, "where did all these books come from?" "Oh, hello, Melissa." Her mother came into the room. "These books? Well, you know Aunt Ethel who just passed away? She used to live with your grandmother, and all these books were from her house. They were your grandfather's."

The rich and illustrious heritage that her religious grandfather had cherished was never revealed to Melissa. Her scholarly grandfather, had studied from these seforim. Yet just one generation later, this priceless treasure remained unrecognized.

"What are we going to do with them?" Melissa asked. "I was planning on giving them to the synagogue." Said her mother. Somehow, despite her ignorance of her family's heritage, Melissa felt an unexplained affiliation to the old books with the mysterious print. "Oh, Mom, can't we keep them?" Melissa pleaded. "I'll study hard in Hebrew school and then I'll read each one!" "We have no use for them." Her mother shook her head, summarily dismissing Melissa's request.

Melissa's throat tightened with disappointment. She knew her mother was right. Melissa probably would never be able to read them all. But poor grandfather! His beautiful Hebrew library—all given away.

Eight-year-old Melissa grew into eighteen-year-old Melissa, a college student who retained her strong Jewish identity. Melissa chose to eat her meals through Hillel, a kosher meal program, in accordance with her family's traditional views. It was through Hillel that Melissa met Beth, a courageous, independent returnee to Judaism. Melissa would accompany Beth to Saturday morning services in the conservative synagogue.

Beth lived with her parents. During her visits to Beth's home on Shabbos, Melissa watched how her friend ate on separate plates in her determination to keep kosher. Beth's behavior was food for thought. (no pun intended). "I'm Jewish," Melissa mused. "Throughout our history, the Jewish people sacrificed for the sake of their religion. Maybe I should give up a portion of my lifestyle, too, so I can live a more Jewish life?" Thus began Melissa's gradual transformation. She accepted weekly invitations for Shabbos from members of the local community. She learned about kosher eating, modesty, and the Creator of the world.

And then, in the midst of her journey, Melissa met David. David's commitment to Judaism began at his bar mitzvah. On the day he first put on tefillin, he was so inspired that he decided to wear them daily. Every morning throughout his teenage years he biked to the nearby conservative synagogue to pray with a minyan before school started.

It wasn't long before Melissa and David were married. Considering their interest in Judaism, it was expected that they would search for a synagogue where they would feel comfortable. "The logical step would be to join a conservative synagogue." David noted. "But if we do, we'll be the most religious members of the congregation. If we join an Orthodox community, we'll have so much to aspire to, so much more room to grow!" The two joined an Orthodox community and quickly embarked on their journey to a Torah true life. In the meantime, Melissa continued to stay in touch with Beth, the friend who had first introduced her to Yiddishkeit. Beth had married Mark, a teacher in a Conservative Hebrew School. They, too, joined an Orthodox community. As Beth's children grew older and married, several of them made their homes in Eretz Yisroel, where they learned in kollel, a yeshiva for married men. Melissa urged her son Moshe, who was learning at a leading yeshivah in Eretz Yisroel, to get in touch with Beth's children. "They're both married and learning in kollel, so if you ever need a place for a Shabbos meal, call them."

Beth's children were delighted to host Moshe. Right after Shabbos, they called their mother Beth. "Do you know who we had for Shabbos? Your friend Melissa's son. And we all agree that he would be the perfect shidduch for Devorah." And indeed he was. Moshe married Beth's daughter Devorah. Melissa and Beth, once only friends, were now bonded by the marriage of their children. The treasure in the books that Melissa had so coveted in her youth was rediscovered. Her grandfather's rich and illustrious heritage, hidden for a generation or two, was reborn and passed on: from Melissa to her son Moshe and his new wife, and to the generations beyond! And it all began with Shabbos (R. Y. Weiss, Visions of Greatness VIII). **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."