

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In this week's Torah portion *Beshalach* the Torah tells us how Moshe Rabeinu (our teacher) instructs the Jewish Nation on the observance of Shabbos.

We distinguish Shabbos from the other days of the week by sitting down to festive meals with our family and enjoying the spiritual recharge of this special day. We cover the tables with white tablecloths and light Shabbos candles. These Shabbos candles bring the light of holiness into our homes.

J.J. Gross, an observant Jew, works as an advertising executive at one of the top marketing agencies in the New York area.

One day an inspirational thought crossed J.J.'s mind. What if the most widely read paper in the world, the New York Times, ran an ad across the bottom of the front page every Friday listing candle lighting time? Who knows how many people it may inspire? Just imagine the possible effects!

Among his many clients are some members of the Lubavitch community. Therefore, J.J. suggested the idea to some of the more influential members within the Lubavitch organization and before long, a Lubavitcher agreed to donate \$1,800 to sponsor the ad every week.

There were times when the production manager of The Times would contact Mr. Gross at the eleventh hour desperately trying to find out what time candle lighting was on that particular Friday evening. The man was of Irish Catholic descent and he was concerned that the paper would go to print before the time for candle lighting was listed!

From the mid-1990's until June 1999 the ad ran each and every week across the bottom of the front page. But then the philanthropist who had been sponsoring the ad cut back on his pledges, the candle lighting ad among them.

However, J.J. felt that the discontinuation of the ad mere days before the fast day of the seventeenth of Tammuz was just not appropriate. So he decided to sponsor it himself for just one more week. And that was the last time it appeared. Or so he thought...

For a special Millennium issue, The New York Times ran three different front pages. One was from January 1, 1900. The second was from January 1, 2000 and a third projected future events for the beginning of the 22nd century — January 1, 2100. Among the news stories in this fictional issue was the establishment of the fifty-first state of the U.S.A.: Cuba. Another article covered the question of whether robots should be allowed to vote, and so on.

Although the candle lighting ad did not appear in the other two front pages, surprisingly it did turn up on the front page of the January 1, 2100 Friday newspaper. This odd inclusion piqued the curiosity of many individuals, including J.J.

When the production Irish-Catholic manager of The Times was questioned about the inclusion his response was astounding. "We don't know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain — that in the year 2100 Jewish women will be lighting Shabbos candles." (Reb Yechiel Spero, Touched by a Story p.146)

We find one of the sources of the commandment to light Shabbos candles in this week's Torah portion, as Moshe tells the Bnai Yisroel in the desert "See, Hashem has given you Shabbos." (Shemos 16:29) The essence of Shabbos is a gift from Hashem to the Jewish nation. We light candles to celebrate this special gift. Since Hashem first gave us this incredible present over three thousand years ago, the Jewish Nation has faithfully kept the Shabbos. (The Aryeh Kaplan Anthology "Sabbath" p.119)

Rav Kaplan tells us that on Shabbos, a Jew can be a Jew in the fullest sense of the word. Every second of the day can infuse a Jew with the unique closeness to Hashem that is the essence of Judaism. (Ibid. p.126) The more a Jew refrains from weekday activities on Shabbos, the more he will connect with the holiness of the day.

We will conclude with the words of the Midrash: all the days of the week were paired off except Shabbos. Sunday was paired with Monday. Tuesday with Wednesday, and Thursday with Friday. Only Shabbos was left without a mate. When Shabbos complained, Hashem proclaimed that the Jewish people would be its mate. With Shabbos we are one Nation, indivisible, united with G-d. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**