

Good Shabbos Everyone. "The Bnai Yisroel shall observe the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations." (Shemos 31:16) One of the most important tenets of our faith is Shabbos.

HaRav I. Grunfeld writes "Our Sages call the Sabbath Yesod Ha-emunah, the very foundation of our faith. This is no exaggeration. The loftiest principles which Judaism has ennobled the human race, the highest ideals for which our people have been striving for thousands of years at the cost of immeasurable lives, are all centered in Shabbos."

In about the year 1800, a fire broke out in the city of Maerkisch-Friedland, where the illustrious Rabbi Akiva Eiger was chief rabbi. A large segment of the Jewish quarter was destroyed as a result of the fire, and many homes had to be rebuilt. Rabbi Akiva Eiger issued a proclamation advising all those planning to rebuild their homes to stipulate in their contracts with the builders that no work was to be performed on Shabbos or Yom Tov.

All members of the community complied with the Rabbi's directive, except for one man, who was the president of the community and its wealthiest member. He wanted his new house built without delay. To this end, he hired workers to do the work non-stop, Shabbos and Yom Tov included. All protestations from the Rabbi and members of the community fell upon deaf ears.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger himself then announced publicly that he was certain that whoever had his house built on Shabbos would not see it stand for long, yet the work on the rich man's house continued unabated.

The president's new house was not only the first to be completed, but also the largest and most magnificent of the reconstructed buildings. The Jews of the city were appalled by this flagrant display of insubordination to their great rabbi.

However, the episode did not end there. Not long afterward, one of the beams of the president's house suddenly collapsed and crashed to pieces. It was subsequently discovered that the entire wooden frame of the house had become infested with timber-decay, and the building would have to be completely demolished and rebuilt.

The builders and engineers were at a loss to explain why only that particular house became infested, while the other houses built at the same time from the same timber supply remained intact. But to the Jews of Maerkisch-Friedland, there was no doubt as to the answer of this puzzling question.

Shabbos is sign of the eternal covenant between Hashem and the Jewish People. The Torah defines "keeping Shabbos" as a sign that a Jew is spiritually in business. The Chofetz Chaim explains this principle with the following parable: A man once returned to his former neighborhood looking for an old restaurant. When he came to the restaurant, the door was closed and locked. He looked in through the window but nothing stirred. The sign reading "RESTAURANT" was still there, so he figured that since it was summertime, the owners were probably on vacation.

A few months later, he came back to the neighborhood, but he noticed that while other stores were doing good business, the restaurant was not only closed but the sign over the store had been taken down as well. "It's obvious," said the man to himself " that they've gone out of business. If the sign is not there, the restaurant is closed."

"The same indicator," said the Chofetz Chaim, "is valid with regard to a Jew's adherence to Torah and mitzvahs. While it is possible that at times a person may slip to an evil temptation, he can still be considered a committed Jew provided that he performs mitzvahs. But, if a Jew removes the signs of Judaism, the basic fundamental tenants that symbolize our relationship with Hashem, [the Jew has heaven forbid, disavowed his association from the Jewish nation.]"

Shabbos is a sign of the eternal covenant between Hashem and the Jewish People. By keeping Shabbos, a Jew demonstrates his belief in this Holy Covenant. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**