

Good Shabbos Everyone. Almost every Jew is at least willing to accept upon himself the 10 Commandments, which we read in this week's Torah portion Yisro. However, only if a Jew keeps Shabbos does he keep all 10 of the Commandments. Otherwise, he is only keeping 9 of the 10.

The Holy Chofetz Chayim writes in his introduction to the laws of Shabbos, quoting the Sages, that one who keeps Shabbos is counted as if he has fulfilled all the mitzvahs; while one who does not keep Shabbos is considered as if he has violated the entire Torah and all the mitzvahs.

Why is that so? Because, keeping Shabbos represents a belief that in six days Hashem created the world and on the seventh day, He rested. If Hashem created the world, he is the Boss of the world and we must do what the Boss says. Subjugating our will to the will of Hashem is the foundation of existence as Jews. The following true story illustrates one Jew's dedication to Shabbos, the foundation of belief in Hashem.

Yankel Rosengarten from Yerushalayim, was apprehensive about his trip to America. He had never been there before but now he had no choice.

His school in Jerusalem, part of an orphanage for young girls, needed funds desperately and he had exhausted all other financial options. He had therefore resolved to make the long journey himself.

He would spend the first few days in New York and then move his way westward to the Midwestern cities of Cleveland, Detroit and Chicago. He would conclude his fundraising trip with a flight to Los Angeles, where he had a few wealthy supporters who had pledged generously to the orphanage.

As soon as he landed in Detroit he called a certain wealthy man named Reb Berel Gross. Before long, he reached Reb Berel's house. Yankel spoke with Berel for a while, discussing the school's dire financial situation and then sharing some thoughts of Torah learning. Yankel was pleasantly surprised that Berel was a scholarly individual who was well versed in every Torah topic they discussed. Berel was sympathetic and understanding of the school's needs and wrote out a generous check. Yankel was pleased with the donation but even more satisfied that he would be able to stay with such a fine family for the next few days.

However, one comment caught Yankel off guard. Berel had mentioned something about the standard of kashrus in his home perhaps not being up to Yankel's standards. Yankel was confused. This was a man who was well versed in Torah learning and appeared to be a strictly observant Jew. Yankel felt he could control himself no longer and asked Berel what the problem could possibly be. "I'm not sure if my Shabbos observance was always what it should have been," Berel answered, while averting Yankel's gaze, but he knew that an explanation was necessary.

Yankel sat back, quite puzzled, and listened closely to every word Berel said. "Many years ago I lived in a small shtetl in Poland. The poverty was extreme and although my parents tried, supporting the family was very difficult. I tried to help out as much as I could but as a young boy of 12, I was limited. Finally my father decided to send me to my uncle who lived in America. There, he figured, things would be better. America was the land where they had 'streets lined with gold.' My father felt that this would be my only chance to break free of my impoverished life.

"The trip by boat took several weeks and finally I arrived. My uncle came to greet me at the dock but his appearance startled me. Instead of the long beard that I had expected to see he sported a trimmed goatee. As a replacement for the long black coat my father wore he dressed in a stylish double-breasted herringbone gray sports jacket.

But perhaps what startled me most was the fact that he walked around with his head uncovered. I tried to hide my shock, though the contrast between what I was expecting to see and the reality was overwhelming. "He quickly used his connections to find me a job and I enjoyed being a carpenter's apprentice. However, when I did not show up for work on Shabbos morning I was immediately fired. This happened for three consecutive weeks.

Each time, my uncle would lecture me on responsibility and each time I would defiantly refuse to go to work. I couldn't believe that my uncle had forsaken his heritage. He entirely dismissed the notion that Shabbos was non-negotiable, rationalizing that during the era of the depression 'making a living' was not something that could be taken for granted. "On my fourth Sunday morning I was warned by my uncle to guarantee my boss that I would show up for work on the following Saturday.

The pressure was so great and I was a lonely 12-year-old with no family other than an uncle who was urging me to give up the most sacred tradition I had known, and so I gave in. When I showed up for work, I told the boss that I would work on Shabbos. "He kept on asking me throughout the week if I would come to work on Saturday and I answered him that I would, sincerely believing that I was in fact prepared to sacrifice the holy Shabbos for the security of my job.

Finally, on Shabbos morning I tearfully left the house with every intention of going to work. Instead of taking the train as I normally had, I walked toward my place of employment, crying the entire time. But as I walked up the steps and stood on the threshold of the shirt factory where I worked, the image of my father flashed before my eyes and I heard him warning me in his soft, loving tone, 'Guard the Shabbos, Berel. Guard the Shabbos.'

Suddenly I stopped. What was I thinking? How could I have even thought of desecrating the holy Shabbos? I turned around and ran as fast as I could, though I had no idea where I was going. I finally reached a park bench and begged Hashem for forgiveness. I knew I could never return to my uncle's house — but I had made a choice about what was dearest to me."

Berel looked up with red eyes at his guest and painfully recalled the event of which he was so ashamed. "I did not work that Shabbos. But every day of the preceding week I had planned to work on Shabbos, to desecrate its holiness. Shabbos isn't one day a week. You have to prepare a whole week for Shabbos and in that respect — I had failed. So if you want to eat in my house, that is your choice."

Yankel stared at his host for a long while, overcome by the holiness of this man who had suffered for so many years not because he actually desecrated the Shabbos, but because he had planned to. He gently embraced his new friend and realized that, aside from the financial benefit of meeting him, he had gained in many more important ways from being in the home of Reb Berel Gross. (Touched by a Story, p. 98 R. Yechiel Spiro)

The Fourth Commandment tells us "Remember the Shabbos Day to keep it Holy." (Shemos 20:8) The Sages teach us that one of the aspects of this mitzvah is preparing for Shabbos both spiritually and physically, throughout the entire work week. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**