

Good Shabbos Everyone. Let us begin this week with a short piece from the Kabbalah. The holy Zohar teaches us, that "Anyone who keeps the Shabbos, it is as if he has fulfilled the entire Torah." (Zohar, Part 2, 92a) The only way truly to understand this piece of Kabbalah is for one to keep Shabbos. Because, keeping Shabbos empowers a Jew to reach the highest spiritual heights. A Jew can only reach his potential with Shabbos. We read about Shabbos this week in the 10 Commandments. As the Holy Torah commands us in the fourth commandment: "Six days you shall work... but the seventh day is Shabbos to Hashem, your G-d, you shall not do any work..." (Shemos 20:9-10) The Sages have taught us that more than the Jewish people have kept the Shabbos, Shabbos has kept the Jewish people. The following amazing true story, told by Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Gruskin, Rav of Congregation Bnai Zion in Detroit, Michigan, illustrates the power of Shabbos. Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Gruskin is a chaplain of the State of Michigan. Part of his duties involve making rounds in hospitals for the mentally ill. Every year before Pesach, a secular Jewish man named Milton helped Rabbi Gruskin in the distribution of Pesach boxes to the mentally ill. One Sunday morning, Rabbi Gruskin received an unexpected phone call.

"Hello, Rabbi. This is Milton." "Milton! How are you?" There was a short silence. Then, "I'm calling from Sinai Hospital, Rabbi." Milton's voice broke. "Rabbi, please pray for me. I'm very ill." "I'm so sorry to hear that, Milton. Not only will I pray for you, but I'll also come down to see you as soon as I can." Rabbi Gruskin went to see Milton the very next day. He had lost weight, his cheeks looked sunken, and his complexion appeared jaundiced. "Rabbi, please pray for me," Milton begged. The doctors say that I have a tumor in my pancreas." "Milton," Rabbi Gruskin began, "You're a kindhearted person, and you've helped me a lot during the past few years. I am certainly going to pray for you. But I have to tell you that there is someone else you should consider asking to pray for you-someone whose prayers will be answered faster than mine will." "Who is it, Rabbi?" Milton asked anxiously. "I must call him immediately!" Shabbos, Milton. The Shabbos can pray for you." "What do you mean?" Milton asked. "Milton, start keeping the Shabbos," Rabbi Gruskin said. "In that merit, she [Shabbos] will pray to the Almighty to heal you." Milton thought for a moment. "But I don't know anything about keeping Shabbos!" "Don't worry," Rabbi Gruskin told him. "I will send you books that will introduce you to Shabbos, and describe every thing that you have to do." Several days after Rabbi Gruskin brought the books, Rabbi Gruskin dropped in for another visit. Milton was in a somber mood. "They think the tumor is malignant," Milton told him "and they want to operate." He paused for a moment. "I thought about our conversation, and I decided that I will keep Shabbos."

Milton pressed the call button for the nurse, and sat silently until she arrived. When the nurse came in, he said to her, "Tomorrow is the Sabbath. I don't want the television on, and I won't be taking any phone calls. I am going to observe the Sabbath from now on." Rabbi Gruskin turned to Milton and said "Let's shake on it." Milton took his hand and shook it vigorously. Rabbi Gruskin came to visit Milton on the day of the operation. It was after 4 p.m. by the time he arrived at the hospital and he was sure that the operation would have long since finished, with Milton already out of the recovery room. But Milton's bed was empty. He must still be in the recovery room. Rabbi Gruskin thought. But he wasn't there either. Nervously, he went downstairs to the surgical lounge, where he found Milton's family waiting on tenterhooks for news of the patient's condition. Just as he arrived, a doctor entered the corridor to meet the family and report on Milton's progress. The expression on his face already told them that the news was not good. "The tumor was malignant. As we had suspected," the doctor said. "But that's not our problem now. We're having difficulty closing the incision, and he's hemorrhaging badly." He paused. "We don't expect him to make it through the night." Milton's wife broke down crying. Rabbi Gruskin calmed her down the best he could. After she was somewhat calmed, Rabbi Gruskin said, "As long as Milton is with us, we must do everything we can. I'm going to shul now for the afternoon prayers, and afterwards I'll add the name Rafael to his name. We are in Hashem's Hands now." After davening (praying) Minchah (the afternoon prayers), the men recited Tehillim - psalms for Milton, and the name Rafael was added to his Hebrew name. (Rafael means "Heal him, G-d." It is commonly added to the name of a seriously ill person as a prayer and plea to Hashem) Rabbi Gruskin went back to the hospital at eleven-thirty that night. He found the family still sitting in the waiting room, hoping to hear good news from the doctors. Rabbi Gruskin stayed for several hours, giving them some badly needed emotional support. When he finally left, he reassured them that he would return immediately after davening Shacharis the following morning.

As soon as Rabbi Gruskin walked in the door of his home, the phone rang. "This is Bill, Milton's brother," a tired voice said. "The doctor just told us that he doesn't think Milton will live another hour. Do you think you could come back to stay with us during Milton's last moments?" "I'll be right over." Said Rabbi Gruskin. Rabbi Gruskin returned to the hospital, and he went to where the family was waiting. He asked the doctors for permission to see Milton. The doctors gave their consent, and Rabbi Gruskin quietly entered the room, with the family filing in behind him. Milton lay quietly in bed, with tubes in his nose and mouth helping to keep him alive. As Rabbi Gruskin came closer, Milton suddenly opened his eyes. He looked at Rabbi Gruskin, looked at his family, and then raised his hand. He tapped his fingers against his thumb and pointed toward heaven. "Do you want us to pray for you?" Rabbi Gruskin asked. Milton shook his head, no. Rabbi Gruskin was puzzled; he could not figure out what Milton was trying to tell him.

Rabbi Gruskin went over to the doctor. "Is it possible to remove those tubes?" he asked. "It might be important to know what he is trying to tell us." The doctor thought for a moment. "I suppose it's all right," he said finally. Rabbi Gruskin turned to Milton. "Do you want the doctor to take the tubes out of your mouth, so you can speak?" he asked. Milton nodded vigorously. So the doctor removed the tubes and stepped back. To everyone's surprise, Milton sat up in bed and began speaking. His voice was hoarse, and they had to strain to hear him. "All of you can go home, I am going to be all right," he whispered. "Rabbi please stay here." Milton's wife was in shock. The doctor was staring open-mouthed at his patient. They filed out slowly, turning their heads for one final look at Milton as they left the room. After they had gone, Milton said, "I had to ask them to leave, because they wouldn't understand what I'm about to tell you. The truth is that since the operation began, I have not been on this world-I have been in heaven." Rabbi Gruskin looked at Milton a bit dubiously. It sounded like the effects of anesthesia to him. But Milton shook his head emphatically. "I know what it sounds like, Rabbi, but it's the truth. They told me up there that if the Rabbi will be at your bedside when you first open your eyes, you'll know that you'll live. But if he's not there, you will die." Milton stopped to catch his breath. "When I opened my eyes and saw you, I knew I was going to make it." From that point on, Milton began the long slow road to recovery. Shortly after the operation, Milton told Rabbi Gruskin, "Thank you for praying for me. It saved my life." Rabbi Gruskin took hold of Milton's hands. "No, Milton, it wasn't me. It was Shabbos." Milton stayed in the hospital for seven months, running up a medical bill that exceeded \$260,000. When he was finally able to go home, he weighed a mere eighty-three pounds-and he is six feet tall! The horrible disease in the pancreas kills quickly-usually two or three months after diagnosis-but Milton lived almost 20 fruitful years after his operation. His oncologist said that Milton's case is a medical miracle. Milton he managed to live a fully observant life filled with Torah and mitzvos. Every weekday, before his demise, he drove twenty-five miles to daven in shul. And every year before Pesach, he continued to help Rabbi Gruskin deliver packages to the inner city. (from Visions of Greatness, p.26, Rabbi Yosef Weiss) More than the Jewish people has kept the Shabbos, Shabbos has kept the Jewish People. If you are keeping Shabbos, let this encourage you to be more dedicated to keeping Shabbos properly. If you are not keeping Shabbos, let this encourage you to find out what you are missing. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

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