



70 Days for 70 Years

Remember the past to build the future

Tiffany Monastyrsky

Why Shabbat?



This is the mitzvah that single handedly changed my life forever. The moment I stepped into my first Shabbat experience about 4 years ago, it changed the way I saw the world. I decided that if I am already spending time in a Jewish community, I wanted to see what the hype is all about – I was going to keep my first Shabbat ever. During those 25 hours I was introduced to a people that were “my people.” It made me challenge what being Jewish meant to me.

These people kept Shabbat and I did not. I did not even understand what Shabbat truly meant. I met families who opened up their homes to strangers, cooked meals with never ending courses, and wanted to know who you were and what your story was. They had a thirst to know who I was as if I was their cousin they had never met. I was told that if I wanted to keep Shabbat, I had to remember not to switch the lights, not use my phone, not to rip toilet paper – instead use the tissues they already have. So I did. I thought it was absolutely bizarre.

Now looking back, I realize how much more beautifully complex Shabbat is. These people were strangers to me, but to them I was family. I saw how these Jews kept Shabbat. Those 25 hours lit something within me that was waiting to spark. I saw how it was okay to let go, to unplug, to be a part of something different. Shabbat challenged me to connect to the people that were physically around me instead of virtually near me, and I was able to hear myself think. I decided that I wasn't ready yet – but when the time would come I too would want to be keeping a day that was filled with blessing. My journey began and still continues...

I spent over a year and half exploring Israel, going somewhere new almost every Shabbat. I encountered countless strangers who became my family, opened up their homes and hearts to share with me the beauty of Shabbat. Every single person I met along the way had a profound impact on me. I found myself waiting every week for that Friday night sunset, for those 25 hours of true peace to begin.

This Shabbat, a movement will begin around the world. It demands of all Jews everywhere to push past what they think they can do. To keep an entire Shabbat fully in all its entirety.

The majority of the world is unable to simply unplug from all their externalities and plug into themselves. Facing a countless amount of distractions, we are a generation which is constantly looking out – almost never looking in. Avraham, our forefather was called an “evri.” According to Rashi, this means on the “other side of the river.” In a time when the rest of his world found salvation in empty gods, Avraham was on the other side standing for true spiritual connection. Today NOTHING is different. The world chases money, fame and superficiality – all these “modern gods.” If one does not do something in their week to sever this influence, it will suck them in. The Avraham of 4,000 years ago stood up for true spiritual connection, and our Shabbat plays the same role in the chaotic world we live in today.

Every week we run around – never able to find a quiet moment. We are given an opportunity to shut out the world that bombards us and instead plug into the people that are around us, and even more so into ourselves. We think that doing something so different and so big is beyond our capabilities. There is this magnificent concept in the Torah of spiritual DNA. Avraham established this DNA for us – the ability to stand up for what we know inherently to be true. Charlie Harary says it perfectly – there is no such thing as one day becoming “more observant” – it is just about uncovering who you already are. It is already inside of you. That is what I realized the first Shabbat I ever kept.

Remember that every moment in which you’re not breaking Shabbat – you are keeping it. It is never all or nothing. Join the movement. Become a part of history. One Shabbat.