

Shabbos is coming, are you ready from A to Z?

Shabbos comes every week and we celebrate Yom Tov every year. These two are givens and do not change. If we know this, then how come Shabbos and Yom Tov seem to creep up and surprise us every time they occur? When I say surprise I don't mean the party hats, presents and happy type of surprise but rather the "oh no, I'm not ready yet how come you didn't warn me" kind of surprise. It is said that as the holiness of the approach of these days increases, so too do the Satan's attempts increase to try reduce the holiness of our behavior. He is a more than worthy opponent and, if you call someone's house on a Friday afternoon, the sounds of yelling are not uncommon. The bickering going on between parents and children, children and their siblings and husbands and wives is music to the Satan's ears. We know this yet we fall victim to it week after week. In my professional practice I hear about the backlash of this stressful time. By the time we usher in the Malachim with Shalom Aleichem, our Shalom Bayis has left the house!

In *The Sound of Music* the governess teaches us that everything should be analyzed "from the very beginning" and follow some type of "a, b, c. . ." format. Well, let's think, where does the problem often start? Does it really start on Friday afternoon when it's at it's most explosive? No. It starts at the beginning of our planning for Shabbos somewhere back on Wednesday. Do we have a good shopping list of what we will need? Have we structured our week and day in a way that will allow us to do the shopping that we have on the list? Discovering on Friday afternoon that we are out of something important is a sure fire way to increase stress in the house even if there is still some time to run out to get whatever it is.

No matter how well we plan in advance, there are just certain things that need to be done on Erev Shabbos or Erev Yom Tov itself. For these items, follow the "When we read we begin with A, B, C" advice. Compile a list of things to do in alphabetical order. It sounds odd because our lives are not file cabinets, but this actually makes compiling the list more fun and easier to remember. Ask the members of your family for key words that will remind everyone of what needs to be done. Here's a list that we've come up with so far in my house and I'd love to hear the ideas that you have.

Air conditioning

Bathrooms - lights on, switch covers on, tissues on tank & under sink

Bedroom - overheads off, lamps on

Bleach or crock pot set

Candles – set up lighters, candles and matches, check candle-lighting time and be ready 5 minutes earlier

Clothing - packages open, pick up clothes from the cleaners

Den - keyboard unplugged

Dining room - table set: bechers, challah tray, knife, cover, salt, dishes, cups, silverware & napkins

Eiruv-is it up this week?

Fridge lights - unscrewed or switches disabled

Garage door - sensor covered, electricity disabled

Hot water urn - filled and plugged in

Ice maker off - push arm inside to up

Jewelry - (That doesn't have to be here but I couldn't think of another J word and, according to the advertising industry, this word is the answer to all of our relationship problems. It sure doesn't hurt to get it or give it or put on a special piece that we already own before Shabbos!)

Kitchen - neat with tablecloth on

Lights - on or off, depending on preference

Muktza - away (in all rooms)

Nosh - Shabbos party supplies ready

Ovens off - warm food and challah earlier

Put away your weekday worries

Question family members for anything you might have forgotten

Raincoats - accessible (not left in the car)

Salads – doing it before Shabbos adds to the relaxation after licht bentsching

Tea Sense

Timers set

For **U, V, W, X, Y,** and **Z** you're on your own.

The next step is to print up your list and post it in an obvious place, like on the fridge door. Read it over earlier Friday afternoon to do whatever can be done already and then again shortly before Shabbos to make sure that it really has all been done. Dividing and conquering the jobs can be a good idea as well, but be realistic about what different family members can be held accountable to do.

By now you might be thinking that my house is so calm on Fridays. Halevai! So what happens when we write our shopping list early in the week, buy everything we need (on sale, yet), check our list, get most of the house ready and BOOM, something goes wrong? The blame game is a very popular activity in this situation and, even without practice many of us seem to be experts at it. Believe it or not, nothing on the list of things that we do Erev Shabbos is actually a matter of life and death. Remember this. They are all meant to make our Shabbos more pleasant. If we scream and make our Friday unpleasant while preparing for Shabbos we will not only have a miserable Friday but this will ruin the mood of the Shabbos that we are trying so hard to make pleasant! In cases like this remember the classic Yiddish adage, Man Tracht un Gut Lacht, man plans and Hashem laughs. We should keep planning and trying and eventually we really will see that your Fridays, and the Shabbos that follows, will run more smoothly. Let's make sure that Shalom Aleichim comes with Shalom Bayis.

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