

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

THE NEW YORK TIMES

In the mid-nineties, a Jewish advertising executive wondered: what if the New York Times – the “Paper of Record” – printed the Shabbos candle lighting time each week? Imagine the Jewish awareness and pride that might result from such a prominent mention of Shabbos each week. He contacted a Jewish philanthropist and sold him on the idea. It cost nearly two thousand dollars a week but he agreed to fund it. For the next five years, every Friday, Jews around the world would see ‘Jewish Women: Shabbat candle lighting time this Friday is ____’

Eventually the philanthropist had to reduce the number of projects he had been funding. And, so, in June 1999, the little Shabbos candle lighting notice made its last appearance in the New York Times. At least that’s what people thought.



On January 1, 2000, the NY Times ran a Millennium edition commemorating the paper’s 100th anniversary. It was a special issue that featured three front pages. One contained the news from January 1, 1900. The second contained the actual news of the day, January 1, 2000. And the third front page, featured projected headlines of January 1, 2100. It included such stories as a welcome to the fifty-first state: Cuba and a debate over the issue of whether robots should be allowed to vote. And so on. And, in addition to the creative articles, there was one extra piece. Down on the bottom of the Year 2100 front page, was the candle lighting time in New York for January 1, 2100. Nobody asked for it. Nobody paid for it. It was just put in by the Times. The production manager of the New York Times – an Irish Catholic – was asked about this curious entry. His answer speaks to the eternity of our people and to the power of Jewish ritual. “We don’t know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain. That in the year 2100 Jewish women will be lighting Shabbos candles.”

MARK TWAIN— CONCERNING THE JEWS

The Egyptian, the Babylonian and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?



ANNE FRANK, DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL- APRIL 11, 1944

Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up until now? It is God who has made us as we are, but it will be God, too, Who will raise us up again. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all peoples learn good, and for that reason and only that reason do we suffer. We can never become just Netherlanders, or just English or representatives of any country for that matter. We will always remain Jews.

Talmud Bavli: Ta'anit 23a	תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף כג עמוד א
<p>One day Honi was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked, "How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit?" The man replied: "Seventy years." Honi then further asked him: "Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?" The man replied: "I found [already grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted those for me so I too plant these for my children."</p> <p>Honi sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept a rocky formation enclosed upon him which hid him from sight and he slept for seventy years. When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and Honi asked him, "Are you the man who planted the tree?" The man replied: "I am his grand-son." Thereupon Honi exclaimed: "It is clear that I have slept for seventy years."</p>	<p>מי איכא דניים שבעין שנין בחלמא? יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה לההוא ג ברא דהוה נטע חרובא, אמר ליה: האי, עד כמה שנין טעין? - אמר ליה: עדשבעין שנין. - אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחיית שבעין שנין? - אמר ליה: האי [גברא] עלמא בחרובא אשכחתי, כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי - שתלי נמי לבראי. יתיב, קא כריך ריפתא, אתא ליה שינתא, ניס. אהדרא ליה משו ניתא, איכסי מעינא, וניס שבעין שנין. כי קם חזייה לההוא גבראדהוא קא מלקט מינייהו. אמר ליה: את הוא דשתלתי? - אמר ליה: בר בריה אנא. אמר ליה: שמע מינה דניימי שבעין שנין.</p>

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF ETERNITY— TORAH.ORG

Ones accomplishments are not necessarily valued for what they produce in the here and now. The days of the life of man, as it says in Iyov (20:8), indeed "shall fly away like a dream." It is what remains afterwards that is the judge of accomplishment and success. Did you plant during your life? If not, nothing remains when you are gone, and therefore your life does not have lasting significance. However, if we all plant, by learning Torah, by adhering to the commandments of G-d, by acting morally and compassionately, and by teaching our children to do the same, fruits will be borne. We may not see these fruits during our life. We may not get to enjoy them in this world. But we can rest assured, knowing that we indeed will be harvesting our bounty in the World To Come, and our children will thrive because of our efforts.

Deuteronomy 29:13-14	דברים פרק כט
<p>It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with whoever is standing here with us today before the Lord our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.</p>	<p>(ג) וְלֹא אִתְּכֶם לְבַדְכֶם אֲנִי פֹרֵת אֶת־הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֵּאת: (ד) כִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁנוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ עַמְּדוּ הַיּוֹם לְפָנַי יִקְרָא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר אֵינְנוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם:</p>

“We are part of a story that began long before we were born and will continue long after we are no longer here, and the question for all of us is: will we continue the story? The hopes of a hundred generations of our ancestors rest on our willingness to do so. Deep in our collective memory the words of Moses continue to resonate. “It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with ... whoever is not here with us today.” We are part of that story. We can live it. We can abandon it. But it is a choice we cannot avoid and it has immense consequences. The future of the covenant rests with us. “

- Rabbi Jonathan Sacks