

Shabbat of Remembrance

The Shabbat right before Purim is called Shabbat *Zachor*, which means the Shabbat of Remembrance. We remember the powerlessness felt among the Jews of Shushan when Haman planned their execution. We remember their joy and triumph when Esther saved her people from Haman's edict. Memory is powerful and formative. Memory is an expression of identity, our deepest fear and hope, loss and joy.

And memory is core to the practice of Shabbat, not only on Shabbat *Zachor*, but every Shabbat. From the Book of Exodus (20:8) we read: *Zachor et HaShabbat l'kodsho*—Remember the Sabbath l'kodsho, to keep it holy. Through our remembering, we learn to set aside time for sacred connection. Through our marking of sacred time, we remember to cultivate sacredness in all areas of our life.

In the prayer *L'cha Dodi*, sung every Shabbat as we welcome the Sabbath bride, we say *Shamor v'zachor b'dibor echad*—Keep and remember uttered as one command/word. For Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, the leader of nineteenth century modern Orthodoxy, *zachor* is verbal expression, while *shamor* is physical demonstration. Since they were uttered as one expression at Sinai, they remain inseparable. *Zachor*

alone would be a 'mere theoretical observance of Sabbath', while *shamor* alone would mean that Shabbat would 'neither be taken to heart nor accepted by the spirit.' (Daniel Landes, *My People's Prayer Book-Kabbalat Shabbat*, p.133)

Questions To Discuss

- Share a memory of a Purim and/or Shabbat that has stayed with you? Why do you carry this memory with you? What does it continue to teach you?
- Remember the Sabbath *l'kodsho*. What is a new way you hope to cultivate holiness in your life? What is a practice that will help you remember to do so?
- Consider Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch's distinction between *shamor* and *zachor*. What is an aspect of your life that requires more balance between the "theoretical" and the "taken to heart"? In other words, is there something that you do based on principle but don't feel connected emotionally or spiritually? How could you create more balance?