

## Avoiding Anger

**In times of pressure, people are inclined to anger.** The *Hida* (*Moreh BaEtzba* 4:140) writes that Shabbat eve is a time when arguments between family members often occur. It is possible that the pressure of Shabbat preparation could cause anger and dispute, and it is also possible that the transition from the world of the mundane to the world of sanctity is so difficult that it is liable to cause tension and anger.

The **Ramban** writes in a letter about the importance of avoiding anger:

“Hear, my son, the admonition of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother” (*Mishlei* 1:8). Accustom yourself to speak everything you say softly, to all people, at all times, and thus you will be saved from anger, which is a bad trait, which ensnares people. So said our Sages, of blessed memory, “Anyone who becomes angry, all kinds of Gehenna gain control over him, as it is stated, ‘Remove anger from your heart, and purge evil from your flesh’ (*Kohelet* 11:10), and evil means nothing other than Gehenna, as it is stated, ‘Even the wicked for the evil day’” (*Mishlei* 16:4; *Nedarim* 22a). When you are saved from anger, your heart will internalize the trait of humility, which is the most positive of all the positive traits, as it is stated: “In the wake of humility is fear of the Lord” (*Mishlei* 22:4).

The Ramban indicates that one of the secrets to overcoming anger is “to speak everything you say softly, to all people, at all times.” This includes not yelling or raising one’s voice. This is true from a physiological perspective as well. Since the body is full of energy, from the sugar that creates energy and from adrenaline, it is easy for this powder keg to explode. Speaking gently relaxes a person and helps him avoid anger. Even if he does get angry, it helps him avoid losing control.

**Advance preparation** is another good way to avoid anger. If Shabbat preparations are completed early, remaining calm as Shabbat approaches will be easier.

Moreover, if we want to connect to the divine sanctity of Shabbat, we must adhere to divine character traits. **Rabbi Moshe Cordovero**, who lived about five hundred years ago and was a contemporary of the *Shulhan Arukh*, wrote *Tomer Devora*, a book on ethical conduct. In the beginning of the book he explains an idea written in *Sefer Heikhalot* (chap. 25) and in kabbalistic and hasidic works, that God is called a **wretched king**. Why is that an appropriate name for God?

God grants us our lives. He created our bodies and breathed our souls into them. God knows everything. He knows exactly what each person does. He knows that at times we use the bodies that He gave us for activities that are very different from the purpose that He commanded us. God can claim: "If you want to sin, please do so with your own resources; do not use those you received from me!" God could immediately smite us and halt the function of our limbs, as he did to Yarovam when Yarovam extended his arm to sin and it instantly dried up (1 *Melakhim* 13:4–6). Therefore, the angels say to God: "You are a wretched king! Why do you allow people to utilize what You have given them in order to transgress Your will? Nonetheless, despite it all, God is forgiving. He is patient and relinquishes His honor. God is not exacting with us; to the contrary, He continues to bestow kindness upon us.

We all want God to forgive us, but we must emulate Him and adopt His character traits: not to be people who are always concerned with their honor, not to be exacting with others, but to be patient and forgiving.

The *Kol Bo* (41, cited in *Beit Yosef* 299) cites a midrash. A certain man was afflicted with painful boils all over his body. A treatment for this affliction was to bathe in water from the well of Miriam. Women would go draw water from their wells on Saturday night, after the conclusion of Shabbat, because they had a tradition that the well of Miriam circulated among the wells at the conclusion of Shabbat. The wife of this man afflicted with boils went to draw water

after Shabbat, and happened to draw water from the well of Miriam. The woman's return home was delayed, and when she arrived her husband was angry that she had taken so long. In her reaction to his great anger, the bucket fell from her hands and broke. A few drops of water splattered on him, and wherever a drop of water touched him, he was healed. Had he not become angry, he would have been completely healed!

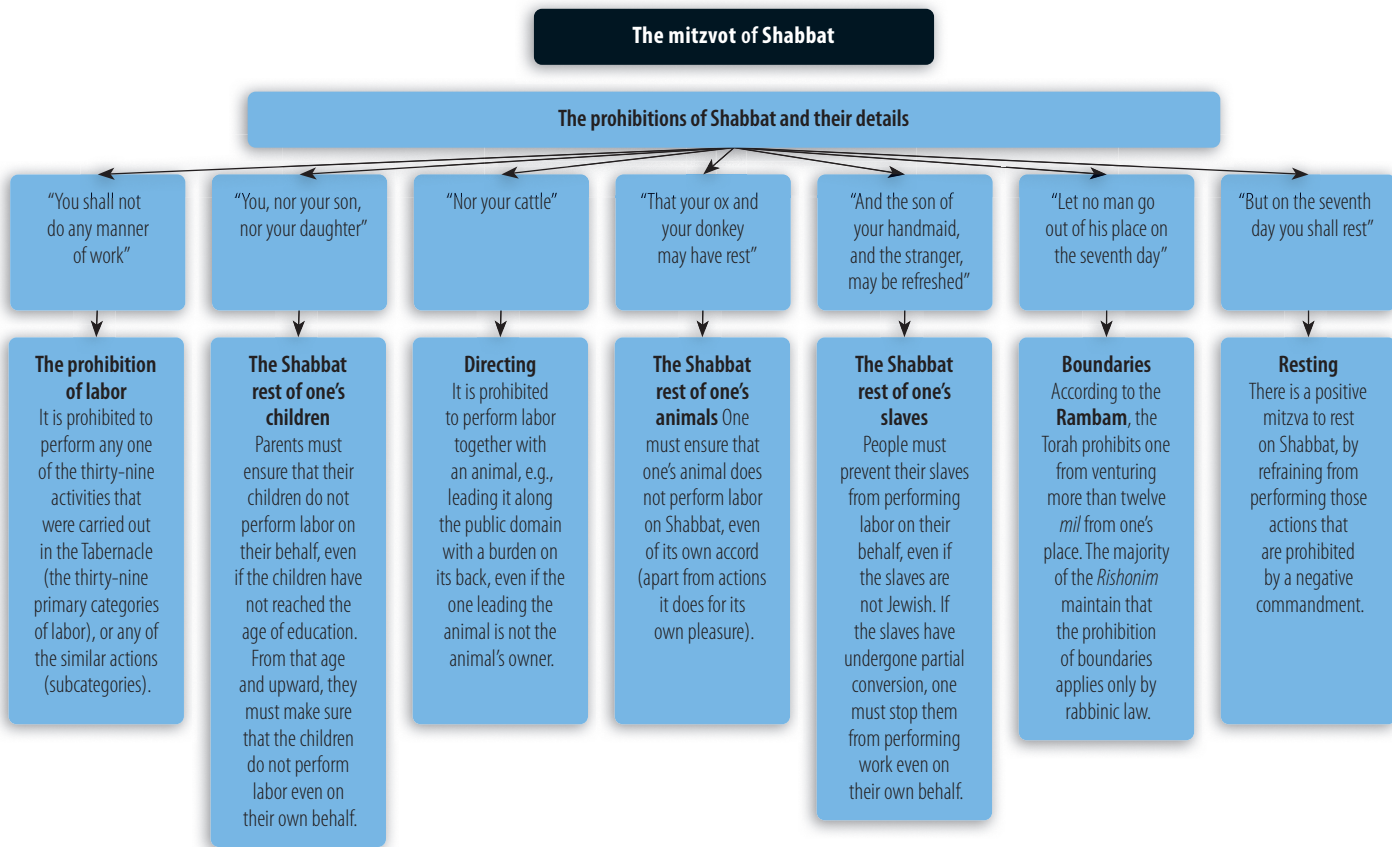
This is not merely a technical point, that had he not become angry the bucket would not have fallen and he would have been healed. Anger creates distance between us and God, between us and other people. It harms us, and transforms us from those in control into those being controlled.

**One who seeks to avail himself of the sanctity of Shabbat must prepare himself calmly and be very careful to avoid anger. It is preferable to not prepare some items for Shabbat, or to make do with simpler foods for the meals, rather than to get angry. Shabbat is much more sanctified by peace and harmony in the household than it would be by another dish or another stringency adopted in the preparations for Shabbat. This is true both during preparations for Shabbat and on Shabbat itself.**

The Sages state that God loves one who does not get angry (*Pe-sahim* 113b):

The Holy One, Blessed be He, loves three people: one who does not get angry, one who does not become intoxicated, and one who is forgiving.

Due to God's love for those who do not get angry, those who know to appreciate everything their family has done to prepare for Shabbat, and who themselves participate in the preparations for Shabbat, will attain a **unique sanctity on Shabbat. They will achieve a special connection between the members of the household, as well as between them and God.**



On many occasions, the Torah stresses that one must **observe** Shabbat: "However, you shall keep My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you," thereby emphasizing the importance of Shabbat and the covenant between the people of Israel and God that is expressed through Shabbat.

