Shabbat And Cellphones

Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.

Addiction to electronic devices is a growing concern in our modern society because we never part with them. Even when we finish our work and come home to relax, we still connect to our computers, cables, and Wi-Fi. Cell phones are particularly problematic, especially for children and adolescents. Teachers don't know what to do to control their use. And many parents have already given up, until one day they realize that their little children would rather have an iPhone in their hands than hold hands with them. The syndrome of "separation anxiety," which in the recent past referred to the fear of being separated from their parents, has become the panic adolescents feel when their cell phones are not within reach.

Being able to disconnect from this addiction is extremely important, but it seems that no one knows how to do it. Except for the Jewish people. In the first part of this Parasha, the Tora tells us about the "Sabbath rest." Shabbat is a Divine gift whose relevance is not for modernity but for eternity. Miraculously – I have no other way of explaining it– the meaning of Shabbat has always been transforming, adapting to what we most need in those moments. In the times of slavery, when we left Egypt, Shabbat helped us feel free and experience physical rest, which we did not have for generations. In difficult times, in our long exile, Shabbat was an emotional refuge, a family space, a community identity, and an island of peace. In times of poverty, the Shabbat table, with its mandatory "two" loaves, helped us regain a sense of dignity.

In modern times, Shabbat once again surprises us, revealing its magical renewed significance to the point that it makes me think that **Shabbat was NEVER more necessary than in 2023**. From Friday afternoon to Saturday night, all contact with the

electronic world is suspended. On Shabbat, we relearn to enjoy the true pleasures of the real world. We sit down to talk, not chat, with our beloved families. We don’t listen to digital music; we sing along with our children. We talk about Tora without the intromission of Alexa or Siri, and our children do not listen to a podcast but to words that come from human lungs and vocal cords.

The images of our family around the Shabbat table will not be shared in family chats, nor will they end up in a virtual cloud. They will be stored in the hearts of our children and will create memories that will become their identity and the feelings that will unite parents and children for generations. Shabbat invites us to disconnect from a fake virtual world to build a real family.

It has never been so necessary.