
Final Thought for the Last Shabbat of the Year

The End Insight

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Why do something now that you can put off until later? This is the way that many people live but unfortunately sometimes later never comes. This is why it is important to finish strong and not wait. An example comes to mind from my days of running marathons. It is extremely difficult to complete the 26.2 mile run without some motivational tools. It is very helpful to have a mantra that you recite in your head over and over as the miles churn by under your feet. I used to tell myself "It's not what you have at the beginning but it is what you have at the end." Everyone begins the marathon with lots of energy, strength and enthusiasm but all of that dissipates with each passing mile. An endurance event demands that you conserve for the finish and when you are coming close to the finish you spend whatever energy you have left. By the time I ran my third and fourth marathons I was a much smarter runner as I had learned to pace myself properly and really pour it on at the end.

Similarly, a few years ago I was installing, with the help of my brother-in-law, blinds in my apartment. There were a lot of windows and the job took almost the whole day. As we were installing the last set of blinds they were not fitting properly. It looked okay but it was not great. I said to my brother-in-law, "Look we are both tired let's just leave it and maybe someday we will come back to it-it's good enough." My brother in law responded with a thought from his father: "You should do the last 10% of a job the same way that you did the first 90%." We stayed until the job was completed properly.

As we are winding down the last few days of the year we need to exert whatever energy that we have left and put all our efforts in to the last few days. Our Sages tell us that the last days of the year have the power to fix the previous year. If we have an extraordinary Shabbat on this final Shabbat of the

year, we are making a statement about all of our previous Shabbatot. We demonstrate that this past year may have had ups and downs but over all we are heading in the right direction. It is like the stock market beginning the year at 10,000 and rising and dipping all year long but finally on the last days of the year the market exceeds the level where it began. By celebrating this Shabbat with joy we will conclude our year on a high note and set the tone for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. It will be very beautiful if we all make an extra effort this Shabbat and together as klal Yisrael-the Jewish community-we will draw strength from each other.

One final thought. In addition to this final Shabbat of the year, we also have a few more days before we transition into the New Year. Let's make an extra effort to do more mitzvot-we can give more *tzedakah*, perform acts of kindness, go to *shul* for *minyán*, study Torah, refrain from gossiping, be more careful about *kashrut*, call our parents, apologize to people that we have offended etc.

I am confident that when we cross the finish line of this year we will have finished strong and be ready to take on the marathon again next year!