

Shabbat Stories

Elliott Burns

It was not an ordinary Friday night Shabbat dinner. Our daughter Emily and son-in-Law Stephen had invited several more than usual plus the usual suspects. All told there were about 15 at the table. When we first moved to Florida in 2001, our daughter and son-in-law hosted Shabbat dinners. It was "their thing." Sharon and I were proud because it was a family tradition that we hosted in Michigan and now we were their guest every week on Friday night. A tradition rarely broken and much hallowed as a kind of family reunion... talking of the past week, and mentioning the good and bad...plus the upcoming family events and expectations.

We felt very good about it because of the family continuity of the tradition...carrying on...L'dor V'dor.

We have a severely autistic grandson, Sam. He is now 12. He is an isolate...does not always sit at the table...noise and touching bother him, and through the years our Emily and Stephen have been trying very hard to have him mimic the Shabbat Shalom, candle lighting blessing, the "bim-biddy-bim-bom lyric," and the *hamotzi lechem* blessing over the bread. After Emily says the prayer *benching* over the candles. She always looks over to Sam for a response. For years and years — nothing.

Tonight was different!

Ma nishTa nah?? Sam blurted out the Shabbat Shalom song, the "bim-biddy bim--bom" little ditty and did the *Motzi*. We laughed ...we cried...we applauded...we shouted YAY! Sam smiled broadly.

Ma nish Ta nah? Why is This Night Different Than Other Nights? Sam spoke!

And so, every Shabbat we look forward to hear Sam – we applaud, we laugh, and we cry.

From Generation To Generation...May the Friday night Shabbat family gatherings continue for a long, long time with much good health and family spirit.

L'dor V'dor!!!!