

Rabbi Yehoshua Yeshaya Neuwirth *zt”l*

Rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva, Leading Halachic Authority and Teacher

The late and righteous Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth’s monumental work, *Shemirat Shabbat: A Guide to the Practical Observance of Sabbath* (In Hebrew: *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata*), is a link in the chain of generations of Jewish legal ruling, along with the Shulchan Aruch and the Mishna. It is a book that has taken an eternal place on the Jewish bookshelf.

Since its publication in 1965, tens of thousands of copies have been printed and have found a place of honor in the homes of Sabbath observers. Whatever problem arises regarding the Sabbath and how it should be properly observed in the Jewish home, *Shemirat Shabbat* is the address. In many homes, family members study the book together every Sabbath so that laws concerning the Sabbath become familiar.

When the book was first published, the author called it “Proper Sabbath Observance – Practical Halacha for the Jewish Home in consideration of the issues that have arisen in our time”. It is, in essence, the proper application of the halacha to modern life. The book deals with the entire body of laws concerning the Sabbath, from day-to-day work such as cooking and baking, bathing, taking things out of the house into the street, and carrying objects forbidden on the Sabbath, to tending gardens and plants, the use of makeup and cosmetics, caring for the sick and emergency situations, looking after babies and infants, and the other questions that arise on the Sabbath.

Shemirat Shabbat brought about a real revolution in Torah literature by taking halachic terms that have been accepted for centuries and adapting them to modern times. Thus, an aqueduct became a water sprinkler; the stove top on which a kettle is placed became the



Shabbat hot-plate on which a pot is placed; the sifter and the sieve became the strainer; cooking by the indirect use of the sun became the solar water heater. These and thousands of other terms that were written in the time of the Mishna and the Talmud were translated into contemporary terms.

In the wake of *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata*, thousands of other books covering all aspects of life followed its lead in adapting the laws of the Shulchan Aruch to our time. It was *Shemirat Shabbat*, however, that was the pioneer in the field. That is how Jewish law went from being the preserve of scholars to being accessible to the masses, and how the divine command given at Mount Sinai, "Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy," is alive and properly practiced in the 21st Century.

Rabbi Neuwirth's sole purpose and intent was to make the Sabbath accessible to the general community. The Rabbi did not put on airs or demand that his opinions be accepted. When the book was first published, after he had invested his lifeblood in it, he included a prefatory note in which he asked all those who had a comment or criticism to inform him so that he could make corrections in the next edition. Dozens of scholars and prominent rabbis sent in comments on points that required correction. The Rabbi was grateful rather than ashamed, and made corrections and changes, additions and substitutions. And so it was with edition after edition, each time anew: the Rabbi did not rest and was not content, but rather erased and sifted and resifted, until he had produced a clean product.

The Rabbi spent his days learning the judgments, laws and practices of the Torah, in yeshivas and girls' seminaries, and at the end of his life he even created two impressive yeshivas in the Jerusalem neighborhood of *Beit VeGan*.

Based on this, the selection committee has decided to bestow Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth's *zt"l* the Katz Award for 5774 (2014).



Rabbi Israel
Meir Lau



Professor Menahem
Ben-Sasson



Rabbi Adin
(Even Israel)
Steinsaltz