

This is Google's cache of http://www.ou.org/ou/print_this/44892. It is a snapshot of the page as it appeared on Feb 1, 2014 16:10:58 GMT. The [current page](#) could have changed in the meantime. [Learn more](#)

Tip: To quickly find your search term on this page, press **Ctrl+F** or **⌘-F** (Mac) and use the find bar.

[Text-only version](#)

Orthodox Union

www.ou.org

She's Marbelous!

Renee Chernin



One could never say my friend Mira has lost her marbles. In fact, she has every one of them, 444 and counting.

Count on Mira to have a unique approach to most everything she does. She lends sophistication to the flowing long skirts and colorful tops she wears, and accents her look with one-of-a-kind jewelry. If you compliment something she has on, you can be sure there is a story to go along with that silver bangle, beaded vest or bejeweled comb holding back her auburn hair. Nothing Mira does is without meaning.

And this is exactly what being a Jew is all about. Our mitzvot enable us to use the physical world around us, and elevate it by giving it purpose and meaning. That is, in a nutshell, spirituality.

Eating a hamburger is a spiritual act when the meat is kosher and we say a blessing. Visiting with friends is a spiritual act when we refrain from gossip. We can even sanctify time by counting. An example of this is in counting the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot, each day a step toward being ready to accept the Torah.

Mira counts marbles. Each of them is attached to one day of holiness: Shabbat.

December 31, 1999 was a Friday night. This Friday night seemed a bit more special because of all the hoopla in the news about the approaching 21st Century. The fact that the approaching New Year fell out on a Friday night was not lost on Mira, who had been taking Torah classes and regularly enjoyed the uplifting atmosphere of the Shabbat tables she shared with friends. However, she felt that making the commitment to be completely Sabbath observant was just too overwhelming. "But surely I can do one," she thought. So, she chose to observe the one Shabbat in her lifetime that began in one century and ended in the next.

Mira realized an important fundamental about Judaism. It's not all or nothing. She did not have to become Sabbath observant overnight. Every mitzvah stands alone and makes a difference. It's a point Rabbi Akiva realized as well.

Rabbi Akiva who at age 40, observed that individual drops of water could bore a hole through a rock and decided that if water, which is compared to Torah, could change a stone, then he was not too old and hardened to have Torah make an impact on his life. From that observation, Rabbi Akiva took baby steps, one day at a time toward greatness, and became one of the most revered Torah giants in all of Jewish history.

What was the secret of his greatness? It's the same rule Mira applied to reach her 444th Shabbat. Her goal was not a lifetime commitment. She commits herself to one. One Shabbat, one mitzvah, one blessing at a time.

There is a story in the Talmud that, at the end of days, the truly wicked person and the perfectly righteous person will both be shown the Yetzer Hara, the evil inclination. They will both burst into tears. Why? The wicked one will see a single strand of hair and realize that the excuse he used that kept him from making choices to do good was something as flimsy as a strand of hair. The tzaddik will face a mountain. He cries in awe because he cannot imagine how he was able to live a life of meaning when faced with a Yetzer Hara that was like a mountain. But it is a mountain of hair, and the righteous person grew by strands, one choice at a time, one day at a time.

I don't know if Mira realized that as the world transitioned between the millennia, she was also making a transition of her own. In one day she became a Sabbath observing Jew, even if it was just that one. At the end of her first Shabbat, she took a shiny blue marble and dropped it in a jar.

The next week, Mira observed just one Shabbat. Afterwards, she added a second marble to the jar. Then a third, a fourth, a 40th and a 400th.

Mira doesn't just count each Shabbat, she makes each and every one of them count. This Friday night as Shabbat enters, she will be consciously aware of the 445th time she lights her candles and enters the synagogue to once again welcome the Sabbath Queen. Her friends will ask her what's the number and she'll smile and tell them something special about what her 445th Shabbat means to her. Mira's marbles, like each Shabbat she observes, have become precious one-of-a-kind jewels, each with its own unique story.

About Mira:

Mira Bergen's creative energy is felt throughout her community, Atlanta's Congregation Beth Jacob--"the Orthodox Synagogue for all Jews," where she has been a beloved member for over a decade. In Beth Jacob style, she is eager to extend a hand to a stranger. Those hands, guided by her

heart, comfort patients in hospice care, prepare and serve elegant Shabbos meals to her close friends and new acquaintances, and craft beautiful Judaica, which she generously donates to her shul or bestows upon her friends. May she continue to inspire us to discover creative ways to extend ourselves in our own communities as well.

About the Author:

*Renee Chernin and her husband, David, recently made aliya from Atlanta and now live in the Old City of Jerusalem where they continue to serve up Southern Hospitality, Beth Jacob style. Renee has recently completed *Cooking for the King*, a book of recipes, Torah insights and practical tips designed to bring majesty to the mundane (and make you Queen of the Kitchen!).*