

# **The Daily Portion**

## **- Sivan Rahav Meir**

### **Sen. Joe Lieberman and Shabbat**

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

Joe Lieberman, one of the highest-ranking Jews in American politics, a pro-Israel senator and Al Gore's running mate (vice-presidential candidate) in the 2000 election, has passed away. It is important to remember Lieberman's unique voice within the Democratic party, which stood in sharp contrast to the opinions voiced by some party members today.

But I would like to focus on his other very significant, non-political legacy.

The last time I met him was in New York. His book, *The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath*, had just been translated into Hebrew and he explained how much this translation meant to him.

Lieberman said that he had written a book about Shabbat because he wanted to communicate to young Jews around the world that they don't have to give up their heritage in order to achieve the highest levels of professional success. In fact, he claimed, the opposite was true. His

Sabbath observance, especially in the middle of an election campaign, only strengthened people's admiration for him as a man of principles and integrity.

But he also wanted young Israelis to understand this too: that on Shabbat, he wasn't "the honorable Senator", and not even Joe, but Yosef Yisrael ben Chanan, his name when he was called up to the Torah.

In his book, Lieberman describes how listening to the Shabbat Torah reading was especially meaningful for him because he knew that he wasn't listening to another political speech but to the words of God Himself. He writes how during the three Regalim (Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot), the Jewish people would travel to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, but we have the opportunity each and every week to welcome the Holy Sabbath directly into our kitchens and living rooms.

Lieberman also points out that the prayer we recite at the Havdala ceremony is no less important than the Kiddush we recite Friday night, because of its powerful message that we learn to make distinctions in our lives and to adjust ourselves to different times and situations.

And I think that, perhaps, this is the key sentence of his book: "When they

**ask me: How can you interrupt your work as senator to observe Shabbat every week? I respond: How could I manage to accomplish all the work I do as senator six days a week if I didn't stop to keep Shabbat?"**

**Lieberman passed away yesterday at the age of 82 before he had a chance to observe another Shabbat. But we have the opportunity to do so.**

**May his memory be a blessing.**

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