

## NEW PRODUCT

## THE NEW AMAZING SHABBOS CLOCK!!!

By Harry Rosenman



A product of AutoTime, LLC.

## Time-it Right™

**F**or the observant Jew, Friday, so the old saying goes, "is a short day," with seemingly a million things to do to get ready for Shabbos. This is not only true during the winter months, when darkness falls early and lichtbentching comes a bit after 4 p.m., but even during the summer months, when you have about another four hours in which to get ready, there sometimes never seems to be enough time (one of the provisions of Murphy's Law is that "the amount of work to be done somehow always expands to more than fill the time available in which to do it"). Beyond this weekly game of "Beat the Clock," there may be as many as 13 additional such hectic afternoons a year preceding the various Yom Tovim.

One of the big "little" jobs that most people leave for the last minute before Shabbos or Yom Tov is setting their Shabbos clocks or timers, which control such appliances as their lights, air conditioners, the crock pot for the cholent and, on the Yom Tovim, their ovens or stoves, since it is forbidden by halacha to manually turn any of these things on and off.

In the old days, this meant actually having a mechanical timer with a little clock dial for each separate lamp, crock

pot, or other electrical appliance, and having to plug these things in before Shabbos and run around resetting them each week – if you remembered to do so. If you didn't want to get involved with clocks and timers, you simply left the lights in some rooms on all night (and for all of the following day), running up your electric bills considerably over the years.

Eventually, the electronics industry developed controllers, which could centralize the time-setting functions in one piece of equipment which would then send on-off commands to individual modules actually controlling each appliance via the house wiring system. "It was progress, of sorts," says Yaakov Wollner of Baltimore, the president of AutoTime LLC, "but the only step in the process that this eliminated was physically running around and setting the individual Shabbos clocks. You still had to punch in schedules, and those schedules would change from week to week as the time for sunset and sunrise would change, and as the various Yom Tovim came around."

A few years later, someone thought to marry these controllers to a computer program. "Instead of looking at a hard-to-read little one- or two-line readout on a device which looked like a

thermostat, you could see it up on your computer screen," Wollner says. "With some fancy programs, you can draw a floor plan of your house and 'walk through' it on screen, to click individual lights and appliances on and off at certain times. But you still have to take the time to sit down each week or month, figure out when Shabbos or Yom Tov starts and ends and when you're going to need lights to go on and off and then enter the commands to make it happen. The technology may be slicker, but all of the work of maintaining those schedules is still there."

Until now.

Wollner, who learned at Ner Yisroel in Baltimore for 13 years, while also getting a master's degree in mathematics from nearby Johns Hopkins University together with colleague Evan Willner, has combined Torah and technology to produce Time-it Right, a home automation system which promises to be the last Shabbos clock you'll ever have to set. It marries the basic principle of computerized control of appliances with a perpetual Jewish calendar, a shidduch which means that once it is installed on your home computer, you, the homeowner, never have to figure out these things again. "Most people

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who use their computers [and some competing program] to control their lights and appliances for Shabbos and Yom Tov have a schedule for this and a schedule for that, separate Shabbos schedules and Yom Tov schedules (which have to be changed year-to-year because the lunar Hebrew calendar can vary the days a Yom Tov falls out upon by as much as three or four weeks some years), schedules for when Shabbos and Yom Tov coincide, as well as different schedules how they do things at their house when they're home, when they're not home, when they have guests, etc. They may have 30 or 40 different schedules. What happens is you turn into a librarian of schedules, and have to constantly change and maintain them. This may be OK for technical types who like playing with their computers, but it's not suitable for the average person who has neither the time nor the inclination to worry about setting up schedules."

Week in and week out, Time-it Right keeps the schedules and correctly generates the right one for an upcoming Shabbos or Yom Tov. It knows what time sh'kiya is on any given day, based upon the time of the year (it figures out what time

lichtbentsching is and even gives a two-minute warning beforehand by flashing the lights on and off, and gives the same signal for Sefiras Ha Omer). When Rosh Hashanah coincides with Shabbos, it'll keep the cholent crock pot on later, since the family will be sitting down to lunch later due to the longer davening. It'll keep the kitchen and dining room lights on past midnight for the Pesach sederim, keep them on all night long for Tikkun Leil Shavuos, and will turn the lights in the sukkah on and off on Sukkos.

Carefully designed with halacha in mind, Time-it Right anticipates problems many people don't even realize exist. Take refrigerators, for example. Most observant people know that opening the refrigerator door on Shabbos or Yom Tov could cause a problem because a light bulb goes on, and consequently, they'll unscrew the bulb beforehand, that is assuming they remember to do so. Or, they'll simply leave it unscrewed all the time, and have trouble finding things in a dark refrigerator. Wollner asks, "What about the refrigerator fan? It runs when the door is closed and goes off when the door is opened, and most people don't even know it's in there. Some people will pay an electrician a lot of money to install a bypass switch so they can get around this on-off problem on Shabbos, but they have to remember to throw the switch before Shabbos. My program keeps the fan on when the door is opened and the light off on Shabbos and Yom Tov, so you don't have to remember to unscrew bulbs or throw switches."

Ovens are  
another area  
where

confusion can arise. "It's pretty simple for Shabbos, when the oven goes off, on Friday night about an hour after Shabbos starts, says Wollner, "but it can be complicated for Yom Tov," when one is allowed to cook and usually has to leave an electric oven on the entire Yom Tov. That heats up the house and makes it uncomfortable, and wastes energy and money. "This past Shavuos, I had my oven on a total of only eight or nine hours to heat up

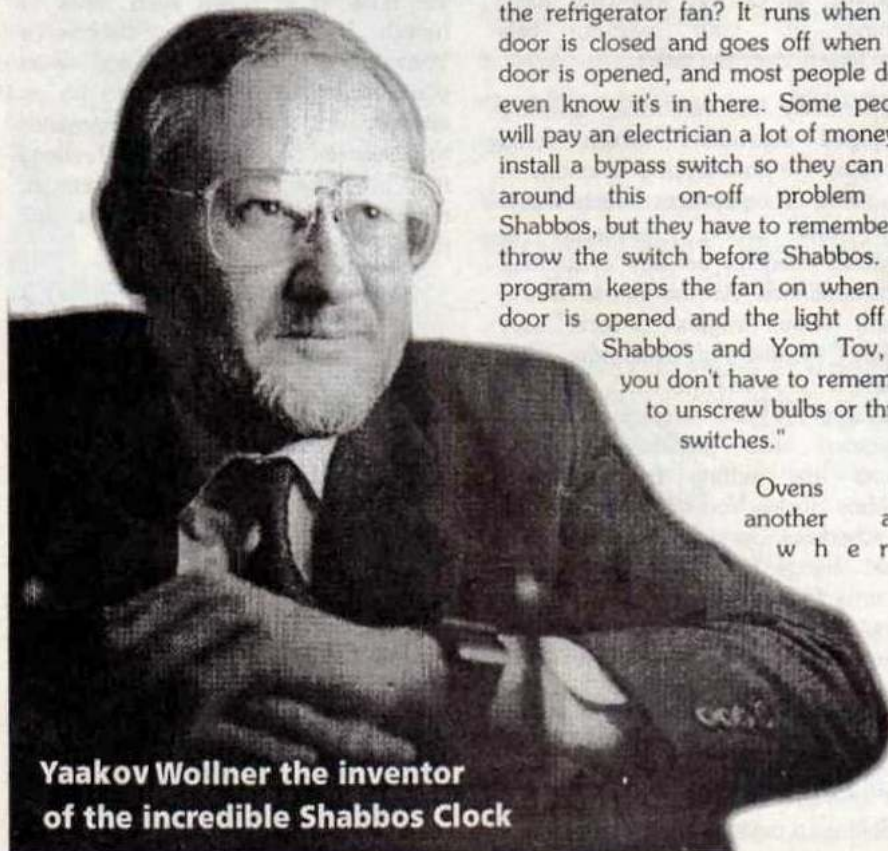
## Carefully designed with halacha in mind...

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food over the holiday," he continues, "instead of just having it on over the whole three-day Shabbos/Yom Tov holiday period." On those occasions when Yom Tov precedes Shabbos and you have to make an Eruv Tavshillin, you have to

have your oven on earlier Yom Tov Friday afternoon to cook any food you're going to eat over Shabbos, and then turn it off an hour after Shabbos starts. Time-it Right knows this and does it all."

Obviously, every family is different, and Time-it Right is anything but a "one-size-fits-all" system. "I meet with the homeowner for an extensive initial review," Wollner says, "to find out about the family's composition, its cooking, sleeping and leisure habits. All of this is important information in setting up a customized schedule, tailor-made for that particular family in that particular home. Babies or younger children, for example, will go to sleep earlier than older children, so their lights can be made to go off earlier, or a night light or small lamp can be left on for them while the overhead light goes out. On Friday nights, maybe the family custom is to linger around the table and sing zmiros, so their dining room lights should stay on longer than those of someone who doesn't. Maybe there's a particular room in the house where someone may want to sit and learn during the evening, so the light in there should be on longer. Perhaps the lady of the house wants the light on in her closet or above the mirror in the bathroom while she's dressing. All of these individual preferences can be built into the family's Time-it Right schedule."



**Yaakov Wollner the inventor of the incredible Shabbos Clock**

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If the family expects to have guests over, the schedule for that Shabbos can be easily altered, Wollner says, to go into what he calls "the simcha mode." Maybe the family will want to keep the kitchen and dining room lights on longer as people linger around the table after the meal. All lights which need to be on for Shabbos and Yom Tov automatically come on, turning on lights such as the powder room or basement playroom. You just come home on Friday afternoon, take a shower, get dressed and then go to shul, knowing the lights will be on."

What about when you're not home for a given Shabbos or Yom Tov? Maybe you've been invited to a relative's house for a seder, or you go away to a hotel, or your family summers in a bungalow colony. Not to worry, Yaakov Wollner says. "All you have to do is tell me during the initial consultation what lights or other devices you will want on during your absence and then punch in the date you expect to leave and the date you expect to come back. The program recalculates the schedule in a vacation mode (a little icon of a cruise ship appears on your computer to remind you that you are in this mode). Both indoor and outdoor lights, and even air conditioners during the summer and other devices are automatically turned on and off in a random fashion to create the illusion that someone is in the house. On Friday nights, doorway lights and landscape lighting can be varied to go on and off at different times than during the rest of the week.

The bottom line, Wollner says, is "I'm taking responsibility away from people, making it easier for them, so they don't have to remember to do all of these things."

After meeting with the family to assess its particular needs and to look over the layout of the house and the placement of lights and other appliances, Wollner writes a customized program incorporating those requirements and preferences. His next step is to meet with the electricians who will do the actual installation, and give them the specifications for the job. Wollner personally supervises the

installation, and then afterward, puts Time-it Right through its paces in an extensive test, to make sure everything has been programmed and installed correctly. "I have to test the system by putting in future dates to make sure all contingencies have been accounted for. I don't just install it and hope for the best."

As can be imagined, such a system, including the personalized attention of the company's president, is not inexpensive (although in this life, nothing of true value ever is). Suffice it to say that you cannot just run down to

customers. "People who get this system are absolutely flabbergasted. Lights go on and off and times adjust week after week as the schedule shows, with no effort on the customer's part. After a couple of weeks, they see the changes in their lifestyle, and they tell their friends, and then they all want one."

Right now, things are still at the stage where Yaakov Wollner can personally interview a family purchasing his system in order to determine their needs, can personally custom-program his system to suit those particular needs, and then personally oversee the installation of the system and test it out to make sure everything is OK. But he has big plans for his system and his company. Time-it Right uses time data from the government's Naval Observatory so it's always on time, and can be adjusted for use anywhere in the world. "It's usable in Eretz Yisroel (taking into account the local practice of one-day Yom Tovim instead of two) or anywhere else. I could market this in Alaska if someone up there could use it."

Whether in New York, Baltimore, Israel or, yes, even Alaska, or anywhere in between, Wollner says, the principles are the same, and so are the results. "I have made this program as simple as possible, and it's programmed forever, to take as much of the worry about doing things on time off the shoulders of the customer as possible." ■



For further information about Time-it Right, or to schedule a home survey, please contact Yaakov Wollner at AutoTime LLC toll-free at (877) SH-TIMER.

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your local RadioShack and buy something like this as a do-it-yourself project. Wollner says that, as with any major home installation, such as a security system, the cost is based upon the size of the home and the complexity of the program which needs to be written. "A person might say, 'It'll cost me a little extra - but I'll be out of the business of setting Shabbos clocks forever.'"

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Wollner says Time-it Right has been four years in the development stage, but he's now marketing it successfully, helped by some not-inconsiderable word of mouth from satisfied