

זכרון אריה

בס"ד

על פרשה ומועד



פְּרִשֶׁת כִּי תֵשָׂא



“...and its name is שַׁבָּת”*



Special edition to celebrate the Inauguration of
RABBI REUVEN STEPSKY שליט"א
REBBETZIN ELISHEVA STEPSKY תח'י
as Rabbi and Rebbetzin of
KEHILLAS NETZACH YISROEL

WITH INTRODUCTORY WORDS FROM
RABBI SHIMON WINEGARTEN שליט"א



חיים בן יצחק הלוי ריצ'רדס

Jeremy Richards

* (Talmud Bavli, Shabbos 10b ~ see inside p.21)

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לעילוי נשמת אריה בן אליהו ע"ה



In Memory of my Dear Parents

Ivor and Jacqueline Richards ע"ה

ע"ה Yitzchok Ben Nachman Halevi and ע"ה Yenta Bas Yisroel

לעילוי נשמות אבי מורי יצחק בן נחמן הלוי ע"ה ואמי מורתי יענטע בת ישראל ע"ה

A truly selfless couple, completely devoted to their family, friends and community.



In Memory of my Dear Friend and Chavrusa

Dr. Leon Lewis ע"ה

ע"ה Aryeh Ben Eliyohu

לעילוי נשמת אריה בן אליהו ע"ה

זכרון אריה for whom this is named.

Leon was a deeply intelligent yet
sweet, self-effacing family man,
who personified "ללמוד וללמד..."

"to learn and to teach..."



אדר תש"פ ~ 5780 Adar



March 2020

~

Celebrating the Inauguration of our
Honoured Mechutonim
RABBI REUVEN STEPSKY שליט"א
REBBETZIN ELISHEVA STEPSKY תח'
as Rabbi and Rebbetzin of
KEHILLAS NETZACH YISROEL
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זכרון אריה

על פרשה ומועד



*With deepest gratitude to השי"ת
for all He gives us and does for us,
for all the ברכות He showers upon us every day,*

and

*with thanks beyond measure and number, for so much,
to my wife, my true אשת חיל, Adrienne ~ חיה תח'*

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מזל טוב HUGE
TO XANDER SOVIN
ON HIS בר מצוה !!!
פרשת כי תשא תש"פ



Warmest wishes to
Rabbi שליט"א and Rebbetzin תח' Stepsky
for much ברכה והצלחה
in their new community.



Introductory words from Rabbi Shimon Winegarten שליט"א
Formerly Rabbi of Bridge Lane Beis Hamedrash, London UK

My sincerest appreciation goes to Rabbi Shimon Winegarten שליט"א for giving generously of his time and kindly writing these beautiful introductory words.



שמעון משולם וויינגרטן
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תובב"א

בס"ד אור ליום ג' לסדר ואתה תצוה ז' אדר תש"פ לפ"ק

March 2020

Dear Friends לא"יט

It gives me great pleasure to write an introduction to this impressive booklet about the cornerstone of our faith - Shabbos kodesh.

Reb Chaim Halevi Richards conveys the essence of Shabbos and gives us an appreciation of differing approaches. Not only has he researched his subject thoroughly, but he has managed to express the concepts skillfully and beautifully. Reading through it gave me a tremendous uplift. What strikes one in particular is the author's love of Shabbos. It flows from each sentence and will surely affect all who will merit to study *...and its name is Shabbos*.

What really inspired me was that I felt transported into a higher realm with every word. By the time I finished reading - and it was early in a week - I could not wait for Shabbos to begin!

What a wonderful idea to produce this work in honour of my dear friends Rabbi & Rebetzin Reuven Stepsky שליט"א following their induction as Rav & Rebetzin of the Netzach Yisroel community! Our sages compare Torah scholars to Shabbos. Reb Reuven's Ahavas Torah and Ahavas Yisroel make him a true example of the Talmudical dictum - תלמיד חכם איקרי שבת - a Torah scholar is called Shabbos.

May the Stepskys have enormous Brochah in leading the Kehillah to ever greater heights in the service of Hashem Yisborach!

With all good wishes

Shimon Winegarten

“...and its name is שַׁבָּת”



שְׁמוֹת ל"א

טז וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם כְּרִית עוֹלָם: יז בְּיָמֵי וּבֵין
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הוּא לְעֹלָם כִּי־שָׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֶשׁ: (פְּרָשַׁת כִּי תֵשָׂא)

“...Thus shall the children of Israel observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant. Between Me and the children of Israel, it is forever a sign that in six days the L-rd created the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day He ceased and rested.”



N.B. All words and phrases in **bold** are my emphases – J.R.

In his introduction to **Mesillas Yesharim**, the great Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto informs his readers that the subject of his sefer, the routes to refinement of personal character and ethics, and advancement in piety and Divine service, is a well-known but neglected field:

החבור הזה לא חברתיו ללמד לבני האדם את אשר לא ידעו אלא להזכירם את הידוע להם כבר ומפרסם אצלם פרסום גדול כי לא תמצא ברוב דברי אלא דברים שרוב בני האדם יודעים אותם ולא מסתפקים בהם כלל אלא שכפי רוב פרסומם וכנגד מה שאמתם גלויה לכל כך ההעלם מהם מצוי מאד והשכחה רבה: (הקדמת המחבר למסילת ישרים)

“I have written this work not to teach people what they do not know, but to remind them of what is already known and quite familiar to them. For you will find in most of what I say, only what most people know and do not doubt in the least. But, as familiar as they are and as universally manifest their truth, so is their disregard common and the tendency to forget them rife.”

(Author's Introduction to Mesillas Yesharim, Engl. trans. From Ofef Institute edition)

We can perhaps apply these sentiments to the promotion of Shabbos observance. The special contribution of Shabbos to Jewish life and its place as the central pillar in Torah observance are not novel or unfamiliar notions. **Shabbos has always enjoyed a special status amongst her fellow mitzvos**, and Jews have always known, both intellectually and intuitively, that Shabbos defines us individually and collectively like no other mitzvos can.

This is expressed succinctly by Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus:

שבת קודש היא לב לבו של עם ישראל. אם רוצים לתאר יהודי הקשור למסורת האבות, אומרים עליו שהוא "שומר שבת". והרי אפשר

היה לומר שהוא יהודי מאמין, שהוא אוכל רק מאכלים כשרים וכיוצ"ב,
אך מכל התארים האפשריים נבחר דוקא התואר "יהודי שומר שבת",
שכן שמירת שבת של יהודי אומרת הכל, השבת היא הנקודה הפנימית של יהודי.

"Shabbos Kodesh is the heart of hearts of the Jewish People. If we want to describe a Jew connected to Jewish tradition, we say he's a "shomer Shabbos." We could have said he's a believing Jew, he only eats kosher food, and so on. But, of all possible descriptions, we choose specifically to describe him as a "shomer Shabbos Jew" – because when a Jew keeps Shabbos, that says it all.

Shabbos is the essence of a Jew.

(צ"ה.ה. p. Shabbos Kodesh – Nefesh Shimshon)

Jews have always known this to be true, yet, to paraphrase the Mesillas Yesharim, as familiar and accepted as this fact may be, so can be the tendency to forget it. It is true that thousands of volumes could be filled with stories of suffering that Jews have endured in loyalty to Judaism and in order to protect it from harm, and many of those tales tell of great personal self-sacrifice in defence of Shabbos, her spirit and her laws. However, such devotion has not managed to penetrate all Jewish hearts and minds, and today the need to shore up and strengthen Shabbos observance among our ranks is at least as urgent as it has ever been.

Notwithstanding, where Shabbos has indeed inspired steadfast fidelity we can only marvel at the extent to which pious souls will observe it doggedly, fearlessly and undaunted by the most adverse conditions. In his moving and inspirational autobiography, Rav Yitzchak Zilber very modestly relates countless personal stories of his stubborn and relentless commitment to stay true to Halochah in Communist Russia, often in relation to Shabbos observance. However, those around him had grave doubts about the practicality and safety of his behaviour:

"Daily our acquaintances and neighbours would repeat the same lament to my father: "Rebbe, what will be with your son? His behaviour is risky for you, as well! Even if he manages not working on Shabbos for one week, or even a full month, it can't possibly continue this way! Can you spend your whole life fighting battles? What will he do? ...Even a simple worker has to work on Shabbos." "

(To Remain a Jew – The Life of Rav Yitzchak Zilber, Feldheim: p.61)

Rav Zilber was abundantly aware of the risks he took in his steadfast commitment to shemiras Shabbos, yet a recipe of unswerving devotion, well-planned deceptions, heartfelt prayer and deep faith seemed to result in open miracles time and again. **One's jaw drops upon reading of how Rav Zilber methodically designed intricate strategies for avoiding Shabbos desecration**, though the seriousness and dangers of his schemes are masked by his matter-of-fact, gentle and even humorous manner in recounting them:

"There are between forty-eight and fifty-two Sabbaths in a year, so imagine how many times during my life I had to invent excuses for not being able to work on that day! I also had to do it in a way that would not be obvious and would not attract attention!

While in the university I did not permit myself to think beyond the one approaching Shabbos; I worked out my trick for each Shabbos, one at a time. I asked of the Al-mighty: **"Ribbono Shel Olam, Master of the world, please ignore my sins and give me the opportunity to observe the upcoming Shabbos."** Why did I not ask for more? Difficulties have to be overcome one at a time. A person cannot face a large number of challenges all at once. Not only that, who knows what might happen during the week? Before the next Shabbos, maybe, G-d forbid, I would not be alive any more. Perhaps the Communist government would fall, or perhaps, please G-d, the Mashiach would arrive.

I had a whole set of tricks which helped me to avoid violating Shabbos. I would put iodine on my fingers, for instance, and bandage my hand. Then, if I were to be called up to the blackboard to work on a problem, I appeared to be out of commission...

I mentioned Yevgeny Konstantinovich Zavoysky, the famous scientist. He taught physics in the university. One Shabbos he gave a major lecture at the university. There were at least 200 people in the audience, no less. I was sitting near the light switch, and it was winter, when it grew dark shortly after 3.00pm. Suddenly the professor called out, "Zilber, please switch on the light." I acted as if I had not heard him. Five minutes later he repeated his request, and again for a third time! I sat there as if I were deaf. To my good fortune a young woman went to the switch and turned on the light..."

(Ibid pp.71,72)

"I taught for about twenty years...During these two decades I developed a series of camouflage tactics in order to keep Shabbos...Shortly before Shabbos I would write in my teacher's log the subjects of the class lessons, and I would invent grades for the students I was planning to question...When the lesson was over, I was often asked about grades. I would tell a student to bring the teacher's log and show it to them all: "As you can see, Fyodorov answered all the questions and got a four, which means 'good.' Andrei, on the other hand, made some mistakes. He got three." "Oh, that's fair," they would respond. Little did they know that the grades had been written down in the log on Friday before sundown!"

(Ibid. pp. 175-177)

Later, **even in the awful conditions of a Russian labour camp, Rav Zilber maintained his determination to keep Shabbos as much as humanly possible.** Most jobs were done in small groups, such that anyone not pulling their weight at any time would cause their partners to fall behind. Taking the advice of an unlikely friend, "an ardent communist" called Semyon Semyonovich Lukatsky, Rav Zilber took the job of water-carrier for the camp. Although it was an enormous, back-breaking task to supply water for three thousand people, since it was a job that he could do by himself he could manage to avoid working on Shabbos.

(Ibid. pp.201,202)

Reading the following passage, one can not fail to be inspired by the simplicity in Rav Zilber's calculated and disciplined reasoning, and his total submission to Halochoh:

"Why did I refuse to work on Shabbos and festivals when I was in the camp? I did not do this on a whim. I did this because it was required by Jewish law. I already mentioned that there are those commandments which may not be violated, even under the threat of death, while others may be waived under certain conditions to preserve one's life. If I had seen that my actions were endangering my life, I would not have behaved the way I did. I behaved similarly during my teaching career, because even if they would fire me from work or revoke my diploma (which eventually happened), that still would not have endangered my life. In the camp, as well, they would not execute me for refusing to work on Shabbos. **They could lengthen my sentence, but so what? This was not enough of a reason to transgress Shabbos.**

The same applied to food. My forced "diet" did not harm me. If I had felt that I was becoming dangerously weak, I would have started to eat non-kosher food. But I would have done it according to the guidelines of Jewish law..." (Ibid. p.253)

Rav Zilber also describes the selfless devotion to Halochoh exhibited by others. Rav Yitzchak Viener spent sixteen years and three months in a prison camp on trumped up charges, doing hard labour. Upon his release, he spent about a year looking for work which he could do without violating the Shabbos laws:

"He had to borrow money and lived only on bread and water, but he didn't give up...When he finally found a job as the chief bookkeeper in a pharmacy, the first thing he did was repay all his debts. He never worked on Shabbos or the holidays, no matter what.

Rav Viener lived strictly according to his principles even after the terrible experience in prison. All the Jews respected him for this." (Ibid pp.333-337)

Having read such accounts, two questions might occur to us:

1. **What is so important about Shabbos** that a person would go to such lengths to observe it and refrain from desecrating it?

2. **What gives a person such strength?** Certainly, acknowledging the special significance of Shabbos is clearly crucial if one is to muster deep devotion and commitment; but perhaps somewhere even deeper than that lies a source of immense strength and determination that gives these great heroes of Shabbos observance their ironclad, unshakeable will.

As a prelude to addressing the first of these questions, let us note the exalted manner in which Shabbos is described by our Sages. In his classic work, 'The Sabbath,' Dayan Dr. Isidore Grunfeld writes:

"Our Sages call the Sabbath Yesod Ha'emunah, the very foundation of our faith. This is no exaggeration. For the loftiest thoughts by which Judaism has ennobled the human mind, the highest ideals for which our people have been striving for thousands of years at the cost of innumerable lives, all are centered in the Sabbath..."

(Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld, 'The Sabbath' Feldheim 1981: p.15)

Dayan Grunfeld later adds:

"Our Sages with their unique gift for epigram gave expression to the fact that the Sabbath contains the sum and substance of Jewish life and thought in the words: "If G-d had not brought us to Mount Sinai and had only given us the Sabbath it would have been enough."

(Haggadah of Pesach) It would indeed have been enough, for Sabbath epitomizes the whole of Judaism." (Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld, 'The Sabbath' Feldheim 1981: pp.21,22)

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan writes:

"The Sabbath is the most important institution of Judaism. It is the primary ritual, the very touchstone of our faith." (Sabbath – Day of Eternity, Aryeh Kaplan NCSY: p.7)

Now, in an attempt to answer the first question above, let us begin by noting how Shabbos appears in the two instances in the Torah where the Aseres Hadibros, the Ten Commandments are listed. The Aseres Hadibros appear in Parashas Yisro and Parashas Vo'eschanan. In Yisro we read:

זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ... כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ (שמות כ: ח,י"א)

Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it... **For in six days the L-rd made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the L-rd blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it.** (Shemos 20: 8,11)

In Vo'eschanan, the same mitzvoh appears differently:

שָׁמֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ... וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצֵאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה עַל כֵּן צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ

לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת (דברים ה: יב,ט"ו)

Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the L-rd your G-d commanded you... **And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the L-rd your G-d took you out from there** with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm; therefore, the L-rd, your G-d, commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

(Devorim 5: 12,15)

The reason for the instruction to *remember* Shabbos, given in Parashas Yisro, is that, following six days of creating, Hashem rested on the seventh day and blessed it. By contrast, the reason given in Parashas Vo'eschanan for the command to *keep* Shabbos is that it is a reminder that Hashem took the Jewish nation out of Egypt.

As an aside, we should explain the differences in nuance between "*remember*" in Yisro and "*keep*" in Vo'eschanan. Our Sages teach that 'remember' refers to the positive mitzvos of Shabbos – Kiddush, three meals and so on – while 'keep' refers to the negative mitzvos – in particular the 39 categories of forbidden creative activity (Ramban, Shemos 20:8). Rashi (Shemos 20:8) teaches that זָכוֹר, 'remember' and שָׁמֹר, 'keep' were actually both said by Hashem "with one utterance." **These are the two aspects of Shabbos, the positive and the negative, and adherence to both is necessary for full and true Shabbos observance.**

Remember that we are answering the question, "*what is so important about Shabbos that a person would go to such lengths to observe it and refrain from desecrating it?*" (Notice that both the positive and negative aspects of Shabbos are included in this question.) We have seen above that **the two foundations for Shabbos given in the Torah are the *Creation of the World* and the *Exodus from Egypt*.** We shall see that these two rationales, together, indeed provide us with a key to understanding the profound significance of the day. In fact, these two features of Shabbos are included, side by side, in the **Friday night Kiddush**:

"...וְשַׁבָּת קִדְּשׁוּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הַנִּחְיָלָנוּ זִכְרוֹן לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית, כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה לְמִקְרָאֵי קִדְּשׁ, זָכָר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם..." (סידור)

"...and with love and favour gave us His holy Sabbath as a heritage, **a remembrance of Creation**; for that day is primary to the holy days, **a memorial of the Exodus from Egypt.**" (Siddur)

The great Rabbi Yehudah Halevi explains the significance of these twin aspects of Shabbos, in his 'The Kuzari':

וצוה על שבֿיתת השבֿת ושבֿיתת המועדים ושבֿיתת הארץ. והכל זכר ליציאת מצרים וזכרון למעשה בראשית, מפני ששני הענינים דומים מפני שנעשו בחפץ האלקים לא במקרה ולא בטבע... והיתה שמירת השבֿת היא בעצמה ההודאה באלקות, אבל כאלו היא הודאה מעשית, כי מי שמקבל מצות

שבֿת בעבור שבה היה כלות מעשה בראשית, כבר הודה בחדוש מבלי ספק, ומי שהודה בחדוש הודה במחדש העושה יתברך...

"G-d [therefore] commanded the observance of the Sabbath and the Festivals and the agricultural laws of the Sabbatical year. All these are in remembrance of our Exodus from Egypt and the act of creation. Those two events are similar in that they were both effected by Divine will and did not happen coincidentally or naturally...**Sabbath observance, therefore, is inherently an affirmation of G-d.** Further, it affirms the creation of the universe. For one who accepts the commandment of the Sabbath with the intention that the seventh day marked the end of creation has without a doubt affirmed his belief in an ex nihilo creation. In turn, one who has affirmed the creation has also thereby affirmed the blessed Creator..."

(The Kuzari, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, Newly translated and annotated by Rabbi N. Daniel Korobkin, Feldheim: pp.212-213)

Rabbi Yehudah Halevi's emphasis here is on both the Creation and the Exodus being testaments to Hashem exercising His Divine will, as against events happening due to natural forces that are separate from His influence, ה"ו. He also states that Shabbos indicates belief in Creation, which indicates belief in the Creator.

The Sefer Hachinuch (מצוה ל"ב) takes this a little further, explaining the specific importance of the Creation and the Exodus from Egypt, respectively. When people ask why we rest on the Sabbath, we shall answer, "...because G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh," and this will lead to everyone being strengthened in their faith. Regarding "the remembrance of the miracle of Egypt," writes the Chinuch, when the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt we were not free to rest when we wanted; Hashem then rescued us from there and commanded us to rest on the seventh day. This is why a second reason for the mitzvoh to rest on Shabbos is given in Devorim:

"And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the L-rd your G-d took you out from there with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm; therefore, the L-rd, your G-d, commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." (Devorim 5:15)

We find interesting additional nuances on these themes in the commentary of Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch on the siddur. Explaining the formulation of the Friday night Kiddush, Rav Hirsch writes:

"Since it is **זכר למעשה בראשית (a memorial of the work of the world's beginning)**, it is both first and fundamental among all the days that summon us forth from the ordinary pursuits of weekday life to the Sanctuary of G-d. At the same time, the Sabbath is **זכר ליציאת מצרים, the memorial to a historic event which we ourselves have witnessed**, a proof of the truths

which the Sabbath teaches us concerning G-d, the Creator, L-rd, Master and Ruler of the Universe.

כי בָּנוּ בַּחֲרַת (for You have chosen us): The Sabbath is so much the basis of all of Judaism that one can truly say that by redeeming us from Mitzrayim, G-d had appointed our people to be the bearers of the Sabbath." (The Hirsch Siddur, Feldheim: p.295)

Rav Hirsch clarifies for us two important distinctions:

1. While, as Rabbi Yehudah Halevi explains, the Creation and the Exodus are both evidence of Hashem's existence and omnipotence, there is a difference between the two. **The Creation, while the more majestic and all-encompassing of the two events, happened at a time when there were no observers present. Yetzias Mitzrayim, on the other hand, was an event which was witnessed by our whole nation, and in which all of our ancestors participated.** In its link to the Creation, Shabbos teaches us truths about Hashem's greatness and power; however, its link to the Exodus highlights the confirmation and verification of those truths by our ancestors who saw Hashem's wonders with their own eyes.

2. Not only do we have Shabbos to acknowledge that Hashem rescued us from Egypt so that we could finally find true rest as free people. In addition, **Shabbos marks our transition from slavery to a freedom that made the very institution of Shabbos possible.** That is, beyond acquiring the possibility of resting, which was impossible when we were slaves, the Exodus afforded us the very ability to keep Shabbos itself, the central pillar of our faith. This is what Rav Hirsch means when he says:

"The Sabbath is so much the basis of all of Judaism that one can truly say that by redeeming us from Mitzrayim, G-d had appointed our people to be the bearers of the Sabbath."

Ramban (or Nachmanides) (Devorim 5:15) informs us that his view on this subject differs from that of Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim (Guide for the Perplexed (II:31). Rambam (or Maimonides) in 'The Guide' writes:

"Thus G-d commanded us to abstain from work on the Sabbath, and to rest, for two purposes; namely, (1) That we might confirm the true theory, that of the Creation, which at once and clearly leads to the theory of the existence of G-d. (2) That we might remember how kind G-d has been in freeing us from the burden of the Egyptians..."

(Moses Maimonides, the Guide for the Perplexed, Transl. Friedlander, Dover pub. 1956, II:31 p.219)

Ramban's view is that resting on the Sabbath does not remind us of the Exodus from Egypt, but rather that, in resting on the day that Hashem ceased from His work, we remind ourselves of the Creation of the World. Why, then, the reference in the second account of the giving of the Ten Commandments, and the same reflected in Kiddush, to Yetzias Mitzrayim?

Ramban answers as follows:

והראוי יותר לומר כי בעבור היות יציאת מצרים מורה על אלוך
קדמון מחדש חפץ ויכול כאשר פרשתי בדבור הראשון, על כן אמר בכאן
אם יעלה בלבך ספק על השבת המורה על החדוש והחפץ והיכולת,
תזכור מה שראו עיניך ביציאת מצרים שהיא לך לראיה ולזכר,
הנה השבת זכר ליציאת מצרים ויציאת מצרים זכר לשבת,
כי יזכרו בו ויאמרו השם הוא מחדש בכל אותות ומופתים ועושה בכל כרצונו,
כי הוא אשר ברא הכל במעשה בראשית... (דברים ה' ט"ו)

It is more fitting to say that because the Exodus from Egypt demonstrates that there is a G-d Who precedes all else, Who creates, Who has will and is all-powerful, as I explained in my comment on the first Commandment (Shemos 20:2) [the Torah] therefore says here that if a doubt should ever enter your heart regarding the Sabbath, which [as a memorial to the creation of the world] demonstrates the creation of new things by G-d, His will and His omnipotence, you shall remember what your own eyes saw during the Exodus from Egypt, for it is a proof and a remembrance of these concepts for you. Thus, **the Sabbath is in effect a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, and the Exodus from Egypt is in turn a reminder of the principles behind the Sabbath**, for [people] will be reminded through recalling [the Exodus] and say, "It is G-d Who can create in all things original signs and wonders and deals with everything (solely) in accordance with His will, for He is the One Who created everything in the act of Creation." (Devorim 5:15, transl. RAMBAN, Artscroll Graff-Rand ed.)

Ramban cautions that, should it enter our hearts to doubt that the Sabbath points to the Almighty's existence, we should remind ourselves of what our own eyes saw at the Exodus from Egypt, which proved and highlighted Hashem's great powers to do wonders. In this way, "Shabbos is a remembrance of Yetzias Mitzrayim, and Yetzias Mitzrayim is a remembrance of Shabbos..." for on Shabbos people will recall and say that Hashem performs all signs and wonders at His will, and it is He Who created everything with 'Maaseh Bereishis,' and then, of course, He rested from His work on Shabbos. (Devorim 5:15)

We see now how fundamental is the place of Shabbos in Judaism. It is **the confirmation of Hashem as Creator of the World, as well as a conduit for reminding ourselves that the all-powerful Creator did not withdraw from the world after creating it** but continues to exercise His powers within the life of humankind when He wishes.

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan cites another verse in Devorim which clarifies and reinforces the significance of the Exodus in relation to Hashem as the one, active G-d of the Jewish People and the world. He writes:

“It is the Exodus that makes Judaism unique. G-d revealed Himself to an entire people, and literally changed the course of nature for a forty year period. This was an event unique in the history of mankind. (Moreh Nevuchim 2:35) The Torah itself speaks of this when it says:

“Did G-d ever venture to take a nation to Himself from another nation, with a challenge, with signs and wonders, as the L-rd your G-d did in Egypt before your very eyes? You have had sure proof that the L-rd is G-d, there is no other.”* (Devorim 4:34,35) ”

(Sabbath – Day of Eternity, Aryeh Kaplan NCSY: p.14)

*[This translation by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, “*Did G-d ever venture,*” found here (in “Sabbath – Day of Eternity”) and also in his translation of Chumash, is found also in the edition of Chief Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz; others have, “*Has any god ever...*”]

Rabbi Kaplan continues:

“That one historic, traumatic experience is the solid bedrock of Jewish faith. The Exodus not only made us uniquely aware of G-d, but it also showed Him profoundly involved in the affairs of man...” (Ibid.)

Rabbi Kaplan notes that “one of the important miracles of the Exodus was that of the Manna,” which “...dramatically demonstrates G-d’s involvement in the day to day life of each one of us.” The fact that the מן only appeared six days a week and was absent on Shabbos, writes Rabbi Kaplan, indicates that “the miracle of the Manna paralleled the miracle of Creation.” For these reasons, Rabbi Kaplan enlightens us: “We usually associate the Exodus with Passover. But it is just as intimately connected with the Sabbath.” (Ibid. p.15)

Rabbi Kaplan expounds the idea of **Shabbos as the affirmation of ה' as Creator and the Giver of Purpose to Creation.** He teaches us that Shabbos is,

“the confirmation of our belief in G-d as the Creator of all things... **For the Jew, belief in G-d is more than a mere creed or catechism. It is the basis of all meaning in life,** for if the world does not have a creator, then what possible meaning can there be in existence! Man becomes nothing more than a complex physiochemical process, no more than an ant or a grain of sand. Morality becomes a matter of convenience, or “might makes right.” It is the belief in G-d that gives life purpose and meaning. It is also what gives us a standard of right and wrong. If we know that G-d created the world, and did so for a purpose, then we also realise that everything that furthers this purpose is “good,” and everything that runs counter to this purpose is “evil.”

The essence of Judaism is purpose and morality. One who does not actively believe in G-d as Creator of the universe divorces himself from these two most basic values. He therefore casts himself outside of Judaism.

This also explains the reason Sabbath violation incurs the death penalty. For life itself involves purpose. **A purposeless life is, in reality, no life at all.** In a sense, therefore, one who does not keep the

Sabbath is not really considered alive in the first place. The existence of the death penalty in such a case is not a mere vindication, but the confirmation of an already existent situation.

In a positive sense, the Sabbath is the focus of Jewish belief." (Ibid. pp.12,13)

The idea that to observe the Sabbath is to confirm life's very purpose and meaning makes Shabbos qualitatively different from all other mitzvos. This notion can be found in the thought of Rambam, and notably in his halachic writings. We noted how Ramban's view differs from that expressed by Rambam in his philosophical work *Moreh Nevuchim*; we shall now turn to an important statement in Rambam's monumental legal work, *Mishneh Torah*. There, in his closing words to *Hilchos Shabbos*, Rambam writes something of great significance:

והשבת היא האות שבין הקב"ה ובינינו לעולם. לפיכך כל העובר על שאר המצוות הרי הוא בכלל רשעי ישראל. אבל המחלל שבת בפרהסיא הרי הוא כעובד עבודה כוכבים ומזלות...
(הלכות שבת ל:ט"ו)

"And the Sabbath is the eternal sign between the Holy One, blessed be He, and us. For this reason, **whoever transgresses the other mitzvos is considered to be one of the wicked of Israel, but a person who violates the Sabbath in public is considered as an idolater.**" (Hilchos Shabbos 30:15)

Let us note two important points that emerge from this, according to Rambam:

First, as we already noted above, **Shabbos is qualitatively different from all other mitzvos**. A Jew who keeps the other mitzvos confirms that he is an observant member of the Jewish nation, while in not performing them he stamps himself with the badge, 'sinner' – that is, he is a Jew who transgresses his Torah. The key, though, is that he remains within the ranks of his Jewish coreligionists, just that he is a disloyal Jew – disloyal to the Torah, disloyal to G-d.

Public desecration of Shabbos, however, is tantamount to full denial of G-d's existence; such a person is considered an idolater and, in effect, at least in practical terms, he takes himself outside the parameters of Judaism.

Second, and very much following on from the first point above, it is important to note that this is not a mere philosophical suggestion. **There are real halachic ramifications attached to deliberate, public desecration of the Sabbath**, and this is why Rambam makes these statements in his halachic work, *Mishneh Torah*. In his commentary on these halachos (*Mishneh Torah*, Moznaim Publications), Rabbi Eliyahu Touger confirms that **"This ruling represents more than a moral condemnation..."** and he goes on to list specific halachic ramifications of Shabbos transgression. For example, such a person would not be acceptable as a witness, and would be ineligible to take an oath in court. He may not be counted in a *minyan*, nor be given any honour in the synagogue.

Importantly, Rabbi Touger adds:

“Many halachic authorities of the recent era (see *Iggerot Moshe* [*Responsa of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein*], *Orach Chayim* I, Responsum 33, and other sources) explain that there is room for leniency with regard to certain of these restrictions at present. Nevertheless, the overall attitude must still be one of stringency.

It must, however, be emphasized that the offspring of such Jews have a full portion in their Jewish heritage. Instead of shunning them, we must make every effort to draw them close to their spiritual roots. (See *Hilchos Mamrim* 3:3.) (http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/935256/jewish/Shabbat-Chapter-Thirty.htm)

In that Halochah, Hilchos Mamrim 3:3, Rambam rules that children of those who denied the תורה שבעל פה (the Oral Law) are considered כתינוק שנשבה ביניהם וגדלוהו – as children captured and raised by them. Of such a child, Rambam writes there:

“Such a child may not be eager to follow the path of mitzvot, for it is as if he was compelled not to. **Even if later he hears that he is Jewish and saw Jews and their faith, he is still considered as one who was compelled against observance, for he was raised according to their mistaken path.** This applies to those who we mentioned who follow the erroneous Karaite path of their ancestors. Therefore it is appropriate to motivate them to repent and draw them to the power of the Torah with words of peace.” (Hilchos Mamrim 3:3)

(Many *halachic* authorities have applied this reasoning of the *Rambam* to all contemporary Jews who have been educated in a secular, agnostic/atheistic environment: all are to be considered a *tinok shenishbah*. The reader who wishes to read a full review of all opinions on this matter is referred to the book *The Tinok Shenishbah* written by Rabbi Chaim Rapoport for the London Beth Din in 5757. Rabbi Rapoport's book also deals extensively with the issues of the *tinok shenishbah* vis-à-vis inclusion in a *minyan* and eligibility for an *aliyah*, etc.

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2312348/jewish/Chapter-9-Our-Generation-The-Tinok-SheNishbah.htm)

We have discussed at some length the fact that Shabbos is considered very much the central pillar of Judaism. **An observant Jew is known as a Shomer Shabbos Jew**, as we saw in the words of Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus: “because when a Jew keeps Shabbos, that says it all. Shabbos is the essence of a Jew.” (Nefesh Shimshon – Shabbos Kodesh p.ה"צ)

The great Chofetz Chaim characterizes Shabbos as the sign that indicates the shop is open for business: **Shabbos observance is the sign, Judaism is the business.** He explains this beautifully as follows:

Shabbos is called a “sign,” “אות” (Shemos 31:13,17) which teaches us of its greatness. To what can this be compared? To a sign on a person's shop. This sign tells passers by that all is well with the business and its owner, whether he is a tailor, or a shoemaker. Now, as long as the sign is above the shop, everyone knows that the merchant is there. Even if the owner travels away for a few days, as long as the sign is still up, we can rest assured that the business has not closed down and the owner will eventually return. However, once the owner takes the sign down in order to put it up somewhere else, then it is clear that the owner has left and will no longer be found there.

Similarly with Shemiras Shabbos, which is the sign that bears witness to the fact that Hashem created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh. **This is also true of a person who carries against him the glorious banner of Shemiras Shabbos: he indicates that he believes in Hashem and that He created the world, that Hashem is the Master over all and we are therefore obligated to fulfil His will with our whole souls.** This person's faith leads him to place Hashem's holiness in his heart. If such a person transgresses certain other mitzvos, nevertheless this ‘Shabbos sign’ remains fixed firmly in place and tells us that this person is still a committed Jew, that he still has that Divine holiness in his heart. However once a person is mechalel Shabbos (desecrates Shabbos), he has taken down his sign and has now demonstrated that from deep within his heart he has uprooted the faith he once had in Hashem and His Torah, and he has removed the holy sanctuary from his heart. This is why

Rambam rules (Hilchos Shabbos 30:15) that anyone who transgresses the other mitzvos is considered to be one of the wicked of Israel, but a person who violates the Sabbath in public is considered as an idolater...”

(חפץ חיים על התורה על שמות לא: יז קלג-קלד) Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah, Shemos 31:17 pp.133-134)

We posed two questions above, let us see them again:

1. What is so important about Shabbos that a person would go to such lengths to observe it and refrain from desecrating it?
2. What gives a person such strength? Certainly, acknowledging the special significance of Shabbos is clearly crucial if one is to muster deep devotion and commitment; but perhaps somewhere even deeper than that lies a source of immense strength and determination that gives the great heros of Shabbos observance their ironclad, unshakeable will.

We have tried to address the first question. Let us now attempt to answer Question 2.

The assumption here is that, while Shabbos is, in Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's words, the most important institution of Judaism, the primary ritual, the very touchstone of our faith, (Sabbath – Day of Eternity, Aryeh Kaplan NCSY: p.7) there is perhaps something even more compelling which gives individuals the strength to go to enormous lengths to observe Shabbos in even the most trying of circumstances, and to avoid desecrating it even in the face of terrible consequences.

Earlier in our discussion we saw some examples of personal sacrifice for the sake of Shabbos; let us take one more, this time from a particularly brutal chapter in our history. During the Spanish Inquisition, toward the end of the 15th Century, neighbours and acquaintances of Jews who secretly remained faithful to Judaism (sometimes referred to as crypto-Jews) would report their suspicions, regarding the Jews' behaviour, to the authorities. **Jews often faced torture and or execution for remaining faithful to Judaism in secret, or for not behaving as devout Christians.** Among reports submitted by a Jew's Christian neighbours,

“...they might claim that they had not seen smoke rising regularly from his chimney on Saturdays; or that the members of his household purchased large quantities of vegetables before the time of the Passover festival; or that he, along with other New Christians, purchased meat from a Marrano butcher.” (Ben-Sasson, H.H., editor. A History of the Jewish People. Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 588-589)

How ironic that, while secretly, within the home, Jews avoided lighting fires on Shabbos, their inactive chimneys told their tale to the whole world, and provided ample incriminating evidence for their friendly neighbours to pass to the officials of the Inquisition.

What gave the Jews such strength, determination and courage? What was it about Shabbos that would lead them to put themselves in the way of almost certain peril?

A thought in Ha'amek Davar by the Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin) may point us in the right direction:

בִּינֵי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הוּא לְעָלָם... (שְׁמוֹת ל"א:י"ז)

במה שאומות העולם רואין שישראל נזהרין בשבת ממלאכה, בזה אות היא לכל העולם, כי ששת ימים וגו', כלומר שישכילו דרך משום זה הזהיר הקב"ה לישראל, ומזה יגיע כבוד ה' לכל הארץ, וזהו התכלית מכל הבריאה, על כן החמיר הקב"ה בקדושת שבת כל כך (העמק דבר).

When the nations of the world see the Jewish People being careful to avoid work on Shabbos, this will be a sign for the whole world, that in six days, etc., which is to say that they will understand that solely for this reason did the Holy One, Blessed is He warn Israel (about keeping Shabbos), and as a result of this the glory of Hashem will reach to all the world, and this is the purpose of the whole Creation, and this is why the Holy One, Blessed is He was so strict about (guarding) the holiness of Shabbos.

According to the Netziv, Shabbos observance broadcasts a message far and wide, the most important of messages, telling all whom it reaches that Hashem is the Creator of the world. **The result of this is that Hashem's glory spreads across the whole earth, which is the very purpose of all Creation.** To keep Shabbos, therefore, is the most powerful and indispensable Kiddush Hashem, whereas to desecrate it is to desecrate Hashem's Name and to deny the world any knowledge of His existence. We can now glimpse what lies behind the great holiness of Shabbos, and understand why the Almighty would wish to protect it with the severest of penalties.

This fundamental importance of Shabbos was appreciated by those throughout our history who, at the hands of tyrants and oppressors, sacrificed their lives to preserve it. Malbim (Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser) notes that **the 'sign' mentioned in the posuk (Shemos 31:17) is itself a Divine promise of the eternity of the Sabbath**, which will be safeguarded for all time by the absolute faithfulness of the Jewish People:

הבטיח להם שהאות הזה ישאר לעולם, וישראל ימסרו נפשם עליה, ועל ידי כן יתקיים אות זה בידם לעולם, וגם הבטיח שעובדי אלילים לא יקבלו יום זה לשבתה, וישבתו ביום אחר, כמו שכתוב בתפלת שבת, ולא נתתו ה' אלקינו לגויי הארצות (תפילת שבת, שחרית) (מלבי"ם).

He promised them that this sign will remain forever, and that the Jewish People will sacrifice their lives for it, and through this, this sign will endure through their hands forever, and He also promised that idolaters will not accept this day as their rest day, and they will rest on another day, as it is written in the Shabbos prayers, "...and You did not give it, Hashem, our G-d, to the nations of the lands..." (Shabbos prayers: Shacharis) (Malbim)



In the final analysis, Shabbos is a mitzvah, a Divine command, and no other reason for observing it is really necessary. Indeed, many of the lofty motivations for Shemiras Shabbos – keeping Shabbos – that we have discussed may not be accessible to everyone. Simply that

we are commanded to keep Shabbos should be enough, regardless of one's perception and understanding of its significance. Perhaps this explains the adage of our Sages:

גדול מצווה ועושה ממי שאינו מצווה ועושה
One who is commanded and fulfils is greater than
one who is not commanded and fulfils. (Kiddushin 31a)

That is, **we keep mitzvos first and foremost because they are mitzvos**; their very nature as being Divinely ordained guarantees their observance. Other motivations are of great value and merit, but we keep all mitzvos primarily because it is the Almigh-ty's will that we do so.

Nevertheless, **Shabbos unquestionably has a special place in the Jewish heart**, and a unique power to shore up the ramparts of Torah Judaism wherever it is kept faithfully. For those who have not yet discovered the sublime beauty of Shabbos and its ability to illuminate and enliven the soul, there is a true treasure waiting to be discovered. In fact, the Rabbis of the Talmud teach that the Almigh-ty told Moshe:

מתנה טובה יש לי בבית גנזי ושבֿת שמה ואני מבקש ליתנה לישראל

"I have a wonderful present in my Treasure House and its name is Shabbos
and I seek to give it to Israel" (Talmud Bavli, Shabbos 10b)

Shabbos is different from other mitzvos, teaches the Brisker Rov, in that it is both a מצווה – commandment, and a מתנה – a gift. Rabbi Yissocher Frand elucidates this idea of the Brisker Rov: **"Tzitzis is not a present. Matza is not a present. Tefillin is not a present. Shabbos is!"**
[torah.org/torah-portion/ravfrand-5773-kisisa/]

Shabbos has a dimension not shared by other mitzvos – it is a present. A present is given in order to create a bond of love and friendship between two parties. Rav Dessler writes at length about the importance of 'giving' - and of being a 'giver' rather than a 'taker' – and its vital place in establishing a bond of love between individuals.

(Rabbi Eliyahu E. Dessler, 'Strive for Truth' Part One: pp.118-158)

Rav Dessler teaches:

"The faculty of giving is a sublime power; it is one of the attributes of the blessed Creator of all things. He is the Giver par excellence..." (Ibid. p.119)

"We see that **love and giving always come together**. Is the giving a consequence of the love, or is perhaps the reverse true: is the love a result of the giving? We usually think it is love which causes giving because we observe that a person showers gifts and favours on the one he loves. But there is another side to the argument. **Giving may bring about love...**" (Ibid. pp.126,127)

Perhaps this brings us closer to truly understanding the unique specialness of Shabbos, and its power to inspire unbridled self-sacrifice. For **Shabbos is a gift from Hashem, an expression of His love.** True giving is giving of one's own essence, and as He gives of Himself to us, we respond in like manner. **How else should we respond upon receiving a gift of love from Hashem but to give in return from deep within ourselves, with wholehearted devotion, to Shabbos?**



*Rabbi Yitzchok Zilber indeed gave back to Hashem, from deep within himself, through mitzvos performed with uncompromising dedication, tenacity, perseverance and courage; and he understood that **to remain a Shomer Shabbos is 'To Remain a Jew.'***

Wishing everyone a Good Shabbos,
a spiritually refreshing and uplifting Shabbos,

Jeremy





שבת שלום!





זכרון אריה

על פרשה ומועד



פְּרָשָׁת כִּי תֵשָׂא

