

SHABBOS SPEAK

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

This week we read the Aseres HaDibros, known throughout civilization as the Ten Commandments. Most of the commandments are well known, and even observed, albeit in varying degrees by manifold societies. One command, however, begs for correct observance by the Jewish nation, "Zachor es yom haShabbos l'kadsho -- Remember the Shabbos to keep it holy." This commandment has a sister command stated in the second set of Luchos in Deuteronomy, "Shamor es yom haShabbos l'kadsho, Observe the Shabbos to keep it holy."

The laws of Shabbos observance fills an entire tractate and myriad pages of commentaries. There are 39 melachos, categories of creative work, that are prohibited on Shabbos. That is observance. But what does "remember the Shabbos to keep it holy" mean? Obviously if one observes the Shabbos, he remembers it!

Though the Talmud derives from this verse the mitzvah of kiddush, at which we remember the Shabbos with an open declaration of its sanctity, it seems to be telling us something more than declaring its entry over a cup of wine. But how does the command of remembering Shabbos add to the mitzvah of observing it?

The next verse reads: "Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work: but the seventh day is Shabbos to Hashem" (ibid 20:9)

Shouldn't the order of the two p'sukim be reversed? First the Torah should tell us to accomplish our work in six days, then tell us that the seventh is Sabbath, and only then tell us to sanctify it by remembering it? After all, we stop work before we say kiddush?

The prophet Isaiah tells us, "If for Shabbos you restrain your feet (from going) and if you honor it by not doing your ways, or seeking your needs, or speaking the forbidden, then you shall be granted pleasure from Hashem. (Isaiah 58:13-14).

The Talmud derives that Shabbos talk, like Shabbos action, should be distinguished from weekday actions or speech. Just as one does not perform business on Shabbos, he should not talk about doing business either.

Thus some Jews who unfortunately are unable to contain themselves from discussing the mundane on Shabbos, preempt their mundane banter with the useless caveat, "nit oif Shabbos geredt," meaning, "this really should not be discussed on Shabbos." Unfortunately some do not heed their

own precursory and continue their irreverent discussions.

A fable I heard years ago, personifies a sad state of spirituality, but, perhaps shines a meaningful explanation for our question.

It was amazingly quiet, during the laining in the small shul on 43rd Street one Shabbos, when Cohen sauntered over to Finkelstein and in a hushed tone asked, "Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, do you know anybody who has a car for sale? My old clunker died on Thursday."

Finkelstein was surprised. "You know," he admitted, "Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, I am thinking of selling my '96 Chevy!"

"Really?, responded Cohen in delight, " Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, how does it run?"

Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, it runs great! It has only 43,000 miles and I just put in a new transmission!

Suddenly, they heard a klop on the bimah. They turned to see the icy stares of the gabbai.

They nuzzled their noses into the chumashim as the Ba'al Koreh continued to read from the Torah.

A few minutes later, Cohen crept back toward Finkelstein. "Nit oif Shabbos g'redt what color is it?"

As the stares began anew, Cohen answered in a low whisper, "Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, its blue."

Cohen realized that he forgot to ask a most pertinent question. "Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, how much do you want for it?"

Finkelstein responded, "Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, \$4,200. Cash."

A few minutes later Cohen countered, "nit oif Shabbos g'redt, how about 3,500?"

'Finkelstein snapped back. "Nit oif Shabbos g'redt nothing less than 4,000!"

Cohen was quiet. "I'll think about it."

Cohen was the first one in shul for Mincha that afternoon. The moment Finkelstein walked in Cohen ran over to him.

"Nit oif Shabbos g'redt, you know the car you told me about this morning, It's a deal! I'll take it for four thousand!

Yankel, shrugged. "Too late. Nit oif Shabbos g'redt I sold it during musaf!"

Perhaps with the words, "remember the Shabbos to keep it holy," the Torah tells us more than just to make kiddush. It qualifies our Shabbos by defining the proper approach to its observance! Shabbos was created for sanctity! Remember it, and speak about it in holy terms. Shabbos should not be a frame of reference in which we set our mundane plans. Rather it should be the central focus of holiness.

Often we hear people use Shabbos as a reference point for their weekly activities. "After Shabbos we are going to a party." "I have a great stock tip, I'll tell you about it after Shabbos!" "What time is Shabbos over? I have to catch a plane."

Shabbos, and remembering it should be mentioned and remembered in the context of sanctity and appreciation! It must be associated with all the wonderful benefits we derive from it! That is what the Torah means by the words, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy!" We should cherish the Shabbos, prolong it, savor it, and bask in its holiness. Therefore the Torah follows its charge with the formula, "Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work," When one feels that his work was accomplished during the previous six days, then Shabbos will not be just a stepping stone in planning the next six! He no longer will associate the Shabbos with what he can not do, but rather he will associate Shabbos with the amazing spirituality that it bestows upon Israel.

Dedicated by Michael & Rikki Charnowitz in memory of Ephraim Spinner Ephraim Yitzchak ben Avraham ob"m -- 17 Shevat

If you would like to be on a shiur update list which sends messages regarding Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky's various lectures in NY City and Long Island and other locations, please send a blank email to rmkshiur-subscribe@jif.org.il You will receive bulletins about those classes.

If you want to be on a shiur announcement faxlist, fax request along with your fax number (dedicated line, please) to 516-569-7954

Copyright © 1998 by [Rabbi M. Kamenetzky](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

If you enjoy the weekly Drasha, now you can receive the best of Drasha in book form! Purchase **Parsha Parables** - from the Project Genesis bookstore - **Genesis Judaica** - at a very special price!

The author is the Dean of the [Yeshiva of South Shore](#).

Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a weekly torah facsimile on the weekly portion which is sponsored by ***The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation***

Books by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky:

