

OUR FRIEND, SHABBOS

by Rabbi Dovid Green

The Sabbath is one of the topics in this week's parsha. "Six days work should be done, and on the seventh day it is a Sabbath of Sabbaths. It is a special holiday to G-d, and you should not do any work. Wherever you live it is a Sabbath to G-d" (Leviticus 23:3).

The modern concept of work is very different from what the Torah means when it stresses "do not do any work." The word for work is "melacha". The definition of this word is derived from its usage elsewhere in the Torah. In the places discussing the building of the Tabernacle the word "melacha" is used. There it is used to mean any of 39 activities enumerated in the Talmud which were done in the building of the Tabernacle. The Torah doesn't only mean to say that one should not go to work. In fact, some people are actually allowed to do jobs which don't involve transgressing any of the 39 activities. The Talmud discusses people who guard orchards as a permitted activity.

The topic of the Sabbath is explained by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19 cent. Frankfurt). "Behold! G-d crowned his work with the seventh day of creation...and bestowed on it a constantly recurring sanctity and a blessing. A sanctity, that through it man should be continually reminded of his appointment by G-d in G-d's world to be G-d's servant. A blessing, that on the seventh day spirit and mind should always gain renewed strength for the worthy fulfilment of his duty...But how can the Sabbath become such a symbol, education, and sanctification for this task?...How above all, does man show his dominion over the earth? In that he can fashion all things in his environment to his own purpose...He is allowed to rule over the world for six days with G-d's will. On the seventh day, however, he is forbidden by Divine behest to fashion anything for his own purpose. In this way he acknowledges that he has no rights of ownership or authority over the world...On each Sabbath day, the world, so to speak, is restored to G-d, and thus man proclaims, both to himself and his surroundings, that he enjoys only a borrowed authority."

Shabbos is a time to emphasize our spirituality and our relationship with G-d. Shabbos is to those who love it, a time to change gears. One who partakes of the Shabbos spirit doesn't view the restrictions as limiting. He views them as liberating. Shabbos is the time when we can concentrate fully on our purpose in this world and recharge our batteries so we can begin the week anew with those goals. Shabbos is a day to spend time with family, and share our lives together.

Shabbos has been the dear friend and trusted companion of the Jewish Nation for 33 centuries. Become aware of Shabbos. Contemplate its message. Live with Shabbos.

Good Shabbos.

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