

EITHER YOU'RE WITH US, OR...

by Rabbi Dovid Green

This week's parsha forces us to make a decision. Either you're with us - or you're with the atheists. The first three (Hebrew) words state "In the beginning G-d created." There is no way around it. Belief in Torah is necessarily characterized by the belief that G-d designed and created the heavens, the earth, and all therein.

The Torah states that G-d created the world in six days. Notwithstanding that there was no sun in the sky to gauge the length of a day, until the fourth day. And Rashi, the commentator states that the entire creation remained in potential until man, the reason for creation, was actually created. At that point everything actually sprang forth into reality.

After the first six days G-d's rested. That means that G-d ceased and desisted from any further creative activity. From now on the completed creation continues to be plugged in to the life force which G-d animates the universe with, but now the creation seemingly works on its own.

As a great kindness the Jewish People, G-d gave us his Torah, and He gives us the great honor of sharing Shabbos with us as well.

Here is what Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi documents as the words of the King of the Kuzar's in the work "The Kuzari" (14th century) regarding the topic of Shabbos.

"Says the Kuzari: ' I have already thought into your matters, and I have seen that G-d has a secret for preserving you (the Jewish People in the diaspora). And that the Shabboses and the Festivals are among the greatest causes of defining your character and your beauty. For the nations would have divided you and taken you as slaves due to your understanding and pure intellect, and they would have drafted you into their armies if it had not been for the Shabboses and Festivals which you guard so carefully. (Your reason for doing so is) because they are G-d-given, and (founded) in strong reasoning, such as in commemoration of the creation, and the Exodus from Egypt, or the Giving of the Torah. All of them are from a G-dly source (and) you are exhorted to guard them. If it wouldn't be for them, you would never dress up in fine clothing, and you would never gather to remember your Torah, out of sheer lowliness inflicted upon you by your ongoing exile. Without those (days) you would never take pleasure any day in your length of days. (In guarding the Shabboses and the Festivals) you already have almost one sixth of your days dedicated to a resting of body and soul, which even the Nobleman cannot enjoy. (This is) because they don't have true rest on their day of rest, for if they need to work and be on the go on those days, they'll go and work hard. Consequently

they don't have a complete rest. If it wouldn't be for your days of rest all of (the income from) your hard work would ultimately be for others since it is always in danger of being plundered. Consequently, by spending on Shabbos and the Festivals you are realizing (spiritual) profit in this world and the next, since you are spending it for the sake of heaven.

The Kuzar is basically saying that Shabbos observance has preserved us as a people, and given us our character, beauty, and dignity over the many centuries of exile and wandering throughout the many countries we have lived in. We gain spiritually and physically from observing Shabbos and the Festivals.

Lastly, through Shabbos observance we are asserting our faith in the Creation of the universe, and our belief in His providence over us. We are G-d's representatives making His presence more profoundly pronounced in the world.

Shabbos is basic to Jewish life. Without it, Torah observance loses its meaning. Without Shabbos, we would have become a non-descript people long ago, and blended in with our host nations like so many other conquered nations have done. With Shabbos we return to our source. We connect with our Creator, and we reassert our purpose for which we were created. Shabbos is the foundation of Judaism, and observing it is the way we get in on the ground level..

Good Shabbos!

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