

WEEK -AFTER- WEEK

by Rabbi Label Lam

Issachar is a strong-boned donkey crouching between the boundaries. And he saw "Menucha"-rest, that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant, and he bent his shoulder to bear and he became an indentured laborer. (Breishis 49:14-15)

And he bent his shoulder to bear...The yoke of learning Torah... (Rashi)

Something doesn't make sense here. Issachar we know was the paradigm of the dedicated Torah Scholar. The reason that he accepts this degree of devotion is that "he saw that "Menuchah"- rest is good". How does one follow from the other? If he perceives that rest is good then why does he work extra hard?

The key may come from the very beginning of human history. The verses tell us, "And so the heaven and the earth and all- their array were completed. G-d completed, on the seventh day His work which He had done, and He ceased from all His work which He had done. G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He ceased from all His work which G-d created." (Breishis 2:1-3)

Bothered by the appearance of impropriety that HASHEM had completed the work "on the seventh day" and in light of the contradiction in the verse which states, "He "ceased from all His work", Rashi adds, "What was the world lacking at the end of the sixth day? "Menucha"-Rest! When Shabbos came, "Menucha"-rest came and then the work (of creation) was complete." "Menucha"-rest, comes to crown the act of creation. It appears to be more than the absence of work since it is "something" that comes when Shabbos arrives. What is this magical "something" called "Menucha"?

In college, I was getting ready for a big exam. I was up almost all night cramming when I realized that I needed some sleep. I set the big ticker, a wind up clock, for six O'Clock and put my head down for what would be a short nap. At one minute to six I awoke with a startle and stared at the clock. The alarm had not rung. "What had startled me into an awakened state?" I wondered. Then it hit me. The clock had stopped at 5:59. It was the jolt of sudden silence that jarred me from my slumber. We joke that when my wife came to Monsey from the Bronx she would wake-up in the middle of the night and shout, "What was that?" And I would answer, "That was the sound of #5 Train not going over head."

The joy of Shabbos lies in that explosive sense of serenity when Shabbos is ushered in. When Halacha takes the hammer from our hands the pounding of the weekday clock is replaced by a

sublime melody of the soul. To those who've been there these are mere understatements. There are times when Shabbos is so high that it is beyond what words could ever convey. It is experienced as a clear sign between HASHEM and His loyal Jewish People.

Yet there are other times when a Friday Night can feel like Monday morning. When the week was filled with nasty, brutish, ugly, foolish, and empty action even the brightness of Shabbos is dulled. Without the preparation of "six days shall you work" the seventh day is not felt as a day to returning to HASHEM. Ouch! We have wandered from our purpose in life and we feel it.

However, when after having worked hard and gained ground in goodness through the pedestrian path of the weekdays the spiritual inertia we have generated is felt on Shabbos as an exhilaration of the soul. We are coming closer. "Menucha"-rest is that which follows the hard work, when one can revel in meaningful accomplishments. Maybe we can say that Issachar seeing that "Menucha" is good therefore invested himself that much more in the task of Torah so that when Shabbos, which is a taste of the future world, finally arrives he would then delight in that goodness more and more deeply **week after week**. Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.