

THE HOLINESS OF SHABBAT

by Shlomo Katz

The Holiness of Shabbat

Ki Tissa

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Today's Learning:

Shevi'it 4:1-2

O.C. 322:6-323:2

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nidah 70

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Metzia 33

We read in our parashah (31:14-15): "You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. . . For six days, work may be done. . ." R' Meir Simcha Hakohen z"l (1843-1926; rabbi of Dvinsk, Latvia; author of Ohr Sameach) notes that the prohibition against working on Shabbat is mentioned several times in the Torah. In some verses (for example Shmot 20:9), the Torah uses the active voice, "Six days shall you work." In other verses, the Torah uses the passive voice, as in the above verse from our parashah. The passive voice also is used in next week's parashah (35:2): "On six days, work may be done." Why?

He answers: In the sections in which the Torah uses the passive voice, the Torah also refers to the holiness of Shabbat. For example, our parashah says, "You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. . . For six days, work may be done." Similarly, we read in next week's parashah, "On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you." In contrast, the verses that use the active voice do not refer to the holiness of Shabbat.

What does this teach? R' Meir Simcha explains: Our Sages teach, "When you do the Will of Hashem, your work will be done by others. When you do not do the Will of Hashem, you will have to do your own work." If we infuse the Shabbat with holiness, that holiness will rub-off on us, helping us do the Will of Hashem all week long. Then our work will be done passively, i.e., by others. However, when

our Shabbat is not infused with holiness, then we will have to do our own work actively. (Meshech Chochmah)

"Between Me and Bnei Yisrael it is a sign forever that in a six-day period Hashem made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." (31:17)

Making a play on the last word of this verse, our Sages derived the existence of a Neshamah Yetairah--literally "extra soul"--that enters man on Shabbat. What is this Neshamah Yetairah?

R' Moshe Shick z"l (19th century rabbi of Huszt, Hungary) explains: Ancient philosophers believed that a completely spiritual Being could not have created our physical world. Rather, they suggested, G-d created a world that was slightly less spiritual than Himself; that world created the next world, and so on, until our world was created.

Shabbat is our declaration that the ancient philosophers' belief is false. We declare that G-d Himself created everything that was made in the six days of creation and that He "rested" on the seventh day--not, as the philosophers claimed, that He rested already on the first day.

Yet the question remains: How can G-d relate to our lowly world? To Jews, the answer is that our world must not be so lowly. Man is capable of elevating himself and the world around him.

What is this Neshamah Yetairah? It is the extra push that we get from Shabbat to realize our potential, for Shabbat is the proof that G-d expects more from us.

(Maharam Shick Al Ha'Torah)

"Why should Egypt say the following: 'B'ra'ah / With evil intent He took them out, to kill them in the mountains and to annihilate them from the face of the earth'? Relent from Your flaring anger and reconsider regarding the ra'ah / evil against Your people:" (32:12)

R' Baruch Zvi Hakohen Moskowitz z"l (20th century rabbi in Budapest and Vienna) asks: Following this verse, Moshe invokes the merit of the Patriarchs in defense of the Jewish People. Shouldn't his request, "Relent from your flaring anger etc.," have waited until the end of his prayer?

He explains: Moshe's intention was to resolve an apparent hypocrisy in his prayer. His prayer was, in effect: "A Chillul Hashem / desecration of G-d's Name will result if You annihilate Bnei Yisrael." Hashem could have answered, "What about the Chillul Hashem that resulted from the Golden Calf itself?" To this Moshe answered, "Relent from Your flaring anger and reconsider regarding the ra'ah / evil against Your people." He meant: The Golden Calf was certainly a ra'ah. However, the ra'ah that would result from Your annihilation of Bnei Yisrael would surely be greater. Therefore, there is no

hypocrisy in my request that You forgive them.

(Mishmeret Zvi)

"He [Moshe] said, 'Show me Your glory'. He [G-d] said, 'I shall make all My goodness pass before you, and I shall call out with the Name Hashem before you; I shall show favor when I choose to show favor, and I shall show mercy when I choose to show mercy'." (33:18-19)

R' Yechiel Michel Halevi Epstein z"l (1829-1907) explains these verses as follows: Moshe's request was to be able to reach the highest possible level in his grasp of the Torah so that he could then attain the ultimate love for Hashem. Hashem answered that He would reveal His "goodness" - an allusion to Torah, which is called "good" - and would teach him His Name - another reference to Torah, which kabbalists say is entirely made up of different Names of G-d.

Moshe was then concerned: How will other Jews attain such an understanding of the Torah? Hashem answered: "I shall show favor when I choose to show favor." The Hebrew root "chen" (translated here as "favor") connotes something undeserved ("chinam"). Hashem assured Moshe, "I will teach the Torah even to the undeserving." G-d also promises in our verse to act mercifully, and it is based on this that we pray every morning (in the blessing before Shma): "The merciful Father, Who acts mercifully, have mercy on us, instill in our hearts to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach . . ." [Without this explanation, it is difficult to understand the repeated references to G-d's mercy in this prayer, which primarily asks G-d to help us study Torah.]

(Derashot Kol Ben Levi No. 15)

The Daf Hayomi

As many readers are aware, this coming Tuesday is the last day of the eleventh cycle of "Daf Hayomi" study. The following essay pays tribute to this historic event.

Superficially, one could describe the Daf Hayomi (commonly called "Daf Yomi") as an undertaking in which participants worldwide study the same page of Talmud Bavli (Gemara) on any given day and complete it every seven-and-a-half years. R' Meir Shapiro z"l, the tzaddik who first promoted the concept, saw it much differently:

The Daf Yomi is a bridge--though fashioned of paper--which lifts the Jew above the stormy confusion of the waters below, and he walks with more assurance and confidence than on the firmest steel structure.

The great allure of the Daf Yomi concept lies in the realization that the daf / page of Gemara which I

learn here and now is being poured over by countless Jews scattered over the face of the earth. While each one has his own particular mode of learning and is influenced by the intellectual climate of his environment, nevertheless, Abaye and Rava [two great sages of the Talmud] remain Abaye and Rava. [From R' Meir Shapiro's remarks on the occasion of the first completion of the Daf Yomi cycle on Tu B'shvat 5691/1931, reprinted in the Jewish Observer, Vol. XXII No. 1]

The two-fold purpose of Daf Yomi, first begun on Rosh Hashanah 5684/1924, was to encourage Jews to increase their Torah study through the implementation of a regimented program or quota, and to provide a vehicle for uniting Jews worldwide. R' Meir Shapiro himself observed on the occasion mentioned above:

It was on my first trip abroad on behalf of the yeshiva of Lublin [in 1927, to the U.S., England, and Western Europe], when I found groups and individuals learning the daf in every Jewish community I visited, that I saw at first hand the impact that Daf Yomi has made in the Jewish world. Whether it was in Strasbourg, London or Baltimore [here he mentioned by name people whom he had met], while their styles of learning differed, there was the same motivating force which is inherent in Daf Yomi.

In every generation since the Daf Yomi was introduced, many gedolim have endorsed it. The Gerrer Rebbe studied the daf and encouraged his chassidim to do so. The Chafetz Chaim reportedly told R' Meir Shapiro, "In Heaven, they love you dearly." R' Aharon Kotler z"l, one of the leading sages in America in the 1950's, studied Daf Yomi as well.

In addition to the advantages of Daf Yomi which R' Meir Shapiro himself described, R' Moshe Feinstein z"l notes that it gives the person the opportunity to complete the entire Torah. R' Feinstein proves from various sources that every person is obligated to do this during his lifetime (Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah II No. 110). R' Feinstein notes that centuries ago it was common practice to study a page of Talmud each day, and many towns had a chevrah shas / Talmud society which did just that (Igrot Moshe, Y.D. IV No. 36). R' Yaakov of Lissa z"l (the "Nesivos") wrote in his famous ethical will almost 200 years ago that his sons should study a page of Gemara every day.

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>.

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