

SEVER YOUR CONNECTION TO THIS WORLD

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week's Parsha, Ki Tisa, along with many other teachings, reiterates the commandment of Shabbos observance which had been taught previously during the Aseres HaDibros (the Ten Commandments).

"V'shomru Bnei Yisroel es haShabbos la'asos es haShabbos l'dorosom bris olam [And the children of Israel shall observe the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos for all generations as an eternal covenant]. [31:16]"

There seems to be somewhat of a redundancy; "v'shomru"-observing the Shabbos and "la'asos"- 'doing' the Shabbos. The S'forno offers a penetrating explanation. "And the children of Israel shall observe the Shabbos"-in this world, "to make the Shabbos"-in the World to Come.

By fully observing Shabbos, one temporarily severs his connection to this transient world. This will pave the way for the time when the connection to this world is completely severed, "to make the Shabbos"-in the World to Come.

Shabbos affords us the opportunity to understand and define who we really are. We so often get caught up in: "What are you?" that is met by a response such as: "I'm a lawyer," "I'm a doctor," or "I'm a venture capitalist." The line between what we do and who we are has gotten very blurred.

I often tell the story of a young lady whom we had for a Shabbos meal many years ago. She was telling us about her family and mentioned a brother who she held in very high regard. We, of course, asked her to tell us about him. She responded that he has a set time daily for Torah study, he volunteers at a nursing home and-just as our thoughts were turning to 'unemployed'-she added that he earns his money as a stockbroker.

That is the mindset with which a person should conduct himself on Shabbos. Focusing on the real purposes for which Hashem sent his neshama [soul] down to this world for the time that it is destined to spend here. Not what he does but who he is and why he's here.

While such a "shomru" in this world clearly leads to a "la'asos" in the World to Come, a 'visitor' from the next world further enhances the internal integration of these two worlds which takes place in us each week.

"Between Bnei Yisroel and I (Hashem) it is an eternal sign that in six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day shavas vayinafash [stopped and rested]. [31:17]"

The Talmud [Baitzah 16A] teaches: Hashem gives a neshama yesairah ['additional' soul] to a person on the eve of Shabbos and it is taken from him when Shabbos departs. This is derived from the above pasuk [verse]: "shavas vayinafash"-once the Shabbos stops [shavas], woe [vay] to him over (the loss of) his (additional) soul [nafash].

Rashi offers an explanation that at first seems quite difficult to understand but is actually the key to understanding this concept of the neshama yesairah. He defines neshama yesairah as: A 'widened' heart for resting and happiness... and he'll eat and drink and his soul won't be repulsed by it.

This seems to be astounding. Could the purpose of this neshama yesairah be for us to rest, be happy and be able to eat massive amounts of food?! Is this what was needed to be given as an exclusive "eternal sign," just between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel? Furthermore, don't we find that gentiles, even in the absence of this exclusive neshama yesairah, seem to be eating and drinking quite well?

Rav Isaac Sher explains that Hashem sanctified the day of Shabbos by setting up this system of a neshama yesairah which envelopes each and every Jew on this sacred day. This adds purity and a connection to Hashem through the physical rest and enjoyment. This "'widened' heart for resting and happiness allows for eating and drinking without the soul getting repulsed by it."

Normally, increased involvement in this world creates a distance and a barrier between Hashem and us. The soul is thus repulsed by it. While that is the case during the week, on Shabbos, the neshama yesairah brings about a fundamental change in us. Our involvement in oneg [rest and enjoyment] for the sake of honoring Hashem and the Shabbos results in an increase of our spiritual connection. As Rashi said, "He'll eat and drink without his soul getting repulsed by it."

Leaving behind the bothers and responsibilities of the workweek in order to enjoy Shabbos, one is transcended to a state of Hashem standing above him, granting the pleasure of connecting to Him. This is of course a prelude to the World to Come-the time of constant connection to Hashem-the time of 'kulo Shabbos' [constant Shabbos].

This was the eternal sign specifically between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel. The nations of the world understand the concept of connecting to Hashem through abstinence. Deprivation of pleasures, they believe, is the path to holiness. Hashem shared with us this understanding that we were placed in this physical world in order to use this world as a ladder upon which we ascend to Hashem. The physical pleasure becomes transformed into spiritual pleasure.

How is this done on Shabbos? If one were to be invited to have a meal at the White House, he wouldn't view the eating as a means of simply satisfying his base physical needs. Rather, one would see the eating as a way of forging a relationship, a connection to important people. On Shabbos, we are invited to dine at the table of the King of kings. The meal is simply a means through which we can connect. The physical pleasure becomes transformed into spiritual pleasure.

"Shavas va'yinafash"-once the Shabbos stops [shavas], woe [vay] to him over (the loss of) his

(additional) soul {nafash}.

May we learn to take advantage of our special, honored guest.

Good Shabbos,
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