
Shabbos
& the Moadim
with YTV

Shabbos & the Moadim with YTV

A collection of essays from many of the great, recent roshei yeshiva and rabbayim of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, discussing Shabbos and the moadim.

Commentary on the Haggadah Shel Pesach.

Introduction and translation of Kinnos by Harav Yisroel Belsky zt"l.

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MENUCHAS SHABBOS

Shabbos With Harav Yisroel Reisman

וַיְכַל אֱלֹקִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה — *And Hashem completed on the seventh day the work that He had done* (*Bereishis* 2:2). Rashi explains that the world lacked *menuchah,* and on Shabbos, Hashem created the concept of *menuchah*. He didn't just rest on Shabbos; He created a new idea — *menuchah.*

Menuchas hanefesh comes from the essence of this *menuchah* of Shabbos. That being the case, it behooves us to understand the *yesod* of the *menuchah* of Shabbos, and what it really means to rest on Shabbos. In this way, we can incorporate *menuchas hanefesh* into our daily life.

כל מקדש שביעי כראוי לו

One of the *zemiros* of Shabbos begins with the words, כל מקדש שביעי כראוי לו, כל שומר שבת מחללו — *All who sanctify the seventh day as is appropriate for [Shabbos], all who guard the Shabbos from violating it.* What is the difference between כל מקדש and כל שומר? Isn't *shemiras Shabbos* the same as *mekadash Shabbos*?

Rav Pam explained that there are two elements to Shabbos: the restrictions of Shabbos and the spirit of Shabbos. A person who doesn't do any *melachah* and follows all the rules is one who is *shomer Shabbos*. But that's just the first step in keeping Shabbos. Of course, this is required of all of us, but it does not cover כראוי לו — *as is appropriate* for Shabbos. It falls under *shemiras Shabbos*, but does not include *mekadash Shabbos*.

The higher level is bringing *kedushah* into Shabbos, which entails much more than refraining from *melachah*. On Shabbos, a person is supposed to refrain from *hirhur*, from thinking about his business, from thinking about *melachah,* and certainly not speaking about it. That's כל מקדש שביעי כראוי לו.

When you reach that point, the spirit of Shabbos takes hold. It brings you *menuchas hanefesh*. That's the *yesod* of Shabbos, to be able to put aside the things that pull at you, the things that distract you. It is also the *yesod* of *menuchas hanefesh* all week. All week, when we're in a state of *behalah,* and something disturbs us and we don't feel tranquil, it's because we're unable to push it aside. The lesson of Shabbos is not to let life's challenges disturb our *menuchas hanefesh.*

The *Michtav me'Eliyahu* (vol. 4, pg. 240) discusses *bilbul hada'as,* which is the opposite of *menuchas hanefesh*. *Menuchas hanefesh* is to feel tranquil, peaceful. *Bilbul hada'as* is to feel torn, confused. He writes that to avoid *bilbul*, to avoid tumult, one needs *menuchah*. The *yesod* he writes is: באה שבת באה מנוחה, כי שבת פירושה הסתלקות מכל הענינים הגשמיים ופנייה למעלה בכוונת לשם שמים — *When Shabbos comes, menuchah comes, for Shabbos means separating from the physical and turning upward for Hashem's sake.* Practicing *menuchah* means training yourself to push things aside, to separate yourself, to look to Shamayim on Shabbos.

What is Shabbos? Shabbos separates you from your weekday business and your weekday affairs. On Shabbos, you are meant to detach yourself, to spend Shabbos as if the business part of your life doesn't exist. As Rashi (*Shemos* 20:9) says, כשתבוא שבת, יהא בעיניך כאילו מלאכתך עשויה, שלא תהרהר אחר מלאכה — *When Shabbos comes, in your eyes it should be as if all your melachah is completed, so that you don't even think about your work.*

But is this really possible? Before Shabbos, perhaps you're in the middle of a business deal, you're applying for a job, or you are trying

to find something you lost. Shabbos comes, and suddenly you're finished with all of it? How can a person do that? By incorporating the energy of *menuchah*. The energy of באה שבת באה מנוחה is to be able to separate from the mundane, כאילו מלאכתך עשויה, as if all your work is done. Finished. There is nothing left to worry about.

My Brother

Let me give you an example of true *menuchas hanefesh*. A number of years ago, I lost a brother. My brother passed away, *yehi zichro baruch*, and for the first time, I sat *shivah.* And then Shabbos came. When sitting *shivah* and Shabbos comes, you have to pick yourself up and keep Shabbos.

My mother went to light the candles and she started crying. A tragedy had occurred; she had lost a child. It was her first candlelighting since his passing, and candlelighting is the time that women are *mispallel* for their children.

My father called her aside and very gently told her, "Yes, we're in the middle of *shivah*, but now it's Shabbos. Tomorrow night, after Havdalah, we'll resume *shivah* and it'll be time to cry, but now it's Shabbos and now we put it aside."

That's Shabbos. Shabbos is a time you detach yourself. You put everything aside. You have worries; you have things you're busy with. But when you put them aside, that's *menuchah*.

With Love

The *Noam Elimelech* (*Parshas Ki Savo*) writes that the feeling of *ahavah*, of being loved, comes from Shabbos. The *avodah* of Shabbos is *ahavah*, which is why in *Shemoneh Esrei* we say "*b'ahavah.*" When Yom Tov falls on Shabbos, we add the word "*b'ahavah.*" Shabbos is *ahavah* because when one feels *ahavah* to and from *Hashem,* it brings him tranquility. And if you're not tranquil, if you're not peaceful, if you're in a state of *behalah*, you can't feel that *ahavah.*

All week, we count toward Shabbos, saying, "*Hayom yom rishon b'Shabbos*, *yom sheini b'Shabbos*…" We hope to pull a little of that Shabbos — that *menuchah* — into our week, because the source of *menuchah* is Shabbos. We have to take a little bit of the *hashpa'ah* of Shabbos, the training a Yid gets through Shabbos, into our week.

On Erev Shabbos there is a tremendous tumult; there is always a rush. And then you light the candles and it's over; quiet sets in. It's not a mitzvah to be in a rush, it's not a mitzvah to be in tumult, but that's Erev Shabbos. Tumult, rush, everything has to get done in time. The *zman comes*, you light the candles, and no more. Tranquility.

We have to teach ourselves to pull that *hashpa'ah* into the week. We lack *menuchas hanefesh* because we don't have the tranquility to separate ourselves from the things that disturb us, from the things that keep us busy.

Stop "*Yasoming*"

A young *bachur* I was very close to suffered a tragedy. He lost his father, with whom he had been very close, very suddenly in an automobile accident. For many years afterward, he couldn't pull himself together. He did what he had to do, but inside he was torn. It disturbed him, and we spoke about it often. Tears would come to his eyes, and it was very difficult, even after many years had passed.

When he reached the age where he was going to start dating, he asked me, "How am I going to get married? I'm upset inside and I can't handle it."

I told him, "You became a *yasom* a few years ago, and since then, you've been *yasoming*. It's time to stop *yasoming*. You're finished *yasoming;* you have to put it aside."

Now, I don't say people should talk to a *yasom* this way, but I was close enough to him that I took the chance. And the message hit

home. As difficult as it was for him, he detached himself. Not totally, but he was able to separate his current life from the *tzarah* that had happened to him. At last, he began to feel *menuchas hanefesh*. Not instantly, but he worked on it, what we called "stop *yasoming*," and he was able to put his life together.

That's a person dealing with a tragedy. How many people have things of lesser importance in their lives, and yet they can't reach *menuchas hanefesh,* because they don't know this secret? יהא בעיניך כאילו מלאכתך עשוי.

You have a business and you have many things to do; if there were twenty-five hours in a day, you couldn't do it all. But there comes a time when you go home to your family. People come home, but their head is still in the business. They are in a state of *behalah*. Stop being a businessman. Detach yourself. True, there are things waiting. But you know what's right. The right thing is to go to your family and talk to your children, talk to your spouse peacefully, focusing on the conversation. That's what *menuchas hanefesh* means, to detach yourself. That's the *sod* of Shabbos; that's the secret of *menuchas hanefesh*.

באה שבת באה מנוחה. A Yid has the *avodah* of *menuchas hanefesh*. If you don't learn how to do it, your Shabbos is disturbed, your learning is disturbed, your *shalom bayis* is disturbed. *Bilbul hada'as* is the enemy of any constructive spirituality.

באה שבת באה מנוחה. A person has to be able to separate himself and be *zocheh* that the Ribono Shel Olam should give us, מנוחת אהבה, מנוחת שלום ושלווה, מנוחת שלימה שאתה רוצה בה. What's מנוחת שלימה — complete *menuchah*? That comes when we train ourselves to live our lives כאילו כל מלאכתך עשוי.

THE NESHAMAH OF THE WORLD

Shabbos With Harav Yisroel Belsky

Shabbos is mentioned twice in connection with the Mishkan. In *Parshas Ki Sisa*, the prohibition of *melachah,* of performing a creative intentional action on Shabbos, is mentioned directly after the command to build the Mishkan. ln *Parshas Vayakhel*, Shabbos is mentioned first, followed by the construction of the Mishkan. The basic lesson is that building the Mishkan was so important that the Torah had to stress the sanctity of Shabbos to emphasize that the work of the Mishkan was not to be done on Shabbos Kodesh. "Let Shabbos not be inconsequential in your eyes," Rashi explains.

The relationship between Shabbos and *meleches ha'Mishkan* does not stop there. The creative acts that were required in the construction of the Mishkan are the very same acts proscribed on Shabbos. We even learn the nature of the forbidden *melachos Shabbos* from the process of constructing the Mishkan. Additionally, both Shabbos and the Mishkan are an *os,* a sign of the special relationship between the Jewish people and Hakadosh Baruch Hu. It is important to appreciate that this relationship has a still deeper level, for Shabbos and the Mishkan are inextricably linked and wholly interdependent.

In the Torah there are spaces between the separate *parshiyos*. Rashi (*Vayikra* 1:1) tells us that Hashem would call to Moshe Rabbeinu before the transmission of every segment of Torah, and then Moshe was given a period of silence, a *revach,* in which to contemplate what Hashem had told him. This is signified by the empty spaces that divide each *parshah* in the Torah.

Moshe Rabbeinu attained total understanding of the Torah, subject by subject, by first encountering the *dibbur,* the word of Hashem, struggling to understand the significance of every word and phrase as it was spoken to him by Hakadosh Baruch Hu. This was followed by a pause, a space when Moshe Rabbeinu would rest and absorb the lesson that he had learned. Thus, the active, intense encounter with the *dibbur* was followed by a passive state of receptiveness. The combination of both modes of learning — one active and one passive — produced understanding.

The relationship between Shabbos and the rest of the week follows a similar pattern. Six days a person works, and then on Shabbos the week's *avodah* is transformed into an outpouring of Heavenly blessing. In the words of the *Zohar Hakodesh*, *All the blessings Above and below are dependent on the Seventh day*. A farmer plows and sows, then waits for the fruits of his crop to sprout and ripen. So, too, a Jew exerts himself in all his endeavors for six days, and on Shabbos he rests, absorbing the effect of his labors. Shabbos is the *neshamah* of the world.

These two phases were reflected in the *mann* that Klal Yisrael ate in the Midbar. It is written, ויברך אלוקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו — *And God blessed the Seventh day and sanctified it* (*Bereishis* 2:3). Rashi explains that Hashem ברכו במן — *blessed Shabbos with the mann*, by causing a double portion of the Heavenly bread to fall on Erev Shabbos, וקדשו במן — *and He sanctified Shabbos through the mann*, through the absence of *mann* on Shabbos itself. Both the double portion of *mann* before Shabbos, and the fact that it did not appear on Shabbos, lead to the recognition that, ראו כי ה' נתן לכם השבת על כן הוא נותן לכם ביום הששי לחם יומים — *See, for Hashem has given you the Shabbos, therefore, He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days* (*Shemos* 16:29).

Thus, the relationship between Shabbos and the rest of the week also reflects the relationship between *dibbur* and *revach,* and both contribute in their own ways to *hashra'as haShechinah,* bringing the Divine Presence to dwell in Klal Yisrael.

In the world of action, the endeavor that brought *hashra'as haShechinah* in the most substantial and tangible way was the construction of the Mishkan, through which every creative act contributed directly toward a structure that would reveal Hashem's Presence in its most intense form. This characteristic was also shared by the *avodah* performed within the Mishkan. The *korbanos* forged and strengthened Klal Yisrael's relationship with Hashem in the most immediate way possible.

In the Mishkan, the necessary conditions were created for *hashra'as haShechinah,* the dwelling of Divine Presence among the Jewish people, and this was accomplished by performing the thirty-nine categories of labor *(lamed tes melachos),* harnessing every creative act as a direct action performed with the intention to connect with the Ribono Shel Olam. The Mishkan can be compared to the *dibbur;* it was a place of intense action through which the goal of *hashra'as haShechinah* was attained.

The Mishkan, the pinnacle of the world of action, and Shabbos, the day of rest, complement each other in the same way as *dibbur* and *revach*. They are two paths by which we can come to *ruchniyus*. In the Mishkan, *ruchniyus* is attained by intense *avodah*, and through Shabbos, *ruchniyus* is attained through no effort at all, indeed, by refraining from all *melachah*. Depending on the circumstances, *melachos* can create *ruchniyus* either by performing them, or by abstaining from performing them. The Mishkan is the element that creates *ruchniyus* through the *avodah* of the *lamed tes melachos,* while Shabbos is the source of *ruchniyus* attained by

resting from *melachah*, and in doing so, allowing Hashem's blessing to permeate our whole being.

This is the reason why in *Parshas Terumah* it was necessary first to describe the Mishkan and all its vessels, and only then to discuss the sanctity of Shabbos. For to know what one must desist from on Shabbos, it is first necessary to know what one must attempt to accomplish during the remainder of the week. To understand the nature and meaning of rest, we must understand the nature and meaning of the creative acts that constitute work.

Within the multifaceted nature of earthly existence, Shabbos and the Mishkan reveal the unity within the workings of the world. There is a unity of purpose and interdependence between *kodesh* and *chol,* activity and rest.

Kedushas Shabbos is defined as the abstention from the *melachos* performed during *chol*. Therefore, Shabbos is not merely a separation from the physical world of *chol*, but rather elevates the *chol* and indicates that whatever is forbidden on Shabbos is to be utilized the remainder of the week to accomplish the same goal.

Similarly, the Mishkan demonstrates that the primary function of the *melachos* is to construct an edifice that can act as a conduit for the *Shechinah*. With these very *melachos* we also grow food, build dwellings, make clothing, as well as *tzitzis*, *tefillin*, and *sifrei Torah*, until even our most basic physical functions are dedicated totally to raising the world through Torah and mitzvos.

In *Parshas Pikudei*, Shabbos is mentioned first, for the work of the Mishkan had been completed; all that was lacking was the final hammer blow: the final assembly and preparations made by Moshe Rabbeinu, by which the Mishkan became ready

to fulfill its purpose. Therefore, the pause, the *revach* of Shabbos comes first, giving a moment of contemplation before the entire structure takes form and begins to operate.

Thus, we see that the goal of uniting Klal Yisrael with Hakadosh Baruch Hu is common to both Shabbos and the Mishkan. Each in its own way leads a person to become aware that he is truly *davuk,* connected to the Ribono Shel Olam, and that this can be achieved both through active and passive means, thus leaving no aspect of life that cannot be elevated through our constant and devoted *avodas Hashem*.

THE KING AND I - APPRECIATING SHABBOS

Shabbos With Harav Zev Smith

The Gemara (*Kesubos* 103a) relates that after Rebbi Yehudah Hanasi was *niftar*, he would return home every Shabbos to be with his family.

Rav Pam made the following observation about this remarkable Gemara:

Who can imagine the *lichtigeh Gan Eden*, the exalted, glorious *Olam Haba*, of Rebbe Yehudah Hanasi? And yet every week he departed Gan Eden in order to spend Shabbos in this world. It seems that Rebbe Yehudah Hanasi enjoyed Shabbos more than Gan Eden.

In the Shabbos *zemiros*, we sing, יוֹם שַׁבָּת מְנוּחָה, מֵעֵין עוֹלָם הַבָּא. Shabbos is described as a taste, a semblance, of *Olam Haba*. But if Rebbe Yehudah Hanasi was willing to give up *Olam Haba* for Shabbos, then obviously Shabbos can be even greater than *Olam Haba*.

It is no wonder, then, that Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu (*Beitzah* 16a): מַתָּנָה טוֹבָה יֶשׁ לִי בְּבֵית גְּנָזַי וְשַׁבָּת שְׁמָהּ — *I have a wonderful gift in My storehouse of treasures whose name is Shabbos.*

Hashem describes Shabbos as a wonderful gift.

What is it that makes Shabbos so extraordinary? What is the nature of this wonderful gift that we have received from Hashem?

Refresher Course

I once met a cousin of mine, a man in his fifties. He told me, "You are not going to believe this, but I am back in school!"

He was right; I did not believe it. Why was a fifty-year-old back in school? He explained: His company sent him for a refresher course, to update him on new developments in his field. Companies spend a significant amount of money for their employees to take these courses. They know that their employees will be more efficient and productive if they are up-to-date with the latest technology and advancements in their line of work. By investing in their employees' courses, they will be enhancing the quality of their work in the long run.

We *Yidden* also need refresher courses in areas of *Yiddishkeit*. Perhaps, we should have a refresher course reminding us of the true gift of Shabbos.

Shabbos comprises almost 20 percent of our lives. Between *hadlakas neiros* and Havdalah, Shabbos itself is close to twenty-six hours. When we factor in the Shabbos preparations, cleaning up after Shabbos, and *melaveh malkah*, we spend close to 20 percent of our week busy with Shabbos. Are we capitalizing on this wonderful gift?

We say in *Kabbalas Shabbos*: לִקְרַאת שַׁבָּת לְכוּ וְנֵלְכָה, כִּי הִיא מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה — *Toward Shabbos we shall go, for she is the source of our blessing*. Shabbos is the source, the wellspring, of blessing from which all of our weekday success is derived. As the *Zohar* (2:88) phrases it: כָּל בִּרְכָאִין דִּלְעֵילָּא וְתַתָּאָה בְּיוֹמָא שְׁבִיעָאָה תַּלְיִין — *All the brachos of the week are dependent on Shabbos*.

We must take advantage of this unique gift. Let us learn about Shabbos so we can make the most of it. There's so much *brachah*

contained within it. To fully describe the greatness of Shabbos would indeed require a full-length book, authored by someone much greater than myself. Nevertheless, I would like to discuss a few important points that can enhance our *avodah* on this holy day.

A Day Spent with Hashem

Rav Shimshon Pincus once asked a thought-provoking question. Every Yom Tov has its identity, with its own unique characteristics. Sukkos is *zman simchaseinu*; Pesach is *zman cheiruseinu*; and Shavuos is *zman Mattan Torahseinu*. If we would have to describe Shabbos, what would we say? Shabbos is *zman* what? What is the distinctiveness of Shabbos?

Suggested Rav Pincus: Shabbos is a *yom im Hakadosh Baruch Hu* — a day spent with Hashem. That is the essence of Shabbos.

Allow me explain: The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119b) says that whoever recites "וַיְכֻלּוּ" on Friday night, נַעֲשֶׂה שׁוּתָּף עִם הקב"ה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית — *becomes a partner with Hashem in creation*. That is one objective of Shabbos, to strengthen our *emunah* in Hashem's creation of the world.

Then, after we recite the passage of וַיְכֻלּוּ, we recite Kiddush that identifies Shabbos as *zecher l' Yetzias Mitzrayim.* Thus, Shabbos is also a restatement of our belief in the exodus from Mitzrayim, and this complements the aspect of *zecher l'Ma'aseh Bereishis*. *Ma'aseh Bereishis* and *Yetzias Mitzrayim* are the two cornerstones — the two wellsprings — of our *emunah*. Shabbos is a "double dose" of *emunah*; a day that is meant to re-energize our *emunah chushis* in Hashem and all His wonders.

The *Ramban* (*Shemos* 20:8), the *Chinuch* (mitzvah 32), and the *Radak* (*Yirmiyahu* 17:24) all say that Shabbos is a key ingredient of our *emunah*.

Hilchos Shabbos

The more one learns about Shabbos, the more one comprehends how accurate it is that Shabbos is *yom im Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. Here are a few examples:

* The Gemara teaches that a non-Jew may not keep Shabbos; in fact, a non-Jew who keeps Shabbos is liable to the death penalty. Why is that? A non-Jew, of course, is not *obligated* to keep Shabbos, but why is he *forbidden* to do so? One is allowed to perform a mitzvah that he is not required to do. For example, many mitzvos are not obligatory for women, but, nevertheless, women may perform these mitzvos.

The *Midrash* (*Shemos* 25:1, *Devarim* 1:21) answers: A non-Jew who keeps Shabbos is an interloper; he is compared to someone who intrudes on the king and queen in the middle of a private and intimate conversation. Shabbos is a day בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, a day that Hashem spends privately with Klal Yisrael. Non-Jews may not interrupt, and may not disturb that intimacy.

* There are numerous *halachos* regarding proper speech on Shabbos. For example, on Shabbos it is forbidden to talk of mundane weekday matters. Why? The *Zohar* (*Beshalach* 47b) explains that when sitting with the king, we discuss only important topics. It is disrespectful to the king to focus on mundane, everyday matters.

* The Brisker Rav (*Parshas Yisro*) points out numerous parallels between the *kabbalas Pnei HaShechinah* and *Kabbalas Shabbos*. Evidently, as we accept Shabbos we are preparing to spend a day with Hashem.

The Brisker Rav would usually *daven* Minchah early in the afternoon; therefore, on Fridays, he would not necessarily go to shul before Shabbos. Often, he would be at home when Shabbos began.

One Friday afternoon, the Brisker Rav was at home speaking in learning with a visitor. When Shabbos began, the Brisker Rav excused himself, stood up, put on his hat, and recited *Kabbalas Shabbos*.

His visitor asked, "Does *Kabbalas Shabbos* have the status of a *tefillah* such that one is required to wear a hat when he recites it?"

The Brisker Rav answered incredulously, "When one goes out to greet the king, doesn't he put on his hat?" (see *Shabbos* 119).

The point of the story is not that the Brisker Rav wore his hat, but *why* he wore his hat. His *Kabbalas Shabbos* was genuine; he was going to greet the King. We too can utilize *Kabbalas Shabbos* to draw Hashem into our lives in a more tangible way. The way to appreciate Shabbos is to experience and explore the greatness of spending one day a week with the King of all kings.

A Shabbos Yid

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119b) teaches us that when a person returns home from shul on Friday night, two *malachim* escort him. This is the source of our *minhag* to sing the *Shalom Aleichem*. We welcome the *malachim* into our home, "בּוֹאֲכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם — *Come in peace.*"

However, the Gemara (*Brachos* 60b) says that before a person enters the bathroom he should recite a specific phrase, because every person is constantly accompanied by *malachim*, and he must apologize and take leave of them before entering the bathroom. The *Shulchan Aruch* (3:1) rules that this phrase is no longer recited, because we are not on the level to merit being escorted by *malachim* and it would be presumptuous (יוּהָרָא) to recite it (see *Beis Yosef* ibid.).

The question is obvious. If we no longer have the privilege of being escorted by *malachim*, why do we sing *Shalom Aleichem* to welcome the *malachim*?

The answer is simple: A Jew on Shabbos is on a unique level, one that he cannot attain during the week. A Jew on Shabbos is not a simple person, he is a different person altogether. He has a *neshamah yeseirah*. He is experiencing a day with Hashem. He is a partner with Hashem Himself.

In fact, the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Ma'aser* 12:1) writes, *Even an ignoramus fears the Shabbos and doesn't sin on Shabbos*. Shabbos has that uplifting potential to change even an ignoramus. He becomes a Shabbos Yid.

The Shabbos Yid is able to have two *malachim* escort him. He is able to say, "I, simple, little, old me, have two *malachim* escorting me. Greetings! שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת!"

Experiencing Shabbos

The Shabbos Yid is different because he is spending a day with Hashem. What does this mean on a practical level?

During the week, we often find ourselves in a world that is so accurately described in *Koheles* (1:2) as: הֲבֵל הֲבָלִים הַכֹּל הָבֶל — *Futility of futilities, all is futile*. We are surrounded by the hustle and bustle of a world focused on *gashmiyus*, and so alien to *ruchniyus*.

But then Shabbos arrives; we take a vacation from the emptiness of this world and we devote ourselves to Hashem. A day spent with Hashem means, on a practical level, a day spent *davening*, learning Torah, and singing praises to Hashem.

An old European Yid once told me, "In Europe, *mir hoben nisht gemacht kein leben* — we couldn't make a living; *ober mir hoben gelebt* — but we lived!" On the other hand, in America, "*Mir macht a leben* — we make a living; *ober ver lebt* — but who is really living?"

During the week, we may not have the time or the focus for true "living." But on Shabbos, there is no excuse. Then the world

stops, and we do what we are meant to be doing the entire week. On Shabbos we stop making a living and we start living.

The *Ramban* (*Shemos* 20:8) describes Shabbos as: יוֹם קָדוֹשׁ לְהִתְפַּנּוֹת מֵעִסְקֵי הַמַּחְשָׁבוֹת וְהַבְלֵי הַזְּמַנִּים, וְלָתֵת בּוֹ עוֹנֶג לְנַפְשֵׁנוּ בְּדַרְכֵי ה׳ — *A holy day when we disconnect from mundane activities and give our neshamos a treat in the ways of Hashem.*

Sometimes, during the week, our *neshamos* are starving. But Shabbos is a day of וַאֲנִי קִרְבַת אֱלֹקִים לִי טוֹב — *For me, being close to Hashem is goodness*; a day of צָמְאָה לְךָ נַפְשִׁי — *My soul thirsts for You*. Throughout the week, we can barely squeeze in the minimum time needed for *davening*. But when Shabbos comes, we do not even notice the longer *Pesukei D'zimra*, *Birchos Krias Shema*, or the extra *tefillah* of *Mussaf*. On Shabbos we enjoy an unhurried, meaningful *davening*.

There's an incredible *lashon* of the *Zohar* (*Tikunei Zohar* 21):

תְּפִילַת שַׁבָּת אֵינָהּ חוֹזֶרֶת רֵיקָם — *A Shabbos tefillah never goes unanswered,*

אֶלָּא מִתְקַבֶּלֶת בְּרָצוֹן כְּמוֹ תְּפִילַת עֲשֶׂרֶת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה — *rather it is accepted willingly just as a tefillah during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.*

This is part of the gift of Shabbos: even our *davening* has a special power because Hashem is close to us, just as He is during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah.

The *Shir Shel Yom* of Shabbos is מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת (*Tehillim* 92). The next *pasuk* says: טוֹב לְהֹדוֹת לַה׳ וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֶלְיוֹן — *It is good to thank Hashem and to sing praise to Your Name, O Exalted One.*

The *Radak* wonders, is it only on Shabbos that it is good to praise Hashem and to sing to His Name?

The *Radak* answers that Shabbos is more conducive for prayer and song:

כִּי הָאָדָם פָּנוּי בּוֹ מֵעִסְקֵי הָעוֹלָם — *Because a person is not preoccupied with worldly activities,*

וְנִשְׁמָתוֹ זַכָּה מִטְּרָדַת הַגּוּף — *and his neshamah is pure, more elevated,*

מִתְעַסֶּקֶת בְּחָכְמָה וּבַעֲבוֹדַת אֱלוֹקִים — *and he is able to focus on wisdom and serving Hashem.*

On Shabbos our *neshamos* are not starving; they are bursting with feelings of love of Hashem. The *davening*, the *zemiros*, and everything else express our innermost desire of the theme of the day with Hashem — טוֹב לְהֹדוֹת לַה׳.

Above all else, Shabbos is an opportunity to learn more Torah, both alone and with our children. It is a time to do what we don't have enough time for during the week.

The Gemara (*Gittin* 38b) provides three reasons why wealthy *baalei batim* lost their wealth. One of them is because they ate their Shabbos *seudah* during the time when the public Shabbos *drashah* was being said in the *beis midrash*. Instead of attending the *shiur*, they busied themselves with their *seudas Shabbos*.

The Chofetz Chaim in *Mishnah Berurah* (290:7) notes that these *baalei batim* weren't wasting time. They were not engaged in idleness or unbecoming activities. On the contrary, they were engaged in the mitzvah of enjoying the required Shabbos meal. Nevertheless, fault is to be found in their actions because by so doing they infringed upon the learning time of Shabbos. Shabbos is a day when we are meant to reconnect to our learning, and these *Yidden* compromised some of that time.

The *Ben Ish Chai* (*Shemos,* preface year II) quotes *mekubalim* who say that Torah learning on Shabbos is a thousand times more precious than weekday learning. Can such precious moments be squandered, albeit with *seudas Shabbos*?

Don't Waste a Minute

The *Meiri* (*Shabbos* 150a) writes:

הַיּוֹם כּוּלוֹ קָדוֹשׁ לַה' — *Shabbos is a day that is entirely holy to Hashem,*

וְאֵיךְ יוֹצִיא קוֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים לְחוּלִין — *so how can one take something that is the "holy of holies" and place it into the realm of the mundane?*

We must not take Shabbos, the ultimate *kedushah*, and waste it.

I recall Rav Pam repeating the following *Midrash* (*Bereishis* 22:13) with great emotion: Adam Harishon was created on the sixth day, and sinned that same day, toward evening. He was supposed to be punished for his sin immediately, but it was already Shabbos, and Shabbos pleaded to Hashem:

"Ribono Shel Olam! Today is Shabbos! Are You going to punish Adam Harishon on my day? זוּ הִיא קְדוּשָׁתִי — *Is that my kedushah?* זוּ הִיא בְּרָכָתִי — *Is that my brachah?* Is this what you make of me? That on my day the first punishment is given? Is that the *brachah* that you planted within me, the holy day of Shabbos?"

Rav Pam would say, "Sometimes a person has to stop and think when he is doing something — זוּ הִיא קְדוּשָׁתִי? Is this what Shabbos is all about? Is this the *brachah* of Shabbos?"

The *Midrash* (*Eichah* 2:4) says that a city in Eretz Yisrael named Tor Shimon was destroyed because the people of the city played ball on Shabbos. I have no doubt that the people of Tor Shimon were not being *mechallel Shabbos*. I am certain that they played indoors, or within an *eruv*, and that the ball they used was not *muktzeh* (see *Rema* 308:45, and *Ketzos Hashulchan* 110:16). So what was their grave sin? They were *mechallel "kedushas" Shabbos*; they reduced the sanctity of Shabbos. They took the lofty day of Shabbos and used it to play ball. And Shabbos cried, "זוּ הִיא קְדוּשָׁתִי?"

We must always remember the special potential of Shabbos *davening* and learning, on a day that even an ignoramus can't sin. Let us imagine Shabbos calling out with great joy and excitement, "זוּ הִיא קְדוּשָׁתִי בֵּרַכְתִּי! זוּ הִיא!" Look at the potential of my day. Take advantage of this day of קוֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים.

Time with the King

Even before Shabbos actually begins, our preparation for the holy day of Shabbos should also reflect — in a practical way — our appreciation that Shabbos is our special day spent together with Hashem.

We know that we must complete all of our Shabbos preparations before the onset of Shabbos, because on Shabbos it is prohibited to cook food and do many of the other necessary preparations. This seems to be illogical. If Shabbos is such a special day, would it not be appropriate that we eat the freshest food possible? Why is Shabbos structured in such a way that we are not allowed to do so?

The following *mashal* will help us understand this, and the essence of Shabbos.

There was a poor man who struggled mightily to support himself and to meet his family's needs. The king of the land, who was righteous and benevolent, took a personal interest in all his subjects. He heard of this particular poor man's plight and wanted to help him.

One day, a uniformed messenger appeared at the poor man's door.

"His Royal Highness, the king himself, will be coming to visit you in your home on the following date, one week hence. Prepare yourself and your home for this royal visit."