



SHABBOS REST

— it's effortless

Keeping Shabbos is about more than just going through the motions, refraining from doing this and being sure to do that — it's an entire shift in our outlook. It's about seeing Hashem and our place in His world in a completely different way, redefining every day of the week in relation to Shabbos, while Shabbos redefines the work that we do each day | BY ROBERT SUSSMAN

THE FIRST MITZVAH THAT WE RECEIVED AFTER going out from Egypt was the *mitzvah* of Shabbos. The commandment to keep Shabbos came in connection with the *manna*, the miraculous food from heaven that descended during our forty-year journey in the *midbar* (wilderness).

"And it was on the sixth day, they gathered a double portion of bread, two *omer*¹ measures for each person [their intention was to gather an ordinary portion, ie. a single *omer* measure of *manna*, and they found a double portion instead]; and all the leaders of the assembly came and reported it to Moshe." Rashi explains that, "[The leaders] asked [Moshe], 'Why is this day different from other days?' From here, we learn that Moshe had not yet told them about Shabbos." Immediately after this, Moshe told them about the *mitzvah* of Shabbos: "So said Hashem, 'Tomorrow is a rest day, a holy Shabbos for Hashem ...'"²

“HOW IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO REACH A LEVEL OF NOT THINKING ABOUT WORK ON SHABBOS?”

CONNECTED FROM THE BEGINNING

Why was the *mitzvah* of Shabbos commanded in connection with the *manna*?

At first glance we might think that it was only due to a practical reason: were it not for the commandment of Shabbos, the people naturally would have also gone out to collect *manna* on Shabbos like every other day of the week; therefore, it was necessary that the people be warned now about the prohibition of going out on Shabbos³ (ie. in search of the *manna*, which fell closer for some and farther for others), and be informed that, because of the holiness of Shabbos, the *manna* would not fall on it, as it did on every other weekday.

But, this actually wasn't the case at all. Regarding the creation of the world, the Torah said⁴, “G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it,” and Rashi explains, “He blessed it with *manna*, so that on all the days of the week an *omer* measure of *manna* per person descended, but, on the sixth day (Friday), there was a double portion (in honour of Shabbos). And He sanctified it with *manna*, so that the *manna* did not descend on Shabbos at all. This verse was written with reference to the future.”

We see already by the creation of the world that a connection was established between Shabbos and the *manna*, which is why they were later given together. So, what is the connection between Shabbos and the *manna*, and what can we learn from this?

AS IF ALL YOUR WORK IS DONE

The Torah says⁵, “And G-d completed on the seventh day His work that He had done.” But did Hashem finish all of His work on the seventh day?! Surely, He already finished His work on the sixth day?! Rashi explains that the world was lacking rest; with the coming of Shabbos came rest, and the work was completed, thereby giving perfection to the creation.

In the commandment of Shabbos in the Ten Commandments it says⁶, “Six

days you shall work, and do all your labour. And the seventh day, Shabbos, will be for Hashem, your G-d, you shall not do any work...” But what does working six days have to do with resting on Shabbos? And how can the verse say “and do all your labour” – is it possible to do “all” of our labour in just six days?

With the entrance of Shabbos, a person stops doing his work, but he certainly hasn't finished it all, and, after Shabbos concludes, he will return to his work and continue doing it – so, how is it possible to say “and do all your labour”? Rather, Rashi explains⁷, “When Shabbos comes, it will be in your eyes as if all of your work has been done, so that you will not think about your work.”

On Shabbos, it's not sufficient to just “not do”; it's also necessary to rest from even thinking thoughts regarding matters of work. And, even though in terms of halacha thinking about work is not actually prohibited⁸, this is not true Shabbos rest. How is it possible for us to reach a level of not thinking about work on Shabbos? The answer is right there in Rashi's comment: “It will be in your eyes as if all of your work is done!” We must imagine *as if* we completed our work already, even if we are in the middle of an important project and our boss is breathing down our neck – we must view it as if we had finished it completely, putting the matter entirely out of our mind!

But what good is this advice? Do we really have to deceive ourselves by thinking that we completed our work?

If a man stops from working but is still full of thoughts and plans about what he needs to do, his “rest” is not really rest. When does rest come about? As we see from the creation of the world, Hashem first needed to complete all that was necessary for the creation, to bring the creation to perfection – only then could rest come. An exterior appearance of “rest” is

insufficient; only the calm of a person's inner soul, which comes, as we see from the creation, from completion, from finishing, only this is true rest.

WHY DO WE NEED TO WORK AT ALL?

Originally, Adam HaRishon (the first man) did not need to exert any significant effort⁹ for his sustenance. It was only as a result of Adam's sin with the *etz hadaas* (the tree of knowledge) that man became obligated to exert real effort for his sustenance – to work: “...by the sweat of your brow you will eat bread.”¹⁰ Our Sages¹¹ teach that Hashem's decree regarding this was like “a levy from which the entire human race cannot escape.” Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler further explains, “Since the entire matter of effort [which a man must exert for his sustenance] is only a punishment and a curse, comparable to paying a levy, that is why it's good for a man to diminish from the curse [ie. minimise his efforts to sustain himself] as much as possible.” [*The Torah's perspective on work generally – including that work is meritorious and something that a person should love, as well as that a person should avoid being idle – is beyond the scope of this article.*¹²]

Man's test in this world is to know and to recognise the truth: that Hashem is the one who did, does, and will do everything, whereas a man's efforts in terms of earning a livelihood, ie. working, are solely to fulfil the obligation that resulted from the decree against Adam HaRishon.

G-D SAYS WORK; G-D SAYS STOP WORKING

Shabbos grants us this view that “all” of our work is “done”. This is what the verse is commanding, “...and do all your labour”. What is “our labour”? To put forth effort and no further! Perhaps we'll fear: how can we stop in the middle of our work? We have to know that this is Hashem's issue to deal with. We are not the ones who make things happen. It's only imposed upon us to do so much; the doing on our part is only the effort that we must

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exert. Since Hashem does not want us to make any such efforts on Shabbos, it's for us to see it as though we finished “all” that we “needed” to do on our part.

When a person recognises that Hashem is the Creator of the world and that everything is in His hands, and he only has to fulfil the decree of putting forth effort, then he knows that working during the six days is all that's imposed on him, and this is what brings him to the point where he can avoid thinking about work on Shabbos. A person doesn't need to think, or, chas v'shalom, worry about what will be, because all of the consequences are in the hands of Hashem. Therefore, it truly is “as if all your work is done” – rather than some sort of self-delusion, it's actually a level of emunah (faith) and bitachon (trust) that Hashem will produce the result. Or, to put it simply: the same G-d who tells us to work also tells us to stop working and to rest!

SPREADING THE INFLUENCE OF SHABBOS

We need to draw from Shabbos and spread its influence on the rest of the days of the week on which we can do work, directing all of the days of the week towards Shabbos and taking care to arrange matters with this view that, when we reach Shabbos, we're able to not think about our work.

When it comes to work, we must be content with doing the minimum that is necessary, viewing the effort that we put forth as comparable to paying a tax – and no one wants to pay more tax than necessary. If we can succeed in developing an outlook of being content with doing the minimum, then, when we arrive at Shabbos, at a time when it's not necessary for us to put forth effort, we will not be pained by this, but just the opposite, we'll rejoice. We must view ourselves like slaves who work against their will, doing only what is imposed upon them and no further. *[To be clear, a person is not meant to just sit idle either, and our Sages are very critical of doing so. Ideally, a person is meant to be involved with Torah, first and foremost, and that obligation should only be interrupted to the extent that he needs to earn a living.^{13]}*

Therefore, in the six days leading up to Shabbos each week, we have to recognise and prepare ourselves that, with reaching the day of Shabbos, it is possible to disconnect from work – to the point that we don't even think about it during Shabbos.

EXTRA EFFORT DOESN'T HELP US

A person, who is not able to disengage from the limited effort required of him

and to abstain from increasing in it always thinks that he needs to put forth more and more effort. Such a person, who places his trust in his own efforts, thinks that he profits through them, through his diligence. But this is entirely false. When it came to the *manna*, all the effort in the world didn't help. Whether one laboured much or little, each person received the exact same amount. And a person was prohibited from leaving any of the *manna* over for the next weekday – he could not hoard it in order to rely on it in the future.

When it comes to putting forth effort, we naturally think that if a little bit is useful, then a lot is even better, so that we can build a good and promising future for ourselves. The *manna*, however, teaches us that a person is not able to trust in the future, because the bracha (blessing) is from Hashem's hand every day. A person receives what he needs for today. What will be tomorrow? This is not our concern, but Hashem's; just as He gave to us today, so too He will grant us a blessing anew tomorrow.

A person who thinks that he is the one who makes things happen thinks that he needs to act also for the sake of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow – for the sake of another 10 and even 20 years ahead – but, in truth, Hashem is the one who gives, each and every day anew.

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SHABBOS AND THE MANNA

This is the connection between Shabbos and the *manna*: *manna* teaches the essence of Shabbos. Just as *manna* proves Hashem is the Creator and the one who sustains us, so too our resting on Shabbos, our ceasing from our labour and our own efforts to sustain ourselves demonstrates our complete recognition and trust in Hashem, that it is really He who sustains us. As we say in our davening¹⁴ on Shabbos, "Your children will recognise that, from You is their rest." We need to recognise that rest is only from Hashem – a result of trusting in Him and realising that we work when He says to work and we stop working and rest when He says to rest.

Just as Hashem decreed that we must put forth effort during the six days of the week, He also decreed that we must not put forth effort on Shabbos, in recognition that everything comes from Him – that He is the source of all bracha. Shabbos is the root of blessing and from Shabbos all the other days of the week

are blessed. The blessing of the *manna* came precisely because of Shabbos, and it was most apparent on erev Shabbos (on the eve of Shabbos), when two days' worth of bread fell.

On Shabbos, it's possible to understand and to feel the words of our Sages¹⁵ that, "A man cannot touch what has been prepared for his friend, even so much as a hairsbreadth." We must not put forth additional effort in vain in the hope of receiving more. True spiritual rest is "rejoicing in one's portion"¹⁶ such that one doesn't worry – not about the future, not about another person, not about anything – because he feels close to and trusts in Hashem.

Even though the influence of Shabbos descends from above, it requires work from our side in order to receive it. The Torah says¹⁷, "The Children of Israel will guard the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos..." Shabbos rest is possible to reach only if we "make" Shabbos. The holiness of Shabbos is an opportunity to receive an emanation of blessing from Hashem,

but we must prepare a vessel that's fit to receive and hold this blessing. **III**

Adapted from a sicha by the Sifsei Chaim, Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, ztz"l.

¹⁴A single *omer* measure was equivalent to approximately 2.5 litres. See *Aiding Talmud Study* by Aryeh Carmell, Feldheim, 1991.

¹⁵Shemos 16:22-23

¹⁶A reference to the *t'chum* - the 2 000 amos (handbreadth) boundary that extends beyond the city limits, and beyond which a person cannot walk on Shabbos.

¹⁷Bereishis 2:3

¹⁸Bereishis 2:2

¹⁹Shemos 20:9-10

²⁰Based on the Mechilta

²¹See Shulchan Aruch OC 306:8 which states that, "Thinking about work is permitted. Nevertheless, because of oneg (enjoyment of) Shabbos, it is a *mitzvah* to not think about [work] at all and it will be in his eyes as if all his work is done."

²²Precisely what Adam's "work" consisted of is a matter of debate among our Sages.

²³Bereishis 3:19

²⁴See Mesilas Yesharim 21

²⁵For a proper treatment of the subject, see *Torah Study* by Yehudah Levi, Feldheim, 1990.

²⁶Again, see *Torah Study* for an in depth discussion.

²⁷From mincha of Shabbos

²⁸Yoma 38b

²⁹See Pirkei Avos 4:1

³⁰Shemos 31:16



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