



The Holiness of Shabbos

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

We say in the Friday night *kiddush*, “*Va'yivarach Elokim et yom hashevii va'yikadesh oto.*” Hashem blessed *Shabbat* and sanctified it. What is the nature of the *Shabbat*'s holiness and blessing? The Netivot Shalom refers to the verse in which Hashem said to Avraham, “*V'heyay bracha.* You will be a blessing.” The sages explain that just being in Avraham's presence engendered blessing. A great *tzaddik* spreads *bracha* to people in his company. *Shabbat* also extends its blessings to the coming week. The word *bracha* is related to *bereicha*, a fountain. *Shabbat* is the source of blessing. In fact, according to *Kabbalah*, the whole existence of the world stems from *Shabbat*. Hashem continuously renews the world for six more days in the merit of *Shabbat*.

Everything that is holy derives from the source of holiness, which is *Shabbat*. This includes all the holidays. We say in the *yom tov kiddush*, as we do on *Shabbat*, “*Zecher l'maaseh bereishit.*” The holidays are a commemoration of the creation of the world, which culminated on *Shabbat*. The holiness of *Shabbat* is stronger than the holiness of the holidays, as indicated by the stricter laws of *Shabbat*. The only day of the year comparable to *Shabbat* is *Yom Kippur* which is also called *Shabbat*. This is because it has a certain comparable quality in that it too is an essential day of creation, a day in which Hashem allows people to be recreated through repentance.

In Kabbalistic literature evil is called *klipe*,

which means a shell or peel. The peel surrounds the center core of the fruit. The Kabbalists teach that although the outside world may be evil, its inner essence is holiness and goodness. The shell lives off the sustenance of the fruit inside. In the same vein, evil sucks its life from the core *kedusha* of this world. Evil is very close to good. I may have good intentions but that doesn't necessarily mean I'll do something good.

The side of evil is called *sitra achra*, the other side. Our challenge during the week is to find the *kedusha* and filter it out from the *klipe*. Sometimes we fail and sometimes we succeed. But on *Shabbat* all the evil forces disappear.

On *Shabbat* there's only *kedusha* in its pristine form, unencumbered by barriers. This explains why the *kedusha* of *Shabbat* is so potent. It is comparable to the holiness of Gan Eden, of Adam before the sin, when the world was pure and holiness was palpable. Heaven has ten levels. *Shabbat* comes from the top three levels of holiness near Hashem's throne, while the other holidays come from the lower seven. The Tana Devai Eliyahu says that the holiness of Hashem, Israel, and *Shabbat* are really one because on *Shabbat*, the holiness of the Jew is unfettered by evil. The verse says, “*U'shemartem et haShabbat ki kodesh hi lachem.* Keep *Shabbat* because its holiness is *lachem*, it becomes your holiness.”

The Netivot Shalom explains that this concept of *Shabbat* helps us resolve the philosophical

question of how it is possible for finite people to cleave to Hashem who is *ein sof*, beyond infinity. Chassidut teaches that it doesn't happen in one step. Sometimes Hashem lowers himself until He is more accessible. This is the concept of the Divine Presence found in the *Beis Hamikdash* or in a shul. At other times a Jew raises himself step by step, moving away from finiteness and coming closer to *kedusha*. Through *itaruta d'latata*, human effort to escape the finiteness of our body and *itaruta d'leyla*, Hashem's movement towards us, *deveikut* is possible. *Shabbat* is the midpoint where Hashem and the Jewish people meet. On that day we can shed the drudgery and confines of the material six day week and ascend the heavenly spheres. Keeping *Shabbat* allows us to sense the holiness of Hashem and this, says the Netivot Shalom, is the blessing of *Shabbat*. We say in the *Shabbat* prayers, “*Ata kedeshta et yom hashvii.* You sanctified the seventh day.” *Shabbat* is the goal and purpose of creation. The Midrash says that Hashem created the universe in order for Him to dwell among us. *Shabbat* is the central platform on which Hashem's presence is manifested.

Regarding the other holidays we recite the *bracha*, “*Mekadesh Yisrael v'hazmanimh.*” Our movement up the scale of holiness creates the *yom tov*. But *Shabbat* is above. Hashem brings holiness into the world. It is a day beyond the natural order, a day when we can stretch beyond ourselves and experience a taste of Gan Eden.

Liabilities and Love Parshat Mishpatim

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Gemara in Bava Kama tells us that someone who wants to be a pious person (*chasid*) should study the laws of *nezikin*, the laws of damages. In this context, the Netivot Shalom points out that the root of *chasid* is *chessed*. In other words, to be a pious person, one's entire being must be involved in kindness. The Netivot Shalom cites the Maharal on Pirkei Avot who explains that a *chasid* is one whose essence wants do what is right in the eyes of Hashem. This is the ultimate form of wholeness and harmony (*shelaymut*). According to the Maharal, this wholeness has three components; he must

achieve wholeness with his Creator, with his fellow man, and with himself. If we study the laws of damages carefully, we can find the pathways that will help us along the road to achieving wholeness in each of these components.

The Torah view, adopted by modern psychology, is that the purpose of existence is growth, to continually change and transform ourselves. This adds vibrancy and meaning to our lives and is the vehicle of free choice. We transform our mere being into becoming. Every time we do a *mitzvah*, we change and grow. The very

blessing we say before performing a *mitzvah* bears witness to this transformation, “For He has sanctified me with His *mitzvot*.” Through my performance of *mitzvot* I create change within myself, I become sanctified.

Every choice I make has the ability to enlarge or, conversely, to diminish me as an individual. Rabbi Friefeld asks, what is the formula for the growth, security and well being of the world? Tehillim gives us the answer: “*Olam chessed yibaneh* – the world is built by kindness.” The key to a well-functioning world is kindness, moving away from egocentrism

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and reaching out to others. By bringing them into my line of vision and more importantly into my circle of action, I am enlarging myself. The more people I help grow and overcome difficulties, the more I expand my consciousness, the larger I become, and the more I create myself.

When we make ourselves aware of the needs of others, we are emulating the Almighty in one of the few ways we can, with *chessed*. Hashem not only created the world, but maintains the world by continually seeing what is lacking and filling that void. If Hashem did not constantly provide for our needs in this way, the world would cease to exist. Similarly, when we make ourselves aware of the needs of others, we expand ourselves, we are transformed, and we are recreated.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz in Daat Torah explains that the laws of damages are not just

about oxen. They are the medium to sensitizing myself to my friend's needs so that I understand why he is entitled to damages for his loss. More importantly, once I know of these *halachot*, I can take special care to prevent these losses to begin with. I can empathize with the beggar who comes to my door asking for *tzedakah*. In short, I become a vehicle of *chessed*.

In this context, the Tiv Hatorah makes us realize that damages can be inflicted spiritually as well as physically. In the laws of damages, if one person dug a pit and the other expanded it, the second person is obligated for any damages the pit causes. Similarly we must avoid making unthinking comments that may push someone already at risk over the edge. Additionally, we must act with care, for a thoughtless moment such as talking during *kedushah* may make our neighbor think that this behavior is acceptable, and he too may sin as a result.

The Mishchat Shemen based on the Bal Shem Tov parallels the four different categories of causing damages with four ways one can damage one's *neshama*. The first is the ox, shor, which parallels to the eyes. This is based on a word in Bilaam's prophecy, *ashurenu*, I will see. Therefore, he exhorts us to be careful that our eyes see only "*kosher*" sights. Second, the pit implies emptiness. Let us not remain empty, but fill our minds with Torah knowledge. (It is interesting that the Hebrew word for pit is *bor* while a boor in English supports this interpretation.) The third set of damages is through teeth, reminding us that we must watch both what goes into our mouths and what comes out. Finally, fire has the potential to cause devastating damages, so we must always be mindful to control the passions within us. To achieve a life of wholeness, one must work on all these areas of oneself.

Rebbitzin's Perspective IV #3

Excerpted from Rebbitzin Tziporah Heller's Q&A series on Naaleh.com

Question:

I recently attended an in-service at the school that I teach at and was left with questions. The presenter lamented the fact that many students are completing school ignorant of the basic concepts of *emunah*, *bitachon* and other important *hashkofot* (principles of faith). I could not help wondering what our approach should really be. While in the age of the "isms" many youths strayed because of intellectual reasons, it seems to me that now the pull of the street rather than intellect is what youths are attracted to. I feel that if we concentrate on transmitting true love of Hashem and love of Torah we will gain so much more. I also wonder if such classes open up students to questions they might not have had. In addition, is it okay that some questions remain unanswered until we understand them through maturity or life experience?

Answer:

I don't think either of these approaches are contradictory. The 13 principles of faith as codified by the Rambam are basic to who we are as Jews. Why separate them from *ahavat*

Hashem and *yirat Hashem*. Why should Torah not be taught with warmth and relevance, while at the same time educating our children about our basic belief system? There's no advantage in keeping our children uninformed. I'm not talking about sophisticated philosophic questions which certainly don't have a place in most classrooms. I'm referring to information that kids often don't have. What is the World To Come? What is reward and punishment? What is *gehinom*? We refer to these ideas all the time but often kids are clueless about what they mean. We teach that Hashem hears our prayers. What happens when they don't seem to get answered?

No one goes off the *derech* because of intellectual questions. Underlying stress makes some kid say I don't like this life. That often happens when they were looking for answers and didn't get any. The Chovot Halevavot brings an example of a seeing man leading a whole train of blind men. If anyone loses his grip for a minute, he is doomed. Similarly a wholesome good kid may follow *emunah* because you said so, the Torah said so, because it resonates as true, and because he trusts you and the Torah. But if he lets go for a

minute he may find himself groping, not just because of the pain of trauma, but because he wonders, what am I believing in, who am I talking to?

The simplest example is praying without *kavanah* (intention). If you don't know who you are talking to, and you wonder if *tefilah* works, it's hard to keep your head involved. Another example would be saying a blessing in a way that you don't even remember if you made a *bracha acharona* (after blessing) or not. It's not just a lack of *kavanah*, but that there's no imprint. The whole phenomenon of doing *mitzvot* by rote, of having a shallow relationship with Hashem, of being weak in one's *yirah*, *avahah*, and *deveikut*, may sometimes be because we are holding on to a chain and we let go and we don't know who we are anymore. There's nothing to be lost in kids having more information, not as a substitute for *ahavat* and *yirat Hashem*, but as a complement to it. In this way our children will be armed and ready to face life with faith and fortitude.