



RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

The Totality of Shabbat

One of the most distinctive points of Shabbat is the moment on Friday night when Kiddush is recited. The mitzvah of Kiddush, all agree, is a Biblical obligation. The Sages (Pesachim 106a; Mechilta on Shemot 20:8) derived this imperative from the fourth of the Ten Commandments: “Remember the day of the Shabbat to sanctify it” (Ex. 20:8).

In order to appreciate the significance of this mitzvah Rabbi Soloveitchik analyzed its purpose. Why do we make kiddush? With its recitation, what are we meant to achieve?

The Rav identified two crucial aspects to the mitzvah that have far reaching implications regarding the very nature of Shabbat observance.

First, perhaps most simply, the Kiddush serves as a mechanism to offer a tribute to the day. Via the Kiddush we praise the day of Shabbat by proclaiming it as the day that God chose for an eternal testimony to His creation and His sovereignty. It is a song for the Shabbat; expressing our feelings of gratitude and devotion. We mark the uniqueness of the day by taking a cup of wine and pronouncing a blessing. (Birkon Mesorat HaRav, pp. 30-31)

However, the Rav beautifully suggested

that Kiddush has a more profound meaning. It is more than merely extending praise to the Shabbat. The true nature of kiddush is alluded to in the name itself. Literally, the word *Kiddush* means sanctification, implying that with its recitation we sanctify the day of Shabbat. In other words, Shabbat’s holiness is incomplete until the individual steps forward and bestows holiness on the day.

This second facet of *Kedushat Shabbat* is implicit in the Torah’s list of the yearly cycle of holidays, in which Shabbat is recorded as the first in the list of holy times, *mo’adei Hashem* (Vayikra 23:3). Shabbat too is one of the *mo’adei Hashem*, and like other festivals, which you must declare, it must be sanctified by man. (Ibid. , p. 28)

Two Aspects of Shabbat Reflected in the Two Ten Commandments

There is a facet of Shabbat’s holiness that flows directly from God. The Creator rested on the seventh day and declared that the Shabbat be holy. This notion is highlighted in the first presentation of the Shabbat in the Ten Commandments. In *Sefer Shemot*, we read: “For God made the heavens and earth in six days...and he rested on the seventh day (*Shemot* 20:10-11).

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However, in the second rendering of the Ten Commandments, in *Devarim*, instead of observing Shabbat to commemorate creation, we are bidden to observe Shabbat “to remember that you were a slave in the Land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.” In this sense the obligation is to treat the day in such a way that one invests it with holiness and experiences its distinctness. (Ibid., pp 28-29)

Moreover, the two terms *Shamor* and *Zachor* connote two distinct components: *Shamor* suggests that one watches over, or guards, the holiness that is embedded in the day. *Zachor*, on the other hand, requires an action. To take action that makes the day unique. The Kiddush is recited in order to fulfill the imperative that the individual enrich the day of Shabbat and inject it with sanctity. (Ibid., p.29)

Experiencing the Totality of Shabbat

An important practical lesson emerges from the fact that man is tasked to imbue *kedusha* in Shabbat. One who passively observes Shabbat cannot experience the totality of its sanctity. While the basic level of *kedushat Shabbat* commences on its own with the sun’s descent on Shabbat eve, only man’s declaration of Kiddush creates the additional element of holiness. ■

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