



RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

The Supernal Shabbat

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik once stated that without Shabbat the Jew would have vanished from the world.

What in fact is the secret strength of the Shabbat? The Rav offered a unique perspective. He drew our attention to a comment made by the Zohar revealing a deep layer to be found in the spiritual structure of the Shabbat.

In numerous places in the Torah we find the command to observe the Shabbat, each time expressed in the singular (i.e. *Shabbat* or *HaShabbat*). A prime example: *Zachor et Yom HaShabbat* (Shemot 20). Yet, there are three places where a double language is employed. For example, *et Shabbotai tishmoru*, ‘you shall observe My Sabbaths.’ (*Vaykra* 19:3). What is the significance of the plurality, *Shabbotai*,

My Sabbaths?

To answer this question the Rav, uncharacteristically, cited a kabbalistic teaching (*Zohar, Hakdama 5b*) which states that the plural form of Shabbat - *Shabbotai* - signifies the idea that contained in every Shabbat are, in fact, two Shabbatot, so to speak. There is the facet of *Shabbat dele'eila* (the supernal Shabbat) and the facet of *Shabbat de'latata* (the earthly Shabbat).

The Rav offered the following exquisite interpretation of this esoteric comment by analyzing the episode of Adam in *Gan Eden*.

Adam’s transgression of eating of the forbidden fruit resulted in a terrible punishment (*Bereshit* 3:17-19). The penalty consisted of the following components:

Hard labor: “With the sweat of your browe shall you eat bread (3:19)”

Zeat apecha, ‘sweat of your brow’ can be understood as two forms of difficult labor. First is the kind that is exhausting and draining. Second, work engenders the feeling that it’s endless, uninterrupted, *pointless work*.

Restlessness: Fear and suffering - *itzavon* (3:17).

Mortality: “For dust you are and to dust you shall return (3:19).”

In sum, Adam’s curse was that he was to suffer continuous, exhausting labor that is by nature unproductive, resulting in conflict and ultimately, death. Factors like the

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competitive society man lives in, the fear that others may take away one's possessions, the feelings of vulnerability that the source of one's income may dry up - all lead to an underlying feeling of uneasiness and tension that man lives with continuously.

As an antidote to this weighty burden and anxiety man endures day to day comes the blessing of Shabbat. Twenty four hours each week which relieves man from these curses.

On Shabbat we are released from the monotony, jealousy and rancor that are often part of the mundane pursuits we all undergo. Work is dignified and ennobling as long as one knows when to stop. In view of the fact that endless work can estrange people from their families and friends the Torah, therefore, commanded that the family rest together and the community joins together. This unique quality of the Shabbat to provide rest and revitalization relates to the quality *Shabbat de'letata* (the earthly Shabbat). A feeling of calm and serenity enters our midst each week on the holy day. Without the Shabbat, the sharp pain of the original curse to man would be simply unbearable.

However, there remains the third component of the curse that seemingly cannot be rectified with the onset of Shabbat. Namely, the curse of death: "you are dust, and to dust shall you return" (Bereshit 3:19)

The Rav posited that even this seemingly unalterable fate of man - death - is assuaged

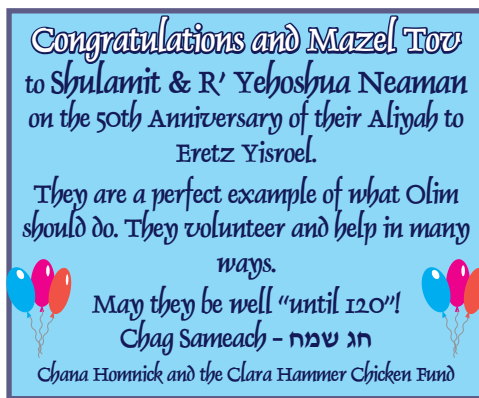
with the onset of Shabbat. Shabbat offers solace regarding the reality of death. The facet of Shabbat referred to in the Zohar as *Shabbat dele'eila*, alludes to a future time when the curse of death will be eliminated. The final *mishna* in *Tractate Tamid* offers us a window into a promise this of future time of peace: "A psalm, a song for the Sabbath" (Ps.92:1): [meaning] a psalm, a song for the time to come, for the day which will be entirely Sabbath and rest for life everlasting."

Shabbat itself is associated with the World to Come. This idea, said the Rav, is alluded to in the description in *Sefer Bereshit*. Toward the conclusion of creation, on the sixth day, the Torah states that the world was 'very good' (1:31); a world of complete unity and totality, as implied by the word *kol*. The world was in a state of wholeness and perfection. However, after the sin of the Tree of Knowledge the world experienced an epic breakdown, a failure that would affect the rest of history.

On Shabbat the world unites once again with the Creator, recreating the wholeness of Creation as on the original Friday. This wholeness will be replicated in the World to Come. ■



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