

# OHRNET

---

SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHAR, BECHUKOTAI • 22 IYAR 5783, MAY 13, 2023 • VOL 30 NO.22

---

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

---

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### The Lesson and the Parable

*“You shall not make idols for yourselves...” (26:1)*

In the 1950s, the British intelligence establishment was rocked by the exposure of an entire Soviet spy network within its ranks. The defections of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean represented a body blow to the prestige and self-confidence of the British secret service. British intelligence was viewed with mounting and entirely justified suspicion by the CIA.

In 1965, Lyndon Johnson ordered a secret investigation into the entire structure of British intelligence. For most of the war, Britain had conducted the espionage battle against Germany with remarkable results; by 1952, the conductor’s baton had passed to the US, and Britain was firmly in the position of second fiddle.

With his vastly popular mythical spy, James Bond, writer Ian Fleming simply ignored this inconvenient fact. His fantasy of an omnipotent British secret service nourished millions of readers on both sides of the Atlantic, and spread a legend of British espionage efficiency that persists to this day.

In a now-notorious speech of 2003, President George W. Bush implicitly summoned up the ghost of James Bond when he cited British intelligence as a reason for invading Iraq: The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. A high-ranking Bush administration official subsequently said that evidence in support of this claim was inconclusive at best and added: “These 16 words should never have been included [in his speech].”

We live in a world where the parable has become the lesson.

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon announced his decision for NASA to build the Space Shuttle. NASA originally chose the name Constitution for the first Space Shuttle. A determined write-in campaign by fans of the science fiction TV series Star Trek convinced NASA to rename this first vehicle Enterprise, after the fictional starship made famous by the show.

As we move inexorably to the end of world history with the coming of the anointed one, the Mashiach, illusion, the parable seeks more and more to replace reality. ‘Reality TV’ shows have nothing to do with reality. They reveal a world where people are prepared to sacrifice their own realities to the illusion of glamor and success.

Idol worship is the ultimate mistaking of the illusion for the reality. The sun and the rain seem to cause crops to grow and so they were worshipped. Nowadays, the idol has become glamor, success, money and fame.

The Ramban says how we can protect our faith through all the vicissitudes of exile: staying far from idolatry, and I might add, not just the classic worshipping of statues and the forces of nature, but also the idols of our age – fame and money; the observance of Shabbat, which is our testimony that Hashem created the heavens and the earth; and respect and reverence for the Beit Hamikdash, which manifests itself in the careful observance of the three festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

Through keeping these three miztvahs, a Jew will find the strength to keep all the others, and guard and preserve his faith even in a world that has mistaken the parable for the lesson.

---

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

---

### Behar

The Torah prohibits normal farming of the Land of Israel every seven years. This "Shabbat for the land" is called "Shemitah." After every seventh Shemitah, the fiftieth year, Yovel ("Jubilee") is announced with the sound of the shofar on Yom Kippur. This was also a year for the land to lie fallow. G-d promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the Shemitah and Yovel years. During Yovel, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work. A Jewish indentured servant may not be given any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free. The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption is limited to the first year after the sale. The Levites' cities

belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of one another by lending or borrowing with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment.

### Bechukotai

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow G-d's commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose purpose is to bring the Jewish People to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. *Sefer Vayikra*, the book of Leviticus, concludes with the details of *erachin* – the process by which someone vows to give the Beit Hamikdash the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal or a property.

## Questions - Behar

1. Why does the Torah specify that the laws of Shemitta were taught on Har Sinai?
2. If one possesses Shemitta food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
3. The Torah commands, "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year." How is this done?
4. Which two "returns" are announced by the shofar during Yovel?
5. From where does the Yovel year get its name?
6. What prohibitions are derived from the verse "v'lo tonu ish et amitov" - a person shall not afflict his fellow?
7. What is the punishment for neglecting the laws of Shemitta?
8. If Shemitta is observed properly, how long is the crop of the sixth year guaranteed to last?
9. After selling an ancestral field, when can one redeem it?
10. Under what circumstance may one sell ancestral land?
11. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
12. What does the word "days" mean in this week's Parsha?
13. What is considered a walled city?
14. What is the definition of a "ger toshav"?
15. To what is one who leaves Eretz Yisrael compared?
16. Why does Rashi mention the plague of the firstborn in this week's Parsha?
17. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Jewish indentured servant.
18. Who supports the family of the Jewish indentured servant during his years of servitude?
19. If a Jew is sold as a servant to a non-Jew, does he go free after six years?
20. Where is it permitted to prostrate oneself on a stone floor?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 25:1 - To teach us that just as Shemitta was taught in detail on Har Sinai, so too, all the mitzvot were taught in detail on Har Sinai.
2. 25:7 - Remove it from his property and declare it ownerless.
3. 25:10 - At the beginning of the year the Beit Din declares, "This year is kadosh (sanctified)."
4. 25:10 - The return of the land to its original owner, and the "return" (freedom) of the slave from slavery.
5. 25:10 - From the sounding of the shofar. A ram's horn is called a Yovel.
6. 25:17 - One may not intentionally hurt people's feelings, nor give bad advice while secretly intending to reap benefit.
7. 25:18 - Exile.
8. 25:21,22 - From Nissan of the sixth year until Sukkot of the ninth year.
9. 25:24 - After two years following the sale, until Yovel. At the beginning of Yovel it returns to the family automatically.
10. 25:25 - Only if one becomes impoverished.
11. 25:29 - Only within the first year after the sale. Afterwards, even in Yovel, it does not return.
12. 25:29 - The days of an entire year.
13. 25:29 - A city that has been surrounded by a wall since the time of Yehoshua.
14. 25:35 - A non-Jew who lives in Eretz Yisrael and accepts upon himself not to worship idols.
15. 25:38 - To one who worships idols.
16. 25:38 - The prohibition against taking interest is accompanied by the phrase, "I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of Egypt." Rashi explains that just as G-d discerned in Egypt between those who were firstborn and those who were not, so too will G-d discern and punish those who lend with interest, pretending they are acting on behalf of others.
17. 25:39-43 -
  1. Do not make him perform humiliating tasks.
  2. Do not sell him publicly.
  3. Do not make him perform unnecessary jobs.
18. 25:41 - His master.
19. 25:54 - No. If he is not redeemed with money, he must wait until the Yovel to go free.
20. 26:1 - In the Mikdash.

## Questions - Bechukotai

1. To what do the words "*bechukotai telechu*" (walk in My statutes) refer?
2. When is rain "in its season"?
3. What is the blessing of "*v'achaltem lachmechem l'sova*" (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
4. What is meant by the verse "and a sword will not pass through your land"?
5. Mathematically, if five Jewish soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Jewish soldiers be able to defeat?
6. How much is "*revava*"?
7. Which "progression" of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
8. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel's state of ruin?
9. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
10. How many years did the Jewish People sin in Israel up till the time the northern tribes were exiled?
11. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written with an extra "*vav*." From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?
12. What positive element is implied by the words "and I will bring them into the land of their enemies"?
13. In verse 26:42, why is the word "remember" not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
14. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 "Torot" (plural) and not "Torah" (singular)?
15. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the *Beit Hamikdash* and doesn't have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
16. If a person says, "The leg of this animal shall be an *olah* offering," the animal is sold and sacrificed as an *olah* offering. What is the status of the money received for the animal?
17. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the *Beit Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *Yovel* what happens to the field?
18. Where must "*ma'aser sheini*" be eaten?
19. When a person redeems "*ma'aser sheini*" what happens to the food? What happens to the redemption money?
20. How does a person tithe his animals?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 26:3 - Laboring in Torah learning.
2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g. Shabbat nights).
3. 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
4. 26:6 - No foreign army will travel through your land on their way to a different country.
5. 26:4 - Two thousand.
6. 26:4 - Ten thousand.
7. 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvot*, rejecting those who observe *mitzvot*, hating Sages, preventing others from observing *mitzvot*, denying that G-d gave the *mitzvot*, denying the existence of G-d. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
8. 26:32 - No enemy nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
9. 26:35 - 70 years. Because the Jewish People violated 70 *Shemitta* and *Yovel* years.
10. 26:35 - 390 years.
11. 26:42 - In five places in the Torah, Yaakov's name is written with an extra "*vav*" and in five places the name Eliyahu is missing a "*vav*." Yaakov "took" these *vavs* as a pledge that Eliyahu will one day come and announce the redemption of Yaakov's children.
12. 26:41 - G-d Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies' land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, G-d will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jews from assimilating into the host culture.
13. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak's ashes (who was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before G-d.
14. 26:46 - To teach that both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah were given to Moshe on Har Sinai.
15. 27:8 - The person whose value was donated goes before the *kohen*, who sets the obligation according to the poor person's ability to pay.
16. 27:9 - The money is "*chullin*," meaning it does not have "holy" status, except for the value of the animal's leg which does have "holy" status.
17. 27:16 - It becomes the property of the *kohanim* who are on rotation at the beginning of *Yovel*.
18. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.
19. 27:31 - The food becomes permissible to him outside of Jerusalem. The redemption money must be brought to Jerusalem and used to purchase food to be eaten there.
20. 27:32 - He passes them through a door individually and he marks every tenth animal with a rod smeared with red dye.

---

# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

---

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

## Behar: Stoning

**A**fter a certain unnamed man (son of a Jewish mother and Egyptian father) blasphemously uttered the name of Hashem for a curse, he was brought in front of Moses and detained until Hashem would reveal to Moses the man's fate. Ultimately, Hashem told Moses that this blasphemer ought to be subject to the death penalty – he should be taken outside of the camp and the entire nation shall stone him. Indeed, that is precisely what was done (Lev. 24:10-23). In that passage, the verb *regimah* for “stoning” a person to death makes four appearances. This essay seeks to determine what, if anything, is the difference between *regimah* and the more common word *sekilah*. Are they actual synonyms or is there something more to the story?

Let's begin with the word *sekilah*, whose root is clearly the trilateral SAMECH-KUF-LAMMED. Inflections of this root that refer to “stoning” somebody or something to death appear twenty times in the Bible. It is the prescribed punishment for one who approaches Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:13), for an ox who kills a person (Ex. 21:28-29, 21:32), for an idolator (Deut. 17:5) or one who incites other to commit idolatry (Deut. 13:11), and for the betrothed virgin who commits adultery and her paramour (Deut. 22:21, 22:24).

The term *sekilah* also appears when Moses refused Pharaoh's offer to bring sacrifices to Hashem in Egypt (in lieu of allowing the nation to leave), because Moses claimed that the Egyptian would not tolerate the Jews slaughtering their gods and would instead “stone” the Jews. Similarly, when the Jews complained to Moses that there was no water in the desert, Moses cried out to Hashem, claiming, “Just a little bit more and they will stone me” (Ex. 17:4). The term *sekilah* was also used when a similar sentiment was expressed by King David (I Sam. 30:6). At another point, King David actually was “stoned” and cursed by Shimi ben Geira, but he was not killed in that stoning (II Sam. 16:6, 16:13). The term *sekilah* further appears in two more instances of men who were stoned to death: Achan, who illegally took the spoils of war from Jericho (Joshua 7:25); and Naboth, against whom Jezebel and Ahab conspired to take his vineyard (I Kings 23:10-15).

Derivatives of the root SAMECH-KUF-LAMMED appear two more times in the Bible, but not in the sense of “stoning” somebody, rather in the sense of “clearing/removing” stones. Most famously, Isaiah prophesied about the Future Redemption and urged the Jewish People to pave the way for that to happen and *saklu m'even* (“remove the stones”) that may impede its path of arrival (Isa. 62:10). Similarly, in a parable about planting a vineyard, Isaiah again uses the word *sakel* to refer to clearing out rocks that could be detrimental to the cultivation of grapevines (Isa. 5:2). This agricultural use of the term also appears in the Mishnah (Sheviit 3:7, 2:3).

When discussing the root SAMECH-KUF-LAMMED, the early lexicographer Menachem Ibn Saruk (920-970) in *Machberet Menachem* lists two separate semantic categories for that root: “stoning” and “clearing/cleaning.” This implies that he does not see those two meanings as related. However, Ibn Janach (990-1050) and Radak (1160-1234) in their respective *Sefer HaShorashim* both see the two meanings of this root as related, in the sense that they mean the exact opposite of each other. It is a well-established phenomenon in the Hebrew language that a given root might have one meaning and also mean the exact opposite (a “self-antonym”); this case is just another example: one meaning of this root refers to “using” stones, while the other meaning refers to “getting rid” of them.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) bridges the gap between these two meanings of *sekilah* by explaining that both refer to the act of "throwing" rocks, but that the first meaning refers to "throwing" rocks at a person, while the second meaning refers to clearing an area of the rocks that are there by "throwing" those rocks elsewhere.

\*To read the rest of this article and find out about how *sekilah* differs from *regimah*, visit us online at: [http://ohr.edu/this\\_week/whats\\_in\\_a\\_word/](http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/)

---

## PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

---

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

### THE SONG OF THE LION

**T**he lion says: "Hashem will go out like a mighty man; like a warrior He will invoke wrath. He will trumpet and shout; His enemies He will overpower." (Yeshayah 42:13)

The lion is the "king of wild animals." The male lion is crowned with a majestic mane and sits lazily like a Pharaoh. Its roar silences all in earshot, just as all are quiet when a king speaks. It hunts fearlessly, consuming its prey alive, unlike other predators that first kill their prey and then commonly drag their food back to their lairs to eat in safety.

Thus, a lion is a symbol of kingship and power, and the image of a lion is engraved on the throne of the ultimate King, Hashem. With its existence, it sings of Hashem vanquishing His enemies without fear.

We should take pride in our heritage and in the Jewish majesty that runs through our veins. The Torah describes us as a nation that rises each morning like lions and shakes free of the bonds of sleep and earthliness to recite the *shema* each morning. For millennia we stand unchanged, unashamed of our traditions, sturdy in our faith, confident and fearless. It is we who represent Hashem's kingship in the world, and our every fulfillment of Hashem's will gives voice to the celestial lion etched on the Throne of Glory.

- Sources: Rosh (Chullin 3:58); Vilna Gaon (cited in *Otzar HaYedios*, vol. I)

In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

# TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Sotah 44-49

### A Special Merit of Tefillin

**W**e learned in a beraita, “One who speaks between putting on the tefillin of the hand and the tefillin of the head has a transgression ‘in his hand’ and goes home from the ranks of the Jewish army.”

The gemara explains that this statement is consistent with the opinion of Rabbi Yossi Hagalili who gives a novel explanation in the Mishna on amud alef for the Torah exempting certain people from a Jewish army in the verse: And the officers shall continue to speak to the people and say, "What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, that he should not cause the heart of his brothers to melt, as his heart." (Deut. 20:8)

Rabbi Yossi Hagalili teaches in the Mishna on amud alef that this refers to someone who is fearful due to his transgressions and as the gemara explains, even rabbinical transgressions. He also explains in the Mishna that the exemptions for a new wife, house and vineyard (verses 5, 6 and 7) act as a type of “cover up” for people to return from the battleground without suffering embarrassment. People who return from the other troops due to their transgressions will be judged favorably, as really returning due to their new vineyard, house or wife. (Rashi)

But why is speaking while putting on tefillin, which is an interruption in the mitzvah and a transgression, mentioned in the gemara as an example of this teaching that a transgressor does not go to battle? One answer is that by keeping the mitzvah of tefillin ‘properly’ (on the arm and head, without interruption) the army of the Jewish People merit that Hashem will bless them with the blessing that Moshe gave the tribe of Gad in Devarim 33:20, “He shall smite the enemy's arms and heads” (they would sever the head and arm of the enemy with one blow – Rashi).” (Rabbeinu Asher)

\*Sotah 44a

### The End of Humility?

*“After the passing of Rebbi (Rabbi Yehuha Hanasi), the traits of ‘humility’ (‘anava’ in Hebrew) and ‘fear of sin’ ceased to exist in the world.”*

This teaching, taught on the concluding daf of Tractate Sotah, is challenged by Rav Yosef and Rav Nachman on the concluding line in the gemara. Rav Yosef said, “Don’t teach ‘fear of sin’ (ceased), because there is me”. Rav Nachman said, “Don’t teach ‘humility’ (ceased), because there is me.” The commentaries question how Rav Yosef and Rav Nachman could each apparently praise themselves in this manner. And are we not taught, “May a stranger praise you and not your mouth...” in Proverbs 27:2?

One explanation is that they felt that it was their obligation to make sure that the teachings of the Torah were transmitted correctly, and if there was something incorrect, it should not be taught. Since Rav Yosef and Rav

Nachman, great Sages without self-bias, felt that they still possessed these traits, it was their Torah obligation to say not to teach that these lofty traits had ceased. (Maharsha)

The Maharsha adds that the trait of “fear of sin” was no longer laudable to the people of this generation, and it could therefore not be considered “praise”. Perhaps even the opposite. A different answer is offered in the name of Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon from Vilna. When it says “ana” in the gemara it does not mean “me or I”, the speaker. Rather it refers to another Sage by the name of Ana, and the speaker is in fact not praising himself.

\*Sotah 49a

---

## LETTER AND SPIRIT

---

*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman*

### Bechukotai

#### Defectors’ Descent

**T**his Torah portion contains one of two mournful rebukes in the Torah, foretelling and warning us of our eventual defection and its consequences. It is read in a low tone to reflect its solemn content. There are several phrases describing the nation’s various levels of descent – a process which is elaborated on by our Sages, and which Rav Hirsch witnessed acutely in his lifetime.

If you will not hearken to Me, and will not observe all these commandments... The first misstep refers to a failure to listen to the Word of Hashem. Forsaking the Law in practice begins with neglecting the study and knowledge of Torah – one who does not study will disobey in practice.

And if you will despise My statutes. One who has lost the theoretical knowledge and understanding of the commandments and has ceased to observe them will be bothered by his conscience. In order to justify his behavior to himself, he will rationalize his disobedience as progress. He will accustom himself to look down on the observance of the mitzvahs and to dismiss them as antiquated. The defector remains keenly aware of the Torah’s presence and power in the lives of his contemporaries, and the faithfulness of those adherents are an indictment of him. In order to neutralize the impact of that indictment, he convinces himself that he is superior to the others and holds their adherence in contempt.

And if your soul will abhor My social ordinances... The process of defection continues. Unable to accept that others’ faithfulness to Torah is the product of their own inner conviction and devotion, the defector then seeks a superficial explanation for their observance. Hence, the next attack is on Jewish communal institutions and life. These are the institutions that have promoted Torah and its study and are therefore despised by the defectors. They particularly despise the leaders and view them as the misfortune of their race.

So that all of My commandments will not be observed. The defector does not stop at his own estrangement and contempt for others who observe and lead. Rather, defectors become fanatically intolerant at every opportunity. What *they* do not respect must not be respected by anyone else. What *they* do not observe must not be observed by others either. They declare war on the Torah, and obstruct its observance wherever and in whatever way they can. They convince themselves that they are acting for the good of mankind, and that their fight against the Torah is not a fight against Hashem, but rather the fight against a dangerous myth of Revelation, against



prophets who were imposters, and all of the duped deceivers who contributed to the fallacy of transmission. They will not stand for *anyone* observing the mitzvahs, and will justify their position by rejecting the Sinaitic origin of the Law.

So that you will break My covenant. There is yet one more level of descent. Even as they have failed to study and practice, have despised the Torah's adherents and leaders, and attempt to block all fulfillment of mitzvahs, they have yet to break the last thread that binds them to Hashem's Covenant. The final step is the denial of Hashem's existence. For as long as the thought of Hashem is in their mind, as long as they contemplate Hashem's existence – even with wavering doubt – they will consider the possibility of Hashem's Revelation, and the voice of their conscience will give them no rest. Only when this last light within is extinguished, will they find rest. And so, in their quest for peace of mind, they will stamp out this last spark and deny the existence of Hashem.

But even then, Hashem does not lose hope. He shapes history in ways that bring about introspection and will require actions and forbearance amounting to the antithesis of those sins to bring the furthest of defectors back.

*\*Sources: Commentary, Vayikra 26:14-15, 39-43*

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions,  
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. [info@ohr.edu](mailto:info@ohr.edu)

Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Nota Schiller – Rosh HaYeshiva,  
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Avi Kaufman, Rabbi Reuven Chaim  
Klein, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Yaakov Meyers, Mrs. Rosalie Moriah, Rabbi Moshe  
Newman, Rabbi Shlomo Simon, Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, Rabbi Yehuda Spitz,  
Mrs. Helena Stern.

©1992-2023 Ohr Somayach Institutions – All rights reserved – This publication contains words of  
Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Editor's disclaimer – Ohrnet Magazine is not intended to  
be a source for halachic rulings. In any real and specific case one should consult a qualified  
halachic authority for ruling.

# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

## KIDDUSH (Part 2) – Unity Through Separation

“Although you may enjoy the rest and the tranquility of Shabbat, have in mind that you are not observing the day for your own pleasure; rather to honor the One who commanded you to do so.”

Sefat Emet (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter)

**K**iddush begins with the declaration: “The sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their array. On the seventh day, Hashem completed His work which He had done, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Hashem blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He abstained from all His work which Hashem created to make.” (Genesis 2:1-3)

The word Kiddush is derived from the word Kadosh, which is invariably translated as “holy” or “sanctified.” However, the very first time that a word of the same root letters as Kadosh is found in the Torah is Genesis 2:3, “Hashem blessed the seventh day and made it holy - v’Yikadesh.” Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch writes in his commentary on the Torah that v’Yikadesh means Hashem set Shabbat “high and holy, unimpeachable, imperishable and eternal.” Accordingly, a facet of the word Kadosh is “separate.” As we envelope ourselves in the sanctity of Shabbat by reciting Kiddush, we declare that we as the Jewish Nation, are separate from all other nations of the world. During the week, we try our best to draw down the spiritual influences from the Upper Realms into our lives. On Shabbat, we aspire to transcend the physical and connect with Hashem in His Kingdom. How do we achieve such a lofty aspiration? By separating ourselves from the mundane and focusing on celebrating Shabbat in the way that Hashem has commanded us to do so.

Shabbat is crucial to the world’s existence. Rabbi Avraham Sabah (1440-1508) reflects on this from a Midrash, as he writes in his magnum opus Tzror Hamor. The Midrash says that as the Creation reached its climax, Hashem, Himself, along with the heaven and the earth longed for the onset of the first Shabbat – the final act of creation which would permeate the world with holiness.

In many Synagogues worldwide it is the custom to recite Kiddush upon concluding the Friday night prayers. If so, why do we need to recite Kiddush again when we arrive home? Rabbi Hirsch answers that we must introduce the Kedusha, the holiness, of Shabbat into our homes as well the Synagogue. As Rabbi Moshe Alschich (1508-1593) writes in his commentary on the Torah (Vayikra 19:2), Kedusha is not something that is reserved only for the righteous. Rather, it is accessible to all and it is something we all must aspire towards. This is why the Torah states that Shabbat is a sign that exists between ourselves and Hashem that we are His Chosen Nation. (Shemot 31:13)

However, there seems to be an anomaly between the opening sentence of Kiddush, which declares that the “heavens and the earth were finished,” and the very next verse which states that Hashem “abstained on the

seventh day from all His work.” “Finished” means that there is nothing left to do; the task is complete. Whereas “abstention” implies there is still more to do. The Vilna Gaon explains: with inception of the first Shabbat, the physical creation came to an end, but, in the pursuit of spirituality there is always more that can be done. We are never finished. With the arrival of Shabbat we are commanded to desist from all creative work and to channel our spiritual energy into reinforcing and defining our relationship with Hashem.

This is why the Prophet Yeshayahu (58:13) enjoins us to proclaim that Shabbat is an “oneg” – a delight. When returning home from the Synagogue, the first thing we do is recite Kiddush with joy, in anticipation of the spiritual delights that Shabbat will infuse into our homes.

Rabbi Avraham Borenstein (1838-1910), the first Rebbe of the Sochatchov Chassidic dynasty and a leading halachic authority in his generation, cautions us to approach Shabbat with appreciation for its spiritual profundity. Shabbat must be savored in the correct frame of mind. In this way, its holiness can live within us throughout the week until the following Shabbat. On the other hand, a Shabbat observed merely out of habit, devoid of deliberation, lacks true Kedusha, which is the most vital ingredient of all.

*To be continued...*

**subscribe @ ohr.edu**

to receive Ohrnet directly to your email each week