

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION  
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**TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY**

**by Rav Moshe Taragin**

**Zakhor Et Yom Ha-Shabbat Le-kadsho**

The description of Shabbat contained in parashat Yitro begins with the phrase 'Zakhor' which literally means to remember. From this word, Chazal develop the mitzva of kiddush - "Remember" or mention the day of Shabbat over a cup of wine. This halakha, though, is somewhat distant from the literal meaning of the word - to remember. Is there an additional normative practice which can be derived from this word?

The Rashbam - noted for his literal reading of and commentary to the Torah - reminds us that 'zakhor' connotes remembering the PAST. According to the Rashbam, this pasuk merely encourages us to remember God's having created the world. This we do by resisting from work on the 7th day. It does not entail any new practical halakha and obligates no new action. Rather, it focuses our attention on the accepted "experiential" purpose of Shabbat - to remember beriat ha-olam.

The Ibn Ezra disagrees with the Rashbam and bases his comments upon the Mekhilta. According to R. Yitzchak, the word zakhor demands that we establish a 'counting system' which revolves around Shabbat. By naming the days of the week based upon their proximity to Shabbat we count 'le-shem Shabbat.' Based on this opinion, the Ibn Ezra claims that in order to prevent forgetting when Shabbat will occur, we should count the days of the week based on their offset from Shabbat. The Ibn Ezra draws his explanation from the Mekhilta and possibly from a related halakha attached to the pasuk of zakhor by the gemara in Beitza. This gemara Beitza (15b) raises a similar issue regarding the ceremony of eiruv tavshilin. Searching for a biblical source for the mitzva, the gemara suggests the pasuk of zakhor - remember

Shabbat in situations in which you might easily overlook it. After all, a Shabbat which follows a joyful chag might be 'overlooked.' To guard against this possible emotional letdown, we pre-empt Yom Tov with the start of Shabbat. We symbolically begin the preparation of the Shabbat meal on EREV Yom Tov to highlight the singular significance of Shabbat. The gemara derives this exercise from the concept of *zakhor* - remember, the gemara claims, because there are instances in which you might forget. This derivation, as well, might have served as the basis for the Ibn Ezra's explanation. *Zakhor* rallies against forgetting Shabbat. Shabbat can be forgotten in exceptional circumstances just as it can be neglected by the daily routine. In each context, we must take appropriate steps to remember Shabbat.

An interesting question can be posed regarding the Ibn Ezra's stance: Is his counting scheme merely practical, in order to insure against forgetting the actual Shabbat? Or might this practice be seen as ceremonial: by establishing a Shabbat-centric counting strategy we, in effect, honor Shabbat every day of the week. Though the Ibn Ezra specifically mentions the danger of forgetting, the primary source - the Mekhilta - did not invoke this "practical" concern.

The third basic approach to the word *zakhor* can be found in Rashi's comments to parashat Yitro - comments which again have their source in earlier texts. The gemara in Beitza (16a) cites the famous dispute between Shammai and Hillel. The former would reserve his finest food for Shabbat. If, during the week, he encountered a tasty or superior type of food, he would designate it for Shabbat use. Hillel differed and claimed "*Barukh Hashem Yom Yom*" - a person should enjoy that day's opportunities and praise God each day of his life. Though the gemara does not cite a source for Shammai's conduct, the parallel section in the Mekhilta invokes the verse of *zakhor* as the basis for this behavior. Based on the gemara and the Mekhilta, Rashi interprets the verse according to Shammai.

One might question Shammai's position in the same manner that the Ibn Ezra's was examined earlier. Is this conduct driven by practical considerations? By reserving delicious food encountered during the week, a person secures a festive and enjoyable Shabbat experience. Or do we view this conduct as ceremonial rather than "facilitative"? By setting aside food, a person maintains a Shabbat consciousness during his entire week. After all, the language which the gemara employs to describe Shammai's conduct is very telling: Shammai used to eat the entire week li-khvod Shabbat - to honor Shabbat. He wasn't merely occupied in early preparations for Shabbat. Rather, he used his eating habits and meal planning as an opportunity to honor Shabbat during the entire week. This might be similar to counting the days of the week based on their proximity to Shabbat. The pasuk of zakhor creates an obligation to invest the entire week with the spirit of Shabbat. According to the Ibn Ezra this is accomplished by one's counting scheme, and according to Shammai, by one's meal plans.

One possible consequence of this understanding of Shammai might be the scope of his halakha. Though the gemara and the Mekhilta cite his behavior regarding foodstuffs, the Mekhilta De-rashbi (a variant edition of the Mekhilta authored by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai) mentions Shammai's conduct in conjunction with utensils. If he discovered a stylish utensil, he would reserve it for Shabbat use. Had Shammai's motives been purely practical, we might question this conduct regarding utensils. After all, unlike food, they are reusable. Why not enjoy during the week AND RE-USE on Shabbat? Evidently, Shammai, by dedicating items, intended to honor Shabbat. This he accomplished by deferring their use exclusively for Shabbat.

Does Shammai's opinion receive halakhic validation? Indeed, the Shulchan Arukh rules according to Hillel and our weekly conduct reflects that ruling. Would it still be preferable to adopt Shammai's behavior if possible? The Ta"z (242;1) cites an Or Zarua which indicates the preference - if possible- for Shammai's strategy. One might say that Rashi by quoting

Shammai's position might be suggesting that although halakha doesn't obligate Shammai's conduct, it certainly prefers it.

It is interesting to consider whether Hillel didn't REQUIRE Shammai's stern position or in fact DISAGREED with it. On the one hand, the stance presents few drawbacks. By preparing so far in advance for Shabbat, a person might very well guarantee the Shabbat experience. Hillel might not have demanded so severe an orientation, even though, theoretically, it is preferable. Alternatively, Hillel might have OPPOSED this behavior which, though assuring the Shabbat experience, demonstrates an insecurity in God's provision of food for Shabbat. By exclaiming "Barukh Hashem Yom Yom" - we should celebrate that which God has given us each day and, as Rashi comments - trust that He will continue to provide, an individual affirms his belief in Providence. This is an affirmation which might supersede technical concerns of food for Shabbat.

#### AFTERWORD:

1) The Ramban (in his commentary to parashat Yitro) comments both upon the word zakhor and the end of the phrase le-kadsho. Indeed, we are asked to remember God's having created the world. Experientially our acknowledgment of His presence is best accomplished by studying on Shabbat (visiting a navi in biblical times or a Rebbe today), and this constitutes le-kadsho, literally to sanctify the day.