

Where are we running?

The break that Shabbat affords us from our regular activities constitutes a disconnect from the world of human action and a connection to a higher world. This break purifies and sanctifies us and affects our spiritual stature and all of our activities over the course of the week. We should take advantage of the sanctity of Shabbat and the break from our regular activities to think about our direction over the course of the week. Very busy people do not have time to think about **whether they are running in the right direction.**

Shabbat gives us the opportunity to think: **To where are we running? Are we pursuing elevated, meaningful goals of building**

28. Heard from my father-in-law (see *Kovetz Shiurim VeSiḥot MiPi Moreinu HaRav Eliyahu Blumenzweig*, p. 253).

our inner worlds, our families, and drawing close to God? Or are we chasing after honor, money, and physical pleasure? It is good that we earn money, which affords us many opportunities. But the goal of life cannot be the pursuit of money and indulging in physical pleasure. This will not elevate us **and also will not bring us happiness**. Even those who have amassed great wealth will not be happy unless they have built their inner world, their family, and have achieved closeness with God.

On Shabbat we stop, internalize the sanctity of the day, and think: **What is the right direction in life? How can we continue to create and contribute to the world without harming our inner selves? How can we develop the world in such a way that our souls also develop and flourish? How can we successfully create in the physical world, while simultaneously running in the real race of life, the race of the soul that yearns to connect to its Creator?**

The prohibitions of Shabbat: A microcosm of the World to Come?

In one of the well-known *zemirot* of Shabbat (*Ma Yedidut*) we declare Shabbat to be a microcosm of the World to Come:

A microcosm of the World to Come, Shabbat, the day of rest.

All who take pleasure in it will merit great joy.

They will be comfortably saved from the birth pangs of the messiah.

Our redemption will sprout, and sadness and groaning will depart.

Shabbat is a microcosm of the World to Come and those who observe it will be saved from the birth pangs of Messiah and will experience redemption and comfort.

In general, when people sing this song and think of Shabbat as a microcosm of the World to Come, they think about the relaxation, the food, the enjoyment, and perhaps interacting with family. They do not think about the laws of Selecting and of *Muktze*. People do

not find these laws to be enjoyable and do not think of them as a microcosm of the World to Come; on the contrary, they consider them to be limiting and stifling. It is easy for people to identify with the positive commandments of Shabbat, such as *kiddush*, Shabbat meals, and Shabbat candles. It is more difficult for people to identify with the prohibitions of Shabbat.

But if they internalize that while these prohibitions may limit them on a superficial, external level, **they allow access to new, much more exalted worlds**, they will have the energy and motivation to connect to all of the laws of Shabbat and its sanctity. This connection will allow them to return after the conclusion of Shabbat to the world of action with renewed energy and the internal strength to build the world in a better, more meaningful way.

Shabbat causes one to disconnect from the external matters surrounding him and to focus on himself. This affords a person several benefits:

1. Discovering one's true inner self
2. Connecting more closely with family
3. Connecting more fully with God

One who has difficulty with Shabbat is particularly in need of it!

Why is Shabbat so difficult for some people? Why don't they feel that it is a microcosm of the World to Come but rather a difficult, stifling day?

A person who is constantly surrounded by the media, the internet, and the external world does not connect to one's own internal world. When disconnected from electronic devices one cannot function; one is not capable of simply being with the real self for even a few hours.

Having a difficult time with the long Shabbat and not being able to wait for it to end is the strongest indication that one is in desperate need of Shabbat! This person needs help in order to experience the inner power of Shabbat. They need to be aided in order to think how they can connect to themselves and their environment without external devices. What will help them achieve this goal? Why are they not successfully doing so yet?

Investing effort and engaging in a process of searching for one's true self will bring one to a greater self-awareness and the ability to perceive the microcosm of the World to Come. Focusing on oneself, and on the unique sanctity of Shabbat, will allow one to achieve personal depth and a unique connection to God. One has to just search, invest, and attempt to feel the microcosm of the World to Come – and, with God's help, achieve success.

Torah verses²⁹

Bereshit 2:1–3

VERSE 1: The heavens and the earth and their entire host were completed.

VERSE 2: God completed on the seventh day His works that He had made; He rested [*vayishbot*] on the seventh day from all His works that He had made.

VERSE 3: God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because on it He rested from all His works that God created to make.

Shemot 20:7–10

VERSE 7: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

VERSE 8: Six days you shall work and perform all your labor.

VERSE 9: And the seventh day is Sabbath for the Lord your God; you shall not perform any labor, you, and your son, and your daughter, your slave, and your maidservant, and your animal, and your stranger who is within your gate.

VERSE 10: Because in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them and He rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and He sanctified it.

29. Our goal here is to demonstrate how the different meanings of Shabbat can flow directly from the biblical verses. It should be noted that these verses can be understood differently; they do not have to be interpreted in the specific manner presented here.

Shemot 23:12

VERSE 12: Six days you shall perform your activities, and on the seventh day you shall rest so that your ox and your donkey will rest [yanuah] and the son of your maidservant and the stranger will be invigorated .

Shemot 31:13–17

VERSE 13: And you, speak to the children of Israel, saying: However, you shall observe My Sabbaths, as it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am the Lord, your Sanctifier .

VERSE 14: You shall observe the Sabbath, as it is sacred for you; its desecrators shall be put to death; for anyone who performs labor on it, that person shall be excised from among his people.

VERSE 15: Six days labor shall be performed, and on the seventh day a sabbatical rest, sacred to the Lord ; anyone who performs labor on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.

VERSE 16: The children of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to render the Sabbath for their generations an eternal covenant.

VERSE 17: Between Me and the children of Israel, it is a sign forever. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day, He rested and was invigorated.

Devarim 5:11–14

VERSE 11: Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy , as the Lord your God commanded you.

VERSE 12: Six days you shall work, and perform all your labor.

VERSE 13: And the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God , you shall not perform any labor, you, and your son, and your daughter , and your slave, and your maidservant, and your ox, and your donkey, and all your animals, and your stranger who is within your gates , so that your slave and your maidservant will rest like you .

VERSE 14: You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God took you out from there with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm; therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to observe the Shabbat day.

