

In Parshas Ki Siso we saw that Hashem gave chochmah to Betzalel and all the chachmei lev to build the mishkon. But at the same time, Klal Yisroel had to be reminded about Shabbos. Hashem warns them: You cannot allow your zeal for the mishkon to override Shabbos.

In order to understand this incredible zeal, we need to remember that Klal Yisroel experienced at Har Sinai a tremendous gilui Shechinoh and closeness to Hashem. Then they panicked when they thought there was no-one to be the go-between between them and Hashem. They made a golden calf as a physical representation of Hashem that they could relate to in order to replace Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe comes down from Har Sinai, shatters the luchos, and tells them they made a catastrophic mistake. He goes back up to get forgiveness and then goes up again for the second luchos with Torah Shebaal Peh.

Now, after all that, Klal Yisroel have the Torah Shebaal Peh and a physical mishkon by which to more easily relate directly to Hashem and sense His presence. Moshe tells everyone to donate their wealth to provide the materials for building the mishkon and the vessels, and Klal Yisroel oversubscribed. They gave way beyond what was necessary. This is something which has never been replicated in the history of fundraising! Such zerizus, such enthusiasm to get the Shechinoh back after it was lost because of their sins. This was their chance to make up for their terrible mistake of the golden calf.

But Hashem says – hold on. For all your eagerness to recover your connection to Hashem through the mishkon, you have to realize that Shabbos is an even more important way to connect. Building the mishkon does not supersede Shabbos.

Why is Shabbos so important? Because it is an *os*. It is an eternal bris between Hashem and Klal Yisroel forever and ever. The mishkon won't be around forever. Shabbos will always be there. It represents the truth that the world was created from absolute nothingness in six days. Hashem chose Klal Yisroel to be His nation to give that message to the world. He gave them His special day of rest for all the world to see. If you violate the kedushoh of the mikdash or Yom Kippur, it is *koreis*. But violating Shabbos is death by *beis din*.

Why is it so severe? Someone who violates the Shabbos is declaring that Hashem did not create the world from nothing in six days. One who is *mechallel* Shabbos in public is violating the testimony of Shabbos that Hashem created the world in six days. The Rambam adds that the foundation of our relationship with Hashem is recognizing that Hashem created the world from nothing. We Jews are the ones who testify this truth to the world. This forms the basis of our entire mission to the world as Hashem's nation.

Shabbos is a *yom menuchoh*. Rashi explains that this is not just to rest up from exertion. It is a deep kind of *menuchoh* which goes to the core of the human being.

In Ki Siso, the verses refer to Betzalel and the select group of craftsmen. He warns them about Shabbos. But in Vayakhel, Moshe speaks to everyone right after he comes from Har Sinai on Yom Kippur to tell them about Shabbos. People get confused about what Shabbos is all about. It is what connects us to Hashem in an essential and important way.

Rabbeinu Avrohom ben HaRambam in Sefer Hamaspik makes an important point. There is a minimum way to keep Shabbos – avoid *melochoh* and make *Kiddush*. But because Shabbos is an *os*, there is

a message to Shabbos. There is a *derech avodoh* with every mitzvah. The Rambam says in his Sefer Hamitzvos that mitzvos have to be used as a means of serving Hashem. Every Jew has to contemplate what is so crucial about Shabbos. Why is it the bris between us and Hashem?

In the times of Rishonim, the philosophy of Aristotle dominated the intellectual world. Aristotle believed in *kadmus* – the idea that the universe is finite in size and infinite in time – going forward and going all the way back forever. Nothing changes. It just keeps on going by itself for eternity. All Rishonim fought this idea with all their might. It is totally inconsistent with Torah. The Rambam says not only is there no basis to interpret the verses of the Torah to accommodate it, but it undermines the fundamental beliefs we have about Hashem and the reality He created. We know from the Torah that nothing exists independently. Hashem is the source of everything and how it functions.

And more than that – Hashem gives everything its existence minute-by-minute.

When we are *mekabel ol malchus shomayim* in the morning in Shacharis, we preface it with two brochos. The first one concludes with the statement that Hashem constantly creates the world in the present – not just in the past. It wasn't a one-time creation which now functions by itself automatically. At the very beginning of Mishnah Torah, the Rambam writes that everything that exists and functions in this world comes directly from Hashem's direct causation. It is the basis of *hashgocho protis* and the basis of reward and punishment.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin explains that this is fundamentally different than how human beings create things. When a carpenter makes a piece of furniture, when he is finished, he's done. He can't change its quality or the way it functions. It doesn't need the carpenter to continue to exist. But Hashem isn't limited by the laws of nature He put into place, nor is he prevented from interfering with the world after He created it. He is continually observing everything that happens and is involved in human history in order to respond to our actions with reward or punishment. This is what *hashgocho protis* is all about.

How we relate to Hashem is what Shabbos is all about. Why do I refrain from all creative activity on Shabbos? Because Hashem created the world in six days, and from then on, He maintains it in an ongoing manner and manipulates it according to our actions. This is the basis of our relationship to Hashem and we need to focus on it for a whole day every week. It's not like Yom Kippur which is once a year or Pesach which is once a year. It is an essential *os* which has to be at the center of every Jew's life because people have a tendency to forget it. Recognize that Hashem created the world.

True, there is a *beis hamikdash* where we also connect to Hashem. But the connection to Hashem through Shabbos is more important. The violation of the mikdash is *koreis*, eating on Yom Kippur is *koreis*, eating *chometz* on Pesach is *koreis*. But because Shabbos is so essential, the slightest violation of Shabbos is more severe than all of them – like *avodo zoro* and various *aveiros bein odom l'mokom*. This is the primary way we connect to Hashem. So even though we get used to it and we forget the message, we have to take time to reflect on it every week.

The verses in Parshas Emor describe Shabbos as "*mikrah kodesh*". The Ramban explains that it is not enough to refrain from *melochoh* and make *Kiddush*. There is a public dimension to Shabbos by having a

public kriyas haTorah. We have a mitzvah to make Shabbos into a yom kodesh and make it distinct from the weekday. The Netziv points out a very interesting thing. One set of pesukim say, "perform melochoh during six days of the week, but on Shabbos, do not perform melochoh". When we come to the pesukim by the mishkon, it says, "melochoh can be done during the six days, but Shabbos should be kodesh". Meaning all melochoh is distant from us on Shabbos. It shouldn't even be done by others on your behalf.

Make Shabbos different. Turn Shabbos into a yom kodesh. It is not just stating a line of testimony about creation. It is a way we can bring kedushoh into our lives for an entire day each week.

The word zachor can either mean to remember, to mention verbally, or to discuss and talk about it in detail. The Rambam in Sefer Hamitzvos says that Kiddush on Shabbos is not just a statement. It is a whole explanation of why Shabbos is special and unique and central to our lives. This is why singing zemiros is part of the mitzvas aseil zachor es yom haShabbos. The zemiros explain the specialness of all the aspects of Shabbos. It is not a day where you socialize or collapse at home after a week of work. You turn it into a yom kodesh by pulling back from the world and focusing on the message of Shabbos. Your learning has to be special. We change the davening in all kinds of ways. We have kriyas haTorah on Shabbos. Hashem created the world

and continues to run it.

It is interesting to note how the relevance of this message continued throughout the history of science.

At first people thought the world was never created. Now people believe it took billions of years. But we testify that it took six days. How do we measure the length of those six days? I have a lengthy discussion of it in my book. The Ramban is very clear that it took six days because otherwise the concept of Shabbos falls apart.

It is interesting to note that most of our units of time have astronomical meaning. A day is a rotation of the Earth. A year is a revolution around the sun. A month is a cycle of all the phases of the moon. But a week of seven days has no corresponding astronomical phenomena. Still, we find that all cultures all over the world mark every seven days as a separate period of time. It's a mystery. But we know this came from the concept of Shabbos.

The kedushoh of Shabbos is the main way we connect to Hashem. It is the most basic. Yes the mikdosh is also a way of connecting. We connect through Shabbos in all places, at all times in history. There was a thought that maybe we should push off Shabbos to build the mishkon. But twice the Torah reminds us that no – this is a misunderstanding of what Shabbos is all about.