

“But the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem.” (35:2)

The various commands and admonishments concerning *Shabbos Kodesh* are reiterated in the Torah a number of times. This clearly indicates the overriding significance of *Shabbos* to *Klal Yisrael*. In the beginning of our *parsha*, as Moshe *Rabbeinu* assembles *Klal Yisrael* to instruct them about the building of the *Mishkan*, he prefaces his talk with a reminder about *Kedushas Shabbos*, the sanctity of the seventh day. *Chazal* derive from here that the building of the *Mishkan* does not supersede the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*. Interestingly, the *avodas ha'korban*, sacrificial service, was performed on *Shabbos*. The holy day was “set aside” for the holy sacrifices. Apparently, the building of the *Mishkan*, which was only a *hechsher* – preparation – for the actual *mitzvah* of offering *korbanos*, does not override the *mitzvah*.

The fact that the Torah found it necessary to imply that the building of the *Mishkan* does not countermand *Shabbos*, indicates that there is a logical assumption for building the *Mishkan*, even on *Shabbos*. After all, we have a *halachic* axiom, *Asei docheh Lo Saaseh*, “a positive commandment prevails over a negative commandment”. To build the *Mishkan* is a positive dictate which seemingly should supersede the negative canon of *Shabbos*.

The *Abarbanel* explains that by giving precedence to the positive/active *mitzvah* of building the *Mishkan* over the negative commandment, one might be led to believe that enterprise, positive activity, is a greater indication of one's belief in Hashem than passively withholding oneself from transgression. This is not true. While it was crucial that *Klal Yisrael* build the *Mishkan*, it did not give them license to eliminate *Shabbos*. While this demonstrates the significance of *Shabbos*, it still does not explain why the building of the *Mishkan* did not eclipse *Shabbos*. Furthermore, why should positive activity not surpass the restraint that is part and parcel of a negative command?

Horav Moshe Reis, Shlita, suggests that a deeper aspect to *Shabbos* is often ignored. The Torah in *Parashas Ki Sisa* (31:14) sums up its characterization of *Shabbos* with the words, *Kodesh he lachem*, “For it is holy to you.” To the one who views *Shabbos* superficially, it is nothing more than an inert *mitzvah* which demands of us that we desist from labor on *Shabbos*. This does not, however, accurately characterize *Shabbos*. Perhaps its “body” is the various constraints placed upon the Jews, but its “soul” is something much more profound. The essence of *Shabbos* is its *kedushah*, sanctity. Thus, the various prohibitions that are involved in the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos* reflect *kedushas Shabbos*, its hallowedness. This idea is reiterated in our *parsha* when the Torah tells us that *Shabbos* “shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem.” Sanctity demands the prohibition of mundane activity, because the day belongs to Hashem, Who has consecrated it.

Just as there is a sanctuary which is erected in the holiest place, so too, is there a sanctuary for time. *Shabbos* is our sanctuary of time – the seventh day, designated by Hashem as the holiest

day for Him. The *kedushah* of the Sanctuary obligates one to maintain a high personal level of holiness and purity. Likewise, the sanctuary of time requires one to act appropriately.

Shabbos attests to the creation of the world. It is a positive reinforcement that on the Seventh Day Hashem rested from Creation. It is a *mitzvah* that serves as testimony to Hashem's creation of the world, and, as such, it is a sanctuary of time, which cannot be overridden by the *mitzvah* of building the *Mishkan*. The command to erect a sanctuary in space does not take precedence over the observance of the sanctuary in time.

We suggest another aspect of *Shabbos* that precludes it from being superseded by the building of the *Mishkan*. We think of *Shabbos* as a body of laws which prohibit various forms of labor on the seventh day. While it is true that these labors are prohibited, it is not a negative aspect of *Shabbos*. On the contrary, it is specifically these prohibited labors that indicate to us the actual character of the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*. *Shabbos* is an experience which is spiritual in nature. It is elevated above what the human being can physically perceive and absorb. Thus, he must elevate himself above the physical dimension which holds him captive – and cling to Hashem. *Shabbos* is a day when the Jew transcends the physical and enters into the spiritual realm.

It is regarding this concept that the *Zohar HaKadosh* writes that “*Shabbos* is the day of the *neshamah*, soul.” One, therefore, prepares himself prior to *Shabbos*, divesting himself of the shackles of the physical dimension as he anticipates entering into the spiritual realm. The prohibitions of *Shabbos* are more than merely a passive form of observance. They are actually a positive aspect of *Shabbos*, for they help divest the person of his physical encumbrances.

We now understand why one may not construct the *Mishkan* on *Shabbos*. By transgressing the “negative” commandments that enhance the *Shabbos*, one destroys the character of the *mitzvah* and undermines its spiritual aspect. Without the spiritual qualities of *Shabbos*, it becomes just another day of the week.