

And you shall speak to Bnei Yisrael saying, “However, you must observe My Shabbos. (31:13)

V'atah tidaber; “And you should speak.” It almost sounds as if it was only this mitzvah (Shabbos) that Moshe Rabbeinu was to (personally) teach the nation. What about the rest of the Torah? Did he not teach the entire Torah to Klal Yisrael? Why is emphasis placed on the mitzvah of Shabbos? Chazal (Eiruvin 54:13) teach that there was a special seder, order/sequence, in the manner that Torah was transmitted to Klal Yisrael. Keitzad seder ha'mishnah, “What was the order of (teaching) the Torah?” Moshe studied (a halachah) from Hashem. (When Moshe was finished) Aharon HaKohen would enter and Moshe taught the halachah to Aharon – after which Aharon's sons entered, and Moshe taught them the halachah – after which Elazar (the oldest surviving son and heir of Aharon's Kehunah Gedolah, High Priesthood) sat at Moshe's right and his brother, Issamar, sat to the left of Aharon. (Rabbi Yehudah contends that Aharon sat at Moshe's right.) Afterwards, the Zekeinim, Elders, entered, and Moshe taught them. When the Zekeinim left, the rest of the nation came forward, and Moshe taught them.

In summation, Aharon heard the lesson four times; his sons heard it three times; the Elders heard it twice; and the nation heard it once. Then Moshe Rabbeinu would leave, and Aharon would review the lesson once; then his sons would repeat the lesson, followed by the Elders, who would repeat the lesson until each group -- Aharon, his sons, the Elders, the nation -- all studied the Halachah four times. The nation heard four shiurim, lectures: Moshe, Aharon, his sons, the Elders. As a result, Rabbi Eliezer derives from here that a Rebbe should teach his student the halachah (pasuk Chumash, etc.) four times.

We now come to an apparent chiddush, novel thought, with regard to Hilchos Shabbos.

Concerning the laws of Shabbos, the Almighty instructed Moshe: V'atah tidaber, “And you shall speak.” I want you to teach Klal Yisrael the significance of Shabbos.

Horav Chaim Vital, zl, adds, when Klal Yisrael will see that Shabbos is like no other mitzvah, for this mitzvah was personally taught to them by Moshe, they will learn to appreciate the value of Shabbos and understand the stringency of profaning it. As a result, they will make a supreme effort to study its laws, reviewing them constantly until they achieve proficiency in all of its intricacies.

What is the meaning of ach, es Shabsosai tishmoreu, “However, you must observe My Shabbasos”? The Maggid, zl, m'Dubno, compares this to a young boy whose mother had sewn two beautiful jackets. He immediately donned one of them and ran outside. The other jacket was left in a suit bag in his closet. On his way to his friend's house, he was accosted by another boy who could not tolerate this boy's new jacket. He demonstrated his disdain for the boy and his jacket by grabbing ahold of a bag of manure and flinging its entire contents upon the boy with the new jacket.

Gevald! Gevald! The first boy screamed through the streets until he came home and was embraced by his mother. “Do not worry,” she said. “I will wash it immediately and allow it to dry overnight. By tomorrow, it will be shining once again. She washed it with bleach, oxy clean and a host of other detergents, but a faint spot still remained. It no longer gave the appearance of a brand new jacket. The other jacket, which had never left the closet, was pristine in its cleanliness.

The Maggid explains the analogy. When the nachash ha'kadmoni, primordial serpent, caused Adam HaRishon to sin on the Sixth Day of Creation, it tainted everything that had preceded it in Creation during the previous six days. While it is true that Adam did teshuvah, repented, nonetheless, a taint, however minor, remained. No longer was the creation of the first six days on the same pristine level as pre-chet Adam HaRishon.

One creation was not affected by Adam's sin: Shabbos, because Shabbos was the day of rest that followed after Six Days of Creation. "However, you must observe My Shabbos," means, continues the Maggid, "that Shabbos is the only creation that remained guarded (like the second jacket in the closet), protected from any taint of sin. It is for this reason that one is able to taste/experience mei'ein Olam Habba, a semblance, a taste, of the World to Come, on Shabbos. The holy tzaddikim, righteous, of each generation, merit this sublime experience.