

## **You shall observe the Shabbos for it is holy to you. (31:14)**

Concerning Yamim Tovim, Festivals, we find the concept of lachem, “For you,” which means that a person is permitted to have personal enjoyment from the Festival. The Talmud (Pesachim 68b) cites a dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua concerning the proper manner in which to celebrate Yom Tov. Rabbi Yehoshua contends: chetzya LaHashem u’chetzya lachem; part of the day should be spent in service to Hashem, ie, praying and learning, and part of the day for oneself, enjoying good food and wine. Rabbi Eliezer is of the opinion that it be spent kulo LaHashem, in total service to Hashem. In any event, Chazal (Pesachim 68b) say that everyone agrees that Shabbos (the celebration of Shabbos) requires lachem. V’karasa la’Shabbos oneg, “And you shall proclaim Shabbos a day of pleasure/delight” (Yeshayah 58:13). One must delight and take pleasure in Shabbos. Nonetheless, the pasuk admonishes us: “You shall observe the Shabbos, for it is holy to you,” concerning which Horav Nochum Horodner, zl, interprets: “You shall observe Shabbos – for it is holy to you.” Even the aspect that is lachem, which you take for yourself, the delight and pleasure must be kodesh. This means, the eating and drinking must be l’shem Shomayim, for Heaven’s sake – not just to satiate our desires and fill our bellies.

Chazal (Shabbos 1118a) teach: Kol ha’meaneg es ha’Shabbos nosnin lo nachalah bli metzarim, “Whoever delights the Shabbos (brings joy to the Shabbos) will be given a portion without borders,” unlimited possession, true freedom without the restrictions imposed by the physical world. Our ability to connect with Hashem will be boundless. Noticeably, Chazal say, “es haShabbos;” (one who delights) the Shabbos – not “es atzmo,” himself. The focus of his delight is Shabbos – not his own physical dimension. Shabbos is not about imbibing and eating for one’s personal pleasure; rather, it is about giving pleasure to Shabbos by maintaining a semblance of sanctity in every physical activity that we do on Shabbos.

Obviously, in order to achieve such a level of sanctity whereby one consecrates his physical experience and uplifts it to a realm of holiness takes a special person with a profound understanding of the meaning and distinction of Shabbos Kodesh. Horav Yosef Halperin, zl, the first Rav of Zichron Meir/Bnei Brak, related that when he was still in Europe, prior to emigrating to the Holy Land, he had traveled to one of the communities that specialized in therapeutic health care. This was a village off the mainstream Jewish path that did not have much of a Jewish community. He was able to find a room in the home of a simple Jew, a hard-working man who earned his living working in the fields surrounding the village. During the six-day work week, he appeared natural and the same as everyone else. On Shabbos, however, his visage underwent a complete transformation. His countenance shone as if a sacred aura emanated from him. They spent Shabbos together, with the host learning Torah at every juncture, singing zemiros, the festive Shabbos songs, with a passion and sanctity that was palpable. The Shabbos experience that Rav Halperin had was unlike anything that he had ever experienced before – all because of his host. It came to an abrupt end following Havdalah on Motzoei Shabbos.

The same thing was repeated the following week. An entire week went by with the man acting no different than the average villager. Come Shabbos, however, a transformation occurred same as the week before. Rav Halperin demanded an explanation, and he was unwilling to take “no comment” for an answer. Finally, his host relented and gave the following explanation:

“A number of years ago, I was a successful cattle merchant, traveling from my home to various communities, buying and selling cattle and other livestock. I did quite well. One Erev Shabbos as I was returning from a very successful business trip, I was running late and saw that I would not make it home in time for Shabbos, so I stopped in Chernovitz to spend Shabbos. Since I was coming off a good week, I had a considerable sum of money in my wallet. Leaving it where I was staying was inadvisable. I went to the Rav of the city, Horav Chaim, zl, m’Czernovitz, author of the Sidduro Shel Shabbos, and I asked if I could leave my money with him for Shabbos. It was Shabbos, and Rav Chaim was already ascending to a different world – a world of sanctity which could only be experienced on Shabbos. I made my request. He directed me to put the money into a drawer, and he returned to his learning. I apologized for bothering him, saying that I was concerned that the drawer was not locked; anyone could get in and empty its contents. He said not to worry; he would lock the drawer before Shabbos.

“Rav Chaim was so engrossed in his learning that he forgot to lock the drawer. That Shabbos, I experienced what might truly be considered mei’ein, a taste, of Olam Habba. To gaze upon Rav Chaim on Shabbos was to look at the countenance of a Heavenly angel: the singing; the learning; the davening; it was all surreal. Once Shabbos was over, I went to retrieve my wallet. I almost passed out when I discovered that the wallet was gone! I went to Rav Chaim and informed him that my wallet was missing. He then reminded himself that he had forgotten to lock the drawer. Rav Chaim began to tremble, and he broke out in a cold sweat. He passed out and fell to the floor. Frozen with terror, I immediately bent down to administer first aid. He opened his eyes and began muttering, ‘How will I be able to repay the money? It is all my fault. Even if I were to sell everything – my house, furniture and religious artifacts, it would be insufficient to pay the debt.’

“I whispered into the Rav’s ear, ‘Machul lach; machul lach; I forgive you; I forgive you!’ When the Rav heard this, he looked up and said, ‘It is not enough that you forgive me. I caused you a great loss for which I am in your debt. What can I do for you? How can I repay you?’ he thought for a moment, then said, ‘I know what I can give you. I bless you to experience the kedushas Shabbos as I do. It will not be exactly the same, but almost.’

“Now, you know why my Shabbos is different. For those 26 hours, I am in a different world, on a different plane, transported there by Rav Chaim Chernovitz’s blessing.”