

No man could see his brother... but, for all Bnei Yisrael, there was light in their dwellings. (10:23)

During *Makas Choshech*, plague of darkness, the Egyptian people were overwhelmed with an opaque, fog-like condition that enveloped the country and extinguished all flames. Thus, even if an Egyptian could reach his lamp, any flame that he would kindle would immediately be extinguished. *Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita*, says that the word *b'moshvosam*, in their dwellings, contains within it the letters which comprise the word *b'shabbosam*, in their *Shabbosos*, which he feels alludes to the notion that the reason the Jewish people were able to withstand the darkness of the Egyptian exile was that they observed *Shabbos Kodesh*. Indeed, *Chazal* (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:28) teach that the Jewish People in Egypt took upon themselves to observe *Shabbos*. Concerning the *pasuk* *Va'yaar b'sivlosam*, "He observed their burdens" (Ibid. 2:11), Moshe *Rabbeinu* went out to his brethren and saw that they had no rest. He went to Pharaoh and contended that one who owns a slave and does not grant him one day of rest will end up burying his slave. No human being can work non-stop without time off to rest. Pharaoh acquiesced and instructed Moshe to provide the Jewish people with a rest-day. Moshe established *Shabbos* as their day of rest. The spiritual illumination engendered through the medium of *shemiras Shabbos* eradicated the darkness of the exile that suffused the lives of the Jewish People throughout the ages.

This idea is alluded to in the *Havdalah* service, which we recite at the conclusion of *Shabbos*. *Hamavdil bein ohr l'choshech*; "He Who makes distinction between light and darkness." This verse implies that immediately following *Shabbos* we enter into a period of darkness. *Rav Gamliel* explains that the weekdays that follow *Shabbos* are dark in contrast to *Shabbos*. When one observes *Shabbos* properly, he causes the *Shabbos* illumination to overflow and continue during the entire week. Thus, *Shabbos* continues to be a source of light that radiates our lives throughout the various circumstances that we confront.

Entire volumes of Torah literature have been dedicated to explaining the profundity of *Shabbos Kodesh*. Yet, for the majority of the Jewish People, it remains an ancient tradition heaped together – often rejected – with the rest of Jewish tradition and values. Perhaps, it is its profundity which makes it so difficult to accept. After all, what is the difference between one day of the week and another? At times, the most profound question can be elucidated with a simple answer: To Hashem, *Shabbos* has special meaning. He asked you/us to observe this day by sanctifying it. Is it so much to ask?

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, visited his *Rebbe*, the saintly *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, in Radin. *Rav Elchanan* related that in a nearby city, a number of shopkeepers had decided to keep their establishments open on *Shabbos*. He was able to convince all but two of the owners to shutter their stores for *Shabbos*. The remaining two were determined to play hardball and defy his request that they close. When the *Chafetz Chaim* heard this, he said, "Quick, we are traveling to that city, so that I can pay a visit to these two men." *Rav Elchanan* did not want to burden his *Rebbe*, whose

advanced age transformed this trip into a major hardship. Thus, he said that he would not go. The *Chafetz Chaim* countered, "Fine. So I will go myself." Obviously, *Rav Elchanan* would not permit his *Rebbe* to travel alone; he accompanied him.

They arrived at the store of one of the recalcitrant owners. The *Chafetz Chaim* did not waste any time getting to the point. "Tell me, my friend," he asked the owner, "do you have money?" "I have done well. I am quite comfortable." "Do you have children?" the *Chafetz Chaim* asked. "Yes, I have a decent sized family." "Is there anything that you are missing?" the sage asked. "Nothing, I am doing well. I have no complaints."

When the *Chafetz Chaim* heard this, he began to weep bitterly and asked, "Hashem has been so good to you. He has given you everything: wealth and children. You are lacking nothing. Yet, Hashem makes only one request of you: that you give Him *Shabbos*. Is that too much to ask? Why will you not grant this to him?"

When the man heard such a "simple" request emanate from such a pure soul he could not say no. He acquiesced to closing his store for *Shabbos*. The second storekeeper agreed as well. The most profound questions can sometimes be answered with a simple, sincere response.