

And Moshe, the servant of Hashem, died there. (34:5)

A debate in *Tosfos* commentary (*Menachos* 30a) addresses when Moshe *Rabbeinu* died. Rav Sholom Gaon posits that Moshe died on *Shabbos Kodesh*. Thus, we recite *Tzidkascha tzedek*, affirming and accepting Hashem's decree. *Tosfos* contends that Moshe died on *Erev Shabbos*, since his *yahrzeit* is on *Adar 7*, which that year (based on calculations) occurred on Friday. Furthermore, Moshe could not write the conclusion of the Torah on the day of his death if it was, in fact, *Shabbos*. As a compromise, the commentators suggest that Moshe's death began on *Erev Shabbos*, and his burial took place on *Shabbos*. For our purposes, we will follow the accepted ruling that Moshe did, indeed, die on *Shabbos*.

The *Sefer Middah K'neged Middah* cites the *Midrash* (*Shemos Rabbah* 1:28) concerning the *pasuk*, *Vayaar b'sivlosam*, "And he (Moshe) saw their burdens" (*Shemos* 2:11). *Rashi* comments, *Nasan eino v'libo lihe'yos meitzar aleihem*; "He focused his eyes and heart to be distressed over them." The *Midrash* teaches, "Moshe saw that they had no *menuchah*, rest. He went and spoke to Pharaoh, 'One who has a slave, if he does not rest one day a week, he will die! If you do not allow your Jewish slaves to rest one day a week, they will die!' Pharaoh said to him, 'Go and do for them as you are saying.' Moshe went and established *Shabbos* for them to rest."

According to this *Chazal*, it is logically consistent that just as Moshe chose to provide *Klal Yisrael* with *Shabbos Kodesh* as their day of rest, his *neshamah*, holy soul, should likewise find its eternal rest on *Shabbos*.

Moshe saw the people's burdens. Pharaoh's slave masters were crushing them. He did not ask Pharaoh to ease off, to lighten their load, to shorten their day. He asked that Pharaoh grant them a day of rest, *Shabbos*. He knew that *Shabbos* would imbue their lives with meaning and purpose. This, in and of itself, would allow their minds and bodies to navigate the overbearing slavery to which they were being subjected. Moshe understood that the greatest *chesed* he could do for them was to introduce them to *Shabbos*. He felt their pain; he understood that, without *Shabbos*, a Jew has no life. The only way that we are able to grapple with life's uncertainties and travail is with the tools of *emunah*, faith, that we receive from our *Shabbos* observance. He pitied them, because they did not know what they were missing. No one in his right mind would violate *Shabbos* if he had any idea of its true meaning and value.

Shabbos is not merely a day off from work, a day of rest. *Shabbos* represents one of the most important religious principles of Judaism. *Shabbos* represents our belief in Hashem and our conviction that He created the world and continues to guide every aspect of it and the lives of all its creatures. True, Hashem rested, but does Hashem require rest? Does He need to rejuvenate Himself? Hashem rested when He halted His creation of the world. At this point, He pulled back (so to speak) and no longer intervened in His world. It was perfect. His purpose in Creation was complete. He concluded His work. This gives us insight into the meaning of *Shabbos*. To us, resting on *Shabbos* means that we are no longer interfering with the world. We emulate Hashem by

relinquishing the world on *Shabbos*. “Work” in the *Shabbos* “vernacular” is an act that indicates man’s mastery over the world by means of his intelligence and skill. Rest means neither interfering with nature nor exhibiting our mastery over it. *Shabbos* represents perfection: a state of peace and harmony between man and nature. It is a symbol of our belief in Hashem’s creation of the world. On *Shabbos*, the process of Creation comes to a standstill.

Furthermore, as *Chazal* state (*Midrash Bereishis Rabbah* 10:10), Hashem created “rest” on *Shabbos*. Since Hashem is immutable, He does not change; serenity and tranquility are emulations/imitations of Hashem’s Attributes. On *Shabbos*, Hashem infused the world with this dimension of harmony and tranquility. Holiness would reign on this day, because its essence is G-d-like. *Shabbos* became the day of eternity.

Having said this, we now have an understanding about why Moshe, who cared so much about *Shabbos* that he was aggrieved over his brethren’s inability to observe *Shabbos*, left this world, his holy soul returning to its eternal tranquility on this holy day. As an aside, we derive from Moshe that the greatest act of kindness toward a fellow Jew is to introduce him to, and enable him to, observe *Shabbos* – the day of eternity.

Horav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitch, zl, was a *tzaddik*, righteous man, in the truest sense of the word. While every *mitzvah* was special to him, he took *kedushas Shabbos*, the sanctity of *Shabbos*, personally. Indeed, he once commented, “Feeling the pain of the *Shabbos* (when people desecrate it) simply makes me ill.” He did not have to see *chillul Shabbos*; even if he heard that it had taken place, it troubled him to no end. Every Friday afternoon he would make his way along Yaffo Road, warning and encouraging storekeepers to close their stores in time for *Shabbos*. This was coming from a man who nary wasted a moment. Yet, he valued Hashem’s honor even more. Therefore, he willingly relinquished his Friday afternoons – walking through the Machaneh Yehudah marketplace, imploring all vendors to close before *Shabbos*. He was often met with ridicule, physical and emotional abuse. He was not afraid. He told his students, “I would readily give up my life for the preservation of *Shabbos*.” He was severely beaten by the police (he was over seventy-years old at the time) during a demonstration *l’kavod*, to preserve the honor of, *Shabbos*. Although the religious public was shocked and outraged, his reaction was, “I am grateful to have had the privilege of being beaten for the honor of, *Shabbos*.” Like Moshe *Rabbeinu*, *Rav Shmuel Aharon*’s pure *neshamah* left him on *Shabbos Kodesh*. He simply smiled, closed his eyes, and quietly passed on to the next world – from eternity to eternity.