

There he established for (the nation) a decree and an ordinance, and there He tested it. (15:25)

The nation needed to study Torah. The Jewish People are unique in that sense; without Torah, we descend spiritually and open ourselves up to spiritual failure, which ultimately leads to spiritual extinction. It had been a three-day journey from the Red Sea, and the people were already complaining, "What will we drink?" Hashem transformed the bitter waters, and they became sweet. Seeing how the lack of Torah study caused disaster, the Almighty gave the nation commandments with which to occupy themselves until *Kabbolas HaTorah*, at which time they would receive the *Luchos*, Ten Commandments. He gave them the laws of *Parah Adumah*, the laws of *Shabbos*, and civil law. *Parah Adumah* is considered the quintessential *chok, mitzvah*, whose rationale is not revealed to man. Thus, we observe it out of love for the Almighty. Civil law is critical for a society to function. *Shabbos*, however, may be an important *mitzvah*, but should it take precedence over all others?

If we peruse *Bereishis* 2:3 concerning the creation and establishment of *Shabbos* as Hashem's day of rest from Creation, we see that Hashem endowed *Shabbos* with a special blessing. As *Horav Shmuel Berenbaum, zl*, notes, *Shabbos* is the *mekor ha'brachah*, source of blessing. This accords extraordinary blessing status to *Shabbos Kodesh*. Indeed, we recite in the *Lecha Dodi* prayer chanted during *Kabbolas Shabbos*, *Likras Shabbos lechu v'neilcha, ki hee mekor ha'brachah*.

How are we to understand *Shabbos* as the *mekor ha'brachah*? *Sheishis yamim tei'aseh melachah*; "On six days, work may be done" (*Shemos* 35:2). *Tei'aseh* literally means that work is done --- by itself. This implies that work is not performed by a person; rather, the work is done on its own. [It should have said, *ta'aseh melachah*, you should work.] Indeed, if a person labors all week to provide a livelihood for himself, how can the Torah write that it just happens on its own?

The simple explanation is that, just as the *neshamah*, soul, of a person is the Heavenly- power source for human life, when Hashem calls the *neshamah* back to its Heavenly sphere, the human body begins to decay and slowly turn to dust. Likewise, the material bounty which we earned during the work week receives its "sustenance" through the individual's *Shabbos* observance. Proof positive of this is the fact that many people exert themselves to work longer hours in order to gain more material benefits. Yet, we observe that the extra hours do not pay off. The person is still behind in his payables at the office. What happened to the extra money? It was not blessed by *Shabbos*. Indeed, we see the observant Jew who puts in his time and "somehow" makes it. The "somehow" is *Shabbos*. If one observes *Shabbos*, his weekday work is blessed, and it is considered as if someone is doing his work. Perhaps, at first glance, this does not appear realistic, but once one scrutinizes his earnings versus his expenses and various expenditures, he will see clearly whether his efforts to earn a livelihood are blessed or not.

It is not only about money. *Shabbos* is the source of blessing for the entire mundane life that we lead. The *Rosh Yeshiva* relates a number of vignettes which support this notion. A woman came to the *Chafetz Chaim*, *zl*, petitioning for a blessing for her young son who was battling serious heart disease. The specialists in Vienna had already despaired for his life. The *Chafetz Chaim* himself was in his later years, weak, manifesting little strength. He told the mother, "I am not the source of blessing. If you seek a positive outcome to your son's illness, you must turn to the *mekor ha'brachah: Shabbos*. If you will promise to be ready for *Shabbos*, table set, food prepared, by midday Friday, *Shabbos* will be your source of blessing. The parents immediately adhered to the sage's advice, and, within a short interval, their son was cured.

The *Chafetz Chaim* once visited a community in which the town's wealthiest Jew owned a factory that was open on *Shabbos*. He himself did not perform any prohibited labor, but the factory, with all its workers functioned on *Shabbos* as if it were a regular weekday. The city's *Rav* was a great scholar, yet, despite his exalted position, he was unable to convince the man to close on *Shabbos*. Apparently, the man claimed that, if he were to close down on *Shabbos*, he would suffer an enormous financial loss. The *Rav* asked the *Chafetz Chaim* to speak with the man; perhaps they could come to an agreement about how to shut down the operation in a manner that would be *halachically* correct, but would not incur a serious financial repercussion.

The *Chafetz Chaim* replied that it is not for us to explain to the man how to run his business, but instead, to explain to him the significance of the holiness of *Shabbos*. He said, "He is more proficient than we are in running his business. We, however, have a deeper understanding of the sanctity of *Shabbos*. If we explain to him our area of expertise, he will, ultimately, figure out a way to close on *Shabbos*."

The *Rosh Yeshivah* concludes with a powerful observation. When we notice someone not using his time wisely for Torah study, we should focus on ways to minimize his distractions, not advise him about how to run his business. We should reiterate to him the importance of Torah study. He – on his own – will figure out a better way to spend his day, once he realizes the overarching importance of Torah study. Focusing on the positive is much more effective.