Our Week is Like a Cellphone

By HaRav Eli Mansour (Shiur E9)

What would happen if חס ושלום nobody kept Shabbos?

The announcement before the Amidah

Most communities recite Pesukim on Friday night before the Amidah. Indeed, most people even know these Pesukim by heart. They are:

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִוא לְעֹלָם כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה . עוֹלָם ה׳ אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפַשׁ.

Let us translate these Pesukim in their simplest form and then take it apart for its lessons.

Bnei Yisrael will observe the Shabbat, to make the Shabbat for all generations as an everlasting covenant. It is a sign between Me and the Bnei Yisrael forever that six days Hashem made Heaven and Earth and on the seventh day He stopped and rested.

Observe the Shabbat

The word ושמרו is typically rendered as 'kept.' People who observe the Mitzvot of Shabbat are called שומרי שבת – keepers of Shabbat. This observance involves both refraining from the prohibited activities associated with Shabbat (Melacha) as well as the required state of mind associated with Shabbat (Oneg).

The battery of the cosmic cellphone runs out as sunset approaches on Friday.

Shabbat gives back

Shabbat does not only expect observance of us; Shabbat gives back to those who observe it. Protection, both on the material and the spiritual plains, are the way that Shabbat gives back. There is a reciprocal relationship, and we cannot imagine a better protection plan. As the great Rishon, the Ibn Ezra wrote: כי אשמרה שבת אל ישמרני – as I observe Shabbat, Hashem protects me.

Protection is built in

Just before reciting these Pesukim we recite the Bracha of השכיבנו. During the week, this Bracha, recited before the Amidah, is filled with requests that Hashem protect us from all sorts of scary occurrences. On Friday night the scary things that we fear are absent in the Sephardic Siddur. And in all Siddurim, the request for protection is absent from the closing Bracha of השכיבנו. Instead of a request for protection, we close with praise of Hashem Who cloaks His People and His Holy City with peace. Where did the request for protection go?

The Chafetz Chaim[1] explains the change in simple terms. We do not refer to שמירה – protection – on Friday night because Shabbat

[1] שו״ע סימן רס״ג מ״ב ס״ק ז׳

provides the protection. And when Shabbat gives back it does not just give back on its day; Shabbat observance protects the person all week long.

Another translation for ושמרו

The אור החיים הק׳ refers us back to Yaakov's response to Yosef's grandiose dreams of becoming a king. While trying to play down the dream in order not to incite the jealousy of the brothers, the Pasuk says, ואביו שמר את הדבר – his father (Yaakov) was שומר the dream. Here the implication of the word, as Rashi points out, is one of holding on, yearning, longing, anticipating, and looking forward to the fulfillment of the dream.

We now have an alternate reading of 'observe the Shabbat.' It now means the Bnei Yisrael 'yearn and look forward to the Shabbat.' It is this craving for the coming of Shabbat that distinguishes us.

Another language of craving

We can combine the comment of the אור החיים הק׳ with another comment of his at the end of the account of Creation. There, Hashem's conclusion of the six days of Creation is described with the word ויכל, simply translated as 'He concluded.' The word ויכל can also refer to yearning, as is found in the Pasuk in Tehillim[2] נִכְסְפָה וְגַם כָּלְתָה נַפְשִׁי לְחַצְרוֹת ה׳ – my soul yearns and pines for the courtyard of Hashem. Our job is not just to guard and observe Shabbat; we are meant to yearn and anticipate its arrival.

To make the Shabbat

The next words of the Pasuk are a mystery. In what way do we, His People, *make* the Shabbat. Hashem made the Shabbat and did so without any help from us. The sun rises and sets over the course of the six days and the setting sun on Friday brings in the Shabbat. No proclamation on our part is needed. How did we 'make' Shabbat?

Adding a Shabbat

An explanation offered by Rav Shlomo Amar shlita (Sephardic Rav of Jerusalem) refers to the fact that we can transform parts of the weekday and turn it into Shabbat. We can do that prior to the onset of Shabbat and append time onto the end of Shabbat. This time, called תוספת שבת, becomes Shabbat. It is sanctified exactly as is Shabbat. Here is Shabbat that we 'make.'

Through an analysis of the sources, Rav Amar shlita, concludes that the time of תוספת שבת is 15 minutes prior to Shabbat and a 15-minute extension of Shabbat. If we multiply this half-hour by the four Shabbatot of the month we get two hours, which means that over the course of a year we have added 24 hours of Shabbat. The Pasuk can now be read, Bnei Yisrael will 'make' or 'create' a Shabbat! It was not there before and our תוספת has 'made' Shabbat.

Shabbat and the good Hotel

We made the Shabbat by anticipating its arrival. We demonstrate that we are happy to be going into Shabbat the way one might think about

[2] תהילים פד : ג

going to a good hotel. We request early check-in and late check-out!

Six days Hashem made Heaven and Earth

Moving forward in our Pesukim we find a surprising wording. We would have expected the Pasuk to say that Hashem made Heaven and Earth *in* six days (בששת ימים). Instead we read that Hashem made Heaven and Earth six days. What could that mean?

Again, tapping into the אור החיים we discover that Hashem only imbued Heaven and Earth with the capacity to last for six days. The battery of the cosmic cellphone runs out as sunset approaches on Friday. The recharge comes from Shabbat. Shabbat enables another six days. If חס ושלום a Shabbat would go by without שמירת שבת the world would cease to exist. In that sense Hashem gave us the ability to not only 'make' the Shabbat, but also to be a partner in Creation.

We are the maintenance

While we were not involved in the design and manufacture of the universe, we are essential to its maintenance. Hashem's handiwork is maintained via our שמירת שבת. As a tribute to our role, Hashem elevates us to partner – שותף במעשה בראשית.

Summary

In summary, we find compacted into these two Pesukim which we recite Friday night before the Amidah:

1. The protection associated with our careful observance of Shabbat.
2. Our yearning, as well as Hashem's anticipation for the arrival of Shabbat.
3. Our ability to 'make' Shabbat via תוספת.
4. Our observance of Shabbat not only energizes the coming week; it makes us partners in Creation.

Takeaway: I will try to pause when the Tzibbur recites ושמרו to recognize the significance of my Shabbat observance.