

# The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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## OF SHEMITAH AND SHABBOS

Parshas Behar begins by detailing the laws of *shemita*: "When you will arrive in the land that I am giving you, the land shall rest a Shabbos for Hashem. For six years you shall sow your fields and prune your vineyards, and you shall gather its harvest. In the seventh year, the land shall rest a Shabbos for Hashem."

Although the year of *shemita* only comes *after* the six years of work, the wording of these verses makes it seem as if immediately upon arriving in Eretz Yisroel (*before* beginning to work), the land should rest. Why are the *pesukim* written in such a way?

Another question:

On the words "a Shabbos for Hashem [*Havayah*]," Rashi comments, "for the sake of Hashem, just as the verse states regarding Shabbos Bereishis [i.e., the weekly Shabbos]." In other words, just as Shabbos is "for *Havayah*," *shemita* is also "for *Havayah*."

What does this mean?

### SUBMERGED OR EXPOSED?

Upon examining the story of the six days of Creation, we see that throughout the six days, the G-dly name that is used is *Elokim* (a total of thirty-two times, in fact). The first time the name *Havayah* is used is with Shabbos. The Torah tells us how Hashem rested on Shabbos, and immediately afterwards the *posuk* continues, "...on the day *Havayah Elokim* created the earth and the heavens."

What is the difference between these two names of Hashem?

*Elokim* has the same numerical value as *hateva*, nature, while *Havayah* is higher than nature.

The word *teva*, nature, is related to the phrase *tub'u bayam*, "submerged in the ocean." What is the connection between nature and submersion in water?

It is possible to have two identical objects, one on dry land and the other submerged in water. They are exactly the same; the only difference between them is that one of them is visible while the other, covered by water, is not.

This is also the difference between miracles and nature. Both identically come from Hashem. Just as Hashem is the One who performs miracles, He is also the One who runs the natural course

of events. He makes the sun rise in the east and set in the west, and all the other phenomena we see around us. (To quote the *Chacham Tzvi*, nature consists of "constant miracles.") The only difference is that since they occur on a daily basis, we can forget, *chas veshalom*,

that the hand of Hashem is behind it all. The garments of nature conceal the G-dliness found within it, making it possible for us to think that the world runs independently.

With a miracle, by contrast, we know clearly that Hashem made it happen. The Hebrew word for miracle, *nes*, can also mean a raised banner that all can see. Similarly, with a miracle, we can all see Hashem's hand at work.

This is the difference between *Havayah* and *Elokim*. *Elokim* represents how Hashem limits and conceals Himself, so to speak, so that the world appears as if it is a separate entity. *Havayah*, on the other hand, signifies a level where Hashem remains above the world and G-dliness is apparent.

### "SHABBOS FOR HAVAYAH"

This is the difference between Shabbos and the six days of the week. The six days of Creation are when Hashem conceals Himself—*Elokim*, while Shabbos is a day when G-dliness is revealed—*Havayah*.

This difference is also reflected in a Jew's behavior during the week versus his behavior on Shabbos.

The weekdays are when a Jew is engaged in business. Why does he do this? Not because this is where his passion lies, but simply because it is what Hashem wants. As the *Mechilta* states, just as we are commanded to rest on Shabbos, we are commanded to work during the week.

But this idea—that the reason he is working is because that is what Hashem wants—is merely the *inner* dimension of his involvement. From an external viewpoint, all that can be seen is that he is involved in physicality. The weekday activities themselves are not holy.

On Shabbos, by contrast, a Jew is dissociated from physical endeavors, and instead he is openly involved in holy pursuits: learning, davening, and *mitzvos*. Even eating the Shabbos meal is a *mitzvah*! (This is unlike during the week, where even when one eats *leshem shomayim*, the eating itself is not a *mitzvah*.)

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In other words, during the week *kedushah* is concealed within our actions (like nature, *Elokim*), while on Shabbos it is out in the open (like miracles, *Havayah*).

## THE SHABBOS-WEEKDAY DYNAMIC

Why didn't Hashem arrange things in such a way that it is always Shabbos'dik?

The reason is that Hashem wants us to connect even our mundane activities with *kedushah*. He therefore orchestrated two paths in our service of Him: the path of Shabbos, in which we are on a lofty, spiritual state, and the path of the weekday, in which we focus on transforming this physical, lowly world into a dwelling place for Him. If it would always be Shabbos, there would be no need to send the

*neshamah* down here! Hashem specifically created the world in such a way that our daily activities are not revealed *kedushah*, so that we can elevate them as well. Therefore, Shabbos is only one day a week, while most of the time we are involved in physicality.

These two courses are interconnected. A Jew's Shabbos experience significantly depends on how he acted during the week. The more his involvement in physicality was *leshem shomayim*, the more he will feel the holiness of Shabbos. By contrast, if he was immersed in physical pursuits, forgetting the true purpose behind them, he will not feel the *kedushah* of Shabbos as much, and his Shabbos davening and learning will suffer. As the Gemara states, "He who toils on *erev Shabbos* [in this context referring to the entire week] will eat on Shabbos."

Conversely, in order to succeed in adopting the right perspective toward engaging in physicality, one must keep in mind that although this is where he spends the majority of his time, the ultimate goal is to disconnect from the world and stand on a higher plane. The knowledge that there is one day a week when a Jew stands above material pursuits empowers him to perform his physical activities *leshem shomayim*. And so it goes, back and forth, with each Shabbos

inspiring the following week, which in turn brings the subsequent Shabbos to new heights, which then deepens the *leshem shomayim* of the next week, and so on.

## ON THE RIGHT FOOT

The same is true with regard to the six years of work and the *shemita* year, which is a year "for *Havayah*," just like Shabbos (as Rashi states).

Although *shemita* comes after the six years of work, in order to approach these years properly, a Jew must know from the start that there will be a year of *shemita*. His goal should be not the years of toil but the time when he will be above worldly matters, and it is this perspective that ensures the six years will be as they should. This is why the *possuk* states that as soon as "you arrive in the land," you must immediately keep in mind that there will be a year when "the land shall rest a Shabbos for *Havayah*."

*Seforim* explain that a ray of Shabbos illuminates the week, in the form of the daily davening. Here, too, the day must begin with davening, and only then does one continue with (his daily session of Torah study, followed by) business and other material pursuits.

It is true that Hashem doesn't want a person to spend the whole day davening; the reason the *neshamah* descended to this world is to elevate the physical to holiness. However, in

order for his involvement in the physical to be as it should, it must be preceded by a time when he is completely detached from worldly matters—he is davening, standing like a servant before his Master. This gives him the ability to approach the rest of the day in the right way, which causes the davening of the next day to be even higher, which in turn influences the activities of that day, and so on.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, pp. 273ff.

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