

Moshe instructs Bnei Yisroel on what he was taught during his sojourns on Har Sinai.

**לֹא־תִבְעֵרוּ אֵשׁ בְּכָל מִשְׁכְּתֵיכֶם בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:**

“You shall not light a fire in all of your settlements on the Day of Shabbos.” (Shmos 35:3).

What is Shabbos? Is it a day to rest? Is it a day to focus on being holy? Is it a day because of Hashem created the world, or some other reason? Or, is it all of the above? Also, why does the Torah not really define “*malacha* / work?” Why are a few mentioned?

There are only a few laws of Shabbos that are explicit in the Torah. Usually, it merely says “do not do work.” “Six days work is to be done and on the seventh day it shall be for you holy, a Shabbos Rest to Hashem, all who do work on it shall die.” (Ibid 35:2). This passuk almost perfectly echoes the fourth dibra. (Ibid 20:9-10). Shabbos was first introduced by the manna. The Torah instructed not to go out and gather (ibid 16:23) or carry in public (ibid 16:25). It was that first Shabbos that the nation rested. (Ibid). It is also forbidden to plow and harvest. (Ibid 34:21). A man was stoned for collecting wood – breaking branches and gathering them. (Bamidbar 15:33). He appears to be violating the wrongful melachos of gathering and carrying – already enjoined, *supra*. Therefore, the explicit malachos in the Torah are lighting fires, breaking branches, gathering, harvesting and all that is related, plowing and all related work, and carrying. Chazal learn the remaining labors out of Shabbos’ close proximity to the teaching of the Mishkan. There is another reason to its proximity, mentioned *infra*.

A couple of times the Torah says that the day of Shabbos is connected to Creation. Hashem “rested” after the “six days” of creating the world. (Bereishis 2:2). Hashem enjoins Bnei Yisroel, from Har Sinai, to keep Shabbos “Because six days Hashem made the skies and the earth, the seas, and all that are in them, and He rested on the Day Seven.” (Shmos 20:10). Yet, Moshe gives another reason for Shabbos. “Remember that you were slaves in the Land of Egypt, and Hashem, your Lord, took you out...therefore, Hashem, your Lord, commands you to make Shabbos Day.” (Devorim 5:15). Moshe uses the word *לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת* “to make Shabbos Day.” Shabbos is usually rest, but in connection to how Hashem freed Bnei Yisroel then they must actively *make* Shabbos. They “make” Shabbos by resting from their labors that – as freemen – they are now able to voluntarily do all week.

Shabbos was introduced as a concept before Bnei Yisroel left Mitzrayim. וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה “And Pharaoh said, ‘The nation of the land are already numerous and great, and you should have them rest from their labors?’” (Shmos 5:5). This was Pharaoh’s objection to Moshe when Moshe came the first time to ask for Bnei Yisroel to go and serve Hashem in the desert. Pharaoh hinted that resting helps increase the numbers of a people. To rest from their labors gives them a chance to grow in number and strength. While it may be counterintuitive – and at the time it was a novel

concept—but a rest day actually *increases* productivity. Moshe asked to serve Hashem, connecting sanctification to the days of rest.

Understanding the true nature of these commands are understood when we consider how Shabbos was presented the four times in relation to Moshe going up on Har Sinai. Moshe went up twice to Har Sinai. Shabbos is mentioned prior to him going up, once each of the sojourns, and then again when Moshe came down. After introducing the concept on the way to Har Sinai—by the manna—and then during the Revelation, Hashem teaches Moshe about Shabbos after giving over the civil and criminal laws. Now knowing property rights and laws of commerce, the Torah says, “Six days you shall do *your handiwork* and on the seventh day you shall rest.” (Shmos 23:12). תַּעֲשֶׂה מְעֹשֶׂיךָ “you shall do your handiwork” is used, not the usual wording of כָּל-מְלַאכְתֶּךָ *all your labor*. This is because after the laws regarding property and commerce were taught, everyone was free to do their handiwork—work to be creative and productive. They knew the laws and now their work was done lawfully. Shabbos was set as a rest from this creativity.

After giving Moshe the full instructions of building the Mishkan, He teaches Moshe about Shabbos. “And you shall speak to Bnei Yisroel saying, ‘However, Shabbos you shall watch because it is a sign between Me and you for generations, to know I am Hashem who sanctifies you.’” (Ibid 31:13). The Torah teaches that despite the importance of the Mikdash, Shabbos still applies. Keeping Shabbos is part of the sanctification of Bnei Yisroel as much as the Mishkan is. Interestingly, there is a second “sign” mentioned. “It is a sign forever, because six days Hashem made the skies and the earth and on the Day Seven He rested and refreshed.” (Ibid 31:18). The signs are complimentary. The resting from work is holy and that holiness sanctifies Bnei Yisroel.

The second time on Har Sinai, Hashem teaches Shabbos after teaching about Shavuot—harvest festival, and Succos—gathering festival. It is connected to plowing and harvesting. (Ibid 34:21). Fourth, Moshe teaches Bnei Yisroel about Shabbos prior to asking for the *Teruma* donations and giving the instruction of building the Mishkan. “Six days you shall do labor.” (Ibid 35:2). מְלָאכָה is general labor of any type. “And the seventh day shall be to you holy Shabbos rest for Hashem.” While the rest day makes one more productive, resting even for that reason is still making it a holy day *for* Hashem. The most fundamental portion of labor is fire. Fire is used to run machines, make tools, mold metals, and cooking dyes. The prohibition of fire is the antecedent of resting from all labor.

Hashem taught Moshe about Shabbos after the Mishkan labors to show how special Shabbos was, equal to the Mishkan. Moshe taught Shabbos prior to the Mishkan labors to elevate the work for the Mishkan. Work done during the week after resting on Shabbos (or in order to rest on Shabbos) makes the entire work holy and sanctified. Sanctified labor was desired to gather, assemble, form, and create the Mishkan.

Finally, Hashem blessed Shabbos and sanctified it. (Bereishis 2:3 and Shmos 20:11). Resting on Shabbos helps with productivity, creativity, and fertility. Still, it is a sanctified and blessed day that sanctifies and blesses those that watch and keep it.