
SHABBAT I

Plugging into the Goals of Life

I might be a techie at Facebook, a photographer at National Geographic, a student at the London School of Economics; any Jewish person. I fly through the week from one project to the next, get prepped for the weekend parties to unwind – to get rewound the next week. Even if I’m so rich and chilled that I don’t have to work and my life is one big “I’m a good guy” – helping every elderly person across the street, donating millions to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, and disease – what’s it all for? Why are we in this world?

If I’m not anchored to the ultimate goals of life, I’m missing the boat. So how do I get clarity? That’s where Shabbat comes in. Shabbat is a pivotal day each week, allowing me to stop and gain a clear perspective on why we’re here.

When Shabbat descends on the world and we participate in its observance, festive meals, songs, prayers, and all types of delights, we are connecting to one of the strongest and most meaningful Jewish forces and experiences. Shabbat is the cornerstone of Jewish belief. When we observe Shabbat, we intrinsically testify that God created the universe and that He supervises and guides the history of mankind.

This class will discuss how Shabbat observance teaches and reinforces these foundations of Jewish belief. The class will also explain the concept of Shabbat *menuchah* – a profound, integrated physical rest and spiritual experience – by both refraining from *melachah*, creative work, and enjoying the special mitzvot of the day (discussed more in depth in the second Morasha class on Shabbat). Finally, we hope to portray the profound impact that Shabbat has made, and continues to make, on the life of the Jewish people.

This class will address the following questions:

- ✧ My idea of a weekend is sports, blogging, and parties; what does Shabbat have to do with me?
- ✧ If I’m not tired on Shabbat, why should I rest? Why not just take a day off when I want to get recharged?
- ✧ What work are we resting from on Shabbat? Flipping a light switch?
- ✧ Why is Shabbat the cornerstone of Jewish belief and practice? Why is it included in the Ten Commandments?
- ✧ How do we understand Shabbat *menuchah*, a reflective kind of rest and spiritual experience?
- ✧ How is Shabbat the key to a Jewish future?

Class Outline:

Introduction. Why Not a Weekly Twenty-four Hour Virtual Break on Wednesdays?

Section I. Shabbat and the Foundations of Jewish Belief

Part A. The Creation of the World

Part B. The Exodus from Egypt

Section II. Shabbat, a Day Off – from What?

Part A. The Concept of Melachah

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Part C. Melachah, the Mishkan, and Why all the Details

Part D. Microcosm of the Universe

Section III. The Concept of Menuchah – Rest

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Section IV. Shabbat Awareness

Part A. A Sense of Purpose and Completion

Part B. Spiritual Sensitivity

Part C. The Impact of Shabbat

INTRODUCTION. WHY NOT A WEEKLY TWENTY-FOUR HOUR VIRTUAL BREAK ON WEDNESDAYS?

As the Kuzari explains, Judaism introduced the world to the universally accepted seven-day week. The culmination of the week for the Jewish people is the Sabbath – a day of rest, connection to God, and rejuvenation. Subsequently, other religions adopted the Shabbat principle by taking a weekly day off from their work. Fast forward to today, with the advent of electronic connectivity some even propose adopting a “secular Sabbath” to insulate themselves from the ever-present media, which penetrates every aspect of our lives.

I took a real day off this weekend: computers shut down, cell phone left in my work bag, landline ringer off. I was fully disconnected for twenty-four hours. The reason for this change was a natural and predictable backbreaking straw. Flying home from Europe a few months ago, I swiped a credit card through the slot of the in-seat phone, checked my e-mail and robbed myself of one of my two last sanctuaries.

At that point, the only other place I could escape was in my sleep. Yet I had developed the habit of leaving a laptop next to my bed so I could check my e-mail, last thing and first thing. I had learned how to turn my P.D.A. into a modem, the better to access the Web from my laptop when on a train. Of course I also used that P.D.A. in conventional ways, attending to it when it buzzed me. I'm a techno-addict, but after my airplane experience, I decided to do something about it. Thus began my “secular Sabbath” – a term I found floating around on blogs – a day a week where I would be free of screens, bells, and beeps. An old-fashioned day not only of rest but of relief.

And sure enough, as soon as I started looking I found others who felt the need to turn off, to take a stab at reconnecting to things real rather than virtual, a moderate but carefully observed vacation from ubiquitous marketing and the awesome burden of staying in touch. Nor is this surprising, said David Levy, a professor in the information school at the University of Washington. “What’s going on now is insane,” he said, assuring me that he used the term intentionally. “Living a good life requires a kind of balance, a bit of quiet.” (Based on I Need a Virtual Break, by Mark Bittman, nytimes.com, March 2, 2008.)

Why not enjoy a “secular Shabbat”? Each person can determine the parameters of what suits him best, based on his particular needs and schedule, to get the break he desires. A doctor might take off Wednesdays, a barber Mondays. And certainly, if something pressing arises this week, I'll go into the office and take off a couple of days next week to compensate. Maybe I'll even be paid overtime! If so, why are the Jewish people so dedicated to when and how to observe Shabbat?

SECTION I. SHABBAT AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF JEWISH BELIEF

Shabbat revolutionized the world. Just as Judaism teaches that places (e.g., a synagogue) and objects (e.g., a Torah scroll) can be imbued with holiness, so too can time. But it goes even deeper than that. As we will learn in Section III, Shabbat is the goal of Creation! By observing the Sabbath we proclaim that God created the universe, gave us the Torah, and is directly involved in guiding the history of the world. Consequently, Shabbat manifests the essence of Judaism and Jewish life. The centrality of Shabbat is reflected in the Torah by its inclusion in the Ten Commandments, which are repeated twice. The first occurrence teaches that God created the world in six days and rested on the Shabbat and the second time reminds us that God redeemed us from Egypt.

1. Shemot (Exodus) 20:2-14 – Shabbat is the fourth of the Ten Commandments.

I am the Lord your God, Who took you out from the land of Egypt.

You shall not recognize the gods of others.

You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day to make it holy.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not commit perjury.

You shall not covet.

(א) אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:

(ב) לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פָּנָי:

(ג) לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שֵׁם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹן:

(ד) זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְשׁוֹ:

(ה) כְּבֹד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמְךָ

(ו) לֹא תִרְצַח

(ז) לֹא תִנָּאֵף

(ח) לֹא תִגְנוֹב

(ט) לֹא תַעֲנֶה בְרֵעֲךָ עַד שֶׁקֶר:

(י) לֹא תַחְמוֹד

PART A. THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

The first expression of the Ten Commandments teaches that we observe the Sabbath since God rested on the seventh day after creating the world in six days.

1. Shemot 20:8-11 – We rest because God rested from His act of creating the world.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

You shall work during the six weekdays and do all your tasks,

but the seventh day is Shabbat to the Lord your God. Do not do anything that constitutes work. [This includes] you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maid, your animal, and the foreigner in your gates.

For it was during the six weekdays that God made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. God therefore blessed the Shabbat and made it holy.

זָכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְשׁוֹ

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל-מְלֶאכֶתְךָ

וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ עֲבָדְךָ וַאֲמָתְךָ וּבְהֵמָתְךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ.

כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי; עַל-כֵּן בֵּרַךְ ה' אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת--וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ.

How does our Shabbat observance today reflect a connection to an event that happened so long ago?

2. **Ramban (Nachmanides), ibid. – Remembering Shabbat makes us conscious of the fact that the world has a Creator.**

It is a mitzvah to constantly remember Shabbat each and every day so that we do not forget it nor mix it up with any other day. Through its remembrance we shall always be conscious of the act of Creation, at all times, and acknowledge that the world has a Creator . . . This is a central foundation in belief in God.

שהיא מצוה שנוזכר תמיד בכל יום את השבת שלא נשכח ואלא יתחלף לנו בשאר הימים, כי בזכרנו אותו תמיד יזכר מעשה בראשית בכל עת, ונודה בכל עת שיש לעולם בורא ... וזה עיקר גדול באמונת האל: בראשית:

3. **Ramban, Bereishit (Genesis) 26:5 – Shabbat observance is equated to the entire Torah. The Torah's objective is God-awareness, and Shabbat highlights that God created the world.**

Shabbat is equated with the entire Torah, for its observance testifies to the act of Creation.

מפני [ששבת] שהיא שקולה ככל התורה כולה (ירושלמי ברכות פ"א ה"ה), שהיא מעידה על מעשה בראשית:

4. **The Shabbat, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, NCSY, NY, 1974, p. 12 – Shabbat observance demonstrates our faith in God.**

The Hebrew word for faith is *emunah* (אמונה). It comes from the same root as *uman* (אומן) – a craftsman. Faith cannot be separated from action. But, by what act in particular do we demonstrate our belief in God as Creator.

The one ritual act that does this is the observance of the Shabbat.

PART B. THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

As the sources above clearly illustrate, observing Shabbat recalls God's act of Creation and therefore serves as a vehicle for us to demonstrate our faith in God. But the Torah also states that Shabbat recalls the Exodus from Egypt. What does this aspect of Shabbat add to the mitzvah?

1. **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 5:12-15 – In the repetition of the Ten Commandments, Shabbat is taught within the context of the Exodus from Egypt.**

Observe the Shabbat to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you ... You should remember that you were slaves in Egypt, when the Lord your God brought you out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. It is for this reason that the Lord your God has commanded you to keep Shabbat.

ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך ... וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים ויצאך יקוק אלהיך משם ביד חזקה ובזרע נטויה על כן צוך יקוק אלהיך לעשות את יום השבת:

Why is Shabbat connected to the injunction to remember that we were slaves in Egypt? How does this complement the first reason for observing the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments – God's resting after creating the world?

2. **Rambam (Maimonides), Moreh Nevuchim (Guide for the Perplexed) 2:31 – Shabbat both confirms the existence of God by recalling Creation and helps us appreciate our physical freedom from slavery by recalling the Exodus.**

Two different reasons are given for this commandment, because of two different objectives. In the Ten Commandments [in Shemot], the following reason is given for distinguishing Shabbat: “For in six days [God created the world etc.].” But in Devarim the reason is given: “You must remember that you were slaves in Egypt ... It is for this reason that the Lord your God has commanded you to keep Shabbat.”

This difference can easily be explained. In the former, the cause of the honor and distinction of the day is given: “Therefore the Lord has blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it” (Shemot 20:11), and the cause for this is, “For in six days,” etc.

But the fact that God has given us the law of Shabbat and commanded us to keep it is the consequence of our having been slaves in Egypt, when we could neither choose whether or at what time to work, nor could we rest.

Thus God commanded us to abstain from work on Shabbat and to rest for two purposes; namely, (1) that we might confirm the Creation, which clearly points to the existence of God, and (2) that we might remember God’s kindness in freeing us from slavery in Egypt.

וכבר באו בזאת המצוה שתי עלות מתחלפות מפני שהם לשני עלולים מתחלפים, וזה שהוא אמר בעלת הגדיל השבת בעשרת הדברות הראשונות, אמר, כי ששת ימים עשה וגו', ואמר במשנה תורה וזכרת כי עבד היית במצרים וגו' על כן צוך ה' אלהיך וגו',

וזה אמת, כי העלול במאמר הראשון הוא כבוד היום והגדילו כמ"ש, על כן ברח ה' את יום השבת ויקדשהו, וזה העלול הנמשך לעלת כי ששת ימים וגו'.

אמנם תתנו לנו תורת השבת וצוותו אותנו לשומרו הוא עלול נמשך לעלת היותנו עבדים במצרים, אשר לא היינו עובדים ברצוננו ובעת שחפצנו ולא היינו יכולים לשבות,

וצונו בתורת השביתה והמנוחה לקבץ ב' הענינים, האמנת דעת אמת, והוא חדוש העולם המורה על מציאות השם בתחלת המחשבה ובעיון הקל, וזכור חסדי השם עלינו, בהניחתו מתחת סבלות מצרים.

How is God’s Creation of the world and subsequent involvement in the Exodus over 3,500 years ago relevant to our life today?

3. **Ramban, Devarim 5:15 – Recognizing that God orchestrated the Exodus makes us aware that He is intimately involved in navigating our ongoing affairs as well.**

If you have any doubt whatsoever as to whether or not Shabbat demonstrates God’s Creation, His desire, and His power, then consider that which your own eyes have seen: the Exodus from Egypt, which provides you with a proof and a remembrance. As such, Shabbat is a remembrance of the Exodus and the Exodus is a remembrance of Shabbat, for when one recalls [the Exodus] he focuses his attention on the fact

אם יעלה בלבך ספק על השבת המורה על החדוש והחפץ והיכולת תזכור מה שראו עיניך ביציאת מצרים שהיא לך לראיה ולזכר. הנה השבת זכר ליציאת מצרים, ויציאת מצרים זכר לשבת כי יזכרו בו ויאמרו השם הוא מחדש בכל אותות ומופתים ועושה בכל רצונו, כי הוא אשר ברא הכל במעשה בראשית...

that God initiated all those miracles and wonders and that everything happens according to His Will, since it was He Who created everything.

Therefore, by observing Shabbat we acknowledge God as the Creator of the world, as well as the Director of the daily affairs of world history.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ≈ The Torah tells us that Shabbat is meant to recall God's act of Creation; our rest reflecting His rest.
- ≈ Keeping Shabbat concretizes our belief in Creation and our faith in God's existence.
- ≈ Shabbat also recalls the Exodus. In this light, it helps us appreciate our freedom and further enshrines our belief not only in God's role as Creator but also as Director of His world.

SECTION II. SHABBAT, A DAY OFF – FROM WHAT?

We are told to rest on Shabbat, but what exactly does that mean? We are forbidden to work, but what does work refer to? What's so difficult about flipping on a light switch? Why not just enjoy a Shabbat dinner at the office and then get back to work? The following would be such an example:

Fridays meant all-night work sessions at the magazine for a senior editor. So his wife and three children would come to the office each week, commandeer a small conference room and have a private Shabbat dinner. "No one objected. The kids generally behaved and it helped to humanize the workplace," said the editor. (Melinda Beck, New Strategies Might Help You Get Home for Dinner, Wall Street Journal, March 1, 2000.)

Judaism's definition of work in reference to Shabbat bears little resemblance to the 9-5 definition of the term that we are accustomed to. The "work" that is prohibited on Shabbat is what the Torah calls "melachah." In this section we will explore the meaning of this term and how it applies to resting on Shabbat.

PART A. THE CONCEPT OF MELACHAH

1. Shemot 20:9-10 – The Torah uses the term "melachah" to denote the kind of activity forbidden on Shabbat.

You shall work during the six weekdays and do all your melachah. But the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. Do not do anything that constitutes melachah. [This includes] you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maid, your animal, and the foreigner in your gates.

ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך: ויום השביעי
שבת ליקוק אלהיך לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך
ובתך עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך וגרך אשר בשעריך:

Melachah is defined as *melechet machshevet*, skilled work, as described in the next two sources.

2. **Ibid. 35:30-33 – The work involved in setting up the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was “melechet machshevet.”**

And Moshe (Moses) said to the Children of Israel, “Behold, God has called by name Betzalel ben Uri from the tribe of Yehudah, and He has filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, understanding, and knowledge [to enable him to do] all types of **melachah**. And also to create plans to work in gold, silver and brass; and to cut stones for setting; and for carpentry; and to do all types of *melechet machshevet*.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוּ קָרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל
בֶּן אוּרִי בֶן חוּר לְמֹשֶׁה וְהוֹדָה:
וַיִּמְלֵא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחָכְמָה בְּתַבּוּנָה וּבְדַעַת וּבְכָל
מְלָאכָה:
לְחַשֵּׁב מַחֲשֶׁבֶת לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּזָהָב וּבַכֶּסֶף וּבַנְּחֹשֶׁת:
וּבַחֲרָשֶׁת אָבֹן לְמִלָּאֵת וּבַחֲרָשֶׁת עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכָל
מְלָאכַת מַחֲשָׁבֶת:

3. **Targum, ibid. – Melechet machshevet means “skilled work.”**

[*Melechet machshevet* is] to do all kinds of skilled work.

למעבד בכל עיבדת אומנון.

4. **Ohr HaChaim, Shemot 20:11 – Melachah does not necessarily involve exertion.**

“And He rested on the Seventh Day.”

There are thirty-nine forbidden melachot, including some that involve no exertion at all. For example, carrying an object from a private to a public area or vice-versa, or many other examples ...

A person might ask, “What exertion is there in this ...?”

Therefore, the verse says, “Six days God **created** ... **and He rested**.” This teaches you that this has nothing to do with exertion, for it is written regarding God, “He does not get tired or exhausted ...” (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 40).

[Clearly, exertion is not a factor at all, rather it means] anything that is termed melachah ...

וינח ביום השביעי.

...מ' מלאכות [ח"א] שיש בהם מלאכה שאין בה שום
טורח כלל בעשייתה כמו שתאמר המוציא כלי מרשות
היחיד לרשות הרבים או להפך וכדומה לזה רבים ...

ויאמר אדם מה טורח יש בדבר זה....

לזה אמר הכתוב כי ששת ימים וגו' וינח וגו' פירוש ודוק
והשכיל בטעם ותדע כי אין הדבר לצד הטורח לבד
והרי מי שנאמר בו (ישעי' מ') לא ייעף ולא יגע ...

ולזה כל ששם מלאכה עליה....

5. **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: Horeb 21:144, Soncino Press – The work prohibited on Shabbat is the creative development of the physical world.**

The word “melachah” appears two hundred times in Scripture and never once refers to physical labor. The melachah which is forbidden on Shabbat is conceived as the execution of an intelligent purpose by the practical skill of man: i.e. any production, creation, or transforming an object for human purposes; but not physical exertion.

Even if you tired yourself out the whole day, as long as you produced nothing within the meaning of the term **melachah**, as long as your activity has not been a constructive exercise of your intelligence, you have produced no **melachah**. On the other hand, if you have engendered, without the slightest exertion, even the smallest change in an object for human purposes, then you have profaned the Shabbat, and undermined your calling as a Jew ...

PART B. CESSATION OF CREATION

If **melachah** is skilled work and has nothing to do with exertion, why does the Torah tell us to rest from it on Shabbat? Below we shall find that refraining from creative physical activity parallels God's rest from His work of Creation.

1. Bereishit 2:1-3 – The term **melachah** is used in the account of Creation.

And the heavens and earth and all their hosts were completed. And God finished all the **melachah** that He had done on the seventh day. And He rested on the seventh day from all His **melachah** that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for He rested on the Sabbath from all His **melachah** that God created in order to do.

ויכלו השמים והארץ וכל צבאם: ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה: ויברך אלהים את יום השביעי ויקדש אתו כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא אלהים לעשות:

2. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shor, Vol. II p. 383 – Cessation of **melachah** expresses our relinquishing of control over the universe.

Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch writes [in his work *The Nineteen Letters*] that the root of the prohibition against **melachah** on Shabbat is that man's control over the universe is relinquished on Shabbat. Only God, Who created the universe, is in charge on this day, to the extent that man has no permission to do anything at all that is creative or transformative, even a simple act like pressing a switch to turn on a light.

הג"ר שמשון רפאל הירש כתב כי שורש איסור מלאכות בשבת הוא לבטל מעשה האדם כלפי השי"ת, כלומר: בשבת מופקעת בעלות האדם על הבריאה, והקב"ה שברא את העולם הוא ה"בעלים" היחידי עליו ביום זה עד שאין לאדם רשות לכל מלאכה יוצרת, כלחיצה על כפתור להדליק אור...

PART C. MELACHAH, THE MISHKAN, AND WHY ALL THE DETAILS

The thirty-nine categories of work that are forbidden on Shabbat are derived from the proximity of the verses regarding the building and maintenance of the Mishkan to those referring to observing Shabbat. (The Mishkan served as a transportable temple for the Jewish people until the Beit HaMikdash was built in Jerusalem). Therefore, those activities related to the building and maintenance of the Mishkan are forbidden on the Sabbath.

1. Shemot 25:8 – The commandment to build the Mishkan.

Make for Me a Mikdash (Tabernacle) and I will dwell amongst them [the Jewish people].

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם:

2. **Ibid. 31:12-16 – After Moshe finished telling the Jewish people about the details of the Tabernacle, the command to keep Shabbat is repeated.**

And God spoke to Moshe saying, “And you shall speak to the Children of Israel, saying, ‘Ach’ – ‘However, you must observe My Sabbaths; for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am God Who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Shabbat

... Six days work may be done, and the seventh day is the Shabbat of rest, it is holy to God; Therefore, the Children of Israel shall keep the Shabbat ...”

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
לֵאמֹר אַךְ אֵת שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינְכֶם
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לָדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם:
וְשַׁמְרְתֶּם אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת...

שִׁשִּׁתַּי יָמִים יַעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת שְׁבָתוֹן
קִדְשׁ לַיהוָה וְשַׁמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת...

3. **Rashi, ibid. – Work on the Tabernacle must be suspended on Shabbat.**

Although I ordered you to command them to take part in the melachah of the Tabernacle, do not think that you may suspend the observance of Shabbat [by laboring on Shabbat] because of that particular task.

“However, you shall observe my Shabbat.” Even though you will be extremely diligent in the melachah [of building the Tabernacle], do not suspend Shabbat on account of it, for the term “Ach” comes to exclude performing work on the Tabernacle on Shabbat.

וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - וְאַתָּה אַעֲ"פ שֶׁהִפְקַדְתִּיךָ
לְצִוּוֹתָם עַל מְלָאכַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן אַל יִקַּל בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְדַחוֹת אֶת
הַשַּׁבָּת מִפְּנֵי אוֹתָהּ מְלָאכָה:

אֲךְ אֵת שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ - אַעֲ"פ שֶׁתִּהְיוּ רְדוּפִין וּזְרִיזִין
בְּצִוּוֹת מְלָאכָה שַׁבָּת אַל תִּדְּחוּ מִפְּנֵיהָ כָּל אֶכָּיִן וּרְקִין
מִיַּעוּשֵׁין לְמוֹעֵט שַׁבָּת מִמְּלָאכַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן:

4. **Malbim, Shemot 35:2 – Anything done in the Tabernacle is considered melachah.**

By saying that work on those activities involved in the construction of the Tabernacle must cease on Shabbat, the Torah implies that any activity involved in the construction of the Tabernacle is considered melachah.

אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים ר"ל אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים שְׂצוּהָ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת
בְּמִשְׁכַּן בְּשִׁשִּׁתַּי הַיָּמִים לֹא תַעֲשֶׂם בַּשַּׁבָּת שֶׁהֵם קְרוּיִם
מְלָאכָה... מִבּוֹאֵר שֶׁכָּל הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ בְּמִשְׁכַּן בְּשִׁשִּׁתַּי
הַיָּמִים קְרוּיִם מְלָאכָה...

We will soon see a list of the thirty-nine categories of work that we refrain from on Shabbat. Why is it necessary to follow the details of Sabbath observance? Wouldn't our Shabbat experience be more meaningful if we were unrestricted in our activities? Rather, not only does our Shabbat observance testify to God having created the world and that He continually guides world events, but also by keeping the mitzvot in all their details we actualize our potential as human beings, refine our character, and build a relationship with God, as the following sources will explain.

5. **Maharal, Tiferet Yisrael, Ch. 4 – Mitzvot actualize our potential as human beings.**

The paths and actions which bring a person success in life are the mitzvot of the Torah, for without them this success would remain unrealized potential. The mitzvot are comparable

הַדְּרָכִים וְהַפְּעוּלוֹת אֲשֶׁר הֵם מְבִיאִים אֶל הַהִצְלָחָה הֵם
מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, שְׂבֻלוֹתָם הִיָּה נִשְׁאָר בִּכְחָל... וְהֵם הֵם כְּמוֹ
הַחֶבֶל שֶׁמַּעֲלִין אֶת הָאָדָם...

to a rope: that they are the means to elevate a person ...

6. **Rambam, end of Hilchot Temurah (The Laws of Temurah) – The mitzvot are God's instructions and advice for living and improving our character traits.**

And all these matters [the mitzvot] are to [help us to] overcome our negative inclinations and to correct our character traits; and most laws of the Torah are instruction from the Great Adviser [to help us] to correct our character traits and straighten our ways.

וכל אלו הדברים כדי לכוף יצרו ולתקן דעותיו ורוב
דיני תורה אינן אלא עצות מרחוק מגדול העצה לתקן
הדעות ולישר כל המעשים.

7. **Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene, Set in Stone, p.31, Targum – Each mitzvah we fulfill intrinsically connects us with God.**

Judaism is not as much a religion as it is a relationship. It is only through mitzvah observance that man can build a deep, enduring, and meaningful relationship with God ... That a mitzvah is the very process of forging the bond [with God] is contained within the very word מצוה, “commandment,” closely related to the word צוהא, meaning a connection or a binding.

8. **Aish.com – Analogy of mitzvot and the Internet: just as details are crucial in the physical world, so too in the spiritual would.**

Would anyone be so nitpicky as to differentiate between “yahoom” and “yahoo.com?” Isn’t it a bit ridiculous that you didn’t get my e-mail just because of a little dot?

No, it’s not ridiculous. Because the dot is not just a dot. It represents something. That dot has meaning far beyond the pixels on the screen that form it. To me it may seem insignificant, but that is simply due to my lack of knowledge of the ways of the web.

(For a more detailed discussion of the nature and purpose of the mitzvot, see the Morasha class *The Mitzvot and Why They Are Detailed*.)

Therefore, Shabbat observance not only helps enable us to actualize our potential as human beings, refine our character, and build a relationship with God, it is the prerequisite to experiencing the Shabbat rest – menuchah (discussed in the next section), which is the very goal of Creation!

Following is a list of the thirty-nine principal categories of work (*avot melachot*), which are prohibited on Shabbat. These melachot are listed in the Mishnah in Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Shabbat 73a. They are grouped according to their function in the Mishkan. These categories have applications to all areas of life.

9. **Based on Rabbi Shimon Eider, Halachot of Shabbat; and Rabbi Dovid Ribiat, The Thirty-nine Melachot – The Thirty-nine Categories of Melachah.**

The first eleven melachot are entitled “The order of making bread.” These melachot were performed in the Mishkan for making loaves of bread for the weekly *Lechem HaPanim* – “Show Bread” offering.

1. חורש – plowing
2. זורע – sowing

3. קוצר – reaping
4. מעמר – gathering
5. דש – threshing
6. זורה – winnowing
7. בורר – selecting
8. טוחן – grinding
9. מרקד – sifting
10. לש – kneading
11. אופה – baking

The next thirteen melachot are related to the processing of the woolen materials used in the Mishkan.

12. גוזז – shearing
13. מלבן – bleaching
14. מנפץ – combing raw material
15. צובע – dyeing
16. טווה – spinning
17. מיסך – weaving processes
18. עושה ב' בתי נירין – weaving processes
19. אורג – weaving processes
20. פוצע – weaving processes
21. קושר – tying a knot
22. מתיר – untying a knot
23. חופר – sewing
24. קורע על מנת לתפור – tearing in order to sew

The next seven melachot were performed in the processing of the animal hides (from the *techashim*, now extinct) for the top covering of the Mishkan.

25. צד – trapping
26. שוחט – slaughtering
27. מפשיט – skinning
28. מעבד – tanning
29. משרטט – ruling lines
30. ממחק – scraping hides
31. מוחתך – cutting to size or shape

The boards which served as a framework for the Mishkan were written on to indicate which board fit into the other, so that when the Mishkan was dismantled and re-erected each board would remain on the same side. If an error was made, the mark was erased and corrected.

32. כותב – writing
33. מוחק – erasing

The next two melachot were performed when setting the boards up and removing them from their bases.

34. בונה – building
35. סותר – demolishing

36. מכה בפטיש – the final hammer blow (the completion of melachah). The smith would strike with his hammer on the block (anvil) or on the completed object to straighten it at the completion of a melachah.

The next two melachot were related to the fire under the kettle used for the making of the dyes in the Mishkan, or for the making of charcoals which were needed for smelting.

37. מכבה – extinguishing

38. מבעיר – lighting a fire

The last melachah was performed when transferring the boards back and forth from a wagon (private domain) to the ground (public domain).

39. הוצאה – carrying or moving an object from one domain to another domain.

The laws of Shabbat are observed unless a human life is endangered. In such a scenario, it becomes a mitzvah to transgress Shabbat.

10. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 328:2 with the commentary of the Mishnah Berurah – Pikuach Nefesh: The obligation to save a life on the Sabbath.

Someone who encounters a person with a life-threatening illness has an obligation to desecrate the Shabbat on his behalf. It is praiseworthy to act quickly ...

Mishnah Berurah

One administers medical assistance since it is written in the Torah, “And you shall live by the commandments” (Vayikra/Leviticus 18:5), and not die by (fulfilling) them.

מי שיש לו חולי של סכנה, מצוה לחלל עליו את השבת; והזריז, הרי זה משובח...

משנה ברורה: פי' לעשות לו רפואה והטעם משום דכתיב (ויקרא יח:ה) וחי בהם, ולא שימות בהם.

PART D. MICROCOSM OF THE UNIVERSE

Why did the Torah choose the construction of the Tabernacle as the source of the definition of melachah on Shabbat?

1. Midrash Tanchuma, Pikudei 2 – The Mishkan parallels the universe.

Rabbi Yaakov, the son of Rabbi Asi said, “What is meant by the expression, ‘O Lord, I love the dwelling of Your house [i.e., the world] and the place of the residence [lit. Mishkan] of Your glory’? It means that [the Mishkan] is on par with the Creation of the world.”

א"ר יעקב בר' אסי למה הוא אומר ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך ומקום משכן כבודך בשביל ששקול כנגד בריאת עולם.

Since the construction of the Mishkan paralleled the Creation of the world, the one who built it had to be privy to Divine insight. Indeed, we find that Betzalel, the architect of the Mishkan, was endowed with just such a gift.

2. Talmud Bavli, Berachot 55a – Betzalel was gifted with the wisdom of Creation.

Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav, “Betzalel knew how to combine the letters with which heaven and earth were created.”

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: יודע היה בצלאל לצרף אותיות שנבראו בהן שמים וארץ.

3. Rabbi Moshe Shapiro (lecturer in Jerusalem) – The Tabernacle as a microcosm of the universe.

The Tabernacle was in effect a recreation of the universe. God created the world in a pure and pristine state, but human beings defiled and distorted it. The Tabernacle (and later the Temple in Jerusalem) was intended to serve as one corner of the world in which the original pristine state of reality could be preserved. Thus, the construction of the Tabernacle by the Jewish people paralleled God's act of Creation. Any type of activity that was involved in its construction is therefore considered the type of creative activity that the Torah requires us to desist from on Shabbat.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ∞ The kind of “work” that we rest from on Shabbat, called melachah, is skilled physical labor that creatively enhances the physical world. It has little to do with the amount of exertion involved.
- ∞ Since God also rested from this same type of work on the seventh day of Creation, our rest is a statement of our belief in the Creation.
- ∞ The specific types of activities defined as Shabbat melachah are derived from the building and maintenance of the Mishkan.
- ∞ Since the Mishkan itself was a microcosm of the world, our rest from the work that went into the Mishkan directly parallels God's rest from His work of Creation.

SECTION III. THE CONCEPT OF MENUCHAH – REST

I once spent Shabbat at the Holiday Inn in Kowloon, Hong Kong, where I was given a room on the eleventh floor of the hotel. I did not use the elevator because of the Shabbat restriction against turning electric circuits on or off, so instead I used the staircase designed for the staff. Wheezing and staggering up the tenth flight of stairs, I encountered a waiter at the hotel, who asked me why I was not using the elevator. I replied, “Because it is the Shabbat, our day of rest.” We looked at each other for a moment; he nervously smiled and sped away before I could explain how climbing eleven flights of stairs is considered “rest.” (From Gateway to Judaism, by Rabbi Mordechai Becher, ArtScroll, pp. 95.)

We have defined work – even walking up so many stairs is not considered “work”! So what constitutes rest? Here too the popular notion of rest has little to do with what the Torah calls menuchah. We are not being told to sit in a hammock all day and rest in that sense of the word. Menuchah is actually an enhanced spiritual reality, a state of inner contentment – a rest achieved specifically by refraining from melachah. It requires pulling back from the physical world and enjoying the totality of the Shabbat experience.

PART A. MENUCHAH COMPLETES CREATION

1. Bereishit 2:2 – God completes the Creation of the world.

With the seventh day, God finished all the work that He had done. He [thus] ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had been doing.

ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת
ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה:

The commentaries addressing this verse point out a basic difficulty. If God created the world in six days, then He was already finished creating by the seventh. The expression that God “finished all the work that He had done” on the seventh day seems to imply that there was an additional creation on that day as well. What was created on the seventh day?

Because of this difficulty in the text, when the Torah was first translated into Greek it was deliberately mistranslated for its non-Jewish audience.

2. Bereishit Rabbah 10:9 – The verse describing the first Shabbat was deliberately mistranslated.

This is one of the texts [the Sages] changed for [the Egyptian-Greek king] Ptolemy, [making it read:] “And He finished on the sixth day and rested on the seventh.”

וזה אחד מן הדברים ששינו לתלמי המלך, ויכל אלהים
ביום הששי וישבות ביום השביעי.

But the Jewish tradition always had its own answer. What was created on the seventh day of Creation? Menuchah!

3. Rashi, Bereishit 2:2 – What did the world lack that required completion? The creation of menuchah.

What did the world lack [on the seventh day]? Menuchah. When Shabbat came, menuchah came; the work [of Creation] was completed and finished.

מה היה העולם חסר? מנוחה, באת שבת באת מנוחה,
כלתה ונגמרה המלאכה.

Clearly, menuchah is a new reality that God Himself introduced into the world on Shabbat. This revolutionary idea is the essence of Shabbat, which the Greeks would not have understood.

4. Rashi, Megillah 9a – The translation was intended to divert the Greek king's difficulty with the text.

[The Sages mistranslated the verse] so that [Ptolemy] should not be able to claim that God did melachah on Shabbat, since the Torah states, “He finished on the seventh day.” He would not have accepted the explanation of the Sages ...

שלא יאמר אם כן עשה מלאכה בשבת, דהא כתיב ויכל
ביום השביעי, והוא לא יקבל עליו מדרש חכמים...

5. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Radical Then, Radical Now, p. 130 – Rest as a spiritually creative endeavor is a uniquely Jewish phenomenon.

The Sabbath was a totally new institution in human history and at first no else could understand it ... What was it that they could not understand? Every religion had its holy days. But none before had ever had a day whose holiness was expressed in the prohibition of work. Greek and Roman writers ridiculed the Jews because of this. They were, said Seneca, Plutarch, and Tacitus, a lazy people who took a day off because they did not labor. Neither Greeks nor Romans could understand the idea that rest is an achievement, that the Sabbath is Judaism's stillness at the heart of a turning world, and that it was *this* that God had created on the seventh day.

6. **Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Vol. II, p. 13 – Menuchah gives the world the means of reaching the Divine.**

The creation of the Sabbath day itself was the completion of the entire Creation. Shabbat is a creation within itself, a world of menuchah. Menuchah does not refer to laziness, which is in reality a form of destructiveness and death. Rather, menuchah is a break from material, physical existence. It is a spiritual restfulness and peace ... which is a precondition to achieving the revelation of the Divine in this world. This itself is the completion of Creation.

שבריאית יום השבת עצמו היא גמר מעשה בראשית. השבת היא בריאה בפני עצמה – עולם המנוחה. אין המכוון למנוחה עצלנית, מתה, שהיא כליון, אלא למנוחה מן הגשמיות. מנוחת-הנפש הזאת היא עצם חיי הרוחניות, והיא ההשתלמות לקראת גילוי השכינה בעולם הזה, זוהי שלימות הבריאה.

7. **Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Sabbath: the Day of Eternity – Resting on Shabbat creates shalom, peace.**

The more something resembles God, the closer it is and the more it partakes of Him. Indeed, the ultimate purpose of Judaism is such an emulation of God. God dwells in eternity, in a realm beyond change and time. He Himself told His prophet (Malachi 3:6), "I am God, I do not change." Serenity and tranquility are therefore an imitation of God's attributes. On the seventh day, God added this dimension of tranquility and harmony to the world. It was no longer in a process of change, and therefore was able to partake of God's serenity. As such, it became holy and blessed. The Sabbath thus became the day of eternity. In this way, the world was then able to partake of God's timelessness.

In a sense, God descended to the world on the Sabbath of Creation. It is interesting to note that the word Shabbat is related to the Hebrew word *shevet*, to dwell. On the Sabbath, God made the world His dwelling place. The Sabbath thus brought about an integral harmony between God and His world. Rather than continuing to change the universe, God brought it into harmony with Himself.

The Zohar, the Kabbalah, tells us that the mystery of the Sabbath is unity. On the Sabbath, God created harmony between Himself and the universe. When man observes the Sabbath, he too partakes of God's eternity. He enters into a state of harmony with both God and the world. Man is then in a state of peace with all Creation. This immediately explains why the concept of peace is so important on the Sabbath. One of the most common Sabbath greetings is "Shabbat Shalom," for the main idea of the Sabbath is peace; not just peace between man and his fellow, but peace between man and all Creation.

PART B. THE MENUCHAH PERSPECTIVE

So, menuchah is not just rest; it is a heightened spiritual reality of peace and serenity resulting from ceasing from creative activity. Moreover, achieving a real state of Shabbat menuchah requires a mental break from the workweek. This is accomplished by viewing all our endeavors as complete, appreciating the tremendous intrinsic holiness of Shabbat, and by conducting ourselves differently than during the workweek. Furthermore, when one understands that the Creation is perfect, that God has a master plan for everyone, and that everything that occurs both on a cosmic and a personal level is part of His plan, and therefore ultimately for the best, he can attain the true peace of mind that is Shabbat menuchah.

1. **Rashi, Shemot 20:9 – On Shabbat one should feel as if all of one's work has been completed.**

"In six days you shall do all your melachah."

ששתי ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך.

Rashi

When Shabbat arrives, you should feel as if all of your work has been completed, and not even think about your affairs.

רש"י: כשתבא שבת יהא בעיניך כאילו מלאכתך עשויה, שלא תהרהר אחר מלאכה.

2. **Ramban, Shemot 20:8 – Rest is a reflection of the holiness of the day.**

The meaning of “to keep the Shabbat holy” is that we must remember it so that it is holy in our eyes. This means that we should rest specifically because the day is holy, as a means to turn away from the mundane matters which occupy our minds and from our ephemeral pursuits, in order to afford our spirits delight in the ways of God; and to go to the Sages and prophets to hear teachings of God.

וטעם לקדשו - שיהא זכרוננו בו להיות קדוש בעינינו... והטעם, שתהא השביתה בעינינו בעבור שהוא יום קדוש, להפנות בו מעסקי המחשבות והבלי הזמנים, ולתת בו עונג לנפשנו בדרכי ה', וללכת אל החכמים ואל הנביאים לשמוע דברי ה' ...

3. **Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Vol. II, p. 14 – The power of Shabbat overrides any mundane concerns since it is the spiritual goal of Creation.**

There is one thing required of a person – that his connection to Shabbat be so great that even if, upon the arrival of Shabbat, he finds himself deeply involved in important affairs, once Shabbat enters, he will have absolutely no desire at all to reflect on his business. In comparison to the powerful holiness of Shabbat, all things in this world are considered absolutely meaningless by him. For all of one's efforts [during the week] are only preparation for a goal, and Shabbat is the spiritual goal of Creation itself.

אך דבר זה נדרש מהאדם, שהתדבקותו בקדושת השבת תהיה כה גדולה שאף אם יעמוד בערב שבת באמצע עסק גדול ומטריד מאד, משיכנס השבת לא ימצא בנפשו שום נטיית רצון להרהר בו כלל. כי לעומת עוצם קדושת השבת כל דברי העולם הזה כאין וכאפס נחשבים לו: כי כולם כאחד אינם אלא הכנות לתכלית, והשבת הרי היא התכלית הרוחנית של הבריאה עצמה.

4. **Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 113a-b – Shabbat creates a complete change of scenery.**

Your Shabbat clothes should not be the same as your weekday clothes . . . the way you walk on Shabbat should not be the same as the way you walk during the week . . . your conversation on Shabbat should not be the same as your conversation during the week . . .

שלא יהא מלבושך של שבת כמלבושך של חול...
שלא יהא הילוךך של שבת כהילוךך של חול...
שלא יהא דבורך של שבת כדבורך של חול...

5. **Bereishit 1:31 and 2:2 – At the conclusion of the sixth day, God proclaimed that the entire Creation was very good.**

And God saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

וירא אלהים את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב מאד ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום השישי:

And the heavens and earth and all their hosts were completed. With the seventh day, God finished all the work that He had done. He [thus] ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done.

ויכלו השמים והארץ וכל צבאם: ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה:

Why did God proclaim after He had completed creating on the sixth day that the Creation was “very good,” in contrast to the previous days (except the second day) when He stated that they were only “good”?

6. Based on Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Bereishit 1:31 – The totality of Creation is a perfect world.

We should not find anything striking [in the verse above], if here, at the final phase of the Creation it only said, “And God saw that it was good.” But the verse says: “behold” – הנה, which always introduces us to something we have not yet seen. This would have occurred to us at first glance to apply to the added word “very” – מאד.

If “behold” always signifies a new idea, and if the word “very” is added to this new conception of “good,” there must be something in the text which must be the motive for this new nuance of our judgment. This new conception is obviously the word “כל” – “everything.” What is the word “everything” coming to teach? Every single creation is good, but only now, when the series of creations is finished, and each single one can be considered in relation to the whole, “everything” is not only “good” but “very good.” “כל” – “everything” is not only the conception of plurality “all,” that everyone is included, but “everything” is a conception of the union of the plurality, as a single unit – “the whole.”

The root of the Hebrew word “everything” – כלל is כלל. כלל in the language of the Sages means ring, hoop, wreath, crown, the idea of round, a circle. A circle is an expression for the whole sphere that a being can control from his own standpoint. Hence all the expressions for the conceptions of completion and perfection are related in Hebrew to the word “circle.” That is why כלל, too, is not so much the sum of many, rather as the designation of the totality of a conception. So here too: God saw the whole of what He had created, saw how everything fit together harmoniously, the union of all He had created, He considered each in its connection with the whole, and “behold, it is very good.”

Good looked at separately by one who does not see the whole, would appear imperfect. Thus everything created, everything in existence, looked at in connection with everything else, is very good. Everything רע (evil) only appears evil when looked at alone, by itself, in a fraction of time and space. But the evil disappears, in fact, itself becomes “very good” – even the yetzer hara (evil inclination), suffering, death – as soon as we broaden our minds and look at the whole, in our spiritual Godly relationship, not only in relation to this world but also to the World to Come. Could we but see at one glance the whole picture of God’s management of events interworking with and on each other in all time and in all spheres, even as He sees it, we should indeed agree with His verdict: “Behold, it is very good!”

This perspective on Creation and life leads to an additional appreciation of menuchah on Shabbat.

7. Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits, The Jerusalem Kollel, Bereishit 1:31 – Understanding that the world in its totality is perfect enables us to relax on Shabbat.

On Shabbat, we recite Psalm 92 for the Sabbath Day whose theme does not overtly relate to Shabbat. It discusses the philosophical question of Divine justice for righteous people who suffer, and wicked people who flourish. Why is this psalm recited on Shabbat – what’s the connection?

On Shabbat we need to be able to feel the menuchah in the Creation. Menuchah means appreciating how life all works out, that everything is just right. Any questions we have [about Divine Justice] are because we are cornering off a small segment from existence, taking something out of context and asking a question. As Rav Hirsch explains [above] the praise “very good” only appears during the Creation narrative in the Torah at the completion of Creation. The Midrash Rabbah states three opinions of what is known as “very good” – death, the yetzer hara, and Gehinnom.

God saw *everything* He had made. In each of the Ten Creation Speeches, there is a “good.” “Good” reflects that there is good, but we can have lots of questions, because even within the other days of Creation there are elements that one might think are incomplete or damaging. However, at the completion of Creation, together with the seeming negative components – death, the yetzer hara and Gehinnom – we pronounce, “And the Heavens and the Earth ... were completed.” Now the Creation is complete. Now there are no questions. The suffering of the righteous is only a question without the World to Come. And the same goes for the flourishing of the wicked.

Now we can understand the menuchah of Shabbat. We commemorate God’s resting on Shabbat because that manifests that Creation is complete and perfect. Shabbat is the totality – it’s the whole picture. The menuchah of Shabbat is taking ourselves out of the world that is full of details that are difficult to understand, and putting ourselves in the totality of Creation; and realizing that it is perfect. Ultimately everything works out. The menuchah of Shabbat is to be at peace with God, with His actions. We don’t understand the answers as details; but we understand the big picture. We understand that it all fits in. Then we can relax our concerns for the issues that are troubling us, knowing that everything will work out, and enjoy the menuchah of Shabbat.

PART C. THE ADDITIONAL SHABBAT SOUL

God grants us an additional soul on Shabbat that enables us to better enjoy the heightened spiritual dimension and physical delights of the day, thus contributing to our Shabbat menuchah.

1. Talmud Bavli, Beitzah 16a – On Shabbat we have “an extra soul.”

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, “The Holy One, Blessed be He, gave man an additional soul on the eve of Shabbat, and at the end of Shabbat He takes it back.”

דאמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש נשמה יתירה נותן הקדוש
ברוך הוא באדם ערב שבת ולמוצאי שבת נוטלין אותה
הימנו

2. Rashi, *ibid.* 16a – The additional soul gives us an added capacity for enjoyment.

“An additional soul” – a greater ability for rest and joy, and the added capacity to eat and drink more.

נשמה יתירה - רוחב לב למנוחה ולשמחה, ולהיות
פתוח לרוחה, ויאכל וישתה ואין נפשו קצה עליו:

The extra soul allows for enhanced spirituality even through one’s eating and drinking. Moreover, Shabbat affords an opportunity for increased spirituality through our prayers and Torah study. In fact, the Ben Ish Chai writes (Parshat Beshalach) that Torah study on Shabbat can accomplish 1,000 times as much as during the week!

3. Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits, The Jerusalem Kollel – The additional soul on Shabbat contributes to our menuchah by enabling our physical actions to make a greater spiritual connection.

The Mesillat Yesharim teaches that we are created in order to derive enjoyment from a connection with God. We receive a special gift from God every Shabbat – the additional soul, which helps us to enjoy this connection in this world. Shabbat is considered a taste of the World to Come. In the World to Come we will have clarity that our connection to God brings great joy. Meanwhile, in this world, the additional soul on Shabbat enables us to experience greater joy by recognizing that He made us a beautiful world, as well as through physical acts like eating and drinking. As Rashi explains [above], we are using our physical actions in order to make a greater spiritual connection.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ⌘ While God created the world in six days, His Creation was not complete without the addition of menuchah, rest. Shabbat menuchah was God's finishing touch to Creation.
- ⌘ With menuchah God added a dimension of holiness to Creation that is accessible to those who rest in the same way that He did.
- ⌘ We can attain this holiness by physically and mentally removing ourselves from the creative development of the physical world so that we can focus on spiritual concerns.
- ⌘ Shabbat requires the understanding that our world is perfect, that God has a plan, and that everything works out for the ultimate best for everyone. With that peace of mind, one can relax his concerns about the issues that are troubling him and enjoy the menuchah of Shabbat.
- ⌘ God grants us an additional soul on Shabbat that enables us to better enjoy both the heightened spiritual dimension of the day, as well as the physical delights we partake of, which contribute to our Shabbat menuchah.

SECTION IV. SHABBAT AWARENESS

Menuchah completed Creation, and we create it by stepping away from mundane and physically creative pursuits. The atmosphere created by a cessation of melachah and the spirit of Shabbat menuchah gives us a heightened sense of awareness of meaning, relationship, and spirituality. Ultimately Shabbat is credited with maintaining the existence of the Jewish people, reflecting its priceless value. Sometimes, one needs to be reminded of how valuable it really is.

A poor man once came knocking on the door of a chasid, asking for charity. The chasid didn't have any money to give to the man, but he did notice his wife's gold wedding ring lying on the table. He decided that the man's situation was so very desperate that it warranted giving him the ring. He consulted with his wife and she agreed that they should give him the ring.

However, shortly afterward, the chasid's wife became frantic and ran outside, trying to find the poor man. Sure that he had done the wrong thing by presenting her with such a dilemma, the chasid started running after his wife to apologize, promising her that he would earn enough money to buy her a new ring, and asking her to allow the poor man to keep the old one now that it had been given to him.

“That’s not why I’m chasing after the man,” his wife replied. “I’m afraid that he doesn’t realize the full value of the ring and, in his desperation for cash, he might sell it for much less than it’s worth.” (Based on an idea from Rabbi Baruch Leff, Shabbos in My Soul, Targum Press.)

PART A. A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND COMPLETION

Shabbat elevates the physical world by providing a goal and a context to our workweek. In this way Shabbat infuses our physical existence with meaning and purpose.

1. Talmud Bavli, Berachot 57b – Shabbat gives us a sense of the ultimate completion of the world.

Shabbat is one sixtieth [i.e. a taste] of the World to Come.

שבת אחד מששים לעולם הבא.

2. Rabbi Akiva Tatz, Living Inspired, pp. 167-7 – Seeing the goal helps us appreciate the process.

There are many ideas in Shabbat, but perhaps the most basic is that it represents an end-point, the purpose of a process. The week is a period of working, building; Shabbat is the cessation of that building, which brings home the significance and sense of achievement that building has generated. It is not simply rest, inactivity. It is the celebration of the work which has been completed. Whenever the Torah mentioned Shabbat it first mentions six days of work – the idea is that Shabbat occurs only after, because of, the work.

A process must have an end-point to give it meaning. If work never achieves a result, the work is foolish. If an inventor builds a machine which maintains itself fully – fuels itself, oils itself, cleans itself – that is clever; provided that the machine produces something useful. A machine whose only output is its own maintenance would be ridiculous.

The result justifies the work, the end-point justifies the process. The pleasure of the freedom and relaxation which accompany an end-point are the direct results of the satisfaction of knowing that the job has to be done. That is the real happiness, the happiness of achievement. Shabbat is wonderful if a person has a week’s work to show for that week – then the relaxation is rich and full ...

PART B. SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY

Shabbat is a taste of the World to Come in another respect as well. By “tasting” Shabbat we become aware of the spiritual dimension of existence.

1. Rabbi Akiva Tatz, Living Inspired, pp. 167-7 – Shabbat makes us aware of another dimension.

But there is much more. Not only do we begin the week rested and inspired by Shabbat aiming to arrive at a higher, more developed state seven days later, we must remain aware that the entire span of our lives is patterned thus: born from a higher dimension, given our time here to work, to give, to achieve, we are aiming at a return to a higher dimension with a lifetime of hard work to our credit. This life is the week; the rest is the great Shabbat. Shabbat occurs weekly to teach that very fact: ultimately, sooner or later, there will be a final end to the work phase and the long Shabbat will begin.

The illusion of immortality which we allow ourselves is powerful – I have forever to live. We never have more than seven days before we are reminded: remember Shabbat.

Shabbat gives us an awareness of a reality beyond our own and thus prompts us to consider the purpose of life.

2. Talmud Bavli, Berachot 14a – One must experience a dream every week.

Rabbi Yonah said in the name of Rabbi Zeira that anyone who sleeps for seven days without having a dream is called “evil.”

אמר רבי יונה אמר רבי זירא: כל הלן שבעת ימים בלא חלום נקרא רע.

Why such a condemning statement for something which is seemingly beyond our control?

3. Attributed to the Vilna Gaon, S'dei Eliyahu to Berachot 14a – Dreams can wake us up to the realization that life itself is transient. Shabbat provides the opportunity to consider the deeper purpose of life.

This seems perplexing – is it within the power of a person to choose whether or not to have a dream? How could such a thing be a gauge of a person's moral level, whether good or bad?

The answer is as follows. It is known that this world, with all the pleasures it has to offer, is like a fleeting dream, a sheer vanity. Of what worth is a life of insecurity, of worry over the possibility of death, never knowing if one will live or die? It is just like a fleeting dream [which is a preparation for the World to Come].

If a person will take to heart that his life is just a dream, then certainly he will make spiritual concerns his priority and his own desires secondary. But people forget this; they become entrenched in the vanities of this world. The whole week a person is involved in making a living, and does not have the time to think about the purpose of his life. But on Shabbat, when a person is free from such concerns, if then he fails to consider the purpose of life, fails to realize that this world is a mere corridor to the eternal life of the World to Come, then this is considered a transgression.

That is the meaning of “One who sleeps for seven nights ...” It means to say that if one goes seven days, including Shabbat, without a dream, i.e. without realizing that this world is like a dream, then he is called evil. Every seven days a person must consider the purpose of life and make a spiritual accounting of his soul.

לכאורה תמוה האם תלוי בבחירתו של אדם שיחלום לו, ומה הטעם שיהיה זאת בחינה על דרך מדרגת האדם אם הוא טוב או רע?

ויש לומר דהנה ידוע דעולם הזה עם כל תענוגיו הוא כחלום יעוף והבל הבלים, כי חיי האדם במה נחשב הוא שימיו ושנותיו אינם בטוחים וכל יום ידאוג שמא ימות למחר, ואינו יודע אם יחיה או ימות, והמה כחלום יעוף.

והנה אם ישים האדם אל לבו כי בהעולם הזה כל ימי חייו הוא רק חלום, אזי בלא ספק ישים מלאכת ה' לעיקר ומלאכתו עראי, אך האדם שוכח זאת, ועל כן הוא שקוע בהבלי עולם הזה, והנה בכל ימי השבוע הוא טרוד במשא ומתן בפרנסתו ואין לו פנאי כל כך לחשוב חשבונו של עולמו בדבר תכליתו אך ביום השבת אשר אז הוא פנוי מעסקיו אם גם אז לא ישים אל לבו לחשוב בדבר תכליתו בעולם הזה אשר זאת רק מבוא לחיי עולם הבא אזי לחטא ועון יחשוב לו כמובן,

וזאת כוונתו הלן ז' ימים, רוצה לומר אם עובר על האדם שבעת ימים ובכלל הזה גם יום השבת בלא חלום שלא נתן אל לבו שהעולם הזה הוא חלום נקרא רע, כי כל שבעת ימים צריך האדם לחשוב חשבונו של עולמו בחשבון הנפש.

PART C. THE IMPACT OF SHABBAT

Observing Shabbat and the awareness it provides us have had a profound impact on Jewish life and the survival of the Jewish people. And it continues to be as crucial as it ever was.

1. Rabbi Mordechai Becher, *Gateway to Judaism*, pp. 96-7 – Shabbat keeps the Jews.

Shabbat creates a sanctuary in time in which we are forced to suspend our normal activities and re-evaluate the importance of our daily concerns. We are offered the opportunity to turn our attention to those areas of life that are too often neglected. Shabbat is the one time that the entire family can get together without the pressure of school or work and without the intrusion of the phone or television. A common expression, coined in the twentieth century, attests, “More than the Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews.”

2. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Radical Then, Radical Now*, pp. 133-135 – Shabbat sustains Jewish life.

The Sabbath sustains every one of Judaism’s great institutions. In the synagogue we re-engage with the community, praying their prayer, celebrating their joys, defining ourselves as part of the “We” rather than the “I.” Hearing and studying the Torah portion of the week, we travel back to join our ancestors at Sinai, when God spoke and gave us His written text, His marriage contract with the Jewish people. At home I spend time – sacrosanct and undisturbed – with my family, wife and children, and know that our marriage is sheltered under God’s tabernacle of peace.

I once took Britain’s leading childcare expert to a Jewish school where, for the first time, she saw young children rehearsing the Sabbath table – five-year-old parents blessing five-year-old children and welcoming five-year-old guests. She, a non-Jew, was enthralled. She asked the children what they like most about Shabbat. They replied, “It’s the time mum and dad don’t have to rush off.” She said to me afterwards: “You are giving those children the greatest gift, the gift of tradition. And it is saving their parents’ marriages.”

... Within the cycle of the week [Shabbat] creates a delicate rhythm of action and reflection, making and enjoying, running and standing still. Without that pause Jews might never have continued the journey. Still today, without Shabbat, we risk making the journey while missing the view.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV:

- ≈ Shabbat is a taste of the World to Come in that it gives us a sense of completion and provides a framework for appreciating the goal of all our efforts.
- ≈ Shabbat also gives us a taste of the spiritual world, an awareness that there is another dimension to existence beyond what we experience with our physical senses.
- ≈ Shabbat sustains Jewish life in the practical sense as well by providing the time and personal space to focus on the important things in life. It provides a rhythm to our week and a context to our lives.

CLASS SUMMARY:

MY IDEA OF A WEEKEND IS SPORTS, BLOGGING, AND PARTIES; WHAT DOES SHABBAT HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

If I'm not anchored to the ultimate goals of life, I'm missing the boat. So how do I get clarity? That's where Shabbat comes in. Shabbat is the one pivotal day each week that allows me to stop and gain a clear perspective on why we're here. It's possible to schedule time during the rest of the week for sports and blogging. And as far as parties, try a Shabbat meal with family and friends!

IF I'M NOT TIRED ON SHABBAT, WHY SHOULD I REST? WHY NOT JUST TAKE A DAY OFF WHEN I WANT TO GET RECHARGED?

Observing Shabbat is unrelated to fatigue and/or a need to take a vacation. The creation of the Sabbath day itself was the completion of the entire Creation. Shabbat is a creation within itself, a world of menuchah. Menuchah is a break from material, physical existence. It is a spiritual restfulness and peace. Moreover, on Shabbat we receive an additional soul to enable our physical actions to make a greater spiritual connection.

WHAT WORK ARE WE RESTING FROM ON SHABBAT? FLIPPING A LIGHT SWITCH?

Contrary to popular belief, the "rest" we aim for on Shabbat has little to do with desisting from physical exertion. Rather, the type of work forbidden on Shabbat, called melachah, is the intelligent and uniquely human endeavor to advance the development of the physical world.

The categories of work that are not allowed on Shabbat are derived from the work that went into the Mishkan. Since the Mishkan itself was a microcosm of the universe, the work we refrain from is of the same type that God refrained from on the seventh day of Creation.

WHY IS SHABBAT THE CORNERSTONE OF JEWISH BELIEF AND PRACTICE? WHY IS IT INCLUDED IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Shabbat is a testimony to belief in God as both Creator of the universe and as Director of human affairs. Since God rested on the seventh day of Creation, our rest every seven days is a statement of our belief in that fact.

Shabbat also recalls the Exodus, our rest being an implementation of the freedom that God has granted us.

Both of these ideas are expressed in the Ten Commandments to emphasize the centrality of Shabbat in Judaism.

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND SHABBAT MENUCHAH, A REFLECTIVE KIND OF REST AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE?

Menuchah can only be created through the cessation of melachah. But this takes more than just inactivity: to truly appreciate Shabbat menuchah, we need to separate ourselves mentally from our mundane strivings.

Moreover, menuchah involves the recognition that God's universe is perfect, and that everything that occurs both on a cosmic and a personal level is part of His plan, and therefore ultimately for the best.

HOW IS SHABBAT THE KEY TO A JEWISH FUTURE?

Shabbat is the cornerstone of every major Jewish institution: marriage and family, synagogue and community. It provides us with a spiritual sensitivity and a context within which to understand the purpose of our existence.