



## Parashat Va'Etchanan

Our *parasha* deals with, among other things, the *Aseret HaDibrot*. The fourth of the *Aseret HaDibrot* states: “*Sheishet yamim ta'avod v'asita kol melachtecha*, Six days shall you toil and do all your work” (*Devarim* 5:12). The *Midrash Lekach Tov* comments: “*Sheishet yamim ta'avod* – this is the *mitzvah* of *Shabbat*.” What is the connection between the work we do during the week and the *mitzvah* of *Shabbat*? Certainly a person can honor *Shabbat* during the week – if he comes across a nice cake, for example, he saves it for *Shabbat*, and if he finds a better one, he saves that one for *Shabbat*. But what does the *Midrash Lekach Tov* mean that the actual work one performs during the week in his office is the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *Shabbat*?

The *mitzvah* of *Shabbat* appears in the Torah fifteen times. In *Parashat Ki Tisa*, the Torah says: “*V'shamru B'nei Yisrael et haShabbat la'asot et haShabbat*, And *B'nei Yisrael* shall keep the *Shabbat*, to make the *Shabbat*” (*Shemot* 31:16). What does it mean to make *Shabbat*? *Shabbat* is not dependent upon any action on our part – even if a person does absolutely nothing, at a certain point *Shabbat* begins automatically and at a certain point *Shabbat* ends automatically! How do we make *Shabbat*?

The *gemara* in *Gitin* (56a) tells the story of the *Churban*. The Roman army had laid siege to *Yerushalayim*, allowing no one into or out of the city. The thugs of *Yerushalayim* would not let anyone out of the city to attempt to make peace with the Roman army. The situation deteriorating rapidly, *Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai* faked his own death and managed to get out of the city in a coffin. He approached the head of the Roman army and told him that a messenger would soon arrive from Rome informing him that he had been elected Caesar. When the messenger arrived, the head of the Roman army, overcome with emotion, granted *Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai* three requests. The first thing he asked for was the city of *Yavneh* and its sages, because he realized that *Yerushalayim* would eventually be destroyed – if not now, in a few years – and that what needed to be done next was to build a bridge between *churban* and *geulah*. This bridge begins in *Yavneh*, because, as the *gemara* in *Berachot* 17a says, the *rabbanim* of *Yavneh* had a favorite teaching: “I am a person, and you are a person. I wake up to my job, and you wake up to your job. I am not involved in your work, and you are not involved in mine. Perhaps you might say that I do much and you do little. But this is not true, for we learned: Whether one does much or one does little, as long as the intent is *l'sheim shamayim*.” This teaching discusses two people – one who learns all day and one who works all day. You might think the life of the one who learns all day is worth more than the one who works all day or vice versa, therefore the *rabbanim* of *Yavneh* taught that they are equal, as every individual works in his particular field to increase *kevod shamayim*.

*Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai* understood that this is the key to the *geulah*. He learned this from *Yeshayah haNavi*, who says that in the future, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will build *Yerushalayim* with a stone called *kodkod* (54:12). The *gemara* in *Bava Batra* (75a) explains that this stone is actually a combination of two stones from the *choshen* – *shoham* (the stone of *Yosef*) and *yashpeh* (the stone of

*Binyamin*). *Yosef* represents the world of business. *Binyamin* represents those who learn Torah. The future *geulah* will be the comfortable synthesis of these two worlds.

This is the meaning of the *Midrash Lekach Tov* as well. “*Sheishet yamim ta’avod* is the *mitzvah* of *Shabbat*” – going to work is not a *bedieved* lifestyle. A person whose task in this world is to work – in whatever field – must understand that his life is equal in value to the life of one who learns Torah, as it is incumbent upon each of us to increase *kevod shamayim*. In fact, it is the one who works during the week and ceases his work in honor of *Shabbat* that truly makes *Shabbat*. One who does not work during the week is *shomer Shabbat*, but does not make *Shabbat*. This is what *Rabbeinu Bechayei* writes in *Parashat Yitro*: “Six days you shall serve *Hashem* through your work and dedicate the seventh day completely to *Hashem*, your L-rd.” *Rashi*, commenting on the *passuk*, “*Re’eh chayim im isha asher ahavta*, Enjoy life with the woman you love” (*Kohellet* 9:9), explains that one must learn a profession to go hand-in-hand with his Torah learning. While certainly anyone with the proper ability to teach Torah or to be a *dayan* should do so – *Am Yisrael* needs them – one who works is not living a *bedieved* life. The *gemara* in *Chagigah* (5b) says that *Hashem* sheds a tear every day for one who could teach Torah, but doesn’t, and for one who is meant to work in a certain field, but instead sits and learns Torah. Therefore, a person who is drawn to a certain profession shouldn’t think for a moment that his life is worth less or a double life if he learns Torah; if anything, it is a broad life, as R’ Yitzchak Hutner, *zatzal*, Rosh Yeshivat Chaim Berlin, writes in *Igeret* 94.

This is the first *Shabbat* after *Tisha b’Av* – we must take this opportunity to lay another stone on the bridge between *churban* and *geulah*. If we truly work to increase *kevod shamayim* through everything we do – every person in his field – we will *b’ezrat Hashem* merit to see the rebuilding of *Yerushalayim*, the nation, and the land, completely and speedily.

Shabbat Shalom!  
Meir Goldwicht

**Rav Meir Goldwicht’s weekly sichah on the Parsha and Moadim is a service of YUTorah, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more parsha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting [www.yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org).**