
פרשת יתרו

פרק כ פסוק ח

זְכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ :

רש"י

תְּנוּ לֵב לְזִכּוֹר תָּמִיד אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, וְשֵׂאם גְּזַדְמָן לָהּ חֶפֶץ יָפֶה תְּהֵא מְזַמִּינוּ לַשַּׁבָּת.

מושג

תְּנוּ לֵב לְזִכּוֹר תָּמִיד אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת

Translation:

Make a point to remember the day of שבת at all times.

Explanation:

Rashi, quoting the מכילתא, understands the פסוק to be teaching us that one must always remember שבת. Even during the weekdays, one must focus on שבת.

There are two different ways to explain this command. One is that the six days of the week, in which we are busy with the material demands of the world, can cause one to become a fully material person. Only by thinking constantly of שבת, can one remember that his or her true mission in life is to focus on his or her spiritual self.

A second explanation believes that we are not meant to negate the material world, but rather to sanctify the material world; to infuse the spiritual in the material. שבת is meant to model this. In order to create this model we are commanded to take the 'day of the spirit' and ensure that we enjoy it physically as well; עונג שבת. We take the material and use it to enhance our spiritual experience, thus elevating the material world by using it to serve the spirit. We are then expected to use this model as a paradigm for the other six days of the week. According to this opinion, the command to set aside choice food or objects for שבת is meant to simply ensure that he will fully enjoy his 'day of the spirit'. According to the first approach one lives his life *for* שבת, while according to the second approach one lives his life *from* שבת.

Looking in the Pasuk:

Rashi in his commentary on the above פסוק explains that if the Torah was instructing us regarding a specific act of remembering שבת – such as making קידוש – the Torah would have written זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת. However, by writing זְכוֹר the Torah is conveying a more general directive not connected to a specific act. Therefore, in order to explain the simple meaning of the פסוק, Rashi follows the understanding of the מכילתא.

NOTES

The common interpretation of this Pasuk is that one must do an act on שבת which reminds us of the holiness of the day. Thus the (פסחים קו.) גמרא learns from this פסוק the obligation to make קידוש on Friday night:

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו: זוכרהו על היין בכניסתו.

Almost all ראשונים thus understand that the recitation of קידוש on Friday night is a Biblical obligation¹, whose source is our פסוק. Since we fulfill the obligation of לקדשו we call the blessing we make on Friday night by the name קידוש.

It is therefore quite surprising that Rashi here chose to explain the פסוק differently. However, as Rashi himself explains, the simple reading of the פסוק does not seem to support the understanding of a specific command to act. For if so, the Torah should have written זכור with a שוא and not with a קמץ. Rashi brings several examples of when similar verbs are written with a קמץ and that they are not to be understood as a specific time-bound command, but rather as an ongoing more general instruction. Therefore, Rashi chose to explain our פסוק as a general command to always ensure that שבת is remembered. This is accomplished by constantly having שבת in mind even during the weekdays, and by dedicating the best of goods for שבת.

The idea that one must be focused during the week on preparations for שבת is mentioned explicitly in the מכילתא:

אלעזר בן חנניה בן חזקיה בן חנניה בן גרון אומר זכור את יום השבת לקדשו תהא זוכרו מאחד בשבת, שאם יתמנה לך מנה יפה תהא מתקנו לשם שבת.

While all the above seems to be quite clear and unequivocal, there is a serious objection raised by the Ramban. The Ramban argues that the idea presented above is actually the subject of debate between שמאי and הלל. The debate is found in the (ביצה טז.) גמרא, which teaches:

תניא, אמרו עליו על שמאי הזקן, כל ימיו היה אוכל לכבוד שבת. מצא בהמה נאה אומר זו לשבת. מצא אחרת נאה הימנה מניח את השניה ואוכל את הראשונה. אבל הלל הזקן מדה אחרת היתה לו, שכל מעשיו לשם שמים. שנאמר (תהלים סח) ברוך ה' יום יום.

It seems, argues the Ramban that the idea of preparing for שבת during the week is the opinion of שמאי, while הלל is of the opinion that one focuses on each and every day, without a focus on שבת during the week. Therefore, concludes the Ramban, Rashi commentary is in line with שמאי, while Rashi should have followed the opinion of הלל.

On the other hand, other commentators are quick to point out that the מכילתא mentioned above seems to clearly support the opinion of שמאי. We are thus left to ponder why the מכילתא would follow שמאי instead of הלל and why Rashi chose to follow the מכילתא and ignore הלל?²

In order to answer the above questions I think we must first try to better understand what שמאי and הלל are arguing about. Specifically, why does הלל not agree with שמאי? Why does הלל counter שמאי by claiming that all one's actions should be לשם שמים, why is that a counter to שמאי? And finally,

¹ That is to say that one must recite the words of קידוש. Whether the Torah requires the קידוש to be made on wine (or bread) is a debate among the ראשונים.

² The גמרא on the (רמב"ו) בית חדש adds yet another source which supports the opinion of שמאי. He quotes the (שבת קיט.) גמרא which tells of a certain butcher who had achieved incredible wealth. When asked how he merited such blessing, he replied that whenever he received a particularly special cut of meat he would designate it for שבת. While the רמב"ו wants to prove from this story that we follow the opinion of שמאי, it would seem to me that the opposite is true. For if we follow שמאי then what the butcher did was mandated by the command of השבת את יום הזכור, and should not have merited such spectacular reward. Only if we follow הלל could we claim that one who follows שמאי has gone beyond what is mandated and therefore merits special reward.

why do we say that הלל had a מדה אחרת, a different character trait, why not simply say that הלל disagreed?

The Ramban quotes a slightly different version of the above argument between שמאי and הלל, which, I believe, sheds some light on the source of their argument. The מכילתא רשב"י that the Ramban quotes says:

שמאי הזקן אומר זכירה עד שלא תבא, שמירה משתבא, ומעשה בשמאי הזקן שלא היה זכרון שבת זו מפיו, לקח חפץ טוב אומר זה לשבת, כלי חדש אומר זה לשבת. אבל הלל הזקן מדה אחרת היתה בו שהיה אומר כל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים. The above Midrash teaches that שמאי did not simply ensure that he had the very best food for שבת, but that זכירה עד שלא תבא. לא היה זכרון שבת זו מפיו. He would ensure that during the entire week he remained focused on the upcoming שבת. In fact, the Midrash teaches, שמאי was of the opinion that the command זכור את השבת, is not fulfilled on שבת, but rather before the שבת, during the week – זכירה עד שלא תבא. We may even propose that when שמאי bought a new object or new vessel and he would say this is for שבת, this would hold true even if he did not particularly need the objects for שבת. Designating these things for שבת was not a part of עונג שבת, which would not really apply to a new pot, but rather, as the Midrash teaches, part of זכירת שבת. That is to say, the designation was simply a way of making sure that שבת was always on his mind and on his lips – לא היה זכרון שבת זו מפיו. And, the same could be said for his opinion in the ביצה in גמרא. He would constantly designate the better food he would find for שבת not because of עונג שבת, but as a means of always keeping שבת in focus. All of שמאי's insistence to dedicate the best for שבת was not an end to itself, but rather simply a means by which he would ensure always talking about שבת, thus fulfilling his understanding of the מצוה זכור את שבת, זכור את השבת.

According to the above we may now understand הלל's position as well. הלל would agree that there is an obligation to designate food for שבת. But, contrary to שמאי, he will understand that this is in order to ensure that there is sufficient food for שבת so that he may properly enjoy שבת. According to הלל the designation of the food is the end in itself, not simply a means by which to always remember the שבת. While הלל may agree that one should remember שבת all week long, and even set aside a new vessel for use on שבת, this would be only a means by which to ensure that one remembers to designate sufficient food for שבת.

In short, according to שמאי designating food is a means by which I ensure that I will be thinking about שבת during the entire week, while according to הלל remembering שבת all week long is a means by which I ensure that I will designate food. The only actual difference between them will be in a situation when I have already designated sufficient food. According to שמאי I will still be commanded to keep a lookout for something even better, while according to הלל there would be no further need to keep thinking about שבת. Thus, שמאי understands that even after setting aside a choice food for שבת, if one found a better food, he would eat switch the designation from the first to the latter. On this exact point הלל argues that no such switch is required, rather once he has set aside a choice portion for שבת he no longer needs to think of his שבת meals during the week.

According to the above, we may argue that Rashi's commentary which the Ramban claims follows the opinion of שמאי is actually the opinion of הלל as well. They both agree that the word זכור commands us to remember שבת even during the weekdays as we learned from the מכילתא. The only argument between שמאי and הלל is why we are commanded to remember שבת all week long. שמאי sees the obligation as an end within itself – to always think of שבת – while הלל sees it as a means to ensure sufficient food is set aside for שבת.

It is interesting to explore the reason for their argument. It would seem to me that שמאי's opinion is rather radical. Why would one be required to be constantly thinking about שבת even after his or her needs for the שבת meals have been secured? And, as asked above, why would הלל base his contrary opinion on the כל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים and ברוך ה' יום ה' of פסוק יום ה'?

I believe we might answer that the argument between the two is based on a most fundamental debate regarding man's mission on earth³. According to שמאי, man's mission is to suppress the physical and focus solely on the spiritual. The weekdays, the days of physical labor, are an annoyance, something that must be somehow tolerated until שבת comes and one may once again focus on the spiritual. Therefore, even during the week, one must live on a שבת mode, doing all he can to somehow endure and subdue the physical nature of the weekdays and think only of שבת. Therefore, any object he may acquire, any special food he might find, must be dedicated only to the day of the spirit. The requirement of עונג שבת is simply a means by which one fuels his spiritual self, much in the same way that the physical splendor of the בית המקדש was meant to facilitate spiritual inspiration. This is why the mention of שבת never left שמאי's lips.

However, הלל felt differently. He was of the opinion that Hashem did not give us the physical world so that we might suppress or negate the physical, but rather God gave us the physical world so that we might sanctify it. According to הלל one does not simply suffer the six days of the week so that he might enjoy the seventh, but rather enjoys the holiness of the seventh and then attempts to spread that holiness over the other six. The demands of physical labor during the week make it difficult to focus on infusing spirituality into the material world. Therefore, G-d gave us one day a week in which physical labor is forbidden so that I might easily focus on the spiritual while still enjoying the physical⁴ – עונג שבת – and thus 'practice' infusing spirituality into the material. According to הלל the מצוה of שבת is thus meant to serve as a model for the entire week! It is an example of melding the physical and spiritual towards the service of Hashem⁵.

This is precisely what the גמרא meant when it said that הלל had another מדה. His מדה was to take all his acts, even the purely physical acts, and sanctify them as well; כל מעשיו לשם שמים⁶. Thus according to הלל after one has ensured that he has sufficiently prepared for שבת, he is meant to enjoy the other days of the week as well as the פסוק taught: ברוך ה' יום יום. Put pithily, according to

³ Upon presenting this idea, I was shown the words of the מלבים (בהר פרק יט) who explains the debate between שמאי והלל in a similar fashion. ב"ש

⁴ Hence the requirement, mentioned in Rashi's commentary on our פסוק, to set aside not only fine foods, but also fine objects for שבת. This will model sanctifying not only the food we eat, but every aspect of our physical lives as well.

⁵ According to this we understand why the מצוה of שבת prohibits one from fasting on שבת. One who would fast on שבת and thus focus solely on the spiritual, would miss the entire point of שבת.

⁶ It interested me to investigate whether we find elsewhere that הלל and שמאי argued on this point. One possible source could be the argument between them as to whether man was better off not being born:

תנו רבנן שתי שנים ומחצה נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים נוה לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא, והללו אומרים נוה לו לאדם שנברא יותר משלא נברא. (עירובין יג)

According to שמאי man is placed in the physical world only to test to his ability to stand up to the challenge it presents to his spiritual self, therefore, he would be better off never having been created. According to הלל, however, man's placement in the physical world is meant to allow him the opportunity to elevate the physical to the spiritual, thus making his presence in this world incredibly significant.

The following הלל's position that taking care of one's physical self is itself a מצוה:

גומל נפשו איש חסד זה הלל הזקן שבשעה שהיה נפטר מתלמידיו היה מהלך והולך עמם אמרו לו תלמידיו ר' להיכן אתה הולך אמר להם לעשות מצוה אמרו לו וכי מה מצוה זו אמר להן לרחוץ בבית המרחץ אמרו לו וכי זו מצוה היא אמר להם הן מה אם איקונין (statue) של מלכים שמעמידים אותו בבתי טרטיאות ובבתי קרקטיאות מי שנתמנה עליהם הוא מורקן ושוטפן והן מעלין לו מזונות ולא עוד אלא שהוא מתגדל עם גדולי מלכות אני שנבראתי בצלם ובדמות דכתיב (בראשית ב) כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם עאכ"ו.

שמאי one lives the whole week *for* the קדושה of שבת, while according to הלל one lives the whole week *from* the קדושה of שבת.

Questions for Further Thought:

- a. In what ways might each of us sanctify our material lives and infuse them with spirituality?
- b. Are there any other מצות which we use the word קידוש to describe them? Do they connect to the idea mentioned above?