

# Introduction to Shabbos

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## A. A Special Day

Of all the מצוות that we have, שבת is one of the most famous. As frum people, שבת is a big part of our lives. A lot of us unfortunately only know about שבת from the Halachic point of view; what we are and are not allowed to do, however the idea of what שבת is about isn't as widely known nor understood. שבת unfortunately is often largely a day of eating and sleeping and nothing else. The truth is, that the more about the השקפה of שבת (or any מצוה), that one knows, the more he will be able to understand "the נשמה"- the essence of what is going on, and it will add infinitely to his appreciation of שבת.

Which day is the holiest day of the year? Yom Kippur? Pesach? Purim? The answer is Shabbos. We say it every week in the Maariv of שבת, "ווקדשתו מכל הזמנים", and you sanctified "It", (referring to שבת), from **all** other times. We also learn this from the punishment that the תורה gives to one who is deliberately שבת מחלל, it is סקילה – death by stoning, (the most severe death sentence) which is a harsher punishment given for the desecration of any other day. Even the punishment for being מחלל יום כפור is כרת, dying before age 60, and not סקילה.

In fact, not only is שבת the holiest day of the year, but in the above mentioned תפילה, some other מעלות of שבת are mentioned. "תכלית מעשה שמים וארץ", שבת is the **purpose of creation**. This means, that the reason that Hashem made this world was for the purpose of it achieving שבת, as we will explain later. In the same תפילה, we also say that Shabbos is the **most blessed day** of all days "ווברכתו מכל הימים". Meaning, that Shabbos has in it the **highest concentration of ברכות**; more than any other day, including יום כיפור and פורים.

## B. Shabbos- The Pillar of Our אמונה

We all know that the main reason the torah told us to observe שבת is an expression of our אמונה. As the פסוק says, "כי ששת ימים...ביום השביעי שבת וינפש" That Hashem made the world in six days and he rested on the seventh, therefore we also rest on the seventh day. Let's review a little of what our אמונה is about so we can better understand what שבת is about. We all know the Rambam's famous thirteen principles of faith, the י"ג עקרי האמונה. They are as follows: To believe -

1. That Hashem created everything and constantly watches over everything.
2. The unity of Hashem.
3. That Hashem is unique and not a physical being and nothing is compared to Him.
4. That He is the First and Last Being.
5. That Hashem is the only power to pray to.
6. To believe in the prophecy of the נביאים.
7. That Moshe Rabeinu was the greatest prophet of all. .
8. That the Torah that we now have is the same Torah that Moshe Rabeinu received from Hashem at הר סיני.
9. That the Torah that Hashem gave us will never be changed or switched.
10. That Hashem knows all of our actions and thoughts.
11. That there is reward and punishment.
12. That Moshiach will come.
13. That there will be תחיית המתים.

Remembering all thirteen of these principles may get confusing. The ספר העקרים has three main categories, which happen to include all thirteen:

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1. To believe in the existence of Hashem (1-5 עקרים).
2. That Hashem gave us the Torah (6-9 עקרים).
3. That there is reward and punishment, (10-13 עקרים).

## C. Three Types of Tefillos on Shabbos

There is something unique about the שבת davening, which we don't see during the rest of the year. All year long, on any particular weekday, we say the same basic tefillah of שמונה עשרי for Shacharis, Mincha, and Mari. The same is true with Yom Tov, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur; all three tefillos are the same, (מוסף is always different as it describes the קרבנות). On שבת however, we have a different שמונה עשרי for each of the three tefillos. Why is this?

Based on the ספר העקרים we can possibly understand this; that the three tefillos are talking about the three categories of our beliefs<sup>1</sup>. 1. That Hashem created the world. 2. That Hashem gave us the Torah. 3. That there will be reward and punishment. The שבת ספרים say that there are three concepts in שבת, 1. שבת בראשית 2. שבת מתן תורה 3. שבת לעתיד לבוא. These three ideas are discussed in the three different תפילות of שבת.

At night during Ma'ariv, we say "ויכלו השמים והארץ...", describing how Hashem finished the creation. Here we declare our belief in Hashem's existence and His creating the world.

By שחרית, we talk about Moshe Rabeinu's receiving the Torah on Har Sinai, as we say, "ישמח משה...בעמדו לפניך על הר סיני, ושני לוחות אבנים הוריד בידו, וכתוב בהם שמירת שבת..." "That Moshe rejoiced...when he stood in front of you at Has Sinai and you gave him the two לוחות, which spoke about the Shabbos". This is a declaration of our אמונה that Hashem gave us the Torah through Moshe Rabeinu.

Finally, at Mincha, we talk about the time of לעתיד לבוא - our future redemption. We say "אתה אחד ושםך אחד", the time when we will all realize Hashem's unity and that no other power exists. Included in this, is the eradication of all evil, and the reward for those who did Hashem's will. We also say "יזחק ירנן, יעקב ובניו ינוחו בו", we describe how our forefathers will rejoice then (in future terms). This is proclaiming our אמונה in our future and in reward and punishment.

We all know that שבת teaches us אמונה in Hashem; however, according to the ספר העקרים שבת is the time that rejuvenates our אמונה in **all** the fundamentals we believe in - Hashem, His Torah and reward and punishment in the future!

## D. Three stages of שבת

If we take a deeper look into what שבת stands for, we will see that on שבת we travel through three different stages. We concentrate on different ideas as we progress through the day.

1. The Basics אמונה - The first idea that we think about on שבת is, of course, as stated above, אמונה, our belief in Hashem and His creating the world. In fact these two ideas, שבת and אמונה are so interconnected that say one who is שבת it

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<sup>1</sup> וב"ה מצאתי זה בספר העקרים שם ע' ספר העקרים מאמר הראשון פרק ד' " העקרים הכוללים וההכרחיים לדת האלהית הם שלשה, והם מציאות השם, וההשגחה לשכר ולעונש, ותורה מן השמים... והמורה על היות ג' העקרים הללו שרש ויסוד לאמונה אשר בה יגיע האדם אל הצלחתו האמתית... "וי"ל שהג' תפילות בשבת הם כנגד ג' העיקרים האלו שבליל שבת מזכרים בריאת העולם ושבת בבוקר מתן תורה ובמנחה זמן משיח שהיה השם א' ושמו אחד... ואפשר כי דעת הרמב"ם במספר העקרים הוא על זה הדרך שכתבנו, אלא שהוא מנה הג' שאמרנו שהם אבות עם השרשים המסתעפים מהם וקרא אותם כולם עקרים..."

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is as if he kept the whole Torah. One who desecrates it, - is as if he desecrated the whole Torah. The **היי אדם** says that **שבת** is the great sign that Hashem gave to the Jews so that we should all know He made the world in six days. Even though we know and believe that Hashem made the world, we still have to keep on reviewing it and bringing it closer to our inner conscience so that it will affect us in everything that we do. Knowing is not enough; we have to live it, breath it, and feel it. As we say every day in **וידעת היום והשבת אל תפילה עלינו לשבת** after every Teffiloh, "לבבך" "Know it today and take it to your hearts". This is also a reason that we say the Shema twice a day- even though we already know it.

In fact, this concept that **שבת** represents all that we stand for and believe in, explains why throughout the ages, the Jews were **מוסר נפש** tremendously to keep the **שבת**. It is a known fact that our grandfathers, who that lived in America in the beginning of the 1900's, had terrible **נסיונות** with **שבת**. **הילול שבת**. A man that would not work on **שבת** had no job on Monday!

The Parness family was one of these families that were very hard pressed for money because they would not be **מחלל שבת**. As a result, R. Parness did not have any money to pay the \$5 needed for the monthly rent. The landlord told R. Parness one day that he felt very bad about this, but he would have to throw them out and rent it to someone else ... Before he threw them out he told them that he would be willing to let them stay in the coal room. There was no table or chairs, but at least it was warm. It was agreed on, and Rabbi Parness and his children moved downstairs to the coal room. They lived like that for a few months with all their children, without any furniture, beds, chairs, or tables. Just a warm black coal room – the parents and their children.

One day the children were playing outside and a man saw them. He heard them talking Yiddish and thought that it was very funny to see such dark skinned children speaking Yiddish. He exclaimed, "In New York even the "shvartzas" (blacks) speak Yiddish!". The children answered him that they were not blacks, it's just that they lived in a sooty coal room because they didn't have rent money, due to the fact they were **שומר שבת** and their father couldn't find a job. The man asked to speak to their father, and told him that he would give him \$500 to pay for his rent so he could move his family to a normal apartment. R. Parness then asked him if he was **שומר שבת**. The man replied, "no". R. Parness said that he didn't want to take money from a non **שומר שבת**, but he would talk it over with his wife. When he asked her, she said that if the money was not good enough for him then it was also not good enough for her. The man thought that they were totally crazy. When he got home he told his wife what happened, and she began to cry. He asked her why? She answered that a long time ago, when **they** had these **נסיונות** they said that they would only be **מחלל שבת** until they had enough money not to work on **שבת**. That time came and went long ago and they were still being **מחלל שבת**! The man then said that from then on he would once again be a **שומר שבת**. He went back to the Parnesses and gave them a check for \$500 saying, "You can take the check from me, because I am a **שומר שבת** now"!

2. A Relationship with Hashem- The second element in **שבת** is in the theme of the morning davening. In this teffiloh we say **..ברית עולם.. ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת**. " **..ביני ובין בני ישראל את היא לעולם..**. The Jews observe the **שבת** which is an 'everlasting bond'...between Hashem and the Jews.

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This is a second element to שבת; one that brings out the special relationship and love between Hashem and us. We asked above, why is it that שבת is the holiest day of the Year? The answer may be because of the relationship between Hashem and us on שבת. שבת is the time when our relationship with Hashem is at its peak.

All of the other Yomim Tovim have a special Mitzvah that is done on them; Pesach has the Shafer; Succos has the Succah... One may ask, "Shabbos, that is the holiest day, has no special מצוה of its own?" I once heard from R. Pincus zt"l that the reason for this is, because on שבת Hashem comes to visit us and just wants to spend some quite time together with us alone, and the specialness of being together is the specialness of שבת. Shabbos is a day that we sort of do nothing, nothing physical, and it has no special mitzvah. Just to spend some quality time with הקב"ה!

The גמרא סנהדרין נח: says "גוי ששבת חייב מיתה", a gentile that is שומר שבת does a עבירה large enough that it is punishable by death. This needs to be explained. If a goy wants to put on ציצית he can; and it isn't considered a עבירה. However, if he keeps שבת, not only is it not a מצוה, but it is also a terrible עבירה. Why? The answer is - that שבת is the special time of love between Hashem and ישראל only. The מדרש says<sup>2</sup>, (see ס' שבת מלכתא ח"ב פ"ו) when a goy that is שומר שבת is compared to an intruder on the king and queen who are dining privately together. What would be if a servant entered the room because he felt very close to them and wanted to spend some time with them also? What would the king's reaction be? Off with his head!! Who does he think he is!! It is the same with Shabbos; Shabbos is the special time that Hashem wants to spend together with ישראל in private.

It is in preparation for this special event, that on ערב שבת, we shower, clean our house, and make an especially fancy meal in honor of the special meeting that will take place when Hashem comes to stay with us.

שבת is a very special complement from Hashem to us. It is as if Hashem is saying to us, "Stop all you are doing, and dress yourself up nicely, because I want to spend some special time together with you!" The גמרא פסחים ק"ה. (ע' ערה"ש ס' ט') says that the Shabbos day meal is more prominent than the night meal. The reason for this may be, because this is the main theme of shabbos, that we are special and connected to his torah.

The חפץ חיים explains the words "ביני ובין בני ישראל אות היא". Shabbos is the "sign" that shows our affiliation and attachment to Hashem. When a couple gets married, the חתן gives the כלה a ring, to show the whole world that they are married. Even if they will have disagreements, and fights, as long as the כלה has the ring on her finger, we know that they are still married. As soon as she takes it off, it shows that they are no longer united... If a storeowner leaves his store closed for a long time; as long as the store's sign is still up, we know that he is still in business; but when he takes the sign down, then even if there is still a lot of merchandise left, we know that he is out of business. It is the same with שבת; a person can drift away and do a lot of sins. This is of course terrible; but he is still considered a Jew. However, if he is מהלל שבת then even if he does a lot of other מצוות he is considered like a goy. He has removed "the sign" Consequently, if he

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<sup>2</sup> ילקוט שמעוני כי תשא צ"א אמר רבי יוסי בר' חנינא כותי ששמר את השבת עד שלא קבל את המילה חייב מיתה למה שלא נצטווה עליה ואינו משמר אותה כתקנה, ומה ראית לומר מי ששמר את השבת חייב מיתה אמר רבי חייא בר אבא בננהג שבועולם מלך ומטרונא שיושבין ומשיחין זה עם זה מי שבא ומכניס ראשו ביניהם אינו חייב מיתה. כך השבת היא [אות] בין הקב"ה ובין ישראל שנאמר ביני ובין בני ישראל אות היא לפיכך כותי שבא ומכניס עצמו ביניהם חייב מיתה.

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cooks or bakes for us during the week, it is considered as if a goy cooked it and it is בישול עכו"ם.

This special relationship came about because of יציאת מצרים and מתן תורה when we became special to Hashem by becoming his personal nation and accepting his Mitzvos. Therefore, it is during Shacharis, when we talk about getting the Torah and our Shabbos observance, that we mention this special relationship that we have with Hashem.

### 3. מעין עולם הבא

Why did Hashem rest on the seventh day? Could it be that he was tired from making the world? This can't be. 1. It says in "הנה לא ינום ולא יישן שומר ישראל" that Hashem doesn't sleep, so how could it be that he needed to rest? 2. The Mishnah says that "בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם", Hashem made the works with 10 utterances. It is impossible to think that Hashem would כביכול tire after saying 10 lines? Hashem is not physical; Hashem is spiritual and therefore doesn't need physical rest. So what does it mean that Hashem **rested** on the seventh day? (Heard from R. Pincus zt"l)

The גמרא in סנהדרין ז"ז. in גמרא says, "אמר רב קטינא: שית אלפי שני הווי עלמא והד חרוב", "The world will last for 6,000 years, then be destroyed for a thousand years, and then be rebuilt". The גמרא says that Shmitta comes after six years of physical working of the earth, then comes a rest period. So to the world also as six periods of physical work and then it rests. We see from this that Hashem made the world in a way that there should be six periods of attachment to physical things and then a rest period for spiritual recharging. This is the pattern for the physical world. He did it with days- six days and then שבת; years- six work years and then Shmitta; and for the universe as a whole- 6000 years of work and then the period of rest.

What comes out is that Hashem's resting on שבת wasn't to get some physical rest; rather it was the opposite - to abstain from involvement with Gashmius. Just like when a person goes on a vacation trip, he goes swimming, hiking, and touring. It may be more physically strenuous than his "work" days. However, it is a rest, a release from work and the person is involved in more pleasurable activities. The same is with שבת. Hashem didn't need to rest; rather he wanted a separation from the involvement in physicality. (And to use the expression that R. Pincus zt"l once used, "He wasn't tired of the physical world, just "sick and tired" of it"!.) (This is in part why we don't do the 39 מלאכות of physical activity on שבת, just as Hashem separated himself from being involved with the physical on שבת.)

All of this is on the daily and yearly levels when we "take a break" from the physical. However, this is also on the overall universal level that there are 6,000 years of physical activity and then the world will "take a break". This will be because the world will have reached its goal and will shed its physical nature permanently. Then the time for reward will begin - which is the purpose of creation. This explains why Shabbos is referred to as "תכלית מעשה שמים וארץ", the purpose of the creation- because it represents the world to come, when we will be attached to Hashem and derive pleasure from our מצות; which is the purpose of creation.

Here we have another important point regarding שבת. שבת is a small reminder of that great time when all we will do is enjoy the company of Hashem, without any problems or worries. That is why שבת is called מעין עולם הבא; a slight taste of

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the world to come. Shabbos is our preview of עולם הבא - our goal in life. It keeps our eyes focused on why we are here and what we have to do with ourselves in this world. It is our **compass** to always keeping us “on track”. שבת helps us in the same sense, that no matter how lost in the physical world we become, every seven days we take a break and have the time to think of where we are in reference to this goal, and get ourselves back on the true path..

This is also a reason why we say the “Yom” everyday. “Today is one day in the שבת”; “Today is two days is שבת”. It’s our compass to help us to stay in touch with the time that we will have שבת every day, and keep us in tune with our goal – עולם הבא. Even when we are deeply involved in physical work, it helps us sail through life’s challenges with our eyes in the right direction and on the right star!

To Summarize: We now see how Shabbos is a journey through three levels of realizing Hashem’s presence and having a relationship with Him.

The first stage is our אמונה in Hashem and our belief that He created the world.

The second stage is having a special relationship with Him, and doing his מצות.

The third stage is the goal, to have a taste of the time that we will reap the rewards of our מצות and be totally attached to Him, in עולם הבא.