

Parsha Ponders

Vaeschanan | July 31, 2020 | 10 Av 5780

*Shabbos: which kind of rejuvenation?*¹

שמור את-יום השבת לקדשו כאשר צוך יקוק אלקיך: וזכרת כּי-עבד היית בארץ מצרים וגו'
Safeguard the Shabbos day, to sanctify it, as Hashem your G-d commanded you...[So] you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt...²

The Ten Commandments make two appearances in the Torah. The first is *parshas Yisro*³, when the Torah relates how the Jews heard Hashem speak at Mount Sinai. The second is this week's *parsha*, where Moshe recounts that monumental event. A careful examination of the two listings will yield some slight but significant differences. Some of the most pronounced is with regards to the *mitzvah* of Shabbos. There are different themes and details that are chosen in the second instance, which don't appear in the first. We are adjured to safeguard the Shabbos, instead of simply remembering it⁴. There's also a focus on the fact that we were slaves in Egypt. What is the Torah highlighting with this connection to the Exodus?

As well, the Torah stresses that we should safeguard Shabbos as we were (already) commanded. When was this? Rashi says⁵ this refers to their encampment at the city of Marah. The Torah relates⁶ that before they arrived at Mount Sinai, they were given a few *mitzvos*⁷, as if to give them a taste of what's yet to come. One of them was the *mitzvah* of Shabbos. This happened at the city of Marah. What is so significant about when and where the Jews received the *mitzvah* of Shabbos? Why do we have to safeguard the Shabbos, as we were commanded then and there?

The weekly celebration of Shabbos seems to be a physical reprieve from our grueling work week. Whatever physical or mental exertion which was required during the week is to be avoided on Shabbos. It's a day of relaxation, celebrating with family and friends. This is one of Hashem's kindnesses towards

¹ Based on Kesav Sofer to Deuteronomy 5:12

² Deuteronomy 5:12,15

³ Exodus Chapter 20

⁴ Ibid v. 8

⁵ To Deuteronomy 5:12, quoting Shabbos 87b

⁶ Exodus 15:25 with Rashi, the source being Sanhedrin 56b and Mechilta ad. loc.

⁷ Rashi says they were commanded in Shabbos, Parah Aduma, and Dinim. Targum "Yonasan" ad. loc. instead of Parah Aduma writes honoring one's parents. Indeed, this is what Sanhedrin loc. cit. has. The question is where Rashi got Parah Aduma. The Mechilta loc. cit. actually brings a dispute what was commanded at Marah. Rabbi Yehoshua says they were commanded in Shabbos and honoring one's parents, whereas Rabbi Eliezer HaMoadi says they were commanded in forbidden relationships and Dinim. The gemarra therefore seems to be a merger of the two, excluding forbidden relationships. However, neither mention Parah Aduma. Torah Temimah ad. loc. § 36 wants to suggest that a typo fell into Rashi. He originally wrote כ"א, which stood for *kibud av v'eim*, honoring one's parents. What happened was the כ was mistakenly copied as א, and someone thought א"פ stood for Parah Adumah. However, the sefer Yosef Hallel ad. loc. strongly argues against this approach. We see Rashi to Exodus 24:3 lists both Parah Aduma and honoring one's parents as *mitzvos* which were commanded at Marah. So we can't say there's a typo. Emes L'Yaakov to ad. loc. also brings this proof against this suggestion. Yosef Hallel adds we see other Rishonim mention Parah Adumah as well, like the Ramban and Ba'al HaTurim to Exodus 15:25. We even see Eliezer HaKalir, who was much earlier than Rashi, writes in his *piyut* for Parshas Parah: ממרה חקה גר. He concludes that it must be they had some *Midrash* which we don't have. Torah Sheleimah ad. loc. § 269 brings from Seder Olam Zuta a *Midrash* that says like Rashi. However, see his Miluim § 11, where he decides this isn't the source for Rashi, as it probably was amended to fit with Rashi. He also asks on the Torah Temimah's suggestion like those above

us, because without Shabbos, we would probably work non-stop. It's true that there eventually became the invention of the "weekend", but in today's modern world that doesn't stop work from creeping into our days off. Being constantly connected to email and phone calls could make it very tempting to work 24/7. Shabbos is the excuse to take a day off from the hyperconnected world, and reconnect with family.

This isn't the first time this insight proved to be so useful. When the Jews were in Egypt, they literally worked non-stop. The *Midrash* tells us⁸ that when Moshe lived in Pharaoh's palace, he made a request of the Egyptian King. He advised him that if the Jews worked non-stop, they'd eventually wear out. They'll prove to be useless as slaves. The only way to keep them productive⁹ is if they have a day off. Pharaoh agreed, and let Moshe pick which day. Moshe ended up choosing what eventually became the same day as Shabbos¹⁰. This could be what the Torah intends when it says that we shall remember that we were slaves in Egypt. Meaning, by observing Shabbos, we take a rest from our exhausting work. We'll recall that the Jews were slaves in Egypt, who also used Shabbos as a day off from their labor.

While the above is true, Shabbos in fact stands for something much greater. Shabbos is a day of spiritual rejuvenation and is the foundation of our faith. We believe that Hashem created the universe, and rested on the Shabbos day. By observing Shabbos, we're recalling that event and testifying to its truth. This is evident from the circumstances of when we were first commanded to celebrate Shabbos. At Marah, the Jews weren't working. They had all of their needs taken care of. They were provided Heavenly bread and water. They lived in perfect conditions. Even so, they were commanded to observe Shabbos.

We see that Shabbos is not only a physical relaxation, but something more significant. The Torah wants us to keep that in mind, and observe Shabbos accordingly. Therefore, it says to safeguard the Shabbos, as Hashem originally commanded us. Where? At Marah. The way they observed shabbos is how we should. True, it's a physical relaxation. But it's also much more than that. It's a chance to recharge our spiritual batteries, and reconnect to Hashem.

With that in mind, I wish you a good Shabbos

⁸ Shemos Rabbah 1:28; Sefer HaYashar Shemos § 28; Bereishis Rabbasi p. 13 (attributed to Rav Moshe HaDarshan); See Torah Sheleimah to Exodus Chapter 2 § 93 for more sources

⁹ The above *Midrashim* stress that if the Jews work non-stop, they'll end up dying. The *Midrash* that Torah Sheleimah brings says that they won't be able to build the buildings that Pharaoh wants. This seems to not fit with Sotah 11a, which says that the Jews were meant to do unproductive work

¹⁰ This is what we mean when we say in the Shabbos day prayers: וישמח משה במתנת חלקו. See Torah Sheleimah *loc. cit.* for sources that give this explanation of the prayers. As well, see there and Miluim § 13, where he brings a dispute how Moshe chose the correct day as the day of rest. One opinion is that Moshe sat down and calculated from the beginning of time when Shabbos is. The other opinion is that it was always known, from the times of the *Avos*, when Shabbos was