

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter IX: Vaveishev (Gen. 37:1–40:23)

Essay 14. The importance of Torah study on the Sabbath

בְּמִטְרָה כְּהַיּוֹם אֲרַבְעָה, "וַיְהִי כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וַיָּבֵא הַבְּנִיתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלֶאכֶתוֹ," "לְטוֹב לְנוּ כָּל־הַיָּמִים לְחַיֵּינוּ כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה," כִּי־
אֵתוֹ כְּהַיּוֹם תִּמְצָאוּן אֹתוֹ, "וַתְּהִי אֲרֻצְכֶם לְחַרְבָּה וּלְשָׁמָה וּלְקַלְלָה מֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה" ע"כ. וּבְמִדְרָשׁ יִלְקוּט מְצִינּוּ
"וַיָּבֵא הַבְּנִיתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלֶאכֶתוֹ" ר' אֱלִיעֶזֶר אֹמֵר שְׁבֵת הִיא שְׁבִיעָא מֵר "כִּי בּוֹ שְׁבֵת מְכַל־מְלֶאכֶתוֹ."

In the Masoretic text, the word *ce'hayom* (כְּהַיּוֹם) (“like today”) appears in eight places, of which we will discuss **four**. After the Torah describes that Potiphar’s wife repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph, to no avail, Gen. 39:11 says, **“One such day, and he came into the house to do his work.”** In Deut. 6:24, it says, **“For our lasting good and for our survival, as today [is the case].”** In I Sam. 9:13, it says, **“Go up at once, for this very day you will find him.”** In Jer. 44:22, it says, **“Your land became a desolate ruin and a curse, without inhabitant, as today [is the case].”** **In Midrash Yalkut Shemoni (146:2), we find on the phrase, “he came into the house to do his work,” Rabbi Eliezer says: it was the Sabbath, for it is said, “And G-d blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it He ceased from all the work that He had done” (Gen. 2:3).¹**

וּבְזֶה נִבִּין טַעַם הַפְּסוּקִים לְמָה בְּאַרְבְּעָה מְקוֹמוֹת אֵלּוּ כָּתַב קָרָא "כְּהַיּוֹם", וְהֵלֵא כְּהַיּוֹם סָגִי, דַּה"א הִיְדִיעָה נִסְתָּרָת תְּמִיד אַחַר
אוֹתִיּוֹת כִּל"ב. אֵלּוּ נִדְּאִי לְהוֹרוֹת לְנוּ שְׁבִיעָא אֵלּוּ מְדַבֵּר בְּעִנְיַן יוֹם שְׁבֵת, שְׁהָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הוּא דוֹמָה לְלֵילָה
וְהָעוֹלָם הַבָּא לְיוֹם, וְיוֹם שְׁבֵת הוּא מְעִין הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא. וּמִשּׁוֹם הֵכִי שְׁיִיךְ שְׁפִיר לְרִמּוֹז אוֹתוֹ בְּתִיבַת כְּהַיּוֹם דְּהִיְנוּ בְּיוֹם שְׁבֵת
שְׁהוּא כְּמוֹ יוֹם שָׁל עוֹלָם הַבָּא.

In this way we will understand the sense of verses why in these four places Scripture wrote *ce'hayom* (כְּהַיּוֹם) (“like today”), for wouldn’t *ce'yom* (כְּיוֹם) (“like a day”) have been sufficient, for the letter *heh* (ה) serving as the definite article is always hidden after the letters *caf* (כ), *lamed* (ל), and *bet* (ב). Rather it’s certain that the word appears with the *heh* in these places to teach us that in these four places Scripture is speaking about the Sabbath day, for this world is similar to night, but the World to Come is similar to day,² and the Sabbath day

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¹ The word *ce'hayom* also appears in Nehemiah 5:11 and 9:10, and Ezra 9:7 and 9:15.

² Pesachim 2b.

is also considered similar to the World to Come.³ Because of this, it's perfectly appropriate to hint this with the word *ce'hayom* (כְּהַיּוֹם), which is the Sabbath day, which is like a day in the World to Come.

וְהַבֵּית יוֹסֵף אוֹרַח חַיִּים סִימָן רפ"ח כְּתֹב שֶׁהַפּוֹעֲלִים הַעוֹסְקִים בְּמַלְאכָתָם כָּל יְמֵי הַשָּׁבוּעַ מְחוּיָּבִים לְלַמּוֹד תּוֹרָה כָּל יוֹם הַשָּׁבָת. אֲמַנָּם הַתְּלִמִּידֵי חֲכָמִים הַיְגָעִים בְּתוֹרָה כָּל הַשָּׁבוּעַ יְכוּלִים בְּיוֹם שַׁבָּת לְהַתְעַנֵּג בְּאַכִּילָה וּשְׂתֵינָה אַף כָּל הַיּוֹם כְּלוֹ. וְאַף כָּאֵן יוֹסֵף שֶׁהֵיָה עֶבֶד שָׁם וְכָל יְמֵי הַחֹל הֵיָה טְרוּד בְּמַלְאכָת רַבּוֹ וְלֹא הֵיָה יְכוּל לְהַשְׁלִים חוּבָתוֹ וְלְלַמּוֹד כָּל יְמֵי הַשָּׁבוּעַ, מִשּׁוּם הֵיָה "וַיְהִי כְּהַיּוֹם" דְּהַיְיָנוּ בְּיוֹם שַׁבָּת 'וַיָּבֹא הַבְּיָתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכֶת"ו', דְּהַיְיָנוּ מְלָאכֶת ו' מְלָאכֶת לִימּוּד הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁל ו' יְמִים.

The halacha favors dividing the Sabbath day between physical pleasures and learning Torah. The ratio between the secular and holy depends on the individual. **The Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim (siman 288:1) wrote that the workers who are engaged in their work every day of the week are obliged to study Torah the entire Sabbath day, i.e., to make up for their inability to learn Torah during the week. Indeed, in contrast, the Torah scholars who weary themselves in Torah the entire week are able to enjoy the Sabbath day by eating and drinking—even the entire day. Even here in Gen. 39:11, Joseph—who was a servant there and who every workday was preoccupied with the work of his master, Potiphar—could not complete his duty and learn during any of the days of the week. Because of this, “It was like the day,” which is to tell us it was the Sabbath day, “and he came into the house to do his work (מְלָאכֶת"ו) (*melachto*),”** which can be broken into the word *מְלָאכֶת* (*melechet*) (“work of”) plus the letter *vav* (ו), which has a Gematria of 6, thus meaning that Joseph came into the house to do **the work of learning the Torah of six days**. In other words, Joseph had to work Sunday through Friday on behalf of Potiphar, and on the Sabbath, he fulfilled the halacha of studying Torah.

"וַיִּצְנָנוּ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-פְּלִי-הַחֲקִים הָאֵלֶּה." זֶה מְדַבֵּר עַל הַתְּלִמִּידֵי חֲכָמִים שֶׁיְגָעִים בְּתוֹרָה כָּל יְמֵי הַחֹל, שֶׁצָּנָה ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל הַחֲקִים "לְטוֹב לָנוּ כְּלִי-הַיָּמִים" שֶׁיִּמְלְאוּ חוּבָתָם מִיְדֵי יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ. וְאַזְ כְּשִׁיבּוֹא יוֹם הַשָּׁבָת נוֹכַח לְהַתְעַנֵּג בּוֹ בְּאַכִּילָה וּשְׂתֵינָה בְּעֶסְקֵי חַיִּינוּ, וְזֶהוּ "לְחִיטְנוּ כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה."

“Then the L-rd commanded us to observe all these laws, to revere the L-rd our G-d, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case” (Deut. 6:24). This speaks of the Torah scholars who weary themselves in Torah every workday, that G-d commanded to observe all of the laws for our good all of the days, so that they will fulfill their duty day by day. Then when the Sabbath day will arrive, we will be able to enjoy it with eating and drinking in the course of our lives, and this is the meaning of “and for our survival, as is now the case,” i.e., it can instead be interpreted, “and during the course of our lives, on this Sabbath day.”

³ Berachot 57b.

וּבְנֵי יוֹדֵעַ לְלַמּוֹד אָמַר, "כִּי־אֵתוּ כְּהֵיּוֹם תִּמְצָאוּן אֹתוֹ," שֶׁאָמְרוּ ו"ל עַל פְּסוּק "וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה," שֶׁהִזְהִירוֹן שֶׁיִּקְהִילוּ קִהְלוֹת בְּכָל שַׁבָּת בְּרַבִּים כְּדֵי לְשִׁמוֹעַ דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה, כִּי אוֹתוֹ דִּהְיִינוּ הַדְרָשׁוֹן הַמְשֻׁמֵּיעַ לְעַם אֵת דְּבָר ה', כְּהֵיּוֹם הַזֶּה תִּמְצָאוּן אוֹתוֹ.

Regarding one who does not know how to learn, Scripture said, “for this very day you will find him” (I Sam. 9:13), for [the rabbis] of blessed memory⁴ said on the verse, “And the congregation of Moses” (Ex. 5:1), that they warned that congregations should gather in public every Sabbath in order to hear words of Torah, because the person expounding the Torah would make the word of G-d heard in the ears of the people, “for this very day you will find Him.” That is, in I Sam. 9:13, “for this very day you will find him” refers to Saul finding the prophet Samuel, but in the context of the essay, Rabbi Nachmani interprets the verse either as “for on the Sabbath you will find Him,” i.e., the Holy One, Blessed be He.

וּמִי שֶׁחָס וְשָׁלוֹם לֹא יָשִׁית לְבוֹ לָזֶה, "וַתְּהִי אַרְצְכֶם" וְכו' "מֵאַיִן יוֹשֵׁב כְּהֵיּוֹם הַזֶּה," בְּשִׁבִיל שְׂלֵא יָשְׁבוּ לְשִׁמוֹעַ דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה כְּהֵיּוֹם הַזֶּה. אֵי נָמִי כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ בְּגִמְרָא שְׁתֵּי מִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָיוּ בִירוּשָׁלַם אַחַת קִבְעָה סְעוּדָתָהּ בְּשַׁעַת הַדְרָשׁ וְנִעְקְרָה. וְאֵלוֹ אַרְבָּעָה כְּהֵיּוֹם כּוֹלֵם רוֹמְזִים אֶל יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַקָּדוֹשׁ וְהַנּוֹרָא, שֶׁכָּל הָעוֹנֵג שֶׁל שַׁבָּת נִרְמַז בְּתִיבַת הַיּוֹם, שֶׁמִּשָּׁם אָנוּ לוֹמְדִים הַשֵּׁלֶשׁ סְעוּדוֹת לְרַבְּנָן וְלִר' חִדְקָא אַרְבַּע סְעוּדוֹת.

To one who, G-d forbid, won't pay attention to this, we apply the verse, “Your land became a desolate ruin and a curse, without inhabitant, as today [is the case]” (Jer. 44:22), because they didn't sit to hear words of Torah on this day, i.e., on the Sabbath. Alternatively, as it says in the Gemara, there were two families in Jerusalem, and one set its Sabbath meal at the time of the sermon so that they would miss it, and that family was uprooted.⁵ These are the four appearances of *ce'hayom* (כְּהֵיּוֹם) that hint at the holy and awesome Sabbath day, for the entire enjoyment of the Sabbath is hinted at by the word *hayom* (הַיּוֹם) (“the day), from which we learn in Shabbat 117b that per the rabbis there are three meals on the Sabbath, and per Rabbi Chidka there are four meals. Shabbat 117b continues: “Rabbi Yochanan said: And both of them derived [their opinions] from one verse: ‘And Moses said: Eat it today (*hayom*) (הַיּוֹם), for today (*hayom*) (הַיּוֹם) is Sabbath for G-d, today (*hayom*) (הַיּוֹם) you will not find it in the field’ (Ex. 16:25).”

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⁴ Beit Yosef Orach Chaim 288:1, says that it's brought in the Tanchuma on the verse, “And the congregation of Moses,” that “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, ‘Descend and down and make for me great congregations for the Sabbath, so that all the generations that follow you may learn to gather congregations every Sabbath, and to enter synagogues and study halls to study Torah in public.”

⁵ Gittin 38b: “Rabba said: With these three matters homeowners become impoverished: That they emancipate their slaves; and that they inspect their property on Sabbath; and that they set their meals on Sabbath at the time of the study hall, as Rabbi Chiya bar Abba says that Rabbi Yochanan says: There were two families in Jerusalem, one that set its meal on Sabbath and one that set its meal on Friday afternoon, and both of them were uprooted. [One family was uprooted because they caused the suspension of Torah study, and the other was uprooted because they did not wait until the Sabbath before eating their Sabbath meal].” Rashi explains “at the time of the study hall” as when the rabbi expounds his lectures to the public on the Sabbath, and [this family] was [instead] sitting at their meal.