



## ביני וביניכם Between Me and You

### ■ Between G-d and Israel

Forty days and nights after Moshe Rabbeinu climbed up Mt. Sinai to receive the teachings of the Torah, and just moments before he is about to return to the people, Hashem turns and whispers to him the following secret:

“I have a nice gift in My treasure house, and its name is Shabbat. I wish to give it to Israel; please inform them.” As is written (Sh’mot 31,13):  
*that you should know that I am G-d Who sanctifies you.* (Betzah 16a)

This Talmudic passage is referring to a short, very remarkable passage in Parashat Ki Tisa, which expresses, almost incidentally, the full significance of the Sabbath day. The passage starts with the beginning of the above-quoted verse:

וְאֵתָה דִּבֶּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר  
אֲךָ אֵת שַׁבָּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם ...

*Speak to the Children of Israel, saying:  
Keep My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you...*

This moving phrase, *between Me and you*, expresses the secret, profound bonds between Hashem and us, via the holy and exalted day of Sabbath.

The six verses of this passage seem, at first glance, to be fairly repetitive, emphasizing similar themes over and over. But upon careful study, we find a perfectly constructed, dual-level configuration. The lower level of the Sabbath day is directed towards us, Israel - whereas the higher one turns toward Hashem. Verse 14 addresses Am Yisrael:

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֵת הַשַּׁבָּת כִּי קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לָכֶם ...  
*Keep the Sabbath day, for it is holy unto you ...*

The emphasis is on the word “*you*.” The Sabbath is very special for you, the Children of Israel. In what way is it special? The preceding verse explains:

לְדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקַדְּשֶׁכֶּם.

*to know that I am G-d, He Who sanctifies you.*

The Sabbath exists so that our own greatness will be known: that Hashem Himself singled us out from among all the nations and sanctified us.

This first level, however, is followed immediately by the higher level. Verse 15 describes the seventh day as שְׁבֵת שְׁבֵתוֹן קָדֵשׁ לַה', *a Sabbath of Sabbaths, holy unto G-d*. The double form of the word Sabbath shows its duality: While the first level is special for Israel, the top level is *holy unto G-d*, special for Hashem. In what way?

... אֹת הוּא לְעֵלָם כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ  
וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֵשׁ.

*It is an eternal sign, for in six days G-d made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested.* (verse 17)

That is, it attests to the creation of the world in six days by the Master of the Universe.

This two-level division is manifest, as well, in the punishment for the desecration of the Sabbath. On the first level, the punishment for willful desecration is *karet*, cutting off:

כִּי כָל הָעֹשֶׂה בָּהּ מְלָאכָה וּנְכַרְתָּהּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ הִיא מִקֶּרֶב עַמִּיהָ.

*He who performs work on [the Sabbath], that soul will be cut off from the midst of its people.* (verse 14)

The very next verse contains the second, higher level:

...כָּל הָעֹשֶׂה מְלָאכָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבֵת מוֹת יוּמָת.

*...whoever performs work on the Sabbath day shall surely die.* (verse 15)

What is the difference between “cutting off” and death?

We explained above that the first passage emphasizes the sanctity of Israel (as in the verses, “*I am G-d Who sanctifies you*” and “*it shall be holy unto you*”). One who willfully desecrates the Sabbath forfeits his right to be included in the Nation of Israel; he has actively taken himself out of their midst. As the Torah states, “*he shall be cut off from his people.*”

But the second passage emphasizes the Divine sanctity of the Sabbath: “*a Sabbath of Sabbaths, holy unto G-d*” (verse 15). Thus, one who purposefully

profanes G-d's sanctity renders himself empty of G-d's presence within himself – a total negation of his life: “...*he shall surely die.*”

### ■ For How Long?

Let us return to and carefully consider the first level, in Verse 13: *Keep My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you, for your generations...* This means that we must take care, generation after generation, to preserve in our hearts and wait with anticipation throughout each week for the arrival of the Sabbath day. There is no mention of an “everlasting covenant.”

This last phrase does, however, appear in the second level:

וּשְׁמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרְתֵם בְּרִית עוֹלָם...  
*Bnei Yisrael shall keep the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath,  
 throughout their generations, an eternal covenant...* (verse 16)

The first level emphasizes the Nation of Israel, and therefore the commitment is limited only to “*your generations.*” On the second level, however, emphasizing that G-d is eternal and everlasting, the phrase “*eternal covenant*” is appropriate.

This distinction is reminiscent of the words Hashem used when speaking to Moshe at the Burning Bush (3,15): “*This is My name forever, This is My remembrance for every generation*” – which tell us that Hashem is setting His *Havayah* Name forever, whereas Am Yisrael is limited only to its generations.

### ■ To Make the Sabbath

The afore-mentioned verse says that we must “*make the Sabbath.*” What does this mean?

I believe that the explanation provided by my son, Rav Yitzchak Chaim, is correct: We must *set* the Sabbath and make it into a covenantal sign. That is, Bnei Yisrael must make sure, throughout the generations, that the Sabbath will be an eternal sign of their covenant with Hashem. This is done by refraining from forbidden work on this day. The Torah continues to explain:

בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹת הוּא לְעֹלָם,  
 כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֶשׁ.  
*Between Me and the children of Israel, it is forever a sign  
 that in six days G-d created the heavens and the earth,  
 and on the seventh day He ceased and rested.* (verse 17)

Here we have further elaboration, explaining why Hashem chose the Sabbath day for the sign of His covenant with us – namely, because He, too, rested on that day from the work of creation.

Thus, on the one hand, the Nation of Israel will identify with G-d's actions and will act in the same way, while on the other hand, Hashem will mark this day of resting as a sign of His link with Bnei Yisrael.

In this vein, let us return to the story of Creation, at the end of which we learn about the first Sabbath in history, as is written: “*The heavens and the earth were completed ... G-d blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, for on it He abstained from all His work that G-d created to do.*” (B'reshit 2,1-3)

The last word of the verse, *la'asot*, means “*to do*” or “*to make.*” It can refer either to the world, or to the Sabbath day. It could mean that G-d created the world and brought it to a status of having been completed – or it could be telling us that He set the Sabbath day for the future as a mark of His covenant.

According to the latter explanation, the world is to wait nearly 2,500 years from Creation until the Nation of Israel receives the Torah - and Israel will then, by refraining from work on Shabbat, *make the Sabbath* into a sign of the covenant G-d forged with Israel:

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית עוֹלָם.

*Bnei Yisrael shall keep the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath, throughout their generations, an eternal covenant.* (Sh'mot 31,16)

### ■ I am for My Beloved, He is for Me

The exalted phrases discussed above – “*between Me and you... between Me and Bnei Yisrael...*” – imply something secret known by only the two parties: G-d and us. This very singular and remarkable connection between Hashem and Israel is revealed in Parshat Ki Tavo:

אֶת ה' הֶאֱמַרְתָּ הַיּוֹם לְהִיּוֹת לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים...

*You have raised G-d up high, to be your G-d...* (D'varim 26,17)

and the very next verse states:

וְה' הֶאֱמִירְךָ הַיּוֹם לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סֻגְלָה...

*And G-d has raised you up high, to be a treasured nation unto him...*

In other words: You, Israel, are for Him, and He is for you. *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li – I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.* (Shir HaShirim 6,3)

The profundity of the two-sided covenant of Sabbath, and of the above verses, is further brought out by our Sages in a fascinating Talmudic passage (B'rachot 6a) regarding the mitzvah of Tefillin. The Gemara states that while our Tefillin contains the fundamental verse *Shma Yisrael, Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One* (D'varim 6,4), G-d Himself has Tefillin with a verse expressing the other side of the coin: *Who is like Your nation Israel, one nation in the land.* (Chronicles I 17,21)

This Talmudic passage introduces us to a new Divine concept, that of “G-d’s Tefillin.” It is obviously not a reference to physical parchment and straps, but rather to the message for which Tefillin stands. Our Tefillin is a crown upon our head, a sign that we crown G-d as our King. At the same time, G-d, too, has great love and admiration for the Nation of Israel, the nation of such lofty and unique spiritual goals and ambitions – and He is therefore willing to bring down His divinity from the infinite heights of the heavens and reveal it in the man-made Mishkan (Tabernacle) and Mikdash (Holy Temple).

This concept, revealed in Parashat Ki Tisa and encapsulated in the bilateralism of the Sabbath day, is the root of the Sabbath duality of *zakhor* and *shamor* in the Ten Commandments. We know that the Ten Commandments are written out twice, in Sh'mot and in D'varim, with slight but significant differences between them. The first version tells us to “remember” the Sabbath (*zakhor*), while in D'varim, we are instructed to “preserve” it (*shamor*). Before we clarify this duality, let us provide some background on the Ten Commandments in general.

### ■ Directly From G-d

It is well-known that there are 613 mitzvot in the Torah, as R. Simlai teaches in the Gemara (Makkot 23b). His colleague R. Hamnuna asks, “From which verse is this number derived?” – and gave this answer:

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה...

*Moshe commanded us “Torah” as an eternal heritage...* (D'varim 33,4)

The word “Torah” in gematriya (Hebrew numerology) is calculated like this: the letter *tuv* is 400, *vuv* is 6, *resh* - 200, and *heh* - 5, for a total of 611. R. Hamnuna explains: “Moshe Rabbeinu commanded us Torah, i.e., 611 mitzvot. We also know that Hashem Himself directly taught us two others, namely, the first two of the Ten Commandments. In total, then, there were 613.”

Bnei Yisrael heard two of the commandments from Hashem – and were overwhelmed. They felt that hearing G-d’s voice directly was too much for them, and their fear and awe were too paralyzing. They therefore turned

with trembling to Moshe and asked if he could himself transmit to them the remainder of the Divine commandments:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה, דַּבֵּר אֵתָּה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה וְאַל יְדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים פֶּן נָמוּת.

*They said to Moshe: Speak to us yourself and we will hear,  
and have not G-d speak to us, lest we die.* (Sh'mot 20,15)

The Ramban (Nachmanides) provides proof that this is what happened. He turns our attention to the unique language used in the first two commandments, indicating that these were the only ones Bnei Yisrael heard directly from Hashem. They are phrased in first-person, with Hashem speaking about Himself:

אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים...

*I am Hashem your G-d; I have taken you out of Egypt...*

לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פְּנֵי...כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל קָנָא...

*Do not have any other gods before Me.*

*Do not make idols... for I am Hashem your G-d...*

But the other commandments refer to Hashem in the third person, indicating that someone else – Moshe – was speaking them:

לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּא...

*Do not bear the name of your G-d in vain.*

זְכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ...וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ...

*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...*

*the seventh day will be a Sabbath unto Hashem your G-d.*

כִּבֵּד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמְךָ וְאֵת אֱמֻנָה לְמַעַן יָאָרְכוּן יְמֵיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ.

*Honor your father and mother, in order that your days will be  
lengthened on the land that Hashem your G-d has given you.*

In short, Israel heard the first two commandments directly from G-d, while the others were uttered by Moshe.

## ■ Zakhor V'Shamor

There are two major differences in the way the commandment of Sabbath is presented in the two versions of the Ten Commandments, in Parashat Yitro (Sh'mot) and in VaEtchanan (D'varim). We have mentioned one of them: In Sh'mot, we are commanded to *remember* this special holy day (*zakhor*), while in D'varim, the Torah instructs us to *safeguard* it (*shamor*).

The Torah also provides different explanations for the Sabbath in the two versions. In Sh'mot, the Torah tells us: *"In six days Hashem made the Heavens and Earth... and He rested on the seventh day. He therefore blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it."* (Sh'mot 20,10)

In D'varim, however, a different reason for the Sabbath is given: *"Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and G-d took you out of there... He therefore commanded you to make the Sabbath day."* (D'varim 11,14)

In D'varim, the Torah explains Shabbat via the first level: Israel's uniqueness in that G-d took them miraculously out of bondage to make them His people. In Sh'mot, on the other hand, the emphasis is on the second floor: G-d as Creator of the World.

In other words: By repeating the Sabbath commandment twice in different ways,<sup>1</sup> the Torah expresses the dual Sabbath message that Hashem gave Moshe as he was about to descend from Mt. Sinai - i.e., the two levels of which we have been speaking.

And this message is expressed yet again, very succinctly, in one sentence in the beginning of Parashat Vayak'hel, immediately following Ki Tisa:

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל עֵדֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם...  
 יָשׁוּבִים יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִהְיֶה לָּכֶם קֹדֶשׁ, שְׁבֶת שְׁבֶתוֹן לָהּ.  
*Moshe assembled the entire congregation of Israel, and told them: "Six days you shall do work, but the seventh day shall be sacred for you, a Sabbath of Sabbaths for G-d."* (Sh'mot 35,1-2)

This is what Moshe told Bnei Yisrael as he descended from Mt. Sinai. The combination of *"sacred for you"* and *"Sabbath of Sabbaths for G-d"* sums up the duality of the Sabbath day, as we have explained.

Let us recall the words *Zachor* and *Shamor*, *Remember* and *Safeguard*, in the two different versions of the Ten Commandments. Our Sages explained that when the Torah commands us, *"Zachor - Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,"* we are to fulfill this mitzvah by reciting a special blessing, Kiddush, over a cup of wine. We must verbally express that "G-d sanctifies the Sabbath" just after the blessing over wine.

On the other hand, when the Torah later states, *"Shamor - Safeguard the Sabbath day to sanctify it,"* this refers to "remembering in our hearts," not

1. See our article on VaEtchanan, *HaChaim v'HaTov*

verbally or out loud. It is like the secret safeguarding of a prized possession. (A form of this word is used in B'reshit 37,11 when Yaakov was told of his son Yosef's strange dream: **וַאֲבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת הַדָּבָר**, *His father 'safeguarded' [shamar] the matter [in his heart]*).

It must be emphasized that despite the above - that the sanctity of Israel is particularly felt via the Sabbath ("*to know that I am Hashem Who sanctifies you*") - the main aspect of the sanctity of Israel is manifest specifically on the Festivals. The explanation for this is that the authority for setting the dates of the festivals is given over to Israel, via the judges of the Sanhedrin when they determine the date of the New Moon.

This is why our festival Kiddush ends with the words, "...Who sanctifies Israel and the holy times," whereas on the Sabbath we say only, "...Who sanctifies the Sabbath."

And this also explains why in Sh'mot, where the Sabbath is described as a sign of G-d's creation of the world, the Torah chose to use the word *zakhor* – remembering the Sabbath verbally and out loud – for this is the point that we wish to emphasize. In D'varim, on the other hand, where Israel's Exodus and liberation from slavery is emphasized, the Torah uses the word *shamor* – remembering in our hearts, not out loud – alluding to the fact that we do not say "He Who sanctifies Israel" on the Sabbath, but rather leave this for the holidays.

We cannot conclude without the moving words of the Prophet Yeshayahu, familiar to us from our Sabbath-day recitation of Kiddush (according to some customs):

**אִם תִּשְׁבֹּר מִשְׁבַּת רַגְלְךָ עֲשׂוֹת חֲפָצֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם קִדְשִׁי וְקִרְאתָ לְשַׁבַּת עֲנִי לְקֹדֶשׁ ה' מְכַבֵּד  
וְכִבְדֹתוֹ מֵעֲשׂוֹת דְרָכֶיךָ מִמִּצְוֹת חֲפָצֶיךָ וְדַבֵּר דָּבָר.**

*If you restrain your foot because of the Sabbath, from pursuing your business on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, and call G-d's holy day honorable, and shall honor it, not going about your own business or speaking of vain matters –*

**אֲזַ תִּתְעַנֵּג עַל ה' וְהִרְפַּבְתִּיךָ עַל בְּמֹתֵי אָרֶץ וְהִאֲכַלְתִּיךָ נַחֲלַת יַעֲקֹב אָבִיךָ כִּי פִי ה' דִּבֶּר.**  
*then you shall delight yourself in G-d, and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth and nourish you with the heritage of your father Yaakov, for G-d has spoken.* (Isaiah 58,13-14)

