Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Abbreviations</th>
<th>xv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halakhic Advisor’s Preface</td>
<td>xxv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xxvii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Shabbat Rest – The Completion of Creation ..................... 1
2. Shabbat and the Jewish People                            3
3. The Link between the Exodus and Shabbat                  4
4. The Uniqueness of Israel and Shabbat                      6
5. The Six Days of Creation and Shabbat                      7
6. Blessing and Holiness                                     8
7. Manna on Shabbat                                         9
8. Zakhor and Shamor                                       11
10. Shamor – Cessation from Crafting the Mishkan            14
11. Shabbat Is the Equivalent of All the Mitzvot because
    It Expresses Faith                                     16
12. The Temple Was Destroyed on Account of Shabbat Desecration ... 17
13. Redemption Is Dependent upon Shabbat Observance         18
14. The Severity of the Sin of Shabbat Desecration           20
Laws of Shabbat

15. One Who Desecrates Shabbat Disaffiliates Himself from the Jewish People ........................................ 21
16. Shabbat, Peace, and Unity ........................................ 23

Chapter 2: Preparing for Shabbat ........................................ 27
1. Shabbat Preparations .................................................. 27
2. Friday ........................................................................ 28
3. Buying Food for Shabbat ............................................. 30
4. Honoring Shabbat via Clothing .................................... 32
5. Honoring Shabbat by Preparing Oneself and One’s Home ... 33
6. The Mitzva to Take Part in Shabbat Preparations ............ 35
7. The Prohibition of Eating a Large Meal on Friday .......... 36
8. The Prohibition of Doing Melakha on Friday ................. 37
9. Tasks that Begin before Shabbat and Continue into Shabbat .... 39
10. Taking a Boat Trip That Will Continue into Shabbat........ 41
11. Sailing for the Sake of a Mitzva and Traveling on a Boat Owned by Jews ........................................... 43
12. Traveling by Plane or Train on Friday ......................... 44

Chapter 3: Shabbat Times ................................................... 47
1. Shabbat Times ............................................................. 47
2. The Mitzva of Tosefet Shabbat ...................................... 50
3. How to Accept Tosefet Shabbat .................................... 51
4. Laws Pertaining to One Who Accepts Shabbat upon Himself .................................................. 52
5. May One Pray Mincha after Accepting Shabbat? ............ 54

Chapter 4: Lighting Shabbat Candles ................................... 57
1. The Mitzva of Lighting Shabbat Candles ......................... 57
2. Where to Light and Who Must Light ............................. 59
3. What May One Light with, and How Many Candles ...... 60
4. The Berakha Recited upon Lighting ............................... 61
5. Fulfilling the Obligation via Electric Lights ..................... 62
6. What Procedure Should Be Followed When Two Families Dine Together ........................................ 64
Contents

7. The Status of Married or Single People Spending Shabbat Away from Home ........................................... 66
8. Those Who Live in Dormitories and Those Who Are Ill ................................................................. 68

Chapter 5: Torah Study and Prayer on Shabbat ......................... 71
1. Studying Torah on Shabbat ................................................... 71
2. What to Study on Shabbat .................................................. 74
3. Sleeping on Shabbat ......................................................... 75
4. The Shabbat Sermon .......................................................... 77
5. Women and Torah Study on Shabbat .................................. 78
6. Reading the Torah on Shabbat ............................................. 80
7. The Haftara ........................................................................ 82
8. Torah Reading at Minha on Shabbat ................................. 83
9. Shnayim Mikra Ve-ehad Targum ......................................... 84
10. Different Customs Relating to Shnayim Mikra Ve-ehad Targum ......................................................... 85
11. Shabbat Prayers ................................................................. 86
12. Va-yekhulu .......................................................................... 88
13. Magen Avot – A Concise Recap of the Amida .................. 89
14. Kabbalat Shabbat and Other Additions to the Prayers ...... 91
15. The Custom of Wishing One’s Rabbi “Shabbat Shalom” .... 93

Chapter 6: Laws of Kiddush .................................................... 95
1. Zakhor and Shamor ............................................................. 95
2. Fulfilling the Mitzva of Zakhor ............................................ 97
3. Kiddush over Wine ............................................................ 98
4. Acceptable Kiddush Wines ............................................... 100
5. The Required Amount of Wine .......................................... 102
6. The Laws of Kos Shel Berakha ............................................ 104
7. Distributing Wine to All Present ........................................ 106
8. Kiddush Customs and Covering the Challah ..................... 108
9. The Prohibition of Eating and Drinking before Kiddush .... 109
10. Reciting Kiddush at the Place of the Meal ......................... 111
Laws of Shabbat

Chapter 7: Shabbat Meals and Melaveh Malka
1. The Mitzva of Se’udot Shabbat (Festive Shabbat Meals) .... 115
2. The Parameters of the Mitzva ........................................ 117
3. Lehem Mishneh (Two Loaves) and Cutting the Bread ........ 119
4. The Importance of the Shabbat Day Meal ....................... 120
5. Se’uda Shlishit .............................................................. 121
6. Birkat Ha-mazon ........................................................... 123
7. The Significance of Melaveh Malka .............................. 124
8. The Laws Pertaining to Melaveh Malka .......................... 125

Chapter 8: Havdala and Saturday Night
1. The Basic Principles of Havdala ....................................... 127
2. Havdala over Wine .......................................................... 129
3. Customs Related to Havdala ............................................. 130
4. Using Beverages Other Than Wine ................................. 131
5. Besamim (Fragrance) ..................................................... 133
6. The Candle .................................................................. 135
7. The Latest Time to Make Havdala .................................... 136
8. The Prohibition of Eating and Doing Melakha before Havdala .......................................................... 137

Chapter 9: The Principles of the Melakhot
1. The Torah’s Commandment ............................................. 139
2. The 39 Melakhot That Were Performed in the Mishkan, and Their Derivatives .................................................. 141
3. The Rabbinic Prohibition of Performing Melakha with a Shinui or Together with Another Person .............. 144
4. The Principles Underlying Rabbinic Enactments and Decrees Regarding Shabbat ........................................... 145
5. Davar She-eino Mitkaven and Psik Reisha ....................... 147
6. Melakha She-eina Tzerikha Le-gufah ................................ 149
7. Kilkul ........................................................................ 151
8. Kiyum ........................................................................ 152
9. Grama ....................................................................... 153
10. Children, Non-Jews, and Animals ................................. 154
Contents

11. Shvut Di-shvut for the Sake of a Mitzva or Great Necessity ......................................................... 156
12. Shvut for an Important Mitzva or for the Public Good ....................................................... 158

Chapter 10: Bishul (Cooking) ................................................................. 161
1. Introduction .......................................................... 161
2. General Principles of Bishul ............................................. 162
3. Cooking Is Prohibited, Reheating Cooked Food Is Permitted ................................................. 164
4. Yad Soledet Bo ...................................................... 166
5. Cooking Liquids According to the Sephardic Custom .............................................................. 168
6. The Yemenite and Ashkenazic Customs Regarding Cooking Liquids ............................................. 170
8. Preparing Tea on Shabbat ............................................... 174
9. Pouring Hot Liquids into a Damp Cup ......................................................... 176
10. Davar Gush .......................................................... 177
11. Cooking after Baking .................................................... 178
12. Megis (Stirring or Mixing) .............................................. 180
13. Adding Water to Food on the Plata to Prevent It from Burning .................................................. 181
14. Introduction to Hashaya .................................................. 183
15. Food That Is Already Cooked ............................................. 184
16. When the Flame Is Covered .............................................. 186
17. Hashaya in an Electric Oven and Cooking Using a Timer ............................................................. 187
18. Hanaha ............................................................... 189
19. Haḥzara ............................................................... 191
20. Hanaha and Haḥzara on a Plata ........................................... 193
21. Returning Foods to the Oven ............................................. 195
22. Principles of Hatmana .................................................... 196
23. Hatmana with a Plata and a Slow Cooker ......................................................... 197
24. Electric Boilers ........................................................ 199
25. Solar Boilers ........................................................ 201
Laws of Shabbat

Chapter 11: Borer (Separating) ........................................ 205
1. Four Melakhot Related to Borer .................................. 205
2. Derekh Akhila and Derekh Melakha .......................... 207
3. Two Types of Food Mixed Together ......................... 208
4. The Prohibition Applies Only to Mixtures ................. 209
5. Removing Psolet from Okhel ..................................... 211
6. Immediate Use ...................................................... 212
7. By Hand and Not with an Implement ...................... 213
8. Removing Peels and Pits ........................................ 214
9. Bones in Fish and Meat .......................................... 216
10. Removing Watermelon Seeds and Rotten Fruit ........... 217
11. Straining Liquids .................................................. 218
12. Separating Broth from Pieces of Food in Soup .......... 219
13. Additional Laws of Separating Liquids from Solids .... 221
14. Teapots and Tea Bags .............................................. 223
15. Removing Insects from Food, and Additional Laws .... 224
16. Utensils, Games, Silverware, and Books ................. 225
17. The Melakha of Dash ............................................. 227
18. Cracking Walnuts, Almonds, and Peanuts ............... 228

Chapter 12: Food Preparation ......................................... 231
1. Tochen ................................................................. 231
2. Chopping Vegetables and Mashing Bananas and Avocados . 233
3. Lash ................................................................. 235
4. Preparing a Loose Mixture with a Shinui .................. 236
5. Preparing a Thick Mixture with a Shinui ................. 238
6. Foods that Are Not Subject to Lash ....................... 240
7. Assorted Laws .................................................. 242
8. Squeezing Fruits .................................................. 243
9. Pickling and Salting Foods ..................................... 245
10. Coloring Food .................................................. 246
11. Writing, Building, and Spreading ......................... 247
12. Ice and Water .................................................. 248
## Contents

Chapter 13: *Melakhot* Pertaining to Clothing .............................................. 251
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 251
2. *Melakhot* Pertaining to Clothing ................................................................. 252
3. *Libun* and *Kibus* ......................................................................................... 254
4. Soaking Clothes in Liquid ................................................................................ 256
5. Cleaning Off the Table and Washing Dishes .................................................. 257
6. Removing Mud from Leather Clothing and Shoes ......................................... 259
7. Nylon, Plastic, and Polyester Tablecloths and Clothing ............................... 260
8. Removing Stains and Dust ................................................................................ 261
9. Folding a *Talit* on Shabbat, and Additional Laws ...................................... 263
10. *Tefer* ............................................................................................................. 265
11. *Kore’a* ........................................................................................................... 266
12. Diapers, Adhesive Bandages, and Sticky Notes .......................................... 268
13. *Kosheir* and *Matir* .................................................................................... 270
14. Prohibited Knots ............................................................................................. 272
15. Bow Knots and Single Knots .......................................................................... 273
16. Miscellaneous Laws ....................................................................................... 275

Chapter 14: Personal Grooming ................................................................. 277
1. *Gozez* (Shearing) ......................................................................................... 277
2. *Gozez* and *Hovel* of Human Beings ......................................................... 278
3. Brushing and Braiding Hair ............................................................................ 279
4. Applying Makeup .............................................................................................. 281
5. Applying Oils, Perfumes, Creams, and Lotions ............................................... 282
6. Bar Soap, Liquid Soap, and Wipes ................................................................. 283
7. Brushing Teeth and Toothpaste .................................................................... 285
8. Bathing on Shabbat ......................................................................................... 286
9. Swimming and Immersion in a *Mikveh* ...................................................... 288

Glossary .............................................................................................................. 291
Index .................................................................................................................. 307
About the Author .............................................................................................. 343
Chapter One

Introduction

1. Shabbat Rest – The Completion of Creation

It took six days for God to create the heavens, the earth, and all within them. At first glance, an additional day seems unnecessary. Nevertheless, God created the seventh day and designated it for rest and cessation of labor. As a result, the world contains rest, blessing, and holiness. Thus we read:

The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. (Bereishit 2:1-3)

The Sages ask:

Does God really get tired? Is it not already stated: “The Lord is God from of old, Creator of the earth from end to end. He never grows faint or weary” (Yeshayahu 40:28)? Not only that, but He actually gives the weary strength, as it is written: “He gives strength to the weary” (ibid. 29). Why then does it say: “He rested on the seventh day” (Shemot 20:11)? It is as though God
declared that He created His world in six days and rested on the seventh. (*Mekhilta Yitro*)

Why did God dictate that even He must rest on the seventh day? In order to create rest, satisfaction, tranquility, and calm for the world. As long as God was busy creating the world, the world was constantly expanding; when He rested on the seventh day, rest was given to the world (*Bereishit Rabba* 10:9).

Nonstop work, without rest, expresses a tremendous yearning for perfection and an unending sense of a void that can never be filled. Despite all of our work, toil, and travail, we are unable to achieve satisfaction and peace of mind, because perfection remains so far away, and our shortcomings extend indefinitely. There is so much emptiness to fill and so many problems to fix that we can never stop working. This is how people would be living if the world had been created in six days without Shabbat. But with the creation of Shabbat, the world was blessed with rest (Maharal, *Tiferet Yisrael* ch. 40).

One is able to rest when he knows that his actions are valuable. He derives satisfaction from his labor, knowing that his work is not for naught. This allows him to gather his strength and ready himself for the next stage, when he will resume working. However, if one does not appreciate the value of his work, he will not be blessed with peace of mind even if he stops working. This was true at the beginning of the world as well. Although the heaven and earth, continents and oceans, trees and grasses, luminaries and the deep, fish, birds, and animals were already created, and even though man – created in the divine image – already walked therein, the world was still devoid of meaning, and thus there was no rest. With the creation of the seventh day for rest and cessation of labor, the ability to absorb the inner worth of the world and all actions taken in it was created as well.

To a certain extent, all of mankind has internalized the idea that the creation of the seventh day gives meaning to work and creation, thus allowing everyone to enjoy rest and draw satisfaction from labor. To benefit from this it is not necessary to rest specifically on Shabbat. But the true and absolute value of creation and work, their divine aspect, can be internalized only by resting on Shabbat, the day that
God designated for rest. This is a privilege granted to Israel alone. Furthermore, Jews cannot find rest through any finite human value: “Our place of rest is only through God” (R. Kook’s Orot, Zeronim, “Tzima’on Le-El Ĥai”).

Without that rest, which expresses the value and purpose of the world, there is no point in its existence. Thus the Sages state: “This can be compared to a king who built, sculpted, and decorated a marriage canopy. What was missing? A bride to enter it! Similarly, what was the world missing? Shabbat” (Bereishit Rabba 10:9). Of what use to the king are all the rooms in the palace and their beautiful furnishings if he does not have a bride to enjoy them with? The bride brings blessing to the palace, because the delight she provides for the king leads him to be benevolent toward the entire kingdom. The Sages further state (ibid.): “This can be compared to a king who made a signet ring for himself. What was lacking? The seal! Similarly, what was the world lacking? Shabbat.” The seal is what gives a signet ring meaning and identity. Similarly, Shabbat, with its sanctity, supplies meaning to the world (Maharal loc. cit.).

2. SHABBAT AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Sages ask: Why does the Torah’s description of the end of the sixth day of creation conclude with “And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Bereishit 1:31), with the definite article? They explain that the Torah alludes the sixth of Sivan, when the Torah was given to Israel. “God set a condition with Creation: ‘If Israel accepts the Torah, you will continue to exist, but if not, then I will return you to being formless and void” (Shabbat 88a). Immediately after the completion of the sixth weekday was the creation of Shabbat, the expression of God’s kingship. It is upon this sixth day that, in the future, God would give the Torah to Israel (ibid. 86b).

Until Israel made its appearance in the world, Shabbat was alone, with no one present to whom to reveal its holiness and blessedness. The Sages express this as follows:

Shabbat said: “Master of the Universe, everyone has a partner except for me. The six days of creation pair off; only I have no partner.” God replied: “The people of Israel are your partner.”
Laws of Shabbat

When Israel stood before Sinai, God said to them: “Remember what I told Shabbat: ‘The people of Israel are your partner.’” This is the meaning of the commandment “Commemorate the day of Shabbat to sanctify it (Shemot 20:8).” (Bereishit Rabba 11:8)

It is true that even before the Jewish people accepted the Torah, Shabbat was already sanctified and blessed, since that is when God stopped His work. Moreover, Shabbat is the heart and soul of the world. However, the blessing that Shabbat bestowed then was limited to ensuring the world’s existence. All the imperfections endemic to the world remained, without the possibility of repair. Therefore God stipulated with His world that should the Jews refuse the Torah, the world would revert to chaos. What would be the point of its existence if it, with all its pain, were to continue without the possibility of progressing and advancing toward a more perfect state?

3. THE LINK BETWEEN THE EXODUS AND SHABBAT

During the first two millennia after creation, humans learned how to sustain themselves; to find food, clothing, and shelter; and to organize a society that could cope successfully with the challenges of their surroundings. Yet apart from a select few who clung to monotheistic faith and morality, the entire world operated based on need and brute strength, without any idealistic goals. This situation continued until the Patriarchs Avraham, Yitzĥak, and Yaakov appeared on the scene, called God’s name, and dedicated their lives to improving the world through truth and kindness. They rejected paganism, which sanctified forces of nature and denied morality. Based on their intuitions, the Patriarchs kept mitzvot and observed Shabbat (Bereishit Rabba 79:7). Nevertheless, because they still had not received the Torah, they could not sustain their ideals within the world. On the contrary, the very wickedness they fought rose up against them; Egypt, then the most powerful of all nations, subjugated and enslaved the Israelites, forcing them to do backbreaking labor in order to sustain the Egyptian economy and provide the Egyptians with all their wants and needs. This showed the Israelites how wicked human nature could be and how badly the world needs the faith heralded by their ancestors.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The Israelites had a tradition, recorded on scrolls, that God would redeem them from Egypt. Each Shabbat they would enjoy reading these scrolls (see Shemot Rabba 5:18). This belief preserved their identity, and they steadily increased in number until they became a nation. Then the God of their ancestors revealed Himself to them, took them out of Egypt, redeemed them, and gave them the Torah and Shabbat.

The Israelites were not redeemed from merely Egyptian slavery when, after the Exodus, they accepted the Torah and Shabbat. They were also freed from their enslavement to nature and the struggle for survival. They were freed from the view that man’s sole purpose is to accumulate as much money and wealth as possible, even if it means controlling and enslaving others to that end.

Jews observe Shabbat and thus always remember that God created and sustains the world. Man’s purpose is to cleave to God and His attributes and to free himself from the bonds of slavery to the evil inclination and the struggle for survival. Even if due to the exigencies of circumstances and lack of choice one must work hard to support himself – even if one has been sold into slavery – he still rests on Shabbat. By doing so, he demonstrates that he is not entirely enslaved; his spirit remains free and connected to its divine roots:

Observe Shabbat day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is Shabbat of the Lord your God; you shall not do any melakha – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of you cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the day of Shabbat. (Devarim 5:12-15)

God intentionally created the world incomplete so that people would have the opportunity to participate in repairing and improving it. It is impossible to fix the world without recognizing that its source is God and that man’s destiny is to walk in His ways, as explained in the Torah.
Laws of Shabbat

This is the purpose of the Jewish people – to reveal the word of God in the world: “I created this nation for My sake; they will tell My praise” (Yeshayahu 43:21). Therefore, the Sages stated that the heavens and earth were created in the merit of the Jews (Vayikra Rabba 36:4). Through Shabbat, a blessed and sacred time, the Jewish people can fulfill their destiny. This is why the Torah was given on Shabbat (Shabbat 86b) and why Shabbat is a time especially conducive to Torah study.

4. THE UNIQUENESS OF ISRAEL AND SHABBAT
Shabbat reveals the special connection between God and Israel, as is stated:

Nevertheless, you must keep My Shabbatot, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout the ages, that you may know that I the Lord have consecrated you. You shall keep Shabbat, for it is holy for you…. The Israelite people shall keep Shabbat, observing Shabbat throughout the ages as a covenant for all time; it shall be a sign for all time between Me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and was refreshed. (Shemot 31:13-17)

The Sages report that “God said to Moshe: ‘I have a wonderful gift in my treasury, and its name is Shabbat. I wish to give it to Israel. Go and inform them’” (Beitza 16a). They further state: “All the mitzvot that God gave to Israel were given publicly, except for Shabbat, which was given in private, as it says: ‘it shall be a sign for all time between Me and the people of Israel’” (ibid.). They then raise a question: Isn’t the mitzva of Shabbat found in the Ten Commandments, which were given very publicly? They respond that the true, inner meaning of Shabbat, which reveals the divine nature of the world, is something that cannot be revealed publicly. It is something special that is linked to the special connection between God and the Jews. In their words: “God gives people a neshama yeteira [lit. “expanded soul”] before Shabbat, and after Shabbat he withdraws it from them” (ibid.). By means of this neshama yeteira, the Jews are able to grasp the godly significance of the world and their special role within it.
This explains the Sages’ statement: “A non-Jew who observes Shabbat is deserving of the death penalty” (San. 58b). They further state:

In human society, if a king and a noblewoman are sitting and talking with each other, wouldn’t one who interrupts them be deserving of death? Similarly, Shabbat is something shared by the Jews and God, as [Scripture] states: “between Me and the people of Israel.” Therefore a non-Jew who insinuates himself between them before undertaking circumcision deserves death. (Devarim Rabba 1:21; see Harḥavot 25:1)

In order to express the Jews’ great love for Shabbat, which is like that of a royal bride at the side of her groom, there is a Jewish custom to go outside before sundown on Friday to greet Shabbat, just as one goes out to greet an honored guest. The Gemara tells us that R. Hanina would put on his best clothes and greet Shabbat with the declaration: “Let us go and greet the Shabbat queen.” R. Yannai would wear his fancy clothes and greet Shabbat by declaring: “Welcome, O bride; welcome, O bride.” This inspired R. Shlomo Alkabetz’s magnificent poem Lekha Dodi: “Go, my beloved (Israel) to greet the bride; let us greet Shabbat.”

5. THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION AND SHABBAT

The six weekdays and Shabbat are interconnected. Just as every person has a body and a soul, so too the week has a body and a soul: weekdays are its body and Shabbat is its soul. Just as a wholesome person’s body and soul work together harmoniously – the body receiving spiritual illumination from the soul and providing it with the means to express itself – so, too, a wholesome week integrates Shabbat with the days of the week. During the week we prepare for Shabbat and give concrete expression to the ideas behind Shabbat, while on Shabbat we draw the spiritual strength that takes us through the week.

On the one hand, we relate to Shabbat as the weekend. All week we prepare for its culmination – Shabbat – which in turn elevates the actions undertaken during the six weekdays and imbues them with meaning. On the other hand, Shabbat is also the anchor and beginning of the next week. From Shabbat we draw spiritual strength for the upcoming
Laws of Shabbat

week so that we are able to realize, through our activities, the spiritual values that we absorb on Shabbat. Thus, the life of a Jew is not a uniform continuum that moves toward erosion and entropy. On the contrary, it is a life of constant elevation.

These two aspects can be explained as follows: from the perspective of the world, the creation of the six weekdays preceded Shabbat, while from the perspective of man, created on the sixth day, Shabbat preceded the following six days (see Shabbat 69b).

The Sages offer another perspective on the relationship between Shabbat and weekdays: Shabbat is in the middle of the week, with three days preceding it and three days following it. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday we prepare for the upcoming Shabbat, and on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday the influence of the outgoing Shabbat is still felt (Pesahim 106a; see below 2:10-11; 8:7).

Since Shabbat is linked to the six weekdays, it is clear that the greater one’s actions during the week, the greater the heights he will achieve on Shabbat. Similarly, the greater the heights he attains on Shabbat, the more he will be able to infuse the ensuing week with sanctity and meaning.

Maharal explains that the idea of Shabbat is hinted at in the number of days of the week. Everything physical has six sides: up, down, front, back, right, and left. The number seven expresses inner essence. Similarly, the physical world was created in six days, and on the seventh day Shabbat, the sacred essence of the world, was created (Tiferet Yisrael ch. 40).

6. Blessing and Holiness
Shabbat is a repository of blessing and holiness, as it is stated: “And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done” (Bereishit 2:3). Similarly we read: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed Shabbat day and hallowed it” (Shemot 20:11).

The word “kadosh” (holy) applies to the absolute, to that which is beyond time and place. “Kadosh” means separate and transcendent, for anything that belongs to the realm of the absolute is separate and
distinct from all the finite things in the world. The word “blessing” (berakha) indicates increase and growth. The greater kedusha an item has, the greater source of blessing it can be. The holiest of all is God, the world’s creator, Who is, was, and will be. His light and power are infinite, and He is the source of blessing for all creatures. For this reason, He is called “the Holy One, blessed be He” (Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu), for He is holy (transcendent) and blessed (bestows blessing).

God sanctified Shabbat and blessed it. He sanctified it by distinguishing it from other days, for on it the inner essence of the world is revealed. He blessed it, in that He bestows blessing on all the other days and on all worlds through it. Thus Zohar states: “The six weekdays all draw blessing from the seventh day” (11, 63b). It further states: “All the blessings from above and below depend on the seventh day, because all the supernal six days draw blessing from it” (ibid. 88a).

By God’s cessation of all work on the seventh day, it became the most sanctified and essential of all the days; through it God bestows blessing on the six days and on the world as a whole. So too the Jews, by ceasing all work on the seventh day and connecting to the holy source of blessing, understand the great value of every different type of work done in order to build up the world, and thus they draw down blessing upon themselves. This is as the Sages state: “The verse ‘The blessing of the Lord will enrich’ (Mishlei 10:22) refers to the Shabbat blessing” (y. Berakhot 2:7). They also state that by honoring Shabbat one merits wealth, because Shabbat is the source of blessing (Shabbat 119a).

7. MANNA ON SHABBAT

During the forty years that our ancestors wandered in the desert, God provided them with food from heaven. This food was known as man (manna), and through it God taught Israel how they should relate to food and to livelihood. “I will rain down bread for you from the sky, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day’s portion – that I may thus test them, to see whether they will follow My instruction or not” (Shemot 16:4). The test was that they were commanded to gather enough each day for the needs of that day, and not to leave any over for the next day. This was a great challenge, as man’s chief worry in this world is his food and means of livelihood. Because of this existential concern – the
Laws of Shabbat

fear of death by starvation, of not having clothing and shelter, of being at the mercy of the elements – man has developed a powerful impulse to eat as much as possible and to pursue unlimited accumulation of money and assets. Thus one becomes enslaved to his work and his impulses. God wished to instill in the Israelites, during their desert sojourn, the proper attitude toward livelihood – knowledge that man’s purpose in life is to cling to God and His Torah. Food and money are only a means to this end, as we read: “He subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had ever known, in order to teach you that man does not live by bread alone, rather man lives by the word of the Lord” (Devarim 8:3). Therefore they were commanded to gather enough food for one day, and to rely on God to send more the next day. One who failed this test and gathered extra would find when he came to his tent that he had exactly what he needed to eat – “an omer (a biblical measure) per capita.” Some people could not overcome their fear; they saved some of their allotted manna for the next day, but it turned foul and maggoty overnight.

When Friday came, however, there was a surprise:

On the sixth day they gathered double the amount of food, two omers each; and when all the chieftains of the community came and told Moshe, he said to them, “This is what the Lord meant: Tomorrow is the day of rest, the Lord’s holy Shabbat. Bake what you would bake and boil what you would boil; and all that is left put aside to be kept until morning.” So they put it aside until morning, as Moshe had ordered; and it did not turn foul, and there were no maggots in it. Then Moshe said, “Eat it today, for today is the Lord’s Shabbat; you will not find it today in the field. Six days you shall gather it; on the seventh day, Shabbat, there will be none.” Yet some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found nothing. And the Lord said to Moshe, “How long will you refuse to obey My commandments and My teachings? Note that the Lord has given you Shabbat; therefore He gives you two days’ food on the sixth day. Let everyone remain where he is: let no man leave his place on the seventh day.” (Shemot 16:22-29)
Chapter 1: Introduction

The Sages stated that the blessing of Shabbat was reflected in the double portion of manna that fell (Bereishit Rabba 11:2). One might be inclined to ask what kind of blessing this was, since, in fact, the amount of manna that the people received on Shabbat was the same as that of the rest of the week; it simply fell a day early. The answer is that on the seventh day they did not have to worry, because their Shabbat food had already been prepared on Friday. This can be compared to one who had to work hard every day. One day he managed to finish two days’ worth of work. The next day he felt a sense of great relief because he did not need to work, and he was free to think about things beyond his immediate needs. Sometimes, because of these musings, he was later able to accomplish more at work. This is the blessing of Shabbat. We are commanded to stop working and stop worrying about money, and through this freedom and liberation we cling to God and His Torah. Doing so will allow blessing to flow from the Source of life, providing us with a comfortable livelihood during the six weekdays.

8. ZAKHOR AND SHAMOR

Two mitzvot constitute the basic elements of Shabbat: Zakhor (“commemorate”) and Shamor (“observe”). “Shamor” is a negative commandment to refrain from all labor. For six days, one must take care of his needs and productively engage the world, but on Shabbat we are enjoined to desist from all labor. By doing so, we clear space in our soul, which we are commanded to fill with the positive mitzva of Zakhor, whose content consists of commemorating the holiness of Shabbat and using it to connect with the fundamentals of faith.

These two mitzvot are so intimately linked that they are united at their root. They split into two complementary mitzvot only upon entering the human realm. This is the meaning of the Sages’ dictum: “Zakhor and Shamor were stated simultaneously, something that the human mouth cannot articulate and the human ear cannot hear” (Shev. 20b). We see this in the Torah itself: the Decalogue as reported in Shemot (20:8) introduces Shabbat with the word “zakhor,” whereas when the Ten Commandments are repeated in Devarim (5:12), it is replaced with “shamor.”

Zakhor is a positive commandment, rooted in love and the divine attribute of hessed (kindness). In contrast, Shamor is a negative
Laws of Shabbat

commandment, rooted in the divine attribute of *din* (judgment), which sets boundaries so that man may turn away from wickedness. Positive *mitzvot* are at a higher level, as they enable people to come closer to God. However, the punishment for transgressing a negative mitzva is more severe, because it causes more serious damage, both to the sinner and to the world at large (Ramban, Shemot 20:7).

*Zakhor* is closely linked to the creation of the world and the first Shabbat, as the Torah states:

Commemorate ("*zakhor*") the day of Shabbat to sanctify it.... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed Shabbat day and hallowed it. (Shemot 20:8-11)

The mitzva of *Shamor* is more closely linked to the Exodus from Egypt:

Observe ("*shamor*") the day of Shabbat to sanctify it... for you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to keep the day of Shabbat.” (Devarim 5:12-15)

As a lofty spiritual principle, Shabbat was embedded in the world at its very creation. However, it was only after Israel survived the iron furnace of the Egyptian enslavement that they could understand how terrible it is to be subjugated to the material and how necessary it is to stop working in order to absorb the spiritual concept of Shabbat.

The two commandments – *Zakhor* and *Shamor* – are hinted at in the word “Shabbat.” Its simple meaning is related to the *shevita*, cessation of work, associated with *Shamor*. However, its deeper meaning is related to *teshuva*, “repentance” or “return,” for on Shabbat we return to the foundations of faith associated with *Zakhor*.

9. **ZAKHOR – FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH**

With the commandment to “Commemorate the day of Shabbat to sanctify it” (Shemot 20:8), we are enjoined to recall the foundations of faith.
This is why the mitzva of Shabbat is the fourth of the Ten Commandments. First we are commanded to believe in God and know Him, as it states: “I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage” (Shemot 20:2). Following this we are commanded not to worship foreign gods: “You shall have no other gods besides Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness... You shall not bow down to them or serve them” (ibid. 3-5).

The third commandment is to honor His name and not to swear falsely. The fourth commandment is about Shabbat, the day that expresses the foundations of our faith in the world (Ramban, Shemot 20:7). Zohar states that all the principles and secrets of faith are linked to Shabbat (II 92:1; III 94:2, 288:2).

We recall two fundamentals of faith on Shabbat. The first is the creation of the world. Shabbat attests that the Creator made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Ever since then, He continues to give the world life and sustain it. The second fundamental is that God took His people out of Egypt. By doing so, He made clear to all that in addition to having created the world, He also supervises and manages it, punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous. He chose Israel to be His people, through which His providence is made manifest in the world.

The Sages tell us that the mitzva of Zakhor entails invoking Shabbat throughout the week, by preparing for it. Similarly, the Levi’im in the Temple would preface the singing of the daily psalm with the formula: “Today is the first/second/etc. day of before Shabbat.” This tells us that the weekdays are not days in their own right, but rather draw their meaning and value from Shabbat. It is indeed a fact that in Hebrew, the holy tongue, days are numbered in relation to Shabbat – the first day, the second day, etc. This contrasts with other languages, such as English and French, in which each day has its own name – generally named for some ancient deity – and has no connection to Shabbat (Ramban, Shemot 20:7).

The primary way in which we fulfill the mitzva of Zakhor is through kiddush, in which we invoke the central themes of Shabbat in brief. The Sages instituted that kiddush be recited over a cup of wine and shortly before a meal, so that Shabbat would be mentioned at a time of joy and pleasure, as Scripture states: “Call Shabbat ‘delight’” (Yeshayahu 58:13; see below 6:3 and 6:10).
Laws of Shabbat

Although we fulfill the basic obligation of Zakhor through kid-dush, the mitzva in principle is to sanctify the entire day. The Torah states “Commemorate the day of Shabbat to sanctify it,” implying that the entire day should be set aside for holy matters – Torah study and attending lectures by Torah scholars (Ramban, Shemot 20:7; see below 5:1-5).

10. Shamor – Cessation from Crafting the Mishkan

During the six weekdays, one must take care of his needs and productively engage the world. Most of his abilities and energies are directed toward working his fields, providing food, shelter, and clothing, and other productive activities. As much as one may enjoy his work, it contains an aspect of enslavement. Ongoing necessities ensnare one in the chains of this world, causing him to forget about faith and the soul. Desisting from all work on Shabbat allows us to rise above the mundane pressures of the here and now, and reach for the world of freedom and rest, a world where the soul can express itself. This is the meaning of the Sages’ dictum that Shabbat is like the World to Come (see Berakhot 57b).

In order to fully appreciate the virtues of Shabbat, on Shabbat a Jew must look at the positive in the world, as it is written: “A psalm, A song; for the day of Shabbat. It is good to praise the Lord, to sing hymns to Your name, O Most high. To proclaim Your kindness at day-break, and Your faithfulness each night” (Tehilim 92:1-3). On Shabbat one must focus on divine providence, which directs everything toward the good. One must also lovingly accept reality as it is, without feeling any pressure or desire to change it. Even if we are missing something that we did not have time to prepare before Shabbat, or even if something upsetting happened, we should accept this with equanimity and enjoy being with God. By doing so, blessing and sanctity will spread to everything that we do during the weekdays.

One might have thought that only secular activities would be prohibited on Shabbat, but actually the Torah prohibits any type of activity necessary for the construction of the Mishkan (the Tabernacle erected by the Israelites in the desert). Moreover, the 39 melakhot (types of labor forbidden on Shabbat) are derived from the work done for the Mishkan, and all forms of labor that were involved in assembling the
Chapter 1: Introduction

*Mishkan* are prohibited on Shabbat. Thus, juxtaposed to the descriptions of the work done in the *Mishkan* we read: “Nevertheless, you must keep My *Shabbaton*” (Shemot 31:13), which teaches us that although erecting the *Mishkan* is a great mitzva, one must desist even from it on Shabbat. For even crafting the *Mishkan* needs to be connected to its inner divine essence. If this were not the case, all the difficulties in putting up the *Mishkan* would likely cause us to forget its ultimate purpose, and the *Mishkan* would be left like a body without a soul, unable to fulfill its purpose of revealing the word of God to the world. Sometimes it is specifically those whose work is linked to the holy who need to be particularly careful about this, because due to their awareness of the value of the holy they are likely to invest their all in building a framework for it, to the point that they forget its inner essence.

Even though there is a big difference in status between the *Mishkan* and the rest of the world, in reality the whole world is meant to be a *Mishkan*, that is, a place where the Shekhina (Divine Presence) can dwell. Consequently, all of man’s labor must be connected to the crafting of the *Mishkan*. Of course, in the *Mishkan* divine idea is expressed in an obvious and concentrated manner, while in the rest of the world this happens in hidden and manifold ways. Therefore one must orient all his actions toward the greater glory of God – in the field or in the factory, while engaged in scientific research or in business, all in order to improve the world and perfect it, until it reaches its ultimate purpose of becoming a *Mishkan* for the Shekhina. The money one makes must also be dedicated to living a godly life, using to establish a family that will serve as a *Mishkan* for developing positive character traits and inculcating godly ideals. This can all be accomplished using the power of the holiness of Shabbat, when we abstain from such labor, and from which all labor draws its inner meaning.

It is also important to be aware that man’s purpose in life is not to work hard. If Adam had not sinned, we would still be living in the Garden of Eden, working there joyfully and achieving satisfaction, without worries or stress. Since the sin, though, we earn a livelihood only by the sweat of our brow. This exertion helps us to correct the sin, but it is also liable to root us in the material world, far from the ideal goals of faith, freedom, and joy. This is why Shabbat, which connects us to higher
Laws of Shabbat

ideals, is so important. Shabbat thus provides a deeper meaning to the six weekdays so that they are not merely focused on immediate survival, but rather on perfecting the world and moving it closer to redemption, when it will once again be a Garden of Eden and a Mishkan for the Shekhina.¹

11. SHABBAT IS THE EQUIVALENT OF ALL THE MITZVOT BECAUSE IT EXPRESSES FAITH

Shabbat is endowed with an amazing capacity. It allows Jews to ascend to a level that is akin to the World to Come, transcend the barriers and masks that this world places between man and his Source of life, absorb the light of faith and Torah, and fully connect with all the mitzvot in the Torah.

The Sages state:

We find attestation that Shabbat is the equivalent of all the mitzvot in the Torah in the Torah, Nevi’im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (the Writings). In the Torah, as it states: “The Lord said to Moshe, ‘How long will you refuse to obey My commandments and My teachings? Note that the Lord has given you Shabbat…” (Shemot 16:28-29). (y. Nedarim 3:9)

This was after they desecrated Shabbat by attempting to gather manna. We thus see that desecrating Shabbat is akin to violating the entire Torah and all the mitzvot.

The Yerushalmi continues:

In the Nevi’im, as it states: “Moreover, I gave them My Shabbatot to serve as a sign between Me and them, that they might know that it is I the Lord Who sanctifies them. But the House of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not follow My

¹ Though the melakhot involved in constructing the Mishkan and Temple are forbidden on Shabbat, one may nevertheless offer sacrifices and conduct a brit mila (ritual circumcision) on Shabbat (Shabbat 133a). Since these mitzvot express the inner and singular connection between God and Israel, they are consistent with the idea of Shabbat and do not constitute its desecration. The construction of the Mishkan, however, draws this inner connection outward, which is forbidden on Shabbat because Shabbat is entirely inward.
laws and they rejected My rules – by the pursuit of which a man shall live – and they grossly desecrated My Shabbatot…. I warned their children in the wilderness…. ‘Follow my laws …and hallow My Shabbatot, that they may be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God. But the children rebelled against Me…” (Yehezkel 20:12-22).

In the Ketuvim, as it states: “You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven; You gave them right rules and true teachings, good laws and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Shabbat, and You ordained for them laws, commandments, and the Torah through Moshe, Your servant” (Nechemia 9:13-14; see also below 22:2, and the rest of Yehezkel 20).

The Sages further declare: “Anyone who observes Shabbat properly, even if he worships foreign deities like the generation of Enosh (when paganism first emerged), is forgiven” (Shabbat 118b). By virtue of observing Shabbat properly, one’s faith is reinforced, and intentional sins are treated as unintentional and are forgiven. The Sages also said: “Anyone who observes Shabbat is distanced from sin” (Mekhila Beshalakh).

12. THE TEMPLE WAS DESTROYED ON ACCOUNT OF SHABBAT DESECRATION

Before the destruction of the First Temple, God sent the prophet Yirmiyahu to tell the nation and the Kingdom of Judah that their future was dependent on their Shabbat observance:

Thus said the Lord to me: Go and stand in the People’s Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go forth, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, and say to them: “Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem who enter by these gates! Thus said the Lord: Guard yourselves against carrying burdens on the day of Shabbat and against bringing them through the gates of Jerusalem. Nor shall you carry out burdens from your houses on the day of Shabbat, nor do any work. Rather, you shall hallow the day of Shabbat, as I commanded your fathers.”
Laws of Shabbat

But they would not listen or turn their ear; they stiffened their necks and would not pay heed or accept discipline.

“If you obey Me” – declares the Lord – “and do not bring in burdens through the gates of this city on the day of Shabbat, and you hallow the day of Shabbat and do no work on it, then through the gates of this city shall enter kings and nobles who sit upon the throne of David, riding on chariots and horses – they, their noblemen, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And this city shall be inhabited for all time. And people shall come from the towns of Judah and from the environs of Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the Shephelah, and from the hill country, and from the Negev, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, meal offerings and frankincense, and bringing offerings of thanksgiving to the Temple of the Lord. But if you do not obey My command to hallow the day of Shabbat and to carry in no burdens through the gates of Jerusalem on the Shabbat day, then I will set fire to its gates; it shall consume the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be extinguished.” (Yirmiyahu 17:19-27)

The Sages similarly state: “Jerusalem was destroyed because they desecrated Shabbat within it, as it is written: ‘They have closed their eyes to My Shabbat. I am profaned in their midst’ (Yechezkel 22:26)” (Shabbat 119b). Later on it states: “And I sought a man among them to repair the wall or to stand in the breach before Me on behalf of this land, that I might not destroy it; but I found none” (ibid. 30).

13. REDEMPTION IS DEPENDENT UPON SHABBAT OBSERVANCE

We see from Yeshayahu that the ultimate redemption depends upon doing what is right and just and observing Shabbat, as it says:

Thus said the Lord: Observe what is right and do what is just; for soon My salvation shall come, and my deliverance shall be revealed.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Happy is the man who does this, the man who holds fast to it: who keeps from profaning Shabbat and stays his hand from doing any evil.

Let not the foreigner who has attached himself to the Lord say: “The Lord will separate me from His people [and I will not be privileged to experience all the good that is reserved for Israel at the time of their redemption];”

And let not the eunuch say: “Yea, I am a withered tree [for I have no children and no future].”

For thus said the Lord: “As for the eunuchs who keep My Shabbatot, who have chosen what I desire and hold fast to My covenant: I will give them, in My house and within My walls, a monument and a memorial, better than sons or daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, which shall not perish.”

And to the foreigners who attach themselves to the Lord to serve Him, to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants – all who keep from profaning Shabbat and hold fast to My covenant: “I will bring them to My sacred mount and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

The word of the Lord God, Who gathers the dispersed of Israel: “I will gather still more to those already gathered.” (Yeshayahu 56:1-8)

The Sages comment on these verses: “If the Jewish people keep two Shabbatot properly, they will immediately be redeemed, as it says: ‘As for the eunuchs who keep My Shabbatot… I will bring them to My sacred mount’” (Shabbat 118b).

At first glance, this dictum raises a question: why do the Sages state that if the Jewish people observe two Shabbatot they will immediately be redeemed? Don’t these verses imply that the redemption is also dependent upon justice and righteousness? The answer seems to be that if the Jews keep two Shabbatot properly, they will also be just and righteous, because keeping Shabbat liberates one from his enslavement
Laws of Shabbat

to money and wealth and refines his faith. This leads to the desire to pursue justice and righteousness throughout the week. This accords with another statement of the Sages: “The Jewish people will be redeemed only in the merit of Shabbat, as it is written: ‘You shall triumph by stillness (be-shuva) and quiet’ (Yeshayahu 30:15)” (Vayikra Rabba 3:1). In truth, we can achieve redemption by practicing justice and righteousness, because by doing so we are released from the bonds anchoring us to the material world and its impulses. Thus we perfect the six weekdays, allowing us to observe Shabbat properly and to increase our faith and closeness to God, through which we will merit redemption (See BB 10a and Devarim Rabba 5:7).

The Sages further state that by virtue of keeping Shabbat we merit living in Eretz Yisrael, as God said to Avraham: “If your children accept Shabbat, they will enter the land; if not, they will not enter” (Bereisht Rabba 46:9). And entering the land is the beginning of redemption.

14. THE SEVERITY OF THE SIN OF SHABBAT DESECRATION

Having learned of the tremendous value of Shabbat, we can understand why its desecration is such a severe sin. The Torah prescribes its harshest punishment for it: if one intentionally desecrates Shabbat in front of witnesses who forewarned him, he is liable for death by stoning. If no witnesses were present, but the violation is intentional, he is subject to karet (extirpation), as it is written: “You shall keep Shabbat, for it is holy for you. He who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does work on it shall be cut off (ve-nikhreta) from among his people” (Shemot 31:14). In actuality, almost no one was ever put to death, as it was rare for all the conditions that would mandate the death penalty to be met. Thus, the Sages state that a court that put one person to death every seven years is considered murderous, and R. Elazar b. Azaria maintains that if it killed one person in seventy years it was considered murderous (m. Makkot 1:10).

Nevertheless, the fact remains that one of the only two cases in the Torah where one was actually put to death is indeed connected to public Shabbat desecration:
When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the day of Shabbat. Those who found him gathering wood brought him before Moshe, Aharon, and the whole community. He was placed in custody, for it had not been specified what should be done to him. Then the Lord said to Moshe, “The man shall be put to death; the whole community shall pelt him with stones outside the camp.” So the whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him to death – as the Lord had commanded Moshe. (Bamidbar 15:32-36)

The Torah seems to be using this story to teach us how seriously the public desecrator of Shabbat damages the values of the nation and its faith.

Yet it remains difficult to understand how the wood gatherer dared to publicly desecrate Shabbat. A midrash suggests that when God decreed, in the wake of the sin of the spies, that the desert generation would not enter the Land of Israel, some thought that mitzva observance was no longer obligatory. The wood gatherer wished to teach them that everyone must continue to keep the mitzvot. Motivated by exceptional religious fervor, he decided to publicly desecrate Shabbat, so that the nation would be forced to put him to death. This would show everyone how serious the transgression was (quoted in Tosafot, BB 119b). Some maintain that the wood gatherer was Tzelofĥad, who merited daughters who loved the Land of Israel and inherited it.

The severity of Shabbat desecration can also be seen in Zohar, which states that during Shabbat, the fires of Hell stop consuming the wicked, with the exception of those wicked who never observed Shabbat (Zohar II 151:1). However, one who repented – and certainly one who was already punished for his sin, like the wood gatherer – is forgiven and not punished in Hell.

15. ONE WHO DESECRATES SHABBAT DISAFFILIATES HIMSELF FROM THE JEWISH PEOPLE

We have seen that the desecration of Shabbat is exceedingly grave; one who publicly desecrates Shabbat, like the idolater, is viewed as having disaffiliated from the Jewish people and is treated as a non-Jew. As Rambam writes:
Laws of Shabbat

Both Shabbat and idolatry are the equivalent of all the remaining mitzvot of the Torah. Shabbat is the eternal sign between God and us. Thus, one who transgresses other mitzvot is grouped with wicked Jews, but one who publicly desecrates Shabbat is like an idolater; both are like non-Jews in all matters. (MT 30:15)²

In other words, in general one who violates one of the Torah’s many prohibitions is not considered an apostate; he is treated as a Jew who sinned. But those who worship idols or publicly desecrate Shabbat, even if they are not motivated by spite (“lehakhis”), and even if they observe all the other mitzvot, are subject to rabbinic sanction. As long as they have not repented, they are viewed as having completely apostatized, and halakha treats them as non-Jews for all purposes (Eruvin 69b; m. Hullin 5:1). This means that their offerings are not accepted in the Temple (MT, Laws of Sacrificial Procedure 3:4), they do not count for a minyan (prayer quorum) (MB 55:46), and wine that they touched may not be drunk. There is no mitzva to treat them with the kindness due to every Jew (Ahavat Hesed 1:3:3).

However, in modern times, a number of halakhic authorities have ruled that as long as a Shabbat desecrator is not acting defiantly, he should not be treated as an idolater. In the past, when all Jews kept Shabbat, one who publicly desecrated it (even if not spitefully) was considered disaffiliated from the Jewish people. But in recent times when, much to our chagrin, many Jews do not keep Shabbat, only one who publicly desecrates Shabbat out of spite or to harm Israel’s Torah is considered like an idolater. In contrast, one who desecrates Shabbat for his own convenience is not equated with one who decides to alienate himself from his Jewish heritage (Melamed Le-ho’il, OH 29; Binyan Tziyon Ha-hadashot §23; see Peninei Halakha: Prayer 2:8). Therefore, in practice, if such a person wishes to join a minyan, he may be counted, and it is a mitzva to be as kind to him as to any other Jew. Nevertheless, even today there are many authorities

² Editor’s note: Here and henceforth, references to MT are to the Laws of Shabbat, unless otherwise indicated.
who maintain that a public Shabbat desecrator should be treated as a non-Jew. Therefore, even one who finds it difficult to observe Shabbat because of his education and habits should at a minimum try to light Shabbat candles before sundown Friday, make kiddush, and observe whatever he can. He thus demonstrates that Shabbat is important to him, and that he wishes to connect with his heritage. In such a case, even according to those who rule stringently he would not be considered an idolater.

It must be noted that in any case a Jew cannot completely disconnect from Judaism. Even if he worships idols, intentionally desecrates Shabbat, and commits every sin in the Torah, he remains a Jew, and his soul possesses the sanctity of a Jew. Yet he is exceedingly wicked, and his punishment is greater than that of other sinners, who did not disaffiliate from the Jewish people (Zohar II 151:2). This is why the Sages established that, on the one hand, we distance ourselves from serious sinners, while on the other hand, when possible, we try to encourage their repentance.

16. SHABBAT, PEACE, AND UNITY

On Shabbat we connect with the Source of our life and thereby reveal that all creation has one root. Consequently, the world becomes more peaceful. The most profound opposition in the world is the dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical, between body and soul. When examined using “mundane eyes,” they appear to be fighting and interfering with one another. But on Shabbat it is revealed that the body and the soul complement one another, for the soul brings life and blessing to the body, while the body provides the soul with a way to express itself. Therefore, on Shabbat we are commanded to enjoy ourselves both physically and spiritually, through Torah study and prayer and through festive meals and sleep (see 2:5 below).

Other forces in the world also find peace on Shabbat. During the week it seems that everyone competes and fights over money, honor, and adulation, and one person’s gain is another person’s loss. This leads to a world of dispute, in which the wicked, those who hate Israel, succeed. But on Shabbat it is revealed that everything strives toward unity; the forces that seem divisive are actually complementary, and can even
Laws of Shabbat

cross-fertilize each other. Together they all long for God, their life Source. The wicked clinging to evil, who seem successful when viewed with mundane eyes, in fact are only there to inspire the righteous, and when they complete their job they disappear from the world. This is the praise sung by the seventh day:

A psalm. A song; for the day of Shabbat:

It is good to praise the Lord, to sing hymns to Your name, O Most High; to proclaim Your kindness at daybreak, and Your faithfulness each night.

With a ten-stringed harp and with a psaltery, with voice and lyre together.

For you have gladdened me by Your deeds, O Lord; I shout for joy at Your handiwork.

How great are your works, O Lord, how very subtle Your designs! A brutish man cannot know, and a fool cannot understand this: though the wicked sprout like grass, though all evildoers blossom, it is only that they may be destroyed forever.

But you are exalted, O Lord, for all time.

Surely, Your enemies, O Lord, surely, Your enemies perish, and all evildoers are scattered.

You raise my horn high like that of a wild ox; I am soaked in freshening oil. I shall see the defeat of my watchful foes. Hear of the downfall of the wicked who beset me.

The righteous bloom like a date-palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God. In old age they still produce fruit; they are full of sap and freshness, proclaiming that the Lord is upright, my Rock, in whom there is no wrong. (Tehilim 92)

True peace thus has two components. The first is that peace gives every force and aspiration its unique and appropriate place, thus enabling each of them to achieve a refinement that shows that none of them are evil or at odds with the others. The second is that even pure evil has a purpose: to inspire the forces of good. Once good has been awakened, evil concludes its mission and disappears. There is no need
to feel pain about the existence of evil, for it too has a destiny to fulfill within God’s plan.  

_Zohar_ states:  

The world continues to exist only on account of peace. When God created the world, it could not exist until He infused it with peace. What is this peace? It is Shabbat, which brings peace between the celestial and terrestrial realms. Only then could the world exist. (III 176:2)  

_Zohar_ further states that one must be very careful not to infringe on the sanctity of Shabbat through arguments. One who is sad must try to overcome this mood on Shabbat. If one is at odds with his wife or someone else, Shabbat is the time for reconciliation (_Tikkunei Zohar_ 57:1).  

The lighting of the Shabbat candles symbolizes this peacefulness. When one’s home is dark, even if it is organized, he stumbles around in the dark to find his things. He bumps into things and trips over them, until he is left feeling that all his furniture and possessions have ganged up against him. But when he lights a candle, he sees that everything is in its place, ready to help him. This alludes to our position in the world. As long as we are distant from God and divine ideals, we are stumbling around in the dark, and the whole world seems at odds and divided, with the wicked dominating. But once we merit the light of Shabbat, which reveals perfect faith, we see how everyone’s different abilities complement each other, and evil goes up in smoke (see below 4:1).  

_Zohar_ states that with the revelation of perfect faith in the one and only God, which Shabbat expresses, joy is multiplied in all the worlds, and there is peace in the upper and nether realms. Every Jew is granted a _neshama yeteira_ and supreme enjoyment. Even the wicked who are condemned to Hell get a break from punishment on Shabbat, if they honored Shabbat while they were alive (See _Zohar_ I 48:1; II 88:2, 151:1, 205:1; III 94:2, 176:2, 273:1).