Dvar Torah Outline

Rabbi Shulman: Shabbat Rest, Torah Toil, and Closeness to God

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman explores Rabbi Tzadok's teaching that Shabbat elevates each person beyond the particular toil of the weekday. For those occupied with earning a living, Shabbat creates space for Torah study and spiritual awakening; for those immersed in Torah all week, it offers a deeper, inward attachment to God through that Torah. This relationship transcends what words can communicate and makes Shabbat a foretaste of the World to Come—uniquely shaped by each person's weekday efforts.

I

Shabbat as spiritual awakening for those occupied with physical work

A. *The starting point: Rabbi Tzadok's* קדושת שבת

- Rabbi Shulman continues studying the first essay of Rabbi Tzadok's work on the sanctity of Shabbat.
- The discussion distinguishes between different forms of weekday toil and the corresponding forms of Shabbat rest.

B. *Physical rest makes Shabbat's distinctiveness tangible*

- Someone who spends the week farming or performing other demanding physical work immediately experiences a change on Shabbat.
- Setting aside tools and ceasing physical exertion allows the body to experience tranquility.
- This bodily rest provides an accessible starting point for sensing the holiness of the day.

C. *Rest must lead to spiritual awareness*

- During the week, earning a living can leave little opportunity to focus on:
  - Serving God.
  - Developing awe of Him.
  - Studying Torah.
  - Asking why one has come into the world.
- On Shabbat, a person should awaken from this weekday "spiritual sleep."
- Freed from constant demands, one can recognize the spiritual life within one's own soul.

D. *Why Shabbat is especially a time for Torah study*

- Rabbi Tzadok applies the Jerusalem Talmud's teaching particularly to those occupied with physical work:
  - **"לא ניתנו שבתות וימים טובים אלא לעסוק בתורה"** (Shabbat and festivals were given for engaging in Torah.)
- For such people, Shabbat provides the opportunity to enter the study hall and invest seriously in Torah.

II

Rest from sacred labor: commandments and prayer

2:30

A. *Those whose weekday work is serving God also need rest*

- Rabbi Shulman identifies three principal forms of spiritual toil:
  - Prayer.
  - Performing commandments.
  - Torah study.
- Rabbi Tzadok teaches that those privileged to devote their weekdays to these pursuits also experience a cessation of their ordinary labor on Shabbat.
- Their rest, however, cannot mean simply abandoning spiritual life.

B. *Shabbat limits many forms of active religious performance*

- Rabbi Shulman notes that certain commandments are not performed on Shabbat:
  - Tefillin are not worn.
  - Rabbinic enactments prevent sounding the shofar or taking the festival branches when the relevant festival day falls on Shabbat.
- These limitations express Shabbat's distinct spiritual character, not a lack of importance attached to the commandments.

C. *Voluntary prayer illustrates the difference between weekdays and Shabbat*

- During the week, an additional voluntary prayer is conceptually possible, paralleling a voluntary offering.
- Rabbi Shulman notes the practical concern that such prayer requires genuine concentration; it should not become an unnecessary recitation of blessings.
- On Shabbat, voluntary prayer is not offered, just as voluntary offerings are not brought.
- Obligatory prayer remains, but the opportunity to add further prayer-as-labor is restricted.

D. *A longer service does not mean a longer central prayer*

- Rabbi Shulman distinguishes the overall synagogue service from the **עמידה**, the central standing prayer.
- Shabbat services may include:
  - More extensive songs of praise.
  - A more leisurely pace.
  - Additional preparation for the central prayer.
- Nevertheless, the central prayer itself is substantially shorter:
  - The opening three blessings of praise remain.
  - The concluding three blessings of thanksgiving remain.
  - The weekday middle blessings of petition are replaced by a single blessing centered on Shabbat.

E. *Ordinary petition is not Shabbat's primary mode*

- The weekday middle blessings address human needs and deficiencies.
- Shabbat is not the usual time for this form of petitionary labor.
- The reduction in requests reflects a movement from striving toward a more restful relationship with God.

III

Torah scholars must also protect Shabbat's rest

9:01

A. *Rabbi Tzadok extends the principle to those who toil in Torah*

- For someone whose entire week is devoted to demanding Torah study, Shabbat cannot simply reproduce the weekday experience.
- Rabbi Shulman emphasizes that genuine intellectual toil can be strenuous:
  - Wrestling with questions.
  - Struggling toward answers.
  - Experiencing frustration and mental exertion.

B. *Rav Sheshet arranged for the Shabbat lecture to end on time*

- The Talmud describes Rav Sheshet positioning the scholars:
  - In the sun during summer.
  - In the shade during winter.
- The resulting discomfort encouraged them to conclude rather than extend the session indefinitely.
- Rabbi Shulman explains Rashi's point:
  - Rav Sheshet was blind and could not readily track the sun's movement.

- The arrangement functioned as an "alarm clock," ensuring that the lecture ended in time for the Shabbat meal.

C. *Rabbi Zeira warned scholars not to delay the meal*

- Rabbi Zeira approached scholars engaged in discussion and pleaded:
  - **"במטותא מינייכו, לא תחללוניה"** (Please, I beg you, do not profane it.)
- Their Torah discussion was holy, yet allowing it to displace the proper experience of Shabbat was inappropriate.
- Shabbat requires more than continuing one's customary activity—even when that activity is Torah study.

D. *This does not justify idleness or indulgence*

- Rabbi Tzadok explicitly rejects the conclusion that scholars should:
  - Sit idle.
  - Substitute frivolous activities for learning.
  - Devote the day exclusively to food, wine, and bodily pleasure.
- If those are the alternatives, continued Torah study is certainly preferable.
- **The intended change is an ascent in spiritual engagement, not a retreat from it.**

IV

From attachment to Torah to attachment to its Giver

14:33

A. *The teaching addresses someone genuinely immersed in Torah all week*

- Rabbi Tzadok describes a person whose mind and heart are continually occupied with Torah.
- Through that sustained engagement, the person is already attached to God through His Torah.
- The elevated Shabbat experience rests on this foundation of weekday effort.

B. *Shabbat opens a higher form of attachment*

- Shabbat is a time of spiritual elevation.
- Someone already deeply attached to Torah can rise beyond the ordinary mode of intellectual struggle.
- Rabbi Shulman expresses the transition as moving:
  - From attachment to Torah,
  - To attachment to **the One who gives the Torah**.

C. *Thinking through the words toward their divine source*

- This does not mean discarding the Torah's words.
- Rather, the person can think:
  - Into the words.

  - Through the words.
  - Beyond their verbal expression toward God, who gave them.
- Shabbat allows a deeper awareness of the soul's relationship with the Source of its life.

D. *Why ordinary analytical toil can become a relative descent*

- For someone capable of this higher attachment, returning exclusively to the familiar battle of questions and answers may mean stepping down from what Shabbat makes possible.
- The contrast is not between Torah and something unrelated to Torah.
- It is between:
  - Torah experienced primarily through strenuous analysis.
  - Torah experienced as inward revelation and closeness to God.

V

The secrets of Torah are deeper than words

18:30

A. *Esoteric terminology is not itself the inner secret*

- Rabbi Shulman challenges the assumption that the secrets of Torah consist simply of:
  - Specialized books.
  - Charts.
  - Technical terms.
  - Mystical vocabulary.
- These can provide a language for approaching deeper realities, but they are not identical with the inner experience itself.

B. *The deepest secrets cannot be communicated fully*

- The language of the Torah's inner teachings functions through analogies.
- Those analogies help a person relate to God, but the resulting relationship exceeds the words used to describe it.
- These teachings are "secret" not only because they are withheld from the unprepared:
  - Their innermost content cannot be transferred from one person to another through speech.

C. *The analogy of love*

- A person may describe love for a spouse with great precision.
- Someone who has experienced such love may recognize what the description points toward.
- Someone without that experience could memorize every word and still lack access to the reality being described.
- Knowing the language is not the same as living the relationship.

D. *"The secret of God" is an intimate relationship*

- **Psalms 25:14:**
  - **"סוֹד ה' לִירֵאָיו וּבְרִיתוֹ לְהוֹדִיעָם."** (The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and His covenant is to make known to them.)
- Rabbi Shulman explains that this "secret" is the relationship with God experienced by those who stand in awe of Him.
- Each person encounters that relationship within the heart.
- Another person can hear about it, but cannot directly possess the same inward experience.

VI

Shabbat as a foretaste of the World to Come

21:30

A. *Weekday effort builds the relationship; Shabbat allows one to live it*

- Rabbi Shulman summarizes the distinction:
  - During the week, a person works toward the relationship.
  - On Shabbat, the person experiences and inhabits that relationship.
- This is the spiritual reward available within Shabbat itself.

B. *The pleasure of the World to Come*

- The Sages describe the World to Come as enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence.
- Shabbat provides a taste of that closeness while a person is still living in this world.
- Its description as one-sixtieth of the World to Come points to this experiential connection.

C. *"May you see your world in your lifetime"*

- Rabbi Tzadok cites the blessing:
  - **"עולמך תראה בחייך"** (May you see your world in your lifetime.)
- Rabbi Shulman explains this as experiencing something of one's future spiritual world during earthly life.
- In Rabbi Tzadok's account, Shabbat is the setting for this foretaste.

D. *Each person's Shabbat is shaped by that person's weekday work*

- The experience is not uniform.
- Its depth and character correspond to:
  - The person's spiritual effort.
  - The particular nature of that effort.
  - The unique relationship with God developed through it.

- For those whose lives are devoted to Torah, Shabbat rest allows the inward significance of their learning to become experientially present.
- Just as each person's Torah toil is unique, so is that person's Shabbat attachment to God.

VII

In Summary

- **Shabbat elevates people beyond their weekday occupation:** physical workers gain space for Torah and spiritual awakening, while those immersed in Torah can reach a deeper mode of attachment.
- **Rest applies even to sacred labor:** Shabbat limits religious activity and ordinary petition, and Torah study must not displace the day's meals and rest.
- **The goal is not less holiness, but greater inwardness:** scholars are not directed toward idleness or indulgence, but toward attachment to the Giver of Torah.
- **The deepest secrets of Torah are lived relationships:** words and analogies can guide a person toward them, but cannot fully communicate them.
- **Shabbat is a personal foretaste of the World to Come:** each person experiences a closeness to God shaped by the effort and relationship cultivated during the week.