

Light Insight

The Rest Is Easy

*“And on the seventh day, a Shabbos of Shabbosos”
(Exodus 31:15)*

There are two kinds of rest. The first kind of rest is a rest from weariness, a chance to recharge our batteries, to enable us to continue to work. No one can work indefinitely. Everyone needs a break.

The second kind of rest comes at the end of a project. The last brushstroke of a painting. The final sentence of a novel. The last brick in a new home. Then you take a step back and look at

your work. You feel the satisfaction of completion. It’s finished. It’s done. A time to rest and enjoy the fruits of your labors.

“You shall labor for six days and do all your work.”

How can you do all you work in six days? Can you build an entire house in six days?

The Torah teaches us that when Shabbos comes, even though we’re half-way through a project, we should think of it as though it was finished completely. On Shabbos we should picture ourselves experiencing the rest and satisfaction that comes after a good job well done, not just taking a break. In a sense, this is what G-d did when the

world was six days old. He looked at the Creation and saw that it was finished — the greatest building project ever — the heavens and the earth were completed. Our rest on Shabbos is a commemoration of that rest.

This is the essential difference between our Shabbos and the non-Jewish idea of a “day of rest.” The world understands the day of rest as a break so that you can return to the week revitalized and refreshed. It’s a only a break.

Shabbos, on the other hand, is not just pushing the pause button on life. It’s the creation of a feeling that everything in one’s life is complete. There’s nothing left to do except sit back and enjoy the fruits of one’s labor.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Peki’in

Many legends surround this village in the north of Israel. New Peki’in was established as a Jewish community in 1955, a short distance from Old Peki’in, a village populated by Druze, Christians and a few Jews.

One tradition is that the Jewish community in Peki’in was never exiled from the Holy Land. Arab riots in 1936 forced the Jews of Peki’in to leave their homes for safer parts of the country and only a few of them later returned.

Another tradition is connected with the ancient synagogue which was restored in 1837. Two carved

stones lying sideways were reportedly brought from Jerusalem and legend has it that they fell on their sides as a sign of mourning when the Temple was destroyed.

But certainly the most famous tradition regarding Peki’in is that it houses the cave upon which the great Talmudic Sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son Elazar hid from the Romans for thirteen years, miraculously sustained by a spring of water and a carob tree while totally absorbed in the study of Torah.

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Failing to judge favorably can ruin friendships. The following incident, sad but true, shows the outcome of...

Thinking ill

Rabbi Joshua (name changed) had an elderly friend who became ill and was hospitalized in Jerusalem's Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital. The sick man wondered why Rabbi Joshua had not come to

visit him, and he was upset about it.

Finally, one Shabbos, Rabbi Joshua (who had 18 children of his own and struggled to make ends meet) decid-

ed to visit his ill friend, and started walking to the hospital.

Shortly thereafter, unbeknownst to Rabbi Joshua, his son fell down the stairs and was bleeding profusely. Rabbi Joshua's wife grabbed the boy and hurried to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Joshua arrived at the hospital, found his way to his sick friend's room and greeted him. The sick man said to him, "I know

you wouldn't have come here to visit only me. It must be that you came here for something else and while you were here you dropped in for a visit."

Rabbi Joshua answered, "No, no, no! I came to visit only you."

A minute later, to Rabbi Joshua's great surprise, his wife suddenly appeared in the room with their bandaged child. "See!" said the sick man. "I told you! You came here because of your son! Why did you lie to me?" The sick man refused to listen to Rabbi Joshua or his wife's explanations.

And from that day on, the sick man refused to talk to Rabbi Joshua.

Response Line

Joel Smith wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
I would appreciate any help which you can give as regards to the following point: When a specific leaf falls off a tree or a specific animal is killed by another animal, is there a reason or decree why that specific leaf fell or is there such a thing as natural occurrences which are random and uncontrolled? I would appreciate any information and sources that discuss and explain this philosophical point. Thank you in advance.*

Dear Joel Smith,

The view that certain events are not individual-

ly guided is a view that is accepted by Maimonides in the *Guide for the Perplexed*, and also by Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno in his commentary on the Torah. They maintain that the degree of individual Divine Providence is directly proportional to the spirituality and Godliness of the being. Hence, animals and plants have less direct Divine Providence that guides their existence, perhaps only as a species, but not as individuals.

An exception to the rule would be a case where the animal or plant interacts with a human being, then there would be direct Divine

Providence. For example, the apple that fell near Sir Isaac Newton was as a result of Divine Providence, whereas an apple falling off a tree in Omaha with no human around occurs as a result of the laws of nature that God created.

Other opinions, held principally by the Kabbalists and Chassidic thinkers, maintain that absolutely everything is a matter of individual Divine Providence.

The difference of opinion may not be as extreme as it sounds: Perhaps the Kabbalists agree in principle with Maimonides' concept, however they contend that since everything interacts with humanity on some level, albeit a very subtle and low level of interaction, therefore every detail of Creation requires Divine Providence.