



THE WEEKLY YOM KIPPUR

In honor of the birth of our first grandchild, Shlomo Yosef Goldman. Born on a Shabbos, may he grow to embrace its message.

The Haftara we read on Yom Kippur morning, taken from the book of Yeshaya, is a profound description of what the true meaning of the fast is all about:

הָלוֹא זֶה צוֹם אֲבָחֶרְהוּ פִתַּח חֲרָצְבוֹת רִשְׁעֵי הַתֵּר אֲגַדְוֹת מוֹטֵה וְשֹׁלַח רְצוּצִים חֲפָשִׁים וְכָל מוֹטֵה תִנְתְּקוּ.

Surely this is the fast I choose: open the bonds of wickedness, dissolve the groups that pervert [justice], let the oppressed go free, and annul all perverted [justice].

Yeshaya 58:6

Yeshaya goes on to describe how focusing on the messages of justice and kindness implicit in the fast day will lead to great rewards:

אֲזוּ יִבְקַע כְּשַׁחַר אֲנֹרָה וְאֶרְכָּתְךָ מִהֲרָה תִצְמַח וְנִתְחַד ה' תִּמְיֵד וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ בְּצַחְצְחוֹת נִפְשֶׁךָ וְעִצְמוֹתֶיךָ יִחְלִיץ וְהֵייתָ כְּגֹן רֶגֶל וְכַמוֹצָא מִיָּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּזְבוּ מִיָּמֶיךָ.

Then your light will burst forth like the dawn and your healing will speedily sprout

... then Hashem will guide you always, save your soul in times of drought, and strengthen your bones; and you will be like a well-watered garden and a spring whose waters never fail.

After this stirring description, Yeshaya abruptly switches gears and begins to speak of the observance of Shabbos:

אִם תִּשָּׁבַת רִגְלֶךָ עֲשׂוֹת חֲפָצֶיךָ בְּיוֹם קִדְשִׁי וְקִרְאתָ לְשִׁבְתָּ עֲנֵג לְקָדוֹשׁ ה' מְכַבֵּד וְכַבְּדָתוּ מַעֲשׂוֹת דְרָכֶיךָ מִמְצוֹא חֲפָצֶיךָ וְדַבֵּר דְבָר אֶז תִּתְעַנֵּג עַל ה' וְהִרְפַּבְתִּיךָ עַל בְּמַתִּי אֶרֶץ וְהִאֲכַלְתִּיךָ נְחֹלֶת יַעֲקֹב אָבִיךָ כִּי פִי ה' דִּבֶּר.

If you restrain your feet because of Shabbos, refrain from accomplishing your own needs on My holy day; if you proclaim Shabbos “a delight,” the holy one of Hashem “honored one,” and you honor it by not engaging in your own ways, from seeking your needs or discussing the forbidden. Then you shall be granted pleasure with Hashem and I shall mount you astride the heights of the world, and I will provide you the heritage of your forefather Yaakov — for the mouth of Hashem has spoken.

What is the connection between Yom Kippur and Shabbos?

On the surface, the mood of Shabbos is extremely different from that of Yom Kippur. Shabbos is celebrated with physical delicacies; Yom Kippur represents the ultimate abstinence from the physical world and its pleasures.

And yet, the connection between the two days may be closer than what we think at first glance. Consider the words of the *Sifra* (Vayikra 78):

ומניין שיום הכיפורים אסור באכילה ובשתייה וברחיצה ובסיכה ובתשמיש המיטה ובנעילת הסנדל תלמוד לומר שבתון שבות, יכול תהא שבת בראשית אסורה בכלום תלמוד לומר שבתון הוא לכם ועינינתם, הוא אסור בכולן ואין שבת בראשית אסור בכולן.

“How do we know that on Yom Kippur one may not eat, drink, wash, anoint oneself, wear leather shoes, or engage in marital intimacy? The pasuk teaches us these prohibitions by describing Yom Kippur as a ‘Shabboson.’ Perhaps one is prohibited from engaging in these acts on a typical Shabbos? The pasuk tells us that this is not so when it says that IT [Yom Kippur] is a Shabboson — IT is marked by these prohibitions, not a typical Shabbos.”

The *Sifra* considers the possibility that a typical Shabbos would be observed like Yom Kippur, abstaining from food, drink, and other physical pleasures. Although the *Sifra* rejects the comparison, the very fact that it entertains the possibility of a Yom Kippur-like Shabbos is fascinating. Why would one think of observing Shabbos in a manner similar to Yom Kippur?

Our perplexity at a Yom Kippur-like Shabbos stems from our impression of Yom Kippur as primarily a Day of Atonement — for which abstinence is totally appropriate as a vehicle for atoning our sins — while viewing Shabbos as primarily a day of rest — during which physical pleasures enhance our sense of relaxation and enjoyment. While this is true, both Yom Kippur and Shabbos share a third theme; they both serve as times for us to transcend our physical reality and embrace the spiritual.

In fact, Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam (*HaMaspik*, pp. 7-8 in the Feldheim edition) suggests that a pious person who truly understands the essence of Shabbos refrains from eating and drinking on Shabbos. He is so connected to the spiritual and so removed from the physical that he feels no desire for food and drink. In this understanding, every Shabbos is ideally observed in a manner similar to Yom Kippur. While the *Sifra* cited above rejects the idea the Torah mandates that Shabbos be observed like Yom Kippur, apparently — according to Rabbi Avraham — the Torah nonetheless believes that it would be ideal to observe a Yom Kippur-like Shabbos every week.

According to this unique position of Rabbi Avraham, we can readily understand why Yeshaya transitions seamlessly into a discussion of Shabbos after describing Yom Kippur. Shabbos is a weekly version of Yom Kippur. Both emphasize the transcendence of the mundane and the embrace of the spiritual. In fact, the truly pious person aims to create a “Yom Kippur” every single Shabbos!

Of course, this position of Rabbi Avraham is quite unique, and, on the surface, seems to fly in the face of the halachic requirement to have three meals on Shabbos. (See footnote 17 in the Feldheim edition for an attempt to reconcile Rabbi Avraham’s position with normative Halacha.) But while his statement that ideally one should eschew eating and drinking on Shabbos is unusual, his general view of Shabbos as a time to escape the mundane is certainly mainstream.

In fact, this very passage in Yeshaya encourages us to see Shabbos as a day on which ordinary pursuits are curtailed.

וכבדתו שלא יהא מלבושך של שבת כמלבושך של חול ... מעשות דרכיך שלא יהא הילוכך של שבת כהילוכך של חול ממצוא חפצך חפצך אסורין חפצי שמים מותרין ודבר דבר שלא יהא דבורך של שבת כדבורך של חול

[If] you honor it — *your dress on Shabbos should be different than your weekday dress; by not engaging in your own ways* — *your manner of walking on Shabbos should be different than that of weekdays; from seeking your needs* — *your needs are prohibited but Mitzvah needs are permitted; or discussing the forbidden* — *your speech on Shabbos should be different than your weekday speech.*

Shabbos 113a

Perhaps according to the normative Halachic position that eating and drinking on Shabbos is mandated, the flow of the verses in Yeshaya is as follows:

Yom Kippur is a day in which we escape the mundane. In truth, every Shabbos is also a day in which we escape the mundane. We do so by changing our dress, our gait, and our speech to focus more on the spiritual. Unlike Yom Kippur, however, Shabbos is a day on which we can escape the mundane while still engaging in the physical pleasure of eating and drinking.

The verses therefore emphasize that, despite our attempts to make our Shabbos dress, gait, and speech unique and sanctified — we still call Shabbos a “delight,” a day on which we engage in the physical pleasures of eating and drinking. It is not coincidental that the verses lay down the prohibitions to treat Shabbos like a weekday in the very same breath in which they speak of the need to celebrate Shabbos with food and drink. Both elements are meant to connect Shabbos with Yom Kippur. In one sense Shabbos, like Yom Kippur, bids us to flee from the mundane and everyday; in another sense, the verses remind us that Shabbos enables us to eschew the mundane while still embracing physical pleasures. In that way it is unlike Yom Kippur.

Whether or not the “ideal” Shabbos includes food and drink, the verses from Yeshaya clearly instruct us that there are elements of Yom Kippur that we can take with us on a weekly basis. Every Shabbos is, in some ways, a mini-Yom Kippur. Let us resolve to carry the message of Yom Kippur with us on a weekly basis throughout the year.



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