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Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

The Treasures of Torah

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E10)

What is the relationship between Torah and Shabbos? Are food and rest central on Shabbos or is Torah central? Let us immerse ourselves in the subject and discover a way to combine the two.

Creation for Torah

Chazal teach us that the world was created on condition that Klal Yisroel would accept the Torah. And both the completion of Creation and the giving of the Torah to Klal Yisroel were on Shabbos. In a word, that means that maximum Kedusha (the Torah) met maximum Kedusha (the Shabbos). And with that combination, the mission of Klal Yisroel was set in motion. The centrality of Torah in the theme of Shabbos cannot be overstated. The Midrash spells it out clearly:¹ The Torah expressed concern over the fact that it was at risk of being neglected now that Klal Yisroel (upon entering Eretz Yisroel) would be occupied producing their daily bread. Hakodosh Baruch Hu then became the Shadchan, so to speak. Shabbos would become the mate for the Torah. On Shabbos, when Klal Yisroel are freed from all other concerns, they can give themselves fully to the precious Torah. It is not possible to disconnect Shabbos from the Torah. The question is only how to manage the connection. As we will see, managing this 'shidduch' can be challenging.

Two opinions in the Yerushalymi

The Yerushalmi² cites two, seemingly incompatible opinions about Shabbos. One opinion is that Shabbos was given to Klal Yisroel for eating and drinking, which translates to the term עניג. Another opinion is that Shabbos was only given to Klal Yisroel for learning Torah. The two opinions seem far apart, indeed!

*Growing in
Torah and
enjoying each
precious
moment of the
day must
permeate every
part of Shabbos.*

No conflict between the two views

The *Meforshim* agree that there is no conflict between the two views. The Halachic resolution of the two views considers what the person does during the week. Those who toil in Torah all week long were given Shabbos to recharge their batteries so that they can carry on their precious learning for the week to come. Those who earn their daily bread during the week were given Shabbos so that they can immerse themselves in the study of Torah. Both views agree that Shabbos is only for the study of Torah, but different people advance their Torah study differently on Shabbos.

Ironically, it is precisely those who toil in Torah all week who forgo their 'entitlement' to indulge on Shabbos. Their love for Torah does not let

¹ בראשית רבה פרק י"א: ח

² תלמוד ירושלמי שבת טו: ג



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them be 'reasonable' and take it easy on Shabbos.³ An example of this 'unreasonable love' was shown to us by the saintly Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel זצ"ל, the legendary Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim.

Rav Nosson Tzvi זצ"ל had a burning love for Torah such that, even while burdened with the debilitating effects of Parkinson's Disease, he devoted himself with Mesiras Nefesh to Torah. When he was asked why he did not take advantage of Shabbos to ease up on his learning and rest, he concealed his 'unreasonable' love for Torah with a 'reasonable' explanation. He said that when his יתירה – the extra Neshama which is granted to each of us on Shabbos – returns to its heavenly abode on מוצאי שבת, they will ask it what it learned over Shabbos and what חידושים were culled from that learning. He did not want to leave his יתירה without a response to the heavenly question.

Another possible resolution

There is, perhaps, another way to join the two opinions stated in the Yerushalmi. Shabbos was given both for עונג and for Torah. And the way forward is to make sure that one's learning on Shabbos is עונג – pleasurable, and to make sure that one's שבת, eating and drinking, is filled with Torah study. On Shabbos we are meant to learn what we enjoy and enjoy what we learn.

This is not simply a clever way to combine the two opinions. This combination finds its way into the Halacha. If one would become so taxed by learning new material that one would suffer a loss of עונג שבת then one should review familiar

material rather than delve deeply into new material. But if one has the capacity to dig into one's learning and enjoy producing a חידוש – a novel understanding of חז"ל – then that becomes one's calling for Shabbos. The key is to ensure that one maximizes one's Torah *and* one's enjoyment.

Examples of Torah on Shabbos

My father, Rav Avrohom Zelig Krohn זצ"ל, was a master at finding the point where תורה and עונג meet. As we were growing up in Kew Gardens, Queens, my father זצ"ל took pains to make sure that there was an early Minyan in our Shul. The early Davening afforded an opportunity for combining תורה and עונג. He would arrange Kiddush for us after Davening at home which was the prelude to joining with him to learn עין יעקב. Here was an opportunity to highlight Chazal's approach to יראת שמים and אמונת חכמים. We were learning *and* we were enjoying.

And it was not just for us, his children. Many well-known figures in contemporary Jewish life got their foundations in תורה and אמונה from the lessons that my father ע"ה taught on those Shabbos mornings.

And the lessons were not just meant for the boys. I recall my sisters sitting around the table, soaking up the lessons that have guided our lives since. The link between תורה and עונג filled the air. And, looking back, it was that special Shabbos combination of תורה and עונג that inspired us to create Shabbos learning

³ כנאמר שאהבה מקלקלת את השורה



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opportunities for our children, for our grandchildren, and for our guests! בס"ד

Not a classroom

Rav Matisyahu Solomon שליט"א has pointed out the risks associated with forcing children to perform or with correcting them on Shabbos when they recall their lessons. I leave it to the teachers to decide if such practices are necessary in the classroom, but they have no place where the aim is to link תורה and עונג. Growing in Torah must join with enjoying each precious moment of the day and thus permeate every part of Shabbos; there is no place for putting one aside in favor of the other. If joining the two requires some creativity, then now is the time to tap into that creativity.

The role of preparation

When we think about the coming Shabbos, we must ask ourselves if we are looking forward to studying and sharing Torah on Shabbos. That

requires special attention to our relationship with Torah during the week leading up to Shabbos. We must each do what it takes to align our internal compass so that we cannot wait to learn, both ourselves and with our children, on Shabbos. The key is to seek out and find the parts and aspects of Torah that you love and are drawn to.

Children learn and pick up our values with amazing antenna. What interests us will interest them. Our curiosity becomes theirs. Shabbos is not the time to force oneself to learn or to say a 'required' Dvar Torah at the table, a 'to-do' on our list. It is an opportunity to let your interest and curiosity about Torah shine through. That is how children grow to have a thirst for Torah which they associate with pleasure and joy. If this message helps you to prioritize the Torah that you enjoy during the week so that you look forward to Shabbos learning, then you are on the right road.

Takeaway: I will try to blend תורה and עונג so that my Shabbos is filled with both simultaneously.