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THE MEANING OF THE SABBATH:
I. How Jewish Law Defines It

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1. Allow me to present to you certain characteristic problems facing modern man which will probably seem unrelated to you. They are aspects of the "mess" in which our civilization finds itself
 - A. Loneliness...sense alienation...how many can stay alone one day -no telephone TV etc without feeling depressed and imminent panic of being isolated
 - B. Piety, genuine spirituality, once mark authentically religious person, now very rare.
 - C. In an age of time-saving devices, we have less time than ever... we actually look for something to do even if essentially purposeless
 - D. People are becoming more and more impersonal...cogs in machine called society.... incapable of asserting true and full individuality
 - E. Worst of all: Modern man has feeling of omnipotence - he can do everything, and all made for him. Feels world belongs to him, for him to exploit as he wishes, no responsibility at all. Egomania, collective selfishness
 - 1) Natural Resource Conservation
 - 2) Science - no responsibility at all! therefore make H-Bombs and test without responsibility...Nazi Dr. Klauberger and sterilization experiments
 - 3) Economics - dumping surplus food when neighbor starves - results from sense of absolute ownership, mastery Nature
 - 4) Tyranny - feeling of ownership Nature transfers to same over other men - one generation: Hitler and Stalin....
2. Ask you to remember these matters, back of mind, while we digress to another area
3. The institution of SHABBOS, so prominent in the Bible, can be viewed from many different perspectives - next week, Please Gd, we shall discuss the dimensions given to it by the Prophets and by the Kabbalah - Jewish Mysticism. But that essential part of SHABBOS involving prohibition work - LO SAASEH KOL MLACHAH....is treated almost exclusively by the Hlacha. The word MLACHAH * work, and the entire concept, is one of most misunderstood of all by moderns. Have used subjective, hazy, vague definitions to justify complete subversion of what G-d demands of us through Torah. We are told:
 - *smoke - not work
 - *gardening - pleasurable, must enjoy self on Shabbos etc etc
 Well, what DOES "work" mean with regard to Sabbath Law?
4. First - some other definitions of work:
 - *Businessman - profitable labor
 - *Workman - physical labor
 - *Medical doctor - muscular exertion
 - *Physicist - force times distance
5. well, if at least four independent definitions, meanings, why do people assume Halachic meaning work must be the one used by the workingman, not by others - or completely other? Can't it have much deeper, loftier, more meaningful definition? It does - & in order to understand it, let give illustrations
6. Oral Law (Halachah) - 39 major categories, as: plowing, sowing seeds, cutting, building, writing, kneading, grinding, burning, sowing, weaving etc.

7. What is common demoninator?

- A. CREATIVE - something new created, something changed - ground softened, life begun, something built, meaning established, garment begun from mere threads etc etc
- B. MATERIAL CREATIVITY - something created in Nature
- C. above implies INTERFERENCE in and CONTROL of NATURE, natural process

8. So intent Shabbos laws is to prevent our interference with & control over nature this one day. Complete relinquishment mastery physical nature. Why? What mean?

9. why? - BEINI UVEIN BNEI YISR EL OSE HI LOLAM KI SHEISHESH YAMIM ASAH HASHEM ES HASHAMAYIM VES HAARETZ UVAYOM HASHVII SHAVASS VAYINAFASH

- * cessation this kind creative MLACHAH sign that G-d rested too on 7th day. Thus is a human testimony of authentic belief in G-d - is a witness of existence, creativity of G-d.
- * more important - indicates not only G-d rested 7th day - BUT THAT HE CREATED ON THE OTHER 6.
- * means therefore that we recognize all nature, world, universe BELONGING TO G-D, since He created it.
- * thus, by not interfering natural process this one day we indicate our awareness that G-d is the master of nature, world, NOT WE - we are not petty divinities

* example: one day year one street on Columbia U. campus closed - legal sign that street belongs to NYC, just lent to Columbia. So too...

10.

Consequences of this idea which can be expressed only by Sabbath observance:

- A. We are not the masters of Nature. It is merely entrusted to us by its rightful Owner, and hence we have responsibilities as well as privileges. With this kind of attitude a man will never permanently damage natural resources; will never prostitute Science, or knowledge Nature to point where he is irresponsible, where he sets off H-bombs at leisure or sterilizes human beings as part of scientific experiment; will never grow crops and then dump them while neighbor starves - for the produce of Nature not his to destroy - it is the Lord's, to wit: he withdraws from Natural control every 7th day; will never imagine that he is the master of humans and can dictate their fates - for he is not even master of his mute, material property, his natural environment.

THIS IS THE SUPREMELY ETHICAL, HUMANITARIAN, DEEPLY RELIGIOUS RESULT OF SHMIRAS SHABBOS.

- B. If we are not permitted constant involvement with mute nature, then we are much higher than it, prevented from identifying selves with it and imagining selves just two-legged erect animals. Not masters of or part of Nature, but SERVANTS OF G-D. That means that we DO have capacity for piety, genuine spirituality, unselfishness. Have never met genuinely deeply religious Jew who violated Sabbath. Shmiras Shabbos is what gives man capacity to transcend self, become bigger person - that is meaning of KIDDUSH....meaning of Chazal that ..NESHAMAH YESETRAH..

- C. In addition to not being masters of Nature, and being much above it, we are, in a positive sense CLOSE TO G-D. That knowledge, that we are of deep concern to G-d, a knowledge that can come only when G-d is of deep concern to us, dispels loneliness and solitude. The essential loneliness of modern man is a result of his estrangement from his spiritual origins - from G-d. Shmiras Shabbos makes man feel G-d is with him. —that indicated in second reason Bible gives for Shabbos - not only Creation, but YETZIAS MITZRAYIM - under natural circumstances we never would have become a people, we would have remained slaves, disappeared. But close to G-d, hence not abandoned.

- D. If we must desist from involvement nature etc., then we - for firsttime - have genuine opportunity to make real contact with OTHER PEOPLE, to find each other out, get to know each other, learn who and what we are, learn love and sympathy and closeness. If you take one day a week, & no travel, no machines, no telephone, no TV, no office, no shopping, then father & son, husband & wife, mother & daughter, neighbors, first have time on hands - and TIME THAT CAN BE USED CREATIVELY - in spiritual and personal sense. Go to shul together, eat together (in leisure), real conversation, read together etc.

E. Finally, one who has observed the Shabbos and learned to understand it as we have explained it, i.e. has grasped the great truth inherent in the Halachic formulation of "work", will first find HIMSELF, learn that he is not abandoned to natural forces, that he is of great worth as an individual, that he is a being created in the Image of G-d. Frequently, people tell me when ill or in great distress - wonder why I lose hope, despair, so terribly frightened, while my father who was plain, simple, pious Jew never panicked in trouble, was able to have real and powerful faith.....reason: his Shmiras Shabbos, even if he didn't articulate it consciously, taught him that just as he was not master of nature, he never became its slave, that nature as well as man is servant of Almighty, and hence it is not disease (destructivity of Nature) which can act independently to harm him, nor medicines (constructive natural forces) which alone can save him. It is G-d who controls Nature - nay, Nature is merely the creation of G-d who acts through it, and hence no doctor can frighten him by saying that no medicine can help. Only G-d can say that - and the truly pious person is more sensitive to the word of G-d than the highly learned scientist.

11. We have attempted to show, therefore, that Sabbath Observance is much different from the shallow interpretation of it given by most people from innocent ignorance. It is not a matter of just "enjoying ones self" in the vulgar way, nor a matter of desisting from use of the muscles, though both are included. It means any creative labor, any interference with the natural process, and behind this prohibition is the great truth we have discussed heretofore.

12. Allow me to conclude with something that great and beloved sage, the CHOFETZ CHAIM, once said: OSE HI LE'OLAM - a "sign" - what means? - when umbrella maker in business, he hangs out umbrella in front store - jeweler a watch - doctor a shingle - and if Jewish people want to show that they are in business, that their partnership with G-d is going strong and business flourishes - they too must have sign - and that sign is: THE SHABBOS... OSE HI LE'OLAM BEINI