



JUDAISM FOR LIVING SERIES

THE HOLY MITZVAH OF KIDDUSH

SOURCE SHEET AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Many of us know that observing Shabbos is one of the 10 commandments, yet in the Torah's two accounts of the giving of the 10 commandments, Shabbos is surprisingly described somewhat differently each time:

The first time, the book of Shemos (Exodus), describing the episode in "real time," renders the commandment as follows:

SOURCE 1: TORAH - EXODUS (SHEMOS) 20:8

8. Remember the Shabbos day to make it **holy**

ח זכור את־יום השַׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

When Moses recounts the episode in Deuteronomy (Devarim) the wording changes:

SOURCE 2: TORAH - DEUTERONOMY (DEVARIM) 5:12

12. Guard the Shabbos day to keep it holy
as Hashem your God commanded you.

יב שָׁמֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

Question: The verses use different expressions to describe the nature of the obligation to keep Shabbos holy. One says "**Remember**" while the other says "**Guard**." What is the difference between these two terms?

When the Torah says "**Remember**," it is a positive commandment, something active that you should do. When it says "**Guard**," it is a negative commandment - you have to prevent something from happening, by not doing something. Really, the entire Torah is made up of positive and negative commandments, like, "eating matzah" and "not eating chometz".

Question: Why do you think the Torah is made up of both negative and positive commandments?

- Our free will seems to be operative on two levels, avoiding temptations to do negative (often bodily oriented), while also tapping into soulful yearnings to do positive.
- We also have internal spiritual drives, both to love and to fear - to come close and to back away. Positive mitzvos inspire and are inspired by love (coming closer), while negative mitzvos are associated more with fear/awe (backing away).

Question: Can you think of anything different about the negative commandment of “guarding the Shabbos”, that makes it a little different from the classical negative commandment?

With respect to Shabbos, it is important to point out that unlike most negative commandments, “Guarding the Shabbos to keep it holy” has a positive aspect to it. By guarding the Shabbos – not doing prohibited work - we activate a state of rest and tranquility which is a positive Shabbos creation! In a sense, the “don’t do’s” of Shabbos also create a great big “Do”!

Perhaps, maybe this is why we call a person that keeps Shabbos a “Shomer Shabbos - guarder of Shabbos”, because the mitzvah of “Guarding - Shamor” includes both the positive and negative mitzvos of Shabbos!

With this as an introduction, let’s take a look at the first verse, “**Remember**”, a little more closely:

Question: The verse from Exodus, above, has two instructions regarding Shabbos. What are they?

The two instructions are “**Zachor - Remember**” and “**L’kadsho - to make it holy.**”

Question: What does the Torah mean when it says you should remember Shabbos? Just don’t forget what day of the week it is. Or, is it telling us to do something more meaningful?

The following source, Nachmanides’ (Ramban) commentary on the Torah, quotes a midrash (Mechilta) commenting upon our verse - “Remember the Shabbos to make it holy”.

SOURCE 3A: NACHMANIDES (RAMBAN) ON EXODUS (SHEMOS) 7:11

And in the Mechilta we find: “Rabbi Yitzchak says: ‘You should not count [the days of the week] as others count them. Rather you should count them with reference to the Sabbath.’” The meaning of this is that other nations count the days of the week in such a manner that each day is independent of the other; they call each day by a separate name or by a name of the heavenly bodies [such as Sunday, which means “sun’s day],” or by any other names which they call them. But Israel counts all days with reference to the Sabbath: “first day of the Sabbath,” “second day of the Sabbath.” This is of the essence of the commandment which we have been obligated: to **remember** the Sabbath always - every day [of the week].

ובמכילתא (מכילתא דרבי
ישמעאל שמות כ':ז): רבי יצחק
אומר לא תהא מונה בדרך
שאחרים מונים, אלא תהא
מונה לשם שבת. ופירושה,
שהגוים מונים בימי השבוע
לשם הימים עצמן, יקראו לכל
יום שם בפני עצמו, או על
שמות המשרתים, כנוצרים, או
שמות אחרים שיקראו להם,
וישראל מונים כל הימים לשם
שבת, אחד בשבת, שני בשבת,
כי זו מן המצוה שנצטוונו בו
לזכרו תמיד בכל יום

Question: What is the Mechilta telling us to do in order to remember the Shabbos?

The Torah is telling us that remembering Shabbos is relevant every single day of the week. We have to remember the Shabbos by referring to the days of the week by their relationship to it.

Question: How do we do we fulfill this obligation?

Every day, after Shacharis (morning prayers) we say a special chapter of Psalms related to that day. Before we do so, we proclaim, "Today is the first day of the Shabbos," and so on throughout the week.

Question: This is all very nice, remembering Shabbos during the week, but the verse implies remembering Shabbos on Shabbos itself! The Mechilta seems to neglect that entirely!?

Perhaps the Ramban's continuation of his commentary above will shed some light on this question:

SOURCE 3B: NACHMANIDES (RAMBAN) (IBID.)

Our Rabbis have yet another Midrash on the word **l'kadsho** (to make it **holy**), namely, that we are to sanctify it by the utterance of words. Here too G-d commanded that we remember the Sabbath day by **proclaiming its sanctity**. And so the Rabbis have said in the Mechilta: "To keep it holy - Sanctify it by **reciting a blessing**."

אבל לרבותינו עוד בו מדרש
ממלת לקדשו, שנקדש אותו
בזכרון וכו' אף כאן צוה שנזכור
את יום השבת בקדושנו אותו.
וכך אמרו במכילתא: "לקדשו"
- קדשהו בברכה

Question: What does the Torah mean when it says we should make Shabbos "holy"? Shabbos was designated as a holy day from the beginning of Creation by the Creator Himself!

While it's certainly true that Shabbos is holy - special, distinct and separate from the rest of the days of the week - our mitzvah is to acknowledge and recognize this for ourselves, our families and the rest of the Jewish People, and in so doing, connect to this holiness.

Question: So how do we fulfill this mitzvah?

We do this by making Kiddush (**from word "kadosh"- holy**), which is a brachah (blessing) describing the special nature of Shabbos and thanking God for sharing this gift with us. So, what separates the mitzvah of **Zachor** accomplished during the week, from the mitzvah of **Zachor** performed only on Shabbos, is this **special acknowledgment of Shabbos made through Kiddush**. Now let's take a closer look at exactly what the Torah wants us to do for Kiddush.

SOURCE 4: TALMUD - NAZIR 4A – COMMENTARY OF REBBENU ASHER (ROSH)

While it is true that Kiddush (the brachah) is a Torah obligation, the fact that it must be said over wine is not (it is Rabbinic).

נהי דקידוש הוי דאורייתא וכו' קידוש
על היין לאו דאורייתא

Question: What is the difference between the Torah obligation to make Kiddush and the Rabbinic one?

The Torah says that a person has to make a statement expressing the fact that Shabbos is special and not like the other days of the week. This obligation can be fulfilled by the declaration of the sanctity of Shabbos which is found in the Shabbos evening prayer. The Rabbis added to the Torah obligation and said that a person should say Kiddush over a glass of wine, before the evening meal.

Question: Why do you think the Rabbis added this aspect to the obligation of Kiddush?

- Shabbos is a day which emphasizes the synthesis of the physical and spiritual in life. Adding a physical element to the mitzvah by making the blessing over wine reminds us to elevate the physical in our lives.
- There also might be a more global intent being expressed, one not limited to the mitzvah of Kiddush. The Rabbis divide the interactions that man has with the world into three categories - Machshava, Dibur and Maaseh - Thought, Speech and Action. The Rabbis added a physical action to Kiddush, which already has an element of thought and speech, to enhance it and allow for the full integration of man's personality in this mitzvah.

ONE FINAL TWIST ON KIDDUSH

As an introduction to this last section, we have seen that the Torah obligation to make Kiddush is only over words and is fulfilled in the Shabbos evening prayer service. However, we say Kiddush over wine rabbinically at our meals.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger, in the next source, is weighing in on the question of whether merely mentioning Shabbos in a greeting may actually be a fulfillment of Kiddush:

SOURCE 5: RABBI AKIVA EIGER, CODE OF JEWISH LAW DAILY LIVING (271:2)

It would seem that it is not only in tefillah [that a person fulfills his obligation of Kiddush] but even anyone who mentions Shabbos and says "Good Shabbos" also fulfills his obligation, **because he has mentioned the Shabbos.**

לכאורה לאו דוקא תפלה
אלא דכל שמזכיר שבת
ואומר שבתא טבתא ג"כ
יוצא דמ"מ הזכיר שבת

Question: We already saw that the Torah obligation of Kiddush does not require wine. What is this source adding?

Rabbi Akiva Eiger says that merely greeting someone with the words, "Good Shabbos" satisfies the Torah obligation of Kiddush.

Question: Many of us have non-religious Jewish friends, family members or neighbors. Is there a practical application to Rabbi Akiva Eiger's ruling that may apply to these people on Shabbos?

Yes, that's right. By extending a Shabbos greeting to another Jew, they might very well get a biblical mitzvah of Kiddush, even without hearing it at a Shabbos table over wine in the usual manner!

Question: Do you think the non-religious Jew needs only to hear the greeting or must there be more of an acknowledgment on their part?

Question: What do you think the reason might be that such a watered-down acknowledgment of Shabbos might still be a fulfillment of the verse "remember the Shabbos day to make it holy"?

Consider the following source which sheds light on this matter:

Question: The Torah says, “Remember the Shabbos to make it holy,” and the mitzvah of Kiddush comes from the words to make it holy. How does saying “Good Shabbos” make the day holy?

SOURCE 6: MINCHAS ASHER (R' ASHER WIESS) ON THE TORAH: EXODUS (SHEMOS 31)

It seems that Rabbi Akiva Eiger understands that the mitzvah is to mention Shabbos because of its praise-worthiness and **holiness**, and when you say to your friend “Good Shabbos,” this is a way to **remember Shabbos and sanctify it because you don’t greet your friend this way on any other day of the week**, nor do you mention the day in your greeting.

ונראה דסבירא ליה לרבי עקיבא
איגר וכו' להזכיר את השבת
משום שבחו וקדושתו וכו' ובמה
שאומר לחבירו “שבתא טבא” הוי
זכירת שבת וקידוש דהלא ביום
אחר אינו מקדים חבירו בדרך זה
ואינו מזכיר את היום בברכתו

As Rabbi Weiss alludes to above, saying “Good Shabbos” implicitly recognizes the fact that Shabbos is **different** than the other days of the week; after all, we don’t greet each other with a “Good Tuesday” or “Good Wednesday”. That is enough to fulfill the requirement of sanctifying the Shabbos, since by saying “Good Shabbos” we are **verbalizing an awareness that Shabbos is unique and distinct - “holy.”** This, according to Rabbi Akiva Eiger, would be enough to fulfill the biblical requirement of making Kiddush!

So next time you greet your neighbors on Shabbos, remember that not only are you being friendly, you are involved in a mitzvah too!

SUMMARY:

- There are two central aspects of Shabbos symbolized by “keeping Shabbos - Shamor” and “remembering Shabbos - Zachor.” “Keeping Shabbos” is refraining from doing actions prohibited on Shabbos, while “remembering Shabbos” is accomplished through Kiddush.
- Shabbos is the one mitzvah, where fulfilling the negative commandment (refraining from work) not only doesn’t undermine the holiness of Shabbos, but actually creates the context which allows us to connect with the holiness of Shabbos.
- There is also an aspect of remembering Shabbos on each day of the week, thereby bringing Shabbos into one’s everyday life.
- The biblical fulfillment of Kiddush is through words, while the Rabbis added a physical component over a cup of wine, getting all of one’s human faculties involved with the mitzvah - thought, speech and action.
- Greeting people with “Good Shabbos!” highlights the fact that Shabbos is different from the rest of the week, and is therefore a form of “I’kadsho” (making it holy) by setting it apart.