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Integrative Rest

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1.

SHALL NOT CEASE

From the verse “and day and night shall not cease,”¹ the Gemara² infers:

A Gentile who rests on Shabbos, *ששבת*, is liable to receive the death penalty, as the verse says, “and day and night shall not cease, *לא ישובתו* {rest}.”³ And the Master said, “Their warning is their death” {i.e., the punishment for a Gentile who violates any prohibition of which the Torah forewarns them is execution}.

The Gemara then adds: “Ravina says: ‘even {if a Gentile rests} on a Monday.’” Rashi explains⁴ that according to Ravina, the admonition, “shall not cease, *לא ישובתו*” applies not only “on Shabbos, the day of rest for the Jewish people, or Sunday, the day on which Christians rest.” Rather, “the Torah forbids them from any {prolonged} idleness. Meaning, they should not abstain from work, even on a day that is not designated for rest.”

Rambam,⁵ however, implies that the prohibition for a Gentile to rest “even on a weekday” is (not because, “the Torah forbids them from any {prolonged} idleness,” but) because “they are not to be allowed to create a new religion or create mitzvos for themselves on their own initiative.” Therefore, the law that “a Gentile who rests, even on a weekday... is liable to receive the death penalty”⁶ applies only when “he observes that day as a Shabbos.” Thus, Rambam maintains that the clause, “shall not cease, *לא ישובתו*,” means that Gentiles may not observe Shabbos, nor may they observe a different day as Shabbos.

We need to clarify (according to Rambam’s opinion): What is the connection between this admonition (that Gentiles may not observe Shabbos, nor may they observe a different day as Shabbos) with the simple meaning of the verse, “shall not cease”? The simple meaning of the verse is that the cycles and

¹ *Bereishis* 8:22 {The context of the verse is Hashem’s promise to Noach never to destroy the world again and to ensure that the cycles of nature continue. The full verse reads, “Continually, all the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”}

² *Sanhedrin* 58b.

³ {*לא ישובתו* can also mean, “they shall not rest (observe Shabbos).”}

⁴ S.v., “*Amar Ravina*.”

⁵ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” ch. 10, par. 9.

⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid*.

patterns of nature will never be nullified or suspended (“seedtime and harvest... and day and night”).

Rashi maintains that “the Torah forbids them from any {prolonged} idleness. Meaning, they should not abstain from work.” According to Rashi, we can appreciate the connection between the two connotations of the phrase, “shall not cease.” That is, Hashem says that there will be no — and consequently, there **should** be no — cessation and suspension {of the natural order}. As Rashi himself explains⁷ that the phrase “shall not cease” means not only that the six seasons (“seedtime and harvest...”) will never be nullified or suspended, but also that humanity should not desist from work.

This is in contrast to Rambam’s opinion. Rambam maintains that the admonishment, “shall not cease” on the Gentiles means (**not** to refrain from resting and abolishing work, but) that they are forbidden to designate a specific day as **Shabbos**. This is perplexing: What is the connection between **this** admonishment and the simple meaning of the phrase “shall not cease” in the context of {the natural order, i.e.,} “seedtime and harvest...”?

2.

RASHI, RAMBAM, AND MIDRASH

The inference above from the verse, “shall not cease,” is also cited by the Midrash⁸ in its comments on the verse,⁹ “See that Hashem has given *you* Shabbos”:

Hashem has given Shabbos to *you*, not to Gentiles. From here we learn that should a Gentile observe Shabbos, not only does he not receive reward, but he is liable to receive the death penalty, as Scripture says, “and day and night shall not cease.” Similarly, it says, “between Me and the Jewish people....”¹⁰ A parable: A king sits, and across from

⁷ *Sanhedrin* 58b, s.v., “*akum sheshavas*.”

⁸ *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 25, sec. 11; see *Devarim Rabbah*, ch. 1, sec. 21.

⁹ *Shemos* 16:29.

¹⁰ *Shemos* 31:17.

him sits the queen. Should someone walk between them, he is liable {to receive the death penalty}.

[True, the Midrash connects “shall not cease” regarding Gentiles with the verse, “See that Hashem has given *you* **Shabbos**.” Nevertheless, the Midrash does not necessarily disagree with the Gemara. Perhaps the statement, “Hashem has given Shabbos to *you* and not to the Gentiles” does not refer (only) to the **day** of Shabbos (i.e., the seventh day), but (also) the **idea** of Shabbos — a day of rest — regardless of the day on which they observe it (as the Gemara says: “even on Monday”).]

Thus, we can conclude that the Midrash maintains that a Gentile is prohibited from observing Shabbos not because “the Torah forbids them from any {prolonged} idleness... they should not abstain from work,” which is Rashi’s opinion. Rather, it is because they may not observe any day as a Shabbos, which is Rambam’s opinion.

There is a difference, though, between the opinions of the Midrash and Rambam: Rambam maintains that the reason that Gentiles may not observe any day as a Shabbos is because “they are not to be allowed to create a new religion or create mitzvos.” In contrast, the Midrash maintains that the reason is that Hashem gave Shabbos only to the Jewish people and not to the descendents of Noah.

We also need to clarify according to the Midrash [aside from the question raised above in Section 1, regarding the connection between the prohibition to observe a day as Shabbos and the literal meaning of the verse, “shall not cease”]: Why is Shabbos observance so negated for Gentiles (to the extent they are not allowed even to designate a different day as a day of rest)? On the contrary, seemingly, it should be encouraged: The verse, “Hashem completed, on the seventh day, His work which He had done, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work which He had done”¹¹ is germane (not only to the Jewish people, like the Exodus from Egypt, and so forth, but) to all of creation. As such,

¹¹ *Bereishis* 2:2.

Shabbos should also have some connection to the conduct of Noahides.¹² Yet, the law is just the reverse — a Gentile is not allowed to institutionalize Shabbos respite!

The question is even more puzzling: Hashem instructed the Jewish people to abstain from working on Shabbos in order to “affix in our souls the belief in the world’s creation.”¹³ Meaning, we believe that the world is not ageless, but rather, created by Hashem. Thus, since Gentiles have no **imperative** to observe Shabbos, and indeed, **may not** observe it, surely this **hinders** them from nurturing a belief in the world’s creation!

3.

BEFORE AND AFTER THE FLOOD

This will be clarified by first prefacing with an explanation of the difference between the world before and after the flood. We find two paradoxical properties:

On the one hand, following the flood, Hashem (promised, and by extension) invested in the world the “strength” of constancy {i.e., the natural cycles} “shall not cease.” This strength was an addition and a novelty in comparison with the state of the world as it was created. According to the way the world was created — although, “Hashem saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good”¹⁴ — sins (could and did) cause the rhythm of nature to be suspended: “Hashem **reconsidered** having made {humanity}... I will blot out....”¹⁵ However, following the flood, Hashem swore¹⁶ and established a covenant that no matter how humanity might behave, the natural order would never stop.

¹² {I.e., all non-Jews, descendants of Noah.}

¹³ *Sefer Hachinuch*, mitzvah 31-32.

¹⁴ *Bereishis* 1:31.

¹⁵ *Bereishis* 6:6,7.

¹⁶ Rashi on *Bereishis* 8:21.

On the other hand, we find that following the flood, the world became weaker. For example (as Ramban says):¹⁷ “Before the flood, people lived very long lives,” whereas afterwards, “the duration of their lives became shorter and shorter.”

4.

DOWN, LOOKING UP; OR UP, LOOKING DOWN

The explanation: Hashem created the world for the Torah¹⁸ [to the extent that “the Holy One made a condition with Creation: ‘If {the Jewish people} accepts My Torah {Creation will continue to exist; otherwise...}’”].¹⁹ *Matan Torah* brought about the connection between the supernal and lower realms.²⁰ For this reason, there needed to be both supernal and lower realms in the world, so that later — at the time of *Matan Torah*, and even earlier, from the beginning of the onset of the “two millennia of Torah,”²¹ when the preparation for *Matan Torah* began — the connection between these two realms (the supernal and lower) could be forged. That is “the lower ones could ascend, and the higher ones could descend.”

The state of these two realms within the world changed from the way they were before the flood to the way they were afterwards: Before the flood, the world’s condition, in general, was consistent with the supernal; following the flood, the world was consistent with the lower realm, as will be explained.

¹⁷ *Bereishis* 5:4; see *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 17:17.

¹⁸ *Rashi* and *Ramban* on *Bereishis* 1:1.

¹⁹ *Shabbos* 88a.

²⁰ *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*VaEra*,” sec. 15; *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 12, sec. 3.

²¹ *Sanhedrin* 97a; *Avodah Zarah* 9a.

5.

THE RAINBOW

On the verse,²² “I have set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth,” the commentators ask:²³ A rainbow is a **natural** occurrence. A rainbow appears when the sun’s rays refract through the clouds (at a specific angle). How, then, can this be a “sign of the covenant”? They answer: After the flood, Hashem created this natural occurrence (that the sun’s rays and the clouds would be in specific positions, and that this would cause the rays to refract through the clouds in a rainbow).

Before the flood, the atmosphere was denser. Therefore, even the clouds (that form from the “mist ascending from the earth”)²⁴ were denser, and they could not absorb and refract the sun’s light. Therefore, at that time, rainbows were non-existent. Specifically after the flood, when the world was further refined, the clouds also became more ethereal — not so dense — to the extent that on occasion, they refract the colors of the sun’s light.

[The same holds true spiritually: Prior to the flood, the world was on such a low level that it could not be refined.²⁵ This is, in fact, why the flood occurred — “to purify the earth²⁶ so that the *avodah*²⁷ of refinement could ensue.”]

Therefore, the rainbow serves as “a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.” For the rainbow depicts the purity and cleansing that the world underwent.

²² Bereishis 9:13.

²³ See *Or HaTorah*, “Noach” (vol. 3) 648a, ff.

²⁴ Bereishis 2:6.

²⁵ End of *Maamar “Es Kashti”* 5654; see *Or HaTorah*, “Noach,” bottom of 652a ff.; *Pelach HaRimon*, “Noach,” *Maamar “Es Kashti,”* sec. 3.

²⁶ See also *Torah Or*, beg. of “Noach” (8c ff.; top of 10a).

²⁷ {Divine service.}

6.

THE FLOOD HELPED EVEN MORE

We need to clarify:

The flood, {which served} “to purify the world,” came (only) because in the generation of the flood “the earth had become corrupt... and the earth had become filled with robbery.”²⁸

Since, “He put the world too into their heart”²⁹ (of man), people’s sins caused the world to become completely coarse.³⁰ The flood removed **this** impurity and coarseness.

However, based on the above — that the rainbow only came into being after the flood because from that time, the clouds (and the world as a whole) became more ethereal — it emerges that through the flood, the world (not only was cleansed of the corruption and impurity of the **Generation of the Flood**, but moreover, the world) became **more** refined than its state before the sin of the Generation of the Flood. The world was purified to an even greater measure than its state at the beginning of Creation (for then, there was **no** rainbow, which exemplified the world’s refined state, as discussed).

7.

CREATION OF THE WORLD — FOR THE TORAH

The explanation: When the world was created, its completeness was related (not to the nature and properties of the world’s existence, per se, but rather) to (the manner of and power invested in) its **creation**: “The world was **fully created**.”³¹ Meaning, **creation** was complete.

²⁸ *Bereishis* 6:11.

²⁹ *Koheles* 3:12; *Zohar*, vol. 1, 195b.

³⁰ *Or HaTorah*, “*Noach*,” 8c ff.

³¹ See *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 12, sec. 6; ch. 14, sec. 7.

However, the flood enabled the world to become **inherently** refined: Hashem gave the world new abilities and properties so that it itself could be refined and elevated.

This explains why the (natural occurrence of the) rainbow came into existence specifically then: True, the sun's rays and the clouds together produce the rainbow, but the clouds play the key role, not the sun's rays. The rays of the sun ("the sun of Hashem") are simple — possessing no color. The rainbow's colors are produced specifically by the clouds that are produced by the moisture that **rises from the earth**. The composition of the moisture that rises is so (refined) that through them the sun's light can be refracted.

Since this property of the earth to become refined (meaning, the world, intrinsically, could become refined and elevated) was innovated only after the flood, therefore, specifically then, it says, "I have set My rainbow in the cloud": Hashem imbued clouds (produced by the earth's vapor) with the necessary qualities to produce a rainbow. Meaning, the "mist rising from the earth" became fine enough to be able to refract the sunlight.

8.

WHAT CHANGED?

Based on the above, we can appreciate why the (initial) Supernal will to create the world (and likewise, that when he completed it, "Hashem saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good") did not prevent His decree to blot out all living things when "the wickedness of mankind was great upon the earth."

³² In contrast, following the flood, Hashem forged a covenant that even when the world would be in a state that would evoke the thought "to bring darkness and destruction to the world,"³³ nonetheless, "never again shall all flesh be cut off..."

³⁴

³² {*Bereishis* 6:5.}

³³ Rashi on *Bereishis* 9:14.

³⁴ *Bereishis* 9:11.

As discussed (in Section 7), “The world was fully created.” This “fullness” was a result of (the manner of) its creation by the Creator (not from the world’s intrinsic nature). Therefore, humanity’s transgressions (which distanced the world from the Creator and His will) precipitated a spiritual fall such that the world’s subsequent refinement and elevation was (practically) impossible.

The sins of the Generation of the Flood caused the world to become so corrupt that the world was filled with robbery — and from the world’s own perspective, there was no hope of refinement or ascent.

[This also explains, on a deeper level, why Noach’s rebuke and warning — “Hashem will bring a flood”³⁵ — did not inspire the people to repent.]³⁶

Therefore, there was no longer any justification for the world’s existence; so “Hashem reconsidered having made man... And He said... I will **blot out**...” (This was because the Divine will for the existence of the world eroded as a result of the world’s descent and its estrangement from Hashem.)

In contrast, after the flood, the world became pure and clean, so that even when in the future, it would find itself in a very lowly spiritual condition, the world can still be refined and elevated (through the *avodah* of repentance). Therefore, Hashem then established the covenant that “never again shall all flesh be cut off... and never again shall there be another flood...,”³⁷ regardless of the state of affairs in the world.

³⁵ *Sanhedrin* 108a ff; see Rashi on *Bereishis* 6:14.

³⁶ True, Adam and Kayin had repented, effectively leading to Hashem’s repeal of His decree **below** (*Bereishis Rabbah*, end of ch. 22). However, their ability to repent was facilitated, possibly, by the positive influence they had received by their association with Gan Eden. (After all, Kayin had been born in Gan Eden (Rashi on *Bereishis* 4:1), whose nature is higher than this world.)

³⁷ {*Bereishis* 9:11.}

9.

TWO OFFSHOOTS OF ONE POINT

In light of this, we can appreciate how the two divergent changes that the world underwent following the flood were not incompatible. True, on the one hand, the world then attained the strength of {persistence, i.e., the natural order} “shall not cease”; on the other hand, “their lives became shorter and shorter.” In fact, however, both characteristics stemmed from the same central point introduced after the flood — the world now endured from “below” {by its own virtues}: Before the flood, the world (was created and) endured on account of the will of the **Creator** (on account of His desire to do “goodness”³⁸). After introducing purity to the world by the flood, Hashem would now constantly recreate and sustain the world on account of **itself** — because of the purification and cleansing within the **world**.³⁹

This central point is the reason for the two paradoxical results discussed above: On the one hand, the world itself became **fitting** that Hashem, Who **never changes**,⁴⁰ should sustain **it**. Therefore, it was now sustained in a way that {its natural order} “shall not cease.” On the other hand, the very fact that after the flood, Hashem began to sustain the world on account of **itself**, caused the world’s constitution to become weaker (reflected in the change that “their lives became shorter and shorter”) in keeping with the limitations of created beings. In contrast, before the flood (when the world was sustained by virtue of Hashem’s kindness), people enjoyed incredible longevity. [As *Tikunei Zohar* says:⁴¹ The reason that people lived long lives then was because their vitality came from “*erech apayim*”⁴² {the Divine attribute of being “slow to anger”} (*arich anpin*).]⁴³

³⁸ {*Michah* 7:18.}

³⁹ This does not contradict the teaching of the Rabbis (*Pesachim* 118a) that says the 26 generations before the giving of the Torah were (all) sustained through the kindness of the Holy One because in this {Divine attribute of kindness}, there are numerous levels.

⁴⁰ *Malachi* 3:6.

⁴¹ The conclusion of *Tikkun* 70.

⁴² {*Shemos* 34:6.}

⁴³ {Lit. “the long face,” a Kabbalistic reference to the external aspect of the *sefirah* of *keser*.}

10.

BRINGING THEM TOGETHER

These two periods — before the flood, when the world existed from the perspective above; and after the flood, when the world existed from the perspective below — served (as mentioned above in Section 4) to prepare for the third period— the “two millennia of Torah.”⁴⁴ During the two millennia of Torah, the **fusion** between the higher and lower began (as a preparation for the Giving of the Torah).

This also explains why Avraham and Sarah begot Yitzchak in their old age specifically (Avraham at age 100, and Sarah at age 90). This expressed the bond between the two eras.⁴⁵ In Avraham’s days, the lives of people grew shorter⁴⁶ (even shorter than the lives of the people who lived between the generations of Noach and Avraham) because the Heavenly outflow of energy came from a level of G-dliness that is relative to the world (whereas before then, the flow came from “*erech apayim*,” which is completely beyond the world). Nevertheless, they begot Yitzchak in their old age, as was normal before the flood, when the Heavenly flow came from “*erech apayim*.”

The connection between these two eras — these two worldly states of affairs of supernal and the lower realms — became revealed through Yitzchak's birth. Yitzchak was the first to be born as a Jew. Yitzchak’s descendants would receive the Torah when the linkage between the supernal and the lower realms would be **actualized**.

⁴⁴ {*Sanhedrin* 97a: “The school of Eliyahu taught: Six thousand years is the duration of the world. Two thousand years {are characterized by} chaos; two thousand years {are characterized by} Torah; and two thousand years are the period {of the advent of} Moshiach.”}

⁴⁵ {The first era ended when Avraham was fifty-two years old.}

⁴⁶ Rashi on *Bereishis* 17:17.

11.

SHABBOS CAME, REST CAME

In order for the Jewish people to connect and join the world (the lower realms) with the level (of G-dliness) beyond the world (the supernal realms), the world was created (at the outset) to include the element of **rest** from the work of Creation (of the world).

As Rashi remarks on the verse,⁴⁷ “Hashem completed on the seventh day”: “What was the world lacking? Rest. Shabbos came, rest came. The work was completed and finished.” The work of creating the world during the six days of Creation did not end by {Hashem} creating the **existence** of the world, but rather, by Him creating rest ({analogous with} **non-existence**). This was brought into the world by {Hashem} resting from the work of Creation.⁴⁸

Since every week, the same aspects of the first week of Creation — the seven days of creation — are repeated,⁴⁹ “rest” flows into the world from On High every Shabbos.

12.

TIME AND SPACE = MOVEMENT

However, Shabbos rest is {rooted in a level that lies} beyond the six-day week (and the creative element within them). It is beyond worldly existence, and the world cannot contain it — as explained in numerous sources that Shabbos is beyond time.⁵⁰ Therefore, “rest” only descends (visibly and discernibly) into the inwardness of the world, but in the world’s external layers, no difference between Shabbos and the weekdays is discernible.

⁴⁷ *Bereishis* 2:2.

⁴⁸ See Maharal’s *Tiferes Yisrael*, ch. 40, at length.

⁴⁹ See *Maamar* “*Vayehi BaYom HaShemini*” 5704, sec. 10.

⁵⁰ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Shir Hashirim*,” 25a.

The Jewish people experience the light of Shabbos in a **revealed** way, also affecting their identity, because they connect the world (the lower realms) with aspects of G-dliness beyond the world (the supernal realms). As known, the additional soul that is drawn {into each Jew} on Shabbos transforms the **nature** of the animalistic soul⁵¹ [for this reason, even “ignorant people do not lie on Shabbos”]⁵² and even the nature of the physical body.⁵³

This is not the case regarding the world in general. The world is delimited by time and space, which are correlated with “movement” (the antithesis of rest). Therefore, the aspect of “rest,” which is connected with a level that transcends time and space, cannot illuminate openly in the world.

13.

DEATH PENALTY IMPLIES A LOSS OF A RAISON D'ÊTRE

This also explains why Shabbos rest is negated for Gentiles — to the extent they may not even observe another weekday as a sort of Shabbos:

The purpose of Creation is for the world (including people) to function dynamically (and productively) without any {idle} rest. This is linked with the very existence (time and space) of the world (which was made through the {Divine} “work” during the six days of Creation). Hashem wants the Jewish people to bring the repose of Shabbos — which is {inherently} beyond the existence of the world — into the world.⁵⁴

⁵¹ {The *animalistic soul* is one of the two souls possessed by every Jew. Fundamentally, the animalistic soul is concerned about physicality, and all negative traits are rooted in the *animalistic soul*. Through his divine service, a Jew works to subdue the desires of his *animalistic soul* and to redirect its energy for divine objectives.}

⁵² *Jerusalem Talmud, Dmai 4:1.*

⁵³ As our Sages say (*Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 11, sec. 2.): “The light of a person's countenance during the week isn't comparable to his countenance on Shabbos.”

⁵⁴ Avraham, too, whose life marked the beginning of the “two millennia of **Torah**,” as discussed above, observed Shabbos. (*Bereishis Rabbah* ch. 64, sec. 4; Rashi on *Bereishis* 26:5. The discussion in the commentaries as to how he was permitted to do so is known.)

Therefore, if a Gentile should deviate from the way of life that was set out for him at Creation, and he desires to bring Shabbos into the world, he is liable to receive the death penalty. Meaning, the Gentile forfeits his life, for doing so is the **opposite** of the purpose for which he was created.

14.

This also explains why the prohibition for a Gentile to assign any specific day as Shabbos is alluded to by the verse “shall not cease,” even though the simple meaning of the verse refers to the cessation of the seasons, “seedtime and harvest” (and not to resting on Shabbos): It is because the pronouncement, “shall not cease,” referring to the six seasons, implies a Gentile is prohibited from observing Shabbos: Since Hashem established after the flood that the world’s existence should be unrelenting, to the extent it “shall not cease,” they (Gentiles) may not bring the unboundedness of Shabbos (a level beyond existence) into the world. For this challenges the (unrelenting nature of the) world’s existence, which draws, as it were, from the plane alluded to by the verse,⁵⁵ “I, Hashem, have not changed.”

— Based on talks delivered on *Shabbos parshas Noach* 5721 (1960) and 5724 (1963)

⁵⁵ {*Malachi* 3:6.}