

By Rabbi Avrohom Lipszyc

*The "Object" of Shabbat*

The Sages teach us (-Bereishis Rabba 92:4) on the verse (-Genesis 43:15), "(When) *Joseph saw... he said to the overseer of his house... 'to slaughter an animal and to prepare (for the men will eat with me at lunch),'*" "*prepare, is for nothing other than Shabbat, just as it says (-Exodus 16:8), 'It will be on the sixth day, they shall prepare (meaning, to prepare the manna on Friday in order to eat on Shabbat)....'* *This is to say that Joseph observed the Shabbat before it was given.*" All the mitzvot that our patriarchs, the 11 sons of Jacob, and Joseph kept, were all but mitzvot of the "Person" that the *person* accepted upon themselves the mitzvot that they knew of through diving knowledge, and then from father to son. However, mitzvot as an "Object" did not exist. Meaning, that there were no such things as mitzvot, which would only exist once G-d gives the mitzvot at Mount Sinai. The exception to the rule is the mitzva of Shabbat, which existed from the beginning of creation. The Torah states (-Genesis 2:2-3), "*and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work that He did. And G-d blessed the seventh day and He hallowed it...*" Thus, Shabbat, as a hallowed day, and as day of abstinence from work, already from creation on, "*before it was given.*"

In Shabbat there also exists the *Object*, an existence of its own, and there is Shabbat as a mitzva for the "Person" fulfilling the mitzva. Thus we find in the *Ten Commandments* two different reasons for Shabbat. When the *Ten Commandments* are told in *Exodus*, as they received them, the Torah states (-Exodus 20:8-11), "*Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it... For [in] six days the L-rd made the heaven and the earth... and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the L-rd blessed the Shabbat day and sanctified it.*" However, in Deuteronomy, when Moses reviews the Torah with Israel before his passing, the verses states (-Deuteronomy 5:12-15), "*Observe the Shabbat day, keeping it holy... You must remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that G-d, your G-d, took you out from there... Therefore, G-d, your G-d, commanded you to observe the Shabbat day.*" In *Exodus* the commandment speaks of Shabbat the "Object," which existed since the seventh day of creation. While Deuteronomy speaks of Shabbat as it is a mitzva for the "Person," which was given to Israel after, "*G-d, took you out from there.*"

Thus, even though the "Object" of the mitzva of Shabbat already existed, "*before it was given,*" nevertheless, it was a mitzva "Object" of G-d, "*and He abstained... And He hallowed it...*" and was not yet "given" from there; the spiritual realm, to here; the physical realm. And because of this, the "Person", a 'creation' observing Shabbat, "*before it was given,*" could not have the Shabbat as it was for the 'Creator.' Not until the 'Creator' would give the "Object" of the mitzva of Shabbat to the "Person." In other words, even when the "Person" would do the mitzva of Shabbat, it would remain a spiritual concept, in which the person could only choose to abstain from work, to commemorate, "*and He abstained on the seventh day...*" The "Person," however, was not able to transform the physical day of Shabbat into being a hallowed day, an "Object" of holiness, an "Object" of a mitzva. Different was Joseph, in which the *Torah* attests that Joseph kept the Shabbat, meaning that Joseph's Shabbat was a *Torah* reality, and not just a self-accepted "Person" reality, and thus, Joseph's Shabbat was eternal. The reason why Joseph was the only brother/offspring that could experience the "Object" of Shabbat is, that while the spirituality of the patriarchs and of his brothers were pivoted and dependent upon their being shepherds, abstaining from physical engagement, Joseph engaged with the physical world. Even while Joseph was charged by Pharaoh with (-ibid 41:44), "*and besides you, no one may lift his hand or his foot in the entire land of Egypt,*" he brought about that (-Bereishis Rabba 91:5) all Egyptians would circumcise themselves! Therefore, being that Joseph, even in his master's home (-Genesis 39:2), "*The L-rd was with Joseph...*" thus, it was within Joseph's power to bring the Shabbat from there; the spiritual realm, to here; the physical realm, that when *Joseph* abstained from working on Shabbat, and being that, "*The L-rd was with Joseph,*" thus Joseph's abstaining of work on Shabbat was the experience of the mitzva "Object" of *G-d's*, "*and He abstained... And He hallowed it...*"

With this understanding that Joseph was introducing the "Object" of Shabbat, rather than just the "Person's" observance of not working on Shabbat, we understand why the Torah teaches us this through Joseph's "*preparing*" before Shabbat the food for Shabbat. *Abstaining* from working *on* Shabbat brings about a change in the "Person." The "Person" on this day is resting and not working. The *action* of *preparing* a Shabbat meal *before* Shabbat is influencing on the physical *objects* and *time* of the world, that we must prepare before Shabbat for the special time of the day of Shabbat. Thus, we learn from the verse, "*It will be on the sixth day, they shall prepare,*" that all week we are to think of, and to live with, Shabbat. During the week, if we happen upon a special dish, we set it aside for Shabbat.

And just as, "*before it was given*" there were the "Person" and the "Object" of Shabbat, so too, once the Torah was given, we have the *external* dimension of abstaining from *working*, and there is the *inner* dimension of abstaining from *speaking* in vain, in which we experience *G-d's*, "*and He abstained,*" from, "*And G-d said, 'let there be...,'*" through which G-d created Heaven and Earth. Through which we have the *interior* of Shabbat, which is the *intentions* of the words of Shabbat prayers and of Torah-study, to cleave to G-d, as the verse states (-Exodus 20:10), "*Shabbat unto the L-rd your G-d.*" And this brings immediately to the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach, as our Sages teach (-Shabbat 118b), "*If only the Jewish people would keep two Shabbatot in accordance with their laws --[within one Shabbat we have the two dimensions of Shabbat]-- immediately they are redeemed.*"