SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 30

Vayetze, Sicha 1

The Rambam:

In his conclusion to the Laws of Shabbos, Rambam writes:

"It is explicitly stated in our prophetic tradition that whoever observes the Sabbath according to law and honors it and delights in it according to his ability will receive reward in this world in addition to the reward that is preserved for the world to come, as the verse states: ''You will then delight in God. I will cause you to ride on the high places of the earth, and I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob your ancestor'; thus has the mouth of God spoken.'' (Yeshayahu 58:14)

The Question:

The Rambam's source is seemingly a teaching of Rabbi Yochanah in Meseches Shabbos, which states:

"Anyone who delights in the Shabbat, God gives him a boundless portion, as it is stated: "Then you shall delight in G-d and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the world, and to feast on the inheritance of Yaakov your father. Not that of Abraham… And not that of Yitzchak… Rather, that of Jacob, about whom it is written, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south. (Shabbos 118a)

Yet Rambam deviates from the language of the Gemara significantly. Instead of "anyone who delights," Rambam refers to a more encompassing standard, "whoever observes the Sabbath according to law and honors it and delights in it according to his ability." He does not mention the "boundless portion," but instead adds, "will receive reward in this world in addition to the reward that is preserved for the world to come," a formulation not found in the Gemara at all.

It seems, therefore, that Rambam is employing his own interpretation of the verse in Yeshayvahu and following the Gemara's reading here at all. What is Rambam trying to convey here?

The Explanation:

Why does Rambam say that the reward received in this world for Shabbos observance is "in addition to the reward preserved in the world to come"? This is an obvious point. Rambam has already taught that the physical reward for mitzvos in this world is not the main reward for mitzvos. Obviously the reward in this world is in addition to the world to come!.

Elsewhere, Rambam wrote that the reward for mitzvos in this world serves the purpose of removing obstacles to divine service so that those who desire to serve G-d can do so unencumbered. The reward for Shabbos, Rambam seems to be saying, is not like these other earthly rewards, it is similar in quality to the reward of the world to come, where the purpose is union with G-d, not mere removal of distraction. Rambam therefore clarifies that even though the reward for Shabbos is similar in kind to the world to come, that does not detract from the world to come's reward, and the reward here is in addition to that.

The Rambam makes this point by reading the verse in Yeshayahu literally, "you will then rejoice in G-d," meaning, the reward for Shabbos is rejoicing in G-d Himself, just as the world to come is where a soul rejoices in its connection with G-d.

Rambam therefore classified the action that earns this reward not as a specific form of honoring Shabbos, such as "delighting in it," but as the entire work of "observing the Sabbath according to law and honors it and delights in it according to his ability." When a person invests themselves completely within Shabbos and becomes one with it, the reward mirrors this, and the person becomes one with G-d, as he would in the world to come. This is so since the entire idea of Shabbos is reminiscent of the world to come, a time where work with the materiality of the world ceases and we focus on our relationship with G-d.

The Lesson:

This should encourage us to develop and grow in the study of chassidus and the service of prayer, since both those domains create greater unity with G-d and resemble the quality of Shabbos, day of rest where we focus solely on the reality of G-d.

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