

Take It Easy

written by Yossi Katz

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Do you ever feel like you're "busy doing nothing"? Do you sometimes work endlessly and yet have the distinct sense that you haven't really accomplished much of anything? We all experience those days from time to time, and as difficult as they are, they allude to the incredible possibility that the exact opposite experience is also possible. Imagine doing "nothing at all" while all your work is done for you! Does this sound too good to be true? Actually, it isn't at all. In fact, it's a concept we are all already familiar with – it's called Shabbat!

Our *parsha* states, "Work shall be done for six days, and on the seventh there shall be for you a holy Shabbat" (Exodus 35:2). Why does the verse say, "Work shall be done," instead

of, "You shall work"?

When the Torah first mentions Shabbat, it states, "And God completed on the seventh day His work that He did" (Genesis 2:2). Rashi asks on this verse, "But what was left to complete on the seventh day? What was still missing? The world was missing the creation of rest. When Shabbat was created, rest was created. Now all of the work was complete."

But how could resting complete anything? Usually, if we have worked hard and are tired, we allow ourselves some rest so our bodies can recover before our next undertaking. But Rashi seems to imply that rest was an integral part of the creation, not a prerequisite for starting something new. He seems to imply that without rest, God's creation would be lacking.

Vayekhal Elokim (God completed) also means "God desired." On Shabbat, we are most attuned to perceiving that everything in our lives and in the universe exists and operates exactly according to God's will or desire. The completion that the world was missing was this last piece of information. Everything was set up and running with incredible precision, but without the knowledge that God's hand was behind everything, creation was still incomplete.

By resting on Shabbat, we acknowledge God's Presence. In fact, precisely the forms of work that we engage in during the week are the ones that we are forbidden to perform on Shabbat. By not engaging in them, we demonstrate our faith in God. And we understand that even during the week, when we engage in these forms of work, God is bringing about our every success, and we are simply going through the motions.

There were once two wealthy brothers who lived across the street from each other. One was very generous, the other a miser. A traveler passing through town asked where he could get a warm, nourishing meal and was directed to the home of the generous brother. By mistake, he ended up by the miser.

The miser promised him a good meal if he would first work for many hours performing grueling labor. When the traveler finally finished, the miser told him to go to the house across the street for his meal. After eating his meal, the traveler complained to his host, "I spent so many grueling hours working for the man across the street and was given only a meal in return." His host responded, "I'm sorry, the meal was given to you for free by me, not because of your labor!"

By cultivating faith in God through our observance of Shabbat, we internalize God as the source of all bounty. According to the level of our belief, the Torah says, "Work shall be done" – our work can be automatically done by God. Wouldn't that be nice for a change?

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