

## January 11th 2019 / 5th Shevat 5779

Dear chevreh,

In his beautiful masterpiece, *The Sabbath*, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel teaches that “Shabbat comes with its own holiness; we enter not simply a day, but an atmosphere...a foretaste of paradise.” He goes on to say that the task of Shabbat becomes “how to convert time into eternity, how to fill our time with spirit...on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul.” [The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man, Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1951]

What is this seed of eternity planted in our soul? The Hasidic tradition encourages the practice of *hitbodedut*, “self-seclusion”, advising each person to set aside time during the day to be with her or himself. Shabbat comes whether or not we partake of it but it is up to us to accept the gift -and some would say, responsibilities - of perpetuating the Jewish peoples’ sacred connection to this day which is a reminder of Creation and the Exodus. If we find some glimpse of the eternal on Shabbat, we can bring it into our daily lives. Of course, discovering holiness during the week can enhance Shabbat as well. For example, studying the Torah portion during the week can heighten our experience at Zimra when we hear the Torah being read, infusing it with more meaning from our previous encounter with it.

What would it do for our souls if we devoted some time secluding ourselves in *hitbodedut*, drawing from sanctity of Shabbat, as Rabbi Zvi Elimelech of Dinov suggests. We are so busy usually trying to change things and grasp for anything other than what is before us. Shabbos invites us to let go of ‘doing’ for a day, and allow ourselves to become more of a human ‘being.’ Mary Oliver speaks beautifully to this:

Can You Imagine?

For example, what the trees do  
not only in lightning storms  
or the watery dark of a summer's night  
or under the white nets of winter  
but now, and now, and now - whenever  
we're not looking. Surely you can't imagine  
they don't dance, from the root up, wishing  
to travel a little, not cramped so much as wanting  
a better view, or more sun, or just as avidly  
more shade - surely you can't imagine they just  
stand there loving every  
minute of it, the birds or the emptiness, the dark rings  
of the years slowly and without a sound  
thickening, and nothing different unless the wind,  
and then only in its own mood, comes  
to visit, surely you can't imagine

patience, and happiness, like that.

- Mary Oliver

Speaking of trees, please RSVP to me if you are interested in being part of the evening Tu B'Shevat seder geared towards adults and teenagers on Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup> between 6:30 and 9:00 pm. I will give you more details if you are participating.

I'll look forward to seeing you at services this evening at 7:30 pm.

Wishing everybody a peaceful and restorative Shabbat,

Rabbi Diana