

Integrating Torah into one's life through reflection and conversation can be an incredibly fun and engaging experience. It's a journey of discovery, where ancient wisdom and timeless teachings come to life in our daily experiences. Through reflection, we have the opportunity to dive deep into the rich tapestry of Torah, extracting profound insights and lessons that resonate with our modern lives. The joy lies in the 'aha' moments, those instances when a Torah verse or story suddenly connects with our personal challenges, aspirations, and values. And when we engage in conversations about Torah with others, it becomes an interactive exploration, where diverse perspectives and interpretations enhance our understanding. These dialogues often spark excitement and intellectual curiosity, making the learning process both enjoyable and fulfilling. Torah becomes a vibrant and dynamic part of our lives, offering not just guidance but also a source of endless fascination, connection, and growth.

Consider the following sources as a basis for reflection and conversation with friends and family:

1. Genesis 2:1, The holiness of the sabbath day

The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. On the seventh day G-d finished the work that He had undertaken: [G-d] ceased on the seventh day from doing any of the work. And G-d blessed the seventh day and declared it holy—having ceased on it from all the work of creation that G-d had done.

וַיְכַל הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־אֲצָבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכַל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

2. Exodus 31:13, Shabbat as a commandment

And you, speak to the Children of Israel saying, nevertheless you will guard My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and your children, for your generations, to know that I, Hashem, have sanctified you.

וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אַךְ אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם לָדַעַת כִּי אֲנִי י' ד' מְקַדְּשֵׁיכֶם:

3. Rashi, loc.cit., refraining from work

You, despite the fact that I have appointed you to command them concerning the building of the Mishkan, not let it be a light matter to push off the Sabbath on account of the work.

וְאַתָּה דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאַתָּה אַע"פ שֶׁהִפְקַדְתִּיךָ לְצִוּוֹתָם עַל מְלַאכְתּוֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן, אַל יִקַּל בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְדַחֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת מִפְּנֵי אוֹתָהּ מְלַאכְתָּהּ:

4. Rashi, loc. cit., the unique sign between G-d and the Jewish people

It is a great sign between us, for I have chosen you by letting you inherit the day of rest, upon which I rested.

כִּי אוֹת הוּא בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם. אוֹת גְּדוּלָה הִיא בֵּינֵינוּ, שֶׁשָּׁבַחְתִּי בְּכֶם בְּהִנְחִילִי לָכֶם אֶת יוֹם מְנוּחָתִי לְמְנוּחָהּ:

5. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 58b, the relationship of non-Jews to Shabbat

And Reish Lakish says, "a non-Jew who observes Shabbat is liable to the death penalty, as the verse states (Genesis 8:22), 'and day and night [they] will not rest'. Mar said, "their prohibition is their	וְאֵר"ל עוֹבֵד כּוֹכְבִים שֹׁשְׁבֵת חַיִּיב מִיתָה שְׁנָא' (בְּרֵאשִׁית ח, כב) וַיּוֹם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבּוּתוּ וְאָמַר מִר אֹזְהָרָה שְׁלֵהֵן זוּ הִיא מִיתָתָן אָמַר רַבִּינָא אִפִּי' שְׁנֵי בִשְׁבֵת וְלִיחֻשְׁבָה גְבִי ז' מִצּוֹת כִּי קָא חֲשִׁיב שֵׁב וְאֵל תַּעֲשֶׂה קוּם עֲשֶׂה לֹא קָא חֲשִׁיב
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<p>death”, i.e., death is the standard penalty for transgression of Noahide laws. Ravina said, “even if he made the second day of the week Shabbat”. Objection: But if so, it should have been counted amongst the Seven Mitzvot! Resolution: The Seven Mitzvot only include negative commandments; positive commandments are not included.</p>	
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6. Rashi, loc. cit.

<p>“A non-Jew who ‘rests’”—from his <i>melacha</i> for an entire day is liable to the death penalty, as the verse states (Genesis 8:22), ‘and day and night [they] will not rest’, and this is homiletically understood to refer to abstinence from <i>melacha</i> (productive work), and therefore applies to people. Do not ask: but “[they] will not rest” refers only to the six seasons mentioned in the verse, meaning that the natural cycle of seasons will not be nullified and will not cease to be! For what we are learning from this passage is that the verse also applies to people.</p>	<p>עובד כוכבי' ששבת - ממלאכתו יום שלם חייב מיתה שנא' יום ולילה לא ישבותו וקא דריש ליה לא ישבותו ממלאכה דאבני אדם נמי קאי ולא תימא לא ישבותו אהך ששת עתים דקרא קאי כלומר לא יבטלו ולא יפסקו מלהיות: פשיטא לא גרסי' דהא טובא קמ"ל דאבני אדם קאי:</p>
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7. Torah Temimah on Genesis 8:22:17

<p>It appears to me that Rashi’s reasoning goes accord to the Midrash (Rabbah, Chapter 25), that during the Flood, the constellations did not cease functioning, nor did the natural world change. And if so, it is impossible to read the verse as applying to the seasons or the constellations, since even until today they have not “rested”. Therefore, the verse is explained as referring to people. In other words, that they should not refrain from <i>melacha</i>, no matter the time or season. But the reason for this mitzvah has not been explained at all, nor the punishment of death for it. Perhaps it can be explained according to that which is written in Avot d’Rabbi Natan, chapter 11, on the verse, “six days you shall work and perform all of your <i>melacha</i>”. What does the verse teach us when it says, “all of your <i>melacha</i>” after it has stated that “six days you shall work”? It includes a person who owns courtyards or fields that are in a state of ruin, and implies that he should go and work in them, for a person only dies through idleness. And the explanation is simple: if idleness causes a person to die before his time, even if a person</p>	<p>*פירש"י עובד כוכבים ששבת ממלאכתו יום שלם חייב מיתה שנאמר ויום ולילה לא ישבתו, ודריש לא ישבתו ממלאכה דאבני אדם נמי קאי, ולא תימא לא ישבתו אהנך ששת עתים דקרא קאי כלומר לא יבטלו ולא יפסקו מלהיות, עכ"ל. ולא פירש הטעם למה באמת לא נאמר דקרא קאי אששת עתים ולא אאדם, ונראה דס"ל כמ"ד במ"ר (פ' כ"ה) דבימי המבול לא שבתו המזלות ולא נשתנו סדרי בראשית, וא"כ אי אפשר לפרש דקאי על העתים ועל המזלות אחרי שגם עד היום לא שבתו, ולכן פירש דקאי אאדם, כלומר שבכל העתים והזמנים לא ישבתו ממלאכה – . והנה לא נתבאר בכלל טעם מצוה זו והעונש מיתה על זה, ואולי יתבאר ע"פ מ"ד באדר"נ פ' י"א על הפסוק ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך, מה ת"ל ועשית כל מלאכתך [ר"ל אחר דכתיב ששת ימים תעבוד] להביא מי שיש לו חצרות או שדות חרבות ילך ויעסוק בהם, מפני שאין אדם מת אלא מתוך הבטלה, ע"כ, והבאור פשוט דכיון שהבטלה גורמת מיתה לאדם קודם זמנו, לכן אע"פ שאין לו לאדם מלאכה הצריכה לו, בכ"ז ישתדל להמציא לו איזו מלאכה שהיא אף שאינה צריכה לגופה עתה, ורק כדי שלא ילך בטל ולא ימות, ויש לכונן ע"פ זה המאמר גדולה מלאכה שמחיה את בעליה – מחיה ממש . ולפי זה י"ל בטעם הדבר שצוה הקב"ה על עבודת האדם כדי שלא יגרום לעצמו מיתה, ויהיה לפי"ז באור הלשון חייב מיתה מעין כונת הלשון מתחייב בנפשו . ואע"פ דלפי"ז הי' מן הדין שלא דוקא בעובד כוכבים אלא גם</p>
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<p>does not have specific work demands, he should nevertheless try to find for himself some productive work, even if it is not immediately necessary just to make sure that he does not become idle and die. And it is important to have the verse in mind that states, “productive work gives life to its owner”—because it truly does give life.</p> <p>According to this, we can say that the reason why the Holy One, Blessed is He, commanded man to work, is to insure that he does not cause his own death. It follows that the expression, “liable for death” implies, “has forfeited his soul”.</p> <p>And despite the fact that it would be logical that this should apply, not only to Gentiles, but to Jews as well, we could say that a Jew can busy himself with Torah learning and prayer during his rest. This is not the case for a non-Jew, who, if he engages in intensive Torah learning, he is liable to the death penalty. His engagement in Torah learning as it pertains to his Seven Mitzvot is relatively shorter and easier. Therefore, he has no other option than to involve himself in productive work—although perhaps the explanation from Avot d’Rabbi Natan is referring to an unlearned person who is not capable of engaging in deep Torah study.</p> <p>And still, more study is needed to understand what the Rambam wrote (Hilchot Melachim 9:9), that this law only applies where a non-Jew has refrained from <i>melacha</i> to fulfill a “mitzvah” of sabbatical rest that he has created for himself like Shabbat—that only in such a case is he liable to the death penalty. Yet, according to what we have said, his intention should not make a difference. But it can also be said that any time he is not resting according to the parameters of a Shabbat type of rest, a full observance of Shabbat, he is not truly refraining from <i>melacha</i>, since he is involved in certain activities of productivity, such as food preparation, cooking, and we need not elaborate further.</p>	<p>בישראל יהי' הדין כן, י"ל דישראל יכול לעסוק בתורה ובעבודה בעת שביתתו, משא"כ עובד כוכבים העוסק בתורה הי' חייב מיתה [ע' לפנינו בר"פ ברכה תורה צוה לנו וגו'], והעסק בשבע מצות דידהו מועט וקל, א"כ אין לו דרך אחרת להתעסק כי אם במלאכה, והמאמר באדר"נ אולי איירי באיש המוני שאינו מסוגל לעסק התורה .</p> <p>ועדיין צ"ע במש"כ הרמב"ם בענין זה בפ"ט ה"ט ממלכים דדין זה הוא רק אם שבת לשם מצות שביתה שעשאו לעצמו כמו יום השבת, ורק אז חייב מיתה, ולפי דברינו הלא אין נ"מ לכאורה באיזו כונה שובת, ויש ליישב דכל זמן שאינו שובת כשביתת השבת, שביתה שלמה, אינו בטל ממש ממלאכה, דהלא עוסק הוא במלאכות קלות ובצרכי אוכל נפש, ואין להאריך עוד .</p>
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1. Rashi's interpretation of Genesis 8:22 suggests that "day and night they will not rest" applies not just to the natural world but also to people. How does this concept of ceaseless work impact our understanding of Shabbat as Bnei Noach?
2. Reish Lakish's proposition implies that those not commanded to observe Shabbat are not allowed to cease from productive labor. What are your thoughts on this perspective, and how does it resonate with your own beliefs and practices?

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Parshat Noach 5784: Finding our Place in Shabbat

3. Rashi states that if a non-Jew refrains from work for a full 24 hours, it's considered a capital offense. How does this interpretation of Sabbath observance challenge or align with your personal views on the role of rest and work in your life?
4. Shabbat, as mentioned in Genesis 8:22, is not only a *commandment* for Jews but also a *concept* that extends to all of humanity. How do you perceive the idea that Shabbat has a broader significance beyond the Jewish community?
5. The Torah Temimah discusses the value of work and productivity. How do you find meaning and purpose in your work, and how can Shabbat observance align with your obligations and values as a Noahide?
6. Reflecting on the prohibition for non-Jews to observe Shabbat, what do you think about the balance between rest and work in your life? How do you navigate this balance while respecting your religious beliefs?
7. Shabbat is often seen as a day of spiritual reflection and renewal. How can you incorporate aspects of rest, reflection, and spiritual growth into your recognition of Shabbat?
8. In your journey as a Noahide, how do you approach the study of Torah and prayer on Shabbat? How do these practices contribute to your spiritual growth and connection to the Divine?
9. Rashi's interpretation raises the stakes in terms of the consequences of Shabbat observance for non-Jews. How does this understanding impact your perspective on Shabbat as a non-Jew?
10. Shabbat is a day of rest, reflection, and connection with the Divine. How can you personalize your observance of Shabbat to make it a meaningful and spiritually enriching experience for you and your community?

Shabbat Shalom!