

THE ZIONIST SHABBAT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Objectives

1. Students should comprehend the essential connection between Shabbat and the principle of 'social equality'.
2. Student should get acquainted with the terms: 'equality', and 'work'.

Duration: A period.

Statements to be Made Prior to the Discussion

- The image of Shabbat in the Israeli society has preoccupied the Israeli and public political arena almost from its inception. In the questions about the image and status of Shabbat many difficult struggles ensued between the orthodox and unorthodox groups (what we call – secular and religious groups).
- Every public confrontation includes a combination of various interests (economical, political and others) along with a struggle over values. In this discussion, we attempt to study the basics of the principles argued by each side (and we will skip the interests that accompany them).
- In the course of the discussion we may encounter terms that are not clear to all of us and I therefore invite you, to refrain from being bashful, to stop the conversation as necessary, in order to have them explained.

Reading of "Shabbat is a Sensitive Issue" (10 min.)

- What is the foundation of the arguments of those promoting the opening of shopping malls? (Work on Shabbat is an economic necessity)
- What are the grounds of the opposers' claim? (Opening shopping malls hurts feelings of religious people based on their perception that work on Shabbat involves desecrating the Shabbat)
- **Statement:** In order to better understand the argument of the religious people, it is important to get to know what 'desecration of Shabbat' entails and why it is such a dramatic transgression as they see it.

Reading of Shemot Raba (5 min.)

To the teacher: Shemot Raba is a book that contains Legendary Midrashim on verses of the Book of Exodus in the scriptures. It contains tales or sayings by which the commentaries explain the verses.

Verbal explanation:

- "descendant of David" – the Messiah.
- "Shkula" – is equal to.
- "Ma'ale Ani Aleichem" – an expression indicating that it is considered as if you had done 'so and so'.
- Why does the desecration of Shabbat take on such an important meaning?





Chagim Center

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- To the teacher: The first part deals with the positive and beneficial aspect of keeping Shabbat, to the extent that keeping a single Shabbat is sufficient to bring the Messiah. The second part deals with the negative aspect of keeping Shabbat and that is the 'desecration of Shabbat', whose importance is crucial to the extent that according to Rabbi Levi, keeping Shabbat is equal in value to the fulfillment of the rest of the commandments. In summary, 'desecration of Shabbat' is a religious argument, deriving from the G-dly prohibition.
- Why are the opponents specifically of the religious faction? Is it possible that there are additional reasons to close shopping malls on Shabbat, that are not connected to the desecration of Shabbat?
- **Statement:** Let us now discover an additional viewpoint, we were not yet exposed to, in regard to the issue of working on Shabbat.

Group the students in pairs and assign verses of the Book of Exodus and the Book of Deuteronomy to each pair (10 minutes)

Instruction: We'll now work in pairs, where half of them will receive verses from Exodus, chapter 20, and the other half will receive verses from Deuteronomy, chapter 5.

Return to Full Class Seating Position (15 min.)

- Who is instructed to keep the Shabbat? (all Israelites and all of their assets and their surrounding geographical areas)
- What are the values reflected from Shabbat, according to these verses?

To the Teacher: Shabbat entails the obligation to refrain from working. In this question we already encounter the first difference between the passages since in the book of Deuteronomy there is also a reason given for cessation of work – rest. According to the Scripture, Shabbat attempts to bring to a halt the subjugation to 'working for a living' and the existential stress and to allow rest for all, not only to select groups of the public but as an obligation that applies to all, since all humans are entitled to it. This was not taken for granted in the ancient world since only those with excessive rights were entitled to the possibility of eliminating work. On Shabbat, differences between master, hired worker, servant, man, woman and even beasts and man are non-existent in this respect.

- What provides its validity?

To the Teacher: The Book of Exodus gives the validity to the fact that the day of Shabbat actually belongs to the Lord. In other words, we must follow His lead and just as he rested when creating the world, so must we rest every week. This is a G-dly validity, religious by nature. The book of Deuteronomy provides the validity for a shared experience that the entire Jewish nation experienced when it became a nation as it emerged from a state of slavery in Egypt, in other words, this is a humane validity, socialistic by nature.

- What is the value that emerges from the commandment of Shabbat?

To the Teacher: Equality or social justice. From the days of the Scripture up until the 19th century, there were clear divisions between the status of workers to the higher echelons of society, manifested in the fact that only those of the higher classes were entitled to rest or to refrain from work at all, while lower class individuals (the vast majority of the world's population) were not



eligible for rest at all, instead, they had to work all week long for many hours a day. Thereupon, the sense of equality characteristic of the commandment of Shabbat that applies both to the affluent and the working classes (including manservants and maidservants!) entails a message of social justice.

Reading of Section 7 of Hours of Work and of Rest Law (5 min.)

- Thousands of years have passed since the biblical period. The State of Israel was established and we are presented with a State law. Which of the two sources on Shabbat does it match in its nature? (The verses in Deuteronomy, because of their social connotation)

Reading of Section 9 of Hours of Work and of Rest Law (10 min.)

- According to section 9-3, what is your opinion, do you agree with it? How does it reconcile with the essence of the verses we learned? (This discusses the halachic solution called, 'a Shabbat goy', according to which a non-Jew can do several forbidden tasks for Jews on Shabbat. We hereby conclude that the State law accepts this halachic perception. The answer to this question is a matter of the ethical the evaluation of every participant).

Discussion (15 min.)

Statement: We opened the discussion on Shabbat focusing on the matter of opening shopping malls on Shabbat while the two arguments voiced were:

Agreeing to their operation on Shabbat – income and profits.

Opposing their operation on Shabbat – hurting the feelings of religious people and desecrating the Shabbat.

- Now, that we were exposed to the ethical consideration of equality and social justice included in Shabbat, both in the biblical law and in the State law, have our opinions from the onset of the discussion changed? Have they intensified? How shall we respond the next time we hear about work on Shabbat?

The Shabbat and Social Justice **"Shabbat is a Sensitive Issue"**

'Sales in Shopping Malls are Threefold Higher on Shabbat'. From 'The Marker' Site, 12.15.2002

"Saturday's income from fast-food stores, apparel, fashion accessories and jewelry in commercial centers is three times higher than that of weekdays, sources in the industry say. In other industries, such as electrical appliances, this is a double increase.

These figures can explain the struggle for the opening commercial centers on the Shabbat. "Shabbat is a sensitive matter," said business owners and network managers when asked about the turnover in malls and commercial centers outside of the cities operating on Shabbat. So much so that many of them preferred not to discuss it.

The malls and commercial centers have long become places of entertainment and family shopping on Saturdays. This phenomenon has expanded in recent years with the recession, which led to a decline in their income in the middle of the week. However, opposition to the opening of shopping malls on Shabbat has increased. Merchants in city centers who cannot sell in their stores on Shabbat due to municipal bylaws. protest this. At the same time, the main objection is religious, and judging by the way things look, there seems to be a possibility of a boycott issued by the religious population.

About three weeks ago, after a Kfar Saba shopping mall opened on Saturday, a religious group held a quiet demonstration in front of it. The mayor of Kfar Saba, Yitzhak Wald, met with members of the mall's management and asked them to have it closed. "The status quo in the city has for many years, led to the creation of a common and tolerant fabric of life between secular and religious residents," he said.

Arim Mall general manager, Dafna Katzir says that the stores opened on Saturday, due to the demands of the merchants and due to requests from the residents for family entertainment. On the first Shabbat 70 out of 120 stores opened, and every Saturday there was an increase in their number. Many of the Mall guests wander about on Shabbat to get impressions, and then buy the product in the middle of the week she said, but added that on the three consecutive Saturdays the revenue was five times higher than the average revenue in the middle of the week.

On the other hand, Raanana Mayor, Zeev Bielski managed to prevent the opening of Renanim Mall in the city. Last Monday, the owners of the mall, the Ofer brothers, announced their intention to operate shops on Saturday, starting on December 14. The next day, Yuli Ofer, one of the owners of the mall, was invited to a meeting with the Chief Rabbi of Raanana, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, and was persuaded to keep it closed.

According to Bielski, opening the shopping mall on Saturday would produce discrimination against shops in the center of the city, which are already in competition with the mall, and would cause

these shops to become economically damaged to the point of closing them. "In order to survive, shop owners in the city center will have to open them on Shabbat, and thus be enslaved seven days a week to their place of work," he said. He added that opening the mall on Shabbat would hurt the feelings of thousands of people.

Shabbat and Social Justice

'Desecration of Shabbat' – what is this? – Shemot Raba, Section 25, Chapter 12

Rabbi Levi said: If Israel guards Shabbat appropriately, even one day(!) the son of David shall come. Why? Since Shabbat is equivalent to all the mitzvot, as it is written: "Since he is our Lord and we are the people of his pasture and the flock of his hands" (Psalms 95) ...

The Holy-One-Blessed-be-He said to Israel: If you merit to keep the Shabbat, I consider this as if you have observed all of the commandments of the Torah and if you desecrated it, I consider this as if you have desecrated all of the commandments! ...

Shabbat and Social Justice

Exodus, Chapter 20, 8-11

Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it. Six days you may work and perform all your labor, but the seventh day is a Shabbat to G-d, your Lord; you shall perform no labor, neither you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your beast, nor your stranger who is in your cities. For [in] six days G-d has made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, G-d blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it.

In pairs:

Who must observe the commandment of Shabbat?

What is the essence of Shabbat according to these verses? What validates this essence?

The Zionist Shabbat and Social Justice

Hours of Work and Rest Law, 5711, 1951

7. Hours of Weekly Rest

(A) At least thirty-six consecutive hours a week are the weekly hours of rest of the worker.

(B) The weekly rest shall consist of –

(1) For Jewish workers – the day of Shabbat;

(2) For non-Jewish workers – the day of Shabbat or Sunday or Friday of any given week, whatever day is acceptable to him as his weekly day of rest.

9. Prohibition of Employment on the Weekly Day of Rest

Employing a worker on his weekly day of rest is prohibited, if it was not permitted according to section 12.

9A. Prohibition of Employment on the Weekly Day of Rest (Amendment: 5729)

(A) In the permanent days of rest as defined in the Law and Administration Ordinance, 5708-1948, the owner of a workshop shall not work in his work place, and the owner of an industrial plant shall not work in his factory, nor shall a shop owner operate his shop.

(B) On days of rest as they were defined, a member of a cooperative society shall not work in a workshop nor - in the industrial plant of the association; a member of a cooperative society shall not work in a factory or an industrial plant of an agricultural cooperative society, a member shall not work in these places, unless the work is connected to the services necessary for its economy.

(C) A non-Jew, when regarding his work place, be it an industrial plant or shop located in the area of a local authority whose number of non-Jewish residents is at least one quarter of the total population, as determined by the local authority in question, may refrain from complying with the prohibitions under this section or on the days of rest as aforesaid or on the days of his Shabbat and holidays, as he chooses; The same applies to a district of a local authority whose area and relative number of non-Jewish residents in general – is at least one quarter – as determined for this purpose by the local authority in question.