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“And you, speak to the Children of Israel and say: ‘Only keep My Shabbosos! For it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I, God, make you holy.’” (Shemos 31:13)

SHABBOS POPS UP a few times in the Torah, including in this week’s parsha. As Rashi explains, the halachah of Shabbos is juxtaposed with the building of the Mishkan, to teach that its construction does not override the laws of Shabbos. On Shabbos, all work on the Mishkan ceased.

Following the discussion about Shabbos begins the episode of the golden calf, the latter seemingly having nothing to do with the former. But, that is usually not the case in the Torah, and in this case, not likely, given the

opinion that the Mishkan was God's response to the golden calf.

This is the link:

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For it is a sign between Me and you: It is a sign of distinction between us that I have chosen you, by granting you as an inheritance My day of rest for [your] rest ... to know: [So that] the nations [should know] that I, God, sanctify you. (Rashi)

Why have we been commanded to observe Shabbos? The usual answer is, to remind us the God is Boss, and that all we accomplish the other six days of the week is because of His blessing. Shabbos reminds us that we owe EVERYTHING to Him.

The Torah's answer in this week's parsha is a little different. We keep Shabbos to make a statement to the rest of the world, that our holiness as a people is only because of God. We do not sanctify ourselves, but we are sanctified because God makes us holy.

And how does God do this? Through Shabbos itself. The truth is, God does this through ALL the mitzvos, but Shabbos is a SUPER mitzvah. This is why the Talmud says that when a person properly keeps Shabbos, it's as if they have fulfilled the ENTIRE Torah. Shabbos “synergizes” what what all the OTHER mitzvos accomplish only in part.

On the outside, to someone who does not understand what mitzvos actually do, even if they already observe them, it seems like just a matter of doing what we are told. But Shabbos and mitzvos are about a lot more than this, and knowing what that “more” is means being able to access its potential advantage in life.

A very basic analogy is like a person who is well connected to the President of a country. He may not work in a government office, and on the street, look just like everyone else around him. But there is one thing that makes him extremely unique and more powerful from the average person. It’s the phone in his pocket that connects him directly to the President, anywhere he goes and at any time.

If this person gets in trouble, he has to make but one call, and his protection comes immediately. If he goes out to dinner and the restaurant is over-crowded, he just uses his phone, makes the call, and gets seated immediately. His phone is a portal to power, available for use at his bidding.

Is it the phone that makes this person powerful? No. It is his relationship with the leader of the country. The phone is merely a portal to access that relationship, and to benefit from it. Without his close connection to the President of his country, his phone is just another communication device of the masses.

What makes the mitzvos so powerful is the way they connect the person who performs them to God. Every time a person does a mitzvah the RIGHT way (as a mitzvah and halachically correct), a portal for Divine light and holiness opens up between God and the person. Automatically, a person’s level of kedushah—holiness—increases.

Shabbos is God's once-a-week open door policy. You just have to come dressed for the occasion, physically AND spiritually. For the person who prepares for Shabbos, physically, emotionally, the door swings wide open and the holiness free flows from God to the person on the other side of it. To the extent to which the person is "there" for Shabbos, that is the extent to which they will be the recipient of unbelievable holiness and spiritual growth.

There's no faking it, or duplicating it. Man has tried, but the eventual result has been pogroms, crusades, and suicide attacks. Life has many "doors," but few lead to a holy destination if not prescribed by the Torah.

The golden calf made this point the strongest. The Erev Rav didn't push atheism or agnosticism on the Jewish people. They pushed an alternative approach to religion on them, claiming that THESE were the gods that took them out of Egypt. They were claiming that holiness can also be manmade, and more advantageous when it is.

The halachos of Shabbos follow the laws of the Mishkan, as Rashi explains, to emphasize that they do not get pushed off for the construction of the Mishkan. But, they precede the incident of the golden calf to tell us that kedushah can only come from God, and the way He says. Any other attempt is at best a forgery and, at worst, a golden calf.