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*Guarding and  
remembering...*

*Rabbi Alon Meltzer*

*A New Page of Talmud –  
Vaetchanan 5782*



The Sabbath sustains every one of Judaism's great institutions. In the synagogue we re-engage with the community, praying their prayers, celebrating their joys, defining ourselves as part of the We rather than the I – **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**<sup>1</sup> Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as Hashem, your God, has commanded you. - **Devarim 1:1-3**<sup>2</sup> Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. - **Shemot 20:8**<sup>3</sup> The laws of Shabbat, for instance, were passed on to me by my father; they are a part of mussar avikha [fatherly directives]. The Shabbat as a living entity, as a queen, was revealed to me by my mother; it is part of the torat imekha [motherly Torah]. The fathers knew much about the Shabbat; the mothers lived the Shabbat, experienced her presence, and perceived her beauty. The fathers taught generations how to observe the Shabbat; mothers taught generations how to greet the Shabbat and how to enjoy her twenty-four hour presence. – **Rabbi J B Soloveitchik on Devarim 1:1**<sup>4</sup> Whoever publicly and wantonly violates Shabbat is likened to a practitioner of idol worship.- **Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 69b**<sup>5</sup> One way of understanding it can be grasped by studying those authorities who take a more lenient view. They write that in modern times, one may extend to a Sabbath violator the privileges of being a Jew, for a very interesting reason. They state that no one would violate the Sabbath if he truly understood its meaning. The shamor, the laws of Shabbat, provide us with the structure, not only the stricture, of Shabbat. One would not be able to feel the presence of Shabbat merely by arriving into the eve of the sixth day and progressing through the seventh, despite the fact that God sanctifies the day with

Observe the sabbath  
day ...

שְׁמֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת  
**Devarim 5:12**

or without our acknowledgement. It is through the shamor, that we are able to engage with the zachor, the remembering, or perhaps the spirit. –**Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan**<sup>6</sup> The Sabbath is the most precious present mankind has received from the treasure house of God. All week we think: The spirit is too far away, and we succumb to spiritual absenteeism, or at best we pray: Send us a little of Thy spirit. On the Sabbath the spirit stands and pleads: Accept all excellence from me ...– **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Sabbath**<sup>7</sup> And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the

work of creation that He had done. – **Bereshit 2:2**<sup>8</sup> Living with a dream is treacherous business. The dream gives and the dream takes away. Dreams can brighten an oppressive reality, or they can

make the everyday appear drab and repellent. Dreams can give life purpose or rob it of value and meaning. Dealing with this double edge has been a major challenge for the Jewish people on their great trek through history toward redemption... Without the dream it hardly seems worth living... With it, everyday unredeemed life hardly seems worth living at all. Paradoxically, Judaism affirms both the dream and the reality, both the perfect, redeemed world to be brought into being by human effort and the imperfect, unredeemed world of today...Through total immersion in the Shabbat experience, Jews live the dream [of an alternative, more perfect reality] now. By an act of [sheer] will, the community creates sacred time and space – **Rabbi Yitz Greenberg**<sup>9</sup>

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