**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**THE PHILOSOPHY OF *SHEMITTA***

**By Rav Binyamin Zimmerman**

**Shiur #22: The Message of *Tosefet Shevi'it* and *Tosefet Shabbat***

**Introduction**

In last week's lesson, we began to investigate the nature of *tosefet* *shevi'it* and its specific agricultural laws. We noted that although *tosefet* *shevi'it* differs from *tosefet Shabbat*, the simple reading of the Talmud is that the source in *Shemot* 34 for *tosefet* *shevi'it* serves as the model and basis for the concept of *mosifin me-chol al ha-kodesh*, even for *tosefet Shabbat*.

After discussing the various laws related to *tosefet* *shevi'it* in particular, its role as the source of *mosifin me-chol al ha-kodesh* (at least according to Rabbi Akiva) deserves special attention. While halakhically, as we saw, *tosefet* *shevi'it* represents certain restrictions during the periods immediately preceding and following the *shemitta* year, it also provides an entirely different outlook for our understanding of *kedusha.*

The laws of *tosefet* *shevi'it* serve as a model for transforming mundane periods of time (*chol*) into holy ones (*kodesh*), promoting the mindset one must have during the seventh year itself, delineating the sanctity of time (*kedushat zeman*) that the seventh year uniquely brings. They teach us how to extend the *kedusha* of the seventh beyond the year itself, throughout the other six years of the *shemitta* cycle. Thus, it is no wonder that extending *shemitta* also serves as the model for extending *kedusha* into the mundane regarding other sacred periods as well. To appreciate this, we must understand a little bit more regarding *kedusha* as a whole and how we add to a mitzva.

**The Difficult Concept of *Tosefet Kedusha***

To get to the bottom of *tosefet kedusha*, we must deal with a concept that calls it into question. *Tosefet* literally means "addition,” and there is a general prohibition to add to or subtract from the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah:

Neither add [*tosifu*] to the matter which I command you, nor diminish from it, to observe the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. (*Devarim* 4:2)

Nine chapters later this mitzva is repeated, indicating its severity:

As everything I command you, so you must be careful to do it. You shall neither [*tosef*] add to it, nor diminish from it. (Ibid. 13:1)

It is not hard to comprehend why such a mitzva is so significant: who is mortal man to modify God's law? Understanding the Torah as the word of God necessarily precludes giving mankind the prerogative to alter it at his will. Where does *tosefet* fit in? The difficulty is even more pronounced when one thinks about the source, *tosefet* *shevi'it*, and applying it to Shabbat as well. The seventh unit of time is sacred, as we read (*Bereishit* 2:1-3):

Now the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts. And God completed on the seventh day His work that He did, and He ceased on the seventh day fall His work that He did. And God blessed the seventh day and He sanctified it, for thereon He ceased all His work that God had created to do. (*Bereishit* 2:1-3)

God specifically sanctifies the seventh day, the day upon which He rested. The same can be said for the sabbatical year, the seventh, due to the special uniqueness of this period.

Unlike Shabbat, the festivals are actually sanctified by the Jewish courts; the Talmud derives from *Shemot* 12:1-2 that they are the ones to determine the Jewish calendar, by the power vested in them by God. *Beitza* 15a even makes reference to this distinction between Shabbat and the festivals while explaining why it is that the blessing made to recognize the special sanctity of Shabbat refers to God as the sole sanctifier of Shabbat. On the other hand, the text of the blessing of the festivals recognizes God as the sanctifier of the Jewish people, who in turn sanctify the festivals. *Pesachim* 117b adds that Shabbat is *kevia ve-kaima* — its *kedusha* is set in stone as every seventh day, unlike the festivals which require human sanctification as well, causing the difference in the blessing.

With this background in mind, the concept of *tosefet* *shevi'it* and *tosefet Shabbat* raises two grave questions. Firstly, how can one add on to anything godly, contravening the biblical prohibition? Secondly, aren’t Shabbat and *shevi'it* both *kevia ve-kaima*, predetermined by God? According to Rabbi Akiva, how can *tosefet* *shevi'it* serve as the source for the concept?

**Appreciating *Tosefet Zeman***

It is for the very two reasons cited above that *tosefet* *shevi'it* would not exist and could not exist without an explicit source in the Torah. One cannot independently add on to Shabbat and *shevi'it* and seek to alter or improve their length; the thought itself is even blasphemous, were it not for the fact that the Torah explicitly instructs us to do so. “In plowing and in harvesting*,* you shall rest” (*Shemot* 34:21, according to Rabbi Akiva) and “On the ninth of the month in the evening” (*Vayikra* 23:32, according to Rabbi Yishmael) indicate that expanding holy periods is exactly what God wants. It is not man's prerogative to add, but to decide how much added time to actively sanctify.

This is *tosefet Shabbat*, but the source of *tosefet* *shevi'it* is somewhat different. The period preceding (and following) the year is sanctified in its own right with halakhic ramifications restricting plowing and possibly other things, yet it serves as the model for extending *kedusha* beyond its strict confines.

One might even add that extending this sanctified period beyond the strict barriers of the unchanging seventh day or year, referred to as *mosifin me-chol al ha-kodesh,* adding from the mundane onto the holy, seems to encapsulate within it a number of prime lessons regarding our overall outlook about *kedusha* as a whole. The fact that Shabbat as well can be extended underscores the contribution of man to the sanctity of holy times.

***Kedushat Zeman***

Even before the Industrial Revolution, the concept of architecture and physical beauty was apparent. The Torah (*Bereishit* 4:22) tells us about the genesis of metalworking and construction:

And Tzilla also gave birth to Tuval-Kayin, who polished all instruments of copper and iron; and Tuval-Kayin's sister was Naama.

People started to build not only teepee-like dwellings but actual professional buildings. There was even a generation who felt they could build a tower to the Heavens, and an entire nation who wished to mark their unique building methods with pyramids and sphinxes.

Against this backdrop, it is relatively easy to comprehend that beauty could be not only aesthetic, but spiritual. The Tabernacle is the first such building, paving the way for a permanent, immovable structure in the physical location that God chooses to rest His presence, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. This concept of *kedushat makom*, the physical representation of holiness as it expresses itself in space, is easily recognizable — according to many modeled after the *kedusha* of the entire universe which was made from the handiwork of God Himself during those six days of Creation.

However the concept of *kedushat zeman* is harder to comprehend. Time cannot be seen, and distinguishing among different periods would be foreign to us were it not for the fact that the Torah introduces *kedusha* in the context of time, as cited above regarding Shabbat. Shabbat shows the world that time can be qualitatively different at various points; more than quality time, it is "qualitative time;” certain periods are qualitatively holier than others.

Shabbat is considered more important than the building of the Tabernacle, and even the yearly memorial for the destruction of the Temple is pushed off to Sunday when the 9th of Av falls on Shabbat. *Kedushat zeman* would seem to take precedence over *kedushat makom*.

Nevertheless, there is a third essential element. Holiness in our world can only be grasped through the third form of *kedusha* which binds these two concepts, and that is *kedushat* *ha-adam*; the sanctity of man.

And the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and He breathed into his nostrils the soul of life, and man became a living soul. (*Bereishit* 2:7)

In the process, God not only gives mankind a divine imagebut He imparts within man the capability of small-scale creation (see *Nefesh Ha-chayim* 1:1-4). Among man's charges are to take an active part in sanctifying what God has designated, in regards to all three aspects of *kedusha*. God sanctifies the Jewish people at Sinai as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (*Shemot* 19:6), but God commands us “*Kedoshim tihyu*,” “You shall be holy” (*Vayikra* 19:2). Similarly, in regards to *kedushat makom*, God commands man to build the Tabernacle and the Temple: "And make for me a sanctuary, and I will dwell amongst you" (*Shemot* 25:8). Most of all for our purposes, although God sanctified certain times at the dawn of Creation, He still orders: "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it.” *Vayikra* 23 lists all the times designated “*mikra kodesh”* — they must be “declared holy” by us.

In short, God consecrates but leaves man to sanctify and endows him with the power and the charge to do so. Man can't sanctify beyond the confines of the framework of holiness that God provides, but man is bidden to bring the *kedusha* to life and extend it wherever and whenever empowered to do so.

This is the backdrop for the concept of *tosefet* *kedushat zeman*, calling upon man to not only recognize the qualitatively consecrated time, but to actively sanctify it. The mitzva of *tosefet zeman* refers specifically to the periods before and after Shabbat, the mundane time which can be made holy, but the message of *tosefet* also tells us how to sanctify the consecrated period during Shabbat and *shemitta* themselves. It demands we recognize *kedusha*, harness it, and even extend it.

The aforementioned *Vayikra* 23 opens by discussing Shabbat: “It is the first of all sanctified periods,” as the famous song goes. Shabbat’s positon serves as the model for both recognizing and enhancing *kedusha* in time. Similarly, the seventh year, also referred to as a Shabbat for God, serves as the model for recognizing, enhancing and even extending *kedusha*. Thus, Rabbi Akiva sees it as the model for *tosefet zeman*, inspiring man to take an active role in *kedusha*. The Jewish people are meant to extend Shabbat’s influence throughout the week.

**The Illustrative Role**

First and foremost, *tosefet Shabbat* serves an illustrative role, anticipating Shabbat rather than merely wanting to do the minimum required. The Benei Yissaskhar (*Shabbat, Maamar* 2) explains that *tosefet Shabbat* demonstrates that we love and cherish *mitzvot*. We show our desire to expand *mitzvot* and to fulfill them beyond what is required: these commands are not a burden, but appreciated gifts of *kedusha*. Practically, we want more; we want to connect to spirituality, by sanctifying unconsecrated time.

Similarly, the Chafetz Chayim (*Bereishit* 2:3) notes that the only day of the week that is blessed is Shabbat, while the other days of the week, set aside for work, are included in the curse to Adam that "By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread.” One who adds on to Shabbat expands the day of blessing at the expense of the days of hard labor.

Additionally, the more one takes hold of *kedusha* and the more one adds on to God's precious Shabbat, with all the difficulty involved, the more one displays recognition that God is the source of one's blessing.

The story is told in *Shelosha Sarigim* that the Sanzer Rebbe took issue with his Hasidim who requested of the local city administration that the market day be moved from Friday to Thursday, as they often had to close their shops amidst numerous customers waiting for goods, even before Shabbat actually arrived. The Sanzer Rebbe remarked:

A Jew is standing in the market with his merchandise and in front of him there is a long line of eager buyers. But the Jew is unimpressed. He packs up his goods early, so that he has enough time to go to the *mikveh* in honor of Shabbat and take a nap so he will be rested in honor of Shabbat. If you knew how much happiness you bring to God, you would never have petitioned the city administration to move the market-day.

While *tosefet* does serve this illustrative role, it does much more.

**The Partnership Role**

What does it mean when we accept Shabbat early? Think about it. We not only expresses our love of Shabbat, our desire for more, and our ability to sanctify the unconsecrated; fundamentally, we express our control over time, and our ability to merge the physical and the spiritual realms. The Eretz Ha-tzvi writes (Vol. II, p. 93):

*Tosefet Shabbat* is not holy in its own right, but it is a means of spreading and extending the *kedusha* of Shabbat into the day of the week.

The Benei Yissaskhar goes on to say that the man who performs *tosefet Shabbat* is accomplishing *Imitatio Dei,* walking in the path of God (*Devarim* 28:9). Just as God initially sanctifies Shabbat, so too does man do the same. To a certain degree, the man who sanctifies the mundane time by extending Shabbat creates qualitative time just as God did.

The Beni Yissaskhar takes this idea one step further. Essentially, the day of Shabbat itself is *kevia ve-kaima;* it exists whether we like it or not, whether we are ready or not; but there is a part of Shabbat that we can be involved in the creation of: after all, the Torah tells us to make Shabbat — man should be the one to actively sanctify Shabbat, not wait for God to do so.

Let’s examine the verse: “The Israelites are to keep the Sabbath **to make** the Sabbath observance (*laasot et ha-shabbat)* a perpetual covenant from generation to generation” (*Shemot* 31:16). The Or Ha-chayim explains: the seventh day is rooted in stone, but it is man who is the one to actually create the Shabbat.

The words “*laasot et ha-shabbat”* are designed to counter the prevailing perception that the Shabbat is a day on which one is passive and restful, treating it as a day to indulge one's laziness. The basic purpose of the Shabbat is not to provide physical rest for the body but to actively fulfill the various *mitzvot* associated with the Shabbat.

The wording [of *laasot et ha-shabbat*] may also allude to what we have learned: that one must add from the weekday to Shabbat. We do not commence the Shabbat only at sundown; we add a period prior to sundown in order to demonstrate how welcome Shabbat is to us… Similarly, one does not conclude Shabbat immediately… but adds time to demonstrate that one does not want to rid himself of Shabbat as one would do with a burden… God expresses His willingness to dignify the extra hours or minutes the Jews add to the Shabbat of their own volition with the name "Shabbat." In turn… this period before Shabbat man actually transforms and makes into Shabbat.

The Sefat Emet also provides a deeper look into the nature of *tosefet Shabbat* (see Yom Kippur 5641), viewing it as personal responsibility to expand *kedushat zeman* and other forms of *kedusha* as well. He even goes one step further. The holy days themselves are originally consecrated by God, and it is, therefore, hard for man to truly connect with it as me'ein olam ha-ba, a taste of the world to come; yet the *kedusha* that man imparts to the day is *kedusha* from this world and therefore, man may truly connect to it.

A similar idea is found in writings of Breslav Hasidic thinkers, who say *tosefet Shabbat* enables man to impart the *kedusha* of Shabbat to the week, a window of opportunity for extending *kedusha* to all aspects of man's existence.

**A Contrast to *Tosefet Kedushat Makom***

*Shemitta*, as we know, is not only a manifestation of *kedushat zeman,* but *kedushat Makom*, i.e., the Land of Israel. Interestingly, the concept of *tosefet kedusha* is also applicable to *kedushat makom*. Although the Land of Israel is the sanctified land, containing ten varying levels of holiness (*Mishna Kelim*, Chapter 1), there is a means of extending both the *kedusha* of Jerusalem as well as the entire *kedusha* of the entire land.

The Shem Mi-Shmuel (*Vayetze* 5682) notes that just as the seventh day is the Shabbat of time, so too the Land of Israel is Shabbat in place. The Torah discusses the extension of *kedusha*, which is repeated in Yehoshua (1:3). However, one might add that there is one caveat to this extended *kedusha*. The *kedusha* of the Land of Israel can only be extended after the initial *kedusha* is complete. First the Land of Israel and Jerusalem must be fully in control and sanctified, and then one can expand the borders out and extend that holiness. However, prior to that being done, extension is immature. This is the nature of *kedushat Makom*: extending a complete place of holiness beyond the borders of the land.

However, in this way, *tosefet* *kedushat zeman*, even of the sanctified time in the specific place of *Shabbat ha-aretz,* is very different than the *tosefet* *kedushat makom* of the Land of Israel. *Tosefet* *kedushat zeman* always begins before the consecrated time has begun. There is an effort not only to extend completed holiness, but to aim to bring it upon oneself before the *kedusha* comes from above. It is an awakening of man who strives to increase *kedusha* and to transform the mundane into a holy period that has not actually begun.

The discrepancy between the two types of adding *kedusha* might be understandable based upon an element that uniquely applies to *tosefet* *kedushat zeman*, and that is the element of *hakhana*, preparation. The period prior to a sanctified time is also necessary for preparation. The concept of *hakhana*, preparation, is at the very least a practical necessity. During the consecrated period one is restricted, and therefore, one must make ready. The prime time for *hakhana* is not only before the holiday itself, but also prior to the *tosefet zeman*, which also carries many of the restrictions of the *kedushat zeman*. However, there is a second element of *hakhana*: the feeling of intensity which accompanies the preparations for a long-awaited event, of wanting to actively contribute as much as possible to make that event not only imminent but also special.

This is part of the message of Rav Kook in his introduction to *Shabbat Ha-aretz*. One who understands the *kedushat zeman* of Shabbat and *Shabbat ha-aretz* recognizes that they specifically lend themselves to *tosefet kedusha*, as their essence is taking a needed break from the harrying mundane work and physically creative enterprise throughout the six units of work, for a long-awaited respite which enables one to spiritually rejuvenate and contemplate direction and focus. The more one adds on holiness to the week, the more one is empowered to refocus and to enable the perspective of Shabbat to permeate the rest of the week. The extra time after Shabbat and *shemitta* allows one to extend the holiness into the otherwise mundane period that follows; the addition beforehand, at a time when that holiness is not yet apparent, teaches us that if we want to maximize the period of *kedushat zeman,* then we must actively prepare for it. A real rendezvous with holiness requires not only precautionary steps to ensure one is ready for the challenges and restrictions, but an appreciable and beautiful change in mindset as well.

In our next lesson, which very well may begin with an ode to spiritual preparation for the wonders of the sabbatical year, we will speak about the fundamental aspects of *shemitta* in *Parashat Behar*.