

Dvar Torah

from Twerski on Chumash by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D.

The Torah states, "Between Me and the Children of Israel it (Shabbos) is a sign forever: (Ex. 31:17).

The unparalleled importance of Shabbos is evident from the Talmudic statement that if one observes Shabbos properly, it is equivalent to observing the entire Torah ... (Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 3). What is it that gives Shabbos this unique status?

The Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, explained with a parable. A proprietor of a store had to close down because business was poor. However, because his name was displayed on the storefront, people assumed that he would reopen one day. Indeed, when economic conditions improved, the store was reopened. When the economy deteriorated again, the store was again closed. This cycle was repeated several times.

One time when he closed his store, the proprietor removed the sign bearing his name. People then knew that this time the store was closed for good. Had there been any hope that he would again reopen, he would not have removed the sign.

This, the Chafetz Chaim said, is the reason for the exclusive importance of Shabbos. By observing Shabbos, one asserts his belief that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. A created world has a purpose. Even if one might deviate from observance of the Torah, the knowledge that there is a Creator leads one to reflect that there is a purpose to existence and that the Creator revealed that purpose. This belief enables one to return to live according to the will and commandments of the Creator.

Shabbos is a sign. It is equivalent to the sign on the store. As long as the sign is intact there is hope that one will observe the rest of the Torah.