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DIBUR (Speech) by Liat Jackman

A while ago, I thought of an important thing that I needed to buy. Fearing I might forget, I wanted to tell my husband. However, it was not a suitable topic for Shabbat conversation. But I wanted to remember it! There is an halacha that one should restrict one's speech on Shabbat and not speak of mundane matters. Is it really true that I shouldn't even mention it? If so, why do we restrict our speech on Shabbat?

In the Mechilta 8:4 (early Midrash on Sh'mot), there is a midrash drawing a parallel between the first five commandments and the last five. Shabbat (#4) corresponds to the commandment not to testify falsely (#9). How are these connected? The midrash explains that a person who observes Shabbat testifies that God created the world in six days and then rested on the seventh. One who does not keep Shabbat testifies, as a false witness, that He did not, since he is showing that all days are the same.

Kli Yakar (commenting on Sh'mot 20:13) expands on this midrash. Shabbat, like not testifying falsely, includes being careful what we say. In Yeshayahu 58:13, refraining from speech is mentioned as part of keeping the Shabbat. The Gemara (Shabbat 113b) teaches that our speech on Shabbat should not be like our speech during the week. Rashi explains this is regarding MEKACH UMEMKAR, busi-

ness. But Tosafot says we learn this from another part of the pasuk in Yeshayahu and adds that we should speak less on Shabbat. At least less then we speak everyday. But why?

The Kli Yakar explains. While man creates through actions, G-d creates by speaking. On Shabbat, when He rested, He stopped speaking. To emulate G-d's way of resting, man sanctifies his speech on Shabbat. Kli Yakar understands this as speaking not of one's personal business but of chafetz shamayim, "G-d's business". In halacha, anything that is not allowed to be done on Shabbat (a melacha) is also not to be spoken about. Business talk is also to be avoided. One should try not to lie or speak ill of one's friend. Mundane matters, small talk and the like may be spoken as long as it brings pleasure to the person. In whatever way we do it, by sanctifying and elevating our own speech on Shabbat, we testify to His creating the world in six days by speech and resting on the seventh.

It is so hard to take that break on Shabbat, but when we refrain from the mundane we not only make space to testify to G-d's creation. We also make space to feel the kedusha of Shabbat. HIRHURIM MUTARIM, thoughts are allowed. Halachically we are allowed to think mundane things in our mind. But I believe the more we make an effort to shut it off (particularly in the day and age of internet and smartphones), the

more we can connect to the kedusha of Shabbat.

I'm not quite sure what it was that I needed to buy, but I do know that I did the right thing. I hope I will be able again to restrain myself and testify to G-d's creating the world! 🙏