

**8/14/20 Dvar Torah for Re'eh Altshul Zoom**, by Larry Magarik

*Mizmor shir l'yom ha-Shabbat* is the seventh psalm of Kabbalat Shabbat and is titled “A musical song for the Sabbath day.”

For the last year I have been studying the Pachad Yitzhak by Yitzhak Hutner, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Rosh Yeshivah of Chaim Berlin. Rav Hutner asks (Pachad Yitzhak, Shaar Aviv, 54:3-7) what relationship the Psalm has to Shabbat? It's a good question. If you still have your Siddur handy, you will notice that the content of this Psalm 92 is whether there is any justice in the world? *Bifroach r'shaim kmo esev, v'yatzitzu kol poaley aven* “The wicked grow like grass, and evildoers flourish.” The Psalm asserts that they also die out quickly, while those who act justly last long like trees. Thoughtless people do not realize this and therefore only see the apparent triumph of injustice, says the Psalm.

In his usual pious and intellectual way, Rav Hutner says that a prerequisite to Shabbat joy and holiness is to recognize that the world has order and there really is justice. On the sixth day, Rav Hutner notes, God saw all of creation and found it *tov meod* – excellent – and only then finished, rested and sanctified Shabbat.

Without reconciling the essential fairness of the world, there really is no Peace. For Rav Hutner, Shabbat is not merely a “day off,” but a state of mind which supposes a high level of discernment. This reconciles the title of the Psalm *Mizmor shir l'yom ha-Shabbat* with the content of the Psalm which affirms theodicy.

In other words, “No Justice, No Peace.”

If evil-doers make out like bandits while innocent people suffer because of their class, color, gender, country of origin, or lack of property, there is no Shalom. If inequality, privilege, oppression and persecution hold sway, there is no Mizmor Shir. If the world appears to have no order, if there

is no competent driver at the wheel, it is difficult to experience Oneg Shabbat.

Yet how many of us can say, like Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide*, that "All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds"? Even God modified the original conclusion in erasing the world only ten generations after creation and going back to the drawing board.

Perhaps this is all a matter of our insight or lack thereof, and we must perform a reconciliation before we light Shabbos candles. The accounting is not so easy. I am certain Rav Hutner's students would use a different program than I. Clearly, the Rav thinks this requires a good deal of mental effort.

Today's parsha, Re'eh says something similar. *Lo ta'asun k'chol asher anachnu osim poh hayom, ish kol-hayashar b'eynav* "You shall not act as we act here today, each person doing whatever is right in their own eyes." (Deut. 12:8). The rudderless, discriminatory, amoral anarchy in which we find ourselves will not do on a permanent basis. The world must make sense.

The answer lies in our Haftarah from the Prophet Isaiah (54:14): *B'tzdakah tikonani, rachaki mey-oshek ki lo tira-i* "You shall be established through justice, safe from oppression and unafraid." As another, more recent Prophet quoted "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

I pray that this Shabbat, and the New Month which it announces, will be one in which we will not only be able to ask these questions, but answer them with some clarification, and in that spirit I wish you a Shabbat Shalom.