TIME IS SACRED
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz
Milan Italy – via Zoom
with Rabbi Don Goor & Cantor Evan Kent
February 21, 2022

Shabbat Shalom. I want to thank my friend and mentor Rabbi Goor for giving me this opportunity to spend shabbat with you and to share a few words of Torah; I only wish that his invitation included a plane ticket to visit you in person; but we've only been friends for about 25 years, so I guess we are still working up to that kind of relationship.

I live in Vancouver, British Columbia Canada; having moved here from Los Angeles around the same time that Don & Evan moved to Israel. I think most in my community would agree that my family and I have become fully Canadian. My children play hockey, I've been known to wear red and black plaid flannel shirts and in the recent winter Olympics, which you will host in a few years (maybe Don will invite me then?) I rooted for the Canadian teams and athletes instead of the US.

But there are a few things from my US identity that I have not fully let go off as an expat living in Canada. One of those things is my subscription to Time Magazine. I grew up with Time in our home; every week I would have to wait my turn to read it after my parents. Magazines in general and Time Magazine perhaps in particular are of a different era. I don't even get the print edition anymore; but I still read it even if it's on my phone or iPad.

So, it was fitting in light of this week's torah portion, that just the other day a message popped up on my screen, my subscription was about to expire, and the message read, "Click here is you want more Time?"

Oh, if it were only that easy, simply click for more time. The message was referring to the magazine of course but we can understand it as much more philosophical.

What's the old proverb? If any one every offers you more money or more time, always take time, you can make more money, but you can't make more time.

In this week's torah portion the ancient Israelites are still in the desert; if it seems like we have been there for a while, we have and we will be for much longer, 40 years in the desert that's a long time by any measure.

In this week's parasha Vayakhel, God commands the Israelites not to do any work in the Sanctuary on Shabbat.

"For six days is work to be made, but on the seventh day there is to be holiness for you, Sabbath, Sabbath-Ceasing for the Eternal."

The great theologian, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel taught:

“Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time.”

Heschel explained that in our natural state, left to our own self-interest human beings would not differentiate from one moment to another; all hours would be treated alike, or separated perhaps by night and day, sleep and awake. BUT Heschel taught, “the torah senses the diversified character of time. There are no two hours alike. Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious.”

For Heschel; time was itself a sanctuary, a holy vessel, that neither the Romans nor the Germans were able to burn; a shrine that even abandonment of religion cannot make unholy.

Think about it in your own life; what lives forever; what cannot be taken away (except by horrible illness)? Memory.

What is memory but a sanctuary, a vessel, a container of time? Memory is cherished time.

Sure, there are some things we would sooner forget, painful and unpleasant memories; and perhaps we can find a place to lock them away. But good memories, special memories, those last forever, they capture time, preserve time.

No matter what we lose in our life, wealth, people, things, time itself, memory is eternal; thus that moment in time that we call upon with a smile and blessing that too is eternal.

As our Torah portion this week teaches, the meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space; rather than things. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the shabbat we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation, from the world of creation to the creation of the world.

Continuing with Heschel’s teaching, “One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *kadosh*, holy; a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar?

The first time the word kadosh is used in the Torah is in the Book of Genesis at the end of the story of creation. " 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." The first thing that is called holy is time itself. In fact, in all 6 days of creation not a single object or being, not even the creation of human beings is called *kadosh*, is called holy, the only aspect of creation that is given such honour is time: the seventh day, the sabbath.

This day, the one that started just now as we lit the candles and said the blessings; this very moment is called holy; time is holy.
So the question before us is the very question that appeared on my iPad screen, “Do you want more Time?” Which is really asking, do you value time? Do you appreciate time? Do you cherish time?

And if you do value, cherish, and appreciate the time you have how do you honour that for yourself, how do you express it?

I appreciate that Rabbi Goor in his invitation to spend shabbat with you this evening gave me permission to speak about anything I wanted, but in truth this is the only sermon a rabbi ever gives, because it’s the fundamental core of what Judaism tries to teach each one of us, make the most of the time you have, you can’t click to get more. Time is holy and time is running out; run after it and catch up to it; you can’t get more, but you can hold on to the time you have by making memories in every moment.