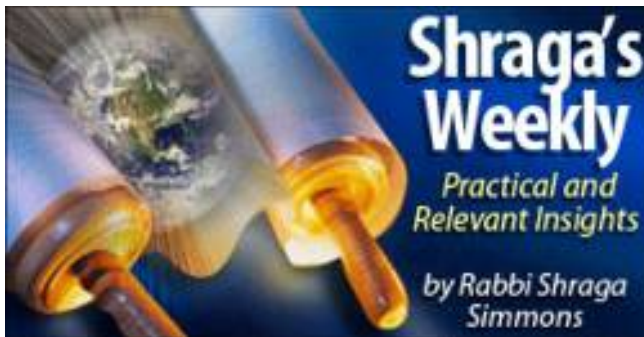


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Shabbos: Tabernacle of Time

Let's start with a fun Torah riddle: Some mitzvot we perform through the act of eating (e.g. matzah on Passover), while other mitzvot we perform by thinking (e.g. Torah study). Some mitzvot we perform by speaking (e.g. the Shema), while others we perform by hearing (e.g. blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashana). But there are certain mitzvot we perform by immersing ourselves totally – i.e. where our body is completely surrounded by the mitzvah. Try to guess what they are before reading on...

Four Immersions

There are four mitzvot that involve total bodily immersion:

1. **Sukkah** – on the holiday of Sukkot, the mitzvah is to be completely enveloped by dwelling in a Sukkah.
2. **Mikveh** – at appropriate times, we completely immerse ourselves in the purifying waters of the Mikveh.
3. **Land of Israel** – it is a mitzvah to be physically located in the Land of Israel.

These three are similar in that they are all immersions in a particular place.

The fourth answer? Shabbos.

When Shabbos comes, we immerse in a new dimension, a dimension of time. In this way, Shabbos is qualitatively different. Rather than a holy place that we must travel to, Shabbos is a holiness that comes to us, once a week, every week. And while we can always walk away from a Sukkah or leave the Land of Israel, Shabbos has a stability and permanence that transcends the limitations of space. It's an anywhere-in-the-world, expense-free vacation. No travel agent required.

Holy Substance

But what is "holiness" anyway? In Hebrew, kedusha has the connotation of separate and distinct. We make Kiddush on Friday night to distinguish between Shabbat and the weekdays. And Kiddushin, the word for marriage, is so named because the one I marry is designated for a

unique status, vis-a-vis every other person in the world.

Holiness, no matter which form it takes, is a metaphysical substance which our souls can perceive. A few years ago, I had just returned to Israel from a two-month trip to America. I flew back to Israel one Wednesday, and had not been off the plane for more than a few minutes, when I saw someone pick up a pen and begin writing. Instinctively I said to myself, "Hey, we don't write on Shabbos!" Then I realized it was Wednesday.

Puzzled, I came to comprehend that the experience of arriving back in Israel had given me a surge of holiness – and I'd intuitively associated it with the feeling of Shabbos. The form may have been different, but the substance was the same. For as Israel is holiness in space, Shabbos is holiness in time.

Shabbos and the Tabernacle

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Moses gathers together ("Vayakhel") the Jewish people and tells them the following:

"You may do melacha during the six weekdays, but the seventh day shall be holy for you... Do not ignite a fire in any of your dwelling-places on the Shabbos day." (Exodus 35:2-3)

Immediately following this, the Torah describes the tasks necessary for building the Tabernacle – the single holiest site in Judaism. In fact, the remaining 100-plus verses of our parsha are a lengthy, detailed description of the Tabernacle construction. Why does the Torah so starkly

juxtapose building the Tabernacle with the mitzvah to observe Shabbos?

Because Shabbos and the Tabernacle are one and the same. They are both links to a transcendent dimension. During the Jewish people's 2,000 years of exile from the land following the destruction of our Holy Temple, Shabbos served as our sanctuary, the place to restore and refresh our perspective in a world often hostile to Torah values. As it is said: "As much as the Jews have kept Shabbos, Shabbos has kept the Jews."

Microcosm of Creation

But the connection between Shabbos and the Temple is much deeper. In the verses quoted above, the Torah forbids "*melacha*" as a violation of Shabbos. This is puzzling because except for the reference to igniting fire, nowhere else in the Torah is there any definition of "*melacha*." Imagine Moses coming down from Mount Sinai and telling the people not to do *melacha* - under penalty of death. The first thing I'd want to know is: What's *melacha*?!

The Talmud (Shabbos 73a) explains: The Torah juxtaposes Shabbos and the Tabernacle to teach us that those activities used to construct the Tabernacle, are the very same activities that are forbidden on Shabbos. For instance, since the Tabernacle involved sewing, we don't sew on Shabbos; since it involved cooking, we don't cook.

Sounds arbitrary? Hardly. The kabbalists explain the connection as follows:

Since God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, in our effort to emulate God

we must likewise rest on the seventh. But in what way did God rest on the seventh? We first need to know what creative acts God did during the six days.

Here is where the Tabernacle is key: The Tabernacle represents a microcosm of the universe – a distillation of all the energies, patterns and resources found in the material world. Betzalel, chief architect of the Tabernacle, understood the blueprint for its construction only because he understood the code of Creation. In fact, the name Betzalel means "in the shadow of God."

Therefore as the microcosm of creation, the activities performed in constructing the Tabernacle exactly parallel those acts performed by God (so to speak) in creating the world. Since the Tabernacle involved writing, we emulate God's rest by not writing on Shabbos.

Prohibited Shabbos activities – "*melacha*" – are different from a secular definition of "work." Because on Shabbos we don't refrain from "exertion," we refrain from "creative acts." For example, it may be permitted on Shabbos to carry a heavy box from the basement to the attic, but at the same time it is forbidden to strike a match. Moving the box involves no change in the creative state of the object, whereas lighting the match clearly does.

Peace and Harmony

The effect is profound. On Shabbos, as we cease to create, we no longer feel the need to compete with the world around us.

The Torah specifically chooses "igniting fire" as its lone example of *melacha*, because it epitomizes the divisive, combustive energies Shabbos seeks to avoid. Instead of imposing our will upon the world, we are in harmony with it. We don't drive a car, work an animal, or even pluck a blade of grass.

On Shabbos, we are all kings. We take advantage of the extra spirituality infused in the Shabbos day to focus on our spiritual goals, which we express through prayer, learning Torah, festive meals, and time spent with family and friends. That is why our parsha is called "*Vayakhel*," meaning unity. For one day each week, there is no competition. There is only flow.

Getting a Break

Besides a communal peace, Shabbos brings personal peace as well. Six days a week, modern man is locked in a cycle of cell-phone, pager, e-mail, and fax. Shabbos is our chance to step back and momentarily release ourselves from the grip.

Many years ago, I was interviewing a famous rock star at the height of his career. (Sorry, no names.) "Tell me," I asked him, "What is the single greatest part of being a rock star? Is it the fame? The money? The world travel?"

He thought for a moment and said, "The best part about being a rock star is going on stage every night."

Very insightful, I thought. "So tell me," I asked, "What's the best part about going on stage every night? Is it the adoring crowd? The thumping music and bright lights? The incredible party atmosphere?"

With all sincerity, he looked at me and said, "The best part about going on stage every night is that no one can reach me on the telephone."

Here is a man who had everything – money, fame, honor. And all he wanted was a break.

For the Jew, Shabbos is our break. It empowers us – not to discard our workaday world – but to retain our ability to be independent from it. Shabbos gives balance and perspective to our lives and to our week. Just as a cube's six sides receives form and substance from its solid center, so too, the six days of our week are balanced by Shabbos, the inner dime.

Bringing the Redemption

And it is Shabbos which holds the key to the Jewish future.

The Talmud (Shabbat 118b) reports: "If all Jews were to observe just two Shabbos' properly, the final redemption would occur."

Why is it necessary to observe two Shabbos' properly? Why isn't one enough?

There is a world of difference between the first Shabbos and the second. A Shabbos observed in isolation would surely be spiritually uplifting, but this is not the type of Shabbos which would lead to redemption. More than a single day, Shabbos must "spill over" into the ensuing week, elevating all our actions and thoughts.

Shabbos is not the end of our week, rather it is the midpoint and source of energy. The second Shabbos, approached after a week so influenced, is completely different. It marks a spiritual apex, not a spiritual island. This is the type of Shabbos

whose observance will bring about redemption. This is the Shabbos of a week, and a world, uplifted. (see Kedushas HaLevi, Ki Sisa 31:13)

And this is the great and permanent peace for which our people yearns.

At sundown this Friday, take a minute and try the following exercise: Clench your fists tight for 60 seconds. **Then let go.** That, my friends, is Shabbos.



Will It and It Shall Be

"Every man whose heart inspired him came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the portion of Hashem for the work of the Tent of the Meeting, for all its labor and for the sacred vestments." (Exodus 35:21)

The previous *parshiyos* have dealt with the construction of the Tabernacle and all the various vessels and furnishings therein. God commissioned these articles with specific measurements and designs, and the people were responsible for their execution. The question that must occur to all of us is how it was possible for a nation of slaves who for generations had been in

bondage, and who had no artisans among them, to create such an intricate and magnificent structure as the Tabernacle. Where did they gain the know-how and the experience?

The answer is to be found in this *parashah*: "Every man *whose heart inspired him came....*" If we truly desire to fulfill the will of God, if our hearts burn with fervor for His sake, then God will remove all obstacles from our paths, and enable us to achieve the impossible. We have an enormous power within ourselves of which we are not even aware, and that is faith. Indeed, if we have faith in our Heavenly Father and seek to fulfill His will, He will enable us to tap energies and abilities that we didn't even know we possessed. We need only act upon our dreams and they may well become reality.

We see this throughout history. Consider Bitya, the daughter of Pharaoh, who went to the Nile to bathe.¹ She saw the basket in which the infant Moses was hidden, floating in the water. She attempted to save him, but her arms couldn't reach the basket. Nevertheless, she extended her hand, and when God beheld her genuine yearning to save the infant's life, He miraculously allowed her arms to extend and bring the basket to shore.

In the days of King Saul, the malevolent Philistine giant Goliath came to menace the Jewish people.² The nation froze in terror. King Saul offered his personal armor to anyone who would battle the monster, but no one had the courage to take up the challenge except David, the young shepherd. Saul was much taller than David, and it was ludicrous to imagine that he could wear Saul's armor, but miraculously, when

David donned that armor, it fit like a glove! There are many more such examples, but the teaching that we must absorb is that if our hearts soar with faith and love of God – if we truly desire to serve Him – miracles can take place and God will enable us to achieve that which only yesterday appeared impossible. Let us never feel intimidated when undertaking mitzvot. If we truly desire it, God can give us wings to soar and energy to accomplish our task.

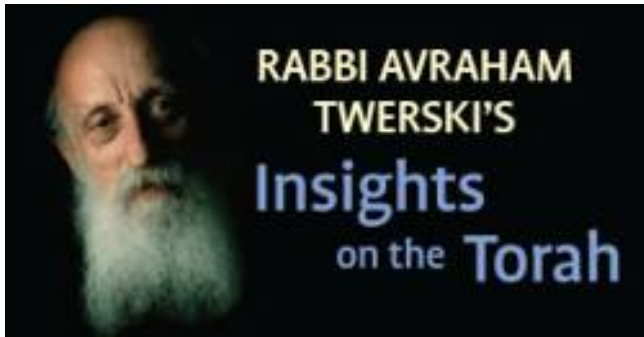
CONVERTING LIABILITIES INTO ASSETS

In the opening verse, "*Vayakhel Moshe* – Moses assembled,"³ Moses gathers the entire congregation of the Jewish people. The word "*Vayakhel*" gives us pause. Usually the text reads "Moses spoke" or "Moses commanded." However, "*Vayakhel*" was the rallying cry calling the people to fashion the Golden Calf, and now the time had come to make *tikun* - to rectify that grievous wrong. *The very same words* that enticed the nation to sin are now used to summon them to perform the sacred task of constructing the Tabernacle.

Thus, the "*Vayakhel*" of the Tabernacle comes to make atonement for the "*Vayakhel*" of the Golden Calf; that is the true essence of *teshuvah* - to convert our sins into mitzvos and to harness all our energies in the service of God. For example, if one was in the habit of speaking *lashon hara* and has an awakening – a moment of truth – he should not retreat into silence, but rather now use the very same energy with which he formerly maligned others to convey words of Torah, *chesed*, kindness, and blessing.

1. Exodus 2:5ff.

2. I Samuel, Chapter 17.
3. Exodus 35:1.



Wise Hearts

Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make everything that God has commanded # (35:10)
Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands (Exodus, 35:25)
He [God] filled them with a wise heart to do ... every craft (35:35)
The wise-hearted among those doing the work made the Tabernacle (36:8)

The repeated references to the trait of “wise-hearted” cannot be without significance.

On the verse, “Every man whose heart inspired him came” (Exodus 35:21), Ramban comments that none of the Israelites had learned the skills necessary for the work of the Sanctuary and the vestments. However, because they were intensely motivated to do the Divine will, they discovered that they were in fact able to do the skilled craftsmanship. This might be interpreted as a miraculous endowment of skills they had not had. However, the words of Ramban indicate that it was not an endowment of something new. Rather,

it was a discovery that they had these skills within them.

This is an important lesson. Clinically, I repeatedly encounter people who are not aware of their inherent skills and personality assets. In my writings on self-esteem I point out that not only are many people oblivious of their personality assets and potential, but even when these are pointed out to them, they persist in denying them. One can only wonder why intelligent people are not able to accept such factual information.

It is not uncommon in psychotherapy to repeatedly point out something to a patient, but it does not have the slightest impact upon him. After regularly pointing this out for a year and a half, there is a sudden insight. The patient may then say, “Doctor, I’ve been coming here for a year and a half. Why haven’t you ever pointed this out to me before?”

During the year and a half of therapy, when the therapist interpreted the patient's symptoms, the patient said, “I understand everything you’ve said, but it doesn't make me feel any better.” I can conclude only that intellect is subordinate to emotion, and that intellectual knowledge that is not accompanied by emotional knowledge is ineffective. If there are emotional factors that do not allow a person to accept something about himself, whether it is something good or something bad, no amount of intellectual information will register.

According to Ramban, this is what happened with the Israelites. Many people did not have an inkling that they had the requisite skills for the intricate work in crafting the vessels, vestments

and curtains of the Sanctuary. But their devotion to God and their desire to do His will resulted in “their hearts being elevated in the ways of God” (II Chronicles 17:6). Their spirits soared, and the emotional fervor enabled them to discover the skills within them.

We usually think of wisdom as associated with the mind and brain rather than with the heart. We associate the heart with emotions rather than with wisdom. The Torah repeatedly refers to the “wise-hearted” to indicate the overriding influence of emotion over intellect, and that only when one’s emotions permit can one implement the powers of the intellect.

We have untouched reserves of both physical and mental abilities. Under conditions of stress, people have been known to perform physical feats that they never thought were within their capacities. There is reason to believe that some geniuses were not of such superior intellect, but rather that their emotional investment allowed them to fully utilize their potential.

This is an important principle in education. If we can stimulate interest and desire for knowledge in children, they are likely to excel in their studies. A good teacher is, therefore, one who can reach the students in a way that they become “wise-hearted.”

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