

A Teaching from Rabbi Weintraub:

Terumah — How Do We Slow Down?

Shabbat Terumah | February 27, 2009; Adar 4

No, you can't. You can't write, carry, erase, cook, shape, sift, grind, knead, spin, dye, weave, build, demolish, wash, sew, knot, or untie (Talmudic exposition of forbidden labors on Shabbat derived from labors connected with this week's Torah portion). Nowadays, you also can't shop, drive, check email, Skype, or Facebook. What is the point of all the restrictions of Shabbis?

There is a place I need to get to where I am more alive. The frenzy of my daily world blocks access to this place. Six days a week I am always on, checking myself. I need to get this done; I'm behind with this; and I should have done that. There are deadlines, evaluations, results and budgets. Even when I try to be still, I hear my internal C.O. "You have to stop!! You have to stop!!"

Shabbat is a consciousness, a feeling of serenity and contentment, which I can't simply turn on during the week. In fact, you can't ever turn it on, because it is not subject to your control. It simply is, and you have to be to experience it.

By limiting ourselves, by restricting our normal activity, even our creativity, we can start to experience who we really are and what the world is like separate from all of our pressures and demands. It is a feeling of delight and all rightness. The struggle is gone and nothing needs to change. Apart from the restrictions, there are also important positive activities to be done the day before Shabbat. This period, called "hachana l'Shabbat" (Shabbat preparation) sets up the right atmosphere.

Do things which help to remove you from the work a day world. If you wear starched shirts and ties, put on a loose shirt or robe (unless you like the shirt and tie). Cook special, fragrant foods and make sure the smell is ventilated as much as possible through the house (fans help here). Turn on calming music or Shabbis songs, (including our own Friday night MP3 now at kanestreet.org) Put some extra money in your charity box since you can't give on Shabbis. Sit for a few minutes silently, close your eyes and be aware of your breath. Tell yourself "Shabbis is coming. Shabbis is coming". Let any or all thoughts come up. If they are negative, acknowledge them without judgment and let them go. Go to Shul and don't worry about your "Hebrew literacy". Just join in the chanting and melodies and swaying and friendship (including our own spirited 6 PM service).

In *The Sabbath*, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "In the tempestuous ocean of time and toil there are islands of stillness where man may enter a harbor and reclaim his dignity. The island is the seventh day, the Sabbath".

Ken Tihye Lanu. So may it be for us. Gut Shabbis!