

ENDLESS VALUE TO ALL WE DO

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Moshe assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them; "These are the things that HASHEM commanded to do them: "On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete cessation for HASHEM... You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the day of Shabbos..." (Shemos 35: 1-3)

Moshe is commanded to tell all the Children of Israel what "to do" and then it seems there is a slight deviation. By instructing about the Shabbos again he tells them what "not to do" first. Shabbos finds itself sandwiched between the instructions and accounts of the creation of the Tabernacle. This week it serves as the introduction to the construction of the Tabernacle where as prior to this it had been the crowning conclusion of that same project. Why?

There are two aspects of Shabbos. 1) In one way Shabbos is the pleasant prize after a good week of work. 2) In another way it is the all important pause in preparation for the coming week. The Shabbos serves as the calm both before and after the storm.

A couple with a thriving business in Manhattan had an amazing adventure. It was late Saturday night when we got the call. Shabbos had been long over. What a trip they had had! They boarded a boat Friday afternoon that traveled out into the bay of New York and there it anchored for more than twenty four hours. From there they could see the city sparkling like a jewel in the distance and so they just relaxed and enjoyed being safely away from the place that occupied the days of their lives. It was called, "A trip to nowhere!"

I remarked, "You've described something similar to Shabbos! Shabbos, though is not a "trip to nowhere". It is a trip to somewhere! (Later this couple came to us for Shabbos numerous times and is now counted happily amongst the "Keepers of Shabbos")

Shabbos is not an escape from a week of harried activity. Certainly, we cease from doing many things but where do we retreat to? Back home! We walk down the same streets and past the same trees we fly hurriedly by during the week. Suddenly we are moving slow enough to notice things and people we may never had seen had the maddening drumbeat not been made to stop.

However, when one uses any artificial or contrived method of escape not only do the problems not go away but they loom even larger. We find ourselves not more equipped but less so to deal with the rugged realities of our lives. We are made lower, not higher, in the end. Shabbos returns us to the center of our lives. It allows the swelling from the pressure of the week to subside in order to see

things with a truer sense of proportion.

There is a building in Manhattan, owned by a Shomer Shabbos Jew. The architecture of the building tells a story. Imagine a tall block and out of the inside is carved a rectangular center piece or alternately a tall rectangular piece of empty space around which is built a building. The entire structure is made of glass from the lobby and beyond. Climbing plants decoratively drape the banisters of the atrium. The first time I saw it, I thought to myself, "What a waste of space! How much good rental property is lost in this albeit beautiful but inefficient design?" Later, I was informed that the offices that face the atrium are as costly as ones that face the street. Nothing is wasted. Every office has an exposure to light and is thereby made more valuable.

Similarly, Shabbos may seem to be a waste of so many man-hours but in the end it yields time. The quiet refrain of Shabbos allows one to recapture energy and focus. The week that follows a Shabbos is likely a more productive and meaningful one. Creating that sacred center piece in our life lets sufficient light into our inner world to lend endless value to all we do. Text Copyright © 2005 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).