

How to Live Your Life without Regret

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Abstract: Above all, the reason why Shabbat is one of the Ten Commandments is that it teaches us we are more than what we own. We are more than what we do for a living. We are more than how much money we make. Our worth, our value is in none of these things, but in being a child of God. Shabbat teaches us that in God's eyes the way I rest is ultimately more important than the way I work. Now you understand why I say that Shabbat may very well be the greatest gift of Judaism to the world -- and a powerful vehicle to help all of us live a life without regret.

The High Holy Days are quickly approaching. In the spirit of the High Holy Days, my teaching tonight is focused on “How to live your life without regret.” And I want to discuss “How to live life without regret in the context of Judaism’s greatest contribution to the world.”

So what is Judaism’s greatest contribution to the world? Is it the concept of monotheism? Is it the Torah, the five books of Moses? Is it the teachings of the great Hebrew prophets?

Tonight I want to explain why the Sabbath – Shabbat – may very well be Judaism’s greatest contribution to the world. Now, how do we know of the commandment to observe the Sabbath? Where does it come from? Sometimes we forget that the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments. But why is it one of the Ten Commandments? In the midst of all these other great moral imperatives – you shall not murder, you shall not covet, you shall honor mother and father—why a ritual observance? Why is Shabbat on this list?

One answer is that the observance of the Sabbath teaches us how to live a life without regret!

How many of us would like to live a life with no regrets? On our death beds, none of us is going to say: I wish I spent more time in the office! We will wish we spent more time with our loved ones. We will wish we spent more time staying in touch with relatives and friends. We will wish we spent more time making a better world. Am I right?

The problem is: we don’t make the time. We get sidetracked by the daily grind. There are problems at work. There are bills to pay. There are lawns to mow. There are all sorts of distractions. We say we will get to the important things. But we don’t. And time flies by.

One purpose of the Sabbath is to infuse one day a week with all of the things that make life worthwhile. The Sabbath teaches us how to live without regret. Six days a week, we put up with our crazy lives. But one day a week, we live a truly ideal, utopian day. That's the Sabbath – an ideal, perfect, utopian day.

So what do we make sure gets put into that one ideal day? What wisdom does Jewish tradition teach us to be mindful of, to include in that ideal day:

- 1) *oneg* (joy) – infuse quality time for loved ones
- 2) *menuchah* (rest) – infuse time to “resoul” yourself
- 3) *kedushah* (holiness) – infuse time for God and the life of the spirit
- 4) *kehillah* (community) – infuse time for community
- 5) *talmud torah* – infuse time for the study of Torah and Jewish sacred Literature.

So how does this grab you? How would it feel to live this way? If we observed the Sabbath in this manner we would be happier, we would be more peaceful, we would feel more in harmony with others, with God, and with the world. We would transform our families, our community, our world.

Now I think we can answer the question with which we began: why is Shabbat one of the Ten Commandments?

Shabbat is a reminder that there is more to life than speed.

Shabbat is an antidote to the ills of modern civilization.

Shabbat teaches us just to be. We stop being money-making and money-spending machines.

Shabbat is the guardian of freedom from the enslaving burdens and anxieties of our careers.

Shabbat is the day when we seek to realize the fullness of our humanity: we love, we laugh, we give, we share.

Shabbat is the guardian of marriage and family life. On Shabbat, we pause to celebrate God's creation and what we have created and brought into the world – our children and our marriages.

Shabbat is the day when we align ourselves in complete harmony with nature.

Above all, the reason why Shabbat is one of the Ten Commandments is that it teaches us: I am more than what I own. I am more than what I do for a living. I am more than how much money I make. My worth, my value is in none of these things, but in being a child of God. Shabbat teaches us that in God's eyes the way I rest is more important than the way I work.

Now you understand why I say that Shabbat may very well be the greatest gift of Judaism to the world – and a powerful vehicle to help all of us live a life without regret.