

# Weekly Teaching

May 19, 2017

I have always been interested in reading Bumper Stickers.

A few that were especially memorable:

- *"Sorry for driving so close in front of you."*
- *"I used to be cool."*
- *"Old age comes at a bad time."*
- *"As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in public schools."*
- *"Never miss a good opportunity to shut up."*

From many years ago, I especially remember: *"The man with the most toys wins."* I laughed out-loud when reading it, and then recall seriously worrying if the car owner was actually being serious with such a bumper sticker.

Sometimes it does feel like members of secular society too often believe that the accumulation of "things" is the key to happiness.

One of the fundamental purposes of religion is to remind us that there's nothing wrong with wanting nice "things," but never at the expense of our higher spiritual goals.

The Biblical Proverb teaches: *"Some give freely and still get richer, while others are stingy, but grow still poorer."*

Ethical Monotheism first and foremost teaches us what's truly important; what's "right" vs. "wrong." This is why we are religiously required to tithe our income to support those who are needier.

We all know "money doesn't buy happiness."

Accumulation of wealth can certainly make aspects of our lives easier, and we are encouraged by the Rabbis to work hard and enjoy the "fruits of our labor." But, not at the expense of "cutting corners," or forgetting that family, friends, neighbors, or even strangers, are more important than items we can potentially possess.

Qualitative time with a loved one is priceless; loss of time never can be retrieved. Good health, by mortal definition, is always limited.

Our "toys" don't travel with us when our soul returns to God.

Finding the right mixture of balance between our material and spiritual pursuits is religiously mandated.

Best laid out is the teaching from the Mishna: "If there is no flour, there can be no Torah. If there is no Torah, there can be no flour."

Material wealth can be a wonderful tool, but never an end to itself. Our lives have no purpose if we don't live within a framework of holiness and spiritual growth. This is why we observe Shabbat, and refrain from the mundane workings of the other six days.

As God rested, we rest.

We tithe our time so as to prioritize weekly, our family and our faith.

Shabbat is God's priceless gift to us; if God hadn't mandated our Sabbath observance we would have had to create the Sabbath gift on our own; so intrinsic is its importance to our Jewish lives.

Ahad HaAm, the great cultural Zionist had it right when he proclaimed that "as much as the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews."

What's the life bumper sticker we want our children and grandchildren to live by?

*"The man with the most toys wins" or "There are more important items in life than our 'things'."*

The two bumper stickers I wish every Jew would place on their car:

- "My child is a mensch."
- "The best gift I got for my Bar/Bat Mitzvah was my weekly gift of Shabbat."

If we nod our heads at these two Jewish bumper stickers then we have to ask ourselves: how are my goals aligning with my actual choices?

Shavuah Tov,

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