

## *The Blind Man Who Saw*

*“Only those that can see are blind to their blindness.”*

Life expectancy in medieval times was a bit over 30. Today it's around 80. That means a lot more time to get things done- and even find some time to relax. Before Thomas Edison's light bulb, it was difficult to get work done at night. In today's casinos, where the lights are always shining (and there are no windows or clocks), there's no such thing as night. Marco Polo's voyage from Italy to the Mongolian-Chinese Empire took four perilous years. Now you can take a flight from Venice to Beijing and arrive safely in nine hours. Our great grandparents had to ride an animal or walk to get around the neighborhood or go to the market. Who walks to the supermarket today? You drive, or better, tap the store's app on your smartphone and all is delivered. Shopping for gifts? Amazon Prime or Instacart. What used to take us hours now takes less than a minute. Just a century ago, to write this and mail it to you would have taken months. Even with a printer and fax it would take a day. I'm typing but I should be using a dictation app with an email plug-in and I'd be done already. So, what are we doing with all this extra time? Are we more relaxed and spending more time with our families? Do we stop and let ourselves be touched by life? Do we take time to reflect? Do we allow ourselves a few moments to be aware? To feel? To hear?

Yesterday I had an appointment and while sitting in the waiting room, I was replying to emails, returning texts, and managing my lists, while while listening to a conference call. Suddenly I was interrupted by a voice that asked, “Did I accidentally hit you?” If anyone touched me, I hadn't felt a thing. I looked up and saw a man with a white cane, apparently blind. He explained he had walked over to press the buzzer behind my head and wasn't sure if he had accidentally touched me. I assured him that he didn't and asked how he managed to avoid my head. He explained that blind people can become acutely sensitive to sound, smell, temperature, and generally develop a sixth sense of awareness.

The irony was too much to bear. I said to him, “You just taught me a lesson I'll never forget. You're blind and cannot see, yet you were aware of my presence, knew exactly where I was, and was sensitive to my needs. I am not blind, and despite my ability to see, I was so distracted by my work that I completely oblivious to your presence! Shame on me.”

This week's Torah portion reiterates the construction of the Tabernacle. From those actions required in the construction, we derive what type of work we aren't supposed to do on Shabbos. The Tabernacle was a holy sanctuary where we left everything outside and connected with G-d. Today, we do that in synagogue (or, at least we're supposed to). On Shabbos, we have the ability to power off and tune in. But what about the rest of the week when not in synagogue. What about connecting with family and friends?

While I haven't given up my phone, I did commit to some additional technology/communication/screen-free time. On Shabbos, the phone is off. During prayers in synagogue, it's off (usually). But now, when I come home, it's off for at least 30 minutes, and I plan to build it up to an hour. The world won't fall apart without me.