SHABBAT UNPACKED

Session 7

OLAMI MENTORSHIP

BURST OF INSPIRATION:

THE LATE R. NOACH WEINBERG USED TO ADVISE THOSE TRYING TO GET THEMSELVES INTO THE SHABBAT MINDSET TO TRY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE. AS THE SUN IS SETTING ON FRIDAY EVENING CLENCH YOUR FISTS TIGHTLY FOR 60 SECONDS AND THEN LET GO!

LET GO OF THE STRESSES AT WORK, LET GO OF THE SOCIAL PRESSURES IN YOUR LIFE, LET GO OF YOUR INNER FEARS, LET GO OF YOUR INHIBITIONS... LET GO AND LET GOD! THAT IS SHABBAT!

Over the last few sessions we have taken a look at some of the 39 categories of creative activities. In this session, we will take some time to examine a key component of Shabbat observance which is Rabbinic, yet plays a central role in Shabbat observance.

MUKTZEH

Definition: The word muktzeh literally means “set aside” and refers to certain items that are not really part of the Shabbat experience. These items may not be moved on Shabbat.

1. The Why

There are a number of reasons why the Rabbis forbade moving muktzeh items:

a. They were concerned that if you move them or pick them up, you may come to use them for a Shabbat prohibited use (i.e. If you move a hammer you may come to bang a nail into a wall).

b. The Rabbis realized that while people were by and large observing the Shabbat laws, they were still spending the Shabbat focused on permissible mundane tasks (i.e. cleaning their garage). They therefore prohibited moving items that are not Shabbat necessary to refocus the Jewish community on the true essence of Shabbat.

c. Not moving muktzeh items creates a noticeable feeling that it is Shabbat. Not being able to just pick up any item subconsciously helps us feel that it is not an ordinary day.

2. The What

Muktzeh items can be regular household items and tools. Here is a short list of muktzeh items to assist you in getting a better picture of the parameters of muktzeh.

- Bars of soap
- Buttons (detached from garment)
- Candles or candlesticks
- Car keys
- Credit cards
- Detergent
- Electronics
- Flour or any inedible food
- Garden hoses
- Glue
- Light bulb
- Matches

MUKTZEH

- Money
- Pens
- Potato peelers
- Rolling pins
- Rulers
- Scales
- Scissors
- Shofar
- Staplers

These items fall into a few categories of muktzeh and the laws surrounding them vary.

Categories of Muktzah and Can I Move It?:

a. **Items that have a prohibited use:** These are items whose primary function is to perform an activity that is prohibited on Shabbat. The primary example of this is a hammer. It is prohibited to move a hammer on Shabbat.

   Can I move it?
   One may use these items for a permissible use, i.e. using a hammer to crack open a coconut. One may also move them if they need the space that they occupy, i.e. a hammer is on your dining room table and you want to eat there.

b. **Items that are inherently muktzeh:** These are items that are not actual utensils and do not serve a Shabbat function. A few examples are rocks, sticks, inedible food, leaves...

   Can I move it?
   These items may not even be moved for a permissible use, i.e. using a rock to prop open a door.

c. **Items that are fragile or of high value:** These are items that a person chooses not to use regularly due to their value or delicate nature. A few examples would be surgical tools, antiques that are not in use, promissory notes.

   Can I move it?
   These items may not be moved even for a permissible use.

3. **Exceptions to muktzeh (because every rule needs exceptions!)**

   a. While it is prohibited to move muktzeh of any of the above categories, this is only when the muktzeh is moved with one's hand. In a situation of necessity, however, one can move muktzeh in an unusual way (i.e. with their head, foot, mouth, elbow...).

b. If one intentionally placed a muktzeh item (i.e. their Shabbat candlesticks) on a non-muktzeh item before Shabbos (i.e. a silver tray) the non-muktzeh item takes on the status of the muktzeh and cannot be moved by hand. This only applies when one intentionally wanted their muktzeh item on the non-muktzeh item.

While there are many ideas behind the institution of the laws of muktzeh, there is one pivotal benefit to implementing the concept of muktzeh, and that is an almost **constant awareness of Shabbat's presence**. Focusing on what one can and cannot move on Shabbat creates a feeling that the reality of the Shabbat day is a reality that differs from all other days of the week. Living in this reality assists us in utilizing the many benefits of Shabbat to their fullest.

There are a host of applications of the concept of muktzeh. Ask your mentor or LOR (local Olami rabbi) for more resources if you want to further explore this topic.

OLAMI MENTORSHIP

CLICK HERE TO
TAKE OUR QUIZ
OR SCAN THIS CODE

FIND MORE
SHABBAT UNPACKED
RESOURCES HERE