

**Temple Israel**  
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**Slowing Down to Speed Up**

When I was working for a radio station about ten years ago, we had an unannounced staff meeting. As we all sat around the table, our boss passed a stapled paper of about five pages to each of us face down. In front of us were two number two pencils, and our boss explained, when I say go, I want you to turn the paper over and complete the sheet. Thinking this was some sort of competition I immediately flipped over the test without reading the directions and starting answering the questions. The first question -- who was the first president -- easy, George Washington. The second, name the author of the book "Walden," -- Henry David Thoreau. Question three, four up until thirteen were simple and I was breezing through this "so-called" test.

Yet, at number thirteen, which I do not remember exactly, but know that it was a math riddle, stumped me. I stopped, lean back in my chair to gain my composure, and took a moment to think. At this point, I noticed that almost everyone around the table was already finished, which dumbfounded me. I was flying through this test, answering question after question at lightning speeds, and still I had three pages to go. But, I was determined to not let this bother me, answered the riddle correctly, and pushed forward.

After responding to number thirteen, I moved to fourteen, which read, "stop for moment and read the directions." The directions, if read from the beginning would have saved me quite the embarrassment for they simply said, "In front of you are a lot of meaningless questions that some of your colleagues will answer. You on the other hand decided to read these simple instructions known as directions. By doing this here is the only thing you need to know, write your name on the top, turn your paper back over and drop your pencil."

While I felt like a complete fool and no doubt learned the valuable lesson of reading directions, in thinking about this experience another message rings true -- what we believe to be an obvious solution to a situation is not always the best or needed resolution. As many of us might attest, whether we are in the midst of making a major life change or a minor choice, we quickly react without taking time to analyze our options. Instead of finding the best possible solution, we settle for our immediate response.

This week, as with much of Leviticus, we are told of the ancient sacrificial rites of the Israelites. We are told that to be an acceptable sacrifice, an animal must be without blemish and defect. Undoubtedly, selecting an animal without an imperfection took time, patience and surely a little “lady luck.” While these practices are no longer pertinent to our time, there is certainly a correlation to this idea in regards to our decision making process.

When confronted with life decisions such as entering or exiting a relationship, maintaining balance between work and home, or finding a more meaningful spiritual connection, many of us disregard the multitude of choices available. We become impatient, we rush to concede defeat, or we believe our “luck” has run out instead of taking time to uncover our ideal circumstance,.

In my opening story, the inability to read directions most certainly caused me the embarrassment of taking a worthless test. However, the greater humiliation is that I believed that speediness was congruent with “right.” For with a simple reduction of speed to analyze each possibility, the ideal rather than the flawed choice probably would have materialized. As we move forward on this Shabbat, so too may we take a moment to scrutinize our choices more carefully, and with it select the decision without defect or blemish.