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Thought Tools

## Retreat to Advance

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[Forward to a Friend](#)

Have you ever experienced intense frustration trying to recall something?

Perhaps it is the name of someone you want to call. Sometimes it is a tune that is dancing around your mind just out of memory's reach. There was an item that my wife asked me to pick up at the store. "Write it down so you'll remember," she said. "Not necessary," I replied. And there I was wandering the aisles hoping I would see something that might jog my memory.

You scrunch up your brow; rub your temples with your fists, and contort your face into a bizarre mask of concentration. None of this helps. Finally, a disconnected thought pops into your mind or you run into an acquaintance and stop to chat. A few minutes later you remember whatever it was that was tormenting you.

Isn't it amazing? All that sweating and stressing to remember and—nothing! Then three minutes of doing something else, and bingo! There it is. It came back to you as clearly as could be.

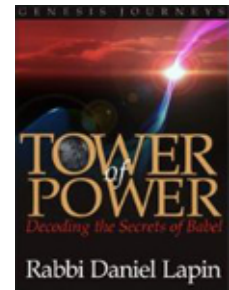
Like all of us, I spend my day tackling challenges. Sometimes there's a problem baffling me. Then I put it out of mind and retire for the night. Often in the early pre-dawn hours I will awaken and am instantly aware that I have had a creative thought breakthrough. Grabbing the pen and pad I always keep alongside my bed, and which I recommend as a vital business tool, I can hurriedly scrawl down the answer to the daunting problem from the day before.

Every time this happens I am amazed, yet it shouldn't astound me. After all, this is one of those timeless truths of ancient Jewish wisdom. Human creativity thrives in an environment of thrust, retreat, and then thrust again. Work the problem, back off, and then return to the problem. It will yield more rapidly than it would in one long protracted push.

This is the principle of both sleep and the Sabbath.

Withdrawing from economic and other forceful interactions with the world during the Sabbath doesn't lessen our productivity; it enhances it. Six days of creativity depend for their effectiveness upon the one day of rest and retreat.

[Tower of Power:  
Decoding the  
Secrets of Babel](#)



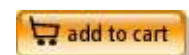
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The function of sleep itself is one of the 125 greatest mysteries of science, according to *Science* magazine. It certainly appears that any creature that managed to do away with sleep would enjoy enormous evolutionary advantage. First of all it would have no extended period of vulnerability to predators. Second, it would have significantly more time available for food gathering and reproduction. Yet we all need sleep. Trying to override this need with stimulants doesn't work long term.

This is a physical parallel to a spiritual reality. Just as our bodies require sleep, so do our minds and souls. Creativity and productivity are enhanced by regular periods of withdrawal.

Life is full of stressful problems. We think we can't afford to stop running. Sometimes we think we can't even take the time to talk to God on a daily basis. Yet if we force ourselves to retreat, we will find that we are using time more efficiently, not less.

In addition to setting times for sleep, prayer and the Sabbath, I think it's a good idea to make a regular appointment with yourself right in your calendar just as you make appointments to meet with a customer or client. Mark it down as thinking time. It might only be twenty minutes of intense concentration on a problem. Work at that problem keeping extraneous ideas out of your head. Then switch your focus to something else. Let your subconscious work the problem for you.

When God set up the rhythms of night and day, six days of work and the Sabbath, He was providing the means by which individuals and societies thrive. I am delighted that two of my audio CDs that explore the truths God built into the world, [Tower of Power: Decoding the Secrets of Babel](#) and [Madam, I'm Adam: Decoding the Marriage Secrets of Eden](#) are now available as downloads. In celebration, this week, Tower of Power is 20% off in either the download or physical form.

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## Susan's Musings

This week's musing - [The Shortened Mile](#)

As this blog heads out over the Internet, my husband and I will have just arrived home from a speaking tour to Texas and New Jersey, which concluded with our enjoying the Rosh HaShana holyday with four of our children. We even got to see...

To read the rest of Susan's Musings click [here](#)

In Thought Tool #60, *Why No Cheese on my Burger*, you wrote, "three time duplication of a verse lifts it from its literal meaning."

Please explain further what you mean.

Thank you,

(PS Love your writings)

Mary G.

[See Rabbi Lapin's Answer](#)

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