

SHABBOS HAS KEPT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HOLY

by Rabbi Label Lam

"The Children of Israel shall observe the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations. Between Me and the Children of Israel, it is a sign forever that in a six-day period Hashem made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed. (Shemos 32:16-17)

He promised them that this sign will remain forever and Israel will make great personal sacrifices for its sake and through this the sign will remain with them forever. He also promised them that no other peoples will accept this day as their day of rest, rather they will seek to rest on another day. (Malbim)

What's so special about Shabbos? Why is it the central day in the Jewish week? Let's see if we can appreciate one small sliver of an approach.

A Rabbi was speaking to an elder group of Jews in Florida some time back. He wanted to impress upon them the greatness of the sainted Chofetz Chaim. He told them that in a town near to Radin where the Chofetz Chaim resided there was a butcher whose son had become a flagrant desecrater of the Shabbos. This presented a tremendous problem for the whole town. The son's ill behavior reflected on the butcher and cast a shadow of over the credibility of his Kashrus.

It was the source of great controversy for the whole community and deep personal pain for the butcher. After many discussions and after having exhausted every other option it was decided that they would bring the young man to meet the Chofetz Chaim. They did. After a brief encounter in a closed room the boy came out transformed and from then on was dutifully observant of the Shabbos.

After the Rabbi concluded his lecture an older man approached him and told him that he was from a certain small town adjacent to Radin. His father was a butcher. In his youth he had gone on a streak of rebelliousness and had desecrated the Shabbos. His father had taken him to the Chofetz Chaim and from then on he ceased from violating the Shabbos. "I was that young man in the story!" he confessed. The Rabbi pressed him, "What happened in that room?"

He related, "I entered the room and saw this sweet elderly Rabbi. He took my hand with his two soft and gentle hands and he began to say, "Shabbos, oy Shabbos..." He repeated over and over again and he began to cry. A tear ran off his cheek and landed on the back of my hand. When I felt that hot tear I gave a shriek and ran out of the room, vowing at that moment I would never violate Shabbos again."

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, the Kuzari, relates a remarkable fact. For all the various measurements of time there is some corresponding celestial cue. During the course of a month the moon does its dance across the sky. A year can be measured by the angle of the sun's rays. These are openly observable phenomena.

However, a week is a peculiar creature. Why is the entire world obedient to a seven-day week. What heavenly signal keeps all of humanity in concert with this schedule? The Kuzari posits that it is a remnant of the persistent memory of all humanity. That from the very beginning the world had an original and continuing cycle of Shabbos.

A second point of interest is that the other faiths have chosen days in the week other than Shabbos as days of relaxation. They do not contest which day is Shabbos. On that all are in agreement. These have parked $\frac{1}{4}$ of humanity on Friday the 6th day and these have placed $\frac{1}{4}$ of mankind on Sunday, the 1st day of the week.

With ink as hot as that holy tear it's in the verse above for 3315 years now, the 7th day has been "an exclusive" for the Children of Israel who have always kept the Shabbos Holy, and so Shabbos has kept the Children of Israel Holy.

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