

A SACRED APPOINTMENT

by Rabbi Label Lam

Every man: Your mother and father shall you revere and My Sabbaths shall you keep- I am HASHEM, your G-d. (Vayikra 19:3)

The requirement to maintain Shabbos and have respect and reverence for parents are again found sandwiched together, just as in the Ten Commandments. What is the intimate relationship between these two that they forever go hand in hand?

At a huge hotel program at a session on parenting I asked this question and proposed the following: Imagine now that we all here for this event, that there is no schedule for meal times or classes. Would we get 1/100th as much out of time spent here? We would spend most of our days wondering when meals are happening and the educational component would be haphazard and deeply defective.

The home is to be seen as a sacred school. Even if we have the best teachers (parents) and ideal students (children) and a more than adequate building (home) we still need a holy schedule. There has to be a coordination of time.

Nowadays parents and kids can spend their time car pooling to and from soccer practice and the mall and then when back home there's a computer or TV for each person in a different room. If everyone is sitting in the same room it's the TV that dominates and even at a quiet dinner the telephone that demands answering may all too often shatter any moment of family togetherness.

A friend of mine Larry, who gets these Parsha Sheets (Hi Larry), once told me that he feared that if he didn't do something dramatic his boys, Jonathan and David, would graduate in a few years from his house without his having ever known them. Until now when he would try to ask them about school they would answer in shortest way "OK" or "AHA" and he felt he had only the smallest window into their world. What happened to him at work was even more irrelevant to them. They would only speak to him sincerely if they were about to ask for 15\$ and permission to go some place. He felt more like a banker or a magistrate than a parent.

I suggested he turn Friday night into Shabbos, even though he is not yet a Shomer Shabbos- a keeper of the Shabbos. Buy the boys' favorite foods. Gets some grape juice and some fluffy challos. Arrange your schedule to be home from work on time and have your wife light a couple of candles. Bless the boys in a formal way and require that everyone attend. Prepare with your wife some stories or lessons that deal with issues or ideals you wish to address. Read from a book each week

and play games with them. The hardest and steepest challenge will be not to answer the holy telephone.

Just months later, Larry was already glowing with joy. The boys were eating up not just the tasty food but the quality of family time and relationship they were building during this time. A while later one of the boys asked if he could go on an over night Friday night to a friend. The mother rightly told him "no" because this is their sacred family time.

The next week Larry came home excited with hockey tickets for a Stanley Cup play-off final that someone in the office had given him. It was for Friday night. He wife looked at him and said, "That if you go there on our Friday Night then I will never be able to say "no" to the boys when they have such a request."

With the courage of Avraham at the binding of his Isaac, Larry wisely listened to his wife and forfeited those tickets. He missed the Stanley Cup play-off game that night but he kept his family together and over the many years he reports to me how close they have grown as a family unit because of their tenacious loyalty to a sacred appointment. Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.