

KEEPING THE HOLY HOLY!

by Rabbi Label Lam

The Children of Israel shall keep 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 31:16-17)

To make the Shabbos: Isn't the Mitzvah of Shabbos accomplished by sitting and not doing and refraining from creative activity? If so what is the meaning of the expression to make the Shabbos? Rabbi Elazar Ben Parta says; All who properly keep the Shabbos are considered as if they made the Shabbos. (Mechilta)

I make more money when I am asleep than when I am awake. (Warren Buffet)

If it aint broke, dont fix it! (Conventional Wisdom)

How is it that one is considered to have made something by merely refraining from destroying it? Why is the subject of Shabbos an immediate prelude to the Sin of the Golden Calf?

It is troublesome to consider how any part of the Jewish People was involved with an idolatrous act only 40 days after the presentation of The 10 Commandments. They had just heard the declaration, "You shall have no other gods before me." Just 43 days prior to that the sea had split and even the smallest nursing child, we are told, was able to lift his head, point, and say, This is my G-d and I will glorify Him. How could the impact of such grandiose events have evaporated from the psyche of a people so quickly?

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz ztl. explains that the prophetic encounters that the entire Nation of Israel experienced at that time was akin to a gift. There is a difference of valuation when something is earned with years of hard work and self-sacrifice and when something is granted to a person with minimal effort. Things that come to us with ease are more likely to be lost with ease.

It is not uncommon for winners of the lottery to squander their wealth and those who inherit family businesses are more at risk to fumble all that was gained through the agony of their parents. Unfortunately, as earth shattering as those events were they didn't make a deep and a long enough lasting impression to forestall the possibility of even immediate failure.

Our sages tell us that the creation of the cure always predates the introduction of the disease. In that spirit we can understand, perhaps, why the flag of Shabbos is waved before the account of the Golden Calf. The effort that allows one to maintain a gift is gained by the hard work of appreciation

just as the sweat equity invested prior to earning something helps secure its value in the mind of the recipient.

The job for all time then, to remedy that error, is to practice receiving a great and holy gift. As with a priceless work of art, we are well advised to protect its integrity. Don't disturb it! Don't fix it! Let it be! Appreciate it! We are asked to stand back and behold the awe and majesty of the day of Shabbos! It comes already assembled.

Sure we can enhance Shabbos with some fine foods and fresh garments but the biggest benefit is to be gained by not disturbing its already pristine state of purity! In that way Shabbos may be seen as a cure for the root problem of the Golden Calf. In weekly installments, for all time, through the discipline of guarding Shabbos, we are meant to gradually master the fine art of keeping the holy holy! Text Copyright © 2004 Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.