

THE PEACE WE SEEK

by Rabbi Label Lam

If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them, then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit. Your threshing will last until the vintage and the vintage will last until the sowing; you will eat your bread to satiety and you will dwell securely in the land. I will grant Shalom in the land... (Vayikra 26:3-6)

If you will follow My decrees: That you should be striving in Torah learning. (Rashi)

I will grant Shalom: Maybe you'll say well there's plenty of food and there's drink too but you should know that without peace there is nothing. All these things and then "I will grant you peace" teaches us that peace is equivalent to everything. (Rashi)

What is this ingredient called "Shalom"?

Under normal circumstances increased material goods tend to complicate life, as the Mishne in Avos states, "The more possessions the more worry!" Rebbe Nachman made the following profound observation; "The more money a person has the further it is removed from him while the more Torah a person has the closer it becomes." If one has \$100.00 it is likely in his pocket. If he has \$100,000.00 it's in a bank. If one has millions of dollars the money is scattered throughout the globe diversified in a variety of investments. However if one learns a single Mishne it stands outside his heart. As one continues to learn chapters and tractates the understanding of the original Mishne is greatly improved and internalized. To the untutored eye material and spiritual pursuits seem to be at odds with each other.

Our Sages tell us, "One cannot find a vessel to retain blessings stronger than Shalom." "Shalom" serves to prioritize and harmonize all the various goods so that they do not negate one another in the war for our attention. How can this be achieved?

Many years ago a remarkable "believe it or not" style story was reported in France. An extraordinarily wealthy businessman received terrifying news from his accountant. Without realizing it his fortune was drastically reduced within a short period. Instead of having hundreds of millions he was suddenly made aware that he was worth only tens of millions. The shock was so great that he immediately died of a heart attack. The wealthy businessman had no children. The sole heir to his remaining fortune was a nephew who was a life long struggling artist. When he was informed that his uncle had left him tens of millions of Francs as an inheritance he was so shocked by the news

that he too died of a sudden heart attack.

As bizarre as it sounds, and I admit it's extra bizarre, both were struck with the same exact report. For one the number was frighteningly small and for the other the same number was shockingly large.

It can easily be observed that so much of what we hope for in the best of relationships finds a weaker substitute in the marketplace: We are sold on the notion of Securities, Bonds, Mutuals, Providence, Trust, Futures. The promise of "Shalom" we speak of here, however, is preceded by a striving to learn and to fulfill the precepts of Torah. Those supernal principles of organization "whose paths are peace" form the foundation of- the peace we seek. Text Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.