

THE GOLDEN THREAD OF OUR EXISTENCE

by Rabbi Label Lam

The Children of Israel shall observe the Shabbos, to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations. (Shemos 31:16)

What is meant by "for their generations"? Rebbe says, "All who keep the Shabbos according to its specifications, the verse speaks about them as if they had kept every Shabbos from the time that HASHEM created His world until the time of the revival of the dead!" (Mechilta)

It's a gross understatement to say that Shabbos is an "important" day. What makes some days more important than others? There are certain days for which many other days are sacrificed. A short list would include, a Bar Mitzvah, a wedding, Rosh HaShana.

When we examine a few of the examples mentioned above we discover that those single days for which so much has been invested are not single days at all. They hold much more that meets the casual eye. A Bar Mitzvah boy- man is suiting himself up for manhood. He is effectively accepting upon himself a lifetime of responsibility at those magic moments. The foundation for the building of his life is being poured. The steadiness his entire structure rests upon the firmness of his commitment that day. So we dress it up and highlight its importance so it should not go by underutilized. The same holds true of a wedding in a more obvious way. Similarly, the entire year and its events are scripted on Rosh HaShana much as DNA hold the code for all living organisms. These are not ordinary single days.

At a Bris in Jerusalem a guest Rabbi stood up to speak and wish well to the grandfather of the new born on the occasion of his first grand- child, "Mazel Tov today you are a human being!" Everyone was stunned.

Maybe there is some hidden insult implied here. Until now he wasn't human? Then he went on to explain that in the animal kingdom it is common to find creatures that have an instinct to protect its young cub, kitten, fledgling you name it. However, only by humans does a grandparent demonstrate love and care for his or her grandchild. This is symptomatic of real soulfulness to see one's self in a grander historical or familial context and to care for the opinion of grandparents or grandchildren.

A great Rabbi, a well-known personality remarked almost sardonically that his main goal at this later stage of his life was to impress his grandchildren. Then he added a caveat when the chuckle of laughter quieted, "I'm not kidding!" One grandmother commented with an uncommon frankness about her feelings of extra love and adoration for her Shomer Shabbos grandchildren over and

above her other biological grandchildren, "When I see these children I see the whole past and the whole future! When I see those, I don't see the past and I don't see the future!"

To be Shomer Shabbos explains the Ohr HaChaim is to wait and anticipate when it will arrive, like one awaits an important guest. He learns this from Yaakov who rebuked Yosef outwardly for revealing the dreams to his brothers but the verse records that he privately kept the matter, and Rashi explains that he waited with great anticipation when it will be realized. From there we learn the definition of keeping the Shabbos! We live for and work for, investing in Shabbos a whole week.

Shabbos, though, is not just a single day in the weekly cycle. Everything is contained in that day, the entire past and the entire future. It can be said that Shabbos is not less than the golden thread of our existence. Text Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.