

SEEING HASHEM WITH OUR HEARTS

by Rabbi Label Lam

We sing on Friday evening the following poetic words, "Lovers of Hashem, those who long for the building of The Temple, delight and rejoice on the Holy Shabbos, like one who has received an endless inheritance..."

What does loving HASHEM and longing for the rebuilding of The Temple have to do with the depth of delight we have on the Holy Shabbos?

The story is told about a sole survivor of a shipwreck who washed up on a dessert island. After having taken care of his most basic needs of food, clothing and shelter he began to forage soon after to satisfy the next level of lacking, the need for human interaction. Looking down from a mountain view he espied what seemed to be signs of civilization. His hopes were confirmed when he stumbled upon a fully developed housing and commercial district. People, however were not to be found as he wandered from store, to store, to home calling out unsuccessfully for a human response. After six full days, in a moment of lapse, he suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder and noticed the streets bustling with people. The stranger invited him to come to his house for Shabbos. Nobody dare pause to answer his inquiries about where they had been because they all claimed to be too busy "getting ready for Shabbos." On Shabbos they would not speak about weekday matters.

He decided to wait till after Shabbos and meanwhile enjoy the high-spirited prayer services, divine cuisine, deeply resonant words of Torah, and angelic singing that accompanied the Shabbos there. After Shabbos, with just the light of the flickering havdallah (traditional observance marking the end of Shabbos) candle flashing in the eyes of all, the final blessing was recited and the candle neatly plunged into the awaiting dish of wine. Immediately the man began to ask but found to his surprise that he was alone again. The next week after six days the same scene transpired. Nobody uttered a word about the weekday activity and where all had been. Shabbos, another delicious Shabbos passed and after havdallah he was plunged into darkness and isolation again. Enlightened by two previous experiences he waited till next week and at the moment when the great dancing light of havdallah was about to be extinguished he quickly grabbed the Rabbi's hand and refused to yield until his curiosity was satisfied. Where does everyone go? Seeing that he "meant-business" the Rabbi explained, "This town has been here for hundreds of years as a port city even during the times of the Temple. Our greatest joy was the three times of the year when special emissaries were chosen and launched with great ceremony laden with a multitude of gifts to represent the community in Jerusalem at The Holy Temple. Upon their return we would live from holiday to holiday on the

inspiring stories of open miracles and the tangible holiness present at those splendid events.

"One time we were awaiting the arrival of our messengers after the holiday. We all stood at the beach at the appointed time. The whole day went by and at the very end when the sun was setting the band started to play as our ship appeared on the horizon. As it moored closer we began to sense something was amiss. The lone figure on the boat sat with his head bowed in silence. "We gathered around him riddling him with questions till we grew silent and he spoke unspeakable words. He whispered in barely audible tones this impossible uttering, 'The Temple was destroyed!' We were all so shocked and hurt by the awful news that our hearts burst with grief and we died a simultaneous death because of our loss. In the heaven there was a great stir because we had all arrived before our time and yet we had left the world. A compromise was offered that since we died because of our love for The Temple we were sent back to live out our appointed days on earth, only on Shabbos." That's the legend! What does it mean?

The Bais HaMikdash rested in a place where we went three times yearly to be seen by and see HASHEM. The "eyes of the congregation" the Sanhedrin sat in that place. It was a place where HASHEM impressed human eyes with the certainty of His presence. Shabbos appeals to other senses and takes precedence in many ways over the Holy Temple. Therefore we cease building the Tabernacle to observe Shabbos and we eat and rejoice when the 9th of Av falls on Shabbos! Shabbos offers the experience of the Bais HaMikdash in time.

We once went to visit a blind woman in Jerusalem who was able to tell us volumes of accurate incites about our children just from "feeling the room". We were amazed. When we left one of our little boys said, 'That lady can't see with her eyes but she sure can see with her heart.'

When a person loses their ability to see, we often find that other senses become more heightened. That extra sensitivity, although not a complete compensation, allows the person to apprehend reality. Similarly, without The Temple, "The Almighty's Place", where His presence could be visibly perceived, we are stricken blind. However, if one loves to that degree and truly longs to behold HASHEM's presence, then Shabbos Kodesh-"HASHEM's Time" takes on a richer flavor of joy, consoling us each week with the awesome gift of **seeing HASHEM with our hearts**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.