

## The First Responsibility

<sup>15</sup> Then Adonai Elohim took the man and gave him rest in the Garden (Gan) of Eden in order to cultivate and *watch* (לשמר) over it. (Gen. 2:15)

At the very beginning God committed to Adam, the first human, the first man, the first husband, and the first father a specific responsibility: to *watch* over the Garden (Gan). The English does not convey the full meaning of the word that is translated *watch*. It comes from *lishmar* the infinitive of *shamar* whose basic meaning is to *conserve*, to *keep*, to *warden*, to *guard*, to *watch*, or to *preserve and protect*. The Modern Hebrew word for *night watchman* (*shomer*) is derived from this root. God held Adam responsible to *watch* (be a guardian) over the Garden. He gave man the responsibility to guard it from the entrance of any “*beast (animal) of the field*” (Gen. 2:20) that had no place in the Garden. The very next chapter reveals that Adam failed in his responsibility. The serpent, who was a *beast (animal) of the field*, made his way into the Garden. Then Adam failed in his second obligation – to *shomer* his wife from Satan's cunning attack. Scripture does not reveal where Adam was at that moment, but it is clear that he left Eve on her own. Adam failed as a *watchman*.

This reveals that the first two sins in human history were sins of *omission*. Adam failed not in what he did but in what he failed to do (he did not execute the office of a *shomer*). Sins of *omission* led to sins of *commission*. The third sin was committed by Eve, who was deceived by the serpent and ate of the forbidden fruit. She also involved her husband by giving him some of the fruit to eat. The primary sin of the man was the sin of *omission*; he was delinquent in his God-given responsibility. Then Adam's sin of *omission* opened the way for Eve's and his own sin of *commission*. People tend to think of sins of *omission* as less serious than sins of *commission* but this is not Scriptural.

The double failure of Adam and Eve set a pattern that has been repeated in every subsequent generation. The primary, characteristic sin of men is a sin of *omission*, not of *commission*. They fail in their responsibility – first to their wives, then to their whole families. The characteristic sin of women is to go beyond the limits of their authority and to usurp the functions of men. The number one problem of Western civilization, in my view, is delinquent husbands (men), just as the number one problem of delinquent children is delinquent parents. The basic principle on which God intended their relationship to be built was a relationship of *initiative and response*. According to this pattern, Adam, as husband, was responsible to take the *initiative*, and Eve, his wife, was responsible to *respond*.

The execution of this *first responsibility* in our day is called spiritual leadership. Men are to lead in the things of God and the family (wives, sons and daughters if married or significant others if not married). Our society would greatly benefit if we (males) would *assume* (*shoulder, accept, adopt, don, take up, take responsibility, take on, and take upon ourselves*) the spiritual leadership role. *Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country...*

Spiritual leadership is one the hardest things men must do. To lead means to go in front and to demonstrate the proper way to those who follow, therefore men should lead, particularly in the things of God. Most men I know do not like being the first to pray, or the first to kneel, or the first to praise, or the first to take initiative in spiritual things in front of their family. When a feeling of *inadequacy* begins to take root in a man, he tends to *withdraw*. This is especially true when the ladies they are attempting to lead are particularly strong in spiritual matters or when they are quick and confident in their spirituality. The man takes a back seat and his sin of *omission* leads to bad consequences. The matter quickly spirals into a way of life where the man yields his responsibility to the woman. While strong spiritual female involvement is desirable and in some cases necessary, it is also vitally important for men to realize that the first responsibility of men is to lead spiritually. In God's Kingdom, men lead!

Our father Abraham demonstrated this spiritual leadership in numerous occasions. In Gen. 18:19 the Torah gives a poignant observation as *Adonai* speaks: “<sup>19</sup> For I have made myself known (*yodea*) to him so that he will *command* his sons and his household after him to *keep (shomer) the way of (haderech) Adonai* by *doing righteousness and justice*, so that *Adonai* may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.” The Almighty states unequivocally that He has intimate knowledge of Abraham (and Abraham has intimate knowledge of Him – this is a two way street) and that that Abraham will demonstrate and lead by example (that is, command) his family in the *Way of the Lord (Haderech Adonai – to shomer and guard The WAY* (the early believers were called the *followers of The Way* in Acts until Antioch). Abraham will demonstrate before his household spiritual leadership in guarding the ways of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice (judgment). I love this emphasis early in Scripture about the important role of proper spiritual leadership. It compels the Lord to come on the scene and reveal His plans with respect to Sodom and Gomorrah. Once Abraham knows what the Lord is going to do, he is able to intercede for the good of his nephew and his family (Scripture refers to Lot as Abraham’s brother). Abraham stopped his intercession when the number went from 50 to 10. How big was Lot’s family? It was 10! That is, *Adonai* would not have destroyed Sodom for those 10 relatives of Abraham, had they embraced the things of God. This is an awesome realization – our children’s families count – for everything!

Without this divine revelation about His plans, Abraham would not have had the opportunity to intercede and there would have been no survivors in Sodom – the only survivors were all related to Abraham. You and I, fathers, parents and leaders, which are (or are to be) heads of households, will receive a great revelation from the Almighty directly if we assume the spiritual leadership of our families and make that the number one priority in our lives. The same thing that obliged *Adonai* with Abraham obliges Him today because He is not a respecter of persons. But in our day something is tragically wrong. Walls that were protecting our sons and daughters are being broken down in ways that fathers and leaders should have foreseen, and families are being plundered at will. There is no question that attacks against bright, wholesome, committed young people are increasing especially in Believer families. Satan knows that they have the potential to do great damage to his kingdom, and that as a result, they have unprecedented opportunities to advance God’s kingdom. So then let us do our part in becoming spiritual *watchmen* over our families first, and over our community. Let us embrace our first responsibility and command and guard ‘The Way of *Adonai*’ in our community so that the Lord will be compelled to reveal His plans to us and we can save some of our family. So much depends on this. Shabbat Shalom!