

To Guard Over Shabbat

"¹⁶So Bnei-Yisrael is to keep (shomer) the Shabbat, to observe (la-asot) the Shabbat throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷It is a sign (ot) between Me and Bnei-Yisrael forever, for in six days Adonai made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested" (Exodus 31:16-17)

At the beginning of human history God committed to Adam, the first man and earthly husband and father, few but very specific responsibilities: "¹⁵Then Adonai Elohim took the man and gave him rest in the Garden of Eden in order to cultivate and watch over it" (Genesis 2:15). The English does not convey the full meaning of the passage. The Hebrew word translated *gave him rest* is *yanicheh*, which also means, *to lead*. The word translated *watch* comes from the Hebrew verb *shamar* whose basic meaning is *to guard/protect*. The Modern Hebrew word for *night watchman* (*shomer*) is derived from this root. God held Adam responsible to *lead* and to *guard* his jurisdiction (the Garden). Adam does not yet have a wife, but he is to *lead and guard* in the garden but from what? He was to secure the Garden from "*all the animals of the field*" (Gen. 2:20) that had no business being in the Garden.

The very next chapter reveals that Adam failed in this responsibility. The serpent (an "*animal of the field,*") made his way into the Garden. Adam fails in his next obligation – to *lead and protect* 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. At that point Eve added her sin to the failures of her husband. She entered into conversation with the serpent, succumbed to his deception and ate of the forbidden fruit. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate of it. This reveals that the first sins in human history were sins of *omission*. Adam failed in what he did not do (*passivity*).

Unfortunately, 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 a sin of *omission*; he was delinquent in his God-given responsibilities to lead and to guard. But Adam's sin of *omission* opened the way for Eve's sin of *commission*. People tend to think of *sins of omission* as less serious than *sins of commission*. But this is not Scriptural. In Matthew 25, *Yeshua* gives a prophetic parable concerning the judgment of the *sheep and goat nations* at the end of the age. To the goat nations He pronounces one of the most fearsome judgments ever to be uttered: '*Go away from Me, you cursed ones, into the everlasting fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*' (Matt. 25:41). What did those nations do to incur such a horrific judgment? The answer is one word: *nothing*. They gave no food, drink, or clothing – they showed no compassion. For those sins of omission they were condemned to everlasting punishment.

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 leading and guarding – first to the things of the Lord, their wives, then to their whole family. The characteristic sin of women is to go beyond the limits of their authority and to usurp the functions of men. The aggressive feminist movement is merely the latest in a long series of unhappy consequences of the continuing failure of *both* men and women. It is important to see, however, that the initial failure of men opens (leads) the way for women to move out of their places and usurp the functions of men. The number one problem of Western civilization, in my view, is delinquent men (husbands and fathers), just as the number one problem of delinquent children is delinquent parents. The failure of both Adam and Eve marred the perfection of the relationship that God planned for them to have toward each other. Nevertheless their failure did not set aside the basic principle on which God intended their relationship to be built. We could call theirs 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*.

One very important application for this principle is in our reading for this week, *Parashat Ki Tisa* when we are introduced to *marital appointed times* i.e., the *moadim*. *Adonai* makes a *weekly date* with His bride body called *Shabbat*. Even though *Adonai* will ultimately provide a complete cycle of His *appointed times* (*moadim* or festivals) in Leviticus 23 they are discussed in part at the end of *Ki Tisa*. The first and at the head of the list is *Shabbat*

– which is a *weekly moed* – a weekly appointed time (a weekly date). It is on *Shabbat* that the **Bride and Groom** meet in a special way with each other: ¹²*Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying, ¹³“Speak now to Bnei-Yisrael saying, ‘Surely you must keep My Shabbatot, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so you may know that I am Adonai who sanctifies you. ¹⁴Therefore you are to keep the Shabbat, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it will die, for whoever does any work during Shabbat, that soul will be cut off from the midst of his people. ¹⁵Work is to be done for six days, but on the seventh day is a Shabbat of complete rest, holy to Adonai. Whoever does any work on the Shabbat will surely be put to death (Ex. 31:12-15).*

Please note that we are to *guard (shomer) Shabbat* (to *keep/guard* is a formal assignment to soldiers in the military. The mission is to *protect* their assigned posts). One of the things we are told is that it is of utmost importance to *guard/protect* this *set aside time (sacred time)* because it is precious. In the military, soldiers face stiff consequences for neglecting to execute their guard duty properly. The same thing holds true for us (since we are in the army of *Adonai*) if we neglect our special duty – to *Shomer Shabbat*. We see the gravity of *Adonai’s* discipline in *Exodus 31:14*. *Adonai* will levy significant discipline upon those who violate their guard duty and endanger their whole jurisdiction/community in the process.

The *rest* being implied here is to be the same as the *Adonai’s* rest. Where do we find how the Lord rested? We find it also in Genesis chapter two: *“So the heavens and the earth were completed along with their entire array. God completed—on the seventh day—His work (melachto, which means work, craft, skill, trade, vocation, occupation, labor) that He made, and He ceased (vayishbot, from the verb shabbat) – on the seventh day – from all His work that He made” (Genesis 2:1-2)*. What was the work He had been doing? He had been speaking forth the Creation of the world, and all of the inhabitants therein. The text says that *God* stopped doing His craft, His skill, His trade and His vocation (working) because the work was completed! Was there anything left to be done? Could anything be added? No! The text declares that creation was completed in its entire vast array. There were only two things left to be done: first, to stop the creative work and then, to enjoy that which had been made, to refresh His soul.

There is much more we can glean from this passage about Shabbat – we see a wedding ring when we are told that *Shabbat* is a covenant ring/sign (*ot*). A ring serves to remind the married couple that they are in a covenant, committed to each other. It is the same with *Shabbat*. Keeping *Shabbat* reminds us that we are *God’s* peculiar (*segulah, special treasure*) people and that He is our bridegroom. Moreover, *Shabbat* serves as a reminder that the same God, who is our creator, desires that we *delight (oneg)* in Him and in who we are in Him. The wedding ring is a sign to other potential suitors that one is married. So it is for the Body of Messiah – the bride of the One and Only True *God* of Israel. When believers practice *Shabbat*, others can see and know that they belong to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that they are already married. Thus, *Shabbat* is a symbol/sign that helps guard the bride from the intrusion of suitors, which could attempt to destroy the marriage. This is specifically a message to other nations, *“...so you may know that I am Adonai who sanctifies you.”*

This portion tells us that, among other things, we are to **do (la-asot, to do) Shabbat**. In fact, the text implies that we are to make a special effort to do it. If *Shabbat* were meant to be a day of our *American concept of resting*, then how would one **do Shabbat**? The *ArtScroll Chumash* states: *“It is a token of respect for the Sabbath that one prepares for it ahead of time ... Thus one, makes (la-asot) Shabbat by preparing for it ahead of time so that it will be observed properly when it arrives.”* We should do all we can to see to it that the preparations for *Shabbat* begin early in the week by readjusting schedules and carefully planning our work and shopping for every week. This helps to ensure that when the preparation day (Friday) arrives, we are ready to do what it takes to **do Shabbat** properly.

We are currently involved in another very important facet of being a *shomer* for *Adonai*. We have jurisdiction over our county/state, county and city and *Adonai* is looking for us to guard His possession (*“the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”*) from any snake (Satanic) intrusions. We must embrace this high call of duty in our time and if we do not faint, we will reap a bountiful harvest. Let us roll up our sleeves and put our hand in the plow and never look back. This is our destiny! *Shabbat Shalom!*