

SPIRITUAL REGENERATION

by Rabbi Label Lam

The Spiritual Regeneration of Jews Throughout the World

Moses assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them, "These are the things that Hashem has commanded to do them: On six days work may be done but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem; Whoever does work on it shall be put to death. You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwelling places on the Shabbos day..."

Six days...The warning for Shabbos preceded the commandment of the work of the Tabernacle to teach that it does not supercede the Shabbos. (Rashi - Mechilta)

Why does the verse tell us that these are the things to do and then tell us what not to do? How do we know what it is that we are not to do on Shabbos? Is kindling a fire the only act forbidden?

The Ohr HaChaim explains that Moses is really commanding about the doing and making of the Tabernacle. The things that we refrain from on Shabbos our sages detail for us are the 39 main categories of creative activity that went into the construction of the Tabernacle. The Torah serves as a self-referential dictionary defining the word "work" as it is used nearby in the building of the Tabernacle. Where would we be without an Oral Torah and sages to delineate the boundaries of permissible behavior on Shabbos?

When my wife and I were engaged, at the party there was a cousin of hers that has written voluminously about the holocaust. He himself survived, somehow, seven concentration camps. One of the Rabbis encouraged him to speak. He claimed to be unprepared and not a good English speaker. He spoke amazingly well. I can never forget his words.

First he looked out at a room filled with newly observant Jews and wondered aloud, "Where do you people come from?" He then quoted the Talmudic principle, "Torah returns to those who have hosted it." He explained, "If you are sitting here today then it's probably because you have some great ancestors who were willing to and did give blood to keep this Torah alive." He went on to talk about my wife's and his illustrious family tree.

Then he said that had he known he was going to speak he would have brought with him a document he held in his hands that morning that answered a question that had been nagging him for almost four decades. "We all know Hitler's "final solution" for European Jewry. What was his global scheme? Where was his plan to eliminate the rest of world Jewry?" He then paraphrased what he had learned

from that amazing document. Years later I saw it published with a partial English translation.

It said as follows: "This document transmits a memorandum dispatched by I.A Eckhardt from the chief of the German Occupation Power. It is an order dated October 25, 1940 from das Reichssicherheitshauptamt-the central office of the German Security Forces to the Nazi district governors in occupied Poland, instructing them not to grant exit visas to Ostjuden- Jews from Eastern Europe. The reason behind this order is clearly spelled out: the fear that because of their "Othodoxen einstellung" their orthodoxy, these Ostjuden would provide "die Rabbiner und Talmudleher" - the Rabbis and the teachers of the Talmud, who would create "die geistige Erneuerung" the spiritual regeneration of the Jews in America and throughout the world."

On the verse in the Megilla of Esther, "Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the entire kingdom of Achashveirosh, the people of Mordachai." (Megillas Esther 3:6) Why was it necessary to write "the people of Mordachai", since it already stated that he wished to destroy all the Jews?

The Talmud explains, since "it was despicable to send his hand against Mordachai alone" he decided to go against the colleagues of Mordachai. These are the Talmud Scholars! In the end he wanted to destroy all Jews. The Maharal writes, "Why all this if he was only contending with one man? The sages are united in principle and supportive of Mordachai and they are also connected with the all the people because it's impossible for the Jewish People to exist without Talmud Scholars."

What Haman and Hitler feared most we hope more than ever and strive daily for -the spiritual regeneration of Jews throughout the world.

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