

" THE NARROW RIDGE"

A HIGH HOLIDAY SERMON, 1966-5727 - GIVEN ROSH HASHONAH EVENING, BETH AM,
MIAMI, FLORIDA.

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ON ROSH HA-SHANAH JEWS GATHER TOGETHER FOR MANY REASONS, SOME OF THE REASONS ARE RATIONALLY BASED. OTHER REASONS WELL-UP FROM THE SUB-CONSCIOUS. WE COME TOGETHER BECAUSE WHEN WE HEAR THE CALL OF THE SHOFEK, WE KNOW THAT JEWS HAVE BEEN TOO LONG APART. WE COME BECAUSE, ALONE AND SEPARATE, WE FEEL A LACK OF MEANING. WE NEED THE STRENGTH WE IMPART TO EACH OTHER. WE NEED THE REMINDER THAT WE BELONG TO A MEANINGFUL AND CONTINUING GROUP.

WE COME, AMONGST OTHER REASONS, TO REMIND OURSELVES WHY WE ARE JEWS, TO SHARPEN OUR BELIEF, TO CLARIFY OUR PERSPECTIVE. EVERY YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, AT THIS SEASON, JEWS ASK THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS IT TO BE A JEW?" THIS IS A QUESTION WHICH IS, AT ONCE, FRUSTRATING AND EXCITING. THE MORE ONE SAYS IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, "WHAT IS IT TO BE A JEW?", THE MORE ONE REALIZES THAT THE ANSWER IS INCOMPLETE AND, THUS, PARTIALLY INCORRECT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ANSWER IS EXCITING, BECAUSE AS YOU RESPOND, YOU REALIZE THAT TO BE A JEW IS SOMETHING PROFOUND AND SPECIAL.

THIS SUMMER I WAS PRIVILEGED TO SEE, FOR THE SECOND TIME, THE BROADWAY MUSICAL, "FIDDLER ON THE ROOF". IT IS A PLEASURE AND A DUTY FOR EVERY JEW TO SEE THIS PLAY. IT GETS ITS NAME FROM THE GREAT JEWISH HUMORIST OF THE 19TH CENTURY, SHOLEM ALEICHEM, WHO WROTE THAT IN EASTERN EUROPE THE JEWS COULD BE COMPARED TO A FIDDLER ON THE ROOF. THAT IS TO SAY, THE JEWS DID NOT QUITE LIVE "IN THE HOUSE" WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. THEY WERE NOT PART OF THE "IN GROUP", SO TO SPEAK. THEY WERE OUTSIDERS WHO WERE PERMITTED TO STAY CLOSE TO THE COMMUNITY, BUT NOT TO LIVE IN IT. THEY WERE GRANTED THE PRIVILEGE, YOU MIGHT SAY, OF LIVING ON THE PERIMETER, ON THE EDGE, ON THE "ROOF".

SHOLEM ALEICHEM COULD HAVE SAID THAT THE JEWS OF EASTERN EUROPE LIVED IN THE BARN, OR IN THE CELLAR, BUT HE CHOSE THE IMAGE OF THE ROOF. THE JEW WAS OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF THE COMMUNITY, BUT HE WAS ABOVE THE HOUSE, NOT BELOW IT. THE JEW MAY HAVE BEEN MORE EXPOSED TO THE ELEMENTS. HE MAY HAVE GOTTEN WET IN THE RAIN; HE MAY HAVE SHIVERED IN THE SNOW; BUT HE WAS "ABOVE" THE HOUSE.

WITH WHAT KIND OF OCCUPATION DID THE EAST EUROPEAN JEW INVOLVE HIMSELF? WHILE THE NON-JEWS WERE FARMING, THE JEWS WHO HAD BEEN FORCIBLY DIVORCED FROM THE LAND SINCE FEUDAL DAYS, DID WHATEVER ELSE THEY COULD. THEY ASSUMED THE FRINGE JOBS OF THE COMMUNITY. THEY BECAME MILK PEDDLERS, AND CLOTHES PEDDLERS, AND TAILORS, AND, LIKE THE GYPSIES AND THE NEGROES OF TODAY, THEY BECAME ENTERTAINERS -- FIDDLERS. THE "FIDDLER ON THE ROOF" REPRESENTS THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF THE CONDITION IN WHICH THE JEWS OF EASTERN EUROPE FOUND THEMSELVES. STILL, THE FIDDLER IS NOT TOTALLY A TRAGIC FIGURE. HE MAKES A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY. HE IS NOT A BEATNIK. HE IS NOT DESTRUCTIVE. HE IS CREATIVE IN HIS OWN WAY, AND BECAUSE HE IS A SPECIALIST, HE MAKES A PLACE FOR HIMSELF.

CAN WE APPLY THIS QUAIN'T IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN JEW TO THE AMERICAN JEW? IN MANY WAYS, NO, BUT IN SOME WAYS, YES. IN THE EXPANDING DEMOCRACY OF AMERICA, IT IS LESS AND LESS TRUE THAT JEWS ARE PROHIBITED FROM COUNTRY CLUB MEMBERSHIP OR RESTRICTED FROM LIVING IN CERTAIN FANCY RESIDENTIAL AREAS. IN AMERICA, MORE AND MORE OF THE PROFESSIONS, ONCE CLOSED TO JEWS, ARE OPENING UP. MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, THERE IS ANTI-SEMITISM IN AMERICA, AND THERE ARE RESTRICTIONS AGAINST THE JEWS, BUT ECONOMICALLY, IN AMERICA, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE THE JEW AS ONE WHO IS SUBSTANTIALLY APART FROM THE "IN" GROUP.

LIVING "ON THE BOUNDARY"

IN SPITE OF THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PICTURE, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THERE ARE, NONETHELESS, AREAS IN MODERN LIFE WHERE THE JEW IS TODAY "ON THE BOUNDARY" AND STANDS APART FROM THE MASS OF THE COMMUNITY. AT LEAST, I HOPE THERE ARE SUCH AREAS. MARTIN BUBER, RECENTLY DECEASED, AND RECOGNIZED AS THE GREATEST JEWISH RELIGIOUS THINKER OF OUR TIME, DESCRIBED HIS OWN RELIGIOUS POSITION AS "STANDING ON A NARROW RIDGE". FROM BUBER'S VIEWPOINT, THE MAN WHO SUBSCRIBES TO THE JEWISH VIEW OF LIFE CAN NEVER BE TOTALLY A PART OF ACCEPTED SOCIETY. BUBER TAUGHT THAT THE JEW CAN NEVER WHOLLY ACCEPT THE REIGNING PHILOSOPHIES AND IDEOLOGIES OF ANY PARTICULAR COUNTRY OR GROUP. THIS PLACES HIM ON A NARROW, ROCKY RIDGE BETWEEN THE ACCEPTED VIEWPOINTS.

TAKE FOR EXAMPLE, THE JEWS OF THE SOVIET UNION. THE MASS OF RUSSIANS FIND IT RELATIVELY EASY TO ACCEPT THE TEACHING THAT COMMUNISTS ARE 100% RIGHT AND EVERYONE ELSE IS ALL WRONG. THE JEWS HAVE HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY WITH THIS. THE RUSSIAN JEWS WHO LIVED THROUGH THE OPPRESSION OF THE CZARS WERE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE EVIL OF CZARISM. THEY WERE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE VIRTUES OF COMMUNISM, BUT THEIR VIEWS WERE CONDITIONED BY THEIR HISTORY OF LIVING UNDER MANY EMPIRES AND THROUGH MANY EXPERIMENTS IN GOVERNMENT. THEY KNEW THAT UTOPIAS ARE HARD TO COME BY AND THAT COMMUNISM WOULD BRING ITS OWN PROBLEMS. SO, MANY OF THE RUSSIAN JEWS, NOT ALL TO BE SURE, STOOD "ON THE BOUNDARY", ON THE NARROW RIDGE, NOT TOTALLY ACCEPTING OF COMMUNISM AND MAINTAINING A CRITICAL POSITION, CLINGING TO SOME OF THEIR OWN CULTURE AND RELIGION. THIS INFURIATED STALIN AND LED TO HIS PERSECUTION OF JEWISH DOCTORS AND INTELLECTUALS. THE LEADERS OF RUSSIA TODAY PERMIT ALL GROUPS BUT THE JEWISH GROUP TO MAINTAIN THEIR ANCIENT CULTURE, LANGUAGE, NEWSPAPER AND SCHOOLS. THE JEWS ARE NOT CONSIDERED TO BE QUITE LIKE ALL THE OTHER PEOPLES. THEY ARE DIFFERENT. THEY ARE NOT SO MANEUVERABLE; THEY ARE NOT SO PLIABLE OR MALLEABLE. THEY ARE RESISTANT TO AUTOCRACY, AND THEY PERSIST IN THEIR OWN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION.

THE SITUATION OF THE JEW IN AMERICA IS NOT SO EXTREME, CERTAINLY, BUT THERE ARE ELEMENTS OF THIS PROBLEM IN SMALLER DEGREE. JEWS ARE LOYAL AMERICANS, YES, FOR AMERICA OFFERS A POLITICAL GOVERNMENT WHICH IS CLOSEST TO THE HEART OF JUDAISM. NONETHELESS, THE JEWS OF AMERICA, BY AND LARGE, FORM AN UNUSUALLY CRITICAL GROUP. WHENEVER AMERICA PURSUES A POLICY WHICH SEEMS TO BE IN THE INTEREST OF SELFISH NATIONALISM, JEWISH GROUPS ARE THE MOST OUTSPOKEN. JEWS ARE NATIONALISTS, YES, BUT THEY ARE NOT ONLY NATIONALISTS.

THEY ARE ALSO INTER-NATIONALISTS. THE DREAM OF A UNITED AND DEMOCRATIC WORLD HAS BEEN A JEWISH DREAM FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. WE TAKE SERIOUSLY ISAIAH'S PROPHECY OF THE TIME "WHEN MEN SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOUGHS AND NATIONS SHALL LEARN WAR NO MORE". WHEN FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN PATRIOTIC NATIONALISM AND INTER-NATIONALISM, JEWS STAND ON THE BOUNDARY, ON THE NARROW RIDGE. THEY DO NOT FIT INTO AN EASY PATTERN. CERTAINLY, RAMPANT CHINESE NATIONALISM IS BAD, BUT WHERE DOES CRUSADING AMERICAN NATIONALISM END? THE CONSCIENCE OF THE JEW DOES NOT REST EASY IN A MATTER LIKE VIET NAM. WE ARE NOT SO SURE AND SO UNQUESTIONING ABOUT THIS AS ARE MANY OF OUR NON-JEWISH FRIENDS. THIS IS A MATTER OF THE CONDITIONING OF THE CENTURIES. IT IS A MATTER OF IN-BREEDING WHICH HAS TAUGHT US THAT WHEN A MAN OR A NATION TAKES UP ARMS, HE IS ALREADY, AT LEAST, PARTIALLY SUSPECT, AND IT IS BETTER TO FALL A LITTLE SHORT OF THE FULLEST DEFENSE OF ONE'S INTERESTS BY DESTRUCTIVE MEANS, THAN TO GO A LITTLE OVER THE BOUNDARY LINE.

BETWEEN "MATERIALISM" AND "OTHER WORLDLINESS"

THERE ARE SOME WHO TEACH IN MODERN TIMES THAT THE DEEPEST MEANING IN LIFE IS THE ENJOYMENT OF MATERIAL OBJECTS. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO TEACH THAT MAN CAN SAVE HIMSELF FROM EVIL ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT HE LIBERATES HIMSELF FROM MATERIALISTIC DESIRES AND BECOMES TOTALLY "SPIRITUALIZED". THE FORMER DOCTRINE OF EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY, IS THE DOMINANT PHILOSOPHY IN AMERICA. THE HOSPITALS ARE FILLED WITH AMBITIOUS AND BRILLIANT YOUNG MEN WHO WORSHIP THE GOD OF FINANCIAL SUCCESS AND WHO WILL SHUN NO SACRIFICE TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR PIETY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TWO RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD WITH THE LARGEST NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS, ARE BOTH, IN THEIR CLASSICAL PRESENTATION, ASCETICALLY ORIENTED. BUDDHISM, WHICH CLAIMS THE ALLEGIANCE OF VAST MILLIONS IN THE ORIENT, TEACHES THAT MAN'S DESIRE FOR PHYSICAL SATISFACTION MUST BE SUBMERGED AND OVERCOME. NOT EVEN DEATH WILL LIBERATE THE SOUL THAT HAS SUCCEDED TO MATERIALISTIC WANTS. TO ESCAPE THE ETERNAL WHEEL OF RE-BIRTH AND ENDLESS DESIRE, ACCORDING TO BUDDHISM, A MAN MUST "DIE" TO THIS WORLD WHILE HE IS YET ALIVE. THAT IS, HE MUST LEARN THE HAPPINESS OF "NOT WANTING", HE MUST FIND HIS LIFE IN DENIAL, IN "NON-BEING".

CHRISTIANITY IS BASED ON THE LIFE OF A MAN WHO, APPARENTLY, NEVER MARRIED AND WAS PROPAGATED MOST BY PAUL, A MAN WHO TOOK A DIM VIEW OF SEX, EVEN IN MARRIAGE. CATHOLICISM, FOLLOWING THIS INCLINATION, BUILT A BROAD SYSTEM OF MONASTERIES AND NUNNERIES WHERE THE BEST CHRISTIANS MANIFEST THEIR HIGHER FAITH IN RETREAT FROM THE DESIRES OF NORMAL MEN AND WOMEN. THE SUCCESS OF FEUDALISM IN THE EUROPE OF THE MIDDLE AGES WAS MADE POSSIBLE, IN PART, BY THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIANITY AS A RELIGION OF ACQUIESCENCE, MEEKNESS, AND DENIAL. AS AGAINST BUDDHISM AND CLASSICAL CHRISTIANITY, ON THE ONE HAND, AND AS AGAINST THE RAMPANT MATERIALISM OF MODERN TIMES, JUDAISM STANDS ON THE BOUNDARY, ON THE NARROW RIDGE, BELONGING TO NEITHER POSITION, CRITICAL OF BOTH, AND, YET, ASSERTING SOME OF THE TRUTH OF EACH. ANY STUDENT OF RELIGION KNOWS THAT THE JUDAISM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHES A HEALTHY ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BODILY DESIRES OF MEN. EVEN TALMUDIC JUDAISM, WHICH WAS MORE PURITANICAL, UPHELD HEALTHY ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEX AND A REASONABLE SEARCH FOR THE MATERIAL GOODS OF LIFE. UNLIKE JESUS AND PAUL, THE HEROES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, MEN LIKE ABRAHAM AND MOSES, WERE MARRIED MEN, INVOLVED WITH THE PROBLEMS OF NORMAL MEN AND NORMAL COMMUNITIES. JUDAISM TODAY TEACHES, WHAT JUDAISM HAS SUBSTANTIALLY ALWAYS TAUGHT, THAT THE SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT OF MAN IS LINKED TO HIS PHYSICAL FULFILLMENT, PROVIDED THAT FULFILLMENT IS REASONABLE AND DISCIPLINED.

IN RECENT YEARS SEGMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY ARE ATTEMPTING TO CAST-OFF THE CLASSICAL EMPHASIS IN "THE WORLD TO COME" AND TO EMPHASIZE THE PROPHETIC TEACHINGS. TO THE EXTENT THAT CHRISTIANITY DOES THIS, IT IS EMPHASIZING ITS JEWISH CONTENT AND CASTING-OFF ITS DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN CONTENT.

MODERN CRISIS

IN THIS REGARD, IT MUST BE SAID THAT JEWS FACE A REAL CRISIS IN AMERICA TODAY. WE WHO ARE THE CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN OF IMPOVERISHED ANCESTORS FROM EUROPE HAVE RUSHED THIRSTILY AND HUNGRILY TOWARDS THE OVER-FLOWING TROUGHS OF AMERICA. MANY ARE THE JEWS WHO HAVE SLIPPED PAST THE BOUNDARIES OF RESTRAINT AND WHO HAVE BECOME SEEKERS OF MONEY AND STATUS FOR ITS OWN SAKE. SOME OF THE MOST DEVIOUS BUSINESS MEN IN MIAMI AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, I AM GRIEVED TO SAY, ARE JEWS WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A JEW. THE VERY EASE OF AMASSING A FORTUNE IN AMERICA HAS BLOTTED OUT ALL OTHER VALUES FOR SOME OF US. SOME OF US HAVE NOT ONLY FORGOTTEN ETHICAL STANDARDS, WE HAVE ALSO FORGOTTEN OUR FAMILIES.

A JEW, IDEALLY, IS ONE WHO IS ON THE BOUNDARY, IN THIS RESPECT. HE IS NEITHER AN ASCETIC, FEARFUL OF ENJOYING THE GIFTS OF THE BODY AND LIFE, NOR IS HE A "CHAZAR", A PIG, "EATING" ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT LIFE THROWS BEFORE HIM. A JEW, IDEALLY, IS ONE CAPABLE OF SELF-DISCIPLINE AND THE CONTROL OF HIS PHYSICAL DESIRES IN THE LIGHT OF LIFE'S HIGHER MEANING. A JEW IS ONE WHO DOES NOT LOSE HIMSELF IN THE PRESENT MOMENT. HE LIVES, IN PART, WITH A SENSE OF YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW, AND HE WEIGHS THE PRESENT IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY. FRIENDS OF PRESIDENT JOHNSON HAVE SAID THAT HE IS ALMOST FANATICALLY CONSCIOUS OF HIS PLACE IN HISTORY. EVERYTHING HE DOES, HE DOES WITH THE QUESTION IN MIND, "HOW WILL THIS LOOK WHEN IT IS WRITTEN DOWN ON THE PAGES OF HISTORY?" THIS SOUNDS A GREAT DEAL LIKE RABBI JUDAH WHO LIVED TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO AND TAUGHT, "KNOW WHAT IS ABOVE YOU, A SEEING EYE, A HEARING EAR, AND ALL YOUR DEEDS RECORDED IN A BOOK." THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT GOD TEDIOSLY WAITS FOR US TO MAKE AN ERROR SO THAT HE MAY PUNISH US. ON THE CONTRARY, THIS WAS RABBI JUDAH'S WAY OF TEACHING THAT WITH THE DEEDS OF OUR LIFE WE ADD TO THE CONTENT OF HISTORY, AND BY THE QUALITY OF THE PRESENT LIFE WE LEAD, WE SHAPE THE CHARACTER OF THE FUTURE. PERHAPS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THIS IS, "FATHERS AND MOTHERS, DO NOT BE DECEIVED! YOUR CHILDREN ARE WATCHING YOU, AND THEY WILL IMITATE YOU, YOU MAY BE SURE, AND GO A LITTLE BEYOND!"

LET ME CAUTION THAT LIVING OUT THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE CERTAINLY DOES NOT MEAN BEING DETACHED FROM THE LIFE OF OUR TIME. LIVING ON THE BOUNDARY SIMPLY MEANS THAT YOU DON'T FOLLOW THE MOB BLINDLY. MANY IS THE TIME THAT A GROUP OF PEOPLE HAVE FOLLOWED THEIR LEADERS, MARCHING PROUDLY OVER THE PRECIPICE TO DESTRUCTION. CONSIDER THE GERMANS OF HITLER'S DAY, OR CONSIDER THE FLOCK OF BIRDS THAT LOYALLY FOLLOWED THEIR LEADER AS HE SMASHED AGAINST THE CONCRETE WALLS OF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING. BEING JEWISH MEANS THAT YOU CONSIDER HUMAN ACTIONS, POLITICAL VOTES, AND PRIVATE THOUGHTS AS SACRED, AND NOT FOR SALE TO ANY MOB. FOR SOME JEWS FOLLOWING THE FADS WHETHER IN TERMS OF DRESS, OR HAIR-DO, OR DRINKING, OR SEX, OR THOUGHT IS A COMPULSION. FOR SOME OF US, BEING DIFFERENT IS A TERRIBLE FATE. FOR TEEN-AGERS, FOLLOWING THE CROWD IS PERHAPS A NATURAL THING, FOR THE TEEN-AGER GAINS WHATEVER SECURITY HE HAS FROM THE APPROVAL OF HIS FRIENDS; BUT FOR

MATURE ADULTS, FOLLOWING THE FAD IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS. THE DOMINANT FAD IS IMAGELESSNESS. IF YOU'RE A WOMAN, DRESS LIKE A MAN. IF YOU'RE A MAN, GET A FEMININE HAIR-CUT. DON'T SEEM TO BE WHAT YOU REALLY ARE, WE ARE TOLD. IF YOU ARE ETHICAL, DON'T LET ANYBODY KNOW BECAUSE YOU'LL LOSE BUSINESS. PEOPLE WILL BE AFRAID OF YOU. IF YOU ARE A CHEATER, O.K., BUT KEEP IT CONCEALED. THIS PULL TO THE NO-MAN'S LAND OF LOSS OF IDENTITY WHERE EVERYONE WEARS A MASK AND NO ONE IS IDENTIFIABLE IS A DANGER TO JEWS AND JUDAISM, FOR OUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS UPON THE OPEN AND FRANK MANIFESTATION OF A WILLINGNESS TO BE DIFFERENT, WHEN THE GOOD CAN THUS BEST BE SERVED. BEING JEWISH MEANS, AMONGST OTHER THINGS, THE COURAGE TO TAKE A STAND, EVEN WHEN IT IS AGAINST THE GROWING TIDE. THIS IS NOT TO BE EQUATED WITH STUBBORNNESS OR WITH THE MERE REFUSAL TO CHANGE. BEING JEWISH MEANS MEASURING THE PRESENT ACT BY THE YARDSTICK OF ENDURING VALUE. TAKE FOR EXAMPLE, THE REIGNING CROP OF T.V. SHOWS, MOST OF WHICH SEEK TO ENTERTAIN YOU BY AN APPEAL TO VIOLENCE. THE PERSISTENT T.V. THEMES ARE PHYSICAL BATTLE AND EASY SEX. A NOBLE EXCEPTION IS THE SERIES RELEASED BY THE XEROX COMPANY. THE XEROX COMPANY, WHICH SELLS OFFICE COPY MACHINES, HAS DARED TO SHOW DOCUMENTARIES ON POVERTY, ON DRUG ADDICTION, ON THE NEED FOR EDUCATION, AND ON ANTI-SEMITISM. IT MAY NOT BE AN ACCIDENT THAT THE T.V. POLICY OF THE COMPANY IS INFLUENCED BY SOME OF ITS JEWISH OFFICIALS WHO HAVE PUBLICLY STATED THAT BEING JEWISH IS A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY. IT GIVES YOU AN "EXTRA SOMETHING", THEY HAVE TOLD A REPORTER FOR "LIFE MAGAZINE". FOR THESE MEN THAT "EXTRA SOMETHING" IS EXPRESSED THROUGH A TOUCHING, DRAMATIC SERIES ON THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF OUR TIME. THE XEROX FILMS WILL HAVE MEANING AND VALUE LONG AFTER THE SPY-FILMS AND THE WAR FILMS HAVE BEEN FILED IN OBLIVION, FOR THE XEROX FILMS DEAL WITH REALITY, WITH THE SUBJECTS THAT WILL DETERMINE THE FUTURE OF AMERICA AND THE WORLD.

IN A SENSE, WE CAN SAY THAT THE XEROX COMPANY IS LIKE THE FIDDLER ON THE ROOF. IT IS NOT PRESENTING T.V. PICTURES THAT ARE POPULARLY ACCEPTED. IT'S PICTURES ARE NOT "COOL" OR HEP. THEY ARE REJECTED BY THE MOB, BUT THEY MAY YET SAVE THE MOB!

LET ME CONCLUDE WITH A STORY FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE. SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I HAPPENED TO BE IN THE CITY OF BALTIMORE. I DON'T RECALL THE EXACT DATE, BUT IT WAS TOWARDS THE END OF THE BASEBALL SEASON. I SAT DOWN AT A LUNCHEON COUNTER TO ORDER A SANDWICH WHEN I NOTICED THAT A MAN SEATED NEARBY WAS SERIOUSLY DEPRESSED. THE MAN COULD BARELY TALK, AND WHEN HE SPOKE, HIS VOICE TREMBLED WITH TRAGEDY. GRADUALLY, I COULD MAKE OUT SOMETHING OF WHAT HE WAS SAYING. THIS MAN WAS OVERCOME WITH THE FAILURE OF THE BALTIMORE BASEBALL TEAM TO WIN THE AMERICAN LEAGUE PENNANT! ALL OF HIS EMOTIONS, HIS HOPES, AND HIS NEEDS HAD BEEN INVESTED IN THE BALTIMORE TEAM, AND WITH ITS FAILURE, THE BUBBLE OF HIS LIFE HAD POPPED. SINCE THEY HAD FAILED, HE CONSIDERED HIMSELF A FAILURE. SO MANY OF US ARE LIKE THIS THIS MAN. WE INVEST TOO MUCH OF OURSELVES IN THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE, SO THAT WE ARE DISTRACTED FROM THE REALLY IMPORTANT THINGS. FOR SOME OF US THE BIG THING IS BASEBALL. FOR OTHERS, IT IS FOOTBALL, OR GOLF, OR LOSING WEIGHT, OR LOOKING PRETTY. SOME OF US FIND MEANING IN LIFE ONLY WHEN WE ARE FRANTICALLY TRAVELLING OR WHEN WE ARE COMPULSIVELY SEARCHING FOR THE NEWEST AND BEST PLACE TO DINE. ALL OF THESE THINGS ARE GOOD IN SMALL DOSES,

BUT WHEN THEY BECOME THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE, WHEN THEY BECOME., NOT RECREATION BUT A PASSION, THEN, WE CAN KNOW THAT WE ARE BLOWING OUR LIFE'S BREATH INTO A BALLOON THAT HAS TO POP.

PERHAPS ROSH HASHONAH IS A GOOD TIME FOR US TO SIT DOWN TO MAKE A LIST CONCERNING WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT IN OUR LIFE AND WHAT IS RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT. IF WE MAKE SUCH A LIST WE MAY GRADUALLY FIND THAT WE WILL NO LONGER CHEER BLINDLY WITH THE MOB WHILE THE FLOW OF REALITY PASSES US BY. WE MAY DISCOVER THAT, SLOWLY, WE TOO, WILL WALK OUT ON THAT NARROW RIDGE FROM WHICH VANTAGE POINT WE CAN PLAN TO INVEST OUR ENERGY AND OUR HOPES IN WHAT IS TRULY WORTHWHILE. WE MAY DISCOVER THAT WITH SO MUCH VIOLENCE AND CONFUSION GOING ON INSIDE THE "HOUSE" OF THE WORLD, WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS IS A "FIDDLER ON THE ROOF" WHO CAN TEACH US A MEANINGFUL TUNE BY WHICH TO DANCE.