

SHOULD JEWS BE MISSIONARIES?

A Yom Kippur Sermon by
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WE JEWS ARE BUT A DROP IN THE OCEAN OF HUMANITY, BUT SOMEHOW WE HAVE INFLUENCED THE ENTIRE OCEAN. HOW SMALL CAN A DROP BE, HOWEVER, BEFORE IT CEASES TO HAVE THE POWER TO INFLUENCE? EVER SINCE HITLER, OUR SMALL BAND HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED. WITH THE ADVENT OF BIRTH CONTROL AND WITH THE INDIFFERENCE TO JUDAISM OF SOME BORN INTO THE FAITH, OUR MEMBERS ARE THREATENED WITH A FURTHER DECREASE, AND AT A TIME WHEN MOST POPULATION GROUPS IN THE WORLD ARE INCREASING. IN THE INTEREST OF SURVIVAL, WE JEWS MUST ASK OURSELVES, "WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAINTAIN OR INCREASE THE SIZE OF OUR GROUP?". OUT OF THIS GENERAL QUESTION EMERGES THE SUBQUESTION, "SHOULD WE BECOME MISSIONARIES? SHOULD WE BEGIN AN ACTIVE CAMPAIGN TO BRING NON-JEWS INTO OUR FOLD?"

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN WE JEWS ACTIVELY SOUGHT CONVERTS. THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHER CRITICIZES SOME OF THE JEWISH SCHOLARS OF HIS DAY FOR TRAVELLING LONG DISTANCES TO MAKE CONVERTS. TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO THE ROMAN SOCIETY, OF WHICH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WAS A SMALL PART, WAS RIPE FOR CONVERSION TO JUDAISM. MANY ROMANS HAD BECOME SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR PAGAN RELIGIONS WERE WITHOUT ETHICAL ORIENTATION, SO THEY HAD TO SEE IN JUDAISM SOMETHING THAT WAS DESIRABLE. ONE ROMAN HISTORIAN WROTE THAT ON FRIDAY NIGHT THERE WERE MORE CANDLES BURNING IN ROMAN HOMES THAN IN JEWISH HOMES. THE HISTORIAN INDICATES THAT THE OBSERVANCE OF THIS CUSTOM WAS A SIGN OF ROMAN ATTRACTION TO JEWISH OBSERVANCE.

HAD REFORM JUDAISM EXISTED 2,000 YEARS AGO, I AM CONVINCED THAT JUDAISM WOULD HAVE GAINED LARGE NUMBERS OF CONVERTS, BUT THE HUNDREDS OF ORTHODOX REQUIREMENTS MADE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR NON-JEWS, ALTHOUGH ATTRACTED BY JEWISH ETHICS, TO ADOPT THE RELIGION COMPLETELY. FOR SOME TIME AFTER THE DEATH OF JESUS, THOSE JEWS WHO THOUGHT HE WAS THE MESSIAH, DID NOT BREAK-OFF FROM JUDAISM TO FORM A SEPARATE RELIGION. THE RUPTURE DID NOT HAPPEN UNTIL, AT LEAST, FIFTY YEARS LATER WHEN PAUL, WHO HAD NEVER SEEN JESUS, BEGAN TO ORGANIZE THIS SMALL MESSIANIC SECT INTO SOMETHING FAR DIFFERENT FROM THE SECT THAT JESUS HAD DEVELOPED. AS THE PAULINE RELIGION, LATER KNOWN AS CHRISTIANITY, GREW MORE POPULAR, A COMPETITION DEVELOPED BETWEEN THIS OFF-SHOOT OF JUDAISM AND ITS MOTHER RELIGION. THE COMPETITION WAS BITTER PRECISELY BECAUSE THE TWO RELIGIONS WERE CLOSE TOGETHER. PROGRESSIVELY, HOWEVER, AS CHRISTIANITY TOOK ON A NON-JEWISH CHARACTER, THE TWO RELIGIONS LOST INTIMATE CONTACT. AS A SEPARATE RELIGION, CHRISTIANITY MADE ITS GREAT STRIDE FORWARD IN THE 4TH CENTURY A.D. WHEN CONSTANTINE, THE PAGAN EMPEROR OF THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE, ADOPTED CHRISTIANITY AND FORCEFULLY CONVERTED HIS FORTY MILLION SUBJECTS TO HIS RELIGION. CONSTANTINE ALSO RULED THAT IF ANYONE ATTEMPTED TO CONVERT ONE OF HIS CITIZENS TO JUDAISM, HE WOULD BE BEHEADED. IN THIS WAY DID CHRISTIANITY BECOME THE MAJORITY RELIGION OF EASTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE AND, ULTIMATELY, OF THE REST OF EUROPE; AND IN THIS WAY DID JUDAISM END ITS GREAT PROSTELYZING PERIOD.

THE STRONGEST MOVEMENT TO CONVERT JEWS TO CHRISTIANITY CAME AROUND 1490 IN SPAIN WHEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, FEARFUL OF THE LOSS OF ITS POWER, ISSUED A SET OF NEW LAWS DESIGNED TO DISCOURAGE DISSENTERS. THE JEWS LIKE OTHER DISSENTERS, WERE OFFERED THE OPTION OF CONVERTING TO CATHOLICISM OR LEAVING THE COUNTRY. AFTER A BRIEF WHILE, THE LATTER OPTION WAS REMOVED, AND THE ALTERNATIVES WERE CONVERSION OR DEATH.

IN LATER CENTURIES IN EUROPE, CONVERSION TACTICS WERE NOT SO EXTREME, EXCEPT FOR THE ALL TOO FREQUENT POGROMS. JEWS WERE GENERALLY LEFT TO THEIR OWN RELIGION. PROBLEMS AROSE, HOWEVER, IF A JEW WANTED TO GET AN EDUCATION IN A SECULAR INSTITUTION OR IF HE WANTED TO TEACH OR TO ENTER A PROFESSION. THEN IT WAS MADE CLEAR TO HIM, IN ENLIGHTENED COUNTRIES LIKE GERMANY, THAT HE COULD DO SO ONLY IF HE FIRST CONVERTED. AS LATE AS THE 20TH CENTURY, A JEW NAMED ALBERT EINSTEIN WAS DENIED A CHAIR AT A MAIN GERMAN UNIVERSITY UNLESS HE WOULD CONVERT. OF COURSE, EINSTEIN TURNED DOWN THE OFFER. OTHER JEWS WERE NOT SO PRINCIPLED.

HERE IN AMERICA, WE HAVE BEEN EXPOSED, FROM TIME TO TIME, TO EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS WHO TAKE IT AS ONE OF THEIR MAJOR TASKS TO CONVERT JEWS. WHEN I WAS STUDYING TO BE A RABBI, ONE OF THESE PASSIONATE BELIEVERS ENCOUNTERED MY ELDERLY HEBREW PROFESSOR IN THE LOBBY OF THE RABBINICAL SCHOOL (DR. SIMON HALKIN). THE YOUNG MISSIONARY GRABBED THE DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR BY THE COLLAR AND SHOUTED, "COME WITH US, BROTHER. WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU. YOU'RE HOLDING US UP!" YOU SEE, IT IS THE DOCTRINE OF SOME CHRISTIANS THAT JESUS WILL NOT RETURN UNTIL THE JEWS ACCEPT HIM AS THEIR LORD. WHILE ONE MIGHT RESENT THIS APPEAL TO CONVERSION, ONE HAS TO ADMIRE THE ZEAL OF THE BELIEVER.

I CAN TELL YOU THAT, AS A RABBI, A DAY DOES NOT PASS THAT SOME WELL MEANING CHRISTIAN DOES NOT CALL ME OR WRITE ME AND TRY TO CONVINCE ME TO ACCEPT HIS FAITH. IN RECENT MONTHS, A GROUP OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ORGANIZED A NATIONAL PROGRAM CALLED "KEY 1973" OR "KEY 73". THE PROGRAM WAS DESIGNED TO INTENSIFY THE FAITH AND OBSERVANCE OF CHRISTIANS, BUT SOME EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS UNDERSTOOD THE CAMPAIGN TO BE A CALL TO CONVERT JEWS. HUNDREDS OF OUR CHILDREN IN BETH AM TOLD ME OF ATTEMPTS MADE BY THEIR FELLOW PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS TO CONVERT THEM. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, WHEN I VISITED A PALM BEACH HOTEL TO PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING, THE PARKING ATTENDANT NOTICED MY HEBREW MANUAL ON THE FRONT SEAT OF MY CAR. HE ASKED ME, NOT KNOWING THAT I WAS A RABBI, "WHERE CAN I GO TO LEARN HEBREW?" "COME TO MY CONGREGATION IN SOUTH MIAMI", I RESPONDED. "GOOD," HE SAID, "I WANT TO LEARN HEBREW SO THAT I CAN TEACH THE JEWS ABOUT MY LORD." NOW WHATEVER ELSE YOU MIGHT THINK OF THIS YOUNG MAN, YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE THE INTENSITY OF HIS BELIEF AND HIS DEDICATION. WE RETURN TO THE QUESTION, WHY ARE WE JEWS ALWAYS SO WITHDRAWN ON THIS MATTER OF PROPAGATING OUR RELIGION? WHY AREN'T WE EQUALLY ZEALOUS ABOUT INCREASING OUR NUMBERS AND BRINGING OUTSIDERS INTO THE FOLD?

THERE ARE SOME READY ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTION. ONE IS THAT JUDAISM HAS NEVER BEEN AN EXCLUSIVIST RELIGION. WE HAVE NEVER TAUGHT THAT IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE AS WE DO THAT YOU WILL GO TO HELL OR THAT GOD WILL NOT LIKE YOU. INDEED, OUR TRADITION IS TO THE CONTRARY. THE BIBLE CLEARLY TELLS

US THAT GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH MANKIND THROUGH ADAM AND EVE, AND THIS COVENANT WAS RENEWED WITH THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE AFTER THE FLOOD THROUGH NOAH. THE RABBIS LATER TAUGHT THAT THE NON-JEW ONLY HAD TO FOLLOW THE SIX LAWS THAT GOD GAVE TO NOAH TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, BUT THE JEWS HAD TO FOLLOW THE HUNDREDS OF ADDITIONAL LAWS GIVEN TO MOSES. IN OTHER WORDS, THE JEW HAD TO SHOULDER A GREATER RESPONSIBILITY THAN THE NON-JEW. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT THE PROPHET AMOS, (IN THE 9TH CENTURY B.C.) SAID ABOUT CHOSENNESS. CHOSENNESS, DECLARED MOSES, MEANT GREATER DISCIPLINE FOR THE JEW, EVEN AS PARENTS EXPECT MORE FROM THE FIRST AND OLDER CHILD.

OUR PROPHETS SPELL OUT THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP THAT THE JEWS HAD WITH GOD. WE WERE TO BE "A MILCHUT KOHANIM, A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS". MEDIATING GOD'S TEACHINGS TO THE WORLD AND SETTING AN EXAMPLE THAT OTHER PEOPLE WOULD WANT TO FOLLOW.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS TELLS US THAT WHEN GOD MADE HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM, HE SAID, "I WILL BLESS YOU, AND BE THOU A BLESSING; THROUGH THEE SHALL ALL THE FAMILIES OF EARTH BE BLESSED". HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE IF MODERN JEWS WOULD TAKE THIS CHARGE SERIOUSLY. OUR FUNCTION AS JEWS IS TO BE "A BLESSING, A B'RACHAH". WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS? THE HEBREW WORD B'RACHAH HAS ITS OWN GENIUS. IT COMES FROM THE ROOT "B'RAYCHA" MEANING "A WELL". PICTURE IN YOUR MIND'S EYE IF YOU CAN, THE IMPORTANCE OF A WELL TO PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN THE DESERT. A WELL, A B'RAYCHA, WAS THE OPPOSITE OF DEATH, IT MEANT COOL RELIEF FROM MADDENING THIRST IMPOSED BY A RELENTLESS SUN. WHOLE COMMUNITIES IN ANCIENT TIMES WERE BUILT AROUND A WELL. IT WAS THE FIRST ESSENTIAL OF A VILLAGE. AS A WELL WAS TO THE EXHAUSTED DESERT TRAVELLER, SO THE JEW WAS TO BE TO THE PEOPLES AROUND HIM, A SOURCE OF LIFE, A SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL REVITALIZATION AND INSPIRATION.

WE KNOW THAT MOHAMMED, THE FOUNDER OF ISLAM, ENVIED THE JEWS BECAUSE THEY WERE THE CULTURED AND LITERARY PEOPLE OF HIS TIME. MOHAMMED CALLED THE JEWS, "THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK". SINCE MOHAMMED COULD NOT READ OR WRITE, THE LITERARY ERUDITION OF THE JEW WAS TO HIM A SOURCE OF ENDURING WONDER. IT WAS IN PARTIAL EMULATION OF THE JEW THAT MOHAMMED BEGAN TO DICTATE THE KORAN. THE BIBLE HAS CERTAINLY BEEN "A B'RACHA" TO THE WORLD, AND SO HAVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE. THE NOBEL PRIZE RANKS ARE BUT ONE OF THE MANY EVIDENCES OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS THE JEWS HAVE MADE IN THE FIELD OF RELIGION, MUSIC, SCIENCE, MEDICINE, LAW, AND LETTERS. THERE IS A REAL QUESTION, HOWEVER, AS TO WHETHER MODERN JEWS FEEL THIS URGE TO BE A B'RACHAH, TO BE A BLESSING, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE JEWS! THE WORLD THIRSTS MORE THAN EVER FOR EVIDENCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN, FOR THE INSPIRATION OF THE DEDICATED GROUP. ARE WE JEWS PREPARED TO RESPOND TO THE CRYING NEED? ARE WE PREPARED TO FULFILL THE CHARGE GOD GAVE TO ABRAHAM?

SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THE JEWS CAME TO THE LAND OF CANAAN WITH MOSES, THEY FOUND THEMSELVES HELD CAPTIVE BY THEIR NEW MASTERS, THE BABYLONIANS. BETWEEN EGYPTIAN SLAVERY AND THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY, THE JEWS HAD ESTABLISHED ONE OF THE GREAT CIVILIZATIONS OF ALL TIME. WHEN THE PROPHET ISAIAH ADDRESSED THE JEWS IN BABYLONIA, AROUND 500 B.C.,

THEY WERE DEPRESSED AND MOURNFUL. HE PROCLAIMED TO THEM IN THE NAME OF GOD, "WHY DO YOU GRIEVE AND THINK SO LITTLE OF YOURSELF? YOU ARE THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM. IT IS YOUR MISSION TO BE A B'RACHAH, A BLESSING, TO ALL THE NATIONS". LET US READ THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH IN OUR PRAYER-BOOKS. TURN WITH ME NOW TO p. 100. COUNT 9 LINES UP FROM THE BOTTOM. THE QUOTE FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH READS, "I, THE LORD HAVE CALLED THEE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND HAVE TAKEN HOLD OF THY HAND, AND KEPT THEE, AND SET THEE FOR A COVENANT OF THE PEOPLES, FOR A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS: TO OPEN THE BLIND EYES, TO BRING OUT THE PRISONERS FROM THE DUNGEON, AND THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS OUT OF THE PRISON HOUSE". ISAIAH BELIEVED THAT A PEOPLE STEEPED IN SUFFERING WAS ESPECIALLY SUITED TO HELP THE OPPRESSED AND THE NEGLECTED MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. TO BE A JEW, TAUGHT ISAIAH, IS TO BE A "LIGHT UNTO THE NATIONS", "L'ORE GOYIM". THE CAPTIVE JEWS OF BABYLONIA ROSE TO THIS CHALLENGE TO CREATE THE TALMUD, A LITERATURE AND A LAW CODE EQUAL IN STATURE TO THE BIBLE. CAN THE JEWS OF AMERICA, WALLOWING IN FREEDOM, RESPOND AS NOBLY? CAN WE AS A GROUP EXHIBIT SUCH EXEMPLARY CONDUCT THAT OTHER GROUPS WILL SAY TO US IN THE WORDS OF ONE PROPHET, "LET US COME WITH YOU, FOR WE HAVE HEARD THAT GOD IS WITH YOU".

THERE ARE SITTING IN THIS ASSEMBLY TODAY MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONVERTED TO JUDAISM. HOW MANY WOULD YOU GUESS? A DOZEN? TWO DOZEN? THE COUNT IS CLOSER TO 12 DOZEN. SOME OF THESE CONVERTS ARE OUR BEST SERVICE ATTENDERS, THE HARDEST WORKERS IN THE TEMPLE. I HAVE BEEN TOLD BY SOME OF THEM, "RABBI, AT TEN O'CLOCK ON SUNDAY MORNING THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF REFORM JEWS SITTING IN CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS". MY INFORMERS MEAN BY THIS, THAT THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE STILL NOMINALLY CHRISTIAN, WHO ACTUALLY BELIEVE VERY MUCH AS WE DO. YES, THE TIME IS RIPE FOR THE INCREASING INFLUENCE OF THAT RELIGION WHICH FIRST CON-JOINED THE IDEAS OF GOD AND MORALITY, A RELIGION WHICH IS ROOTED IN A HEROIC HISTORY WHICH HAS BEAUTIFUL AND LIFE OFFERING RITUALS, WHICH IS OPEN AND STILL EVOLVING, AND WHICH HAS A MINIMUM OF DOGMA.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THE JEWISH TEACHER HONORED THERE IS QUOTED AS SAYING TO AN ASSEMBLAGE OF PEOPLE, "WHY DO YOU HIDE YOUR LIGHT UNDER A BUSHEL?" AND STILL LATER HE SAID TO THEM, "YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH". THE TEACHER WAS TALKING TO HIS PEOPLE, THE JEWISH PEOPLE. WHY DO YOU HIDE YOUR LIGHT UNDER A BUSHEL? INDEED, WHY ARE WE JEWS SO DEFENSIVE OR INDIFFERENT TO OUR FAITH, WHEN WE HAVE A RELIGION SO ADMIRABLY SUITED FOR MODERN TIMES.

NOW THE QUESTION REMAINS, RABBI ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT WE GO AROUND TO RING DOOR BELLS AND TO GRAB PEOPLE BY THE COLLAR? OF COURSE NOT. WE ARE NOT SOUL SAWERS LIKE BILLY GRAHAM. WE DON'T WANT TO INTERFERE WITH A PERSON'S ESTABLISHED BELIEF. WHEN I GO TO A CHURCH UPON INVITATION AND CHRISTIANS ASK ME, WHY DON'T YOU ACCEPT JESUS AS GOD, I NEVER GIVE THEM THE PROOFS, TEXTUAL OR OTHERWISE, WHICH ARE ABUNDANT AT MY COMMAND. I WOULD THINK IT VERY IMPOLITE TO COME TO A MAN'S HOUSE TO ROB HIM OF HIS RELIGIOUS FAITH, BUT I DO SAY THAT WE JEWS OUGHT NOT TO LOOK ASKANCE AT EXPOSING THE GOOD POINTS OF OUR FAITH, WHEN WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO IN GOOD TASTE.

WHAT KIND OF MISSIONARIZING IS POSSIBLE FOR THE MODERN JEW? I RECOMMEND TO YOU THE TEACHING OF RABBI HILLEL WHO LIVED SOME 2100 YEARS AGO.

RABBI HILLEL TAUGHT, "BE OF THE DISCIPLES OF AARON LOVING PEACE AND PURSUING IT, LOVING ALL FELLOW CREATURES AND THUS BRINGING THEM NIGH UNTO THE TORAH. IF YOU WANT TO CONVINCE PEOPLE ABOUT THE BEAUTY OF YOUR RELIGION, LIVE OUT THE BEAUTY IN YOUR RELIGION, AND YOU WILL BE THE BEST PROSELIZER THERE IS. WHEN SAMMY DAVIS WAS ASKED WHY HE CONVERTED TO JUDAISM, MANY YEARS AGO, HE ANSWERED, "I JUST NOTICED THAT EVERY TIME I ENTERED A ROOM AND FOUND A FACE LOOKING KINDLY AT ME, IT BELONGED TO A JEW. TO THE EXTENT THAT YOU ACT OUT THE BIBLICAL TEACHING THAT EVERY MAN IS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, YOU HELP TO PROPOGATE JUDAISM.

THE TALMUD TELLS US THAT A POTENTIAL CONVERT CAME UP TO RABBI SHAMMAI, WHO WAS NOTED FOR HIS STERNNESS AND ASKED, "RABBI, CAN YOU TELL ME THE TORAH WHILE I STAND ON ONE FOOT?" SHAMMAI IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE SCOLDED THE MAN AND SENT HIM ON HIS WAY.

ACCORDING TO THE TALMUDIC STORY, THE MAN THEN WENT TO RABBI HILLEL WHO WAS NOTED FOR HIS KINDNESS AND PATIENCE AND ASKED THE SAME QUESTION, "RABBI, CAN YOU TELL ME THE WHOLE TORAH WHILE I STAND ON ONE FOOT?" RABBI HILLEL ANSWERED, "DO NOT DO UNTO OTHERS WHAT YOU WOULD NOT HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU. NOW GO FORTH AND STUDY TORAH. THE REST IS ROOT AND FOUNDATION."

RABBI HILLEL'S ADVICE TO THE POTENTIAL CONVERT IS ALL THE MORE VALID FOR JEWS TODAY. MOST OF US WANT THAT KIND OF JUDAISM THAT CAN BE SUMMARIZED OR LIVED, WHILE WE STAND ON ONE FOOT. WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME OR THE CONVICTION FOR MUCH ELSE. MOST OF US MIGHT BE CALLED, "ONE FOOTED JEWS". BUT THE HEART OF RABBI HILLEL'S TEACHING IS NOT THE FIRST PART, THE SO-CALLED GOLDEN RULE. THE SECOND PART IS THE CRITICAL PART, ESPECIALLY FOR MODERN JEWS, "NOW GO FORTH AND STUDY TORAH. THE REST IS ROOT AND FOUNDATION!" WE UNDERSTAND THE WORD TORAH, AS USED HERE, IN ITS BROADEST CONTEXT. TORAH IS ALL OF JEWISH WISDOM PLUS ALL OF JEWISH EXPERIENCE. IT CONSISTS OF ETHICAL COMMANDMENTS AND THE EGYPTIAN SLAVE EXPERIENCE. IT CONSISTS OF THE TALMUD AND THE NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP EXPERIENCE. THE DEEPER MEANING OF THE GOLDEN RULE FOR JEWS IS SPELLED OUT IN 4,000 YEARS OF HUMAN STRIVING, 4,000 YEARS OF INTER-RELATING WITH OTHER CULTURES AND RELIGIONS, 4,000 YEARS OF SEARCHING FOR GOD, 4,000 YEARS OF SEARCHING FOR MAN'S PURPOSE. WITHOUT AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF THESE YEARS, THE GOLDEN RULE IS JUST A COLLECTION OF SWEET-SOUNDING WORDS UNCOLORED BY SPECIFIC ILLUSTRATIONS.

SHOULD WE JEWS BECOME MISSIONARIES? BY ALL MEANS. WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE, BUT AS HILLEL ADVISES, THE JEW WHO IS IGNORANT OF TORAH CANNOT REALLY TEACH JUDAISM. LET EACH OF US ASK HIMSELF THIS QUESTION TONIGHT, "DO I KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT JUDAISM TO TEACH IT TO OTHERS? DO I FEEL DEEPLY ENOUGH ABOUT IT, TO TRANSMIT THIS SENSE OF CARING AND URGENCY TO OTHERS?" THE WAY YOU HONESTLY ANSWER THAT QUESTION AND WHAT YOU DETERMINE TO DO ABOUT IT MAY WELL DETERMINE WHETHER JUDAISM AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE LIVES OR DIES.

OF ONE THING WE CAN BE SURE, JUDAISM WILL NOT SURVIVE IF WE REMAIN ONE-FOOTED JEWS, IF WE LIVE AND TEACH MERELY BY MOUTHING ABSTRACT AND PIOUS RULES. I HAVE HEARD MANY JEWS, IGNORANT OF TORAH AND UNAFFILIATED WITH THE SYNAGOGUE, SAY, "THE GOLDEN RULE IS MY RELIGION". TO TRANSLATE THIS, IS TO MEAN, IF YOU WANT ME TO LIFT A FINGER TO SEE THAT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY SURVIVES, YOU'RE CRAZY".

TO WHAT IS ABSTRACT TEACHING TO BE COMPARED? IT IS TO BE COMPARED TO THE RAILROAD STATION MANAGER WHO TESTIFIED AT A HEARING FOLLOWING A TRAGIC TRAIN COLLISION AT HIS STATION. "DIDN'T YOU WAVE YOUR LANTERN TO WARN THE ONCOMING TRAINS", ASKED THE INVESTIGATOR? "OF COURSE", REPLIED THE STATION MASTER. "THEN, HOW COULD THE WRECK POSSIBLY HAVE HAPPENED?", ASKED THE BEWILDERED INVESTIGATOR. THE STATION MASTER LOWERED HIS EYES AND SAID, "I HAD NO LIGHT IN MY LANTERN".

WE JUST MUST BE LIVING EVIDENCE OF THE VALUE OF OUR FAITH, AND WE CANNOT TEACH OTHERS, WHETHER THE "OTHERS" ARE OUR OWN CHILDREN OR PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE FAITH, UNLESS THERE IS A LIGHT IN OUR LANTERN, UNLESS WE HAVE SOME REAL KNOWLEDGE AND FEELING ABOUT WHAT BEING A JEW MEANS. IF WE DO NOT SUCCEED IN REFUELING OUR LANTERN, WE CAN SCARCELY BE A LIGHT TO OURSELVES, MUCH LESS, A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS.