

S T A N D F A S T

(Yom Kippur Morning, 5736-1975
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AS YOU CAN SEE BY THE SIZE OF OUR CONGREGATION THIS MORNING, NO PRAYER IS MORE IMPORTANT TO JEWS THAN THE MEMORIAL OR YIZKOR PRAYER WHICH IS PART OF THIS SERVICE. JEWS WHO NEVER COME TO SERVICES AT ANY OTHER TIME, WANT TO SAY THE YIZKOR PRAYER. IT IS AN EMOTIONAL MATTER STRONGER THAN REASON. IN THE YIZKOR PRAYER, WE REMEMBER THE DEAD. WE RESTORE ONCE MEANINGFUL TIES. WE SAY THE PRAYER IN A MOOD OF GRATITUDE FOR LOVE ONCE SHARED. WE SAY IT IN A MOOD OF LONGING FOR JOYS ONCE EXPERIENCED. WE SAY THE YIZKOR IN A MOOD OF PENITENCE, SEEKING FORGIVENESS FOR WHAT WE MIGHT HAVE DONE, BUT, BEING WEAK AND HUMAN, DID NOT DO. WE DON'T HAVE TO ASK WHY THIS PRAYER IS SO IMPORTANT TO US JEWS. WE KNOW THAT IT HAS A HOLD ON US.

A PART OF EVERY JEWISH SERVICE, BE IT ON THE HOLIDAYS, THE SABBATH, OR WEEK DAYS. IS THE KADDISH PRAYER, ANOTHER PRAYER IN MEMORY OF THE DEAD. SOME RELIGIONS ARE BASED ENTIRELY ON ANCESTOR WORSHIP. THE JEWS FOUGHT AGAINST THIS PREVAILING IDEA IN ANCIENT TIMES. SOME RELIGIONS IGNORE THE DEAD ENTIRELY. JUDAISM HAS FOUND A MIDDLE WAY. THE DEAD SHOULD NEITHER BE WORSHIPPED NOR IGNORED. IF WE WOULD DENY OUR MEMORIES OF THEM, WE WOULD BE DOING SOMETHING UNNATURAL. THE TRUTH IS THAT MEMORY OF PAST RELATIONSHIPS MOTIVATES A GREAT DEAL OF OUR PRESENT ACTIONS, WHETHER WE ARE AWARE OF THAT INFLUENCE OR NOT. ESPECIALLY IN OUR TIME, WHEN THE WHOLE IDEA OF THE INTER-CONNECTEDNESS OF THE GENERATIONS IS UNDER ATTACK, THE KADDISH HAS REAL IMPORTANCE.

ORIGINALLY, THE KADDISH WAS NOT AT ALL A PRAYER FOR THE DEAD. IT WAS SAID BY A RABBI OR TEACHER WHO HAD CONCLUDED A TEACHING LESSON BASED ON THE TORAH OR ON ANOTHER JEWISH SOURCE. IN THE SYNAGOGUE, IT CAME TO BE THE PRAYER THAT STOOD BETWEEN ONE PART OF THE SERVICE AND ANOTHER. IT WAS BOTH THE DIVIDER OF THE SERVICE AND THE PRAYER THAT BOUND THE TWO PARTS TOGETHER. THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE KADDISH, THEN, HAS TO DO WITH THE DEDICATION OF THE PEOPLE SAYING THE PRAYER. WHEN THE KADDISH BEGAN TO BE USED AT FUNERALS, IT WAS FIRST USED ONLY FOR SCHOLARS WHO HAD BEEN STUDENTS OF THE TORAH. LATER, IT WAS USED FOR EVERYONE.

STILL LATER ON, THE KADDISH CAME TO HAVE SOME SUPERSTITIOUS ASSOCIATIONS. THE LEGEND SPREAD UNDER NON-JEWISH INFLUENCE THAT THE SOUL SPENT A YEAR OR SO IN LIMBO BEFORE IT WENT TO GAN EDEN, THE JEWISH EQUIVALENT OF HEAVEN. THOSE WHO WERE NOT AMONGST THE LEARNED JEWS TAUGHT THAT UNLESS A SON SAID KADDISH FOR A

PARENT FOR A YEAR (OR SLIGHTLY LESS) THE SOUL OF THE DEPARTED WOULD NEVER BE FREED TO GO TO HEAVEN. IN REFORM JUDAISM, OF COURSE, WE REGARD THIS AS SUPERSTITION. WE STRONGLY ENDORSE THE SAYING OF KADDISH ON A REGULAR BASIS FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE, BUT OUR REASONING ENDORSING THE CUSTOM DIFFERS.

MY FATHER WAS NOT A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS MAN, BUT HE BELIEVED IN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KADDISH PRAYER. WHEN HIS MOTHER DIED, MY FATHER WENT DAILY TO HIS ORTHODOX SYNAGOGUE TO RECITE KADDISH. MY FATHER TOLD ME HE FOUND GREAT COMFORT IN THIS EXPERIENCE. HE FOUND COMFORT IN ASSOCIATING WITH OTHER MOURNERS WHO SHARED HIS SENSE OF LOSS. IN THE SYNAGOGUE, HE WOULD THINK THOUGHTS LIKE, DOES THE MEANING OF LIFE END AT THE GRAVE? DO WE HUMANS HAVE A SHARE IN GOD THAT MAKES US IMMORTAL? THE SIMPLE ACT OF PRAYING REGULARLY HELPED MY FATHER TO BELIEVE IN THE PROBABILITY OF SOME KIND OF ONGOING LIFE FOR THOSE HUMANS WHO PASS ON. FINALLY, MY FATHER SAID TO ME, HE ENJOYED GOING TO THE SYNAGOGUE BECAUSE HE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL THERE. BEFORE AND AFTER SERVICES THERE WERE STUDY SESSIONS, AND WHENEVER HE COULD COME EARLY OR STAY LATER, HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT JUDAISM. HE FOUND THIS REWARDING. WE IN REFORM JUDAISM STRONGLY URGE OUR MEMBERS TO RECITE THE KADDISH FOR THE YEAR FOLLOWING A DEATH BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT THE LIVING BENEFIT FROM THE PRACTICE. THE KADDISH CUSTOM GIVES US A SENSE OF THE CONTINUITY OF HUMAN LIFE. IT ENRICHES US IN OUR SENSE OF BEING JEWISH. TO RESIST THIS CUSTOM IS TO DEPRIVE ONESELF OF PROFOUND EMOTIONAL STRENGTH. IN SPITE OF THE SIZE OF OUR ATTENDANCE THIS MORNING FOR YIZKOR, I WONDER IF THE CONGREGATION OF TOMORROW WILL SHARE OUR FEELING OF RESPECT FOR AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS. I WONDER IF THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY AS WE KNOW IT WILL BE THE SAME IN HALF A CENTURY.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE FAMILY

WE HAVE DISCUSSED EARLIER IN THESE HOLY DAYS THE FACT THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE BEING SWEEPED AWAY BY A TIDAL WAVE. THEY ARE CAUGHT IN A PREVAILING TREND THAT BELITTLES TIES TO THE PAST GENERATIONS. THEY ARE EVEN TAUGHT THAT THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY IS A QUAIN AND OUT-DATED IDEA. THERE ARE SOME STATISTICS THAT DRAMATICALLY DESCRIBE THIS EROSION OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY STRUCTURE, WHICH ARE ALL THE MORE MEANINGFUL TO JEWS, BECAUSE OUR WHOLE STRENGTH DEPENDS ON THE FAMILY STRUCTURE. I WILL TAKE THESE STATISTICS FROM A FAR RANGE OF STUDIES. FACT: IN 1975 FOR THE FIRST TIME, DADE COUNTY HAD AS MANY APPLICATIONS FOR DIVORCE AS FOR MARRIAGE LICENSES. LOS ANGELES COUNTY HAS HAD THIS 50-50 STATISTIC FOR QUITE A WHILE NOW. FACT: STUDIES SHOW THAT OVER HALF OF THE GIRLS WHO GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE HAVE HAD SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH AT LEAST ONE BOY. IN THIS SAMPLING, ORTHODOX JEWISH GIRLS SHOW THE GREATEST DEGREE OF ABSTINENCE, WHILE GIRLS FROM LIBERAL JEWISH HOMES INDICATE THEY ARE ENJOYING THE NEW SEXUAL FREEDOM AS MUCH AS LIBERAL CHRISTIANS. ANOTHER STUDY SHOWS THAT WHERE A BOY AND GIRL LIVE TOGETHER ON A CONTINUING BASIS, DIFFERENCES IN RELIGION ARE LESS OF A BAR TO MARRIAGE. SO THE NEW SEXUAL FREEDOM IS MAKING FOR A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN INTERMARRIAGES.

AS FAR AS THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS CONCERNED, ITS FUTURE DEPENDS ON THE COMMITMENT OF ITS YOUNG PEOPLE TO RAISE JEWISH CHILDREN. THE NEW OPENNESS IN OUR SOCIETY IS A SEVERE THREAT TO THIS POSSIBILITY. STUDIES AT F.S.U. SHOW THAT THAT UNIVERSITY HAS 300 - 400 JEWISH STUDENTS OUT OF A TOTAL ENROLLMENT OF OVER 15,000. WITH THE SCARCITY OF JEWS ON CAMPUS, 95% OF THE JEWISH STUDENTS INTERVIEWED THERE INDICATE THEY ARE DATING NON-JEWS, AND 63% OF THE JEWISH STUDENTS ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF MARRIAGE TO WHOMSOEVER THEY ARE DATING. THE STATISTICS AT A PLACE LIKE THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA ARE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT. AT THE U. OF F., THERE ARE 3,000 JEWISH STUDENTS OUT OF AN ENROLLMENT OF SOME 17,000. 50% OF THE JEWISH STUDENTS INTERVIEWED INDICATED THEY WERE DATING NON-JEWS AND 30% SAID THEY WERE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF MARRIAGE. THE CONCLUSION TO BE DRAWN FROM THESE STUDIES IS THAT IF YOU SEND YOUR CHILD TO A UNIVERSITY WITH MORE JEWISH STUDENTS, THERE IS LESS OF A CHANCE HE WILL MARRY A NON-JEW, BUT, EVEN THEN, THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT HE WILL. EITHER WAY, THE COLLEGE SCENE, IN THE WORDS OF ONE COMMENTATOR, IS "A DISASTER AREA" FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IF WE ARE THINKING IN TERMS OF JEWISH SURVIVAL.

WE COULD GO ON WITH THE STATISTICS, BUT THEIR CONCLUSION IS CLEAR ALREADY. THE FAMILY AS AN INSTITUTION IS UNDER SIEGE IN AMERICA. LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE GET DIVORCED FOR SMALL REASONS. CHILDREN SEEM TO HAVE LOST A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TO PAST GENERATIONS AND TO THEIR PARTICULAR GROUP; AND THE KIND OF JEWISH COMMUNITY IN WHICH THE YIZKOR OR KADDISH PRAYER HAS MEANING SEEMS TO BE DISAPPEARING.

WHAT CAN WE DO? WELL, IF I THOUGHT THOSE WHO ARE THE ARDENT ADVOCATES OF CHANGE HAD ANY REAL CHOCHMAHS FOR US, I WOULD SAY, "LET'S JOIN EM"; BUT I SEE THAT THOSE WHO ARE THE MOST FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF THE CULT OF THE DETACHED INDIVIDUAL ARE NOT VERY HAPPY PEOPLE. SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES STILL SHOW THAT MARRIED PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER THAN SINGLE PEOPLE, IN SPITE OF THE RATE OF DIVORCE. THESE SAME STUDIES SHOW THAT THE MARRIED MAN IS FAR HAPPIER THAN THE UNMARRIED WOLF. THIS IS THE CRITICAL FACT: OF ALL THE PEOPLE INTERVIEWED, NO ONE WAS LESS HAPPY THAN THE SINGLE MALE. IF THIS BE TRUE, THEN WE WHO ARE ADVOCATES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY AS THE AGENT FOR TRANSMITTING HUMAN VALUES MUST BE RIGHT. IF WE ARE RIGHT, THEN THE FIRST THING WE HAVE TO DO IS STAND FAST. I HAVE THE VERY STRONG SUSPICION THAT OUR CHILDREN ALSO WANT US TO STAND FAST. I KNOW A YOUNG MAN VERY MUCH INVOLVED IN THE FREE SEX SCENE WHO SAID TO HIS FATHER, "I DON'T THINK THAT WHAT IS GOING ON IS GOOD FOR ANY OF US, BUT I'LL ENJOY MYSELF WHILE I CAN." I KNOW A YOUNG LADY WHO RECENTLY WENT TO A PARTY FOR YOUNG SINGLES IN HER APARTMENT COMPLEX, AND AS SHE CAME TO THE DOOR, SHE SAW ANOTHER YOUNG LADY CRYING AND RUNNING AWAY. "WHAT'S THE MATTER?", THE FIRST YOUNG LADY ASKED OF THE ESCAPEE. "I JUST MET THIS FELLOW", THE TEARFUL LADY SAID, "AND ALREADY HE'S

ATTACKING ME." THIS IS THE SCENE, DEAR FRIENDS. THIS IS WHAT YOUR DAUGHTERS HAVE IN STORE FOR THEM AS THE RESULT OF THE NEW FREEDOM. A WOMAN NO LONGER HAS THE RIGHT TO INSIST THAT A MAN RESPECT HER FEELINGS. "AFTER ALL", HE SAYS TO HER, "WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE? WHY SHOULD YOU BE DIFFERENT?" IN ONE WORD, ITS A JUNGLE, AND ITS EVERYONE FOR HIMSELF.

NOW, OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ALL MOUTHING THE NEW SLOGANS, ALL OF WHICH INVOLVE THE WORD FREEDOM. A FINE WORD, BUT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BOTH ADORE AND FEAR IT. THEY REALLY WANT TO BE ADVISED BY SOMEONE WHO IS MATURE AND WHO HAS LIVED THROUGH MORE THAN THEY. THEY DON'T WANT US TO LEAN ON THEM WITH ABSOLUTE DIRECTIVES WITH IMPLIED PUNISHMENTS, BUT THEY DO WANT GUIDANCE. THEY DO WANT TO KNOW WHERE WE STAND, AND MANY OF THEM WANT TO HEAR US SAY, "YOU KNOW, THERE ARE OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU OUT THERE WHO THINK OF SEX IN RELATION TO MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN. YOU DON'T HAVE TO FOLLOW THE CROWD JUST TO BE ACCEPTED. BE TRUE TO YOURSELF. RESPECT YOURSELF. YOU'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO FEELS AS YOU DO." OF COURSE, YOU AND I HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT IT ISN'T EASY TO BE A YOUNG PERSON TODAY. THE IDEA OF MARRIAGE IS LESS ATTAINABLE TODAY THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST. AS THE MARRIAGE AGE IS DELAYED FOR ANY NUMBER OF REASONS, PREMARITAL SEX BECOMES THE MORE PROBABLE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE STATISTICS ALSO SHOW THAT THOSE COUPLES WHO LIVED TOGETHER TO MAKE CERTAIN THEY ARE COMPATIBLE BEFORE THEY GET MARRIED HAVE A HIGHER DIVORCE RATE THAN COUPLES THAT DIDN'T HAVE THIS TRIAL PERIOD.

WHAT CAN YOU AND I DO? WE CAN STAND FAST LIKE A BEACON IN THE NIGHT, OFFERING FRIENDLY GUIDANCE TO THOSE SHIPS IN THE STORMY SEA THAT ARE ABLE TO SEE OUR LIGHT AND WANT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT.

WHAT CAN WE DO? WE CAN FIRST DETERMINE WHAT WE WANT FOR OURSELVES AND WHAT WE DON'T WANT FOR OURSELVES. WE CAN REFUSE TO BE DRAWN INTO THE WHIRLPOOL THAT IS SPREADING OUT IN WIDER CIRCLES AND AFFECTING MUCH MORE THAN THE YOUNG. SOME OF US ADULTS, SO CALLED, CAN'T WAIT TO IMITATE THE YOUNG AND JOIN THE NEW REVOLUTION. THERE IS A LITTLE BIT OF DON JUAN OR THE COURTESAN IN ALL OF US, AND THIS PART OF US IS BEING CONSTANTLY TITILLATED BY THE HAPPENINGS OF OUR TIME. PARENTS WHO PLAY GAMES THAT THREATEN FAMILY LIFE WILL FIND THAT THEIR CHILDREN WILL FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE AND DO THEM ONE BETTER.

OUR CHILDREN, AFTER ALL, ARE THE VICTIMS OF THE SAME SIREN CALLS AS WE, ONLY THEY ARE LESS PREPARED TO RESIST THESE CALLS. AS MEMBERS OF THE FIRST AFFLUENT GENERATION, WE HAVE SHAPED OUR LIVES ALONG LINES OF PLEASURE, AND OUR CHILDREN HAVE JUST FOLLOWED THESE LINES OUT A LITTLE FURTHER. WHAT CAN WE DO? WE CAN REORIENT OUR PRIORITIES. WE HAVE TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE WANT TO DO WITH OUR LIVES AND WHERE WE WANT TO GO, AND WE CAN'T GO SO FAR AWAY FROM HOME THAT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND OUR WAY BACK AGAIN. WE HAVE TO KNOW WHAT IS REALLY

IMPORTANT TO US, BESIDES GOOD TIMES AND FLASHY POSSESSIONS. WE HAVE TO KNOW IF WE ARE ANYTHING MORE THAN A COLLECTION OF EPISODES DEDICATED TO FUN. WE HAVE TO TRY TO DECIDE IF WE ARE STILL JEWS OF ANY KIND, IN ANY MEANINGFUL WAY, AND IF WE WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT. WE HAVE TO DECIDE IF WE REALLY CARE WHETHER WE HAVE JEWISH GRANDCHILDREN OR NOT, AND IF WE DO CARE, THEN THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS WE HAVE TO DO.

IN THE BOOK, "POWER", BY LEON FEUCHTWANGER, A BOOK NOW ABOUT 50 YEARS OLD, THE NOVELIST DESCRIBES HOW A BRILLIANT JEW WORKED HIS WAY UP IN THE COURT OF ONE OF THE EUROPEAN KINGS. THE JEW LEFT THE GHETTO AND BECAME A PERIPHERAL JEW. HIS JOB WAS TO ADVISE THE KING AND THE LORDS. AT TIMES, HE ALSO HELPED THE LORDS AND LADIES TO ENJOY THEMSELVES, ARRANGING SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN THEM. THE COURT JEW NEVER DREAMED THAT BY BECOMING A PART OF THE COURT SOCIETY, EVEN IN A DETACHED WAY, HE WAS ENDANGERING HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY. HE THOUGHT HE HIMSELF COULD STAY OUTSIDE OF ALL THIS CHURNING, AND HE CERTAINLY THOUGHT HIS FAMILY WAS PROTECTED, BECAUSE THEY NEVER CAME TO COURT. TO HIS GREAT ANGUISH, THE JEW LEARNED THAT ONE OF THE LORDS HAD SEEN THE JEW'S DAUGHTER AND SET HIS HEART ON TAKING HER. BEFORE HE COULD PREVENT THE ENCOUNTER, THE DAUGHTER WAS RAPED BY THE GENTLEMAN, AND THE JEW BEGAN TO SIT SHIVAH, TO MOURN, FOR HER AND FOR HIMSELF. SUBSEQUENTLY, HE LEFT THE GAIETIES OF THE COURT TO RETURN TO THE GHETTO AND TO THE TRADITION OF HIS PEOPLE. HE HAD LEARNED THAT THERE WAS NO SAFETY FOR HIS FAMILY OR FOR HIMSELF IN THIS KIND OF SOCIETY. IN A SENSE, ALL OF US ARE THIS COURT JEW. WE ARE LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER IN THE CURRENT SOCIAL SCENE. BEFORE WE LOSE EVERY VESTIGE OF OUR JEWISHNESS, BEFORE WE LOSE EVERY SENSITIVITY OF THE ONCE GREAT JEWISH CONSCIENCE, IT IS TIME FOR US TO TURN BACK.

HOW DO WE TURN BACK? HOW DO WE DISENGAGE FROM A SOCIETY THAT HAS SO MANY ATTRACTIONS AND ENCHANTMENTS? WELL, ONE THING IS SURE; WE CAN'T DISENGAGE WITH A SMALL EFFORT. IF WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT SAVING OUR JEWISH VALUE SYSTEM AND OUR FAMILY LIFE, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE SOME MAJOR SACRIFICES. THE CHANGE MAY NOT COST US ANY MONEY, BUT IT WILL COST US SOMETHING WE MAY NOT WANT TO GIVE AT ALL. IT WILL COST US PART OF OUR EASE. IT WILL COST US SOME TIME. IT WILL COST US SOME EFFORT. FROM WHAT I CAN SEE OF SOME PEOPLE IN THIS CONGREGATION, THEY ARE WILLING TO GIVE OF THEIR MONEY, BUT THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO GIVE US THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS, AND THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO GIVE OF THEMSELVES.

REBUILDING THE CITADEL

WHERE WILL YOU HAVE TO START THIS DISENGAGEMENT FROM A SOCIETY TURNING TOWARDS PAGANISM? YOU WILL HAVE TO START AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE, IN YOUR HOME. YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE A CITADEL FOR YOURSELVES THERE, A CITADEL WHICH IS A PROTECTION FROM THE RAVAGES OF THE WORLD WITHOUT. IT WAS NOT THE SYNAGOGUE WHICH WAS THE MAIN LINE OF DEFENSE OF JUDAISM UNTIL MODERN TIMES. THE SYNAGOGUE WAS ALWAYS IMPORTANT, BUT THE CENTER OF JEWISH TEACHING AND VALUE DISTRIBUTION WAS THE HOME. THE SYNAGOGUE CAN NEVER BE MORE THAN AN IMPLEMENTATION OF WHAT IS LEARNED IN THE FAMILY. WE CANNOT BE THE SUBSTITUTE FOR FAMILY TEACHING AND FAMILY LOVE AND FAMILY RESPECT.

HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR HOME JEWISH? WELL, FIRST OF ALL A JEWISH HOME IS ONE WHERE THERE IS LOVE AND RESPECT BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE. THE ULTIMATE TEST OF THE JEWISHNESS OF A HOME IS THE PATIENCE AND COMPASSION THAT A HUSBAND AND WIFE SHOW EACH OTHER AS THEY FACE THE TRULY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS OF MODERN TIMES. NEVER HAS IT BEEN SO IMPORTANT THAT A HUSBAND AND WIFE SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND HELP EACH OTHER IN RELATING TO CHILDREN WHO ARE DRAWN AWAY FROM THE FAMILY.

A JEWISH HOME IS ONE WHERE PARENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR MAIN ROLE HAS TO BE THAT OF TEACHER, AND THAT INCLUDES THE TEACHING OF THE JEWISH TRADITION. SO YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTION, WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT THE JEWISH TRADITION THAT I AM ABLE TO TRANSMIT IT TO MY CHILDREN?

A JEWISH HOME IS ONE WHICH OBSERVES THE SABBATH. NOW THAT'S A FAR-OUT IDEA, ISN'T IT? HOW CAN A MODERN JEW OBSERVE THE SABBATH ON THE TENNIS COURT OR IN A BOAT? THE ANSWER IS THAT WITH DETERMINATION A JEW CAN OBSERVE THE SABBATH ANYWHERE. IN ANCIENT TIMES, THERE WERE SPECIAL RULES FOR OBSERVING THE SABBATH WHEN ONE WAS ON A TRIP AND WAS NOT IN THE SAFETY OF ONE'S HOME. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO HAVE THE DETERMINATION TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH, AND YOU WILL FIND A WAY. SOME OF YOU HAVE SEEN MY ARTICLES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LIGHTING SABBATH CANDLES. IT IS ENTITLED, "A RECIPE FOR YOUNG LOVERS". FREQUENTLY, YOUNG MARRIEDS SHED TEARS WHEN THEY READ IT. SOME OF YOU OLD FOGIES MIGHT PROFIT FROM IT ALSO. GET A COPY FROM THE OFFICE AND LIGHT FRIDAY EVENING CANDLES, PREFERABLY AT HOME WITH YOUR LOVED ONES AROUND YOU, BUT WHEREVER YOU ARE, IF YOU HAPPEN TO BE AWAY FROM HOME. IN THE TRADITION, THE FATHER IS REQUIRED TO SING A LOVE SONG TO HIS WIFE WHEN THE CANDLES ARE LIT, AND HE PLACES HIS HANDS ON THE HEAD OF EACH CHILD AND BLESSES HIM. THE CANDLE-LIGHTING MOMENT IS THE MOMENT FOR TOUCHING, FOR CARESSING, FOR EXPRESSING LOVE. IT IS ANOTHER GENIUS IDEA OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. CLAIM IT FOR YOUR OWN. VARY IT AS YOU WILL, BUT CLAIM IT.

IF ONE IS TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH, THE SABBATH MEAL HAS TO BE THE MEAL OF THE WEEK, THE FAMILY BEING ALL TOGETHER, AND MOTHER TRYING TO MAKE IT A SPECIAL AND FESTIVE OCCASION. IF ONE IS TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH, IT HAS TO BE A TIME FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION. IN A FEW MONTHS, BETH AM WILL HAVE ITS OWN SABBATH MANUAL, WHICH WILL INCLUDE A BRIEF REVIEW OF EACH WEEK'S TORAH PORTION. WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE THINGS EASY FOR YOU. YOU COULD READ ONE PAGE OF THIS MANUAL AND SET OFF A SPIRITED DISCUSSION ON JEWISH VALUES. DOES THIS SOUND TOO FOREIGN TO YOU? ARE YOU SO MUCH THE HEDONIST THAT YOU ARE UNABLE TO ASSOCIATE WITH THIS KIND OF POSSIBILITY?

ONE THING EDUCATORS HAVE LEARNED, AND YOU CAN PROFIT FROM IT, IS THIS. UNLESS SOMETHING IS DONE SINCERELY AND PROFOUNDLY, IT MIGHT AS WELL NOT BE DONE. IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO MAKE AN EXTREME EFFORT TO MAKE YOUR HOME JEWISH, FORGET IT. GIVE IN TO THE PAGANS AND TAKE YOUR DAUGHTER TO COURT. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT REALLY TRYING. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MAKING SACRIFICES TO GET BACK TO SOME KIND OF VITAL LIFE PERSPECTIVE AND FAMILY UNITY.

THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT ON THE 7TH DAY GOD RESTED. THE HEBREW WORD FOR "AND HE RESTED, VAYINAFESH", ALSO MEANS, "AND HE TOOK ON A NEW SOUL". THE SABBATH, THAT BRILLIANT JEWISH DISCOVERY, IS A TIME FOR TAKING ON A NEW SOUL. IT IS A TIME FOR SEARCHING FOR OUR BETTER SELF, FOR REACHING FOR LIFE'S GREATER MEANING, AND WE JEWS HAVE CREATED THE VEHICLE FOR DOING ALL OF THESE THINGS - THE BIBLE AND ITS STUDY.

NOW, THE ROAD BACK TO A JEWISH-CENTERED HOME IS A TOLL ROAD. THE TOLL IS NOT PAID WITH COINS. IT IS PAID WITH LEARNED KNOWLEDGE AND JOINT FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN JEWISH CELEBRATIONS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO STOP TAKING YOUR FAMILY TO THE DOLPHINS GAMES TO BE JEWISH, BUT YOU DO HAVE TO START TAKING THEM TO SABBATH-ORIENTED DINNER AND TO TORAH SESSIONS. CAN YOU AFFORD THAT PRICE? IF YOU CAN'T, THE JEWISH PEOPLE IS POOR INDEED.

IF YOU DON'T DELIBERATELY ESTABLISH A JEWISH CHARACTER IN YOUR HOME, WE JEWS WILL CONTINUE TO DRIFT DOWN THE ROAD LEADING US FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM THOSE THINGS FOR WHICH JUDAISM STANDS.

IF YOU ARE NOT CAPABLE OF MAKING AN ORGANIZED EFFORT TO ESTABLISH YOURSELF AS A KNOWLEDGEABLE AND PARTICIPATING JEW, YOU WILL MAKE THE RECITATION OF THE YIZKOR OR KADDISH PRAYER AN EMPTY GESTURE, FOR YOU WILL NOT HAVE KEPT FAITH WITH YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS.

READ THE STATISTICS, FRIENDS. IT IS TIME TO STOP PLAYING MAKE BELIEVE. YOUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE.