



Torah Thoughts for modern times

ADAPTED FROM THE WORKS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE א"ת צ"ז

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Dear Mr.

I have received your letter in which you inform me about yourself and your family and present before me your problem: You operate a hardware store, which is the source of your weekly income and as Shabbos is the busiest day in the week, you have kept your store open on Shabbos, but the violation of the Shabbos bothers you, and you ask my advice.

I want to tell you first of all that I was very pleased to hear that the desecration of the Shabbos disturbs you to the depth of your heart. It shows that your Jewish heart is alive and active and strongly objects to your doing something wrong—wrong not only for your soul, but also for your body, for with the Jew the body and soul are closely united to form one whole, and there can be no thing which is hurtful to the soul and yet not be hurtful to the body.

Before answering your question, I want to make the following observations by the way of introduction:

Jews, in general, and faithful ones in particular, have no doubt that G-d created the world and guides it. Nor is there any doubt that the Ten Commandments are from G-d, and among them the fourth: "Remember the Shabbos day to keep it holy...you shall do no work on it."

It is equally certain that G-d, Who created man, also provides him with opportunities to sustain himself. It would be illogical to imagine that G-d would compel anyone to obtain his livelihood in a manner contrary to His will, and particularly, contrary to His will expressed in the Fourth Commandment of keeping the Shabbos day holy.

One more point I wish to underscore. The money one earns is not an end in itself; it is but a means to obtain one's needs. Obviously, rather than first earning money and then, G-d forbid spending it on medical care, it is preferable to forego both the earnings and the medical expenses—and be well. The important thing, therefore, is not the money earned, but the assurance that the money would be well spent and properly enjoyed.

After this preface, let us consider your case:

You have the privilege of being born a Jew, which means that you have been given the possibility to go through life

along the Jewish path, the path of Torah and Mitzvos, of which Sabbos observance, Kashrus, Taharas Hamishpocha (family purity through Mikvah), and the like, are fundamentals.

There can be no doubt that if you determine to follow the path of Torah and Mitzvos, the Almighty will provide you with a kosher means of livelihood. This does not mean, of course, that the path will be easy from the outset. For reasons often beyond our comprehension, G-d may make the path difficult with trials and tests, while an easier road presents itself easier and better, that is, in the mind of the one who is put to the test, but a road which involves the neglect of a Mitzvah or a transgression of a prohibition (Averah). Such a test may be a severe one, for example, when it appears that so many Jews who unfortunately desecrate the Shabbos seem to prosper, perhaps more than those who struggle to observe it.

It is certain, however, that it is not so. The ultimate happiness of a Jewish man or woman can only be found through Torah and Mitzvos. In your case it depends on your observing the Shabbos.

Consequently, as a friend of yours and in compliance with the Mitzvah of 'Veohavto l'reacho komocho' (love your fellow as yourself) which is also a fundamental of Torah, it is my duty and Zechus to advise you to base your life in general, and means of livelihood in particular, upon the commandments of our Torah. Do not be influenced in any way by the difficulties that may arise in the beginning, even loss of earnings. Be absolutely firm in your faith that the Almighty will eventually provide for all your needs in a kosher way, and you and your wife and children will lead a happy Jewish life, a life of complete harmony between the physical and spiritual, between the material needs and the Divine soul. For, to quote a saying by my saintly father-in-law of blessed memory: A Jew neither desires, nor can he be separated from G-d.

I am looking forward to hearing good news from you, and conclude wishing you success in arranging your affairs materially and spiritually.

Cordially,

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson