

Rabbis Reflections: "The Sum Is All The Parts"

Events in the synagogue are winding down as summer approaches. Things won't pick up until the school year begins, especially since the High Holidays are the end of September. Many of us will go on vacation. Judaism, though, does not stop. Services continue throughout: Shabbat every week both Friday night and Saturday morning, Shavuot for two days in June, and some fast days. Those who observe kashrut will continue to do so, business ethics will continue, people will still need to be visited, and we will still avoid certain speech like spreading gossip, rumor mongering, etc. As I have said many times, Judaism is a lifestyle, the sum of all of its many parts.

Rabbi Bernard Raskas once wrote a thought nicely expressing the idea of Judaism being "The Sum Is All The Parts" (*Heart of Wisdom*, p. 303):

William Carey, a famous Scottish preacher, was also a shoemaker. Even though he was the leader of a great religious movement, he spent the better part of each day practicing his trade. One day someone asked him what his business was and he replied, "Well, my business is to extend the Kingdom of God to men's hearts, but I repair shoes to pay expenses."

His life was an excellent illustration of the principle that religion, if it is to have any value at all, must be practiced every day, hour and minute. When religion is sealed off from involvement in the concerns and affairs of men and the concrete particularity of daily decisions, then it becomes sterile and meaningless. If our faith is to function, we must allow it to grapple with our pressing personal problems.

In truth, every day is a messenger of God. He places choices before man daily so that one can never isolate himself from ethical issues. Those who sit in seclusion or retreat to ivory towers, or stay out of politics, or dodge issues, or think they will find salvation by a few pious words are sadly mistaken.

We cannot rise to God by stepping on the heads of men. We cannot hate men during the week and love God on Saturday or Sunday. Religion is the sum of *all* its parts.

*Men must beware of looking upon religion as an ideal to be yearned for; it should be an ideal to be applied.*

Simon Dubnow (Russian Jewish historian, 1860-1941)

I hope you have a Judaically fulfilled summer as Judaism does not take a vacation.

--- Rabbi Michael Rascoe