



THE SABBATH IN MY HOME(TOWN)

To most Evangelical Christians the concept of one day of the week holding a major distinction from the other six is viewed as either archaic, legalistic, or both. Other than the fact that we go to church in the morning on Sunday, that day, regrettably, has become pretty much like the rest of the week.

In stark contrast to this casual attitude toward the Sabbatarian principle of one day out of seven being kept "holy" is the practice of Orthodox Judaism which strictly observes the Sabbath by seeking to meticulously obey not only the commandments of the Torah (Five Books of the Law written by Moses: Genesis through Deuteronomy), but also the additional regulations imposed by the rabbis with regard to that period beginning shortly before sunset on Friday and concluding shortly after sunset on Saturday.

A practice most foreign to the Gentile mind is that within the



Orthodox Jewish community of erecting an **eruv** (pronounced *air-oo-ve*). An eruv consists of a series of poles connected by a wire encircling an entire Jewish town or neighborhood and thus making every home within the community actually part of one big (happy?) household. In so doing, observant Jews are able to bypass the rabbinical rules regarding moving anything from one's private dwelling into a public place on the Sabbath. The eruv connects every home to everything else within its perimeter and therefore frees families to move about on their Holy Day.

A recent article (August 5, 1999) in the *Jewish Exponent*, a Philadelphia-based newspaper serving the Jewish community, applauded the efforts of numerous synagogues and Jewish organizations in funding the construction of an eruv in Elkins Park, a suburb of Philadelphia. Since many of the paper's Jewish readers are not Orthodox, an explanation of the function of the eruv is included in the article:

An eruv circumvents the prohibition against carrying by transforming a public domain into a private one. It is as if all the homes, synagogues and

institutions within the designated area are living under one roof.

The article quotes from a brochure distributed to members of several synagogues which explains that the eruv project utilizes existing telephone poles and the lines that are strung between them.

By attaching a 'lechi,' or plastic molding to each pole, every two poles form a symbolic doorway which (together) create a symbolic grated wall around the neighborhood.

The nature of the obligation to abide by the provisions of rabbinical law is evident in these words in the article:

If a *lechi* (one of the plastic moldings attached to the telephone pole, ed.) falls from a pole during a given week, then the contractor will have to come and place it back on before Shabbat, or else the carrying prohibition might again be in effect. In addition,...a telephone-answering system must be established so that people will be able to call up before Shabbat in order to check on the status of the eruv.

It is interesting to note how frequently Jesus was criticized and condemned by the religious leaders of His day for what they perceived as laxity on His and His disciples' part in adhering to established Sabbath laws. On one

such occasion recorded in Mark 2:27-28, His reply was very much to the point:

And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

While the Orthodox Jewish community's level of commitment to obedience is admirable, one cannot help but be reminded of what the Apostle Paul wrote regarding his own people:

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.

(Romans 10:2- 4)



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