

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE:

SABBATH OBSERVANCE IN A MODERN STATE

by

Professor Ze'ev Löw*

Observance of the Sabbath in accordance with the Halakhah presents serious problems for the modern state with a modern technology. Some of these problems stem from objective factors, while others have their origin in the willingness of the owners of the enterprise to take the laws of Sabbath observance into account.

At present, enterprises are granted permanent or temporary permits to operate on the Sabbath on the basis of applications they submit. Most of such applicants justify their request on the ground that maintenance work cannot be done during the regular work days and that a separate day is needed for this purpose. Of those enterprises that request permission to continue normal production on the Sabbath about 10-15% maintain that the technical difficulties involved in shutting down and resuming production once a week would make the enterprise unprofitable. The remaining applications in this second category are motivated by the desire for greater profits.

The simplest solution to the problem of maintenance would be the introduction of the five-day week, and there is no doubt that this will eventually be done.

However, that would still leave the problem of those industrial plants which is essential to operate on a continuous basis, seven days a week, such as the Electric Company, the atomic reactor, and plants which employ heating installations of large dimensions.

One "solution" would be to relinquish such industries. To do so, however, would not only entail a decline in the standard of living but would also be unwise from security considerations. Nor would it be practical to employ non-Jews to work on the Sabbath in such industries. The import of suitable non-Jews especially so that Jewish industry could be operated on the Sabbath would hardly gain much support.

The only real solution is to find the technological answer to the Halakhic problem – and while this is not always be new: around the time of the establishment of the State of Israel, a number of rabbis, notably the late Chief Rabbi Herzog and Abraham Karlitz, dealt with the problem of

* in: Torah sheb'al Peh, XI (1968-69), p. 117-122; original Hebrew title:

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milking cows on the Sabbath, and similar questions. Some of the Halakhic rulings embody principles that have implications for various industries today. The milking machine, for example, is the prototype of an industrial problem.

The Scientific-Technological Institute for the Solution of Problems in accordance with the Halakhah was established a few years ago to deal with both the technological and Halakhic aspects of Sabbath observance in industry and in public institutions. The members of the Institute – rabbis and scientists – are today more convinced than ever that modern industries can be operated without entailing the desecration of the Sabbath.

Summary by Aryeh Rubinstein