

The Daily Portion **- Sivan Rahav Meir**

When Trump reminds us of Shabbat

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

President Trump has declared a “National Sabbath”, to be honored a week from this coming Shabbat. To mark 250 years of American independence, he called on the American people to adopt a day for rest, family, and gratitude to God, out of appreciation for the contribution of Jewish tradition to the United States.

First of all, this is amazing. It sounds almost prophetic. The leader of the world’s greatest superpower is calling on its citizens to honor Shabbat – the ancient Jewish “startup”. The man who leads the most powerful nation on Earth understands that there is Someone above more powerful. The man who seems to have no limit to the power he can wield is calling on all of us to stop for one day and cease exercising power.

But in my view, this isn’t just “Trump declared”. God already declared it long ago. It is the world that is now discovering Shabbat – and in doing so, reminding us Jews, in particular of who we are.

Millions of Jews immigrated to the United States, assimilated, and were nearly lost forever to the Jewish people. Many of them also kept Shabbat with great self-sacrifice, even though the American job market did not recognize the Jewish day of rest. And now, a non-Jewish leader speaks with unique admiration about this treasure of ours. “Six days you shall labor” – that, Americans know well. But now comes a reminder of the seventh day. A reminder for all of us to be proud of our immense heritage – of Shabbat and everything else we have to share with the world from the outside. Simply to be aware of all the gifts we’ve received, and of our divine mission – to illuminate the entire world.

The national Sabbath that Trump declared is next week. Trump himself is not obligated in the mitzva of Shabbat – but we are. So there’s no need to wait until then, and no need for a presidential declaration. Shabbat arrives every week, and we should think and plan about how to elevate it: what to prepare, whom to invite, how to enter it joyfully and calmly. From the White House – to our house.

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