

Ordination Address

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INTRODUCTION

PRESIDENT ELLENSON, DEAN BARTH, DIRECTOR OF THE RABBINIC SCHOOL RABBI RICHARD LEVY, MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY, BOARD OF GOVERNORS, OVERSEERS. ORDINEES, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.

WE REJOICE IN THIS SACRED OCCASION OF THE ORDINATION OF FOUR RABBIS WHO WILL SERVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE WITH HONOR AND A DEEP PASSION FOR JEWISH LIFE AND LEARNING. ISAAC MAVER WISES' FIRST CLASS OF ORDINEES CONSISTED OF FOUR YOUNG MEN, THE NUMBER IS NOT UNLIKE THAT OF TODAY, BUT THERE IS A TIDAL WAVE OF DIFFERENCE WHICH TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCE HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT. THERE ARE TWO WOMEN IN THIS CLASS GIVING EVIDENCE OF A NEW COLLEGE-INSTITUTE AND A NEW SPIRIT, ONE THAT WAS INITIATED WITH THE ORDINATION OF SALLY PRIESAND IN 1973,

• WHEN RABBI ELLENSON A FEW WEEKS AGO ASKED ME TO GIVE THE ORDINATION SERMON AT A BRANCH OF SCHOOL WHICH I HAD SERVED AS PROFESSOR AND DEAN FROM 1957-1971 [WAS HONORED AND MOVED, WHEN WE BEGAN ON APPIAN WAY IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS IN THE MOST MODEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES THE IDEA OF A SCHOOL WHOSE RABBINIC PROGRAM CULMINATED IN ORDINATION WAS BUT A DREAM, TODAY IT IS A REALITY. A REALITY OF CONSEQUENCE 'THE CALIFORNIA SCHOOL;' AS WE CALLED OURSELVES THEN HAD A REMARKABLE FACULTY. LOS ANGELES WAS A VIRTUAL MIDBAR BUT IN THE WORDS OF NEXT WEEKS TORAH PORTION OUR CAMPUS ON APPIAN WAY WAS A "MIDBAR SINAI," OUR STUDENTS AND FACULTY AND STAFF, SMALL AND DEVOTED MADE WHAT WAS CONSIDERED IN MANY WAYS A DESERT A DESERT ABOUT TO BLOOM WITH TORAH, THE LURE OF SINAI MADE THAT MIDBAR A SPECIAL PLACE OF LEARNING, COMPASSION AND UNUSUAL PROMISE, ON THE EXTRAORDINARY FACULTY, IN THAT GROUP OF "RISHONIM'-ORIGINALS" WAS A RABBI WHO STOOD OUT BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL QUALITIES HIS NAME WAS JACOB SONDERLING AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON UNTIL THE END OF HIS RABBINIC CAREER HE WAS THE RABBI OF Fairfax TEMPLE, A SMALL CONGREGATION OF GERMAN REFUGEES IN THE FAIRFAX DISTRICT OF LOS ANGELES, HE USED TO SAY, THAT WHILE HE HAD THE SMALLEST CONGREGATION HE ENJOYED THE LARGEST FOLLOWING. HE DIED ON SIMCHAT TORAH AND WAS BORN ON SIMCHAT TORAH SOME 93 YEARS APART HARDLY A COINCIDENCE. HE ALSO TAUGHT A COURSE IN Homiletics AT OUR SCHOOL AND WAS A GREAT TEACHER AND PREACHER AND AN EXTRAORDINARY ROLE MODEL FOR OUR STUDENTS, ONE DAY I RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM HIM IN WHICH HE INFORMED ME THAT HE HAD A YOUNG MAN IN HIS CONGREGATION WHO HAD TO BECOME A RABBI. I WAS MOST RECEPTIVE AS WE NEEDED GOOD STUDENTS. WHAT HE DIDN'T TELL ME, WAS THAT THE "YOUNG MAN" WAS BUT 15 OR 16 YEARS OLD, WE HAD NO COURSES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SO WE LET -THE YOUNG MAN" JOIN SOME OTHER YOUNG MEN LIKE MICHAEL SIGNER, AND "OLDER MEN" UCLA UNDERGRADS, MICHAEL MEYER, LEWIS BARTH, SANDY RAGINS, HARVEY FIELDS AND OTHERS, -THE YOUNG MAN" IN SONDERLING'S CONGREGATION WAS BARRY KOGAN, TODAY HE IS KNOWN AS RABBI, PROFESSOR BARRY KOGAN. AND THE SO CALLED "OLDER MEN" BARTH AND MEYER ARE ALSO TODAY PROFESSORS AT THE COLLEGE-INSTITUTE AND LEW BARTH OF COURSE AS WE KNOW IS NOW ITS DEAN. ONE DAY (TOWARD THE END OF HIS CAREER AS RABBI OF FAIRFAX

TEMPLE, WHICH EVENTUALLY WAS SOLD WITH THE PROCEEDS COMING TO SUPPORT THE FLEDGLING NEW CAMPUS OF THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE GOING UP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA) SONDERLING ARRIVED AT THE APPIAN WAY CAMPUS, HUFFING AND PUFFING HIS WAY UP OUR SOLE STAIRCASE. HE HAD IN HIS ARMS A THIN TALL SCROLL WRAPPED IN AN ANTIQUE FRAYED TORAH COVER.

I MET HIM AS HE REACHED THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. HERE] HE SAID, THIS SCROLL, IT WAS IN MY ARK FOR OVER FORTY YEARS, TAKE IT. NOW IT IS YOURS! I GIVE IT TO THE COLLEGE

TO PRESERVE. IT WAS A PARCHMENT SCROLL OF THE PROPHETS, A RARITY. IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR RABBI SONDERLING SERVED IN KAISER WILHELM'S ARMY ON THE EASTERN FRONT, HE WAS A JEWISH CHAPLAIN AND MOVED WITH THE TROOPS, ONE NIGHT AS THE ARMY WAS PUSHING EASTWARD SONDERLING REALIZED HE WAS IN A SHTETL THERE WAS A LIGHT ON IN THE SMALL SYNAGOGUE HE WAS PASSING IN HIS VEHICLE, HE ORDERED HIS DRIVER TO STOP. SONDERLING ENTERED THE SYNAGOGUE. IN A CORNER IN THE DIM LIGHT HE SAW A MAN COWERING, SONDERLING APPROACHED HIM. AND SAID. ' ICH BIN OYCHA YID WAS TUST DU HIER-ES IS A SAKANAH NFASHOT.

1. THE MAN REPLIED, ICH BIN DER SHAMES VON DER SHIEL UND WtR HOBEN A SEFER IM OPEN HAKODESH..2. SONDERLING SAID " ICH BIN A RAV UND ICH WILL SEIN SHOMER FOR SEFER I AM A RABBI AND WILL BECOME GUARDIAN OF THE SCROLL IN YOUR STEAD.' THE SHAMAS HANDED IT TO HIM CAREFULLY. SONDERLING TOOK THE SCROLL AND SAID TO THE SHAMES, YETZT LOIF, RUN IT'S DANGEROUS HEREF THE SCROLL NOW RESTS IN OUR ARK IN THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE WALTER HILLBORN SYNAGOGUE. IT HAS A BATIK NEW COVER MADE BY JEANNIE GOTTSCHALK AND MIRIAM WOLF. [HOPE YOU HAVE NOTICED THE SCROLL DURING YOUR DEVOTIONS AT THE SYNAGOGUE. OF HIS EXPERIENCE AS A GERMAN JEWISH CHAPLAIN HE ONCE REMARKED IN HIS INIMITABLE STYLE, 'THESEMINARYMADEMEARABBL THE UNIVERSITY MADE ME A DOCTOR BUT MY EXPERIENCE IN EASTERN EUROPE MADE ME A JEW;' SONDERLING FOUND IN HIS MrDBAq IN HIS SERVICE IN THE ARMY SINAI HE FOUND IN A

LITTLE SHUL AND IN HUNDREDS LIKE THEM IN EASTERN EUROPE SINAI WAS PRESENT. EVERY RABBI WHATEVER "MIDBAR" HE OR SHE IS CAN FIND SINAI IN RARE, PRECIOUS, UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS.

"VA-YDABER ADONAI EL MOSHE BA-, MFDBAR SINAr BOHEL MOED -" IN THE SACRED TENT OF MEETING IN THE MIDBAR SINAI. GOD SAID TO MOSES; PAY ATTENTION, LISTEN CAREFULLY,

1. -/AMALSOAJEW. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, T IS VERY DANGEROUS"
2. J AM THE SHAMES OF THE SHUL AND THE GUARDIAN FOR THE SCROLL THAT IS LEFT IN THE ARK,' COUNT YOUR FAMILIES - GET READY TO STAND AT SINAI FOR YOU ARE ABOUT TO BECOME A DEDICATED PEOPLE.

AS HEIRS TO SINAI AND TO THE GENERATIONS OF SONDERUNGS SINCE THEN, LET US ACCEPT THE TORAH GIVEN TO US. YOU NEWLY ORDAINED RABBIS ARE THE SHOMRIM OF THE FUTURE. IT IS YOU WHO WILL MAKE THE MIDBAR- A MIDBAR SINAI,- FOR YOU NOW ARE THE GUARDIANS OF THE SACRED SCROLL.