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Y.U. Hanukkah Dinner

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The festival of Hanukkah, but recently concluded, is centered about the מנורה... celebrate victory Israelites over oppressive Greek-Syrians.

Origin מנורה: Moses-- commanded by God to construct

Share w you rather strange legend on מנורה: Moses difficulty w divine instruction construct מנורה in Tabernacle: משה נתקשה במעשה המנורה עד שהראה לו... הקב"ה מנורה של אש

What did the Sages mean to teach us with this comment? What made them attribute to Moses difficulties which even beginner not have, so clear & explicit are Biblical instructions?

I believe that one major problem perturbed them: מנורה yields mixed signals; is symbol two apparently conflicting values -- beauty/spirituality. The very loving attention Torah showered on details ornamentation מנורה is sufficient evidence its status as work unblemished art. In course time, generations Jews came to revere מנורה as Jewish symbol of beauty.

At same time, pure flame of מנורה made of מנורה itself the ultimate symbol spirituality/רוח. Thus, Zechariah envisions a מנורה, exclaims, כי לא בחיל, ולא בכח כי אם ברוחי אומר ה"צ.

Now, these two values suggested by the מְנוּחָה, beauty and spirit, do not at all seem compatible. Beauty is external, it speaks to appearances. Spirit is inwardness, it reflects essence, not appearance. Beauty is enchanting, spirit is enduring. Beauty thrives in revelation--artist seeks exposure; spirit shuns public scrutiny and flourishes only in concealment, in the closed chambers of the heart, shy and shame-faced.

In course history, symbols expanded: not only beauty but all worldly knowledge; & spirit=sacred, Jewish teaching. And these two as well--considered incompatible, irreconcilable.

Yet the מְנוּחָה implies both; hence difficulty experienced by Sages/Moses. How indeed construct this center-piece for the Temple when it in and of itself is a contradiction? Hence, the מְנוּחָה required the direct intervention of the Creator Himself, for no mere mortal -- not even Moses -- could find a way out of the dilemma on his own authority.

So God Himself, as it were, gave His blessing to מנורה, and by projecting fiery image of מנורה not only showed Moses how build, but conceptually confirmed it, denying that the 2 symbols mutually exclusive & insisting that beauty/spirit indeed compatible & worthy of coexistence. All that is needed is--a little vision, a little fire, a

modicum of prophetic passion. If one's faith is fiery & dynamic & has not become encrusted with routine and boredom and staleness, the two could be reconciled and the מנורה could become a reality.

I have elaborated a bit on this bec on our annual Hanukkah dinner, the מנורה composite of symbols is really all about us, about YU. The 2 symbols מנורה equiv't our TuM

As we enter 2nd century, wise to recall that we were NOT accepted by J world. Some saw in us too much beauty or worldliness, some--too much spirituality or J'ss, T/M. Right: college, univ'y can only dilute rel integrity. Left: univ connected to J school=separatist, lead numerous clausus, anti-Sem. Either way: a YESH and a UNIV--IMPOSSBL! נתקשה...

But was done, we exist, and we now flourish as never before! --undergrad enrollment (YC/SCW)... AECOM, CSL, WSSW, FGS, BRGS, SUE GOLDNG--all devoted to ED/RSRCH/SERVIC; and: schools J, talmdc learnng fr HS thru RIETS, Kollelim-- togethr w supprt of Librries, Museum, etc-- we manage to keep alive & creatv in both worlds: sacrd/sec; univ/particulr stc; J/gen human.

is imp't f all Jews-- but also f all people; whch country, USA or 3rd World, even USSR, not have probl role relign in sec socy, or majority/minority cultures?

we hv demonstratd tht it CAN BE DONE-- w zest, dtmtn, hgh resolve-- מנורה of fire

We HAVE done it--& in so doing, brought glory A-Jewry, and credit America itself which allows minrty cultures flourish & thus add to the mosaic which is USA. מנורה is token that contribution

BUT beg remind you: מנורה requires נשם, oil, fuel. W-o means to achieve great ends, w-o whrwithal, our מנורה dead, lifeless, dark--neithr btfl nor sacred.

I take ths occasn thrfr to thank all those wh tonite, all yr, so generous... keepg the lght burnng, allowg the unqness that is YU to illuminate & enlightn w our dual symbol, & thus bring comfrt & hope, bty & sprt, faith & scince, to our comnty, to all commties, to world of all humankind.

הנהגת מנורה
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