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ADDRESS TO THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA1. Introduction.

Carl Becker, great American historian, once said, "It is important every so often to look at the things that go without saying to be sure that they are still going."

So, let's take a good look at ourselves to see if things are still going--and if not, why not; where we seem to be heading in the future; and what we can do about influencing that future direction.

Of course, talking about future is a thankless task: מליום... שחרב ביהמ"ק נילטלה נבואה מנבילאים ונלחנה לשוטלים... Maybe that's why a great חכם, Albert Einstein said: "I never think of the future; it comes soon enough."

2. Gadlut and Katnut

*Kabbalah on גדלות דמוחילן and קטנות דמוחילן

*Hasidism/Besht: popularized and universalized--all existence has major (גדלות) and minor (קטנות) phases. Explain.

*These terms -- not only for individuals but collectivities & communities as well. Hence, can use terms *gadlut* and *katnut* to analyze our current state and perhaps even use them to chart future course.

3. Our Current State

We are obviously in a state of *katnut*.

Those who deny it--as Ch.Silberman (*A Certain People*) and others recent years--do great disservice...

4. Analysis of Causes for This Condition

a) somber CJF statistics: 52% intermarriage...

b) Prof. Seymour Martin Lipset (for Mandel): 4.4m of 5.5m Jews who identify as part of "Jews by religion"--"and only 1/4 of children of Orthodox continue themselves to be Orthodox." I don't know source or reliability of this statistic, and I seriously question it. But scary none the less.

c) Prof Samuel Heilman (at last month's mtg of UOJCA, YI, RCA under YU auspices): Orthxy--6-12% population; 20-25% of Orthx=הרדלים; appears non-Orthx, bec rejected by Orth, will not continue to support Orth institutions; rivalry among divisions in Orthy will get worse, esp bec will be on own financial resources as Orth move away gen J commy; Orth have *not* enlarged demographic share A-Jy & and may have lost 50% last 20 years; financially (even before Reichmann collapse) Orth *not* become richer last 20 yrs: median income shrunk 10%; financial stress, so wives will work outside, hv fewer ch (now: 2.1-4.2 ch/fam); Mod Orthx--have given over educ ch to Right teachers...; so either rift between MO/CO and Haredim, or MO/CO plus Haredim from "Nominally Orth"; Orth synags getting smaller, may not be able support FT rabbi;

d) AJCommittee report (Meir & Hostein), "The High Cost of Jewish Living"

e) In Israel--ל"ל מפד

f) RCA...!

Clearly, enough to justify state of *katnut*.

5. How Must We React?

a) If we ignore the difficulties, ostrich-like: Dangerous! If succumb to pessimism--not *katnut* but actually קטנים, certainly קטני אמונה.

b) How then? Shall we throw in towel, say we ready to accept Haredi thesis that rest commy will disappear, therefore we must separate...Abandon our own "silent majority" and adopt fortress psychology?

משה למרגלים: וראיתם את הארץ מה היא ואת העם היושב עליה, החזק הוא אם רפה, המעט הוא אם רב, ומה הארץ אשר הוא יושב בה, הטובה היא אם רעה, ומה הערים אשר הוא יושב בהנה, הבמחנים אם במבצרים.

Spies thought that fortified cities sign greater danger:

אם במחנים הם. והערים בצורות גדולות מאוד. But *Tanhuma* not so: שרולים--גבורים הם ובוטחים על כחם, ואם במבצרים--חלשים הם ולבם רך

So, entrenchment, insularity, fortress psych=sign weakness, diffidence, weak heart, lack courage--and defeatable!

Moreover: במחנים speaks to the essence of our *Weltanschauung*: open to the world, accessible, confident, and: two camps!=Tum...

What then?

6. Five Strategies

A. Learn from History: WE CAN DO IT, PREVAIL! We can survive *katnut*, go on to *gadlut*. It's been done before.

When I first started *רבנות*, were in *katnut* bec of triumph of Left; and we survived it.

Then, pessimists: Give up, go to JTS, RA... Many did--& their feeling inauthentic'y haunts them to this day. But those of us who kept the faith lived see a far better day w-o scrapping ideals.

Now--threatened by Right (but: *להבדיל*)--and can still succeed.

Remember: history doesn't stand still. Pendulum. And it is in the nature of a pendulum to swing; and it is in its nature as well that, when it settles, it does so in the center...

B. 2nd: Don't Trust Predictions--Even Your Own! World a very uncertain place, and time usually disproves most prophecies. -USSR--

Cap Weinberg

Alfred North Whitehead: "It is the business of the future to be dangerous"--especially for self-confident prognosticators. (Another philosopher, Sam Goldwyn: "I never trust predictions, esp about the future")

Kotzk on *מלחמה של אדם*

Doomsayers are as wrong as soothsayers: 1988, French polit'l comment'r Jean Paul Revel in *How Democracies Perish*: "Democ'y May turn out to b a histor'l accident, a brief parenthesis that is closing before our eyes"...

C. 3rd: A Recession is Not the End of the World --in communal affairs as well as market place.

We're not only ones suffering--everyone is. צרת רבים הצי. Left=most threatened. Right=also in trouble. Even before tragic Reichmann bankruptcy, *Kollel-forever system* bound to fall apart, impossible to sustain.

אל תחליש מן הפורעניות

Above all--remember that *katnut* is not only a state of affairs, but: a challenge!

גמ' שבת: כפה עליהם הר בגילגול וכו'. הקשו בתוס': הלא אמרו נעשה ונשמע? תל' חידוש הר"מ: נעשה ונשמע הלינו גדלות המוחין, "אבל היו צריכים לקבל עליהם לדורות שאפילו בלי חשק לתורה ולכבוד השם מ"מ יעשו כמו שהם בכל נפשם", דהלינו בקטנות המוחין.

Maybe that is our destiny, not only fate: to do the work of the *ע* in *katnut* rather than *gadlut*; and maybe if we persevere, we will b

to serve him in *gadlut* as well. There is no shame in responding *etc.* even when He holds mountain over us *נעשה ונשמע*

D. 4th - Be Aware of Your Strengths as well as Weaknesses

* we have a viable שליטה for the future--the only one that can retain and invigorate יהדות התורה without closing off outside world, abandoning כלל ישראל and alienating all non-Orthodox Jews--who are the vast majority...

* in a rapidly polarizing community, we=only ones: Bridge...

* younger men YU--many splendid ones, reasonable and moderate & לומדים--going into הינוך and even: Rabbinate, convinced of our דרך & proud of TuM.

* despite current financial crisis (מכת מדלגה), YU doing very well, better endowment, better students, than ever...

^{wemust}
THEREFORE: be careful not to waste our valuable sp'l, intellec'l, organiz'l assets by falling prey to temptation of defeatism, and by talking out of turn (we've had too much of that recent weeks/months!).

E. Finally: We Must Accept More, Not Less, Responsibility

* Must assist and lead in building up: all J Comm'y, all Orthx commy, & our interp'n Orthy

* and above all: not be intimidated...

* Our lead'p resp'y includes: *uniting our own commy--OU/YI, Council (MO) orgzns; *support our own at least as much as others, as: YU; * build up RCA & "talk it up"; * banish all defeatism; *indiv'l rabbis more aggressive in Fed's; * & mr active in local rabb'c groups in advoc't'g/advanc'g our p-v, institutions

* all this is difficult; no doubt. But, so what? Who said life must be easy for us? חזו"א: כל הדברים המורים ודבר קל כמעט; * Purpura: "Pressure makes diamonds"...

F. Conclusion

We are in era of *katnut*. But we shall learn to live and prosper in it. And if we have the resolve to endure *katnut*, we will yet witness ~~*gadlut*~~ & then go on to *gadlut*--when השגחה in own time decrees it.

If we have any מוחילין at all, we will help along the transition from *katnut* to *gadlut*; for those who lose heart--are in equal danger of losing their minds (מחילין) -

We shall play the divine symphony in major even as we did in minor key.

If we can outlast the כפה עליהן הר כגיגית mode, we will be blessed w a sunnier day when, not under a mountain, but at its summit we will joyously respond, נעשה ונשמע