

1967

NORMAN LAMM

SUNDAY LECTURE SERIES

penal marks  
revision  
for 1975

THE JEWISH CENTER

"THE LITHUANIAN LUMINARIES"

### III. "RABBI HAYYIM OF BRISK"

#### I. INTRODUCTION:

Todny - "the RAV" - his father - his grandfather MHB. Baletto: 1122

\*Gaon, RHV, & RHB - made of Torah students a Jewish aristocracy; And within this context, the family & disciple line represented by these 3 -- a ROYAL HOUSE -- "BETH HA-RAV" (בית הרב)

\*GAON's student: RHV. Transforms Lithuania from cultural desert to OASIS of Torah - the YESHIVAH. One scholar: "VOL. NOT A TOWN OR A SCHOOL, BUT A CONCEPT"

\*THE DYNASTY: RHV; his son R. ISAAC; then his first s-i-l R. ELIEZER ISAAC (brief, died young); then famous controversy over succession between R. Isaac's 2nd s-i-l, the NETZIV (R. Meir Berlin-Bar Ilan was youngest ch of his 2d wife) and R. Joseph Ber Soloveitchik (author of "Iggrot"). A renowned Beth Din (headed R. Isaac Elchanan) favors NETZIV. Later 2 adversaries reconciled through the subject of tonight's lecture...

#### \*CHARACTERISTICS OF בית הרב:

##### 1. TOTAL DEDICATION TO TORAH:

אין כנסת (no synagogue)

XXXXXXXXX \*STORY: Reform Temple...how come? - Read backwards....)

##### 2. DOMINANCE OF HALAKHAH: RHV on יפה גורל זר זית וזר (double-consc'ss)

##### 3. UNINTERRUPTED EFFORT & DILIGENCE: נחמ

(\*STORY: RHV asked "what do in Vol?" Ans "Eat & sleep"...othrws: ONLY / learn

-- for this reason: GAON lecture spoke Kabbalah, RHV - theology; RHB: HALAKHAH

#### II. BIOGRAPHICAL:

\* while RJB a Rosh Yeshiva at Vol, b. to him son, Purim 1853: HAYYIM

\* even as young child known as 'לך -- "the little R. Akiva Eger"

\* many stories about his sharp intellect as child. Two worth repeating:

--chaver=R. Zalman Sender. RJB: who better student? RH: if I say He, I'm a liar, if I say I, I'm a לרשע.... (RJB: Now you're both...)

--story of RJB & wife in parlor, ask H f tea....some Kavod.....

\*in 1865 (RH=12), RJB leaves VOL (after controversy) for Rabbinat Slutzk.

NETZIV wants RH remain behind, study VOL-Y. Utterior: SHIDDUCH his gr-d

RJB: NO! Later, NTZIV & s-i-l R. Raphael Shapiro travel Slutzk, again

beseech RJB. Agrees SHIDDUCH (Lifshe) but on condition RH studies Slutzk

\*during all this time, RH grows both intellect (to make him for 30 years the outstanding Gaon generation) -- & also CHARACTER.

(His friendliness -- RH w arm about friend in VOL; NTZIV: how he going to study Torah when he has to carry YOU on his back?!

ALSO: later as Rabbi would leave wealthy BAALEBATIM waiting hours while attending to miserable & lonely

\*MARRIED 1873 (age 20). Got 1000 Rubles NADDAN. Later: never felt as bad as short time a GEVIR. F-i-l had to borrow part, so RH immediately repaid it, distributed rest as charity. Who needs money, I have KEST? Besides, don't want be guilty of Talmudic censure

הנהגתו המעולה



\*After marriage, returns to VOL, & when f-i-l accepts Rabbinate elsewhere, RHB succeeds him (1820) as ROSH YESHIVA. Extermely popular  
Never such crowds in class as during his 12-year tenure.

WHY? -- gifted teacher with NEW "DEREKH", NEW METHODOLOGY

\*his brilliance apparent to all -- thus, despite NO secular education, taught self math (Jacon Mark memoir: on beach, calcul'tns in sand)

\*used to challenge students with mind-TWISTERS. THUS: problem have 2 ETROGIM, one ISRAEL (def'y KOSHER, / hadar), other CORFU (? kosher-murkav, but! -hadar). Which first? Most ans'd: ISRAEL... He! CORFU (if kosher, is very hadar; if not kosher, nothing lost...)

autocatalytic with conc. comp.  
phos. thrusky in phos. lang

### III. HALAKHIC METHODOLOGY

A) BACK to RISHONIM (who dealt w more fundamental issues) instead of ACHRONIM (more pilpul). Primarily: HALAKHIC SURGERY, a logical breakdown to fundamental CATEGORIES.

B) USUALLY: *p. 131e* -- the HALAKHIC DICHOTOMY charctrstic RHB

\*Examples: 1.  $\frac{100}{100} = 1$  2.  $\frac{100}{100} = 1$  3.  $\frac{100}{100} = 1$

C) ILLUSTRATION OF חכמה ונבואה: חכמה ונבואה - תשובה.  
מחשבות ה' יבוננה ויחמדם: חכמה ונבואה - תשובה.  
ה' יבוננה ויחמדם: חכמה ונבואה - תשובה.

With this -- solves 2 difficult problems (Tur & Rambam)

D) ILLUSTRATION OF 2 KINDS OF 163 an (i.e., objective qualitative differences)

1. מניין תפילות: 17, ו 23 (7 תפילות)

ד. ל"ס: ערצית-קלור; אגוזי-במלך; קנאו ערצית בקוזה

3. דמיון: "מי שהיה דומה לרשע ונצטוו לכתוב שם רשע, ואם לא כתב שם רשע, לא יצא חלילה לו".

9- אחד מוסף הכתוב: "ואם ביתה תבוא דרדית אינך כוסק, שלא תבוא  
5- הכוונה משה: "אני חוזר"

5- הכוונה משיב: "אין כאן נחת בזה". כוונה, שלא פיוס פני זרזית חזק, ה, קדמו. ולבוארה בצד אתו. וקשה אמנם על הכתוב

6. תיכונים של חזרות: זרימה ושאר תפילות = שתי חצות שניות: חזרה ונדרה.

תורה, אלא זכרם נשאלה אכתבם אן נציה. חסד אכתבם אן נציה, אלא  
ואכתיב: הכתוב, חסד אכתבם אן נציה. חסד אכתבם אן נציה, אלא

[illegible]

על תורה ודבר האדם  
על תורה ודבר האדם



- G) ILLUSTRATIONS OF עיון בדין: report by הרב שמואל רבינוביץ of התורה  
Best illustrate by story reported Zevin: RHB sitting group  
Rabbis, man comes crying: 2 people died, one shortly after other,  
his relative first. Hevra Kadisha buried other first AGAINST "DIN"!  
RHB: Let me look it up. Takes Rambam, looks, says: I'll scold  
Gabbaim, but none of your business. Other Rabbis: a) they saw  
nothing in place in Rambam, & 2) if Gabbaim wrong, why none of  
relative's business? RHB: analyze 2 possibilities: IS THIS  
RULING OF PRIOR BURYING A GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF החיות or a  
or a SPECIAL RULING (עיון בדין) of החיות?  
So looked up RAMBAM החיות &, like other Rabbis, found NOTHING there.  
So concluded is NOT special law relating to honor for dead.  
Hence is part general principle of priority of Mitzvot. In that  
case, wrong decision by Gabbaim did NOT violate honor this  
man's relative, so he has no claim. Rather, they violated  
general halakhic principle of priority, & so as Rabbi he'll chastise  
--- In other words, RHB, instead going to ends earth for legal  
reasoning, went deep into problem itself. Thus, he answered problems  
not by proposing novel solutions, but usually by showing: NO PROBLEM.  
THUS \*STORY His father RJB said: if ask kashia of me, Questioner  
happy & I happy.... If ask of RHB, both unhappy: Questioner learns  
there's no question, RH - he wasted his time on nothing...  
--- is this shames that gave him such tremendous insight into  
truth of Torah. \*STORY told by R. Meir Berlin of discussion group  
Rabbis, one disproves RHB by quoting a Tosafot. RHB: Tos. doesn't  
say that. Look it up, discover RHB right. Later, RHB tells him:  
not my memory -- isn't that good. Rather, I discerned that TOS  
justn't COULDN'T say such a thing.....

כוונה מפורשת: "special laws" = illustration 2  
 if time: IV. HIS RABINATE  
 המקור: פוסק במקום 22323 ב"ק 2210, מקור - מערכה 2 מקום 2420 וזרע וזרע וזרע  
 - י"ח: כוונה אברהם העזבים שאני יו"ר - ומה ב"ק 2210  
 ובית דין וזרע המקור, מה 22323 מקור - הוצאת כרונת 2210



#### IV. HIS RABBINATE.

- A) In years at VOL developed thousands disciples, many became world-renowned. But 1891, Russian Govt closes Yeshivah, banishes NETZIV & RHB. N dies in Warsaw one yr later of broken heart. RHB finally permitted go to Brisk, father. Latter dies w-i yr, RH succeeds him. Is BRISKER RAV for 23 years - - always complaining of his incompetence as Rav!
- B) HAS-MITNAGDIM: Despite position leading Lithunainan.. was beloved & revered even by Hasd'm both in Brisk & over border in Poland, by rich & poor, by zealots & leftists. Has'm often: RHB- miracles. Actually: miraculous logic! \*STORY sees maid w chicken leaving his court. Looks at it, says: go home & bring the other one... Miracle? No - saw no "shaalah" on this, understood she exchanged...  
 ---but RHB appreciated Has'm too. Visiting Rabbi on way to RHB Erev Shabbat, passes Karliner Shtibbel, enters, overwhelmed (weekday more than his Neilah). RHB recognizes face: Where you there? I can see! I send kids there -- lasts a life-time....
- C) During Brisk Rabbinate becomes LEADER WORLD JEWRY; "DER RAV"
- D) MAN OF TRUTH: Rabbinic conv'n Vilna: Cable greetings Czar Nikolai II. RHB opposed: if don't have to, don't: he's a RASHA. Right: he never acknw.  
 So: draft exemptions WWI for Rabbis Cong's, so all shuls "appoint" Rabbis. RHB opposed: Chilul Hashem, & jeopardize real Rabbis. Refuses to allow own son (R. Velvel) & s-i-l to register as Rabbis, tries to free them by other ~~means~~ means  
 wit: man's q: father sick, high cost travel, & 2/3 for 4/5 (12.5% - correct), in travel (1/3) first! -
- E) DOES NOT "PASKEN": rare that he decides; no Responsa. Distinction bet. theoretical legal philosopher & practical jurist. Reason for hesitancy: CONSCIENCE -- might have to disagree accepted PSAK, & didn't want defy authority. THUS \*STORY 2 Dayanim disagree GET; he sends on to R. Isaac Elchanan, requests decision w-o reasons.....
- F) ONLY TIME INSISTENT ON PSAK: DANGER TO LIFE (עַד חַיִּים)  
Very lenient. Students: Why so LENIENT? RHB: am strict -- on פַּדְיוֹן חַיִּים  
 -- thus to critically ill: EAT ALL YOU WANT. But: Sh.A. only אֵין מְבַלְבֵּל?  
R. Velvel explains: that's only for one who, if fatscan BECOME critical, as "ME'UBERET". But if already endangered -- anything  
 -- if patients gloomy, reluctant, RHB: Why? is father ch sad at Bris Milah on Shabbat....??  
 -- relative to this, famous incident: 1st yr WWI, Brisk under Russians. 5 Jews arrested spies, threaten hang. RHB learns can rescue for 5000 Rubles. Rich reluctant -- economic crisis. Erev YK, instructs all synagogues not start till he permits. Walks w purse shul to shul... till late into night, assesses rich, only then OK..released
- G) MAN OF COMPASSION:  
 --endangers life to save Jewish Bundists in Brisk  
 --great fire 1895 - personal assistance day & night, refuses sleep own bed, on floor synagogue, till all taken care of  
 ---s-i-l relates: poor, pregnant woman comes home crying, pleading. RHB to wife: VAAD NASHIM? Whispering. Husband left her 11 mos ago. RH: if so, double pity: stay here 2 weeks. Baby, RH makes BRIS, supports for 2 years



- H) SO - his home open day & night. Beggars would use it as HQ, slept & cooked there. Foundlings. Some sharp merchants, seeing all the traffic - pasted signs advertising merchandise on his walls...

#### V. CONCLUSION.

- B) When Battle front came close Brisk WWI, RHB afraid hostage, so fled --Wandered, suffering, privation, sick. At 63, looked 90  
His big black eyes, like fiery coals, now lose glisten, sad. Liver trou

A) RHB left 3 sons:

- \*oldest, R. MOSHEH, became Rosh Yeshivah Y.U. -- his sons (R. Sh. Berman)
- \*R. Simchah died Brooklyn
- \*R. Velvel, most like him, succeeded him in Brisk, then Jerusalem

- C) Summer of 1918, RHB dies in village near Warsaw  
Was the year (Hberew calendar) 5678 (תרס"ח)  
His sons, in Introduction to his Sefer, point out that numerically equals verse ענה לו כי --the great sun had set

- D) We have, then, in our series this year, traced the great LITHUANIAN LUMINARIES, beginning with the genius of Gaon Vilna, through RH Volozhiner, through RH Brisker.

In this period, Hasidism gave new impetus to development of the Jewish heart -- and Lithuanian Mitnagdim experienced tremendous new surge of intellectual vigor, the Jewish mind

By time of RH Brisker, the old antagonisms between Has'm & Mitnag'm had been resolved; House of Israel was reconciled.

Our generation heir to these two marvelous, historic traditions of Jewish intellect and spirit. Providence has handed to us these remarkable resources wherewith to fashion a renaissance of Torah Judaism unparalleled in our chronicles.

It is true that ענה לו כי, that the sun has set -- the giants we've discussed past 3 years are no longer with us: Besht, R. Shneur Zalman Ladi, R. Elimelech Lizensk, R. Nachman Bratzlav, Gaon Vilna, RH Volozhiner, RH Brisker. But their descendants -- many of them worthy of ancestors's mantles -- and their teachings are with us

כי לא נאחזקת -- the House of Israel is not widowed.

Though the sun has set on one period of Jewish history, it is in the nature of the sun to rise once again -- and rise it shall, on a new period full of vitality and vigor and creativity.

והיה כבודו של ישראל  
והיה כבודו של ישראל