

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

Dr. Belkin, Honored Guests, Fellow Graduates, Friends.

It is customary for the valedictorian to stress the idea that the class' four year stay at the college has been but preparation for later accomplishments; that the college has given the tools, but the actual forging ahead must come, as a result of individual efforts, in the years following. I find myself forced to adhere to this stereotype. Yeshiva, in the final analysis, is bound only to give us the raw materials necessary for that now-famous synthesis of Western civilization and Traditional Judaism which is the epitome of the ideals of this school. It is our duty to effect within ourselves this conciliation or harmony between the two cultures.

It is generally conceded that one of the primary characteristics of ~~modern~~ Western civilization is science; that science, and especially technology, is the foundation upon which is built the edifice of modern Western civilization. Therefore, it becomes our interest to consider the juxtaposition of science and Judaism.

However, I do not believe it proper to rehash, here, the ancient topic of science and religion. Much - very much - has been said, but little indeed has been done. Perhaps we should begin to emphasize the "doing" rather than the "saying".



The essence of Traditional Judaism, as we know it and as we would like to know it, is the Halacha.

מיון פירער זיגן פאר אים און נאך וועלכע דאס איז געווען  
"Since the day the Holy Temple ~~was~~ destroyed, the Holy One, Blessed  
be He, has in His world only the four cubits of Halacha". And what  
is the Halacha if not the application of divinely revealed  
Biblical and Talmudic principles to empirical facts, to what  
William James called "the irreducible and stubborn facts" of Nature.  
As such, the understanding and correct practice of Halacha is  
necessarily dependent upon the development and success of scientific  
endeavor . Since the codification of Halacha, and particularly in  
the past one hundred years, men have discovered more and more  
about the world in which we live. New facts have been brought to  
light, and many old ideas have been reexamined in the light of the  
newer knowledge. Inevitably, therefore, we find certain contradictions  
between the facts we have come to know as a result of scientific  
researches and what our Sages, in their days, believed to be fact.  
And these conflicts, these contradictions between Halacha and Science,  
Halacha and economics or psychology or any other field we have  
chosen to study during our college careers, afford us, particularly  
us who have been trained at Yeshiva and Yeshiva College, the  
challenging opportunity to contribute in ~~this~~<sup>a</sup> nowise small manner  
to the enhancement of Halacha by a reexamination of the empirical  
facts upon which it is founded, and the application of the age-old  
and eternal principles of the Torah and Talmud to the "irreducible  
and stubborn facts" as we now know them.



In one of his works, Whitehead says, "In ~~the~~ formal logic, a contradiction is the signal of a defeat; but in the evolution of real knowledge it marks the first step in progress towards a victory". Our victory, the fostering of Halacha and Traditional Judaism in the context of American democracy, can indeed be achieved if we will but apply ourselves to these contradictions with all the resources at our command. We who ~~are steeped~~<sup>live</sup> in the unique valley of Halacha and who have just completed four years of higher secular education should strive to, and can, achieve a successful symbiosis of Halacha and Science, and other secular subjects; not merely the study of ~~the~~ two separate and distinct fields, but the harmonious, mutually beneficial and interdependent coexistence of these two great spheres of human experience and knowledge.

It was after a great and bitter destruction had been heaped upon Israel that Moses, in a moment of intense religious experience, pleaded with G-d, saying וְיִדְּעֵנִי אֱלֹהִים  
 "Make me know Thy ways", וְיִדְּעֵנִי אֱלֹהִים, "that I may know Thee".  
 The same vital thirst for truth which caused Moses to ask G-d to let him know His ways must drive us, individually and collectively, to an unending search for the knowledge of G-d, whether it be the ethereal and spiritual knowledge of a Moses, or the rational and metaphysical of a Maimonides, or the organized and systematic knowledge of a modern scientist. And how much more beautiful,



how much fuller, is this drive for the knowledge of G-d's ways if it is the systematic search of the scientist, set in the lofty mold of religious sanctity and guided by the strong fineness of Halacha.

We feel an overwhelming gratefulness to Yeshiva College for having trained us to shape the contribution of our era to the history of Judaism and Israel; for having impressed upon us the fact that *אם איעזר נח* is now not an apology, for circumvention, but an urgent and positive command of the day:

*נח*, now is the time; *איעזר*, to do, not to say but to do;  
*נח*, for G-d.

CHILE BOND

COLDSMITH BROS. N.Y.

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