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129

הרב נחום לאם

Rabbi Norman Lamm

1255 CARROLL STREET

BROOKLYN 13, N. Y.

PRESIDENT B-5008

"WHAT G-D FOUND IN THE DESERT - the moral of shevuoth"

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A. Rabbis describe G-d finding delight in three experiences, 3 finds, each based on a Biblical text. Each teaches a moral principle.

B. FIRST METZIAH: Abraham. אברהם אבינו . Loyalty of heart; faith.

Not so much intellectual conception monotheism as faith in G-d in all totality and purity.

1. sign of times, sophistication, is "emancipation from all faith".

2. state categorically that's impossible. Every man has faith; depends what kind -

a. No more than two ways. No "grays".

b. either in G-d - or idols, whether stone, scientism, psychology, destiny, wealth, security, communism, free enterprise. No matter how good, still idol.

3. כיון לאדם בורח מן האורה הולך אחר חלק

4. Cynics deride this idea as too conservative, tight orthodoxy. Under guise of sham liberalism, "so open-minded that their brains fall out", they insist on third way - no faith in anything at all.

5. Bertrand Russel: "To live a human life, man must have grounding in something, in some sense outside of human life....in some end which is impersonal and above mankind, such as G-d or Truth or Beauty"

6. There must, therefore, be a choice of WHICH faith. Abraham recognized this etc.

6. SECOND METZIAH: David. אברהם אבינו . Servitude, or service.

1. G-d could have found delight in so many other great aspects of David:

a. Royalty: a monarch reigning in august majesty...consolidated Jewish kingdom

b. Military prowess: uncanny strategist...2nd Book Samuel (vs Absalom). No Kojé incident possible under him.

c. Poet: sublime thoughts which run so mellifluously thru his Divine verses... inspiration to countless generations in times of need and also bliss.

2. Yet G-d extolls servitude above all these. Two great qualities of an אברהם:

a. Surrender, Yielding to Master...Sacrifice in toto

1. ~~אברהם אבינו~~ once altar, now Bimah; once Kohen, now Shatz; once animal physically, now man spiritually -

2. אברהם אבינו . A measure of intensity. Noticeable in Psalms.

3. In this sense David a complete אברהם .

אברהם אבינו - אברהם אבינו

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page two

b. Time. Constantly and eternally at service of Divine master.

1. No "days off" -
2. Halachic expression to this concept in *Halacha* is *Yom Yom* - every day.
3. True religious personality similar; not year end, not week end, not even daily Jew, but every moment infused with consciousness of G-d.
4. Religion not to be "scheduled"; must be freed from oppressive tyranny of the calendar, and liberated from the heavy hour- and minute- hands of the clock.
5. In this sense David a complete EVED - all aspects his life bespoke servitude to G-d. We too must learn this.

D. THIRD METZIAH: complements the other two.

1. No Rabbi can expect to succeed in getting his people to live up to standards of an Abraham or a David. The Rabbi himself can't.
2. Lionel Trilling in recent essay of lit criticism - people fear genius, uninspired by it even if they respect it. Better great achievements of normal humans with normal weaknesses.
3. This is third great METZIAH - what G-d found in desert, commemorate this Shevuoth day.
4. Hosea: $\text{כַּחַד צִיּוֹן כַּחַד בְּרֵךְ מִיְּמֵי הַיָּמִים הַהֵם}$ - pregnant profound symbolism, hidden meaning.
5. Midrash: $\text{מִי הָיָה נֶאֱמָר הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הָיָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהָיָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$...
6. CHARTZONIM of Jews:
 - a. stubbornness: - $\text{כִּי עָקֹבְתָּ עֲוֹנוֹתָיִם}$
 - b. unimaginative: - $\text{מִי יֵאֱמָר מִי יֵאֱמָר מִי יֵאֱמָר}$
 - c. thankless: - $\text{מִי יֵאֱמָר מִי יֵאֱמָר מִי יֵאֱמָר}$
7. Yet G-d accepted them! Why? What great moral message is latent in this matter?

TWO GREAT LESSONS FROM THIS DISCOVERY IN THE DESERT ON SHEVUOTH:

1. THE TRAVELLER (following grape-desert analogy): In desert, where hot, parched sands, and only thing that grows is thorny, inedible cactus, if find grapes, don't quarrel with bitter pits, don't hold out for seedless grapes.
- G-d found Israel in a world like a desert..idolatry, immorality etc. So he accepted the grapes; recognizing the CHARTZONIM, he also recognized the pulp & juice, the flesh & the skin. THIS IS THE LESSON OF REALISM.
 - a. Israel - criticism OK, but conclusion is wrong.
 - b. Yeshivoh and other Jewish institutions.
 - c. Personal - as parent, husband or wife - in for disappointment.
2. THE GRAPE: no despair. Jews recognized PITS yet tried for & succeeded in $\gamma\lambda\epsilon\iota\ \alpha\lambda\gamma\alpha$
- a. Freud - self-criticism - but not self-hatred.
 - b. every person painfully aware own shortcomings, mediocrity, but not to despair
 - c. should be firm in knowledge that G-d accepts CHARTZONIM, if there are only ANAVIM
 - d. Traditionally MASMID appreciated more than ILUI.
 - e. Moral: develop good points to fullest. G-d expects that, no more.
 - f. Story of Reb Zusya.