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"EMERGING FROM THE CAVE"

IV. The Old Man

It is easy enough to point to religious youth and the growth of day schools and Yeshiva University. True, these are the symptoms of a revival. But without a special kind of attitude by the mature generation, the elders of our community, our whole enterprise is doubtful.

Hence, the Talmud tells us: the giants of Torah who emerged from the cave beheld a most remarkable sight—an old man in the dusk of his life, the Friday night and the twilight of his career, was racing and running. Where to and what for, old man? Preparing for a new Shabbat! Carrying that which will make Torah sweet, which will endear Yiddishkeit to all! When questioned closely as to why he had *two* myrtle branches, his answer was illuminating; one for *zakhor*, remembering, and one for *shamor*, observing. The old man not only performs the commandment to remember; he not only entertains ancient memories, espouses a religion of murky sentiments, and recalls faded glories. No! It is true that there are hosts of noble memories worth cherishing, but the old man at the dusk of his life also affirms *shamor*, "Observe the Sabbath!" Guard your heritage for the future, transmit Judaism to a new generation, prepare for posterity. The old man does not despair, does not give up and return to the womb of yester-year's memories. He is oriented to a future which he wishes to sweeten and to adorn today. His *Shabbat* is not a relic of the past, but a symbol of the future.

That old man's indomitable optimism is something we dare not fail to learn. It is a source of optimism for us that we have progressed beyond the experimental stage, that there are already some of us in this country who have reached full maturity and have survived with their Judaism intact despite their willing encounter with contemporary society. But this mature generation must also be sufficiently motivated to provide for the future, for *shamor*. If it will do so with sweetness and not with bitterness; if it is confident and working and striving, even if sometimes all this effort seems irrational; if it loves and adores our precious heritage — then there is indeed a future for Judaism even outside the cave. If those approaching the dusk of their lives can look beyond the night to a new dawn, then Orthodoxy does not need total isolation in order to survive; then Yiddishkeit can and will flourish even outside Meah Shearim and Williamsburg, Bnei Brak and Boro Park. The rest of the world *is* redeemable!

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