

(1) THE AWARENESS OF HISTORY. IF YOU ARE ONLY SELF-INVOLVED, IF YOU ARE TROUBLE ONLY BY PROBLEMS OF YOUR OWN EGO, THEN YOU CAN NEVER BE TRULY RESPONSIBLE IN THE JEWISH WAY. IF ALL YOU ARE CONCERNED WITH IS THE IMPRESSION YOU MAKE ON OTHERS, THE IDENTITY YOU WANT TO DISCOVER, YOUR SELF-INDULGENCE AND SELF-INTEREST, YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO FEEL RESPONSIBLE AS PART OF A LARGER PEOPLE. I REMEMBER THE LITTLE OKINAWAN IN THE BROADWAY PLAY OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO, "TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON," WHO WITH SUPERBLY UN-SELF-CONSCIOUS ARROGANCE PROCLAIMED THAT HE WAS THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE: "TO THE RIGHT OF ME IS THE EAST, TO THE LEFT IS WEST, BEFORE ME IS NORTH, BEHIND ME IS SOUTH; SO, I AM THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE." MOST OF US ARE INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO DENY OUR OWN CENTRALITY IN THE WORLD; WE KNOW THAT THAT IS UTTER NONSENSE. BUT EMOTIONALLY, PSYCHOLOGICALLY, WE ALL ACT AS IF WE WERE INDEED THE POINT ABOUT WHICH ALL THE WORLD REVOLVES. THIS IS THE ROAD OF ADOLESCENT IRRESPONSIBILITY — A FORM OF IRRESPONSIBILITY THAT FOR MOST PEOPLE CONTINUES WELL INTO ADULTHOOD AND EVEN OLD AGE. TRUE RESPONSIBILITY MEANS TO BE CONCERNED NOT ONLY WITH YOURSELF — OBVIOUSLY YOU MUST THINK ABOUT YOURSELF TOO — BUT TO CONCEIVE OF YOURSELF ALSO AS A MEMBER OF A PEOPLE, TO SEE YOURSELF AS PART OF A GREAT REALITY CALLED HISTORY. IT MEANS TO REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE A SON OR DAUGHTER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE WHICH MADE A COVENANT WITH GOD AT SINAI, THAT THAT MEMBERSHIP OBLIGATES YOU TO A CERTAIN MODE OF CONDUCT, AND THAT YOUR CONDUCT AT THE PRESENT LEADS ULTIMATELY TO THE GREAT FUTURE OF THE DAYS OF THE MESSIAH IN THE USHERING IN OF WHICH EACH OF US PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE. WHEN THE COVENANT WAS SEALED WITH US, IT WAS EXPLICITLY TOLD TO US THAT IT INCLUDES "NOT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE HERE STANDING WITH US TODAY, BUT ALSO THOSE WHO ARE NOT HERE THIS DAY" (DEUT. 29:14). THAT INDICATES, AS THE RABBINIC TRADITION TAUGHT US, THAT ALL SOULS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS OF JEWS WERE PRESENT AT SINAI. IF WE ARE NOT ONLY INDIVIDUALS BUT ALSO PART OF A PEOPLE, AND WE ARE, THEN THE HISTORY OF THAT PEOPLE AND ITS OBLIGATIONS INCLUDES US AS WELL. HENCE, TO BE JEWISHLY RESPONSIBLE MEANS TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE PART OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, AND THAT WE WILLINGLY EMBRACE THE OBLIGATIONS THAT WERE IMPOSED UPON US IN THE DIM PAST AND WHICH WILL LEAD US INTO A GLORIOUS FUTURE. OF COURSE, YOU CAN DECLINE THIS RESPONSIBILITY AND CHOOSE THE WAY OF IRRESPONSIBILITY. OTHERS HAVE DONE IT BEFORE YOU. BUT IF YOU ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY, YOU ACCEPT BOTH A BURDEN AND A JOY. YOU LOCATE YOURSELF IN A MEANINGFUL CONTEXT OF A HISTORIC CONTINUUM THAT EXTENDS FROM UR OF THE CHALDEES, FROM WHICH ABRAHAM EMERGED, THROUGH SINAI, AND TO THE COMING OF MESSIAH AND THE END OF DAYS. SO, RESPONSIBILITY IS YOUR READINESS TO ANSWER TO GOD AND TO ISRAEL — AND TO THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP, TO JEWISH HISTORY.

THE SECOND ELEMENT IS — BRASHNESS. THAT MAY SOUND ASTONISHING. BUT I MEAN IT QUITE SERIOUSLY AND LITERALLY. WE ARE SUMMONED TO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FATE OF JEWRY AND JUDAISM. YOU MIGHT WELL ASK: "WHO, ME? WHO AM I TO ATTEMPT THIS?" AFTER ALL, MANY OF YOU COME FROM HOMES WHERE PARENTS AND POSSIBLY EVEN GRANDPARENTS MAY ALREADY HAVE ABANDONED THAT IDENTITY AND THAT RESPONSIBILITY. MANY, IF NOT MOST OF YOU, COME FROM FAMILIES WHERE JEWISH OBSERVANCE HAS DWINDLED ALMOST TO A MINIMUM. YET WE NOW ASK OF YOU TO DO SOMETHING THAT YOUR PARENTS FAILED TO DO. THAT REQUIRES BRASHNESS, AND PLENTY OF IT. REMEMBER: BRASHNESS, NOT DISRESPECT. TO BE DISRESPECTFUL OF PARENTS IS TO NEGATE JEWISHNESS. BY BRASHNESS I MEAN THAT EACH OF YOU MUST BE FOOLHARDY ENOUGH TO IMAGINE THAT YOU CAN RECAPTURE A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY BY YOURSELVES, ALTHOUGH IN YOUR HOMES IT WAS NOT HANDED DOWN TO YOU, FATHER TO SON AND MOTHER TO DAUGHTER, AS IT WAS IN OTHER JEWISH HOMES.

SUMMER SESSION
EASTERN TORAH LEADERSHIP SEMINAR
BANQUET REMARKS

- RABBI NORMAN LAMM

RESPONSIBILITY

WHAT THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION OF SEMINAR OFFERS THE SEMINARIANS DURING THIS REMARKABLE 8-DAY PERIOD IS MORE THAN SONG AND SPIRIT AND COMRADESHIP. IT IS EVEN MORE THAN THE IMPARTING OF KNOWLEDGE; INDEED, WE OFFER YOU EVEN MORE THAN ANSWERS. PRIMARILY, WE OFFER YOU -- QUESTIONS!

THE AWARENESS THAT EACH OF US LIVES UNDER A QUESTION MARK IS ONE OF THE MOST FRIGHTENING AND CREATIVE EXPERIENCES OF WHICH A MAN IS CAPABLE. THE FIRST HUMAN BEING, ADAM, AT A TIME OF GREAT CRISIS IN HIS LIFE, THOUGHT THAT HE COULD HIDE FROM THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE. BUT GOD PURSUED HIM, AND CONFRONTED HIM WITH THAT PENETRATING QUESTION, WHICH CAME THROUGH HIS EARS AND INTO HIS MIND AND FROM HIS MIND INTO HIS HEART AND FROM HIS HEART INTO HIS CONSCIENCE: AYEKAH, "WHERE ART THOU?" WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MAN? WHAT MEANING DO YOU FIND IN YOUR LIFE, WHAT PURPOSE DO YOU FULFILL, WHAT ENDS DO YOU STRIVE FOR, WHAT WILL REMAIN AFTER ALL OF PHYSICAL LIFE IS DONE?

THAT QUESTION -- AYEKAH, WHERE ARE YOU? -- INCLUDES ALL OTHER QUESTIONS, AND IT IS ONE WHICH WE MUST ANSWER, MUCH AS WE WOULD LIKE TO AVOID IT. THE QUESTION DEMANDS AN ANSWER, AND THE ANSWER SOMETIMES TAKES A WHOLE LIFETIME TO FORMULATE. THAT WE MUST ANSWER, THAT WE MUST RESPOND, MEANS THAT WE ARE CHARGED WITH -- RESPONSIBILITY, THE NEED TO "RESPOND."

THAT IS MY THEME FOR THIS EVENING. WHAT WE TRY TO GIVE YOU IN SEMINAR IS JOY AND MEANING AND FULFILLMENT AND UNDERSTANDING AND FRIENDSHIP. BUT MOSTLY, WE TRY TO AROUSE YOU TO YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. AND RESPONSIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, THE NEED TO ANSWER THE GREAT QUESTIONS POSED TO YOU BY GOD AND TORAH AND ISRAEL, MAY WELL PROVE TO BE THE TURNING POINT OF YOUR LIVES. SO WE OFFER YOU NO PRIZES AND NO AWARDS. WE OFFER YOU ONLY THE ANGUISH OF TRANSFORMING YOUR LIVES, THE DIFFICULTY OF TESHUVAH OR REDIRECTING THE COURSE OF YOUR LIVES, A CODE OF LIVING WHICH INCLUDES HARD WORK, A REGIMEN OF JEWISHNESS FULL OF DUTIES AND CHALLENGES, AND ABOVE ALL A WAY OF LIFE THAT BEGINS WITH THE PAINFUL AWARENESS OF YOUR OWN IGNORANCE. THAT IS A HARD PRODUCT TO SELL, UNLESS THE CUSTOMERS ARE SENSITIVE AND PERCEPTIVE AND INTELLIGENT. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THAT DESCRIPTION FITS YOU, AND SO WE SIMPLY REFUSE TO SUGAR-COAT THE PRODUCT. WE ARE HONEST WITH YOU. IN THE WORDS WITH WHICH A GREAT SPANISH PHILOSOPHER, MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO, CONCLUDED HIS FAMOUS WORK, THE TRAGIC SENSE OF LIFE, "MAY GOD DENY YOU PEACE, BUT GIVE YOU GLORY." WE GIVE YOU NO EASY SOLUTIONS, NO PAT ANSWERS, NO PROMISE OF INSTANT PEACE OF MIND. WE OFFER YOU ONLY THE OPPORTUNITY TO STRUGGLE WITH YOUR CONSCIENCES, TO FACE THE QUESTIONS, TO RISE TO YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES, TO ABANDON PEACE OF MIND AND PEACE OF HEART UNTIL YOU HAVE BEGUN TO FORMULATE A PROPER COURSE IN LIFE -- AND THUS A CHANCE FOR GLORY.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS JEWS, YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE QUESTION OF AYEKAH, "WHERE ART THOU?," CAN BE PROPERLY DISCHARGED ONLY IF SEVEN CONDITIONS ARE PRESENT. THESE SEVEN ELEMENTS THAT GO INTO THAT COMPLEX COMPOUND CALLED "RESPONSIBILITY" ARE AS FOLLOWS:

THAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, TO BE REALIZED AND EXECUTED WITH RESPECTFUL BRASHNESS, BUT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ULTIMATELY YOUR BRASHNESS WILL BE APPRECIATED. REMEMBER THAT EACH GENERATION OF JEWS EXTENDS THAT GOLDEN THREAD OF JEWISH HISTORY AND COMMITMENT ANOTHER INCH, ANOTHER LENGTH, AND HANDS IT ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION. I GIVE MY CHILDREN THAT GOLDEN THREAD AND ASK THAT THEY ADD THEIR CONTRIBUTION AND HAND IT ON TO THEIR CHILDREN AFTER THEM. MANY OF YOU HAVE PARENTS WHO DO JUST THAT, AND NOW THEY ENTRUST THE FUTURE TO YOU. BUT THERE ARE MANY OF YOU WHOSE PARENTS HAVE FAILED TO ADD THEIR LENGTH TO THE GOLDEN THREAD OF JEWISH TRADITION. SOME OF YOU EVEN COME FROM HOMES WHERE YOUR GRANDPARENTS HAVE ALREADY FAILED TO DO SO. WELL, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? WITH A SENSE OF NATURE RESPONSIBILITY AND YOUTHFUL BRASHNESS, STRETCH YOUR HANDS, YOUR HEARTS, YOUR SOULS, STRETCH AS FAR AS YOU CAN GO, OVER THE CHASM OF A GENERATION OR EVEN TWO GENERATIONS, AND PICK UP THAT THREAD THAT DANGLES LIKE SOME AMPUTATED LIMB, AND PULL IT, PULL, PULL IT ACROSS THE GENERATION OR TWO-GENERATION GAP, AND CONTINUE THE GOLDEN THREAD OF JUDAISM, REDEEM THE MISTAKES THAT PAST GENERATIONS MADE. IF THE PAST GENERATION OR TWO WERE "LOST GENERATIONS," YOU MUST REDISCOVER JUDAISM AND RETROACTIVELY MAKE THOSE "LOST GENERATIONS" INTO "REFOUND GENERATIONS." WHAT A CONTRIBUTION THAT WILL BE TO YOUR FAMILY!

THE THIRD ITEM THAT IS NECESSARY IS COURAGE. I DO NOT WANT TO REPEAT ALL THAT I SAID TO YOU AT THIS OCCASION LAST YEAR. BUT I DO THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE DISCHARGE OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY REQUIRES OF YOU THE COURAGE TO BE DIFFERENT IN A SOCIETY IN WHICH JEWISHNESS IS ALMOST IDENTICAL WITH DIFFERENTNESS. YOU MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO DISSENT FROM THE CONFORMISM PRESSED UPON YOU BY YOUR PEERS. RESPONSIBILITY MEANS THE ABILITY TO SAY "NO." YOU MUST SAY "NO" TO DRUGS, TO HIPPIEDOM, TO TARFUT, TO DESECRATION OF THE SABBATH, TO IMMORALITY. YOU MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO DISCHARGE YOUR JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY BY SAYING "NO" TO THE SNEER OF YOUR "GOOD FRIENDS" AND THE SMIRK OF YOUR ACQUAINTANCES WHO, NOTICING YOUR SUDDEN INTEREST IN JUDAISM, WILL LABEL YOU "SOME KIND OF RELIGIOUS NUT." REMEMBER THAT OUR PEOPLE BEGAN WITH THE WORD "NO" WHEN ABRAHAM SAID "NO" TO HIS ENTIRE SOCIETY, AND SET ABOUT BRINGING GOD INTO THE WORLD. WE EVEN HAVE MORE NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS IN JUDAISM.

IN A PRECIOUS INTERPRETATION OF A VERSE FROM THE PROPHET JEREMIAH, THE FOUNDER OF HABA'D HASIDISM DISCOVERED THE SAME PRINCIPLE. JEREMIAH, SPEAKING IN THE NAME OF GOD, TOLD HIS PEOPLE: "THUS SAYETH THE LORD, I REMEMBER THE FONDNESS OF YOUR YOUTH, THE LOVE OF YOUR BRIDAL DAYS, WHEN YOU FOLLOWED ME IN THE DESERT B'ERETZ LO ZARUAH, IN A LAND THAT WAS NOT SOWN." GOD TELLS ISRAEL THAT HE WILL NEVER FORGET HOW ISRAEL REMAINED LOYAL TO HIM IN THOSE EARLY YEARS OF JEWISH HISTORY, LIKE A BRIDE WILLING TO FOLLOW HER BELOVED HUSBAND EVEN INTO THE VERY DESERT. BUT THE RABBI INTERPRETS THE WORDS ERETZ LO ZARUAH NOT ONLY AS "A LAND THAT WAS NOT SOWN," BUT RATHER AS, "A LAND IN WHICH THE WORD LO, 'NO,' IS SOWN." IN THE SOIL OF JUDAISM THERE IS IMPLANTED THE COURAGE TO BE NEGATIVE, THE ORNERINESS THAT MAKES US SAY "NO" TO OUR INSTINCTS, TO BLIND PASSION, TO NATURAL APPETITES, TO THE PRESSURE OF SOCIETY, TO THE NEW PAGANISM, TO THE ALLURE OF ASSIMILATION.

SO RESPONSIBILITY DOES NOT MEAN BEING PASSIVE AND RESIGNED. IT MEANS TO ACCEPT UPON YOURSELF STRIFE AND STRUGGLE AND BRAVERY AND DEMANDS. JUST TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO, GENERAL MOSHE DAYAN, SPEAKING TO A GRADUATING CLASS IN ONE OF THE

IN ORDER TO USE AND DEVELOP THIS BRASHNESS, REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE. THE JEWISH PEOPLE ITSELF BEGINS ITS STORY IN THIS MANNER. WHEN THE ANCIENT JEWISH FARMER WOULD BRING HIS BIKKURIM (FIRST FRUITS) TO THE TEMPLE, HE RECITED A PROCLAMATION WHICH BEGAN WITH THE WORDS, "ARAMI OVED AVI," WHICH RASHBAM TRANSLATES AS "MY FATHER (ABRAHAM) WAS A WANDERING SYRIAN." HE BEGAN AS A WORSHIPPER OF ICONS, LIKE HIS FATHER, AND PROCEEDED TO WORSHIP THE STARS AND THE MOON, AND ONLY AFTERWARDS DID HE COME TO THE ONE GOD. ABRAHAM WAS BRASH INDEED, DESTROYING THE ICONS OF HIS FATHER AND ABANDONING THE PAGANISM OF HIS FAMILY.

SO IN ORDER TO BE RESPONSIBLE, YOU MUST BE BRASH ENOUGH TO TRY TO BE MORE JEWISH THAN YOUR PARENTS. SPEAKING TO YOU AS A PARENT, I CAN SPEAK AS WELL FOR YOUR PARENTS. WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO HAVE MORE THAN WE HAVE, AND TO ACHIEVE MORE THAN WE HAVE ACHIEVED. IF WE ARE TRULY SENSITIVE, WE WANT OUR CHILDREN NOT ONLY TO HAVE MORE, BUT ALSO TO BE MORE THAN WE ARE. PERHAPS, DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS YOU MAKE TO BE RESPECTFUL IN CHARTING YOUR OWN COURSE IN LIFE, YOU MAY IRRITATE YOUR PARENTS. BUT IF YOU ARE INTELLIGENT, AND IF YOU ARE UNDERSTANDING AND SYMPATHETIC, AND IF YOU ARE DETERMINED, THEN ULTIMATELY YOUR PARENTS WILL RESPECT YOU AND LOVE YOU ALL THE MORE FOR IT.

THAT PARENTS WILL ULTIMATELY UNDERSTAND THE ROAD YOU CHOOSE FOR YOURSELVES MAY BE ILLUSTRATED, I BELIEVE, BY A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT OCCURRED TO ME WHEN I WAS A RABBI IN SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS, ABOUT 12 OR 13 YEARS AGO. WE HAD A JUNIOR CONGREGATION, IN WHICH SEVERAL CHILDREN, MANY OF THEM FROM NON-OBSERVANT HOMES, WOULD WALK OVER A MILE OR TWO IN ORDER TO JOIN US. ONE DAY A BLIZZARD STRUCK SPRINGFIELD, NOT AN UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE FOR THAT PART OF THE COUNTRY, AND VERY FEW PEOPLE CAME TO SERVICES. ONE YOUNGSTER, HOWEVER, WHO NORMALLY WOULD WALK TWO MILES EVERY SHABBAT TO COME TO "SHUL" AND THEN RETURN, DID APPEAR DESPITE THE HEAVY SNOWS. I WAS SHOCKED, AND SCOLDED HIM FOR RISKING LIFE AND LIMB IN ORDER TO COME TO SERVICES IN SUCH INCLEMENT WEATHER. HOWEVER, THIS DID NOT BOTHER HIM, AND DESPITE MY PLEADING TO REMAIN WITH ME FOR LUNCH, HE DECIDED TO GO HOME. THAT EVENING, RIGHT AFTER "HAVDALAH," HIS MOTHER CALLED ME OVER THE PHONE. I DO NOT REMEMBER EVER HAVING BEEN BERATED AND REPROACHED WITH SUCH FLUENCY, EFFICIENCY, AND RICHNESS OF VOCABULARY. THE WOMAN COMPLAINED THAT I HAD DESTROYED THE PEACE OF HER FAMILY, I HAD INCONVENIENCED HER AND HER HUSBAND BY MY AGITATION FOR THE CHILD TO BECOME "OLD FASHIONED" AND "FANATIC," AND NOW SHE WAS REQUIRED TO LIGHT THE CANDLES AND PROVIDE KOSHER FOOD, AND DO OTHER SUCH OUTDATED AND TERRIBLY ANNOYING THINGS FOR HER CHILD. AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO RESPOND, I TOLD HER THAT, AS A NATIVE NEW YORKER, I RECOGNIZED THAT SHE TOO WAS FROM NEW YORK. SHE SAID THAT SHE WAS. TELL ME SOMETHING, I ASKED, ABOUT YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR PARENTS' HOME. OH, SHE SAID, THEY WERE VERY ORTHODOX PEOPLE, THEY WERE VERY RELIGIOUS JEWS. AH, I SAID, AND YOU ABANDONED WHAT THEY CHERISHED! YOUR MOTHER LIT CANDLES, BUT YOU BETRAYED HER. YOUR PARENTS OBSERVED THE SABBATH AND ATE KOSHER, BUT YOU TOSSED ASIDE THEIR MOST DEEPLY-HELD PRINCIPLES AS IF THEY WERE EXCESS BAGGAGE AND OF NO USE AND INTEREST TO YOU. YOU HAVE NO QUALMS OF CONSCIENCE AT HAVING BETRAYED YOUR PARENTS — BUT YOU ARE TERRIBLY UPSET WITH ME BECAUSE YOUR CHILDREN INCONVENIENCE YOU IF THEY WANT TO RECAPTURE THE PRINCIPLES WHICH YOU SO GLIBLY ABANDONED! THE SILENT PAUSE AT THE OTHER END OF THE TELEPHONE SPOKE VOLUMES. FINALLY, SHE REPLIED DEMURELY AND SOFTLY AND RESPECTFULLY, "I'M SORRY, RABBI, PLEASE FORGIVE ME." WITH THAT, SHE HUNG UP — AND REVEALED THAT SHE HAD LEARNED SOMETHING.

FURTHERMORE, WITH ENTHUSIASM YOU CAN HAVE AN ABIDING INFLUENCE ON OTHERS. IT IS TOLD OF THE GREAT RABBI ISRAEL MEIR HAKOHEN, KNOWN AS THE 'CHAFETZ CHAYYIM,' THAT HE WAS TOGETHER WITH HIS STUDENTS WHEN HE SAW THE FIRST LOCOMOTIVE HE HAD EVER SEEN. HE WATCHED IN GASPING ASTONISHMENT AS THE TRAIN HURTTLED BY. WHEN HIS STUDENTS ASKED HIM FOR HIS IMPRESSIONS, HE SAID: HOW MARVELOUS THAT 'ONE HOT ONE CAN PULL ALONG SO MANY COLD ONES' -- THAT ONE LOCOMOTIVE, FILLED WITH FIRE AND HEAT AND POWER, CAN DRAG ALONG A HUNDRED COLD AND UNFEELING CARS. IF YOU WILL HAVE ENTHUSIASM, YOU WILL PULL ALONG OTHERS. A LITTLE WARMTH WILL INSPIRE AND KINDLE THE SOULS OF MANY, MANY OTHERS.

AND THIS LEADS US TO THE SIXTH ELEMENT: FELLOWSHIP. RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD AND ISRAEL AND TORAH MEANS RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR FELLOW MEN. IT MEANS THAT YOU MUST NOT BE SATISFIED WITH JUDAISM FOR YOURSELF. INDEED, THE BEST WAY FOR YOU TO REMAIN SECURE IN YOUR JEWISHNESS IS TO SEEK FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHERS WHO ALREADY ARE RELIGIOUS AND OBSERVANT, AND ALSO WITH THOSE WHO MAY ASPIRE TO IT. TRY TO CONTINUE THE FRIENDSHIPS YOU HAVE FORMED HERE. KEEP IN CONTACT, SEEK OUT THOSE WHO ARE LIKE-MINDED. AND THEN REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHERS AS WELL; IN THE WORDS OF THE TALMUD, 'ALL ISRAELITES ARE CO-RESPONSIBLE ONE FOR THE OTHER.'

FINALLY, THE SEVENTH ELEMENT IS: GREATNESS. DO NOT HAVE TOO MUCH HUMILITY. IF YOU ARE OVERLY HUMBLE, IF YOU THINK YOU ARE INFERIOR, IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE NO INNER WORTH, YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO BE RESPONSIBLE JEWS. YOU MUST NEVER BE ARROGANT, BUT YOU MUST BELIEVE THAT YOU POSSESS THAT CORE OF VALUE AND POTENTIAL THAT WILL ENABLE YOU TO BECOME GREAT JEWS. YOU CAN DO IT. AND YOU MUST DO IT -- BECAUSE WE CAN AFFORD NOTHING LESS.

WILLIAM JAMES ONCE SAID, IN AN ADDRESS AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY IN 1906, 'THE WORLD...IS ONLY BEGINNING TO SEE THAT THE WEALTH OF NATIONS CONSISTS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE NUMBER OF SUPERIOR MEN THAT IT HARBORS.' WE HAVE ENOUGH ORDINARY PEOPLE. WE DESPERATELY NEED SUPERIOR MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL DEMONSTRATE THEIR SUPERIORITY IN MORAL CONDUCT AND JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY. YOU WHO HAVE SHOWN SUFFICIENT INTEREST IN TORAH TO VENTURE THIS WEEK AT SEMINAR HAVE REVEALED AN ELEMENT OF MORAL COMPETENCE AND SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE BY THE VERY FACT OF YOUR RESTLESSNESS, OF YOUR DISSATISFACTION WITH YOUR STATUS QUO, OF YOUR SEARCH FOR YOUR JEWISH ROOTS. I KNOW SOME OF YOU FEEL CHAGRINED BY YOUR IGNORANCE AND EMBARRASSED BY YOUR UNFAMILIARITY WITH THINGS JEWISH. BUT THAT TOO IS A SIGN OF INCIPIENT GREATNESS. NOW -- USE IT, EXPLOIT IT, DEVELOP IT.

THESE, THEN, ARE SEVEN ELEMENTS THAT GO INTO THAT STERLING QUALITY CALLED ACHARAYUT; THEY ARE THE ABC OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY:

AWARENESS OF HISTORY
BRASHNESS
COURAGE
DETERMINATION
ENTHUSIASM
FELLOWSHIP
GREATNESS

ARMED WITH THIS BEGINNING OF THE ALPHABET OF GENUINE JEWISHNESS, GO ON IN JOY AND SPIRIT TO ACHIEVE MATURITY AND RESPONSIBILITY. BRING TO GOD AND TORAH AND ISRAEL THE FIRST FRUITS OF YOUR YOUTHFUL ZEAL AND IDEALISTIC DEDICATION.

'AND YOU SHALL REJOICE IN ALL THE GOOD WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS GIVEN UNTO YOU.' (DEUT. 26:11).

OFFICERS' SCHOOLS IN ISRAEL, OFFERED A REMARKABLY CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF A BIBLICAL PHRASE. GOD SAYS TO JACOB, AS HE SAID TO HIS FATHERS BEFORE HIM, AL TIRA AVDI YAAKOV, "DO NOT BE AFRAID, MY SERVANT JACOB." DOES THAT MEAN THAT GOD TOLD JACOB THAT HE CAN SIT BY WITH FOLDED ARMS, AS A PASSIVE SPECTATOR, WHILE GOD DOES THE JOB FOR HIM AND ADVANCES HIS INTERESTS IN THE WORLD? ABSOLUTELY NOT, SAYS GENERAL DAYAN. "DO NOT BE AFRAID" DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO BUT YOU CAN RELY UPON ME. RATHER, IT MEANS THAT YOU MUST THROW YOURSELF INTO THE BATTLES OF LIFE, YOU MUST COMMIT YOURSELF TO THE GREAT STRUGGLE. AND IN THE COURSE OF THAT STRIFE DO NOT SUBMIT TO COWARDICE AND TO FEAR AND TO PANIC, BUT FIGHT ON LIKE A BRAVE SOLDIER OF THE ALMIGHTY. THAT IS WHAT RESPONSIBILITY IS ALL ABOUT. IT TAKES COURAGE.

FOURTH REQUIREMENT FOR RESPONSIBILITY IS: DETERMINATION. REMEMBER THAT WITH ALL YOUR BRASHNESS AND YOUR COURAGE, YOUR ATTEMPT TO BE JEWISH -- IF ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS NEWNESS TO YOU AND YOUR SPOTTY KNOWLEDGE OF ITS REQUIREMENTS -- MEANS THAT YOU PROBABLY WILL FAIL IN MANY RESPECTS. HENCE, YOU MUST BE DETERMINED TO CONTINUE DESPITE FAILURE. YOU MUST BE PREPARED FOR DISAPPOINTMENT WITH YOURSELF. TO BECOME JEWISHLY JEWISH IS NOT THE KIND OF DECISION THAT IS AUTOMATIC ONCE YOU HAVE MADE UP YOUR MIND. IT REQUIRES CONSTANT HARD WORK. BUT DO NOT WORRY ABOUT FAILURES, FOR THEY ARE ONLY TEMPORARY. THE VERY EFFORT ITSELF AT BEING GOOD JEWS IS A NOBLE AND HEROIC AND ADMIRABLE ONE. ROBERT BROWNING, IN HIS FAMOUS POEM, "RABBI BEN EZRA," ONCE SAID: "WHAT I ASPIRED TO BE AND WAS NOT COMFORTS ME." THE VERY UNDERTAKING TO BE JEWISH, THE ENDEAVOR ITSELF, IS A HOLY ONE. ASPIRATION ITSELF IS PRECIOUS. SO MUCH IN RELIGION IS THE VALUE OF EFFORT, EVEN IF IT IS DOOMED TO FAILURE. THIS IS THE NATURE OF SHOFAR, ACCORDING TO THE FAMED HASIDIC RABBI I MENTIONED BEFORE: IT IS THE HOARSE AND WORDLESS CRY OF THE SOUL THAT SEEKS TO BREAK OUT OF ITS MATERIAL PRISON AND REACH UPWARDS TO EMBRACE GOD HIMSELF. WHAT A GREAT AND HOLY AMBITION -- AND HOW CERTAIN TO FAIL IT IS! JEWS DO NOT WORSHIP SUCCESS; THEY DO WORSHIP EFFORT.

SO THE ATTEMPT TO BE JEWISH IS ITSELF GREAT. FURTHERMORE, YOU MUST BE CONFIDENT THAT ULTIMATELY YOU WILL SUCCEED IF YOU TRY HARD ENOUGH. THAT IS WHAT RESPONSIBILITY REALLY MEANS IN THE HEBREW. THE WORD FOR RESPONSIBILITY, ACHARAYUT, DERIVES -- ACCORDING TO A GREAT ITALIAN-JEWISH LEXICOGRAPHER, RABBI NATHAN OF ROME, AUTHOR OF THE ARUKH -- FROM THE HEBREW WORD ACHARIT, WHICH MEANS: ENDURANCE, 'A LASTING END.' YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE IF YOU WILL BE CONFIDENT THAT ULTIMATELY YOUR EFFORTS WILL PREVAIL, THAT YOU WILL HAVE ACHARIT, AND THAT BY SHEER DETERMINATION YOU WILL REACH YOUR GOAL ULTIMATELY. THE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE ACHARIT THE DETERMINATION TO TRIUMPH, IS A BASIC INGREDIENT OF RESPONSIBILITY, OF JEWISH ACHARAYUT.

FIFTH IS: ENTHUSIASM. YOU DO NOT CHANGE A WAY IN LIFE WITH THE EMOTIONS OF A COLD FISH. YOU MUST HAVE REAL SPIRIT. ENTHUSIASM, AS YOU WELL KNOW, COMES FROM THE GREEK WORD EN AND THEOS, GOD IS WITHIN. THE FABULOUS SINGING AND DANCING YOU EXPERIENCE HERE AT SEMINAR CAN SOMETIMES BE MISLEADING. ORTHODOX JEWS DO NOT SING AND DANCE AT EACH OF THE THREE MEALS OF EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK. BUT WE DO SO HERE IN ORDER TO GIVE YOU SOME INDICATION OF THE INNER ENTHUSIASM THAT IS NECESSARY FOR TRUE JEWISH LIFE AND THAT MAKES IT SO DELIGHTFUL, SO CHARMING, SO HOLY