

ONE PEOPLE: Facts, Fictions, and Faith

1. Thank Sonnenschein... Left Kodimoh exactly 40 years ago... 2 generations...
So good to be back--and so sad... Izensteins: Lou, Yetta... Lou would be pleased learn alma mater--top tier, #42... so, dedicate to Lou ע"ה..
 2. Theme: UNITY Jewish People--urgent, yet industrial size yawn... will not preach..
Rather, treat as penultimate to more critical Q: Jewish survival/continuity
 3. Survival imperiled 2 factors: Intrmrrrg-- 52%... don't be consoled by bromide
"outreach"= mantra.. Current 13M→5-6M in one gen'n...
Also: demographics: Since '60, world Jy=ZPG; A-Jewish=NPG.
Only bright spot: Orthx/ultra-Orthx growth. But what of maj'y Js? ... *Tragedy!!*
 4. But: equally grave prob: *We stand today at critical juncture in hist'y our people.*
Our gen'n must mk fateful decision: remain one ppl, or be fragmented to 2/2+
ppls unable marry each other, therefore permanently divided fr each other?
Potent'y, this=mr disastrous>splitting Davidic kingdom into 2 >death Solomon.
- The fact of our disunity now looms over us like some giant, brooding, threatening presence, one that we deny at our own peril. Some say: we nvr were united, unity of Israel=myth/fantasy/legend, and therefore our present disunity should not worry us. And yet others act as if disunity was inevitable and welcome.*
5. So: let's concentrate on unity, i.e., minimum nec'y for self-preserv'n, not mythical/fictional "unity" which never existed except f brief moment Sinai.
- Theological--Sages: תפילין של הקב"ה--מי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ...
 - Pract'l Q: unity vs Principle: which should prevail?

The conflict, as we have formulated it, is not completely a new one. Gemara: Moses/Aaron= archetypes of these 2 differing attitudes: Moses: יקוב הדין את ההר; Aaron, however, אוהב שלום, ורודף שלום. Moses symbolized preeminence of law and principle, Aaron that of peace and unity.

Tanna de'vei Elyahu: in a contest betw love for Isr/Torah, former prevails. In Middle Ages. Saadia: אין אומתנו אומה אלא ע"י התורה. Halevi: Israel= the constant, unchangeable pole w-o which Torah could/would not have been given.

So, which prevails & which do we abandon? wholeness of Torah /unity of the poeple? The Right holds: must maintain hegemony of Torah even at expense of oneness of Isr. Left believes must strive to effect the unity of Israel even it it means compromising the Halakha.

My answer is clear: In our present sit'n, we dare not ask such question, bec it is a prematurely forced and therefore false dichotomy! When Nazis where bored by ordinary torture of Jews and wanted t reach the zenith of sadism they resorted t psychological torture. So: they told a man that h would have t choose betw having hs father/mother killed, and that if he refused to choose, both would be murdered. T force us t choose betw love f Torah/Israel=cruel, inhuman demand. Granted, under extreme conditions, we may conceivably hv t decide which t choose/abandon.

But to ponder the question and choose sides for imminent application before every single solution has been examined and tested, is an act of gargantuan irresponsibility.

The presumption that the values are locked in mortal combat=an abstraction that in context our own particular, peculiar predicament=utterly misleading. We can/must hold on to both elements of dear life. Now Js may cavalierly despair of/abandon thousands upon thousands of fellow Js. And no J has right to dispense w integrity of Halkha, source of our spiritual/communal existence and the only guarantee that we and generations after us will remain Jewish.

□

- So need forgo minor demands/polit gains/institut'l prestige in favor Jewish unity
- We Orthx far from blameless, BUT: don't put all onus on us of marrg+convers'n issue: One thing is and should be clear to us: Any formal imprimatur to non-halakhic conversion will lead to disaster. If there is more than one way to enter the Jewish fold, and any one of them is non-halakhic, it will lead not to the kind of disunity that now afflicts us, but to something infinitely worse: the break-up of our one people to two or more nations, unable officially to intermarry with each other. Consider this sit'n: we not recognize most Cons'v conversions (depending on individual officiant.) Conserv's if they=true to own convictions will not accept Ref conversions. Furthermore, the Isr Ref group said tht it does not recognize Amer Ref actions such as patrilinealism, same-sex marriages. Thus, we so far can count 4 diff't groups tht will not marry other's converts. Is this what they want?

6. So what will keep us together??

- FIRST: Despite lower a-S, the גויים... ST: QE-II....Mendel...Entebbe...
- SECOND: Resolve not be distracted by minor issues. Thus: drop polemical thrusts that not imp't as: Orthx="recogn'n"; non-Orthx="plur'm"

These=luxury; even UJA/Fed-"historic suicide"...

Somehow, we smart Js at end this tortured century just don't get it. While others are united by external threats, we pull apart. Face sea=change in A-Jy, & bicker over mixed services at Kotel...sanctify single-sex mrrgs...But slogans will nt save us, & buzz-words won't redeem us, nor should we let them intimidate us

- THIRD: Return to Religion, to Torah! A secularzd nat'm = bankrupt
ST: Uri Avneri (Heb Nat'l)... Today: "post-Z'm".....

The new post-Zionism, that darling invention of left-wing Israeli intellectuals, is merely the newest idol in the pantheon of alienated Jews. *Most of us come to God only when our idols will lie shattered, the shards of their clay feet puncturing our illusions and goading us to look up, beyond the confines of our own creations, past the dazzling display of our arrogant inventions, to the brooding Presence which summons us and awaits us so patiently.*

So it is w idols of contemp'y J lf. must go all th way, mk leap fr rallies→religion, protest→practice, Z'm alone or J identity alone→totality of J exper'ce, or--(late R. Maimon: fr *kultura*→*kol Torah*!)

[Put problem in Biblical perspective--3 covenants: נח-אברהם-משה...with the later including the former...]

- d) **FOURTH:** Admit our errors. Orthx=overly strident, triumphalist;
non-Orthx=too accomod'g ephemeral soc-cult'l fads, dismissive Hal (as: gay mrrgs)

e) **J education:** Those w most/most intensive J ed hv exper'd least defections. Those w least J ed suffered most. The Othx comm'y hs overstated success in attract'g *baalei teshuvah*; both here/Israel, defections undoubtedly out-number the returnees. But by and large, number of Orthx out-marriages is far less than with others. And as y go t other end of spectrum, where Jed is either shamefully dilute or totally absent, numbers increase. The ripple becomes a stream, the stream a river, and the river a flood.

Geo. Hanus in Chicago....

7. Do I think we're going to make it?

- a) plenty reason pessimism...
b) Yet: David Ravidowicz: Isr-"The Ever-Dying Ppl"
c) ST: "Think it's easy to be an optimist?"
d) All depends on us--as commty and also as individuals...

*Immediately before sounding the shofar, we recite the words of David (Ps. 47:6)--
עלה אלקים בתרועה which loosely translated means that God, as it were, is exalted at
the sound of the teruah ... Hasidim (R. Shelomo Leib of Lenchno; R.SZ): תרועה
derives from טרע-- friend/friend'p. The love/ loyalty amongst friends is imp't t טרע
& He=exalted when those who serve Him do s in fellow'p/mutual love/esteem.*

8. In conclusion: Let me read you 2 paragraphs fr the Nobel Prize Acceptance
speech by tht grt Amer novelist, voice of the American South, William Faulkner:

*I decline to accept the end of Man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal
simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and
faced from the last worthless rock hanging timeless in the last red and dying evening,
that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice,
still talking. I refuse to accept this .*

*I believe that man will not merely endure: He will prevail. He is immortal,
not bec he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he
has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.*

I say that the same about the Jews. I believe that the Jew will not merely survive; he
will prevail and flourish. He is immortal, not because he has an inexhaustible voice
hawking his wares and shares, or garnering more graduate degrees, or devising new
inventions; but because he has a נשמה, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice
and endurance; because he has the insight into a reality beyond himself and an
irrepressible urge to reach out to the God of his fathers; because he has the patience to
wait years and even centuries for the promise of the God of Israel to be realized, and
his own hopes vindicated, and his prayers answered.

And may our prayers be answered, from whereverw we are--NY/Jerus/Tel Aviv/Spfld
--for a שנה טובה ומבורכת...