

N. Lamm

Young Israel Convention

6/18/82

"A RETURN TO SPINITY: OLD-NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM"

1. Renewed this talk - casual conversation R. Ephraim Sturm in Jerusalem last Feb. (even for thoughts as dangerous as this; no - will talk as dangerous p. 1/2 p. 123.)
2. Sturm: something has happened to us that has made us other than that which we wanted to become. Y.I. started out - effort bring back dignity/modesty/openness to Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy synerg. It pursued its objectives w/ pride + integrity - effort to blaze trail for that which goes under many names - MODERN/CONTEMP/ MODERNIST ORTHODOXY

So - Y.V. VOODOO, others

BUT - polarization that afflicted Orthodoxy - has left us reeling, self-doubt, questioning own authenticity, unsure who we are, where we going - & hence often succumbing pressure right.

How else explain such phenomena as Y.I. veterans - in 2nd place,

Y.V. alone - such children p. 123 p. 124 sec. 11.

W. all our drivings - some's gone away

ST - Zhitkov - "V" - Y.V. 1/2 vs 1/3 0.1/2/1/3 p. 124 p. 125

3. Give: accepted challenge of Sturm to examine problem, ~~can't~~ try to rethink our situation, & see if we can reaffirm our
3. Give w/o defensiveness/offensiveness

(2)

4. Let us begin by being honest (- hurts, but good for health)
First - nowhere engraved tablets or inscriptions that what we were in 1930's-40's is some Truth, idealism, cynicism etc.
Second - our camp today not flawless - not at all.
5. If my theme were critique mod/contemporary - world list:
- a) BURNEDNESS - as if intellect modern synonyms PARVE. bloodless
 - b) timidity & diffidence... (vs. a vs. soc. + non-virt. vs. vs. sold - "vegetarian")
 - c) too much accommodation rampant HEDONISM ... { how many really come out to Australia? no career like them? also - 1813...
 - d) retarded demography
 - e) inadequate esteem for us - by selves & others.
6. At same time, extremists to Right vs. how some get things: passion; dedication (often at self-sacrifice); lg families; 11/12 71373; high value on us.
7. BUT price has been too high & work-unnecessary. Bec. considerable negative features committed w. swing to Right NOT NECESSARY for virtues it has affirmed. For indeed it is possible to have passion... etc; w/o destructive elements
8. What are some other less than desirable characteristics? - 5...
- a) AUTHORITARIANISM - a Lithuanian / Russian - surrender own critical faculties, follow blindly even most blatantly political decisions RUBBISH - doctrine of infallibility

(3)

- often unnecessary as well as overers, giving
the man a good feeling but driving away so
many others

- b) Tendency pile up מלכודת, ספ. נ"ס 113 א
c) closed minds -- elevating shallowness to metaphysical principle

I hesitate to engage in a recitation of the instances of bigotry and shallow-mindedness that afflict us. We all know of them either by hearing about them or by actually experiencing them -- and our heart aches. Little self-contained clumps of self-righteous super-piety come into being, each specializing in condemning and attacking some phantasmagoric heretic: those who celebrate Yom Ha'atzma'ut; those who build an Eruv in Manhattan or Brooklyn or wherever; those who may not eat "glatt" ~~those who not eat glatt at wedding meals;~~ meat or drink Halav Yisrael; and certainly, those who take anything but a grudging attitude to higher secular education. (High-philo-trig - 1960; computer, recently - 1965)

There are even those who have set themselves up as censors of the Rishonim: Ibn Ezra is non-Kosher; Seforno usually unacceptable; Maimonides - sometimes good, often dangerous; Abarbanel - usable, except where he may corrupt young, innocent minds!...

~~I refuse to accept~~ ^{And we are told} that such totalitarian, authoritarian narrowness is the proper way of Torah, the Torah "whose ways are the ways of pleasantness." ~~I refuse to accept the proposition~~ That piety can flourish only in closed minds, and That Judaism to be authentic must be intolerant. Were that true, then we should have to concede that the late Professor Arnold Toynbee was right in his fulminations against Judaism.

- a) ATAVISM - a deliberate return to a form of primitive existence. "Haimish Amish." - (then highlighting parts of next page)

Now, I don't
mind people who
eat glatt & drink
that etc. - as long
as not forgotten -
remember the 90%
but to judge others
that way, denigrate
others? -
at - 1961.11

דעת תורה

חדשים מקרוב באו במנהגים זרים, לשוט יד בדרכי לימוד חינוקות של בית רבן. כל יום ויום מתגלים מנהלים ומלמדים, הבוראים ובודים חדשות, על ידי השפעות שונות, לסלול מסילות אשר לא שערם אבותינו. רוב השינויים לקוחים מדרכי ומעטאדע"ן של הגוים. והצד השווה שבהם שכולם נותנים טעם כי כוונתם להועיל, בסכרות וראיות. על כן באנו בזה להזהיר באזהרה חמורה שלא לנגוע כלל בבבית ענינו, חינוך ילדינו הטהורים. ואסור לשנות אפילו קוצו של יו"ד מדרך המקובל ונהוג מימיו עולם, כל המשנה ידו על התחתונה, והחדש אסור מן התורה בכל מקום ובכל זמן. ואף אם יבואו בטענות וראיות ובידורים, ואפילו בדברים אשר לפי ראות העין אין בהם שום הפסד ואדרבה נראים כתועלת גדול, הכל הבל ולא יעלה על לב לעולם, לא תשמע ולא תאבה להם. והוא כבר נאסר מכל גדולי הדורות. וכן דרך כל בוצע בצע, לומר שהוא לטובה ולעזר, וסופו ה' שהפכו הקערה על פ'י. שכל שינוי כל דהו יהי' מאיזה טעם שיהי', הכל אסור עפ"י דתוה"ק.

ענין שינויים א"א להעלות הכל על הכתב, שכל יום ויום עולים חדשים לבקרים. אבל העיקר שכל שינוי שלא הי' נהוג בתלמוד תורה שלנו מעולם, אין להנהיגו, שכבר נאסר עפ"י דתוה"ק מכל גדולי הדורות. ומ"מ נפרט אחדים מהם המצויים היום. (א) כל מיני סיסטעם ומעטאדע"ן של דרכי הגוים, ופסיכאלאגיא, ושאר ענינים מספרי הגוים ודרכיהם והדומה לדומה, אין להשתמש בהם כלל, ואפילו לתלמידים, יחידים בכל הנוגע לחינוך בנים ובנות, כולו צריך לזרות הלאה הרחק מן המחנה. (ובכלל יש להתרחק לגמרי מפסיכאלאגיא ופסיכיאטערע"ן בין לגדולים בין לקטנים ומי שבאמת זקוק לרפואה מהם וכן ילד שהוא בגדר חולה בדעת באמת ר"ל בתולדה או מסיבה אחרת וצריך רפואה מרופאים, לא ילך לפסיכאלאג' ופסיכיאטאר כ"א אחר שאלת חכם וצדיק ועפ"י הוראתו). (ב) אפילו דבר קל שלא הי' נהוג בתלמוד תורה שלנו, ונוהגים בו בבתי ספר של גוים או מאדערנע אין להכניסו כלל, אפילו אם יהי' בו תועלת רב. (ג) אין להשתמש בתלמוד תורה לצורך הלימודים בטע"ס דעקאדע"ר או שאר מאשינע"ן. בין כל הלימוד בין מקצתו, בין ללמוד בין לחזור על הלימוד. וכן אין להכניס שום מאשינע"ן המזמר והדומה לו. (ד) אין להנהיג להמלמד שלא להכות התלמידים, אשר מחוייב עפ"י דתוה"ק ונהוג מימיו עולם כמפורש בש"ס ופוסקים. (ה) אין למנות מנהל, או מלמד, או מחנך אפילו בדרך ארעי כ"א מי שהוא ירא ושלם ושראוי להיות מלמד קבוע באותו תלמוד תורה. וכש"כ שמו שלמד לימודי אוניווערזיטעט וקאלעד"ז אפילו רק מעט פסול מלהיות לו שום מגע ומשא בהנהלת מוסדות החינוך, ובכל עניני חינוך בכלל. (ו) אין לנשים או בתולות להיות מלמדות לילדים אפילו לקטנים ביותר ואפילו אין לומדים עמהם ממש. כל שהוא בדרך כיתה בתלמוד תורה. וכן אין לערב ילדים וילדות בכיתה אחת.

כלל העולה כל שינוי גדול וקטן ממנהגים הנהוגים מכבר בכל השייך לבתי חלמוד תורה, ובכל השייך ללימוד והדרכת התלמידים בהם, הוא נאסר מגדולי הדורות.

וכל מנהל או מלמד או מחנך שרוצה להנהיג כן ראוי להעבירו ממשמרתו ולא יבאו לקהל ה' להיות מחנכים, מלמדים, או מנהלים והדומה. ולכל השומע תבא עליו ברכת טוב. ונזכה כולנו יחד לגאולה שלימה הקרובה בעה"א אכ"ר.

עפ"י א"ב

אברהם קליינמאן	יחזקאל ראטה	לוי יצחק גרינוואלד
אבדק"ק מארגארעטען	דומ"ץ דק"ק יט"ל	אבדק"ק צהעלים
אפרים פישל הערשקאוויטש	דסאטמאר	משה ניישלאס
אב"ד האליין	יחזקאל שרגא ליפשיץ	אבדק"ק שיכון סקווירא
גבריאל יודא איליאוויטש	האלבערשטאם	משולם פייש סג"ל
אבדק"ק שאמשאן	אדמו"ר מסטראפקאו	אדמו"ר מטאהש
הלל ליכטענשטיין	יחיאל וויינבערגער	נתן געשטעטנער
אבדק"ק קראסנע	אבדק"ק סערדעהעלי	הרב דקא"י ב"ב
חזקי' פייבעל ראזענבערג	חנני' יו"ט ליפא טייטלבוים	נתן יוסף מייזעלס
אבדק"ק דעברעצין	אבדק"ק נירבאטור	ר"מ ומנהל הרוחני
חיים זנוויל אבראמווין	יוסף אלי' שטיינער	בישיבה תו"י דסאטמאר
אדמו"ר מריבניץ	דומ"ץ קהל עדת יראים	רפאל בלום
חיים יעקב ראזנער	יוסף גרינוואלד	אבדק"ק קאשוי
אבדק"ק טערצאל	אבדק"ק פאפא	שלום משה הלוי אונגאר
חיים מייזעלס	יושע כץ	אבדק"ק נייטרא
אבדק"ק סארוואש	אבדק"ק סאמבאטהעלי	שלום קרויס
		אבדק"ק אודווארי

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Now, I'm not at all implying that this fossilized narrowness & atavistic nonsense is true of all rightists & even extremists - but is indicative of a Hungarian primitivism that is all too common. I'm not angry - just sad & amused. But what does change me is - "5/11/13"! We've allowed this ill-^{-defined, half-baked} concept - of very recent vintage - to be fostered on us as if was an ancient dogma..... Whose 5/11/13 - Saturday? Wednesday? Given? Broken? A given? Raw? If so - how many Torahs are there? (So - "The Jewish version...")

- 2) INTOLERANCE: needs little documentation. Is a tragedy - esp. bec. it's infected many non-extremists as well. Even rational people have taken leave of their senses -- & accepted uncomprom'g, intolerant, rigid views & attitudes.

Ex: Israeli settlers. I respect all who are for peace - but I'm critical of p.j.m.s (12), those who threatened suicide in Yamit. Expected many to take issue; why not? But listen better a former strait, also in YC -

(see attached...)

(might even that has threat to withhold funds from YV failed to panic me. This well-to-do young businessman has history - 10/1/12 contributed to YV of \$102.12...)

(6)

9 - In response to this wave of extremist emotion in Jewry, w. its deplorable features & threats to infatigable Jews, it is time for us to reaffirm a return to sanity - for sanity and moderation are the ways of Torah Judaism - plz writing for prisoners too.

Centrist Orthodoxy makes a distinction bet. frum/cholish - ... & frum/mum.

It is not blm in mitzvot only or halakha only - but in the mitzvot itself. I accept mitzvot when they make sense & mitzvot when based on sources - not in mitzvot inspired by self-interest & mitzvot by self-righteous.

Centrist Orthodoxy takes a positive view to Agudat & considers its existence a mitzvah & its security a mitzvah. Many or may not regard it as distasteful (I, like Agudat, do not & do not say goyim & minim & etc.)

Cent. Orthodoxy not look askance at sec. ad. ag. & n. ag. & etc. (which is - the world - world... So: yes & no or, in Hirschian formulation - it is & it is not. After all, what is alternation - mitzvah no it is...?

Cent. Orthodox Jews prefer to be tolerant, courteous, accommodating, civilized - & even to splc correct any cholish - but not all 3 mitzvot (the new patners of Yiddish, or Yiddish - mitzvot)

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Cent. Orthodoxy is open to variety of opinions - even if contradictory.
It's like a big tent - but it's show: can have radically
different & sharply held views - still accepting of each other.

It's like a big tent ... a bldg consists of all kinds of views,
countervailing pressures. If all are in balance, harmony,
reconciled to living together - house stands. But let one
pressure source get out of hand & attempt overwhelm
others, whole structure comes crumbling down. So it
is in J. community ...

Cent. Orthodox is, even while vigorously maintaining own
Torah views, cooperative w all other Jews in Jewish life
matters, w/o denigrating or patronizing them.

In all, we are - *אנו כולנו יהודים* - *אנחנו כולנו יהודים*
& Talm. (Jant. 37b) - *אנחנו כולנו יהודים*
... Thus - have *אנו כולנו יהודים*
- from *אנו כולנו יהודים* ...

Not imp't. way, to possess all above traits
& also profound views - but at least most of them.

10. How can this center be strengthened?

First - must be convinced rightness our position, principled;
& ~~not~~ not apologetic or defensive. We have, after all,
created a whole community that made it possible for

(8)

New Rights & Jewish. I beg leave to share w. you
what I told you (S.M. at S.M. (March 81) - -

cause we must all of us beware of a dreadful error that some of us make if we think, in the privacy of our consciousness, that somehow it is the extremists who are authentic and that moderation is merely pragmatic rather than principle and thus an unworthy compromise.

Not so! Those who throw rocks do not represent the צור ישראל, the "Rock of Israel!" Those who suffer a wrenching inner self-contempt and express it in arrogant self-righteousness—they do not represent Torah and Judaism. Remember: it is the way of moderation which Maimonides refers to as the "way of the Lord."

The teaching of moderation is not a policy of prudence but a philosophy of character and society. Extremism may be far more successful in whipping up passions and fostering the illusion of principle. But it is fundamentally inimical to Torah and to reason and it is hospitable to bigotry. Its "idealism" is meretricious, and its claim to Jewish authenticity rings hollow and false.

We must be articulate, firm, and cogent in advancing our own views and perceptions as Orthodox Jews -- whether they concern our relationship with Israel, with the academic world, with the wider Jewish community, with society at large. We must not be intimidated. But we shall have to proceed, above all, by affording the same courtesy to others that we demand for ourselves, by practicing what we preach, at the same time that we assert our view rigorously. Without in the least yielding, we must answer calumny with kindness, denunciation with decorum, denigration with ^{הנהגה כבודית} dignity. "The soft answer turneth away wrath," as Proverbs taught.

And Christ Orthodox will, above all, have to learn to live w. scholarship in peace, respect, w. scholarship. (Hers. H.J. - 1985) -
will tell you what I told VOSHA Conv. - separation is a
scandal! - - - -

- 11- Should make it clear before I conclude: am not denigrating all extremists. Not all are bigots or primitive or silly. i) I recall, ~~the~~ ^{also} I disagree w. those who are authentic in their views who come to them from a broad depth, whose extremism derives from an excessive depth.

I cherish such Jews, & I deeply regret their motivations & hence their separatism. I understand as well their fears of this modern or post-modern world - the world of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, of hedonism & hedonism, of escapist urban life - whether of the urban, the gang, or all those in between.

I often feel - I confess - that I too would like to flee, to run away from the mad circus to a little island of sanity & sanctity.

But I do not b/c we are forced to make this tragic choice bet. the options of either flight or assimilation. That we are not faced w. a forced option is at the heart of one of the most meaningful ~~is~~ in Talmud. It is not a legend; it is not just history; it is a truth in the form of a story.

-4-

However, fortunately, we are not called upon to make this tragic choice. We are not restricted to the two options of either "Neturei Karta" or assimilation. And it is this that is at the core of the story of the cave.

The Talmud (Shabbat 33b) tells us: R. Simeon bar Yohai and his son R. Eliezer made slurring remarks about their advanced contemporary Roman civilization. By an indiscretion, they were found out and condemned to death. They fled and eventually hid in a cave, where they were forced to spend some twelve or thirteen years. During this time they lived on nothing more than carobs and water. This long interval was spent by them in growing spiritually, in the study of Torah, and, according to tradition, in achieving tremendous mystic insights which were later incorporated in the book Zohar. After the end of this period they were told that Caesar was dead, and it was safe for them to leave their hiding place. When they emerged, they saw people -- their compatriots-- occupied in the normal business of living: planting, reaping, buying, selling. They were shocked: Is there no one who studies Torah all his days? Kol makom she'notnim enehen miyad nisraf, wherever they looked and whatever they looked at was immediately consumed by fire! At which a bat kol, a Heavenly voice, issued forth and exclaimed: le'hachariv olami yetzatem? Have you left your cave only to destroy My world? Hizru le'ma'aratkhem, return to your cave! This they did, remaining in the cave another



twelve months. Then another bat kol called forth: Leave your caves. The two scholars left, and, surveying the scene about them, were again deeply distressed. R. Simeon turned to his son and said: dai le'olam anⁱ v'ata, apparently you and I are the only ones left. The two of us shall have to continue Judaism by ourselves. But then something remarkable happened: it was behaⁱdei pania de'maalei shabbeta, Friday afternoon, just before the beginning of the Sabbath. They saw hahu sabba, an old man who was carrying in his hands trei medanei assa, two bunches of myrtle twigs, ve'rahit bein ha-shemashot, he was rushing just before twilight. "What are you doing this for?", asked the two scholars. He answered: li'khevod shabbat, I am preparing the sweet-smelling myrtle in honor of the Sabbath. "But why two bunches?", father and son asked the old man. He replied: one in honor of the commandment of shamor, to observe the Sabbath day, and the other in honor of zakhor, to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Whereupon father turned to son and exclaimed: kamah havivin mitzvot al Yisrael, how this people Israel loves the commandments! As a result, yativ daataihu, their spirits were assuaged, they were pacified and happy. R. Simeon and his son became reconciled to the world.

What does the Talmud mean to tell us in this story? R. Simeon and R. Eliezer are the symbols of ^{certain kinds of} the gedolei Yisrael of all generations. They recognized the

rot and the decay of their contemporary civilization and hence preferred to retreat into their own enclave of Torah and piety. They would not pollute the pure spirit of Torah and piety with the corruption of the world. When they did venture forth to meet the rest of the world, they were dismayed. Their own standards had grown during their isolation, while the rest of the Jewish world had remained static. Everywhere they looked, there was fire; the institutions they beheld were "burned"--they reduced the pretense of normal life to ashes. They had finally honed their own spirit to a keen edge, so they could not tolerate people engaged in their regular and profane pursuits of business or professions or universities--anything, indeed, but the Yeshivah, the Beit Ha-Midrash or the Kollel. From that vantage point, the rest of the world was, indeed, nothing!

But -- the bat kol calls out: this can destroy the Jewish world! Back to your cave! With an attitude of this sort, you are not yet fit to live in the community. Neturei Karta may be fit for Meah Shearim, but the rest of the Jewish community cannot live this way. Such attitudes are dangerous and destructive and deleterious, precisely because they are too holy, too remote, too demanding. The Jewish community cannot abide such a perspective--and God wants to save his world even as he wants his Torah to prevail.

But then R. Simeon and R. Eliezer do finally leave their cave and are finally reconciled with the world.

They do learn that Judaism can survive outside the cave, even in the Roman environment. How are they reconciled? How are we -- who consider Torah absolute and modernity relative, who yearn for the beauty of pristine pure Jewish life and fear contamination and pollution in our semi-pagan technological society -- how are we to be reconciled with the rest of the world? What in short, are the sources of our optimism and confidence, of our faith that Judaism will survive without retreat into caves and enclaves?

It is easy enough to point to youth and day schools and Yeshiva University ^{and young Israel & other groups}. True, these are the symptoms of a revival. But without encouragement from our elders, 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 trees, 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 ^{nostalgic} a religion of murky sentiments, 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 yesteryear's memories. He is oriented to a future which he wishes to sweeten and to adorn. His Shabbat is not a relic of the past, but the symbol of the future. *And both the past & the future of Torah can survive - outside the cave!*

That old man's indomitable optimism is something we dare not fail to learn. If the mature generation of our times is 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 so 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 isolation in order to survive; then Yiddishkeit can and will flourish ^{not only in but also} even outside Meah Shearim and Williamsburg, Bnei Brak and Boro Park. The rest of the world is redeemable!

~~This afternoon we shall read in our Perek Avot, (Chapter 4) an apparently paradoxical remark. The Rabbis say that yafah shaah ahat shel teshuvah u-maasim tovim, one hour of repentance and good deeds in olam aa-zeh, this world, is more beautiful than all the life of the world-to-come. However, by the same token, one hour of korat ruah, satisfaction, in olam ha-ba, the world-to-come, is worth more than all the life of this world.~~

Orthodox Judaism in our generation is *hovering at the mouth of* ~~beginning to emerge from~~ its cave. It must never reject that cave entirely. There will and should always be some who will guard that cave and prefer to live in it. God bless them. But, as R. Simeon and R. Eliezer learned 1800 years ago, that cannot hold true ^{for} the entire people of Israel. To insist upon it is to wish, Heaven forbid, destruction upon the Jewish people and particularly the Jewish State. If there are such, then the divine voice commands them: hizru le'ma'aratkhem, return to your caves and do not impose your wish upon the community. As a people we must leave our self-contained caves and risk the great perils - and they are many and tragic - of attempting to live the life of Torah in the wide community, joining the rest of the world in the daily pursuits of all mankind, and endeavoring to be mekadesh shem shamayim ba-rabbim, to sanctify the Name of God in public.

Our God-ordained duty is to bring the bnai medanei assa, ~~the two myrtle twigs of Judaism~~, to the entire world; to offer all Jews and all mankind the sweetness and pleasantness of Torah; to challenge them both to recall the glories that were and prepare for those that yet will be; to inspire teshuvah u-maasim tovim wherever we are; to look confidently towards what destiny is yet to bring us; to acknowledge the ^{Torah and} mitzvot as our most precious and most beloved possessions.

This is the "sanctity" to which Torah bids us to return.