

A-150

"A PREMATURE OBITUARY AND AN IMMATURE RELIGION"

1. Jewish Tradition maintains that sin of Golden Calf, which read in today's portion, is arecurring sin of which most generations to some extent guilty. Important, therefore, to understand it & its causes, see whether germane to this generation's problems.
2. Usually thought of as symbol of Greed. Not true, since its creation volunteered by Isrealite who donated own personal effects for it. If anything, not Greed, but a lopsided scale of values where Gold is given first priority - in our estimation of others, in our hopes and dreams and aspirations and prayers - in other words, in our Religion.
3. What causes this? Torah merely tells us that Israel thought Moses unduly late in coming down Mt. Sinai with Ten Commandments (KI BOSHESH MOSHEH), and so directed Aaron to make for them a god to lead them through wilderness.
4. The comments of our Rabbis are of great interest and extremely pertinent here. Say that rumor spread through camp that MOSHE MEIS - Moses is dead! In our terms: Judaism is done for, has no future, is a thing of the past. In almost the same words, Neitzche had Zarathustra clamor, "The gods are dead", and in almost the same tone modern deviationists from Torah maintain that, for all practical purposes, Judaism "s we've known it throughout ages, is - dead. MOSHE MEIS.
5. What gave cause to these expressions of hopelessness in Judaism, to this death-knell sounded for Torah? Why are people convinced that Orthodoxy cannot survive? The causes are the same as those that gave rise in the desert camp of the Children of Israel that MOSHE MEIS, the ugly premature obituary of Moses.
6. ONE REASON for the birth of this rumor was the fact that Satan had cast a pall of black darkness all about the mountain. Lost was all its primitive beauty, the glory of the Mt. which only short while ago was breath-taking scene of MATAN TORAH...only dark, dimly lit, poorly lighted little Mt. One of reasons people cheerfully sound death-knell Torah is therefore the SOCIAL-ESTHETIC one. The "shul" not bright enough, not as pretty as the gilded Temples. Must have something more attractive,...to glitter and glisten, show our non-Jewish neighbors the beauty of our Temples, what we can accomplish, attract the socially prominent our own people. Religion which not pretty not vital. Too dark, ~~un~~handsome.
7. SECOND REASON a PERSONAL ONE. Satan had projected an image of Moses on his death-bed floating high above the people. i.e. Religion too far above us. Has no relation with us. Torah is irrelevant in modern times. Talks about such impersonal things as Sabbath and Prayer and Love of G-d and Love of Neighbor and Prayer...but doesn't hold solution for my daily problems...it's floating in the stratosphere, we need soemthing to come down to our level. When Torah that high above, that unconnected with our dances and card-parties and social aspirations and business worries, then MOSHE MEIS, it's gone, done for.
8. THIRD REASON is an INTELLECTUAL one. KI BOSHESH, Rabbis said, means BA-SHESH, he's already six hours late...i.e. Ortodox Judaism has "missed the boat", it's outmoded. It's "behind the times", isn't up-to-date with latest intellectual currents, wants to turn the clock backwards.....MOSHE MEIS, if it's not up to date, then it's as good as dead.
9. Imagine chagrin and embarrassment of the hasty obituary writers when Moses reappeared, & they saw him standing there at foot of mountain: out of the darkness, on earth, and on time. And there, by his very presence he answers their questions and belies his reported death:
 - a) as his face shines with KARNEI HA'HOD, he seems to say to them, the outer glitter is nothing, it is the inner light which counts...& if you think Torah not clothed beautifully enough, then your task to do so, to build beautiful, well-lit "shuls", not to build pagan gold-gods.

b) if you think Religion too high, too beyond you, too impersonal.... then try to reach up try to grasp for it, lift yourself up to it, not bring it down to your low level... and second, look closely at that image, and you'll realize that its height and distance is only a foolsh mirage, actually close to you, near to you.... Sabbath is the essence of your relationship with Nature - organic and mute - every oment life,... Prayer is the yearning of you innermost self, which sometimes you don't even know... Kashruth there to teach you to be man, self-controlled and disciplined, not overgrown boy.

c) Finally, don't foolishly think I'm late, Torah "behind times". It is beyond the times, and so can never grow old. With Torah, Time is matter of ~~eternity~~ not calendar, but eternity. Hitch your Religi on to latest intellectual fads, and it is self-destroyed in few years.... *Reform latched self to Ka- Neo-Kantianism; now that is outmoded, so is Reform. It teamed up with 19th century Progressivism,... now both are "behind times". ,.... *Conservatism, particularly i its leftist expression called Reconstructionism, is based exclusively on Dewey and Instrumentalism.... now is slipping into backwash of intellectual history, means it cannot survive, soon completely out of vogue.... ORTHODOXY... or better: Torah Judaism, can absorb all these trends, use them and even strengthen them... but never base itself on them to detriment of Torah self... Torah is "up-to-date" only with G-d, who is above Time, and therefore Torah has eternal validity, not subject to Time's ravaging effects on ideas which are only temporal.

10. When the obituaries are announced, and the people say KUM ASEI LANU ELOHIM, MAKE us a god, let us fashion out a Religion with our own hands, let us bow to our own images, let's get selves a man-made god instead of believeing in G-d-made Man, then it is a danger-sign that a people is on brink of great destruction and strife.

11. Today as then, the Golden Calves will be groind to dust

Today as then, Moses will reappear in the form of a revitalized Torah Judiasm... the hasty ~~and false~~ arguments vs Torah will be seen in all their ludicrous falseness, and with the disintegration of the gods of gold, a grateful Jewry will dutifully return to G-d, away from Immature Religion based in Premature obituaries

May that day come soon, and may G-d willingly reaccept His children - without strife, without plague, but with love and with blessing.

- and g-d-willing it will. For already we have begun to witness the first signs of a serious & sincere return. from the gilded gods to the g-d of Torah; ~~earth~~ already we've seen Orthodoxy presented in Beauty - inner & outer; we have seen people understand it in their most personal aspects life; we have seen those closest to contemporary scient- & philos. thought remain loyal to Torah.