



*arche  
non-arche*

Dear Uzi:

I just returned from my Israel-Prague trip and haven't yet had time to unpack and go through my accumulated mail and calls, but I did want to respond to your somewhat anguished query about my interviews with Yom Hashishi and Makor Rishon.

I did not see the printed results of the interviews, but--yes--I did and do feel that Reform has no future. I do not say this with any degree of satisfaction or triumphalism, certainly not with Schadenfreude. Indeed, it is tragic to even contemplate where Reform (and, for that matter, most of the American-Jewish community) is going.

My prediction is based upon a cold (very cold!) analysis of the demographic data and the simple extrapolations, granted, of course, that no major societal or cultural convulsions will occur. Walk into any Reform Temple in this country and keep both your eyes and ears open and you will sense the tragic mass movement, lemming-like, into obscurity. Of course, if you're willing to accept patrilinealism and easy "conversions" and "inclusivism" (which includes non-Jewish spouses officiating at various "rituals" in the "service"), then the future shines bright. But are you willing to make that assumption? Are you ready to have your humanism (in the best sense), your compassion, and Ahavat Yisrael so overwhelm your primary sense data and perception of objective facts that you are ready to concede that they are viable for the next few generations as a Jewish community?

I am not ready to do that, because such transcendental ignorance does not contribute to healthy and effective communal planning. I repeat that we are facing a tragedy, and I am not in the business of assigning blame--there is enough to go around to all concerned. But this is what I foresee, what I fear, what I think must be said if we are to find or create some harbor for the gathering storm. For me to do otherwise is to submit to cultural correctness, which is every bit as dangerous as political correctness...

So, Uzi, that's where I stand.

I liked your Noach treatment, especially because it involves more than the flood story itself. One caveat: the fact that one ought to see things in context, to respect other perspectives, to admit the possibility of error, to be "careful in judgment," etc., should not lead to a revulsion about "judgmentalism." That is a peculiar kind of modernist heresy: since you should not be so free with off-the-top-of-your-head judgments, therefore do not exercise any judgment at all. David Gelernter of Yale has recently written about that with considerable insight.

That's all for now. Be well!

Norman Lamm

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