

MARCH 5, 1967

THE LITHUANIAN LUMINARIES
II. R. HAYYIM OF VOLOZHIN

I. INTRODUCTION:

- a. R. ARYEH COHEN, ^{like} RABBI-VOLOZHIN, WAS VISITING HOME WEALTHY R. ISAAC. NOT SOCIAL. RATHER, NO ONE ELSE TOWN HAD "SHAS", whereas REBECCA, WIFE R. ISAAC, BROUGHT HIM ONE AS PART DOWRY. R. ISAAC PLEADS W R. ARYEH (Shaagat Aryeh) TO GO HOME -- WIFE GOING INTO LABOR, ASHAMED CRY OUT.... THIS WAS 2ND NIGHT SHAVUOT 1749
 RABBI: DON'T WORRY : IT WILL BE A GOOD CHILD" --- R. HAYYIM VLOZHINER!!
- b. J WORLD THEN -- uncertainty & instability: b. 100 yrs after Chmelnicki; same day Graf Pototzki killed; 80 years after Sabbatian heresy; 14 yrs after "revelation" BESHT; midst bitter polemic w Hasidism.

II. BIOGRAPHICAL:

- a. "Wealthy" family
- b. Student R. Raphael Hamburger, R. Aryeh Cohen. All of Talmud & Commntries by age 22. Then: DISCIPLE GAON OF VILNA
- c. First Rabbinic position: WILKOMIR -- no salary, woolen factory. Competitors angry, seek trip him up - AV HARACHAMIM-LUACH... So, after 1 yr., leaves for VOLOZHIN. Later used to warn students...
- d. VOLOZHIN: small town, but RH paternal, gaining reputation. also reveals G-type brilliance. STORY - RH disqualifies man applying TZDKAH bec he possesses 200 guilden, & Sh.A. MISHNAH: poor=less 200. Man furious: who cares Mshnah, where in Torah 200?? RH: 200 = 199!!
- e. SO--INSIGHT. Shortly after death G., 1797, story DER KRIEMER -- Sephardi-- Govt spy contrabrand... ALL LITHUANIA: 10/2/18 9:38 PM
- f. PRIMARY ACHV'T: THE YESHIVAH (after hs death called Began w 10 students: HE SUPPORTED OWN POCKET (will-t-do) THEN: OPEN LETTER about 1802. (told: wife son jewelry support)
- g. RELATIONSHIP GAON: sons G & students: RH LEADING DISCIPLE But not usual manner. Rather: 3-4 times a yr., stay 2-3 months...
- h. RH's REVERENCE FOR GAON (as recorded by R. Isaac, son of RH):

Once Father prepared to travel to the Gaon. I said to Father, "I too want to journey to the Rabbi." Father was overwhelmed, and said whilst trembling, "You too want to travel to the Rabbi?" I too became frightened, but nevertheless I kept to my wish and stated, "Yes, I wish to do so." Father hesitated, but finally he agreed, and we went off. As we were on our way, I noticed Father's face, and behold he turned pale because of fear and trembling. As the wagon drew closer to Vilna, Father's face became even more pale. By the time we came to Vilna, it was difficult to recognize him. Again he turned to me and inquired, trembling, "You too want to go to the Rabbi?" I gathered myself together and said, "Yes." As we were standing at the door of the chamber of the Gaon, his knees actually quaked out of awe for his teacher...and once more he inquired of me, "You too want to go in?"...Thus did we enter the chamber of the Gaon.

- i. TRUE, BRILLIANCE G OVERSHADOWED RH. BUT 1921, R.KOOK (100th Yahrzeit RH): RH "REVEALED" THE GAON..... both practically & theoretically.... SO NOT TRUE (Louis Ginzberg): G=LAST GREAT THEOLOGIAN RABBAN JSM
- j. SHARED MANY CHARACTERISTICS w G: ASCETIC BENT; dedication TRUTH & refusal bow AUTHORITY IN INTELECTION: THANKS G-D THAT:

that men's opinions are not identical, and "both these and these are the words of the living God," provided that He direct our hearts to render a decision that accords with the truth of Torah, and He, blessed be He, for the sake of His seal of truth, may He open our eyes to find the way of truth in the Torah which is called Truth.³¹

R. Hayyim acted on his own decisions, and considered his opinions sufficient basis

for practical action, as if they were rendered by the Rishonim in immediate post-Talmudic times.³³ "It is forbidden for a

student to accept his teacher's words if he finds them deficient, for at times the truth is with the student."³⁴

When, in the interests of objective truth, we disagree with a teacher or with famous authors, we are engaging in a

"holy war."³⁵ "One ought not have any personal regard for any man (i.e., submission to authority), but only love the truth...on condition [that we sit] in the dust of their feet, i.e., with humility and modesty."³⁶ It is this

intellectual integrity and respect for the truth as he saw it that characterized R. Hayyim's own religious thought and the methodology and educational philosophy which he intro-

duced into the Yeshivah of Volozhin.

(STRY) ANOTHER MINOR CHARACTERISTIC SHARED w GAON: DISTRUST MEDICINE & DOCTORS! Once when sick- family prevails: old Christian MD. RH: You know, I don't believe medicines.. MD: effective only if believe in them as believe in Jesus. RH: THAT'S JUST THE POINT....

- k. CHARACTER: Marvelous, warm, kind -- "GOLDEN HEART". R. ISAAC: purpose life -- to do good to others

ישראל בן ישראל

1. MAJOR-WORKS:

- *RESPONSA -- only few, reveal great brilliance, method of G (Elihu Gin)
 *NEFESH HA-CHAYYIM.... 1st ed: 1824 (3 yrs after death); 7 eds in 50 years; ethico-Kabbalistic - pithy classical Rabbinic Jsm
 *why so little? -- all rest burnt great fire destroyed Volozhin (1815)

In a letter to his grandson, he characteristically offers this advice:

Never allow any enmity towards another person to enter your heart, and certainly never answer another person with impatience. For by means of tolerance a man can attain far more than by all the harshness in the world. In general, be acceptable to people; yet do not engage excessively in idle conversation with any individual. Always be the first to extend greetings, and respond calmly. Never be haughty towards another man in any matter, for when a man's heart grows proud, he is considered an abomination...

3 areas: 1. philosophy, 2. ethics, 3. mysticism

III. THE YESHIVAH; EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY:

- a. Lithuania not only poor, but also wide ignorance.
Influence of Gaon -- status of scholarship but not actually learning

- b. Founding Yeshv Vol in 1802 - regarded curiosity. Thus,

R. Joseph of Krynki, who in his younger days was one of the first students of R. Hayyim and remembered vividly the founding of the Yeshivah, writes, in his old age, as follows:

...Before the House of the Lord was established by the Angel of the Lord, our holy Rabbi,¹²⁰ the world was desolate, actually void and formless, for even the name yeshivah was as yet unknown in the world, or what it is all about and what one does there. The idea of the public study of the Torah was likewise unknown, for the world was desolate of Torah, and even the books of the Talmud were completely unavailable except to the chosen few, the famous rich. Even in the synagogues [batei ha-midrash] of the large towns a complete set of the Talmud could not be found, for there was no need of it since hardly anyone was engaged in [the study of Torah]. During the first year that the House of the Lord was founded in Volozhin, I saw many merchants who went out of their way in order to pass by Volozhin, to see what a Yeshivah is all about and what one does there... And when they saw that several tens of great Torah scholars were sitting and studying all night with remarkable assiduousness, they wondered and marveled at this very much.¹²¹

- c. Final ach'v't- no less than historic. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
For one century - greatest Yesh world, spawned dozens others
- d. RH critique private enterpriuse- academic individualism of teachers
- e. VOL YESHV: a FORMAL school; not just LOCAL (1st such 150 years);
SIZE: RH 50-100/R.ISAAC 200/NETZIV 250 offcly, 400 unoffcly
- f. RH CONSIDERED HIMSELF PRIMARILY: EDUCATOR: למדן ומוסרן
 His form of educ - complete, not just unrelated information
Although no formal MUSAR studies.. strived for it thru Torah
studies aiming at inculcation of MIDOT TOVDOT. Are very imp
in school. STORY teach ch Hebrew, 2 yrs know only 3 words: BVAKASHAH,
TODAH, SLICAH. So send Israel school. 2 yrs later - know
all Hebrew -- except 3 words: BVAKSHA, TODAH, SLICAH
- g. EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY:
1. METHODOLOGY GAON: למדן ומוסרן or למדן ומוסרן; aim at למדן
 strive only for למדן; intellectual masochism re: למדן.
 2. NO AUTODIDACTISM: Hearing over Seeing; CHAVRUTA system
(למדן ומוסרן - חכמה ומוסר)
 3. TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP: warmth & humility -- intelt honesty:
למדן ומוסרן - חכמה ומוסר (so: J.B.)
 4. HIGH STANDARDS -- admission not open -- no refuge for embittered
 5. GREATEST PRINCIPLE: למדן, thus: למדן ומוסרן
 SO: למדן. INSTITUTED MISHMAR...himself on Sabbath eves...
 6. DIGNITY OF SCHOLAR: now למדן - חכמה, no longer למדן
 thus: stipends, no more
YET: no haughtiness; aristocracy w-o arrogance, snobism
- NO WONDER BIALIK! למדן ומוסרן - חכמה ומוסר

IV. MITNAGDISM AND THEOLOGY:

- a. NEVER SIGNED BAN (so: USED G's INDEPENDENCE AGAINST HIM!)
 not refer Has'm as חכמה; only למדן ומוסרן
- b. RH rejected both extremes. Accepted Has'c students in Yesh-
- c. TANYA as first Has'c gesture reconciliation; NH as RH response.
Both looked upon w suspicion by extremists (STORY: YOU BEAT UP MY FATHER)
- d. MOST ANNOYING to RH: למדן ומוסרן & למדן ומוסרן
Why? Aren't they trivia? Ans: encompass fundamentals
- e. LATE PRAYING.
Has: Besht - dawn. R. Levi Ytzhk Brdchver, R. Michel Zlotchov; P'schysche
reasons: KAVANH vs KEVA. KAVANAH fr w-i, can't regulate....
RH: eruption of pneumatic, sumberge normative. Records Has'm
who thought forbidden (!) pray Minchah till stars out!
So, KAVANAH & DEVEKUT overwhelm actual MITZVAH. If necessary,
ignore ZEMAN i-o acheieve KAVANAH. BUT: LEADS t ABSURDITY:
eat MATZAH w KAVNAH on Rosh HSHNA; SHDAFR-PESACH; LULAV-YK
- f. MEDITATION UNCLEAN PLACES.
Has. Immanentism -- if so, sanctity cosmos uniformly. Thfr.....
RH. Halakhah NOT uniform; pluralistic. But isn't God uniformly
present universe? So: למדן ומוסרן -- HIS SIDE=beyond
human contemplation, whereas למדן ומוסרן
RESULT (for us too): SEAL OFF PRACTICE OF HALAKHAH fr THEOLOGY

- g. Despite opposition Has'm, his critique: MODERATE, manner: URBANE
Contrast GAON- couldn't denounce OFTEN ENOUGH (STORY: WISE-ofn, not enog)

V. TORAH.

- a. His GREATEST THEME --PART IV of NH, its climax
- b. Mishnah: אשר דבר דבר --rcvd most radical formuln by RH
- c. for RH: T=mystically, aspect GD HIMSELF! Existed before Gd's revelation in Creation... T=chief value existence; its realiz'n = purpose existence; and continued existence cosmos depend IT....
- d. Thus, HASM: TT every day; RH = all day
- e. T vs MTZVOT: debate from days R. Akiva & R. Tarphon thru M.A. HasM: Naturalized T as part all M; RH: P. EXAM B W JAHNIAH
RH: TT dual function - teach do M, & itself an M
Torah is whole, of which M=parts; they derive KDUSHAH fr T ...
- f. T & P: HasM: P over T. RH: T. ask: מהו דבר דבר - מהו דבר דבר?
Ans: before Sinai (אשר דבר דבר). Now: TORAH
- g. MOTIVATION, TL: 3 definitions: *FUNCTIONAL - אשר דבר דבר
*DEVOTIONAL - sake g-d/Mmnds: love Gd/HasM: devekut-ecstasy
*RH: COGNITIVE - אשר דבר דבר (follows fr T over Mtzvot);
also includes Functional; more than intllctual pastime: אשר דבר דבר
So: for sake divine ~~being~~ quality Torah, to which COGNITIVE=ONLY KEY
- h. WRONG MOTIVATION, T-SH-L: HASM - strongly opposed. RMM Lubavitch-
the foundation Has'm. Thus, MUST have experience while study'g
RH: w Talmud, opposed disputations. BUT: NOT DISCOURAGE IT
if not yet attain proper motive: אשר דבר דבר. REASON: VALUE IT.....

i. So, in NH:

Scripture has said, "It [Torah] is a tree of life to those who take hold of it."⁷⁹ Let man therefore establish in his heart and know in his mind that if he were drowning in a mighty river and saw before him a strong tree, certainly he would make every effort to take hold of and cling to it with all his strength, not letting go of it even for a moment. Since his life hangs only on this, who would be so foolish as not to understand that if he were lazy even for a moment and loosened his hold that he would drown immediately. So is the Holy Torah called a "Tree of Life," for only during the time that a man is seized with the love of it, and engages and meditates in it regularly, does he live a true higher life, and is bound up and attached, as it were,

to the Life of the Worlds, blessed be His Name, for the Holy One blessed be He and His Torah are one. And if, Heaven forfend, he rejects his study and abandons its regular pursuit, in order to engage in the follies and pleasures of the world, he is removed and cut off from the higher life and drowns in the evil waters.⁸⁰

VI. CONCLUSION:

- a. What RH give to World, posterity?
- b. Founded great Yeshivah, Mother all others 19-20 centuries;
Thus = Fpunding Father all Yeshivot
- c. As educator not only built & administered schools, but also
created revolution in philosophy J education
- d. A Lithuanian Mitnaged, disciple Gaon, who yet rose to respond
to conciliatory gestures Has'm, ushered in irenic era
- e. Brilliant theologian, philoospher Halakhah, who used Has'm
as foil to propose broad & profound exposition classical Rabbinc Jsm
- f. Above all - value of Torah & its COSMIC DIMENSIONS
- g. Left FAMILY active J history. Son, R.ISAAC= successor.
Next week: NETZIV, others, R.HAYYIM BRISKER --
and Soloveitchiks today: נדב א'2
- h. On death-bed, 1821 (age 72) -- 2 requests: YESHVAH, NH.
So: perfect blending 2 elements -- practical & academic;
מעשה עין אלקים ע"ה

HE WAS A MAN WHO REPRESENTED THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS