

2000/09/23

INSTALLATION OF RABBI AR BERMAN AT THE JEWISH CENTER—September 23, 2000

(Note: *backslanted* denotes what I prepared but failed to deliver;
Brackets—what I added after delivery of the talk)

I: This= my 3rd installation Rabbi TJC: a professional "אינסטלצור" ... [Little did I imagine, when I first mounted this pulpit as the new Associate Rabbi, that 42 years later I would be installing my third successor] I installed my immediate successor, the late and unforgettable Rabbi Isaac Bernstein; no one seems to remember if Rabbi J.J. Schacter was officially installed—probably not; and now I am here to install Rabbi Ari Berman as the new Rabbi of TJC. Of the 3, I knew him longest at time of install'n—Gave him סמיכה, appointed him to teach Talmud at YU, mentored him--& learned from him. And I cherish him.

Inducting new Rabbi gives me oppty to discuss **Relations R-C**:

First, togthr they must effect delicate balance Trad/Change. TJC @ 2000 ≠ TJC yr foundd or '58 when I came here or '76 when I left. Life changes, society changes, and our reaction to them must change. But it must not be change for the sake of change; the change must come w-o flippancy/arbitrariness. Respect TJC trads-- w-o dead hand past acting as a brake on the present and the future [stifling our creativity and imagination]... (No interpret these remarks re: TOP HATS... too delict/explosv topic...)

R—must give hs full attention/loylty to his ppl. Only afterwardas must he turn to the larger concerns of the A-J commty. And **CONG**: Allow your R. to expand his horizons; [let him use this pulpit as a bully pulpit to benefit all Amer & world Jewry]. And: don't overburdn R w trivia. Tm t learn; w-o it → MC, not רב. You & your children will be the beneficiaries

Tread dangr's ground: CRITICISM. I tell yng Rbbs: No mattr hw much y resent... aggrvtg.. dstrsg... Ppl will crtzy you: you greeted Mr. And not Mr.B. The length שמו"ע/whn Tallis ovr head/hw much gv in to femnst demands: either y hv no courage to resist or you're a sexist.... Listen, bt don't let it disturb pc-mnd. These=good/intllgt/often accomplshd ppl, mean well; forgive thm. Rabbis just too temptg target; tk it as sign of yr imprtn'ce t them. Love them, & they'll love y in return--& they'll still continue to...!

That's what I tell the Rabbis. But to **Cong**: f y, there's no excuse!! Lif is hard enough f the R. to make him bear the additional burden of making sport of him by excessive criticism/לה"ר.

How R-C Relate: Shalom's interp basaed on (נצי"ב) עזר כנגדו... dialectic is higher stage of rel'p, both grow — Solomon: נאמנים פצעי אזהב

Both R & Cong must know: Can't please everybody. Demands are contradictory, requirements too diverse—makes it impossbl to please everybody. Only place Tanach please all—לעשות כרצון איש ואיש -- and he was either רשע or טיפש...

Rabbi's sphere of service => cong/commty/all Isr. Rabbi--respect/consult shul elders, f they gv tm, work f synag; bfriend wlthy & powerful, f thy support shul so others can benefit; affectn & דרך ארץ f Jwshly lmd even if nt \$/pwr. **BUT REMMBR**: Also Rbbi of fin'y poor, lonely strangrs, sp'y derelict. **מהרש"ל בשם מהר"ם: armless mn as ש"ץ? Is it same as כהן who can't bless if מום בעל, or diff? Ans: OK, bec: מהרש"ל להשתמש בכלים שבורים. So function R=those w poor hearts/ shallow devotion/doubt-fild minds/impatient /even curt...

Kapishnitzer: לא ת"ח or צדקה, חסד, but none of these....

אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש שבתי בבית ה' כל ימי חיי לחזות בנעם ה' ולבקר בהיכלו

Q: Not אמת אחת? Also: if כל ימי חיי ה' שבת בבית ה' why only visit: ולבקר בהיכלו?

A: בוקר=לבקר... SO: ביקור חולים... Bring light & joy, confidence & hope... t yr ppl...

Shine the light of your intellect & love into every nook & cranny of their homes & Hearts; temper their anxieties & lift deprssn. BUT ALSO—elevate their minds/understg

Function R also=theological teacher: If M-O sometimes seems to be confused, disheartening, it is bec we who presume to be leaders suffer from a fundamental disease-- our own self-doubt, an inner failure of philosophic nerve. We have been bullied into doubting our own שיטה, the one on which we hv built our personl/prof'l lives. When one/ another of sides tht surround us shouts loud /long enough, we begin t wonder if maybe, maybe we wrong all along, tht others=right, we=in error. & there's nothing mr deadly thn tht kind pernicious self-doubt. It kills person's initiative/dignity/&, finally, his integrity.

This, then, =tm f for us t reaffirm our faith in our own mst fundamental principles, & our confidence in correctness of our convictions. We must assert our convictions in face those who treat Hal as mere option, & those who use it as tool to impose on others; those who treat it lightly/those who delight in making it ever heavier & more difficult to practice in joy. Assailed by Right/Left, we must stand up with strength, with both the courage of our convictions and the conviction of our courage.

There is a time for self-questioning, even for a degree of self-doubt. [It is a way of arriving at objectiv truth]. But now is not such a time. The kind of *Yiddishkeit* we stand for must be reasserted when it is assaulted. This is what TJC has stood for all these years and we must not fail it in the future.

Letter ע in word שמע of ישראל =writ large, עין רבתי. Why so? R. S.R.Hirsch explains: it is large i-o not to be mistaken for an א, f or the word שמא means "maybe," "perhaps"; is sign of self-doubt/hesitation/unsureness. Such שמא=very opposite of שמע, which connotes a commanding certainty and confident rightness.

We are attacked f being true t Torah heritge, supposedly marking us as Neanderthals and as benighted advocates of antidemoc'c & clerical intolerance. We are all of us presumed by our critics to the Left of us t identify w the political Shas. And those to the Right fault us for failing t consult the לית'ע ט"ש. We=assailed & disqualified f not being authentically Orth bec we do not obsequiously follow line of orgs which lay claim t b sole guardian of the Abslt Truth of Sinai t exclusion of non-members/ non-sympathzrs; or bec we blv in TuM; or bec we affirm tht St-Isr=no exception t princpl tht everything this world=brought about by השגחה פרטית; or f our insistence tht כלל ישראל includes those who do nt nec'y agree w us on evry count. Bt n matt'r where attacks come fr, we mst hv strngth/courg t proclaim שמע f our ideals--שמע & not, Hvn frbd, שמא.

Kenneth Clark concluded hs massv study, *Civiliz'n*, by stating, "It=lack of confidnc, > thn anything else, tht kills a civiliz'n." If wht we hv cherishd as our interp'n of our "civiliz'n," is t thrive/flourish, then we must rid ourselves of our שמא stance and return to a firm and self-respecting שמע attitude.

The halakhic test fr questionbly kosher spine of animal, t determine if חוט השדרה is כשר *treifa*=t hold spine at base & see if it wavers. If leans t 1 side/othe=טריף; if erect=*kasher*. That is also test of effectv rabb'c ldp: a רב t b כשר must have backbone/חוט השדרה that doesn't crumble/bend ovr submissively. & tod, in this respect, Rabbi must be כשר גלאט....

That, my dear RAB, is what we expect of your ideological leadership.

We enter **season of beginnings**: RH; עיני ה' אלהיך בה מראשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה; soon thereafter, read בראשית, and now install RB f official בראשית of his tenure. So... תיקוני זוהר. May you and your new Rabbi make great music together. May the harsh beat of percussion instruments be few, and the great majority of the song be lilting and elevating, sweet music adorning all our lives. Great music comprehends many instruments, different voices—but they all blend together. The symphony orchestra of TJC now inducts a new conductor—and a great future for all of us.

AB worthy of post'n h occupies: ת"ח, fr fam YU/comm ldrs/scholshp; AB=בעל מדות I testify fr personal knowldg: not a shred of arroganc/not an ounce of envy/not a microgram of duplicity; he=carng/gentle /concernd/courteous; Role Model; is tchr בחסד עליון & nw officially ready to b calld out of classroom at YU t grt com ldp at the helm of TJC.

[I conclude w an earlier case of a man summoned from tending his local, restricted flock to grander vision and broader horizons: **Amos--Shepherd→Prophet**: ויקחני ה' מאחרי הצאן. ויאמר אלי ה' לך הנבא אל עמי ישראל.

So, Rabbi Ari Berman, we welcome you as you go from the shepherd of your flock in your classroom to a much more demanding calling: arise, and prophecy in the name of God to your people Israel.