

RAV KOOK

3rd Lecture: "Religion and Philosophy"

I. Unity: General

A. Last week showed how his "ahavat Yisrael" and his positive orientation even to sinners who were nationalistic, derived from his doctrine of Yihud -- thus: God, Torah, and Israel are One, hence the total unity can be approached and entered into via any one of the three. All branches J. people form (as K. says in his "Orot") a Komah Shelemah.

B. Theme of Yihud is key to most of his thinking.

Not just that God is One -- that is common all Judaism, all monotheistic religion.

But -- that the Unity of God suffuses all of life, all existence; that belief in Ha-Shem Ehad helps us overcome all divisions and splits in world, fragmentary nature of our existence; and ultimately -- leads to integration of our lives.

C. Own Personality

(A) Last week: his concept of War and Peace -- War ephemeral, Peace enduring. Now War = disunity, Peace = Unity (shalom-shalem). (aside: he once told Lord Storres that in Hebrew same letters form MOSHEL and SHALOM to show that task government is to institute peace!)

Own personality showed was shalem -- a unified and integrated character.

Thus, normally split Halakhah/Agadah.

But: R. Zevin -- K. only "gadol" our generation uniformly master of Halakhah and Agadah. Ask him question in J. law -- and overflows with encyclopedic knowledge, analytic insights, and: philosophic implications, insights from world of vision and poetry, thought and mysticism.

Combined both as one: Halakhah body, Agadah soul.

So: he himself was Halakhah: disciplined thinker, defender of Judaism, showed no weakness to his enemies and opponents. And Agadah: man of poetry and vision, as well as generous soul and boundless love for others. Example: K said: every mitzvah and Halakhah has a special and distinctive musical quality, an identifiable note which the observant Jew hears -- and delights in. Imagine joy when all orchestrated together. K. had perfect integration of the rational and the mystic.

* READ: AUX. TEXT P. 14, #H-5

here IV
II. The Sacred and the Profane

A. Greatest Unity -- between sacred and profane.

* READ: AUX. TEXT P. 13, # H-1

Here his primary reference is to Torah-spirit vis-a-vis practical upbuilding Palestine.

B. But also includes: Sacred and Profane Studies -- i.e. Torah and secular studies.

K. believed in what called (Y.U.) "Synthesis"

But -- many interpretations Synthesis. For K., not mean merely that one person should study both disciplines and keep them apart, but should study secular studies as a Torah-man and thus sanctify the secular, raising all to a sacred unity.

Thus, S.R. Hirsch (1808-1888 vs. K:1865-1935): Torah im Derekh Eretz. But K. would have said: Torah ve'derekh Eretz (story: strawberries and milk, with milk -- woman and child, with child).

K: the 2 must confront, come to grips with each other.

Saw them in terms Kodesh and Hol.

Hence: Function Kodesh is to transform all else to Kodesh; Function hol is to seek its own transformation

Thus -- and this is stated explicitly by K. though Buber mentions it in own name -- there is no Hol muhalut -- only: the Holy and the Not-Yet-Holy.

Shelah on Havdalah: "bein Kodesh la-hol" and "bein Yisrael la-amim".

Hence to study science or history means to digest it within a Kodesh-oriented personality, or -- to use K's words -- to perceive the profane from point of view of the sacred.

Thus, by opening my heart and mind to all kinds of knowledge, all knowledge becomes one within me

They do not merely coexist, but coalesce. Alchemy. Not only in one person -- but unified personality.

* READ AUX. TEXT P. 14, # H-3

Is dangerous, but great opportunities. K. at dedication of Hebrew University: U-fahad ve'rahav levavekh...

III. Science and Religion

A. A most important instance of his religious philosophy of unity -- his views on Science and Religion. (Story: J. astronaut: "ich gei ORBITTEN leben oif dein KEPSELLE...")

Here too -- refused to see conflict between true Religion and valid findings of Science. Wanted to absorb truths of science into unity with Torah

* READ AUX. TEXT, P.15 # I-1

B. for some of K's discussion on problems Science and Religion, especially his important note on "Maaseh Bereshit" ---

* READ AUX. TEXT PP15-17, # I-2

(see marginal comments to text)

IV. Mysticism and Unity (story: (1533/157): monism-pluralism - Greek polante, vitarium. Neo-Platonic monism.

A. Essentially his Monism not philosophic but mystical Mysticism -- esp. Kabbalah -- composed of 2 elements: the experience and the content, (Rudolf Otto: Heilsinteresse vs. Wissenschaft) And both -- Yihud

The Mystic Experience: a tremendous, awesome, all-embracing oneness. Thus too the current halucogenic drugs, as mescaline, lead to state of exaltation-intoxication in which feeling of oneness is pervasive (but content missing -- like being in love w-o having a beloved).

Kabbalistic Doctrine: world--as it were--a dream of God; meaningless and impossible without Him. He is immanent throughout it, but also transcends it. World of matter as we now know it is fragmented and atomized because of separation from God -- hence is: alma de'peruda. God in innermost self: alma de'yihuda. The devekuth of man in God means overcoming perud, achieving yihud.

Agadah: Enoch a cobbler, and with every stitch of awe serving together leather and soul, would join together God and His Shekhinah. "Kudsha Berikh Hu" -- God in His Transcendence, and "Shekhinah" -- God in His Immanence.

This joining or Yihud of K.B.H. and Shekhinah, restoration of Divine Unity in eyes of man, is achieved through direction of our thoughts and dedication of our deeds "le'shem yihud K.B.H. U-Shekhintei." Hasidic Zaddik: means to believe in the reality of God in all thought, words things: God is the vital principle immanent in it. Therefore by directing one's self to the spark of divinity within all that exists (Shekhinah), and recognizing it as God, we "unite" it with K.B.H. Therefore, your eating, drinking, talking, working, business -- in everything: direct thoughts to what is good, lovely, and beautiful in it; redeem it, elevate it, be joyous in it. If you work -- your tools have Spark and therefore work in love and devotion; your neighbors; even the ugly and the mean have a spark worth redeeming. Thus -- Unification of all world in God. (even a fly, not only a man -- Hasidic innovation)

B. Example of K's mystical poetry on Unity Theme.

* READ AUX. TEXT P. 14 # H2

Note mention of "lights" (mystic illumination); science; and panentheism (world part of G-d). (For more information on K's development of the "Unity Theme" refer to Aux. Text P. 14, # H4; and my article on "The Unity Theme and its Implication for Moderns" in TRAD. Fall, 1961) → (8)

V. The End

A. Sickness slowly crept upon him. Cancer. As got worse, had to be forced to curtail his activities. But mental powers never waned. On contrary...

B. At one point developed high fevers, body weakened and wracked with pain. Famous doctor from Paris, Dr. Ben-Sod, 3 hrs. with Rav, emerges shaken, uttering: "ve'hineh ha-sneh bo'er ba-esh, ve'ha-sneh eino ukal"

C. Visitor tells him of founding of "Mishmeret Shabbat" organization. K: if organize in Tel Aviv, I'll speak. Family objects. K: "Hillul Shabbat" causes me suffering than my physical pains. And if I can help increase "Shemirat Shabbat" it will help me more than all medicines.

Actually attends. Pale and worn. Immensely enthusiastic, loving audience.

Before speech: awarded "Honorary Citizen" of Tel Aviv. His last speech

D. Visitors curtailed as he's confined. Yet when an American tourist came, was told by attendant he's too sick, R.K. put on bathrobe, merged from room, shook hands with him and his wife, and said "if a Jew comes to Holy Land from America, we have to give him greeting of Ahalom." That couple -- our own Mr. and Mrs. Greenblatt.

E. Attended by famed Dr. Zondek. Story (apocryphal?) K to Z: "am glad we have Jews who are great. Now we need great Jews."

F. On Rosh Hodesh Ellul, 1935, Zondek: hopeless, only another day or two. When report known, all Jerusalem turns out to pray. Roads to Kotel Maaravi as crowded as an Erev Yom Kippur. Synagogues -- Tehillim round the clock.

G. 2nd Ellul -- calls in beloved son, R. Zvi Yehudah, asks him to pay all his debts, and to ask all his friends thank God on his behalf that He's been given so many wonderful years.

Instructs son, also R. David Cohen (the "Nazir") who had just come in with proofs or "Orot", not to give him any special titles, in books or tombstone; only - Ha-Rav and Ha-Kohen.

H. Ellul 3, 1935 -- year in which dark, angry storm clouds began to descend upon world Jewry, and as if to spare him that agony of holocaust, God mercifully allowed his sun to set and take his beloved soul to Him. Doctors see and coming, allow Rabbis and students into sick room. They enter praying ana be'koah. K. turns from facing wall to look at them. In the unnatural brightness of his appearance they detect that his moment of departure is at hand.

They all hold hands, say Shema. K. follows them, whispering Shema... Ehad.

And with that -- Rav Kook (zekhev tzaddik li'verakhah) breathed his last breath, ve'yatzetah nishmato be'taharah.

Rabbis, weeping, recited blessing of Dayan ha-Emet. And a nation was plunged into deep mourning for a father, a visionary, a guide, a giant of the spirit, the pride of a generation, who left his people orphaned in order to take his place as a bright and luminous star in the firmament of the immortal great of the people of Israel.