

A-223

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1. Our very presence here this evening, the solemnity of this hour and the sense of serious dedication which pervades and sweetens the atmosphere of our synagogue ~~thus~~ tonight, points something within us that we seldom suspect existed. It indicates a tremendous potential for the good, the holy, the decent and the courageous that lies dormant in our hearts all year but which comes to the fore in response to the mystic challenge of Kol Nidre. Our presence, our prayer, our upward glance, our silent cries and our unseen tears, these are an affirmation of the great principle of Judaism that Man is more than a two-legged beast, that he has a soul, that he was created in the Image of G-d, that there is something inherently good and worthwhile and decent and honorable and G-dly within each of us.
2. This thought came to mind when I read a recent press report of one of the many archeological expeditions carried out in the State of Israel. An expedition had discovered the ruins of an ancient settlement which was, according to all estimates, some 2,000 years old. Deep down in one of the underground caves, the archeologists had found a large amount of wheat evidently stored away by the original settlers. Because of the right conditions of humidity and temperature, the wheat had remained preserved intact for these past 2000 years. But the scientists were extremely skeptical as to whether any life was left in the kernels of wheat - that was too much to expect. And so, to experiment, they planted the kernels - and by harvest time they were amazed to find a bumper-crop! Buried in the depths of the earth for 20 centuries - and enough life left to start all over again!
3. So it is with man - all year we may resemble a spiritual ruins, but on Yom Kippur we affirm that there is a kernel of Life left someplace deep within us, and in response to the call of Torah, we seek to retrieve that kernel, that hidden goodness and concealed G-dliness, and bring it to full bloom and fruition again.
4. Indeed, has not modern Israel proven that there is a certain element in the Jewish soul whose existence we never ~~even~~ suspected for some 2000 years? Since our exile in the year 70, we have been Ghetto Jews - persecuted, stepped upon, humiliated, taunted, killed and maimed. Rarely in all these dark centuries did we show any resistance. We walked to our martyr-graves without a word of protest, without a shadow of resistance. "Cowards" the world called us. We were supposedly a weakling people, congenitally unheroic and uncourageous, who knew not how to defend themselves. But now our Israeli brothers and sisters have proved that heroism and courage and pride do exist in the Jewish soul, that they have been there all these generations - dormant perhaps, but not dead. And in our days those kernels of bravery have been excavated and brought up out of the subterranean depths of the Jewish personality, and have begun to live - and what a bumper-crop they have produced! Every brave young Israeli who risks his life at some lonely border outpost, and with shoulders thrown back and head held high answers the hypocrisy of the Big Powers with an affirmation of Jewish morality and ethics and will-to-live and an iron determination to survive, every one of them is a proud stalk ~~of~~ grown from those kernels of courage that remained dormant for generations.
5. And if that is true of courage and heroism, then it is even more true of goodness and G-dliness and holiness and Jewishness. We may not see it. We may not suspect its existence. We may seem a spiritual shambles and resemble a religious ruins. But within each of us there is kernel of G-dliness that is waiting to be planted and reaped.
6. We have just recited, in the sentence prior to the Kol Nidre, the words, ANU MATIRIN LE'HIS* PAIEL IM HA'AVARYANIM, that permission is granted for us to pray with the "sinners". This was composed during the Spanish Inquisition, when many Jews converted to Christianity in order to escape death, but continued to regard themselves as Jews and practice their Judaism in secret. They were called the AVARYANIM, "sinners" or Marranos. In clandestine caves and cellars throughout Spain, where more courageous Jews who had refused to bow to the Cross gathered for Kol Nidre and welcomed these Marranos, these secret-Jews or "sinners" to their ~~mar~~ services, reciting that verse we just did permitting them to pray together with with the Marranos, the AVARYANIM who were Christians openly but Jews within.

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7. Now the fact that we recite that hallowed verse even today tells us that it is of more than just historical interest - it is a philosophy of life which we urgently need to learn in 1956. On this sacred night we declare that so many of us American Jews are AVARYANIM, we are Marranos - but we declare as well that this radically un-Jewish appearance, this semblance of being sinners and evil-doers and apostates is only external and outward, and within we are Jews and shall remain Jews. We stake our lives on the faith that we were created in the Image of G-d, and that we always carry that image with us. Tonight we declare that within the Marrano there is a yearning for prayer, that deep within the shambles some of us have made of our spiritual lives there lies a kernel of G-dliness and Jewishness that is very much alive, that can be dug out and planted, and that if we want to we can reap a harvest of holiness from it.
8. We reject alike the religion that tells us that man is hopelessly lost in original sin, the psychologist who tells us that all of man is an aggressive instinct, and the psychoanalyst who wants us to believe that the whole story of man is one of sexual lust. We reaffirm our belief that despite man's shortcomings, despite his tendency to sin and evil, his aggression and his lust, man's real self and real image is - G-dliness; that deep in the ruins there is a live kernel of goodness; that underneath the Marrano's outer garments of heresy and un-Jewishness, there is something precious Jewish; that the Eternal is frequently internal.
9. Of course, that is not an easy principle to accept, much less to live by. David in his haste called all men liars. Mark Twain said, "all I care to know is that man is a human being; that is enough for me - he can't be any worse." Prof. Whitehead calls us "the incommensurable idiots of the universe." It is not easy to deny those grim estimates after two world wars, a third threatened and a third of our people massacred. Our newspapers give us daily reports of man's meanness, of filth and corruption, and we are bound to take a dim view of human nature. From rotten novels and dirty politics and Kinsey Reports we are faced with the coarseness of man. We Jews more than any others have experienced the brunt of man's cruelty and depravity, so that with the Psalmist we cried out MAH ADAM KI SIZ'KERENU U'VEN ENOSH KI SIF'KEDENU, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" Why does G-d bother with this depraved creature called Man?
10. And yet with the same Psalmist we answer VA'TECHASREIHU ME'AT MEILOHIM, "Thou hast made him little lower than the angels". There is nobility in man. There is worthiness in him. There is dignity in him. There is goodness in him. There is a live kernel deep in the ruins. He has a soul. He is a prayerful being. He is but little lower than the angels. He is worthy of G-d's attention and concern.
11. The SHMA we recite twice a day - is not that an affirmation of our belief that in some deep, ^{+ unexplored} cavern in the undergroun of our souls a kernel is alive and waiting to be planted? We say: V'AHAVTA ES HA'SHEM ELOKECHA B'CHOL L'VAVCHA U'VCHOL NAFSHECHA U'VCHOL MEODECHA - "thou shalt love the Lord thy G-d with all thy heart and soul and might." Jewish thinkers throughout the ages, deeply perplexed by this commandment, have asked: How can you possibly command someone to love? Deeds can be commanded, but not emotions. You may order a man to walk or sit or help or speak, but love is something which comes from within and cannot be forced. How, then, does the Torah command us to love G-d?
12. The criticism would be correct, answers the great Hassidic teacher, the Gerer Rebbe, if the Torah commanded us to love where no love existed before. However, that love for G-d already exists within us - even in the most callous Jewish heart there lies a NEKUDAH, a dot, a kernel of Jewishness, a PINTEELE YID, an atom of the Jew, a Divine spark, an ingrained and deep and abiding love for G-d and for Torah. Frequently however, that kernel or Divine spark or PINTEELE YID is covered up by a hard crust, it is concealed in the shambles of indifference, it is hidden by our material pursuits and selfish desires and ignorance and apathy. The commandment V'AHAVTA ES HASHEM, thou shalt love G-d, means: peel off that crust, remove that curtain of selfishness, dig deep in the ruins of your soul and retrieve that kernel of love for G-d which lies within, expose your real self, the good self, reveal and develop the PINTEELE YID. Man may be an AVARYAN, but G-d is mindful of him, for he is really but little lower than the angels. The PINTEELE YID is mindful of G-d.

13. It is told of Michelangelo that when he was sculpting his famous statue of Moses, a bystander remarked to him, "How wonderful! You take a mere slab of stone and make a Moses out of it!" To which the great artist answered, "You are mistaken. I see Moses already in that stone, and merely chip away the outside, unnecessary pieces." Indeed, the PINTELE YID, the gestalt of Moses, is already in us. Just chip away the stony covering and you will see it. Peel off the crust of ignorance and arrogance and you will find the love of G-d. Dig deep enough and you will come up with the kernel of religious devotion.
14. If there is any one here tonight who is still doubtful of this idea we have been expounding, let me refer you to the reports brought back from Russia by those of my colleagues of the R.C.A. who visited the Iron Curtain countries this summer. Need I review for you the pressures exerted against Judaism in the USSR? Need you be reminded of the reign of terror imposed by the accursed Stalin, YIMACH SHMO VZICHRO? Need I remind you of the decades of persistent Communist indoctrination of young Russian Jews, of the venom and hatred spewed forth against any semblance of Torah, so that a recent visitor to the Great Synagogue in Moscow was told, "Yes, we have young people in our 'shule' - and they are about 45 or 50 years old."? What can we expect of a generation raised on Marx, with the promise of Siberia for those who will not study and believe? Are not the ruins so devastating as to discourage even the most optimistic spiritual archeologist?
15. Yet my colleagues report that in the province of Georgia over 100,000 Jews have defied the Russian regime and to this day remain SHOMREI SHABBOS - observant Jews who teach Torah to their young! And in the very city where the accursed Stalin was born, 3,000 Jews recently risked their lives and the lives of their families by openly and heroically proclaiming that they will not allow the Communist authorities to close down their YESHIVA, their Day School for their children! Who says that Jewishness is gone from the Russian Jewish soul? Who will dare to pronounce the kernel of Jewish wheat dead and fruitless? Who will dare to deny that our modern Marranos desperately want to pray? And one of my colleagues tells me that after he and the other members of the delegation preached Shabbos sermons in the synagogue in Leningrad, a Russian Jew approached them, making sure that no one was observing him. He came up to them and said, IHR AMERIKANER RABBANIM HABEN HEINT MECHALLEL SHABBOS GEVEHN - You American Rabbis desecrated the Sabbath today! They were surprised - and hurt - and asked him why he said that. And he answered, VILE IHR HUT HEINT UNGETZINEN A FIER IN UNZERE HERTZER - because today you kindled a fire in our hearts. Yes, my friends, there is a spark in us that begs to be fanned; there is a kernel in us that begs to be sought after and planted; there is a prayer in us that begs to be offered up; there is a PINTELE YID in us that desperately wants us to remember it and help it grow, and of which we must never, never despair.
16. There is nothing that gives me more hope than the knowledge of that PINTELE, that kernel that can survive the neglect of generations and still sprout and thrive. O how often have we been told that genuine Judaism is dead! How often have Prophets of Doom announced our obituary and written us off the books of the living. But those who have sought to dispose of on the auction block of history have failed to reckon with the hard kernel of Jewishness, with the PINTELE YID. Christianity has tried with fanatic zeal, from the woodpiles of the Inquisition to the latest saccharine missionary tracts dripping with brotherhood and "good will", to make us abandon our faith and jump on the religious bandwagon. Dr. Toynbee calls us a "fossil" of Syriac civilization - a fossil, a dead bone from some extinct dinosaur. This winter a Reform Rabbi got himself a good press when he solemnly predicted the demise of Orthodoxy. To them and to all defamers of the Jewish Tradition, we say in the words of a great wit, "we have read reports of our death and we believe them to be greatly exaggerated." You are not aware of the hardness of the PINTELE YID. You have overlooked the kernel in the ruins. You have underestimated the power of the Jewish soul and its loyalty to Torah. Orthodoxy is thriving today more than ever before - from elementary schools through universities and medical schools, from synagogues through cultural organizations. While you prophecy doom it is developing the PINTELE YID. It is getting the AVARYAN to return to his prayerful self. It has planted the long-lost kernels. Now just you wait and see the harvest that it is going to reap!

17. There are here tonight some dear friends of mine who are fond of me as I am of them. They know what my aims in the Rabbinate are, and they want to spare me as much pain as possible. Out of consideration for me and in order to save me from frustration and disappointment, they say to me, "Rabbi, you can't change human nature. You won't get people to keep the Shabbos, to keep Kosher, to come to shule regularly & be Orthodox, to study Torah. Don't try. Be prepared for failure if you do. Rabbi, you can't change human nature." To those of you who have offered me this advice and counsel, I give my deeply felt thanks for the sincerity of your friendship and the genuineness of your concern. But allow me, I beg of you, to differ. I AM NOT TRYING TO CHANGE HUMAN NATURE. I AM STRIVING, AND ALWAYS WILL STRIVE, TO MAKE PEOPLE'S NATURES MORE HUMAN AND MORE JEWISH. I am not sure that I can agree that "Human Nature" always means orneriness and stubbornness and selfishness and superficiality and stupidity and blindness and profaneness and un-Jewishness. I stake my career and my life on the proposition that there is something decidedly human in Human Nature and something unmistakably Jewish in the Jew. I am not fool enough to think that I am going to convince this entire congregation overnight into becoming fully observant Orthodox Jews. But I know that I can, with the help of G-d, reach a man here and a man there, that in every man, woman and child in this congregation there is a hard kernel of Jewishness, a love for Torah, a prayerful essence, a PINTELLE YID, and that this must, can and shall be brought out. I know that it can be done, because it has been done. I shall therefore not despair of any single person here tonight. You have come for Kol Nidre - that is enough to convince me that you have that kernel, that PINTELLE YID. If I did not believe in that with all my heart and all my soul, I would never be an Orthodox Rabbi. I am convinced in the humanity of human nature when I see the selfless devotion of a mother for her child and the back-breaking sacrifices of a hard-working father for his family. I am convinced of the Jewishness of the Jew when I see professional men drop their work and come to shule once a week and often once or twice a day. I have faith in the indestructible kernel of Jewishness within us when I see harried housewives taking time out to study and read and hear lectures and otherwise inform themselves of Torah. I know that there is a PINTELLE YID when I see wearied and busy businessmen with so much on their minds giving so much time to synagogue and school, attending meeting after meeting and accepting duty after duty in their Jewish endeavors. I face the future with unbounded confidence when I see youngsters of our Junior Congregation, 9 and 10 years old, walk to Kodimoh every Saturday a distance of 2 and more miles each way. With some, this spark of Jewishness is evident and obvious. With others it is hidden and concealed as a diminutive PINTELLE, as a kernel of wheat in some underground ruins. But it is there. And it always will be. THAT is Human Nature. THAT is Jewish character. I do not aim to change it. But I do know that it is worth spending a lifetime trying to develop it.
18. Such a principle could not be overlooked in the Halacha, which is more than Jewish law, but is the philosophy of a G-dly life expressed in legal terms. The Talmud decides that when a court finds that a man must perform a MITZVAH, a required act for the good of his family and the ^{welfare} common good of society, that it may force him to perform that good deed. And the Talmud adds four words: AD SHE'YOMAR ROTZEH ANI - it is not enough that he do what we want of him, he must also express his consent by saying "I am willing". What a strange law! If we need his consent, do we believe we really have it when we have to beat it out of him? "Yes," answers the great Maimonides, for a man may be forced to do a good deed, but when he finally does it and says "I am willing", that is his inner self, his better self speaking. For deep in his heart every Jew has the ingrained desire to do what is good and holy and right. Sometimes a man must be pressured into doing what is right - but that is really what he wants. We may have to dig painfully to reach the kernel - but it is there. We may have to strip away the callous covering, but the yearning for MITZVAH is there. It is the PINTELLE YID within each of us. All of us have the capacity of responding to G-d's call. On Kol Nidre night G-d asks us to do that out of love and not from fear and punishment.

19. It is told of the saintly Hassidic Zaddik, R. Zushya, that he was on his deathbed and weeping. "I am afraid," he told his disciples who surrounded him, "that I shall not be able to answer the charges of the Heavenly Prosecutor on Judgement Day." "Why of all people, Rabbi, you should have the least to fear." "Ah, you do not understand," he answered them, "I am not afraid of being charged with not being as great as Abraham, because I did not have his religious genius. If they will ask me why were you not like Moses, I will say because I was not granted the gift of Prophecy? Why not like Maimonides/- because I did not have his brilliance. But," he continued, "waht O what shall I answer when the Great Prosecutor turns to me and says, "Zushya, why were you not Zushya?"
20. On this Judgement Day we are each of us faced with the same question and the same charge. We must, on this YOM HA'DIN, answer the Prosecutor's charges: why did we not live up to ~~h~~ that within us which is little lower than the angels? Why have we kept the PINTELLE YID concealed in the inner, ~~ost~~ compartments of our hearts? Why have we restrained the love of G-d which burns within us? Why have we kept the TEFILLAH from dominating the AVARYAN? Why have we not been spiritual archeologists, digging into the ruins of our lives and extracting the kernels of religiousness which alone can rebuild us? Why have we not been ourselves, our better selves?
21. As we proceed with our prayers on this holiest night of the year, let us answer with resolutions and not with rationalizations. Let us rededicate ourselves to the faith that we are better than we thought. Let us strive to make ourselves better than we are. Let us raise the kernels from the ruins so that we may be little lower than the angels. Let us cast off the Marrano garments of apostasy and pray with meaningfulness and enthusiasm so that we may be true to ourselves.

And may the G-d Who created us in His image give us and all Israel a year of blessing and peace and greater loyalty to Torah, as we resolve to give loving devotion and attention to the PINTELLE YID within us developing that PINTELLE until each of us becomes that proud son of his people, humble servant of the Almighty, friend of the weak and seeker for goodness which we call A YID - a Jew.

Can include
this, in preparing a 3/2 sum for publication

(fr. Epist. 307 n. 10): John MacMurray: real
moral problem not so much the discovery of the good, as the
discovery that it is the good that the self really wants.
It is that which distinguishes the religious from the un-
religious consciousness. "In the relig. consciousness, the question
is not 'why do men not do what they ought to do?', but
'why do not men do what they want to do?' why do
we persist in refusing to be ourselves & fulfill our
own nature even when we recognize what it is?"

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