

## West Coast UOJCA Conference-12/23/99

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1. **INTROD**-- "The lamb wasn't too good yesterday"/ "Why, wht dd h spk about?"  
I have good news for you *Angelenos*: the temperature in NY today=24...

In 9 yrs since I last here, much hs happnd--לטוב ולרע. **Good news**= Orthy md mch progrss-- O-U prosprd both coasts as its activities→mr focusd & prestige enhanced; Y.U. grown considrbly-- all respts, esp acad improv't, proliferatn of Kollelm/increase numbrs t highest level yt; etc. **Bad news**=polariz'n increasd enorm'y--betw Orthx/nn-Orthx &, mr painfl, w-i Orthy--& even w-I our own M-O itself. Reform bashing of Orthx, militant call t arms against us by **Consrvs** not added t dignity of our ppl. **Ultra-Orth** hv continued t gloat triumph'y at our disqualific'n as truly Orthx & hv honor sm us--at least 1 of us--w some choice malignant epithets.

3. You will be deliber'g about **challngs t M-O**, impedmnts/tempt'ns/distractns tht best us, young/old, in our effrts t realiz lf of קדושה tht=our goal as ppl Tor. Tht w= capbl sch introspectn/slf-criticism=tribute t our vitality/hnsty/slf-confdnc. Is als absol neccsry if our commty/values t survv/thrive. **Sartre**--*Les Mouches* or *Huis-Clos* /No Exit) -HELL-No mirror. By lookg at slves in collectv **MIRROR**--see our flaws

4. **Still**, facd w all th challngs dredgd up by our slf=criticism in front comml mirror, w cn becm fidgty/dscourgd. List of sch road-blocks-> insurmountbl, at least frustrt'g/ wearyg. If s mch tm/spl energy is spent strugglg w mighty/hzrds challngs, w navigating the turbulnt seas of mod'y, w the pressures/tensions/stresses tht= peculiar lot of M-O, w barbs & derision fr both sides of us & diffdemce fr w-I, when oh when can we breathe easy, just BE? Whn will we evr get around t living lf of a true Jew? **Ans:** passage in *TNY* (chap.27) on relentlss struggle w one's Evil Urge: אל יפול לב אדם עליו ולא ירע לבבו מאוד גם אם יהיה כן כל ימיו במלחמה זו, כי. אולי  
לכך נברא וזאת עבודתו Equally applicbl t our collectv struggle w various problms/ hindrances tht=lot of M-O J. This=our peculiar form עבודת ה'. Th struggl itself= supreme, transc't exper'ce; it is f ths tht we brought into world: t do Creator's will; t live lives of Tor in vry centrs of Westrn civilizn; t see in Hm both עולם & בורא עולם נותן התורה, & therfr feel obligtd study both His Tor & Nature, word & world; t reach highest levels both באלי"ם / באלי"ח evn if seem t diverge, evn conflict; t lv in 2 worlds but unite them in one heart/נשמה/individual.

5. With this as **background** let step back, view current situation: survival A-Jy imperialism 2 factors: Numbers: Intramural-- 52%... Current 13M→5-6M in 1 generation... Also: demographics: Since '60, world Jy=ZPG; A-J=NPG. Don't be consoled by bromide "outreach"= mantra. (ST: Chelms: build clinic at foot mt.). Only bright spot: Orthodoxy (Ultra+M.O.) growth. But what of major Jews? *Tragedy!!*

6. What aggravates this already frightening situation=chaos. We seem to be looking for opportunities to slap each other down. Dogmatism dominates, modesty of expression is as rare as is commendable. Confrontation is taken as sign of true conviction. We appear to have become *Loud Society*, in which soft speech=considered compromise of principles, and failure to shout is tantamount to a confession of cowardice.

7. This leaves us in dilemma: Want **Peace**, but not want to yield **principles**. **Q: What do?**

**A:** Midrash: Good consulted angels ("Let us make man in our image"), they→ 2 groups on advisability of creating Man. אמת-אל יברא bec כולו שקרים. But צדק-יברא bec not yet done anything wrong. אמת-אל יברא but שלום-אל יברא קטטות. So equally divided: צדק וחסד pro, אמת ושלום anti. God broke tie: Daniel: אמת ארצה: Since now 2:1 vote for creation. אמת out, שלום outvoted, & צדק וחסד carried day. And so, man was created. The rest, as they say, is history.

**But Q:** why throw down אמת; why not שלום? **ANS:** Interpret by Hasidic Rebbe: 2 kinds Emet: heavenly/earthly. If heavenly, emet taken in absolute sense, shalom=defeated. If I believe that what I believe/advocate=emet & therefore, of necessity, your emet is not emet, then society cannot survive. If insist on my truth necessarily precludes your vision of truth, then I must fight to the death, which is what causes so much destruction/dissonance in society. I have shalom in world, if Man is to survive, then those who differ p-v must hold on to their emet--but the earthly kind; none must hold that their truth precludes other's truth. No one has monopoly on truth. Although I may feel/ know that I am right and yet wrong, I must give you right to utter your truth. So, in imagery of Mid, emet hurled to ground, because mankind could never have existed with heavenly, only earthly Truth.

Thus, Talmud (יבמות י"ד) on differing opinions Bet Hillel/Shammai: ללמדך שחייבה וריעות נהגים זה בזה לקיעים מ"ש (זכריה ח') האמצע והשלום אהבו

**Lesson for us**= absolute emet must yield to pragmatic social requirements of shalom. Through **peace**, Jewish community/Jews/people/all society, are viable/can survive with dignity. Must allow as much emet as possible without suppressing other party, denying him/her permission to utter his/her truth.

Thus, while walking very thin line between principle/practicality, peace/truth, we learn that it is important to avoid extremism. When dealing with issues of ultimate conviction/commitment--religion,



sprt, morlty, belief, upon which y base yr lf--is easy t veer t extreme. Th requirmnt of Jsm =**moderatn**. This not mean lack of conviction/passion, but in understanding of how soc/commy operate and make life possible.

8. Hence, our conventns--unlike othrs-- shldn't b charactrzd by attacks. Fact tht we refrain fr such instt'l belligrnce prefer respectf>Loud Socy,=nt sign our *wimprdom* but *wisdom*, our princpl of צו גאט און צו לייט

9. Ths=way Js, esp עהליכע אידן ought t behave. **Pop:** א איד דארף נישט זיין פרום, א איד דארף זיין עהרליך א גלח דארף זיין פרום. (honrble). " Mission of devout J-t b good/pleasnt t bth Gd/mn. Wht we seeing now=breakdwn tht sacred mission in course of *Kulturkampf* tht=ugly/unpredntd since terrbl dys precedg destructn 2<sup>nd</sup> Cmmnwlth. We=being torn apart politically, culturally, ethnically, and religiously.

10. Our policy mst b: fearlssly oppose neg factors our commy/socy, bt t d so civilly/sanely/analytclly & t refrain as mch as possbl fr "passeling"... Same tm, must join battl of ideas/ideals b forthrght in defense our faith, t spk out constructvly but clearly in our criticism.

11. . F us t succeed, mst remain tru t our princpls, nt b intimatd. Shimon Peres/BG/ ShY Agnon--"BG not afraid of *goyim*--and not even of Jews."

Same applies t us. Lt's nt b intimatd. Wht we stand f=real/authntc. Mst nt be s timd tht shun evry contrvrsy. Clash ideas/p-v= hlthy. *Causes blood t circult bettr in brain/churns juices of mnd*. Totl avoidanc argumnt/disagrmnt cn→t *absurd/comicl* results. **ST:** Zeide--Tefillin. Als dangrous if supprss all contry opinions. **ST:** India-Pakistn A-Bombs, CIA asleep--fault=no listen t "contrarians"

12. And, unfortnly, thr's mch t crtcz! 2 exmpls fr among many: 1) Despt new tendncs t incrsd obsrv, failure Ref to rein in intrmrg. T cite extrm exmpl (Phila *J Exponnt*): "In a Pennsylvania syn recently, a father who=Anglican Episcopalian priest proudly handed down the Torah at his son's Bar Mitzvah." *Ugly!* O-c, nt all Reform go tht far, bt is result non-coercv charctr mitzvot f them. No commandmnts, only OPTIONS (so, no 10 commndmnts, 10 suggestions...)

2) **POST-ZM**... **ST:** Uri Avneri (Heb Nat'l)...Betw intrmmrg & post-Zm we=full agenda

13. **BUT**--sm tm: restraint/no arrognc/ no hatred...1<sup>st</sup>: no overdo combtvss R. Yonah Gerondi-Spain d 1263 (=736 yrs)...שערי תשובה...History Lesson: Maimonist Controv'y...Maim'ts scurrilously attckd RY ...RY=anti-Maim't...→

OU-West Coast-99

burn מִדַּע מוֹנִי, altar church by Dominicans/Franciscans... RY appalled. Later:  
(1242) *exactly same spot*--Talmud burnt (24 wagonloads)! Deeply penitent/sees how  
not disagree.... wrote שְׁעָרֵי תְּשׁוּבָה

13. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Despt vigorous disagreements--**max'l inclusvness**, & help others to m'r closeness Tor.  
Used to think: Nothing>Ref/Cons. Tru 40-50 yrs ago. *But no longer true!* Road to  
שמד as Chty/Oriental religions=mch shorter fr secularism thn fr Ref/Cons. Unfortun'tly,  
mny fr those groups wh convrt; bt s: ch Orthx homes ר"ל, albeit far lesser numbrs.  
ST: Dr. Rothman of Detroit & my lectures in Chicago...

--bt very identity as Js! We often תפילי ת"ת, שבת, Problem f majrty A-J=not  
derivative: J-identity simply inadequate f J survival. Yt--has some value, & therfr evn those  
on fringe Jsm wh strive f mere identity shld b honrd/our concern. Thus, R. Zadok  
עיקר היהדות=בקריאת שם "ישראל"...[שם יש לו] רק מעלה זו שמכונה בשם "ישראל", די.  
[ומביא ממשנה וגמי שבת פרק כלל גדול:] רב ושמואל דאמרי תרויהו... גר שנתגייר לבין  
הנכרים. נמצא שלא ידע כלל מכל התורה, ובמה הוא גר להתחייב חטאת:--רק בקריאת שם  
"ישראל" די! ובוה מוכן מה דיהרג ואל יעבור על המרת דת להיות ישמעאל--אעפ"י שאינם  
עציו אפי' בשיתוף... אבל המרת שם "ישראל" לבד זה שקול ככהת"כ... וכן דורות הראשונים

14. In US--if rel'p w Ref-Cons helps strengthn tht Identity--worth th effort!  
We need sch relation'ps w all Js--f sk both parties. *F us--& f them*. Is our respon'y  
t ישראל כלל. Ref/Cons tod NOT same as 30-40-50 yrs ago... Thn: they=Orthx *on*  
*way out*; tod--secular *on way in*. Mny thm--incl their rabbis--wnt t b J/remain J.  
We regrd thm as misguided, bt is wrng t demonz thm, paint all w sm brush approp't  
only t truly להכעיס מומרים amongst thm. Mst encourg thm t gv their ch as much J  
ed as possible, to remain within fold, to turn to תורה ומצוות more.

15. I don't mean to exonerate Ref-Cons l'p. I don't mean to sink into pernicious  
relativism ("I'm OK, y're OK") which nowadays goes by name "pluralism."...Nor  
do I naively blv thy=all pure intentions. I do not advocate any kind of intra-J  
syncretism (=mish-mash). But (the ultimate heresy!): I prefer that non-Orth  
(=90% of A-J) be Ref-Cons>nothing, totally secular, assimilated, disappearing.  
I blv: talking w each othr, act'g civilly/respect'ly, teaching Tor t thm. Let thm  
attack us evry opprtnty, bt w must stll enrg thm: הוה מקרבן לתורה... If anyone  
wants t oppose nn-Orthx or prove superrty our ideals, don't shout/execrate/  
condemn. Instd, continue t d wht's right here L.A.--, תשובה, כוללים, תינונים, שעורים,--. Tor (I evn heard y hv sheurim f Kohanim only!). Do more  
of it--& teach--yr chldrn/selvs/other Js outsd own group.

16. We mst b realstc re: **J UNITY**. Mst strv f it--bt nvr imgn wll achv it compltly.

There will be no J-U, not till משיח. Evn thn...ST: Advct: Hlp wantd-"Substitute Mashiach"... BUT must work, hr-&-nw, f maxm unty.

**Historn Shelby Foote**: <Cvl Wr, "U.S. are"; >Cvl Wr-"U.S. is." 670,000 yng Amrcns died t convrt intrnstv, copltv vrb are → is. Thus th unific'n in syntax & symbol. So we...

17. Thr are fw **hard-fast rules**. Judgmnt. But must form choices w knowldg:

"שְׂמֵאמִין בְּרוּאִיו" : אלא ילקוט : "א-ל אִמוֹנָה"--מה זה? אלא ילקוט : "שְׂמֵאמִין בְּרוּאִיו" The grt Q=not do we blv in Gd, bt does He blv in us!

16. Conclude by paraphrsng Voice Old South, **Wm Faulkner** in hs Nobel acceptnc speech: **I blv** tht the J will nt merely survy; h wll prevail/flourish. H=immortl, not bec h hs an inexhaustible voice hawkg hs wares/shares, or garnerg mr gradt degrees, or devisg new inventns or growing rich w Inrternet; bt bec h hs a נְשִׁמָּה, a sprit capbl of compssn/sacrfc/ endurenc; bec h hs the insight int a reality beynd hmslf and irrepresbl urge t reach out t the Gd of hs fathrs; ; bec h hs th patienct wait yrs/evn centuries f th promise of th God of Israel t b realized, and hs own hopes vindicatd, and hs prayers answered; bec h knows in hs innards tht רַב־שׁוֹעַ waits f hm/blvs in hm/loves hm--יִרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים--יִרְאוּ אֱלֹהִים.