

Synagogue Council of Boston—January 28, 2004
"KELAL YISRAEL – BUILDING BRIDGES"

1) "Bldg BRIDGES"—ST Genie—one wish—bridge Hawaii—Isr poltics
 Poltics of Isr no more arcane/disheartnng than sociology A-Js...

- Sinai we commissioned: אַתָּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ
 Tchng function. What do A-Js hv t teach? גורמים
- Last week's *WSJ Bar/Bat Mitzva bashes*—READ: epitome of vulgarity!
- So we hv job t do in USA t reach out/educate flw Js ...
- Must assume respy f Klal Yisrael.
- But can hardly do tht if disunitd, bricks at each othr...

2) Theme= Klal Yisrael ~UNITY – but: industrl sz YAWN

- Rarely were we unitd; Sinai – first + last time...
- During 2nd Temple – 20 odd sects. Tod—prob same/more
- Attempts A-J histry to coordnt—usually cm to grief: Rabbi Jac Joseph
 Syn Council Amrc.. ~~YOU IN BOSTON~~—~~RARE BIRDS!~~
- Bt < discuss hw attain unity: Is it good thing?, highest on A-J agenda?

3) Well--*I not sure I'm in favor J-U!* True, one hand, Talm Sanh 88:

משרבו תלמידי שמאי והלל שלא שימשו כל צרכן רבו מחלוקת בישראל
 והלכה היא: (סנה ק"י): א"ר כל המחזיק במחלוקת עובר בלאו (רמבן ור' יונה-מד"א)

Natur J cultr-מחלוקת... Blatt Gemara...

Fusion of ideas/princpls as expressn Unty, uniformty--nt a desideratum

Thus ברכות נ"ח ע"א--ת"ר: היראה אוכלוסי ישראל אומר: ברוך חכם הרזים.
 שאין דעתם דומה זה לזה, ואין פרצופיהן דומים זה לזה

So too a remarkable and apparently paradoxical Mishna in *Avot* V:

כל מחלוקת שהיא לש"ש סופה להתקיים ושאינה לש"ש אין סופה להתקיים איוו היא מחלוקת שהוא
 לש"ש זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי ושאינה לש"ש זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו:

Strange! Sounds absurd....BUT:

רבנו יונה: הכוונה שלעולסיתקיימו במחלוקת, היום יחלוקו בדבר א', למחר בדבר אחר.
 למחלוקת יהיה קיום ונמשך ביניהם כל ימי חייהם, ולא עוד אלא אורך ימים ושנות חיים יוסיפו
 להם. ושאינה לש"ש אין סופה להתקיים, רק במחלוקת הא' ייספו ויתמו ושם ימותו

R. Yona: מחלוקת stirs juices, shows new possibilities; diversity=healthy

כי נח נפשיה דרבי שמעון בן לקיש, והוה קא מצטער רבי יוחנן בתריה טובא. אמרו רבנן: ב"מ
 דף פ"ד ע"א מאן ליזיל ליתביה לדעתיה - ניזיל רבי אלעזר בן פדת, דמחדדין שמעתתיה. אזל
 יתיב קמיה, כל מילתא דהוה אמר רבי יוחנן אמר ליה: תניא דמסייעא לך. אמר: את כבר
 לקישא? בר לקישא, כי הוה אמינא מילתא - הוה מקשי לי עשרין וארבע קושייתא, ומפרקינא
 ליה כ"ד פרוקי, וממילא רווחא שמעתא. ואת אמרת תניא דמסייע לך, אטו לא ידענא דשפיר
 קאמינא? והוה קא אזיל וקא בכי ואמר: היכא את בר לקישא, היכא את בר לקישא, והוה קא
 צוח עד דשף דעתיה [מיניה]. בעו רבנן רחמי עליה ונח נפשיה.

Similarly: lack diversty→stagnat'n of religious life, halakhic'c creat'y

Persnl exprnc: RAV-ST: I know what I said; what do YOU say?!

... follows his ancestor

הגר"ח מוולוז'ין (ר"ח פ"א)—והוי מתאבק וכר—כי מלחמת מצוה זו היא, וכן אנו נגד אבותינו
 הק', וניתן לנו רשות להתאבק וללחום ולא לישא פני איש, רק לאהוב את האמת

YET: ב"י על איזוה מקומן --

Historn Shelby Foote: <Cvl War, "U.S. are"; >Cvl Wr-"U.S. is"

670,000 yng Amrcns died t convert tht intranstv, copltv verb *are* → *is*

Thus th unific'n in syntax & symbol. So we...

Q: So, which is it? A: am all *for* מחלוקת! Expands horizons as ideas

tested/trying in crucible contrariety ... BUT לש"ש means 3 things:

* no ulterior motv *objctv *respcftl! i.e, civilzed. *NO AD HOMINEM*

* What destroys אחדות is not מחלוקת but the lack of genuine לש"ש

* Presence of לש"ש → absenc stifl'g narrow'ss, openness....

4) What does KY include? 2 extreme attitudes --

- Maximum: evry slf-defind J evn if not Hal'c. BUT: Js f Jesus? Bu-Jus?
- Minimum: only Haredim. ST my visit בעלזער רב Satisfctry?
- So – somewhr im betw. Just this: KY (NOT as Hal catgry; as functnal socio-polit) cannt include fringe groups—גט"ק, Kahanites, Canaanites
- ST: Uri Avneri/Heksinki/"Heb Natl"...
- *Let me put cards on table*: I f warm reltns all Js; I ready tch Tor all Js; but not yield iota on prncpls of Hal. Spread tent Js/Jsm wide—but too wide & tent collapses
- Maxm: Hal Js... & idntty Js; שם ישראל:ר' צדוק -- ואל יעבר-- כך מוסלם ייהרג ואל יעבר--
- If so: Orth-Cons-Ref-Sec -- & Belzer Hasidim... & me... & Daniel Pearl
- I know: my limitg t Hal Js—enrage some. Conflct w Isr legal standards.
- Groucho Marx—not lk my prncpls? I'll try new ones
-
- SO—where Unty stand in priority list?
- (V.CARDOZO PP---KY implies IDEALS; Conscience trumps unity...)

5) PLURALISM: Yes politclly, w-i Hal, democrtc rights... Yes, if means frndly/cooprty reltns non-hal Js. BUT NOT THAT ALL TRUTH CLAIMS EQUALLY VALID. Dangr Plurlsm → reltvsim which=destructv all Jsm

- Sometimes need hard line... (Tod=annivrsy close Volozhn – 1892 ה'שבת)
- Not all "hard lines"=nasty, intolrnt. Rathr: authntcty twrds truth
- I know bth Rght/Lft crtlal of me—ofn feel lk ST— car going wrng way
- So, MUST bld brdgs to all who intrstd, evn non-hal Js. BUT NOT ON SAME SIDE OF GULF—bridgs yes, but not same side in all things
- ברצלב: כל העולם כולו גשר צר מאוד והעיקר לא לפחד כלל
- Distinctions/expansion/contraction—all can b unpopular. Bt—so what?
- דבר תורה: ויהי בנסוע .. גונין הפוכין

"THE QUEST FOR JEWISH UNITY;

Getting beyond Buzz Words

Stamford CT

May 3, 1999

1. J Unity → industrial size yawn. Evryone knows: tear'g selv's apart; must DO SOME'G! But... so: despair--boredm. T avoid tht, will tk advc לוי אשכל : "begn at end." *There will b n J-U, nt till משיח*
2. & evn thn...ST: Ad Feb Advct: Hlp wantd-"Substitute Mashiach"

--MAHARAL—(F&D pp.56-58)

--Rav Kook: מחלוקת is not antonym of שלום, bec Peace=pluralistic...

ת"ח מרבים שלום בעולם ... וכל בניך... א"ח בניך... רב שלום בניך, א"ח בניך... לא כתוב... "גדול" השלום אלא רב או מרבים, כי יש צירוף של כמה יסודות בשלום... וכמו בנין (בנין) שכמה וכמה יסודות נכללים בבנין....

6. TODAY: מחלוקת on two fronts--Orth/Nn-Orthx; & worst intra-Orthx polariz'n. We Orthx: should b ashamed slves! Nvr gv credit/demonz/misquote... *Nvr reconcile barroom lang. w לש"ש, no matter positn/office one who...*

-thus: diff'ces opinion on NEEMAN COM. ..

-Mst Resist atpts stifle discuss'n/dissnt bec "גדולים," but always בד"א-

*Orthx-non-Orthx: Worst Orthx-bash'g my career... & they: vicious (like us...) for collectv institut'l egotism, willing risk....

- & we: act towards them w contempt, derision...

6) How should we of M-O commy act t othrs? And othrs t us?

a) w DIGNITY--both to Rt/Lft

b) NOT patroniz'g/canddts conver'n... but: faith...

c) teach them Torah?--any place/any time, w-o condesc'n. I-HUC; חב"ד; נרעם אלימלך: אך טוב וחסד ירדפני כל ימי חיי ושבת בביית ה' לאורך ימים

d) improve own ethcl quotient; Sartre--*Les Mouches*--Hell= NO

MIRRORS... & if tk good look: חלול השם... NYT, Rav: close yeshva

e) Most imp't: --drop Buzz words!-- "Pluralism"/"recognitn" דרך ארץ!

We must aspire t diff't defin'n U, one whch presrvs genuine commit'ts/abjures negott'g convictns as if merchands/ argue-debate-disagree—but agree t disagree agreeably, debate issues not BUZZ, argue w passion bt n hatrd/disrespt/disctsy. *Rmmb--we all משפחה...*

SO: It's agree t disagree agreeably... Lt all opinions floursih--bt לש"ש encouraging honst diversty &, w same passion, barring mutual denunc'n, humiliat'n. (&: not only Rabbis, comm'y ldrs; also indiv's....

1) Miguel de Unamuno ("Tragic Sense of Life"): My Gd dny y pc bt grnt y glory"

One thing is and should be clear to us: the approach of the non-Orthodox groups will lead to disaster. If there is more than one way to enter the Jewish fold, and any one of them is non-halakhic, it will lead not to the kind of disunity that now afflicts us, but to something infinitely worse: the break-up of our one people to two or more nations, unable *officially* to intermarry with each other. Consider this situation: we will not recognize most Conservative conversions. The Conservatives—if they are true to their own convictions—will not accept Reform conversions. Furthermore, the Israeli Reform group has said that it does not recognize American Reform actions such as patrilinealism and same-sex marriages. Thus, we so far can count *four different* groups who will not intermarry with each other. Is this what they want? Will the Israeli Supreme Court support such a result in the name of civil rights?

Haredim are accommodating themselves to the idea that unity is impossible, that we are already broken up into two separate peoples. A lead article in the January 20, 1998, ידיעות אחרונות, tells it all; it is entitled, "ניפרד כידידים"....

To force us to choose between our love for Torah and our love for Israel is a cruel, inhuman demand. Yes, under extreme and dreadful conditions, we may have to decide which to choose and which to abandon. But to ponder the question and choose sides before every single solution has been examined and tested, is an act of gargantuan irresponsibility.

The presumption that the two values are locked in mortal combat is an abstraction that in the context of our own particular and peculiar predicament is utterly misleading. We *can* and we *must* hold on to both elements for dear life. No Jew may cavalierly be מפקיר thousands upon thousands of his fellow Jews. And no Jew has the right to dispense with the integrity of the Halakha, the source of our spiritual and communal existence and the only guarantee that we and generations after us will remain Jewish.

7) Moreover Often, the problem of unity is formulated in a way that assumes that Torah has no special place for the wholeness of ישראל כלל. But that is not so. When our ancestors left Egypt on the way to Sinai and the Revelation, we read: ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני and Rashi comments on the first two words, לא היה צריך לכתוב אלא ביום ההוא, מהו ביום הזה? שיהיו דברי תורה חדשים בעיניך כאילו היום ניתנו. That is a beautiful sentiment but there is an inaccuracy or anachronism lurking in the background...

Today=yahrzeit Gerer Rebbe 5 Shevat 1905--The Gerer Rebbe (author of the שפת אמת) asks: how can those two words apply to "the words of Torah" when the Torah was not yet given—it would only be revealed several days later? In answering his own question, he points to the very next verse: ויחן ישראל (singular) camped there, opposite Mt. Sinai. Why the switch in number from plural to singular? And Rashi here too records the answer: Israel arrived at the mountain כאיש אחד, united as one person with one heart beating for all. The approach to Revelation was one of transcendental unity, a togetherness not known before or after. And here the Gerer Rebbe adds: *this very fact of utter Jewish unity—this in itself is an aspect of "Torah!"* The experience of כאיש אחד is not merely a psychological or sociological phenomenon; it is a spiritual value that in itself constitutes Torah, the Author of which is known by the name of שלום, for that too is a Name of God. And since that is Torah, it is no longer an anachronism to say that the words שיהיו דברי תורה חדשים apply to this as well. Hence, if we recognize that the unity of ישראל כלל is a fundamental of תורה, that it has the value of הלכה, then we will not pose it as an antagonist of Torah.

8) We must not permit the dogmatists and exclusionists to preach that unity is NOT desirable. And we must not allow the cynics and the self-proclaimed realists to tell us that unity NEVER existed and hence never will. רבש"ע told us that the *tefillin* of the רבש"ע proclaim the unity of Israel—אחד גוי אחד בארץ--and we should not "possess" or disqualify the *tefillin* of the רבש"ע!!

אתה אחד ושמןך אחד ומי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ

9) כֵּאֶחָד, as if we were one. Bless us, our Father, all of us together, בֵּרַכְנוּ אֲבִינוּ כֻּלָּנוּ כֵּאֶחָד

Even though we suffer sharp differences with each other and sometimes act like antagonists instead of friends; notwithstanding our impatience with and impertinence towards each other; and despite our occasional outbursts of temper and use of intemperate language; bless us כֵּאֶחָד, to act as if we were one, united in a common destiny, living with each other like brothers and sisters who may have radically different points of view and yet recognizing that we are related by blood and by fate, and—yes—with וריעות ורחמים, with compassion and even with love.

For there can be no greater ברכה than this.