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THE FUTURE OF ORTHODOXY

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The New Prophets

In recent years a number of American Jewish writers have returned to an ancient Jewish vocation: prophesying. Having seemingly exhausted all studies of the past and the present, they have turned to the future and the prediction of what it holds for the American Jewish community. With a certain glee, these prognosticators — including sociologists, historians, professors, and novelists (all non-traditional) — have prophesied the demise of Orthodox Judaism. Orthodoxy, they tell us, does not stand a chance. Its following will dwindle down to a few insignificant die-hards who will themselves sooner or later be assimilated by some form of "modernistic" Judaism. Torah and Tradition, they report, have no place in the future.

One ought not be dismayed by such reports from non-Orthodox circles. Without a commitment to Torah one cannot, after all, truly know its inner vitality and its uncanny capacity for attracting the hearts of Jews and surviving in all environments. What is disturbing is the underlying pessimism one sometimes detects in some — by no means all — observant and loyal Jews. Are we indeed a vanishing race? Is Israel doomed to remain an *alman*, deprived of the company of Torah?

The question is one of great importance. First, it affects a principal tenet of our faith: the eternal loyalty of Israel to G-d. Second, there is the question of morale. No one wants to be identified with a lost cause. Third, the answer to that question will determine the policy of Orthodox Jews vis-a-vis the general Jewish community.

Our answer to the question is a resounding "No." Orthodox Judaism is here to stay, and it can and will survive even in the free and democratic atmosphere of modern America. We say not only *Ha-shem melekh* (the Lord reigns) and *Ha-shem malakh* (the Lord reigned) but *Ha-shem yimlokh* (the Lord will reign). It is our sacred duty to believe, and act upon the basis of the belief, that the Torah which survived the persecutions of Hadrian, the interdictions of Antiochus, and the blasphemies of Stalin and Khrushchev, will survive the benevolence of political freedom and social mobility, the risks of prosperity, and the test of abundance.

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