

THE TOTAL VIEW

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The theme of the Messiah, which is the central message of the prophet Isaiah in today's Haftorah, has been a source of fascination for countless generations of our people. One of the questions that attracted their attention was: what will life be like just before the coming of the redeemer? A well-known comment the Rabbis of the Talmud made about this was: ein Ben David ba ad she'tikhleh perutah min ha-kis, that the Messiah will not come until every perutah, or penny, will vanish from every pocket. In other words, it will be an era of stark and oppressive poverty.

The great Hasidic teacher, the Vorker Rebbe, interpreted that passage in a manner which, while fanciful rather than literal, provides us with a deep insight into all aspects of life. The word perutah, which means the smallest coin, a penny, is derived from the word perat, meaning a small detail. Peratiut, "detailism," the tendency to break everything down into small pieces, into the perat, and to fail to see the whole picture, is one of the things that prevents the Messiah from coming. Peratiut is fragmentization, the inclination towards personal and collective isolation, the spirit of divisiveness and disunity. Messiah will come only when peratiut ends, and in its place comes the opposite: kelaliut, the tendency to think in terms of the kelal, the community, the whole picture, the Total View. When man will increase the breadth of his vision and grow beyond peratiut, beyond the confining limitations which make him think small, act small, be small; when he will be a man of kelaliut, of wholeness and wholeness, Messiah will come.

Peratiut sees life in little bits, while kelaliut tries to include everything in the grand sweep of its vision. Peratiut is egocentric, while kelaliut considers others as well. The pagan embraces peratiut: he views every force of nature or history as independent -- war, love, thunder -- and assigns each to a separate god. The Jew follows kelaliut, he unifies

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all his experience and recognizes that all these little bits of life are part of the one world of One G-d -- "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One."

Look at how these ideas contend with each other and struggle for supremacy in every sphere of human endeavor. When husband and wife follow the way of peratiut, then they are merely two different individuals with no basic connection with each other, whom circumstance has thrown together and who may share certain facilities for a long time. Such a marriage is spiritless, it portends breakdown, it is beyond redemption. When there is kelaliut, when they think of each other as forming one unit, ishte ke'gufo -- they treat each other with the same love and consideration and respect they want each for himself, they share common aims and aspirations and ideals -- then you have a happy home. No wonder that in Hebrew a marriage is called kelulot, as when Jeremiah speaks of ahavat kelulotayikh, marital love.

When a nation thinks of itself only and ignores the rest of mankind, redemption is still far off. Peratiut in the international community means rabid nationalism, thinking only of the perat and ignoring the kelal which is the whole of the human community. Kelaliut is at the heart of the idea United Nations and of the Peace Corps.

Breakdown or peratiut seems to be a disease of our times. Economically, the worker does only one small part of the manufacturing process; he never gets the satisfaction of the artisan who creates a whole vessel or article. The scientist specializes in one very restricted perat or branch of knowledge and loses the ability to view life in its wholeness. We each live in a hundred different worlds, cut off one from the other: the world of medicine, the world of journalism, the world of business, and we lose sight of the universe, the fact that all these are part of one world, one kelal. Consequently, our personalities too break down. We become mentally sick. And this affects our religion as well: here too we think in terms of

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peratiut, and we regard religion as just another interesting detail amongst hundreds of others. Religion becomes a little bit of life that is confined to the temple on certain days of the week or year. The grandeur of religion is reduced to a dry, repetitive ritual. Its towering message, intended to infuse all of life with the drams of purpose and meaningfulness, is shrunk to a kind of sacred charades. Religion has become only one isolated perat in the disconnected melange of life. Indeed we have a case of spiritual schizophrenia! No, Messiah is not here yet when people think in such small, narrow, restrictive terms.

Modern American Orthodox Jews face a special problem in this respect. We live, culturally, in two distinct worlds, that of traditional Judaism and that of the modern Western world of science and technology. Are we to develop split personalities as a result, being moderns one moment and Jews the next? Are we to fall prey to that pernicious slogan developed by the Hskalah, that we ought to be Jews indoors and ordinary human beings when away from home? -- a perat here and a perat there, with nothing to unify them? If we fail to develop a solution and go along with peratiut, then our future is dark indeed. For sanity and integrity call for a wholesome personality, not one that is rigidly compartmentalized. Messiah's function will be to establish one world of humans, one family of mankind, one great kelal -- and people accustomed to thinking in disjointed ways, and of considering only themselves or their own interests, are not going to acknowledge Messiah or appreciate his teachings.

Fortunately, the future is not at all dark. I am optimistic about American Orthodoxy. For we have in our midst one great, noble symbol of kelaliut, a visible case of synthesis and integration, of the unity of mind and the oneness of heart. I refer to Yeshiva University, whose very name indicates the merging of two distinct ideas into one -- the Yeshiva and the University, the sacred and the secular, the holy and the profane.

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Yeshiva University is more than a school; it is a vision. It is more than an institution; it is an Idea. And the idea and the vision represented by this great educational complex is kelaliut, the integration of all knowledge in the personality of the student. Yeshiva strives to produce whole Jews, not Jews atomized by cultural fissions. Its aim is symbolized by the wide-angle lens of a camera, which includes the entire scene in the scope of its picture, not the telescopic lens which focuses minutely on just one restricted segment. It aspires to the Total View which alone can inspire young Jews to be full, loyal, and observant in the context of contemporary America. The adam ha-shalem, the complete man today means one who will combine within himself all great values from Bible to biochemistry, from Talmud to technology, from Maimonides to medicine. For ultimately this is the nature of Torah -- that it is kelaliut, that it is all-inclusive: hafakh bah ve'hafakh bah de'kulah bah, study it and plumb it and you will find that it contains all.

Sometimes a person or institution or idea can best be appreciated by imagining that it or he were absent. Imagine then that there were no Yeshiva at all. Imagine that the thousands of graduates of Yeshiva who represent Torah in all fields -- rabbinate, education, medicine, law, business, science -- were to disappear. Imagine that hundred of pulpits and schools were suddenly empty, and that the hundreds of young scientists, lawyers, and leaders in business who represent to the world the idea that you can be a good, learned Jew and still be contemporary -- that all of these were suddenly to vanish. Would there be anyone brave enough or foolish enough to dare to hope that Judaism has a chance to survive? You might find no more than a few isolated individuals with a vestigial smattering of Jewish learning unrelated to the rest of their lives -- and the peratut would be stifling. Judaism would have broken down.

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But that is only a bad dream. Yeshiva is here. The half-assimilated Jewish intellectuals do not represent the whole picture of America's young, thinking people. There are those who are not strangers to Judaism who are yet in the vanguard of the intellectual and professional and commercial life of our society. There are people of kelaliut, thanks to Yeshiva, who can integrate both worlds into one. If there is hope for Orthodox Judaism it is because of Yeshiva. If we can redeem Torah and Torah can redeem Jewry in our day, it is because Yeshiva has taught us how to overcome the peratiut of a fragmentated faith and an atomized mentality.

I need not tell this congregation about Yeshiva. Leaders of The Jewish Center have been leaders of Yeshiva since its inception. You know of its phenomenal growth, its meaning for our future, and the fact that within a few short years, please G-d, a major part of Yeshiva will be our close neighbors.

All this requires the expenditure of great sums of money. The dream of kelaliut cannot be realized through good wishes alone. The responsibility for it devolves upon each and every Jew to whom the future of his Torah and his children is of any importance. Ein Ben David bah ad she'tikhleh perutah min ha-kis, the vision of Torah cannot be achieved until we banish from our lives, our thinking, our society every vestige of peratiut. Yes iva does this for us, both in the social and intellectual sense. But remember the last two words of this passage: min ha-kis -- from the pocket. The realization of the dream of Torah in America requires our direct financial assistance. Yeshiva's requirements grow daily. So must our help yearly. We must at this occasion of the annual Passover appeal for Yeshiva University do what is only right and proper.

When we will have helped, min ha-kis, in concrete and practical manner, Yeshiva's mission in creating whole Jews, then we shall be the participants

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in the drama of bringing on the age of spiritual redemption. When we assist in this historic endeavor for kelaliut, then we shall be the recipients of G-d's blessing given to Father Abraham: va-Shem berakh et Avraham ba-kol -- and the Lord blessed Abraham ba-kol, with everything, with kol or kelaliut. May that comprehensive blessing be ours, and our children's, forever more.