

HEART AND MIND

There are two ways of relating to God, and hence two modes of teshuvah: the ways of the heart and of the mind, of feeling and of reason. The flame of faith, the אש דת, produces both warmth and light -- warmth for the heart, and light to illuminate the mind. Religion can be conceived of as an appeal to the emotion or to the intellect.

These two approaches can be seen as opposed to each other in the pre-scriptions offered by two Tannaim, both of whose sayings are recorded in Avot. In one, Rabbi (Rabbi Judah the Prince) tells us: קִדְּמֵךְ בְּשֵׁשׁה דְּבָרִים וְאֵי  
יִבְרָךְ -- consider three things and you will steer clear of sin. "Know what is above you: a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and all your deeds are recorded in a book." Here is an intellectual formulation for teshuvah. You must know what is above you. You must elevate your thinking towards the higher goal, and you will realize, quite rationally, that man cannot hide from Providence, that all he does is of significance to the Creator, that there is a balance and a reason and a logic to all of life.

The second opinion is that of Akavia ben Mahalallel. He begins with the identical introduction that Rabbi does: "Consider three things and you will steer clear from sin." But his three guide-posts are considerably different: "know from whence you came -- the fetid drop; where you are going -- the place of dust and maggots and worms; and before Whom you have to give an account -- before the Holy One, the King of Kings, blessed be He." Akavia is not appealing to our reason. He is addressing our existential concerns. He is touching our deeply-felt awareness of our nothingness, our marginality and triviality and insignificance. He is reminding us of our purely biological origin, and that our end is nothing more significant than being food for worms. And he is compounding that by calling our attention to the fact that unbearably trivial as we are, we must yet face the ineffable Source of all being...

These two casts of mind run like two threads through the fabric of Jewish religious experience. For instance, in the Middle Ages, it was Maimonides who represented the rationalist school, the idea that the highest goal of Judaism is daat, knowledge, the attainment of the right ideas about God. As opposed to him, we have a thinker like Rabbi Yehudah Halevi who maintains that the highest ideal is not knowledge but devekut, cleaving to God, the emotional experience of closeness to the Creator.

In more modern times, we find a similar division between the Hasidim and Mitnaggedim. The Mitnaggedim elevated the study of Torah to the highest rank of Jewish values, whereas the Hasidim cherished emotion, prayer, ecstasy. For the Mitnaggedim, the way to repentance begins with the study of Torah. For Hasidim, it begins with the turning of the soul and the heart to God; it is experiential.

Which of these approaches is the most authentically Jewish?

This is not an idle question. We face the problem practically and regularly in contemporary Jewish life. What shall we emphasize in the synagogue -- adult education or prayers? There are those who have turned the entire service into a study session, with dialogues and monologues and lectures. There are others who turned the study of Torah into a "ruah" session, with singing and shouting

and appealing to emotions. Shall our Jewish education be geared primarily to inform our children, and fill them with knowledge -- as in the traditional yeshivot -- or shall we try for something more inspirational, with a seminar system and all that goes with it? When we appeal to young people to come to Judaism, shall we base our appeal upon arguments or experience?

In a sense it all boils down to this: Is Judaism primarily an objective system, a theology, or a legally consistent way of life, rationally conceived and executed? -- or is it addressed to our subjectivity, an orientation and way of life that must be experienced rather than thought through?

I suggest that the answer of our tradition is not either/or, but both/and response. We can choose either way, and preferably both. It all depends upon our own personality structure. Whether one -- and there are very few such -- is completely cerebral or completely emotional, all heart or all mind, he too can find his place in Judaism. Most of us are someplace in between; every human personality differs in the "mix" of rational and affective elements.

When, therefore, I say that we find elements of both reason and emotion in Judaism, I am not just stating the obvious and reasserting a truism. Rather, what I am saying is that Judaism is not monolithic, it is available and open to all kinds of personality, all varieties of human character. Whether you intend to be more logical or more feeling, more intellectual or more emotional, you can find that in Judaism which resonates and articulates with your own personality cast! There is therefore no excuse for anyone to pull away from Jewish life because it does not appeal to him. If you consider yourself intelligent and are put off by emotionalism, see if you can plunge into the sea of Talmud without drowning! If you feel apprehensive about the intellectual demands of Judaism, and are a more feeling person, then remember that in Judaism you have that which plays upon the full range of emotions, from genuine dread and awe through the highest reaches of pure ecstasy.

Let us now see how both of these elements are present in the various observances of this season.

The main part of Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is the teruah. The tekiot, the long blasts which begin an end to each shofar sound, are merely ancillary. But what is the teruah sound? The Rabbis were of two minds. Some identified it with our present shevarim, the three intermediate size blasts, and some maintained it is what we today call teruah, the staccato or series of nine very short sounds. What do these symbolize? The Rabbis referred to the three intermediate size blasts as הגה גוה, sighing or groaning; the nine short blasts were identified as ששש' ששש', sobbing. What is the difference between them? The late Rabbi Kook, of blessed memory, said that the difference is this: sighing or groaning is the reaction to an intellectual effort. I take an account of my past, I consider what I have done rationally, and I come to the conclusion that I have been a dreadful failure. I therefore sigh and groan. The הגה גוה is therefore my response and my urge to repentance by means of the mind. ששש' ששש', uncontrolled sobbing, is obviously the sudden emotional awareness of the abyss that lies before me and into which I am toppling. It is an unmediated response of the heart, and this too leads to repentance.

What do we do? The answer is: all three. First we sound tekiah-shevarim-tekiah -- the intellectual form of teshuvah. Then we do tekiah-teruah-tekiah, the purely emotional way. And then we combine them: tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah, representing the great majority of us who live on both plains, sometimes inclining one way and sometimes another.

During the Selihot season, we refer to God as אלהינו , One

Who is abundant in love and in truth. Love refers to His response to our emotional approach, truth to His response to our cognitive approach.

On Yom Kippur, when we come to the climax of the day during Neilah, we have the two most important prayers, each of which represents a different facet. First we say *אתה נותן יד לפושעים* -- You extend Your hand to the sinner, and are willing to accept him in repentance. And then we cry out: *מה אנו, מה חיינו, מה צדקנו, מה ישועתנו, מה כחנו, מה גבורתנו* -- "what are we, what is our lives, what is our righteousness, what is our help, what is our strength, what is our power!" The very repetition of the word mah is in itself a form of onomatopoeia, the sound of sobbing!

And then we turn to another paragraph which takes the other view: *אתה הבדלת אנוש מראש*, You separated man from the very beginning out of the rest of creation; he may be an organic, biological creature, but he has something that goes beyond the rest of natural life -- *ותיכרהו לצימוד לפניך*, You acknowledged man as something special, and made him worthy to stand before You. It is his mind and his soul that marks him off from all the rest of the natural world. He is a creature endowed with a mind!

On Sukkot too we have both themes. The holiday is the *זמן שמחתנו*, the time of joy, the outpouring of great emotion. But the meaning of Sukkot is *למען ידעו דורותיכם*, in order that our generations know that and why God commanded us to dwell in Sukkot.

Perhaps all of this is most beautifully expressed in the Haftorah for this Shabbat Shuvah. Remarkably, on this Sabbath we read from three different Prophets, and all three taken together represent what we have been trying to say.

The first one, from Hosea, is one in which we find an appeal to the Jewish mind to do teshuvah. "Return O Israel to the Lord your God *כי כשלת בעוונך*, because you stumbled on your sins." The word ki, "because," in itself is indicative of reasoning. The prophet tells us to recognize that we are bankrupt, that we are actually our own worst enemy. (That most sophisticated of all cartoon characters, Pogo, once said, "We have met the enemy and he is us.") The prophet concludes on the note *מי חכם ויבן אלה לבון וידעאם*, "who is wise and he will understand this, discerning and he will know it." It is wisdom and knowledge and intelligence which Hosea stresses.

The second Prophet, Micah, addresses the Jewish heart. He appeals to God to return to us and love us and pity us: *יכבוש עינוותינו*, "may He subdue our sins" -- the language of emotion rather than reason; he is not asking that God discount our sins, but that He overwhelm them. And then what is by all means an emotional expression: *ותשליך ממצלות ים כץ הטאתם*, "And cast into the depths of the sea all their sins." One can almost feel with the prophet the power of his image, as if God were lifting the great burden of our sins from our backs and throwing it into the ocean in one great splash!

The third Prophet, Joel, offers us a combination of heart and mind, reason and intellect. On the emotional level he tells us: *קרצו לבבכם ואז בגדיכם* -- "Tear your hearts rather than your clothing"; instead of rending your garments as a sign of grief, break your heart, because the Lord wants a broken heart. In the Temple, he tells us *ובכו הכהנים*, the priests will weep -- sobbing again! The conclusion will be *גילו ושמחו*, you will be joyous and happy when God answers you. But his conclusion is on the intellectual level: *וידעתם*, "And you will know that I am in the midst of Israel." Emotion and intellect are combined.

So, the three parts of the Haftorah for this Shabbat are the literary echoes of the three kinds of shofar sounds. Hosea represents the shevarim, the <sup>הננן 'הננן</sup> or sighing, symbol of an intellectual calculation. Micah represents the teruah, the <sup>שש'א 'ש'ס'</sup>, the uncontrolled weeping which is the way of emotion. And Joel represents the combination of both, the tekiah-shevarim-teruah-tekiah.

So, Judaism does not fit us into a strait-jacket. It speaks to our minds -- if that is the focus of our being; to our hearts -- if that is where our life is centered; and it speaks to both of them, if -- as is usual -- we operate on both levels.

But whether to heart or to mind or to both, the message is crystal clear:  
"Return O Israel to the Lord your God."