Two Voices

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As I ponder the essence of Judaism, and how Orthodoxy has evolved since I was a student at Yeshiva University, I hear two distinct voices that emerge from those 11 years (1962–1973) spent at several schools of YU. I hear a voice of love and a voice of fear, mixed together, and an underlying tension that was inevitable in a clash of these two powerful energies. I was exposed to many great rabbis and professors in my years at YU, and I would like to share some seminal ideas that have remained with me, and describe some incidents that occurred that illustrate these ideas, trends, and tensions during my residency, which included studying at Yeshiva College, the Semikhah program, Revel, and Wurzweiler. I was also a dorm counselor and moderator of the Friday evening oneg Shabbat programs in the dorm. I will point out how I think there has been a shift in the balance of these energies over the years. I was privileged to live through the depth and complexity of these different forces.

One emergent idea that felt true to me was that Judaism was not monolithic but had different emphases expressed by different sages with different temperaments. One could resonate with one side of the polarity, or bear the tension of both. There were always the gentler rulings of Hillel and the stricter rulings of Shammai, sometimes at odds, sometimes integrated but always there, joined together as a whole. Some of us were drawn toward one side of the dialectic, and others toward the other; but in the final analysis we had to yield our

personal proclivities to the majority of redacted opinion in the Law Code. Interestingly, even the opinion given for why both majority and minority opinions were redacted in the Mishna varied. One view is more “conservative,” positing that the reason is to show that the minority opinion has already been thought of and rejected, so as not to use it as a precedent for changing the final law, and the second view is that it was redacted to show it contains a verity, a seed of truth, that may potentially be used as a precedent in different conditions.

The two major energies of love and fear dwelt as a constant. When balanced and honored, they served as a healthy reality where each individual’s temperament could be satisfied; but when one energy ascended to power at the expense of the other, an intolerance prevailed that was harmful to the development of students and perhaps the “living” tradition.

YU itself, in those days, was looked at by the more conservative Yeshiva World, as somewhat deviant from tradition because of its integration of Torah uMada, and honoring of both Torah and secular knowledge, even if the former was primary and the latter was to increase new insights. Eventually, the impact of the more stringent energy entered the walls of the yeshiva and became increasingly present. (I will illustrate this later, and give some reasons for it.)

As stated, I think both emphases are valid voices in Judaism, and are healthy when they are in balance. I once heard a talk by Rav Aharon Feldman, when I studied in Israel for two years after graduating college, which explained these two energies in the name of the Maharal.

He said that there are two Messianic figures (Mashiah ben Yosef, and Mashiah from the tribe of Yehuda), who represent two valid ways of bringing holiness into the world. Yosef’s temperament was to perfect the world through withdrawal, exemplified by his retreating from Potiphera as he escapes from the clutches of evil. He utilizes fear, and creates fences to shield himself from distracting influences and creates holiness in this separated state. Yehuda, on the other hand, perfects the world through entering it, by bringing the light into the darkness. He utilizes love as a force to reveal the image of God dwelling within each human being, even those who appear darkened. Both energies are essential, and can be positive forces; but I think this is only true when we can each recognize their validity and respect them. It is truly difficult for these different temperaments to sometimes recognize the unique importance of each other, and thus when they separate and do not dwell together, extremes develop which create discord rather than harmony. Perhaps the Mashiah can only come in reality when this fractured harmony (already present in the destruction of the

second Bet haMikdash) is healed, when acknowledged difference can be accepted and honored.

We see the positive dimension of difference many times in the Torah, for example, the different flags of the tribes in the Midbar. Our Torah commentaries also point to the wisdom of the different voices contributing different insights into the whole, promoting growth and glory to the Creator. This notion proclaims that unity that results from diversity is much stronger than a unity that emerges from repression of difference. We see this many times in the Gemara as well, where "both these and those are the words of the living God. A good example is found in the tale of the Oven of Akhnai (Baba Metsia 59a–b) where we learn that the creative voices of the individual sages are honored by God even more than the heavenly Voice. For the Torah was given to human beings to work on, imbibe its wisdom, and build more wisdom based on its holy words and teachings. This suggests that we are partners with God in creation. The world is not fixed or completed without our contributions including our creativity in extracting truths that are not only manifest but that lie dormant in the Torah. The story of Moshe and Rabbi Akiva in Menahot 29b illustrates this as well, as Moshe acknowledges that R. Akiva, in the future, will create insights that had not been available to him.

But alas, our different temperaments influence us to see what we want to see even in our zeal to find objectivity in the data that we encounter, and we tend to ignore teachings that do not fit in with our personalities or proclivities. Thus it is essential to keep opening our awareness and to keep growing to expand our vision and our hearing, to face our fears and resistances to change as the story of the Ten Spies/Princes (meraglim, Numbers 13) teaches. The ten spies saw the data from a place of fear and self-interest and encountered a very different reality from Yehoshua and Caleb. It is so challenging to see and hear clearly when all the varying sounds of our ego abound. It takes work to refine and be aware of our subjectivity and hear the sound of the great shofar, which contains all the sounds of the world within it, the unity within the diversity, as the dross is removed from the greater truth.

The Torah suggests that at Mt. Sinai we had the capacity to "see the sound of the Shofrot" (Ex. 20:15); we were in a state of such enlightened connection—"Vayihan' sham yisrael neged hahar," "And we dwelt as one by the mountain," (Ex. 19:3)—that our hearing was attuned to (we actually saw) the Unified Voice beneath all the divergent opinions. Both these and those are the word of the living God when we are connected.

Today, even within the Orthodox community there is lack of connection, and certainly our relation with different parts of the Jewish community has been fractured, severed, shattered. How different are we from the sin'at hinam of the Second Temple? How much do we desecrate by creating groups and factions (agudot, agudot, Yevamot 13b) that are not connected—violating the prohibition of "lo titgodedu"(Deut. 14). We are taught to be supple as a reed and not hard as a cedar.

When there is an extreme imbalance in our community, not allowing different voices to be heard, this disparity leads to different groups emerging as an attempted corrective. In our Orthodox community we have had the Hassidic movement, which arose as a corrective to the aristocracy of the learned, and to the recognition of the worthiness of the ignorant and impoverished. Prayer, emotional expression, and joy were reemphasized in the face of a respect saved only for the learned. The Mussar movement arose when certain religious leaders experienced a lack of moral sensitivity even among those who studied Torah and perceived halakhic practice as merely habitual group practice rather than self-transforming. The Prophets inveighed against those who observed commandments selectively, keeping ritual details but neglecting the poor, the powerless, the outsiders. Sometimes, if we are insular and self-congratulatory, we may be blinded to some areas where we have neglected growth and chosen insular security. Moreover, closed groups or communities lead to entropy, obviating new energies that lead to growth within the community.

It is understandable why some of these insular trends have arisen in our communities, and that YU has been caught in the middle of them and influenced by them. The Enlightenment increased assimilation and threatened the continuity of Judaism. Withdrawal was a natural response. Science threatened to dismiss non-empirical data as unreliable and argued that the subjective reality of faith could not be verified. Freud dismissed religion as a childish need for the protective Father, and its detailed mandates as a form of obsessional neurosis to ward off chaos and meaninglessness.

The Holocaust and radical evil introduced doubt and eclipse of God, a hester panim, that had to be addressed by withdrawal and strengthening of holiness and communal support. It was as if Amalek struck the Jewish soul. Not only did Hitler physically destroy millions of our people, but the soul and the energy of faith was also severely attacked. As the Hassidim teach, Amalek in Gematria is 240, the same numerical value as Safek, or doubt; if radical evil exists in the world then the glory of God is diminished. So there had to be a strengthening of faith through

stricter practice and adherence to the details of the Law. We all became ba'alei teshuvah, and the secular world was defined as "evil," value laden with materialism and sexual perversion and immodesty.

Moreover, the rise of the ba'al teshuvah movement, where adherents were less exposed to the dialectics of the Talmud but wanted the finality of the halakhic decisions to guide their practice, removed some of the expansiveness of the plethora of views. Furthermore, the time spent in learning in yeshivot in Israel after high school rather than after college brought students with greater commitment to spending time in the Bet haMidrash during their college experience and more intense religious fervor imbibed from their learning in Medinat Yisrael. The ideal of Torah uMada was a different concept than total immersion in learning Talmud. Very subtly, dress codes also changed in the community as a result of more of a "group think," and a sense of wanting to belong. People feared being seen as lesser in observance or deviating from the norm. Finally, I think another factor that emerged at YU was that when the Rav, who was a consummate model of Torah uMada, passed away, the students who studied Talmud and posekim day and night became roshei yeshiva. They were not as drawn to secular studies as a complement to Torah study, but were more inclined to view secular studies as either a waste of time or as potentially antithetical to the fundamental principles of belief and practice that demanded constant commitment. A certain nostalgia for the great academies of Eastern Europe as the ideal emerged, and the Torah uMada model was seen as a lesser model of what could and should be achieved by a system geared to produce Torah scholars. It was forgotten that it takes greater courage to rule with leniency than severity. The roshei yeshiva naturally were less exposed to the challenges of congregants who faced complex decisions, and thus they found it more natural to make stricter decisions than pulpit rabbis. These strict decisions and customs became the norm in areas of kashruth (glatt), synagogue practices (mehitsot and sound systems), and community education where prevalent themes of discussing the halakhic intricacies such as the removal of bugs from vegetables replaced relevant ethical concerns in the community, even during the week preceding Rosh haShana.

Let me now turn to some examples of the clash of energies that I experienced at YU during my years there. During the Vietnam war there was some question as to whether it was permissible to protest against the war if it meant taking off time from Torah study. There was a shiur given in Lamport auditorium where the whole school was gathered to address this theme. This was very unusual, to say the least, but it was felt to be a significant issue only to be decided by the highest

authorities. One of the roshei yeshiva declared in his shiur that because of the halakhic mandate of aivah (fear of what the Gentiles might say if we sat passively on the sidelines), it was permissible to participate in a timely manner in the protest; another rosh yeshiva agreed with the decision but for a different reason, a more powerful reason, from the pole of ahava. He based his shiur on a Maharsha at the end of Yevamot who declared that any decision (halakha) that does not lead to peacefulness and harmony is not a true halakha. I appreciated the clarity of this pesak, because it came from a deep understanding of the purpose of halakha: to promote peace and harmony, and thus to elevate the name of the Lord in the world; rather than a utilitarian decision protecting the safety of our people.

Another salient event was the publication of an interview of Rabbi Yitz Greenberg in the Commentator in the late 1960s. In it he articulated views that were controversial to the more stringent core of students and faculty. It touched on themes that were relevant to several modern issues facing the community and issues that were debated through the centuries; subjects such as revelation, relations with the Christian community, roles of women within Judaism, biblical criticism, and so forth. His progressive views touched on the underlying tension between these two poles within YU, and there was a robust outcry on the part of the more fundamentalist voices that these views were heretical. They were voiced in the Letters to the Editor in the Commentator.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein wrote a rebuttal of many of Greenberg’s positions in a following issue of the Commentator. It was a rich debate teasing out many salient disagreements on fundamental issues. While both brilliant scholars adhered to the authority of the halakha, their approaches were very different. Rabbi Greenberg, trained as a Harvard historian, was by temperament very optimistic, and believed in the capacity of change inherent in the halakhic system. He acknowledged historical influences and posited a value-oriented approach to halakha. He pointed out the subjectivity in the development of halakha in Responsa literature, viewed it as dynamic, flexible, and open to human needs and changing circumstances affected by socio-cultural transformations. He was sensitive to the scholarly historical research originating in the nineteenth century, and balked at the idea that the halakhic method was an exact science where its practitioners were insulated from subjective or external considerations. He suggested that they are also human beings influenced consciously or unconsciously by life’s realities and the concrete situations in which they find themselves. Their goals did and should influence their rulings which included their values as well as pure legal theory. Without this capacity for flexibility and

adaptation within the system, halakha could become burdensome in these new living conditions. And he bemoaned the fact that the contemporary gedolim were not utilizing their capacities to respond to issues that needed halakhic intervention. I believe it was Greenberg's humanistic, optimistic nature, and his belief in the human being's capacity and responsibility to partner with God in a continued revelation of bringing progress and healing to the world that were the foundations of his position.

Rav Lichtenstein's position emphasized that although change was valid, it can never be at the expense of rejecting or distorting halakhic norms in order to satisfy contemporary demands. Whenever the halakhic decision-making process is carried out with integrity and full scholarship it is never a process of deliberate change in conformity with shifts in taste or new social conventions. It is always was motivated to shape contemporary life in accordance with the values of the Torah. It assumes the absolute authority of the norms of the Torah and the mandate to apply these norms to the ever-changing developments in societies. He posited that it was an error to begin with a desired conclusion and then try to justify it by means of halakhic dialectic in order to support a previously held viewpoint. The law must always be determined on its own merit and we must then be bound by its voice. We are also bound by its rules of procedure pronounced by our Sages, which includes precedent and consensus. And the most essential vector in his point of view is that caution in the face of change, is not only due to the need for legal stability, but the belief that the Word of God is unchanging. It is heretical to deny Rambam's position that the Oral Law is of Divine origin and that the rabbinic enactments are binding. He emphasized the inherent caution of the gedolim was not because they opposed change, but because of the awareness of the importance of making correct decisions that are in accordance with the tradition. So trepidation and patient adjudication were at the root of the posek's work. Two different poles, caution (Lichtenstein) vs. empowered action (Greenberg) clash here and create inherent tension, rather than a Hegelian synthesis. This is a major challenge. Can these two different temperaments, two different points of view live side-by-side with respect and imbibe from each other's energies so as to balance and temper extremes, or is only one view looked at as legitimate in the Orthodox camp?

Greenberg responded to his critics that he was being misunderstood in some particulars but that his main point is that he saw talmudic discussions and the halakhic process as the creative thinking of human beings in relationship with the divine Torah, and that humans are given the divine right to partner with God in decision-making. Flexibility and adaptivity are gifts of God empowering human

beings to foster societal progress through the values of the Torah. Moreover, he felt that we should be self-critical, out of love, so that we can address contemporary issues in a more assertive, humane, caring way as representatives of Torah, promoting the highest values of our tradition in the world.

Part of this debate is a never ending argument of how much of a role do humans play in the Sinaitic and ongoing revelation. Whose voice is primary? The contemporary, modern human leaders who view themselves as partners with God in carrying out the mandates of Torah; or the ancient voices and decisions of the Talmud and sages, whose authority is stronger and must be obeyed in all situations? How is the halakhic process viewed by these different thinkers, and can they both be given credibility? Or is there a right way and a wrong way? There are those who experience the voice of God in the halakha, and those who experience God in different realms, such as philosophy, psychology, literature, mysticism. Are they mutually exclusive? The original version of Torah uMada accepted the legitimacy of a wider, encompassing view; but I think the view of caution/yir'ah has overtaken the view of ahava these days as the more authentic, legitimate expression of Orthodoxy and thus thinkers such as Hartman, Rackman, Berkovits, and Wurzburger, who expressed similar conceptualizations to Greenberg are not in the forefront of Orthodox thought, but the teachings of the Rav (viewed through a particular lens) and Rav Lichtenstein, Rav Shechter, and Rav Willig are singled out as more accurate progenitors of genuine Orthodoxy.

Of course, there is a great complexity and thus disagreement over whether there is complete objectivity in the halakhic process, or greater weight given to the human being's ability to creatively change the law for the sake of the benefit of the individual through takanot, gezerot, hora'at sha'ah, and so forth. One might ask as Dr. Gerald Blidstein did, "Are there not meta-halakhic categories where hashkafa plays a role?" And if so, who is empowered to make a decision there? There are divergent opinions on this. The scholars argue that only the recognized sages are empowered to make these decisions and the synagogue rabbis argue that since they are closer to the people, their decisions are more reality-based and humane.

Another area of contention is our perception of the nature of human beings. Our beliefs impact our behaviors. Can we use principles within the halakhic system to alleviate problems that affect the Jewish people and the world, or is the world an evil place whose values are to be shunned? What is it that motivates us? What is our deepest belief? Are we humanists, who utilize religion to express our humanistic beliefs, or are we true believers, who will give up our views and needs

because Tradition mandates (demands) it. Probably the marriage of these two views would be helpful and complementary, but marriages can be contentious even with commitment. This discussion in the Commentator alerted us to the Two Voices that called out to us, each with overwhelming strength.

Perhaps the most extreme and frightening moments in the dorm discussing this Commentator debate arose when we entertained the possibility that the disagreements between the right- and left-wing Orthodox ideologies were so different that it would be better to acknowledge this and go separate ways, i.e., define these movements as two distinct movements. For the primary ideology in the more right-wing community is based upon belief; either one has it or one does not. Belief in Sinai and the oral tradition as God-given: There could be no compromise with this truth. The participants in this system ingest this value, and then it becomes a group of true adherents with the pressure that a group brings on its members, and a psyche that is ruled by a strong superego that dominates it.

The Modern Orthodox group may not have this absolute belief, but they have a faith in the teachings of the Torah and sages as evolved and holy and thus are committed to follow these laws because of the divine truth that emerges from the corpus of its teachings. It gives up the absolute certainty of the right wing, but derives its meanings from the resonant values that it pursues and sees God’s presence in this. The gain for this group is a sense of authenticity even within the struggle. These are very different guiding principles. After nights of debate we concluded that Orthodoxy contains both energies, which breeds an inevitable tension, but manages at most times to survive and thrive as a community, unless the boundaries become too taut, and then one part of the system breaks off and forms a new movement. We were determined to remain connected because of our love for the Jewish people.

Another event at YU also cried out with the pain of conflict. During this period of time, Stern College students at the downtown campus were asking for permission to take classes at the Yeshiva College campus uptown, for they felt limited by course offerings and felt deprived of taking courses with professors and rabbis who were highly respected. There was increased discussion of the possibility of the women being able to come uptown to take courses, and the Student Council was asked to also take a vote on the matter. It was an important vote that could impact the future policy of Yeshiva. It appeared that the majority of the students felt it only fair that the Stern College students should have the right to take classes on the uptown campus. But right before the final vote, Rabbi Shlomo

Riskin, who was a dorm counselor at the time, made an impassioned speech to the students condemning the idea since the socializing between girls and boys would detract from the kedushah of the yeshiva. The suggested move was voted down in a dramatic close vote, and the energies of progressive change and the maintaining of the status quo clashed. Both energies had merit, there was no judgement of castigation of the differing point of view, but it was another indication of the intensity of two voices that dwelt within the yeshiva. I believe it was a turning point in strengthening the status quo and if the vote had gone the other way, a new atmosphere would have entered the gates of the yeshiva. But it was a moment of integration and respectful dialogue and thus it was a good moment at YU.

On the other hand, there was some disrespectful extremism, one pole not connected to the whole, that took place right after this. There was a wonderful, humble religious scholar who taught at the Revel Graduate School named Rabbi Meyer Feldblum, who lived in Washington Heights and davened with the YU minyan on Shabbat. He taught a class on Rabbinic Literature and introduced some ideas that were thought to be heretical to the fundamentalist group. He suggested that it was erroneous to declare, “Judaism says this, or Judaism holds this way,” for he taught that different scholars held different opinions and had different voices, and it was more accurate to say the Rambam in the twelfth century says this, and Rabbi Akiva in the first and second centuries says this. He taught about different layers of the rabbinic tradition, and some felt that it was too close to the historical school of Judaism, more akin to what the Jewish Theological Seminary was teaching. So a few zealous students began to march in front of his classroom in an attempt to boycott his class. He was also a Kohen, and they said he should not get an aliya because he is a heretic. Most students ignored these few students, or were angered by their behavior, and it reinforced their anger toward bigotry and intolerance. But it was a seed that was being planted in which some students were fearful of sharing thoughts that would be perceived as heretical, learned to be quiet, and more sadly this schism began to create different factions that were no longer willing to dialogue with each other as their positions hardened.

After graduating college, I studied in a yeshiva in Israel for two years, and entered the YU Semikhah program while working as a dorm counselor. In Israel, at Mercaz Harav, I was exposed to the teachings of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook, and to the classic Mussar teachers. Although in the Yeshiva world, there was some feeling that one did not need Mussar, I felt touched by its teachings and emphasis on character development. So when I returned to YU, a group of

students used to gather in my room at night and we used to study Mussar (Rav Dessler, Mesilat Yesharim, Hovot Halevavot), and the mystical, poetic teachings of Rav Kook. We began to feel that in addition to our formal observance, we needed a greater emotional connection to the spiritual voice found in the Torah. There was some connection that was developing between our spirituality and our need to concretize this energy into social action. But once more there were two voices.

Parts of the yeshiva world condemned Rav Kook as too universal and too accepting of the emerging modern voices in Israel. They marked up his sefarim with graffiti. The bulk of the yeshivot also did not give much credence to Mussar; the ideal was to learn Talmud day and night. But some did not have the talent nor the temperament for this; they were drawn to philosophy, the mysteries of the human condition, and the inner calling to contribute to the healing of the world. But their voice was not as honored as those dedicated to talmudic learning. There was actually no reason to reject different factions if one thought more deeply about it since we were all God's creatures and if we were studying Torah it should be logical to embrace and honor each other. But as R. Yisrael Salanter taught, "A human being is just a drop of rationality in a sea of irrationality." So my friends and I decided we should continue to study Mussar and try to grow as much as we could and contribute to the world.

Subsequently, we formed several Mussar projects. One was called Project Ezra where we pledged not only to continue our Mussar study, but to move down to the Lower East Side and work to help the elderly in a settlement house downtown. This project was supported by the Jewish Federation. We also decided to write a Mussar Anthology. Rabbi Hillel Goldberg edited it, and it was published by Harwich Press. It contained articles by people interested in Mussar from both right-wing and left-wing communities. In addition, we decided to compose a 'chain letter (before the days of the computer), in which we would send our ideas about Judaism to one another and each person would comment. I was engaged in a very interesting dialogue with Rabbi Yechiel Perr from Far Rockaway in which we expressed differing views on Judaism and its practices and philosophies. Although he lived in the world of the right-wing yeshiva, and I lived in the world of Torah uMada, we were able to respect each other's differences and remain in dialogue for a period of years. One of our basic differences was that he felt that the purpose of Judaism was to create an eved Hashem (servant of the Lord), and I favored the idea that our purpose was imitatio Dei, "Just as God is compassionate so must we be compassionate." Obviously, these ideas were not mutually exclusive, but the disagreement highlighted a preference for submission to the

yoke of the mitzvoth vs. a preference for character refinement as the goal of Judaism. The point here is that though these ideas led to very different emphases, practices and outlooks, we were able to accept each other's differences and respect the other, even though we differed temperamentally and philosophically. The yir'ah and the ahava dwelt together in this case, but it was an exception rather than a rule.

Three other minor events reflect this ongoing tension at YU at that time. One was that during my years in the semikhah program there was some feeling among the more Mussar-oriented students that the curriculum in the semikhah program should be adjusted to include more courses relating to the contemporary needs of the community. The formal curriculum was based on the yeshivot in Eastern Europe, and we felt it could be adjusted a bit. I was to write up this proposed curriculum and publish it in the Commentator. The article suggested among other things a shift from Yoreh Deah to Hoshen Mishpat, some Mussar, and so forth. At the same time, however, Hillel Goldberg began to publish an underground newspaper entitled Pulse, and I chose to publish it in Pulse rather than the Commentator. Because of the stronger energy to maintain the status quo at the yeshiva, I was not hopeful that change would occur, but I felt that a seed should be planted. Pulse did not last too long, and perhaps in retrospect, I should have published it in the Commentator, but this is an example of the strong power of precedent that was the stronger voice at YU. When I spoke with a rosh yeshiva about my view that this older model was an educational model set up for the one percent who would emerge as gedolim at the expense of the many who are deprived from spending more time studying other areas of Judaic thought, he answered, "Yes, and this is how it should be. Without the great scholars there would be no Judaism."

On the other hand, the voice of greater inclusivity and the importance of social action did have its place, though in a lesser role. One example was when a fire broke out in the library of JTS, and we received a call in the dorm late at night asking if some students would be willing to come down to help salvage some of the books. This was very unusual, for most of us had never entered the premise of JTS, nor did we had contact with non-Orthodox seminary students; but after a phone call to the Rav, we were given permission to go down and help during this emergency crisis. Although flames and water destroyed or damaged over 120,000 volumes, half the waterlogged books were salvaged through a simple but time consuming process, blotting each page of each book with a paper towel, and then drying the books in a hot room.

Yeshiva College responded to JTS's plea for help, and hundreds of YU students spent hours aiding in a very tedious job helped by refreshments provided by JTS. This was an unusual incident that touched on the energies of yir'ah (are we permitted to even enter the JTS seminary) and ahava, an act of kindness to help others with a different philosophy and to save holy books.

Of course, ongoing acts of social action were expressed in the activities to save Soviet Jewry. Though there was initially hesitation to get involved, for many of the leading rabbis said it may be counterproductive and interfere with the secret work being done to smuggle Jews out of the Soviet Union, an amazing man named Jacob Birnbaum visited our dorms alerting us to the immense importance of pidyon shevuyim, and many of us in the yeshiva at that time joined the SSSJ (Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry) and protested regularly with other Jews.

This partnering with other Jews in social action projects also led me to join a group of Jewish student leaders in pressuring the New York Jewish Federation to adjust their spending priorities to bestow more money to aid Soviet Jewry and Jewish Education. Their budget had been heavily involved in subsidizing hospitals and social service projects but almost negligible in support of these Jewish essential interests. After a year of dialogue with the Federation leaders and little progress, we planned a protest at their New York headquarters, informing the New York Times and the press of our intentions to close down their operations for the day. We succeeded to both get arrested for a few hours and achieve front-page coverage in the Times, which led to the ceding of money to Soviet Jewry projects and aid to Jewish educational institutions. I mention this as an example of an energy of progressive action to improve society and overturn injustice that also dwelt within the walls of the yeshiva.

After setting down some examples of two strong voices in the Jewish Orthodox world that I experienced at YU and perhaps a trend that may have strengthened one pole (yir'ah) more than the other, there has currently emerged a movement to create a new Modern Orthodox voice today as exemplified by Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and Maharat founded by Rabbi Avi Weiss; by the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals founded and led by Rabbi Marc Angel; and by the International Rabbinic Fellowship, founded by Rabbis Angel and Weiss. There is Itim in Israel led by Rabbi Seth Farber working to welcome converts and free agunot. We also can point to the rise of the rabbinic group Tzohar in Israel, as well as the Beth Hillel organization there. A resurgence in Modern Orthodoxy is emerging.

The more liberal voices in the Orthodox community have often been ignored or quashed. As an example, a few years ago on Shabbat, I attended Beth Jacob in Los Angeles on the Shabbat of Rabbi Rackman's yahrzeit. The President of YU was the guest speaker that Shabbat, and the rabbi was a musmah of YU. But Rabbi Rackman's name was not even mentioned. His points of view were not recognized as an integral part of the Centrist Orthodox community. The reality is that we rarely hear about Rabbi Rackman, Rabbi Greenberg, Rabbi Hartman, Rabbi Berkovitz, Rabbi Wurzburger in Orthodox circles; but we hear the names of the gedolim, such as Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Moshe Feinstein. But now new institutions such as YCT have arisen, and new voices emerge. The kol demama daka returns from exile and both the ahava and yir'ah are combined. The balanced, living halakha leads to peace and pleasantness.

Rav Kook taught that creativity and wisdom are strengthened in an atmosphere of freedom and respect (Orot, vol. 1:177). Both bina (rational differentiation) and hokhma (intuition and imagination) can be truly honored in Modern Orthodoxy and integrated to produce da'at, a full wisdom that honors both sides of the gestalt. The Hassidic commentaries, which tease out psycho-spiritual wisdom, can be studied along with Mitnagdic wisdom and Sephardic wisdom so that a multiplicity of voices can be heard.

The firmness of the legal mind and the flexibility of the psychological mind will marry again to produce harmony and creativity so that extremism is diminished. This tension of the opposites will lead to greater creativity and new solutions to age-old problems that are not solved by retreating to isolated, safe, like-minded enclaves. As R. Yisrael Salanter taught, "Rather than worrying about another person's spiritual level, and your own physical needs, worry about another person's physical needs and your own spiritual level."

Yes, in the exposure to the modern world, our beliefs have encountered challenges as new information and shifts of values emerge. Yes, we have to differentiate which practices and beliefs can fit into accepted norms and traditions in this encounter. This is very challenging, but debates and dialogue can lead to new insights, expansions, and deeper conviction about formerly held ideas. There will always be a tension between choice and yielding to authority, between different temperaments; but this leads to advancement and new insights.

The Hassidim teach us that the Torah begins with a bet and ends with a lamed, lamed-bet spells lev, heart. The Torah is a heart book; the more human you are the more Jewish you are. As the story goes, a student of the Rif ran to him in

excitement and told his rebbe, “I just went through all of the Talmud,” expecting praise. And the Rif replied, “But how much of the Talmud went through you?” Let us learn to love each other with all our differences. This is the spirit that will usher in the Mashiah.