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"The future of Judaism or the Judaism of the future: About the Jewish Values"

It was Theodor Hertzl who talked about "state heart" and "people heart" as the state condition and the people condition. Hertzl believed that having our own state is a prerequisite for the survival and unity of the Jewish people. In Hertzlian terms, the state is a means to reach a greater goal. The state is a high goal but the greatest goal is the Jewish people. Despite the greatness of founding a state, it is even a greater challenge to guarantee the continuity of the Jewish people.

Today I would like to talk about religious tolerance, not the external tolerance but the internal one. In my opinion, the current division of the Jewish community worldwide is a destructive tendency, even more destructive than anti-Semitic activities. This division I would like to talk about implies the serious danger of a real apartheid between orthodox and liberal Jews. If our generation fails to overcome the religious and ideological barriers among the Jews in the short term, I foresee that in the next century there will not be one Jewish people but two. There cannot be a future for a people without internal unity in the present; without a present, there cannot be a future. Of course, unity does not imply unanimity. It only implies respect for natural differences. Pluralism is the essence of democracy and the foundations upon which Judaism is built. I think unity is possible, and I say that with full and honest conviction. I am aware of the internal tensions, which are not only ideological: there are principles that are being questioned, rivalries that are not always based on ideologies. And even so I believe that unity among the Jews is possible, in Sao Paulo, in Rio de Janeiro, in Buenos Aires, in Montevideo and even in Jerusalem.

I consider it essential to defend in practice the unity of our people clearly and as seriously as we do it in theory. As a liberal I should not speak about what our orthodox brothers are doing right or wrong. I cannot express an opinion on that. But I can give my opinion on what we should do to advance the unity of the *Ishuv*. Instead of just denouncing the intransigence of our orthodox brothers, we should adopt a positive platform that considers the present and future of Judaism. I will try to explain what I mean.

I think we should address the orthodox with due credit. The orthodox devotion, their education (*chinuch*) are a good example for all the Jewish community. Even the declared secularist Nahum Goldman used to say that it is safer to leave the *Chinuch*, Jewish education programs, in the hands of the orthodox since they obtain the best results. They are the ones that manage to go deeper into the Jewish identity. They also bring the children that fill the classrooms. Our position should keep good balance, opposing to the orthodox establishment's attempts to use the political and financial power to suppress liberal Judaism and, at the same time, fostering the dialogue with our moderated orthodox Jewish brothers. It is necessary to have a continuous dialogue between the liberal and the orthodox Jews at all levels, not only among rabbis and community leaders but mainly among the masses.

If through dialogue we are being successful in overcoming 2,000 years of hatred and mistrust between Christians and Jews, we are certainly able to overcome hatred and mistrust between Jews and Jews. Today we live in open and pluralistic societies, and Jews are exposed to alternative life styles. In each environment, the more ways of Jewish life the community offers, the greater number of Jews will choose from such options, thus strengthening the Jewish people as a whole. If we restrict the Jewish options, the people will end up choosing non Jewish options. This is a basic marketing principle.

Even in this ethics of mutual respect, the different Jewish movements need each other's singularity to compensate for their own internal deficiencies. Each group needs help from the other, needs the presence of the other. The liberal movement has to go deeper into its sense of tradition. By being in contact with an orthodox family, the non orthodox Jew can better capture the beauty of *Sabbath* and can even start to observe these traditions at his or her own home. The orthodox community in turn needs to increase its ability to respond to the contemporary universal issues with sensitivity. And one of the best ways to motivate orthodox Jews regarding social work would be for them to be in contact with the specific contents of social work and the liberal Jews who are seriously involved in such field. Obviously, there are irreconcilable differences, but this should not prevent us from seeking areas of cooperation, mutual interest, and the support to the State of Israel in the first place.

Let us work for the chinuch and the *tarbut*, the Jewish culture and Jewish education; for the dialogue inside the community, not only out of it. This dialogue will have to involve firstly moderated Jews from both sides, with the hope that, as time passes, more orthodox Jews will become more moderated not in their religious observance but in their receptiveness of Jews from other denominations. Meanwhile, as those moderated Jews from the orthodox side are attacked by the extremists for being willing to talk and cooperate with us, we, the liberal Jews, cannot let the radicals of our own ranks "opposing to any form of dialogue" intimidate us. In the beginning of a new millennium, the main goal for the Jews is to unite; gratuitous hatred can only be overcome with *ahavat chinam*, groundless love. There are friends whose hearts can be conquered, alliances that can be made, unions that can be consolidated, new options that can be found. Unless the Jews learn to acknowledge one another, they will lose the acknowledgment of the non-Jews. So instead of seeking the failure of each other's side, I think we should pray and work for their well-being and success. To fight against Jewish extremism, we need sensible, balanced, and moderated Jews; we need tolerant Jews. In the current Jewish life scenario, short of political and religious moderation, we need the contribution of both traditionalism and liberalism.

We need Jews who acknowledge their Jewish condition with pride and dignity and, at the same time, support the dialogue with the representatives of other movements and other religions. We need Zionists who devote themselves wholeheartedly to the welfare of the State of Israel and also worry about the rights of other peoples in the Middle East. When the military dictatorship was at its peak, here in Brazil in the 70s, a general sent a message to the leaders of the youth movement: take care of your radicals and we will take care of ours. I believe that is the role of the Jews in Latin America. And this involves, as far as possible, taking care of our radicals; making them realize that their perception of truth is just a mere perception and, as such, it can be

partial and biased; trying to show them that we are all children of the same G-d, therefore, we are all brothers and sisters; and showing them that we will only reach our Jewish objectives if we disarm our spirit and strive for mutual understanding.

This is my dream for Latin American Judaism, for a quantitative and qualitative future: I wish there were more harmony inside the Jewish community, more respect among rabbis, more respect among community leaders, more understanding between orthodox and liberal Jews, Ashquenazim and Sefaradim. I wish the disagreements were limited to ideas and were not based on personal vanities and power games. This is my dream. I wish there were more Jewish contents in the community projects and less ostentation. I wish the Jewish intellectuals in Latin America had the same status as the Jewish businessmen. I wish the Latin American Jews were aware that their fate is inextricably connected to the fate of Israel and that such awareness were reflected in actual solidarity actions. In the new millennium, there are external problems to solve, but the first steps are to face and overcome the internal challenges. I hope that the new millennium brings us reasons to believe that better times will come for our community, for the State of Israel and for the people of Israel. Amen.