

Text of Reb Zalman's Keynote Address
PeRaH Founding Meeting
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I want us to know that we are a חידוש. A חידוש doesn't mean that a thing is brand new. It means that we have discovered a new way of looking at the old that suddenly takes away the difficulties that we have.

At the same time, a new problem is created for us: מי ומי ההולכים. My sense is that we have to start looking at people who get the call and create the possibility for them to respond to the call.

We started with תעודת חבר, a certificate of collegiality.* The best way in which I could express it at that point was not rabbinic ordination but to say that I will accept this person's מעשה בית דין. How s/he will deal with Torah I accept. I accept him/her as a colleague. I wish that we could have continued along this line. It didn't turn out to be practical for reasons that had to do with employment and with what is good for people and so on. But I feel that even on the level of collegiality there is a whole sliding scale.

The sliding scale concept has been in my halakhic vocabulary and in my way of appreciating even issues having to do with inter-religious dialogue. Sliding scale is important. It isn't off/on; it isn't brittle; it isn't binary. It's over the whole range. And so when I now talk about התכללות and ספירות, I mean that paths are more important than the ספירות because the action is not in חסד but the action is between חסד and גבורה, כי גבר, גבורה, it is somewhere on the path, in the middle. So when we start looking at who is a rabbi, in a sense we're all becoming. I just want to get that really clear. We are becoming rabbis.

At which point, then, can you say to somebody you are a rabbi? For myself, this has to do with the ספר barrier. You need to be able to read unvoweled Rashi script and make sense out of what's going on. Then you can be autodidactic, you can do your own learning. How did it happen when somebody in Galicia (where they didn't have the great yeshivot), wanted to become a rabbi? How did it happen over there? The person sat in the בית מדרש, worked through the יורה דעה, then showed up before one of the רבנים, and said, "Test me. I want to have a היתר הוראה." What this means is you come and say, "Look at me." The way the rabbi used to say it is: ובקש ממני לתהות על: בא לפני האברך כך וכך ובקש ממני לתהות על: קנקנו, to go and check what's inside of his pitcher. Then the examining rabbi would go on to say: ומצאתיו מלא וגדוש: I found he's well learned, he's filled up.

In our situation what I found was basically a lot of yearning and motivation. ברוך השם, all of us came to serve in that capacity. Still, there are a number of people who will not break the ספר barrier yet are very good people who can lead small congregations and do a wonderful job. With the plethora of what's available in English today they can handle the life cycle and year cycle rituals in a good way.

Therefore, I want to say that I'm not happy having only the nomenclature rabbi. I want to put this out as a challenge: to come out and say to the world that we need other words and we need gradations. My sense is that the needs today are again for those kinds of people that America spawned at the beginning, which were the reverends. I

would like to see the return of a kind of a bachelor of divinity type ordination, though it should have a different name. I would rather see that the word rabbi, rav, be reserved for people whom I will delineate as we talk more in the world of בריאה and about the business of learning.

Here I'm talking about something that gives me pain. We are now talking about feeling, connection, and relationship in בריאה. It has to do with the study partnership, with ongoing study and חברותא. When the issue is you're not going to get the semicha until you cover this and that, then the hevrasas sometimes work. But it gives me pain that you are not continuing to study. I want to hear from people asking what is this thing called kiddushin, even if after study we decide that we're going to go with Rachel Adler and say we don't accept the concept of an אשה הנקנית, that marriage cannot be a קנין, and a woman is not chattel to be bought. Way back I wrote an article entitled: "Modern Covenants Need a Modern Ketuba." To spell out what is the real agreement, the real covenant that is happening, we have to get down to see what it is made of.

Soon, we will have to deal with the pro life forces on the one side and the pro choice forces on the other side in every state. We will have to take it up and we will be asked to take positions. I think every one of you should take a look at Gedaliah Felder's תשובה regarding a woman who has cancer and is pregnant and might gain a few months if she aborts the pregnancy. He is in favour of the abortion because the child becomes a רודף even for a few months.¹

You need to know the words. I have a feeling that when you come to talk with other rabbis the first issue that's going to come up is do you know how to use לשון לימודים the right way. And when we find עמארצות to the point that people who have gotten semicha don't know אשרי or שמע by heart, it's a real שאנדע. I think you need to learn more. This is why I insisted on your doing אוצר דינים ומנהגים at least. When you get involved in a conversation you will know the right terminology and you will know where to find the original reference because the אוצר tells you where to find it in the רמב"ם or the יורה דעה. Use of the ponies from the concordance to the right kind of dictionaries and secondary sources is what I told graduate students is called knowing how to b.s. respectably. To be a rabbi, you must know how to use the references and the right terminology.

Along the same lines: every one of us discovers raisins in the cake, little gems in the sources, and I would like to see a collection made of these gems. Reb Yaakov Emden (18th century), has the following in one of his ספרים: A woman gives birth to a baby girl while her husband is away at war or on a trip. In order to name the girl, he suggested that a מנין should meet in the house of the יולדת, that the יולדת be called to the Torah, and that a מי שברך should be made afterward naming the child. You understand why I think we need to have these things accessible to us? They give us roots in the past.

I want to reaffirm that I feel we are post demoninational. What we're doing doesn't fit into any denomination. New categories need to come into our speech.

¹In a conversation with Rabbi Gedaliah Felder, he told me that this תשובה can be found in his יסודי ישורון, Volume IV or V.

What are the things we need?

The קשר on communication:

I would like to see more on computer, a central place in which we can download references and quotes by fields and categories.

I would like to see rabbinic boiler plates. I feel that each of you will not have the time or the energy to produce these things yourselves, so why not share.

I would like to see a telephone tree arrangement for us.

I would like to see us put on computer the ספרים that we have.

I would like to see a rabbi's handbook based on the approach of our (P'nai Or) siddur with life and year cycle rituals and a modern drash section.

Now comes the other side. There were some people who said to me that they don't care about ממזרות. When I heard that, it felt like the bottom was falling out of all the stuff I tried to stand for and put into the world. It could all be undermined if people didn't have a sense of כלל ישראל, of responsibility. That hurt. How are you going to know what creates ממזרות and what does not create ממזרות if you don't take apart the software that we're using?

Let me give you an example: Every once in a while I see one of those כתובות with no קנין in it. There is nothing in there to say that this marriage takes effect as of now and that this is a legal instrument. These are wonderful assertions that people are making and you read from the pulpit, but you don't have a sense of what takes, what is the instrumentality. In some way it's my אשמנו, because what I tried to do was to hide it, to make sure it was there but with a little spoonful of sugar so the medicine should go down. So I handled קנין and other things in such a way that it should be also an act of מוסר, of ethics. But it has to be there. *Tachlis* is *tachlis*. It has to be there. The words at the end of every סמיכה that I've written are, that I trust in the להחמתו שלא יראת שמים שקדמה להחמתו שלא יוציא מתחת ידו דבר שאינו מתוקן

I want to say two things about egalitarianism as far as witnesses are concerned. The דין is that certain witnesses are עדי קיום; nothing happens without the witnesses. As far as כלל ישראל is concerned, women have not been accepted as עדי קיום. However, in things that are מותר and אסור, then נאמן באיסורין באחד נאמן באיסורין באחד and where עד אחד is נאמן באיסורין באחד, a woman is too. (This derives from the ענין of בדיקה of herself.) My practice at this point has been to demand that two men and two women be used for witnesses for עדי קיום in order to create an egalitarian ethos around this at this point. Where the issue is להוצוא ידי חובתו, e.g. to blow shofar, to read Torah, to do those things where people say a woman cannot be מוציא a man, then the gender of the witnesses is irrelevant. This sets out to the world that we care for egalitarianism but without creating a situation that might lead to ממזרות and other unforeseen consequences. My *sof sof* is that I believe that a real מעשה בית דין for our time should be done by a man and a woman rabbi together, things that have to do with personal status should not be handled by a man alone or by a woman alone.

I also want to say that when we oversee a *get*, I would like to have the man write the

get himself and not go the way *halacha* has gone in the past, that he has to appoint a *sofer*. Any second hand situation takes away from the severity of what has to be happening. The only reason not to have the man write is because he may say later on that he had the wrong *kavvanah* and didn't really mean it. That is why we have asked him to be מוסר מודעה in the same way as we handle מסירות מודעה in other situations. He declares irrevocably that he does it with this and this intention.

I would like to talk about arbitration. On one סמיכה I wrote ידין ידין. This stands for an arbitration procedure not based on the שלחן ערוך. What I've found is that when it comes to דיני תורה between people we are not trying to force a legal precedent based on a פסק that comes from the 16th century. Rather, we want to create an agreement from the common usage of our day that both sides will be willing to accept. Not everyone can serve in this way.

Waves come and go. In the late sixties and the early seventies we were planning a seminary without walls. I remember that one of the things that I put in as a possible standard for women rabbis was midwifery, in the same way as I wanted a male rabbi to be either a מוהל or a שוחט. I now think that maybe a person needs to be at a death before being ordained. What happened was that they were scared and so they started to lay on a lot of academic layers for getting a סמיכה. I feel that it's time again for doing something.

I also want to see מקוות כשרות for non orthodox uses. I want to see not only טבילה לשם גרות, but טבילה לשם השכנה and טבילת רפואת הגוף והנפש. The clinical notion deadens anything spiritual that might happen in a מקוה.

In יצירה, I want to suggest periodic meetings for study and *davvenen*, for sharing our readings, for pointing to teachers and resources that the *haverim* should know. We need to compare notes on processes, experience, and methods of spiritual growth, to socialize and to experience the newest holy esthetic, to try out new ideas and to share the work in progress.

What has made הלכה transformative is what I call the psycho-halachic process. The doing was accompanied by experience, the right כונה. We grew up in a kind of chaos and had to educate ourselves. Therefore, we lack a certain discipline. There's hardly anyone who has enough depth to know his/her inner processes because we are so on the surface, and it's not likely that we can find people who went through a school of higher consciousness prior to their ordination. One of the things about discipline, אלהי, is to have a תענית דיבור. The late rebbe made me have a תענית דיבור between certain hours on Monday and Thursday. Study, learn, *davven*, whatever you need to do, but don't say anything else. Can you have an itch that you don't scratch for a while? I would also like us to have שלח לך אנשים ויתורו את הארץ, to go and find out what are the things being offered that we all need to experience, to import and transform. For example, the Hoffman process currently takes seven days, which one could do between *Rosh Hashanna* and *Yom Kippur*. It is hokey as hell but it works and he wants people to learn it.

I would like us to give each other mutual help, like AA sponsors, with קהילות. At contract time, you should be able to talk with somebody who can help you walk into the meeting not arrogant but not like a *shmata*. You really can rehearse these things. This is also true for משפחה and health issues. Nobody can help as much as *haverim*. I sense that most of us don't talk to one another when it comes to the real cutting edge of our spiritual lives, where we are not bragging about our meditation but where we are really running into trouble.

I want to say something about דרכי העבודה and how to make the סידור work. I sometimes feel like the emperor's clothes with the new סידור. I'm saying, "Oh what nice clothes, how wonderful," because who wants to appear not new and stupid. So we say it works, but I'm not sure yet that it works. The text is the bricks. The mortar that puts those bricks together is the דרכי העבודה, the inner states, and I don't think that we have yet found a smooth way of working with the text of this *siddur* to make it a spiritual experience. We need to help one another to do that.

When it comes to referrals for תיקון הנשמות, I don't deal with *dibbukim* and *gilgulim*. I don't see auras. Some of you have those abilities. In the ספר חסידים of ר' יהודה החסיד you find short stories which make up a kind of recipe book of what חסידי אשכנז did in the 14th century. I would like us to create such a cookbook. People tell me that there is a greater amount of disassociation coming into the world, that people are experiencing the disassociation of personality to a far greater extent than before. We need to know to whom we should refer people.

I want to move to בריאה.

A while ago I talked with people who are planning a rabbinic curriculum about what is modern and what is contemporary and I realized that contemporary stops with Kaplan and World War II. A name like Ken Wilbur and a concept like *gaia* are unknown. This is where we will make our theological contribution. We are beginning to find out that the deep structures of mind and reality overlap. It's important to learn those structures and get involved in that kind of reading. Some people will love what happens between transpersonal psychology and nuclear physics. Gaia theology is going to become more and more important especially when we start talking about eco kashrut and טעמי המצוות which need to be given not only rationally but in פרדס, on all four levels. That's my recent insight in נכנסו לפרדס, ארבעה נכנסו לשלום, that if you want to be נכנס בשלום and יצא בשלום you have to deal with the body, the emotional being, the rational being, and the spiritual being. If they go in together and come out together, then you have a wholistic person; otherwise the person either goes crazy or dies.

I come now to אצילות, the deepest field in which we need to share.

Our cover is rabbi; our real being is *rebbe*. The צד השוה of פר"ה is *rebbe*. I can certify rabbi. For *rebbe* you have to have an ordination which is not from the top down so much as from the bottom up.

A man came to the Kotzker and said, "Rebbe, I dreamt my father came in

my dream and told me I should be a rebbe." The Kotzker laughed. The man says, "Why are you laughing? It was a very serious dream." The Kotzker replied: "If your father would have come in a dream to three hundred people and told them to take you as their rebbe, then I would take your dream seriously."

Rebbe is an ordination from the bottom up, an acclamation. We see it with the *אשת חזון* ceremony where a group of women say: "היי לנו לקצין", you show us the way. We see that you are modelling something for us and we want to empower this model." This is not a *תור הכבוד*, it's a burden and a temporary function. We really must get that clear.

As a rebbe, you function as a *נשמה כללית*. People plug into you and since you are sitting on their shoulders you have vision. At that moment you see yourself larger than life and you learn things that you can teach to the people who empowered you. Further, what you see is often more than what you can transmit; the residue is what gives you further vision and enrichment. The trouble is you forget to take off the inflated self and that creates a lot of *tsores*. You begin to believe you are that inflated self rather than being its instrument. In my life I have never seen two *rebbe*s talk to each other like friends. When the *Yid Hakodesh* walked with Reb Hershele Riminover, they held each other by the *gartel* as they walked and talked. That was a way of saying that you can say what you need to say to each other and you can deflate each other and see where you really are. The Kotzker's basic way was to deflate both himself and other people, but he didn't do it with joy and grace. This is where the peril is for us. We do become transformed by the *tsaddik* function and we have to learn how to come down gently.

So we come now to *שארית האצילות* and *ירידת השפע*.

There are issues of sexuality that come to a *נשמה כללית*. If you stay in inflation you're in trouble and even if you don't there are problems because it is difficult to read all the signals that come in the surrender of *נשמות פרטיות* to a *נשמה כללית*. I feel that you have to face this and talk it through.

There are some people who come to me whom I would like to refer to you. I hope something will arise from *פר"ה* that lets people say what their specialties are. People need a contact of a greater depth and greater intensity than I can handle at this point.

From time to time I may be in your area. Given early enough warning and the right to say "no thank you," I could introduce you in a cameo situation. I have done this in the past and want to continue to do that. It is a way of saying to the *קהל* that I'm working with that this is a well beloved *תלמיד* who does things really well. I would like to be able to do that in the future.

I'm done. Thank you.