

ON BEING TORAH: Reflections on a Party.....Elliott #1495

This thinksheet is a few notes on the 11 June 80 Chappaqua surprise party for Loree and me--as complete a surprise as the NYTS party a few weeks previous.

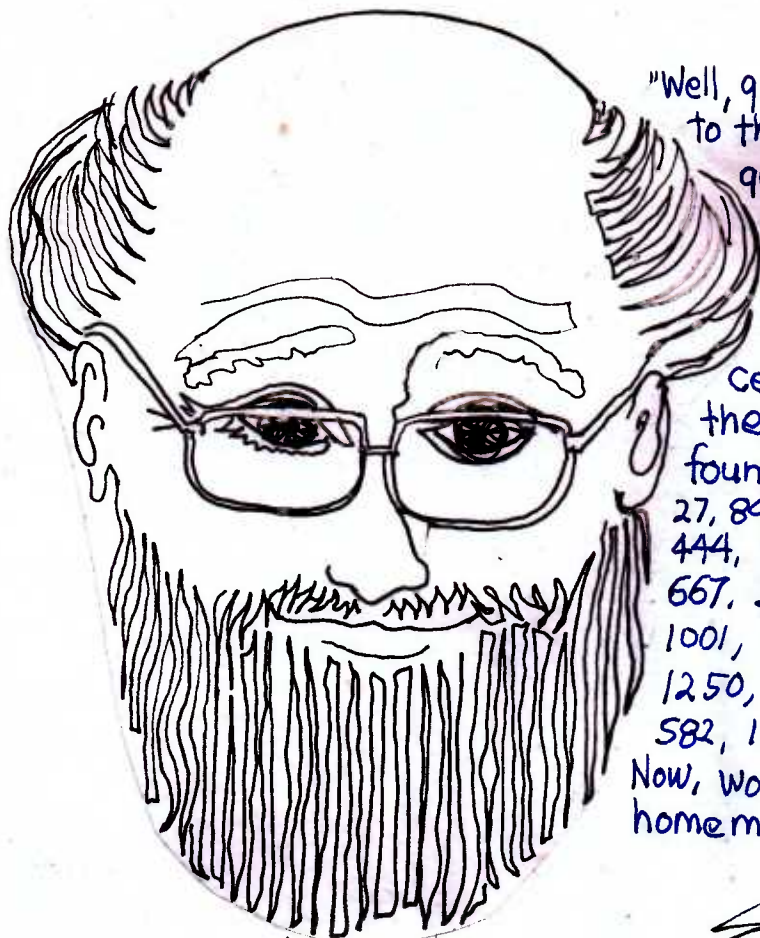
1. The reverse of this sheet is John Lefton's "legacy sheet": all attenders were expected to come prepared to read such a sheet and then present it to us for the event's album (+ cassette of the occasion). John, who just completed Midlife Exploration, got me good --but Loree less, for he worked from memory only, and doesn't know her as well. In my opinion, he's become a major Christian artist; and his first series on Scripture will soon be reduced to 8 1/2 x 11 so I can thinksheet it.

2. The most conscious motivation for this thinksheet appears in its title. The phrase "to be torah," which Rabbi Chaim Stern used in his speech, struck me with great force both because I couldn't recall ever hearing it before and because it is so resoundingly biblical. We all remember the negative form: "What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say." My college just published "The Great Teachers in Alumni Eyes"--the results of a just-completed survey: All of them (and I was privileged to "have" them all) are remembered more for what they were than for what they knew or even for teaching skills. The rabbi told the humorous shock-story of the student who went to rabbinic teachers not to hear them but to see how they tied their shoes. In Jewish (and, I say, biblical!) education, neither "communicating" nor "enabling" are primary, but "modeling" is. A corollary is that such education implies time-extensive teacher/student exposure, perhaps even only one teacher at a time (for which Jesus/Disciples is our central Christian model, the model Bonhoeffer made increasing use of as the world became more ominous for his seminary-on-the-run). Negative corollary: Having many teachers at the same time both trivializes and confuses, and shifts attention from teacher-as-torah to some impersonal-as-torah (book or process or...). Secondary negative corollary: Any less personal structure of teaching/learning alienates and imbalances "the coils" (splitting head and feelings, whether the excess attention is given to the one or to the other).

3. "All sorts and conditions" showed up for the party--of both Loree and me, friends and fellow-workers and students and counselees. Odd fact: Except for Chaim and Susan, all Jews who came are MDs! Gifts were in no case purchases: all were offerings of head-and-heart (the legacy sheets) and hand (personally made pottery). Quotes humorous and profound shall remain on tape, except this one (which I overheard): "Of all the people I haven't been able to understand the words of, Willis is the one I've learned the most from." So what's "understanding"? I thought of Augustine's "Fides quaerens intellectum," which I'll translate here as "Faith everlastingly sniffs out understanding."

4. The oldest speaker is 94 and still pastoring! When, after, he asked how I felt, I said "As though the party were for someone else, for God." He smiled and said, "Why not?"

OVER



Willis

"Well, quite possibly the ultimate solution to the particular query (as opposed to a question or quagmire) which you have presented may be resolved by, (or at least addressed by) your reading, (and hopefully understanding) certain explorations of this subject the quintessence of which may be found in my think sheets numbered: 27, 840, 997, 62, 63, 275, 1019, 2144, 873, 444, 99, 98, 279, 66, 1184, 1189, 1407, 667, 334 A, 334 B, 21, 22, 1200, 777 1001, 222, 9, 889, 210, 1000, 1249, 6, 1250, 1178, 1179, 99, 772, 327, 670 582, 101, and of course... 275! Now, would anyone care for some homemade wine?"

"The Murphey Brothers Van Lines gave us their Estimate for the move to Cape Cod. It came to only \$875 for the furniture and all the household items... and over \$2,000 for the 3"x5" cards."



Loree

with love and admiration,

H. Efton

OVER