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Gesher

Yeshiva University Journal of Jewish Studies

BRIDGING THE SPECTRUM OF ORTHODOX JEWISH SCHOLARSHIP

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This volume of Gesher is dedicated

in loving memory of

our dear friend and fellow student

David Rottenstreich ז"ל

who passed away tragically

on April 7th, 2009 at the young age of 20.

He exemplified a commitment to

Torah and mitzvot at the highest levels

and was truly a role model to all.

May his memory be a source of everlasting

inspiration and blessing for everyone.



יהי זכרו ברוך

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All submissions must be submitted electronically to GesherSubmissions@gmail.com to undergo a blind approval process. Submissions should be between 3,500-6,500 words, written clearly and in accordance with Chicago-style citation. Hebrew should be avoided as much as possible in English articles with the exception of textual quotations which should be quoted and translated. When necessary, Hebrew may be transliterated using standard transliteration guidelines. All submissions are subject to editing.

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Preface

First printed under the auspices of the Student Organization of Yeshiva in 1961, *Gesher* was published nine times between the years of 1961 and 1985. Originally conceived as a journal of Jewish Studies, *Gesher* became a forum for a wide range of distinguished authors, both within and outside the Yeshiva University community, to publish and disseminate their work. For many years, it tackled issues confronting the Jewish community while providing an outlet for “the development of Jewish scholarship on an advanced level...synthesiz[ing] the values of Torah with the values of culture and science” (Editors’ Preface, *Gesher* 1976). However, by 1985, *Gesher* fell silent.

In the past year, a group of students from Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women have endeavored valiantly to resurrect this publication. With the deepest gratitude to the Almighty, we are pleased to present the new *Gesher: Yeshiva University Journal for Jewish Studies*.

The journal in your hands today differs somewhat from its previous editions. First, *Gesher* has broadened its scope, expanding the range of topics explored within the realm of Jewish Studies. Additionally, we are pleased to present a journal comprised exclusively of students and former students of Yeshiva University. Similarly, this issue of *Gesher* has been prepared and edited solely by Yeshiva University students. While these changes may break with some of the traditions of old, they represent only technical modifications. At its core, we believe, this rejuvenated *Gesher* remains true to its *raison d’être*: to bridge the spectrum of Orthodox Jewish Scholarship—celebrating the “fundamental philosophy which lies behind our institution [Yeshiva University]—the notion of ‘Torah U-mada’” (Editors’ Preface, *Gesher* 1976).

We would like to express our most sincere *hakarat hatov* to the many people who have enabled us to renew this publication. First and foremost, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the Michael Scharf Publication Trust for endowing our project and to its administra-

tor, Professor Jeffrey Gurock, who has always been there to guide us along the path and without whom this project would never have become a reality. We would also like to thank the esteemed Jewish Studies faculty at Yeshiva College in particular Professors Shawn Zelig Aster and Aaron Koller for their continued advisement and commitment to their students. We are also very grateful to Ilene Goldfeder, our graphic designer, for her beautiful cover design.

Lastly, and most importantly, as this issue of *Gesher* comes to a close, we would like to once again offer our profoundest thanks to the Almighty, *HaKadosh Barukh Hu*, for His continual support and guidance in all His ways. It is our hope that this journal contributes towards a greater understanding of His Torah and world.

כי תבוא חכמה בלבך ודעת לנפשך ינעם (משלי ב:י)

THE EDITORS

Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5770

• Ari Schwab graduated from Yeshiva College in 2008 with a BA in Literature and is currently enrolled in RIETS and the Bernard Revel Graduate School.

Ari Schwab

Hadashim Gam Yeshanim: *Between* Maimonides and Maimuni

*The Child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.*

— WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam¹ (hereafter: Maimuni) inherited both the lineage and mantle of his illustrious father. Fittingly, Maimonides thought highly of his young child. In one of his correspondences, the normally concise codifier waxed poetic about the budding scholar:

בעניני העולם אין לי נחמה זולתי בשני דברים: כשאסתכל ואעין במה שאעין, ושזה בני אברהם, השם יתברך נתן לו הן וברכה מברכת מי שנקרא על שמו [. . .] הוא עניו ושפל שבאנשים, מצורף אל זה טוב מדותיו, והוא בעל שכל דק טבע נאה, ויהי לו בעזרת ה' שם בגדולים ללא ספק.

Of the affairs of this world I have no consolation save two things: preoccupation with my studies and the fact that God has bestowed upon my son Abraham grace and blessings similar to those He gave to him whose name he bears [. . .] He is endowed with subtle intelligence and a kind nature and with the help of God he will certainly gain renown amongst the great.²

At the time of this letter's composition, Maimuni was a mere child.³ When assessing Maimonides' viewpoint, family biases cannot be underestimated. Yet Maimonides' unabashed praise remains a significant approbation. After his father's death, Maimuni assumed the position of *nagid*, the communal and religious leader.

Raised on his father's knees, Maimuni was probably a graduate of an intensive educational program. One need only examine the *Mishneh Torah* to find some of Maimonides' familial guidelines:

כל שאינו מקפיד על אשתו ובניו ובני ביתו ומזהירן ופוקד דרכיהן תמיד עד שידע שהן שלמין מכל חטא ועון הרי זה חוטא. (סוטה ד:יט)

Whoever is not scrupulous regarding their wife and children, constantly warning them and observing their ways until he knows they are free from any iniquity, he is considered a sinner. (Laws of Sotah 4:19)

Certainly, the man who codified this sentiment would have taken a personal interest in his son's development. We can presume, therefore, that Maimuni's upbringing was saturated with his father's guidance. At the same time, while the "child is Father of the man," a lifetime adherence to his forbearer's path is far from self-evident.

Much of Maimuni's writing indicates a continuation of the Maimonidean tradition. His *Birkhat Avraham*, *Ma'aseh Nissim*, and *Milchamot Hashem* were written to defend his father on halakhic and philosophical grounds. Generally, the rabbinic tradition has assumed that Maimuni followed firmly in his father's footsteps. "It is known," asserts Maharam al-Askhar (1466-1542), "that all of his words are based on the words of his father."⁴ Indeed, Maimuni's positions are often used to explain a difficulty or clarify an ambiguity within the *Mishneh Torah*.⁵

One glaring exception to this rule seems to be his *magnum opus*, the "*Sefer HaMaspik Le'Ovdei Hashem*," known in Arabic as "*kifaya al-'abidin*."⁶ This work, a massive undertaking "built upon the foundations of fear and love," blends exegesis, a halakhic code, and a guide to character development.⁷ Paul Fenton, in his "Abraham Maimonides: Founding a Mystical Dynasty" begins his discussion on *Sefer HaMaspik* by noting that "in many respects, especially in its halakhic portions, the monumental *Kifaya al-'abidin* appears as an Arabic version of the *Mishneh Torah*." Following that premise, he raises a tantalizing question:

In the light, then, of his utter dedication to his father's legacy, it is somewhat difficult to understand why in so short a space of time after the Code, a mere thirty years after its publication, Abraham had deemed it fit to compose a similar work. (144-145)

The key to understanding Maimuni's intentions lies in the crucial distinction between father and son. Contemporary scholars, with Fenton at their head, have identified the influence of Sufism on Maimuni's thought, practice, and writings: "Abraham developed a complete religious theosophy of his own, which diverged quite considerably from that of his predecessor . . . characterized by a distinct leaning towards Sufism."⁸ This Islamic movement fused mystical speculation with ascetic pietism, desiring, in a sense, "my days to be / bound each to each by natural piety." Innovator⁹ of a new religious worldview, Maimuni composed *Sefer HaMaspik* to promulgate his revolutionary teachings.¹⁰

Not unlike the debate surrounding his father, Maimuni's ideological identity is perceived differently by rabbinic tradition and academic scholarship.¹¹ Historically, Maimuni remains the closest to understanding his father's intentions. Yet he should not be mistaken for his father's spokesperson; his words do not have complete authority over Maimonides' rulings. Twenty years later, would Maimonides have heaped the same praise on his son? Without the words of Maimonides himself, we must resort to speculation and reconstruction. Using the *Sefer HaMaspik* as a guide, we will suggest a middle approach between the divergent understandings on Maimuni's worldview; Maimuni was neither a Maimonidean clone nor a Sufi insurgent in disguise. Towards that end, we will utilize an instance where Maimuni disagrees with his father as a test case. Through the prism of this example, our analysis will sketch the issues involved in assessing the influence of philosophical beliefs on religious positions.

• • •

In the extant *Sefer HaMaspik*, Maimuni contradicts his father but once. He justifies this divergence by stipulating that had Maimonides been aware of his son's reasoning, the great sage would surely have capitulated to the truth.¹² While that may be the only *explicit* Maimonidean dispute in the work, there is at least one other time where Maimuni flouts

a ruling of his father. Within the chapters on “Compassion” and “Contentment” lies a subtle rejection of one of his father’s decisions.¹³ In his chapter on Compassion, Maimuni writes:

You should refrain from compassion when the Torah demands harshness [...] an even more striking example is that of the rebellious son: his parents must bring him to court to be executed—“His parents shall take hold of him” (Deuteronomy 21:19). (Feldheim 41).¹⁴

He repeats this obligation again in the chapter on Contentment: “his parents may not pity him” (321-323).¹⁵

One can read this passage without batting an eye. As the Feldheim edition rightly notes, however, this perspective directly contradicts Maimonides’ *Hilkhot Mamrim*:

אם מחלו לו אביו ואמו קודם שיגמר דינו פטור... היה אביו ואמו רוצה אמו רוצה ואביו ואינו רוצה אינו נעשה בן סורר ומורה שנאמר “ותפשו בו אביו ואמו” (ממרים ז,ח, י)

If his father and mother pardon him before the death sentence has been passed on him, he is exempt. . . . If his father is willing [to bring accusations against him] but the mother is not, or if the mother is willing but the father is not, he is not condemned as a stubborn and rebellious son, for it is said: “Then shall his father and mother lay hold on him.” (*Laws of Rebels*, 7:8,10)¹⁶

Two points can be gleaned from Maimonides’ excerpt. First, the parents have the ability to forgive the boy before his verdict has been decided.¹⁷ Second, both parents need to be *willing* to punish the boy to brand him rebellious and wayward. Noticeably, Maimonides does not codify any obligation for them to do so: to begin the *ben sorer u’moreh* process, parents are given the option of taking him to court. Fittingly, the commandment that Maimonides counts in his header to *Hilkhot Mamrim* reads: “a son shall not rebel against the authority of his father or his mother.” The parents are not featured in the normative command; their actions stem from their own willing impetus. Maimuni’s explanation disputes both of these points. First, parents are *obligated* to punish their son. Following this requirement, the possibility of parental forgiveness has also been removed.

Dual points of intrigue emerge from this dispute. Not only does Maimuni appear to contradict his father’s ruling, but he also glosses over this difference, not acknowledging his own innovation. It is possible to

harp on Maimuni’s mention of gluttony as the root of the boy’s sin,¹⁸ and accuse Maimuni of deciding halakha in accordance with his pietistic-ascetic views. Such an argument would run as follows: as part of his Sufi agenda, Maimuni harshly condemns the antithesis of the ascetic, demanding his eradication. Symbolically, perhaps, Maimuni was attempting to purge the Jewish community of its own hedonism. By ruling that parents may not pity their son, he insinuates that there is no forgiveness for those who shun the Sufi path.

This theoretical analysis falls flat on several counts. Most significantly, it does not account for the possibility that Maimuni’s reading stems from a legitimate source within the world of halakha. Strikingly, Maimonides himself espoused a similar belief regarding the cause of the sin in *Moreh Nevukhim*.¹⁹ Asceticism, then, cannot hold the only key to this puzzle. Secondly, this approach all too quickly undermines a figure recognized for his erudition and extreme devotion to the practices of Judaism, one who explicitly stated:

You know that we are commanded and responsible to observe the entire Torah—the positive and negative commandments [...] no Jew may be satisfied with keeping some of the commandments while ignoring the rest. (Feldheim 163)

This ambitious dedication to the system’s entirety argues against a Sufi wolf in Jewish clothing; even if we detect Sufi strains at play, the majority of his work focuses on “traditional” halakhic norms.²⁰ A more nuanced analysis, one that examines the relevant halakhic discussion, is required to solve this Maimonidean dispute while accounting for all the evidence and personalities involved, and it is to this exploration that we now turn.

On the level of Biblical exegesis, Maimuni may have been motivated by a reading of *v’tafsu bo aviv v’emo*?²¹ as mandating an obligation upon the parents. He would not have been alone in this regard: Ibn Ezra also suggests that the transfer to court is a normative responsibility upon the parents.²² Assuming, however, that the disagreement between Maimonides and Maimuni lies not in Biblical exegesis but in the realm of the Oral Law, we must embark on a slight detour through the former’s treatment of the *ben sorer u’moreh*.

There are several anomalies in the relevant section of the *Mishneh Torah*. The aforementioned header to *Hilkhot Mamrim* reads: “a son shall

not rebel against the authority of his father or his mother.” The focus here is undoubtedly on the boy’s rebellion against the parents. Yet within the halakhot proper, we find:

בן סורר ומורה האמור בתורה הרי נתפרשה בו סקילה ולא ענש הכתוב
אלא אם כן הזהיר ידי שפיכות דמים וזו אכילת בן והיכן הזהיר לא תאכל
על הדם לא תאכל אכילה המביאה לסורר ומורה שאינו נהרג אלא אל
אכילה מכוערת שאכל ... (א:ז)

The penalty incurred by the stubborn and rebellious son spoken of in Scripture, is stated to be death by stoning. But the Bible does not pronounce punishment without having expressed a warning. Where does the warning occur? It is said: “You shall not eat with the blood”; i.e. do not indulge in eating which will eventuate in bloodshed. It refers to the way in which the stubborn and rebellious son gorges. He is executed for the loathsome manner in which he gratifies his appetite. (7:1)

Here, Maimonides pinpoints the gluttonous eating as the sin, a formulation echoed in his *Sefer HaMitzvot*²³ and *Moreh Nevukhim*.²⁴ Maimonides’ usage of context also demonstrates this complexity. In the *Mishneh Torah*, these laws are found within “*Hilkhot Mamrim*,” The Laws of Rebels. Furthermore, they are juxtaposed to those halakhot dealing with the obligation of filial respect and fear.²⁵ Yet in *Sefer HaMitzvot*, this commandment is nestled among types of forbidden eating.²⁶

Maimonides’ presentation highlights dual themes within the unified whole of *ben sorer u’moreh*: rebellion against one’s parents and hedonistic indulgence. Both of these elements can be uncovered upon a close reading of the Torah’s verses, beginning with the double term of “wayward and rebellious,” possibly connoting two separate sins. Later, when the parents bring the child to court, they publicly announce:

This our son is wayward and rebellious, he does not listen to our voice, he is a glutton and a drunkard.²⁷

Their pronouncement denotes dual arenas of his sin: his refusal to heed their commands, and his rampant gluttony.

Maimonides was hardly the only medieval commentator to present the Rebellious Son as an amalgam of several themes.²⁸ In his glosses on the *Sefer HaMitzvot*, Nahmanides claims that these laws should be split into two separate commandments as they possess dual actions (the two

required thefts and consumptions) and punishments (lashes and then stoning). In his *Commentary on the Torah*, he addresses the dual themes operating within these laws:

האחד שהוא מקלה אביו ואמו וממרה בהם, והשני שהוא זולל וסובא עובר מה
שנצטוינו “קדושים תהיו” (כא:יח)

The first, because he dishonors his father and his mother and rebels against them, and the second, because is a glutton and a drunkard, transgressing that which we have been commanded: “You shall be holy.” (21:18)²⁹

For both Maimonides and Nahmanides, the junction between familial responsibilities and restricting pleasure yields the explosive character of a *ben sorer u’moreh*.³⁰

Returning to our original question, Maimonides’ perspective on the parents’ role can be explained through the lens of his broader position regarding these halakhot. The parents’ perspective plays an integral part in these proceedings because they are the ones being wronged (at least within the rebellious aspect of the crime). They have the option to start his trial only if they both interpret his demeanor as disrespectful; only when his actions are understood as an affront will he be considered “wayward.” Consequently, they are also allowed to forgive him before the verdict, while his evils are still related only to them; after the court proceedings, his sins have been formalized and placed on the legal records.³¹

While Maimonides’ presentation accounts for dual sins, this need not be the only understanding of the *ben sorer u’moreh*. Other commentators present only one of the multiple themes. The *Sefer Yeraim*, for example, classifies this sin under “*hukat akum*”; the boy has rebelled against his Jewish upbringing.³² On the other extreme, the *Sefer HaHinukh* only discusses the hedonistic element.³³ Admittedly, the analysis of Maimonides was highly involved. On a simpler level, one can easily ignore some of the dualities, focusing only on a singular sin. This, I believe, is Maimuni’s position, as he highlights the *zolel v’soveh* element over the *sorer u’moreh*. Obviously the boy is rebellious, but the dangerous direction of his path stems from his inability to exercise self-control.

Maimuni’s reading of the *ben sorer u’moreh* as “merely” gluttony-centric can explain the discrepancy with his father. If the Rebellious Son performs an objective sin of hedonism (as opposed to a direct affront to

his parents), their personal feelings should not play any role in the process. They are simply a cog in the machinery, responsible for escorting the boy to court. While Maimonides believes the parents must be the willing impetus of the boy's punishment, Maimuni counters that their role is merely functional: they are *sbluchei beit din*, emissaries of the court. Therefore, their compassion or desire to forgive has no impact on the boy's fate; it is not in their hands to decide.³⁴

This discrepancy can also be explained by turning to another of Maimuni's proof-texts: the *Mishneh Torah*. As mentioned earlier, the *Sefer HaHinukh*, also known for echoing Maimonides' statements, focuses merely on the gluttony. While his language parallels Maimonides' formulation, he does not import the latter's complex presentation. In light of the fact that the differences we have outlined stem from a close reading and a constant search for dialectic, compounded by Maimuni's silence about contradicting his father, we may suggest that the son was indeed unaware of such a dispute.³⁵ He adopted a simple reading of his father's work, oblivious to the contradiction he was espousing.

The above analysis has demonstrated that the differences between Maimonides and Maimuni need not be explained by turning to outside influences. They could stem from entirely valid readings of the Oral Law (or *Mishneh Torah*). Yet while Maimuni's different understanding of the *ben sorer u'moreh* can be related to some internal halakhic logic, is there an room to import his philosophical positions? In other words, can we speculate why Maimuni adopted this approach? As noted, this may have been an unwitting misread of the *Mishneh Torah*. But if this was a conscious dispute over the nature of the Rebellious Son, then we may examine the roots of this shift away from his father's position. Since the issue at hand involves asceticism, a motif found throughout the *Sefer HaMaspiq*, there may indeed be room for further analysis, one that incorporates Maimuni's philosophical commitments.

• • •

Maimuni attributed the trait of asceticism to most Biblical characters, beginning with the patriarchs and culminating with the prophets. While this can be viewed as an impact of Sufism, Maimuni addresses the claim of outside influence:

You know that due to our sins, the Sufis have copied this custom [of elders cloaking younger protégés] from our early Hasidim [...] "they adopt the behaviors that come from You" (Devarim 33:3). In recent times, this custom has disappeared from us, or nearly so. Yet we copy their customs ... (371).

Maimuni's belief that he was merely reinstituting old practices comes up several other times in the *Sefer HaMaspiq*.³⁶ He perceived contemporary Sufis as the last remnants of certain Biblical practices. Fenton dismisses this as polemical rhetoric: "like all great reformers, he claims not to reform but to restore."³⁷ While this is certainly a possibility, it need not be the only option; several other solutions can still be offered. Between radical revolutionary and staunch conservative lies a rather fruitful middle arena. We will outline a few possible approaches to the balance between intra-halakhic concerns and extra-halakhic influences.

Following Fenton's footsteps, it is possible to speculate that Maimuni may have been unduly motivated by the Sufism he so eagerly encountered. Growing up both on the knees of his father and within the environment of Sufism, Maimuni's viewpoint on Torah was affected. Having donned the lenses of Sufism, his reading of this issue (or of his father's presentation) appeared to him as a glaring exemplar of asceticism. Yet (and here I diverge from Fenton), this may have been an entirely unconscious decision: he was unaware of the toll his secular studies had taken on his Judaism, and equally blind to the deviation from his father's decisions. He had stumbled into the path of Sufism, and its perspective colored his ability to accurately assess halakha.

But his Sufi orientations may also bespeak a willing, though selective, devotion to this pietistic path. Our first inclination should be to take Maimuni at his word. Raised on the teachings of the prophets and the tradition of Mosaic Law, the young Maimuni perceived asceticism as an inherently Torah-based value. It is possible that Maimuni's pietistic streak began long before he encountered Sufism. With the later onslaught of Islamic mysticism, the budding scholar adopted some of their practices. This transition occurred not through osmosis, but as a conscious choice. Though coming from a different viewpoint, Maimuni shared the religious *weltanschauung* of the Sufis, viewing their customs as the lost path of the ancient prophets. To note, this approach effectively flips the question of "outside influence" on its

head: Maimuni's exposure to Sufism did not impact his reading of halakha; his initial adherence to halakha, though idiosyncratic, set the stage for him to carefully adopt some Sufi elements. Attuned to halakhic values, Maimuni gleaned selective lessons from the surrounding religions.

Another possibility is to indeed accept that the young Maimuni was influenced by the zeitgeist. Having been raised on the dual values of Torah and philosophy, Maimuni was primed to explore other disciplines in a constant quest for truth. While he searched for the path towards knowledge of the Divine, he was well aware of the swirling mystical tendencies permeating the Jewish community. Having learnt of their pietistic-ascetic ideals, he was unduly impressed. Yet he was not a Sufi in Maimonidean clothing. Sufism may have impacted his religious development, but it did not detract his strive to live according to halakha; it modified his spiritual sensibilities without undermining their foundations. Maimuni imported elements into normative Judaism, but this was done out of a sincere search for religious service. Now exposed to Sufi ascetic ideals, Maimuni was primed to perceive even subtle references in Scriptures, and adapted his halakhic worldview accordingly.

These possibilities may explain why Maimuni preferred the hedonistic-centric reading of *ben sorer u'moreh*. Sensitive to ascetic strains, he hardly even detected other threads within his father's work. The Rebellious Son, once a complex amalgam of themes, was surreptitiously swallowed by its own gluttony. As we have strived to demonstrate, this reading is certainly a halakhically viable one. It is not, however, the one adopted by Maimonides. Overall, Sufism may have affected Maimuni's viewpoint, but only in terms of preferring one acceptable position over another. In other words, while it may be tempting to accuse Maimuni of revolutionary Sufism, there is considerable pressure stemming from within the world of halakha to curtail such a suggestion. Ultimately, Sufism's impact on his religious life was limited to when he could use it to buttress halakha.

Or so he thought. With the benefit of hindsight, we might be able to identify instances where Maimuni imported values completely alien to halakha, and even critique some of his decisions (or misreadings of *Mishneh Torah*). But we must remember that Maimuni himself espoused a complete dedication to Judaism. Though we may think him mistaken

at points, and may not be swayed by the ascetic models he purports to identify throughout Scriptures, he was motivated by the best of intentions, a desire to fully understand and fulfill the rigorous demands of religion. Even when we can identify divergences, we need not accuse him of devotion to his philosophical commitments over halakhic concerns. The choices he made stemmed from a desire to maintain fidelity to halakha.

While Maimuni certainly added his own unique individuality to the heritage of his father, this did not symbolize a total break with the Maimonidean tradition. Ultimately, he exemplified *badashim gam yeshanim*, blending his father's legacy with his own mystical twist. Firmly entrenched within the world of halakha, Maimuni added his own ingenuity and individual beliefs into its mix. While the son returned to redig many of his father's wells, he still discovered his own sources of running water.

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In an attempt to analyze the religious thought of Maimuni, this article has leaned heavily upon his presentation of the *ben sorer u'moreh*. We have speculated that Maimuni's halakhic decisions may have been affected by his unique (read: Sufi-tinted) perspective on Judaism. It is interesting that none of the research I encountered dealt with the plethora of responsa penned by Maimuni. Even if *Sefer HaMaspik* was intended to be a halakhic code, it would undercut some of our conclusions if the Sufi trend went undetected in the responsa.

While I have focused almost exclusively upon the treatment of *ben sorer u'moreh*, there are several other instances of Maimuni's ascetic bending shoulders with a halakhic outlook. Of these, the most controversial were his attempts to alter prayer rituals; his efforts were met with vehement opposition from certain members of the community.³⁸ Additionally, Maimuni believed that the highest level of Sabbath observance, one that results in a form of apotheosis, requires abstaining from food.³⁹ This extreme form of asceticism appears to contradict the majority of opinions found within *Hazal*, including Maimonides.⁴⁰ To fully understand the interplay between Maimonides, Maimuni, and Sufism, a more in-depth examination is required.⁴¹

Methodologically, to conclusively arrive at answers requires more than a case study of one dispute between Maimuni and Maimonides. In his doctoral dissertation, R. Dr. Michael Rosenweig stipulated that:

The investigation of halakhic history should incorporate two perspectives. It should proceed on the assumption that halakhic history is rarely chaotic; that legal developments can often be reconstructed and that certain patterns can be discerned. At the same time, the task of accurate reconstruction is actually facilitated by the recognition that the process of halakhic decision making is complex and that specific lines of development can rarely be anticipated. Certainly, the position of individual halakhists can never be presumed to be locked into any rigid pattern. The guidelines for viewing broader themes in halakhic history should similarly reflect these diverse but complimentary conclusions. Historians of Halakhah should initially focus intensively on the evidence and nuances of specific topics and avoid projecting from one subject to another. A narrow concentration guarantees that the specific factors and textual evidence that distinguish every topic are properly assessed; it decreases the likelihood that subtleties or apparently anomalous halakhic developments will be overlooked. At the same time, cumulative studies that encompass multiple topics are invaluable in establishing wider patterns and broader orientations; they alone can determine which developments are representative or idiosyncratic. (275-276)⁴²

While R. Rosensweig is discussing social and historical factors within the study of halakha, his caveat applies, with some minor modifications, to our analysis as well. As I have strived to prove, both internal halakhic pressures and personal philosophical commitments can be analyzed, but only by maintaining proper focus and direction. The relevant topic must be explored first with an eye towards the inner logic of halakha, and only then—maintaining the hesitation of speculation instead of the conviction of certitude—to subjective philosophical beliefs. As this point runs like a thread throughout my entire paper, it bears repeating: there is certainly room for analyzing the interplay between halakha and philosophy, but it demands nuance and careful reconstruction on dual fronts. In a different context, referring to two seemingly incompatible issues, Theseus exclaimed: “hot ice and wondrous strange snow! / How shall we find the concord of this discord?” Our dual realms are not nearly as paradoxical; the path towards concord lies in subtle examination.

In his autobiography, the Victorian philosopher John Stuart Mill

contended that “the habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings; [. . .] it tends to weaken and undermine whatever is the result of prejudice.”⁴³ This type of study had disastrous effects upon Mill’s personality, yielding a “Crisis in My Mental History,” when he lost all capability for happiness. For our purposes, any academic examination can diminish the reverence owed one of the great halakhic masters of the past. Especially when dealing with someone of such illustrious accomplishments and pedigree, this can yield a perilous outcome, causing all too quick denigration of his motives and life’s work. It is easy to quickly accuse Maimuni of unswerving devotion to religious concepts alien to halakha. Though “Sufi influence” may, *prima facie*, appear to be the simple answer, these types of claims must be made carefully.

Speculation in the realm of halakhic decisions should remain tethered to both internal and external contexts, constantly keeping an eye on halakhic issues while also perceiving the philosophical commitments of an individual decider. To construct intellectual biographies of these practitioners should presuppose the internally consistent logic of halakha. Such analyses proceed on the assumption that *pesak* (halakhic decision making) operates as a developed legal system, at once completely autonomous, yet also allowing for subjective input from its skilled adherents. There is ample room to explore Maimuni’s influences, but we must remember that Sufism was viewed, at least by Maimuni himself, as fully consonant with halakha. That notion, if nothing else, should force us to devote the requisite time to analyzing the halakhic minutiae in question before making any claim of ulterior motives.

Notes

The author is indebted to Menachem Butler, whose assistance in all stages of this article—from research through editing—greatly enhanced the final product. Thanks also to Professor Jonathan Dauber for commenting on an earlier version of this article.

1. Much of the biographical and background information on Maimuni came from the following works: *The Guide to Serving God* (Feldheim Publishers 2007, translation and introduction by R. Yaakov Wincelberg), pp. xiii-xxxv;

- Paul Fenton's "Abraham Maimonides—Founding a Mystical Dynasty" (in *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Moshe Idel, 1998, pp. 127-154), and the introduction in *The High Ways to Perfection of Abraham Maimonides*, ed. Samuel Rosenblatt, 1970.
2. A. Lichtenstein, ed., *Tesubot-haRambam*, II fol. 31c, cited in Fenton, p. 131. (Throughout this paper, "Fenton" will refer to his "Abraham Maimonides—Founding a Mystical Dynasty" article mentioned in footnote 1).
 3. There is some debate about the exact dating: the young Abraham would have been either six or eleven. See Fenton, footnote 6.
 4. Responsa #96. Feldheim cites this as Responsa #93 (xxi).
 5. See, for example, *Kesef Mishna on Isbut* 1:2.
 6. I have not included his Commentary on the Pentateuch, as that work is mainly exegetical.
 7. "חיבור אחד בלשון קדר וישמעאל חברתיו, ועל יסודי היראה והאהבה בנייתו, ומספיק" לעובדי השם קראתיו" *Tesubot R. Avraham Ben HaRambam*, #124. The extant *Sefer HaMaspik* is but a small portion of Maimuni's *magnum opus*. For a tentative table of contents for the entire work, see Fenton's "Review of Dana's Kifaya al'abidin" (*Jewish Quarterly Review* 82:1-2), p. 197-199.
 8. Fenton, p. 135.
 9. Fenton contends that Sufism was part of the zeitgeist; Maimuni was certainly not a singular innovator. Even so, he admits that Maimuni was certainly the "movement's most outstanding spokesman and thinker" (130).
 10. After suggesting that "the Kifaya is a deepened restatement—almost a reinterpretation—of Jewish law and ethics in the spirit of Hasidism," Fenton surveys several other explanations behind its composition. See pp. 143-149.
 11. There is also speculation about Sufi influence on Maimonides' *Moreh*. For a summary, see Fenton's "The Literary Legacy of Maimonides' Descendants," (in *Moses Maimonides: His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, eds. G. Hasselhoff & O. Fraisse) p. 112.
 12. Fenton, "Review of Dana's Kifaya al'abidin," p. 200. Feldheim also quotes this incident in their introduction. Neither cited their exact source within *Sefer HaMaspik*, but the specifics of the debate—involving washing on *Yom Kippur*, aren't featured in the sections translated by Feldheim.
 13. To preempt a possible argument that the nature of this work is more exegetical and polemical than halakhic, I refer the reader to both Fenton 144-147 and Feldheim's Introduction. Several additional implicit contradictions remain to be discussed. These include Maimuni's embracing of excessive asceticism, and specifically, his allowance of fasting on the Sabbath.
 14. My translations of the *HaMaspik* will follow the Feldheim edition. What this edition lacks in scholarly standards is compensated by its clarity and ease. For the two direct quotes (as my analysis leaves heavily on their exactness), I also add Rosenblatt's translation: "And (still) severer than that is His command, exalted by He, with regard to the wayward and rebellious son, that his father and mother take charge of bringing him to court, that he be killed" (Vol. 1, p. 163). This statement seems less damning, but in light of the other excerpt (see

- next footnote), the contradiction stands.
15. Rosenblatt reads "and not to be pitied by his father and mother" (Vol. 2, p. 219).
 16. Translations from the *Laws of Rebels* follow Abraham Hershman in *The Code of Maimonides* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1949).
 17. This point is based on *b. Sanhedrin* 88b. In light of these explicit sources, Maimuni's statement contradicts the Talmud in addition to his father's code.
 18. See Feldheim, p. 321.
 19. III:33.
 20. The opposite extreme, aligning Maimuni with his father at all counts, appears equally untenable. Feldheim's footnote suggests that "R. Avraham might be referring to after the sentencing." This appears unconvincing on textual grounds, as *ikkar chaser min hasefer* (there is no proof to such a claim). Additionally, the possibility of forgiveness is the novelty that Maimuni ignores, not the temporal limitation to pre-verdict.
 21. *Devarim* 21:19.
 22. "מצוה שהם יתפשוהו ויציאוהו," Ibn Ezra *Devarim* 21:18.
 23. Negative Commandment 195.
 24. III:33. Maimonides may have detected this dialectic between rebelliousness and hedonism from the presentation of the *gemara*. There are many detailed requirements for this process: some focusing on the boy's theft, others on his consequent consumption. Both actions play their specific and integral parts within the whole. See the *mishnayot* in *Sanhedrin* 8 for a partial list.
 25. For a discussion of Maimonides' choice in placing these halakhot within the realm of *Hilkhot Mamrim*, see Elimelekh Polinsky's article "Parent-Child Relationships and *Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot* in Rambam" (*The Legacy Of Maimonides—Religion, Reason, and Community*, Yashar, 2006).
 26. Negative commandment 172 begins this unit with the prohibition of impure meat; this list culminates with the prohibitions of leavened bread on *Pesach* in 197-199. Immediately preceding the rebellious son's gluttony can be found *orlah* (192), *kelai ha-kerem* (193), and *yayin nesach* (194); following it comes the prohibition of eating on *Yom Kippur* (196).
 27. "בננו זה סורר ומרה איננו שמע בקלנו זולל סבא" (Deuteronomy 21:20). The Deuteronomic context also echoes our dialectic. The laws of the rebellious son follow several familial issues: the captured woman/wife (21:10-14), the hated wife, and unjust inheritance (15-17) are all halakhot centered around the home. At the same time, this unit also begins with hedonism—the capitulation to carnal desire yields the *eshet yefat tohar*. This point is made explicit by the *Sifrei* 218, which explains that the father's taking of the *eshet yefat tohar* affects the spiritual status of the home, ultimately resulting in the *ben sorer u'moreh*.
 28. Also see Abarbanel, who identifies the interplay of four themes.
 29. Translation follows Charles B. Chavel in *Commentary on the Torah by Ramban* (NY: Shilo Publishing House, 1971).
 30. Space constraints do not allow for a full exposition of Maimonides' position,

- one that could explain the different emphases in each location. Briefly, it is possible to split between the two required actions (as he must steal and eat twice to be killed). The boy's first eating (punishable by lashes) can be viewed as a reflection of his rebelliousness while his second constitutes the capital crime of gluttony. Indeed, *Or Sameach Mamrim* 7:1 emends the text of the *Yerushalmi* to account for progressively worsening actions: one punitive and one capital. This can also explain the *Shiurei HaKorban* Sanhedrin 8:1, who quotes Maimonides as believing that the rebellious son possesses dual *azharot* (explicit injunctions mentioned in the Torah), one related to theft and one tied to forbidden eating. Finally, this approach parallels *R. Hayyim Soloveitchik's* original premise in his *Hibur* on *Mamrim* 7:7, where he suggests that the rebellious son may stem from two separate *michayyim* (loosely translated as "impetuses"). Though he does not explain the exact nature of these theoretical differences, I believe our analysis would dovetail well with his understanding. Resuscitating *R. Hayyim's* initial approach lies well beyond the scope of this paper. I have also not dealt with Maimonides's presentation in the *Moreh*. Suffice it to say that on closer reading, the gluttony aspect only refers to the boy's death (the second eating).
31. A broader explication of *gemar din* (the final verdict) lies beyond our scope. According to our assumption, a similar allowance of *mehilah* should exist in a case where one hits or curses his parents (as the affront relates to them, they should be given the possibility of forgiving the son). While this does not seem to be Maimonides's position, it is suggested by several later commentators, including the *Minhat Hinukh*.
 32. Commandment 275.
 33. Commandment 248.
 34. This anomaly may be indicative of a broader trend within the thought of Maimuni. In his chapter on Calmness, he draws a thematic parallel between hitting one's parents and the striking of any Jew (Feldheim 87). Accepting the literal reading of this passage mitigates some of the uniqueness of filial laws. Perhaps Maimuni might not have believed these halakhot deserve their own category. In his version of *Mishneh Torah*, striking one's parents would feature in *Hovel U-Mazzik*, not *Mamrim*. As we have seen, *ben sorer u'moreh* could be classified within *Hilchot Deot*, related to the character trait of gluttony.
 35. Another possibility, one proposed by Fenton to be a "large part" of *Sefer HaMaspik*, is that Maimuni was polemically forwarding his own agenda, co-opting Maimonides (by inference *ex silentio*) onto his side. I think this seems a bit forced, especially in light of the evidence that he does explicitly contradict Maimonides in other places. While he certainly was a man of great stature, it is possible he sometimes misunderstood or misconstrued his father's teachings. While he can and should be utilized for insight into the *Mishneh Torah*, he need not be its infallible interpreter. Though he is often quoted, his position is not always accepted: see the aforementioned *Kesef Mishna Ishut* 1:2, where Maimuni's testimony is ultimately rejected. I will discuss this latter possibility in the next section.

36. See pp. 427 and 529. This claim echoes a similar one made by Maimonides regarding Aristotelian philosophy.
37. Fenton, p. 144.
38. See Fenton, p. 139, as well as his "Review of Dana's *Kifaya al'abidin*." For an extensive treatment of this issue, see Dov Maimon's *גבולות המפגש בין יהדות ומיסטיקה מוסלמית: חלק ב'* (*Akdamos* 8, pp. 54-60). Thanks to Dr. Yehudah Mirsky for this source.
39. Feldheim, p. 12.
40. *Hilchot Shabbat* 30:12.
41. Unfortunately, the extant *Sefer HaMaspik* is but a small portion of the original work. Until the complete text is available, any claims regarding the book's nature are obviously limited.
42. *Debt Collection In Absentia: Halakhah In A Mobile and Commercial Age*, Michael S. Rosenweig (Yeshiva University, 1996).
43. *Autobiography*, Ch. V.

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German Neo-Orthodoxy and Zionism: Continuity and Departure Between the Generations

By following the philosophies of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer, late 19th and early 20th century German Neo-Orthodox Jews thrived in a post-Emancipation society, absorbing German social and intellectual culture, yet maintaining a commitment to a traditional Jewish lifestyle. Concurrent with the development of Neo-Orthodoxy was the proto-Zionist and early Zionist movements, which eventually resulted in the founding of the religious nationalist party of the Zionist Congress, Mizrahi, in the early 20th century. Mizrahi attempted to do for nationalism what Hirsch and Hildesheimer did for German culture—namely, to synthesize secular nationalism with traditional Judaism. Hirsch and Hildesheimer encouraged their congregants to immerse themselves in German society in order to benefit from its social and intellectual culture, while at the same time demonstrating to Germans the holiness of the Jewish God. Mizrahi argued for participation within the greater Jewish nationalist movement in order to obtain specific utilitarian nationalist objectives, while at the same time attempting to steer the secular program on a more religious course.

Despite similarities between Neo-Orthodoxy and Mizrahi, German Neo-Orthodox rabbis and leaders were not necessarily receptive to the Jewish nationalist or even the religious nationalist enterprise. This article will examine the positions of German Neo-Orthodoxy's eminent community leaders and spokesmen in the late 19th and early 20th century in order to assess how they viewed the proto-Zionist or Zionist movement. Our analysis will illustrate that whereas the first generation of German Neo-Orthodox leaders to encounter the Jewish national movement expressed ambivalence, apprehension, or even adamant opposition to this program, the second generation adopted aspects of the first generation's positions while also embracing certain elements of Jewish nationalist thinking. This evolution in attitudes can best be explained by changes in the sociological and intellectual atmosphere surrounding the German Jewish community in this period. As 20th century Jews facing an increasingly anti-Semitic German society became disinterested in the founding principles of Neo-Orthodoxy, specifically the philosophy of *Torah im derekh eretz* and the pursuit of social emancipation, the second generation of German Jewish leaders were compelled to reconsider various aspects of the Jewish nationalist program.

The First Approaches

The modern Jewish national movement began in the mid to late 19th century. It is during this period that Moses Hess published *Rome and Jerusalem*, one of the earliest expressions of a secular Jewish national ideology. On the religious front, Hess was matched by Yehudah Alkilai and Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, Eastern European rabbis whose writings on modern Jewish nationalism are undergirded by a strong sense of commitment to traditional rabbinic Judaism. Along with literary activity, by the 1870's there was a marked increase in Jewish settlement and philanthropic endeavors in Palestine, evidenced by the First Aliyah and the founding of the Miqveh Israel agricultural school by the Alliance Israelite Universelle. The fledgling efforts of early Jewish nationalists were catalyzed by a series of pogroms in Russia after the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. Following this wave of anti-Semitic violence, former *maskil* Dr. Leon Pinsker published *Auto-Emancipation* in which he

argued for the gathering of the Jewish nation into a confined location outside Europe in order to assuage European anti-Semitism. *Auto-Emancipation* was complimented by the nationalist writings of Moses Leib Lilienblum, Peretz Smolenskin, and others, and in 1882, the Hibbat Zion organization was established with Pinsker as its chairman. The Hibbat Zion constituted a precursor to the World Zionist Organization of the early 20th century.

It is within this social climate that Rabbis Hirsch and Hildesheimer presided over major Orthodox congregations in Hungary and Germany. Hirsch served as rabbi in various principalities before leading the separatist congregation of Frankfurt Am Main from 1851 to 1888, whereas Hildesheimer became rabbi of Eisenstadt in Hungary before accepting the rabbinical position in Berlin in 1869, serving there until his death in 1899. Despite being contemporaries who maintained a close personal relationship, they developed remarkably different approaches to a range of issues confronting traditional German Jewry in the late 19th century, among them being their perceptions towards philanthropic activity and Jewish resettlement in Palestine.

While most agree on Hirsch's position, several scholars may have underestimated Hildesheimer's approach to the issue. A thorough analysis of both Hirsch's and Hildesheimer's attitudes reveals that whereas Hirsch was fundamentally opposed to any activity—besides traditional philanthropy—on behalf of religious Jews in Palestine, Hildesheimer was more receptive to broader philanthropic endeavors and even associated himself with colonizing organizations towards the end of his life. Nevertheless, even Hildesheimer remained apprehensive towards full-fledged nationalistic activity. An examination of Hirsch's writings and Hildesheimer's actions, coupled with an analysis of the sociological and intellectual factors prevalent in later 19th century German Jewish Orthodoxy, reveals how these rabbinic leaders viewed the relationship between Jews and Palestine.

Over the course of his rabbinic career, Hirsch developed a unique conception of Jewish nationality which was fully compatible with a post-Emancipation German Jewish identity.¹ Hirsch maintained that it was a religious Jew's duty to "join . . . as closely as possible to the state which receives us in its midst, to promote its welfare and not consider our well-being . . . separate from that of the state to which we belong."²

Hirsch's idea of the relationship between Jew and state went well past the traditional understanding of the Talmudic legal dictum *dina d'malkhuta*, the general halakhic obligation to obey the laws of the government under which Jews resided, by extending it to a sense of genuine patriotism and love for the Fatherland: "But this outward obedience to the laws must be joined by inner obedience *i.e.*, to be loyal to the State with heart and mind . . . to guard the honor of the State with love and pride, to strive with enthusiasm wherever and whenever you can."³ Hirsch's novel interpretation of *dina d'malkhuta* stemmed from his larger perception of the Jewish nation in which the Torah, not the land of Israel, is the sole source of Israel's nationhood.⁴ As such, the Jewish nation has a unique, metaphysical character; by receiving the Torah, it has a spiritual vocation to obey its precepts and spread its values throughout the world. For Hirsch, this was best realized when the Torah served as the centerpiece for a Jewish state in the First and Second Israelite Commonwealths, and, now that the Jews have been exiled, Jews must mourn for "the lack of Torah observance which that ruin has brought about" in an effort to hasten the Messianic redemption.⁵ Until then, however, it is critical that "every Jew and every Jewess should be . . . a modest and unassuming priest or priestess of God and true humanity" in order to serve as an example for the neighboring gentiles and to sanctify God's name among the nations of the world.⁶ In this vein, Hirsch embraced Jewish citizenship within the German Reich, because it presented the ideal opportunity for Jews to fulfill their spiritual-national responsibilities.⁷

Thus, Hirsch's philosophy was entirely opposed to a national-political enterprise geared towards the founding of a Jewish state. Such a program was a gross misinterpretation of the essential elements of Jewish nationhood, since the Jews, according to Hirsch, were an extra-territorial entity united by the Torah alone—other more conventional national elements such as land, language, or culture were irrelevant as far as the Jewish nation was concerned. Furthermore, any national program which did not exclusively promote the adherence to the precepts of the Torah was, for Hirsch, completely beyond the pale, because it therefore ignored the Jewish nation's essential mission to imbue the world with the values of the Torah. Israel's spiritual vocation in the pre-Messianic era was to dwell in *Galut* and continuously demonstrate to the gentiles the holiness

of the universal God, whereas full-fledged expressions of traditional Jewish nationhood—the ingathering of the exiles and the restoration of the Davidic theocracy in Israel—awaited the coming of Messiah.⁸ Hirsch was largely indifferent towards and, on occasion, even adamantly opposed to almost all initiatives concerning religious Jews in Palestine, with the exception of the traditional charity collection on behalf of the Old *Yishuv*, called the *Haluka*.⁹ *Jeschurun*, the newspaper which Hirsch founded and edited, rarely published news on the religious *Yishuv*, and on many occasions criticized the nationalist ambitions of secular and religious German Jews. In light of its support for the settling of Russian Jewish refugees in Palestine, *Jeschurun* even felt compelled to publish a disclaimer assuring their readership that this strictly humanitarian project had absolutely no nationalist underpinnings.¹⁰ Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, the early Zionist rabbi who promoted Jewish settlement in Palestine, sought Hirsch's support for his projects on numerous occasions but to no avail. Later in life, Hirsch even stated that Kalischer's activities were "a sin of no small accord."¹¹

Contrary to Hirsch, Azriel Hildesheimer was significantly more involved in organizations and initiatives concerning the Jews of Palestine. Throughout his rabbinic tenure in Eisenstadt and Berlin, he made charity collection and other philanthropic endeavors on behalf of the Old *Yishuv* a priority. In 1858, Hildesheimer founded the Society for the Support of Eretz Israel, which supplied housing to the homeless Jews of the Old City, and in 1870, he established a new organization to aid impoverished Jews in Palestine. On several occasions Hildesheimer attempted to found an orphanage in Jerusalem which would implement a German Neo-Orthodoxian educational program, much to the consternation of rabbinic leaders of the Old *Yishuv* and the European ultra-Orthodox community.¹² To some extent, however, Hildesheimer shared Hirsch's apprehension for nationalist initiatives in Europe and Palestine. While remaining considerably active in philanthropic activity on behalf of the religious *Yishuv*, Hildesheimer almost never expressed his connection to the Holy Land in nationalistic terms. His devotion to community building and resettlement in Palestine seems to stem more from his deep connection to the Jewish religion, of which Hildesheimer believed Israel played a central role, and to the Jewish people, rather than to nationalistic considerations.¹³

On the other hand, Hildesheimer's participation in religious Jewish settlement projects in Palestine is particularly noteworthy. At a Jewish emergency meeting in Berlin in response to the Russian pogroms of 1881 and 1882, Hildesheimer was the only delegate to insist that Palestine, not America, was the best location for the resettlement of Russian refugees.¹⁴ He was instrumental in founding the religious *yishuv* Petach Tikvah in 1882, providing it and other settlements, such as Rosh Pinah, with financial support.¹⁵ At the end of Hildesheimer's life, he founded the L'man Zion group in 1890, which was committed to the furtherance of vocational training within the Old *Yishuv*.¹⁶ Furthermore, Hildesheimer was associated with several organizations that were Zionist or nationalist in orientation. Hildesheimer agreed to assume ownership of Kefar Katurah, a settlement outpost of the Bilu—a group of young religious Russian immigrants with nationalist aims—in order to circumvent Ottoman Turkish restrictions against Jewish pioneers purchasing land in Palestine.¹⁷ The Jerusalem-based *Techiyat Yisrael*, which promoted Jewish national consciousness by encouraging resettlement and economic production in Palestine, and the Ezra association of Berlin, a cohort of young nationalistically-inclined Orthodox Germans interested in supporting Jewish resettlement and agricultural productivity in Palestine, were backed by Hildesheimer financially or otherwise.¹⁸ In his letters and essays, Hildesheimer repeatedly praises Kalischer and Rabbi Y.M. Pines for their indefatigable commitment to resettlement and even commends the Jewish nationalist *Hibbat Zion* organization.¹⁹

David Ellenson contends that Hildesheimer "viewed Eretz Israel in religious terms *only*," adding that "Esriel Hildesheimer was not a modern Zionist."²⁰ Yaakov Zur seems to agree with Ellenson when, in analyzing the different German Jewish responses to the Zionist movement, the former speaks of the Orthodox community's "initial, relentlessly uncompromising opposition," referring to Hirsch and without explicitly addressing Hildesheimer.²¹ While Ellenson and Zur are partially correct in the sense that Hildesheimer was critical of both secular Jewish proto-nationalism and religious initiatives in Palestine to hasten the coming of Messiah, their assertions may fail to paint the complete picture of Hildesheimer's stance towards Jews and Palestine. His involvement in numerous resettlement enterprises, some of which were decidedly Zionist, may indicate that Hildesheimer was not opposed as much as he

was ambivalent towards a sense of religious Jewish nationalism in the Holy Land. The following comment made by Hildesheimer may help clarify the issue: "Zion is our homeland, and especially during this age of anti-Semitism, our only hope."²² Such a statement resonates in the writings of contemporary and later Zionists such as Lilienblum, Pinsker, and Herzl, all of whom concluded that a Jewish State must be pursued to alleviate European anti-Semitism. This is not to say that Hildesheimer was a proto-nationalist of the Pinsker mold; it may demonstrate, however, that his support for resettlement in Palestine was comprised of more than purely religious motivations.²³

Enlightened Jewish Germans

Even though Hildesheimer was more involved in proto-Zionist activities than Hirsch, both were unwilling to fully embrace Pinsker's political nationalism or Kalischer's and Alkalai's religious-nationalist messianism. Hirsch's disapproval and Hildesheimer's ambivalence were rooted in complex social trends gripping the Orthodox Jewish communities of Germany in the mid to late 19th century. Throughout this period, German Jews were either lobbying for or trying to justify the granting of emancipation from a German government which hoped to offer civil equality in exchange for the promotion of Enlightenment values. By championing the German Enlightenment concept *Bildung*—"the process of autonomous self-formation under the guidance of practical, i.e., moral, reason"—in the decades leading up to Emancipation, Jews enmeshed themselves within Germany's social and intellectual culture in order to achieve civic equality and, after Emancipation, to encourage social equality.²⁴ Another vital aspect of German Emancipation was *Konfession* or "the marginalization of Jewish nationality and its transformation into a purely religious phenomenon."²⁵ While Orthodoxy never went as far as some Reform Jews who completely deemphasized Jewish nationhood, the effects of this Enlightenment concept still influenced Orthodoxy's attitudes towards Jewish nationhood.²⁶

By championing the concepts *Bildung* and *Konfession*, German Orthodox Jews increasingly identified with the German Reich, sometimes viewing it as an ideal Jewish society. As one newspaper wrote when a new civil code came into force, "In broad outlines it coincided

with the laws of *Hoshen Mishpat*."²⁷ Jews embraced their German ethnicity, evidenced by the Frankfurt newspaper *Der Israelit* proudly proclaiming in the face of anti-Semitic rhetoric, "We German Jews are Germans and nothing else" and "German by birth and inclination."²⁸ Men served in the German army, rabbis preached about the Fatherland frequently, Orthodox schools stressed their Germanness, and loyalty to the Emperor was frequently expressed in the Orthodox press.²⁹ Furthermore, as Jews enthusiastically adopted a German posture, it was only natural that a slight degree of their Jewish national identity dissipated. This development is somewhat present in Hirsch's perception of the Jewish nation in the exilic period, which he categorized as a *Religionsnation* or a people of divine rather than national type. According to Hirsch, in the pre-messianic period, Jews are to be scattered among other nations in order to sanctify God's name in front of the non-Jewish world. Full expressions of Jewish nationhood will only be realized in the messianic age; until then, however, Jews are encouraged to embrace their status as German citizens so that they can better fulfill their divine vocation.³⁰ In this sense, Hirsch substituted Jewish national identity, which he suspended to the distant eschatological future, with a strong degree of German national identity, demonstrating to what extent *Bildung* and *Konfession* influenced 19th century German Neo-Orthodoxy.

Thus, it is not surprising that these two leaders of 19th century German Neo-Orthodoxy exhibited unreceptive attitudes towards the nascent proto-nationalist movement. In the wake of the Emancipation, expressions of overt nationalism may have jeopardized Orthodox Judaism's sometimes tenuous position in German society, the latter of which many Orthodox Jews including Hirsch and Hildesheimer cherished. Both Hirsch and Hildesheimer heavily identified with the German Reich, making it all the more difficult for them to embrace an ideology which called for the rejection of the Fatherland and the establishment of a separate Jewish polity. These sociological factors shaped Hirsch's opposition to Jewish nationalism while inhibiting Hildesheimer's warmer attitude towards Jewish nationalist initiatives in Palestine. As the sociological factors changed in the years ahead so, too, did the positions of German Neo-Orthodoxy regarding nationalism.

The Nationalist Shift

In the early 20th century, several noteworthy individuals emerged as leaders of the German Neo-Orthodox community. In his later years, Hirsch inaugurated the FV (Freie Vereinigung für die Interessen des Orthodox Judetum), an organization composed of delegates from various German Orthodox communities who worked to coordinate religious practices, financial support for smaller communities, and political representation before the state. Jacob Rosenheim succeeded Hirsch as chairman of the FV, subsequently reconstructing it into a broader organization which would rival its non-Orthodox counterparts, the ecumenical CV (Centralverein deutscher staatsbürger Judischen laubens) and the secular Zionist ZVfD (Zionistische vereinigung für Deutschland), by representing a broader contingency of Orthodox communities in Germany. Rabbi Dr. Isaac Breuer, grandson of S.R. Hirsch, was another prominent member of the FV and an outspoken leader of Neo-Orthodoxy. In response to the burgeoning influence of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the concomitant religious-nationalist Mizrahi party, Breuer and Rosenheim moved to establish Agudat Israel in 1911, an anti-Zionist organization comprised of religious Jewish delegates which hoped to represent religious Jewry across Europe.

Hildesheimer left successors to match those of Hirsch. His son, Rabbi Dr. Hirsch Hildesheimer, assumed editorship of the influential newspaper *Jüdische Presse*, while at the same time lecturing at his father's rabbinical seminary and serving as leader of the Berlin Orthodox community. One of Azriel Hildesheimer's top students, Rabbi Dr. Marcus Horovitz, moved from Berlin to become rabbi of the non-separatist Orthodox community in Frankfurt, much to the displeasure of Hirsch's separatist descendants, Isaac Breuer among them. Rabbi Nahman Anton Noble, another close student of Azriel Hildesheimer, succeeded Horovitz as rabbi of the Frankfurt community, served as chairman of the Union for German Rabbis, and was involved in early 20th century *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.³¹

These leaders faced challenges unlike those of their predecessors, and while in some ways they carried on the intellectual mantle of Hirsch and Hildesheimer, in other ways they developed some unique perspectives of their own. The issue of Zionism was coming to the fore in early

20th century Germany. As the WZO increased in power and popularity, Zionist groups and the Mizrahi party made significant inroads in the German Orthodox community. The leaders of the succeeding generation confronted a Zionism much different than the Jewish proto-nationalist movement facing Hirsch and Hildesheimer in the prior century. In dealing with these new challenges, they appropriated some of Hirsch's and Hildesheimer's specific ideas and responses in order to formulate new notions concerning the growing Zionist movement. While 20th century Germany was home to significant reactionary measures in response to Zionism, specifically the Agudah, the Orthodox Jewish leaders succeeding Hirsch also exhibited opinions which were significantly more Zionist in outlook than anything Hirsch himself would have fostered.³² At the same time, the spiritual descendants of Azriel Hildesheimer took the next step in support of Zionist activities, furthering Hildesheimer's commitment to settlement in the Holy Land and even accepting some of the objectives of the burgeoning Zionist movement. An analysis of how these leaders both incorporated the outlooks of Hirsch and Hildesheimer yet differed from them, coupled with an examination of the various social currents spurring their specific positions, will provide a glimpse of how these prominent German Orthodox leaders perceived Zionism in the early 20th century.

For Jacob Rosenheim, the secular political Zionism of the WZO and even the religious Zionism of Mizrahi were antithetical to Orthodox views. Rosenheim claimed that the Zionists presented nationalism as the essence of Judaism, almost as if it were a new brand of Jewish religion akin to the Reform Judaism of the 19th century, whereas for Orthodoxy, nationalism is an ancillary component of Judaism which fits into a broader religious framework.³³ Rosenheim writes, "A total inversion of traditional values takes place: what until now was regarded as mere means to an end becomes the object, and that which was formerly the object becomes the means."³⁴ He repudiated Mizrahi for the very same reason: by working with the WZO, Mizrahi was essentially reinforcing the Zionist concept that religion was a private matter—according to Zionism, the nation is primary, faith or adherence to the Torah is not required.³⁵ These attitudes echo Hirsch's influence on Rosenheim, for Hirsch had argued repeatedly that the Torah is the binding force of Judaism, so much so that Hirsch was com-

pelled to separate his Frankfurt congregation from the larger German Jewish communal municipality, claiming that Jews who reject the Torah's absolute authority were in effect not Jews at all and could therefore not be included in a Jewish *kahal*. Thus, Rosenheim's critique of the WZO and Mizrahi: if a nationalist enterprise operates outside the four cubits of the Torah, it should be rejected by the Orthodox community.

To present him as an uncompromising anti-Zionist, however, would fail to adequately portray Jacob Rosenheim. Despite the fact that he was instrumental in transforming the FV into the largely anti-Zionist Agudah organization, certain elements of Rosenheim's thought were remarkably nationalist in orientation; he is best described, in the words of Mordechai Breuer, as an anti-Zionist Zionist.³⁶ The role of philanthropic and resettlement activities in Palestine remained a contested point in the nascent Agudah organization, and whereas Eastern European representatives were generally opposed to such endeavors, it was Rosenheim who conceived of the Agudah as a competitor to the WZO and who pioneered religious philanthropic and resettlement work in Palestine.³⁷ While serving as chairman of the FV, Rosenheim reorganized the "*Pekidim* and *Amarkalim* Fund for the Holy Land," constructing a modern welfare system based on stricter policies of distribution.³⁸ As leading spokesmen for the Agudah, Rosenheim moved to establish religious schools and youth groups committed to religious resettlement in the Holy Land.³⁹ These efforts represent a marked departure from his predecessor Hirsch, resembling more the actions of Hirsch's Berlin counterpart, Azriel Hildesheimer.

The differences between Rosenheim and Hirsch are most evident in the former's writings on Zionism. In one article, Rosenheim outlines the various aspects that Zionism and Orthodoxy share in common: the importance of reawakening national consciousness, resettlement in Palestine, and the revival of Jewish character and culture.⁴⁰ In another essay, Rosenheim recognizes the inherent holiness of the land Palestine, yet he insists that it is the Jews' duty to respond to this holiness by advocating for the institutionalization of halakha in Palestine.⁴¹ In these writings, Rosenheim both incorporated and departed from Hirsch's thought: while Rosenheim insisted that the Torah must be the public constitution of a Jewish polity, he supported resettlement in Palestine under certain religious conditions and even maintained that not only the

Torah but also the Holy Land served as a central component in contemporary Jewish nationhood. A resolution passed at Rosenheim's (and Isaac Breuer's) behest at the 1918 Agudah conference is perhaps most reflective of the difference between him and Hirsch:

The Jewish religion and the Jewish nation form an inseparable unity. . . . Our task it prepare the Jewish nation and the Jewish land for their reunification under the sovereignty of God and his Torah. . . . [This] demands its settlement with Torah-true Jews. . . . While the Diaspora exists, Eretz Israel must become the spiritual center of the nation united . . . under God's law.⁴²

This is nothing less than a full-fledged nationalist expression of the pursuit of resettlement in Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish polity, the statement's religious-fundamentalist undertones notwithstanding. Equally noteworthy is the idea that a Torah-based community in Israel would serve as the "spiritual center" for the Diaspora, a concept similar to Ahad-Haam's Zionist philosophy which had Israel serving as the center for a larger cultural revival in world Jewry. Rosenheim was particularly interested in the cultural Zionist programs of Ahad-Haam and Martin Buber, and the incorporation of a facet of the culturalist's decidedly anti-religious Zionist philosophy into a profoundly religious nationalist program illustrates just how far this anti-Zionist Zionist drifted from the Frankfurt camp of Hirsch.⁴³

A similar paradigm is presented in the writings and activities of Hirsch's grandson, Rabbi Dr. Isaac Breuer. In his earlier years, Breuer expressed opposition and even vehemence for the Zionist program: "Zionism is the most terrible enemy that has ever arisen to the Jewish nation . . . Zionism kills the nation and then elevates the corpse to the throne."⁴⁴ Yet Breuer soon became more receptive to certain Zionist tendencies, couching his writings on the subject of Jewish peoplehood in remarkably nationalistic terminology: "Only from the healthy mother soil can a human blossom and develop. One who denies his people and thus his history . . . is doomed to misfortune because individual happiness . . . rests in ethnicity."⁴⁵ Although Breuer departed from the thinking of Hirsch by recognizing the inherent importance of the Holy Land for Orthodox Jews, his increasingly religious-nationalist philosophy was indeed grounded in the key principles of his grandfather's thought: namely, the central role that traditional Jewish law played in the concept of

Jewish nationhood. Nevertheless, Breuer also differed from Hirsch in that he applied Hirsch's "nation of the law" philosophy to a religious-nationalist program. In other words, unlike Hirsch, Breuer believed that the unity of the Jews was one of religion *and* nationality. Breuer sought to merge commitment to Torah with Jewish nationhood through the restoration of a Jewish state in Palestine with religious law as its constitution.⁴⁶

Breuer saw the realization of his program as decidedly imminent and dependent on immediate Jewish action. As Breuer wrote in 1922, "Zionism seemed to me no longer an attempt . . . to bring about national reform of our people . . . but it seemed to me at the same time an instrument in the hand of the God of metahistory to let . . . the Jewish nation become more active than it had been [in the past] . . . to let it ripen toward its promised goal more actively."⁴⁷ Breuer viewed World War I and the Balfour Declaration as the incipient reverberations of the messianic era, and he repeatedly wrote about what he considered to be Orthodox Jewry's most important task: to prepare the Jewish masses for the revival of a Jewish homeland grounded in traditional law in Palestine.⁴⁸ In this sense, Breuer was arguing for a national rebirth which incorporated strict adherence to the Torah in the spirit of his grandfather, yet Breuer also empathized with a broader nationalistic interpretation of Judaism akin to Zionism.

Thus, Jacob Rosenheim and Isaac Breuer represent the intellectual heritage of Hirsch, while at the same time they assimilated Hirsch's philosophy within a more nationalistic conception of Orthodox Jewry. In light of the founding of the Agudah organization in 1911, this synthesis presented somewhat of a paradox. Since it was established in response to the burgeoning Zionist movement, the Agudah was somewhat reactionary in nature; yet, for at least Rosenheim and Breuer, the Agudah would champion a religious-nationalist stance that, when compared with the philosophy of Hirsch or the Eastern European Agudah representatives, was remarkably novel in its outlook. This nationalist-progressive shift in orientation among the Frankfurtists is equally evident in the activities of some of Hildesheimer's protégés and successors, who moved to broaden their teacher's tepid attitude towards Jewish nationalism.

Azriel Hildesheimer's son, Hirsch Hildesheimer, continued and even furthered the cause for resettlement in Palestine. Hirsch

Hildesheimer's *Judische Presse* was the lone German Orthodox newspaper to express support for the proto-Zionist Hibbat Zion organization, and Hirsch Hildesheimer remained active in Hibbat Zion throughout the organization's existence.⁴⁹ He transformed the *Judische Presse* into the most Israel-oriented Jewish newspaper in Germany and also exhibited a constant commitment to resettlement, founding the Ezra youth group in Berlin in 1884 in order to support Jewish agrarian settlement in Palestine.⁵⁰ While Hirsch Hildesheimer steered clear of political Zionism and the Mizrahi movement, even turning down an invitation from Theodore Herzl to speak at the First Zionist Congress, he remained relentlessly devoted to practical resettlement in Israel.⁵¹ In fact, part of the reason why he turned down Herzl's invitation was the worry that public involvement in the congress would compromise resettlement initiatives.⁵² Despite the fact that Hirsch Hildesheimer expressed some reservations for Jewish nationalism akin to his father, his redoubled dedication to colonization in Palestine fits neatly in a period in German Neo-Orthodoxy marked by a wider interest in Jewish Palestine, as evidenced by Rosenheim and Breuer. Additionally, after Hirsch Hildesheimer's death in 1910, the *Judische Presse* became increasingly nationalist in orientation by identifying more with the WZO.⁵³ In fact, in 1919, the newspaper became the central organ of the Mizrahi party, before ceasing publication in 1923.⁵⁴ While no direct correlation can be made between the pre- and post-1910 *Judische Presse's*, it is indeed possible that the seeds of the newspaper's radical shift in viewpoint were sown in the early days of the newspaper when Hirsch Hildesheimer consistently advocated resettlement and continually reported news from Palestine.

Pronounced shifts in nationalist perception are evidenced by some of Azriel Hildesheimer's other prominent students. Rabbi Nahman Anton Nobel, who Mordechai Breuer refers to as "a star pupil of [Azriel] Hildesheimer," was among the first German rabbis to embrace the religious Zionist movement and was a cofounder of the Mizrahi party, the religious-nationalist party of the WZO.⁵⁵ Additionally, Rabbi Marcus Horovitz, one of Hildesheimer's closest students, delivered a speech to the first Agudah conference in which, contrary to the pervading anti-Zionist atmosphere, he applauded various aspects of the WZO. To be sure, Horovitz remained wary of the WZO, whose secular character

compelled him to join the Agudah opposition. Nevertheless, in his address at the Agudah conference, he praised Zionists for hoisting the banner of Jewish nationalism in the face of the prevalent contention that the Jews did not constitute a nation, even referring to Max Nordau as a “*bal teshuva*” and affirming that “if Nordau and his colleagues could be this enthusiastic about religious Judaism, I hereby thank God for Zionism.”⁵⁶ Horovitz also respected the WZO’s attempts to provide the European Jewish community with physical salvation from European anti-Semitism and spiritual salvation from European emancipation and assimilation.⁵⁷ His feelings about the dire condition of European Jewry in the early 20th century may be revealed in his efforts to aid the Old and New *Yishuv* in Palestine—his unwavering commitment to resettlement rivaled that of Azriel and Hirsch Hildesheimer.⁵⁸ In this sense, Horovitz represents the next step in Azriel Hildesheimer’s line of thinking: whereas he shared with his teacher a degree of apprehension regarding the Jewish nationalist enterprise, in his speech to the Agudah conference Horovitz demonstrated that he was at least slightly receptive to the nationalist initiatives of the Zionist party.

Self-Criticism, Anti-Semitism, and Mizrahism

The shift to a more Zionist or nationalist perception among Neo-Orthodox leaders fits neatly within the greater sociological context in which the second and third generations of Neo-Orthodoxy found itself—in what Mordechai Breuer has termed the “New Orientation.”⁵⁹ Beginning at the turn of the century, many societies in Europe, Germany among them, experienced growing cultural pessimism, a lack of trust in authorities, cynicism and uncertainty regarding the present condition of society, the expectation of an approaching newer and better world, and a marked shift towards the irrational; all of these sentiments manifested themselves in the German Orthodox community as well.⁶⁰ The ramifications of this sweeping wave of cynicism found particular expression in the Orthodox community in its self-criticism of Hirsch’s founding concepts of Neo-Orthodoxy, such as *Torah im derekh eretz*, which many began to regard as hackneyed and unrealistic.⁶¹

The intellectual support for Hirsch’s philosophy—namely, early 19th century Enlightenment principles such as *Bildung*—lost significance in

an age of self-criticism and reevaluation, leaving in its wake an intellectual vacuum that produced widespread assimilation or new approaches to living an Orthodox Jewish life in Germany. Breuer explains, “Mysticism, Torah study, and Eastern European Jewry were . . . forces that mightily attracted Orthodox Western Jewry and provided them not with a rather stale ideology of *Bildung* but with fresh nourishment.”⁶² As Breuer duly notes, German Orthodox Jews also turned to the Zionist movement in light of the social and intellectual upheaval of the early 20th century.⁶³ This would explain why all the examined leaders, whether they hailed from Hirsch’s separatist circle or from Hildesheimer’s rabbinical seminary, were at least slightly inclined towards Jewish nationalism, leaving behind Hirsch’s and Hildesheimer’s apprehension to proto-Zionism in the late 19th century.

The significant rise in political anti-Semitism in Germany in the late 19th century and early 20th century directly contributed to the disillusionment in the German Orthodox community during the New Orientation era. The Jews of Hirsch’s period clung to the principles of Enlightenment and liberalism, hoping that after the Emancipation equal treatment under the law would prevail in Germany, thereby neutralizing anti-Semitism. The problem with this was that as Germany moved into the 20th century, its political sector slowly abandoned liberalism for ethnic nationalism, and with the rise of more conservative political movements came the infiltration of politicized anti-Semitism into German politics.⁶⁴ In place of the mid-19th century liberal notion of Enlightened Jews living equally under German law in a post-Emancipation society was the anti-Semitic construction of the Jews “as a racially foreign, inherently inassimilable element.”⁶⁵

With the onset of the 20th century, Jews were disenchanted with the Hirschian appropriation of Enlightenment concepts *Bildung* and *Konfession*, as it became clear that social Emancipation would never follow civic Emancipation in an anti-Semitic German society. Alan Mittleman has argued that the German Jewish super-organizations of the early 20th century—the CV, the ZVfd, and the FV—directly resulted from the rise in anti-Semitism, as Jews of all denominations sought organized defense in the public sphere against the new anti-Semitic threat.⁶⁶ Be that as it may, it seems just as likely that the rise in Zionism in the German Orthodox community was another consequence of

politicized anti-Semitism. Jews of the New Orientation era abandoned the mid-19th century hope that they would finally be accepted in German society. As patriotism for the Fatherland waned in response to politicized anti-Semitism, Jews looked inward for new identities, of which nationalism was an obvious choice—hence, the rise in Zionism in the early 20th century. This development is encapsulated by the quote from Isaac Breuer in which he characterized the Jews' relationship to the German state as "German citizenship of Jewish nationality."⁶⁷

A final explanation for German Orthodox leaders' turn to Zionism or Jewish nationalism in the New Orientation period may be found in the article's opening discussion about the similarity between Hirsch's Neo-Orthodox philosophy and the Mizrahi religious-nationalist party of the WZO. Mizrahi was founded in 1902, at around the same time that German Orthodoxy was withdrawing from the era of Hirsch and Hildesheimer. It is possible that although certain aspects of religious nationalism remained inimical for German Orthodox leaders, the commonality between some of Mizrahi's central tenants and those of Hirschian Neo-Orthodoxy helped facilitate the transition from Hirsch's anti-Zionist stance to a more nationalistic outlook among Hirsch's descendants: namely, that of the anti-Zionist Zionists like Breuer and Rosenheim. One of the more obvious similarities lies in how both Mizrahi and Neo-Orthodoxy responded to modernity—not by isolating themselves from it but rather by viewing it as a means to improve the condition of world Jewry.⁶⁸ In this sense, both movements attempted to integrate secular concepts, whether it was nationalism or *Bildung*, into the Jewish fold.

In addition, there seems to be a similarity between Hirsch's concept of sanctifying God's name in the secular world and Mizrahi's prime justification for participation with unobservant Jews in a Jewish nationalist enterprise—by associating themselves with the WZO, Mizrahi hoped to bring wayward, assimilated Jews back to an observant lifestyle.⁶⁹ In other words, members of Mizrahi were spreading Torah values in a secular Jewish world in the same way that the followers of Hirsch's *Torah im derekh erez* philosophy were spreading Torah values in a secular German world.

Finally, both movements have messianic undertones, even if they are not overt. In terms of Hirsch, Mordechai Breuer remarks, "He sum-

moned his readers to work together for the furtherance of humanity, for the 'salvation of the world'—and thus his ideology of culture became a universal message of salvation that he proclaimed with almost messianic pathos . . . *Torah im derekh erez* was not . . . not only a formula . . . for the eternal actuality of the Torah, but for Israel and the world to merit redemption."⁷⁰ In response to the sometimes vituperative critique of anti-Zionist Orthodox leaders, the messianic inclination inherent in religious-nationalist circles was usually repressed by Mizrahi's leading figures.⁷¹ There remained, however, a small contingency of religious-nationalists that "elevated the messianic dimension," the most famous being Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook.⁷²

These similarities may point to an explanation of why Hirsch's intellectual descendants assimilated some form of Jewish nationalism during the New Orientation. While they remained completely opposed to Mizrahi's participation in a secular program which was indifferent to the precepts of the Torah, the subtle commonalities shared between Hirsch's Neo-Orthodox philosophy and the Mizrahi may have helped the likes of Breuer and Rosenheim meet Mizrahi halfway, by incorporating a profound sense of nationalism into a Torah-centric program.

Notes

1. See Alan Mittleman, "Some German Jewish Orthodox Attitudes Toward the Land of Israel and the Zionist Movement," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 1994, 6:3-4, pg. 111-114.
2. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uzziel*, Ed. and Trans. Bernard Drachman (New York: Bloch Publishing Co) 161.
3. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb*, Ed. and Trans. Isidor Grunfeld (London: Soncino Press, 1962) Vol. 2, 462.
4. *Ibid.*, 461: "The Torah did not exist for the State, but the State for the Torah. And only the Torah, the idea of being joint bearers of a spiritual calling, fused the individuals into an association of human beings whose inner cohesiveness is reflected in the term *am* (literally, society) and whose character in the wider sense as a nation is designated by the term *goy*, that is to say, a corporate body or people." See Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity Within Tradition* (New York: Columbia University, 1992) 59-60, where Breuer discusses Hirsch's admiration for the Medieval Jewish Andalusian poet and philosopher Yehuda Halevi yet notes that Hirsch rejected Halevi's conception of Jewish ethnicity and his profound love for Zion. See also Breuer, 289.

5. Ibid., 461. See Hirsch's discussion about mourning in the Jewish month of Av in *Judaism Eternal*, Ed. and Trans. Isidor Grunfeld (London: Soncino Press, 1959) Vol. 1, 126-141, page 135 in particular. See also Breuer, 287.
6. Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, 86. See Breuer, 78.
7. See Hirsch, *Nineteen Letters*, 85, the entirety of the Fifteenth Letter (159-168) in which Hirsch discusses Emancipation, and Breuer, 77.
8. See Hirsch, *Horeb*, 461, and Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Siddur* (Jerusalem—New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1972), 703.
9. Mordechai Eliav, *Ahavat Tzion V'anshei Hod* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1970) 75.
10. Ibid., 75-77. The quote is found on page 77 (translation mine): "Unfortunately, the masses have concluded that the settling project [of Russian Jews] is associated with harmful conceptions, which present the immigration as a national project . . . and not a humanitarian effort. This is entirely incorrect and one must oppose it fervently."
11. Ibid., 77; translation mine. See also R. Mohilever's comment to Pinsker regarding Hirsch on pg. 91, footnote 176.
12. David Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of Modern Jewish Orthodoxy* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1990) 108-109.
13. See Ellenson, 108-110.
14. Eliav, 101-102.
15. Ibid., 103-104.
16. Ibid., 108.
17. Ibid., 103.
18. Ibid., 104-106.
19. Ibid., 101 and 107.
20. Ellenson, 108. Emphasis mine.
21. Yaakov Zur, "German Jewish Orthodoxy's Attitude Towards Zionism," *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Shlomo Almog, et al. (Hanover: University Press of New England) 114. Zur addresses expressions of ambivalence towards Zionism later in his article, yet he never mentions Hildesheimer.
22. Eliav, 119, footnote 131.
23. On the issue of Hildesheimer and Zionism, Ellenson seems to rely heavily on Eliav's work, which he references repeatedly in his footnotes. Eliav, however, may not agree entirely with Ellenson's assessment. On page 109, Eliav contrasts Hildesheimer's activity on behalf of Palestine with that of Kalischer and Alkalai, noting that Hildesheimer's endeavors were more "religious-philanthropic" than nationalist in nature. Eliav then adds that, like Kalischer, Hildesheimer stands as a bridge between the old, traditionalist approach to resettlement in Palestine and the "forerunners of Zion" approach. In this comment, Eliav may be pointing to the fact that characterizing Hildesheimer as a non-Zionist is missing the greater point of the discussion.
24. Mittleman, "Some German . . .," 108-109.
25. Ibid., 110.

26. See Breuer, 294-295.
27. Ibid., 303.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 304.
30. See Mittleman, "Some German . . .," 111-114.
31. "Nehemiah Anton Nobel," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition 2007.
32. Yaakov Zur touches on the apparent shift in position among second generation Hirschians such as Mendel Hirsch and Isaac Breuer, yet he does not sufficiently explain why the shift occurred.
33. Zur, 111.
34. The quote is presented in Zur, 111.
35. Mittleman, "Some German . . .," 119.
36. Breuer uses it to characterize Isaac Breuer on pg. 393, but I think the phrase equally applies to Rosenheim.
37. Alan Mittleman, *The Politics of Torah* (Albany: State of New York University Press) 117, 122.
38. Mittleman, "Some German . . .," 118.
39. Mittleman, *The Politics . . .*, 113-114.
40. Mittleman, "Some German . . .," 120.
41. Ibid., 121.
42. Quote presented in Breuer, 393.
43. For Rosenheim's interest in cultural Zionism, see Mittleman "Some German . . .," 120.
44. Zur, 111.
45. Quote presented in Breuer, 382.
46. Breuer, 383, 393.
47. Quote presented in Breuer, 394.
48. Breuer, 392-393.
49. Eliav, 360.
50. Ibid., 363 and 309.
51. Breuer, 370; Eliav, 363; "Hirsch Hildesheimer," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition 2007.
52. "Hirsch Hildesheimer," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition 2007.
53. Breuer, 168.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., 246.
56. The quotes are presented in Hebrew in Isaac Heinemann, "R. Marcus Horovitz and his Approach to Judaism," *Sinai*, 1944, 167. Translation mine.
57. Ibid., 166-168.
58. "Marcus Horovitz," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition 2007.
59. Breuer, 355.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 356-257.
62. Ibid., 368.
63. Ibid., 369-370.

64. Mittleman, "Some German . . .," 115.
 65. Ibid.
 66. Ibid., 116-117.
 67. The quote is taken from Mordechai Breuer, 384. Note the contrast between Isaac Breuer's quote and that of the *Der Israelit* regarding Jewish German citizenship found on page 9 of this paper.
 68. Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England) 135.
 69. Ibid., 152.
 70. Breuer, 73. See also Breuer, 77, where he elaborates on the messianic undertones of Hirsch's philosophy of Jewish exile.
 71. Shimoni, 139-144.
 72. Ibid., 145-151.

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Zev Eleff

Toward an Understanding of Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik's Zionism

In 1901, Rabbi Elijah Rabinowitz founded *HaPeles*, a monthly popular rightwing journal in Russia famous for its militant opposition to Zionist factions. Five years later, Rabinowitz relaunched his publication as a weekly newspaper, renaming it *HaModia*. Rabinowitz and his fellow journalists saw their journal as a means to "combat the cultural programme and the plan to capture the communities by the Zionist Movement and its Orthodox arm, the Mizrachi." Rabinowitz became renowned for this editorial stance, despite the fact that he himself participated in the first Zionist Congress in 1897. The first issue of *HaModia* included a letter of support for the newspaper undersigned by some of the most influential rabbinic figures in Europe. After first offering warm approbation for Rabinowitz, the letter stated that "it is obligatory and a great deed for all those for whom it is within their means to bring *HaModia* into their homes." Among the undersigned luminaries on the letter were Rabbis Abraham Mordecai Alter of Gerrer, Hayyim Ozer Grodzinski of Vilna and Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brest-Litovsk.¹

That Soloveitchik's name appeared on such a letter comes as no surprise. Rabbi Hayyim's father, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, himself a scholar of great repute, was known to be an antagonist of the Zionist

forerunners. The elder Soloveitchik—respectfully called the Beit HaLevi, the title he gave to his Talmudic works—categorized proto-Zionists in the same field as the hasidic Jews; a growing sect he believed spelled the end for Jewish life. Thus, Rabbi Yosef Dov said of Moses Hess and his cohorts: “They are a new sect like that of Shabbatai Zevi, may the names of evildoers rot.” Further, Rabbi Yosef Dov commented on his shock to learn that many righteous men were affiliating themselves with this group that attempts to do nothing short of “destroying religious Judaism.” Scholars of European Orthodoxy have generally assumed that Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik adopted his father’s ideological stance on Zionism, and in turn, passed the Beit HaLevi’s tradition onto his son, Rabbi Velvl. Most forcibly, Shlomo Avineri has opined that “there is little to distinguish the approach of Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk at the birth of Zionism from that of Rabbi Velvl Soloveitchik after the establishment of the state.”²

Avineri’s assessment of Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik’s position can be backed by a collection of Soloveitchik’s published correspondence. Two of his most extended and elaborate discussions on Zionism are reproduced below:

Regarding the ‘Zionist cult,’ which has now banded and united together by force. . . . Have they not a bad reputation in their own communities, and is not their purpose to uproot the fundamentalists of [our] religion—and to this end also to take control of all the Jewish communities? . . . The people of Israel should take care not to join a venture that threatens their souls, to destroy religion, and is a stumbling block to the House of Israel.³

A few years later, on August 25, 1899, responding to a letter from a Rabbi Moses Jacob, Soloveitchik repeated his words while also acknowledging just how deep Zionism had sunken its teeth into eastern European Judaism:

I read your words on the issue of the ‘Zionist cult’ which has now become strongly consolidated. I am not ashamed to say that seeing that each of its members has earned an evil reputation in his place of dwelling, I do not know of ways to confront them. They have already proclaimed their goal to uproot the basis of the Jewish faith. And to attain it, they have made inroads in all places of Jewish settlement so as to enlist other Jews to assist them.⁴

There is further evidence of Soloveitchik’s anti-Zionist stance from his time as a member of the faculty at the Etz Hayyim Yeshiva in Volozhin. There were several attempts in the 1880s to start a Hovevei Zion student organization in the Volozhin Yeshiva. The first group was founded in 1885 to discuss and philosophize about Zionist ideas after students were done with their Torah study for the day. The group numbered fifty students by the time Rabbi Naphtali Zevi Yehudah Berlin, the head of the school, forced them to disband. Although Berlin, known more commonly as the Neziv, was a supporter of the early Hovevei Zion movement, he believed that such an organization did not belong in his yeshiva for risk that students may become distracted from their studies. Rabbi Hayyim, on the other hand, was known to be vocal about his ideological opposition to any Zionist “cell” that developed in Volozhin. For this reason, when Soloveitchik competed with Rabbi Hayyim Berlin for the reigns to Volozhin after the Neziv’s passing in 1893, there was a boisterous cluster of Zionist students who made it their business to support Berlin over Soloveitchik.⁵

Notwithstanding, there is reason to believe that Soloveitchik’s position on Zionism was more nuanced than we would otherwise be led to believe. To demonstrate this thesis, examining Soloveitchik’s involvement in the early plans to establish the Agudath Israel, a rightwing Orthodox organization in pre-World War II Europe, is instructive. As well, we should note that despite his considerable role in starting Agudath Israel, in Gershon Bacon’s *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916-1939*, a pioneering work on the history of the Agudath Israel, Soloveitchik’s name is never mentioned. It seems that Soloveitchik essentially removed himself once the organization was launched. This too, then, must be given due consideration in our study.

In large part, the formation of the Agudath Israel in 1912 was in response to rabbinic opposition to Zionism at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. At the start of the 1900s, Polish rabbis vigorously published pamphlets designed to antagonize Religious Zionism. Among a plethora of attacks, these published works claimed that increased popularity in Zionism was due to common people’s “search for a shortcut on the path to the final redemption.” Religious Zionism, they would have it, “dressed in the garb of traditional Jewish longings for Zion and the Messiah” but in effect was merely a

foolish and useless shortcut toward a long-term dream. One such pamphlet put out by Rabbis Shlomo Zalman Landau and Yosef Rabinowitz, *Ohr la-Yesharim*, argued along these lines when the authors wrote that each community rabbi did more to improve the Jewish people's situation than the entire Zionist movement with all its money, publicity and fanfare. Then, in 1911, when the Mizrahi supported Tenth Zionist Congress adopted a resolution that pledged to begin educational activity in the Diaspora, many Central European Mizrahi loyalists resigned from the movement. Indeed, the more conservative Mizrahi members chose to embrace Herzl's Political Zionism only so long as its goal functioned in concert with Religious Zionism's messianic aspirations.⁶

As Matthias Morgenstern has stated quite clearly, Jacob Rosenheim, one of the founders of the Agudath Israel organization, was especially interested in working with as many members of the Orthodox and even Zionist communities as possible. He therefore contacted these former German Mizrahi members to help form his new organization. Moreover, Rosenheim, in his attempt to make his institution acceptable to these men, resisted all efforts from internal and external forces to turn the Agudath Israel into a "special-purpose association" and an "anti-Zionist combat organization." Rosenheim was convinced that the only way to keep Orthodoxy in Europe safe was by unionizing the leaders of its dispersed and varied communities.⁷

To their surprise, when Rosenheim and his fellow westerners contacted rabbinic leaders from Lithuania, Poland and Russia, they were taken aback by the other side's lack of interest. Especially Lithuanian rabbis, led by Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik, warned their other easterners of the Neo-Orthodoxy preached by German Jews. Soloveitchik and his party stressed that forming a union would be a concession to secularism and European nationalism, something very much in vogue within liberal circles at this time. Moreover, these central Europeans, it was alleged, would try to use the associations made by the establishment of the Agudath Israel to impose secular education on Jewish youth in eastern Europe. The matter finally came to a head in the town of Katowice, where some three decades prior the Hovevei Zion first met to start their Zionist organization, 228 mostly rabbinic figures met to establish the Agudath Israel. The delegates hailed from Austria, Belgium, Byelorussia, Congress Poland, England, France, Galicia, Germany,

Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moravia, Palestine, Russia, Switzerland and the Ukraine.⁸

Although participants at the assembly hailed from an assortment of locales, David Vital writes that all attending could be placed into one of two salient categories. The first was a young group of central European Jewish scholars who valued worldly cultures and subscribed to educational models that boasted eclectic curricula. Many of the rabbis from this class were formerly members of the Mizrahi movement but sought a new direction after the events of the Zionist Congress of 1911. As for the men who comprised the second and larger group of participants at the initial Agudath Israel meeting, they were older and claimed eastern Europe as their home. These rabbinic luminaries abhorred virtually everything that was beyond their insular world of Torah and Orthodoxy. They were present at the Agudath Israel meeting only reluctantly because of a "newly heightened sense of national responsibility." Led by Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik, these eastern European rabbis submitted a list of demands to Rosenheim for their further participation in the Agudath Israel program. In fact, it was Soloveitchik who drew up the list of eighteen conditions by which Rosenheim would have to agree upon before the great sage would cooperate with plans to start the Agudath Israel.⁹

Therefore, one of the most critical points in the formation of the Agudath Israel was an ideological compromise made by these two sides. To be sure, there were prominent eastern European rabbis who saw the need early on to form a national organization. In the first years of the twentieth century, Rabbi Hayyim Ozer Grodzinski wrote that "the recent great revolution and the devastation visited upon our people have moved all the best in Jewry to consider the condition of the people and how it might be improved." Grodzinski followed up these words by suggesting that "an organization that would address "the questions facing the nation in an orderly fashion and in a spirit appropriate to those who keep the faith." Around the same time that Grodzinski wrote this, a group of leading Lithuanian rabbis met in August 1909 to discuss the possibility of forming a unified organization that would represent European Orthodox Judaism. The attendees at this meeting were Grodzinski, Rabbis Eliezer Gordon of Telshe, Abraham Alter, Shalom Schneersohn of Lubavitch, Shlomo Breuer and

Hayyim Soloveitchik. In the end, however, the participants at this exclusive gathering could not agree on an appropriate way to establish a national Jewish organization. Nevertheless, it was not until the conference in Katowice when a significant number began to think along the same lines as Grodzinski and acceded to those ideologues who regarded the Jews as a nation.¹⁰

Likewise, Rosenheim and his fellow German members of the Agudath Israel were careful to appease their counterparts and limit the mission of the organization to less ideological credos. And of those philosophical points that the Agudath Israel pledged to devote energies toward, they were by and large ones that Orthodox Jews generally agreed upon. Accordingly, no official statement was made regarding Zionism in Katowice nor was the topic of secular studies broached at that time. A carefully worded resolution passed at that initial 1912 meeting demonstrates this point:

The purpose of the Agudath Israel is the solution of the respective tasks facing the Jewish collectivity, in the spirit of the Torah. In accordance with this purpose, it sets itself the following goals: (1) the organization, concentration and unification of dispersed parts of Orthodox Jewry, especially of the Jews in Eastern and Western Europe; (2) the generous promotion of Torah studies, and of Jewish education in general, in countries where this promotion is needed; (3) the improvement of economic conditions of the Jewish masses, not only in Palestine, but wherever they suffer want; (4) they organization and promotion of emergency aid in cases of necessity; (5) the advancement of a press and literature in the traditional Jewish spirit; (6) a representative forum for all Jews adhering to the Torah; this forum will parry the attacks directed against the Torah and its adherents.¹¹

What can be gleaned from Soloveitchik's hesitation to join the Agudath Israel in its early goings is his clear opposition to forming Jewish organizations. Soloveitchik was careful to stay away from affiliating himself with movements and spokesmen who would readily feel obliged to speak on behalf of all members of the institution—including Soloveitchik. Perhaps, for this reason, Soloveitchik was not satisfied with the Neziv's response to the students attempt to start a Hovevei Zion chapter in the Volozhin Yeshiva. The Neziv validated the good intentions of the group but outlawed it for pedagogical reasons. Soloveitchik similarly wished to outlaw the Hovevei Zion club, but his personality refused

to permit him to step into the rank and file; faculty were expected to adhere to the decisions of the Rosh Yeshiva. To be sure, Soloveitchik served a more elevated role than the other teachers in Volozhin. While they were all considered to be top-tier rabbinic scholars, none compared in scholarship, pedigree and popularity to Rabbi Hayyim. However, there was something else that motivated Soloveitchik to speak up against the establishment at times: his uncomfortableness when others spoke for him, *carte blanche*. All other factors just contributed to this condition.¹²

In this light, a different profile of Rabbi Hayyim's position on Zionism emerges. To illustrate, Rabbi Meir Berlin's account of Soloveitchik demonstrates the latter's openness to discussion with other differing personalities; even those with fervent Zionist beliefs. Berlin, an eventual Mizrachi leader, reported to his relative, Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik, that a prominent Zionist leader from Palestine requested an audience with the famed rabbinic scholar. "What should I be concerned about?" Soloveitchik responded, sensing the worried tone in Berlin's voice. "If he is willing to listen to my views, then why shouldn't I!"¹³

Moreover, it is telling that such an episode is not recounted for Soloveitchik's father, the Beit HaLevi. Indeed, as we have stated earlier, Rabbi Yosef Dov treated his Zionist opponents the same way he behaved toward his hasidic adversaries—he unyieldingly ignored them both and refused every request for an audience. In the last decade of his life, one of the primary recipients of the Beit HaLevi's wrath was the Hovevei Zion movement. The elder Soloveitchik campaigned for Orthodox rabbis to rescind their support for the movement. While most followed Soloveitchik's instructions, one prominent figure who refused to do so was Rabbi Samuel Mohilewer. Mohilewer was one of the early members of Hovevei Zion and went so far as to join Theodore Herzl's World Zionist Organization in 1897 when other Orthodox rabbis would not. Yet, although he was respected as a gifted orator and scholar, Mohilewer was always viewed as an iconoclast who, among his other beliefs, stressed the need for dialogue between Orthodox rabbis and leaders of the *maskilim*. Rabbi Yosef Dov must have sensed that Mohilewer's views were dangerous to European Jewry when he stated publicly that "even a young child can see their grave mistakes" that Mohilewer was making in his pro-Zionist stances.¹⁴

Years later, after Rabbi Yosef Dov's death in 1892, Rabbi Hayyim

wished to attend Mohilewer's funeral in 1898 to offer a eulogy for the Zionist leader. Family members and prominent members of the community attempted to dissuade Soloveitchik, arguing that were he to appear at Mohilewer's funeral, it would be construed that Soloveitchik had reversed his position on Zionism. Soloveitchik was unconvinced that attending Mohilewer's funeral would carry with it such an outcome. However, due to the fact that other "more feeble-minded people" would interpret Soloveitchik's presence in such a manner, Rabbi Hayyim ultimately decided not to travel to the funeral. Nevertheless, here again we find another example of Rabbi Hayyim's willingness to converse with individual members of the Religious Zionist camp so long as it was not done under the banner of institutionalized organizations.¹⁵

What then motivated Soloveitchik's hostility toward institutional Zionism as testified by his published letters and opposition to the Hovevei Zion club in the Volozhin Yeshiva? As is well known, many Lithuanian rabbis, including Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik, opposed Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor's leniency in 1889 to use grains harvested in the sabbatical year. One of the staunchest detractors of Spektor's so-called "Heter Mehira" was Soloveitchik's relative and colleague at Volozhin, the Neziv. Thankfully, one writer's account of his many conversations with Soloveitchik throws light on Rabbi Hayyim's extrahalakhic position on the matter. Indeed, after the writer, Jacob Mark, prompted Soloveitchik's comments by raising the Neziv's opposition, Rabbi Hayyim responded:

My grandfather [the Neziv] is not alone in his adamant proposition to leave the land in Palestine fallow. I too have supported this position for a long time and continue to do so. However, the actions taken by students in Kharkov have caused me to cease my protests. I recall vividly that these university students entered into the Great Choral Synagogue in Kiev. They picketed all day and openly confessed their sins that were very far from Judaism. They called out their slogan: "House of Jacob, let us go and let us go forth!" One of their members named Louis would cry out at that moment: "Let us go and return to God." Come my brothers and let us begin to be punctilious in our observance of the Sabbath and Kashruth. . . . They arrived in the Land of Israel and did not improve on their ways, even a little bit. . . . Instead, they scattered apostasy throughout our Holy Land. Certainly, we need to oppose Zionism so long as these people stand at the head of its leadership.¹⁶

Soloveitchik was referring to the twenty-five alumni of Kharkov University who founded Bilu (Hebrew abbreviation for *Beit Ya'akov lekhu ve-nelkha*) in the early 1880s. Although its duration and lasting legacy were minimal, Bilu was a Zionist society dedicated to redeem the Land of Israel and reestablish a Jewish state. Zev Dubnow, one of the group's original members, once remarked that "the ultimate aim [of Bilu] is to build up this land of Israel and restore to the Jews the political independence that has been taken from them for the past two thousand years." With this lofty goal in mind, it is easy to understand how these radicals, almost immediately upon touching down on Palestinian soil, were seen as a major ideological threat to rightwing religious camps. The religious camp's lack of support is one reason that a cooperative village, called Gadera, south of Jaffa was essentially the group's lone achievement. And, as Mark records in his dialogues with Rabbi Hayyim, Bilu did not fare much better in Europe. There, conservative religious Jews did not take well to Bilu activists' well known for their intense propaganda. Soloveitchik's enmity for Bilu jibes with a statement attributed to Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn of Lubavitch. Schneersohn opined that had Bilu members followed "in the light of God," he himself would have followed their lead and settled in Palestine.¹⁷

Surely, Soloveitchik did not oppose Bilu's mission statement as articulated by Dubnow. Soloveitchik's grandson, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who spent years studying with his grandfather before enrolling in the University of Berlin, described his forebear's attitude toward Zionism in the following terms: "He always played with the idea that once he had married off his children, he would hand over his rabbinat to one of his sons, and settle in the Land of Israel, buy an orchard, and fulfill the commandments pertaining to the Land of Israel." Were Rabbi Hayyim to have interviewed individual members of Bilu, perhaps he would have found that many of them were genuinely Orthodox. However, like Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, Soloveitchik was unbending in his opposition to any Zionist establishment where its spokespeople, in his view, did not conform to his strictures of Orthodox Judaism. Further, it is for this reason, perhaps, that Rabbi Hayyim refused to see any merit to hosting a Hovevei Zion club in the Volozhin Yeshiva. For his students, any involvement in a movement that sought to maintain ties with other external organizations threatened the ideals and integrity of the students

and the yeshiva with which Soloveitchik was associated.¹⁸

What then was Rabbi Hayyim's approach to Zionism? In their writings, a few of Soloveitchik's relatives have sought to impose a positive view of Zionism onto Rabbi Hayyim. Rabbi Meir Berlin has testified to the fact that Soloveitchik's home was "surrounded by a spiritual aura of the Land of Israel." Although he opposed organized Zionist movements, this did not prevent Soloveitchik from becoming "the singular rabbinic figure to completely exert himself in taking an active involvement for the sake of the Land of Israel." Consequently, Jewish fundraisers from Palestine—like school administrators and directors of orphanages, for instance—would make it a point to contact Soloveitchik to request donations from the wealthy Jews of Lithuania. Similarly, in Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's words, Rabbi Hayyim, through his pioneering halakhic analyses of laws related to Israel, "was perhaps the greatest lover of Zion in his generation." However, as articulated by his grandson, Rabbi Hayyim's "love of Zion and Jerusalem" were totally unconnected and ran in counter-distinction to Chaim Weizmann—the so-called founder of Synthetic Zionism and first president of Israel:

If you think it is easy for me to get used to the partly heretical, partly "enlightened," and partly Russian-revolutionary testament of Chaim Weizmann in the last chapter of his book [*Trial and Error*], where he develops his ideas of the spiritual image of the State of Israel—you are wrong! And endless distance separates the outlook of Chaim Weizmann and secular leaders from my outlook. I cannot understand their viewpoint. How can one in any way dream about rebuilding of the Land of Israel without the Lord of Israel?¹⁹

Indeed, Rabbi Soloveitchik's above comments parallel his comments delivered as part of a eulogy for his uncle, Rabbi Velvl Soloveitchik. In this speech, Rabbi Soloveitchik addressed the political agendas of his uncle and grandfather regarding Zionism. "My uncle was completely removed from the socio-political overtones [of Israel]. It can be said, however, is that the State did not find a place within its halachic system for his particular halachic perspective." In this way, Rabbi Soloveitchik believed that his uncle was the true heir to his grandfather's world view. Both men viewed situations through a Torah-exclusive lens, refusing to account for any external factors and influences. In a word, according to his relatives, Rabbi Hayyim never opposed Zionism as an ideology—just the institutionalization of Zionism as a synthetic national movement.²⁰

Of course, it is impossible to fully accept these descriptions of Rabbi Hayyim's view. Beyond the fact that neither family member can find suitable evidence to back their claim that Rabbi Hayyim was in some way a true Zionist, both Berlin and Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik became strong proponents of Religious Zionism and may have wished to reinterpret Rabbi Hayyim's approach to suit their cause. However, there is likewise no evidence that Soloveitchik held the views of other more ideologically virulent anti-Zionists. In particular, one of Soloveitchik's most outstanding disciples, Rabbi Elhanan Wasserman of Baranowicz denounced Zionism as a "wrong turn" in the history of the Jewish people in the Exile. Wasserman fervently believed that just as the Enlightenment had failed to elevate the Jew to the status of his fellow gentile citizen, so too, Zionism as a national movement could only be doomed to failure. Moreover, Hasidic sects, led by Rabbi Shalom Dov Schneersohn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, attacked Zionism on extra-halakhic and theological grounds. Begging for a more passive role for humankind in the bringing about of the messianic age, the Lubavitcher Rebbe believed that a Jewish national movement was completely unconnected to a return to the Land of Israel. The Rebbe's messianic expectations were for a messianic savior to come about and perform miracles. "Zionism," Shlomo Avineri writes about Schneersohn's view, "appears to be a blatant violation of the oath sworn by the Jewish people to wait patiently until the End of Days" and a "betrayal of the religious norm of exile." In the following generation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe's view was adopted with even greater vigor by Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, the grand rebbe of Satmar. The Satmar Rebbe went so far as to describe all Zionism as secular and heretical to Jewish values.²¹

Another anti-Zionist with similar views to the ones expressed by the Lubavitcher and Satmar rebbes was Rabbi Hayyim Eleazar Shapira of Munkacs. Moreover, not only did the Munkacer Rebbe wage a struggle against Zionism, he took the opportunity to attack the Agudath Israel organization, as well. Shapira warned his followers that while Agudath Israel rabbis openly displayed a great deal of piety in their organ, *HaModia*, they were in fact no different than the Zionists. Shapira stressed to his listeners that they should not believe the claims made by the leaders of Agudath Israel because "in their hypocrisy they have done us more harm than all the wicked of the earth."²²

By contrast, Rabbi Hayyim's antagonistic comments on Zionism

consistently appear to be directed at the members of the "Zionist cult" who have earned a negative reputation from their interaction with the religious leaders; not Zionism as a national ideology. Yet, one cannot help but notice that through Shapira's attacks, Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik's fear of affiliating himself with the Agudath Israel was realized. Soloveitchik was well aware that the ultra-traditionalists in the rightwing camp refused to differentiate between all types of institutionalized movement. To men like Shapira, all Jewish organizations, by virtue of carrying basic institutional features—i.e., advertisements, newspapers, etc.—were to be considered essentially secular. Soloveitchik demonstrated that he at least partially shared this view when he retreated from taking active involvement in the Agudath Israel after serving as one of the instrumental figures who allowed the organization to get off the ground. Our argument has been that Soloveitchik maintained the same outlook for the Zionist movements. In his heart, Rabbi Hayyim deeply subscribed to many of the views held by those in the Religious Zionist camp. He profoundly yearned to sit by an orchard in Palestine along with his other co-religionists, and shared their ambition to help bring about a messianic redemption. Nevertheless, Soloveitchik never could feel comfortable joining a movement where he would be forced to compromise on some of his views and sit beside individuals whom he believed shared no part of his version of Religious Zionism.

Notes

I thank Dr. Jess Olson for his comments and criticisms which greatly enhanced the quality of this article as well as Rabbi Hershel Schachter who directed me to several valuable sources on the ideological stances of Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik.

1. For a brief assessment of Rabinowitz's newspaper, see Shmuel Rotstein, "The orthodox press in Poland," in *The Jewish Press That Was: Accounts, Evaluations and Memories of Jewish Papers in pre-Holocaust Europe* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Post Press, 1980), p. 97. For a reproduction of the letter published in *Hamodia*, see Aharon Sorski, *Rosh Golat Ariel* vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Amudei ha-Or, 1990), pp. 164-167.
2. For above quotation attributed to Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, see Yosef Salmon, *Dat ve-Tzionut: Eimutim Rishonim* (Jerusalem, Zionist Library, 1990), pp. 28-29. See also Avineri, pp. 13, 176.

For portraits of Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik, see Shelomoh Yosef Zevin, *Ishim ve-Shitot* (Jerusalem: Bet Hillel, 1979), pp. 43-85; Isser Frenkel, *Men of Distinction: Biographies of Great Rabbis* vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Sinai Pub., 1967), pp. 177-186; O. Feuchtwanger, *Righteous Lives* (New York: Bloch Pub., 1965), pp. 107-109.; Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* vol. 1 (Hoboken: Ktav, 1999), pp. 6-8.

3. Shelomoh Zalman Landau, *Ohr Yeshtarim* (Warsaw: Halter, 1900), p. 55
4. Shimon Meler, *Uvdot ve-Hanbagot le-Beit Brisk* vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 201-202. Also quoted in Chaim Dov Rabinowitz, *The History of the Jewish People: From Nechemia to the Present* vol. 2 (New York: Moznaim, 1998), p. 391. See also Yosef Eisen, *Miraculous Journey: A Complete History of the Jewish People from Creation to the Present* (Southfield: Targum Press, 2004), p. 321. For another anti-Zionist letter by Soloveitchik with similar themes, see *Igrot mi-Beit ha-Levi* (Bnei Brak: Pardes, 1993), p. 37.
5. Shaul, Stampfer, *The Lithuanian Yeshiva and its Formation* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2005) pp. 185-192. See also Hillel Goldberg, *Between Berlin and Slobodka: Jewish Transition Figures from Eastern Europe* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1989), pp. 106-107. For a comment on the Neziv's advocacy of the leaders of Religious Zionism, see Gil Pearl, *Emek ha-Neziv: A Window into the Intellectual Universe of Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin* (PhD diss. Harvard, 2006), p. 19.
6. Gershon Bacon, "Reluctant Partners, Ideological Opponents: Reflections on the Relationship Between Agudat Yisrael and the Zionist and Religious Zionist Movements in Interwar Poland," *Gal-Ed* 14 (1995): 70-71. Ironically, Agudath Israel eventually expanded its program to support settlements in Palestine. Even the Gerrer Rebbe, once a reluctant member of Agudath Israel, visited Palestine numerous times and went so far as to invest his own funds to help form a stock company in Jaffa. Again recipients of scathing criticism, Agudath Israel spokesmen released the following statement: "We have to clarify for ourselves and for the world not only that 'Zion' and 'Zionism' are contradictory opposites, but anyone who has true love of Zion in his heart must be an even greater foe of Zionism."
7. Matthias Morgenstern, *From Frankfurt to Jerusalem: Isaac Breuer and the History of the Secession Dispute in Modern Jewish Orthodoxy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 60.
8. David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 131-135. Morgenstern, p. 58.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Hayyim Ozer Grodzinski, *Abi'ezer: Kobetz Igrot* (Bnei Brak, 1970), pp. 257-260. On the 1909 meeting, see David Kranzler and Dovid Landesman, *Rav Breuer: His Life and His Legacy* (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1998), p. 43. Consequently, the rightwing Orthodox factions that turned down an invitation to join the Agudath Israel consistently criticized the organization for betraying the "very value it purported to defend"—traditional Jewish communal culture. Further, so apologetic were their arguments in self-defense, that Agudath

Israel's leaders must have been aware how far they had come since its first days: "Regarding external and technical means to guard the Torah against innovations Agudath Israel uses all the modern means that secular parties have employed to fight against the rule of Torah in order to defend Torah. People of the older generation regard things like organizations, literature, lectures and conferences, planning and strategy as new things, but they do not realize how many victims have succumbed to these seemingly minor things, and that the way to defend against them is to use the same weapons." See Alexander Zysha Frydman, *Ketavim Nivharim* (Jerusalem: Moreshet Sofrim, 1960), p. 37-38.

11. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 446-447.
12. In fact, Soloveitchik's popularity amongst Volozhin's student body eventually outshined the Neziv. For an example, see Shelomoh Yosef Zevin, *Ishim ve-Shitot* (Jerusalem: Kol Mevaser, 2007), pp. 26-27.
13. Meir Berlin, *Mi-Volozhin Ad Yerushalayim* vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1970), p. 243.
14. See Isaac Nissenbaum, *The Ideology and Revival of Nationalism* (Warsaw: Mizrachi, 1920), pp. 92-118.
15. Meler, p. 208.
16. Jacob Mark, *Bi-Mehitzatam shel Gedolei ha-Dor* (Jerusalem: Goyil, 1958), pp. 45-46.
17. Vital, pp. 371-372. See also Israel Bartal, "Farming the land on three continents: Bilu, Am Oylom, and Yefe-Nahar," *Jewish History* 21 (Spring 2007): 249-261. See also, Benjamin L. Gordon, *Between Two Worlds: The Memoirs of a Physician* (Booksman Association, 1952), p. 249. The above quotation from Dubnow can be found in Anton La Guardia, *War Without End: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Struggle for a Promised Land* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002), p. 74. For a brief discussion on tension between Bilu and the rightwing Orthodox, see Nathan Ausubel, *The Book of Jewish Knowledge* (New York: Crown Pub., 1964), p. 530. For Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn's comments, see Isaac Alfasi, *Ha-Hasidut ve-Shivat Zion* (Tel Aviv, 1986), p. 22.
18. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Rav Speaks: Five Addresses on Israel, History, and the Jewish People* (Lakewood: Judaica Press, 2002), p. 35.
19. See Berlin, p. 260; and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Rav Speaks*, p. 36.
20. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Be-Sod ha-Yahid ve-ha-Yahad* (Jerusalem: Orot, 1976), pp. 240-241.
21. See Elhanan Wasserman, *Kobetz Ma'amarim* (Tel Aviv, 1984), pp. 111-112; and Shlomo Avineri, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) pp. 15-19.

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Ezra Blaustein

Saadya Gaon and Maimonides on the Question of Divine Attributes

Though separated chronologically by several centuries, two of the greatest Jewish thinkers, Saadya Gaon and Maimonides, were faced with some of the same theological questions. Their ideas often reflect the philosophical trends of their times, trends which they then adapted to Judaism. Saadya, it is often stated, was heavily influenced by the tenets of kalam, a contemporaneous Muslim theological movement which proposed a rational approach to religious philosophy. That claim is easy to justify, as even a cursory look at Saadya's writing will reveal the markings of kalam thought. Maimonides, on the other hand, rejected kalam, preferring the Aristotelian philosophical school. A particularly illustrative example of the differences between them appears in their respective treatments of the problem of anthropomorphic descriptions of God and the related issue of ascribing attributes to God. Saadya and Maimonides approach this issue in slightly different ways, a manifestation of their underlying philosophical discrepancies. Yet there is a good deal of overlap in their arguments regarding divine attributes. In fact, after analyzing their writings, we find that identifying Saadya with kalam and Maimonides with Aristotle may be accurate overall but is something of an oversimplification of the reality.

In order to appreciate Saadya's relationship with kalam, we must first take a brief look at the intellectual environment in which he worked. Saadya, upon arriving in what is now Iraq from his native Egypt, found there a raging spiritual conflict. Religious doctrine was seen as opposing the propositions of rationalist philosophy, and people from all religious groups, whether Muslims, Jews, or Christians, found themselves confused and unsure of what to believe.¹ To add to the confusion, in Baghdad, where Saadya wrote his *Sefer Emunot Ve-Deot* in 933, many different sects of Christianity and Islam, as well as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Indian philosophy, were all competing for intellectual and spiritual dominance.² One popular intellectual movement which grappled with these issues was kalam.

Kalam, literally meaning speech or discussion, represented an attempt by Muslim theologians to reconcile religion with a rationalist worldview. As Haggai Ben-Shammai points out, it differs from other schools of philosophy in that it contains a significant polemical element. Followers of kalam, known as mutakallimun, often engaged in debates and arguments, not pursuing knowledge for its own sake, but rather as a form of religious practice.³ Kalam, as a theological movement, divided into many different sub-groups, the two main ones being the mu'tazilite and ash'arite schools. Briefly, the difference between mu'tazilites and ash'arites was that the latter tried to read the Quran literally, while the former used a method of allegory to interpret verses which presented philosophical problems.⁴ In general, Jewish philosophers, Saadya included, tended to follow the more rationalist mu'tazilite form of kalam.⁵

It is not difficult to find evidence of Saadya's concurrence with the ideas of kalam. Firstly, the structure with which he organizes *Emunot Ve-Deot* bears a striking resemblance to the writings of the mutakallimun. He begins with an argument for rationalist thinking, proceeds to a discussion of the nature of creation and the nature of God, and moves from there to his theories about free will and the phenomenon of reward and punishment. It is significant that his treatment of divine attributes and God's unity leads into his discussion of God's justice, as that is a distinguishing characteristic of kalam writings.⁶ By organizing his work in a way so typical of the mutakallimun, and specifically of the mu'tazalites, Saadya is demonstrating his acceptance of their method of theological reasoning.

In addition to similarities in form, *Emunot Ve-Deot* resembles mu'tazilite works in substance as well. Saadya was the first Jewish thinker to fully develop the distinction between rational and revealed laws, a staple of mu'tazalite thinking.⁷ He offers four proofs of creation, proofs which can be found in the works of the mutakallimun.⁸ An additional resemblance to kalam can be found if we keep in mind Ben-Shammai's comment that the purpose of kalam was at least partially to engage in polemical, often apologetic, debate. Isaac Husik contends that Saadya wrote *Emunot Ve-Deot* as a defense of Jewish beliefs. Saadya, he says, does not concern himself with the question of pure metaphysics, as other philosophers do, but rather focuses only on those aspects of philosophy which impact his argument for the Jewish faith.⁹ If we accept both Ben-Shammai's claim about the purpose of kalam as well as Husik's assertion regarding the purpose of *Emunot Ve-Deot*, we find that Saadya's reason for writing was the same as that of the mutakallimun.

Let us now take a closer look at how Saadya dealt with anthropomorphism and attributes of God, an issue which challenged his conception of the nature of God's unity. Anthropomorphic passages in the Bible and the Talmud which ascribe physical properties to God presented a serious problem for Jews throughout history, but, according to Harry Wolfson, the problem intensified under Muslim rule. Islamic writers considered Jews anthropomorphists, and Saadya felt he had to refute that accusation.¹⁰ To make matters worse, even the Karaites, whose literal interpretations of the Torah so angered Saadya, accused the Rabbanites of possessing anthropomorphic tendencies.¹¹ In response to this, Saadya repeatedly and categorically affirmed that any passage which describes God in an anthropomorphic manner must not be read literally.¹² Saadya was not unique in saying that, and while that was the approach of the mutakallimun, it was also the approach of most other philosophical-religious schools and therefore it cannot tell us much about Saadya's relationship to kalam.

More instructive than Saadya's discussion of physical descriptions of the divine is his treatment of conceptual attributes ascribed to God, a difficulty to which the mutakallimun devoted much effort. Wolfson identifies two problems that adherents to kalam found with divine attributes. First, they had to deal with what Wolfson calls the ontologi-

cal question. When the Quran speaks of God knowing or living, is it implying that knowledge and life are qualities which, though perhaps inseparable from God, are at least somewhat independent? Then there is also the semantic aspect of the problem, which Wolfson sees as two-fold. First, we can say that God “knows,” but we can also say that a person “knows.” To what extent is the meaning of the “knowledge” the same for God as it is for people? The other element of the semantic problem is the question of how best to formulate the relationship of God to the attributes predicated of Him.¹³ Muslim theologians dealt with these issues in several different ways.

Three different schools of thought developed within Islamic philosophy regarding the problem of divine attributes. One school, called the “Likeners” by their detractors because they likened God to people, believed that attributes of God truly represent completely independent entities, a belief Wolfson compares to that of some Christians who believe that the Trinity represents a tritheist system. Another group did not believe in anthropomorphism but did believe that divine attributes described in the Quran represented real beings within God. These beings, they maintained, are non-divine and inseparable from God, therefore maintaining divine unity. Others rejected this approach as well, arguing that the claim that there exist certain independent beings, even if they themselves are not divine and cannot be separated from God, destroys God’s unity. They concluded that divine attributes must be merely different names for God, each one simply explaining God in a certain way.¹⁴

Saadya, it is clear, sided with the third position. He believed that divine attributes are themselves ontologically insignificant, and are simply various terms for God’s essence, echoing the view of the mu’tazalites.¹⁵ In fact, Saadya’s stance on divine attributes so resembles the mu’tazalite one that Ben-Shammai goes so far as to say that Saadya and the other “Jewish mutakallimun,” as he terms them, who took this position were taking part in a debate primarily between Muslims and not so relevant to Jewish views at the time. He contends that Saadya’s formulation of his solution to the problem of divine attributes is strikingly similar to that of the mu’tazalites, a formulation chiefly designed to counter the views of the ash’arites. Ben-Shammai argues that if we want to view Saadya’s position in a Jewish context, we would have to assume the

existence of Jews who shared the ash’arites’ opinions on this matter, an assumption Ben-Shammai seems not to believe is accurate.¹⁶

Ben-Shammai’s argument, however, may be something of an overstatement. Bearing in mind Altmann’s description of the intellectual and spiritual confusion rampant in 10th century Baghdad, we can conclude that even if there did not exist a group of Jews with views parallel to those of the ash’arites, Jews would have been aware of the ash’arite view. It is conceivable that Saadya, in dealing with the issue of attributes, was indeed writing mainly, if not exclusively, for a Jewish audience. Maybe there were no “Jewish ash’arites,” but Jews did live in this bewildering spiritual milieu, and Saadya likely wanted to clarify exactly what he felt to be the Jewish opinion. As Altmann himself says, Saadya “could have named his book, like Maimonides over 200 years later, a *Guide of the Perplexed*.”¹⁷ Perhaps Saadya used anti-ash’arite formulations not because he was actively choosing sides in an intra-Islamic argument, but because he wanted to differentiate the Jewish opinion on attributes from any other views to which Jews were being exposed. Ben-Shammai is certainly right, though, in strongly identifying Saadya’s position regarding divine attributes with the mu’tazalite school.

According to Wolfson, on the question of divine attributes, Maimonides began where Saadya ended. Saadya, and the mutakallimun in general, did not address the logical problem of God’s attributes, and in fact created an additional difficulty. Saying that attributes are merely names for God may help preserve God’s unity, but by equating all divine attributes with God’s essence, the mutakallimun are basically just equating God with God.¹⁸ For example, we can take the phrase “God’s knowledge” and say that “knowledge is God;” that knowledge is just a way of referring to God. But once we assume that knowledge equals God, then the statement “knowledge is God” is merely saying “God is God.” Maimonides solves this problem in several different ways, the first of which is to argue that divine attributes should be read as verbs or actions.¹⁹ To return to the example of “God’s knowledge,” Maimonides is suggesting that we interpret that phrase as “God knows.”

As Wolfson points out, Maimonides likely based this answer on Aristotle, who dealt with a similar logical dilemma. Aristotle cites an opinion which suggests that a statement which defines the subject and its predicate as different presents logical problems, as it would imply that the

subject, itself one, is many. The solution some people found to this problem, Aristotle reports, is to change the statement "the man is walking" to "the man walks."²⁰ Wolfson argues that Maimonides borrowed this solution from Aristotelian philosophy and applied it to the uniquely religious issue of divine attributes and the unity of God.²¹ If true, that would reflect the unmistakable imprint of Aristotle on *Guide of the Perplexed*, an imprint quite apparent in Maimonides' other answer to the logical aspect of the problem of divine attributes, the solution of negation.

In this solution, Maimonides contends that we can indeed say that divine attributes are identifying God and not simply describing His actions, but only if we understand them in their negative sense. Maimonides explains that if we are told that a certain object is a man, we know that it is not a plant or a mineral. That, he says, is the only way to understand God's attributes as identifying Him.²² However, Maimonides develops this idea further. Wolfson draws our attention to the wording of Maimonides here, explaining that Maimonides does not say that God's attributes refer to the negation of their opposites, but rather the negation of their privations.²³ This significant formulation is discussed more extensively by Zvi Diesendruck. He explains that the idea that attributes should be read as negations of their opposites was already developed extensively in the works of the mutakallimun. Maimonides' contribution was to introduce the concept of privations into the discussion of divine attributes.²⁴

The difference between opposites and privations is that a negation of privation means that the quality in question *cannot* be applied to the subject at all, not merely that the quality *does not* apply to the subject. To illustrate this point, Diesendruck cites Maimonides' examples of "sweetness," which cannot be described as crooked or straight, and "voice," to which the terms salty or insipid cannot be applied. Applying this concept to our discussion, Diesendruck explains that when we say "God is one," we do not merely mean "God is not many," but that "God is *non* many" and quantitative descriptions simply cannot be applied to Him.²⁵

By using privations, Maimonides solves another problem. If we say that "God is living" means that "God is not dead," and we are dealing with opposites and not privations, then "God is not dead" logically goes back to meaning "God is living," and we are faced with the same problem we had originally.²⁶ However, if we employ the concept of priva-

tions, we can say that "God is not dead" means that the quality of death cannot be applied to God at all. The difference between opposites and privations is another example of Maimonides' use of Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle developed this idea in his *Metaphysics*,²⁷ and Maimonides applied it to the problem of God's attributes.

Based on what we have seen to this point, it seems Saadya firmly sides with kalam, specifically the mu'tazilite version, while Maimonides is more in line with the Aristotelian school. However, the divide between the two of them may not be so distinct. Firstly, kalam itself may have owed a great deal to Aristotle. Though the works of Aristotle had not yet been translated into Arabic by the time the most prominent mutakallimun were active, Wolfson suggests that there exists much evidence suggesting that Aristotelian philosophy had indeed reached Muslim lands by then. Specifically, regarding the question of divine attributes and their challenge to God's unity, some mutakallimun based their solutions to this problem on ideas borrowed from Aristotle.²⁸

In particular, Wolfson cites the examples of Abu al-Hudhayl and Nazzam, mu'tazalite thinkers who disagreed about how best to explain the nature of divine attributes. Nazzam preferred to say that "God is knowing not in virtue of knowledge," meaning that God's knowledge is not at all separate from God; when we speak of it, we are referring to God Himself. Abu al-Hudhayl, in contrast, states explicitly that "God is knowing in virtue of knowledge;" that is to say, God's knowledge does exist outside of God Himself. Yet, despite their differing conclusions, both Nazzam and abu-Hudhayl maintain that divine attributes relate to God "in virtue of Himself." Wolfson points out that the term in Arabic which they both use for "in virtue of Himself" is a direct translation of a Greek phrase found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He therefore contends that we can understand the differing views of Nazzam and Abu al-Hudhayl as a disagreement about how to interpret this Aristotelian terminology.²⁹ If Wolfson is correct, it would prove quite difficult to completely separate Aristotelian philosophy from kalam.

Saadya himself certainly did not ignore Aristotle. He may not have been acquainted with all of Aristotle's ideas, but he was familiar with many of Aristotle's important works.³⁰ In his treatment of divine attributes, Saadya at one point suggests that perhaps the attributes can only be explained as describing God's actions. Guttmann proposes that this

is a response to the logical problem that arises if attributes are understood as identifying God; namely, that we would logically just be saying "God is God."³¹ Recall that this is the same problem which spurred Maimonides to suggest the Aristotelian idea that attributes should be understood as verbs or actions, the same idea which Guttman quotes Saadya as advancing here.

At the same time that there is evidence suggesting Saadya employed Aristotelian concepts in his writing, there is evidence that Maimonides himself was not free of mu'tazalite influence. Maimonides formulates his denial of divine attributes in two ways; the first, that "God's essence is His knowledge and His knowledge is His essence," and the second, that "He is knowing not in virtue of knowing." Both of these formulations, Wolfson notes, have their roots in mu'tazalite works.³² This is especially astounding, considering that Maimonides categorically dismisses kalam as a source for Jewish philosophy, speaking quite critically of the "Geonim and Karaites" (it is interesting to note that he groups them together), who get their ideas from the Muslim mutakallimun.³³

Yet, while Maimonides devoted much time to refuting kalam, it is not at all clear that he accurately represented the views of the mutakallimun. In part I, chapter 73 of *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides outlines 12 principles of kalam thought. Upon examining his treatment of kalam, it becomes clear that there are serious discrepancies between his account of kalam and the actual writings of the mutakallimun, and on a number of occasions, he ascribes beliefs to them which prove difficult to find in their actual works. Michael Schwarz cautions that any attempt to explain these discrepancies can claim only to be conjecture, but he does provide several suggestions. Perhaps Maimonides simply was not interested in representing the entire range of mutakallimun's thinking. Or, keeping in mind Maimonides' sarcastic tone in describing kalam, maybe it can be argued that he purposely misrepresented the mutakallimun's views in order to make them seem more outlandish.³⁴

In light of these discrepancies, it should not surprise us to find ideas of the kalam in *Guide of the Perplexed*. If we accept Schwarz's first suggestion—that Maimonides simply left out many mainstream kalam ideas—we can explain that the kalam ideas which find their way into his work were not part of the system of kalam which he ridicules in his writ-

ing. If we agree with Schwarz's second suggestion, that Maimonides deliberately altered kalam thinking for the sake of argument, the presence of some kalam ideas also can be easily explained. Maimonides did consider the mutakallimun's general framework of thinking false and therefore decided to attack them, but perhaps he did accept some individual ideas of the kalam and simply did not say so for polemical reasons. In fact, according to Ben-Shammai's contention that kalam served a more polemical function than philosophy did, Schwarz's second suggestion would imply that Maimonides' purposes for writing were closer to those of the mutakallimun than they were to the philosophers.³⁵ So while Maimonides' adoption of mu'tazalite formulations of divine attributes may initially seem strange, it can more easily be understood after an exploration of his attitude toward kalam.

It is not the purpose of this article to suggest that kalam and Aristotle were the only influences on Saadya and Maimonides. There is no question that the Talmud played a significant role in developing their philosophies. As Altmann explains, many of the dilemmas that Muslim thinkers had when confronted with Greek philosophy were already dealt with by the Talmud, which experienced that confrontation earlier.³⁶ Therefore, later Jewish thinkers like Saadya and Maimonides were able to rely on Talmudic sources in resolving their philosophical questions. Yet there is little doubt that they did look to kalam and Aristotle for many issues, including the question of divine attributes. And by looking at their respective discussions of this question, we find that the differences between the two of them might not be so clear-cut. While Saadya may have primarily based himself on kalam, he does incorporate shades of Aristotle, and similarly, Maimonides does allow some mu'tazalite formulations into his mostly Aristotelian treatment of this problem.

Notes

1. Alexander Altmann, "Introduction to Saadya Gaon: Book of Doctrines and Beliefs," in *Three Jewish Philosophers*, ed. Hans Lewy, Alexander Altmann, and Isaak Heinemann (New Milford; London: Toby Press, 2006), 126.
2. *Ibid.*, 127.
3. Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Kalam in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *History of*

- Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 115.
4. Altmann, 127.
 5. Julius Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism, The History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. David Silverman (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964), 62.
 6. Ibid..
 7. Ben-Shammai, 129-130.
 8. Ibid., 131.
 9. Isaac Husik, *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1940), 25.
 10. Harry A. Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 41.
 11. Ibid., 44.
 12. See *Emunot Ve-Deot* II, 9-10 for examples.
 13. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 206-207.
 14. Wolfson, "Saadia on the Trinity and Incarnation," in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion, Vol 2*, ed. Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 399.
 15. Guttman, 68.
 16. Ben-Shammai, 131-132.
 17. Altmann, 125.
 18. Wolfson, "Maimonides on Negative Attributes," in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, 195.
 19. *Guide of the Perplexed* I, 52.
 20. *Physics* I, 2.
 21. Wolfson, "Maimonides on Negative Attributes," 196.
 22. *Guide* I, 58.
 23. Wolfson, "Maimonides on Negative Attributes," 207.
 24. Zvi Diesendruck, "Maimonides Theory of Negation of Privation," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* Vol. 6 (1934-1935), 140.
 25. Ibid., 141.
 26. Wolfson, "Maimonides on Negative Attributes," 208-209.
 27. IV, 2.
 28. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, 228-229.
 29. Ibid., 226-227.
 30. Husik, 26.
 31. Guttman, 69.
 32. Wolfson, *Repercussions*, 74. However, we should keep in mind what Wolfson, as cited above, writes in *The Philosophy of Kalam*, namely that this formulation of "knowing not in virtue of knowing," while found in the works of mutakallimun, may itself be based on Aristotelian philosophy.
 33. *Guide* I, 71
 34. Michael Schwarz, "Who Were Maimonides' Mutakallimun? Some Remarks

- on *Guide of the Perplexed* Part I Chapter 73," in *Maimonidean Studies*, vol. 3, ed. Arthur Hyman (New York: Michael Scharf Publication Trust of Yeshiva University Press, 1992-93), 172.
35. Leo Strauss suggests that Maimonides, like the mutakallimun, wrote with the primary goal of defending faith, so while he disagreed with their "assumptions and methods," he was "in perfect harmony with their intention." Strauss, "Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952), 40.
 36. Altmann, 132-133.

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Glorification to Defamation: A Literary Analysis of II Samuel 3:6-30

In many biblical narratives, the narrator withholds details from the reader; as much as the narrator relates, he nearly always leaves significant information unsaid. Robert Alter describes the process of constructing accurate, holistic pictures of biblical characters as “a process of inference from fragmentary data . . . and this leads to multiple or sometimes even wavering perspectives on the characters.”¹ Meir Sternberg also talks about biblical narrative as “a system of gaps that must be filled in.”² By strategically providing and withholding information, the narrator puts forth his own interpretation of, and spin on, the narrative and the characters within it. These ambiguities often cause the reader to reexamine and reevaluate his positions on the characters and content of a narrative. In this respect, intentional ambiguities allow a close reader who is already familiar with a particular narrative to view that narrative with fresh eyes, for the ambiguities make the reader question the accuracy of a prior interpretation. The characterization in the narrative of II Samuel 3 follows these models. In this case, the information which the narrator provides and withholds combines to influence our perceptions of the narrative’s characters.

The characters of our chapter are developed through two main devices: uncertainty and contrast. The uncertainty stems from ambigu-

ties within the narrative, and leads to ‘wavering’ perceptions of the characters, especially of the narrative’s protagonist, Abner. Since the narrator often deprives us of key information about Abner, we cannot come to many conclusions about his character as portrayed in our story. As we will see, the lack of information about Abner leads us to be more sympathetic to him. The narrator also develops the characters in II Samuel 3 through contrast or opposition; by using a complex system of heroes, villains, and foils, the narrator seeks to persuade us of Abner’s worthiness relative to the other characters in the story. We will find this to be particularly evident in the narrator’s characterization of Joab. As the narrator thoroughly denigrates Joab and other characters, Abner is glorified by contrast. The narrator’s account and the account’s missing pieces, then, cause us to view Abner in a positive light. Moreover, by evoking favorable reactions to Abner, the narrator is able to even further disparage Joab. The contrast goes both ways, then: Joab is vilified so that Abner may be acclaimed, and Abner is acclaimed so that Joab may be further vilified. We will now conduct a literary analysis of the chapter in order to examine these points.

The narrative prepares us for conflict from the start, as verse six relates that Abner was “מתחזק בבית שאול” (“strengthening himself within the House of Saul”). Abner was actively³ building his own power base from among the supporters of the House of Saul, the people who should have been rallying around Ishboshet.⁴ This phrase also recalls the chapter’s first verse, where David is described as “הולך וחזק” (“growing stronger”) and begins, in a literary manner, to form the connection between David and Abner which will dictate much of the narrative’s course of events. Ishboshet is not named in this verse; indeed, he is not mentioned by name until verse eight, even though he has an active role in verse seven. He will not play a major role in this narrative, for the narrator portrays him as a weakling controlled by Abner.⁵ From verse six, then, we begin to gain an understanding of the relationships between the major political and military powers among the Israelites: the influence of the House of Saul (Ishboshet) rapidly wanes, while at the same time the respective positions of Abner and David wax. Most importantly, the weakness of Ishboshet contrasts with the strength of Abner, further highlighting Abner’s growing power and authority.

In the next verse, an unnamed person (who, at the end of the verse,

we discover is Ishboshet) accuses Abner of sleeping with the concubine of his father, the late King Saul. The narrator, however, inserts a large gap into this story by never telling us whether Abner actually slept with Rizpah. It could be that Abner slept with Rizpah, either out of lust or in order to advance his political position. It could also be, however, that Abner never slept with Rizpah, and that Ishboshet was looking for an opportunity to sully Abner's name and halt the spread of his power base. To be sure, from Abner's response of "ותפקד עלי עון האשה הזאת" ("you have reminded/charged me this day of/with the sin of the woman") in verse eight, it seems that Abner's transgression may have been genuine, but that Abner did not think Ishboshet would bring it into the open.

Whichever the case, Abner reacts with great anger in verse eight, seeming genuinely surprised that Ishboshet would dare accuse him. Maybe Abner was feigning insult, using it as a pretense to desert the foundering House of Saul even though he had actually slept with Rizpah, or maybe he was insulted because of the false accusation. A third possibility is that Abner had slept with Rizpah years earlier,⁶ and he was surprised that Ishboshet had brought it up now.

It is not nearly as important to determine which one of these scenarios was in fact the case as it is to recognize that the narrative gap has generated considerable confusion. This confusion ultimately works in Abner's favor, as the reader is uncertain who to blame for the confrontation between Abner and Ishboshet.⁷ Whatever Abner did or did not do, the material provided by the narrator leaves us, at least taken at face value, with the distinct impression that Abner was wronged. As a result, Abner vows to aid David, and, once more, Ishboshet is powerless to act.

Abner formally offers his services to David, and David responds positively, requiring only that Abner bring with him Michal, Saul's daughter and David's one-time wife. This request was likely meant to be either a test of Abner's loyalty or, more practically, to give David a political boost in the eyes of the people.⁸ Interestingly, though, in the next verse David makes the same request of Ishboshet. Ishboshet carries out David's request in verse fifteen, taking her *איש מעם פלטיאל* "ויקחה מעם איש מעם פלטיאל" *בן לוש*.⁹ Even though Abner does take some action, in verse sixteen, when he commands the grief-stricken Paltiel to return home, Ishboshet performs the main action in this section. It is Ishboshet who foolishly strikes a severe blow to the House of Saul by handing David a link to

the throne. It is Ishboshet who cruelly brings grief to Paltiel. Once again, the character of Abner benefits from the contrast; the narrator portrays Abner positively by comparison. Ishboshet is made to look like a cruel fool, and there is stark contrast between Paltiel, whom the narrator describes as filled with sorrow at the loss of his beloved Michal, and David, whose reunion with Michal apparently does not merit a single word of description.⁹ The only character who emerges from this scene morally unscathed is Abner.

Following this, Abner moves to gather support for David by appealing to the rest of the people, and then to Ishboshet's own kinsmen, the tribe of Benjamin.¹⁰ Verses seventeen and eighteen, where Abner speaks to the elders of Israel, bear some resemblance to verses nine and ten, where Abner decides to switch his allegiance over to the House of David. Each time, Abner discusses the transfer of kingship to the House of David, and each time, Abner seems to reveal his altruistic side. In verses nine and ten, he presents Davidic rule as something God wants. By abandoning the ailing House of Saul and supporting the rising House of David, Abner claims that he is performing God's will. In verses seventeen and eighteen, when he is appealing directly to the people, Abner combines the motif of the will of God with that of the will of the people. He presents Davidic kingship as something that the people want.

In both cases, Abner seems to be acting not from political concerns but from concerns about the will of God and the will of the people. However, we must question Abner's motives.¹¹ The narrator never explicitly says that these were Abner's thoughts; we learn about these "altruistic" motivations from Abner's own dialogue. In general, dialogue is not as trustworthy as a direct statement by the narrator. Therefore, this part of the narrative reveals less the narrator putting a positive gloss on Abner's actions than it does Abner doing so himself. Still, the narrator chose to include Abner's stated motivations, probably because it fits well with his overall agenda—to portray Abner in a positive light.

After this, Abner finally comes face-to-face with David, and then the intrigue really begins. In verses 20 and 21, Abner and his entourage arrive at David's camp, David throws them a party, and they leave to gather more support for David. This seems to have been a rapid sequence of events, with barely any time for Abner and his men to even catch their breaths before going on the road to campaign for David. Remarkably, the

narrator reveals nothing about negotiations between Abner and David, and conceals any agreements at which they may have arrived, along with the conditions of those agreements. This massive narrative gap lays the groundwork for the tension that begins to be felt in these verses, and which grows steadily throughout the rest of the story.

Was this new campaign by Abner simply an endorsement in exchange for money or some other reward? Did David and Abner come to some sort of understanding in which David promised Abner a position of power once the issue of kingship was settled? Vanderkam points out that while we know what Abner promised David, namely to secure further support from the people, we do not know what David promised Abner.¹² Joab, who arrives on the stage in verse 22, was surely bothered by these questions.

The lack of information about what occurred at the meeting between David and Abner resonates in our minds as we read the next few verses. Verses 21, 22, 23, and 24 all end with some variation of *שלח*. *שלח בשלח*, which builds on this gap. The narrator uses this phrase when the peaceful departure actually occurs, then again when Joab returns, again when Joab is told that Abner met with David, and finally in a slightly altered manner (without the *שלח*, which may be foreshadowing the story's end) when Joab berates David. It could be that the purpose of this repetition is to convince the reader that David was not involved in the murder of Abner; the narrator records three times that David sent Abner away peacefully.¹³ However, the tension generated by the lack of information about the meeting between David and Abner mounts when we see this phrasing repeated, for the repetition also makes us think of some back-door collusion involving David and Abner. Why else would the king have sent away his chief rival unharmed?

These suspicions and tensions grow even greater when we find out, in verse 23, that Joab was out of the camp when the meeting took place. It almost seems, and it certainly must have seemed to Joab, that David managed to finish his work with Abner just before Joab returned. What deal did David want to make with Abner that precluded Joab's presence at the negotiations? As soon as Joab returns, in verse 23, he is informed of the "clandestine" meeting. Who told him, and why did they tell him? Maybe Joab's men told him about the meeting to keep him aware of possible threats, or maybe it was someone else, reporting to Joab in the

hope that Joab would draw his own conclusions—conclusions similar to our own suggestions of conspiracy—and take action against Abner.¹⁴ The actual message to Joab supports this second possibility. The message does not detail the full story of Abner and David's communication, the delivery of Michal, and the party (not your usual mark of a conspiracy) which David had held for Abner and his men. Rather, the informant simply says, "בא אבנר בן נר אל המלך וישלחהו וילך בשלום" ("Abner son of Ner has come to the king, [t]he [king] sent him forth, and he went in peace"). It appears that the informant wanted Joab to believe that something sinister was happening.

Once Joab arrives and begins to take action, the narrative becomes a mass of gaps, confusion, and contrasts. We have already seen the narrator use gaps and contrasts to enhance our positive outlook on Abner's character. Now, though, the gaps and contrasts have a second function: the destruction of Joab's character. The narrator means for us to emerge with an extremely negative perspective on Joab; this will eventually be the ultimate support for the strength of Abner's character. What better way to make the reader feel sympathy for Abner than by making the reader feel disgust for, and revulsion to, his killer?

Joab's thought process when he returned and heard that Abner had met with David is similarly ambiguous. Numerous ideas could have been going through Joab's head: maybe, as we have said, David was plotting with Abner and planning on giving Abner Joab's position. Joab would be especially worried about this, because the whole episode occurred while Joab was on the battlefield, the ideal time to arrange a coup. Joab's own worry, as he expresses to David in verse 25, is that Abner was tricking David into revealing military secrets, and was actually working as a spy for Ishboshet. Of course, as we have already seen, the words of the characters are not as reliable as those of the narrator, so Joab's professed concern for David may actually be a thinly veiled attempt to fortify his own position in David's inner circle.

Another obvious, yet significantly absent (at least until verse 30), factor is that Abner and Joab have a past. In the previous chapter, Asahel, brother of Joab and Abishai, was slain by Abner. In that episode, Abner seems most honorable, slaying Asahel only after giving him two warnings, two chances to halt his pursuit. Fresh in our minds, this incident cannot be ignored, however much the narrator tries to minimize it.

Asahel is not even mentioned until after Joab has killed Abner, but we cannot dismiss the possibility of personal vendetta as motivation for what is to come. It may be that Joab was trying to paint the meeting between David and Abner as conspiratorial, or voicing his concerns about Abner as a spy, in order to have a legitimate pretense to avenge Asahel's death.¹⁵

Joab sends his men after Abner, who has gone to rally more support for David, and brings Abner back. The narrator makes sure that we know that "דוד לא ידע" ("David did not know"), continuing the process of arguing against Davidic complicity in the death of Abner.¹⁶ David would have had much to gain from the death of Abner, who until this point had been the mainstay of the House of Saul, and the narrator goes to great lengths throughout the story to ensure the readers that David was not involved.¹⁷

Then comes a flurry of action—Joab makes his move. Verse 27 finds Joab leading Abner, who has just been brought back to Hebron by the agents of Joab, aside on the pretext of talking to him "בשלי", probably meaning quietly or alone, and then striking him in the "חומש" the same place that Abner struck Asahel, killing him. Perhaps the most significant phrase of this verse, though, comes at the very end, after the action has just taken place. The narrator suddenly declares that Joab has killed Abner "בדם עשהאל אחיו" ("for the blood of Asahel his brother"). The heretofore unmentioned link between Abner and Joab, the intense personal history between the commanders who had previously faced each other on opposite sides of the battlefield, is suddenly brought to the forefront by the narrator. As we have already noted, Joab had other reasons for wanting Abner dead, either because he was afraid of Abner usurping his position in David's inner circle or because he honestly believed that Abner was a spy. Yet the narrator chooses to attribute Joab's actions to the only emotion which, reading this narrative by itself, we should have completely overlooked: vengeance.

However, it seems that even the narrator is not completely sure of Joab's motive. Verse 27 says "וימת בדם עשהאל אחיו" ("he died for the blood of Asahel his brother"). The narrator does not write "ויחרג את אבנר בדם עשהאל אחיו" ("he killed him for the blood of Asahel his brother"), that Joab killed Abner out of vengeance. From the precise words of the narrator, it seems that Asahel being avenged may have been more a

result of Abner's death than a motive for Joab killing him. Until verse 30, then, the narrator never explicitly says that Joab killed Abner out of vengeance.

Thus Joab's motive in killing Abner is possibly the most unclear part of this narrative. The only problem Joab ever voiced was his fear that Abner was a spy, but the narrator seems only to recognize the motive of vengeance, as does David in his curse in verse 29. We are inclined, as always, to give more credence to the narrator's opinion than to the claims of a character; we must remember, however, that throughout this narrative the narrator is trying to put a positive gloss on Abner. If Joab was genuinely worried that Abner was a spy, this would certainly not only mean that Joab attempted to take proper action; it would also cast a shadow over what we had viewed as Abner's good intentions, and make us rethink our position on Abner's character. By portraying Abner's assassination as an act of vengeance, we lose respect for Joab and feel sympathy for Abner. Furthermore, by leaving Asahel out of the equation until after the assassination, the narrator successfully bypasses any sympathy which we as readers would feel towards Joab. The narrator hides the inner turmoil which Joab would have been going through before he slew Abner, as well as the powerful emotions Joab would have felt during the assassination. We are shown only the aftereffects, the loss of innocent life caused by Joab's desire for vengeance.

Even the potential to view Joab's vengeance as noble is taken away by the narrator's description of the assassination and especially by the narrator's ultimate condemnation of Joab. In verse 27, the narrator's description makes Joab's slaying of Abner seem like cowardly treachery. Leading him off to the side, away from witnesses, under the pretense of having a personal conversation, Joab takes the opportunity to almost literally stab Abner in the back. The reader, already made to recall Asahel's murder because of the word "חומש" and the phrase "וימת בדם עשהאל אחיו" cannot help but remember that Abner was considerably more honorable when he slew Asahel. Whereas Joab committed premeditated murder using cunning and deceit, Abner did not initiate the conflict with Asahel, and twice gave him the chance to turn aside (II Samuel 2:21-22). Then, when providing the reader with a final summation in verse 30, the narrator writes that Joab (and Abishai) slew Abner "על אשר המית את עשהאל אחיהם בגבעון במלחמה" ("because he had killed Asahel

their brother in Gibeon *in the war*"). This last word pronounces the narrator's resoundingly clear judgment on Joab: Abner killed Asahel fairly, in war, according to the rules of engagement, after giving him fair warning. What is left unspoken but obvious is that Joab killed Abner out of vengeance, during peacetime, through deceit.¹⁸ The narrator's position regarding the assassination of Abner is clear. Abner did not deserve this. Relative to Joab, he was a good person.

One last gap which the reader might easily overlook in all of the confusion regarding Joab's motive is the role Abishai played in Abner's death. In verse 29, David places a curse "על ראש יואב ואל בית אביו" ("on Joab and to his entire House"). Why does he place the curse on Joab's whole family? We find the reason in the next verse, when the narrator relates that Abishai had a hand in the assassination. Until verse 30, Abishai had not been mentioned at all, yet now the narrator suddenly relates that he was a key player in the preceding events. By removing Abishai from the picture until the end of the narrative, the narrator manages to bypass an issue which would have made our condemnation of Joab less severe. If we had known when we were forming our initial opinion of Joab and his actions after the murder took place, that Abishai had aided in, or possibly even taken part in the planning of the assassination, the blame would not have fallen entirely on Joab. The narrator's decision to leave Abishai out of the story until David's curse causes us to view Joab more negatively.

Without the narrator's spin, we might have felt sympathy for Joab. After all, his suspicions that David would favor Abner had merit. Abner was bringing more with him than Joab ever could, namely Michal and the support of Israel. Furthermore, Joab had just lost a brother to Abner, albeit in war. But the narrator ensures that we sympathize only with Abner, and feel only revulsion for Joab. He uses narrative gaps in order to maximize on our negative feelings towards Joab, thereby provoking positive feelings towards Abner.

But why does the narrator seek to lionize Abner and vilify Joab? It is possible that the narrator's bias toward Abner and vendetta against Joab stem from later conflicts between Joab and the Davidic line. As we have noted, the narrator contrasts Abner and Joab, making the reader emerge with more positive feelings for Abner. At the same time, though, the contrast also serves to make the reader have a more negative reaction

to Joab. These negative views of Joab may actually be the ultimate goal of the narrator.

To understand why the narrator wishes to defame Joab, we must understand the narrator's relationship to Joab, and to the House of David in general. Throughout this narrative, we have seen the narrator clearly supporting the Davidic line. During the course of action, the narrator reveals to the reader that David was not involved in killing Abner. After Abner is killed, David curses Joab in verse 29; moreover, the main function of verses 31 through 39 is to show that David was not pleased with the death of Abner.¹⁹ By distancing David from the killing, the narrator evinces his support of the House of David.

Joab, however, was not always supportive of the House of David. Aside from killing Abner, Joab murders Amasa under similar circumstances. Amasa had been Absalom's general, and after Absalom's death David appoints Amasa to a high position in his own military.²⁰ Joab, perhaps seeing another threat to his position, slays Amasa.^{21 22} This, then, is another case where Joab seems to be working against the interests of David. The culmination of Joab's anti-Davidic activity, though, comes soon after David has died. In I Kings 1, we find Joab abandoning Solomon, the divinely chosen successor of the Davidic line, in favor of Adonijah, another of David's sons. This is the ultimate betrayal of the House of David, and may be the source of the narrator's general negativity toward Joab.²³

In light of this evidence, we can suggest that one of the main functions of this narrative is to delegitimize the actions of Joab by continuously portraying Abner in a positive manner. By using confusion as well as contrasts with other characters to glorify Abner and subsequently contrasting Joab with his figure, the reader emerges with an image of Joab as unwholesome, not acting in the best interests of David, and guilty of murdering Abner in cold blood. Thus begin the narrator's efforts to discredit Joab.

Notes

1. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 126.
2. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 186.
3. The word מתחזק is reflexive—he was “strengthening himself.” *Word Biblical Commentary* (vol. 11, p. 55) presents an interesting, but probably less correct, alternative. They agree with my general observation that “Abner is portrayed in our sources as a positive hero”, and use this to translate מתחזק as “kept faithful to”. Presumably, the reasoning is that since the narrator has taken a liking to Abner, he would not want to present Abner as maliciously undermining the support of Ishboshet. However, it could be that we should view Abner’s undermining of Ishboshet itself as a positive action. Abner seeks to wrest political control from the weakening, divinely abandoned hands of Ishboshet and place it into the rising, divinely supported hands of David. Alternatively, it could be that although the narrator chooses to portray Abner in a positive manner, the narrator recognizes that some of Abner’s actions in this narrative are not entirely altruistic.
4. I Chronicles 8-9 refer to Saul’s son as Eshba’al, but I will rely on the text of Samuel.
5. Cf. James C. Vanderkam, “Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal: A Historical and Redactional Study”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 99 No. 4 (Dec., 1980), pp. 529-530, and J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, vol. III, *Throne and City*, pp. 70-72.
6. This would explain the line “ולשאול פילגש” (“Saul had a concubine”) – Abner’s transgression occurred when Saul was still living. In this case, either Saul did not know about Abner’s affair, or he knew and chose not to act, perhaps because of Abner’s value to him. Alternatively, the narrator could be using the phrase “ulsha’ul pilegsh” to further remove Ishboshet from the scene.
7. For similar possibilities, as well as other possibilities, which illustrate the tremendous amount of confusion this gap has generated, see *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 11, p. 56; Fokkelman p. 72; *The Anchor Bible, II Samuel*, pp. 105-6, 112.
8. *The Anchor Bible*, 114. It is generally recognized that the relationship between David and Michal had always been based more on pragmatic political concerns than on love, at least on the part of David, so it is unlikely that the motivation was purely to regain a lost wife.
9. Alter, 122.
10. Fokkelman, 87; *Word Biblical Commentary*, 60.
11. Fokkelman, 74.
12. Vanderkam, 531.
13. *Word Biblical Commentary*, 60; *The Anchor Bible*, 117.
14. Vanderkam (532-3) believes that this may actually have been David’s motive in inviting Abner to his court in the first place. David would have been aware

- of the bad blood between Abner and Joab following Abner’s killing of Asahel. He would have anticipated the tension caused by Abner joining David’s forcing, especially if David promoted Abner above Joab. I think it more likely, though, that the narrator believes that David’s motives in this regard were relatively pure, and sought to make use of Abner.
15. Fokkelman (page 96) raises another interesting possibility, that Joab’s personal feelings toward Abner (stemming from the Asahel incident) may have led Joab to conclusions (namely, Abner acting as a spy for Ishboshet) which he might have dismissed had he been thinking more clearly.
 16. See above, note 13.
 17. This process continues in verse 28 when, after hearing that Joab killed Abner, David immediately announces that he was not involved. This is a central theme in the narrative’s denouement, verses 31-39, but one in which I am not interested at this point in the study. For more on this, see the article by Vanderkam, as well as P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., “The Apology of David”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Dec. 1980), pp. 489-504.
 18. Cf. Fokkelman, 104.
 19. Cf. Vanderkam.
 20. II Samuel 19:14.
 21. II Samuel 20:10.
 22. F. H. Cryer, in “David’s Rise to Power and the Death of Abner: An Analysis of 1 Samuel XXVI 14-16 and Its Redaction-Critical Implications”, *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 35 (Oct., 1985), pp. 392-3, believes that this story has elements which emphasize David’s innocence (although he believes that it is a secondary addition). He is presumably referring to the fact that David’s name is not mentioned in conjunction with Joab’s actions in the slaying of Amasa; it would seem that David did not know that Joab was planning this. This could then be another example of a story where Joab acted of his own will to eliminate someone favored by David, putting him at odds with the House of David.
 23. Like Cryer, Anderson believes that the narrator’s attempts to denigrate Joab are secondary, but Anderson believes that they are meant to justify Solomon’s directive to kill Joab in I Kings 2 (*Word Biblical Commentary*, 55).

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Ruth as Naomi: A Close Reading of the Book of Ruth with Naomi as the Main Character

I.

The story of Ruth is a very complex one, including familial shifts in the form of intermarriage with foreigners (1:4), loss of family (1:3,5), familial estrangement (1:14), a possible love affair (chapter 3), גאולה marriage (4:1-13a), and childbirth (4:13b), culminating in a presentation of David's pedigree (4:17b-22). In complicated narratives like this, the reader is inclined to identify the main character, the individual around whom the story is centered. Indeed, the search here is no simple task, as the characters interact with each other in a variety of ways, and incidents that happen to one are by extension also relevant to the other characters.

A basic reading of the Ruth story would probably have one believe that the main character is Ruth. The traditional name of the book itself (as preserved in B. Batra 14b) is Ruth, indicating that early interpreters viewed her as the focus of the story.¹ Additionally, there are long stretches of narrative that seem relevant only to Ruth. Ruth's escapades in the

field in chapter 2 and the granary in chapter 3 relate only to her and Boaz. One could construe the book of Ruth as a romance story centered around her, in which she loses her first husband and sets out with her mother-in-law to a foreign land, manages to find love and stability with the wealthy land-owner Boaz, and ultimately has a son with him. Her conviction to stay with Naomi and embrace the Jewish nation is another focal point that could be underlined: Ruth serves as a model of familial and ethnic commitment.

Other perspectives on the issue exist, however. For Adele Berlin,² viewing the Ruth as the central character is too simplistic. In her general survey of characters in biblical literature, she first presents three categories of people who appear in the Bible: 1. the agent, whose job is to further the plot; 2. the type, who has a character role but it is limited in complexity; 3. the character, who "has a broader range of traits (not all belonging to the same class of people), and about whom we know more than is necessary for the plot."³ Berlin discusses⁴ three characters in the Ruth story—Boaz,⁵ Naomi and Ruth, chosen based on their extensive involvement in the plot, as well as two supportive 'type' personalities, Orpah and Ploni the redeemer, whose main purposes are to serve as foils to Ruth and Boaz.⁶

Regarding the tagging of a primary personality in the story, Berlin renders a split decision. She says that Naomi is presented as the "central character in the book,"⁷ but the main point of interest in the story is Ruth. In other words, there will be a literary focus on Naomi as the primary character in the story, and certain formulations will reflect that, but the person whom the reader identifies and empathizes with most is Ruth. In Berlin's own words,

The distinction between perceptual point of view and interest point of view is important in the Book of Ruth, for Ruth is the focus of the interest point of view. Certainly she is Naomi's main interest throughout the story. But, more than that, she is the focus of the reader's interest. The reader wants to know what will happen to Ruth more than he wants to know what will happen to Naomi.⁸ (Berlin, 84)

This is a noteworthy split,⁹ and it provides an intriguing reading of the book of Ruth. However, it is possible to find a middle path between Berlin's view and the first position presented above.

II.

Naomi can be presented as not just the primary personality of the book, but as the main point of interest to the reader as well. A first indication that she is the foremost character in the narrative is the fact that she spans the whole length of the book. She first appears in the opening verse about the travel to Moav (1:1) and is still the topic of discussion at the end of the book, in the description of having a son born to her (4:17), (which is followed by a discussion of her noteworthy descendant David's genealogy).⁹ This stands in contrast to Ruth, who is only introduced to the narrative following the death of Elimelekh. Additionally, as Berlin has pointed out, all of the characters are referred to by names that focus on their relation to Naomi. Aside from the introduction, Elimelekh (1:3), Mahlon and Kilyon (1:5) are all referred to as Naomi's husband and sons. Ruth and Orpah are similarly referred to as daughters-in-law of Naomi (1:6) or as accompanying her (2:7), Boaz is called a relative of Naomi's on her husband's side (2:1) and the baby born at the end is called a son to Naomi (4:17). Additionally, Naomi is the one making all of the decisions—she decides to return to the land of Israel (1:7), originally without her daughters-in-law, and she is the one (in the beginning of chapter 3) who introduces Ruth to Boaz and the possibility of his redeeming the field and marrying her. Thus, everything surrounds Naomi, she is present through the story, characters are named in relation to her, and she makes key decisions throughout the narrative.

The contentions that have been made until this point mainly speak to the central character in the story and not the main point of interest. However, a strong argument can be made to present Naomi as the main point of interest in the story, as well. A major question and source of tension throughout the book is whether Naomi will be restored to her previous position or not. She leaves the land of Israel, loses her husband and then her sons. The first deficiency is fixed, by Naomi's own initiative, in her voluntary return to the land of Israel. However, she still is missing a husband and, more acutely, a son. Naomi expresses (in the context of her daughters-in-law's situations) the fact that she does not see herself having another husband or children in the following passage (1:12):

שבנה בנתי לכן כי זקנתי מהיות לאיש כי אמרתי יש לי תקוה גם הייתי הלילה לאיש וגם ילדתי בנים.

Naomi conveys both the fact that she is past marriageable age and the reality that she is too old to bear children.¹¹ Reference is made to a lack of 'hope' for having children, marking her unhappy state. Her gloomy disposition is noted by residents of her hometown Bethlehem, who, upon her return (1:19) ask "is this Naomi?" Her response to them is no happier (1:20):

ותאמר אליהן אל תקראנה לי נעמי קראן לי מרא כי המר שקי לי מאד. אני מלאה הלכתי וריקם השיבני יקוק למה תקראנה לי נעמי ויקוק ענה בי ושקי הרע לי.

She asks to be called not Naomi but Marah, because God has embittered (המר) her verily. The tragedy of Naomi's loss of family is only further underscored by the contrast to her daughters-in-law's situation. Naomi is very strident in asking her daughters-in-law to return, as she commands them (שבנה) three separate times (1:8,11,12) and an additional time to Ruth (שובי) and she employs strong language (אל בנתי). One gets the feeling that this strength is due to Naomi's conviction that their lives can be restored to their pre-marital status, as she says when commanding Ruth and Naomi to return to their fathers' house, while hers cannot. This explains the following half-verse (1:13):

אל בנתי כי מר לי מאד מכם כי יצאה בי יד יקוק.

Naomi tells her daughters-in-law not to stay with her because it is very painful for her to see them¹² with a full life still ahead of them and the capacity to undo the ills of their husbands' deaths, while Naomi has no such recourse. Throughout this whole ordeal, the reader sympathizes with Naomi and experiences the pain that she must be feeling following the collapse of her life. (It is thus ironic that, after Naomi's loneliness is sharpened by Ruth and Orpah's comparatively better situation, the way Naomi improves her situation is expressly through Ruth herself.)

Throughout most of the second chapter there is not much change in Naomi's situation. The first verse in the chapter mentions that Boaz was a relative of Naomi's husband, but that relationship does not surface again until the end of the chapter (2:20). Most of the chapter discusses Naomi's and Ruth's subsistence plan, how Ruth would collect charity gleanings. The long description of Ruth's interactions with Boaz and his workers there does not seem to connect with the first chapter significantly. The reader has been told of the connection between Boaz and

Naomi's family but the characters do not yet realize this. The long description of the charity gleaning serves as a suspense builder for the end of the chapter, when Naomi finds out that the friendly farmer is family. Once Naomi makes the connection to Boaz, there is suddenly a method of resolving her problems. This is brought to life in 2:20, as Naomi learns that the field-owner was the familiar and familial Boaz, as she joyfully blesses God

ברוך הוא ליקוק אשר לא עזב חסדו את החיים ואת המתים

and then explains to Ruth that he is a relative and a potential redeemer. This verse is a direct reference to 1:13 and 1:19, when Naomi had invoked God (using both šdy and ykwk) in her suffering, and she now blesses Him for providing a solution to her problems. And this divine חסד stands to help 'the living and the dead,' because it is a חסד of redemption, of taking the place of the deceased.¹³ The threshing floor scene in the third chapter continues with the development of the relationship between Ruth and Boaz, except that Naomi and Ruth move in the direction of actualizing the relationship with a גאולה process. These scenes in the second and third chapters may present Ruth and Boaz at the center of the action, but Naomi's status is what really occupies the back of the reader's mind throughout, as he awaits some solution to her problem, the prospect of which appears at the end of the second chapter. This model is discussed by Berlin¹⁴ in the context of King David, presenting him as the main focus throughout all of II Samuel though the various women in his life present themselves as the main actors for short sections of the book. Here too Naomi remains the main character and point of interest, though Ruth is doing most of the acting in these scenes.

The גאולה story (4:1-15) reflects the next stage in Naomi's plan to restore her prior situation of marriage, and it has many interesting points to it. First, the process clearly references the biblical procedure of levirate marriage (יבום), though without mentioning that particular word. Additionally, the procedure here follows the same overall form as that of יבום,¹⁵ and some terms used here are taken from the יבום laws but it may not be יבום entirely. The reference to יקרא שמו בישראל (4:15) is parallel to ונקרא שמו בישראל (Deut. 25:10), though the first refers to the son and the second to the place and/or process of חליצה, the alternate choice to יבום. Additionally, the shoe is mentioned both here (4:7-8) and in the

context of legal חליצה (Deut. 25:9). The potential redeemer first backs out on his opportunity for גאולה, and then Boaz marries Ruth through the redemptive process. What is interesting here is the question of whom the process is supposed to redeem. There is reference several times to the אשת המת (also a quote from Deut. 25:5), but it is unclear to whom this refers exactly. Obviously, Boaz is marrying Ruth and not anyone else, so one would expect that it is her husband מחלון who is being redeemed. However, the story points in other directions. First of all, the connection of the marriage to the redemption of the field which was originally Elimelekh's indicates that this is a package deal of redeeming everything that once belonged to the family patriarch. This is underscored in the following verse (4:9):

ויאמר בעז לזקנים וכל העם עדים אתם היום כי קניתי את כל אשר לאלימלך ואת כל אשר לכליון ומחלון מיד נעמי.

The primary redeemed party is Elimelekh, and his sons are an afterthought. This gives one pause when considering the next verse (4:10):

וגם את רות המאביה אשת מחלון קניתי לי לאשה להקים שם המת על נחלתו ולא יכרת שם המת מעם אחיו ומשער מקומו עדים אתם היום.

Who is the deceased party whose name is being restored? The verse could easily have explicitly mentioned Mahlon as the restored party (להקים שם מחלון), but it does not, instead referring to the broader 'restoration of the deceased's name,' which including restoring his name through a grandson. The most compelling point is the connection in verse 10 between the redemption of the deceased and his portion of land (להקים שם המת על נחלתו). This connection indicates that the person whose memory is being restored is Elimelekh, former owner of the field, and that Naomi his wife is the beneficiary of the restoration.¹⁷ Now that it has been established that the primary living redeemed party in this marriage and field restoration process is Naomi, by extension it casts Naomi as the main living player in this story, while Ruth is a mere proxy. By virtue of her position as a younger woman of childbearing age, she is able to serve the role of preserving Elimelekh's existence.¹⁸

This point of Ruth serving as a proxy for Naomi is only further proven by the relationship between Naomi and the newborn baby. In 4:14, immediately after the birth to Ruth is described in technical med-

ical terms, the women tell Naomi that she has received her redemption; the child will restore her and Ruth is greater than seven sons. The fact that the baby is considered redemption for Naomi and especially the invocation of the *יבום* language of *ישראל* indicate that the whole story of *יבום* and bearing a son was really about Naomi, not Ruth.

Thus, the reader bears witness to an interesting chain of events in Naomi's life—Naomi leaves the land of Israel and loses her husband and sons. She then chooses to return to the land of Israel, regains the family's possession of the field, and at the end, at the great climax of the book, she restores her male progeny as well. Thus, we see Naomi's progression from a woman who has lost everything to one who has replaced everything, concluding with a high of satisfaction and closure for both Naomi and the reader.¹⁹

III.

However, the question of motive in the story remains—why provide a story, albeit an interesting one, of how Naomi lost everything and then regained it? What broader purpose does this story serve? Some have claimed that the main purpose of the book is to justify its last few verses (4:17-22), the genealogy traced back from David. There is strong support for this in the fact that the last five verses in this genealogy, 4:18-22, have no connection at all with the story and are only relevant to David. If the story is about finding David's lineage, then it makes sense to trace it first through his great-grandmother Ruth the convert, and then to trace the more standard roots back to Judah.²⁰

The need for an explanation of David's pedigree could be for one of two reasons. One possibility is, as claimed by Feeley-Harnik,²¹ that David has his progenitor Ruth leave from Moab to Israel in order to parallel Moses' exile from his Egyptian homeland to Israel. This, she claims, allows for a justified transition to monarchical leadership that was at issue in David's time.

Alternatively, one could suggest that the motive was different. David was the progenitor of the first and biggest Jewish dynasty in history, and it would only make sense that the Bible ensure that his pedigree appear clean and not problematic.²² This comes up most poignantly for David, being that his lineage includes a convert great-grandmother, and espe-

cially so given that she originates in Moab, a nation that Deut. 23:4 says cannot enter the Jewish nation through marriage.²³ Thus, there is a need to justify David's lineage, and that is what the book of Ruth sets out to do. On a most basic level, it presents Ruth's conversion as preceding her marriage to Boaz.²⁴ However, the text may extend beyond that. The approach of reading of the book of Ruth as Naomi's quest to restore her earlier life may significantly clarify the issue of David's pedigree. If that is the accepted way of reading the book, then the issue of Ruth—the elephant in the room—is circumvented. David is not considered a descendant of Ruth; she was just a cog in the engine, a part of the process that restored lineage to Naomi and Elimelekh, David's true progenitors. If this is the case, then David's ancestry has been purified, with the reassignment of Ruth's status from matriarch to proxy. This is most fitting, because the connection from David to Naomi ensconces him as a multiple-generation Bethlehemite, which is the way David is introduced in I Samuel 17:12. In this vein, there seems to have been an additional measure taken to ensure the purity of David's genealogy. The blessing given to Ruth upon her redemption compares her to Rachel and Leah who built the House of Israel and to Tamar from the house of Peretz. The idea here is to try to naturalize Ruth as an Israelite citizen. She is placed into the house of Israel and Peretz, and this is the same Peretz who is the starting point for David's other wing of ancestry in verses 4:18-22. Thus, the attempt to purify David by naturalizing Ruth runs its full course—she is made into a full-fledged member of the houses of Israel and Peretz, the houses of which David is a descendant.²⁵

IV.

Now that Naomi has been established as the main character, we can take this opportunity to analyze the book's presentation of the character traits she possesses, and the contrasts with her foils. One theme that pervades the entire plot (as discussed earlier) is her insistence on restoring everything she possessed originally.²⁶ She feels a need to repossess her field, to be married again vicariously, and to replace her lost progeny. She is associated with passive verbs in the first chapter: *ותשאר*—and she remained (1:3,5), *ותשב* / *לשוב* / *השיבני* / *שבנה*—returning (1:6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 21, 22), regarding both Naomi and her daughters-in-law, and

- should serve to make Ruth the most central character in the book, not necessarily the individual whom the reader identifies with as a point of interest.
9. Another interesting treatment of this issue is presented by Athalya Brenner in her "Naomi and Ruth," *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (1983), 385-397. She claims that Naomi and Ruth play the major role at alternating parts of the story and they share complementary life situations (an old and experienced woman with her younger counterpart), and that the two jointly form the focus of the book.
 10. There is a question whether these last five verses are original to the text or not, as will be discussed later (n. 20).
 11. This comment is actually made in the context of convincing Ruth and Orpah that they have no reason to wait for her to bear another son before they marry, but that may just further demonstrate the deep-seated bitterness that Naomi feels about her situation.
 12. This interpretation translates מִכִּי as 'because of you,' and understands that Naomi is jealous of her daughters-in-law. There are a couple of other, more mainstream, readings, either that Naomi sympathizes with her daughters-in-law or that מִכִּי is to be translated 'than you,' that Naomi is claiming her pain is greater than that of her daughters-in-law. These two alternate interpretations are presented on p. 16 n. 1 of "Two Multivalent Readings of the Ruth Narrative," Bernstein, Moshe, *JSOT* 50 (1991), 15-26.
 13. Compare with Ibn Ezra's explanation that the חַסֵּד God had done with the dead was to grant Elimelekh the position of judge. It is unclear what impelled Ibn Ezra to make this claim, though it may be based on the juxtaposition of the days of the judges and the man from Bethlehem in 1:1.
 14. pp. 32-33.
 15. This is not the place to discuss discrepancies between the two or between either and the Halachic system. For more on the issue of Pentateuchal law and law in Ruth, see Beattie's (Beattie, Derek Robert George. "The Book of Ruth as Evidence for Israelite Legal Practice," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974) 251-267) summary of the medieval and modern literature on the topic and his conclusions, where several issues are raised: 1. Why is the redemption of the field connected to the marriage of Ruth? 2. How could this be levirate marriage if Boaz was not a brother-in-law (and is that necessary)? 3. Was Ruth's original marriage to Mahlon prior to her conversion, and would that preclude the existence of a יְבוּם situation? 4. Does the law in Ruth follow the law promulgated in Deuteronomy?
 16. Note here the connection of וְלֹא יִמָּחַח Deut. 25:6 to וְלֹא יִמָּחַח שֵׁם הַמֵּת מֵעַם אֲחֵיו and שְׁמוֹ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, and also the connection between וְלֹא יִמָּחַח שֵׁם הַמֵּת עַל נַחֲלוֹתָיו and Deut. 25:7's לְחֻקֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
 17. Assuming Elimelekh is the redeemed party, verses such as וּפְרִשְׁתְּ כִנְפֶךָ עַל אִמְתְּךָ (3:9) and אִם יִגְאֹלְךָ טוֹב (3:13) can be explained as meaning that Ruth is an actor in the ge'ulah process, but not that she is the redeemed party.
 18. There are a couple of verses that seem to indicate otherwise, but which can be explained. In 3:9 Ruth says to Boaz וּפְרִשְׁתְּ כִנְפֶךָ עַל אִמְתְּךָ כִּי גֹאֵל אֲנִי, and Boaz replies in 3:13 that אִם יִגְאֹלְךָ טוֹב. However, it is possible to explain that

- both talk about Ruth as an actor in the redemption process, but the true beneficiary from the redemption is Naomi.
19. This is very similar to the story line of Job, where he loses all his worldly possessions and family and health, only to regain them (doubly) at the end. The distinction between these two narratives is that, while Ruth is about Naomi's quest to regain what she had lost, the story of Job is all about the philosophical arguments presented by a man who has lost everything, and the story of Job's loss and recovery (the Lord taketh away, the Lord giveth?) is just the frame within which the philosophy is contained. Another example of Job-like material in Ruth appears in Naomi's blaming of God in 1:20-21 and her blessing of God in 2:20.
 20. Rashi (4:19) suggests that the description of David's paternal lineage is brought in to parallel the discussion of his maternal lineage. Some might argue that the section tracing David back to Judah (4:18-22) is a later addition, and that therefore the original text offers no such proof. (This understanding of 4:18-22 is seen favorably by Edward F. Campbell [p. 169-73] in his *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975.) To this there are two responses. First would be to follow the approach of Berlin (p. 109-110), that the genealogy is original to the text (though she goes on to say that it serves to connect the book of Ruth to the rest of the Bible). Additionally, even if it really is the case that the original text did not include 4:18-22, this point could still be made regarding the current literary unit of Ruth. J.M. Sasson in *Ruth* (Baltimore and London, 1979) discusses the literature on this issue (p. 178-87).
 21. Her article ("Naomi and Ruth," in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed. Susan Niditch, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1990, p. 163-184) discusses the meaning of having David's genealogy come from this book about women, and in the first half of the article she provides an interesting comparison to Moses and the women in his early life. The second half of the article, however, goes on to speculate without any basis all sorts of irrelevant claims in the realm of gender theory.
 22. This issue is distinct from the question of technical viability to be a ruler, and relates to combating public perception, not legal norms.
 23. This point is made in a midrash in Yevamot 76b. In the story, claims are made against David that he is of illegitimate birth, and also that Ruth could not have married into the faith. The latter problem is solved by the derashah of "מִמֵּי מוֹאָבִי, וְלֹא מִמֵּי מוֹאָבִי," that a Moabitess is excluded from the prohibition. Incidentally, this law solves both the technical, legal, question and (at least partially) the issue of perception.
 24. There is a dispute among the medieval commentators about when Ruth actually converted—only when coming back with Naomi (Rashi 1:16) or earlier, prior to her marriage to Mahlon (Ibn Ezra, 1:2).
 25. Alternatively, it is possible to understand like Bernstein (23), who suggests that this is a standard blessing for marriages in Bethlehem.
 26. D. F. Rauber discusses this theme in his article "Literary Values in the Bible:

that word definitely qualifies as a leitwort in the first chapter.²⁷ She does not go out in the fields to collect alms, preferring to stay at home. When she learns of Ruth's interaction with Boaz, Naomi focuses on the potential to utilize him for his duty of restoring the inheritance, seeing him as a redeemer and not a love interest.²⁸ She is interested primarily in returning things to their original status quo. Thus, her conservative nature is a consistent theme throughout the book.

On the other hand, this is contrasted by the other two main characters in the book, Ruth and Boaz.²⁹ Ruth is clearly more ready to go out on a limb and take risks, as evidenced by her leaving her homeland for Israel. She actively goes and collects fallen sheaves in the fields, which results in her finding Boaz. Furthermore, as discussed above, she seeks a romance with Boaz, even going the extra step at the granary.³⁰ So we find that Ruth is active and uninhibited, which might be reflective of her youthful exuberance.

More of a contrast is apparent regarding the character Boaz, who functions as a foil to Naomi. Both of them are from the previous generation, and this connection is underlined in several parallels between Boaz and Elimelech. Both are called ish,³¹ both presumably live in the same area, and the familial relationship between them functions as yet another connection.³² Despite their shared background and age, however, Naomi and Boaz have opposite character traits. Naomi, as above, was very conservative, while Boaz was more of a risk-taker. He takes the initiative of singling out Ruth (2:5) and arranging for her to receive special treatment (2:6-10). He seems to welcome Ruth when she appears in the granary scene (3:9), though what is done appears improper. He agrees to redeem the fields though it is not necessarily a profitable business deal (it was risky enough to scare off the other potential redeemer), and he even seems to convince the other redeemer not to redeem the fields so that he can do so himself. Thus, we see that Boaz was very proactive and ambitious, though he was connected to Naomi, who did not share those traits.³³

V.

In summation, this author claims that Naomi represents not only the main character of the book, but the main interest of the reader as well. The reader accompanies Naomi on her journey to recover her loss of a

husband, children, and homeland, which is accomplished through the actions of Ruth and with Boaz's kind redemption. This journey is important because of the end of the book, which establishes David's genealogy through the valid Naomi and not the questionable Ruth. In terms of the characters involved in the story, Naomi represents a more conservative and passive actor, more concerned with recouping what is hers. On the other hand, Ruth and Boaz take more active roles, ironically all culminating in a result that helps Naomi, namely, the restoration of her נחלה.

Notes

1. This is not an absolute proof. There are books in the Bible where the character's name in the title of the book does not correspond to his being the main character. For instance, Samuel dies a third of the way through the book bearing his name, and David seems to be the main character, as he is central for approximately two thirds of the book. [At best one could describe the book as presenting the transfer of power from Samuel to (Saul and) David, but even this seems to focus on the end of the story.]
2. *Poetics and Interpretations of Biblical Narrative*, Sheffield: Almond, 1983, reprinted Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994.
3. Berlin, p. 32.
4. Berlin, p. 86.
5. It is possible to present Boaz as not a full-fledged character but rather as one who blandly fits the bill of a successful redeemer. He always goes out of his way to help Ruth, both in the field and in his later status as redeemer, and does not seem very complex. Compare this with Edward Greenstein's article "On Feeley-Harnik's Reading of Ruth" in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed. Susan Niditch, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1990, p. 187-188, where he presents Boaz's act of redemption as heroic and monetarily sacrificial, lending texture and detail to the character through this dilemma.
6. *Da'at Migra* (Five Scrolls, ed. F. Meltzer, Hebrew, The Society for the Publication of the Bible with a Traditional Commentary, Jerusalem, 1973, Ruth) p. 8 has an interesting character analysis in the book of Ruth, presenting three ordinary characters (Orpah, the youth standing by the harvesters, and the redeemer) who do what is expected of them and three extraordinary ones (Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz) who go beyond the call of duty. In this fashion, Orpah serves as a foil to Ruth and the youth and redeemer serve as foils to Boaz, as they highlight the piety and integrity of the main characters.
7. Berlin, p. 83.
8. One argument promulgated for this claim is the above-mentioned fact that Ruth appears in every major scene of the book. I believe that, if anything, this works against Berlin's argument. Being the most often mentioned character

The Book of Ruth" (JBL vol. 89, no. 1). He speaks of the restoration by the end of the story of everything that was lost at the beginning, though he does not specifically focus on Naomi (he claims that Naomi's restoration is parallel to the restoration of the land from famine to fertility), and he also portrays this theme as representing a strong and continuous literary methodology by the author of the book.

27. Interestingly, there is a related leitwort in chapter 4- we find the similarly sounding verb to sit ישב appear multiple times at the beginning of the chapter (6 times in 4:1-4) as well as one case of the שרר verb (4:3), and the end of the chapter (4:14-15) immediately after the birth of the child, where there are four words, each of a distinct root, with the ש sound in them—למשיב, ודשבת, משבתך, משבעה.
28. Berlin p. 90, quoting Sasson, says that "In instructing her daughter-in-law to prepare herself for Boaz, Naomi shares not one word about the latter in his function of redeemer . . . Ruth broached the subject of redemption . . . uninstructed by Naomi and, as it turns out, insufficiently informed about Boaz's precise position in the chain of possible redeemers." The only problem with this analysis is that, in a previous scene where Ruth first tells Naomi about Boaz and his field, she proclaims "he is of our redeemers" (מגאלנו, 2:20), so this seems to undermine Sasson's point. In general, it would not make sense for Ruth, who just learned of the redemptive potential in Boaz and who had no vested interest in it, to be more focused on the redemption process than Naomi.
29. An interesting unifying theme (presented by Bernstein) between the two of them is חיל. The verse originally calls Ruth an אשת חיל (3:2) and Boaz a גבור חיל (2:1) and then the end of the book includes a blessing that they חיל באפרתה (4:11).
30. It is not clear exactly what happens there, but whether a consummation of their relationship occurs or not, (discussed by Moshe J. Bernstein in his aforementioned article) Ruth is presented as having gone farther than Naomi asked of her. [Regarding the question of what did happen, many point to the word 'threshing' as a euphemism for the sexual act, and Bernstein (18) points to many words in chapter 3 as double entendres. One point I did not see discussed was the usage of the word "הערמה," literally meaning "the pile," but which has the same root letters as the word "ערם," naked. This may be a hint to the fact that it was Boaz's nakedness that was being uncovered (which is the meaning of the word ותגל, as Bernstein mentions), which in Leviticus 18 many times refers to the sexual act.]
31. This is further emphasized by the midrashim (quoted by Rashi 1:1) that say that Boaz was one of the judges and that Elimelekh was a philanthropist of the Jewish people, and, in fact, both are called "פרנס" by the midrash.
32. Aside from the establishment of a foil, this also serves as foreshadowing, as Boaz serves to replace Elimelekh in the יבום process.
33. This contrast between Boaz and Naomi may be reflective of gender roles, where the male is more active and the female more conservative. If so, this may weaken Feeley-Harnik's argument that the book of Ruth reflects a feminist angle due to the proactive part of women.

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Alex Ozar

A Study of Rava's Halakhic Axiology and Judicial Autonomy

The Talmud (*Bava Batra* 130b) records the following statement of Rava to his students:

כי אתי פסקא דדינא דידי לקמייכו וחזיתו ביה פירכא, לא תקרעוהו עד דאתיתו לקמאי, אי אית לי טעמא אמינא לכו, ואי לא — הדרנא בי; לאחר מיתה, לא מיקרע תיקרעו ומגמר נמי לא תיגמרו מיניה, לא מיקרע תיקרעו — דאי הויה התם דלמא הוה אמינא לכו טעמא, מגמר נמי לא תיגמרו מיניה — דאין לדיין אלא מה שענינו רואות

When a legal decision of mine comes before you [in written form], and you see any objection to it, do not tear it up before you have come before me. If I have a [valid] reason [for my decision], I will tell [it to] you; and if not, I will withdraw. After my death, you shall neither tear it up nor infer [any law] from it. "You shall neither tear it up" since, had I been there, it is possible that I might have told you the reason; "nor infer [any law] from it"—because a judge has but what his eyes can see.⁷¹

This is a broad, far-reaching and powerful statement whose ramifications extend from the fields of halakhic jurisprudence and axiology to basic issues of intellectual and moral integrity. I would like to explore and explain those ramifications, especially with regard to the field of jurisprudence. The significance of this statement lies not only in its con-

tent, but also perhaps to a greater degree in its context. By "context" I refer to the extent to and manner in which Rava acted in accordance with his principles in real life situations, the environment in which this statement was made, the people and personalities to whom it was directed, and the reaction and resistance to the ideas it expressed. Understanding this context will aid us in grasping the statement's meaning and the significance of its being said. More than just a matter of abstract philosophy, the ideas expressed in this statement led Rava to concrete measures in the area of *pesak* (halakhic decision making), which often put him at odds with his colleagues.

Let's begin then with an analysis of the statement itself. First, Rava instructs his students that if they encounter a ruling² of his with which they disagree, they should not reject it outright, but should rather address their objections to him. Rava pledges to consider the students' objections, then to uphold his ruling if he finds a satisfactory basis for it, or else to withdraw it. The first part is a rather basic and hardly noteworthy principle of intellectual propriety; one should not form a conclusion, and certainly not act on that conclusion, without first exhausting at least all readily available avenues of verification. To reject a ruling of one's master without first consulting him, when it is certainly plausible that he has a satisfactory explanation, is clearly wrong.

The statement's second component, Rava's pledge to consider his student's objections and uphold or retract his ruling accordingly, is more interesting. We could with no trouble imagine a perfectly respectable authority figure who, at least under normal circumstances, would demand obedience to himself and acceptance of his rulings even when they are found objectionable. He could in many cases argue that maintaining his authority and prestige is necessary for the proper functioning of the community he serves, and that to allow his rulings to be challenged and potentially overturned every time a student objects would undermine that authority and prestige. He would argue that the benefit of his community's confidence in his authority outweighs any risk of error. In fact, the Talmud has a term for this issue, "*ziluta d-bei dina*," the concern for which is discussed in several passages.³ It was precisely this idea (or at least some form of it) to which Rava objected.

To Rava, it seems, an axiom of halakhic decision making is that all rulings should be correct. To uphold a ruling which one knows to be

erroneous is surely unacceptable. Moreover, one must actively engage himself and others in an effort to ensure the correctness of his rulings. Concerns about the community's confidence in authority, or any other concerns, are outweighed by a strong commitment to intellectual honesty and integrity. Rava, then, was in the first clause of his statement expressing a dual responsibility and commitment. His students should not reject his rulings without first exhausting all avenues for verification, and Rava himself concomitantly pledged to always consider objections to, explain, and if necessary reject his own rulings.

The latter half of Rava's statement contains two components. The first, that if after his death his students encounter a ruling of his with which they disagree, they should not "tear it up, since, had I been there, it is possible that I might have told you the reason" is again an expression of intellectual integrity, albeit a considerably more subtle one, but is also largely a matter of proper juridical practice. Though the student disagrees with the ruling, it is certainly possible that the ruling is in fact correct, and it would therefore be inappropriate, or judicially irresponsible, for the student to proactively reverse the *de facto* ruling.

The second component, however, states that when it comes to the student's future rulings, they are in no way bound to those of their master. While they are prohibited, presumably for reasons of proper judicial practice⁴, from reversing decisions already made, Rava's students are under no obligation to accept them as precedent either. When judging their own cases, they have no duty to override their own judgment. Moreover, and this is the most significant point, they are enjoined from doing so. Many would argue that it is obligatory for one to accept the rulings of those wiser than he, and even more would argue that it is at least permissible to do so. Rava though presents a contrary obligation: it is forbidden, at least on a practical plane, for a judge to compromise the conclusion of his own intellect in favor of his master's authority. Rava is here advocating a combination of intellectual honesty and judicial integrity. A judge should possess sufficient intellectual honesty and responsibility to not reverse a *de facto* ruling, as he should acknowledge the possibility that the error is in fact his own. Concurrently though, it is the judge's intellect alone which may form the basis for a new judicial decision, and any compromise of that constitutes a breach of integrity, intellectual, judicial, or otherwise.

This brings us to Rava's concluding aphorism, "for a judge has but what his eyes can see." This aphorism has over time given rise to a variety of interpretations. In this context, it would seem to be a positive formulation of the principle underlying the immediately previous proscription. In his deliberations, a judge is allowed only "what his eyes can see," or those considerations that are products of his own intellect, and may and should disregard those of others, regardless of those other's intellectual superiority or greater authority. In addition to this, Rava may have intended something more with his aphorism. We will see that, to an extent greater than his colleagues, Rava believed that *pesak* must take into account the pragmatic realities and circumstance of the decision. This has two possible applications here. First, it could constitute further argument against the inappropriate use of precedent. Since a *pesak* can be affected by the circumstance in which it is made, appeal to precedent will always be problematic, as no two cases and their respective circumstances are entirely identical. Second, "for a judge has but was his eyes can see" may be a direct argument for a judge's taking circumstance, or "what his eyes can see," into account. In the sequel, I will use records of Rava's judicial activity as well as other statements of his to illustrate the conceptual breadth and practical ramifications of these ideas.

There is a series of three parallel passages in *masekhet Hullin* which preserve a clear record of a dispute between Rava and his students and colleagues as to the proper use of precedent in *pesak*. Specifically, Rava rejects in these passages what are known as "*klalei ha-pesak*," principles which govern the choice of which authority's rulings should be used as precedent. In addition, we find in these passages disputes as to the scope of considerations allowed in halakhic deliberation. These passages are parallel in the sense of sharing common structure and form. Since the aforementioned dispute is the most prominent shared content, it is plausible that the formulation of these passages was intended deliberately for the purpose of preserving a record of this dispute.

Before we dive into the passages themselves, just why the issue of *klalei ha-pesak* would be so tendentious should be made clear and explicit. A *klal ha-pesak* says that for any case about which there is a dispute between Rabbi X and Rabbi Y, we should always follow the ruling of Rabbi X. Why? Presumably, and in some cases explicitly, it is founded upon an appeal to Rabbi X's superior competence in the relevant mat-

ters, or perhaps some reason why Rabbi X is or should be endowed with greater authority. And presumably, the point is that in more cases than not, the ruling will come out right. Other benefits may include standardization of *pesak*, as well as simple court efficiency. But what if one believes, in a particular case, that Rabbi Y is in fact correct? How could a procedural regulation force a judge to decide contrary to what he believes is right? Even if a judge was unsure as to the correct ruling, someone like Rava might still object to the reliance on procedural rules in place of a genuine decision, in what may be seen as essentially abdicating one's judicial responsibility.

Here then is the first passage, found in *Hullin* 49b:

ההוא נקב דסתמה חלב טמא, דאתא לקמיה דרבא. אמר רבא, למאי ניהוש
לה? חדא דהא אמר רב ששת: חלב טמא נמי סותם, ועוד, התורה חסה על
ממונם של ישראל. א"ל רב פפא לרבא: רב, ואיסורא דאורייתא, ואת אמרת
התורה חסה על ממונם של ישראל?

There came before Rava the case of a perforation that was stopped up by unclean fat. Said Rava, "What have we to fear?" After all R. Sheshet has ruled that even unclean fat can also stop up; and moreover, "The Torah spares the money of Israel". Whereupon R. Papa said to Rava, "Rav; and moreover, it is a Torah prohibition, and you say 'The Torah spares the money of Israel!'"

The passage begins with a question posed to Rava as to the permissibility of a particular item. Rava's response is a permissive ruling, expressed by "what's there to worry about?" a blunt dismissal of the question. Rava then provides two justifications for his ruling. First, he cites the permissive opinion of Rav Sheshet on the matter as support and precedent for his own. Second, he marshals the principle of "*ha-Torah hasa al mamonan shel yisrael*," which essentially states that halakha does not impose unnecessary economic hardship.⁴ Apparently, Rava was claiming that though in fact there is no reason to rule stringently, even if there were it should be disregarded on the grounds that it would impose undue economic hardship.⁵

Rava dismissed the question as if the permissive ruling were a given, but it is clear from his need to justify his position, and more so from his colleague's response, that this was merely rhetorical. In fact, the opposite was true: it was the permissive ruling which, given the commonly accepted norms of *pesak*, required justification. It was precisely his ruling for which there was "what to worry about," and Rava was fully aware of

this. The strength of his rhetoric betrays not confidence but rather an awareness of the controversial nature of his ruling.

Rav Papa, a student and colleague of Rava's, responds to Rava's ruling tersely and with a clear sense of astonishment. Rav Papa's statement contains three items. First, he simply states "Rav," referring to the great authority known by that title. Rav Papa is responding to Rava's citation of the permissive ruling of Rav Sheshet with a precedent to the contrary as Rav had ruled stringently in this case. It was a given to Rav Papa that in the case of conflicting precedents from Rav and Rav Sheshet, the opinion of Rav is always to be followed. This was a *klal ha-pesak* to which Rav Papa adhered, and which in Rav Papa's eyes was normative. That such a *klal* existed is in no way surprising, as the Talmud states explicitly in *Nidah* 24b that "The halakha accords with Rav in matters of prohibition." Rava though apparently did not feel bound by this *klal ha-pesak*, rather considering himself free to follow the precedent of his choice, in this case the permissive ruling of Rav Sheshet. We will see that he may not have felt the need to follow precedent at all.

The second component of Rav Papa's objection is to simply state the fact that the question was one of Torah law. It seems this should be read in conjunction with the third component; Rav Papa was expressing his astonishment at Rava's use of the "*ha-Torah hasa*" principle in a case of Torah law. This testifies to a rather fundamental dispute between Rava and Rav Papa as to the scope of considerations allowed in the process of halakhic deliberation. Rava felt that even in a case of Torah law, factors of economic circumstance could determine the outcome of *pesak*. To Rav Papa though, *pesak* cannot allow, at least not to as great an extent as Rava advocated, factors external to halakhic reasoning. The parameters of this dispute cannot be deduced with precision from this passage, but that such a dispute existed is clear.

Here is a second parallel passage, again from *Hullin* 49b:

מניומין כנדוקא איגלי ליה בסתקא דדובשא, אתא לקמיה דרבא. אמר רבא, למאי נחוש לה? חדא, דתנן שלשה משקים אסורים משום גילוי: היין, והמים והחלב, ושאר כל המשקים מותרים, ועוד, התורה חסה על ממונם של ישראל! א"ל רב נחמן בר יצחק לרבא: ר' שמעון, וסכנת נפשות, ואת אמרת התורה חסה על ממונם של ישראל?

Manyomin, a pottery dealer, once left uncovered a pot of honey. He came to Rava [to enquire about it], and Rava said, "What have we to fear?" In

the first place, we have learnt: Three liquids are prohibited if left uncovered, viz., water, wine, and milk; and all other liquids are permitted. In the second place, 'The Torah spares the money of Israel'. Whereupon R. Nahman bar Yitzhak said to Rava, "Rabi Shimon, and moreover it is a question of potential mortal danger, and yet you say, 'The Torah spares the money of Israel!'"

The structure here is the same as in the previous passage. Rava rules permissively, saying "What's there to worry about?" then justifies his ruling by first citing precedent and then the "*ha-Torah hasa*" principle. This time, Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak, another student and colleague of Rava's, objects in the same manner as Rav Papa, first citing, by name alone, a dissenting authority, and then citing a reason why "*ha-Torah hasa*" should be obviously inapplicable. In this case, it seems that the first matter of dispute was a *klal ha-pesak* which favored any opinion of Rabi Shimon over one of Rabi Meir, the presumed author of the *Mishnah* quoted by Rava.⁶ Again, Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak considered this *klal* normative, and thus felt it sufficient to state "Rabi Shimon" as an objection. Rava though, to the shock of his colleague, did not feel bound by this *klal*. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak then objects to Rava's application of "*ha-Torah hasa*" in this case, on the grounds that it involves potential mortal danger and one should therefore be required to rule stringently, favoring the side of safety. Again, where precisely the parameters of the dispute as to the applicability of "*ha-Torah hasa*" lie is unclear; what we can conclude confidently is that Rava felt considerably more license to employ economic considerations in his *pesak* than did his colleagues.

Here is the final parallel passage, from *Hullin* 76b:

הנהו גידין רכין דאתו לקמיה דרבא, אמר רבא: למאי ליחוש להו? חדא, דאמר ר' יוחנן, גידין שסופן להקשות נמנין עליהו בפסח, ועוד, התורה חסה על ממונם של ישראל. א"ל רב פפא לרבא: ר"ש בן לקיש, ואיסורא דאורייתא, ואת אמרת מאי ליחוש להו? אישתיק.⁷

[The case of a fracture which was covered for the most part with flesh and] tender sinews came before Rava. Said Rava, "What have we to fear?" In the first place, Rabi Yohanan has declared that in respect of the sinews which later will become hard people may be counted in to partake thereof in the Passover offering. Secondly, 'the Torah spares the money of Israel.' Whereupon Rav Papa said to Rava, "Rabi Shimon ben Lakish, and moreover it is here a question involving a Torah prohibition, and you say, 'what have we to fear?'" He [Rava] remained silent. But why did he remain silent?

Has not Rava himself declared that the law agrees with Rabi Shimon ben Lakish only in those three cases? In this case it is different, for Rabi Yohanan retracted his view in favor of that of Rabi Shimon ben Lakish.

The basic form here is the same. Rav Papa objects to Rava's ruling on two counts: Rava's use of precedent and his application of "*ba-Torah basa*." Here though, it is doubtful that there was an accepted *klal ha-pesak* favoring Reish Lakish over Rabi Yohanan; if anything, the opposite was true.⁸ A different, considerably more intriguing explanation of Rav Papa's "Reish Lakish" objection emerges from the ensuing discussion. A fact we should note first is that unlike the previous passages, in this case we are told that Rava fell silent in response to his colleague's objection, apparently conceding the point. Why did he concede here but not previously?

The Talmud itself asks why Rava conceded, given his stated opinion that the halakha generally accords with the view of Rabi Yohanan over that of Reish Lakish,⁹ and answers that Rava was aware that Rabi Yohanan had in fact conceded to Reish Lakish in this case. If Rabi Yohanan had in fact retracted his opinion, we certainly understand Rav Papa's objection to its use as precedent, and we understand too why Rava, left without precedent for his ruling, would himself retract. The remaining question is though, on what basis did Rava make his original ruling? If Rava accedes, in the face of Rav Papa's objection, that his ruling requires precedent, or that it is illegitimate to decide against the solitary, contrary precedent of Rabi Yohanan, how did he justify his ruling originally?

It would seem that in fact, Rava felt his ruling did not require precedent, and further, he need not address contrary precedent. Rava believed that he had the autonomy to decide halakha with his own intellect, on his own authority. He was not bound to uphold precedent of earlier authorities, at least among the *Amora'im*, with which he found fault, "for a judge has but what his eyes can see." In the previous passages, Rava also stressed his autonomy, rejecting procedural rules which would limit his freedom in choosing between various precedents. Here he goes a step further, rejecting the need to address contrary precedent. In the previous passages, we are not told that Rava conceded to his colleagues. Presumably, Rava stood his ground in the face of his colleague's critique. Here though, Rava is not as confident in his position. Some

combination of lesser conviction on the part of Rava or more forceful resistance from his colleague's resulted in Rava's unwillingness to maintain his position.

What we learn from this passage is that Rava's rejection of the necessity of precedent for *pesak*, and his emphasis of the individual judge's autonomy were not only unique in his circles, but even radical. That Rava's rulings were rejected sharply by his colleagues is nothing to marvel at; the Talmud is replete with harsh objections. But that Rava would back down at his colleague's objections, without offering any defense, shows either that he himself was not confident enough in his position, or that his colleagues resisted it with unusual vigor. Either way, it is clear that Rava's position was perceived as radical by himself and his colleagues.

Here is one more example of this phenomenon, from *Eruvin* 47b:

הנהו דכרי דאתו למברכתא, שרא להו לבני מחוזא למיזבן מינייהו. אמר ליה רבינא לרבא: מאי דעתיד? דאמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: חפצי נכרי אין קונין שביטה, והא ושמואל ורבי יוחנן הלכה כרבי יוחנן, ואמר רב חייה בר אבין אמר רבי יוחנן: חפצי נכרי קונין שביטה, גזירה בעלים דנכרי אטו בעלים דישראל! הדר אמר רבא: ליזדבנו לבני מברכתא, דכולה מברכתא לדידהו כארבע אמות

Some rams arrived at Mabrakta and Rava permitted the inhabitants of Mahoza to purchase them. Said Ravina to Rava: What [authority is it that you have] in your mind? That of Rav Yehudah who said in the name of Samuel that a gentile's objects do not acquire their place for the Sabbath? Surely, in a dispute between Samuel and Rabi Yohanan the halakha is in agreement with Rabi Yohanan, and Rabi Hiyya bar Abin has laid down in the name of Rabi Yohanan: The objects of a gentile acquire their place for the Sabbath, a restriction having been imposed upon those of a gentile owner as a preventive measure against the infringement of the law in the case of those of an Israelite owner? Rava thereupon ruled: Let them be sold to the people of Mabrakta since in their case all Mabrakta is deemed to be only four cubits in extent.

Again, we find Rava ruling leniently against an accepted *klal ha-pesak*, but retracting upon censure from his colleague Ravina. We can't know why he retracted in this case but not in the first two *Hullin* passages; any number and variety of circumstances may have affected this decision. What is clear is that this provides further evidence for what we have already learned, that Rava rejected the binding nature of *klalei ha-pesak*, and that this position was regarded as radical by him and his contemporaries.

In truth, we need not content ourselves with oblique inferences from anecdotes only; we have a direct record of an explicit debate between Rava and his colleagues on a matter of *klalei ha-pesak*. Here is a passage from *Eruvin* 46a:

איצטריק, סלקא דעתך אמינא: הני מילי, יחיד במקום יחיד, ורבים במקום רבים, אבל יחיד במקום רבים, אימא לא. אמר ליה רבא לאביי: מכדי, עירובין דרבנן, מה לי יחיד במקום יחיד ומה לי יחיד במקום רבים? אמר ליה רב פפא לרבא: ובדרבנן לא שני לן בין יחיד במקום יחיד ליחיד במקום רבים... אמר רב משרשיא לרבא, ואמרי לה רב נחמן בר יצחק לרבא: ובדרבנן לא שני בין יחיד במקום יחיד, בין יחיד במקום רבים?

It was required because it might have been presumed that the statement applied only to an individual authority who differs from another individual authority or to several authorities who differ from several other authorities, but not to an individual authority who differed from several authorities. Said Rava to Abaye: Consider! The laws of eruv are Rabbinical. Why then should it matter whether an individual authority differs from several other authorities? Said Rav Papa to Rava: Is there no difference in the case of a Rabbinical law between a dispute of two individuals and one between an individual authority and several other authorities? ... Said Rav Meshasheya to Rava (or, as others say, Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said to Rava): Is there no difference in the case of a Rabbinical law between a dispute of two individuals and one between an individual authority and several authorities?

In this passage Rava rejects the application in cases of Rabbinic law of the root of all *klalei ha-pesak*, the Biblically rooted injunction to follow the majority opinion. This was no technical debate; the rhetoric and sharp formulations betray a significant ideological dispute. Unsurprisingly, it is none other than Rav Papa and Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak, the same *Amoraim* from the *Hullin* passages, who appear as Rava's disputants. What we are beginning to see is that this dispute was not a onetime occurrence. The amount of evidence from varied forms and contexts suggests that this was a persistent, significant, and principled debate.

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Was Rava a fourth century Conservative rabbi, or perhaps an Eliezer Berkovits type? Clearly, a handful of anecdotes and statements is insufficient to justify any such labels. We have scant knowledge of the parameters Rava used in applying his beliefs, and we can't even be certain of the

extent of his conviction in them. We certainly don't know how he would have applied them today. Perhaps then, our primary accomplishment is not the discovery of any individual's views, but rather a glimpse at a conversation about fundamental issues of Halakhic axiology and jurisprudence, a conversation no less relevant in our day than in Rava's.

Notes

1. All translations are taken, at times modified, from the Soncino English translation of the Tamud.
2. It is somewhat unclear whether the term *piska de-dina* refers to an actual court decision or an abstract ruling. I have followed the lead of virtually all commentators in regarding it is the former. This is supported by the fact, pointed out to me by Dr. Yaakov Elman that there was significant reluctance in Talmud era Persia to commit halakha to writing, whereas there was no such reluctance to writing court records, which served a practical function as proof to the court's decision. In addition, the "tear it up" idiom is often used with regard to court documents. One potential problem with this interpretation is the rule of "*toeh b-shikul ha-dat*," recorded in *Sanhedrin* 33b, which states that if a ruling is found to be mistaken due to an error in reasoning, the ruling stands. According to this rule, Rava should not have demanded the reversal of his mistaken rulings, presuming of course that we are not dealing exclusively with *toeh b-devar mishnah*.
3. See *Bava Batra* 31b and *Ketuvot* 26b.
4. It should be noted that Rava did not invent this principle. It is found already in *Sifra, Parashah* 5.
5. Whether the conclusion would be that the prohibitive ruling must be incorrect or that though it may be correct it should nonetheless be ignored is immaterial here, though I certainly favor the former.
6. For a brief discussion of the extent to which this *klal* was accepted by the Bavli, see Halivni, Ephraim Betzalel, *Klalei Psak BaHalacha*, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel, October 1991.
7. Despite the ubiquitous Vilna Shas's reading "Rabah," the correct reading is certainly "Rava." If the parallels to the previous passages were not evidence enough, virtually all early manuscripts read "Rava."
8. See Halivni's discussion on Resh Lakish and Rabbi Yohanan.
9. It is at least somewhat ironic that in the course of our discussion about Rava's rejection of *klalei ha-pesak* we quote one of his own. It should be understood though that this *klal* allows several exceptions, and in fact the *klal* is formulated by Rava in terms of the exception. Presumably, this is less a procedural rule than a statement of fact; Rava is simply ruling in favor of Rabi Yohanan in all cases but three.

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Rationalizing Evil in the Biblical Perspective: An Examination of Bereshit 3-6

The Bible initiates the idea of monotheism, which is the belief in the existence of one, almighty God. Although a collection of secondary godly entities does have a function in the Bible as confirmed by numerous passages,¹ strictly speaking, one main God runs the show, inevitably controlling these weaker "gods." Yet, as much as monotheism brings a fresh outlook to religion, it has to confront deep, theological problems of its own. One of monotheism's major issues is the vexing occurrence of evil in the world. In the beliefs of polytheism, evil occurs to someone when a more powerful god defeats one's own protective god. Playing the game of polytheism, where one's luck invariably rises and falls, requires a person to realize the precariousness of his or her situation.² In monotheism, on the other hand, the occurrence of evil creates a troubling paradox. On the one hand, if everything in the universe flows in some form from one omniscient God, then evil should also originate from God; yet this assertion would infringe on another of monotheism's basic postulates, a beneficent God. On the other hand, if this evil presence does not emanate from the

almighty God, but rather from some external force, then God in actuality is not omnipotent, since a power, in this case evil, exists outside His jurisdiction. Philosophers have dealt with this paradox since the birth of monotheism. No simple solution exists, and any attempt to decipher the conundrum will ostensibly require some form of capitulation.³

Almost every response to this dilemma will inevitably confront one of the two issues mentioned above, but concurrently concede to the other. Thus, one method is to relegate evil to an earth-bound origin, thus disqualifying any external forces as its source, since Earth originally derives from God. However, the problem with this path is that though this distances evil from God, it still nevertheless derives evil, however distantly, from God Himself. The other path to take defines evil as issuing from some heavenly figure other than God. The problem with this choice is that it implies that God, assuming He is beneficent and does not want evil occurring in His kingdom, does not have full control of all that happens in His realm.

Since it is the Bible's monotheistic ideas which raise the paradox of evil, surveying this holy book will potentially uncover a response to this difficulty. The origin of evil in the biblical account of the world's history occurs right after the creation of humans. Evil is introduced because of, and is synonymous with, the act of sinning against God, thereby defying His authority. Chapter 3 of Genesis, detailing man's violation of God's command not to eat from the tree of knowledge, and chapter 4, depicting the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, encompass a spiraling sequence of unfortunate events that establishes evil in the world. The first act of evil functions as direct insubordination towards God, while the subsequent act of evil occurs as an affront against man. Subsequent to the Bible's own "slanted" description of these two adjacent accounts, interpreters of the two stories inevitably tilted toward one of the two above paths in rationalizing the origin of evil.

The first possible explanation, presenting evil and sin as deriving from God's earthly creatures, finds expression in the Bible itself. Throughout the two stories in chapters 3 and 4, no mention of any angel or superhuman figure occurs. The stories deal solely with the actions of creatures living on Earth.⁴ A serpent, no doubt a more formidable one than those alive today, convinces Eve to eat from the forbidden fruit; she, in turn, sways Adam to eat from it as well. In the next immoral

episode, Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, kills his brother Abel. All of the participants in the two accounts, from the perpetrators to the victims, manifest themselves as earthly beings. Thus, the biblical account attempts to shift the source of evil as far away from God as possible while staying within His dominion.

The other potential starting point of evil in biblical history, which will assist in painting an accurate picture of evil for this discussion, occurs at the beginning of the 6th chapter of Genesis, immediately before, and apparently inducing, God's decision to flood the world. In this instance, creatures referred to as *bnei elohim*, ostensibly translated as "sons of gods," become attracted to human women, forming unions with them which attract God's disapproval. Although, in this episode, heavenly creatures seem to play some role in the proliferation of evil, the Bible leaves open a handful of options in aligning this story with the earlier incidents of purely earthly evil. One possibility to hold the human women—and not the *bnei elohim*—responsible for the manifestation of evil, similar to blaming Eve, rather than the snake, in the story from Genesis 3.⁵ Moreover, man acts as the real perpetrator throughout this tale, by discovering the destructive arts and sciences, while the *bnei elohim* merely operate as auxiliary characters.⁶

Following in the footsteps of the Bible, some interpreters bolster the idea of evil/sin's earthly origin by touching up and solidifying the stories in chapters 3 and 4, as well as ironing out the account in chapter 6. A number of interpretative works on the Bible make strides in smoothing out chapter 6 of Genesis. The *Book of Jubilees*, perhaps the earliest source taking this position, explains that the *bnei elohim*, who take the human women, originally come down to earth with sincere plans.⁷ Only later⁸ do these angels become evil due to humanity's influence on them.⁹ *Pirkei deR. Eliezer (PRE)*, chapter 22, in a slightly different twist, claims that the angels from heaven become attracted to, and then are seduced by, the licentious human women of Earth, removing the blame from the angels.¹⁰

An entirely alternative interpretation, which maintains the earthly source of evil, developed in the middle of the second century CE, after many generations of keeping to the literal explanation. In *Genesis Rabba* 26:2, R. Simeon b. Yohai translates *bnei elohim* as "sons of nobles" and even curses anyone who refers to them literally as "sons of God" or "sons of gods." R. Simeon solves the problem of evil that appears to originate

from heaven by totally removing the angelic beings from the narrative, replacing them with humans.¹¹ This divergent interpretation is expressed as "sons of nobles, rulers or judges" in some works, and "the righteous line of Seth" in others, both serving the purpose of highlighting the evil brewing in humanity and not angels. It is not clear, though, whether the dilemma of evil was R. Simeon's original impetus when he decided to change from the standard interpretation.

Returning to Genesis 3 and 4, many interpreters choose to follow the Bible's exclusion of heavenly beings from the two accounts, preserving the source of evil as earthly. In the first story, commentators focus their energy on developing the serpent's fascinating role in the episode. Indeed, the reader, upon reaching the story, immediately notices the serpent's heightened intelligence, ability to speak, and (implicitly) the presence of legs. Additionally, the reader wonders what drives the serpent's wicked plot. An explanation of all these details is undoubtedly necessary to properly understand the story. *Jubilees*, Philo, and Josephus, in elucidating the serpent's character, cite no suggestion of supernatural powers, instead concentrating on the serpent in a more rational manner. All three interpreters have no problem from a scientific standpoint with the serpent's cleverness, legs, and speech, claiming that at that point in history nature was different from that of today.¹² These writers do not explicitly connect the serpent's unique characteristics to its subsequent plot against the humans, though, but, rather, see the two aspects as unrelated.

The literature of the Talmudic scholars expands on the serpent's physical traits, simultaneously connecting them to the serpent's nature and motivation for treachery. The rabbis, in various places, depict the snake as almost an equal to Adam. Not only do several commentators note that the serpent possesses feet, preventing him from needing to slither around, but they also suggest that it has hands as well.¹³ It is very likely that the serpent's overall appearance even resembles that of a human being's. The serpent's food is the same as that of man, apparently unlike the other animals, which have their own unique food. The serpent, like Adam, has important responsibilities, given that it is designated king over all the other animals.¹⁴ The Talmud deduces from the severity of the serpent's punishments for his trickery that it originally was the most high of all the animals, now becoming the lowest. This description of the serpent leads to the logical rationalization of its strategy: to have

Eve as its mate, if necessary tricking her and killing Adam.¹⁵

The original source of all evil in the world, therefore, stems from the serpent itself and its “devilish” plan. However, a question immediately arises. How does evil continue to persist in the world, even in circumstances removed from the serpent? The continuation of the rabbis’ account of the Genesis tale solves this problem. Although the serpent’s complete plan to kill Adam and live out its life with Eve falls short, the serpent does succeed in satisfying its craving to sexually encounter Eve. According to the Rabbis, what began as a casual conversation between the serpent and Eve eventually deteriorated into a sexual act. What occurs next is perhaps referenced, outside of the rabbis’ exegesis, in a fragment from Qumran, 1QH^t XI, which contains a phrase that can be read as: “the one who is pregnant of the serpent,” apparently referring to Eve. While not all scholars reckon the expression in this way, Florentino Martinez, a respected academic in the field, does cite it as an illustration of the “serpent violating Eve” interpretation.¹⁶ *PRE*¹⁷ contains this tradition as well, which the author of the work then uses to set the stage for the birth of Cain. Thus, the differences between Cain and Abel, displayed in the biblical text, derive from their divergent progenitors, Cain acquiring his genes from the serpent and Abel obtaining his genes from Adam. The serpent transmits its evil to Cain through Eve and eventually to the entire human race, perpetuating evil forever more. A number of sources in the Talmudic writings¹⁸ contain this analysis, yet explain that only non-Jews still have this evil inside their hearts and souls, since the Jewish people fortunately eliminate it at Mt. Sinai when they receive the Torah from God. The question remains: what is responsible for the evil committed by Jews? This line of interpretation of the Talmud specifically requires an alternative source of evil, which will be dealt with later in this article.

The subsequent story of Cain and Abel in the Bible becomes the model for all later struggles of good and evil.¹⁹ In a midrashic debate, recorded by the Targumim, Cain represents the perverted, evil outlook on life, while Abel represents the correct perspective. Their discussion, in fact, focuses on the predicament of evil occurring in the world, the question of theodicy, which connects back to the initial difficulty set forward by monotheism. Indeed, Cain’s response removes him completely from the sphere of monotheism.

This exegesis of Cain’s perverted origin relies on cues from the text of the Bible itself. As *PRE* and other sources note, the line, “And the man knew his wife Eve,”²⁰ possibly signifies the act of sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve, thus deeming Adam the true father of Cain. However, the sentence could also be read to say that Adam *knew something about* Eve, utilizing the more common usage of the verb *yada*. What Adam “knows” is that Eve has been impregnated by the serpent, making it the father of Cain and thus completely turning upside-down the first meaning of the sentence. Another source for this fascinating exegesis comes later in the text, when Eve gives birth to Seth. In the beginning of chapter 5 of Genesis, the text explains that Adam is made in God’s image and that subsequently Seth is formed comparable to Adam’s godly appearance. This implies that Cain (and perhaps even Abel), who does not have this qualification at his birth, is formed in some other shape, following some other predecessor, i.e., the serpent.

The last indication in the text for Cain’s alien origin issues from Eve’s etymology of his name. The English translation of it, “I have acquired a man *with* God,” does not do justice to the Bible’s actual words, as almost every Hebrew word in the line contains a fragment of ambiguity. What does Eve mean when she claims to have *acquired* her son? Why does Eve refer to Cain as a *man* if he was just born? Additionally, the word *et* in the Hebrew language usually joins with the noun that the verb beforehand is addressing, for example, “And the man knew- *et* Chava his wife.” Applying this literary exercise to Cain’s etymology yields: “I have acquired a man, God,” implying that Eve alleges that with Cain’s birth she acquired God Himself.²¹ The alternative explanation is that *et* means “with” in this context; however, this is also potentially problematic, since Eve would be claiming that she somehow obtained her son from or with God.

Second Temple commentators perceive all of these textual problems and, while some see these as openings to insert celestial creatures into the story, others remain faithful to the biblical standard of evil’s terrestrial origin. In the Jewish work the *Life of Adam and Eve*,²² Cain is described as radiant and mature like an *ish* (“man”), translating literally that word in the phrase. This image brings to mind Esau’s birth, and one must wonder whether the author of the *Life of Adam and Eve* was influenced by this other well-known story. The reference to God in the equa-

tion is probably due to Eve's belief that God Himself surely had an unusually active role in creating such a dexterous child.²³ In a similar vein, some translations of the Bible, namely, *Onqelos*, *Neophyti*, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, preempt any thought of God's, or any other heavenly being's, personal involvement in the situation by interpreting *et Hashem* as "(I have acquired a man) from before God" or "(I have acquired a man) through God."²⁴ The verb *kaniti* (acquired), from which Cain's name derives, appears to be used in the *Life of Adam and Eve* to add in the detail of a mature Cain bringing a reed to his mother; "reed" having a similar Hebrew root as "acquire."²⁵ Cain's mature features and behavior can probably be linked back to his wicked father's distinctive genes.

In conclusion, this group of thinkers chooses to delegate evil's manifestation to the lower world in spite of the problems that subscribing to this position entails. Maintaining that sin and evil stem from the creatures of Earth keeps the origin of all that is bad as far from God as conceivably possible. Yet, it must be realized that this still connects God to the scene of the crime, however slightly. Those who espouse the position described above would rather deal with the reality that God has a distant association with evil than imply that some other force besides God authored evil's beginning, or that evil commenced in God's midst in the heavens.

The second position addressing the problem of evil's existence through sin delineates the heavenly abode itself as the source of trouble. Not God, but some other angelic being decides to cause trouble, ultimately leading to generations of evil on earth indefinitely. This choice of explanation must accept the theological dilemma, that God is all-good and despises evil, but is to some extent powerless against a particular outside force. This idea perhaps has somewhat of an allusion in the Bible itself, in numerous places where other godly forces are mentioned. However, in all these instances, God possesses the final word over these beings.

The supporters of this stance who look to the Bible for guidance deal with the same issues mentioned earlier, namely exposing the cause of Adam and Eve's defiance of God's command and Cain's slaying of Abel and capitalizing on the same peculiarities in the text in their own elucidations. Although the Bible itself keeps celestial creatures out of

these narratives, those who espouse this position insert angel-like beings into their own interpretations of the events. The story, according to this line of thought, starts before the sin of the forbidden fruit, when God creates Man. The Bible indicates that Man is made in God's image,²⁶ a feature that even the angels do not possess. Both the rabbis of the Talmud as well as the various versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* use this detail to some extent as a springboard for an elaborate storyline. Man is treated with extra respect and honor, making some of the angels, specifically Satan, the greatest of the angels, extremely jealous. Satan refuses to accord Man proper deference, leading to this archangel's banishment from the heavenly host.²⁷ In the Bible, Satan, like the other angels, has a limited role as a standard messenger of God. Only in the post-biblical and apocalyptic writings does Satan stir up trouble, establishing himself as the eternal enemy of God and Man.²⁸

After his expulsion, Satan devises a plot to take revenge on humanity. Satan decides to disguise himself in the form of a serpent and trick the humans into disobeying God's warning to not eat from the tree of knowledge. The connection between Satan and the serpent permeates the literature throughout the ages in numerous religions. The serpent eventually becomes synonymous with the devil, completely interchangeable with the character of Satan. Afterwards, the serpent is punished by God for playing the part of Satan's instrument. Yet, Satan appears to avoid penalty.²⁹

Although the rabbis do talk about the angels' jealousy toward Man, the whole account of Satan's exile and employment of the serpent fails to surface in rabbinic literature. This is perhaps the result of a deliberate polemic against Christianity which extensively disseminated the tale. A few striking echoes of the story, however, do crop up in scattered statements of the rabbis. In a piece from *Avot deR. Natan*,³⁰ Satan tries to seduce Job away from God's path, yet fails to do so. God then rebukes Satan and sends him from the heavens. Commenting on Psalm 8, *Psalms Rabba* states that at three points in history, the angels in heaven become irritated with God's fondness of Man: at Man's creation, at the giving of the Torah and at God's decision to dwell in the Tabernacle. When the angels question God's resolution to create Man, God challenges them to compete with Man in naming all the animals, in order to demonstrate Man's wisdom to the angels. The angels fail, while Man performs the

task effortlessly, thus silencing the complaining angels. Yet, no fall of any angels, let alone Satan, is recorded.

The relationship between Satan and the serpent also has meager support in the rabbis' teachings. A well-known line of interpretation by *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on the story of Genesis 3:4 forms a possible resource. *Pseudo-Jonathan* is believed to have derived from a Jewish pen, one generally in line with rabbinic thought. It is commonly recognized, however, that in a number of cases *Pseudo-Jonathan* contains the remnant of an interpretation that the rabbis chose not to advocate, even though earlier Jewish commentators did. Twice in the extended story, from the temptation of Eve until the murder of Abel, Sammael, an alias of Satan found throughout the literature, makes an appearance in *Pseudo-Jonathan's* translation. The first time occurs during Eve's discussion of the forbidden fruit with the serpent.³¹ Although the text does not explicitly formulate a connection between the serpent and Sammael, the seemingly arbitrary mention of the angel at this point definitely causes one to speculate. Perhaps more convincing, several versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* books also state that Eve sees Satan in his angelic guise for a split-second before he assumes the form of the serpent, similar to what Eve observes in *Pseudo-Jonathan*. While most of the narrative from the *Life of Adam and Eve* books fell out of the Jewish tradition, this less important detail made its way into later Jewish works.

Later in the story, at the beginning of chapter 4 of Genesis, Sammael makes another appearance. *Pseudo-Jonathan*, like *PRE* 21 discussed earlier, has the tradition that not Adam but something or someone else mated with Eve, who then gave birth to Cain. In *PRE*, the serpent himself executes the evil deed, with no mention of any angelic creatures. *Pseudo-Jonathan*, however, uses the angel, Sammael, to play the role of the perpetrator. Although, in this line of *Pseudo-Jonathan*, as well, Sammael and the serpent do not explicitly cross paths, the association is too strong, especially since another rabbinical line of interpretation (*PRE*), in its retelling of the story, contains the serpent itself as the criminal.

However, the correlation between the angelic being, Satan, and the biblical serpent does act as a strong force in early Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature, a course continued later in Christian writings. Probably the first echo of this theme arises in the books of *Enoch*, written around the 3rd century BCE. In *1 Enoch* 69:6, the angel Michael

announces that the angel Gadreel, another alias of Satan, led Eve astray and introduced weapons to man. Additionally, *2 Enoch* 31:4-6 tells of the devil's plot against Adam and Eve.

Indeed, this idea, that evil comes from an angel in heaven, permeates the books of *Enoch*, cropping up in another familiar context. The *Book of Enoch* significantly expands the episode of the *bnei elohim* who become captivated by the daughters of man, ultimately leading to the spread of corruption on earth and annihilation of the world through water. Earlier, it was noted that the view which sustains the problem of evil as emanating from Earth deviates from the simple meaning of *bnei elohim* in order to fit into the narrative. The *Book of Enoch*, on the other hand, not only preserves the simple meaning of the term *bnei elohim* as angels, but develops a whole tale about their profuse wickedness. According to the books of *Enoch*, the conception of evil originates in the heavenly sphere with supernatural creatures and only afterwards is brought to earth.

The work called the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, also referred to as *3 Baruch*, makes the connection between the evil angel and the serpent in a few places. In 4:8-9, an angel tells Baruch that Sammael planted the tree of knowledge and then used it, along with the serpent, to trick the humans. 9:7 mentions that Sammael took the serpent as a garment. The *Book of Wisdom*, also known as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, contains a possible connection between the two figures. Verse 2:24 reads, "Through the devil's envy, death entered the world." While some claim that this phrase refers to Cain's killing of Abel due to the former's uncontrollable jealousy, others believe that this phrase speaks of the serpent's scheme, and maintains that the devil himself is, in truth, to blame.³² The idea of the serpent as the cause of death in the world can be explained by the fact that, because of the first couple's sin, mortality came into the world. This idea is found in numerous other works, such as the *Wisdom of Sirach*,³³ *Philo*,³⁴ the *Apocalypse of Moses*,³⁵ and *4 Ezra*³⁶ to name a few. The first possible identity of the verse in the *Book of Wisdom* just mentioned raises another interesting twist in the story: the impregnation of Eve with Cain by the devil. The "devil's envy" in the verse would therefore refer to Cain's jealousy of Abel, leading to the birth of death in the world. This interpretation exploits the few textual problems surrounding Cain's birth mentioned earlier in this article. However, instead of an ordinary serpent

as the real father of Cain, here it is the devil or, at least, the devil in the serpent's disguise.

A detail in the Bible's section of the punishments allotted to the humans and serpent helps lead the way for the connection between the serpent and Satan. God tells the serpent that He guarantees constant hostility between its offspring and Eve's offspring.³⁷ Why is the Bible so concerned with the fight between humans and snakes, seeing that the issue does not come up as a significant theme later in the Bible? Also, it seems rather odd to single out the hostility of humans toward snakes over any other fear-inspiring animal. This message of God must be telling readers something deeper and more significant. For many espousers of the Satan-serpent connection, this admonition by God confirms the association between the two. God is actually speaking to Satan, "the eternal Tempter," about his perpetual struggle with humanity.³⁸ *Targum Neophyti* also translates the verse as more than a simple "Watch out for snakes." When Eve's children follow the commandments, *Neophyti* explains, the serpent will be powerless against them; if they fail to follow them, though, the serpent will cause trouble. Although *Neophyti* does not mention the devil explicitly, the job that is given to the serpent sounds fairly similar to that of Satan in Jewish thought—namely, the evil inclination.

Christianity later employed this association, and it became a major component in its belief system. However, besides incorporating into the New Testament many verses that speak of the devil and including a few passages that may allude to the Satan-serpent connection, only Revelations³⁹ explicitly equates the two. An important passage in 1 John⁴⁰ refers to humanity as "the children of the devil" and to Cain as "of the evil one," thus incorporating Satan into the story of Cain's strange birth, as seen in other works already. The image of Satan as a tempter divorced from the serpent, which appears in Mark 1:13 and Matthew 4:1, shows the extent of this association. The two figures become so interrelated that their characteristics eventually are interchanged and shared between the two of them.

The church fathers, who wrote after the completion of the New Testament, continued the scheme established by the New Testament regarding this matter. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, connects the serpent to Satan, even going so far as claiming that the word

"Satan" actually derives from the Hebrew words "*sata*," meaning apostate, and "*nas*," meaning serpent. This etymology was also implemented by Irenaeus some years later.⁴¹ While Irenaeus himself believed that Satan merely utilized the serpent to carry out his plan, the etymological exercise of showing how the idea of Satan develops from the serpent foretells the eventual shift to Satan himself performing the trickery without requiring the serpent as a tool. The next logical step would therefore simply be to remove the original source of the treachery, the serpent, from the story and maintain Satan as the only player in the entire saga.⁴²

The second section of this article dealt with the second perspective on evil which chooses to relegate evil's beginnings to the heavens, but still to a realm beyond God's immediate access. Some other force is responsible for the initial wickedness. Satan, in various forms and aliases, becomes the embodiment of evil and the cause for all of the suffering in the world. An elaborate story of Satan's fall from heaven becomes interwoven into the early stories of Genesis, using peculiar passages in the text to generate the details of the fateful tale.

The existence of evil in the world has caused a wave of problems for the monotheistic theologian. Belief that a good, all-loving God runs the world does not easily coexist with knowledge of the terrible things that rage within its borders. The dilemma spins itself into a paradox because any attempt at solving it falls short in some way. Claiming that evil began on Earth keeps evil's source a safe distance from heaven, but still implies that God, the creator of Earth, also authored evil's commission. Yet, on the flipside, asserting that evil sprang from a celestial power other than God gives the impression that God is not all-powerful. Whichever approach one selects falls short in some regard. Thinkers throughout the ages have been willing to deal with these setbacks, uniformly dividing themselves between the two alternatives. As biblical interpreters have joined the discussion, the Bible has become the site of a passionate, textual confrontation between these two intellectual sides.

Notes

1. Exodus 12:12, Psalms 29:1, Psalm 82 to name a few.
2. Davies, Philip. "The Origin of Evil in Ancient Judaism." *Australian Biblical Review* 50 Ormond College, Australia (2002): 43-54. p. 44.
3. Davies p. 45.
4. Davies p. 49.
5. Davies p. 49.
6. Davies p. 52.
7. 4:15.
8. 5:6.
9. Van Ruiten, J.T.A.G.M. *Primeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1-11 in the Book of Jubilees*. Leiden: Brill, 2000. p. 100.
10. Interestingly, the *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs*, a once-Jewish text with, at this point, a great deal of Christian redactions, tells the story in a similar manner to *PRE* (Collins, John J. "The Origin of Evil in Apocalyptic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls." In Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism, Leiden: Brill, 1997. p. 298). The idea of the human root of evil seems to have been accepted and promoted not just by Jews, but by certain Christians as well.
11. This interpretation, which became a trend in Jewish as well as Christian writing at that time, also finds prominence in the translations of *Onqelos*, *Neophyti* and Symmachus, the writing of Julius Africanus and the Samaritan biblical text.
12. Kugel, James L. *The Bible As It Was*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1997. p. 73.
13. *Avot deR. Natan* version 1, chapter 1.
14. b. *Sotah* 9b.
15. A word in the text that seems to have irked the rabbis is *arum*, the word used to describe the serpent's keen wisdom (Genesis 3:1). Interestingly, this word can also mean "naked," and even more intriguing, the introduction of the serpent as *arum* and the subsequent story of his trickery appear to interrupt the original topic of the first couple's nakedness (Genesis 2:25). Noticing the juxtaposition between Adam and Eve's nakedness and the serpent's "nakedness," the rabbis weave a tale in which the serpent witnesses the first couple engaged in sexual intercourse and immediately wants to do the very same act with Eve (*Genesis Rabba* 18:6). That, they explain, is what the Bible means when it declares that the serpent was more *arum* than the other animals: it had a stronger sexual desire than the other animals for Eve's nakedness. Since of all the animals, the serpent was physically and socially similar to the humans, it was the most prone to see a potential future between itself and Eve. This leads to the development of the serpent's plot. Thus, the serpent's very status in the Garden of Eden's societal structure directly connects to and causes its perverse scheme.
16. Martinez, Florentino Garcia. "Eve's Children in the Targumim." Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, ed. *Eve's Children: the Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*. Leiden: Brill, 2003. p. 27.

17. Chapter 21.
18. b. *Avodah Zarah* 22b, b. *Yevamot* 103b and b. *Shabbat* 146a.
19. Genesis 4:8, which describes Cain's murder of Abel, contains two somewhat connected inconsistencies. Firstly, Cain clearly says something to Abel before he kills him, since it says, "And Cain said to Abel his brother," yet the Bible does not reveal to the reader what Cain actually said. Furthermore, the two brothers somehow end up in a field where the murderous act occurs, yet it is unclear how they arrive there or what the function of mentioning the field at this point in the narrative is. Probably in response to one or perhaps both of these issues (according to Rabbi Chaim Heller, the first; according to Yeshayahu Maori, the second), the Palestinian Targumim on the spot insert into their adaptations of the story a lengthy debate between Cain and Abel regarding the fundamental concept of reward and punishment (Maori, Yeshayahu. *The Peshitta Version of the Pentateuch and Early Jewish Exegesis* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995. pp. 236-237). Cain, apparently fueled by his resentment of God's rejection of his offerings, claims that there really is no God who orchestrates the world; rather, things simply happen at random. Abel vehemently argues the opposite position, inciting Cain to kill him.
20. Genesis 4:1.
21. Martinez p. 29.
22. 21:3
23. Kugel p. 86.
24. Martinez p. 30.
25. Kugel pp. 85-86.
26. Genesis 1:27.
27. Anderson, Gary A. *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. p. 21
28. Langton, Edward. *Satan, A Portrait: A Study of the Character of Satan through all the Ages*. Great Britain: Fleet Street Press, 1945. pp. 9, 21.
29. Langton p. 44.
30. 2nd edition, chapter 9.
31. Genesis 3:6.
32. Langton pp. 19-20.
33. 25:24.
34. Creation 152.
35. 14:2.
36. 3:7.
37. Genesis 3:15.
38. Kugel p. 73.
39. 12:9 and 20:2.
40. 3:10-12.
41. Russell, Jeffrey Burton. *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. p. 66.
42. Russell p. 68. Theophilus, the bishop of Antioch, in his three books to Autolytus, holds the devil, Satan, responsible for not only deceiving the first

couple through the serpent, but also convincing Cain to kill Abel. Satan, not satisfied with his first act, since Adam and Eve still had a ray of optimism in their lives, attempted once more to harass the first couple via their offspring (Russell 78). Different from the other interpretations that insert Satan into the Cain story, such as 1 John, the church fathers claim that Satan, or the serpent, does not affect the humans in a sexual, genetic manner, but rather in an external, advice-giving way. Satan gives over his evil ideas to Cain by speaking to him in a persuasive manner. This exegetical initiative perhaps does not come so much from the peculiarity surrounding Cain's birth, which instigated the report of Cain's non-human father, than from verse 4:7 in Genesis, where God cautions Cain about the predicament of sin.

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Divine Unity in Light of the Trinity, Ein Sof and Sefirot

”שמעתי אחד מן המתפלספים מספר בגנות המקובלים, והיה אומר: הנצרים מאמיני השלוש, המקובלים מאמיני העשיריות.”

(שו"ת הריב"ש סימן קנז)

“I heard one of the philosophers critique the Kabbalists: ‘Christians believe in the Trinity, and the Kabbalists believe in a ten-part God.’”

(*Rivash, Responsa 157*)

P*rima facia*, the objection which R. Isaac ben Sheshet (1326-1408 CE) voices is well founded: Both the Christian belief in the three-part Trinity and the Kabbalistic doctrine of the ten *Sefirot* seem to undermine the monotheistic tenant expressed in the biblical verse: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One”.¹ Sensitive to this critique, Kabbalist and Christian thinkers defend their respective theologies in light of divine unity. However, though many of their answers share common ground, certain views proposed by the Church Fathers regarding Jesus’ nature and relationship with the Father yield a fundamentally different conception of divine unity than the Kabbalists.

Judaism

Monotheism is grounded in the biblical verse that proclaims "the Lord is One." Today, the standard Jewish understanding of monotheism is based on Maimonides' formulation of divine unity in his thirteen principles of faith:² God's unity is absolute, indivisible and unparalleled.³ However, in *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*, Professor Marc Shapiro cites numerous places where Kabbalistic views openly contradict Maimonides' perspective of divine unity. Shapiro explains that, while no Jewish thinker has ever challenged divine unity, the Kabbalists have a different understanding of what qualifies as divine unity.⁴ Essentially, Shapiro's thesis is that Jewish theology goes beyond Maimonides and also includes more flexible perspectives of God's unity. In this light, it is important to understand the range of perspectives amongst Jewish thinkers in order to properly contrast Jewish and Christian thought.

During the Rabbinic period,⁵ Louis Jacobs points out, most discussion of divine unity assumed that the biblical teaching "God is One" was purely a numerical statement and a rejection of polytheism.⁶ In the same vein, Harry Wolfson explains that they focused on "external unity" and "there is nothing in scripture or in the Talmudic literature which directly and explicitly states that the unity of God meant anything more than an external numerical unity and a denial of polytheism."⁷ Discussion of what God's oneness entails, what Wolfson calls "internal unity,"⁸ does not appear until Jewish thought was exposed to Greek Philosophy during the medieval period.¹⁰ Once Jewish thinkers began to discuss conceptions of divine unity from a Jewish perspective, two basic approaches, the Rationalist and Kabbalist, emerged.

Rationalists

Beginning with Saadya Gaon's (892-942 CE) *Emunot Ve-Deot*, the first canonical exposition and philosophical presentation of Judaic doctrine, Medieval Jewish Rationalism was defined by the synthesis of Greek Philosophy and Jewish thought. Accordingly, to explain divine unity, Jewish Rationalists drew on Neo-Platonist philosophy, assuming that God is wholly indescribable, indivisible and unchanging.¹¹ In this vein, Plotinus' (204-270 CE) perspective that the One cannot be described since it is "beyond all statement" and cannot be named since "no name

could identify it,"¹² which results in our "efforts to understand or to define the nature of the One . . . inadequate,"¹³ appears to be echoed in many of the medieval Jewish philosophers descriptions of "divine simplicity" and "absolute divine unity."¹⁴

However, Jewish thinkers did not simply accept Greek philosophy; they integrated the Greek ideas with their received Jewish tradition. Thus, Jewish thinkers were forced to square Greek views of an unchanging God with the bible's description of an emotive God who is involved with the world. The problem this description poses, known as the "question of divine attributes," can be demonstrated through a comparison to a person. Over the course of time a person can act with kindness or cruelty, wisdom or ignorance, anger or calm. An individual's ability to utilize all these multiple, independent and individual qualities comes from the multiplex configuration of disparate values, thoughts and emotions contained within a person. Thus, when someone shifts between these different components, their composition changes, and they therefore act differently based on the circumstances. Accordingly, applying such terms to God, i.e., saying that God acts with mercy, anger or cruelty, is tantamount to suggesting that God possesses multiple attributes and changes based on circumstance. Therefore, faced with the paradox of believing in both the Greek conception of divine unity and the biblical description of God, medieval Jewish Rationalists formulated two basic approaches to reconcile the question of divine attributes and the Neo-Platonist conception of divine unity.

Maimonides (1135-1204 CE)

In chapters fifty to fifty-nine of *Guide to the Perplexed*, Maimonides deals with the question of divine attributes and presents a hard-line defense of divine simplicity. He begins in chapter fifty by explaining that people "whose aspirations are directed toward ascending to that high rank which is the rank of speculation, and to gain certain knowledge with regard to God's being One by virtue of a true Oneness" should know that God "has in no way and in no mode any essential attribute, and that just as it is impossible that He should be a body it is also impossible that He should possess an essential attribute."¹⁵

Ultimately, Maimonides thinks that God's essence is wholly indescribable. However, before discussing essential attributes and negative theology, Maimonides deals with the countless Biblical references to God's

actions. He explains that just like people who think God possesses a body because of a literal reading of the Bible, people often think that God has attributes because of "the external sense of the texts of the Scriptures."¹⁶ However, Maimonides argues that "there need not be a diversity in the notions subsisting in an agent because of the diversity of his various actions"¹⁷ and explains that the biblical references to God's actions or emotions are only "in reference to the diverse relations that may obtain between God, may He be exalted, and the things created by Him."¹⁸

After explaining that the Bible's descriptions of God as emotive and active do not imply a multiplicity in His essence, Maimonides continues to discuss the issue more pertinent to our analysis: God's essential attributes. Here too, Maimonides defends the Neo-Platonist notion of divine unity and explains that ultimately God is utterly indescribable. In this vein, he ends off chapter fifty echoing Plotinus' understanding¹⁹ that

the description of God, may He be cherished and exalted, by means of negation is the correct description—a description that is not affected by an indulgence in facile language and does not imply any deficiency with respect to God in general or in any particular mode. On the other hand, if one describes Him by means of affirmations, one implies, as we have made clear, that He is associated with that which is not He and implies a deficiency in Him.²⁰

Thus, Maimonides dismisses the question of divine attributes entirely. In a word, God cannot be described at all. Any descriptive term of His essence is really a rejection of the opposite; saying "God knows," is really a way of saying that "God is not ignorant." In this sense, Maimonides' defense from divine attributes is essentially a reaffirmation of Neo-Platonist divine simplicity: God is wholly indescribable, indivisible and unchanging.

Gersonides (1288-1344 CE)

In his *magnum opus* Wars of the Lord, Gersonides adopts a far more liberal understanding of divine unity. He begins book five chapter twelve with the proclamation that "it is now appropriate that we determine, as best we can, which attributes can be properly attributed to God and which cannot."²¹ Over the course of the chapter he proves that God possesses knowledge, and can be referred to as substance, existent, one and active.²² However, he is quick to point out that:

all these predicates refer to one thing, even though they connote different aspects of Him. It is important that we make known to the common people that when God is described by these properties, He is described by them in an immeasurably more noble way than when other things are described by these terms. Similarly, it is necessary that we deny of Him any properties that are imperfections, which it might be thought belong to Him.²³

Although he thinks that describing God with certain words is acceptable, he acknowledges that such descriptions of God are totally dissimilar to their usage regarding humanity and therefore do not imply a multiplicity or a change in God's nature. Thus, while Gersonides agrees with Maimonides that God is wholly unapproachable and indivisible, he maintains that certain attributes—albeit in an "immeasurably more noble way"—can be used to describe God.

Kabalah

In contrast to the Rationalists school, *Kabalah* emerged in the 1200's as a Jewish mystical perspective concerned with addressing matters of the relationship between the infinite and unfathomable Creator and His finite and corporeal creations. Regarding divine unity, a number of scholars suggest that the Kabbalists were unable to accept the Jewish Rationalist understanding of God because it conceived of God as distant—transcendent, infinite, and inconceivable.²⁴ Kabbalists felt that God is approachable and that man possesses the potential to forge a relationship with Him.

However, because the Kabbalists were enamored with the Neo-Platonic conception of absolute divine unity they were forced to develop a theology which accounted for both needs. Accordingly, a number of scholars explain that the Kabbalists responded by developing a two-part perspective of God: *Ein Sof* and the *Sefirot*. This way, *Ein Sof* could satisfy their commitment to the Neo-Platonic idea of divine unity, and the *Sefirot* created a conception of God which allowed humanity to access and develop a personal relationship with Him.

Essentially, *Ein Sof* is the Kabbalists' way of discussing God's essence.²⁵ Just as the literal meaning implies ("without end"), the *Ein Sof* is completely hidden and beyond human comprehension.²⁶ In this vein, there is an often-quoted idea of the *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohub* that the *Ein Sof* is not mentioned in the Torah, Prophets, Writings or Rabbinic works

because it is totally concealed from mankind.²⁷ In Hallamish's words, the *Ein Sof* is:

Truly transcendent, inconceivable by human intellect because no equivalent in him exists in human language or experience. His absolute hiddenness makes verbal description of him impossible. His being is ineffable, for any statement about him imposes limitations or multiplicity. . . . The *Ein Sof* has no human characteristics and cannot be described; in essence, none of the divine names appearing in the bible are appropriate in relation to him.²⁸

In a word, the Kabbalistic doctrine of the *Ein Sof* is consistent with the rationalist's Neo-Platonic view of God: indescribable, unknowable and transcendent.

However, the Kabbalists also maintain that God revealed Himself to humanity through the ten *Sefirot*. In Isaiah Tishby's words, the *Sefirot* are "seen as spiritual forces . . . as revelations of the hidden God, both to Himself and to that which is other than He. The fundamental element is this revelation is His emergence from the depths of limitless infinity."²⁹ Therefore, because the *Sefirot* are revealed, they are understandable entities which can be discussed, understood, and influenced. In this vein, the Kabbalists use different symbols, such as names, colors, structures and natural elements to discuss the *Sefirot* in more tangible and concrete terms. Thus, it emerges that the *Sefirot* have a unique status: they are both connected to *Ein Sof*, and revealed to mankind.³⁰

Seemingly, although the *Sefirot's* dual status satisfies the need for both a transcendent and revealed God, there is an inherent paradox in this idea. As explained, God, identified merely as the indescribable and incomprehensible *Ein Sof*, reveals Himself to mankind through the *Sefirot*. However, how can the *Sefirot* be a true revelation of God if His essence is normally identified as being infinite and unchanging? Seemingly, assuming that the *Sefirot* are truly God undermines the integrity of God's unity, while assuming they are not God, makes Him transcendent and unapproachable.

In response, three approaches emerge from the Kabbalists regarding what the *Sefirot* are, what it means that God revealed himself through the *Sefirot*, and why they do not pose a problem for divine unity. The most conservative perspective suggested is that the *Sefirot* are only nominal; people discuss the *Sefirot* because they need a way to speak about

God, but the *Sefirot* do not actually exist. Alternatively, some thinkers suggest that the *Sefirot* are not really God, but merely a creation, God's tools, or *kelim*, which He uses to relate to the world. Lastly, the most extreme view amongst the Kabbalists is that through a process called emanation the *Sefirot* "emerged" from *Ein Sof* and they are a revelation of God's essence, what Idel calls "Sefiroth quo essence."³¹ However, because the *Sefirot* emanated from *Ein Sof* they are inherently linked up with God. The coming analysis will give a broader understanding of these views and place their different understandings into the larger context of Jewish perspectives on divine unity.

R. David Messer Leon (1470-1526 CE)

The most conservative explanation of the *Sefirot* is suggested by David Leon. He explains that all discussion of the *Sefirot* is purely nominal and a mechanism of speech. Truthfully, he argues, God's unity means divine simplicity; however, in order for people to talk about God the vocabulary of the *Sefirot* was developed. In his words:

the *Sefirot* are united in the essence of the creator, blessed be He, and the multiplicity and diversity signifies the diverse activities which proceed from the unity of the Creator, *not that there is within Him diversity.*³²

Thus, it emerges that David Leon adopts the most conservative understanding of the Kabbalistic system by integrating it with the rationalist philosophy. In this sense, he adopts the rationalist construal of God as transcendent and unfathomable, but he utilizes the vocabulary of the "*Sefirot*" to refer to God's activities, which appear to man to be diverse.³³

R. Menacham Recanati (1250-1310 CE)

Menachem Recanati, moving further away from the rationalists than David Leon, argues that the *Sefirot* are really God's tools, or *kelim*. To explain this theory, Recanati begins the discussion of the *Sefirot's* nature by citing a parable of a king and his two servants. The first servant is told by the king that if a certain person acts properly, he should be rewarded and protected. The second servant, however, is commanded to attack that very same person if he acts improperly.

Similarly, Recanati explains, God interacts with the world through His servants—the *Sefirot*. A person's behavior naturally invokes the divinely driven response of the *Sefirot*; the different responses, however,

do not reflect a multiplicity or change in God's nature. In his words, "the Creator blessed be He empowers His attributes to act, yet His own action remains unaltered; it is the attributes that act."³⁴ In this light, Recanati's conception of God maintains a commitment to divine simplicity, with one caveat. Essentially, Recanati views the *Ein Sof* the same way the rationalists view God: unchanging and transcendent. However, Recanati adds in the theory that the *Sefirot*, as tools of the *Ein Sof*, govern the world's functioning.³⁵

R. Azriel of Gerona (1160-1238 CE)

The most radical understanding of the interaction between the *Ein Sof* and *Sefirot* appears in Azriel of Gerona's epistemological *Perush Eser Sefiroth*. Azriel begins with proofs for the existence of God, the *Ein Sof*, and the *Sefirot*, and continues to provide evidence that there must be ten *Sefirot* possessing certain characteristics. In doing so, he makes it clear that the *Sefirot* are not a separate entity, such as God's *kelim*, but rather are part of God, part of His essence, or *atzmut*. In Scholem's words, Azriel understands that emanation is "the transition from the pure transcendence of the One to the manifestation of its diversity of aspects in creation."³⁶

At the same time, however, this conception of the *Sefiroth* seems to undermine divine unity. Thus, Azriel asks why this is not a contradiction to God's unity. Azriel proceeds to explain that because the *Sefirot* emanated from the *Ein Sof*, they were inherently bound up with the *Ein Sof* and do not undermine divine unity.³⁷ Like a flame transferring its fire, the *Ein Sof* gives rise to the *Sefirot*, but maintains its strength, creating nothing that was not existent previously. In this vein, Azriel spells out the unique status of the *Sefirot* by saying that "[*Ein Sof*] is the source of the [*Sefirot*], and no strength originates in them, rather it is all drawn from the [*Ein Sof*], which is greater than [the *Sefirot*] . . . which means that the [*Ein Sof*] is really the *strength* of them all."³⁸ Essentially, Azriel acknowledges that God's essence contains multiple parts; however, because the *Sefirot* all emanated from the *Ein Sof*, which really encompasses everything, there is no contradiction to God's unity.³⁹

There are very real differences between the different views of divine unity within the world of Jewish thought. That being said, even the most extreme Kabbalistic thinker, Azriel of Gerona, relies on the theory of

emanation to explain that the *Sefirot* are intrinsically linked up with the *Ein Sof*. However, moving into the world of Christianity, there are a number of suggestions which emerged during the early years of Christian thought that undermine the emanative hierarchy or fundamental connection which Kabbalistic emanation requires.

Christianity

Following Jesus' death, his students used Jerusalem as their center point to spread the Gospel to their fellow Jews. In time, as Christianity's influence reached further and further, they met Roman opposition on the religious grounds that the Christian Church claimed religious supremacy over the Pagan Roman Gods and on the political grounds that Christians felt that the Emperor's rule was only binding if it was in consonance with the word of the Christian God.⁴⁰ Septimus Severus (145-211 CE), the Roman Emperor, initiated the first official persecution of Christians in the early 200's, triggering turmoil which lasted until 312 CE when Emperor Constantine (272-337 CE) accepted—even embraced—Christianity. From the time Constantine ruled the Roman Empire until the death of Pope Leo the Great (440-461 CE) many of the Church's basic doctrines were established and canonized, including Christianity's primary tenet: A "belief in Jesus Christ, God and man."⁴¹ In this light, the years preceding the establishment of Church doctrine, the 200 years following Jesus' death, saw the debates and discussions which formed the nucleus of Church theology. During these debates certain views about Jesus and the Trinity were suggested which assume a much more liberal understanding of divine unity than anything the Jewish Kabbalists ever suggested.

The Trinity

The Christian belief in the Trinity, that God is composed of the Father, Son⁴² and Holy Spirit, is well founded in the New Testament. The Book of Matthew records Jesus' charge that his students should "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (28:19) and 2 Corinthians records Paul's blessing that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (13:14). Accordingly,

early Christian thinkers faced the tension of reconciling the Old Testament's declaration that "God is One" and the belief that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all God. In this vein, much like the Kabbalists, the Church fathers developed a number of different approaches to reconcile monotheism with their unique understanding of God.

One suggestion to reconcile the Trinity and divine unity is to explain that "the distinction between the three members of the Trinity to be not real but only nominal."⁴³ Namely, though we discuss the Trinity as if it is three distinct parts, truthfully they are all one and the same. This perspective, strikingly similar to David Leon's understanding of the *Sefirot*, is suggested by a number of early Christian thinkers during the 200's, including Praxeas, Noetus and Sabellius, and purports that the three parts of the Trinity, the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit . . . are only names or predicates or attributes without any reality."⁴⁴ However, though this answer is appealing, the Church deemed it unacceptable and mainstream Christian doctrine was established based on Justin Martyr's (100-165 CE) formulation, drawn from Aristotle, that any distinction from the Father is "in number," not "in thought," and "in number" but not "in name only."⁴⁵

In this light, Christian thought was forced to confront the blaring question of why the Trinity—three real and distinct entities—does not violate divine unity. To resolve this problem, Wolfson explains that the Church Fathers expanded the definition of unity to include a "relative unity" or "a unity which would allow within it a combination of three distinct elements."⁴⁶ With this assumption, the Church Fathers offer two primary explanations why belief in the Trinity qualifies as monotheism: the Trinity's unity of substratum or the Trinity's unity of rule.

A number of thinkers explain that because the three parts of the Trinity share a common essence, or substratum, they qualify as a single God. Essentially, they argue that despite being distinct and separate entities, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all share the same essence, or *ousia*. Therefore, because of the underlying connection linking the three parts of the Trinity together, they explain that the Trinity is a single God. This view is expressed succinctly in Wolfson's summary:

[Origen (185-254 ce) solved this problem] by taking the three members of the Trinity to constitute three distinct individual species and by taking their unity to consist in a unity of specific genus. The formula used by

him is that the three members of the Trinity are three hypostases (substances) but one *ousia*.⁴⁷

Yes, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost each exist independently; however, because they share a common essence they are one. This perspective and vocabulary was popular amongst the Church Fathers, and Wolfson cites similar arguments with nuanced differences in Tertullian (160-220 CE), Basil (330-379 CE), John of Damascus (676-749 CE) and Augustine (354-430 CE).⁴⁸

Alternatively, a number of Church Fathers understood that because the three parts of the Trinity all share the characteristic of rule, the Trinity can be called unified. Essentially, they argued that God is the single being which rules the world.⁴⁹ That said, they argued that a divine ruling being can be comprised of multiple components without undermining the fact that there is still only a single ruler. Thus, saying that God, the ruler of the world, is composed of different parts does not undermine the singularity of God. Tatian (120-180 CE) seems to adopt this view by critiquing Polytheism because they acknowledge "the dominion of many" and do not accept the Christian "rule of one," as does Justin Martyr when he discusses "the monarchy" of God.⁵⁰ Thus, two distinct understandings—the first based on unity of essence and the second based on the common characteristic of a ruler—are offered to defend divine unity in light of the Trinity.⁵¹

Challenges

Seemingly, the philosopher in R. Isaac ben Sheshet's responsa is correct: from a rationalist standpoint both the Trinity and *Sefirot* violate God's absolute unity; and, just as the Kabbalists explain that the *Ein Sof* and ten *Sefirot* are really a single God, the Church Fathers explained that the three parts of the Trinity are really One. However, there are three ideas within the world of early Christian thought which reflect views that are fundamentally different than the most extreme understanding of the *Sefirot*. Both Augustine's understanding of the Trinity's unity of substratum, as well as Irenaeus' (100's-202 CE) perspective on the co-eternality of the Logos, seem to extend the idea of emanation beyond the Kabbalistic view because although they both maintain that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are composed of the same substance, they com-

pletely negate the chronological/conceptual⁵² hierarchy established by the Kabbalistic theory of emanation. Additionally, Arianism, a school of thought prevalent in the third and fourth centuries, establishes Jesus and the Father as independent entities composed of different materials and reduces Jesus' status in relation to the Father, but maintains that Jesus is God in a way that the Kabbalistic theory of *kelim* does not allow for.

Augustine

As explained above, Augustine was one of a many Christian thinkers who explained that the Trinity is unified because the *ousia* of all three parties is identical. *Prima facie*, this idea is very similar to Azriel's suggestion that the *Sefirot* and *Ein Sof* are unified because the *Sefirot's* "strength" is bound up with the *Ein Sof* and they are fundamentally linked. However, despite the common ground between Azriel's understanding of the *Sefirot's* connection to the *Ein Sof* and Augustine's view of the Trinity, the source of the connection is very different in Azriel and Augustine.

Azriel, as explained above, thinks that this fundamental connection is only possible because of emanation. Similarly, most Christian thinkers understand that there is a common essence to the Trinity because, in John of Damascus' words, "the Father is without cause and unborn . . . but the Son is derived from the Father after the manner of generation, and the Holy Spirit likewise is derived from the Father, yet not after the manner of generation, but of procession."⁵³ In a word, because the Son and Holy Spirit both emanated from a single being—the Father—they share a common *ousia* and are unified.

Augustine, however, suggests an alternative source for the unity of substratum. Augustine argues that the three parts of the Trinity always existed as three parts of God, or in Wolfson's words "from eternity the Godhood is differentiated into the three persons."⁵⁴ In this sense, he does not think the Father precedes Jesus; rather, in its essence "the Godhood itself is ineffably and inseparably a Trinity."⁵⁵ In Adolph Harnack's words, "according to Augustine it is not the divine substance or the Father that is the monarchical principle, but, on the contrary, the Trinity itself is the One God."⁵⁶ Thus, unlike the idea of an emanative hierarchy, Augustine maintains that the distinction between the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit does "not establish anything in the way of superi-

ority or inferiority"⁵⁷ and "the Father is regarded as being conditioned in His existence by the Son in the same way as the Son is by the Father"⁵⁸ because "the Godhood is common to all [the three persons] as the one of all and in all, and wholly in each one; through sole Godhood the same Trinity is said to be God."⁵⁹ Thus, although Augustine and Azriel understand the connection between their respective views of God very similarly, because Augustine replaces Azriel's emanative hierarchy with the theory of the common Godhood, he outstrips even the most extreme of the Kabbalistic perspectives.⁶⁰

Irenaeus

The second place where a Church father goes beyond anything the Kabbalists ever suggested is Irenaeus' perspective on when the Logos came into existence. Wolfson explains that Irenaeus belonged to the school of thought known as the Single Stage Theory of the Logos, while thinkers like Justin Martyr and Tatian adopted the Twofold Stage Theory of the Logos. Both groups, Wolfson explains, agreed that the Logos eternally existed; however, they argued over the original form of the Logos. The proponents of the Twofold Stage Theory believed that the Logos originally existed within the Father and later emanated from him. In the words of Novatian (200–258 CE),

He, then, when the Father willed it, proceeded from the Father, and He who was in the Father came forth from the Father; and He who was in the Father, because He was of the Father, was subsequently with the Father, because He came forth from the Father.⁶¹

Seemingly, this view satisfies the Kabbalistic understanding of divine unity because the Logos' derivation from the Father clearly establishes the Father's supremacy. Thus, because both chronologically and conceptually the Father precedes the Logos, this emanation qualifies as divine unity according to the Kabbalistic theory of emanation.⁶²

On the other side, Irenaeus and Origen, the champions of the Single Stage Theory, argued that there was never a time when the Father existed independently; rather, the Logos had always existed as a separate and distinct entity since the beginning of time. In this vein, Wolfson explains that Irenaeus' interpretation of the verse "In the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was with God" (John 1:1) to mean that the Logos "existed in the beginning with God" is not meant in "in the sense of the

beginning of the creation of the world but rather in the sense of from eternity."⁶³ Seemingly, much like Augustine's understanding that the Trinity's connection lies in the Godhood, Irenaeus' view that the Logos and Father are coeternal is incompatible with the notion of emanation. Essentially, emanation requires there to be a form of hierarchy, normally chronological,⁶⁴ amongst the different parties. Thus, because Irenaeus believes the Trinity is coeternal and equal, his views are incompatible with the theory of emanation.⁶⁵

Arius (250-336 CE)⁶⁶

The final topic in early Christian thought to be analyzed is the debate which Arius triggered regarding Jesus' nature. The discussion began when Arius challenged the accepted belief that Jesus was equal to the Father in substance and in divine status. The common belief was based on Paul's pronouncement that Jesus was "in the form of God" (Phil 2:6) and the opening verse of John, "the Word was God" (1:1). However, citing Biblical verses and logical arguments, Arius argued that Jesus was on a lower level than the Father. Firstly, Arius argued that Jesus' pronouncement in Proverbs 8:22 of "the Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work" meant that "before [Jesus] was begotten or created or ordained or established, he did not exist."⁶⁷ Thus, Arius understood that the Trinity was not eternal, but that "there had always been a divine monad, but a dyad had come into being with the generation of the Son and triad with the production of the Spirit or wisdom."⁶⁸ In this vein, Arius broke from the earlier proponents of the Twofold Stage Theory of the Logos, who thought that even though the Logos was created, "God generated it by nature out of His own essence."⁶⁹ Instead, Arius argued that Jesus was created "by pure will and power without importation of *ousia*."⁷⁰

Furthermore, building on Jesus' explicit statement of John 14:28 that "the Father is greater than I," Hanson cites three points which Arius used to prove the Father's greatness over Jesus. Firstly, Jesus was sent by the Father to provide salvation to humanity. Also, Jesus "does the father's will and exhibits obedience and subordination to the Father." Lastly, he points out that Jesus sings the Fathers praise in both this world and the heavenly realms.⁷¹ In this light, Arius, though committed to the belief that Jesus "originates from the Father's will, and his production was impassible and immutable, and has nothing whatever in common with

human generation," argued that Jesus "is still not co-eternal with the Father" and therefore should be called "*secundus Deus* (Second God)" because "the Father is greater than He."⁷²

An additional component of Arius' conception of Jesus is his rationalist understanding of the Father's oneness. After distinguishing Jesus from the Father, Arius explained that the Father was

Absolutely One, the only unbegotten, the only eternal, the only one without beginning, the only true, the only one who had no immortality, the only wise, the only good, the only potentate . . . the monad and the principle of creation of all things.⁷³

At the same time, however, Arius retained his Trinitarian beliefs and argued that, despite being distinct, Jesus and the Father are both God.⁷⁴ In this vein, in his famous Epistle to Eusebius, Arius wrote that Jesus is "full of truth and grace, God."⁷⁵ Thus, Hanson summarizes Arius view by explaining that Jesus is "*our* God . . . and should be called 'God' and be adored and glorified and honored. So God has produced a God, the Creator a Creator, but there is still a difference between them. God the Father is the God of God the Son."⁷⁶ In this light, because he believed that Jesus was lower than the Father, Arius rejected using the analogy of a flame to describe Jesus' creation because "it suggested a continuity of *ousia* between the Father and the Son, which violated the transcendence of God."⁷⁷ Rather, Arius believed that the Logos was "alien and unlike in all respects to the essence and selfhood of the Father."⁷⁸

Thus, it seems that Arius' understanding of the Trinity is beyond the pale of any Kabbalistic understandings for the opposite reason as Augustine and Irenaeus. Whereas the previous two ideas leveled the playing field between the Father and Logos, Arius thinks that the Logos is inferior to the Father to the extent that it is of a different essence; not only was the Logos created by the Father, there is also a difference in their essence. At this stage, Arius' ideas seem very similar to Recanati's conception of the *Sefirot* as *kelim*—created and of different substance. However, the fundamental difference is that, while Recanati clearly establishes that the *Sefirot* are God's tools and not God, Arius thinks the Logos is part of God.

Seemingly, Maimonides, the champion of the Jewish Medieval Rationalists, would label Christianity's belief in the Trinity—save the perspective that the division is only nominal—heresy. However, as R. Isaac ben Sheshet points out, after entering into the world of Kabbalah, it is unclear if Christianity and Jewish Kabbalah are so different; the dynamic of Ten *Sefirot* and the *Ein Sof* seems to be similar to the interaction between the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Kabbalists' defense that because the *Sefirot* emanated from the *Ein Sof* they share a common essence echoes the popular Christian theory that the Trinity's unity of substratum qualifies as divine unity.

Nonetheless, certain views about the Trinity aired during the Church's nascent years undermine even the most extreme views of Jewish Kabbalah. Firstly, Augustine's theory that the three parts of the Trinity were derived from the Godhood—and not each other—undermines the hierarchy of Kabbalistic emanation. Additionally, Irenaeus' belief that the Father and Logos are coeternal contradicts Kabbalistic emanation. Lastly, Arius' theory that Jesus is both God and created—and therefore on a lower level than the Father—totally contradicts the essence of the Kabbalistic theory of emanation. Thus, despite the common ground between the Church and Kabbalists, certain views amongst early Christian thinkers go well beyond anything ever proposed by a Jewish thinker. Yes, Professor Shapiro correctly points out that Jewish thought goes well beyond Maimonides; nonetheless, even the most extreme understanding of God amongst the Kabbalists—Azriel's emanation—is more conservative than certain views contained within the corpus of Church theology.

Notes

1. Deuteronomy 6:4, *The English Standard Version Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with Apocrypha*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. (All biblical citations assume the *English Standard Version* translation.)
2. Shapiro, Marc B. *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised*. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, (2004), 2.
3. *Perush liMasechet Sanhedrin*, 10:1.
4. Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*, 44.
5. The period which the Talmud and Midrashic literature were composed: approximately 200-500 CE.
6. Jacobs, Louis. *A Jewish Theology*. (Springfield: Behrman House, 1973), 22.
7. Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *Repercussions of the Kalam on Jewish Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 2.
8. Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam on Jewish Philosophy*, 3.
9. More specifically, the Jewish rationalists were exposed to the Arab Mu'tazilites—who themselves had gleaned such issues from the Greeks (Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam on Jewish Philosophy*, 3). Following the introduction of these ideas in the world of Jewish thought, the Kabbalistic thinkers responded to the Jewish rationalist's treatment of these issues (Jacobs, *A Jewish Theology*, 27). Alternatively, Graetz went as far to suggest that the entirety of Kabbalah was “nothing but a reaction against the radical rationalism of Maimonides” (Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 7).
10. Actually, Wolfson points out that Philo (20 BCE - 50 CE) had introduced ideas such as “internal unity” and “absolute simplicity” much earlier. Thus, even though mainstream Jewish thought did not deal with these issues until they were exposed to the Greek discussion of these ideas in the medieval period, the ideas existed within a Jewish context much earlier (Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam on Jewish Philosophy*, 3-4).
11. Jacobs, *Jewish Theology*, 44.
12. Plotinus. *Enneads*, V.3.13. trans. Stephen Mackenna. (New York: Larson Publications, 1992), 452.
13. Bussanich, John. “Plotinus's *Metaphysics of the One*.” *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. Ed. Lloyd Gerson. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 38.
14. Jacobs, *Jewish Theology*, 44-45.
15. Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 1:50. trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1963), 111
16. *Guide* 1:53. Pines translation, 119.
17. *Guide* 1:53. Pines translation, 120.
18. *Guide* 1:53. Pines translation, 122.
19. In fact, Plotinus asks “How, then, do we ourselves come to be speaking of [God]?” and suggests that one reason is that “we can and do state what it is

- Gottlieb (*Mechkarim bi-Safrut ha-Kabbalah*, 304) suggests that this perspective on emanation is reflected in Nachmonides' understanding of the word "אצלת" (Genesis 27:36) to mean "things emanate from each other—not that they leave and are totally removed, but that they leave and still remain connected." Additionally, he posits that Recanti's *kelim* view is also built upon the emanation implied in Onkelus' interpretation of the word "אצלת" from Numbers 11:17 as a reference to the idea of "lighting one candle from the next—and the first one is not diminished."
38. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush Eser Sefiroth*, printed with Meir ibn Gabai's *Derekh Emunah* (Warsaw: 1879), 4.
 39. Tishby notes that the author of the Zohar adopted this perspective, while the *Tikkunei ha-Zohar* maintains, like Recanati, that the emanation of the Sefiroth was the "expansion of the divine being into non-divine substances" (*Wisdom of the Zohar*, 274).
 40. Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*. New York: Doubleday. (2004), 37-38.
 41. Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 43.
 42. For the purpose of the paper, Jesus, the Logos and the Son are identical.
 43. Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1970), 310.
 44. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 583.
 45. Dialogues 56 and 128 as cited in Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 310.
 46. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 312. Seemingly, this distinction is very similar to Wolfson's distinction between external and internal unity in Jewish thought (see page 2). Whereas internal unity assumes that God is wholly indivisible and unchanging, external unity assumes that God is not two—and that whatever is God, can be understood as a single whole. Similarly, absolute unity is a true unity inherent in God. However, relative unity is just an explanation of why/how God is one. Thus, other than the approach of Nominalism, all Christian thought is working within the world of external divine unity (ie the Kabbalists) and not the philosopher's conception of internal divine unity.
 47. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 322.
 48. Since this answer assumes that the Trinity is three distinct parts it will not satisfy the rationalists demand for divine simplicity or absolute unity. However, because the three parts all share a common essence, a single *ousia*, it could satisfy certain Kabbalistic understandings of divine unity. Ostensibly, this answer is very similar to Azriel's understanding of divine unity. However, it will be discussed below that certain Christian thinkers understand this idea very differently than Azriel.
 49. This perspective only satisfies a numerical or external understanding of god's oneness because it is based purely on god's interaction with the world. It does not, however, satisfy the philosophers demand for internal and absolute oneness since it makes no statement regarding god's actual composition. Thus, this

answer is insufficient according to Jewish rationalists. Moreover, whereas the answer of a unity of substratum echoes certain Jewish Kabbalistic answers, unity of rule does not relate directly to god himself and leaves room for a conception of god which is fundamentally more disparate and separate than anything suggested by Jewish Kabbalists.

50. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 313.
51. Interestingly, Wolfson points out that Origen utilizes both unity of substratum and unity of rule to defend the trinity when he explains the verse of "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30) to mean that "the will of God is the will of the Son which is unchanged from the will of the Father" (*Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 322). John of Damascus also seems to combine both unity of substratum and rule when he explains that the Trinity is really One "owing to their having the same *ousia* and dwelling in one another, and having the same will, and operation and power, and authority, and movement" (Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 349).
52. The significance of this is discussed further in footnote 64.
53. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 349.
54. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 353.
55. Letter 120 to Consentius, printed in *Saint Augustine: Letters Volume 1 (83-130): The Fathers of the New Church Volume 5*, trans. Wilfrid Parsons (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 310-311. Also cited in Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 353.
56. Harnack, Adolf, *History of Dogma*. Trans. Neil Buchanan, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1903), 130.
57. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 130.
58. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 129.
59. Letter 120 to Consentius, *Saint Augustine: Letters Volume 1 (83-130)*, 310-311. Also cited in Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 353.
60. When citing Augustine's view, Harnack highlights the tension therein by noting that even though "the triple personality is understood as existing within the absolute simplicity of God. The differences or characteristic notes of the three persons are still to hold good when the Godhood is so conceived of; but they appear merely as relations in the one Godhood" (*History of Dogma*, 129). In this vein, Battenhouse points out that Augustine's suggestion that the distinction amongst the Trinity's parts is relational and not essential, "reflects the Neo-Platonic element in his thought, with its concern for the One, and gives his treatment of the Trinity a tinge of Unitarianism, or at least Sabellianism. Of course he does not fall into those . . . but the tendency remains" (Battenhouse, Roy. *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*. [New York: Oxford University Press 1955], 247).
61. A Treatise of Novatian Concerning the Trinity, 31. (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Roberts and Donaldson [Grand Rapids: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994], V. Also cited in Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 195-196.
62. See footnote 37 for a fuller discussion of emanation.
63. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 199.

64. Wolfson explains that Origen does not suggest complete co-eternality of the Logos like Irenaeus. Rather, Origen maintains that the Logos' "generation is as eternal and everlasting as the brightness which is produced from the sun." Furthermore, he says elsewhere that "the Father did not generate the Son and dismiss him after he generated, but he is always generating him" (*Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 201). Essentially, he agrees the Logos have always existed separately from the Father, but that was only because the Father was constantly creating the Logos. Thus, although there is no chronological precedence of the Father, there is a conceptual one. Seemingly, although most Kabbalists adopt the author of the Zohar's understanding that "the process of creation of the lower worlds parallels and reflects the process of divine emanation. Consequently, the section of the Torah in Genesis dealing with the creation has a double meaning" (Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 279) and maintain that the *Ein Sof* preceded the *Sefirot* chronologically, this is not a necessary component of the Kabbalistic understanding of emanation. In this vein, Scholem explains that Azriel of Gerona believed "that the first *Sefirah* was always within the potentiality of *Ein-Sof*, but that other *Sefirot* . . . had a beginning," while R. Cordovero believed that emanation occurred in a "dimension of time which involved as yet no differentiation into past, present and future" (Scholem, Gershom, *Kabbalah* [New York: New York Times Book Co., 1974] 103).
65. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper, R. Leon de Modena (1571-1648) attacks the Christian doctrine of Incarnation in a similar fashion to the issue raised here with Origen and Augustine. He explains that the idea of God being unified—and still being composed of multiple parts is totally understandable and sensible. However, he explains that Incarnation implies that Jesus and the Father are distinct and separate individuals, thus precluding the argument that they are really the same (*Magen Va-Hereb*, 2:4, also cited in Jacobs, *A Jewish Theology*, 27).
66. Although Arianism has been deemed heresy by the Church, it is still noteworthy that these ideas had large followings during the nascent years of the Church doctrine's formation.
67. Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vol. 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1975), 193.
68. Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 194.
69. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 586.
70. Hanson, R.C.P.. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 102.
71. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 103.
72. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 103.
73. Epistle to Alexander, cited in Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 50; Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 194; and Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 7.
74. Arius explains that the reason the Logos qualifies as a part of God is because the Logos' creation was first and through the Logos the rest of creation

- occurred. In this vein, Athanasius' cites that Arius said "we consider that the Son has this prerogative over others, and therefore is called Only-Begotten, because only he was brought into being by God alone, while all other things were created by God through the Son" (Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 196).
75. Letter to Eusebius, as translated in Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 6. An alternative translation is "as perfect God" (*Nicea and Post-Nicea Fathers: Second Series*, ed. Schaff and Wace [Grand Rapids: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994], 3:1.).
76. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 103.
77. Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 194.
78. Cited in Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 196.

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Julian Horowitz

Moshe Aaronsohn's Matta'ei Moshe: The Beginnings of American Orthodox Responsa

Though many luminaries of American religious life have received detailed attention in various studies of American Jewish history, there remains a wealth of primary source material which has yet to be fully analyzed. Among these are the writings of Rabbi Joseph Moshe Aaronsohn (sometimes written Aronson or Aaronson, c. 1805-1875), *Matta'ei Moshe*, published posthumously in 1878.¹ Judah David Eisenstein, an early chronicler of American Jewry, credits Rabbi Aaronsohn with being the author of the first book of American Responsa.² This claim was echoed by later works of American Jewish History, such as Peter Wiernik's *History of The Jews in America*.³ *Matta'ei Moshe* is also notable as the first work by an American rabbi published in Palestine,⁴ for reasons which will be discussed below.

Though the smattering of publications on mid-19th century American Orthodox rabbis⁵ has probably done something to dispel the general ignorance concerning the stories and scholarship of rabbis from that era, Aaronsohn's period still represents a lacuna in the study of American Jewish history. Exploring Aaronsohn's life and works will help shed light on his scholarship, circumstances, and challenges.

Recorded details of his life are somewhat sparse⁶ and occasionally

contradictory, but a picture can be pieced together from some early historical accounts. Judah David Eisenstein, in an entry in *Otzar Zikbronotai*⁷ and an even longer entry in *Otzar Yisrael*⁸ provides some biographical details: Aaronsohn, also known as the "Ba'al ha-Pardes" (after his books *Pardes ha-Hokhmah* and *Pardes ha-Binah*, published in 1836 and 1855, respectively, in Europe), was born in Salant around 1805 and served as a rabbi and a *maggid* for several Eastern European towns. In the fall of 1861, he was invited to America, possibly for the express purpose of "introducing order and dignity into the matter of American *gittin* (divorce document)."⁹

His first rabbinic post in America was as the *darshan* (preacher) of the *Beit Midrash* on Allen Street¹⁰ on Manhattan's Lower East Side.¹¹ Later, Aaronsohn would be appointed rabbi of Congregation Adath Jeshurun, also in Manhattan. In New York, Aaronsohn was "appalled at the laxity of rank and file of American Jewry in observing the ritual law and at their ignorance of Jewish tradition" and "equally aghast at what he deemed to be the incompetence and temerity of American rabbis."¹² During his years there, this "contentious individual" became "engaged in personal and religious squabbles with other local clergy." It was these squabbles which would ultimately force Aaronsohn—by then put under the ban (*herem*, or excommunication)—to depart from New York in 1873.¹³ Though Aaronsohn hoped to relocate to Palestine with his family,¹⁴ Sherman records that he spent the next two years traveling as a *maggid*, before settling in Chicago and dying there.¹⁵

A brief accounting of the various aforementioned "squabbles" is in order, if only because these conflicts became so central to Aaronsohn's life and legacy. One debate, in which Aaronsohn "joined Rabbi Yudel Mittelman . . . to oppose Rabbi Abraham Joseph Ash,"¹⁶ presumably dealt with the proper text of *gittin* discussed in New York City. According to Eisenstein, it was the escalation of this conflict which led to Aaronsohn's excommunication. Another debate—this time putting him at odds with Mittleman and another rabbi, Aaron Friedman—concerned the permissibility of the then-common practice of bloodletting before *shehitah* (ritual slaughter). A final set of debates, "through which"—according to Eisenstein in *Otzar Yisrael* (contradicting his account in *Otzar Zikbronotai*)—"Aaronsohn was forced to leave New York," concerned the *kashrut* of wine from California and the *shelubim*

(charity emissaries) from the Etz Hayyim yeshivah in Jerusalem.

An important source concerning Aaronsohn's personality and problems is an article by Zvi Hirsch (Henry) Bernstein (a friend of Eisenstein),¹⁷ in which he was asked to reminisce about the state of Jewry thirty years earlier, including chronicling his own newspaper *Hatzofe b'Eretz Ha-Hadasha*, the first Hebrew periodical published in the United States.¹⁸ Though Bernstein first describes Aaronsohn in glowing terms, this is a prelude to the painting of a very negative picture. Copied below are selections of the article relevant to us, as translated by Gary Zola:

This rabbi [Aaronsohn] was the first Orthodox rabbi in America and (with the exception of Rabbi Abraham J. Ash . . .) no man ever took anything upon himself, large or small, in connection with Judaism without asking Aaronson's opinion. All this was not true only for New York City, but also throughout all parts of the United State where he was respected and admired. In those early days, the Reform rabbis also honored him...

Rabbi Aaronson was elected rabbi of congregation Adath Jeshurun in the year 1864, and as I have already mentioned, every part of the Jewish community respected him. He was a man of comfortable means, and in a brief time he had acquired wealth and was extremely successful. Yet, he was also a man who was quite prone to argument and quarrel. He was vengeful and could bear a grudge; he could be like a venomous snake—doing evil and acting wrongly. A full year hardly had passed when a great storm of controversy raged in the very heart of congregation Adath Jeshurun, and the heads of the congregation gathered together to confer on how to settle the hostilities. They resolved to speak with Rabbi Aaronson and to implore him to stop the quarreling so as not to dishonor fellow Jews in the eyes of their neighbors. To accomplish this task, the head lay person [*parnas*] of the congregation . . . went to see Aaronson one Friday evening after services. They had hardly reached the doorstep, however, when the rabbi opened up a window and began yelling for help. The sound of his screaming brought police who were in the neighborhood, and these honest people who had come in peace were arrested because Aaronson accused them falsely of coming to his house with the intention of killing him! The lay leaders spent the night in jail. After this horrid scandal, Aaronson was removed from his post in disgrace and, afterwards, he set up a house of prayer in his home from which he continued to unleash his anger and to instigate quarrels among his contemporaries. His hatred for Rabbi [Abraham] Joseph Ash was very great, and he would denigrate him at the drop of a hat in the most scurrilous and shameful manner (129-130).

Later, he describes his own personal run-in with Aaronsohn:

And I watched over *Ha-Tzofeh*¹⁹ for five years straight . . . in spite of the mean-spirited detractors who criticized me relentlessly. First and foremost among them was Rabbi Aaronson, whom I have already mentioned above. A long and bitter controversy lasting nearly two years erupted between the two of us. This dissension continued up until he relocated to Chicago, at which point I was freed from his oppressive spirit.²⁰ Aaronson's move put an end to his defamations.

Not surprisingly, Bernstein omits a key detail from his narrative: the March 26, 1872, *New York Times* reports that "Hersch Bernstein, editor of the *Hat Safe*,²¹ was arrested for libeling Moses Aronson, a Rabbi." While there is no way to determine who was in the right in this case, Bernstein's relationship with Aaronsohn certainly stands as yet another testimony to the trouble that Aaronsohn seemed prone to getting himself into.

Integral to understanding the life of any rabbinic figure, especially those who've left us as little written record as Aaronsohn, is an in-depth study of the rabbi's writings. Specifically, the *responsa*, which contains the rabbi's opinions on matters of law and public policy, can be a lens through which to explore Aaronsohn's American Jewish experience.

The Responsa: Struggle for Independence, Struggle for Authority

Matta'ei Moshe was published by Yoel Solomon in 1878,²² and included rabbinic approbations from Abraham Ashkenazy and Moshe Yehoshua Yehudah Leib, as well as a lengthy introduction and epilogue by the author's son Jacob Elijah,²³ who supervised the printing of book. The title page informs us that the book contains two sections, one of sermons and another of fourteen *responsa*.²⁴ Also included are two appendices, added to the former and latter sections, respectively: some letters written to Aaronsohn by rabbinic figures of note and a commentary on Song of Songs.

While always displaying Talmudic erudition and presenting "detailed arguments in a classical rabbinic manner,"²⁵ some of Aaronsohn's *responsa* deal with mundane issues that rabbis have been dealing with for time immemorial: numbers one, six, nine, and fourteen all deal with complicated, albeit typical, issues of *kashrut*. Number eight,

written to the community of Baltimore, explains the routine procedure to be followed when a Torah scroll is dropped. Other responsa dealt with issues which were agitating various American Jewish communities at the time, such as permission to build the ark on the "wrong" side of the synagogue (seven), the sale of a synagogue to gentiles, and the conversion of a church into a synagogue (four).²⁶ Additionally, responsum number twelve²⁷ raises the question of sending a divorce through the mail, a situation which would surely come up more often when one of the spouses has migrated to far-away America.²⁸

The responsa, however, that made Aaronsohn famous are those in which he disputes the other great rabbis of his era on then-controversial issues. Responsa two and three take up the widespread practice of drawing blood from animals prior to *shehitah*, which Aaronsohn thought rendered the animal ritually unfit for consumption.²⁹ Aaronsohn reports that some of his rabbinic colleagues, including Abraham Rice from Baltimore and "the rabbis of Cincinnati," had prohibited this bloodletting, but that New York rabbis, including Judah Mittelman, had permitted it. In order to bolster his opinion, the rabbi sought out the support of his more-prominent counterparts in Europe, gathering an impressive list of supporters, some of whom were the "greats" of their day.³⁰

Even though Aaronsohn was unsuccessful and "remained at odds with his colleagues,"³¹ his approach towards resolving this problem sheds light on the bigger issue: authority. Paradoxically, Aaronsohn's dependence on European authorities was an attempt at establishing his own authority. By brandishing the vast rabbinic support he had marshaled behind himself, he showed that his opinions were, from thereon in, to be treated as theirs; this meant, on the one hand, a certain level independence from Europe and, and on the other hand, authority over America.³²

Rod Glogower points out that in addition to two conventional halakhic arguments, Aaronsohn also offers extra-halakhic reasoning for prohibiting the preparation of animals in this manner, arguing that bloodletting is the top of a slippery slope to forgetting the laws of *shehitah* entirely. This enough is reason to forbid it: "Although it is true that no such preventive ordinance is to be found in the writings of the rabbis, it is also true that no such breach has appeared heretofore among the Jewish people."³³ Once again, Aaronsohn positions himself as an

authority with the same extra-judicial powers of the Sages of Old. Referring to his coming to America as being "directed by God,"³⁴ this is not a power-grab, but simply a rabbi who would like to see tradition (and its purveyors) adhered to.

Similar conclusions can be reached by examining the events leading up to responsum number twelve. A Polish *beit din* challenged the validity of a *get* arranged and sent overseas by Aaronsohn, requesting that a second *get* be sent. While Aaronsohn complied with this request, he nevertheless composed a letter defending the method he had used to send the first *get*. Here too Aaronsohn displays a desire to prove that he can argue on the same level as the rabbis of Europe. In this same letter, Aaronsohn lashes out against the poor state of Torah knowledge in America, establishing himself as the de facto authority for these matters. The previous responsum, which also deals with matters of divorce, contains a similar critique of the incompetence of New York rabbis, specifically those associated with the local Beth Hamedrash Hagadol.³⁵

A final example is the beginning of responsum nine, a seemingly innocuous question concerning the *kasbrut* of a seriously-wounded chicken. The questioner, however, complicated issues by getting a second opinion which disagreed with Aaronsohn. Our rabbi, forced once again to assert his authority, resorted to equating his opponent with "the wayward and rebellious son."³⁶

• • •

In his article on Hebrew books printed in Israel, Nathan Kaganoff presents several guesses as to why Aaronsohn's family would have had his book printed in Israel: "Whether the choice of this place of publication was due to his unfulfilled dream [Aaronsohn's dream to move to Palestine before his death], or because his family felt that after all his suffering at the hands of the New York rabbis, they preferred not to publish in New York City, the only logical place to do so in America, is not known."³⁷ Later on, Kaganoff offers some other "conjectures" as to why these rabbis would begin publishing in Palestine, pointing to the efforts of American Jews in Palestine to organize themselves and the desire to help support the settlement of Jews there.³⁸

But perhaps we can offer another conjecture which reflects what has

been written about Aaronsohn so far: how much more striking is it to open a book and see in a large font "ירושלים" spread across the bottom of the page, rather than a transliterated "נוי יורק." Moshe Sherman describes "how an image was shaped in Europe of American Jewry as religiously lax;"³⁹ is it possible that as part of Aaronsohn's continuing struggles for legitimacy, independence, and authority, his family imagined that he would have wanted to make his book appear as impressive as possible? We know that Aaronsohn himself didn't hold his own city in high regard; when describing the ritual slaughter controversy, he commented about his rabbinic colleague ". . . Rabbi Mittelman, who looks for leniencies wherever there is a prohibition and for this reason he is well received in New York."⁴⁰ In fact, the entire United States didn't escape the biting criticism of our rabbi, who in one responsum included a litany of insults hurled at "a land in which stupidity rules, a land in which the glory of the Torah has not found a nest."⁴¹

Even if the desire to garner respect wasn't implicit, this idea certainly reflects the challenges with which Aaronsohn was forced to deal. As a "resistor" against changes to tradition in a country that was rapidly shedding it, much of Aaronsohn's rabbinic career was an uphill battle. His authority was never really accepted and his independence was never really cemented, but in death his book comes from Jerusalem, the city from which "the word of God will go out."⁴²

Appendix: Responsa Topics in Moses Aaronsohn's Matta'ei Moshe (and folio numbers)

1. Can an error in ritual slaughter be corrected (1a-9b).
- 2 and 3.⁴³ The permissibility of drawing large amounts of blood from animals prior to ritual slaughter (9b-11b, 11b-13a).
4. Can a synagogue be sold to gentiles, can a gentile house of worship be converted to a synagogue (13a-17a).
5. Can a man whose wife refuses to accept a divorce document be allowed to remarry, in direct opposition to the ban of Rabbi Gershom (17a-b).

6. Concerning the *kasbrut* of an animal with a specific defect in its spleen (17b-18b).
7. Can a synagogue be constructed in such a way that the worshippers would be facing southwest⁴⁴ (18b-19b).
8. The proper response for a Torah scroll which has fallen on the ground (18b-21a).
9. Concerning the *kasbrut* of a chicken with a serious wound (21a-22a).
10. Concerning the status of an animal which we are uncertain whether or not it had an internal defect (22a-24b).
11. A general lament about his situation in New York (specifically mentioning the poor state of Jewish divorce), followed by a discussion of the status of a divorce officiated by someone who lacks the requisite degree of rabbinic knowledge (24b-26b).
12. Concerning sending a divorce document through the post (26b-33b).
13. Concerning the proper text of the location on divorce documents issued in New York.
14. Another responsum concerning a defect in a spleen (38a-39a).

Notes

1. Aaronsohn, Moses. *Matta'ei Moshe*. Jerusalem: Yoel Solomon, 1878.
 2. Eisenstein, Judah David. "The Development of Jewish Casuistic Literature in America." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 12, 1904, p. 144.
 3. Wiernik, Peter. *History of The Jews in America*. New York: The Jewish Press Publishing Company, 1912 p. 406; Idem. *History of The Jews in America: Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged*. New York, The Jewish History Publishing Company, 1931.
- In the first of edition of this work Wiernik cites "Mr. Eisenstein" as his source, but, strangely enough, omits the citation of Eisenstein from his second edition (1931 edition, 380-381). Additionally, the second edition includes a

- serious error: he records that *Matta'ei Moshe* "was printed in Jerusalem about 1862" (381). Not only is this incorrect, but, as the volume includes a responsum from 1863 (19b), it is chronologically impossible. One can think of one of two etiologies for this error: 1. Wiernik confused the publication date of *Matta'ei Moshe* with Aaronsohn's coming to the US, which occurred in late 1861. Or, he misread the book's title page, which indicates that the book was published in the year תררכ"ו, (whose numerical value yields the Jewish year [5]768=1877-1878) which can be misread as an anagram and conjugation of the year תרכ"ב, equivalent to 1861-1862.
4. Kaganoff, Nathan M. "American Rabbinic Books Published in Palestine," in *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn. New York: Ktav, 1976, p. 237.
 5. Sherman, Moshe. "Struggle for Legitimacy: The Orthodox Rabbinate in Mid-Nineteenth Century America." *Jewish History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Spring 1996. pp. 63-74, is but one example of this. In the introduction to that article he notes that "studies of the Orthodox rabbinate in America have, to date, focused primarily on rabbis who emigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe during the final decades of the 1800s...historians have focused mainly on their contributions and neglected the study of Orthodox rabbinic leaders who emigrated to America during the formative period of American Judaism, the middle of the 1800s" (63).
 6. His name will often appear first in the index of works, but he does not usually merit more than a sentence or a paragraph. His only mention in Sarna's *American Judaism* is as part of "a small, fervently (*haredi*) Orthodox subculture of their own, where they debated Jewish legal questions, maintained ties with leading European rabbinic figures, and even published erudite articles and religious tomes in Hebrew that brought them to the notice of their counterparts in Europe" (102) who operated in the second half of the 19th century. Aaronsohn is usually included in the small list of American rabbis who predate the 1880's. See, for example, n. 18 of the oft-reprinted chapter "Resistors and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886-1983" by Jeffrey Gurock (in *The History of Judaism in America: Transplantations, Transformations, and Reconciliation* ed. idem. New York: Routledge, 1998. pp. 1-89; idem. *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1996. pp. 1-63; *The American Rabbinate*, ed. Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham J. Peck. Hokoken, NJ: Ktav, 1983. pp. 10-97. Similar listings appear in the introduction to Moshe Sherman's *Orthodox Judaism in America* (2) and in Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993. pp 12 and 341 (this last page incorrectly listed in the index of that book as 241).
 7. Eisenstein, Judah David. *Otzar Zikbronotai*. New York: Part I. New York: J.D. Eisenstein, 1929, p. 24.
 8. Idem. *Otzar Yisrael: Volume I*. New York: The Publishers of the Hebrew Encyclopedia, 1906, p. 167.
 9. Goldman, Shalom. *God's Sacred Tongue*. Chapel Hill: University of North

Carolina Press, 2004, p. 125. Goldman does not record who made this request of Aaronsohn. Also, Goldman's source for his paragraphs on Aaronsohn is Sherman's *Orthodox Judaism in America*, but the quote concerning Aaronsohn's purported reason for immigration does not appear in Sherman's book, nor in any other work on Aaronsohn that I have seen. The closest I have found is a formulation in Eisenstein's *Otzar Yisrael*, which relates that "Aaronsohn afterwards became a private Rabbi to all who sought him [to ask questions], especially in the matters of marriages and divorces" (translation is my own). When I contacted Professor Goldman to inquire as to his source, he was unable to recall where the quote came from.

It is not entirely clear why Aaronsohn relocated to the United States. The introduction to *Matta'ei Moshe* by his son simply records that "it was requested by the greatest of the wise (literally: old) rabbis—the cedars of Lebanon, foundations of the Earth, mighty ones of the Torah, and defenders of the masses—that he move his residence to America to be the rabbi for several big cities to instruct them Jewish law, the ways righteousness, and justice . . ." (unmarked pages, second to third pages of the introduction).

10. This synagogue is a predecessor to the Eldridge Street Synagogue, which today counts Aaronsohn as its first rabbi.
11. Eisenstein's works aren't clear concerning the amount of time it took Aaronsohn to secure this job, possibly even recording a discrepancy. *Otzar Zikbronotai* relates that "he circulated amongst the big cities as an itinerant preacher, ultimately being accepted as a preacher in the *Beit Midrash* on Allen Street." On the other hand, *Otzar Yisrael* has "from there [Russia] he came to New York during the festival of *Sukkot* of 1861 and was accepted initially as the preacher in the congregation of the *Beit Midrash* on Allen Street" (both translations are my own). A third, seemingly reconciling, account is provided by Sherman: "When he immigrated to America around 1860, Aaronsohn became a *maggid* in New York City. For a while he conducted a *minyán* at his home on East Broadway and was referred to by some of his followers as the 'East Broadway *maggid*.'"
12. Glogower, Rod "The Impact of the American Experience Upon Responsa Literature." *American Jewish History* 69 (1969-1970) pp. 257-269, p. 257.
13. Sherman, Moshe D. *Orthodox Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996, p. 13.
14. Eisenstein *Otzar Yisrael*, *op. cit.*
15. Sherman here relies on the account given by Aaronsohn's son in his introduction to *Matta'ei Moshe*. *Otzar Zikbronotai* writes that "on his way to Chicago he became ill and died," seemingly implying that he never actually reached Chicago.
16. Eisenstein, *Otzar Zikbronotai*, *op. cit.* Here, Eisenstein only records the names of the rabbis involved, without informing us of the debate's content.
17. Sherman, *Orthodox Judaism*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
18. Bernstein, Zvi Hirsch. "Al Devar ha-Yehudim veba-Yabadut Lifnei Sheloshim v'Arba Shana b'New York." *Yalkut Maarabi*, Vol. I, 1904 pp. 128-134 (translat-

- ed from the Hebrew by Gary Zola as "An Account of the Jews and Judaism 34 Years Ago in New York (Circa 1870)" in *The American Jewish Archives Journal* Vol. L, 1998, pp. 110-130.
19. There is a play on words here which gets lost in translation: the name of the journal *HaTzofeh* means "the watcher."
 20. The original text reads עד אשר שברתי את עולו, which would be better translated as "until I broke his oppression," implying that it was Bernstein himself who broke Aaronsohn's "yoke."
 21. "New York and Suburban News" *The New York Times*. March 26, 1872, p. 8. This news brief has been subject to an interesting series of typographical errors: The *Times*' text website (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9C01E0D6143EE43BBC4E51DFB5668389669FDE>) identifies Bernstein as "editor of the Hal Safe." This is probably a result of a faulty computer scan of the original printed page, which read "Hat Safe." The cross-bar of the t in "hat" was poorly printed, so the scan only picked up the remaining vertical line, or a lowercase l. The original printing of "Hat Safe" as the name of Bernstein's journal is simply an American misunderstanding of *Hatzofe*, the real name used for the journal.
 22. This is not the only thing that Solomon would accomplish in this year; in 1878 he was among the founders of the Jewish Palestinian settlement of *Petah Tiqwah*.
 23. Noteworthy about this introduction is that while much praise (in typically flowery rabbinic prose) is showered upon the recently-deceased Aaronsohn, most of the praise is reserved for his wife Libah.
 24. See the appendix to this paper for a list of the responsa topics.
 25. Sherman, "Struggle," *op. cit.*, p. 65.
This is despite the fact that being in America may have limited Aaronsohn's access to rabbinic resources. See the responsa section, 33a, where he notes that "he was not fortunate enough to the actual responsum of Ben Lev [Joseph ben David ibn Lev], just what was quoted by the *Knesseth Hagedolah*."
 26. Kaganoff, *op. cit.*, p. 237-238.
 27. Sherman ("Struggle" n13) writes that this is responsum seventeen, but this is obviously a typo, as there are only fourteen responsa in the entire work.
 28. Beginning his responsum with a description of the complicated halakhic procedure used to allow this sort of long-distance divorce, Aaronsohn notes that "the officiators of Jewish divorce in the States of America are accustomed" to this method, implying that this is something American rabbis have dealt with before.
 29. This practice was said to improve the quality of the meat, see Glogower (258) and Sherman ("Struggle" 69) for more details.
 30. A full list of his rabbinic endorsers can be found on the last page of the second responsum on this topic, 13b. The text of some of these letters of support can be found in the appendix immediately before the responsa.
 31. Sherman "Struggle," *op. cit.*, p. 69.

32. Sherman notes that the responsa of Aaronsohn could be "complex and point to an independence of halakhic authority" ("Struggle" 65).
33. *Op. cit.* p. 258.
34. *Op. cit.*, 9a.
35. *Ibid.* 25.
36. *Ibid.* 21a.
37. *Op. cit.*, p. 237.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.
39. "Struggle," *op. cit.*, p. 64.
40. *Op. cit.*, p. 9.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
42. Isaiah 2:3.
43. The printer notes at the beginning of 3 that he saw fit to print both of these responsa even though there is significant overlap.
44. Instead of east, which is the universally accepted practice.

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בן קנדל

שירת הים בעיני התרגומים

שירת הים היא אחד השירים החביבים ביותר על עם ישראל. השירה הוכנסה ל'פסוקי דזמרא' ותופסת מקום מרכזי בתודעה הלאומית. בחיבור זה נסקור את התרגומים שנכתבו על השירה ונדון במשמעותם – מחד, כדי לשאוב – מתוך עיון מדויק בלשון התרגומים – פירושים לקשיים שמצויים בשיר; ומאידך, כדי לעמוד על התרגומים כשלעצמם, בשביל להעריך את המשמעות המלאה של המדרשים וההוספות שמופיעות בתרגומים השונים.

נראה כמה תופעות שמאפיינות את התרגומים ודרך עבודתם, ונביא כמה דוגמאות לכל תופעה מתוך התרגומים לשירת הים. נתרכז בפירושים של התרגומים למילים וביטויים קשים; בהוספות המדרשיות, גלגוליהן ותפקידיהן; ובהרחבות על הטקסט המקראי.

א. מילים ופסוקים קשים

נתחיל במילים הקשות שהתרגומים מפרשים. בפסוק השני בשירה, מופיעות המילים "עזי זמרת י-ה". תחבירו של פסוק זה קשה. אם כוונת המילה "עזי" היא "העוז שלי", היינו מצפים למצוא סיומת של בעלות גם אחרי המילה "זמרת". מכיון שאין סיומת אחרי המילה "זמרת", כוונת הפסוק איננה ברורה וניסו פרשנים חדשים גם ישנים לברר את הפסוק העמום הזה. רש"י והספורנו כתבו ש"עזי" ר'זמרת" הם שמות עצם, אך לא פירשו את כוונת הפסוק בצורה זהה: רש"י כתב שהכוונה היא "העוז והזמרה של הקב"ה היו לי לישועה". לעומתו, הספורנו פירש שהכוונה היא "עוזו וזמרתו של הקב"ה ירה בים את הסוס ואת רוכבו". המיוחס ליונתן והניאופיטי פירשו גם הם שאין כוונת הפסוק "העוז שלי", אבל הם הבינו ש"עזי זמרת" הם שמות תואר, ותרגמו "תוקפן ורב תושבחן ה'". (הפשיטתא גם פירשה את הפסוק בצורה דומה: תקיפא ומשבחא). לעומתם,

תוכן חלק העברי

שירת הים ביעני התרגומים
בן קנדל

א

אכילה על הדם בספר ויקרא ובספר שמואל
עזרא פרייזר

יב

העורכים

עורך

תני כהן

עורך ביצועי

טוביה ברנדר

עורכי משנה

שמחה מנחם גרוס
שלמה צוקר
חיים הורוביץ

ועד הערכת

יצחק רטנר
יונתן בנימין שוואב
ארי שפירא

צוות טכני

איטה גולדפדר

מפרשים אחרים (וביניהם ראב"ע והרמב"ן) הבינו שכוונת הפסוק היא "ה' הוא העוז שלי והזמרה שלי", וכן תרגם אונקלוס - "תוקפי ותושבחת". הבעיה עם הפירוש הזה היא שאין יר"ד של בעלות אחרי המילה "זמרת".

בין החוקרים המודרניים, יש כמה הצעות לפרש שתי מלים אלו. רוב הדעות מסכימות שפירוש המילה "זמרת" היא "זמרת", והפירוש הכי סביר להעלמות היר"ד הוא שמכיון שיש יר"ד בתחילת המילה שלאחריה, אין צורך ביר"ד של בעלות בסוף המילה "זמרת".² (באשר לפירוש המלים עצמן, נראית ההצעה שפירוש המילה "זמרת" אינו "שיר" אלא "גיבור", כפי שעולה מהשוואה לשפות שמיות אחרות. פירוש זה מתאים מאד להקשר בשירת הים, עם כי לא נזכר לא בפירושי הראשונים ולא בתרגומים.)

המפרשים נתקלים בבעיה דומה בפסוק הבא. כתוב "זה א-לי ואנוהו, א-להי אבי וארוממנהו". ברור שהמילה "אנוהו" מקבילה ל"ארוממנהו", אבל פירוש המילה אינו ברור. הפועל "אנוהו" אין לו רע במקרא, ומפרשים שונים ניסו להביא כמה מקורות למילה. ככל הנראה, שורש המילה היא נ-ו-י, שפירושו "יפה". מילה זו איננה מופיעה בתנ"ך, אבל המילה "נאוה", שכנראה באה מאותו שורש, כן מופיעה כמה פעמים.³ לכן נראה שפירוש המילה הוא "אשבחה" או "אגיד יפיר", וכן תרגמו יונתן (נשבחינה), ניאופיטי, והפשיטתא (אשבחיה). אולם באופן מפתיע במקצת, אונקלוס (שבדרך כלל מפרש פסוקים פחות או יותר על פי פשוטם) מביא מדרש לפרש את הפסוק - "ואבני ליה בית מקדשא". דרשה זו דורשת את המילה "ואנוהו" מלשון "נוה"=בית.

ב. הוספות מדרשיות

1) 'ויניקהו דבש מסלעי'

בחלק זה, נביא כמה הוספות מדרשיות של התרגום, ונשווה אותם למדרשים אחרים כדי לראות איך התרגום מוסיף וגורע מהמדרשים. ההוספה הראשונה נמצאת בפסוק "עזי וזמרת י-ה". כמה תרגומים מביאים מדרש שמתאר איך שהקב"ה הגן על התינוקות היהודיים שנעזבו במדבר כאשר אמותיהן נאלצו להחביא אותם מעיני פרעה. מדרש זה מופיע בכמה גרסאות. התרגומים מביאים את המדרש הזה על הפסוק "עזי וזמרת י-ה". רוב התרגומים, כפי שיבואר להלן, מתחילים את המדרש מן הזמן בו התינוקות ראו את הנסים על הים והצביעו להקב"ה באמרים "זה א-לי". אולם תרגום אחד מביא הקדמה ארוכה למדרש זה:⁴ תוקפן ורוב תושבחתן לריבון כל עלמא י'. אמר במימריה והוה לן לפריק. דכד אישתעבידו בני ישר' במצרים בתר מותא דיוסף צדיקא. גזרו עליהון תלתא גזירן תקיפין גזירה קמיתא למיררי חייהון בטינא ובליבנין. תינינא בכל פולחן חקלא. תליתאה לקטלא להון כל בנין דוכרין. וכד חזו חרשיא דבעיין חיינ חכימתא. גזרו למירמי יתהון בנהרא. וכד מטא...

שמות רבה (פרשה א)	פרקי דרבי אליעזר (היגר) - "חורב" פרק מא	תרגום המיוחס ליונתן	ניאופיטי	Biblioteca Palatina di Parma, Codice de-Rossi 2887 (736)
...וכיון שהגיע זמן מולדיהם הולכות יולדות בשדה תחת התפוח, שנאמר תחת התפוח עוררתיך,	ר' שילא אומר כל הילדים שהשליכו המצריים ליאור לא מתו אלא היאור היה מפליט אותם למדבר מצרים,			וכד מטא זמן מולדיהון דנשיהון דישר' הוואן נפקן לאפי חקלא ומולידן תמן ושבקן בניהון והדרן.
והקב"ה שולח מלאך משמי מרום ומנקה אותם ומשפר אותם כחיה זו שמשפרת את הולד ... ומנקט להם שני עגולין אחד של שמן ואחד של דבש, שנאמר (דברים לב) ויניקהו דבש מסלע וגו'	והיה הב"ה מביא סלע בפי כל אחד ואחד וסלע בצדו והסלע שהיה בפיו היה מניק אותם ומסיך אותם שמן כחיה שהיא מסכת את בנה, שנ' ויניקהו דבש מסלע ושמן מחלמיש צור	... הוון {ע} >ינ<קיא מחוון באצבעתהון לאבהתהון ואמרינ דין הוא אלקן דהוה מוניק לן דובשא מן כיפא מחש מן שמיר טינרא בעידן דאימן נפקו לאנפי ברא וילדן וישבקן יתן תמן ומשדר מלאכא ומסחי יתן מלפף יתן	ואמרינ: מן ת{ר} >ד<י אמהתא הוון ינקיא באצבעתהון לאב>ה<תהון ו{מא} >אמ<רין להון דין הוא אבונן דהוה מינק יתן דבש מן כיפ' ומשח יתן משח מן שמיר טינרא	ומלאכא הוה אתי ושקיל יתיה ומסחי יתיה ויהיב בידוהי תרתין אבנין מן חדא מייץ חלבא ומן חדא מייץ דובשא.

<p>וכיון שמכירין בהן המצריים רצו להרגם, ונעשה להם נס ונבלעין בקרקע, ומביאין שוורים וחורשין על גביהן, שנאמר (תהלים קכט) על גבי חרשו חורשים, ולאחר שהולכין מבצבצין ויוצאין כעשב השדה</p>	<p>וכשבאו ישראל ראו הב"ה והביאוהו וקלסוהו וקדשוהו שנ' זה אלי ואנוהו,</p>	<p>וכדון נשבחינה אלקא דאבהתן ונרומימניה</p>	<p>עניין בני ישראל' ואמרין אלן לאלן דן הוא א-להן ונשבחה יתיה א-לה <ה>תהון ונרוממה יתיה דירא...!:</p>	<p>ואתו מצר' וחזיין להון ובעו לתפסיהון. ופתחא ארעא פומיה ובלעת יתהון. ומייתן תורין ורדיין על גביהון ולא יכלין להון. וכד הו מרביין והו מהדרין לבית אבהתהון.</p>
<p>... וכשנגלה הקב"ה על הם הכירוהו תחלה שנאמר (שמות טו) זה אלי ואנוהו.</p>	<p>וכד חזו ההיא ידא הכא על ימא פתחו פומהון ואמרין. דין הוא א-להא ונשבחיניה. א-להא דאבהתנא ונרוממיניה.</p>	<p>וכד חזו ההיא ידא הכא על ימא פתחו פומהון ואמרין. דין הוא א-להא ונשבחיניה. א-להא דאבהתנא ונרוממיניה.</p>	<p>וכד חזו ההיא ידא הכא על ימא פתחו פומהון ואמרין. דין הוא א-להא ונשבחיניה. א-להא דאבהתנא ונרוממיניה.</p>	

מדרש זה מופיע בכמה מקומות ובכמה גירסאות. הרעיון העקרוני הוא שהקב"ה כלכל תינוקות יהודים שהושלכו למדבר בעקבות גזירות פרעה. לפי חלק מהגרסאות, האמהות של התינוקות בעצמן הביאו אותם למדבר ונטשו אותם שם עקב אי-יכולתם לשמור עליהם בבית. לפי גירסא אחרת, התינוקות הושלכו ליאור שפלט אותם למדבר מצרים שם היו זקוקים לאוכל וטיפול.

נחלקו המדרשים לגבי מה קרה לתינוקות אחרי שהגיעו למדבר. לפי הגירסא בשמות רבה ובסוטה (יא:), המצרים ראו את התינוקות וניסו להרוג אותם, אלא שנעשה להם נס ונבלעו בקרקע עד שהמצרים התייאשו והלכו להם. בגירסה בפרקי דרבי אליעזר, תרחיש זה אינו מוזכר, וכנראה התינוקות נשארו במדבר בלי הפרעות עד שחזרו הביתה כאשר נגמלו.

אין בתרגום יונתן ובניאופיטי כל אזכור לאיום של המצרים על התינוקות שנמצאו במדבר, ובני ישראל אינם משבחים את הקב"ה על כך שהציל אותם מיד פרעה. בני רק משבחים את הקב"ה על כך שהוא הניק אותם בדבש ושמן

במדבר, ואינם מזכירים שפרעה ניסה להרוג אותם. הסיבה לכך ברורה – התרגומים מביאים את המדרש הזה בתוך שירת הים, שבה בני ישראל משבחים את הקב"ה על כך שהוא הציל אותם מיד המצרים על הים, ולכן לא ראו לנכון להכניס גם את החלק של המדרש שעוסק במה שקרה במצרים.

קיים לפחות הבדל בולט נוסף בין הגרסאות השונות של המדרש. במדרש בשמות רבה, הקב"ה שולח מלאך ש"מנקה ומשפר" אותם. לעומת זאת, בפרקי דרבי אליעזר לא מוזכר מלאך, אלא שהסלע שהיה בפי התינוק היה סך אותו בשמן. בתרגום המיוחס ליונתן וב-Parma 2887 אכן מוזכר מלאך, כמו בשמות רבה. לעומתם, בגליון ניאופיטי לא מוזכר מלאך. שם כתוב "דין הוא אבונן דהווה מינק יתן דבש מן כיפ' ומשח יתן משח מן שמיר טינרא", שמשמע שהקב"ה (כביכול) היה מושח את התינוקות. הבדל קטן זה הוא חיוני בשביל לעמוד על כוונת התרגום. תפקיד מדרש זה, כנראה, הוא לפרש איך בני ישראל היו יכולים לדעת מי הוא הקב"ה כדי שיוכלו לומר "זה א-ל". לפי המדרש, התינוקות כבר הכירו את הקב"ה מן הזמן שהוא טיפל בהם במדבר. ודייקא נמי דקא דריש "כשנגלה הקב"ה על הים, הם הכירוהו תחלה" – משמע שאלו שהיו רגילים לנוכחות השם (כלומר, התינוקות) הרגישו בנוכחות השם גם בים סוף, והם היו אלו שהכריזו "זה א-ל". במלים אחרות, התינוקות שהקב"ה סך אותם היו אלו שהרגישו בקב"ה כאשר הוא נגלה להם בים סוף. כך כתוב במפורש בתוספתא בכ"י Parma 2887: "וכד חזו ההיא ידא הכא על ימא". פרט זה מסביר איך בני ישראל היו יכולים להגיד ש"זה א-ל" – הם כבר הכירוהו טוב מילדותם.³

(2) הויכוח בין הים לארץ

וויכוח זה מופיע בכמה מדרשים, ורק גרסה מקוצרת של המדרש מופיעה בתרגומים. גרסאות ארוכות יותר מופיעות בתוספתות שונות.

ניאופיטי	תרגום המיוחס ליונתן	מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל בשלח - מס' דשירה פרשה ט
<p>ימא וארעא הוון מדיינין תריהון כחדא ואמרין ימא הוה אמר ארעא קבלי בניך וארעא הוות אמרה לימא קבלי קטולי<><ך><<</p>	<p>ימא וארעא הוון מדיינין דין עם דא כחדא ימא הוה אמר לארעא קבלי בנייכי וארעא הות אמר לימא קבל קטיל[נ]י<ך></p>	<p>ד"א נטית ימינך תבלעמו ארץ מגיד שהים זורקן ליבשה והיבשה זורקתן לים,</p>

<p>לא ימא הוה בעה לקבלא יתהון ולא ארעא הוות בעה למבלע יתהון דחילא הוות ארעא מן דינא יומא רבה דלא יתבע יתהון מנה לעלמא דאתי</p>	<p>לא ימא הוה בעי למטמע יתהון ולא ארעא הות בעיא למבלע יתהון דחילא הות ארעא למקבלא יתהון מן בגלל דלא יתבעון גבה ביום דינא רבא לעלמא דאתי היכמא דיתבע מינה דמיה דהבל</p>	<p>אמ' היבשה ומה אם בשעה שלא קבלתי ולא דם הבל שהוא יחידי נאמר לי ארורה האדמה, עתה איך אוכל לקבל דמן של אכלוסין הללו?</p>
<p>מן יד ארכנת ימינך י' ועל ארעא בשבועה 'בשבועת' על ארע' דלית את תבע יתהון מנה לעלמא דאתי 'הא בכך' ופתחת ארעא ית פומא ובלעה יתהון:</p>	<p>מן יד ארכינת יד ימינך י' בשבועה על ארעא דלא יתבעון מינה לעלמי דאתי ופתחת ארעא פומה ובלעת יתהון</p>	<p>עד שנשבע לה הקב"ה שאיני מעמידך בדין שנ' נטית ימינך תבלעמו ארץ,</p>
		<p>ואין ימין אלא שבועה שנ' נשבע ה' בימינו (ישעיה סב ח).</p>

יסוד דרשה זו בביטוי המשונה "נטית ימינך תבלעמו ארץ". כוונת הפסוק איננה ברורה, שהרי הים כיסה את המצרים כאשר משה (ולא הקב"ה) נטה את ידו על הים "וישבו-המים על מצרים על רכבו ועל פרשיו" (שמות יד:כו). איך פסוק זה מסתדר עם מה שכתוב בשירת הים, שהשם נטה בידו (כביכול) והארץ כיסתה את המצרים? הפתרון של המדרש ושל התרגומים זהה – אחרי שהשם כבר ציווה לארץ ולים לכסות את המצרים (כנראה, אחרי שמשה כבר נטה בידו על הים והמצרים טבעו ונספו), הארץ והים ניסו לחמוק מהאחריות של קבלת הפגרים של המצריים.

למרות שהמדרש מופיע בצורות דומות בשני התרגומים ובמדרש, השוואה מדוייקת מראה שיש כמה הבדלים חשובים בין הגרסאות השונות. ההבדל הראשון הוא בכך שהמדרש אינו מזכיר את הטיעונים של הים ושל הארץ זה על זה, ורק פותח בסצנה משעשעת בה הים זורק את המצרים ליבשה, והיבשה מסרבת לקבל את המצריים וזורקתם בחזרה לים. (נראה שסצנה זו מיועדת להדגיש עד כמה המצרים היו חסרי אונים, לעומת הים והיבשה שהיו יכולים לשחק איתם כרצונם.)

בתרגומים מופיעות גם הסיבות של הים ושל היבשה – מצד אחד, הים טוען שהמצרים הם הבנים של היבשה, ומן הראוי שהארץ תקבל את בניה. לעומת זאת, היבשה טוענת שהים הרג את המצרים, ולכן מן הראוי שהוא יקבל עליו לקבור אותם. הוספה זו מספקת הסבר טוב לוויכוח שבין הים והיבשה – שני

הצדדים נראים סבירים. גם חשוב לציין שהסבר זה, בניגוד לזה שמופיע בהמשך המדרש, הוא טיעון מוסרי. הארץ איננה טוענת שהיא מפחדת לקבל את המצרים, אלא היא טוענת שיש לים אחריות לקבל על עצמו לטפל בהרוגיו. מצד שני, הים טוען שהאחריות היא של הארץ לקבור את בניה שלה. המילה "בנייך" אינה מופיעה במקרה, והמשמעות הברורה היא שהארץ חייבת לקבור את המצרים בגלל שהיא האם שלהם, ו"התשכח אשה עולה, מרחם בן בטנה"?

המשך המדרש מסביר למה הארץ לא רצתה לקבל את המצרים – "אמ' היבשה ומה אם בשעה שלא קבלתי אלא דם הבל שהוא יחידי נאמר לי ארורה האדמה, עתה איך אוכל לקבל דמן של אכלוסין הללו?" יונתן מרמז לטיעון זה, אבל אינו מביא אותו במפורש. לעומת זאת, הניאופיטי רק רומז למדרש זה בעקיפין – "דחילא הוות ארעא מן דינא יומא רבה דלא יתבע יתהון מנה לעלמא דאתי". יכול להיות שמחבר הניאופיטי הניח שהשומעים (או הקוראים) שלו יבינו שהכוונה היא למדרש, אבל ייתכן גם פירוש אחר.

המדרש, בשביל להסביר טענת הארץ, מביא את הפסוק "ארורה האדמה", שזה ציטוט מבראשית ג:יז: "ארורה האדמה בעבורך, בעצבון תאכלנה כל ימי חיך". פסוק זה נאמר לאדם כאשר הקב"ה קילל אותו ואת האדמה בגין עונו, ואין ענין פסוק זה לכאן כלל. כוונת המדרש, כנראה, היא לפסוק שנאמר לקין אחרי שהוא הרג את הבל: "וְעֵתָה אָרוּר אֲרֶזְךָ מִן הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה אֶת פִּיהָ לְקַחַת אֶת דְּמֵי מִיָּדְךָ" (בראשית ד:יא). פסוק זה יכול להתפרש בשני אופנים:

(א) שורש הקללה הוא האדמה, וכפי שפירש ראב"ע: "שיבא לו חסרון מפאת האדמה, שיוזע ויטע, כי הוא היה עובד אדמה ולא תתן האדמה עוד קציר ופרי, ויצטרך ללכת אל ארץ רחוקה ממקום אדם אביו שהוא קרוב אל הגן, ולא ישקוט במקום אחד רק ינוע". לפי פירוש זה, הארץ לא קיבלה קללה בפסוק זה.

(ב) קין הוא יותר ארוך מאשר האדמה ארוכה. וכן הוא פרש"י: "יותר ממה שנתקללה היא כבר בעונה, וגם בזו הוסיפה לחטוא". ברור שכוונתו היא שהקללה רובצת גם על הארץ וגם על קין. בשבילנו חשובה הנקודה שהארץ מקבלת עונש על כך שקיבלה את הדמים של הבל.

לפי הפירוש הראשון, הארץ לא יכולה לטעון שאיננה רוצה לקבל את המצריים בגלל מה שקרה בעקבות רצח הבל, שהרי הארץ לא קיבלה שום עונש על כך! אולם לפי הפירוש השני, שהארץ כן תקבל עונש אם תקבל את המצרים, טענת הארץ היא מאד סבירה – היא כבר לקתה פעם מפני שהיא קיבלה את הגופה של מישהו שנרצח, ואין היא רוצה לשוב אל קיאה.

יש מקום לטעון שמחבר הניאופיטי הבין את בראשית ד:יא כמו הפירוש הראשון, ולכן לא יכל להכניס שם שום אזכור למקרה בו הארץ לקתה על כך שהיא קברה את הגוף של נרצח. לעומת זאת, ברור שהמדרש הבין את הפסוק כמו הפירוש השני, ונראה שגם יונתן הבין אותו כך, ולכן הארץ יכולה להסתמך על ניסיון מר בשביל להצדיק את סירובה לקבור את המצרים?

ג. הרחבות

כמו בכל שיר מקראי, רוב פסוקי שירת הים מורכבים משתי (או יותר) צלעות מקבילות. בדרך כלל, הצלע השניה מרחיבה את הרעיון שמופיע בפסוק הראשון או מבטא אותו בצורה חזקה יותר. לדוגמא, הפסוק הראשון בשיר הוא: אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה, סוס ורכבו רמה בים.

בפסוק זה, הצלע השנייה של הפסוק באה לפרש ולרכז את הצלע הראשונה גאותו של ה' מתבטאת בכך שהוא רמה סוס ורכבו בים. במלים אחרות, הצלע הראשונה בפסוק מבטאת את הרעיון העקרוני (שהקב"ה גאה), והצלע השניה מקשרת תכונה זו למה שקרה על הים. בפסוק זה, הצלע השניה אינה חוזרת בדיוק על מה שמופיע בצלע הראשונה, אלא שהיא מקדמת, מפתחת, ממחישת ומעגנת את השבח על יקישור שבח כללי זה לנסים שנעשו לבניי על הים. אולם, תרגום יונתן אכן מוסיף צלע בפסוק זה שמקביל כמעט בדיוק לצלע הראשונה: הא בכך שבח משה ובני ישראל ית שבח שירתא הדא קדם י' ואמרין למימר נודה ונשבחא קדם י' רמא

דמתגאיה על גיוותניא ומתנטל על מנטליא
כל מאן דמתגאי קדמוי הוא במימריה פרע מיניה
על די אזיד פרעה רשיעא קדם י' ואיתנטל בלבביה ורדף בתר עמא בני ישראל סוסוון ורכביהון רמא וטמע יתהון בימא דסוף
חשוב לציין שתי תופעות מעניינות בתרגום לפסוק זה. ראשית, כפי שהזכרנו כבר, התרגום מוסיף צלע (ומתנטל על מנטליא) כך שיש תקבולת ישירה לצלע הראשון של הפסוק (כאילו היה כתוב "גאה על גאים ורם על רמים").
שנית, התרגום פה רומז למוטיב שחוזר הרבה פעמים במזמור, אבל אינו מופיע בצורה מפורשת בפסוק זה: רוממות הקב"ה לעומת שפלות אויביו. בהרבה ביטויים ודימויים בשירת הים, הקב"ה מתואר כגבוה, והמצרים מתוארים כשפלים. גאוותנותם ויומרנותם נמסו ופגו, גם מפאת הימצאותם בתחתית הים, מקום נמוך, וגם מפאת תבוסתם המכריעה בידי הקב"ה ושליחיו. הקב"ה הוא גאה (פסוק א), מרומם (ב), המים שמצייתים לצווי נערמים ונצבים (ח), והוא כונן מקדשו בהר (פס' יז). הוא גם רמה (פס' א), וברור שיש משחק מלים עם המילה "ארממנהו" (בפסוק שלאחריו), ירה, טבע (פס' ד), וכיסה (פס' ה' ו-י') את פרעה, ופרעה צלל בים (פס' י') והארץ בלעה אותו (יב). אימתו של הקב"ה גם נפלה על יושבי ארץ ישראל (טז). בכל הביטויים והדימויים האלה, הקב"ה במקום יותר גבוה מאשר אויביו, ובעוד שהוא עולה למעלה, המצרים ושאר בעלי דבבוהי הם שפלים ויושבים בעפר.

יונתן, בתרגומו לפסוק זה, רומז למוטיב זה וגם מציע שיש כאן כעין מדה כנגד מדה. פסוק א' אינו מסביר למה הקב"ה ראה לנכון להביס את פרעה, או במה חטא פרעה שהגיע לו עונש חמור זה. אבל התרגום מספק מענה לשאלה זו: מפני שפרעה "מתגאי קדמוי" ו"איתנטל בלבביה" שלא כראוי, הקב"ה מחזיר

לו את העונש שמגיע לו. פרעה חשב לעלות למרום, אבל הקב"ה החזיר אותו לארץ בצורה מרשימה ומעליבה. הסבר זה ממלא חור מסויים בפסוק עצמו, ואפשר בנקל לראות איך הוא מתאים לסגנונו של יונתן. תופעה דומה מופיעה בפסוק ט'. שם כתוב:

אמר אויב ארדף אשיג אחקל שלל תמלאמו נפשי אריק חרבי תורישמו ידי ותרגם אונקלוס:

דהנה אמר סנאה ארדוף אדביק אפליג בינתא תסבע מנהון נפשי אשלוף חרבי תשיצניון ידי:
התרגום לפסוק זה אינו מרחיב את הפסוק ומתרגם אותו כצורתו. אולם גם פה, יונתן ממלא צלעות שאינן קיימות בפסוק להדגיש רשעת פרעה וכדי להצדיק את הדין. המילים שאינן תרגום ישיר של הפסוק מסומנות: דהוה אמר פרעה רשיעא סנאה ובעל דבבא

ארדוף בתר עמא בני ישראל ונרע יתהון שריין על גיף ימא
ונסדרא לקובליהון סידרי קרבא ונקטול בהון קטול רב וסגי
ונבוז מינהון ביזא רבא ונישבי מינהון שיביא רבא

ואיפליג ביזהון לעמי עבדי קרבי וכד תתמלי נפשי מן אדם קטיליהון מן בתר כדין אשלוף חרבי ואישצי יתהון ביד ימיני.¹⁰
יונתן פה מרחיב בצורה מרשימה את הפסוק מכפי שהוא מופיע בחומש.

בפסוק, פרעה מתואר כאויב מאיים, אבל לא כרשע. אין כל אזכור לחטאיו של פרעה, והשיר בכללו מתאר את הפגישה על הים כפגישה בין שני עמים עוינים, ולא כפגישה בין עם ראוי וצדיק לבין עם רשע. אולם גם פה, יונתן מפרש למה הקב"ה העניש את פרעה ואת עמו - פרעה אינו אויב סתם, אלא הוא "רשיעא סנאה", לעומת בני ישראל.

יונתן גם מפרש ומפתח את התוכנית של פרעה. בפסוק, פרעה מתכנן לעשות שש פעולות: (1) ארדף, (2) אשיג, (3) אחקל שלל, (4) תמלאמו נפשי, (5) אריק חרבי, (6) תורישמו ידי. לעומת זאת, בתרגום, פרעה מתכנן לעשות תשע פעולות: (1) ארדוף, (2) ונרע יתהון, (3) ונסדרא קרבא, (4) ונקטול, (5) ונבוז, (6) ונישבי, (7) ואיפליג ביזהון, (8) אשלוף חרבי, (9) אישצי יתהון. בתרגומו לפסוק זה, יונתן מייחס לפרעה תוכניות שלא הוזכרו בכתוב כדי להדגיש עד כמה הגיעה רשעתו ולמה ראוי להעניש אותו.

ראוי לציין עוד מקום אחד בו התרגומים מוסיפים בתרגומם בצורה שמאד מתאימה לשיר. ראשית, נקדים בכך שהרבה מפרשים וחוקרים מחלקים את השיר לשלשה חלקים: א-ו, שמתאר את מפלתם של פרעה ועמו בים ומסתיים, אחרי תיאור של פעולת ה' בים סוף, בשבח הכללי "ימינך ה' תרעץ אויב"; ז-יא, שעוסק גם הוא בתבוסת המצרים בים סוף, אך בתיאור יותר מדוייק למאורעות בים סוף, בתוכניות של פרעה ותסכולן, ומסתיים בשבח הכללי "עשה פלא"; ו-יב עד יח, שמתאר את תגובת שאר עמי כנען ועבר הירדן לנס על ים סוף.¹¹ מה

שחשוב לעניננו הוא שהבית השלישי מפנה את תשומת הלב של הקורא מים לסוף ליעד הסופי של בני ישראל, באימה אשר נפלה על כל העמים שעומדים בפני בני ישראל בארץ ובדרך לה, ובתיאור המקום בו ישבו בני ישראל והמקדש בית זה כמעט ואינו עוסק בים סוף.¹² ה' מנחה ומנהל את עמו אל נוה קדשו, וכל העמים אשר סביבותיו שומעים את שמע עם ישראל ופוחדים ממנו. אולם באמצע תיאור פחד הגוים, מופיע פסוק אחד שכנראה אינו במקומו:

תפל עליהם אימתה ופחד
 בגדל זרועך ידמו כאבן
 עד יעבר עמך ד'
 עד יעבר עם זו קנית

הפסוק אינו מפרש מה עם ישראל אמורים לעבור, אבל נראה מההקשר שמה שהם עוברים הוא בדרך לארץ ישראל. ואכן כך פירשו התרגומים את הפסוק. אונקלוס, לדוגמה, מתרגם:

תיפול עליהון אימתא ונדחלתא
 בסגי תוקפך ישתקון כאבנא
 עד דיעיבר עמך י'
 דפרקתא ית ירדנא

אונקלוס מפרש שהפחד יפול עם העמים השכנים עד שבני ישראל יעברו את הארנון ואת הירדן.¹³ גם פה, כמו שמצינו בשתי הדוגמאות הקודמות, התרגומים מראים עד כמה הם קשובים וערים לניואנסים במקרא, ואיך התרגום מדגיש ומפתח את הרעיונות המרכזיים בכל פסוק.

ד. סיכום

במאמר זה, עמדנו בקצרה על כמה נקודות מרכזיות בתרגומים לשירת הים. ראינו את הפירושים של התרגומים לפסוקים שונים שפירושם עמום, ומצאנו שיש לעיין בפירוש של התרגום כמו שיש לעיין בפירושים של המפרשים האחרים. גם ראינו כמה דוגמאות של מדרשים שהתרגומים מביאים, והראינו שיש חשיבות רבה לשינויים קטנים שנראים על-פניהם כשירותיים וחסרי-משמעות. בנוסף, סקרנו את המקומות בהם התרגום מוסיף לפסוקים. כפי שעולה מעיון מדויק בלשון התרגום, נראה שהתרגום, לעתים קרובות, אינו סתם מכניס מלים לפסוקים כפי שעולה במחשבתו, אלא שההוספות בתרגום מאד מתאימות למקומות בהם הן מופיעות, ומבליטות ניואנסים עדינים בטקסט שאולי לא נראים לעין כשקוראים אותו בפעם הראשונה. מכל זה עולה שהמתרגמים השקיעו מחשבה ודיוק רבים בתרגומים, ועל כן עלינו, כשוחרי לימוד התנ"ך, לשים לב לתרגומים כדי להפיק הבנה יותר מלאה, מדויקת, ומפותחת של התרגומים.

- 1 רש"י כתב שאם היו"ד היא יו"ד של בעלות, המילה היתה צריכה להיות "עזי". אבל נראה שאין זו הזכחה, מפני שהשורוק בא תחת הקמץ הקטן שאינו קיים בניקוד של בעלי המסורה מטבריה. עיין על כך Werner Weinberg, "The Qamās Qaṭan Structures," JBL, 87:2, p. 151.
- 2 כך פירש קאסוטו: (U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, Jerusalem: Central Press, 1951, p. 174).
- 3 Loewenstamm, "The Lord is My Strength and My Glory", VT 19:464-471.
- 4 Mitchell J. Dahood, BDB p. 627, 610 יש שטוענים שפועל זה מופיע באוגריתית. עיין, Michael Klein, "Targumic Tosefta to Ex. 15,2", Journal of Jewish Studies, 26:61-68.
- 5 קליין (שם) סבור שבמדרש המקורי, ה' טיפל בתינוקות בעצמו, וייחוס טיפול זה למלאכים הוא ניסיון מאוחר לצמצם האנשה מטרידה זו. טענתו נראית סבירה, אם כי אינה משכנעת. אמנם, בכ"י Parma, המלאך הוא זה שמטפל בתינוק, אבל נראה שהכוונה היא באותו כיוון.
- 6 אי אפשר להכריע מיונתן ומהניאופיטי לבראשית ד:יד איך הם קראו את הפסוק, מפני שהם מתרגמים את הפסוק מילולית.
- 7 עיין עוד ב-301-330, Biblica, 54:301-330.
- 8 Etan Levine, "Neofiti 1: A Study of Exodus 15", Biblica, 54:301-330.
- 9 J.P. Fokkelman, Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible, עיין, פ. פוקלמן. עיין, Van Gorcum, 1998, 37-38.
- 10 Robert Shreckhise, "The Rhetoric of the-Expressions in the Song by the Sea (Exodus, 1-18), Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament, 21:2, 201-217.
- 11 לוי (שם) מציין שלפי חז"ל, סתם "יד" הוא יד שמאל, ויונתן (וניאופיטי) מתרגמים שלא כהלכה. אין בכוונתי להכנס לדיון נרחב בחלוקת השיר לבתים. עיין על כך ב-Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry, New York: Basic Books, 1985, p. 51-54.
- 12 כבית עצמאי (פוקלמן שם עמודים, 34-35 ועיין בפירושו בעמודים 48-50).
- 13 הבית מתחיל במלים "נטיית ימינך תבלעמו ארץ", שהן כנראה תיאור של מיתת המצרים. אולם יש לעיין שבפסוק זה, הארץ היא זו שכולעת אותם, ולא הים. יש מקום לטעון ששנוי זה כבר מסמן מעבר מהנס על ים סוף לנס העתידי בארץ כנען.
- 14 כך פירש הניאופיטי ו-FT V. לעומתם, יונתן ו-FT-P. פירשו שהכוונה לארנון והיבוק. לא זכיתי לרדה לעומקה של מחלוקת זו.

• הרב עזרא פרייז'ר לומד לתואר שלישי בפרשנות המקרא בישיבה אוניברסיטה. הוא בעל תואר ראשון במדעי מחשבים ותארים שניים בחינוך ובתנ"ך, כולם מישיבה אוניברסיטה.

עזרא פרייז'ר

אכילה על הדם בספר ויקרא ובספר שמואל'

וַיַּעַשׂ (קרי: וַיַּעַשׂ) הָעָם אֶל-שֵׁלֶל [קרי: הַשֵּׁלֶל] וַיִּקְחוּ צֹאן וּבָקָר וּבְגֵי בָקָר וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ אֶרְצָה וַיֹּאכְלוּ הָעָם עַל-הַדָּם: וַיִּגְדּוּ לְשֹׂאֵל לֵאמֹר הֲנֵה הָעָם חֹטְאִים לָהּ' לֶאֱכֹל עַל-הַדָּם וַיֹּאמֶר בְּנֵדְתֶם גְּלוּ-אֵלֵי הַיּוֹם אֲבָן גְּדוֹלָה: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוֹל פָּצוּ בָעֵם וַאֲמַרְתֶּם לָהֶם הַגִּישׁוּ אֵלַי אִישׁ שׁוֹרוֹ וְאִישׁ שְׂהוֹ וַיִּשְׁחֲטֶם בָּזֶה וְאֶכְלֶתֶם וְלֹא-תִחַטְּאוּ לָהּ' לֶאֱכֹל אֶל-הַדָּם וַיִּגְשׁוּ כָל-הָעָם אִישׁ שׁוֹרוֹ בְּיָדוֹ הַלְלָה וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ-שָׁם: וַיָּבֶן שְׂאוֹל מִזְבֵּחַ לָהּ' אֶתֹו הַחֵל לְבָנוֹת מִזְבֵּחַ לָהּ': (ש"א י"ד:ל"ב-ל"ה)

פסוקים אלה מתארים חטא חמור - אכילה על הדם. את חומרת החטא אפשר לראות גם בדברי יחזקאל (ל"ג:כ"ה): לָכֵן אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה-אָמַר אֱ-דְנִי [א-להים] עַל-הַדָּם | תֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּגְיַכְם תִּשְׂאוּ אֶל-גְּלוּלֵיכֶם וְדָם תִּשְׁפְּכוּ וְהָאֶרֶץ תִּיָּרָשׁוּ, אלא שגם בשמואל וגם ביחזקאל אין המקרא מסביר לנו את מהות החטא. גם מקור האיסור בויקרא (י"ט:כ"ו) - לא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ וְלֹא תַעֲוֹנֶנּוּ - אינו מתאר בפירוט את הפעולה האסורה. הסיפור שלנו כנראה שופך אור מסוים על האיסור, כי הוא מלמד ששחיטת הבהמות על האבן הגדולה פתרה את בעיית אכילה על הדם. אך פרט זה אף הוא סתום, כי לא ברור מה הקשר בין אבן זו למזבח המתואר בפסוק הבא, או איך פתרו האבן ו/או המזבח את האיסור. בעבודה זו, נסקור את הגישות העקרוניות לסוגיה זו, בהן נקטו רוב הפרשנים המסורתיים והמודרניים, כאשר נצביע גם על ההבדלים שבין פרשנים שונים השייכים לכל גישה עקרונית.

א. ריכוז פולחן ובשר תאוה.

הספרא (קדושים, פרשה ג) והתלמוד הבבלי (סנהדרין ס"ג) מביאים דעה שאיסור לא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם מוסב על אכילת בשר קרבן שלא נזרק דמו על המזבח: "דבר אחר לא תאכלו על הדם לא תאכלו בשר ועדיין דם במזרק." לפי זה, בסיפור בש"א י"ד העם חטא בכך שאכל בשר שלא נזרק דמו. ברם, הפסוקים אינם אומרים שהעם הקדיש את הבהמות, ואם מדובר בבשר חולין, אז קשה להבין למה אסור לאכול בלי זריקת הדם? התלמוד (בבלי, זבחים ק"כ; ירושלמי, מגילה פרק א' הלכה י"ב) מניח שמדובר בבשר קדשים³, אבל אינו מסביר מתי ולמה הקדישו קרבנות במהלך הקרב. אדרבה, לפי קריאה פשוטה של הסיפור, העם רצה בשר בגלל שלא אכל כל היום⁴; הם התעניינו באכילה בלבד, ולא הקדישו את בהמתם לקרבנות.⁵

ראב"ע (ויקרא י"ט:כ"ו) מציע וואריאציה מעניינת של הדעה שהעם חטא בגלל שאכלו לפני זריקת הדם. הוא מאמץ את דעת חז"ל שאיסור לא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם מוסב על אכילת בשר קודם שנזרק דמו, ואף מחבר הסבר זה להקשר של ויקרא י"ט על ידי השוואה לערלה (המצווה שנידונה מיד לפני לא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם).⁶ בש"א י"ד, ראב"ע מסביר שהארון היה איתם. למרות שבעיקרון הותר אז בשר חולין, לא היו אמורים לאכול מהבשר לפני הזיית הדם כאשר היו ליד הארון.

חלק מהחוקרים אף הם סוברים שהעם חטא בכך שאכלו את הבשר ללא זריקת דמו,⁷ אלא שלא נאלצו להוסיף מידע לסיפור (שהעם הקדיש את הבהמות) או לתלות את האיסור בנוכחות הארון.⁸ חז"ל לא יכלו לפרש שבשר חולין צריך זריקה על המזבח, כי לדעתם בשר חולין ("בשר תאוה") הותר ללא זריקת הדם ברגע שנכנסו בני ישראל לארץ, אם נאסר בכלל.⁹ מאידך, חוקרים רבים מייחסים את ספר דברים לתקופת 'אשיהו וסוברים שעד אז נאסרה אכילת בשר חולין לחלוטין. סמית' (1899) ומקארטר (1980) מפרשים שבתקופה הקדומה אסרו בשר חולין על פי התפיסה שהדם שמור לא-ל. לפי תפיסה זו, הדם ייצג את עצם החיות, ולכן קבעו שרק הא-ל רשאי לטעום ממנו.¹⁰ ברם, לימים הותר בשר תאוה פי-יך חק מִמֶּךָ הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֶל-לְהִיךָ לְשׁוֹם שְׁמוֹ שָׁם. כלומר, רק התירו בשר תאוה כתוצאה של ריכוז הפולחן בבית המקדש, כי אז האיסור היה מבטל לגמרי את היכולת לאכול בשר מחוץ לאזור המקדש. עד ימיו של 'אשיהו, לא היה צורך להתיר בשר תאוה כי כל אחד יכול היה לבנות במה ליד ביתו ולזרוק שם את הדם כאשר רצה לאכול בשר. אם כן, בסיפורינו חיילי שאלו חשקו בבשר תאוה, ואכלו את הבשר לפני זריקת הדם. שאלו שמעו והבין שמדובר באיסור חמור, ולכן תבע מהם להביא את בהמתם אליו כדי שיקריבם על האבן שהקים כמזבח ארעי.

גישה זו של החוקרים קשורה לשיטה הכללית של תורת התעודות. שיטה זו מאחרת את ספר דברים עד ימי 'אשיהו, ומאחרת את ספר ויקרא עד לאחר חורבן הבית הראשון. הנחות אלו מקשות על הבנת הסיפור בש"א י"ד, כי לפי הפסוק, העם נכשל באיסור אכילה על הדם, אך הפסוק לא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם

טרם נכתב! מקארטר (1980) מפרש שהייתה מסורת קדומה על איסור אכילה על הדם, שהוא איסור אכילת בשר לפני שנזרק דמו, והמסורת נשתמרה גם בספר ויקרא ויחזקאל.¹¹

קויפמן (1966) דוחה פרטים מסוימים של גישה זו, אך גם הוא נוקט בגישה העקרונית הקושרת את איסור לא תאכלו על-הדם לסוגיית בשר תאוה. בניגוד לרוב הדוגלים בתורת התעודות, קויפמן מקדים את זמנו של ספר ויקרא. הוא משיג על ההבנה הרווחת אצל מבקרי המקרא בגלל שרואים את ויקרא י"ז (האוסר שחיטת בשר מחוץ לאהל מועד) כהמשך למושג של דיכוז פולחן שמופיע בדברים. קויפמן טוען שפירוש זה לא ייתכן, כי לא מסתבר שויקרא יאסור בשר חולין, שהותר במפורש בדברים.¹² קויפמן עצמו מציע שהיו שלשה שלבים במעמד בשר חולין. בימי קדם (כגון תקופת שאול) לא היה מושג של שחיטת חולין ממש, אבל עדיין הבחינו בין שחיטת קרבן לשחיטת בשר שאינו קרבן. כאשר לא התכוונו להקריב קרבן, לא הקטירו את החלב, אבל עדיין זרקו את הדם לשם ה'. זריקה זו התבצעה על אבן המיוחדת לשם כך, ולא נתנו לדם לשפוך ארצה. כאשר נשפך הדם, חל איסור "אכילה על הדם". בשלב שני, שהוא השלב של ספר ויקרא, אסרו שחיטה על פני השדה (מעין זו של שאול), כי היא עלולה להטעות את העם. ברור שיש תוכן דתי בשחיטה זו, אך לא תמיד ברור להמון-העם אם זובחים לה' או לאלים אחרים (שעירים). לכן קבע ספר ויקרא שיש לשחוט אך ורק במקדש מוכר או במה מוכרת, ורק על ידי כהן.¹³ בשלב באחרון, ספר דברים ריכז את הפולחן במקום אחד, ואז אסרו שחיטת קדשים בחוץ, וגם ביטלו את זריקת הדם של בשר חולין באופן הנ"ל. ספר דברים גם חידש שמחוץ למקדש המרכזי מותר לשפוך את הדם כמים, כצבי וכאיל, בלי שום טקס דתי. שני חידושים אלה של ספר דברים קשורים זה בזה: אסרו את זריקת הדם מחוץ למקדש, כדי לרכז את הפולחן בבית המקדש, ואז התירו את שפיכת הדם בשחיטת בשר תאוה ע"מ לרוקן שחיטה מחוץ למקדש מכל תוכן דתי. בקרב הפרשנים המסורתיים, פירושו של ר"י קרא בולט בקרבתו לפירושים של החוקרים הנ"ל. גם הוא רואה קשר הדוק בין הסיפור של ש"א י"ד ואיסור בשר תאוה. לדעתו, בשר תאוה הותר אך ורק בתקופת איסור במות, כי אז אין האדם יכול לזרוק את הדם של בשרו על מזבח אם נמצא מחוץ למקדש המרכזי. בניגוד לדעת החוקרים, ר"י קרא סובר שבשר תאוה הותר בתקופת משכן שילה, כי חל אז איסור במות,¹⁴ אבל הוא טוען שכאשר הותרו הבמות אחרי חורבן שילה, שוב נאסר בשר תאוה.¹⁵ לכן חטאו של העם כאן היה עצם אכילת בשר תאוה, כפירוש התלמודי "לא תאכלו על הדם" - לא תאכלו בשר ועדיין דם במזרק.

ב. איסורי עבודה זרה ומאגיה

"מ גרינץ (תשכ"ו) ורד"ץ הופמן (תרפ"ח) הקשו כמה קושיות חמורות נגד הגישה הקודמת:¹⁶ (1) אם הייתה חובה לזרוק את הדם, אז צריך לפרש שהאבן

הגדולה של שאול זהה עם המזבח שבנה שאול בפסוק הבא. רד"ץ הופמן טוען שלפי רצף הפסוקים, שאול בנה מזבח אחרי ששחט על האבן: וַיִּגְשׁוּ כָל-הָעָם אֲכִילָה עַל הַדָּם, ואין שום אזכור של זריקת הדם, לא במקור האיסור בויקרא י"ט ולא בש"א י"ד. אכן חז"ל דרשו את הפסוק על איסור אכילה לפני זריקת הדם, אך אין שום זכר לזה בפסוקים, ולא ייתכן שמבקרי מקרא יבססו את פירושיהם על מדרש הלכה שאין לו זכר בפסוקים. (3) איסור אכילה על הדם מוכרח להיות מנותק משאילת בשר חולין, כי גם מבקרי המקרא יסכימו שהותר בשר חולין בזמנו של יחזקאל, ובכל זאת החשיב יחזקאל את האכילה על הדם לחטא חמור. (4) ברור מסיפורים אחרים במקרא שבזמן הקדום לא נחשבה אכילת בשר חולין לאיסור. לדוגמה, קשה להאמין שלחמו של שלמה ליום אחד - עֶשְׂרֵה בָקָר בָּרְאִים וְשֵׁשֶׁת בָּקָר רְעִי וּמֵאָה צֹאן לְבָד מֵאֵיל וְצִבִי וַיְחַמֹּר וּבָרְבָרִים אֲבוּסִים - הוקרב כולו על גבי המזבח.¹⁸ (5) הסיפור שלנו אירע בלילה¹⁹ ומעולם לא הותר להקריב קרבנות בלילה, לא בישראל ולא בעולם האלילי.²⁰ (6) גרינץ השיג על קויפמן, כי התמקד יותר מדי בויקרא י"ז, שאינו מזכיר אכילה על הדם (כמו שקויפמן בעצמו העיר), ולא עסק מספיק בויקרא י"ט:כ"ו. קויפמן גם הציע את ההשערה הדחוקה שאהל מועד בויקרא י"ז מהווה אב-טיפוס לכל הבמות ואינו מוסב על אוהל מועד דווקא.

לאור הקשיים הנ"ל, מעדיפים הופמן (בפירושו לויקרא י"ט) וגרינץ את הפירוש שאומץ על ידי הרבה מפרשי ימה"ב, שאיסור לא תאכלו על-הדם בא למנוע פולחן של עבודה זרה.²¹ פירוש זה מסתדר עם ההקשר בויקרא, כי הפסוק ממשיך לא תִּנְחָשׁוּ וְלֹא תִעֲוֹנוּ.²² ההקשר של איסור זה בש"א י"ד פחות מובן. למה יעבדו העם עבודה זרה דווקא ברגע זה, במלחמה עם הפלשתים? במה הועילה האבן הגדולה למנוע עבירה זו?

בעיה נוספת בהקשר של ש"א פרק י"ד גרמה לארליך (1899-1901) לשנות את דעתו בהבנת סיפור זה. ארליך מעיד על עצמו שפעם קשר את איסור אכילה על הדם לעבודה זרה, אך חזר בו מפירוש זה בגלל שאין ההקשר של הסיפור בשמואל הולם טקס של עבודה זרה.²³ העם היה עיף ורעב, ובא לידי חטא בגלל שמיהר לאכול. אם כן, אין החטא יכול להיות נעוץ בדבר שלוקח זמן, כמו טקס של שפיכת הדם על הקרקע לפני האכילה.

אפשר לדחות את קושייתו של ארליך אם נפרש שהעם לא חטא בגלל שבאמת התכוון לעבוד עבודה זרה. התורה אסרה אכילה אצל הדם, דהיינו ליד מקום השחיטה, שמא יאכלו שם כחלק מפולחן אלילי. אבל איסור זה חל גם אם אדם אוכל ליד מקום השחיטה בגלל שאינו רוצה לטרוח ללכת למקום אחר, מחמת עייפותו. כעין זה כותב ר"י אברבנאל ששאול ידע שאין העם מתכוון לעבודה זרה באכלם על הדם, אבל חשש שהאיסור חל בכל מקרה ולא רצה שייענשו. כדי להסביר את נטיית העם לעבודה זרה דווקא בש"א פרק י"ד, מציעים רמב"ן (ויקרא י"ט:כ"ו) ור"י אבן-שועיב (דרשות, פר' אחרי מות-קדושים) שהיו

בני בעת צרה וראו ששאל מתייעץ רק באורים ותומים,²⁴ ולכן הם התייעצו בשדים. שאל הגיב בחריפות ואמר בְּנִדְתָם כי ה' גמל להם טובה על ידי התשועה מהפלשתים, והם בגדו בו לשאל בשדים. ביחס לפתרונו של שאול, רלב"ג ור"י אבן-כספי (בפירושיהם לש"א) מפרשים שהאיסור חל כאשר אוכלים אצל הדם. לכן ריכוז שאול את השחיטה סביב אבן אחת כדי ישחטו את הבהמות שמה ואז יאכלו את הבשר במרחק מסוים מהאבן. רד"ץ הופמן (בפירושו לויקרא) הולך באותו כיוון, אלא שהוא כנראה הבין שהטקס האילולי דרש אכילה על מקום הקרקע בו נבלע הדם, ולא רק בסמוך אליו.²⁵ לכן נוח לו להסביר שמאחר ושחטו על האבן הגדולה, לא יכלו לאכול על מקום ספיגת הדם בקרקע.

הנוקטים בגישה כללית זו, שלא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם קשור לעבודה זרה, חיפשו הוכחות שאכן התקיימה טקס אילולי בסגנון זה בתקופת המקרא. רשב"ם מזכיר טקס "שאוכלים על קבר ההרוג לשם מכשפות שלא ינקם", אך אינו מציין אך הכיר טקס זה.²⁶ הרמב"ם (מר"ג חלק שלישי פרק מ"ו) מתאר בפירוט את הרקע ההיסטורי של אכילת דם, על פי ידיעותיו ביחס לכת הצאבה (Sabians):

ודע, כי הדם היה טמא מאד בעיני הצאבה, ועם כל זה היו אוכלים אותו מפני שהיו חושבים שהוא מזון השדים, וכשאכל אותו מי שאכלו כבר השתתף עם השדים ויבואוהו ויודיעוהו העתידות, כמו שידמו ההמון ממעשי השדים, והיו שם אנשים שהיה קשה בעיניהם אכילת הדם כי הוא דבר שימאסהו טבע האדם, והיו שוחטים בהמה ומקבלים דמה בכלי או בחפירה ואוכלים בשר השחיטה ההיא סביב דמה, והיו מדמין במעשה ההוא שהשדים יאכלו הדם אשר הוא מזונם והם יאכלו הבשר, ובה תהיה האהבה והאחזה והרעות להם, בעבור שאכלו כלם על שלחן אחד ובמושב אחד, ויבאו להם השדים ההם לפי מחשבתם בחלום ויגידו להם העתידות ויועילו להם, אלו כלם דעות שהיו נמשכין אחריהם בזמנים ההם ובחורים אותם, והיו מפורסמות לא היה ספק לאחד מן ההמון באמתתם, ובאה התורה השלמה ליודעיה, להסיר אלו החליים הנאמנים ואסרה אכילת הדם, ועשתה חזוק באסורו כמו שעשתה בעבודה זרה בשוה, אמר ית' ונתתי פני בנפש האוכלת את הדם, כמ"ש בנותן מזרעו למלך ונתתי את פני באיש ההוא... וצוה לשפוך דם כל בהמה שתשחט אע"פ שאינה קרבן, אמר על הארץ תשפכנו כמים, ואח"כ הזהיר מלהתקבץ סביבו ולאכול שם, אמר ולא תאכלו על הדם, וכאשר התמיד מריים ונמשכו אחרי המפורסם אשר גדלו עליו ולהתחבר אל השדים באכלם סביב הדם, צוה יתעלה שלא יאכל בשר תאוה במדבר כלל, אבל יהיה הכל שלמים, ובאר לנו סבתו כדי שישפך הדם על המזבח ולא יתקבצו סביבו, ואמר למען אשר יביאו בני ישראל וגו', ולא יזבחו עוד את זבחייהם לשעירים.²⁷

יש לשים לב שהרמב"ם נעזר בהיסטוריה של האלילות לא רק כדי להסביר

את לא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם אלא גם להסביר את איסור בשר התאוה בויקרא י"ז. מבחינה זו, הרמב"ם שותף לדעת חז"ל והמבקרים שהובאו לעיל, שקיימת זיקה בין ויקרא י"ז לאיסור לא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם למרות שאכילה על הדם אינה מוזכרת בויקרא י"ז. אלא שהפרשנים הקודמים פירשו את לא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם על רקע ריכוז הפולחן שהוזכר בויקרא י"ז, ואילו הרמב"ם פירש אותו על רקע עבודת השעירים שהוזכרה שם. יתירה מזו, הרמב"ם גם צירף את איסור אכילת דם לאותה מערכת של מצוות הבאות למנוע עבודה זרה.²⁸ ר"י אבן-שועיב (שם) מאמץ את פירושו של הרמב"ם לאיסור לא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם, שהוא מבוסס על עבודה זרה, אך הוא דוחה את טענת הרמב"ם שגם אכילת הדם עצמו נאסרה משום עבודה זרה, כי "לשון הכתובים לא יורו כן שהם יאמרו תמיד בטעם האיסור כי נפש הבשר בדם הוא. כי נפש כל בשר דמו בנפשו הוא. והחזיר במשנה תורה רק חזק לבלתי אכול הדם כי הדם הוא הנפש ולא תאכל הנפש עם הבשר".

גרינץ (תשכ"ו) מביא את דברי הרמב"ם הקושרים בין לא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם לחשש עבודה זרה, ונותן גיבוי לדברי הרמב"ם ממה שידוע לנו על האלילות הקדומה, ובעיקר על אלילות יוון.²⁹ גרינץ מזהה כמה הבחנות בפולחן היווני בין עבודת האלים העליונים לעבודת האלים התחתונים (שדים):³⁰ (1) שוחטים לעליונים כאשר צוואר הבהמה מופנה כלפי מעלה, ולשדים כאשר הצוואר פונה למטה. (2) זובחים לעליונים על מזבח ולשדים בתוך חריץ. (3) זובחים לעליונים על הר או גבעה (מקום מוגבה), ולשדים במערה ובמקום חשוך. (4) זובחים לעליונים ביום ולשדים בלילה. פולחן השדים לא נועד להיות "עבודה" במובן הרוחני אלא בא לפייס אותם, כדי שלא ינקמו דם שפוך.

גרינץ מציין שישנם רמזים רבים שהמקרא ידע על התפיסה האלילית של עולם עליון ועולם תחתון. לדוגמה, היהודים מכנים את א-להיהם "א-להי השמים" כאשר מדברים עם גויים בתקופת שיבת ציון, והוא מכונה "א-ל עליון" בתקופה קדומה. כך גם רומז המקרא שה' אינו מתעניין כלל בשאול. הרעיון של אכילה "על הדם" הוא בדיוק כך, שאסור לשפוך את הדם על הארץ, כדרך עבודת השדים, ואז לאכול את בשר הבהמה שנזבחה לשדים. על פי זה, מסביר גרינץ את הסיפור בש"א י"ד. שאול שחט שחיטת חולין על גבי אבן כדי שלא יישפך דם החולין על הקרקע. האבן הגדולה איננה זהה עם המזבח המוזכר בפסוק הבא, כי לא הקריבו עליה אלא השתמשו בה כדי שהדם לא ייספג בקרקע ולא יוכלו החיילים לאכול את בשרם על הדם.

מילגראם (2000) העיר שהפסוקים אינם מזכירים את שריפת שום חלק מגופות הבהמות שנשחטו, וגם אינם מזכירים את זריקת הדם על האבן. עובדות אלה תומכות לדעתו בשיטת גרינץ ואחרים, שלא הקריבו שום קרבנות בש"א י"ד. ברם, מילגראם גם מעלה כמה קושיות נגד הצעת גרינץ: (1) למה מתיר ספר דברים לשפוך את דם הבהמה על הארץ כמים אם יש בזה פולחן אלילי?³¹ (2) היוונים הקריבו עולות לאלים התחתונים, אך לא קרבנות שלמים. אם כן, לא הקריבו קרבנות שנאכלו על ידי הזובחים. (3) גרינץ מניח (כדעת רמב"ן שהובאה

לעיל) שהעם פנה אל שעירים ושדים בגלל ששאל לא קיבל מענה מה' ושאלו בעצמו סירב לפנות לשעירים. ברם, אין שום רמז בכתוב שהעם ושאלו התווכחו אודות הדרך לדרוש את דבר ה'. 4) גרינץ (בדומה לדברי הרמב"ם) הניח שקיימת זיקה הדוקה בין ויקרא י"ז לאכילה על הדם, אבל ויקרא י"ז אינו מזכיר כלל את הביטוי "על הדם" המשותף לש"א י"ד ולויקרא י"ט. למרות קשיים אלה, מילגרם מסיק שהתיאוריה העקרונית של גרינץ מתקבלת על הדעת, אלא שאולי צריך לתקן את חלק מפרטיה.

ג. אבר מן החי

בגמ' הנ"ל בסנהדרין, גם מובאת דעה שלא תאכלו על-הדם בא לאסור אכילת אבר מן החי: "רתניא, מנין לאוכל מן הבהמה קודם שתצא נפשה שהוא בלא תעשה? תלמוד לומר, לא תאכלו על הדם." כך מפרשת התוספתא (סוטה ו': ט' במהדור' ליברמן) את יחזקאל ל"ג:כ"ה: "על הדם תאכלו - זה אבר מן החי." ר"י בכור שור (פירוש לויקרא י"ט:כ"ו) מאמץ הבנה זו של איסור אכילה על הדם ומציע שחיילי שאול חטאו באבר מן החי, כי היו כל כך רעבים ועייפים שאכלו את הבשר מיד אחרי השחיטה ולא המתינו עד שהבהמה תמות. לדעתו, שאול פתר בעיה זו על קביעת מקום מיוחד ומרוכז לשחיטה (האבן הגדולה). כי זה שלל מהעם את ההזדמנות לשחוט בעצמם ולאכול מיד בצורה חפוזה, לפני שתמות הבהמה.

גם הרמב"ן (ויקרא י"ט:כ"ו) כותב שמתוך הפירושים שניתנו בחז"ל לאכילה על הדם,³² חז"ל כנראה יפרשו את ש"א י"ד שהעם חטא באבר מן החי, כי אפשר להבין שעם הבהול לאכול יחטא בזה, ואילו הפירושים האחרים בספרות חז"ל אינם קשורים כלל לסיפור זה בש"א י"ד. ייתכן שאף החזקוני (ויקרא י"ט:כ"ו) - שהושפע במקומות רבים מדברי בכור שור - סובר שהעם נכשל באיסור אבר מן החי, כי כותב שלא תאכלו על-הדם אוסר אכילה בלי שחיטה, ושאלו פתר בעיה זו כאשר אמר וישחטתם בזה ואכלתם ולא תחטאו לה' לאכל אל-הדם. במבט ראשון, החזקוני סובר שמדובר באיסור נבילה, שהוא האיסור הרגיל של בשר שלא נשחט. ברם, הרב ח"ד שוועל (בהערותיו לחזקוני שם) טוען שכוננת החזקוני לאיסור אבר מן החי, כי כבר הזהירה התורה נגד אכילת נבילה.³³

ד. שונות

סקרנו את הדעות המרכזיות בהבנת חטאו של העם בש"א י"ד. כעת נזכיר בקצרה את דעותיהם של כמה מגדולי הפרשנים שאינם משתייכים לשום קבוצה מהקבוצות הנ"ל. רש"י (בפירושו לשמואל) סובר שהעם נכשל באיסור אתו ואת-בָּנוּ. הצעה זו הולמת את האווירה הפרועה המצטיירת בפסוקים: חיילים רעבים שוחטים על ימין ועל שמאל בלי לחשוב איזו בהמה צעירה נולדה לאיזו אם, עד שבא שאול ומשליט סדר.³⁴ ברם, קשה להבין את שייכותו של איסור אותו ואת בנו למילים ויאכל העם על-הדם. יתירה מזו, יוצא לפי רש"י שאין שום

קשר בין הפסוק ויאכל העם על-הדם והאיסור לאכול על הדם בתורה. גם ביחזקאל (ל"ג:כ"ה) פירש רש"י את האכילה על הדם שהוזכרה שם בעניין אחר. לדעתו, יחזקאל משתמש במליצה המורה על רציחת אנשים ולקחת רכושם, כפי שנלמד מהמשך הפסוק: על-הדם תאכלו ויעינכם תשאו אל-גלוליתכם ודם תשפכו והארץ תיבש.³⁵ אם כן, רש"י פירש את אותו ביטוי מקראי בשלוש דרכים שונות בשלושת המקומות שמופיע במקרא.

גם רד"ק מבחין בין הסיפור בש"א י"ד לאיסור אכילה על הדם בתורה. לדעתו, התורה עוסקת בחוק של עבודה זרה (כפי שנלמד מההקשר - לא תנחשו ולא תעוננו), ואילו בש"א מדובר באיסור אכילת הדם עצמו.³⁶ לדעתו, העם לא המתין כדי שהדם יזוב מהבשר, ולכן ציווה שאול לשחוט על אבן גדולה, שהדם של שדה הקרב, אפשר להבין שחיילים רעבים אכלו את הבשר בחיפזון ולא המתינו לדם שיזוב מהבשר. מאידך, גם פירושו של רד"ק לקוי בחולשה שנאלץ להבחין בין אותו ביטוי - "אכילה על הדם" - בויקרא ובשמואל.³⁷ הפשיטתא מתרגם את לא תאכלו על-הדם על איסור אכילת דם ממש: "לא תאכלון דמא."³⁸ אילו פירש רד"ק כך את הפסוק בויקרא, יכול היה לפרש בצורה עקבית את עניין האכילה על הדם בשני המקומות. מדבריו בפירושו לשמואל, משמע שרד"ק לא פירש כך בגלל שהפסוק בויקרא סומך את האכילה על הדם למעונן ומנחש, ולכן מסתבר שהאיסור שייך לאותו תחום של איסורים אלו.³⁹ גם ייתכן שרד"ק הרגיש שהפסוק ביחזקאל אינו סובל את הפירוש של אכילת הדם ממש, כי אכילה על הדם נסמכת שם לעבודה זרה: על-הדם תאכלו ויעינכם תשאו אל-גלוליתכם.

סיכום

מתוך מגוון הפירושים האפשריים לאיסור אכילה על הדם, רק שתי גישות עקרוניות מושכות תומכים רבים לאורך הדורות, מפרשני ימה"ב ועד חוקרי זמננו - קשירת האיסור לתקופת איסור בשר תאוה, וקשירת האיסור לאלילות. על פניו, הסיפור בספר שמואל תומך באפשרות הראשונה, כי שאול מגיב לחטא העם על ידי צמצום השחיטה לאבן אחת. ברם, ההקשרים בויקרא י"ט וביחזקאל ל"ג קושרים את האיסור בצורה ברורה לאלילות, כך שקשה לנתק את האיסור מזיקה לאלילות. הניסיון להבין את האיסור כמקביל או זהה לאיסור בשר תאוה גם מעורר קשיים נוספים שנזכרו לעיל, כגון העובדה שבתקופת יחזקאל הותר בשר תאוה לכל הדעות. הצעות נוספות שהוצעו במהלך הדורות, כגון אלו של רש"י ורד"ק, התקשו בכך שלא הצליחו למצוא פירוש אחד עקיב למושג "אכילה על הדם" שיסדר עם כל המקורות המקראיים.


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כל הציטוטים של ספרות חז"ל וספרות המחשבה של הראשונים נלקחו מפרוייקט השו"ת של בר אילן, גירסה 15.

- 1 מאמר זה נכתב בשנת 2005 כעבודה במסגרת של קורס בספר שמואל עם פרופ' ישעיהו מאורי. העבודה נועדה לסקור את הפרשנות המסורתית והמודרנית ליחס שבין המושג "אכילה על הדם" בספר ויקרא לאותו מושג בספר שמואל. המאמר מופיע כאן עם שינויים קלים מהעבודה המקורית ולכן נשמר האופי הבסיסי שלו כסקירת והערכת הדעות השונות בלי להגיע למסקנה חד-משמעית או להציע פירוש חדש.
 2 בכתוב יש כאן שם הוי"ה, הנקרא כשם א-להים בגלל שבא אחרי שם אדנות.
 3 הבבלי עוסק בעניין הקרבת קרבנות בלילה: "שחיטת לילה בכמת יחיד - רב ושמואל, חד אמר: כשרה, וחד אמר: פסולה; וקא מפלגי בדרכי אלעזר, דרבי אלעזר רמי קראי אהודי, כתיב: ויאמר בנדתם גלו אלי היום אבן גדולה, וכתוב: ויאמר שאול פוצו בעם ואמרתם להם הגישו אלי איש שורו ואיש שיהו ושחטתם בזה ואכלתם ולא תחטאו לה; לאכול על הדם ויגישו כל העם איש שורו בידו הלילה ושחטו שם! מר משני: כאן בחולין, כאן בקדשים; ומר משני: כאן בקדשי במה גדולה, כאן בקדשי במה קטנה." לפי הגמ', גם רב וגם שמואל מודים שהבשר שנשחט ביום (כלומר, הבשר שנאכל "על הדם") היה בשר קדשים. ברם, מסתבר ששמואל (שכדעתו סוברים גם ר' אלעזר ור' יוחנן לפי הסוגיה המקבילה בירושלמי) לא יוכל לפרש שחטאו של העם תלוי בדיני קרבנות, שהרי לדעתו השתמשו בפתרונו של שאול (האבן הגדולה) גם בלילה, כשהקריבו בשר חולין. בכל זאת, המפרשים לספר שמואל (החל מרש"י על ש"א י"ד:ל"ב ועד למצוד" ומלבי"ם שם) צירפו את ב' המקורות מהתלמוד (הגמ' בסנהדרין והגמ' בזבחים) והסיקו שלדעת חז"ל העם הקדיש את הבהמות ואז אכלו את הבשר בלי זריקת הדם, ובזה עברו על לא תאכלו על-הדם.
 4 חטאו של העם מוצג כתוצאה ישירה של שבועת שאול שאין לאכול כל היום. ראה גרסיאל (בתוך אנציקלופדיה עולם התנ"ך על אתר), שאכילה על הדם מובאת כאן כי היא מבטאת את המגמה של כישלונות שאול. שבועתו הבלתי-חיונית הכשילה לא רק את יונתן אלא גם את שאר העם. וראה גם בר-אפרת (תשנ"ו), שמעיד שאול מגיב בנחישות לחטאו של העם כי יותר נוח למנהיג כמותו לטפל בבעיה באופן כזה מלהודות שהוא גרם לכך ע"י השבעת העם מלאכול.
 5 גם רש"י ורד"ק על אתר הרגישו שדברי חז"ל אינם הולמים את פשוטו של מקרא כאן. רש"י הציע פירוש משלו לפני שהוסיף "ורבותינו דרשו" ורד"ק הביא את דברי חז"ל והוסיף "אבל אין משמעות פשטי הפסוקים אלא כמו שפרשנו".
 6 הזיקה שבין ערלה לאכילה על הדם נידונה כבר בספרות חז"ל; ע' ויקרא רבה על אתר. בסוף דבריו, מציע ראב"ע שאיסור לא תאכלו על-הדם גם בא למנוע עבודה לשעירים, ולכן הוא גם מסתדר עם המצוות הבאות, מעונן ומנחש.
 7 החוקרים מציינים את וילהויון כראשון שנקט בגישה זו (ראה, למשל, קריפמן 1966), אבל היא אומצה ע"י חוקרים רבים. ראה, למשל, מקארטר (1980).
 8 הרבה חוקרים מכחישים את נוכחותו של הארון בספור זה, כי מעדיפים את גרסת השבעים לפסוק י"ח, לפיה ביקש שאול להגיש אפוד, ולא ארון.
 9 ע' תלמוד בבלי (חולין ט"ז: ושם) המביא מחלוקת בין ר' עקיבא לר' ישמעאל בהבנת דברים י"ב:כ"א-כ"ב. לדעת ר' ישמעאל, נאסר בשר תאוה עד שנכנסו לארץ ישראל והתורה באה בספר דברים להתיר בשר תאוה מעת כניסתם לארץ ישראל. לדעת ר"ע, הותר אפ' בשר נחירה (שלא נשחט כראוי) במדבר, והתורה באה בספר דברים לאסור בשר נחירה ברגע שנכנסים לארץ ישראל. הבבלי קובע שלדעת ר"ע מעולם לא נאסר בשר תאוה (ע' תוד"ה רבי עקיבא). מקור האיסור לדעת ר' ישמעאל שנוי במח' הראשונים. רש"י (שם ד"ה נאסר) סובר שויקרא י"ז אוסר בשר תאוה, כי הוא דורש שיביאו את בהמתם לאהל מועד (וע' גם רש"י עה"ת, שפירש בויקרא י"ז כדעת ר"ע ובדברים י"ב כדעת ר' ישמעאל). תוס' (ד"ה שבתחלה) סוברים שויקרא י"ז עוסק רק בקדשים, ובא לאסור שחוטי חוץ, ומציעים להפיק את איסור בשר תאוה במדבר מעצם העובדה שהתורה הצטרפה להתיר בשר תאוה בדברים י"ב.
 10 מקארטר מצוין כמה פסוקים התומכים בתפיסה זו: אף בְּשֵׁר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ דָּמָו לֹא תֹאכְלוּ, כִּי-נִפְשׁ הַבְּשָׂר בְּדָם הוּא וְאֵינִי נֹתְתִי לָכֶם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם כִּי-הֵדָם הוּא בְּנִפְשׁוֹ וְכַפֵּר, כִּן חִזַּק לְבַלְתִּי אֲכַל הֵדָם כִּי הֵדָם הוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְלֹא-תֹאכְלֵם הַנֶּפֶשׁ עִם-הַבְּשָׂר.
 11 רד"ץ הופמן (תרפ"ח) מביא שפירוש זה נאמר כבר ע"י גראף, כאשר פיתח את תורת התעודות ושלא את קדמותו של ספר ויקרא.

- 12 קויפמן גם טוען שספר ויקרא אינו מכיר כמה מושגי יסוד של דברים, כגון ריכוז פולחן, ולכן הוא מקדים את ספר ויקרא, כנ"ל.
- 13 יש חידוש מופלג בדברי קויפמן, כי לדעתו אהל מועד בויקרא י"ז מהווה אב-טיפוס לכל הבמות ואינו מוסב על אוהל מועד דווקא. בשעה שלפי רוב הפרשנים ויקרא י"ז אוסר בשר תאוה, קויפמן טוען שויקרא י"ז רק בא למנוע זביחה לשעירים, אבל מתירה לזבוח הן באהל מועד והן בכל מזבח רשמי.
- 14 ע' משנה, זבחים י"ד:ר, ותלמוד בבלי, מגילה י'.
- 15 רוב הפרשנים המסורתיים כנראה אינם מקבלים את האפשרות שנאסרה בשר תאוה אחרי חורבן שילה; ע' רד"ק כאן. הרמב"ם (מו"נ חלק שלישי פרק מ"ו) מסביר שרק אסרו בשר תאוה במדבר, כי התורה תולה את האיסור בחשש של עבודה לשעירים, ועבודה זו רווחה במדבר דווקא. לפי זה, משנכנסו לארץ ישראל לא הייתה סיבה לאסור בשר תאוה גם בזמן היתר כמות. גם משמע מדברי הגמ' בחולין ט"ז: שר' ישמעאל התיר בשר תאוה אחרי הכניסה לארץ, אפילו בשעת היתר כמות. הגמ' מתקשה בדברי המשנה "לעולם שוחטין", שלכאורה אין בהם שום חידוש. היא מתרצת שהם דברי ר' ישמעאל, וקא משמע לן שהנה על פי שנאסרה שחיטת חולין במדבר, הכניסה לארץ התירה שחיטת חולין "לעולם" – ואפילו אם יצאו בני"ג לגלות. למרות שאין הגמ' מתייחסת במפורש למקרה של היתר כמות בארץ ישראל, הקביעה ששחיטת חולין הותרה "לעולם", והטענה שר' ישמעאל הרגיש את נצחיות היתר כרי שלא נטעה לחשוב שמדובר בהיתר זמני, שוללות את פירושו של ר"י קרא.
- 16 במקום אחר, מציג גרינץ התקפה חריפה ושיטתית נגד עצם ההנחה הרווחת בחקר המקרא שיאשיהו היה דמות מרכזית בתהליך ריכוז הפולחן; ראה "הסיפור על 'הרפורמה' של אישיהו וספר דברים" בתוך לוריא, ב.צ. עיונים בס מלכים, כך ב' (ירושלים, קרית ספר: החברה לחקר המקרא בישראל, 1985) 349-361.
- 17 סגל (1964) תמה על רד"ק הופמן על שתקף את דברי וילהוזין בדרך זו, הואיל וקושיא זו מערערת גם על פירוש חז"ל ששאל הקריב את הבשר כקדשים.
- 18 בחרנו להביא רק דוגמא אחת. רד"ק הופמן מציע כ-5 דוגמאות נוספות, אבל חלק מהם נראו לנו כדחוקות, כגון הוכחותיו מהאבות, שחיו לפני מתן התורה.
- 19 קושיא זו נכונה לפי נוסח המסורה, שגורס וַיִּשְׁחַטוּ אֶת-הָעֵז אִישׁ שׂוֹרוֹ בְּיָדוֹ הַלְיָהּ וַיִּשְׁחַטוּ שָׁם. ברם, אין שום מקבילה למילה "הלילה" בתרגום השבעים. דרייוור (1913) גם מביא שיש חוקרים שהגיהו את הפסוק להיקרא וַיִּשְׁחַטוּ אֶת-הָעֵז אִישׁ שׂוֹרוֹ בְּיָדוֹ לֵה' וַיִּשְׁחַטוּ שָׁם.
- 20 ע' במאמרו של גרינץ, הערה 51, שם מובאים מקורות מספרות חז"ל על איסור הקרבת הקרבנות בלילה.
- 21 ע' בפירושי רשב"ם ורמב"ן לויקרא ופירושי רלב"ג, ר"י אבן-כספי, ואברבנאל לש"א.
- 22 כך כותב רשב"ם שם שלא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם הוא "דבר הלמד מעניינו."
- 23 ארליך מסיק שהאיסור הוא לאכול דם במקום השחיטה, כדי שאנשים לא יהיה ליבם גם במראה הדם ויתרגלו לשפיכות דמים. העם אכל על הדם כדי לאכול מיד, בלי לטרוח להתרחק ממקום השחיטה. נימוק זה לאיסור לא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם אינו נמצא בשום פרשן אחר הידוע לי.
- 24 לפי נה"מ, לא נאמר ששאלו התייעץ באורים לפני שאירעה האכילה על הדם. בפסוק י"ח כתוב וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוֹל לְאַחֶיזָה הַגִּישָׁה אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים. בהמשך הפרק, שאלו שואל "בָּא-לֵהֵם" (פס' ל') ואינו נענה, ושוב שואל הַבָּה תָּמִים ולוכד את יונתן. ייתכן שרמב"ן סבור שהגשת הארון פירושה שאילה באורים ותומים. גם ייתכן שהפיק מהשאלה שלא נענתה אח"כ שגם בתחילת הפרק לא הספיק שאלו להגיש את הארון בגלל שה' לא רצה לענות אותו. (לכאורה, העובדה ששאלו לא נענה חשוכה לפירושו של רמב"ן, כי היא מסבירה למה ירגיש העם שהוא זקוק לעזרת השדים.) יש לציין שהשבעים גורסים בפסוק י"ח "הגישה האפור."
- 25 ראה פירושו של מילגראם לויקרא, הדין אם יש לתרגם את "על הדם" on the blood או כ- the blood.
- 26 יש לציין שהטקס שהזכירו רשב"ם ועוד כמה חכמי צרפת (ראה בכור שור וחזקוני על אתר) שונה מאד הטקס שמזכיר הרמב"ם. רשב"ם מדבר על אכילת דם אדם אחרי שהאדם נרצח, ואילו הרמב"ם מדבר על אכילת בשר בהמה שחוטתה.
- 27 יש לציין שבמשנה תורה מביא הרמב"ם את פירושי התלמוד של הפסוק לֹא תִאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם ואינו

- מביא את פירושו במו"נ, המבוסס על הבנתו בפשוטו של מקרא. ראה במקורות שהובאו במהדו' מ' שוורץ של מו"נ על אתר.
- 28 ראה דרשות ר"י אבן-שועיב (שם) שהשיג על הרמב"ם בנקודה זו, לאור העובדה שהתורה מנמקת את איסור אכילת הדם באופן אחר.
- 29 אמנם בני"ג לא היו במגע ישיר עם היוונים בתקופת התורה והנביאים הראשונים, אבל גרינץ טוען שאפשר להוכיח שפולחן דומה התקיים גם במצרים ובמסופוטמיה בתקופה קדומה.
- 30 גרינץ רושם שבע דברים, אבל הבאנו רק את אלה שנוגעים לעניינינו.
- 31 קושיא זו אינה נראית לי חמורה במיוחד. ספר דברים רק התיר את שפיכת הדם. הוא לא התיר אכילה אצל מקום שפיכתו ואף לא התיר להזות את הדם על הקרקע בצורה טקסית. ספק אם שפיכת הדם בלבד יש בה חשש עבורה וזה, כי הפסוקים בדברים מדגישים שאין שום תוכן דתי (יהודי או אלילי) בשחיטת זאכילת בשר תאוה. גם יש לציין שגרינץ נשמר מקושיא זו כאשר טוען שהחשש לעבודת השעירים קיימת רק במדבר ולא במקום יישוב. ויקרא י"ז עוסק בעם השוהה במדבר, ודברים י"ב עוסק בעם הנכנס לארץ.
- 32 הגמרא מביאה פירושים שלא הזכרנום כאן הואיל והם רחוקים מאד מפשוטו של מקרא, ואינם שופכים שום אור על הסיפור בש"א י"ד, כגון האיסור לאכול לפני התפילה, האיסור לאכול ביום שמוציאים אדם להורג, ואזהרת בן סורר ומורה. הגמ' גם אומרת שהפסוק מהווה "לאו שבכללות", מה שמלמד שלדעתה לא ראה כל חכם את דרשתו כפירוש הבלעדי לפסוק. בשביל דרשות נוספות על הפסוק לא תִּאָכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם, ראה תורה שלמה על דברים י"ט:כ"ה. וראה פירוש ר' בחיי שם, שהביא שחז"ל דרשו מכאן שאין דנים דיני נפשות בבוקר. רח"ד שוועל (במהדורתו של פירוש ר' בחיי שם) מעיר שלא מצא שום מקור בחז"ל לדין זה, חוץ מהוזהר.
- 33 דברי חזקוני קשים גם לפי הסבירו של הרב שוועל, כי מפורש בש"א י"ד שהעם אכן שחט את הבשר גם כאשר חטאו: וַיִּקְחוּ צֹאן וּבָקָר וּבְגֵי בָקָר וַיִּשְׁחַטוּ אֶת-הָעֵז וַיֹּאכְלוּ הָעָם עַל-הַדָּם. פתרונו של שאול לא היה כעצם השחיטה, אלא כדרישתו מהם לשחוט אצלו, באבן הגדולה. בכל מקרה, יש לציין שגם בכור שור וגם חזקוני מוסיפים פירוש אלטרנטיבי של אכילה על הדם כטקס אלילי הודמה לטקס שהוזכר ברשב"ם. הדמיון בין דבריהם בפירוש השני מעיד על השפעת בכור שור על חזקוני בפסוק זה, ואולי נותן גיבוי לטענת הרב שוועל שגם פירושו הראשון של חזקוני מקביל לפירושו הראשון של בכור שור (אבר מן החי, ולא נבילה).
- 34 ברם, לא ברור מה חשיבותה של האבן הגדולה. וכי לא יכול היה שאלו להשליט סדר בלי האבן? ע' בפירוש כלי יקר לר"ש לאנדיאנו (ד"ה אך ק"ק) שהקשה כך על רש"י ותיירץ ברוחק.
- 35 וראה עוד בתוספת המופיעה בפירושו ר"י קרא ליחזקאל שם.
- 36 רד"ק גם מביא את הפירוש של חז"ל שנכשל העם באיסור אכילת הבשר לפני זריקת הדם, אך טוען שאין פירוש זה הולם את פשוטו של מקרא.
- 37 ביחזקאל ל"ג מפרש רד"ק את הפסוק עַל-הַדָּם תִּאָכְלוּ בהתאם לפירושו על הפסוק בויקרא - חוץ של עבורה וזה.
- 38 ע' צפור (2003) על אתר (הערה 21), המעיר שהפשיטת על שמואל ועל יחזקאל מתרגם את אכילת הדם בצורה מילולית, כך שאין להפיק מפסוקים אלה איך פירשו מתרגמיהם את המושג "אכילה על הדם".
- 39 ראה בפירושו של רד"ק הופמן לויקרא שם, שהביא חוקרים שפירשו את ויקרא י"ט:כ"ה על אכילת דם ממש, ורד"ק הופמן דחה את דבריהם בגלל הסמיכות למעונן ומנחש.