



KOL HAMEVASER

The Jewish Thought Magazine
of the Yeshiva University Student Body



JEWISH PHILOSOPHY



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JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In the last edition of *Kol Hamevaser*, “Kedoshim Tihyu,” editor Gilah Kletenik wrote a thought-provoking editorial entitled “Over-Sexualized.” The piece left readers shocked but reflective. Kletenik presented untraditional ideas and questioned the lifestyle systems that so many of us are accustomed to. While I give credence to the complexity of the issues presented in the article, I find fault with a number of her claims.

The first issue that Kletenik raises is that of our educational system. While a mother forbids her teenage daughter from watching “Gossip Girl,” she willingly retires to her own bedroom and tunes into the latest episode of “Desperate Housewives.” Yes, this is hypocrisy. This confuses the daughter, generating tension and bitterness. Gilah writes of our children that “we expect, even demand, that they successfully sift through popular culture, spurning the sexual and embracing the acceptable – that they be experts at this cultural gymnastic. Is this fair, even possible?” She begs for an alternative route, saying, “There must be another way, and if there is none, we have failed.” Coincidentally, there is one. And it is neither the Satmar way of isolationism nor the approach of total secularism that Kletenik mentions.

Rav Soloveitchik, in his article “Confrontation,” discusses a major conflict within man. On the one hand, man is a member of the external universe, thrust into a dynamic world of opportunity and danger, but at the same time he is a member of his individual faith, bound to the laws of his religious teachings. These two elements, the Rav argues, cannot be perceived as opposing one another. He writes, “The Westernized Jew maintains that it is impossible to engage in both confrontations, the universal and the covenantal, which, in his opinion, are mutually exclusive... Hence, the Western Jew concludes, we have to choose between these two encounters.”ⁱ But this is simply not the case. Halakhah places great value on the acquisition of knowledge, and recognizes a person’s thirst for culture and even leisure. Isolationism, for many, is not the correct path in leading a vigorous and flourishing Jewish lifestyle. The system to which the Rav refers is one that accepts culture’s most valuable aspects and incorporates them into the Jewish faith. This can only be successful, however, if it is joined with an unwavering commitment to the Torah’s laws.

I agree; it is not easy. But it is fair, and it is possible. The mere fact that something is challenging is by no means a reason to disregard it. As our youth enter the “real world,” we can prepare them to make the proper choices, train them to hold their ground. Given the difficulties of effectively making the right choices, would it be preferable to abandon all sense of morals and wholly indulge in every television show, or wear the all-too-revealing skinny jeans? I think not. With the appropriate

guidance, a person can lead a lifestyle of the right decisions and balance. This process is not simple, but should not be rejected only because of its complexities. Life is not black and white.

The second issue raised is that of the halakhic system and its seeming inflexibility. With this, I disagree strongly. Halakhah certainly accounts for the changes in times and can be modified based on current realities. For example, “the halakhot concerning the exchange of coins of various metals do not apply if one changes nickels for a quarter, as Hazal dealt with multiple currencies and the United States has only a single currency, albeit with units of different metals.”ⁱⁱ In such a case, as Rav Lichtenstein points out, the Halakhah can change due to the differing situations we encounter. Even so, this only applies where the reality has changed, not the attitudes towards the reality. Therefore the modern approach towards sexuality should not alter our halakhic norms.

Given that nowadays more women consider it appropriate to wear outrageously revealing clothing, should we, as Jewish women, do the same? Do parts of a woman’s body become less sexual simply because they are revealed more often? From the perspective of Halakhah, that which is labeled *ervah*, with the

herself out of a sense of self-respect, not shame. I am not trying to pull a Gila Manolson here, but let us face it – she does make some good points.

These matters are complex and should therefore not be disregarded. Life is confusing, and we ought not to embrace either extreme. Balance is key. We must not neglect the world that we are thrust into – it has many positive things to offer us, even as Jews. But it is vital that we remain steadfast in our commitment to God and His laws, no matter how badly we want to tune in to the next episode of “Gossip Girl.”

Sincerely,
Shalvi Berger, SCW ‘11

ⁱ Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought* 6,2 (1964): 5-29. Available online at: <http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/soloveitchik/>.



Source: upload.wikimedia.com

ⁱⁱ Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, “The Human and Social Factor in Halakhah,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought* 36,1 (2002): 13-14. See *Bava Metsi’a* 44a-45b.

Dear Editor,

Most would say that I am a typical Stern student. I went to Yeshiva schools all my life, I spent my time in Israel, and now I am finishing up my time here at Stern College. At the bottom of this article it will not list my credentials. I am not the president of any club, nor do I run anything. I usually let things run their course and I do not normally speak up, but there is something that I cannot keep quiet about.

The most recent *Kol Hamevaser* ran an editorial by Gilah Kletenik entitled “Over-Sexualized.” I, like so many of my fellow students, was completely outraged by such a skewed view on the topic that displayed such disrespect, and I just could not let this pass without voicing my opinion. The article said that we have to come to grips with what goes on with high school students behind closed doors, suggesting that we should teach children the “safe way” to break Halakhah. This is like having a class that tells us the best way to commit an illegal act. After all, Halakhah is a set of laws that we are expected to follow under all circumstances! Since when do we let high school students and the things that they are doing set the tone for what should and should not be accepted in the Jewish community? I do agree that we should stop pretending that the problem does not exist, but I do not believe that the answer is to change Halakhah. There needs to be better education in halakhic topics, firmly teaching what is right and wrong, taught by teachers that students can relate to. Accepting the problem means that we are essentially accepting a complete and total disregard for Halakhah, and this is something that we should never stand for!

The article spoke about the influences of pop culture. The facts may be that we are influenced by pop culture and the outside world, but that does not mean that we have to emulate it. Anyone who thinks that has perhaps been influenced already and needs to take a personal look within himself and not point fingers outward.

Furthermore, I wonder why this question was spoken about so harshly and negatively. Is this not the very question that the YU community deals with every day? The slogan of the school is Torah u-Madda, is it not? We try hard to find the balance between both the secular and religious worlds that *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* has put before us. This is one way to be a Torah-true Jew without having to be Satmar – as an answer to your question.

Are we so afraid to stand out? Too afraid to accept our position as the *Am ha-Nivhar*, the chosen people, and all the details that come along with that position? Open your eyes and recognize that we are supposed to be different

Jewish Philosophy

My Documentary Hypothesis

BY: Rabbi Arthur Balanson

Editor's Note: This article was written by Jesse Lempel on behalf of R. Balanson.

DEJP. PEJD. EDJP. I have only these letters to play with. Mix and mash, ceaselessly rearrange, like a game of Scrabble I cannot win. These awkward, clumsy letters that will not line up right, will not make sense. They are painted on everything I look at. They glow in

match up events in his life to that of his namesake, connecting all the dots, reading the divine plan like an oracle. Yossi is an assistant rabbi now, in case you were curious, and has a lovely wife and three girls. I am proud. I am an old fool. My wife, Ellen (of blessed memory), passed on almost four years ago, my kids are grown up and out of the house, and I was taking on fewer responsibilities at my pulpit. I was just waiting for a crisis to come and keep me company.

It is a funny thing, I think, that an old man



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the dark and are tattooed on the inside of my eyelids. So I stare a stupid, mindless stare, like a pimple-faced teenager gawking at a beautiful girl. Yes, there is temptation. And with each look I am reminded of my frustration, my fear, my solitude, my shame.

They are just so ugly; they lack form and order and unity. I tried about a million times to set them right, you know, like rotating the letters till they embrace each other and become one – if you flip the P upside-down, it can slide into the hook of the J... or you can unravel the J a little and wrap it around the D... That is where I got stuck. Oh God (by whichever name Thou please), Thy Book of Peace Thou hast given – will Thou not let me read it in peace, like I read it as a child, with my father, my teacher, peace be upon him?

Week by week, verse by verse, familiar narratives were unfolded and reframed in sermons and pamphlets everywhere. “In this week’s *parashah*...” For God’s sake, I named my son Yosef because he was born in the week of *Parashat Va-Yiggash*. For years, I would

wants company so he dials up a crisis of faith like it is an escort service. When King David was old and cold and needed company, he got himself a young virgin. I got myself a dead German (is this telephone broken?). I had always been somewhat aware of the Documentary Hypothesis and the work of Julius Wellhausen – that was nothing new. What is more, I confess to being mostly ignorant of the details of Biblical Criticism. It was not its particular challenges or proofs that got to me; it was just a feeling that gradually swelled up within me, like that peculiar churning and suction before you vomit. My whole life I had been asking questions on the biblical text and, from my pulpit, giving answers wrapped in a warm message of faith and hope and justice. But now, I had Questions.

Churning and suction – and then I vomited. I do not really know how it happened, but I would read through the Torah and it looked different. I started noticing the cover and the shape and the weight of it, and it looked just like any other book. It was a book and that is

it – no magic, no flare. Where was the Book of Life that I had known forever?

Tablets of stone engraved with light, borne by angels and Moses’ might, have turned in my eyes to gossipy lore, a mouthful of sand where was water before – is there no potion to return me my sight?

This was my condition – an old rabbi battling new heresy – for quite some time, until my recent recovery. But before I recount my convalescence, which is, after all, the reason I am writing, it is important to emphasize the gravity of my situation at the time. Although my faith in the existence of a Creator was never shaken, the Torah was quickly changing into a flimsy piece of parchment best kept in the museums. Is not the Torah just a collection of myths from an ancient tribe, like so many others in history? Why should I think that God wrote it? Am I not a fraud? And here come the letters. JEPD. EPDJ. Page, pigeon, edged-up, Jupiter: How will this end? Oh Jupiter, how will I end?

And so, humbled, on my knees, praying to God for a restoration of my faith, I felt empty. The best idea I could come up with was to relive the experiences of my childhood – to drench my balding head in gasoline, hold myself close to the flame of my youth and hope that I catch fire. I decided to revisit a famous passage of Talmud, often taught to children and beginners, and one that I had learned with my father, my teacher, peace be upon him. The Talmud probes the scope of the injunction to “redeem thy firstborn son.”ⁱ According to the Talmud, R. Yehudah and the Rabbis debated the following issue: Is the biblical command to redeem oneself (if one was not redeemed as a child) similar to a written legal contract (because it is written in the Torah), and therefore results in a lien on one’s possessions, or is it similar to an oral agreement, which does not generate a lien?ⁱⁱ

The comparison of the Torah text to a legal monetary document stuck with me for several days afterwards. So now I had that in my head next to the nonsense letters. I recalled my days in Yeshiva long ago, learning *Masekhet Gittin*, delving into the world of *shetarot*, of legal documents. The most basic concern of one holding a *shetar* is that someone will claim that it is a forgery. And, like an angel, to his aid comes the Halakhah, protecting the *shetar* from those who wish it harm. As students, we struggled to understand who or what is protecting the *shetar* from claims of forgery and deception, and to this end we devoted countless hours of study. I became aware that I was merely a character in a tal-mudic passage, brazenly claiming that the

and to stand out from everyone else and accept that with pride! The answer is NOT to bend Halakhah or to make it fit to our modern day lives but the opposite—make our modern day lives fit with Halakhah the way it was intended.

In addition, as a *shmata*-wearer myself (I believe that is the way you put it!) [a reference to the covering that married women wear on their heads—ed.], it seems that you did not bother to get my opinion or suggest that there are other opinions out there. You see, if you had come to me, I would have told you that I am quite proud to wear a scarf on my head to symbolize that I am a married woman and that I am not like all the other non-religious married woman out there. I know that I am special and solely for my husband. I do not feel that I have become an over-sexualized human being who has been forced to cover up who I am. I feel the opposite—that I am perhaps more *kadosh*, and that I have an opportunity to keep another one of the commandments that I choose to live my life by.

Who do we think we are, suggesting that Halakhah should change or modify itself? For thousands of years it has been the same, but because we have T.V we think we can change it? Or perhaps because things are harder, it is okay for us to throw our hands up in the air and say that Halakhah has to change for us so that we do not have to work so hard? If we look back in history, we can see that over and over again this has been the exact downfall of the Jewish people. Every time we try and become like the other nations we are afflicted with punishments, from the time *Mitsrayim*, to the time of the *Nevi'im*, to Germany in the 1930s. Please be strong enough to think harder and appreciate being a Jew so that we do not have to deal with these issues again. We need to show *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* that we are up to the challenge now more than ever.

As a final note, I would like to add that as a YU paper, I believe you have a very hard job. Choosing what is appropriate while still allowing for freedom of speech is not an easy task. However, when you carry the Yeshiva name, I think that it is important that you are careful not to include anything that may conflict with Halakhah!

Sincerely,
Natanya Horowitz, SCW '09

Torah was a forged *shetar*, and realizing that the Halakhah will of course protect it from my silly assault.

What power is it that shields the *shetar*, and might it not lend itself to guard the holy Torah as well? So I began to sift through decades-old memories and notes, trying to reconstruct shiurim that I probably did not fully grasp in the first place. The starting point is the statement of Reish Lakish that “the testimony of witnesses signed on a *shetar* is considered as already processed in court.” (“*Edim he-hatumim al ha-shetar, na’asu ke-mi she-nehkerah edutan be-beit din.*”)ⁱⁱⁱ If you say so, Rabbi Lakish – but how to explain it?

There is a *mahaloket* – two approaches diverged in a wood. The more traveled road is that by some combination of reasonable assumptions, we can dismiss the claim of forgery. This seems to be the view of Rashi,^{iv} who explains that we assume that no one has the chutzpah to outright forge a *shetar*. Therefore, when we see a *shetar* that says that so-and-so lent money to so-and-so, and it has the signatures of two witnesses, we assume that the loan actually occurred.^v

I had heard this one before. Could Moses have had the gall to claim that the entire Jewish people – 600,000 men above twenty, probably about 2 million people in all – had heard Hashem speak at Mt. Sinai if it did not happen? Would anyone have believed him? If that never occurred, would they not have said he was crazy and never have accepted any of the mitsvot? Nobody has the chutzpah to make up a story like that and get away with it, so essentially the very fact that our ancestors adopted the Torah is tantamount to mass testimony that it is divine. This is commonly referred to as the *Kuzari* Principle, since it is loosely based on an argument in R. Yehudah ha-Levi’s classic work of the same title.

Furthermore, if you admit that there is a Higher Power (an assumption which, although perhaps not logically provable, is intuitively appealing), and I certainly did, would it not make sense that that Power would want to communicate with us somehow? We are here for *some* reason, after all, and should we not be told what that reason is? If so, then the Torah is a pretty good candidate for the divine message. It is the oldest monotheistic text (polytheists do not count), belonging to the descendants of the original monotheists, and nearly all other monotheistic religions acknowledge its authenticity (though they may challenge its relevance or interpretation). So what is the problem?

This, unfortunately, did not help. I had doubts about the most serious thing in my life, my entire life, and all I was getting were some reasonable assumptions! And even those were shaky. So I moved on to the other, more radical approach in understanding Reish Lakish’s principle, most notably associated with R. Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk.^{vi} He claimed that the *shetar* actually testifies as to its own veracity, overcoming the apparent problem of circular logic by some halakhic magic. In other words, if someone claims that the *shetar* is a fake, he is automatically contradicted by

two witnesses (a halakhic knock-out) – the *shetar* itself!

This was a familiar argument as well. Over the course of my career, I must have told three dozen skeptics that if only they would learn the Torah for themselves their doubts would vanish. The Torah is its own authenticator. Anyone who studies it – genuinely plumbs its depths – will be convinced beyond question that these are the words of the Living God. I knew the argument by heart; I knew how to say it with just the right amount of confidence, of excitement; I even knew how to bring my voice up to a crescendo at the word “depths,” and how to execute that perfect, breath-taking cadence at “Living God” with just the right flash in my eyes and my brow wrinkled just a bit. That argument, and the Torah itself, had become a stale donut; sucking on it for a while was not going to make it fresh again.

So I sat flipping through my notes, thinking: “That’s it? That’s all I got?” When I look at the Bible, I see only letters – no holiness, no truth. You cannot just tell me that I am not looking hard enough. This is the hardest I have looked in my entire life – harder than when I heard those shiurim on *Gittin* – and still I fail. Is the Torah one of those stupid optical picture-puzzles that people stare at in magazines – you either see it or you do not? What kind of religion – what kind of God – would do that to me?

Disappointed with my Torah-as-*shetar* idea, and feeling incredibly foolish (what was I thinking?), I despaired. I did not know what to do. Could I continue to live a lie, to go on being an unbelieving rabbi? Was I willing to abandon my way of life, my God, my people – to abandon my father, my teacher, peace be upon him? I thought about what it would be like to make a drastic change – to jump ship and quit – and it was unthinkable. That much I knew for certain – to betray my faith was completely out of the question.

And that was an idea, an epiphany, a lifesaver. Perhaps this is the real explanation of Reish Lakish’s cryptic statement, which holds that we ignore the rabble-rouser who screams “Forgery!” because the testimony of the *shetar* is considered “processed in court.” This is not a collection of assumptions or a self-verifying mechanism. In fact, it is not a method of verification at all. Instead, it is simply a way of coping with the challenge. So how do we deal with this assault?

Reish Lakish is saying that a *shetar* is part-and-parcel of the judicial system and therefore is not subject to the challenges of any individual. The *shetar* is an accepted institution and tool of the court, and as such is already “processed in court.” To attack the *shetar* is tantamount to attacking the entire court system, and nobody has the power to do that without indisputable proof! Essentially, instead of verifying the authenticity of the *shetar* – a nearly impossible task – we undermine the standing of the challenger to claim that it is a fake. We do not have to defend the entire judicial system against every whining Joe Shmoe, and neither must we defend the *shetar*.

The Torah, too, has been “processed in court.” It stood as the centerpiece of the Jewish people for millennia, and is part of the Jewish identity. Indeed, everything that makes us a people is in the Torah, and we are certainly a special people. I am a Jew; I could no more reject the Torah than deny my own Jewishness, and I know that I cannot do either. Jews throughout history have integrated the Torah into every sphere of their lives, and, as a result, to be Jewish has no meaning if it does not include the Torah. And I am a Jew. This, I feel, is the most comforting and satisfying argument, and it is what inspired me to renew my faith with even greater confidence than before.

In *Parashat Terumah*, we read: “And thou shalt put into the Ark the Testimony which I shall give thee.”^{vii} Rashi explains that the Testimony refers to “the Torah, which serves as testimony between Me and you that I have commanded upon you the mitsvot that are written in it.”^{viii} The Torah is a testimonial document, a *shetar*, and is not vulnerable to my claims. I do not have the standing.

Jesse Lempel is a sophomore at YC majoring in English.

ⁱ Exodus 13:13.

ⁱⁱ *Kiddushin* 29b.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Gittin* 3a, *Ketubbot* 18b.

^{iv} *Gittin* 3a, s.v. “*na’aseh ke-mi.*”

^v *Netivot ha-Mishpat* (28:7, 48:5) expanded this idea and claimed that the witnesses on the *shetar* do not actually testify about its content – that is, the particular loan or sale in question – but simply establish that the lender in fact agreed to write the *shetar*, and we generously assume that the transaction took place afterward.

^{vi} *Hilkhot Edut* 3:4, *Hilkhot Geirushin* 12:3.

^{vii} Exodus 25:16.

^{viii} Rashi to *ibid*, s.v. “*ha-edut.*” See Ibn Ezra who compares the Torah to a “*shetar ketubah.*” I often cite this beautiful idea at weddings or a *sheva berakhot*.

When Logic Meets Flew: On the Meaningfulness of Theological Assertions

BY: Alex Ozar

We theists have had somewhat of a hard time in the last few centuries, sustaining attacks from all sides. Even to the philosophically uninitiated, many of the stock atheistic arguments, from the argument from evil to basic skepticism, are commonplace. The conclusions of these arguments are that theistic beliefs are wrong or simply unjustified, and that holding them is at best non-obligatory and at worst a grave breach of epistemological scruples. What is less known is a line of argument, popular in the twentieth century, which concludes that theological claims are not wrong or right at all; they are simply meaningless.

Antony Flew, whom William James might have called a “delicious *enfant terrible*,” wrote in 1950 of what he deemed “the peculiar danger, the endemic evil, of theological utterance.” Professor Flew believes (I write as if it were now 1950, as there is much debate about Professor Flew’s current beliefs) that theological assertions, or assertions about theological matters, are in fact not assertions at all. I would like to ascertain precisely what Professor Flew means, why he thinks we should accept his claims, and whether in fact we should. (One brief note: I will be using the words “assertion” and “proposition” interchangeably.)

Flew writes, “Now to assert that such and such is the case is necessarily equivalent to denying that such and such is not the case.” As he explains in a footnote, what he means is simply that $P = \neg\neg P$, an uncontroversial principle which many of us recognize as “Double Negation.” For the purposes of constructing the argument, let’s state the principle as follows: “For any P , P is a proposition if and only if there is some Q such that the negation of the negation of Q is equivalent to P .” Now, though Flew never fully and explicitly articulates this, he seems to say that in the case of the proposition “there is a God,” there is in fact no such proposition Q such that the negation of its negation is equivalent to the proposition “there is a God.” To motivate this assertion, Flew tells an interesting parable he borrowed from John Wisdom. I will quote it here in full, as I think it captures well the argument’s compelling force.

“Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, ‘Some gardener must tend this plot.’ The other disagrees: ‘There is no gardener.’ So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. ‘But perhaps he is an invisible gardener.’ So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember

how H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. "But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves." At last the Sceptic despairs, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?" From this, Flew reasons that there is no proposition Q the denial of which would imply the denial of "there is a God," and that "there is a God" is therefore meaningless, or not an assertion at



Source: www.photoshoptalent.com

all.

This is quite silly. Of course there's such a proposition Q; it's just P, "there is a God." There is in fact a proposition such that its denial implies the denial of "there is a God;" it's "there is a God." Perhaps, though, we should be more generous; maybe Flew meant that P is an assertion if and only if there is a proposition Q such that Q is not logically equivalent to P (that is, ignoring the modality of entailment: it is not the case that "P if and only if Q") and that the denial of Q implies the denial of P. In other words, it is the case that if not Q then not P, but is not the case that if Q then P. Let's look at an example of this. Let P mean "there are apples in my shoes" and let Q mean "there are fruits in my shoes." It is then the case that if not Q then not P: if my shoes lack fruit, they lack apples too. But is not the case that if Q then P, for my shoes may contain fruits other than apples. Therefore, "there are apples in my shoes" counts as an assertion by Flew's criteria. How would this relate to "there is a God?" It seems that this proposition too would pass muster. Let P mean "there is a God," and let Q mean "there are beings." It is then the case that if not Q then not P, and it is not the case that if Q then P, so we may safely conclude according to Flew that "there is a God" is a meaningful

assertion. So on this construal of Flew's premise, his argument is decidedly unsuccessful.

Likely, Flew means to add an additional stipulation: Q must be empirically verifiable. (I should note here that per the current suggestion it seems possible to drop the previous paragraph's qualification.) Flew would be claiming that a necessary condition for assertionhood is empirical verifiability. "There are apples in my shoe" is empirically verifiable, as is its negation, and so it makes a good assertion. "There is a God" is not empirically verifiable, or it can at least be reasonably denied that it is, and so it should be deemed not an assertion. Even if we momentarily take the plausibility of this claim seriously, I am inclined to say it is incoherent, or at least that anyone holding this opinion in conjunction with myriad normal beliefs would be guilty of inconsistent believing. Take P to mean: "the number two is prime." Now, it seems to me that there is no Q such that Q is empirically verifiable and the negation of Q implies the negation of P. Even if P were "one plus one equals two," a rather fundamental proposition, I would be strongly inclined to believe that no empirical observation could ever shake us of our conviction in P. If every time we added one and one things we got three, we would conclude that something rather strange was amiss in the laws of physics and nature, but we would not question our mathematical intuitions. Is Flew prepared to say that "one plus one equals two" is not an assertion and is meaningless? I cannot imagine. But if he accepts the assertionhood of "one plus one equals two," by what criteria will he deny assertionhood from "there is a God?" I do not know.

Try as I might, I have been unsuccessful in construing Professor Flew's argument in any remotely compelling fashion. We are left with nothing but Flew's bare insistence that theological statements are meaningless, and I believe the onus of proof is on him. "There is a God" sure seems to be meaningful; countless have lived and died, loved and hated, waged war and made peace over it. Upon its utterance, people do not just respond with quizzical stares as they would were gibberish in its place; positions about it are held strongly and it and its subtleties are debated endlessly. Even Professor Flew seems to have an opinion about it. All of this is I believe a solid *prima facie* case for the meaningfulness of "there is a God."

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The Maimonidean Roots of American Literature

BY: Ruthie Just Braffman

A letter is more than a piece of parchment with handwriting. It is a form of communication, a gesture extended further than one's personal boundaries. It is a means of a relating to another; a give and take collaboration between two persons. And even a book, without oral response from its readers, can be part of such a collaborative relationship. In the prologue preceding *Wieland*, Charles Brockden Brown states, "It will be necessary to add that this narrative is addressed in an epistolary form, by the Lady whose story it contains, to a small group of friends, whose curiosity with regard to it has been awaked."ⁱ The Lady of which he speaks, Clara, writes in response to the curiosity of her friends, acknowledging their "right to be informed of the events that have lately happened."ⁱⁱ By writing in epistolary form, Brown ensures that the reader or the one receiving the letter is immediately involved. They are embraced into the current events of the life of the writer. Clara writes with the knowledge that she has a readership to listen to her story. Clara only writes on condition that she has an audience.

Brown, too, only writes if he has a willing readership of his works. When Brown writes to the readers of *Wieland*, in fact, when he writes *for* the readers, he enters into a relationship with them expecting a response. If the reception of his book is "favorable," than it "will induce the Writer to publish,"ⁱⁱⁱ yet if they do not think his work of certain value, Brown vows he will not pick up a pen. By addressing his audience and inviting them to be a part of his process/work, Brown empowers the reader with the ability to advance or stop his writing.

While Brown solicits the partnership of the reader as an integral part of his work, he withholds direct communication and instead relays his moral work through the conventions of a Gothic Novel. Brown does not want to produce a moralizing work, instructing his readers' behavior, but instead he "aims at the illustration of some important branches of the moral constitution of man."^{iv} He does not want the lines read literally, but advises the reader to "listen to my narrative,"^v to hear the greater moral work illustrated through the Gothic story. Brown must obey the "delicate line of propriety" by telling his story without telling it. He holds the tension of the sentence in place long enough for the reader to discover what the words actually are, allowing them to develop a philosophical reading of the text. Brown prompts the reader to be "excited by my story,"^{vi} for a Gothic tale is a form of entertainment to draw in the audience. Nevertheless Brown remarks: "Make what use of the tale you shall think proper."^{vii} He intends to produce a moral work, a text that can not exist without the reader, for it is up to the reader through the conventions of the Gothic novel to "moralize on this tale."

The genius and unparalleled form of literature Brown creates in producing America's first "novel" is not necessarily the words, syntax, or flow of the horrific tale; rather it is the collaborative and personal experience of the reader when he reads *Wieland* correctly. *Wieland* is not about some Gothic story wherein death and murder reside in twisting plots. More precisely and accurately, it is about authority, independence, and reverence for antiquity. It is about being a being a philosopher rather than just a good student. The epistolary form is asking the reader: "What is your opinion on these issues? How is your thought developed through the reading of this novel? Does it grab you? Engage you? Change you? If so, Brown implies, then he has a readership; then he will continue to write. Brown does not write his ideas in bulleted form imposing his doctrines on the reader: "His purpose is neither selfish nor temporary but aims at the illustration of some important branches of the moral constitution of man."^{viii} Brown does not have a strategic plan to manipulate or educate the reader a certain way, but offers an illustration. Illustrations allow the readers to figure out what they are meant to gain for themselves, personally and directly. "Make what use of the tale you shall think proper,"^{ix} Brown whispers to the reader. Take my text and run with it, he implies, see what moral constitutions of man you find, and what offers you intellectual growth. "I leave you to moralize on this tale,"^x he imparts. It is up to you, the reader to do something with this work. Brown creates space, potential for the reader to make the work his or her own. *Wieland*'s worth comes from what the reader does with it rather than the read words themselves. Brown did not just craft a novel, but created a book as a tool for growth. There is toil on the reader's part, and it is that labor that renders Brown's work genius and of immeasurable worth.

Brown had to break from the British tradition of literature because he was building a new country with his words. The publication of *Wieland* came only a few short years after the crafting of the United States' Declaration of Independence and Constitution. America was unwritten, and Brown had the great responsibility in his hands as the first professional author in the new land to create an American tradition of writing. And yet for all his attempts to release American literature from the clutches of England and move into an untrodden realm, Brown, unbeknownst to him, was a Maimonidean at heart. The conventions that make *Wieland* unique were in fact conquered by Rabbi Moses Maimonides, Rambam, seven centuries earlier in medieval Spain.

Maimonides writes to his student Rabbi Joseph ben Judah his axiological reasoning for writing his (philosophical) work, *Moreh Nevukhim*, or *Guide for the Perplexed*: "Our discussions aroused in me a resolution which has long been dormant...prompted me to compose

this treatise for you and for those who are like you.”^{xi} Maimonides writes because he knows he has a readership and his purpose is defined by his readership’s need. In fact, without a readership, Maimonides believes his work is worthless: “Let the reader make a careful study of this work...but if he derive from it no benefit whatever, he may consider the book as if it has never been written.”^{xii} The book’s worth is measured by the reception of the audience. Maimonides also understands that writing has the potential to be a form of communication: “Our sages laid down the rule ‘The *maaseh Bereshit* (Creation Story) must not be expounded in the presence of two’ if an author were to explain these principles in writing, it would be equal to expounding them unto thousands of men.”^{xiii} Maimonides understands that writing has the potential to be a powerful forum for discussion, a transactional text wherein the process engages the reader.



Source: people.bu.edu

As such, Maimonides attempts to explain the many metaphors and prophetic visions in the Torah while honoring the rule of the sages not to trespass the “delicate line of propriety,”^{xiv} for he knows the impact of the written word. The metaphors in the bible are “in order that the uneducated may comprehend it according to the measure of their faculties and the feebleness of their apprehension while the educated persons may take it in a different sense.”^{xv} The genius of *Moreh Nevukhim* lies in Maimonides’ ability to appeal to various audiences relative to their level of comprehension while its main intentions are directed towards a specific audience. Maimonides directs his attentions to the educated and intellectuals who will read his text properly: in this work, however, “[he] address[es] those who have studied philosophy and have acquired sound knowledge, and who while firm in religious matters are perplexed and bewildered on account of the ambiguous and figurative expressions employed in the holy writings.”^{xvi} Maimonides is cognizant that the readers who he directly addresses will receive the intended information because of their ability for inference and reasoning. Maimonides himself does not explicitly explain the parables in the Torah but

employs the use of metaphors: “Your object should be to discover inmost of the figures the general idea which the author wishes to express. In some instances it will be sufficient if you understand from my remarks that a certain expression contains a figure, although I may offer no further comment. For when you know that it is not to be taken literally, you will understand at once to what subject it refers.”^{xvii}

Moreh Nevukhim is not an instruction manual or handbook for the perplexed, but rather a “Guide.” Maimonides wants to guide the intellectually inclined towards the true significance of the parables in the Torah. He never simply lays it out for them because the significance of *Moreh Nevukhim* only shines through the laborious study that the reader, reading it correctly, employs to acquire knowledge. “You must study thoroughly and read continually”^{xviii} in order to fully comprehend and experience the work as it is meant to be experienced. The *Guide* is not meant to be lightly or superficially read as a coffee table book, Maimonides writes, “lest you do me an injury and derive no benefit for yourself.”^{xix} The *Guide* is supposed to be an experience that engages the reader and develops his or her thought. The immeasurable value of the ‘toil and labor’^{xix} the reader must experience to truly be a reader of the *Moreh Nevukhim* establishes it as a work and validates its existence. Once read properly, the book will be a “key, providing admission to places the gates of which would otherwise be closed. When the gates are opened and men enter, their souls will enjoy repose, their eyes will be gratified, and even their bodies, after all toil and labor, will be refreshed.”^{xiv} It is an experience, not a book, a journey that is meant to leave the reader at a location distant from where he or she started.

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ⁱ Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland* (New York: Penguin Group, 1998), 4.

ⁱⁱ Ibid, 5.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, 3.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid, 6.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid, 5.

^{viii} Ibid, 3.

^{ix} Ibid, 5.

^x Ibid, 278.

^{xi} Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, transl. by M. Friedlander, 2nd edition (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 71.

^{xii} Ibid, 80.

^{xiii} Ibid, 70.

^{xiv} Brown, 4.

^{xv} Maimonides, 75.

^{xvi} Ibid, 76.

^{xvii} Ibid, 79.

^{xviii} Ibid, 80.

^{xix} Ibid, 84.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and a Global Community

BY: Alex Luxenberg

During a recent visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I chanced upon a man standing at a wishing fountain. The man stood at the fountain with his feet together, a penny in his hand and his eyes closed. With a tremendous amount of concentration, the man meditated as hundreds of tourists walked through the great halls of the museum. He then proceeded to turn his back to the fountain, moving carefully as if holding a cup filled to the top. Once his back was facing the fountain, he successfully tossed the penny over his right shoulder and into the wishing well. I was blown away. Did this man really believe that the wishing well had powers? Did he believe that all of his prayers would be answered as the penny hit the surface of the New York City tap water coming out of the fountain?

I was tempted to approach the man and ask him all the questions that arose from his strange behavior. Before I had the opportunity to say anything, though, he was gone and the penny had sunk to the bottom. Would that man be able to relate his experience to me? Could I truly understand what thoughts had just passed through his mind? Is it possible to put a personal religious experience into words that a stranger (perhaps, even a friend or a relative) can understand?

To further understand religious dialogue, we are going to turn to the writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Rabbi Soloveitchik, in his essays “The Lonely Man of Faith”ⁱ and “Confrontation,”ⁱⁱ discusses the feeling of loneliness. The Rav asserts that being truly alone is a religious state of being, not a social one. One can be surrounded by friends day and night, he argues, and still be plagued by loneliness: “It is paradoxical yet nonetheless true that each human being lives both in an existential community, surrounded by friends, and in a state of existential loneliness and tension, confronted by strangers.”ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, one can go through his or her entire day immersed in conversation yet, at the same time, feel alone. What creates this religious loneliness? Why is it that one can feel socially popular yet existentially alone?

The answer lies in the limitations of a religious conversation. The loneliness that Rabbi Soloveitchik writes of is brought about by the inability of one person to share his or her religious experiences with another. This inability to exchange ideas with a friend presents yet another paradox, the paradox of language. Men and women are married, in part, through words, argumentation through words creates Halakhah, and a judge’s words can end a life, but the strength of words has its limits. As Soloveitchik explains:

The word is a paradoxical instrument of communication and contains an inner contradiction. On the one hand, the word is the medium of expressing agreement and concurrence, of reaching mutual understanding, organizing cooperative effort, and uniting action.

On the other hand, the word is also the means of manifesting distinctness, emphasizing incongruity, and underlining separateness. The word brings out not only what is common in two existences but the singularity and uniqueness of each existence as well.^{iv}

The boundaries of relating a religious experience are marked by the words that are used to articulate the experience. Man is lonely because “[t]he word brings out not only what is common in two existences but the singularity and uniqueness of each existence as well.”^v Perhaps the man at The Met tossing his penny was an example of a “unique existence,” one that I could not truly understand even had I had the chance to ask.

This raises an interesting question: If the man at The Met represents an existentially different being, a creature that does not share the same goals and ideals that I do, then do I owe him anything? Am I responsible for his well being, in accordance with the biblical dictum “Do not stand idly by the [spilling of the] blood of your friend” (Leviticus 19:16)? Rabbi Soloveitchik makes it clear that though we are different, there is still an underlying similarity: “We have never proclaimed the philosophy of contemptus or odium seculi. We have steadily maintained that involvement in the creative scheme of things is mandatory.”^{vi} In other words, we still need to consider ourselves part of the global community, rallying for and supporting our brethren of all walks of life. Rabbi Soloveitchik continues his plea for membership in a worldwide community: “We are called upon to tell this community...the story it already knows – that we are human beings, committed to the general welfare and progress of mankind, that we are interested in combating disease, in alleviating human suffering, in protecting man’s rights, in helping the needy, et cetera.”^{vii} We are obliged to act as an example to the other nations, guide the nations of the world on the path of the just, as is stated in Isaiah 42:6: “...And I will establish you as a covenant of the people, for a light unto the nations.” Now that we have established that one has a responsibility to his fellow citizen, let us explore how this relationship manifests itself.

We turn our attention to Rabbi Soloveitchik’s analysis of the two types of firstborns, in order to broaden our appreciation of a Jew’s responsibility to be a leader. In another one of his essays, titled “The Plague of the Firstborn,”^{viii} the Rav uses the story of the Exodus from Egypt to break down the different types of roles the firstborn plays in the scheme of a family. In Egyptian society, he explains, the firstborn played the role of the taskmaster, with the mentality of “I am stronger, therefore I am better.” This model of the older brother is the logical result of the general slave society in which it developed. Because of the fact that the father was physically the strongest member of the family, he decided between right and wrong and set the rules, thus making him the head of the household. With this type of family structure, the younger siblings have no

Towards Logic, the Sublime, and the Other

BY: Gilah Kletenik

room to develop and mature as their own people. Instead, the oldest brother rules over them with a sense of dictatorship. This mode of living was so ingrained in the Egyptian socio-religious system that God had to destroy the entire nation in order to remove its ideology, as it says in Numbers 33:4: "The Lord executed judgments upon their gods."

The Jewish notion of the firstborn, in contrast, is rooted in the idea that the firstborn possesses a status of holiness. The firstborn of the Jews was not a taskmaster, but rather an example. He represented the paradigmatic leader, exemplifying a sense of honesty and sincerity and did not inflict his views upon his younger siblings by force, but rather relied on them to observe and imitate. God considers the Jewish people his firstborn: "*Beni bekhori Yisrael, Israel is my firstborn. I have said to you 'Let my son go, that he may worship me,' yet you refuse to let him go.*" Now, "*Hinne Anokhi horeg et binkha bekhorekha, I will slay you firstborn*" (Exodus 4:22-23).

Of course, it is not the responsibility of the other nations to view the Jews as an older brother; it is, rather, the Jew's responsibility to view himself as an exemplar of ethics. In a word, the Jew must hold himself to the highest of standards when it comes to his relationship with others, God, and himself, for if an older brother does not treat himself as worthy of re-



Source: www.fetzer.org

spect, then he deserves none. If, on the other hand, a Jew lives in an honest and ethical manner, he will automatically earn the respect of others and can simply lead his life as an example for the nations of the world to follow.

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ⁱ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "The Lonely Man of Faith," in *Studies in Judaica in Honor of Dr. Samuel Belkin as Scholar and Educator*, ed. Leon D. Stitskin (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1974), 69-133.

ⁱⁱ Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought* 6,2 (1964): 5-29.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, p. 15.

^{iv} Ibid, p. 14.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid, p. 20.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "The Plague of the Firstborn," in *Festival of Freedom: Essays on Pesah and the Haggadah*, ed. by Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 2006), 136-148.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein poses the question: "In what sense is logic something sublime?"ⁱ At first glance this question seems peculiar: to describe logic, that which is often associated or even conflated with mathematics, with an adjective belonging to the realm of the majestic and lofty, that which transcends estimation, seems odd, even counterintuitive. In encountering Wittgenstein's point, therefore, we must first determine what precisely Wittgenstein means by "logic" and "sublime."

Ordinarily, when encountering a term, we have the instinct to jump to define it, in this case, to articulate a definition of the word "logic," to answer the question "what is logic?" However, such an inquiry is a 'scientific' one; it presupposes knowledge hidden from us that necessitates the use of tools to unearth it. This is precisely the kind of question and investigation which is at odds with Wittgenstein's understanding of logic, and by extension, his conception of philosophy.

To understand what Wittgenstein means by "logic," we first ought to examine what he does not mean by "logic." A logical investigation "is not directed towards phenomena,"ⁱⁱ that is to say, such an investigation does not require that we "hunt out new facts ... [or] learn anything new," in an effort to "penetrate phenomena."ⁱⁱⁱ The investigation of logic is not one of revelation or uncovering; it is not an act of measuring or calculating; it is uninterested in facts and connections. Rather, a logical investigation is about the potential, the "possibilities of phenomena." Its meeting is driven by the urge to "understand something that is already in plain view" and that which is already apparent, is necessarily the "nature of all things."^{iv}

Abraham Joshua Heschel, the American rabbi, theologian and activist, expounds on this very point: "analyze, weigh and measure a tree as you please, observe and describe its form and functions, its genesis and the laws to which it is subject; still an acquaintance with its essence never comes about."^v Thus, as Heschel suggests, an investigation of this nature, in this case through the tool of logic, is not a scientific one; it is rather an essential one. And the appropriate question is not "what is logic," but instead "where is logic, where can logic be found?" Logic underpins all that is in plain view, it is "the *a priori* order of the world ... it is prior to all experience, must run through all experience; no empirical cloudiness or uncertainty can be allowed to affect it – It must rather be of the purest crystal."^{vi} Indeed, by understanding the "where" of logic it is possible to approach an understanding of its nature, that which is suggested, albeit in a misguided way, by the "what" question.

That logic is *a priori*, that it is the essence of everything and that it is unadulterated, all hint at its sublime nature. In this sense, logic is the vastness of everything, the tapestry hold-

ing together all that is in plain view; it is the pattern of reality. Thus, it is "not a theory but a reflection of the world ... transcendental."^{vii} And this accounts for what Wittgenstein means in describing logic as "something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it, is something that we need to *remind* ourselves of."^{viii} Evidently, the ubiquity of logic, its omnipresence, accounts not only for its accessibility but also, and somewhat paradoxically, for its remoteness. That said, it is not clear precisely what Wittgenstein means here; how could something be at once accessible, even ubiquitous, and then suddenly rendered unreachable?

Heschel describes at great length that which he terms the "ineffable." "Which is sensed as something immediately given by way of an insight that is unending and undividable, logically and psychologically prior to judgment, to the assimilation of subject matter to mental categories; a universal insight into an objective aspect of reality."^{ix} Indeed, Heschel's ineffable, God, is not only akin to, but *is* Wittgenstein's logic. Moreover, because logic precedes judgment and mental categories, the moment we are called upon to explain it, we suddenly "need to *remind* ourselves" of it, as we have an intuitive, almost natural understanding of that which is the essence of everything.

In contrast, we are able to articulate and describe answers to the "what" kinds of questions, for these are but interested in facts and knowledge, that which lies beyond ourselves and requires unearthing and discovery. However, though essence is the source of that which is in plain view and accessible, the instant we are summoned to identify, let alone explain it, we suddenly lose sight of that which was once, a second earlier, so obvious and even intuitive. For this reason, the task of identifying an answer to the "where," by definition transforms the question into a "what" one. And this "what" question is precisely that which Wittgenstein focuses on in the opening of *The Blue Book*: "The questions 'What is length?', 'What is meaning', 'What is the number one?' etc., produce in us a mental cramp."^x Indeed, by demanding an explanation of the "where" question we transform it into a "what" one.

The impossibility of finding a way to properly express logic, the ineffable, is due, as Heschel recounts, to the reality that "we have a certainty without knowledge; it is real without being expressible."^{xii} Although logic underpins reality and is the foundation of everything in plain view, our intuitive grasp of it is constrained and perverted by the need to articulate it in words, to restrict it. This is not to say that we do not understand it; to the contrary, our grasp of it is almost instinctive and itself transcends articulation.

Since it is impossible to express the ineffable, the logical, how can we even begin to know that it exists? The obvious instinct here is to turn the question on itself; to reject its very

premise for, "doubt can only exist where there is a question; a question only where there is an answer, and this is only where something *can* be said."^{xiii} Alas, in dealing with the logical, the ineffable, there is no place for words and thus the question itself is rendered moot. Heschel addresses this very relationship between doubt and knowledge, in discussing the encounter with the ineffable:

Wonder rather than doubt is the root of knowledge. Doubt comes in the wake of knowledge as a state of vacillation between two contrary or contradictory views; as a state in which a belief we had embraced begins to totter. It challenges the mind's accounts about reality and calls for an examination and verification of that which is deposited in the mind. In other words, the business of doubt is one of auditing the mind's accounts about reality rather than a concern with reality itself; it deals with the content of perception rather than perception itself.^{xiv}

Asking how we know about the logical, the ineffable, in effect spurns and rejects the ineffable itself because that very concern is oriented to the "what" to the "auditing of the mind's accounts about reality,"^{xv} and not to the "where" to "a concern with reality itself."^{xvi} Still, this is not to say that we might never approach, let alone experience the ineffable. To the contrary, we experience it through our encounter with its very self, with its essence, with its "where." And this very experience stirs a feeling within us, a wonder, which is precisely how we begin to "know," that it is, for "the inner response it evokes is that of awe or reverence."^{xvii}

But why does this encounter with the sublime fill us with awe and reverence? "How the world is, is completely indifferent for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world. Not how the world is, is the mystical, but that it is."^{xviii} The very reality of this world, according to Wittgenstein: that it exists, is an understanding we can barely identify, let alone express and explain. Instead, when we encounter the mystical, the sublime, and find that we are unable to articulate its majesty and mystery in mere words, we are left speechless and in wonderment. We are in awe of that which is, but cannot be expressed. Indeed, this is awe not of fright or fear, but of puzzlement and amazement.

Although our encounter with the sublime, the experience of wonder, is not one constrainable by words, this is not to say it has no affect on us. Rather, writes Heschel, "We go out to meet the world not only by way of expediency but also by the way of wonder. In the first we accumulate information in order to dominate; in the second we deepen our appreciation in order to respond." Indeed, though it is impossible to articulate its nature, describe its sensation, the encounter with the sublime nevertheless demands, even necessitates a response. And further, while we cannot know, let alone ask of the source, the underpinnings of

the ineffable, we are able to and in fact must respond to it. But what is the nature of this response, how might we even begin to respond to the sublime?

Our encounter with logic, the ineffable, the sublime, reality itself, leaves us awestruck and amazed. We stand and appreciate the reality which lies in our plain view and realize that we are not separate from it, but rather we are a part of it, its fabric, and its very essence. There is no dichotomy between us and the ineffable, we are not only elements of it; we too are it. Naturally then, if we are part of it, that means each one of us is; every human:

To our knowledge the world and the “I” are two, an object and a subject; but *within* our wonder the world and the “I” are one in being, in eternity. We become alive to our living in the great fellowship of all beings, we cease to regard things as opportunities to exploit. Conformity to the ego is no longer our exclusive concern, and our right to harness reality in the service of so-called practical ends becomes a problem.^{xix}

Consequently, our encounter with the sublime causes us to look beyond ourselves, to turn towards the other. Perhaps this is what Wittgenstein means in writing that “the ethical is transcendental.”^{xx} He means that there is a connection between the transcendental nature of both logic and ethics; they are necessarily linked, one and the same.

Just as logic presents an *a priori* order, ethics does as well. The obligation to be “ethical” is an *a priori*, transcendental one, no better demonstrated than by Adam and Eve in Genesis. Adam and Eve transgress God’s command by eating of the fruits from the Tree of Knowledge and God then calls out to Adam, “*ayyekkah*,” “where are you?”^{xxi} The Almighty does not ask Adam and Eve “why did you do this” or even “what have you done?” Instead, He simply asks them where they are, right then and there. This question is not a “what” question; it does not demand of Adam and Eve to uncover past deeds, to judge, to recall that which has already transpired; it is not a scientific question. Rather, it forces them to examine themselves, who they are at that moment, their own logical, ineffable nature, that which is their essence.

The “where” question is one which, by definition, is without an answer; it cannot be articulated because of its very nature, its sublimity; it cannot be constrained by words. It is precisely that which Wittgenstein refers to in writing: “Something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it, is something that we need to *remind* ourselves of.”^{xxii} Indeed, Adam’s response to God bespeaks a total misunderstanding of the very nature of the question itself; he treats the question as if it is a “what” oriented one: “And he said: ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.’”^{xxiii}

Adam’s reply to God is not only an excuse, but reflects a profound lack of awareness; he does not realize what the Lord is really asking him and instead tells God where he is literally and how he actually came to be there.

That he is even able to articulate a response to the question posed to him is itself evidence that Adam does not grasp the question – he does not appreciate his own encounter with the ineffable. Consequently, Adam fails to recognize not merely that which the question is truly asking him, but what it presupposes; responsibility.

“What is sublime,” like the question “what is logic,” does not even begin to address the nature of the sublime, as explained by both Wittgenstein and Heschel. And like logic, the appropriate question is “where is the sublime found?” Indeed, while a true answer to this question is not one that can necessarily be articulated, this is not to say that we can not approach an understanding of the sublime. Rather, logic is sublime for this very reason; because it is essential and ineffable. Necessarily then, it is inextricably linked with the ethical; with the responsibility to look towards the other and even the Other. For this reason, the Ineffable’s call to man is the eternal “where” call, which turns him away from facts and towards essence; to a place where indeed, logic is sublime.

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ⁱ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 42.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1951).

^{vi} Wittgenstein, 44.

^{vii} Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, Ltd., 1955).

^{viii} Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 42.

^{ix} Heschel, 19.

^x Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 42.

^{xi} Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Book* (New York: Harper & Brother, 1958), 1.

^{xii} Heschel, 12.

^{xiii} Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 187.

^{xiv} Heschel, 11.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Heschel, 23.

^{xviii} Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 187.

^{xix} Heschel, 39.

^{xx} Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 183.

^{xxi} Gen. 3:9.

^{xxii} Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 42.

^{xxiii} Gen. 3:10.

An Interview with Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

BY: Ari Lamm and Shaul Seidler-Feller

There is a wide range of approaches – both ancient and modern – that have been advanced to interpreting the account of Creation in Bereishit (literal, allegorical, harmonization with modern science, literary, etc.). What are the theological issues involved in evaluating these approaches, and which does Rav Shulman prefer?

Everyone understands that on the one hand, we start from the premise that Torah is divine truth. Torah is telling us truths. Now, there are all kinds of truths – there are literal truths, mystical truths, allegorical truths. We’re not, *le-havdil*, Protestant fundamentalists who think that every thing has to be read on the level of literal truth. We don’t read “*ayin tachas ayin*” literally as “an eye for an eye.” On the other hand, we do understand that our understanding of Torah *she-bi-Kesav* has to be moderated by Torah *she-be-Al Peh*. So

it’s written by G-d, the ascription is no longer meaningful. It may be sincere, but it’s like saying that Shakespeare’s plays were written by Bacon. It’s just eccentric. You’re reading it as an ancient myth, so in what sense is it *devar Hashem*? It’s not serious.

So we have to take the *pesukim* within an understanding of Torah *she-be-Al Peh*. Of course, we have the difficulties of modern science, which gives a radically different account of the creation of the world and so on. Those are challenges. An adequate account would have to accommodate Chazal and Kabbalah and physics and biology and so on. I’m not equipped to give such an account. I’m not sure if there is anybody who has yet given an adequate account. But remember that Chazal also said that *ma’aseh Bereishis* cannot be understood by most people. Even amongst Chazal themselves, the Gemara says that not all the Chakhamim were privy to *ma’aseh Bereishis*.

Would there be any value in an allegorical



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that’s a constraint. We can’t just say that we can understand Torah *she-be-Kesav* however we want. So if you’re talking about *ma’aseh Bereishis*, I don’t think that you have read it literally, because Torah *she-be-Al Peh* tells us that *ma’aseh Bereishis* is esoteric. But that still doesn’t mean that it’s *hefker*; on the contrary, the very fact that it’s esoteric, that it’s *ma’aseh Bereishis*, means that it’s not *hefker* at all – it doesn’t belong to the *reshus ha-rabbim* at all.

By the way I want to make the obvious point that saying something is not literal is not the same as saying that it’s myth. I don’t believe that you can say – and remain within the tradition – that anything in Torah is myth, a monotheistic re-workings of ancient myth – the Artscroll version of Gilgamesh. That’s way outside the *masorah*. And even if you say that

approach, or is that also outside of the bounds of the masorah? Not to say that it was myth but to say that it was written as an allegory? Or some parts were written as an allegory?

Once you see some part of the story is allegorical then where do you draw the line? Where’s the seam? Where does it stop being allegorical and start being historical? You’ve opened up a tremendous Pandora’s box. Moreover, Torah *she-be-Al Peh* clearly takes it as historical. *Ma’aseh Bereishis* occupies a special place; it’s pre-history. The Ramban already says that it’s “*sodos ha-Torah*,” it’s highly esoteric – the Torah has wrapped this in mystery. But once you get into the human realm, then any reading that says that it’s not historical – to my mind it raises insuperable difficulties.

To what extent are and/or were the 13 Ikkarim of Rambam binding upon the Jewish people?

What's binding is the *masorah* of Chazal. Just as *Torah she-be-Al Peh* is normative, it teaches us what *Torah she-bi-Kesav* means – for example, that “*totafos*” are *tefillin* – so too, it also tells us *what* the *Torah* is, where it comes from, what its basic doctrines are, what beliefs are so central to it that someone who doesn't share them stands outside the faith. Those are all part of the *masorah* of Chazal and are all binding and normative. If you're outside of the *masorah* of Chazal, you're outside of Rabbinic Judaism.

What the Rambam in the 13 *Ikkarim* was trying to do was to give us his distillation of what were the basic *emunos*, what were the basic fundamentals of this *masorah* of *Torah she-be-Al Peh* in regard to the nature of *Torah*, the nature of *Hashem*, and other basic theological issues. The Rambam is giving us his take on what is the *masorah* of Chazal. Other Rishonim might have formulated things a little differently, organized things differently, they might cavil about certain details regarding which they had a different understanding of what the *masorah* is saying and interpreted it differently. But they both agree to the normative nature of the *masorah* itself.

Let me give you an example from the realm of Halakhah. We have a *machalokes* Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam about the order of the *parashiyos* of *tefillin*, based on different understandings of the Gemara. So Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam disagree here about the content of the *masorah* of Chazal. But Rashi didn't think that Rabbeinu Tam was an *apikores*, *chalilah*, and Rabbeinu Tam didn't think that Rashi was an *apikores*, *chalilah*. They both agree that the *masorah* is binding; they have a disagreement regarding the specific content of the *masorah* in this case. But suppose that someone would say, “I believe that Rashi's reading of the Gemara is correct. The *masorah* of Chazal was that *tefillin* should be like Rashi. But I think that Chazal were wrong; I think that the *masorah* was wrong. The real *tefillin* that Moshe Rabbeinu wore were like Rabbeinu Tam. Chazal don't say so; the *masorah* doesn't say so; but the correct interpretation of *tefillin* is like Rabbeinu Tam.” Such a person would be an *apikores* – he would be denying the *masorah* itself. There can be disagreement or ambiguity with respect to what the *masorah* says with regard to a particular issue, but whatever the *masorah* says is binding. A similar idea applies here. The *masorah* of *Torah she-be-Al Peh* teaches what the nature of *Torah* is, what it reveals about *Hashem* etc. Everyone agrees that that is binding. The 13 *Ikkarim* are the Rambam's distillation of the content of that *masorah*. There may be disagreements about the details. What overarches the disputes is the

masorah itself, and everyone agrees that the *masorah* itself is binding.

Is there anything about Rambam's formulation of the 13 Ikkarim that makes them more authoritative than anyone else's enumeration?

Rambam's is the most concise formulation, and it is *pashetah be-chol Yisrael*. And the disputes are really very few; you have to go searching to find them. In most cases, what are represented as disputes don't withstand close inspection.

What is the extent of hashgahah peratit? In how much of daily life is God involved?

The Rishonim maintained that *hashgachah peratis* is, first of all, only for human beings, and secondly that it works on different levels for different people. *Hashgachah peratis* for the Rishonim does not mean, “Is God aware of what's happening?” God's knowledge is total. Instead, *hashgachah peratis* is most closely related to *sekhar va-onesh*: can I say that if I stub my toe, there is a specific explanation for that having happened in the realm of *sekhar va-onesh*? Can I directly relate that to some *aveirah* that I did?

The Rishonim maintained that such a level of *hashgachah peratis* does not apply to animals. Maybe in Chasidus you have such a notion, maybe in Chabad, but the Rishonim do not accept that. Moreover, you find in Rishonim the idea that the greater the person, the more his *sekhar va-onesh* is manifest and visible. Everything in life happens on the level of *sekhar va-onesh*, but with a great *tsaddik* there is *dikduk ke-chut ha-se'arah* – it's more immediate.

Part of the idea of *hashgachah peratis* is the conception that *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu*'s activity, His running of the world, is in some way reactive to human behavior. There is a philosophical problem with this, which the Ramchal points out in *Derech Hashem*: If we make *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* reactive to human nature, how do we reconcile that with idea that He is omnipotent? If He's in charge – He directs the world and brings it to a certain goal – then He is proactive, not just reactive. However, *sekhar va-onesh* implies that everything that *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* does is in response to what we do! Ramchal explains that both are true at the same time: On the one hand, *Hashem* is reacting to us and everything He does is justifiable on the level of *sekhar va-onesh*. But, at the same time, *Hashem* runs the world with *hanhagas ha-yichud* – towards a certain goal or endpoint – the world-historical goal of *Hashem echad u-shemo echad*. But both things are true at the same time, even though it seems to us that these are mutually exclusive ideas. That's part of the mystery of *hashgachah*.

It's really similar to the conundrum dis-

cussed in the Rishonim about the conflict between omniscience and free will. Ramchal transposes that tension into the conflict between human freedom and *sekhar va-onesh*, on the one hand, and the idea of omnipotence, that God is all-powerful, on the other. You have in the non-Jewish world, *le-havdil*, the same transposition, at around the same time in history: The medieval talked about the conflict between divine foreknowledge and free will, but starting in the 16th century, in the beginning of the modern period, the big issue becomes human freedom versus divine omnipotence. That was one of the issues in the Thirty Years' War. Not that I would paint that as the backdrop to Ramchal's discussion; he's coming from a different place altogether. But it's interesting.

What are Jews required to believe with regard to Tehiyyat ha-Metim? In general, how can or should Jews conceive of the Yemot ha-Mashi'ah?

The starting point in this discussion is that the Rambam says that, with regard to all of these *Acharis ha-Yamim* issues, no one knows what *Acharis ha-Yamim* will be like until it actually happens. In general terms, the Mishnah says that *Olam ha-Zeh domeh li-perozdor* and *Olam ha-Ba domeh li-teraklin* – that the purpose of Creation is not for *Olam ha-Zeh*, but rather for *Olam ha-Ba*. The Ramchal writes in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim* that Man was created to experience closeness with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, but the place where that will be accomplished is *Olam ha-Ba*. *Olam ha-Zeh* is the world of *avodah*, but the goal is *Olam ha-Ba*, where Man's purpose will ultimately be realized. This world is a world of *nisyonos* and challenges and we're supposed to meet those challenges as best we're able in order to ultimately reach the goal of *Olam ha-Ba*.

There is a major *machalokes* between the Rambam and the Ramban regarding the meaning of *Olam ha-Ba* and where the final *mekom ha-sekhar* really is. The Rambam held that the final *sekhar* of *Olam ha-Ba* is only for the disembodied *neshamah* in the *Olam ha-Neshamos*. The Ramban and the *Mekubbalim*, however, felt that *Olam ha-Ba* is the world of *Techiyyas ha-Mesim* and that the final *sekhar* will be experienced by the *neshamah* together with the purified *guf*, in a state of *Adam ha-Rishon kodem ha-chet*.

With regard to *Techiyyas ha-Mesim* specifically, Chazal tell us that while *kol ha-nevi'im lo nisnabbe'u ela li-yemos ha-Mashi'ach*, even the prophets could only visualize the Messianic era; but beyond that, when it comes to *Olam Haba* – which, for Ramban and the *Mekubbalim*, means the world of *Techiyyas ha-Mesim* – *ayin lo ra'asah Elokim zulasekha*, they could not picture it, it's beyond our imagination.

Does the mahaloket between the Rambam and Ramban necessarily extend into the meaning of Yemot ha-Mashi'ah?

No, but there's a dispute in the Gemara about whether *Yemos ha-Mashi'ach* are going to be days of *olam ke-minhago noheg* – where the natural order is preserved, except that Jews will be independent and will be able to devote themselves to the study of *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu*'s *Torah* and the whole world will recognize *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu*'s *malkhus* – or whether they will be days conducted according to a different natural order.

Many of the foundations of medieval Jewish philosophy are based on scientific or philosophical conceptions of the universe that are not commonly accepted today. Should this influence our view of these philosophers? How do we evaluate the importance of studying the work of these philosophers vis-à-vis the work of modern secular and religious philosophers?

There's no question that the Rishonim who were most steeped in Aristotelian philosophy seem more remote to us. The Rishonim who were not, for example the *Kuzari*, seem much more accessible to us than, for example, the *Moreh Nevukhim*. The language of the *Moreh* is the language of Aristotelian philosophy, and that's not the language that we speak. It's sort of ironic, and maybe there's a lesson for us as well: The more one tries to speak in the contemporary idiom, the quicker one becomes dated. In terms of the Rishonim, that meant speaking in Aristotelian terms, the philosophic terms accepted at the time. They talked to the philosophical concerns of the time in the philosophical language at the time, and because it was so timely then, for us it seems much more dated. The 17th century, the death of Aristotelian thought, lies like a chasm between them and us. But the Ramban is as fresh as the day it was written, because he was not talking in that idiom. The fact that *Moreh Nevukhim* was written in the style it was is certainly a barrier to contemporary people learning it, which is part of the reason that it's not as widely learned as the *Kuzari* or the Ramban.

At the same time, Rishonim remain Rishonim. Rishonim will always repay the effort that we put into understanding them; it's just a bigger challenge in some cases. Often, *Moreh Nevukhim* sheds light on things that the Rambam writes elsewhere; R. Meir Simchah writes somewhere that the Rambam in all his literary manifestations is the same Rambam. I remember once, when I was learning the Rambam in *Hilkhos Teshuvah* about the question of *yedi'ah* and *bechirah*, how could *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* know the future but yet there's free will? The Rambam says that we can't understand it because *Hashem*'s knowledge is be-

yond our comprehension. And then in the next chapter, the Rambam seems to ask the same question all over again. He says *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* told Avraham that his children were going to be slaves for four hundred years. If so, the Egyptians had no choice, so why were they punished? The *Lechem Mishneh* asks: Why is the Rambam revisiting this, he just dealt with it in the last *perek*?

If you look at the *Moreh* and see how the Rambam frames the original question, you'll see something interesting. The Rambam poses the question there almost as a grammatical question: A person can only have knowledge of true propositions. Propositions about the future are neither true nor false, because the future is not yet determined. Such propositions are contingent. A human being cannot have knowledge of contingent propositions. So the Rambam asks: How can Hashem have knowledge of contingent propositions? The answer is that God's knowledge is different from our knowledge; he can have knowledge of contingent propositions. It's all very Aristotelian, the language and premises are straight out of Aristotle. But the point is that you see that for the Rambam the question was epistemological, it's a question about divine epistemology. And that really sheds light on the *Lechem Mishneh*'s question. In the fifth *perek*, the Rambam is dealing with divine foreknowledge, so he can answer that we don't understand His knowledge. He can have knowledge of contingent propositions even though we can't. But in the next *perek*, he is talking about Hashem sharing some of that knowledge with *Avraham Avinu*, so that is human epistemology. I could continue, if you follow the thought you can better understand what the Rambam answers about the Egyptians, it solves the Ra'avad's question on the Rambam, too, but we're going too far afield.

But, in any event, the point is that Ris-honim repay the effort we invest in them.

Does the work of non-Orthodox theologians have any relevance for Orthodox Jewry? What about non-Jewish theologians?

I don't want to be an obscurantist. I know of lots of people who have found valuable insights in all kinds of theological literature, and we have the example of R. Soloveitchik. But *Torah ba-goyim al ta'amin*. For that we look to our own tradition. There's such an explosion of work being done in *machsheves Yisrael*, especially in Israel, about the thought of the Gera, Ramchal, Chasidus, Kabbalah – really, the whole gamut. I'm not talking about academic scholarship; I'm talking within the world of the beis midrash. There's so much out there that you can spend all your time just keeping up with what's being done, much of it done by leading figures.

Any last thoughts?

Just to reiterate that right now happens to be a very exciting time for *machsheves Yisrael*. There is so much being done in the realms of Tanakh and *machshavah* – it's really worth finding out what's out there.

Does that mean that people should use seder time for that or have a separate seder in mahshavah?

Of course, in the years of yeshivah, your priority is to grow in the bread and butter of Gemara, and especially here at YU students have so little time at their disposal that it's difficult to find time for anything extra. But still it is good to begin to cultivate an interest in these areas.

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Moses ben Maimon's *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead* and its Subsequent Insight on the Ideal Worship of God

BY: Ilana Gadish

When approaching any piece of philosophical writing by Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, often known as Maimonides or Rambam, one is often left confused. Perplexed is perhaps the perfect word. With his adherence to science, logic and Aristotelian thought matched with his staunch commitment to the Mosaic Law of the Torah, Rambam's writings are oft riddled with a complex, sometimes clashing combination of these worlds. His *Treatise on the Resurrection of the Dead*, or *Essay on Resurrection*, is a thoroughly debated piece of work because of the aforementioned reasons. Despite the confusion over whether or not Rambam actually

that it has been previously explained and does not elaborate on it. Many read into Rambam's lack of extrapolation. Joshua Abelson, in his article "Maimonides and the Jewish Creed," notes as follows: "It has been inferred by many that he [Maimonides] was really opposed to classing it [Resurrection of the Dead] among the fundamental dogmas of Judaism, and only did so as an unwilling concession to the current orthodox views of his day."ⁱⁱⁱ From the fact that Maimonides here only says one sentence regarding the Resurrection, it is possible to say, like Abelson does, that he did not really believe in it at all. This is similar to the opinions of scholars who believe that in *The Guide of the Perplexed* Rambam secretly held Aristotle's



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believed in the Resurrection of the Dead, "diverse readers... have understood the *Treatise* as a sophisticated and subtle defense by Maimonides of his consistent and constant commitment to achieve a precarious balance at the intersection of law, theology, and philosophy."ⁱⁱⁱ It is the exploration of this balance that, while sometimes trying to the reader, leads to an understanding of Rambam's unique perspective of the bodily Resurrection of the Dead and ultimately gives the reader insight into his inspiring attitude towards the ideal worship of God.

In Rambam's enumeration of the Thirteen Fundamental Principles of Jewish faith, Resurrection of the Dead is mentioned in an extremely concise manner. He simply remarks

version of eternity *a parte ante* to be correct, and wrote otherwise to cryptically hide his true intentions. This is analogous to the assertion that Rambam did not believe in his Thirteenth Principle, and the manner in which he wrote it is indicative of his true, yet hidden, disbelief in the Resurrection.

Another possible interpretation is suggested in Ralph Lerner's article, "Maimonides' *Treatise on Resurrection*."^{iv} He explains that Maimonides wrote the *Treatise* in response to claims made against him that he did not believe in Resurrection. However, Lerner maintains that the *Treatise* was also written in "reaction to popular preoccupation with the minutiae of resurrection." It is apparent in the text that Rambam is frustrated by the Jewish popula-

tion's total fixation on Resurrection of the Dead over what he believes to be the final goal, the World to Come. Lerner's exposition offers an alternative to the claim that Rambam did not believe in the Resurrection: Rambam did not deny the principle of the Resurrection of the Dead, but rather simply tried to de-emphasize it. He expresses irritation towards those who are consumed with "asking if the dead will rise naked or in their garments."^v He similarly seems irritated in his other writings about people's obsession with calculating the exact moment in which the Messiah will arrive. His brevity in his Thirteen Fundamental Principles of Faith can be ascribed to his lack of interest in the Resurrection of the Dead, relative to the rest of the religious community of his time.

In the *Treatise*, Rambam responds sharply to those who claimed that he was being defensive in setting out to write the *Treatise*. He says that the reason he composed his essay is for "the benefit that can result to the learner, not the defense and admiration of a person, nor the disapproval... of another."^{vi} Although Rambam previously explained his idea of the Resurrection in his *Commentary on the Mishnah to Sanhedrin*, chapter 10, and in his magnum opus, the *Mishneh Torah*, he explains that the *Treatise* is intended for someone who has yet to comprehend his position on Resurrection.^{vii}

While Rambam makes it clear that he does not believe the Messiah will resurrect the dead, and that it is God who will do the resurrecting, it is unclear as to whether he believes the Resurrection is necessary. On the one hand, Rambam declares that to deny the possibility of Resurrection is to repudiate the existence of all miracles, and that this rejection is a "denial of God and a defection from the Law." However, Rambam does not clarify whether it is necessary and true that there be a historic event where God resurrects "whomever He desires" somewhere in the future, or if it is just merely a possibility due to the omnipotence of the Almighty.^{viii} If Rambam is saying the Resurrection of the Dead is only a possibility, it seems as if it is aggrandized by including it as the thirteenth fundamental principle of the Jewish faith. If it is not just a possibility, but rather a necessary occurrence in history, it appears, as described below, as somewhat incongruous with logic and with Rambam's staunch belief in the supremacy of a bodiless existence in the World to Come.

It seems, even from the text of the *Essay on Resurrection*, that Rambam believed in the latter approach. Rambam's uncertainty in the absolute realization of Resurrection is evident in light of his comparison between Resurrection and the Creation of the World, stating that just as the Creation of the World is possible, "all miracles are possible; therefore the Resurrection is also possible."^{ix} Furthermore, Rambam states that the only way to actually prove a miracle is to see it happen, or to be told by someone who experienced the miracle. Rambam is making a clear assertion that we have no way of truly knowing whether or not prophetic miracles will be fulfilled until they occur.

To really understand the uniqueness of

Rambam's approach to Resurrection, one must note of his comparison between the nature of Resurrection and the Messianic era. Similar to his explanation of the nature of life during the Messianic era, Rambam clarifies that mortality is not replaced by immortality during the Resurrection. Humans will not live eternally; rather, after being resurrected they will "eat, drink, marry, and procreate and they will die after a long life."^x Rambam clearly states that the joy of joys and the penultimate existence of the soul is a bodiless one in the World to Come.^{xi}

One of the problems Rambam solves in the *Essay* is the issue of why the Resurrection of the Dead was not mentioned to the Jewish people when the Torah was revealed to them in the desert. Rambam gives a simple explanation: The Nation of Israel at that time had a different paradigm of God, one that was not fully developed and was based on the view of God espoused by the society in which they had been entrenched for so long. Consequently, God did not mention it to them because they would not have accepted Resurrection as possible and therefore would have sinned. It seems, however, that during Rambam's own time, the idea of a Resurrection was not inconceivable, even in general society, and so it could be considered a focal point of the Jewish religion.

David Hartman, in his *Discussion of the Essay on Resurrection*, explains that Rambam wrote the *Essay* with "deep anger and resentment."^{xii} The reason Rambam was compelled to write the *Essay* was perhaps due to a "disgust for and abandonment of a community that required miracles and promises of reward to motivate for religious behavior."^{xiii}

From a certain perspective, the prospect of a bodily Resurrection does seem kind of odd. A righteous man lives his whole life, and when he passes away his soul leaves his body. If, as Rambam strongly asserts, the ultimate reward for a righteous person is the bodiless existence of the soul in the World to Come, it seems almost silly to remove the soul from its bodiless state. No longer existing in the body, the soul is ready for the World to Come. But then Resurrection unites the soul back again with the body. It seems that the only reason why one would live again is to have another chance to fulfill more of God's commandments. It seems that this would involve some sort of maximizing of opportunities for the highest possible level of the World to Come. Otherwise, what is the point for a bodiless Resurrection? Hartman is correct when he says that the community that Rambam has to respond to is fixated on some sort of reward for God's commandments. But if reward is what seems to be the purpose of the Resurrection, it is no wonder that people are concerning themselves with it. If reward is *not* the focal point of the commandments, then why offer the incentive of Resurrection at all?

Perhaps the answer lies in a broader view of the scope of textual interpretation and its impact on man's approach to God. When deciding whether or not to interpret verses regarding the Resurrection, such as the ones in the Book of Daniel that Rambam quotes, the Sages must

have taken into account the final result of each interpretation. A literal interpretation of the text would provide an incentive for the nation of Israel to follow God's commandments. It provides a concrete, desirable reward. The only existence that the average man can comprehend, as Rambam derisively points out in the *Treatise*, is the existence in a body. A literal interpretation that offers the possibility for a Resurrection makes it easier for someone less sophisticated to understand reward and punishment for an individual's actions. But this leads to a narrow-minded focus on the corporeal existence as the only understanding.

It is this lack of openness to the possibility of an incorporeal existence in general that upsets Rambam. The idea of a Resurrection comforts humans about their mortality and the temporal, tenuous and fleeting nature of their lives, but also distracts them from the real point of this world, which is to arrive at the World to Come, leaving a corporeal existence behind. Offering the possibility of a Resurrection allows a more comprehensible form of reward and punishment for the average man to whom the reward of an incorporeal existence seems far-off and completely unfathomable. The Sages decided to interpret verses regarding a Resurrection of the soul into the body as literal, perhaps as an aid to the average human as described above. Rambam is adhering to this long tradition, yet he is wary of putting the main focus on a corporeal life here on earth. This possibly addresses the issue of his brief discussion of Resurrection in his Thirteen Fundamental Principles of Faith, and is definitely, as Hartman says, the reason why he is so full of angst throughout the entire *Essay*.

For Rambam, a focus on the corporeal reward of posthumous revival of the body might lead a religious observer to concentrate only on physical reward and punishment. Rambam could "tolerate religious observance that was motivated by self interest," but the idea of ascribing any aspect of corporeality to God, as he so thoroughly discusses in his *Guide of the Perplexed*, disgusts Rambam.^{xiv} If one observes religion through fear, *yir'ah*, then his "worship is motivated by self-interest" or some other physical reward such as a posthumous bodily Resurrection. The one who observes out of love makes his whole focus on "the anticipated joy of being in God's presence." Rambam's focus on the World to Come as the religious observer's goal shows that he is denying the importance "of all human pleasures save the joy of knowledge in God."^{xv}

This love-based worship is Rambam's ideal. "Life in the World to Come follows the Resurrection," Rambam declares.^{xvi} He urges his readers to stop focusing on the Resurrection; something much greater will come after the Resurrection. Rambam's lack of detail about the Resurrection of the Dead in his Thirteen Principles, and his counsel against worrying about the details is not because he denies it, or secretly thinks it will not happen. By leaving out details and not dwelling on the Resurrection, Rambam in his cryptic, yet enlightening method is trying to educate the Jewish community about how they should approach wor-

ship of God as a whole. His advice urging readers to stop worrying about what happens to the body after death is his encouragement for his students, the Jewish people, to concern themselves with the fate of their souls. The underlying message is that corporeality is much less important in light of the everlasting incorporeal World to Come, where "the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and bask in the radiance of the Divine Presence."^{xvii}

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ⁱ This title is used in reference to Rambam's *Treatise on Resurrection*, referred to later as *The Essay on Resurrection*.

ⁱⁱ Charles M. Raffel, "Reviewed Work(s): *Moses Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection: An Inquiry into Its Authenticity* by Lea Naomi Goldfeld," *The Journal of Religion* 68, 1 (Jan., 1988): 104-105, at p. 104.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joshua Abelson, "Maimonides on the Jewish Creed," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 19, 1 (Oct., 1906): 24-58, at p. 56.

^{iv} Ralph Lerner, "Maimonides' *Treatise on Resurrection*," *History of Religions* 23, 2 (Nov., 1983): 140-155, at p. 143.

^v Moses Maimonides, "Essay on Resurrection," in *Epistles of Maimonides: Crisis and Leadership*, transl. and discussion by Abraham S. Halkin and David Hartman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1993), 213.

^{vi} Ibid, 219.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid, 221.

^{ix} Ibid, 228.

^x Ibid, 220.

^{xi} Ibid, 213.

^{xii} David Hartman's "Discussion of the Essay on Resurrection" follows Abraham S. Halkin's translation of Rambam's "Essay on Resurrection" in *Epistles of Maimonides: Crisis and Leadership* (see n.5 above).

^{xiii} Hartman, 249.

^{xiv} Hartman, 251.

^{xv} Hartman, 253.

^{xvi} Maimonides, 217.

^{xvii} *Berakhot* 17a.

General Jewish Thought

A Burning Fire and a River of Tears: One Day in My Shoes

Editor's Note: This article was published in the February edition of Kol Hamevaser. It is being reprinted here to reach a broader audience.

The article was submitted anonymously to protect the student's identity and allow him to discuss the topic openly. If you would like to contact him privately, he can be reached at: bluejew12@gmail.com.

I wake up to a buzzing alarm clock signaling the arrival of another day and head out to daven. I concentrate as hard as I can and ask Hashem for help to face another day. I am the typical YU student. I go to morning *seider*, lunch, *shiur*, and then my secular classes. I am still the typical YU student. I sit down for supper, go to night *seider*, and then to *Ma'ariv*. Am I really the typical YU student? I spend my nights studying for the next day of classes; I work hard for my grades, but still find some time to spend with my friends. But as I get ready to put my head down for the night, exhausted from a trying day, I know that I am not the typical YU student; Hashem has given me the challenge of challenges, a challenge that leaves me muffling my cries on a tear-stained pillow as I slowly fall asleep.

Each of us has a challenge in the world, a roadblock on the highway of life that challenges us to become the best we can be. We are given these tests to help shape our character and to become masters of our desires, whatever they are. Whether the test is keeping Shabbat or learning afternoon *seider* between classes, we are all given a test in life. My own challenge keeps me up at night, preoccupies my thoughts during the day, and leaves me feeling like I am walking down a somber road in a lonely world: I am a religious Jew, living in the observant Jewish world, faced with the challenge of being a homosexual.

The Torah in two places¹ tells us that the act of homosexuality is an abomination, and under no circumstance is one to perform this act, even when faced with death as the only alternative. This is because the act of homosexuality is likened to that of bestiality and adultery and is looked upon in the most severe of manners. There is little reference otherwise to homosexuality in the Torah and Talmud, although at the end of *Masekhet Kiddushin*, on *daf* 82a, we are told that two men are prohibited from sleeping under the same blanket for fear of possible homosexual relations taking place. The Gemara there, however, states that this ruling no longer applies, as such acts were practically unheard-of during that era. Little other halakhic information is available from these early sources on this topic, although some stories are related in the Gemara and several biblical Midrashim.

Before homosexuality started to become an acceptable alternative lifestyle in modern

society, as is so visibly flaunted today, the idea of permitting homosexuality within Judaism was unheard of. Despite the fact that homosexuality is clearly labeled by the Torah as an abomination, some people have, within the last several years, started making arguments to try to find loopholes for its permissibility. Homosexuality is labeled by the Torah as an abomination and there are no infallible arguments against it. "How can Hashem expect us to live our lives as celibates? As two consenting adults, we should be allowed to live our lives the way we want in order to find true happiness," is often an argument put forth to the Jewish community. "'Love,' 'fulfillment,' 'exploitative,' 'meaningful' – the list itself sounds like a lexicon of emotionally charged terms drawn at random from the disparate sources of both Christian and psychologically-oriented agnostic circles,"ⁱⁱⁱ wrote YU's Chancellor and Rosh ha-Yeshivah, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm in the 1970s. He went in depth to prove that these sorts of arguments would permit any sex-

today? When one looks closely, the verse in *Va-Yikra* labels the homosexual act as an abomination – but only the act. The perpetrators are people, people who are challenged and who do not know how to control their desires – desires that so many of them pray they never had. British Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks explains clearly that the Torah "does not condemn homosexual disposition, because the Torah does not speak about what we are, but what we do."ⁱⁱⁱ

However, within the Orthodox Jewish context, few people recognize this. While many today have corrupted general society, leaving it with the notion that once someone is gay, he/she will eventually "come out" and live an "alternative lifestyle," this is impossible for an Orthodox Jew to accept. As such, I have hidden throughout my lifetime – today I do and in high school I did. I hid in fear that I would be ostracized and excommunicated from the Jewish community. I stood alone as a frightened fifteen-year-old boy, avoiding acting on

self to be thrown away by a towering figure pointing out in the distance with anger and fury on his face – to watch my life disintegrate before my eyes, collapsing like a building whose structure finally gave out after years of pressure or like a house of cards falling from the force of a gust of wind. But through all this I never faltered in my determination to live a life committed to Judaism. I told myself that it did not matter what happened in my life and how anyone reacted; I was raised a *frum* Jew, which is my true life and real identity, and no matter what anyone said or did to me, nothing could weaken who I was.

I was not sure how my rebbe from yeshivah in Israel would react. I just expected to be sent home from the yeshivah in shame, looked upon like I was some sexual deviant. I told myself in my heart, however, that no matter how anyone reacted – even if I was told to leave my yeshivah and thrown out of my house – I was never going to act upon my desires, nor was I ever going to turn away from God. I thank Hashem every day for the strengths He has given me. I thank Him for the rebbe He sent me, who, instead of rejecting me, stood by my side, helping me through the most awful time of my life. I thank Him for the stamina He gave me to fight a depression that nearly led me to commit suicide.

My path is unclear and even though I still stand alone, I stand armed with the will to live another day and fight to keep my beliefs alive. No matter the support I get, I stand on trial every day of my life. I do not know where my future will lead, nor how I can change my feelings. I live with a sense of frustration, knowing the goal I want to reach but lacking the tools to arrive there. What must I do to be able to marry a woman? What must I share with my future partner? How can I even bring myself to tell her this hidden secret? I do not know if it is fair to ask someone to live with me under these conditions, or whether I will truly be able to be happy in such a relationship. All I know is that I want to one day make marriage to a woman work – to love her and have her love me back. I want to watch her walk down to the *huppah* in the most beautiful wedding dress, with tears of happiness and joy in her eyes, as I know there will be in mine. I know that I want to stand with her, supporting her through the hard times that we will go through, and be there for her always. I see this vision in my future, but I have so many questions that have no answers.

I know that I have a goal that I hold onto every day, but I live trying to cope with an everlasting sense of guilt, even though I understand that these feelings are not my fault and that this is the way my life was divinely ordained to progress. I have read through so many different experimental ideas about the root of homosexual attractions. But to me, that is all they are – ideas, possibilities that I do not



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ual relationships in today's society, removing from it all sexual morality.

As a religious Jew, I have always put Torah values at the center of my beliefs. Never would I dream of trying to say that homosexuality is permissible; I know that there is something intrinsically wrong with such an act. That is certainly not to say, however, that it is not a challenge for me. Attraction, whether to a man or to a woman, is not always something that one can control. The fact that I have certain desires – which I would purge from my life in a second if I had the ability – is something that I cannot change. They leave me with feelings of solitude, despair, depression, and, alas, excitement.

Am I an abomination? Does Hashem look at me with disgust and loathing, as I feel so many people would if my struggle should become known and as so many people do, in fact, look at "open" religious Jewish homosexuals

my desires, yet also unable to call out and ask for help to rid myself of them. I stood frightened and did not know where to turn. I always wanted to find a wife and raise a family as an Orthodox man. I did not know how I would ever be able to do that, but I knew, and still know, that that is the life I am destined to live. I knew that one day I would need to tell someone about my feelings, step out from my hidden world of shadows, and ask for help.

It took me five years to gain the courage to reach that petrifying moment. After many months of praying and introspecting, I eventually reached the point not where I wanted to tell someone, but where I was prepared to do so. That moment had been the most horrifying and dreaded thought in my mind for so many years. I had prepared for the worst possible outcome, no doubt because of Hollywood's portrayal of the heroic homosexual being shunned by a once-loving family. I readied my-

Old Nation, Young Love

BY: Jake Friedman

With lengthening days and warmer weather, spring is approaching. During this time of year, a forgotten reserve of vitality, dormant throughout the winter, is re-awakened in us, and we are charged with an excitement for the coming spring and summer. Pesah is the benchmark for this seasonal turning point, and many details of the holiday resonate with the romantic optimism and enthusiasm of springtime. On the other end of the calendar is Sukkot, a celebration marking an end instead of a beginning, and hunkering down for the long winter instead of rushing forward to meet the summer.

Hag ha-Aviv and *Hag ha-Asif*, two alternate names for Pesah and Sukkot, allude to the agricultural significance of the holidays. With *Hag ha-Aviv*, the spring festival, we know exactly what to expect when we look outside during Pesah: the appearance of the earliest blossoms, renewed verdancy, fields full of sprouts promising to replenish our depleted stores. With *Hag ha-Asif*, the festival of the harvest, however, our expectations are drastically different: the fields are laid bare, the storehouses are filled, and the land begins to nod off for its long winter nap. At Pesah, we hope and dream about what is to come, and we prepare for the intense involvement of cultivating our land; but at Sukkot, we retreat inside, for the land has produced all we can expect for the year, and we step into winter, sustained by the yield of the past year. The unique imagery of each holiday is inherent even in the events they commemorate. Pesah commemorates the *ge'ulah*, our birth, our national springtime. Sukkot commemorates the homes God made for us in the wilderness, a settling-in parallel to Pesah's bursting-forth.

The timeframes of these two events seem comically disproportionate: *yetsi'at Mitsrayim*, a phenomenon that occurred overnight, compared to the dwellings of the wilderness, a condition maintained for nearly forty years. The haste of *yetsi'at Mitsrayim* plays a central role in the mitsvot of Pesah; the reason for the mitsvah of *akhilat matsah* is given as, "for you left Mitsrayim in haste,"ⁱ and the Jews of Mitsrayim were commanded to eat their *korban pesah* (paschal sacrifice) "in haste"ⁱⁱ as well. These differences are characteristic of the attitudes we have ascribed to the individual holidays. On Pesah, a time of excitement, we exult in the joy of a single moment. On Sukkot, the more tranquil festival, a more sustained cause for celebration is required.

The conflicting attitudes of impassioned excitement and cool equanimity are mirrored in the *megillah* readings of the two holidays (observed by Ashkenazim). *Shir ha-Shirim*, read on Pesah, is well known for its vividly romantic imagery. Sukkot's *Kohelet*, on the other hand, is sangfroid in its approach to life, especially its profound, but cold, conclusion. The relevance of the readings to their respective holidays is evident. Pesah is, in fact, a time for

rosy outlook toward a bright future, while Sukkot is a time for calm reflection.

The particular mitsvot of each of these *hagim* further emphasize their unique natures. The *avodot* of Pesah and Sukkot each contain a singular centerpiece – the *korban pesah* and *nissukh ha-mayim* (pouring out of the water libation on the Altar), respectively. The *korban pesah* is a particularly fire-centric offering. It is unique in its requirement to be prepared for eating by roasting, exclusively.ⁱⁱⁱ *Nissukh ha-mayim* presents a contrast to the fiery *korban pesah*: an offering of water, the elemental antithesis of fire. The emotional polarity symbolized by fire and water represents the same polarity of attitudes represented by Pesah and Sukkot. Fire, as a symbol of energy and passion, undoubtedly deserves a prominent position in the *avodah* of Pesah. Water, as a symbol of quiet nourishment and sustained connection, is especially appropriate for the *avodah* of Sukkot.

So, the holidays are different, even opposed, but why does each holiday take on its particular character? At *yetsi'at Mitsrayim*, the relationship between the Israelites and God was newly rediscovered. After centuries in Mitsrayim, we had strayed far from the *derekh Hashem* (the path of God). The leap back into God's arms involved us falling in love all over again. This new, exciting love is the type often associated with fire. Noted for its volatility, its consuming nature, and its ceaseless motion, fire, or burning, is often used to describe intense love. After we find ourselves in the wilderness, separate from the world, alone with God, he nestles us in the *ananei ha-kavod* (the Clouds of Glory). This is quite a different relationship. Just as a young romance differs from an enduring love, the relationship with God that was sustained during the years we followed Him in the wilderness differed from the one we had with Him at the point of *yetsi'at Mitsrayim*. The daily support and guidance of Hashem is what we celebrate on Sukkot, as exemplified by his housing us in the *ananei ha-kavod*.

Pesah is a holiday for us to dream about the relationship we can build with God in the coming year. We look outside, see the reemerging vitality of nature, and fill ourselves with awareness of the limitless potential in our relationship with Him. We relive the breathtaking reunion of *Am Yisrael* and *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* at the *seder* and top it off with *Shir ha-Shirim*, the only *sefer* that sufficiently conveys the ardent love between God and His People. With this in mind, may this year's Pesah reignite, in all of us, the flame of our personal relationship with Hashem.

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ⁱ Deut. 16:3.

ⁱⁱ Ex. 12:11.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, 12:8-9.

Responding to Social Change

BY: Rabbi Yosef Blau

Orthodox Judaism accepts eternal Torah principles and applies them to an ever-changing world. Usually, those changes are technological and/or economic. Categories of *melakhah* (work) on Shabbat have to be precisely defined and interpreted to determine whether cooking with a microwave oven or using an automatic elevator is permitted. Recent medical developments have introduced a myriad of halakhic questions where there are no clear precedents. And various categories of modern corporations create difficulties for halakhic decisors in assessing levels of individual responsibilities and ownership.

Often ignored, however, are the challenges resulting from social changes that take place. In the last hundred years, women have entered the workforce (out of the home) and are, for the first time on a mass scale, getting elementary, high school, college, and graduate school educations leading to their becoming professionals. Correspondingly, Orthodox Jewish women attend yeshivah elementary schools, high schools, seminaries in Israel, Stern College, and some advanced post-college programs.

In law firms, businesses, and hospitals, men and women socially interact as equals. The public streets, planes, trains, and buses are filled with men and women sitting and standing next to each other. Internet, e-mails, Facebook, and cell phones introduce new ways of communication.

However, in most Orthodox Jewish communities, there appears to be a bifurcation. In Jewish life, men and women have different roles. The same woman who is a partner in a law firm, gives papers at academic conferences, and speaks in court, normally would never address the congregation from the pulpit. Tradition seems to indicate that Jewish women should marry, have children, and stay home raising them.

In the area of formal Jewish education, Orthodoxy has adapted, but in other areas all innovation has been rejected. Even within the schools there are wildly divergent educational goals. The head of the Bais Yaakov seminary in Benei Berak is reported to have said that the purpose of his seminary is to educate women to emulate the lives of their uneducated grandmothers. In other circles, women are seriously studying Talmud.

What is the appropriate response to these dramatic social changes in the modern Western world? Should this be determined solely by rabbinical authority or should the needs and experiences of ordinary men and women also be a factor? Judging by the process of the evolving developments in formal Jewish education for women, there need not be a single, uniform response.

At present, we are witnessing both ex-

think can really help in ridding me of my challenge. In fact, I do not think that I will ever be able to fully rid myself of these feelings, even when I marry and raise a family. Such knowledge is endlessly frustrating. I know where my path will lead, but I do not know how to get there. I see hope at the end of the road, but the path to it is covered by a screen of smoke and fog.

And I still live in fear. I have told a handful of people about my challenge. The results have sometimes been incredibly painful. I have had to pull away from people I had once called friends because of pain and embarrassment. I have been forced to sever relationships with close friends because of their lack of understanding and because of the hurt and confusion I have caused them. I watch my friends begin to date and to marry and question what my future holds. Will I find someone to share my life with? Will I ever really be completely happy with my decision? Am I destined to live a life alone? I want to tell my friends, to cry out to them, but I know I cannot. I know that the path that has been laid before me is one of solitude.

Rabbi Dr. Lamm once wrote that "Judaism allows for no compromise in its abhorrence of sodomy, but encourages both compassion and efforts at rehabilitation."^{iv} I have told you my story and have given you a glimpse at my challenge. I do not ask you to cry with me or accept me; I only ask you to realize that I am out there. Realize that not everyone who is challenged with homosexuality is parading or protesting for equal rights. I beg you to realize this – that I, too, am a *frum* Jew, trying to live a *frum* life like everyone else. I stand with you in the elevators of Belfer, Furst, Muss, Morg, and Rubin. I eat lunch at your table and sit with you in class; you call me a friend. And I am not one person; I am the courageous voice that has spoken for a group that lives isolated and in hiding.

The Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot* 2:5 tells us to never judge someone before one has walked in his shoes. I have let you see a peek of the trial I will face for the rest of my life, and ask that you do not judge me; I ask you to understand me. I stand next to you, even if you will never know my identity and my challenge. There is a fire within me, which will always burn, urging me to fight and complete my destiny, which I must hide from the world. I stand next to you, even if you will never know my identity and my challenge. Many tears have flown from my heavy eyes and there will be many more. One day in my shoes, a trial that will last a lifetime.

ⁱ *Va-Yikra* 18:22 and 20:13.

ⁱⁱ Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, "Judaism and the Modern Attitude to Homosexuality," in *Jewish Bioethics*, ed. Fred Rosner and J. David Bleich (New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1979), 209.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks' foreword to Rabbi Chaim Rapoport, *Judaism and Homosexuality: An Authentic Orthodox View* (London; Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), ix.

^{iv} Lamm, 217.

treme reactions to the perceived threat to tradition and groups pushing the boundaries of Halakhah to conform to the current climate. Most of us fall somewhere in the middle, often with inconsistencies. Some Haredim have literally removed women from the picture. Greater gender separation is demanded than ever existed in Eastern Europe. The reconstituted *shtetl* has greater restrictions on women than its historical counterpart.

At the other extreme, there has been an attempt to create an egalitarian Orthodoxy. The most recent manifestation of this occurs in congregations where women get *aliyyot*. For decades, there have been women's *tefillah* groups.

In some areas, reality has resolved what had been an issue. In the 1920s, there had been a dispute about whether women were permitted to vote in the pre-Israel elections in the *Yishuv*. The majority opinion was no – it

the differences are most apparent in the sphere of male-female interaction. The gap between families that do not mix sexes at the Shabbat table and those sending their children to co-ed schools is enormous. Clearly, no common approach will work for all. My wife and I have gone to weddings in Hasidic halls where men and women have separate entrances and coat-rooms and then congregated together at the smorgasbord.

The growth and diversity of formal Jewish education for women does present a model of what might occur in areas of women's leadership and public expression in Jewish life. Schools that taught Jewish as well as secular subjects for girls started in Germany fifty years before they began in Eastern Europe. Attempts to create such schools at first faced opposition. When introduced, they received ex post facto approval by leading rabbis. There is still no consensus about what should



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was immodest. The practical consequences of the Orthodox losing half of their votes made the question moot. Today, Orthodox women vote without any controversy.

The world of *kollelim* is totally dependent on working mothers. Contrast between their lives in the religious community and in the workforce has to be a source of tension. Not all will permanently accept that the wives' mission in life is to simultaneously earn a living, take care of the home, and have a large family.

The broader society is struggling to balance traditional family roles and women having careers. The feminist movement has splintered and the rise of Evangelism in America has strengthened opponents of change. However, economic factors make the "stay-at-home-mom" an option for only a small percentage of women. Getting married later, most women have begun working and/or completed graduate studies before their wedding.

There is no single Orthodox Jewry and

or should not be taught, but eventually all elements of the community have schools, almost all for at least twelve years.

Without broad acceptance by respected rabbis, initiatives will remain on the fringe. Halakhah has flexibility, but within its own terms. Attempts to reverse those societal changes that follow from women's advanced education and working will be successful only in totally closed communities. The pace of change will be uneven with the pull of tradition and the need to compete in society conflicting, but in time a new equilibrium will emerge. Women will have greater opportunities for religious expression, though, as in the case of education, it will be expressed in different ways in the diverse Orthodox world.

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Kol Mevasser or Kol Hamevasser?

Editor's Note: It recently came to our attention that the name of the first modern Yiddish newspaper was Kol Mevasser, distinct from ours by only an article, so we thought it would be interesting to include this historical sketch on the paper; an excerpt from David Fishman's The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), pp. 6-8. We leave it to our readers to determine how faithfully we carry the torch of our namesake.

The first modern Yiddish cultural institution in Russia was the periodical press, which came into being, alongside the Hebrew and Russian Jewish press, during the 1860s, the era of the great reforms of Tsar Alexander II. The first modern Yiddish newspaper, the weekly *Kol Mevasser* (Hebrew for "The Heralding Voice"), was established in 1862 by the *Maskil* Alexander Zederbaum. Since the modern newspaper was itself an institution that migrated from European and Russian culture to Jewish culture, it comes as no surprise that the founder and editor of *Kol Mevasser* was a *Maskil*, someone who advocated the Jews' modernization.

Many of the characteristics of *Kol Mevasser*, which was published in Odessa between 1862 and 1873, would become mainstays of the Yiddish press. Each issue opened with a news section consisting of a mix of world news, items about Jewish communities across the globe, Russian news, and governmental decrees from St. Petersburg. The section exposed Yiddish readers in the Pale of Settlement to the goings-on in the wide world beyond their immediate horizons. But news actually occupied a minority of the weekly's space. Most of its pages were taken up with biographies of famous Russian, European, and Jewish historical figures; articles on science, technology, medicine, and health; and *Maskilic* feuilletons with social criticism of Russian Jewry for its ignorance, superstition, and backwardness.

Two types of non-news material stood out in *Kol Mevasser*. First, it published Yiddish stories and the first Yiddish novels in serialization. S. J. Abramovitch, better known by his pen name, Mendele Moykher Seforim, and by the title of grandfather of Yiddish literature, published his first Yiddish novel, *Dos kleyne mentshle* (The little man), in *Kol Mevasser*. Abraham Goldfaden, the father of Yiddish theater, published poems in *Kol Mevasser*. The close association between the press and literature would become a basic feature of modern Yiddish culture. The press gave an impetus to the spread of Yiddish literature and provided a measure of financial security for writers. But it also created limitations on the kinds of works that could be published, given that Yiddish

newspapers were directed at a broad general readership.

The second type of non-news material published in *Kol Mevasser* was reports on Jewish life in the cities and towns of the Pale of Settlement, sent in not by professional journalists or regular correspondents but by local inhabitants, unsolicited and free of charge. These reports often took the form of exposés or simple gossip about Jewish communal conflicts and the shortcomings of local institutions and leaders. The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture took the form of exposés or simple gossip about Jewish communal conflicts and the shortcomings of local institutions and leaders. The material transformed *Kol Mevasser* (and subsequent newspapers) into a folk institution, where the boundary between reader and writer was porous—and sometimes nonexistent. Popular participation in the Yiddish press (far beyond the confines of a letters to the editor column) created an informal and familial atmosphere in its pages.

In *Kol Mevasser*, as in many later Yiddish newspapers, the voice of the editor was ubiquitous and his role domineering. Zederbaum did not merely compose much of the newspaper himself. He frequently penned responses to the feuilletons and reports he published by others; he freely edited his contributors' language and content, including the *belle lettres* submitted by writers such as Mendele Moykher Seforim; and he used the newspaper as a forum to settle personal accounts.

While Zederbaum's attitude toward Yiddish was ambivalent at best—he urged the readers of *Kol Mevasser* to give their children a Russian education—the newspaper he founded thrust Yiddish writing into the modern world. It provided the opportunity for a significant *Maskil*, Abramovitsh, to launch his career as a Yiddish novelist. The paper also helped create a modern Yiddish style, as it vacillated between the meandering loquaciousness of a traditional storyteller and the highfalutin German of a *Maskil*, to present the problems of the modern world in Yiddish.

Zederbaum maintained the basic features of *Kol Mevasser* in his subsequent weekly newspaper, *Yidishes Folksblat* (Jewish People's Paper; St. Petersburg, 1881–1890), where the most famous Yiddish writer of all, Sholem Rabinovitch, better known by his pen name, Sholem Aleichem, debuted in 1883. The only shift was in the newspaper's editorial orientation. Whereas *Kol Mevasser* was enthusiastically patriotic and supportive of the regime of Alexander II, *Yidishes Folksblat*, published after the pogroms of 1881–1882, was reserved in its treatment of Russian affairs, while devoting considerable attention to the new Jewish colonies in Palestine.



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