

# HAMEVASER

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## HAMEVASER

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# Editorials

## The Right to Write

Yeshiva is an institution where two worlds continually meet in uneasy union. However, each world is not without its own internal conflicts. Within the *Beit Medrash*, debates spark and conflicting approaches emerge. In recent months, *Hamevaser* has drawn heat from the proponents of one approach towards independent student thought.

This first approach asserts that *psak* applies to thoughts as well as actions. One must turn to a learned *rav* for the correct answer to a halachic question; shouldn't one turn to the same *rav* to "check" one's ideologic opinions? Only a *rav* qualified to decide a complex halachic technicality offers the proper mindframe for debating a contemporary issue. Certainly students, barely past twenty, should not publish their own thoughts; besides the possibility of expressing a "wrong" opinion, they face the grave danger of stepping outside the bounds of Orthodox Judaism. The very idea of *Hamevaser* is both presumptuous and hostile.

The central Orthodox approach dismantles this monolith. The realm of Orthodox thought incorporates a wide range of views; outside of certain fundamentals, few specifics unite all opinions. The pluralistic scope of normative Orthodoxy provides fertile ground for discussion and investigation. Concerned and thoughtful Jewish students, soon to share in communal leadership, have a right — and obligation — to explore, research and advance opinions. (Indeed, Rabbi Lamm has postulated, in *Jewish Life*, Fall 1979, that any idea derived from a study of Torah sources, though open to disagreement, remains within Orthodox bounds. The process, not the conclusion, defines a valid view.)

When a *Hamevaser* article addresses a halachic issue, it should never be mistaken for *psak*. Although few *Hamevaser* writers would argue halacha without first discussing it with a *posek*, we trust our readers to treat *Hamevaser* as a student paper, not a rabbinic journal. We do not deny the possibility of

factual errors in our articles (we hope letters to the editor will point them out), but criticisms of *Hamevaser* have not centered around quality control. Rather, critics question *Hamevaser's* right to exist independent of rabbinic supervision. It seems clear to us that the very nature of Yeshiva University and centrist Orthodoxy justifies — and demands — the kind of independent thought *Hamevaser* strives to provide.

## The Besht for the Best

Over ten years ago, a very popular professor taught a course in Chassidic Thought. With his elevation from the ranks of teachers to those of administrators, that professor forsook his Furst Hall classroom for a roomier office on the fifth floor. Happily, we welcome back Professor Norman Lamm, co-teaching with Rabbi Shalom Carmy (who will teach the bulk of the course). Once again, Professor Lamm eloquently convinces Yeshiva students, this time Max Stern Scholars, that "there is more to Chassidut than *Buber* maizes."

Unfortunately, Rabbi Lamm's return has been marred by the exclusion of non-Stern Scholars from the Chassidut course. Due to an initial misunderstanding, a number of undeniably qualified non-Scholars had expected to be admitted, some already registered and attending. When Dr. Egon Brenner, Executive Vice President, overruled both Professors Lamm and Carmy (as well as the Scholars themselves) and closed registration, he inadvertently upset and embittered some of Yeshiva's best students.

We hope this series of events will prompt a more exacting evaluation of the exclusivity of the Scholars' courses in general; the case of Chassidut is especially disappointing. If President Lamm has time to offer the student body, wouldn't maximum accessibility better serve us? We look forward to more thoughtful planning in future decisions, but for now, we are best off applauding Professor Lamm, if only from a distance.

# A Call to Sobriety

By DAVID A.A. LEVINSON

As the time of Purim and *Parshat Zachor* nears, Jews in exile (euphemistically termed "the Diaspora") must engage in introspection. Although few *Hamevaser* writers would argue halacha without first discussing it with a *posek*, we trust our readers to treat *Hamevaser* as a student paper, not a rabbinic journal. We do not deny the possibility of

quae flaw. The Jew, from birth, has been reared on the belief that every human being has a divine spark within him, a *Tzelem Elokim*. This optimistic perception of humanity, combined with the belief that repentance is almost always possible, pervades Jewish thought and the Jewish psyche. While this noble belief is to our credit, when accepted blindly it has led to our downfall. The phenomena of a force of absolute evil and irrational hatred that knows no bounds is a sobering experience for the naive Jew who has deluded himself into believing that Amalek does not exist. And so the Jewish response to the rise of Haman was *V'hair Shushan navocha*. "One would expect the response to be *V'hair Shushan bachta*," cried, or *"avela*," mourned. However, the *Megillah* clearly wants us to realize that the Jewish reaction was one of *"navocha"* — perplexity, confusion, and disbelief. The Jews of the time lived in an era of relative religious tolerance. They were served "Glatt Kosher" food at the feast of Achashveirosh. They were *"mefuzar u'meforad bein ha'amim"*. They did not live in ghettos. When faced with the unexpected fury of Amalekic hatred from their neighbors, initial Jewish response was mere disbelief and perplexity.

In "Reflections of the Rav," the following insight into the Jewish personality sheds light on our problem. One of man's greatest weaknesses, though at times a gift, is forgetfulness. But in this area, the Jew has a uni-

had forgotten that home was not "*Shushan habira*" or 127 other cities. It was the "*kol dodi dofek*" cloaked in the vestments of anti-semitism. Years before the prophet, Yirmiyahu wrote "*Eicha yashva vagoyim lo amatz'ah manoach*." She [*Knesset Yisrael*] sat amidst the nations and found no rest. "The *midrash's* comment makes a powerful statement: Had the Jewish people found rest among the nations in the exile, they would not have returned home to Eretz Yisrael.

Through hidden, divine intervention, the Jews of Persia were saved. Their reaction was "*Layehudim hayta Orah V'simcha V'sason V'ykar*." But, after the appropriate jubilation, the Jews should have made proper conclusions about their condition in exile and the tragedy that had just been averted. They did not. The *gemara* in *Berachot* says that if trouble befalls someone and he finds no reason for it, he should assume it is due to "*Bitul Torah*." *Chazal* say: From the day the Jews were exiled from their land, you find no greater *Bitul Torah!*" On a national scale steps should have been taken to cease this "*Bitul Torah*," by creating an ingathering of the exiles. Sadly, the Jew of the Persian exile did not go through this "*cheshbon Ha nefesh*."

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This is lesson one which we learn from *Zachor* and Purim; a lesson that for generations to come, a force Amalek will indeed exist. When least expected, it will turn upon the Jew in his exile, for this is the nature of *artzot hagalat*. It is written in *Vayikra* (26:5), "And you shall live securely in your land." *Chazal* say: in your land (*Eretz Yisrael*) you will be secure but not outside of it. It is the curse of the Galut and the promise of Eretz Yisrael: "*U'vagoyim haheem lo targia*, in those nations in the exile you will find no rest (*D'varim* 28:65)." Let not Jewish humanistic optimism foolishly blind him into thinking otherwise.

And now lesson two. Though the historical context of the *Megillah* appears to be shrouded in mystery, with some help from *Chazal* and other books of the *Tanach*, the following historical picture emerges. The First Temple is destroyed. The Jews, are dragged into exile weeping "Im eshkech Yerushalaim tishkach yemini." Almost seven years pass and a miraculous opportunity is offered to the Jews by Koresh, the Persian King: "Return to your land and build your Temple anew." One would expect sudden rejoicing, everyone packing their bags to return to their homeland after seventy long years of waiting. But, this was not to be. After seventy years of exile, the Jew had become economically established in *Bavel*, and it soon became a "home away from home"; or even worse, a home to replace his real home — *Eretz Yisrael*. Consequently, only a minority of Jews returned. Among those who remained were many *talmidei chachamin*, who may have believed that it wasn't "the real thing"; that redemption could not occur through natural means — certainly not through a gentile King. The wealthy on the other hand, satisfied their consciences by giving donations to their brethren in the Holy Land (the forerunner of the tax deductible U.J.A. donation), a special right granted to them by King Koresh.

And so the Jews of the Persian Empire continued to live, learn and prosper even though a certain King Artachshashta (identified by *Chazal* as Achashveirosh) halted the building of the *Beit Hamikdash*. They even went to his testimonial dinners... until the infamous decree of Haman shook the entire Jewish world "*meHodu v'ad Kush*." One irrefutable reason for this decree was the divine objective to awaken those Jews who

had forgotten that home was not "*Shushan habira*" or 127 other cities. It was the "*kol dodi dofek*" cloaked in the vestments of anti-semitism. Years before the prophet, Yirmiyahu wrote "*Eicha yashva vagoyim lo amatz'ah manoach*." She [*Knesset Yisrael*] sat amidst the nations and found no rest. "The *midrash's* comment makes a powerful statement: Had the Jewish people found rest among the nations in the exile, they would not have returned home to Eretz Yisrael.

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And so, when *Daryavesh*, the son of *Achashveirosh*, gave the Jews permission to return to *Eretz Yisrael*, once again, the response was weak. The majority of Jews elected to remain in Persia under the subordinate status of "*Akati avdei Achashveirosh anani*"? The *gemara* in *Megillah* 14 says that we do not say *Hallel* for the miracle of Purim because one does not say *Hallel* for miracles occurring in *chutz la'aretz*. Perhaps, *Chazal* realized that by saying *Hallel* on such a miracle, the Jew would delude himself into thinking that he is at last safe and that he may continue to live securely in his exile. To he *Chazal* say: a true *Hallel* can only be said in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Tragically, the Purim generation did not seem to understand the implications of the historical era in which they lived. Therefore, the *gemara* mourns: had all the Jews of that time gone up to *Eretz Yisrael* en masse, the *Beit Hamikdash* would have lasted forever; since they did not, the *Beit Hamikdash* did not last and was destroyed (see *Yomah* 9B and *Shir Hashirim Rabah* 8:12). The Purim generation and their successors have clung

# Between Synagogue and State

## There is little distinction between stone-throwing Neturei Karta and gun-toting Yamit settlers

By YEHUDA SUSMAN

*The scenario: On the first day of Pesach, a young Tel Aviv couple drives to Jerusalem to visit friends. Unfamiliar with the city, they don't hesitate to turn down Rechov Malchei Yisrael, in the direction of Mea Shearim. It is, of course, a mistake for which they and their insurance company will soon pay.*

Throwing stones just isn't our modern/centrist Orthodox style. It's distasteful. Counterproductive. Wrong. Even the Aguda frowns on it.

In a recent article in the *New York Times Magazine*, Elyakim Haetzni a West Bank settlement leader, was quoted:

If he [Peres] gives up land, the jails will be so filled with civil resisters, they will have to set up concentration camps, they will have to drag people out of their homes, and, I am afraid, some people will fight. By breaking the law we will be faithful to the superior law.

What happened to distasteful? What happened to wrong? Assuming Mr. Haetzni's case definition of "the superior law" is correct, can we justify civil disobedience for halachic gain? There is, after all, little distinction between stone-throwing Neturei Karta and gun-toting Yamit settlers refusing to leave. Yet, we automatically condemn the former. Why?

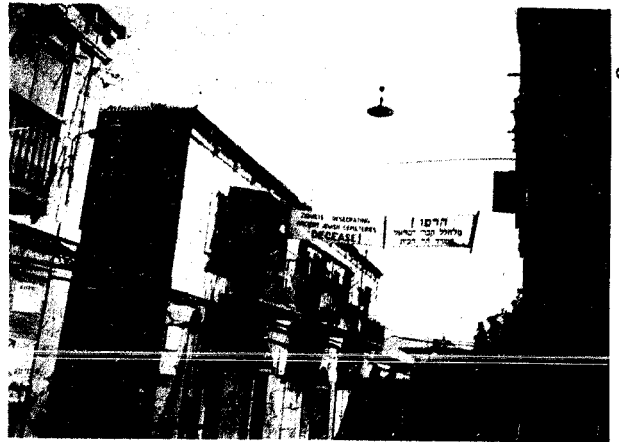
The problem is not limited to civil resistance. Israel today is not a Torah state. 80% of her population is not religious, and the religious parties control only twelve seats in the Knesset. Does the minority have an obligation, or even a right, to impose

halachic restrictions on an unwanted populace? If not, *k'fya datit* — religious coercion — be it in the form of "Who is a Jew," marriage and divorce statutes, or banning public transportation on the Sabbath, is morally indefensible.

What do our Charedi brethren think they accomplish by stoning the Subaru? What does a religious legislator achieve by stopping the buses in all Jerusalem on Shabbat? From a halachic perspective, neither has done very much. *Chilul Shabbat* continues, albeit less publicly. The Charedi's neighborhood is "autorein," but the Subaru driver will angrily tootle his way around the rest of the city because the #4 bus isn't running into Rehavia. No greater fulfillment of *mitzvot* has been realized. At most, a more "Shabbosdik" aura can be said to fill the air. Shabbosdik — not Shabbat — is the issue of the day.

Atmosphere, lies at the heart of many, if not most, of the issues at hand. The proposed amendment in the "Who is a Jew" legislation, for example, changes nothing from a halachic perspective. True, those who have undergone invalid conversions can presently enter the country under the Law of Return. So what? They cannot marry Jews. The Chief Rabbinate must, by law, validate all marriages, and it would categorically deny such a union. To be sure, it is difficult to spot a "Jew." I would, however, rather a *rav* ask the pertinent questions — not an irrelevant clerk at the Absorption Ministry.

*Mihu Yehudi* may have no halachic impact, but the psychological reverberations run deep. On the surface, Israel has made a small but definite step towards becoming a state



where halacha reigns supreme. Religious Zionists would hail another step in the continuing redemptive process; a Jewish state where being a Jew means being a Jew according to the halacha.

In our zealous drive to build *Bayit Shlishi*, we must be careful not to resurrect *Bayit Sheni* in its stead. Halacha without *ruach halacha* has little meaning; the root of *sinat chinam* can easily devour the core of halachic observance. The negligible gains against *chilul Shabbat* must be weighed against the very tangible losses in *chilul Hashem*. Are halachic Jewry's small moral victories worth the disillusionment and anger of the overwhelming majority of Klal Yisrael?

To be sure, actual observance is the crux of a number of these cases. The questions of *gittin v'kiddushin*, enforced observance of Shabbat and *kashrut* in the army, government

subsidies for yeshivot, and *Eretz Yisrael HaShlema*, are halachic questions. They must be applied to secular society within a halachic framework.

To the religious Jew, individual and community are inextricably interwoven. The precept "*kol Yisrael arevim zeh b'zeh*" (all Jews are responsible for one another's actions) is deeply rooted in halacha, and to assume otherwise would deny the fundamental nature of *knesset Yisrael*.

But like all forms of responsibility, our accountability for one another must entail an understanding of its limits. In a free society, religious practice cannot be legislated. No legal system can function if society doesn't accept its authority. Torah's absolute authority is not accepted in our society. Traditional forms of coercion such as *hochacha* and

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## Trouble in Paradise

By DANIEL Y. MANN

Recently I overheard a discussion in the *Beit Medrash* about the proper motivation for learning Torah. One participant boldly claimed that success in learning depends primarily upon intellectual intrigue and enjoyment. As he dogmatically put it, "Nobody will become a big *talmid chacham* if he learns because it's a *mitzvah*. There are many *mitzvot* to perform. Dedication to Torah stems from appreciating its intellectual beauty."

As I deliberated his claim, I recognized elements of truth, but also, in my opinion, significant and dangerous misconceptions about the nature of dedication to Torah. Clearly it is hard to imagine one who considers learning a bitter medicine achieving great success in *limud Torah*. Greater appreciation of Torah bolsters one's *hamdalah* and, indeed, his closeness to *Hashem*. There is a beautiful elaboration on this theme in the introduction to the Eglei Tal to dispute those who claim that deriving enjoyment from Torah diminishes from the element of *lishmah*. However, the catalyst should not be constructed as the cause: there is a far cry between being exhilarated by Torah and learning because it is exhilarating.

We proudly consider ourselves servants of *Hashem* and the nature of this relationship obligates us to fulfill His every decree. We are fortunate that *shmirat hamitzvot* benefits us and that the biggest *mitzvah*, *talmud Torah*, benefits and inspires us most. But the obligation to learn Torah remains just that — an obligation. When we capture the profundity of the experience we are fortunate in-

deed; when we cannot or do not, though, our obligation is just as binding and our zeal and dedication should be just as great, albeit more difficult.

The well-known explanation of Rav Chaim Volozhin (*Nefesh Hachaim, Sha'ar 4*) defines *Torah lishmah* as learning to know and understand, not necessarily with lofty, mystical thoughts (as the early Chasidim demanded). An inspection of his elaboration reveals that this desire to know must be rooted in an awareness that *Hashem* values and has commanded us to obtain this knowledge. Rabbi Akiva and thousands like him sacrificed their lives for Torah because

(6:4) describes the *derech shel Torah* as "... you live a life of great toil; if you do so you are fortunate and it is good for you." Many other *ma'amarei Chazal* discuss the sacrifices one must be willing to make for *limud Torah*.

Perhaps one of the blessings of Yaakov presents the most startling image of a *ben Torah*. Which metaphors most fittingly portray the *lomeid Torah of Bnei Yisrael*? Surely it should be the "hind sent loose which gives forth beautiful sayings," describing Naftali. But it is not. *Yisachar, the ben Torah*, is portrayed as "a large-boned donkey" which sleeps while standing and shuns the pleasures

### The road of the talmid chacham is long and grueling; one who finds the path short and smooth has probably lost his way

of this realization, not because they found Torah more fascinating than physics or philosophy. Although our dedication to Torah may not result in martyrdom, we must be willing to make a variety of sacrifices — monetary, social or other — that probably encompass every aspect of life. These sacrifices cannot realistically be met if one's motivations are enjoyment and intrigue.

*Chazal* do not hesitate to announce the heavy tolls of the road to success in Torah. The *gemara* in *Berachot* (43b) states: "Torah is preserved only in one who kills himself over it [to be applied in a nonliteral sense, obviously]." The famous *mishna* in *Avot*

of the land to drag its burden. The spiritual burden *Chazal* tell us of is Torah. The road of the *talmid chacham* is long and grueling; one who finds the path short and smooth has probably lost his way.

Learning need not always be interesting or pleasant. *Limud Torah* is reviewing a piece of *gemara* "a hundred times" until you can't bear to review it again — and then doing so anyway. *Avodat Hashem* entails keeping a seder when you know you'll have to stay up late studying for a final. Dedication to Torah is learning during intercession when you'd much prefer spending two weeks in Florida with your friends. One who learns when the

mood strikes, and he can "get into it," has not fulfilled his responsibility... even if it amounts to many hours a week.

As Y.U. students in an intellectually open environment, we often eagerly discuss the proper approach to problems facing the Jewish community. We scrutinize the performance and/or integrity of various individuals and groups and quite willingly enumerate what we believe to be the shortcomings of Jewish leaders, members of the administration, and even of our own *roshei yeshiva*. However, there appears to be one group which has evaded our scrutiny — ourselves.

We take pride in the fact that there is more learning now in Y.U. than ever before, that many people are active in *kiruv*, and that many students *daven* with a *minyan* every morning. We have certainly come a long way and can be proud of that. But I believe it safe to say that we have not, as a group, nearly reached such a high level of dedication to our learning, *kiruv*, or *shmirat hamitzvot* in general to justify complacency and self-congratulation. Instead, or at least in addition, to criticizing those who will not read our newspaper nor hear our discussions in the cafeteria, let us search our own souls as individuals and as a community.

We must first contemplate the extent of our responsibility, especially considering the turmoil of our times and our potential as a group to affect it, and whether we are adequately meeting that responsibility. We must then work hard to rectify any shortcomings we

See PARADISE, Pg. 11

# Rambam — Interpreting Aristotle

By MORDECHAI COHEN

When the Rambam decided to write a comprehensive system of Jewish ethical philosophy, he naturally turned to the Talmud, the corpus of Jewish law and thought. However, rabbinic literature itself does not provide a systematic exposition of Jewish ethical thought, since the moral prescriptions in the Talmud are terse and scattered and often reflect divergent opinions. Thus, Maimonides faced the task of extracting from the diverse sources what he considered central to the Torah's ethical system. In this endeavor, the Rambam utilized his knowledge of general philosophy, in addition to his own sense of abstraction and organization. Specifically, the Rambam adopts some of the terminology and categorization that Aristotle developed in his works. Naturally the content of the Maimonidian and Aristotelian systems differ, since the latter is a product of man-made ethical rules while the former explicates the precepts of the Torah. But the categories and structure utilized by the Rambam often correspond to those found in Aristotle.

We tend nowadays to restrict ethics to the realm of interpersonal relations; Aristotle, however, shifts the emphasis of ethical rules from one's responsibility to others to the individual's character development, fostered by the virtues, which are divided into two groups: intellectual and moral. The intellectual virtues, which are acquired mainly by instruction, include wisdom and understanding, while the moral virtues consist of character traits such as temperance, generosity, patience and friendliness, and must be developed by habit as well as moral instruction.

The Aristotelian ethical system assumes that man has a unique potential and that his ultimate fulfillment and happiness depend upon realizing that potential. Since reason and understanding are unique to man, Aristotle concludes that man's goal revolves around the development of his faculty of reason. The intellectual virtues are central to man's true happiness, since he attains through them the highest level of human achievement which, according to Aristotle, consists of physics and contemplating the supernatural world through the study of metaphysics. The case of the moral virtues is more complex since they deal with feelings and desires rather than with intellect and do not seem to directly develop man's faculty of reason. Nevertheless, Aristotle contends that the moral virtues are necessary to regulate man's bodily functions in a manner that enhances man's intellectual development. Specifically, one major aim of the moral virtues is to curb those desires that would distract man from his pursuit of knowledge. For example, a virtuous person is not greedy, does not anger easily, and does not possess excessive physical appetites. On the other hand, the moral virtues must also safeguard those basic needs which are essential to the proper function of man's body and mind. For example, while the virtue of temperance restricts man's unnecessary desires, it does not prescribe physical neglect; on the contrary, a tempered person must have adequate food and rest to function well. Thus, the Aristotelian moral virtues prescribe the "golden mean" which guides man to properly utilize his body in the service of his higher faculties.

Similar to Aristotle's ethical system, the Rambam considers character development the central aim of the Torah. However, the Rambam and Aristotle differ with regard to man's ultimate purpose and hence with regard to some of the desired character traits. Specifically, while Maimonides accepts the general notion of intellectual and moral virtues (*ma'lot hasichliot* and *ma'lot hamidot*



in his *Shmoneh Prakim*, he directs the intellectual virtues towards the contemplation of God and considers the *mitzvot* to be the source of the moral virtues. The Rambam states that the highest goal man can aspire to is the understanding of God, which, in turn, brings the individual closer to God and endows him with ultimate happiness. The general purpose of the Torah, therefore, is to guide man to actualize his potential and approach God to the extent that is humanly possible. The commandments that foster man's intellectual and moral virtues contribute most directly to this goal; the intellectual virtues prepare man's mind to fully grasp the Torah's theological propositions, while the moral virtues enable man to include his physical existence within the overall goal of understanding his maker.

The *mitzvot* that deal with belief in God and the acceptance of concepts such as Divine omnipotence and Divine providence relate to the intellectual virtues and are dealt with extensively in the Rambam's philosophical works. His ethical works, on the other hand, deal with the *mitzvot* which foster the moral virtues, the functions of which are twofold. On a basic level, the Rambam agrees with Aristotle's assumption that the moral virtues are necessary to simply curb man's base desires and prevent them from interfering with man's loftier goals. However, at a deeper level, Maimonides explains that, since God is the source of the moral virtues, one who acquires those virtues is, in a way, emulating God. This type of emulation can perhaps be understood as a practical knowledge of God that is to supplement a person's intellectual understanding. The concept of *imitatio dei*, not stressed by Aristotle, is derived in the Talmud from verses such as "After the Lord your God shall you walk (Deuteronomy 10:1)," upon which the rabbinic comment that man should strive to be merciful, kind and holy, just as God is merciful, kind and holy (*Shabbat* 133b, *Sotah* 14a; see also the Rambam's formulation in *Hilchot De'ot* 1:6). Thus Maimonides adopts the Aristotelian category of moral virtue to group certain *mitzvot*, but he infuses new meaning into the notion of moral virtue with the principles of our tradition.

Although the Rambam at one point states that most of the *mitzvot* develop man's moral character, he does not deny that the *mitzvot* serve other purposes as well. Many precepts that foster virtue in an individual also have social benefits; for example, the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* fosters generosity in the donor while, at the same time, benefitting the recipient. The same can be said regarding most of the virtues; friendliness, kindness and honesty develop the individual's character while at the same time benefitting society as a whole. This dual function is reflected in *Shmoneh Prakim* where Maimonides stresses



character development (in contrast to the third section of *Guide for the Perplexed* which emphasizes the more utilitarian social benefits of the *mitzvot*).

The Rambam also counts certain precepts that are unrelated to the intellectual or moral virtues at all. The Rambam explains that the prohibition of *sha'atnez* (wearing a garment of wool and linen) was aimed at distancing the Jews from the idolatry of the Canaanites whose priests wore garments of wool and linen. It is well known that Maimonides provides a similar rationale for other *mitzvot*, as well (e.g. the commandments regarding the sacrifices and the prohibition of shaving). Even though these *mitzvot* do not directly foster the virtues, they nevertheless were necessary to prevent the Jews from relapsing into idolatry and giving up the more central concepts of the Torah. Thus, while the major thrust of the *mitzvot* deals with character development, the Rambam contends that some *mitzvot* serve this central goal in an indirect fashion.

The Rambam adopts the Aristotelian

Against which soul did he sin? It must refer to the fact that he denied himself wine. Now if the Nazirite denied himself wine only and is termed "sinner," how much more so he who denies himself the enjoyment of ever so many things (*Ta'anit* 11a, *Nedarim* 10a; see also the Rambam's formulation in *Hilchot De'ot* 3:1).

R. Eleazar's opinion seems to indicate that physical desires are intrinsically evil and undesirable; Maimonides, however, prefers the opinion of R. Eleazar HaKappar and considers it more consistent with rabbinic thought. The Rambam maintains that man's physical desires per se are morally neutral; only if man uses them simply for his own satisfaction are they undesirable. The purpose of the Torah is to guide man towards utilizing his physical desires to maintain his physical and mental well being; this, in turn, enables man to pursue the ultimate goal of understanding God.

The Rambam explains that one who is haughty and quick to anger will find it difficult to lower himself even before God; therefore, the virtues of patience and humility are essential to a proper perspective of one's relationship with God. Regarding these virtues, the Rambam, based upon numerous references from our tradition, deviates from his "golden mean" and states that:

[Pride] must be shunned to the extreme. The right way in this regard is not to be merely meek but to be humble-minded to the utmost... Anger, too, is an exceedingly bad passion and one should avoid it to the last extreme. The sages therefore charged us that anger should be avoided to such a degree that one should train oneself to be unmoved, even by things that would naturally provoke anger (*Hilchot De'ot* 2:3).

## Maimonides infuses new meaning into the notion of moral virtue with the principles of our tradition

"golden mean" in explaining that the moral virtues fostered by the *mitzvot* are meant to distance man from extremes in behavior. While charity is meant to develop the virtue of generosity, the rabbis limited even that *mitzvah* to one-fifth of one's possessions so that no one would give away so much that he and his own family would remain without sustenance. Similarly, while the dietary laws and the prohibition of *arayot* (certain sexual relations) are meant to curb man's excessive physical desires, the Rambam maintains that the Torah does not encourage physical deprivation, leading to poor health. Maimonides even criticizes the ascetic sects of Judaism which regarded fasting and suffering as methods of purifying the soul from the impurities of the body. Both the ascetic position and the Rambam's view are reflected by (conflicting) statements in the Talmud. Pointing to the institution of *nezirut*, R. Eleazar says:

[The Nazirite] is termed "Holy," as it is said, "He shall be holy (Numbers 6:5)." If the Nazirite who denied himself wine only is termed "Holy," how much more so he who denies himself the enjoyment of ever so many things (*Ta'anit* 11a).

On the other hand, R. Eleazar HaKappar, discussing the sin-offering brought by the Nazirite, states:

According to the Rambam, Judaism requires the extreme in humility because the more a person is humble among his fellow men, the greater will be his capacity to lower himself before God. Thus, although the Rambam generally adopts Aristotle's "golden mean," since he considers it to accurately characterize the philosophy of the Torah, he deviates from this principle when it is inconsistent with Jewish ethical thought.

The Rambam and Aristotle also differ with regard to the source of ethical obligation. Aristotle argued that a thinking person ought to accept his ethical system because it provides the highest form of human happiness. This argument, however, is not sufficient to sustain the concept of obligation: people have different conceptions of happiness and may choose not to accept Aristotle's definition. In Judaism, however, all obligation stems first and foremost from the commandments of God and therefore a Jew is not free to reject the Torah's ethical system. Nevertheless, by adopting the Aristotelian concept of teleological ethics and by setting a form of human fulfillment as the goal of the *mitzvot* the Rambam takes the best of both worlds. That is to say, although obedience to God's command is the root of man's observance, the natural result of this observance is man's ultimate fulfillment and happiness.

# Museums With Souls

By ELIHU SIEGMAN

"Inside the museums, Infinity goes on  
trial! Voices echo this is what salvation must  
be like after a while."

Bob Dylan

On seven previous visits to the Yeshiva Museum's new exhibit, "Ashkenaz: The World of German Jewry," I roamed the aisles alone. On this particular Sunday afternoon, however, a modest bustle of human activity breathes life into the stiff display cases, returning to the exhibit its sense of purpose. Parents escort their children down the aisles, pointing, whispering and lightly lecturing them on their heritage. A clique of German natives test the presentation against their memories. This enlivened atmosphere helps transform the museum-goer into an aggressive observer: studying, scrutinizing and learning from the displays.

As other small museums around the country alter their form from passive display to active textual types, it seems especially appropriate for a university museum to assume the role of educator. Its primary teaching tools include artifacts, historical documents, and explanatory texts provided by the organizers. Not limited to collegiates, the studently embraces school children, families and scholars as well. And by focusing on various aspects of Ashkenazic daily life, outstanding personalities, and significant historical events and phenomena, this exhibit attempts to instill in the viewer a vivid picture of a unique culture.

As opposed to painting galleries, which Nathaniel Hawthorne described as "the greatest absurdities that ever were contrived," science and history museums, such as the Smithsonian Institute, the Diaspora Museum in Tel-Aviv, and the Yeshiva Museum allow artifacts not to compete, but to complement one another. Grouped thematically alongside documents and prepared texts, the visual delights endeavor to recreate the substance, texture and spirit of the Ashkenazic historical experience. Although factual information — dates, periodizations and biographies — frames the texts, the layout and categorization of topics imply a larger argument: that Ashkenaz constitutes more than a period in history; it signifies a culture that continues to live within the communities of its inheritors.

If the viewer remains patient and studious, the variety of artifacts, documents, photographs, and the short film evoke a deep appreciation for the exhibit's subject matter. With limited space allocated for this show, other aspirations of the exhibit do not prove as successful. The structural design of the exhibit falls short of its proposed attempt to revive the atmosphere of a Jewish town in Germany or France. Instead, the walled display cases create supermarket-like aisles, without any particular direction or path. In addition, the ratio of material per square foot of display space nearly halts movement, resulting in a mild case of museum fatigue. On the other hand, the cousin exhibit on the first floor, "The Art of Celebration," exemplifies how an open plan, complemented by several, pleasant niches, rests easier on the visitor's mind, as well as feet. Yet, whatever its disagreeable side effects, "Ashkenaz" rewards visitors for their effort.

Artifacts appearing either especially beautiful or simply curious, tend to immediately capture the viewer's gaze, more so than documents and books. The Jews of



Ashkenaz had an apparent obsession with ceremonial objects, as if always looking for excuses to fashion yet another. Their exclusion from trade guilds did not inhibit them from voraciously commissioning non-Jewish artisans or managing the workmanship on their own. Embossed iron tokens, for example — no bigger than quarters — were used to vote in synagogue elections. Another iron implement that resembles a garden tool boasts this label: "matza perforator."

Some novel objects hint at practices lost to most Jews. A threatening "Malxus whip," used for penance on Yom Kippur Eve, suggests one extreme of the religious spectrum. Other Ashkenazim found more use for the Jewish "beer token," embossed with the Star of David on one side and the German words "good for one glass of beer" on the opposite.

The more common objects, like kiddush cups and spice boxes, appeal to the viewer with their beauty and warm familiarity. They

for t'vilah (ritual immersion) — not lewd by any measure, but still unusual.

Certain books shed a revealing light on everyday life in the Ashkenazic community, while at the same time incorporating historical and sentimental value. A record book kept by the *Chevre Kadisha* (Burial Society) includes an inscription and signature of the sage, Malbim. Another, called a *Memorbuch*, (book of sayings and records), from 1792, begins a listing of martyrs with the Maharam of Rothenberg — who spent the last years of his illustrious life unjustly imprisoned.

The early stages of the exhibit display a generous number of old volumes of halacha, responsa, commentaries, and novellae, together representing the unprecedented contribution made to Jewish learning by brilliant scholars of Ashkenazic origins. From Rabbenu Tam, to Rashi, the Tosafists, and later intellectual virtuosos, such as, Rav Ya'akov Emden, Reb Yehonatan Eybeschutz and Rabbi Akiva Eger, one senses an unbroken chain of passion for Torah study. When the visitor examines the selection of original manuscripts, and places the authors in historical and geographical perspective, these names, daily tagged onto ideas, become whole personalities, with presence and immediacy that speak directly to him. Thus, books too can embody the emotion of a period in history long past.

The exhibit mindfully devotes attention to outstanding, though lesser known, personalities of Ashkenaz culture. One wall encasement pays homage to the legacy of Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger — the Arukh La'ner. Among the fathers of modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Ettlinger taught both Samson Raphael Hirsch and Azriel Hildesheimer, spawned a generation of scholars, teachers and community leaders, and literally outlined the basic tenets of Orthodoxy as they remain today.

The farther we dig into the biographical

## The Jews of Ashkenaz had an apparent obsession with ceremonial objects, as if always looking for excuses to fashion yet another

stimulate not only the eye but emotions and memories as well. Indeed, people harbor a fascination with objects of no particular artistic value that have faded with the passage of decades and centuries. A hefty, elegantly carved, wooden Omer counter from the Eighteenth century undeniably pleases the eye. In sharp contrast, a crudely nailed-together Omer counter, measuring a meek five inches, hangs in a nearby case. However, the humbler counterpart, the story has it, was smuggled out of Inquisition Spain in 1492. It suddenly becomes a jewel in the heart's eye.

Still, the most aesthetically striking objects always remain the shining silver candelabra, Cups of Elijah, and similar traditional ceremonial objects. As manifestations or requirements of *mitzvot*, they help invoke beauty and meaning into Judaism's abundance of religious rituals. Indeed, taking the raw slab of silver and skillfully fashioning it into a seder plate (with which to perform *mitzvot*) itself becomes a religious act.

Artistic expression is not restricted to ceremonial objects. For centuries, artists and illustrators have decorated and illuminated otherwise visually dry texts. This show boasts many illuminated manuscripts of meticulous workmanship, including a breathtaking, immaculately preserved, 1489 Bible from Prague, which was once owned by Moses Mendelsohn, and used in his difficult task of translating the Bible into German. Other artistically embellished books contain illustrations that would surprise some people:

Inside a miniature siddur, a picture of a woman in a bathtub accompanies the prayer

layers of history, the more intriguing the personalities become. Bertha Pappenheim, for example, pioneered in the field of social work in the early part of this century, and took a vigorous role in the Jewish Women's Rights Movement in Germany. Passage of time revealed that she was also the famed "Anna O": Freud's longtime patient, said to have fostered the breakthrough of psychoanalysis. When one's eyes return to examine her portrait and photographs, she indeed appears as a woman with great conviction and many deep secrets.

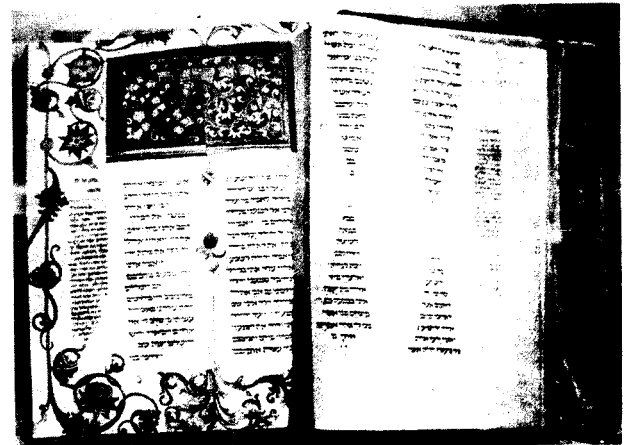
Perhaps the most gripping biographies belong to the simple, pious Jews who lived out their existence without notice. Occasionally, they leave behind some proof, as in the case of Gluckel of Hameln, whose memoirs are displayed in the exhibit. Gluckel was born in 1645, married at the age of fourteen, gave birth to twelve children, and was left a widow at age forty-six. Exceptionally gifted, and among the very few women educated, she took command of her deceased husband's business, and began writing her fascinating memoirs to help ease her depression. Incidentally, it was Bertha Pappenheim who translated her memoirs.

A voluminous collection of historical documents wallpaper various sections of the "Ashkenaz" exhibit, informally acquainting the viewer with the particulars of Jewish history. (Written in German, most are explained but not translated.) Numerous contracts and documents testify to the watchful eye with which governmental authorities tracked the Jews' every step in business and in private life. One reads of Jews requesting permission to move, to build, or to marry. These pleas, needless to say, were not always answered favorably. The *Schutzjude*, or privileged Jew, could buy these rights. One such Jew, Aaron Lehmann, preserved documents throughout his life, including those detailing the legal odyssey of building his own home in the town. Perhaps this oppressive need for documentation and record helps feed the stereotyped image of the excessively meticulous German Jew.

These documents serve as light reading in comparison to the many harsh edicts against the Jews. Declarations call attention to the tragic budding of the seeds of anti-semitism planted during the waves of Crusades centuries before. One edict expels the Jews by the order of King George in 1733. Others declare that Jews must don a special badge, direct Jews how they are to behave on Christian holidays (eg., not walking in the street) and another accuses them of poisoning the wells and triggering the bubonic plague. In such close proximity to documents from the Holocaust, even these familiar decrees achieve a fresh significance. For over one hundred years following the Enlightenment, these roots of vicious anti-Semitism were thought to be buried, while, in truth, they trembled beneath the German soil ready to sprout forth with a vengeance when summoned to strangle the Jews.

The deliberate juxtaposition in the last row of the exhibit smacks of a bitter irony. It places examples of the flowering Jewish artistic endeavor during the 1920s and 30s beside documents that foreshadowed the destruction of this rich culture. The turn of the century unleashed a profusion of artistic expression, turning out such gifted and

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Prague Illuminated Bible (1489) — Joan Vitale, Yeshiva University

# A Prisoner's Conscience

By ADAM S. FERZIGER

When Anatoly Shcharansky set foot on Israeli soil, a free man, Jews throughout the world felt a sense of pride and relief. A true Jewish hero had finally been released from the Siberian gulag to which he had been unjustly exiled. We all shivered at the pictures of Shcharansky atop the shoulders of an Israeli soldier, dancing at the Kotel with what seemed like half the Israeli populace around him. As the week went by, we were all astonished at the accounts of suffering that this man had undergone and the enormous strength of character which enabled him to endure. He made no secret of the fact that his deep sense of pride and belief in his Jewish heritage had played a major role in his thoughts and actions throughout his ordeal.



However, almost as suddenly as we entered into our midst, a new phenomenon appeared. Quarrels raged between religious and non-religious groups, each claiming the rights to this man — that he identified with their camp. The religious groups, specifically the Gush Emunim faction, based their claim on the strong support which they had given his wife, Avital, throughout Shcharansky's years in prison and on her identification with their philosophies. At the same time, the secular press focused their aim at Mr. Shcharansky's bare head at public functions and his admission that he did not observe the 613 mitzvot.

This controversy evokes a number of painful questions: Why must Shcharansky be judged on the basis of his religious and political affiliations? Must, or can, one camp have exclusive rights over him; shouldn't he be viewed as a "Jewish hero," one whom all the Jews of the world can relate to and admire? Furthermore, this situation highlights the fact that somehow, shared Jewish triumphs too often cause even further inter-nal consternation and disagreement. The Orthodox end up looking more diabolical in the eyes of others, and greater disunity is created. How easily a national celebration can turn into a vehicle for those who seek to keep *Am Yisrael* divided.

Clearly, the emotional and physical support given to Avital Shcharansky by the Israeli religious community, as well as by American religious leaders, such as Rabbis Avi Weiss and Haskel Lookstein, deserve the

highest praise. Their encouragement continually buoyed her hopes and enabled her to continue fighting even when the situation looked bleak. I saw this woman sitting at a Shabbat table a short three months ago, her eyes desperately gazing out as if hoping that suddenly, miraculously, her long-lost husband would appear. Had these people not taken in Avital Shcharansky and accepted her as one of their own, would she have had the strength to wage the campaign which put her husband's plight before the world's eyes?

Nevertheless, the Orthodox community does not have a copyright on concern for their brethren. Despite the illusion that Solidarity Day is a reunion for yeshiva high school alumni, the majority of people who attend public rallies in support of Soviet Jewry are not Orthodox. Non-sectarian Jewish organizations such as Bnai Brith, the American Jewish Committee and the Greater New York Conference on Soviet Jewry, have played major roles in pressing the American government to work for the release of Soviet Jewish prisoners and for the relaxation of emigration laws. Edgar Bronfmann, president of the World Zionist Congress has made numerous trips to the Soviet Union to plead for Soviet Jews. Can we discount these contributions to the cause simply because of their proponents' ideological beliefs? Can we pinpoint which factors played the strongest role in Shcharansky's release?

Equally distressing is the issue made of Shcharansky's current level of observance. His years of suffering in Soviet prison would seem more than adequate testimony to his deep commitment to Judaism. He was not raised in an observant home, and he certainly could not have conducted himself in such a manner while in prison; can anyone honest-

ly term Shcharansky a "secular Jew?" He himself speaks of the deep religious feelings he developed during his captivity, and the lengths to which he went to keep his book of *Tehillim* by his side.

Rabbi Lookstein related to me a story on the eve of Shcharansky's release that demonstrates the high degree of spirituality and religious sensitivity in this unusual individual. One point during Shcharansky's term in prison found him in the same camp as fellow "refusenik" Yosef Mendelevich, and with great difficulty and danger they managed to communicate. The first day of Chanukah drew closer and they were discussing possible substitutes for Chanukah candles. Mendelevich said that he had a dirty rag which he could tear up and make into wicks for lighting. Shcharansky complimented the resourcefulness of his friend, but deemed that using a mere dirty rag for such a holy purpose would be disrespectful and not in the spirit of the *mitzvah*. A picture emerges of a man reared in a non-traditional home yet blessed with a unique sensitivity for God and his *mitzvot*.

Eventually, Shcharansky will reach some decision as to his own religious beliefs and political orientation. Regardless of his personal conclusion, he is someone whom all of the Jewish people can admire, a modern day Jewish figure who did not succumb to the pressure of the outside world to renounce his Jewish identity, and in fact, underwent physical and mental suffering in return for the knowledge that he had followed his conscience.

The current claims to his allegiance must be severely admonished; instead of looking for ways to glorify the images of individual factions, Anatoly Shcharansky should be a vehicle for unifying the Jewish people.

I was pleased to find at least one place where Shcharansky's release had a positive effect — our own university. As news of the exchange in Germany spread, a feeling of excitement pervaded the entire campus. An unusual number of smiles somehow materialized out of the cold, dreary winter day. A few students hastily organized a band to perform in the cafeteria during lunch and cleared an area for dancing. The ensuing celebration was unique for two reasons. First, a feeling of euphoria, of *simcha* — a great event had occurred — inspired the circle of students who danced continuously for over forty minutes. Second, and in this context more significant, the cross-section of re-joining faces spanned all the different student

divisions and groups in the school. SOY board members danced with YCSC officers, and *talmidim* from all the different *shiurim* joined in. Everyone celebrated together; for a few brief minutes, a feeling of *achdut* had been created to celebrate one heroic individual and a triumphant event for *Am Yisrael*.

Speaking as an Orthodox Jew, I feel that the controversies which developed following the release of Shcharansky must be a basis for a self-inspection into the way we relate to the rest of *Klal Yisrael* and their perception of us. In this case, an initially "positive" event, by the clear consensus of all factions in Judaism, became a cause for disension and could potentially exacerbate already existing conflicts. Although this is especially true of the relationship between the religious and secular groups in Israel, the argument pertains to the American situation as well. Rather than arming ourselves with propaganda against those with whom we have fundamental theological disagreements, observant Jews must strive to find positive, unifying factors in such events.



# Patrons of a Latter Day Church?

By ERICA SCHOONMAKER

In a matter of months, if we stand across from the Kotel, our messianic vision will be marred not only by the Dome of the Rock mosque, but also by Brigham Young University. Yet, for all the protests, debates, and lectures decrying the new Mormon presence, many Jews remain ignorant of the Mormon doctrine that draws them to Israel. In order to effectively control Mormon missionary work in Israel, we must be aware of the total picture, including Mormon history. This history shows that Jew/Mormon relations started not two years ago, but rather with the very inception of Mormonism in the early nineteenth century.

The mood in America was one of curiosity; thousands of miles of land lay waiting for the completion of manifest destiny. What better way to finally rid pioneers of all European ties than to create a new religion and knot its destiny with that of conquering the West?

Mormons were aware, however, that no serious religion could survive without some connection to the Bible. A solution: perhaps the Indians could be members of a lost tribe, and have had a prophet who buried "Israelite

plates" (an addendum to more obscure books in the Canon) in American soil?

Yes, answers Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, who unearthed these plates — including a breastplate and "*urim V'tumim*" in 1823 in Ontario County, New York. These plates, whose later translation and additions became known as the Book of the Mormon, include gospel and a historical account of the lost tribe in America. The Mormons, the alleged tribe of Joseph, have a gospel made up of fifteen main parts of sacred documents and history which spans from 600 b.c.e. to 421 b.c.e. Two of these parts bear familiar names — The Plates of Esther and The Brass Plates of Laban. All the books are couched in Biblical imagery with both story and ritual mimicking that of the Jewish tradition. In fact, most Mormons are more familiar with maxims and laws of the Old Testament than with their own text, which appears more as a narrative necessary to give their religion credibility.

Mormonism's magnetic appeal gained strength from the idea of uniting immigrants under a common dream, one that at the same time was a characteristic expression of the American situation. The West will become

the new Zion where prophecy will once again reign. As Edward Tullidge, a Mormon and author of *The Women of Mormondom*, writes, "The West is the future world . . . All America then is Zion."

From the preceding two paragraphs one can clearly see borrowing from the Jewish faith. The similarities are so strong that they provoked this comment from "Desert News," a Salt Lake City newspaper, "Mormonism is Judaism grafted on Christianity

## Perhaps the founding of the State of Israel is a milestone in Mormon history as well?

instead of Christianity grafted on Judaism (vol. III 1852/1853- no, 12, p.4)." Not only did the Mormons preserve the study of the Old Testament, they also tried to recreate the ancient world it depicted. They envisioned their churches as small Temples, reintroduced the priesthood of Aaron, and along with

it, titles to the church. Zion moved to America and the journey from New York to Utah under the leadership of Brigham Young was paralleled to the exodus from Egypt under Moses.

On a psychological level, the Mormons desired the comparison to the Jews. During the many attacks on the Mormons by the Christians, the Jew was looked up to as the paradigm of strength amidst suffering. "The Jew never gives up hope or bows to pressure.

nor will we". The Jews also gained Mormon respect by not joining in the Christian affronts.

With so much respect for Jewish practice and attitude, one is forced to ask what the Mormon doctrine says about the converting of Jews. Can one proselytize to a Jew?

By DANNY FEIT

Just as a society must have a scapegoat, so hatred must have a symbol. Georgia has the Negro and Harlem has the Jew." This chilling claim, written by James Baldwin in 1948, underlines the tense nature of black-Jewish relations that persists at the local level. The Shylock stereotype of the Jew endures in the black consciousness: the conception of the Jew as slumlord or exploitative businessman lingers. 56% of blacks recently polled believe that Jews consider money more important than people. The image of the black as "faceless predator," instilling fear in the white population, indelibly colors Jewish perceptions. These powerful impressions originated in the ethnic battles of the neighborhood. Norman Podhoretz, in his 1963 article entitled "My Negro Problem — and Ours," depicts the

# Brothers in Arms

adolescent confrontations which mature into adult fear and hatred. He writes that black-Jewish conflicts generated "a special intensity and (were) conducted with a ferocity unmatched by intramural white battling." The incomprehensible hatred at the local level remains even after the neighborhoods are left behind.

Street-level difficulties, however, did not impede cooperation between black and Jewish leaders. Together, they fought for fair employment, fair housing and fair education legislation. During the 1940s and 1950s, despite the vast economic difference between them, black and Jewish organizations often joined forces in a quest for beneficial legislation. A Jew fighting exclusion from a Fifth Avenue cooperative apartment and a black battling exclusion from more modest accommodations cited the same law. During the 1950's and 60's Jews provided much of the funds, and many of the skills, that fueled the civil rights movement. When *The New Republic* writes about "revitalizing the historic relationship between black and Jews," it refers to a time when "James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner — one young black and two young Jews — were murdered together in a civil rights struggle as incandescent as its racist tormentors were cruel." Confronted with the increasing strain between blacks and Jews, leaders of both groups have anguished over the loss of the black-Jewish civil rights coalition.

However, the civil rights movement, that shining example of black-Jewish cooperation, kindled the flames of animosity and mistrust that presently exist between the leaders of the two communities. Paradoxically, the civil rights movement, through its immediate results and underlying assumptions, has divided its own coalition.

Black advocacy of affirmative action, a staple of civil rights legislation, induces Jewish anxieties. These programs mandate racially preferential treatment in employment and education. While blacks embrace this idea, Jews distrust it. Blacks view the use of quotas as just recompense for historical wrongs. Jews detect in such programs echoes of past persecutions and fear losses in their professional standings. Perhaps more importantly, however, the affirmative action con-

troversy represents the two communities' differing conceptions of America. The Jew, in his quest to advance in American society, has centralized abstract, objective measures of individual merit. The liberal principle of merit characterizes the Jewish-American experience and has thus become axiomatic for American Jewry. Blacks, however, do not share this belief. For them, the farcical merit system perpetuates black subservience; only political pressure can subvert this oppressive system. Blacks justify their claims historically, not meritously.

Affirmative action plagues black-Jewish relations in another way as well. These programs, ostensibly instituted to rectify past injustices, acknowledge black suffering, not that of other ethnicities. Affirmative action,

tionalism clashes with Zionism because Israel, despite its diverse population, exists as a Western creation. On a deeper level, Jewish ideas to facilitate black integration into American society run counter to black nationalism. As Podhoretz writes, any attempt to reach a time when "color does in fact disappear . . . means assimilation, it means — let the brutal word come out — miscegenation." Podhoretz argues that if racism is to disappear, color must disappear.

Blacks regard this solution as, at best, misguided and, at worst, self-serving. Harold Cruse, in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, argues that, since the civil rights movement and the quest for integration may drive white Americans into a right-wing position, American Zionist thinkers regard the move-

## The civil rights movement, through its immediate results and underlying assumptions, has divided its own coalition

by conferring special status on the oppression of blacks, implicitly demeans the afflictions others have borne. This realization inevitably occasions a discussion of what Glenn Loury terms "comparative victimology." Unanswerable questions, such as "who suffered most," require a comparison of highly subjective and personal feelings. These comparative judgements foster deep ethnic divisions: all communities resent integration that their suffering lacks significance measured against the suffering of others. In addition, "comparative victimology" inevitably provokes debates over the ability of different groups to cope with their minority status. Do blacks today really confront barriers greater than those faced by European immigrants at the turn of the century? This question, although answerable, looms as another factor dividing the two groups.

The conflicting public vision of blacks and Jews extends beyond the issue of affirmative action. The civil rights movement reinforced feelings of black nationalism; this belief found expression in pan-Africanism — an overwhelmingly anti-Western philosophy. On a purely superficial level, black na-

tionism as an indirect threat to Jewish status: Thus, pro-Zionist influences within civil rights organizations are strategically aiding and abetting Negro integration (assimilation), albeit Zionists, themselves, do not believe in integration (assimilation) for Jews. Cruse's accusation, although tenuous, represents the deeply rooted discord that haunts black-Jewish relations.

A working coalition of ethnic groups requires a common set of values and perceptions. When the civil rights movement began, blacks and Jews shared a vision of equality, a vision they doggedly pursued together. Cruse asserts that "Among the many myths life and history have imposed on Negroes . . . is the myth that the Negro's best friend is the Jew." Cruse's statement oversimplifies the matter. At one point, the Jew stood as the black's best and most consistent friend; Cruse's myth existed as reality. However, as the results and implications of the civil rights movement became clearer, the great coalition shattered. Blacks and Jews no longer shared a common vision, and their friendship became a memory. Today, Cruse's statement rings true — the coalition has ended and the friends have drifted apart.

— p. 113.)"

Perhaps the founding of the State of Israel is not only a milestone in Jewish history but in Mormon history as well? Are they one step closer to achieving their prophecy? What role will we play in "helping" them?

What should we do to prevent the building of Brigham Young University right next to Hebrew University? What secular Israeli wouldn't take advantage of the tennis courts, a swimming pool, and one of the most comprehensive genealogical libraries in the world? Why build an auditorium that seats 750 people if only 60 Mormons study in Israel every year?

The Mormons claim that they won't missionize to the Jews (which is illegal in Israel) but as missionizing is such a fundamental element in their religion, can they be believed?

This is not an issue of racism or denial of religious freedom, but rather an issue of Israel's defense. Not only does Mormonism encroach on Jewish values, but the Mormons' presence in Israel undermines the country's very existence as a home and refuge for Jews. Can American Jews afford to remain silent while the extreme right throws stones?

Drawing of the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City, 1923.

# Women in uniform

## The Greater Ideal

By SUZANNE DASHMAN

Modern Orthodoxy strives to carry out the ideology of Judaism in a modern world. Individuals who attach special significance to superficial issues ignore the spirit of Halachic Judaism in the twentieth century. If we hang on to external rules and disregard their ideological meaning, we've weakened Rabbinic Judaism and leave only a shell of rules.

The dress code at Stern is one of these issues, one that has generated much discussion among students here. The reasons faculty members have given for the rule are not halachic; rather, the code attempts to create a sense of decorum in the school, supposedly beyond the letter of the pants law. But can Orthodox Jews discuss any question of dress without even mentioning *tzniut*? After all, *tzniut* is the motivation and criterion for proper dress regardless of sociological issues. If pants are halachically permissible, as administration silence indicates, then it must be possible to wear them modestly; if not, the halacha contradicts its own principles.

The greater issue here is modesty and dignity, which, if properly understood and internalized, will necessarily result in proper decorum.

I'm referring to *tzniut* as a fundamental internal value; it corresponds to self-perception in relation to God and other people reflected in behavior and mode of dress. The modest personality realizes that she is not the center of her universe. Although she achieves, her ability comes from God and is wrought with flaws and contradictions. As a result, in gain-

ing self-perception, she realizes that others are basically in the same position: doubtful and insecure at times, always deserving respect, dignity, warmth and understanding. A modest person will not draw attention to herself because she knows her place in the world and in the group. Her mode of dress outwardly expresses inner self-esteem — attractive and dignified, while objectively monitored by halacha.

So what am I saying about the dress code? Mainly, that the question of pants makes us

**If pants are halachically permissible ... then it must be possible to wear them modestly**

lose sight of the greater issue, and perhaps undermines it, by attaching weight to a superficial detail. The question is ideological: conforming to halacha in the twentieth century without detracting from an ideology revealed to us by God. That's what an educational institution should emphasize — not rules motivated by external reasoning, but values that educate Jews to realize their ideology and morality. As a result, mature, dignified adults won't even need to discuss a dress code.

you to return to *Eretz Yisrael*. Only there can you erase the memory of Amalek. (Summary of p. 213-214) The Rambam in *Hilchot M'lachim* makes a point of saying that the commandment to wipe out the seed of Amalek is bound up with the Jewish people's presence in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Yet, it seems we have forgotten the lesson of *Zachor* and *Purim*. When over three decades have passed since the Holocaust and the establishment of *Eretz Yisrael*, and still the majority of Jews reside in the exile; when 7,000 Israeli emigrants requested German citizenship in 1984, we must wonder: have we already forgotten? This year, when I sit in shul listening to the deafening roar of the *gragers* trying to silence the name of Haman the Amalekite, I will sit silently, wondering how much longer we will continue to fool ourselves into thinking that we are thus eradicating Amalek. And, as Jews continue to sit in America and throughout the exile, thinking that they are "*M'kayem Parshat Zachor*" when they know not what to remember. I have but one response: If you truly want to erase Amalek, take the first step and return home to *Eretz Yisrael*. Only there can we truly be an "*Am Ehad*" living in the path of the Torah, whose light unto the nations will erase the power of Amalek for eternity.

## Decorative Decorum

By SHIRA ISAACS

There is a saying that "clothes make the man." This sexist remark can be changed to "clothes make the person." Stern College, just a few blocks away from the center of the famous garment industry, has absorbed certain practices from it: namely, the administration has put out its own "clothing label" or dress code.

The text for the code is found in letters sent out to the entire student body (Oct. 23rd 1984):

The Dress Code is a school regulation which is binding upon all students. It proscribes the wearing of slacks or sleeveless attire by any Stern College student while she is in the school building, during both school and non-school hours. This regulation is in effect for any student who enters the building to attend classes, or to use the library, the gymnasium or the cafeteria.

The rationale can be found in letters sent both on July 15, 1982, and July 12, 1985 (to every student, entering as well as returning to Stern in '85). The reason given:

Each one of us has a contribution to make to the maintenance of the academic standards and the Jewish environment of the College. It is our expectation that observance of the Dress Code by all students will be one of the ways in which we sustain the distinctive character of the Stern College community.

What now has to be considered is the importance of such a code, and the message it tries to convey. I do not wish to discuss the halachic issues about wearing pants because there are many sources on all sides of the issue; whether or not one wears pants is the decision of the individual. I do, however, wish to explore the effect of clothing in both Jewish and sociological sources. There are three levels from which you can view the role of clothing. On one level, clothing covers a person's nakedness. It is the mark that differentiates people from the rest of the animal kingdom. On another level, a person's profession is represented by what he wears. People can distinguish a doctor or nurse immediately when they are in "uniform." The *Akedat Yitzchak* points out that there are many points in the Bible which use similar terms to refer to both human qualities and to clothing. The clothing we wear reflects our personalities: even in English we refer to people as being "clothed in righteousness" or "clothed in mercy." There is a very strong correlation between what we wear and who we are internally. In the field of modern sociology as well, work has been done on the "message" that clothes transmit. In a 1972 study, Rosencrantz writes that clothing is a "convenient shorthand for identification . . . and clothing symbols are a "language." Clothing is the first, and most striking, aspect of a person that you encounter. There are certain impressions gathered as a result of looking at a person's clothing. Knapp in 1972, further stated: "Appearance and dress are part of total stimuli which influence interpersonal responses — and under some conditions they are primary determinates of such responses." It is therefore not surprising that many businesses require a certain dress code for employees. Firms want to make a positive impression on future clients. I never saw a lawyer wear jeans and a sweatshirt to court.

The clothing a person wears also affects his attitudes, actions, and thoughts. A person dressed for a banquet will behave differently than one dressed for bowling, and

his mannerisms will reflect the change. Likewise, when a person is in synagogue his clothing and attitude will differ considerably than were he going roller skating. A person's clothing will often influence the internal side of man.

This same point can be transferred to a school setting as well. Stern College is an institution of Torah U' Mada, a synthesis of Torah and secular studies. Therefore, when walking into the school building, one should sense a certain atmosphere of respect. When students dress "properly" there is a spirit of respect created for the place of study. It is this type of atmosphere that will lead to the "maintenance of the academic standards, and the Jewish environment of the college." According to the Dean, the college is now at a point where students are taking themselves, and their work, much more seriously. It is no secret that many of the finest prep schools have dress codes: they see an impact on the students, as well as on the image of the school. A proper dress code sends signals to the students that a level of seriousness and dignity is found in the college.

It is at this juncture that the question arises: what is the "proper" dress code for a Jewish woman? Representing a Jewish religious institution, the University has set up standards according to the "machmir" view of halacha. In general, Jews should strive to achieve the maximum, and not settle for the

**There is a very strong correlation between what we wear and who we are internally**

minimum. It is especially evident here; as Rabbi Flaum explained, "Most of the dress code is based on a 'Kabalah' of past generations: we are preserving a tradition. Since Stern College is a place of Torah, and represents Torah values, the more traditional dress is in order. No one is infringing on an individual's private dress; rather they are being asked that in the Torah community of Stern College, a student should dress as Jewish women have dressed for generations."


The dress code as it is now is a *University Regulation*. It is similar to twelve credits of humanities or the prohibition against cheating on an exam. As the *gemara* in *Bava Kama* (113a) states: "The law of the land is the law; and we have to abide by the law without exception." Breaking the rule of the dress code is to break the sense of "community" that Stern College is attempting to establish.

In conclusion, since the term "college" comes from the Latin meaning "community," we have an opportunity to create a true sense of community at Stern by respecting the rationale behind the Dress Code and abiding by it. We know that many people mock the symbols of some fashion, like everyone wanting to wear the "alligator" or the "peb-person" or Benetton's plastered on the front of tee-shirts. We shouldn't need a large "Stern College" written across our clothing for us to know, and for others to know, that we are *Bat Torah*, and that we are proud to carry ourselves that way. The dress code gives us that authentic "Stern Style." We should help this image of the Stern community. Let's not "skirt" the issue.

## SOBRIETY

Continued From Page 2

to the naive belief that exile is secure and that Amalek is gone. They closed their eyes to the promise of *Eretz Yisrael*. They, too, were proven wrong. Yet one would think that we, living in the same generation that witnessed both the greatest tragedy and the greatest triumph of the Jewish people in the last 2,000 years, would be different. Somehow, the prophetic words of Rav Yisachar Shlomo Teichthal in his *sefer Eim Habanim Smeicha* ring true: He writes that the commandment to remember Amalek is especially, "when God will let you rest from the enemies around you (*behanich l'cha mikol oyvecha misaviv*), then remember to put your strength and resources *ba'aretz asher Hashem Elokecha notes l'cha l'rishta*." God knows our tendency to forget the hatred of the Goyim. We are easily appeased by a friendly gesture on their part or an economic opportunity, and so we remain exiled. To this, the Torah warns "*lo tishkach*." All these troubles have befallen you in order to awaken



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# Pride or Prejudice

By REUVEN SHECHTER

In 1981, when the Government of Israel annexed the Golan Heights, there was a predictable chorus of outrage . . . from the Jewish Left, from the Arabs, from the United Nations, and from the Western media. The most interesting and unusual criticism, however, came from a prominent B'nai Brak rabbinical sage, who declared that the Israeli action was wrong precisely because it had provoked the Gentiles. The proper posture of Jews before non-Jews is self-abasement and humility, he asserted. The model for contemporary Jewry, he said, should be "the old Jew, the *ma yaffis* Jew, who danced to please the local Polish lord." (Jerusalem Post, Dec. 30, 1981, p. 1).

Are grovelling and humiliation indeed the proper mode of behavior for the contemporary Torah Jew? Or are they relics of a mentality which developed under conditions of Medieval persecution, and which have failed to adjust to the radically changed historical circumstances of the Twentieth Century?

The belief that Jewish prostration will win for us the love of the Gentile world is erroneous. The prerequisite for gaining the world's love is to gain their respect. But we will never gain the world's respect until we have self-respect, and part of the problem with the Orthodox Jew of today is that he seems to lack self-respect and pride in his Jewishness.

The Midrash states (*Beresheet Rabba* 99), that when the time came for the Almighty to give the Torah to the Jewish People, all the mountains of the world gathered together and argued with one another, each one demanding that the Torah be given on its summit. The Talmud (*Sotah 36a*) explains that God specifically chose Sinai because it was a low mountain, symbolizing the need for the Jew to be modest and humble.

But that is not all. For the Rebbe of Gur asked the very obvious question: If God wanted to teach us to be humble, he should have given the Torah in a valley; why did he choose a "low mountain?" The Rebbe's answer is particularly relevant in our times, and goes a long way in defining what the posture of contemporary Jewry should really be. It is quite true, he said, that God wants us to be humble and shun the arrogance of the high and lofty mountains. But to be a low, humiliated valley is also not the Jewish way. A Jew must always have self-respect, and never allow himself to be degraded or shamed, the Rebbe said. He must ever be aware that he is a member of the Chosen People of God, of whom it is written: "All of the children of Israel are the sons of kings." (*Shabbat 67a*).

There is a Jewish imperative to feel a sense of pride and dignity in being Jewish. It is not enough to perform perfunctory rituals. Judaism demands passion and fervor, a consciousness of the honor and distinction of being God's treasured nation and the bearers of his Torah. We must always be aware that we alone have been chosen to serve as the instrument of the Almighty in the world, and charged with the mission of sanctifying his name.

Indeed, Jewish pride is an obligation, and the root of that pride is our Torah. The great poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik may not have been an observant Jew, but he understood the power of Torah. Thus he wrote, "If you wish to know the source from which your brothers drew their strength of soul, during evil days, woeful as these; if you wish to know the source of their faith and their iron will to endure every oppressor . . . Ah, my brother, if you know not the source of all this, go and see the old house of study . . ." Bialik was referring to the Beit Medrash where the



Statue of Mordechai Anilewicz at Yad Mordechai, Israel

Torah is studied, and those of us fortunate enough to study Torah understand what Bialik meant. Morning and night, we delve into the laws and concepts which discipline, restrict, and channel our desires and needs, raising us up to a point just "a little lower than the angels." The *Or HaChaim* (1696-1743) put it best in his comment on the verse in Deuteronomy, "And you shall rejoice in all the good that the Lord your God has given you (26:8)." He wrote: "The only true goodness is the Torah. If people truly were sensitive to the sweetness and goodness of the Torah, they would go crazy and run after it, and a world full of gold and silver would be as nothing in their eyes vis-a-vis the Torah, for it contains all of the possible good in the world."

Our ancestors believed these words of the *Or HaChaim*. Their hearts burned with a fire and a passion for Judaism because they understood what being Jewish means. Should our eyes not well up with tears of pride as we remember the tenacity with which our ancestors clung to our faith? They were ground into the dust in a bitter, two-thousand-year exile. But in every generation they arose, dusted themselves off, spat the oppressor in the face, and carried on with a life of Torah and *mitzvot*. They persisted in the face of persecution because they knew that the Torah confers nobility and eternal life upon those who learn and who live it. Hence, they were unyielding and unbowed. They possessed an indomitable spirit. Because of that stubborn spirit, the Jewish nation survived.

The Church crucified us, the Inquisitors and Crusaders snatched our souls and burned our bodies. We were exiled and beaten, but we never abandoned our faith! Pharaoh, the Babylonians, the Romans, and all the nations which demanded our extinction, are today extinct. We alone have survived because we are an obstinate People, an eternal People, God's People.

We persisted, and today we are a sovereign nation in the Land of Israel — surely the greatest miracle in two-thousand years. We dare not forget how the State of Israel came into being, with sacrifice, with blood, with Jewish bravery — all anchored in the bedrock of two millennia of stubbornness and faith. Throughout the long, dark exile, our

ancestors prayed for Zion. For two-thousand Tisha B'Avs, they mourned for Jerusalem. And as their lives were made a living hell, they prayed, "May our eyes behold thy return to Zion." And their faith was rewarded. The Almighty answered by restoring us to Zion and Jerusalem.

And let us never forget the Jewish heroes, who, with incredible sacrifice and loyalty, paved the way. Yosef Trumpledor, the one-armed hero who died defending Tel Hai against a vicious Arab attack in 1920. And the immortal words he said just before he died: "It is good to die for our country." Shlomo Ben-Yosef, a young Jew from Poland who swam to the shores of Palestine in the 1930's and worked devotedly with the Betar groups in the Galilee. In 1938, he became the first of many Jews to be hanged by the British for the "crime of defending Jewish lives and property." Dov Gruner of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, who was captured in an Irgun raid on the British police station in Ramat Gan while attempting to steal badly-needed weapons for the Jewish Underground. He was hanged, but his courage in captivity and then in death, was an inspiration to Jews everywhere. Eliahu Hakim and Eliahu Bet-Zouri of the Stern Gang, and all the others who went to the gallows for us, so that we could be sovereign in our homeland. And the sainted Reb Aryeh Levine, the "father of the prisoners," who every Shabbat went to visit the imprisoned members of the Jewish Underground. A pious Jew, he defied the British and risked imprisonment by smuggling in messages for the prisoners in the lining of his long black coat. How many modern-day rabbis would take such risks for the sake of *ahavat Yisrael* and imprisoned Jews?

And what of the Haganah, the Palmach, and today's Israel Defense Forces? Finally, after two-thousand years of defensiveness and being at the mercy of the nations, we have a Jewish army to protect our lives and the lives of our loved ones. Finally, with Jewish guns and Jewish tanks and Jewish attack planes, we have taught the world that Jewish blood is not cheap. Indeed, a radical change in Jewish history took place in 1948. The view that Jewish meekness and self-abasement should continue to guide contemporary Jewish behavior, is a remnant of the

"*galut* mentality" which insists that it is a *mitzvah* to be beaten, a holy obligation to be degraded and humiliated. Well, there is nothing holy about the Crusades, nothing noble about gas chambers. It is much better to live in an Israel that angers the Gentiles, then to die in an Auschwitz that makes them happy. To a world that sucked our blood for two millennia, we owe nothing.

The soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces who fell in battle, and their predecessors in the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Haganah, were men and women who gave their lives to change Jewish history. These heroic contemporary expressions of Jewish strength prove that we Jews can be the masters of history, rather than its victims.

Why does the course of study in Jewish day schools ignore all of these Jewish heroes? Why do we not attempt to ignite the spark of Jewish pride in our youth with the history of Jewish heroism, bravery, and spiritual resistance? Why have our children never heard of Mordechai Anilewicz, commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt in 1943? Why is the heroic Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, who risked his life saving thousands during the Holocaust, unknown among young Jews? Why is the diary of Channah Senesh not required reading in our schools? Channah Senesh was a member of the Haganah and a heroine of World War II. In 1944, she parachuted into Nazi-occupied Hungary to help organize Jewish resistance, and to try to save her fellow Jews. In her diary, found after the war, she had written the simple yet beautiful words, "I am very proud to be a Jewess." Our youth are ignorant of these heroes, but worse, how many adults know their names?

Why do we not impress upon Jewish children, from the earliest ages, the beauty, the warmth, the meaning, and the concepts of Torah that will fill them with passion for religion? And how many Jewish adults lack the fervor, the enthusiasm, and the pride that should accompany an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle? This issue must be addressed, for there is simply no room in Torah Judaism for the nonchalant, spiritless, academic coldness which seems so prevalent in the Orthodox camp.

The imbalance in contemporary Jewish education must be corrected. Enough courses have been designed to teach about Jewish death and suffering. Enough books have been written about the Holocaust. More emphasis should be placed on showing the spiritual — and physical — fortitude displayed by our ancestors in the face of oppression. We must infuse the hearts and minds of our youth with nationalist and religious pride, and with a genuine love for Judaism. Being Torah-observant Jews is too great an honor, too noble a pursuit, and too important a mission to be treated with such lethargy and indifference.

The Torah declares: "And the Lord has proclaimed allegiance to you today, making you his treasured nation, as he has promised. . . . And he will make you supreme over all the nations that he brought into existence, for praise, fame, and glory. . . . You will remain a nation consecrated to the Lord your God, as he has promised." (Deuteronomy 26:18-19). The Ramban elaborates: "And God has glorified and raised you up to be unto him a special nation from among all the nations, and to observe his commandments, for only unto you has he given his Torah. . . . and to no other nation. . . . for you are higher and greater than all of them!"

Happy are we! How good is our portion, how pleasant our lot, how precious our inheritance. Jewish is beautiful! Let us believe that, and pass it on to the next generation with love and with pride.



# 'Mishenichnas Adar Marbim B'simcha'

**Man must often forgo comfort and security, make the move into insecure, dangerous territory, in order to actualize his full potential and find a higher life meaning**

By WENDY ZIERLER

Happiness is one of the most broadly defined abstract nouns known to man: from the time of the ancient philosophers down to Charles Schultz, mankind has been attempting to fill in the blanks of what "Happiness" is. . . . "In *Iyana Shel Torat Hachasidut* the Lubavitcher Rebbe makes the assertion that the Torah is the source of all true universal ideas. If so, what truths can the Torah, and Jewish thought in general, teach us about the nature of happiness? What is it and how is it attained? Granted, these are monumental questions, and there is a plethora of information from which to draw an answer. Certain key ideas can be highlighted, however, as representative of a basic Jewish response.

Essentially, we must deal with two sorts of happiness, for which we shall consider the following two preliminary definitions:

- 1) Joyfulness, cheerfulness, light-heartedness; the feeling of ecstasy at some great realization or accomplishment.
- 2) A state of well-being and contentment that man attempts to maintain throughout his life, whereby the net total of positive experiences and feelings is greater than the negative. . . .

Most people have gut feelings about what makes them happy; they need not be told how to identify the happiness of the first category. When they have it, they feel it. The second sort of happiness, which we will now focus on, is much more difficult to pinpoint, although we can suggest some common criteria for its attainment: a good family, spouse, wealth, a successful career, a nice house or community of friends, the respect and honor of one's fellows. . . . The Torah, in fact, acknowledges these as contributors to human happiness. Think of Abraham Avinu. He enters the Biblical scene when God commands him to transfer his base of monotheistic operations from Ur Casidim to Canaan. And what does God promise him as reward? Riches, honor, a big family — in other words, a lifetime of happiness. However, the reward that God promises Abraham is slow to come. Along the way, Abraham faces famine, childlessness, war, family strife and the test of *akeidat Yitzchak*. Abraham's life story is prototypical. It proves that a comfortable "sit back and feel prosperous" existence can rarely be sustained. Furthermore, the fact that God chooses the course of tests that he does for Abraham, his first faithful follower, indicates that the easy course is not necessarily the preferred path. Man must often forgo comfort and security, make the move into insecure, dangerous territory, in order to actualize his full potential and find a higher life meaning.

"Meaning" is the key term in the Jewish definition of happiness of category two — the sort of happiness that can be sustained through good times and bad times alike. The anxieties of life often make it very difficult for people to perceive and receive the good in life. For this reason, Chazal teach us: "Who is the rich man? He who is happy with his lot. (Avot 4:16)." We are challenged to weigh our joy and misery, and somehow to psychologically tip the scale to the side of joy, even in instances of overwhelming hardship. The question which remains, of course, is how?

In the fifth section of *Duties of the Heart*,

Bachya Ibn Pekuda explains that man's meaningful existence, his statement of happiness (of category two), is contingent upon trust in God. This trust prevents a person from serving any other power, god or man. True faith in God helps a person turn away from worldly concerns and enables him to exist solely for God's sake.

Bachya continues to prove why the believer in God is more secure and content in his existence than the "alchemist," who through his own clever devices, manages to bring himself wealth. (The alchemist is an archetype for the man who considers himself wholly independent of God.) The alchemist fears his daily contact with dangerous chemical processes, as well as jealous men who wish to uncover the secrets of his trade, and suffers the anxiety of not knowing whether he can continue to produce enough "gold" to sustain himself.

Most importantly, the alchemist's worldly riches cannot assure him of wealth at the end of his days, in the world to come. The faithful Jew, however, has nothing to fear.

Bachya writes:

He who trusts God is secure against mishaps. His heart is assured that no evil will befall him. Whatever comes to him from God gives him joy and gladness. He obtains his livelihood quietly, tranquilly and happily. . . .

There is a certain innocence to what Bachya purports here. It is hardly realistic to posit that trust in God suffices to assure man of all his physical needs, or to secure him "against all mishaps." Generations of Jewish suffering, even among those faithful to God, attest to this reality. Bachya does teach us, however, that trust in God gives the Jew a meaningful direction to enable him to contend with a lack of physical enjoyment or comfort and even with extreme suffering. When one lives for the spiritual, the physical reality becomes easier to ignore. Bachya believed that a Jew could find happiness of the second sort in life by placing the emphasis of all his efforts on spiritual rather than worldly accomplishments (unlike the opinion of those like Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who believed that true happiness only comes in death, when man is liberated from the throes of conflict between his physical and spiritual aspects.)

How can one achieve and maintain this spiritual happiness as a Jew? The process of T'shuva, repentance, for example, if maintained, can serve as a constant source of happiness. In *Orot Hat'shuva*, Rav Kook elucidates beautifully the centrality of T'shuva to the Jewish definition of happiness. He writes:

After repentance, man's soul climbs and ascends until he has been completely freed of bondage to sin [whereas Rashbi said his freedom only comes in death]. He senses within himself the sacred freedom so pleasant to his weary soul and is progressively cured. . . . the thought of cleaving unto God in all its forms is the ultimate happiness. . . .

The process of T'shuva calls each Jew to an awareness of his free will. His ability to take each situation that he encounters and turn it around — to take mistakes and turn them into triumphs, to take instances of suffering and discover their meaning — and find



Illustration from *Sefer Minhagim*, 1788. Courtesy the Yeshiva University Museum.

joy in realization. Viktor Frankl, the developer of "Logotherapy" (meaning therapy) — a psychiatrist and concentration-camp survivor similarly emphasizes how man can exercise his free will in the discovery of life's meaning. According to Frankl, meaning can be found in a *value* which transcends the individual (like the love of another man, one's country or one's God,) and through a *deed*, (a notion similar to the meaning found in the performance of *mitzvot*.) His concentration camp experience taught him as well, that man can exercise his free will through his response to *suffering*.

When one experiences physical or psychological torture, he has the option at any time to capitulate to pain and commit psychological or physical suicide, or to resist pain and find some sort of meaning that affirms life.

So why did God not skip with Abraham down a flower-strewn path to happiness, but rather, dragged him along a tortuous route of tests and trials? God made Abraham aware of his potential to rise above his troubles and charge his experiences with meaning.

Truth be told, man does not feel happy while he is sad and suffering. His state of mind at such time, whether the pain is physical or psychological, is very real, and when prolonged, very unhealthy. Judaism supplies the insight and spiritual strength to triumph over such situations. Knowing that "it is over," that pain has been defeated, man experiences the truest euphoria. Which brings us back full circle to the happiness of the first category, which we have not yet discussed. The Torah provides a lifestyle structure that gives man occasions to celebrate and enjoy (happiness), at the same time, but-tressed by *meaningful* behaviors and experiences. In essence, Judaism aims for a synthesis of both types of *happiness* (analogous to the synthesis of Adam I and Adam II in the Rav's "Lonely Man of Faith), to create the highest, purest form. As Theodore Isaac Rubin, author of many popular works on psychology, explains:

"Happiness is feeling good, nothing more than that. I know that feeling good, that is feeling fairly comfortable and relatively tension-free, is no small matter and depends on the existence of

many, many, factors; most of which are not discernable, let alone controllable. Therefore, what I have come to view as *happiness* can only be sustained for limited periods of time, sporadically and always on a relative level. . . . (From *Compassion and Self-Hate*, N.Y., 1975, p. 105-106.) Judaism, similarly, recognizes that happiness of the first sort supplies a transitory

## When one lives for the spiritual, the physical reality becomes easier to ignore

feeling. Jews are commanded to be happy on the *Shalosh Rega-lim*, and at a *seudat mitzva*. When the month of Adar arrives, the Jew is encouraged to be merry, culminating in the uninhibited Purim celebration. But Jewish thought and practice are tempered with the awareness that no man can be happy all the time. Therefore, when looking for happiness as a life-lasting state of mind, the Jew is directed toward the idea of transcendent spiritual fulfillment. The power of pleasure of the first sort of happiness is important mainly in that it gives him incentive and energy to pursue his higher goal. Man's true happiness, the synthesis of positive feelings and the general notion of meaning or direction, is grounded in man's knowledge that he is free at any time to react, grow and develop. It does not exist in psychological homeostasis, but grows through experience and confrontation. As Viktor Frankl writes in *Man's Search for Meaning*:

The crowning experience of all, for the home-coming man is the wonderful feeling that after all he has suffered there is nothing he need fear anymore but God."

# The Open Book

By CHAIM BOOK

Recently, various student councils and organizations have begun to unite in promoting and sponsoring activities. The reasons behind this recent development vary. One obvious consideration is financial: the larger the number of supporters, the less each has to spend. Small groups with limited funds, and large organizations with even larger ideas, have used co-sponsorship to implement expensive activities.

Co-sponsorship also creates events relevant to a wide variety of students; if IBCSC, JSSSC, and SOY all work on an event, it will be geared to the general student body. The resulting display of *achdai* can itself provide a moral lesson about unity; the improvement of the event itself, however, through its preparation for a wide range of students, is of even greater importance.

This does not mean that an event sponsored by a single group will lack broad appeal. Unfortunately, many students seem to have adopted just that perspective. They may refrain from attending a SOY-sponsored

shiur, under the misapprehension that it is only for "those *from* YP guys," or an IBC lecture, believing it limited to students in that Jewish Studies division. What they should realize is that when SOY sponsors an event, it invites the entire student body. Granted, some events may not interest certain — perhaps many — individuals; for the most part, though, the statement on a publicity sheet, "All are invited," means exactly what it says.

The upcoming Purim Chagiga has not changed; the food and the *ruach* will both be as great as in previous years, and the skit will still be hilarious. Nevertheless, the publicity for the Chagiga will read, "co-sponsored by SOY, IBCSC, JSSSC, and YCSC." Although SOY disapproves of this syndrome, we must still face the practical necessity of displaying an effort to cater to the needs of all students. We can only hope that, in the future, there may be some way to invite all students to an event without the aid of co-sponsorship.

This charred stone of 1943 seems just as old, for it too belongs to a world vanished from the earth — leaving only a legacy and a memory. Perhaps the difference lies in the sensation that this stone is still warm from the fire.

## MUSEUM

Continued From Page 5

creative persons as the Zionist artist I.M. Lilien, the skilled silversmith Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, and the architect Erich Mendelsohn. The Holocaust puts an abrupt end to the exhibit's long and convincing argument that Ashkenazic culture was exceptionally rich.

A charred stone and wooden doorlock — remains from a synagogue destroyed during the Holocaust — are the last artifacts to meet the viewer's saturated vision.

Though not significant in the way a menorah or Talmud would be, their inconspicuousness allows the ashen residue of annihilation to dominate and provoke.

I recall a visit, two years ago on a scorching August day, to a private museum being excavated beneath a couple's home in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. The owner led me through stone columns blackened with ash from the fire that consumed the ancient city 2,000 years before. The site of the Holy Temple, father of synagogues, stood only yards away.

## PARADISE

Continued From Page 3

might have discovered.

In conclusion, I would like to express my feelings upon writing this article. I am, like most of you, a *talmid* of this yeshiva, one who is aware of the enormous distance he has to travel in his own *avodat Hashem*, yet ignores that fact in his daily routine. Thus as one to whom these urgings apply, do I convey my message. I am not quite naive enough to expect a renewed wave of zeal and excitement to overtake Y.U. as a result of my words. My hope is that the reader will stop for a moment to think and evaluate what needs to, and can be done to, improve those over whom he has the most control — himself and his peers. That is, after all, what a yeshiva is all about.

## AIDS

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to use a *moch* in general. The Ritva, however, feels that a person may commit an *aveirah* to avoid any danger, even a minor one, if he deems it necessary, despite the protection of *min hashamayim yerachamu*. R. Shmuel Boylan ("Cheshbash Sakana Le'Or HaHalacha," *Or Hamizrach* Sept. 1983) claims that the Ritva's opinion here is really based upon his statement elsewhere (*Eruvin* 72a) that the protection of "The Lord watches over fools" does not remove a danger, but rather offers a guarantee of protection — a guarantee that a specific individual need not rely on.

At first glance, the Gemara seems to give a blanket go-ahead on all involvement with statistically unlikely *sakanot*; and indeed, the Maharam Schick (quoted by the Maharsham [Responsa v. l no. 58]) suggests that the essential reason the *Chachamim* don't worry about a *sakana* stems from their general view of *avalays* following the majority (*rov*). However, this view is very difficult to accept in light of the conclusion of a gemara in *Chullin* (9b-10a) that, in terms of our concern and prevention, "danger is stricter than sin" ("*chamira sakanta me' issura*"), and that we are even concerned with a minor *sakana*.

A number of *Acharonim* deal with the limitations of *min hashamayim yerachamu*, and the gemara's application of it in the case of *moch*. The most common response, given by the Avnei Nezer (*Even Ha'ezer* 1:81) and the *Achi'ezer* (1:23), applies this rule only to very (statistically) small *cheshashot*. According to this view, the transfer of AIDS among school children would be too minor a possibility to warrant concern.

R. Moshe Feinstein (*Igrot Moshe*, *Even Ha'ezer* 63) understands *min hashamayim yerachamu* as the antipathy of the rule "*ein somchin al ha'nes*," — one should not rely upon a miraculous event to protect him from danger. The latter rule refers to "unnatural," unexpected dangers, such as disease, whereas *min hashamayim yerachamu* only guarantees cases involving a natural danger, such as pregnancy. AIDS, however, would not constitute a "natural" danger, and presumably would be a cause for concern, perhaps even to the exclusion of children from school.

Another gemara relevant to this question shows Shmuel's view that one may hunt a snake exposed to the public (*Shabbat* 3a), and the Rashba (*ibid.*, 42a) quotes R. Hai Gaon's opinion that Shmuel considers this action to be a *melacha de'oraitya* (and allows it nevertheless). Why? Explains the

Rashba, since many people are exposed to the snake, one of them is bound to get bitten. Therefore, although the snake may not be dangerous to an individual per se, it is still considered a real danger. Similarly, the risk of any single death from AIDS becomes greater when dealing with large numbers of school children.

Even if one assumes the danger posed by students with AIDS to other schoolchildren to be halachically insignificant, nevertheless, public reaction (which has been decidedly negative so far) to the disease can play a role. We find that R. Ami outlaws placing coins in one's mouth for fear that they may have come in contact with a diseased person, even though such contact is very unlikely, because "we [i.e., Halacha] are concerned with any danger that frightens the general populace." The violent public protests, then, might be a possible reason to quarantine children with AIDS, despite medical assertions to the contrary. However, it must be noted that the *cheshash* in the case of the coins lacks statistical — and therefore halachic — significance; medically, however, the concern is a sound one. In our case, on the other hand, the basis for any *cheshash* might be medically unfounded. In other words, if people knew with certainty that AIDS could not be transmitted except through the exchange of blood, they would not react in quite the same way.

The Dove *Meysharim* (Responsa 20), concerning the gemara in *Yevamot* (12b), suggests that the case of *moch* is unique in that it involves a mitzvah, and, as the gemara says elsewhere (*Yoma* 11a): "Those involved with a mitzvah do not suffer harm." The Taz (*Orach Chaim* 455:3) goes even further, claiming that one is not permitted to avoid doing a mitzvah involving an (unlikely) danger (which would deny the protective power of the mitzvah). This raises a possible distinction between secular classes and Torah classes, in that even a child banned from the former (due to some certain risk, like AIDS), might (perhaps) not, according to the Taz, be allowed to attend the latter. This question, of course, would depend heavily on the alternatives to attending school, for instance, whether the family can afford a private tutor, or whether the other parents are willing to pay for one.

In the end, one must really hope that none of these alternatives become necessary, either medically or halachically. The "best" solution is one that avoids the possible psychological damage caused by separating a child from his peers. Perhaps future research will clarify (and remove) any possibilities of contagion beyond a shadow of a doubt. In the meantime, it is imperative to avoid intense, panicky reactions which, despite their possible halachic significance, are certainly unnecessary.

## COERCION

Continued From Page 3

*k'f'ya* are likely to prove futile, or worse, counterproductive.

Halacha is fully aware of where the border of communal liability lies. The commandment of *hocheiach tochiach* (rebuke) is suspended when it is clear that reproach will be ineffective. Moreover, under those circumstances, the *mitzva* is to not rebuke (*Yevamot* 63b). Similarly, the edict of "*kofin oto ad sheomer rotze ani*," coercing a person until he declares his acquiescence, is only applicable in instances where it is possible to assume that the eventual declaration is itself truthful (*Ohr Sameach, Gershin*, 2:20). For a more extensive discussion of the topic, see Rav Aharon Lichtenstein's article

"Religion and State," *Judaism*, Fall 1966). Were that not the case, the coercive process would not only be meaningless; it would smack of immorality.

This is not to say that *kol Yisrael arevim* is now a crippled, disfigured concept — the "*kol*" grotesquely misshapen into only the segment of *kol Yisrael* subscribing to halacha. Nor am I suggesting that all religious legislation be rejected out of hand. Some laws may aid in preserving our national character (*gittin v'kiddushin* for example) while not promoting individual devotion. Before we legislate any religious ordinance, however, we must determine what overall effect it will have on national religious life. There should be a way, to paraphrase the popular song, of bringing about both *Shabbat* and *shalom beir Yerushalayim*. It would be tragic if the desired end of *hochacha* — returning the transgressor to the fold — slipped away because we had used the wrong sized stick.



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Mazel Tov to Avi Moskowitz, Editor in Chief of Commentator on his engagement to Helen Simon (SCW '85)

# Open Classrooms

By JONAH KASZOVITZ

The recent increase of AIDS victims has caused a reaction in the public school system seldom seen since the college campuses of the late sixties. Researchers have discovered much about this deadly disease, but many hard facts still elude them. The public reaction revolves around one aspect of these facts, the transmission of AIDS through casual, but constant, contact with fellow students. The medical field has considered the reaction unjustified and hysterical; experts from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta insist that the risk involved is minimal at worst. These statements have not succeeded in calming an anxious, emotional public; 12,000 New York students boycotted their schools in late September.

A halachic perspective on the the removal of students with AIDS from schools, according to Rabbi Moshe D. Tendler, involves two major questions: 1) the reliability of general medical opinion (from the viewpoint of Halacha) or *ne'emanut harof'im*; and 2) the significance of an unlikely or uncertain risk (any definite risk, of course, becomes a case of classical *pikuach nefesh*). The first

question involves various degrees of halachic credence: the *Teshuvah Shira* (Responsa no. 466), for example, considers a doctor reliable only about something that he attests to directly with his senses, or through the use of advanced instruments of observation, but not to his own *umdena*, or medical judgment. (There are many *Acharonim* who disagree.) Jewish and non-Jewish doctors may also be viewed differently. It must be stated at the outset that, firstly, a proper treatment of this topic is beyond the scope of this article, and also that the relevance of the second topic (which will be discussed here) depends upon the outcome of the first. If medical consensus is a key factor in a halachic decision, then perhaps the risk involved is indeed insignificant. (For a discussion of medical opinion in Halacha,

the reader is referred to the *Darchei Teshuva* [Yoreh Deah 187:96-104].)

The halachic status of an unlikely danger may still not complete the analysis of the problem; the various alternative solutions involved (and there are several) may also be significant. One student participated via a video monitor. The community could hire a private tutor for an AIDS victim. Different solutions may have different halachic implications, as will different subjects: barring a student from secular studies and barring him from a shiur may not be the same thing.

The main source cited by the *Acharonim* concerned with the status of an unlikely danger is a gemara in *Yevamot* (12b) that quotes a disagreement whether an eleven-year old girl can use a *moch* (the best modern equivalent to a *moch* is a

diaphragm) as a contraceptive. R. Meir says she may, because "she might become pregnant, and might die from the pregnancy." The *Chachamim* argue that "she may do as always," despite the possible dangers, because "*min hashamayim yerachamu*" — Heaven will protect her from any possible injury, and they quote the *pasuk*: "The Lord protects fools" (*Tehillim* 116:6) as support.

The *Rishonim* on this gemara have essentially three opinions: Rashi understands the *Chachamim* as outlawing the use of a *moch* (since it is forbidden for women to use it in general); thus, they force the girl to confront the danger directly (relying upon *min hashamayim yerachamu*). Many other *Rishonim* (Rabbeinu Tam, Rambam) learn that R. Meir requires the girl to use a *moch* because of the danger involved, and the *Chachamim* allow her the choice of using it or not. However, they agree with Rashi's basic understanding of "Heaven will protect them" (i.e. that one can be forced to rely on this "safety net"); the *Chachamim* happen to argue in the case of *moch* because they feel that it is permissible for women

## Behind Closed Doors

By GERSHON KAPLAN

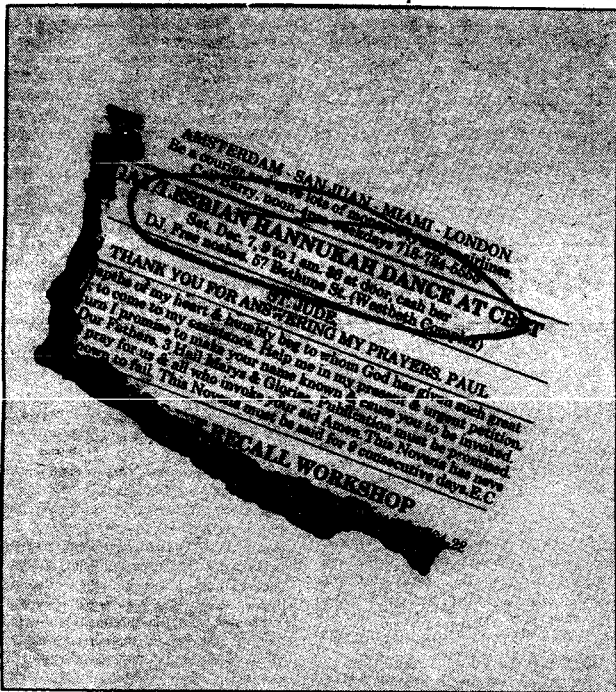
"If a man also lie with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Leviticus 20:13). Homosexual relations between males is forbidden by Scriptures and is punishable by death (for both partners).

"After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do... Neither shall ye walk in their statutes." (Leviticus 18:3) The *Sifra* explains that this verse refers to lesbianism. While no punishment is prescribed by Scriptures, Maimonides writes that lesbians receive the Rabbinically prescribed punishment of *makat mardut*, disciplinary lashes (*Issurei Biah* 21:8).

One reason suggested for the prohibition of male homosexuality is that of Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein, the *Torah Temimah* (Leviticus 18:22), "You are going astray from the foundations of creation;" it is an act which defies the natural order. Rav Saadiah Gaon in *Emanut v'Deot* writes that male homosexuality threatens the family structure. Expanding on this idea, Rabbi Moshe Tendler, Rosh Yeshiva in RIETS and noted ethicist, explains that the premium Judaism places on human life limits the prescription of capital punishment to crimes that threaten the basic fabric of society, such as public desecration of the Sabbath or adultery. Similarly, homosexuality is an attack upon the basic building block of Jewish society, the family.

While the prohibition of homosexuality itself is quite clear, how Jewish society should deal with homosexuals is not. Should they be completely ostracized, fully accepted, or perhaps somewhere in between?

Homosexuals cannot ask for legitimacy;



their sexual practices are an abomination. However, they *can* ask for our sympathy and understanding. Whether due to genetic or environmental factors, or a combination of both, homosexuals have an overpowering need and desire to pursue interpersonal relationships which God has forbidden. This puts them in an unusual position in Jewish society. Judaism generally teaches us that physical desires are God-given and, when properly channelled, become holy. The most basic human needs and desires, nourishment and sexual fulfillment, when performed properly are *mitzvot*, executions of Divine will. The beauty and power of the love between a man and a woman are so intense that *Shir Hashirim*, the "holy of holies," uses this love as a metaphor for the relationship between God and the Jewish people. Yet, a homosexual searching for seemingly the same relationship, only with a member of the same sex, is told that his actions are an abomination. His threat to the family structure and violation of the natural order dictate his prohibition, but shouldn't the homosexual who has been unable to withstand this terrible test deserve sympathy and understanding?

Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University, and Rabbi Tendler,

both distinguish between two categories of homosexuals. A homosexual activist demanding recognition of homosexuality as an "alternative lifestyle," is actively espousing an anti-Torah doctrine, is a *mumar lehach'is*, a rebellious sinner. He forfeits his place in the Jewish community and is not welcome in Jewish organizations or deserving of their support. However, one who practices secretly, or even one who practices openly but does not seek society's legitimization of his actions, should be treated very differently. While it must not be forgotten that his actions are a *to'eva*, an abomination, he is a *mumar lete'avon* a mentally-affected transgressor driven by desire, and should be treated with kindness and understanding. Certainly, any homosexual seeking a cure for his condition (rarely possible) or supportive help in sublimating and controlling his desires should be afforded all possible assistance.

Rabbi Lamm has clarified this distinction by using an example from a more common transgression, *lashon hara*. While as a pulpit rabbi, he would never consider ejecting all of the people in his congregation who spoke *lashon hara*, he would certainly not tolerate a congregant

## Shouldn't the homosexual deserve sympathy and understanding?

who organized a libel, slander, and tale-bearing club.

However, Rabbi Lamm and Rabbi Tendler disagree on the question of hiring homosexuals in sensitive areas such as teaching, thus exposing adolescents to, and presenting as a role model, a homosexual. Rabbi Lamm feels that a teacher remaining discreet about his homosexuality poses no threat. Rabbi Tendler, however, worries about the possibility of a homosexual seducing the children. Whereas the average heterosexual female teaching a class of males can be trusted, many homosexuals are far less well-adjusted to their condition. Placing them before a class of children, therefore, involves a definite danger. Additionally, even if the homosexual is "well-adjusted," exposing children and adolescents to homosexuality at an impressionable age risks legitimizing homosexuality in their eyes as an "alternative lifestyle" for themselves and others. Rabbi Tendler also feels that homosexuals should be barred from the armed forces. Their presence, he notes, often disturbs the delicate social interactions of a unit, severely damaging its morale and ability to function. He pointed out that the United States Armed Forces does not permit homosexuals to serve.

Treatment of the Orthodox homosexual is only a small part of the much broader problem of dealing with non-Jews and transgressors, whether observant and not. Too often these issues are dealt with in an unsophisticated manner by our educational systems, both formal and informal, for adults as well as children. Every observant Jew, especially one in the "Modern Orthodox" camp, encounters such dilemmas in his daily life. Dealing incorrectly with others often leads to desecration of the Divine Name for which even death might not atone.

Celebrating Its Centennial  
1928-1986

# Ham & Vasser

Food for Thought Published Despite  
the Jewish Studies Divisions of Yeshiva University

Purim 5746

## Yitzchaki: A New Perspective

(This article is adapted by permission of the author from a dissertation submitted to the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Higher Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University.)

A proper historical analysis of the writings of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, the eleventh-century European rabbinic leader known as Rashi, demands a thorough critical study of his magnum opus, *Rashi al Ha'gemara*, his commentary on the Talmud, and *Rashi al Ha'tanach*, his commentary on the Old Testament. While it has traditionally been assumed that these are the works of a single author — Yitzchaki — a careful analysis shows otherwise.

First, as is well known even among the most fundamental Jewish strains, many internal contradictions plague *Rashi al Ha'gemara*. Enumeration of these contradictions need not be repeated here.

Additionally, simple literary sensitivity exposes the stylistic variations between different volumes of the same work. For example, while the words *shor*, bull ox, and *qefel*, double idemity, commonly appear in the commentary to the Tractate Baba Qama, they are nearly absent from the commentary to Tractate Berakhot. No traditional explanation has satisfactorily accounted for these differences.

Probably the most important text for properly understanding the Yitzchaki problem is to be found in Tractate Berakhot 28b. The

Talmud reads:

Our rabbis taught: when Rabbi Eliezer fell sick, his students entered to visit. They said to him, 'Master, expound to us the ways of life that we may merit the World to Come.' He responded, 'Be careful in the respect of your friends and prevent your children from [the study of] *higayon*...'

On this last phrase, the commentary attributed to Yitzchaki states, "*Al targilam b'mira yoteir midai keivan d'mascha* — do not accustom them to [the study of] Bible too much because it attracts." A textual difficulty surfaces on a first reading. While the statement of Rabbi Eliezer (on his deathbed) stresses the word "prevent," our text of Rashi suggests a milder proscription, one out of keeping with the tone of the Talmudic passage. To restore the original reading, the text of *Rashi* should be emended by dropping the words "*yoteir midai*" and by exchanging the *mem* in "*mascha*" for the phonetically similar *nun*, leaving us with "*nascha*," a word often used to refer to a fatal snake bite (see Numbers Rabbah 20). The revised line reads, "*Al targilam b'mira keivan d'nascha* — do not accustom them to [the study of] Bible because it bites [like a venomous snake]." a stronger statement, more in consonance with Rabbi Eliezer's exposition. Having properly resolved the textual questions, we must now face

a more troubling problem. Yitzchaki wrote a running commentary to the entire Bible; could the same person have compared the study of a Bible text to a fatal snake bite? It seems obvious that the author of this remark is not the author of Yitzchaki's commentary to the Bible. (It is most likely that our corrupt version of the text is the product of a feeble attempt by a copyist to eliminate this great difficulty in the original text.)

The final evidence critical for a resolution to the Yitzchaki problem can be found by contrasting the radically different attitudes toward women in the Talmudic and Biblical commentaries. In the Biblical commentary we find the expected Jewish male posture expressed in such statements as, "*Kee kulan da'tan kalah aleihen* — for they [women] are all airheads (commentary to Ecclesiastes 7:28)." In stark contrast to this, we find precisely the opposite view in the Talmudic commentary; in Tractate Niddah 45b, the Talmud states, "extra understanding was given to women." <sup>1</sup> Any medieval male would have found this statement perplexing and thus in need of explanation. Yet, Yitzchaki's normally expansive commentary offers none. Only a woman could have bypassed this line without comment; clearly then, the Talmudic commentary must have been written by a female scholar. Unfortunately, very few clear examples of this egalitarian outlook have survived in extant manuscripts of the commentary. It is likely that male editors and copyists of succeeding generations altered or removed such statements. Our example escaped their purview only because it expressed itself in the absence of a comment, rather than in written exposition.

The female perspective may also be seen in a survey of tractates which Pseudo-Rashi chose not to comment upon. For example, the Tractate Pesakhim, concerning the holiday of Passover, a cruel torture for any medieval woman expected to single-handedly prepare the home for the holiday rites, a task made well nigh impossible by centuries of male decreed edicts and stringencies, receives almost no commentary. Also notably absent is a commentary on Tractate Nedarim, which discusses the tyrannical oath-nullifying power the husband and the father exercise over the woman.

Who were these mysterious female authors? An examination of Jewish legend reveals the popular tradition that the daughters of Yitzchaki donned phylacteries. While it is uncertain if they actually did so, this tradition contains an important kernel of historicity. It implies that Yitzchaki's daughters rose above the traditionally oppressive state of the Jewish female. Even more striking, no corresponding legend concerning Yitzchaki's donning of phylacteries

has been discovered — implying that he himself had fallen to the degraded state accorded to women denied the opportunity to practice this most basic Jewish ritual. Based on our analysis, the grounds for this reversal are now clear. It was, in fact, the daughters who pursued the traditionally male task of Talmud study, while the father was restricted to the customary feminine role of Bible-tale interpretation. Yitzchaki may have written the Biblical commentary, but his daughters wrote the Talmudic commentary. Recognizing the unacceptability of female scholarship in the Middle Ages, they published their works pseudepigraphically. One question remains: How did they succeed in convincing the rabbis of the next generation, the Additional Masters (*Ba'alei Haosafot*), that Yitzchaki was in fact the commentary's author? While we can offer no conclusive answer, it must be remembered that this was also the age in which the Zohar was "discovered." More likely, the daughters' task was simplified by their being the *Ba'alei Haosafot*'s mothers.

While the detailed studies necessary to determine the exact authorship of each passage have not yet been completed, we are able to sketch broad outlines. (ed. note: in the interests of brevity, we will abbreviate names where appropriate). The four main sources are respectively, Judith, Esther, Devorah, and Penina. While the youngest daughter, P., wrote on more theological sections such as Kodshim, which deals with priests and Temple rituals, the eldest daughters, J. and E. concentrated on Aggada, sections which discuss stories attributed to the Talmudic fathers and history leading up to them. D., taking a slightly different tack, wrote the supercommentary to Rabbi Isaac Alfasi's work on the Talmud, known as *Rashi al Ha'rif*, or Deuterashy.

The female authorship also explains the psychological underpinnings for the theological imperative the *Ba'alei Haosafot* felt requiring them to disagree with *Rashi al Ha'gemarah*. Even on non-feminist issues, their masculine *weltanschauung* found itself in subtle conflict with that of the *Ba'atot Rashi*.

We have laid the groundwork of an exciting new theory; much work remains to be done in developing and applying these ideas and their revolutionary implications. However, even at this point, it is quite clear in the case of Yitzchaki and his daughters who wore the tefillin in the family.

<sup>1</sup> For an understanding of this statement in its Talmudic context, we refer you to our earlier work, "Nashim A'vadim U'ktanim: the Talmudic Perspective on Women and Judaism."

## The Dyslexica Ilui

According to the Encyclopedia Talmudit, an *ilui* is someone who knows *shas*, *rishonim*, *achronim*, and *poskim* "backwards and forwards," and has never lost a game of Trivial Parshanut. Predictably, few such luminaries have appeared in the annals of our tragically repetitive history. One little known *ilui* (who, according to legend, never really existed), was the Dyslexica *ilui* — fabled to have mastered all of Jewish scholarship backwards, though not forwards.

Raised in nineteenth century Poland, where dyslexia was still thought to be an intellectual advantage, the Dyslexica *ilui* had a difficult time playing the role of a fountain of Torah knowledge when everything he read or said came out backwards, jumbled, or otherwise incoherent. But the *ilui* persisted in his role, setting a strong precedent for rabbinic students of later generations.

His *cheder* rebbe recognized him as a prodigy, but continued to beat him severely for reading the Talmud poorly. The rebbe reported to his father that the child was either destined to join the ranks of the Sages or, given his disposition, just as likely to end up shlepping logs all winter like the rest of his family. Needless to say, the rebbe was fired, and the father began beating the child instead.

As a young man, the *ilui* was approached by a delegation of rabbis from the neighboring towns. They employed the old rabbinic trick of presenting a bowl of fruit to the young man and waiting to see what *bracha* he would make. The *ilui* pondered the action and responded, "None, my revered teacher. I am allergic to fruit." The rabbis were dumbstruck by the boy's clever

response. He was immediately accepted into the Rabbinic Hall of Fame and given a weekly shiur at the local synagogue.

Thousands of *Ba'alei Habayit* flocked to hear the young *ilui* lecture on the Talmud. Unfortunately, it was soon apparent that the *ilui* was making absolutely no sense. Too embarrassed to tell the *ilui*, they tried alternative solutions. The local rabbis tried turning the *gemarot* upside down, angling mirrors, but eventually were forced to call in the town mystic. The mystic, a short, mysterious old woman, who could clean and jerk 350 pounds, hurled ancient incantations at the *ilui*, sprinkled the inside of his yarmuke with nutmeg, and, in an inspired moment, grabbed the *ilui* by his *peyus*, yelling, "For God's sake, man, make some sense!"

The mystic was subsequently carted off, and the *ilui* retired to his father's home to write his memoirs; they have yet to be deciphered, but will appear in an upcoming issue of *Tradition* anyway.

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## Ham & Vasser

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# Editorials

## Shiur Desperation: Reforming RIETS

Last week, Rabbi Tendler, the noted ethicist, informed his shiur that he had submitted to Rabbi Charlop a list of twenty-one students he felt should be waived from his shiur roster. It seems that these students had, with regularity and dedication, declined to attend his shiur.

To the best of our knowledge, the RIETS office has yet to respond to Rabbi Tendler's action, but **Ham & Vasser** applauds Rabbi Tendler's insight. By freeing advanced *tabulidim* from his (*semicha*) shiur, he has afforded them the opportunity to devote themselves fully to independent Torah research, as well as to the morning game shows. Currently, the RIETS office demands faithful shiur attendance even from the most advanced students, but Rabbi Tendler's plan would liberate deserving students from such distractions. As MYP continues to grow, lack of attendance becomes a greater problem for RIETS. Rabbi Tendler has suggested an innovative solution; we hope Rabbi Charlop will heed his advice.

## Equal Pray?

We were pained to read in the most recent *Observer* a small piece written by a one-time **Ham & Vasser** contributor about a *tefilla* group at Stern. We wish to completely dissociate ourselves from her current endeavor.

**Ham & Vasser** would in no way condone women convening to *daven*, not even in Beis Ya'akov. That the article states, "This is a group *tefilla* and not a *minyana*" surely fails to exonerate the students; that it proudly describes *divrei Torah* on Mondays and Thursdays proves both their ignorance and disregard for Torah principles. We were also surprised to see such an article printed in the *Observer*, normally a high-quality Torah-true newspaper. Unfortunately, we see a general liberal trend growing at Stern, one that began with the opening of the "Beit Medrash" and has extended now to a prayer group.

**Ham & Vasser** has learned that some courageous women tear down announcements of the group *tefilla*; on Purim day, these true women of valor join with Esther herself in providing examples for all of us.

# Ham & Vasser

**Ham & Vasser** is published occasionally by the Chaim Book Organization of Yeshiva. A watered-down version of a *treif* publication, **Ham & Vasser** has been certified Kosher by the *Observer* Kashrut Korner. Higher standards, represented by Rabbi Shmulke Bernstein, require ingestion of 60 issues of *Shinayim LaTorah* together with a **Ham & Vasser**. The views of signed articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the JTS faculty.

## Rabbi Yehuda Parnes Mashgiach Hashkafati

## YP Melech Malchei HaMinim

Eli "Who does he think he is?" Siegman

### Illiterate Editor

Daniel "Up all neit" Feit  
Harvard Editor

Lewis & Clark  
Aznayim LaTorah  
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# Reach Out and Touch Someone

Keeping with Yeshiva's long history of outreach, YCDS recently began a new outreach program — SHMAD (Secular Humanism, Mada, and Daas Torah). SHMAD specializes in reaching out to the yeshiva world, bringing it closer to true yidishkeit: Torah U Mada. The small, but very active, group is currently seeking new volunteers to join its swelling ranks. Although dedication, *Ahavas haMada* and thorough knowledge of Victorian poetry are the only requirements to be an advisor, Rabbi Benny Landau, SHMAD's director points out that writing for **Ham & Vasser** can help one's chances of acceptance.

In just two months of existence, SHMAD has already run programs at Ner Yisroel, Lakewood, and Chaim Berlin. In addition,

it ran a special retreat for kollel wives and are planning a Counterpoint to Merkaz haRav Shach, to take place this summer. So far the programs have been very successful; the seed of pluralism being planted in the hearts of many, and some students have even transferred to "yeshivas" in Boston and New Haven.

SHMAD advisors realize that success depends on their ability to relate to the "too frum." To help achieve this, some have grown beards, and others now wear hats and jackets (though they take care not to dress like this in the Beis Midrash.) Many have been consuming massive doses of *acharonim*, and some are even beginning to dabble in *musar*. This last item created the most controversy; many rebbem believe that there is danger of being influenced by the

ways of the very people one hopes to reach. As Rabbi Kahn put it, "*Mussar* carries too great a risk and if the goals cannot be accomplished without reading such perfidy, maybe the whole endeavor should be dropped." Landau replied, "he has a point, but we care about CLAL Yisrael."

Additionally, the group formed a special team to work specifically with Chofetz Chaim. They are clean shaven, wear brown hats and have been learning the first *Tosafos* in *Merubah* since September.

Two weeks ago, SHMAD held an orientation shabbosson for its advisors. Commented one meSHuMAD, "Yeh, it was, like, great, man, we were really like shab-bostoned; it was wild, you know, how we were *mekadesh* the *chomer* and all."

Landau explains that the shabbosson provides a chance for advisors to meet, plan activities, and learn the songs. One of the group's favorites is, "*Kol haalom kulo GESHER* and footnotes, *v'ha-ikar lo l'Kaiv J.C. khal*."

As part of advisor training, the group tried role playing. Landau instructed the advisors, "You walk into a room at a retreat and you see a guy and a girl learning *musar* together, how do you react?" The group considered this a particularly difficult, though not unrealistic situation, and proposed taking the hard line: explain that, while we can't tell them what to do at home, study of *musar* is a violation of retreat rules, and they must stop immediately. In another scenario Landau asked, "You're walking down a hall during recreation, and you see two guys leaving the room together, smiling. Under their arms are large books which you suspect are *gemaras*. What do you do?" One meSHuMAD explained that he wouldn't risk turning them off by confronting them directly. Rather, he suggested, he would offer them a copy of *Dikdukei Sofrim*. Another advisor proposed engaging them in a conversation by quoting the Rambam on the *zugya*, swinging the talk over to the *Moreh Nevuchim*, and gradually return to the *zugya*, introducing textual emendations into the discussion.

When out in the field, SHMAD has developed a somewhat unique style. Based on Rav Yaakov Emden's famous, if unusual, heter, SHMAD permits women at their shab-

bossonim. This factor tends to be the strongest draw, and insures the popularity of the events. A typical shabbosson begins Friday afternoon with pre-Shabbos inspiration — usually a short reading from Milton. As the atmosphere develops, and advisors breathe a bit easier, *Kabbalas Shabbos* is recited, culminating in *negiah* with the *Shabbos haMalka*. The first Shabbos meal is nothing special, though dessert often consists of *nielles* (i.e. quintessential fluff). The mood during *ruach* is often high, and the dinner ends with SHMAD's own niggunim — they have words but no tune.

After dinner, the shabbosson breaks up to smaller session groups. Typical topics include: *Am Segula* (or how to find your bashert while still in college), *Mesorah* (how to pass your *Yoreh Deah* bechina without even trying), and the Gods (must be crazy). Following the session everyone goes to sleep (around).

In the morning, participants have the option of attending an explanatory *minyana*. Of course, most of the *tefilot* are eliminated, but particular attention is paid to reading the Torah. Between *aliyas*, an advisor discusses the authorship of the upcoming sections. The highlight of Shabbos day comes shortly after lunch when the entire group goes out to the road for a shabbostoning.

After Mincha everyone settles down for the most meaningful part of Shabbos: the last supper. Typical fare consists of crackers and deep red wine. Keeping with SHMAD's laid back approach, they don't hold from long, emotional *havalahs*. In fact, they don't hold *havadala* at all.

A typical shabbosson culminates at Saturday night's *krumsitz*. A candle is passed around the darkened room, giving everyone present the opportunity to express the new doubts they encountered over the weekend. In addition to concretizing the growth the individual has achieved, sharing one's doubts with the group helps to unbalance others too.

While this model of (de)programming has proved very successful so far, SHMAD's staffers say that their ultimate goal is to start newspapers in the yeshivot. Once publications of "traditional" thought and ideas are printed, the battle is almost won, claim the meSHuMADim.

## S.O.Y.'s Sheilos U'Teshuvos Forms Ready to Use

### From the

- humble
- afar ha'aretz*
- unworthy
- insignificant
- am ha'aretz*

### To

- Harav*
- Hagaon*
- Moreinu*
- Rabbeinu*
- Hatzaddik*
- Shlita*
- N"Y*
- Or Hadoros*
- Or Hagola*
- Z'chuto Yagel*

### Regarding

- learning
- finances
- science
- marriage
- thinking

### The T'shuva

- assur*
- tov l'hachmir*

"Daas Torah K'neged Kulam"

By CHAIM BOOK  
President of SOY

Fellow students, as the Purim season rolls around, I would like to take a few moments to share with you some of SOY's latest projects. For those in our great, one hundred-twenty-seven county nation who have not as yet been touched by the far-reaching benevolence of my administration, I am proud to announce that SOY has dutifully embraced all the limbs of Yeshiva's paraplegic student services division. This bloodless revolution, spearheaded of course by me, was welcomed by the administration as a definitive step in establishing YU as one of the most progressive institutions regarding student activities. In our efforts to retain as much of the already existing personnel as possible, Rabbi Lamm and I thought it best to offer Barry, Elana, Howard T., Mr. Parker, Avi, Rabbi Josh T. Sasquatch, Rabbi Charlop, and of course, Ivan, executive positions in their respective organizations, while I will maintain general supervision and offer guidance when and where I please.

A personality whose responsibilities I will assume are those of Rabbi W.W. Bornortin. Under his co-misdirection, RIFTS has allowed countless numbers (or at least three or four) of wanton IBC apostates into its program. I intend to end this charade once and for all; after all, if you can't trust your president, whom can you trust? Rabbi B. will soon journey to Europe to complete a doctoral thesis in Underwater Basketweaving under the tutelage of Flipper at the Galapagos Islands School of Oceanography. We extend

# The Uncensored Book

our wishes for the best of luck as the good rabbi moves on to yet another promising career of glamour and stardom.

While it is impossible to list in so short a space all of my responsibilities as Universal Head and President for Life of Greater SOY International, here is a smattering of some of the things I, in humble dedication, attend to on a day-to-day basis. I work hard perpetuating a strong following of Rabbi Tendler impersonators on campus. In addition, I oversee the publication of various scholarly journals and pamphlets such as "M'chabeh Ohr Torah" and "Pritzkat Kolei Hayeshiva." Much of my time is spent upholding our superior kashrut standards at Grandma's Bar 'n Grill.

In pursuit of my noble aspirations to promote unity within the ranks at Yeshiva, and to preserve its international reputation as a watershed of cultural and intellectual progress, I have compiled a list of issues which I feel should not be dealt with in clubs, societies, and most importantly, school publications.

Certain compelling issues which directly affect the welfare of our student body will be condoned despite their controversial nature. I'm talking about serious issues like Rabbi Paretzky's *bechinot*, morning muffin availability, and inside information regarding

alternate side of the street parking. In addition, we will, from time to time go out on a limb with a lecture or even a symposium on, say, the Halachic ramifications of the migratory patterns of the European lemming versus those of the African wombat. These bold undertakings do not go unnoticed. Unfortunately, certain professors and even some students have voiced opposition to what they term "bleeding-heart liberal bombast." They, for some incomprehensible reason, feel the gnawing compulsion to espouse reactionary ideas anathema to the basic tenets upon which this great Yeshiva was founded. They advocate policies such as religious pluralism, intellectual maturity, academic freedom, and real silverware in the cafeteria, which if ever implemented (God-forbid), would reduce this institution to a cultural level roughly comparable to that of a Pushmepullyu with Down's Syndrome.

Fortunately, I am in a position to quell this uprising. As student council president, I of course have the power of the purse, which, I might add, I exercise quite liberally. (Note this column.) Also, as newly appointed dean, I am able to enforce my flexibility through aggressive persuasion and empty threats. However, this issue may require more delicate treatment than such traditional avenues offer. Consequently, I have re-

constructed, inside our brand new, Max Stern Olympic size dog-run, the official Centennial gallows. Since they are fifty cubits high, everyone, from the tallest professor to the most minuscule, early-admissions freshman, will be accountable to my justice. I know that I can count on the entire student body for full support in my campaign to uproot these pariahs from within our midst.

As a concluding note, I would like to put an end to the myth perpetuated by many under the guise of religious fervor. This month, Adar, is traditionally a month of joy and celebration. Each year, there is a small group (probably that same band of wild-eyed radical conservatives) who find it necessary to misinterpret the sages regarding this time of year. Our sages profess, "Mishenichnas Adar Marbim b'simcha." They claim that, because true happiness can only be attained through intense study of the scriptures, "Marbim b'simcha" really means "Marbim b'Torah." This is, of course, absurd. Why would anyone say: "Go out and party" when they mean: "Sit and Grub"; especially with the price of ink and goose-quills what it is today? I would humbly (of course) suggest an alternate interpretation; one which is infinitely more appealing than this exegetical outrage: we know from a reliable source, that "Ain simcha elah b'basar v'yayin." From this dictum, it becomes apparent that in order to fulfill our obligation, we must all go and get drunk while sitting in The Orange Lounge. My best wishes to all for a most productive season.

## Frum Fashions

Preprinted from the Observer

You're stuck: you have an important party to attend — your best friend is celebrating her acceptance to secretarial school — and you don't have a thing to wear. What to do? You figure, "I'll hop over to L-rd and Taylor's or Macy's and pick up a nice sweater or blouse. Oh, I know, the clothes there are not always *tzniut*, but I'll make sure to pick up something long and loose, perfect for me."

Hold it! That may seem innocent enough to you, but those clothes, believe it or not, contain a problem far worse than *tzniut*: they're decidedly unfashionable! As one local clothing expert put it, "Today's *frum* woman has to dress not only for the rebbe, but for his *talmid* as well. A knowledge of current *frum* fashions is absolutely vital, and only a true Boro Park store will have complete expertise."

Starting at the top, you must be well-prepared with the proper *sheitel* for your *choson*. What's that you say? Of course, you'll have the latest, \$8,000, all-natural-hair *sheitel*? No, no, natural is out; today's *frum* bride must sport a *sheitel* of the finest mink.

Fred the Furrrier's ample supply could be used to cover that *sheitel*. However, the *poskim* differ as to the best place to get your fur. While some maintain that Fred suffices, others insist that the holiest fur can be obtained from the Catskill Game Farm, an area sanctified by thousands of Jews who are *oleh le'regel* there every *Pesach*. But some raise the potential problem of improperly taken *ma'aser behemah*; consult your local Orthodox rabbi for details.

The proper *frum* woman, of course, is fortunate in that she doesn't need to buy a special mask for *Purim*; her usual load of make-up will do just fine.

A more solemn matter is the proper leg covering. Pants are passe, of course, and jean skirts are definitely outdated. One popular *frum* method of avoiding the horrific idea of wearing pants is the long skirt with alonger slit. Another possibility is the leather outfit, with a tight leather skirt. (Many consider this style an outgrowth of a secret desire to wear *teffin*.) The snug, stifling fit of a tight skirt

has the added plus of fulfilling the *mitzva* of "Lo Sasur," "You shall not swerve...neither left nor right." And remember to hang your finest jewels when you wear leather, as the *Levush Ga'avah* cites from the *posuk*, "La'yehudim hayta orah...veykar," "And the Jews had leather...and precious jewels."

The textured pantyhose you wear should, *lechatchilla*, have enough dots to give your legs the appearance of *tzora'at*, an especially convenient way to attract the attention of a *kohen*. The *Dyslexica Illuy* (see article elsewhere in this issue) quotes a source for this style: "Vaitbash Ester machalut" (5:1). "And Esther dressed with diseased clothing." When his students pointed out that the *posuk* actually says, "Vaitbash Ester malchut," the *Dyslexica* knowingly replied, "That's prot a noblem, my *spak* still counts because I have *mnivyata dishesaya*."

If, after all this effort to please your husband, he still treats you as an inferior, just take it passively; after all, he has a source to treat women like dirt: "Ester karka olam hayta (Sanhedrin 74b)."

### Believe it Or Not Dept.

...Students may be subject to disciplinary and academic penalties if they are absent without acceptable excuse for more than five sessions a semester. Preparation (*hakhana*) and lecture (*shiur*) are considered separate sessions, so that a student missing a full day without excuse is considered to have two absences. Lateness to any session is considered as half an absence.

Students who are absent from a session and wish to have the absence excused must file their excuse with the Office of the Director within two days of their return to school. A special form obtainable in that office is to be used. Ordinarily only a note from a physician will be accepted as an excuse for an absence because of illness."

Reprinted from the Yeshiva University Undergraduate Catalog, 1983-85, pg. 56. This one's for real, folks.

## Dial a Rabbi

Recently, Ham & Vasser concluded that it should seek guidance before discussing the propriety of Yeshiva's mere *semicha* students' meeting with Conservative and Reform rabbis and decided to consult the Roshei Yeshiva and Jewish Studies faculty. While none of them were available, our journalistic responsibilities require us to report the responses we received on their various answering machines. (In order to preserve anonymity, we will avoid mentioning names):

- "Rabosei, I'm presently undergoing a process of absentia; hopefully, I'll soon undertake the action of listening to your message, and subsequently be transformed into a person who returns messages. In the following space please lundisize an analytical message. Nothing *ba'alebatish*, and Suna, don't press me on this one."

- "In my last phone message, I quoted Ralph Kramden's comment to Alice that Auden never phoned home...Wurzburger, by the way, has the proofs for the next edition of Either/Or — working title is Maybe, but I didn't get to where I am today by not returning messages so leave a manuscript up on the fifth floor. Beep beep, b'didut and shalom."

- "Ehh, I'm not at all uncomfortable talking to an answering machine, eh, I talk to an empty shiur all the time. As you know, I'm at the shver's; leave a message — and try to be intelligent this morning."

- "Mywife won't let me answer the phone. Should I listento her? The *achron*, RavShnitzei Miponovetch, inhis commentary tothe *JoyOfCooking*, has a whole essay referring to recipe forlorkushenkugel hemade, ingoring his wife's requestthat hetake theeggs tothewife of theS'deiChemed, who obviouslyhas siyata dishemaya onsuchissues and canposkin onthesematters, butshewas out atminyuan. Couldbeassur, I don't now, but nunu... Ifyouleave amessage myresponse to youcanbe foundin anessay Iwrote inthe 1968 BeisYitzchak. Beepbeepbeepbeep."

- "You have reached the residence of Dr. and Rabbi Blau. An observation: either you can leave a message or drop by the Beis Midrash tomorrow — or any time — and schmooze."

- "I'm out at the Jewish Agency trying to repeal the funding of the Reform movement; as I told Yosef Burg, Academic Freedom won't limit my messages, but if you were in my history class at Yeshiva you would know that. Beep!"

- "This is R.C. (note: initials for anonymity) if you leave me your name and shiur placement, I'll check your file and send a letter to your home address."

- "Rabbi Charlop has not allowed me to answer the phone. If you leave a message, I'll ask Rabbi Charlop for permission to ask Rabbi Hirt's permission to return your call."

## BEWARE!

AIDS on campus

Anyone coming in close, intimate contact with carriers of AIDS (AIDS related) or suspected carriers should report immediately to Health Services for emergency injections of original rabbinic texts.

# A Halakchic Guy

Ahalakchic man reflects two opposing selves. On the one hand, he resembles *homo agnosticus* (Ish ha-doubt); on the other hand, he is like the cohabitative man (Ish ha-date). When *homo agnosticus* confronts the world, he cries out from the depths of his heart, "Where is the owner's manual?" When cohabitative man faces reality, he is moved to celebration, to wit, "Hey, bud, let's party!" The ontic pluralism of *homo agnosticus* frees him from the restrictions of human cognition, but ontic pluralism can only go so far: he still won't let his daughter marry an Oriental. Cohabitative man feels the need to express his love of God's creation, be it blessing a rainbow or going to singles' bars.

The central antinomy of ahalakchic man disturbs his consciousness and gives him heartburn. God's lofiness and splendor awakens questions in his soul: "How can I comprehend His creations? Especially ear wax?" At the same time ahalakchic man desires to partake of the empirical, earthly life. He wants to appreciate the exquisite beauty of the autumn sun, sinking in a sea of purple and gold. He wants to go to "R"-rated movies. The higher longs and pines for the lover.

*Homo agnosticus* stresses inactivity to implement his subjective ideal. He wishes to undermine the validity and truth of the mathematical construct: the ideal, lawful, unified system. He owns no IBM stock.

But God knows better. He gave us the Torah which transforms natural springs into ritual baths and drunken bacchanalia into Purim *chagigor*. Ahalakchic man dedicates his life to uniting doubt and ritual. But then ahalakchic man believes in the tooth fairy.

Once my father was sleeping in the synagogue courtyard when he heard a loud weeping. Surely he's a Chabad Chasid, my father thought. Surely he's in need of a good analyst. The Hasid suffered, as mystics do, from God's silent air of superiority. My father hit the Chasid over the head with a shofar and said: "If God had wanted men to weep, would he have created David Letterman?"

Neither modesty nor humility characterizes the image of ahalakchic man. He is very like the Max Stern scholar. The autonomy of the intellect makes ahalakchic man a supernal pain in the neck. He insists on discovering the kernel of cognitive content in everything, even Bloom County.

Ahalakchic man does not chafe against existence; at worst, he suffers from occasional athlete's foot. Meanwhile, the mystic shares in the anguish of the Divine Presence in Exile. Together, these two would be about as much fun as nuclear fallout. Apart, they contribute to the I-Thou-Thou dialogue that Aquinas pretends to know so much about. Thus, we create an ontic relationship of

parallelism and analogy.

Since Halakhah encompasses all facets of sociological creations, society and community, ahalakchic man is an antisocial personality. I remember once I went outside into the synagogue courtyard, where I found my father staring vacantly into the sunset. As I began to speak, he thrust a wad of paper into my mouth and pushed me into the mud. Ahalakchic man thrives on his sense of power, confidence and strength, especially over little kids. He swims in the sea of the Talmud, but mostly loiters in the wading pool of the Artsroll series.

In truth, ahalakchic man avoids melancholy and dread and embraces an exaggerated

spirit of joy, a spiritual drunkenness (or to use the term of William James, "letting it all hang out."). This stance brings man closer to God, creator of the bellybutton. It exemplifies the wild dancing, unruly celebrations and drunkenness identified with Jacob Frank, ahalakchic par excellence. We have here great strength and presence of mind, the conscious avoidance of moderation, equilibrium and tranquility. We have the party animal.

Ahalakchic man is conscious of cosmic paradoxes, especially on weekends. He apprehends transcendence; he has even attained it with the aid of certain hallucinogens. But he recognizes that complete fulfillment is possible in this world (except in New

p.m., \$8 (\$2.50 w/ this page).  
**Soloveitchik Chasid Symposium**  
 on educational theories & practices of  
 Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, Furst  
 Hall, 500 W 185th St, 3 p.m., free.  
 Country music & blues, Carol Hauser & Eleanor El-  
 lis, DBN Exhibition Space, 101  
 Weaver St, 219-2790, 4 p.m., free.  
 Big Boppers: Poets Haoui Mon-  
 taug & Marle Ginsberg, Be Bop  
 Cafe, 28 W 8th St, 982-0892, 4:30  
 p.m.

## The a priori framework of halakhah is the foundation of ahalakchic man's willy-nilly weltanschauung

Jersey). Man resides together with his Creator in this world, cultivating a togetherness in the here and now; this is a friendship which might come in handy sometime (talk about your character witness!). Having omniscient friends in high places is a primary aim of the ahalakchic. Without it, life is melancholy and sad, not to mention improbable.

These are but some of the traits of ahalakchic man. Much more is imprinted in his consciousness and in FBI dossiers. Much more than that is imprinted in *Encyclopedia Britannica*. But it is revealed and known before Him who created the world that my sole intention was to defend the honor of ahalakchic men and maybe make a few bucks. And if I have erred, may God in His goodness have a happy Purim.

## Moreon Aid

The startling discovery of starving minds wandering the intellectual desert of YU has led to a generous outpouring of charity, climaxing in the Pseudo-Aid concert last week.

Bob Geltoff, organizer of the concert, assembled a formidable array of faded Sixties radicals (many of them dead) and contributors to the *New York Review of Books*.

The concert opened with Mordechai Ben David, considered by many to be the longest name in Jewish music today, reciting some of his recent unpublished poetry. Then, he rocked the audience with his latest hit:

Just one Revel course  
 Will set your mind free  
 Just one Revel course  
 Come and join with me  
 We will question the mind  
 Of the Spirit Divine  
 It is heresy, true  
 But I'll come and burn with you.

The pseudo-intellectual tone was sustained by the next act: YCDS presented a Modern Drama tableau directed by Anthony S. Beukas. The production, entitled "The Three Little Pigs," is an absurdist, post-nuclear war musical, depicting the hapless lives of reductionist swine — whose communication is limited to primal screams — striving to build a socialist utopia in the face of capitalist wolves. Musical highlights included: "You Belong To The City, Your

House Belongs To The State," "Pigs Just Want To Have Fun" and "Pinocchio and His Amazing Technicolor Tinsel."

Then President Norman Lamm took the stage, demonstrating his new dance routine, "The Hirt Backward Step." Surprise appearances by Dr. Belkin and Dr. Revel (resurrected for the Centennial) led to an all-president trio performing "The Torah U Mada Cha-Cha." For an encore, President Lamm recited his investiture address and a poem entitled "How to Spend \$100 Million."

This was followed by Bob Dylan, a recent convert to Taoist Chasidism. Dylan performed a ballad based on Rabbi Nachman's parables in Chinese; then he went to the Beit Medrash and distributed his song in little pamphlets. Joan Baez, recently ordained a Rabbi by JTS, joined Dylan in a duet, entitled "The Times They Aren't Changin' Fast Enough."

In the concert's rousing finale, Woody Allen and his sisters reminisced about his years at YU: "When I got a C in Freshman Comp, I said to my professor, 'Be fruitful and multiply,' but not in those words..." Twisted Sister followed Allen with chamber music; the ensemble donated their time and an extra \$1500 for playing to a mixed audience. YU's own Kabbala also offered to perform for free. They were refused.

The concert was broadcast live on WYUR

with color commentary by Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger. The radio station also arranged a satellite link to Yeshivat Har Etzion: "Our whole *weltanschauung* — from eschatology to ethics — is firmly grounded upon the profound conviction that the physical, the natural, the secular is to be sanctified. *Avail*..."

Ham & Vasser agreed to co-sponsor the concert "in the interest of sustaining a rapidly diminishing readership." But the editorial

board insisted on one condition: that no performer wear a hairpiece while onstage.

Money raised by the concert (requested donation: \$20.00 per couple; for Stern Scholars: \$15.80 cumulative) paid for subscriptions to *The Old Republic*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Carpenter* and *Uncommonary*. Members of the Perspiring Collegiates Club joined UNESCO in distributing the magazines.

## Benefit concerts not only encourage philanthropy but play a vital role in Shiduchim as well

For months, Doctors Carmen and Brucestein visited the stricken, trying to revive them with didactic conversation and scintillating wit.

Sitting around the table at the cafeteria, the most anorexic of the intellectuals gathered to discuss their predicament. One prominent pseudo-intellectual was heard to say, "Despite a parochial atmosphere and stultifyingly professionalistic milieu, the gasping signs of the contemplative pseudo-intellectual will be heard over the indulgent mewling of pre-meds and accounting majors." Briefly, cheers rang through the cafeteria.

Another fund raising event, called Char-Aid, will finance book-burnings in Mea Shearim.

The pseudo-intellectual crisis developed gradually. The untimely demise of *Tempo* signaled the first warning of disaster. Then, graduation drastically deteriorated the ranks of the sophisticated. Eventually, the dearth of intellectualism at YU forced uninspired students to ascend to the fifth floor of the library and assume the fetal position there. (Judah asked the prone bodies to be quiet.)