

HAMEVASER

A Student Publication of Traditional Thought and Ideas
Published by the Jewish Studies Divisions of Yeshiva University

Vol. 25 No. 6

April 1987 Nisan 5747

Tension and Dissension



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HAMEVASER

Yeshiva University
500 W. 185 St.
New York, N.Y. 10033

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Permit No. 4638

LETTERS

Bilaam: A Response

To the Editor:

Some notes on Wendy Zierler's article "Bilaam Under Attack" in your Shevat 5747 issue.

Ms. Zierler maintains that "the real message of *parashat Balak* [is] the magnanimity and great mercy of the God of Israel." Inspired by a remark of Ibn Ezra and expanding on him, she points to the parallels between this section and the episode of the spies. In her analysis the story of Balak and Bilaam, and the blessings of Bilaam, reverse the curse precipitated by the behavior of the spies. Her development of this theme is a worthwhile contribution and surely merits further attention. Her insistence that this theme is of paramount importance in the *peshat* reading of *Bamidbar* 22:24 to the exclusion of all others is interesting but debatable.

Several formulations in the article, however, are liable, by reason of their incompleteness or one-sidedness, to vitiate the value of her insights. Let me touch briefly on some of them.

The negative view of Bilaam is not the discovery of *Chazal*. As Ms. Zierler clearly notes, *Bamidbar* 31:8 alludes to Bilaam's role in the Baal Peor incident; several other passages recount his condign demise during the ensuing war against Midian. Nor does *parashat Balak* have anything positive to say about him. He is a mouth for hire with no inhibitions about cursing Israel. Despite God's explicit instruction not to curse the people, "for it is blessed," Bilaam continues to entertain more lavish and obsequious offers until God accedes; as *Chazal* state, "A man is led along the path he wishes to follow." His beast of burden is granted a most extraordinary opportunity to make an ass of him, as he, who purported to know the secrets of heaven and earth, remains oblivious to that which she sees. The sermon by the mount apparently gets the message across: as he repeatedly tells Balak, he has no power to determine his speech, his words are in the Hand of God. Nevertheless, the Torah throughout the narrative carefully avoids calling him a prophet (*navi*), and employs peculiar locutions, in describing God's communications with him: God "happens" to him (*vayikar*); God "places a word in the mouth of Bilaam." [*Rishonim* discuss the possibility of development in Bilaam's status as a prophet; see particularly Ramban.]

Now Ms. Zierler has an impotent point to make here: the text of *parashat Balak* says nothing *explicit* about Bilaam's encouragement of the Moabite women (though a hint may be found in 24:14; see *Sanhedrin* 105). Bible critics may, of course, resort to the doctrine of multiple authorship, but as Ms. Zierler correctly asserts, "for readers who do not follow this theory of the multi-authorship of the Bible the discrepancy between the Numbers text and other texts remains problematic." That the Torah omits to mention in the obvious place, in *parashat Balak*, what it tells us a short time later, should be cause for inquiry. And one obvious answer, to anyone not blinded by biblical criticism, is that the Torah chose not to depict Bilaam as darkly in *parashat Balak* as he is truthfully portrayed elsewhere.

Why? Here Ms. Zierler's thesis may be helpful, if the *major* theme of *parashat Balak* is the blessings of Bilaam, then all we really need to know about him is that he is totally dependent on God, and totally, ridiculously, unable to act a free agent. To emphasize his wickedness beyond this might, indeed, diminish our concentration on the content, and the value, of his blessings.

This significant insight, however, in no way dilutes the negative judgement on Bilaam's personality that emerges from *Torah shebikhav* and *Torah shebeal peh*. It explains, rather, why this universal judgement is presented in different tones, and with varying degrees of intensity, throughout the Torah. I wish the article had stated this more clearly, and without allowing the reference to Geza Vermes to dangle before the reader like an open electrical socket.

So far my comments on the dimension of *peshat*. Some of the author's characterization of *Chazal* is also liable to unfortunate construal. We all know (or should know) that *peshat* and *derash* often treat separate agendas, and deploy differing methods. In the case at hand, there is no doubt that *Chazal* are apt to interpret verses about a personality like Bilaam in the light of our entire knowledge of the man, whereas the literary approach distinguishes carefully between the presentation of Bilaam in different sections. Moreover, *Chazal* adopt the rule *tolin kalkala bemekulal* in order to bring to psychological life the biblical wicked.

Chazal and *Rishonim* may also be concerned with issues in the text that do not have the same, or equal, significance to the biblical reader (or the contemporary one, for that matter): e.g. the question of Gentile prophecy for *Chazal*; the problem of the unworthy prophet for Rambam. Though I have had the benefit of Ms. Zierler's conversation on some of these matters, within the scope of these marginal notes, I can hardly examine all of them in detail: how much of the traditional and midrashic discussion is *peshat*, how much *derash*, what *Chazal* are teaching us in their non-*peshat* dicta etc. But it is precisely because I know that, in the famous words of Rashbam, earlier generations, in their piety, had been concerned with the legal and moral lessons of scripture, leaving room for the "ever new facets of *peshat* that are every day discovered," that I find difficult, and misleading, the notion that *Chazal*, in their zeal to disparage the gentile prophet-magician, "neglect to emphasize the real message of *parashat Balak*."

In our zeal to discover ever new facets of *peshat* and achieve a deeper relation to the "seventy facets of Torah," and in our zeal to conserve, reverently, the knowledge consecrated by the normative tradition, we should all, faculty and student, right, left, centrist alike, heed the Mishna's exhortation: "Wise men! Be careful in your words!" To the extent that we are oblivious to this dictum, we risk impoverishing our insight and undermine its communication.

Shalom Carmy

HAMEVASER

500 West 185 Street
New York, N.Y. 100 33

Published monthly during the academic year by the Student Organization of Yeshiva, James Striar School Student Council, and Isaac Breuer College Student Council. The views of the signed articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of HAMEVASER or Yeshiva University. Editorial policy is determined by a majority vote of the members of the Governing Board. Advertising rates are available upon request. Subscription rate: \$7.50 per year. All material herein copyright Hamevaser 1986

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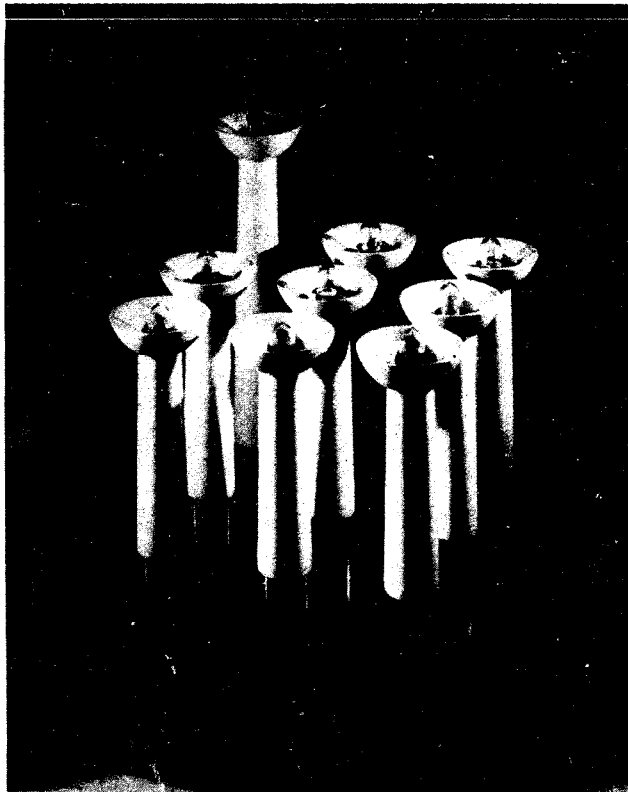
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When caught up in the spirit of a Purim issue, it is unfortunately all too easy to lose sight of how articles might be perceived. The governing board of Hamevaser would like to apologize for any offending articles in our Purim issue.



An electrical menorah on display in Yeshiva University Museum's Nerot Mitzvah exhibition

Hannah and Her Sisters

The Barren Woman in the Bible

By WENDY ZIERLER

*Then how gladly I would hide
from the longing to be once
again*

*oh a boy again, with my life
before me to sit,
leaning on future arms and
reading of Samson,*

*how from his mother first
nothing, then everything was
born.*

*Wasn't a hero inside you
mother?*

*Didn't his imperious choosing
already begin there in you?*

(Rainer Maria Rilke,
"The Sixth Elegy")

Our forebears in *Tanakh* seem to have bequeathed to their children and descendants an extraordinary inheritance. In addition to a theological legacy — a covenant with God — the children inherit a pattern of life experiences to follow. "Like father like son," and "like mother like daughter," mean here that children find themselves in situations that are identical to those confronted by their parents and grandparents. For example, like Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and his twelve sons also experience famine in Canaan, and, with the exception of Yitzchak, journey to Egypt as they seek food. The motif of the *akara*, the barren woman who, after many years and much personal torment, finally gives birth to a great hero in Israel is perhaps the most striking example of all.

The *akara* story most elaborated upon in *Tanakh* is the first one — the account of Sarah's barrenness and Yitzchak's long awaited birth. Within this story we find all the basic elements of a pattern found later with Rivka, Rachel, and in various *Neviim*. Even before Avraham answers God's call to leave his birthplace in Ur Kasdim in *parashat Lekh Lekha* we read, "Sarah was barren; she had no child" (*Bereshit* 11:31). Thus the perpetuation of the nation becomes a struggle that is destined to continue into the next generations. But why does God choose to seal the wombs of Sarah, Rivka and Rachel if He wants to create a nation from Avraham and his sons? And if God ordains that these women should be barren, why cannot the other women, who are fertile, serve to mother the next generation of Jews? Clearly, something about the condition of the *akara* and the personalities of these specific women conduces towards the rearing and grooming of our forefathers.

An examination of the paradigmatic events of Sarah's life helps advance us towards an answer. Sarah, then called Sarai, apparently cannot conceive; time goes on, Avram's anxiety over Sarai's failure to conceive mounts. When God promises Avram a great reward after his participation in the war against the five nations, Avram queries, "Oh Lord, God, what will you give me seeing that I go hence childless, and he that shall be the possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus." God reassures Avram that his own son will be his heir. But Sarah's barrenness persists (*Bereshit* 16:1).

Sarah decides, therefore, to offer Avram her handmaid, Hagar, as a wife so that she will produce an heir for him. According to Rashi, Avram is at first very reluctant but eventually, because a divine voice compels him, agrees to this proposal.

Soon Hagar becomes pregnant and simultaneously swollen with pride and contempt for her mistress, Sarai. In turn, waxes increasingly jealous and intolerant of Hagar.

But Avram remains loyal to Sarai; when she says, "Oust Hagar from this household," Avram complies, despite his concern for the child which she is about to bear him. Hagar eventually returns and gives birth to Yishmael. Finally, Avram has a son. But Yishmael is the wrong son. Sarai, the *akara*, has already been designated as the mother to perpetuate the *berit*.

In the same vision in which God commands Avram to circumcise all the children of his household as a sign of the *berit*, He announces to Avram that his wife will no longer be called Sarai, but Sarah; she will no longer be a barren woman, rather God will give Avraham (name change for him too) "a child also of her." Avraham laughs. "Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old, and shall Sarah that is ninety years old give birth?" God reiterates, "Sarah, your wife, will bear thee a son indeed." Notice that in this second proclamation, God uses the active verb, *yoledet*, whereas the first time Avraham is promised a child "from her" — *venatai mimena lekha ben*. Sarai will be actively transformed into Sarah by giving birth to Yitzchak. The use of the word *yeled* appropriately counters the two previous statements of Sarah's barrenness (*akara, lo yalda*). Moreover, *yoledet* refers to *yelid bayit* — born into the household — a term used three times in this chapter to denote those who must be circumcised as a sign of the *berit*.

The use of building imagery for the birth of a child is inherent in the word *ben* which forms part of the root *banah* (to build); it is present from the beginning of this narrative when Sarai offers Hagar to Avraham and says, "Ulai ibaneh mimena" — perhaps I will have a son (lit. be built upon) by her. Thus, when God announces that Sarah will conceive, it is clear that this child will not merely be an addition to Avraham's family unit, but a vital component in the building of a new nation of believers in God.

Strangely enough, the next chapter finds Avraham entertaining three messenger-angels who have come to inform him that his wife Sarah will bear a child. Hasn't Avraham heard this news already? One might answer that Avraham still needs to be convinced that this is true, that his visions are genuine. But when Avraham laughs in response to the announcement (in chapter 17) and is not rebuked for doubting God, we have good reason to assume that he responds not as a skeptic but as a happy expectant father. Moreover, God states his intention to grant Sarah a child twice, which would seem sufficient to drive home the point. Therefore, we must conclude that the messengers have come to deliver their news to someone else. But whom?

We find the answer in the angels' question: "Where is Sarah your wife?" "She is in the tent," Avraham replies (it was not proper then for a wife to join her husband in greeting such a guest). Although Sarah does not occupy center stage, she listens to the conversation, and the chapter focuses upon her reaction to the news. She too laughs and exclaims, "After I am grown old I shall have pleasure, my lord being old also." Clearly, Avraham and Sarah stand as partners in their reception of the news, their reactions, and in their joy when the prophecy is fulfilled. Yitzchak is born.

Now we can examine the elements of the narrative which repeat in other *akara* stories: 1) In every account there is a beloved wife distinguished by her moral and spiritual excellence and strength of character, who is designated to be the mother of the next leader

of the nation. Sarah proves herself dedicated and magnanimous when she offers her handmaid to Avraham; then she displays her mettle when, threatened by Hagar's reproductive superiority in their contest for Avraham's affections and the role of the mother of the Hebrews, she takes decisive action to eliminate Hagar from the race. Similarly, Rivkah proves herself virtuous and considerate when she draws water for Eliezer from the well; later she exhibits conviction and strength when she engineers Yaakov's usurping of Esav's blessing. A combination of characteristics emerges, traits traditionally identified as essentially female or essentially male, namely the inclination toward both withdrawal and attack, the need to give and also receive. Apparently this is what God deems necessary for the mothers of Israel. 2) In most cases, another woman stands as rival. Sarah's rival is Hagar, Rachel's are Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah. The bond between husband and barren wife is affirmed even though the other wife provides him with children. Instead, love bonds the husband and wife, and a commitment towards an ideological partnership prevails. Avraham expels Hagar, Yaakov lives with Rachel almost exclusively.

3) The husband and wife become acutely aware that their independent power to create life through childbirth is but a shadow, ultimately subordinate to the will of God, the Supreme Creator. Therefore, the husband and/or wife pray to God for a child. Avraham confronts God, saying, "What will you give me since I have no heir?" About Yitzchak it is written "And Yitzchak entreated God before his wife." According to Rashi, Yitzchak prayed together with Rivka, each of them in his or her corner of the room. Evidently, Rachel prays as well, for when she becomes pregnant, we read, "God remembered Rachel and heard her." Thus, the *Avot* and *Imahot* develop a profound awareness of God's role in procreation and the building of the Jewish people.

4) God answers the prayer, turning sadness to joy. A child is born to the deserving parents. 5) The child becomes a great leader, a hero of the people.

This last point is the one that demands investigation, for it seems that God specifically ordains the painful early stages as a preparation for the final, heroic stage. The miraculous manner of the birth seems to prime the child for his role as leader and receiver of God's word.

But an examination of the two other *akara* narratives in *Tanakh* helps expand our understanding even further. First there is the story of Manoach's barren wife and the birth of Shimon (*Shofetim* 13). This account closely resembles the story of Avraham and Sarah with one prominent twist — the wife, although she is never even named, is the main protagonist instead of Manoach. When the angel appears to announce that a child will be born, he appears to Manoach's wife. The angel informs her that this child has been designated a *nezir Elokim* from the womb. She too must become a *nezira* in order to establish the environment most conducive to the child's spiritual development. The wife's persistent inability to give birth has developed within her a keen appreciation of the privilege of parenthood. The angel's message, therefore, compels her to an even sharper awareness of the gravity and awareness of her parental task. Manoach's wife runs to tell her husband what she has heard, and he prays to the Almighty for more

details. The verb used for his prayer is the obscure *vaye'etar*, reminding us of the narratives in *Bereshit* which treat the barrenness theme.

The angel reappears to Manoach's wife in a field (notice how different this is from the story of Sarah who sits in the tent while Avraham entertains his guests). Immediately, she hurries to tell her husband that "that man" has returned. The scene here is strikingly similar to the second announcement of Sarah's impending pregnancy by the three angels. Manoach arrives and the angel essentially repeats to him what had already been told to his wife. "mikol asher yetze migefen lo tokhal." The use here of the verb *tokhal* is ambiguous, understandable either as the third person form meaning that only Manoach's wife must be a *nezira* or as the second person form meaning that Manoach as well is commanded to be a *nezir*. The interchangeability of this verb form emphasizes the idea of partnership in the rearing of Shimon, for the "you" (Manoach) and the "she"

(his wife) are joined in the one verb.

As in the case of Avraham and Sarah, the husband and wife enjoy a marriage in which both participate equally in the acceptance of commitment to God and to the parental task. From the time of Shimon's conception, Manoach and his wife strive to create an environment in which the child God has blessed them with will experience optimal growth. Together, they consecrate through *nezirut* a covenant of sorts with God, echoing the covenant between Avraham and God symbolized by circumcision.

The final *akara* story in *Tanakh*, that of Chana, helps us to further understand the meaning behind this recurrent motif of barrenness and the birth of a hero. Like Sarah and Rachel, Chana has a rival: Penina, who has borne Elkana many children. Elkana affirms that his love for her is worth ten sons, but Chana desperately wants a child. She prays fervently to God, acknowledging His power over creation with her tears and silent *tefila*, swearing that if He will grant her a child she will rear him as a *nazir* (volunteering to do what Manoach and his wife were commanded). God answers her prayer, grants her a child, and she sings a song of thanksgiving which reveals an understanding of why the previous *nezir* experiment, Shimon, ultimately failed. "It is not by strength that man prevails," she sings, but rather by spiritual strength and fortitude. With this spiritual dedication and awareness she succeeds in mothering a great prophet of Israel.

Ultimately, the theme of barrenness in *Tanakh* extends beyond these particular events — the births of *Avot*, heroes, and prophets. The barren women who finally conceive becomes a general symbol of God's power to change desolation to joy for those who dedicate their lives to the perpetuation of His covenant. In *TeHillim* 113:5, the Psalmist praises God: "He sets the childless woman among her household as a happy mother of children." And in the *haftara* of *parashat Noach* (in which we first read that Sarah is an *akara*) we read: "Sing O barren one, thou that didst not hear; break forth into singing and cry out loud . . . My faithful love shall not depart from thee." Thus, the image of the *akara* passes down as an inheritance from generation to generation as a source of hope for the renewal of God's covenant of peace and the redemption of the entire nation.

The Halakhot of Heterodoxy

A Consideration of Heresy

By ELI CLARK

In these times of tension and conflict, of factions moving right or left so often as to require a compass, vituperative accusations of heresy abound. Tragically, however, the issue of heresy itself is rarely addressed. Herewith, then, a modest attempt at setting forth the barest skeleton, the basic guidelines to heresy.

In his Code (*Hil. Teshuva*, Chap. 3), Maimonides distinguishes between four categories: *minim* (heretics), *apikorosin* (Epicureans/skeptics), *koferim* (deniers of Torah), and *meshumadim* (apostates). He begins:

Five are called *minim*: 1) he who says that there is no God and the world has no ruler; 2) he who says that there is a ruling power but it is rested in two or more; 3) he who says there is one ruler but that He is body and has form; 4) he who denies that He alone is the prime mover . . . 5) he who worships anything besides Him, as a mediator between man and the Lord of the Universe.

According to this formulation, the title *min* can be applied only to the atheist and one who denies the Jewish concept of God.

No doubt many will find Maimonides' standards demanding. But in the Talmud (*Aboda Zara* 26b) two definitions emerge: according to the first, one who eats carrion meat solely to provoke is a *min*; according to the second, one who actually worships idols. While the former opinion associates the *min* with a contempt for Halakha, the majority of commentators identify the *min* with more fundamental heresies. For example, Rashi (loc. cit.) defines *minim* as attendants (or students) of idolatry, be they gentile or Jewish. Similarly, Ephraim Urbach understands the Amoraic usage of the word *min* to refer to Christian and Gnostic sects (*Chazal: Pirkei Emunot veDeot*, p. 97).

Unfortunately, Maimonides himself seems to identify the *min* in accordance with the minority opinion in the Talmud. In *Hil. Gezela veAveda* (11:3), he writes: "But one who eats carrion meat solely to provoke is a *min*." Similarly, in *Hil. Rotzeach* (4:15): "Even one who eats carrion meat or who wears *shatez* solely to provoke is a *min*."

This apparent contradiction might be resolved by examining Maimonides' commentary on the Mishna (*Chullin* 1:2):

Minim . . . are people whose folly has dulled their reason, whose passions have darkened their souls; and [they] dispute the Torah and the prophets out of foolishness and contradict the prophets on that which they have no knowledge; and [they] abandon the mitzvot out of contempt.

Perhaps Maimonides views the transgression of sins with deliberate intent to provoke as manifestations of the heresies he lists in *Hil. Teshuva* which indicate *minim*.

Maimonides' second category, that of *apikoros*, is even less clearly defined. The term *apikoros* apparently derived from the Greek, Epicurus, a popular Greek philosopher whose school of thought was widely accepted in Hellenist cultures (see Stanley M. Wagner's "The Apikoros — Epicurean, Atheist or Scoffer," *Gesher* IX). In time, however, *apikoros* took on an abundance of associations and halakhic definitions. Maimonides writes:

Three are called *apikorosin*: 1) he who denies the reality of prophecy and maintains that there is no knowledge which emanates from the Creator to the hearts of man; 2) he who denies the prophecy of Moses; 3) he who asserts that the Creator has no cognizance of the deeds of man. . . .

Here, *apikoros* is one who calls into question the relationship of God to man, both in its ancient manifestation — prophecy — and its contemporary one — divine providence.

Once again the formulation of Maimonides diverges from the Talmud, which itself is ambiguous. In *Sanhedrin* (99b), ten separate definitions appear: 1) one who insults a neighbor; 2) one who insults his neighbor in the presence of a scholar; 3) one who gibes: "Of what use are the Rabbis to us? For their own benefit they read [the Scripture], and for their benefit they study!"; 4) one who takes credit for a statement instead of quoting in the name of his teacher; 5) one who says: "Of what use are the Rabbis to us? They have never permitted us the raven nor forbidden us the dove (i.e. never innovated upon the written word of Scripture)"; 6) one who speaks irreverently to the rabbi; 7) one who renders an opinion without consulting his teacher; 8) one who calls his teacher by

authority and not in the name of God and one who denies the advent of Messiah. It should be noted that many of these are also listed by Maimonides as people who have no share in the World to Come. But Maimonides seems to impose a hierarchy which assigns a lesser severity to these transgressions.

Abraham b. Moses di Boton, the author



Epicurus

of the commentary, *Lechem Mishna*, tries to resolve the vast number of definitions by explaining that his contemporaries applied the term to people "who are not truly *apikorosin*, but whose halakhic status approaches that of *apikoros* because their behavior is a preface to *apikorosut*." Such a program no doubt vastly increased the ranks of both

In his definition of *kofer*, Maimonides equates denial of the unity of the written text with denial of the unity of Oral and Written Law (trusting Wellhausen into the company of Zadokkim and Boethusim). Further, such denial is no better (or worse) than declaring the Torah not relevant in the modern age (claims associated with Jesus and other Reformers).

Much of this definition derives from the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 99a), which discusses the verse: "Because he hath scorned the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off (Numbers 15:31)." Some understand the verse to refer to one who denies that the Torah is divine, others say it refers to the *apikoros*. A third opinion identifies the subject of the verse as one who renders an interpretation of the Torah not according to Halakha. Other interpretations render the verse an admonition: it refers to one who studies the Torah but does not teach it, one who pays no heed to the Mishna, or one who can engage in the study of Torah but fails to do so.

Maimonides' final category, *meshumad*, or apostate, relates to heretical practice rather than thought. Of these, there are two kinds: the apostate with respect to one precept

is a person who commits the transgression habitually and has become notorious for it. An apostate with respect to the whole Torah is one, for example, who at a time of religious persecution becomes converted to the idolator's religion.

While every manuscript version reports the word *meshumad*, most printed texts of the Code use the term *mumar*. Not coincidentally, this textual error (or emendation) extends to the Talmud as well. In *Sabbath* 69a, the apostate is excluded from the privilege of bringing a sacrifice. In *Sabbath* 87a, "all of Israel" are described as apostates during the sin of the Golden Calf. In both places, the common printed texts record the word *mumar*, where the corrected ones have *meshumad*.

The root of the word *meshumad* is *shemad*, or religious persecution. The connotation of *meshumad* then, as Maimonides explicitly states, is forced apostasy, imposed by an imperious, foreign religion. Clearly, gentile censors substituted the word *mumar*, which indicates a volitional change of religion.

It seems more than a trifle ironic to find such a dramatic reminder of gentile domination — hostile tampering — in a halakhic discussion of internal religious rebellion. Perhaps we should draw a lesson: Those who are quick to assume the task of condemning the heresies of their neighbors should remember that we Jews are a subjugated nation. Heresy is not a symptom of the Diaspora; but here we live in the midst of *somei Yisrael* who anxiously await opportunities to condemn *Am Hashem veTorato*. We dare not allow interecine strife to weaken us in our apocalyptic battle: every effort must be directed towards that victory which spells restoration of the Jews — all the Jews — to a rebuilt Zion.

While Maimonides associates the min with a contempt for Halakha, the majority of commentators identify the min with more fundamental heresies

name; 9) one who is a plagiarist; 10) one who derides the word of the Sages.

It would seem that the term *apikoros* was applied by the *Amoraim* to a variety of skeptics and scoffers (a Jewish custom prevalent even today). One explanation for this is that the Sages adopted the term *apikoros* because of its similarity to the word *hefker*, whose root, p.k.r., implies scorn and derision. Menachem b. Solomon (Meiri), for example, reflects this understanding. In his commentary on the Talmud, Meiri expands the concept to include: one who habitually violates even one precept, one who treats the festivals with contempt and desecrates the sacred, one who causes the multitude to sin — even in light matters, one who separates himself from the community, those who transgress in a high-handed manner in public in a scoffing manner, those who terrorize the multitude in the interest of power and

alleged and bona fide *apikorosin*.

The third category mentioned by Maimonides is *koferim*, deniers of Torah:

he who says that the Torah is not of divine origin — even if he says that one verse or one word was said by Moses on his own — is a denier of Torah; likewise he who denies its interpretation, that is the Oral Law, and repudiates its reporters, as Zadok and Boethus did; he who says that the Creator changed one commandment for another and that His Torah, although of divine origin, is now obsolete, as the Moslems and Nazarenes assert.

Talking To or Shouting Down

Rav Kook's Theological Etiquette

By HOWIE JACHTER

What attitude should we adopt toward Orthodox Jews with whom we disagree ideologically? Is it proper for Orthodox rabbis to cooperate with their non-Orthodox colleagues in certain matters, and how should we relate to our non-religious brethren? Should Israel relinquish territory in exchange for promises of peace? Three passages from Rav Kook's letters, while not necessarily providing definitive solutions, will demonstrate the proper approach to issues such as these.

Rav Kook combined his mastery of philosophy and *pesak* with keen insight into human nature: his correspondence allows us to glimpse the manner in which that insight enabled him to relate effectively to a wide variety of people. His famous letter to the Bezalel Art Academy (letter 158) serves as an exemplar of the proper method of sensitizing non-religious people to the values of Halakha. In a particularly significant passage (p. 205 in the first volume of his letters) he asserts that one should avoid concentrating on one value to the exclusion of all others, citing in support of this principle King Solomon's caution against being overly righteous (*Kohelet* 7:16). An exclusive focus on even a crucial value such as righteousness will invariably lead to detrimental results, he claims.

Too often people err by looking at only one aspect of a complex problem. "Nightline", for instance, once featured a debate between an environmentalist and an industrialist on whether Antarctica should be exploited for the benefit of mankind. The environmentalist felt that no legitimate need exists important enough to condone human interference with Antarctica's delicate ecosystem, while the industrialist insisted that if necessary, Antarctica should be exploited to the fullest degree regardless of any deleterious impact on its natural environment. Both outlooks are flawed because they consider only one value. One taking a prudent and sound approach to such an issue would deal with all aspects of the problem before deciding on a plan of action.

Similarly, many Peace Now activists argue for peace at any cost, and many Gush Emunim supporters are concerned solely with maintaining the territorial integrity of the land of Israel. A reasonable approach to this issue would reject both extremes; focusing solely on one value in this matter could lead. God forbid, to disaster.

Likewise, the question of whether Orthodox rabbis should cooperate with non-Orthodox rabbis should be approached from such a broad-minded perspective. It is undoubtedly important that we avoid conferring legitimacy upon the Reform and Conservative movements, but this is not the sole consideration in the matter. We must remember that millions of Jews recognize these non-Orthodox Rabbis as communal leaders. More importantly, perhaps we should cooperate with non-Orthodox rabbis in an attempt to eliminate the problems of widespread *manzeirat* and questionable conversions. While the solution to this dilemma is open to debate, it is clear that one should not offer a solution without carefully considering all aspects of the issue.

Throughout the generations, Jews have suffered greatly when they have been at times intolerant and disrespectful of one another. The Talmud (*Yevamot* 62b) relates that all of Rabbi Akiva's students died within a short period of time because they failed to treat each other respectfully. Furthermore, we are

taught (*Yoma* 9b) that the Second Temple was destroyed as a punishment for the sin of *sinat chinam* -- hatred of one's fellow man for no valid reason. The Jews were punished, the Talmud records, despite the fact that

tolerance that the right-wing Orthodox community sometimes displays towards the Centrist Orthodox community and vice versa. Some people in both communities actually believe that they possess a monopoly on *Daat*

patriotic people among those who oppose the very existence of the Zionist movement. It is a bad omen for a party if it thinks that it alone embodies the source of life, wisdom and righteousness and that all others are of no consequence."

Few people, if any, were as dedicated to the Zionist movement as Rav Kook. Yet, despite his feeling that Zionism marks the dawn of the Messianic era, he readily acknowledged that "there are sincere and patriotic people among those who oppose the very existence of the Zionist movement." His attitude is evidence that one can firmly believe in and espouse his own views and still be tolerant of those with whom he disagrees. Indeed it is exceedingly disturbing to find Torah scholars and yeshiva students who disparage believing and observant Jews whose views do not coincide with their own. This sort of attitude is destructive to the Jewish community and should be eliminated.

Lastly, the tone of our discussions with those with whom we disagree should be respectful as well as assertive. Rav Kook's letter to a certain Dr. Rupin demonstrates how to tactfully express disappointment with failure to comply with Halakha. Rav Kook writes (Letter 296):

Exalted and honored sir, Dr. Rupin, may his light shine. I approach you to speak a word from the depths of my trembling heart, and I hope that in your best spirit you will understand my meaning and quickly calm my spirit which storms within me without rest, and remove that blemish which causes this storm in my inner spirit.

Shocking news has reached my ear. In Herzl Forest people desecrate the Sabbath in public, and the Jewish guard rides his horse on the Sabbath.

Honorable sir, this fact rightly makes the heart of every man in Israel for whom the sense of national honor has not been extinguished from his heart, cry out. This forest, the collective possession of the Jewish nation and a memorial consecrated to the man, who with his spirit raised the national banner -- it is impossible for us to tolerate and suffer desecration of the Holy name, before all of Israel, on public property. Please sir, quickly remove this horrible blemish, and banish shame from God's portion.

In exalted honor and blessing from Zion.

Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook

Rav Kook succeeded in conveying his tremendous anguish without offending Dr. Rupin. This is the way we must conduct ourselves with those whom we have disagreements. We must learn to argue civilly whatever the circumstances are, be it in the Knesset, the office of the Jewish Agency, or in the YU cafeteria. We should aspire to the day when Jews will interact in a respectful, tolerant, and broad-minded manner. This is precisely how Rav Kook conducted himself and we should learn from his shining example.



Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

they studied Torah regularly, scrupulously adhered to the mitzvot, and engaged in acts of kindness. The Netziv, in a celebrated passage of his introduction to the book of Genesis, explains that the Jews of that era regarded any who disagreed with their Torah

Torah and/or good sense.

Those people would do well to explore one of Rav Kook's most remarkable letters (letter 18), in which he comments on the famous controversy generated by the British offer of Uganda as a homeland for the Jewish people

An exclusive focus on righteousness will invariably lead to detrimental results

viewpoints as heretics.

Unfortunately, the sin of *sinat chinam* persists in our generation. We Orthodox Jews are too often intolerant of views that differ from our own. Indeed, we are certainly not obligated to recognize the legitimacy of a philosophy which clearly constitutes heresy (see Letters 79 and 555 in which Rav Kook discusses the limits of tolerance). But there is absolutely no justification for the in-

ple. Rav Kook writes (p. 17 of Tzvi Feldman's translation, the message is even more powerful in the original):

I will not get involved in the arguments between the "Zionists of Zion" and the "Ugandans." There may definitely be found in both parties sincere and patriotic people. Similarly, there are sincere and

FOCUS: Secularism

Kiruv Merachok

Long Distance Outreach

By ERICA SCHOONMAKER
My experiences as teacher/psychologist/chaplain/mother/friend/actress/garbage man as an advisor on Counterpoint this past summer have forced me to ask many critical questions about *kiruv*, particularly long-distance *kiruv*. For thirteen years, YU's Division of Youth Services and Mount Scopus College in Melbourne, Australia have recruited ten to fifteen American advisors for a summer (an Australian winter) of outreach. Despite the personal satisfaction I received from the program, *kiruv* work with a time limit of four nine-day seminars and a plane ticket from Australia to the United States makes one

their letters, trying to recreate the muddy walkways between our pea-soup green barracks and the dining hall and all that took place between those walls.

I still hope you can come back next year, back to Australia. I know you said you would if you could, I'm just reminding you that we would all really love it if you would, but only if you can.

Michael

Thinking about you Michael, makes me laugh. You thought it was a commandment to wear sneakers on fast days, and then you learned how the laws had developed. You

We would have been happy had you only taken and not given back, but sometimes you didn't even take. For all the preparation, the sourcebooks, the skits and the D&Ms (deep and meaningful discussions) until the wee hours you'd tell us that you got nothing out of the program. Didn't you think that hurt us? And those of you who did take in some cases, took so much, did you say thank-you?

It was difficult walking into a room knowing that many of you wanted to learn and many of you wanted to run away and hide. For those of you who thought about issues, I'm sorry we're not around to help you resolve them. For those of you who just didn't care, I'm sorry we're not there to show

Fate hasn't presented you with the best of circumstances, Karen. Your parents stuck you and your brothers in the midst of a horrid divorce settlement, and you need to find and develop confidence in yourself. You see religion as a different lifestyle, one of togetherness and family. But how will you learn? Where will your support group come from in Perth where meat has to be flown from Melbourne every few months for the few families who keep kosher?

And who can you talk to when life's getting you down? I spent hours with you, but that's never enough time or security. I wondered if it was fair to get emotionally involved at all. But you didn't give me much of a choice. You needed me. I was there. We talked. We write. And I may never see you again. I kind of wish you wouldn't tell me I'm your friend. What kind of friend listens, sympathizes, and walks away?

It took me about four days to get over Counterpoint emotionally, but I think I have recovered. Thank you so much for coming to Perth. I and many others really appreciate it.

Ronit



question the success and sincerity of one's influence.

Many of the difficulties with long-distance outreach are endemic to all *kiruv* work. It would be inaccurate therefore to compartmentalize issues as relating to *kiruv* work done across four hundred miles, six thousand miles, etc. The fact that long-distance for some relationships is a twenty minute car ride to Riverdale and to others is a twenty-five hour flight to Melbourne proves that distance is not always a factor in determining the impact of a *kiruv* program.

Five areas seem most touched by the problem of distance: 1) Given the time limit and the distant location, the advisor must give of himself intensely without necessarily experiencing the satisfaction of teaching or even receiving a meaningful response from the participants. Worse, prolonged physical and mental exhaustion prevent the advisor from functioning to his full capacity. 2) Those students who do gain from seminars intellectually are not always left with an adequate means of following through. 3) As if in the middle of a battlefield, the advisor is assaulted by thousands of questions. The opportunity to answer questions satisfactorily is restricted by time and one's ability to write meaningful letters. 4) There were moments, and they were not few, that the youngsters needed emotional guidance. This brought many frustrations to the fore. No secure relationship can be developed in nine days, which makes any emotional guidance either unfair from the point of friendship or inaccurate from the point of understanding. 5) Even if the advisor makes a conscious decision to emotionally distance himself, the participants may not have made that choice. Their temporary attachment is very strong, however, and tremendous resentment often follows the lack of mutuality.

It is easy to dissect the issues with microscopic concern for details. Yet, analytical criticism in an area that precludes subjectivity misses the human element that serves as the axis for sincere outreach. It is not a science. Therefore, I have chosen to illustrate rather than to describe. The following responses are imaginary and for the benefit of the reader. But they answer actual letters that I have received from a few of the kids whom I still write to. I read through

learned that you make a *berakha* on food before and after you eat, and by the end of the second seminar, you and six others had finished the sixth *perek* of *Mishna Berakhot* with me. Every night at 11:30 you'd pile in and drop on the floor and slowly recite the words in Hebrew and translate and understand the concepts. At mealtimes our little *shitur* would sit together, and you would identify those foods on your plates which are one of the *shiva minim* and in what order they were to be blessed. Have you figured out yet what *berakha* to make on vegemite?

Michael, I know I told you I'd come back if I could, but I can't right now. Graduate school approaches, and I have to continue my learning if I'm going to continue teaching. And yet I'm thinking that whatever I teach you about Judaism increases your knowledge a hundredfold and that I have an undeniable responsibility to you.

Has your inquisitiveness about Judaism taken a backseat to your schoolwork? If you should want to learn more, where would you go? Do you feel that we only showed you the surface of something you don't have the tools to unearth yourself? I sometimes wonder about this when I say *berakhot* and remember you and Karen, and David and Ronit, and Ari.

Then I remind myself that not every kid was like you, Michael. I still have nightmares about the kids who'd steal all the lightbulbs from the session rooms (how was I supposed to know that "session" in Australian slang meant "to smoke pot"? No wonder you kids were excited when we announced them) or the night that what's-his-name kicked a hole through the wall.

It wasn't easy staying up till four almost every night/morning asking you to go to sleep and waking up at seven begging you to get up. You used to wait until we went to sleep to sneak into each other's bunks. Then you found out the good advisors never go to sleep. The bags under my eyes were so big they could have held groceries. Didn't you see that we were always tired? Did you ever feel a little sorry?

I sometimes wonder if you thought we had feelings. No matter what happened behind the scenes we'd walk into the dining room plastered with smiles. We wanted to deposit in your heads everything we'd ever learned.

you how to care.

I questioned God for the first time yesterday. There are so many bad people in the world, murderers, etc. . . .

Sharon

It took you a while to realize that, Sharon, and I guess it came clearest although hardest through personal suffering. We had discussed it more than once in daily *tefilah*, but the question you'd ask me most frequently was if you could French braid my hair when you popped into my room early mornings in your pink thermals. I'm glad you wrote me and tried to straighten out some of your feelings, but inadequacy sweeps over me. I can't really answer the question of theodicy, and hugs can't be postmarked.

You thought that Judaism was full of answers. You rejected it because I emphasized that religion is full of questions. And then I wonder if you're asking me out of sincere curiosity or because you know that this is the appropriate question to ask at times of suffering. My answer will depend on the intent of your question.

Every morning in *tefilah* and sessions I would entertain your questions. What are miracles? Why don't we have them now? Does God really hear me? Why did God create the world anyway? Intellectual honesty required me to present and reject various arguments knowing full well that I could have served a "sugar pill" that was easily digestible. Did I do the right thing? Could you assimilate the product of thoughts that have taken me years to formulate? Dishing out instant responses sometimes made me feel philosophically naked before you when you didn't even understand. My telling you exempted you from embarking on your own inquiry.

It takes a lot of stationary to respond to your questions when perhaps all that's really asked for is a simple affectionate gesture. I'm not really sure what you need unless I'm standing in front of you.

It's the future that scares me. Will it change? Will my life be a repeat of my parents' those are the things I so much don't want . . .

Karen

Ronit, you were probably the most serious of all our participants. You asked for all the sourcebooks when we left and even applied to Stern. You could be called the "Counterpoint Success Story." And even you had to recover from the seminar. Every year new advisors would pass through Perth and you would imbibe the knowledge and spit back the friendship, knowing that a new crew would replace this one in nine months. You didn't resent us for it, but so many of the others did.

The real effect of the program could only be measured long after we were gone. Even five weeks after we left you wrote us repeating the lines of *Safam* songs, but that wears off and we wait to see if resentment develops. Some of us stop writing. Some of us stop writing. Some of us ask you how we could have deceived you, masking Judaism in friendship? Did we? I tried to remain distant; not all of you perceived that. Was it my fault?

Looking back and looking in, I have tried to capture an experience in its most negative aspects to surface the problems inherent in long-distance outreach. Counterpoint leaves indelible memories of laughing, and late night tea, and guitar playing. Sitting silently, observing the thinking and changing of adolescents is second only to being one with a youngster's struggle to find himself and his heritage. Even in its most difficult moments, Counterpoint was always a learning experience — both frustrating and rewarding, and although I can't return this year, I intend to do it again.

Why? I try to think of possible alternatives to Counterpoint and my mind draws a blank. Not every kid was a Sharon, a Karen, or a Michael, but every kid learned something about his religion and himself. *Hazorim bedimaberina yiktzoru* — the seeds we planted, even if they were not likely to be sown, might one day flower. Some young woman might think twice about intermarrying. This Pesach one of the biggest troublemakers might ask his parents to buy a box of matzah. Those are the stories we hear about much later. A college student shows up in Melbourne's Kollel one day to

cont. on p. 11

Give a Little, Get a Little

Aguna: The Continuing Crisis

By LARRY YUDELSON

When civil marriage and divorce are introduced in Israel in a decade, don't be surprised. It won't be the result of a giant campaign by the Reform movement either, but the product of the rabbinate's quiet neglect of *agunot*, women whose husbands refuse to divorce them.

A point we should remember: in Israel, the rabbinate is established at the sufferance of the non-religious majority. Since the time of Ben Gurion, it has been a worthwhile compromise, preserving Jewish unity, saving coalitions, and satisfying the traditional desires of many "non-religious" Israelis.

But all compromises have to be bought. In this case, Israel's Jews (Christians and Moslems have their own courts) pay by abiding by divorce laws which, to a secular, twentieth century sensibility, are inherently inequitable. While, a thousand years ago, Rabbeinu Gershom decreed that a woman could not be divorced against her will, it is still the man who must give the divorce, and it is the woman who bears the costs of an extra-marital relationship.

Were this to remain theory, it would have little consequence. But the increasing number of "victims" of the system may become the means to its destruction. Quite simply, every *aguna* is a timebomb ticking away next to Heikhal Shlomo.

One such *aguna* is my American friend — call her Rachel — who, after a year of being beaten by her Israeli husband, couldn't take it anymore. She thought he would stop after she had a baby, and he did. For three days. She took her daughter, smuggled her through the airport (her husband had torn up the baby's passport) and has been living in the U.S. for the past two years.

This sounds extreme on her part. If she's being beaten, why doesn't she go to the *beit din*? After all, they lived on a religious *moshav*. Wouldn't the *beit din* intervene and tell the husband that Halakha forbids wife-beating, and that he better clean up his act?

Rachel had little reason to believe that; battered women have not been the subject of many of the rabbinate's public statements.

In fact, if she had asked, she might have found things worse than she thought. Had she, for example, gone before the Jerusalem *beit din*, claiming to have been repeatedly beaten, even bringing hospital records to prove it, Rabbi Ezra Basri, head of the court, would have been extremely reluctant to compel her husband to give her a *get*. (As for sending the husband to prison until he cleans up his act, no one would even think of asking a *beit din* for that.)

Rabbi Basri recently told a Jerusalem conference on Women and Judaism that he does not feel wife-beating is sufficient cause to force a divorce. What the couple need, he said, is education as to what marriage is all about.

Now, in the U.S., one can understand the inaction of a *beit din* in such a case (though not excuse it — more on the RCA later). But in Israel, the *beit din* can throw the recalcitrant husband in jail until he gives his wife a divorce.

How often does the rabbinate take advantage of this privilege to back up Halakha with the long arm of the law? Thirty times since 1953, according to Na'amat Women, the women's organization of the Histadrut, which is active in women's issues. By comparison, from 1980 to 1985, according to Na'amat, the rabbinate allowed a man to remarry without a *get* one hundred times.

Some were cases where the woman was insane or ill, where the man in the situation could not grant a *get*. But one suspects an inequity here.

The rabbinate claims that long term *aguna* cases are rare, though they will not issue figures or comment on those of Na'amat. Nor are they anxious for accurate statistics to appear — when one organization began looking through public files with an eye towards compiling data on the *aguna* situation, the rabbinate ordered the files closed.

But even if the two or three anecdotes that were printed in reports of the conference were the only cases, what is the excuse? When a woman runs away from repeated beatings, why should it take twenty-three years to get a divorce? Why should a husband's declaration that "I love her" send a woman back for more beatings in the name of *shalom bayit*?

Shalom bayit is an important matter. How much energy — and pain — should be invested in a bad marriage before giving up? One Jewish position on this question is clear: Divorce is prohibited except in cases of adultery.

But the Halakha does not follow Beit Shammai, and Israel is not Ireland. A Jewish marriage is not the permanent commitment of a Catholic marriage. The Rambam held that if a woman finds her husband repulsive, the *beit din* forces him to give her a *get*. "She is not a slave that she should be forced to have intercourse with one that is repulsive to her." Other *Rishonim* demand that she substantiate her repulsion. One would think hospital records should suffice. My point here is not to fully analyze the halakhot of *gettin*, but to point out that while the altar

procedures, as provided for by Halakha, there is little doubt that Halakha is doomed as Israel's sole marriage law. In Israel, the expatriate YU rabbis are working on it. But will they succeed in time? Certainly it would help if, the next time the Chief Rabbis make their pilgrimage to YU, students actively protest against the degradation of Halakha taking place under the Rabbis' auspices. If the rabbinate realizes that their American supporters have had enough, maybe they'll realize the status quo can't last forever.

But if the Israeli rabbinate is anything like the Rabbinical Council of America on these issues, I wouldn't be optimistic. Here, the rules of the games are different. No one expects the RCA to imprison, or even rough up, recalcitrant husbands. But one does expect them to follow up on their promise to release a pre-nuptial agreement which could, maybe, solve some problems in marriages not yet contracted.

The criteria for determining that a Jewish marriage has irredeemably failed and a *beit din* should take action are clearer in America. If the civil divorce has come through, it's all over. Unfortunately, by then there's nothing a *beit din* can do to procure a *get*, barring the desire of the husband (or the wife) to remarry in a religious ceremony.

The most widely enacted solution to the problem is the Conservative *ketuba*, in which the couple agrees to the (Rabbinic Assembly) *beit din*'s jurisdiction and its right to impose fines on a spouse who does not accede to its decision. Despite Orthodox misgivings as to its legality (in the 1950's a YU-published booklet criticized the *ketuba* on both halakhic and legal grounds), in the 1983 case of Avitzur vs. Avitzur, the New York Court of Ap-

peals affirmed the legality of the *ketuba* by a vote of four to three.

Since then, a Brooklyn court has jailed a man for contempt of court after he was ordered by a *beit din* and a secular court to give his wife a *get*. And this past month, the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court ruled that an agreement to trade a *get* for money is subject to court review and possible invalidation as against public policy. The result may be that withholding a *get* to extort a better divorce settlement will no longer be possible in New York.

But any attempts to involve the state in supporting the *beit din*'s order to grant a *get* tread the narrow line of separation of church and state; other jurisdictions have rejected the Avitzur decision. At some point the issue will no doubt make its way to the Supreme Court.

Back in 1984, New York State passed a law composed by Agudath Israel's Commit-

tee on Law and Public Affairs which requires that a husband filing for civil divorce give his wife a *get*. The law certainly will not help when a woman files for divorce and her husband won't give a *get*; it is less certain, but nonetheless highly likely, that the law will fail the first time it faces a constitutional challenge in court.

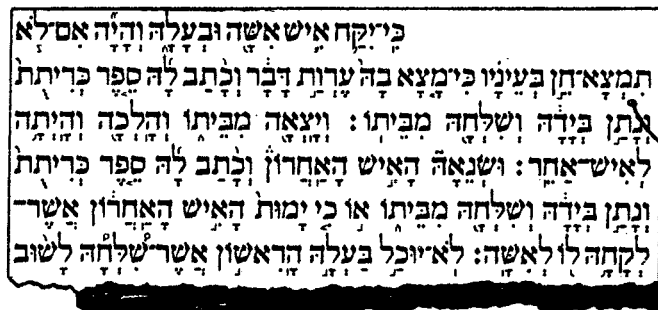
Around the same time the *get* law was being pushed through the New York State legislature, a number of Orthodox pre-nuptial agreements intended to force a divorced couple to give and receive a *get* were being written. While they rely on the general principles affirmed by the Avitzur decision — that the state can constitutionally enforce a contract involving a *beit din* — they all circumvent to varying degrees the legal and halakhic problems of the Conservative *ketuba*.

In brief, the couple agree to submit themselves to financial penalties in the event of refusing to give or receive a *get* after a civil divorce has taken effect. The details vary among the different proposals.

In December of 1983, the RCA released one such proposal. The following June, the RCA asked its members to stop using it "until further notice." (Nonetheless, some rabbis have couples sign the documents.) At the time, Rabbi Binyamin Walfish, executive director of the RCA, told the *Long Island Jewish World* that a new, improved version might be released within a year.

In fact, there's been no apparent progress. RCA president Rabbi Milton Polin, warning that "certain things need to be quiet until they're ready to be revealed," would not say what, if any, efforts are being made.

When questioned, Rabbi Walfish explained that he could not guarantee that any of the



How much does a Jewish divorce have to cost?

may weep at divorce, the Jewish concept of marriage accepts it.

Of course, halakhic opinion on this issue is not unanimous. Inaction is safe and easy, prime virtues in any bureaucracy. And perhaps they don't understand that Rachel would rather try to scrape by on her own than be battered by her husband. But while now the rabbinate can shirk its responsibility, the situation may not last forever.

The situation is rather analogous to that of drunk driving in America. Decades of casualties created a constituency in the millions whose lives were ruined by drunk drivers — and the laws were changed. In Israel, each year brings more and more *agunot*. This decade has seen a burgeoning of grass-root citizen activist groups, in large part inspired by the American empowerment movements of the seventies and financed by young American philanthropists through the New Israel Fund.

Unless action is taken to liberalize divorce

agreements would hold up in court or in Halakha. He didn't want to recommend one. It was analogous, he said, to saying that not smoking would prevent cancer.

Again, how long will this go on? One organization, Getting Equitable Treatment (GET), has been applying community pressure to husbands who won't give a *get* to their civilly divorced wives. GET finds that picketing a man's business will sometimes help him realize that he wants to give his wife a *get*. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein recently took up GET's call for synagogues to deny all honors to recalcitrant husbands.

These actions are fine as far as they go, but there are real solutions out there. Precedents exist — in extreme circumstances — for annulling marriages. Perhaps by rattling their chains at RCA conventions, GET could convince the rabbinate that the situation warrants drastic solutions.

Back in 1984, New York State passed a law composed by Agudath Israel's Commit-

Johannesburg to Jerusalem

Apartheid on the West Bank?

By JOSHUA SHOSHAN

Recently, the press reported an American request that Israel sever her military ties to South Africa. Curiously, the relationship between the two countries is rarely addressed by Jewish analysts, almost never scrutinized. This myopia permits the evasion of serious questions regarding the similarities between the Zionist homeland and the birthplace of apartheid.

Since 1948, Israel and South Africa, alienated from both the Free and Communist powers, have formed a significant strategic alliance. They have granted one another in-

ternational recognition and maintain vast economic and military ties. In 1980, for example, South African exports to Israel totalled \$117 million and Israeli exports to South Africa totalled \$80 million. Concerning the military alliance between the two countries, James Adams writes in his book, *The Unnatural Alliance*:

South Africa's military strategy has been developed with the help of Israeli officers, her armed forces are equipped by Israel and their counter-insurgency tactics have evolved almost entirely as a result of lessons learned by the Israelis in their fight against the Palestine Liberation Organization.

During the 1967 war, the South Africans gave the Israelis substantial military aid; Israel, in turn, has disregarded the arms embargo declared by the United Nations in 1963, helping South Africa supply her arm-

ed forces, particularly during the past thirty years.

That Israel and South Africa have become allies is a curious historical phenomenon. The strength gathered by "Afrikaner racist Nationalism" from the 1920's through 1948 paralleled the growth of anti-Semitic movements in Western Europe during the same period. Until 1948, anti-Jewish legislation was enforced in South Africa — to the extent of a ban on Jewish immigration — even after the publicization of Nazi atrocities.

The major change in South Africa's attitude toward the Jews occurred when the state

Africa to adopt restrictive policies.

However, one must also examine the ideological considerations that have caused Israel and South Africa to subjugate a native (or portions of the native) population. The Nationalist party in South Africa, after gaining control of the South African government in 1948, instituted a legal system designed to preserve the white population's dominance. They adopted the policy of apartheid, or separate development, wherein the various South African races were to develop as separate peoples with the white population retaining the governmental control. Although this racial domination is indeed part of the Dutch Afrikaner's "Christian morality," the goal of South African policy is considered the retention of South Africa's wealth in white hands.

The Zionists, whose movement began in Western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, felt that the only method of saving the Jewish people from eventual destruction was the rebuilding of a Jewish state in the land that was once the sovereign Jewish country — Palestine. Jewish settlement in Palestine began in the 1800's, culminating with the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. The Arab world responded to this "intrusion" by attacking on all fronts. Since 1948, Israel has fought for her survival in four bloody wars. Although today the Arab world conveniently blames the Middle East crisis on Israel's "occupation of Arab territories," it is historical fact that the Arab world seeks to put all of Palestine under its control. As the Arab world is, by its own admission, a mortal enemy of Israel, Israel has been forced to control the Arab population within her own territory.

Critics of Zionism and apartheid are correct when they point out that both Israel and South Africa feel a necessity for a certain ethnic exclusivity within their territories. However, there is a profound difference between Israeli and South African ideology — a difference that anti-Jewish and anti-South African commentators choose not to notice.

At the core of Zionism is the belief that Jewish survival is threatened not only culturally and religiously, but physically. As a result, Israel makes no apologies for her desire to remain a Jewish state. She has no alternative, if she is to achieve the simple Zionist goal of self-preservation.

On the other hand, the white community of South Africa is not threatened with genocide. If non-whites are granted political equality in South Africa the present white government would certainly cease to exist, but the white South Africans could either persevere under a predominantly black government or move to other Western countries. Thus the subjective moral bases for South African and Israeli policies differ radically. Israel can justify her treatment of the Arab population as an act of self-defense, whereas South Africa cannot do the same regarding apartheid.

Critics of Israel and South Africa point to similar discriminatory policies that both countries practice. Let us put a few of these similarities into perspective.

The Madison Area Committee on Southern Africa's publication, "Israel and Southern Africa," delineates several policy likenesses between the two countries. The pamphlet emphasizes the "second class citizenship status" of the native populations in Israel and South Africa, and the "tools of repression"

that both countries employ.

Concerning second class citizenship, Israel, like South Africa, does not grant full equality to part of her native population, but this "second class citizenship" is far harsher, far more discriminatory in South Africa than in Israel. In South Africa, non-whites cannot vote in any national election, nor own property in white areas, are forced to live in the government-established "homelands," are severely restricted from employment and are not granted any semblance of the education that whites receive. In Israel proper (i.e. not including the occupied territories), Arab residents are full Israeli citizens with the same rights and privileges of Jewish citizens. The Arabs who live in the occupied territories are not citizens of Israel, but the Israeli government has made every attempt to treat this population well. These Arabs are educated in Israeli schools and supported by *Bituach Leumi*, the Israeli welfare system. Even the United Nations has recognized that the Arabs' standard of living has risen under Israeli occupation.

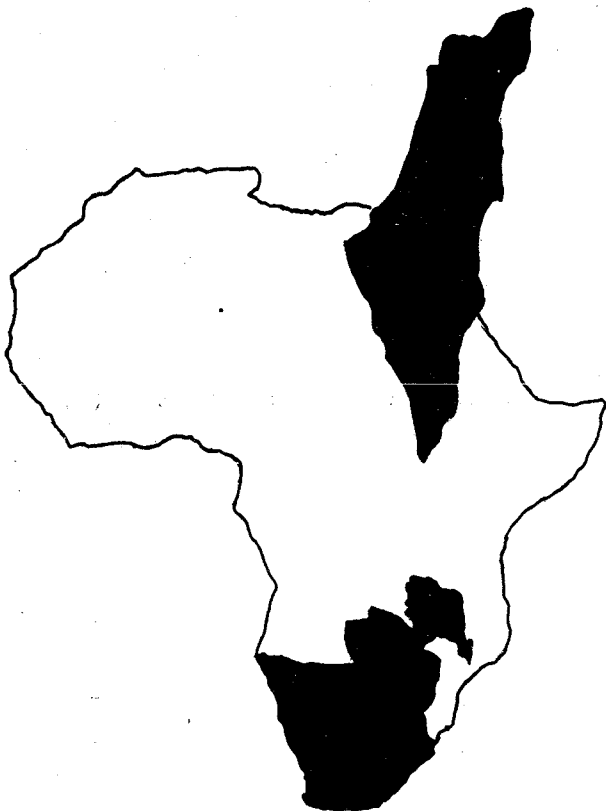
Concerning "tools of repression," again, these policies are more in evidence in South Africa than in Israel. In South Africa, members of the native population are detained or imprisoned regularly for violating apartheid-inspired laws. Curfews, banishments and deportations are imposed to enforce apartheid as well. The Madison Area Committee claims that Israel uses the same methods solely for the purpose of oppressing the Arab population. The Committee chooses to ignore the terrorist problem that Israel constantly faces; in the past thirty years, many hundreds of innocent Israelis have been murdered by Arab terrorists. The aforementioned penal measures are employed only in isolated cases, almost all of which confronted the threat of terrorism.

One final lie currently perpetrated by anti-Jewish authors is the comparison between the massacre at Deir Yassin, Israel in 1948 and the Sharpeville, South Africa shootings in 1960. There is no basis for comparison between these two events. In 1960, South African Government troops opened fire and murdered 67 black demonstrators. The Deir Yassin massacre was committed by the Irgun and Stern Gang, two small, militant Jewish factions that existed prior to Israel's independence. About Deir Yassin, Larry Collins and Dominique La Pierre write in *O Jerusalem!*:

Their actions were deplored and condemned by the vast majority of Palestine's Jewish community as representing an outrage on Jewish and Zionist ideals.

The government of South Africa is responsible for, indeed perpetrated, the atrocity of Sharpeville. Israel's government had no involvement in, did not even exist at the time of Deir Yassin.

Finally, Israel and South Africa are not allies because of any ideological similarities. History has taught that countries do not have friends, countries have interests. This great truth enables the United States to trade with her enemies; it is the basis for most international relations. South Africa and Israel are natural allies because both are alienated from the rest of the world, face some common situations and have many common interests. This is the basis for the South African-Israeli alliance, an alliance that will remain strong until one or both members experience radical geo-political change.



of Israel was established. No longer could the Jew be considered a wandering parasite; he was a valiant hero with a homeland. Furthermore, South Africa perceived Israel as a potentially strong ally in a similar geopolitical situation.

The most basic and profound similarity between Israel and South Africa is a native population that cannot be granted political equality without drastically changing the domestic political status quo. In South Africa, where the non-white to white ratio is approximately four to one, granting citizenship to the non-white population would immediately destroy white government. In Israel, which has a thirty percent Arab minority (including the populations of the Israeli occupied territories on the west bank of the Jordan and in the Gaza strip), granting the Arabs citizenship would allow for Arab control of the Israeli government — by peaceful means — before the year 2000. These facts have induced Israel and South

Dialogue or Disputation?

Judaism and the Church in the 80's

By ADAM FERZIGER

It was Tuesday morning, the twentieth of January. As I sat enjoying a leisurely inter-session breakfast I reviewed my schedule for the day, paying particularly acute attention to my primary goal: working on a long overdue paper dealing with medieval Christian Jewish disputations. Simultaneously, I was casually perusing the *New York Times* — I figured that flipping all those pages was just the right amount of exercise for a snowy winter day. Suddenly, my eye caught a picture on the front page of the Metropolitan Section. There, in front of me, sat Theodore R. Mann, head of the American Jewish Congress, Morris B. Abram, Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and, looking particularly at ease, John Cardinal O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York. But what struck me was the large painting, hanging from the wall, of the late Terence Cardinal Cooke sitting on a throne and dressed in medieval church garb. It appeared as if the late Cardinal was passing judgement as the mortals below negotiated the current crisis.

Something clicked inside me. Was I witnessing a disputation, vintage 1987? I cannot say that the sight of Theodore R. Mann conjures up images of Nachmanides at Barcelona, nor does Morris B. Abram quite match my perception of Rabbi Joseph Albo of Tortosa fame. However, on a good day, Cardinal O'Connor might do a favorable impersonation of the apostate Pablo Christiani, and it is certainly not hard to imagine the late Cardinal Cooke assuming the majestic air of King James of Aragon who presided at Barcelona in 1263, or at least the "holiness" of the anti-Pope Benedict who engineered the Tortosa affair in 1413-14.

Of course, we are living in the late twentieth century and much has changed since the infamous days of medieval Spain. On the surface, Jews and Christians have never enjoyed better relations since the first century. Inter-faith groups have been set up to reconcile differences between the two groups. The second Vatican Council did away with "official" church anti-Semitism. In fact, Mr. Abrams, as quoted in the *New York Times* on January first, points to a "growing understanding over the years" between Catholics and Jews. However, despite the apparent "politeness" of today's Church (at least in America), can we honestly say that the real issues which create friction have changed? Moreover, although the Church cannot summon Jewish leaders at whim to defend Judaism, is the dynamic of the relationship between the "all-powerful" Church and the "weak" Jews, who only seek self preservation, any different?

The recent controversy surrounding Cardinal O'Connor's visit to the Middle East which precipitated his meeting with Jewish leaders can serve as the background for developing these points. The Cardinal had originally been scheduled to make stops in Jordan and Israel, paying visits to their respective heads of state at their capitals in Amman and Jerusalem.

However, just a few days before his departure from New York, the Cardinal's staff informed the Israeli government that he would be unable to see the Prime Minister and President at their offices. The reason given was that it would be against Vatican protocol.

The Vatican directive grew out of the Church's continual unwillingness to recognize the State of Israel. This policy is not a new phenomenon but a reflection of

deeply rooted Catholic theology. As the late Dr. Esther Feldblum wrote in her book on the reaction of the American Catholic press to Zionism: "Embedded in Christian literature is the idea that the ingathering of the Jews is unthinkable as long as they persist in the rejection of Christ." This idea developed from the Christian view of the Jew as the eternal witness, who must live in order to testify to the authenticity of the Old Testament, as well as the crucifixion of Christ. The Jew must always be downtrodden and may never regain his former glory. This idea is already reflected in Paul's message to the Thessalonians: "The Jews, who both killed the lord Jesus and the prophets, and have persecuted us. . . are adversaries to all men. . . for the wrath of God is come upon them to the end" (Thess. 2:14-16).

In 1897, when Zionism was just beginning to take shape, the Church vocalized its strong opposition. Feldblum quotes an article in *Civilita Catholica* which conveys the message with the utmost clarity:

. . . according to sacred scriptures the Jewish people must always live dispersed and *vagobando* (wandering) among the other nations, so that they may render witness to Christ not only by scriptures . . . but by their very existence . . . As for a rebuilt Jerusalem which might become the center of a reconstituted state of Israel, we must add that this is contrary to the prediction of Christ himself, who foretold that "Jerusalem would be trodden down by the gentiles until the time of the gentiles is fulfilled," (Luke 21:24) that is . . . until the end of the world.

Church position on this issue has not changed in our day. Jewish leaders in Israel are still not accorded proper respect, and forced to "suffer" because the Church refuses to accept the fact that Jews have regained sovereignty over the land of Israel. How hollow are the words of Cardinal O'Connor when he claims that "the Vatican too, bears no ill will toward Israel."

As originally stated, the meeting between Cardinal O'Connor and Jewish leaders was called in order to deal with this exact controversy. Interestingly, the issue of Jewish sovereignty over the land of Israel played a role at the infamous Tortosa disputation in 1413-14. Geronimo, the Christian apostate, whose goal it was to prove that the Messiah had come, gave as one of his proofs the following: "and so that I may confirm this truth more to you. . . I showed you plainly through authority of the Talmud that the Hebrew people was never to possess the land more than twice."

To take the comparison a step further, both Nachmanides at Barcelona and the Jewish leaders at Tortosa were forced to enter a hostile environment, the palace of the King or Pope, in order to defend the position of the Jews. Admittedly, such dangerous conditions do not exist in New York today, but how ironic that Jews must come before the Cardinal at his "palace" in order to register their complaints and fears.

To say that Jewish-Christian relations have not progressed since the fifteenth century would be a fallacy. Despite the occasional report of a blood libel case in some obscure town, or Easter and Halloween pranks, Jews (at least in America), are able to live in peace

without fear of an impending crusade or inquisition. Yet, there remains an acutely medieval air which dominates any contacts which we have. The idea of disputations in medieval Europe developed out of a new position taken by Catholics towards converting Jews. Led by the Dominican friars, the Church abandoned using violence or invoking laws which would make it difficult to live as a Jew. They adopted a potentially more successful method for converting Jews — proving that Judaism was wrong, and that the Messiah had already come, as prophesied in the Old Testament. This started serious

influence the Church. The fact that Cardinal O'Connor apologized to the Israeli officials for his "faux pas" is itself a significant gesture. Furthermore, in this century, Jews have learned that apathy does not ensure the status quo. Rather, it opens a void which can be filled quickly by those with radical ideas.

Reverend Michael McGarry, a liberal-minded Catholic priest, believes that "talks between Jews and Christians will influence Vatican policy" on theological issues. This too, is both unrealistic and incompatible with the goals to which Orthodox Jews strive. As seen already, Catholic theology has essen-



discussion between the two faiths on theological issues. The fact that eventually they resorted to the violent Inquisition shows that their tactic did not succeed in attaining their primary goal. Yet, a secondary result did have more long-lasting effects. The distinctions between Christianity and Judaism were made clear and there has never since been any question about the magnitude of our rift. As such, all efforts at improving Jewish-Christian relations are the product of what began as a debate, not a dialogue. Although the tone of these discussions has changed, the underlying theological differences, first formulated at medieval disputations, remain intact.

In this light, we must examine what position Jews should take in terms of dialogue with the Church. To sit back, maintaining an attitude that nothing can change, is to be both blind and naive. Whatever positive effects have developed must be attributed to the efforts of individuals who have tried to

tially remained the same, as far as Jews are concerned, for the last millennium. In addition, theological conciliation by nature, implies some compromise on the part of each side. We are not looking to return Catholicism to the fold, and the Church only wants Jews on its terms. All we are asking for is toleration of our way of life, in the hope that all religions develop freely with mutual respect for one another.

Rabbi Benjamin Walfish, Executive Vice President of the Rabbinical Council of America, suggests a more practical approach to Jewish-Catholic dialogue: "We have to be more realistic with the Church and realize that they have theological and religious considerations which supersede their relationship with the Jewish community and Israel." Implicit in this statement is the recognition that church doctrine does not change; yet, this in itself does not rule out the possibility of meaningful dialogue. I suggest that by

cont. on p. 11

PERSONALITIES

Rav Natan Tzvi Finkel

The Impact of a Mussar Personality

By Erica Schoonmaker

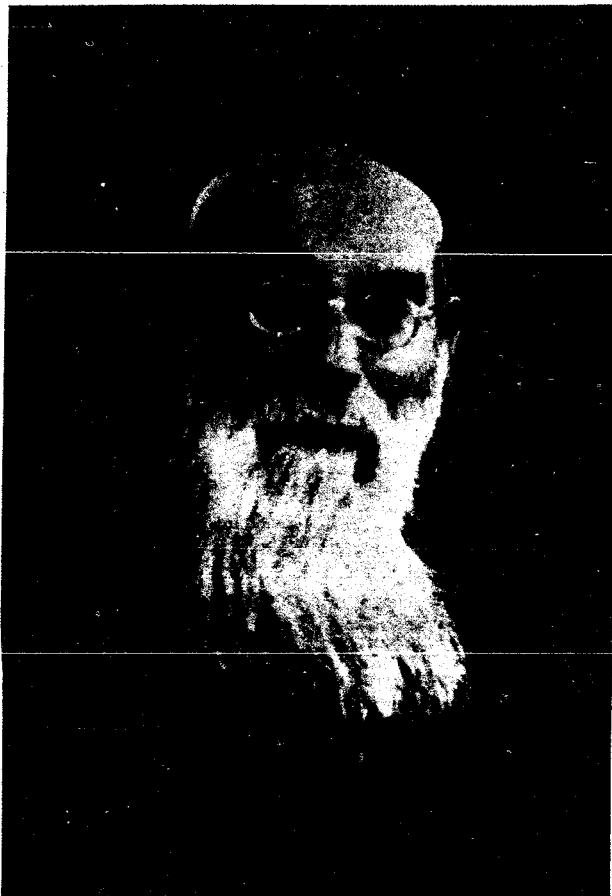
To bridge the gap of contemporary man and history, the Jew is obligated to recreate his past — "be^hkol dor vad^or chayav adam lir'ot arzmo keilu hu yatza me-Mitzrayim." Yet, certain occurrences weaken the chain of tradition, making it difficult to recreate one's past and thereby preserve and relive history. The Holocaust is such a period; it tore us away from the yeshiva *vel* of Eastern Europe and the recent deaths of many *gedolei hador* force us, in an attempt to recreate their lives, to once again discover the architecture of time that held the yeshivot of Eastern Europe.

One way of recapturing this glorious age of scholarship is to acquaint ourselves with the personalities that have most affected the yeshiva world of today. One such figure, Rav Natan Tzvi Finkel, the *Alter* of Slobodka, was, through his yeshiva, credited with the Talmudic development of R. Yaakov Kaminetsky, R. Aharon Kotler, and R. Kahanamon *zecher tzadikim livrakha* among others. A look into R. Finkel's philosophy of learning and the foundation of the Yeshiva of Slobodka will tie us not only to recent leaders, but also to the various trends that collided together to resolve or combine the views of the *maskil* with those of Orthodox Jewry.

The period of the Enlightenment forced Judaism to look inward and either respond to the milieu or actively choose to ignore it. One area of Jewish life open to repair or rediscovery was that of the Jewish ethic; in order to challenge the *maskil*, the Jewish religion had to present a living philosophy. The *mussar* movement is looked upon by many historians as an answer to the problem of addressing Jewish ethics in the time of the Enlightenment. Indeed, there was wide disagreement as to the most effective brand of *mussar* to inject into the yeshiva. Consequently, different *mussar* personalities developed varied approaches.

R. Natan Tzvi Finkel attempted in his teachings and in the philosophy of the Yeshiva of Slobodka to achieve more than the *maskil*; as he himself said, "The *maskilim* demand light; humanity must be given light. But we must not forget that a light sheds light for all but it itself is extinguished. Otherwise it would not be a light." The teaching of ethics must be rooted in a moral imperative to fulfill those teachings, and for R. Finkel, an in-depth study of Torah accompanied by lessons in morality would catalyze the process.

R. Nathan Zvi Finkel, son of R. Moses Finkel, was born in Rossein, Lithuania in 1849. Although he was orphaned at an early age, his development in Talmud was not obstructed and, by fifteen, he was recognized for his erudition. His reputation as a prize student led R. Eliezer Gutman, the leading rabbinic figure in Kelm, to offer him his daughter in marriage. It was in Kelm, that his ethical posture began to take shape under the guidance of R. Simcha Zissel b. Yisrael Broida, the "Saba of Kelm." R. Zissel was a disciple of R. Yisrael Salanter and his own educational theories were molded by the *mussar* movement; Although they worked closely together, R. Finkel's philosophy of education was developing independently. Zalman F. Ury wrote of R. Finkel's approach to *mussar* in *The Mussar Movement*:



R. Natan Tzvi Finkel

There is more than enough suffering these days, argued R. Finkel, and if you constantly stress man's finiteness and helplessness you may completely crush his spirit. Instead, his argument went, let us teach man that he is a great being with unlimited potential for spiritual development.

R. Finkel served as assistant to R. Zissel in the running of Beit haTalmud and the Yeshiva of Grobin for a number of years but left Kelm in 1876 to start his own yeshiva. His destination was Slobodka, his goal, to build a yeshiva of students who constantly aspired to greater heights in both Torah study and religious development. It may seem superfluous to state that study must be interwoven with character development. However, a look at the yeshivot in Eastern Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century revealed a tremendous dichotomy. On one side was a yeshiva student engaged in the mental gymnastics of *pitpul*, while on the other side of the *beit midrash* sat a student, with his head down, resting on a closed book, pondering his inadequacies. According to R. Finkel, the former method of learning, critical analysis, was a prerequisite for the creating of a *talmid chakham*; the latter

was not. He often said, "A soldier who does not aspire to be a general is not even a soldier."

In 1877, the first yeshiva in Slobodka was established. Ten married students learned under the close supervision of R. Finkel and R. Eliezer Jacob and part of their curriculum consisted of *mussar* studies. Rabbi Naftali Amsterdam, one of these students described his impressions of the Kollel:

The outstanding ascetic Torah scholars made the Kollel a tree of life and a precious corner. From there, they are destined to come out as outstanding teachers to serve the Jewish people and to set a model for high achievement in Torah study and God fearing.

His impressions were challenged by Eliezer E. Friedman, another student who found too much emphasis on ethical teachings distracting to Torah study and rallied other students and personalities in Slobodka to his side. Eventually, the axis of the controversy, to teach *mussar* or not to teach *mussar*, was the source of too much tension and the Kollel had to be dissolved: "The Kollel of Slobodka is not fulfilling the purpose for which it was

established by its benefactor."

R. Finkel then assumed a number of positions, including that of religious advisor for Yeshivat Orav Hayyim, an elementary school. From there he channeled students ready for intense, advanced study to the Slobodka Yeshiva, which he founded in 1882. This yeshiva would mold students in skills of analytical thinking. These skills were honed by those who carried on R. Finkel's methods. It was said of the second *Rosh Yeshiva*, R. Isaac Rabinowitz, that "He discouraged casuistic, hairsplitting arguments in the study of Talmud, and emphasized thinking and understanding rather than memorization." This combination of emotional and intellectual *Talmud Torah* was so appealing and successful that when the yeshiva of Volozhin closed down in 1902 many of the students journeyed to Slobodka.

Through exploring the *hashkafa* and pedagogical methods of R. Finkel, we can develop an excellent picture of the energy and character of his yeshiva. He was intimately involved with his students, and his conversations with them would examine issues of character and background which he believed a necessary factor in assessing a student's learning.

Lester Eckman wrote in *The History of the Mussar Movement* (from interviews with Rabbi Lessin, the late *masgiach* of Yeshiva University):

Rabbi Finkel rebuked his students for seemingly small offenses in good manners and appearance. He was convinced that major offenses were the results of a series of small ones, and that therefore it was a "must" to overcome insignificant failings before they developed into behavior patterns. For example, in stressing the importance of proper care of one's clothes, he used to say: "A wrinkled or shapeless hat is indicative of a disorganized mind."

R. Finkel felt that since man is created in the image of God, he must feel obliged to live up to that image. That image manifests itself in the way one's demeanor and one's opinion of self. A *talmid chakham* does not wear a shapeless hat nor does he have shapeless ideas. "He (R. Finkel) taught the majesty of man. Man is great, man is good, but man must never cease striving even higher towards the better, the more beautiful. Life is a ladder on which one descends or ascends but one never stands in one place."

His philosophy was all-pervading; it meant that the yeshiva was in one's heart and mind always; the *daf* could always be learned better. One's philosophy and actions could always be scrutinized more intently. Yet the goal was fulfillment of *imitatio dei* through the realization of man's majesty. This was the tremendous challenge of life at Slobodka — to direct one's intellect into an intense performance of mitzvot. As was said of life at Slobodka, "The bridge between Kovno and Slobodka was built to go to Kovno and Slobodka but not back."

Luther and the Jews

cont. from p. 12

things we Christians simply shall not bear from you, they themselves have robbed me of all the influence I might otherwise have been able to exercise before princes and lords on your behalf.

For my opinion was, and still is, that one should treat the Jew in a kindly manner, that God may perhaps look graciously upon them and bring them to their Messiah — but not that through my good will and influence they might be strengthened in their error and become still more bothersome. I propose to write a pamphlet about this . . .

In this letter Luther himself describes the reasons for his change of heart. One could claim that in a letter to a Jewish leader Luther would be less than forthright about his anti-Jewish attitudes, but the very fact that Luther maintained a warm correspondence with a Jewish leader as late as 1537 is in itself revealing. The future pamphlet to which Luther refers is most probably "Against the Sabbatarians," which was printed four months after the date of the letter and soundly denounces Jewish practices and Jewish influence on Christianity. However, conspicuously missing from "Against the Sabbatarians" is the hatred which so permeates "On the Jews." The tone of the former pamphlet, like that of the letter, could be better described as disappointed than spiteful.

If the letter is to be taken at face value, we now have three distinct images of Luther, and we must judge which of our previous explanations can account for the intermediate stage in Luther's development. The Luther of 1537 still believes that tolerance is the best

method to teach non-believers, even stubborn ones. This proves that Luther's tolerance was not a phase confined to the early 1520's. But by 1537 Luther was well aware that a movement of mass Jewish conversion to Christianity was not to be, as he makes clear in "Against the Sabbatarians."

It is now evident that Jewish influence on Christianity caused Luther's change, but, one may ask why Luther's disappointment evolved into vehement hatred. Oberman's theory leaves no room for the intermediate Luther. If Jewish penetration into the reformed church signalled the advent of the apocalypse, why did Luther not respond immediately? Of course, one could argue that it took some time before either this doctrine or its full implications crystallized in Luther's mind. But this strips Oberman's explanation of its most appealing feature. Luther's attitudes were consistent with his theology.

In light of the letter, Baimon's theory — that Luther was depressed perhaps to the point of irrationality — becomes more attractive. The existence of a rational intermediate stage in Luther's thought means that his irrationality transformed him only from disappointed, rather than from tolerant, to spiteful. Also, an irrational Luther might have permitted an inconsistency between his stated purpose for writing "On the Jews" and the pamphlet's contents. Luther claims to be writing to prevent Jewish influence on Christians, but after the first paragraph, the subject goes entirely unmentioned. In the rest of the pamphlet, Luther's two major complaints against the Jews are blasphemy and usury (with a bit of murderousness added for good measure), but only in the first paragraph, does one detect that Luther was troubled by Jewish influence.

Another possible explanation is that there was no real change in Luther's thought bet-

ween 1537 and 1543. Rather, Luther changed his political tactics. Troubled by Jewish influence, he hoped that by withdrawing his support from the Jewish cause, the Jews would be compelled to mend their ways. When this tactic failed, Luther decided that stronger measures were in order. He wrote a pamphlet that reinforced the prevalent anti-Jewish prejudices to separate Jews from Christians socially or, preferably, territorially, and end the contamination of Christianity. If this scenario is accurate, we can now explain Luther's reluctance to write "On the Jews" ("I had resolved not to write anything more . . ."). "On the Jews," then, could be viewed as a political ruse, designed to incite hatred rather than express it. Of course, to question the sincerity of the writer of a historical document is at best speculative, but no more so than to question his rationality.

Martin Luther's role in the development of anti-Semitism is conservative rather than creative. He did not innovate; he recorded the superstitions and prejudices of his time powerfully and persuasively. Luther was not a racist. But, in the words of Heiko Oberman, "Strictly speaking, 'anti-Semitism' did not exist prior to the race theory of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, there are events, attitudes, or statements which long before the rise of the concept come very close to the reality of anti-Semitism." The views which Luther expresses in "On the Jews" fall into this category. While it seems inappropriate to name Luther as Hitler's spiritual ancestor, it would be equally misleading to deny any connection between the two. The Nazi party drew upon some of Luther's works for their propaganda to legitimize their anti-Semitism. If Luther's intended "On the Jews and Their Lies" to incite popular hatred for political purposes, then he could be considered one of Hitler's political ancestors.

Kiruv

cont. from p. 6

rediscover his Judaism and would not have been there without Counterpoint. Fifteen kids decide to go to Israel for a summer because they were moved by our program on Israel. It happens.

Over intercession I went to Israel. It was Australia's summer and it was more than coincidental that the first people I met when I arrived were a bunch of Australian girls from our third seminar going to The Plaza for milkshakes. The girls were on Ulpan, a program run by Mount Scopus High School for tenth graders. By chance, fifty of our Counterpoint kids were staying across the street from my hotel in a hostel, and I was able to spend many hours a day there.

In Jerusalem, I went out for dessert with Leon, a boy I became close with on Counterpoint. We discussed the summer and his trip, which was to end the following day when the Ulpan participants returned to Melbourne. He told me he now wears *tzitzit* every day. I couldn't help smiling. Was Counterpoint worth all of the strain, philosophical and physical difficulties? I don't know. Ask Leon.

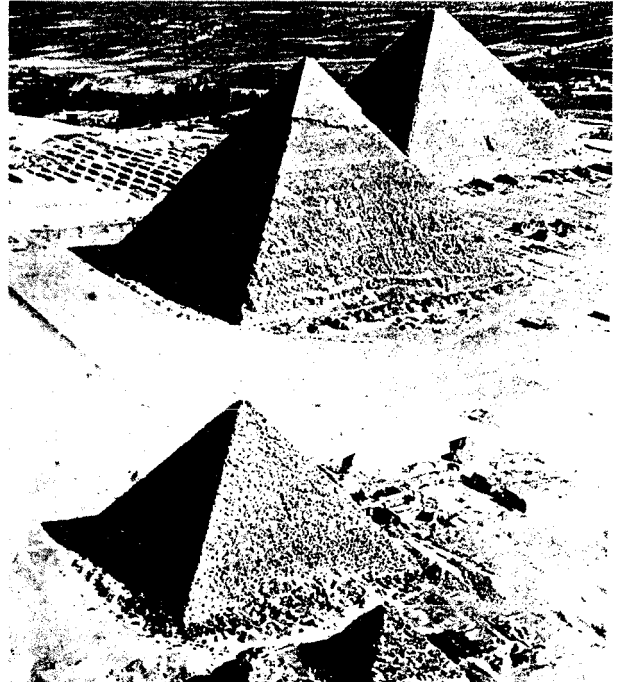
Dialogue

cont. from p. 9

making ourselves aware of the dichotomy between theology and pragmatism, we will have a more clear-headed approach in our efforts to improve the current situation. As long as we realize that our goal is to have the court meet us on equal terms, rather than we being forced to respond to its majestic decrees, medieval theological disputations will finally lose their influence and we will enter a new era of Jewish-Christian relations.



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STUDIES

Luther and the Jews

The Prejudice of a Protestant

By JAY NEUSTADTER

Nazism and the Holocaust, the twin horrors of the twentieth century, have been the subjects of much history. Historians have scrutinized the past of Germany, and indeed of all of Western civilization, attempting to uncover the roots of fascism and anti-Semitism. A frequent target of this soul-searching is Martin Luther. But Luther's role in the development of anti-Semitism remains far from clear. In fact, Martin Luther appears to have been the best friend of sixteenth century Jewry, and also their worst enemy.

Luther's writings about Jews fall easily into two distinct groups separated by time as well as content. The first category consists of one pamphlet, "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew," published in 1523. Luther wrote this in response to accusations of heresy regarding his view of the conception and birth of Jesus, but mainly the pamphlet presents an argument to the Jews in favor of Christianity. The majority of the pamphlet consists of proofs that the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by Jesus in the Gospel. Luther restricts his proofs to the Old Testament because it comprises the only books in the Jewish canon.

More interesting, however, than Luther's exegesis of the Old Testament is a small section appended to the pamphlet containing Luther's plan for treatment of the Jews. Here Luther strongly criticizes the harsh treatment of Jews by Christians. Kindness, he claims, is the most effective way to approach a non-believer. "If the apostles, who were also Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles have dealt with the Jews, no Christians would ever have emerged from among the Gentiles." If the Jews are reluctant to accept all of Christian dogma immediately, they should first be taught a watered-down version. Luther's attitude towards those Jews who might persist in their heresy was equally liberal. "If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either." Most likely, the less-than-perfect Christians to which Luther refers are Roman Catholics. If so, this comparison of Jews to Papists is remarkable. Both subscribe to illegitimate doctrines, and both should be educated in a loving and kindly way.

Luther's next work to deal primarily with the Jews was not written until 1543, two years before his death. In that year, he authored three anti-Jewish pamphlets, the longest and most famous of which is "On the Jews and Their Lies." Like "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew," the main purpose of "On the Jews" is interpretation of the Old Testament, and it includes a practical program for dealing with the Jews. But the tone of the later pamphlet differs radically from that of its predecessor.

"On the Jews and Their Lies" begins with a refutation of the Jews' "boasts" of descent from Abraham and of a covenant with God through circumcision. He argues that since man can be justified only by faith, neither works nor descent can contribute to one's salvation. Luther then addresses the lies of the Jews, that is, their interpretations of the Bible which deny the Gospel. After a lengthy treatment of several Old Testament passages, he concludes with a general summary of Jewish treachery, offering seven specific recommendations for the treatment of the Jews, culminating with expulsion. The tone of the pamphlet alternates between fierce anger and dripping irony: the reader can vividly feel the writer's consuming hate. The

pamphlet is filled with crude descriptions of the Jews' murderousness, exploitativeness, and devilishness. For example, "They let us work in the sweat of our brow to earn money and property while they sit behind the stove, idle away the time, fart, and roast pears."

Although these attitudes appear repulsive by modern standards, they resemble the norm of the sixteenth century much more closely than those expressed in "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew." In fact, "On the Jews" introduces few new ideas. Luther's biblical interpretation is nearly entirely borrowed from earlier Christian exegetes, and similar descriptions of Jewish treachery had been written by such illustrious contemporaries of Luther as Martin Bucer and Johannes Eck. In an era of blood libels and expulsions, Luther's attitude and recommendations are by no means radical. What is new about Luther's works is his talent as a pam-

phleteer: Luther may not have hated the Jews more than his contemporaries, but he was more capable than they at communicating that hatred to others. It is the unique style of "On the Jews," rather than its contents, that has made that pamphlet a classic of anti-Jewish literature.

We are confronted, then, with two sharply contrasting images of Martin Luther. One way of resolving the contradiction is to downplay one of the images, in effect, to choose one Luther over the other. Luther's writings contain negative references to Jews beginning as early as his sermons in 1516, and they persist throughout all his works. Some bring this as proof that Luther generally shared fully in the prevalent medieval prejudices against Jews, and that his apparent toleration in the early 1520's was only a temporary aberration. This argument is less than convincing, because it fails to distinguish between a theological objection to Judaism and a personal hatred for Jews. Even during his supposed period of toleration, Luther never doubted that Jews were heretics and that Judaism as a religion was spurious. In short, Luther's persistent negative references to Jews in a theological context in no way contradict or diminish his appeal to tolerance.

On the other end of the spectrum, Roland Bainton claims that the tolerant Luther is the "real" Luther, while the hate-filled pamphlets of the 1540's were written by a depressed old man who had suffered the strain of a lifetime under imperial ban. Bainton's position is at least partly true; obviously, when Luther wrote "On the Jews" he was not in the best of moods. But the old Luther cannot be dismissed so easily. Luther had experienced depression before without writing inflammatory pamphlets, and there is no other evidence that Luther had "snap-

ped" or behaved irrationally in other ways. Also, this theory does not explain why Luther chose to vent his anger specifically on the Jews.

If both sides of Luther are "real", then one must explain what caused his ideological about-face. It has been surmised that Luther had unpleasant experiences with Jews, and that this caused his change of heart. Nowhere, however, are these incidents recorded. In "On the Jews," Luther does refer to one unpleasant personal experience with a Jew, but he brings this story to illustrate the Jews' insistence on trusting their traditions even after they have been defeated in debate. Regarding his major complaints against the Jews, he mentions no personal experiences.

Another popular explanation of Luther's change of heart is that he became disillusioned when the Jews failed to flock en masse

to Christianity. Of course, this argument rests on the assumption that Luther expected the Jews to convert after recognizing the truth of the newly-discovered Gospel. In "That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew" Luther does not clearly set down his expectations. At first he voices optimism: "I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Scripture many of them will become genuine Christians . . ." Later in the pamphlet, however, Luther adopts a more conservative tone: "I would request and advise that one deal gently with them and instruct them from Scripture. Then some of them may come along." Supporting this explanation are many references in "On the Jews" to the Jews' stubbornness and their unwillingness to convert. Even so, it appears that Luther did not entirely despair of converting some Jews. "With prayer and the fear of God we must practice a sharp mercy to see whether we might save at least a few of them from the glowing flames."

Yet another possible explanation of Luther's reversal finds support in Luther's writings. Luther's expresses his purpose in writing "On the Jews":

I had resolved not to write anything more about the Jews, either for them or against them. But since I learned that these miserable and accursed people do not cease to lure to themselves even us, that is the Christians, I have published this little book, so that I might be found among those who opposed such poisonous activities of the Jews and who warned the Christians to be on their guard against them.

In other words, Luther is trying to combat Jewish proselytizing or Jewish influences in the Church. Yet, it is difficult to imagine how Jewish influence on the Church could engender the deep and powerful hatred that Luther displays in "On the Jews;" furthermore, this influence is not mentioned again after the introductory paragraph. Heiko Oberman explains that Luther was incensed by his discovery of Jewish influence on reformed churches. Luther had long considered Roman Catholicism a "Jewish" religion, based as it was on formal legalisms rather than faith. Luther's discovery of the Gospel, however, had initiated a new chapter in history; the Church had been purified of Judaism. The penetration of Jewish influence into the evangelical church, which manifested itself in sects such as the Sabbatarians, was taken by Luther to signal the advent of the apocalypse. The forces of the devil were converging upon the purified church, and they desperately required belligerent resistance. With the Day of Judgement approaching, there was no time for toleration.

Supporting this theory is a letter from Martin Luther to Josel of Rosheim in 1537 in response to the latter's request that Luther intervene on his behalf to the government so that he should be granted safe passage through Saxony.

My dear Josel,

I would gladly have interceded for you, both orally and in writing, just as my writings have greatly served the whole of Jewry. But because your people so shamefully misuse this service of mine and undertake



Martin Luther. Woodcut, 1521

cont. on p. 11