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Rabbi Aron Soloveichik
President

Statement by Rabbi Aron Soloveichik 11/23/88

Cable sent November 22, 1988

Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir
Office of the Prime Minister
Jerusalem
Israel

In relation to controversy re change in Law of Return, the Rabbinical Council of America supports removal of this issue from the political agenda. The RCA believes in Giyur K'Halacha a religious matter which belongs in the hands of the Chief Rabbinate and not in the secular knesset.

The speedy solution of this problem will help preserve the unity and support of the American Jewish community with and for Israel.

May the Almighty bless your efforts with success.

Rabbi Max N. Schreier
President
Rabbi Binyamin Walfish
Executive Vice President

New York - The President of the Rabbinical Council of America has sharply criticized the Conservative and Reform movements "for unwarranted and unfounded attacks on the Orthodox community re: the 'Who is a Jew issue'."

Rabbi Max N. Schreier said that "Orthodox bashing" must cease and that the Conservative and Reform movements and the Federation "have released a storm of invective which they cannot control."

"They have issued veiled threats to cut aid to Israel, even raising the specter of anti-Semitism. When a negative image of a segment of Jewry appears as it has appeared all over this country, in the eyes of those who are ready to attack Jews, there is no distinction drawn between one Jewish group or another," said the president of the RCA.

"There has been a great lie perpetrated on the American Jewish community that we Orthodox are disenfranchising Jews. Not so. We recognize those Conservative and Reform Jews who are born as Jews, or those who are halakhically converted to Judaism. Any other conversion process which is not in accordance with halakha is fictitious," he said.

Rabbi Schreier said the RCA feels that "congressmen and senators are not competent to speak on the subject of 'Who is a Jew'; and for Conservative, Reform and Federation leadership to use congressmen and senators for this purpose is an interference in the internal affairs of Israel that can endanger the all-important support of the U.S. government for Israel."

Rabbi Schreier said he and his organization would seek to meet with media representatives to protest the "unfounded canards being heaped upon Orthodoxy such as medievalists, Khomenis and fundamentalists."

He stated that the divisiveness in the Jewish community, contrary to the claims of the non-Orthodox, is caused by the Reform sanction of mixed marriages; by the Reform policy of patrilineal descent and the non-halakhic practices and conversions of the Reform and Conservative movements. It is Reform and Conservatism which has changed the thousands of years of tradition on how to convert to Judaism," said Rabbi Schreier.

The recent elections in Israel have given the Likud party and the religious parties a vote of confidence to amend the Law of Return to recognize only conversions to Judaism done according to Halakha - Jewish law.

The recent efforts of the American Reform and Conservative movements to prevent this amendment and to force their interpretation of Jewish identity upon the sovereign state of Israel, are undemocratic and can only be characterized as "religious coercion."

Furthermore, the refusal of these movements to allow the law to set a universal standard for conversion to Judaism, leaves the field open for each Jew to set his/her own standard and to pass judgement upon the Jewishness of others. This is can only lead to divisions and splintering of the Jewish people.

The duplicitous attempts by these movements to claim they are championing unity, while characterizing as divisive the religious parties' efforts to amend the Law of Return, are most deplorable.

I was shocked to learn today of the Rabbinical Council of America's statement "supporting removal of this issue from the political agenda." I find it incomprehensible that such a statement be made without consulting with the membership.

The proposed amendment is of utmost importance for the preservation of Judaism throughout the world, and there can be no compromise on this issue.

While it is true that conversion is a religious issue, rather than political, the Law of Return as it presently reads is flawed and makes a mockery of Jewish identity and conversion to Judaism.

I call upon all members of the Rabbinical Council of America to repudiate the statement and to declare unequivocally that the only way to remove the "Who is a Jew" question from the political arena, is by requiring that all conversions be done in accordance with Halakha - Jewish law.

I further call upon all members of the Rabbinical Council of America to use their influence to properly explain this issue to the public and to do everything possible to ensure passage of the amendment.

This issue is vitally urgent to the future of the Jewish people. My poor health notwithstanding, I am ready to travel to Israel and personally present the case for amending the Law of Return to Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir and other Israeli leaders and to assure them that the vast majority of American Jewry steadfastly support them.

Rabbi Aron Soloveichik

In a telephone conversation with Robert Klapper, RCA President Rabbi Max Schreier stressed repeatedly that the Council's dispute with Rabbi Aron Soloveichik was one of means rather than ends. We all agree that the amendment should ideally be passed, he said. The dispute is only whether American Jewry's emotional reaction, granted that that reaction is fueled by often deliberate disinformation, makes the risks of pushing for the amendment unacceptable. He added that he felt that countering the disinformation campaign was a major priority. Rabbi Schreier also suggested that Rabbi Soloveichik's statement may have been based on news reports of the RCA's cable rather than on the complete text of the cable. RCA Vice President Rabbi Binyamin Walfish declined to comment on Rabbi Soloveichik's statement, saying he had heard of it only through third-party reports.

EDITORIALS

Who Is a Jew?

The past few weeks have seen a perhaps unprecedented wave of Orthodoxy-bashing. Hordes of delegations from within Israel and without have descended upon Jerusalem to beg Yitzchak Shamir not to "surrender" Israel to the "fanatics," the ones who "would turn Israel into a Jewish Iran." These disinformation delegations have been accompanied by incomprehensible and almost unrepeatable threats to diminish aid to Israel and various charities. These threats reveal the true motivations of those who issue them.

Let us make several things clear. Anyone born of a Jewish mother, be they Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, Reconstructionist or whatever, is a Jew. Nothing can remove that status from them. All claims that Orthodoxy believes anything different are unfounded.

In retrospect, however, it seems that raising the "Who is a Jew" issue was a mistake. Any potential gain even if the

amendment is passed will not be worth the recent battles. Yet clearly battles were brewing, and had this not triggered them, something else would have. And as time passes, the costs of dropping the amendment increase and the costs of pushing on increase.

If the non-Orthodox maintain their politics of deception, we may soon have little or nothing to lose by passing the amendment.

In the meantime, however, Hamevaser reluctantly hopes that a face-saving method can be found in order to remove the issue from the political agenda. But we also feel that Orthodoxy should move off the defensive. Let us challenge the Conservative Movement to admit that it does not believe that patrilineal descent makes a Jew, that they "delegitimize" many more Reform Jews than does the proposed amendment. And let us ask the Reform Movement just who isn't a Jew, and what gives them the right to make that decision.

A Time To Worry

The purposeless stabbing of Dani Greenblatt shook us all. It also, however, exposed an oddly skewed sense of priorities. Several years ago Yeshiva tried to force all Kollel members to live in Washington Heights. Now it does not man its guard stations to protect those who voluntarily live here. The excuse: money. We find it impossible to accept that the safety of those students and their families does not hold top priority.

A Time To Celebrate

On a more cheerful note, tonight SOY will run its annual Chanukah chagigah. The chagigah traditionally has great *ruach*, and we look forward to seeing hundreds of students from all Jewish Studies divisions there. The chagigah is also an enjoyable opportunity for *rebbeim* to display their interest in *talmidim* outside the *shul* room, and for *talmidim* to see and hear *rebbeim* with whom they might never otherwise come into contact. The chagigah offers a rare chance for *rebbeim* and *talmidim* to feel that we all belong to one *yeshivah*, and we hope both will take advantage of it.

Religious Relations

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REBBE — TALMID RELATIONS

Hindy Najman on Rebbe and Talmidah

Robert Klapper on Mutual Respect

Yehuda Galinsky on Aveirah Lishmah

Aharon Haber on Jewish Biography

Happy Chanukah!

HAMEVASER

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Special Thanks to Asher Brander

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Lately there has been a cataclysmic upheaval in the Jewish world regarding the attempt by the religious parties Israel to change the "Who is a Jew" amendment. What should our reaction be?

My personal belief is that the method of implementation used by the religious right is not politically sensible, and that perhaps the timing is off too. But let me state openly and unambiguously that we cannot take a centrist position on this fundamental issue, which strikes at the core of Judaism and our Jewish beliefs! Surely we can voice a difference of opinion regarding the advancement of this cause — our cause — but difference of opinion does not imply criticism, and this must be made clear; in principle we are absolutely aligned with the religious right.

Even appearing to court the Reform and Conservative view is fatal. Our leaders must state in unequivocal terms that were it feasible to change this devastating law and institute *giyur k'halakha* we would, that we believe Reform conversions do not qualify one to don the cloak of Judaism; but that unfortunately, we cannot advance our beliefs for fear of offending and alienating the innocent laypeople and congregants influenced by their "preachers" to believe that we question the authenticity of their Jewishness. This could obviously be even more detrimental than the present amendment. But it must be stated that for this reason, and this reason alone, we oppose the change under the present circumstances.

If we push this agenda, then the contrast between the Reform and Conservative, and Orthodox — Agudah, Lubavitch, Satmar, and Centrist — all represent Orthodoxy — will be firmly established.

We like to think of ourselves as Centrists, as rational open-minded individuals, and so we are! — *viyasher kokhenu* — but our leaders

— if they are indeed to live up to their titles and positions — must make our position clearer than clear, leaving no room for the suggestion that we sympathize, even slightly, with the Reform (as a recent statement by a Reform leader suggests). "*Chachamim hizharu b'divreichem shema tachuvu chovat galut...v'yishvu hataimidim habaim achareichem...v'nimtza shem shamayim mitchalel*" (Avot 1:11), and the Bartenu explains the words *hizharu b'divreichem*: "*shelo tanichu makom tau b'divreichem*," "that you should not leave any room for error in their words." This idea applies today more than ever before in Jewish history. By embracing it we will deprive the Reform and Conservative factions of any form of victory in the aftermath of this debacle and help to unite all forms of Orthodoxy under the banner of true Torah Judaism.

Yair Yaish
YC '89

To the Editor:

I would like to delineate here some of the problems with the article, "Through the Past, Talmudically" (Hamevaser, Cheshvan 5749/ October 1988). I did not notice all of these problems on my own, but as author of this letter, I take full responsibility for their appearance here.

First, the description of the various epochs in the history of Talmudic scholarship. The account given here is not entirely accurate. For example, it is incorrect to portray the *Amoraim* as only transmitters of *Mesorah*, depicting the *Rishonim* as the first Talmudists to be logicians. In fact, the *Amoraim* were not just specialists in *b'kiut*; they were also *lamdanim* of the highest order, and their *charifut* and *amku* were at least as profound as their *yedua*.

Second, the assertion that 19th century *pilpul* had lost its "intellectual vitality." This is

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The Perplexities of Providence

by Adina Mosak

Everyone faces at some point the issue of *zadik vera lo*, the pain of seeing someone you love suffer for no apparent reason. Rambam discusses this universal problem in detail in several places. Unfortunately, one who plunges into his discussion may emerge even more confused than when he started.

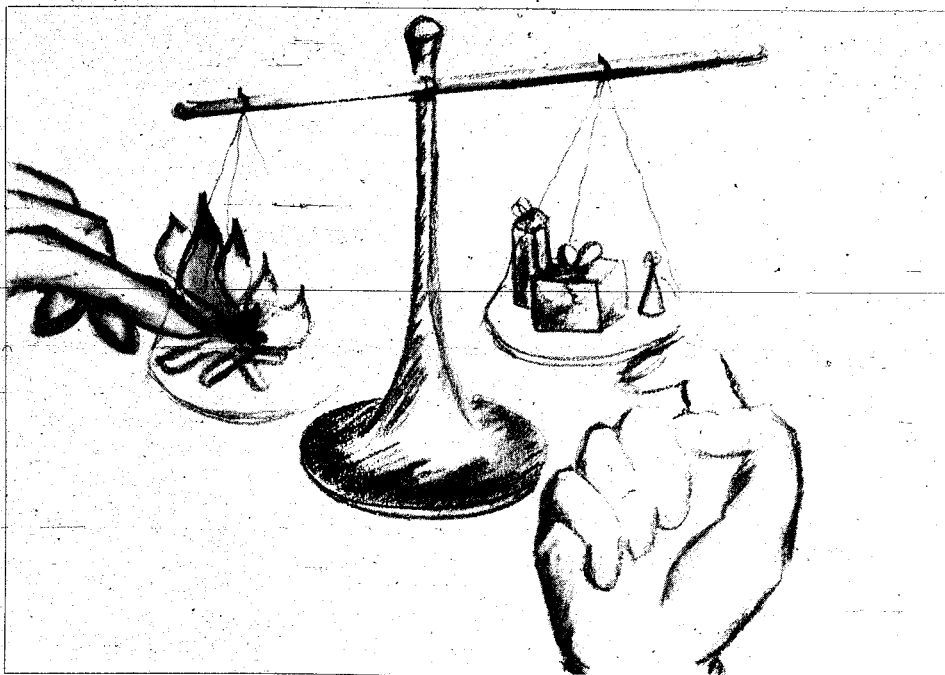
Rambam often espouses the popular view of divine providence. For example, in *Commentary to the Mishnah, Pereq Chelek*, Rambam places the belief in reward and punishment among the thirteen basic principles of Judaism: "The eleventh fundamental principle is that the Exalted One rewards the one who observes the commandments of the Torah, and punishes the one who transgresses its admonitions."

He reaffirms his belief in divine justice in the *Mishneh Torah*. "11. (Everyone) is judged according to his deeds. If he does well, good is done to him; and if he does ill, evil is done to him." (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 5:4) While ultimate judgment is found only in the world to come (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 9:1), Rambam clearly indicates that reward and punishment exist in the physical world as well: "In the case of some sins, justice requires that the sinner should be punished for his sin in this world, in his body or his money or his small children." (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 6:1)

Rambam's discussion of providence in *Moreh Nevukhim* is far less clear. In the *Moreh*, Rambam defines the Torah view of providence as the belief that "...all the calamities that befall man and the good things that come to man...are all of them determined according to the deserts of the man." (*Moreh* III:17) If a person is pricked by a thorn, he deserves the resulting pain, minimal as it may be, as punishment. Likewise, if he enjoys any "slight pleasure" his behaviour must justify reward. Rambam then offers his understanding of the deeper meaning of providence. He believes that all natural occurrences not involving humans are subject to chance. Intelligence provides Human beings with a unique connection to God. Human intelligence results from an overflow of divine intellect (*Moreh* III:51). Because he shares in the divine intellect, man's fate is not left up to nature but rather determined by providence: "According to me, as I consider the matter, divine providence is consequent upon the divine overflow, and the species with which this intellectual overflow is united...is the one accompanied by divine providence which appraises all its actions from the point of view of reward and punishment." (*Moreh* III:17) Rambam here speaks of the intellect as the medium which enables people to receive divine providence. Providence equals reward and punishment for our actions.

In the next chapter, however, Rambam redefines the concept of providence itself: "...when any human individual has obtained, because of the disposition of his matter and his training, a greater portion of this overflow than others, providence will of necessity watch more carefully over him..." (*Moreh* III:18) The term providence here refers to divine protection rather than reward and punishment. God rewards the "righteous and excellent" by protecting them from evil. He does not actively punish the wicked, but rather abandons them to their fate. The wicked have forfeited the human bond to God and are consequently left to chance like all subhuman creatures: "...they have been relegated to the rank of the individuals of all the other species of animals." (*Moreh* 3:18)

The theory of providence presented here carries interesting consequences for the



meaning of "punishment." According to this theory, God abandons the wicked person leaving his fate to chance. Thus, two people could be equally wicked, yet one suffer cruelly, while the other flourishes. Although this idea sounds strange, Rambam is not alone in his opinion. Rambam also believes that people are sometimes abandoned to chance as a punishment for their sins. (D. Berger, "Miracles and the Natural Order in Nahmanides", *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides: explorations in his religious and literary virtuosity*, ed. I. Twersky, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).

In chapter 18 Rambam states that divine providence depends upon one's state of "human perfection." Rambam explains this term in detail in the *Moreh* III:54. There are four types of human perfection: perfection of wealth, of the body, of the morals, and of the intellect. Intellectual perfection is the greatest perfection of all, according to Rambam. He defines this perfection as "the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine things," or, in other words, an arrival at an intellectual understanding of God. The concept of intellectual perfection is clarified in III:51 in the famous parable of the king in his palace. Rambam compares the irreligious to people who live outside the city of the king. He compares those who practice false religions to people who live within the city but have their backs turned toward the palace. Those who practice the true religion, Judaism, and study the Torah, have arrived at the palace and are walking around it. They have not yet entered the palace because they "do not engage in speculation concerning the fundamental principles of religion and make no inquiry whatever regarding the rectification of belief." Only those who have "achieved perfection in the natural things and have understood divine science" have entered the palace of the king. One must be an expert in natural science and philosophy to be close to God.

Thus those who have perfected their philosophical understanding of God receive the greatest degree of providence, Rambam explains further: "...providence always

watches over an individual endowed with perfect apprehension, whose intellect never ceases from being occupied with God. On the other hand, an individual endowed with perfect apprehension, whose thought sometimes for a certain time is emptied of God, is watched over by providence only during the time when he thinks of God." (*Moreh* III:51)

Rambam here seems to be saying that providence is contingent upon intellectual activity only, and has no connection to our moral conduct. It is difficult to reconcile such a view with Rambam's earlier statement that a person is rewarded and punished "according to his deeds" (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 5:4). We must now understand this statement to mean "according to his intellectual deeds", or, in other words, according to his thoughts. Even if we are willing to reinterpret Rambam's statement in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* in this way, the statement from *Pereq Chelek* quoted above presents a second problem. In *Pereq Chelek* Rambam states that one who "observes the commandments" is rewarded, while one who "transgresses its admonitions" is punished. What connection can there be between philosophical speculation and the mitzvot of the Torah?

The Rambam states one connection between philosophy and the mitzvot explicitly in *Mishneh Torah*, explaining the mitzvah of *Ahavat Hashem* as the philosophical understanding of God: "One cannot love the Holy One; blessed be He, except through the knowledge by which he knows Him...Therefore a man must devote himself to understand and to comprehend the wisdoms and intelligences which make his Maker known to him." (*Hilkhot Teshuvah* 10:6)

It may seem strange that Rambam counts the study of philosophy, a secular subject, among the mitzvot of the Torah. It is clear, however, that the Rambam did not consider philosophy and Torah two independent fields of study. He believes that the underlying truths of the Torah are philosophical in nature. The study of the Torah's mysteries is, known as *pardes*, or, more specifically, *maasei breishit* and *maasei merkava*. In the *Mishneh Torah* Rambam identifies these subjects as

physics and metaphysics, respectively (*Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah* 4:13). He claims that the purpose of the *aggada* found in the gemara is to hint to the secrets of the divine science (Introduction to the *Commentary to the Mishnah*). Rambam believes that the great Jews of the past were expert in philosophical subjects. Moshe and the Ayot, reached a state of moral and intellectual perfection (*Moreh* III:51). In time, however, the philosophical secrets of the Torah were lost so that "knowledge of this matter has ceased to exist in the entire religious community..." (*Moreh*, Introduction to pt. III. Also see *Moreh* I:70,71.) Rambam, however, believed that he understood these secrets, and felt it to be his obligation to pass his understanding on to others. (*Moreh*, Intro. to pt. III)

Although Rambam claims that philosophical perfection is the ultimate goal of the Torah, he specifies that moral perfection is necessary in order to achieve this goal. In the *Moreh* Rambam states that the Torah "aims at two things, the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body." (*Moreh* III:27). Welfare of the body is achieved through "the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing and through the acquisition of a noble and excellent character," in other words, through moral perfection. Rambam connects moral perfection with observance of the mitzvot in III:54, stating "Most of the commandments serve no other end than the attainment of this species of perfection." Certain mitzvot, however, are aimed at the perfection of the intellect, which is the welfare of the soul. Rambam identifies welfare of the soul as the "ultimate perfection," but states that bodily welfare is necessary for the welfare of the soul:

"It is also clear that this noble and ultimate perfection [intellectual perfection] can only be achieved after the first perfection has been achieved. (*Moreh* III:27).

One who is morally corrupt is separated from God by his involvement with worldly things. In order to perfect his soul and reach a true understanding of God, he must rise above his physical desires:

"A man should be in control of all these

Continued on page 11.

Interview with a Torah U'Mada Educator

Rabbi Mayer Schiller, a senior rebbe at MTA, is the author of numerous books and articles. His *The Road Back* (1977) presented a philosophical defense of Orthodox Judaism. *The (Guilty) Conscience of a Conservative* (1978) was an "affectionate" critique of American political conservatism. Today, Rabbi Schiller says he finds *The Road Back* "a bit too nasty and simple, but of value". His political book is "a legitimate statement of where I was then". At present, he rejects the label "Conservative" and describes himself as adhering to the "Third Way", that is, "an approach based upon personalism and communalism, which would embrace anarcho-syndicalists, humane socialists, distributists, regionalists, 'greens', futurists, and anybody who believes in man's dignity and its fulfillment in true community". Rabbi Schiller's most recent publication is a lengthy article in the current issue of *Jewish Action* entitled "Hasidut and the Rhetoric, Mechanics and Metaphysics of Change".

What follows is an edited transcript of Robert Klapper's interview of Rabbi Mayer Schiller, Rabbi Schiller and Mr. Klapper thank David Debow for his editorial and technical assistance.



Rabbi Mayer Schiller

H: Rabbi Schiller, how precisely do you perceive the Rebbe's job in MTA, what is the major educational goal... both intellectually and in terms of spiritual development?

Rabbi Schiller: Well, the Rebbe's goal has to be spiritual development, although that is a pretentious phrase—obviously the main thing must be the transmittal of the Divine faith to future generations. That's the Rebbe's goal. At MTA, we can not speak of it in monolithic terms. In truth, there are several MTAs. The diversity of the student body makes it impossible to answer the question in one fell swoop.

H: How about the students you deal with?

Rabbi Schiller: Let's back track. At MTA there is on the one hand the cream of the crop of Modern Orthodoxy coming from homes where Torah is learnt and discussed, mitzvah practices are part of the home... on the other hand... there are many who are essentially disinterested in everything, although there might be minimal practice among them. You can't say, "How do we educate this mass?" because obviously the methodologies needed to educate such a diverse body would be widely different.

H: Let's deal specifically with your students.

Rabbi Schiller: Well I don't want to simplistically label my students as belonging to either one of these groups. I suppose people would say that some of them belong to the weaker elements. Here there is a complex situation as

well. When we speak of the weaker shiurim, we talk of students who are there sometimes because they are not that intelligent, some who are disinterested but very intelligent, some who lack the basic skills such as reading and basic knowledge but are capable, some who are so turned off to Judaism and MTA that they have given up on everything. So again, even in the "weaker" shiurim there are people who are there for an assortment of reasons. And even there you can't address the totality of the shiur. Then there is a group, which is a common group, which finds gemara beyond them. They don't possess the ability to deal with rigorous analytical progression of thought if it extends beyond a minimum amount of steps.

H: It's just beyond...

Rabbi Schiller: We are not talking about raw intelligence here. There are different forms of intelligence in the world. There are certain kinds of people who are able to absorb analytical steps and hold them. When I'm up to step five, how does it affect the original question proposed? Now there are a lot of people, and I would suspect a lot more than most Torah educators realize, who cannot do that. When they are on step five, they really don't know how it affects the original proposal of the gemara. But what's the difference? They learn a lot of Tosafot and lamdut and things like that.

H: You have this heterogeneous group which has all these qualifications. But is there in fact a way which the goals which you have for each can be achieved even though you are giving the same lecture to all of them?

Rabbi Schiller: To thirty of them.

H: To thirty of them?

Rabbi Schiller: If I could set a primary goal, I would have to put it as making yiddishkeit something which they will, when they are grown-ups, want to believe in, practice and study. Basically rendering it pleasant, appalling, non-life-threatening... rendering it something accessible to them, as best as I possibly can. Now this is a terrible problem due to a lot of different reasons. One, the gemara problem, because if this text is made the center of one's faith and I cannot succeed at comprehending this text, then I have failed in the context of my religion. My religion no longer speaks to me. So what you try to do, and this is going to sound very bad, you allow them to fool themselves. There is no other choice. Unless you were to revamp the curriculum and make it more relevant to each individual. You have to let them fool themselves. You have to let the kid who thinks he knows it, really think he knows it. You have to grade him accordingly, you have to treat his questions with respect. So you let him believe in himself. The same thing pertains in relation to prayer, you have to make them believe that prayer is not a threatening experience that authoritarian figures are imposing on them. It has to become an organic, natural development of their personalities. In other words, life is normal, life is non-threatening, rabbis are non-threatening, yeshiva is non-threatening, now we daven Mincha in which there is no talking because that is the way you want to do it better and I want to do it better, a pleasant, mutual approach to davening, discipline etc. So then this becomes internalized. One of the biggest problems you face in Modern Orthodox high schools is the big gap between minimal Judaism and the Judaism of their lives and homes and shuls. That gap could be bridged by creating a total alternative environment for them where the yeshiva would become the center of their lives.

However, doing this would demand radical, revolutionary change, heavy involvement and creativity: Until that happens... and I don't suspect it will... the alternative is personalist, empathetic, listening education. I hear you and you hear me.

H: What are your long term goals?

Rabbi Schiller: I like to sell basic, firm, committed yiddishkeit: daven three times a day, wear tzitzit, bench, when you grow up go to a shiur everyday or at least learn Torah daily. We have to realistically set out goals. This whole system, this watered down version of a Mitnagid Yeshiva somewhere in Kletsk, 3-hundred years ago... that's absurd. They're trying to produce Roshei Yeshiva or something. I don't know what it is exactly, but whatever it is, it is not what their goals should be. Minyan, Shabbat, Kasrus, setting times for Torah, that's not a bad way to live, right? So I try to make the picture of a frum baal habayis appealing to them. Someone who will wear tzitzit on a hot day in June. That's what I want to sell them on. Let it be a pleasant and respected thing to them.

H: At this point we are speaking solely of practice. To this extent they should be shomerai mitzvot. But there are plenty of people that are 'shomerai mechanical mitzvot'. One wonders to what extent their observance impacts on their personality, to what extent does it affect their spiritual development?

Rabbi Schiller: I would say that even the coldest observance of mitzvot impacts on a personality metaphysically, in ways that are often not known to us, even if it doesn't appear to make a tangible change in the person. As for "spiritual development", I don't know if you can talk to a sixteen year old at MTA, trained in endless hours of T.V. watching, movie going (and we're talking about Golan/Globus, not Bergman), party-animal-ing, about spirituality, about man's soul, and its strivings, attachment to G'd...

H: Obviously at this level you can't tell them that religion is something which causes inner conflict, division between rational and irrational — which is not going on in them anyway — but if you are selling the religion as simple, to what extent do you impede or even preclude the possibility of it sometime deepening?

Rabbi Schiller: I think in any Orthodox Jewish culture, Modern Orthodox and more serious ones, you'll never get more than ten-fifteen percent of the population deeply interested in spiritual progress, in relationship to the Divine. There is always only going to be an elite which is doing this. So I don't think we have precluded anything here. Those few souls who would be capable of hearing, taking hearing, the deeper message of Torah, mitzvot, or life — I'm talking also about life in general — I mean eighty five percent of the men in any culture are just going to live. They are not going to respond to existence.

H: To authentic existence.

Rabbi Schiller: Yes, absolutely. That is the way it is in the best of cultures. I think those precious souls will find their way to the proper Rebbeim and s'forim and experiences and people. They'll come seeking. The rest, make sure that they believe in Torah, perform mitzvot, trust in God... Their salvational process is a different salvational process. Both are dear to God, but very different.

H: Let's suppose you have in your shiur, among your disinterested, someone who is disinterested in Orthodox Judaism and not disinterested in spiritual issues in general.

Rabbi Schiller: Like "spiritual issues" is too preceptious...

H: Right. He's interested in speaking with you. How do you handle him within the context of shiur and without?

Rabbi Schiller: In twelve years, I've only had one. By the way, that ten-fifteen percent is lower in Modern Orthodox circles, because they are thoroughly Amricanized. The total crushing of the brain and soul that American culture imposes on its inmates produces its inevitable victims, the "prototype insensitive bourgeois of suburbia".

H: How many of the ten-fifteen percent get to develop themselves elsewhere?

Rabbi Schiller: I was in the Hasidic world and the yeshivish world and would say, more amongst the Hasidim. I spent many years with the Skverer hasidim and I think that the ten-fifteen percent get a tremendous chance there.

H: And in the yeshivish world?

Rabbi Schiller: Less. Their philosophy and experiences are far more simplistic.

H: Let's get back to that one special person...

Rabbi Schiller: I would encourage the expression of his own soul. I would most like to see him obedient to God, of course, but I wouldn't stifle his apprehension of life and thought and beauty, no, why would I want to do that?

H: How do you relate to such a student in the context of the whole class?

Rabbi Schiller: Well I'll have various discussions in my class and see if any of the students pick up on it. It's like chumming, dumping bait over the side of a boat to see if any fish are nearby. Usually four or five kids pick up on it, but it's more pseudo-intellectual, precocious, sort of baloney. My test is, I'll

recommend articles and books and see if they follow through. They rarely do, though.

H: You've commented about the inability to produce sensitive individuals here in America. To what extent is that simply a result of growing up in America or perhaps of deliberately opening to American culture?

Rabbi Schiller: You're hinting at a critique of Modern Orthodox culture. No, it's simply living in America. The result of growing up in an affluent country that has bought the worst elements of capitalism, democracy and deculturalization. Ideas, principles, learning, reverence, respect, romance, quest, and beauty are of no significance to most Americans.

H: In your writings, you lament the passing of an openness to culture and yet in your educational philosophy as opposed to your personally philosophy you generally condemn the culture surrounding us.

Rabbi Schiller: What I condemn is the decadence of European man, blind conformism dominated by mass capitalism and faceless state socialism. The former produces a culture in direct conflict with man created in God's image, as well as does the latter. They are anti-cultures and must be rejected in the name of Orthodox faith and the dignity of man. My own personal Torah world view follows from the belief that God is very much the author of revelation and creation, so that all of existence and experience is a legitimate manifestation of the Divine, except when expressly forbidden. I guess that puts me in the Torah U'Mada, Torah im Derekh Eretz camp. Although I don't like the term Torah U'Mada because it seems to limit the totality of Being to the knowledge and study of Being. All of existence and experience is what God meant for us. This is my own personal Derech Avoda. I think that this Derech Avoda has no relevancy to ninety percent of the MTA student body. Only once one has a minimal commitment to Torah and mitzvot can one



find that Derech Avoda which is congenial to his soul. Although I espouse the Modern Orthodox shita of being open to culture, it has been perverted by many as an excuse for becoming well adjusted, insensitive, affluent Americans. When I speak of being open, it's not to mindless materialism, like what car to buy, but to knowledge, life's experiences, beauty, the world.

H: The high school students that enter MTA are woefully unprepared for any high level ideology. What exactly is critically lacking from the educational system that produces such as these?

Rabbi Schiller: Education is run by educators. They are not good "I Thou" people. They have there noses in books and assume the students are like them. A realistic attempt would have to revolutionize the system such as to make the Modern Orthodox school an alternative home for its students. Give them the chance to experience life within the framework of Torah.

H: Are you suggesting boarding school?

Rabbi Schiller: It would be better, of course, but much can be done without that. You must understand that the students that these schools produce are hopelessly shallow. They are so chameleon-like that they assume the color of whatever culture they are in. Look at the Israel wonder. I get these packs of letters from my students in December and January telling me how they want to learn for the rest of their lives. All you have to do is present them with a vibrant cultural alternative within the confines of the yeshiva and they'll become influenced.

H: I'm trying to get some specifics as to this vibrant cultural alternative.

Rabbi Schiller: They have to be given a way in which they will regard being in the Yeshiva, day and night as the center of their lives. Shabbat, Yom Tov, M'aveh Malka, singing, trips, games, clubs, teams, hobbies, debates. Imagine having Kachniks and Oz Veshalomites battling in the hallways... They have to find whatever it is that will make them happy in the yeshiva under religious guidance. Then they will regard the school as something they love. Now it's a battle, teachers and administrators against kids and vice versa.

H: What about the time constraints? You're trying to make school fun and still spend four hours a day in hard textual work. In this ideal school would you eliminate that?

Rabbi Schiller: No, absolutely not. In this ideal school you're going to try and ascertain where the students are. A kid who can't handle analytical progression will be studying little or no Gemara, a lot of Mishnayot and Halakha. Give basic skills, but also "mah shelibo chafetz". Take them on a nature trip... A shiur should be involved in chesed. They should be involved with suffering people somewhere to break down their sickening bourgeoisie attitude in ways which are religious, but are relevant to them. Do a thousand things to unleash whatever spiritual resources they may have. Also, you must meet them half-way on things they love. Let them have the things they love like sports, and treat those things with true interest and respect.

H: You speak of meeting them half-way. How about co-education?

Rabbi Schiller: (heavy sigh) Let's be honest. At least seventy percent of MTA does not practice the sexual ethic that is sold to them by their Rabbis. At best they regard it as some exotic chumra like not eating chadash, but it has no relevance to their lives. This makes your question very complicated. First, what is the social ideal we are postulating? Is it total separation of the sexes until just before

marriage, at which time someone can engage in relationships in order to get married. I don't know if that is the way things must be done... There is an imperative that any stimulation to lust before marriage is evil. By that assessment, all the camps they go to, even the better ones, are in violation. So what is it that Y.U. wants? What are the ideals? What I would like to see?...

Can the sexes intermingle in a non-lustful decent, cultured way here in America? I don't think so. Yet, is the alternative to say they can't do anything? Then you just sound ludicrous, you lose your credibility. I would propose that if you can make your schools the source of the students' enthusiasms, you've licked half your problem right there. For example, if you made the athletic program really serious, you'd channel their energies in a more positive direction. Give them a combination of meaningful and enjoyable activities, give them a sense of pride in their faith, and eventually the sexual problem will fade away.

H: How does a rebbe go about building a relationship with his talmidim?

Rabbi Schiller: If you are teaching thirty kids, it is absurd to talk about building a deep and lasting relationship with each and everyone of them. The first thing that has to be is a basic decency to all of them. You have to listen to all of them... this one's silly that one's immature, it doesn't matter. The Lubliner says that it's included in the mitzvah of Y'ahavtah l'rei'akha kamokha — love your neighbour as yourself — listening to each person. You have to respond to all of them with a simple human decency. Beyond that you must realize that a Rebbe is a human being and that his personality will mesh better with certain personalities and not with others. When it does mesh he should open himself to his students more, and respond to their reciprocal openness. I must add one addendum, and it's going to be awfully painful and sound cynical. The death of the soul produced by financial reductionism and childish hedonism renders many children of this culture incapable of deep human relations. The Rebbe must realize, when he opens himself up, that in many cases the students are unable to reciprocate because they are missing some of the basic elements which a human being, in order to be truly human, must have.

H: Can you elaborate some of these basic human elements?

Rabbi Schiller: Sensitivity, caring, reverence, a sense of beauty, of poetry, long term love and loyalty, respect, acknowledgement of favors, the soft qualities of soul that make us human and humane. Many students are harsh, superficial and coarse. The conventional wisdom of personalists is that if you cut open their souls, somewhere deep inside is buried a beautiful human being. I think, in some cases, if you cut open their souls you'll find nothing because nothing has ever been put there...

H: I'm still at the idealistic stage.

Rabbi Schiller: Oh so am I. Very much so. But we must realize the vastness of the project. An era immersed in security and frivolity must be touched by faith, study, reverence, and selflessness. It's a big job.

H: When the serious Modern Orthodox Jew meets the serious Jew from the Yeshivish world, although their goals may be so similar, still there is such antagonism. Why, if their goals are so similar?

Rabbi Schiller: People like to feel superior to other people. Everyone thinks that their truth is the only truth in the whole world. Are large numbers of people really capable of saying, "I have my truth, you have yours — all truths are

true"? I have my truth and you're imperfect that's the way of the world (sighs).

H: Ideologically, certainly in the rightwing world, this concept of "I have my truth and you have yours" is not a problem of lack of depth of soul but rather what they have been trained to think.

Rabbi Schiller: Intolerance and an inability to have a pluralistic view of the truth is a problem across the board, part of human existence. It's not only different approaches to Torah, I have big problems with this as it relates to non-Jews. The world is so full of people who don't seem to have the same apprehension as we do. We don't quite know what to do with them. For example, we have no idea of what to do with the neighborhood Puerto Ricans except to block them out of our minds — and fear them. What are they? Who are they? What they mean in the totality of a Torah world view is never considered.

H: What type of serious religious Jews have you produced if racism is rampant in the Yeshiva world? This is where I lose faith with the sort of lay back and float attitude which may produce mechanical religious folk.

Rabbi Schiller: Be careful of the word "racism". It is often used by dogmatic egalitarians to imply that all races are the same. No, they are different and in their difference lies their dignity. Many Orthodox Jews find it difficult to accept the fact that this world is populated with different peoples and each one of them apprehends reality slightly differently. I would say that the reaction of Chasidim to Puerto Ricans in Williamsburg is the same reaction as West Bank settlers to Palestinians. In other words, "they are here to serve us. If they ever get in our way, get them out because they are not real people with lives, hopes and dreams". Jews have problems with non-Jews. But non-Jews have problems with Jews as well. Still, most students from MTA, a Modern Orthodox school, are no better at all than Hasidim on this. That's people. Jews are insensitive to non-Jews and non-Jews are insensitive to Jews. We need a Torah articulated philosophy that will take into account the amazing diversity of life and peoples.

H: If the goal of education is to produce decent human beings, and seeing that there are a lot more of non-Jews than Jews, exactly how successful are we?

Rabbi Schiller: In all my hopes and dreams, I never imagine for a second that we can rectify this particular problem. I even have my suspicions about the progressive Jews. I get a condescending sense, that it is not really, "here are the Catholics of Ulster and here are the Palestinians, and Aborigines and Croatians, and these are all human beings with a particular kind of life that God created. They have their own destinies, reason for existence, and there is a drama of salvation and hope and suffering and happiness for them." Sometimes amongst really sincere humanist Jewish leftists you can find that, sometimes. Often, the lefty Jew that talks about Palestinians is full of baloney because why is it only Palestinians; why isn't he talking about Latvia or Tibet? It is a trendy sort of thing. His agenda is set by what the Leftist media feeds his dwarfish mind. The secularist really can't say that Palestinians, the Welsh, Bretons, the Afrikaaners, or Blacks have a destiny. You see he is a secularist, a materialist, he doesn't believe in destiny. He can't say a people has a soul. I say "God created all these people; all these people have a spiritual link to God." He can't. The secularist has lost the ability to appreciate the infinite spiritual plenitude of our planet.

H: Let me open my last topic. In what way is the Chasidish world successful? Is it just the

fact of being more isolated or does it have more to do with the remnants of what was once a great culture?

Rabbi Schiller: As I said before, the fifteen percent of Chasidim that want to be Ba'alei Avoda are deeper, sincerer, profounder in their expression than the Yeshiva world. The Rebbes, the parables, the lessons, the Torahs are infinitely richer and deeper.

H: To what extent is the Chasidic ideology, the non-intellectual, the more "true to life" approach still a relevant difference between that and the Smitnagdishe world?

Rabbi Schiller: Wait a second. When I said they were more profound, I didn't mean that they dance better! They think better, and deeper. Their experiences are also richer, but that's a different topic.

H: Are those thoughts still part of the Chasidish tradition, part of the Hasidic education?

Rabbi Schiller: It is there for the serious baalei avoda. The Hasid has where to go, books to open, and older Hasidim to approach.

H: How do you reconcile this infinitely richer and deeper Hasidic point of view with the fact that the Chasidish world generally disassociates itself from the intellectual history of the world?

Rabbi Schiller: Of course, Hasidic profundity was limited to the particular Jewish religious experience which they examined to its depths and probed profoundly. They obviously were not open to worldly knowledge. They thought it was sinful.

H: You both praise openness to the world and Chasidut. You denigrate Modern Orthodoxy, yet it is Modern Orthodoxy that espouses this openness and Chasidut which shuts it off.

Rabbi Schiller: I denigrate the hopeless contradictions of the Modern Orthodox masses while actually, not only embracing, but often going beyond its theories of openness. Rabbi Lamm raised the point of Torah U'Mada and Hasidism last year...

H: Yes, he said that had Chasidut thought this through, they would have concluded that...

Rabbi Schiller: I was saddened that he mostly limited it to academic pursuits and not to life itself. It was too much a justification of a college curriculum, not enough of a way of life in its entirety, except at the end. Had Chasidim thought things through, would they have concluded that organic chemistry or mountain climbing is, as much from God as eating and drinking? Yes, I think that is the natural implication of what they were saying. I think it is unavoidable really. Although we must take Scholem's critique of Buber here. Buber wanted Hasidim to be saying that they value existence as existence. Scholem said, "No. Hasidim are seeing through existence. They are seeing the Divine that lurks behind it. The Divine sparks in creation." I like to call myself a romantic phenomenologist existentialist. I am sympathetic to the Buberian world view on these matters. The question of to what extent Chasidim actually understood things in a phenomenological sort of way is tough to answer. Chasidim combine a mystical ascent to being with a phenomenological ascent to being. These two strands are interwoven. Personally, I prefer the latter. Mysticism, although I certainly believe in it, does not touch me on a personal level. Therefore, it is not clear if all Chasidut leads to openness theory, because of the heavy interwinding of mysticism and phenomenology.

H: Thank you. I think we'll stop here.

Rabbi Schiller: I'm afraid we've covered too many things much too quickly, but it's been fun.

The Responsibilities of Leadership

From an address at the OU Convention. Revised by Dr. Lamm for publication in *Hamevaser*.

by Dr. Norman Lamm

The theme of "The Responsibility of Leadership in the American Orthodox Jewish Community" has engaged and fascinated and worried me for a long time. And I have come to the conclusion which can be summed up by saying that, in addition to and above all else, leadership requires the taking of risks — not only political and financial and social and psychological risks, but also moral risks.

There is a remarkable statement by Chazal which is quoted by Maimonides in his *Peirush Hamishnavot* (Avot 1:49), although our texts do not carry this dictum as he cites it. It reads: "Kul mi shshuzbitur m'maneh oto parnas miltatah nikra rasha lma'alah." "One who is appointed to a position of leadership by the community here below, is regarded as wicked above." A similar thought occurs in the *Zohar* (III, p.24a). On the verse "asher nasi yechetah," "if a prince (i.e., a king, a leader) sins," the *Zohar* adds two words, "vadai yechetah," "he most certainly will sin!" You cannot be a "parnas" or a "nasi" without being considered a "rasha" or a "choteh."

What a strange thing to say — and what a deterrent to public service on behalf of the community! Granted that some leaders abuse their positions and that others may be neglectful of their duties, is that a reason to say that all leaders are regarded by heaven as "r'shaini" or "chotim," as evil or sinful? Do we not bear enough burden, and is there not enough to discourage us without this added onus placed upon us by the Talmud, the *Zohar*, and the Rambam?

What the Rabbis meant, I believe, is this: Leadership involves making hard decisions — or better, dirty decisions, choosing between alternatives neither of which is perfect or clean or pure or desirable or even acceptable, but selecting the one which is the least evil and the least harmful.

Clean decisions between good and evil, right and wrong, helpful or injurious — these are risk-free decisions and these do not require leadership. Any intelligent and reasonable person endowed with a modicum of moral judgment can make such decisions. A leader must be willing to embrace the risk of being a "rasha lma'alah," of being less than perfect in the abstract, of being accused of ideological error or moral turpitude, if by so doing he carries out his mission of protecting the "tzibur miltatah," the interests of his community in the real world, of sparing them a greater hurt, a more serious injury, that a worse moral blemish.

That is not an easy task, but that is what leadership is all about. "Asher nasi yechetah — vadai yechetah"; there is no way out. Someone who wants to play it safe and appear on the side of the angels — even if in doing so he creates an opening for the demons who will surely take over later — such a person has no right to be a leader and had best go back to his own affairs.

I can offer dozens of illustrations from my own experience, as can anyone in a position of leadership. But we have at hand probably the best and most painful example, the problem that has been plaguing us especially these past few weeks and monopolizing the attention of all Israel and most of the world's media, the question of "Who is a Jew?" We Orthodox want to amend the Law of Return to read that a Jew is not only one born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism, but specifically converted "according to halakha."

The non-Orthodox are opposed to this, especially in America, because this delegitimizes their rabbis by denying them the right to perform conversions, and thus by implication delegitimizes their congregation and thus their own selves as Jews, and so they then feel rejected by the state of Israel. And for unaffiliated Jews, this is even more critical, because Israel is one of the only things holding them together as Jews.

It is clear to me that there is no easy way out. "Oy li m'yizri v'Oy li m'yozeri" — we are damned if we do, damned if we don't. It is a difficult and messy decision: Those who are unprepared to examine both sides and all alternatives, who are concerned only with how they appear in the eyes of their own constituencies, who are afraid of controversy, who are unwilling to make unpopular decisions by compromising their ideological purity now in order to avoid greater disaster for the community later — they are not proper leaders. Leadership demands sober analysis of



the alternatives and a determination which is less damaging, and choosing that decisively, even if it means being a "rasha lma'alah."

Consider our issue. On the one hand, there is no doubt and there should be no question in anyone's mind on the substantive halakhic issues. *The Orthodox community, here and in Israel, and across the spectrum, is united on such fundamentals as the definition of Jewish identity and the exclusive definition of conversion as "according to the Halakha."*

On the other hand, the reaction of the great majority of organized American Jewry has been as unanticipated. Whether they are right or wrong, informed or misinformed (and I believe they are badly misinformed), the fact is that large numbers of non-Orthodox American Jews feel that their identification with Israel and thus their Jewishness is being questioned and rejected by Israel if this amendment is passed. They are angered, outraged, and they are ready to take revenge on all who are connected with what they see as an effort to divide world Jewry and to force the State of Israel to deny them and their communities Jewish legitimacy. The longer this goes on, the more they despise Orthodox Jews and hate Orthodoxy itself.

On the Talmud's dictum that "almidai chachamim marbim shalom baolam," "scholars increase peace in the world," the great Rabbi of Brisk, R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik,

author of the "*Beis Halevi*," comments: we see this in everyday life in our communities and congregations — as when there are various factions in a "shul" who are constantly battling with each other, at each other's throats; but as soon as the Rabbi, the "*talmid chacham*," takes a position or makes a request, they gladly unite with each other in order to oppose him... So too have we succeeded in uniting a deeply divided Jewish world — against us...

So there is no really "clean" choice. Either alternative carries along its negatives, its disadvantages. Whatever you choose, you will be a "rasha lma'alah." We must, if we are responsible leaders, look for the least harmful, the least unprincipled alternative, even if it has jagged ends and is less than perfect.

Allow me to share with you my feelings on the matter as it now stands.

First, let me say that I am dismayed that the leaders, on both sides, have allowed this matter to get out of hand when, in purely practical terms, it involves but a handful of people per year — maybe 6 or 8 non-halakhically converted Gentiles who annually seek to make Aliyah. The battle is over symbols, and symbols are important. For us, the amended Law of Return, containing the words "giyor k'halakha," symbolizes the supremacy of *Halakha* and the invalidity of any other form of conversion. For the non-Orthodox this very amendment and these very words symbolize Israel's denial of their participation as full partners in Jewish life and the enterprise of Israel, and represent an Orthodox effort to sow divisiveness amongst Jews. So now we face a bitterly divided Jewish world and growing enmity and hatred not over substance but over symbols. And I submit that no symbols are worth hurting the cause of Torah or the cause of Israel so grievously!

Second, I take exception to the position of most Orthodox parties in Israel who are pursuing the amendment with relentless determination. I agree with Rabbi Shach, the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponovezh, that the whole campaign is an exercise in futility. Even if we should win and force the Knesset by our political leverage to adopt the amendment, it will be challenged by the others, especially the conservatives, who will probably persuade the Supreme Court that their conversions too are halakhic. In that case, we shall have lost on the "Who is a Jew" question and gained the hatred of all other Jews.

Moreover, important as the principle of "giyor l'fi hahalakha" is, we have failed to distinguish between means and ends. An ideal may be sacred but the means of implementation are not necessarily sacrosanct — and indeed may be quite the reverse. There is a vast difference between content and form, between substance and strategy. A secular body such as the Knesset is not the right forum to determine halakhic issues, and politics is not necessarily the most effective way to win the hearts and minds of the Jewish people. Threats and coalitions and coercion and legislation do not advance the program of Torah Judaism, which teaches (in the *Sifre*) that one of the meanings of "v'ahavah et Hashem Elokecha" is "sheyithei shem shamayim m'cabehe al yadecha," that to love God means to make His Name beloved by others; that "dracheha d'archei noam" which, in contemporary American political parlance, means that people of Torah must appear to be "gentler and kinder" than others; that we must be sensitive to others who, though they now are estranged from us, may one day wish to

come closer and therefore should not be permanently alienated. This is Torah doctrine, not just some "goody-goody" preaching. For to cause widespread disaffection and rejection of Torah is a case of "chillul Hashem," and where such desecration of the divine Name takes place, the Mishnah taught us, "ain cholkim cavod larav," we do not bow to anyone's authority.

Third, I cannot let this occasion pass without expressing my consternation at the disproportionate reaction of the Reform and Conservative communities, at the fiercely extravagant and irresponsibly extreme onslaught against Orthodoxy as a result of this perceived hurt. The mobilization of American legislators, some of them non-Jewish senators, to interfere in an internal Israeli and Jewish issue, is something which, if we Orthodox did it, would be considered inexcusable. When religious parties, elected in a democratic if awkward manner, negotiate for their constituencies' needs and demands, that is sneeringly termed "blackmail" and occasions near anti-Semitic cartoons in the Israeli press. But what is sauce for the goose is apparently not sauce for the gander; how lightly do certain leaders of the organized American Jewish community threaten the withholding of funds from Israel (actually the needy people and causes, not the government of Israel) and, far worse, the refusal to help Israel politically in its ongoing dealings with the American government and public opinion. My heart breaks when I say that this is more than blackmail; it is an act of betrayal, nothing less. It is, tragically, a highly disturbing insight into the loyalty to the state of Israel by so much of American Jewish leadership if, because of this alleged insult to their rabbis, they are prepared to abandon the Jewish State. What a sad commentary on their priorities.

In 1949, the late Gov. Herbert Lehman was addressing a large gathering of Jews at a dinner for Israel Bonds or UJA, I do not recall which. At that time, many American Jews were deeply distressed at Israel being governed by a Socialist party. Even then, many semi-assimilated American Jews — the very same types who are now enamored of labor — considered putting a distance between themselves and Israel because of this.

Gov. Lehman acknowledged that he too did not prefer a Socialist regime. He then stepped back from the podium and, dramatically, asked, "But ladies and gentlemen, for Heaven's sake, is this a reason for abandoning the Jewish state and the Jewish people?" That question is as relevant and as poignant now as it was then — and even more so.

At a time when a new administration is taking over the reins of government in the U.S., Israel's great powerful ally; when the threat of the Palestinian *intifada* hangs over the heads of all Israelis; when tempers flare and positions harden and the vision of Jewish unity seems more distant than ever — at a time of this sort we must be prepared for greater risks, for redoubled efforts at talking to each other civilly, for greater restraint, and for more mutual understanding.

When Jacob prepared for his historic confrontation with his brother Esau, we are told "vayirah Ya'akov meod vayeizer lo vayachatz et ha'am," Jacob was very frightened and he was distressed, and he divided his people into two groups.

What so scared him that the Torah uses two

Continued on page 11.

Coercive Kiruv: Never...

by Kenneth Waxman

"The ways of Torah are those of peace. Coercive legislation is not the way to advance religious observance. Therefore Meimad will not support attempts to advance "religious" legislation that lack a clear national consensus or that threaten the unity of the Jewish people." Thus read the platform of Meimad, a new political party formed shortly before Israel's recent election. Meimad endeavored to prove, in the words of one of its founders that "Torah isn't just (about) fighting against a sports stadium." Meimad opposed "Kfiyah Da'it".

The Israeli religious electorate's resounding rejection of this policy, and consequent tilt in favour of the Agudah, Shas, Mafdal triumvirate and its policy of "renewed religious legislation portends new rounds of public debate and Knesset battles over Orthodoxy's powers and status in Israeli society. The "Who is a Jew" issue is less relevant than many other religious issues to secular Israelis. Very few Israelis are converted by Reform Rabbis. Many ride the buses on weekends.

The modern context of Israeli democracy and its doctrine of personal liberty necessitates viewing the issue of religious coercion in light of the general topic of public authority vs. individual freedom: Traditional Jewish doctrine exacerbates this tension. Judaism postulates man as a spiritual creature gifted with free will and metaphysical responsibility. Man fulfills himself to the extent he freely gives himself to his creator. Judaism also emphasizes the nearly antithetical concept of "Knesset Yisrael", the nation formed at Mt. Sinai and defined by its unique status and metaphysical mission. The Jew's responsibilities to Knesset Yisrael and its quest equal those to his nature. Any analysis of religious coercion must account for both the individual and the nation, whether in regard to positive or negative precepts.

Any Jewish social and political structure should endeavour to preserve the spiritual integrity of both the individual Jew and of the Jewish people. Sources and precedents exist for a coercive approach to this task, validating the morality of neglecting individual freedom in exchange for greater Halakhic or community good. Rambam (*Hilkhot Grushin* 2:20) cites the Tannaic statement *b'gitali nashim koffin oto ad shevomer rotzeh ani*, that a man who refuses to divorce his wife should be beaten until he agrees, (*Ervkin* 21a) as including all locales and times. The extensive use of ad hoc punishment during the Geonic era and excommunication during the medieval era further support this thesis.

Halakha's conception of "shelo lishmah" forms the basis for coercing halakhic behaviour. Despite *Sifra's* comment on the verse "Asher anokhi m'zaveh etem hayom l'ahavah et Hashem Elokaikhem" (Deuteronomy 11:13) that "that which you do, you should do solely out of love", halakha recognizes that functions performed perfunctorily or for reasons other than inner commitment and spiritual sustenance remain significant while less than ideal. The Talmud states (*Pesachim* 50b) "Let a man always engage in Torah and Mitzvot, though it not be for their own sake, for out of an ulterior motive emerges the motive of for their own sake", i.e. "lishmah. Netziv comments that the unmotivated act contains intrinsic value even if the reformation of motives never occurs. The actual physical performance carries metaphysical import.

The dictum of "shelo lishmah" however, fails to bridge the gap between lack of positive

motivation and the problem of mental resistance and objection. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein maintains that the objections of the coerced negate the significance of any forced performance. Citing Rabbi Meir Simcha's commentary on *Mishnah Torah* (loc. cit.), Rabbi Lichtenstein concludes that examples of religious coercion mentioned in the Talmud are confined to situations where the pressure initiates a transformation of heart (Arguments and Doctrines). In the modern context the secular Israeli fails to recognize religious law and authority. Forced observance therefore contradicts the Jewish doctrine of spiritual freedom and is therefore morally repugnant and unjustifiable.

This argument fails to address the issue of prohibitions. Both individuals and society as a whole are obligated under the general rule "hocheakh tochiakh" to prevent fellow Jews from transgressing, "l'afrish min ha'tissur". Even if the positive act of observance carries no significance, we cannot forsake our obligation to prevent desecration.

This reasoning contains many flaws. The Law formulates "l'afrish min ha'tissur" with an eye to the spiritual well-being of the coerced. In light of the antipathy towards Orthodox and religious behaviour the constrained secular Israeli experiences, forced abstinence and observance seemingly engender greater alienation from God and Judaism. Furthermore, even on the purely quantitative level, forbidding secularists to ride the buses to the beach or movies on *shabbat* will not decrease the number of their transgressions. Israelis discovered VCRs and backyard barbecues many years ago.

Many proponents of *kfiyah da'it* base their support on the need for a public *shabbat*. *shabbat* plays a pivotal role in the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people. It is "beini u'vain Bnei Yisrael et hee l'olam" (Exodus 31:16). A Jewish state without public *shabbat* constitutes an insult to God and a mockery of *knesset Yisrael's* purpose. The needs of the nation outweigh concern for the unjustly coerced individual. For what is Jewish nationhood and govern-

ment but a vehicle for the implementation and proclamation of Torah and religious values? What is the state but a manifestation of *Knesset Yisrael* and its ideals?

The claims about Jewish nationhood and government are correct. The Torah commands, *shofim vshotrim te'atin l'cha b'chal sh'arecha* (Deuteronomy 17:18), mandating both a regional court system and a supreme judicial and legislative authority, the *Beit Din Hagadol*. Maintenance and improvement of spiritual and religious life constitutes the motif and primary role of the system. *Beit Din Hagadol*, sits in the *Lishkat Hagazit* an area adjacent to the *Beit Hamikdash*. Many of its powers, including capital punishment are contingent upon its presence in *Lishkat Hagazit*. The Abravanel (Deuteronomy 17:18), unlike some authorities who believe that a handful of Priests and Levites suffices, maintains that Priests and Levites comprise the majority of the body. Only they have the necessary spiritual character to serve.

Many *aggadot* express the spiritual role of the governmental system. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 7a), based on the verse "God stands in the congregation of God, he judges among the judges" (Psalms 82:1), proclaims that "Every judge who judges true judgement truthfully, causes the Divine presence to rest in Israel". Similarly, the Talmud states that "Every judge who judges true judgement truthfully for even one hour, the Torah views him as a partner in creation (of the world)" (*Shabbat* 11a) Abravanel unifies the two *aggadot*, explaining that the creation of the world constitutes the ultimate act of divine presence. The creation and enforcement of Halacha and justice by the judicial system facilitates the divine presence.

Even given the premise that public observance of *Shabbat* and other Mitzvot manifests the purpose and mission of *Knesset Yisrael*, we must question whether the losses outweigh the benefits. Though more than the aggregate of its individual members, *Knesset Yisrael* cannot exist and benefit independent of its members. By alienating large portions of Israeli society from religion, the proponents of

religious legislation might damage *Knesset Yisrael* itself. Furthermore, *Knesset Yisrael's* covenant with God mandates both privileges and responsibilities. The privilege of covenant and the responsibility of mission defined as the "light unto nations" idea of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch or as the archetype of complete unity and harmony envisioned by Rav Kuk, it is difficult to imagine a Jewish state replete with inner division and tension along with a reputation for repressive extremism fulfilling *Knesset Yisrael's* mission and character. Finally, tradition conveys that "the *Beit Hamikdash* was destroyed because of divisiveness and hatred" (*Gittin* 55b) Further religious legislation might be very much against the public interest.

Some proponents of religious legislation claim that our responsibilities to the Torah itself, to uphold it publicly, to vigorously wave the flag of Torah, dictate a need for intensified and increased religious legislation. As much halakha as possible must be incorporated within the state. But a careful consideration of ideal Jewish government provides a different perspective.

The judicial framework comprises only part of a larger system. The monarchy and judiciary, though interacting constitute separate branches of government. The Ran in his eleventh *drasha* views the split as a separation of powers. The verse "and they shall judge the people with righteous judgement" (Deuteronomy 17:18) confines the judiciary to defining and enforcing the halakha, the system of righteous judgement and behaviour. But as stated by the Talmud "Jerusalem was destroyed because they judged the Law of the Torah" (*Baba Metzia* 39a). Society cannot survive under the rule of pure halakha. Halakha contains strict rules for punishment. For a murderer to receive the death penalty the witnesses must recognize the victim, the murderer must acknowledge that he has been warned, and declare he is committing the act realizing that by doing so he forfeits his life. Finally, he must commit murder within a minute time span "Toch k'dai

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...Or Sometimes?

by Gilaad Deutsch

A full page advertisement in the daily *Maariv* stated: "The national unity government was bad. The proposed alternative is a disaster." These are not the gloomy words of Labor supporters bemoaning their defeat in the November 1 Israeli elections to the Likud, but a reaction which has transcended party boundaries. Both the triumphant rightists and the vanquished leftists have cried out against the new kingmaking power of the four religious parties.

As I write, Shas, Agudat Yisrael, Degel Hatorah, and the National Religious Party hold the balance of power in the Knesset. But though, as Rabbi Yitzchak Peretz, head of Shas, asserted, "Labor offered us more", the religious parties have publicly expressed their preference for a Likud-led coalition.

But does Yitzchak Shamir want such an alliance? Initially, he seemed to; now, after the voices of the "vocal people" in Israel and in America have been heard, his feelings are unclear. Political pundits disagree whether his feelers to Labor for a second national unity government are sincere or just meant to trick

the religious parties into softening their demands.

The key to Shamir's conundrum is not the currently fashionable "who is a Jew" issue, but rather the essence of what the "religious party" is and what it stands for. "Who is a Jew" is only one of the myriad issues of controversy.

Historically, observers of Israeli politics have superficially divided the religious parties into two camps: the separatists and the Zionists. The separatists isolate themselves from the secular community, while the Zionists attempt to integrate themselves into Israeli society. All, however, share a common goal: a Jewish state run according to *halakha*.

They have accomplished much toward that end. In 1947 they reached a "status quo" agreement with David Ben Gurion insuring the preservation of *shabbat* in areas then legally mandating *shabbat* observance. Buses did not run in Jerusalem before 1947 and still don't; Haifa did then and does so now. The army still officially keeps *shabbat* and *kashrut*. Marriages and divorces still must be conducted according to *halakha*. In addition, state-run and independent religious schools

were formed.

Obviously, the religious parties are not satisfied with the status quo. Not only do they fight to maintain such things as bans on soccer matches and movies on *shabbat*, they seek to intensify the state's Jewish character by enhancing religious education, and by other methods.

Many secular and Orthodox Jews ask why religious parties are necessary at all. But before debating the justification of religious parties, one must have a grasp of the halakhic fundamentals involved.

The Torah commands (Leviticus 19), "Hocheakh tochiakh et amitekha", reproach your friend (who sins). According to Maimonides (*Hilkhot De'ot* 6:7) the purpose of this commandment is "Return your friend to the best possible level". Other *Rishonim* (*Nimukei Yosef*, Ritva, etc.) believe reproaching a "necessary reaction to a sin", a more literal interpretation of the law. At certain times one is excused from reproaching: when it is obvious that the sinner will hit the reproacher (Maimonides), or when the sinner curses the

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Never...

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"dibur" after the warning. (*Sanhedin 40b*) Under such strictures human society disintegrates.

The responsibility for maintaining societal integrity through justice outside the bounds of *Mishpat Tzedek* belongs to the King. The judiciary is confined to *Mishpat Tzedek*.

Likewise the King is limited to maintaining societal integrity. In Western tradition strict separation of civil and religious powers and authority protects and safeguards the state from religious interference; in Judaism that separation protects religion. Ramban (*Genesis 49:10*), explaining that the Hasmonean bloodline died out because they sinned by assuming the throne: Once involved in affairs of state they could no longer remain purely devoted to spiritual life, and the institution of Priesthood could no longer serve as an ideal

of spiritual devotion. Perhaps a similar theory motivates Ran's elaborate framework. *Mishpat Tzedek* must exist undiluted and uncontaminated in the judicial system. Any extension of power by the *Sanhedin* undermines and defiles the halakha and Torah the *Sanhedin* is designed to uphold.

Hence, any attempt to regulate society must beware the danger of impinging on the sanctity of the Torah. In the modern context any discussion of further religious legislation must question whether Torah flag waving on the Knesset floor upholds the banner of Torah or tramples it underfoot. We must ask ourselves whether further religious legislation benefits our people, our nation and our Torah. The structure and themes of this article owe heavily to a similar discussion by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein. For a more comprehensive discussion please see his piece in *Arguments and Doctrines*.

...Sometimes

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reproacher (Maharsha). In addition, in certain cases chastisement is totally prohibited: when it causes hatred and the sinner does attack the reproacher (Maimonides).

Currently, Israeli rabbis are concerned with the related rabbinical law of "*haftrasha m'isura*", separation from sin. Ramo (*Yoreh Deah 157:1*) believes that one need not spend money or risk one's life to fulfill this commandment. Furthermore, only a righteous man may risk death at the hands of sinners in order to save them from wickedness, and only if he believes his death will cause many to repent (*Beit Yosef, Shach*).

But the possible negative effects of "*haftrasha m'isura*" include more than just argument, monetary loss, and "being hit". One of the strongest points raised against religious legislation is that coercion does not draw secular Jews closer to observance of the commandments but rather antagonizes them. True, non-"*dani*" Jerusalemites do not ride the buses; they ride their cars instead. And they resent the Orthodox for intruding on their private lives. Twenty thousand citizens attended a recent rally in Tel Aviv to call for electoral reforms diminishing the power of the religious parties. How many reached their political opinion out of hatred for the religious parties?

Those who support religious parties answer these objections as follows. First, even though the legislation does not usually lead to a "*hachzara lamutav*", "return to better", and one who refrains from specific sins (like riding a bus) because of the fear of a country's justice is not a Torah observer, the commandment of separation from transgression is achieved. Any removal of temptation is beneficial. Perhaps the secular Jerusalemite will drive a car, but we can be certain he won't ride a bus. And while it is unfortunately true that religious parties have created feelings of hate and *Chillul Hashem*, desecration of God's name, a solution less drastic than their elimination can be found. The Orthodox parties should try to achieve their goals through *darkhei shalom*, a peaceful manner. Otherwise, coercion could make repentance by the non-religious even less likely. Even a *beit din* would be forbidden to coerce sinners in such a case. Only if we draw the secular Jews closer can Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan's dream of "*Eretz Yisrael for Am Yisrael*" in accordance with *Torat Yisrael* come true.

Now that we understand what is involved in having a nation under the rule of the Torah, we can discuss whether religious parties aid in achieving that goal. Can religious Jews stand idly by while their secular counterparts desecrate the *shabbat*? Obviously not, whether because conditions in Israel cause Jews to be considered as "forced violators"

and therefore there is a commandment of "*hashavat aveida*", the return of lost (souls), or because there is an obligation to separate Jews from the chance of committing sin.

But is a religious political party needed to fulfill that goal? Why not have independent lobbies like AIPAC or the NRA? The answer lies in the proportional representation form of Parliament in Israel. In this system, members of the Knesset are responsible only to the party line, not to specific constituents. Thus, only through party policy can religion enter the government.

Another possibility for the religious is to exist as powerful movements within a major party. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, in his address to the Mizrahi convention in 1966, countered this by bringing a parallel to a case in the Talmud (*Baba Kamma 62b*) in which Raba says that a woman assigned to guard a golden dinar but told that it's just a silver dinar is responsible only for the value of a silver dinar if she was negligent, because she may say, "I accepted responsibility only for silver, not for gold." From this it is derived that the care for a golden dinar is different from the care for a silver dinar. Had the woman known it was gold, she would have guarded it more carefully. Similarly, the Rav says "even if we assume that Mapai, the liberal party [Labor], and Herut [Likud] understand the value of Judaism and also consider a religious *Eretz Yisrael* important in order to tie Jews in the *golah* [diaspora] to the state, the question remains: what is Judaism for them, a golden dinar as it is to us, or merely a silver one?... Do they believe, as we do, that a secular *Eretz Yisrael* is not *Eretz Yisrael*, and that for thousands of years we prayed and hoped only for an *Eretz Yisrael* of holiness?"

To the non-religious parties, Judaism is only a silver dinar. And the existence of a few religious major party members is not enough to allow us to "entrust the golden dinar in their hands" (Soloveitchik, *ibid.*).

So although "when one engages in politics the good name of those immersed in it is tarnished"; religious politics is necessary to achieve the goals of a truly Jewish state. Of course, it should be done in an amicable manner, without excessive forcefulness. Looking at the present attitudes of most religious parties, one cannot blame Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for searching for coalition partners beyond the religious parties.

While historically the NRP has been able to compromise and work with governments, the other religious parties are more rigid. They wish to live in the political arena without being politicians. Ultimately, they jeopardize any success the religious may hope to obtain by refusing to operate *b'darkhei shalom*, in peace.

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Lord Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits

Post-Holocaust Faith: A Personal Perspective

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Letters to the Editor

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certainly erroneous, for among the **Chakhmei Ha-mesorah** who flourished during the 19th century, we find such luminaries as: the *Ktzos Ha-choshen*, the *Netivot*, the *Chatham Sofer*, the *Mishkanot Ya'akov*, the *S'fat Emet*, the *Keren Orah*, the *Beit Ha'levi*, the *Netziv*, the *Avnei Nezer*, and Rav Akiva Eiger. Consequently, it would seem to be false to assert that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik was "a source of renewal," implying that Talmudic scholarship was a wasteland prior to his emergence. This is not, God forbid, to take away from Rav Chaim's greatness as a *m'chadesh*, but to imply that he restored life to *lamdu* is an error.

Third, the assertion that "the Brisker *derekh* makes the centrality of Talmudic study even harder to justify." It is difficult to see how this can be true. Rav Chaim created his *derekh* as a method of interpreting the Talmud in a better and more profound fashion, as an attempt to interpret the Talmud from within. None of these goals is achievable without knowing the texts, better; if anything, the Brisker *derekh* increases the emphasis on Talmudic study.

Fourth, the use of the quotation from Rav Aharon Kahn *shlita*'s address to the Torah U'mada Think Tank. This article gives a highly distorted view of that talk. The overwhelming majority of it was devoted to the issue of how much Torah each individual is obligated to learn and how legitimate other pursuits are in one's life. It was only in conclusion that Rav Kahn dealt with the issue of Talmud study in particular, and even then, Rav Kahn focused only on the significance of such study, not on its centrality.

The manner in which the author of this article dismissed Rav Kahn's assertion, an assertion based on *Nefesh Ha'Chaim* 4:11,12, is also problematic. Now of course, the *Acharonim* do not command the same axiomatic acceptance as *Chazal* do, and with enough support, it is even possible to argue on

the *Rishonim*. But there are (at least) two guidelines to which anyone who argues on the **Chakhmei Ha-mesorah** must adhere. The first, that it must be done with humility. In his commentary on *Avot*, the *Ruach Ha-chaim*, Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains that one can only "wrestle" (*be mit-avek*) with the *Chakhamim* if one sees himself as "dust at their feet" (*afar b'raglay-hem*). Second, any such argument must be from within the tradition, applying the methodology of the tradition. The arrogant rejection of the *Nefesh Ha-chaim* that Rav Kahn cited based only on a common sense evaluation of that source is therefore questionable in the extreme. Furthermore, it is indeed perplexing to see an article in a journal of traditional Jewish thought predicate allegiance to *yahadus* on its conformity with what the naked intellect judges to be religiously valuable, for this predication has led hundreds of thousands of Jews to abandon part or all of that very tradition.

Finally, the tone of the article as a whole is very disturbing. The reverence, and yes, affection, that one would assume are appropriate for a discussion of the Talmud and its commentators are noticeably missing from this article. Instead, Torah is discussed with a coldness, and worse, a glibness, that are more suited for a discussion of mundane phenomena. Where is the sensibility that Torah is *k'doshah*? Haven't the Rav *shlita* and our other great *rebbeim* shown us that one need not sacrifice *ahavah* and *yirah* to be precise and accurate? I think it reasonable to assume that *talmidim* of this *yeshiva* will know how to weld piety to intellectual sophistication without having to dispense with one to affect the other; it is certainly both worthwhile and appropriate for Yeshiva University's student publication of traditional thought to strive to do so.

Eliyahu W. Ferrell
RIETS

by Mark Gottlieb

As Hanukkah approaches, our minds conjure up images of dramatic clashes between Jewish and Syro-Greek forces. Yet, to view that conflict simply as a military struggle with various socio-political ramifications would be to ignore the more profound elements of contention. The Maccabean revolt represents in microcosmic fashion the ever-unfolding confrontation between two great cultures: Judaism, nurtured by the Divine light and wisdom, and Hellenism, in its ideal paradigm the full flowering of all that is good and noble in man when forced to decipher the multifariousness of Being with the unaided faculty of human reason, without revelation. (For a fuller treatment, see Rabbi S.R. Hirsch's *Judaism, Hellenism, and Rome* in *Judaism Eternal*, vol. 2, p. 197, of Rabbi A. Lichtenstein, *Yahadus Y'yanavus*.)

The central pursuit of the Hellenic tradition, one which occupied the 'minds of countless thinkers; was the study and explication of the triad of transcendental ideals: the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. Judaism is also concerned with such matters, thus the Torah provides man with certain metaphysical truths, ethical categories, and moral imperatives which must always pervade any human speculation into the nature of the True and the Good. Naturally, ontological value is assigned to these ideals. Yet theological issues relating to the nature of Beauty and the realm of aesthetics are often overlooked. Moreover, a prevalent attitude maintains that Beauty is, at best, of little significance in the Jewish axiology, and at worst possesses a distinctly corruptive quality which makes Judaism actively inimical to it. An oft-cited source presumably justifying this belief is the verse in Mishlei 31:30, "False is grace and vain is beauty; a God-fearing woman, she should be praised." Indeed, this verse confirms that beauty of form does not belong to the *urum necessarium* and can never take the place of fear and love of G-d as the central values of spiritual man. However, the fact that one value is subordinate to a more exalted value does not preclude its own profound meaning. In fact, a closer examination of Jewish sources will belie the claim that Judaism is monolithically hostile to the aesthetic realm, and this essay will attempt, in an all too cursory fashion, to restore aesthetics to its rightful place in Jewish thought.

Man approaches the Divine on two levels, through Creation and Revelation. The Creation of the Divine Artist — "there is no sculptor like our God" (*Berachot* 10a) — is replete with beauty. The world is decidedly not monochromatic but rather a polychrome of forms, colors, and sounds heralding the power and glory of God. Man can sense the meaning and truth of the psalmist's exclamation, "...the voice of God is in beauty" (*Tehilim* 29:4). To ignore this innate beauty is to ignore God's handiwork. We are charged to appreciate and enjoy the many pure, non-sinful pleasures G-d has seen fit to give to man: "Man will have to account for whatever his eye has seen and he has not partaken of (*Yerushalmi, Kiddushin, end ch.4*). Anything less would be ridiculing God's creation. Certainly the sublime pleasure that man can receive from God's world should be counted among those permissible, even desirable pleasures. Certain human actions possess faint yet distinct traces of the divine. The *mitzvah* of *v'halachta b'derachav* (*Devarim* 26:17), *immatio-Dei*, is understood by *Hazal* and *Rishonim* as a command to lead a morally upright life (see *Sepher Ha-Chinuch, mitzvah* 611). Yet, surely, just as human acts of goodness, mercy and compassion somehow are intimations of God's love, human works of beauty are echoes of the ultimate source of all beauty and creativity, i.e. God. The fact that a higher manifestation of creative force is to be found in the cognitive realm — intellectual disciplines and *chiddush* *Torah* (see R. J. Solovitchick's *Halakic Man*) — should by no means preclude man's creative nature from

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the aesthetic realm. The creative powers within man should be cultivated in every legitimate sense, for to a large extent, this creativity latent in man's soul is an aspect of *Tzelem Elohim*.

At this point, some fundamental halakhic concerns must be expressed. Several forms of aesthetic expression and appreciation come under halakhic approbation. It is well known that Judaism is anathema to certain forms of representative art, specifically material representations of spiritual beings (*Shemot* 20:4, *Devarim* 4:16-18, *Shulkhan Aruch Y.D.* 141). Static, brute material can never fully capture the dynamic nature of the spirit. True, this does limit the purview of a Jewish aesthetics, with the plastic arts most severely affected. However, the entire aesthetic realm need not be dismissed on this account. Music, creative literature, architecture and other permissible art forms should be within the domain of the spiritually sensitive individual. Another area of halakhic concern centers around beauty of form of a provocative or sexually stimulating nature. We must be unwavering in our assertion that this type of aesthetic appreciation is forbidden. Aesthetic concerns must never lead man to moral corruption. The Biblical injunction, "and you shall guard against anything evil" (*Devarim* 23:10), as interpreted in the Talmud (*Avodah Zara* 20a), specifically bans such forms of provocative beauty. There is no distinction in this respect between natural objects of beauty, such as human form, and works of beauty created by man. Rav Kook, who keenly perceived the value of beauty as having the potential for transcendence, writes: "Literature, painting, and sculpture have the potential to realize all the spiritual concepts impressed into the depth of the human soul. As long as even a trace of a line—concealed within the depth of the soul—is lacking realization, the service of art is still obligated to bring it forth. It is understood that it is good and proper to open only those treasures whose opening will perfume the air of reality. 'Every utterance which departs from the mouth of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, perfumes the entire world.' (*Shabbat* 88b) Indeed, in response to even hearing foul matters) whose (commanded) burial is its (deserved) destruction...Soulful agitation arising from the feelings of natural love which play a large role in reality, both in ethics and in life, are fittingly explicated through all of literatures means of realizing the concealed. But this process must be accompanied by the highest guarding from a potential inebriation latent within these feelings, which would pervert their natural purity into wretched inanity. Only holy people are fit to be poets of holiness "11". (See Daniel Landes' *Aesthetics as Mysticism: Rav Kook's Introduction to Song of Songs* "Gesher, vol. 9")

The artistic and architectural beauty of the *mishkan* and *Beis HaMikdash* (there is an interesting *Yerushalmi, Avodah Zara* 3:1, that states that every creature, except man, was artistically represented in the Temple), the power of poetic song and praise, inducing states of prophecy (the *Shirat HaYam* and *Shirat Miryam*) and the vocal and instrumental music central to the Divine Service all attest to the profound and sublime ability, recognized by Judaism, that beauty possesses in ennobling and elevating man's soul. Indeed, the Temple, the earthly domain of God's *sekhina*, where the Divine Presence was most sharply perceived, was a veritable bastion of aesthetic cultivation. — Rambam is clear in relating various aesthetic concerns in the Divine service *mum* "It was commanded that the priests should be clothed properly with beautiful and good garments, 'Holy garments for glory and for beauty' (*Shemot* 28:2). The duty of the Levites was the performance of vocal music. The object of the singing is to produce certain emotions; this can only be

attained by music, as was always the case in the Temple." (*Moreh* III,45) Although for the Rambam aesthetic necessity is legitimized on somewhat pragmatic-empirical grounds, not necessarily metaphysical ones, nevertheless crucial value is assigned to beauty. Another halakhic concern implicitly recognizing the value category of Beauty is the charge of *Hiddur Mitzvah*. The Talmud (*Shabbat* 133b) comments on the words "This is my G-d and I will adorn him" (*Shemot* 15:2): "Make beautiful objects in the performance of his commandments, make a beautiful *Sucevah*, a beautiful *Lulav*, a beautiful *Shofar*." This halakhic regard for factors not merely of necessity or utility, namely the minimal ritual requirements of the ceremonial object, but of aesthetic enrichment, seems to intuit the Godly desire that religious man not be satisfied with a prosaic apprehension of Being but rather strive for the realization of all legitimate poetic stirrings of the soul.

The metaphysical value of beauty is dramatically illustrated in a conversation between Rav Yochanan and Rav Elazar in *Berachot* 5b. (A similar incident involving Rabbi Akiva is found in *Avoda Zara* 20a). It is related that Rav Yochanan visited Rav Elazar during the latter's sickness, and that upon enjoying the beauty of Rav Yochanan's countenance (Rav Yochanan's physical beauty was legendary; see *Bava Metzia* 84a) Rav Elazar bitterly wept. After discussion it was discovered that the cause of Rav Elazar's tears was not that he would soon die and cease to learn Torah. Instead, Rav Elazar laments the transient nature of the beauty of human form, replying, "Such great beauty (Rav Yochanan's) will lick the dust." Upon hearing this explanation, they both continued to weep. The Talmud reveals here a remarkably deep sensitivity to beauty. These sentiments, coming from the greatest *Tanaim* and *Amoraim*, are quite unintelligible if one does not adopt a system where the intrinsic metaphysical value of beauty is clearly assumed and recognized. (It should be remembered that Rabbi Akiva is the author of the statement, "For all of *Ketuvim* is holy and *Shir HaShirim* is the Holy of Holies" (*Yadayim* 3-4) and is projected as the prototype religious aesthete by Rav Kook.)

For Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, the religious development of man requires cultivation of the aesthetic realm. The world of aesthetic beauty echoes another world, one that possesses an even higher ontological value in the hierarchy of being — namely, the world of moral beauty. "Not in vain has G-d clothed his world in beauty, created the harmony of forms and sounds and given man eyes and ears to understand these harmonies and to enjoy them: Each time man experiences the grandeur of the star-studded firmament and the radiant diadem of the rising or setting sun, each time he enjoys the grace and beauty of a flower he is elevated above the narrow range of mere materialistic usefulness and a note is struck in his heart which is very close to the even higher feeling for all that is morally beautiful and which carries him an important stage nearer to its understanding... And the Creator, in his infinite goodness, has endowed the human soul with the sense of beauty which in itself is a first step towards higher perfection, and only in an existence enriched by its sense of beauty can man find happiness and serene enjoyment in his life on earth." (see R.S.R.'s "Hirsch's *Judaism, Hellenism and Rome* in *Judaism Eternal* volume 2 page 190. This sentiment of beauty reflecting moral quality is also found in R. Hirsch's commentary on *Bereishit* 9:27)

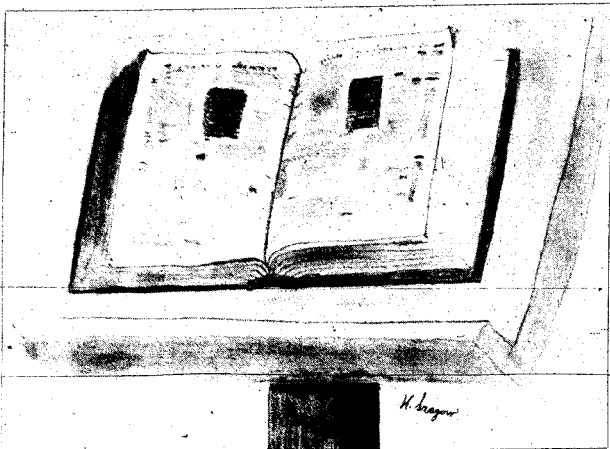
Two points must be made clear. First, R. Hirsch refutes the position that beauty, without being evil, belongs to the mundane aspects of creation. This position would hold that beauty, inextricably linked to the senses and the perishable, is an unnecessary

diversion cast in the way of the man seeking true salvation. This is a grave misunderstanding of the essence of beauty and accounts for a great portion of the unwarranted prejudice against the aesthetic realm. Granted, beauty of form is garbed in material and audible things and presupposes the use of sight and hearing, yet the aesthetic experience is decidedly not sensual or material. The erroneous opinion speaks of beauty of form as a pleasurable sensation of the eye or ear. However, most would agree that listening to Mozart's Fourtieth Symphony or viewing a beautiful landscape has little to do with sense datum or bodily pleasures. Simply put, they are pleasures experienced by the soul. Yet, it is necessary for this distinctly spiritual pleasure to simply serve as a symbolic intimation for the moral realm? Can beauty be appreciated in its own right, phenomenologically, as a ubiquitous element of Being? Similar questions arise when we recall Rav Kook's mystical doctrine of beauty: It is reported that after viewing a Rembrandt, Rav Kook said that the artist must have been one of the select few in each generation permitted to see the *Or HaGanuz*, the supernal Light hidden away for the righteous until the Messianic era; see Alexander Cariebach's *Men and Ideas Rav Kook in England* p. 97). The need to tap into the Ultimate reality with a vision which pierces through this illusory world is part and parcel of the mystical tradition. Does this view sidestep reality, perhaps evading its manifold mysteries by thrusting them into the world of the unseen, albeit ultimate, reality? Isn't the legitimacy of Creation enough to substantiate the sublime value of Beauty? These are weighty questions, indeed, far beyond the scope of this essay, with simple solutions quite possibly lying beyond the pale of human certainty.

Beauty of form and aesthetic cultivation are, without question, not part of man's most essential spiritual baggage on his odyssey through existence. However, this is equally true of other concerns of human existence as well, such as economic, social and political ones. Love and Fear of G-d, *middot tovo*, and Torah study must always have our immediate attention (see *Avot* 3:7). This fact should not be seen, however, as a dispensation to ignore one of the most profound and sublime values, imparted by G-d, of the human condition. Orthodox Jewish scholarship has produced many fine political scientists, economists, ethicists, classicists, etc., yet there has been a dearth of traditional-minded scholars involved in the serious study of aesthetics. (Shubert Spero's "Towards a Torah Esthetic", *Tradition* Spring-Summer 1964 is a fine analysis, however, Steven S. Swartz's recent contribution to *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought* is rather disappointing.) We should strive to produce works of quality comparable to the many efforts of Gentile scholars in this field. Ironically, classical Jewish polemics often emphasize the ascetic, other-worldly nature of Christianity, contrasting it with the monistic orientation of normative Judaism ("Kuzali II, 50; *Shnei Lukhot Habris*, as quoted in R. Norman Lamm's "Monism for Moderns", in *Faith and Doubt*). Yet, profound and unparalleled contributions to a literature of a theological aesthetics have been made by two Catholic thinkers. The nation entrusted with the eternal truths of G-d should not abstain from this field.

Aesthetics ennobles and enriches Being. When aesthetic cultivation, the dominant feature of the Hellenic contribution to mankind, can be subsumed into the Jewish Nation, the bearers of the metaphysical and moral truths of existence *mum* when artistry, implanted by the Divine, can exist within the framework of the Divine Law *mum* then will we realize our multi-dimensional spiritual potential. Then it will truly be said that the beauty of *Yefe* dwells in the tents of *Shem* (*Megillah* 9b). This, indeed, is a goal worthy of our attention.

Rekindling The Lost Fires



The Fire Within: The Living Heritage of the Mussar Movement by Hillel Goldberg Mesorah Publications, 1987 Reviewed by Shmuel Landesman

A great emptiness and void exists in many people's lives. Even in the yeshiva world, Y.U. included, Mitzvot are performed by rote. Davening is something we do because, well, because we're supposed to. We learn because we feel we should; it's intellectually stimulating; it looks good. Our *midot* are not exemplary. We lack fervor and faith.

These problems are not new. In 1840's Vilna, the *mussar* movement arose to combat these spiritual deficiencies. But unfortunately, most of us are not quite sure just what *mussar* is. The term conjures up in our minds images of a rebbe "giving *mussar*", or perhaps guilty memories of the few minutes daily in Israeli yeshivot during which we were supposed to learn *Mesilat Yesharim* or *Chovot Halevavot*. We fail to realize that *mussar* is a way of transforming life. It is a way of giving meaning to life. It is a way of life. It is life!

Rabbi Dr. Hillel Goldberg (YC '68) is a highly influential writer on the subject of *mussar*. He spent well over a decade in Jerusalem after college forging close relationships with prominent *ba'alei mussar* (people who embody the *mussar* ideal). In *The Fire Within* Goldberg defines modern *mussar*, the ideological movement founded by Rabbi Yisroel Salanter in the mid-nineteenth century, as a way of maintaining human integrity and spirituality. Rabbi Salanter stressed the need for introspection and self-improvement. A person must be cognitive of God at all times. Fear of Heaven is critical since it encourages people to perform mitzvot and not sin.

The *mussar* movement was firmly rooted in traditional Jewish texts. Rabbi Salanter recommended the medieval *mussar* treatises as aids to spiritual improvement, and he believed that the words of important verses or talmudic sayings should be repeated many times to reinforce their lessons. He followed these traditional sources in applying intense scrutiny to *mitzvot bein adam le'chavero*, as well as developing numerous original insights.

The Fire Within discusses *mussar* from a personal rather than an intellectual perspective. "It explains how concepts were lived, more than how they were formulated. It explains the concrete more than the abstract. Better: it explains how the abstract became the concrete. It shows how individuals worked with ideas of *mussar* to change their lives, to transform themselves into *tzaddikim* special Jews with exquisite sensitivity to, people and

heightened spirituality before God, Hashem."

Goldberg begins with a discussion of the ideals and personal struggle of three fourth generation *ba'alei mussar*. He studied under Rav Binyamin Zilber (author of the respected responsa *Az Nidbaru*), Rav Ben Zion Bruk (*Rosh Yeshiva* Navarodok, Jerusalem, d.1985), and Rav Yehudah Nekritz (*meshgiach* Navarodok, Boro Park, d.1984). To place them in context, he then deals with the founder of the *mussar* movement - Rav Salanter.

To understand Goldberg's treatment, we must realize that Rav Yisroel was a *gadol haTorah* in his own right, compared by R. Chaim Brisker to the *Beit Ha-levi* and R. Yehoshua Leib Diskin. Thus he was qualified to protest what he saw as weaknesses in the fabric of Lithuanian Torah Jewry. Although nearly every Jew in Eastern Europe was *shomer mitzvot*, their daily behavior lacked spirituality. Torah & mitzvot had become routine. People had forgotten that being a Jew means striving for closeness to G-d and not trampling on one's fellow man in the process of getting there.

Nonetheless, Rav Yisroel was not sure whether to be a *tzaddik nistar* (hidden *tzaddik*) or to try for public influence. Legend has it that the following incident was decisive:

"There was a fancy wedding hall in Vilna that was used by all the rich people. A poor shoemaker decided that nothing could be too good for his only daughter's wedding. He scrimped for many years and was able to save enough money to rent the hall. The rich people were incensed. As the shoemaker was walking his daughter to the *chuppa*, a rich man came over, took off his shoe, and asked in a loud voice how much it would cost to repair his shoe." Rav Yisroel said that *gedolim* of the previous generation were being called to account in heaven for this incident.

Lithuania, Rav Salanter felt, was being affected by the *Haskalah*, and everyone was obligated to combat it. Traditional Judaism would collapse unless infused with new vitality. Learning Torah was no longer enough; the *haskalah* had tainted man's motivation. *Mussar* was also needed. It would remind people why they were doing what they were doing. *Mussar* would infuse reason, purpose, and meaning into people's everyday thoughts and actions.

His decision made, Rav Salanter began his public career successfully. He took Vilna by storm with his Talmudic lectures at the famous Rameillis Yeshiva, and, in a move almost unheard of for a famous yeshiva dean, delivered public lectures to laypeople on fear of Heaven. He also broke precedent by lecturing to women. He opened *ba'ei mussar*,

rooms where people would study *mussar*, reflect, meditate, and hear lectures on *mussar* topics. R. Yisroel fled Vilna in 1849 to avoid being forced by the government to head a "enlightened rabbinical seminary" and founded a *mussar* yeshiva in Kovno that attracted an elite student body. In 1858, R. Yisroel went to Germany for medical treatment, he basically remained there for the rest of his life, intimating that Russian Jewry was still going downhill while German Jewry had bottomed out and could now be saved.

R. Yisroel's early campaigns were big and large successful. He revolutionized the yeshiva world; in the pre-WWII era, basically every *Litvish* yeshiva was a *mussar* yeshiva of some sort. He inspired a generation to "Fear of Heaven", Torah, and good deeds. Young men tried to emulate him. And many of his later ideas, though not successfully implemented during his lifetime, have (since) been adopted. Among them are: a. monthly Torah journals b. a vernacular translation of the Talmud into the vernacular for beginners c. An Aramaic-Hebrew dictionary to make Talmud more accessible. the publication of Jewish books in the vernacular e. introduction of the Talmud into the college curriculum to give it respect in the eyes of assimilated Jewish students

Goldberg's style is captivating and haunting. One cannot help but be spiritually moved by *The Fire Within*. It is well worth reading. However, it must be noted that Goldberg does not subject the *ba'alei mussar* to the same rigorous scrutiny he has other *gedolim*, e.g. R. Yitzchak Hutner (in *Tradition* Winter 87.) And while he rightfully berates the *maskilim's* enmity toward *mussar*, he surprisingly ignores its opposition from within Orthodox circles. He also fails to cite sources. (Goldberg does review Rav Salanter's *mussar* theories analytically in his doctoral thesis, entitled "Israel Salanter: Text, Structure, Idea") the Ethics and Theology of an Early Psychologist of the Unconscious" (Ktav, 1982). He also has written more scholarly articles on R. Yisroel in *Tradition*.)

Goldberg discusses Rav Yisroel's three closest disciples: the Alter of Kelm (Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv), who founded the Talmud Torah of Kelm (a preparatory *mussar* yeshiva that also taught secular studies), Rav Itzele Petersberger, author of *Pri Yitzchak* and rav of St. Petersburg, and Rav Naftali Amsterdam, who reflected Rav Yisroel's hidden side.

Goldberg delves into their *hashkafot*, and also talks about other less well-known disciples. He then discusses the third generation - Slabodka and Navarodok. While those discussions are beyond the scope of this review (not to mention the ability of this reviewer), some brief comments should be made. Navarodok had 70 branch yeshivot in Europe before the Holocaust. It taught *bitachon*, trust in Hashem. The Talmud (Brachot 35b) discusses how much *bitachon* one should have. Rabbi Yishmael believes in normal work involvement, trusting in Hashem for success. Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai holds that one should take an extreme approach; no *hishdalu*, wordly exertion, and all *bitachon*. The Alter of Navarodok followed R. Shimon bar Yochai. He and his students would open yeshivot with no money or support, only *bitachon*.

Rabbi Natan Bar-Chaim once told me a story which beautifully illustrates the extent of Navarodok *bitachon*. Many years ago he met an elderly, irreligious shopkeeper who had studied as a youth in Navarodok. The shopkeeper said that he and three friends had once decided to test their *bitachon* by travelling an hour's distance away from town and remaining there, relying on Hashem to

provide for them. The first day of their stay, they prayed and studied and had nothing to eat. The same thing happened on the second day. The storyteller (who was already a bit of a *maskil*) decided to play a joke on his friends, and after they went to sleep slipped off to town and bought some milk and bread which he placed outside the hut. The next morning his friends were overjoyed that their *bitachon* had paid off while he laughed to himself and considered them fools. However, forty years later, he realized that he had been the fool, for they had the *bitachon* and actually did not starve.

Most yeshivot in America, ours a notable exception, stem from Slabodka. Rabbis Rueben Grozovsky, Yaakov Kamenetsky (Torah Vodava), Aharon Kotler (Beth Medrash Govoha), Yitzchok Hutner (Chaim Berlin), and Yaakov Ruderman (Ner Israel) were all products of Slabodka. Rav Yakov Moshe Feinstein and Rav Shach studied in a branch of Slabodka. What more need be said?

Slabodka's theory of *gadlut haadam* (the immensity of human potential) is another lasting heritage. Slabodka taught that sin is beneath man. God wants us to avoid punishment by growing in learning and *mussar*. "Man is the purpose of creation. Life is very beautiful." Goldberg discusses the concept of *romemut* (exaltedness) in terms of Rav Moshe Lesin, a Slabodka graduate who was *meshgiach* here at Yeshiva. I never had the privilege of seeing Rav Lesin, but having seen Rav Simcha Zissel Broide, Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron, I understand what Goldberg means.

The Fire Within answers a question that has perplexed me for several years. We tend to have a somewhat negative view of Navarodok, viewing it as "depressing *mussar*". Its emphasis on *shiflus haadam*, the lowliness of man, *shivrit hamidot*, breaking bad character traits, and blind trust in God, does not seem too joyful. Chaim Grade's books only reinforce that image. Yet I saw Rabbi Nekritz, the late *meshgiach* of the Navarodok branch of Boro Park, at a wedding in the winter of 1984, and he was very friendly and happy. A funny incident occurred at that wedding, which took place in a non-observant orthodox shul. The president ceremoniously presented Rabbi Nekritz with an oversized key to the synagogue. Rabbi Nekritz laughed in appreciation and through a translator profusely thanked the president. I was dumbfounded: Rabbi Nekritz was the grandson-in-law of the Alter of Navarodok, a faithful adherent to his *shita*. He went through six years in Siberia without violating *shabbat* or *kashrut*. Where was his negation of the world? What was he doing being so happy?

Hillel Goldberg answers that the Alter's goal was not asceticism. True, he rejected the amenities of this world, but that rejection was a technique, not a goal. Withdrawal from the world gives one freedom and leads to true, permanent happiness. Life can mean everything when the world means nothing.

Goldberg tells how in 1941 Rabbi Daniel Movshovitz, head of the Kelm *mussar* yeshiva, faced Nazi machine guns together with the Jews of Kelm. Rav Daniel asked the German officer for permission to say a few last words. "He ended, 'Behold we have now reached a point of which I have spoken just now: *kiddush Hashem*. Therefore do not be confused: accept the decree without panic.' Then he turned to the German, and said 'I have finished. You can begin.'" Such is the *bitachon* imbued by *mussar*.

We should weep.

For we do not even yearn toward that level.

The Perplexities of Providence

Continued From page 3.

impulses, restrict his efforts in relation to them, and admit only that which is indispensable." (*Moreh* III:8)

Once we realize that Rambam did not believe that intellectual perfection can exist in a vacuum, we may find it easier to accept the intellectual model of providence described in III:51. Although providence remains proportionate to the development of the intellect, development of the intellect is only possible once moral development, as facilitated by observance of the Torah, takes place. Perhaps for this reason, throughout his discussions of providence in the *Moreh* Rambam uses the term "righteous" as a synonym for one who has perfected his intellect. For example, within a single paragraph Rambam states:

"...providence is...consequent upon the intellect...His providence that watches over excellent and righteous men is proportionate to their excellence and righteousness." (*Moreh* III:18)

We may now attempt to reconcile the description of providence in the *Moreh* III:51 with the description in *Hilkhot Teshuvah*. Even if providence depends directly upon intellect, providence remains indirectly connected to deeds. We acquire correct opinions through the perfection of our morals, achieved by performance of the mitzvot. In addition, intellectual perfection itself counts as a mitzvah. Even after we perfect our intellect, our moral state has a continuous effect on our degree of providence. In III:51 Rambam states that providence protects the perfect person only when he is thinking of God. If he becomes distracted and involved with "worldly things" providence abandons him. However, he is not completely forsaken by God. The withdrawal of providence from him

"Is not like its withdrawal from those who have never had intellectual cognition...providence merely decreases...the greatness of the calamity being proportionate to the duration of the period of distraction or

to the vileness of the matter with which he was occupied." (*Moreh* III:51)

When the righteous person involves himself with worldly activities such as making a living, talking to his family, or eating, he is subject to a lower level of providence than when he contemplates God. If he involves himself with activities that are vile, he reduces his state of moral as well as intellectual perfection. In this case providence decreases yet further. This moral failure is directly connected to the withdrawal of providence.

Rambam previously stated that one must reach a level of intellectual perfection to receive providence in the first place. Although he assures us that the wicked can never reach intellectual perfection, he has not guaranteed us that the morally vigilant will reach this level either. According to Rambam, the righteous but ignorant man fulfills all of the mitzvot of the Torah except one, *Ahavat Hashem*. Is it possible that his level of providence is the same as that of the worst evildoers?

Rambam's discussion of the Book of Job in the *Moreh* seems to confirm our suspicion. Rambam describes Job as a "righteous and perfect man." Despite his righteousness, Job suffers all of the classic examples of punishment in this world as discussed in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 6:1: he loses his wealth, his children, and finally his health. Rambam seems to imply that Job's misfortunes were his own fault. According to Job's friend Eliphaz, Rambam tells us, "everything that befell Job was deserved by him, for he had committed sins because of which he served these misfortunes." Although Job was a good person, Eliphaz tells him, "The righteousness of your actions and your excellent way of life upon which you relied do not entail your being perfect before God so that you should not be punished." Rambam then says that "the opinion of Eliphaz is in keeping with the opinion of our Law." (*Moreh* III:24)

Rambam does not specify directly in what way Job might have failed, but he makes

several revealing comments. (L. Kravitz, "Maimonides and Job: An Inquiry as to the Method of the *Moreh*", HUCA XXXVIII, 1967). Rambam states enigmatically in the beginning of his discussion, "The most marvelous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that knowledge is not attributed in it to Job." (*Moreh* III:22) He points out that according to the book of Job, Satan causes Job's suffering (ibid). Rambam quotes a gemara which states that "Satan, the evil inclination, and the angel of death are one and the same." (*Baba Bathra* 16a) Rambam adds that "the evil inclination is produced in the human individual at his birth", while the "good inclination is only found in a man when his intellect is perfected." In II:12 Rambam identifies the evil impulse as the imagination, which is responsible for "every deficiency of reason or character." This implies that Job's troubles are due to his lack of understanding, as we might have expected from Rambam's discussion of the nature of providence. Since Job was ignorant, all of his "righteousness could not save him from disaster. The only consolation Rambam offers us at the end of this unhappy story is that Job eventually realizes that all of his physical misfortunes do not really matter:

"But when he knew God with a certain knowledge, he admitted that true happiness which is the knowledge of the deity, is guaranteed to all who know Him and that a human being cannot be troubled in it by any of all the misfortunes in question." (*Moreh* III:23)

This statement is unclear. Perhaps Rambam is saying that Job realizes that physical suffering is unimportant. Rambam makes a comment earlier in the *Moreh* which lends itself to this interpretation:

"As for the fact that one individual possesses many sachets and clothes adorned with gold whereas another lacks these superfluities of life, there is no injustice and no inequity in this." (*Moreh* III:12)

At first glance this statement may not seem very controversial. But when we remember that a loss of wealth is one of the three examples of punishment in this world according to Rambam it seems strange that Rambam later discounts the importance of this very occurrence. With this statement, Rambam in effect disposes of the problem of providence by saying "it doesn't matter anyway." It is hard to believe that Rambam would discuss providence at such great length, only to give an evasive answer to a fundamental question of the subject.

Rambam may have meant to convey a different idea in his consolation. Job regains his happiness when he gains intellectual understanding. This is not surprising when we remember that as a result of his intellectual perfection, Job will now be protected from tragedy in the future. And in fact, in the Book of Job, God stops Job's suffering and awards him twice as much as he had had before. Once protected by God, he can reflect that his past losses were not so terrible. But this consola-

tion only helps in retrospect, to one who has reached intellectual perfection. Most ignorant people possess no prospects of future intellectual development. Seemingly they are delegated to the whims of chance.

Rambam's discussion of the Book of Job may not warrant such a pessimistic conclusion. According to Rambam, Job gained intellectual understanding as an indirect result of his suffering. Thus his suffering had a positive effect. According to Rambam, the pain of punishment is purely destructive in nature. In *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 9:1 Rambam states that reward makes it easier for the righteous to observe the commandments. Punishment makes observance of the Torah more difficult for the wicked "in order that they be destroyed in their wickedness." In contrast to the usual effect of punishment, Job's suffering actually increased his level of providence. It does not seem accurate, then, to describe Job's pain as a punishment. In fact, the Book of Job makes it clear that Job's suffering is an exception to the rule. In the beginning of the story God praises Job as a "blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil." God grants Satan permission to afflict Job as a special test in order to see whether his righteousness will endure. One can say that God extends providence over Job in testing him.

Thus it seems unlikely that the simple but pious Jew is not subject to providence. Ordinary Jews should be protected from evil occurrences in proportion to their state of perfection, unless, of course, God decided to make them suffer as an opportunity for intellectual growth.

Rambam implies that "those who have never had intellectual cognition" are not subject to providence at all. However, it is hard to imagine that he includes in this category all those who have never studied philosophy. Although philosophy may be the highest form of thought, it is not the only one.

The study of the Torah, even in its external, legal sense, is valued highly by Rambam. In the parable of the king's palace Rambam places the Torah scholar directly below the philosopher-Torah scholar in the hierarchy of human perfection. Thus the study of Torah should provide even the simple Jew with a certain level of providence.

In summary, Rambam's theory of providence is disturbing when considered on a superficial level. The idea that providence is based upon philosophical perfection conflicts with the traditional belief in reward and punishment according to fulfillment of the mitzvot. If we study Rambam's discussion of providence carefully, however, we find only subtle differences between his view and the traditional approach. Intellectual perfection and the Torah intertwine in Rambam's thought. Providence depends on one's moral and intellectual development, made possible by fulfillment of the mitzvot.

The author wishes to thank her father and Dr. David Shatz for their help in preparing this article.

Leadership

Continued From page 6.

synonyms — "vayirah and vayetzer" — to describe his fright? Hasidim answer: he feared, firstly, the enmity of Esau, "vayirah Ya'akov meod," and so he knew that he had to divide his clan so that at least some of them could survive Esau's attack. Yet "vayetzer lo," he remained deeply troubled by the very strategy of "vayachatz et ha'am" because he knew that no matter what the danger from without, divisions within his own family constituted a mortal danger in its own right! As the archetype of a great and responsible Jewish leader, Jacob was terrified at the thought of divisiveness and disunity in his own ranks. He knew that whatever he did, his decision would be morally imperfect — "rasha l'malah," that he had no choice but to select the lesser of two evils: "asher nasi yechetah — vaday yechetah." But the thought of a split in the Jewish polity, of profound disunity — that terrorized him.

All Jews, of all groups, must acknowledge that fright and that terror and do whatever we can to avoid further divisions, more hate, greater enmity in the house of Israel.

We must learn from Jacob and be ready to do all to avoid "vayachatz et ha'am" — even if it means that we do not achieve our entire ideological agenda, that we are "rasha l'malah," not quite perfect when measured by heavenly standards.

I make no facile assumptions that "cooling it" now will solve any ultimate problems. It

will not. The problem of halakhically illicit conversions in Israel will remain, but it is at present a manageable one from a practical point of view. The times are too tense to press the issue now. And there are even greater, more sinister problems that we somehow are ignoring at our own peril, such as the problem of halakhically illicit remarriage by divorced persons and the consequent question of illegitimacy, a problem that cannot be solved by reconversion according to *Halakha*. We shall have to exercise great heroism to solve that thorniest of all issues.

But I reiterate my main thesis: leadership requires that we risk imperfect decisions. Otherwise, we have no right to be "parnas al hatzibur milmatah," to claim the mantle of leadership in the real, terrestrial world in which we live and in which alone the destiny of our people will be forged.

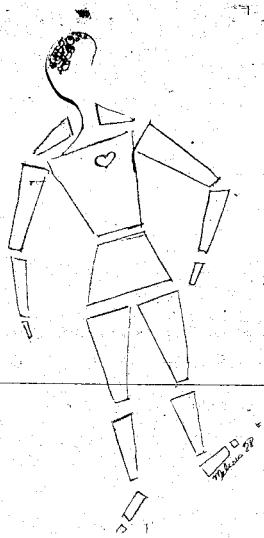
I know that this is a difficult and frightening task. But leadership is impossible without knowing and experiencing such fear — and then overcoming it. I plead with you to be strong, and not to submit to one of the great sins of our age — the violation of the mitzvah "lo taguru mipneh ish," "you shall fear no man."

This is no time for hot heads and cold hearts and torn souls. This is precisely the right time for genuine Jewish leaders to reassert cool heads and warm hearts and souls that strive for both wholeness and holiness.

Mazal Tov to
Hindy Najman & Paul Franks
on their engagement.

Mazal Tov to
Chana & Michael Broyde
on the birth of a son.

Aspects of Elokut



by Seth (Zisha) Kadish

When the gentile asked Hillel to teach him the Torah as he stood on one foot, Hillel quoted the targum to "Love thy neighbor as thyself" and then told the man, "This is the entire Torah. The rest is *perusha*. Now *zil gemor*, go and study (*Shabbat* 31a)."

Rashi explains *perusha* as meaning that the Torah teaches us what actions hurt our neighbors so that we can avoid doing them. In other words, the rest of the Torah is to teach us how to apply *ve-ahavta le-re'acha kamiokha*. *Perusha* in this context is less an explanation than an application. Leviticus 19:18's major importance lies in its application; this essay is in the spirit of *zil gemor*.

Genesis 1:26-27: "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (*be-tzalmenu ki-demeinu*). They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on the earth.' And God created man in His image (*betzalmu*), in the image of God (*be-tzelem Elokim*) He created him; male and female he created them." (51-2a). "This is the record (*sefer*; cf. Rashi) of Adam's line. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God (*demu Elokim*); male and female He created them." Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the Lord." (new JPS trans.) What of man's nature does "God's image" tell us? To begin with, there is a major trend in *parshanut* that claims the *pesukim* tell us nothing at all about man's being "patterned," somehow, after God. Rashi, disregarding the *te'amim*, reads 1:27 "God created man in his (man's) own (unique) mold, in a (unique) mold did God create him. Rashi, by taking the second *Elokim* as a new subject rather than an adjective of *tzelem*, removes any trace of anthropomorphism from the *pasuk*.

Rashi's interpretation is directly related to his understanding of *Avot* 3:14. The common reading there is, "Beloved is man, for he was created in (God's) image (*betzelem*)." But *Machzor Vitry* tells us that anyone who reads the *mishnah* that way is suspected of heresy because God has no form or "image." He reads instead "Beloved is man, for he was created in his own unique mold", inserting a *zakef katon* at the word "*tzelem*" to create a

pause before "*Elokim*" in Genesis 1:27. Similarly, he changes the *targum* to "*be-tzelem elahim*," rather than "*be-tzelem de-elahim*" as we have it. His reading of the *mishnah* also cannot be accommodated by those versions of the *mishnah* which have "*chaviv adam she-nivra be'tzelem elokim*." And even if *Elokim* was not part of the original text, the *mishnah* is understood by most as if it were there.

The 'anti-anthropomorphic interpretation of Rashi's school comes from a long tradition. Sa'adya mentions and rejects a similar version ("This opinion, although it makes more sense and does not upset (our) fundamental beliefs, it does upset the sense of the section.") But does not reflect the way Chazal or later *parshanim* read these verses. Certain commentators find that our *pesukim* imply that in some way man was patterned after God. They relate this idea only to man's physical nature, his position in *olam hazeh*. Sa'adya, later quoted slightly differently by Ibn Ezra (cf. *shitah acheret*), tells us that *tzelem elokim* is either "a term of uniqueness and greatness" or else means rulership. Just as God is the ruler of the universe, man is the lord and master of the creatures found on earth. This fits well with the context of the second half of the *pasuk*.

These interpretations also fit well with the way the concept was used in the Ancient Near East. Each of two letters to kings of Assyria in the seventh and eighth centuries B.C.E. lauds the monarchs with equivalents of the adjectives found in Genesis. In one: "The father of my master the king is *tzalam* (equ. word for "*tzelem*") of Bel, and my master the king is *tzalam* of Bel." In the other: "The shadow of the god is a free man. The shadow of a free man is a slave. [But] the king; he is like the *mushshul* (equ. of Hebrew *demu*, cf. *maslah*) of the god." Hammurapi, too, announces that he is "royal seed, that [the god] Sin gave birth to." And in Ugarit, letters call the king "son of el." Still, these similarities are less important than some differences: while the Assyrians claimed heavenly status for their kings, *Tanakh* teaches that all men are created in the image of the One God. But the parallels do teach us that the terms *tzelem* or *demu* were used as adjectives of *Elokim*. And they illustrate that the terms, at least at one time, were meant in a physical sense, providing a precedent for Sa'adya's claim that man's position as ruler of the earth's creatures is their understanding. Several *midrashim chazal* indicate that man's body also, but not exclusively, has an element of *tzelem Elokim*. For example, "Adam was born circumcised, as it says: God created man in His image (*Avot de-Rabbi Natan* 2)." And there is Hillel's *mashal* that keeping one's body clean is a sign of respect to God for it is like polishing a statue of the king.

Most relevant to us, though, are those *mekuyot* that give us information about man's spiritual nature and how we are to relate to our fellows. They strikingly proclaim *Tanakh*'s view of man. To whom did God speak when he proclaimed, "Let us make man in our image?" Radak, quoting his father, suggests that He spoke to the newly created physical earth. "It is as if He said: You (the earth) and I will do it (create man) together; the body will be from physical matter but the spirit will be from of high, like the angels." Better known is the midrash that God consulted with the angels: "The Torah teaches that one who is greater should consult with one who is lesser than he." But if man was patterned after God and the angels, then why was he, specifically, called *Adam* (earth)? Radak tells us, "It is obvious that the other forms of life are (completely) physical, both

their bodies and their spirits; there is no need to connect them with earthness. But man, whose spirit comes from heaven, is called *Adam* to distinguish him from the spiritual beings (angels), both those which have forms and those which do not...which are totally spiritual...and whose substance has nothing to do with the four types of matter." Along the lines of Radak's father's suggestion, *Chazal* tell us: "God created man with four aspects from above and four from below. He eats and drinks like an animal, reproduces like an animal, excretes like an animal, and dies like an animal. But from above: He stands as the angels do, speaks as the angels do, has intelligence as the angels do, and sees as the angels do... R. Tifda'i in the name of R. Acha said: Those above (the angels) were created in the form and image (of God), but do not reproduce. Those below (the animals) reproduce but were not created in the form and image (of God), Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, 'I will make him (man) in the form and image of those above, but he will reproduce as do those below.' Rabbi Tifda'i said in the name of Rabbi Eliezer: Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, 'If I create him like those above, he will live and not die. [If I create him] like those below, he will die and never live. Rather, I will create him both like those above and those below. If he sins he will die, but if he doesn't sin he will live.'" (*Bereishit Rabba* 8; *Chagigah* 15a, a close parallel, has three similarities rather than four).

The last passage here is the most powerful: Man has special worth only when he fulfills God's will. When he sins he is no better than an animal, which never really lives. The powerful impact that *tzelem Elokim* is meant to make on our lives is put to us in a famous midrash: "Love your fellow as yourself." R. Akiva said: This is a major principle in the Torah. Ben Azzai said: "This is the record of Adam's line. (When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.)— This is an even more fundamental principle (*kelal gadol mizzev*)!" This midrash is found in the *Sifra* and *Yerushalmi Nedarim* 9:4. *Bereishit Rabba* reverses the idea, calling "Love thy neighbor" the greater principle, and also adds a reason, "Lest one say: Since I am dishonored, let me ridicule my friend," Rabbi Tanchuma taught, "If you do this, then understand whom it is you are dishonoring. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God." Scholars agree (see Albeck and Kasher) that our version of *Bereishit Rabba* is reversed. (This can be seen from Ra'avad (among others) in his commentary to *Sifra* of R. Tanchuma's reason as an obvious: logical reason for the *demu elokim* of Ben Azzai being the greater principle. Albeck also cites a version with the correct order).

Man was created in God's image and has the potential to emulate Him; he can transcend the physical world and become unique, *kadosh*. It is this, Ben Azzai's *kelal gadol*, that provides a basis for Hillel's, and later R. Akiva's, insistence that we treat others with dignity, respect, and love." The practical application of the Torah is to create an entire nation, *Kelal Yisrael*, that exemplifies *ve-ahavta le-re'acha kamiokha*. But we can only understand this *halakha* and apply it fully when it is understood that it leans on a *kelal gadol mizzev*. Humankind is fashioned after that which is above, and each person deserves the respect that we are commanded to show due to the potential that lies within them.

NOTES

1. The "Rashi" on *Avot*, in fact, agrees with the position of *Machzor Vitry*. In isn't really Rashi, though; I began to realize this when the commentary quoted the Rambam. There are, in fact, two versions of this passage in *Machzor Vitry*, one with both interpretations, and one with only the anti-anthropomorphic explanation. See E.E. Urbach, in the fourth volume of his edition of *Avot Ha-Bosem* pp. 79-80, for an historical account of how and why this happened. *Tiferet Yisrael's* commentary on this *mishnah* is fascinating. What he writes is must reading for anyone concerned with how *tzelem elokim* applies to all mankind, even gentiles.

2. There seems to be no evidence that the *pasuk* was ever read with these *te'amim*.

3. Better texts of *Onkelos* do, in fact, lack the *dalet*, which allows Rashi's explanation but in no way proves it. See the *Taj* and *Sperber*.

4. The reading *tzelem Elokim* does exist for the *mishnah*. Among others, the parallel in *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (39) in the name of R. Meir has it, as does the Kaufman manuscript in a marginal gloss. The "original text" here is not as important as the original understanding, because the *mishnah* can be read both ways it stands. A gloss *Elokim*, as in the Kaufman manuscript, tells us that the *mishnah* wasn't understood Rashi's way.

5. *Perushei Rasag Li-Bereishit*, edited and translated by Moshe Zucker, pp. 256-259.

6. Levinstam, Shemuel A., "*Chaviv Adam she-Nivra be'Tzelem*," *Tarbiz* 27, 1958, pp. 1-2.

7. Hillel, despite his negative phrasing, is definitely referring to the same verse as R. Akiva. See *Targum Yonatan, Lekach Tov*, and Maharsha on the *gemara*. The negative phraseology is brought on by the first half of the verse. Hertz, in an apologetic essay in his *Additional Notes* to Leviticus, says that the phraseology is irrelevant; the *meforshim* saw it as significant. Also see the second *nosach* of *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* where the convert story is told in the name of R. Akiva!

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