

# HAMEVASER

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כִּי אֵיכָכָה אוֹכֵל וְרֹאֵתִי  
בְרַעְהָא שֶׁר־יִמְצֵא אֶת־עַמִּי

וַאִיכְכָּה אוֹכֵל וּרְאִיתִי  
בְּאֶבֶדֶן מוֹלַדְתִּי:

For how can I bear  
to see the evil that shall  
befall my people?

And how can I bear to see the  
destruction of my kindred?  
(Esther 8:6)

## Translations:

## Brothers!

# Let Us Fight Together With Our Enemy!

Jews bring bloodshed all over. They are proud and rude as pigs. They make preparations to put all Russians into slavery.

Who is this troublemaker? He fools around all people! Every day he insinuates the government for something bad for the people! He 'owns the youths' minds. Not everyone can realize how he brought AIDS from the United States. Do you know him? This is a Jew!

# Join the Freedom Express!

(see editorial, page 2)

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## The Time Is Now

Our Jewish brethren in Russia face grave and imminent danger. Vicious antisemitic literature, published almost daily, calls for the expulsion of Jews from Soviet society, citing the traditional charges of economic stagnation and cultural infestation, and even the rise of AIDS. Already, many cases of antisemitic violence directed against the Jewish people, their homes, synagogues, and cemeteries have been documented.

The future, however, points to an even more directed, brutal attack on Soviet Jewry. On May 5, Soviet hate groups, such as *Pamyat*, are organizing a day of pogroms aimed at purging the country of its Jewish presence. The thought of this impending disaster has all Soviet Jews living in fear. Such pledges cannot be taken lightly, as the recent massacre of Armenians in Baku proves.

This atmosphere of dread has triggered a tremendous rise in the number of Jews applying for emigration, with the figure currently at one-million and growing as the threat increases. The Soviet government has recently nullified an agreement between El-Al and Aeroflot airlines, which calls for the provision of direct flights between the Soviet Union and Israel. Without this agreement Jews are being put on a one-year waiting list to leave. In short, our Soviet Jewish brethren are trapped: can we remain silent when so much can still be done to save them?

On *Ta'anit Esther*, this Thursday, the entire student body of Yeshiva University, accompanied by members of the national press, will be travelling to Washington D.C. to rally on behalf of Soviet Jewry. The concurrence of the rally with *Ta'anit Esther*, of course, was hardly coincidental. The similarity between the plight of the Persian Jews two thousand years ago to that of today's Soviet Jewry, adds a special significance to our fast on Thursday. Like the ancient Persian community, Soviet Jewry has been given a final date for its destruction. When we fast and rally this Thursday, therefore, not only do we commemorate *Ta'anit Esther*, but we also act (and fast) in deep concern for the situation of Soviet Jewry. This is in the true spirit of a *ta'anit tzibbur*: as the Book of Jonah says: "God saw their deeds," even more than He saw their fasting.

The Yeshiva University Administration, as well as our *rebbeim*, understand quite well the circumstances and cancelled our formal *limudei kodesh* for Thursday. But clearly the purpose was not to suspend learning; there can be no more appropriate time to affirm our commitment to Torah than when we are en route to ensuring the survival of such a large segment of the Jewish population. *Shuirim* have therefore been arranged for the bus ride down to Washington.

As for the rally itself, our objectives will be twofold. We will be calling on the United States to pressure the Soviet government to denounce and prosecute the catalysts of the antisemitic movement, and to implement the direct flights agreement. This rally's effectiveness, like that of all other rallies, depends heavily on the number of people who attend. However, at this rally specifically, Yeshiva University must be fully represented. The press and our administration must know that our entire University is gathered for this demonstration.

Not often in life are we presented with the opportunity to directly partake in the all-important *mitzva of pidyon shevuyim*. That time has come. As human beings we must respond. As Jews we are commanded to respond. Join our united voice in Washington.

## Lend A Helping Hand

This past Sunday, the Philanthropy Society sponsored a Purim celebration for local Russian Jews. The Russians enthusiastically enjoyed the program of food, the film *Raid on Entebbe* and a Purim play. So many Russians (over two hundred of them) showed up that the Society incurred a major debt simply due to the expenditures of this successful event. Unfortunately, none of the Student Councils have contributed funds for this cause. Let us remember that caring for our Russian brethren extends beyond rallying in Washington for those trapped in Russia; it includes helping them adjust to the difficulties of their new life.

We can assist them in a number of ways. When immigrants arrive they are often housed in cheap hotels until permanent residences can be found. They often need help in language skills and Judaica; we can donate our time to help tutor. They certainly don't bring house furnishings with them from the Soviet Union; we can help them get it. And perhaps most valuable to them is a friendly face. New York can be a lonely place, especially to one who is unfamiliar with the language, much more the streets. Encouragement and companionship can help set a favorable tone for the rest of their lives outside the Soviet Union.

These volunteer activities can be coordinated through the Max Stern Division of Communal Services, at Furst 419, (212) 960-5261.

## Honesty Is The Best Policy

Hamevaser congratulates Rabbi Cheifetz, Rabbi Blau and all the other *rebbeim* and students involved in the innovative and successful series of Dorm Talks. The talks succeeded in opening meaningful dialogue on such sensitive and well-nigh ignored issues as prejudice, mixed sex events, and the halakic imperatives of honesty. People argue that the heated debate that ensued in the Rubin installment on proper social contact between sexes was inappropriate. We disagree. That which agitates and provokes must be discussed. A passionate dialogue reflects how deep the issues run. We also believe there is much to be gained from a frank and honest relationship between the *rebbeim* and students, something which is often missing in such a large institution. Many students were refreshed to hear their *rebbeim* discussing issues of personal concern. And for many students, this was the first time they thought about such issues in a halakic context. Hamevaser's only request: that the dialogue continue.

## Never Again

Hamevaser deplors Meir Kahane's recent appearance at Stern College. A man who distorts Torah to spread his message of hatred and violence does not deserve a platform at our institution. Some would claim that the right to free speech demands that we allow him to speak. We, however, distinguish between allowing his position to be discussed, considered, and judged, and overtly strengthening his position by associating his name with that of Y.U. His advocacy of violence and intolerance has earned him the ostracism of the entire Israeli body politic; certainly it behooves the entire Torah world to shun him as well. His abuse of sources, through selective and misleading quotation, is an affront to our honesty; his hate-mongering and venom offend our sense of humanity.

We are surprised and disappointed that Stern stood silently and allowed Kahane to spread his hatred. No one objected, no one protested, no one even raised the possibility that it might be inappropriate for a student group to sponsor him. In the future we hope to see more responsibility and sensitivity on the part of the administration, the teachers, the student organizations, and the students themselves.

# HAMEVASER

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# Letters To The Editor

Dear Sir:

I was surprised by Benjamin Samuels' "Warriors in Spirit" (*Hamevaser* 29:1). Why? The protagonists of the piece are the *Haredi* world (opposed to army service), on the one hand, and the anti-religious elements in Israeli society on the other hand. It is only in the very last paragraph of a rather long essay that a third protagonist is introduced: "the religious" (why not *Dati*, parallel to *Haredi*?). He is positioned in such a way that he rejects the only two real options—the *Haredi* and the secular—but has no authentic ideology of his own. Rav Lichtenstein, who is presented as the patron of the "religious," is similarly crowded into a couple of anemic sentences; there was no room at all, apparently, for his halakic rationales. One would hardly guess from your summary that he concludes, (*Tradition* 19:3): "Standing in tears atop Har HaZeitim...what would Ramban have given to head a *Yeshivat Hesder*?"

But my intention is not to quarrel with your presentation of Rav Lichtenstein's essay. What I want to argue — and this goes beyond his position, I'm sure — is that "the religious" occupy a distinct third position. Thus, the *Haredi* option (on this issue and others) is rejected by large segments of the *Dati* world, and on grounds that flow from a different understanding of what it means to be a loyal-God-fearing Jew in Israel. It is seen as simply wrong, and often as self-serving to boot. *Hesder*, thus, is not a compromise but the right way; just as putting on *tefillin* is not a compromise engendered by having a body as well as a soul.

Mr. Samuels is entitled to think that his two protagonists represent the only real options. But if he intends to present the "religious" as they see themselves rather than editorialize about them (perhaps he didn't

realize that this is really what he did, if subtly), he ought to go much deeper into the spiritual experience of modern Israeli life. That experience is not exhausted by *Haredi* Jews and anti-clerical Israelis.

Sincerely,

Gerald J. Blidstein

[Dean, Ben-Gurion University]

Mr. Samuels responds:

Understanding the Israeli Jewish experience requires detailed analysis, especially of those aspects of Israeli society with which we do not agree. In "Warriors in Spirit: Yeshiva Students and the Israeli Draft," I focus on one particular ideology: the *Charedi* view of military service. My analysis examines the deferment process through relevant statistics, political opinions and the halakic considerations. I presented secular and *Hesder* viewpoints not to give them equal space along with the *Charedi* position, but as a backdrop to it. I did not propose to write an in-depth evaluation of all the options available to the religious Israeli youth.

Dr. Blidstein's misinterpretation of my intentions is, in part, due to imprecise terminology in my article. Instead of consistent usage of political catch words (*Dati*, *Charedi*, etc.), I employ ambiguous labels (religious, Israeli, etc.). Thus, for example, in the concluding paragraph of my article, Dr. Blidstein reads "religious" as "*Dati*" (as opposed to *Charedi*) when I mean "religious" to refer to any halakic Jew. Dr. Blidstein's Israeli ear discerns variant terminologies more readily than does an American ear. But that is no excuse for imprecision.

However, Dr. Blidstein's critique is also inaccurate. He fails to see that I give just continued on page 10

# Britain, Israel, and the World

## Lord Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits

Lord Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits has enjoyed a varied and illustrious career in the rabbinate. Serving as Chief Rabbi of Ireland and spiritual leader of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, he distinguished himself as a passionate voice of reason within the Jewish Community. Continuing as Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth and simultaneously member of the British House of Lords, he has guided many Jews worldwide with his strong leadership.

Hamevaser's Howard Sragow and Ronald Ziegler spoke with the Chief Rabbi during his recent visit to the United States. Excerpts from the interview follow.

**Hamevaser:** Is your Chief Rabbinate directed more at observant or non-observant Jews, and would the U.S. benefit from a position such as yours?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** I definitely feel America would benefit from such a position, but I suspect it is a bit too late now to get the necessary sense of cohesion and unity in a highly diversified community such as American Jewry represents. In England, the basis of the Chief Rabbinate is that the office was created before the great influx of newcomers with diverse backgrounds — Chasidim, Mitnagdim, East Europeans, Central Europeans, and so on.

The office was already established by the time the great wave arrived, and so were the main institutions that we have; our Board of Deputies was established much earlier than the influx, the United Synagogue was established earlier, the Chief Rabbinate, Jews' College, and so on. The major institutions, including the Chief Rabbinate, were there on arrival for the enormous wave of immigrants which was much more populous than the indigenous community. They therefore integrated into an existing structure, an existing system, which included a very unique Chief Rabbinate. Here, [in the U.S.], they all arrived to find nothing and so the great influx has split into many divisions — Chasidim, Mitnagdim, Reformers and Orthodox, and it was too late; there was nothing to integrate into on arrival.

So I suspect that while such an office would be of enormous value here in consolidating factions, certainly helping Orthodox cohesion — after all, the Chief Rabbinate in Britain is strictly Orthodox — it cannot be done, it's just not practical because of the enormous diversity.

You ask whether my office is primarily geared toward the observant part or the nonobservant part. In terms of jurisdiction, meaning formal rights that my office enjoys and exercises, it is only Orthodox congregations. We have over two hundred congregations in the country and a few overseas in the Commonwealth, in Australia and New Zealand. According to their constitutions, they recognize my office as their religious authority. So if they want to appoint a Rabbi, they need my agreement. Any major religious issues would land on my desk. I usually do not resolve them on my own; I have a *Beit Din* — halakhic advisors [to assist me]. So these two hundred congregations receive determinations of halakha by way of rulings from the Chief Rabbi.

The rest of the community are under no religious jurisdiction. Obviously, Reform marriages I cannot certify, their appointments I don't certify, but they do traditionally recognize the Chief Rabbi as the religious spokesman of the entire community. So in

terms of outside relations — the Government, the press, non-Jewish religious bodies, they normally would look upon me as their spokesman as well.

**H:** But they would disagree with you on many public policies.

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** Yes, they do. They have tried to contest my spokespersonship from time to time — a few individuals. But in practice, [the Chief Rabbi] is still the religious spokesman for the entire Jewish community.

There are occasions, I'm well aware, when I don't speak for the majority. Let's say I speak of *shemirat Shabbat*. I know I don't represent even my own members — a majority of them are not *Shomer Shabbat*. I am therefore the interpreter, or spokesman, not of Orthodox Jews, but of Orthodox, of Orthodox teachings, and by extension, of Judaism for the whole community. But by and large, there have been no major challenges to the seniority of the religious spokespersonship for the community at large.

I was interviewed recently by the *London Times*. I was involved with making a Jewish claim that the Jewish people ought to be consulted on the future of Germany since we

they give the authorization, as we call it, on their own. But then, in order to have a complete register, they register with our office.

On many matters, we work together. On, for example, educational items that need intervention with the government, they will often come to me and rely on my contacts, sometimes intercession. There are many areas in which we cooperate well together. We fought the battle against the threat that might have existed to prohibit the practice of *shechita* in the traditional way — we fought together. We have consulted together. We sat on a committee over which I presided. We send many of our children to their schools, to right wing schools, including my own grandchildren as well.

Their *raison d'être* is to be *austruit*, is to be secessionists if you like, or what they call independent Orthodoxy, meaning independent from the establishment which I represent. But with my background, which is close to theirs, childhood background, studies background, Yeshiva background, I would not say I have ever been a *persona non grata* with them. But that is largely personal; the office itself is distinct. They are independent of the office.

**H:** We are aware of the Chief Rabbi's successes in using the Chief Rabbinate to advance both Jewish education and Zionism. In what areas has the Chief Rabbi been dissatisfied with his progress and what does he plan to do about it?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** As long as there is a single child who does not receive intensive Jewish education, I am dissatisfied. The fact that we now have got just over 30% of all our children of school age attending Jewish day schools, against the 15% to 16% that I found on arrival 23 years ago, certainly does not make me feel that we have reached our target. I'm not satisfied. Still 70% don't go to Jewish day schools and [do not] get an intensive Jewish education. Nevertheless, our figures are proportionately three times as high as yours here in this country. There are other areas, obviously — *lo alekha ha-melakha ligmor* (it is not incumbent upon you to complete the work) — therefore there is a lot more to be done by my successor in due course, *im yirtzeh Hashem*. I'm far from being complacent about any great areas.

About Zionism... I think we have not yet asserted ourselves on the overall direction of Zionist affairs and the State of Israel that is inspired by Jewish values and by Jewish insights. I think we are — even we, the Orthodox — a secularist body as far as Israel is concerned. We do not apply our uniquely Jewish insights in directing either our Zionism or our Israeli stance, and that to me is still a great *desideratum*, a target to be pursued.

**H:** The Chief Rabbi devotes a major portion of his [autobiographical work] *If Only My People* to correcting misinterpretations of his public statements. Does he at all regret his provocative style of speech which is so open to misunderstanding?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** Of course I regret when people misunderstand me. Obviously I don't intend to be misunderstood. People want to misunderstand me because the views I express are not palatable to them, and so it is easiest to fight me by misrepresenting me. And I do realize that often, I'm often a lone voice or a minority, especially in the Orthodox Rabbinate. I do realize that, *Furfallen* — I can't change my views because many others don't share my views. I respect views that

are different than mine. Unlike them, I've never attacked any of them: not personally and not otherwise. I believe there is validity to their views — which I don't share, but I believe there is validity — and I think we ought to have a greater degree of tolerance in our attitude to one another, and realize that there must be diverse views. There were diverse views between Rabbi Akiva and his *chaverim* on the attitude to *Bar Kochba* which was precisely the same argument that goes on today — between *Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai* and his *concordat* reached with the Romans, as it were, and the opposition. The spiritual leaders of the time didn't agree with him. I think there are historical precedents for these kinds of divisions. Not to mention

the most celebrated episode of all, culminating in the shattering episode of the *melekh ha-mashiach* who was recognized by many leading authorities in the sixteenth century, only to be discarded afterwards as a false Messiah. It has happened that we have had deep-seated divisions in interpreting contemporary events or contemporary personalities. I do not claim *kablu da'at*; I can't claim a monopoly on being right. *Ein le-dayyan ela ma she-einav ro'ot*; I can only interpret things as my own eyes see them and interpret them as best I can.

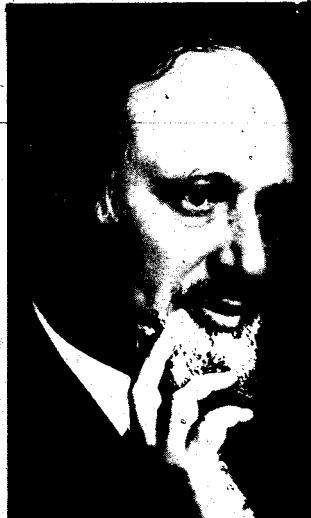
So the fact is that I had to write a book not so much to correct mistakes or mistaken impressions but to present my views in my own words and not in other peoples words, because there had been a lot of distortions in the presentation of my views. Here I want them to see it, black on white, what I did say and what I meant. There isn't a word there that I have reason to regret or to correct. What is there is there and these were my views and I have no regrets whatever about having presented them even though I realize that I went through rough times at certain stages.

I always say, "If I only say things that everybody agrees with I don't need to say them." People already hold these views: what am I needed for? At times I feel that one has to take the guidance of one's conscience even if public opinion doesn't support it and no one more so than *rabbanim* because if we were to ask public opinion on *shemirat Shabbat* or *iahrat ha-niskapcha* we wouldn't get their support either.

**H:** The Chief Rabbi mentioned the need for more tolerance and acceptance of the diversities within the community, but obviously there are limits to this. How aggressive do we have to be in fighting the Reform, especially given that we can reach a situation in several generations where there are large numbers of people who are considered Reform Jews who are actually non-Jews or *mamzerim*?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** Basically, we have to draw a major dividing line between Reform, its teachings, and the Reform Jews. Reform Jews are fellow Jews and I must respect them as such. *Yisrael al pi she'chotet, Yisrael hu*. (A Jew, even though he sins, is still a Jew.) I recognize he is a brother, and fight for his rights; I respect their views as I respect their right to have views. The views themselves I cannot accept or compromise [with]. Reform teachings are a subversion of our tradition and sacred beliefs and that I cannot compromise with, obviously. But once I make this distinction, I think one can live and let live. *Yitamu chata'im min ha-aretz — chata'im* and not *chor'im* (sins, not sinners, should

continued on page 9



Lord Rabbi Jakobovits

were the worst victims of a united Germany. It happens that this did not have directly religious underpinnings. Nevertheless, the bulk of the community would accept this as representing their thinking. There may be individuals, as there were in this case some Reform Rabbis, who would say it doesn't speak for us, but by and large, that problem doesn't arise.

**H:** You said that your authority is accepted by the more liberal element...

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** As spokesman.

**H:** Yes. In America we seem to be plagued besides divisions with those who are more liberal, also with those to the right of us. I understand that there are similar problems in England. How successful have you been in bridging that gap?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** I would not say bridging it. I certainly have very personally close, intimate relations with their leaders, their *Rabbanim*, and their *Beit Din*. There are divisions, as there are bound to be — they have their own *Shechita*, *Kashrut*, and *Beit Din*. We respect that and I acknowledge that. They register their marriages at our office but

# Am Va-Am KiLeshono

## The Case For Hebrew



by Solomon B. Schneider

Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Rebbe: The people of Yehuda who were careful about their [Hebrew] language — their Torah was preserved; the people of the Galil who were not careful about their [Hebrew] language — their Torah was not preserved.

Erwin 53a

Culture, according to the classic definition of Sir Edward Burnett Taylor, is something "acquired by man as a member of society." Language is probably the most important aspect of culture. In fact, culture as a whole is transmitted very largely through language, whether taught explicitly or transmitted implicitly. Language and culture, "form" and "content," are engaged in a dialectic. Thus, to understand a national or ethnic culture, one must understand its language.

Language is a badge of membership in a community, be it geographic, cultural or professional. Quebecois are easily identifiable to each other and distinguishable from Continental French by their dialect, while medical terminology is a distinguishing mark of health professionals around the world. The nationalists of the Berlin *haskala* understood the importance of language as a means of cultural expression and a symbol of national identity. They realized that the Jewish People had invested in Hebrew and in Jewish culture by means of Hebrew, and thus the only way to regain the investment in Jewish culture is to learn Hebrew. They also realized that Hebrew serves as a unifier of Jews across time and space. For these reasons, they championed the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language. As if to prove the importance of Hebrew, they assimilated as soon as they abandoned Hebrew.

Language reflects the philosophical and historical background of concepts in several ways. Words in different languages often embody concepts that appear to be parallel but are actually opposite. For example, the word *tzedaka* stands almost in contrast to the word charity. Charity comes from the Latin *caritas*, dearness; according to this conception, one is charitable because someone or something is dear, and one reacts that way out of the goodness of one's heart. Not surprisingly, then, there is a certain condescension in the word charitable. *Tzedaka*, by contrast, comes from the root *tzdk*, justice; when one gives *tzedaka* one does justice, what one is obligated to do. There is no implication of choice, at least in principle, and no condescension on the part of the giver. This

linguistic difference reflects and perpetuates the distinct approaches to giving in the Jewish and Western cultures.

Language preserves cultural notions in many instances where there is no readily available equivalent in a foreign language. The word *halakha* indicates a concept far broader than the one implicated by the English word law. *Halakha* includes custom but is more inclusive; it signifies a complete system, a way of life. Law, by contrast, is a body of rules prescribed by a controlling authority having the power to enforce its will. It does not include tradition or morality per se, though both may be implicated by the system of law.

Words are repositories of historical experience and thus serve as short-hand references. It would take articles, if not dissertations, to explain concepts such as *kiddush Hashem* and *chillul Hashem* to the uninitiated. Yet, in Hebrew, a few words encapsulate a philosophy on appropriate behavior and, by implication, the role of the Jewish people as a light unto the world. The *Tanakh* implies a different set of experiences and a vastly different point of view than does the "Old Testament" or even the "Bible." Similarly, "Hear O Israel" is not *shema Yisrael*. The English does not incorporate the many interpretations of *shema Yisrael*. Furthermore, precisely because *shema Yisrael* has been used by generations of Jews, "Hear O Israel" has no independent history and lacks the emotional power of the original.

Translation raises obstacles to understanding the primary source. Studying secondary sources is dangerous because the distillation of the primary sources may be inaccurate or incomplete. This is particularly true when, as in literature, both the linguistic form and the content must be preserved. If the secondary source is not in the same language as the primary source, the likelihood increases that concepts and formulations unique to the language of the primary source have been lost.

Furthermore, a text locked in the words of a translation stagnates and loses its dynamism. The translation replaces the original as the primary source and generally begins with a tabula rasa, since the traditions associated with the original text are not carried over in translation. This threatens the authoritativeness and traditions of the original.

As a repository of culture, Hebrew is not unique, since all languages have concepts that cannot be translated properly. Nonetheless, Hebrew is special for the Jewish People because it preserves Jewish concepts and history. Severed from Hebrew, Jewish culture becomes a shade of itself, Jewish identity is weakened and assimilation generally follows. The Jewish community of Alexandria presents a tragically precise example of this phenomenon. The community was affluent and relatively well tolerated, and it succeeded in developing a flowering Jewish culture. It was considered one of the pillars of Jewry. But it chose to make Greek the language of its rites and learning and it replaced the *Tanakh* with the Septuagint, with two primary results. Firstly, Alexandrian Jewry pulled itself out of the flow of Jewish history; while it greatly influenced the rise and development of Christianity, it had little effect on the history and development of Judaism. Of all the Jewish learning in Alexandria, only

the work of Philo remains; it survived only because it was preserved by the Catholic Church. Secondly, Alexandrian Jewry opened the door wide to assimilation. According to Philo's estimate in *Embassy to Caius*, section 36, in his day there were close to one million Jews in Alexandria. Yet, when Cyril and his monks came to eliminate the "unbelievers" in 412 C.E., they found few Jews to liquidate — the Jews had liquidated themselves.

In Germany also, translation aided assimilation. Moses Mendelssohn translated the *Tanakh* into German for the stated purpose of helping his son learn it. But Mendelssohn's disciples adopted it in place of the original, thereby eliminating an important reason for learning Hebrew. In abandoning Hebrew, Mendelssohn's disciples abandoned one of the last marks distinguishing the Germans of the Mosaic Faith from other Germans. Little wonder, then, that by the second generation after Mendelssohn, there were almost no disciples to use the translation because most of them had abandoned Judaism.

A variation of this phenomenon is evident in the assimilation of the Yiddishists such as members of the *Bund* and *Arbeidersing*. Yiddishists like Y. L. Peretz created a culture based on Yiddish which they believed would serve as a bulwark against assimilation. But their Yiddish culture failed to prevent or even slow their assimilation. The speed of their assimilation has baffled scholars. Some scholars point out that the Yiddishists increasingly became detached from the traditional Hebrew sources. For example, some began to write phonetically Yiddish words, like *emes*, originally derived from Hebrew words. Drained of its Hebrew lifeblood, their Yiddish became just another foreign language and could not stem the tide of assimilation.

The North American Jewish communities have adopted several different approaches to Hebrew. Those who advocate assimilating into the surrounding culture correctly see Hebrew as an obstacle to successful assimilation. To the extent that they wish to retain some Jewish identity, they are faced with the reality that they do not know Hebrew and have no access to the primary sources. Thus, in order to study Jewish subjects they must have the sources translated. With some sources translated, there is even less incentive to learn Hebrew. A self-perpetuating cycle discouraging the learning of Hebrew is created. Furthermore, they see the study of Hebrew as a diversion of limited resources better spent on "the basics." They do not comprehend that Hebrew is the most basic of all Jewish Studies because without it there can be no direct access to any of the basic sources. Because it is not based on these sources, their vaunted "Jewish values," the expression of their Jewish identity, ring hollow.

The assimilationists point to the lack of knowledge of Hebrew in the past as evidence that Hebrew is not necessary. But they neglect to point out that those communities which did not know Hebrew, like Alexandria and Germany, were the ones that disappeared. The communities which survived built their learning and Jewish life on Hebrew, even if they were not fluent in Hebrew. Ironically, in believing that Hebrew is not important, the assimilationists ignore the warning of Solomon Schechter that "the lesson [history]

affords us is that the disappearance of the Hebrew language was always followed by assimilation [of the Jews] with their surroundings, and the disappearance of Judaism." (Norman Bentwich, *Solomon Schechter*, p. 291.) Unfortunately, the Americans and Canadians of the Mosaic Faith have proved the accuracy of this warning, as borne out by the high rate of assimilation in North America.

Right wing religious circles in North America maintain a contradictory position with regards to Hebrew. Unlike the assimilationists, they do not believe that texts should be studied in English. On the contrary, their educational institutions emphasize that they teach "it, not about it" and that their approach is based on learning a *blat gemoro innerveinig*. They do not officially sanction the use of Soncino, even though they know that many of their students use it. Indeed, they consider themselves the inheritors of Slobodka, Volozhin and Mir, all of which prided themselves on their study of the primary sources.

If learning primary sources is considered important, it stands to reason that the language in which they are written is important and should be stressed. The language must be mastered as a discipline if it is to be useful in a wide variety of linguistic situations. In contrast, vocabulary learned by rote is useful only in the context in which it was initially learned. Yet, these religious circles disdain teaching Hebrew as a discipline. At best, they consider Hebrew a relatively innocuous way to fulfill a state-imposed foreign language requirement. At worst, they consider it *treif* and in conflict with *yahadus*. They see themselves as the protectors of *Loshen haKoidesh* and *Avrit*, by contrast, as the contaminated and distorted product of the *haskala*. Just as Jewish nationalism is *treif* because its modern incarnation, *tzionut*, was initially formulated by secular Jews, Hebrew is *treif* because it was championed as the vehicle of national expression by those same secular Jews. The ironic result is that the assimilationists reject Hebrew as too Jewish, while at the same time the religious right rejects it as not sufficiently *frum*. But the religious right is trapped in the contradiction of trying to learn in Hebrew while not learning Hebrew. Either the quality of learning will decline to the point of crisis, or resistance to the study of Hebrew will weaken.

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# The Soul Behind the Sefer

by Shmuel Landesman

I am confused. What should my role in life be? Better yet, what should my goal in life be? Ostensibly, my goal in life, as well as that of every other religious Jew, is *avodat Hashem*. Yet, I do not hear too much talk of that around Yeshiva, or elsewhere, for that matter. In a search for answers to my questions, I turned to over fifty fellow students in the *beit midrash*, as well as to several *rebbeim*. I was not attempting to conduct a scientific survey of opinions in Yeshiva University; instead, I was hoping to use the advice of knowledgeable peers and teachers to help resolve these issues.

Most students I consulted with believed that one's goal in life should be proper *avodat Hashem*. Attainment of this goal, according to the students, could take the form of coming closer to God, developing religiously, and helping others reach these same heights. Though a few expressed the desire for successful careers, they, like most others, stressed the importance of learning and their hopes to become *talmeidei chachamim*.

It might seem that the best means for coming closer to God would be the studying of Gemara. Yet, viewing my experiences in Y.P. *shiurim*, I notice that days—if not weeks—go by without the mention of God. Still, there have been times when I have gotten a spiritual high from *shiur*. Gemara and *lomdus* can give me the feeling of a special connection to God. Although I cannot explain it, I do sense that others feel the same way.

Nevertheless, when I reflect upon my own learning, I genuinely feel that I benefit more from the study of *Mussar*, *Hata'at*, and *Chumash*. Rambam cites the attainment of "*yedi'at Hashem*" (knowledge of God) as the reason for learning, and most of my "*yedi'at Hashem*" stems not from Gemara, but from these alternative forms of learning.

Yet, it seems that almost all *talmeidei chachamim* devote the majority of their time to Gemara and *iyun*. In fact, one can get the feeling at times from the yeshiva world that God only loves people who can spit forth "Reb Chaim's". Certainly *yeshivish shachchanim* can come across that way. Therefore, I again turned to others, to find out why they devoted so much of their time to Gemara. The most common response was that Gemara represents the Revealed Will of Hashem; therefore, not only is it essential to full knowledge of Judaism, but its study offers the best way to attain a closeness to God. On a halakic level, the Gemara contains the decisions concerning the laws of Hashem upon which we base our conduct, while it likewise offers the lifestream of *hashkafa* and Jewish thought. Some students stressed the role of Gemara as part of the *massora*, while many said that they find it both intellectually

stimulating and spiritually uplifting. Rabbi Blau added that, of course, *talmud Torah* is an independent religious value regardless of its effects.

When I asked Rabbi Schachter why the *talmidim* should learn Gemara, he replied that many of the *talmidim*, in fact, should not. One must first have a familiarity with *Tanakh*, *Mishna*, and *Halakha* before delving into Gemara. Rabbi Schachter added that men should complain that their curriculum is not as well-grounded in the basics of Judaism as is that of women.

In many Litvische *yeshivot*, *Mussar* study has traditionally complemented Talmudic study. To my surprise, at YU, all four of the Bible professors I spoke with, and about half the students, learn *Mussar* regularly. Of those students who do not, many regret their lack of *Mussar* study, though one student and a couple of *mushmachim* were actually opposed to such study. One student added the need for studying *Chasidut*.

Among the reasons for the popularity of *Mussar* is the feeling among students that it helps one counter negative influences that society may place on him and instead afford him a proper perspective on his purpose in life. *Mussar* study is found to be particularly useful in the area of *mitzvot Bein adam le-chavero* as well as in the recognition of certain responsibilities of a Jew that are not fully expressed in the Gemara or that involve the spirit of the law. Rabbi Schachter said that since he does not have time to review the *Gemaras* that talk about *yirat shamayim*, he turns to *Mussar* works.

While *Mussar* study appears to be a popular instrument in improving a student's *avodat Hashem*, I searched for additional avenues towards that goal. On a basic level, many students stressed the need for better *davening* and more learning. Others pointed out that they would like to simply think more about fundamental issues, while yet others felt the need to better integrate what they have learned from texts and *rebbeim*. Certain students advised spending more time helping others as well as setting attainable goals in one's striving towards greater *avodat Hashem*. From a different perspective, a *talmid* who has recently lost a close relative told me that only as a result of going through such an experience will one properly think through this issue.

As a yeshiva student, I wanted to understand the role of a yeshiva and how it relates to improved *avodat Hashem*. In fact, Rabbi Moshe Eisman of Ner Israel feels that a *talmid's* primary reason for attending a yeshiva should be not to learn, per se, but rather to grow in *avodat Hashem*. Many students I spoke with shared his feeling.

Some *rebbeim* offered fascinating insights into the purpose of a *yeshiva gedola*. Rabbi Mayer Schiller, for example, stated that it



is only in a yeshiva that a Jew can come to know what God demands of him. Rabbi Mordechai Tendler offered three purposes for Yeshiva: to impart the *shakhelet ha-kabbala*; to give students tools to continue mature intellectual learning even after they leave the yeshiva; and to expose students to a high level of observance so that they will also act this way.

Rabbi Blau said that today's *yeshiva gedola* serves a dual purpose. Though the primary activity in *yeshivot* is learning, *yeshivot* have, in fact, taken on the function of maintaining the current religious commitment of their students. If not for their existence, the students would go to a secular college, and universities present overwhelming challenges to religious values.

Since *Mussar* study seems to serve to improve *avodat Hashem*, the vast majority of my respondents felt that an official *Mussar seder* in Y.U. would have a beneficial effect on the general level of the yeshiva. But while most students favored this approach, quite a few considered the implementation of such a program impractical. Still, most felt that a *Mussar seder* would spur ethical and moral growth among the students, while some stressed its special need in YU due to what they perceive to be improper *hashkafot* presented in some college courses.

A couple of Bible professors thought *Mussar* study should be part of the college curriculum, while Rabbi Carmy thought there should be a non-obligatory *Mussar seder*. Rabbi Mayer Schiller, when asked for his opinion regarding a *Mussar seder*, replied, "Anything, anything. *Ribbono shel Olam*, anything. Even depressing Litvische *Mussar*."

Students suggested additional methods for enhancing the *avodat Hashem* at Yeshiva. Many students were quite vehement about the need for better *Rebbe-Talmid* relationships. In addition, some would like a more serious atmosphere on the campus and more administrative support for learning. One student even favors a mandatory wake-up, *minyan*, and night *seder*.

The *Ro'shei Yeshiva* had much to say concerning this issue. One, who wished to remain anonymous, feels that there are tremendous structural flaws in YU because it only teaches textual skills, with no program for developing the wholeness of the student. There is no *hadrakha*. This is a special problem for YU *talmidim*, who come from modern (possibly non-Torah emphasizing) backgrounds and face a Torah U-Madda challenge. Another anonymous Rosh Yeshiva said we are fighting the wrong battle. The adversary is neither right-wing nor left-wing Orthodoxy, or even secular culture. Rather, it is American hedonism, which must be fought "tooth and nail." This, he added, has nothing to do with Torah u-Madda.

Rabbi Schiller expressed similar feelings, saying that "the people in charge must realize and act upon the obvious axiom that the purpose of Yeshiva is to bring about faith in and practice of God's Torah. Anything that detracts from or lowers that must be opposed. In YU, we must confront honestly and courageously the dozens of compromises with basic halakha that the masses of Modern Orthodoxy all too contentedly engage in."

Finally, Rabbi Blau pointed out the lack of "*varmkeit*" (warmth) at Yeshiva. There are simply not enough mechanisms of helping those who are floundering.

So, where does all this leave me? I was deeply inspired by the sincerity, idealism, and spirituality of the *talmidim* I interviewed. I felt deeply moved. I received a clarification of ideas with regard to the study of Gemara and I saw a strong commitment to *Mussar* study, *tikkun ha-middot*, and thinking about life, an one's goals. I also perceived anger towards the campus atmosphere outside the *beit midrash* and the lack of personal attention from *rebbeim*. As suggested by some, a partial remedy for these problems would be the hiring of more *meshgichim*.

Rabbi Mayer Schiller mentioned to me that his goal in life is to serve God and bring a little joy into the world. May that be mine as well.

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These religious circles are often heard to claim that they teach what they need, *Loshen haKodesh*, not what they do not, *Ivrit*. On a linguistic level, this reasoning is flawed. Language must be learned as a whole and in a systematic manner. Learning only vocabulary is like learning only simple addition and subtraction. A language is a unity; an academic subset of a language cannot maintain an independent existence outside the context of the language as a whole. In practice, artificial distinctions are not long maintained. The taint of *Ivrit* spreads to *Loshen haKodesh* and both are abandoned.

The religious institutions point to their graduates, who generally have a strong sense of Jewish identity and a good, albeit

secondary, understanding of Jewish texts, as evidence that the teaching of Hebrew is unnecessary. In contrast to the assimilationists, whose students generally have an attenuated sense of Jewish identity, their record is quite good in this regard. But this does not answer the questions raised by not teaching Hebrew. The measure of education is whether the student can stand on his or her own, applying skills to new situations. Learning by rote is inefficient because in each situation the student must begin textually from *alef*, whereas otherwise he or she could expend more effort on the material itself. It is not coincidental that in Israel, where these language-related difficulties do not exist, the overall level of learning is much higher. There is no necessary correlation between time and effort devoted and the acquisition of learning

skills; if the method of teaching does not allow students independently to acquire learning skills, years of bench-pressing will not make up for this qualitative lack. Admittedly, some *kollel* boys, after many years of study, reach the level they should have attained, and which *dati* and *charedi* students in Israel regularly attain, by age eighteen. That most *kollel* boys and virtually all other students do not reach this level is proof of the failure of the North American religious educational system.

Without language skills, the students of these *yeshivos* in Boro Park and Williamsburg are learning texts *more* or less by rote. Thus, it is difficult to take too seriously the claims that the students can learn *Shulchan Arukh* or difficult texts. The existence of many Artscroll translations, written primarily for the religious right in all areas of *halakha*,

*hashkafa*, *drush* and *parshanut hamikra*, is an indication that many of the students cannot read most Hebrew texts. *Peyutim* and other difficult texts are certainly beyond the capability of most because they do not have sufficient backgrounds in Hebrew to analyze unfamiliar textual styles.

Israeli institutions produce much scholarship in all areas of Jewish Studies, making Israel the center of Jewish learning. The *charedi* community in Israel is generating a vast literature in the area of *mussar* and biographies of *gedolim*, who are held up as figures to be emulated. Israel is also home to a thriving *charedi* press, including periodicals and newspapers such as *Yated Ne'eman* and *HaModia*. All of this scholarship and popular literature, most of which will likely

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# Bishop Pawns Religion

## Desmond Tutu's Recent Visit to Israel

by Benjamin Samuels

Exercising his mind, the political strategist stares at sixteen men poised on a field of sixty-four alternately colored squares. He permutes possible maneuvers along the ranks and files—the eight horizontal and vertical rows of the chessboard. Each move demands his intelligence, foresight and courage. He must cunningly guide his opponent's principal piece, the King, into inescapable capture. The word "checkmate," combining two Persian roots *Shah*, "king," and *mat*, "dead," underscores the game's seriousness. Chess is a contest that begins in equality, but ends in conquest: White versus Black.

At the southern tip of Africa, whites and blacks continue to play political chess, but the game is rigged. By minimizing Black's political power through apartheid, the White minority government transforms Black's royal pieces into pawns. With segregation laws, White restricts Black's movement to dark squares: the homelands. The South African government deactivates threatening pieces by moving them from the game board to jail. In order to equalize the sides, Desmond Tutu of Cape Town, the Anglican Archbishop of Southern Africa, pawns religion to reinforce Black's weak position.

The 1984 Nobel peace laureate chose Christmas time in Jerusalem and Bethlehem to deliver a message of support for Palestinian statehood. "Denouncing injustice is for us a religious duty and not a political act," Tutu explained. "The land that gave birth to the Prince of Peace is racked by violence, hatred, and hostility." The Archbishop, however, confuses religion with politics. In an interview with the Hebrew daily *Ha-Aretz* just prior to his visit, Tutu lambasted Israel for supplying Pretoria with "techniques for putting down mass unrest." In Israel, at a meeting with journalists at St. George's Cathedral in East Jerusalem, Tutu again referred to Israeli not control in his observations on the *intifada*: "In the methods of resistance used by Palestinians, and in the ways the Israeli Government deals with resistance, we experience an extraordinary sense of being at home." The Archbishop condemned all violence, but added that the brunt of his censure must fall upon the Israelis—"those who break bones and who use bullets."

In his Christmas mass sermon in Beit Sahur, a Christian village near Bethlehem, Tutu continued to mix religion and politics. He preached: "What is happening on the West Bank and Gaza could, by just changing the names, describe what is happening in South Africa." If blacks are gradually defeating oppression in South Africa, he continued, the Palestinians can beat the Israeli occupation.

Archbishop Tutu also said that he chose to celebrate Christmas in Israel to reaffirm that "we bear no animosity to the Jewish people." Yet Tutu refused to schedule meetings with Israeli Government leaders except for the Minister of Religious Affairs. He also declined to meet with a delegation of Ethiopian Jews who wanted to acquaint "their fellow black African with the story of their *ahava* immigration to Israel."

Tutu scorns the Jewish State for allying itself with South Africa. Tutu, however, forgets that Israeli affinity for South Africa began after black Africa rejected Israel. During the 1950's and 1960's, Israel partic-

ipated in a massive aid campaign for African countries. Israel sent over 1500 experts to Africa to provide educational, medical, and agricultural assistance. Israel granted eleven black African states economic assistance; it supplied ten with military aid. But when political pressure from Arab oil suppliers intensified following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, eight African states quickly severed diplomatic relations with Israel. After the 1973 war, twenty-two others followed suit.

When France initiated an arms embargo against Israel after the 1967 war, South Africa was one of the only countries willing to help resupply Israel's depleted arsenal. A full scale trade agreement shortly followed helping boost both countries' economies. Currently, Pretoria proves to be a multi-million dollar boon to Israeli arms manufacturers, thus playing a significant role in the development of Israel's defense industry.

Tutu has long criticized Israel for its political ties with Pretoria. In Johannesburg, June 1985, the Archbishop vocalized his sentiments to Shimshon Zelikner, the head of social studies at the Labor Party college Beit Berel. Zelikner met with Tutu to discuss Israel's foreign policy toward South Africa. Tutu spoke of his "abhorrence of the Jewish monopoly of the Holocaust"—that is, Jews' ignoring or downplaying the suffering of other people. Tutu said that he did not understand Israel's insensitivity to apartheid, which he compared to Nazism. He also drew an analogy between the racial situation in South Africa and Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in the West Bank. Tutu repeated his remarks in San Francisco, January 1986, at a breakfast sponsored by the American Jewish Congress.

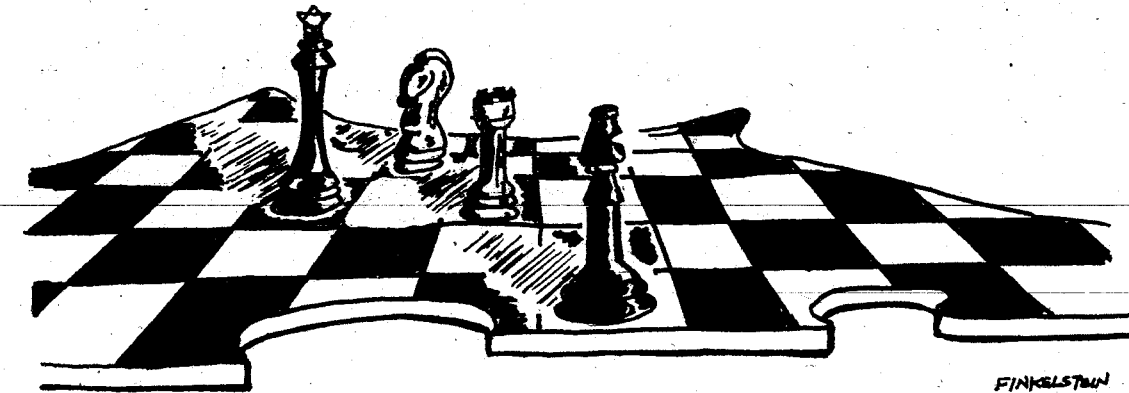
During his recent visit to Israel, however, Tutu surpassed all previous invective by exhibiting both political courage and personal insensitivity in his remarks at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial. After placing a wreath in Memorial Hall, and studying photographs of concentration camps and their skeletal Jewish inmates, Tutu entreated Israelis to pray for and forgive those responsible for the Nazi genocide: "Our Lord would say that in the end the positive thing that can come is the spirit of forgiving, not forgetting...We pray for those who made it happen, help us to forgive them and help us, so that we in our turn will not make others suffer." Archbishop Tutu, the non-violent opponent of apartheid, argued that the Jews should forgive the Nazis because Israel maintains ties with a Nazi-like government, because the Jews themselves act like Nazi oppressors to the Palestinians.

Anglican Church officials insisted that the Archbishop's comments should not offend Jewish sensibilities: the remarks exemplify the Christian doctrine of forgiveness of adversaries. Jews, however, do not believe in turning the other cheek. Elie Wiesel, the 1986 Nobel peace laureate, was quick to chastise Tutu: "No one has the right to forgive except the dead themselves," Wiesel said, "and the dead were killed and silenced by their murderers."

Stronger reaction came from Rabbi Marvin Hier, Dean of the Los Angeles Simon Wiesenthal center, the largest Holocaust institute in the United States: "Bishop Tutu showed the arrogance of an ancient crusader who had come to Yad Vashem with a bag full of Christian morality...The Bishop surely

knows where that Christian conscience was when millions of Jews and others suffered at the hands of the Nazis." The International Christian Embassy, a group of Christian fundamentalists, apologized for Tutu's remarks which show "so much horrible anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish bias that still persists in our Christian ranks."

Whether or not traditional antisemitism motivated Bishop Tutu's remarks remains open to speculation. His unfeeling affront to Jewish sensitivities and his projection of South African racial problems onto Israel, however, undeniably signify a distorted world view. One can understand why Tutu sees the world through South African eyes, why conflicts and crises around the world naturally remind him of apartheid. But a purblind analysis of world events is wrong, obtuse, and dangerous.



One can also empathize with a clergyman's struggle for social justice. Bishop Tutu sincerely believes it his religious obligation to speak out against Israel: "We are aware that the Israeli Government is very sensitive over suggestions that it treats Palestinians the way the South African Government has treated black South Africans. But our faith compels us to state what we perceive to be the truth and to speak up for justice everywhere, whether in South Africa, the rest of Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, or China." Tutu's analogy, however, not only insults Israel, it also offends the truth.

An honest appraisal of Israeli and South African politics verifies that Israeli security measures cannot be compared to apartheid. The South African government administers a legalized system of discrimination against its black citizens. The Israeli government exercises no such racist policies toward the Palestinians. Israel does not treat Palestinians differently because of their Arab descent. Israeli Arabs enjoy the same rights as their Jewish counterparts. Palestinians, however, are not Israeli citizens. They inhabit territory conquered by Israel in a war of self-defense.

Until the outbreak of the *intifada*, Palestinians lived under a relatively benign occupation. Recent restrictions imposed on the Palestinians issue solely out of justifiable security concerns. The Palestinians continue to show themselves to be enemies of the State of Israel. They proceed to employ terrorism and belligerent defiance in their ongoing war against a Jewish presence in the Middle East.

Israel's association with South Africa also does not demonstrate support for apartheid, but rather reflects practical political considerations. Israel denounces South African opposition groups, not out of racial prejudice, but because of their antagonistic attitudes toward the Jewish State. The Soviet Union finances the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress; the PLO trains them. A PLO spokesman explained that "it is necessary for the PLO and the liberation movements in southern Africa to work together" because "we are convinced that the collapse of the South African system will lead to the destruction of the Zionist state in the Middle-East." According to ANC leader Oliver Tambo, the feeling is mutual: "By definition their struggle is ours. Every victory they win advances our cause against the forces of imperialism and racism."

Maintaining relations with South Africa, on the other hand, creates a no-win situation for Israel. Eric Lee, a prominent left-wing Israeli intellectual, implores Israel to resist political pressures to boycott Pretoria on the grounds that "the movement for sanctions against South Africa may be a prelude to similar campaigns against other 'racist' and unpopular regimes, such as the 'colonialist Zionist entity in Palestine.'" Other critics claim that sustaining political ties with Pretoria makes it more difficult for Israel to persuade the world to believe there is no connection between Zionism and racism. After all, the infamous U.N. resolution 3379, passed in November 1975, equating Zionism with racism, condemns "the unholy alliance between South African racism and Zionism."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu must have played a lot of chess in training for his political priesthood. Invoking religion for political ends, Bishop Tutu, like his counterpart in chess, does not move up and down the ranks and files. He traverses the board diagonally, slipping in and out of political confrontations. With his bichromatic vision, Tutu sees world events positioned on a single chessboard, everything in black and white. Thus, for his latest move in his battle against apartheid, Tutu champions the Palestinian cause. Perhaps for Christmas Bishop Tutu should have visited a political optometrist instead of East Jerusalem. Then, just maybe, he would be able to see that the "game" in Israel is not the same as it is in South Africa.

# Divide Or Conquer:

## The Halakhic Dispute Over Territorial Concession

by Mitchel Benuck

by Mitchel Benuck

Discussion and debate regarding the possibility of territorial concessions by Israel as part of a Middle East peace plan has persisted in two seemingly disparate arenas: political and halakhic. While the practical aspects of any halakhic question undoubtedly weigh heavily in a final decision, the decision process itself generally remains the exclusive domain of authorized rabbis. Yet, a recent exposition by Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef (*Yated Ne'eman* 17 Av 5749, pp. 4-5, 12) suggests that the permissibility of a transaction of land for peace hinges not only upon rabbinical analysis, but upon political and military expertise as well.

On a general level, there exist two separate biblical injunctions which prohibit a Jew from

Zara 20a). Rambam, for one, considers the prohibition against sale of land effective regardless of Israel's stature *vis a vis* its neighbors. Furthermore, Rabad does not voice an objection analogous to the one mentioned above, perhaps implying that he too accepts its application to any non-Jew. The Tur, however, maintains that this commandment also relates only to idol worshippers, leaving the door open for permissible sales to Ishmaelites (*Choshen Mishpat* 249). Still, it seems that most authorities would admit that the transfer of land from a Jew to a gentile amounts to an infraction of at least one biblical commandment (if not two - see Chazon Ish, *Hilkhot Avodat Kohanim* 65:1).

Nevertheless, Rabbi J. D. Bleich (*Contemporary Halakhic Problems* II, 189-221) suggests that the discussion of territorial concessions may not relate to this precept at all, depending upon how one defines the scope of the prohibition. A narrow, literal interpretation of this law would ban only actual sales of land. Transfer of national sovereignty, however, does not reflect a transfer of ownership; material possession of the land would remain in the hands of the individual inhabitants. Under such an interpretation, cession of land would not constitute a "sale" in the literal sense of the term, and would therefore be exempt from the constraints of a halakha which specifically forbids the sale of land from a Jew to a non-Jew. Alternatively, the interdiction of "*lo techanem*" may include any action which enhances the permanence of a foreign power on Israeli soil. Rabbi Betzalel Zolti argues that "political sovereignty assuredly carries with it an element of domiciliary permanence" (qtd. in Bleich, 218), and he considers territorial concessions a violation of this commandment on those grounds.

Furthermore, in the current situation a second factor dwarfs the significance of *lo techanem*: the circumstance of *sakanat nefeshot* - a life-threatening situation. Our Rabbis teach us that a situation involving *sakanat nefeshot* temporarily suspends all commandments except for the three cardinal sins (idolatry, adultery and incest, and homicide), as the Torah says, "*va-chai bahem*" (Lev. 18:5) - one should live by the commandments, not die by them (Yoma 85b). Thus, says Rabbi Yosef, if the heads of both state and military determine that the present circumstances pose an immediate danger to the people of Israel, and this danger would be eliminated by relinquishing control of the territories, all halakhic authorities would permit such a transaction for the sake of preserving lives.

Indeed, all authorities might unanimously agree that one may violate the ban of *lo techanem* in the face of *sakanat nefeshot*. Before permitting the transfer of territorial rights, however, the suspension of the commandments provided by *sakanat nefeshot* might need to hurdle one more obstacle: the *milchemet mitzva* - the imperative to conquer Israel as our homeland.

The Torah commands (Num. 33:53), "*ve-horashitem et ha'aretz vijshavtem bah*" - "And you shall take possession the land and you shall dwell therein." In his commentary to Rambam's *Sefer Hamitzvot*, Rambam contends that this verse constitutes a biblical commandment (*Mitzvot Asseh*, no. 4). He identifies four separate obligations mandated

by this precept: 1) to conquer the land by force (this verse would therefore serve as a biblical source for *milchemet mitzva*), 2) to live in the land, 3) to avoid establishing a homeland in any land other than Israel, and 4) to settle the land in its entirety, leaving no portion of it either uninhabited or occupied by other nations.

The *Minchat Chinukh* (no. 425) points out that the Torah commands us to fight mandatory wars both for the sake of conquering Israel and for the elimination of Amalek. Our Rabbis teach, however, that a state of mortal danger suspends all the commandments except for the three cardinal sins. It would therefore follow that in circumstances of *sakanat nefeshot*, there exists no obligation to fight a war which entails a life-threatening risk. He then asks, how might we reconcile the obligation to wage war, which usually necessitates human sacrifice, with the biblical appeal of "*va-chai bahem*?" He answers that since the nature of war requires one to endanger his life, part of any biblical obligation to wage war inherently demands human sacrifice. Because mortal danger must be incurred during proper performance of this *mitzva*, a situation of *sakanat nefeshot* obviously does not suspend this obligation. We can conclude from this analysis that if there currently exists a biblical obligation to conquer Israel, *sakanat nefeshot* would not justify any leniency with regard to its fulfillment. We now must ask: does such an obligation exist?

The status of the commandment "*ve-horashitem et ha'aretz*" - biblical or rabbinic - has been the subject of intense debate for centuries. We have already mentioned the position of Rambam, who enumerates it as one of the 613 precepts. Rambam, however, omits this commandment from his tally. Many commentators have suggested explanations for this omission. Rabbi Isaac de Leon, in *Megillat Esther* (his commentary on the *Sefer Hamitzvot*), links the Rambam's exclusion to the three oaths God forced upon the Jews and the nations of the world following the destruction of the temple (Ketubot 111a). One of these oaths, that of "*she-lo ya'alu ba-khoma*," forbade them from reconquering Israel by force. He suggests that Rambam considers this oath halakhically binding, thereby disallowing the fulfillment of this precept. Thus, while the generation responsible for the original conquest may have been divinely obligated, the vow of *she-lo ya'alu ba-khoma* nullified the commandment for future generations.

Would Rambam recognize this oath as halakhically binding as well? To answer this question, Rabbi Yosef quotes a responsum from the Rashbash (no. 2): "There is no question that dwelling in Israel constitutes [the fulfillment of] an important precept in any era, and my master and elder the Rambam counted it as a positive admonition...However, this precept does not bind all Jews in this exile, but it is still counted, as our Sages said that this is from the oaths which our God, blessed be He, caused the people of Israel to swear...*she-lo ya'alu ba-khoma*." Rabbi Yosef infers from this passage that even Rambam would admit that the commandment to conquer the land does not apply during the exile, for such a mission would violate the oath. Without a divine commandment to endanger one's life in order to wage this war, circumstances of *sakanat*

*nefeshot* would then permit the return of territory, regardless of other potential transgressions.

Rabbi Bleich arrives at a similar conclusion. He differentiates, within Rambam's fourfold understanding of the divine commandment, between two types of obligations: individual and communal. The requirement to live in Israel, for example, binds every Jew as an individual, while the requirements to conquer and settle every part of Israel obviously demand the efforts of an entire community. The oath, argues Rabbi Bleich, pertains only to those aspects of the precept which bind the community as a whole. Therefore, Rambam could maintain that while the verse "*ve-horashitem et ha'aretz*" constitutes a divine obligation for the individual to live in Israel even today, the oath of *she-lo ya'alu ba-khoma* invalidated its communal obligations for the present generation.

Thus, both Rabbi Yosef and Bleich say there exists no biblical mandate to conquer Israel today, even according to Rambam. Rabbi Yosef concludes: "If it should become clear beyond any doubt that peace would result from the return of the territories, and that conversely, there exists an immediate danger of war if we do not return the territories, we should return them; for no item stands in the face of mortal danger." At this point, determination of the precise risk entailed in each scenario becomes critical to the halakhic question. Both rabbis entrust the government to issue this judgment, and stand prepared to give a definitive ruling based on its determination.

Many authorities contest certain assumptions inherent in this argument. First, many dispute the contention that the oaths described in the Talmud merit halakhic consideration. Numerous scholars have felt that the oath "*she-lo ya'alu ba-khoma*" was never halakhically binding. Others claim that though the oath originally carried halakhic weight, recent events have rendered it powerless. For example, Rabbi Herschel Schachter (J. of *Halacha and Contemporary Society* XVI, p. 88) quotes the *Ohr Sameach*, who claims that the Balfour Declaration, which fulfilled the obligation of *ve-horashitem et ha'aretz* through peaceful means, absolved the Jews of the oath of *she-lo ya'alu ba-khoma*. Rabbi Aaron Schreiber further points out that none of the "authoritative Jewish Law Codes" include the oaths as halakha (J. of *Halacha* in *Contemporary Society* XVIII, p. 85). Having dismissed the authority of this oath, one might argue that Rambam's biblical commandment to conquer Israel by force remains binding today, and would consequently override the concern of *sakanat nefeshot*.

In addition, even if the divine commandment of "*ve-horashitem et ha'aretz*" no longer applies, its absence may not preclude the possibility of waging a *milchemet mitzva* today. Our Rabbis state that waging an obligatory war differs from waging a permissible war in that an obligatory war needs no authorization from the High Court. Rabbi Schachter quotes a responsum of the *Chatam Sofer* (*Choshen De'ah* 10) which utilizes this distinction in an original manner. He contends that other nations, lacking courts of status comparable to that of the Jewish *Sanhedrin*, cannot wage a permissible war, as none of their authorities could properly

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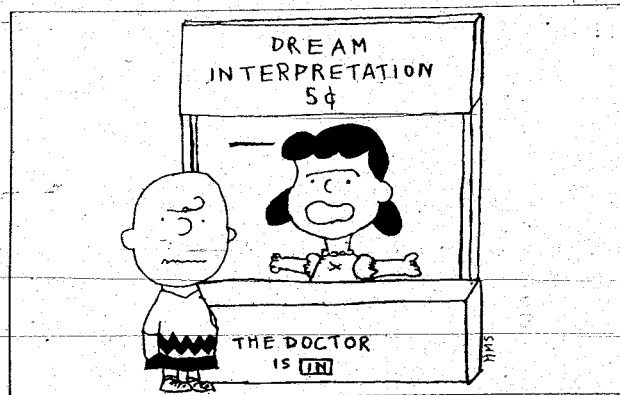
# Joseph: Rising to Humility

by Jonathan Koschitzky

First impressions forge indelible marks in our minds. Therefore, the Torah's weak introduction of Joseph appears problematic. Despite his father's favoritism, and perhaps because of it, we find difficulty empathizing with young Joseph. The Torah seems to emphasize his immaturity. He informs on his brothers, provokes them with his ambitious dreams, and remains oblivious to their hatred. Although we detect a certain blind innocence in these actions, they still disturb us. In the absence of any countervailing positive deeds, Joseph's entrée positively leaves us with a bad taste in our mouths. This is further troubling in light of Joseph's promised future. What character trait merited such future recognition? We expect God's chosen ruler to wear a robe of the purest strain, untainted by ambiguous stains in personality.

In direct contrast to this, at the peak of his life, Joseph indeed reveals virtues of majestic proportion. He inspires us with his compassion and humility toward his brothers. He consoles them for selling him to Egypt and not heeding his dreams: "Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you" (Genesis 45:5). How did this arrogant young boy, who engendered his brothers' hatred, transform himself into a humble ruler, able to forgive those same brothers for their terrible crime against him? What brought about this striking metamorphosis of Joseph's character? Perhaps the years that Joseph spent away from home and the maturity that age itself brings induced this development. Yet, Chazal imply that Joseph's evolution was not an entirely natural one, but one initiated and meticulously organized by divine will. On the verse "And Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father" (Genesis 37:2), Rashi enumerates the three sins of which Joseph falsely accused his brothers: calling the maidservants' sons slaves, eating *ever min ha-chai*, and behaving licentiously. Rashi, like the *midrash*, adds that Joseph was fittingly punished for all three of these claims: he himself was sold as a slave, his brothers celebrated his demise by eating meat which had been properly slaughtered, and his own sexual morality was tested by Potiphar's wife in Egypt (Yerushalmi Peah 1). Superficially, this *midrash* represents nothing more than poetic justice. Yet, what underlies it are two fundamental attitudes Chazal espoused regarding the Torah's account of Joseph's life. First, the narrative is multi-dimensional. That is, the specific events anticipating the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams were meaningful both in the grand scheme of leading *Benei Yisrael* to Egypt and on the personal level as well. Second, and more important for our discussion, is that their particular significance was in perfecting certain deficiencies in Joseph's character. With this in mind, we must attempt to observe the details in Joseph's life from this newfound perspective, focusing on their consequences to him as an individual.

From the outset, Joseph probably regarded himself as a chosen child, and with good reason. The Torah repeats numerous times that he was "well-built and handsome," and apparently, Joseph was aware of it. On the phrase "and he was a youth," *Bereishit Rabbah* (84) comments: "Joseph was seventeen and he was still a youth (*na'ar*)? Rather,



that he would partake in youthful activities (*ma'aseh na'arut*), fixing his eyes, walking proudly, and fixing his hair." Furthermore, Jacob did not hide his favoritism; even God made no attempt to hide his royal future. Thus, Joseph began thinking that he was inherently superior to his brothers, wholly deserving of the privileged status he presently enjoyed and was promised for the future. His behavior toward his brothers, especially his informing on them to their father, can therefore be explained not as spiteful acts of hatred, but as manifestations of his overabundant self-righteousness, continually encouraged by his circumstances.

While moderate confidence and pride form the foundation of good leadership, in excess they are both distasteful and undesirable. It therefore became necessary for Joseph to radically alter his self-perception before meriting his role as ruler of the nation of Israel. Before seeing the fulfillment of his future, it was vital for our dreamer to first see himself. His mirror — twenty-two tumultuous years.

Ironically, Joseph attains this power of vision through his very blindness. What presumably tormented our young visionary during those years of travail was his ability to see his goal yet not his means. He knew that he was to become king, and so all the more devastating it must have appeared as his every step seemed to lead in the opposite direction. Instead of ruling his brothers, he was debased by them. Instead of donning royal robes, he was stripped of his own ornamental tunic. Instead of rising to power, he fell into slavery. This complete reversal of his expectations terrified him, probably leading him to doubt his charmed nature for the first time, and to question whether he indeed was destined for glory.

Yet, incredibly, Joseph refused to submit to these distressing thoughts, confidently applying himself to the arduous climb from the pit where his brothers had left him for dead to become chief steward in Potiphar's house. Was Joseph's good fortune a sign that he had learned his lesson, and now, as a more humble individual, he was ready to fulfill God's mission? His next plummet, at the hands of Potiphar's wife, discredits this hypothesis. Although we could explain that this second fall was merely a result of circumstances, a closer look at the verses hints that Joseph had provoked this fall.

Interestingly, the Torah prefaces the narrative of Joseph's enticement with the verse: "Now Joseph was well-built and

handsome" (Genesis 39:6). Although this could be excused as a foreshadowing of Potiphar's wife's attraction to him, the *midrash* again chooses to interpret this as a comment on Joseph's character. *Bereishit Rabbah* (86) states: "...This is similar to a warrior who was standing in the marketplace fixing his eyes, arranging his hair and walking haughtily, proclaiming 'I am the mightiest.' So they replied to him, 'If you are mightiest, then here is the bear to pounce upon you.'" Clearly, Chazal perceived Joseph's pride as precipitating this second collapse. Fittingly, Joseph loses his clothes again (left in Potiphar's wife's hands) and is cast into jail, emphasizing for Joseph the complete reversal of his fortune (see Rabbi Shalom Carmy, *Enayim Latorah, Vayeshev* 5750).

However, Joseph's indomitable will remains intact even after this second disappointment. He perseveres, still confident that he can fulfill his dreams. Befriending Pharaoh's two servants in hope of obtaining high-placed connections, appeared to be a foolproof plan. Unfortunately, once again, what Joseph had devised was not precisely what God had willed: "And the wine-steward did not remember Joseph, and he forgot him." Rashi, viewing this as an intentional delay aimed at disciplining Joseph, makes a perturbing comment: "...And he forgot him: because Joseph trusted in him (the minister) to remember him, he was required to remain two years in prison as it says: 'Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust, and looks not to the proud'" (Rashi, Genesis 40:33).

Was Joseph expected to sit back and wait for a miracle? Why should God have punished him for attempting to save himself from this terrible situation? This time, Joseph apparently had done nothing to prompt such a response.

Perhaps, we could presume that he had not actually sinned this time, but it was necessary that Joseph not have any hand in his own final salvation. In order to completely metamorphose, it was essential that Joseph's final redemption come from the depths of despair, when even he saw no way out. Joseph did not realize this gradually with each setback, for after each one he regained his confidence and prevailed. The realization jumped at him suddenly, as he unexpectedly found himself standing before Pharaoh. In the space of one verse, we witness the complete reversal of Joseph's fortune: "And they hurried him from the pit, and he shaved, and changed his tunic and came to Pharaoh" (Genesis 41:14). God discharges him from the

*bor* (pit) that his brothers had cast him into nearly twenty years ago. He regains his stolen garments and finds himself standing before the king. Every previous attempt he had made to fulfill his dreams had ended in failure. Only when he believed that there was nothing more he could do, did his dreams finally become realized. Joseph finally understood that his greatness did not come from within, but from above. The position was not selected for him, but he was selected for the position.

Although the Torah does not reveal the precise moment of Joseph's transition, a contrast of the two dream sequences before and after his liberation expose an obvious change in character. Through the interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh's two ministers we still detect the strong confidence Joseph has in his interpretive abilities. He is the one who approaches the distressed men hoping to befriend them, and claims nonchalantly: "For interpretations are given to God, please tell me" (Genesis 40:8). He took for granted the logical step between God's knowledge of dreams and his own. Never doubting that God would disclose the dreams' meanings to him, he regards himself as a legitimate and deserving agent of God. Joseph fails to mention God's name in the episode again.

In contrast, when in front of Pharaoh, Joseph clarifies that it is God who is revealing the future to him, referring to him throughout (four times). Most essential, however, is that Joseph's first utterance is also the first expression of modesty we have heard from him. In one word, Joseph proves to us that he finally understands his significance in the eyes of God; in one word Joseph indicates that the twenty years in the *bor* had indeed humbled him; in one word Joseph confirms his worthiness and deservedness as a leader: "*bi'adai* (not I) — [rather,] God will see to Pharaoh's welfare" (Genesis 41:16).

Paradoxically, because of Joseph's realization that he merely serves as God's functionary, underserving of acknowledgment, he gains actual recognition. As the *Midrash Tanchuma* pronounces on *bi'adai*: "... You did not want to attain greatness for yourself. On your life, that for this you will rise to greatness and majesty" (*Tanchuma, Mitzet* 3). Indeed, looking ahead to Pharaoh's reward to Joseph, he bestows upon him an appropriate measure for his humility: "I am Pharaoh; without you (*u-bi'adekha*); no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 41:44). In return for Joseph's *bi'adai*, God acknowledges *bi'adekha*.

Final proof of Joseph's complete transformation comes when he reveals himself to his brothers. They were the victims of his kindness in youth. Therefore, a proper catharsis would have to include them as well. His ability to forgive his brothers after they caused him so much pain is extraordinary. No trace of bitterness remains as he even justifies their crime against him: "Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you" (Genesis 45:5). He attributed no value to his own greatness, merely perceiving himself as a pawn in God's great scheme of saving his brothers in Egypt. Ironically, Joseph reversed the situation; humbly perceiving himself as subservient to his brothers when in reality they depended on him for their very lives.

Our admiration for Joseph's humility and compassion multiplies as we remember the Joseph of years past. Yet, what inspires us is not his virtue alone, but his very struggle toward it. We are all Josephs, racing to fulfill our dreams without always stopping to notice the divine messages sent to us. Joseph's ultimate success hinged upon his ability to appreciate the significance in each of his life's details, and to thereby guide his life. Before learning to be humble he had learned to see. Joseph the Righteous had a greater talent than interpreting dreams. He had the rare ability of interpreting reality.

# Britain, Israel, and the World

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vanish). We pray that the sins should cease from the world, but the sinners we must live with. This has been my guideline.

H: In America, we have had many of controversies regarding various proposals to solve of *Gerut* and *mamzerim*...

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** Those particular proposals — joint *Beit Din*, etc., are just not practical. I don't see it, at least.

I know that the Rav, Rav Soloveitchik, just before I came to this country, made an effort — parlayed with the Conservatives, in particular, with Saul Lieberman — to try and find a formula, and that broke down. The history of all that ought to be written up one day. It's a fascinating history and a very instructive one, I'd say.

So it doesn't seem to me that we are on the way to unraveling this, to finding a solution. I myself believe the solution is elsewhere. We should come to a deal with them whereby we recognize them as part of the House of Israel and their congregations and even their spiritual leaders provided they give us exclusive jurisdiction in matters of personal status. In other words, *giyur*, *gerut*, is in our hands — theirs as well as ours — and in return we acknowledge them. Unfortunately, at the moment they don't subscribe to our *kashrut* or *shmirat shabbat* or other things. This is something I have written about extensively and believe that it's a solution, but it's not practical at the moment.

H: Of that deal you speak of... It certainly is a measure for them to recognize the Orthodox right to legislate what is and what isn't marriage and conversion. But to recognize them as part of the House of Israel, we already do!

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** We don't. We don't sit with them as religious organizations whose existence we recognize to the extent that we will share a table with their Rabbis and their organizers — we don't. We do not count them into the House of Israel as an organized grouping. For instance, I take as my pattern here pre-war Germany. My father was a leading Rav in Berlin and head of the *beit din*. That *beit din* belonged to what was

known as the *Grossgemeinde*, the general community, which had within it the Orthodox community and non-Orthodox congregations. But the *beit din* with halakic authority over the whole lot was an Orthodox *beit din*, obviously. There were within the official community liberal congregations, but their *gerut* and divorces came under Orthodox jurisdiction, in principle. That is a situation that I think won't be easy to achieve.

H: I came across an interesting statement you made in 1957 at the Conference of European Rabbis, reprinted in your *Journal of a Rabbi*. You said that among the major challenges facing the Rabbi, that the vital job today is to promote religious intelligentsia, particularly religious scientists. Has this been attained; and if so, has it achieved the results you desired? Also, you say that religious scientists will be "our most powerful commanders". Has this been the fact?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** I still believe that and that's why I am gratified to find the emergence and development of Torah U'Madda. Yes, I strongly believe that it's desperately needed. To some extent, we are beginning to fulfill it. We will eventually have to come to terms with the culture and science around us and reach out and produce people who live in both worlds. We have done it in the past. We have lived in highly cultured societies without insulating ourselves from that culture. Take the Rambam's culture, the Arabic culture in which he lived. He wrote all his major works in Arabic. What greater indication could you have? Imagine one of our *gedolim* today writing his *teshuvot* in English! That is what the Rambam did. It merely is a symptom of the degree to which he immersed himself in the culture of his day. Arab philosophy is the philosophy he shared with Arab thinkers.

So we had periods where we successfully managed this. We will eventually, I think, have to recreate some bridges, but it will be a slow and painful process, especially because of the Holocaust. In my mind this target is just as valid today as it was thirty years ago.

H: Particularly in terms of science or in terms of culture?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** I mean culture in the widest sense. I don't mean by culture necessarily today's smug literature and all that, which may go under the name of culture, but that one should have some understanding, or relationship to, say, some of their social sciences — behavioral sciences, such as psychiatry or social services. Certainly, we should feel challenged by the exploration of space and all that it stands for philosophically and ideologically, because it raises a lot of problems. We cannot simply insulate ourselves and say it is none of our business. We should participate in the search for ultimate truths as colored by our convictions and our commitments. So I do include it in a wider sense, but not necessarily the whole of the current literature and the celluloid culture, films, television. That's not what I meant.

H: You said that by speaking the language of science, we would be able to speak to the masses as well. Is that necessarily true where in today's society most people have very little inkling of matters scientific?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** You don't have to speak as a scientist to the masses, but you have to be recognized as being able to hold your own against the scientists. You have to enjoy the esteem in their eyes that is normally reserved for the scientists. They must not recognize in us somebody they call narrow and insulated and ignorant of what transpires on our world. They have to see in you someone who is abreast with modern thinking and who can hold his own against philosophers and scientists and technologists of our time. Once you quote a great scientist, that information is authentic. We don't want that situation to be exclusive to science; we want to share that. I do not say that every Rabbi should have a degree in science. We have got to relate to those fields. I believe it will make a very considerable impact, in and understanding and reverence from circles who at the moment are divorced from us and often put off by us because we don't speak their language and don't live in the universe in which they live.

H: You had mentioned a view opposed to the common Israeli saying that "if you don't

like the way we run Israel, come over here and vote!" How much, beyond the money that foreign Jews give to Israel, do non-Israeli Jews have a say in the way the Israeli government is run, and how much of an obligation does the government there have to the Jews abroad?

**Rabbi Jakobovits:** I think we have no voice whatever and shouldn't seek any voice in the way political decisions are made in Israel. That's exclusive for citizens of Israel who live there. On the other hand, they determine not just their fate, but my fate in London, and your fate in New York, and the fate of Jews the world over. If Israel will be respected by the nations of the world, we will gain as Jews, we'll stand erect and proud. We will be safer and more secure.

If *chas veshalom* Israel loses that respect from the nations, and especially if it becomes a cause for hatred against Jews, we will all be the sufferers. Therefore, my claim is that Israel must bear in mind that these decisions are not made just for the citizens of Israel who happen to be there already. On the contrary, I feel that by not allowing Jews of the world to have a voice — not a decision, but a voice — you deny the centrality of Israel. Centrality of Israel means that there must be something peripheral which is part of the same body. If you deny them the right to have a voice in and to be consulted, then you write them off. Far from asserting the centrality of Israel, you would relegate Israel to a peripheral place in Jewish life.

Therefore, I think it is in the interest of Israel as well as the Jews outside Israel that we should have a definite opinion — expressed, of course, with due respect for Israel's needs, so as not to get them more enemies than they have already. Clearly, one has to be very careful and diplomatic. But that said, we do not want to write ourselves out of decisions affecting the future of Israel in terms of having opinions taken into account. But decisions are theirs alone. I would never claim we must be consulted in decision making, nor challenge any of their decisions either. I have challenged religious support for them, but never their decisions.

# Divide or Conquer?

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justify such a venture. Therefore, any war which the nations of the world consider acceptable must fall within the parameters of a *milchemet mitzva*. Since all people stand ready to defend their countries, it follows that we can classify any war fought in defense of one's country as a *milchemet mitzva*. Thus, Rabbi Schachter concludes, "Israel, too, may defend its territory, notwithstanding the possibility that lives will be lost in the process" (p.76).

Is Israel presently in a state of war? While Rabbi Yosef would seem to turn to the government for such determinations, Rabbi Schachter feels there exists a halakic position on this issue. In his article, he quotes a ruling of Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky z"l regarding the question of redeeming hostages. In 1970, terrorists hijacked a plane on which Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner was a passenger. Many rabbis felt that attempts should be made to secure his release, but Rabbi Kaminetsky objected. He argued that the rules pertaining to redeeming hostages have no relevance to wartime, and Israel has been considered,

halakhically, a nation at war since 1948. Thus, contends Rabbi Schachter, if Israel is presently engaged in a *milchemet mitzva*, it is forbidden to do anything which might impede the ultimate success of such a war.

When the *Sanhedrin* presided over the Jews, it possessed the power to end a *milchemet mitzva* — as Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai did when he surrendered to the Romans, after concluding that further fighting would be a futile exercise. According to Rabbi Schachter, is anyone empowered to make such a determination today? He compares the current situation to that of a medical patient afflicted with a life-threatening disease. In a case where the only treatment of the disease will merely prolong a painful life, halakha gives this patient the option to refuse treatment. "Likewise," he writes, "in the case of a nation in mortal danger, faced with a solution of dubious value, the decision on the course of action to be taken should be in the hands of the majority of those affected." Therefore, he concludes, if the majority of affected members of *Klal Yisrael* — i.e., believing Jews who

circumcise their sons, marry Jewesses, believe that Israel is the Jewish homeland, and live there (pp.80-81) — objectively feels that the attempt to retain the territories amounts to a losing battle, halakha would permit their surrender. Until such a determination is made, however, we must consider Israel to be presently waging a successful *milchemet mitzva*.

Finally, some rabbis have criticized Rabbi Yosef's basic understanding of the current situation. In explaining why *sakanat nefashot* would permit a land-for-peace exchange should the government decide it would prevent an immediate danger of war, Rabbi Yosef compares the question at hand to that of whether a sick individual may eat on Yom Kippur. In that case, if some doctors consider fasting life-threatening to the patient, the patient may eat even if the majority of physicians regard fasting as safe (*Choshen Mishpat* 618:4). Just as doctors can determine the status of *sakanat nefashot* for the individual, he argues, so too can heads of state assess these circumstances for the nation. In drawing this comparison, Rabbi Yosef

appears to assume that, at worst, relinquishing the territories presents no danger to the people, in the same way that eating will definitely not harm the patient. We need not look very far, however, before we find military officials who argue the very opposite: that cession of the territories would in fact introduce a life-threatening situation which currently does not exist. If this were indeed the case, *sakanat nefashot* would not entail surrender of the territories; it would demand their retention. As long as this position remains viable among military authorities, our application of *sakanat nefashot* should take it into consideration.

Empowering an outside source with the authority to issue a halakic verdict, as Rabbi Yosef suggests, does have halakic precedents. However, this case in particular presents some interesting implications. The integration of halakha and practical government, like the conquering of Israel, represents a significant precursor to the ultimate redemption. We can only hope that whatever decision ultimately prevails will hasten its peaceful arrival.



# Letters To The Editor

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as much voice to *Dati* opinion as I do to *Chiloni* opposition (again, both employed only as background to the *Charedi* position). Further, Dr. Bliedstein claims that I anemically present Rav Lichtenstein's *Hesder* ideology. I disagree. I portray the Rosh Yeshiva's convictions with the authority and vitality of his own words. Finally, to say that my article implicitly conveys that *Hesder* is a *bedieved* compromise is a gross misreading of the text. In fact, in quoting Rav Lichtenstein, I explicitly state that *Hesder* is very much *le-khatchilla*, "a freely willed option grounded in moral and halakhic decision, and not a second-best alternative for those unable or unwilling to accept the rigors of single-minded Torah study." As Dr. Bliedstein knows, occupying the middle position does not imply compromise.

To the editor:

As it is my first year in Yeshiva, I was very impressed when about a month into the school year a memorial service was held for an Israeli rosh yeshiva who had recently passed away. The students apparently recognized the importance of caring about the larger Torah community outside of our yeshiva. It was therefore more shocking later on in the year, when no one noticed the passing of a great *tzaddik*, one of the last lights of Eastern Europe, the Bluzhever Rebbe zt"l. It's hard to recall a single conversation or even mention of his death by anyone in the yeshiva. There was a greater sense of loss when Billy Martin died!

My first reaction was to try to understand this seeming lack of sensitivity within our yeshiva. I reached the conclusion that because most didn't know who the Bluzhever was, no one mourned his loss. Why didn't we know about this great *tzaddik*?

The answer may lie in the very foundations of our yeshiva. Because Torah U'madda requires us to be open to the western world, we often turn our faces to the worlds of Hollywood, Broadway, and Cooperstown while turning our backs on the worlds of Lakewood, Williamsburg, and New Square. We must strive for the ability to maintain our *hashkafa* without severing our connection to the rest of the Torah world.

Familiarity with traditional yeshiva institutions and respect for their roshai yeshiva shed light on various segments of Torah Jewry.

Their *gedolim* are our *gedolim*, and modern Orthodox youth should not have to wait for Artscroll to publish a "*Gedolim* Series" in order to be exposed to our great Torah leaders. We must have the concern and sensitivity in order to create a greater sense of *achdut*, for when a *gadol* dies and it just passes us by, we widen the gap between our world and that of other Torah Jews.

It is therefore only appropriate to write a brief *zikaron* for the Bluzhever Rebbe, Rabbi Yisroel Spira, who exemplified *ahavat Yisrael*. He was born in Cheshvan 5650 (1889) in Bluzhev, Galicia. Directly descended from the author of the *Bnei Yissochar* and equally influenced by his grandfather, the author of the *Tzvi Hatzaddik*, the young Rebbe acquired a reputation as an *ilui*. At sixteen, he received *semicha*. At nineteen, the town of Prochnik invited him to serve as their Rav.

He was especially known for his humility. When his father died in 1932, out of respect for an older step-brother, he went to a different city instead of being a rebbe in Bluzhev. While in Europe, the rebbe was active as a member of Agudat Yisrael, attending the first *Knessia Gedola* in 1923.

The Rebbe suffered greatly during the Holocaust, losing his wife and child. Yet in this darkest of times he showed great heroism, assisting those around him spiritually and physically. From these events, the Rebbe gained the reputation of being a true *tzaddik*. Yaffa Eliach tells many stories of him in her *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*. While in the camps, he always maintained his pride and dignity. The Rebbe always saved a bit of the rationed water to wash his uniform in order to look respectable. Even when the Nazis placed a candle under his beard, burning it off, he remained silent.

Many stories describe the Rebbe's courage. One took place in Bergen-Belsen, where the Rebbe spiritually led his fellow prisoners. During Chanukka, the Jews smuggled shoe dye out of a factory in order to serve as oil, and made wicks from threads of sweaters. On the first night, the Rebbe led a clandestine *ma'ariv miynayn*, after which many Jews risked discovery joined together as the Rebbe recited the three blessings and lit their menorah. A secular Jew asked the Rebbe, "Rabbi Spira, I cannot understand how you can bring yourself to recite the blessing, 'Blessed... who

has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.' How can you offer thanks for having been kept alive for this time of death, torture, and hunger?" To this the Rebbe replied, "I too wondered how I could joyfully recite these words. But then I looked around and I saw this huge assemblage of Jews that had gathered to participate in this mitzva. Despite the terrible suffering, they insist on remaining Jews, even at the risk of their lives. Have you ever in your life witnessed such courage and faith? For that alone we thank the Creator for life, to witness the greatness of our people. No! We Jews do not give up, we are proud that we have

lived to see thousands of Jews who have not given up, will never give up, and are living proof that we will one day rebuild anew."

After the war, the Rebbe did build anew — establishing a Bluzhever *beit midrash* in Williamsburg. During his lifetime he worked to solve the personal problems of those who sought his advice, and involving himself with important policymaking as a member of the *Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah*. When Rav Spira died this year, a week before his hundredth birthday, the world suffered the loss of a great *tzaddik* whose life can inspire all *klal yisroel*. Shalom Axelrod  
YC '92

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# The Case for Hebrew

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never be translated, is beyond the reach of most Jews in North America.

The *dati* reaction to Hebrew is not inconsistent in principle but is in practice. While they, like the religious right, believe in studying texts in the original, they accept the importance of Hebrew as both the language of Jewish religious and cultural expression and the national language of Israel. However, this belief in the importance of Hebrew does not generally lead to greater knowledge of Hebrew. Large segments of the *dati* community measure social status in terms of professional success. In the almost single-minded pursuit of professional success, students and their parents stress subjects which directly or indirectly provide access to the professions of accounting, business, law and medicine. Hebrew and the rest of Jewish Studies are necessarily secondary. Among some who learned in Israel, Henglish —

English interspersed with Hebrew words — is fashionable, but this is no substitute for an active and comprehensive knowledge of Hebrew. The result is that the Hebrew of the *datiim* is often not much better than that of the religious right, and they suffer from many of the same problems in dealing with texts. Ironically, because the *datiim* admit the importance of the *Tanakh* and Jewish History, there is more for them not to know due to ignorance of Hebrew than there is for the religious right.

Lack of Hebrew fluency weakens the relationship of *datiim* with Israel, the nature of which relationship distinguishes them from the religious right. It is difficult for them to follow events in Israel and become familiar with Israeli culture. Most do not understand the political forces in Israel, the economic situation, the mentality of *chilonim*, Israeli literature and arts or the reality of daily life. They are left with *Talafel* and *Egozi* bars. Without knowledge of the Israeli scene, it is

hard for the *datiim* to fully support Israel. They do not know how to respond properly to criticism of Israel voiced by those who have read only the selective and frequently biased reportage on Israel in the North American press, because their knowledge is limited to the same sources. Instead of expressing their support in politically effective ways, they are reduced to buying Jaffa oranges and Elite wafers.

For those who want to realize *tzionut* fully by *aliya*, the lack of Hebrew is even more damaging. Not knowing the language of the land is a major obstacle to successful integration in Israeli daily, professional and cultural life. Some potential *olim* are discouraged from *aliya* by the problems of integration; others who have come to Israel find life complicated by these problems. In some cases, poor knowledge of Hebrew is a factor in the departure of *olim* from Israel.

Without Hebrew, the key to Jewish culture, there can be no true access to the culture,

because the culture is to be found primarily in Hebrew sources. No one would take seriously a Shakespearean scholar or a North American attorney not fluent in English or a physicist not expert in differential equations. Not for naught must graduate students acquire proficiency in languages to which their field naturally relates or in which a sufficiently large number of articles about their field are written. Yet, North American Jewry believes one can learn Jewish Studies without mastering Hebrew.

North American Jewry is almost unanimous in accepting Salo Baron's proposition that North America is the new *Bavel*. Yet, they believe that *Torah* and Jewish life can flourish as in *Bavel* without Hebrew, and in this they are mistaken. The learning of *Bavel*, for all its use of Aramaic, was based on the Hebrew sources. Without this strong foundation of Hebrew and primary sources, North America cannot be the new *Bavel*; instead, it can only be the next Alexandria.

# Just Do It.

## Purim's Plea Against Passivity

by Simi Chavel

(Based on shiurim by Rabbi Menachem Liebtag)

Of all the Jewish holidays, Purim is the one we should best relate to, from both a conceptual and historical perspective. Understanding the Purim miracle clarifies our current relationship with God and to the Land of Israel.

To appreciate Purim, we must first look at the two different formulations of God's promise to Abraham that he and his children will inherit the Land of Israel. In Genesis 15:1-21, during the *Berit Bein ha-Betarim*, God promises Abraham that He will redeem the Jews from Egypt, lead them to Israel, conquer the land (*kibbush ha-Aretz*), and give it to them ("ve-natati," v.18). The hallmark of this covenant is God's intervention, which transcends the normal routine of nature and history. The use of God's personal name, YKVK, in this passage indicates that God reveals Himself through His actions. In such a relationship between God and the Jews, God openly decrees and implements the nation's policies. The paradigm of the Jews' stance is King David, who always sought God's approval before he undertook any venture, and recognized that God was the cause for his success. This is the relationship between revelation and *hasgacha peratit*.

The second covenant between God and Abraham occurs at the first *Berit Milah* (Genesis 17:1-14), when Abraham circumcises himself. Again, God promises to give the Jews the Land of Israel, but in this formulation, the inheritance will be peaceful ("*achuzat olam*" v.8); rather than conquer the land, the Jews will settle it (*Yishuv ha-Aretz*). While conquest depends on God's open support, inheriting land through use and inhabitation is a natural process. The use of the universal name of God, *Elokim*, in this passage implies that God's special relationship to the Jews will be hidden, leading the Jews to participate normally in nature and history. Thus, the Jews will have to take initiative and rely exclusively on human reason.

Pesach reflects *hitgalut* (revelation) and the beginning of the fulfillment of the *Berit Bein ha-Betarim*, through God's redemption of the Jews from Egypt. The relationship the Jews have with God as He brings them to the Land of Israel is one of *hitgalut*; God acts, while the Jews are relatively passive. This relationship characterizes the period of the First Temple, in which God reveals Himself directly, through prophecy. However, despite this open relationship, the Jews worship the local pagan gods, resulting in the destruction of the Temple and exile of the Jews for seventy years.

When the time for redemption draws near, the Jews neither seek out God nor express a desire to return to Israel. Instead, they partake in Achashverosh's parties. Therefore, when salvation does come, its form is different from that of the exodus from Egypt. The Jews attempt to orchestrate their own salvation, since God has made Himself obscure. The role of lottery and chance in the ultimate salvation, as well as the absence of God's name from the *Megilla*, reflect the lack of revelation. If *Pesach* is the holiday of *hitgalut* and *Berit Bein ha-Betarim*, then Purim is the holiday of *Teva* (nature) and *Berit Milah*. Recognizing the situation, Mordechai takes the initiative to act, without open support and clear direction from God. This represented a new approach to the Jews' relationship with God and the world around them.

The Jews who do return to Israel (a shockingly small percentage of those living in exile) have not yet realized the significance of Purim; they expect God to give them the land in the same manner as in the time of Joshua, through *kibbush ha-Aretz* and *Berit Bein ha-Betarim*. Thus, Nechemia complains to God that the Jews are slaves in their own land (Nechemia 9:36-37), sending their tithes to foreign kings rather than properly giving them to the Kohanim and Levim. The Jews assume that the tithes and other laws pertaining to the land (*mitzvot ha-teluyot ba-Aretz*) are dependent on *kibbush ha-Aretz*, and there clearly has not been a *kibbush*. Therefore, the Jews think that they are free

from observing these laws. In the next chapter (v.32-39), however, the Jews realize a new bond to the land by taking an oath to uphold the *mitzvot ha-teluyot ba-Aretz*, even though there has not been a *kibbush*. By merely inhabiting Israel and settling it, the Jews express a relationship with God based on *Teva*, one in which the people are the primary players.

When the exile of the Jews nears its end, Achashverosh has in his kingdom 127 provinces, practically the entire civilized world. In order to challenge God as the ruler of the world, says the Midrash, Achashverosh throws a party in honor of himself; this is precisely the time that God should be leading the Jews back to Israel to demonstrate His rule, as He did with *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. Meanwhile, rather than seek God, the Jews revel at Achashverosh's party. Furthermore, the Midrash tells us, Achashverosh modeled his palace after the Temple, his private chambers corresponding to the Holy of Holies. Instead of anticipating the rebuilding of the Temple, the Jews are paying tribute to a perverse replica. Only Haman's hate for the Jews reminds them of their identity and responsibility. When they finally cry out to God and repent, they do not receive an answer, so they must decide their own destiny — a relatively new system of salvation for them. When salvation arrives, the *Megilla* (9:22) describes the reversal of a time of sadness and fasting into one of rejoicing and feasting. The Jews send portions of food to their friends, and presents to the needy.

In Nechemia 8:2-13 the people of Judea congregate on Rosh ha-Shana, the holiday in which the Jews pay tribute to God as the true and sole Ruler of the world. They hear Ezra the Scribe read to them from the Torah, an event that has not transpired in a very long time. Accepting God's Kingdom, the people prostrate themselves, throw their hands to the heavens, and call out "Amen! Amen!" (v.6). Nechemia and Ezra then say that this is not a time of sadness and fasting, but a time of rejoicing and feasting. The people follow their command to send food

to the needy. The language of this verse is almost identical with that in Esther (9:22), indicating that, in a sense, Ezra and Nechemia turned Rosh ha-Shana into Purim. The message is dual: at the time of the original Purim, the Jews were paying homage to Achashverosh as the ruler of the world, not to God, the true Ruler of the world, who would have brought them back to Israel. Therefore, once the Jews recognized the true King, Ezra and Nechemia instituted a Purim mentality in order to emphasize that the Jews had finally behaved as they should have at the time of the original Purim. In addition, they showed the Jews that their relationship with God was to be of a different nature; man is to be in the spotlight, and man must take the initiative.

As a result of this new relationship, there was no prophecy to define the Jews' relations with God in the period of the Second Temple. Rather it was the study and proliferation of law, the work and creativity of man, which was the hallmark of the spiritual life of the Jews.

However, another component in this relationship exists, one which gave Mordechai the inner strength to act against seemingly impossible odds. It was his staunch faith that, should the Jew do what he can, God will do the rest. Otherwise, how could he, or any person, have the strength and courage for any pursuit? Purim, then, symbolizes a relationship with God based on the Jews' initiative, which, in turn, is ultimately dependent on their unflinching faith in God's response.

The comparison, then, between Purim and our own time is clear. As in the time of Purim, God has called us home; yet we, like the Jews of that time, refuse to return. Why do we wait? The end of the exile is not guaranteed; but it can and should be secured by a return to God and Israel. Thus, in Jeremiah 31:20-22, God appeals to the Jews to live up to their responsibility to seek Him out and return to Israel, "...Return...Maiden Israel! Return to these, your cities! Until when do you waver, rebellious daughter? For God has created a new thing in the land: a woman courts a man."

BS'D

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# Bridge Over Troubled Waters

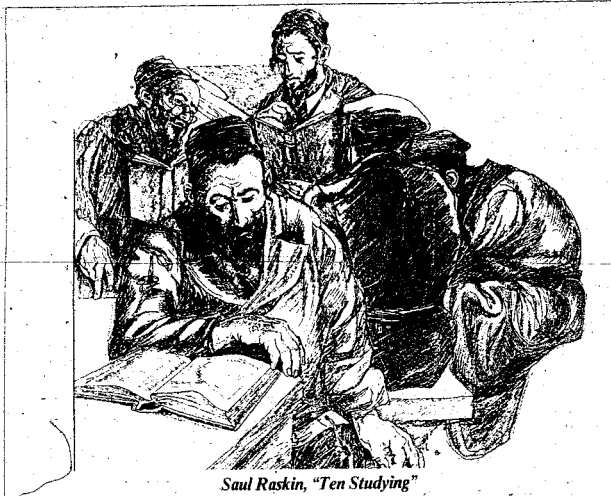
## YU Students in the Satmar Beit Midrash

by Yossi Prager

Many Yeshiva students strive to enhance their *avodah Hashem* by drawing from a broad range of educational sources. In that struggle to properly incorporate the secular, however, we may inadvertently overlook the importance of exposure to other Torah communities and their worlds of learning. How many Yeshiva students, especially those who were not raised in Brooklyn, have shared Torah or analyzed a *sugya* with *talmidim* at other yeshivot — Litvish or Chasidish? I, for one, first learned with a non-Y.U. *chavrutah* after graduating Yeshiva College. Yet only recently did I recognize the unnecessary loss resulting from my isolation.

Together with my *chavrutah*, Rabbi Baruch Simon, I learn *masechet* Mikva'ot during the afternoon kollel seder. As we began exploring some *halakha le-ma'aseh* issues, we realized that the Satmarer Rebbe Zt"l enjoyed unusually broad authority on *mikva'ot* questions. For example, the fierce controversy in the early 1970's over Miami Beach's mikva primarily involved a dispute between contemporary *poskim* over the Rebbe's position on a particular issue. In general, the Satmar Kollel's program of study stresses *mikva'ot*, and the kollel's journal, *Peri Temarim*, recently devoted an entire issue to *mikva'ot*. As Baruch and I continued learning, the articles in *Peri Temarim* and other sources raised questions for us about the Satmarer Rebbe's approach toward various issues. In general, we did not pursue our questions any further than the printed page, but this once we decided to be bold. Baruch called a Satmarer acquaintance, who suggested calling Rav Yisrael David Harfenes, author of two volumes of responsa and other *sefarim*, editor of *Peri Temarim* and a member of Satmarer's "*Beis Hora'ah*." Baruch called Rav Harfenes, and he agreed to meet us at one o'clock on a Thursday afternoon.

We left Yeshiva around ten-thirty and reached Williamsburg at noon. A Satmarer chasid, seeing two bewildered faces, escorted us to the main Satmarer *beit midrash*, where we found the last two *minyanim* finishing *shacharit*. (Rabbi Harfenes later told us that his *teshuva* emphasizing the significance of *zeman tefillah* led to a sharp decline in the number of late daveners.) All the participants — in fact, all of the men we met that day — were dressed as expected, with *shtrimelech* and hanging *peyos*. Another chasid offered to walk us to one of the *kollelim*, where we finally received directions to the kollel in which Rabbi Harfenes learned. (We would probably be guided to the correct kollel immediately had our Yiddish or their English been better.) Rabbi Harfenes, a man in his forties, took us from the kollel to his basement, which was lined with a fantastic range of responsa and Torah journals (including Yeshiva's *Beit Yitzchak*). While we were getting settled, Rabbi Harfenes asked us about the number of *talmidim* in Yeshiva's kollel. We explained that Yeshiva had three different *kollelim*, and he interrupted to ask, in all naivete, whether all three were devoted to *limudei kodesh*. The question suggested an inauspicious start to the conversation. But, as happened several times that day, initial impressions proved misleading. Baruch asked Rabbi Harfenes about a responsum he had written in connection with *hilkhot avehut*, and the conversation flowed from there to



Saul Raskin, "Ten Studying"

discussions about issues in *hilkhot Shabbat* and from there to a host of other *sugyot*. We talked for over an hour, after which Rabbi Harfenes proudly showed us his computer and laser printer, donated a copy of his two-volume responsa to Yeshiva's *beit midrash* and provided us with copies of *Peri Temarim* that Yeshiva's library was missing. Rabbi Harfenes also directed us to his brother-in-law, Rabbi Chaim Kalman Gutman, a young *mikva'ot* expert.

After a quick lunch, Baruch and I walked to the main Satmarer kollel in search of Rabbi Gutman. Walking into the kollel, I finally understood the discomfort probably felt by the rare woman who enters Yeshiva's *beit midrash*. All eyes turned in our direction, and our request for Rabbi Gutman generated disapproving stares. We found Rabbi Gutman, a somewhat austere-looking man in his late thirties (in my appraisal), with strikingly dark *peyos* hanging from the side of his head. He seemed busy and asked if we could wait until the weekend, but agreed to talk immediately when we pressed him. Rabbi Gutman and another chasid unlocked a room downstairs, and we sat across from him expectantly.

Again, the conversation did not start smoothly. Rabbi Gutman asked if we spoke "Jewish" and seemed unhappy to find that we did not. He explained that his English was weak, but that he would try his best to convey his ideas clearly. We presumed that he would ask for specific questions, but instead he began describing, in a halting English, the basic requirements of a *mikva*, as if we were high-school students unfamiliar with some of the most fundamental issues involved. (Thinking now about his initial perceptions, I am even more impressed that Rabbi Gutman agreed to speak with us.) When he discovered that our study had been intense and high-level, Rabbi Gutman shifted his review many notches upward and warmed to us considerably. We freely interrupted him with questions, particularly on the issues we had planned to ask about, and he answered them all patiently and carefully, at times arguing forcefully for his positions. The halting English I had first noted seemed to fade, and brilliant clarity shined. I powerfully learned that clarity and fluency need not be

related, and that Torah transcends many boundaries. As the conversation continued, I lost my sense of difference; the *shakla v'etarya* overwhelmed. Although Rabbi Gutman seemed to have been very busy, he spent over an hour talking to us. He also handed us his address and phone number and asked us to contact him with any further questions.

As Baruch and I travelled home, I felt both enthused and embarrassed. Enthusiasm bubbled at the surface: I had spent the day learning from two young *talmidei chachamim* who had clarified many issues, introducing us to some important sources we had not yet seen. I also discovered that differences in dress and philosophy do not prevent Jews from sharing their greatest possession — words of Torah. I think that Baruch and I also taught the people we met that Yeshiva's *talmidim* are equals in the important struggle to understand God's word. Rabbis Harfenes and Gutman seemed to have had low expectations; I now believe they more fully appreciate our commitment to Torah study.

The bubbling enthusiasm soon gave way to subtle embarrassment. Yeshiva taught me certain important lessons: learn from every person you meet; represent Judaism in the best way you can. I typically return from a *kiruv* event excited by how well we related to the participants and surprised by how much we had in common with them. The problem

here was that I felt this same astonishment — even though the Satmarer chasidim and I share the same commitment to halakha, the same yearning to discern the Divine will and the same difficulties in understanding Rambam's position on *katafris einu chibur*, the issue we had come to discuss (see Gittin 16a). Our different lifestyles and philosophies should never have allowed me to view these *rabbanim* as foreign; yet they did. Unfortunately, we seemed somewhat foreign to them. More than that, had Baruch not seized the moment and called Rabbi Harfenes, we would never have understood the Satmarer Rebbe's approach to *katafris*, nor would we have discovered (at least for some time) an important *Chazon Ish* that we had missed.

*Talmud Torah* is the pinnacle of religious expression and intellectual growth, and clearly deserves our greatest efforts. While Yeshiva offers a generous collage of *darkhei ha-limud*, many approaches and traditions are not represented here. An educational process that emphasizes varied educational sources must surely stress the importance of drawing from *talmidei chachamim* and *talmidim* in other Torah communities.

Beyond strict *limud haTorah*, learning with and from members of other Torah communities may help narrow the gaps that currently divide the Orthodox world. Certainly, different Jewish groups can offer each other insights into community cohesion, religious intensity and approaches to confronting modernity. The current environment, however, founded partially on ignorance and stereotypes, makes such exchanges difficult. Even informal Torah contacts provide an opportunity for Jews to begin to dispel misconceptions that unnecessarily divide us.

Ironically, Yeshiva as an institution may be powerless to solve the broader communal problems, since so much of Orthodox Jewry demeans its philosophical positions. However, we, as individual *talmidim* of Yeshiva, are not held responsible for its philosophy. We can initiate contacts with students and *roshei yeshiva* at other yeshivot and learn much from them; and at the same time take a first step toward improving communal relations. At times we may be rebuffed, as philosophical differences and social insecurities cloud the visions of those we approach. That risk of disappointment, however, pales against the potential benefits. Stronger connections with the rest of the Torah world can only enhance our religious perspectives, individually and collectively.

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