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Chag Kasher VeSame'ach to all our readers

From Chametz to Chesed

Once again, the Philanthropy Society offers us the opportunity to perform an important act of *chesed*, without much effort. This year, instead of throwing out *chametz*, or selling it through a *heter* originally intended to prevent *hefesei merubeh*, please help others put it to good use. These Wednesday and Thursday evenings, the Philanthropy Society will set up receptacles in the lobbies of all residence halls at SCW and YC (for Muss residents across from Klein Hall). Deposit unopened containers of food, and they will be distributed in shelters for the homeless. It doesn't take too long a walk in Manhattan to realize that the people who will receive the food need it desperately. In addition, our donations will certainly serve as a *kiddush Hashem*. The Philanthropy Society has made it easy for you to help the homeless — don't miss this chance!

Nail the Tables Down

We would like to call attention to the plight of the wandering *talmidim* here at Yeshiva University. All too often, the proprietors of the university evict these students from their rightful domain, the *Beit Midrash*, causing them to waste valuable time. Upon return, the students waste even more time trying to become reunited with their *sefarim*. In an institution equipped with many large auditoriums, surely we can find more suitable (and spacious) locations for speeches, group photographs, and even *chagigot*. Though a *shur* by the Rosh Ha Yeshiva clearly belongs in the *Beit Midrash*, the organizers of other events should consider holding them elsewhere.

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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to the article "When Something Goes Right" and accompanying cartoon featured in the Kislev 5750 edition of *Hamevaser*, because I think that the meta-message — that one who spends a year learning in Israel unwittingly/unwillingly undergoes a radical *yeshivish* transformation — does a great disservice to the uninitiated who have not learned in Israel.

Possibly, one might argue that the *Hamevaser* readership all have contact with Israel returnees who can give them a fuller picture; however the written word and visual pictures can be very powerful and their effect should not be taken lightly.

Most striking, certainly, is the cartoon. A happy-go-lucky, rough-around-the-edges hockey player goes off to Yeshiva in Israel, where he intends to learn and dip into Torah and *hashkafa* (as indicated by the dials on the Israel machine).

One would imagine that he expects to come out of Israel still whistling (though maybe some Israeli tunes might be interspersed with the Billy Joel and Guns and Roses) but with a more solid Jewish foundation exhibited by a *sefer* under his arm though his hockey stick would still be under the other.

However, we see the unsuspecting Joe Yeshiva exit the Israel machine sans hockey stick and tennis shoes, with *sefer* in hand, sporting *yeshivish* clothing with his *tzitzit* out. Possibly his most disturbing feature is the quizzical look on his face, as if he's thinking, "Gosh, what happened to me?" It's not a happy or a satisfied look.

Add to this Rabbi Schiller's statement, "In Israel a Torah environment is introduced and the evil enemy arsenal of TV, music, movies and 'going out' is depleted. Once this has been achieved, slowly a subculture of *Benei Torah* grows."

Possibly Rabbi Schiller got carried away in the fervor of his writing, but I would challenge calling the above distractions an "evil arsenal", and I would also cite that the vast majority of Roshei Yeshiva do not

emphatically "*assur*" any of the above activities (save for "going out" if it's with girls), if they do not conflict with one's learning schedule. Although spending free time in learning activities is encouraged, one should not get the impression that going to Israel means swearing off an occasional *Motzaei Shabbat* movie.

Going to Yeshiva is serious business. Students who go to Israel for the year *le-hatchila* want to grow, want to change, want to incorporate Torah more into their daily lives.

Students should be encouraged to learn in Israel. They should be told of the richness of the Israel experience, the learning, the *chevra*, the beauty of *Eretz Yisrael*, the attachment one makes in Israel to the history and destiny of *Am Yisrael*. They should hear about the satisfaction to be gained from spending long hours in the *Beit-Midrash* and the sense of doing something truly meaningful by volunteering with a vast array of volunteer opportunities in Israel (tutoring children, working with disabled, volunteering with Soviet *olim*, *kiyuv work*, etc.)

They should know that a year or more of Yeshiva in Israel will affect them profoundly — but they should not think that everything secular will be deemed as evil or that they'll come out of the Israel machine bewildered by the new personage they've adopted unwittingly.

This can be avoided if one thinks carefully as he makes decisions to change and does a serious *cheshbon ha-nefesh* throughout the year.

The Israel experience is too rich and vastly rewarding to be characterized as a machine by the cartoon in question.

I commend *Hamevaser* on your fine publication and appreciate the well-written and well-researched articles.

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Seeing God's Hand: A Psalm Reading

by Lowell Abrams

Every Friday evening *Lechu Neranena* calls us to praise God and inspires us to usher in the Sabbath Queen. A closer look at the psalm, however, reveals that this theme applies to only one of its two very distinct sections. In the first section (verses 1-7), Israel collectively expresses its joy and contentment, but in the second half of the psalm, God informs Israel of His displeasure with them. Why does the psalm reverse the initial ebullience so drastically? What has happened over the course of psalm 95? What has Israel really said, and why does God respond so harshly?

The psalm begins with an artificially inflated excitement. Israel emphatically urges "Let us go sing to God" which, by use of the command "*lechu*," implies a call to hurry (Me'iri). The strong parallel of "Let us sing," "Let us shout," "Let us come forth," and again "Let us shout" heightens this excitement. These phrases often appear together (as in Psalms 47:2, 81:2, 94; 100:1,2 and in other places), and connote serious and intense praise of God, as in "Sing, heavens! for God has acted; shout, depths of the Earth, forest and all trees in it!" (Isaiah 44:23). However, these phrases also may imply less serious or less sophisticated cheerfulness, as in "And happiness and enjoyment will be gathered from the field, and in the vineyard none will sing nor shout" (Isaiah 16:10).

In the next three verses (3-5), Israel continues to describe God's preeminence in a heightening progression. Certainly, "the Lord is a great God," but "He [even] reigns above all divine beings." In addition, "in His hand are the depths of the land, and the heights of the mountains are His." God's domain extends outside the spiritual world into the physical world. Indeed, "The sea is His, and He made it, and the land, His hands formed it;" God created all. The parallel

structure of verses four and five, highlighted by the use of "*asher*," and the chiasmus (an a-b-b-a verse structure) underscoring "His" and "His hand," further emphasize Israel's acknowledgment of God's supremacy.

Suddenly, however, Israel's enthusiasm disappears. Parallel to the opening of the psalm, Israel calls "Let us come" (v.6), involving a lesser expenditure of energy than the original "Let us go." In addition, we have "Let us bow," "Let us kneel," "Let us bend" — all parallel to the first two verses. The use of parallelism intensifies the difference between the earlier call to worship (vv.1-2) and the present calling; bowing, kneeling and bending imply rote, mechanical service to God rather than the spontaneous outpouring of singing, shouting and going forth. Why has Israel's excitement dissipated?

The answer to this question involves the solution to the even more powerful problem in verse seven: "*Hayom im be-kolo tishma'u*," "If, today, you heed His charge." This admonition seems to be a strangely inappropriate or unfitting ending for what began as a stirring cry; it appears to be merely an afterthought. The feeling of incompleteness with which the first half of the psalm leaves us and the negative attitude God assumes throughout the second half of the psalm beg us to examine Israel's words more carefully.

The strong parallels between the two callings (verses 1 and 2 and verse 6) indicate that Israel equates formal, organized service with spontaneous, inspired praise. Even while contending this, Israel remains convinced of its impeccable standing. Thus, Israel describes God as "*oseinenu*" (v.6), "our maker," and themselves as "*tzon yado*" (v.7), "the flock of His hand," both parallel to "*asher lo hayam ve-hu assahu, ve-yabeshet yadav yatsaru*" (v.5) — "that the sea is His, and He made it, and the land, His hands formed it." Israel overestimates its own importance, and implicitly grants itself the significance of all creation.

Continued on page 7.

Through the Looking Glass and Beyond

by Menachem Lazaroff and David Ehrenkranz

"For constantly, I felt I was moving among two groups-comparable in intelligence, identical in race, not grossly different in social origin, earning about the same incomes, who had almost ceased to communicate at all, who in intellectual, moral and psychological climate had so little in common that... one might have crossed an ocean." (C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, p.2)

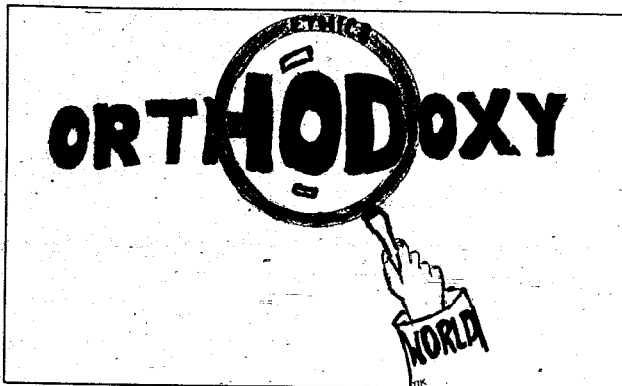
As students who have moved to RIETS from secular universities, we were disturbed to discover the vastness of the chasm separating these two worlds. Basic assumptions, values, and standards of one group are completely ignored by the other. Consequently, distinct communities emerge that view only the negative in each other and the positive in themselves. Unable to perceive themselves through the eyes of others, they lose the ability both to affect others and to be affected by them.

Our college experiences indicated that were we, the Orthodox Jewish community, to see ourselves as others see us, we would not be very happy; there exists a disturbing tendency for many non-religious Jews and many non-Jews to view us as arrogant, self-righteous, intolerant, narrow-minded, hypocritical, or, at best, anthropologically interesting. Halakha, to them, is not a majestic individual but rather an aberration of nature. Some of these myopic impressions are due to ignorance of the foundations and strictures of Halakhaic Judaism. Lamentably, many other impressions stem from personal experience with Orthodox Jews.

The dilemma which we face is to determine whether the perceptions of others concern us. If they do, then we must decide if these perceptions reflect a problem within our community; and if so, what its socio-cultural sources might be, and how we can overcome it.

It seems sensible for us to utilize the perceptions of others as a means to critique ourselves. Do we treat all people as individuals by displaying a genuine interest in their lives? Can we interact with others without judging them? Are we able to disagree without denigrating our opponent and his or her experiences? Do we involve ourselves in the problems and affairs of the general community? Do we make every effort to convey to others the pertinence of the Halakhaic ethic in every facet of modern life? The response of a large portion of the non-Orthodox world to these questions is no: Orthodox Jews do not live up to these ideals. Furthermore, many Orthodox leaders corroborate these outside impressions (see *Tradition* 20:1 (Spring 1982), "Symposium on the State of Orthodoxy," particularly articles by Rabbis A. Lichtenstein, R. Bulka, E. Rackman, S. Leiman, N. Rabinovitch, and M. Wyschogrod). They note tendencies towards a lack of concern for *Klal Yisrael*, hypocrisy, and a tendency to "adopt *chumra* in person-to-God commandments... combined with selecting *kula* in person-to-person commandments" (R. Bulka, *ibid.*, p. 19). Clearly, in the eyes of many, we are deficient.

When others suggest deficiencies in our community, we must consider these criticisms as challenges to be contemplated quite seriously, as our Rabbis teach, "Who is wise? He who learns from every man" (Avot 4:1).



If others do not recognize the ethic inherent in Orthodox Judaism, then, at the very least, we have failed in our mission to be an *or-la-goyim*. Moreover, the Talmud itself teaches us the gravity of the transgressions of arrogance and hypocrisy: "Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit is as though he worships idols" (Sota 4b). "Whoever is deceitful is regarded as though he worships idolatry" (Sanhedrin 92a).

However, the issue is not that simple. To determine the relationship between the ethical judgement of others and Halakha, we need to discuss whether or not Halakha recognizes the validity of a supralegal ethic. R. Aharon Lichtenstein presumes that "natural morality is clearly assumed in much that is quite central to our tradition" ("Does Jewish Tradition Recognize an Ethic Independent of Halakha," in M. Kellner, *Contemporary Jewish Ethics*, p.103). Yet, to completely assess the relationship of this morality to Halakha, we still need to determine whether "the demands or guidelines of Halakha are both so definitive and so comprehensive as to preclude the necessity for — and therefore in a sense, the legitimacy of — any other ethic?" (p. 106).

R. Lichtenstein argues that this ethical imperative manifests itself in various halakhaic concepts. Nachmanides suggests that *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din* is an ethical guideline which is not embodied in any direct halakhaic commandment (Nachmanides, Deuteronomy 6:18); yet, all are bound to live by its ideal. The *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* considers *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din* a *mitzva* (*Semak*, 49). Ra'avya and Ra'avan even believe that people could be compelled to act in this manner (Mordokhai, Bava Metzia, sec. 327; see R. Lichtenstein, note 56). For Maimonides, *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din* is a halakhaically defined level of observance which only a select few can attain (*Hilkhot De'ot* 1:5). Nevertheless, R. Lichtenstein argues that Maimonides incorporates a supralegal ethic in his understanding of the commandment of *imitatio dei* (*ibid.*; R. Lichtenstein, in note 44, recognizes that not all agree with his formulation).

R. Lichtenstein also suggests that *kefin al midat Sedom*, which "refers to an inordinate privatism that leaves one preoccupied with personal concerns to the neglect of the concerns of others" (p. 112), is a further manifestation of this ethical imperative. R. Lichtenstein contends that "if we mean that everything can be looked up, every moral dilemma resolved by reference to code or canon, the notion is both palpably naive and patently false" (p. 107). There is no way that Halakha can foresee every possible situation

and prescribe the appropriate response for it. Thus, "even the full discharge on one's whole formal duty as defined by the *din* often appears palpably insufficient," and accordingly, "there are moments when one must seek independent counsels" (p. 107). The Gemara records the opinion that Jerusalem was destroyed because the people acted according to *din*, and not *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din* (Bava Metzia 30b). The Maharal adjures that "standing upon *din*," which he defines as not wanting to do any good towards another, "entails ruin" (*Netivot Olam*, "Netiv Gemilut Chasadim," chapter 5). R. Lichtenstein concludes that there exists a reciprocal relationship between the loosely defined contextual sphere of *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din* and the more technically rigid definitional sphere of *din*. Both spheres are indispensable facets of the totality of Halakhaic Judaism.

Other indications of this ethical imperative seem to appear throughout Halakha. Many times the Gemara uses the concept of *darkei shalom* in determining the approach to certain halakhaic questions. Rashba understands *darkei shalom* as restricted to those times when Jews are subjugated to non-Jews (*Chiddushei Rashba*, Bava Metzia 32b). The problem is that this understanding limits *darkei shalom* only to non-Jews, while the Gemara in Gittin (59b) uses this concept in a totally Jewish framework. Accordingly, Maimonides conceives of *darkei shalom* as an overriding ethic which should be used to guide all our interpersonal relationships, even with idolaters (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 10:12). Therefore, even misleading pagans in any way is a *chillul Hashem* (*Hilkhot De'ot* 2:6; Tosafot Gittin 62a, Bava Metzia 87b). (This discussion of *darkei shalom* is based on a lecture by R. Yosef Blau and an R. W. Wurzberger's "Darkei Shalom," *Gesher*, 1977-1978).

Finally, one other place where this ethical message emerges is in the concept of *peshara*: "It is a *mitzva* to arbitrate...in a place where there is peace, there is no justice, and in a place where there is no justice, there is no peace... what is justice with peace?... this is arbitration" (Sanhedrin 6a). This opinion clearly articulates the tension between *din* and *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din*, between rigidly defined formulation and a more general contextual conceptualization. Despite our belief in God as a God of Justice, and our system as an ultimately just one, we also recognize the importance of overriding ethical ideals. "Great is peace, because if the Jews were to practice idolatry, and peace prevailed among them at the same time, God would say, 'I cannot punish them, because

peace prevails among them'" (Genesis Rabbah 38:6). According to at least this one opinion, the ethical value of peace overrides even recognition of God. How much more important is this value when augmented by a belief in God and subjugated to the body of Halakha?

The importance of perfecting our moral character by ethical standards is emphasized by many *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* as either the purpose of Torah or a necessary precursor to it. Maimonides compares ethics to the key to the palace of Torah. Solomon Ibn-Gabriel composed an entire treatise concerning the necessity for ethical achievement prior to searching for God (*Sefer Tikun ha-Middot*). Meiri states, "Whoever does not possess pure and perfect middot cannot be considered a complete individual under any circumstances, even if his Torah wisdom is exceedingly great" (Sanhedrin 88b). Commenting on *Berakhot* (6b), he adds: "a person should always be pleasant to people and hasten to extend a greeting to them, and he should concern himself with their honor and welfare to whatever extent he can do so. He will thereby become beloved by people."

In the same vein, the Vilna Gaon states that "the individual's entire service of God is contingent upon the perfection of his character traits, which are like a garment enveloping the *mitzvot* and the principles of the Torah... The main substance of man's existence is to strengthen himself continually in the improvement of his character traits" (*Even Shelema*, Tosfa'a 1:1-2). "Excellent character traits were not specified by the Torah because they include the entire Torah" (*Bi'ur Ha-Gra*, Shir ha-Shirim 1:5). R. Chaim Vital states even more clearly, "While *middot* are not included among the 613 commandments, they are nevertheless essential prerequisites concerning the fulfillment or violation of these commandments... therefore, evil character traits are a more serious matter than the transgressions themselves... Accordingly, it is more important to remove bad *middot* than to fulfill specific positive and negative commandments. Because, if one is a *ba'al middot*, one inherently will fulfill all the *mitzvot*" (*Sha'arei Kedusha* 1:2, pp. 9-10).

But while one might agree that ethical behavior is important and necessary, are there not times when Halakha demands that we rebuke others, even hate others? Do we not today have an obligation to hate those who subvert Torah values and to reprimand and reproach them wherever possible?

The Talmud (Yoma 9b) relates that the reason for the destruction of the Second Temple was *sinat chinam*, inappropriate hatred; the Talmud explicitly adds that this occurred even though the people were scrupulous in their observance of other commandments, including *gemilut chasadim*. The implication is clear: *sinat chinam* is a greater transgression than all others, and can be more destructive than any other. We are only allowed to hate a sinner when our hatred will in some way impact the individual so that he or she will return to the right path. We hate the sins, not the sinner (*Berakhot* 10a). Maimonides (*Hilkhot Mamrim* 3:3), and later, the Chafetz Chayyim (as quoted in R. Yehuda Amital, "A Torah Perspective on the Status of Secular Jews Today," *Tradition* 23:4, Summer 1988, p. 8), the Chazon Ish (*Hilkhot De'ot* 13, 100:16), and Rav Kook (*Igrot Re'ya* 1:171) argue that in the modern era we can

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The Two Messiahs

Rav Kook's Eulogy of Herzl

by David Rosenstark

In his eulogy of Theodore Herzl, entitled *HaMispel BiYerushalayim*, Rav Kook provides crucial insight into his controversial views on secular Jews and secular Zionism. Interestingly, the *hesped* does not eulogize Herzl, or laud him for his great accomplishments; Rav Kook alludes to Herzl only once, not even mentioning his name. Nevertheless, Rav Kook's position aroused much debate. Rav Moshe Tsurieil, author of *Otzrot HaReiya*, identifies two main targets of opposition: Rav Kook's great love for Jews no matter how estranged from *shmirat ha-mitzvot*, and his iconoclastic view that Jewish nationalism is central to Jewish thought.

In the eulogy, Rav Kook takes care to delineate the sources of his views in mainstream Jewish thought. Though he emphasizes the important historical role of the secular Zionists, he still maintains that their approach is far from correct. On the other hand, Rav Kook believes even the *yeshiva bochur*'s actions fail to meet the ideal. Qualities of each are needed to redeem the Jewish people — qualities reflected by the natures of the two messiahs, Mashiach Ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David.

Rav Kook explains that each messiah has a unique role, comparable to the dual roles of the body and the soul. Man must care of both parts of his self. In a complete person, these two forces do not conflict. Rather, the *neshama* utilizes all the powers of the body to further its own goals, as the body draws on the *neshama* for its strength. Similarly, *Am Yisrael*, often compared to a body, must use its dual nature to achieve physical and spiritual perfection. Its physical aspects must provide support for attaining the ultimate spiritual goal of our nation: the transformation into an *Am Kadosh* and a light unto the nations. While all nations share the physical aspiration, Rav Kook continues, only *Am Yisrael* possesses spiritual aspirations.

The two kingdoms of Bnei Yisrael reflect the physical and spiritual forces: *Malkhut Beit Yehuda* embodies the spiritual, and *Malkhut Beit Yosef* the physical. Yehuda's spiritual nature is echoed by the verse in Tehillim (114:2) "Yehuda became His sanctuary."

Furthermore, utilizing the idea of *ma'aseh avot siman la-banim* (the actions of the forefathers are indicative of the nature of their descendants), Rav Kook shows that Yosef is the embodiment of the physical traits of *Malkhut Beit Yosef*. During the famine, he functioned as the provider for his family. In addition, his involvement in society and his knowledge of many languages evince a trait common to all nations.

Originally, *Klal Yisrael* was united under David's kingship. David integrated of the nature of Beit Yehuda with Beit Yosef: the Midrash explains that David was both *admoni*, a trait shared by Esav, and *yefeh enayim*, meaning that he acted only with the consent of the Sanhedrin. History reveals, however, that these two forces could not remain united. Only two generations after David's rule, strife divided the kingdom between Yehuda and Yosef. While ideally the spiritual and the physical should have remained unified in one leader, God now proposed to Yaravam, the first ruler of *Beit Yosef*, that the two kings work together to combine these forces: "I and you and the son of Yishai will walk together in Gan Eden" (Sanhedrin 102a). Though separate and distinct, the two rulers could still complement each other. The line of Yosef could never realize its spiritual potential without aid from *Beit Yehuda*; the line of Yehuda lacked the *modus vivendi* for restoring the body of *Am Yisrael*, the basis for higher levels of spiritual growth.

Clearly, Yehuda, as representative of the unique spiritual quality of *Am Yisrael*, was to hold preeminence. God explained this to Yaravam, who responded, "And who will walk in front?" When God answered, "The son of Yishai is in front," Yaravam refused the offer.

The rift between these two forces resulted in each facet's separate and divergent development. *Malkhut Beit Yosef* emphasized only that which Bnei Yisrael shares with the rest of the nations. Such an emphasis led to idol worship, in imitation of the other nations. *Beit Yehuda*, on the other hand, suffered from a curable case of spiritual myopia; had they focused on spiritual efforts, they might have overcome the lack of physical strength. But Yehuda failed, and eventually became

physically and spiritually blind. The two camps grew antithetical, precluding the possibility of mutual cooperation, leading to an inability to coexist.

Throughout the generations, these two forces would alternate in the forefront of Jewish activity. At times, national aspects stemming from the line of Yosef would predominate. At other times, the people developed only the spiritual aspects, peculiar to Yehuda. Since both are necessary for spiritual wholeness, the two forces began to exert influence simultaneously. The consequence: a state of confusion and a lack of focus, known as *Chevel Mashiach* — the birthpangs of both Mashiach Ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef.

Although Mashiach ben Yosef will embody the unique spiritual aspects of *Am Yisrael*, his main role is to serve national interests. By placing the national ahead of the spiritual, he will precipitate his own murder by *Beit Yehuda*. When he is killed, all will recognize their errors. *Beit Yehuda* will, at that point, finally realize that the second aspect of *Am Yisrael* is of utmost importance to its totality and so must be extracted from the character of *Beit Yosef* and incorporated into *Mashiach Ben David*.

According to Chazal, the *hesped* for Mashiach ben Yosef is found in a verse in Zechariah (12:11) where the crying is compared to "the mourning of Hadadrimon in the valley of Megiddon." Yonatan Ben Uziel says the verse refers to the mourning of the death of Achav and Yoshiyahu, an explanation which the Gemara (Megilla 3a) relates stirred a great controversy. God inquired, "Who is this person who has revealed My secrets to Man?" whereupon Yonatan Ben Uziel answered, "I am the one that did so. You know that I did not do this for my own glory or for the glory of my family, but to limit strife in *Am Yisrael*." How is the *hesped* of Mashiach Ben Yosef like those of Achav and Yoshiyahu? Why did this interpretation spark controversy?

In answering these questions, we must first understand the distinctive traits of these two kings. Achav and Yoshiyahu were prime examples of the development of one power at the expense of the other. Achav was a devoted nationalist who died a hero's death in battle, never disclosing to his people that he had been mortally wounded. In other words, he emphasized the material aspects. Yet, Achav did not appreciate the Torah's importance or *Kedushat Yisrael*. He worshipped idols and followed in the evil ways of his wife Izevel. Yoshiyahu, in his sole emphasis on spiritual aspects, desired that Bnei Yisrael separate themselves from all the other nations. For example, when the Egyptians asked to pass through Eretz Yisrael, Yoshiyahu's strong desire to disassociate from the other nations caused him to ignore Yirmiyahu's command from God and so refuse the Egyptian request.

We can now understand why the *hesped* of Mashiach ben Yosef is compared to those of both Yoshiyahu and Achav. Both camps will realize the terrible loss incurred through the death of Mashiach ben Yosef, equalling the mourning at the death of both these kings. Those who valued nothing but spirituality will acknowledge their mistake, realizing the necessity for the material aspect in the rebirth of *Am Yisrael*. Similarly, all who did not acknowledge the spiritual aspects will also

understand their error.

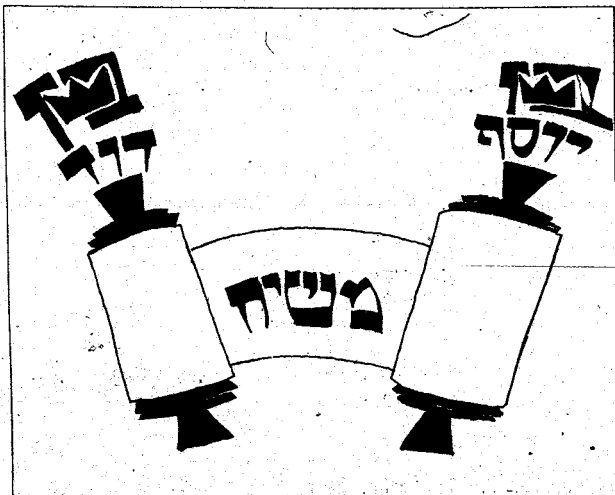
The lesson to be learned comes at a very high price. Therefore, in explaining the verse about the *hesped* of Mashiach ben Yosef, Yonatan Ben Uziel attempts to clarify the two roles to Bnei Yisrael. He explained the motive to be "to limit strife," so that the two sides might try to reconcile before such a great calamity would occur. The prophet, however, had mentioned it only *be-remez*, because after the two forces went opposite ways, it became impossible for anyone to integrate the two, concentrating on the spiritual precluded the national and vice versa.

Secular Zionism today follows in the footsteps of *Beit Yosef* in its focus on the material aspects of restoring the nation to the land, utterly forgetting the *segula* (chosenness) of *Am Yisrael* through its spirituality. Since involvement in one aspect precludes participation in the other, Judaism has been split, fulfilling exactly what Yonatan Ben Uziel tried to prevent. The only cure is for the leadership, the *tzaddikim* of the generation (*Beit Yehuda*), to recognize the important role Zionism plays and incorporate it into the spiritual goals of Bnei Yisrael. Unfortunately, they have been unable to take the lead of the secular Zionists and utilize the kernel of good in the movement. Instead of success and the perfection of *Am Yisrael*, the consequences were strife and disagreement, leading to Herzl's death.

It is time for both sides to see the truth that Yonatan Ben Uziel tried to teach us. Neither camp is correct, nor should either one think it is correct. The religious Jews must acknowledge and rejoice in the awakening of concern for the general needs of the entire nation. They must realize that this power, if harnessed, facilitates their spiritual goals. On the other hand, the secular Zionists must realize that with nationalistic intent alone Bnei Yisrael cannot survive, as God told Yaravam when He offered him kingship. Herzl's death, then, is tragic, since he followed in the ways of Mashiach ben Yosef. If both sides had cooperated, the result could have been the unity of Bnei Yisrael, and a complete return to God.

Rav Kook's letter to the members of Mizrahi urging them to change their definition of Zionism is an application of the ideas he expressed in *HaMispel BiYerushalayim* (see Tzvi Feldman, ed., *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, letter 37, pp. 250-269). He was aware of the deleterious effects of secular Zionism, saying that we (the religious) are not safe from the influence of the secularists (p. 256). For Zionism to be meaningful, Torah must be its basis. The leaders of Zionism, however, "show no desire for the observance of religion and Torah" (p. 255). He urged reversing the official Mizrahi interpretation of Zionism, which disclaimed any connection between Zionism and religion. Rav Kook explained that separating Zionism and religion contradicts the Torah and constitutes heresy. All through history, any resurgence of nationalism has been based on Torah. We see in the days of Moshe and Yehoshua, as well as the times of David, Shlomo, Chizkia, and the Maccabees, that the national power revolved around the spiritual hub of the nation, the *Mishkan* or the *Beit HaMikdash*. The heroism of the Maccabees was itself based on their devotion to the religion and not merely to the nation.

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Rebel, Rebel

A Guide on How to Ask Questions

by Rabbi Howie Jachter

Already in my brief teaching and rabbinic career, my students have posed countless questions concerning the conflict of their own values and those of the Bible and the Talmud. Most of these questions have been asked in a polite and appropriate manner. Some of them, however, have been posed without showing proper respect for our religious heritage. While the asking of questions clearly enhances the study of both Bible and Talmud, it is obviously preferable that such questions be asked in recognition of, and not in contempt of, religious authorities. Let us explore this issue in light of some biblical examples, and try to develop an appropriate framework for such questions.

There is an old Yiddish saying that "no one ever died from a question." This attitude is best depicted by a charming anecdote which I heard from my *rebbe*, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstien, *shlita*. A student once asked Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik a question, and Reb Chaim referred him to a small Tosafot which simply asks his question and states that they do not have an answer for it. Reb Chaim then responded that he wanted to make him aware of the fact that others have asked this question, and that no one ever died from a question.

Indeed, the literature of our sages indicates an unreserved willingness to ask the unanswerable. The Talmud itself often concludes a discussion with the word "*kashya*" — the question remains unanswered. Maimonides (*Hilkhot Teshuva* 5:5) readily admits that the human mind is incapable of reconciling the contradictory principles of human free will and divine prescience (see, however, Rabad's strident comments on this passage). Rabbi Akiva Eiger, in his commentary on the Talmud, shows that he too has learned this lesson, posing many earth-shattering questions which he leaves unanswered.

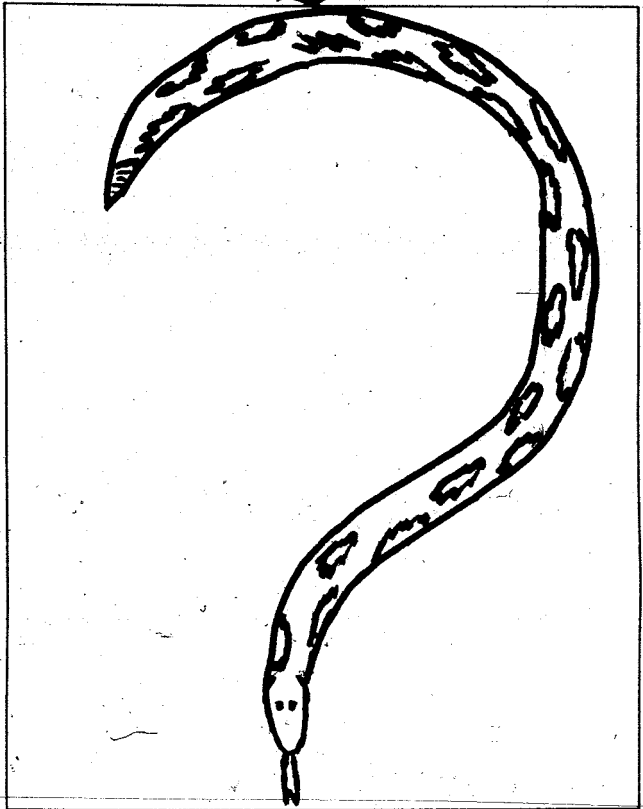
However, while questions asked out of interest should be encouraged, disrespectful questions can be destructive. The classic illustration of this is the age-old discussion of the difference between the questions of the wise and the wicked sons of the Haggada. At first glance, the wise son's question, "What are the testimonies, statutes, and judgments, which the Lord our God has commanded you?", seems quite similar to the wicked son's query, "What is this service of yours?" Why is one son deemed wise and the other condemned as wicked? (For a survey and discussion of this issue, see Nechama Leibowitz's *Studies in Shemot* pp. 147-151, and the presentation of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's view in *Mesora*, vol. 3, pp. 29-30.) The most satisfying answer, in the author's opinion, is offered by Nechama Leibowitz. She points out that the Torah

describes the wise son's comments as a question — "Tomorrow when your child will ask you" (Deuteronomy 6:20), whereas it portrays the wicked son's remark as a statement — "And when your children will tell you" (Exodus 12:26). The wise child may ask audacious questions, but actually seeks an answer. The wicked child, on the other hand, is not interested in asking a question; he merely wants to make a statement. Thus, the reactions of the wise and wicked children clearly serve as examples of how to, and how not to, ask questions.

The Torah itself provides a more direct contrast between appropriate and inappropriate ways of asking questions. In the book of Numbers we read of both the Korach rebellion and the grievances of the daughters of Tzelofchad. Yet, while Korach and his company were severely punished and constitute the classic examples of destructive rebellion (see Numbers 17:5 and Avot 5:20), our Rabbis heap praise upon praise on the daughters of Tzelofchad. They are described as "righteous," "lovers of the land of Israel" (Rashi, Numbers 27:1), and "intelligent" (Rashi v. 4); "their eyes saw what Moses failed to see" (Rashi v. 5) — "praised be those to whom God agrees to their words" (Rashi v. 7). We must ask, though, why they deserve such overwhelming praise, for apparently they registered their complaints to Moses just as Korach and his company had voiced their objections. By analyzing the differences of their methods, we can discover why the former are so rousing praised and the latter so roundly condemned.

We can identify at least four important distinctions between these two groups. The first fundamental contrast centers on the acceptance of Moses's authority. Korach rejected Moses's leadership, and our Rabbis describe how he poked fun at both Moses and the Torah (see Rashi, Numbers 16:1, and the analysis of Rashi by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in *Reflections of the Rav*, vol. 1, pp. 139-149). Conversely, the daughters of Tzelofchad wholly accepted his authority upon presenting their complaint to him. In fact, they later accepted without objection the restriction that they marry only within their tribe, despite the severe limitation this placed on their spousal selection.

Second, Korach attacked the personal integrity of Moses and Aaron, while the daughters of Tzelofchad presented their grievance without launching an *ad hominem* invective. Furthermore, the daughters of Tzelofchad registered their complaint as individuals, not instigating others to "gang up" on Moses and the leaders of Israel. Korach, however, organized a mob to join him in his actions. Whereas the daughters of Tzelofchad sought to pursue truth and justice when they approached Moses, Korach



sought to intimidate Moses and to stir up a negative attitude towards him among the children of Israel.

Finally, a critical distinction between the two groups lies in the different motivations for their complaints. Our Rabbis explain that Korach was angered because he was not appointed to be president of the family of Kehat (see Rashi, Numbers 16:1). On the other hand, the daughters of Tzelofchad merely wished to preserve their father's inheritance. In short, Korach's demand for power constituted a rebellion, while the daughters of Tzelofchad, with their request, respectfully attempted to have their father's name remembered.

Accordingly, whenever we question our religious heritage, we must do so in the spirit of the daughters of Tzelofchad. We learn from them that God appreciates sincerely motivated, respectfully posed questions which implicitly honor the authority of the Bible and Talmud.

However, there is one last point that we must bear in mind. Moses recognized the

sincerity of the daughters of Tzelofchad, yet he could not satisfy their request because the Torah does not allow for female inheritance. Fortunately, Moses was able to consult with God for a resolution to this problem. However, teachers today still find themselves in the same difficult position Moses was in. Individuals today may be sincerely troubled by certain strictures within the halakic system, and may be unable to find satisfactory resolutions to their quandary. Unfortunately, we cannot ask God to resolve our dilemmas.

Hence, we must patiently await the arrival of the Messiah and the reconstitution of the Sanhedrin, under whose jurisdiction these matters will be resolved. The contemporary spiritual heirs of the daughters of Tzelofchad must wait for the revival of prophecy until they will be satisfied. However, we will certainly hasten the arrival of a new prophetic era if we ask questions in the spirit of the daughters of Tzelofchad and the wise son, avoiding the attitudes and tactics of Korach and the evil-son.

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Rav Kook implored Mizraichi to recognize the importance of Zionism in the spiritual life of Bnei Yisrael. Only such a recognition would allow the rest of *Beit Yehuda* to begin to see and understand that Zionism is necessary, and then the opposition would evaporate. At the end of *HaMispel BiYerushalayim*, Rav Kook stresses the great potential of the materialistic force of Mashiach ben Yosef. A unique quality of the generation of the messiah will be to use even

the most base forces for the unique *kedusha* given to *Am Yisrael*. Rav Kook also did not hide his feelings about secular Zionism from its followers. When asked to eulogize youths killed while on guard duty, he wrote of his skepticism about whether he would actually be allowed, halakhically, to praise them ("*Al Bamoteinu Chaltim*," *Ma'amrei HaReiya*, pp. 89-93).

Both *Beit Yehuda* and *Beit Yosef* are preventing messiah's arrival. The murderers of Mashiach ben Yosef are none other than

the zealots of *Beit Yehuda*. *Beit Yosef*, on the other hand, have hurt their own goal of bringing all of Bnei Yisrael together and having a strong nation, as they have denied the Torah and refused to acknowledge God. The indispensability of each segment of Bnei Yisrael, though, stands beyond question.

Just as Yonatan Ben Uziel was taken to task for his explaining the importance of both *Beit Yehuda* and *Beit Yosef*, so was Rav Kook. His goals were identical to those of Yonatan Ben Uziel: "to limit strife in *Am Yisrael*." By

objectively examining both houses, he was able to not only pinpoint the inadequacies of *Beit Yehuda*, but also to extract the core of truth in *Beit Yosef*, the secular Zionist movement. He concluded that unity was much more than just a pragmatic need. It is the only way that all of the directives of Bnei Yisrael as an *Am Segula* can be realized to bring *Mashiach Ben David*, the highest level of spiritual achievement.

A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing

Rambam's View of the Fall of Man

by Seth Kadish

Philosophic interpretation of the Torah combines allegiance to philosophical ideas and a belief in Tanakh as the word of God, containing all truth. When the text of the Torah doesn't clearly indicate those philosophical truths that a *parshan* (exegete) holds dear, he often responds by reinterpreting the text in a fashion that makes it bear those truths. His task then becomes to show just how the words hint towards the philosophical foundations of the issue at hand.

The account of Adam's sin and his exile from the Garden of Eden is an obvious candidate for philosophic interpretation. The events described in the text are quite plain; indeed, the story seems almost naive in its simplicity. The philosophic exegete's reverence for the text of Genesis demands that he focus on broader problems that the story doesn't seem to address directly: What was the nature of Adam's sin? What do the characters represent? Most importantly, what moral lesson or lessons does the story hold for its readers? To an exegete with a philosophical understanding of sin and punishment, his philosophy must be the theme of the story of the Fall of Man in Genesis.

Rambam's interpretation of the Fall of Man has been thoroughly discussed. Most of the attention has focused only on his definition of Adam's sin in section 1, chapter 2 of the *Guide to the Perplexed*, because that section is clearly written and provides logical argumentation. In section 2, chapter 30, Rambam quotes a series of *midrashim* dealing with the entire story of creation, but he is purposely ambiguous as to how he expects the text of Genesis to be read in light of them. As he writes to his student, to whom the *Guide* is officially addressed: "I will not explain them thoroughly so that they will be easily understood, in order that I not be a revealer of secrets... I will provide just enough hints for someone like you to understand them."

The first analysis of the entirety of Rambam's statements on our biblical text is provided by Sara Klein Braslavay. In her study, Braslavay focuses not only on the philosophical points that Rambam brings out in the biblical story, but also on his exegetical approach. She relates each new point in the *Guide* to the exegetical problem that Rambam solved with it. Our summary of Rambam's interpretation is an outline of Braslavay's thorough presentation, focusing on Rambam's exegetical contributions.

Rambam's commentary in chapter 1:2 of the *Guide* is a deeper explanation of the basic theme of the story. He explains what changed in man when he sinned and why man changed in that way. The chapter is written as a response to a man learned in philosophy who objected to the apparent meaning of the Genesis story. Before Adam's sin, argues the objector, man was like the animals in that he had no knowledge of good and evil. It was only when he disobeyed God that he gained moral knowledge, which is man's noblest characteristic. Thus, he concludes, according to the narrative in Genesis man was elevated to the highest level of knowledge on account of his misdeed; it seems that he was rewarded for sinning!

Rambam counters that the knowledge of good and evil referred to in the story is neither the highest form of knowledge nor man's noblest characteristic. He stresses that the noblest pursuit of man is actually in the study

of philosophy, a point that he emphasizes throughout his writings (cf. the *Guide* 3:54, and *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 4:13). But philosophy is not identical with moral distinctions. Such distinctions are necessary only so that society can function and achieve material ends. At the beginning of the story, says Rambam, man occupied himself completely with intellectual pursuits. This is the meaning of man's having been created in the image of God: man's intellect may gain immortality by contemplating God. When he sinned, however, man shifted his attention towards material goals. By doing this he lost the Divine image and became like an animal which pursues only material goals. Man was expected to pursue greater things than physical satisfaction with the intellect that God gave him.

The key to understanding Rambam's interpretation, argues Braslavay, is to take certain words beyond their most superficial

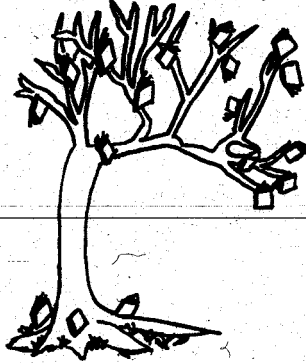
meanings. One key word in the story is the verb *le'ekhol*, to eat. Rambam devotes an entire chapter in the *Guide* (1:30) to its definition. The word suggests both that the object being eaten is consumed and that the living being which has eaten it is enriched by the food. The second nuance in the word *akhal* is directly relevant to the verses that Rambam is discussing, as its meaning can be broadened to include "all intellectual perceptions. These preserve the human form (intellect) constantly in the most perfect manner, in the same way as food preserves the body in its best condition." Braslavay suggests that Rambam read "eating" from "all the trees in the garden" (Genesis 2:16) in exactly this way. But the same verb is more difficult in the case of eating from the *etz ha-da'at*, where the connotation is certainly not one of perfection. Braslavay suggests that the meaning here may lie between the two nuances of *akhal*. In 3:54 of the *Guide*, Rambam states that the purpose of ethical laws is a practical one, that they enable human society to function. Thus *akhal*, in the case of the tree of knowledge, was the achievement of a certain kind of knowledge, a knowledge dedicated to material ends rather than spiritual perfection.

The reader of chapter 1:2 comes to realize that the places in the story, like the verb *le'ekhol*, are not meant to be taken literally. The Garden of Eden and the trees in it are not simply a physical place and physical objects; they symbolize Adam's spiritual state before his sin. So, too, Adam's expulsion represents his removal from metaphysical contemplation. The poor food that he was cursed to eat by the sweat of his brow (3:17-19) symbolizes his misguided toil for material goals rather than spiritual ones.

Rambam sums up his major point in 1:2 with a verse from Job, "He changed his face and You sent him away" (14:20). When Adam shifted his attention to mundane matters, the natural result was that he no longer inhabited the spiritual state that the Garden of Eden represents. Adam's punishment, then, is the logical consequence of his transgression, and Rambam has succeeded in removing any objection to the justice of man's fall in the Genesis story.

This verse from Job also hints that man's change of direction is constantly a free one, meaning that he also has the choice to return to spiritual contemplation. Rambam doesn't make this point in the *Guide*, but he stresses it in *Mishneh Torah* (*Hilkhot Teshuva* 5:1) and in *Shemona Perakim* (chapter 8). The point is a crucial one, because it helps Rambam to solve the most problematic verse in the Adam story.

Genesis 3:22, as it is commonly understood,



says: "And the Lord God said: Now that man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever!" But this implies that God was somehow "afraid" that man would eat from the tree of life and become His rival! This certainly seems to undermine what Rambam said in the *Guide* (1:2) about the nature of Adam's sin. But a new explanation of the verse, found in Rambam's other writings, shows it to be perfectly complementary to his thesis.

In Rambam's full treatment of Genesis 3:22 in *Shemona Perakim* we find that, based on Targum Onkelos, the first part of the verse should be read: "Man is unique, it is in his power to know good and evil." (The novelty in this reading is in its unexpected division of the phrase "one of us," which destroys the phrase and gives a completely new meaning to the sentence.) As Rambam elaborates, "Man is a unique species in the world... in the fact that he knows good and evil, can do whichever he chooses, and there is nothing to prevent him. Because this is so, it is possible for him to 'stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life.'" The point is clear: God cannot be said to be afraid lest man eat from the tree of life. On the contrary! God desires man to shift his attention away from mundane concerns and back to the philosophic contemplation represented by the tree of life. It is impossible to eat from both trees simultaneously because they represent mutually exclusive pursuits. But man, even after his fall, constantly has the option to return to the tree of life.

In 2:30 of the *Guide*, Rambam deepens our understanding of the allegorical meaning of the story of the Fall of Man. In 1:2, he

clarified the central theme of the story by defining man's sin as a turning away from philosophical contemplation. He also revealed that certain ideas in the story, such as the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, were not meant literally. But the discussion left the story's characters unexplained. Why was the sin first instigated by a serpent? And why does the serpent approach Eve first, rather than Adam? It is only in chapter 2:30 that Rambam hints, through carefully chosen *midrashim*, that the characters in the Adam story are actually various parts of the personality of man.

First, Rambam refers to the *midrash* (Bereshit Rabba 8) stating that Adam was created *du-partzufin* ("two faces"), and only later was he divided into man and woman (Genesis 2:22-24). The rabbis were in fact hinting that we must equate Adam and Eve with 'form' and 'substance.' (Elsewhere in the *Guide* (1:17), Rambam points out that early philosophers such as Plato had already dubbed 'form' as 'male' and 'substance' as 'female.') The 'form,' or abstract definition of man, is in his intellect, or perhaps more specifically in his capacity for philosophic inquiry. His 'substance' is his physical body. Substance worked in unison with Form when man was first placed in the Garden of Eden. The creation of woman, however, released the physical substance from servitude to the intellect. It was this situation, which potentially allows the physical substance to dominate, that first made sin possible.

Now, the *midrash* states that Samael, the Devil, "rode" the serpent as if it were a camel. Braslavay shows the serpent to represent arousal of desire, while Samael himself exemplifies the power of imagination or illusion. The serpent appealed to Eve specifically because it is man's physical nature that can be aroused by illusory goals whose source is in the imagination. This works well with how Rambam explains God's curse to the serpent: "I will put hatred between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will wound his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Eve's descendants will defeat the serpent by using the "head," the power of intellect, while the serpent's descendants will achieve victory over man with the "heel," which symbolizes, the desires of the flesh.

When God addresses Adam at the end of the story he is again addressing an entire person. Thus, in the larger scheme of Rambam's interpretation, we see that the biblical story begins by describing man as whole: he is created in God's image and placed in the Garden of Eden. In its description of his sin, the story divides his personality into separate characters: Adam, Eve, and the serpent. At the end, the story returns to the entire man again.

Rambam next quotes a *midrash* stating that the uncleanness inflicted upon mankind by the serpent was removed from the Jewish people when they received the Torah on Mount Sinai. With this he hints to another great theme underlying the text of Genesis. The story actually means to explain the purpose and necessity of the Torah itself. The laws of the Torah are the only laws governing a human nation that are not ultimately meant to promote material good (although they may also accomplish this). The laws of the Torah are meant to create a society conducive to philosophical contemplation by its citizens. In this manner the Torah removes the

Continued on page 7.

Looking Glass

no longer expect to be effective using hatred and rebuke; accordingly, we have to reach out with love to those who deviate from our religious practices. Maharam of Lublin argues that no one can be considered a *rasha* until receiving proper rebuke, a condition which today cannot be fulfilled (Responsa, 13). R. Amital asserts that today, when there are no people who "know how to give reproach" (Arakhin 10b), we must treat those who do not observe Torah with love. Moreover, R. Amital suggests that in the post-Holocaust generation the importance of developing a strong concept of *Klal Yisrael* is heightened. The existence of a *sinat chinam* problem in our times was recognized by the Chafetz Chayyim as the major obstacle delaying the Messianic era (Ahavat Yisrael, Chapter 2).

Unquestionably, an ethical imperative exists within Rabbinic Judaism. Whether it is viewed as the framework upon which the *mitzvot* are constructed, the purpose of *mitzva* observance, or a necessary development of the observance of *mitzvot* is not relevant to positing its existence. The importance of perfection in our interpersonal relationships is at worst an enhancement of the Torah, and at best an ethic central to the entire Torah. This imperative manifests itself in our relationships to all people — observant Jew, non-observant Jew, and non-Jew — and is supposed to serve as a criterion for achieving a status of ethical perfection. Yet, it is precisely in these areas that we seem to be lacking.

The reason for this phenomenon seems to be a complex interaction of various factors. First, in its fear of deviationist movements, Orthodoxy has tended towards the complete rejection of any ideal emanating from these movements. Since they stress the ethical imperative of Judaism, we have distanced ourselves from the overt promulgation of this imperative. Accordingly, we increasingly stress ritual observances — the minutiae of Halakha — which by the outside world's

standards seem irrelevant.

Second, the general trend in America towards the exclusive use of a scientific model of thought has expressed itself in Orthodox Judaism in an overly technical reliance on "how-to" guides and specific proclamations, which by necessity obscure the sensitive nuances of the halakhic stance on interpersonal relationships. For instance, even if misleading another in a business deal might not strictly be termed *gezel* or *genevat da'at*, it should certainly strike a halakhic Jew as a *chillul Hashem* and accordingly disturb him.

Third, the American tendency to value the individual over the community seems to have affected Orthodox Judaism. We seem to emphasize the perfection of the individual over that of the community. The result is a game-show atmosphere where each individual is striving to accumulate the greatest number of *mitzvot* in the shortest time possible. Others become pawns to be used by individuals in the accumulation of these *mitzvot*. People should not visit the sick just to fulfill the *mitzva* of *bikur cholim*, but should rather feel the human need to relate to others who are suffering and attempt to alleviate, if only momentarily, their pain. All Jews should be concerned with the best way to bring the whole Jewish community together, rather than with the creation of further distinctions and more divisiveness.

Fourth, the social and economic stratification and isolation of the Orthodox community has made us insensitive (and in some cases slightly hostile) to those who do not share our common socio-historic background. Apathy towards the poor and underprivileged, derision of blue-collar workers, and abusive-jokes deriding other minorities and the homeless should have no place in any religious community.

Fifth, the confluence of the disruptive influence of the Holocaust and other mass migrations in recent history has led to an Orthodox community largely raised in non-

Orthodox environments. We did not witness the complexity and sensitivity of the European *gedolim* on a day-to-day basis. Accordingly, our major link to the past is through reading rather than through direct personal interaction. We have a tendency to view *gedolim* with a "nostalgic romanticization of a vaguely remembered East European Jewish way" (N. Rabinovitch, *Tradition*, 20:1 (Spring 1982), p. 54). We read their *sefarim*, but cannot experience their unique combination of "intellect, piety, personality, and practical wisdom" (S. Leiman, *ibid.*, p. 43).

Finally, it has been unusual for the Jewish community to define its relationship to the outside world: we are accustomed to acting *bedi'avad* — responding rather than initiating. We have had trouble acclimating ourselves to the more hospitable outside world which exists in America; and therefore continue to react as if the entire world were hostile to our convictions and intentions. In America, where the government and many private institutions have treated Jews fairly as individuals, we have no justification for cheating the government or its institutions. Certainly in America we have no justification for presuming that every non-Jew is an antisemite.

In or, utilize this critique beneficially, we need to re-evaluate the whole spectrum of our interpersonal relationships. Within the observant community we need to place a greater emphasis upon the importance of the community, *chesed*, and *kiddush Hashem* through our interactions with others. We need to treat each individual as one created *b'tzelem Elokim*, worthy of respect by definition. Within the larger Jewish community and the world community, we need to view the world as it is, not as we would like it to be, and to realize that the whole world cannot be a *yeshiva*. Imbuing all our personal relationships with compassion and love and acting towards all others with the highest possible ethical standard will retain for us the credibility to impact upon others by allowing them to view our ethical system and our God as worthy of respect. It is these things which inspire admiration in others, even more so than spiritual perfection.

I remember my father waking me up for early prayers. He did it egressing my forehead, not tearing the blanket away. Since then I love him even more. (Yehudah Amichai, "Letter of Recommendation," in *Poems of Jerusalem*, p. 17.)

Ethical behavior and human relationships are the language we share with the rest of the world. To minimize the gap between us and the world, to allow us to truly serve as a moral force in the world, we need to more clearly articulate and more forcefully stress our ethical values from a logical perspective. We need to recognize that most people today are not searching for an avenue to God, but rather for an avenue to life. It is less important to them that God commanded a particular action than that the action is a logical, ethical approach to a particular situation. Most Jews today do not even consider Halakha an option, either because they do not recognize its relevance to the modern world or because they have been disenchanting by the actions of Orthodox Jews. They have been led to believe that if they are not convinced that God exists, or if they do not want to live in a *shetl* or a *yeshiva* community, then Halakha can have no meaning or value to them. Yet, even if many people frequently reject the halakhic approach, as long as they consider it a viable option they will frequently utilize it. As people become convinced of the value of the halakhic ethic, they will increasingly come to recognize God and worship him.

In conclusion, by perfecting our personal and ethical lives as well as our spiritual lives, not only will we perfect ourselves as individuals, but we will also inspire others towards a new-found respect for halakhic Judaism and God, which will hopefully lead to greater halakhic observance, a more cohesive Jewish community, and greater ethical conduct in the world at large.

A man came to the Besht very much perturbed because his son was no longer observant. The Besht asked him, "Did you love your son?" He responded, "Yes, of course." Then love him even more," the Besht advised.

Knowledge

uncleanliness that Adam received from the serpent when he began to focus on material good. The Torah enables a person to eat from the tree of life once again.

With his major points concluded, Rambam adds a final midrash describing the tree of knowledge, and shows that the Rabbinic, too, identified the tree with philosophic contemplation. Chazal wrote that the width of the trunk of the tree of knowledge is five hundred years journey (Bereshit Rabba 15; Yerushalmi, Berakhot 11), and in the Talmud (Chagiga 13b) they identified this particular interval with the distance from the earth to the firmament of heaven. Thus, the trunk of the tree of knowledge symbolizes the contemplation of earth, or the great (yet finite) science of physics, while its branches, which have no limit, stand for the study of the heavens and of God, or metaphysics. When a man occupies himself with these two sciences it can truly be said that he is in the image of God.

The entire argument in the Guide is based on the single premise that certain terms used by scripture are actually code words that imply more than their literal meanings. With a correct understanding of the persons 'Adam,' 'Eve,' and 'Serpent,' of the objects 'Tree of Knowledge' and 'Tree of Life,' and of the location 'Garden' and of the verb 'eat,' the story takes on a completely different meaning. Rambam's discussions in the Guide, which accurately define these terms, are meant to help the reader break the code and see the story's deeper philosophic meaning in his own reading.

Rambam sees the written Torah as a perfect

text; therefore, it must have the capacity to encompass all great truths. For him, Aristotelian philosophy is a system that largely succeeds in describing the universe. For that reason the Torah, as the sum of all wisdom, must contain this knowledge on some level. However, even assuming the Torah's perfection, the question of genre may still be raised: perhaps the nature of the Torah's Divine perfection is not in that it literally contains the contents of Aristotle's philosophy, or that of any other philosophic system. The Torah may, for example, be perfect in that for man it is the perfect guide to right living; after all, the name Torah does come precisely from *hora'ah*, instruction. Certainly, Torah need not necessarily be a composite of whatever truth lies in Aristotelian philosophy.

The belief in *Torah min ha-Shamayim*, belief that the Torah is the word of God, demands that it be perfect. Rambam raises an important example of what this perfection might entail by assuming that it lies in the written Torah's containing the sum total of abstract truth in philosophy. Alternative explanations of the nature of the Torah's perfection could certainly be suggested, and these different understandings of the very nature of the text of *Torah she-Bikhtav* would result in different methods of interpretation, in different readings, and in finding different themes in biblical stories. Rambam provides an honest and a complete example of careful interpretation which can even serve as a model for those whose assumptions about the Torah's nature have little or nothing to do with formal schools of philosophy.

Continued from page 6.

Psalm

God immediately reacts to Israel's attitude, warning them not to act as they did in Massa and Meriva (v.8) and in the desert. "And they called the place Massa and Meriva, because of Israel's fight, and because they tested God, saying 'Is God among us or not?'" (Exodus 17:7). The direct connection of "as the day" in verse 8 with "the day" in the previous verse suggests that Israel's exhortation to itself and God's rebuke refer to the same incident. Indeed, the events at Massa and Meriva stand in stark contrast to Israel's calling in the first half of the psalm, hinting that Israel operates with a double standard.

In verses 8-10, four phrases stand out: "Do not harden your hearts," "They saw My acts," "They are a nation led astray by their heart," and "They did not know My ways." The first and third, emphasizing the heart, and the second and fourth, describing Israel's perception of God, parallel each other. The latter parallelism tells us that something fundamentally wrong plagues Israel's interpretation of what they see, and that they possess little understanding of God and His acts. For this reason, Israel, allowing its heart to lead it astray, became obstinate.

God turns to the people of Israel, and angrily warns them, "Do not harden your hearts." Their forefathers did not properly perceive what they saw; they followed the ways of their hearts, thus disgusting God, as God tells Israel, "They did not know My ways." This phrase carries important impli-

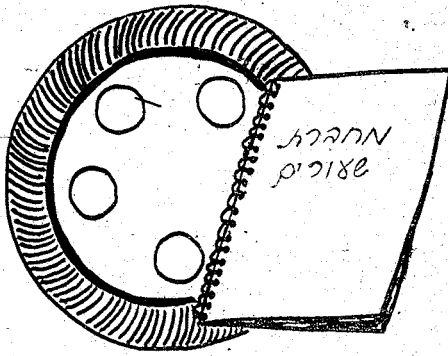
cations. The passage, "They say to God: 'Leave us alone, we do not want to know Your ways'" (Job 21:14), indicates that knowledge of God's ways remains tied to experience of His presence, both through an historical and a contemporary perspective.

Here, in psalm 95, Israel believes that reversal of "They did not heed My charge" (Numal. 14:22), echoed by "If, today, you heed His charge" (v.7), immediately implies reversal of the next passage in Numbers, "[None] shall see the land that I swore to their fathers." God informs them that they err, reminding them, "I swore in My anger that they would not come to My resting-place" (v.11). Israel did not understand God's beneficence then, and even now, while joining in praise, fail to appreciate it.

Israel opened with excitement, praising God as creator and master of the world. Nature, however, becomes commonplace, and spontaneity as a reaction to nature only cannot easily be maintained. Thus, Israel lapses into formalities and rote service, assuming that merely following God's command suffices. God immediately retorts that true and continuing spontaneity can stem only from recognition of His hand in history and constant awareness of His great miracles on Israel's behalf. Only those with sensitivity to God's role in history can achieve deep understanding of Him, and only they will merit enjoyment of His presence in His "resting-place."

Continued from page 2.

Brisker or Brisket A Seder for the Whole Family



by Jon Marvin

Imagine yourself at the Seder-table Pesach night, the house filled with friends and relatives. Since you are learning in Yeshiva, you are of course expected to participate in the *Sippur Yetziat Mitzra'im*. You spent an hour or two last week looking over the *Brisker Haggada* and heard your rebbe's comments about Pesach in *shur*. Finally you decide that your primary contribution to the Seder will be a wonderful piece about the *shur* of *pegima* in the bones of the *korban pesach* needed to violate the *lav* of "et-zei lo tishberu bo," which you figure you can explain with reasonable clarity in, oh, about fifteen minutes. You listen to your six-year-old nephew singing the Four Questions, waiting for your big chance ("Pesach, Matza, u-Maror"), when you hear your Uncle Irving begin snoring and turn around just in time to catch your aunt give him a solid elbow to the ribs.

If your Seder is anything like mine, most of the people there will not be too interested in a Brisker Torah on *pegima*. In fact, as you are sliding smoothly from *sevara* to *sevara* on *sichseh*, most of the others will be brooding over the mouth-watering scent of brisket wafting in from the kitchen; while your heart is in your learning, theirs is in the liver. How, then, can we enhance our sederim with *divrei Torah* and still not put Uncle Irving to sleep? Can we perhaps even interest him in the Seder?

The answer, of course, is yes, we can (or at least we can try). A few simple guidelines combined with a bit of planning can make the sederim meaningful for all of our guests, as well as for ourselves. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1) "KNOW BEFORE WHOM YOU ARE STANDING" (or sitting in this case). Think about who will be at the seder, what kind of backgrounds and interests they have, and what your role at the Seder should be (remember you will probably be younger than the others and do not want to seem to "know it all"). In order to *communicate* with the others, you must be aware of their presence and their needs.

2) Plan beforehand what to say and how to say it. Relating a number of short *divrei Torah* is probably better than relating one long one; if you lose people at one point, you can always try to catch them again later.

3) Remember that the *mitzva* is "to tell [of the] miracles and wonders that were done for our fathers in Egypt . . . and anyone who elaborates upon the events that occurred and happened — he is praiseworthy" (Rambam, *Hilkhot Chametz u-Matza* 7:1, emphasis added). The basic *mitzva* seems to be telling the story, focusing on the real-life events — the release from bondage and the miracles which God performed. When we reach the passages of the Haggada which describe these events, many of us do not even bother explaining them in English, never mind elaborating upon them.

Let me share with you a few thoughts that I plan to try out at my Seder. I will also tell you what I find appealing about each of the ideas/explanations. Nothing here is original; sources are listed at the end of the article.

I

The Torah uses four expressions of redemption in the passage preceding the Exodus: *ve-hotzeiti*, *ve-hitzalti*, *ve-ga'alti*, and *ve-lakachti*. Each of the four cups of wine

corresponds to one of these expressions. The first two of these expressions ("I will bring you out" and "I will save you") connote freedom from something, from the physical burdens of Egypt, slavery, etc. The second two expressions ("I will redeem you" and "I will take you [to me]") connote freedom for or to do something. The first kind of freedom must precede the second, but it is the second kind of freedom that is truly worthwhile. Freedom means the most when it is used to create, to build, to redeem. I think the message here is important: the American idea of "freedom of religion" as insuring that all public places are sterile of God and religion is not consistent with the Jewish idea of freedom; nor is the idea of freedom as "Do anything you want so long as you are hurting no one else" in harmony with the Jewish idea of freedom. Judaism views freedom as a positive, purposeful, and creative force.

II

We break the *matza* and put it away or hide it for later. What kind of person puts away or hides bread? The slave, the prisoner, the impoverished person (Sharansky, in his book *Fear No Evil*, vividly describes how a prisoner will hide away even the smallest crumbs of bread.) Tonight, we are the slave coming out of Egypt, and hiding the *matza* is part of our reenactment of the Exodus. I chose this because it connects one of the rituals with the central idea of telling of the misery of Egyptian life (i.e. *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* according to the Rambam) and because it is something that people can unfortunately relate to: many of the older people at the Seder have suffered through the Holocaust or lived through the depression, times so difficult that they too have had to hide away food.

III

Many fascinating *midrashim* on the Exodus can be used to add color and meaning to our sederim. The Haggada explains the phrase, "And there he became a nation," by saying, "This teaches that the Israelites were distinguishable there." Here we can relate the well-known *midrash* which informs us that the Jews kept their names, their language, and their distinctive dress (and also their religion, as other similar *midrashim* state).³ These are issues that religious American Jews are constantly forced to confront: whether or not to use Hebrew names,⁴ to wear a *kippa* in public, etc.

IV

The commentary *Me-Am Lo'ez* relates that Pharaoh condescended the populous Jewish nation

into working for him, which eventually led to their enslavement. The Egyptians began a national construction project; they appealed to the Jews' sense of patriotism. On the first day, all of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh himself, turned out to work. The Jews, wanting to show that they were loyal Egyptians, worked their hardest, making as many bricks as they could. Pharaoh kept track of the number of bricks that each one made that day and it became his or her quota. The point is clear: the Jews tried to show that they were more Egyptian than the Egyptians, but that very effort led to their downfall.

Passages in the Haggada can be directly relevant to people and to their concerns. Remember: when selecting your *divrei Torah*, keep in mind to whom you will be speaking, and the next thing you know, Uncle Irving will be singing "Chasal Siddur Pesach" for the first time in forty years.

NOTES

- 1) While the basic *mitzva* is clearly to tell of the *nissim* and *niflaot*, as the Rambam explains, there is also a *kiyyum* in learning the laws of Pesach, as implied by the *Tosefta* at the end of Pesachim and the *Tur* and *Shulchan Arukh* (*siman* 481). See also the piece in the *Brisker Haggada* (p. 97 s.v. *Ve-hayu mesaperim*), and *Emek Beracha* (75:3 to end).
- 2) Avot 6:2 comes to mind: the only [truly] free person is one involved in *Talmud Torah*.
- 3) Rabbi M. M. Kasher's *Haggada Shelema* is an excellent source for *midrashim*. For this particular *midrash*, see p. 35.

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