HAMEVASER

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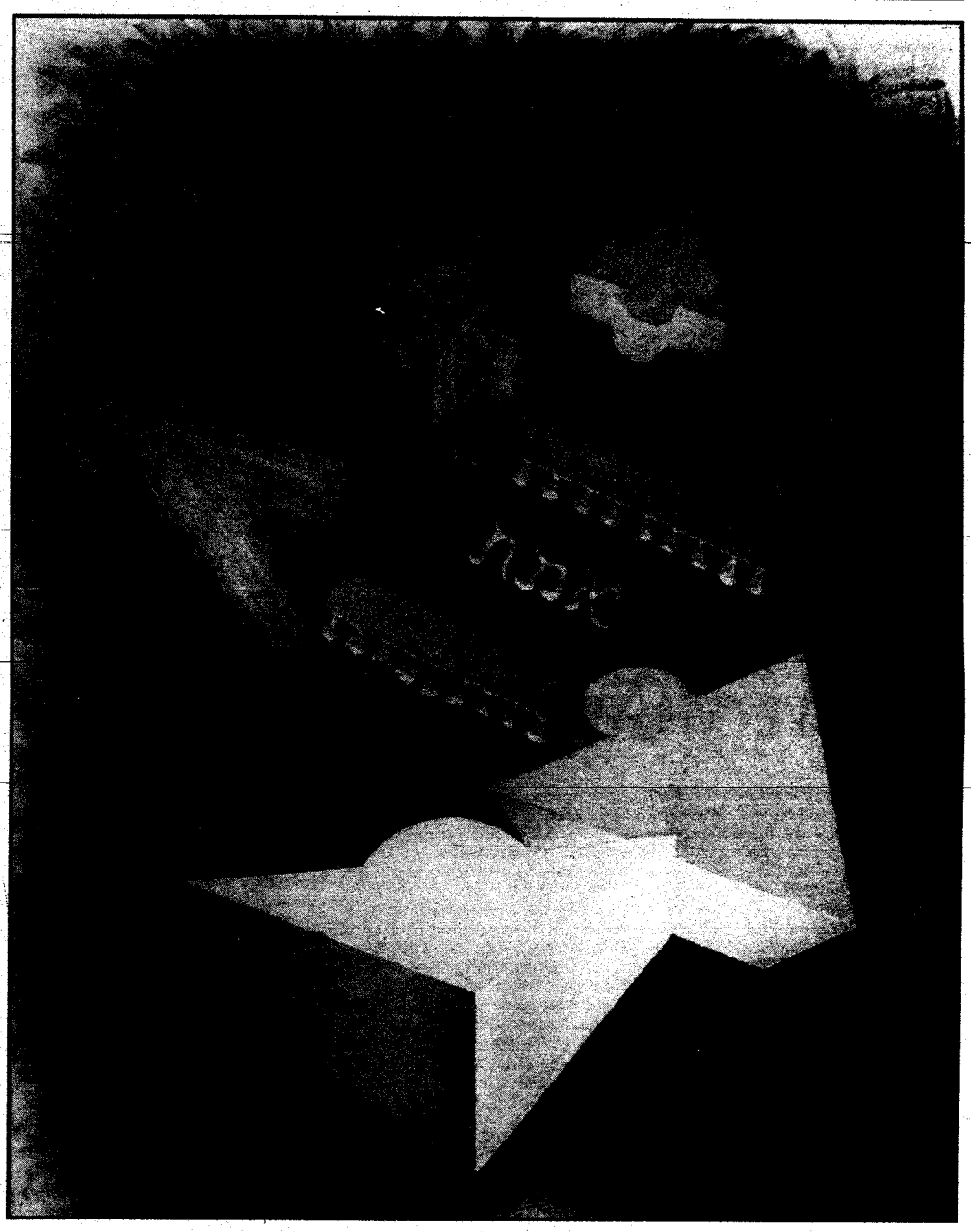
IN THIS ISSUE



Yeshiva, Inc.

The Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) has successfully served the needs of its students for a number of years. SOY has spread its wings far beyond its charter purpose of maintaining the minyanim and *Batei Midrash*. It now conducts *sefarim* and *arba minim* sales, contributes to numerous charities, and finances several Torah publications, to name but a few of the services it provides. With its increased cash flow, many have come to picture SOY not as a student organization, but as big business.

We all recognize that SOY must generate profits in order to adequately fund all the services it provides. Often, this requires students to devote large blocks of time to ensure the success of these events. SOY, as a student organization, depends upon its constituents to regularly volunteer themselves to keep their operations running smoothly. Unfortunately, many students, sensing the dollars flowing into SOY's coffers, have come to feel that offering their time in support of their own student government no longer justifies the effort. Why volunteer, they ask, when we can get paid?

This appalling display of apathy for our yeshiva now infests some of SOY's central obligations. This year, **Hamevaser** (Vol. 30, No. 1) urged students to take control of a disorderly *Beit Midrash* through the innovation of a mandatory clean-up rotation, like the one many of us participated in at our *yeshivot* in Israel. Some of the officials in charge of the *Beit Midrash*, aware of a lack of volunteers, instead offered an hourly, above-minimum wage to students to clean *sefarim* off the tables. Once the system was in place, even the officers billed SOY for their efforts.

Enayim Latorah, another SOY sponsored project, has long relied on student volunteers to ensure production of its weekly *divrei Torah*. This year, they too could not convince enough students that *harbatzat Torah* is enough of a reward for their voluntary participation. To avoid trimming back its publication schedule, they temporarily paid their typists.

No single event exposes SOY's financial health like the *sefarim* sale. As the sale has expanded to accommodate not only the students, but the rest of the New York area, its turnover has reached levels in the six figure range. Obviously, a sale of this magnitude demands hundreds of man hours of its organizers and their assistants. To attract enough labor, SOY openly advertises compensation in the form of percentage discounts and free books. However, what once constituted tokens of appreciation now more closely resembles an excessive payroll.

The system has spun out of control, and our students, and even some of our elected officials, have taken advantage. If, as students, we don't care enough to contribute our time to ensure the continuation of services we have come to take for granted, we don't deserve to be served so well. Conversely, students privileged with responsibility must rediscover what it means to Serve Our Yeshiva.

In Every Generation

As we prepare for Passover, we once again familiarize ourselves with the commandments we hope to perform on the Seder night. More than any other holiday, the essence of our actions lies in their symbolic significance: matzah in rememberance of the bread of affliction, bitter herbs to recall bitter times, and so on. This theme reaches its climax when the Haggada asks us to view ourselves as participants of the Exodus: "In every generation it is incumbent upon every individual to view himself as if he himself was liberated from Egypt."

It seems that few events could enhance our ability to play this role as much as the Allied victory in the Gulf and Saddam Hussein's fall from grace. Hussein brazenly defied a world united against him. With a hardened heart, he, a modern-day Pharaoh, terrorized Israel with aimless air attacks in the face of Allied superiority. When Allied armies pushed his forces into the Gulf, we, like Israelites on the shores of the Red Sea, stood and sang praises to God.

We feel as if we have witnessed His hand in the victory. Consequently, at the Seder, we should explicitly recognize His immeasurable contribution; no other time seems as appropriate. At the same, we must hail the valiant efforts of all the Allied troops who participated in Operation Desert Storm. We cannot overestimate our debt to them; their flawless execution of their mission prevented hundreds, possibly thousands, more casualties. Many Jewish soldiers will remain with coalition forces in the Gulf until after Passover; we might convey our gratitude through the mail. We can write to the soldiers through the following Army chaplains:

CPT Mitchell S. Ackerson
063-50-1970
HHB 2/52 ADA
Operation Desert Storm
APO, NY 09374

LTC David Zalis
219-52-6482
HQ USARCENT
Main - Morale Officer
Operation Desert Storm
APO, NY 09852

In the immediate future, the mail will represent much more than a means to express our thanks. While we have won the battle in Iraq, the diplomatic battle in the Middle East is reaching a critical stage. Now that we have quieted the guns, our legislators and diplomats can hear our voices. While the silence of the guns is truly a blessing, the silence of our voices could prove deadly.

Secretary James A. Baker III
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Secretary Richard Cheney
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

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500 West 185th Street, New York, N.Y. 10033

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To the Editor:

In his article **Of Human Bondage: The Avot As People**, Kevin Taragin reveals the conflicting rabbinic attitudes regarding the interpretation of biblical personalities. Compiling an impressive list of sources, he presents numerous cases where Chazal are clearly willing to rebuke the *Avot* when they feel it necessary, while contrarily, he demonstrates several cases where they choose to bend over backwards to preserve the integrity of our forefathers. Regarding the latter, Mr. Taragin specifically refers to the perplexing *gemara* in Shabbat 55b which, blatantly challenging the simple *peshat* of the text, declares that "whomsoever claims that Reuven or David sinned, is mistaken" (some texts say "is a sinner").

Faced with this difficult piece of *agadda*, as well as the more general dilemma as to what Chazal commonly maintain regarding the character of our forefathers, Mr. Taragin offers an innovative solution: "...we must realize that the actual *Avot* may have differed from the picture the text draws...For people on our level, Reuven and David actually gravely sinned as depicted. Chazal, though, want us to avoid the mistake of defining the *Avot* based on the literal interpretation of the Torah...The *Avot* as they truly were might have been wheels of the *kisei Ha-kavod*, but the Torah presents them to us as humans, and wants us to see them as such and learn from their lives and mistakes."

There are several disturbing things about this solution. First of all, it seems that in an attempt to preserve the integrity of Chazal, Mr. Taragin has compromised the integrity of that which they represent: the Torah. I would rather suffer a thorny *da'at yachid* (solitary opinion) in a *gemara* in Shabbat than remedy it by saying the Torah falsifies its accounts of the *Avot* for didactic gains. If anything, wouldn't the opposite relationship be more plausible? Couldn't Chazal have justifiably circumvented the simple reading of this text in order to achieve a pedagogic end they felt necessary at the time?

Furthermore, it seems that this contrivance fails even to achieve its purported goal. How are we to accept the *Avot* as models for our everyday life when we know that it is a farce? Only with the knowledge that we are examining a genuine portrait can we hope to emulate it. If, in truth, their character is pristine then it would be a crime to sully it. If, on the other hand, it shows flaws, then there is nothing to be embarrassed about. Simply give us the real thing.

There will always be those who believe in the perfection of the *Avot*, whose immaculate forms serve as the paradigms for future generations to emulate. There are others however, who perceive the *Avot* as living, "real" examples, and not as "petrified statues of ossified virtue". To the latter, it is the *Avot*'s ability to struggle with their natural inclinations and ultimately persevere which establishes them as the greatest teachers of all. They would strongly concur with Mr. Taragin's conviction that "A model for another's conduct must be one which faces the same types of tests, battles with the same emotions, and, when necessary, repents for the same mistakes." But this school would

- Continued on page 10

ABOUT THE COVER:

"Emmet," acrylics, by Judy Dick.

Fragmented and falling, the Magen David, a classical symbol of Jewish Unity, represents the current divisiveness within world Jewry. *"Emmet,"* emblazoned on the central hexagon to which six minor triangles connect to form the Jewish Star, serves as the unifying power of *Klal Yisrael.* Emphasizing the supreme essentiality of the State of Israel to such symetrical fellowship, the two tasseled bars sandwiching the Hebrew word for truth, remind us that *emmet,* truth, is the key to the puzzle of Jewish reunification.

About the Artist: Judy Dick is a freelance artist currently attending Stern College for Women. She participates in the joint program with F.I.T.

Art and Ardor: The Role of a Chazzan

by Lowell Abrams

"Who hasn't davened yet?" This familiar call to assemble a quick, unceremonious *minyan* almost always results in one person somewhat ambivalently (unless he is an *avel*) stepping up to lead the *tzibbur*. Although the function of a *shliach tzibbur* is widely known, few take it to heart. Every time a Jew is elected to lead a *minyan*, even on a one-time basis, he accepts upon himself the responsibilities of representing his congregation in front of God, of leading his congregation in prayer, and of maintaining a personal religious commitment to Judaism. Some Jews feel drawn so strongly to these responsibilities that they seek out full-time positions as *shiluchei tzibbur*. A few Jews go so far as to become *chazzanim*, a class even more uniquely committed than that of the *shiluchei tzibbur*.

A *chazzan* takes all aspects of prayer very seriously, and believes that increased sophistication in religious expression yields more meaning. He takes the requirement to prepare difficult prayers and special services to an extreme (O. Ch. 100:1, and M.B. there). In fact, the term "*chazzan*" derives from the Aramaic word "to see"; a *chazzan* must look over the text of a service before its performance (ibid. 53:26 in M.B.). In order to achieve his desired level of preparedness and sophistication, a *chazzan* must undergo long and hard training. This training, and its results, distinguish a *chazzan* from a *shaliach tsibbur*.

Every *chazzan* needs a working knowledge of musical theory, for various reasons. First, without this background, he cannot properly appreciate the various types of scales (called modes), such as major, minor, *freigisch* (the most famous of the "Jewish" modes), and others, used in *chazzanut*; all of these have specific musical properties and must be used accordingly. Second, lack of awareness of the wealth of possible fundamental structures for a composed piece or improvisation must eventually lead to monotony. Third, musically improper usage of chord progressions, transpositions, dynamics (loudness and softness), etc. may not only dull the effect of a piece, but completely undermine the *chazzan*'s intended interpretation of the prayer.

The extent of the *chazzan*'s vocal talent and training also determines the effectiveness of his presentation. Practically, a *chazzan* whose voice cannot stand the strain of singing for the entirety of a service, or which the congregation cannot hear clearly, cannot fulfill his mission. Extensive vocal training invariably alleviates this problem. Vocal training also teaches a *chazzan* how to fuse his voice with his thoughts and emotions; ideally, each and every emotional nuance should correspond, recognizably, to a vocal nuance. A serious *chazzan* studies vocal technique because he wants to avoid any lack of vocal ability limiting the expression of his emotions.

A meaningful musical interpretation of a text, of course, requires a literary understanding of the text as well. Thus, proper training of a *chazzan* includes studying the texts of prayer. But to truly understand prayer texts one needs more than just a superficial familiarity with the Bible and Midrash. For example, the phrase "*ve'sa ness lekabetz galuyoteinu*" (in the weekday service), "and lift a banner to gather our exiled ones", refers to Isaiah 11:12, where we find that the banner is lifted for the nations, not for Israel *per se*; apparently, the banner functions as a bold and grand declaration of God's regrouping of Israel, not as a long, tearfully awaited rallying point. A sensitive and knowledgeable *chazzan* will sing this phrase, and others like it, in such a way as to bring out the proper meaning.

Aside from a close familiarity with the Bible, a *chazzan* must also have a working knowledge of grammar. How many people, clearly ignorant of grammar, read "*Melech, El, chei ha'olamim*" (in the daily morning service) "the King, God, life - giver of the universe," as "*melech el chei, ha'olamim*" "the King God life - giver of, (sic) the universe?" Not only does the latter reading make no sense, the grammatical structure precludes it. A serious *chazzan* recognizes the need to develop grammatical sensitivity in order to avoid this type of error.

The training of a *chazzan* must also include study of the laws and customs of prayer. Of course, a *chazzan* has to know when to say which prayers, but he should also be familiar with less frequently needed laws, for example, when a paragraph must be repeated.

Actually, a *chazzan*-in-training spends the bulk of his time studying the customs of prayer, particularly the customary music. This is no small feat. Each and every prayer, each and every day of the year, has a particular musical mode and characteristic musical motives, and perhaps even a special tune. The weekday *Amida* is sung in the pentatonic mode (or minor mode with pentatonic motives), the *Shabbat Shacharit Amida* is sung in freigisch, and neither of these modes is used on *Rosh Hashana*; the list goes on.

The assignation of these particular musical aspects to each text, as we have it today, has existed for centuries; the tune for *Aleinu* in *Rosh Hashana Musaf*, for example, has existed that long. The importance of retaining musical tradition in prayer is intensified by the ruling of Rabbi Jacob Moellin (MaHaRIL) of the fourteenth century that a person may not deviate "from the custom of the city even in the tunes." Rabbi Moshe Isserles cites this opinion as accepted law (O. Ch. 619:1). A *chazzan* accepts as his duty to fulfill this requirement properly.

More than any other aspect of his development, a *chazzan* must tend to his religious feeling. Through study, introspection, and observance of Jewish law, the *chazzan* must nurture his soul. Without a sense of commitment to the Jewish people and to the Jewish religion, a *chazzan* cannot properly lead in prayer, nor represent a congregation before God. A bonafide *chazzan* develops an emotionally deep relationship with God. He prays to God, not at Him.

Once a chazzan has undergone his basic training, he focuses on the application of that training to his prayer. In particular, the *chazzan* spends more time on actual interpretation of texts. For each phrase or prayer, the *chazzan* chooses between one of two categories of interpretation. He can emphasize, or "bring out," the meaning of the words, for example, by using ascending note patterns and a higher tessatura (pitch range) for such words as "heaven," or, for example, by describing the holiness of God with a mysterious, mystical feel. The *chazzan* also has the option of "bringing out" a particular emotional reaction to the ideas presented by the words, for example, by singing in a crying, begging voice when petitioning God for kindness.

In some instances, the same phrase can receive completely different musical settings. The first line of the second paragraph of the *Kaddish* presents a sequence of eight different terms, each one declaring God's holiness and transcendence. If the *chazzan* wants to emphasize the literal meaning of these words, he will probably increase the volume of his voice as he sings each word and will use some sort of ascending musical line. If the *chazzan* chooses the other interpretive option, and wishes to demonstrate how, with each description of God, he feels less and less significant, he will probably sing increasingly softer and will lower the pitch of his voice. As a *chazzan* becomes more aware of his own abilities and emotions, the sophistication of his interpretation increases.

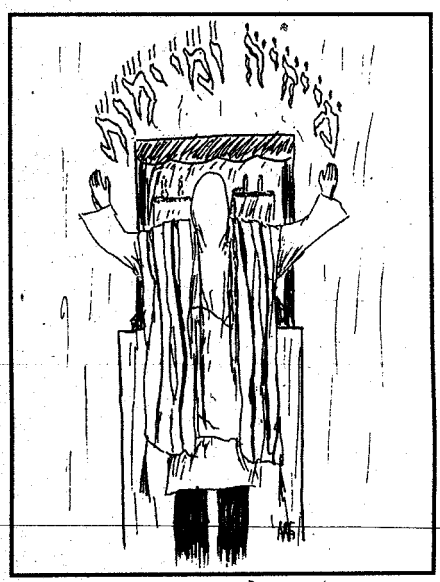
This increase in sophistication requires that, for any service, a *chazzan* must specially prepare each line of prayer he intends to emphasize. Suppose that the *chazzan* chooses the line from *selichot*: "*sarnu mimitsvotecha umimishpotecha hatovim, velo shava lanu.*" First, he insures that he understands the simple meaning: "We have deviated from Your good commandments and laws, and it was not worthwhile for us." Then, he checks the possible biblical references: In Daniel 9:5, "*vesor mimitzvotecha umimishpatecha,*" "[we] have deviated from your commandments and laws," appears in the context of prophet Daniel's personal cry to God after studying the history books regarding the destruction of Jerusalem. The psalmist in Psalms 119:102 speaks of his love of study of the torah, and asserts that, because of that study, "*mimishpotecha lo sarti,*" "I have not deviated from your laws." In Deuteronomy 17:20, when the torah describes the king's requirement to carry and read his personal torah scroll wherever he goes, it gives a motivation: "*levilti sur min hamitsva yamin usmol,*" "in order that he not deviate from the commandment right or left." The *chazzan* notices that all three references show a connection between study of holy books and following God's commandments.

The *chazzan* has now reached the second stage of his preparation. He asks himself if he has deviated from the proper path. He weighs whether or not he has benefitted from his studies of Torah and Judaism as he should have. Should he spend more time studying? He also asks himself more general questions. Has he deviated, if at all, because of laziness, or perhaps because of weak faith? Once the *chazzan* answers these questions to himself, he can properly appreciate this particular prayer.

Finally, the *chazzan* begins the most practical aspect of his preparation -- he decides how he will actually sing the words. Perhaps the *chazzan* will choose special motives to emphasize the contrast of the word "*tovim*," the goodness of God's commandments, and "*lo shava*," the worthlessness of deviation. The *chazzan* decides on dynamics — when to sing loudly and when to sing softly. Most importantly, the *chazzan* must determine what tone of voice to use. Does he want to project a sense of deep regret, or of dissatisfaction with himself and his congregation, or some other emotion? Once the *chazzan* finalizes his ideas about singing the prayer, and actually practices however much he finds necessary, he has finished his preparation. Only by following a method similar to the one just described can the *chazzan* ensure that, in the synagogue, he will not present an audience with a concert, but will lead a congregation in prayer.

The *chazzan*'s role as congregational leader has many facets. From the practical side, he maintains the pace of the service, and he indicates which prayers should be said when, and how. In addition to this, though, a dedicated *chazzan* makes efforts to involve his congregation in the service, in two ways. First, he encourages the congregation to join in singing. Second, and more important, he does his best to involve the congregation on an emotional level.

This latter form of involvement presents great difficulties for a *chazzan*; how can he achieve it? There is only one solution. A successful *chazzan* opens himself to his congregation through his singing. He willingly displays his innermost feelings about the prayers, himself, Judaism, the Jewish people and God. He uses his knowledge of Jewish music and prayer and the sophistication of his vocal artistry to project what he believes most deeply. This sincerity yields empathy; when such a *chazzan* cries, a sensitive congregation cries with him. Together, they rise to a higher spiritual level.



Lo Techanem: Three-Ply Insulaton

Yakov Blau

While discussing the Jewish conquest of *Eretz Yisrael*, the Torah instructs us how to deal with the gentiles living there. Among the many pertinent commandments, we find the cryptic "*lo techanem*" (Deut. 7:2). The Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 20a), expounding on this verse, proposes a threefold prohibition. What is the nature of these prohibitions, and to what extent are they interrelated?

The first manifestation of "*lo techanem*" posited by the *Gemara* forbids giving gentiles station in the land. Presumably, this prohibition applies only to selling land in Israel. Ramban, however, extends this prohibition to land sales in the Diaspora, as a preventive measure to curb such sales in Israel. Rosh rejects this extension, arguing that Ramban lacks textual support from the *Gemara*; Rav Yosef Karo (*Yoreh Deah* 151:7) rules like Rosh.

During the famous controversy over the *heter mekhira*, the selling of land in Israel to non-Jews for the purpose of easing the laws of *shemitta*, R. Yitzchak Elchanan opined that a temporary sale does not violate the prohibition against granting station in the land to gentiles (*Kitvei Rav Herzog* Vol. 1 Ch. 2 footnote 6).

The Gemara's second corollary of "*lo techanem*" prohibits the giving of gifts to gentiles. Tosafot (*Avoda Zara* 20a, s.v. Rabbi) cites an exception to this rule: the *gemara* (*Gittin* 61a) states that we should support poor gentiles along with Jewish paupers in order to preserve peaceful relations.

One particular case of giving gifts to gentiles troubles many *Rishonim*. The *gemara* (*Pesachim* 22a) permits sending the thigh of an animal to a gentile even if the *gid hanashe* (sciatic nerve), forbidden to Jews, is not removed. While the gemara addresses the prohibition of *gid hanashe*, it fails to consider the prohibition of "*lo techanem*." Tosafot (ibid) quotes a *Tosefta* (*Avoda Zara* 3:5) which permits the presentation of a gift to one's gentile neighbor or acquaintance. Such a gift, in principle, resembles a sale, since a neighbor is likely to return the favor. Thus, Tosafot limits the case of *gid hanashe* cited in Pesachim to a gentile neighbor or acquaintance. Rashba (*Shut HaRashba* Vol. 1, No. 8) originally offers this approach, but then adds that the *gemara* may only be referring to a non-idolatrous gentile. Meiri presents a similar answer, but does not clearly delineate the gentile's religious beliefs. He says, "[to] any member of a nation which has defined religious beliefs...it is permissible and proper [to give presents]."

The *Gemara*'s third and final directive is that one may not compliment gentiles. The example given is that one may not say: "This gentile is beautiful." The *Gemara* proceeds to qualify this law, permitting praise of a gentile if the praise refers to Hashem. In fact, the *gemara* asserts that one must bless Hashem upon seeing beautiful creations.

What is the reason for these prohibitions? Meiri explains the prohibition of giving presents to gentiles as a preventive measure, insuring the obligatory material support of needy people such as a *ger toshav*. Rambam (*Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 10:4) explains that all three prohibitions serve as means to prevent association with non- Jews, for fear of learning from their ways. The *Sefer HaChinukh* (*Mitzva* 426) adds that since thoughts and words lead to action, praise could lead to association. In unusually strong language, the *Sefer HaChinukh* stresses the severity of this prohibition.

Rambam attempts to categorize yet another prohibition under the rubric of "*lo techanem*." In *Hilkhot Avoda Zara* (10:1), he alludes to the *gemara*'s ruling that while a Jew should not endanger a gentile, he need not actively rescue him from peril (*Avoda Zara* 26a). Rambam (*Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 10:1) cites "*lo techanem*" as the primary source, presumably attributing to this interdiction those parameters already governing the other related prohibitions. In contrast, the *Shulchan Arukh* distinguishes between the *Gemara*'s three facets of "*lo techanem*" and the lack of an obligation to rescue a gentile in danger, applying the former to all gentiles (*Yoreh Deah* 151) while limiting the latter to the Seven Nations when they are not engaged in battle with Israel (ibid., 158:1). For the *Shulchan Arukh*, there exists a definite obligation to rescue any gentile in danger (with the same limitation that he not be of the Seven Nations and at war with Israel).

Do all these prohibitions apply today? R. Barukh Epstein (*Torah Temima*, Deut. 7:2) submits that all these prohibitions only apply to the Seven Nations specified in the immediate context of the Biblical prohibition. Since individual members of these nations are no longer identifiable, "*lo techanem*" cannot be implemented. Many *Rishonim*, however, universalize "*lo techanem*," applying it to all gentiles (see Tosafot, *Avoda Zara* 20a s.v. *De'amar*, which explains this extension). A proof for their opinion is the *gemara* (*Avoda Zara* 20a) which applies "*lo techanem*" to Romans who clearly do not belong to the Seven Nations.

A dispute exists whether or not "*lo techanem*" includes even non-idolatrous nations. Bach (*Chushen Mishpat* 249) feels that it applies only to idolaters, and consequently permits the giving of gifts to Ishmaelites; Beit Yosef (ibid.), however, posits that it applies even to non-idolators. While Bach and Beit Yosef deal specifically with the aspect of gift giving, it seems reasonable that this dispute extends to all facets of the prohibition, "*lo techanem*." Nevertheless, the *Darkhei Teshuva* (*Yoreh Deah* 151) asserts that all authorities agree that no prohibition of selling land to Ishmaelites exists. Despite the author's conviction, he offers no rationale for distinguishing between the different laws attributed to "*lo techanem*." Apparently, the reasons for the various categories of "*lo techanem*" differ, possibly along the lines of Meiri's position that gift giving is prohibited due to unrelated financial considerations.

Rav Herzog (Vol. I Ch. 2 Sec. 6) believes that the prohibition of selling land to gentiles does not apply to Christians. First, he argues that Christianity is not idolatry (a position which has been the subject of much debate). Additionally, even if Christianity *per se* qualifies as idolatry, today's Christians may still have pure intent; they simply do not comprehend the contradiction between the Trinity and Jewish monotheism. R. Herzog only makes these arguments in the context of selling land to gentiles; thus if we accept the distinction of the *Darchei Teshuva*, there is no proof of R. Herzog's opinion regarding gift giving.

None of these authorities discuss the prohibition of praising non-Jews. It is unclear, therefore, whether it would be linked with the prohibitions of land selling or giving gifts.

Regardless of the exact applicability of these prohibitions today, the Torah's intent behind "*lo techanem*" remains instructive. We must strive to avoid becoming excessively integrated into non- Jewish society.

Book Review

Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust
by Shimon Huberband
Translated by David E. Fishman.
Edited by Jeffery Gurok and Robert Hirt.
KTAV Publishing House and Y.U. Press, 1987
Reviewed by Elisha Anskelovitz

Kiddush Hashem stands apart from other books about the Holocaust. It was written during the Holocaust by Rabbi Shimon Huberband, an Orthodox Rabbi of Aguda background who was also a respected historian. Unlike a survivor's record, it escapes any hindsight reinterpretation of events in light of the mass murder of European Jewry. Rabbi Huberband's book thus offers a unique glimpse at what Orthodox Jews during the Holocaust could see and foresee.

Rabbi Huberband presaged much of the cultural and religious annihilation. In response to the expulsion of Jews from various towns, he advocated collecting all rare religious books and other Jewish cultural articles of historical value to Warsaw, by way of the local congregations (p. 458). This appeal makes us realize most clearly that Warsaw Jews, while informed of the fates of other towns, did not foresee their own expulsion. In fact, while Rabbi Huberband repeatedly demonstrates his awareness of the murder of martyrs in Auschwitz, he seems never to have realized that the Germans planned to systematically kill all the Jews.

The author's position as an Orthodox Rabbi contributes to the book's information on religious life not found by this reviewer elsewhere. This contribution is twofold. First, he discusses issues of immediate, practical *halakhic* concern, such as "The Ritual Slaughter of Poultry" (Ch. 25) and "The Ritual Slaughter of Cattle" (Ch. 26); a reminder of Holocaust Jewry's concern for domestic issues despite the difficult times. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Rabbi Huberband's direct involvement serves to offset misconceptions which may arise in other works. For example, works that speak of Messianic forecasts that spread through the ghettos leave the reader with the impression that such speculation was the product of the ghetto inmates' creative imaginations. R. Huberband, on the other hand, shows us many earlier sources, some of which date back to the *Rishonim*, which predicted the Messianic redemption during 1939-41 (pp. 121-124).

Rabbi Huberband's background as a historian also reveals added insights to his description of religious life. As Nachman Blumenthal and Joseph Kernish point out in a biographical essay of R. Huberband, "Rabbi Huberband's work is distinguished by its remarkable objectivity. He avoids tendentiousness and any detail which would reflect a personal bias or subjective approach. He attempts to give the facts and episodes without literary decoration, as his eyes saw them or as he was informed of them. He writes about the events without any of the false lynchism which characterizes most of the memorists of the period....The facts speak directly to the reader and force him to contemplate. The reader feels pain along with the victims of the Holocaust, admires the objectively presented instances of Jewish heroism in this cruel period and draws the appropriate conclusions from all this on his own (p. xxvii)."

Some other reviewers disagree with the description of this work as objective, in light of R. Huberband's comments on the Gerer Rebbe, Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter. For example, he blames the Gerer Rebbe for not encouraging *aliya* (p. 235-6), an accusation echoed by the Rebbetzin of Strapkov before entering the gas chamber (Ber Mark, *The Scrolls of Auschwitz*, p. 208). Others express objection to R. Huberband's description of Gerer youth as "the harsh ones," followed by pointed accusations of stealing from their parents (pp. 181, 183) and extorting money from and informing on fellow Jews (p. 182).

As a historian, R. Huberband described the reality behind the events of religious heroism. He interweaves his descriptions of religious life and sacrifice with thorough descriptions of the conditions, thereby producing a truly complete picture of his community. Its comprehensiveness eclipses that of books such as Mordechai Eliav's *Ani Ma'amin*, in which facts are presented out of context, thereby diminishing the reader's appreciation of them. Even without detailed descriptions of the death camps themselves, the book convinces one that previous Jewish catastrophes "pale in comparison" (p. 267).

R. Huberband presents the readers with essays arranged by topics, including autobiographical materials, ranging from the Nazi invasion to the time of the author's writing. This enhances clarity, allowing the reader to focus on specific aspects of the Holocaust. The structural difference between this history and Holocaust diaries is important for anyone who will read only a limited number of books on the Holocaust. A student, for example, need not plow with difficulty through the sometimes tedious daily descriptions of a diary.

In short, this book will easily draw the reader into Rabbi Huberband's Holocaust world. It will overwhelm him with its deceptively simple style. It will spiritually invigorate him, and challenge him to higher standards. Hopefully, by clarifying our impressions of the Holocaust and enhancing our understanding, it will further imbue the lessons to be learned from this dark period in Jewish History.

Veahavta Lereakha Kamokha:

You Must Love Your Neighbor, But Must You Like Him?

Beth Zuckerman

First impressions, however brief, often permanently shape our opinions of the people we meet. Based on such encounters, we inevitably determine that we like some people more than others. However unfair this decision may seem, we often cannot control ourselves. Or can we?

It seems that many Torah obligations do attempt to control our emotional responses. Most conspicuous among them is the commandment of "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*" (Lev. 19:18). Does "love your neighbor" demand an emotional response, or can we fulfill its requirements merely through action? Specifically, is man actually commanded to love his neighbor as himself?

We can understand this *mitzva* in three basic ways. At one extreme, the first approach assumes man cannot control his feelings. As a result, the *mitzva* cannot make emotional demands, and one fulfills it solely through action. The middle approach recognizes the inherent difficulty in mandating emotions; this school therefore limits the degree of love that one must feel for another, but does not abolish emotion altogether. At the other extreme, the third approach not only imparts an emotional component to the *mitzva*, but interprets the phrase "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*" literally, claiming that it indeed commands man to love his neighbor as his equal.

Malbim: Love Through Action

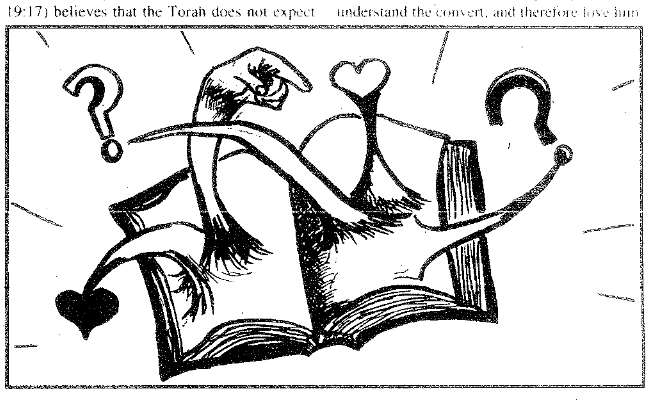
By eliminating emotion from the *mitzva*, the first school operates solely in the sphere of action. Its members rely heavily on two well known Tanaitic statements: one, Hillel's succinct reply to the gentile who agrees to convert to Judaism if Hillel can condense the whole Torah into one principle, "What is hateful to you, do not do unto your neighbor" (*Shabbat* 31a); and two, "Rabbi Akiva says: 'Love your neighbor as yourself' — this is an important precept in the Torah" (T.Y. *Nedarim* 9:4). Throughout the centuries, many commentators have used Hillel's statement to define the *mitzva* of "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*." "Love" means treating your neighbor with consideration. Although the connection between Hillel's dictum and the commandment to love one's neighbor is not explicit, the correlation can be seen by suggesting that Rabbi Akiva equates Hillel's "one principle" with the "important precept" of loving one's neighbor.

But why would Rabbi Akiva choose to reinterpret the *mitzva* from its literal meaning of loving one's friend as an equal to the fulfillment of Hillel's golden rule? In his commentary *Torah Temima*, Rav Baruch Epstein explains that Rabbi Akiva finds it unlikely that the Torah would require one to love his neighbor as himself, since humans cannot attain such complete control over their emotions. Furthermore, Rabbi Akiva himself rules that if a person must choose between saving his own life or that of his friend, his own life takes precedence. How could the Torah require equal love while dictating that one's own life is more important? Therefore, Rabbi Akiva understands that "love," in this context, is not expressed through emotional feelings, but rather through action, such as not offending or hurting his neighbor.

Malbim (Lev. 19:18) agrees that a person cannot possibly love his friend to the same degree that he loves himself. His understanding of "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*" not only requires, as Hillel's rule does, that man refrain from causing his neighbor harm, but additionally demands helping his friend in any way possible. Malbim derives this definition from the *pasuk* itself. Were the Torah to require us to love our neighbors, the commandment would have been formulated "*veahavta et reakha*"; our verse, however, states "*veahavta lereakha*" - "to your neighbor." In addition, emotional love is usually juxtaposed with "*nefesh*," but here it is followed by "*kamokha*." Though this first school may be philosophically satisfying, eliminating emotion from the mitzva seems to ignore the literal understanding of the *pasuk*.

Hirsch: Love Through Empathy

Members of the second school of thought make moderate demands on man's feelings, an understanding which more closely parallels the literal meaning of the *pasuk*. Ramban (Lev. 19:17) believes that the Torah does not expect man to love his fellow as himself. Interpreting the syntax of the *pasuk*, he explains that "*lereakha*," as opposed to "*et reakha*," limits the degree to which we must control our emotions. We are not required to love our fellow Jews equal to ourselves, but we are expected to unreservedly wish them the same well-being that we wish ourselves.



Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch also believes that loving the "person of our neighbor as we love ourselves...is practically impossible to carry out" (Lev. 19:18). He champions the same exegetical approach as Ramban, but defines the *mitzva* a little differently. "*Lereakha*" refers not to the person himself, but to the situations that pertain to the person. While we may not love our neighbor as a person, we should nevertheless rejoice in his happiness and grieve in his sorrow as if it were our own. According to Hirsch, this demand does lie within man's self-control, and it is fair to require such expressions even toward someone whose personality we may find not to our liking.

Mendelsohn (Biur, Lev. 19 s.v. *veahavta lereakha kamokha*) also tries to limit the emotional demands of the *mitzva*. He takes a novel approach and explains that while the Torah may dictate that one love his neighbor, it does not quantify exactly how much love to feel. Like the other commentators, he derives his understanding of the *mitzva* from an exegetical approach to the text. The word "*kamokha*" is generally understood as defining the nature of man's love for his fellow: love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. For Mendelsohn, however, "*kamokha*" represents the reason, not the amount, that one should love his neighbor: love your neighbor because he is like yourself. Nehama Leibowitz (*Studies in Vayikra*, p.196-197, *Iyunim Besefer Vayikra* p.302) points out that this interpretation of *kamokha* is supported by another verse appearing later in the chapter: "*K'ezrach mikkem yihye lakhem hager hagar itkhem, veahavta lo kamokha ki gerim heyitem b'eretz Mitzrayim*" - "The stranger who resides with you shall be treated the same as the native born and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:34). Were we to understand the phrase "as thyself" as a quantifier indicating how much love one should feel for the convert, the end of the verse would seem out of place. The fact that we too were strangers in Egypt does not further explain why we should love a convert as *much* as we love ourselves. However, if we understand "as thyself" to mean "as one who is like yourself," the demand of *veahavta lereakha kamokha* is quite clear: love the stranger who is like yourself. Since you yourself were once strangers, you should understand the convert, and therefore love him. Likewise, there exists a common human bond which requires us to feel love toward all people, but does not require that we love everyone as much as we love ourselves.

Rambam: A Literal Understanding

Rambam's understanding of the *mitzva* to love one's neighbor spans both of the above schools. In *Hilkhot Avelut* (14:1) Rambam enumerates various forms of *chesed*, such as *bikur cholim* - visiting the sick, and *nichum avelim* - comforting mourners. At the end of this list, he concludes, "Although all these commandments are from the Rabbis, they are under the category of '*veahavta lereakha kamokha*.' All the things that you want others to do for you, you should perform for your brother..." This formulation seems to closely parallel Hillel's golden rule. Seeing this source in Rambam's writings would certainly lead one to the conclusion that Rambam understands "love your neighbor" like members of the first school, as a *mitzva* performed through actions only, devoid of any emotional element.

Rambam, however, incorporates additional requirements into the *mitzva* of "*veahavta*." His explanation in *Sefer HaMitzvot* (M.A. 206), "...one's love and compassion towards his brother should be commensurate to his love and compassion towards himself for his money and his body...and everything that I desire for myself I [should] desire for him," smacks of Ramban's formulation, and therefore places Rambam in agreement with the second school. Rambam's dominant position, however, seems to go beyond the first two schools. *Mitzvat Aseh* 206 includes, "...by this injunction we are commanded to love one another even as we love ourselves...This injunction is contained in the words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'" Here Rambam seems to advocate the literal interpretation, placing him in the third school which defines the *mitzva* as a commandment that man emotionally love his brother as his equal. Rabbi Norman Lamm explains, "Maimonides holds that while the means of implementation are functional or practical in nature, the essence of the commandment which defines its fulfillment is emotional: a feeling of love" ("Loving and Hating Jews as a Halakhic Category," in *Tradition*, Winter 1989 p.105). This "feeling of love" is not identical to the feelings of good will demanded by Ramban and Hirsch. Rambam explicitly states that "we are to love another even as we love ourselves." In other words, "*veahavta*" is to be taken literally, requiring that man indeed must feel equal love towards his fellow man.

Limits On Love: Are They Possible?

This formulation raises the difficulty suggested in the introduction. Can we possibly love every person as our equal? Would it not make more sense to consider whether each person deserves such love based on his respective deeds? Rashbam (Lev. 19:18) confronts this question, and through an analysis of the word "*reakha*," redefines the reach of this command in terms of whom we are required to love. "[Love him,] if thy neighbor is good," argues Rashbam, "but if he is wicked, 'the fear of the Lord is to hate evil.'"

Although the text may not seem to support the distinction between a good or evil person, this gloss is valuable for our purposes. Rashbam, like Malbim and Ramban, recognizes the problem inherent in requiring man to love all people as he loves himself. Yet, instead of redefining "love" and thereby limiting the scope of the requirements in fulfilling the command, as the others do, Rashbam chooses to limit the applicability of the command without changing the meaning of the word "love." His innovative interpretation refuses to recognize any limits on love itself; he simply admits that man by nature cannot love wicked people, so the *mitzva* therefore does not require him to do so. It does, however, compel him to love those whom he is capable of loving as much as he loves himself.

Some contemporary thinkers also seem to agree that while there is inherent difficulty in demanding complete love for our fellow man, the Torah can and does require this. In his response to Ernst Simon, Harold Fisch claims that the *mitzva* to love one's neighbor is unique because it "places on our moral and emotional organism an almost superhuman burden." Yet he asserts that its fulfillment is not beyond man's capabilities. "We obey it because in spite of its difficulty it is nevertheless within the bounds of the humanly possible" (*Modern Jewish Ethics*, ed. Marvin Fox pp. 56-57).

Understanding this *mitzva* literally places extraordinary demands on the individual. Controlling our actions is difficult, but mastering our emotions seems impossible. Nevertheless, Rav J. B. Soloveitchik writes that *halakha* does [illegible] control the inner life of man through [illegible] as "do not covet" or "do not hate your [illegible]." Many people, consumed by [illegible] actions, may attempt to downplay [illegible] cance of commandments that [illegible]. But the Rav contends [illegible] integral to *halakha* [illegible] [illegible]

Joseph: The Royal Economist

BIBLE

Lawrence Burian

After Joseph's successful interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams and his subsequent suggestion for economic action, Pharaoh extols Joseph for his refined business acumen, calling him an "*Ish navon vechakham*" — "a man of discernment and wisdom" (Gen. 41:33). According to Seforno, the redundancy in the praise indicates Pharaoh's finding the young Joseph both an incisive theoretician and a skilled business manager. Pharaoh, awed by Joseph's genius, appoints him "head of his household" (Gen. 41:40). In ancient Egypt, this position represented the head of the financial ministry.

Yet, to the reader, Joseph's economic sensibility seems incongruous with his shepherd/slave background. His rapid advancement and immediate recognition in Pharaoh's court elicit a number of intriguing questions. When did Joseph, a young Semitic shepherd, develop the sophisticated economic proficiency which helped him assume the financial leadership of Egypt? What was the exact nature of his seven year plan? In what specific manner did Joseph distinguish himself as a qualified economist and financial planner?

During the years of plenty, Joseph exhibited shrewd economic insight by imposing a 20% tax on agricultural produce. Legislating forced saving, he secured the stability of Egypt's economic structure. Without such a levy, "the super abundance would have engendered a tremendous loss in productivity due to a sharp increase in idleness and waste" (A. Levine: Tradition 25:2).

Not only did Joseph maintain the production and consumption balance of Egypt; he also ventured to ensure the psychological welfare of the nation. Throughout the difficult taxation and distribution process, Joseph displayed a high degree of sensitivity to the impact of his policies on the people: "And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up within it" (Gen. 41:48). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that by enforcing localized--rather than centralized --storage, Joseph dispelled any notions of government profiteering from the collected produce. The conspicuous, local presence of the granaries assured the people of the government's intention to return their grain.

Still, when the years of famine finally arrived, the alarmed Egyptians petitioned their leader: "And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread" (41:55). Joseph responded decisively: "And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to Egypt..." (41:56). Seforno explains that Joseph literally "opened" the silos in order to create the strong visual effect of the government's overstuffed preparations. In this manner, Joseph successfully mollified the mounting panic.

The Torah uses the verb "*vayishbor*" in describing Joseph's action. While here interpreted as "and he sold," a more precise translation suggests "and he divided" or "and he broke up." Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains, based on the above peculiarity, that Joseph carefully supervised the redistribution of the public stores. In order to prevent racketeering, Joseph conscientiously rationed and divided the sale of the produce. To further protect the economy from individual hoarding, Joseph prohibited the sale of governmental famine relief to slaves. Otherwise, one could direct many slaves to purchase government grain and amass more than his legal ration.

Ironically, these seemingly sound economic policies ultimately served to estrange the Egyptian populace from Joseph. What possible justification could any Egyptian have for being dissatisfied with him? Dr. Levine explains that "survivors of the famine might very well have shifted focus to their landless state and blamed this condition on Joseph...the argument for fixing blame could run as follows: "Since the foodstuff in the public granaries represents private savings, why were we made to exhaust our money, sell our cattle and turn our land over to the state, all to obtain what is in any case our entitlement?" (A. Levine: Tradition 25:2)

Joseph did, in fact, sell the government stores, but this does not preclude a viable defense for his policies. In Dr. Levine's scenario, the Egyptians' grievance is based on the imbalance between forced saving versus purchased consumption. This assumes that Joseph forcibly collected the one-fifth tithe. Yet the text does not necessitate such a conclusion. When outlining his plan, Joseph says: "... and let him appoint officers over the land, and collect the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty" (Genesis 41:34). Ibn Ezra comments that Joseph's plan called for the purchase of twenty percent of all produce at full compensation. Within this scenario, Joseph created neither an imbalance nor an injustice in selling the fully owned government storage.

Such an interpretation implies great economic acumen on the part of Joseph. In modern terms, he manipulated government fiscal policy in order to offset the boom and bust of the business cycle. By purchasing twenty percent of all produce, Joseph maintained consumption percentages and price levels. Similarly, during the famine years, Joseph once again ensured stable markets by expanding supply.

However, even assuming that Joseph implemented forced saving without just compensation and charged for the redistribution, Joseph still acted wisely and fairly. By pricing government storage, Joseph chose the most effective and efficient method of allocation. Rabbi Hirsch explains that by charging money Joseph prevented popular consumption from becoming "extravagant in waste." Dr. Levine concludes: "Certainly, retrospective focus on a particular component of Joseph's policies could easily lead an embittered soul to deny the enormous national debt owed to Joseph and instead turn the tables and fix blame for his own personal misfortune on Joseph" (Levine: Tradition 25:2). Nonetheless, Joseph's plan represented the most beneficial and sensitive solution to Egypt's radically changing economic condition.

Still, the initial, nagging questions remain: when and how did Joseph develop his refined business sense? Perhaps he never did. Perhaps Joseph's prediction of long, alternating periods of abundance and drought brought no startling news to the Egyptian people. They had already acclimated themselves to the cyclical nature of the Nile and its periods of growth and destruction. It seems logical that they would already have developed sophisticated agricultural methodologies to combat periods of drought. More likely, after predicting the specific character of the upcoming fourteen year cycle, Joseph merely suggested, by way of conclusion, that Pharaoh now implement the standard and proven fiscal policies.

Barring this explanation, however, the source of Joseph's genius remains an enigma. Professor Nehama Leibowitz points out that "many of our commentators have wondered how Joseph, the stranger and slave,...dared to proffer advice, unrequested, to Pharaoh King of Egypt?" (Studies in Bereishit).

She outlines the explanations of Ramban and Abravanel. Ramban presents a radical understanding of the relevant biblical passages: "Joseph's plan was prompted by the sight of the lean cows devouring the fat ones, symbolizing that the famine years would eat of the plenty. On the basis of this, he advised Pharaoh to have all the food of the years of plenty stored for use in the famine period. It was not his own advice. Had they commissioned him to advise the king? It was merely part and parcel of the dream's interpretation." Thus, according to Ramban, Joseph displayed no personal economic knowledge; he simply interpreted the dream.

Professor Leibowitz, however, rejects Ramban's approach: "The wording of the text and content of the advice would seem to preclude such an interpretation. Joseph's 'Now therefore let Pharaoh look for' (Gen. 41:33) indicates the beginning of a new theme ... It does not at all sound like the continuation of his interpretation of the dream, as an explanation of a hitherto undeciphered item."

Instead, she presents Abravanel's interpretation: "This advice was prompted from beginning to end by the Holy Spirit. The prophet cannot keep back his prophecy and must unburden himself." According to Abravanel, Joseph's advice stems not from his interpretation of the dream, but from an added divine inspiration. This explains why Joseph consistently invokes God's name. In his conversation with Pharaoh, Joseph reminds the court of his reliance and faith in God. Similarly, Joseph's economic plans were firmly founded on divine prophecy.

The above interpretations seek to minimize the scope of Joseph's personal economic ingenuity. However, there still remains at least one commentator who allows for continued respect for Joseph as an economic planner. According to Targum Onkelos, Joseph's responsibilities in Potiphar's house predominantly involved the financial ledgers and bookkeeping. It is unclear what prompted the Targum to depict Joseph as the equivalent of the modern day accountant. Perhaps Onkelos' motivation originates from the

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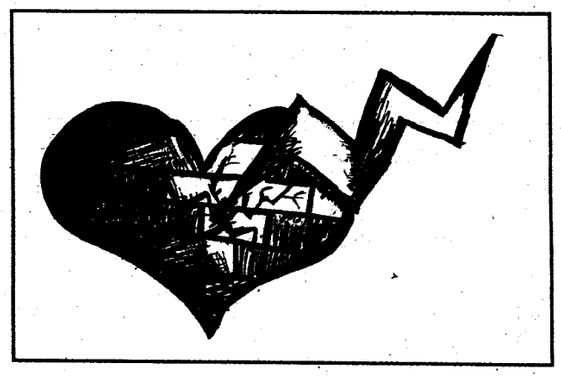
KING OF HEARTS: *Pharoah & Free Will*



Sammy Levine

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart mentioned in the Exodus story presents a puzzling philosophical question. Rambam writes that "there is no doubt that all of man's actions are of his own volition ... without any compulsion forced upon him. Therefore, it is possible [for God] to command him." This principle's conspicuous absence from God's treatment of Pharaoh leads Rambam to ask, "how could He punish [Pharaoh] when he did not free [*B'nei Yisrael*]?" The problem is so powerful that prior to suggesting a solution, Rambam advises his reader to "pay close attention, and compare [my answer] to those of others, and choose for yourself the best one" (*Shemona Perakim* 8).

Extending an idea mentioned briefly by Rav Saadia Gaon (*Emunot Vedeot* 4:6), Rambam answers that Pharaoh indeed sinned voluntarily, any feelings of contrition he may have. Since Pharaoh's sins against *B'nei Yisrael* included murder and other sins which necessitate punishment, there could be no *teshuva* to reverse his fate.

Alternatively, Abravanel posits that according to "simple justice," man must be punished or rewarded according to his actions. *Teshuva*, then, reflects a special kindness which God grants upon his nation, *B'nei Yisrael*, "who are constantly under his *hashgacha pratit*, solicitous supervision." A sinner such as Pharaoh, however, cannot perform *teshuva* while remaining an idolater. With regard to the men of Ninveh, whose *teshuva* was accepted, Abravanel writes that they had to reject the idolatry they had embraced before they could be saved from destruction.

Traces of Rambam's ideas are elaborated upon by Ramban. Noting that the verses describing the first five plagues state that Pharaoh's heart was strengthened without God's intervention (7:13), Ramban writes that the early plagues were simply a punishment for Pharaoh's own stubbornness. When Pharaoh finally decided to capitulate, Ramban says, he intended not to recognize and glorify God's name, but only to relieve himself of the hardships he had endured. Therefore, God says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart and I will increase My signs and My wonders in the Land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:3). God intended the Exodus from Egypt to "show My strength and to tell My name in all of the land" (Exodus 9:16).

In the *Sefer Ha'ikarim* (4:25), Rav Yosef Albo adds a twist to this explanation. He writes that sometimes an evil man repents in the midst of his punishment, as Pharaoh did when declaring "I have sinned; God is Justified" (Exodus 9:27). Feeling that such repentance is not based on free will but is thrust upon the sinner, the *Ikarim* posits that God considered it necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart to insure that he think the plague occurred by chance rather than through Providence. Only once this transpired was Pharaoh no longer forced in his actions, but could instead "choose his own path." Contradicting Rambam, then, this explanation suggests that, ironically, by hardening Pharaoh's heart God returned to this sinner his free will.

Seforno explains similarly, but inserts a final twist which, in effect, reverses Rambam's view concerning Pharaoh and *teshuva*. He asserts that God actually wanted Pharaoh to repent with a sincere *teshuva*. As Ramban said, without God's intervention, Pharaoh would certainly have freed *B'nei Yisrael* as a result of the unbearable plagues. Seforno adds that although such an act would be prompted partially by some recognition of God's "Greatness and Goodness," its ultimate motivation would remain self-preservation. While Rambam wrote that God took away Pharaoh's ability to do *teshuva*, Seforno insists, on the contrary, that hardening his heart was the only way to bring Pharaoh the opportunity for "*teshuva amitit*," true repentance.

The various answers to the problem of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart involve important theological and philosophical principles with broad ramifications. Yet, perhaps we should recall the words that Rambam himself writes after offering his own solution. He admits that even his answer leaves us with the question of "why God punished this man with this particular punishment and not a different punishment." In the end, he writes, we "do not need to know His wisdom" to such a great extent, but should remember "the rule that all of His ways are merciful and just, and He will punish the sinner according to the sin and reward the virtuous according to the merit" (*Shemona Perakim* 8).

■ ■ ■

Unveiling The Masks:
Minor Characters in Megillat Esther

Chaviva Levin

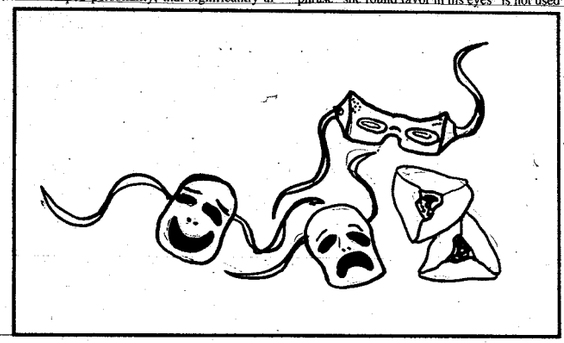
The Book of Esther is unique among the books of Tanakh. The characters in the story are some of the most assimilated Jews one encounters in Tanakh. The story takes place entirely within a foreign court, and focuses not at all on the tragedy of assimilation. There is a high concentration of terms of Persian origin which have been preserved in the tale, not replaced by the appropriate Hebrew terminology. On the surface, the tale appears to be a story of palace intrigue replete with implausible coincidences, in which behind the scenes players wield most of the power.

As Uriel Simone points out, the secondary characters in most accounts in Tanakh are not well developed and serve only to highlight or contrast the personality traits of the sole protagonist. Simone mentions that Ruth is unusual in that it contains a number of main players. Against this backdrop, the tale related in the Book of Esther is atypical. It contains a large number of main characters: a hero, a heroine, a villain, and a fool. Even with all these main players, however, the forward movement of the plot is stimulated by the actions of many smaller players. The former irregularity should serve to obviate the need for the latter.

In Esther, the main characters are sufficiently numerous to have their interactions with one another precipitate forward motion in the story. They possess sufficiently well defined characters to contrast or balance one another during the course of the story. It is thus doubly unusual to find a large number of secondary characters playing a primary role in the plot development. Characters about whom the reader knows nothing appear at critical moments in the story, say a few words which have a tremendous impact on the outcome, and then disappear, never to be heard from again.

The first plot twist comes with Vashti's refusal to comply with Achashverosh's request to come before the king, and the aftermath of that refusal. Memukhan, who is the lowest ranking of the seven advisors to Achashverosh (according to the *Midrash*), advises that Vashti be deposed. He also recommends that a decree be sent throughout all the provinces of the kingdom apprising the king's subjects of the incident, in order to ensure that each man be recognized as the ruler of his own home.

Memukhan's advice has two far reaching effects regarding the continuation of the plot development. First, Vashti's removal clears the way for a replacement queen, Esther. Secondly, according to the *Gemara* (*Megilla* 12b), it was the decree proposed by Memukhan that ensured that the mandate to kill the Jews during the month of Adar was not immediately implemented. Achashverosh's royal decree that men reign supreme in their own homes was perceived as obvious by his subjects, so his order was deemed inconsequential and foolish. This set the stage for the later decree against the Jews to be similarly disregarded as the work of a fool. It is the advice of Memukhan, a minor character with an undeveloped personality, that significantly affects the story's outcome.



The next step toward Esther's ascendance to the throne comes when Achashverosh's anger subsides as he recalls Vashti's deposal. The *Naarei haMelekh*, the personal servants of the king, advise Achashverosh to implement a nationwide search for the beautiful women of his kingdom, from amongst whom he will select his next queen. This is a highly unorthodox method by which to choose a spouse for a head of state. Generally, such marriages are arranged with the progeny of neighboring rulers, and act as political alliances. Alternatively, the monarch can marry a member of an aligned branch of royalty, thereby consolidating his existing power. Had this been the criterion for Achashverosh's new queen, however, Esther would not have been considered as a contender for the position. It is only the strange advice proffered by some young servants which allows Esther to become a player, albeit an unwilling one, in the search for a queen.

The reader of the Book of Esther knows from the start, by virtue of the book's title, that Esther will be selected as the replacement queen. The reader, however, might not have anticipated the machinations behind her selection. It is clear from the narrative that Hegai, the keeper of the women, takes a special interest in Esther. A close examination of the text, moreover, suggests the conclusion that Hegai played a decisive role in the selection of Esther as Achashverosh's next wife. When the king's servants advocated a beauty contest as the method by which to pick a new queen, the stated: "And let the maiden who finds favor in the eyes of the king be queen instead of Vashti." It is interesting to note that the phrase "she found favor in his eyes" is not used regarding Achashverosh's perception of Esther. The phrase is, however, used in connection with Hegai's opinion of Esther: "And the girl found favor in his eyes." It almost seems as if the king chose the woman who pleased Hegai rather than she who pleased himself.

The original impetus for Haman's anger against Mordekhai and his people stem from Mordekhai's refusal to bow down to Haman. As the incident is related, however, it is the servants of the king sitting in the king's gate who first notice Mordekhai's noncompliance with the king's order. They bring the matter to Haman's attention. It is only after Haman is apprised by others of Mordekhai's behavior that he becomes incensed and resolves to destroy Mordekhai along with his entire nation.

Haman's anger is not assuaged even with an invitation to an exclusive banquet with Esther and Achashverosh. Haman's rage still churns every time that Mordekhai refuses to prostrate himself. Haman's wife, Zeresh, suggests that Haman build gallows on which to hang Mordekhai, in order to rid himself of this "thorn in his flesh." It is fascinating to observe that Haman himself does not create this idea; rather, his wife, a minor character, suggests the construction of the structure which later plays a significant role as the instrument of Haman's ultimate downfall.

One of the subplots which most distinctly highlights the theme of ironic twists within the book of Esther follows the king's sleepless night. Haman suggests to the king that the one whom the king wishes to honor be led through the streets of the capital, riding the king's horse, clothed in the king's garments, with an escort preceding him, shouting "thus shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor." Haman obviously considers himself worthy of the king's tribute, and as the audience looks on knowingly, the overconfident vizier is felled by his own assurance. He is ordered by the king to implement his own advice by leading Mordekhai through the streets as the one whom the king wishes to honor. This scene, which plays a pivotal role in increasing Haman's wrath and resentment against the Jews, could not have taken place if Mordekhai had not intercepted the treasonous plot of two palace officials. Thus, Bigtan and Teresh, two negligible dignitaries of the king, unwittingly play a notable function in propelling the plot development toward its finale.

In order for the story to have a satisfactory ending, Haman must be punished by the same method which he wished to use against Mordekhai. If not for the intervention of Charvona, this fitting conclusion might not have been achieved. Charvona observes at the appropriate moment, when the king's wrath against Haman reaches its peak, that Haman has a fifty cubit gallows in his own backyard. He reasons, wouldn't it be a shame not to use it? Charvona's comment ensures that Haman receives his just demise, and hangs on the very gallows which he wished to use for Mordekhai. A reversal of the plot is again fulfilled through a minor character.

The observation of this phenomenon raises an implicit question: Why do secondary characters play a primary role in the Book of Esther? It is plausible to surmise that the nature of palace intrigue is such that small tremors within the inner sanctum of the court have tremendous repercussions for the rest of the kingdom. If the court is a microcosm, then everything which occurs within the court is automatically magnified in its importance. Thus, the actions of secondary characters, by virtue of their being connected with the court, are attributed greater significance than the actions of other secondary

- Continued on Page 10

Lo Techanem: Three-Ply Insulaton

Yakov Blau

While discussing the Jewish conquest of *Eretz Yisrael*, the Torah instructs us how to deal with the gentiles living there. Among the many pertinent commandments, we find the cryptic "*lo techanem*" (Deut. 7:2). The Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 20a), expounding on this verse, proposes a threefold prohibition. What is the nature of these prohibitions, and to what extent are they interrelated?

The first manifestation of "*lo techanem*" posited by the *Gemara* forbids giving gentiles station in the land. Presumably, this prohibition applies only to selling land in Israel. Ramban, however, extends this prohibition to land sales in the Diaspora, as a preventive measure to curb such sales in Israel. Rosh rejects this extension, arguing that Ramban lacks textual support from the *Gemara*; Rav Yosef Karo (*Yoreh Deah* 151:7) rules like Rosh.

During the famous controversy over the *heter mekhira*, the selling of land in Israel to non-Jews for the purpose of easing the laws of *shemitta*, R. Yitzchak Elchanan opined that a temporary sale does not violate the prohibition against granting station in the land to gentiles (*Kitvei Rav Herzog* Vol. 1 Ch. 2 footnote 6).

The Gemara's second corollary of "*lo techanem*" prohibits the giving of gifts to gentiles. Tosafot (*Avoda Zara* 20a, s.v. Rabbi) cites an exception to this rule: the *gemara* (*Gittin* 61a) states that we should support poor gentiles along with Jewish paupers in order to preserve peaceful relations.

One particular case of giving gifts to gentiles troubles many *Rishonim*. The *gemara* (*Pesachim* 22a) permits sending the thigh of an animal to a gentile even if the *gid hanashe* (sciatic nerve), forbidden to Jews, is not removed. While the gemara addresses the prohibition of *gid hanashe*, it fails to consider the prohibition of "*lo techanem*." Tosafot (ibid) quotes a *Tosefta* (*Avoda Zara* 3:5) which permits the presentation of a gift to one's gentile neighbor or acquaintance. Such a gift, in principle, resembles a sale, since a neighbor is likely to return the favor. Thus, Tosafot limits the case of *gid hanashe* cited in Pesachim to a gentile neighbor or acquaintance. Rashba (*Shut HaRashba* Vol. 1, No. 8) originally offers this approach, but then adds that the *gemara* may only be referring to a non-idolatrous gentile. Meiri presents a similar answer, but does not clearly delineate the gentile's religious beliefs. He says, "[to] any member of a nation which has defined religious beliefs...it is permissible and proper [to give presents]."

The *Gemara*'s third and final directive is that one may not compliment gentiles. The example given is that one may not say; "This gentile is beautiful." The *Gemara* proceeds to qualify this law, permitting praise of a gentile if the praise refers to Hashem. In fact, the *gemara* asserts that one must bless Hashem upon seeing beautiful creations.

What is the reason for these prohibitions? Meiri explains the prohibition of giving presents to gentiles as a preventive measure, insuring the obligatory material support of needy people such as a *ger toshav*. Rambam (*Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 10:4) explains that all three prohibitions serve as means to prevent association with non- Jews, for fear of learning from their ways. The *Sefer HaChinukh* (*Mitzva* 426) adds that since thoughts and words lead to action, praise could lead to association. In unusually strong language, the *Sefer HaChinukh* stresses the severity of this prohibition.

Rambam attempts to categorize yet another prohibition under the rubric of "*lo techanem*." In *Hilkhot Avoda Zara* (10:1), he alludes to the *gemara*'s ruling that while a Jew should not endanger a gentile, he need not actively rescue him from peril (*Avoda Zara* 26a). Rambam (*Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 10:1) cites "*lo techanem*" as the primary source, presumably attributing to this interdiction those parameters already governing the other related prohibitions. In contrast, the *Shulchan Arukh* distinguishes between the *Gemara*'s three facets of "*lo techanem*" and the lack of an obligation to rescue a gentile in danger, applying the former to all gentiles (*Yoreh Deah* 151) while limiting the latter to the Seven Nations when they are not engaged in battle with Israel (ibid., 158:1). For the *Shulchan Arukh*, there exists a definite obligation to rescue any gentile in danger (with the same limitation that he not be of the Seven Nations and at war with Israel).

Do all these prohibitions apply today? R. Barukh Epstein (*Torah Temima*, Deut. 7:2) submits that all these prohibitions only apply to the Seven Nations specified in the immediate context of the Biblical prohibition. Since individual members of these nations are no longer identifiable, "*lo techanem*" cannot be implemented. Many *Rishonim*, however, universalize "*lo techanem*," applying it to all gentiles (see Tosafot, *Avoda Zara* 20a s.v. *De'amar*, which explains this extension). A proof for their opinion is the *gemara* (*Avoda Zara* 20a) which applies "*lo techanem*" to Romans who clearly do not belong to the Seven Nations.

A dispute exists whether or not "*lo techanem*" includes even non-idolatrous nations. Bach (*Choshen Mishpat* 249) feels that it applies only to idolaters, and consequently permits the giving of gifts to Ishmaelites; Beit Yosef (ibid.), however, posits that it applies even to non-idolators. While Bach and Beit Yosef deal specifically with the aspect of gift giving, it seems reasonable that this dispute extends to all facets of the prohibition, "*lo techanem*." Nevertheless, the *Darkhei Teshuva* (*Yoreh Deah* 151) asserts that all authorities agree that no prohibition of selling land to Ishmaelites exists. Despite the author's conviction, he offers no rationale for distinguishing between the different laws attributed to "*lo techanem*." Apparently, the reasons for the various categories of "*lo techanem*" differ, possibly along the lines of Meiri's position that gift giving is prohibited due to unrelated financial considerations.

Rav Herzog (Vol. I Ch. 2 Sec. 6) believes that the prohibition of selling land to gentiles does not apply to Christians. First, he argues that Christianity is not idolatry (a position which has been the subject of much debate). Additionally, even if Christianity *per se* qualifies as idolatry, today's Christians may still have pure intent; they simply do not comprehend the contradiction between the Trinity and Jewish monotheism. R. Herzog only makes these arguments in the context of selling land to gentiles; thus if we accept the distinction of the *Darchei Teshuva*, there is no proof of R. Herzog's opinion regarding gift giving.

None of these authorities discuss the prohibition of praising non-Jews. It is unclear, therefore, whether it would be linked with the prohibitions of land selling or giving gifts.

Regardless of the exact applicability of these prohibitions today, the Torah's intent behind "*lo techanem*" remains instructive. We must strive to avoid becoming excessively integrated into non- Jewish society.

Book Review

Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland During the Holocaust
by Shimon Huberband
Translated by David E. Fishman.
Edited by Jeffery Gurok and Robert Hirt.
KTAV Publishing House and Y.U. Press, 1987
Reviewed by Elisha Anskelovitz

Kiddush Hashem stands apart from other books about the Holocaust. It was written during the Holocaust by Rabbi Shimon Huberband, an Orthodox Rabbi of Aguda background who was also a respected historian. Unlike a survivor's record, it escapes any hindsight reinterpretation of events in light of the mass murder of European Jewry. Rabbi Huberband's book thus offers a unique glimpse at what Orthodox Jews during the Holocaust could see and foresee.

Rabbi Huberband presaged much of the cultural and religious annihilation. In response to the expulsion of Jews from various towns, he advocated collecting all rare religious books and other Jewish cultural articles of historical value to Warsaw, by way of the local congregations (p. 458). This appeal makes us realize most clearly that Warsaw Jews, while informed of the fates of other towns, did not foresee their own expulsion. In fact, while Rabbi Huberband repeatedly demonstrates his awareness of the murder of martyrs in Auschwitz, he seems never to have realized that the Germans planned to systematically kill all the Jews.

The author's position as an Orthodox Rabbi contributes to the book's information on religious life not found by this reviewer elsewhere. This contribution is twofold. First, he discusses issues of immediate, practical *halakhic* concern, such as "The Ritual Slaughter of Poultry" (Ch. 25) and "The Ritual Slaughter of Cattle" (Ch. 26); a reminder of Holocaust Jewry's concern for domestic issues despite the difficult times. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Rabbi Huberband's direct involvement serves to offset misconceptions which may arise in other works. For example, works that speak of Messianic forecasts that spread through the ghettos leave the reader with the impression that such speculation was the product of the ghetto inmates' creative imaginations. R. Huberband, on the other hand, shows us many earlier sources, some of which date back to the *Rishonim*, which predicted the Messianic redemption during 1939-41 (pp. 121-124).

Rabbi Huberband's background as a historian also reveals added insights to his description of religious life. As Nachman Blumenthal and Joseph Kernish point out in a biographical essay of R. Huberband, "Rabbi Huberband's work is distinguished by its remarkable objectivity. He avoids tendentiousness and any detail which would reflect a personal bias or subjective approach. He attempts to give the facts and episodes without literary decoration, as his eyes saw them or as he was informed of them. He writes about the events without any of the false lynchism which characterizes most of the memoirists of the period....The facts speak directly to the reader and force him to contemplate. The reader feels pain along with the victims of the Holocaust, admires the objectively presented instances of Jewish heroism in this cruel period and draws the appropriate conclusions from all this on his own (p. xxvii)."

Some other reviewers disagree with the description of this work as objective, in light of R. Huberband's comments on the Gerer Rebbe, Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter. For example, he blames the Gerer Rebbe for not encouraging *aliya* (p. 235-6), an accusation echoed by the Rebbetzin of Strapkov before entering the gas chamber (Ber Mark, *The Scrolls of Auschwitz*, p. 208). Others express objection to R. Huberband's description of Gerer youth as "the harsh ones," followed by pointed accusations of stealing from their parents (pp. 181, 183) and extorting money from and informing on fellow Jews (p. 182).

As a historian, R. Huberband described the reality behind the events of religious heroism. He interweaves his descriptions of religious life and sacrifice with thorough descriptions of the conditions, thereby producing a truly complete picture of his community. Its comprehensiveness eclipses that of books such as Mordechai Eliav's *Ani Ma'amin*, in which facts are presented out of context, thereby diminishing the reader's appreciation of them. Even without detailed descriptions of the death camps themselves, the book convinces one that previous Jewish catastrophes "pale in comparison" (p. 267).

R. Huberband presents the readers with essays arranged by topics, including autobiographical materials; ranging from the Nazi invasion to the time of the author's writing. This enhances clarity, allowing the reader to focus on specific aspects of the Holocaust. The structural difference between this history and Holocaust diaries is important for anyone who will read only a limited number of books on the Holocaust. A student, for example, need not plow with difficulty through the sometimes tedious daily descriptions of a diary.

In short, this book will easily draw the reader into Rabbi Huberband's Holocaust world. It will overwhelm him with its deceptively simple style. It will spiritually invigorate him, and challenge him to higher standards. Hopefully, by clarifying our impressions of the Holocaust and enhancing our understanding, it will further imbue the lessons to be learned from this dark period in Jewish History.

Veahavta Lereakha Kamokha:

You Must Love Your Neighbor, But Must You Like Him?

Beth Zuckerman

First impressions, however brief, often permanently shape our opinions of the people we meet. Based on such encounters, we inevitably determine that we like some people more than others. However unfair this decision may seem, we often cannot control ourselves. Or can we?

It seems that many Torah obligations do attempt to control our emotional responses. Most conspicuous among them is the commandment of "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*" (Lev. 19:18). Does "love your neighbor" demand an emotional response, or can we fulfill its requirements merely through action? Specifically, is man actually commanded to love his neighbor as himself?

We can understand this *mitzva* in three basic ways. At one extreme, the first approach assumes man cannot control his feelings. As a result, the *mitzva* cannot make emotional demands, and one fulfills it solely through action. The middle approach recognizes the inherent difficulty in mandating emotions; this school therefore limits the degree of love that one must feel for another, but does not abolish emotion altogether. At the other extreme, the third approach not only imparts an emotional component to the *mitzva*, but interprets the phrase "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*" literally, claiming that it indeed commands man to love his neighbor as his equal.

Malbim: Love Through Action

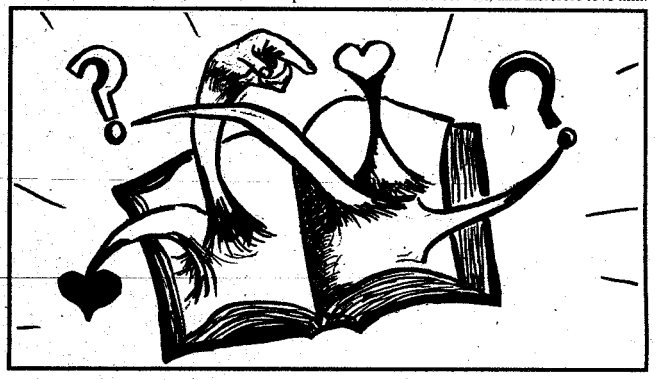
By eliminating emotion from the *mitzva*, the first school operates solely in the sphere of action. Its members rely heavily on two well known Tanaitic statements: one, Hillel's succinct reply to the gentile who agrees to convert to Judaism if Hillel can condense the whole Torah into one principle, "What is hateful to you, do not do unto your neighbor" (*Shabbat* 31a); and two, "Rabbi Akiva says: 'Love your neighbor as yourself' — this is an important precept in the Torah" (T.Y. *Nedarim* 9:4). Throughout the centuries, many commentators have used Hillel's statement to define the *mitzva* of "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*." "Love" means treating your neighbor with consideration. Although the connection between Hillel's dictum and the commandment to love one's neighbor is not explicit, the correlation can be seen by suggesting that Rabbi Akiva equates Hillel's "one principle" with the "important precept" of loving one's neighbor.

But why would Rabbi Akiva choose to reinterpret the *mitzva* from its literal meaning of loving one's friend as an equal to the fulfillment of Hillel's golden rule? In his commentary *Torah Temima*, Rav Baruch Epstein explains that Rabbi Akiva finds it unlikely that the Torah would require one to love his neighbor as himself, since humans cannot attain such complete control over their emotions. Furthermore, Rabbi Akiva himself rules that if a person must choose between saving his own life or that of his friend, his own life takes precedence. How could the Torah require equal love while dictating that one's own life is more important? Therefore, Rabbi Akiva understands that "love," in this context, is not expressed through emotional feelings, but rather through action, such as not offending or hurting his neighbor.

Malbim (Lev. 19:18) agrees that a person cannot possibly love his friend to the same degree that he loves himself. His understanding of "*veahavta lereakha kamokha*" not only requires, as Hillel's rule does, that man refrain from causing his neighbor harm, but additionally demands helping his friend in any way possible. Malbim derives this definition from the *pasuk* itself. Were the Torah to require us to love our neighbors, the commandment would have been formulated "*veahavta et reakha*"; our verse, however, states "*veahavta lereakha*" - "to your neighbor." In addition, emotional love is usually juxtaposed with "*nefesh*," but here it is followed by "*kamokha*." Though this first school may be philosophically satisfying, eliminating emotion from the mitzva seems to ignore the literal understanding of the *pasuk*.

Hirsch: Love Through Empathy

Members of the second school of thought make moderate demands on man's feelings, an understanding which more closely parallels the literal meaning of the *pasuk*. Ramban (Lev. 19:17) believes that the Torah does not expect



man to love his fellow as himself. Interpreting the syntax of the *pasuk*, he explains that "*lereakha*," as opposed to "*et reakha*," limits the degree to which we must control our emotions. We are not required to love our fellow Jews equal to ourselves, but we are expected to unreservedly wish them the same well-being that we wish ourselves.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch also believes that loving the "person of our neighbor as we love ourselves...is practically impossible to carry out" (Lev. 19:18). He champions the same exegetical approach as Ramban, but defines the *mitzva* a little differently. "*Lereakha*" refers not to the person himself, but to the situations that pertain to the person. While we may not love our neighbor as a person, we should nevertheless rejoice in his happiness and grieve in his sorrow as if it were our own. According to Hirsch, this demand does lie within man's self- control, and it is fair to require such expressions even toward someone whose personality we may find not to our liking.

Mendelsohn (Biur, Lev. 19 s.v. *veahavta lereakha kamokha*) also tries to limit the emotional demands of the *mitzva*. He takes a novel approach and explains that while the Torah may dictate that one love his neighbor, it does not quantify exactly how much love to feel. Like the other commentators, he derives his understanding of the *mitzva* from an exegetical approach to the text. The word "*kamokha*" is generally understood as defining the nature of man's love for his fellow: love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. For Mendelsohn, however, "*kamokha*" represents the reason, not the amount, that one should love his neighbor: love your neighbor because he is like yourself. Nehama Leibowitz (*Studies in Vayikra*, p.196-197; *Iyunim Besefer Vayikra* p.302) points out that this interpretation of *kamokha* is supported by another verse appearing later in the chapter: "*K'ezrach mikkem yihye lakhem hager hagar itkhem, veahavta lo kamokha ki gerim heyitem b'eretz Mitzrayim*" - "The stranger who resides with you shall be treated the same as the native born and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:34). Were we to understand the phrase "as thyself" as a quantifier indicating how much love one should feel for the convert, the end of the verse would seem out of place. The fact that we too were strangers in Egypt does not further explain why we should love a convert as *much* as we love ourselves. However, if we understand "as thyself" to mean "as one who is like yourself," the demand of *veahavta lereakha kamokha* is quite clear: love the stranger who is like yourself. Since you yourself were once strangers, you should understand the convert, and therefore love him.

Likewise, there exists a common human bond which requires us to feel love toward all people, but does not require that we love everyone as much as we love ourselves.

Rambam: A Literal Understanding

Rambam's understanding of the *mitzva* to love one's neighbor spans both of the above schools. In *Hilkhot Avelut* (14:1) Rambam enumerates various forms of *chesed*, such as *bikur cholim* - visiting the sick, and *nichum avelim* - comforting mourners. At the end of this list, he concludes: "Although all these commandments are from the Rabbis, they are under the category of '*veahavta lereakha kamokha*.' All the things that you want others to do for you, you should perform for your brother..." This formulation seems to closely parallel Hillel's golden rule. Seeing this source in Rambam's writings would certainly lead one to the conclusion that Rambam understands "love your neighbor" like members in the first school, as a *mitzva* performed through actions only, devoid of any emotional element.

Rambam, however, incorporates additional requirements into the *mitzva* of "*veahavta*." His explanation in *Sefer HaMitzvot* (M.A. 206), "...one's love and compassion towards his brother should be commensurate to his love and compassion towards himself for his money and his body...and everything that I desire for myself I [should] desire for him," smacks of Ramban's formulation, and therefore places Rambam in agreement with the second school. Rambam's dominant position, however, seems to go beyond the first two schools. *Mitzvat Aseh* 206 includes, "...by this injunction we are commanded to love one another even as we love ourselves...This injunction is contained in His words, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'" Here Rambam seems to advocate the literal interpretation, placing him in the third school which defines the *mitzva* as commanding that man emotionally love his brother as his equal. Rabbi Norman Lamm explains, "Maimonides holds that while the means of implementation are functional or practical in nature, the essence of the commandment, which defines its fulfillment, is emotional, a feeling of love" ("Loving and Hating Jews as a Halakhic Category" in *Tradition*, Winter 1989 p.103). This "feeling of love" is not identical to the feelings of good will demanded by Ramban and Hirsch. Rambam explicitly states that "we are to love another even as we love ourselves." In other words, "*veahavta*" is to be taken literally, requiring that man indeed must feel equal love towards his fellow man.

Limits On Love: Are They Possible?

This formulation raises the difficulty suggested in the introduction: Can we possibly love every person as our equal? Would it not make more sense to consider whether each person deserves such love based on his respective deeds? Rashbam (Lev. 19:18) confronts this question, and through an analysis of the word "*reakha*," redefines the reach of this command in terms of whom we are required to love: "[Love him] if thy neighbor is good," argues Rashbam, "but if he is wicked, 'the fear of the Lord is to hate evil.'"

Although the text may not seem to support the distinction between a good or evil person, this gloss is valuable for our purposes. Rashbam, like Malbim and Ramban, recognizes the problem inherent in requiring man to love all people as he loves himself. Yet, instead of redefining "love" and thereby limiting the scope of the requirements in fulfilling the command, as the others do, Rashbam chooses to limit the applicability of the command without changing the meaning of the word "love." His innovative interpretation refuses to recognize any limits on love itself; he simply admits that man by nature cannot love wicked people, so the *mitzva* therefore does not require him to do so. It does, however, compel him to love those whom he is capable of loving as much as he loves himself.

Some contemporary thinkers also seem to agree that while there is inherent difficulty in demanding complete love for our fellow man, the Torah can and does require this. In his response to Ernst Simon, Harold Fisch claims that the *mitzva* to love one's neighbor is unique because it "places on our moral and emotional organism an almost superhuman burden." Yet he asserts that its fulfillment is not beyond man's capabilities: "We obey it because in spite of its difficulty it is nevertheless within the bounds of the humanly possible" (*Modern Jewish Ethics* ed. Marvin Fox pp. 56-57).

Understanding this *mitzva* literally places extraordinary demands on the individual. Controlling our actions is difficult, but mastering our emotions seems impossible. Nonetheless, Rav J. B. Soloveitchik writes that *halakha* does try to control the inner life of man through *mitzvot* such as "do not covet" or "do not hate your brother." Many people, consumed by the importance of actions, may attempt to downplay the significance of commandments that direct emotions. But the Rav contends that these *mitzvot* are as integral to *halakha* as *mitzvot* which direct our actions. "In a word, the *Halakha* thinks there is an ethic, not only of action, but of feeling as well. Man is master over his own his emotional world ("Catharsis" in *Tradition*, Spring 1978)."

Joseph: The Royal Economist

BIBLE

Lawrence Burian

After Joseph's successful interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams and his subsequent suggestion for economic action, Pharaoh extols Joseph for his refined business acumen, calling him an "*Ish navon vechakham*" — "a man of discernment and wisdom" (Gen. 41:33). According to Seforno, the redundancy in the praise indicates Pharaoh's finding the young Joseph both an incisive theoretician and a skilled business manager. Pharaoh, awed by Joseph's genius, appoints him "head of his household" (Gen. 41:40). In ancient Egypt, this position represented the head of the financial ministry.

Yet, to the reader, Joseph's economic sensibility seems incongruous with his shepherd/slave background. His rapid advancement and immediate recognition in Pharaoh's court elicit a number of intriguing questions. When did Joseph, a young Semitic shepherd, develop the sophisticated economic proficiency which helped him assume the financial leadership of Egypt? What was the exact nature of his seven year plan? In what specific manner did Joseph distinguish himself as a qualified economist and financial planner?

During the years of plenty, Joseph exhibited shrewd economic insight by imposing a 20% tax on agricultural produce. Legislating forced saving, he secured the stability of Egypt's economic structure. Without such a levy, "the super abundance would have engendered a tremendous loss in productivity due to a sharp increase in idleness and waste" (A. Levine: Tradition 25:2).

Not only did Joseph maintain the production and consumption balance of Egypt; he also ventured to ensure the psychological welfare of the nation. Throughout the difficult taxation and distribution process, Joseph displayed a high degree of sensitivity to the impact of his policies on the people: "And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up within it" (Gen. 41:48). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that by enforcing localized--rather than centralized --storage, Joseph dispelled any notions of government profiteering from the collected produce. The conspicuous, local presence of the granaries assured the people of the government's intention to return their grain.

Still, when the years of famine finally arrived, the alarmed Egyptians petitioned their leader: "And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread" (41:55). Joseph responded decisively: "And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to Egypt..." (41:56). Seforno explains that Joseph literally "opened" the silos in order to create the strong visual effect of the government's overstuffed preparations. In this manner, Joseph successfully mollified the mounting panic.

The Torah uses the verb "*vayishbor*" in describing Joseph's action. While here interpreted as "and he sold," a more precise translation suggests "and he divided" or "and he broke up." Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains, based on the above peculiarity, that Joseph carefully supervised the redistribution of the public stores. In order to prevent racketeering, Joseph conscientiously rationed and divided the sale of the produce. To further protect the economy from individual hoarding, Joseph prohibited the sale of governmental famine relief to slaves. Otherwise, one could direct many slaves to purchase government grain and amass more than his legal ration.

Ironically, these seemingly sound economic policies ultimately served to estrange the Egyptian populace from Joseph. What possible justification could any Egyptian have for being dissatisfied with him? Dr. Levine explains that "survivors of the famine might very well have shifted focus to their landless state and blamed this condition on Joseph...the argument for fixing blame could run as follows: "Since the foodstuff in the public granaries represents private savings, why were we made to exhaust our money, sell our cattle and turn our land over to the state, all to obtain what is in any case our entitlement?" (A. Levine: Tradition 25:2)

Joseph did, in fact, sell the government stores, but this does not preclude a viable defense for his policies. In Dr. Levine's scenario, the Egyptians' grievance is based on the imbalance between forced saving versus purchased consumption. This assumes that Joseph forcibly collected the one-fifth tithe. Yet the text does not necessitate such a conclusion. When outlining his plan, Joseph says: "... and let him appoint officers over the land, and collect the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty" (Genesis 41:34). Ibn Ezra comments that Joseph's plan called for the purchase of twenty percent of all produce at full compensation. Within this scenario, Joseph created neither an imbalance nor an injustice in selling the fully owned government storage.

Such an interpretation implies great economic acumen on the part of Joseph. In modern terms, he manipulated government fiscal policy in order to offset the boom and bust of the business cycle. By purchasing twenty percent of all produce, Joseph maintained consumption percentages and price levels. Similarly, during the famine years, Joseph once again ensured stable markets by expanding supply.

However, even assuming that Joseph implemented forced saving without just compensation and charged for the redistribution, Joseph still acted wisely and fairly. By pricing government storage, Joseph chose the most effective and efficient method of allocation. Rabbi Hirsch explains that by charging money Joseph prevented popular consumption from becoming "extravagant in waste." Dr. Levine concludes: "Certainly, retrospective focus on a particular component of Joseph's policies could easily lead an embittered soul to deny the enormous national debt owed to Joseph and instead turn the tables and fix blame for his own personal misfortune on Joseph" (Levine: Tradition 25:2). Nonetheless, Joseph's plan represented the most beneficial and sensitive solution to Egypt's radically changing economic condition.

Still, the initial, nagging questions remain: when and how did Joseph develop his refined business sense? Perhaps he never did. Perhaps Joseph's prediction of long, alternating periods of abundance and drought brought no startling news to the Egyptian people. They had already acclimated themselves to the cyclical nature of the Nile and its periods of growth and destruction. It seems logical that they would already have developed sophisticated agricultural methodologies to combat periods of drought. More likely, after predicting the specific character of the upcoming fourteen year cycle, Joseph merely suggested, by way of conclusion, that Pharaoh now implement the standard and proven fiscal policies.

Barring this explanation, however, the source of Joseph's genius remains an enigma. Professor Nehama Leibowitz points out that "many of our commentators have wondered how Joseph, the stranger and slave,...dared to proffer advice, unrequested, to Pharaoh King of Egypt?" (Studies in Bereishit).

She outlines the explanations of Ramban and Abravanel. Ramban presents a radical understanding of the relevant biblical passages: "Joseph's plan was prompted by the sight of the lean cows devouring the fat ones, symbolizing that the famine years would eat of the plenty. On the basis of this, he advised Pharaoh to have all the food of the years of plenty stored for use in the famine period. It was not his own advice. Had they commissioned him to advise the king? It was merely part and parcel of the dream's interpretation." Thus, according to Ramban, Joseph displayed no personal economic knowledge; he simply interpreted the dream.

Professor Leibowitz, however, rejects Ramban's approach: "The wording of the text and content of the advice would seem to preclude such an interpretation. Joseph's 'Now therefore let Pharaoh look for' (Gen. 41:33) indicates the beginning of a new theme ... It does not at all sound like the continuation of his interpretation of the dream, as an explanation of a hitherto undeciphered item."

Instead, she presents Abravanel's interpretation: "This advice was prompted from beginning to end by the Holy Spirit. The prophet cannot keep back his prophecy and must unburden himself." According to Abravanel, Joseph's advice stems not from his interpretation of the dream, but from an added divine inspiration. This explains why Joseph consistently invokes God's name. In his conversation with Pharaoh, Joseph reminds the court of his reliance and faith in God. Similarly, Joseph's economic plans were firmly founded on divine prophecy.

The above interpretations seek to minimize the scope of Joseph's personal economic ingenuity. However, there still remains at least one commentator who allows for continued respect for Joseph as an economic planner. According to Targum Onkelos, Joseph's responsibilities in Potiphar's house predominantly involved the financial ledgers and bookkeeping. It is unclear what prompted the Targum to depict Joseph as the equivalent of the modern day accountant. Perhaps Onkelos' motivation originates from the

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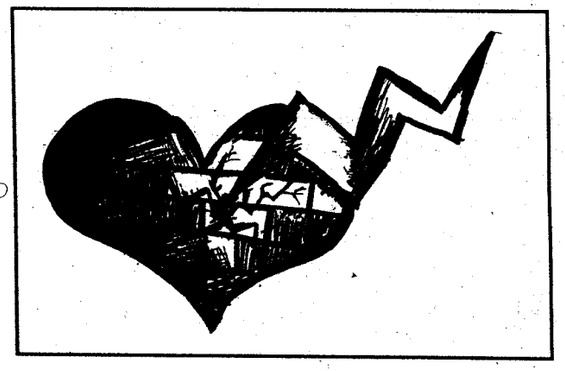
KING OF HEARTS: *Pharoah & Free Will*



Sammy Levine

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart mentioned in the Exodus story presents a puzzling philosophical question. Rambam writes that "there is no doubt that all of man's actions are of his own volition ... without any compulsion forced upon him. Therefore, it is possible [for God] to command him." This principle's conspicuous absence from God's treatment of Pharaoh leads Rambam to ask, "how could He punish [Pharaoh] when he did not free [*B'nei Yisrael*]?" The problem is so powerful that prior to suggesting a solution, Rambam advises his reader to "pay close attention, and compare [my answer] to those of others, and choose for yourself the best one" (*Shemona Perakim* 8).

Extending an idea mentioned briefly by Rav Saadia Gaon (*Emunot Vedeot* 4:6), Rambam answers that Pharaoh indeed sinned voluntarily, plotting and implementing the persecution of *B'nei Yisrael*. Only subsequently did God harden Pharaoh's heart, preventing him from repenting so that he would receive his just punishment (ibid.). Clearly, God's actions here do not conform to His usually merciful response to sinners. Rambam points to Pharaoh as one of a few exceptional cases in which "a man may sin a great sin or many sins" leading to an extraordinary result -- a suspension of his ability to repent (*Hilkhot Teshuva* 6:3).

Abravanel finds difficulty with Rambam's thesis that certain sinners cannot repent. Citing several Biblical sources, he insists that God never rejects the sinner, but instead always offers him the opportunity of *teshuva*. Nevertheless, Abravanel presents two suggestions to defend the possibility that Pharaoh did not merit the chance to repent. First, he notes that certain sins cannot be absolved through repentance. For example, a murderer is executed by *beit din*, regardless of any feelings of contrition he may have. Since Pharaoh's sins against *B'nei Yisrael* included murder and other sins which necessitate punishment, there could be no *teshuva* to reverse his fate.

Alternatively, Abravanel posits that according to "simple justice," man must be punished or rewarded according to his actions. *Teshuva*, then, reflects a special kindness which God grants upon his nation, *B'nei Yisrael*, "who are constantly under his *hashgacha pratit*, solicitous supervision." A sinner such as Pharaoh, however, cannot perform *teshuva* while remaining an idolater. With regard to the men of Ninveh, whose *teshuva* was accepted, Abravanel writes that they had to reject the idolatry they had embraced before they could be saved from destruction.

Traces of Rambam's ideas are elaborated upon by Ramban. Noting that the verses describing the first five plagues state that Pharaoh's heart was strengthened without God's intervention (7:13), Ramban writes that the early plagues were simply a punishment for Pharaoh's own stubbornness. When Pharaoh finally decided to capitulate, Ramban says, he intended not to recognize and glorify God's name, but only to relieve himself of the hardships he had endured. Therefore, God says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart and I will increase My signs and My wonders in the Land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:3). God intended the Exodus from Egypt to "show My strength and to tell My name in all of the land" (Exodus 9:16).

In the *Sefer Ha'ikarim* (4:25), Rav Yosef Albo adds a twist to this explanation. He writes that sometimes an evil man repents in the midst of his punishment, as Pharaoh did when declaring "I have sinned; God is Justified" (Exodus 9:27). Feeling that such repentance is not based on free will but is thrust upon the sinner, the *Ikarim* posits that God considered it necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart to insure that he think the plague occurred by chance rather than through Providence. Only once this transpired was Pharaoh no longer forced in his actions, but could instead "choose his own path." Contradicting Rambam, then, this explanation suggests that, ironically, by hardening Pharaoh's heart God returned to this sinner his free will.

Seforno explains similarly, but inserts a final twist which, in effect, reverses Rambam's view concerning Pharaoh and *teshuva*. He asserts that God actually wanted Pharaoh to repent with a sincere *teshuva*. As Ramban said, without God's intervention, Pharaoh would certainly have freed *B'nei Yisrael* as a result of the unbearable plagues. Seforno adds that although such an act would be prompted partially by some recognition of God's "Greatness and Goodness," its ultimate motivation would remain self-preservation. While Rambam wrote that God took away Pharaoh's ability to do *teshuva*, Seforno insists, on the contrary, that hardening his heart was the only way to bring Pharaoh the opportunity for "*teshuva amitit*," true repentance.

The various answers to the problem of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart involve important theological and philosophical principles with broad ramifications. Yet, perhaps we should recall the words that Rambam himself writes after offering his own solution. He admits that even his answer leaves us with the question of "why God punished this man with this particular punishment and not a different punishment." In the end, he writes, we "do not need to know His wisdom" to such a great extent, but should remember "the rule that all of His ways are merciful and just, and He will punish the sinner according to the sin and reward the virtuous according to the merit" (*Shemona Perakim* 8).

■ ■ ■

Unveiling The Masks:
Minor Characters in Megillat Esther

Chaviva Levin

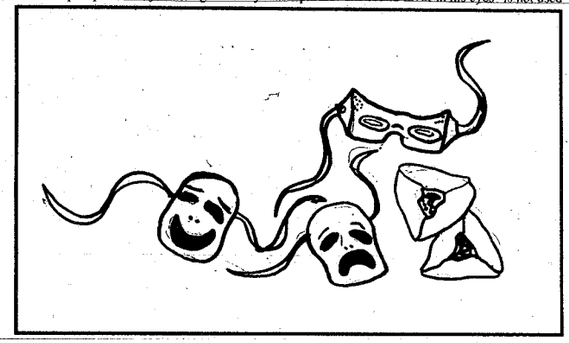
The Book of Esther is unique among the books of Tanakh. The characters in the story are some of the most assimilated Jews one encounters in Tanakh. The story takes place entirely within a foreign court, and focuses not at all on the tragedy of assimilation. There is a high concentration of terms of Persian origin which have been preserved in the tale, not replaced by the appropriate Hebrew terminology. On the surface, the tale appears to be a story of palace intrigue replete with implausible coincidences, in which behind the scenes players wield most of the power.

As Uriel Simone points out, the secondary characters in most accounts in Tanakh are not well developed and serve only to highlight or contrast the personality traits of the sole protagonist. Simone mentions that Ruth is unusual in that it contains a number of main players. Against this backdrop, the tale related in the Book of Esther is atypical. It contains a large number of main characters: a hero, a heroine, a villain, and a fool. Even with all these main players, however, the forward movement of the plot is stimulated by the actions of many smaller players. The former irregularity should serve to obviate the need for the latter.

In Esther, the main characters are sufficiently numerous to have their interactions with one another precipitate forward motion in the story. They possess sufficiently well defined characters to contrast or balance one another during the course of the story. It is thus doubly unusual to find a large number of secondary characters playing a primary role in the plot development. Characters about whom the reader knows nothing appear at critical moments in the story, say a few words which have a tremendous impact on the outcome, and then disappear, never to be heard from again.

The first plot twist comes with Vashti's refusal to comply with Achashverosh's request to come before the king, and the aftermath of that refusal. Memukhan, who is the lowest ranking of the seven advisors to Achashverosh (according to the *Midrash*), advises that Vashti be deposed. He also recommends that a decree be sent throughout all the provinces of the kingdom apprising the king's subjects of the incident, in order to ensure that each man be recognized as the ruler of his own home.

Memukhan's advice has two far reaching effects regarding the continuation of the plot development. First, Vashti's removal clears the way for a replacement queen, Esther. Secondly, according to the *Gemara* (*Megilla* 12b), it was the decree proposed by Memukhan that ensured that the mandate to kill the Jews during the month of Adar was not immediately implemented. Achashverosh's royal decree that men reign supreme in their own homes was perceived as obvious by his subjects, so his order was deemed inconsequential and foolish. This set the stage for the later decree against the Jews to be similarly disregarded as the work of a fool. It is the advice of Memukhan, a minor character with an undeveloped personality, that significantly affects the story's outcome.



The next step toward Esther's ascendance to the throne comes when Achashverosh's anger subsides as he recalls Vashti's deposal. The *Naarei haMelekh*, the personal servants of the king, advise Achashverosh to implement a nationwide search for the beautiful women of his kingdom, from amongst whom he will select his next queen. This is a highly unorthodox method by which to choose a spouse for a head of state. Generally, such marriages are arranged with the progeny of neighboring rulers, and act as political alliances. Alternatively, the monarch can marry a member of an aligned branch of royalty, thereby consolidating his existing power. Had this been the criterion for Achashverosh's new queen, however, Esther would not have been considered as a contender for the position. It is only the strange advice proffered by some young servants which allows Esther to become a player, albeit an unwilling one, in the search for a queen.

The reader of the Book of Esther knows from the start, by virtue of the book's title, that Esther will be selected as the replacement queen. The reader, however, might not have anticipated the machinations behind her selection. It is clear from the narrative that Hegai, the keeper of the women, takes a special interest in Esther. A close examination of the text, moreover, suggests the conclusion that Hegai played a decisive role in the selection of Esther as Achashverosh's next wife. When the king's servants advocated a beauty contest as the method by which to pick a new queen, the stated: "And let the maiden who finds favor in the eyes of the king be queen instead of Vashti." It is interesting to note that the phrase "she found favor in his eyes" is not used regarding Achashverosh's perception of Esther. The phrase is, however, used in connection with Hegai's opinion of Esther: "And the girl found favor in his eyes." It almost seems as if the king chose the woman who pleased Hegai rather than she who pleased himself.

The original impetus for Haman's anger against Mordekhai and his people stem from Mordekhai's refusal to bow down to Haman. As the incident is related, however, it is the servants of the king sitting in the king's gate who first notice Mordekhai's noncompliance with the king's order. They bring the matter to Haman's attention. It is only after Haman is apprised by others of Mordekhai's behavior that he becomes incensed and resolves to destroy Mordekhai along with his entire nation.

Haman's anger is not assuaged even with an invitation to an exclusive banquet with Esther and Achashverosh. Haman's rage still churns every time that Mordekhai refuses to prostrate himself. Haman's wife, Zeresh, suggests that Haman build gallows on which to hang Mordekhai, in order to rid himself of this "thorn in his flesh." It is fascinating to observe that Haman himself does not create this idea; rather, his wife, a minor character, suggests the construction of the structure which later plays a significant role as the instrument of Haman's ultimate downfall.

One of the subplots which most distinctly highlights the theme of ironic twists within the book of Esther follows the king's sleepless night. Haman suggests to the king that the one whom the king wishes to honor be led through the streets of the capital, riding the king's horse, clothed in the king's garments, with an escort preceding him, shouting "thus shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor." Haman obviously considers himself worthy of the king's tribute, and as the audience looks on knowingly, the overconfident vizier is felled by his own assurance. He is ordered by the king to implement his own advice by leading Mordekhai through the streets as the one whom the king wishes to honor. This scene, which plays a pivotal role in increasing Haman's wrath and resentment against the Jews, could not have taken place if Mordekhai had not intercepted the treasonous plot of two palace officials. Thus, Bigtan and Teresh, two negligible dignitaries of the king, unwittingly play a notable function in propelling the plot development toward its finale.

In order for the story to have a satisfactory ending, Haman must be punished by the same method which he wished to use against Mordekhai. If not for the intervention of Charvona, this fitting conclusion might not have been achieved. Charvona observes at the appropriate moment, when the king's wrath against Haman reaches its peak, that Haman has a fifty cubit gallows in his own backyard. He reasons, wouldn't it be a shame not to use it? Charvona's comment ensures that Haman receives his just demise, and hangs on the very gallows which he wished to use for Mordekhai. A reversal of the plot is again fulfilled through a minor character.

The observation of this phenomenon raises an implicit question: Why do secondary characters play a primary role in the Book of Esther? It is plausible to surmise that the nature of palace intrigue is such that small tremors within the inner sanctum of the court have tremendous repercussions for the rest of the kingdom. If the court is a microcosm, then everything which occurs within the court is automatically magnified in its importance. Thus, the actions of secondary characters, by virtue of their being connected with the court, are attributed greater significance than the actions of other secondary

- Continued on Page 10

Purim Perestroika:
A Free Spirited Celebration

Alex Margolis

Hundreds of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union will recall the Purim celebration held in their honor at YU with smiles on their faces and a lasting feeling of warmth in their hearts. For most, this was an inspiring introduction to an animated and caring North American Jewish community.

Entering Belfer Hall's Weissberg Commons, the participants were greeted by the original paintings of eight artists who have recently arrived from the U.S.S.R. Among those pieces were works of Yana Grushko, a recent emigre from Leningrad currently enrolled in a dual program with Stern and FIT. This Purim celebration was the first opportunity for these proud artists to display their works in the United States.

Rabbi Gedalia Finkelstein, the Associate Principal of MSTA high school, welcomed the 250 participants to the event. He stressed the importance of unity among *Klal Yisroel* and the important role that Soviet Jewish immigrants have to play within it. "There are no Americans here," he proclaimed, "and there are no Russians. There are only *Yiddin*, Jews who are celebrating the joyous and miraculous holiday of Purim!"

Next, David Rozenson, a native of Leningrad who now directs the Russian programs for the Philanthropy Society, addressed the overflowing crowd in Russian. He spoke of the importance of Jewish individuality, citing the classic example of Mordechai. He further stressed the need for Jewish education among all Jewish children, and the special opportunity that the new extended Soviet Jewish family has of sending their children to *yeshivot*. He concluded by emphasizing that the Jewish people's uniting together in celebration gives her the strength to prevail over all her enemies.

Daniel Schwartz, accompanied by pianist Aaron Deutsch (both of them students at the Belz School of Jewish Music), entertained the crowd with a cantorial concert. "I noticed that the cantorial program was very special to those present," says Isaac Kreizman, himself a Soviet immigrant. "I saw many of the participants begin to cry - some because of the memories of their past, others out of the joy that they now have the ability to freely practice their religion."

Meanwhile, in a room behind Belfer Commons more than a hundred children, with the help of students from Stern, busied themselves with various activities ranging from making costumes and Megillahs to creating computer posters with their Jewish names and birthdays. Each boy received a yarmulke with his Hebrew name inscribed on it, and every girl received a barrette with an imprint of her Hebrew name. "This is for whom we struggled so hard to leave Russia," one mother related, with a tear escaping her eyes as she pointed to her daughter. "My father would have been so proud to see his granddaughter here, right now."

As the music of the Shpilkes band, led by Avrohom Sacks, began to play, students and immigrants joined together in joyous dancing. Children were lifted onto the shoulders of students, adults clasped hands and danced energetically to the Jewish music, and others simply stood on the side content to watch the activity. "It was beautiful to see the students of YU open up their hearts and share the joy of Purim with the Jews who have recently been saved from Soviet oppression," says Yitz Rosenblum, who recently returned from a YUSSR mission to Estonia.

The dancing took on a new fervor as the men began doing the *Kazatske* — the traditional dance of the Soviet Union. "As the band began playing *Leshana haba'a beYerushalayim*,' I saw some of the men mouthing the words '*Yerushalayim*' over and over," remarked Tzvi Bornstein, "this is the spirit in which the immigrants will recall the event."

"The immigrants, many of whom are experiencing culture shocks, and are not able to find work because of language barriers," says Rozenson, "left the event with the spirit of Purim, with a new self-confidence, and most importantly, with the knowledge that they have a very large, extended family, which anxiously awaits to welcome them, and accept them in their new homes in the United States."

This event represents only a small part of the Philanthropy Society's overall agenda. The Society organizes celebrations for Soviet Jewish immigrants before each of the *yomim tovim*, provides resume-writing programs and furniture assistance for new immigrants, distributes food packages to the elderly and Jewish homeless, and is in the process of developing a club for Soviet children in the Washington Heights Community.

"I just want to thank the students of the University for all they have done for us," one of the event's participants said. "They don't realize what it means for us to come into such a beautiful Jewish environment. I hope that we can share many more *simchot* together."

Words that come from the heart enter the heart. I pray we don't disappoint them.

Helping the Homeless:
Halakhic and Personal Perspectives

Ben Wiener

Over two and a half millennia ago, Isaiah attempted to alert the Jewish people to a perennial social problem: "Distribute bread to the hungry and bring the poor who have been cast out into homes" (Isa. 58:7). As he called for the Jews to aid their less fortunate brothers, Isaiah paid special attention to homeless Jews. Isaiah was the first to sensitize Jews to an issue that would later fill many Jewish sources.

A cursory review of Talmudic and *halakhic* sources reveals that the *Halakha* approaches the problem of the Jewish homeless from several perspectives. For instance, the *mishna* in *Pe'ah* (8:7) states: "One must provide a poor person who moves from place to place with a loaf of bread equal to a *pundion*... and if he needs to sleep, his needs for sleeping must be supplied." A *pundion*, explains Rosh, equals half a *zuz*, the equivalent of about half a dollar. Rav Papa interprets "needs for sleeping" as a bed and a pillow (*Bava Batra* 9a). Alternatively, Rash in *Pe'ah* quotes a *Tosefta* which explains it as oil and beans, the basic ingredients of a meal.

According to Radbaz, Rambam (*Hilkhot Mattanot Aniyyim* 7:8) rules like both interpretations: one must provide a homeless Jew with a place to sleep and a simple meal. The *Halakha*, therefore, ostensibly requires that we afford our fellow Jew with the basic needs, including lodging.

An alternative approach to the homeless issue comes from another fundamental concept in *tzedaka*. The Torah demands that we provide a poor man with "sufficient needs for which he lacks" (*Deut.* 15:8). The *gemara* in *Ketubot* (67b) clarifies this by adding "*afilu sus lirkov alav*" - "[give him] even a horse to ride upon." If he rode on a horse before his reversal of fortune, we must attempt to restore him to his previous lifestyle. Similarly, when we provide for the homeless, we must objectively determine what they lack. It follows that homeless Jews should hold a high position on our priority list of beneficiaries of *tzedaka*. In concert with "[give him] sufficient needs for which he lacks," it seems that a person who has no residence of his own takes precedence over anyone suffering only from other of the aforementioned misfortunes (e.g. hunger).

Despite its importance, many of us remain unaware of the homeless problem confronting Jews today. According to a recent estimate by *The Jewish Week*, 3,000 homeless Jews live in the metropolitan New York area alone. Clearly, our community must reach out to serve the needs of our fellow members of *Klal Yisrael*. Fortunately, through the Yeshiva College Philanthropy Society, an avenue now exists though which Yeshiva University students can help to remedy the problem.

For many homeless, a lack of residence is only one of the many hardships confronting them each day. Many homeless are senior citizens. Others are patients released from mental institutions and hospitals which lost funding during the budget cuts of the late seventies, and they often still need medical and/or psychological help. Some are addicted to drugs or alcohol. All these people have either been neglected by their families or have no families at all. Most receive some sort of financial support from various government institutions. Some recipients are so irresponsible, though, that social workers must be entrusted to collect and cash their welfare checks. Their problems are extensive and serious, yet many are simply neglected.

Members of our society meet with these unfortunates each week. One such instance comes to mind. Mollie greets us from her wheelchair as soon as we are in earshot: "Hi, Zevi! Hello Ben! It's so wonderful to see you..." She sits in her usual place, in front of Congregation Emunath Israel, on the Lower West Side. During the week, Emunath Israel is the home of Project ORE, a drop-in center run by the Educational Alliance which provides hot lunches and other services for homeless and isolated Jews. On Sundays, when ORE is closed, the Philanthropy Society helps instead. On this Sunday, Shelley inspects the boxes of food in our arms and quietly asks if there is a choice of roast beef or turkey sandwiches, like last week. As we hand out the bagged meals, a few of the elderly men who have come for *mincha* and *ma'ariv* stand aside and look on. They know us by now, and one or two walk over and slip dollar bills into our hands. We walk with some of the people who have come for food, listen to their problems and offer them an occasional suggestion. Some people leave right away, but we often convince some of the men to stay for the davening. Once or twice they've even completed the *minyan*. Their participation transmits a powerful message: we are all Jews, and those of us who are in more comfortable, secure surroundings must provide for our brothers who are less fortunate.

The YCPS homeless program provides just a drop in the bucket towards curing this problem. Although we provide a much needed service, there are thousands of homeless we cannot reach. If we, as a community, continue to ignore these people, the problems will persist for many years to come. It will take a large, concerted effort to help save the Jewish homeless.

Ta'amei Hamitzvot: *Commandments in Good Taste*

Ari Ferziger

Jewish law contains a wide range of commandments and, with few exceptions, the written Torah does not provide their underlying reasons. The Torah's non-disclosure, however, has bothered traditional philosophic circles, who contend that if one has reasons behind one's belief, they lend added strength to the beliefs and their resultant directives (Hyman). Medieval Jewish philosophers in particular endeavored to make sense of the commandments. Faced with a dichotomy presented by Saadia and Bahya, Maimonides devotes twenty-five chapters of The Guide to the Perplexed to developing his thesis that all the Torah's commandments have reasons.

Saadia: Two Classes of Commandments

Saadia's discussion of law in *Emunot veDe'ot* adopts Mu'tazilite Kalam distinctions rooted in Plato, Aristotle and possibly the Stoics. Classifying laws of civilized peoples, they distinguished between rational law and conventional law. Moral reason prescribes or precludes actions which are intrinsically right or wrong, such as lying, misrepresentation, stealing and murder. Such objective laws will exist in all societies. Conventional laws, however, find their roots in prudential reason and are subjective, requiring deliberation and compromise. They may change in different societies, for they hinge upon the legislative will which determines their obligatory nature.

Saadia applies this distinction to religious law, positing categories of *Mitzvot Sicflliyyot* and *Mitzvot Shim'iyyot*. The first branch of *mitzvot* encompasses those which reason dictates and have a point of confluence with moral law. Saadia believes these same laws obligate God; far from arbitrary, He prohibits things that are intrinsically wrong. God created man with an ingrained approval of the rational commandments, at the same time implanting disapproval of the prohibitions. For man, this knowledge is self- evident.

Saadia presents *Mitzvot Shim'iyyot* somewhat ambiguously. He describes them as conventional laws received through tradition. Unlike rational laws, they have no intrinsic compulsion; their justification depends instead on God's will alone.

Conventional Laws: An Unconventional Notion?

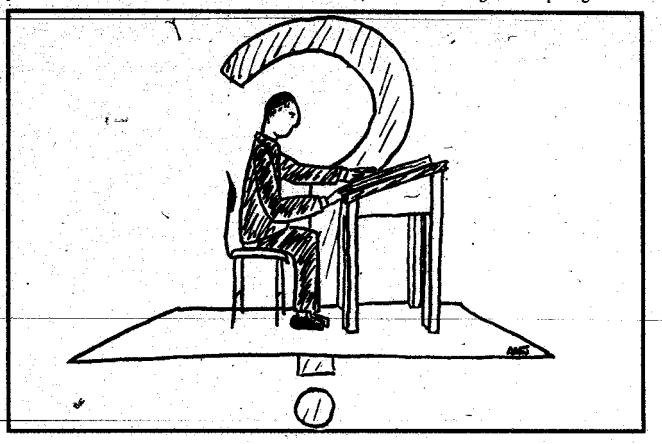
Maimonides ostensibly argues with this position, writing in the Guide III;26 that "all the laws have a cause, though we are ignorant of the causes of some of them..."

In *Shemona Perakim*, Maimonides attacks the distinction between *Mitzvot Shim'iyyot* and *Sichliyyot*: "Things which all people commonly agree are evils, such as the shedding of blood, theft, robbery, fraud, injury to one who has done no harm, ingratitude, contempt for parents, and the like. The prescriptions against these are called commandments, about which the rabbis said 'if they had not already been written, in the law it would have been proper to add them' (*Yoma* 67b). Some of the later sages, who were infected with the unsound principles of mutakallimun, called these rational laws" (*A Maimonides Reader*, ed. I. Twersky, p. 378).

The condemnatory tones of "those who were infected" clearly evidence Maimonides' disapproval of the distinction. Instead he posits his own characterization of *mitzvot*. Maimonides separates readily understood and well known *mitzvot*, the Torah's *mishpatim*, from those whose meaning may be difficult to comprehend, the *chukim*.

Maimonides presents Saadia's understanding of *Mitzvot Shim'iyyot* as *mitzvot* that are contingent only on God's will and not on his wisdom. Saadia maintains that these *mitzvot* are merely conventional laws, a notion Maimonides attacks, calling any characterization of conventional law a human shortcoming. In reality, he argues, an objectively correct standard for behavior exists, and God's directive enables us to realize it.

However, a second view of Saadia's *Mitzvot Shim'iyyot* is posed in Bahya's *Chovot HaLevavot*. Bahya posits the existence of rational bases even for these *mitzvot*. Beyond human understanding, these reasons are there nonetheless. This understanding closely approaches Maimonides' classification.



God's Rationality Knows No Boundaries

Maimonides advances a general thesis of reason behind all *mitzvot*. He views human conventional law as a limitation. Often, humans cannot perceive a best course of action, but God is not limited in this manner. Even the apparently conventional laws result from God's wisdom. He states that: "any particular commandment has a useful end. In the case of some of them it is clear in what way they are useful as in the case of the prohibition of killing and stealing. In the case of others, their utility is not clear — as in the case of the interdiction of the first products [of tree] and of [sowing] the vineyard with diverse seeds" (Guide III:26, trans. S. Pines, p. 507). He goes on to say that if the utility of certain *mitzvot* seems non-existent, then "the deficiency resides in your apprehension."

Maimonides counters three objections to his claim of a rationale behind the *chukim*. First, he refers to the statement in the Talmud (*Yoma* 67b) which characterizes the commandments of *sha'atnez* and *kashrut* as "things which I have prescribed for you about which you have not the permission to think." The Rabbis, he argues, did not believe these to be devoid of reasons, or prohibit the seeking of their reasons. "On the contrary, the multitude of sages believe that there indubitably is a cause for them — but that it is hidden from us either because of the incapacity of our intellects or the deficiency of our knowledge" (p.507).

A second source for opposition lies in the Torah's explicit lack of reasons for most *mitzvot*. This suggests that if no reasons were given, then none exist. Maimonides responds to this by explaining that if reasons had been given, individuals might not observe the commandments, arguing that the specific reasons did not apply to their personal situations. He cites the case of Solomon, who disobeyed the three laws whose reasons were explicitly transmitted. Maintaining that, as the wisest of men, he was not categorically responsible for these *mitzvot*, he fell to sin.

The final objection points to the passage in *Bereshit Rabba* regarding the laws of ritual slaughter where the sages ask: "What does it matter to the Holy One, blessed be He, that animals are slaughtered by cutting their neck in front or in the back? Say therefore that the commandments were only given to purify the people" (*Genesis Rabba* XLIV). Maimonides comments: "When one first reflects on it...some of the commandments have no other cause than merely to prescribe a law without their having...any other end or any real utility" (p. 508). Maimonides regards this passage as singular, unrepresentative of the general opinions of the sages. As an addendum he points out that even if this were, in fact, representative of a majority opinion, these laws still remain explainable as stemming from concern for an animal's comfort, even in death.

Maimonides is hardly content with merely stating that *mitzvot* had purpose. Rather, he attempts to demonstrate this purpose in individual laws. Many laws lend themselves to rational interpretation, falling under the rubric of *mishpatim*. However, such explications were not always feasible; in such cases Maimonides uses historical insight to accomplish his purpose. He interprets certain laws as arising from abhorrence of anything resembling pagan rites. Regarding sacrifices, he explains them as a concession to an ancient mentality influenced by the surrounding culture (*Philosophies of Judaism*. J. Guttman p. 181).

Exceptions To The Rule of Rationality?

Yet, despite this intense adherence to rationality, Maimonides seems to veer from his established course in the final passage of The Guide (III:26): "Wisdom renders it necessary — or, if you will, say that necessity occasioned — that there should be particulars of commandments for which no cause can be found; it was, as it were, impossible in regard of the law that there should be nothing of that class in it." He cites examples of these "particulars... for which no cause can be found" as certain sacrificial laws prescribing one animal or another. Maimonides seems to adopt a position of denying the rationality of certain commandments, reverting to the very position he attacked.

Arthur Hyman, in "A Note On Maimonides' Classification of Law," points out this seeming inconsistency, grapples with it, and emerges with a consistent view. In order to understand Maimonides' view, he refers to a general philosophic concept known in Christian Scholasticism as the problem of "Buridan's Ass." It develops a philosophically objective situation where a hungry animal finds buckets of food on its left and right. The buckets lie equidistant from the animal's head, no breeze carries the food's scent more powerfully to the animal's nostrils, and the animal has no tendency to move in a particular direction. In short, no reason exists to induce the animal to eat from a particular bucket. Would such an animal starve due to indecision? No; rather, the animal, faced with no rational reason to make a particular choice, would make an arbitrary decision.

Relating to the human condition, this concept asserts the plausibility of decisions devoid of motivating factors. The problem discusses whether human acts can be arbitrary or must always be guided by reason. Hyman maintains that Maimonides believes that both are possible, and that the same point holds true for God, arguing that God also is capable of both rational and arbitrary choices.

Hyman cites a discussion in Ghazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah* to explain Maimonides' rationale. In contrast to the Aristotelian, Ghazali believed that man can be in a position to choose between objectively equal alternatives and still make a choice. No reason exists and an arbitrary decision is reached.

We can understand Maimonides in this light. He writes: "When you ask why a lamb should be prescribed and not a ram, the same question could have been asked if a ram had been prescribed" (The Guide III:26). Indicating that no reason for a preference exists, Maimonides argues that even God must make an arbitrary choice. God commands laws within a context of divine wisdom, but in situations in which only an arbitrary decision can be made, even God can make a decision independent of specific rationale. Thus, Maimonides' position can be understood as consistent with his basic thesis.

JOSEPH

Continued from page 6

very same questions enumerated above. Perhaps he too struggles with Joseph's apparent lack of financial credentials for the economic stewardship of Egypt. The Targum Onkelos implicitly suggests that Joseph developed sophisticated economic proficiency while employed by Potiphar. Accepting this assumption, one might comfortably attribute the Egyptian economic salvation to the bold and perceptive advice proffered by Joseph, the wise economist.

Although these various interpretations appear to lie at opposite ends of the spectrum, there still remains common ground upon which to base a fuller understanding of the text. Ramban, Nehama Leibowitz, and the contemporary exegetes must all confess that the overall tone of the passages implies Joseph's economic wisdom. Conversely, Targum Onkelos must admit to the relatively weak foundations upon which he builds Joseph's financial experience. How should one determine the "truth?"

Perhaps a blend of the various commentators will prove most realistic and compatible with the passages. One may draw a distinction between the source of Joseph's information and the details of his plan. For example, one might choose to accept the notion of a prediction and general economic plan based on dream or prophecy (Ramban/Abravanel), yet, in examining the details of Joseph's policies, refer to his accounting background (Targum Onkelos) and the already sophisticated Egyptian economy.

Furthermore, while differing over the extent of Joseph's business expertise, all commentators must credit the ultimate success of Joseph's leadership to divine inspiration. Joseph, even in the house of Potiphar, relied on divine intervention: "And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field" (Gen. 39:5).

MEGILLAT ESTHER

Continued from page 7

characters in other works of literature.

This suggestion, however, still begs the question: Why were the names and details preserved in the account of the story incorporated into Tanakh? Why not attribute the suggestions to those who implement them? The story would not be radically different if it were recorded that Haman decided to build a gallows on which to hang Mordekhai, or that Achashverosh decided to have a beauty pageant to select a new queen. Furthermore, as the story is related, the reader wonders about the string of implausible coincidences which become less realistic as the story progresses.

It would seem that the fact that the events occurred through the activities of minor characters as well as the preservation of the minutiae of the workings of the palace, are intended for a purpose. The phenomenon of secondary characters playing primary roles indicates that power in the story was indeed wielded from behind the scenes. It is not Achashverosh and Haman who control the course of events. These implausible events did not occur as a result of purely human initiative; rather, Divine Providence ensured that the right characters would be in the right place at the right time, speak their peace, accomplish their purpose, and then disappear. They leave the reader to wonder: "Who were those masked men who saved the story?" Perhaps the reader is encouraged to find the hand of God behind the masks.

[redacted]

differ on one fundamental point: it does not think any less of the *Avot*, *chas ve'shalom*, because they have sinned; rather, it recognizes in them all the more greatness because they are human.

Jonathan Koschitzky
YC/91

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Mr. Taragin responds:

Before I respond to the letter of my close friend and *chavrusa* Jonathan Koschitzky, let me thank him for highlighting the existing difficulty that has plagued and motivated me to write my article. The problem of interpretation is, indeed, serious and my article's primary intent was to prove the dilemma's existence, with a secondary aim of approaching its resolution. Your letter proves to me that others also recognize the problem and struggle with its solution. My response aims at clarifying my article's goals and their underlying assumptions.

The letter consists of two parts: two criticisms and a final assertion. The first criticism is that I suggest a certain unjustifiable falsification of *ma'aseh Avot*. To avoid this problem, Mr. Koschitzky prefers to "suffer" or, more directly, ignore the *gemara* in tractate Shabbat and other sources that reject the simple implications of the biblical text.

My defense begins with the realization of the constructs on which I based my thesis. I recognize a genuine problem: the text implies one perspective while Chazal stress another. When faced with this difficulty, one has three possible options. The first is to deny the simple implications of the text. This is, unfortunately, what many have done; the main purpose of my article is disputing this option.

The second option is to practically ignore the rabbinic implications when deliberating the question. This is what Mr. Koschitzky suggests. I did not consider this an option for although the *gemara* in Shabbat does quote a single *amora*, it represents but an example of a sentiment evident in much *Tanaitic*, *Amoritic*, and subsequent rabbinic literature. In fact, the *gemara* in Shabbat is accepted and quoted by many subsequent Jewish commentaries. Regardless of the question of what significance we attribute to various commentaries in resolving *hashkafic* issues, this opinion clearly maintains a steadfast place within the "*hashkafic* universe."

Mr. Koschitzky believes that the *amora*'s statement may have only had a contemporary pedagogic purpose. Recognizing that, to the contrary, he represents but an example of a more common approach, I consider the suggestion at best unlikely. As far as Chazal's making statements for purposes other than their literal meaning, we do, indeed, find such cases, but the *gemara* or commentaries usually bring out this point. In our case, I know of no primary sources which make such a claim.

One who considers both the literal meaning of the text as well as Chazal's declaration to be authoritative must adopt the third option: resolving the two strains. This is what I attempted to do. I agree with Mr. Koschitzky that *a priori* I would rather not suggest the texts' possible misrepresentation of *ma'aseh Avot*, but my suggestion accepts what Chazal assert and attempts to resolve the issue *a postiori*. "What's done cannot be undone!" I agree that the solution is surprising, but I feel it necessary, although I welcome alternative solutions. My main point was primarily to assert the question's existence, buttress both contributing factors, and outline the proper path to that solution.

The second criticism is that we cannot accept the *Avot* for personal models if the accounts of their lives are apparently a "farce." Mr. Koschitzky claims that, "only with the knowledge that we are examining a genuine portrait can we hope to emulate it. If, in truth, their character is pristine then it would be a crime to sully it." I claim that this type of portrait is not only theoretically effective, but practically employed. Though I certainly do not mean to equate *kodesh* with *chol*, I cite morality plays and literature, as well as all instructive arts, as consisting of contrivances aimed at instruction. The audience recognizes the art as fiction, but is still able to glean its message. As far as my claim's legitimacy is concerned, many reliable authorities support it. For example, the *Derashot Haran* (*Derasha* 6) concurs with the concept of the Torah's not presenting the real life of biblical heroes.

Mr. Koschitzky concludes with the assertion that one can perceive the *Avot* as "living, 'real' examples." We can "recognize in them all the more greatness because they are human." Interestingly enough, I agree with this. We must read the Torah as a story with human subjects only so can it have its intended effect. The issue of contention is simply whether we should interpolate back from the text to the actual lives of the depicted personalities. I assert that Chazal warn us against this, and I insist that such restriction does not inhibit the Torah's message. To the contrary, the Torah's distinguishing between the story told and the *Avot*'s real lives is the only way those lives can impact us.

In summation, my article intended to present a difficulty that I'm happy Mr. Koschitzky recognizes. I believe that a genuine resolution requires consideration of the full impact of both factors. I do not insist that my solution is preclusive, or even gratifying from an *a priori* perspective; I do see it as possible, and definitely justifiable, and I consider its direction necessary from an *a postiori* one. I obviously agree with Mr. Koschitzky that a reading of *ma'aseh Avot* must acknowledge human players with human emotions. Regarding exegetical technique, we concur; we argue only about the relation of player to subject and the reality of the *Avot*'s lives. Thus, I hope that we can proceed with the type of biblical analysis Mr. Koschitzky and I see as justifiable. Still, the actual lives and identities of the Avot may have to remain momentarily unknown.

Kevin Taragin
Y.C. '91

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Dear Editor:

Thank you for sending me a copy of your publication, *Hamevaser*, volume 30 number 2, which I found very interesting, especially your contribution on racism and prejudice within the American Jewish community. Unfortunately, much of your searching analysis applies to Anglo-Jewish Jewry as well. That desirable, yet elusive, fine balance between Jewish particularism and universalism is difficult to find.

Wishing you success with your publication.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Cohen
London, England

Pesach: Religion at Rush Hour

Ellen Payne

"And the Earth was unformed and void..." (Gen. 1:2). By the end of the week of creation, Hashem had set order to the Earth, but a spiritual desolation and chaos remained, characterizing society throughout the first two thousand years of history (*Avoda Zara* 9a). The people inhabited a religious wasteland, chasing mirages of licentiousness and idolatry (Ramban, Gen. 1:2).

But from that first week, God had entrusted man with a *nishmat chayim*, a holy soul waiting for the end of its exile. The soul finds its physical entrapments, the body, in conflict with its only aspiration, to adhere to its source, the Creator. Already obstructed by its material surroundings, a soul from the era of chaos suffered even more distress.

Amidst the chaos, one man recognized and proclaimed the spiritual reality of a singular God: Avraham *Avinu*. He first acknowledged God's existence, and recognized the necessity of living according to His will. Avraham observed nature and understood that man's behavior should correspond to the divine pattern of creation. According to several sources, the *Avot* kept the 613 commandments of the Torah; their observance thus began the era of Torah (*Midrash Rabbah*).

The piety of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov secured the transmission of these commandments to their descendants. However, imparting a system of beliefs and practices to a nation can prove much more difficult than to a small group of volunteers. In fact, before Avraham *Avinu*, the only Torah-like observances around were the seven Noachite laws.

These seven *mitzvot*, according to the classifications of Rav Saadia Gaon, are all *sichliot*, following from logic. For example, murder and idol worship undermine the existence and origins of man. Even the proscription of *eiver min hachai*, eating flesh of a living animal, makes sense in that it preserves the environment, similar to the arguments of conservationist movements today.

In contrast to the Noachide laws, the value of *mitzvot shim'iyot*, non-derivable laws, which constitute the bulk of Torah but were observed already by Avraham, is not so easily discerned. Man can only appreciate these *mitzvot post facto*, after immersing himself in them. Once he keeps several *Shabbatot*, he understands *Shabbat* as a time of rejuvenation, although he would probably not come to recognize *a priori* his need for a weekly withdrawal from his activities. Some *mitzvot*, also presumably *shim'iyot*, have moral messages, such as the metaphoric lesson of *sha'atnez* or *kashrut*, that the essences of some substances cannot be synthesized without destroying the framework in which they exist.

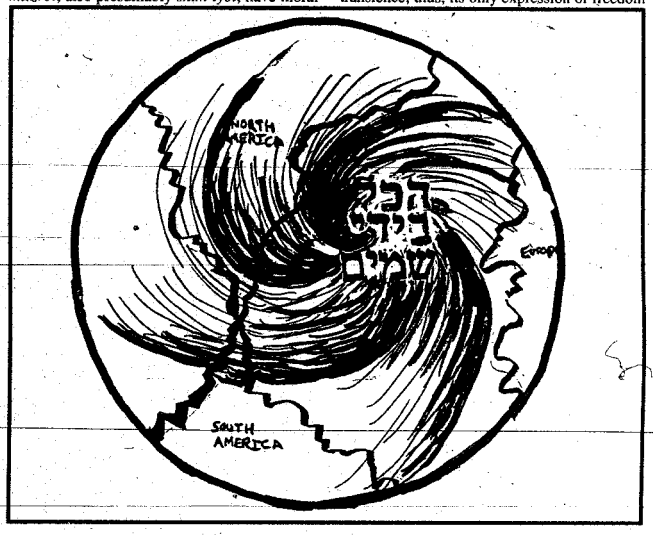
With the inclusion of *mitzvot shim'iyot* into his religious repertoire, Avraham introduced a new dimension to the relationship between the body and the soul in their quest for spiritual deliverance. While the body passes over its opportunity for spiritual expression, the eternal soul yearns for it. Nothing would bring the *neshama* more happiness than the elevation of its physical container through actions in harmony with the world's divine scheme. Otherwise, it remains a slave to the material environment; even time restricts its freedom.

In his collection of essays on *Pesach*, Rav Yitzchak Hutner *zt"l* explains that the soul wants to escape the physical prison in which it resides, and worship Hashem in a timeless and weightless atmosphere. The holy *neshama* has no actual representation in this world of corporeality and transience; thus, its only expression of freedom is speed, as it attempts to break the time barrier and connect with its eternal source. Within the body, the closest the *nefesh* may come to its goal of infinite speed and eternality relies on the performance of *mitzvot* with *zerizut*, alacrity.

The problem for the *Avot*, then, was to convey the system of *mitzvot* with *zerizut* to the masses, who would not pursue this path voluntarily. *Galut Mitzrayim* formed the basis for the solution. When Pharaoh had completely enslaved the Hebrew nation, not only the people's souls, but even their own logic cried out for freedom. The liberty to choose became a national imperative. At this point, they would take any path to freedom offered, no questions asked. Thus they accepted the life of Torah *bechipazon*, hastily.

Rav Hutner quotes the *Mekhilta* to show that this emotional haste, in conjunction with physical speed, forms an integral part of the performance of *mitzvot*: "*Ushmartem et hamatzot*,' *mikkan she'ein machmitzin et hamitzvot*" (Ex. 12:17). Chazal make a play on the words in the verse, replacing the admonition not to allow fermentation of the *matzot* with an admonition referring to a lack of alacrity in *mitzvot*. The *Mekhilta* continues: "*mitzvah haba'a leyadkha al tachmitzena*" — don't hesitate to perform a *mitzva* that comes into your hands. Rav Hutner explains that *zerizut* does not enhance the *mitzva*; rather, it is intrinsic to the proper performance of the *mitzva*. Just as the fermented *matza* becomes *chametz* and thereby unfit for consumption, a *mitzva* spoils when one delays its fulfillment. Again, the closest ephemeral simulation to eternity is speed. Therefore, to satisfy the immortal, desperate soul, its mortal caretaker would also need to recognize the eternal character of the *mitzvot*, and fulfill them accordingly.

Pesach, then, when the Jews accepted the Torah "*bishe'at chipazon*," marks the time of the year when Jewish souls yearn for their eternality, strain to break the physical barriers of time and space, and demand that the body perform *mitzvot* with *chipazon* and *zerizut*. During the holiday of the Jewish people's spiritual renewal of its relationship with God and His Torah, this message is most appropriate.



The Dating Game: An Inquiry Into Existential Angst

Shmuel Landesman

Dating has turned out to be quite an experience. I have no other way to describe it. It brings out all my emotions. Sometimes I feel like bursting into song and, sometimes, into tears. I did not think it was supposed to be that way. I had always assumed it would be this pleasant "happening" in which I'd have someone with whom to go to all the restaurants, museums, and movies I would never have bothered to go to on my own. True, it would cost me twice as much, but that's a small price to pay for the smooth courtship of my wife-to-be.

Coming from a background perhaps more *yeshivish* than that of the average YU student, I did not go on a date until after I finished college. Hence, I never expected all the emotional toil, drain, burn-out and, oh yes, rejuvenation and exhilaration of dating. Eventually, after much peer encouragement (i.e. many peer engagements), I decided I would go on a date.

That is, I would eventually go on a date, though I still never actually felt the immediate need to, so to speak, set a date until I began to feel more than my usual existential angst — I was lonely.

Oddly enough, this decision proved somewhat more difficult to implement than I had planned. I asked friends, aunts, and cousins, my unofficial *shadchanim* (matchmakers). They wanted to know what I was looking for. I muttered something about a soul-mate and the need to satisfy a connection to my innermost being. Strangely, they wanted me to get a bit more specific. I told them I wanted a girl who was college educated and planned on covering her hair. Looks, within reason, were not important. I may have added something about values, ideals, and goals here — I may have been reading too much Fromm. Nevertheless, I managed to refrain from the old refrain: "She has to have good *midos*." I reasoned that if after a couple dates I couldn't determine that, either her *midos* were exemplary or mine were not.

My *shadchanim* then wanted to know how they should describe me to the girl. So did I. Defining oneself in a couple of sentences is really quite hard; I had to abandon not a few of my expectations. A *rebbi* of mine recently remarked: "Dating causes guys to make more of a *Cheshbon Hanefesh* than *Neilah* on Yom Kippur ever does."

Unable to define myself, I suggested they ask me what she would want to know. The first question, inevitably: "What are you planning to do?" I wonder why there is such a stress on what I do and not on what I am. After all, I am a human being, not a human do-ing. More questions came, questions about my *hashkafos*.

For some reason my shadchanim never ask about my belief in God or *Torah miSinai*; they would rather know whether I plan to own a T.V. Next comes the real toughie: "Do you consider yourself *yeshivish* or modern Orthodox?" I usually manage to pass this one. Finally, my *shadchanim* focus on the part of me they can relate to, and ignore the rest (this has caused not a few mismatches!).

My final observation is that dating can, at least in its present state, often lead to disappointment. I know people have grown disillusioned with *frumkeit* due to the whole *shidduch* scene. I can understand this feeling, yet I feel that one's need to connect to God is stronger than one's need to connect with the "Ideal Mate." Another difficulty: by the end of a date people are inevitably reduced to lifeless "categories." But one's self-esteem is not determined by the opinion of one's date. Although we're used to being judged on Yom Kippur, at least then we get the feeling that Hashem is on our side.

Hamevaser wishes all its readers a chag kasher vesameach

Saving The Torah Zone

Some Afterthoughts on Operation Torah Shield

Mitchel Benuck

The ozone layer envelops the Earth like a giant embryonic sac, protecting its inhabitants from a harsh, unforgiving external environment. Its negligent caretakers once basked in its shadows, oblivious to the vulnerability of their supposedly invincible guardian. Ultimately, their disregard for the need to control atmospheric gas levels shattered their myth of an eternal oasis. This recent discovery of the fragile, symbiotic relationship between a planet and its people resulted not from a self-imposed, renewed commitment to the needs of nature, but from an impending disaster of potentially epic proportions: a hole in the ozone layer.

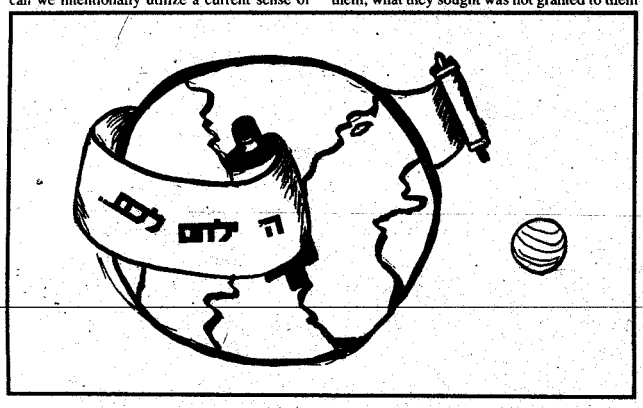
As Jews, we have long recognized the unfortunate irony inherent in the unifying power of a crisis. Crises temporarily dispel our domestic differences, reacquainting us with the universal ideals we collectively hold most dear. They spur us to open our pocketbooks for the unfortunate, volunteer our services to the unsuccessful, and offer our prayers in support of our people, our state, and ourselves. By eliciting specific external responses, emergencies expose our internal weaknesses, compelling us to rethink our priorities and repair our spiritual superstructure. In this light, the significance of the Gulf Crisis may have superceded that of many recent crises. By propelling us not solely to prayer, charity, or any particular individual act, but toward Torah study itself, it may have unmasked a most significant threat: a hole in the Torah shield.

Torah study has long held a prominent position as the Jewish alternative to the Strategic Defense Initiative. This protective umbrella, recently publicized under the code name Operation Torah Shield, has offered us security from our infancy as a people. Upon our Exodus from Egypt, God, through Moses, promised us, "*Hashem yilachem lakhem, ve'atem tacharishun*" - "God will fight for you, and you will hold your peace" (Ex. 14:14). Rabbeinu Bachya (ibid.) interprets this verse as a reminder of the delicacy of our defensive coalition with God. Commenting on "*ve'atem tacharishun*," he expounds: "You will have to *work*, so that God will not turn upon you, for you too worshipped idols as [the Egyptians] did" (cf. *Or HaChaim*, ibid.). The shield thus, from its inception, draws its strength from our commitment to distance ourselves from the illusions of idolatry and embrace the ideals of Torah and Torah study.

Chazal, in developing this theme, focus intently upon the caliber of study necessary to sustain the Torah shield. Rabbi Yochanan states: "He who studies Torah for its own sake shields the whole world" (*Sanhedrin* 99b), adding pure intent in Torah study, or "*Torah lishma*," as a prerequisite for protection. He supports his statement with the words of Isaiah: "And I placed My words into your mouth, and with the shadow of my hand I covered you" (Isa. 51:16). Radak, in his commentary on this verse, seems to agree with Rabbi Yochanan's contention. " 'My words are in your mouth' and in your heart," he writes, "for I placed them into your mouth only so that they should be in your heart, as it says, 'In your mouth and in your heart to do [the Torah]' (Deut. 30:14)." Radak's emphasis on localizing Torah to the heart, in the context of Torah study coupled with God's assurance of protection, recalls Rabbi Yochanan's requirement of pure intent.

Yet, while Chazal champion the protective merits of properly performed Torah study, they convey an uneasy tension regarding the issue of Torah study for ulterior motives. On one hand, some rabbis encourage the employment of ulterior motives as a means to an end: "Said Rav Yehuda in Rav's name: One should always engage in the study of Torah even if not for its own sake, for he who begins thus will end by studying it for its own sake (*mitoch shelo lishma ba lishma*)" (*Pesachim* 50b; Rambam, *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 3:4). On the other hand, others condemn those who regularly resort to this practice: "R. Banna'ah used to say: If one studies the Torah for its own sake, it becomes to him an elixir of life,...but if one studies the Torah not for its own sake, it becomes to him a deadly poison" (*Ta'anit* 7a).

This tension stretches the central cable supporting Operation Torah Shield. To what extent can we intentionally utilize a current sense of vulnerability to prompt an increase in Torah study? Specifically, how can we reconcile our use of the Gulf Crisis, and hence our immediate need for defense, as a primary motivator for Torah study with the condition of *lishma* imposed by Chazal?



Interestingly, in one context Chazal do recommend Torah study motivated solely by a promise of protection. In the Mishna's discussion of the suffering of a *sotah* (a faithless wife) upon her drinking of the bitter waters, we find a loophole: "If she has merit, we hold [her punishment] in abeyance....From here, Ben Azzai says, 'One is obligated to teach his daughter Torah, for if she ever drinks [the bitter waters] she will know that her merit holds [her punishment] in abeyance' " (*Sotah* 3:4). Ben Azzai explicity advocates Torah study for the sole purpose of protecting women from the bitter waters.

The Talmud (*Sotah* 21a) discusses the nature of the "merit" alluded to in the Mishna, culminating in a debate concerning the relative protectability of Torah study *vis a vis* performance of the commandments. Rav Yosef believes "a commandment protects and rescues (*magina umitzla*) while one is engaged upon it; but when one is no longer engaged upon it, it protects but does not rescue. As for [study of] Torah, whether while one is engaged upon it or not, it protects and rescues." Rava, however, citing the demises of Doeg and Achitophel despite their studious efforts, downplays the magnitude of these forces: "While one is engaged upon [study of] Torah, it protects and rescues, and while one is not engaged upon it, it protects but does not rescue. As for a commandment, whether one is engaged upon it or not, it protects but does not rescue."

Where lies the difference between Rava and Rav Yosef? Surely Rav Yosef knew of the cases of Doeg and Achitophel, yet they failed to influence his stance on the principle of *Torah magina umitzla*. What factor pertaining to these cases prompted Rava to disagree?

Doeg and Achitophel both served as civil servants, in the courts of Saul and David, respectively. Although Chazal insist the two were not contemporaries (*Sanhedrin* 106b), they nevertheless repeatedly treat them as a couple, depicting them as learned men who strayed from the path of the righteous.

If we look closely at Chazal's treatment of the two, we find Doeg and Achitophel shared one very relevant characteristic: ambition. Chazal group them among others who, like a *sotah*, "set their eyes upon that which was not proper for them; what they sought was not granted to them and what they possessed was taken from them" (*Sotah* 9b). Rashi (ibid.) explains that Doeg's jealousy of David's superiority in halakhic matters propelled him to do whatever he could to better David. He found motivation for Torah study not in and of itself, but from his desire to best David in an obsessive competition. Because of his improper incentive, he not only failed to achieve his objective, but ultimately lost his knowledge of Torah (*Sanhedrin* 106b).

A similar desire for power consumed Achitophel. He defected to Absalom's camp because he saw an opportunity for leadership. Subsequently, his stimulus for study, like Doeg's, evolved into a quest for authority. When he realized Absolom would not follow his advice, he lost not only his motivation, but his newly adopted *raison d'etre*, and committed suicide.

In light of this, we might impart the following understanding of the apparent argument between Rava and Rav Yosef. Rav Yosef deals exclusively with the power of Torah study when performed *lishma*. With ideal maintenance of the Torah shield, the Torah not only protects ephemerally, but rescues perpetually, accompanying its devotee even when he leaves the house of study. Rav Yosef thus focuses not on the quantitative accumulation of study hours, but on the qualitative attitude Torah study cultivates in the mind of one who approaches it devoutly.

Rava, in citing the cases of Doeg and Achitophel, points out that some people, although brilliant Torah scholars, fail to grasp the qualitative aspect of their trade. When motivated by other sources, Torah study becomes important only quantitatively, as a means toward an immediate end. Just as they measure their own gains quantitatively, so too we must measure their reward quantitatively. Thus, when dealing with Torah study prompted by ulterior motives, God grants protection only as long as we actively engage in study; when we leave the books, however, we leave the ideal behind us, and thus we also leave the protection of the Torah shield.

We cannot question the positive effects of Operation Torah Shield. Sensing vulnerability, we quickly rearmed the Torah shield to respond to an impending crisis. This mobilization, in turn, compelled countless individuals to devote countless hours to Torah study. Unfortunately, with the almost miraculous dissipation of danger, we, for the time being, seem to have shelved our armor, reverting back to our simpler pre-crisis schedules. In completing this cycle, we revealed two telling traits about our level of Torah study: a necessity to improve on the status quo, and a need for a new motivation to do so.

This potential paradox embodies the very tension Chazal purport regarding Torah study for reasons other than *lishma*. By demonstrating our desire to develop the Torah shield, we show promise that our study performed in the context of Operation Torah Shield will evolve into the continued maintenance of the shield supplied by *Torah lishma*. By mothballing our weapon, however, we indicate that a perpetual promise of protection in return for our pure intent in Torah study may not be enough.

In the aftermath of the Gulf Crisis, will Operation Torah Shield prove to exemplify Chazal's hope that *mitoch shelo lishma ba lishma*, or will we allow this cyclic deployment of our secret weapon to repeat itself, ultimately afflicting us like Rabbi Banna'ah's deadly poison? Will our perseverance continue to fill the reservoir of strength from which the Torah shield draws, or will our abandonment of our gains corrode the shield like chlorofluorocarbons in the atmosphere?

The Torah shield recognizes no state of preparedness short of high alert. This time, we fulfilled its expectations; if we allow it to deteriorate, in the future we may fail to plug its holes.

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