

HAMEVASER

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Editorials

United We Stand...

Here at Yeshiva, we peer out at the world and often see a demoralized, uncaring place. The impression is reinforced by the minor inroads made against this complaint. The "Holiday Season" comes, and the world remembers that the homeless have names and faces. And we know the world will forget the overcrowded shelters they cannot go to and the desperate, hopeless nature of their lives. A power hungry dictator threatens, and the world rises up to crush him. And we know that the world will forget the few hundred people who died in uniform and once again will hurry to sell him arms for hard cash. Suspicions are confirmed, accusations justified. The world does not care to know that it has the power to change things, to really make this "a kinder, gentler place."

Here at Yeshiva, we peer out at the world and often we see ourselves. Every campus newspaper tells us that nobody cares. Every issue, editors, essayists, and the casual letter-writer all scramble for new ways to level the charge of apathy at the student body. Sometimes it seems if there would ever be a Yeshiva University slogan for students to rally around it would be, "Dear God, let me just get out of this place and into a good job or graduate school."

It's not true. At least there's evidence to the contrary. Two weeks ago three hundred students attended a rally to protest the closing of the Bernard Revel Graduate School. Many of those present were not students in Revel; some have never taken a course there. Yet they cared enough about this university's future to stand out in the cold and demonstrate their distress over its closing the only Orthodox graduate school for Jewish studies. As a result of student activism, the university has scheduled another board meeting to reconsider its decision. Because students care, things have changed, and may continue to change.

The actions of the student body are commendable; somehow, the ability of many groups to combine their efforts towards one goal surpasses any sort of encouragement or praise we can offer. But many here remain pessimistic, skeptical about our commitment to keeping Revel open. Surprised that even a first step was taken, some cannot bring themselves to believe that any student effort can be more than a quick flash in the pan.

If we want to believe that student determination and drive can go beyond opening stages, the movement to keep Revel open must find new vigor. The students who so proudly marched in front of Furst Hall must intensify their efforts. Apathy is a persistent disease; we can't afford to ignore it after the "Holiday Season" is over.

Divided We Fall

Our attraction to the world of Torah uMadda, which we have chosen to inhabit, is based upon our faith in its integrity. The integrity of Torah uMadda as a mission draws from several sources. But no source contributes more to that integrity than strong leadership. In pursuing Torah uMadda as students, we look to our faculty and administrators to guide us around the potholes, down the road of synthesis.

The public has had more than its fill of rumor and innuendo, backstabbing and politics, particularly when it interferes with our ability to pursue halakha and hashkafa. In our last issue, Hamevaser highlighted the uncooperative atmosphere among some Rabbis and *batei dinim* as a major contributor to our community's inability to solve the *aguna* problem. One only need to mention "brain death" to evoke images of politicians at the stump. We would have hoped that our leaders would learn from past incidents.

Alas, history has repeated itself again. We live in a real world, and must confront real problems. But ultimately, the well known axiom "X Jews = X+1 opinions," should fail when it hits the roots of our religion. Yeshiva University believes in Torah and academics. If acrimony within the administration and faculty of our university regarding this definition has led us into the current crisis, we are led to question the integrity of our leadership in general.

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Letters

Dear Rabbi Lamm,

I am deeply saddened to learn of Yeshiva University's decision to close the Bernard Revel Graduate School. I understand that Yeshiva faces financial difficulties, but no fiscal crisis, no matter how deep, can warrant amputating an institution's heart.

I graduated from Yeshiva College in 1985. To be perfectly blunt, I left Yeshiva with deep ambivalence about the institution. But of one thing I have always been certain: that no single part of Yeshiva is more responsible for whatever intellectual vitality there may have been at the main campus than the Bernard Revel Graduate School. It is the students, faculty and alumni of Revel that have given content and meaning to Yeshiva's unique mission — the synthesis of halakhic Judaism and the best of secular thought.

Without Revel, Yeshiva will be nothing more than a place where Orthodox Jewish students can go to college without facing the challenges posed by life on a secular campus. To be sure, there is value in Yeshiva's serving that function, but it hardly substitutes for the lofty ideal of synthesis that you and Dr. Belkin so eloquently advocated over the last several decades.

Perhaps the people responsible for the decision to close Revel think that there are other programs that deserve priority over Revel because those programs serve a broader constituency with more immediate and visible results. That view is tragically short sighted. For it is the Revel graduate school and the ideals it promotes that provide Yeshiva University with its reason for being. I urge you to reconsider your decision.

Very truly yours,
Isaac D. Corr
YC '85

ABOUT THE COVER

Torah U'madda was the overarching philosophy in the life of Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel, founder of the first Diaspora institution which combined secular and Jewish studies, Yeshiva College. Born in Lithuania in 1885, Revel studied Talmud from a very young age, learning first with his father, Rabbi Nahum Sheraga, and then continuing in the Yeshiva of Tels. He was also a student of the Haskalah, and gained a broad knowledge of Jewish history and Hebrew language and literature. After moving to the United States in 1906, Revel continued his studies at New York University and Dropsie College, where he earned his doctoral degree. When appointed *Rosh Yeshiva* of RIETS in 1915, he reorganized the seminary, and thirteen years later, established Yeshiva College, for which he served as president. In 1937, Bernard Revel founded the graduate school that now bears his name.

Unrevealing At The Seams

Mitchel Benuck

On December 17, A. M. Rosenthal offered a description of life in Moscow during this tumultuous period of political revolution:

"Every day here is so full of fear and hope, rising and fading, so many things happen so erratically, the present is so taut and the future so murky that life sometimes seems like the day itself -- cold, fogged over, too suddenly dark..."

"I am an educated man, a cultured man. But they...insult me every day. They don't tell me what is happening to me and my country" (*Letter From Moscow*, The New York Times, A21).

In light of recent developments at our university, I could not help but empathize with Rosenthal's words. When Yeshiva University allowed financial constraints to dictate the future direction of the Bernard Revel Graduate School, they thrust it headlong into a transition of unprecedented criticality. The darkness that has enveloped our community's future eerily parallels the gloom and uncertainty the Russians must feel upon the dissolution of their country. We consider ourselves educated and cultured, yet we can only stand idly by as our administration prepares to dismantle a vehicle through which we have expressed our mission as an institution for the past fifty years.

The administration paints a grave financial picture of our university. They claim Revel will operate at a deficit of \$560,000 for this academic year, perhaps half of which they hope to save by restructuring. However, while financial considerations may have pushed us to the brink of this abyss, it required a true leap of faith on the part of the university to have taken the plunge. After many years of development, Revel has earned respectability both on and off campus. It has produced rabbis, educators and professors of the highest caliber, former students who now fill the ranks of successful Jewish studies programs on all levels of education. In choosing to restructure (should we say perestroika?), the administration risks watching these gains evaporate in hope that a new program will exceed them. Why are they restructuring the Bernard Revel Graduate School at a time when its attempt to synthesize scholarship with Torah study truly seems to be bearing ripe fruit?

Any analysis of such a decision must begin from the very core of the university's self-declared mission: Torah uMadda. Proudly emblazoned in the center of our university's seal, it captures in a nutshell our mission as an institution. Over the years, its specific definition, or lack thereof, has provoked debate and derision from supporters and dissenters alike. However, through all the cacophony of internal strife, its primary, basic goals ring clearly. Yeshiva University attempts to orchestrate a harmony between Torah study and academic scholarship, in the process composing what we hope will ultimately be a truly glorious symphony, which we have already entitled "Modern Orthodoxy."

To this end, we might say Bernard Revel Graduate School comprises our string section. Its melodies penetrate the inner ears of scholarship on several different academic fronts -- bible, Jewish history, philology, and Jewish philosophy. Assuming the tenets of Orthodox Judaism, it proceeds to apply the academic method to their respective fields, challenging its students to confront the hurdles modern secular scholarship poses to our steep tradition. Students emerge from these investigations with a true academic methodology regarding the approach of an Orthodox Jew to their particular area of interest. Furthermore, their work reaches the ears of scholars worldwide, whose work we can influence and through whom we can make a name for ourselves. In short, it builds the bridges

which have transformed us from a ghetto of Orthodox Jewish study into a metropolis of Orthodox intellectual development.

By cutting those bridges, Yeshiva University will effect several disastrous ramifications for the continued development of Orthodox higher education. First, it removes from the lanes of academic traffic the sole carrier of Orthodox scholarship. New discoveries in areas of Jewish scholarship will now be analyzed in light of tenets which Orthodox cannot accept. Bible will be interpreted according to the beliefs of criticism, and history will be rewritten with disregard for the Orthodox perspective. Orthodox students who wish to pursue such lines of inquiry will be forced to do so under the auspices of institutions which reject the principles upon which Yeshiva University and Modern Orthodoxy stand.

Second, the restructuring portends a dearth of bible and history teachers for our next generation. In an era marked by its emphasis on Talmud and halakha, bible and history studies often tend to get lost in the shuffle. Without educators who can impart a proper emphasis on these subjects and the importance of their study, students may never properly appreciate the continuous development of Jewish tradition -- our *mesorah*.

The administration, unfortunately, does not recognize these and other problems as imminent dangers. Not once have they publicly discussed, or even acknowledged, the potential negative ramifications of the restructuring of Revel. Apparently, not only do they believe the monetary savings is worth the restructuring, they seem to communicate a rather glib confidence in their amorphous proposal for a program in *machshvet Yisrael* - Jewish thought. What do they see in this proposal that could possibly make it worth the risk?

Over the years, many have debated the merits of Revel's version of academic Jewish scholarship with regard to its fulfillment of the university's mission. By forcing students to confine their studies to specific disciplines, they argue, Revel's "narrow" scholarship doesn't promise a synthesis of Torah and academics; it merely resolves potential conflicts between traditional Orthodoxy and secular academics in specific areas. As such, it only represents a means to an end. A true synthesis, however, must come through an analysis of a much broader, all-encompassing perspective of thought.

The administration apparently believes the proposed program in *machshvet Yisrael* can provide just this type of synthesis. Their argument proceeds on three basic points. First, they expect students to learn an academic, methodological approach to texts just as they would in programs of bible or Jewish history; they would simply achieve these goals by studying Rav Kook and Maimonides *et al*. Second, they argue students will, through the wide-ranging interests generated by study of Jewish thought, acquire the knowledge of bible, Jewish history, and language necessary to pursue a career in education. Third, they feel the topics covered in the graduate school should relate more directly to the training of *semicha* students in the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), whom they see Revel as primarily serving. By imbuing in their future rabbis a deeper interest in *machshava*, they hope students will develop a stronger feel for the roles of these topics in the more general framework of "yiddishkeit," and through that they may better serve their respective communities.

Their expectations are bold, ambitious, and certainly visionary. They have to be. The administration has courageously committed itself to restructuring without even proposing a cur-

riculum for the restructured institute. Furthermore, they have yet to name a single faculty member who will teach courses in the new program. Given the administration's disregard for the current faculty's opinions regarding the decision to restructure in the first place, coupled with the faculty's vehement opposition to the plan, it appears unlikely that any current faculty member of Revel would think of teaching in the "new" Revel. The administration also hopes to accomplish the entire restructuring within the budgetary limits imposed by Revel's current insufficient endowment. It is truly difficult to claim, even from a practical standpoint, that the decision to restructure was reached after careful deliberation and consideration of all factors and issues involved.

But only when we consider this apparent shortsightedness in light of the educational issues involved can we come to grips with the full implications of the decision. Many question whether one can pursue the study of *machshava* at all on a higher level without a proper background in bible, history, and language. Without a bible or history department, how can the administration expect the restructured Revel to provide the education necessary for one to appreciate the overarching perspective of *machshava*? Without proposing a curriculum, how can they expect Revel students to receive proper training to teach any subject other than Jewish thought, even on a secondary level? Without consulting Revel's students, how can the administration claim the restructured program was conceived to better serve their educational needs? Perhaps most importantly, without the support of its faculty, currently respected by their students as among the very best in their fields, how can the administration hope for the new program to qualitatively compare to the one currently in place?

The issue of faculty quality goes far beyond the respectability of the school's degree. Obviously, from an academic standpoint, one cannot begin to compare the merits of a certificate to those of a doctorate. But as personalities and campus fixtures, the faculty have contributed far more to the university than their classroom pres-

ence. Perhaps no classroom in any graduate program in America has fostered as much original intellectual inquiry as the fifth floor of Gottesman library or the stairwells of Furst Hall. The sense of community that has developed on campus among all those in the Jewish studies division could not be replaced no matter how much the university invested in restructuring. Much has been made of the calculation of indirect costs which have so inflated Revel's deficit. If the administration incorporated the indirect benefits of maintaining Revel as is into the budget calculations, perhaps we would rightfully conclude Revel indeed operates in the black.

The Bernard Revel Graduate School as it currently exists feeds our budding thinkers with invaluable knowledge, stimulates their thought, and challenges them to respond. The traffic it produces on the bridges to modern scholarship analyzes the discoveries of scholarship, assesses their role and importance within the framework of Orthodoxy, and sends it back to the outside world in a form acceptable to the axioms of both our methodology and theirs, thereby earning us worldwide respect as academicians, as thinkers, and as people. It would seem that such a report would be considered music to our ears.

Instead, the decisions emanating from the offices of our administration attack our senses as a deafening cacophony. We hope they act upon what I hope is our joint desire to compose our symphony, rather than sit back and witness its decomposition. A generation from now, a small group of thinkers may come to Yeshiva University, seeking to register in the Bernard Revel Institute for Jewish Thought. Upon visiting the fifth floor of the library, the stench of stale air envelops them. They ask each other in bewilderment, "What happened to synthesis? Where did all the composers go?" In the back, they encounter a lonely man, who overhears their flustered queries. He soberly shows them to a calendar, and mournfully points to the following entry: "December 3, 1991. The day the music died."

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Rabbi Dr. David Berger is Professor of History at Brooklyn College and the Graduate School of the City University of New York. He is also on the faculty of the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University.

1) Jewish scholarship is neither more nor less than the examination of Jewish texts and Jewish history with the tools of modern academic disciplines. If we assume that these disciplines produce insights and understanding in other areas of discourse, they must surely do so in the study of Judaism as well.

While this conclusion is so self-evident that it appears superfluous to assert it, large segments of the Orthodox Jewish community refuse to assign any value to "chokmat Yisrael" for reasons that we cannot pursue here. This means that a vast array of questions ranging from points of detail in the study of Torah to issues of fundamental *hashkafah* cannot be approached in an informed fashion.

A list of such questions could extend almost indefinitely, but a few random examples should illustrate the essential point: How have Jews through the ages approached the authoritative-ness, and interpretation of *aggadah*? Of *kabbalah*? How have mainstream Jews related to sectarianism? To non-Jews? Can recent literary developments provide a new understanding of biblical narratives and a new strategy in responding to biblical criticism? Can ancient Near Eastern texts or the literature of Greece and Rome illuminate difficult terms or passages in the Bible or Talmud? What is the relationship between the Rambam of the *Moreh Nevukhim* and the Rambam of the *Mishneh Torah*? Is *daat Torah* a new term for a venerable belief or is it largely an innovation? What can the history of Jewish Messianism teach us about contemporary

This unprecedented generation of learned Orthodox Jewish [women and men is] poised to lead a renaissance of Modern Orthodoxy, and we are now pulling the rug out from under them--and ourselves.

Messianic expectations or personalities? How have *poskim* dealt with the challenges of historical change?

Orthodox Jewish scholarship approaches such questions with a combination of academic rigor and religious reverence. Without it, positions that either contravene tradition or exclude legitimate options are proffered with a passion born of ignorance. The quality of public discourse in the religious Jewish world would improve immeasurably with the widening and deepening of scholarly literacy.

2) The Bernard Revel Graduate School has been a major partner during the last decade or so in educating an extraordinarily impressive group of young Modern Orthodox Jews. With all respect to my own generation, we did not produce nearly as many students with a passion for traditional *talmud Torah* combined with a commitment to intellectual openness leading to the pursuit of advanced academic training.

The significance of this development can hardly be exaggerated. During the past several decades, the most effective argument of the Orthodox Right has not been the tired and historically untenable insistence that the pursuit of

worldly knowledge is religiously illegitimate; it has been the triumphant assertion that Modern Orthodoxy must be judged by its fruits. "Show us young *talmidei chukhamim* who really adhere to your ideology. Show us *Torah U-Madda* in the flesh, not merely on the printed page." We are beginning to be able to hold our heads high and respond, "*Kazeh re'eh vekaddesh*." The opportunity to attend the *semikhah* program and simultaneously study in a rigorous graduate program in Jewish Studies is a key factor in a change that is crucial to the flourishing of an enlightened Orthodoxy. Revel is not without its flaws, and this crisis is an opportunity to re-examine many aspects of its procedures and curriculum; nonetheless, the preservation of a degree-granting program in Jewish Studies is a matter of transcendent importance.

3) The proposal to replace Revel with an Institute for Jewish Thought fails on both academic and religious grounds. In the absence of the context provided by a course of study in Jewish history and philosophy, an "orphan" program in Jewish thought could have no academic credibility. Moreover, the proposed reorganization abolishes the fields in which students have demonstrated the greatest degree of interest, namely, Jewish history, particularly intellectual history, and Biblical Studies broadly defined. Still more important, such an Institute would address only a small fraction of the sorts of issues noted under question one and would therefore compromise the crucial objectives of an Orthodox center of Jewish scholarship. Finally, the elimination of Bible underscores the religious failings of this plan and brings us to the long-term impact of the closing of Revel.

4-5) To abandon Bible is to abandon the only degree-granting program in the United States where an Orthodox Jew can pursue the academic study of Bible comfortably. There are simply no alternatives. If we take Modern Orthodoxy seriously, we need teachers of Bible with a sophisticated understanding of the subject whose religious commitment has not been compromised. If Yeshiva University's mission does not encompass the obligation to provide such training, it would be hard to formulate a coherent statement of that mission.

The study of Bible is an area with particular appeal to Jewish women. Although one of Revel's failings had been inadequate attention to the interests of Stern College graduates, the recent introduction of a course of study in biblical exegesis is symptomatic of a renewed commitment to the vital importance of women's graduate education. The proposed reorganization not only eliminates Bible from the school; it may well exclude women entirely. This unprecedented generation of learned Orthodox Jewish women along with the remarkable group of young men now beginning to emerge are poised to lead a renaissance of Modern Orthodoxy, and we are now pulling the rug out from under them--and ourselves.

Underlying much of this discussion is a sociological reality of the highest importance. Like Conservatism and Reform, and unlike the Orthodox movements of the Right, Modern Orthodoxy has placed all its eggs in one institutional basket. Surely one message emerging from this crisis is that anyone who cares about the fate of enlightened Orthodoxy must place Yeshiva University at the top of his or her philanthropic priorities. Administrative decisions taken by Yeshiva determine the future of Modern Orthodox Judaism far more profoundly than decisions taken at Ponevezh, Lakewood, Chaim Berlin, or even the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah determine the future of the so-called yeshiva world. The issue before us is not the closing of a school; it is the destiny of a religious movement.

The Revel Crisis: A Symposium

As we mentioned in our editorial column, the decision to restructure the Bernard Revel Graduate School indicates to us that Yeshiva University has suddenly and turbulently entered a critical stage in its development as an institute of higher Jewish education. Hamevaser recognizes that each of us, depending upon our vantage point, views this decision in a different light. To lend a broader perspective to the issue, we have turned to several Orthodox Jewish scholars, leaders, and educators, and asked them to contribute their insights. We presented our panelists with the following questions:

- 1) What do you think are the most important contributions of Orthodox Jewish scholarship toward developing our understanding of Judaism?
- 2) Do you think the Bernard Revel Graduate School, in its present format, currently achieves these goals? What changes, if any, do you think would improve its potential to realize its mission?
- 3) Do you think the proposed program of study in *machshevet Yisrael* has the potential to succeed? If so, what breed of future Jewish leaders do you expect it to produce? Who will attend this program, and how will its education and certificate benefit them?
- 4) What effect will the absence of the present program at Revel have upon Yeshiva University and Jewish communities of the future (say, twenty-five years from now)?
- 5) What effect will the absence of Revel have on the future of women's higher Jewish education?

Their responses arrived to us by fax, by phone, and in person. We now present them to you.

Rabbi Dr. Marc Angel is Rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel, the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City. He is currently President of the Rabbinical Council of America. Rabbi Angel received his Ph.D. from the Bernard Revel Graduate School in 1975.

Ideally, the Bernard Revel Graduate School (BRGS) should be expanded and upgraded, not contracted and downgraded. All rabbinical students should be taking courses in BRGS, and the best should be studying for M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. It is precisely in the BRGS that the distinctive character of Yeshiva University is made manifest.

All other Yeshivot offer shiurim in Talmud; most have *kollelim*. But where else other than Yeshiva University can an Orthodox rabbinic student have the opportunity to study Jewish texts and sources in the framework of a true academic institution? Where else can one study with world-class Orthodox Jewish scholars in Talmudic literature, bible, Jewish history, semitics, and Jewish philosophy? Where else can an Orthodox rabbinic student have the opportunity to write a dissertation under the tutelage of competent Orthodox academicians? BRGS has provided an invaluable service not just to its students, but to the community at large. I can say without any reservation that my own experience

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at BRGS has profoundly shaped my rabbinate. I think this is true of many others who serve as rabbis and teachers.

If anything, the contemporary Orthodox community needs more rabbis trained in BRGS

—not less. We need rabbis of broad scope and deep scholarship, men trained in academic discipline, acholars who can lecture and write on the highest levels. We need Orthodox scholars who can function as equals in the intellectual world, who can deal with scholarly problems and represent Orthodoxy with authority and sophistication.

Many people have complained of the increasing narrowness of contemporary Orthodoxy. BRGS provided us with a response to that criticism. It has offered the hope of an intellectually alive and academically creative core of Orthodox leadership. The closing of BRGS will be more than just the end of a school; it will be the beginning of the end of an ideal.

Rabbi Michael Rosensweig is a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, and is pursuing a Ph.D. in the Bernard Revel Graduate School.

Rav Rosensweig: In as much as Jewish history, to us, is not just a history but a history which is the basis of our faith and which is built on the principle of *hashgacha*, ...obviously the more accurate and complex understanding of the various factors and forces that shape that history and all of its various... disciplines [we can achieve], the more that will contribute to our appreciation of it and our ability to draw lessons from it.

In terms of the more specific issue, what I do on a daily basis - in terms of *talmud Torah* - cultural, historical, and religious context as well as intellectual climate appreciably enhance the standing of certain kinds of materials....On the philosophical level, for example, a true appreciation of Rambam's *Moreh Nevukhim* obviously cannot be accomplished without an understanding of the whole of Aristotelian physics and metaphysics, or medieval intellectual thought generally. This is not to say whether that's a positive or negative development, but simply that you can't read Rambam without an appreciation of that. And again, the information you want to extract from Rambam from a religious perspective needs to take that into account for better or for worse. Or, for example, the attitudes of *Rishonim* to astrology can only be understood against a certain backdrop, which is, if you realize that medievals generally perceived astrol-

ogy as a science. Otherwise, the commitment of certain *Rishonim* to astrology becomes astonishing from a modern perspective. Or, again, an understanding of Rambam's independence in that area -- Rambam is one of the few *Rishonim* who rejected astrology -- can only be appreciated if you understand what it meant for a person living in medieval society to reject this kind of thing. Our appreciation of *Rishonim* can be enhanced by an understanding of the unique methodological contributions that they made, whether it be Rambam, Rabbeinu Tam, Ramban in Spain, Ra'avad in Provence. If you understand what came before they came on the scene....and how they impacted people who came after them, you can get a fuller appreciation of what it is that they actually contributed.

This is not to say that you can't engage in *talmud Torah* or can't appreciate these people without scholarship, but certainly there is a dimension which is appreciably enhanced by this kind of study. For serious *beni Torah* interested in *devar Hashem* as reflected in these kinds of things, whether it be on a *machshava* level or a halakic level....the more angles you're able to pursue in understanding them will contribute to a fuller appreciation, and ultimately that helps impact *talmud Torah* as well.

At the same time, I think one should make the point that these are not substitutes for classical *talmud Torah*, nor again does the lack of pursuit of these things imply that regular *talmud Torah* will not contribute to one's personal growth, understanding of the material, etc. But the point is that alongside with traditional bases of *lomdus*, analysis, etc., these are things that can contribute other elements and other dimensions.

Hamevaser: Do you think that a study of *machshevet Yisrael* exclusively can provide that same kind of perspective? What would be its contribution to *Tora* study?

Rav Rosensweig: The point is not so much to disparage *machshevet Yisrael*; obviously, that has a great deal of merit as well. I think the point is that it's important as part of a larger scheme; certainly it's not a substitute for a broader curriculum. I don't think there's any sense in saying that you can't have any *machshevet Yisrael* within the context of the Bernard Revel Graduate School; I think you should. But I think the point is that it's a narrow perspective of Jewish studies generally; certainly for people interested in halakic issues and in *tanakh*, to focus exclusively on *machshevet Yisrael* is unbelievably narrow. I don't think narrowness generally con-

tributes very much, and certainly not in an area rich in Jewish history and Jewish philosophy; to narrow them to one specific, even if important, aspect of this is always unfortunate....

Hamevaser: In proposing this program, the administration has claimed that they are trying to better serve the needs of RIETS students, the rabbinic students. Do you think the study of *machshevet Yisrael* is a better approach for them in terms of pursuing careers in the rabbinate as opposed to academics?

Rav Rosensweig: I really don't see it. Different people have different inclinations, different strengths, and are impressed by different facets of what can generally be called Jewish studies. There are people for whom *machshevet Yisrael* will make a greater impact, but other people may have a better sense for the intellectual and social forces of history, or a more rigorous philosophical approach. Again, there's definitely a need for *machshevet Yisrael* as a component of an overall program. I don't really see how that specifically targets *semicha* students more than intensive *tanakh* study, or *parshanut* in *tanakh* in particular, or more intensive appreciation of certain issues in history of halakha. I see it as one component of many, but I don't see it necessarily as a more effective component. I guess you would have to take a poll among *semicha* students to see what they are really interested in, but intuitively, I don't think that's so clear.

Hamevaser: What kind of effect do you think a concentration in *machshava*, if carried out, would have on the shaping of future Orthodox Jewish leaders and educators?

Rav Rosensweig: I don't really see the question in those terms. I don't see the fact that Yeshiva University introduces more intensive *machshevet Yisrael* into their technical curriculum as creating more thoughtful individual people who are more steeped in the thinking of Rav Kook, the Rav, the Maharal, and those general subjects....Basically, an institution can push certain things, but *machshava* is already on the agenda of all serious...discourse and study among serious *beni Torah* and yeshiva students. As the sole focus of a technical program, I don't see it revolutionizing anyone's basic orientations.

I think the main point is not so much the difference between *semicha* students that emerge from a program in *machshevet Yisrael* as opposed to a broader education, but simply the denying of an opportunity for people who are interested in other subjects as well to pursue them seriously, and to pursue them in a *Tora* environ-

ment, which I think is the most crucial issue. Perhaps the need for an Orthodox scholarly framework for studying the thought of Rav Kook, the Rav, etc. -- again, I'm not disparaging it; I think it's very important, but -- is much less urgent, because inherently it's quite clear what we are supposed to do with those texts, and how they are supposed to be studied, much less urgent than the parallel, namely, what's required for Jewish philosophy, certain issues in Jewish history, history of halakha, *tanakh*, etc. There, where others really have taken over, and other frameworks exist which are dangerous to the interests of Orthodox Judaism, the urgency for specific Orthodox framework for *beni Torah* to be teaching and to be projecting some of these things -- again, without compromising the rigorous standards of whatever the subject matter happens to be, and whatever its methodology require -- is a much more crucial need than a formal program of *machshevet Yisrael*. *Machshevet Yisrael*, for all its importance, is already on the agenda, and already within the yeshiva part of most *yeshivot*. So I don't think it's a question so much of who's going to emerge from this as simply that it's unfortunate that you deny the opportunity for people to pursue something within a framework that is practically required, or significant, and contributes more, in favor of something which by and large should really be part of a larger program.

Hamevaser: Do you see any other programs, within or without Yeshiva University, coming to fill the gaps Revel will leave by eliminating its programs in bible, Jewish history, and language?

Rav Rosensweig: At the moment I don't; obviously, that's the issue....The opportunity for serious *beni Torah* to study in an Orthodox environment in graduate school is something which is unique. Even as we admit that there are differ-

The urgency for a specific Orthodox framework for [history, bible, and history of halakha] is a much more crucial need than a formal program of machshevet Yisrael.

ences in focus between the yeshiva and the graduate school, the opportunity to interact with the two is precisely the unique element. And I don't see any alternatives on the horizon, and that is the problem. There are other programs in Jewish studies for people who are interested in pursuing Jewish history, *tanakh*, Jewish philosophy etc. It seems to me students will be forced to pursue those options. Some of them are quite problematic....they are not being taught by *beni Torah*, and the general thrust of things in some universities and other programs is precisely antihalakic in their orientation. You can take the same kind of issues, and depending upon how you present them, they can either enhance your appreciation and your understanding, or they can be posed as alternatives to traditional learning and halakic commitment. In addition to the fact that you lose the positive exposure, the fact that people who will go into this will do so in a framework which....on the contrary, exposes them to certain orientations which are at best neutral, and in some cases anti-Orthodox. I think is one of the major problems.

Rabbi Dr. David Eliach is principal of the Yeshiva of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School, and is on the faculty of Yeshiva University's David I. Azrieli Graduate Institute for Jewish Education and Administration.

Rav Eliach: Revel creates teachers for high schools. In our school alone, we have had three graduates from Revel [on our faculty]. Otherwise, we would not be able to properly teach *tanakh* [bible], Jewish history, or Jewish philosophy, because we wouldn't have anyone prepared to teach without the background of a graduate [education]. So practically, we benefit from this school....

I think if [we allow] this institution to close, we are closing the intelligencia of Orthodox Jewish groups. The only other institutions that we have in Orthodoxy are *yeshivot*, which teach *talmud* and *halakha*, but we have no place where we can create leaders, teachers in *chokmat Yisrael*. It's the only institution which can create those. I understand there may have been some other problems in the graduate school; for instance, it could be that some taught bible in such a manner which borders on *hikkorei hamikra*, bible critique, and did not differ much from Hebrew University, let's say, or Tel Aviv University, or the Seminary. If this is the case, then this should be changed. I'm definitely in favor of a re-evaluation of the direction of Revel; it could be, unfortunately, that some teachers taught in a direction which is not according to our *hashkafa*. I don't think Revel should be a free academic institution like the other universities; we don't need that. We need an institution that teaches *chokmat Yisrael* in accordance with a certain *hashkafa*.

Hamevaser: Rabbi Lamm has proposed, within reconstruction, that Revel focus exclusively on the study of *machshevet Yisrael*, and he feels that such a program will convey to the students in the program the *yedi'ot* [knowledge] they would need to teach bible and Jewish history, at least on the high school level. Do you think such a program could succeed in this regard?

Rav Eliach: Absolutely not. Someone who teaches Jewish history...has to be a scholar and has to be on a level like anybody else who's teaching history. By teaching him *machshevet Yisrael*, he's not going to become a historian, or a person who knows Hebrew literature, or somebody who knows *tanakh*, at least in terms of one who could teach these subjects. I say again, maybe Revel needs a new direction and a review of what we teach there....but we have to have people knowledgeable in bible who can concentrate [on becoming] *talmidei chukhamim* in bible, and the same is true for Jewish history and Hebrew literature. *Machshevet Yisrael* is very important, but it cannot take the place of the other subjects.

Hamevaser: Do you think it's possible the graduate programs in other universities like Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, and other schools which have produced people currently on the faculty of Revel can fill the gap? Will enough people still be motivated to pursue graduate careers to the extent that they will go to other universities?

Rav Eliach: I think we were lucky that we got some people that graduated other universities in line with the *hashkafa* of Torah U-Madda, or *Torah Im Derech Eretz*, like Dr. Berger, Professor Leiman, etc. And again, these people went later on. If they would have their entire education in places like Columbia, I don't know what their outlook would be or what their point of view would be. The major direction of Yeshiva University is the claim of Torah U-Madda, *Torah Im Derech Eretz*, and it needs to have a school which can produce that type of people. And it's not enough that we have today *talmidei chukhamim* and *ba'alei halakha*; we must have people in *chokmat Yisrael* in the *hashkafa* of Torah U-Madda....This can only be done in a place like Revel....

Hamevaser: The proposed program plans to

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Are There Any "Halakhic" Christians?

Sammy Levine

The Talmud writes that amongst the commandments given to *Bnei Noach* is the prohibition of *avoda zara*, idol worship (*Sanhedrin* 56a). While blatant idolatry prevailed in Talmudic times, how should we view Christianity? Are Gentiles prohibited from practicing the Christian religion?

It is possible that Christianity does not conform to the classic definition of *avoda zara*, but instead falls under the category of *shituf*. This category includes the practices of those who recognize an omnipotent, transcendental God, but claim that He endowed certain creations with their own god-like power, motivating their worship in conjunction with His own. If Christianity is indeed an example of *shituf*, the question of the legitimacy of Christian worship should depend on the general question of whether Gentiles are prohibited in *shituf* as part of the commandment against *avoda zara*.

The earliest source dealing with this question appears to be *Tosafot* in *Sanhedrin* (63b), commenting on the prohibition of entering into a partnership with an idolator. The Talmud bases this prohibition on the concern that the idolator may be required to take an oath and will swear by his god. In such a case, the Jewish partner will violate the prohibition of "the name of other gods... shall not be heard out of your mouth" (Ex. 23:13), which the Talmud extends to causing others to swear by other gods. *Tosafot* suggest that the ban on a partnership with idolators no longer exists, because "in our days... their intention is also to the Creator, and although they combine (*meshatphim*) God's name with another, we do not find that it is forbidden to cause others to do such a combination (*leshatef*), and there is no [problem] of a stumbling block [before a blind man], since *Bnei Noach* are not prohibited in it."

Although *Tosafot* permit Gentiles to swear in a manner of *shituf*, the last line in *Tosafot* is ambiguous; in the phrase, "*Bnei Noach* are not prohibited in it," "it" could refer either to worship through *shituf* or simply to swearing through *shituf*. In the *Shulchan Arukh* (*Orach Chaim* 156:1), *Rama* cites *Tosafot*'s opinion, concluding that "[Gentiles] are not prohibited in *shituf*." Apparently, *Rama* reads *Tosafot*'s ruling as permitting Gentiles to not only swear through *shituf* but to worship in such a manner as well.

The *Sha'ar Ephraim* (Responsum 24), however, writes that many have erred in interpreting *Tosafot* and *Rama* to permit *shituf*, including Christianity, for Gentiles. He quotes *Rambam* (*Hilkhot Melachim* 9:2) that "any *avoda zara* for which a *Bet Din* of Israel executes [the worshipper], a Noachide is killed." Since Jews receive capital punishment for worshipping *avoda zara* through *shituf*, Gentiles are clearly prohibited as well. In addition, the *Sha'ar Ephraim* finds no logical reason to distinguish between Jews and Gentiles in regard to this practice. As for *Tosafot* and *Rama*, he claims that while their language may be misleading, they actually permit only swearing through *shituf*.

We find a similar reading in Responsa *M'el Tzedaka* (Responsum 22), which cites a different passage from *Mishne Torah* to prove that Gentiles are prohibited in *shituf*. *Rambam* writes that "the primary injunction against *avoda zara* is to not worship any of the creations - not an angel, nor a planet, nor a star, nor one of the bases [of matter] or any creations from them. And although the worshipper knows that Hashem is the Lord... he is deemed an idolator" (*Hilkhot Avoda Zara* 2:1). *Rambam* is clearly describing *shituf*, worship of both God and other beings, yet refers to it as "the primary injunction against *avoda zara*." Since Gentiles are commanded against the general prohibition of *avoda zara*, obviously they are commanded against the "primary" aspect of this prohibition, namely *shituf*.

In Responsa *Veshav Hakoheh*, R. Raphael Susskind attempts to prove that the prohibition of *shituf* applies to Gentiles as well, by analyzing the sources of the prohibition for Jews. He quotes the *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* (*Smag*, Negative Commandment 1), who adduces two verses as sources for the prohibitions of *avoda zara* and *shituf* respectively. The first is found in the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods (*elohim acherim*) beside me" (Ex. 20:3). Since the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 56b) derives the proscription of *avoda zara* for Gentiles from the same word, "*elohim*," R. Susskind suggests that the prohibition for idolatry from the verse in the Ten Commandments should similarly refer to Gen-

tiles if Gentiles were commanded not to worship through *shituf*, a further proof that *Rama* does not limit his statement about *shituf* to swearing, but rather allows it as a form of worship.

Some other *Acharonim* also advance the belief that Gentiles are, indeed, permitted to worship through *shituf*. R. Ya'akov Emden (*Mor U'Ketzia*, *Orach Chaim* 224) quotes the verse "and lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the hosts of heaven, you will be misled to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord your God has allotted to the nations under the whole heaven" (Deut. 4:19). The Jews are warned not to worship the heavenly bodies, which are given

he uses the very sources R. Emden submits, to prove the contrary - that Gentiles are prohibited, not permitted, in *shituf*.

Though he does not address R. Emden by name, he quotes the Talmud's comments on the verse, "...God has allotted [the celestial bodies] to the nations." We find the story of Ptolemy's commanding 72 elders to translate the Torah into Greek described in *Masechet Megillah* (9a,b). The translators felt compelled to slightly alter a number of verses whose literal translation they felt might be misleading. Thus, they rendered the aforementioned verse as saying that "god has allotted [the celestial bodies] to illuminate to all the nations." *Rashi* explains that a literal reading of the verse may have prompted the erroneous inference that Gentiles may worship *avoda zara*. The Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 55a) actually learns the opposite message from this verse. R. Spira points out, as did R. Emden, that this verse clearly refers to *shituf*, as it identifies the Creator of the other gods. Nevertheless, the Talmud writes that it does not serve as a license for Gentiles.

As for the opinion of the *Yeshuot Ya'akov*, R. Spira notes that although one *Tanna* claims that the Jews saved themselves by only violating *shituf*, R. Shimon bar Yochai disagrees, as noted by the *Smag*, stating that "all those who combine (*meshatef*) God's name with another are uprooted from the world" (*Sanhedrin* 63a). While R. Ornstein claims that this response represented only a minority opinion, R. Spira points out that *Rambam* holds like R. Shimon bar Yochai (*Hilkhot Shevuot* 11:2). When offering a halakhic ruling on the issue of *shituf*, he feels, one should not ignore the authority of R. Shimon's statement.

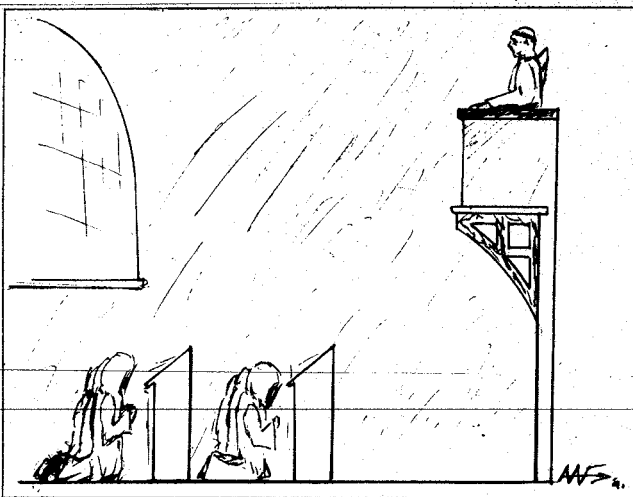
Even if we accept the view that Gentiles are permitted to perform *shituf*, Christianity may nevertheless be forbidden as *avoda zara*. R. Emden, for example (*She'elat Ya'avetz* 41), writes that *shituf* "was the belief of most of the idolaters throughout history." These idolaters, though, did not speak of multiple powers vested in one god, as do the Christians. This one group, he writes, may "not be in the category of *meshatphim*, since they [believe in] multiple powers." Instead, "they are worse."

In addition, in passages that have been censored from many editions of his works, *Rambam* explicitly writes that Christians are considered worshippers of *avoda zara*. While not addressing the issue of *shituf*, he calls them idolaters with regards to all of the proscriptions relating to conduct with such people (*Perush Hamishnayot to Avoda Zara* 1:1; *Hilkhot Avoda Zara* 9:4).

More recently, the *Minchat Elazar* quotes the Responsa of the *Chatam Sofer* (*Yoreh Deah* Responsum 133) who speaks of those "in the land of India" who worship *avoda zara*. The reference to India, says R. Spira, is clearly an attempt to avoid persecution that could have resulted from negative writings about Christians. He supports this contention by citing R. Sofer's son, the *Ketav Sofer* (*Yoreh Deah* 84), who refers to his father's aforementioned responsum as describing the Christians in his own town, not the far East.

Although there is no dearth of halakhic literature dealing with Christianity and other possible forms of *avoda zara*, an actual *psak* is not always easily attained. When considering the status of a particular religion, one must first be familiar with the intricacies of that religion, and only then categorize it as *shituf* or *avoda zara* and subject it to the discussions that have continued throughout the ages.

(For a further discussion on this issue see R. Shlomo Wahrman, "Kenisah L'kenesiah Shel Notzrim," in *Shearith Yosef*, vol. 3, pp. 256-263, and R. Avraham Korman, "Natzrut Ve'etilut," in *Morasha*, summer, 5734, pp. 66-78.)



tiles.

The source for *shituf* is in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 63a), which quotes the verse "he who sacrifices to any god except the Lord only he shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. 22:19). R. Shimon bar Yochai learns that "he who combines (*meshatef*) the name of God with another will be uprooted from the world." R. Susskind notes the indication that a Jew who performs *shituf* is killed, certifying *shituf* as a bona fide *avoda zara*; since the prohibition of *avoda zara* applies equally to Gentiles, *shituf*, a form of idol worship should be prohibited to Gentiles as well.

Finally, R. Susskind addresses the issue of the intent of *Tosafot*. He strongly disagrees with those who claim that *Rishonim*, and particularly *Ran*, permit *shituf* for *Bnei Noach*. Examining *Ran* (*Avoda Zara*, 7a in *Alfasi*), R. Susskind claims that although we find a lenient opinion regarding partnerships with Gentiles, similar to the ruling of *Tosafot*, there is no evidence in *Ran* of leniency regarding their worshipping through *shituf*. In fact, R. Susskind believes that *Ran* may serve as a key to unlocking the ambiguous language in *Tosafot*; just as *Ran* refers only to the issue of swearing through *shituf*, so too *Tosafot* limits its comment to swearing and goes no further.

Nevertheless, we find in *Rabbenu Yerucham* (17:5) the explicit statement that "*Bnei Noach* are not commanded in *shituf*." These are the very words which *Rama* added to his citation of *Tosafot*. Furthermore, the *Pitchei Teshuva* (*Yoreh De'ah* 147:2), though he feels that *Tosafot* does not permit *avoda zara* through *shituf* for Gentiles, writes that *Rama*, based on the very same *Tosafot*, does in fact allow this practice. He also notes that in *Rama*'s commentary to the *Tur*, *Darkhei Moshe* (*Yoreh De'ah* 151:6), he extends his opinion of *shituf* beyond the area of oaths, permitting actions which would be strictly for-

to the other nations. R. Emden claims that "God has allotted [the heavenly bodies] to the nations" for them to worship, albeit only through *shituf* and not through pure *avoda zara*.

The *Yeshuot Ya'akov* (*Orach Chaim* 156:1)) uses a different approach, based on Talmudic and Midrashic sources. He quotes the Talmud's discussion of the sin of the golden calf (*Sanhedrin* 63a) - specifically, the Jews' declaration that "These are your gods, Israel, who have brought you up (*he'elucha*) from Egypt." (Exodus 32:4). A *tanna* claims that "if not for the 'vav' in 'he'elucha,' the enemies of Israel" would have deserved destruction." According to the *Tanna*, had they referred to the golden calf as the single god who liberated them from slavery, then the Jews - whom he euphemistically calls the "enemies of Israel," would have warranted utter destruction as idolaters. By referring to many gods, however, "who have brought you up," and including God with the lesser gods, the people limited their sin to one of *shituf* rather than pure *avoda zara*. Yet, we know that Jews are killed even if they worship through *shituf*, so their words still should not have saved them. R. Ornstein therefore brings an allegorical Midrashic statement (*Tanchuma* 30) which says that the Jews were "not [God's] wife" after the *luchot* were shattered; instead, they were like *bnei Noach*. As such, they were judged as *bnei Noach* and not killed for the golden calf. If Gentiles were actually prohibited in *shituf*, this dispensation would not exist. Thus the *Yeshuot Ya'akov* concludes that Gentiles are permitted to worship through *shituf*. (Others permitting *shituf* for Gentiles include Responsa *Chavot Yair* (185), and *Mishnat Chachamim* in the *Tzaphnat Paneach* (*Hilkhot Yesodei Hatorah* 1:1)).

In his Responsa *Minchat Elazar* (53:2), R. Elazar Chaim Spira rejects the proofs of both R. Yaakov Emden and the *Yeshuot Ya'akov*. In fact,

Halakha, Reality, and Responsibility: The Tzeniut Question in Youth Groups

Chesed Niurayikh by Rav Shlomo Aviner
Reviewed by: Sara Klein

Tzeniut, modesty, is classically a complicated issue. The question of male/female interaction and its parameters has been a source of frequent debate and is rich with responsa.

Rav Shlomo Aviner, *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim*, grapples with the issue of *tzeniut* as it applies to *B'nei Akiva* and other modern youth movements in his book, *Chesed Niurayikh*. Interestingly, Rav Aviner believes that the type of male/female contact largely occurring within the framework of coeducational youth groups is forbidden. Much of the book is devoted to exploring the Mishnaic, Talmudic, and later halakhic sources in thorough detail. Across the board, on the subject of men and women convening together, *Chazal* and the *Rishonim* are clearly not enthusiastic, to say the least. For example, Rav Aviner quotes the *Shulchan Arukh* (*Even Ha'ezer*, 21:1), where it states that a man must be careful to greatly distance himself from women ("Tzarikh adam lehitrachek mehanashim me'od me'od"). No matter how one interprets this clause, it is clear that in youth groups, with the emphasis on singing, *ruach*, *achdut*, etc., there is increased closeness between the sexes, precisely the opposite of this goal. In fact, the rest of the passage in the *Shulchan Arukh* says that it is assur to exercise levity with a woman ("Lehakel rosha kingedo"). Rav Aviner points out that it is exactly this mode of levity which is predominant in mixed youth activities.

In addition, Aviner points to Rav Kook's responsum on coeducation (*Tzirot Hareiyah Alef*, p.316) as a staunch opposition to the mixing of the sexes even on the grounds of learning in schools. Rav Kook, who apparently sets the hashkafic tone of Rav Aviner's writings, writes clearly that there are serious halakhic difficulties with this type of contact between males and females.

Indeed, the subsequent discussion of the topic, taking the forms of responsa and a roundtable discussion, leaves no question that socializing in any form, with the exception of that all important search for one's "ezer kenegdo", is categorically forbidden in halakha.

Of course, throughout the reading of the book, one waits patiently for the "but...". Rav Aviner himself was a *madrich* in *B'nei Akiva*, and clearly states his support for this movement at the outset of the book. The enigmatic combination of this statement with the initial bombardment of halakhic objections was quite confusing at first.

His response is manifold. First R. Aviner presents Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg's famous *teshuvah* in the *S'ridei Aish* in reference to *Yeshurun*, an outreach movement in c. 1950's France with goals similar to those of NCSY. The rationale for the permissibility of this mixed youth group was nothing short of *hatzalat nefashot*, saving of souls, according to R. Weinberg, who acknowledged that if the movement were to be sequestered, the teenagers, who had little or no religious background, would not attend. R. Aviner contends that in places where *B'nei Akiva* is a primary source of Judaism and Torah within an otherwise secularized environment, and the attendance would be poor were it not coeducational, there is no choice but to rely on the *S'ridei Aish's* application of "Et la'asot laHashem heifeiru toratekha." (At times we must break G-d's will in order to observe G-d's will.)

However, how can we explain the permissibility of the majority of *B'nei Akiva* chapters that are attended by youth from religious homes? On this topic, Rav Aviner makes two adjoining points. The first is the Rambam's principle (*Hilkhot T'shuvah*, 3:1) of universal evaluation in which positives and negatives are weighed against each other. That is to say, for example, that a *tzadik* is one who's positive merits outweigh his faults - not one who has no faults at all. Additionally, R. Eliezer ben Shimon states (*Kidushin* 40b) that the world must be considered in terms of its majority component ("shehaolam nidon achar rubo").

Based on this premise, R. Aviner concludes that since *B'nei Akiva* provides serious Torah education, and teaches values such as love for Israel and a commitment towards *binyan ha'aretz*, the building of the Land, as well as *ahavat yisrael*, it stands to contribute a great deal towards the shaping of a new generation strong in its Judaism. These aspects are the major com-

ponents of *B'nei Akiva*, and they far outweigh the negatives. Furthermore, nowhere in the doctrine of *B'nei Akiva* is it proposed that the organization be coeducational. This unfortunate fact is simply a function of reality rather than an intrinsic characteristic of the group or its ideals.

Although there is certainly a deficiency in the *tzeniut* of this and other organizations, their general purposes and outcomes are positive and reaffirming of Torah values. This calls for a correction of the *tzeniut* factor, rather than disassemblage of the institution as a whole. This issue of *tikkun*, correction of the problem, is the second basic point in R. Aviner's *teshuvah*. It is not enough to merely acknowledge the halakhic problems occurring within coeducational youth movements without taking any action, but it is similarly out of order to tear down an institution to demonstrate active objection. Rav Aviner, in the tradition of Rav Kook, calls for fixing the reality not with force, but by means of education, patience, example, kindness, and the cooperation between *talmidei chachamim* and the organization leaders and members. In this way, the solution will bring people closer to religious ideals, rather than pushing them away.

This "soft-handed" approach is encouraged in the Talmud (*Beitza* 30a), where it is stated: "Hainach lahem leiyisrael: mutav sheyihyu shogegim velo yihyu mayzidin" ("Let Israel go: it is better that they should err in ignorance than presumptuously.") Additionally, the Talmud (*Yevamot* 65b) states: "K'shem shemitza al adam lomar davar hanishma, kach mitzva al adam shelo lomar davar she'aino nishma." ("Just as it is a mitzva to say something which will be obeyed, so, too, is it a mitzva not to say something which will not be obeyed.") In other words, if a reality exists in which a majority of the Jewish People are sinning, it is better not to condemn or reprimand them, thereby converting a situation of *shogeg* into one of *mayzid*, particularly in cases where it is known beforehand that it will go unheeded anyway. However, this does not exonerate the leaders of *Klal Yisrael* from having an obligation to teach the truths of the Torah and Halakha. Rather, this should be done through methods of *kiruv*, and not of disdain.

This process of *tikkun* on the part of potential leaders of such movements is compared to

the issue of burning *chametz*; found on *Yom Tov* in which case it is impossible to burn it immediately (*Pesachim* 29b). *Tosefot* there say that leaving *chametz* on *Pesach* with the intention of burning it is not the normal transgression of "bal yirah u'bal yimatze" that one otherwise would be by such an action ("Hameshahech chametz: bepesach vida'ato liv'a'aro, ano over be'oto shehiyah"). Although the person in this case is momentarily incapable of correcting the situation, his intent is ultimately to burn the *chametz*. Similarly, a leader faced with a reality adverse to halakha can not hope to rectify this in one stroke. He must, however, possess a willingness and a readiness to effect change. This is the approach that Rav Aviner suggests be taken by *B'nei Akiva's madrichim*, and leaders in such communities.

In analyzing this *teshuvah's* approach, one is left with one basic question: To what extent may a *posek* enter practical considerations and hashkafic values into halakhic decision making? The line between halakha, which Rav Aviner defines as the *emet* that we must strive for, the truth which must exist, and *hora'a*, the operative actions to reach these lofty goals, bridging the ideal with the reality, is a thin one. While it is clear that R. Aviner's *teshuvah* works entirely within a halakhic framework, one can't help doubting that the very same sources concerning "rov" and "tikun" would be brought down by an *Agguda rov* from Williamsburg, with very different results.

It is commonly accepted, however, for different views, all within the realm of Torah and halakha, to each work within the same system to support its own orientation... Rav Aviner's *teshuvah*, while definitely operating from certain value judgements concerning *Eretz Yisrael* and methodology of leadership (which also, incidentally, have a strong basis in Torah ideals), is constructed with the frequent and thoughtful inclusion of halakhic sources and respected authorities.

This book was both enlightening and enlightening, serving as a *teshuvah* on one hand, and some good guidance on the other. The *tikkun* of an institution, rather than its discontinuance, is a wise and timely notion.

Symposium

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offer a certificate upon completion, but as of yet will not offer a master's or a doctorate. Do you think it is reasonable to propose a program which doesn't offer a degree? Is this a viable option which people are going to pursue?

Rav Eliach: I don't think people who are serious are going to go to a program like that. Serious educators want to go to a program where they can get a Ph.D.; we want to attract these kinds of people. If you give a certificate, you can expect people who are very mediocre that high schools would not be able to employ as teachers.

Hamevaser: One of the points many people have raised regarding the restructuring of Revel is that it, in effect, closes women out of its structure; there is no existing program where women can pursue their Jewish education beyond Stern College.

Rav Eliach: I really think it is true. It is a very important point. Until now, women who wanted to pursue Jewish education or Jewish scholarship could go to Revel. Now, all the doors are closed; once she's graduated Stern College, this is the end of her Jewish education...We are going to lose a lot because I think that women today in

Jewish education can contribute to Jewish education, so from that point alone, I think it's a terrible loss.

Hamevaser: What we seem to be leading to is that in the absence of today's Revel, even if Revel restructures in this limited way, twenty-five years from now we will not have as many of the proverbial Rabbi Dr.s who play such an important role in shaping today's communities and today's *hashkafot*. Can you foresee what direction Jewish communities in general might take in the absence of these people?

Rav Eliach: If I may just take a minute and just say how I perceived the declaration of the closing of Revel... I perceived it as the end of Modern Orthodoxy. I perceive there must be a lot of pressure from the right. The entire idea [behind the decision] seems [to be] that what we did teach in Revel - in Jewish history, Hebrew literature, bible...is not what we should teach. We should go join the other groups - the right groups - where the concentration is solely on Torah and halakha. And I think that by doing that, the Yeshiva University is making a statement that Yeshiva University as an institution wants to become a Yeshiva like all the other Yeshivas existing in the United States, like Lakewood, like Chaim Berlin, like Torah V'daas, because that's the end of the road for Modern Orthodoxy. If so, an official declaration should be made about it; we

shouldn't hide behind something like that. This is the way I perceive it, because otherwise, I don't see any reason for it. I don't think even the budget should be a reason or a cause to close an institution like that. So therefore, that's the question - is this the end of the road of Modern Orthodoxy, and we are moving back to another era of having rabbanim like there were about fifty or sixty years ago who beside knowing gemara and halakha knew nothing?

Furthermore, how are we going to handle the public of the Jewish community? One of the major problems that Israel has with the religious problem in the state is most rabbanim in Israel are people without *haskala kelalit*. The only knowledge they have is gemara and halakha. They have no knowledge about Jewish history. They have no knowledge about *tanakh*. They have no knowledge about literature. In other words, they are not up to date with the people they are dealing with. And therefore, the rabbanim in Israel have absolutely no *hashpa'ah* (influence) on *Klal Yisrael*. And I am afraid we are reaching the same point in the United States. We will have rabbanim who have no common language with the people they deal with, with their communities. The advantage of Yeshiva University was that they produced a product that could communicate with the modern people that he is teaching or is a rabbi there. By

closing Revel, I think it's a kind of declaration of a new approach which means that a rabbi is a person who is a holy man - he knows gemara and halakha and a little *machshevet Yisrael*, but all the other *chokhmot Yisrael* which help him to better understand modern people will be abolished.

Hamevaser: Do you think that it will have similar ramifications in terms of affecting the presence of Orthodoxy, of the Orthodox position, in the Conservative and the Reform communities, or even among secular communities in America and here in Israel?

Rav Eliach: I think that...until now, Modern Orthodoxy, the modern rabbis, had a tremendous contribution in the Jewish community at large. Even when we had to deal with the government of the United States, when we had to deal with politics about Israel, [we contributed] because we had people who could match the others, who had their Ph.D.s, people who graduated universities and were on that level. By closing Revel, closing the graduate program with Ph.D. level studies, we are closing the intelligentsia of Modern Orthodoxy and I think its going to be a tremendous loss. But again I must emphasize that perhaps Revel as it is needs to be reevaluated, needs to get a new curriculum, maybe different types of teachers...So this has to be reevaluated. I go along with it.

A Mushroom Cloud Over New York

A Report From The Yeshiva University Archives

Shulamith Z. Berger

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A plague had descended upon the Jewish community of New York. Although it struck only seasonally and often lay in remission, it nonetheless drained precious life-blood from the community's limited resources. The spread of the "mushroom synagogues" continued unabated throughout the Great Depression; in many cases, it posed a threat to a community's existence.

The "mushroom synagogues," transient places of worship which sprang up annually just before Rosh Hashana only to wither away with the waning of the sound of the shofar at the close of the Yom Kippur service, posed a dual danger to the Jewish communities of the 1930's. First, many expressed doubts as to the spiritual integrity of these makeshift groups. Convocations for purposes of prayer held in chop suey restaurants, dimly lit, poorly ventilated theaters, or dance halls where the sounds of jazz still resonated, "profane the sanctity of our holy days...and encourage disrespect to our faith" (from documents in Yeshiva University Archives (YUA), Yeshiva University Records (YUR) 15/2, "Mushroom Synagogues - Correspondence," and *Orthodox Union* (OU), Aug. 1933, vol. 1:1). Furthermore, economic considerations posed an immediate threat. The bootleg "services" lured worshippers away from established neighborhood synagogues with offers of bargain rate tickets. "They menace the existence of true synagogues which rely on revenue from seats for income for the congregation and religious school..." (July 1933, 1:1). "These temporary houses of worship are a poisonous evil [which] must be uprooted" (OU, Aug. 1933).

The proliferation of the "mushroom synagogues" encouraged the new type of "three-day-a-year" and "yahrzeit" Jews, freeing them of the responsibility to support permanent religious institutions (YUA, YUR 15/2). The "...misguided individuals who attend such 'services'...have been permitted and tolerated with unopposed protest, to shirk their duty to their community. As a result the Jewish consciousness of many of these people has been demoralized to such an extent as to render them practically valueless to the strengthening and upbuilding of Judaism in America" (OU, Aug. 1933). Attending the regular synagogues "...helps the perpetuation of Judaism and the spread of Hebrew education among the children" (OU, July 1934). "Mushroom synagogues" are nothing but "private davening stores" run by "cheap storekeepers" who speculate in religion for their own personal profit (YUA, YUR 15/2). Most involved parties saw only one solution to the problem: the elimination of these religious "racketeers." "No honest representative of the Jewish spirit of prayer would prostitute his people's religious idealism for the gain of gold. And no Jew should dare to seek spiritual elevation at the Godless altar of temples dedicated to the idea of Money-Theism!" (OU, July 1934).

In order to ameliorate this critical situation, the National Federation of Orthodox Congregations embarked on a campaign to eliminate the "mushroom synagogues." The Federation joined an illustrious roster of Jewish groups such as the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and the United Synagogue in the fight against this menace. A newcomer to the world of Jewish organizations, the Federation was founded at the First National Convention of Jewish Congregations of America, held at Yeshiva College in June, 1932. The Federation proposed to "assume the sole leadership of the Orthodox communities and be empowered to act in their name in all Jewish matters, local as well as national." Among the chief objectives of the Federation, as stated in the report of the founding convention, was the desire "to unite the synagogues in each district in order thereby to improve their own po-

sition as well as to enable them to exert a proper influence in all Jewish activities so that they be conducted in the Jewish spirit" (YUA, YUR 12/4, "National Federation - Executive Committee Correspondence").

An obvious threat to the hope of uniting the synagogues was the divisive phenomenon of the rogue "mushroom synagogues." Therefore, eradicating the "mushroom synagogues" was high on the Federation's list of priorities, and the campaign against them gathered momentum in the summer of 1932. The Federation placed

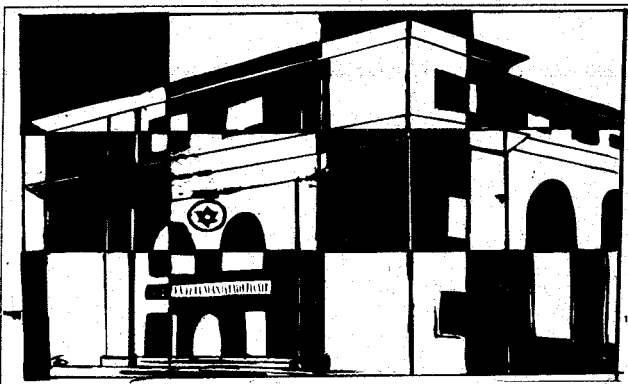
ducted well-lit, perfectly ventilated, and in compliance with Fire and Building Dept. rules, but he donated a percentage of the High Holiday receipts to a local synagogue and Talmud Torah. Furthermore, he accused the Federation of hypocrisy, charging established synagogues with their own improprieties: "Now as to your claim that we are taking away the sale of tickets from neighborhood synagogues, they are taking away all year long, business from us to which they have no right, as theirs should be places of worship, instead of being used for dances, wedding recep-

be heeded. The birth of the Federation, an organization which certainly was part and parcel of the authoritative Jewish community, serves to reinforce this analysis of the American Jewish community. By November 1932, only a few months after the Federation was organized, the Federation and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America had already conducted meetings to discuss the merger of "...two organizations apparently organized for the same purpose, yet working independently of each other" (YUA, YUR 3/4, "Samuel Bayer"). Negotiations on the subject of the merger continued through the early part of 1933 but were apparently never concluded. Thus, we might find official Jewish organizations guilty of some of the same sins as those committed by the "mushroom synagogues." Competition, fragmentation, and duplication of efforts existed on a national, official, organizational level as well as in the realm of the local neighborhood and lay community.

Although the Federation became inactive after 1933, the fight against the "mushroom synagogues" continued with unabated vigor on numerous fronts. In July, 1934, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations advertised the availability of English and Yiddish "Anti-Mushroom Circular 'Throwaways'" at \$3.00 per thousand in its publication, the *Orthodox Union*. Local and state governments, presumably at the behest of the organized Jewish community, also jumped on the anti-mushroom bandwagon. Bronx D.A. Samuel J. Foley issued a warning against "mushroom synagogues" "in an effort to keep racketeers posing as rabbis from defrauding Jews in the Bronx" (*The New York Times*, July 12, 1934, p. 38:4). An "anti-mushroom synagogue bill" was introduced in the New York State Legislature as an amendment to the Penal law of New York State, entitled "Frauds on religious institutions" (OU, July 1934). Despite these efforts, neither legislation nor exhortation could truly succeed in a society without religious coercion, where all are free to do as they see fit.

The age of the "mushroom synagogue" passed as the nature of synagogue attendance and synagogue structure changed. Large, established synagogues adopted practical measures akin to those suggested by the Federation. They began to hold multiple services on their premises rather than just one main service. These services catered to various needs, including those of non-members, and offered tickets at a range of prices. Perhaps in a society based on free enterprise, synagogues realized that they too must learn the skills of adaptation and competition in order to thrive.

Yeshiva University Archives is located on the sixth floor of the Mendel Gottesman Library. The collection is a resource for American Jewish History during the twentieth century and for Holocaust studies. The Archives is open to students and researchers. For more information on the Archives, contact Shulamith Berger, Associate Archivist, at x451.



press releases describing the evils inherent in the "mushroom" situation in prominent Yiddish dailies in New York. As a practical measure, the Federation requested that synagogues make room for all comers for the High Holidays, and enable all to pray in accordance with their means, especially in consideration of the economic crisis of the time.

Employing another tack, the Federation sent letters of protest to owners of the premises that were rented for these "services." The managers of Jewish institutions in the Bronx were informed that "...religious services in your theatre undermine the very existence of many of the congregations in the section that have benefits in your theatre throughout the year. An institution that derives income from congregations should not be the one to help undermine their only source of income."

These letters elicited several protests from owners who felt justified in holding services on their premises. Jennie Goldstein, proprietor of the Prospect Theatre located on 161st street, declared that the Federation's description of the situation made "...its abhorrent features...apparent even to me as a woman." However, she explained, her desire to help the community was the very reason that services were held in the theater. The High Holiday services on her property were conducted by the "Bikur Cholim Convalescent Home," a charitable organization, for fund-raising purposes. In addition, the Bikur Cholim threatened to hold their services in a "hall" and announce publicly that her theater refused to help the organization and should be boycotted. Ms. Goldstein suggested that the Federation should direct its complaint to the Bikur Cholim rather than to her, concluding, "So you see, we are damned by them if we don't, and damned by you if we do" (YUA, YUR 15/2).

In response to a similar missive, Bim-Green caterers -- managers of The Winter Garden on Washington and Tremont avenues -- aggressively counterattacked the Federation's insinuations. Sol Green vehemently protested the designation of the premises as a "mushroom synagogue." He declared that the Federation was "woefully misinformed" on the matter. Not only was the ballroom where the services were con-

ducted, but the entire building was owned by a Jewish family, and the prices should be. This they do without need of paying taxes, licenses, etcetera, such as we in our business are obliged to pay.

"At every affair in our place we have a Special Officer who sees that no strangers are admitted, so that there is no chance of any but the guests entering, whereas at your places of worship I have witnessed all kinds of people, in fact whoever pass the doors, come in, including Gentiles, and they buy liquor from the Sextons in charge of your synagogues" (ibid.).

The comments of the managers of these institutions highlight some of the flaws in the claims of the anti-mushroom groups. Services held in temporary quarters were not a monolithic group, could not necessarily be lumped together, and were not always organized with self-serving or mercenary intentions. But with respect to one important underlying issue, the group of temporary services did stand on common ground. Perhaps one of the unarticulated complaints of the organized, established Jewish community vis-a-vis the "mushroom synagogues" was the issue of authority in the American Jewish community. The individual "mushroom synagogues" could not be united or integrated into any formal structure, and were regarded as a potential threat to the future of the Jewish community as an organized entity.

Yet even those who regarded themselves as official representatives of the legitimate Jewish community could not agree whose voice should

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