

HAMEVASER

A Student Journal of Traditional Thought
Published by the Jewish Studies Divisions of Yeshiva University

Volume 31 No. 4

Adar II 5752, April 1992

IN THIS ISSUE:

MASHIACH

**Who Is Mashiach
Ben Yosef?
Page 7**

**An Interview
With Lubavitch
Page 6**

**The Satmar
Approach
Page 3**

**Halakhic
Perspectives on
Chishuv Haketz
Page 6**

**False Messiahs
Page 9**



Editorials

Remembering The Wrong Topic

On March 26th, Yeshiva University observed the *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Dr. Samuel Belkin with the annual lecture given in his memory. Rabbi Lamm, our President, has delivered this speech for several years. This year, Rabbi Lamm chose this opportunity to speak about the concept of anger in halakha and hashkafa. Those familiar with the atmosphere that has enveloped this university over the past four months had no difficulty recognizing the target of this speech.

We acknowledge that the *Rosh Hayeshiva* has the right to deliver *musar* if he deems it necessary. However, he should do so within his role as the *Rosh Hayeshiva*, not as the honored speaker at the memorial lecture. In the past, the lecture's primary function has been to honor Dr. Belkin's memory with an analytic discourse. Rabbi Lamm's implicit criticism of student protest, however, easily penetrated the thick veil of *midrashic* analysis behind which it attempted to hide. **Hamevaser** finds it unfortunate that our *Rosh Hayeshiva* used the Samuel Belkin Memorial Lecture as a vehicle to deliver this type of personal message.

Perhaps his message would be better received in a different context. The student body welcomes Rabbi Lamm's greater presence in the *beit midrash*; they would especially welcome his increased visibility in his role as the *Rosh Hayeshiva*. If he has a personal message to deliver to the students, he should do so not as a guest speaker at a memorial lecture; he should do so as our *Rosh Hayeshiva*.

Talmud For Women

Responding to the growing interest in Talmud study at Stern College, the Yeshiva University administration convened a meeting in November to discuss the possible creation of a graduate program which would provide a content-oriented degree in Jewish education. At this forum, students outlined a possible curriculum for this program, with an emphasis on intensive study of Talmud, Halakha, and *Tanakh*, in addition to complementary educational methodology courses to be taken in Azrieli during the summer.

After numerous delays and missed deadlines, the University recently responded to student demand, with the addition of a course entitled "The Development and Methodology of Halakha" to the normal Azrieli curriculum. **Hamevaser** applauds this innovation, as it represents an attempt on the part of the University to provide women with graduate study of Talmud and Halakha.

However, it falls short of the needs and desires of those women entering the field of Jewish education. This course intends to provide future educators with a proper background in these areas of study. A single course per semester, however, is insufficient and inadequate for the realization of this goal. Women entering the field of education are concerned with their lack of experience in these areas, and full and proper training is the only solution.

The University's commitment to a serious program is questionable. It is disconcerting that the University could not develop a full program along the lines of the student proposal. Additionally, there has been to date no publicity other than a memo to those who came to the original meeting, and word of mouth. If the program is to attract the best students, then all available students must be made aware of its existence.

A proper program has the potential to attract a wide range of committed women who might otherwise dismiss Jewish education as a viable career option. Yeshiva University must take the initiative and actualize the potential.

Who Stays Home At Night?

A glance around our *beit midrash* at night reveals a capacity crowd of students. In the interest of serving those students, the Yeshiva has attempted to implement a rotation of *rebbeim* for night seder. The theory of a rotation promised advances in two critical areas of *beit midrash* health. First, the availability of *rebbeim* to students during night seder would provide invaluable sources of Torah and halakha for the students during their extended hours in the *beit midrash*. Second, an increased presence of *rebbeim* in the *beit midrash* could provide the impetus toward establishing stronger *rebbe-talmid* relationships.

Unfortunately, as happens all too often, the benefits of the theory have not, for the most part, been realized in practice. Several reasons may be cited for the program's shortcomings. The most glaring aspect of the program is its invisibility. The sole indication of the program is an obscure calendar which lists the *rebbeim* scheduled to make an appearance on a particular night. If a student's own *rebbe* is not present, he often does not know whom to approach with his questions. Furthermore, students may not find someone to approach because several *rebbeim* have been lax in their commitment to this program.

If the program is to work, the Yeshiva must, first of all, strongly encourage *rebbeim* to honor their night seder appointments. But even perfect attendance of a rotating body may not provide the permanent presence the *beit midrash* lacks. In conjunction with the rotation, **Hamevaser** recommends that the Yeshiva officially appoint a *sho'el umeshiv* (or two) (a) who would be present and available to students every night for a predetermined duration, and (b) whose identity and location in the *beit midrash* would be well known by and easily accessible to students.

HAMEVASER

500 West 185th Street, New York, NY 10033

The views of signed articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of **HAMEVASER** or Yeshiva University. Editorial policy is determined by a majority vote of the members of the governing board. Subscription rate: \$10 per year. All material herein copyright **HAMEVASER** 1991.

Mitchel Benuck
Editor-in-Chief

Eli Schick
Executive Editor

GOVERNING BOARD

Seth Berkowitz Yakov Blau Simi Chavel Ari Ferziger
Yitzchak Hollander Chaviva Levin Sammy Levine Michael Segal

ASSOCIATE BOARD

Steven Buch Joshua Fogel Steven Usdan
Dov Chelst Shani Feiner Shoshana Levine
Sara Klein Aliza Levin Reuven Spolter

STAFF

Bena Bradwein Matthew Harris Avraham Husarsky
Chavie Levine Ayelet Novetsky Sally Rosen
Mark Smilowitz Naomi Wadler

ART

Aharon Fischman Avi Greengart
Simma Krames Judy Dick

Editors

Benjamin Samuels, editor emeritus

ABOUT THE COVER

Mashiach, by Aharon Fischman

Pastels, 14x22

Chazal's imagery of the Messianic Era often helps us relate to concepts that might otherwise lie beyond our grasp. The image of a white-robed man riding toward the hallowed gates of Jerusalem on a donkey proliferates as the most popular portrayal of our ultimate Redeemer.

Hamevaser extends its sympathies to Associate Board Member Stephen Buch upon the loss of his father. May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Letters

To the Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly respond to the position taken by Dr. Soloveitchik in last month's *Commentator* in regard to the letter which I submitted. Although time has passed, our obligation to pursue that which we hold to be the truth is eternal, and I therefore find it appropriate that I be granted the opportunity to express my thoughts.

Dr. Soloveitchik argued that since the context of the Rav's lecture was one of the validity of certain halakhic *chazakot*, his words must be understood specifically in that vein. I believe that such a limited understanding of the address is not feasible. Although the Rav's reaction was triggered by a specific case, as Dr. Soloveitchik stated, nearly the entire content of the address was outlining a general approach to the study of Torah as a whole, and only after approximately half an hour of clearly detailing general guidelines did the Rav arrive at the case which stirred him to speak. His objection to the dismantling of halakhic *chazakot* was his conclusion which he drew from his *basic thesis* as to how Torah is to be presented.

The second argument presented by Dr. Soloveitchik was that the Rav's statement that "Such an attempt (to rationalize Torah Law), be it historicism, be it psychologism... undermines the very foundations of Torah U'mesorah" does not apply to the Revel approach of "studying halakha from the viewpoint of history", but rather refers to "introducing psychology, history... into halakhic thought and drawing from this halakhic conclusions" also seems difficult to understand. As I stated in my initial letter, I have studied many examples of the type of historical-halakhic thought

Continued on page 10

Waiting For the Messiah

The Satmar Approach

Steven Udán

Imagine sitting next to a gentleman dressed in a bekesh (a long black robe) and a shtrimmel (mink hat) on a Pan Am flight to Israel. In conversation, you discover your neighbor's Satmar background. Knowing little about Satmar chasidism, you recall only vicious rumors of Satmar members supporting the PLO. Impressed by the man's strikingly Jewish appearance and gentle dignity you do not understand how such a person contests the legitimacy of the State of Israel - to you the Jewish State has always represented the ultimate exemplification of Jewish identity and guardian of your people's future. Deciding that you stand to lose nothing, you ask the elder to explain his views.

Few Jews understand any of Satmar's convictions. While this hypothetical dialogue may never transpire, it would foster greater understanding among individuals from contrasting Jewish traditions. Only through careful examination of Satmar's sources can we understand how Satmar's loyalty to the Jewish nation prevails in the face of disdain towards the State of Israel.

Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rabbi, summarized his sect's classical opinion regarding the State of Israel in a letter to his assistant Rabbi Yechiel Klein (*Divrei Yoel*). There, he stressed the falsehood he perceived underlying Zionist ideas, and professed his repugnance for Zionism, declaring that no force in this world would ever shift his position closer to accepting this "idolatry." Today's Satmar chasidism staunchly support this acutely anti-Zionist approach towards the Israeli State. Perhaps, in light of its extremist views, Satmar's survival despite the many challenges it faced suggests a message that can be applied to the greater Jewish community.

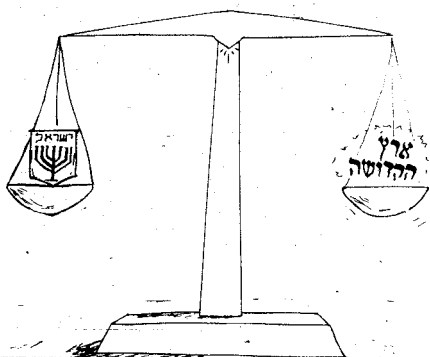
Surprisingly, many twentieth century European rabbis shared Rabbi Teitelbaum's belief in Zionism's fundamentally secularizing nature. Many Orthodox Jewish leaders likened the secularizing force of Zionism to Kemal Ataturk's late nineteenth century secularization of the Turkish peninsula. Rabbi Teitelbaum was simply reacting to his observation of a trend during the 1930's among groups that adapted Zionist ideals from Poland, Warsaw, Budapest, and Cracow to diverge from the path of Jewish values and traditions.

To illuminate the background that fostered initial Rabbinic objection to Zionism, the Moozayer Rabbi (nephew of Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum), Rabbi Rubin, explained (interview, November 12, 1991) that the leftist wing of Zionism brazenly denies the essence of Judaism - i.e. the existence of God. He recapitulated numerous cases of expressed Zionist insolence for fundamentally Jewish beliefs. For example, when a left-wing Zionist Mayor of Be'er Sheva arranged a parade, he replaced the name of the Lord with "Tzahal" (acrostic in Hebrew for the Israeli Defense Forces) in the verses "O Yisra'el starkly in the Lord" (Psalms 115:9). This act starkly contrasted his utmost confidence in the Israeli army with his tantamount denial of God's domination.

In addition to Zionism's inherently secular nature, the Satmar Rebbe also opposed its Messianic character. The danger of Messianic movements to Torah adherence was aptly demonstrated by the Sabbatean movement and its aftermath. Thus, many viewed Zionism and the State of Israel as potentially the greatest threat facing religious Jewry in the twentieth century.

Before beginning an exposition of Satmar's view of Israel, it is critical to distinguish between the Land of Israel and the State of Israel.

While the Satmar Rav opposed the existence of a State, he passionately loved the land. When he first arrived in Israel he never intended to migrate to America. He recurrently wrote to his nephew about his happiness in "the land of life" and his desire to wait there for the arrival of the Messiah (*Divrei Yoel* Vol. I, letter 137). Even when forced by political and family obligations to travel to America, the Satmar Rav did not pack one *sefer*, intending to very shortly return "home," to Eretz Yisrael. During the rest of his life in America, he struggled with the forces preventing his immediate return to Israel. Not surprisingly, his references to the land of Israel in his letters reflect a lifelong intense love for the Jewish homeland that contrasts with his unyielding opposition to the State.



To support his arguments against the Jewish State, Rabbi Teitelbaum employs a passage from the talmudic tractate Ketubot (111b). There, the Talmud discusses three oaths that God imposes upon the Jewish Nation. The first of these oaths binds the Jewish people not to "raise a wall (*choma*)."¹ Rashi explains this oath to mean that the people of Israel should not rise up "*beyad chazaka*," with a powerful hand, presumably prohibiting a forceful advance of Jews to Israel. Maharsha interprets the Talmud's cryptic reference to a "wall" as a metaphor representing a single mass movement to Israel -- a majority of the Jewish people moving to Israel or settling in Israel through an act of war to displace the nation which happened to occupy Israel at the time. Satmar, analyzing this text in context to deduce a prohibition on Jewish advancement to Israel, employs these commentaries to advocate its anti-Zionist platform.

Rabbi Teitelbaum expands the definition of this oath to include any manifestation of force. He stresses that no opinion throughout the Talmud argues with this particular text, suggesting unanimity among the Talmudic redactors regarding this prohibition. He also cites a supporting reference to his expansive interpretation in Tractate Yoma (9a) which states that multitudes approaching Israel constitute a "wall." The commentators elucidate that while small numbers of people need an actual wall to protect them, large numbers effectively constitute a wall unto themselves. Thus, mass Jewish migration to Israel, even unarmed, violate the oath.

Modern Satmar policy represents a remarkably wider interpretation of the wall metaphor, extending the prohibition of raising a "wall" to apply despite permission from international authorities for Jewish advancement to Israel (*VaYoel Moshe* p. 35, verse 15). According to the explanations of Rashi and Maharsha, the oath warns only against using force to reach Israel. However, should force not be necessary, i.e., if international authorities granted title of Israel to

Jews, no violation of the oath would be perpetrated. Satmar challenges this assumption of mutual exclusivity between international approval and the prohibition against forceful ascent to Israel, disallowing even internationally mandated Jewish migration to Israel. Satmar leaves no alternative to Jewish waiting in exile until Divine Redemption.

The later acceptance of Zionism by Orthodox Jews who opposed Zionism and the State at its inception, such as Religious Zionists and the Agudah faction, further accents the extremity of Satmar's approach to Zionism and the Jewish State. Despite antagonizing the Jewish community with its contrary views, Satmar forges ahead, opposing the State on the religious and political level. Its beliefs con-

Satmar stresses the preeminence of Jewish principles, exemplifying the notion that Judaism must ultimately supersede all political and social principles - particularly democracy. To illustrate, even if a majority of Jews voted to eat pig, eating pig would certainly not be permissible. Thus, by replacing all secular influences with Torah and a totally Jewish environment, Satmar epitomizes this notion, facilitating a completely Torah based society and preserving Jewish ideals.

Additionally, Satmar's rejection of the "Jewish State" implies a measure of desirability to Jewish life in exile. While the notion of Jewish people detached from a Jewish state may seem illogical, strands of mystical thought suggest possible advantages to exile. Satmar views exile as a positive phenomenon to the extent that God wills it. Since God wills exile, Satmar searches to fathom the desirable elements of exile.

Primarily, exile provides the environment to strengthen Jewish commitment, forcing the individual to determine his distinct identity when faced by cultural, religious, and social challenges. Although Satmar attempts to lessen these challenges *vis a vis* the individual, it finds the potential enhancement of overall religious commitment inherent to confronting the community with secular alternatives. Additionally, exile affords the direct opportunity to exemplify Jewish morality and serve as a "light unto the nations." Satmar's many acts of kindness, including mass community busing to visit the elderly and sick, exemplify this commitment. The Satmar community believes that by personifying the path of the just, they will perfect the world by spreading Divine morality, facilitating the Jewish return to Zion.

Finally, the shift of focus from the community as a whole, exemplified by the Temple and the Jewish Land, to the individual, illustrated by the small Jewish community and synagogue, reflects the most marked realignment of Jewish values in exile. Although Satmar eagerly awaits the return to Zion and future Jewish unity, they stress the need for exile as an interim phase to perfect the individual. Dissociated from the greater Jewish community, the Jew is forced to solidify his personal commitment, reacting to the many challenging forces in exile. Although exile tends to thrust Jews in diverging directions, Satmar strives to bind its community together, isolating itself from outside influences. Negating exile's effects in this way ironically relates to Satmar's belief not to hasten the redemption. While ultimate issues underlie such questions, Satmar's willingness to alienate major segments of the Jewish community in deference to overriding Jewish values provide a paradigm, setting an example for other Jews to emulate in exile.

While Satmar views divine redemption as the ends and exile as the necessary means, it rejects the active facilitation of redemption, leaving its time and manner to God. This humbleness prevents Satmar's acquiescence to the State which they believe arrogantly violates the Talmudic oath discussed above. Passive acceptance of fate characterizes Satmar faith.

Many dispute the Satmar opinion and support Israel to differing degrees. Refutations to this opinion abound ranging from challenging the applicability of the tractate in Ketubot about advancing to Zion to advocating active accession to Zion; viewing international events as a divine precursor to the Messianic era. However, the Satmars' fervent commitment to Jewish humbleness and tradition represents a paradigm for even those Jewish communities with whom they disagree.

Tefila Revisited: The Role of Chazarat Hashatz

Reuven Spolter

We need You, we need your Tephilah.
Each and every Yid can bring the Geulah.
Don't talk, just daven.
And your Tephilah can reach Hashem.

Although the religious lyrical encouragements of the Miami Boys Choir are usually meaningful and somewhat relevant, this particular song is puzzling. What impact does one person's *tefila* have on another, and how does this influence the power of that prayer? Questions like these usually compel us to shrug off the verses as simple songs. Surprisingly, these lyrics, although unintentionally, do carry a great deal of significance with regard to the meaning of *tefila* in general.

Rambam, in a famous responsum quoted by the *Beit Yosef*, Rabbi Yosef Karo (*Orach Chaim* 124), admits that the *chazarat hashatz*, the repetition of the *amida*, is essentially only to allow those who do not know the *Shemone Esrei* to fulfill their obligation. Nevertheless, although everyone present knows the *tefila*, Rambam asserts that the repetition must still be recited, as it is a *takkanat chakhamim*, a rabbinic injunction which cannot be repealed. Thus, even though the impetus for the creation of *chazarat hashatz* no longer applies, since the custom was previously established, it cannot be rescinded.

Later inspection of Rabbi Yosef Karo in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 124) reveals a curious phenomenon. The language used regarding talking during *chazarat hashatz* may be the harshest used in the entire *Shulchan Aruch*. Regarding those who speak during the *chazzan's* repetition of the *Shemone Esrei*, Rabbi Karo writes, "And those who speak idle talk during the *chazzan's* repetition are sinners. Their sin is greater than they can bear, and they should be repulsed." Additionally, Eliyahu Rabbah adds, "Woe is to those who speak during the *tefila*, as we have seen several synagogues that have been destroyed because of this sin."

While this alone may not be alarming, it is shocking when considered in light of the attitude taken by the *Chakhamim* towards *chazarat hashatz* and its purpose. One is compelled to ask: if *chazarat hashatz* is essentially a remembrance for a public repetition instituted by the sages, why is one not permitted to talk or even learn Torah during its recitation? Also, if this assumption about *chazarat hashatz* is true, what requirement is there to fulfill in *chazarat hashatz* that demands both a quorum of ten men, and the proper concentration (*kavana*) of its members?

To better understand the institution and practice of *chazarat hashatz*, it is necessary to comprehend the logic behind its establishment, and the overall benefit of prayer with a *minyan*.

In his first *drasha*, Ran (*Drashot HaRan*, p.15) proposes that when a group gathers for a specific purpose, its overall influence is far greater than that of its parts. This is true because, as individuals, each human being has deficiencies in his personality specific only to himself. Therefore, when many people join together, their qualities and deficiencies cancel each other, resulting in the goal which the group had joined forces to accomplish. When ten men join for the purpose of prayer, their prayer is far more powerful than had each one prayed individually. This, explains Ran, justifies the great concern found in halakhic literature for the respect of the community (*tircha detzibbur*). Because the community holds such a powerful force, it is afforded respect commensurate to its significance.

surate to its significance.

This can also explain why the *Mishnah Berurah* instructs the *Sheliach Tzibbur* not to wait to begin the *chazarat hashatz* for the Rav or other important members of the community, provided that ten men have already completed the *Shemone Esrei*. Although on an individual basis, the Rav is greater and commands more respect than each particular layman, the respect for group as a whole outweighs the esteem commanded by the Rav. Consequently, the congregation should not be kept waiting, even in deference to the respect of the Rav.

With this new understanding of the institution of the minyan, it is now possible to establish a greater comprehension of *chazarat hashatz*.

The Mishna in Rosh Hashana (33b) presents an argument between Rabban Gamliel and

Rabbanan had the same tradition from their teachers: the existence of two separate recitations of the *Shemone Esrei*. Apparently, these separate recitations were meant to have two distinct but equally important purposes. The silent recitation is the opportunity for the individual Jew to stand before God in prayer and make intimate requests regarding his personal, religious, financial and emotional situation. Conversely, the public recitation of the *Sheliach Tzibbur* is a supplication of God for the prosperity of no single person, but rather, the public as a whole. This being the case, Rabban Gamliel believed that as long as the individual kept the proper concentration during the public recitation of the *Shemone Esrei*, he also could fulfill his obligation for personal prayer as well. Therefore, just as the *chazarat hashatz* fulfills

with the *chazzan* was the personal *Amida* established." Clearly, *Chatham Sofer* understands the primary role intended for *chazarat hashatz* at its institution. For this reason, the many stringent halachot regarding *chazarat hashatz* are actually instinctive by nature. Similar to the silent *Amida*, the public *tefila* demands not only the attention, but also the concentration of the community present. External discussion is not merely a disruption of the public service, but rather a shunning of the prayer on the communal level. Hence, the comment of *Eliyahu Rabbah* is now easily understood. Idle chatter during the repetition of the *Shemone Esrei* desecrates the vehicle for community prayer, and removes the need for the synagogue, which has been reduced to at best a gathering point for the recitation of the personal *Amida*, and at worst, a social rendezvous. Therefore, explains *Eliyahu Rabbah*, many synagogues were destroyed due to the sin of talking during *chazarat hashatz*.

This interpretation of *chazarat hashatz* also resolves an argument over an unexplained custom attributed to the Gra. The *Sefer Ma'ase Rav* mentions the custom of the Gra to refrain from reciting "Baruch Hu Ubaruch Shemo" in response to the recitation of God's name during *chazarat hashatz* (*Hilkhot Tefila*, p.3). To explain this peculiarity, the *Mishna Berura* asserts that this custom originated only out of necessity, as the *chazzan* often sped through the repetition of *Shemone Esrei*, and an appropriate acknowledgement of God's name would make the proper answering of "Amen" impossible. The *Tosafot Ma'ase Rav* disagrees, claiming that the Gra refrained from saying "Baruch Hu Ubaruch Shemo" during the *chazarat hashatz*, just as he would during *kiddush*, as he felt that the listening to the *chazarat hashatz* fulfilled a necessary obligation, which may not be interrupted. It is reasonable that the obligation which the Gra refused to interrupt was one of true *tefila betzibbur*, fulfilled through the repetition of the *Shemone Esrei*. This requirement demands not only the response of the listener, but also active participation through concentration, which may not be interrupted, even to acknowledge the oration of God's name.

An excellent illustration of this concept is derived from the parallelism commonly made between *Tefila* and *korbanot*, sacrifices. The *gemara* in *Berachot* states that the prayers of the day correspond to the daily offerings (*korbanot tamid*) brought in the Temple. While *shacharit* corresponds to the *korban tamid* of the morning, and *mincha* corresponds to the *korban tamid* of the afternoon, the association for *ma'ariv* presents a difficulty, as the priests offered no official sacrifices at night. Therefore, the *gemara* proposed associating *ma'ariv* with the burning of the ashes which remained from the day's sacrifices. It is appropriate that *shacharit* and *mincha* should correspond to a *korban tzibbur*, *per se*, while *ma'ariv* finds no such parallel. Just as the priest offered the *tamid* of the morning and the evening on behalf of the entire *kelal Yisrael*, the *Sheliach Tzibbur* also offers his prayers, not on behalf of himself, but rather on behalf of his community. *Ma'ariv*, however, corresponds to no such *korban tzibbur* and likewise has no



Rabbanan regarding the repetition of the *musaf* service on Rosh Hashana. While Rabbanan opine that each individual has a personal obligation to recite the *musaf* prayer, Rabban Gamliel counters that as the *chazzan* can fulfill the obligation of those who cannot recite the prayer on their own, the *chazzan* can (similarly) fulfill the obligation of those who can individually recite the *musaf* prayer. The ensuing *gemara* quotes a *Tosefta* in which Rabbanan question the purpose of *chazarat hashatz* according to Rabban Gamliel, while he inquires about the purpose of the individual *tefila* according to Rabbanan. Rabbanan respond that the *chazarat hashatz* can only fulfill the obligation of those who cannot pray on their own. If this is a seemingly trivial explanation for such a significant institution, the explanation for the personal recitation of the *tefila* by Rabban Gamliel is astonishing. Rabban Gamliel justifies the individual's recitation as an opportunity for the *chazzan* to formulate the prayer in his mind. This explanation becomes even more difficult when contrasted to a Mishna in the fourth chapter of *Berachot*. There, Rabban Gamliel takes the strictest opinion, arguing that every individual has an obligation to pray at least once a day. It is peculiar that the same Rabban Gamliel who imposes a responsibility of personal prayer also considers the silent *Amida* a "stalling tactic" to allow the *chazzan* time to prepare his recitation.

This difficulty is magnified when the scope of the argument is expanded to *chazarat hashatz* of the regular *Shemone Esrei*. Though some *Rishonim* feel the argument regarding *chazarat hashatz* only concerns *musaf* on Rosh Hashana, Rav Ovadiah Mibartenura explains that this dispute extends to the repetition of the *Shemone Esrei* throughout the year. This simplified understanding of the institution of *chazarat hashatz* demands explanation, particularly in light of the respect it receives in later *poskim*.

A possible resolution of this quandary relies on the arrival of a new understanding of the very purpose of *chazarat hashatz* itself, one which will also shed light on many of the difficulties raised. Apparently, both Rabban Gamliel and

the obligation of personal prayer with a power unattainable at the individual level, the personal *tefila* has lost its original meaning. Rabbanan counter that the main *tefila*, is the personal *Amida*, and it is impossible to engulf one within another.

Even if this explanation is accurate, the *gemara* in Rosh Hashana is still troubling. What possibly motivates Rabban Gamliel to minimize the personal *tefila*, and the Rabbanan the public recitation? A possible explanation which would resolve this difficulty maintains that according to both opinions, there is only one true *Shemone Esrei* recitation. The argument between Rabban Gamliel and Rabbanan is simply over which recitation is dominant. This being the case, it is logical that the *gemara* minimizes the significance of the other *tefila*. Nevertheless, in this understanding, the prominence attributed to the *chazarat hashatz* remains difficult.

To support the appearance of such importance in later *poskim*, who adopt the *gemara's* interpretation, a more moderate approach is necessary. These *poskim* accepted the opinion of Rabbanan, not because they reject Rabban Gamliel's understanding of *chazarat hashatz*, but rather because it was feared that were his approach adopted, the importance of the individual's obligation for prayer would be lost, something Rabban Gamliel himself strove to prevent. As a result, because the position of the Rabbanan was adopted, although *chazarat hashatz* is technically regarded as a *takkanat Chakhamim*, it nevertheless carries the import of a public, independent *tefila*.

Chatham Sofer (*Shut Orach Chaim*, 4) expresses this notion, emphasizing the importance of *chazarat hashatz* and its role as *tefila betzibbur*. Asked whether one is permitted to recite *Kedusha* with the *chazzan* if one had only begun to pray at the beginning of *chazarat hashatz*, *Chatham Sofer* replies, "This [*chazarat hashatz*] is the true *tefila betzibbur*. That which the individuals pray alone is called 'personal *tefila*,' but when one man exempts the many, that is the main 'public prayer.' Only because each individual cannot concentrate adequately

Continued on page 10

Before And After: God, Man, and the Golden Calf

Simi Chavel

(Based on shiurim by Rabbi Menachem Liebtag)

God's thirteen attributes (the *shelosh esrei middot*) appear in Torah in the local context of Moshe's meeting with God to forge the second covenant. However, the full meaning and role of the thirteen attributes slowly develops throughout the book of Exodus. This fuller context begins with *Mattan Torah*, the initial covenant between God and Israel (Exodus, ch. 19-24), continues with *Chet ha'egel* (The Sin of the Golden Calf), Israel's breach of the covenant leading God and Moshe to draft a new one (ch. 32-34), and concludes with the ramifications of the new covenant, the commandments involving the *mishkan* (25-31), and the actual building of the *mishkan* (35-40).

When they left Egypt, the Israelites knew that, as the chosen descendants of Abraham, they would make a covenant with God and then enter into the land of Israel. The content and form of this covenant, though, remained unknown. Thus, after reaffirming the Israelites' commitment to forging a covenant (19:3-8), God reveals fundamental aspects of its lawful element (20:1-23:19). He then explains its historical component, the process by which the Israelites will conquer and settle the Land of Israel (23:20-33).

The primary characteristic of this conquest rests in the role of God's messenger, who will bring the Israelites to Israel and protect them along the way. Because of his high level of spirituality, indicated by the fact that "*ki shmi bekirbo*" - God's name resides in him (21), he will not forgive any sins (*ibid.*). After the Israelites sin at Mount Horev, God describes the

nature of a new messenger, indicating that His relationship with the Israelites has changed. This messenger does not carry God's name: "*ki lo e'ele bekirbekha*" (33:3). Then, the sin of the Israelites does not invite immediate retribution and decimation (33:5), as it would were God directly among them. Rather, later events will carry the weight of this earlier one (32:34). God's less direct involvement thus mitigates harsh punishment for *Chet Ha'egel*, but it also distances Him from His nation.

Moshe, though, will not settle for this reduced level of interaction between God and His people. Without the personal relationship, the Israelites would not differ from the peoples of the world (33:16). At the same time, Moshe would like to prevent the immediate and total punishment for sin which characterizes this close relationship (34:9). In other words, Moshe asks God to retain the high level of relationship with the Israelites, but without the risks.

In making this request, Moshe actually recounts the implications of the encounter he just had with God. God's response to Moshe's request of "*Har'eni na et kevodekha*" (33:18) yielded on a personal level that which he now seeks on behalf of the nation. God asserts that a dynamic path does exist. While man, *en masse*, cannot withstand the immediate, face-to-face encounter with God (33:20), God can remain in man's midst in an implied fashion. The encounter with God's "back" indicates God's continued presence and regular historical involvement. But the terror of the immediate confrontation with God is avoided. Thus Moshe exclaims that God will personally escort the Israelites to the Land of Israel (34:9),

while He will still have mercy and forgive the "stiff-necked nation" for their sins.

This new covenant satisfies God's assertion in the second commandment (20:2) that the Israelites "will have no other gods *al panai* (colloquially, 'in My face')." Because of the need to revise the covenant, the Israelites can no longer stand before God's "face." Instead, they will stand behind God's "back," creating a less immediate, less demanding relationship. The new relationship, though, necessitates a new covenant; thus, before God details the new process, Moshe must forge a new covenant, a second set of tablets, for God and Israel (34:1-5).

God formulates the process by which He will forgive the Israelites' sins in the new relationship with the thirteen attributes that He calls out (6-7) as Moshe sits in the crevice in the rock. The first phrase, "YHWH, YHWH," refers back to Moshe's encounter with God at the burning bush, where God describes His relationship with Israel in terms of his constant presence and concern, "*Ehyeh asher ehyeh... ehyeh shelachani aleikhem... YHWH elokei avoteikhem... shelakhani aleikhem*" (3:14-15). The allusion to this initial confrontation indicates that God's particular attention to Israel will not diminish.

The next two pairs of attributes, "*rachum vechanun*" and "*erekh apayim*," correspond to God's initial reaction to the Israelites' betrayal (32:7-14), and the rest of the attributes continue in this manner. The trait of *charon af*, burning nostrils, fills the conversation between God and Moses in describing God's reaction to the Israelites' sin. The Torah itself refers to the result of God's *charon af* as "*ra'a*," evil (14). In place of these passionate traits, God now exhibits compassionate ones. *Chen* and *rachamim*, grace

and mercy, associate themselves with the effects of God's goodness (33:19), and *arikhut apayim*, calm countenance, characterizes God's new face. Thus, where earlier, God's messenger would not bear the Israelites' sin (23:21), now God himself is "*nose avon vapesha vechata'a*." Furthermore, the zealotry which the second commandment attributes to God as "*el kana*" gives way to God who cleanses, "*nake*." At the same time, though, God does not ignore sin, as an uncaring parent: "*lo yenake*." Rather, as in the second commandment (20:4), God spreads out punishment over generations. The difference between the earlier and current formulation of dividing up punishment exists in the absence of the term, "*sone'ai*," "those who hate me." Whereas beforehand God reacted to sinners as though they hated Him, now God does not think of them as such. Complementary to this, while the second commandment asserts that God "does *chesed* for thousands of generations" only for those who love Him and keep His commandments (20:5), now God "does *chesed* for thousands of generations" without holding His beneficiaries to as high a standard.

Finally, the phrase "*rav chesed ve'emet*," sums up the interaction of all the attributes and characterizes the entire relationship. God's truth and justice continue to operate as essential components of His relationship with the Israelites. However, God's impassioned love for the Israelites tempers the immediacy of such a confrontational relationship. The same holds true conversely as well. God's truth tempers His passion and turns it to compassion.

BS'D

...The flat has one room, no bathroom, no shower, no kitchen, not even a sink. Two beds are backed into the corners, with cribs at the foot of each. Mattresses for the children, aged six months to eight years, are stacked under and on the beds. To shower, Menahem and his wife, Nomi, go to friends or a mikveh. They bathe the children in a makeshift tub. They share a small kitchen with a family upstairs. A tiny, dark and damp room contains a toilet used by the two families.

...But their story is not unusual. Poverty is sweeping the nation.

...In Jerusalem.... 23.7% of the Jewish population live in poverty...

...In 1990, 77,600 Jewish Jerusalmmites lived in poverty...

...43.3% of Jerusalem's Jewish families with four or more children have incomes below the poverty level.

...We see people now with their refrigerators empty, and who barely have enough to eat...

...The economic situation is only going to get worse...

Source: Jerusalem Post International Edition,
Week ending February 1, 1992, Page 7.

OHAVEI SHALOM TZEDAKA FUND

Dedicated to the memory of

Rabbi Solomon P. Wohlgeleitner zt"l

Distributes your contributions to needy families in Israel

Judah Wohlgeleitner
Pollack Library, Y.U.
Campus Representative

Rabbi Eliahu P. Rominek, Chairman
611 Beach 8th Street
Far Rockaway, NY 11691

Preparing For the Coming of the Moshiah

An Interview With Lubavitch

"Prepare For the Coming of Moshiah!" blare the advertisements throughout Israel. As religious Jews, we have yearned for an end to our current exile for nearly two thousand years. Yet, the proliferation of these signs and others like them somehow generate in many of us a uneasy reservation towards the suggestion that the arrival of Moshiah, and the end to the exile, may be an imminent reality. Why do we approach Lubavitch's vibrant enthusiasm with such cautious insecurity? Perhaps we can improve our understanding of our own positions with an improved understanding of theirs. With this goal in mind, Hamevaser's Michel Benick

Rav Schochet: Obviously not. The *Yomim Tovim* are not [relevant] to the Gentiles. But there are probably more Jews that see the ads in the subways and in the New York Times than would read a Yiddish paper or a Jewish weekly, which are usually house organs for the aggrandizement of some organizations. The newspapers they read, and the ads in the subways they see, so that is geared specifically towards the Jews.

Hamevaser: To what extent would you say that Lubavitch is interested in making every Jew, or even every frum Jew, a follower of Lubavitch, if that's true at all?

ciple which has been espoused and emphasized in very sharp terms by the Vilna Gaon. So [to claim] that everybody has to become a Lubavitcher Chasid, nothing of the sort [is true] at all.

Hamevaser: Beginning last summer, advertisements began to appear in the Times, among other places, which stressed the coming of the Moshiah, with slogans such as "Moshiah, Be a Part of It." Over the past month, particularly in Israel, this campaign has intensified. First of all, what events, situations, or other factors would you say caused Lubavitch to initiate the Moshiah campaign?

Rav Schochet: The recent events in the world [are] all symptomatic fulfillments of the predictions of Chazal in various *midrashim*, most specifically the *midrashim* in *Pesikta*, that indicate that the coming of Moshiah is imminent. [This] means that this is a uniquely auspicious time for the coming of Moshiah. This is no different than... [that] which was done by the Chofetz Chaim eighty years ago when [he and] other *gedolim* published numerous pamphlets even before the First World War, at the turn of the century, that we live in a time of *ikvesa dimeshicha*, that the coming of Moshiah is imminent. He therefore urged the reintroduction of the study of *Kodoshim* so that *Kohanim* should prepare themselves because obviously, they will be needed to serve in the *Beis Hamikdash*, so they will need to know the *halakhos*. So we see that throughout history *gedolim* have seen certain times as being indications of the coming of Moshiah, the same as they have made predictions with regard to certain dates.

Now, their predictions were not false predictions. They were not realized simply because people did not avail themselves of the opportunity, as is mentioned in numerous *seforim*, and they did not come to the challenge of availing themselves of the *es ratzon*, the auspicious time. So here likewise. So far, we are living in very cataclysmic times which are certainly indicative of all the predictions that Chazal describe.

What are the events happening immediately

before the coming of Moshiah? [One requirement is] an awareness of the concept [of Moshiah]. Chazal, *midrashim*, and various *gedolei Yisrael* have stated explicitly that the *Midrash* says *hakol taluy bekvuv*, that everything depends on our anticipation and our hoping for Moshiah, of people being aware, of people wanting Moshiah to come, to the point that when there is an auspicious time people should demand Moshiah. This is not something that any one individual or any one group on its own can do. Therefore, [we advertise] to make people more aware...

How many Jews are aware of the concept of Moshiah? I have been asked to speak very often about Moshiah. And the shock that goes through the audience when they hear that Judaism believes in a Messiah is amazing! They think Messiah is a Christian concept, that Reform Judaism has annulled the Moshiah concept, and that so-called Orthodox Jews likewise do not believe in a personal Moshiah. They believe Moshiah is an idea, a concept of eventual world peace, a utopia that will eventually come, a United Nations kind of concept. But not a physical, personal Moshiah who [will] actually redeem the Jewish people physically and reestablish a physical new Jewish Commonwealth, as described in *Tanach* and Chazal.

Hamevaser: Could you be just a little more specific as to how you think today's era...

Rav Schochet: I am coming exactly to that point. Therefore, [we must] make... Jews wherever they are, wherever they are, aware. "Yes, Moshiah is a Jewish concept." Moshiah is something we must believe in -- it's one of the principles of our faith... This is also *halakha*. Not to look forward to Moshiah is to deny the Torah; so *paskens* the Rambam in *Hilkhos Melachim*. On the other hand, by anticipating him sincerely, this in itself will bring Moshiah, so making people aware, trying to make people want Moshiah... as Chazal tell us and promise us, [is] one of the ways of hastening the coming of Moshiah. And so in that context, I suppose those who put up these billboards and

Continued on page 8

Mashiach Ben Yosef: The Other Messiah

Aliza Levin

"...Most of Israel will remain in their exile, because it will not be clear to them that the appointed time has arrived, and then Mashiach ben Yosef will go up from the Galilee to Jerusalem, with the people who gather themselves to him; they will kill the officer of the king of Edom and the people who are with him... And when all the nations hear that a king has arisen for the Jews in Jerusalem, they will rise against them in all the other nations and expel them, saying, 'Until now you were amongst us with the understanding that you will have neither a king nor an officer, and now that you have a king, you will not dwell in our land.' ... [At this point, the new king of the Jews is to be killed by Armilus, during the period of *chevlei Mashiach*, the birth pangs of the ultimate Messiah of the Davidic dynasty.]

This is Rav Hai Gaon's account of Mashiach ben Yosef as it appears in *Al Inyan haYeshuah* (*Orzar haGeonim* VI, pp. 72-75), his response to a question about the Messianic Age. The elements of this pre-Messianic Messiah include arrival during a time of oppression and strife, a limited following, successful combat against the forces of Edom, and death at the hand of the enemy. This is the standard conception of Mashiach ben Yosef, and this answer no doubt satisfied R. Hai's eleventh century questioner. The questions linger, however, regarding the origin and meaning of this first Mashiach.

Mashiach ben Yosef is mentioned only once in the Talmud (*Sukkah* 52a, and its parallel in the Palestinian Talmud *Sukkah* 5:2). Cited as a supporting text for the separation of men and women in the Temple, Zechariah 12:12 reads: "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart and their wives apart..." The Talmud asks what occasions the eulogy, and responds with an argument between R. Dosa and Rabbanan: "One explained, the cause is the slaying of Mashiach ben Yosef, and the other explained, the cause is the slaying of the evil inclination..." J. Klausner, in *Hara'ayon HaMeshichi BeYisrael* (p. 294) in-

dicates that this passage is not a *Beraita*, but an Amoraic transmission of a Tannaitic tradition. This is evidenced by the Aramaic of the question, "mai avidetai," and supported by the fact that it is unclear which name is to be associated with which *derasha*. In fact, in the *Yerushalmi* version of the passage, the same opinions are ascribed to two unnamed amoraim. Rather, in *Ahavat Tziyon veYerushalayim* (v.8 p.134), associates the messianic interpretation with the fourth century amora R. Dosa, indicating that it is not tannaitic at all. Klausner, like Bacher and Frankel, attributes the difficulty of dating the passage to the incidence of two tannaim named R. Dosa (p.295). One lived at the time of R. Yochanan b. Zakkai (first century), and the other during the period following Hadrian (second century). Following Bacher, Klausner attributes the passage on Sukkah 52a to the latter. This line of analysis assumes that either the opinion maintaining that the verse refers to Mashiach ben Yosef is that of R. Dosa, or that the "Rabbanan" of the argument were his contemporaries. Accepting this, and following either Ratner or Bacher, we have a relatively late source in the Talmud for Mashiach ben Yosef.

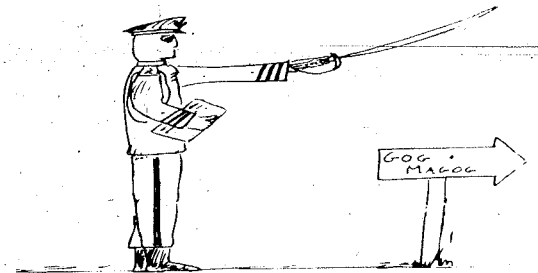
What information about Mashiach ben Yosef is gleaned from this passage? Only that he is killed. *Iyun Ya'akov* claims his death is an atonement for Yerob'am, playing on the notion of Mashiach ben Yosef as representative of the Northern Kingdom. Later in the same discussion in Sukkah, God offers Mashiach ben David anything he wants, "and when he [sees] that Mashiach ben Yosef was killed," he requests life. Again, a dying Messiah, but nothing more. However, this passage does have the advantage of a definite tannaitic association, beginning "Tanu Rabbanan - our Rabbis taught."

The second passage on Sukkah 52a does not cite a verse or any other support for the existence of an earlier Messiah. Hence, a glance at the context of our later "proof text" (*Zech.* 12:12) is in order. The subject of the chapter is the End of Days, beginning with the siege of Jerusalem and its subsequent salvation, including the destruction of the enemy nations, followed by the eulogizing of those who died in the

war. It is this eulogy which is discussed in verse 12. Verse 10 relates, "But I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication..." Presumably, then, it is these inhabitants who are mourning others; the survivors are of *Beit Yehuda*; *Beit David*, Jerusalem - the Southern Kingdom. The *derasha* in Sukkah begins with the assumption that the non-survivors are from the other kingdom, *Yisrael*, represented by *Beit Yosef*. (Just as plausible, however, is the contention that the focus here is on the people of Judah because that is where the final siege and ultimate victory occur.) The passage then pro-

discussion relates to an extant tradition, and is not responsible for its creation.

Other *midrashim* also mention Mashiach ben Yosef. *Targumim* refer to him as Mashiach ben Ephraim, but it is clear that the same figure is intended. *Targum* to Cant. 4:5 compares the later redeemers, Mashiach bar David and Mashiach bar Ephraim, with the earlier ones, Moses and Aaron. Pseudo-Jonathan to Exodus 40:11 designates Mashiach ben Ephraim as defender of Gog. There are other similar references, none of which seem early enough or definitive enough to create the tradition of this Messiah. Again, we see here reflections of an



ceeds from the death of people from the Northern Kingdom to the existence, success, and demise of one individual, Mashiach ben Yosef. This would seem a less fantastic leap if R. Dosa [or Rabbanan] were not posing a messianic figure, but relating one to a particular place in *Tanach*. Several facts support this contention.

There is a parallel *derasha* of *yetzer hara*, a known concept fitted to a specific context; Mashiach ben Yosef is used here as a side point and given no explanation (the implication of "that [Mashiach ben Yosef] died" is that they are mourning an event whose future occurrence is known); and the subsequent *beraita*, which may be an earlier source, speaks of Mashiach ben Yosef with no proof text and no explanation. In other words, it would seem that the Talmud's

extant belief. Even more significant is that, unlike the *Bavli* citation, these passages do not explicitly record the death/martyrdom of Mashiach ben Ephraim. Therefore, a continued search for a source, as well as an analysis of this difference, are required.

R. Shmuel bar Nachmani (*Baba Batra* 123b) interprets Ovadia 17, "And the house of Jacob shall be fire, and the house of Joseph flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them..." as an indication "that Esau's seed will be delivered into the hands of Joseph's seed." Some have used this *derasha* to point to this verse as the source for Mashiach ben Yosef. However, the context in Ovadia is not messianic. Rather, it discusses the regular restoration of Yosef and Yehuda, the two kingdoms (Charles C. Torrey, "The Messiah Son of Ephraim," *JBL* 66, p. 257). Furthermore, "Joseph's seed" does not necessarily mean a single triumphant leader. In addition, there is no source here for the death of this Messiah, but as we have seen, that element is not present in many of the traditions.

Charles Torrey (p. 258) also rejects the even more unlikely notion that there are messianic overtones to Moshe's blessing to Joseph, on similar grounds. Instead, he focuses on Isaiah as the source for the dying Messiah. He claims that since the advent of Christianity, Rabbinic tradition shied away from interpreting much of Isaiah in an apocalyptic manner, due to the Christological implications of such an interpretation. However, before the first century, verses such as 42:1 ("...he shall bring forth judgment...") and 52:13 ("Behold, My servant shall prosper...") were viewed as messianic, with 52:9 ("For they made his grave among the wicked...") referring to the demise of the first mashiach. Although Torrey has perhaps found a dying savior figure in *Tanach*, there is no compelling reason in the text to identify this figure with Mashiach ben Yosef strongly enough to be the origin of the tradition.

Louis Ginzberg (cited in David Berger's "Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism," *AJS Review* 10.2 (85), p. 144) has offered another theory for the creation of the Mashiach ben Yosef tradition. His is a typological explanation, based upon the premature

Continued on page 10

MOSHIACH

Be a Part of it!

Part of a Lubavitch Advertisement

and Eli Schick recently interviewed Rabbi Emanuel Schochet about Lubavitch's understanding of Mashiach. Excerpts from the interview follow.

Rabbi Emanuel Schochet is the Rabbi of the Kielev Congregation in Toronto, Ontario. He is also a Professor of Philosophy at Humber College in Toronto; prior to that, he was an Adjunct Professor for Medical Ethics at the Medical School of the University of Toronto. He has written about two dozen books, including a recent book on Mashiach and the Messianic Concept in Halakha: A Jewish Tradition.

Hamevaser: Lubavitch has long utilized aggressive advertising and public relations techniques which have established the Lubavitcher name among the lay community in association with Orthodox Jewry. For example, they often advertise the arrival of certain holidays - the coming of Chanukah, the coming of Pesach, etc. Could you please delineate the general goals Lubavitch tries to fulfill through their aggressive advertising campaigns?

Rav Schochet: The same purpose as advertising tries to achieve in any other field -- to make people aware that a certain thing is available. We claim it is for their benefit -- to bring Jews to an awareness of *Yiddishkeit*. [It is in the spirit of] the *halakha* -- thirty days before a *Yom Tov*, *dorshin behilkos hachag*. You have to *darshan* in the shul -- every Rabbi has an obligation to address [his] community. Once upon a time, there was no advertising, but people used to [gather] in shul. As of thirty days before a *Yom Tov* you have an obligation to make people aware (a) that a *Yom Tov* is coming, (b) what the *halakhos* are, and (c) what they have to look out for, and to therefore make sure that they observe the Torah and *Mitzvos* of the *Yom Tov* in a proper fashion. But there is a condition - you have to have a *halakha* precedent for it.

Hamevaser: Is Lubavitch's advertising then geared specifically toward the Jewish community, or is it geared towards the general secular community as well? The Lubavitchers, aside from advertising in Jewish periodicals and publications has also advertised in the subway, in the New York Times. To which audience are those advertisements geared?

Rav Schochet: I don't understand what you mean by secular community. Do you mean the Gentile community?

Hamevaser: Yes.

Rav Schochet: I don't think that is true at all... The objective of Lubavitch is to make every Jew conscious of his Jewishness, to serve God in his own way. As a matter of fact, Lubavitch won't adopt the school system and *Yeshivos* in Morocco and Tunisia; the Rebbe was very emphatic about not changing Sephardic pronunciation or Sephardic customs and practices. So you can hardly claim that trying to convert them to Lubavitch.

Lubavitch will try to make everybody aware of the teachings of Chassidus. Chassidus is not the private property of Lubavitch. Chassidus is an integral part of Torah - it's *peninim* *hatorah*. Every Jew, as *paskened* in *hilkos Talmud Torah*, has an obligation to study all facets of the Torah, not just *peshat*. One has an obligation of learning *sod* (its secrets) as well. This is not a Chassidic principle - this is a prin-

LONG RANGE FORECASTS: Justifying Messianic Predictions

Yakov Blau

Throughout Jewish history, generation after generation has engaged in messianic speculation. The great desire for the messiah's arrival has caused even the greatest scholars to partake in this dubious practice. At the same time, their efforts aroused constant opposition from those who see great harm as the result of such attempts. Is it, in fact, justifiable to attempt these predictions?

The first of these calculations appears in the Bible, when an angel reveals to Daniel when the *ketz*, or final time of redemption, will occur. These calculations are exceedingly cryptic, and Daniel asks for elucidation (12:8). The angel replies that until the time comes, these calculations will remain hidden (12:9). The Talmud in Tractate Sanhedrin (97b) seems to clearly militate against these calculations when it states, "The bones of those who predict the time [of redemption] should be blasted."

One of the earliest people to attempt a calculation of the *ketz* was Saadia Gaon in the eighth chapter of *Emunot VeDe'ot*. He bases his calculations on the verses in Daniel and feels no need to justify himself for doing so. Maimonides, in his *Iggeret Teman*, takes Saadia to task for this. He first argues that the *ketz* is unknowable, and then repeats the Talmud's warning, claiming that should the messiah not arrive when expected, many will give up hope of his coming. Later, however, he strives to defend Saadia's actions by assuming that Saadia felt it was necessary to give a specific date in order to keep the hope of his particular generation alive. Then, despite his strong warnings against these calculations, Maimonides himself gives a date based on the tradition of his family. Perhaps a similar justification to the one he used for Saadia can account for his own calculations as well.

Many others give no justification for their own calculations, such as Rashi

(Daniel 8:14 and 12:11-12) and Rabbeinu Chananel (quoted by Rabbeinu Bachya on Ex. 12:40). However, others such as Ibn Ezra (Daniel 11:31) and Hasdai Crescas (*Or Hashem, ma'amar 3, kelal 8*, chapter 2) posit that all efforts in this regard are worthless.

Another method of calculation employs *Ma'ase Bereshit*, the story of creation. Rabbeinu Bachya (Gen. 2:3) implemented this method by assuming a correspondence between the seven days of creation and seven millennia of world history. Following this assumption, the creation of man on the sixth day will be paralleled by the Messiah's arrival in the sixth millennium. He also ventures the claim that this arrival will occur after one-tenth of the millennium has passed, since that correlates with the approximate time of sunrise during a day.

Although many of those who attempted to calculate the *ketz* used Daniel or the verses of *Ma'ase Bereshit* as their source, there were those who used astrology. Ibn

Ezra (Daniel 11:31) reports that Ibn Gabirol did so. Likewise, Rabbi Avraham Bar Hiyya, an early medieval philosopher, uses this method in his *Megillat Hamegalle*. He only does this after having already utilized both *Ma'ase Bereshit* and Daniel. He premises his use of this method by saying that it is not necessary to use astrology to arrive at his prediction, and he only does so for those of small faith who engage in secular wisdom. The *Akedat Yitzhak* in the end of Exodus specifically attacks Rav Avraham Bar Hiyya and the usage of astrology as a source. Among other reasons, he posits that should we rely on astrology, and the redemption not come when predicted, there will be a large time period until the constellations properly re-align themselves and foretell his next possible arrival.

In his introduction, Rav Avraham Bar Hiyya lauds the efforts of those who calculate the *ketz*, and claims - contrary to Maimonides's initial concerns - that it

strengthens people's faith. He interprets the verses in Daniel to encourage such calculations, but to caution that many won't be worthy of proper understanding. Finally, he refers to the efforts of his predecessors, particularly Saadia, as a justification of his efforts.

Nachmanides, in the fourth *sha'ar* of his *Sefer Hageula*, feels the need to respond to the Talmud's warning before engaging in his own calculations. He claims that calculating the *ketz* was only prohibited in the time of the Talmud because the time of redemption was far away, and people would be disheartened by the great length. However, says Nachmanides, since we now near the End of Days, this admonition no longer applies. He also argues that since so many predictions have already been given, it won't be damaging to add to the list, because "perhaps it will provide additional comfort [to the people]." He concludes by saying that in any case, his cal-

culations aren't stated as definite, but merely as possible.

Abraham, in *Ma'ayana Hayeshua* (*ma'ayan 1, tamar 2*), claims that the talmudic warning only prohibited the use of astrology, but did not apply to the use of biblical verses as a basis for one's calculations. He also claims that at the time of the *ketz*, its coming will become clearer, thereby giving later generations the right to indulge in predictions.

A quick inspection of the dates offered by these great figures could lead one to question the wisdom of this entire enterprise. The dates range from Saadia's 968 to Abraham's 1503. Clearly, these dates are woefully far from accurate. The best approach to this matter would seem to be hopeful waiting. As Maimonides concludes the twelfth of his thirteen Principles of Faith, "Achake lo bekhol yom sheyavo" - "I will wait for him every day, so he should come."

Lubavitch

Continued from page 6

so forth are trying to bring this to public consciousness.

Hamevaser: When you stress that this era has the potential to be the Messianic era, what parallels specifically would the Rebbe draw between the outline delineated by *Chazal* in the *Midrashim* for the Messianic era and the events that are happening today?

Rav Schochet: Look, first of all, at the description in the *mishnah* at the end of Sotah, the description of *ikvesa dimeshicha* in Sanhedrin (97-99), and then compare that to the events that have been happening in the Middle East, the events that have been happening in Eastern Europe, and, for that matter, the moral condition throughout the world. I mean, you have it right here.

Hamevaser: Is Lubavitch at all concerned that by raising the hopes of so many Jewish people that the coming of *Moshiach* is imminent, that should *Moshiach* not come in time to satisfy them, they could be disappointed and could possibly be turned away from the level of Judaism that they currently observe?

Rav Schochet: This is an issue the *gemara* raises. The *gemara* raises *tipach aznosam shel meshchvei kitzim*, that cursed be the bones of the spirit of those who calculate the end. The *gemara* asks, "Why?" Because if you... calculate, and the calculation may not be correct, people will be disillusioned. They may lose hope, drop the whole faith, and say the whole thing is just baloney. So that is where this idea of fear and apprehension comes from. Yet, the fact is, that throughout the ages, all the *gedolei yisrael*, all the very pillars of halakhic Judaism - Rav Saadia Gaon, Rav Hai Gaon, Rashi, the Ba'alei Hatosfos, Rambam, Ramban, Abarbanel, the Vilna Gaon, the Arizal, you name them - literally every one of them in every generation over the past thousand years has calculated a *keri* (an end). Now, were they not aware of this prohibition? Were they not aware of this apprehension? Were they not aware of being afraid? Especially since this is stated explicitly in the *gemara*? And Rambam elaborates on it in great detail in *Iggeres Teman*?

The answer to that is twofold. Number one, Rambam says in *Sefer Hageula* that the prohibition of *meshchvei kitzim* no longer applies. It applied only when the *geula* was far off, but not to a time [such as ours] in *yemos hamoshiach*, and as of then one is allowed to [calculate]. So therefore you have a halakhic point. Secondly, when they gave these predictions... they should have been even more afraid! Not just that they predicted when *Moshiach* is going to come. These are people with a continuous series of predictions. What greater apprehension could there be than seeing one *gadol beyisrael* after another *gadol beyisrael* - and we are talking about the biggest *gedolei yisrael* - coming up with [self] predictions. Why are they not afraid to do so, and to write and publish about it, that people are going to lose the faith? Obviously, even if one could possibly argue this apprehension, you have here the halakhic concept of *ma'ase rav*, that you see here a *gadol*, a halakhic authority, fully aware of what the *gemara* says, fully aware of these apprehensions, nonetheless doing it, which would indicate that this apprehension is no longer a realistic apprehension. Why not? First of all, historically, I would like to know who has lost his faith because of these predictions?

Hamevaser: Well, many of the people from the Sabbatean movement, as a result of Sabbatai Tzvi having been proven a false Messiah, turned away from their religion.

Rav Schochet: Hold it. The Sabbatean movement is a completely different case because there you are talking [about] a person [who] has declared himself, "I am the *Moshiach*!", and [says], "The Messianic redemption is already here! it's already a fact!" It isn't that he lived

in a time of potential redemption. It isn't that this individual is a potential *Moshiach*. ...They said no - this man is the actual realized *Moshiach* and we are now in the Messianic Age... Once we have that, either [the declaration] is true or it is not true. Since the facts did not prove it, he did not live up to the criteria to prove that he is the *Moshiach*. This, of course, will lead to disillusion.

Hamevaser: Yet the time seemed to be right, in Sabbatai Tzvi's estimation, in that era for the coming of *Moshiach*.

Rav Schochet: The time was right. As a matter of fact, the time that Shabbetai Tzvi came was one of the times that was predicted for the

*Every one of the
times that has been
predicted [for
Moshiach's coming]
achieved something
of the redemption*

Messianic redemption. The point however, is, that somebody came and said, "I am *Moshiach*" and people said the Messianic redemption is already a fact. You have to distinguish between a prediction which may happen in this particular year and saying it has happened already. [Sabbatai Tzvi] claimed it has happened already, and we very soon found out that [he was] false. That is very different than saying it is going to happen at a certain date. The Vilna Gaon and the *Bnei Yisasschar* and the *Tzvi Litzadik*, a commentary on the Zohar, state quite clearly that of all these times that had been predicted, not one of them was a false prediction. Every one of these times that had been predicted achieved something of the redemption. It could have been the real redemption, down here on our physical mundane level; however, because the generation was not fit for that, it did not come down on our level, but it did achieve something on the spiritual level to bring it ever lower down. So saying that the predictions [of *gedolei Yisrael*] are false predictions is absolute *bizayon hatorah*! It shows insolent contempt for the *gedolei Yisrael*. It is in effect saying that they did not know what they were doing -- [that] they did not realize what the *gemara* says [or] what the Rambam says. You are not talking about some Tom, Dick, and Harry in some hick town making a prediction - you are talking about the pillars of halakha, the pillars of what Judaism stands for. So if they did that, they obviously knew what they were doing. So disillusion is a happy thing. Disillusion is good. It means you believe and you did not find it.

Let me give you another quote. In *Michtav Me'eliyahu*, by Rav Eliyahu Dessler, he quotes his father-in-law, precisely about this very concept, and gives the following parable. If you have a very sick person in the house, and you call the doctor, "It's an emergency!", and the doctor promises to come, and you wait for the doctor to come, and then somebody knocks on the door, and you are sure it's the doctor but it's only the mailman. Are you disappointed? Of course you are, but you keep waiting. And then another knock on the door, and it's the grocery man making a delivery. Are you disappointed? Of course you are. And so you get another five, six knocks on the door, and every time you think it's the doctor whom you need, whom you are waiting for, but every time it is somebody else. Are you going to throw in the towel and say, "Oh, to heck with the doctor!"? You're not even going to wait for him anymore? That's absurd! What do you do? The doctor hasn't come yet? [You say], "I'm disappointed that that time it was somebody else. I'm disappointed that this

time he hasn't shown up yet. But I'll keep waiting and waiting and waiting even if it will be a thousand false alarms." So [regarding] the fact that *Moshiach* hasn't come -- the fact that the knock on the door wasn't really the knock of the expected doctor, was not reason for disillusionment in our physical life in our reality here on Earth -- why should we then be disillusioned when it comes to our spiritual life? And people who say that they are going to disillusioned are using this as a copout.

Hamevaser: You noted earlier that one aspect of Sabbatai Tzvi's prediction that distinguished it from other predictions throughout history is that he wrongly claimed himself to be the *Moshiach*, and that he had actually arrived. Many Lubavitch chasidim today seem to be proclaiming the Rebbe as the *Moshiach* who has either already come or will be arriving shortly. Are these chasidim faithfully portraying the Rebbe's personal views regarding the coming of the *Moshiach* in this era? Does Lubavitch believe, or does the Rebbe himself believe, that he is *Moshiach*?

Rav Schochet: To know what the Rebbe believes, you have to ask the Rebbe himself. Do the Lubavitch believe that the Rebbe is *moshiach*? Most definitely yes; either that the Rebbe is the *Moshiach*, or that the Rebbe is the potential *Moshiach* of this generation. This, again, is a halakha; it comes from our tradition that in every generation there is a living person in our midst who is the potential *Moshiach* to redeem this generation. The Chasam Sofer writes in a *teshuvah* (responsum) [in volume 6, I think its number 98], and the Bartenura states quite explicitly in his commentary on *Megillas Rus*, that in every generation there is a person of *zera David* (the seed of David) or *zera Yehuda* (the seed of Judah) who is the potential *Moshiach* for his generation, and if the generation is fit, he will be sent by God to redeem the people.

Moreover, many *seforim* mention that the *talmidim* (students) of the Arizal said of him that he is the *Moshiach*, the *talmidim* of the Vilna Gaon said of him that he is the *Moshiach*, the *talmidim* of the Chida said of him that he is the *Moshiach*; you find [such occurrences] throughout history. The precedent for that is the *gemara* in Sanhedrin, [which] asks, "What is the name of the *Moshiach*?" The *gemara* answers: The students of Rabbi Shilo said "Shilo shmo," his name is Shilo. The students of Yannai said, "Yannai shmo," Yannai is his name. Rashi says that each one gave the name of his *rebbe*, which means - and many commentators explain - that each one says that his *rebbe* is the appropriate candidate to be the *Moshiach*

*In every generation
there is a living person
in our midst who
is the potential
Moshiach to redeem
this generation.*

for his generation. [More recently], [Rabbi] Isser Zalman Meltzer, the *Even Ha'azul*, said of the Chazon Ish that he is probably the *Moshiach* of his generation.

So the concept of looking to your *rebbe* [as the potential *Moshiach*] is something that is... halakhically and historically sanctioned, and has always been done by *gedolei Yisrael*. So if a Lubavitcher chasid feels that his Rebbe is *Moshiach*, I think it is a most appropriate feeling. [Similarly], there is nothing wrong with a Gerrer chasid saying simultaneously that the Gerrer rebbe is *Moshiach*, nor is there anything wrong with him believing that someone else is *Moshiach*. Who might it actually be? That, only time will tell. But for a *talmid* to recognize in his *rebbe* that which is *psakened* in the

gemara and in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* that your *rebbe* should look like a *malakh Hashem tzavkos*, literally like a *melekh* (a king), and second, that he be a person, then he would then be a likely candidate to be the potential *Moshiach* to redeem his particular generation.

Hamevaser: Given that the Lubavitch so fervently recognize the Rebbe as this potential figure, how would Lubavitch respond to criticisms from other Orthodox groups regarding this idealization, or what some extreme critics might call an idolization, of the Rebbe?

Rav Schochet: Why should Lubavitch have to respond to that... Lubavitch activity is something uniquely Lubavitch. If others have not found amongst their *rebbes* and their *Roshai Yeshiva* another likely candidate, that's their problem. But Lubavitch [does not have to answer a] question whether a Lubavitch should regard his Rebbe as the potential *Moshiach* for this generation... because that is a basic, halakhic precedent; there is nothing wrong with that... If all the sources point in that direction, and this is a legitimate exercise, then I don't have to answer that.

You said another thing: idolization. We already have a world of those who criticize Lubavitchers and say, "How could they say about a person that he is *Moshiach*," [and] these very same people - and this includes some *Roshai Yeshivos* - [are] completely under the influence of Christianity. They have... a concept, an idea of *Moshiach* as some sort of a semi-God. This is *apikorsus*. *Moshiach* is flesh and blood, a human being born of a mother and a father, a normal human being like you and I, and just that he is a *tzaddik*, just that he is a person with unusual qualities, and when his time comes a person who will be chosen by God to redeem the people. But those who would accuse Lubavitch of idolization in one respect are themselves guilty of idolatry, because what they are doing, in effect, is making *Moshiach* an idol. *Moshiach* is not an idol; *Moshiach* is like you and I. No different; just greater. That's all.

Hamevaser: Many people fear that the proliferation of the image of the Rebbe in all Lubavitcher synagogues and other religious buildings has created an image of the Rebbe that he is infallible, something a little bit more than a person. Would you have any response to the perceived creation of this public image of the Rebbe through the omnipresence of the Rebbe's picture at all Lubavitch gatherings?

Rav Schochet: Isn't the picture of the President of the United States in every post office and every Federal building?

Hamevaser: Those aren't religious institutions. **Rav Schochet:** One second. Isn't the picture of the Queen in every government institution of the British commonwealth?... Do you have pictures of your parents? Do you have pictures of people that you really care about, that you really look up to, that you take as a symbol of your love and respect?...

In my Lubavitcher home, the Rebbe is to me not just Rebbe. The Rebbe is to me my father, the Rebbe is to me my guide, the Rebbe is to me my inspiration, the Rebbe is to me my mentor. I look up to the Rebbe more than I look up to any other person in this world. And... I have a personal love towards the Rebbe, the same as I would have towards my own father, even more so. But that is again halakha: *avedas aviv, avedas rabo, avedas rabo kodemes*; [the loss of] your Rebbe takes precedence over your parents. [At a] Lubavitcher institution, our institution, we are guided, we are influenced, we are inspired by our Rebbe. This is the man whom we are inspired by and here he is hanging on the wall.

Even on a purely spiritual level, the *gemara* [relates] that when Yosef was sold to Egypt... and was being seduced by the wife of Potiphar, he was ready to succumb to the seduction; he was ready to commit that sin. What saved him the last minute? The last split second? *Demus deyukno shel aviv* - he saw the image of his father before his eyes. So seeing the image of his father, seeing the image of his spiritual mentor, seeing the image of his *rebbe* before

his eyes, prevented him from sinning, because he realized, "How can I face my father again after having committed such a sin? How can I, the son of this tzaddik, possibly go and commit such a sin?" Similarly, since I am connected with a tzaddik, a tzaddik whom I regard as a *neshama klalis*,... I see his image before me [as] a physical reminder...

But tell me, have you not been in homes of people of the *misnagdim*, of people who follow Rabbi Shach of Bnei Brak, have you not seen pictures in their homes, literally in every room, of Rabbi Shach? Or of the Steipler? Or of the Chazon Ish?... I have no problem with that. Why, then, should anyone have a problem if I have pictures of the Rebbe in my house? They have pictures of their parents in their house; they have pictures of their children in their house, they have pictures of their children's weddings, to keep them as a happy reminder. I have no problem with that. Why, then, do I have a problem if I have a reminder of my spiritual parent? Of my spiritual mentor? Of the one that I look up to?

Hamevaser: How does Lubavitch view other Jewish messianic groups who are not predict-

ing but anticipating the coming of the Third Temple Era; for example, the Temple Mount Faithful who are attempting to build the Third Temple today?

Rav Schochet: I don't know what their agenda is. Lubavitch, however, is guided exclusively by halakha. The third *beis hamikdash* [will be] one of two things. According to Rambam, Rashi and Tosfos, the third *beis hamikdash* comes straight from God himself. So to say, "I am going to attempt to build a Temple now," is sheer lunacy, unless that person can show to me that he is *Moshiach*. So I am not interested in that people who also may believe in *Moshiach*, and who also may have a messianic agenda, but any messianic agenda must be guided and controlled exclusively and strictly by a halakic framework. Anything else is nonsense. As long as it stays within halakha, we have no problem with it.

Hamevaser: Does anyone know what kind of view the Rebbe has for the future of Lubavitch, particularly in the event that *Moshiach's* arrival will be delayed until after the Rebbe's lifetime (he should live and be well)?

Rav Schochet: The *midrash* has a story of - I

think it was Rabbi Yehoshua, but I don't remember right now - who was asked a similar question, and he answered to the Roman Emperor like this: "Tell me, when your son was born, were you happy?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Did you make a celebration?"

"Yes."

"Did you have great festivities?"

"Yes."

"But did you not know at the time that your son was born that the time may come when he will die, that he will leave this world, that it is only a temporary stay that you are here?"

The Emperor answered him, "What kind of ridiculous question is this? At a time like that you don't even consider these things. Sure, they may be part of reality. But you don't consider these things. You deal with the present situation. Why should I even consider anything of that sort?"

Rambam *paskens* that we are to await and anticipate the coming of the *Moshiach* literally every day. The Brisker Rav says of this that you must literally believe that the *Moshiach* can come this very day, and not just this very day,

but *haye shushan k'vina kol hayom* - all day long, every second of the day you should expect *Moshiach*. So why should I start contemplating, "Yeah, but what am I going to do a hundred years down the road if a hundred years down the road he has not come?" It does not mean I am going to put my hands in my pocket and retire right now since *Moshiach* is going to come any moment. I carry on my life normally now - I still have a house, I still have a mortgage, I still go to my job, I don't sit in the house... look out the window, and say, "Nu, nu, nu, nu, where's *Moshiach*?" *Sodam keminhago nobeg*. We will carry on planning as of now for the here and now. But by the same token, to start considering, "Oy vey, but what am I going to do twenty years down the road if such and such a possibility will arise," is an unrealistic thing. Am I planning for the other possibilities? How many possibilities can take into consideration...? So preparing takes place in terms of the here and now. What will be tomorrow? We must take each day as it comes. But my *emunah* (belief), my *bitachon* (faith) is that *Moshiach* will come any moment. The rest is up to God.

The Messiah... NOT!: A Brief Overview

Aharon Fischman

For almost two thousand years, Jews have kept alive the hope for the impending arrival of *Moshiach*. This has been an article of faith that only the messiah may serve as the means of redeeming the Jewish nation from exile and returning her to the Land of Israel. Though the date of the Messiah's arrival has always been shrouded in mystery, its lure has led many to attempt to divine it. Most of these predicted dates have come and gone, and are merely footnotes to the long saga of Jewish history. For some, however, date divination alone did not suffice. There were individuals who not only predicted the imminent arrival of the messiah, but identified themselves as God's anointed, arrived to fulfill the promise of a return to Jewish sovereignty.

Despite the incredulity with which moderns greet the claim, several historical characters who have professed messianic identity have attracted significant followings. Ultimately, however, their movements were doomed to collapse. Despite the passage of time, these movements and their leaders continue to present a fascinating chapter in the history of the Jewish nation.

One of the first of many pseudo-messiahs of stature was Abraham Abulafia, a Spanish scribe. He began his career by unsuccessfully seeking the legendary river "Sambation." Upon his return from this failed journey, he began to study Kabbalah. During the course of these studies, Abulafia became convinced that he had received a message directing him to convert Pope Nicholas III to Judaism. Further messages informed him that he was the messiah, and charged him to proceed to Italy to execute his mission of converting the Pope. His mission did not achieve success, and only the death of his target, the Pope, allowed him to escape Rome with his life. Upon retreat to Sicily, he began to attract a following who believed in his messianic claim. His crusade, however, was halted by Rabbi Ibn Adret, a famous defender of Judaism, who publicly disproved Abulafia. Abulafia's movement lost its momentum, and he died unrecognized in 1292.

A strange series of events preceded the appearance of another pseudo-messiah. This events began with the arrival of a shortish man in the Vatican one day in 1525. On behalf of the King of Tartary, a kingdom of Jews, he requested munitions with which to fight the Turks, alongside the remnants of the Crusades. This man, David Reuveni, had his surprising request granted, and he was referred to the king of Portugal to collect the promised munitions. Astounded at the sight

of a Jew receiving such stature, some Portuguese Jews began to hail Reuveni as messiah. Fearing the consequences, Reuveni fled to Italy. Reuveni never asserted his identity as the messiah, and it is unclear whom he represented as a delegate to the Vatican.

Reuveni's odyssey in Portugal did, however, inspire another individual to declare himself messiah. Diego Pires, a marrano, was influenced by Reuveni's appearance to return to Judaism and adopted the name Solomon Molko. He began to study Talmud and Kabbalah, and commenced to believe that he was the messiah. He was successful in attracting followers, but his movement faltered when he was humiliated at a public disputation. Undaunted, he began to garner followers in the lands surrounding the Vatican territories. He achieved sufficient renown to demand an audience with the Pope, at which he predicted that an earthquake would occur in Portugal. Despite his popularity, two factors induced Molko's downfall. First, he published one of his anti-Christian works in Latin, alienating the Vatican and his supporters there. Second, his movement was opposed by a large majority of Jews. Ultimately, Reuveni and Molko were both killed by the Inquisition, and the messianic movements which had surrounded them dwindled swiftly following their deaths.

The most famous and influential of the false messiahs was Sabbatai Zevi. Sabbatai was a scholar who studied and taught the Zohar with a group of fellow kabbalists. Their studies convinced them that the messiah was due to arrive in 1648. During that year, Sabbatai arose in his synagogue in Moren, pronounced the ineffable name, and, by virtue of his ability to pronounce that name, declared himself messiah. Vehemently opposed to Sabbatai, the rabbis of Moren excommunicated him from the community. Sabbatai was forced to wander, during which time he began to gather supporters. Rebuffed in Constantinople, he continued on to Egypt where he was warmly received and attracted many followers. He then proceeded to Israel, to await the impending messianic miracles.

Meanwhile, "prophets" had begun to emerge, asserting divine approval of Sabbatai's endeavors. A Polish woman, Sarah, predicted Sabbatai's reign and her eventual marriage to him. Her subsequent marriage to him seemed to confirm the validity of the prophethood, and of the messiah that she supported.

Sabbatai's stature began to decline when he felt compelled to demand the surrender of the ruler of Constantinople upon his arrival to that

city. The ruler refused to surrender, and, fearing that killing Sabbatai would transform him into a martyr, instead confined Sabbatai in jail. Despite his imprisonment, Sabbatai's supporters accorded him royal treatment, to the extent of orchestrating his sacrifice of a Paschal lamb.

During the course of Sabbatai's incarceration, however, a European "prophet" declared that the messiah had arrived, but that the messiah was not Sabbatai. Sabbatai summoned the "prophet," but was unable to dissuade him from his proclamation. Fearing for his life, the "prophet" converted to Islam, and informed his new co-religionists of Sabbatai's plans to conquer Turkey and its surrounding areas. Upon receipt of this news, the ruler offered Sabbatai a choice between conversion and death. Shock-

ingly, Sabbatai elected to convert. Confronted with this astounding event, most of Sabbatai's disciples abandoned their plans to follow him to Israel, and returned to their former lives. Some, however, maintained that a dummy had converted in Sabbatai's stead, and that his return to the faith was imminent. Sabbatai died on Yom Kippur, 1676, as Mehemet Effendi.

The one constant theme that unifies all cases of false messiahs is the true hope of the people for the eventual coming of the true Messiah, their redeemer. In the past, individuals such as Abulafia, Molko, and Sabbatai exploited that hope to further their personal interests. By no means, however, should we allow these events to mitigate our hope and belief in *Moshiach's* ultimate arrival.

The Azrieli Graduate Institute for Supervision and Administration of Jewish Schools

announces the opening of a

Masters Degree Block Program

The Masters Degree Block Program is offering 4 courses this coming summer at SCW. Two courses during the school year 1992-93 will be part of this program and the concluding 4 courses will be given during the summer of 1993 in Israel.

For more information, contact:

Dr. Yitzchak Handel, Dean of Azrieli, at 340-7705, after 3 P.M.

If you are accepted into the Block program you will benefit from a generous scholarship as well as enhancing your professional education.

Mashiach Ben Yosef

Continued from page 7

departure of *benei Ephraim* from Egypt, a story which ends with death in battle (*Mekhila, Beshalach*). This aborted redemption is followed, of course, by the Exodus from Egypt, suggesting that these events of the first redemption will be repeated in the Messianic Age.

This theory has been attacked (Aptowitzer, cited in Heinemann, Joseph. "The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim," *Harvard Theological Review*, Jan. 1975, p. 4) on the grounds that the role of *Mashiach ben Yosef* does not truly parallel that of *benei Ephraim*. There is a negative attitude towards the latter; their attempt at early redemption is viewed as sinful. No such criticism is made of *Mashiach ben Yosef*. Furthermore, it is not clear that the relationship of *benei Ephraim* to the Exodus is the same as that of *Mashiach ben Yosef* to *Mashiach ben David*. The demise of *benei Ephraim* does not facilitate redemption, and the sole parallel is in miracles, "not sacrilegious undertakings, not catastrophes" (Aptowitzer, qtd. in Berger, p. 144). *Mashiach ben Yosef*, on the other hand, fights the battles of Gog and Magog, making way for the ultimate redemption. *Mashiach ben Yosef* is characterized as a hero, albeit a dying one.

Based on this analysis, Heinemann (p. 8) proceeds to rearrange the chronological order of the Talmud, which speaks of the death of *Mashiach ben Yosef*, and the later *midrashim*, which do not. He claims that if death were so implicit in the concept of *Mashiach ben Yosef*, it would not be omitted. The fact that several versions of the story do not incorporate death indicates that they are unaware of, and therefore precede, this part of the tradition. Hence, the question of which second century event could precipitate the notion of a dying first Messiah remains intact. Heinemann's obvious answer is the Bar Kokhba revolt. Here we find an event touted by none other than R. Akiva as the advent of *mashiach*, and the key figure was killed. This resulted in a reinterpretation of the events as pre-Messianic, with a tragic death associated with the "first" *mashiach*.

David Berger (p. 146) objects to the reordering of the accounts without a more compelling reason. Additionally, if Heinemann is correct, Sukkah 52a is the first source which includes death as an integral part of the *Mashiach ben Yosef* tradition. As we have seen, the Talmud does not lend itself to this conclusion, for death is assumed knowledge and not presented as a new concept. Berger asserts that the positive attitude towards *Mashiach ben Yosef* is in no way mitigated by his death; this figure may be the quintessential tragic hero. With this, Berger returns to the typological explanation. Maintaining the chronological order of the *midrashim*, the earlier ones contain the death images, and lack some of the spectacular heroic overtones of the later Rabbinic accounts. This perspective brings us much closer to *benei Ephraim*; they are not heroes as much as dying predecessors of redemption.

Berger's typological approach leaves many questions regarding the character and identity of *Mashiach ben Ephraim*. If he is indeed based upon *benei Ephraim*, what characterizes him as a messianic figure? Does he have a sin, as they do, for which he must die? To what extent should we draw the parallel to *benei Ephraim*—does *Mashiach ben Yosef* in fact play an integral role in the ultimate redemption? Also worthy of exploration is the Rabbinic attitude towards *benei Ephraim*; was it more positive in earlier (second century) accounts than in later ones?

Regardless of a possible grounding of the *Mashiach Ben Yosef* tradition in historical circumstance, it is difficult to ignore that the two Messiahs, of Ephraim and of David, represent

the tribes of *Yehuda* and *Yosef*. The struggle between these two brotherly dates back to the sale of *Yosef*. At this point in Genesis, it is time to determine which of Jacob's children will carry the mandate of leadership, or *bekhorah*. In each generation, one son has been selected: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau. In the family of Jacob, there are two wives of equal stature—as opposed to handmaids like Hagar, Bilhah and Zilpah; it is clear that they each have a *bekhor*. Leah's first three sons have already been rejected as candidates, a fact evidenced by their father's blessings (Gen 49:4-6). Therefore, *Yehuda* is next in line for the leadership role. We are then told of *Yosef* as a favored son (37:3) who dreams of a position of dominion over his family. He too appears to be stepping towards the *bekhorah*.

From *Yehuda's* suggestion that *Yosef* be sold rather than killed, it seems that his personal animosity towards his brother stretches only as far as concern for family position, or for its future development. His question of "mah betza (37:26)," what benefit is there in killing *Yosef*, implies that the same goal could be achieved through the sale: *Yosef* could be out of the picture, removed from the family as an unsuitable leader.

The parallel development of *Yosef* and *Yehuda* continues as the *Yosef* story of chapters 37 and 39 is interrupted with the episode of *Yehuda* and *Tamar*. Both chapters 38 and 39 begin with a *yeridah*: "vayered *Yehuda me'et echav*" and *Yehuda* went down from his brothers' and "ve*Yosef* hurad *Mitzrayim*" and *Yosef* was brought down to Egypt." The Torah clearly focuses upon these two brothers, and they experience direct contact again in chapter 44, with *Judah* pleading before *Joseph* on behalf of *Benjamin*. *Benjamin's* presence here parallels the events with *Yosef* prior to the sale; this time, *Yehuda* passes the test. He apparently now knows that *Rachel's* children have a role to play as well.

The dual nature of the national leadership on the level of the brothers is evidenced in Jacob's blessings to *Yehuda*, from whom "the staff shall not depart (49:10)," and *Yosef*, for blessings will be "on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brothers." These tribes are singled out in Moshe's blessings as well (Deut. 33), with the nationalistic side of *Yehuda* emphasized ("and bring him to his people" (v.7)) and *Yosef* receiving a lengthy blessing which speaks of the goodness of the land, again with "ulekodkod *nezir echav* (v. 16)."

The account of the brothers in *Chronicles* (5:1-2) strengthens the notion of dual leadership: "...his [Reuven's] birthright was given to the sons of *Yosef* the son of *Yisrael*, but not as to have the birthright attributed to him by genealogy. For *Yehuda* prevailed over his brothers, and of him came the chief ruler, though the birthright was *Yosef's*." Rashi here elaborates that the transference of the *bekhorah* was from *Reuven* to *Yosef*, *bekhor Leah* to *bekhor Rachel*, while *melukha*, kingship, was always reserved for *Yehuda*. *Yosef* does seem to reap some benefits of the firstborn; due to his split into two tribes, he gets the firstborn's right to the double portion.

These two tribes, *Yehuda* and *Ephraim*, are singular in their military strength. More importantly, they each house the House of God; *Yosef* temporarily in *Shiloh*, and *Yehuda* permanently in *Jerusalem*. The *Joseph/Judah* divide appears again in the splitting of the Kingdom into *Yehuda* and the northern *Israel*, represented by *Ephraim*. Rav A.I. Kook ("Hamisped biYerushalayim," *Ma'amarei haRa'aya*, Jerusalem, 1984, pp.94-99) uses these factors to characterize *Yehuda* as a separatist, maintaining that only a centralized *kedushat Yisrael* can remain distinct. *Yosef*, on the other hand, sees this *kedushat Yisrael* as best manifested when spread throughout the

people and nations. Hence, a mobile *Mishkan*, with the permissibility of *bamot*, is followed by a permanent *Beit Mikdash* whose activities are restricted to this one place. This is reflected in the original personalities as well, with *Yosef* thriving in Egypt and *Yehuda* terrified of any contact with it.

The *Yosef* who responds well to decentralization is typified in the role of *Mashiach Ben Yosef*. According to the Vilna Gaon ("Kol haTor," p. 468), this messiah has three major responsibilities: revelation of Torah secrets, ingathering of the exiles, and eradicating impurity from the Land. Only a *Josephite* can accomplish this, reaching out to the general populace and allowing himself to have "tainted" contacts. His position as vanquisher of the en-

emy also reveals his more outgoing, external nature.

Why, then, must such a messiah die? Rav Kook ("Yosef veYehuda," *Shemuot Ra'aya*, Jerusalem, 1939) develops *Yosef's* more external nature in a negative direction, as well. *Yosef* is also the more physical, material, as opposed to *Yehuda's* spiritual quality. A nation requires both of these aspects in order to survive and flourish. Ideally, they are both embodied in a single leader; the split in the kingdom manifested a situation far from ideal. Eventually, forces of the physical and of the spiritual begin to oppose each other, rather than complementing each other as part of the same unit. When this is the case, it is the spiritual side which must always prevail. *Mashiach Ben Yosef* plays a crucial role in *geula*. The key, according to Rav Kook, is to recognize the limited scope of this role, so that the two forces can again be united under *Mashiach ben David*.

Tefila

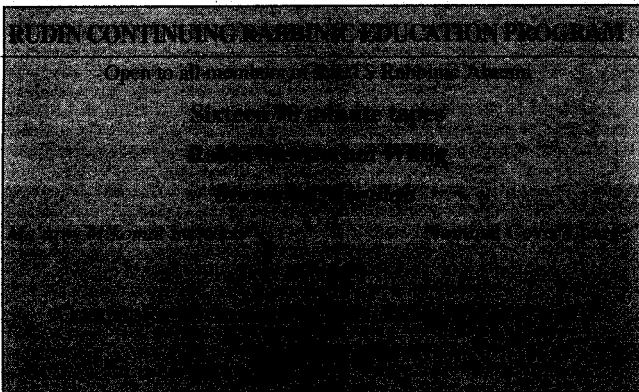
Continued from page 4

tefila betzibbur.

This new comprehension of *chazarat hashatz* should also have ramifications on commonly accepted notions and practices regarding *tefila* nowadays. It is a routine practice to convene a *minyan* for *mincha*, only to replace the *chazarat hashatz* with an abridged version which stops after *kedusha*. This habit, though it conserves time, is incorrect as it deprives the *minyan* of the opportunity to fulfill this obligation of *tefila betzibbur*. In fact, Rav Y. Soloveitchik often

cautioned against this practice, recommending the recitation of the entire *Chazarat Hashatz*. It is also well known that women cannot be counted toward the required number of men to complete a *Minyan*. Nevertheless, in *tefila betzibbur*, women can and must contribute to the power of the *tzibbur*, by having the proper concentration during the repetition. That women are not counted towards a *qorum* in know way influences the potency of their prayer, and the effect they can have on the overall *tefila betzibbur*.

With this new understanding of *tefila betzibbur*, we can now honestly sing: We need You, we need your Tephilah, Each and every Yid can bring the Geulah, Don't talk, just daven, And your Tephilah can reach Hashem.



Letters

Continued from page 2

advocated by Dr. Soloveitchik. Assertions that non-halakhic social biases were at the root of Tosafist responsa concerning the consumption of certain foods, or that the justification by some Ashkenazic Rishonim of certain forms of Jewish martyrdom were their distortions of halakha which were influenced by historical circumstances are most certainly examples of "introducing history into halakhic thought". Additionally, if we were to accept the validity of such highly objectionable interpretations, there may very well be a case for "drawing from this... halakhic conclusions". If a given halakhic position is predicated upon a set of social biases or legal distortions, there may very well be reason to alter conclusions.

Dr. Soloveitchik's final proof for the acceptability of Revel's approach was the fact that the Rav himself lectured in Jewish Philosophy under the school's auspices. I believe that this assertion also lacks soundness. Several of Revel's staunchest supporters have distinguished between today's Revel and the Revel of yesteryear, in which hard-line Talmud criticism was taught, yet the Rav nevertheless associated his name with the school. Certainly, his association with Revel is absolutely no indication of his sanctioning of the school's curricula or approach as a whole.

Again, I am in no way being vindictive. My opinion is focused on ideas, not on individuals. I pray that the present school wide contention concerning Revel's proposed closing soon end and that true Torah unity be manifest in *Klal Yisrael*.

Avrohom Gordimer
YC '89, RIETS '93

[Ed. Note: Since the submission of this letter, Yeshiva University has announced its plans to maintain the Bernard Revel Graduate School according to the recommendations of the Task Force.]

In Memoriam: Ten Years After the Passing of Rabbi Moshe Besdin, z"l

Rabbi Yosef Goldberg

In thinking of Rav Moshe Besdin, z"l, ten years after his passing, the Aggadic passage at the end of Sotah (49b) leaps to my mind: "Our Rabbis taught, 'When R. Eliezer died, the *Sefer Torah* was hidden away. When R. Yehoshua died, counsel and thought ceased. When R. Akiva died, the might of Torah ceased and the fountains of wisdom were sealed off. When R. Eliezer b. Azariah died, the crown of sages disappeared.... When R. Chaninah b. Dosa died, men of (great) deeds disappeared. When R. Yosef b. Katisha died, men of great piety disappeared.... When Ben Azzai died, men of exceptional diligence disappeared. When Ben Zoma died the great preachers disappeared. When R. Shimon ben Gamliel died, plagues of locusts appeared and an era of great misery was entered into. When Rebbe died, the misery doubled in intensity. When Rebbe died, humility and fear of sin disappeared.'"

In this passage, the Talmud powerfully expresses the sentiment that on rare occasions certain spiritual giants in our history have, in their passing, left a unique void that was felt with unusual perception by the generation which venerated them.

I am certain that the thousands of students who studied with Rav Moshe Besdin profoundly feel such a void and would agree that the declaration: "With the passing of Rav Moshe Besdin, extraordinary teaching ceased," would not be mere hyperbole. Ten years after his passing I still find it difficult to conceive of a JSS without his presence; to imagine students who will never thrill to the experience of being taught by a master of *Chinuch* what it means to love Rashi, adore Ramban, and be in awe of Rambam.

My thoughts turn back to those halcyon days in the late 1960's when there was still daily maid service in the Y.U. dormitories, and students would turn down the Ivy Leagues, choosing instead to be introduced to the study of holy texts and the proper performance of *mitzvot* by Rav Besdin and the outstanding faculty he had handpicked.

Rav Moshe Besdin was a dynamic man with a warm, magical smile, a razor sharp intellect and an immense and passionate love for Torah. He was a master teacher who worked hard at his craft. Each of his lessons was an art form. His notion of the ideal pedagogue was a *rebbe* who was a thorough master of his material, yet had the self restraint to control his own desire for intellectual self-expression, and instead geared his lessons towards the level and limitations of his students. I often heard him say that the commentary of Maharsha on Rashi and *Tosafot* is much more complex, demanding, and stimulating than the commentary of Maharam, but that a great *melamed* should choose to teach young and tender students the Maharam.

Rav Besdin took pride in his teaching prowess. He would relate a story about one of his daughters who, as a little girl in early elementary school, asked for his help in studying for a *bechina* in a subject with which she was having some difficulty. As a result of her father's help, the child received a perfect score. When her teacher expressed some surprise as to how well she had done, she told the teacher, "My father taught me; and when my father teaches me I stay taught." When telling this story to his students, he would open his mouth with an almost magical grin and say, "And when I teach you, you'll stay taught too."

Teaching students to be self-sufficient in the Hebrew and Aramaic texts so that they could move on to the Yeshiva was his expressed goal. His famous motto was "In JSS we study it, not about it." Much time was spent in his *Chumash*

classes drilling students repeatedly in the proper reading and translation of the classic commentaries that are found in the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* (I remember Rav Besdin pointing out that the name *Mikra'ot Gedolot* was an example of a grammatical error that became popularized - it should be *Mikra'ot Gedolim*). However, the soul of the *shiurim* came from the lucid, and often inspiring insights with which Rav Besdin explained the *Chumash* and its commentaries. For example:

Rashi on *Bereshit* 6:7 comments: "Even they (the animals) corrupted their ways." Rav Besdin offered an original explanation based upon the kabalistic concept of the four classes of creations - *domem* (non-living), *tzome'ach* (the plant kingdom), *chai* (the animal kingdom) and *medaber* (humanity). The purpose of all creation is to serve the Creator. Before the Flood, the animal kingdom existed to be offered as sacrifices by mankind. The animals fed upon plants, which in turn received their nutrition from the minerals of the soil. It was man who completed the current of spiritual electricity by worshipping *Hashem* in a fashion that utilized and therefore justified the entirety of creation. In becoming evil, man short-circuited this spiritual electric current and thus it was as if the animals had also become corrupted, for their existence was no longer directed towards the service of God.

In *Parshat Vayetze* (*Bereshit* 28:16), commenting on the phrase "*V'anochi lo yadati*," Rav Besdin quoted the Kotzker Rebbe who translated the *pasuk* as, "I didn't know the meaning of *anochi*." The Kotzker Rebbe saw Ya'akov's statement not as an apology for having slept at a holy site, but as a justification. In other words, "*Anochiut lo yadati*" - "I had no egotism whatsoever." Ya'akov's every action was devoted to serving *Hashem*; he had no sense of egotism or self-gratification other than that.

In *Parshat Vayishlach* (*Bereshit* 32:5) Rashi's comments on "*Im Lavan garti*..." that Ya'akov told Esav, "You have no reason to hate me because the blessing '*Hevai Gevir l'achechah*' was not fulfilled in me (*lo nitkaymah bi*)." Rav Besdin postulated that one could read the Rashi as "*lo nitkayim ha'bi*" - the letters "*bi*" (*bet* and *yud*) of the word *gevir* were never fulfilled; only the letters *gimel* and *resh* remain, which spell *ger* (stranger).

In *Parshat Vayeshev* (*Bereshit* 39:11) Rashi comments that as Yosef was tempted to sin with

the wife of Potiphar, the image (*demut deyukno*) of Ya'akov appeared to him. When teaching this, Rav Besdin took the opportunity to explain to his students that they too must have someone for whom they have great respect, whose memory will come to mind at times of temptation and prevent them from sinning.

"In *Parshat Vayigash* (*Bereshit* 46:15) Ramban takes Ibn Ezra to task for his difficulties with the midrash which states that Yocheved was born as the *B'nei Yisrael* were entering *Mitzraim*, asserting that "*zahav rote'ach*" - molten gold - should be poured down the throat of that sage for his criticism of the midrash. Rav Besdin pointed out that gold, not lead, was Ramban's choice of punishment. Even in a strong condemnation, Ramban still had great respect for Ibn Ezra.

Rav Besdin received immense satisfaction from his former students who went on to excel in the Yeshiva, many becoming fine *Talmidei Chachomim*. Great emphasis was also placed on a guidance system meant to help his students deal with all of their personal difficulties, given his profound interest in their total development. He dealt with many difficult and heart-rending questions, such as: "My father beats me if he sees me putting on my *Tefillin* in the morning. Is it all right if I put them on when I come home from school?" Similarly, the first year I taught in JSS, we had a student whose father, upon being informed that his son was going to attend YU and JSS, calmly picked up a frying pan and smashed it down on the boy's hand, breaking it. Such stories were not uncommon in JSS. Rav Besdin had a special place in his heart for all of these students and their individual needs.

Students also learned incredible lessons in *menshlichkeit* from Rav Besdin. His love for and devotion to his wife and children were clear to all. He took great pride in his family as well as in his faculty and students.

In the years before his passing, the student body of JSS had changed greatly from that of the golden years in the late Sixties and early Seventies. The Hebrew school movement of America had become virtually extinct. Hebrew schools had been the original source of students for JSS, YU Seminar, and NCSY. Now this was no longer the case, as students who would have been in Hebrew schools a decade before were either in Day Schools or were receiving no Jewish education of any kind. Without the Hebrew school system to provide its student body, and

with the growing success of the "Irum" *Bu'alei Teshuvah yeshivot*, the population of JSS became primarily students who, despite having spent several years (or all of their lives) in *yeshivot* or Day Schools, were still incapable of reading or understanding the holy texts in their original language. The challenge of teaching these students, from a pedagogic perspective, became an even greater one than before. Now, instead of the precocious and gifted students of the earlier years of JSS's history, the Rebbeim were faced with a less motivated student body. Rav Besdin rose to the challenge as only he could.

With age, Rav Besdin developed heart problems. I remember walking alongside him after lunch and having to pause with him in the middle of the Amsterdam Avenue crossing as he fought to catch his breath. He told me, on one such occasion, that he could not think of slowing down, living a less active life than that to which he was accustomed.

The last time that I saw him was on a seventy-degree day in early April, the last day of school before *Pesach*. Oddly, the weather forecasters were predicting a blizzard for the next day. Rav Besdin had a long-standing practice of giving an optional *shiur* on the *Haggadah* after formal sessions had closed before *Pesach*. I had first sat spellbound and awed by the mastery and magic of his *Haggadah* *shiur* some thirteen years before. I mentioned to him that heavy snow was expected the next day, and since I lived nearby in the Bronx, I could fill in for him. He never took me up on my offer.

The next day, as a fierce blizzard raged across New York City, a great *Rebbe* whose life was totally dedicated to the teaching of Torah struggled in his car on a long trek from Kew Gardens to Yeshiva. He gave his class and returned home. The following morning he experienced chest pains and checked himself into a hospital. On the first day of *Chol haMoed Pesach*, Shabbos Kodesh, a day he loved so much and which he had taught thousands of students to love and cherish, the presence of his holy *Neshamah* was requested at the heavenly *Beis Din*. The following day, the day of his burial, the temperature had returned to the seventies.

Rabbi Yosef Goldberg is the Rabbi of the Young Israel of Wavecrest and Bayswater.

The Azrieli Graduate Institute announces the introduction of an experimental course to be offered in the 1992-93 academic year to students pursuing a Masters degree at Azrieli. The course is entitled

JED 5211: The Development and Methodology of Halakha

To introduce the course,

Rabbi Yonasan Sacks

will deliver a *shiur*, open to all interested parties, on

Tuesday, April 7

Stern College, Room 507

Reflections Upon Teenage Sin

Dov Chelst

You are now twenty. Seven or eight years ago, you believed that your religious responsibility had peaked. Since then, earthly courts could punish your misdeeds. Now, you hear that twenty adds a new level to your religious culpability. Only now do God and His divine court exact their full array of punishments.

Yet, you wonder, what is the nature of this new level? How does God view your pre-twenty years? The optimistic approach cloaks your teenage sins in invisibility. A milder outlook wraps them in a thin veil that shields them from divine scrutiny on Earth, but reveals them before God's attention in the afterlife. The pessimistic view barely cloaks your early errors, leaving most of them as openly visible to God as your later, post-twenty transgressions.

The Invisible Cloak

In an optimistic light, the "twenty" criterion removes a great weight from an early sinner's breast. Even as terrestrial court punishes him, God disregards all teenage transgressions. He will not punish you in any way for them - even upon your Judgment Day. It seems too good to be possible.

Maharal explains the assignment of individuals aged thirteen and twenty years to their respective courts of jurisdiction (*Derekh Chayim* on Avot 5:25). He distinguishes between the awareness of an earthbound *beit din* and a heavenly one. Human deliberation, working with only the most essential knowledge of events in their jurisdiction, renders approximate judgments. In contrast, divine decisions, with their complete information, pronounce exact verdicts.

These two courts parallel an individual's stages of growth. A human court judges juvenile defendants who have attained the essential physical and emotional maturity of age thirteen. A divine court, with its comprehensive judgment, deals only with stable, fully grown defendants of age twenty. With this understanding, Adam and Eve, created as complex adults, were already accountable for their actions on Day Six. Rabbi Yochanan expresses this idea when he states that our ancestors were created as twenty-one year olds (*Bereshit Rabba* 14:7).

Rashi clearly considers a teenager to be inherently sinless. "And Sarah's life was a hundred years and twenty years and seven years [long]" (Gen. 23:1). Rashi (and *Bereshit Rabba* 58:1) reads the verse's separation of Sarah's years as forming a set of comparisons. She was as free of sin at age hundred as a girl who just turned twenty.

Rashi also notes that Noah fathered no children until he was five hundred in order that no son would reach one hundred at the time of the flood and consequently warrant independent attention for his own deeds or misdeeds (Gen. 5:32). (Rashi explains that before the time of Abraham, the age of a hundred replaced the modern twenty in importance.) Rashi's midrash (*Midrash Rabba* 26:2 and *Midrash Tehillim*, Psalm 11) indicates that God even discounts Noahide transgressions under the age of 20/100.

Are You Really Invisible?

Unfortunately, the optimistic outlook must ignore problematic sources that contradict its philosophy. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 55b) states that God notices the sin of a nine-year-old who commits bestiality, but the Torah mercifully spares him from human punishment. If God recognizes the sins of a prepubescent child, how could He completely ignore a teenager's faults?

Optimists face another obvious thorny problem. Human courts can execute teenagers for their misdeeds. How can God allow capital punishment for actions that He disregards?

The Thin Veil

A more conservative interpretation of the twenty criterion removes these problems. While God records your teenage sins for an accounting upon your Judgment Day, he will not punish you for them on Earth. A simple

the generation of Israelites who perished in the desert, as the primary source for this rule: "Your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were counted of you at all numberings, from twenty years of age and upwards who brought you into revolt against me" (Num. 14:29). God condemned only the individuals above twenty years of age to death in the wilderness. But, this source refers to capital punishment! Why extend it further?

Rav Yehudah Hachasid maintains that the exemption before the age of twenty applies only to national punishments such as *Dor Hamidbar* and not to individual judgments (Gen. ch. 38).



reading of the talmudic references to the age twenty - *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi* - supports this view.

The Talmud (Shabbat 89b) tells of a future time when God, desiring to destroy the Jews, will search for a patriarch to dissuade him. Isaac defends his progeny and convinces God that out of a normal lifespan of 70 years, man can only sin for a measly 12.5 years. Since man spends the majority of his life free of punishable sin, God should not destroy His chosen people. This calculation involves subtracting the first, unpunishable, twenty years, and then dividing the remaining fifty years by four. After all, one spends the nightly half of his or her life asleep, and wastes another quarter on bodily chores. The Talmud describes the first twenty years of life as "unpunishable" as opposed to "sinless."

The Talmud *Yerushalmi* (Bikkurim 2:1) uses the level of twenty in order to prove that *karet* is defined as death before the age of fifty. It explains (*Yerushalmi* Sanhedrin 11:5) that Chananya ben Azur mistakenly began counting the 70-year Babylonian exile from the point when King Menashe turned twenty. Once again, the talmudic language indicates that, during the first twenty years, the divine court neither punishes nor inflicts "*karet*." Furthermore, while the first two references, which discuss destruction and *karet*, might tempt the reader to limit the exemption of twenty to capital punishments (see *Penet Moshe* on *Bikkurim*), the final context of exile proves otherwise.

Scant Protection

The pessimistic view of teenage exemption addresses another problem: the sin offering. If the Torah only requires a sin offering for unintentional offenses that would normally warrant *karet*, why should a teenager, who cannot incur *karet*, ever bring one? Many commentators therefore limit the exemption's scope, and one even attacks its actual formulation. Chakham Tzvi (87) suggests, as one alternative, that teenage sins remain in abeyance until twenty. If, by that time, you have not repented, God freely punishes you for them.

Scope-limiting commentators take their cue from another appearance of the twenty criterion. Rashi (Shabbat 89b) cites the *Dor Hamidbar*,

sins, must we not conclude that He disregards sins of the elderly as well? In light of Chakham Tzvi's question, one may simply reject this proof for a "twenty rule" by saying that God only punished Jews of fighting age for the Spies' Sin. The warriors, men from age twenty to sixty, died in the desert as a penalty for their fear of battle and their lack of faith in God's power (Chizkuni).

The Flood And The Future

If the punishments of both the *Dor Hamidbar* and the sons of Noah operated under the 20/100 years exemption, a contradiction emerges (Rashi, Shabbat 89b versus Rashi, Gen. 5:32). Children died in the Flood while, in the wilderness, they lived to enter Israel. The contradiction dissolves if one notes that the form of punishment for each generation radically differed from the other. In order to punish Noah's peers, God altered the natural state. To punish *Dor Hamidbar*, He merely executed them individually.

For each generation, the criterion of age formed part of a different question. For those in the wilderness, God asked, whom should I execute? For those in diluvian times, God asked, whom should I save from the natural disaster? In both cases, He only considered those above a specific age. This principle, that an age criterion will not spare children from natural disasters, applied to Korach's rebellion as well (Num. 16:27). The midrash emphasizes that even sucklings perished when the ground swallowed him and his fellow rebels (Rashi and *Bemidbar Rabba* 18:4).

As for the Flood, why was the criterion a hundred instead of twenty years? It is possible that due to the longevity of the early generations, their growth cycle expanded to suit their lifespans (*Divrei Yonatan, Chayei Sara* 23:1). As a source for this criterion, the midrashim cite a messianic verse from Isaiah (65:20): "There shall be no more thence an infant of days; nor an old man, that hath not filled his days; for the youngling shall die a hundred years old and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed." Maharzav (*Bereshit Rabba* 26:2) explains the comparison between Noah's era and the messianic age. He quotes *Vayikra Rabba* (27:4) which elucidates the recurring phrase in *Kohelet* "nothing is new under the sun." The Messianic Age cannot create a new reality, but must use that which came before it. Isaiah's Messianic Age criterion of a hundred years must have previously existed in the times before the flood.

So now you're twenty. Whether an optimist or pessimist, if you sin now, you court disaster at both levels - human and divine. For blanket criteria, your last glimmer of hope lies with *mashiach*. If he comes soon, *mashiach* could postpone your punishment for the rest of a century.

**Rabbi Isaac Elchanan
Theological Seminary
HAMEVASER
2540 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10033**

**Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
New York, N.Y.
Permit No. 4729**