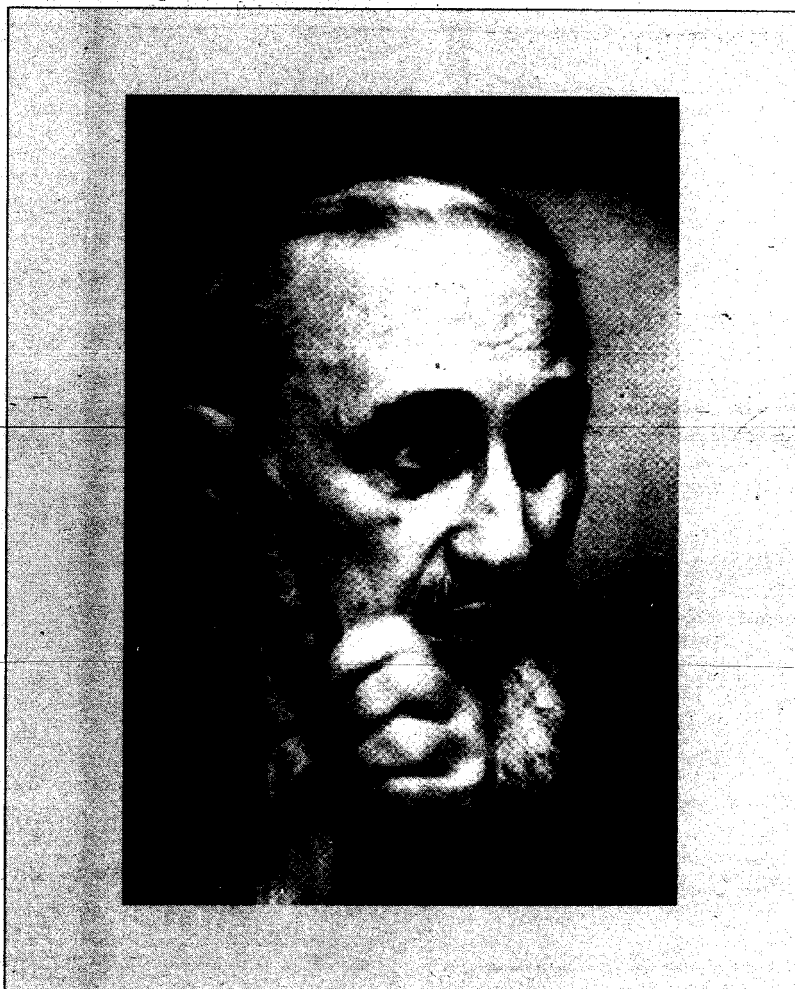


המבשר

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Hamevaser



אם בארזים נפלה שלהבת
מה יעשו איזובי קיר

מועד קטן כ"ה

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EDITORIALS

A Positive Sign

Having spent a year or more in *Eretz Yisrael*, most of us have learned to appreciate the atmosphere that can permeate a *yeshivah*. Torah and *yiddishkeit* are not simply learned; they are inhaled. That such an *avirah* is lacking in YU has been noticed and lamented by many *talmidim* over the past few years, but no one, until now, has had the industry to analyze the problem and work towards solving it.

Hamevaser lauds MYP students Eitan Mayer and Yitzy Schechter for their recent flurry of activity on behalf of our *yeshivah*. Their approach has been right on target: rather than just demanding arbitrary improvements, they have, by tirelessly organizing a survey of all RIETS *talmidim*, set out to discover exactly which pieces are missing from the puzzle. The two recent morning *minyanim* in the *beit hamidrash*, to which they attracted over two hundred students, served to give us a taste of what they are trying to achieve. We look forward to more.

Hamevaser also thanks Rabbi Charlop and the RIETS administration, as well as SOY, for their cooperation.

The New Dorm Talks

The last session of Dorm Talks boasted the presence of Y.U. President Rabbi Norman Lamm. Rabbi Lamm's comments on a wide variety of topics were both inspiring and timely, as was his assertion that while his comments were halakhically-oriented, yet, they fell between the *seifim* of the *Shulchan Arukh*.

It was encouraging to note the personal dynamics evident between Rabbi Lamm and the attending students. His willingness to field questions on any topic was refreshing. The student body can only benefit from continued exposure to Rabbi Lamm, and positive events such as the past Dorm Talks.

On this note, one must wonder about the lack of a similar program for the women of Stern College. Exposure to the opinions of their faculty and *rabbeim* outside of a classroom setting would enhance the educational experience of all participants. It is our hope that a Dorm Talks series will be instituted for Stern College in the near future.

Lessons from the Ashes - Continued from page 7

"forward," came his answer.
The Nazi voices grew silent. The sounds behind me were deafening. I turned around. The Reichstag was burning. Pandemonium was breaking loose, but the loudest sounds came from behind a door which I feared to open. The sounds were driving me mad. I turned the handle. Millions of naked Jews stood under the showers, soap and towel in hand. They all stood ready.

The dead man was awaiting me.
I screamed, yet like in a bad nightmare, no sound escaped my lips. I pointed over and over at the gas chambers. Finally, with all my energy I yelled, "Get out of there. They are going to kill you."

"They do not hear you," the old man told me.
"But how, how do I tell them that they are about to die?" I pleaded.
"You should have spoken to them long ago."

I watched desperately as he joined the others in the showers. The door was shut. No longer were the voices screaming.

I found myself in front of the Reichstag. Several thousand people stood with me, candles burning. "Millions of young Germans have never seen a Jew," the familiar voice repeated. "We must teach them who we are... not allowing anyone to misrepresent us."

I looked up into the withered face of the man who had become a part of me.
In the background, I could hear the faint sounds of the neo-Nazi gangs, with their fascist slogans. Dressed in SS uniforms, they handed out pamphlets, calling for the death of the Jew.
I joined the thousands screaming.

HAMEVASER

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Michael Segal, *Editor Emeritus*

Ode to the Rav by Ari Blech

I say goodbye,
although we never met,
an odd choice for an author

I didn't know you, but who
did, you, like your books,
more hidden than revealed

And yet there is a difference,
I feel it and tremble,
replicating the awe of decades of students
(ironically, in doing so I feel some
connection, some sense of your presence)

Unfit to write, I feel
helpless, absurd

Wanting, nonetheless, to try,
I feel divided

Trying, I create you once more
only to dominate loss,
(lonely)
(The Rambam is my only friend left)

My body is weary,
tired with the empty chase of Cupid's billen

My mind yearns to be more rational, to follow
the path of reason

In every moment, my body yearns to please you, of your friendship
I reach my hand, to hold you, my spiritual guide,
and my heart

I want it all to end, when you will it never end
I'll be close to you, as you are
Rabbeinu Shimon

Can I hear the spirit of a man I never met?

*Hamevaser offers its condolences to
the Soloveitchik, Twersky, Gerber,
Meiselman and Liechtenstein families
on the passing of their brother, father
and grandfather, The Rav.*

Nimrod: The Innovative Rebel

by David Silverberg

Chazal didn't like Nimrod. Although the Torah itself doesn't openly say anything negative about him, Chazal accuse Nimrod of everything from attempting to murder Avraham to instigating the building of the Tower of Babel. But the fact is that the five *pesukim* in the middle of the post-flood genealogical record (*Bereishit* 10:8-12) which mention Nimrod seem pretty innocuous. That Nimrod is a significant figure is clear, as the Torah reports only the birth and death of all of Noah's descendants until Avraham, while when introducing Nimrod, the Torah suddenly begins to elaborate, telling us that he is a "gibbor tzayid" (*pasuk* 9) and that he establishes a vast empire. We also learn that "hu heicheil," which most interpretations agree means that Nimrod is an innovator in some sense. What major role does Nimrod play in the post-flood world which justifies spending so much space on him, and what image does the Torah intend to project of Nimrod himself?

The vast majority of commentators, from the *midrashim* through the *acharonim*, sketch Nimrod as a villain. Representing the dissenting minority is Ibn Ezra, who explains that "gibbor tzayid lifnei Hashem" refers to Nimrod's admirable practice of hunting animals in order to sacrifice them to God. Ibn Ezra's major support is the phrase "lifnei Hashem," which he argues indicates Nimrod's divine purpose in being a "gibbor tzayid." Accepting this view means accepting a Nimrod who exemplifies the *moser nefesh*, as he utilizes even his hunting skills for a Godly purpose. Although Noah is the first to offer sacrifices after the *Mabbul* (*Bereishit* 8:20), Noah has a zoo at his disposal, while Nimrod, according to Ibn Ezra, exerts himself to find animals for *korbanot*.

But Chazal aren't as generous to Nimrod as Ibn Ezra is. Since there is no explicit evidence to support a negative judgment of Nimrod, what hinted to Chazal to return a guilty verdict?

"The Evidence"

First, Nimrod is the grandson of Canaan, whom Noah had just cursed fifteen *pesukim* earlier. In fact, one view contends that the Torah's major purpose in recording the genealogy of Noah's sons is to sharpen the contrast between the righteousness of Cham and Yafet (Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apt, *Ohev Yisrael*). Furthermore, Nimrod's kingdom originates (and perhaps centers) in Bavel, in the land of Shinar (10:10), places which are later identified with the *Dor haPalagah* [affectionately known by many of the less *dikduk*-familiar among us as "Dor haFlogah"] (11:2,9) and the evil king Amrafel (14:1). This connection with Bavel leads the Midrash to suggest that Nimrod was the driving force behind the *Migdal Bavel* (*Chullin* 89a, *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* ch.24) and to identify him with Amrafel (Rashi on 14:1). Finally, Chazal understand Nimrod's name itself as a derivation of the word "mered" - "Nimrod" is one who rebels against Hashem. How does Nimrod rebel?

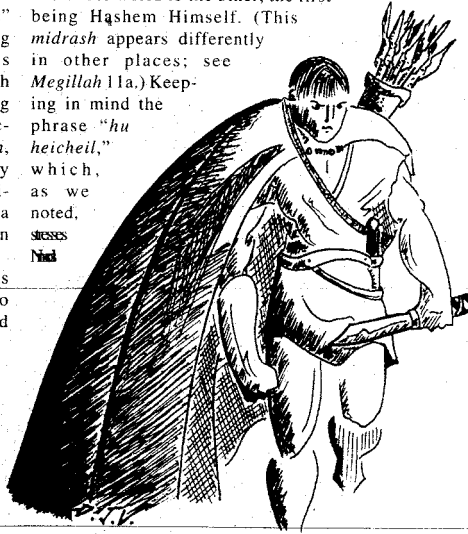
Rashi adopts the position cited in *Pesachim* 94b which claims that Nimrod rebels against Hashem by promoting idol worship. "Gibbor tzayid," Rashi explains, refers not to his skill as a hunter, but to his power of deception, of leading people to trust in *etzim va'avanim*. Perhaps even more significantly, Nimrod, again the innovator, actually reintroduces *avodah zarah* to the post-*mabbul* world, after the *reshaim* of the generation of Enoch had perished. "Hence the saying, 'like Nimrod a gibbor tzayid before the Lord'" (10:9).

At first glance, Nimrod's function as initia-

tor of *avodah zarah* seems to be the basis for the (nearly) murderous conflict between Nimrod and Avraham which the *midrashim* speak of: Avraham and his revolutionary monotheistic teachings threaten Nimrod's theology as well as his sovereignty. *Yashar Noach* (18a-19a) tells us that before Avraham's birth, Nimrod sees in the stars signs of the impending arrival of his nemesis, one who would undermine his entire religion. And according to the *Zohar* (beginning of chapter 14), the war between the powers of the East and the cities of Sedom is waged by Nimrod for the sole purpose of eliminating Avraham for rejecting paganism. (See also *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 27.)

"Nimrod's Real Rebellion"

However, other *midrashim* and later *me'fareshim* focus on a different aspect of Nimrod which redefines his major *cheit* and points to another way of understanding his conflict with Avraham. *Midrash haGadol* (*Bereishit* 10:8) lists Nimrod as the second of ten kings who ruled from one end of the world to the other, the first being Hashem Himself. (This *midrash* appears differently in other places; see *Megillah* 11a.) Keeping in mind the phrase "hu heicheil," which, as we noted, stresses **his**



originality, we may conclude that Nimrod's importance lies in the fact that he is the first monarch, the first ruler to attempt to replace Hashem as universal ruler. Thus, the *pasuk* calls him a "gibbor tzayid before Hashem," which, according to Ibn Janach, means "in the whole world."

The only trouble with this theory is that the list in *Midrash haGadol* includes righteous rulers such as Yosef, Shlomo, Koresh, and even *Melekh haMashiach*. So why is Nimrod to be criticized for establishing a powerful kingdom?

Yosef confesses, "God has made me lord of all Egypt..." (*Bereishit* 45:9). Similarly, Koresh declares, "The Lord God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth..." (*Ezra* 1:2). They recognize their power as an extension of Hashem's, and it is He who is responsible for their success. By contrast, Nimrod sees his political and military achievements as expressions of his own authority, unconnected to that of Hashem. "Power was his character and his destiny, his very existence and the centrality of his life" (Rav S.R. Hirsch, *Bereishit* 10:8). "He began to chase after prowess and victory, thinking that good comes with majesty and victory" (Ralbag). The legitimacy of a monarchy is contingent upon the ruler's submission to Hashem. Otherwise, the very institu-

tion of a kingdom inherently contradicts the authority of God. Josephus writes, "The great success that attended all of Nimrod's undertakings produced a sinister effect. Men no longer trusted in God, but rather in their own prowess and ability" (*Antiquities*, 1, 4, 1-2). Nimrod introduces to the world the concepts of absolutism and despotism, thus diminishing the totality of *Malkhut Shamayim*.

This analysis of Nimrod supports the connection *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* makes between Nimrod and *Migdal Bavel* and presents a new outlook on Nimrod's struggle with Avraham. Alone, constructing a landmark monument is not idol worship. The mistake of the builders is not in building, but in motivation: "vena'asch *lanu* shetim." (See Nechama Leibowitz, *Noach* 7.) Nimrod, the defiant ruler of the entire Ancient World, wishes to ensure that his word will remain unquestioned, his subjects obedient. He wants to make "a name" for the human race, to deny the existence of a supreme authority. The *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* (53b) refers to the tower as "the house of Nimrod," indicating that Nimrod orders its construction in the interest of solidifying his own power and challenging God's. Avraham, Nimrod's opponent, seeks to glorify God and spread His authority. His confrontation with Nimrod does not revolve around the question of paganism versus monotheism; instead, the crux of this murderous *machloket* is a power struggle: the Almighty versus defiant *basar vedam*.

The most extreme formulation of this approach is the claim that Nimrod actually proclaims himself a god. Abarbanel quotes an unidentified source which identifies Nimrod with the Babylonian god Beil mentioned by the *Nevi'im* (*Yishayah* 46:1, *Yirmiyahu* 50:2, 51:54). Other *midrashim* also mention Nimrod's claim of divine powers. See Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. I, p.178, and vol. V, p.201, note 87.) In fact, this *shitah* accuses Nimrod of a combination of two *chataim*: idol worship and belief in the superiority of man over all else. In any case, this approach focuses on Nimrod as the first and greatest challenger to Hashem's authority.

This understanding of Nimrod may find support in the connection between Nimrod and Ashur, Ashur, which appears in 10:11, is the subject of dispute between the *me'fareshim*: is Ashur a leader who establishes his own kingdom to release himself from the yoke of Nimrod, or does Nimrod extend his own empire into Ashur? (See Rashi versus *Targum Onkelos*.) What is clear from the *pesukim*, however, is that Assyria arises as an outgrowth of Nimrod's empire in some way. Furthermore, in one of the other two places in Tanakh where Nimrod is mentioned, his name appears together with Ashur's: "[The messianic king] will shepherd Assyria's land with swords, the land of Nimrod in its gates" (*Mikha* 5:5). The most recent evidence is archaeological: archaeologists in Iraq have discovered a military fortress from the time of the Assyrian rule of the Middle East—in a town called "Nimrud." (See *Time*, Oct. 30, 1989, pp.80-1.) It seems that at the height of their power, the Assyrians named their major military capital after Nimrod. Why?

Sancheiriv, the most powerful of the Assyrian kings, brazenly boasts, "By the might of my hand have I wrought it, by my skill, for I am clever; I have erased the borders of peoples; I have plundered their treasures, and exiled their vast populations" (*Yishayah* 10:13). Speaking for God, the prophet exclaims, "Ha! Assyria, rod of My anger, in whose hand, as a staff, is My fury" (10:5-6). He challenges Sancheiriv, "Does an axe boast over him who hews

continued on page 6

The Search

Hamevaser: First I was wondering how you began.

Davis: I will say for myself that as a personal quest it began back in 1973-74, as I began to look at the historical roots of my Christian faith, and as I began to examine the historical roots of the Christian faith it drove me back into Judaism. And then as I began to explore these aspects I came upon the concept of the seven laws of Noah, and that was about... a 12 year journey, with a lot of intense study, a lot of reading, a lot of research.

H: What did you research?

D: Well for instance you find that in the Nazarean writings (I don't like to call them the New Testament) they kept talking about the Oral Law. Coming from a Christian background - I was educated, had degrees from a Christian college, but I'd never studied this "Oral Law." Now, I was preaching in Houston, Texas, and went by a Jewish bookstore and asked [the proprietor] if he had a book on the Oral Law, and, of course, he gave me the Mishnah. And I began reading in the Mishnah. And I had, I think, it was Danby's Mishnah, and read through [it]. Then, searching other books out I was trying to find the statements that were made in the New Testament, or the Nazarean writing, in some of these Jewish sources, and it just didn't work out. And so, that again just drove me further into the study. If you look at my library, I have... right now I'm looking at the Soncino Talmud, Hebrew and English; Encyclopedia Judaica; the Torah Anthology; the books of the Rambam (I have everything in English that he's printed); the Midrash, ten-volume *midrash*; the *Chumash* with Rashi; you know I could go on and on and on. These were books that we read, but it took a long time to find some of these things and study through them. But primarily, as I said, beginning, exploring the historical roots of Christianity took me and the people here back into things.

H: Was it personal or a group [endeavor]?

D: It was personal for me, but being the "pastor" of a Baptist church I shared with the people the things that I had learned, and as I [did so], we moved away from Christianity to the Noachide concepts. And, if you really want to be technical, I think the break came officially in about 1988. Now, we had rejected the Christian concepts of the Trinitarian view and these types of things before that, but I think probably the spring of '88 is the official break from Christianity. 'Cause we were still trying to kind of hang on; we were trying to sanitize the New Testament is what it boiled down to, and you just couldn't sanitize it.

H: What do you mean by sanitize?

D: Clean it up, try to make it something other than a Christian document, and it's not as it's been interpreted by many Christians; you know there's a lot of interpolation going on there. But the fact is we've come to the place after studying, doing textual criticisms and all that, to just junking it, completely... but realizing that it is still a tool to attract people, because most of the people that are coming into the *Benei Noah* movement are coming from a Christian background, so you have to be able to deal with the questions that arise.

H: And now your movement is based in Tennessee.

D: Yes, in Athens, Tennessee, that's where we started from; originally, the group here - the church was called the Immanuel Baptist Church; now we are Immanuel Benei Noah Congregation of Athens, Tennessee. And the reason we held on to the name Immanuel - of course you know "Immanuel" just simply means "God with us," and there for a long time it was us and God; nobody had anything to do with us, and we just held on to the Immanuel.

H: And eventually people related to you...

D: Oh, sure.

Direction

H: Did you have any - did anything open up within the Jewish community?

D: Oh, absolutely. After a while. For a while Rabbi Michael Katz was our teacher, and he moved away to Atlanta and then eventually on to Florida, and our primary teacher for over a year now has been Rabbi Israel Chait, the *rosh yeshivah* of *Benei Torah* in Far Rockaway.

H: And how does he...

D: We have a Torah class each Wednesday evening by electronic hookup. We call him up on the phone; we have equipment here. The phone is patched in and into a PA system, and on Wednesday evening we'll have anywhere from forty to sixty people here listening to the lectures. And we have two-way communication. We have also been recognized by the Chief Rabbinate in Israel, the former Chief Rabbi Mordecai Eliyahu. The office of the Chief Rabbi has monitored, if you want to use that word, the development of *Benei Noah*. We have many friends in Israel that have worked with us, [among them] Rabbi Yoel Schwartz, who is a well known and well-respected rabbi. We also have communication with Bar-Ilan University; the people there... in Tel Aviv have worked with us. A number of rabbis around the country work with us.

H: So do you normally direct your - when you go to someone for spiritual advice you usually go to whom?

D: Rabbi Israel Chait. As I said, he's our primary teacher now.

Kiruv

H: Are you involved in any outreach?

D: Yes, we have a publication called *The Gap*, which is an international publication, and it literally goes around the world. And we also have pamphlets dealing with *Benei Noah* that we send out. We have distribution points, people that work with us, in Israel; that is, Israel is an international country, and people from all over the world come there, and these people pass out our pamphlets. We have little pamphlets entitled "*Benei Noah* and the Seven Laws that Affect You," a little tri-fold that gives background and a little place on the back so that they can write for more information. And we've received letters from Europe, Australia, [and] the Orient as a result of these little pamphlets.

Shabbat

H: Do you run any formal services in your congregation?

D: Well what do you mean by that?

H: Well, I *daven* three times a day; I don't know what a *ben Noah* would do...

D: I understand what you're saying. Well, we have two study sessions a week. We have a study session on Sunday morning - we meet on Sunday simply for convenience. And we have two study sessions on Sunday. Then we have a study session that is led by Rabbi Chait on Wednesday evening. Now, as far as the observance goes, the *ben Noah* is not obligated

We Are All His Children: An Interview With An Observant Ben Noach

Hamevaser's Dov
Chelst interviews Mr.
David Davis, a former
Baptist minister who
now leads the
Immanuel Benei Noah
Congregation of
Athens, Tennessee.

as a *ben Israel*. He does not have these obligations upon him. But as we study with our rabbinic colleagues, and as we search for ourselves, the observance is [of] a voluntary nature. For instance, in relation to the Shabbat, I think it is good for the *ben Noach* to acknowledge, and I emphasize the word *acknowledge*, the Shabbat. Now what does that mean? That means that he should realize that this is a day that God has made and sanctified and set apart, made it different than any other day. But now as far as the Shabbat is concerned, you have thirty-nine types of work that you can't do on Shabbat. The *ben Noach* does not have this stipulation, but I think with a learning process, he should acknowledge the Shabbat - but that is not one of the *sheva mitzvot Benei Noach*. But I think that this is a way of sanctifying the name of God. The prophets tell us, if you read in Isaiah 56, and then I believe it's Isaiah 60, that in the days of the *Mashiach* that those (and I think he's referring to the *ben Noach* there) that "acknowledge my Sabbath" will come to the Holy Temple and... will pray there. And then the verse that I was speaking of - let me see if I can find it - I'm opening my Bible here - I was looking at that just the other day - right, here it is - in Isaiah 66 - "they that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens... will be consumed, saith the Lord." Now right here, this passage that I'm reading in Isaiah 66 talks about those that have not sanctified God. Then Isaiah 56 talks about those who have sanctified themselves and kept my Sabbaths and chosen the things that please me. So this is one of the things that as a person learns that they voluntarily accept is the acknowledgement of the Sabbath. But we do not get into a detailed halakhic...

H: I guess there might even be problems if you did.

D: Yes, there would be because we've had people who have written in and said, "Well, don't you think that people ought to keep the Sabbath?" My response back is, "What do you mean 'keep the Sabbath?'" Then they'll write back and say, "Well don't you think they ought to observe the Sabbath?" Then I'll put a one-liner back, "How do you suggest that we 'observe' the Sabbath?" Then they'll write back and tell what they do. Then I will [answer], "Do you suggest that for everyone?" You see, the logic behind it [is that] you can't just draw up a set of rules of dos and don'ts for the *ben Noach*.

H: And so how do you personally...

D: What I personally do on the Shabbat is most of the time we have a meal with friends. We go to [the home of] my friend Jack Saunders, who is one of my colleagues... and there'll be a group of us there and we'll have a nice meal. We'll do the *bracha* with the bread. Of course we'll light the candles; we'll do the *bracha* over the bread and the wine and sit around in the evening and have a good time with conversation and just enjoy the day, the evening. Sometimes during the fall season there'll be a group of us and we'll go out to a football game and we'll have a time together. But we stop and pause and acknowledge that this is the Sabbath. So as far as having a locked-in form, we do not.

Theology

H: Seeing yourself as a *ben Noach*, how does that affect your daily life?

D: Well, I'll tell you how it affects me. First of all, I think the number one thing that we have to deal with, as *Benei Noach* and *Benei Israel*, is idolatry. And the more you learn about the Torah faith and the more you learn about the One God, then the more acutely you are aware of the paganistic society in which you find yourself. And you become acutely aware - and

this is on a personal level - I've become acutely aware of the pagan influence in almost every facet of our society. For instance, most people do not realize that a steeple on a church is... a fertility symbol. And when you go down the street and you see the churches with the steeples on them, and again, these are the ends of idolatry.

H: Why would you say that? That is how it originated?

D: Yes, it's a historical fact. The steeples have their form in the obelisk, and the obelisks were... fertility symbols. So you see if you begin to learn and you study the origins and you get into the Talmud and you study about the *avodah zarah*, the dos and don'ts in relation to idolatry, it makes you aware. As a historian, I pick up these other things - the pagan influence of Christianity and other idolatrous sects. So that's how it affects me daily, on that end of it. Then [in] a positive manner, you are made aware of how awesome God is, how awe-inspiring. Then, to be able to study the Torah and you can be as David said that the Torah of God was as honey in his mouth and that the Torah was more precious than gold, yea precious gold, refined gold. So, you have this love of Torah, and that desire for the knowledge of Torah comes when you find the true God.

H: How would you view your relationship with God?

D: That's a great question. My relationship with God is simply the fact that I know God in two ways, I know Him on an intellectual level and I know Him on an experiential level. But, we must allow our intellect to rule and not our emotions. And, when I just see the manifestation of God as you read the Torah and the Prophets, and you find that God has promised and then He performs. And then, you look at today. Did you have any idea five years ago that you would ever see a living, breathing, talking, walking *ben Noach*? [You] see *Benei Noach* was something that the rabbis talked about in the *veshivah*, but it was nothing that they ever expected to see in their lifetime.

H: Right, because usually most people just convert.

D: Right. And see in the master plan of God, you have *Benei Israel* and *Benei Noach*, and here we are, today, a living, breathing group of non-Jews living out Torah faith as it is set forth by Hashem. So that's how I view my relationship: as living out the master plan for me, as a non-Jew.

Prayer

H: Do you ever engage in *tefillah*, prayer?

D: Yes... We have worked with a number of rabbis about developing a *siddur*. But, the fact is that, with few exceptions, the *siddur*, the prayer book that is used is adequate. But the advantage, I think, that the *ben Noach* has as you look at the *amidah*, [is] that the *ben Noach* can be familiar with the *amidah*, but we have the spontaneity of prayer without the *siddur*, if that makes sense.

H: You meant that you could use the normal standard *siddur*?

D: Yeah. We could use the normal standard one.

H: But you have the option to...

D: Yeah. We have the option. I'm not bound. I don't have to pray three times a day and I don't have to, in fact I can't lay *tefillin*. But, the fact is that if you know God, just the very fact of knowing God and having a relationship with God will cause an indi-

vidual to pray. By the way, we've been studying on prayer around here for the last [two] months with Rabbi Chait.

Judaism and Jews

H: So, you feel yourself as part of the Jewish religion, or...

D: Well, actually not. Because, see, this is something I told a rabbi in Israel and he looked at me and blinked twice. I said, "Some of you... I've heard the statement made that *Benei Noach* is Judaism for non-Jews," and I said, "I really don't like that term." I said, "I prefer to put it this way - that Judaism is the religion for non-Gentiles. We predated Judaism by 1500 years." And so, no, I don't see myself as a part of Judaism. I see myself as a part of the Torah community. But then, you, being a Jew in the Torah community, there must be, and I emphasize, there must be interaction between those people within the Torah community. And we recognize Israel's place as the guardians of the Torah, and the keepers of the Torah, and the teachers of the Torah. But, see, this is not an inferiority or superiority attitude; it is just living out the Torah faith. And, by the way, that's some heavy duty stuff we just talked about. Very heavy.

H: What do you mean by "heavy"?

D: Well, see, a lot of times the people really do not understand, even some within the Jewish community do not understand Torah faith. They don't understand living out Torah. You know, you get insulated and isolated, and you're comfortable within your community and you fail to realize the responsibility of reaching out to others and interaction with others within the Torah faith... without intimidation.

H: I'm not sure what you mean by...

D: Okay. I'll tell you. You see when you come, you find someone like myself, an observant *ben Noach*. We come into a Jewish community and they're really not prepared to deal with us. Now, I'm writing an article in this issue of *The Gap* and I make this statement. I was talking to a rabbi... just a few months ago, and he made this statement. He said, "Sure, I know all about *Benei Noach*. I studied it for thirty minutes in the *veshivah*." And see, there's a little black humor in there. It was funny that he said that, but... What would you do, personally, with a *ben Noach* that came to you and said, "Hey! I'd like to learn with you?"

H: Well I mean, personally, there are a couple of *dappim* in *Sanhedrin* that I'd be interested in learning with somebody.

D: Okay! And see, it would be a tough place to jump in. All right, suppose then that a hundred *Benei Noach* come and, as the prophet [says], they grab hold of the *tzitzit* of him that is a Jew and say, "We'll go with you, because we know that God's among you?" And see that's what we're doing now; we're grabbing hold of the *tzitzit* of the Jew and saying, "Teach us; for we know God's among you." And, it's created some problems because there hasn't been the prepara-

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Hamevaser

Ben Noach

continued from previous page

tion and the collation of the material for the *halakha* for the *ben Noach*. It's there, but it's just never been dealt with.

H: Right; I guess it wasn't a major issue.

D: It was not a major issue. So, I'm not finding fault with anyone. This is not to infer criticism in any way. But it's just the fact... the Jewish community was not prepared.... There are, I would emphasize again, there are rabbis and people within the Jewish community, literally all over the world, working and really pushing the *sheva mitzvot Benei Noach*. In fact, there are several people right now in the New York area that are working. I've got some material here on my desk where some guys over in Englewood are working; they're taking out some ads in the paper, advertising more of the lectures [about] *Benei Noach*.

The Mitzvot

H: I wanted to ask you some questions about *halakha*; I was just wondering how you practice. The *Gemara* discusses the possibility of there being more than seven Noachide laws. What did you end up deciding?

D: Okay, here's the deal. The seven are actually seven headings. As you know they have been divided into thirty categories. I'm sure you're familiar with that, and some have divided them into sixty. But the fact is that the *sheva mitzvot* - for instance, as I said, the one is to abstain from idolatry; strange worship. How am I to know what strange worship is? Now we have a whole tractate in the Talmud dealing with this. It talks about illicit sex; okay, where do I go to find out [about] illicit sex? We have to find out those aspects that are permissible and those that are not permissible. So again, we have to go extrapolate that from the Talmudic teachings. We have a third one, about the limb of a living creature - how do you understand that? You get past just the - it says don't do idolatry, don't blaspheme, don't have illicit sex, don't eat a limb of a living creature. You know, that's great to say that, but what does it mean? These are headings. Then you get into the courts of justice. And you get into the book of *Sanhedrin*, in the Talmud, and you go down and you find that there's a lot said in there about the *Benei Noach* system. So there's more than just seven. We can think about the prohibition against theft; again, we have to go into the Talmud to determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

H: There were some other ones that come up also: grafting trees, sterilizing...

D: The jury's out on that; is a *ben Noach* under the same obligations as a *ben Yisrael* as far as procreation is concerned. Now some have suggested that the *ben Noach* should have as many children as possible, one right after another. Others have said that if you have a son and a daughter you have fulfilled the *mitzvah* of filling the earth. Is it acceptable to use birth control? Should you castrate

your animals? Now some have said that we could spay a female dog but that it would not be acceptable to neuter a male dog. And so all these things have been discussed, but in the final analysis there's just a lot that has not been nailed down.

H: Have you nailed down anything?

D: Yeah, I've nailed things down for myself personally. I have no problem at all with idolatry. I mean I can nail the idolatry down, blaspheming, these areas I can nail the door shut on them. The areas of illicit sex, the marriage, divorce, these type of things, who you can have sex with, who you can't, and those other things, you know, we've pretty well nailed that down.

H: How did you nail down something like marriage?

D: It's just the fact that in the *Benei Noach* system, that when a man and woman come together, they are married.

H: So you simply used the Rambam for that?

D: Yeah. But then see in America, we don't demand that people have a civil ceremony, but we most definitely recommend it.

H: And regarding something like birth control...

D: Birth control again, we leave that up to the individual. And we had some real heated discussions on that, initially. You know, you could see yourself out here having fifteen kids. And I think that, and I'll just give you a personal thing, that, now this is my interpretation: when God told Noah to multiply and replenish the earth, it was to fill it up. And so do we continue just to spit out a child every nine months? See, I asked one of the rabbis who was saying that we should not practice birth control at all. I said, well, Rabbi, what about your wife? I said, if she has ten kids in ten years, is she going to stop? And you know that, you can go to the doctor and get a statement or to the rabbi, hey, the children are getting on my wife's nerves, and we're not going to have one for a while. I said, who do we go to? Who do we have to go [to] and say we don't want to have any more kids because my wife can't handle it, etc. etc. etc.? And so some of the philosophies just don't go from one community to the other because of the infrastructure. It's tough. Again, there are no easy answers.

H: What are your basic halakha materials? Because normally the *Gemara* is a source, it's not usually... in the Judaic system I'd go to something like *Shulchan Arukh*...

D: Uh huh - I have that too.

H: What do you use?

D: The Torah is our basic root.

H: Are the *Benei Noach* discussed in the *Shulchan Arukh*?

D: No. Not as such. You have *Encyclopedia Talmudica*, there's a section in there. And then as far as the *halakha*, it's just not there, you know, as

far as the intricate details.

H: All I know of is in the Rambam.

D: The Rambam, in the *Laws of the Kings*, chapter 10 and 11, he deals with it there. But as far as just having a code of *Benei Noach* rules, it's not there. It's just not there. One rabbi said, and I think it's a good point. He said, you have all the treasures of the Torah, but you have unlimited liberty to enjoy. You know, that's kind of the way I look at it. We have all the wealth and the joys of Torah, and we have unlimited liberty.

Olam Haba

H: I have this final question: What do you think of the afterlife?

D: Well, I'll give you my position right now. My position now, based on my learning, and I'll quote *Ecclesiastes* 12:7, that the soul returns to God, the spirit returns to God and the body to the earth. So - I can amplify that if you want. I think that when a person dies, that life is life and death is death. That they are alive when they're here, and when they're dead, the body's dead. I don't see God having a holy rotisserie in hell, where somebody goes down and burns on a rotisserie for a few years, and then God gets to elevate [him] to another level. I think that when a person dies, they're dead, and that the soul goes to God. Now what does it do in the meantime? I don't know. I don't know. But there is a prophecy, of course you know, the thirteen principles, a belief in resurrection. And I believe there is going to be a resurrection. I think there will be a bodily, physical resurrection.

H: Thank you very much.

D: Hey, I appreciate that. Let me give you my mailing address, and when you print this up I'd like to have a copy. If anyone wants to contact us, you can put my mailing address in there. And they can feel free to write us and get in touch with us, and we'll help you any way we can. Thank you very much.

Mr. Davis's address is: P.O. Box 442, Athens, Tennessee 37370-0442.

Nimrod continued from page 6

with it? Or a saw magnify itself above him who wields it?" (10:15). Sancheiriv is the classic "Nimrodian" king, determined to turn all the world's inhabitants into subjects, determined to give no credit to God, determined to assert his own might. He needs the *navi* to remind him that he is Hashem's tool, the rod of His anger, a means to a Divine end and not an end in himself. That is why the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 11a) states that Sancheiriv would have been listed among those who ruled over the entire world, as Nimrod is, if not for his failure to capture Yerushalayim. It stands to reason that Sancheiriv would name his major fortress after Nimrod, who both establishes Ashur and professes the philosophy Sancheiriv embraces. Perhaps this is why Mikah chooses specifically "the land of Ashur" and "the land of Nimrod" as examples of territories which will be subjugated by Mashiach ben David. The God-dependent power of the ultimate Davidic king will manifest itself in his conquest of the paradigms of Godless monarchy. Teaching Nimrod and Sancheiriv a final fatal lesson, Mashiach will "stand and shepherd by the might of the Lord, by the power of the name of the Lord His God" (*Mikah* 5:3).

Lessons from the Ashes

by David E. Rozenson

"That earth is drenched with the blood of six million souls, that land filled with villains, with inhumane culprits." Such was the reaction of virtually everyone within the Jewish community with whom I had discussed my plans of spending the summer in Berlin. "I would never set foot on that soil, never purchase a product from them. You don't understand the implication of your action."

The comments would not end; the criticism grew more and more bitter. The mental baggage with which I set sail far outweighed the two suitcases which accompanied me. The guilt invoked by the authors of these conversations almost served to prevent me from boarding the train at London's Victoria Station which would ultimately bring me to Berlin.

Weeks prior I had tried to psychologically prepare myself. Yet all I could think of were the human fumes which escaped from the chimneys of Auschwitz, knowing that every time I would glance atop a German roof that is exactly what my mind's eye would see. I attempted enacting conversations which would not begin with, "What did your father do during the war?"... "how many lives did he ruin?"... "how many souls did he kill?" Trying desperately to imagine myself on the busy streets of Berlin, all I could see were the SS pointing a gun at a little child who had his arms raised pointedly toward the heavens. "Don't shoot," I cried. He was already dead. Every street sign was a fascist slogan; every scream announced a Jewish death. I was toying with flames that would set me afire, metamorphosing me not into a victim, but a culprit, my hands stained with blood; my body clothed in an unbreakable bondage. I was guilty and knew my accuser. Six million pure souls stared at me with their bony hands pointing at my naked flesh. A familiar face gazed at me with utter incomprehension. Every scene, every image, every sentence I ever read describing German bestial inhumanity now ran uncontrollably through my mind. The angels of death pointing to the gas chambers; the abuse, the rape, the torture...naked bodies piled on top of each other, limbs scattered as though parts of useless toys. What was I doing? Where was I going? The memories. The pain. The gas chambers releasing vapors of venom. The bodies. The souls. They were right, how could I forsake the others? Unprepared, I boarded the train. I was heading toward the devil's inner sanctum.

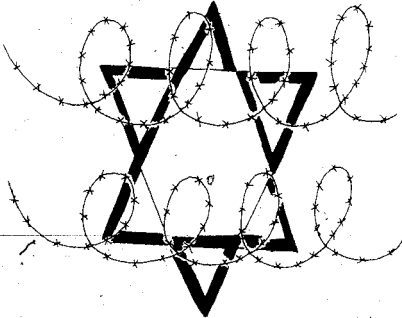
1942 - His gaze was mesmerizing. He lay there. Was he dead? His body seemed so shrivelled, every bone protruding from his naked flesh. Yet his eyes. His clear blue eyes stared ahead unblinkingly.

The rows of coarse wood lined the walls of the huge, inescapable shack. One long plank on top of another. The human beds lay without stirring. There were perhaps two hundred of them. Maybe more. It was midnight. The barking of the German shepherds could be heard all night. The dogs would not stop screaming. The molding wood had long ago stopped creaking under these weightless bodies. The ghosts had long ceased moving. The fields were flowerless; only the gray puddles lay as a testament to the bones of the burned human flesh. At times orders would be heard, shots fired. Soon, new lines for selection would be formed. The fires were ready. The doors would

shut. Humanity was dying.

It was almost fifty years later as I turned the corner on Kurfurstendam. The new Jewish Community Center was rebuilt from the ashes of the glorious synagogue which had once stood there. As I entered the library, three thick volumes attracted my attention. Each one was simply entitled "Yizkor" - "The Memory." My hands swept across the pages of these voluminous books. Name after name. Soul after soul. Body after body. Millions gone, their memories only recalled on these uncountable pages.

And he stared. He stared so intently, his eyes expressing everything that he himself could not. The scars on his body told stories no words would ever be able to describe. The eyes suddenly met mine, beckoning for me to come closer. I shook my head wildly, and heard a foreign voice escape from within me. "We live in different times," I pleaded. "We must move on. We can no longer hide behind the shadows of the Holocaust. Europe is reuniting. The German economy is intimidating the world. We must learn to live with them. We must."



me. "Do you see what they have done to our people? Do you know how many of us march daily to our deaths? How could you come back here? How could you?"

"But we must move on. We cannot live in history," I nervously replied. "The economy of Israel depends on Germany. We cannot isolate ourselves."

His eyes grew moist. The look of death had suddenly disappeared. "Israel," the man said, almost unbelievably. "You mean there is a state?"

"From the ashes of the Holocaust the state was born," I hurriedly answered.

"And now you return to Germany?" He asked me angrily.

I closed the book, attempting to shut him out of my mind. Yet he would not leave. He kept on talking. I walked silently under the oak trees along the Unter Den Linden. As I approached the Brandenburg Gate, I heard the voices of thousands of Nazi soldiers. "Death to the Jews," and "Tomorrow the World," they joyously sang. Pictures of Hitler were everywhere. There were thousands of them. Perhaps millions. I had no escape. They were heading right toward me. I tried to move, and could not. Their guns were drawn. The singing grew louder and louder, until it totally enveloped me. They were everywhere, yet their faces were those of angels. Suddenly, I was no longer afraid. "They probably just need a cause," I thought to myself. They were all just a few feet away. And then it happened. Their faces suddenly changed into those of demons, their rifles drawn. They were ready to fire. There was no escape. Then I saw his face. He looked exactly like the pictures I had seen of him thousands of times. Without thinking, I approached him.

"Why have you done this to us?" I asked him.

"What can possibly justify shattering millions of lives?"

His silence struck me. "I do not worry about lives," he quickly answered. "I worry about the Fatherland."

"But Germany used to be identified with the foremost philosophers, educators, scholars. People the world over respected the Germans for their genius. Post war Germany is now eternally to be identified with death, destruction, and the Holocaust. You have destroyed every positive image of your Fatherland."

His sinister smile worried me. His voice was filled with confidence as he replied. "These fifty years have meant nothing: As the world concentrated on Communism, European political unification, and nuclear disarmament, we rebuilt the world superpower." His infamous black moustache moistened, as raising his voice he screamed. "We will show the world who really is the eternal, universal leader. As we regain what is rightfully ours, the world will watch with amazement. Our constituencies will be far greater, our armies far stronger, our technology far more advanced. If we cannot take the world through weapons, we will capture it with the strength of the German mark."

I would not draw back. Silently we stared at each other. There were so many questions I wanted to pose to this embodiment of evil. Yet none came forth. His malignant eye kept staring at my Jew-covered head. He whispered something to the soldier at his side. "The Führer wants to know how you survived," came the murderer's question.

"I never forget who I am," came my reply. Suddenly, I heard a murmur of voices behind me. They were all chanting something which I could not understand. The Nazi emperor turned white. His words dripped like venom, but none of the soldiers could hear him. He wiped the sweat off his face over and over with the red handkerchief one of the soldiers had given him. And his voice produced no sound. No one heard him.

The voices behind me grew louder. I wasn't afraid. The Nazi soldiers began retreating, their banners no longer in the air. The man I took for dead when I closed that "Yizkor" book now stood beside me. His bony fingers suddenly shoved me forward. "Show those bastards we are still alive," he screamed at me. "Tell them that they could not kill us...Do not run from them...demonstrate the strength that we have as a nation." The sounds behind me grew even louder. I tried to pull back; to run from the crowds of the Nazi soldiers. The man I took for dead had a firm hold on me. "Do it for all of us," he whispered in my ear. "Never allow them to repeat their tragedies...teach them who we are," he screamed over and over.

"Will that bring you back?" I asked, my voice breaking.

"No, but it will allow you to go

continued on page 2

Existential Man

Man is a dialectical being: an inner schism runs through his personality at every level.... The Judaic view posits that the schism is willed by God as a source of man's greatness.... Man is great and creative because he is torn by conflict and is always in a state of ontological tenseness and perplexity.... The conflict is final, almost absolute... complete reconciliation is an eschatological vision. ("Majesty and Humility" p.25)

Where the individual expects to find the *summum bonum*, the realization of his most cherished dream or vision... it is precisely in those areas that God requires man to withdraw... from whatever man desires most. (*ibid* p.36)

What is heroism in *halakha*? The answer is: one must perform the dialectical movement.... The Torah wants man who is bold and adventurous in his quest for opportunities, to act heroically, and at the final moment... stop short, turn around and retreat. The *halakha* teaches man how to conquer and how to lose, how to seize initiative and how to renounce, how to succeed, how to invite defeat, and how to resume the striving for victory. ("Catharsis" p.43)

Let me spell out this passionate experience of contemporary man of faith. He looks upon himself as a stranger in modern society, which is technically minded, self-loving and self-centered, almost in a sickly narcissistic fashion, scoring honor upon honor, piling up victory upon victory, reaching for the distant galaxies, and seeing in the here-and-now sensible world the only manifestation of being. What can a man of faith like myself, living by a doctrine which has no technical potential, by a law which cannot be tested in the laboratory, steadfast in his loyalty to an eschatological vision whose fulfillment cannot be predicted with any degree of probability, let alone certainty, even by the most complex, advanced mathematical calculations- what can such a man say to a functional, utilitarian society which is *saeculum*-oriented and whose practical reasons of the mind have long ago supplanted the sensitive reasons of the heart? (*The Lonely Man of Faith* pp.6-7)

The brute's existence is an undignified one because it is a helpless existence. Human existence is a dignified one because it is a glorious, majestic, powerful existence. Hence, dignity is unobtainable as long as man has not reclaimed himself from coexistence with nature and has not risen from a non-reflective, degradingly helpless instinctive life to an intelligent, planned and majestic one. For the sake of clarification of the double equation humanity = dignity and dignity = glory-majesty, it is necessary to add another thought: there is no dignity without responsibility, and one cannot assume responsibility as long as he is not capable of living up to his commitments. Only when man rises to the heights of freedom of action and creativity of mind does he begin to implement the mandate of dignified responsibility entrusted to him by his maker. (*ibid* p.16)

There is much truth to the fundamental contention set forth by the dialectical philosophies... namely, that there is a creative power embedded within antithesis; conflict enriches existence, the negation is constructive, and contradiction deepens and expands the ultimate destiny of both man and the world. (*Halakhaic Man* p.4)

Loneliness and Friendship

There is, however, a third level which man, if he is longing for self-

fulfillment, must ascend. At this level, man finds himself confronted again. Only this time it is not the confrontation of a subject who gazes, with a sense of superiority, at the object beneath him, but of two equal subjects, both lonely in their otherness and uniqueness, both opposed and rejected by an objective order, both craving for companionship. This confrontation is reciprocal, not unilateral. This time the two confronters stand along side each other, each admitting the existence of the other. An aloof existence is transformed into a together-existence.

"And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helpmate opposite him.... And the Lord God made the rib which he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her unto man" (*Genesis* 2: 18,22) God created Eve, another human being. Two individuals, lonely and helpless in their solitude, meet, and the first community is formed.

The community can only be born, however, through an act of communication. After gazing at each other in silence and defiance, the two individuals involved in a unique encounter begin to communicate with each other. Out of the mist of muteness the miraculous word rises and shines forth. Adam suddenly begins to talk... He addresses himself to Eve, and with his opening remark, two fenced-in and isolated human existences open up, and they both ecstatically break through to each other. ("Confrontation" p.14)

It is paradoxical yet nonetheless true that each human being lives both in an existential community, surrounded by friends, and in a state of loneliness and tension, confronted by strangers. In each to whom I relate as a human being, I find a friend, for we have many things in common, as well as a stranger, for each of us is unique and wholly other. This otherness stands in the way of complete mutual understanding. The gap of uniqueness is too wide to be bridged. Indeed, it is not a gap, it is an abyss. Of course, there prevails, quite often, a harmony of interests - economic, political, social - upon which two individuals focus their attention. However, two people glancing at the same object may continue to lead isolated, closed-in existences. Coordination of interests does not spell an existential union. We frequently engage in common enterprise and we prudently pursue common goals, travelling temporarily along parallel roads, yet our destinations are not the same. We are in the words of the Torah, an *ezer* - a helpmeet to each other, yet at the same time, we experience the state of *kenegdo* - we remain different and opposed to each other.... In a word, the greatness of man manifests itself in his dialectical approach to his confroter, in ambivalent acting towards his fellow-man, in giving friendship and hurling defiance, in relating himself to, and at the same time, retreating from him. In the

dichotomy of *ezer* and *kenegdo* we find our triumph as well as our defeat. (*ibid* pp.15-16)

Prayer

When the I becomes aware of his being responsible for the Thou, whom he has helped bring into existence, a new community emerges: the community of prayer... a community of common pain, of common suffering. ("The Community" p.19)

Prayer in Judaism... is bound up with human needs, wants, drives and urges which make man suffer. Prayer is the doctrine of human needs. God wants to hear the outcry of man's confrontation with a ruthless reality.... In short, through prayer man finds himself. ("Redemption, Prayer and Talmud Torah" p.65)

Prayer equals sacrifice.... Initially, prayer helps man discover himself, through understanding and affirmation of his self-need awareness.... Once the task of

The Rav's Legacy

During the past few weeks, since the *petirah* of Rav Soloveitchik *zekher tzaddik livrakha*, we have heard *divrei hesped* from many of his *talmidim*, our *rabbeim*. The more we hear, the more we realize what we missed by just a few short years. While, thanks to the generation of *mechankhim* which he molded, his Torah and his thought have suffused our Torah education, we were not *zokheh* to have encountered his powerful persona directly.

We have learned many a Rambam with the help of the Rav; we have even read his description of *rishonim* filing into the room as he learned their Torah. But when lost in a *shiur*, never did we join with the Rav in turning to *Rabbeinu Tam* and asking him to help us understand. We have read and appreciated the profound insight of *Kol Dodi Dofeik*, but we never did experience the emotion and power of his sonorous voice echoing off the walls of an otherwise silent *beit midrash*.

We painfully realize that we did not know the Rav; we know only "the Rav." We therefore pay tribute here to his memory in the only way we know - by presenting some of his own thoughts which capture a portion of the legacy which he has left to us.

Yehi *zikhro* *barukh*.



interested in life's inner problems.... How is it possible to assume that it completely ignored the greatest quality - prayer! Does the Torah demand mute service, hidden experiences, without giving them a revealed medium? When the Rambam said that prayer is biblical and identified it as service of the heart, he redeemed the love, and the fear and all of religious life from muteness. He gave them a mouth. The lover expresses his yearnings, the fearer his awe... the lost one his confusion, and the happy one his religious song of the soul-all within the framework of prayer. ("*Ra'ayonot al haTefillah*" pp.5-6)

The difference between prayer and prophecy is, as I have already mentioned, related not to the substance of the dialogue but rather to the order in which it's conducted. While within the prophetic community God takes the initiative - He speaks and man listens - in the prayer community the initiative belongs to man: he does the speaking, and God, the listening. The word of prophecy is God's and is accepted by man. The word of prayer is man's and God accepts it. (*The Lonely Man of Faith* p.57)

The foundation of efficacious and noble prayer is human solidarity and sympathy or the covenantal awareness of existential togetherness, of sharing and experiencing the travail and suffering of those for whom majestic Adam the first has no concern. Only Adam the second knows the art of praying since he confronts God with the petition of the many... If God abandons His transcendental numinous solitude, He wills man to do likewise and thus step out of his isolation and aloneness. (*ibid* pp.59-60)

Rav Chaim

Rav Chaim, unique in his generation and many preceding generations... caused a complete revolution in halakhaic thinking. Even someone who has just begun to learn knows this.... What was R. Chaim's strength, without which Torah would have been forgotten...? A sharp mind - yes! Depth - of course! Understanding and breadth - clearly! However, these descriptions don't capture what was unique about R. Chaim.... R. Chaim was married to the Torah, whereas other *gedolim* were engaged.

Halakhaic man who is wedded to the Torah and cleaves to it "sees" halakhaic concepts, "feels" halakhaic ideas as if they possessed voice, sight and smell. He doesn't just live according to *halakha*, but rather lives the *halakha*, just as in he lives in the world. ("*Mah Dodekh Middot*" pp.70-71, 74-75)

Halakhaic man gives all his heart and soul to Torah and halakhaic thoughts, and does not remove his thoughts from it even when he is engaged in other matters. The problems draw him, the questions bother him... the words of the Rambam in regards to loving God apply equally to the act of *talmud Torah*. This is his language: "how is the love that is fitting, one should love God with such an intense love until his entire soul is bound up with loving God and he's always involved in it as if lovesick for a woman..." R. Chaim of Brisk... fulfilled this command by loving the Torah with a boundless love. Many times when he was walking on the road, conversing with friends, resting on a chair or eating, he would suddenly cry out with great feeling, "Our master's words are answered." The light flashed and he saw the truth in all its glory. (*ibid* p. 84)

Israel

Someone from the street can ask: did the Brisker Rav love Zion?... The answer

self-discovery is fulfilled, man is summoned to ascend the altar and return everything he has just acquired to God. (*ibid* p.72)

According to the Rambam it is impossible for us to conceive of serving God without prayer. What is prayer? It is the expression of a soul that yearns for God in a verbal medium, through which man expresses his soul's turmoils.... Had the Torah not mandated prayer as an the medium of expression of inner service - would we not have known what someone would do when his soul thirsts for God? Is it conceivable that Judaism wants man to suppress his experiences? Just the opposite!

The *halakha* is always in almost supernatural occurrence.... This was perhaps the only proposal where East and West were united. I am inclined to believe that the United Nations organization was created specifically for this purpose - in order to carry out the mission which Divine Providence had set for it. (*ibid* p.69)

Religion

Homo religiosus starts out in this world and ends up in the supernal realms; halakhaic man starts out in the supernal realms and ends up in this world. *Homo religiosus*, dissatisfied, disappointed, and unhappy, craves to rise up from the vale of tears, from concrete reality, and aspires to climb to the mountain of the Lord. He attempts to extricate himself from the narrow straits of empirical existence and emerge into the wide spaces of a pure and pristine transcendental existence. Halakhaic man, on the contrary, longs to bring transcendence down into this valley of the shadow of death - i.e. into our world - and transform into the land of the living. (*Halakhaic Man* p.40)

An individual does not become holy through mystical adhesion to the absolute nor through mysterious union with the infinite, nor through a boundless, all-embracing ecstasy, but, rather, through his animal actions, and through actualizing the Halakhaic in the empirical world. (*ibid* p.46)

The fundamental tendency of the Halakhaic is to translate the qualitative features of religious subjectivity - the content of religious man's consciousness, which surges and swells like the waves of the sea, then pound against the shores of reality, there to shatter and break - into firm and well-established quantities "like the nails well fastened" (*Eccles*, 12:11) that no storm can uproot them from their place. (*ibid* p. 57)

The actualization of the ideals of justice and righteousness is the pillar of fire which halakhaic man follows, when he, as a rabbi and teacher in Israel, serves his community. More, through the implementation of the principles of righteousness, man fulfills the task of creation imposed upon him: the perfection of the world under the dominion of Halakhaic and the renewal of the face of creation. (*ibid* p.91)

Halakhaic man's most fervent desire is the perfection of the world under the dominion of righteousness and loving-kindness - the realization of the *a priori*, ideal creation, whose name is Torah (or *Halakha*), in the realm of concrete life. The *Halakha* is not hermetically enclosed within the confines of cult sanctuaries but penetrates into every nook and cranny of life. The marketplace, the street, the factory, the house, the meeting-place, the banquet hall, all constitute the backdrop for the religious life. (*ibid* p. 94)

Man's task is to "fashion, engrave, attach and create," and transform the emptiness in being into a perfect and holy existence, bearing the imprint

In the Incessant Battle

by Rabbi Shalom Carmy

Every day is a good day for *teshuva*. Yet there is a day that is not like any other. On that day weeks of contemplation and self-examination course through the arteries of our spirit. Among the lengthening shadows of *Neila* twilight we conceive our lives as they were meant to be: If only *Yom Kippur* did not come to an end, the vision would never flee; it would remain perpetually before our eyes, and culminate in reality. And so as we turn, each to his dinner and his common weekday world, we wonder and we pray: may some residue of the uncommon day, stamped upon our souls, leave us changed forever.

Every day is a good day for *hakkarat hatov*. Yet there are days that are not like all the others. Such is this day, the thirtieth since our teacher was taken from this world. For the past month he has not been absent from our thoughts. Nearly every exchange, whether the subject was Torah or worldly matters, has become an excuse to utter his name and bring his words to our lips. We have undertaken special learning commitments in his memory--we who knew him well (or more precisely, aspects of him), and you who barely knew him, or knew him not at all--and our shared experience has mingled recollection with regret and inspiration with desire.

We all know that the Rav *z.t.l.* charted a new path in *Mahashava*. It is no more possible to survey here the major *sigvot* in Jewish thought that his reflection transformed than it would be to give an inventory of the numerous *halakhot* whose depths he plumbed and put into words, or the myriad of difficult passages whose intricacies he conquered. Let me set down three essential insights and attitudes that underlie the Rav's *derekh* in every area of Jewish philosophy. Without these keys we cannot begin to enter into our inheritance.

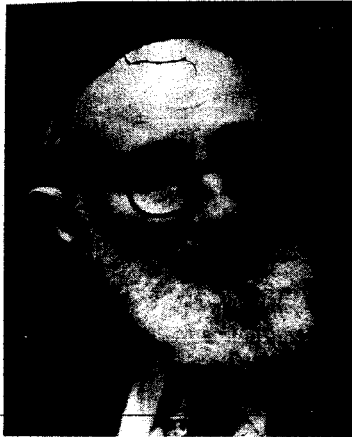
II

1) Philosophy of religion is first and foremost the philosophy of religious realities. For a variety of reasons most incisively explored in *The Halakhic Mind*, the religious realities of Judaism are centrally, and objectively, located in the Halakha.

The religious realities of Judaism are manifest, not only in the performance of the Halakha, but also in its study. A full experiential involvement with *mitsvot* is impossible without understanding their meaning and significance, whence the necessity of learning.

The Rav deemed our time propitious for the intellectual quest. In his own words:

[t]he young American generation... is not totally engrossed in the pragmatic, utilitarian outlook... To the degree that average people in our society attain higher levels of knowledge and general intelligence, we cannot imbue them with a Jewish standpoint that relies primarily on sentiment and ceremony.



If R. Kook witnessed the alienation of Jews from traditional religious commitment and decided that his generation needed exposure to a comprehensive Jewish philosophy deriving from the sources of Kabbala, the Rav offered a simpler, more startling solution: renew the covenant with the exoteric sources that confront directly our concrete experience. And despite the currently fashionable anti-intellectualism, the Rav is right: no contemporary religious commitment can long stand without an abiding cognitive element.

2) The quest of which the Rav so ardently speaks is to be pursued not only through the "revelational consciousness" (*havaya gilluyit*), through God's encounter with man, i.e. through Torah. It is complemented by the "natural consciousness" (*havaya tiv'it*), the search for God initiated by man, the yearning to understand the mystery of the external world and the mystery of human consciousness and culture, the mystery of being and the nature of religious experience (as distinguished from the confrontation initiated by God). Man is created in the image of his Creator, and the expression of human creativity through the quest for theoretical and practical mastery of the external world and the world within constitutes a fulfillment of the nature given to us by God. Every advance in our scientific and cultural endeavors, says the Rav, brings with it a deepening of our religious awareness as well.

Though the Rav heartily endorses the search for God via the natural consciousness, he knows its inadequacy: the heavens speak the glory of God; but a personal relation with God is attainable only through revelation. He also knows the inevitable threat of moral and intellectual anarchy when religion relies on the all too human results of human investigation and culture. But the untruth of a one-sided approach does not diminish his affirmation of man's dual nature: as the

The Challenge of the Rav's z.t.z.l. Legacy

by Walter Warzburger

A number of years ago, a reporter who had interviewed the Rav z.t.z.l. in preparation for an article on him, turned to me for background information. Before the journalist could address any questions to me, I asked him what impression he had formed of the Rav z.t.z.l. He replied, "Never in my life did I encounter an individual, for whom even the simplest things were so highly complicated and complex."

Unfortunately, we live in a world which prefers oversimplifications to complexity or profundity. This is one of the reasons why the Rav z.t.z.l. was so widely admired and so little understood. The Brisker method of Torah learning with its emphasis upon "two *Halakhot*," *Maasseh vs. Kiyum*, *Cheftza vs. Gavra*, etc. was reflected not only in the dialectical tensions of his philosophy but was actually internalized in the core of his personality.

It is not surprising that there are so many different images which various individuals have of the Rav z.t.z.l. According to the *Pesikta*, at Sinai every individual heard the voice of God in accor-

dance with the individual's capacity. We, too, only caught partial glimpses of some aspects of the Rav z.t.z.l.'s personality.

Some pictured the Rav z.t.z.l. simply as a giant of *Halakha*, a *Rosh Yeshiva*, who had acquired extensive knowledge of science and philosophy in order to win back American Jewry to Torah. But such revisionist biographies fail to take account of the fact that it was his intellectual and spiritual restlessness which prompted him, in the first place, to defy the family tradition of Brisk and to leave behind the sheltered environment of his youth to study in Berlin. As he once told me, "you have no idea how difficult it was for my generation to move from the traditional milieu and expose ourselves to the currents of modernity. Even my children cannot appreciate it, because they already found a paved road. But we had to pioneer a new approach."

Many individuals were so dazzled by the brilliance of his intellect that they failed to appreciate his religious passion. Because "*Ish Ha-halakhah*," his earliest published major article, appeared decades before his "*U-bikashtem*," people confused what was intended only as a typological study with the exposition of the Rav z.t.z.l.'s complete religious philosophy.

Witnessing how the Rav z.t.z.l. recited *Hallel* and *Nishmat Kol Chai* during the *Seder* left an indelible impression upon me. No one who has observed

active searcher for God and as the passive recipient of Divine revelation.

Please note that the principle outlined above is not to be identified with a specific, rigid curriculum. The Rav himself devoted a great deal of attention to the discipline of epistemology and its relation to contemporary philosophy of science. More relevant for most of us is his paradigmatic citation of authors like Kierkegaard, Tolstoy and Scheler to illuminate the spiritual dimensions of human existence. And surely I am grateful for the example he gave of the critical use of Western intellectual resources to sharpen the opposition between what Torah teaches and what the culture within which we live presupposes. What is distinctive and fundamental is the honest recognition of the duality in man's intellectual life and the honest attention to the significance of both moments: the confrontation initiated by God and the search initiated by man.

3) Because the Jewish philosophy envisioned by the Rav is reconstructive rather than external to religious realities, the Rav is indifferent to the demand that we must abdicate our methodological autonomy and submit to regnant academic doctrines. A letter, dated August 11, 1953, explaining the Rav's objections to proposed RCA involvement in the planned JPS Bible translation, captures

some-thing of his attitude:

After all, we live in an age which admires the expert and which expects him to tell how things are and how they ought to be done. The expert, on the other hand, does not



tolerate any opposition; all we ought to do is listen to him and swallow his ideas. I am not ready to swallow the ideas of the modern expert and scholar on our Tanakh...

I noticed in your letter that you are a bit disturbed about the probability of being left out. Let me tell you that this attitude of fear is responsible for many commissions and omissions, compromises and fallacies on our part which have contributed greatly to the prevailing confusion within the Jewish community and to the loss of our self-esteem, our experience of ourselves as independent entities

him on such an occasion could think of the Rav z.t.z.l. as a cold, detached, purely intellectual *Talmid Chakham*. Having been exposed to the intensity of his religious passion, I can appreciate why he always spoke in such glowing terms of the joy Yom Kippur brought to him, and why he saw in the Rambam's last chapter of *Hilkhot Teshuvah* with its reference to the passionate love of God as well as the two concluding Chapters of the Guide the very essence of the Rambam's religious ideal. Moreover, the Rav z.t.z.l.'s analysis of prayer attests to the profundity of his religious experience.

Because of his uncompromising quest for truth, the Rav z.t.z.l. refused to sacrifice depth to neatness, complexity to spurious unity. For him, dialectical tension is an ontological necessity - not a disturbance to be resolved. As Jews we are mandated to live in two worlds. As he put it in his "*Chamesh Derashot*," our goal is to encounter both *Chessed* and *Emet*. *Chessed* requires that we actively participate in the conquest of nature and involve ourselves in the effort to utilize our intelligence for the purpose of alleviating human needs and thus contribute to the building of civilization. But at the same time, we also must respond to *Emet* - the truth that is contained in the divinely revealed Torah.

The Rav z.t.z.l. always insisted that the world of Torah be governed by its own autonomous methodology. Just as Kant had contended that the categories governing the phenomenal world cannot be employed outside of the realm of possible experience, so the Rav z.t.z.l. argued that to employ the methods of science or historic scholarship to the analysis of Torah is an illicit application of

committed to a unique philosophy and way of life.

III

What about the Rav's lasting impact on the intellectual world of Jewish philosophy? The scholars, with their unerring instinct for what is beside the point, busily plan research programmes and conferences. The popularizers, the politicians, the polemicists, with unfailing affinity for the superficial and the half-true, bravely try to make him do, and purvey many anecdotes. Among the ideologists, some blithely erase the "inconvenient" record of his philosophical corpus; their counterparts pay their respects while appearing to ignore the *lomdut* as well.

What then becomes of you and me, looking back on this unforgettable month, and hoping that something of it clings to our souls and leaves us changed forever? What shall we take with us, this sunny and bittersweet morning in a season of lengthening days, as each prepares for his kind of summer, and contemplates his notion of life without school?

Every day is a good day for *hakkarat ha-tov*. And every day is a good day to tackle a difficult Rambam; to attempt a closer relationship with the Ramban on *Humash*, to confront seriously some aspect of the human condition, and, yes, even to engage in a modicum of self-examination. We, the *mishpaha ha-lomedet* of Yeshiva University, have been allowed to share, directly and indirectly, in the legacy of a remarkable individual. In the incessant battle between truth and falsehood, between the real and the fake, his voice will always haunt us, a powerful ally in our quest, a calm and persistent advocate in moments of weakness, when we feel isolated and forlorn, and need to be reminded, in the Rav's words, that

collective man is a conformist, and that it is lonely man who creates.

We are blessed beyond our desert, as a community and as individuals. How much we - you and I - have to be grateful for will depend, in large measure, on our spiritual integrity and intellectual courage. With prayers for God's help, let us resolve to be worthy of our good fortune.

categories to a realm to which they are totally inappropriate.

The relentless pursuit of *Chessed* and *Emet* were to the Rav z.t.z.l. the very essence of piety. He always felt that ethical responsibility and intellectual honesty were mandated by the religious norm of *imitatio dei* (*Vehalakhta Bidrakhav*). For the Rav, *Halakhah* was not merely a divine system of law to be obeyed, but the matrix of values and insights upon which Jewish philosophy must be based. There was no room for sprugness and complacency in a religious orientation which demanded that human beings forever engage in a never-ending struggle to respond to the demands of *Chessed* and *Emet*, of Adam I and Adam II, of majesty and the "Covenantal Community." This constant wrestling is the hallmark of Jewish destiny.

Those of us who were privileged to be the Rav z.t.z.l.'s *talmidim* realize that no amount of words can do justice to the impact of his personality. We shall study his writings in the hope that just as the Rav z.t.z.l. taught us that the ideas of Torah ultimately may lead to the encounter with the Divine Presence, so may the Rav's Torah result in his continuing presence among his *talmidim* and his *talmidim's talmidim*.

Gedolim tzaddikim bemitatam yoter mibechayyeihem.

by Hayyim Angel

Ron Luciano once was the home plate umpire when Rod Carew, a premier hitter in the 1970's and 1980's, was at bat. After fouling off several pitches on a 3-2 count, Carew took a pitch which appeared to have been in the same location as those which he had fouled off. Normally, Luciano would have thumbed the batter out on strikes. But Carew was a *superstar*; if this exceptional batsman deemed the pitch out of the strike zone, then it must have been out of the strike zone. The umpire called the pitch a ball, awarding first base to Carew.

When dealing with biblical heroes, religious Jews face a more complex situation than did Luciano. Many instinctively deflate or even dismiss the apparent flaws and misdeeds of the "superstars" of the Bible, such as Abraham, Shaul, and David. The question is more acute, however, when appraising secondary biblical heroes. In *Ruth*, for example, we find three protagonists with "minor star" status; we would not ascribe to them the greatness of Abraham and those in his league). Do we offer Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz the same protection against accusations which we normally give to superstars?

At first blush, our question should be irrelevant regarding the characters in *Ruth*, given the plain sense of the text. Modern literary scholars, including Edward Campbell Jr., in the *Anchor Bible* (A.B.), join most traditional *pashtanim* in explaining that the text of *Ruth* highlights the greatness of the protagonists. Once the *peshat* of *Ruth* promotes the qualities of Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth, is there any reason to probe further into their personalities?

Yet, despite the fact that the plain sense of the text exalts the stars of *Ruth*, our Sages in rabbinic literature view its characters, especially Naomi and Boaz, more critically. Let us consider the *midrashim* found in *Yalkut Shim'oni* (Y.S.) on *Ruth*.

Naomi

Who could ask for a better mother-in-law than Naomi? At the opening of the drama, the older woman begs her daughters-in-law to return to Moav, so that they will be cared for (*Ruth* 1:8-15). The image is striking: Naomi, bereft of her husband and sons, with only Ruth and Orpah to comfort her, is more concerned with her daughters-in-law than in attending her own loneliness. Moreover, Naomi never stops caring for Ruth, helping her daughter-in-law find security via matrimony. Naomi emphasizes her selfless motives when she states, "My daughter, have I not been seeking security for you, so that things may go well for you" (3:1)?

Given Naomi's ostensibly exemplary behavior, one would expect midrashic literature to glorify her. However, Y.S. 601 challenges Naomi's motivations for telling her daughters-in-law to return home. "Why did she [want to] send them back? So that she would not be disgraced by them." The Midrash proceeds to explain that women of different

classes wore distinctive garb, and Ruth and Orpah would belong to the lowest social echelon. This *midrash* implies that Naomi preferred not to associate with her daughters-in-law. She had enough bitterness without their tarnishing her image.

Furthermore, Y.S. 599 indicates that all of Elimelech's family, including Naomi, heartlessly elected to leave Beit-Lechem in order to preserve their own financial savings. Another *midrash* understands Naomi's name to be derived from her *ma'asei ne'imim*, or pleasant actions. Even in this case, however, Y.S. 601 explains this term with regard to her physical demeanor: "Before going to Moav, she rode in a covered wagon, wore nice clothing, and had pink cheeks from her healthy eating habits. None of these attributes even vaguely touch upon generosity.

Why did the Midrash see such self-indulgence in a seemingly unselfish woman? It would appear likely that the authors of the *midrashim* found evidence from a careful reading of the text to support their assertions. The following are a few suggestions.

In *Ruth* 1:16, after Naomi tells Ruth to return to Moav, Ruth responds, "Do not *tiyge* i me to abandon you." The root *tyga* is generally a strong word (A.B. renders, "do not press me."), indicating that Naomi badgered Ruth to leave. Moreover, Ruth focuses on the *going away* aspect of Naomi's request, rather than on the return to Moav. Ruth's unexpected emphasis possibly demonstrates a perception on her part that Naomi wanted Ruth to leave her alone. Perhaps Naomi, the former noblewoman, was worried about her own status and reputation.

Additionally, Naomi's statement of her intent for planning Ruth's marriage in 3:1, "so that things may go well for you," calls for further questioning. Is Naomi concerned only (or even primarily) for Ruth? A closer look at chapter 4 reveals that Naomi had a vested interest in Boaz's act of redemption. Naomi stood to regain her field, and hence her financial independence (see discussion in A.B., pp. 157-8). A close reading of the dialogue in chapter 4 reveals that Boaz considered Naomi's field to be the primary element in the redemption; Ruth is mentioned only in passing (4:3,9-10). The concern for Naomi's profits is accentuated when we consider that there was no open communication between Boaz and Naomi in all of *Ruth*. How was Boaz to know that the field was so important, if Ruth discussed only her marriage to Boaz (3:9)? From the strange presentation of the details in chapter 4, it would seem that Naomi, behind the scenes, cleverly arranged her own advancement while sounding concerned only with Ruth's welfare.

The end of the *megillah* (4:14-17) completes this pattern when Naomi adopts Oved, and her friends announce that "A son is born to Naomi." Strangely, Ruth has disappeared from the text. Thus, in chapters 1 and 4, the story focuses primarily on Naomi's suffering and happiness-- deemphasizing or even eliminating Ruth's participation! In short, our Sages have enough textual support upon which to base their negative remarks about Naomi.

Boaz

From the plain reading of the text, Boaz is a true hero. He is committed to protecting Ruth from harassment (2:9,15), begs her not to go to other fields (2:8), and has his reapers drop extra grain for Ruth (2:16). He gives Naomi barley (3:15), and will not rest until he has completed the redemption of Naomi's field and the marriage of Ruth (3:18-4:10).

Let us consider some quotations from the Midrash. Y.S. 601, following the assertion that the judge Ivtzan (Shofetim 12:8-10) is Boaz, quotes a

Midrash which states that when Ivtzan had parties for his children, he never invited Manoach, because Manoach had no children and therefore could not return the invitation.

After Boaz gives Ruth a healthy amount of barley, a seemingly charitable action, Y.S. 604 states: "When one fulfills a precept, he should do it wholeheartedly... Had Boaz known that his actions would be recorded in the biblical text, he would have given her fatted calves." Surprisingly, Boaz is censured for his lack of true zeal in helping Ruth; he gave her only the bare minimum, despite his great wealth.

Later in Y.S. 604, it is noted that Boaz benefitted from Ruth more than the reverse. This is derived from the fact that Ruth (*Ruth* 2:19) describes her work as that which "asiti *immo*" ("I did for him") rather than "asah *immi*" ("he did for me") implying that she considered her gleaming to have been for Boaz's benefit, rather than for her own.

Like Naomi, the seemingly magnanimous Boaz does not survive the critical scrutiny of rabbinic literature. Y.S. views Boaz's behavior as follows: He performs the right actions, when he can expect recompense. Again we must ask, what did our Sages see in the text which led them to such a faultfinding view of Boaz? The scene at the threshing floor finds Ruth lying at Boaz's feet, basically telling him that he should marry her (3:9). Boaz responds: "Blessed may you be by the Lord, my daughter. You have made your latter *chesed* better than the former, in not going after the younger men, be they poor or rich" (3:10). At this dramatic point in the story, Boaz tells Ruth that her loyalty to him is a greater act of *chesed* than her devotion to her mother-in-law at the beginning of the *Megillah*. Rephrased, Boaz considers Ruth's remaining in his fields to be an act of *chesed* surpassing Ruth's abandoning of her household, clinging to a destitute woman who offers her nothing and who tries to chase her away. Ruth follows Naomi despite the former's impending entry into the lowest echelon of Israelite society, her subjection to the menial labor of beggars, and her potential harassment by other workers. Is staying in Boaz's field, where she is protected and fed well, a greater act of *chesed* (is it *chesed* at all)? Despite the various answers proposed by the commentators, Boaz's exaggerated satisfaction in Ruth's loyalty to him appears to belie the selflessness of his statements and behavior towards Ruth.

The dictum of "No chain is stronger than its

continued on page 14



Unto The Nations

by Shifra Liberman

Israel is a nation, but possesses a character that distinguishes it from other members of the community of nations. Israel was selected by God to be the *Am Segulah*, "Vihyitem li segulah mikol ha'amim" (*Shemot* 19:5), and was given the Torah to live by. Unlike other nations, Israel simultaneously possesses a religious identity as a "mamlechet kohanim vegoy kadosh" (*Shemot* 19:6). As a *mamlechet kohanim*, Benei Yisrael were designated as priests of God, enjoined to serve the world by spreading God's name among the nations. Directed to be a *goy kadosh*, Israel was also required to act in a Godly manner, imitating God's actions as models of behavior for the people of the world. Their priestly endeavors were to last forever, their mission never ending until the time when all the world would recognize Hashem, "Bayyom hahu yihyeh Hashem echad ushmo echad" (*Zekhariah* 14:9). Israel became, like the God they serve, and the Torah which they guard — immortal. "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you, when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" (*Yeshayahu* 43:2).

The two roles of *mamlechet kohanim* and *goy kadosh* have different instructions and accomplish distinct, although overlapping, goals. The *mamlechet kohanim* aspect is specifically directed outward. The nation's priestly actions are intended to bring the world closer to God. The *goy kadosh* aspect dictates a mode of behavior applicable both within the Jewish nation and when confronting the outside world. The two roles merge, forging our identification as the *am segulah*. We will first examine the inward *goy kadosh* and then move to explore the role of the Jew as a teacher, as part of a *mamlechet kohanim*.

The Roles of the Am Segulah-Goy Kadosh

The Jewish religion sustains life. The Bible by which all of Israel lives is called the Torah, which means "teaching." The Torah serves as a value system for all humanity, a compendium of moral instruction, which, when followed, leads to the well-being of individuals and society. "The *mitzvah* is a candle, the Torah is a light, and the moral instructions are the way of life" (*Mishlei* 6:23). The laws that make up the structure of the life of *Am Yisrael* are called "*halakhot*," which means the proper way in which a person should walk. "You shall teach them the statutes and the decisions and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do" (*Shemot* 18:20). If the Torah serves as a moral reference for all people, then how does Israel's "tread" differ from the non-Jew's? Our uniqueness is demonstrated by the following story:

The *talmidim* of Rabbi Elazar asked him the extent of the obligations of the *mitzvah of kibbud av ve'eim*, honoring one's parents. In response, he told them to learn from the behavior of Dama ben Nesina, a non-Jew. The *chakhamim* had approached Dama in order to purchase a precious gem for the breastplate of the *kohen gadol*, and they were willing to pay any price. However, the key to the box where Dama kept the gem lay under the pillow of his sleeping father. He refused to awaken his father in order to retrieve the key, forfeiting tremendous financial gain, out of respect for his father (*Kiddushin* 31a).

Kibbud av ve'eim is one of the *Aseret*

haDibberot, the Ten Commandments, that were given exclusively to Israel. Why then, did Rabbi Elazar respond by bringing an example from an idolater, instead of simply stating the balakchic parameters of the *mitzvah*? It is truly wonderful that a virtuous heathen existed who exemplified the *kavod* one should show one's parents, but of what consequence are his actions to the *talmidim*'s question? Rabbi Shimon Schwab resolves this problem, explaining that Rabbi Elazar's response was intended to convey a fundamental concept in the fulfillment of the Torah's commandments: that the pinnacle of the non-Jew's observance is merely the starting point of a Jew's obligation (*Jewish Observer*, February 1988). Jews are expected to perform the *mitzvot* at an even greater level than that of the most devout non-Jew.

Additional responsibilities and higher expectations of the Jew do not, however, assert superiority. Despite the universal brotherhood of man which results from all having been created in one Divine image, each nation has a distinct role in God's world, and so each possesses a distinct task and responsibility. Israel's responsibility is to disseminate the concept of God and moral behavior. Thus, it is necessary that their own behavior maintain a higher ethical standard.

But this inferred minimum standard of behavior for the Jew is just the beginning. We are in fact required to do even more! Ramban on "*kedoshim tihyu li*" in *Parshat Kedoshim* (19:2) says, "*kadesh et atzmecha bemutar lakh*," "sanctify yourself with what is permitted to you." The call to act above and beyond the letter of the law, *lifnim mishurat haddin*, is something which is exclusive to the Jew. That is what distinguishes the Jew as *kadosh*, part of the *goy kadosh*. By going beyond the minimum mandated standard of behavior, she sanctifies herself and the name of Hashem among the nations. The Jew additionally sanctifies God's name in his *leshem shamayim* fulfillment of the commandments. Netziv writes regarding "*vihyitem li segulah*": since the commandments are expressions of Divine will, their execution should be intended to fulfill the Divine will.

Mamlechet Kohanim

The ethics of Judaism were also offered to all of humanity. Israel's covenant with God was a covenant with mankind. "I have given you as a covenant to the peoples, as a light to the nations" (*Yeshayahu* 42:6). The Torah was given openly, in the wilderness, a free place, so that anyone who was willing could come and accept it. Even those who resisted accepting the yoke of Torah in its entirety were welcomed as *yirei shamayim*. Judaism never claimed to be the only route through which "salvation" could be achieved. Rather, it asserts that "The righteous among the Gentiles will have a portion in the world to come" (*Tosafot Sanhedrin* 13b). The goal of the *mamlechet kohanim* was not to convert the whole world to Judaism, but to convert the entire world to belief in God. The tragic exile that we are still experiencing is but an opportunity for Israel to bring mankind closer to God (*Pesachim* 87b).

It is in this exile that we have seen the influence of Judaism on many religions. The religion's conceptual and moral influence has manifested itself in all the great social and democratic movements of Europe in the last few centuries, which have formed our present world. The founders of these movements used the Torah as their inspiration - social justice and human equality, brotherhood and peace. Presidents

and heads of state quote the Torah as justification of their demands for social, political, and economic reform. The influence of the Torah continues to echo around the world.

One example of this influence is Judaism's significant contribution to social justice in the history of human development. Judaism surpasses anything the ancient world attained, not only in its ethical outlook which normally extends beyond the scope of the law, but in its legal system as well.

The Code of Hammurabi, composed about two or three hundred years before the Jews received the Torah, seems to express many ethical values in common with the Torah. For example, both codes include laws against killing others. However, the Code of Hammurabi has one significant difference; it delineates between classes of people, between the nobility and the common people. Thus, if a nobleman kills another man of equal stature, death is his punishment, while if he kills a mere commoner, the punishment is less severe. In contrast, Torah law does not assert such hierarchical differentiations. There is no discrimination between the noble or common people, any more than between a born Jew and a *ger* (*Shemot* 12:49). Even our actions toward non-Jews are required to be on the same level of justice as those toward Jews. Rabbeinu Bachya in his work, *Kad haKemach*, explains that the word "*tzedeek*" in the *pasuk*, "*tzedeek tzedeek tirdof*" (*Devarim* 16:20), is repeated to indicate that the Jew must conduct himself with righteousness and justice to both Jew and non-Jew alike. Thus, a Jew is required to give a non-Jew assistance and *tzedakah* when needed. In business matters he must deal honestly. He is commanded to save a non-Jew's life. All of these acts should be done with the same levels of concern and commitment that he would feel towards his fellow Jew. All humans, Jews and non-Jews, are revered in Jewish law.

This reverence for human life was unusual for the Ancient World. "There was, owing to the chronic warfare of the time, usually a dearth of men, and superfluity of women among the early Indo-European peoples. Hence girl infants, as not needed, were often (left out and) exposed (to the elements to die). Old people, too, were frequently put out of the way, especially in time of need" (H.D. Griswold, *The Religion of the Rigveda* pp.9,20). Even Plato approved of infanticide. "The offspring of the inferior, or of the better when they chance to be deformed, will be put away in some mysterious unknown place, as they should be" (*Republic* V, 460). This deadly practice also prevailed among the Hindus and Persians.

Jewish law forbade the killing of any infant. Life is to be treasured and man was not given the privilege to decide which quality of life merited living and which

continued on page 14

Quotes from the Rav
Continued from page 9

of the divine name. (*ibid* p.101)

Religion is not, at the outset, a refuge of grace and mercy for the despondent and desperate, an enchanted stream for crushed spirits, but a raging, clamorous torrent of man's consciousness with all its cries, pangs and torments.... Out of the straits of inner opposition and incongruities, spiritual doubts and uncertainties, out of the depths of a psyche rent with antinomies and contradictions, out of the bottomless pit of a soul that struggles with its own torments I have called, I have called unto Thee, O Lord. (*ibid* p.142)

The reluctance on the part of *homo religiosus* to accept Maimonides' rationalistic ideas is

Am Yisrael - Continued from page 13

merited death. "Against your will you were born and against your will you will die" (*Pirkei Avot* 4:29). No one but Hashem may decide when a person's life should end.

Also opposing the popular conception that old people are useless, Jewish youths are advised to turn to the aged for guidance. "With the aged there is wisdom, and in length of days there is understanding" (*Iyyor* 12:12). The aged are to be cared for, sheltered, and honored. "You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old..." (*Vayikra* 19:32).

Judaism's humaneness was evident even in its attitude toward capital punishment. While accepting capital punishment in principle, it is actually nearly impossible to execute an offender. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said that a *sanhedrin* which imposed capital punishment once in seventy years was considered tyrannical (*Makkot* 1:10). Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiva declared, "If we had been members of the Sanhedrin, no man would ever have been put to death" (*ibid*). Everything possible was done to acquit the accused. The witnesses were thoroughly examined and cross-examined. If finally sentenced, new evidence in favor of acquittal was always accepted. This concept of legal appeals on the basis of new evidence has transferred to modern law as well.

The Torah's sensitivity to life extends even to animals. "Until the 19th century, cruelty to animal was nowhere illegal except in Jewish law" (Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* pp. 343 f.). "The duty of relieving the suffering of beasts is a biblical law" (*Shabbat* 128b). "A righteous man has regard for the soul of his beast" (*Mishlei* 12:10). "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." (*Devarim* 22:10) because the strength of the donkey is less than that of the ox, and he would be overtaxed if forced to keep up with the ox (Ibn Ezra). "A man is even forbidden to eat before he gives food to his beast," said Rabbi Yehudah in the name of Rav (*Berakhot* 40a).

Thus, Jewish law taught the value of life. In addition, it also introduced new concepts of modesty and sensitivity, *tzniut* and *boshet*, moral delicacy in a world where aberrant behavior and promiscuity were encouraged (see Plato's *Republic* regarding a community of women, and Socrates' writings).

not ascribable to any agnostic tendencies, but to the incontrovertible fact that such explanations neither edify nor inspire the religious consciousness. They are essentially, if not entirely, valueless for the religious interest we have most at heart. (*Halakic Mind* p. 92)

Suffering

The question of suffering, Judaism claims, may be raised in two distinct dimensions: fate and destiny.... What is the nature of an existence of fate? It is an existence of compulsion, an existence of the type described by the Mishnah "Against your will do you live out your life" (*Avot* 4:29), a purely factual existence, one link in a mechanical chain, devoid of meaning, direction, purpose, but subject to the forces of the environment into which the individual has been cast by providence, without any prior consultation.

What is the nature of an existence of destiny? It is an active mode of existence, one wherein man confronts the environment into which he was thrown; possessed of an understanding of his uniqueness, of

his special worth, of his freedom, and of his ability to struggle with his external circumstances without forfeiting either his independence or his selfhood. The motto of the "I" of destiny is, "against your will you are born and against your will you die, but you live of your own free will." (*"Kol Dodi Dofek"* pp.52-54)

Suffering occurs in the world in order to contribute something to man, in order that atonement be made for him, in order to redeem him from corruption, vulgarity, and depravity. From out of its midst the sufferer must arise ennobled and refined, clean and pure.... Out of the negation grows the affirmation, out of the antithesis the thesis blossoms forth, and out of the abrogation of reality there emerges a new reality. (*ibid* p.56)

When the impulse of intellectual curiosity seizes hold of a person, he ought to do naught but find strength and encouragement in his faith in the Creator, vindicate God's judgement and acknowledge the perfection of His work. (*ibid* p.63)

Jewish law proposed the innovative idea that even while existing in a primitive world, man can raise his moral level and be Godly.

Therefore, Judaism teaches more than social justice. Jewish law teaches the Godly qualities of humaneness, tenderness, magnanimity and sensitivity to one's fellow. Israel's actions based on the

Torah are living demonstrations of this Godly characteristic. Their code of behavior inspires others and sanctifies the holy name of God among the nations. In this manner does Israel truly fulfill their charge to be a holy nation, a nation of priests, being *mekadesh Hashem*.

Ruth - continued from page 12

weakest link" weighs heavily in this instance; this one self-oriented comment casts aspersions onto all of Boaz's alleged generosity towards Ruth. To be sure, he offers Ruth food and shelter, and eventually marriage, but he reveals in 3:10 that he is concerned for himself, primarily. Again, the *midrashim* pay close attention to the remarks of Ruth and Boaz, and noticed that Boaz's outward performance was inconsistent with his true conduct.

The Leadership in the Time of the Judges

Despite the fact that Midrashim criticize Naomi and Boaz, however, they find no faults with Ruth. The "in crowd" of Yehudah (Boaz, Naomi, Elimelech and his sons) placed their own needs before the demands of their society, actions unbefitting Jewish leadership. "Woe unto the generation whose judges are judged!" exclaims a *midrash* in Y.S. 598. Even the greatest members of that society were unable to rise above the rest of the nation, leaving the Israelites in an undesirable spiritual state.

Ruth, in contrast, was an outsider who came under the wings of God and Israel with nothing to gain, whatsoever. The Midrash states, "The Holy One, blessed be He said, Ruth, who is a convert, should come and rebuke Israel, who has rebelled against Me" (Y.S. 601). Ruth's status as an outsider, uninfluenced by the Judean society, enabled her to rise above them. Her strength and convictions for the pursuit of *chesed* (and not her own interests) made Ruth the perfect progenitor of a truly great leader, David.

This point unites Ruth with the book of Shofetim: Beginning with Devorah, the leadership was comprised of "outsiders." Devorah was a woman, an unlikely leader for her times. Gideon hailed from the poorest family in Menasheh, and was the youngest in his family (Shofetim 6:15). Avimelech was the son of Gideon's concubine, whereas the seventy sons of normal wives did not lead (8:30-31). Yiftach was the son of a harlot (11:1), and Shimshon was such an outsider that he had virtually no contact with his own

people.

When the people who should be in leadership are unable to look beyond their own four 'ammot, outsiders are required to enter the fray, adding fresh insights and occasionally even genes to the Jewish leadership pool. In Ruth, the mainstream leaders were content to sound magnanimous, to appear righteous to the public; such a society required a Ruth to enter and show them what true religiosity was.

A simple reading of the text of Ruth suggests that there is a strong contrast between the minor characters (Orpah, Boaz's foreman, and Peloni Almoni), who are normal people who are interested in their own well being, and the main protagonists (see, for example, A.B., p. 161). The *peshat* reading of Ruth suggests that Boaz, Naomi, and Ruth, all transcend average behavior and are superior. Y.S., on the other hand, views the entire populace of Beit Lechem, including Boaz and Naomi, as people concerned for their own interests. They all serve to highlight Ruth, who alone transcends these motivations.

It is interesting that modern literary analyses defend Naomi and Boaz, while Y.S. opens them to critiques which may not have been seen by the casual reader. It certainly is not our contention that the defense of these characters is untraditional; the plain sense of the text does point to a favorable view of Naomi and Boaz, as most traditional *pashanim* assert. Nevertheless, the Midrashim were not oblivious to the *peshat* of the text; on the contrary, it appears that they were sensitive to the finest nuances in Ruth, and interpreted the entire book in light of their assessments of the characters and the overall period of the judges. Additionally, the authors of the Midrash were sensitive to the "minor star" status of Boaz and Naomi, and therefore did not offer them the same benefits often given to biblical "superstars."

Letters to the Editor

Rishonim Reexamined and Beyond

To the editor:

Too often in halakhic debate on controversial issues, the facts of the *masoret* are distorted *leshem shamayim* in support of what are perceived as necessary positions. Formulations that grate on modern sensitivities are buried, and contrary precedents ignored. Uri Cohen's response to Alyssa Berger regarding the propriety of women wearing *tefillin* clearly had no such intent, but I fear that some of the secondary sources which influenced him were not so innocent. As a result, his article was unintentionally but nonetheless seriously misleading and inaccurate.

Torah Judaism's major advantage in our ongoing battle with anti-halakhic groups is our superior knowledge and intellectual honesty in dealing with traditional texts. Our authority comes from our fidelity to those texts; we should not sacrifice it for short term gains on narrow issues. I'd like, therefore, to briefly try to set the halakhic record straight.

Among *rishonim*, Rabbeinu Tam, Sefer haChinukh, Meiri, Rashba, Ritva, Agudah, Shibbolei haLekket, Orchof Chayyim, various collections of Tosafot, Nimmukei Yosef all hold *lehalakha* that Michal wore *tefillin* with Chazal's approval. Nimmukei Yosef adds that his positions was the consensus in *Sefarad* and supported by Ramban (Ramban's position cannot be demonstrated directly from his *chiddushim*). This position is also supported by the straightforward reading of Rashi and Rambam. There is no suggestion in the *rishonim* that Michal was exceptional in this regard.

The position that women may not wear *tefillin* is held by Maharam as cited by his student Kol Bo (Orchof Chayyim also cites Maharam but disagrees) and Maharam's student Tashbetz (not the sephardic rishon R. Shlomo ben Tzemach Duran). Hagahot Maimuniyyot cites anonymously a position that women may not wear *tefillin* because "*seyar be'ishah ervah*," an argument that presumably would be limited to *tefillin shel rosh*.

Thus the vast majority of *rishonim* permit women to wear *tefillin*. The Mechaber follows their view (despite citing Maharam in Beit Yosef, he makes no mention of a restriction on women in *Shulkhan Arukh*; standard halakhic methodology takes this as conclusive evidence that he disagrees with Maharam), but the Rema disagrees. Rema presumably follows his and Beit Yosef's explanation that Maharam took into account the position of *Pesikta*, that Chazal objected to Michal's action, (cited by Tosafot; the same position is cited in the *Yerushalmi*) as against that of the *Bavli*. (This seems offhand, however, somewhat curious, as generally the authority of the *Bavli* is unchallenged in *halakha*. It becomes curiouser yet if one accepts the Vilna Gaon's emendation of the *Yerushalmi/Pesikta*, in which case the *Yerushalmi/Pesikta* merely records a disagreement on this issue rather than taking a definitive stringent stance. It seems possible, although there's no real evidence either way, that Maharam accepted the *Bavli*'s permitting women to wear *tefillin* in Talmudic times, but believed that the women of his time were unable or unwilling to maintain a *guf naki*.)

I know of no authorities after the Rema who clearly permit women to wear *tefillin* (which by no means implies that there aren't any), but it is important to note that few follow Rema's rationale for objecting to the practice. Rather, they follow Maharshal, who suggested that Michal was exceptional and that women should therefore be discour-

aged from wearing *tefillin* even though there is no technical halakhic prohibition. Maharshal's position is prefaced by the words "nonetheless, nowadays we should object," and his formulation of the *guf naki* issue in terms of general cleanliness certainly leaves room for discussion of whether he would object to women wearing *tefillin* in our day, in which the availability of running water has raised standards of personal cleanliness to levels unheard of in premodern society. Furthermore, he presumably would permit women as exceptional as Michal to wear *tefillin* in all societies.

Arukh haShulchan's suggestion that the *guf naki* issue prevents women from wearing *tefillin* because they are *pattur*, and not because they are less careful than men in keeping a *guf naki*, is interesting but difficult to connect with Maharam's language. (Ritva's explanation of the rejected position that women may not wear *tefillin* may accord with *Arukh haShulchan*). The Maharam's formulation (which is echoed in the *havah aminot* of many other *rishonim*: mention should also be made of Ramban's explanation that this position is a function of "*nashim da'atan kallot*") is that women "are less careful in *guf naki*" or "do not know to be careful with regard to *guf naki*."

None of this is intended to suggest any conclusions *halakha lema'aseh*, which would clearly depend on *derekh happesak* (the relative weight given a consensus of *rishonim* versus a consensus of *acharonim*; and the willingness to recognize change in social reality as a factor in *pesak*) and an evaluation of the communal situation (would permitting women to wear *tefillin* be a damaging confession of halakhic mutability, or a way to avoid estranging committed women from *halakha*). However, there certainly is room to question (at least theoretically) whether a woman's vow to wear *tefillin* is *ipso facto* invalid because contra-halakhic, and a responsible *posek* who permitted women to wear *tefillin*, particularly on a case by case basis, could not be dismissed out of hand.

Robert Klapper

Response II: The End

Uri Cohen responds:

"A person's words of Torah cannot stand unless he stumbles in them" (*Gittin* 43a). My friend Robert is right: my assessment of the *rishonim* was wrong. What I should have done (and what I originally intended) was to stress the *acharonim* and to say: "Once the Rema ruled in accordance with Maharam and Tosafot, that became the clearcut *halakha* (for Ashkenazim, anyway). Furthermore, the unanimity of *acharonim*, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic, in accepting the Rema in this matter makes it a formidable task for any *posek* to be lenient today." That was what I meant to say.

I would like to respond to Robert here, but I will not. As I stated last issue, "Hamevaser is not the forum for a full-blown halakhic debate." The interested reader is invited to continue the debate outside of Hamevaser, to look up the sources for him/herself, and to ask his/her *posek*.

ED: We would like to note that Alyssa Berger did herself respond to Uri Cohen's critique of her letter. However, we felt that Mr. Klapper's response was more comprehensive. Nevertheless, we concede to Alyssa Berger's observation that our usage of the phrase "Berkovits' Blunder" was unduly harsh and inappropriate. We intend to refrain from similar blunders in the future.

Too Conservative

To the editor:

In the Adar 5753 issue, an editorial states that Hamevaser's approach toward Torah subjects is of "a more intellectual, open, and analytic nature." This statement elicits a question that must be answered any time we talk of openness: to what are we open?

The Adar issue's discussion of Bais Hillel and Bais Shammai is devoted primarily to the theories of Conservative ideologues. As Conservative ideologues, their conjectures and analyses are therefore highly suspect. Consequently, they should not be given primacy in such a discussion. A further consequence is that nothing they say can be accepted without the sanction of an accomplished Torah-true Talmudic scholar. Although the rejection of the heresies of Ginzberg and Finkelstein is laudable, the acceptance of Frankel's hypotheses without such sanction is highly problematic.

It's true that the Rambam said, "accept the truth from whomever says it." It's also true that the Rambam would not approve of accepting as true anything inconsistent or irreconcilable with the Torah, which is *Torah Emet*. It's also true that the Rambam does not direct us to study the works of the Karaites in order to achieve an understanding of the Gemara. What would he say about today's heresies?

One must not say "*Eilu V'eilu*" when it comes to Orthodoxy and Conservatism. Instead, one must recognize distortions and denials of our faith for what they are and reject them utterly. Hamevaser's "more open approach" should not be synonymous with a tolerance for that which is opposed to the Torah.

Eliyahu W. Ferrell
RIETS

ED: We hope that it is clear to our readership that citing the opinions of Conservative scholars regarding the disputes of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel does not in any way imply acceptance of Conservative ideology.

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Mesorah

(Translated from "Uvikashtem Misham" by Eitan Mayer)

I would like to relate a personal experience which exemplifies the idea of *mesorah* we are dealing with.

I remember when I was very young, I was a solitary, lonely little boy, afraid of the world. It was cold and strange to me; it seemed to me that everything mocked me. But I had one friend, and he was--do not laugh--the Rambam. How did we become friends? Simple--we met.

The Rambam was a regular guest in our house. Those were the days when my father was a member of the household of Grandfather, the gaon and chasid, Rav Eliyahu Feinstein of Prozna. Father sat and learned Torah day and night. A *chaburah* (and not a very big one) of young scholars and the better bochorim gathered around him and drank his words with thirst.

Father's shiurim were given in the main hall of Grandfather's house, where my bed also stood. I would sit in bed and listen to Father's words. He always spoke of the Rambam. This is what he would do: he would open the Gemara and read the *sugya*. Afterward he would say something like this: "This is the explanation of the *Ri* and the *Ba'alei Tosfos*; now we will look at the Rambam and see how he explained." Without fail, Father would find that the Rambam had not explained as the others did--the Rambam had avoided the simple *peshat*. Father used to say, almost complaining, "We understand neither the logic of the Rambam nor his way of explaining the *sugya*." It was as if he were complaining to the Rambam himself: "Rabbeinu Moshe, why did you do this?" To us: "It seems that the Raivad is correct in his objections to the Rambam!" The members of the *chaburah* would jump up, each one offering his own theory; Father would listen carefully and reject each one. He would repeat: "The words of the Rambam are tough as iron!" But he would never give up. He would rest his head on his fist and recede into deep thought while the *chaburah* remained quiet and did not disturb his thoughts. Finally, he would raise his head slowly and begin: "Rabbosai, let us look carefully...." He would begin to speak, sometimes at length and sometimes shortly. I strained my ears to listen to him. I did not understand a word of what was spoken, but two clear impressions were formed in my simple, young mind: first, the Rambam is surrounded by opponents and "enemies" who wish to do him evil, and second, his only defender is Father. Who knows what would happen to the Rambam if not for Father? I used to feel that the Rambam himself was present with me in my bed. What did he look like? I didn't know exactly, but his face looked a lot like Father's beautiful face. He was also called by Father's name--Moshe. Father would speak, and the *talmidim*, eyes riveted on him, would listen to his words tensely. Slowly, slowly, the tension would ease, as Father would begin to tread with might and strength. New analyses broke forth

and stood, *halakhot* were formulated and categorized with spectacular precision. A new light shined forth. The difficulties were solved, the *sugya* was explained. The Rambam emerged victor. Father's face beamed with joy--he had defended his "friend." Rav Moshe ben Maimon. A smile of pleasure appeared on the Rambam's face. Even I participated in the *simchah*. I was ecstatic. I would jump from my bed and run to Mother's bedroom with my heart singing: "Mother,

solve his problems." The matter remained unexplained. The entire *chaburah*, including Father, was sad, near tears. Silent anguish was in all faces. My eyes as well shed tears. Even in the eyes of the Rambam, I saw scintillating teardrops forming.

Slowly, I would approach Mother and say to her with a torn heart: "Mother, Father could not explain the Rambam--what will we do?" "Don't worry," Mother would answer. "Father will find a solution for the Rambam. And if he does not, maybe you will when you grow up. The *ikar* of all *ikarim* is to learn Torah with joy and excitement."

This experience belongs to my childhood. Nevertheless, it is not a golden fantasy of a little boy, not a mystical experience. It is a completely real psychological experience which lives even now in the depths of my soul. Whenever I sit down to learn, I am immediately among the *chaburah* of the giants of the *mesorah*. We relate to one another personally. The Rambam is to my right, Rabbeinu Tam to my left, Rashi sits at the head and explains, Rabbeinu Tam questions, the Rambam rules, the Raivad objects. They are all in my little room, sitting around my table. They look at me lovingly, delighting with me in *sevarah* and Gemara, encouraging me and strengthening me, each like a father. Learning Torah is not merely a didactic experience, it is not just a formal, technical process of creating and exchanging knowledge. It is an overwhelmingly powerful experience of intimacy with the generations, a fusion of spirit, a union of souls. All those who have given over the Torah and all those who have accepted it from them gather in one historical inn.

As I mentioned, the Rambam was not only my childhood friend. Even today, we are still friends. The difference between my childhood experience and my present experience is expressed in only one detail--in my childhood, only the Rambam was my friend. But by now, the *chavrutah* has grown and includes many others. All of the *chakhmei hamesorah* from the days of Moshe until now have become my friends; all are my fellows and my comrades. When I solve a difficulty in the Rambam or Rabbeinu Tam, I see their shining faces, shining with *nachat*. I feel that the Rambam and Rabbeinu Tam are always kissing me on the forehead, shaking my hand. As I said before, this is not my imagination. It is a very deep experience. It is the experience of the *mesorah* of Torah *Shebe'al Peh*.



Mother, the Rambam is right, he beat the Raivad! Father helped him. Father is wonderful!"

Sometimes the Rambam's luck ran out. His "enemies" laid siege to him from every side; the difficulties were tough as iron. The Rambam's words were beyond Father, who tried with all his power to defend him. But salvation did not come. Father would descend into deep thought with his head resting on his fist. The *talmidim* and I, and even the Rambam himself, awaited Father's words in agonizing suspense. But Father would raise his head and say sadly, "Teiku. The Rambam is very difficult. No one can

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