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NO PAIN, NO GOD
ASCETISM EXAMINED

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Editorial: Winds of Change

We were pleasantly surprised at the beginning of this year when we entered the Bet ha-Medrash and witnessed the presence of new mashgichim available to the *talmidim*. This fresh development not only provided much needed assistance to Rabbi Blau and all those who seek his guidance, but set an important precedent of goodwill, proving that when students take initiative and respectfully request change in the Yeshiva, somebody listens. The talmid counts, not only as a number to fill up the classrooms, but as a person worthy of attention. Hopefully, this trend will continue as YU institutes the Golding Beit-Medrash Program. Instead of trying to impose one schedule for everyone, to set universal standards of learning, let us remember that each *talmid* faces his own unique struggles and difficulties, and in the long run, he alone must choose whatever method suits him best.

But as we turn toward the administration of the university, where a new dean prepares for his first term, we cannot help but wonder if his arrival will similarly enrich Yeshiva College. Obviously, we hope his new ideas and prospective changes will enhance the quality of our education. Yet, we are not only concerned with the provision of stimulating classes and engrossing teachers, but also the need for a special sensitivity towards the philosophy of the Yeshiva, including the goals of all aspiring *bonei Torah* who frequent our Bet ha-Medrash.

True, a dean works primarily within the confines of the general studies departments, but nevertheless, decisions and policies that arise in the college often expand their influence within the realm of the Yeshiva as well. Last year, for instance, administrators proposed a seemingly innocuous change in the curriculum. Yet, in reality, this proposal challenged the basic foundations of Torah U-madda, threatening to dilute both yeshiva and college in favor of better enrollment. The endeavor to cancel Jewish Studies, in YC almost established a powerful precedent, demonstrating that for the sake of attracting more students, for the prospect of improving our academic reputation, we should simply shove Torah-oriented study aside.

Therefore, we appeal to the dean to proceed with special sensitivity to Torah values, both in the advice he tenders to individual students, and in the institution of any new policy that bears its influence throughout the university. By concentrating on long term religious objectives as well as secular goals, we believe that we can uphold the prestige of the university without having to forsake our integrity as *Bnei Torah*.

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HaMevaser would like to extend its condolences to the Heller family on the passing of Aaron z"l. May God comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Human Intelligence Gone Frum

by Kalman Schoor

"Talmud Torah equals all other mitzvos." This short sentence asserts the primacy of learning above all else in Judaism. But if this is true, why is Tanach almost devoid of any emphasis on *limud ha-Torah*? Considering the hype that *limud* receives in this Talmudic statement, along with countless others, the obvious absence in Tanach seems somewhat odd. Apparently, Jewish religiosity during the periods in which the *Bet ha-Mikdash* stood focused on worshipping God through the *mikdash* and not necessarily through Torah study, and concentrated more on taking care of the *makom ha-shechina*. Even the Torah itself stresses the importance of the *Bet ha-Mikdash*, at least quantitatively. Judaism, during those periods, represented a much more active religion, in which religious performance usually entailed a physical action for the *Bet ha-Mikdash*. When one was not performing any specific *avoda*, he still displayed some overall dedication to it, one that permeated throughout the Jewish nation.

Today, however, we usually concentrate on the conceptual analysis of halakha, though this often comes at the cost of emphasis on physical action and dedication. The transition began during the period of the Tana'im, when for the first time, halakha was put under the human microscope. From then on, Jews have been directing their intellectual energy into the formation and formulation of halakha. The Tana'im were aware of this change in focus and made certain efforts to address it, such as including in their primarily halakhic work, the Mishna, a section dedicated to morality, namely *Pirkei Avot*. Consequently, the Amora'im, included sections in the Talmud that, according to Rambam, encoded the moral underpinning of the Jewish faith, known as "Agadot." Due in large part to the Tana'im and Amora'im, the "analytical Jewish mind" was formed. From hence forward, the Jewish elite were determined mainly based upon their intellectual prowess.

If this historical analysis is correct, then why does a shift of emphasis exist? As the *pasuk* says in

Kohélet, "there is nothing new under the sun." Ramban explains in his introduction to *Shemot* that the stories found in the beginning of the Bible are meant to provide historical models for Jews throughout the generations. Abraham, as the Midrash perceives him, was a powerful preacher who eventually got a sizable following. What made him such an influential preacher? Kesef Mishna on Rambam (*Hilchot Ovadei Kohavim* 1:3) comments that the difference between Abraham and the other leaders of the generation; namely Shem and Ever, was that Avraham discussed ideas of faith with others. Shem and Ever, on the other hand, deliberated only the method of worship, instead of the conceptual basis behind it. Obviously, Avraham had a much more integral role in the creation of the nation then did Shem and Ever, but does this imply that their influence was completely muted? Though Avraham may have been major figure in Judaism, perhaps his focus did not represent the entire ideal for the nation's growth.

Yitzchak seems to have lost the *kiruv* spark of his father. After seeing his father's self-sacrifice at the *akeda*, he was convinced that his religious focus should be on personal sacrifice as well. But Ya'akov already signifies the importance of not only religious observance and spiritual dedication, but the intellectual pursuit of Jewish knowledge. Rashi quotes the Midrash that ponders the obvious question: how did Rivka know that two nations were in her womb? The Midrash explains that when they passed the *Bet Midrash*, Ya'akov kicked to get out, and when she passed a house of idol worship, Esav kicked. Also, Ya'akov consequently spent fourteen years of his life in the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. Ya'akov's propensity, and therefore his defining mark, was not in preaching but rather in learning.

Although in one sense Ya'akov marks the apex of patriarchal development, his children each have a specific contribution as well. The

Jewish community that Ya'akov's sons set up may have been as diverse as the ones we have today. Each one of the brothers embodied another important dimension of Judaism, although Yosef was to be the brother that represented his father best. Still, why did Ya'akov see Yosef as his successor more than any of the other brothers? The Midrash explains that Yosef sent chariots to remind Ya'akov of the last topic they learned together. Ya'akov saw Yosef as his successor of Torah knowledge, as the true successor. God, however, evidently rejected this assumption, for all of the brothers became successors of their father.

Even after the completion of the Talmud, this debate continued over the course of time, starting with Rambam. Rambam, in his philosophical work *Guide to the Perplexed*, depicts a religion that not only focuses on intelligence, but rewards it as well. He suggests that the ultimate achievement of man is to "know" God, thereby concluding that the more intelligent a person is, the closer he can come to God. Initially, this assumption seems discomfoting. Upon analysis, however, this approach of Rambam becomes not just plausible, but logical. Rambam was influenced by the works of Aristotle, who believed that human beings can explain the metaphysical world. Rambam, in pondering the purpose of man, took the initiative from Aristotle by saying that man should utilize his abilities to the utmost in order to understand the existence of God. This assumed, against the opinions of most other rabbinic authorities, that Judaism's goal was less action-oriented and more conceptual.

A generation later, with the growth of *yeshivot* and the start of the school of *Hosefot*, the practical concentration on the intellect be-

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Risky Profit? The Hashkafot of Wealth

by Aryeh Tuchman

Does the ring of ideas stir your blood? Do words tingly spoken quicken your pulse? Or maybe you live for the clinking of coins, the trading of stock, and the clench of the deal? Are you a poet or a banker? Members of each type lead lives of fulfillment and accomplishment; the leaders among them have changed the world. However, coexistence between the types may sometimes seem difficult, as the poets view the bankers as money-grubbing Philistines and the bankers dismiss the poets as flighty dreamers.

Superficially speaking, the bankers should emerge from this argument victorious. As the monetary cost of Jewish living rises every year, and as even poets need to eat, we understand why 76% of YU undergraduates major in the profitable areas of pre-medicine, pre-law, and business.

"On the other hand," retorts the poet, "prices may rise and times may get tight, but do the bankers really need the newest computers, fastest cars, and most fashionable clothes?" Although the *pasuk* in Mishlei warns, "*kof yemei aninim*, we must also remember that "*ezehu ashir, ha-sameach becheleko*." Why don't the bankers work on expanding their minds and their Torah instead of their purses?

Shlomo ha-Melech brings up another powerful objection to a full-fledged pursuit of wealth. He writes:

"Two requests I have of You / deny them not before I die / Vanity and falsehood remove far from me / give me neither poverty nor riches. / For nourishment let me find the bread allotted to me / lest I become full and deny, and say: Who is God! / Or lest I become poor and a thief / and yet hold on to the name of my God" (Mishlei, 30:7 - 10).

A special spirit of *apikorsut* can strike the rich man at any time. While the poor may fall prey to a mentality that leads them to violate God's commandments in order to survive, wealthy individuals are also challenged in the constant temptation to see their success and power as their own achievements. This slight independence from God differs from outright denial of the Creator only in degree, not in kind. The poor man, confronted with endless troubles, naturally calls out to God for help. The rich man, contented with his life of luxury at the top, may easily convince himself that he does not need God at all.

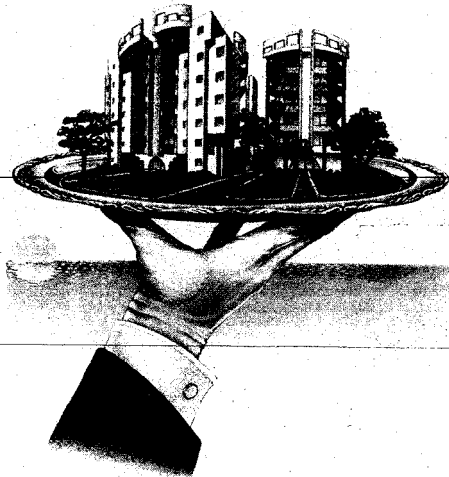
The aspiring banker now faces a number of dilemmas. While he craves a life of comfort, he wonders if pursuit of that lifestyle would rob his existence of meaning. He wishes to support Torah institutions, but wonders why he does not learn himself. Thus, wealth can at once both enrich and impoverish. At best it poses a challenge, while

at worst, the poet wins after all.

How do we avoid the pitfalls of riches? Only, answers Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, if we remember another proverb of Shlomo ha-Melech:

The blessing of the Lord will bring riches, and toil will add nothing to it. (Mishlei, 10:22)

*This *pasuk* introduces us to dynamic *bitachon*, a state of mind that, if attained, may allow the *ba'al bitachon* to safely navigate the byways of business without fear for his soul. Throughout the year, the *ba'al bitachon* must nurse his memories of the *yomim nora'im* davening that exhorts that "On Rosh Hashana will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed...who will be impoverished and who will be enriched." He must remind



himself that his salary comes through divine decree, and therefore, no amount of personal striving can change his lot. Once the *ba'al bitachon* achieves the summit of earthly accomplishment, he will realize that it was God who assigned him all his material possessions, and will no longer fall prey to delusions of self-grandeur.

While the concept of *bitachon* resolves Shlomo ha-Melech's problem of wealth, it raises other questions inherent in its implementation. If we truly believe that the blessing of wealth comes strictly from Providence, then why should we toil? Does our own personal striving get in the way of, or only enhance, God's plans for our well-being?

Somewhere in the forests of Lithuania, roughly one hundred years ago, R' Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, the Alter of Navarodok, closed himself in a cabin for a year and a half's duration. He had made no provisions for this self-imposed exile from the rest of the world, trusting completely that Hashem would provide his sustenance. In this instance, He chose a humble woodcutter as His agent, who, upon accidentally discovering R' Yosef, un-

dertook to bring him food every day. In his work, Madregat ha-Adam, R' Yosef espouses such a literal interpretation of *bitachon*, claiming that in a world governed by Divine Providence, *hishtadlut* (earthly striving for livelihood) has no place.

Radical though his *shitta* may seem to us, R' Yosef enjoys the company of several *gedolim* on this issue, including the Vilna Gaon, and the Ramban -- according to Rav Yisroel Salanter's interpretation. (Even Yisrael, Drush 3, s.v. *be'inyan yishuv shenei midrashim*; contrast with Ramban's comments in Emuna u-Bitachon) We repeat part of their argument at least twice daily, when we recite the *Shema*. Hashem promises us that "If you will keep My mitzvot...then I will provide rain for your land in its proper time...and you will eat and be satisfied." Hashem here promises us material prosperity if only we would fulfill our obligations to Him. These *gedolim* counsel us to stay in the *bet midrash*, and leave Wall Street to its own devices. While they deny neither the possibility nor the usefulness of riches for the *ba'al bitachon*, they do believe that acquiring wealth should not occupy time better spent involved in Torah and mitzvot.

Others argue, however, that the Navarodok *shitta* ignores the ramifications of "*bezei at apecha tochal techem*," Hashem's curse to Adam. Rablag and Bachya ben Asher both believe that only in Gan Eden could we rely on Hashem for our livelihoods. With the curse, and our subsequent exile from that supernatural place, we entered the realm of nature -- and in nature, people work for their livelihoods.

As a result, while we must believe that our work cannot generate more money than Hashem decrees for us, we must also believe that Hashem decrees that we must work a certain amount in order to make our predetermined living. *Bitachon*, then, is a state of mind only, with very few ramifications *lema'ase*. It protects us from the pitfalls of wealth, but leaves us to determine for ourselves just how much *hishtadlut* to perform. We must work until we attain the level of wealth that we desire, remembering always that whatever wealth we have comes from Hashem, not from our *hishtadlut*.

The majority of *gedolim* have staked out positions somewhere between these polar opposites. While they refuse to weigh Adam's curse too heavily in the equation; they equally refuse to counsel us to place too much trust in divine intervention. Expositors of this *shitta*, including Chovot ha-Levovot and Ramchal, maintain that we must walk the fine line between relevant *hishtadlut* and over-*hishtadlut*. *Bitachon*, for these centrist opinions, requires us to work just enough for it to appear as if our actions have caused our income, but not more than that. Note the distinction between Chovot ha-Levovot and the Rablag. Whereas the Rablag urges us to work until we reach our goals, Chovot ha-Levovot mandates *hishtadlut* only until our target goals could theoretically be reached, at which point the *ba'al bitachon* will leave the rest to God.

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Lessons From The Hair Shirt:

Asceticism, Temperance, and American Jewry

by Ilan Haber

Dearest brethren, flee from the evil temptations of society, and seek God in the desert. Let not your soul indulge in pleasurable pursuits, but subjugate your will through penitence and suffering. Don hair shirts, deprive your body its sustenance, tear away your flesh through much flagellation, all in order to purge lust from your hearts.

Throughout the ages religious societies have toyed with the idea that pleasures of the flesh pull humanity away from properly serving a higher purpose. At times, this belief, even within a Jewish context, has led whole communities to turn toward a more monastic way of life. At the end of the Second Temple period, separatist sects such as the Essenes and the Therapeutae, grew increasingly popular. Some *rishonim* even claim that many of the *Nevi'im* and their disciples led an ascetic lifestyle. (see *Chovot ha-Levavot*, Sha'ar Perishut ch. 2; Kuzari 3:1)

Nevertheless, for the most part, Judaism has not treated asceticism with the same fanfare characteristic of Christianity and many other religions. While the Torah lays out heavy prohibitions against engaging in certain sexual acts and eating specific foods, it remains conspicuously silent in regard to prohibiting the overindulgence of various other pleasures. Although Rambam (*Vayikra* 19:2) expands the biblical exhortation, "*kedoshim tihyu*," to include permissible activities as well as prohibited ones, Rashi and others follow a more contextual interpretation and confine *kedoshim tihyu* to only those immoral acts expressly forbidden in the Torah.

Similarly, the fulfillment of certain *mitzvot* severely curtails the extent to which an individual can take ascetic practices. The biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply prohibits celibacy, a hallmark of ascetic practice. The *mitzvah* to derive pleasure from the *chagim*, according to popular interpretation, seems to encourage the consumption of meats and wines. In these examples what the Torah does, in effect, is to sanction pleasure as a legitimate approach to *avodat ha-kodesh*. Indeed, Judah ha-Levi, in his criticism of ascetic practices, writes, "Your contrition on a fast day does nothing the nearer to God than your joy on the Sabbath and holy days, if it is the outcome of a devout heart." (Kuzari 2:50) This concept of an individual utilizing material pleasure as inspiration in his service of God runs counter to traditional ascetic philosophy, which condemns all desires of the flesh as embodying evil.

Rabbinic sources take note of this fundamental difference in outlook concerning the nature of human desire. On the contrary, many argue, physical pleasures play an important role in the continued existence of the world. Bachya ibn Paquda points out that "God implanted in the souls of human beings a desire for the foods appointed for them in this world, to maintain and improve [body and soul] during the period of their union." Similarly, God imbued the body with a sexual drive "so that a human being should procreate another individual to take his place in this world." (*Chovot ha-Levavot*, Sha'ar Perishut, ch. 1) Far from representing evil, these drives play a major role in God's vision of proper human function.

As a result, most rabbinic authorities ex-

clude both self-mortification and the withdrawal from material necessity as legitimate expressions of holiness. Moshe Chaim Luzatto condemns individuals who practice like the "foolish gentiles" by dispensing with even "those things that are absolutely essential," and who "afflict their bodies with torments and strange practices that God abhors." (*Mesilat Yesarim*, ch. 13) Similarly, Rambam in *Mishna Torah* absolutely forbids extreme ascetic practices as sinful, quoting the Gemara, (*Ta'anit* 11b) "if the Nazirite who abstained only from wine

for the explicit purpose of promoting moderation. Therefore he classifies any abstinence over and above what the Torah prohibited as superfluous." (*Shemona Perakim*, ch. 4) Nevertheless, even Rambam, in special cases of overindulgence, sanctions increased abstinence as a method to restore an individual's moral equilibrium.

Asceticism in the Twentieth Century



In Western society today, asceticism as an ideal has all but disappeared. Faced with unprecedented affluence and pleasure time, "the pursuit of happiness" has overtaken other more spiritual considerations in the way individuals structure their priorities. Material success, and the leisure possibilities it entails, has had an impact on American Jewry as well. Interestingly enough, *Chovot ha-Levavot* warns of an uncannily similar situation where "people passing the bounds [of material prosperity], make their bellies their gods; their time clothes their law; keeping their dwellings in sound condition their ethics." (*Sha'ar Perishut*, ch. 7)

For Jewish college students, a product of this hedonistic environment is a greater emphasis on pursuing careers that will afford them wealth and respect than on pursuing ones that will foster spiritual and intellectual health. This hardly comes as any surprise when we consider that the Jewish community in general subconsciously ridicules those individuals that choose more modest, and sometimes more honest careers. To realize the source of this materialistic mentality, one need only look at many modern day synagogues, where Shabbat services often turn into fashion shows and the congregants seem to worship their bank accounts instead of God.

Bachya ibn Paquda teaches that in times of extreme materialism only abstinence can show us where we have gone astray. By observing the extent to which the ascetic removes himself from overindulgence we come to question and reevaluate our own priorities. He writes that abstinence as a philosophy "is one of the cornerstones of the world, and human beings need it just as they need sciences and arts in which some nations excel, for the benefit of all mankind." (*Chovot ha-Levavot*, Sha'ar Perishut, ch. 1) Thus, even though the customs of ascetics seem foreign to us we can still take note of their aversion to bodily lusts, and perhaps learn to keep our own temptations in perspective. Despite the fact that this is an age of rampant materialism, or perhaps because of it, we can still learn a lesson from those donning the hair shirt.

requires atonement, how much more so does one who abstains from everything." (*Hilehot De'ot* 3:1; for more examples of what represents a clear pattern see also *Chovot ha-Levavot*, Sha'ar Perishut, ch. 3; Kuzari 3:1)

However, many of these sources, while speaking out against asceticism, argue against the philosophy of overindulgence. *Chovot ha-Levavot* warns that "the predominance of lust over the understanding (reason) is the beginning of all sin, the cause of everything ignominious." Therefore, he claims, the followers of the Torah need to practice abstinence in order to "make the understanding predominate and prevail over the soul's longings." (*Sha'ar Perishut*, ch. 2) Thus, what emerges is neither extreme asceticism nor sanctioned indulgence, but a policy of temperance.

Some rabbinic sources, however take this policy of temperance to greater extremes. Rambam, for example, worries that overindulgence could cause an individual to "become a sordid person [even] within the permissible realm of the Torah." (*Perushat ha-Torah*, *Vayikra* 19:2) Therefore he advocates temperance even in those matters that the Torah does not explicitly prohibit. Rambam disagrees, claiming that the Torah limited human ac-

Meditations on Al ha-Nisim

by Aton Holzer
 based upon notes
 of a shiur by
 Rav Solovetchik
 z"tl

When the people of Israel faced moments of peril and potential disaster, they turned exclusively to God for protection and salvation. At times "The Lord will fight on your behalf, and you remain silent" was the unspoken rule. And sometimes, such as in the days of Hanukkah, when they faced religious persecution from the Hellenists, the Jews, as instruments of Divine intervention, took the initiative in challenging their oppressors.

This is the theme that we find throughout *Al ha-Nisim*, the special holiday addition in the prayer service, recited throughout Hanukkah. Perhaps by examining the Rav's interpretation of certain segments of this prayer, we can locate both the motivation and the details of the Judean initiative.

The prayer begins with *Bime Mattityahu ben Yochanan kohen gadol Chashmonai u-banav*, "In the days of Mattityahu, the son of Yochanan, the High Priest, the Hasmonean, and his sons." Why does the composer of the tefilla employ the word *Bime*, "in the days of?"

Many philosophers believed that time is motion; it constantly progresses. If man utilizes time effectively, he possesses time, but if he is negligent and allows it to pass, then time owns him. Some people can grasp hold of time, harnessing it and directing it toward a great goal, while others are dragged along by time; "youth passes, middle age passes, and before man can realize, he is old, foolish and poor." The Rav said that no person can appreciate knowledge as does the elderly person. If knowledge is important to a middle-aged person, it certainly is important when man reaches old age, for if the old man is ignorant, his world bleak and dreary. This is as Chazal say (Kinim 3:6); "Rabbi Shimon Ben Akashia says, 'The elderly of the boors, as they age, their ignorance grows, but the elderly of the scholars are not so; rather, as they age, their intelligence becomes more exalted....'" The problem faced by most senior citizens today is not their lack of financial security but their lack of knowledge, their inability to spend time productively. Such people then begin to think about their age, about death, and become frightened. The Rav related that in his youth, he knew many elderly men, but he could not recall one that was dejected or depressed because of his old age. *Zikna* old age, used to inspire a person and give him a sense of pride and understanding. Of course, the society of the past generation, which appreciated the value of time, used to treat the elderly differently than does contemporary society.

Mattityahu, and His Unique Role in History

bime Mattityahu...u-banav means "the time that belonged to Mattityahu and his sons." The Hasmoneans utilized their few years to the utmost, shaping their time by confronting hostile historical circumstances. Therefore, we name the period after *Mattityahu u-banav*. Each period challenges man, compelling him to respond in kind. Mattityahu and his children responded to the challenge of their time. This is *bime Mattityahu...u-banav*.

Next, we must examine the name Mattityahu. What kind of name is it? Mattityahu is translated *mattat kah*, "a gift of God," a present from the Almighty. Maybe this name, thought the Rav, is significant, denoting some aspect of his personality, emphasizing his role in the miracle of Chanukah.

Who molds history? Thomas Carlyle presumed that individuals make history; (see *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*) had Napoleon not been born, the historical destiny of Europe would have been much different. Marxism insists that history is made by the crowd, by the masses, by the class. What is the Jewish viewpoint?

Of course, God makes history, but He employs men as instruments, tools with which He realizes His will, His scheme. Who plays the important role, the individual or the crowd? There is one *ma'amar chazal* that appears to resolve the problem: "ve-Af gam zot bihyosam be-eretz oyvehem lo me'astim ve-lo ge-altim le-halosam le-hafer beriti itam ki ani Hashem Elokekhem." "Thus, even when they are in their enemies' land, I will not have been revolted by them, nor will I have rejected them to destroy them, to break My covenant with them, for I am Hashem their God." In a Baraita it was taught, "I will not have been revolted by them" in the times of the Chaldeans, for I appointed Daniel, Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah to help them; 'nor will I have rejected them' in the times of the Greeks, for I appointed Shimon the Righteous, the Hasmonean and his sons, and Mattityahu the Kohen Gadol to help them; 'to destroy them' in the times of Haman, for I appointed Mordechai and Esther to help them; 'to break My covenant with them' in the times of the Romans, for I appointed the school of Rabbi and the sages of the various generations to help them; 'for I am Hashem their God,' in the time to come, when no nation or kingdom will be able to dominate them." (Megilla 11a; a slightly different version appears in Otzar ha-Midrashim 433:1)

The Midrash explains that although *ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu* exiled the Jewish people from *Eretz Yisra'el* and dispersed them throughout the world, nonetheless, in times of crisis, when disaster was near and was about to strike, He protected them. If this were all that the Midrash wished to convey, it could have said *lo me'astim* "for I helped them in the times of the Chaldeans"; *ve-lo ge'altim* "for I helped them in the times of the Greeks." However, the Aggadah reads differently, "for I gave them certain individuals to help them: I gave them Daniel, Chananyah, Misha'el, and Azaryah, I gave them Mordechai and Esther, I gave them Mattityahu and his children, and I gave them Rabbi and his colleagues." We may derive from that Midrash that the individual indeed plays an extremely important role. As long as the individual is necessary and his presence is indispensable, he can play a critical role in Judaism. Had Mordechai not been in the capital city of Shushan and had Esther not been queen, the Jews would have been in a terrible dilemma. The fact that Mattityahu lived in a certain era and a certain epoch was a gift of God. The individual can serve to inspire the crowd, to arouse the community. The final accomplishment belongs to the community, but the individual is the teacher. Carlyle spoke of the hero, but Judaism stresses that the greatest of heroes is but a human being, who, as Chazal say, is *ha-yom kan u-le-machar ba-kever*, "today here and tomorrow in the grave." Our gratitude is directed at the individual as the teacher, not as the hero; he inspires, he arouses, he leads -- and then, the community takes over.

For example, when the Jews worshipped the Golden Calf, God told Moshe, *lech reid*, "descend." The Gemara (Berachot 32a) writes: *Moshe, reid mi-gedulaikha; kelum natati lekha gedula ela bishvil yisra'el*, "Moshe, descend from your greatness, for I have bestowed glory upon you not for your sake, but for the sake of the community. If the community has committed a sin and lost its glory, then you cannot retain your glory -- you must descend." It is interesting that Chazal (Avoda Zara 36b, Sanhedrin 82a, et al...) speak of Mattityahu and his sons as the *bet din shel Chashmonai*, as if Mattityahu and his children were Rabbanim who comprised a *bet din*. In fact, there are several *halachot, takkanot, and perushim* that the Gemara attributes to the *bet din shel Chashmonai'im*. As a teacher, not as a hero, the individual is crucial to the destiny of his people.

The same is true even of David ha-Melech.

Certain *sigyor* in Gemara Berachot give the impression that Chazal perceived David not as a king or warrior, but as a *rosh yeshiva*. In Psalm 119, David portrays himself as a teacher, as one who was more interested in Halakha than military strategy or warfare. David is known to all as the great warrior, the hero on the field of battle, as the friend and comrade of Joab, as the commander-in-chief who united Eretz Yisra'el, as well as the Jewish people, and extended the northern, southern and eastern borders of the country. Why, then, is he portrayed by Chazal as an *av bet din*? If we respect the king, appreciate him and remember him with love and tenderness, it is only because the king has become a teacher. Already in Chumash we read (Devarim 17:18): *ve-hayah ki-*

kingdom had disintegrated and the Syrian branch of the kingdom controlled the Near East. Why then did the composer of the *tefilla* refer to the oppressors as *malchut yavan ha-resha'a*? The authors of *Al ha-Nissim* knew very well whom their adversaries were! The ruling Seleucids had assimilated into Greek culture, the intelligentsia, the ruling class and the higher strata of society spoke the Greek language, the people dressed as Greeks, and their habits and mores were Hellenistic -- but that's all. Why did the *mechaber* classify them as Greek? Why did he indict Greece for a crime that it had never committed?

A new phenomenon confronted the Jewish people immediately prior to the Maccabean

revolt -- a strange, alien experience that arose then for the first time in Jewish annals -- namely, religious persecution. The Jewish nation had never before met with mass religious persecution, with an attempt to prevent it from observing basic principles of its own religion. Before the days of the Seleucids, religious persecution was unknown; that era brought the first instance of *ridifat hadat*. Many laws relating to *kiddush Hashem* and *pikuach nefesh* -- if, for example, a tyrant forces the Jew to violate the law, should he incur martyrdom and observe the law, or should he give in for a little while -- plus many of the laws of *yehareg ve-al ya'avov* and *ya'avov ve-al yehareg* were formulated for the first time in the pre-Maccabean period, for the problem of dying *al kiddush Hashem* truly emerged only then. The fact that the oppressors defiled the *Bet ha-Mikdash* was a malicious act, part of their scheme of *ridifat hadat*, religious harassment.

Plato and Aristotle, the teacher of Alexander, that their morality is a lofty one, that of the cultured and sophisticated Greeks. Hence, tension between Alexander and the recalcitrant people resulted in persecution imposed by Alexander's forces.

Hence, those directly culpable were not Greek, but indirectly, the Greek mentality, Greek culture, Greek vanity, Greek pride, and the idea that the world consists of barbarians and Hellenes, *zon* the day among the Syrian oppressors, pat- terning their lifestyle and ideology.

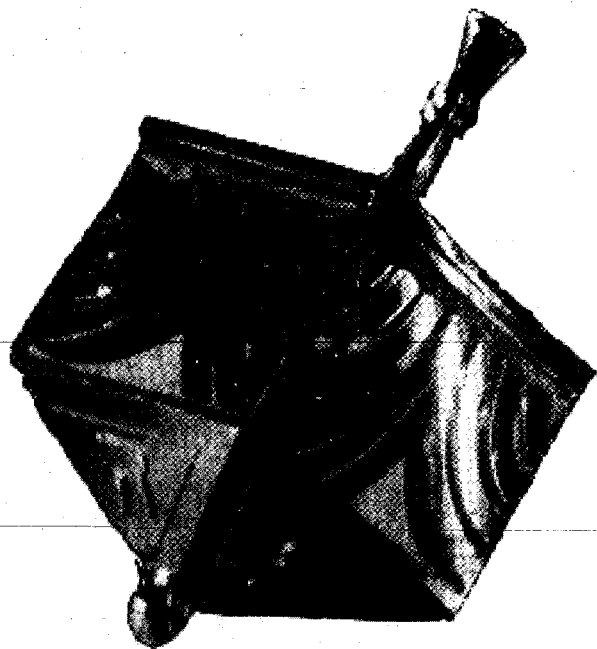
A member of the Catholic hier-

archy of Rome once told the Rav that not only was the Church not responsible for the Holocaust, but that their priests helped Jews during that period. Statistically, the Rav noted, it is hard to corroborate or contradict that statement; there were some that did help, and others that cooperated unconditionally with the Gestapo, as did, with few exceptions, the priesthood of Poland. The Rav disagreed on different grounds.

"I cannot argue with you about statistics, for I have heard accounts from both sides; but when I think of the Hitler holocaust, that millions of Christians -- the decent, civilized, cultured people of Germany, France, Poland, and the Baltic countries that have witnessed the slaughter of six million Jews, among them little babies, infants whom the Nazis would swing against brick walls and smash their skulls -- people sometimes cannot see a wounded dog without getting excited and trying to help the dog, yet millions witnessed the systematic murder, the extermination of old men, the middle-aged, children and infants without a problem. I must ask, how was it possible? It was due to the preaching of the Church throughout the centuries that the Jew is cursed because he rejected Christ, that the Jew is responsible for the fact that he has not returned, that the Jew is subhuman. These notions originated in the Catholic Church."

The same was true of *malchut yavan ha-resha'a*. The Greeks were not directly responsible; the malefactors were a bunch of wild Syrians. However, indirectly, it was Alexander's mission, the pride of the Hellenists, and the contempt for everyone who did not act in accordance with Greek morality and culture that brought about our first bout with religious persecution.

Thus, the Jews, as they clashed with the Hellenists, with the Greek mentality, did not merely fight a dangerous adversary. They confronted people eager to undermine the essence of their faith, their eternal commitment to God. The Hasmonians, not as military strategists, but as religious teachers, exemplified that Jews cannot sit passively under these circumstances.



shivto al kise mamlachto ve-kasav lo es mishneh ha-Torah ha-zot...ve-kara bo kol yemet chayav, "It shall be that when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah...and he shall read from it all the days of his life." The Midrash writes, (Tanchuma, Devarim 3:3) *David...yoshev be-shevet tuckemoni*, "David spent his time in halakhic debates. This Davidic form of leadership is *mattat kah*, the gift of God, during this period, when the Hasmonians inspired the community to rebel, to shape its own destiny, to escape the clutches of Hellenism.

Ke-she-Amda Malchut Yavan ha-Resha'a

Why did the Hellenists arouse this uncharacteristic reaction from the Jews? What agenda induced their rebellion? The *Al ha-Nissim* alludes to the nature of these particular foes by stating: "When the wicked Greek kingdom rose up (against your people Israel)." Actually, the aggressors of the Jews in the time of the Chashmona'im were not the Greeks; the setting of the story of Chanukah was in the post-Alexandrian period, after the Alexandrian

Why was responsible for religious persecution if not Greek culture? When Alexander the Great began to extend his empire, he had a dream of conquering the world not simply for the sake of power, but to bring the Greek gospel to every primitive barbarian tribe. But as any ruler who develops the idea of missionizing, that he must conquer the world to civilize it, raising mankind from a state of barbarity and primitiveness to one of civility and culture, Alexander resorted to religious persecution. What else could he do to achieve success? The barbarians certainly do not wish to be taught, believing that their moral code is just as honorable as that of

**HaMevaser
wishes all
a Chag
Sameach!**

HaMevaser

Human Intelligence - continued from page 3

gan to emerge, based upon the Iosefist's creative style of learning. Those who could more readily assimilate abstract concepts rose to positions of stature and honor. According to Dr. Haym Soloveitchik, this eventually caused the authorship of Sefer Hasidim as a response to the fixation with intellectual prowess. Ashkenazic Chasidut, as elucidated in the work, places more emphasis on the Rebbe's spiritual feats, and less on his scholarly nature. When the book was published, the Jewish community began to split. The existence of an elite based on depth of Talmudic knowledge was undeniable, yet they no longer monopolized the show.

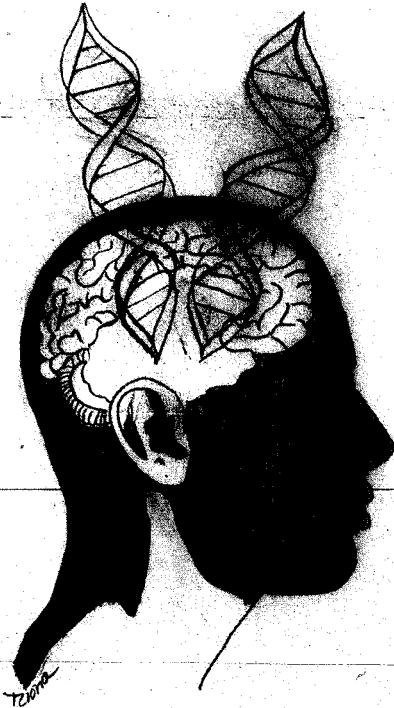
History has proven that no one direction is agreed upon by all. It is, instead, an obligation of the individual to decide which path is correct for him. Interestingly, although Rambam adopts the intellectual position, he nowhere mentions that intellect is hereditary. Rambam may have presumed that, although man can grow closer to God through knowledge, it does not limit the less intelligent individuals from achieving their own personal goals.

This conflict of emphasis arises also in the age-old question of searching for reasons behind the *mitzvot*. Although Rambam mentions that the prohibition of eating pig was instituted in order to prevent "the streets of Zion from being dirtier than a cesspool" and blood and *nevela* are forbidden because they are indigestible and injurious as food, (Guide to the Perplexed II:48) he still classifies these prohibitions in his *Yad ha-Chazaka* as *chukim*, laws without reason. In his *Shemona Perakim*, he describes the mindset of an individual as he avoids transgression. For example, if someone passes by a McDonald's, he should not think that the cheeseburgers must be unhealthy, but should accede that, although they are delectable, God prohibits eating them. This fits into the simply spiritual performance of *mitzvot* without its logical underpinnings.

Rambam makes his most controversial claim in the area of *korbanot*. Rambam says that sacrifices were a concession to the people because they could not see worshipping God without the use of a sacrifice. The Jewish rationalists of the 19th century saw Rambam as an explicit source that *mitzvot* were related to specific time periods and not eternal. This approach contradicts Rambam's own conclusion in *Yad* regarding the eternity of every word of the Torah. Rambam was not looking to explain the purpose of sacrifices, but rather to elucidate why sacrifices were chosen as the form of worship as opposed to prayer.

Today, the tales of *tzadikim* that

make Artscroll's *gedolim* series popular reflect the purely spiritual side of Judaism, whether it be the rebbe's ability to learn without sleep for three days, or the efficacy of each *berakha* that he gives to his followers. This clearly focuses less on the intellectual emphasis expounded by Rambam. Ultimately, *chu ve-chu divrei Elokim chayim*, but every Jew should certainly, integrate various facets of each approach.



Judaism on Vegetarianism - continued from page 12

for the proper treatment of animals.

But to casually argue that all these *mitzvot* were commanded solely for this reason would be oversimplifying things. While the Rambam, in explaining the *mitzva* of *shiluach hakan* (Moreh Nevuchim 3:48), argues that not commanding us to send away the mother bird would be tantamount to commanding us to be cruel to animals, the Ramban (Berachot 33B) objects to such a rationale. Rather, he maintains, the *mitzva* is meant to teach man how to act more compassionately in general. What is common to the two positions is that the Torah had moral considerations in mind when it charged us with this *mitzva*, and either one could serve as a justification of vegetarianism.

Contrast that with Rashi's argument that "God didn't give us this commandment because of compassion, but only to place upon the Jews a set of decrees in order to inform them that they are all His [God's] servants" (Berachot 33b). Thus, according to Rashi, the true purpose of *mitzvot* is to instill a sense of obedience. Therefore, because there isn't a greater moral purpose behind the laws, it is a distortion to attempt such an explanation of them, let alone to expand the laws of the Torah to include the desirability of vegetarianism on the basis of such an explanation.

But even if one were to disagree with the approach of Rashi, it is not altogether clear that the conclusion would be a mandate for vegetarians. One could argue that precisely because there are already so many *mitzvot* designed to foster compassion toward animals, the "twentieth-century *mitzva*" of vegetarianism is superfluous.

Modern vegetarians disagree, based on an interesting piece of logic. In an ancient agrarian society -- in which people were involved with animals on a regular basis -- the laws regarding compassion toward animals achieved their desired effect with relative ease. In a modern technological society, however, we must substitute other means, such as vegetarianism, to achieve this end.

For the Rambam, this argument works well. Because he focuses on man and the lessons he should infer from these "animal rights" *mitzvot*, it follows that since today it is that much more difficult to learn these lessons, we must substitute other means to help drive the point home. For the Rambam, however, it is very likely that this reason is not enough -- just because we are not directly feeling the intended effects of these *mitzvot* does not mean we should attempt to substitute them with other practices. The focus is on the animal, and as long as they feel the effects of these actions, that is sufficient.

In conclusion, no single position emerges as the "correct" attitude toward vegetarianism. The issues involved are too complex and the sources too unclear to provide us with definitive answers. What is apparent, however, is that while it is certainly possible to justify vegetarianism on religious grounds, a person's own biases, intuition, and logic should determine whether or not he accepts these justifications.

The HaMevaser Mazel Tov Matching Game :

Yael Zeiger
Dasi Billet
Efrat Altshul

WITH

Ronnie Zeigler
Dan Jacobson
Eli Schorr

.....
 • Letters to the Editor should be handed / flown / carried:
 • barefoot over hot coals / via extinct carrier pigeon / and other
 • various means to Han Haber at **MORCUE** 227 or through e-
 • mail address: kahan@yu1.yu.edu.
 •.....

Halakhic Outreach

by Stephen M. Tolany

Over recent decades, millions of Jews began to vanish into the populations of the Diaspora, and outreach to the non-observant took center stage as a matter of life-and-death importance. The entire Torah community concurred that drastic measures were called for, and every segment of the population spawned institutions and individuals that have been attacking the problem from every possible angle, employing every conceivable technique. Whether we like it or not, *kiruv* has become a fundamental, ever-present part of Orthodox Jewish culture, most notably in the YU community here in America, in which practically every individual has involved himself in some form of outreach at one point or another.

Of course, halakha must dictate our conduct here no less than it regulates other aspects of our religious lives, and possibly more so, considering the tremendous emphasis our society places on *kiruv*. In a recent lecture entitled "The Halakhic Aspects of Outreach," Rav Mordechai Willig, *s'gan rosh kollel* of the Kollel L'Horaah (Yadin Yadin), outlined the halakhic problems inherent in outreach, avoiding specific rulings in situations that, by nature, required case-by-case examination.

The topics discussed included the status of a non-religious Jew in halakha. Rambam defines a *tinok she-nishba* (literally, a "captured child") to be from at least the second generation of a family or community that has given up Torah observance, a categorization that clearly applies to most of the non-observant in America. Such a person would be exempt from punishment for his transgressions, and would certainly not be considered an *apikores* for his heretical beliefs. Rav Willig stressed Rambam's ruling that a *tinok she-nishba* always retains that status, despite subsequent exposure to Torah culture.

Also discussed was the permissibility of

sibility that he may be willing to sleep over. The "Turn Friday Night into Shabbos" organization follows this approach, starting its program before Shabbat.

A recurring theme in the lecture was the perennial conflict between personal religious obligations and the nature of outreach itself. First and foremost, involvement in outreach takes time away from other spiritual endeavors, not the least of which is *limud ha-Torah*. Rav Willig cited the famous *responsum* of R. Moshe Feinstein (written in regard to a yeshiva student's participation in JEP, Agudath Israel's Jewish Education Program) that equates an individual's time to his money in respect to the amount one must turn over to the community. Just as ten percent is the very minimum one may give to charity, one must also devote at least one tenth of his time to communal service. (Exactly how that ten percent is calculated is, nevertheless, unclear.) Still, reducing one's *limud ha-Torah* is no small matter, and Rav Willig bemoaned the popular view that yeshiva students should bear the burden of outreach

since they have the most time, an attitude that "degrades" their learning.

Co-educational *kiruv* activities, such as NCSY, comprise another area of conflict, by requiring their volunteers to compromise halakhic norms in order to participate. The *teshuvot* Sender Esh lays the ground for many of our modern institutions, by having permitted co-educational activities and borderline cases of *kol'isha* in certain European youth groups when they were the only means of combating widespread assimilation. Nevertheless, co-educational activities are definitely **not** the preferred way, or *lekhatchila*. Rav Willig stressed that all *gedolei Torah* have been vocal in their opposition to this being accepted as the norm, including even Rav Shlomo Aviner, *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim and a leader of the Bnei Akiva community in Israel. Additionally, many *kiruv* organizations are very successful

Continued on page 11

"If you're not interested in getting married right now, in my opinion, the halakha discourages, very strongly, any co-educational activities"

causing a person to violate halakha during the process of drawing him closer to Torah observance. Regarding inviting a non-religious guest over for a Shabbat meal, R. Moshe Feinstein argues in a *responsum* that one who does so knowing that the person will drive on Shabbat, is in the category of a *mesit u-mede'ach*, a label the Torah applies to one who leads Jews to worship idols. On the other hand, one may be permitted to cause an individual to transgress a minor prohibition under certain circumstances, if doing so would prevent him from committing a much greater sin. To illustrate this, Rav Willig quoted R. S. Z. Auerbach who writes in *Minchat Shlomo* that one may give food to a person who will not make a *berakha*, if not doing so would cause that person to hate him, and thereby violate the prohibition of *lo tisna*.

Rav Willig's general position was that one should invite a guest to come on Friday afternoon before Shabbat begins, and prepare a bed for the pos-

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Power Shifts and the Usage of Cows: A Look at the Motives of Yeravam ben Nevat

by Daniel Yolkut

From a religious perspective, the actions of Yeravam ben Nevat raise puzzling questions. What compelled Yeravam to use a calf to represent the God of Israel, an apparent throw back to the disastrous *egel ha-zahav* of the wilderness? Even if Yeravam could rationalize it for himself, how was he able to induce *am Yisra'el*, a nation at least somewhat committed to monotheism, to readily accept it?

Additionally, several places in the Torah (specifically Ya'akov's blessings to his children) grant the monarchy to Yehuda. Even with Achiya ha-Shiloni appointing Yeravam as a future leader of the Jewish people, what justifications did he use to break with the existing Davidic monarchy? Moreover, on what basis did Yeravam ignore the halakhic status of Yerushalayim in favor of Bet El, when clearly Yerushalayim was the ideal central location to worship God, based on the notion "*makom asher yivchar Hashem*?"

Why Calves?

Yeravam was not a character wholly unfamiliar with classical sources. Indeed, while Yeravam was described as one of three kings who have no portion in *olam ha-ba*. (Sanhedrin 90a) he was also regarded as a brilliant Torah scholar. (Sanhedrin 102a) Therefore, it would stand to reason that Yeravam's actions stemmed from, or at least were defended through, sources in Torah and contemporary religious tradition. While the calf does call to mind the *egel ha-zahav* of the wilderness, it is important to realize that the calf is an important symbol of the revelation of God in the world. In the first chapter of Yechezkel, the prophet relates his vision of the *merkava* descending to Earth, "...and their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot." (Yechezkel 1:7) And later in the *perek*, "...as for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of the man, and they four had the face of a lion on the right side, and they four had the face of an ox on the left side, they four also had the face of an eagle." (Ibid. 1:10)

Although Yechezkel's vision took place hundreds of years after Yeravam's death, there is evidence that this concept of the *merkava* existed beforehand. The Yerushalmi (Shekalim 8:2) describes the curtains of the *mishkan* as having lions and eagles depicted on them, a possible allusion to the *merkava*, which, like the Mishkan, served as a vehicle of divine revelation on Earth. In Shlomo's *Bet ha-Mikdash*, the symbols of the *merkava* also appeared, as lions and oxen were used as decoration. (Melakhim I 7:29)

Nevertheless, the image of a calf has more than just religious significance. The ox was also a symbol of Yosef (and consequently *shevet* Ephraim) as is seen from Moshe's blessing in Devarim comparing

Yosef to a goring ox. It is conceivable that by choosing a calf (in essence a young ox) Yeravam was attempting to convey the message that power was being shifted out of the hands of *shevet* Yehuda and into the hands of *shevet* Ephraim.

However while the symbol might be appropriate, the problem of idolatry still remains. After all, this very same symbol led to the deaths of thousands who participated in the *egel ha-zahav*. Yeravam had to find a halakhic precedent that allowed images in the service of Hashem. Such a precedent was readily available in the description of Shlomo's *Bet ha-Mikdash*. In the twenty-eighth chapter of Divrei ha-Yamim I, David gave Shlomo instructions and materials for building the *Bet ha-Mikdash*. Included in this list are plans for two large cherubim described as a *merkava*. Melakhim I (6:23-28) describes the cherubim in detail. They stood in

Yosef Hot, Yehuda Not

There is also clear biblical support for the claim that Yosef, and specifically *shevet* Ephraim, should play a dominant role in the leadership of *am Yisra'el*. Yosef's dreams depict the brothers bowing down to him, a claim that the brothers understood as referring to royal status. This is clear from their reaction: "Shalt thou surely reign (*timlokh*), or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" (Bereshit 37:8)

This dream led to Yosef's sale, and eventual promotion to king of Egypt. It is possible that Yeravam interpreted these dreams as prophecy for generations, and that the time had come for Ephraim to take its rightful place as leader of *am Yisra'el*. Indeed, the story is laced with conflict between Yehuda and Yosef, as the narrative focuses on both of them independently and as leaders among the brothers. This tension can even be traced back to Leah and Rachel.

Ya'akov's blessing to the brothers also discusses the future roles of the respective tribes. This is clear as Ya'akov prefaces his blessings by telling the brothers to approach and hear "what shall befall you in the end of days." (Ibid. 49:1) Ya'akov's blessing to Yosef is very long and detailed and describes a future filled with plenty. Yehuda is also given an extended blessing, which, among other things, contains in it the source for his offspring to be the future rulers of *am Yisra'el*. "The staff shall not depart from Yehuda, nor shall the scepter from between his feet, until Shilo comes, and the obedience of the people be his." (Ibid. 49:10)

The phrase "until Shilo comes" is a fairly obscure one. Rashbam explains the phrase as meaning "until he of Shilo comes," until Achiya ha-Shiloni came to divide the kingdom in two halves, taking away a share of the kingdom from *shevet* Yehuda and awarding it to *shevet* Ephraim. (the tribe of Yeravam) It is quite plausible that Yeravam advanced a similar interpretation to support his claim to the throne.

There are also historical examples that may have reinforced Yeravam's belief that the kingdom did not belong solely to *shevet* Yehuda. The only Judge to be offered the crown was Gidon, a member of *shevet* Menashe. Kalev, a member of Yehuda, was passed over for the role of leading the Jewish people into *eret* *Yisra'el* in favor of Yehoshua of *shevet* Ephraim. And Shaul, the first king, hailed from Binyamin.

Religious Headquarters Get New Address

Once Yeravam broke with *Bet David*, Yerushalayim was quickly dropped from the geography of Yeravam's emerging theology. The likely explanation for this is that Yerushalayim was widely perceived as closely linked to *Bet David*, which conquered and built up Yerushalayim. Still, because of the Torah's odd silence regarding Yerushalayim as the capital, Yeravam set up his headquarters in the historic site of Bet El. Bet El was the place Ya'akov called "none other than the house of Elokim, and...the gate of heaven." (Bereshit 28:16) It is altogether possible that Yeravam is appealing to this



the *devir*, or Holy of Holies, and their wings shielded over the *aron ha-brit*. It could be inferred from the description of the cherubim as a *merkava* that they were intended to symbolize the descent of the divine presence through the *merkava* into the *Bet ha-Mikdash*. Indeed, there were also images of actual cows in the *Bet ha-Mikdash*. The *yam*, a large water vessel, was supported by images of twelve oxen. (Melakhim I 7:25)

ancient tradition of the sanctity of Bet El as "the gateway to Heaven" by building his sanctuary there, tying in his worship to that of the Patriarchs. (as is seen from Ya'akov, who also built a *mishkan* there after his experience of Divine revelation) It is also possible that he is following a precedent of establishing the main national sanctuary in the domain of the leader -- Yehoshua installed the *mishkan* in Shilo, which was located in the land allocated for *shevet* Ephraim, and in Shaul's time the *mishkan* was in Nov and Givon, both part of the *chelek* of Binyamin.

Yeravam the Rationalist

On the basis of the above conjectures, a possible reconstruction of Yeravam's thought process runs as follows: God made promises of royalty to both Yehuda and Yosef. Yehuda had been given a chance through David and Shlomo and was found lacking. The monarchy was then restored to Yosef. Also, the fall of Yehuda terminated the sanctity of Yerushalyim and restored it to the ancient holy place of Bet El. Following the precedent of the *Bet ha-Mikdash*, the sanctuary of Bet El contained in it concrete symbols. These symbolic calves were not only representative of the *merkava*, the divine chariot of God's glory descending to Earth, but also the symbol of power shifting to the house of Ephraim, the new way in which the divine manifests itself on Earth. Thus, while Yeravam's actions may have been misdirected and sinful -- he was, after all, barred from *otam ha-ba* -- they were not necessarily irrational or without Scriptural basis. As is seen here, they followed a clear and logical thought pattern.

Halakhic Outreach - Continued from page 9

without having to resort to any co-educational activities. People in the YU community may have become too accustomed to what had begun as a forced situation.

The problem may be greatest when the volunteer has not yet begun looking for a marriage partner. "If you're not interested in getting married right now, in my opinion, the halakha discourages, very strongly, any co-educational activities," said Rav Willig. Since it is normal for many in the YU community to meet their future spouses in mixed social settings, the halakha may be more lenient on those who already have marriage on their minds. Along these lines, Rav Willig commented that if a yeshiva student does not involve himself with certain outreach organizations, not because of *bittul Torah*, but because of the questionable status of co-educational settings, he is behaving according to "principle," and is completely justified in pursuing other avenues in *kiruv*.



הרב מרדכי וויליג

In answer to a question regarding an outreach group that must conduct prayer services in a room without a *mehitza*, Rav Willig commented that the halakha is somewhat more lenient in an *ad hoc* situation, when the services are not in an actual synagogue that was constructed without a *mehitza*.

In such a situation, it is preferable for the women to be sitting behind the men.

Also discussed was the propriety of a woman delivering a presentation before a mixed crowd. (At a recent Agudath Israel of America convention, a prominent American *rosh yeshiva* had brought this issue into the spotlight by strongly condemning the practice. - ed.) Rav Willig said that each situation must be examined on its own merits, since the halakha depends on the community and the context. In some communities, it is unheard-of for a woman to deliver

a speech to a group of men, whereas in others, this is commonplace. Context must be the overriding factor since the potential problem is one of *pritzut*

guder, which entails violating a social norm.

Since outreach is so widespread an issue in our community, concern for and study of the relevant *halakhot* is of the highest priority. Unfortunately, the *kiruv* subculture is very well established, and to the extent that outreach has embedded itself within the fabric of Orthodox society, and particularly in the YU community, its halakhic dimensions have become obscured, i.e., the more fundamental a given halakha, the fewer people know about it. As this lecture only scratched the surface of a consequential and complicated matter, more steps may be necessary to heighten public consciousness.

Risky Profit - Continued from page 4

Deciding which of these three major approaches to adopt can be an extremely difficult task, as each one of them stands complete and internally consistent. Nevertheless, whether we see *bitachon* manifesting itself tangibly or just intellectually, it must play a primary role in the creation of a proper context for our success. We must always remember that in the conflict between poet and banker, only the *ba'al bitachon* wins. (For a deeper analysis of *bitachon* see *Betach ba-Hashem*, by R' Dovid Rosen: Jerusalem, 1989)

Yeshiva University

Residence Halls

November 28, 1994

To: All Students
From: Dorm Talks Planning Committee

We wish to inform you that the next "Dorm Talks" program scheduled for 8:00 P.M. on Monday, December 12th, in the Rubin Shul, will be dedicated to the memory of Ahron Heller. The speaker will be Dr. Norman Lamm and the program's theme will be "Emanah and Bitachon - Issues of Faith and Trust in the Face of Tragedy." Rabbi Dr. Michael Shmidman will be the moderator.

Chanukah is a time to strengthen our spiritual commitment and to endeavour to understand the tragedy that befell the Heller family and all of us at Yeshiva.

In the spirit of introspection, we ask you to help us prepare for these "Dorm Talks" by submitting the questions of faith and trust you would like discussed so that we can all better deal with the challenges, struggles, and vicissitudes of life.

Please take a few minutes from your busy midterm schedule to jot down a few ideas and drop them off in the Dorm Office or mention them to your floor counselor.

Thank you and best wishes for a Chanukah Sameach.

Hamevaser

Judaism on Vegetarianism: Burnt flesh or Required Culinary Delight?

by Meir Zeitchik

In today's world, where new fads spring up almost daily, vegetarianism is often perceived as just another one of these fads. We see vegetarians as people who needlessly deny themselves some of life's finer pleasures. At best we ignore their high-minded actions; at worst, we make them an object of scorn. But for millions of people in the United States, whether done for health reasons -- in an era when 33% of Americans are classified as obese (N.Y. Times, July 19, 1994)-- or as a moral imperative, vegetarianism plays a very real and meaningful role in their lives.

As religious Jews we face an additional dilemma. Moral and medical reasons are appealing not only from an a priori point of view, but also from within the framework of Judaism. Moreover, Judaism at times mandates the eating of meat. The prevalent Jewish view that man is qualitatively superior to animal poses philosophical difficulties for the vegetarian position. Man should express his superiority to beasts by eating them. The fact that much of the Torah, gemara, and other rabbinic sources fail to deal with this issue directly cloud the debate even further.

The issue raised by pragmatic vegetarianism is relatively straightforward. The Torah clearly tells us "*U-shmartem et nafshotekhem*", which most halakhic authorities understand as including physical well-being. Given this fact, the question becomes purely scientific: what risk, if any, does the eating of meat pose to the average person?

More perplexing is the decision people make to adopt vegetarianism for moral reasons. Essentially, the question becomes: Does Judaism view meat consumption as ideal, improper, or something in between?

Adam the Ideal?

Contrary to popular belief, the moral foundations of principled vegetarianism are quite ancient. God commands Adam (Bereshit, 2:16) "*Mikol et: ha-gan akhol tokhul*" implying that meat consumption was forbidden. After the *mabul* God permits Noah to consume meat, as it says (Bereshit:9:3) "*Kol remes asher hu chai lakhem yihyeh la-okhla, ki-khol verek eisev natati lakhem et kol.*" It seems that God's original intention was for man to be an herbivore, only later allowing him the privilege to eat meat. This assumption raises a troubling question: why did God change His mind?

Alternatively, we could read the verse as a concession to man's desires. God absolved man of certain responsibilities following His observation that "*vetser lev ha-adam ra minurav*" (Bereshit 8:21). This certainly provides a sound basis for vegetarians, who set their standards above the lower level of God's concessions.

God to Jews: Eat Meat!

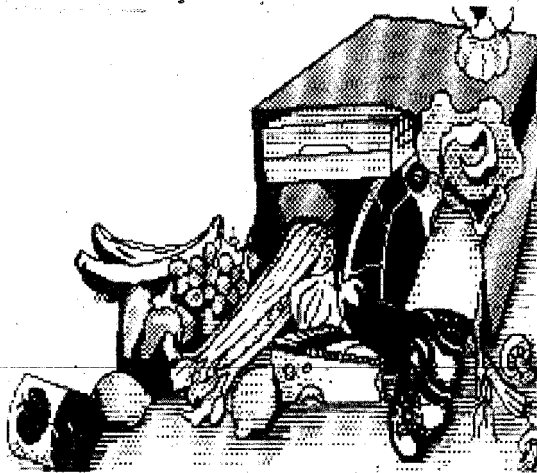
However, many Torah texts seem to undermine the spirit if not the permissibility of vegetarianism. The gemara (Pesachim 109) rules "*Ein simkha ella be-basar ve-yavin*", implying that the consumption of meat is an acceptable means towards the goal of achieving a state of joy. Animal sacrifice hardly accords with the concept of vegetarianism as an ideal. Every sacrifice that was brought to the *mizbeach* (aside from the *olah*) had to be consumed by a human being. And *korban pesach*, which must be consumed by every member of Klal Yisrael, renders vegetarianism not only undesirable philosophically but impossible practically as well.

How, then, would vegetarians harmonize their views with those of the traditional Jewish sources? Perhaps the gemara's ruling applies only to the time of the Bet ha-Mikdash (Tosfot, Moed Katan 15). Rav Kook even goes so far as to assert that in the time of the third Bet ha-Mikdash no animal sacrifices will be brought at all (*Olat Re-iyah*, p. 30). Another opinion in the gemara (Chulin 16) believes that in the desert it was only permissible for the Jew to eat meat when it was in the context of *korbanot*; "*basar taava*" was forbidden. These opinions indicate that only against a backdrop of *avodat Hashem* is it permissible to eat meat; otherwise, it is simply an animalistic act of satisfying desires in which man lowers himself to the level of the animal. To be truly human, argues the vegetarian, we must refrain from eating meat when not associated with the holiness of the Temple service.

The Torah on Compassion

The idea of compassion towards animals is not a new one. *Shiluach hakan, lo tachsom* and the laws of *shechitah* all point to the Torah's concern

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To explain God's "change of heart", Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook remarks in *Talifei Orot* that following the Flood "the change in attitudes, ideal paths and boundaries for all life called for the reservation of all reserves of moral strength for humanity alone." While not killing animals remains a moral ideal, the overriding concern is morality between man and his neighbor. Ideally, man should preserve both ideals. However, since man finds it impossible to adequately concentrate on both, human morality takes precedence.

Based on this reasoning, Rav Kook concludes with a favorable view of the attempt to balance both goals. It is altogether plausible, however, to take Rav Kook's initial logic to the opposite conclusion. Due to the possibility of confusing human and animal rights, it is improper -- even dangerous -- to attempt the return to earlier ideals. God realized the perils of an overemphasis on animal rights and based on that enjoined us to consume meat.

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