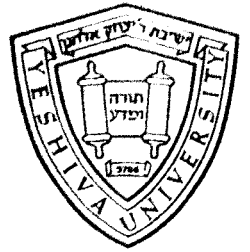


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# Hamevaser



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## From the Editors

### On Language

Everyone seems to blame inflammatory language for the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, z"l. However, over two years later, it seems apparent that we have done little to mend our ways. Precision of language is a lost art, and too often we succumb to the temptation of broad brushstrokes of inflammatory speech. In this sense, the double-edged sword known as freedom of speech stabs its wielder. Yes, we should maintain our right to express our views with vigor. But when those adamant statements undercut our in-

tegrity, nobody wins. Instead of only defending our right to say what we wish, let's start insisting on our responsibility to speak responsibly. The insensitive speaker or writer loses the trust of his or her audience, regardless of the legitimacy of the point being made. Too often, issues that merit mature discussion and debate get lost in the swamps of righteous indignation and verbal audacity. We cannot separate the messages from the messengers, and if those messengers destroy their own credibility, their messages will inevitably fall on disinter-

ested and alienated ears. At Yeshiva University in particular, we are often fooled into thinking that our comments carry no broader ramifications, that our statements go no further than the few blocks of a given campus. This perception is wrong. If we indeed hope to take ourselves seriously as a yeshiva, as a university, as the supposed leaders of the next generation of Jews both in Israel and the diaspora, then we should be calculating and deliberate in how we speak among ourselves, knowing full well that others will hear what we say. ♦

# Recollected in Tranquillity: Ramban's Thematic Approach to Kohelet

Shelly Stohl

Kohelet, perhaps the most organizationally confounding book in *Tanakh*, has left traditional and modern commentators alike struggling to uncover its thematic structure. Even amongst the poetic and otherwise enigmatic Hagiographia, Kohelet appears particularly lacking in both scheme and purpose. The book presents the running, jumbled thought pattern of a wealthy, perceptive, yet embittered thinker resigned to his futile existence. The author jumps sporadically from dilemma to dilemma and from theory to theory, inserting both questions and truisms at random. He often leaves the reader, who cannot always identify the immediate philosophical issue, wondering whether a particular statement raises or resolves the issue. Indeed, it seems that the author muses in solitude, addressing only himself. Although commentators, often each with a unique approach, have succeeded in deciphering the intention of individual verses and even, in many instances, the connection between one verse and the next, most have fallen short of identifying a distinct objective or focus of the author in writing his work. Any philosophical or theological conclusions upon which the student fortuitously stumbles appear to be no more than byproducts of a monologue lacking direction. As Ibn Ezra observes, "Solomon purported to compose 'd'varim sheya'alu al halev.'"<sup>1</sup>

Yet Ramban, in his famous homiletic sermon on the Book of Kohelet, triumphs over this interpre-

tational barrier by pinpointing three calculated messages which the author seeks to convey. In identifying these distinct goals of the author, Ramban transforms the Book of Kohelet from a diary of Solomon's thought into an informative, instructive, even pedagogical, exposition. The most apparent message of the book reminds the audience not to pursue the empty promises of hedonism. Qualifying the disenchanting implications of this message, the second message assures that spiritual wisdom, unlike anything else man acquires or produces during his lifetime, will survive forever. Finally, the author stresses that man lacks the capacity to perceive divine justice.<sup>2</sup>

Solomon introduces these three insights with his opening assertion, "*havel havalim hakol havel*" (1:2). Popularly translated, "futility of futilities, all is futile," the phrase undergoes two critical adjustments in Ramban's commentary. First, Ramban defines '*havel*' as 'transient',<sup>3</sup> not only a milder term than 'futile', but one that implies that everything, including the physical world, serves a worthy purpose. Ramban emphasizes that Solomon is not rejecting the value of physical human endeavor; he is, rather, contrasting its transience to the permanence of the natural elements, discussed in Kohelet 1:5, and the permanence of wisdom and the soul, addressed in 2:12. Second, Ramban interprets the phrase '*havel havalim*' not as the 'extreme degree of *havel*', but as an imperative: "Recognize everything transient to be so,

for all is transient!"<sup>4</sup>

Each of these two changes independently suggests that, according to Ramban, Solomon constructed a planned, organized essay, complete with an introduction befitting his thesis. The book's heading as read by most commentators reads like a cry of desperation, a general observation from which the author spontaneously embarks on a soul-searching expedition to more closely analyze his initial impression. Even if interpreted as an introductory synopsis added after the completion of the Book, the statement still rings of desperation, a condition not conducive to the preparation of a systematic, rational discourse. In contrast, Ramban's rendition of 1:2 as an imperative compels the interpretation of Kohelet as an outlined argument, prefaced with an advisory remark. An effusion of thoughts -- or even a collection of proverbs -- would not be introduced with such an instruction.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a focused, structured, reading better accommodates as balanced and refined a designation as 'transient'. For an impromptu essay, an opening declaration that "all is transient" seems reasonable only assuming that the author added the introduction after completing the rest of the work and reviewing its conclusions, a possibility which Ramban does not raise for the Book of Kohelet. Thus, in light of his interpretations of both '*havel*' and '*havel havalim*', Ramban clearly recognizes a planned, sche-

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# Yonatan ben Shaul: A Case Study

Tamar Wadler

The Bible is clear about the reasons for the death of Shaul, the first king of Israel. The prophet Shmuel explicitly told Shaul when and why the royalty would be taken away from him to be given to the house of David, and we know exactly why Shaul eventually perished in battle. However, the reasons for the death of Yonatan, Shaul's son and heir, are slightly less clear. Yonatan and his companion David were seemingly equally worthy men, yet David received the oil and crown of coronation while Yonatan was slated only for death. In analyzing the events of Yonatan's life, in particular his relationships with Shaul and David, one must probe beyond the surface in search of an explanation for apparently ambiguous events.

The story of Yonatan ben Shaul, as recorded in Shmuel I, is presented in eight non-sequential chapters throughout the book. He is first introduced, in Chapter XIV, as the commanding officer of one thousand Israelite soldiers and the initiator of an attack that started the war in Geva. Due to a perceived sign from God, Yonatan confidently took his squire and attacked a small band of Philistine soldiers. He ultimately killed forty men, an act that is viewed as being directly responsible for the Jewish victory over the Philistines. While Yonatan was on this self appointed mission, however, Shaul had declared that the entire army fast until the enemy was vanquished. As a result, Yonatan, albeit unwittingly, had broken the vow of his

father and king.

The second mention of Yonatan is in a different context. He had just witnessed the slaying of Goliath, a victory against all odds. Yonatan subsequently became friends with David and almost immediately entered into the role of his protector and defendant. It was in this guise that Yonatan was initially successful in dissuading his father from attempting to kill David. When he could no longer convince him to spare David, Yonatan stole away to warn his friend. It was only after swearing an oath of friendship that David runs away and

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“It seems that Yonatan was...by very nature a second in command”

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Yonatan returns to the palace. They meet once more when Yonatan secretly goes to meet David to give him moral support and renew their vows of friendship. Strangely, this is the last we hear of Yonatan until he is killed in battle with the Philistines in Chapter XXXI.

At first glance, the undeniably sketchy details recorded in Shmuel I portray a reasonably well defined character, but a deeper look provokes disturbing questions. Yonatan is always referred to as Yonatan ben Shaul, or *Yonatan bno*, with the exception of his first appearance when he is simply called Yonatan. In light of the usual style of Tanakh, this is an anomaly worth further study. Logi-

cally, this identification mode poses a literary problem: why introduce a character simply by name without any other identification, when subsequently he is always mentioned with a specific appellation? Additionally, one is led to question what the title “ben Shaul” signifies about the relationship between Yonatan and his father (or reverse?).

Further problems arise with the final meeting between Yonatan and David. At that time, Yonatan told David that he will become the next king, and proposes to act as his advisor and second in command. It seems perplexing that the royal heir apparent was so willing to relinquish his right to the throne, even to his closest friend. Finally, we are told that Shmuel's prophecy foretold that Shaul and any sons that accompanied him would die in battle. Given that Yonatan was Shaul's confidant and closest advisor, one may safely assume that Shaul told Yonatan of this prophecy. One is then forced to question why Yonatan would accompany Shaul into battle, knowing that in so doing he was ensuring his own death.

These questions can be answered through a close analysis of Yonatan's personality and character, the key to which can be found in the covenant he made with David. In Chapter XXIII Yonatan relinquishes his right to the throne and pledges to support his friend. After the renewal of the vow of friendship, we are told that Yonatan went home, a seemingly redundant detail. Yet, this statement

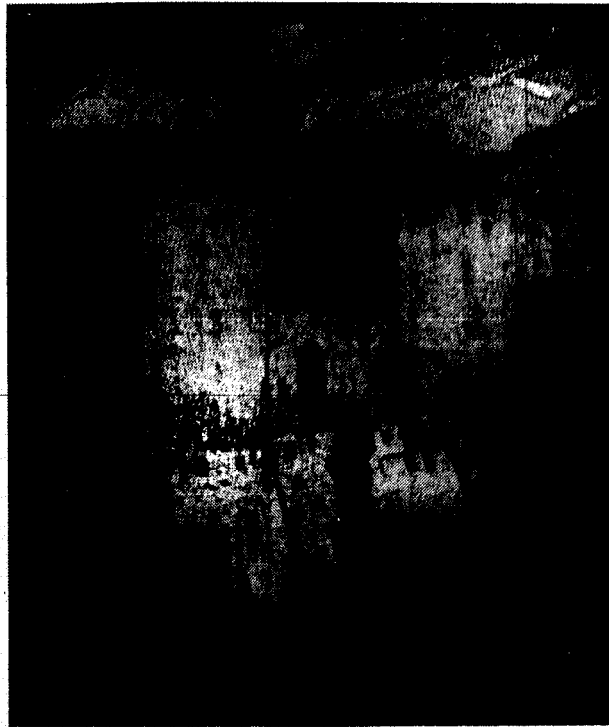
epitomizes Yonatan's personality. He could have gone with David, for he recognized that Shaul's reign was ending. Yonatan went to show his support of David and his acknowledgment of the divinity of the future Davidic dynasty. Yonatan went home, realizing that for the duration of Shaul's life his loyalty lay with his father.

Human nature recognizes many paradigms. There are some who are born to lead and command, others who are glad to relinquish authority and responsibility. There are also those personalities who walk a fine line between the two extremes: they do not lead, neither do they blindly follow. It seems that Yonatan was of this latter type, by very nature a second in command. We see in 20:2 that Yonatan was Shaul's closest advisor, apparently possessing all the qualifications needed in a leader. He did not wish to accept responsibility for the entire nation however, thus sacrificing all independence. As king, Yonatan would never be able to secretly attack a group of Philistines accompanied only by his squire.

Yonatan was purposely not introduced as Yonatan ben Shaul, the crown prince. This introduction gives the reader the freedom to judge him by his actions alone. Yonatan was a military hero, a bit of a daredevil, an excellent commander—his character was not one that would allow him to be happy as king. Had Yonatan been introduced as "ben Shaul" the phrase would have planted preconceived

notions that would have overshadowed the impressions we should get from his actions. Yonatan's very essence was to be second in command, which is why he was so willing to acknowledge David as the rightful successor to Shaul. He knew that God chose David as the next king and, recognizing his own strengths, offered what was best in himself to his friend.

Despite his close friendship with David, Yonatan was loyal to his fa-



ther in every way. He had to walk a fine balance between his love for his father and his love for David, and he did so successfully. The fact that Yonatan is consistently called either "b'no" or "ben-Shaul" gives us a deeper insight into the nature of Yonatan himself as being more a right hand man than chief as well as allowing us a broader feeling for the relationship between Yonatan and Shaul. We are reminded of the intense love

Yonatan felt for his father every time his name is mentioned. Shaul and Yonatan are rarely separated—Shaul's other sons are mentioned only in the listing of Shaul's lineage and when they die. Yonatan on the other hand is constantly with Shaul. This attests to the close relationship between Yonatan and his father, but also shows us how invaluable Yonatan was to Shaul as an advisor.

The Rabbinic characterization of Yonatan is extremely favorable. He is compared to David both physically and spiritually. He, like David, was musically talented, a strong warrior, an able fighter, and a handsome man. He was also scholarly, learned and intelligent. (Sanhedrin 93a) Yonatan was the head of a Rabbinical court. (Sanhedrin 104a) The exegetes on the book of Shmuel I point out that Yonatan and David become such close friends because of the similarities in their characters. (Malbim 18:1) According to the portrait given by Chazal, Yonatan was the antithesis of Shaul, and similar instead to David. Every flaw of Shaul's, specifically

the ones that led to his downfall, were reversed in Yonatan (Da'at Mikra, Shmuel I, synopsis chapters 13-14) While Shaul was hesitant Yonatan was bold. Shaul was swayed by the people while Yonatan put his trust and faith in God alone. Shaul's fluctuating nature is emphasized by contrasting it to Yonatan's stable one. The royalty is taken away from Shaul

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# The Semicha Controversy

Shoni Mirvis

In the paradigmatic ordination process Moses placed his hands upon Joshua, thereby imparting a portion of the Divine spirit. This process is evidenced in the verse "Moses received the Law from Sinai and handed it down to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly" (Avot 1:1). It was the subsequent transfer of this spirit to future Jewish leaders that allowed legally binding decisions to be made: only people who received semicha were allowed to serve on the Sanhedrin and lesser religious courts. As ordination was an integral part of religious authority, semicha recipients alone were allowed to decide matters of religious ritual, capital punishment, corporal punishment, fines, annulment of vows, and the organization of the calendar.

The unbroken chain of traditional ordination lasted until the fourth century and Hillel II, arguably even until 1062 and the death of the Gaon of Palestine, Daniel b. Azariah. The loss of biblical ordination prompted religious leaders to take measures to ensure the continuity of the judicial system. The presence of a central authoritative court was a religious necessity and precipitated various attempts to re-institute biblical semicha.

One of the most interesting incidents in the history of semicha took place in Safed in 1538, and involved a heated debate between the two prominent scholars Ya'akov Berab

and Levi ibn Habib. R. Ya'akov Berab, born near Toledo in c. 1480, was exiled in the Spanish expulsion of 1592. After extensive traveling in order to teach Torah and conduct business, he finally settled in the thriving community of Safed in northern Israel. Charismatic, wealthy, and well learned, R. Berab advanced a plan to re-institute Rabbinic ordination based on the view of Maimonides as put forth in his commentary on the Mishnah (1:3):

It seems to me that if there were an agreement by all the scholars and students to choose a man from the college and to appoint him as a head, this man is ordained and can then ordain any one he likes. For if it were not so, then it would be impossible ever to have the Great Beth-Din, because we must have at least one member ordained and the Holy One blessed be He, has vouched that they will return, as it is written, 'and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning, afterward thou shalt be called the City of Righteousness.' This will certainly happen when the Creator, blessed be He, will correct the hearts of men, and when their merits and their longing for His name, blessed be it, will increase and their wisdom grow, before the coming of the Messiah, as is obvious from many verses in scriptures.

Additional support for R. Berab's view can be found in the original Arabic text, but were edited in the Hebrew translation:

For if it were true that semicha can only be conferred by a musmach who is in the direct unbroken chain of traditional ordination starting with Moses, then semicha has ceased forever, even for Messianic times, for not even Messiah has the right to add anything either to the written or to the oral Law. But the Holy One, blessed be He, has promised Israel that when they return to their Land He will restore their judges as before and their counselors as in the beginning. This can therefore, definitely not happen except by the agreement of the learned men of Palestine, even though they themselves are not ordained."(Newman 157)

R. Berab, based on these sources, persuaded the rabbis of Safed to aid him in implementing this monumental endeavor. He assembled twenty-five learned men to confer semicha upon him. R. Berab then gathered all the Safedian Jews together in order to declare his new status and explain the significance of the ordination. The revival of semicha brought tremendous joy and exaltation to the people as they believed that the Sanhedrin, in all its glory, was soon to reappear.

Yet, despite its popular support R. Berab's action encountered

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# Defending the Faith: Theological Considerations in the Response to Early Reform

Asher Friedman

The early years of the nineteenth century presented the mainstream rabbinic establishment with an unexpected and seemingly unparalleled challenge. While the personal observance of Jews living in Western Europe had steadily eroded during the century preceding the Reform movement, this decline had not impinged on the rabbinate's influence on the public domain — synagogues and other communal institutions continued to function as they had for centuries. Although rumblings of unrest could be heard by the end of the eighteenth century, for the most part, public religious life remained under the guidance of *talmidei chachamim*. Then, with startling speed, the unquestioned authority of *Halakha* over the public domain was shattered. For the first time, groups broke away from the established communal structure and formed their own non-halakhic synagogues which radically diverged from accepted norms.

The *poskim* of the time responded to this nascent uprising quickly and unequivocally, mustering their resources for an all-out war against the Reformers. Almost immediately, traditionalists published a compendium of anti-Reform responsa. Entitled *Eleh Divrei HaBrit*, this work included contributions from the Hatam Sofer, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, and other Torah giants. In this and other responsa, the battle lines were drawn clearly: any modification of traditional practice, no matter how innocuous or seemingly beneficial, was deemed an

act of rebellion. The traditionalist community responded harshly and unforgivingly to the slightest signs of innovation.

What motivated this brick-wall stance by the *poskim*?<sup>1</sup> Two factors influencing rabbinic policy clearly manifest themselves in responsa regarding innovations in traditional life. First, *halakha* remained the primary concern of *poskim*. While not the only overtly acknowledged consideration, halakhic texts served as the basis for almost all attacks on reformers, and, during the early years of the struggle, were the chosen battle ground for both reformers and traditionalists alike.<sup>2</sup> Second, *poskim* calculated their responses not only as letter-of-the-law analyses of *halakha*, but also as an overarching social policy that would guarantee the continued survival of the Jewish people. The threat of Reform extended beyond the particular halakhic areas to which it brought innovation: it imperiled the very fabric and structure of the traditional Jewish community. *Poskim* fought not only to preserve the integrity of the *halakha*, but saw themselves as bulwarks between the Jewish people and the chaotic corruptions of the western world. Thus, we find extreme positions like that of R. Shlomo Rappaport: "We must warn our co-religionists not to have any social contacts with the members of the Reform association, and especially not to enter into matrimonial union with them."<sup>3</sup> By completely ostracizing Reformers and secularized Jews, *poskim* hoped to minimize the impact

of those groups on the majority population of traditionalists.

While considerations of *halakha* and social-policy were certainly primary in determining the stance of *poskim* in the battle against Reform, another set of considerations — neither strictly legalistic nor completely pragmatic — played a large role in the traditionalist opposition to religious innovation in the beginning of the nineteenth century. These considerations, theological in nature, often go unnoticed or misunderstood, for they manifest themselves primarily as implicit assumptions rather than as explicitly stated policies. But for that very reason, they are of tremendous importance in correctly understanding the revolution that occurred both within and outside the Orthodox world in the mid-nineteenth century. This group of theological considerations played a central role in the battle over the nature of the synagogue and communal *tefilla*.

\*

Reformist fusillades of criticism battered the traditional synagogue in the early nineteenth century. Claiming that the *tefilla* service expressed primitive theology, offended aesthetic sensibilities, and was completely incomprehensible to the non-Hebrew speaking worshipper, the radicals demanded the creation of new prayer books and synagogue format that would carry Jewish prayer into the "enlightened age." The insurgents promulgated these complaints by

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## “Poskim calculated their responses...”

publishing their own collections of responsa.<sup>4</sup>

The traditionalist writings collected in *Eleh Divrei HaBrit* certainly refer to faults in the quality of ritual observance and prayer, but none draws a direct sociological link between deficiencies in the traditional Jewish life of the time and subsequent demands for reform. Even the more moderate calls for innovation are portrayed as completely illegitimate and corrupt. These early responsa avoid admitting that an unintelligible, chaotic, and uninspiring *tefilla* service might have been a partial cause of the mass abandonment of traditional synagogues.

Seemingly, the responsa of R. Eliezer of Trier are an exception to this tendency.<sup>5</sup> Undeniably, in his letter published along with those of other rabbinic luminaries, R. Eliezer criticizes the traditionalist community for its failure to maintain decorum in the synagogue and for other flaws in Jewish society of the time. But, in fact, even R. Eliezer does not view these problems as social causes of the Reform insurgency, nor does he legitimize the complaints of the reformers. A close analysis of his letter reveals that he viewed the rebellion against rabbinic authority as a Divine punishment:

Why have the actions of Satan succeeded in our holy congregations? It is well known that God punishes measure for measure. And it so happens that because of our numerous

sins, the breach has occurred in the matters of synagogue and *tefilla*. **The cause is that you failed to glorify the holy synagogue . . .** therefore this tragedy has come upon you, that they [the Reformers] want to remove its holiness and to completely profane it, God-forbid. Specifically, in our sins it has become as if permitted in many congregations (and particularly in the countries of Ashkenaz according to rumor!) **to speak idly in the synagogue, ...and at times this leads to shouting and fighting, and this is a sinful crime. . .** This is the cause of the turmoil and disorder in your holy congregation. Therefore, you must gather up the men and women and children and warn them profusely, **that they must not speak any idle talk during the time of *tefilla* ...**<sup>6</sup>

R. Eliezer portrays Reform as a result of the failure of the Jewish community to pray with dignity, but he stops short of describing it as a sociological cause-and-effect relationship. He views the insurgency as a punishment and sign from God rather than as a statement of legitimate claims. Thus, R. Eliezer's only recommended 'reform' is that people stop talking during *tefilla*. Complaints about the unintelligibility, excessive length, and general inaccessibility of the traditional *tefilla* service are not addressed.

This understanding of R. Eliezer's position is further reinforced when we read the rest of his letter:

It is obligatory and fitting to **begin with rebuke . . . regarding their lowly character traits in matters between man and his fellow . . . baseless hatred . . . *lashon hara* which is prevalent . . . and also the trait of jealousy and flattery and vulgar language and theft and robbery..**<sup>7</sup>

This laundry-list of shortcomings indicates that R. Eliezer viewed problems in the *tefilla* service as one sin among many that together aroused Divine wrath. He saw the insurgents as merely tools in the hands of Heaven, visiting punishment upon the Jewish people for their sins. Repentance in the area of evil speech or robbery would end the turmoil as effectively as would a change in the *tefilla* service.

Not surprisingly, the complaints of the reformers were, for the most part, ignored. After all, Jews had led meaningful religious lives for hundreds of years without ever consciously adapting the *tefilla* service to modern sensibilities.<sup>7</sup> The idea that radical modifications were suddenly needed seemed both preposterous and heretical in the minds of the *poskim*. They answered the call for change with what was to be the battle



## as an overarching social policy...”

cry of much of Orthodoxy for the next hundred years: *Hadash asur min haTorah* (novelty is forbidden by the Torah). Far from a mere pragmatic pun, this phrase, popularized by the Hatam Sofer (1762-1839), expresses a deep conservatism innate in the religious personality. A religious Jew views his way of life as a continuation of the ideals of his ancestors and therefore as a reflection of the Divine will. Any modification of this way of life - especially if based on non-traditional values or concerns - completely undermines this feeling of being linked to both the past (*mesora*) and to Divine truth.

This position expressed by the Hatam Sofer and his peers by no means reflects intransigence or inflexibility in the realm of religion. The Hatam Sofer himself authored a remarkable passage in his responsa that specifically advocated personal innovation in religious life:

He who possesses only Torah does not really even possess Torah, for then his performance becomes merely habit and custom passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, he who would achieve piety before his Creator will be recognized by his deeds — i.e. **by those practices which he originates for the sake of heaven . . .**<sup>7</sup>

Jacob Katz, a twentieth-century historian, points out that this empowering view allowed the Hatam Sofer

to modify many well-established *minhagim* when he felt that they were inaccurate or unfounded.<sup>9</sup> The Hatam Sofer's religious innovations originate *l'shem shamayim*, purely motivated by the desire to serve God truthfully, whereas the changes forbidden by "*Hadash asur min haTorah*" are those that are motivated by concerns or values external to the religious life. Contrast the Hatam Sofer's position with that of Eliezer Lieberman, one of the early rabbinic proponents of Reform:

In every generation the Torah is in the hands of the *hakhamim* of the time to be lenient and stringent, to forbid and to permit, **sometimes according to the nature of the generation, and sometimes even against the words of the Torah if the hour demands it.**<sup>10</sup>

The conservatism common among Orthodox leaders would not endure as the years passed. By 1849, figures like the Maharaz Chajes (R. Tzvi Hirsch Chajes, 1805-1855) permitted certain modifications:

It is clear that synagogue leaders have the right to correct any deformities in the manner that seems proper to them, with the explicit condition that they not change established *halakhot* that are explained in the *Shulhan Arukh*.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the Maharaz Chajes emphatically supported sermons in the vernacular during services<sup>12</sup>, a modification decried by *poskim* of earlier years. Note that here the latitude given to leaders is restricted only by the *Shulhan Arukh*, and not by the subjective but more demanding limit proposed by the Hatam Sofer of *l'shem shamayim*.

The earliest eruptions of the Reform controversy centered around issues relating to the nature of *tefilla b'tzibur*, public prayer. Sadly, much of the Jewish population of Western Europe already had cast off the yoke of personal *mitzva*-observance, and the synagogue thus replaced the home as the center of Jewish life. Due to its newly intensified prominence, the liturgy of the synagogue became the site of the most ferocious battles during the early stages of organized Reform.

In one of the earliest concerted efforts to alter the nature of *tefilla*, the Hamburg Temple Association established its own break-away synagogue in 1818. Among the immediate changes wrought by these reformers was the institution of *tefilla* in German, replacing the no-longer intelligible Hebrew service. This seemingly progressive act unleashed a storm of halakhic and political controversy.

On a purely halakhic level, the question of *tefila b'laaz* (prayer in the vernacular) is not easily resolved.

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Those opposing the institution of *tefila b'tzibbur* in a language other than Hebrew must grapple with the passage in Masechet Sota (32b) which explicitly states that communal prayer is effective in any language, justified by the logic of "*Rachamei bi*," that prayer is supplication, implying a need for comprehension on the part of the worshipper. While denying the validity of the talmudic source was clearly not an option for *poskim*, its scope could be limited. Thus, some *poskim* took the position that the passage in Sota refers only to occasional organized prayer, but does not at all permit even the slightest permanent

alteration of the daily Hebrew service.<sup>13</sup>

What led these *poskim* to deny the legitimacy of public *tefilla* in the vernacular? Halakhic proof texts and social factors aside, theology played a large role in the rejection of this particular innovation. Perhaps more than any other factor, the rabbis' conception of the nature of *tefilla* guided their reading and application of the Talmudic sources. A hidden schism separated the *poskim* and the reformers in their respective conceptions of *tefilla* to the extent that there could be no possibility of compromise or understanding. Each side's halakhic position seemed absurd to the other because of differing conceptual understandings of *tefilla*.

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Any theology of organized prayer must balance two sources of constant tension. First, the tension between the need of the individual worshipper to express his innermost feelings, and that of the congregation to retain a degree of objective uniformity and theological similarity among the worshippers. Second, the conflicting manifestations of the nature of prayer: *tefilla* as petition and *tefilla* as worship. These two tensions can be seen in the enduring dialectic found in *Berakhot* 26b. While R. Yosi bar Chanina pos-

its that formal *tefilla* was patterned after the *avot* - Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov - who initiate and offer deeply personal petitionary prayers to God, R. Yehoshua ben Levi maintains that *tefilla* was established parallel to the *korbanot* — a formal ritual of public worship.

A careful reading of many of the responsa published in the era of Reform, as well as those of earlier generations, reveals that the worshipper's comprehension of the liturgy is an important, but only secondary, requirement. While the Reform concept of *tefilla* - clearly influenced as much by contemporary Protestant Christian attitudes as by traditional Jewish sources - assumed that *tefilla* is a subjective, personally initiated and human-oriented religious experience, the contemporary traditionalist conception differed dramatically. In terms of their essential definition of *tefilla*, these *poskim* leaned heavily to the talmudic view that *tefilla* was established as an institution parallel to that of the *korbanot*. Take, for example, the words of the *Hatam Sofer* in one of his letters regarding the Reform liturgy:

God commanded us to stand and serve before him in His sanctuary, every day with regular and additional *korbanot*. If so, after the destruction (of the Temple) anyone who admits that *tefilla* is a desired worship (*avoda*) between man and God is obligated to pray every day in place of the *korbanot* (*avoda*) since God wants us to serve him every day. . . It is impossible that *tefilla* which is

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# History and Historicity: A Review of “Judaism’s Encounter with Other Cultures”

Yehudit Robinson

Should adherence to *halachic* Judaism inherently limit one’s interaction with general society? How does Judaism react to its surrounding environments? On Wednesday, October 29, Drs. David Berger and Shnayer Z. Leiman discussed these questions in a lecture entitled “Judaism’s Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?” based on the recently released book of the same title. Dr. Jacob J. Schacter, the book’s editor, moderated the forum, introducing the issues at hand by positing that Judaism has always touted interaction with other cultures.

Dr. Berger contrasted Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities of the Middle Ages as proofs that, at least historically, Jews have interacted with members of the general societies in which they live. Specifically, this interaction took the form of higher education, especially when the Jews lived in an inherently multicultural environment. For instance, Spain of the ninth to twelfth centuries exhibited two features which facilitated interaction between Jews and their surroundings. In contrast to Christian ruled countries, where Christianity existed as the exclusive culture, Spain was a religiously-neutral sphere. That is, beyond pure religion, Islamic culture emphasized poetry, science, and philosophy. Additionally, in these countries, Arabic was both the language of religion and the vernacular. Thus, all Jews who could communicate with their neighbors were also able to interact effectively with the

higher culture. In Western Europe, however, the language of scholars was Latin, while the language of the street was either French or German. Therefore, proficiency in general society did not necessarily enable the Jews to join the *intelligentsia*.

Dr. Berger posited that Spanish Jews did, in fact, engage with their society’s general culture. However, the tenor of that interaction included both “absorption and resistance,” demonstrated by a willingness to examine, while at the same time critically evaluating, both the foreign culture’s values and Judaism’s beliefs. Dr. Berger cited Maimonides as an example of a scholar who promoted interaction with the general intellectual environment. For instance, Maimonides felt that understanding Aristotelian physics enabled the individual to understand *Ma’asei B’reishit*. Further, he employed secular philosophy to prove the incorporeality of God.

By the end of the twelfth century, Spanish Jews were confident of their adopted culture. They left Jews from other countries to choose between embracing the Spanish approach or viewing general culture with great reservation, believing that the Sepharadim “were contaminating the Torah with Greek wisdom.” The implications of this confrontation transformed both Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewry. Some of Ashkenaz now became more open to the study of philosophy, although the study of the Rambam ironically remained controversial.

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both Sephard and Ashkenaz began to limit their interactions with general culture. Dr. Berger maintained that this shift reflects more about the surrounding cultures than it does about the Jews. He posits that Spanish intellectual life had become moribund. Similarly, the main centers of culture in Western Europe remained far from the primary enclaves of Ashkenazi Jewry. Thus, neither the Sefaradim nor the Ashkenazim entered the nineteenth century with a great amount of interaction with Gentiles. However, Dr. Berger stressed that one need not ascribe any religious significance to this lapse in communication with general society, for there was simply little culture available for the Jews to interact with. Hence, Dr. Berger suggested that “insular Orthodoxy” today “deviate[s] from tradition,” insofar as historically, Jews have inculcated elements of secular culture whenever that culture offered the opportunity to do so.

Dr. Berger concluded with the affirmation that we must engage with others in our society. “We must prevent Judaism from becoming secluded from the modern world.” In addition, “we should not tell someone who is drawn [to secular culture,] you could become a *Gadol BaTorah*” and therefore urge him or her to reject all secular studies. One day, he maintains, we might be able to produce somebody who is great in both

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# Martin Buber's Thought: An Introduction

Benjy Balint

## I.

Martin Buber, one of the great modern Jewish thinkers, was born in Vienna in 1878, and died in Jerusalem in 1965. He was raised by his grandfather, Solomon Buber (1827-1906), a philanthropist and scholar who dedicated himself to editing a critical edition of Midrash. In 1916, the younger Buber founded the influential German Jewish intellectual journal *Der Jude*. When the Nazis forbade his lecturing and teaching, Buber emigrated at age sixty to Palestine, where he taught at Hebrew University and acted as the first President of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Whether or not he himself realized his philosophy in his own interpersonal relationships,<sup>1</sup> Buber was a complex personality, a man of "uncanny openness, subject to continuing pivotal experiences . . . as well as constant reevaluation."<sup>2</sup> According to Maurice Friedman, one of his primary interpreters, Buber's thought underwent "a gradual movement from an early period of mysticism through a middle period of existentialism, to a final period of developing dialogical philosophy."<sup>3</sup> This assessment will provide the structure of my discussion of Buber, which quotes generously from Buber's writings to convey some of the flavor of his style.

## II.

In his initial phase, his mystical thought, Buber's prime influence was the German mystical tradition spanning from Meister Eckhart to Ange-

lus Silesius, but he was eventually more profoundly indebted to his immersion in Hasidut.<sup>4</sup>

"God does not want to be believed in," Buber claims, "to be debated and defended by us, but simply to be realized through us."<sup>5</sup> How is God realized? Through the genuine ecstatic experience in which selfhood -- though never reaching full apotheosis -- is paradoxically lost as it dominates the experiential field of perception. Buber describes the ecstatic experience as "the experience of an exclusive and all-absorbing unity of [the mystic's] own self. This self is then so uniquely manifest, and it appears then so uniquely existent, that the individual loses the knowledge, 'This is my self, distinguished and separate from every other self.'<sup>6</sup> "Nothing exists [other] than his self, which he experiences as the self."<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, this "religious solipsism" leads to a state in which the mystic no longer has any communion with his fellow man, nor "anything in common with them."<sup>8</sup> In 1910, Buber remarked that, "Mysticism negates community, precisely because for it there is only one real relation, the relation to God . . . nothing else matters to [the mystic] than to be alone with his God."<sup>9</sup>

This is where Hasidut becomes important, and where Buber introduced Hassidic themes into the context of Western thought. He called Hasidut, with its fervor and exalted joy, with its hallowing of the everyday, its exaltation of the banal, "the greatest phenomenon we know in the

history of the spirit."<sup>10</sup>

## III.

"If those be called existentialists who transpose human existence itself into the center of rational contemplation, then one could call me that," Buber says. He goes on to say that "everything else may be discussed purely speculatively, but not our own existence."<sup>11</sup>

In this, the second stage, many elements of Buber's thought echo existentialist concerns. At the age of seventeen, for instance, in what was "probably his first literary venture," Buber translated into Polish the first part of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a work which he reports "took possession of me," and later praises Nietzsche as a prophet of the "God of becoming," a man who "erected before our eyes the statue of the heroic man who creates himself."

Significantly, Buber introduces notion of active human decision. Unity is achieved through the commitment of the act of decision. Speaking like a theistic Sartre, Buber extols the religiosity born of decision: "The act of decision is conceived as God's realization through *imitatio Dei* . . . [to] be determined by nothing, removed from all conditionality."<sup>12</sup>

The theme of alienation resonates prominently in the Second Part of I and Thou. While eschewing any notion of the individual who feels abandoned in the absurd, he writes of a time "when man is overcome by the horror of the alienation between I and

world. . . and the world fills him with anxiety."<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, in emphasizing the primacy of concrete experience over theoretical speculation, Buber reiterates that unlike the Greek *sophia*, theoretical and an end unto itself, Jewish *chochmah* must lead to action, to praxis.

Part of what makes Buber such a difficult philosopher to treat systematically is that not only does he profess to presuppose no dogmatics, but, as he writes in the preface to *For the Sake of Heaven*, "I have no doctrine." As Gershom Scholem put it, he "does not acknowledge any teaching about what should be done but puts the whole emphasis on intensity, on how whatever one does is done." This trait too, this suspicion of schools of thought reducible to a set of tenets, exposes Buber's affinity to the existentialists.

With other religious existentialists like Gabriel Marcel, Buber shares a distaste for institutionalized religion and systematic theology. Like them, he asserts that "Man's 'religious' situation . . . is marked by its essential and indissoluble antinomies;"<sup>14</sup> by its "burning contradictions."<sup>15</sup> Buber thus shares too the skepticism which pronounces reason to be woefully inadequate in formulating a response to man's most profound questions, dilemmas, and decisions, the most crucial being the decision to choose God.

Buber, citing Kierkegaard, also distinguishes between objective, impersonal truth confirmed by correspondence with reality, and truth as a "way of being" confirmed in the authentically lived life. "Human truth becomes real when one tries to translate one's relationship to truth into the reality of one's own life."<sup>16</sup> Only

(God), only through revelation, can man discover true morality.

And yet, for Buber, revelation does not directly dictate; it does not inscribe on the *tabula rasa* of man a clear and explicit ethical program, totally devoid of human creative participation. "Even the man who is 'mouth' is precisely that and not a mouthpiece - not an instrument but an organ, an autonomous, sounding organ; and to sound means to modify sound."<sup>19</sup> Serious moral action, therefore, cannot facily and mechanically appeal to an inherited set of routinized behaviors or pre-determined, ready-made, generalized rules or instructional formulae. Revelation cannot be the universalizable communication of content, since the God of dialogue speaks to the unique partner in a unique situation. If God has a general name at all, says Buber, it is "I shall be who I shall be," (*Shemot* 3:14) - meaning that God is not encountered as timeless essence, but can only be encountered anew in the here and now of each freshly revelatory moment, transcending conceptual



the "lived idea" has value.

Unlike the atheistic existentialists, Buber holds that morality is not expediency, prudential choice nor (as in Sartre) arbitrary human invention.<sup>17</sup> Every genuine duty is intrinsically valuable and absolute, and "only an absolute can give the quality of absoluteness to an obligation."<sup>18</sup> Hence only in relationship to the Absolute

anticipation.<sup>20</sup> Thus, even though moral decision can only be based on revelation, "there is not the slightest assurance that our decision is right in any way but a personal way."<sup>21</sup> Revelation supplies direction, but "direction must not be substituted for decision."<sup>22</sup> Condemned to the trem-

*continued on next page*

bling uncertainty of subjectivity, the man who faces moral decision makes "the crucial realization: Everything depends on myself."<sup>23</sup> Again Buber's thought resonates with existentialist themes.

With this attitude in the background, Buber, fearing the "Eclipse of God," was passionate in his opposition to institutional religion, almost amounting, as it were, to a doctrine of *nulla salus nisi extra ecclesiam* - there is no salvation unless outside the church. "Religion is the greatest enemy of mankind," Buber said, if it sanctions a dualism which leaves our mundane lives untouched. He denied that revelation could become legislation; he thought religion antithetical to religiosity.

Buber's religious subjectivism proclaimed that the authentic religious impulse vanishes the instant one tries to institutionalize it; to capture it in ritual or fix it in liturgy. Halacha, in his eyes, stifles and stultifies religious spontaneity by immobilizing, devalizing and formalizing pure religiosity; by making it abstract and arcane.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, rabbinic legalism, rigid and ossified, results from the unnatural, uncreative defensiveness of *galut* which drove elemental, primal, authentic Jewish religiosity to its last refuge - heretics.

Finally, we note that at this stage in Buber's thought, the two-fold relation of man to the world is not yet articulated in terms of the I-It/I-Thou dichotomy, but in terms of a more basic distinction of orientation. "There is a two-fold relation of man to his experience: the orienting or classifying and the realizing or making real. What you experience, doing and suffering, creating and enjoy-

ing, you can register in the structure of experience for the sake of your aims or you can grasp it for its own sake in its own power and splendor."<sup>25</sup> Thus "To realize," writes Buber, is "to re-

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"...the world of I--Thou...is the world of lived, inner experience of immediacy."

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late life-experience to nothing but itself."<sup>26</sup> "For all life-experiencing is a dream of unification; orientation divides and subdivides it, realization accomplishes and proclaims it."<sup>27</sup> Unity is no longer mystically discovered, but existentially realized. Unlike the mystical unity which is passively experienced, the existential unity must be created: "The unity cannot be found, it can only be created."<sup>28</sup> Yet even at this stage, man achieves unity by withdrawing into himself. "The unity of the world is only the reflection of his unity."<sup>29</sup>

#### IV.

Buber's magnum opus, *I and Thou* (1923),<sup>30</sup> more descriptively phenomenological than analytically philosophical, represents the culmination of the mature, dialogical phase of Buber's thought - the third stage.

Accused by critics of imprecision and opacity, of a "conceptual clarity clouded by rhetorical effects," Buber's ambiguous, sometimes metaphorical style of language here reflects his refusal to portray the world in precise, simplistic formulae. ("I wrote under the spell of an irresistible enthusiasm," he reports.)

I and Thou typologizes two distinct worlds. In the world of I-It, the world in which "causality holds un-

limited sway,"<sup>31</sup> I experience "things that consist of qualities and processes that consist of moments, things recorded in terms of spatial coordinates and processes recorded in terms of temporal coordinates . . . an ordered world, a detached world."<sup>32</sup> It is a world of cognitive experience; of "differentiated experience," fragmented by scientific analysis and classification. The man

who says I-It, who has an instrumentalist attitude, acquires information and measures things in isolation; "he experiences things as aggregates of qualities."<sup>33</sup> (The intellectuality of the I-It, we might add, is not negative unless it purports to claim total reign; unless it falsely claims exclusive and exhaustive epistemological truth. "Without It a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not human."<sup>34</sup>)

In contrast, in the world of I-Thou, the object one encounters does not reduce to spatio-temporal terms; it is *sui generis*; totally unique. It is the world of lived, inner experience of immediacy; the non-rational, undifferentiated experience of reality which cannot be subsumed under cognitive categories. "Thou has no borders."<sup>35</sup> According to Buber, this attitude is even paradigmatically Jewish: To the Jew, "the world appears as a limitless motion, flowing through him. Though he perceives individual things, he does not perceive them as separate entities, each reposing and complete in itself, but only as an aggregate of nodal points for an infinite motion."<sup>36</sup>

The It, which Levinas calls "an anonymous article of exchange," is an

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# Where is Kever Rachel?

Mordechai Friedman

## The Problem

Today's barricaded and heavily guarded tourist attraction known as Kever Rachel is located one half mile north of the ancient city of Beit Lechem. This location is based on the *pasuk* in Berashit which describes where Yaakov buried Rachel: "*Vatikaver b'derech Efrata hi Beit Lachem*" (Berashit ??). This location is affirmed by many ancient sources and records.<sup>1</sup>

Although most tour guides will swear that the present day Kever Rachel is the actual location of her tomb<sup>2</sup>, and many people pour out their hearts in prayer at this tomb, we find that according to Tanach, this historicity of this site should be called into question.

The reason for doubting the validity of the present location of Kever Rachel stems from an apparent contradiction between different *pesukim*. In Sefer Shmuel, Shmuel the prophet instructs Shaul to go find his lost sheep at a certain location. "*Bilechticha hayom ma'imadi u'matzata shnai anashim im Kevurat Rachel b'gvul Binyamin b'Tzeltzach*" ("When you leave me today, you will find two men by Kevurat Rachel which is in the boundary of Binyamin by Tzeltzach") (Shmuel I 10:2). From this source it seems that Kever Rachel is not in Beit Lechem, which is located in the boundaries of Yehuda, but in the borders of Binyamin near a place called Tzeltzach.

The situation is further complicated when taking into account the

following *pasuk* from Sefer Yirmiyahu (31:14) - "*Kol b'Ramah nishma... Rachel mivaka al baneha*" ("A voice was heard in Ramah... Rachel weeping for her children"). This *pasuk* seems to label Kever Rachel as being somewhere near "Ramah" (one of the major crossroads in the mountainous northern region of G'vul Binyamin). Where, then, is Kever Rachel?<sup>3</sup>

## In Defense of the Accepted Location

There have been many attempts to defend the accepted location in Beit Lechem Yehuda in lieu of Tzeltzach in Gvul Binyamin, or Ramah. To do so, they must somehow reread the *p'sukim* in Shmuel and Yirmiyahu.

The Tosefta (Sotah 11:6 and cited by Rashi in Shmuel I) suggests that we read the *pasuk* in Shmuel as follows: "now I am speaking to you from here, they (those who found your sheep) are coming from Kever Rachel, so go and you will meet them in the border of Binyamin in Tzeltzach." Thus, the Tosefta divides the *pasuk* so that the apparent description of one place is actually that of three.

The Midrash Rabbah (82:9-11) offers another alternate reading along similar lines. "When you leave me today from Kever Rachel, you will find the men (with your sheep) in the border of Binyamin in Tzeltzach." According to this interpretation, there are two places mentioned in the *pasuk*: one in Tzeltzach in Gvul

Binyamin, while the other is Kever Rachel, which we can assume to be in Gvul Yehuda.<sup>4</sup>

*Sefer Peshuto Shel Mikra*, by Professor N. Tur-Sne, finds support for this reading of the Midrash by pointing out that the word "*im*" in the *pasuk* "*u'matzata shnai anashim im Kever Rachel...*" seems extraneous. The word "*im*" is normally followed by a description of what the subject is with. Here, the verse remains ambiguous. Professor Tur-Sne suggests that "*im*" is functioning as a shortened version of "*im hatzon*" ("with the sheep"), which is exactly what the Midrash says - i.e. that the sheep are waiting for Shaul at Kever Rachel.<sup>5</sup>

A second approach is suggested by Professor A. R. Malachi (*HaDoar*, volume 37). He claims that in an Arab village north of Yerushalayim, researchers found what is known as "Kovet Rachel," a memorial to Rachel, but not her actual burial site. This allows for the possibility that Shmuel was referring to Rachel's memorial, not her grave, thereby avoiding any contradictions between the *p'sukim*.

However, we must still explain the *pasuk* in Yirmiyahu in a way that does not contradict the *p'sukim* in Berashit. This poses less difficulty than the source in Shmuel, for the phrase "Kol B'Ramah nishma" has been translated by most translators as something other than a place, for the general context of that *pasuk* is poetic. For instance, Targumim Yonatan ben

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Uziel and Onkelos translate it as "Kol Rom" ("a loud voice").

Others, though, admit that Ramah could be referring to an actual place, yet still not contradict the location given in Sefer Berashit. Rashi suggests that Ramah is another name for Efrat, and similarly, Ramban and Shadal suggest that it is a small city near Beit Lechem. Ramban, though, retracts his position after arriving in Eretz Yisrael himself. Instead, he explains that Ramah is "b'derech mashal" ("a literary metaphor") that Rachel's voice could be heard all the way from Ramah. This approach assumes that Rachel was, in fact, buried in Beit Lechem, while referring to Ramah as a location in the northern part of Israel.

Rav Gershon Harpnas, (*Hatzofeh*, 29Elul, 5755) suggests yet another approach. Ramah is generally accepted as a border city between Yehuda and Ephraim, today called Kfar Ram. At the time of Yirmiyahu's statement in the *pasuk*, the tribe of Ephraim had already been exiled by Sancherev. Thus, Yirmiyahu spoke to the inhabitants of Yehuda in concrete and relevant terms - either repent, or suffer the same fate as the former inhabitants of Ramah. Thus, the mention of the "voice from Ramah" is intended to inform the listeners of impending destruction and punishment, but not of the location of Rachel's tomb.

#### Other Possible Locations of Kever Rachel

Despite the above support for Kever Rachel being in Beit Lechem in Gvul Yehuda, there are many who claim that its real location is else-

where. The earliest sources for this view come from Chazal. The Sifri (Pesikta 11, 352) according to R. Meir, the Eliyahu Rabbah, and Targum Shivim all establish that Rachel was buried in Ramah. In fact, an opinion cited in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* claims that the only reason for associating the present-day location with Rachel derives from the book of Matthew (2:18) and not from Jewish sources.

Ramah has been identified by scholars as the Ramah conquered in the northern borders of Binyamin, as mentioned in Sefer Yehoshua (18:24). Today, this town is known as Kfar Ram (ten kilometers north of Yerushalayim), or Kfar Aram (nine kilometers north of Yerushalayim). This claim would necessarily assume a loose translation of "B'derech Efrata" as meaning "in the direction of Efrat," but not anywhere actually near Efrat.

If we accept this as the location of Kever Rachel, we can then understand several statements in the Midrash.

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"There is evidence that strongly suggests that the modern-day Kever Rachel is not in fact, the actual site of Rachel's grave."

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One explanation for Rachel being buried on the side of the road, "b'derech l'Beit Lechem," is that if Bnei Yisrael would be exiled, they would pass by her grave and pray there.<sup>6</sup> However, we must reconcile this approach with the *pesukim* in Sefer Berashit and Sefer Shmuel, for those sources imply otherwise. The *Eliyahu Rabbah* avoids this problem by equating Ramah with the "Efrat"

mentioned in Berashit. Professor A. Haberman (*Tarbitz* 25, 5716) offers a different solution, suggesting that although Rachel was originally buried on the side of the road, as mentioned in Berashit, this was not considered an appropriate final resting spot for one of our matriarchs. Thus, after Yehoshua and the Bnei Yisrael conquered Eretz Yisrael, they took the initiative to move her burial site to a more acceptable location within the land given to her children.

Another possible explanation for the apparently conflicting sources stems from references (Sefer Shoftim 17:7, 19:1-2, and Sefer Nechemia 7:25) to another Beit Lechem located within the borders of Binyamin. If this "new" Beit Lechem is what is meant in the *pesukim*, all of the references can coexist. However, it also renders our original assumption - that Sefer Berashit referred to a location within the land of Yehuda - incorrect.

In conclusion, there is evidence that strongly suggests that the modern-day Kever Rachel is not, in fact, the actual site of Rachel's grave. *Sefer Ohr Chadash al Yirmiyahu*<sup>7</sup>, by Naga HaRiuveni, and *Sefer Matzavot Kodesh B'Eretz Yisrael*, both mention that the city Ein-Parah, located in the land of Binyamin, is the same city as "Parat" mentioned in Sefer Yehoshua (18:23). Archaeologists have uncovered several factors that indicate that this could be the site of Kever Rachel. First, the city is located near one of the largest water springs in the area, making it a favorite resting spot for travelers. In fact, an ancient road was recently found

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## Ramban's Approach to Kohelet, *continued from page 3*

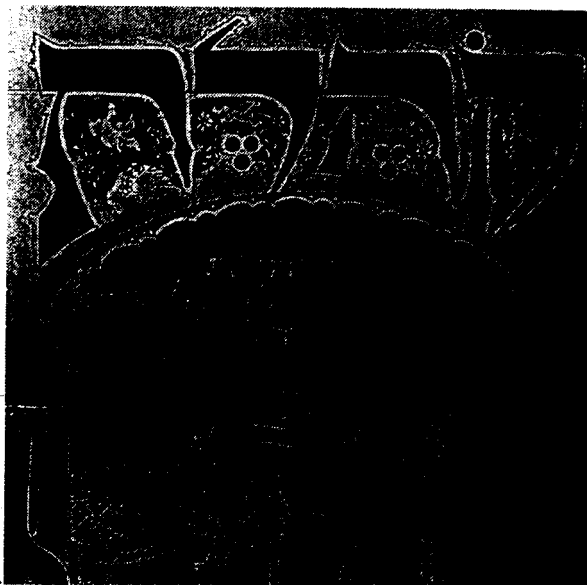
matic structure in Solomon's work. An analysis of Ramban's approach to the entire introductory section will facilitate a greater appreciation of this structure.

According to Ramban, the introductory section (1:2-11) contrasts between the transience of man and his endeavors with the permanence of the natural elements.

Ramban carefully chooses the description 'transient,' identifying 'hevel' with 'over,' 'mitbatel,' and 'hozrim el y'sodam' and contrasting it to 'tohu' and 'kazav'.<sup>6</sup> His definition aptly suits the phrase "mah yitron la'adam" in Verse 3, which observes not that man's toil bears no fruit, but that the fruit will not endure ('yitkayem').<sup>7</sup> Nor will the individual man himself endure, although "dor holekh v'dor ba" (1:4) -- the circle of life continues. Every species<sup>8</sup>, as such, qualifies as one of the 'y'sodot', or foundations, of physical existence. These

'y'sodot,' which include the four natural elements listed in verses 4-7<sup>9</sup>, will prevail for the duration of the world's existence.<sup>10</sup> However, even when altered by man or their own natural course, the y'sodot will always revert to their appropriate original forms—man will return to dust (verse 4), the sun will set (verse 5), the wind will circulate (verse 6), and water will flow to the sea (verse 7). Man therefore wields only a limited, temporary influence on his surroundings. "Ha'yam einenu malay" (1:7), a manmade reservoir will never be filled, as "sham haym shavim la'lakhet," the water will first return

to the sea.<sup>11</sup> Everything thus seems 'weary' (1:8), and everything seems to disappear before one can 'see,' 'hear,' or 'speak of' it.<sup>12</sup> In verse 9, the author reiterates his assurance that the y'sodot will endure forever<sup>13</sup>, just as the very same y'sodot have endured since the world's creation. Verses 10 and 11 assert that any apparent evi-



dence to the contrary is merely a product of human shortsightedness.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning with verse 12, the author "enters a detailed discussion on the transience of man's toil,"<sup>15</sup> a twelve-chapter discussion in which he develops the three messages he wishes to convey. The first message emerges in the earlier half of chapter 2. Solomon paints an elaborate picture of his princely lifestyle, adding that his luxuries have surpassed those of all his forerunners in Jerusalem, "the choicest of lands."<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, he concludes that his entire fortune amounts only to "hevel ur'ut ruah"

(2:11), which Ramban interprets as "fleeting and generating want."<sup>17</sup> The connection between this observation and the book's introduction requires no elucidation.

The author explicitly states his second message in 3:14, "All that God makes will exist forever...God made that [men] will fear Him." According to Ramban, Solomon sees in the endurance of the y'sodot a reassurance to man that he does not toil in vain. Only physical accomplishments will fade; spiritual endeavors generate eternal reward. Provided that man directs his efforts toward the acquisition of divine wisdom, he can secure eternal 'kiyyum' for his 'nefesh'.<sup>18</sup> While an appreciation of the relationship between 'hokhmah' and the physical y'sodot requires considerable familiarity with *kabbalah* (a subject beyond the limits of both this essay and its author), understanding that Ramban recognizes this relationship

unveils the centrality of Solomon's second message in the introduction. Although "havel havalim bakol havel"—i.e., all changes to the physical world last only temporarily—, y'sodos will necessarily and eternally revert back to their respective original forms<sup>19</sup>—"sham hem shavim la'lakhet." Similarly, a properly nurtured nefesh will return, matured and refined, "el ha'Elokim asher n'tana" (12:7).<sup>20</sup>

Ramban divides Solomon's defense of divine justice, the subject of the third message, into two stages.

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In 8:12-13, Solomon responds, "For I also know that good will ultimately befall those who fear God...and good will not befall the wicked." At this point, Solomon denies entirely the phenomenon of 'tzaddik v'ra lo, rasha v'tov lo,' insisting that every man eventually receives his due. In the words of Ramban, "eina ela arikhut."<sup>21</sup> In verse 14, however, Solomon observes instances in which justice is not merely postponed, but neglected entirely. The "tzaddikim asher magia alehem k'ma'aseh ha'reshaim" and the "reshaim shemagia alehem k'ma'aseh ha'tzaddikim" never receive their rightful due.<sup>22</sup> As verse 15 maintains, the rationale behind this apparent injustice remains beyond the intellectual reach of man. Nonetheless, Solomon assures (verse 14) "shegam zeh havel," that 'tzaddik v'ra lo, rasha v'tov lo,' like most things in the world, is a passing phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> Again, a complete understanding of the distinction between the 'arikhut' of verse 12 and the 'hevel' of verse 14 requires an intimate knowledge of *kabbalah*.<sup>24</sup> Yet, again, even without this enhanced understanding, the foundations of Solomon's third message emerge clearly from the introduction. Man should not despair over what he perceives as a random, lawless world order, as this order will persist only temporarily—"hakol havel." Instead, although he cannot presently appreciate the value of *hokhmah* and spiritual endeavors, he may rest assured that, ultimately, "sham haym shavim la'lakhet," *hevel* will give way to justice.<sup>25</sup>

Ramban thus successfully uncovers a fluent, structured opening section that introduces all three central themes of the work. He identifies

these themes in the body of the text and ties them together in his understanding of Solomon's exhortation in 12:13, which he describes as "a verdict, delivered after the judges [i.e. Solomon] have heard all the arguments."<sup>26</sup> The practical application of the sum of all three messages reduces to a single, concise closing statement, "et haElokim y'ra v'et mitzvotav sh'mor."

Although Ramban restricts the linear portion of his commentary to the introductory passages of Kohelet, the appearance of the same focused themes in the introduction, conclusion, and main body of the text clearly suggests that Solomon follows a pre-planned outline. Instead of recording a stream of consciousness, Solomon seeks to inform his audience of specific discoveries and conclusions derived through study, experimentation, and life experience. Commenting on a famous *midrash*<sup>27</sup> which dates Kohelet to Solomon's later years, Ramban writes that Solomon composed his discourse "derekh m'konen mavhil ha'itim."<sup>28</sup> In other words, the disjointed prose of Kohelet may indeed reflect an overflow of emotions, but of emotions recollected later in tranquility.

### Notes

1 Ibn Ezra, Kohelet 1:1

2 Kitvei Ramban, Mosad Harav Kook, p.190-5

3 A minority of other commentaries have similarly associated 'hevel' with the Aramaic 'havla', motivating translations similar to Ramban's.

4 KR, p.185

5 Unless, of course, the instruction were one of the proverbs, a possibility that Ramban plainly rejects in identifying 1:1 as an introduction.

6 KR, *ibid.*

7 *ibid.*, p.186

8 This term does not necessarily refer to the strict scientific definition.

9 Ramban appears to distinguish between 'y'sodo' and 'k'lalim'. This distinction, however, is often blurred throughout the *d'rasha* and will be overlooked in this essay, which is concerned more with Ramban's understanding of Kohelet structure than with his interpretation of *kabbalah*.

10 KR, *ibid.*

11 *ibid.*, p.187

12 *ibid.*

13 i.e. for as long as the world exists.

14 KR, *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*, p.188

16 *ibid.*, p.190

17 *ibid.*

18 *ibid.*, p.191

19 Also a kabbalistic term, 'tzurak' for Ramban. (This parallels Ramban's 'homer', although the concepts of Ramban's Aristotelian physics do not perfectly match those of Ramban's metaphysics.)

20 KR, p.191-2

21 *ibid.*, p.195

22 *ibid.*

23 *ibid.*

24 Ramban writes, "Gam zeh mi'gilgul ha'sibot she'hozrot li'y'sodam maher" (*ibid.*). In a subsequent discussion he reiterates, "Yesh b'inyan sod gadol, iy efshar l'da'ato b'stum inyan ela b'kabbalah" (p. 199).

25 I am inclined to believe that the third issue, that of *tzaddik v'ra lo*, somehow links the other two issues and, as briefly mentioned in the following paragraph of the essay, that the concluding two verses of Kohelet tie all three together. Uncovering these links would expose a stronger relationship between the third issue and the introduction, as well as a more persuasive scheme for the entire book. I have not, however, succeeded in pinpointing these links, and I appeal to the reader for any insight in this regard.

26 KR, p.199

27 *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:10

28 KR, p.182

## Yonatan ben Shaul, *continued from page 5*

because of actions stemming from flaws, flaws that Yonatan did not possess. Yet despite the likelihood of his candidacy, Yonatan could not become king. Part of Shaul's punishment was that his line of royalty would not continue. But the next best option would have been for David to become king and Yonatan to become his second in command. If Yonatan had been alive and not contesting the throne, David's reign would not have begun in civil war and bloodshed. With Yonatan alive, the transition between the reign of the house of Shaul and the house of David would have been smooth. Yonatan's death was therefore a tragedy of national proportions. It is now even more important to understand the reasons for his death.

When Yonatan met with David on Rosh Chodesh (Shmuel I chapter 20), he told David that Shaul could not be dissuaded from his intent to kill David. They swore their loyalty to each other and David ran away. In his superior position of safety, Yonatan neglected to secure provisions for David. In order to ensure his survival, David had to ask the priests in the city of Nov for food and a weapon. Because of their kindness to David, Shaul kills out the entire city. The Rabbis (Sanhedrin 104a) blame Yonatan for the destruction of the city, adding that due to his lack of foresight, he and his father and brothers were killed in battle. This conclusion seems unproportionally harsh. Could it be that Yonatan was punished for a mistake, so much so that three others died as a result?

Shaul's death and the deaths of his sons was not a punishment for Yonatan's sin, but rather a direct result of his action. Shaul's punishment

for killing the city of Nov was his death, and the deaths of the sons who went with him into battle. Yonatan was the indirect cause of the destruction of the city. His actions do not remove any blame from Shaul, but they still hold him responsible for what happened, even though his "sin" was unintentional.

Yonatan's death can be seen as an act of mercy as well. Yonatan was completely willing to relinquish the throne to David. It is easy to give up something that you never had, particularly when there are aspects of it that you do not want. Yonatan did not want the responsibility of complete autonomy, God wanted David to rule, Yonatan recognized David's capabilities, and so he relinquished the throne. Even so, it would undoubtedly be difficult for Yonatan to see David in his father's place. One does not switch loyalties so easily. Yonatan would make an excellent advisor and second in command, and yet he would always feel like he was betraying his father by serving David. When Yonatan's children grew older, it would be difficult to realize that by giving up something that he did not want, he denied that very thing from his children. While he had the right to make that decision for himself, he might have felt guilty taking that decision away from his children. The feelings of betrayal and guilt might have escalated and strained or even destroyed the friendship between Yonatan and David. Yonatan's death prevented such a tragic possibility. It kept Yonatan's gift of the crown to David whole and unspoiled, never to be regretted.

The final reason for Yonatan's death is connected to his character and the essence of who he was.

Shaul's punishment was his own death, and the death of the sons who were with him. Knowing this, Shaul could have forbidden his sons to accompany him to battle, or they could have refused to go. Knowing that, Yonatan did not have to go to battle with his father on that day - his brother Ishboshet did not. However Yonatan chose to go with his father, knowing that he would be killed. If Shaul was going bravely into battle, unflinchingly marching to meet his death, then Yonatan would be by his side until the end. Yonatan, being Yonatan ben Shaul, could do nothing else.

In Tanach, a character is normally introduced by name and additional relevant information, (ie father's name) and subsequently is called solely by his first name.

We can now better understand the relationship between Shaul and Yonatan. Yonatan was more than a son to Shaul—he was his right hand man, his most trusted advisor. Yonatan was Shaul's sounding board and the one from whom Shaul got his final approval for any idea. Shaul did not do anything without telling Yonatan. When Shaul split up his army he assigned one thousand men to Yonatan. He wanted his son to be king. Perhaps Shaul saw in Yonatan a better version of himself, the potential to become the kind of king that Shaul himself wanted to be. How could Shaul not hate David, David who would replace Yonatan as next king, David who would take away Yonatan's chance?

## The Semicha Controversy, *continued from page 6*

immediate opposition from rabbis in Jerusalem. Though a few scholars gave R. Berab encouragement, and one even signed the original ordination, the chief Rabbi of Jerusalem R. Levi Ibn Jacob Habib protested strongly. Both he and his colleague Moses de Castro wrote persuasive letters clarifying the reasons for their opposition.

The first argument they offered was based on Maimonides's Code (Sanhedrin 4:11) which seemed to contradict his original opinion as stated by R. Berab. In the passage, Maimonides restates his view that "if all the wise men in Palestine were to agree to appoint judges and to ordain them, the ordination would be valid, empowering the ordained to adjudicate cases involving fines and to ordain others...." Yet, he concludes that "this matter requires careful reflection" and, according to R. Levi ibn Habib, Maimonides himself does not seem convinced of its veracity. Ibn Habib, therefore, argues that one must follow the accepted rule that when there is a contradiction between the Code and the Commentary we follow the Code, the later source, and assume that Maimonides changed his mind.<sup>i</sup>

R. Berab defended his position on this matter in his Ordination Epistle, which was written in an impersonal style in the hopes of decreasing the risk of a heated controversy. He claimed that the last words of the Commentary, as quoted by ibn Habib, were not in fact referring to the issue of the ability to re-institute ordination. Rather, it was further clarifying an issue mentioned earlier about whether the semicha ceremony requires three ordained judges or if one is sufficient. Upon careful analy-

sis of the rather peculiar language and structure of the paragraph however, Berab's interpretation strikes one as rather unlikely.

The second challenge posed by Ibn Habib concerned Maimonides words "all the sages." He argued that the words were meant literally and since R. Berab had ignored the Sages of Jerusalem the ordination process could not be valid and binding. Ibn Habib claimed that by including the Jerusalem rabbis in an assembly to decide if re-instituting semicha was permitted according to Jewish law, this procedural error could be rectified. This suggestion, however, seemed more like a way to look agreeable than a sincere commitment to reconsider his views on the permissibility of ordination.

In addition, R. Berab denied that the "all" was intended to be taken literally. Rather, he claimed, it just implied the need for a majority as in many other ritual cases. Maimonides speaks about talmudic students assembled for ordination in his Commentary, and according to R. Berab, "in our time, the Talmudic Academy is mainly in Safed." Therefore, the fact that rabbis in Jerusalem did not participate in the decision in no way invalidated the ordination.

The third issue in the controversy related to the proclamation of the new moon and the fixing of the months. Relying on Nachmanides, ibn Habib asserted that it was an ordained Beth-Din's obligation to proclaim the new moon based on evidence and not to depend on the calendar established by Hillel. This was so because the calendar system was only instituted for a time when there was no way for an ordained court to make a proclamation. Ibn Habib

feared that reverting to the system of proclamation would engender confusion and discrepancies in religious observance. R. Berab seemed to agree with ibn Habib on this point as he, too, did not wish to abandon the calendar system. Yet, he did not think that a newly ordained Beth-Din would have any power to institute changes unless they were greater in number, than the Beth-Din of Hillel. Since the likelihood of this was incalculably small, Rav Berab claimed that there was no reason to fear a possible abrogation of the system.

Another issue of the debate was the actual need for an ordained Beth-Din. The main purpose that such a Beth-Din would serve was to administer punitive lashes to the many repentant conversos. These men and women believed that thirty-nine lashes would absolve them of their religious culpability and the Divine punishment of karet. This conviction was based in Makhoth 3:15 which states "All they that are liable for karet, if they have been scourged are no longer liable to karet." Ibn Habib asserted that R. Berab was attempting to give the new Beth-Din more power than an original ordained Beth-Din. For, the laws of flogging apply only when the sinner has been forewarned about the consequences of his actions. Since the conversos had received no warning they were exempt from lashing and would receive only divinely ordained punishment.

In his original epistle R. Berab considered the administration of lashes to be of prime importance in his agenda. In his second treatise however, he responded to the question of Ibn Habib by saying that he had seen common Batei-Din impose

penitent lashes and therefore he had a precedent for giving a Beth-Din such a power. The obvious contradiction in this defense was pointed out sharply by Ibn Habib: there was no necessity that warranted the renewal of ordination if a common Beth-Din was capable of inflicting the thirty-nine lashes. When confronted with this argument, R. Berab was forced to reduce the significance of punitive lashes to an ancillary position in his motivation to restore semicha.

The intense opposition to the revival of semicha stirred up doubts and uncertainty in the Safed community. Aside from writing his Ordination Epistle, R. Berab sought to validate his view in the eyes of his community. He therefor convened a new assembly of rabbis to reaffirm the original decision. Though his support had diminished, R. Berab continued to maintain that a majority of rabbis was sufficient to retain semicha.

What had begun as a moderate legalistic debate rapidly transformed into a fiery controversy filled with personal insult and ad homonym attacks. Ibn Habib harshly accused R. Berab of overlooking many of the complaints of the Jerusalem rabbis. R. Berab hinted in turn about ibn Habib's past, implying that he was one of the Portuguese conversos who converted instead of sacrificing his life for the glory of Heaven.

Scholars have attributed many causes and factors to explain the outbreak of the vitriolic debate. One explanation points to personal hostility and jealousy as the basis of the dispute. The two rabbis had a history of personal contention and Halachik disagreements over the past 14 years.

In this particular issue, ibn Habib accused R. Berab, an outspoken and authoritarian man, of being interested in personal status. He suspected that R. Berab was pursuing the ordination only in order to increase his power. R. Berab claimed that ibn Habib's opposition was only due to jealousy and resentment on not being the first rabbi ordained.

This slant has many points of weakness however. At the start of the debate, both rabbis had attempted to keep the dispute limited to a purely halachik arena without bringing in personal issues. Ibn Habib even tried to prevent his first letter from reaching R. Berab, presumably in order to avoid a controversy. Personal rivalry, therefore, can only explain the bitter tone that crept into the debate but can not be the initial cause of the altercation.

An alternate suggestion is that the goal of the ordination was to create a

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“Regardless of which motivations served as the central impetus for the renewal of semicha, ordination became a reality.”

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centralized body that could unify the many different types of people who were settling in Safed after the Spanish and Portuguese exile. A lot of confusion resulted from the fact that each community had their own leader who determined its laws. By gathering these rabbis into a cohesive unit, R. Berab aimed at having a more uniform and effective way of implementing halacha.

The plight of the Marranos may also have served as the main motivation for the renewal of semicha. The

many Jews who had denounced their faith in order to survive now wished to have a means by which to exonerate them-selves. They believed that a restored semicha, which would create rabbis with the power to inflict lashes, was the means to cleanse themselves of their sins. Though this point was crucial to masses of Jews in Safed and helped to elevate the ordained in their eyes, it is unlikely that it was the central motivation for R. Berab. If his main goal had merely been to re-institute penitent lashes, it is unlikely that he would have persisted in renewing the ordination in the face of ibn Habib's initial argument. Even after he was forced to relegate the lashes to a subsidiary role, he still believed in the significance of the ordination. Therefore, there must have been other factors prompting his insistence on semicha.

The main source of R. Berab's motivation can be found in the actual halachik texts that he used to support the renewal of the ordination. Maimonides quotes Isaiah 1: 26: “I will restore your judges as of old...After that you shall be called the city of righteousness”. According to R. Berab's interpretation of Maimonides, he deduces that semicha must be renewed by human hands before the advent of the Messiah.

R. Berab and his community believed that the coming of the Messiah was an imminent reality. When hearing of the refusal of the Jerusalem Rabbis to participate in the ordination, R. Berab commented “[w]ho would even think of something that would delay our redemption...that all

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who hear of it would not come with drums and dancing to subscribe to it." R. Berab and his followers were certain that their actions could hasten the process of redemption.

The historical setting in Safed helped to create this strong messianic impulse. Thousands of Jews who were weakened physically and spiritually by the Spanish Inquisition fled to Israel. These broken hearted Jews looked toward salvation, and the ingathering of people to Israel seemed to be the start of the process of redemption. The turmoil they experienced could only be the "birth pangs of the Messiah."

Messianic calculations, like the Abravanel's, that set the date of the redemption during this time period, also increased the frenzied expectation. Solomon Molcho, a messianic figure in the early 16th century, preached that the coming of the redemption would begin in Safed. There are those who posit that the choice of 1538 for the renewal of semicha was related to Molcho's prediction of the arrival of the Messiah in 1540.

Safed was also flourishing spiritually due to its many kabalistic thinkers. The mystical atmosphere, which emphasized the approach of the Messiah, also influenced R. Berab. All of the above factors helped produce an atmosphere of fervent messianic expectation, and R. Berab refused to wait passively for the redemption. Based on his reading of Maimonides, he believed in the necessity of human action in order to initiate the first stages of redemption. The reinstatement of semicha was a "magic key to facilitate the first human step which would provide the impetus for the remaining divine steps toward

redemption (Katz 133)."

A responsum of Moses de Castro depicts the motivation of R. Berab in the following way:

As the main reason leading our brethren who dwell in the Galilee to take this step is that they moan and groan at the helplessness of those who bear the banner of the Torah; and particularly in our Land which is desolate by reason of our sins, from which Torah once went forth to all Israel; but now 'Israel is grown poor' and the violent and evil tongued have grown powerful and none inquire and none ask; therefore they [inhabitants of Safed] have said, Come let us return to the Lord and raise the banner of the Torah. And they will come unto us from the ends of the earth to honor the G-d of the land. For they will say, there are mighty judges in Israel 'and Israel prevails'. And we shall do our best to restore the crown as of old. Perhaps the Lord will show grace to our remnant and show mercy unto us again as of old (Sefunot ,10, 147 found in Ben Sasson 664).

By renewing semicha, R. Berab wished to return to the Torah its original authority and glory, thereby expediting the advent of the Messiah.

Perhaps it was ibn Habib's different conception of the redemption process that was at the root of the controversy. He did not believe that the arrival of the messianic age required human initiative. Rather, he supported a more passive approach which simply encouraged good actions as ends in themselves and not as a means to quicken the Messiah's arrival. Therefore, ibn Habib did not have the tug of messianic expectations pulling him to renew semicha as did

Rav Berab. Furthermore, ibn Habib may have feared renewed ordination would lead to a false messianic movement.

Regardless of which motivations served as the central impetus for the renewal of semicha, ordination became a reality. The ordainees retained their status and ordained other Rabbis in turn. The process of giving semicha was limited to a very few people and only took place at the end of the ordainers life. R. Berab ordained four of his peers: R. Yosef Kairo, R. Moshe Metrani, R. Avraham Shalom, and R. Yisrael Day-Koreal. R. Kairo ordained Moshe Alsheikh who then ordained Chaim Vital. In addition, Rav Cairo also ordained the second R. Ya'akov Berab, grandchild of the original R. Berab, who in turn ordained seven other rabbis including Rav Moses Galanti and Yaakov Abulafia.

There is considerable disagreement amongst scholars about how widespread ordination was, and about how the newly ordained rabbis viewed their status. The primary documents are open to various interpretations. According to Jacob Katz, official ordination was only transmitted as an honorific title that carried with it no inherently significant authority. To support this view, he quotes R. Yosef Kairo who says "nowadays the beth-din in this city is recognized by the public and is great in wisdom and numbers. We have heard from all over the world that their questions were answered and afterwards they were satisfied." Katz points out that Kairo attributes the authority and popularity of the Safed bet din to its wisdom and not to the special status of ordination.

Semicha did not play a functional

Katz's claim that R. Berab's requirement of knowledge of the Talmud as a prerequisite for ordination was intended to curb the spread of ordination by requiring his approval of all future ordinations."

role in rendering halachik decisions. In the Shulchan Aruch R Kairo comments that "we do not have ordained judges, and in our time, none are ordained." Even he, one of the first ordainees, did not view his semicha as being legally significant. The beth-din of R. Moshe Di Trani also desisted from using his elevated status as a means of imposing punishments and continued to rule based solely on Gaonic rulings. Katz claims that even R. Berab wanted to curb the spread of ordination by requiring his approval of all future ordinations.

The opposition to semicha died down not because people no longer objected to its renewal, but because the participants themselves no longer attributed significance to their status. No practical ramifications resulted from the ordination so it no longer posed any danger to the halachik system. The recipients still believed in the viability of re-instituting ordination, but since they were not able to gather universal support for their goals, they recognized its practical limitations.

Meir Benayhu rejects the argument that semicha had no efficacy. He claims that the ordination had a substantial impact on the authority and the functioning of the batei-din. Moreover, he posits that many more people received ordination than may have originally been thought. Benayhu adduces several texts to support his views. He quotes the two statements from R. Kairo that Katz brought, yet, he reaches very different conclusions. Benayhu suggests that when R. Kairo states that there

is no semicha, he only is referring to the condition of the Jews as a whole. Since he was writing a book pertaining to all of Jewry, he refrained from mentioning ordination exclusive to Safed. This argument is somewhat difficult for the authority of an ordained beth-din can exert influence over other communities. Therefore, there would be no reason to omit the reality of semicha in the Shulchan Aruch because it would pertain to all Jews.

Benayhu is more convincing in his proposal concerning the amount of people who received ordination. He does not view R. Berab's requirement of knowledge of R. Isaac Alfasi's work on the Talmud as a prerequisite to semicha as an attempt to limit the spread of ordination. Rather, he sees it as an indication of how many more people R. Berab intended to ordain. R. Berab wanted to produce only scholars who would be worthy enough to sit in the Sanhedrin. The insistence on mastering a large-body of knowledge was in order to select rabbis capable of fulfilling this position. Benayhu cites a source from the descendent of Rav Shemuel bar Maimon even Danan who says that he was one of two hundred rabbis who were given semicha by Rav Kairo.

Further support for even Danan's claim can be found in the Chida who says in the name of Rav Chaim Abulafia, grandson of the original Rav Chaim Abulafia, that close to two hundred people received semicha. This testimony supports the view that semicha was not limited to a select few individuals, but rather effected a

significant amount of people.

The success of the renewed ordination is disputed. Some scholars claim that it had a forceful historical impact, whereas others see it as having failed from the very beginning. There is no disputing the fact however, that the practice of ordination dwindled on until the mid 17th century when it faded into oblivion due to economic troubles and the death of many of the learned men in Safed. It is important to note that not only did the attempt at renewal of ordination not succeed in restoring the full authority and glory of halachah, it also failed in hastening the coming of the Messiah.

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## Where is Kever Rachel, *continued from page 17*

running through the middle of the city. Second, many commentators suggest that the name Tzeltzach derives from a conjugation involving the Hebrew word *tzal* (shade). This city is traditionally known for its large stones near which nomads and shepherds often rest during the heat of the day. Thus, it is at least plausible that Yaakov would have chosen such a spot to rest with his family. Finally, five giant stones in this city are known among the Arabs of the area as "Kevurei Bnei Yisrael" ("The Graves of Bnei Yisrael"), suggesting that there is a tradition that these markers are tombstones.

### Halakhic Implications

The legitimacy of the traditional Kever Rachel carries ramifications for

Kohanim. However, even if we conclude that the current location is not the actual Kever Rachel, that would not necessarily allow Kohanim to enter the site, for we can't assume that no one is buried there. However, the *Tzitz Eliezer* (Vol. 15, No. 68) quotes from a *Sefer Ahavat Hashem* (p. 128) which states that Kohanim of that time would routinely enter Kever Rachel. However, the *Tzitz Eliezer* does not actually sanction this practice.

### Notes

1 See: Book of Jubilees (32:34); Midrash Sechel Tov (compiled in the early twelfth century) in Berashit 48:7, which mentions Jewish pilgrimages to Kever Rachel at this location.; Midrash HaYashar; Ramban Berashit 32:16; Kaftor VaFerach

chapter ten; Teshuvat Bartenura; "Guide to Jerusalem" (a tenth century travel diary found in the Cairo Geniza); Himamos and Absyos (famous early Byzantine historians); Abbot Daniel (1106); Benjamin of Tudela (1170); Sefer Maasot Eretz Yisrael shel Olim Yehudim

2 See: Sefer Otzer Yisrael, which claims that Kever Rachel is the only Jewish tomb which has records since its inception of its exact location.

3 This question does not go unnoticed by the Meforshim. This question is raised by the Tosefta (Sotah 11:6), Berashit Rabbah (82:9-11), Sifri, Eliyahu Rabbah, Midrash Shmuel, Rashi, Rashbam, Radak, Ramban, Chizkuni, and is argued about by many modern Bible scholars as well (see, for example, Professors Aharoni and

*continued on page 31*

## Torah U'madda, *continued from page 17*

Judaic and general studies.

Dr. Leiman centered his remarks around a different issue. Citing current examples of historical revisionism in the portrayal of the Vilna Gaon, Dr. Leiman focused on the need for *halachic* Judaism to maintain standards of intellectual honesty. For example, *Yated Ne'eman*, a right wing Israeli newspaper, recently reported that the seven graves next to the Gaon were those of seven famous rabbis. Not only were all seven names incorrect, but two of the actual seven belong to women. Dr. Leiman concluded, "*ein zeh omer ela darsheini.*"

Another inaccuracy in the portrayal of the Vilna Gaon is his presentation as a personality who was wholly against secular study. True, the Gaon spent his entire life immersed in Torah study, reportedly for

no less than a day. Reports by his sons state that he never slept for more than two hours a day. Yet, the same Gaon requested a translation of Josephus. R. Yisrael of Shklav reported that the Gaon, upon completing his commentary on "The Song of Songs", said that "all secular wisdom" is essential for understanding the Torah. In addition, Rabbi Baruch of Shklav wrote, "when I was with the Vilna Gaon in Tevet 5538 [1778], I heard him say that 'as one lacks in secular knowledge, one lacks one-hundred fold in Torah knowledge, for Torah and wisdom are bound up together.'" Apparently, the Gaon promoted secular studies so that one should better understand the Torah.

However, others, such as Rabbi Betzalel Landau (in the 1970s), challenge the accuracy of Rabbi Baruch's

statement. Dr. Leiman suggested that this borders on intellectual dishonesty, especially considering that the integrity of the disputed narrative had never been questioned. In fact, in 1863 Rabbi Avraham Simcha Amishav, a descendant of the Gaon, affirmed the credibility of the narrative, and the first biography of the Gaon cites the same passage regarding secular studies.

Dr. Leiman concluded that the dominant position of *Chachmei Yisrael* today is to reject secular culture. However, many Torah giants such as R. Yisrael Salanter, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, and R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "reflect [the] incredible richness...depth, [and] latitude of Orthodox thought," supporting secular study, at least for individuals.



## Defending the Faith, *continued from page 11*

in any other language can fill the void left by the lost Temple service. . . The *Knesset haGedola* decreed what they were able to, in known words and pleasing intentions (*kavanot*) to fill the gap as much as possible. They precisely measured every word and every letter, and it is impossible to reproduce these intentions in any other language. But if we say these words in the language decreed by the *Knesset haGedola*, even if we don't know how to concentrate, in any case our *tefillot* are effective. This is not the case for *tefillot* in the language of the gentiles.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, according to the Hatam Sofer, *tefilla* is essentially not a subjective approach to God but rather a precisely formulated ritual with repercussions far beyond the consciousness of the worshipper. When the sacrificial worship ceased after the destruction of the second Temple, Judaism was left in crisis. The *avodat hakorbanot*, one of the three human activities responsible for the continued existence of the universe<sup>15</sup>, was no more. The *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* heroically saved this institution of *avoda* by translating it into a new form, *avodat hatefila*. But just as the *korban* was an essentially formal action, precisely delimited by halakhic categories, so too its successor, *tefila*, retained this ritualistic nature. *Avoda* remained an activity; it was not reduced to inward thought. While both *korbanot* and *tefilla* have deep significance and are surely not haphazardly designed ceremonies, their true meanings are beyond the

grasp of mortals. Although proper understanding certainly enhances the performance of the *tefilla* service, it does not, by any means, define it. The minimal definition of *tefilla* according to this perspective is the recitation of a precisely formulated text in the context of worship.

The Hatam Sofer mourns the fact that many Jews lack the knowledge to understand the literal meaning of the *tefilla* service, yet he nevertheless insists on strict adherence to the traditional formulation of *tefilla* in all its details, since the act of prayer is essentially formal and objective. But among the evidence that he marshals in support of his position is the seventeenth century responsa of the Sha'ar Ephraim, an extreme view suggesting that some components of the service may have been deliberately formulated so as to be unintelligible.

And for this reason the Tanim and Gaonim, who established the *piyutim*, did not wish the language to be readily intelligible to all, so that the idol worshippers would not come and utilize them in their worship of heathen divinities. . . If an ignoramus prays by himself, even if he doesn't know what he says, he fulfills his requirement in *tefilla*.<sup>16</sup>

The view of the Sha'ar Ephraim appears almost one hundred years before the first stirrings of Reform, and thus is especially significant evidence that non-cognitive perspectives on *tefilla* existed before social-policy concerns became factors. The Hatam Sofer, Sha'ar Ephraim, and others represent a distinct theological position, and not merely a polemical re-

sponse to rebellion.

In order to fully appreciate the perspective of these *poskim*, a comparison to the writings of R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), composed almost twenty years later, will be instructive. At the beginning of the century, many *poskim* had not yet meaningfully encountered Western thought — they had only battled its proponents. On the other hand, R. Hirsch's theology was at least partially shaped by his Western education and later struggle against the Reformers. While R. Hirsch's theology of *tefilla* finds its roots in earlier rabbinic thought, it represents a clear shift in emphasis and orientation that may have been brought on by his encounter with the West. While the *poskim* of the previous generation saw *tefilla* as a theurgic, God-centered ritual, R. Hirsch portrays it as a symbolic, conscious, human-oriented process. He stresses that the grammatical structure of the Hebrew verb 'to pray', '*hitpalel*,' is reflexive, representing an internal judgment of the self. Hence, he analyzes *tefilla* in psychological, not metaphysical, terms. He defines *tefilla* as follows:

The temporary withdrawal from the whirl of life in order to replenish, in the presence of God, one's spiritual power and dedication for further service to Him even in the continuing hustle and bustle of living . . .<sup>17</sup>

The fruit of prayer is the purification of thoughts and emo-

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tions.<sup>18</sup>

The gap between this cognitive conception of *tefila* and the ritualistic conception of the earlier *poskim* is illustrated further when we compare R. Hirsch's words to the following parable developed by the Hatam Sofer a generation earlier:

A doctor comes to a sick person, and, after examining the illness, writes him a prescription. In this prescription he indicates the particular powders necessary to cure the malady. If the sick person takes the prescription and grinds the paper with a mortar and cooks it all day and then eats it, it will accomplish nothing. Rather, he must take the prescription to the pharmacy where they prepare the drugs that cure disease. So too, in this matter. The *hakhamim*, the healers of the soul, arranged the *tefillot* with many deeply hidden *kavanot* (mystical intentions). They established these *tefillot* in the holy tongue, and the language of *hakhamim* heals since it includes many *kavanot* and ideas. This is not the case regarding other languages. If a man has a worry, he has the prescription prepared by the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah*. But the prescription itself is not sufficient to aid the sick of body or soul. Rather, he must pray to Whom the pharmacy belongs, to the Holy Blessed One, Who knows the assemblers of *kavanot*, the establishers of *tefilla*, and He knows

and is ready to heal each and every ill person, according to his *tefilla* in the holy tongue.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, the Hatam Sofer differs sharply from R. Hirsch's notion of *tefilla* as a reflexive process of self-judgment. *Tefilla* is not intended for the consumption of the worshipper, but rather must be delivered to God in order to be effective. The worshipper's own comprehension of the *tefilla* is fundamentally of mini-

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“For R. Hirsch, both *tefila* and *korbanot* accomplish a revitalization of one's inner commitment to God”

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mal significance.

A fascinating extension of this debate between the generations manifests itself in their respective understandings of the nature of *korbanot*. As mentioned above, a strong link between *avodat hakorbanot* and *avodat hatefilla* is suggested by Masechet Berakhot. Both R. Hirsch and his predecessors accept this conviction as axiomatic, but they differ regarding which of the two institutions serves as the paradigm for the other. R. Hirsch's view of *tefilla* shapes his understanding of the purpose of *korbanot*:

This inner Divine service can come to its perfection only by bringing about a change in our thoughts and emotions — namely, by evoking and rejecting, and by bringing to life and reviving thoughts and emotions in our inner self . . . Thoughts and emotions are . . . evoked within us either by means of words or by symbolic signs and actions. The inner

Divine service, expressed in symbolical sign and action, is revealed in the *korbanot* and the history of the temple sanctuary. The inner Divine service expressed in words we call *tefilla* . . .<sup>20</sup>

For R. Hirsch, both *tefilla* and *korbanot* accomplish a revitalization of one's inner commitment to God. *Tefilla* is essentially a subjective process with psychological goals, and R. Hirsch applies this conception to *korbanot* as well. *Korbanot* achieve in symbolic action what *tefillot* accomplish in verbal expression.

In contrast, the Hatam Sofer derives the nature of *tefilla* from his understanding of *korbanot*. Formal *tefilla* was established exclusively with the intention of maintaining the most ritualistic, non-psychological aspects of the sacrificial service. In a discussion regarding the talmudic statement that the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* destroyed the evil inclination for idol worship<sup>21</sup>, he states this explicitly.

Idol worship originated when the *bamot* (private altars) were banned and the Jews were left with no congregational worship other than in the Temple . . . they saw all the nations go, each man in the name of his divinity, to request his needs. This seduced the Jews to follow them in their abominations . . . Indeed, the Great Assembly became wise and established structured *tefilla*, and the sanctification of God's name in public with ten men, and gatherings three times a

day corresponding to the *tamid* sacrifices. Even though *tefilla* was a biblical commandment . . . it [the biblical commandment] is incomparable to the great decree they established . . . By these means, it never again occurred to a Jew to worship idols . . . and this is what is meant that they destroyed the *yetzer ha'ra* for idol worship.<sup>22</sup>

According to this striking account, the establishment of formal *tefilla* was a ploy to prevent Jews from worshipping idols. The most ritualistic elements of sacrificial worship were incorporated into this newly established communal *tefilla*, thus compensating for the fact that the ritual of *korbanot* could be experienced only three times a year by the average Jew. Whether as a compensation for inaccessible ritual experience or as an agent of world preservation, *tefilla* for the Hatam Sofer is clearly patterned after the rich detail and God-centered orientation of the *korbanot*. What matters most in *tefilla* is form, not subjective comprehension.

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We have seen how underlying theological assumptions impacted on, and were influenced by, the dynamics of the Reform controversy. As the battle continued, greater sensitivity to sociological cause and effect combined with a subtle shift in theological assumptions led to a more moderate opposition to Reform. Thus, Orthodoxy was able to save itself from stagnant entrenchment, yet it still remained steadfastly dedicated to its precepts, values, and tradition.

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## Notes

1 Indeed, considerable evidence indicates that for a period of time following the exuberant early days of the Reform rebellion, the movement stagnated. For example, Gotthold Saloman, preacher of the reformist Hamburg Temple, wrote despondently in 1830, only twelve years after the temple opened, "Here I can barely dispose over a fragment of a community. I say, barely! For there is no unity even in this fragmented group...." (Plaut 38). Conversely, on the traditionalist side of the battle, confidence reigned for a time, as is evident in Maharatz Chajes' account:

"In Ashkenaz, the Council of (Re-

object which is perceived. The Thou, however, is in fact not an object at all, but a presence which confronts. Hence the human task to consecrate the It to a Thou, to redeem the fallen state of objectness into one of relatedness.

This typology impacts Buber's theology as well. First, whereas I-Thou is the place of prophets, mystics, and zaddiqim, I-It is the place inhabited by priests and legalists. Second, in a way reminiscent of Maimonides' theology of negative attributes,<sup>37</sup> Buber contends that God is not subject to logical or empirical proof; He is beyond categories and conceptualization, and the holy exists only in meeting, never in pure thought. God cannot be spoken of, only spoken to. We can only address Him and feel ourselves addressed by Him. Buber's "religious anarchism" (in Scholem's words) forbade any I-It relations with God; we cannot reduce the Eternal Thou to a mere object of dogma. In short, God, the Eternal Thou, can never become an It.

Because an I can only truly be an I when addressing itself to a Thou, and because "He who lives with It alone is not a man,"<sup>38</sup> all this amounts to a total renunciation of Buber's earlier egotist position, and an overcoming of his earlier individualistic impasse. Here the realization of unity takes place not in the individual consciousness, not in the innermost recesses of the soul, but in the realm of interpersonal relations. As Buber told a Vienna audience in May 1918:

The Divine may come to life in individual man, may reveal itself from within individual man; but it attains

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its earthly fullness only where . . . individual beings open themselves to one another, disclose themselves to one another, help one another . . . where the sublime stronghold of the individual is unbolted, and man breaks free to meet other men. When this takes place, where the eternal rises in the Between, the seemingly empty space, that true place of realization is community.<sup>39</sup>

God is no longer realized in the contemplative ecstasy of the lonely mystic, nor in intense life-experience, but in that "seemingly empty place" of meeting; the *bein of bein adam l'chaveiro*. "The realization of the Divine on earth is fulfilled not within man, but between man and man . . . it is consummated only in the life of true community."<sup>40</sup> Turning towards one's fellow man is itself a "theophany." "In each Thou we address the eternal Thou,"<sup>41</sup> says Buber, and "The relation with man is the real simile of the relation with God."<sup>42</sup> Buber thus endows the social sphere with a religious dimension.

Here we find Buber's critique of existentialist individualism at its most acute. Publishing his *The Question to the Single One* at a time when "the Kierkegaard renaissance was at its height," Buber attacks the Danish proto-existentialist for not recognizing the love of man and the love of God to be necessarily complementary and symbiotic, rather than mutually exclusive. "A 'life with God' erected on the rejection of the living is no life with God."<sup>43</sup>

Here again Buber looks to Judaism for direction. At least premoni-

tions of the notion that I relate to the Eternal Thou by means of relating to the finite, human Thou have long animated traditional Jewish texts. According to some exegetes,<sup>44</sup> Abraham, in the midst of communicating with God, begs His pardon, asks Him to wait, and runs off to extend hospitality to three passing men; an episode from which the Talmud derives the principle that "Welcoming guests is greater than receiving the face of the shekhina- the divine presence."<sup>45</sup> "In genuine Judaism," Buber asserts, "ethics and faith are not separate spheres; its ideal, holiness, is true community with God and true community with human beings, both in one."<sup>46</sup> This also colors Buber's view of Jewish eschatology. "Our wait for the Messiah is the wait for the true community."<sup>47</sup>

#### V.

Let me conclude with some questions:

1) If God's realization is effected through man, if we are autonomous partners with God in a mutual and fully reciprocal I-Thou dialogue, does Buber not then tend to erase the differences between lowly man and supreme God? "Don't you know that also that God needs you? . . . How

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"Does Buber not then tend to erase the differences between lowly man and Supreme God?"

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would man exist if God did not need him?"<sup>48</sup> " 'Let your will be done,' is all he [the worshipper] says, but truth goes on to say for him 'through me whom you need.' " Buber says of this worshipper: "incomprehensibly, he

acts on God."<sup>49</sup> This indeed seems an inevitable consequence. For if our relation with God is a real one, and if every real relation changes both terms in the relation, then man must effect some change to God.<sup>50</sup>

2) How can the I-Thou relation, rare and fleeting and evanescent,<sup>51</sup> form the basis for social community, a constant and permanent feature of our lives? How does the I-Thou relation, which "by its nature . . . contains only two partners,"<sup>52</sup> a relation of exclusiveness, form the basis of the community of many? Buber's repeated references to a common relationship, to a vague "living center,"<sup>53</sup> do not seem to mitigate this difficulty.

3) Does the reciprocity and symmetry of the I-Thou relation mean that our relations to individuals in the past (for example the teachers of yesterday) must perforce be of the mere I-It variety, since they can no longer respond? Must I always relate to history as an It? Are there no finer gradations of relations?

4) Finally, can we not challenge Buber and side with Levinas, who regards the relationship between self and other as unequal and asymmetrical in that the other is greater or higher than myself and makes ethical demands of me? My relation to the other, in this view, is not one of dialogue so much as one of responsibility.<sup>54</sup> Levinas also criticizes the I-Thou/I-It distinction as too sharply drawn, its dualism as too neat and too purely spiritual, for it ignores the dependency of the I-Thou encounter on real, third-person objects. "Does [the I-Thou relation] not presuppose things, without which, empty handed, the re-

sponsibility for others would be but the ethereal sociality of angels?"<sup>55</sup>

In assessing Buber's legacy Emmanuel Levinas concludes:

It was he who showed the Western world that Judaism exists as a contemporary form of life and thought. But it was also he who taught Judaism itself that it was again visibly exposed to the outside world, present otherwise than by the participation of its assimilated and de-Judaicized intellectuals in the spiritual life of the West . . . It was he who drew the world's attention to living Judaism.<sup>56</sup>

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## Notes

1 See for example Haim Gordon, ed., *The Other Martin Buber: Recollections of His Con-*

*temporaries*. Ohio U.P., 1988.

2 Goldberg, p. 69.

3 Friedman, *Martin Buber: A Life of Dialogue*, p. 27.

4 In the matter of influences generally: Buber was influenced by the thought of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), (his doctoral dissertation concerned their theories of individuation) and Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260-ca. 1320) (Buber worked with his dear friend Gustav Landauer (1870-1919) on the latter's modern rendering of Eckhart's works), Buber was also influenced by Albert Schweitzer, and he studied with Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Georg Simmel (1858-1918) in Berlin.

Buber in turn influenced the theologies of Nikolay Berdyayev (1874-1948) and Paul Tillich (whom he knew for some forty years). Buber perhaps most enduringly influenced Protestant thinkers disillusioned with what they felt to be the excessive rationalism of Protestant theology. His influence extended even to Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the United Nations (1953-1961), who at the time of his death was translating Buber's writings into Swedish.

5 "Jewish Religiosity," *On Judaism*, ed. Nahum Glatzer, p. 94.

6 *Pointing the Way*, ed. M. Friedman, New York: Harper & Row, 1963, p. xv.

7 *Ibid.*, x.

8 *Ecstatic Confessions*, p. 6.

9 Quoted in Mendes-Flohr, p. 81.

10 "The Beginnings of Hasidism," *Hasidism*. Here Gershom Scholem famously accuses Buber of "highly personal speculations" and oversimplifications which fail to stand the test of "sober and critical" historical scholarship. Scholem notes the lack of rigorous scholarship expressed in drawing from Hasidut's legends and folk tales rather than from its doctrinal texts, and compares Buber's resulting view of Hasidut to a picture of Catholicism based solely on hagiography, without theology. As Buber

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himself freely admitted, "Our chief source of knowledge of Hasidism is its legends, and only after them comes its theoretical literature. The latter is commentary, the former the text." (The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism, p. 27.)

Buber ends up with the surprising thesis that the originality of the Hassidic movement is more manifest in its legendary, epigrammatic literature - which emerged at the end of the 18th century - than in its theoretical literature of about fifty years prior, which developed in tandem with the nascent movement. In his ultimate assessment, though, Scholem asserted that "No one performed greater service than Buber in making visible again precisely those traits in Judaism which were . . . actively rejected in nineteenth-century Judaism - mysticism and myth."

11 Rome, p. 18.

12 "Jewish Religiosity," On Judaism, p. 83.

13 I and Thou, pp. 120-21. All quotes are from I and Thou, Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York: Scribners, 1970.

14 Ibid., p. 143.

15 Eclipse of God, New York: Harper & Row, 1952, p. 21. This seems akin to Rav Soloveitchik's description of the religious experience as one of "inner oppositions and incongruities, spiritual doubts and uncertainties . . . antinomies and contradictions." Halakhic Man, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Lawrence Kaplan, trans.), Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983, fn. 4 (p. 142).

16 "The Prejudices of Youth," Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis. Trans. Olga Marx, New York: Schocken, 1948, p. 46.

17 Cf. Eclipse of God, p. 70.

18 Ibid., p. 18.

19 I and Thou, p. 166.

20 This formulation borrows from Fackenheim, p. 285.

21 Between Man and Man, R.G. Smith, trans., New York: Macmillan, 1965, p. 69.

22 Ibid.

23 Hasidism and Modern Man, M. Friedman, trans., New York: Harper & Row, 1958, p. 158. The criticism of moral relativism may justifiably be leveled at Buber here as well. If there

are no universal moral rules, if moral decisions are arrived at only in light of how an individual feels addressed in his uniqueness and particularity, how can Buber himself make specific moral judgments, such as calling Hitler "sinister," (Eclipse of God, p. 77) and judging Nazis to belong to the sphere of "monstrous inhumanity?" (Pointing the Way, p. 232) How, for example, can he pronounce lying to be "evil" (Good and Evil, p. 7) and always "disgraceful" and "pernicious?" (At the Turning, p. 53)

24 Parenthetically, just as formalized religion for Buber is to be suspected insofar as it interferes with an individual's relation to God, so is the national element in Judaism to be suspected if it obscures or replaces the individual's religious life. "I have described the relationship of Israel to God only as the origin, not as the essence of the relation of the believing Jew to God. The great trust . . . is a personal trust of the person as such." (Rome, p. 109.) And yet, insofar as Zionism is nationalism, Buber, a cultural Zionist, (he debated Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), who attacked Zionism as an illegitimate quest for a state, in the summer of 1916) idealized the kibbutz as a fulfillment of his dream of a community of "utopian socialism." (See his Paths in Utopia - 1949.)

25 Daniel: Dialogues on Realization. M. Friedman, trans. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964, p. 64.

26 Ibid., p. 69.

27 Ibid., p. 72.

28 Ibid., p. 141.

29 "The Teaching to the Tao," p. 48

30 Buber, though ever wary of convenient labels, characterized I and Thou (which he wrote over a period of seven years) as "the ontology of the between" ("die Ontologie des Zwischenmenschlichen" - a Buberian neologism).

31 I and Thou, p. 100.

32 Ibid., p. 82.

33 Ibid., p. 81.

34 Ibid., p. 85. Elsewhere Buber writes, "I-It finds its highest concentration and illumination in philosophical knowledge." (Eclipse of

God, p. 45.)

35 I and Thou, p. 55.

36 "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism," On Judaism, p. 59.

37 See for example Moreh Nevuchim, I:58-60.

38 I and Thou, p. 34.

39 "The Holy War: A Word to the Jews and to the Nations," On Judaism, pp. 109-10.

40 Ibid., pp. 113.

41 I and Thou, p. 6.

42 Quoted in Birnbaum, p. 397.

43 Rome, p. 86.

44 See the second interpretation of Rashi, and Onqeles on Bereishit 18:3, based on an opinion in BT, Shavuot 35b.

45 BT, Shabbat 127a. Cf. Maharal, Netivot 'Olam, vol. 1, Netiv Gemilut Chassidim, ch. 4. I am indebted to my friend Yair Silverman for this point.

46 "The Holy War: A Word to the Jews and to the Nations," On Judaism, pp. 111.

47 Ibid. Elsewhere, Buber writes "It is a mistake to regard Jewish Messianism as exhausted by a belief in an event happening once at the end of time . . . the Messiahship of the end of time is preceded by one of all times, poured out over the ages." ("Spinoza," The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism, pp. 106ff.)

48 I and Thou, p. 130.

49 Ibid., p. 131.

50 Cf. Bertocci's question in Rome, p. 87.

51 "Every You in the world is doomed by its nature to become a thing or at least to enter into thinghood again and again." I and Thou, p. 69.

52 I and Thou, p. 74.

53 E.g. "A community (die Gemeinde) is built upon a living active center." I and Thou, p. 94. Cf. also "Comments on the Idea of Community," A Believing Humanism, M. Friedman, trans., New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967, p. 88.

54 See Levinas, ch. 3, p. 43.

55 Ibid., p. 47.

56 Levinas, ch. 1, pp. 5, 8.

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form) Rabbis has already made itself inconsequential. Also, the council of Breslov was... a disgrace and laughingstock in the eyes of the inhabitants of the city. And because of this, the council of Manheim fell apart. Each day the innovators are self-destructing, including the reformer in Berlin. Not only are they isolated and alone in their actions, and not a single congregation follows their direction... all of their actions were ephemeral, since they do not fear the true God."

Based on such evidence, Elbogen (304-306) claims that European Jewry faced a crossroads at this moment, and could have been steered by the traditionalist rabbinate towards a less fragmented end had they been more flexible in their treatment of reform. Elbogen's assertions one of historical hindsight, and it is open to question. What matters, though, is that the traditionalists did *not* see compromise as an option, and it is the purpose of this article to explore why.

2 For example, see the reformist responsa collected in *Noga Tzedek* and *Or Noga*. Petuchowski describes a shift from battle over halakhic proof texts in the early stages of Reform to a much greater em-

phasis on issues of historicity, for as the disputes progressed, the reformers honed their Wissenschaft weaponry. This transition may indicate that the reformers did not set out intending to completely split from traditional Judaism, and thus they entered the battle on traditionalist turf - *Halakha*. Only when the futility of this venue became clear did the reformers change their approach. This coincided with the development of a new reform - Wissenschaft theology, and the rest is history.

3 Plaut 52.

4 See *Or Noga* and *Nogah HaTzedek*.

5 See Bleich 52.

6 R. Eliezer of Triers (*Eleh Divrei HaBrit* 94-96) (1818).

7 Ibid.

8 Katz, *From East to West* 242-3 (emphasis mine). He quotes the *Shu"t Hatam Sofer* Orach Chaim 197.

9 Ibid.

10 *Or Nogah* 38 (emphasis mine).

11 *Minchat Kenaot* 993 (1849).

12 Ibid. 991.

13 For example, R. Akiva Eger, *Eleh Divrei HaBrit* 27-8.

14 Hatam Sofer, *Likutim*, no. 84

(1818).

15 Avot 1:2.

16 *Shu"t Sha'ar Ephraim* Orach Chaim 13. The Hatam Sofer refers the reader to this responsa but does not quote from it. Although the *Sha'ar Ephraim* refers here specifically to *piyutim*, his general thrust throughout most of the responsa is to treat *piyutim* and the more halakhically-regulated *Shmoneh Esreh* equivalently with regard to halakhic demands for comprehension.

17 *Horeb* 471 (1837).

18 Ibid. 544.

19 *Mavo L'Siddur Shel HaHatam Sofer* 6 (quoted from *Hut HaMeshulash*).

20 *Horeb* 471.

21 *Yoma* 69b.

22 *Mavo L'Siddur Shel HaHatam Sofer* 3, quoted from *Drasha* 26.

## Kever Rachel

*continued from page 24*

Cassuto).

Many historians point out that even in the Apocrypha, in *Sefer Kadmonim*, we read "Vatavo el Hamakkom *hakaruy* Matzevet Rachel," which implies that the author had his doubts as to whether it was the actual location or simply was what was attributed as her grave.

4 Interestingly, the Midrash cites a second opposite opinion. "When you leave me today from Gvul Binyamin Tzaltzach, you will meet the men in Kever Rachel." Regarding the significance of Shaul being at Kever Rachel, see *Megadim* 14 (p. 43-

46) for an ingenious explanation.

5 He also brings support from many places in Tanach that the phrase "im hatzon" is used. See, for example, *Berashit* 22:5 and 29:6.

6 See for Metzudot David who identifies Ramah as one of the major prison and exiling cities.

7 P. 143-150. ♦

# Denial of Unpleasant Realities

Rabbi Yosef Blau

Confounding sociologists and historians, Orthodox Judaism has had a remarkable renaissance. On the surface, this has been accompanied by renewed confidence bordering on triumphalism. Yet one senses that an underlying insecurity remains. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the pattern of denial that permeates the Orthodox community when reacting to reports of improper behavior by individuals within its ranks. The featuring in Hatzofe, the newspaper of the National Religious Party in Israel, of an article supporting conspiracy theories as the second anniversary of the Rabin assassination approaches, is a striking example of this phenomenon.

Focusing on the "possibility" of a conspiracy, and accompanied by a list of questions about the official investigation, this article shifts our attention from the undeniable fact that the convicted and admitted assassin acted on religious motives. Yigal Amir justified his actions with arguments against Prime Minister Rabin that were commonplace in some religious circles. While the rest of Israeli soci-

ety struggles with the meaning and implications of the assassination, the Orthodox community refuses to acknowledge that the event actually happened as it did and sees no need for introspection or reevaluation.

Unfortunately, this is only one manifestation of a pattern of responses that primarily serve as an avoidance technique, to obviate the need to face the real implications of problems within our midst. When a book appeared last year from a prominent and respected Orthodox Rabbi and psychiatrist that dealt with domestic abuse, many Hebrew bookstores were advised not to make it available for purchase. Instead of recognizing the fact that this worldwide problem exists in Orthodox circles as well, the perceived scandal was the fact that a book acknowledged the situation. Problems denied clearly will not go away, but will only continue, if not increase.

An almost automatic response to newspaper reports of financial scandal involving religious institutions, politicians, or individuals is to claim anti-Semitism, if in the United States,

or anti-religious prejudice, if in Israel. The next line of defense is that not everyone indicted is guilty. If this does not suffice, the individual involved is described as "only apparently observant." His guilt, when proven, is the proof. The possibility that his religious education failed to inculcate the value of honesty as well as Sabbath-observance and kashrut is not considered. Federal jails have Talmud classes and shiurim led by individuals who see themselves as observant Jews.

Perhaps the most troubling cases of denial involve misuse of religion itself. Religious courts exist that are corrupt and nothing public is said. Rabbis sell their blessings or promise miracle cures. Halachic sources are cited to justify husbands remarrying without giving their wives a get. Troubled individuals in their role as religious teachers or outreach professionals have acted improperly with adolescents and the response has been to cover-up and to excuse. What will happen to the person's family if he is fired? We are asked to look at the

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