

# CHAVRUSA

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Rabbi Meir Goldwicht  
Rabbi Dr. David Horwitz  
Rabbi Naphtali Weisz



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## CHAVRUSA

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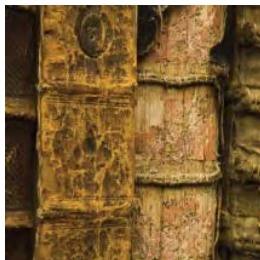
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## Editorial Policies

- CHAVRUSA will consider articles and letters for publication.
- Books authored by musmakhim that are reviewed by musmakhim will be considered for publication as well.
- Obituaries about and authored by musmakhim will be considered for publication.
- CHAVRUSA aims to maintain the Hebrew pronunciation style of the author of the article. Transliterations follow the author's preference i.e. academic, Ashkenazic, modern Hebrew or the like. While we will remain consistent within articles, each author will be afforded to transliterate within his comfort level.
- CHAVRUSA reserves the right to edit articles received for publication, and will make every effort to show a draft form to the author prior to publication.
- Contributions may be sent to chavrusamagazine@yu.edu
- In addition to CHAVRUSA magazine, articles and divrei Torah may also be submitted for publication in the weekly Rabbinic Alumni e-newsletter. Please e-mail them to rabbinicalumni@yu.edu

## RIETS Dinner 2010

RIETS honored dedicated leaders and educators of the Jewish community at its Annual Dinner of Tribute on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2010 at the Grand Hyatt in New York City. Honorees include Guests of Honor Rabbi Joel '60R and Judy Schreiber and Dr. Joel Wolowelsky, who was awarded the Lifetime Achievement in Jewish Education award. The dinner also paid tribute to Alvin Blumenfeld z"l through the establishment of a scholarship fund in his name.

Rabbi Schreiber has served as a member of the RIETS Board of Trustees since 1996. He is a graduate of Yeshiva College, Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and RIETS. His wife, Judy (nee Bunim), is a graduate of YU's Brooklyn Girls High School and received a master's degree from YU's Wurzweiler School of Social Work. The Schreiber family's generosity has supported many YU initiatives, including the Aaron and Blanche Schreiber Torah Tours Program that provides students the opportunity to present sermons and teach

classes at synagogues during Simchat Torah and Sukkot.

Dr. Wolowelsky is dean of the faculty at the Yeshiva of Flatbush in Brooklyn, NY, where he teaches math and Jewish philosophy. He is associate editor of *Tradition*, the journal of Orthodox Jewish thought published by the Rabbinical Council of America, and the series *MeOtzar HoRav: Selected Writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*.

Mr. Blumenfeld z'l, a distinguished and widely admired trustee of RIETS and a former board member of the Yeshiva University High Schools, was a graduate of YU High School for Boys and Yeshiva College. Together with his wife, Lois, they established the Lois Blumenfeld Personal Endowed Scholarship Fund at YU's Stern College for Women and the Lois and Avi Blumenfeld Kollel Fellowship in Israel, and have supported many other YU initiatives. At the dinner, Mr. Blumenfeld's family announced that a new scholarship fund for undergraduates would be dedicated in his memory.



President Richard M. Joel, Dr. Joel Wolowelsky



President Richard M. Joel, Rabbi Joel Schreiber, Mrs. Judy Schreiber

This year's dinner also featured divrei Torah at each table courtesy of current RIETS students, and a lively dance set at the end of the dinner, which feted the honorees and brought a sense of bonding to the attendees. ■

## Former Students Return to Yeshiva to Spend Time With Rav Schachter

RIETS hosted a reunion shiur for the talmidim of Rabbi Hershel Schachter '67R on Nov. 18, 2010. Over 80 former students from both Yeshiva College and RIETS attended the evening, in which Rabbi Schachter offered introductory remarks to Sefer Kodshim.

Rabbi Schachter has had a distinguished career with RIETS, joining the faculty in 1967 at the age of 26 as the youngest rosh yeshiva in the seminary's history. Since 1971, Rabbi Schachter has been rosh kollel of the Marcos and Adina Katz Kollel and also holds the Nathan and Vivian Fink Distinguished Professorial Chair in Talmud.

In addition to his teaching duties, Rabbi Schachter lectures, writes and serves as a world-renowned posek. A prolific author, he has written more than 100 articles, in Hebrew and English for such scholarly publications as *HaPardes*, *Hadarom*, *Beth Yitzchak* and *Or Hamizrach*. His books include *Eretz HaTzvi*, *B'ikvei HaTzon*, *Nefesh HaRav*, *MiPninei HaRav* and *Ginat Egoz* and the newly released *Torat HaRav*. ■



# Rabbinic Advisory Committee (RAC) Established

A new body of Rabbinic Alumni leadership, the Rabbinic Advisory Committee (RAC), has been created and launched by RIETS and the Center for the Jewish Future.

In the spring of 2009, at the behest of Yeshiva University and RIETS President Richard M. Joel, three dialogues were held at his home with three groups of RIETS alumni. Divided up by the amount of time since receiving semikhah, each cohort contained a mixture of musmakhim representing alumni in the pulpit, education, the chaplaincy and those serving Jewish organizations, as well as musmakhim who do not serve as klei kodesh at all. The President, joined by the Max and Marion Grill Dean of RIETS Rabbi Yona Reiss '91R and the David Mitzner Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future Rabbi Kenneth Brander '86R, had a frank and constructive dialogue with those assembled. Those three meetings led to the proposal to convene a new group — the RAC — which would be led by RIETS alumni who have distinguished themselves in service to YU and RIETS, representing varying demographics of age, vocation and geographical diversity within the United States.

The newly appointed members of the RAC convened their first meeting on Oct. 20, the same day as the RIETS dinner. They heard from President Richard Joel and Rabbis Reiss and Brander. They then received briefings from teams representing various YU divisions including admissions, alumni relations, advancement and the Institute for University School Partnership. During the latter part of the meeting, the RAC conclave asked its members to set forth their priorities for such a group, after hearing the presentations of the morning.

The group chose to focus its attention



(L-R) Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler, Institute for University School Partnership Director Dr. Scott Goldberg, Rabbi Binyamin Blau, Rabbi Perry Tirschwell, Rabbi Elchanan Weinbach, CJF David Mitzner Dean Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Rabbi Shalom Baum, RIETS Max and Marion Grill Dean Rabbi Yona Reiss, Director of The Morris and Gertrude Bienenfeld Department of Jewish Career Development and Placement Rabbi Ronald Schwarzberg, RIETS Alumni Director Rabbi Elly Krinsky, Rabbi Moshe Neiss, Rabbi Howard Zack, Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Rybak and Rabbi Shmuel Silber

on three areas: building relations with RIETS alumni and extending more services to them; working to help the professional rabbi thrive and succeed in the various fields of avodat hakodesh that they serve; and helping YU and RIETS promote its values and message in the communities. We wish the members of the RAC well as they begin serving in this new role, and we look forward to seeing the fruits of their labor and experiencing the benefit they will bring to the Yeshiva and its musmakhim.

The members of the Rabbinic Advisory Committee are (in alphabetical order): Rabbi Shalom Baum '94, New Milford, NJ; Rabbi Adam Berner '94R, New Milford, NJ; Rabbi Binyamin Blau '89R, Beachwood, OH; Rabbi Kenneth Hain '78R, Lawrence, NY; Rabbi Elazar Muskin '81R, Beverly Hills, CA; Rabbi Moshe Neiss '75R, Riverdale, NY; Rabbi

Dr. Shlomo Rybak '66R, Passaic, NJ; Rabbi Shmuel Silber '02R, Baltimore, MD; Rabbi Perry Tirschwell '97R, Boca Raton, FL; Rabbi Elchanan Weinbach '90R, Bala Cynwyd, PA; Rabbi Howard Zack '85R, Columbus, OH; and Rabbi Eliezer Zwickler '01R, West Orange, NJ.

The Yeshiva and the thousands of members of the Rabbinic Alumni owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the officers who have led our alumni association over the past few years. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Rybak, who served as president, continues on as a participant in the RAC, as does Rabbi Moshe Neiss who served as a vice president. We graciously thank Rabbis Gideon Shloush '97R and Dovid Kupchik '93R for serving as vice presidents and Rabbi Moshe Rosenberg '84R for his service as secretary. ■

# Orthodox Forum Marks 20 Years of Service to The Community

An interview with Rabbi Robert Hirt (RRH) '62R, senior advisor to the President, who has chaired the Orthodox Forum since its inception.

## **CHAVRUSA: How was the Orthodox Forum born?**

RRH: In the mid-80's, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm '51R, myself and others were talking about the need to provide greater explication and appreciation for what the concept of Torah Umadda really means and how both components operate in close harmony. We convened some of our best thinkers and asked them what they thought the burning issues were and solicited their ideas about them for publication. We wanted the volumes to be authoritative, not authoritarian. We aimed to produce a body of literature that would provide insight and information on these issues. That's how the Orthodox Forum was born, with the goal of bringing people from both inside and outside YU around a table.

## **CHAVRUSA: By what process are the topics and authors chosen?**

RRH: A group of 15 or 20 thinkers are on our steering committee. They represent all the fields of leadership that we have. Every year we ask them what topics they feel should be addressed. We select the editor for the volume by seeing who in the steering committee and the subsequent subcommittees seem most passionate about the topic. The group then asks people to write new articles for the new volume. We then convene a larger group to discuss the articles, which ultimately helps the authors revise and fine tune their articles. In essence, the book is being read in draft form and the authors experience a peer review which leads

to the edits. The articles are then revised based upon the input from the two-day conversation. We endeavor to produce a body of literature that is a reflection of multi-disciplinary current thinking on a specific topic which highlights the interface of Torah and society.

## **CHAVRUSA: Do you feel challenged after 20 years to revisit some of the topics from a more contemporary lens?**

RRH: The last conference on believing and non-believing Jews was also addressed in our second volume. But we felt that it behooved us to revisit not the topic but the challenges faced by that issue. The world has changed. We want to look at the issues in new ways. Another change is that we seek to have shorter articles and pieces written by younger authors, not just the senior people in the field. The next volume, which will address cultural changes, will feature many writers under the age of 40. The bottom line is that we need everyone to sit around one table—even if it's 70 or 80 people—to be part of a process, not part of an audience. We are looking for different formats and there is a need to extend the process beyond the two-day conclave in New York.

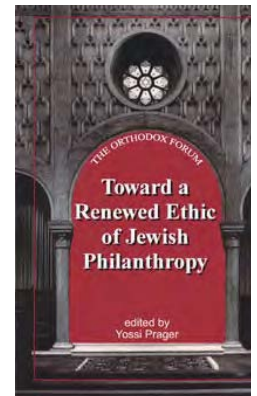
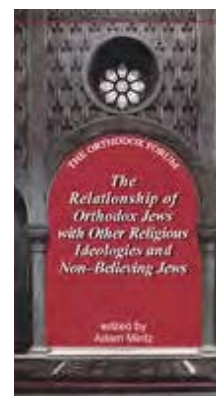
## **CHAVRUSA: How can the Rabbinic Alumni partner with you in the Forum?**

RRH: We live in a world where there is competition for ideas, values and lifestyle. People do not need us to come up with the challenges. There are plenty of blogs, listserves and web sites addressing these issues. We look to make our contribution by providing religious leaders with resources to guide their members and students through these



taxing issues. That is where the volumes of the Forum can be helpful. We are not interested in selling books; we want them read. Most of the volumes can be downloaded for free at [www.yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org). Rabbis and educators need to take the articles they feel are most germane to the intellectual and spiritual needs of their community and make them available for discussions in thinking or learning circles or chaburot. The authors should be invited through the YU/CJF Speakers Bureau to the community or invited to the teacher in-service days. We don't just send out the volumes; our goal is to have their contents read.

Furthermore, we would welcome suggestions of topics to be addressed from the Rabbinic Alumni. While we will ask specific writers to present papers and invite them to the two-day seminar in New York, the input of our alumni can certainly help us identify appropriate topics. ■





## Tu Bishvat: A Potential Holiday

Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

**W**hen you come to the Land and you shall plant any food tree, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years they shall be forbidden to you, they shall not be eaten. On the fourth year, all of its fruit shall be sanctified to Hashem. On the fifth year you shall eat its fruit, so that it will increase its crop for you, I am Hashem, your Elokim (Vayikra 19:23-25)

*“After Hashem your Elokim shall you go.” (Devarim 13:5). Rabbi Yehudah bar Simon asked, is it really possible for a human being to go after the Holy One Blessed be His Name and to cling to Him? Can flesh and blood ascend to the heaven and cling to His Divine presence? Rather,*

Aharon and Moshe earned second names, aside from the ones from their birth. They succeeded in incorporating those qualities into their personalities and thus acquired second appellations.

*here is how we can understand this passage. From the beginning of creation, Hashem only focused on planting, as it is stated “Hashem Elokim planted a garden in Eden” (Bereshit 2:8). You too, when you enter the Land of Israel focus initially on planting as it states, “When you come to the land and you shall plant any food tree...” (Vayikra 19:23). (Vayikra Rabba 25:3)*

Chazal teach us that when we come to Eretz Yisrael and plant a tree, we fulfill the mitzvah of *v’halachta bidrachav*. This midrash is a challenge to understand since the vast majority of those who live in the land and those who emigrate there never planted a tree in Israel. How can this be? What do Chazal mean?

In order to answer this question, let us attempt to learn the sugya of *v’halachta bidrachav*. This mitzvah appears eight times in Sefer Devarim. This repetition demonstrates how fundamental and important this mitzvah is. However, despite its ubiquity in Devarim, we do not find it mentioned once in the other four seforim of Chumash. How can this be?

The explanation is as follows. The Rambam (*Sefer Hamitzvot* #8) suggests to us that the fulfillment of the mitzvah of *v’halachta bidrachav* has two aspects. First, *mah hu rachum, mah hu chanun, tzadik...* (just as He is compassionate, forgiving and righteous, so should we...) as both Sifrei in Eikev and the Gemara (Shabbat 133) establish. There is also a second component as seen in the Gemara (Sota 14) which describes actions Hashem performs for man. He clothes the naked, as we read “Hashem Elokim formed

for man and woman clothing from hides” (Bereshit 3:21); He visits the sick, as it states, “Hashem appeared to him [Avraham] in Elonei Mamre” (Ibid. 18:1); He comforts the mourner as it states, “Behold, after the death of Avraham, Elokim blessed Yitzchak his son” (Ibid. 25:11). Finally, Hashem engages in burial of the dead as it states, “He buried him [Moshe] in the valley” (Devarim 34:6). Therefore, we too must clothe the naked, visit the sick, comfort the mourners and bury the dead.

Why did Chazal not teach us the basics of the mitzvah in the contexts of our own lives and professional fields? What do we gain from the aforementioned list of examples and details? Each person finds his own way of emulating Hashem’s ways.

Rather, Chazal teach us one of the most important lessons of life. Each person has a name, which is received at birth or at his brit. A person goes with this name his whole life. This midrash teaches us that the purpose of life is to merit a second name, one of the names of Hashem. Imagine that two people walk on the street as an important Jew passes by. One says to the other, “See this man. He is a true baal chessed, a true baal tzedakah.” That man has a birth-name, why call him a baal chessed? Just call him by his name. The answer is that it behooves each of us to try to acquire a second name. When the Borei Olam sent Moshe back to Egypt, Aharon was dispatched to meet Moshe on the way. The two brothers reunited and embraced (Shemot 4:27). The midrash (Shemot Rabbah 5:10) invokes a verse from Tehillim (85:10) to describe that emotional reunion: “Chessed and truth met. Righteousness and peace kissed.” The midrash describes Aharon as chessed, citing a verse comparing the urim v’tumim and ish chasidecha (Devarim 33:8). Likewise the midrash identifies Moshe as emet, quoting a biblical verse (Bamidbar 12:7) where Moshe’s trustworthiness is described. What do Chazal aim to teach us? Why not merely “Moshe met Aharon?” Why do Chazal summon chessed, emet, tzedek and shalom? Aharon and Moshe earned second names, aside from the ones from their birth. They succeeded in incorporating those

qualities into their personalities and thus acquired second appellations.

Chazal aim to teach us that the path to meriting a second name—a name of Hashem—and the proper road to fulfill *v'halachta b'drachav* is to follow certain acts which will crown us with our second names. Diligence in that particular mitzvah will acquire for us that second name, and we thus fulfill *v'halachta b'drachav*.

This notion of second names has a practical side as well. When Hashem created man and showed him all the trees in the Garden, he stated that you are like them, “*ki ha'adam etz hasadeh*” (Devarim 20:19). A tree has a hard outside but can also create fruit. Hashem reminds man that we too can be fruitful and creative by building. The Borei Olam tells man that he has a great potential, and encourages us to use it. Be like a tree and bring our potentials to fruition, we are told. The Vilna Gaon points out that *etz* and *b'tzelem* share the same gematria.

If this is true, this explains the Gemara (Brachot 33a) where a student in Rabbah's yeshiva who acted as the shaliach tzibur said, “*ata chasta al kan tzipor, ata chus v'rachem aleinu*” - “You have mercy on the nest of the bird, may You too have mercy upon us.” Rabbah praised his student saying, “How much does this student know how to appease his Creator!” Abaye responded to him that it's forbidden to daven this way, for the Mishnah (Ibid.) says, he who declares “may Your compassion extend to the nest of the bird” is silenced. The mitzvot of Hashem are decrees; our Sages felt that we have no right to ascribe motives to them. Why then was Rabba so laudatory of his student? Why was he complimentary of behavior that was seemingly oppositional to the mishnah? The answer is that the student shaliach tzibur was not addressing HaKadosh Baruch Hu. He did not come to grade the Ribbono Shel Olam. He described what he personally learned and felt from this mitzvah, the *yir'at shamayim* he gained from his experience from this mitzvah. He identified the unique trait found in this bird. All creatures nurture their young until they are ready to become independent.

A bird's innate nature is to fly away from anything remotely fearful. When this bird hovers over its eggs, it battles its inclination to fly away. The eggs are only potential. If a bird has such *mesirat nefesh* for potential, how much more effort should be expended for objects already born. Rabbah saw how the student internalized the mitzvah, and did not feel he was ascribing motives to the Almighty's mitzvot or actions.

This also explains the Gemara (Brachot 17a) that as the students in Rav Ami and Rav Chanina's yeshiva would take leave of one another, they blessed each other “*olamcha tir'eh b'chayecha*,” that which is hidden or only potential will become revealed. May we see it. No one should wake up one day and regret not actualizing their potential.

This notion of actualizing that which is potential represents the *simchat hachag* of Tu Bishvat. We celebrate the beginning of the sprouting of the fruit. It would have been worthy to celebrate *yom hapri* in the summer after it's harvested. We celebrate in the winter because in Judaism, process is part of the goal. The path is as important as the final destination.

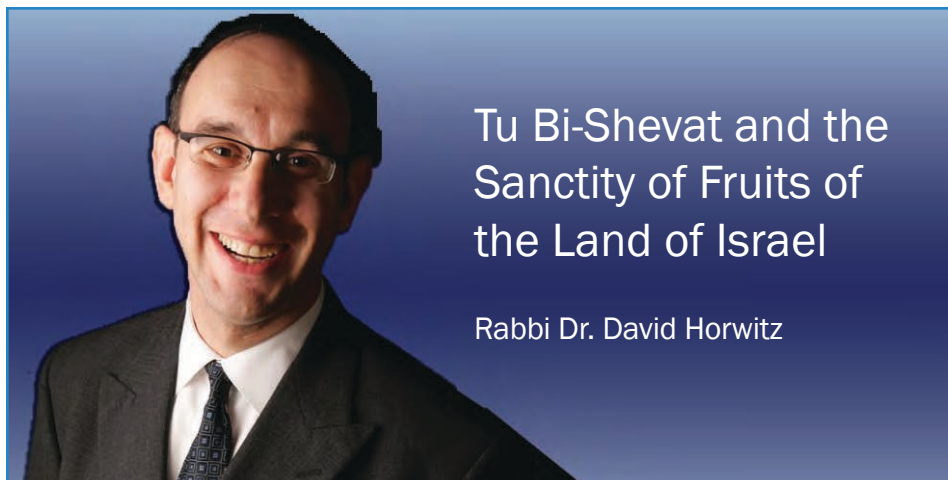
We also see this in the fruit of the seven species, the *shiv'at minim*. Halachah ascribes priority to those foods closer to the word *erezt* in the verse (Devarim 8:8) which introduces us to the fruits of the Land. The verse states, “A land of wheat and barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates; a Land of olives and dates.” Therefore the order of importance begins with olives and dates, followed by grapes, figs and pomegranates. I believe there is an additional message to this prioritization. With regard to olives, we eat the fruit and throw away the pit because it is bitter. With dates, we eat the fruit and suck the seed because it is sweet. With grapes, sometimes they come with seeds and sometimes without. With figs, we eat the fruit and the seeds together, as they cannot be separated. Finally, with pomegranates, we only eat the seeds as they themselves are the fruit. We see that which was bitter at first turns sweet and transforms into the food itself. This shows the depths of Chazal's knowledge, positing

that even *poshei yisrael* perform mitzvot like pomegranates. Our challenge is to reveal the potential in ourselves, and to convince and strengthen others that they too should believe in the wonderful powers and abilities that they have.

When Hashem created His world, almost every day He said “*ki tov*.” After creating man he said “*tov m'od*.” The difference between *tov* and *tov m'od* is that *tov* connotes harmony while *tov m'od* represents the intangible, the potential to be recognized. The species that can recognize potential and actualize it is man. Therefore we learn in the midrash (*Psikta Zutrata Lekach Tov*, Bereshit 1) that *m'od* and *adam* are the same three letters spelled differently. For this reason Eretz Yisrael is described as *tohav ha'aretz m'od m'od* (Bamidbar 14:7). It has tremendous physical and spiritual potential.

For this reason we learn in the name of Rebbe Yochanan ben Zakai that if one holds a tree to be planted in one's fist and is informed that Mashiach has come, first one should conclude the planting and then go greet the Mashiach (*Avot d'Rebbe Natan* ch. 31). The essence of the geulah is actualizing potential, which can be represented through the act of planting, which can lead to the budding of a fruit.

Every new beginning since the Creation of the world begins with a tree. Hashem put man in Gan Eden. On Yaakov Avinu's final night in Israel, he cut down branches of the *arazim* that Avraham had planted, to give to each one of the tribes as they were about to begin their difficult exile. After *yetziat Mitzrayim*, Moshe threw a tree into bitter waters. We of course find planting when we arrive back in the Land of Israel, as quoted at the beginning of this article. Parents plant trees when babies are born. Tradition has it that the branches of those trees serve as the poles of the *chupah* when the children marry (*Gittin* 57a). All this because trees symbolize the actualization of potential. The more we believe in our own potential, we will merit to see generations of fruit as it says in the mishnah “*eilu dvarim she'adam ochel peiroteihem ba'olam hazeh*” (Pe'ah 1:1). ■



## Tu Bi-Shevat and the Sanctity of Fruits of the Land of Israel

Rabbi Dr. David Horwitz

The Mishnah that begins Massekhet Rosh Ha-Shanah states:  
*There are four New Years ... On the first of Shevat is the New Year for trees according to the ruling of Beth Shammai; Beth Hillel, however, place it on the fifteenth of that month.*<sup>1</sup>

The Halakhah, of course, follows Beth Hillel. Since Tu Bi-Shevat is listed with the other New Year dates in this Mishnah, including days that have the halakhic status of a Yom Tov, many Jewish customs have evolved that treat the day like a holiday. The Mehaber writes that we do not recite tahanun on that day, or on the preceding Minchah.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, if a community has proclaimed a series of bahab (Monday, Thursday and the following Monday) fasts, and Tu bi-Shevat occurs on one of those days, the fast is postponed until the week after Tu Bi-Shevat.<sup>3</sup> The Magen Avraham writes that a groom should not fast if his wedding day is on Tu Bi-Shevat, as this day is mentioned in the Gemara.<sup>4</sup>

Why did Hazal assign Tu Bi-Shevat to be the beginning of the year with respect to trees? The Talmud writes that the reason is that most of the winter rains have concluded by then.<sup>5</sup> This law assumes another, namely, that the designation of a year with respect to trees follows hanatah, and Tu Bi-Shevat is roughly the beginning of the period of hanatah (literally, blossoming; the first point in time when what has grown can be formally defined as a fruit) for the crop of

trees of the upcoming year. R. Menachem Ha-Meiri adds that as the winter cold begins to subside at Tu Bi-Shevat, the hanatah of trees at that time becomes more prevalent every subsequent day.<sup>6</sup>

Many mitzvot whose fulfillment depends upon the holiness of the Land of Israel possess rules that have ramifications with respect to Tu Bi-Shevat. With respect to ma'aserot (tithes), for example, as the law states that one may not tithe fruit that grew on one year upon fruit that grew on the previous year, the cutoff period is Tu Bi-Shevat.<sup>7</sup> If and only if the hanatah of a fruit occurred before Tu Bi-Shevat, the fruit would be considered the previous year's fruit.

Regarding Shevi'it (the seventh year of the Shemithah cycle, in which one may not work the land, and whose fruit are designated as perot shevi'it with their own particular laws), although the cutoff point for working the land is the Rosh Ha-Shanah that occurs on Tishrei, rishonim explain that with respect to trees, the Rosh Ha-Shanah that defines perot shevi'it is Tu Bi-Shevat! Thus, fruit whose hanatah occurred on the eighth year (that is, the first year of the new Shemithah cycle), after Rosh Ha-Shanah, but before Tu Bi-Shevat, when one may resume working the land, is still designated as perot shevi'it!

R. Yitzhak Mirsky, in his work *Hegyonei Halakhah*, presents an interesting dispute regarding this last point. The Tosafist R. Samson of Sens (the "Rash Mi-Shantz")

claimed that this last rule is only le-humrah, but not le-qula. That is, if the hanatah of a tree took place during the seventh year itself, after the Rosh Ha-Shanah of Tishrei but before Tu Bi-Shevat, one does not say that technically the hanatah was a sixth-year hanatah. Rather, these fruits are also defined as perot shevi'it and have the same rules as fruits that have a "seventh year hanatah" after Tu Bi-Shevat of the seventh year.<sup>8</sup> R. Isaiah Horowitz (the Shelah Ha-Qadosh), on the other hand, wrote that this law exists even le-qula. Hence, fruit that experienced hanatah after Rosh Ha-Shanah of Tishrei but before Tu Bi-Shevat would have the laws of fruit that grew on the sixth year, not the seventh year.<sup>9</sup>

Tu Bi-Shevat is also relevant to the prohibition of orlah, the law that one may not eat fruit for the first three years of the tree.

The Magen Avraham quotes the Ashkenazi custom to eat many diverse types of fruit on Tu Bi-Shevat, in order to honor the name of the day—the new year of trees.<sup>10</sup> But based upon the halakhic categories we have discussed above, an interesting question arises; the fruits that one eats on Tu Bi-Shevat surely were from trees whose hanatah were of the previous halakhic year with respect to trees (that is, even if the hanatah occurred after Rosh Ha-Shanah, it surely occurred before Tu Bi-Shevat). So, how are we honoring the New Year with respect to trees when the fruit that we are eating was halakhically part of the old year's crop? An interesting answer was suggested by R. Leible Eger, R. Akiva Eger's grandson, who became a Hasid. He cited a celebrated Talmudic passage in Berachot:

*R Hanina b, Papa said: To enjoy this world without a benediction is like robbing the Holy One, blessed be He, and the community of Israel ...*<sup>11</sup>

Rashi (ad loc.) writes that one steals the berachah from God (for the berachah was His due) and one steals from the collective Jewish people as well, for when a Jew sins (and eating without a berachah is surely a sin) the fruits of Eretz Yisrael become damaged. Thus, the custom of the Jewish



people is davka to eat, and first make a berachah, on fruits of the previous year. After one praises God for the previous year's fruits, we are confident that with this zechus, God will ensure that the new year's crop of fruits, the crop that halakhically begins on Tu Bi-Shevat, will be a bountiful one.<sup>12</sup>

Many people have a custom davka to eat on Tu Bi-Shevat the seven fruits with which Israel was praised. We will use this fact as a segue to discuss some halachot regarding the shiv'at ha-minim.

After one eats from these fruits, one makes the berachah aharonah of me'ein shalosh. The nusah of the barachah includes the phrase "and (may we) eat from the fruit (of Israel) and be satisfied from its bounty." The Tur quotes an opinion that it is not appropriate to include those words. This is because one should not desire to go to the Land of Israel in order to enjoy its fruits, but rather to observe the mitzvot that can only be fulfilled in the Land of Israel (as Rav Simlai [Sotah 14a] states, Moshe Rabbenu certainly did not plead with God to enter the Land of Israel in order to taste its fruits. Rather, he wanted to observe the mitzvot that can only be fulfilled there).<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the author of the work *Torah Temimah*, R. Baruch Ha-Levi Epstein, expressed surprise at the fact that the accepted custom is to recite this passage expressing our desire to eat the fruits of Israel, in light of the fact that the Talmud clearly disapproves of such sentiments.<sup>14</sup>

R. Joel Sirkes ("the Bach"), in his commentary on the Tur, writes that indeed there is a spiritual value in eating the fruits of Israel themselves. In his view, when one ingests the fruits of Israel one is nourished from the holiness of the divine Shechinah.<sup>15</sup>

R. Zvi Yehuda Kook zt"l often quoted this Bach, emphasizing that the value of Eretz Yisrael is not exclusively due to the commandments that one fulfills there. He pointed out that the Talmudic phrase is *mitzvot ha-teluyyot ba-aretz*, and not *aretz ha-teluyyah be-mitzvot*. It states that the mitzvot are dependent upon the Land, and not that the Land is dependent upon the mitzvot. R. Tzvi Yehuda exclaimed.<sup>16</sup> The fact that there

are commandments whose observance is uniquely tied to the Land of Israel is itself due, in his view, to the inherent sanctity of Israel, a sanctity that makes the very ingestion of the fruits of that land a virtuous deed.

R. Tzvi Yehuda gave his own unique explanation to the case of Moshe Rabbenu. If there is an inherent sanctity in eating the fruits of the land of Israel, why then did the Talmud (Sotah, 14a) state that Moshe did not desire to go to the Land in order to eat its fruits but in order to fulfill its mitzvot?

He quoted in his explanation the book *Binah la-Itim*, a collection of sermons authored by the Italian Rabbi R. Azariah Figo (1579-1647), the author of *Giddulei Terumah*, a commentary of *Sefer Ha-Terumot* of R. Samuel Sardi. In his derashah entitled "Et Dodim" (derashah #46) he suggested that the passage means something else: Surely, it is an intrinsic value to go to the Land of Israel and to be zocheh to eat its fruits, as the Bach indeed understands. The aforementioned Talmudic passage was not dealing with the individual spiritual benefit that a person would get from eating the fruits of the land. Rather, the Gemara is discussing Moshe Rabbenu, who was

spiritually equal to the entire people of Israel. He was concerned about the spiritual foundation of the Jewish people as they entered the Holy Land; wishing to ensure that one's quest for spirituality in the Land should not be motivated by an exclusive desire of individual fulfillment, but with a desire for the improvement of the tzibbur as a whole. Therefore, the Talmudic passage does not speak in the active sense (how I [=Moshe] will perform mitzvot) but in the passive sense (how the commandments will be performed for the entirety of the Jewish people through me [=Moshe]). That is, Moshe only wanted to enter the Land in a manner that would enable the totality of Klal Yisrael to spiritually benefit. But certainly, R. Tvi Yehudah exclaimed, there exists enormous spiritual benefit as well for any Jewish individual who eats perot Eretz Yisrael, as the Bach teaches us.<sup>17</sup>

The notion that there are seven special fruits that distinguish the Land of Israel is based upon a verse in the Bible: "A land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey" (Deuteronomy 8:8). In Massekhet Eruvin (4a-b), R. Hannan cited this verse in



Deuteronomy, listed the seven fruits of Eretz Yisrael, and proceeded to quote halakhot that are derived from each one:<sup>18</sup>

1. Wheat (was mentioned) as (an allusion to what) we have learned: If a man entered a leprous house (carrying) his clothes upon his shoulders and his sandals and his rings on his fingers, he becomes unclean forthwith, but they (i.e., the items he was wearing) remain clean unless he stayed there (for as much time) as is required for the eating of half a loaf of wheat bread but not barley bread, while in a reclining posture and eating with some condiment. (The Talmud assumes that one can eat wheat bread much more quickly than barley bread.)
2. Barley (is an allusion to the following: for we have learned, a bone the size of a barley grain causes defilement by contact and carrying, but not by (being in the same) tent.
3. Vines (are an allusion to) the quantity of a quarter of a log of wine (the drinking of which constitutes an offense) of a Nazirite.

On Tu Bishvat, we show the Ribono shel Olam that we looked at the spiritual side of the bounty that He has granted us, i.e., we have recognized God's ultimate ownership of the universe by making berachot over the fruits.

4. Figs (allude to) the size of a dried fig, regarding (the laws of) carrying (from one domain into another) on the Sabbath.
5. Pomegranates (are an allusion) as we have learned: All defined wooden utensils of householders (become clean if they contain holes) of the size of pomegranates.
6. A land of olives (is an allusion to the) land (where) all the legal standards are of the size of an olive. (The Talmud later modifies this to most of the legal standards.)
7. Honey (of dates)(is an allusion to the eating of food of) the size of a big date (that constitutes an offence) on the Day of Atonement.

Why are these seven fruits of Israel singled out above and beyond other fruits of Israel? R. Isaiah Horowitz, the Shelah Ha-Qadosh, understood that it was precisely because of the halakhot regarding standards (shiuirim) of Torah that are derived from the Torah's mention of these fruits. Therefore, when one eats one of the shiv 'at ha-minim, one should have in mind the wheat, barley, etc. from which one's soul receives enjoyment, that is, one should think about the halakhot that are derived from the biblical verses concerning the shiv 'at ha-minim.<sup>19</sup>

I would add that when one eats one of the shiv 'at ha-minim on Tu Bi-Shevat, one can combine this last thought with the aforementioned idea of R. Leible Eger and conclude the following: on Tu Bishvat, we demonstrate to God that our enjoyment of last year's fruits was not exclusively a physical act, important as the ingestion of the perot of Eretz Yisrael per se is, as R. Tzvi Yehuda taught us. We show the Ribono shel Olam that we looked at the spiritual side of the bounty that He has granted us, i.e., we have both recognized God's ultimate ownership of the universe by making berachot over the fruits, and we also keep in mind the halakhot that pertain to these fruits. As a consequence, we pray to God

that this coming year, the time period that with respect to fruits commences on the day of Tu Bi-Shevat, God will continue to bestow His magnanimity and beneficence upon the Jewish people, by nourishing us both physically and spiritually. ■

### Endnotes

1. *Rosh Ha-Shanah 2a* (Soncino ed.)
2. *Shulhan Aruch Orach Hayyim 131:6*.
3. *Mehaber. ad loc. See also ibid., 572:3, Mordecai, at the beginning of his comments to Rosh Ha-Shanah, and the commentary of Bigdei Yesha to the Mordecai by R. Isaiah Horowitz (the Shelah Ha-Qadosh) ad loc.*
4. *Magen Avraham, Orach Hayyim, 573:1. These references, as well as many that will be cited in this article, can all be found in R. Yitzhak Mirsky, Hedyonei Halakhah, vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 2010), pp. 87-95.*
5. *Rosh Ha-Shanah 14a*.
6. *Meiri, Bet Ha-Behirah, Rosh Ha-Shanah 2a*.
7. *Rosh Ha-Shanah 12a-b. See also Sifre to Deuteronomy 14:22, and Rashi ad loc.*
8. *Rash to Torah Kohanim, Parashat Be-Har, Chapter 1, #4.*
9. *Shelah, Sha'ar Ha-Otiot, (Jerusalem, 1975), 57b, s.v. od hineni mod'ia.*
10. *Magen Avraham, Orach Chayyim, 131:16*.
11. *Berachot 35b*
12. *R. Leible Eger, Torat Emet (Shmot), quoted in Mirsky, Hedyonei Halakhah, p. 89.*
13. *Tur Orach Hayyim 208.*
14. *Torah Temimah (Vilna, 1904), Deuteronomy 3:25.*
15. *Bach, Orach Hayyim 208, quoted in Mirsky, Hedyonei Halakhah, p. 90.*
16. *See Sighet R. Tzvi Yehuda, Shemot (Jerusalem, 1997), p. 26.*
17. *Besides the previous note, see Sighet Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda, Ba-Midbar (Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 420-22; Sighet Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda, Devarim (Jerusalem, 2005), p. 212. In that last source R. Tzvi Yehuda emphasizes that in his view, the qedushah of the Land of Israel is absolutely intrinsic, and is not a result of the mitzvot that may only be performed there.*
18. *I have used the Soncino translation (with modifications).*
19. *Shelah, Sha'ar Ha-Otiot, quoted in Mirsky, Hedyonei Halakhah, p. 94.*



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**Musmakhim in the Limelight**

Longevity and

Burnout in

Avodat Hakodesh

## Musmakhim in the Limelight

Chazal often use the imagery of forestry and vegetation to depict endurance, resilience and durability. Our sages spoke about the acacia wood planted and nurtured by our avot hakedoshim for their children's journey through the wilderness (Tanchuma Trumah 9). We encounter the ultimate blessing that a fruit's offspring should mirror and continue the usefulness and sweetness of its parent (Taanit 5b-6a). We are also aware of the story of Choni Hamaigel, who finally understood the value of an old man planting a tree that takes 70 years to bear fruit (Ibid. 23a).

R. Eliezer b. Shamua's students asked him to what he ascribed his longevity? He did not answer describing his work ethic, healthy eating habits or genetic mazal. He offered rationales not from the gymnasium or health food store, but rather habits of piety (see Sota 39a).

For this edition of CHAVRUSA, we asked **Rabbi Ronald Schwarzberg '83R (RRS)**, director of the Morris and Gertrude Bienenfeld Department of Jewish Career Development and Placement to interview two of our chavirim who have enjoyed long careers in one institution, **Rabbi Aaron Brander '59R (RAB)** long-serving principal of the Yeshiva of Central Queens (YCQ) and **Rabbi Dr. Mordecai Zeitz '62R (RMZ)**, who has served Congregation Beth Tikvah Ahavat Shalom Nusach Hoari and the Hebrew Foundation School, Dollard Des Ormeaux, Montreal since its founding over 47 years ago.

### **RRS: Describe your positions?**

**RMZ:** I had the unique privilege and pleasure to serve as rabbi of one of the communities that YU founded. While in Hoboken finishing my doctorate, YU came to me with the idea of moving to the West Island of Montreal, which they felt had a promising future. The developer was a baal teshuvah and indeed we have built a center of Jewish activity in this new community. Our synagogue and day school continue to be a center of Jewish activity in West Island, the fastest growing Jewish community in North America. This can be attributed to affordable housing, as opposed to in the inner core of the city, and we are blessed with second-generation young families who look back on their wonderful childhoods and are raising their own kids here. Although we are an Orthodox community, we never push Orthodoxy. During the course of building the development, the Reform and Conservative synagogues closed. We are the only Jewish institutions here aside from the Federation, Chabad and a Sephardic community.

**RAB:** My career began in Mt. Clemens, MI, where I served after the famous mechitzah fight which was immortalized in the volume *Sanctity of the Synagogue*. Those were some of the happiest days in my career as I took a congregation that was not interested in Orthodoxy and made an impact. They did not want to install me because they were sure I would not last. To this day I still have friends from Mt. Clemens. I then worked as the educational director at Bnei David in Oak Park Michigan for five years, when I was asked to come and become principal of the Heller Academy in Queens. Although I told them I had only administrative experience and no education degree, they still took me. Four years later the Heller Academy merged with YCQ. Although

Heller had fewer students, part of the merger stipulated that I would become principal of the new merged YCQ. I remained there until my retirement.

At Bnai David, we had a large afternoon Hebrew school and after five years, we built it to close to 500 students. The greatest accomplishment was with the NCSY program at Bnai David, which had no mechitzah, despite Rabbi Hayyim Donin, the shul's rabbi, desiring one. The youth minyan, however, had a mechitzah. Many of those who graduated from that NCSY chapter are leading individuals in the contemporary Detroit community.

**RRS: I was part of the Bnai David NCSY chapter after your tenure and I can testify that it remained strong until the mid-to-late 70's, when the synagogue ultimately banned the mechitzah in the youth minyan. You were a mainstay and a builder for many baalei teshuvah in the suburban Detroit area.**

**Let me ask another question. There is a problem of burnout today. Is this a more current issue than when you began your careers, or has it always been an issue? What is the history of this from your vantage points, having had outstanding, long and wonderful careers?**

**RMZ:** It's very easy to become burned out. I have always been a workaholic and very hands-on with practically every aspect of the synagogue. That's how our shul works. Whatever limited successes you may have balances out the burnout and the pressure. There is also another important factor in my particular case. In the earlier years, I was blessed with baalei batim who understood and joined me in what we wanted to do. I had the advantage of fashioning the synagogue around my inclina-



Rabbi Aaron Brander

tions and personality. Those who joined me enjoyed the ride and share in the successes. They bought into it and lessened the aggravation. I think if you have to focus on limited goals, you reset the goals for other things, you limit burnout. Today, the fact that there are so many alternatives makes everything a lot more complicated.

**RAB:** I did not have the luxury that R. Zeitz had. I came to Bnai David when it was already an established shul. When I arrived at YCQ, the school was well established and already had a reputation. I had to approach my work differently. I too am a workaholic, but I'm also a people person. All of my students, teachers and parents knew that I was always available to them. I will always make time for every individual. I found it wise to meet with individuals and not groups. For example, if a group of parents wanted to discuss a teacher, I told them that I would discuss the teacher with them as individuals, but not in a group setting. Although it would be a lot quicker to meet the group as a whole, I preferred to meet with each set of parents one on one, since the



Rabbi Dr. Mordecai Zeitz

issues were different for each parent. I felt the same way about the students. Even when we had 700 students, I knew each and every one by name and pretty much knew how they were doing in class. I had a photographer come and take pictures and created a rolodex of all the students, and memorized that list so when I saw them in the hallway I knew them. That meant a lot to them. It's important to set goals that are achievable. Pie in the sky will never be accomplished. Even though YCQ won a Blue Ribbon in education, it happened in stages. It was not all of a sudden. You build steps until you reach goals. If you overreach you are bound to fail.

**RMZ:** The blessing of having leaders who have a personal contact with you and grow with your vision also helps. The early leaders of our shul, who were not at all machers, are now leaders of the Montreal community. They didn't want to disappoint me and came through for me.

**RRS: How did you balance personal life and family with your professional goals? Was that part of the equation of not burning out?**

**RMZ:** I have to count my blessings. My wife was always accommodating, understood my meshugeneh hours, cared for the home and was always there to support. Our vacations were always very significant and important. I'm blessed with children and grandchildren all of whom are committed to their local synagogue. We all saw the shul as an extension of our family and vice versa. This did not mean that our home was always open. We understood

family time. My shul always forgined me to be with my family because of my level of devotion to the synagogue. My son is one of the key lay leaders at the Kingsway Jewish Center in Brooklyn and my daughter went on aliyah and is a mainstay in her community. I only have nachas.

**RAB:** I tried to make sure that supper time and Friday night would be private family time. I was lucky that I lived three blocks from the school, and was hence able to set my appointments around the supper hour. I too am fortunate to have a wife considerate of my meshugeneh hours, who made sure that everything was taken care of. My children too are all involved communally, with a son as dean of the CJF, a son in rabbonus in California and a son in law who serves as the director of admissions at YU, and two others who are important leaders in their communities. My wife prevailed.

**RMZ:** I was once standing in the driveway of my house and some kids from my shul who drove by audibly stated, "Wow, the rabbi has a house!"

**RRS: How have you both been able to stay at the same place for so many years? What kept or keeps you fresh, innovative and looking forward to every day? What chizuk would you give to guys out there who are devoting themselves to klal Yisrael, but are feeling burn out?**

**RAB:** I must tell you that within the school setting every day there's something new. We had to deal with different situations every day. You also have to keep up with the new literature in your field. You can't stagnate. You have to go to conferences, read journals, and whenever there is something worthwhile, don't hesitate to bring it in. Bring your baalei batim into your vision. If you go gung ho without your baalei batim, if and when it fails, you have no one to back you up. Hopefully it doesn't. I feel this is very important. You need to be on the cutting edge of your field.

**RMZ:** I would suggest that you need to be cognizant of the changing market. The needs of the baalei batim today are different. You have to continue changing and refining. Every bar mitzvah is fresh and new, as is every class.

You can't just regurgitate the same information over and over. We made a Chanukah video and sent it out to the entire membership. It was the talk of the town for Chanukah.

Younger colleagues: Study your market, and know your strengths. Know what you can't accomplish and don't do those things. Don't be afraid to bring in people more proficient than yourself and don't worry about them outshining you. If you show this kind of strength, you will become stronger. Also, don't bite off more than you can handle.

**RRS: What can the RIETS curriculum do to help your musmakhim stay fresh and avoid burnout?**

**RMZ:** YU and Rabbi (Kenneth) Brander have done a tremendous job in creating imaginative programming. These kinds of materials are significant and important. Practical shimush in terms of rabbinic training (aveilus, kiddushin, geirus...) also cannot be underestimated. Shimush is indispensable, especially when you have to rub shoulders with colleagues of different backgrounds and mesorot, especially the practical matters you need to do on a daily basis.

**RAB:** I would say that in the field of Jewish education, RIETS has to continue to improve. We are only beginning to train our students to go into the field of chinuch and providing the wherewithal to succeed. Many are leaving this to the right wing. People going into the field, especially elementary school education, are people from Lakewood, Chaim Berlin, Torah Vodaas. Years ago, when one attended the Torah Umesorah conventions, there were tracks for Bais Yaakov schools and day schools. Today, we find sessions split between faculties at Bais Yaakovs and chadarim. Day schools are on the side. We are not doing enough curriculum development. We need to provide curriculum materials and other resources for the mechanech to deal with issues with a different twist than other schools.

**RMZ:** In rabbonus, we need to train the students that Judaism exists and thrives outside of the New York area. Chumrah is not the only option all the time. We need to be able to open doors and not scare people away. We should opt for inclusiveness over exclusivity. ■



## On Being a Maggid A Look at the Storytelling of Rabbi Hershel Schachter

by Zev Eleff '11R

There is much to consider about the pedagogical stylings of Rabbi Hershel Schachter. Reviewing my five years spent in Furst 307 and in Glueck 517, it is apparent to me that Rabbi Schachter utilizes different lecture presentations in order to achieve different educational goals.

Of course, there were the countless occasions when we would travel with him throughout the pages of the Bavli to explore Rabbi Schachter's unique conception of chazakah or bittul mitzvah asei. Sometimes Rabbi Schachter would marshal some 20 proofs as he showed us that he was undoubtedly correct. And then, there was that time during our study of Kidushin a number of years ago when Rabbi Schachter struggled aloud for nearly an hour on comprehending a difficult piece in the *Chidushei HaRamban*. It was certainly not the first time he had encountered that particular Ramban. Yet, Rabbi Schachter purposefully read and reread those words in order to show us that sometimes even the best scholars struggle through a Tosafot or a Ramban.

As aspiring educators, many of us surely paid close attention to Rabbi Schachter's presentations and his careful formulations of various topics. Yet, as far as pedagogy is concerned, what captured my attention more than anything else was Rabbi Schachter's storytelling that occupied significant space in nearly every one of his daily shiurim. It seems like a reasonable exercise, therefore, to review and reassess some of his more recurrent stories.

### Herman Wouk and Rashi on Deuteronomy 17:11

The famed novelist Herman Wouk served as visiting professor at Yeshiva College from 1952-1957. Wouk's classes and lectures were immensely popular with students who appreciated being in the presence of a Pulitzer Prize-winning author. The Pulitzer, of course, was the most prestigious of the awards Wouk had won for *The Caine Mutiny*, first published in 1951. While at Yeshiva, Wouk developed a relationship with Professor David Fleischer, the longtime head of the English department. Rabbi Schachter frequently recounts that when he was an undergraduate, Professor Fleischer once related that Wouk's inspiration for *The Caine Mutiny* was derived from his understanding of Rashi's well-known comment on the verse, "You shall not turn aside from the matter which they shall declare to you, to the right nor to the left" (Deuteronomy 17:11). On this, Rashi famously states that we are compelled to follow a judge "even when he says to you that the 'right' is 'left' and that 'left' is 'right.'"

On the surface, Wouk's theme is consistent with Rashi. *The Caine Mutiny* tells the story of Captain Philip Francis Queeg of the U.S.S. Caine. The author describes the crew's discontent with Captain Queeg's orders and his unstable psychological constitution. When it becomes all too clear that Queeg's condition has jeopardized the safety of the ship in the midst of a horrible storm, one of the officers, Lt. Stephen Maryk, forces Queeg out and assumes control of the U.S.S. Caine.

Once the storm settles, Queeg demands that he be permitted to resume his post and that the ship's log be stripped of all mention of the mutiny. Maryk refuses to yield the station and to doctor the books. The remainder of the novel centers on Maryk's court-martial, and more abstractly, the propriety of usurping control from an ill-suited leader.

Consistent with his understanding of Rashi, Wouk sums up his point toward the end of the book. "The idea is," says one regretful crewman upon reflection of the entire episode and his incompetent skipper, "there's nothing to do but serve him as though he were the wisest and the best, cover his mistakes, keep the ship going, and bear up."<sup>1</sup>

That Wouk saw navy life as an analogy for Jewish practice comes as no surprise to those familiar with his writings. Indeed, in *This is My God*, Wouk articulated the parallel he saw between the navy and Jewish observance. "Possibly because the navy meant so much in my life," confessed Wouk, "I have always thought that the Jewish place among mankind somewhat resembles the position of navy men among other Americans."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, confirmation of Wouk's fascination with this Rashi is evident from the Herman Wouk Papers held at Columbia's archival collections. Although much of Wouk's papers remain restricted, one writer has made a relevant notebook scribbling public. Apparently, Wouk's working papers for *The Caine Mutiny* contain a paraphrase of another Rashi, this one from I Samuel 12:11, with a similar theme

as the one referred to by Professor Fleischer: “Jephthah in his time, as Samuel in his time; the meanest leader, once set over you, must have your loyalty as though he were the noblest of the noble.”<sup>3</sup> Rashi’s comment, actually a modified citation from Rosh Hashanah 25b, ostensibly implies that authority is binding, even when it is in error.

While this is one reading of Rashi, Rabbi Schachter prefers the Ramban’s interpretation found in his gloss of the Ramban’s *Sefer HaMitzvot* (Shoresh n.1). There, the Ramban cites the first Mishnah in Horiyot which rules that one who is aware that the Sanhedrin ruled in error may not follow that decision. In other words, a talmid chacham is not allowed to adhere to an erroneous Sanhedrin the same way a responsible crewman should not adhere to the orders of a lunatic captain.

Perforce, Rashi’s dictum speaks to those who are not expert in Halachah, clarifies the Ramban. Those who are proficient, on the other hand, certainly may not follow an erroneous ruling. In contradistinction to Wouk’s claim, authority has considerable limitations. As people steeped in text and knowledge, we have the responsibility to push our leaders to produce cogent arguments and sound decisions. Entitlement and rank have no place within Judaism’s conception of authority.

**A Talmid Chacham is not allowed to adhere to an erroneous Sanhedrin the same way a responsible crewman should not adhere to the orders of a lunatic captain.**

### **Yom Kippur in Alexandria**

Each year, sometime during the months of either Elul or Tishrei, Rabbi Schachter invariably reflects on the following account. During the Geonic period, the Jews of Alexandria, Egypt, would hold an annual march on Yom Kippur. The parade served as a public declaration that the Jewish community subscribed to the Oral Law. This idea accords with Dr. Samuel Belkin, Yeshiva’s second president, who noted 70 years ago that Alexandrian Jews during the Second Temple period seemed to have indeed split Yom Kippur into two spiritual arenas: one for fasting and repenting and another for celebrating.<sup>4</sup> Although Dr. Belkin does not develop this point further, we might suggest that this celebration was in honor of our ancient Oral tradition.

It is also of interest that Philo Judaeus of Alexandria noted that of all the Jewish holidays, it was Yom Kippur, with its dual meanings, that Jews observed most punctiliously. “On the tenth day is the fast,” Philo began, “which is carefully observed not only by the zealous for piety and holiness but also by those who never act religiously in the rest of their life. For all stand in awe, overcome by the sanctity of the day.”<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Schachter’s utility of this story is meant to buttress the thesis of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the author of the *Beit HaLevi*. According to him, the first tablets that Moshe held in his arms as he marched down from Sinai contained what would become the Written as well as the Oral traditions. The second set of tablets that Moshe received on the first Yom Kippur in the wilderness contained just the Written portion. Consequently, the notion of Oral tradition finds its roots on that day, when our tradition was split in two. The Rav, developing his great-grandfather’s thesis further, understood that while Shavuot represents the celebration of the Written Law, it is most appropriate to commemorate the Oral tradition when we first received it on Yom Kippur.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Rabbi who Reviewed Ish HaHalachah**

Quite frequently, Rabbi Schachter describes his mentor, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik,

as a traditionalist thinker. In that generation, contends Rabbi Schachter, it was in reality Rabbi Moshe Feinstein whose creative brilliance produced many novel approaches to contemporary halachic issues. The Rav, however, was more inclined to follow the paths paved by the Rishonim and Achronim, without much deviation. Moreover, to reinforce his claim, Rabbi Schachter has over and over again made mention of a Conservative rabbi who reviewed the Rav’s *Ish HaHalachah* sometime during the 1970s. The reviewer was thoroughly unimpressed with the philosophical essay, claiming that at its heart, the work merely espoused Orthodoxy’s traditional approach to Halachah. While the Rav’s elegance in language and style were unique and unmatched, the content itself, this Conservative writer contended, was anything but novel.

I have always been struck by this account and have from time to time pressed Rabbi Schachter to recall where he might have seen the review. Then, a few months ago, I purchased a used copy of the Rav’s *BiSod HaYachid VeHaYachad*. While leafing through the pages, a newspaper clipping from the July 27, 1984 edition of London’s *Jewish Chronicle* fell out of the book. It was Rabbi Louis Jacobs’s review of *Halachic Man*, the (at that time) recently translated English version of the Rav’s lengthy essay.

Jacobs, the founder of Conservative (Masorti) Judaism in England, did not see the Rav’s work as “a source of inspiration,” as many Orthodox Jews had for the past forty years. “It is almost as if Soloveitchik is repeating,” wrote Jacobs, “in the language of Western thought, the old dissatisfaction of the Litvak with Chasidic whimsicality.” Although Jacobs called the work a “fine philosophical poem, written by an outstanding halachist,” he argued against those who prefer to see it as a “systematic treatment of a great theme.”<sup>7</sup> While Jacobs is not the Conservative rabbi to whom Rabbi Schachter has routinely referred, his review conveys the identical message: the Rav was, as another of the Rav’s students has commented, a master performer and masterful presenter of information.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, though, Rabbi Schachter believes, the Rav was a staunch traditionalist whose dedication to his grandfather’s teachings is unquestioned.



### Teaching Themes and Trends

Not surprising is the importance Rabbi Schachter has placed on storytelling as a tradition he received from Rabbi Soloveitchik himself, who would lace many tales and lore into his classes when opportunities presented themselves. While I am in no position to assess the Rav's stories, there are several points one may glean from Rabbi Schachter's anecdotes. First, there is a common thread that may be woven through these stories as well as the many others within Rabbi Schachter's repertoire: rabbinic tradition and authority. The "rules and regulations of *beit din*," as Rabbi Schachter phrases it, is a useful portal to consider contemporary Orthodox life. Many of the crucial issues of the day—from the role of *beit din* in society to women's issues, and onward to synagogue matters—center on this very theme. Rabbi Schachter's stories, as do many others, provide a perspective to contextualize such communal concerns.

It is not by coincidence that, as Rabbi Schachter himself once told us, the theme that links the 40 essays in his *Eretz HaTzvi* is the concept of *kol detikkun rabanan keein doritah tikkun*. In other words, central to Rabbi Schachter's scholarship is the notion of rabbinic authority and its limitations. The same can be said, I would wager, for *Belkvei HaTzon* and *Ginat Egoz*. A cursory counting of the entries for Tractate Sanhedrin in the indexes of these works reveals the centrality of rabbinic authority within Rabbi Schachter's halachic thought.

A second point: for Rabbi Schachter, storytelling is an instructive tool akin to the study of history. Rabbi Schachter frequently provides biographical information about the Chatam Sofer, the Netziv or Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik before elucidating their teachings. Other times, Rabbi Schachter speaks more loftily about history. With the absence of prophesy, Rabbi Schachter has frequently said, analysis of the historical past is humankind's best predictor of the future. Perhaps then, more noticeably than Torah learning, history links the past and future chains of our Mesorah.

The same can be said of storytelling. Rabbi Soloveitchik famously described the sensation of teaching a much younger generation,



“young enough to be his grandchildren.” He found comfort in the fact that as he delivered his lectures, Reb Chaim, Rabeinu Tam and the Rambam would enter through the doors. Suddenly the chain of tradition was transported into the Rav's classroom.<sup>9</sup> Although just as meaningful, the opposite effect is true of storytelling. As the teacher smiles at his eager students, no matter what age, and begins to tell a tale from 50 or 500 years ago, there is a feeling among all in the room that they have been retrojected into a different time and place. In this scenario, the students are the visitors in Reb Chaim and the Netziv's Volozhin, or maybe one of the Furst Hall classrooms some 40 years ago.

Just as Louis Jacobs commented about the Rav, this too is not a new idea. It has been articulated by many others. The creativity, though, is not within the story—it's found in how one chooses to tell it. ■

### Endnotes

1. *Herman Wouk, The Caine Mutiny: A Novel of World War II (Garden City: Doubleday, 1951), 519.*
2. *Herman Wouk, This is My God: The Jewish Way of Life (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 56.*
3. *Arnold Beichman, Herman Wouk: The Novelist as Social Historian (New Brunswick: Transaction Pub, 2004), 75, n.10. See also Fred Smokin, "Was Captain Queeg Good for the Jews?," Midstream 45 (January 1999): 35-38.*
4. *Samuel Belkin, Philo and the Oral Law: The Philonic Interpretation of Biblical Law in Relation to the Palestinian Halakah (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 216.*
5. *De Specialibus Legibus 1:186*
6. *See Zvi Schachter, Divrei HaRav (Jerusalem: OU Press, 2010), 119-25.*
7. *Louis Jacobs, "Order into a World of Chaos," Jewish Chronicle (July 27, 1984): 41.*
8. *Hershel Reichman, "The Rav: My Rebbe; An Essay on the Derekh Halimud of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," in Mentor of Generations: Reflections On Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, ed. Zev Eleff (Jersey City: Ktav, 2008), 206.*
9. *Abraham R. Besdin, Man of Faith in the Modern World: Reflections of the Rav, vol. II (Hoboken: Ktav, 1989), 22.*



## A Renewable Light Unto the Nations

Rabbi Naphtali Weisz  
*Rabbi, Beth Jacob Congregation, Columbus, OH*

It seems ironic that Tu B'Shvat, the Jewish holiday celebrating trees and nature, falls in the dead of winter. A cynic might explain the timing as appropriate in light of Orthodoxy's "cold embrace" of environmental causes. And it is true that these issues consistently rank low on the communal agenda of contemporary Orthodoxy. We justify this low priority with reasons that range from the historical (our long exile has engendered a national sense of rootlessness that has led to a disregard for nature) to the biblical. To be sure, Hashem's initial charge, "fill the earth and conquer it"<sup>1</sup> appears to grant man permission to exploit the natural world as he sees fit. Furthermore, the well known mishna in Pirkei Avot (3:9) has become a lightning rod for those who accuse Judaism of a contempt for nature:

*Rabbi Shimon would say: One who walks along a road and studies, but interrupts his studying to say, "How beautiful is this tree! How beautiful is this plowed field!" – Scripture considers it as if he had forfeited his life.*

I remember my high school rebbe explaining that the severe punishment for interrupting one's Torah study to admire a tree is appropriate since involvement with nature is, per se, bittul Torah and it also poses the danger of leading to further disregard for Torah values. There is a perceived conflict within Orthodoxy of Torah versus teva, His word vs. His world. A deeper look at our sources, however, uncovers the Torah's view of an appreciation for nature that does not come at the expense of a commitment to Torah, but rather contributes greatly to it.

Breishit outlines Hashem's intimate involvement with the natural world and describes G-d proudly looking upon His work and declaring, "v'hine tov meod" — "and behold, it was very good." Man is created and immediately charged with caring for creation, "And Hashem placed man in the Garden of Eden, *lavda u'lishamra*, to work it and to guard it."<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Norman Lamm identifies both a positive and a negative element to this call for stewardship. Man has been appointed an "oved," a worker who builds and crafts, as well as a "shomer," a watchman who "is obligated to keep the world whole for its true Owner, and is responsible to return it in no worse condition than he found it."<sup>3</sup>

The negative prohibition of bal tashchit is an expression of our duty as a shomer. Although the Torah expresses bal tashchit narrowly as calling for the preservation of fruit trees during times of war,<sup>4</sup> the Rambam<sup>5</sup> makes it clear that the prohibition has much broader applications. As he points out, *This principle applies not only to trees. Whenever someone destroys a useful artifact, rips clothing, demolishes a building, plugs up a spring or senselessly destroys food, he violates bal tashchit.*

Similarly, the *Sefer Hachinuch*<sup>6</sup> sees, in addition to the environmental ethic in bal tashchit, the basic definition of what it means

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## Biur haShulchan: Hilchot Basar B'chalav

by Rabbi Eliyahu Ferrell '94R

Reviewed by Rabbi Shmuel Landesman '93R



At RIETS, without exception, we must take bechinos (examinations) on Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah, i.e. hilchot basar b'chalav (laws of milk and meat), etc. However, it can be quite difficult to get ourselves to chazer (review) these all-important halachot. Life gets busy, we do daf yomi, there is no one to chazer with, are among reasons that years can pass without our reviewing these halachot that are critical to us as rabbanim or baalei bayit (owners of kosher kitchens.)

Rabbi Ferrell has a solution to this chazara dilemma. He published this past June the sefer *Biur haShulchan: Hilchot Basar B'chalav*. As Rabbi Ferrell writes in the preface: "This sefer would be of help to musmachim who are doing chazarah. This sefer is not meant for those who are not learning or have never learned these halachot with a rebbe" To ensure that his work does not get misused, Rabbi Ferrell cleverly does not translate some key terms which are well known to those who have studied Y"D, but unknown to those who have not. Otherwise, the language in Rabbi Ferrell's English sefer is both crisp and articulate.

Rabbi Ferrell accomplishes his goal by explaining the fundamental concepts that underlie these dinim. He uses citations from Rishonim and Meforshei Shulchan Aruch, side by side with scientific and historical data, plus pictures and charts. Rabbi Ferrell also quotes never-before published psakim on these halachot from Rav Hershel Schachter, Rav Yisroel Belsky, Rav Dovid Feinstein and Rav J. David Bleich. As an added bonus, Rabbi Ferrell, a rabbinical coordinator for OU Kashruth, shares how the preeminent certifying agency deals with basar b'chalav issues.

Personally, I can attest as to the value of this sefer. This summer, I studied four pages a day from it (the book is 82 pages long) and in less than three weeks was able to do a comprehensive chazarah of hilchos basar b'chalav, plus learn new practical applications of these halachot.

This sefer can be obtained directly from Rabbi Ferrell for only \$10 (plus \$3 postage) by e-mailing him at FerrellE@ou.org or calling him at 212.613.8394. Rabbi Ferrell can also email you a sample chapter. ■

## Angel for Shabbat: Thoughts on the Weekly Torah Portions

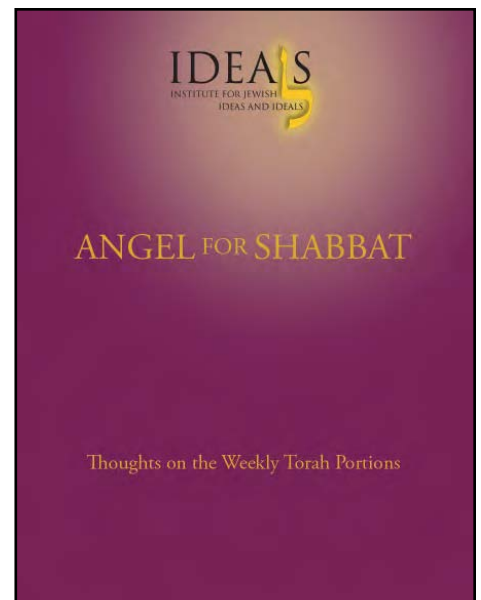
by Rabbi Marc D. Angel '70R

Reviewed by Rabbi Asher Lopatin '96R

Rabbi Marc Angel has just come out with a unique book entitled *Angel for Shabbat*. It is a semi-autobiographical, Modern Orthodox manifesto and Bill of Rights, using the backdrop of the parshiot and chagim to illustrate the key points of Rabbi Angel's thought. This book is Old World and New Age: it quotes classic Hassidic and Sefardic masters — from Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev to the Kotzker Rebbe to Rav Chaim David Halevi, Chacham Ovadia Yosef and Rabbi Benzion Uziel — and classic secular thinkers such as Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, Eric Fromm, Paul Johnson and a half-dozen former presidents of the United States. You just don't see books written today which cite Rabbi J. H. Hertz who quotes Marcus Jastrow

or which spell mitzvos, "mitzvoth." The book will bring you back to a different era in Jewish thought, where it was OK to entertain the idea of the world being several billion years old or the idea that superstitions are actually bad and not integral to Judaism.

On the other hand, Rabbi Angel does not hold back on expressing his views on every contemporary flashpoint in Orthodoxy, from the Gedolim, to discrimination against Sefaradim in Emanuel, to Postville and the Rubashkins to parking lots and protests in Jerusalem. Whether you agree with Rabbi Angel or not, it is fascinating to see how a pulpit rabbi of a 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial New York congregation can use the language of the Rambam to leap from the text of the parsha to blast charlatans who would espouse an irrational Judaism or teachers who would demand a literal interpretation of midrashim. Was Rivka really 3 when she decided to marry Yitzchak? Can we view Mordechai and Esther as assimilated Jews? This book will get you off your comfy chair to



shout out either "How can Rabbi Angel say this!" or "Lead the way Rabbi Angel! We are right behind you!"

This is a parsha book like no other— in a sense it is a gorgeous and tender polemic, where

### *A Renewable Light Unto the Nations*

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to be a good person:

*This is the way of the righteous and those who improve society ... that nothing, not even a mustard seed, should be lost ... if possible they will prevent any destruction that they can. Not so are the wicked who rejoice in the destruction of the world.*

If our obligation as “shomer” includes the negative prohibition of bal tashchit, then “oved” describes our positive role as a worker and a fabricator. Especially in today’s climate of numerous environmental concerns, we have the unique ability, and urgent responsibility, to be an “oved” and to take the natural resources that Hashem created and improve upon them for the benefit of humanity. It is, therefore, a great source of pride, and a kiddush Hashem, that some of the most exciting breakthroughs in clean technology are currently being developed by Jews in Israel. A number of examples will illustrate how Israeli environmental innovation is the inspiring outcome of the great intersection of Torah and Teva.

Nearly one billion people throughout the

world—about one in eight—lack access to clean water. More people die each year from water-borne diseases than through armed conflict,<sup>7</sup> so finding a solution to this global threat is among the most pressing issues facing the world today. The Jewish State currently leads the international community in water conservation and desalination, purifying and reusing 75 percent of its waste water each year. To put that in perspective, the second most efficient nation, Spain, recycles only 12 percent of its water.<sup>8</sup> A turning point in Israeli water conservation occurred in the 1930’s when a Polish immigrant noticed a tree growing in the Negev desert, “without water.” Simcha Blass dug around the tree and uncovered a leaky pipe dripping tiny droplets of water onto its roots. Blass went on to develop drip irrigation, now a multimillion dollar Israeli export that is responsible for saving thousands of lives in third world countries.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to its chronic water shortage, the State of Israel has also faced a perpetual energy crisis. Unable to rely on its oil-rich

neighbors for energy, Israel has looked to the heavens to provide an alternative solution. Its abundant sunshine led to early adoption of solar water heaters, but cutting-edge research and development has advanced Israel well beyond the “dud shemesh” which sit atop 90 percent of Israeli homes.<sup>10</sup> A Jerusalem based solar company, BrightSource Energy, recently began to build the world’s largest solar energy project in Southern California, which will produce enough energy to power 140,000 homes, doubling the amount of solar electricity currently produced in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

Israel is also working to end the world’s dangerous addiction to Arab oil. While electric vehicles are now available in many countries, Israel has taken the first groundbreaking step to build an extensive network of battery exchange stations and plug-in charge spots for electric vehicles. Its small size makes Israel the perfect test market for this revolutionary concept that can transform the entire transporta-

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## Book Review

### *Angel for Shabbat*

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Rabbi Angel’s father, wife and congregants come into the picture as being part of the story of a former president of the RCA and leading Orthodox rabbi (he is now emeritus at New York City’s Historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue) who has only gotten more passionate and self-confident to try to make a difference in the world. Parsha after parsha, in pithy two-page essays, I found myself saying, “Don’t hold back Rabbi Angel! Tell us what you really think!” Tell us how you think it might be morally dubious to reject Thanksgiving as a Jewish holiday! This book is a must read because it recreates a time in Orthodoxy where doing Thanksgiving and reading the Hertz chumash and quoting Harry Truman were all very much part of the “frum” Jewish experience. But at the same time the ideas in this book, and Rabbi Angel’s uncompromising style, bridge the gen-

eration gap and address issues that the Modern, Centrist and Chareidi world are struggling with today. Nostalgia is just the start; this book wants to take you to a world of independent thinking, bold questioning and strong “inner calm” that will wake you up. It’s not a book to read just every week — it’s a book to go through in one sitting, and then to ponder it again as our Jewish year, and our Torah, unravels before us. Good luck putting it down! ■

*Angel for Shabbat is published by the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, New York, 2010 and is available through the online store of [jewishideas.org](http://jewishideas.org).*

*Since 1969, Rabbi Angel has served Congregation Shearith Israel, the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City, founded in 1654. For several decades he served as its rabbi and now as its rabbi emeritus. He now devotes himself full time to the work of the Institute of Jewish Ideas and Ideals which he founded*

*and directs. He has authored and edited 28 books and hundreds of articles. He has served as president of the Rabbinical Council of America, the Rabbinic Alumni of RIETS, Sephardic House, and various other organizations. He has served as an officer and board member of UJA-Federation of New York, the HealthCare Chaplaincy, American Sephardi Federation, Cancer Care and other agencies. He has won national rabbinic awards from the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and the United Jewish Communities, and the Finkle Award of the New York Board of Rabbis.*

*Rabbi Asher Lopatin, now in his fifteenth year as spiritual leader of Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation in Chicago, holds an M.Phil. in medieval Arabic thought from Oxford University as well as a BA in international relations and Islamic studies from Boston University. Rabbi Lopatin won a Rhodes Scholarship in 1987 from Massachusetts and was a Wexner Fellow. He has also been a Truman Scholar, Boston University Trustee Scholar and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa.*

Publications

**Rabbi Marc D. Angel '70R:** *Angel For Shabbat: Thoughts on the Weekly Torah Portions* (Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2010).

**Rabbi Michael Brody '93R:** *Innovation in Jewish Law: A Case Study of Chiddush in Havineinu* (Urim Publications, 2010).

**Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman '98R** and Stuart W. Halpern: *Mitokh Ha'Ohel, Essays on the Weekly Parashah from the Rabbis and Professors of Yeshiva University* (YU Press, 2010).

**Rabbi Dr. Barry Freundel '75R:** *Why We Pray What We Pray: The Remarkable History of Jewish Prayer* (Urim Publications, 2010).

RIETS Rosh Yeshiva **Rabbi Menachem Genack '73R:** *Shiurei HaRav on Inyanei Tefillah and Keriat Shema*, which contains 52 essays of the Rav's classic Torah (OU Press, 2010).

**Rabbi Reuven Grodner '65R:** *עני התפילה - Rav Soloveitchik on Prayer*

**Rabbi Jonathan Gross '04R:** *The Jewish Case for the One State Solution* (published by Rabbi Jonathan Gross, 2010).

**Rabbi Gil Marks '79R:** the cookbook, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Food* (Wiley & Sons, 2010).

**Rabbi Adam Mintz '85R,** editor of the new Orthodox Forum volume: *The Relationship of Orthodox Jews with Believing Jews of Other Religious Ideologies and Non-Believing Jews* (Ktav, 2010). Series Editor is **Rabbi Robert S. Hirt '62R.**

**Rabbi Zev Reichman '02R:** the English edition of *Remove Anger from Your Heart* (Judaica Press 2010) by Rav Avraham Tubolsky, which Rabbi Reichman translated from its original Hebrew.

RIETS Rosh Yeshiva **Rabbi Hershel Schachter '67R:** *Divrei HaRav*, collected lectures, insights and rulings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, zt"l (OU Press, 2010)

**Rabbi Tzvee Zahavy '72R:** "In Search Of The Logic Of Judaism: From Talmudic Chaos To Halakhic Linearity," in the book, *Judaic Logic in the Series: Judaism in Context* (Gorgias Press).

Mazal Tov

**Rabbi Moshe '10R** and **Navah Adler** and on the birth of a son, Gavriel Dovid.

**Rabbi Daniel '98R** and **Rivka Alter** on their son, Yehuda Meir, becoming a bar mitzvah.

**Rabbi Dovid '09R** and **Aliza Asher** on the birth of a daughter, Elana.

**Rabbi Chaim '10R** and **Yael Axelrod** on the birth of a son, Aharon Matisyahu.

**Rabbi Michael '06R** and **Dr. Debra Bashist** on the birth of a son, Levi Yitzchak.

**Rabbi Gedalyah '98R** and **Miriam Berger** on the birth of a daughter, Shira Tiferet. And to grandparents, **Rabbi Dr. Dean David '68R** and **Dean Pearl Berger.**

RIETS student **Chaim Yosef** and **Leora Blumenthal** on the birth of a daughter, Esther Tehila.

**Rabbi Irwin '60R** and **Judith Borvick** on the birth of a great-granddaughter, born to Esther and Rafi Offenbacher.

**Rabbi Matt Brenner '02R** on his marriage in May 2010 to Dori Braude from South Africa.

RIETS administrator **Rabbi Chaim '72R** and **Brenda Bronstein** on the marriage of their daughter, Sarah, to RIETS student **Jeremy Baran.**

**Rabbi Aaron '59R** and **Ellen Brander** on the marriage of their granddaughter, Aliza Kranzler, to Shloimie Zeffren.

**Rabbi Asher '92R** and **Batyah Brander** on the marriage of their daughter, Esther Malka, to Eli Heller. And to Esther's grandparents, **Rabbi Aaron '59R** and **Ellen Brander.**

**Rabbi Avi-Gil '09R** and **Tamar Chaitovsky** on the birth of a daughter, Ahuva Bina. And to great-grandparents **Rabbi Samuel '58R** and **Tzivia Bramson.**

RIETS Rosh Yeshiva **Rabbi Yitzchok '65R** and **Sarah Cohen** on the marriage of their son, Dovid, to Chana Anemer of Lakewood, NJ.

**Rabbi Ira '01R** and **Chevi Ebbin** on the birth of a son, Isaac Roi.

**Rabbi Shaul '07R** and **Sara Libby Epstein** on the birth of a son, Aaron Moshe.

**Rabbi Yaacov '06R** and **Aliza Feit** on the birth of a son, Yitzchak.

**Rabbi Daniel '98R** and **Leah Feldman** on the birth of a daughter, Shaindel Tovah. And to grandfather **Rabbi Mordecai E. Feuerstein '72R.**

RIETS student **Yoni** and **Romema Feiner** on birth of a daughter.

**Rabbi George '72R** and **Freda Finkelstein** on the birth of a granddaughter to Ariel and Abby Finkelstein.

RIETS student **Daniel** and **Bryna Fox** on the birth of a daughter, Rivka Neima.

**Rabbi Dr. Manfred "Meir" Fulda '59R** on being honored with the Marbitz Torah Award at the American Committee for Shaare Zedek Medical Center World of Heroes Awards Dinner.

**Rabbi Hersh Moses '58R** and **Sarah Galinsky** on the birth of a granddaughter, Tehilla Batya, born to Shaya and Chaya Galinsky.

**Rabbi Mallen** and **Sonia Galinsky** upon their grandchildren both becoming bar mitzvah: Yitzchak Yehuda Dov Gold, son of Rabbi Shaul and Adina Gold, and Yehuda Dov Galinsky, son of Rabbi Shimon and Yonat Galinsky.

RIETS student **Chesky Gewirtz** on his marriage to Aliza Rabinovich of Queens, NY.

**Rabbi David '68R** and **Leah Glicksman** on their grandson, Kalman Yaakov, becoming a bar mitzvah.

Belz faculty member **Cantor Sherwood** and **Batya Goffin**, on the birth of a grandson, Shmuel, born to Rabbi Uri and Yael Goffin.

**Rabbi Eric '07R** and **Leora Goldman** on the birth of a son, Ruvain Moshe.

**Rabbi Marvin '65** and **Judy Goldman** on their grandson, Evan Goldman, becoming a bar mitzvah. And to Evan's parents, Joseph and Laura Goldman.

**Rabbi Joshua '09R** and **Dr. Rachelle Goller** on the birth of a daughter, Penina Devora.

**Rabbi Avrohom '94R** and **Chava Gordimer** on their son Yaakov becoming a bar mitzvah.

**Rabbi Macy Gordon '56R** on the birth of a great-grandson, Matanya Yisrael, born to Betzalel and Nitzana Friedman. And also on the marriage of two granddaughters, Nava Friedman to Tzori Weider, and Edna Friedman to Yanai Apelbaum. And to Nava and Edna's parents, Dr. Alan and Etana Friedman.

**Rabbi Wally Greene, PhD '69R** on receiving the 2010 Lifetime Achievement for Jewish Education in the Diaspora Award for his role in founding the SINAI schools for Jewish special needs students.

**Rabbi Jon '04R** and **Miriam Gross** on the birth of a daughter, Raya Liba.

**Rabbi Shmuel '01R** and **Shari Hain** on the birth of a daughter, Rachel Leah. And to grandparents, **Rabbi Kenneth '78R** and **Nancy Hain.**

**Rabbi Yehuda '05R** and **Shoshana Halpert** on the birth of a daughter, Leora.

**Rabbi William '55R** and **Sylvia Herskowitz** on the birth of a great granddaughter, Keira Charlotte Katz.

**Rabbi Yair '10R** and **Talia Hindin** on the birth of twin daughters, Leba Chana and Eliana Rachel.

**Rabbi Carmi '71R** and **Sara Horowitz** on the birth of a granddaughter, Gefen, born to Elisha and Hodaya Horowitz.

**Rabbi David '72R** and **Marcia Jacobowitz** on the birth of a granddaughter, Chaya Perel, born to Rabbi Moshe and Batya Jacobowitz.

**President Richard M.** and **Esther Joel** on the marriage of their daughter, Ariella, to Shlomo Benzaquen of Los Angeles, CA.

**Rabbi Benjamin '00R** and **Abby Kelsen** on the birth of a daughter, Adira Tova.

**Rabbi Eric '07R** and **Dara Kotkin** on the birth of a daughter, Bruriah.

**Rabbi M. Aaron '43R** and **Bessie Kra** on the birth of a great-granddaughter, Nava Ashira, born to Josh and Adeena Kra. Also to the grandparents, Ethan and Madeline Kra, and Sarah and David Goldstein.

**Rabbi Aaron '09R** and **Lynn Kraft** on the birth of a son, Eli.

**Rabbi Ira '72R** and **Faigie Kronenberg** on the birth of a grandson, Yair Nechemia, born to Ely and Elana Kronenberg.

**Rabbi Eliezer '75R** and **Lucy Langer** on the birth of a granddaughter, Rivka Esther, born to Elisheva and Yossie Schulman.

**Rabbi David '10R** and **Adina Lessin** on the birth of a son, Chananya Yakov.

**Rabbi Aryeh '05** and **Estee Lightstone** on the birth of a daughter, Shayna Hadassah.

RIETS student **Eytan** and **Allie London** on the birth of a son, Moshe Avraham.

**Rabbi Uriel '01R** and **Shani Lubetski** on the birth of a son, David.

**Dr. David '71R** and **Vivian Luchins** on the birth of a grandson, Benyamin Zev, born to Mordechai and

Suzannah Luchins. And on receiving the Sarah Rivkah & Bernard Lander Memorial Award at the OU's 15th Annual Ben Zakkai Reception.

**Rabbi Isaac Mann '78R** on the marriage of his son, Aryeh to Nechama Reece of Passaic, NJ.

**Rabbi Meyer H. '78R** and **Shulamith Y. May** on the marriage of their daughter, Elisheva Tehila, to Yoni Schwartz of Philadelphia. And on the birth of a granddaughter, Devorah, born to Rabbi Joshua and Rachaeli Lobl.

**Rabbi Efraim '65R** and **Felice Mescheloff** on the birth of a grandson, Yoav Reuven, born to Gilad and Amital Mescheloff.

**Rabbi Moshe '75R** and **Dr. Vivian Neiss** on the birth of a granddaughter, Aliza Alexandra, born to Jonathan and Mindy Neiss. And to great-grandfather **Rabbi Dr. Edmund Neiss '48R**.

RIETS student **Yitz** and **Aviva Novak** on the birth of a daughter, Ayelet Shoshana.

**Rabbi Israel '51R** and **Alizah Poleyeff** and Dr. Alvin and Miriam Schiff on their grandson, Doniel Poleyeff, becoming a bar mitzvah. And to Doniel's parents, Linda and Arthur Poleyeff.

**Rabbi Kenny '09R** and **Ilana Pollack** on the birth of a son, Yonah Betzalel.

**Rabbi Baruch '01R** and **Leah Shifra Price** on the birth of a son.

**Rabbi Steven** and **Karen Pruzansky** on the birth of a granddaughter, Kayla Leah, born to Dina and Hillel Weingarten.

RIETS Rosh Yeshiva **Rabbi Hershel** and **Chasida Reichman** on the birth of a granddaughter, Beekura Nechama, born to RIETS student **Tani** and **Chana Prero**.

RIETS Rosh Yeshiva **Rabbi Hershel** and **Chasida Reichman** and RIETS administrator **Rabbi Chaim '72R** and **Brenda Bronstein** on the birth of a granddaughter, Talya Leah, born to their children RIETS student **Yosef** and **Batya Bronstein**.

**Rabbi Dani '03R** and **Ayala Rockoff** on the birth of a son, David Aryeh.

RIETS student **Yosef** and **Hedva Rosen** on the birth of a son, Eliezer.

RIETS student **Menachem** and **Aliza Rosenbaum** on the birth of a son.

**Rabbi Dr. Bernhard '74R** and **Charlene Rosenberg** on the birth of a granddaughter, Ahuva Leiba, born to Ilana and Joshua Merl.

**Rabbi Menachem '75R** and **Karen Rosenfeld** and **Rabbi Alan** and **Linda Yuter** on their grandson, Elyahu Neriyah, becoming a bar mitzvah. And to Elyahu's parents, Dr. Avi and Esther Rosenfeld.

**Rabbi Reuven '90R** and **Judy Rosenstark** on the marriage of their daughter, Shifra, to Yair Jablinowitz.

**Rabbi Yisroel '02R** and **Ruchie Goldberg** on the birth of a son, Yaakov Tzvi. And to grandparents **Rabbi Yitzchak '62R** and **Judy Rosenbaum**.

**Rabbi Yitzchak '62R** and **Judy Rosenbaum** on their grandson, Yechiel Mordecai Dovid, becoming a bar mitzvah. And to Yechiel's parents, Rabbi Moshe and Rivkie Rosenbaum.

RIETS student **Benji** and **Aliza Rubin** on the birth of a daughter, Tovah.

**Rabbi Chaim '68R** and **Esther Sacknovitz** on the birth of twin grandsons, Matan Yosef and Amitai Dov, born to Rabbi Dr. Baruch and Adina Hain.

**Rabbi Jeffrey '95R** and **Ilana Saks** on their son, Shalom Amit, becoming a bar mitzvah

**Rabbi Ben '60R** and **Liza Samson** on their grandson, Yosef Mayer, becoming a bar mitzvah. And to Yosef's parents, Dr. Israel and Susan Samson.

RIETS Rosh Yeshiva **Rabbi Hershel '67R** and **Shoshanah Schachter** on the birth of a grandson, Yehuda born to RIETS student **Shay** and **Rina Schachter**.

**Rabbi Dr. Elihu '57R** and **Freida Schatz** on the birth of their 48th grandchild, Renena, born to Bat-sheva and Assaf Spiegel; and on the birth of their seventh great-grandchild, Tzvi, born to Shaindie and Shai Markovich.

**Rabbi Etan '09R** and **Rebecca Schnall** on the birth of twin sons, Aharon and Baruch.

**Rabbi Joel '60R** and **Judy Schreiber** who were honored at the RIETS Annual Dinner of Tribute.

**Rabbi Sonny Alvin '52R** and **Ivy Schwartz** on their granddaughter, Michal Hannah, becoming a bat mitzvah. And to Michal's parents, Dr. Bashie and Yoni Schwartz.

RCA and CRC Av Beis Din **Harav Gedalia Dov Schwartz '49R** on his marriage to Chana Sora Back.

**Rabbi Shmuel Segal '08R** on his marriage to Leah Kanner of Lawrence, NY.

**Rabbi Label '79R** and **Debby Sharfman** on the birth of a granddaughter, born to Sarah and Shimshi Leibler.

**Rabbi Jay C. '79R** and **Jody Shoulson** on the birth of a granddaughter, Neta Penina, born to Dr. Rivka and Marc Wiznia. And to great-grandparents **Rabbi Solomon '49R** and **Bertha Shoulson**.

RIETS student **Sandor Shulkes** on his marriage to Rachel Rein of Fair Lawn, NJ.

**Rabbi Moshe** and **Balla Shulman** on the birth of a granddaughter, Chiena Meira, born to RIETS student **Motti** and **Tzippi Klein**.

**Rabbi Chanan '82R** and **Dr. Beverly Simon** on the birth of a grandson, Sholom, born to David and Mira Simon.

**Rabbi Moshe '56R** and **Marion Talansky** and **Rabbi Dr. Henoch '62R** and **Dr. Rochelle Millen** on the marriage of their granddaughter, Atara Malkah, to Shlomo Askotsky. And to Atara's parents, Rabbi Alan Yitzchak and Naomi Talansky.

**Rabbi Stuart '69R** and **Anita Tucker** on the birth of a grandson, Yishai Aharon, born to Aviel and Osnat Tucker.

**Rabbi Yehuda '10R** and **Ilana Turetsky** on the birth of a daughter, Shira Miriam.

**Rabbi Dr. Elihu '79R** and **Brenda Turkel** on the birth of a grandson, Yehuda, born to Daniel and Sarala Turkel.

RIETS student **Aryeh Chayim Urist** on his marriage to **Chaya Mizrahi** of Monsey, NY.

**Rabbi Elie '05R** and **Avital Weissman** on the birth of a son, Yehuda.

**Rabbi Naftali '08R** and **Navah Wolfe** on the birth of a daughter, Eliora. And to great-grandparents **Rabbi Dr. Bernard Rosensweig '50R** and **Rabbi Fabian '52R** and **Ruth Schonfeld**.

**Rabbi Howard '77R** and **Annette Wolk** on the birth of a grandson, Raphael Yosef, born to Yonatan and Lani Wolk.

**Rabbi Daniel '02R** and **Anna Yolkut** on the birth of a son, Yehuda Hendel.

**Rabbi Lawrence '78R** and **Florence Ziffer** on the birth of a granddaughter, Chaviva Leah, born to Yosef and Esther Ziffer.

## Condolences

Emanuel "Manny" Adler on the loss of his father, **Rabbi Dr. Jacob Adler '48R**, husband of Dorit Adler.

Esther Avigdor on the loss of her husband, **Rabbi Isaac Avigdor**, father of Rabbi David Avigdor, Rabbi Morton Avigdor, Rabbi Merrill Avigdor and Mr. Jacob Avigdor, and brother of Dr. Abraham Avigdor.

Ayelet Batt on the loss of her husband, **Rabbi Ahron Batt '58R**.

**Rabbi Hillel Bick '67R**, **Rabbi Ezra Bick '73R**, and Rabbi Yussie Bick on the loss of their father, Charles "Shaya" Bick, brother of Anita Berliner and Shirley Motechin.

**Rabbi Benjamin '56R** and **Elaine Blech** on the loss of their son-in-law, Stephen Lubofsky, husband of Yael Blech Lubofsky and father of Noam, Daniel and Eliana.

**Rabbi David Chanofsky '56R** on the loss of his sister, Rachel Wood.

Haviva, David, Rena and Miriam, on the loss of their mother, Tzivia Donin, wife of the late **Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin z"l '51R** and sister of Esther Steinhart.

**Rabbi Mordecai E. Feuerstein '72R** on the loss of his wife, Rebbetzin Shayndel Feuerstein, mother of **Leah** (and **Rabbi Daniel '98R**) **Feldman**, Dovid (and Aliza) Feuerstein, Shifra Feuerstein, Penina (and Yossi) Samet, Yosef, Aviva, Elisheva, and Nechama Feuerstein.

**Rabbi Joel Finkelstein '89R**, Harris Finkelstein and Saul Finkelstein on the loss of their father, Bernard Finkelstein, husband of Caroline.

Chani Hilewitz on the loss of her husband, **Rabbi Yehuda Hilewitz '72R**, father of Chaim (and Mindy) Hilewitz, Dr. Yedidya (and Dr. Mindy Levine) Hilewitz and Ayelet Hilewitz.

**Rabbi David Hill '47R** on the loss of his wife, Lenore Hill, mother of Tzerel Goldschmiedt, Jacob Hill, Deborah Bermish, Rebecca Raab, and the late Jonathan Hill z"l.

Eve Jacobs on the loss of her husband, **Rabbi Jacob D. Jacobs '74R**, on June 2, 2009.

**Rabbi Joseph Karasick '45R** on the loss of his wife, Mrs. Pepa Karasick, mother of **Rabbi Mark Karasick '73R**, George Karasick and **Bernice** (and **Rabbi Benji '69R**) **Mandel** and sister of Margie Zwiebel and Anita Walker.

**Rabbi David Koenigsberg '74R** and **Miriam** (and **Rabbi Dr. Chaim '65R**) **Brovender** on the loss of their mother, Gertrude Koenigsberg.

**Rabbi Pesach Levovitz** on the loss of his wife, Rebbetzin Freida Malka Perlow Levovitz.

**Rabbi Joseph Oratz '82R**, Suzie Lowinger and Dina Perlman on the loss of their father, Rabbi Irving M. Oratz, brother of Rabbi Ephraim Oratz and the late **Rabbi Pesach Oratz z"l '50R**.

**Rabbi Pinchas N. Pearl '82R** on the loss of his mother, Ruth Pearl.

**Dina and Rabbi Moshe '84R Rosenberg** on the loss of Dina's mother, Eva Meyer.

**Rabbi Dr. Bernard Rosensweig '50R** on the loss of his wife, Rebbetzin Miriam Rosensweig, mother of RIETS Rosh Yeshiva **Rabbi Dr. Michael '80R** (and **Smadar**) **Rosensweig**, Judah (and Deborah) Rosensweig, Joshua (and Aviva) Rosensweig, Sharon (and Dr. Danny) Gottlieb and Marylin (and Meir) Amar.

**Rabbi Dr. Yaacov Rosenthal '93R**, Dr. Brett Rosenthal and Adam Rosenthal on the loss of their father, Dr. Martin Rosenthal, husband of the late Marilyn Rosenthal z"l.

**Elisabeth** (and **Rabbi Arthur '56R**) **Schneider**, Francois (and Miriam) Nordmann, and Claude (and Maya) Nordmann on the loss of their mother, Blulette Nordmann.

Esther Roos on the loss of her husband, **Rabbi Dr. Eiyahu "Jack" (Steinhorn) Shalem '61R**, brother of Tasya Stone, and father of Deena (and Harvey) Wrubel, Darona (and Zvi) Bernstein, Nechama (and Lazer) Blisko, and Aleeza (and Avi) Lauer.

Avi Shapiro and Carmi Shapiro on the loss of their father, **Rabbi Joshua Shapiro '49R**.

**Rabbi Jerry (Yechiel) Shatzkes '70R** and Rabbi Shaul Shatzkes on the loss of their mother, Rebbetzin Yehudis Shatzkes, widow of the late RIETS Rosh Yeshiva Rav Aharon Shatzkes zt"l and daughter-in-law of the late RIETS Masmich Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes zt"l.

**Rabbi Solomon '49R** (and **Bertha**) **Shoulson**, Blanche Romirowsky and Rabbi Harold Romirowsky on the loss of their sister-in-law, Rose Shoulson, wife of the late Rabbi Abraham Shoulson z"l and aunt of **Rabbi Jay C. '79R** (and **Jody**) **Shoulson**, and **Toby** (and Azrielli Graduate School Dean **Rabbi Dr. David '72R**) **Schnall**.

Mollie Kolatch Simonson on the loss of her husband, **Rabbi Louis (Eliezer) Simonson '37R**.

Tzipora Steinmetz on the loss of her husband, **Rabbi Sol Steinmetz '56R**, father of Steven Steinmetz.

**Esther** and **Rabbi Etan '95R Tokayer** on the loss of Esther's father, Morris Nadjar.

**Rabbi Benjamin '69R** (and **Shevi**) **Yudin**, **Evelyn Rothman** (and **Rabbi Bernard Rothman '59R**), Tzippy Twersky and Sara Wikler on the loss of their mother, Mrs. Adele Yudin.

**Rabbi Ari Zahtz '04R** and **Rabbi Yaakov Werblowsky '02R** on the loss of their grandmother, Rebbetzin Alta Shmidman, widow of the late Rabbi Shmuel Shmidman z"l, and mother of Judith Werblowsky, Chanie Zahtz, and Rabbi Dr. Michael Shmidman (of Teaneck), and aunt of Rabbi Michael Shmidman (IBC faculty).

## Practical Halachah

### *A Renewable Light Unto the Nations*

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tion industry.<sup>12</sup> Originally conceived as an idea to make the world "a better place," founder Shai Agassi has promised that Better Place will be the biggest international brand to come out of Israel since Jaffa oranges.<sup>13</sup>

Another Israeli start-up has developed a material that attracts and retains dew. Shaped into trays and placed around crops, this material will take the dew that forms overnight and funnel it directly onto the plant and its roots. Field tests promise enormous water savings, reducing the water needed for crops by 50 percent.<sup>14</sup> Based in the village of Gan Yoshiya, the name of the company is Tal-Ya, "G-d's dew."

The State of Israel is one of only two countries in the world that ended the 20th century with more trees than it started with, thanks to the efforts of the Jewish National Fund in planting more than 240 million trees in the last century.<sup>15</sup> As religious Zionists, we should view this incredible achievement as a sign of the first flowering of our redemption, reishit tzmichat geulatenu, in light of Vayikra Rabbah (25:3):

*R' Yehuda ben Simon began, "You shall follow the L-rd your G-d." Is it possible for flesh and blood to follow the Holy One Blessed be He?... What this means is that in the beginning the Holy one Blessed be He engaged in planting, similarly "you shall*

*come into the Land, and you shall plant."*

Many of the serious environmental concerns that now face the global community — scarce water resources, the dangerous addiction to foreign oil, and desertification — have confronted the State of Israel since its inception. Applying Jewish ingenuity to our biblical mandate to be an "oved" is now providing the answers to some of the world's most pressing problems.

Yeshayahu hanavi wrote long ago that one day, "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom."<sup>16</sup> Our generation has been privileged to witness not only the miracle of the blooming of Israel's deserts, but the emergence of the Jewish State as a global leader in environmental innovation. It is clear that concern for Teva does not take away from our appreciation of Torah. On the contrary, we see it bringing the Torah to life and, to paraphrase Isaiah, inspiring the Jewish people to become a "renewable" light unto the nations. ■

### Notes

1. *Breishit* 1:28.
2. *Breishit* 2:15.
3. Rabbi Norman Lamm, "Ecology in Jewish Law and Theology" in Faith and Doubt, KTAV Pub-

lishing House, 1971.

4. *Devarim* 20:19, "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an ax against them; for thou mayest eat of them but thou shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man that it should be besieged of thee?"
5. *Hilchot Milchamot*, 6:10.
6. *Mitzvah* 529.
7. More troubling statistics are available from the not-for-profit organization [www.water.org](http://www.water.org).
8. Israel Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, [www.investinisrael.gov.il](http://www.investinisrael.gov.il).
9. The fascinating history is available on the "About Us" page at [www.Netafim.com](http://www.Netafim.com), the irrigation company founded by Blass.
10. Neil Sandler, "At the Zenith of Solar Energy," *BusinessWeek*, 3/26/2008.
11. Karin Kloosterman, "Brightsource Gets a Billion," [www.israel21c.org](http://www.israel21c.org), 3/1/2010.
12. See chapter 1 in *Start Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle* by Dan Senor and Saul Singer, McClelland & Stewart, 2009.
13. Ron Friedman, "Better Place's Electric Vehicles Land in Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, 2/8/2010.
14. Karin Kloosterman, "Tal-Ya Water Irrigation Trays Make the Most out of Dew," [www.greenprophet.com](http://www.greenprophet.com), 6/6/2009.
15. According to the JNF web site, [www.jnf.org](http://www.jnf.org).
16. *Isaiah* 35:1