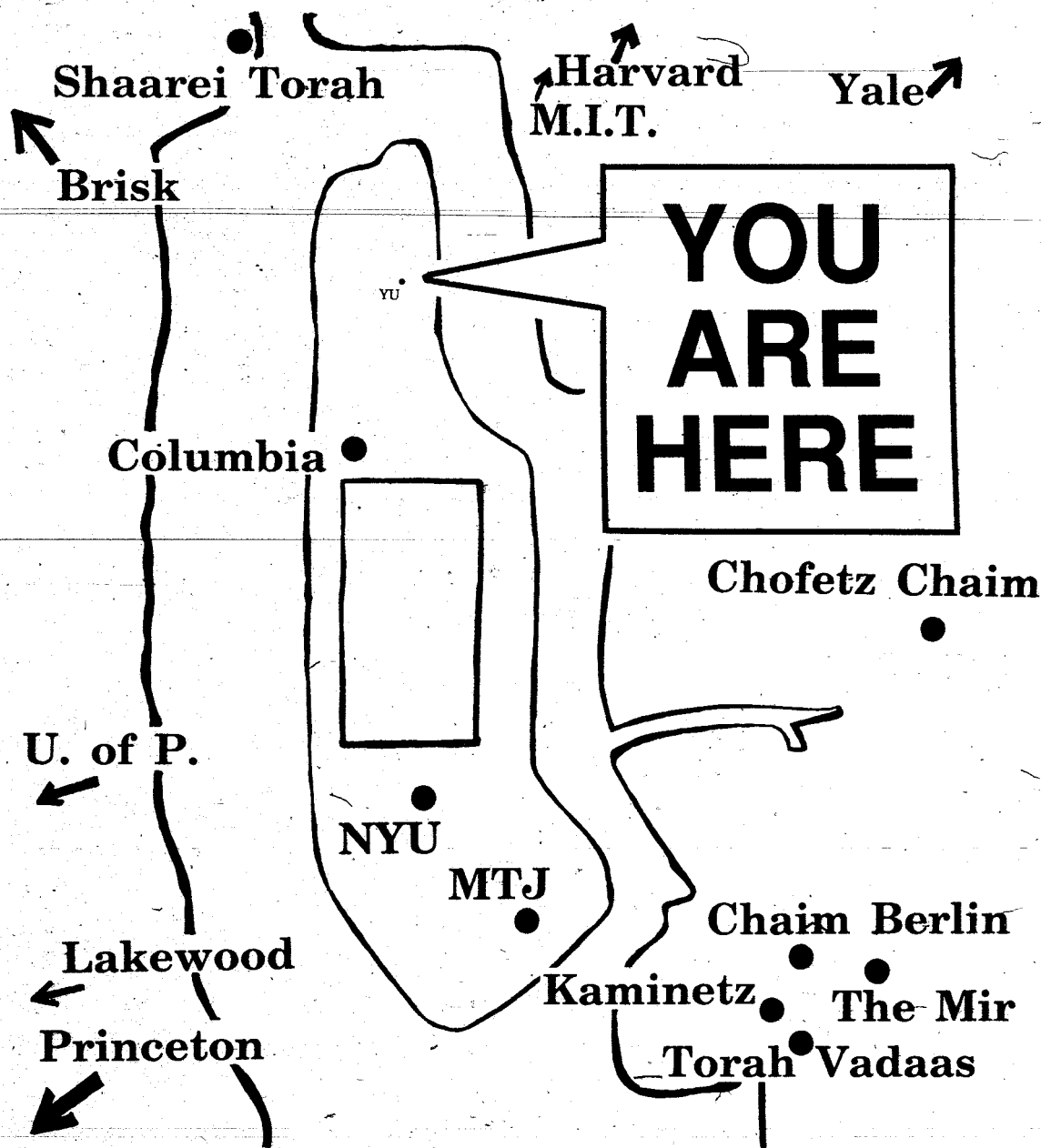


# PHENOMENAVASER

The Student Publication which Boldly Goes  
Where No Other Journal of Traditional Thought and Ideas Has Gone Before

Volume 29 No. 4

Purim 5750, Star Date 10319.9



# WHY?



# A Message from Our President

Dear Student:  
 Since its deception, the mission and misleading philosophy of Yeshiva University has been "Torah u-Manna." In broad terms, this philosophy asserts that uncompromising commitment to *halakha* is fully compatible with sophisticated involvement in gourmet society and trivial pursuit of exotic delicacies.

In resetting the *Shutlan Aruk*, two questions remain: one, what shall be our educational curriculum; and two, where can you get a good pastrami sandwich for a decent price nowadays?

In regard to the second question, I plan to give an advanced *shiur* on it to superior *talpidim* in Rabbi Rosensweig's *shiur* on Mohl's mornings next term.

In regard to the first question we must consider the *pesak* of our Polish patriarch, the great Rema (see Shlomo Hyman's Notes, O.H. 246:4), who cites the words of our Litvish forefather, the Rambam (*Hil. Yesodei Torah u-Manna* IV:13): "and this (Manna) is what our sages called *pardes*, and a man should not stroll with *pardes* until he has filled his stomach with meat and wine."

Our great-grandmaster Reb Chayim points out in his book, *Reb Chayim's Book*, that gastronomic activity must not only precede synthetic intellection, but it must garnish Pentateuchal contemplation as well. Reb Chayim cites the end-piece of Rambam's famous letter to R. Jonny ha-Kohen Cook, where the Rambam describes his brisk, passionate devotion to Torah study: "The strange [one manuscript reads "Stern"] women (Manna) are only to be employed as spice-women, cooks, and bakers." Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein has added that he believes the pursuit of manna is what whetted Rambam's appetite for *ta'amei ha-mizvot*.

In the last few years, I have directed my attention to "enhancing the application of "Torah u-Manna" ideal at Yeshiva in practical and concrete ways. A little over ten years ago, in an address to my *chabibi* Pepe, I made the following point.

"When I was a student and complained, "Why don't you tell me how to make sweet and sour chicken?", Dr. Belkin, of blessed memory, told me, "Our job is to give you the raw materials; you must measure out the corn syrup and vinegar."

I disagreed then. But I agree now. You simply cannot spoon-feed farina to a goldfish. You can give the ingredients; the cooking — the internal fermentation — has to be done by your mother. That will always remain true. Again, I do not recommend the educational equivalent of the AMIT Women's Cookbook but rather intelligent assistance ensuring that our students do not become culinary schizophrenics, being Jews in one way and Szechuan beef-brains in another — a personification of B. A. Fresser's motto, "Eat Kreplach in *der heim*, and wonton at China Shalom." That formula is no less unwise now as it was then.

The Midrash Says explains that the manna in the desert conformed to the palate's preference. This variety of flavors is what we wish to capture in our full-course offerings. Thus, in accordance with *halakha*, and with Rabbi Hechtshur of the Va'ad of haRabbanim of Bergen County, I hereby implement the Torah u-Manna program — a program designed to enhance your personal growth.

Norman Lamb  
 Grand Poo-Bah  
 Yeshiva University

# Course Listing

BCE 3737 Recipes of the Ancient Near East  
 Dr. Berry Eichler  
 (Prereq. Cuneiform and Chicken feet)

JER 4Qa Dead Sea Salads in Qumran Cuisine  
 Dr. Shmulke Bernstein  
 (Prereq. Time — lots of time)

CAF 1989 Jewish Rebellion in the Time of Late Profits  
 King Alan Solomon  
 (Postreq. Indigestion and Cholesterol Build-up)

TAL 1987 Bush or Shrub: The Strawberry Controversy  
 Dr. Grach  
 (Prereq. Guts)

POP 12oz Fizzosophy of Nagelvasser  
 Dr. Diet Shatzta

BUN 999 The Roll of the Frankist Movement  
 Rabbi Sour Krauss

PHI 1245 Seminar in Ibn Snapir and Hasdai Cresceset  
 Dr. Basil Herring  
 (Prereq. Tam-Tams and Mock Kishke)

HIS 1206 Kashrus in the Medieval Jewish Home  
 Dr. McDovid Burger  
 Prereq. Franco-German fries and Provencal Pizza

MRS 1819 Kashrut in the Modern Jewish Home  
 Dean Carrot Bacon  
 (Required Course for SCW students)

LIB 5382 Intellectual Meat and Potatoes  
 Rabbi S. Carmel

HAL 7777 Chulent in Modern Responsa  
 Rabbi Shabbos Blech

HAL 0000 Biodegradable Ethics  
 Dr. Meat Tendlerizer  
 Offered also at the College for Stern Women

# PHENOMENAVASER

Starbase 12: Triangull Sector: Quadrant 5

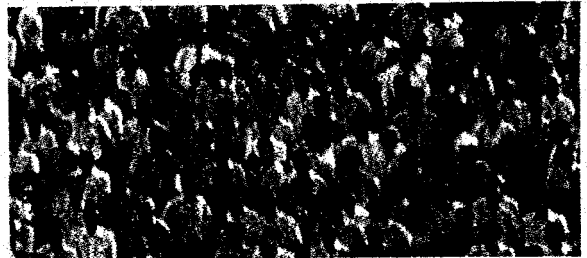
The views of signed articles are those of Federtion High Commander Ceil Levinsohn and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of PHENOMENAVASER or the authors. Editorial policy is determined by Starfleet Command. All material herein copyright PHENOMENAVASER 5750.

Capt. Ronald T. Ziegler  
 Commander, USSOY Phenomenavaser

### OFFICERS, Departments:

Yitzchak Blau, Existentialism	Adina Mosak Moshavi, Computers
David Debow, Kiruv	Benjamin Nachimson, Poetry
Hillel Felman, Finance	Benjamin Samuels, Rabbinitics
Dov Fogel, Medicine	Miriam Segal, Law
Mark Gottlieb, Epistemology	Howard Sragow, Assyriology
Aharon Haber, First Officer	Beth Zuckerman, Engineering
Seth Kadish, Aretz	

### CREW



We apologize to all crew members not pictured here  
 Robert Pike Klapper, commander emeritus

In an effort to broaden readership, Hamevaser embarked on survey #564. On the flip side of the invitations to NYJEN's Purim Bash '90 that were slid under dormitory doors, surveyers surreptitiously printed the following open-ended question: Why do you not read Hamevaser (The Student Publication of Traditional Thought and Ideas)?

### Results:

1. Sensationalistic articles- 17%
2. Prohibited as bathroom reading- 24%
3. Already read (Check if member of staff battalion)- 87%
4. Rebbeim snatch up all copies to impress friends and family-15%
5. Not distributed in my shul- 30%
6. Still catching up on last year's issues- 15%
7. Still reading last issue of Observer- 16%
8. Mediocre score on SAT verbal- 45%
9. Long italicized words not found in Webster's- 45%
10. Reading in cafeteria permitted only to Dining Card holders- 34%

# RIETS News

The RIETS office announced today that Rabbi Eliahu Shulman will begin taking attendance at night *seder* to make sure the Y.U. Rebbeim show up for their scheduled guest appearances. A Semikha III.V student (he spent a semikha year in Israel learning at the yeshiva of his choice) had applied for the position, but was rejected. Rabbi Charlop explained why: "It was a *chutzpa* for him to apply. He hasn't published any *sefarim*. He's not even in Kollel Elyon." When asked why Rabbi Yehuda Parnes and Rabbi Abba Bronspegel do not appear on the list, Rabbi

Dr. Norman Lamm commented: "They're probably learning in their rooms."

The Riets office also announced today the winners of this year's Vice-Presidential *bekius* contest are Rabbi Yosef Blau, Rabbi Meir Goldwicht and Rabbi Mayer Twersky for knowing the most names of Talmidim in the Yeshiva. The contest prize, the English edition of the Steinsaltz Talmud and a five dollar stipend, were presented by the venerable James Danforth Quail who recieved an honorary B.S. from Yeshiva University this past fall.

The Office of Rabbinic Alumni is proud to present a new collection of compact disks for its Torah Tape Library:

Rabbi Cohen and Sons with their new album

"Big Daddy and the Shuckels"

Featuring their recent hit single: Ay Yai Yai

### IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

The End of Innocence: Reflection on Shabbat at Yeshiva  
 All for One and None for All: The Rabbis of Yeshiva University

# Halakhic Woman A Jewish Approach to Appetite Control

From the thyroid of Woman, two distinct personalities emerge. The first is overweight, stays home all day, watches soap operas and reads the Jewish Observer. We will call her *homa kollewifeosa, eishet ha-bayit*. The second majestically rules her home, works on Wall Street, eats only tofu and reads Tikkun. We will call her *homa liberationa, eishet ha-diet*.

Both these personae, of course, are deeply religious; each in her own way. *Eishet ha-diet* looks at the world analytically and conceptually. She breaks it into component pieces and studies their calory count and fat content. In NutraSweet and Simplese she sees H-Shem. *Eishet ha-bayit* reacts more emotionally. She is reduced to gibbering awe at the thought of the Being Who Created Milkshakes Without Drinking Them.

The Pentateuch provides appropriate paradigms of these personae. Esther, facing certain death, ordered a three day fast. Yael,

on the other hand, dealt with an alien general by making a wine and cheese party.

In most religions, women are condemned to swing between these personality poles. Halakha, however, urges a synthesis. Thus, we have in the same week both Taanit Esther and Purim, and the entire year is a balance of fast and feast. As our Sages put it, "Both eating on Erev Yom Kippur and fasting on Yom Kippur are religious acts."

We stress that we are not seeking to change the traditional role of women, but rather to find religious meaning within it. Thus our vision of *homa halakhica* is of our grandmothers in Poland-slaving over their vegetable illuminator boxes leaf by agonizing lettuce leaf.

In the past century, science, mathematics, and psychology have all changed our view of the universe. Within the Jewish kitchen, a new worldview awaits discovery.

# No Shiur in Brochure: Rabbis Respond

All YU students know that the Yeshiva is the heart and soul of our institution. They also all know that Torah U'Madda is the heart and soul of our institution. Distressed that the Torah U'Madda brochure did not include RIETS courses, we asked our Rebbeim to explain how their *shiurim* fulfilled the *mitzva* of *Talmud Torah U'Madda*.

**Rabbi Yehuda Parnes:**

Torah and Mada are fundamentally incompatible, as Rambam in *Avoda Zara* shows. Yet Rambam thought Torah and Mada were compatible, as the Guide shows, although according to Rambam in *Avoda Zara* it's probably forbidden to read the Guide. In our class we determined that this is a classic example of implausibly contradictory synthesis, which of course explains everything, so I need say no more.

**Rav Aharon Kahn:**

In our *shiur*, we learn Aramaic grammar every Wednesday for half an hour, and as you know if you've read my article, grammar isn't Torah. Now you might feel inclined to ask me why I teach grammar in *shiur* when the Rav didn't. That's a good question, and I intend to answer it clearly and directly. Yes, an excellent question, one worthy perhaps of the Vilna Gaon himself. The Vilna Gaon, you know, was a great *tzaddik*, and he knew mathematics. He even wrote a textbook on it. I find the Vilna Gaon a fascinating topic. He was the teacher of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, who, as you may not know...

**Rabbi Herschel Schachter:**

I don't understand why I should be writing this - maybe I shouldn't, nu, nu, could be. I don't know. The *shiur* really has nothing to do with Torah U'Mada, except for the line from Pascal I quote once in a while. I didn't get into the journal, so why should I be in the brochure?

**Rabbi Moshe Tendler:**

Ehhh, in our *shiur* we frequently discuss biology, which as you know the *shver* knew very well, although he would rely on my knowledge when it came to *psak*. Eh, that takes care of mada, doesn't it? Now if you want, ehhhh, Torah, I suggest you come to

my Bioethics class.

**Rabbi Michael Rosensweig:**

Before discussing the topic of the relationship or lack thereof of the *shiur* to the wide-ranging and conceptually diffuse topic of Torah U'Mada itself, broadly defined and speaking only in the most general possible terms, I think it's important, even highly significant, that we outline the parameters of the term *shiur* in our context, recognizing of course that the term *shiur* has many ramifications, especially with regard to *issurim* and may mean entirely different things in various situations, depending of course on which of the six basic approaches we'll establish in the Rishonim you take to the issue, again speaking in the broadest possible terms, and relating this back to the very definition of *shiur* itself. To touch on a few of these very briefly - I don't want to go into this - I see we're running out of space, but can I have just five lines more, or maybe ten? Suppose you start printing three inches early on the next page and go straight to the bottom...

**Epilogue: Rabbi Zevulun Charlop:**

When Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation; I think he had Yeshiva in mind. Lincoln was a prototypical Yeshiva *bocher*, his black hat and beard a striking contrast to the white fringes of his *Taliti Katan*. When he spoke, it was with the terseness of Biblical narrative, and when he dreamed, it was with the vast throngs of humanity in our *Beit Midrash* every morning. Yes, indeed Lincoln - now what was I writing about? It's gotta be somewhere in the book - I'm sure I wrote it down there somewhere. Let me write that down before I forget it - "topic to write about is written in book." But how shall I remember where this reminder is written? Maybe if I write a note on the previous page - but of course I'd need to write a note about that a few pages later. Maybe I should just write one note in big letters, like Hancock. Did you know that Hancock almost became a *musmakh* of our Yeshiva? I've got it all written down here somewhere...

# Letters to the Editor

Dear (sic) Sir,

I was profoundly insulted by the article on Halakhic Woman which my *daas Torah* has revealed will be published in this issue. Women have no more business discussing theology than do *roshei yeshiva*. And their claim that women can learn to think halakhically is of course absurd; if women were able to think halakhically, wouldn't they be encouraged to learn gemara?

With Torah greetings,

A prominent right-wing Torah scholar

(Name withheld by request; our correspondent was afraid his *talmidim* would discover from his knowledge of English that he went to YU; they already suspect he went to Ner Israel)

P.S. Esther appears not in the Pentateuch, but in the Talmudic tractate Megilla.

Dear Madam,

I was profoundly insulted by the piece on Halakhic Woman, which my guru has revealed will be printed in this issue. The claim that women need to think halakhically is insulting to those women who have lived religiously fulfilling lives without any exposure to halakhic thought whatsoever. I, for one, have never felt the need for a greater halakhic education than that which I received in Beis Yaakov.

In feminist solidarity,  
Rabbi Alice Walker

Dear Sir or Madam,

We were profoundly insulted by the above parody of the thought of the Rav which we feel strongly will be printed in this issue. The ideas it raises are serious and worthy of profound consideration, and should not be discussed satirically. Indeed, our Beit Din has worked seriously on this situation for years and will be issuing a decision shortly after we appoint a new Rosh Beit Din.

In the Centrist spirit,  
The RCA Administration

The author responds:

I am, of course, greatly relieved that no one realized that I can't read Hebrew. Indeed, my ability to get away with this one encourages me to continue with my forthcoming book, "Halakhic Justifications for Women's *Minyanim* at the Kotel."

As for my anonymous correspondent, his introduction of Talmud in the discussion shows that he misunderstood my use of the term "halakhic thought." I of course meant Brisker thought. Rabbi Walker's complaint, I feel, is valid, but not legitimate. With regard to the RCA letter, I refer readers to my response of two years ago to the identical letter.

Yeshiva University/Stern College & the AZYF Religious Department  
present the new:

GOLUS  
הגליית קולוב  
CLUB

•Bnei Akiva-NGSY.  
•Yavneh Olami.  
•Young Israel.  
•HaBaita.  
•NYSIPAC.

United for  
the first time!

Come decide  
Israel's fate  
from the comfort of  
Yeshiva University's  
Golus Club!

• Showing: "The Israeli Style Experience" (with English subtitles)

• Guest Speaker  
General Israeli Propoganda Honcho Uri Savyon  
"Israel Today: Not Just Any Third World Country"

Join us as we continue to bring Israel  
to Yeshiva University and Stern College!

# Dr. Seuss' The Matter with Madda

In this wide world from Grundoon to Granada  
No one has ever seen *Torah u-Madda*.  
Come with us North, with us South, West and East,  
Together we'll search for this mythical beast.

First we will visit Mt. Muddle-Dum-Dominick,  
Home of the last living *Torah u-Madda-nik*.  
"Recall, I recall," he says with redundancy,  
"When *Torah u-Madda* was found in abundance.

"We'd pluck it off vines, fish it out of the sea.  
We'd harvest it right off the Synthesis Tree.  
Of course, the Torah-Onlies were oftentimes fumin'  
Seeing us feasting on John Cardinal Newman.

"They told us Philosophy Fruit could be harmful.  
But didn't Maimonides eat by the armful?  
They answered, 'Your Monides may, but ours would never  
Engage in a non-Torah-only endeavor.'

"And what about Hirsch?,' we challenged that troupe,  
'He had a recipe for Synthesis Soup.'  
'He didn't! He didn't!' cried the Breuer Boys Choir,  
'Anyone saying he-did is a liar!'

"No *Torah U'Madda!* That beast is a myth,  
No realer than Feeler-Fa-Zooms from Fa-Zith!  
But despite all the nays of those nay-saying sayers,  
We played *Torah U'Madda* — just without other players."

Away from this mountain — Let's head for the Gush!  
Where Rav Lichtenstein tends to the poetry bush,  
Speaking of "but," "while on the other hand,"  
Dancing to an utterly *Acharon-less* band.

There we are told, "The problematic is plural,  
The tension's two-tiered, the dilemma is dual,  
God is our guide, the Torah totality,  
Yet Dante can deepen our spi-rit-uality."

"I'd like to add," says the Carmy-Army-Man,  
"That *Torah u-Madda* is Kierkegaardian."

Now take the limo on a little Lamm ride,  
Up to a penthouse on the Upper West Side,  
The President gives away books by the dozen  
On *Torah U'Madda* and Chaim Volozhin.



"Where has that *Torah U'Madda* thing went...  
Where has it gone, to where was it sent?  
I think I can say, without confabulation,  
That this office of mine needs more information.

Our promising Project progresses apace,  
With lectures and lectures all over the place.  
Refer to our journal quite stuffed with alotta  
Talkin and balkin' 'bout *Torah* and *Madda*."

"And what of the *Ramim* who roam around RIETS,  
Do they look beyond the *Keztos* to read Keats?"

We ask a Parnesian, "Sir, does your teacher  
Believe in a *Torah u-Madda*-like creature?"  
But he keeps on learning, like he never heard.  
He answers my question, not saying a word.

Now come take a ride on the Schachter Express,  
A tour of the *Shas* in two hours or less.  
"Can we stop in *Madda-Land*?" I would like to know.  
"No time, we have four hundred *shitos* to go."

Next we will visit the Tendler-Lab-Lair,  
Home of Prince Pre-Med, the Quoter of *Shver*,  
He says, "Quester, your question has an easy solution,  
More easy than ethics or than evolution.  
*Torah U'Madda* means Law and Biology,  
It doesn't include that humanisticology."

Maybe Rav Rosensweig knows where to find it?  
"First, we must count all the ways to define it.  
Then we'll examine the theories behind it.  
Read all the *Rishonim*, and then we'll refine it.

"Watch out for aspects that might undermine it.  
And notice the *shitos* who like to malign it.  
Then, if there's time, we will try to assign it  
To where God's expecting us all to consign it."

Now we are done, yet there's so much to do,  
Work that will fill up a lifetime or two.  
Maybe you'll work on this after YU,  
I can't imagine work finer. Can you?

# Several Ways to Fight a Fire

(by a student in Rabbi Rosensweig's *shiur*, with apologies to Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire")

Absolutely, positively  
Not necessarily  
One way, another way  
Both are integrated.

Unified, bonified  
Altogether rarefied  
One coin, its other side:  
Subtleties galore.

Radical, both extremes  
*Shitos* that are moderate  
More and less, what a mess;  
It's clear in both directions.

External, internal  
Technical and formal  
BIFURCATE!  
EXPLICATE!  
What more do I have to say!

CHORUS:  
Several ways to fight a fire  
Can always confront it, avoid it, reject it,  
What exactly is a fire?  
We can go on and on and on ...

Imperious, impervious  
Locus parentis  
Equivocal, equivocate  
Overstated *pashus*.

Pragmatic, practical  
Organic, personal  
Qualitative, quantitative  
Strikingly obscure.

Rayvad, Ra'avad  
Rashi and Rabeinu Tam  
Mabit and the Tosfos Rid  
Who really is the Rivva?

People, places, persons, things  
Can really mean most anything  
FIVE APPROACHES!  
FOUR POSITIONS!  
Who's seen the *mekoros*?

CHORUS.

Stronger, weaker, larger, smaller  
Greater, lesser, harder, softer  
More expansive, less unique  
All at the same time.

Indicate, correlate  
Can reflect, retroject  
Popped out, propped up  
Self defending *shiur*.

Different hats, *K'savos man*  
Striking formulations  
Super-duper-*birur*  
It's a one way street.

Highlights, conceivable  
Linked to, the *Kovetz* who?  
Options, possibilities  
Marathon *shiurim*.

Endless lists, categories  
Just two more minutes, in a hurry  
SHIUR TODAY!  
BLOWN AWAY!  
Happens like this every day!

CHORUS.

# Torah Re-Torahed

The Talmud declares, "*Mitzva haba'ah le-vadkha al tachmitzena*" - "When the opportunity to perform a *mitzva* arises, one must not allow it to become stale." Meaning, of course, it will leave a bad taste in your mouth and may even smell up your kitchen. Given this principle, we now face the arduous task of identifying which *mitzvot* one is expected to perform throughout the day. Clearly, no one can dispute the axiom that working for a living is a *mitzva* *ba'ora* (or, at least, an effective means of feeding the children). For those skeptics among the readership of Hamevasser (or for those skeptical of whether Hamevasser has a readership at all), one need look no further than the "Ten Commandments" wherein the obligation "*sheshet yamim ta'avod*" leaves no room for debate, except for extremely argumentative people. It follows from elementary logic, *logos elementatos*, that one is obligated, nay, ...uh very, very obligated, to make haste to earn a living. Presumably, the onus of "*hidur mitzva*" requires one to make a luxurious salary, let us say, enough to allow one's wife free reign of the gold card.

The universally accepted means of achieving this *mitzva* is through a college education, for one may achieve the maximum *hidur* that way, and, if desired, join the volleyball team. As such, should one consider study in a university to be a *mitzva*? Only if one really has the time to. Ostensibly, it is clear that this at least falls under the rubric of "*hechsher mitzva*." Furthermore, the source for this idea is found in the Bible itself (the numerical value of "college" is 139 - equal to "*leket*," referring to the influx of information one "gleans" in college), thus bestowing upon it the elevated status of "*hechsher mitzva haketuba batorah*" or "pretty darn important," which enjoys almost identical status with a bona fide *mitzva*. Well, I think so, anyway.

Nevertheless, it is not necessary to look to such intricate analysis to ascertain the "mitzvaic" nature of college study. The Talmud provides explicitly for just this activity, placing the responsibility with the father to insure its fulfillment. "*Chanokh lanar al pi darko; gam ki yazkin lo yasur minena*," or "Be straight with your boy, dude, and he'll pay for your retirement."

Having established the existence of the above two *mitzvot*, viz. going to college, and getting a job, one more significant *mitzva* deserves mention. The *Chovot HaLevavot* describes that even leisure activities are *mitzvot*, as they enable a person to keep the other *mitzvot* with greater zeal (the truth is,

however, Rabbenu Bachya was rumored to have a mean tennis game, and was heard saying to his *beit midrash*: "I'll take any of you, on any day.")

But what of *talmud Torah*, you ask? How will we find time for Torah given all these other *mitzvot*, especially after cable has been installed? Have no fear, gentle reader. The several Biblical verses which one finds quoted to establish *talmud Torah* as a *mitzva*, do not relate to learning Torah at all! Well, it surprises me too! This essay will therefore have nothing to say about them. Any citation from the Prophets and Hagiographia are invalid as sources in this regard, due to the limitation, "*Divrei Torah mi-divrei kabbala lo yafinan*" - "Don't get *divrei Torah* from *Nach*, unless there's nothing to say on the *parsha*." As such, there exists no source for the idea of learning Torah. But this is a natural consequence of the following analysis.

The Talmud prohibits donning phylacteries on the Sabbath and Holidays. The rationale is striking - since the holiday is deemed a "sign (*ote*)" and the phylacteries are deemed a comparable "sign (*ote*)," one who dons the phylacteries (and even if he just puts them on) during the holidays declares willfully that he denies the significance of the holiday! (NOTE: in some states, willfully declarations are punishable by law, and violaters are subject to public defamation by the United Philosophers Front.) By natural extension, the same principle applies to *talmud Torah*. The Talmud considers the Oral Law a "covenant (*brit*)" and the Bible describes circumcision (*mila*) as a "covenant (*brit*)" as well. In fact, the Talmud gives the commandment of circumcision the weight of 13 "covenants!" (and those covenants can get pretty heavy). One cannot but conclude that anyone circumcized who learns the Oral Law slaps the *mitzva* of circumcision in its face - akin to wearing phylacteries on the holidays (one of the biggies). Although this does not preclude the study of the Written Bible, *Itzhaki* expressly forbids study of the Written Bible as well (cf. Blessings 24a). [Although M. Sofer in the Responsa offers a leniency on this point, his opinion is not generally known.]

A serious objection must be resolved before we proceed further. How is one to know what minutae are included in the Torah, to know what to avoid? The resolution of this seemingly insurmountable dilemma rests in a similar difficulty regarding "sefarim hitzonim." The Talmud raises an injunction against reading these external works, yet how

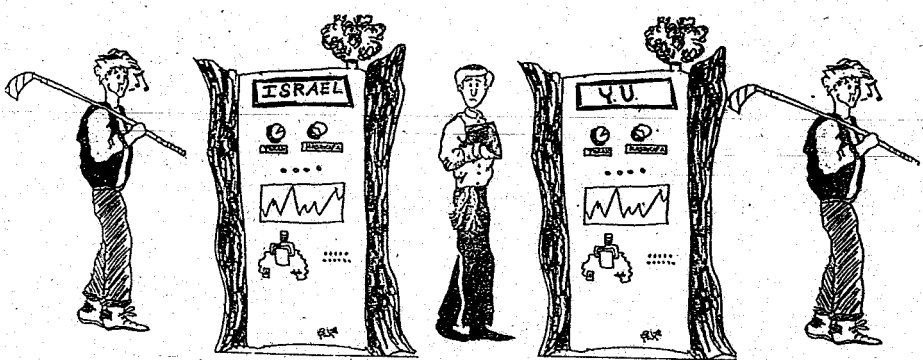
can one know which are included? Obviously, a select few must be entrusted with the responsibility of delving into these books and they must disseminate the specific objections to the masses (and not just have a good time).

One cannot help but jump to the next compelling conclusion, namely that this detail (to learn for the sake of instructing) justifies (if such justification is necessary) the institution of Yeshiva University (or at least its numerous parking lots). The institution is presumably dedicated to the notion that we must study the Torah to alert the general populace what is forbidden to learn. In fact, swarming numbers of students in this holy institution have inculcated within themselves the full severity of the prohibition, and cannot bear even to learn the Torah in accord with this leniency.

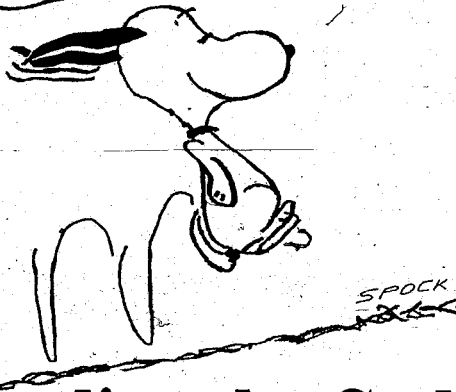
One final objection to complete the analysis (purely for the sake of thoroughness) begs attention. The Talmud raises a debate as to whether a "*ba'al ker*" - "a happening man" - is permitted to learn Torah. Similarly, the Talmud also goes out of its way to state that a mourner may not learn Torah. These two passages appear to contradict our entire premise! Of course a mourner may not learn Torah! Of course a *ba'al ker* may not learn Torah! The difficulty is compounded, since the conclusion of the Talmud is that the *ba'al ker* is indeed permitted to learn!

The resolution of these difficulties lies in the nature of the prohibition of learning Torah: One might think that since the mourner is thrown into such a fit of disconcertion, an obligation to learn is appropriate, precisely to act antipodally to normative behavior. To this, the Talmud goes out of its way to reinforce the injunction. Similarly, the Talmud describes that the *ba'al ker* is of no state of mind for actual learning (in the manner that it was given at Sinai) so his learning cannot be construed as a negation of the "covenant" of the circumcision. Possibly, this is the reason that the *ba'al ker* alone may learn Torah.

Hopefully, no sentient reader of this essay will consider the matter as he did before (even those who are brain-dead might give it a thought). Nevertheless, as with all matters of normative halachic decisions, before the abstract becomes a realism, consultation with a local Orthodox *musmach* (preferably one who has not been tainted by the study of Torah) would not be superfluous.



HERE COMES SNOOPY  
THE SPACE-FILLER!!!



# Decoding the Codes

Researchers for the Discovery Project in Israel, busily laboring at their task of showing the world the utter truth of Judaism, have discovered astonishing patterns in such classic rabbinic works as the *Mishneh Torah*, the *Mishna Berura*, the *Shulchan Arukh*, and the NCSY Brokchos Booklet.

In *Mishneh Torah Hilchot Talmud Torah*, for example, the phrase "Moshe emet v'Torato emet" appears every 613 letters. In the Raavad's glosses, however, the phrase "eino ken" appears at the same interval; apparently the Raavad misunderstood which Moshe was intended.

In the *Shulchan Arukh on Hilchot Tzeni'ut* it was found that by skipping every 143rd letter the sequence "mitzva le-hachmir me'od" was formed (There were several instances in which it occurred every 150 letters, but this was probably only a *chumra* adopted by *Brot Yisrael*). It was also found that the word "chakira" is conspicuously absent in all these works.

A competing group of researchers in Brooklyn, New York also processed the *Shulchan Arukh*, but included the glosses of the Ashkenazic posek, Rema. Their analysis in *Tzeni'ut* reveals the phrase "mitzva le-hachmir me'od me'od me'od me'od" when skipping every three letters. "This," boasts Brooklyn coordinator Dr. Jake Baal Turim, "conclusively demonstrates that Ashkenazic halakha is superior in the eyes of *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*." "Our program spreads the Torah to people who otherwise wouldn't believe in it," says Turim, "and it gives our boys an excuse to go to college."

Both projects agree that regardless of which tradition is superior, these newly discovered codes will only strengthen their programs' ability to be *mekarev*. Turim laughs off the efficacy of organizations which use traditional learning methods for *kiruv*: "We are enormously more effective than NCSY. And we don't even use candles."

# Talmud: Between Here and Eternity

(an excerpt from the overview to the ArtScRawL Talmud)

The Babylonian Gemara, like the entire Torah revealed to Moshe at Har Sinai and translated by Meir Zlotowitz, is eternal; it transcends here-and-now reality, much like the *Moetzes Gedolei haTorah*. Thus it can be said that the ArtScRawL Talmud was present when G-d looked into the ArtScRawL Torah and created the world. Its revelation now is simply the result of *siyata d'shemaya*, and not G-d forbid of a rush job to take advantage of the Steinsaltz controversy. As is written in the ArtScRawL **Chapters of our Fathers**, and quoted in the ArtScRawL Biography series on page 246 of seven or eight different highly distinctive works, the Torah should not be used as a spade to dig with.

Our new translation, based on the classic work of HaRav Jacob Neusner shlit"a, is designed to make English speakers feel as if they were reading Aramaic.

Incidentally, several of our readers have written us concerning the publisher of that Vilna text, the Brothers and Widow Romm. We assure you that the good Widow never read the text published under her name, but rather sat in a balcony behind a six foot barrier with a one-way mirror extending to the ceiling while the Talmud was printed. Thus her name on the title page is really not that of a printer but only her signature on a *haskama*.

You may have noticed that so far I haven't told you much about the Talmud itself. I really would like to, but look what happened to Steinsaltz when he tried. So please read the book yourselves after buying it, and please keep it from your wives and daughters. And may the *zechus* of keeping our people from learning Torah in the original hasten the arrival of the *Mashiach*, speedily and as soon as possible, Amen.

# Eat at Joe's

New York City, as we all know, harbors many secret dining retreats. This one, situated in a slightly hazardous section of Washington Heights, is out of the way, but well worth the trip.

Called **Tannenbaum's** (2540 Amsterdam Avenue, 960-5344 for reservations), it's tucked into a quaint old building designed to look like a monastery. The clientele is student-age and, inexplicably, all male. But the atmosphere is warm, and the menu surprisingly varied.

Breakfast is easily the most popular meal at Tannenbaum's. Muffins predominate, supplemented by O.J., chocolate milk or coffee. Though Tannenbaum's officially begins serving breakfast after Reb Dovid's morning service (starts 7:45, ends eventually), the crowds begin to arrive only around ten o'clock.

Service is generally good, although much of the staff is well past retirement age. The maitre d' merits special mention. Sporting a simple black suit and an endearing accent, Joe Blau glides smoothly from table to table. He seems to know every customer personally!

The rare new face receives a warm welcome, and Joe is always ready to sit and chat.

Lunch at Tannenbaum's, sad to say, lacks any kind of luster. But the supper menu is quirky and distinctive, featuring a retrospective of Jewish cuisine. The beverage is grape juice, the entree gefilte fish. The optional dessert consists of sandwich cookies.

The decor at Tannenbaum's is understated; wood tone contrasts black plastic. A couple of obtrusive columns create an uneasy privacy in certain sections, and strategically placed books complete the scene. (Unfortunately, the books are clearly props which have never actually been read.)

Prices are reasonable. And the regular customers seem satisfied. Or they may simply have low expectations. Some people apparently have been coming back for decades. Although they seem to have only the slightest idea of what is really going on.

In short, I would recommend Tannenbaum's for a change of pace in dining. Especially for those who have grown tired of Aaron's Eatery in Lakewood or Chaim's Berlinplatz in Flatbush.



T"ול

## Stern College's Midda of the Month Club

*proudly presents*

### A Shiur Hashkafa by M.K. Shulamit Aloni

שלימית

Place: Stern College  
Time: 1:00 P.M.  
Date: Yom Rishon,  
11th Mar, 1990 c.e.

*"Another fine TACKy Production..."*

# Rimbim Rediscovered

One of the deepest humiliations of the twentieth century is our ignorance about tenth century Andalusia. Our ignorance about that time is epic in scale, broad as well as deep, almost infinite in its dimensions. It exceeds even our ignorance about the ingredients of salami.

Rather than disturb that ignorance, then, let us turn to thirteenth century Catalonia, about which we know a great deal. Which also makes research a heck of a lot easier.

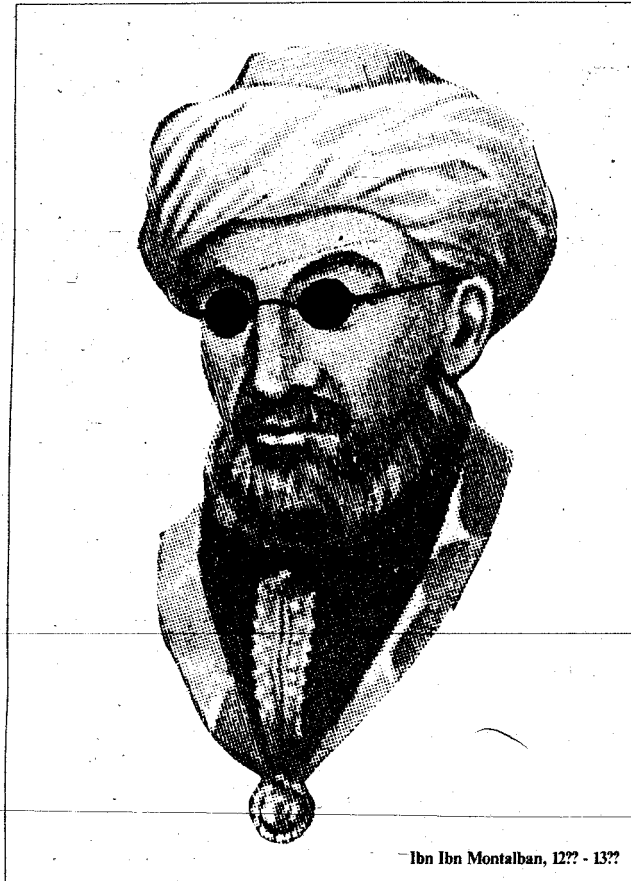
Catalonia in the mid-thirteenth century was a hotbed of intellectual indigestion. Libraries sprang up everywhere, as did pizza shops. The streets of the city were the informal home of debates on every kind of intellectual concern — physics, metaphysics, sports and weather. Many a debate erupted into violence, and the air would fill with cries of pain as rubberbands fired madly in every direction.

The Jewish community enjoyed a particularly honored place in Catalonian society, owing mainly to the Jewish monopoly on fresh fruit stands and the media. The king of Catalonia, whose name we do not know — although evidence suggests that it might have been "Vinnie" — generally treated the Jews with benevolence. He saw in their presence a counter-weight to the influence of the aristocracy. He also loved bagels and lox. As a result, the Jews in Catalonia thrived both financially and culturally; scholars multiplied and schoolchildren divided.

One of the most prominent unknown figures of that age was Ibn Ibn Montalban of Managua, sometimes referred to as Rimbim. A part-time student of Ramban and a full-time student of cheesemaking, Montalban quickly developed a reputation for his vast insipidity.

Rimbim married early, we know, and to a woman of high station. She was, in fact, at least six inches taller than Montalban himself. According to Graetz, she also weighed more than he did. But many have questioned his evidence, an oblique statement by Rimbim that "My beloved embraces the heavens, and the earth barely contains her." Whether this actually refers to Rimbim's wife is, of course, open to dispute. It may refer instead to Neo-Platonist emanations or, perhaps, to a very good cigar.

Because cheesemaking was still a somewhat inexact science, Montalban turned to counterfeiting. He enjoyed immediate success and rose quickly to become a courtier to the king of Aragon, Torquemada (not related to his more famous fifteenth century descendant). In the court, Rimbim proved himself an adept financier upon whom the king could rely and



Ibn Ibn Montalban, 12?? - 13??

in whom he could trust. But Montalban's bad table manners alienated the nobles.

When the aristocrats overthrew Torquemada, Rimbim was forced to run for his life. His hasty departure forced Montalban to leave behind his wife and eighteen children; he took with him only the shirt on his back and eleven trunks full of gold and silver.

Rimbim settled in Tudela, buying a house on Fourteenth Street and M. The house had light blue trim, although he later had it repainted a burnt orange.

Because his reputation had preceded him, Montalban was, upon arrival, immediately ignored by everyone of substance. But by

1289, when he left Tudela, Rimbim had become completely anonymous. He was thus free to write. He also had to write for free, because no one was willing to pay him.

Montalban's greatest literary work, a thirteen-volume magnum opus entitled *Hirhurei ha-Rimbim*, has not survived the ravages of time and a three-pack-a-day smoking habit. Fortunately, we can piece together a fairly accurate picture of the work from the thousands of citations to it in the Franco-German literature. But that would take a long time and far more effort than I care to expend on so insignificant a figure. Instead, I have analyzed the shortest piece

of the Rimbim ever wrote, a pamphlet entitled, *Megillat Melekheth Mishkenei Mekor ha-Chayyim ve-ha-Mavret*.

The *Megilla* is an eclectic work, reflecting the many facets and multiple personalities of Montalban himself. He was widely read in both classical and contemporary philosophy, and he closely followed horseraces. In addition to his halakhic work, Rimbim authored a monograph on the mosquito. Although his scientific ignorance limits the significance of this work, it happens to be good for a few laughs.

The *Megilla*, illustrates Rimbim's vast erudition and taste for off-color jokes. The writing style is uneven, his metaphors downright bumpy. Nevertheless, one can draw from this work a fairly incoherent picture of Montalban's philosophical worldview. One can also derive his *weltanschauung*.

Rimbim was a fierce critic of Maimonidean rationalism. He decried the injection of Jewish sources into Aristotelian philosophy. He also intimated that Maimonides was a closet Sabbatean. But few of Montalban's contemporaries believed this accusation; still fewer understood it.

Rimbim also pioneered a new style of exegesis, based on the critical theories of Islamic literature. He advocated the dissection of the biblical text into tiny slips of paper. These slips were then thrown up in the air then reassembled. If the result was intelligible, then one has conclusively proven the divinity of the text. If not, then the text is clearly a human document and should only be read at bedtime.

Scholars everywhere criticized Montalban for his radical theories. Undeterred, he cited Geonic sources as prooftexts and called his critics nasty names. He also challenged his most vocal critic, R. Jose of Guadalajara, to a disputation in the town square of Bologna. Neither showed up, and Montalban claimed victory.

Little is known about Rimbim's later years. Baer has suggested that Montalban was beset by depression, based on a statement in his *Hirhurim*, "My head is heavy and hoary with age, And all of my thoughts are of death." But Montalban may have said this just to attract girls.

We do not know where Rimbim died or when. But we are fairly certain that he did, indeed, die. When it occurred, his passing was doubtless widely mourned, especially by those who were left out of his will. Nevertheless, the impact and influence of his thought can still be felt today, especially in this article.

