

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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## Modern Orthodoxy or Orthodox Modernism?

An Analysis

## Teen-Age Attitudes Toward Jewish Life

A Report

## The Succah and The Way Back

## Yuchsin Records —

A Crucial Need for Our Time

## Responsa in English

Letters to the Editor

***It IS a Future For a Jewish Boy!***

# THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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# Modern Orthodoxy or Orthodox Modernism?

## *An Analysis of Some New Trends in Modern Orthodoxy*

A RECENT ISSUE OF *The Commentator*, THE UNDER-graduate newspaper of Yeshiva College, featured a number of questions submitted to Dr. Irving Greenberg, an associate professor of history at Yeshiva College, and the rabbi of an Orthodox congregation. His replies prompted a torrent of protest and criticism which moved him to write a clarification and defense of his views.

Dr. Greenberg has been one of the spiritual mentors of *Yavneh*, the association of Orthodox college students, and some of his views have been reported recently in *The New York Times* in connection with a symposium on Jewish Religious Unity. Together with Dr. Eliezer Berkovits, Dr. Michael Wyschogrod, and others, Rabbi Greenberg is representative of a decided trend among certain Orthodox intellectuals, whose recent pronouncements about fundamental Jewish concepts should not go unchallenged by those whom they have on occasion called "fundamentalists." This essay offers such a challenge by giving *different* answers to some of the questions that were put to Dr. Greenberg.

*What do you believe is the essential element in Jewish theology?*

DR. GREENBERG: "The covenant idea, the belief that an infinite G-d is concerned for man and will enter into a personal relationship with him."

S. D.: It is certainly *not* a tenuous "covenant idea" (italics mine), a shadowy *belief* that "G-d is concerned for man and will enter into a personal relationship with him." This "covenant idea" could, of course, be taken seriously by non-Orthodox Jews, as Dr. Greenberg states.

The essential element in Jewish "emunah" is *Torah Min Hashamayim*, the Divine revelation of the Torah (Written and Oral) by G-d to Mosheh, *literally speaking, as an objective fact*, and not in any vague, naturalistic, subjective sense. "And when Mosheh went into the tent of meeting that He might speak with him,

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RABBI SHELOMOH E. DANZIGER says a shiur at the Mesivta Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and is Rabbi of Cong. Beth Midrash Horeb in Riverdale, New York. His essay, "The Relevance of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in Our Time," appeared in our issue of June, 1965.

*then he heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the ark-cover that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and He spoke unto him." (Bamidbar 7:89).*

Any attempt, expressed or implied, to qualify the external, objective reality of this revelation of the Written-Oral Torah, any tendency to rationalize it philosophically as a historical development of spiritual insight and response, must be considered a critical departure from *Torah Min Hashamayim*."

This Covenant of the Written-Oral Torah, which G-d revealed to us in detail at Sinai in the literal, unqualified manner mentioned above, is certainly not accepted by the non-Orthodox, either in the manner of its revelation, or in the careful and enthusiastic practice which is predicated on that manner of revelation.

*Do you feel that the categories, "Reform," "Conservative," and "Orthodox" have any meaning?*

DR. GREENBERG: "The main reality in these categories is an institutional one."

S. D.: These categories have the most decisive meaning beside their institutional reality, as has just been indicated. The inability of the American Jewish layman to discern the basic philosophic gulf between Orthodoxy and non-Orthodoxy with regard to authentic revelation has resulted in serious consequences. The clearest delineation in this matter is vital, indeed crucial.

In his clarification Dr. Greenberg makes the point that "there are individual Jews who call themselves other names [than Orthodox] who accept halachah or are seeking to rediscover it for themselves." He makes the further plea that ideas should not be ignored "simply if labeled Conservative or Reform." Rather, "they should be judged on their merits as measured by a rich and complex understanding of the classic halachic tradition." Moreover, Dr. Greenberg concedes that he "exaggerated by ignoring the differential Orthodox obedience to halacha."

Certainly ideas *should* be judged on their merits rather than by their labels. Nor do I dispute that there may be a few *anomalous individuals* who accept hala-

chah while they describe themselves as being other than Orthodox. Yet it would be dangerous not to recognize the Reform and Conservative norm, which is non-acceptance of the authority of halachah. Dr. Greenberg, in focusing on the "differential Orthodox obedience to halachah," would have us view the difference statistically, or quantitatively. This ignores the fact that the Reform and Conservative movements were conceived by their originators in terms which go beyond quantitative adherence to halachah. The names "Reform" and "Conservative" were not given by statisticians, but by dissident thinkers whose criteria were conceptual, not statistical. Those who call themselves Reform or Conservative normally mean something very clear beyond their institutional loyalty. More important than obedience to halachah as a yardstick is the naturalistic conception of revelation of normative Reform and Conservatism, which is tantamount to non-revelation.

Those isolated few who do not call themselves Orthodox, while they seem to be Orthodox in practice and concept, cannot escape the description of collaborators with anti-Torah forces. Their refusal to call themselves Orthodox renders them, at best, inconsistent and anomalous, or, at worst, actual sectarians whose nearness to Orthodoxy is merely quantitative, external and misleading. Theirs is the onus to demonstrate that they are the former rather than the latter. Whether they should then be accepted by the Orthodox community is debatable. The resultant blurring of delineation is a weighty argument against such acceptance.

*What is the primary problem facing today's Orthodox community?*

According to Dr. Greenberg it is the need to come out of the European ghetto psychologically. However, in my view, the primary issue is how to contend with the overwhelming sociological forces of America which are working toward the religious assimilation of the Orthodox. Not merely the survival of individuals and groups who consider themselves Orthodox, but rather the survival of Orthodox teaching and practice in their Sinaitic purity, free from assimilated distortions, is the main issue. How can we produce classic *lomdim* who also have the breadth of mind and vision necessary for today's leadership? How can we have a viable laity, trained for survival in this age of automation, whose standards of *Talmud Torah* and *Yiras Shomayim* are not diluted by years of professional training and by intellectual and social contact with the world around them? How can the divergent groupings of authentic Orthodoxy effectively unite organizationally and communally, in order to better confront the monstrous voracity of American cultural assimilation? How can we protect ourselves and our children from the materialism, dishonesty and indecency of the dominant culture? How, in the face of many distracting interests,

can Torah study and performance of mitzvos remain the major enthusiasms of life, as authentic Judaism requires? The answers to these questions constitute the primary problem facing today's Orthodox community.

*Ideally, how does Orthodox Judaism believe that Jews can experience the Divine?*

I AGREE WITH DR. GREENBERG THAT "ORTHOODOXY believes that the Divine can be experienced through the observance of every halachah." However, he goes on to say that, in contrast to the Conservative movement which "changes halachah because popular opinion demands the change," he believes that "changes in halachah should not be the result of popular opinion, but the result of deliberate consideration by the *gedolim*."

Now the basic difference between Orthodoxy and Conservatism regarding changes in halachah is not whether these changes should be made by *gedolim* or by popular demand. Rather does the difference concern the very definition of halachah, indeed the essential nature of the Oral Torah.

Orthodoxy is based on the classic definition of the nature of *Torah Shebbeal Peh* found in the Talmud, *Geonim* and *Rishonim*. More recently the scholarly investigations of R. Isaac Halevi in his *Doroth Harishonim* have further illuminated this fundamental of Orthodoxy. Except for the *gezeros* and *takkanos*, the main corpus of the *Torah Shebbeal Peh* consists of:

- the detailed halachos revealed to Mosheh at Sinai concomitantly with the more general legal outlines of the Written Torah; and
- the conscientious *definition and application* of the body of revealed halachah to the specific cases that arose in successive generations. The crucial point is conscientious *definition and application*, not to be confused with subjective *interpretation*. The latter is often merely a form of judicial legislation—a new law. Since even the process of conscientious definition and application is carried out by human minds, subjectivity may sometimes enter the scene. However, the Divine Torah provided for this process, and sanctioned it, on the condition, of course, that the authorities sincerely strive for objectivity, and scrupulously avoid conscious distortion of the revealed halachah.

In contrast, the Conservatives subscribe to the heterodox views of Zacharias Frankel and Isaac Hirsch Weiss, who propounded theories of the post-Sinaitic origin of the very essence and substance of what we Orthodox call the revealed *Torah Shebbeal Peh*. It is only according to this un-Orthodox premise that one can logically call for basic "changes in halachah," whether they be the "result of popular opinion," or "the result of deliberate consideration by the *gedolim*."

Yet many who consider themselves Orthodox—in Eretz Yisroel and in America—subscribe to this non-

Orthodox conception. It is they who clamor for "changes in halachah" through the kind of legislative reinterpretation which may be proper for the United States Supreme Court, but improper for Torah leaders, whose only authority (except for making *new* decrees) extends to the objective *definition and application* of the received halachah. Thus, in connection with the alleged case of the refusal of a religious Jew in Jerusalem to desecrate the Shabbos on behalf of a non-Jew,\* Professor Jacob Katz, professor of Jewish social and educational history at the Hebrew University, wrote: "The Halachah is the legacy of previous ages whose general principles and details have been preserved in their original form, even when they have been rendered obsolete [!] by their legitimate interpreters. The preservation of the form accompanied by adaptation of the content to changing conditions has enabled the Halachah to act as a basis for a consciousness of the continuity of Judaism throughout its long history."

Yet this letter was quoted by *The Commentator* (the editors of which certainly consider themselves Orthodox) with approval and with the remark that Professor Katz is "himself an observant Jew." He may be an *observant* Jew, but his view of the continuity of Halachah by reinterpretation of its original intent in order to adapt to new conditions is *not* Orthodox.

The *Posekim* may indeed be implored to objectively define and apply the *received* halachah to the new situations that are constantly arising. This has always been their sacred task, as is recorded in their responsa. Naturally there must be no pressure, political or otherwise, to extract a "favorable" decision. Nor can there be any talk of a "thorough re-examination of the Shulchan Oruch," as Dr. Greenberg demands. This can be urged only on the premise of a non-Orthodox conception of *Torah Shebbeal Peh* (the Talmud, and the *Shulchan Aruch*, which is its compendium according to the authoritative understanding of the *Rishonim*), a premise which Dr. Greenberg, as an Orthodox rabbi, cannot accept.

CLASSICAL HALACHAH—TO ORTHODOXY—IS NOT AN ALL-purpose instrument to be used freely in the service of general Torah values by translating them into concrete laws. There has always been an area of general *hashkafah-values*, *middos* and *musar*, which were not concretized in the specific details of the Divinely-revealed legal system of the *Torah Shebbeal Peh* (halachah), but were the domain of the Agadah. The *legalistic* application of the revealed halachah to the specific cases of successive generations is in the main a *judicial*, not a *legislative*, function. In the process of defining and applying the revealed halachic details to specific cases, general Torah values inevitably entered the picture at times. Fundamentally, however, the halachic process of definition and application was intended for what Dr. Greenberg complains are "technical and procedural issues." Dr. Greenberg's demand to apply

\* See: איח סימן ש"ל, סעיף ד', ומשנה ברורה ס"ק ח'.

the classical process to "the areas of quantitative modern experience and broader thought and value issues, [war, poverty, civil rights, welfare capitalism and manufacture control] which are the strongest challenges today" can consistently be made only in line with the non-Orthodox theories of substantive, post-Sinaitic halachic creation. The point here is not that Dr. Greenberg subscribes to these theories of Frankel and Weiss, but that he fails to realize that his demand of "halachic change," in which term he includes "expansion, adaptation, changes in strategy, as well as re-evaluation of halachot," is logically consonant only with those theories. He is in gross error when he thinks that "our historic Gedolim have led this process," or that this process becomes consistent with Orthodoxy because of his concluding sentence: "Naturally I am speaking of using halachic norms and this is clearly stated in my answer to question #4 in my interview"—in which he states that "changes in halachah should not be the result of popular opinion, but the result of deliberate consideration by the gedolim." Indeed, his very approach is tenable only outside the halachic norm, outside the halachic process as taught by classical Orthodoxy.

*How can Orthodoxy — halachic Judaism — become relevant in America?*

ACCORDING TO DR. GREENBERG, WE MUST FIRST recognize the challenge and the opportunity of becoming more fully integrated into the democratic society of America by changing the ghetto attitudes that foster indifference to the larger community. "For example," states Dr. Greenberg, "we should recognize that it is our religious responsibility to participate in the current civil rights struggle."

Let us be clear about what is meant by becoming "relevant in America." If it means a growing participation in the American non-Jewish *community*, such "relevance" would be suicidal. Even the Hirschian approach of *Torah im Derech Eretz* never intended to lessen the force of: "Lo, it is a people that shall dwell apart, and not reckon itself among the nations" (*Bamidbar* 13:9). R. Samson Raphael Hirsch comments on this passage: "It will live in an insulated land without much intercourse with other nations, living its 'internal' mission as *am* as a national social body."

Halachically this is expressed in the intentional *eruv* difficulties that the Sages put in the way of Jews living in the same courtyard with a non-Jew. The Sages discouraged such contact "lest one learn from his (the non-Jew's) acts" (*Erubin* 62a). Such an attitude does not, as Dr. Greenberg asserts, reflect "cowardice" or "that our beliefs are shallow," but rather a realistic evaluation of sociological principles. The detail and the intensiveness of the Torah's requirements can be carried out as a viable tradition only in a psychologically separate, non-integrated community. G-d

"One must settle in the end for pleasing oneself," the Rabbi was continuing . . . "Oneself—and to be sure, one's God." Was there a tone of apology as he said the final word? . . .

"But you must excuse me . . ." the Rabbi responded, struggling to bring his wristwatch up into view out of the surrounding tangle of elbows and arms and fists full of whiskey glasses that had already begun to slop over onto the purple and gold and green of his prayer shawl. "In just fifty-five minutes I must be on the plane for Alabama. Selma, you know." At this evocation of the spirit of Civil Rights, his face lit up with a glow as it had not at the earlier mention of God.

THE LAST JEW IN AMERICA  
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gave His Torah to *Yisrael* as His *am* to carry it out as an *am*, a separate national (or at least communal) social body. Our Torah mission is to testify to G-d's truth to the world as a model, non-integrated community.

There are then three approaches to Orthodox relevance in America. Isolationism rejects the idea that Orthodox Jews must in any way relate to the total surroundings of the age. Some of the greatest Jews have been, and still are, advocates of this approach. At the other extreme are those who, like Dr. Greenberg, would risk integration into the very fabric of the American community, while clinging (or attempting to cling) to Orthodox teaching and practice. This course has no record of success in Jewish history. Indeed, such an accomplishment would fly in the face of sociology. The third path is that of non-integrated adaptation, which is the Hirschian approach as I understand it.

According to this method, Orthodox Jews live their own communal life, which is unintegrated religiously, socially, culturally and *psychologically*. Within this community, however, there is an awareness of the intellectual and cultural trends of the nation and of the world, and a conscious reaction to these currents. The reaction may be positive or negative, an acceptance or a rejection of the surrounding norms. But even when the contributions of the wider milieu are accepted, they serve only as cultural raw material for the implementation of *Torah life* through Orthodox forms of expression.

Yet, as Rav Hirsch writes, "this isolation is only an illusion. Judaism imbues its adherents with an all-embracing love . . . that offers always the warmest, fondest sympathy for all human suffering and human hope . . . Torah-true Jews are 'isolationists' whose very strength centers in the knowledge that, together with them, all men walk towards the Kingdom of G-d on earth wherein will dwell truth and love, justice and sanctity."

Thus, the non-integrated Orthodox Jews will be concerned with the nation's policies, domestic and foreign, and will say and do what should be said and what can be done to insure the justice and wholesomeness of those policies. However, they will do this without violating their *am*-character—without entering into non-Jewish groups and their activities. The Orthodox Jewish community will, of course, express friendship to the non-Jewish community for "the ways (of the Torah) are ways of pleasantness and peace." Civic duty is enjoined upon us by our heritage. But all this will be done from within the framework of a non-integrated Orthodox community, which glories in its religious, social and cultural isolation.

THUS, IN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF RELEVANCE, Orthodoxy does not seek to become relevant in *America*. Instead it wants America to become relevant in *the Jewish community* to the extent that the unchanging Torah be applied to the American raw material (when it is not objectionable), transforming it into Torah modes of living. Through this non-integrated adaptation, the American Torah modes will vary from those of Israeli Jews, or British Jews, or any other Jews, but only as *modes*, only as variants of *minhag*, so to speak—never as essentials.

I believe this process of non-integrated adaptation has ever been going on in our history, even—to some extent—among communities that held a seemingly "isolationist" viewpoint. It should not, however, be confused with *integrated* adjustment, which leads only to ultimate assimilation. In the past, when religious differences were deemed important—even when there was no persecution—there was little opportunity for Jews at large to make anything but a non-integrated adjustment. In modern times the situation has changed. We must now cultivate the separate *am* concept.

If I may be permitted a personal reference, I have always been deeply stirred by American history, tradition, and principles. I am patriotic in a sense that is almost old-fashioned among the literate today. But I nevertheless deeply feel that the moment we Jews think of ourselves as part of the American *am*, instead of *Am Hashem* (and one cannot belong to two *ammim*), we have started the process of disintegration and final assimilation. We must be an American *Am Hashem*, not Jewish members of the American *am*!

As a second step toward making Orthodox Judaism relevant in America Dr. Greenberg suggests:

Orthodoxy must train a body of scholars—especially in Biblical criticism. We should acknowledge a debt to Bible critics. They have shown that the Torah is not toneless, but has elements in common with the temporal experience of the ancient Near East. This does not undermine our faith because the Jewish idea of a holy life is the proper utilization of the temporal. However, contemporary scholarship denies G-d and sees *only*\* the temporal qualities of the ancient Jew. We need Jewish scholars who assume that *man can relate to G-d*. This type of Jewish scholarship would illuminate our

\* Emphasis in this passage is mine—S.D.

understanding of the ancient Jew; it would enable us to understand the exact point of meeting between the Divine and the temporal. We would be able to see how the ancient Jew utilized the temporal in a Divine manner . . . We need to undertake Biblical scholarship in order to more fully understand our own revelation. We should be committed by faith to the Torah as Divine revelation, but what we mean by 'Divine revelation' may be less external or mechanical than many Jews now think.

When I first read this passage I viewed it in the context of the statement by Dr. Greenberg at the previously-mentioned Symposium on Jewish Religious Unity. To this symposium, Jacob Petuchowski, professor of rabbinics at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati (Reform), submitted a paper which contained the following words.

One of the most encouraging answers to those questions [i.e., What do we conscious Jews have in common? To what kind of greater unity may we yet aspire?] has recently been given by Eliezer Berkovits, in the magazine Tradition. Writes Berkovits:

The Ikkarim (principles) that should determine ideological divisions in Israel should be so formulated as to leave the gates wide open for communication with the broadest possible sections of Kelal Yisrael. We suggest that the recognition of three principles is sufficient to become the foundation of ideological unity. They are belief in a personal G-d, in *Torah min hashamayim* (that the Torah was revealed by G-d to Israel) and *Torah shebe'al peh*, the inseparable connection between the Written Torah and the Oral tradition. Jews who acknowledge these principles, even though they may disagree with each other in matters of interpretation, should be looked upon as belonging to the same ideological grouping. Once the basic principles are affirmed, differences in interpretation should not be permitted to become dividing walls between Jew and Jew.

(Tradition, Vol. VII, No. 2, Summer 1965, p. 80.)

To all of this I can only say, 'Amen and Amen!' In the essentials which Berkovits has singled out, he has, I believe, laid the foundations of the future religious unity of Israel. There is little I could add by way of improving on his formulation. Perhaps I would have liked him to be a little more specific in spelling out the difference between what he calls 'principle' and what he calls 'interpretation.' If, for example, *Torah min hashamayim*, as a 'principle' permits of the kind of interpretation which Louis Jacobs gives to it [An interpretation which accepts Higher Criticism, and which the London Beth Din properly considered heretical and inconsistent with Orthodoxy—S.D.], then it is a 'principle' which I can and do accept. (I would even allow the 'mechanical' (italics mine) view of Revelation as a possible and legitimate 'interpretation' of that 'principle.') But if the 'principle' itself is meant to commit us to fundamentalism—as the London *beth din* means it to commit us—then, of course, the 'principle' itself could not be one of the foundations of a future religious unity. Again, if the centrality of *Torah shebe'al peh* can legitimately be understood in the way in which Zacharias Frankel understood it, it would be a suitable 'foundation.' But if the 'principle' itself is meant to commit us to the position of a Samson Raphael Hirsch [Who criticized Frankel for having essentially departed from the principle of *Torah Shebe'al Peh Min Hashamayim*—S.D.], then, obviously, it could not serve as a foundation of religious unity.

In the discussion that followed the reading of the papers Prof. Greenberg commented: "There is nothing\* in Professor Petuchowski's words that I felt could not be fully acceptable to Orthodoxy—as it will look

after going through the modern experience, and possibly even now within many circles of Orthodoxy. It is a matter of degree at that point whether a person keeps part or all of the mitzvot. I fear, however, that this agreement is a rather misleading one, because when we get down to the hard question of specifics—what we mean by Covenant, what we mean by G-d and so on—there is where the sticky points will stick."

In the subsequent discussion Dr. Michael Wyschogrod, assistant professor of philosophy at the College of the City of New York, and a member of the editorial staff of *Tradition*, remarked: "I had planned to remain silent at this meeting for the simple reason that my good friend Irving Greenberg has been expressing my own views so well, and I so deeply and profoundly agree with everything he has said."

(All the foregoing in *Judaism*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Spring 1966.)

It seemed to me that when Dr. Greenberg spoke of a Divine revelation that "may be less\* external or mechanical" he was associating himself with Dr. Petuchowski's rejection of "the 'mechanical' view of Revelation." The latter denies "mechanical" revelation completely; Dr. Greenberg feels that revelation may be less "mechanical" than many now think. It was in this sense, it seemed, that he could say: "There is nothing in Professor Petuchowski's words that I felt could not be fully acceptable to Orthodoxy—as it will look after going through the modern experience" (presumably, after it will undertake modern Biblical scholarship).

THIS UNDERSTANDING OF DR. GREENBERG'S WORDS, ALSO seemed to clarify how Orthodoxy, by training a body of scholars in Biblical criticism, could become more relevant in America. Modern naturalistic thought—Jewish and non-Jewish—heretically rejects *Torah Min Hashamayim* as the literal, objective phenomenon of "And the Lord spoke to Mosheh," which is the very basis of Orthodox Judaism. Thus Orthodoxy cannot become relevant to modern thinking in America unless it modifies its classical, "mechanical" view of Revelation, which is too fundamentalist for modern *apikorsim* to accept.

This reading of the passage also seemed to explain several other nuances of expression.

Naturally the Torah "has elements in common with the temporal experience of the ancient Near East." Who has not heard of the Code of Hammurabi? Dr. Greenberg says: "This does not undermine our faith because"—because what? We would say: "because at the time of *Mattan Torah* G-D REVEALED to us how the temporal Semitic context was to be accepted, modified, rejected, or by-passed. Dr. Greenberg says: "because the Jewish idea of a holy life is the proper utilization of the temporal."

\* Emphasis in this passage is mine—S.D.

"We need Jewish scholars who . . ."—we would conclude: "are convinced that G-d has revealed the Torah to man." Dr. Greenberg concludes: "who assume that *man* (my emphasis) can relate to G-d."

From Dr. Greenberg's words it seemed that understanding: a) "the ancient Jews;" b) "the exact point of meeting between the Divine and the temporal;" c) "how the ancient Jew utilized the temporal in a Divine manner" (for which reason his faith is not undermined); and d) "our own revelation . . . [which] may be less external or mechanical than many Jews now think," are synonymously, and that this understanding will be that fruit of a new type of Jewish Biblical scholarship. The stress seemed to be man-oriented ("the ancient Jew"). We, on the other hand, do not require an improved Jewish scholarship to "enable us to understand the exact point of meeting between the Divine and the temporal." The Semitic temporal ends and the Divine begins with the words: "And the Lord said to Mosheh—Now *these* are the *mishpatim* which you shall set before them" (*Sh'mos* 20:19-21:2).

The only other possible interpretation of Dr. Greenberg's words—that he was arguing *only* for an acceptance of the fact that G-d gave us the Torah in a Semitic temporal context—failed to take into account the above-mentioned man-oriented nuances. Moreover, the viewpoint that G-d gave us the Torah in a temporal Semitic context (Code of Hammurabi, etc.) is widely accepted even among "fundamentalists" like the present writer. Why, then, the impassioned plea for a new type of scholarship? Nor could this interpretation explain—except by tortuous reasoning—how such a viewpoint would make Orthodoxy more relevant in America. The whole tenor of Dr. Greenberg's argument seemed to be about a more basic issue.

Nevertheless, in his later clarification Dr. Greenberg wrote concerning "Revelation—and Bible Criticism" (one of the three main areas of protest and criticism of his statements, which indicates that many had understood the words as I had):

On this I specifically reject the liberal religious solution to the conflict of criticism and faith which answers that Torah is merely the product of humans 'inspired by G-d.'—But contemporary Biblical scholarship (Wellhausen has been dead now for a long time) has enriched our understanding of the meaning of Tanach—and this despite its secular, humanist bias. I anticipate an even greater enrichment when we develop our own Biblical scholarship by men who believe that G-d does communicate with man [a different stress and direction from "Jewish scholars who assume that man can relate to G-d"—S.D.] but who will not work from an apologetic or stereotyped base.—Still we cannot blink that the Torah has been placed in the setting of the ancient Near East by contemporary scholarship. My comment that Divine revelation 'may be less external or mechanical than many Jews think' [the original passage read "than many Jews *now* think"—S.D.] simply means that I believe we can legitimately move from the assertion that the Torah was given totally without reference to the actual human situation in which it was given.—In addition, I believe that we need generations of our own scholarship to explore and illuminate the entire Tanach. Nor need we block such scholarship *a priori* from encountering the theses of contemporary scholarship and evidence. There

will be time enough to evaluate whether this new scholarship will give us acceptable conclusions or even will deepen our faith. I believe that we can be disciplined enough to reject conclusions that do not meet our tests of validity when, and if, this becomes necessary."

Despite the aforementioned difficulties engendered by this clarification of Dr. Greenberg's original intent (the charge has been implied in print and heard orally that the entire clarification, on other issues as well, is so inconsonant with the plain meaning of the original passages that it constitutes more of a retraction than a clarification), we must, of course, accept the author's clarification in good faith. Yet Dr. Greenberg must accept responsibility for having used language with misleading connotations.

But even the clarifying statements are characteristically rash. To advocate a non-apologetic approach to Bible criticism, with the implied free speculation inherent in such an approach, with only the reservation that "there will be time enough to evaluate" later, and in the belief that "we can be disciplined enough to reject conclusions . . . when, and if, this becomes necessary," is to substitute non-Jewish standards of study for those of Torah Judaism. The only permissible course of study where the principles of *emunah* are involved is an *a priori* acceptance of the Divine Torah as our historically received truth, and an *a priori* rejection of *apikorsus*, for the apologetic purpose of confirming our *emunah* and refuting the *apikorsim*.\*

THE CONCLUSION CANNOT BE AVOIDED that a *new trend* is asserting itself under the leadership of men who are expert in the jargon and vagaries of modern theologians like Barth, Tillich and Buber, but not in the *depths* of the Talmud and the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. Dr. Berkovits not only reduces the thirteen *Ikkarim* of Classical Orthodoxy to three (not even the three of Albo); he also leaves them open to the widest interpretation, so that the non-Orthodox can accept them according to their vitiating views. Professor Petuchowski pounces upon this opportunity to explain Revelation according to the notions of a Louis Jacobs, not the London Beth Din, and *Torah Shebbeal Peh* according to Zacharias Frankel, not Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Dr. Greenberg feels "there is nothing in Professor Petuchowski's words that . . . could not be fully acceptable to Orthodoxy—as it will look after going through the modern experience." And Professor Wyschogrod agrees "with his good friend Irving Greenberg . . . deeply and profoundly." In their desire to become relevant and more acceptable to the non-Orthodox intellectuals, they will become alienated from the authentically Orthodox (as they would have it, "fundamentalists").

Fundamentalists we are indeed in the original sense of the word. We hold the thirteen *Ikkarim* to be fundamental to Torah Judaism, without the self-defeating

\* ספר האמונות והדעות לרב סעדיה גאון, הקדמת המחבר.



interpretations of Jacobs, Petuchowski and company. Also fundamental—Classical Orthodoxy historically has accepted instruction on *Ikkarim* only from those whose main area of study was the Talmud, in which they were the accepted experts. It is for this reason that Rambam and Ramban are decisive to Orthodox thinking. Certainly not Karl Barth and Paul Tillich, or Martin Buber. Not even Dr. Berkovits and his colleagues!

THE ASSIMILATORY PRESSURES AND THE LACK OF CLASSIC *lomdus* make it inevitable that a trend of pseudo-Orthodoxy will, sooner or later, emerge in America. When that time comes—and perhaps it has already come—we must have the moral stamina and the religious courage, despite personal considerations, to

draw the line clearly between modern *Orthodoxy* (that is, Classical Orthodoxy in modern times) and *Orthodox Modernism* (that is, modernism couched in Orthodox forms). We must speak out fearlessly against those who speak out recklessly.

The real future of Orthodoxy depends on the increasing number of the true *Bnei Torah* and their families, not on the philosophical professors or the professorial theologians. Surely a way must, and can, be found to unite all true *Bnei Torah* organizationally in a manner that overrides all other demarcations, without necessarily obliterating them. The old organizational arrangements have proved, it seems to me, inadequate. The staggering assimilatory challenge to authentic Orthodoxy must be met with constructive unity. □

N. L. Rabinovitch

## ***It Is a Future For a Jewish Boy!***

### **A Rabbi Explodes Some Myths About the American Rabbinate**

MYTHS DIE HARD. Long after the kernel of truth which gave rise to them has evaporated they continue to influence opinions and shape attitudes. When they stand in the way of a constructive evaluation of reality, they can be downright dangerous.

American Jewry suffers the ill-effects of such a mythology. So great is its power that it poisons the minds of some of our best Torah youth, distorts their vision and destroys their initiative. It feeds on escapism and cultivates superciliousness and endangers the future of our community.

These are strong words indeed! What myths are these with might so great? You can hear their echo in every Yeshivah in America. Just mention to a *Ben Torah* the possibility of becoming a rabbi — a real honest-to-goodness rabbi, leading a congregation; not a salesman sporting a title in the phone-book and at *simchas*—and you will be greeted with a look of amazement and mystification. If your respondent suspects that you are yourself indeed a rabbi, a coloratura of pity and no small measure of contempt will come

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RABBI N. L. RABINOVITCH contributed In Witness Thereof . . . A Plea for the Use of Choshen Mishpat in Jewish Life, to our September, 1965 issue. He is the rabbi of the Clanton Park Synagogue in Ontario, Canada, and appears frequently in various Jewish periodicals.

into his voice. If, fortunately, he is unaware what you are, a little skillful questioning will bring out the details of the mythology of the *Rabbi in America*.

It is axiomatic, almost, that the nemesis of the rabbi is the Schul president. The president twists the poor rabbi around his little finger. The rabbi is entirely at the mercy of his president. Of course, the president is an ignoramus and although rich, he is very stingy. The rabbi's paltry salary is doled out by the president as if it were a personal grant. Nobody, but nobody, is interested in Yiddishkeit and the rabbi dares not talk about any obligations imposed by Torah. There are no *she'elos*, since nobody cares enough to ask. Learning is taboo and besides, even if the rabbi wanted to study Torah on the sly he doesn't have time to spare from the Sisterhood and the Junior girls and the Brotherhood and "young-marrieds" and the fund-raising committee and the . . . *ad infinitum*.

The implications are obvious. If you want to be a *Yrai Shomayim* and a *Talmud Chochom*—and which *Ben Torah* doesn't?—spend your years in the Yeshivah learning diligently. But, shy away from studying *Shulchan Aruch*—THAT smells of the Rabbinate.

The true status symbol of Torah is learning *Kodshim*. It matters little that you don't know basic laws concerning Shabbos or family life—the genuine *Kollel'nik*

needs to know the rites of the sacrifices in the *Bais Hamikdosh*.

After you leave the Yeshivah, go into real-estate or insurance. This way you will be spared all the temptations and compromises which mar the career of a rabbi, and you will be able to make a good living and learn Torah as well.

It is high time that this myth of the *Rabbi in America* is exposed as the pack of lies that it is. If it is not, the time is not far distant when the majority of American Jewry will be beyond the reach of Torah, G-d forbid, simply because in the absence of true rabbis, others are usurping their role and leading our people away from Torah.

Being a rabbi myself and having served in this capacity for fifteen years, both in a small Southern community and more recently in a large city, I feel that I know the position of the *Rabbi in America* as well as anybody, and I take the liberty, therefore, of listing the falsehoods that becloud so much of our thinking on this subject.

#### LIE NO. 1: *Rabbi vs. President.*

In my career I have worked with quite a few presidents and have known many more. Almost to a man, they are sincere, intelligent, and well-educated. Of course, some have very little Jewish knowledge, but they are active in the Synagogue because they are interested in things Jewish and they want to learn.

It is true that in the early days the president of a Schul was often an *am-ha-aretz* such as the myth describes. That was often so during the immigrant period. An *am-ha-aretz* then was a total ignoramus without education or refinement who happened to be a bully and thus got into a position of leadership in the only area he could—the Schul.

That era is long past. Today, with very few exceptions, the Synagogue leadership consists of people with considerable intellectual and professional attainments. Were it not for their genuine concern for the Jewish people and its future, they could find a field for their communal efforts in a hundred different organizations. They come to the Synagogue because they feel it is the fountain of Jewish life and they are anxious to drink its life-giving waters. They look to the rabbi for a positive example of Jewish living and inspiration.

#### LIE NO. 2: *The Rabbi suffers indignity and is poorly paid to boot.*

If there is any single temptation that is the rabbi's greatest, it is *kovod* (status). The entire community looks to him for guidance. He is their confidant in gladness and in sorrow. No function is regarded as complete unless it is graced by the rabbi's presence, or at least by a message from him. Many are the rabbis who encourage this trend to ridiculous lengths, simply

to feed their insatiable egos. Apparently they too believe the myth and need to constantly disprove it.

And as for salary, certainly if one's desire in life is to be a millionaire, let him not hide under a cloak of *Yiras Shomayim!* (He might as well become a Conservative "rabbi" and aim for fifty-thousand a year!) The average Orthodox rabbi today earns a decent salary, comparing favorably with other professionals, and unless he wants to, has no need to degrade himself and his office by *schnorring* from the living and the dead.

#### LIE NO. 3: *Opportunities for learning Torah and fulfilling it are greater in business than in the Rabbinate.*

The story is told about R. Yisroel Salanter, that he decided to open a shop to avoid the pitfalls of temptation. When he realized how many are the occasions that present themselves to violate numerous commandments and laws in the *Choshen Mishpat*, he decided that if one has to fight the *Yetzer Hara* anyhow, it is better to do so while helping to mold the Torah-character of future generations, rather than to struggle with temptation only to make a few dollars.

How many Day-Schools and Yeshivohs would survive if not for the active support of congregational rabbis? And how many individuals would be lost to Torah if not for the direction and impetus given by their rabbis?

As for the opportunity to learn Torah, the rabbi who wants to study can do so more readily than in any other field. And his people will revere him for it. The fabled multiplicity of a rabbi's duties is largely of his own making and there are today in America a number—unfortunately, too few—of rabbis who study Torah diligently and who have earned the respect not only of their colleagues, but more especially of their congregants. There are many reasons for this but perhaps the most important has to do with —

#### LIE NO. 4: *Nobody asks She'-eylos.*

How many times have I come across this canard in conversation and in print as well! Talking with *Bnai Yeshivah*, I often urge them to study *Schulhan Aruch*, not only for themselves but because it will be needed by the community. Invariably they ask: "What for? Who asks *She'-eylos* nowadays?"

Of course, if the rabbi believes the myth himself—and sad to say, many do—his people quickly sense that he is not concerned with *She'-eylos*. Those who care in spite of him go elsewhere, and many of those who *would* care, learn not to. Nonetheless, the thirst for Torah guidance is constantly growing and, if they know that their questions will be treated sympathetically and knowledgeably, many will ask.

Naturally, the average rabbi, unless he is connected with a slaughter-house, will have few, if any, questions in *Treyfos*. The centralization and modernization of

the meat industry has removed most of these matters from the purview of the individual rabbi. But *Treyfos*, after all, is only a section of *Yoreh Deah* and there are three parts more to the *Schulchan Aruch* as well!

Why talk in generalities? Every week I am asked an average of twenty or so *She'-eylos*. Here is a typical list.

1. A man planted gooseberries in his garden. Does ערלה and נטע רבעי apply?
2. Is it permissible to take "the pill"?
3. May two brothers celebrate their weddings on the same day?
4. How should a היתר עיסקא be written for a mortgage?
5. May a bride go to the *Mikveh* on the seventh day?
6. For a non-dangerously sick person, may ordinary gelatin be permitted?
7. A couple is going on a cruise. What procedure must be followed if the ship leaves the home port on Shabbos and docks on Shabbos?
8. A firm finds that a number of its clients have credit balances less than one dollar. They have been notified many times and have not bothered to collect or deduct from subsequent payments. It is a nuisance to carry such balances. May they be written off?
9. A woman is vacationing on a lake over a hundred miles from the nearest *Mikveh*. May she use the lake for *Tvilah*?
10. Must one set aside תרומות ומעשרות from Israeli oranges?
11. If a jobber promises a customer to get him a discount from the manufacturer, does this include the jobber's own discount as well?
12. How far up the sideburns may one shave?
13. May an automatic oven be opened on Shabbos?

This list does not include, for obvious reasons, certain difficult questions about *Niddah*, nor the questions that arise out of the usual rabbinical functions in weddings, *gittin*, etc.

Obviously, some of these questions are quite simply answered. It is an explicit ruling in a specific section of the *Schulchan Aruch*. But a few require a good deal of thought and analysis. In what other profession is a man so challenged to study Torah?

Enough of lies! Let the myths be buried and forgotten! And let our Yeshivah students remember that precisely because they are learning Torah, they bear an awesome responsibility to the entire community which is making it possible for them to become *B'nai Torah*. Even if true *mesiras nefesh* were required in the rabbinate, even if great sacrifices had to be made, it would still be our duty to bring Torah to Jews. How much greater then is our obligation, now that the office of Rabbi carries with it prestige, status, economic security and unlimited potential for growth in Torah both for the rabbi himself and for his people?

*A Report by Jerome Kerzner*

## Teen-Age Attitudes Toward Jewish Life

*The survey of Jewish Teen-Agers' attitudes in regard to their sense of identification with Jewish life and the Jewish community which was conducted in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, has been widely discussed. We asked RABBI JEROME KERZNER of Wilkes-Barre to give us a first-hand report of the survey and its implications for Orthodox Jewry. Rabbi Kerzner is the spiritual leader of Congregation Ohev Zedek and is intimately associated with the Yeshiva High School in Scranton.*

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY is deluged with a proliferation of surveys, studies, and analytical discussions of the nature and direction of its various component elements. One such survey was recently conducted under the sponsorship of the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Community Center in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Wilkes-Barre is a typical, medium-sized Jewish community, numbering about 5,400 Jews in a city with a total population of 350,000 people, and the purpose of the study was to determine the attitudes and values of teen-agers in relation to their sense of identification with Jewish life and the Jewish community.

The problems reflected in this study are symptomatic of the complex challenges we face throughout the United States. While it is true that in certain areas of heavy concentration of Orthodox Jews, Jewish life in all its ramifications pulsates with great vigor and vitality, it should be abundantly obvious that the overwhelming majority of our brethren live outside such Jewishly-fortified enclaves. The American Jew lives in an open, free, hospitable, and secular society and we must somehow reckon with these conditions as we entertain ways and means to combat the tidal waves of assimilation that are engulfing so many of our brothers and sisters.

It should be noted that while the study includes teen-agers affiliated with the Orthodox Synagogue, we have no breakdown as to the attitudes of our children who attended the Day School. It must also be borne in mind that a substantial number of teen-agers whose participation could have drastically altered some of the statistics were out-of-town studying in various Yeshivos. It would be very informative if we could further explore

this area of interest and discover the values of those teen-agers who studied in the Day School.

The response of teen-agers must to some extent be evaluated in the broader context of generational conflict based on rebellion against authority, mutual misunderstanding, and lack of communication between parents and children. We cannot, however, evade the conclusion that these responses reflect an alienation and estrangement from Judaism which is most alarming.

It is not here our purpose to go into any comprehensive review of the study's findings but rather to indicate major critical areas of distorted thinking and reaction.

The respondents in one section of the questionnaire dealing with *What Do You Think Makes a Good Jew?* were asked to check items which they considered ESSENTIAL, DESIRABLE BUT NOT ESSENTIAL, or IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE. These replies give us some insight into the definition of Jewishness held by these young people and may serve as a barometer for measuring the success of Jewish parents in transmitting their values without the help of intensive Jewish schooling.

The following matters were deemed to be ESSENTIAL by teen-age respondents in the percentages indicated.

1. Belief in G-d — — — — — 96%
2. Accept being a Jew and try not to hide it 89%
3. Attend services on High Holiday days — 86%
4. Belong to a Synagogue — — — — — 80%
5. Lead an ethical or normal life — — — — 79%
6. To know the fundamentals of Judaism — 66%
7. Gain respect of Christian neighbors — — 65%
8. Marry within the Jewish faith — — — — 60%
9. Work for equality for all minority groups— 32%
10. Promote general civic improvement — — 29%
11. Support all humanitarian causes — — — 25%
12. Observe dietary laws — — — — — 25%
13. Attend weekly services — — — — — 20%
14. Support Israel — — — — — 20%
15. Contribute to Jewish philanthropies — — 19%

While these percentages constitute the statistical averages of all teen-agers, the Orthodox group scored relatively higher in many crucial areas of observance and commitment to Judaism. For example, the response to the question whether observing dietary laws was essential to being a good Jew: 44% of the Orthodox youngsters said "Yes," while only 16% of youngsters from Conservative background answered "Yes." In answer to the question as to whether observing dietary laws was desirable but not essential: Almost all the Orthodox youngsters said "Yes." Despite these differences, it must be admitted, however, that the results from the Orthodox group were far from satisfying in many significant areas of concern. The word "Orthodox" does not necessarily connote an observant Orthodox home, but simply affiliation with the Orthodox Synagogue.

The figure which shocked even those people who are not Orthodox was that only 60% felt that it was essential for a Jew to marry within his own faith. The other 40% who seemed to feel otherwise, are potentially harboring thoughts which are pernicious to Jewish survival.

The non-Orthodox could also not comprehend that with all the adult support and fervor for the State of Israel and Jewish charitable endeavors, there should be such a small percentage of teen-agers who feel that this constitutes an essential activity. It seems quite evident that many of these attitudes and values reflect to a considerable degree the attitude of a fumbling and ambivalent adult community which wants to maintain marginal and sentimental ties to Judaism but lacks ultimate commitment to make these values an indispensable ingredient in their lives.

The study also indicates a gradual drop-off in synagogue attendance as the teen-agers become older. Bar Mitzvah ominously serves as a tapering-off point in regular attendance at synagogue. The youngsters, despite the fact that they appeared satisfied with their Jewish education (or lack of education), nevertheless indicated that they would like to know more about such subjects as Jewish Philosophy and History and modern Jewish life.

The authors of the study make the conventional recommendations to:

(a) De-emphasize the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, and to focus the community's efforts to formulate a program of Post-Bar-Mitzvah Jewish Schooling in social-scientific aspects of Judaism.

(b) Establish a program of small group discussions where the ethical and moral values of Judaism can be communicated and openly discussed.

(c) Have the parents pay increased attention to those behavior patterns reflecting ongoing concern with Jewish observances, as models to be emulated by their children.

While anything that is done to call attention to this problem and while all efforts, no matter how feeble, to strengthen and intensify the teen-agers' participation in the mainstream of Jewish living should be encouraged, it should be obvious to everybody that the kind of massive threat that results from the overwhelming array of de-Judaizing and conformist pressures in our society, cannot be vanquished by half-hearted and peripheral efforts.

Anyone who is engaged on the Jewish battle scene really needs no statistics to be aware of the stark ignorance and abysmal apathy that permeate the American Jewish community. One sees these battle casualties daily and is constantly confronted by the corrosive impact of their mentality. On the other hand, those who are overcome with a sense of despair and futility, and, therefore, preach the doctrine of withdrawal and spiritual ghettoization are in a sense con-

demning the overwhelming majority of *Klal Yisroel* to complete extinction.

While the Wilkes-Barre teen-age survey was publicized nationally, the American Jewish community as a whole may not know that in the same area the Orthodox Jewish community has produced the only effective antidote to the blind fury of Jewish illiteracy and the resulting assimilation. The Wilkes-Barre and Scranton Orthodox communities, more than a year ago established jointly the Milton Eisner Yeshiva High School of Northeastern Pennsylvania to supplement the elementary Jewish education now available in both local Day Schools. We need no surveys to tell us of the precious Jewish souls that are being saved for *Klal Yisroel*. We know of many youngsters whose lives are now Torah-directed and Torah-orientated as a result of the new school. The ancient prescription of injecting into our children a heavy dosage of Torah is still the

only valid response to today's difficult challenges. For Torah alone is capable of providing our young people with a cause that will give meaning and purpose to their lives in these troubled times. The task, of course, is arduous and the results will make no dramatic headlines. A cynical shrug of the shoulders and a sense of *bitul* surely will not help matters. These are times of profound intellectual ferment, times when young people especially are groping for meaning in a panic-stricken world. Young people are basically honest and have a revulsion against double standards and superficiality. They have an inner respect for true dedication and sincerity. It is to be hoped that a militant Orthodoxy will coordinate and encourage such activities on an ever broader scale, so that the teen-ager will be—not a conflicted young person torn between two cultures, but a vibrant young Jew staking his claim to the Torah heritage which is rightfully his. □

*Scholom Rivkin*

## **Yuchsin Records — A Crucial Need for Our Time**

A MOST PRESSING PROBLEM, which calls for immediate positive action, is facing the American Torah-community—a problem which we had better begin to face, and act upon, before it is—G-d forbid—too late. This is a problem which the non-Torah world is almost unaware of, and it has ramifications that are intelligible only to those who see reality and all its categories through the perspective of the Torah-Imperative. To the Halachah-minded, Torah-Imperative Jew, this problem has frightening, awesome consequences—consequences which become increasingly complicated and, thus, more awesome with every moment of neglect.

Briefly stated, this problem involves the complex, practical *halachic* questions resulting from the existence and creation, and unbelievable increase, of many types of forbidden marriages and unknown *yuchsin* (*yuchsin* referring to human birth lineage as defined by *halachah*) throughout the contemporary Jewish community.

Examples of these *yuchsin* problems are much too extensive to enumerate. But a sampling glimpse can give us some idea of the degree to which this problem is pressing in upon us. Those in the active rabbinate will immediately recognize the problems to which I

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RABBI SHOLOM RIVKIN is the rabbi of the famed Congregation Bikur Cholim, a bastion of Orthodox communal life in Seattle, Washington. He served as Associate Rabbi of the Bais Din of the Vaad Hoer in St. Louis, Missouri, and contributes frequently to scholarly Torah journals.

allude, and a brief moment of reflection—if the reflection be honest and serious—will point up the fact that I am here only *under-stating* rather than *over-stating* the serious proportions of the problem.

Here is a sampling of the types of problems to which I refer:

1. A married Jewish woman cannot remarry while her first husband is living, unless the bond of the first marriage was dissolved by a *halachically* valid *get* (Jewish-divorce). A woman who does re-marry without having first obtained a *get* from her previous husband commits a grievous sin, and any child resulting from the union (with or without a civil marriage) with the second man is a *mamzer* (“illegitimate”) who may not be married to a non-*mamzer*.

2. The marriage of a Jewish person to one who was not born Jewish is forbidden unless the non-Jewish person goes through a *halachically*-valid conversion. If the non-Jewish party-to-the-marriage is the woman, the child resulting from that union (whether by civil marriage or without it) is not Jewish.

3. A *kohain* (male-descendant, through exclusively male lineage, of Aaron the Priest) may not marry a woman whose prior marriage has been dissolved by a *get*. The child resulting from such a forbidden union is a *chahal* and is subject to a number of marriage restrictions and other limitations in connection with his *kehunah* (priesthood-lineage) status.

4. A child born from artificial insemination presents some serious questions regarding his (her) Jewishness and general *yuchsin* status. Not the least of these questions is the possibility that when one (and certainly when both) of the parties to the marriage is the result of artificial insemination—that two persons (e.g., a brother and sister) who are forbidden to each other, might unknowingly marry.

5. The *yuchsin* problems of adopted children need serious study in each particular case—so that the *halachic* status of each child—as regards Jewishness, *kehunah*, *mamzerus*, etc.—be determined clearly before the child becomes eligible for marriage.

Those who are concerned with the sacredness of the matter of *yuchsin* and are at the same time aware of the situation in the Jewish community, will realize how seriously these problems confront us. The terrible frequency with which these kinds of marriage-*yuchsin* questions confront us makes it necessary that we grapple with an approach to this problem—and *immediately!*

Determining and recording the facts of each case is, admittedly, not a simple task. It involves large numbers of people. It involves complexities of the laws of evidence and details of *birurim* (i.e., searching out and clarification of the facts). One can hardly overstate the amount of *halachic* research, added to the administrative work necessary to launch this recording effort. We can safely say that this work will not be completed—nor will it even approach completion—in a decade or two. Yet, the seriousness of the problem and the geometric proportion of its increase, make it imperative that we begin to cope with it *without delay!*

At present it seems highly unlikely that the four Orthodox Rabbinic organizations (the *Agudas Harabonim*, the *Hisachdus Harabonim*, the Rabbinical Council of America, and the *Igud Harabonim*) can work together harmoniously on everything. Regrettably, even inter-communication between these organizations—communication that is entirely open, that is based on genuine mutual respect, and that is at all times founded exclusively upon the pure intention to find more areas of co-operation toward strengthening Torah-Yiddishkeit—even this inter-communication still does not adequately take place. Who knows?—perhaps there is some advantage to the “competition” among organizations, the same type of advantage to which the Talmudic Sages allude when they tell us that “*kin’as soferim tarbeh chochmoh*” (competition among scholars increases wisdom)? Yet, because of some of the detrimental consequences of divisiveness, we would do good—I feel—to re-examine all areas of *kin’ah* and make sure that it be only pure and unadulterated *kin’as soferim* . . . and nothing else . . . (*V’day la’chakimoh birmizoh*).

But while we are compelled to accept *de facto* rabbinic organizational atomization on other levels, we

cannot afford to accept it as regards the harmonious working-together to clarify and record the matters of *yuchsin*. On this matter we dare not wait another moment, since the results of neglect are much too serious and much too far-reaching in their negative consequences. Certainly, the facts and the *halachos* of *yuchsin* can, and must, be viewed and clarified and recorded together by all Torah-committed groups. A central *yuchsin*-clearing-house must be established which should be presided over by a group of universally recognized *halachic*-authorities and which should gather the data necessary for ever-increasing detailed *yuchsin* records which should—in time—include more and more individual Jewish persons (man, woman and child). This *yuchsin*-clearing-house should have the co-operation, not only of all Torah-true *rabbinic* groups, but also of all Torah-committed *lay* organizations. Every rabbi should be obliged to furnish the information of *yuchsin*-data available to him; every non-rabbinic Torah-true organization—especially synagogues, both large and small—should be enlisted to co-operate in this endeavor. The *yuchsin*-clearing-house, in turn, should serve as the central resource to be consulted by rabbis and *batei-din* regarding *yuchsin*-matters which might confront them.

A few years ago, the Rabbinical Council of America took an important first step in this direction when it issued forms to be used by its members in connection with the performing of marriages. These forms call for detailed information concerning *yuchsin*-data in connection with the weddings performed. Yet, this is only a first step. For maximum effectiveness, the records must include not only weddings performed, but also *gittin* (Jewish religious divorces), *chalitzos*, conversions, adoptions, births (including details on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the birth, whether by artificial insemination, etc., ritual-circumcision, *pidyon-ha-ben*, names given, etc.). Moreover, these records must be kept, not only through one rabbinic organization, but—through the clearing house, with the co-operation of all *halachah*-committed rabbinic and lay organizations. It also will require the awareness and the cooperation of every Jew.

THE CHIEF RABBINATE IN ENGLAND has been keeping such records for over one hundred years. It is high time that we, in the United States and Canada, follow this example and that we begin setting up the organizational-machinery for the keeping of these records. We should also establish the modes of inter-communication, on matters concerning *yuchsin*, with the rabbinates of Israel and of all Jewish communities throughout the world.

(See *Be'er Hetev ad Eben Ha'Ezer* II, 4, where the necessity for clarifying the *yuchsin* of someone “who came from another land” is underscored. The *Be'er Hetev* there also tells that in *Medinos Litah* the custom

was not to perform a marriage for anyone "unless he has proof of his Jewishness and from which family" he comes. See also the Responsum of the *Giv'as Pinchas*—by the *Baal Haflo'oh*—no. 5, where it is related concerning the use, and degree of trustworthiness, of the *yuchsin*-records. There are indications that many Jewish communities throughout history had *yuchsin* records and that they played an important part in many aspects of clarifying lineage and other *yuchsin* information.)

To the Jew whose view of reality and whose daily practices are ever-guided by the Torah-Imperative, the ramifications of this problem are of utmost seriousness. According to our Sages, moreover, the very sacredness

of *Klal Yisroel*, and the presence of G-d in our midst—depend centrally upon the purity of our *yuchsin* (see, eg., *Kiddushin* 70b). Should not these considerations be sufficient to direct our immediate attention toward co-operating on this most sacred and most urgent endeavor *without delay*?

Even while we recognize that we cannot—in a few years—complete the entire recording task—we must, nevertheless, begin. With reference to Torah and Torah endeavors, we would do well always to remember what our Sages tell us (*Ovos* II, 21): "You are not called upon to complete the task. *But neither are you free to evade it!*"

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*A Holiday Study by Shubert Spero*

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## The Succah and the Way Back

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THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT WAYS of regarding the Festival of Succos. From the point of view of the observing Jew it is the *Yom Tov* which comes shortly after the awesome days of Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur. It is the holiday which occurs on the fifteenth day of that month whose first day and whose tenth day have already been set aside as most solemn occasions of judgment and repentance.

On the other hand, as the last of the three pilgrimage festivals; as one of the *Shalosh Regolim*, Succos stands on its own broad conceptual base, rich in ideas and significance even when considered in context-free isolation.

And yet, regardless of which of the above points of view we take, we shall arrive at a similar conclusion regarding the basic significance of Succos. What is most unusual is that the Torah itself seems to encourage such a bifurcated view of our Festival.

For after describing the holidays of Rosh Hashona and Yom Kippur the Torah continues: "and the Lord spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the people of Israel in this manner: On the fifteenth day of *this* seventh month shall be the Feast of Booths for seven days to the Lord. . . ." (*Vayikra* 23:33, 34). After three sentences pertaining to Succos, there comes the following summary passage which appears to bring to a close the entire section dealing with the festivals: "These are

the feasts of the Lord which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations. . . ." (*Vayikra* 23:37). Yet strangely enough, the very next sentence resumes with the laws of Succos: "But on the fifteenth day of *the* seventh month . . ." (*Vayikra*, 23:39) and continues for another four sentences. Thus the Torah itself in its presentation of the laws of Succos seems to divide it into two sections—one section which is linked to the other holy days of Tishrai ("on the fifteenth day of *this* seventh month") and the second section which is separated from the first by the . . . 'אלה מועדי ד', "These are the festivals of G-d." It would therefore appear that two different approaches to Succos are being suggested here.

In regard to the first aspect of Succos, a most seminal insight is suggested by a recent Jewish thinker: "*It is difficult to imagine that a way can lead back from Yom Kippur into the circuit of the year . . . to neutralize this foretaste of eternity, the Feast of Succos reinstates the reality of time.*"

Indeed Yom Kippur is Judaism's most serious attempt at a complete and thorough-going spiritualization. After many days of preparation, of *Slichose*-prayers and Rosh Hashona worship and after total immersion in that *Mikveh* of the spirit which is the day of Yom Kippur, the question *is* indeed, how can we find our way back? He who observes Yom Kippur seriously, has in a sense "died to the world." How can he find his way back to that every-day world without losing the precious harvest of the Yom Kippur experience; without going into "shock" because of the sudden and vast difference between the world of Yom Kippur and our every-day *Olom Hazeh*?

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RABBI SHUBERT SPERO'S *Holiday Studies* are widely read and appreciated by rabbis and laymen alike. He is the rabbi of Young Israel of Cleveland, and has published many booklets on various aspects of Torah life.

An apt analogy suggests itself here. When a deep-sea diver ascends from the depths he cannot immediately come to the surface because of the tremendous difference in pressure. Should he do so, he will become severely ill with what is known as the "bends." He must therefore spend some time in a decompression chamber which gradually prepares him for a return to the surface.

Perhaps the Succah is our *decompression chamber*. Fresh from Yom Kippur we dare not trust ourselves to enter our homes. Even the most spiritual of our homes are too worldly. Even with the *mezuzah* to remind us, it is extremely difficult to generate in the home an awareness of the presence of G-d. A Succah however is different. It is in its entirety built to *mitzvah*-specifications. We enter it on its own terms. We are, once we enter, completely immersed in a *mitzvah*. Yet it is already a step in the direction of the reality of our workday world. For that which was forbidden on Yom Kippur is now permitted in the Succah.

תשבו כעין תדורו, we are commanded to dwell in the Succah as we do at home. We bring our food, our society into the Succah, which thus serves as a bridge from the rarefied atmosphere of the awesome days to the involved environment of our Jewish homes.

Our Sages indeed saw this as the very purpose of the *Yom Tov* of Succos. "You shall dwell in booths seven days . . . that your generations may know that I caused the Israelites to dwell in Succos when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." In spite of the difference of opinion in the Talmud, both *Rashi* and the *Ramban* agree that the Succos referred to in the latter part of the passage are the ענני כבוד, the clouds of glory, the experience of the presence of G-d. This, says the *Ramban*, is צילא דקב"ה על דרך הפשט according to the plain meaning of the text! It is thus the task of every Jew to attempt to generate in his ממש, his actual Succah, an echo of the presence of G-d; to work toward a direct awareness of the proximity of the Divine which our people experienced in the wilderness.

The essence of the *Yom Tov* of Succos is expressed in that verse in Song of Songs: בצלו חמדתי וישבתי ופריי מתוק לחכי. "In His shadow I desired to be, and dwelt, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." The other peoples, as *Rashi* points out, simply did not see any shade and fled. They did not perceive any reality behind the religious experience of the Jew and so denied any relevance to his teachings or any important consequences to his ethics. The Jew however persisted in his faith in the reality of the צילא דקב"ה which thus became his דמהימנותא, צילא דמהימנותא. G-d not only gave commands but spread over His faithful a shadow, a palpable Presence. In this Presence, Israel longed to be. Yea, more than that, Israel was convinced that in that Presence one can dwell! One can abide.

The Jew understood that the glory of G-d was not simply an experience of the moment—a high point of ecstasy unrelated to the before or after. The Jew was taught that he must dwell in the shadow; תשבו כעין תדורו; carry on his normal activities while in the presence of G-d. The entire point of the Torah is to develop the excruciatingly difficult art of living in the presence of G-d. This is the message of the Succah.

If we indeed build for ourselves a kosher Succah in which צלחה מרובה מחמתה, (the shade is more abundant than the sun-light), the presence of G-d overshadows secular attractions, then we can appreciate the beautiful custom of אושפזין which is based on the Zohar, of inviting on each of the seven days of Succos, successively, the seven heavenly guests—אושפזין עלאין—קדישין: Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Yoseph, Moshe, Aaron and Dovid. We could never be so bold as to invite guests such as these into our homes! Even the angels that are greeted on Friday evening (שלום עליכם) are bidden goodbye the very next moment (צאתכם לישלום). The Succah however is different. In this *decompression chamber* we aspire to צילא דקב"ה. We have built an individual tabernacle according to Torah specifications in commemoration of the ענני כבוד. Here alone can we invoke the presence of the Patriarchs; we invite Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov because *this* was their special genius—האבות הם הם המרכבה—to bring the presence of G-d down upon their tents as a felt and abiding experience. As the *Ramban* expresses it in his introduction to the book of *Shemose*: שהיה מעלות אבותם שהיה סוד אלוייה על אהליהם: "The attribute of the Patriarchs was that the Divine Mystery was upon their tents."

The wilderness experience of the Jewish people was indeed one of the most potent educational forces of its early history, including faith in G-d and reliance upon His goodness and guidance. The prophet applauds the devotion and dedication which led to the initial decision of the Jewish people to follow Moshe into the wilderness: "I remember you for the affection of your youth, the love of your espousals: how you went after Me in the wilderness, in the land that was not sown." (Yirmiahu 2:2). At the termination of the forty year period, *Moshe Rabbenu* expresses extreme satisfaction with its accomplishments: "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness, your clothes are not old upon you and your shoe is not old upon your foot. You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine nor strong drink; that you might know that I am the Lord your G-d . . . and the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see and ears to hear until this day." (*D'vorim* 29:3-5).

It is no wonder then that the entire *Yom Tov* of Succos is designed to make us mindful of this character-forming period of our history and to enable us to re-live



its great moments. The question arises however as to why tradition made no attempt to incorporate other aspects of the wilderness experience such as the manna or the Well of Miriam or the Divine guidance into the Succos observances even in some symbolic way. Why does everything center about the Succah?

But before we answer this let us consider the meaning of the four species—*Lulav*, *Essrog*, etc., within the context of Succos. The explanation advanced by the *Rambam* is most surprising: "I believe that the four species are a symbolical expression of our rejoicing that the Israelites exchanged the wilderness, 'no place of seed or of fig or of vines or of pomegranates or of water to drink' for a country full of fruit trees and rivers. In order to remember this we take the fruit which is the most pleasant of the land, branches which smell best, most beautiful leaves and also the best of herbs. . . ." (*Guide*, page 355).

If we place all of these considerations side by side we emerge with a rather ambivalent attitude toward the wilderness which has very profound roots. *We sit in a Succah to remind ourselves how secure we were in the wilderness, and then we take the Lulav and Essrog to remind ourselves that we are happy that we are no longer there!* True, the wilderness was the great school of the Jewish people teaching reliance and providence, and in many ways it was idyllic—but nevertheless it was still a very artificial existence which the Jewish people might get used to at their peril. The provisions in the *Midbar* had all the sub-conscious appeal of the womb causing the Jewish people to prefer its placid security to the harsh unpredictable realities of an invasion of Canaan. This was undoubtedly behind their unfortunate reaction to the report of the *Meraglim*. But to act thus was to be blind to their responsibilities as a Jewish people. Hence, in designing the observance for our festival, our Torah selected only that aspect of the wilderness experience which alone would have permanent relevance—the Succah, the ענני כבוד, the presence of G-d.

It would be very easy for a people to misconstrue the message of the Succah and see in it a call to return to the wilderness! In moments of national despair and moral decline there was always the temptation to flee civilization and its disappointments and seek out the simplicity of the wilderness; to go back to the direct rule of G-d in a closed society of a select few. Jews in Judea always had a wilderness close at hand. Indeed, throughout our history there were always groups who succumbed to this temptation. During the first Temple there were the Rechabites who "neither build houses nor sow seeds nor plant vineyards, nor have any, but dwell in tents." During the period of the second Temple there were the now-celebrated Essenes and the Qumran covenantors who forsook the rest of society for the communal peace and simple piety of the wilderness of

Judea. There is little doubt that Hillel's famous teaching: "Do not separate yourself from the community" was directed at just such groups. Hillel lived at the height of Herod's tyranny, and corruption of all that was sacred in the Temple. There were very strong considerations for those who valued the spirit and sought to live by the word of G-d, to go off on their own and create their own society. The wilderness beckoned. Hillel however thundered: אל תפרוש מן הצבור—do not abandon the communal arena! So long as there is *Klal Yisroel* we cannot surrender the responsibilities of communal leadership.

In selecting the ענני כבוד to represent the entire wilderness experience, Torah is in effect telling us that what is important is the ultimate goal of experiencing the presence of G-d. As history moves on we will be called upon to generate this experience under ever more complex conditions: not only in a wilderness but in a city; not only in the Temple but in the entire city of Jerusalem; not only in Bnai Braq but throughout greater Tel Aviv; not only in a religious kibbutz but in confrontation with the full complexity of a technologically advanced society. It is a fatal error to fix the ענני כבוד to any specific environment, to any specific social form or to circumscribe its viability to any specific locale. The walls of the Succah may be of any material, the Halacha delineates only the *S'chach*. Given the will, the צילא דמהימנותא can be expected almost anywhere.

We thus come full circle to our original conception. As the "way which leads from Yom Kippur back to the circuit of the year," Succos is the *decompression chamber* which shows us how to live in the presence of G-d and thus brings us back to the world of the every-day without losing the sanctity of the awesome days.

As the festival which commemorates the wilderness experience, Succos helps us to perceive its abiding relevance. It teaches us that the Jew must continue to proclaim: בצל חמתי וישבתי even while he takes up his dwelling in ever more advanced positions in the dramatic movement of civilization.

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# The Power of Joy

## *Celebrating Simchas Torah in Auschwitz*

The following harrowing episode occurred in Auschwitz where so many of our people went to their death. It is recorded in the preface to a book entitled *M'Kadshei HaShem* ("Those Who Sanctify The Name") by Rabbi Zvi Meisels of Chicago. Rabbi Meisels was an inmate of Auschwitz and personally witnessed the unparalleled suffering of the Kedoshim. With G-d's help, he survived

IT WAS THE NIGHT of *Simchas Torah* in Auschwitz. With Satanic glee, the Nazis, *yemach shmom v'zichrom*, would select a Jewish holiday on which to carry out their murderous work. So they picked fifty of our younger people and led them from the camp to the crematorium. There they were instructed to wash themselves clean, "since the sanitary accommodations in the camp were not the best." Thus did these sadistic murderers taunt and deceive their helpless victims—they would tell them that they would be "washed" in the gas-ovens. The purpose of this cat-and-mouse game was to break the spirits of their victims, so that they would go to their death in the docile manner of sheep being led to the slaughter.

Although of tender years, the fifty boys were mature enough to fully understand the fate which awaited them this night. But even in these last moments of their young lives, they did not permit themselves the luxury of abject surrender. In this terrible moment, they did not forget that they were created *b'tzelem Elokim* (in the image of G-d). They lived as Jews, and as Jews they prepared to return their souls to their Creator.

Suddenly an indomitable spirit from on High rested on one of the boys, and he called out:

"Dear Chaverim: Tonight is *Simchas Torah!* True,

to record this testimony that the Power of Joy is so mighty that it broke through the iron wall of bloody Auschwitz. The following is a free translation by ZALMAN ARYEH HILSENRAD who was the founder and first editor of *JEWISH LIFE*, published by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. He is now in the insurance business in New York City.

we have no *Sefer Torah* with which to dance, but the *Ribono Shel Olam* is surely here with us . . . so let us dance with Him before they burn our bodies."

The words—which emanated from the innermost recesses of a heart overflowing with blood, convulsed and seared by a G-dly fire . . . flew swiftly into the hearts of the fifty boys, and stirred them into motion. As one, they broke out into a song of exultation which spilled out into a tempestuous dance of such fervor that it obliterated all thought of the terrible fate which awaited them. The heavenly spirit which pervaded their dancing and singing purified their souls and lifted them to the highest spiritual realm. Faster and still faster the tempo rose as they sang: *How happy is our portion, and how pleasant our lot.* The *Simchas Torah* spirit flowed into every organ of their bodies . . . as they recalled wistfully how they had danced with *Sifrei Torah* in a serene peaceful era . . . how many ages ago it all seemed . . . now all was desolate . . . devastated by a fiendish enemy bent on destroying all our people . . . but he will not succeed! G-d is in Heaven . . . this we must not forget for a moment! And now a new *niggun* gave them new strength . . . new courage . . . new faith . . . *Purify our hearts that we may serve Thee with truth . . . Oh G-d, dear G-d, do purify our hearts, that we may truly serve Thee . . . please G-d!*

THE FIERY ECSTASY of their singing and dancing broke all barriers; it seeped through brick and steel!

The abysmal Nazi brutes who had made all the necessary preparations, and stood ready to open the gas-jets, heard these wild songs of exultation . . . and ran in to investigate. As they opened the door a wave of joyous song and dance stopped them in their tracks. For a moment they stood, struck-dumb by what they saw and heard. What manner of men were these who

sang and danced with such seemingly reckless abandon a few moments before their death?

The officer in charge finally found his tongue and bellowed: "What is the meaning of this?"

Out of tear-drenched souls, almost broken with despair, came a dignified reply: "We realize you plan to destroy us any moment. So we are happy that we shall leave a world ruled by such wild dogs as you. We also rejoice that we shall soon be re-united with

our beloved parents and families whom you cursed murderers have killed!"

The Nazi sadist, the devil's own disciple, let his blood-thirsty eyes rest first on one, then on another of his intended victims. A hellish fire flamed up in his black soul. Like a mad dog he screamed: "I will teach you manners! Instead of killing you quickly, I will find a slow, lingering death for you. We will chop you to death slowly, piece by piece."

The boys refused to listen to the depraved murderer's ranting and his words were lost, drowned out as they renewed their triumphant singing and dancing . . . right up to his face.

Livid with rage, the chief murderer ordered that the fifty boys be taken out of the crematorium and locked up separately, until he would find a more hideous form of torment before destroying them.

**B**UT THE MURDERER'S PLANS were never carried out. The heavenly spirit with which they were imbued and which broke through brick and steel, rose right up to the very heavens . . . even in the blackness of *Hastoras-Panim*.

Each one of the fifty boys survived!

What happened?

Next day—*Simchas Torah*—a large number of people were transported from Auschwitz to labor-camps in Germany. Somehow most of the fifty were included in this group. The few who were left were herded into other groups and each one was saved.

The remnants of our poor people in Auschwitz heard of this great miracle . . . and gained new spirit . . . new faith . . . and renewed hope.

*Such is the Power of Joy.*

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *ETHICS FROM SINAI* (Vols. 2 and 3)

By Irving M. Bunim

(New York, 1966; P. Feldheim Inc., \$5.50 and \$7.50)

THE PUBLICATION OF THESE TWO VOLUMES completes a truly monumental effort—a commentary on *Pirkei Ovos* written with our time in mind. The eternal validity of Torah makes it relevant for all ages—but every age has its problems and difficulties, questions and issues, and therefore in every generation there is a need to make explicit what the Torah has to say to it. This is particularly important in a time like ours, where the lack of Torah knowledge keeps man from any access to our sacred writings, and permits only very superficial “learning” on the part of so many others. Therefore, immense value must be attached to a work like the one before us, which gathers from ancient, medieval and quite recent Rabbinic mines, explanations to *Pirkei Ovos* which are particularly appropriate for our time; interprets them in a manner intelligible to any man of our age; and does all that in an idiom that is free-flowing and most readable. It is no wonder that the first volume found an enthusiastic reception and has already gone through a second edition. The present two volumes are its equal in every respect. Its usefulness for even the simplest study of *Pirkei Ovos* can, for instance, be seen from the author’s enumerations and explanations of Avrohom’s ten trials which the *Mishnah* itself does not list individually (vol. III, pp. 25-43), and from the illuminating biographies of the *Mishnah* teachers, given after each *Perek*.

The author goes to great pains to discuss and clarify fundamentals of our faith, such as the significance of the Exodus for later generations (III, 52-53), the belief in the resurrection of the dead (II, 198-201), and the concept of *Gan-Eden*. At the same time he analyzes modern issues, such as the rise of Conservatism and Reform, or the teachings of psychoanalysis. The wide range of ideas covered is paralleled by the equally wide range of Rabbinic works quoted; the author draws a great deal on *Ovos d’Rabbi Noson*, but he also quotes many of the latest commentaries, and we find the sages of our age quoted frequently such as Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman and Rabbi Ahron Kotler. (A later edition, which this work can surely expect to attain, would serve the reader well by providing an index of all personalities and writings quoted, and perhaps even an index of subjects covered).

Needless to say, in the selection and presentation of material from the vast store of homiletic literature existing on *Ovos*, an author’s personal preferences must guide him, and there can be differences of opinion on

this or that choice. Thus, I have been wondering about the authenticity of the story told of the *Nziv* (II, 59); I would not have included one or the other quotation from secular sources (II, 120), and I believe Moses Mendelsohn’s position is somewhat oversimplified (II, 101). But the striking point about this work is not that there might be a couple of minor differences of judgment, but that, as I believe, the author’s judgment in almost every detail will be overwhelmingly seconded by all his readers, whether learned or unlearned, with a strong Torah background or, unfortunately, a weak one. This reviewer is convinced that Mr. Bunim has succeeded in “reaching” the present day American Jew with his exposition of Torah teachings, an achievement for which he can be envied.

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### *JUDAISM, THOUGHT AND LEGEND*

by Meir Meiseles

Bnei Brak, 1966, Israeli Trade Co., \$8.50

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THIS WORK OF CLOSE TO 600 pages, “an anthology of (Jewish) ethics and philosophy throughout the ages,” originally appeared in Hebrew and now lies before us in a fine translation into English. In four parts, it deals with man’s relationship to society, with his duties to the Creator and His commandments, with man’s self-perfection, and with the fundamental principles of our faith. Literally speaking, this is not an anthology in the accepted sense; to the great benefit of the reader, it does not merely provide quotations from the classical Torah sources, but the author weaves them together into a coherent exposition of the various themes discussed in the altogether seventy-eight chapters, while he has also added a number of relevant short quotations at the end of each chapter.

The author has drawn not only on Talmudic and Midrashic literature, but refers to the teachings of the *Baal Shem Tov*, of Reb Yisroel Salanter, and many other of the great personalities of Judaism in the modern era. From among the most recent writers he quotes Dr. Isaac Breuer and Aaron Barth; Ze’ev Yaivetz (the reference to whom on p. 485 is open to question) and Rabbi Judah Alkalay (whose views on the stages of redemption, p. 576, are interesting but, I believe, should not have been quoted without stressing that they are one opinion rather than authoritative Jewish tradition); and also Chief Rabbi Hertz (whose remarks based on Professor Steinthal, p. 470, are, to say the least, open to misunderstanding and should not have been quoted). Except for these few quotations, on which this reviewer would disagree, every one of the hundreds of passages in this work is extremely well chosen, making it a treasure house of Torah teaching both as far as Jewish thought and Jewish living are concerned. It is impossible to do justice to the book

by selecting one or the other passage, there is truly an *embarrass des richesses*. Whether we turn to the timely emphasis on the Siniatic origin of the Oral Law, which the author demonstrates by authoritative quotations, or to the heart-warming anecdotes that show the greatness which pervades the daily life of the *Tzaddik*, humble though his place in the world be,—we find food for thought and inspiration wherever we turn.

It is to be hoped that this volume will find wide distribution, and succeed in making an impact on its readers, particularly those unfamiliar with the wealth of our traditions. For the sake of this objective, one or two technical improvements could be wished for—a more attractive typeface, perhaps, than the present one; a table of contents at the beginning rather than the end of the book; and above all, an index of topics and thinkers quoted. They will not add to the intrinsic value of the work, which needs no improvement, but will assure that fullest utilization which it so amply deserves.

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## ***The Brussels Hoax***

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*The following analysis of the recent Brussels meeting of the World Jewish Congress, by Phineas Biron, appeared in several Jewish newspapers. The emphasis . . . is ours.* □

The Brussels meetings of the World Jewish Congress have attracted a great deal of publicity . . . Even the general press in the States and Europe gave it a lot of space . . . A body calling itself World Jewish Congress must be taken seriously and the non-Jewish press is apparently ready to accept it as an authoritative voice of world Jewry . . . *Thus, very few inquire as to how and by what procedure delegates to the Congress are "elected"* . . . It does not occur to our friends, or foes that *there are no elections, technically speaking* . . . The delegates are chosen and, in many instances, accepted provided they have the finances to pay for their trip . . .

To be quite candid, the assembly which met at Brussels, although its members originated from many countries, cannot be labelled representative . . . But this is not our principal beef . . . We resent much more the low standard and caliber of the leadership . . . We mean "low" in the sense of non-creative, devoid of ideas, poor in scholarship and above all unprepared for a responsible task . . . For what the delegates are required to do, a knowledge of international affairs as well as a thorough background are urgently needed . . .

*Were the participants to the Congress prepared for their task? . . . We doubt it . . . And this is not said*

to disparage or minimize the men and women who spent their money and time in the belief that they could be helping in solving important issues . . . Organizationally, the World Jewish Congress "functions" the whole year, with permanent offices in the United Kingdom, Switzerland and to some degree in the United States and South America . . . It employs a professional staff, which maintains—in some measure—communication with its leadership . . . It cannot, however, be regarded an all year producing body . . .

It must therefore, be admitted that, while the sessions of the World Jewish Congress do provide a platform for public demonstrations and declarations, the Congress assembly is not a consultative democratic body that contributes to the issues that confront world Jewry . . . *It is nothing more than a publicity getter for individuals* . . . The statesmen, Jewish and non-Jewish, who can influence the course of events, are absent . . . It is a sectarian and rather provincial get-together of well meaning Jews who dispense more or less eloquent phrases on important subjects . . . As a political factor the World Jewish Congress is totally inadequate . . .

We shall be criticized for the harshness of our evaluation . . . And the word "Hoax" will be resented . . . *But what is the use of kidding ourselves and or nursing a myth* . . . Dialogues and speeches are necessary, we grant, *but only if they are translated into action of statesmanship or into institutional efforts* . . . Demonstrations are also necessary but they rarely result in anything more than attention getters . . . Judaism in Western countries, surely needs strengthening but conversations without action are not going to do it . . .

The weakest pronouncements at the Brussels Assembly and at the recent Dialogue held at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovoth, dealt with the alarming trends of relations between Israel and world Jewry . . . These relations suffer primarily because of the thesis that Israel is the cultural and religious center of world Jewry . . . Israel may some day in the future achieve this position but it surely cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be accepted as the dominating creative force of the Jewish people today . . . Certainly there is little doubt that the triumph of Zionism has changed the world Jewish panorama . . .

On the other hand it must be said that the mere fact that Jews have proved they can adjust themselves to the discipline of the Jewish state will not continue to fire the Jewish imagination of the Diaspora . . . Israeli intellectuals have to reappraise themselves honestly and apply an objective self-critical measure . . . They will discover that they can learn a great deal from the Diaspora and that they have a long way to go before equalling the creative achievements that dot the history of Jewry outside of Israel . . . Thus far, Israel has been on the receiving end and we do not mean only financially . . . It is high time that Israel assume a more modest role in its partnership with the Diaspora . . .

## **...V'nomar Awmain**

*Shmuel walked to Schul with a tear in his heart on what might otherwise have been a beautiful Shabbos morning. His small daughter lay ill in the hospital; his wife sat at her bedside slumped in a chair. Shmuel was going to Schul to place before the Almighty his prayerful petition, hoping that the Mi Shebairach he would ask to be recited would swing the balance.*

*There was a Bar Mitzvah at another Schul that morning, and many of the regulars were absent, leaving a meagre minyan. Shmuel, with body fatigued by three sleepless nights, shuffled over to the Gabai, and asked to be called to the Torah.*

*In the Bais Din Shel Maloh, the Heavenly Court, a count was being made of the z'chusim that could be mustered to restore vigor to the body of the stricken child and to return her in good health to her anxious parents. The count was short, but hope was not lost.*

*If eighteen Jews would say Awmain to the prayer for the child's recovery, the balance could yet be swung in her favor.*

*Shmuel responded when his name was called, and with a closeness to G-d that tragedy generates, expressed his gratitude that "He has chosen us from all the nations and has given us His Torah." The words took on new meaning as they fell from his tired lips.*

*With the conclusion of the reading of Chamishi (Shmuel was no big-wheel) and the final brocho, the stricken father leaned over to whisper his request for a Mi Shebairach for the sick. The Gabai complied in his mechanical sing-song, and when he said V'nomar Awmain, the Angels on High strained to hear the Awmain above the din of conversation.*

*"Twelve . . . thirteen . . .," then silence. One of the more astute of the group was able to hear two Awmain that had gotten by the others. "Fifteen," he shouted jubilantly, but his face fell as he became aware of what he said.*

*The Angels looked at each other and they cried. They could not overlook their instructions. Eighteen Awmain . . . fifteen is not eighteen, not even in Heaven.*

*Alright . . . so it doesn't happen just that way. So the life of a child doesn't depend on counting up Awmain. But then again . . . who can say for sure?*

**A Fantasy**



ery manager, Chaplain Swerdlow mapped a plan of action designed to eliminate this barrier. He enlisted his colleagues in a letter-writing barrage for bagels. Shortly thereafter the bakery manager sent word that the bakery in Fuerth was assigned the task of making the bagels.

Bagels are now listed on the European Exchange System for distribution in packages of eight.

STEMMING THE TIDE / "Hundreds of thousands of American Jews who

are not synagogue worshippers, and many who are, have come to the realization that the only way to stem the tide of intermarriage and assimilation and survive as Jews in the United States is by strengthening secular Jewish cultural and social idealism," Judge Jacob T. Zuckerman, the president of the Workmen's Circle, the nation's largest Jewish labor fraternal organization told the proverbial "1,000 delegates from all parts of the country," at their recent convention. (JTA) The

judge departed from the traditional hostility of the Workmen's Circle to Yiddishkeit, and said that, "We do not oppose those who think that religion holds most of the answers . . . but there must be social idealism and Jewish humanism [that] can be found only in Jewish secularism, which we represent and reflect." He also had some harsh words for other Jewish organizations:

*Other Jewish organizations have attempted to decorate their activities by cloaking themselves in a religious aura. From time to time, they have been forced to assume almost exclusive secular postures on civil rights or matters of foreign policy. We offer no shams to the American-Jewish community. We are, we believe, following the best traditions and the deepest heritages of the Jewish people by opposing the conservative and reactionary elements within our own Jewish community and by representing the hundreds of thousands of American Jews who are proud bearers of tradition as it is reflected in the Yiddish language, in literature, in music, in the dramatic forms, in the arts and in progressive social improvement. The fact that Jewish community centers and Y's from coast to coast have shown an acute interest in our program is demonstration enough that our secularism is the current taste of the American Jewish community.*

The judge has stated his indictment with the clarity befitting a jurist. It was the Workmen's Circle (and other such groups) which was the trail-blazer for secular Judaism. It is a sham for Jewish organizations to "cloak . . . themselves in a religious aura" when they are actually selling secularism. But before the judge presses his indictment for infringement of patent, he might do well to pause and ask himself some questions.

Has the secularism of Workmen's Circle succeeded in stemming the tide of assimilation, or is it not rather true that their pioneering efforts in this field has been one of the major factors in assimilation by

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removing the religious base from Jewishness?

Have the pioneers of secularism succeeded in infusing even that much Jewishness into their children that they would want to be members of Workmen's Circle, or have they not actually dwindled in numbers to the extent that they are no longer a factor in Jewish life?

Jewish secularism failed miserably the first time around; no new garb can keep it from failing again. But, it is a tragi-comic spectacle to see Jewish groups quibbling as to who gets the 'credit' for the failure.

**INSTANT JEWISH** / A most vulgar advertisement for a product called "Instant Jewish" recently appeared in *The New York Times*. It consisted of a can labeled: YOU TOO CAN BE JEWISH, which contained: "Powdered chicken soup; instructions on holding plush bar mitzvah in Chinese restaurant . . ." etc. ad nauseam. The America Jewish Congress quickly protested; *The Times* apologized and promised not to run the ad again—and rightly so. Looking back at the incident, however, we wonder why purveyors of "Instant Judaism" are not so quickly condemned?

**ADULT BAR MITZVAHS** / We have often noted that Jewish illiteracy—rather than being attacked at the roots—is often legitimized and institutionalized. 'Bar Mitzvah' is a case in point. The ceremonialism which has grown up around this institution has led many to believe that without it one is not truly, in some sense, a Jew. "Ye see rabbi, we were poor when I was a kid, so I never got *bamitzved*," is a statement many rabbis have heard at least once. Most rabbis will explain that becoming a Bar Mitzvah is not contingent on any ceremony; that a Jewish male attains this status when he passes his thirteenth birthday.

Others (as of this writing it has not been done by Orthodox rabbis) have institutionalized the miscon-

ception that one must be "*bamitzved*" in order to be a full-fledged Jew, and a rash of "Adult Bar Mitzvahs" has broken out over the land. Every so often a local Jewish paper will publish a picture of a group of men, their bald heads covered with white yarmulkas, and their shoulders draped with a 'talis,' and the caption will hail the fact that they have become 'Bar Mitzvah.' The ceremonies, from what we have read, are just like the conventional 'Bar Mitzvah,' and the adults having recited the blessing, and being blessed by the 'rabbi,' like their junior counterparts are then privileged to sink back into the abyss of illiteracy.

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AZ MEN DERLEBT . . . DEPARTMENT/  
There is a pithy Yiddish expression, *Az men derlebt, derlebt men*, which defies translation, witness this feeble attempt: "If you live long enough, there's no telling what you will live to see." A Protestant minister in New York has proposed that Christians return to the celebration of their Sabbath on Saturday, that day being the seventh day of the week and therefore the true Sabbath. More recently, a Roman Catholic priest suggested that Christians stop using the expression, "Old Testament" which is "an affront to

Jews" since it implies to Jews "that Christians believe the religion of the Prophets is without contemporary value or spiritual significance." (*The New York Times*, 5/24/66).

What shall we say?—*Az men derlebt, derlebt men!*

What we truly look forward to is the time when the growing interest in Jewish studies by Christian theologians will begin to rub off on our Jewish theologians and they will hasten back to the sources which they have declared to be "without contemporary value or spiritual significance." □

## The Autopsy Crisis

THE LAW WHICH REGULATES post-mortem operations in Israel is ineffective. In practice, citizens who do not want their own bodies tampered with after death, have no legal protection. Doctors and hospital officials perform autopsies, literally with a vengeance; and the basic Torah Concept of *Kovod Hames* is under constant attack. Appeals to government officials to halt the widespread abuses have been to no avail and the proposed legislation purported to remedy the situation will only make it worse.

This is the essence of "The Autopsy Crisis in Israel" which appeared in our September issue; it is the essence of the latest upheaval resulting from the attempt to establish a Jewish State based on secular law, with only tangential allegiance to Torah Concepts.

*The crisis is unabated; it grows from day to day.*

On Tuesday, September 6, a meeting of representatives of every rabbinic and lay organization in Orthodox life in America was held in New York City and with one voice expressed the anguish of *Klal Yisroel* over the desecration of the dead in the Holy Land. The precise form of the unified action is yet to be determined, but the rare unanimity of all of Orthodoxy promises

to evolve into a forceful program to bring an end to the situation which is a disgrace to the holiness of *Am Yisroel*.

Most groups expressed the hope that the problem could be solved without creating a public scandal which would be a blow to the prestige of the State of Israel in the world political arena. However, it was underscored that Israeli leaders have not exhibited any great measure of such restraint in the heat of political debate and internal squabbling.

Orthodox Jewry is moving toward action to save Israeli Jewry—and the State of Israel—from further enlargement of the battle between religious and secular forces. It remains for Orthodoxy to maintain its unity and vigilance in the face of vicious aggression by the enemies of *Kedushas Yisroel*.

It is our fervent prayer that the unity and vigilance demonstrated in this situation will lead to further efforts by a united Orthodoxy in America for those basic tenets and concepts of Torah which unite us all.

May it be the will of the Almighty that these efforts shall succeed.

We ask this for the glory of G-d's Name, if not by virtue of our own merit. □

*The Jewish Observer / October, 1966*

## Rabbis or Rabbonim?

IT MUST BE SAID IN BEHALF OF some of the early leaders of Reform that they evinced a sense of principle and even of learning that is sadly lacking in their latter day followers. Their basic differences with Orthodoxy were two-fold: they were opposed to Rabbinism and to Zionism. These two "anti"-principles were developed by them with a thoroughness befitting the Germanic origin of the Reform movement. All mention of the sacrifices and of the Return were completely excised from their prayer books. Berlin and Washington were their new "Jerusalems." Likewise, all respect for rabbis and rabbinical authority were eliminated. Their equivalent for the *rabbonon kaddish*, for example, avoids all mention of *rabbonon*, but states instead *al Yisroel v'al tza-dikayo*. Their clergy originally assiduously avoided the title of "Rabbi," choosing instead such titles as "Doctor," "Reverend," or "Rev. Dr." The re-establishment of the State of Israel, however, totally destroyed one of their theologic props and confused their thinking in regard to their other prop. Judaism and Jewishness has become an "In" thing. The title "Rabbi" is now borne with pride, and preachers of so-called anti-Rabbinic Judaism dignify themselves with the title of Rabbi—a name some of their predecessors avoided like a plague.

The earlier consistency and sense of principle that motivated the Reform movement is gone. While it existed, it afforded protection to Orthodoxy in that it helped to maintain sharp boundaries. Today their tactic is to confuse boundaries and to infiltrate through the confused lines. The general adoption of the title "Rabbi" has confused all the *goyim* and most of the Jews. A medical friend of mine insisted that "a rabbi is a rabbi," and that the superior attitude of some Orthodox rabbis was comparable to the snobishness of a Harvard graduate to

a Podunk college graduate. When I tried to explain that the physician-chiropractor relationship was a closer analogy, he appeared incredulous.

It is high time that we take measures to restore these boundary lines. We cannot prevent others from using the title of "Rabbi." However, we can achieve our purpose by dropping use of that title in all future references to men having a valid *s'michah* by entitling them *Rav*. If editors of Torah-true periodicals would adopt this principle, consistently with the trend they have more or less been pursu-

ing, of using *Torah* for "Bible," *Shemos* for "Exodus," etc. . . . it would be a significant step forward. If the *rabbonim* themselves would destroy or discontinue use of their letterheads and cards bearing the title "Rabbi"—another and greater step will have been accomplished. Finally, the troublesome adjective "Orthodox" could be dropped. A reference to "Orthodox rabbis" may contain the implication that there are other kinds of legitimate rabbis. However, the title *Rav*, or reference to *Rabbonim* needs no qualification and should by itself truly reflect the dignity of that position.

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# Letters to the Editor

## Responsa in English

To the Editor:

Your challenging review of my book "Jewish Law Faces Modern Problems" (June 1966) prompts me to make three comments:

1. I am no more responsible for Dr. Stitskin's editorial Foreword than he is for the rest of the volume written by me. Our respective views are, I believe, sufficiently clear to all intelligent readers.

2. In my item on the Manhattan *Eruv*, there is no claim or suggestion "that there is no rabbinic authority opposing the *Eruv*." I simply abstracted an article on the subject which had appeared in the January 1962 issue of *Hapardes*. That article listed, among other opinions, the published statement of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein defending "the right of those who wish to set up the *Eruv* as founded on many sound arguments." Notwithstanding his subsequent stand in deference to Rabbi Ahron Kotler זצ"ל (who, as he told me, objected to *Eruvin* even in Israel, where almost everyone accepts them), Rabbi Feinstein had definitely endorsed the legality of establishing an *Eruv* in Manhattan, as carefully stated in my abstract and as can readily be confirmed by consulting the afore-mentioned issue of *Hapardes*.

3. Above all, I cannot agree with your reviewer's principal criticism that the publication of rabbinic rulings in English presents a "grave danger" to the "ordinary reader" who will "jump to conclusions" or carry away erroneous impressions." This much-used and abused argument is, to my mind, itself entirely erroneous and dangerous. The alternative to the popular presentation of responsa in the vernacular is not halachically correct conduct based on the submission of all problems to a competent *Rav*; it is rather the complete disregard of Halachah born out of ignorance. Without the popularization of rabbinic opinions on contraceptives, artificial insemination, gambling, microphones on the Sabbath,

or labor-relations (to mention only a few of the topical subjects treated in my book), how many people would altogether know that Jewish law addresses itself in precise terms to such problems? Because of the attitude exemplified by your reviewer, most Jews today are more familiar with the Catholic views on abortion, birth-control or divorce than with the Jewish attitude!

No, those who are likely to apply these abstracts indiscriminately in practice without rabbinic endorsement as I urged are even more likely to ignore Jewish law completely in the absence of such literature, while those who would insist on personally submitting their problems to rabbinic judgment are not likely to refrain from doing so because they have read some rabbi's opinion on the subject. We only stand to gain from spreading a knowledge of current Halachah and its complex *modus operandi*.

Moreover, would your reviewer seriously suggest that in Israel rabbis should not publish their responsa in Hebrew, understood by everyone, and instead resort to English—or perhaps Latin? Is the Torah of Israel, given as a heritage to all Jews, from the elders to the drawers of water, to become the esoteric property of the few? Should we refuse to proclaim and publicize the law because some "ordinary reader" might thereby resort to the extraordinary expedient of becoming his own rabbi when he would otherwise be knowledgeable enough to ask *Sha'aloth* and conscientious enough to act on the verdict he receives?

DR. IMMANUEL JAKOBOVITS, *Rabbi*  
Fifth Avenue Synagogue  
New York, New York

To the Editor:

Your review (since it is unsigned, I assume it is yours) of Dr. Immanuel Jakobovits' book *Jewish Law Faces Modern Problems* (June, 1966), disturbed me deeply, not because you doubted the value of this particular book or took exception to the views expressed in the introduction by Dr. Stitskin, but for a far more serious reason. You question the propriety of any halachic discussion in English for fear it may become a "do it yourself manual." Carrying this logic a step further, perhaps no halachic problem should be put in print in any language, even Hebrew. For not all who can read and understand Hebrew are experts in halacha. Perhaps we should develop a secret society with a closely guarded meeting room, and a carefully screened membership whose allegiance would be unquestioned and who could then be entrusted with this "holy" task. Is this the climate in which Jewish values and observances grow? Or will they suffocate and die in such small quarters?

The purpose of Dr. Jakobovits' book is to bring forth articles "as samples

for the operation of Jewish law at the present time, for the diversity of modern problems discussed in the light of Jewish teachings and for the contribution of Jewish principles to the solution of some of the gravest moral perplexities troubling our age." It is [by] how well Dr. Jakobovits succeeded in this task that the work should be judged.

That there is a need for such books is pitifully clear. Our college youth are well informed, intelligent people in almost all areas except their Jewishness. They are filled with concern for the moral problems that confront us all. They are unaware of the great sources of wisdom and strength that Judaism and the Jewish commitment holds for them. One of the few channels left through which we can still reach these young (and not so young) people is

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that of the written word. These readers must be exposed to books and articles written in depth and not only dealing with superficialities. They must be shown the soul and mind of Judaism, and not just its face and restraining arms. Truly to meet this very real challenge we must "publish or perish."

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To the Editor:

Your reviewer of "Jewish Law Faces Modern Problems" implies that the book's introduction by Dr. Stitskin contains views which are inconsistent with the beliefs of Orthodox Judaism. It appears to be the reviewer's view that it is non-Orthodox to ascribe any degree of innovation and flexibility to the rabbis of the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods.

Your reviewer did not quote all of the pertinent portions of Dr. Stitskin's introduction. On page 8 of the publication, Dr. Stitskin wrote: ". . . Jewish law represents a continuous all-embracing stream of oral doctrines and precepts . . . embracing the collective labor of many successive generations, derived from Sinai" (emphasis added). Thus,

Dr. Stitskin did not postulate that the Pharisees "originated the Oral Law," but instead stated that it originated at Sinai but was developed by the Pharisees.

This formulation is far from being a heretical point of view. In fact it is precisely the view adopted by Maimonides in his "Introduction to the Mishna."

. . . I thus wish to submit that Dr. Stitskin's approach to Talmudic Judaism is in fact the traditional approach, an understanding of which is essential to again make Orthodoxy a vibrant force in our religion and the only type which represents authentic Judaism.

DAVID B. MORRIS  
Silver Spring, Mr.

*RABBI JOSEPH ELIAS, the author of the review in question, as well as most of our reviews, offers the following comments:*

The issues raised by the above letters are of great significance and certainly merit clarification.

1. DR. STITSKIN'S PREFACE: Mr. Morris imputes to me the view that we cannot ascribe any degree of innovation and flexibility to the Rabbis of the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, and then proceeds to offer arguments against this view from the *Rambam*. Actually it is clear that the Rabbis, from *Moshe Rabbeinu* down to the *Sof Ha'horo'oh* (the end of the Talmudic period—see *Rambam*, Intro. to *Yad Hachasokoh*) had a certain authority vested in them at Sinai—apart from the issuance of general *gezeros* and *takanos*, they were entrusted with the clarification of legal details by means of formal legal reasoning and their extrapolation from the basic Written and Oral law, received at Sinai, by the application of fixed legal rules—procedures that were themselves given to *Moshe at Sinai* (specifically, the Thirteen Rules of Interpretation). This is all that the *Rambam* says; but it is not what Dr. Stitskin writes. His view is stated quite clearly (the emphasis is mine): "The rabbinic tradition received its initial impetus with the Pharisees . . . The rabbinic tradition was set into action by the Pharisaic sect. . . The 'Oral Law' emerged to endow man with a margin of subjectivity in applying the high ideals of biblical law." Undoubtedly, Dr. Stitskin agrees that some oral traditions were of more ancient or even Sinaitic origin; that is all that the sentence quoted by Mr. Morris means, and that is why it is of no real importance in the light of Dr. Stitskin's unequivocal statement that "the rabbinic tradition received its initial impetus with the Pharisees." They were a sect of innovators, then, who introduced a new system of legal interpretation which brought a new flexibility into Torah law by endowing

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man with a margin of subjectivity apparently not known before. Such a thesis can by no stretch of imagination be squared with the fundamental traditional Jewish view; in the past it has been put forward by men from outside the Orthodox camp who saw in it a basis for "reintroducing flexibility" into *Halcho*. It is not only at variance with basic Jewish tradition, then, but also poses a serious threat to it.

Dr. Jakobovitz (I am very glad to have this opportunity to extend congratulations on his assumption of the Chief Rabbinate of Great Britain) does not take issue with my appraisal of Dr. Stitskin's remarks, but feels that he carries no responsibility for an editorial

foreword. *But this is the very point which I felt compelled to challenge in my review.* I am sure Dr. Jakobovits would agree that a biologist of note, if introduced in some publication as an adherent of Lysenko's theories, would hasten to disassociate himself from such "faint praise," and likewise a doctor presented as a believer in Krebiozen. I do not believe that, given such a challenge to their professional standing, they would rely on the fact that their real views are well known. In our case it is not a mere question of professional standing but people's *Emunah*, and I submit that our position must be made very clear. If Dr. Stitskin's views are unacceptable and dangerous (and Mr. Morris' letter shows how much confusion there is on this subject), is it enough to rely on the understanding of the "intelligent reader"? Is not a certain degree of responsibility given to the views in the Foreword by their appearance in Dr. Jakobovits' book? Is there not also an obligation to take a stand against unacceptable views, rather than being involved, albeit indirectly, and unwillingly in their dissemination? At a time of ideological confusion such as ours, such questions are, I think, very justified.

2. PUBLICATION OF RABBINIC RULINGS IN ENGLISH: I am afraid that both Dr. Jakobovits and Mrs. Donin very much misunderstood my remarks on this point. There can be no question that there is great value in every book that brings the Torah viewpoint before the Jewish public, and certainly we need such writings, particularly in English. Moreover, we specifically need presentations of *Halochoh* in a popular manner and on the questions of acute concern today. My point was merely that such publications should represent *Halochoh Pesukoh*, definitive halachic rulings, rather than the type of "responsa literature" which I discussed.

We must remember that the publication of halachic material has been treated throughout Jewish history as a deadly serious matter. Great scholars (such as Rabbi S. B. Bamberger, a hundred years ago) opposed the publication of their own responsa because they could be misapplied, having been originally drafted for certain very specific cases; others would often stress that their opinion should only be followed if one or two other authorities would also agree. Even where it was not a matter of publishing responsa but general halachic and other rabbinic works, even great scholars, such as the *Chofetz Chayim*, would not proceed without first obtaining *Haskomos* (approbations) from leading rabbinic authorities. It goes without saying that extreme care would be taken to present all sides of the question, and

to provide a clear and unequivocal ruling which would not permit misunderstandings.

When we now turn to the books of responsa and responsa abstracts that have appeared in English, we find many more pitfalls—and no safeguards at all. Major halachic questions are discussed forward and backward, with the lay reader (for whom these books are designed) quite unable to evaluate the significance of the rabbinic formulae and give-and-take; where the author wisely seeks to provide an insight into the "workings of the halachic process," no definite conclusions may be offered and, even worse, only a very partial and misleading selection of ideas presented, so that the reader will form his own impressions—wrong ones; even when final conclusions are offered, no effort is made to secure rabbinic approbations, with the author apparently convinced that a little notice, "Not for practical guidance," makes up for any inadequate or rash opinions expressed, or for any misuse of his book due to the readers' misunderstanding of the import of the general discussion.

I cannot take seriously the objections that such halachic discussions in Hebrew appear after all in Israel, where they are available to the general public. Rabbinic journals, written in the traditional style, are not usually reading fare for the layman, nor are Rabbinic tomes. Of course, there is a good deal of halachic material published for the general public—but in its case we have to expect (from responsible authors) adherence to the standards I stressed before, definitiveness of presentation and insistence on rabbinic *Haskomos*; it is the neglect of these standards in the English "responsa writings" which evoked my concern.

(Since writing these lines I have seen Dr. Jakobovits' remarks in the Summer 1966 issue of *Tradition*, which would explain his belief in the importance of such responsa literature that lets the reader in on halachic discussion. He there stresses that "as far as is possible, the logic of halachic decisions must be demonstrated before the bar of public opinion to win acceptance," and that "in making halachic decisions, the reasons given are as important as the conclusions." Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, in the *Hoveb* and his other writings, certainly succeeded in showing to his readers the meaningfulness of Jewish Law; but he did not agree that we should even seek to base the authority of the *Halachah*, or of the Halachic process, upon our understanding of the Law's meaningfulness. I do not believe that the sources quoted by Dr. Jakobovits support his conclusions, and I continue to feel that rational and reasonable presentation of Torah Law (in its definitive form) along

the lines of Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, will serve us very adequately, and that by letting the layman pass on the logic and reasonableness of the halachic decision-making process we are creating vastly more problems than we solve. This does not, of course, mean that we cannot or should not explain how the halachic process in general works—but when we provide the concrete illustrations we must adhere to the standards and safeguards I mentioned before—and we cannot and need not make the layman, directly or indirectly, a judge of this process.)

3. **THE ERUV IN MANHATTAN:** If any proof is needed for the validity of my misgivings about the pitfalls of responsa for the lay public, it is furnished by this case in point. On the topic of an *Eruv* for Manhattan, Dr. Jakobovits summarized an article from 1962 which stated only the positive views on the subject. There can be no question at all that the uninformed reader must come to the conclusion that there are no opposing views at all. But that is not all; the article from 1962, which lists Rabbi Moshe Feinstein as approving of such *Eruv*, was summarized in 1966 without even a footnote to warn the unwary reader that Rabbi Moshe Feinstein meanwhile signed an explicit *issur* on the making or use of such an *Eruv*.

Dr. Jakobovits' explanation is utterly incomprehensible to me. Is the final decision of Rabbi Feinstein any the less worthy of our attention because it was prompted by the acceptance of the halachic opinion of other *Gedolim*? This is a constant occurrence in the halachic field, and has always been. But, even if we did not know this, could we say that *this* decision of an outstanding rabbinic authority like Rabbi Feinstein we consider legitimate, as based on adequate reasons, and *that* decision we do not? Surely Dr. Jakobovits does not mean to say that, and I am sure that if he had been engaged in writing a formal rabbinic responsa he would have referred to Rabbi Feinstein's later *psak*. In an English article he did not feel called upon to do so—and herein lies the basis for my concern. After all, the final *psak*, as signed by Rabbi Feinstein and five other *Gedolim*, declared the use of such an *Eruv* an act of *Chillul Shabbos*; if the omission of this *psak* unwittingly misleads any reader, we may well wonder whether it does not outweigh the general educational benefits that the book is meant to bestow. Our Sages put this very simply when they voiced the demand that the wise be most careful with their words.

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## News of Agudath Israel

### Chazaka Year Opens For Chicago Youth

The Agudath Israel Youth Groups in Chicago have begun their *Chazaka Year* of youth activities in Chicago. The youth groups, in their short two years of existence, now have 250 youngsters attending Shabbos and Sunday activities at the nine branches throughout the city.

Rabbi Reuven Levinson was recently engaged as youth director of the Agudath Youth divisions, Pirchei and Bnos. Rabbi Levinson, formerly of Los Angeles, is a *Musmach* of Mesivta Torah Vodath and in his five years in Chicago has become widely known for his accomplishments in education and youth organizations.

At a recent celebration of the beginning of the *Chazaka Year*, over 100 *Pirchim* heard inspiring words from the Menahel of the Telshe Yeshiva in Chicago, Rabbi Chaim Schmeltzer. The chairmen of the evening was Rabbi Reuven Levinson. Special recognition was given to Nochum Stein who is chairman of the Agudath Youth Council and also to the leaders who attend the Telshe Yeshiva and Beth Medrish Latorah. A special delegation from Milwaukee, headed by Rabbi Leibel Katz, a leading Agudath personality, also attended the celebration.

The Agudath youth groups in Chicago are the only Orthodox youth groups in Chicago and the largest in the Mid-West to have complete separate programs for boys and girls.

The Agudath Israel Youth staff consist of: Rabbi Levinson, Youth Director; Nochum Stein, Chairman and Treasurer; Israel Fogel, Secretary; Isaac Neger, Public Relations Director. The Agudath Israel Mid-West offices are located at 5114 N. Drake Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60625.

### Massachusetts Branch Organizes Activities

The North Shore (Massachusetts) Branch of Agudath Israel has undertaken a number of constructive projects. Among the first activities of the group is the safeguarding of Yeshiva interests in Massachusetts regarding federal aid programs and organizing a traditional *Chevra Kadisha* in the North Shore district. Rabbi Chaim Krasnow was elected president; Rabbi Zvi Travis vice-president, Rabbi Nochum Cywiak secretary, and Rabbi Samuel Twersky treasurer. The Executive Committee consists of Rabbi Mordecai Sevitsky, Rabbi L. I. Horowitz and Rabbi Kalmen Lichtenstein.

### New Branch Organized In Nation's Capitol

A Washington branch of Agudath Israel was organized this month, to mobilize Orthodox Jews in the District of Columbia and the Silver Springs, Maryland area for local and national activities. The temporary officers elected are: Rabbi Yerachmiel Friedman, former president of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America, as chairman; Yisroel Langer, secretary; and Moshe Rottenberg, treasurer. A Youth Committee and Program Planning Committee are already functioning and other committees are in formation.

The first adult education project of the new branch was a well-attended *shiur* held at the Summit Hill Congregation in Silver Springs during the *Aseres Yemai Teshuva* by the famed Rosh Yeshiva of Baltimore's Ner Israel, Rabbi Yaakov I. Ruderman.

### Pirchei Leaders Conference Held at Camp Agudah

Over a hundred and fifty young men assembled over the Labor Day weekend in Camp Agudah, Ferndale, N. Y. to participate in the third annual Pirchei Leaders Conference which is held for the benefit of leaders of the youth movement of Agudath Israel. Delegations came from as far as Montreal and Chicago (an observer was present from Buenos Aires). All came to receive inspiration and to discuss ways of making the Pirchei movement into an ever more effective instrument of *Chinuch*. The Conference also set the groundwork for projects and plans that would directly affect the activities of over ten thousand boys who are currently participating in the Pirchei Agudath Israel movement.

The delegates were warmly welcomed in the opening address by Rabbi Joshua Silbermintz who has been for many years one of the most effective figures in the organization. The keynote address was given on Friday Night by the Rosh Yeshiva of Telshe in Chicago, Rabbi Chaim D. Keller who portrayed in very vivid terms the world that a yeshiva youth faces every time he steps foot outside his Yeshiva. Rabbi Keller also strongly attacked those so-called Orthodox leaders who are surrendering basic concepts of Torah Judaism for expediency.

The newly elected officers of the Pirchei Council are Yitzchok Pinter, President, Shmuel Krieger, Secretary, Arie Verschleizer, Treasurer; Yuseph Brick, Israel Lamm, Avrohom Gruenfeld, Shimon Zweig, Frank Sondhelm and Avrohom Frankel, Vice-Presidents.

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