

מילין חביבין  
**BELOVED  
WORDS**

*Milin Havivin*

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Torah, Society and the Rabbinate*

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*Where Open Orthodoxy Begins*

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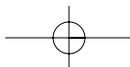
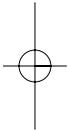
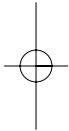
**Robert J. Leifert**

ראובן יעקב בן דב בער ושרה ליבע ע"ה

father of our friend and classmate Aryeh.

His life of service to *Klal Yisrael*  
and his example of personal integrity  
serve as inspiration to  
the entire Chovevei family.

תהא נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים



## Editors' Foreword

As we publish the second volume of Milin Havivin, we are reminded of the second set of *luhot ha-brit*. Just as these second tablets solidified the relationship between God and the Jewish people, this second volume strengthens the place of Milin Havivin within YCT's mission. We are honored by the comments and articles that have been submitted in response to the first journal, and look forward to the continuing discourse that we are confident this volume will elicit.

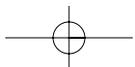
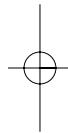
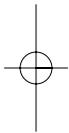
The educational mission of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah encompasses far more than the halakhic, pastoral, and professional training we receive during our *semihah* studies. Modern Orthodoxy, indeed the entire Jewish endeavor, can only flourish in the context of a vibrant culture of Torah study. We hope this volume will truly be "beloved words" of scholarship that educate and inform, and of Torah that instruct and inspire.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to many different individuals. Rabbis Avi Weiss, Dov Linzer, Dov Weiss, Tsvi Blanchard, Jeff Fox, Barry Gellman, Ysoscher Katz, Yaacov Love, Chaim Marder, and Drs. Michelle Friedman and Jonathan Milgrom, who have taught us through their immense knowledge and character traits. Special thanks go to our teacher Biti Roi whose editorial assistance is manifest throughout the Hebrew articles. We also offer gratitude to the YCT staff: Oksana Bellas, Rivka Miller, Stacey Schmulowitz, Ruthie Simon and Minda Abidor for their never-ending work on behalf of every student and teacher.

We cannot ignore the immense help and advice of Rabbi Nati Helfgot, and the encouragement, aid and patience of our *hevrutot*, friends and families. Finally, as we celebrate *zman matan torateinu*, we thank Hashem for the gift of His Torah, which serves as a constant motivation for everything that occurs within the Yeshivat Chovevei Torah community.

*B'ahavat Hatorah,*

Yonah Berman and David Wolkenfeld  
Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School  
Sivan, 5766



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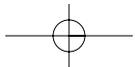
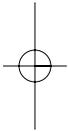
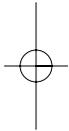
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## RABBAN YOHANAN BEN ZAKKAI AND *ZEKHER LE-MIKDASH*

Rabbi Dov Linzer

### THE TAKANOT OF RABBAN YOHANAN BEN ZAKKAI

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai (RYBZ), leader of the Jewish people in the period immediately following the destruction of the Temple, established a number of edicts (*takanot*) during his tenure.<sup>1</sup> The Talmud places the total number at nine, six of which are stated explicitly in the Mishnah<sup>2</sup> and three more are attributed to him by the Talmud.<sup>3</sup> While only one of his *takanot* explicitly mention the phrase “a commemoration for the Temple (*zekher le-mikdash*),”<sup>4</sup> many are introduced by the phrase “when the Temple was destroyed he enacted (*mi-sheharav hamikdash bitkin*),” and almost all of them seem to be responding to the destruction of the Temple.

The Talmud, commenting on the Mishnah that employs the phrase *zekher le-mikdash*, underscores the imperative to make such commemorations:

What is the basis for commemorating the Temple (*zekher le-mikdash*)? Because Scripture says, “For I will restore health unto you and I will heal you of your wound, says the Lord, because an outcast they have called you, ‘she is Zion, there is none that inquires after her.’” (Jer. 30:17) From this we gather that she ought to be inquired after.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tosafot in a number of places (*Yoma* 66a, s.v. *ain makdishin*, *Avodah Zarah* 13a, s.v. *ain makdishin*, and *Bekhorot* 53a s.v. *ela mishum*) assumes, based on the evidence of RYBZ’s *takanot*, that after the Temple’s destruction he was the *Nasi* (religio-political leader of Palestine), although there are no explicit Talmudic statements to this effect.

<sup>2</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:1, 4:3, 4:4.

<sup>3</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31b.

<sup>4</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:3.

<sup>5</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 30a. Translations of *Bavli* are from Soncino, with small changes. Translations of *Yerushalmi* are my own.

It is thus assumed that for RYBZ *zekher le-mikdash* was a high priority and, as a leader following the Temple's destruction, he enacted his many *takanot* to ensure that its memory not be forgotten.

A close inspection of the evidence, however, points to the opposite conclusion. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, far from encouraging the Jewish people to look towards the past and the destroyed Temple, enacted his *takanot* to fix their focus on the present and to encourage them to embrace the vitality of Judaism without a Temple.

In the Talmud's narrative of the Roman siege of Jerusalem,<sup>6</sup> Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai is the only leader with the foresight to look beyond the Temple, and the one who was smuggled out of Jerusalem to broker peace with Vespasian. When Vespasian grants him a request, RYBZ responds, "Give me Yavneh and its sages." RYBZ understands that after the destruction of the Temple, Yavneh would take the Temple's place, and Torah, not Temple, would be the key to the survival of Judaism. It is in this light that his *takanot* must be understood.

Let us start by looking at the *takanah* that is explicitly termed *zekher le-mikdash*: taking the *lulav* all seven days of Sukkot. The Mishnah (*Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:3) states that according to Torah law the *lulav* was taken only on the first day of Sukkot except in the Temple, where it was taken all seven days. After the destruction, RYBZ established that it be taken everywhere all seven days in commemoration of the Temple.

While it is possible that the act of taking the *lulav* on *hol ha-mo'ed* Sukkot evokes the memory of the Temple, it seems more likely that it sends the opposite message—that the Temple is not necessary for this mitzvah, and even without the Temple the mitzvah of taking the *lulav* on *hol ha-mo'ed* continues. To commemorate the Temple, RYBZ drew upon its practices to expand the mitzvah of *lulav*. *Zekher le-mikdash* served as the *motivation* to make this *takanah*, but it was not the nature of the *takanah* or its effect. This point was made by Rav Soloveitchik,<sup>7</sup> who contrasted taking the *lulav* on *hol ha-mo'ed* to other *zekher le-mikdash* practices, such as counting the Omer and eating *korekh*. Rav Soloveitchik noted that only the practice of taking the *lulav* on *hol ha-mo'ed* has all the classic components of a regular mitzvah: it receives a mitzvah blessing (*birkat ha-mitzvah*); it is performed identically to the Biblical mitzvah;<sup>8</sup> and that under appropriate circumstances receives a *shehehiyanu* blessing. In other words, this *takanah* made an extension of the Biblical mitzvah rather than establishing a practice that commemorates the Temple.

<sup>6</sup> *Gittin* 56b.

<sup>7</sup> *Harerei Kedem* (Jerusalem, 2000), vol. 1, section 138.

<sup>8</sup> This is as far as the act is concerned. With regards to the requirements for the objects, there are lower standards for the validity of the *lulav* and *etrog* on *hol ha-mo'ed*, given that it is only a rabbinic mitzvah. See *Sukah* 29b and Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Lulav* 8:9.

There is another ritual on Sukkot that was established soon after the destruction of the Temple: the practice of taking and beating the willow-branches (*aravot*) on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. This practice was established by R. Eliezer bar Zaddok in the generation following RYBZ.<sup>9</sup> The Talmud asks why RYBZ did not make a *takanah* regarding the *aravot*:

Abaye said to Rabbah: Why in the case of the *lulav* do we perform the ceremony for seven days in commemoration of the Temple, whereas in the case of the willow-branch we do not perform the ceremony for seven days in commemoration of the Temple? . . .

R. Zevid answered in the name of Rava: In the case of the *lulav* which is a Biblical *mitzvah* we perform the ceremony for seven days in commemoration of the Temple; in the case of the willow-branch which is only a rabbinic *mitzvah*, we do not perform the ceremony for seven days in commemoration of the Temple.

For RYBZ, a *zekher le-mikdash* must be an extension of an existing Biblical *mitzvah*, and the taking of *aravot* does not qualify. But why is this so? Most of the practices that are classically *zekher le-mikdash*, such as placing ashes on the head of the groom or leaving a part of the house unplastered,<sup>10</sup> are clearly not extensions of existing *mitzvot*. And it stands to reason that this ought to be the case. Placing ashes on the head of the groom and the taking of *aravot* are effective in evoking the memory of the *mikdash* specifically *because* they lack a *mitzvah* basis and therefore call out for a different religious contextualization. Moreover, these new rituals can be (and are) structured in such a way to have this effect: the ashes on the groom's head evoke destruction and mourning. During *hoshanot*, the later extension of the *aravah* practice, a *bimah* is used to represent the altar in the Temple.<sup>11</sup> There can only be one reason why RYBZ would not be interested in such a powerful form of *zekher le-mikdash*: he did not want to establish practices that evoked the Temple and the past. He wanted to use the Temple to strengthen and deepen the *mitzvot* of the present. For the generation after the destruction, Yavneh and Torah-centered Judaism needed to be established as the Temple's rightful replacements.

Yavneh's replacement of the Temple is manifest in another of RYBZ's *takanot*, the blowing of the shofar on Shabbat:

If the festive day of New Year fell on a Sabbath, they used to blow the shofar in the Temple but not outside the Temple. After the destruction of the Temple, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai ordained that it should be blown [on Sabbath] in every place where there was a *bet din*. R. Eliezer said: Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai laid down this rule

<sup>9</sup> *Sukah* 44b and Rashi, *ibid.*, s.v. *de-lo avdinan lah shiv'ah*.

<sup>10</sup> *Bava Batra* 60b.

<sup>11</sup> Maimonides, *ibid.*, 7:23.

for Yavneh only. They said to him: it applies equally to Yavneh and to any place where there is a *beit din*.<sup>12</sup>

According to Rava, the reason that the Shofar is not blown on Shabbat is to prevent inadvertent carrying.<sup>13</sup> Since there are no rabbinic safeguards in the Temple (*ain shevut be-mikdash*),<sup>14</sup> it was permitted to blow in the Temple and, by extension, in all of Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> RYBZ innovated that people could blow in the vicinity of a court as well, as the oversight of the court would ensure that no Shabbat violation would occur.<sup>16</sup>

The Talmud, however, relates a fascinating story about the events that preceded this *takanah*, one that indicates that bigger issues were at stake:

Our Rabbis taught: Once New Year fell on a Sabbath [and all the towns assembled], and Rabban Yohanan said to the *Benei Beteira*, “Let us blow the shofar.” They said to him: “Let us discuss the matter.” He said to them: “Let us blow and afterwards discuss.” After they had blown they said to him: “Let us now discuss the question.” He replied: “The horn [i.e. the shofar] has already been heard in Yavneh, and what has been done is no longer open to discussion.”<sup>17</sup>

RYBZ’s political maneuverings and the *Benei Beteira*’s opposition seem to indicate that much more was at stake than safeguarding Shabbat. Rather, allowing Shabbat shofar blowing in Yavneh was an unambiguous statement that Yavneh replaced the Temple. The Temple may be gone, but Yavneh stood in its stead. The *Benei Beteira*, leaders from an earlier period in Jewish history with possible ties to the Temple,<sup>18</sup> were not ready to make this transition so quickly. RYBZ successfully outmaneuvered them and succeeded in sounding the shofar in Yavneh. The message of Yavneh was sent loud and clear.

This point emerges even more forcefully from the *Yerushalmi*, which adopts the position rejected in the *Bavli* that refraining from blowing the shofar on Shabbat has a Biblical source:

R. Zeira instructed his colleagues: Go listen to R. Levi expound Torah, for it is impossible that he would say something that we can-

<sup>12</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:1.

<sup>13</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 29b.

<sup>14</sup> See Rashi, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 29b, s.v. *gezeirah shema yitlenu*.

<sup>15</sup> See *Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:2.

<sup>16</sup> See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Shofar* 2:9, and Commentary to the Mishnah, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:2.

<sup>17</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 29b.

<sup>18</sup> See *Pesahim* 66a. For further discussion over the identity of *Benei Beteira*, see Richard Kalmin, “Hillel and the Soldiers of Herod: Sage and Sovereign in Ancient Jewish Society,” in *Jewish Religious Leadership: Image and Reality*, vol. 1 (JTSA: 2004), ed. Jack Wertheimer, pp. 91-126.

not learn from. They went and heard him say, “One verse says, ‘A day of shofar blasts you shall have’ (Num. 29:1), and the other verse says, ‘A remembrance of shofar blasts’ (Lev. 23:24). How is this possible? [You must say,] when Rosh ha-Shanah falls out on the weekday, it is a day of shofar blasts, when it falls out on Shabbat it is [only] a remembrance of shofar blasts, we mention them, but we do not blow.”

If this is so—then even in the Temple it [the shofar blowing] should not override [Shabbat]?! . . . Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai taught: “‘And you shall offer a sacrifice’ (Lev. 23:25), in the place where sacrifices are offered [there shall be shofar blasts].”<sup>19</sup>

In line with this position, the *Yerushalmi* states that RYBZ extended a privilege to Yavneh that the Torah itself had previously limited to the Temple and Jerusalem: “In Jerusalem blowing [on Shabbat] is of a Biblical nature . . . in Yavneh it is Rabbinic in nature.”<sup>20</sup> Presumably, RYBZ believed that there was no prohibition to blow shofar on Shabbat—how else could he override a Biblical injunction? Rather, the Torah had designated that on Shabbat, while technically permissible elsewhere, the only *appropriate* place for the shofar to be blown was in the Temple and its environs. RYBZ’s *takanah* established that after the destruction Yavneh took the place of the Temple. Perhaps he understood that shofar blowing was to occur in the central institution of the Jewish people so that the day could still be defined as a “day of shofar blasts.”<sup>21</sup> Without a Temple that central institution was the rabbinic court at Yavneh.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Yerushalmi. Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:1. The problem here is obvious, as this verse follows the verse of the “remembrance” of shofar blasts, not of the “day” of shofar blasts. See the commentators ad. loc.

<sup>20</sup> *Yerushalmi. Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:2.

<sup>21</sup> He may have supported his position with an exegetical read the *Yerushalmi* rejects, that the juxtaposition of the phrase ‘On the first of the month’ with ‘a day of shofar blasts’ (Num. 29:1) teaches that in a place where they sanctify the new month, i.e., a central *beit din*, one blows the shofar even on Shabbat (*Yerushalmi Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:1). This idea is echoed in the *baraita* in the *Bavli* (*Rosh ha-Shanah* 30a) that they would only blow in a *beit din* that sanctified the new moon. This, too, points to the central role that Yavneh (or a similar *beit din*) played in the absence of the Temple – the institution that sanctifies the months and that sets the Jewish calendar is the critical institution for Jewish life after the Temple.

<sup>22</sup> This approach accords better with the position of R. Eliezer in the Mishnah that RYBZ made his edict only for Yavneh, as opposed to the majority opinion that it applies to any court. According to many, even this majority opinion is only extending his edict to courts that can sanctify the moon (see, for example, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Shofar* 2:9), and on this, see previous note. Even if his edict extended to all courts, it could be understood as a recognition that after the Temple Judaism would be largely decentralized, and even Yavneh would not have unique status. All courts would take the place once held by the Temple.

The remainder of RYBZ's Temple-related *takanot* bear out this theory. Not one of these *takanot* establishes a practice that replicates a Temple practice. Rather, every one of them changes the practice that was in effect until the destruction to reflect the current non-Temple realities. A cursory review of these *takanot* will demonstrate this point:

#### EATING OF THE NEW GRAIN<sup>23</sup>

When there was a Temple, the new grain could be eaten by noon on the sixteenth of Nissan because the *Omer* sacrifice would always have been brought by that time. In the absence of the Temple, RYBZ ruled that the entire day must pass before the eating of the new grain.

There is a debate in the *Bavli* whether this ruling was a statement of the biblical law or a *takanah*.<sup>24</sup> If it is a statement of Biblical law, then it is simply a recognition that the law had changed in the absence of the Temple. If it is a *takanah*, the matter is less clear. In explaining the position that RYBZ made a *takanah*, the anonymous voice in the Talmud (*stama de-Shas*) states that the *takanah* was made to anticipate the rebuilding of the Temple and to guard against possible transgression.<sup>25</sup> This explanation might suggest that RYBZ was directing people's attention to the eventual rebuilding of the Temple,<sup>26</sup> but this is not the case. As was discussed above regarding taking the *lulav*, RYBZ may have been motivated by Temple concerns, but that is not to be confused with the experiential effect of his *takanah*. His *takanah* may prevent people from sinning when the Temple is rebuilt, but for now they are being told that they no longer live a Temple-based Judaism and the rules of Jewish conduct are different.

#### RECEIVING THE WITNESSES OF THE NEW MOON<sup>27</sup>

For reasons related to Temple practice, witnesses to the new moon were not received after the time of the afternoon sacrifice. In the absence of the Temple,

<sup>23</sup> [He] also [ordained] that during the whole of the day of the waving [of the *Omer*] the new grain should be forbidden. (*Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:3)

<sup>24</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 30a-b, *Sukah* 41a-b, *Menahot* 69a-b.

<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that this explanation is not stated by any *amora* or by the *Yerushalmi*.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, *Arukh La-Ner*, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 30a, s.v. *mikhlal de-ba'i derisha*.

<sup>27</sup> Originally, they used to accept testimony with regard to the new moon during the whole of the day. On one occasion, the witnesses were late in arriving, and the Levites went wrong in the daily hymn. It was therefore ordained that testimony should be accepted [on New Year] only until the afternoon sacrifice. . . . After the destruction of the Temple, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai ordained that testimony with regard to the new moon should be received during the whole of the day." (*Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:4)

RYBZ established that the witnesses could be received all day. Rather than allowing the old practice to continue, RYBZ insisted that the practice reflect the current realities, and Temple-related practices should not be retained.

#### VIOLATING THE SABBATH TO TESTIFY FOR THE NEW MOON<sup>28</sup>

When there was a Temple, the requirement to bring the appropriate sacrifices allowed the witnesses of the new moon to violate Shabbat. RYBZ recognized that this justification was no longer present after the Temple had been destroyed. At the same time, the festivals remained important to the Jewish calendar and thus the practice continued for *Tishrei* and *Nissan*.<sup>29</sup>

#### SETTING ASIDE MONEY FOR THE CONVERT'S SACRIFICE<sup>30</sup>

A convert should ideally bring a sacrifice upon converting. There were those who stated that a convert should set aside money to be ready to use for this purpose when the Temple is rebuilt. This position seems close to a true *zekher le-mikdash*, a practice that elicits the memory of the Temple and anticipates its rebuilding. RYBZ eradicated this practice. His concern for possible wrongdoing (misuse of the money) was stronger than his need to anticipate the rebuilding of the Temple.

#### BRINGING FOURTH-YEAR FRUIT TO JERUSALEM<sup>31</sup>

When there was a Temple, the rabbis insisted that fourth-year fruit grown near Jerusalem be brought to Jerusalem and not redeemed or declared free to the poor, in order to beautify Jerusalem with the fruits. Had this been maintained

<sup>28</sup> *Mishnah*. For the sake of two months Sabbath may be profaned, namely, Nissan and Tishrei, since in them messengers go forth to Syria and in them the dates of the festivals are fixed. When the Temple was standing they used to profane Sabbath for all the months, in order that the sacrifice [of new moon] might be offered on the right day.

*Gemara*. Our Rabbis taught: Originally the Sabbath could be profaned for all of them. When the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai said to them, Is there then a sacrifice [waiting to be brought]? They therefore ordained that Sabbath should not be profaned save for *Nissan* and *Tishrei* alone. (*Rosh ha-Shanah* 21b)

<sup>29</sup> Compare this to the shofar blowing privilege given to the courts that could sanctify the new moon, note 19 *supra*.

<sup>30</sup> One who becomes a proselyte at the present time must set aside a sum of money for a nest of pigeons. Said R. Simeon b. Eleazar: Rabban Yohanan took a vote on it and annulled this rule, because it may lead to wrongdoing. (*Rosh ha-Shanah* 31b)

<sup>31</sup> [The fruit of] a vine in the fourth year was taken to Jerusalem from any point within a day's journey on all sides. The boundary of this area was as follows: Elath on the north, Akrabath on the south, Lydda on the west, and Jordan on the east.'

after the destruction, it surely would have evoked powerful feelings of loss in those who brought the fruit to Jerusalem. RYBZ asserted that without a Temple the obligation to bring the fruits themselves served no functional purpose and he nullified this ruling.

The effect of every one of these *takanot* was to change the practice after the destruction of the Temple: not to recapture the experience of the Temple, but to anchor the practice in the current reality of the Jewish people.<sup>32</sup>

### RABBAN YOHANAN BEN ZAKKAI AND RABBI AKIVA

Given our understanding of RYBZ's *takanot*, it is not surprising that while he enacted *takanot* for Rosh ha-Shanah, Sukkot, and the second day of Passover (the day of the *Omer*), he made no *takanah* for Passover itself. On first blush, if any holiday calls for a *zekher le-hurban*, it is Passover, which lost the central mitzvah of the seder night, the Pascal lamb. Certainly this was on Rabbi Akiva's mind when he formulated the blessing at the conclusion of the haggadah:

And he concludes with [a blessing of] redemption.

R. Tarfon used to say: “[Blessed are You . . .] Who redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt,” but he did not conclude [with a blessing].

R. Akiva said: “So may the Lord our God and the God of our fathers suffer us to reach other seasons and festivals which come towards us for peace, rejoicing in the rebuilding of Thy city and glad in Thy service, and there we will partake of the sacrifices and the Passover-offerings etc.” As far as “Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who has redeemed Israel.”<sup>33</sup>

Ulla (or as some say, Rabbah b. Ulla) said in the name of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai: What was the reason? To decorate the streets of Jerusalem with fruit.

It has been further taught: ‘R. Eliezer had a vine in its fourth year east of Lydda at the side of Kefar Tabi, and R. Eliezer had a mind to declare it free to the poor, but his disciples said to him, Rabbi, your colleagues have already taken a vote on it and declared it permitted’. Who are his ‘colleagues’? — Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai. (ibid.)

<sup>32</sup> The other *takanot* of RYBZ are either pre-destruction or unrelated to the Temple altogether. The location of the scarlet thread on the *Azazel* goat is clearly pre-destruction. The *takanah* that priests should not ascend to the *duhan* wearing sandals is either pre-destruction or irrelevant for our purposes (regarding these two *takanot*, see *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31b). The *takanah* that the witnesses of the new month should go to the place of the court, regardless of the location of the head of the court (*Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah* 4:4) so as not to dissuade the witnesses from coming a second time, also seems irrelevant to our purposes. It does, however, serve to underscore the decentralization of authority post-destruction, a point which may also emerge from the status given non-Yavneh courts. See note 22, *supra*.

<sup>33</sup> *Pesahim* 10:6.

According to R. Akiva one cannot experience the night of the seder without feeling deeply the loss of the Paschal lamb and hoping and praying for its restoration. It is exactly for this reason that RYBZ could not establish any *takanah* for Seder night. Any *takanah* connected to the Paschal lamb would direct our gaze backwards and deepen our sense of loss. While R. Akiva could make such a blessing, RYBZ could not.<sup>34</sup>

The different approach of R. Akiva is also reflected in the Talmud's narrative of RYBZ's encounter with Vespasian:

[Vespasian] said [to RYBZ]: I am now going, and will send someone to take my place. You can, however, make a request of me and I will grant it.

He said to him: Give me Yavneh and its Sages . . .

R. Yosef, or some say R. Akiva, applied to him the verse, '[God] turneth wise men backward and maketh their knowledge foolish' (Isa. 44:25). He ought to have said to him: Let them [the Jews] off this time.

He, however, thought that so much he would not grant, and so even a little would not be saved.<sup>35</sup>

Either Rav Yosef or R. Akiva said that RYBZ should not have let go of the Temple so easily. It is easy to imagine that it was R. Akiva who offered this critique. R. Akiva backed Bar Kokhba, the leader of the Jewish revolt at the time of Hadrian. R. Akiva militated to see the Temple rebuilt as quickly as possible. Had he been alive when the Temple was on the verge of being destroyed, he would have fought to maintain it at all costs.

Just as RYBZ and R. Akiva differed regarding how one should deal with the Temple's imminent destruction, they differed in how to deal with its actual destruction. Three distinct reactions were possible: despair, a sadness coupled with a hope for the future, and a pragmatic appreciation for what they had in the present. The reaction of despair is described in the following story:

Our Rabbis taught: When the Temple was destroyed for the second time, large numbers in Israel became ascetics, binding themselves neither to eat meat nor to drink wine.

R. Yehoshua got into conversation with them and said to them: My sons, why do you not eat meat nor drink wine?

<sup>34</sup> I hope to develop in a future article how the Seder night developed after the destruction of the Temple, moving from a Rabbi Akiva-Temple model to a Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai-Yavneh model.

<sup>35</sup> *Gittin* 56b.

They replied: Shall we eat flesh which used to be brought as an offering on the altar, now that this altar is in abeyance? Shall we drink wine which used to be poured as a libation on the altar, but now no longer?

He said to them: If that is so, we should not eat bread either, because the meal offerings have ceased.

They said: [That is so, and] we can manage with fruit.

We should not eat fruit either, [he said,] because there is no longer an offering of first-fruits.

Then we can manage with other fruits [they said].

But, [he said,] we should not drink water, because there is no longer any ceremony of the pouring of water.

To this they could find no answer, so he said to them: My sons come and listen to me. Not to mourn at all is impossible, because the blow has fallen. To mourn overmuch is also impossible, because we do not impose on the community a hardship which the majority cannot endure. . . . The Sages therefore have ordained thus. A man may stucco his house, but he should leave a little bare. . . . A man can prepare a full-course banquet, but he should leave out an item or two. . . . A woman can put on all her ornaments, but leave off one or two. . . . For so it says, 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I remember thee not, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.'<sup>36</sup>

R. Yehoshua rejects the reaction of extreme despair. Despair is a natural reaction, but they must move beyond it. Life must go on, and they should still take pleasure in it. Nevertheless, a sense of sadness would continue to tinge their lives, even at the happiest of times. This sadness is appropriate, and R. Yehoshua endorsed practices of *zekher le-mikdash* that were enacted to ensure that this sadness not be forgotten.

R. Akiva, on the other hand, believed in the possibility of an imminent rebuilding of the Temple and was more positive than R. Yehoshua. The following classic story reveals their different approaches:

Once again they (Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaryah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva) were coming up to Jerusalem together, and just as they came to Mount Scopus they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They fell a-weeping and R. Akiva seemed merry.

<sup>36</sup> *Bava Batra* 60b.

“Wherefore, said they to him, are you merry?”

Said he: “Wherefore are you weeping?”

Said they to him: “A place of which it was once said, And the common man that draweth nigh shall be put to death, is now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep?”

Said he to them: “Therefore am I merry . . . In the [earlier] prophecy [in the days] of Uriah it is written, ‘Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field, etc.’ In Zekhariah it is written, ‘Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, ‘There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem.’ So long as Uriah’s [threatening] prophecy had not had its fulfillment, I had misgivings lest Zekhariah’s prophecy might not be fulfilled; now that Uriah’s prophecy has been [literally] fulfilled, it is quite certain that Zekhariah’s prophecy also is to find its literal fulfillment.”

Said they to him: “Akiva, you have comforted us! Akiva, you have comforted us!”<sup>37</sup>

R. Yehoshua and his colleagues may have rejected despondency and asceticism as an appropriate *modus vivendi*, but the sight of the destroyed Temple still filled them with despair. R. Akiva, in contrast, retained his optimism. All is not lost, for the Temple will surely be rebuilt. The common denominator of both reactions, however, is a sense that our current reality without the Temple is crippled or, at the very least, impaired.

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai saw things otherwise. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* tells a story of RYBZ and the Temple Mount similar to that of Rabbi Akiva, but with significant differences. Commenting on the Mishnah in Pirkei Avot (1:2) that “The world stands on three things, on Torah, on Temple service, and on acts of loving-kindness,” it states:

On acts of loving-kindness—How is this so? Behold the verse says, “For I desire loving kindness, not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6). The world originally was built only for the sake of loving-kindness, as it states: “For I have said, “The world is built by loving-kindness; Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens” (Ps. 89:3).

One time, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was leaving Jerusalem and he saw R. Yehoshua going after him, and he saw the Temple destroyed.

R. Yehoshua said: “Woe to us that this is destroyed! The place where the sins of Israel were atoned for!”

<sup>37</sup> *Makkot* 24b.

He said to him: “My son, do not be distraught. We have an atonement that is similar to this. And what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it says, “For I desire loving-kindness, not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6). And so we find regarding Daniel, that he was involved in loving-kindness. And what loving-kindness was he involved in? If you say he was offering burnt-offerings and sacrifices in Babylon, [that cannot be, since] the verse states “Guard yourself lest you offer your burnt-offerings in any place that you see, save the place that the Lord will choose from one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt-offerings” (Deut. 12:13-14).

But rather what loving-kindness did he perform? He would prepare the bride and cause her to rejoice, and accompany the dead, and give a coin to the poor, and pray three times a day, and his prayer was received with desire, as it states: “Now when Daniel learned that the writing was signed, he went into his house; his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.” (Daniel 6:11)<sup>38</sup>

R. Yehoshua once again voices a sense of despair over the destroyed Temple, but RYBZ’s response is completely different from that of R. Akiva’s. RYBZ does not talk about hope in the rebuilding of the Temple; he focuses on the present and what it has to offer. Loving-kindness is itself atonement equal to that of the sacrifices. It does not atone “in place” of the sacrifices, it is not a virtual atonement; it is an atonement in its own right.

This point is made even more forcefully when the text turns to prayer. It is a well-established idea in the Talmud that prayer acts as a substitute for the sacrifices, in connection with the verse “[S]o will we render for bullocks the offerings of our lips.” (Hosea 14:3) In this vein, the Talmud states that if a person repents, “the Torah accounts it to him as if he had offered up bullocks, as it is said: So will we render for bullocks the offerings of our lips.” (*Yoma* 86b) True atonement and true worship, according to this account, is only through sacrifices, but prayer can be considered *as if* it were a sacrifice. The ideal is still absent.

In contrast to this, RYBZ states that prayer is an act of loving-kindness, which itself is an act of atonement. Although thrice-daily prayer, which is strongly suggestive of the sacrifice model, is mentioned, the text makes no hint to the idea that prayer serves as a pseudo-sacrifice. The prayer itself is accepted with desire. The verse quoted twice in this passage makes this point explicit: “For I desire loving-kindness, not sacrifice.”

<sup>38</sup> *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, Version A, Chapter 4.

It is worth considering briefly to what degree the rabbinic idea of prayer, in the form of the *amidah*, reflects the approach of RYBZ, and to what degree it is understood only as a stand-in for sacrifices. This is at the core of the debate whether the prayers were established based on the Patriarchs or based on the sacrifices.<sup>39</sup> In the text of the *Amidah*, moreover, it is remarkable that sacrifices are never mentioned, even in the blessing of the Temple Service:

Receive favorably, O Lord, our God, Your people Israel and their prayer, and restore the service to the Holy of Holies of Your House, and the fire-offerings of Israel and their prayer accept with love and favor, and may You constantly find favor in the service of Your people Israel.

This blessing mentions “prayer” and “service,” twice, but never once “sacrifices.” The closest it gets is the abstract phrase “the fire-offerings of Israel” to which it immediately appends “and their prayer.” This is in stark contrast to the *Musaf* prayers, which are explicit stand-ins for the sacrifices,<sup>40</sup> and which in their main section repeatedly use the words *korbanot* (sacrifices), *nakriv* (we will sacrifice), *tamid* (daily communal sacrifice), and *musaf* (additional sacrifice), and do not once mention “prayer.” It seems that the rabbis went out of their way in our thrice-daily prayers—the post-Temple staple of our religious service—to downplay the sacrifices and to maintain our focus on prayer’s own efficacy.

Finally, the verse with which we open the *amidah*,<sup>41</sup> “O Lord, open you my lips; and my mouth shall declare your praise” appears in Psalms in the following context:

- O Lord, open you my lips; and my mouth shall declare your praise.
- For You do not desire sacrifice that I should give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.
- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
- Do good in Your good will to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem.
- Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bulls upon Your altar.<sup>42</sup>

When the walls of Jerusalem are built, we will offer sacrifices, and God will be pleased with them. But for now, echoing the above verse from Hosea, we are

<sup>39</sup> *Berakhot* 26b, and, significantly, *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 4:1.

<sup>40</sup> See *Berakhot* 26b.

<sup>41</sup> Inserted by the *amora* R. Yohanan; see *Berakhot* 4b and *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 4:4.

<sup>42</sup> Ps. 51:17-21.

told that God “do[es] not desire sacrifice,” but rather “a broken spirit and a contrite heart.”

Without a doubt RYBZ shared in the terrible sense of tragedy and loss over the destruction of the Temple and longed for it to be rebuilt. But he was a leader who had the vision to face up to the present and to plan for the future. To continue focusing on the Temple as the paradigm for true religious fulfillment and to see our current reality as a weak shadow of this ideal would vitiate Judaism. To focus on the present and to recognize the redemptive power of a life of Torah, *mitzvot*, and acts of loving-kindness was to revitalize Judaism and to give it the power to survive for millennia to come.

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## BRINGING SPIRITUALITY INTO THE SYNAGOGUE\*

Rabbi Avraham Weiss

Mark was laying absolutely still, a tracheotomy tube in his throat, his artificial feet extending just beyond his blanket. It was the eve of Pesach. “Which holiday do you like best?” he haltingly asked me. “*Rosh ha-Shanah* is a favorite,” I replied, “as it celebrates the creation of the world.” “For me,” Mark responded, “every morning I wake up is *Rosh ha-Shanah*.” And then, he started to sing *Dayenu*, the Seder song in which we thank God for everything He has given us. As I joined in singing the verses of *Dayenu*, Mark, with a precious twinkle in his eyes, softly called out “amen,” as if I had recited the morning *birkhot ha-shahar* blessings of renewal. I leaned over and kissed his forehead and said, “Thank you for saving my soul.” As I stepped away to leave, Mark whispered, “Every moment, every moment.”

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The purpose of this paper is to offer a particular approach to spirituality. There are other models. Still, it is an understanding that I have found to be of meaning, and one steeped in Jewish sources. We will analyze spirituality by first defining the term; second, offering a pathway to achieve spirituality; third, suggesting ways to bring spirituality into synagogue; finally, outlining what rabbis need to do to bring spirituality into their communities.

### DEFINITION

My working definition is rather simple. Spirituality means to transcend the self to feel the presence of God. That is, spirituality involves going beyond, with God playing an instrumental role in the process.

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## THE PATHWAY

How is spirituality achieved? In broad terms, it involves two distinct stages. It begins with a counter-intuitive idea. Many people associate spirituality with an upward movement, a reaching up toward God. I would like to suggest the opposite: spirituality is triggered not by reaching upward but by reaching inward.

The idea that spirituality is attained by moving inward is found in the first sacrifice accepted in the Torah. Sacrifices relate to spiritually connecting with God. After Cain's sacrifice is rejected, the Torah states: "*ve-Hevel heivi gam hu.*" (Gen. 4:4) Normatively this is understood to mean that Abel, like Cain, brought a sacrifice. The *Sefat Emet*, R. Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger, offers an alternative reading. Abel brought *gam hu*, also himself—he reached deep into his soul and brought his true inner essence. As a consequence, his sacrifice, unlike Cain's, was accepted. In the words of *Sefat Emet*:<sup>1</sup> "*Gam hu: gam et atzmo [et ha-ani she-lo] im ha-korban, ve-lakhen nitkabel lifnei Hashem Yitbarekh—Abel brought himself [his inner I] with the sacrifice and, therefore, it was accepted before the Lord, may He be blessed.*"

From this perspective, spirituality begins by reaching inward to become fully conscious of the *I*, and, by extension, the moment the *I* is experiencing. There are many who believe that spirituality is an out-of-body experience. The opposite may be true. Spirituality is being fully involved, completely in the moment.

Judaism is not unique in this formulation of spirituality. It differs in its consequences. In some eastern religions, for example, the moment being experienced is so overpowering, one feels a sense of nothingness, a negation of being. Total consciousness of moment can yield a sense of worthlessness in the face of all that is unfolding. This is much like a young woman who recently told me that, as a musician, her spirituality surfaces when listening to a symphony orchestra. The moment, she said, "is so awesome, everything stands still; I lose my sense of self."

The opposite feeling can also take place. Consciousness of moment can elevate one to feel a sense of self-importance, to be totally self-absorbed. Spirituality from this perspective yields an approach to life which is anthropocentric, narcissistic, revolving completely around the human being. Ted Williams, arguably the greatest hitter in baseball, described this phenomenon. Asked what his secret to hitting was, he said, as the pitcher threw the ball even at speeds close to one hundred miles per hour, everything for him stopped. He could literally see the seams of the ball. That, for Williams, was, I believe, a spiritual moment. Everything came to a halt. It was only Williams and the ball.

In Judaism, we find echoes of these positions, from Chabad's *bitul ha-yesh* to Slobodka's *ve-tehasreihu me'at me-Elokim*. However, our critical contribution is

<sup>1</sup> *Sefat Emet, Parashat Bereshit, s.v. be-sefer Kol Simbah.*

that consciousness of moment can be a synthesis of these positions, and, is inextricably linked with God and God's role in the moment being experienced. In the Torah framework, consciousness of moment should lead to an awareness of the presence of God and God's role in bringing about, nurturing, and giving meaning to the particular experience.

This is apparent when taking Cain's offering a step further. *Gam hu* may refer to one's inner Godliness. After crossing the sea the Jewish people call out: "*Zeh Eli ve-anveihu*—this is my God and I will glorify Him." (Ex. 15:2) Here the Jews proclaim that their relationship to God is one of *anveihu*, a compound of *ani* and *hu*. In the spiritual experience, I feel the mystery of the *Hu*, the Other, who is always near me and in me. From this perspective *ve-Hevel heivi gam hu* means the bringing not only of the inner essence of man or woman, but the *Hu*, the inner part of God in each of us. Consciousness of moment is a transcendent movement when we reach beyond—not up, but in—tapping into one's Godliness which is crucial to feeling the inner moment.

This, I believe, is the deeper meaning of *kavannah la-tzeit bah*, the conscious intent required before performing a *mitzvah*, that one does the *mitzvah* to fulfill God's command, *le-kayeim ba-zeh ka'asher tzivah Hashem*.<sup>2</sup> In the words of *Sefat Emet*: "*Asiyot ha-tzivuy yoter mekubal me-ta'am ha-metzuvah*—the doing of the commandment is more acceptable by reason of the Commander."<sup>3</sup> Not only is awareness of God required before a *mitzvah's* performance, but, as Rav Chaim of Brisk adds, in the context of prayer, it is important to recognize that one stands before God while performing the *mitzvah*.<sup>4</sup> Although he makes this an imperative in prayer, it is sound advice for all *mitzvot*. Thus, *halakhah* serves as a foundation for the spiritual experience. Often, *halakhah* is seen as constricting, limiting one's spirituality; we become so involved in the minutiae of *halakhah* that it blocks our connection to God. Nothing could be further from the truth. *Halakhah* is the base, giving wings to the spiritual moment, helping us to connect to God Himself.

Ritual, especially ritual associated with rites of passage, is an example of how spirituality can be experienced by taking cognizance of the moment. It is not the time to give lengthy impersonal *divrei Torah*. Rather, the Torah presented should be a very brief segue for blessings, and for encouraging "sharing," where the principals, together with family and friends, offer personal reflections about what this moment means to them. Although the ritual is a rite of passage, the challenge is to have time stand still, to ponder the religious significance and spiritual power of the moment.

Consider the ritual on our most joyous and mournful occasions. It is spiritually uplifting to read after the *sheva berakhot* under the *huppah*, words of blessing

<sup>2</sup> *Mishnah Berurah, Orach Hayim* 60:7.

<sup>3</sup> *Sefat Emet*, first comment on *Parashat Ahrei Mot*, s.v. *be-Rashi*.

<sup>4</sup> *Hidushei Rav Hayim ha-Levi, Hilkhotei Tefilah* 4:1.

that bride and groom have written to each other. The *mesader kiddushin* can then ask for a moment of silence wherein all present can offer their blessings to bride and groom. Or, at the last *kaddish* recited for one's beloved, it is meaningful to have the mourner offer a personal reflection about the person for whom her or she has said the *kaddish*.

It is here that spirituality faces a formidable challenge. The idea that the foundation of spirituality involves living in the moment makes many people uncomfortable. We are, by and large, not happy coming face to face with who we are: our physical beings, our emotions, our relationships, our inner essence. When challenged to encounter our inner "I," we often feel vulnerable; it is a place at which we often do not want to be.

For example, a wedding of spiritual meaning where aspects of love are touched upon may conjure up for many in attendance matters related to the inadequacies of their own marriages. Or a *Yizkor* of spiritual depth, where one is encouraged to be in dialogue with the departed, may raise all kinds of issues about one's relationship to the deceased.

Virtually nothing of meaning comes easily. Because spirituality is potentially exhilarating, it is equally daunting. All we can do is be sensitive to the challenges of consciousness of moment while carefully forging ahead. In fact, *halakhah* may show the way. While *halakhah* is often viewed as blocking spirituality, it *should* do the reverse—it should, in fact, foster consciousness of moment. For example, the Mishnah which declares that a groom should not recite *Shema* on his wedding night is based on the principle that *ha-osek be-mitzvah patur min ha-mitzvah*. Bride and groom should be so immersed in the moment that even if they could find time to say *Shema*, they should not.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the mourner may be prohibited from learning Torah so that he or she fully feels the emotions of *shivah* and does not escape into the *yam shel Torah*.<sup>6</sup>

Something extraordinary occurs here. Once engaged in the first stage of spirituality, and moving inward, and feeling consciousness of moment, we are catapulted to the second stage, in which we are able to reach great heights. Joseph Ibn Saddiq (twelfth-century Spain) echoes this idea. He writes, "by man knowing his own soul, he will know the spiritual world from which he can attain some knowledge of the Creator, as it is written, 'From my flesh I shall perceive God.'" (Job 19:26)<sup>7</sup> A century later, Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera (also of Spain) expanded on this idea:

They said that whoever knows his soul knows his Creator, and whoever is ignorant of knowing his soul is all the more ignorant of knowing his Creator. How can one believe that a person is wise concerning

<sup>5</sup> *Mishnah Berakhot*, 2:5.

<sup>6</sup> *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah*, 384:1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ha-Olam ha-Katan*, translation by S. Horovitz.

something else when he is ignorant concerning himself? And so it was written in the Temple of the Ascetics: “Know yourself, man, and you will know your Creator.” Therefore, they said that the knowledge of the soul is prior to the knowledge of God, and that is the most excellent knowledge after the knowledge of God.”<sup>8</sup>

In the end, spirituality means kindling the spark of God in each human being. Once kindled, our souls can soar to connect to the infinite God and to the godliness in our fellow person. Spirituality is therefore achieved in two stages: first, through an inward focus, and then, by moving upward and outward. Hence my definition: Spirituality means transcending the self to feel the presence of God.

### BRINGING SPIRITUALITY INTO SYNAGOGUE

This definition and approach to spirituality yields several teachings relative to bringing spirituality into synagogue, revolving around the three Hebrew terms for synagogue—*Beit Tefillah*, *Beit Kneset* and *Beit Midrash*. These terms encapsulate the three directions in which spirituality moves.

#### **BEIT TEFILLAH**

As a *Beit Tefillah*, a synagogue is a place where we reach inward through prayer, traversing beyond the self to touch the Divine. R. Avraham Yitzchak ha-Kohen Kook makes this point in his introduction to his siddur, *Olat Re'iyah*: “*Hatefillah milematab le-ma'alab*—Prayer rises from down below to high above.” “*Ve-khol ma she-nered yoter le-tokh tehom penimiyut nafsheinu . . . benehnu yekholim la'amod be-kavim yoter meduyakim et aliyoteinu be-mabalakh hatefillah*—The more we penetrate to the recesses in the inner regions of our soul, the greater the accuracy with which we shall be able to measure the extent of our ascent during the progress of our prayers.”

It is by no means easy to accomplish this spiritual state in a synagogue setting. Synagogues are often caught up in form and structure, in buildings, in institutional bureaucracy, shul politics, and perfunctory observance—in the external rather than the internal. But spirituality in synagogue means going beyond, going deeper within to touch God, in others and ourselves.

How can we do this? Through preparatory focus in the spirit of “*hasidim harishonim hayu shobin sha'ah abat u-mitpallelin*—The pious people of old [who] would meditate an hour before praying.” (*Berakhot* 30b) Such practice helps make the structured *tefillah* more meaningful. *Kavanot* can set the spiritual tone for a specific prayer. A quick sentence right before a recitation of a *tefillah* can serve as a point of inspiration. For example, before *Lekhah Dodi*, congregants

<sup>8</sup> *Sefer ha-Nefesh*, translation by R. Jospe.

can be encouraged to consider contemplating Shabbat in Yerushalayim when singing “*mikdash melekh*.” Or, before *Ashrei*, a rabbi can point to the genocide in Darfur and suggest that it be pondered when reciting “*Somekh Adonai le-khol ha-nofelim ve-zokef le-khol ha-kefufim*—the Lord supports all the fallen ones, and straightens all the bent.” Or it could be pointed out that *hazarat ha-shatz* is no less than a *Shemoneh Esrei*, but while the silent *Amidah* is focused on the individual, the repetition focuses on the community. Hence, during the repetition, people should concentrate on communal concerns and if possible, remain standing, as it is another *Amidah*.

Also, through movement, we can attain a special emotional and mental state necessary for prayer. This may explain the underlying reason we take three steps back before the *Amidah*, the ultimate prayer, and then move forward. When we take these steps back, we are in effect moving inward, entering our own space, our own consciousness of moment. In that setting we appropriately recite “*Hashem sefatai tiftah u-fi yagid tebilatekha*—My Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise.” Similarly, other movements and postures in prayer—whether standing, sitting, falling on our faces, lifting our hands, swaying, and so on—prepare us for different moods the *tefillah* attempts to evoke.

In addition, it is through song that is participatory and soulful, rather than a musical performance in which congregants become mere spectators that we can achieve heights of spirituality. It is song that expresses our deepest emotions and longings, that binds community and connects earth and heaven. When possible, we may experiment with live music for *havdalah* or on Sunday *Rosh Hodesh*, or *Hanukkah*.

And, of course, through silence, private meditation, and reflection, we can reach deeply inward. The standardized words of prayer are not meant to limit our thoughts, but to inspire spontaneous feelings that take us beyond.<sup>9</sup> This may be enhanced by praying outdoors in the framework of R. Shemuel ben Nahmeini, who declares that “[the three prayer services] correspond to the three times that the day visibly changes over [God’s] creatures—*ke-neged sheloshah pe’amim she-hayom mishtaneh al ha-beriyot*.” (*Yerushalmi, Berakhot 4:1*) As *Mishneh Berurah* notes, “*Ke-she-nitbatelah kavanato yisah einav la-shamayim le-orer ha-kavanah*—when one loses *kavanah*, lift the eyes heavenward to awaken *kavanah*.”<sup>10</sup>

### BEIT KNESSET

*Beit Knesset*, a house of gathering, is where all come together. Here lies the “outward” ingredient of spirituality—the readiness to embrace everyone, and es-

<sup>9</sup> This is very much in the spirit of the *halakhab*, “*im ratzah le-hosif be-khol berakhah me-ha-emitza’iot . . . mosif*—if one wishes to add to any of the middle blessings . . . one may add.” See *Shulkhan Arukh, Orach Hayim 119:1*.

<sup>10</sup> *Mishnah Berurah, Orach Hayim, 90:8*.

pecially those in need. The test of spirituality in synagogue is not how the community receives the most powerful, but how it welcomes the most vulnerable.

Rambam makes this point when he codifies that on Purim it is preferable for a person to be liberal with his or her donations to the poor (*matanot la-eryonim*) than to be lavish with the Purim feast (*se'udat Purim*) or in sending portions to friends (*mishloah manot*): “*She-ha-mesameiah lev ha-ameilalim ha-eileh domeh li-Shekhinah*—one who brings happiness to the hearts of these unfortunate individuals resembles the Divine Presence, who revives the spirit of the lowly and the brokenhearted.”<sup>11</sup>

Viktor Frankl argues that what impels most people to act is the desire to seek meaning in life. From a theological perspective, Frankl is echoing the most fundamental principle in Judaism, that every person is created in the image of God. As God gives and cares, so do we, in the spirit of *imitatio Dei*, have the natural capacity to be giving and caring. In doing so, we imitate God and reflect how God works through people.

Too many synagogues fail in this mission. The role of a synagogue is to aid and repair the soul, not to pass judgment, condemn or ostracize. An instructive model for the synagogue is a hospital. Just as a hospital is dedicated to healing physically, so the purpose of a synagogue is to heal spiritually—to bring greater spiritual health. The goal of the synagogue is to admit not only those who are healthy but those who are not; not only to accept those parts within us that are whole, but also those aspects within each of us that are broken.

Yet another model for synagogue is a *bayit*.<sup>12</sup> As a *bayit*, a home, is a place of welcome and love, so too should the most basic message of a *beit kneset* be one of welcome and love. Indeed, a *bayit* conjures up the image of family. In functional families, members love one another no matter the path they have chosen. Similarly, a *beit kneset* should be a place where we unconditionally love others regardless of their levels of learning, observance, physical or mental well-being.

Some suggestions to achieve this goal include offering, “Free and Open High Holy Day Services,” “Free and Open Passover Seders,” “Free and Open Shabbat Meals,” and for those wary of religious observance, “Free and Open Thanksgiving Meals,” and complimentary first-year membership in the synagogue. Moreover, synagogues, and their sanctuaries, should be built with ramps to the ark and the lectern. A beautiful synagogue, a spiritual synagogue, is one that is accessible and sends the message that all are welcome and no one is excluded. Synagogues should also provide resources for the visually and hearing impaired. As for spiritual leaders, rather than sitting apart from and in front of the congregation, they should consider sitting among their congregants in an effort to reinforce the sense of community, the sense of family.

<sup>11</sup> Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Megilah* 2:17; see also Isaiah 57:15.

<sup>12</sup> At the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, we affectionately refer to our synagogue as the *Bayit*.

From the perspective of *beit kneset*, spirituality is fostered in a prayer setting which is inclusive—intergenerational and heterogeneous, where young and old, more versed and less versed, more observant and less observant, learn and grow through contact with each other. Inclusive—wherein the *mehitzah* allows women to see, hear, and be heard just as the men are. Inclusive—wherein we encompass the angst and dreams of all of *Am Yisrael* especially in *Eretz Yisrael*, in the spirit of R. Yehuda Ha-Levi, “*libi be-mizrah, va-ani be-sof ha-ma’arav*—My heart is in the East, but I am at the uttermost of the West.” Even though we may be in the Diaspora we can be *dorshei Zion*, seeking and yearning constantly for Zion.<sup>13</sup> Inclusive—wherein we connect with a sense of universal consciousness with *mishpehot ha-amim*, the families of humankind. Hence, we should sponsor commemorations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, where African-Americans and Jews can come together in hope and song, as a living example of, “*Ki veiti beit tefilah yikareh le-khol ha-amim*—for My house shall be a house of prayer for all the peoples.”(Isaiah 56:7)

#### **BEIT MIDRASH**

Finally, a synagogue is called a *Beit Midrash*, a house of teaching and learning, where the “upward” values of Torah are taught. The teaching of Torah values, even when those values conflict with contemporary culture, is a primary ingredient of spirituality. Within synagogues, spirituality is possible only when there is a readiness to criticize the ethics and materialism of modern society, and, through teaching and learning, offer a higher, Torah-bound alternative.

During much of the twentieth century, Jews who felt themselves to be outsiders in America sought in their synagogues a way to feel that their religion reinforced—indeed, glorified, Americanism and democratic values. Now that we feel at home in America, synagogues have a unique opportunity to restore their spiritual mandate by raising a voice against cultural conformism and seeking a higher distinctiveness that can be a new source of pride.

Some concrete examples: Do our synagogues encourage excess in bar/bat mitzvah or wedding celebrations, or do they strive to infuse lifecycle events with higher spiritual meaning? When we distribute honors institutionally, are they based on wealth alone or do they demonstrate our admiration for all who live in accordance with a lofty vision of Jewish values? Is the goal of our sermons and teaching to say what people want to hear, or are we willing to lovingly challenge our congregants in order to encourage growth and change? A spiritual synagogue should not only make its congregants comfortable, but also uncomfortable. Do we talk about God in synagogue, and is the presence of God felt in our *divrei Torah* and *shiurim*?

<sup>13</sup> *Rosh ha-Shanah* 30b.

Of great importance is the recognition that for a synagogue to be spiritual its message must go beyond its confines. Perhaps this is the meaning of the *halakhab* that synagogues have windows.<sup>14</sup> The windows connect what is happening inside to what is happening outside, bearing in mind that spirituality is inextricably bound to feeling the consciousness of the moment, that moment transcends space. Thus, the way we interact with family, the way we conduct ourselves in business, the way we reach out to the needy in our daily lives should be no less spiritual than the way we pray, study Torah or give charity in synagogue. Spirituality is an expression of *kedushah*, of suffusing all we do—at every moment, in every place—with sparks of holiness.

#### WHAT RABBIS NEED TO DO TO BRING SPIRITUALITY INTO THEIR COMMUNITIES

To succeed in spreading spirituality, rabbis must inspire their communities to be *committed*, *invested*, and *grounded* in the endeavor.

Rabbi and congregants must first be committed to the culture of spirituality, the culture of creating a vibrant, dynamic spiritual center. But commitment *to* is not enough. It is critical to invest heavily *in* developing creative paths to spirituality, such as learning seriously about *tefillah* and finding meaningful ways to integrate spirituality into our lives. And the spirituality we invest in must be grounded with a deference to *tirhah de-tziburah*; it should not be open-ended. Much like Yaakov's dream of a ladder extending heavenward but anchored in the ground, spirituality in synagogue must have a solid foundation, with a formula that has a beginning, middle and end.

Most important, spirituality requires humility. Spiritual leadership requires someone who is clearly at the helm, but someone whose leadership is so clear, it appears he or she is not leading. In effect, dynamic spiritual leadership is a dialectic of assertiveness and self-effacement. As God balances greatness with humility (*gedulato ve-ivatanuto*) so, too, should we. Humility also means that no matter how learned a rabbi may be, one should be open to every person (*kol adam*), as everyone has a spiritual message to share. And humility means the recognition that we are never quite sure we are getting it right; we are never complacent; we are always aspiring to new levels. Spirituality in synagogues is more a *process* than the achievement of a goal. If we think we have made it, we have failed. King David said it best when he asked: "Who will ascend the mountain of the Lord?" The answer is embedded in the question. The one who is constantly seeking is the one who ultimately arrives at the mountain of the Lord.

<sup>14</sup> *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim*, 90:4.

For rabbis to bring spirituality into their synagogues and communities, adaptive, rather than technical, changes are needed. A class, a convention on spirituality is laudatory, but it is our rabbinic training and rabbinate which must be fully and wholly immersed in the culture of spirituality.

That is what we try to do at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School—emphasizing the emotion as well as the intellect, the heart as well as the mind, and the interfacing of spirituality with *halakhah*. Therefore, we carve out days for spiritual retreats and constantly try to foster spirituality in our Torah learning, in our *tefillot*, and in our daily lives. Our goal is not to clone other spiritual models, but to inspire our students to find their own unique voices. There was only one Rav Soloveitchik, only one Rav Shlomo, only one R. Heschel, and, *yibadel le-hayim*, there is only one *mori ve-rabi* Rav Yehuda Amital. We must glean from their spiritual Torah, but express that spirituality in a way that is authentic to us.

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I looked deeply into Mark's eyes as he responded "Amen" after each stanza of *Dayeinu*. I thought of the words of the prophet: "*Hineh yamim ba'im, ne'um Hashem, ve-hishlalti ra'av ba'aretz*—days are coming, says the Lord, when I will send a famine to the land, *lo ra'av la-lehem, ve-lo tzama la-mayim ki im lishmo'a et divrei Hashem* . . . not a famine for bread, or thirst for water, but to hear the words of the Lord." (Amos 8:11) Those days are here.<sup>15</sup> On our campuses, in our synagogues, schools, and communities, our holy task is to respond to the thirst by sharing and spreading spirituality with passion, eloquence, and soul—every moment, every moment.

<sup>15</sup> This is why I believe that Hillel's campus model of having an executive director, often without a rabbi, is flawed.

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## WEEP FOR WHAT AMALEK HAS DONE UNTO YOU— LAMENTATION AND MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN OUR GENERATION\*

Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein

*“Would that my head be water and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I  
could weep day and night for the dead of my people”*

The problem of evil in the world has occupied us since antiquity; no other theological dilemma has merited such thorough treatment in the holy writings.<sup>1</sup> It disturbed *Yirmiyahu*, prophet of the Destruction; it led *Yehezkel* to formulate the ways of Divine Providence in directing the world; it caused *Habakuk* to shout out in prayer towards the heavens; it found extensive expression in the poetry of *Tehilim* and in the philosophy of *Kohélet*. *Moshe Rabbeinu* himself is depicted by the *Gemara* (*Berakhot* 7a) as asking God to make known to him His ways in matters of reward and punishment:

“Let me know Your ways”—He [Moshe] said to Him, Master of the Universe—why is it that there are righteous people who prosper, and righteous people who suffer, and wicked people who prosper, and wicked people who suffer?

Contemporary thinkers are plagued no less by the same paradox. Indeed, this is undoubtedly one of the most difficult and agonizing questions that trouble a religious person who observes life and witnesses the wicked vanquishing the righteous and enjoying success in their endeavors.

To a great extent, a believing person can only sense his smallness, his inadequacy in attempting to understand the deepest mysteries; he can only abandon any attempt to understand how God operates and to comfort himself with the

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that this is the only theological problem to which *Tanakh* (with the exception of *Kohélet*) devotes massive attention and upon which it provides multiple perspectives.

sense of closeness and personal attention that often accompanies Man's suffering. Thus, although *Mishlei* presents a simple world—directed at the child who is beginning to encounter the world at large for the first time—in which a person who commits himself to goodness dwells safely and free of fear, while the wicked are cut off from the earth, *Iyov*, immediately follows it as the response of the *Tanakh* itself, repudiating the orderly world that is presented to the youth in *Mishlei*. *Iyov* argues the case of the suffering victims whose world has turned upside down in front of their eyes, who have not merited the tidy, organized system that is folded up in the verses of *Mishlei*. In his world, wisdom has disappeared and there is no room for understanding; man must accept the fact that he is not party to the mechanisms of Divine Providence, and he can do nothing but accept the Divine will. The conclusion of *Iyov* is that man cannot hope to appreciate the workings of Divine Providence in the world, so that the proper attitude is for a human to place his trust in his maker as Master of the Universe. The upshot of this will be an existential relationship between Man and God, not a better understanding of suffering in the world.

All this is true with respect to the suffering individual. Here, the *Tanakh* recognizes the tension between an orderly world in which Divine justice is apparent and a world in which the ways of His Providence are hidden from our human understanding. The situation, though, is different when it comes to reward and punishment on the communal level. The various forms of suffering that afflict society find a clear and consistent message in the Torah, asserting that all the ills that befall the community are the result of sin; they are nothing but the punishment for the sins of the community. The principle of Divine beneficence and malevolence in accordance with the loyalty—or lack thereof—of *Am Yisrael* to its God is articulated in countless verses, regardless of where we open the *Tanakh*. Be it the second paragraph of *Kriat Shema*—“And it shall be, if you will listen diligently . . .”, or the blessings and curses in *Vayikra* or *Devarim*, that outline the principles of God's Providence, the concept of reward and punishment is central to their ethos. If we turn to the Prophets, and the major historiographical passage at the beginning of *Shoftim*, or follow the course of events as they are described throughout the prophetic narrative—the principle that arises from all of these sources is the same: the trials and tribulations of the nation are perceived as Divine punishment for sin. *Yehezkel*, observing from a distance and reviewing the entire development of Jewish history, from its beginnings in Egypt to the Destruction of the Temple in his own times, concludes decisively that the Destruction is the result of rebellion against God while *Yirmiyahu*, sitting in Jerusalem and agonized by the terrible suffering that he witnesses in the war-torn and starved city, declares: “Do not both evil things and good come from the mouth of the Most High?”, and acknowledges God's justice as he cries out from the depths, “We have sinned and rebelled; You have not forgiven.” We find no character like *Iyov* or *Kobelet* who challenges this assertion, nor do we find the prophets indicating that it is better to accept com-

munal suffering as a phenomenon that is impenetrable and incomprehensible to human understanding: it is not an unfathomable mystery, but rather well-deserved retribution that is spread before us.

In light of this, the conclusion must be that there is a difference between the individual and the collective when it comes to dealing with tragic and traumatic events. The suffering individual, perplexed by the blows that seem to incessantly fall upon him will find support and legitimization in Jewish tradition, as have the righteous of previous generations, for his anguished and even blunt quarrel with his Maker. The afflicted soul that questions the bitter fate that has befallen it is not overstepping its boundaries and is not reproached for it. "You are right, God, though I contend with You, yet I will rebuke You: why does the path of the wicked prosper?" *Yirmiyahu* argues with God, demonstrating to us the way of faith. So long as a person accepts the fundamental axiom that God is right, and senses himself as a creature arguing with his Creator, he is entitled to present his claim before the Master of the Universe. The greatest figures of all generations did not hesitate to argue the case of the suffering individual and to demand a fair hearing for him, knowing very well that *Iyov* was not held accountable for his claims and complaints while in the throes of his crisis; on the contrary, he is said to have petitioned God in a proper manner, and it is he who atones for his companions.

This approach, though, is not available to us as a community, for the sources are clear in spelling out what we should regard as the reason for communal, or national, distress. When we seek to address painful events that befall the community, at moments of shock and crisis when our faith longs to absolve itself in the powers that lie beyond our control and to relegate it all to the infinitely mysterious and unfathomable, the verses starkly confront us. In the midst of our efforts to deal with our cruel situation and its ramifications, the sources offer us no refuge; they demand a fair hearing for Divine retribution and justice, and place the responsibility squarely on our shoulders. The situation is not unfathomable at all: it is crystal clear, and what it means is that God is visiting our sins upon us. Paraphrasing *Tehilim* 139 we may say that although the soul longs to declare, "That knowledge is too wondrous for me, it is too high; I cannot attain it," it is forced to admit, "Where can we go from Your truth; where can we flee from Your retribution?"

Were this the case only with regard to the events of ancient history, we could comfort ourselves with the knowledge that the interpretation of those events has been delivered through the medium of prophecy and rests upon the authority of revelation, but that we cannot and should not extrapolate concerning our own times. We could maintain our claim that evil and suffering such as we experienced was not open to the easy, simple explanation that "Because of our sins we were exiled from our land," but rather represented something mysterious and unfathomable. Certainly, we would tell ourselves, all that befell the earliest generations of our people could have been the result of their sins (as the sources

would suggest), but this would teach us nothing about our own situation and our present tribulations.

It should further be added and emphasized that if we were to argue thus concerning all the varied events of the past, we would most certainly feel this way in relation to the Holocaust of the previous generation. In relation to that terrible period, when terror and a profound blackness of evil and insanity descended upon the world, when unparalleled wickedness and cruelty occupied darkened souls and brought the world a plague of slaughter and horror, we feel in the very depths of our being that we can only conclude that mortal man cannot penetrate the primal workings of the world and understand the workings of Divine Providence: “For as high as the heavens are elevated from the earth, so My ways are elevated over your ways, and My thoughts—from your thoughts”. Who could imagine otherwise in relation to the Holocaust? Have we any choice but to stand confounded and grief-stricken in the face of an event so horrendous as to be inconceivable? This was suffering that one cannot bear to describe or to hear of; these were actions of such malice and evil that they are unspeakable. Seemingly, anyone attempting to investigate and explain the Holocaust using the normal spiritual parameters of history is guilty of gross insensitivity and indifference, and fails to recognize the hell that it was. If we are speaking of a different planet with a wholly unique and foreign set of circumstances, then human understanding cannot hope to grasp and explain; we can only accept with surrender, and nothing more.

But if we examine this assumption more closely—and anyone who believes in the Torah has no way to do this other than by looking at the texts—it appears that this is not the picture that they present. The *Tanakh's* view of the unfolding of history as Divine retribution is not limited to the chronicles of the kingdoms of *Yisrael* and *Yehudah*; rather, the sources address the range of events and situations that are destined to befall the nation of Israel throughout the generations. Aside from the prophecies that concern and apply specifically to the events that occurred during the lifetimes of those prophets, the Torah notifies us that is providing the Jewish nation with the tools to follow the future vicissitudes of its history and states explicitly that these texts come to predict what will happen to us in the course of time—both in the near future and in the distant time to come. This discussion is the focus of two principal sections in the Torah: the list of blessings and curses in *Vayikra* (chapter 26) and in *Devarim* (chapter 28), in which the Torah emphasizes the principle of reward for observance of the commandments and punishment for sin, and the closing sections of *Devarim* (chapters 29-32), which come to guide *Bnei Yisrael* in the future with the passing of Moshe and the conclusion of the Torah. First and foremost in this regard is the song of *Ha'azinu*. This poetic passage—the heritage defined by the Torah itself as a testimony that will accompany the nation of Israel for all generations—reviews the future experiences of the nation and offers guidance in the ways of the world and the paths of Divine Providence throughout history. Indeed, were

we to summarize the lesson of this song, we could say that it presents two spiritual motifs as the motivating forces that move the wheels of history: Divine reward and punishment, on one hand, and desecration of God's Name, on the other. In presenting the course of history to us, the text emphasizes the danger of sin that comes about in the wake of economic success, and the punishment that will follow in its wake.

However, were we to assume that the retribution described in the Torah is not speaking of an anguish and suffering as extreme as the Holocaust; if we did not dare imagine that there were verses describing such a terrible punishment, if we were convinced that they could offer us no tools with which to examine the phenomenon that we experienced in the last generation, the song of *Ha'azinu* bares its message with mighty force. The hand trembles as it writes such words and the heart refuses to believe and accept what one's own hand has written, but the mind cannot ignore the significance of the message that stares out at us from the text:

They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods, and angered Him with abominations.

They sacrificed to powerless spirits, to gods whom they did not know, to new gods that had recently appeared, of whom your forefathers were not mindful.

You are unmindful of the Rock that begot you; you forgot God Who made you.

And when God saw it He abhorred them out of anger at His sons and His daughters.

And He said, I shall hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be. For they are a fickle generation; children with no faith in them.

They have made Me jealous with a non-god, they have angered Me with their vanities; I shall make them jealous with a non-nation, and I shall anger them with a vile people.

**For a fire is kindled in My wrath and it will burn to the nethermost Sheol; it shall consume the land and its produce and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.**

**I shall heap evils upon them; I shall spend My arrows on them.**

**They shall be sucked empty by starvation and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction.**

**I shall set the teeth of beasts upon them with the poison of the creeping things of the dust.**

**The sword on the outside and the terror within will destroy  
both the young man and the virgin, the infant and the old man.**

**I said, I shall scatter them to the corners; I shall cause their  
memory to cease from mankind.**

Let us ask ourselves: were we to try and describe the events of the previous generation in just a few sentences, could we formulate them any differently? Do the above verses not describe most accurately what befell our nation, our brethren, our grandparents?

The ramifications are far-reaching and brutal, emotionally and religiously, for what they tell us is that the decrees of 1939-1945 are the result of Jewish sins. Admittedly—not necessarily the sins of the deceased themselves, but there is no avoiding the conclusion that this punishment was brought about the sins of the generation, or—more precisely—the results of the sins of the generations. In other words, the Holocaust should not be regarded as an event so inexplicable and enigmatic that we can only gaze at it, dumbfounded; rather, it should be attributed to Divine retribution, to the cycle of sin and punishment so familiar to us from the various discussions of it in the Torah.

To the extent that this is indeed the case, there is another conclusion that must be drawn: the Holocaust should not be regarded as a one-time event that deviates from the usual boundaries of Jewish history. Rather, it should be placed within the continuum of Jewish history, with all the suffering that has accumulated throughout the generations. Indeed, it is said of Rav Yitzhak Hutner *zt"l*, that he refused to use the term “the Holocaust” (*ha-shoa*), insisting instead on referring to “the decrees of 1939-1945,” since he did not regard the Holocaust as an aberration that lay outside the framework of Jewish history, but rather saw it as a link in the chain of Jewish history and suffering.

Nevertheless, such an approach—despite its apparent grounding in the Torah—is wholly inappropriate to the situation of our generation. This latter point brings us to the crux of the dilemma that we presented above. It is certainly possible that historical justice and spiritual truth concerning those horrific times are aligned with the approach of Rav Hutner, and that the principles of Divine Providence laid down in *parashat Ha'azinu* apply to every historical event that befalls the nation of Israel—even the most horrendous of them. However, we must draw a distinction between objective historical analysis, which reviews the course of events from the distant and detached perspective of an external observer, seeking to grasp the historical causality that gave rise to the situation that came about (be it from a spiritual, political, economic or any other point of view), and the warm, live contact with the people who personally experienced these events. Any attempt to compare the viewpoint of the distant observer, several generations later who can only perceive the distress and suffering of previous generations in the most abstract way, with that of a person who lives amongst the survivors and daily encounters their scars and suffering, in a tangible and unmediated manner

will immediately reveal the difference in perspective. While the role of a later scholar is to understand and explain the course of history, to learn and teach the lessons of the past, the obligation of the contemporary generation is emotional participation in the sorrow and anguish, of a generation enveloped in mourning. The sense of a common fate, empathy for the survivors, compassion, comfort and mutual help precede any discussion of causes and reasons, processes and theories. Could any mortal with a feeling heart, living among other flesh-and-blood mortals like himself, survivors of death camps and ghettos with tattooed arms and scarred emotions, approach the Holocaust in any manner other than via experience and consolation? Who but a cold-hearted, barren soul could opt for the path of analysis and observation? Although it goes without saying that there is room for an intellectual analysis that undertakes an attempt to understand the events and the underlying historical dynamic, these attempts must be integrated into our emotional and existential encounter with the recent past, not stand independent of it. Weeping rather than analysis, consolation rather than observation—these are the appropriate response of our generation to the Holocaust:

When *Iyov*'s three friends heard of all of this evil that had befallen him, they came—each from his place; *Elifaz* the *Temanite*, and *Bildad* the Shuhite, and Tzofar the Na'amatite, and they met together to come and mourn with him and to comfort him. And they lifted their eyes from afar, but did not recognize him, and they lifted their voices and wept, and each rent his coat, and they sprinkled ashes upon their heads towards heaven. And they sat with him upon the ground for seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word to him for they saw that his suffering was very great.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, when his suffering is great and well nigh unbearable, the friends do not discourse with *Iyov* about the Divine ways of justice or attempt to solve the problem of theodicy; rather, they sit by his side. The simple human gesture of understanding and empathy is the support that they offer him as they mourn with him and comfort him. Only later, when the discussion of God's justice becomes an emotional need for *Iyov*, will it be appropriate to engage in the attempt to justify the ways of God to man. However, the tragic flaw of *Iyov*'s devoted friends is that they are unable to grasp that *Iyov*'s discourses are the deeply personal struggle of a suffering soul attempting to understand what has befallen it and they are not intended as a learned philosophical discussion. Their response, that addresses the metaphysical issues but is oblivious to their companion's emotional needs, is highly inappropriate.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Iyov*, 2:11.

<sup>3</sup> The present article does not allow for extensive discussion of this point; therefore, we shall simply make reference to *Iyov*'s words throughout Chapter 16, and the Mishnah in *Bava Metziah* 59, which identifies the inappropriate reaction of his companions as a lack of sensitivity, rather than as a mistake.

Similarly, the prophet *Yirmiyahu*, who reproved the people and unflinchingly confronted them as he tried to prevent the oncoming catastrophe of the Hurban, reacted afterwards by devoting all his energies to express the anguish and the agony of those who experienced the horrible events. *Eikhah* is not an analysis of the events and its attendant causes, nor is it an attempt to understand the ways of Divine Providence in and of themselves. The entire *megilah* is meant to give expression to the experience of the Destruction and the human perspective that is embodied in the lamentation, mourning, and acknowledgement of God's justice.<sup>4</sup>

A comparison with his contemporary, the prophet *Yehezkel*, living in distant Babylon, far from the scene of the events and with no direct contact with his fellow Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*, is illuminating. *Yirmiyahu* lives amongst the generation of the Destruction, in Jerusalem. Hence, *Yehezkel*, the distant observer who was not a participant in the actual event, is indeed able to engage the elders of Israel in debate as to the reasons and causes of the Destruction, without any insensitivity or apathy to the suffering, since he is not addressing those who experienced the awful events. *Yirmiyahu*, however, cannot allow himself such a discussion, for he lives among the survivors.<sup>5</sup>

Let us now return to *Parashat Ha'azinu*. The stated intent and purpose of *Ha'azinu* (and the other similar sections of reproof in the Torah) is not to share

<sup>4</sup> The approach that we have adopted here is that of Rabbi Nehemiah rather than that of Rabbi Yehudah as expressed see *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:1, "Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Nehemiah disagree: Rabbi Yehudah said: *Eikhah* is meant as an expression of rebuke, as it is written, "How (*eikhah*) have you said, 'We are learned scholars; God's Torah is with us. . .'" Rabbi Nehemiah said: *Eikhah* is meant as an expression of lamentation, as it is written (*Bereishit* 3), "The Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you (*ayeka*)—woe to you (*oy lekha*)'". When was the scroll of lamentations recited? Rabbi Yehudah said: It was recited in the days of *Yehoyakim*. Rabbi Nehemiah said to him: Do we cry for the deceased before he is dead?! When was it recited? After the Destruction of the Temple, as we read: 'How the city sits alone. . .'"

<sup>5</sup> It is for this reason that *halakhah* permits the study of the bitter passages in *Yirmiyahu* and *Iyov* on *Tish'a be-Av*, but forbids the study of *Yehezkel*. Although a description of the destruction of the Temple is also found in *Yehezkel*, the *baraita* in *Ta'anit* (30a) which presents a detailed list of the books that may be studied includes only *Eikhah*, *Yirmiyahu* and *Iyov*; *Yehezkel* is clearly excluded. Why should this be so? Because *Tish'a be-Av* is not a day of study, set aside for in-depth research of the causes and reasons for the Hurban; rather, it is a day devoted to feeling and experiencing the pain of the Hurban. Therefore we may study *Yirmiyahu* and *Eikhah*, which express the emotions and experience of mourning in the words of a prophet who lived in the midst of Jerusalem at the time of the events themselves, but we may not study the words of *Yehezkel*, which address the events of the *Hurban* from a more general perspective, and from the point of view of a distant observer.

The inclusion of the Book of *Iyov* in the list of material permissible for study on *Tish'a be-Av*, despite it not discussing the *Hurban* at all, proves that the *heter* is dependent on the experience of mourning rather than on study of the historical event of the *Hurban*. *Iyov* is permitted because it conveys the experience of mourning and dealing with suffering. The inner state of mourning, not historical knowledge, is the crucial factor.

the pain of the nation or to try to console their suffering; rather, its aim is to guide us in the endeavor of analyzing God's ways as He directs our history. The song itself defines this as its goal: "Remember the days of old; comprehend the cycle of the generations". This is a remembrance of the "days of old" in order that we may be able to understand and learn from the "the cycle of the generations." Not experience but observation is the perspective of *Ha'azinu*, a song that must serve as a testimony for *Benei Yisrael*. For this reason, analysis of cause and result based on a panoramic view of events "from above" is clearly the proper approach, rather than an expression of empathy with and consolation for the souls in distress.

However, the situation of our generation is not that of *parashat Ha'azinu* or of *Yehezkel*; rather, it resembles that of *Yirmiyahu*. As the prophet of the Destruction in his time, who lived in the besieged Jerusalem and viewed the terrible sights that he mourns throughout *Eikhab*, in particular in the spine-chilling fourth chapter, likewise we are the children of the generation that experienced first-hand the horrors of the Holocaust. Just as *Yirmiyahu* knew and lived among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so, too, we live amongst the community of survivors. Our contact with the Holocaust is not—and must not be—based upon historical scholarship and emotional detachment, but rather is rooted in our living among members of the Holocaust generation. Not only the survivors themselves who personally endured the immense suffering of hell upon earth in the satanic kingdom of death, but also the wider circles of society—children of survivors, descendants and relatives, and society as a whole—we all live in the shadow of the Holocaust. Our society reflects a reality in which your rabbi, your next-door neighbor, or your colleague at work might be a "brand plucked from the fire." The possibility that the man across the street may have been a refugee who fled his country of birth without family and friends, leaving behind the world of his childhood in a desperate attempt to escape the murderous forces of evil, or that the woman seated beside you on a public bus lost her entire family in the Valley of Death is a situation that we are all familiar with. Have we not witnessed the *Hazan* on Yom Kippur, a seemingly successful survivor, who weeps uncontrollably as he attempts to utter *Eileh Ezkerah*, (the prayer that recounts the martyrdom of the Jewish leadership in Roman times) or loses his rhythm when he reaches the *Kel Maleh Rahamim* memorial passage in *Yizkor*? Therefore, our attitude towards those events must arise from a feeling and emotional heart, sensing the depth of the pain and suffering, and attuned to the human element. Sensitivity and empathy, not analysis and scholarship, are of the essence. Who among us has not heard survivors' stories, or read hair-raising memoirs written by people still alive? Each and every one of us still comes into direct contact with the memory of the Holocaust as a living, raw wound—whether within our own families or within the public domain. So long as the blood has not stopped boiling, the time for cool, clear, intellectual discourse has not yet arrived.

Therefore, concerning our own generation, we cannot and need not regard the Holocaust from the general historical perspective—whether a history exam-

ined from the point of view of human causality or whether viewed through the spectacles of Divine Providence: “Weep greatly for the house of Israel and for the nation of God, for they have fallen by the sword”<sup>6</sup>—this is the command to our generation.

The conclusions that arise from this are that we must not include the Holocaust as yet another event in the chain of Jewish suffering and martyrdom throughout the generations, as Rav Hutner was wont to do; rather, we must award it unique attention. It should be emphasized that we do not mean by this claim to adopt a position regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a historical phenomenon—whether it was indeed so different from all that came before, that it should be considered as an event *sui generis*, or whether we should seek a common denominator to it and the prior tragedies with which the paths of Jewish history are strewn. Rather, our contention here is that this question is not the factor that should determine the attitude of our generation towards this event. Living in such close proximity to the events of the previous generation, our relationship towards this period must be completely different from that of the other tragedies of the Jewish people. We are in direct contact with those who experienced the horrors of the time—in contrast to our distance from other tragic periods—and in this sense it is certainly unique from our point of view. Thus, even if Rav Hutner’s position is theoretically correct, it should not affect our perspective, since it relates only to the general issue of the workings of Divine Providence in the world, while our own approach must be based on the existential sense of common fate and empathy.

In the summer of 1977, newly elected Prime Minister Menahem Begin paid a visit to the United States and visited my grandfather and teacher, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. In the course of their conversation, the Rav proposed to the Prime Minister that *Yom ha-Shoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) in Israel be annulled as a separate day of mourning and be included, instead, within the framework of *Tish’a be-Av*, as is our custom concerning the martyrs of the Crusaders’ attacks upon the Jewish communities of the Rhineland. In support of his suggestion, he quoted from one of the *kinot* (lamentations) that we recite for the victims of the Crusades: “No other time of brokenness and burning should be added” [in addition to *Tish’a be-Av*]; rather, all matters of communal mourning should be included in a single day of mourning.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it seems to

<sup>6</sup> From the *kinot* of *Tish’a be-Av*.

<sup>7</sup> “Would that my head be water”—by R. Kalonymus bar Yehudah (siman 26 in the *Kinot* edition of D. Goldschmidt, published by Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem 5732 (second edition, revised). The full text of the excerpt is as follows:

שימו נא על לבבכם מספד מר לקשרה  
 כי שקולה הריגתם להתאבל ולהתעפרה  
 כשריפת בית אלקינו האולם והבירה  
 וכי אין להוסיף מועד שבר ותבערה  
 ואין להקדים זולתי לאחרה  
 תחת כן היום ליתני אעוררה  
 ואספדה ואילילה ואבכה בנפש מרה

me that the State acted correctly in not accepting the Rav's proposal. In our generation, it is indeed fitting that a special day be set aside as a dedicated day of remembrance for the Holocaust. While the time may come when it will indeed be appropriate to adopt the Rav's approach and to include *Yom ha-Shoah* within the framework of *Tish'a be-Av*, as long as the wound is still fresh and has not yet healed, we cannot integrate commemoration of the Holocaust with our mourning for the other tragedies of Jewish history whose memory is more distant and remote.<sup>8</sup>

Hence, returning to our point of departure with regard to the problem of Divine reward and punishment, we cannot ignore our particular historical situation with respect to the the Holocaust.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, if our coping with the Holocaust is a purely intellectual and theological issue, the distance of generations does not affect the question in any way, and both approaches that we presented at the outset—acknowledgement of God's justice in light of our sins and iniquities, or attributing our situation to the ways of Divine Providence, far above our comprehension (“For as high as the heavens are elevated above the earth, so are My ways elevated above your ways, and My thoughts—above your thoughts”), remain. As we have explained, the literal text seems to point in one direction, so that any attempt to adopt the alternative will be forced to address the verses that we quoted and to explain them in light of their approach. Nevertheless, both alternatives are uninfluenced by our distance from the events.

However, it is not only the purely philosophical issues but also the existential aspect that must have a significant role in our response. After all, even Voltaire—not a figure generally considered to be a great *tzaddik*—did not react as he did in the matter of reward and punishment on the basis of some abstract theoretical knowledge about catastrophes of the past, and did not attack the defenders of Divine Providence until he encountered tragedy in his own times. For our purposes, a person who sees things from a distance of generations and is prepared to acknowledge that the generations may have sinned, is not the same as a person who is being asked to claim that his predecessors and neighbors suffered, or

<sup>8</sup> Clearly, in our present reality—in which the secular public has a most powerful sense of mourning over the martyrs of the last generation but does not feel the same way with regard to the Destruction of the Temple and the exile of the *Shekhinah*—this suggestion, were it to be implemented, would bring about a situation in which *Yom ha-Shoah* would overshadow *Tish'a be-Av*, causing the mourning over the Destruction and the other themes of the day to be pushed aside. In general, I believe that this suggestion was proposed out of a lack of familiarity with the way in which *Yom ha-Shoah* is commemorated in Israel, and its place in Israeli reality.

<sup>9</sup> It should also be pointed out that *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot* also adopted this approach: they established an entire period of mourning during the days of the Omer for the martyrs of their times, and did not suffice with *Tish'a be-Av* (concerning the connection between the mourning during *Sefirah* and the martyrs of the Crusades, see the overview of Prof. D. Sperber in his book, *Minhagei Yisrael* [part I, pp. 101-111]).

are suffering, because of those sins. Just as distance in time (and place) dulls our sensitivities towards the pain of others, so does intense closeness sharpen it. So long as we are still busy comforting the sufferers and sharing their anguish, this proximity carries the blessing of empathy with it—but it may tempt us to weight the scales, since we are affected by the suffering and close to the sufferers. Once more, I repeat the thesis presented above—this is not our mission at this point in time. A person who is close to the events cannot and should not sit in historical judgment over the generations with whom he lives; rather, he should sense their pain.

To formulate the idea differently, we must distinguish between the individual and the community. Since we are still close to the event, our attitude is not directed toward an historical development relating to the nation as a community, but rather toward the suffering of individuals, as private people. What concerns us most should be not the ups and downs of the relationship between the *Kadosh Barukh Hu* and His nation, but rather the fate of individuals. “Mourn alone as for an only child,” *Yirmiyahu* instructs the generation of the Destruction at that time, and in a generation in which fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, sons and daughters are weeping, this is the proper and natural course to follow. When the victims have names and faces, when they are related to us, our weeping is directed towards and focused upon individual men and women who are known to us, not towards the history of the community as a community.

It should also be emphasized that this is not merely an emotional issue; it is a fundamental principle in the system of reward and punishment. Even if the texts teach us that it is sin that brings punishment upon the community, the individuals who are stricken partake in that suffering as part of the punishment of the community; their own personal righteousness or personal stature are not taken into consideration. Thus, even assuming the textual assertion that, “I said: I shall scatter them to the corners; I shall cause their memory to cease from mankind,” arises from, “When God saw it He abhorred them out of anger at His sons and His daughters,” this says something not about the individual, but rather about the community. While a community is admittedly composed of the sum of its individual members, it must be clear that judgment is passed here not on the single generation, but rather on all the generations that have collectively reached their fill of sin. Thus we, as those who are close to the event, must relate to the individual sufferers who are familiar to us, rather than the cumulative generations; therefore, addressing the Holocaust from the historical point of view of *parashat Ha’azinu*, and the prophetic perspective of sin and punishment that it provides, is neither the proper nor the appropriate frame of reference for our generation. We are not sitting in judgment over individuals, placing the yoke of guilt upon them. The approach presented in the song of *Ha’azinu* is not meant for the generation of the sufferers’ or their children. The task of integrating the spiritual perspective of *Ha’azinu*—the testimonial song that was

handed down to guide us throughout the generations—and other similar texts into our collective memory, must be assigned to other future generations that will be more distant in time and less emotionally engaged. Our generation will have to remain faithful to the needs of our unique circumstances.

## II

Thus far, we have addressed past and present in terms of our attitude towards the Holocaust. Let us now turn our attention to the future. First, however, let us look at *Eikhab* in order to draw upon the principles that may assist us in this task.

The structure of the book is quite clear and can be readily analyzed in accordance with its alphabetical schematics and some additional considerations. For our purposes, we need not dwell on the differences between chapters one, two, and four on one hand, and chapter three on the other; suffice it to note the distinction between the first four chapters and the fifth. Needless to say, no special literary scholarship is needed to discern that the final chapter deviates from the alphabetical structure of the rest of the book, and thus stands apart. This clearly indicates that the subject matter of chapter five is different from that of the previous chapters, but the change requires an explanation. The key to understanding the difference lies in the chronological framework of the Book, which undergoes a significant transition between the alphabetical chapters and chapter five. The beginning of the book finds the prophet lamenting his encounter with the terrible reality in the wake of the Destruction. The first chapter does not describe the events of the Destruction themselves; rather, it speaks of the situation that prevails in the land in their wake: the roads to Zion that are now desolate, the city that sits alone like a widow, abandoned as one who is loathed, the children of *Yehudah* exiled in their destitution and slavery—all of these images convey the situation soon after the Destruction—whether five or ten years later, or a mere six months or year after the event. In extrapolating to our situation, the situation in chapter one parallels that of the refugee of 1946-7, reviewing the destroyed European Jewry that had lost its glory; its paths desolate and empty of those who used to frequent them.

The *megilah* then proceeds to return back in time to describe the actual events of the Destruction (chapters two and four, with chapter two focusing on the destruction of the Temple and the land, and chapter four lamenting the human suffering), and the acknowledgment of God's judgment (chapter three). Common to all of these chapters is the focus on the events of the time—whether in descriptions of the events themselves or in the grappling with the ways of God's Providence from the point of view of that generation. As emphasized at the beginning of chapter three, **"I am the man who has seen afflic-**

tion by the rod of His anger: He has led **me** and brought **me** into darkness, not light. Surely He has turned **against me**; He turns His hand against me all the day”.

In chapter five, though, there is a seismic shift in the literary time-frame: we are no longer in the period of the Destruction, or even close to it; we now find ourselves very distant, on the time-line, from the events of the Destruction. The Destruction is no longer perceived as a sudden catastrophe and a fresh wound, but rather as a memory from the distant historical past. The lamentation is no longer over the reality in which the contemporary victim of the Destruction finds himself; rather, the panoramic view of the prophet gathers up many generations and moves us telescopically into the future historical situation that is destined to come. The descriptions of chapter five speak of distant events, focusing on the long-term results of the Destruction, “Our fathers sinned and they are no more, and we have suffered for their sins.” This is the situation that chapter five deals with, and therefore it opens with a call to memory; “Remember, O God, what befell us.” The time-frame is no longer a first-hand eye-witness account, but rather a memory of the past and the description of the situation is in keeping with that framework. It is no longer an emotional, traumatized record of shocking events that requires the limiting authority of a rigid alphabetical structure to impose control upon powerful emotions; rather, it is a general statement about the situation that has been created. This is the reason for the abandonment of the alphabetical framework, for this chapter is not uttered in the white heat of the moment, but rather in circumstances to which the lamenter has already become accustomed and to which he is reconciled; at this stage, the text no longer needs the strict alphabetical control to conquer and channel the emotional outburst into literary vessels. The conclusion of the chapter (and of the *megilah*) emphasizes the prolonged reality of exile and the ongoing consequences of the loss of the *Beit ha-Mikdash*: “Why will You forget us forever, forsaking us for so long? Restore us, O God, to You—and we shall return; renew our days as of old, unless You have utterly rejected us and are very angry at us.” The weeping makes way for memory and sighing.

If, up to this point, we have emphasized the weeping and anguish that have dictated the attitude of our generation towards the Holocaust for the past fifty years, a certain change in perspective with respect to the future is inevitable, and it is proper that we prepare ourselves for it. In a society in which the survivors and the mourners are living amongst us and the influence of the Holocaust on family life is so tangible, the proper reaction and attitude are as described above. But as the years pass and time goes by, this situation will inevitably undergo a transformation. On one hand, there is a new generation whose immediate impressions arising from unmediated contact with the event are considerably weakened; at the same time, the number of survivors is gradually diminishing. We pray that the *Kadosh Barukh Hu* lengthen the lives of the survivors living amongst us for many years, but it is clear that the day will come when genera-

tions will be raised lacking any personal familiarity with either the victims or the survivors. Already today, the organized trips to Poland are a clear indication, not only of the geopolitical changes of the last two decades, but also as to the discrepancy in the immediacy of the encounter with the Holocaust in private and public life in Israel in contrast with previous years. There is also a clear sense that the official commemorations of *Yom ha-Shoah* and the accompanying sense of public mourning are undergoing a quiet but discernible evolution, expressing more introspection and less unmediated encounter and mourning than in previous years. The literary landscape reflects the same processes. Alongside—or in place of—personal memoirs that were the lion's share of *Shoah* literature in the past, there is now a shift towards historical and documentary works.

The conclusion that arises from the above is that to a small but recognizable degree, a process of transition from chapter four to chapter five has already begun. We are undergoing a paradigm shift from a generation of mourning and anguish to generations of memory and understanding. We need neither lament nor applaud this development, but rather understand that it is taking place and prepare ourselves accordingly.

The public, educational preparation that is required involves a dual process. Firstly, before we become altogether distanced from direct contact with the horrific past, and before the sense of loss dissipates, it is appropriate that as much of it as possible be preserved, and that it be contained in vessels that may be transferred to the generations to come. Every single one of us is obligated to sense and experience the times in which we are living; to regard the Holocaust as a filter through which we view—on the existential level—the reality of our lives, and as a consciousness that constantly accompanies our communal and personal lives, and to convey this perspective to the younger generation. As long as we are still living in such close proximity to the generation of the Holocaust, we must try to live the event, to experience it, and not just to meditate on it. Clearly, a great, difficult and painful privilege belongs to those who still have the strength to convey their personal experiences from the Holocaust years to the next generation, whether in writing or orally. However, even those who may be considered the “second generation” (not necessarily the direct descendants of survivors themselves, but anyone who grew up in a Jewish community, in Israel or in the Diaspora, as the second generation after the Holocaust) has an obligation to pass down to the next generation the immediacy of the suffering and the mourning.

Secondly, there is the transition to mourning for all future generations. A most central foundation of our Jewish and halakhic world view is the sense of shared fate with previous generations, not only on the general, communal level, but also on the personal level. As stated above, *Eikhab* eternalizes the human suffering of that generation, rather than focusing only on the Destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Divine Presence. *Hazal* continue this approach in the *midrashim* concerning the Destruction of the Second Temple and the city of

Beitar, by recording for future generations the details of the human torments of their generation; following their example, the *Ba'alei ha-Tosefot* instituted prayers and customs of mourning for the victims of their own time. The mourning practices during *sefirah*, combining the mourning for martyrs from different periods, are a faithful expression of inter-generational emotional and existential closeness. Just as a Jew living in one place is meant to feel the pain of another Jew who lives far away—whether it be an inhabitant of Jerusalem seeking the welfare of his brother in Iran or Argentina, or whether it be Jews living in distant isles, concerned about their brethren in Israel (or anywhere else)—the same principle applies to Jews who are distant from us in time. Just as the barrier of place does not obstruct the fraternity that exists between Jews throughout the globe, so too, time should not come between them. Admittedly, it is more difficult for a person to feel this way; after all, we say to ourselves, the martyrs of the past would have been dead for several hundred years anyways, no matter whether they were slaughtered by accursed savages or whether they lived in peace and tranquility. Hence, it is difficult for us to mourn their death. However, this is nothing more than the human inclination towards callousness, routine and psychological laziness; a sensitive soul feels and knows that lives that were prematurely cut off will never realize their potential, even if time immemorial has passed since then. The tragedy of a bride and groom who were never able to consummate their love, of parents who never merited raising their sons to Torah, or of boys and girls who were never given the chance to experience the world and its bounty—remains a tragedy forever. Lives that were cut short remain frozen in time forever. Judaism teaches us to shed tears for them and to experience their pain as that of brothers who do not allow time to come between them.<sup>10</sup>

This obligation also applies to the martyrs of the past generation. Their memory, and the memory of their suffering, dare not fade from our descendants for all generations. The Rav may be right; a day may come when the mourning of the Holocaust will be integrated into the framework of *Tish'a be-Av*; or it may

<sup>10</sup> Obviously, a person who has some consciousness of painful human tragedy will not regard the prohibitions of the “three weeks” (*bein ha-metzarim*) or *sefirah* as a halakhic “headache” that must be borne, or seek various loopholes to get around them. Rather, for him these are days when he has no desire for any joy or celebration. Just as we do not regard the limitations imposed on *Yom ha-Zikaron* for fallen I.D.F. soldiers, or on *Yom ha-Shoah*, as a “decree” imposed by the Knesset, but rather experiences these days as times when we do not dream of engaging in certain types of behavior because the sense of mourning is real and palpable, so, too, a person who is sensitive to historical tragedy feels the same way on days set aside for mourning over the suffering of previous generations. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that if the mourning customs prescribed to be followed during *sefirah* were applied to a shorter time period, they would be more effective and better focused. In the long term, over many generations, such a long mourning period does not work in favor of the message that it tries to convey.

be that a more particular commemoration, similar to the *sefirah* model, will be more appropriate for future generations. Either way, the mourning must be preserved for all generations. It is not our intention, within the framework of this article, to make any practical suggestions or to recommend any particular model, but rather to emphasize and clarify the need and obligation to mourn that is incumbent upon us and all future generations. This shall require documentation of the suffering and torment in the lives of those who suffered, and the transition from the first and second generation to the future, more distant ones to follow. Not only history books are needed, but also personal accounts and memoirs in the printed and film media. We must preserve for future generations not only learned lectures that debate historical causality and analyze testimony, but also personal literature and lamentations.

The upshot of this is that our generation is one of transition, and it faces an important challenge: the challenge that arises from the transition from weeping to memory, while preserving the mourning and the connection to the generation of the survivors. The greater the extent to which we are able to couch their stories and memories in modes that are capable of carrying their messages to future generations, the more successful we will be in conveying our experiences and consciousness to future generations, who will not know have personally known the survivors, the better we will be able to pass on the feelings of loss and anguish over a generation that was cut off to the sons and daughters of a generation that is flourishing—to that extent we will have fulfilled our holy obligation towards those martyrs. By joining the acute memory of their bitter fate to our historical memory that accompanies us from time immemorial, from the “days of the world and the cycle of the generations” to the introspection which *parashat Ha’azinu* obligates us, we may hope to discharge our duty towards them and thereby find favor in the eyes of God and man.

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## THERE IS NO FORGETTING IN TORAH, OR IN THE UNCONSCIOUS

Michelle Friedman, M.D.

We are a people of memory. Every day, our prayers and ritual recall God's covenant with the patriarchs and with the Jewish people. We remember God's revelation through sacred history and pay special attention to the exodus from Egypt. Each week commands us to remember the Sabbath day. *Zakhor*, the imperative verb meaning "remember" comes as a clarion call. Remembering is not a passive activity; rather, it demands vigor and conviction. We feel this especially on *Parashat Zakhor* when, on the Sabbath before Purim, Jews are commanded to hear a public Torah reading recounting Amalek's evil behavior in the wilderness following the exodus. Those verses, along with only two other Biblical portions, uniquely formulate the imperative of memory in doubled language, employing verbs for "remember" and "do not forget" in the same text.

Before examining these three texts, let me consider my theme from my professional vantage as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Memory and her partner, forgetfulness, hold endless fascination for me and my colleagues. The literature of psychoanalytic inquiry regarding the apparatus of memory is enormous and far beyond the scope of this essay. Most non-psychoanalysts are familiar with classical psychoanalytic theory apropos unconscious, preconscious and conscious realms of information. Unconscious data, whether repressed memories, feelings or perceptions, hover outside the realm of conventional mental access. We look for clues to their existence in dreams, slips of the tongue and other phenomenon. The work of decoding the unconscious is not a casual or purely intellectual endeavor. Psychoanalysis rests on the belief that bringing the unconscious to light, in other words, remembering the forgotten, the repressed, offers release from profound psychological suffering.

The preconscious, on the other hand, can be provoked to yield information. Let us try a brief experiment. Remember your first grade teacher. Close your eyes and visualize her face. Chances are that seconds before my directive, you were not thinking of that teacher and had not thought of her for some time. As of this moment, you recall not only her face, but possibly her voice, her manner

and a myriad of details about her classroom style. Most people, when prompted, can retrieve vast amounts of information from the storehouse of preconscious mind and bring it into conscious awareness. On a superficial, if highly practical level, when we instruct a child, “Remember your phone number,” we tell him to store that information and to keep the series of digits accessible for deployment.

The edict “to remember,” however, can imply much deeper meaning. When a command is issued such as “Remember the Alamo,” “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy,” or in stark reference to the Holocaust, “*Zakhor*,” the intent is that the recipient of that instruction must keep his relationship to the significant national/religious event uppermost in his consciousness. His identity and conduct must be informed by that memory; he must honor and cherish it forever.

Different languages encode various shades of meaning about the activity of remembering. French, with its different verbs for diverse kinds of knowing (*savoir* and *connaître*) commonly employs *reconnaître*, literally meaning “to re-know.” In English, the literal explanation of “re-member” is “to make whole again,” to restore something that once was intact but no longer is. The Hebrew verb, *zakhor*, invites comparison to the noun for “masculine,” *zakhar*.

“Forgetting,” on the other hand, evokes darker and painful associations. Certainly we drop out of retrievable mind what we deem unimportant. The mass of trivial data accumulated on a daily basis would overwhelm anyone of us were we doomed to keep it in active awareness. But we also block out of consciousness that which is too painful or difficult such as traumatic experience or painful knowledge. We forget what we do not want to know. There is also an aggressive component to forgetfulness. Forgetfulness lures us into oblivion; we forget promises and responsibilities and, thereby, damage relationships with others. We have the capacity to annihilate through forgetfulness. Memory can be destroyed when a generation in possession of the past rejects it or fails to transmit it forward.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, we self-destruct and suffer humiliation by forgetting our own values and losing our identity.

Perhaps another experiment would be helpful. Think of the famous ending of Margaret Mitchell’s classic, *Gone with the Wind*. Scarlett O’Hara, finally realizes that the love of her life is none other than her own husband, Rhett Butler. She runs to tell him, only to be met with his immortal words, “My dear, I don’t give a damn.”<sup>2</sup> These words sting and send readers scurrying into discussion about the unhappy couple’s long-term fate. Now, imagine a sequel in which, some years later, Rhett Butler is asked about the heroine and responds “Scarlett? I don’t remember her.” Such a stunning act of repression would devastate Scarlett O’Hara and consign an epic character to the dustbin of literature.

<sup>1</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 109.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind* (New York: Scribner, 1964), 1035.

Torah incorporates themes of memory and forgetfulness throughout. In only three texts, however, are the verbs for “remembering” and “forgetting” used together.

### 1. GENESIS 40:23

ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף וישכחה:

*But the chief butler did not remember Joseph—he forgot him.*

This succinct verse sums up the butler. This man of no memory erases personal history and in doing so denies his connections to past and future except for utilitarian purpose or accident. The brothers are also guilty of attempted identity murder by sentencing Joseph to the oblivion of the pit. In contrast to the butler, however, they never forget Joseph and, in their poignant meeting years later, identify themselves immediately in relation to their lost brother. The butler is the essence of Egypt, a country where a later Pharaoh will entirely forget how Joseph saved the entire nation. The butler epitomizes a culture where people are reduced to function, to their need fulfilling value as dispensable objects.

### 2. DEUTERONOMY 25:17-19

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים:

אשר קרד בדרך ויזנב בך כל הנחשלים אחריו ואתה עיף וידע ולא ירא אלהים:  
והיה בהניח יקוק אלהיך לך מכל איביך מסביב בארץ אשר יקוק אלהיך  
נתן לך נחלה לרשתה תמחה את זכר עמלק מתחת השמים לא תשכח:

*Remember what the Amalekites did to you on your way from Egypt, how they met you along the way and cut off all your stragglers in the rear of the march when you were exhausted and tired; they were unafraid of God. So when the Lord your God gives you relief from all the enemies who surround you in the land he is giving you as an inheritance, you must wipe out the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven—do not forget!*

In the Exodus 17:8-16 account of Amalek attacking the weak and defenseless children of Israel in the wilderness, God commands Moses to write down and to remember that historic incident. God also promises that God will wipe out memory of the people of Amalek. Deuteronomy 25:17-19 transfers this legacy of commemoration and revenge to the nation of Israel. Amalek represents evil, the absence of God. As a developing nation, *Benei Yisrael*, the children of Israel, are commanded to assume the dangerous responsibility of a hate-filled memory. We must retain sharp communal memory of Amalek’s nature and actions so that we stay vigilant towards their appearance in future history. We must carefully discriminate between different kinds of evil and recognize Amalekite versus non-Amalekite cruelty and badness. Through our own preservation of memory, we will annihilate Amalek by eradicating them from the collective mind of humanity.

### 3. DEUTERONOMY 9:7

זכר אל תשכח את אשר הקצפת את יקוק אלהיך במדבר למן היום אשר  
יצאת מארץ מצרים עד באכם עד המקום הזה ממרים הייתם עם יקוק:

*Remember—do not forget—how you provoked the Lord your God in the desert; from the time you left the land of Egypt until you came to this place you were constantly rebelling against him.*

The spare opening of this verse contracts the commandment to adjacent imperatives, “remember, do not forget.” Moses is close to the end of his journey; the children of Israel will soon enter the land without him. He implores them to retain a true and honest account of their behavior in the wilderness. The people must never distort history to think that God took them out of Egypt because of their superiority or their goodness. On the contrary, *Benei Yisrael* complain, revolt, and disobey throughout their exodus from slavery. In an ironic reference to memory, Moses has to plead with God to remember God’s own covenant with the patriarchs in order to evoke divine mercy on the sinful people of Israel.

In Torah, the dyad of memory and forgetfulness appears three times, organized around the exodus from Egypt. The story of the man who does not remember and forgets *Yosef* occurs early on the trajectory of the *Ya’akov*’s children coming into Egypt. The butler’s deficient historical, moral consciousness foreshadows the coming years of oppression and suffering. Amalek attacks the children of Israel as they journey out of Egypt. Torah repeatedly commands us not to forget the experience of slavery and to transform that memory into compassion to those in need. Deuteronomy 24:19 starkly commands us that we have an obligation to remember cruelty and to be on guard lest the perpetrators of evil ascend to power. Finally, as *Benei Yisrael* prepare to enter the land of Israel, Moses reviews the reality of their fractious relationship with God. The people should never think that God brought them out of Egypt to the land in recognition of their virtue. Rather, the opposite is true—time and time again, Moses reels an infuriated God back from destroying the whiny, rebellious and sinful wanderers. As he prepares to leave his flock of wanderers, Moses implores *Benei Yisrael* to remember forever the centrality and responsibility of the covenant. Only by not allowing ourselves to succumb to the siren song of forgetfulness, can we maintain our proper relationship to God and to our sacred heritage as a moral, responsible people with past, present and future purpose.

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## *TEKI'OT* TRANSFORMING TEXTS: *ELUL SHOFAR* BLASTS IN MEDIEVAL *MINHAG*\*

Steven Exler

From its first call, the shofar blast on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* jars the listener; its dissonant clash with the rhythm of prayer continues to shock and surprise for the duration of the month. This powerful custom is a central part of the individual and communal preparation for the Days of Awe, yet its origins are as unexpected as the sound itself. This article aims to uncover the sources and to trace the development of the textual history of this *minhag* in medieval *Ashkenaz*.<sup>1</sup>

\* Thanks to Eitan Rubenstein for his thoughtful comments and suggestions and for helping me think about the organizational structure of this article. Special thanks to Will Friedman, from the *Milin Havivin* editorial staff, for his extraordinary care in reading drafts of this article and offering invaluable suggestions and corrections.

<sup>1</sup> It is during the medieval period, broadly defined as spanning the 10th through 15th centuries, that one finds the most diversity of opinion surrounding the basis of the custom. Subsequent discussion largely concerns the questions of how many times a day and at what times the shofar is blown, from which day of *Rosh Hodesh* to start, how many days before *Rosh ha-Shanah* to stop, and what to do if the individual misses the shofar blast. For some of these discussions, see *Igerot Moshe Orach Hayim* 4:21, par. 5, *Mas'ei Binyamin* #2, and *Tzitz Eliezer* 12:48, as well as the commentaries to *Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayim* 581:1. See also the extensive discussion in Gedalia Aberlander, “*Minhag Teki'at Shofar be-Hodesh Elul: Hishtalsheluto ve-Kiyumo*” (Hebrew), *Or Yisrael* 9:1:103-9 for a summary of the contemporary halakhic discussions about this custom.

This is essentially an Ashkenazic custom. By Ashkenaz, I mean primarily (northern) France-Germany; see Yisrael Ta-Shma, *Minhag Ashkenaz ha-Kadmon* (Jerusalem, 1999), 14-16, particularly footnote 1, and Haym Soloveitchik, *Yeinam* (Tel-Aviv, 2003), 17. However, I also include Provence, and I mention North Africa in the first century of the period I am analyzing. This custom is not practiced in *Sefarad*; however, see *Yalkut Yosef*, vol. 5 (*Mo'adim*), *Hilkhot Selihot* 14 (Jerusalem, 1988), p. 16, and footnote 27 there. The Sefardic custom of blowing shofar during *selihot*, coupled with their custom to begin *selihot* from *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, results in *Sefaradim* blowing shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* as well! A full study of how this developed in *Sefarad* is beyond the scope of this paper; however, especially notable is that sources from medieval *Sefarad* which discuss the custom refer to it as a “*minhag Ashkenaz*,” further proving the absence of this practice in *Sefarad* in the medieval period.

The custom began as a single shofar blast on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and organically expanded, at different times in different communities, to encompass the entire month of *Elul*, and sometimes an even longer period. Throughout, attempts were made to justify this expanded practice by rereading the original sources and adding supporting reasons and justifications. This ever-expanding *minhag* serves as an example of the tension between the development of *minhag* and its relationship to its textual sources. In a larger sense, it can be seen as a microcosm of the tension between text and tradition.

While this study will follow the development of the *minhag* chronologically and geographically, its major divisions are arranged according to the types of responses to the aforementioned text-tradition tension. This is not to undervalue the contribution of tracing the custom along chronological and geographical axes. There *is* a clear progression from blowing shofar only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* to blowing shofar for the entire month, with a possible intermediate period during which some communities blew shofar for an entire forty days from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* until *Yom Kippur*. Further, examining along the geographical axis *does* allow us to witness the acceptance and spread of this custom as it occurred differently in different regions and to speculate about the basis for those differences in the chains of tradition in medieval Ashkenaz.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, however, it is the text-tradition tension that characterizes the medieval Ashkenazic attitude towards this custom, so it will be the organizing principle for this study. In this regard, this study differs from and builds upon previous work on this topic<sup>3</sup> which collected different customs and justifications of those customs without significant attention to close readings focused upon the text-tradition tension.

<sup>2</sup> One methodological note is important to reiterate here. While a valuable approach to the study of *minhag* and *halakhah* is to trace their development in distinct geographic regions, that method must be undertaken with great care in this instance. First, some authors lived in one region but commented about the practices of other regions. Second, many moved frequently due to the unrest in various regions of Europe in the medieval period. Therefore, we must be careful to distinguish between the home of an author and the region about which he comments. Nonetheless, an essential distinction makes an attempt at regional analysis useful. While tracing the development of the *custom* by regions based on the textual evidence is difficult, tracing the *relationship between the text and the tradition* through these works is a viable and important project. That is what we will attempt here. Along the way we will briefly explore the generalizations that can be made about either regional practices or, perhaps more importantly, chains of teacher-student tradition reflected in these texts.

<sup>3</sup> Two very good articles have been written on this custom, in addition to brief discussions in a number of works on *minhag* and High Holidays. Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael*: vol. 2 (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1991), 204-14, discusses this custom in a chapter entitled "The Literary Source as a Factor in the Formation of the *Minhag*," and addresses some of the same issues discussed here. Aberlander's article (see note 1 above), although it does not employ our method, is a well-organized and expansive collection of sources progressing to the present.

In order to understand the basic approaches to this tension, we must first lay some groundwork. We will begin with the original textual source and Geonic literature. Subsequently, we will chronologically trace the earliest texts which respond to it. Within the twelfth century we will find the paradigmatic approaches to dealing with the text-tradition tension. We will then follow those basic schools through the subsequent 300 years of medieval Ashkenaz.

### I. THE PRIMARY SOURCE—*PIRKEI DE-RABBI ELIEZER*

The earliest source of the custom to blow shofar in *Elul* altogether is found in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (henceforth PRE<sup>4</sup>), Chapter 46. In a discussion of the process of Israel receiving the Torah, the *midrash* outlines the schedule of Moses' journeys up and down the mountain:<sup>5</sup>

And on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, "Ascend to me upon the mountain" (Deut. 10:1),<sup>6</sup> and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp.<sup>7</sup> For Moses was ascending the mountain so that they would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted on that day through that shofar blast, as it is said, "God went up in the *teru'ah*-blast, the Lord in the sound of the shofar" (Ps. 47:6). Therefore the Sages enacted (*hitkinu hakhamim*)<sup>8</sup> that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Except when transliterated as part of its citation in other primary sources.

<sup>5</sup> All translations in this article are mine. In addition, I have added verse references where necessary.

<sup>6</sup> See David Lurya, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (Warsaw, 1852 [reprinted in *Sefer Kitvei ha-Gaon R. David Lurya zt"l* (Jerusalem: NP, 1990)]), 110, end of comment 17. He points out that Ex. 24:12, which also uses these words, refers to the first tablets. Gerald Friedlander, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* (New York, 1965), 360, however, gives the attribution as Ex. 24:12.

<sup>7</sup> See Ex. 36:6 and Lev. 25:9.

<sup>8</sup> Whether there is a specific relationship to the force or widespread nature of this practice in PRE evidenced by the word enactment (*takanah*) as opposed to custom/practice (*minhag*), is beyond the scope of this paper. Despite the language of enactment in PRE, which often suggests a more binding or forceful practice, this practice is clearly classified and treated as a *minhag* in almost all subsequent literature. Note, however, the different uses of these terms in the parallel *midrashim* cited below (footnote 10) and throughout the sources in this paper.

<sup>9</sup> PRE Hebrew text is from the Venice 1554 edition, taken from the facsimile edition of Hayim Meir Horowitz, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer: Mahadurah Mada'it* (Jerusalem, 1972). Alternate versions will be discussed below.

This source<sup>10</sup> immediately raises a few points regarding our custom. Most noteworthy is the indication that the practice was to blow only on *Rosh Hodesh*, not for the entire month as is so widely practiced today. Secondly, the shofar blast has little to do with the traditional associations with the initiation of a repentance process.<sup>11</sup> What, in fact, was its function in this midrashic narrative? PRE tells us that it served to prevent Israel from committing idolatry. How? Two possibilities present themselves. First, the shofar blast may have simply been a rallying cry to call the people to recognition or even to worship of God as Moses ascended for a second try at receiving the Ten Commandments for posterity.<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, perhaps the shofar was blown to mark the time and date so that the people would not mistake the time of Moses' descent from the mountain and again stray towards idolatry as they did when building and worshipping the Golden Calf.<sup>13</sup> This second explanation fits well with remedying the original temptation to idolatry. However, it would make more sense if the shofar was subsequently blown every day at that time to keep track of Moses' sojourn on the mountain. This difficulty will be revisited in the later sources. Either way, the enactment of the Sages seems to be a remembrance of this event in the wilderness connected to an exhortation against idolatry, a far cry from our current associations with this custom.

Before examining the use of PRE in later sources, as much of this article does, we must first understand what custom, if any, PRE itself is reflecting, and where and when it would have been practiced. Such will reflect our earliest knowledge of the practice of shofar blowing in *Elul* altogether.

<sup>10</sup> This *midrash* appears in similar versions in three other midrashic texts: *Midrash Lekah Tov* (*Pesikta Zutarta*) Ex. 34 s.v. *va-yomer Hashem* (early 12<sup>th</sup> century), *Midrash Aggadah* Ex. 34 s.v. *pesol lekha* (12<sup>th</sup> century), and *Yalkut Shim'oni* Ps. *remez* 754 (early 13<sup>th</sup> century Germany). Each *midrash* includes a reference to the custom of blowing shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. *Lekah Tov* and *Midrash Aggadah* say, "therefore their practice was to blow (*nahagu litko'a*) shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*," while *Yalkut Shim'oni* matches the language of PRE in saying, "therefore the Sages enacted (*tikenu hakhamim*) blowing the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year." All three of these *midrashim* are much later than PRE, however, and are rarely, if ever, cited as sources for the *minhag*. For more information on the dating and organization of these *midrashim*, see *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Moshe David Herr, "Midrash," vol. 11, 1507-1514, and the *Encyclopedia Judaica* entries on these individual *midrashim*. In addition, see a preserved version of the *midrash* in Ramban, Ex. 33:7.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:4.

<sup>12</sup> Although the connection between the shofar and an exhortation against idolatry is not obvious, it might be implied by the verse adduced from Ps. 47:6—the notion of God being elevated by the shofar might simply be that a shofar blast served to remind Israel of their committed relationship to God.

<sup>13</sup> See *Shabbat* 89a. In this case, PRE relies on the midrashic tradition of these narratives, whereas the previous explanation can be justified according to the plain-sense meaning of the narrative as well.

Leopold Zunz contends that it is common for PRE to retroject later laws or customs into the Biblical period and to find a biblical source for them.<sup>14</sup> If so, PRE is likely referring to a *minhag*, extant in its time, of blowing shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* as a remembrance of the shofar blast on the first *Rosh Hodesh Elul* of Israel's peoplehood, upon Moses' second ascent up Sinai. In that case, the dating of PRE sets the latest possible start for this custom. While scholars argue within a range of over a hundred years, Zunz's widely accepted opinion places it in the early- to mid-eighth century.<sup>15</sup>

As for the location of the work, there is compelling but inconclusive evidence for PRE's composition in *Eretz Yisrael*.<sup>16</sup> Zunz seems to indicate that at the time of PRE's composition this custom was practiced at least in *Eretz Yisrael*, and possibly in the Diaspora as well.<sup>17</sup> In summary, then, PRE appears to indicate a known custom of blowing shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* extant in the eighth century, with no reference to any shofar activity for the remainder of the month.

While PRE is the earliest reference to this custom, it should not be thought of as the origin of the custom. Although almost all subsequent texts that record any practice of shofar blasts on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and afterwards return to this source or a similar one,<sup>18</sup> PRE itself is clear, by its reference to the enactment of the Sages in the past tense, that it offers an explanation of a custom already in practice for some time. The dating of the enactment and earliest practice of this custom, however, remain clouded in the mysterious language of "the Sages enacted". Which Sages were these? While the term Sages (*hakhamim*) frequently refers to the Rabbinic period, there is no mention of the practice prior to PRE, suggesting that the custom began, at the earliest, in the post-Talmudic period. Nonetheless, because PRE is the first text which records and discusses the *minhag*, and almost all subsequent texts use it as their point of departure, it plays an essential role in framing the development of the *minhag*.

<sup>14</sup> Y.L. Zunz, *ha-Derashot be-Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1974), 137.

<sup>15</sup> Zunz 136. For a summary of the opinions on the dating of PRE, see Dina Stein, *Meimrah, Magyah, Mito* (Jerusalem, 2005), 2-3, and Friedlander lii-liv.

<sup>16</sup> Stein 3, and Friedlander *ibid.* See also Joseph Jacobs and Schulim Ochser, "Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 58, who, despite pointing out that almost all the figures quoted in PRE are Palestinian, locate the original composition in Italy.

<sup>17</sup> Zunz 138 notes the mention in PRE of a number of Palestinian customs which were not practiced in Babylonia. However, he does not include the blowing of shofar in this list, but rather mentions it earlier in his general list of retrojected customs. This implies that Zunz had no reason to believe that this custom was a matter of dispute between the communities.

The relationship between PRE as a Palestinian text and the custom of shofar blowing based upon it as an Ashkenazic custom is not unusual. See Ta-Shma 14 footnote 1 and Aberlander 99, footnote 22.

<sup>18</sup> See the Eastern European school of the late 13th to 15th centuries discussed in Section IV.C for the major exception to this tradition.

## II. GE'ONIM

There is no extant discussion of this custom in Geonic literature. However, *Shibolei ha-Leket* (R. Tzidkiyah b. Avraham ha-Rofei, 13th century Italy) quotes R. Nisim Gaon's (R. Nisim b. Yaakov, 10th-11th century Tunisia) comment regarding this custom:

The Law of *Rosh Hodesh Elul*—Why They Customarily Blow Shofar

There are places that have the custom to blow the shofar on nights of *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, and I found in the work of Rabbeinu Nissim of blessed memory: as for the Sages' practice of blowing the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*—I found a basis for it in *midrash*, and similarly it is written in some aggadic texts: on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, "Ascend to me upon the mountain," (Deut. 10:1) and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp. Moses went up the mountain to accept the second tablets so that they would not stray any longer<sup>19</sup> after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted on that day and through that shofar blast, as it is said, "God went up in the *teru'ah*-blast." (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year. So it appears in PRE.<sup>20</sup>

This quote of Rabbeinu Nissim does not appear in any extant material of his.<sup>21</sup> However, if the quote is accurate, *Shibolei ha-Leket* had a text of Rabbeinu Nissim which indicated his awareness of the practice of blowing shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. Rabbeinu Nissim lived in Tunisia in the late tenth to early eleventh

<sup>19</sup> Some versions of PRE have *stray* (*yit'u* with a *tav*), while others have *mistakenly follow* (*yit'u* with a *tet*). The original version from all reliable manuscripts follows *yit'u* with a *tet*.

<sup>20</sup> *Shibolei ha-Leket, Arugah Asirit—Seder Rosh Hashanah—Siman 281* (Buber edition p. 264).

<sup>21</sup> However, see Shraga Abramson, *Rav Nissim Ga'on: Hamishah Sefarim—Seridim me-Hiburav* (Jerusalem, 1965), 277-8, who published the Table of Contents of Rabbeinu Nissim's *Sefer Megilat Setarim*, which says, "122. That which many of the sages practiced, to blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, he brought a basis for it." See also *Menorat ha-Ma'or, ha-Ner ha-Hamishi, ha-Kelal ha-Sheni, ha-Helek ha-Rishon, Perek Rishon* [290] (Mossad ha-Rav Kook edition p. 615) who quotes Rabenu Nisim as follows: "[There are] many of the elders (*zekeinim*) and laypeople (*ba'alei ha-batim*) who blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. And I found a basis in the *midrash*: It was taught, on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses. As it appears inside." (Abramson 278-9, footnote 212, which points to this source, should read *Ner He, Kelal Bet*, and not *Niddah Kelal Khaf*.) See also B.M. Levin, *Otzar ha-Ge'onim Masekhet Rosh Hashanah* (Jerusalem, 1933), 32, which cites *Menorat ha-Ma'or*'s version but, surprisingly, completes it by quoting a version of PRE which does not match *Shibolei ha-Leket*'s quote of Rabbeinu Nissim or the original version of PRE.

While it is clear that *Shibolei ha-Leket*'s quote of Rabbeinu Nissim begins before the words "the Sages' practice," the end of the quote is less clear. Logically, and by implication from the various versions of Rabbeinu Nissim cited in the paragraph above, it seems

century. While *Shibolei ha-Leket*'s quote of Rabbeinu Nissim does not imply that the practice necessarily took place there, it indicates that shofar blowing on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* was happening in Rabbeinu Nissim's time in a region with which he was familiar, and links the practice from the time of PRE to the end of the period of the *Ge'onim*.<sup>22</sup>

### III. EARLY ASHKENAZ (1000-1200)—NEW CUSTOMS, NEW TEXTS

The first source from early Ashkenaz that relates to this custom follows the trend established by PRE and Rabbeinu Nissim. *Mahzor Vitry* (R. Simhah of Vitry, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century France),<sup>23</sup> an early twelfth century work from the school of Rashi, records:

We say in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkanos*, on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, "Ascend to me upon the mountain," (Deut. 10:1) and you shall loudly sound<sup>24</sup> the shofar throughout the camp, for Moses went up the mountain so that Israel would

most likely that it ends after the quote of the midrashic text, "every single year," and that *Shibolei ha-Leket* himself attributes this *midrash* to PRE. It seems unlikely that Rabbeinu Nissim would first say that he found the basis for a custom in a number of *midrashim* and then only after the fact identify the source as PRE. See Zunz 430-431, footnote 20, who adopts this reading of *Shibolei ha-Leket* as well.

What seems most likely, then, is that the original edition of Rabbeinu Nissim was in *Megilat Setarim* and included the quote of *midrash* as *Shibolei ha-Leket* cites it. *Shibolei ha-Leket* then attributes that quote to PRE. However, the original version of Rabbeinu Nissim's statement regarding who observed this custom—the sages (per *Shibolei ha-Leket*), many of the sages (per Abramson's *Rav Nisim Ga'on*), or many of the elders and laypeople (per *Menorat ha-Ma'or*), is not clear. This leaves open the interesting possibilities that the early practice of this custom was either not communal (a practice of some or all of the sages may imply that a select group blew shofar privately) or not agreed upon by everyone (if it was practiced only by many of the elders or laypeople) even in the communities in which it was followed.

<sup>22</sup> See, however, Sperber 207, who quotes a *piyyut* from *Eretz Yisrael* which he places between the 8th and 9th centuries that evidences a custom to blow shofar for the entire month of *Elul*.

<sup>23</sup> This attribution of authorship is still the subject of some scholarly debate. See, for example, Efrayim E. Urbach, "*Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashī*" in *Sefer Rashī*, ed. Y.L. Maimon (Jerusalem, 1956), 322 footnote 1.

<sup>24</sup> *Mahzor Vitry* is the only source with the version: "you shall loudly sound." All other medieval versions that quote PRE, as well as all manuscript and printed editions of PRE, have "and they loudly sounded". See *Mahzor Vitry* (S. Hurwitz edition, Nuremberg, 1923), 361-2, footnote *alef* for a discussion of this variant. While the difference is irrelevant to this study, the midrashic significance of attributing the *Rosh Hodesh Elul* shofar blast at Sinai to a Divine instruction as opposed to a communal initiative is striking.

not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, “God went up in the *teru’ab*-blast, the Lord in the sound of the shofar.” (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year.<sup>25</sup>

*Mahzor Vitry* quotes PRE without elaboration. In the absence of further clarification, it is reasonable to assume that *Mahzor Vitry*’s reference to this text and the custom it relates indicates that the custom was in fact practiced.<sup>26</sup> If not, why reproduce the *midrash* in a text that was designed to be a guide for law and custom?<sup>27</sup> If it was indeed in force, then we have early evidence that the custom endured from PRE’s original context, to Rabbeinu Nissim’s North African community, and into early *Ashkenaz*. For *Mahzor Vitry*, then, there is no text-tradition tension. That is, if we assume that the text reflects the custom as practiced, then PRE continues to be a logical and accurate source to explain the custom.

The first rupture in the textual transmission of this custom occurs with Ra’avan (R. Eliezer b. Natan, 12th century Germany). In the section of responsa at the beginning of his major work *Sefer Ra’avan*,<sup>28</sup> in a long responsum regarding the arrangement of shofar blasts on *Rosh ha-Shanah*, Ra’avan concludes with a discussion of the 40 shofar blasts on *Rosh ha-Shanah*. He writes:

And the general idea of the blasts—thirty seated correlating to the *Malkhiyot*, *Zikhronot*, and *Shofarot*, and we add ten standing, which totals forty, corresponding to . . . the forty days of the second tablets, as it says in PRE, on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* Moses blew the shofar and went up on the mountain, and on *Yom Kippur* he descended and blew the shofar to tell the Children of Israel that they should fast because of, “and you shall afflict yourselves” (Lev. 23:27). Because Moses blew the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, Israel still customarily blows the shofar **from** [emphasis mine] *Rosh Hodesh Elul*.<sup>29</sup>

A number of elements of this text are striking. First, the quote from PRE is a selective paraphrase. While PRE does mention the *Yom Kippur* shofar blast much later in the chapter, it is not juxtaposed to the *Rosh Hodesh Elul* blast.

<sup>25</sup> Par. 323, p. 361-2 in the S. Hurwitz edition.

<sup>26</sup> See Aberlander 97, who reads *Mahzor Vitry* this way as well. But see *Sefer ha-Manhig* (Yitzhak Refael edition, Jerusalem, 1978), vol. 1, p. 328-9, footnote to line 70, where Refael seems to suggest that although *Mahzor Vitry* implies that the shofar should be blown on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, its silence regarding the rest of the month cannot imply that the shofar was *not* blown for the remainder of *Elul* as well.

<sup>27</sup> See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Ernst Daniel Goldschmidt, “*Mahzor Vitry*,” vol. 11, 736-8.

<sup>28</sup> Also called *Even ha-Ezer*.

<sup>29</sup> *Sefer Ra’avan She’elot u-Teshuvot* #61 (Warsaw, 1905 edition [reprinted Israel, 1984], p.55).

Second, the purpose of the *Rosh Hodesh Elul* blast is not specified by Ra'avan, while it is in PRE.<sup>30</sup> Third, the custom itself is unclear regarding its terminus. Did the shofar blasts begin from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and continue until *Rosh ha-Shanah*? Or did they last for the entire forty days corresponding to Moses' time on the mountain?<sup>31</sup> The selective paraphrase focusing on the juxtaposition of the blasts of *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and *Yom Kippur* combined with the absence of a reason for the blast seem to point towards the likelihood that the custom extended from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* all the way until *Yom Kippur*.<sup>32</sup> However, this is not clear.

The final line of Ra'avan's text is ambiguous. Is "Because Moses blew . . ." a continuation of the paraphrase from PRE, or Ra'avan's own comment? If it is a paraphrase of PRE, it suggests that Ra'avan's PRE indicated a custom different from that which our editions of PRE record.<sup>33</sup> However, reading the last line of the Ra'avan as a part of his PRE is unlikely. First, we have neither manuscripts of PRE nor sources citing PRE before Ra'avan that indicate that the impact of Moses' blast was a practice to blow the shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and on. Second, the change in language from the record of an enactment of the Sages as PRE has it, to a note of current practice, as it appears in Ra'avan, suggests that Ra'avan has by this point stopped paraphrasing PRE. Third, the record of the enactment in PRE is mentioned only after PRE's discussion of the *Rosh Hodesh Elul* blast, not after the reference to the *Yom Kippur* blast. Finally, because the text is marshaled only to justify the forty shofar blasts based on Moses' forty days on the mountain, there is no need to quote the Sages' enactment from PRE. Rather, Ra'avan tangentially mentions that this PRE source, which he is bringing for the aforementioned purpose, is also a basis for the custom to blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* on. Therefore, I understand this final line as

<sup>30</sup> Both of these aberrations are simply explained by remembering that the purpose of PRE here is to show that Moses was on the mountain for forty days, not to explain the custom of shofar blowing in *Rosh Hodesh Elul*.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, the frequency of blowing is not made explicit by Ra'avan either. In the absence of alternate explanations, however, it seems likely that the shofar was blown daily. The time of day of the blast(s) is also not specified. These questions arise from many of the sources we will see, but are beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>32</sup> Urbach 353, footnote 12 also reads Ra'avan this way. However, Refael in *Sefer ha-Manhig* vol. 1, p. 328, notes to line 70, claims that the custom to blow for the whole month of *Elul* is mentioned in *Sefer ha-Ra'avan* #61—our section, and Sperber 205 also asserts that the Ra'avan has the same custom as Ra'avyah (blowing only for the month of *Elul*). Perhaps Refael and Sperber mean the whole month and possibly even more, but if these sources understand that Ra'avan is decisively recording a custom of blowing shofar for the whole month and not beyond to *Yom Kippur*, the basis of such an assertion is not clear to me.

<sup>33</sup> S. Hurwitz's *Mahzor Vitry* p. 361-2 footnote *alef* does assume that this is part of Ra'avan's version of PRE.

Ra'avan's acknowledgement that the current custom is an expansion upon the original practice of the *Rosh Hodesh Elul* blast recorded in PRE.<sup>34</sup>

Ra'avan, then, stands our analysis of this custom at a crossroads. He indicates no knowledge of a contemporary custom to blow only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and not for the succeeding period, as PRE itself suggests was done. How can these contradictory practices be reconciled?

Perhaps we see here a geographic distinction in which some communities, such as France (based on *Mahzor Vitry*) and North Africa (based on Rabbeinu Nissim), blew shofar only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, while other communities' *original custom* was to blow for all of *Elul*, contrary to PRE. The community to which Ra'avan refers, likely his in Germany,<sup>35</sup> would have been among the latter. Alternatively, this may be part of a geographic-historical progression. Every community's *Elul* shofar custom began as blowing on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* alone, as PRE indicates, and at various times some places, like Ra'avan's community, expanded upon that custom, while others (e.g., those mentioned above), did not.<sup>36</sup>

Essentially, this distinction raises the question of whether communities that blow beyond *Rosh Hodesh Elul* arrived at that custom by expanding from an

<sup>34</sup> Although Ra'avan seems to have the basic narrative of PRE, because he offers only a short paraphrase, we do not know whether he had the Sages' enactment in his PRE or not. This is important in understanding the significance of Ra'avan's struggle with the text-tradition tension. If he did have the original Sages' enactment in his PRE, he is (albeit not explicitly) acknowledging that the current practice is an expansion beyond the original enactment of the Sages. If not, he is only holding a tension between the original narrative shofar blast and the current practice, a less striking tension.

<sup>35</sup> Although Ra'avan's language of "Israel still customarily blows\_" is ambiguous, a reasonable default assumption is that he refers to his own geographic region.

<sup>36</sup> A third theoretical option is that all communities originally blew shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* for the rest of the month or until Yom Kippur. In that case, the earlier sources which indicate blowing only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* might have been explaining just the reason for the *Rosh Hodesh Elul* blast. This is very difficult since those sources make no mention of the continuation of the shofar blasts past *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. While it is also possible that at the stage of these earlier sources communities which had begun by blowing shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and beyond had already undergone a reduction in their practice, it is unlikely both because *minhag* tends to expand and not reduce and because the only reasons for reducing this practice are introduced much later in the medieval period.

One final speculative possibility is that no alternative tradition yet exists, and that the original Ra'avan actually said, "Because Moses blew the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, Israel still customarily blows the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*," (that is, *be-Rosh Hodesh Elul* instead of *me-Rosh Hodesh Elul*) and that the change was put in later to harmonize Ra'avan with then current tradition. This makes for a more logical reading of that line in Ra'avan. Of course, the counter-argument is precisely that—*lectio difficilior praeferenda est* (the more difficult reading is to be preferred). Furthermore, without any alternative textual traditions of Ra'avan, I am very reluctant to suggest this change.

original custom of blowing on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* only, or initiated that practice *ex nihilo*. It is almost impossible to make a determination based on the textual traditions we have, and the implications are minimal for this study.<sup>37</sup> It seems most likely that some communities underwent expansion from a *Rosh Hodesh Elul*-only custom and others started with the already-expanded custom. I assume that at least some places underwent an expansion simply because in the first few centuries of record of this custom, blowing only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* was by far the dominant practice. Many of the places in which the post-*Rosh Hodesh Elul* custom was practiced in subsequent centuries descend from these original communities, so it is likely that actual expansion took place in some communities. I will use that rubric in the rest of this paper with the awareness that I may also be describing communities whose original custom was the “expanded” one.

Given the expanded custom which took hold in some places in Ra’avan’s time, and given that Ra’avan had the original version of PRE and yet recorded an expanded custom, we can trace the subsequent history of the *minhag* by asking two questions. First, at what times and in what places did the expanded *minhag* take hold? Second, in communities that adopted the expanded custom, how did they reconcile it with the narrower custom recorded by PRE? Ra’avan marks the first approach to this second question. He acknowledges a custom that has expanded from the practice advocated by its source while maintaining both. This is essentially the first school of addressing the conflict between practice and source. It is a school which holds the text-tradition tension by acknowledging the gap between them, the difference between the original basis and the current practice, without necessarily justifying or mitigating it.

At this juncture we must ask an essential question: what induced the expansion of the custom? Despite its importance, the answer cannot be deduced from the texts and is largely subject to educated speculation. I will offer one brief suggestion here. It can be argued, particularly in *Ashkenaz*, that “*minhag* abhors a vacuum.” The trend of Jewish ritual and custom is to expand to cover more space and time in the Jewish life experience.<sup>38</sup> In early medieval *Ashkenaz* the shofar was being blown on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* as custom and on *Rosh ha-Shanah* as law. *Elul* was developing as a time of preparation for the Days of Awe, marked

<sup>37</sup> That is, either way the texts must struggle with the fact that the post-*Rosh Hodesh Elul* shofar blowing practice is at odds with the textual source from PRE. The text-tradition tension is a different one for each development. Communities that began with a post-*Rosh Hodesh Elul* practice have to justify *initiating* a custom which is both based on and at odds with PRE. Alternatively, places which underwent an explicit change from practicing in accordance with the fundamental text to expanding beyond it must justify the decision to expand beyond the original basis.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Ta-Shma 22 on the mourning periods and practices in the Jewish calendar.

in part by evolving and expanding customs of reciting *selibot*.<sup>39</sup> It seems likely that as part of the expansion of the importance of *Elul*, some medieval communities simply decided to fill the space between the shofar blasts of *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and *Rosh ha-Shanah* with the daily institution of the powerful call of the shofar.<sup>40</sup>

No matter what the cause of the expansion of this custom, its textual history changes dramatically only fifty years later in *Sefer Ra'avyah*<sup>41</sup> (R. Eliezer b. Yoel ha-Levi, 12th-13th century Germany):

That which they practiced to blow from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single day, thus was taught in *Perakim de-Rabbi Eliezer*, R. Yehoshua ben Korha said, Moses stood forty days on the mountain . . . and after forty days he descended and broke the tablets on the seventeenth of *Tammuz* . . . on the first of *Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, "Ascend to me upon the mountain" (Deut. 10:1), and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp, for Moses went up the mountain so that Israel would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, "God went up in the *teru'ah*-blast, etc." (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the whole month every single year in order to warn Israel that they should repent, as it is said, "if a shofar shall be blasted in the city, etc." (Amos 3:6), and in order to confuse the Satan so that he not prosecute Israel.<sup>42</sup>

Ra'avyah, Ra'avan's grandson, also recognizes an existing custom which, from his opening phrase, echoes that of his grandfather—blowing shofar daily from *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. Also like Ra'avan, the terminus of the daily blast is initially left unspecified. However, from the continuation of the quote of PRE, it is clear that Ra'avyah's custom is for the month of *Elul*. This continuation of the quote is quite astonishing. No earlier source made any reference to the custom of blowing for the entire month as a part of the text of PRE, nor to the additional two reasons—a call to repentance attached to the verse from Amos, and the confusion of

<sup>39</sup> For an example of *selibot* as an expanding custom, see Sperber, 214-6, especially 216. He also notes the interesting connections between the development of *selibot* and our custom and their joint relationship to PRE. For the concept of *Elul* becoming a time of preparation for the Days of Awe in the Geonic and medieval period beyond what it was in the time of the Sages, see *Entziklopedya Talmudit*, "Elul," vol. 2, p. 2-3. The *minhagim* which developed around *Elul* are all post-Talmudic. See footnote 71 below.

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, it is the opposite force which creates a post-medieval justification for the custom not to blow shofar on *Erev Rosh ha-Shanah*—so as to create a clear distinction between these customary blasts of *Elul* and the legally prescribed ones on *Rosh ha-Shanah*. See, for example, the commentaries to *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayim* 581:3.

<sup>41</sup> Also called *Avi ha-Ezri*.

<sup>42</sup> Par. 542 (Aptowitz edition, Jerusalem, 1938 [reprinted 1964]) vol. 2, p. 239.

the Satan. Ra'avyah's quote from PRE is an almost word-for-word rendition of our text, until the last line. Where PRE ends "therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year," Ra'avyah's version interpolates the phrase "for the whole month," and then adds the two justifications.

Grappling with this text is difficult. It is problematic to say that Ra'avyah's quote of PRE ends at "every single year" and the rest is his explanatory emendation, because then his citation of PRE would still contain the interpolated phrase "for the whole month;" Ra'avyah also provides no indication that the quote ends there. Grammatically, the two appended reasons seem inextricably tied to the quote of PRE. The alternative possibility is that Ra'avyah actually had this text of PRE in front of him. Verification of this thesis requires an examination of the variant editions of PRE.

The academic work on manuscripts and textual history of PRE is incomplete.<sup>43</sup> The most extensive work has been done by H.M. Horowitz, whose critical edition of PRE, an extraordinary undertaking, was never completed.<sup>44</sup> Even in incomplete manuscript form, it is still the most comprehensive study available. It is supplemented by the extensive work of Friedlander.<sup>45</sup> Although an edition was recently published by Hiegger,<sup>46</sup> it is based on a manuscript which was already used by Horowitz. The Lurya<sup>47</sup> edition, in wide circulation, has been censored and is among the less reliable.<sup>48</sup> Even with the variety of manuscripts and printed editions available, none of Horowitz, Friedlander, or Hiegger notes any textual variants in this last line of our section of PRE, nor do they bring evidence of anything resembling the version offered by Ra'avyah. Even Lurya, who argues in favor of this variant, does so only on logical grounds, and does not indicate any versions before the medieval period with this version.<sup>49</sup>

Given the absence of manuscript evidence, we must conclude that Ra'avyah offers here a drastically modified PRE. He interpolates the phrase "the whole month" and adds an extensive addition, and attempts to offer it as a text of PRE.<sup>50</sup> What motivates this break from the textual tradition? A comparison of

<sup>43</sup> See Stein 22-3 (footnote 15 above) for a clear summary of the scholarship on the editions of PRE.

<sup>44</sup> See footnote 9 above.

<sup>45</sup> Friedlander xiv-xv (see footnote 6 above).

<sup>46</sup> M. Hiegger published an edition of PRE in *Horev* volumes 8, 9, and 10. Its version of our section of PRE is very similar to the Lurya edition used above, although it locates this passage in Chapter 45. In addition, although it begins like the Lurya edition, "And on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* . . ." it ends, "therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Tishrei!*" This seems to be a scribal error.

<sup>47</sup> See footnote 6 above.

<sup>48</sup> Stein 23.

<sup>49</sup> Lurya 110, comment 18.

<sup>50</sup> See Sperber 207. Although he does not attribute the revised version to Ra'avyah, he does argue that Ra'avyah has a non-original PRE which was reworked in order to harmonize early text with contemporary practice.

Ra'avyah to Ra'avan is instructive here. As noted above, Ra'avan seems content to hold the traditional version of PRE with its custom of blowing shofar only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and simultaneously record the practice of blowing shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* onward. Ra'avyah, Ra'avan's own grandson and student, does not maintain that tension. He resolves the apparent contradiction by producing a text of PRE which reflects the community's practice. While it cannot be concluded whether Ra'avyah himself altered or reworked the PRE text he had in front of him, or if he inherited someone else's handiwork, it is practically incontrovertible that the original PRE text was adjusted to reflect a practice in consonance with the community's revised practice. Ra'avyah, then, represents a second school in tackling the text-tradition tension. Rather than dispense with the text or acknowledge the gap between it and the current practice, he offers a source, here a reworked PRE, which justifies the practice of his community.

One difficulty with Ra'avyah's approach should be pointed out here, which will be referenced when addressing later adherents to his school as well. While many of the reasons offered to justify the expansion to the month-long custom are appropriate, some appear to be justifications of something longer than a *Rosh Hodesh Elul*-only approach, but do not necessarily point to a month-long practice. Of the two reasons appended by Ra'avyah, the confusion of the Satan is certainly the more difficult one. Why does it justify a month-long practice? As this reason gains force in later sources, its problematic nature becomes even more strongly emphasized.<sup>51</sup>

Thus far we have constructed a theoretical development of this *minhag*. Sometime before the mid-eighth century, communities began to blow the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, perhaps for the reason described by PRE. This *minhag* continued and spread along with the transition of Diaspora Jewry to Europe and North Africa in the early medieval period. By the early twelfth century, some communities had begun the custom to blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and on, minimally for the whole month of *Elul* and possibly until *Yom Kippur*, an expansion beyond the practice recorded and dictated by PRE. By the late twelfth century, the grandson and student of Ra'avan (who had retained the original version of PRE), offered a version that had undergone a drastic change to reflect this expanded custom.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See commentaries to *Tur Orach Hayim 581: Perishah* ad. loc. *gimel* and *dalet*, and *Bah* ad. loc. *bet* on why the confusion of Satan is a difficult justification of the custom to blow for the month. In fact, the confusion of Satan argument may have the opposite effect—the only direct opposition to blowing shofar for the whole month in medieval Ashkenaz is precisely that Satan will become accustomed to it and no longer be confused by the unusual arrangement of blasts on *Rosh ha-Shanah* which are also designed to confuse Satan. See Aberlander 103 who cites this opposition in the name of R. Moshe mi-Lotra.

<sup>52</sup> See “*Elul: Tok'uin ba-Shofar*” in J.D. Eisenstein, *Otzar Dinim u-Minhagim* (Tel-Aviv, 1975) 17, who also suggests this two-stage development of the custom.

Three textual trends emerged in Ashkenaz in the subsequent 300 years. Ra'avyah's direction (which will be called by his name, even as it is utilized by texts that may have had no awareness of his PRE) was followed by a number of texts which recorded the *minhag* of blowing for the whole month and based it either on a text of PRE which corroborated that *minhag*, a paraphrase of PRE, or an alternate source altogether. A second stream, in the style of Ra'avan (which I will also call by his name), recorded the *minhag* to blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and beyond (though not always with a clear terminus) but retained a source, the original version of PRE or another, which dictated blowing shofar only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, holding the two in tension. A third tradition retained the custom as originally dictated by PRE to blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* alone, thus experiencing no tension between practice and text, similar to *Mabzor Vitry* as we read it. While the retention of the custom to blow only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* into the later medieval period outside Sefarad is striking, it does not directly address the text-tradition tension, and as such will not be discussed here. We will trace the former two streams as we follow the development of this *minhag*.

#### IV. RA'AVYAH'S APPROACH—HARMONIZING TEXT AND TRADITION

##### A. RA'AVYAH'S PRE VERSION IN ARBA'AH TURIM

Ra'avyah's text follows a natural chain of transmission based on its subsequent appearances: via Rosh to two of Rosh's students, Tur and Rabbeinu Yeruham, all three of whom quote it almost word for word. However, a small but highly significant omission of the words "for the whole month" in both Rosh and Rabenu Yeruham removes them from this school altogether. As such, they will be discussed below in Section V.

The direct heir, then, of both Ra'avyah's expanded PRE and his approach to the text-tradition tension is Tur (R. Ya'akov b. Asher *Ba'al ha-Turim*, 13th-14th century Germany-Spain). Tur<sup>53</sup> opens his Laws of *Rosh ha-Shanah*, writing:

It was taught in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, "Ascend to me upon the mountain" (Deut. 10:1) for then he went up to receive the second tablets,<sup>54</sup> and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp. Moses went up

<sup>53</sup> Although *Sefer ha-Rokeah* and *Ma'aseh Rokeah*, discussed in Part B of this section, preceded *Arba'ah Turim*, I have put *Arba'ah Turim* first both in order to follow the transmission of Ra'avyah's PRE text immediately after discussing it, and to provide a background against which to view the even more extreme harmonization approaches of *Sefer ha-Rokeah* and *Ma'aseh Rokeah*.

<sup>54</sup> This addition does not appear in either Ra'avyah's version or Rosh's.

the mountain so that Israel would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, “God went up in the *teru’ah*-blast, etc.” (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year and the whole month in order to warn Israel that they should repent, as it is said, “if a shofar shall be blasted in the city, will the nation not tremble?” (Amos 3:6) and in order to confuse the Satan. So they practice in Ashkenaz to blow every morning and evening after prayers.<sup>55</sup>

Tur probably took his text of PRE from Ra’avyah directly or from his father Rosh, and basically matches Ra’avyah’s expanded version, moving “the whole month” before “every single year” so that the entire section which seems to be an addition to the original PRE is in one piece.<sup>56</sup> Tur notes that this custom is an Ashkenazic practice, and adds that the custom includes blowing twice a day for the month. Essentially, Tur follows Ra’avyah’s school in presenting a text of PRE that explicitly reads the original enactment as justifying the custom of blowing the entire month.

Commentaries to *Arba’ah Turim* struggle with a textual and conceptual question (which also applies to Ra’avyah) which highlights the text-tradition tension that we have emphasized. If the enactment to blow the shofar was made to commemorate a single blast on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, why is it necessary to blow the

<sup>55</sup> *Arba’ah Turim Orach Hayim* 581. See also the Sefardic work *Tzeidah la-Derekh* of R. Menahem b. Aharon ben Zevah, 14th century France-Spain, *Ma’amar Revi’i, Kelal Hamishi, Perek Sheni* (Warsaw, 1880), p. 114a, whose text is a quote of Tur with only minor and insignificant variations.

<sup>56</sup> Sperber 204-5 argues that Tur must have taken his text from Ra’avyah and not Rosh because Tur includes the words “the whole month,” which Rosh omits. This argument is not conclusive, however. First, Tur may simply have had Rosh’s version and added in “the whole month” to make the enactment match either the explanations given or the practice he saw around him, just as Ra’avyah did before him. In addition, the last line of Tur, quoting the custom of blowing twice a day in *Ashkenaz*, is a direct quote from Rosh. Refa’el, *Sefer ha-Manhig* vol. 1, p. 328, notes to line 70, suggests that Tur took the PRE text from Ra’avyah and the record of the custom from Rosh. Even if this is true, the exact quote suggests that Tur saw Rosh’s paragraph in which the custom is recorded. In that case, even if Tur copied the PRE text from Ra’avyah (or from an entirely different manuscript of PRE which he had), he consciously chose to do so over using the one he saw in Rosh, perhaps indicating his preference to include the words “the whole month,” and then (if he was working from Ra’avyah) rearranged the order of words.

*Beit Yosef* and *Bah* ad. loc. note that *Sefer ha-Mordekhai* cites PRE after mentioning Rosh. However, we do not seem to have the referenced *Sefer ha-Mordekhai*. See *Arba’ah Turim ha-Shalem*, pub. *Maknon Yerushalayim* (Tel-Aviv, 1993), 319, footnotes *alef* and *bet*, and Aptowitz’s *Sefer Ra’avyah* vol. 2, p. 239, footnote 2. Tur presumably did not take his version directly from *Sefer ha-Mordekhai*, though, since he never cites *Sefer ha-Mordekhai* in *Arba’ah Turim*.

entire month? Additionally, if blowing the entire month is a logical way to remember the shofar blast at Sinai, then why adduce additional reasons and verses? The most satisfying answer is one that addresses both questions simultaneously, explaining that in fact there are two separate sources and two separate customs here. This is precisely the approach of *Binah le-Itim* (R. Azaryah Figo, 16th-17th century Italy) in his homily for *Shabbat Rosh Hodesh Elul*, who writes:

Know that the Rav *Ba'al ha-Turim z"l* in *Orah Hayim* at the beginning of Laws of *Rosh Ha-Shanah* brings this *baraita*<sup>57</sup> until “that they blow the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every year.” And he added and wrote, “and the whole month in order to warn Israel that they should repent, as it is said, ‘if a shofar shall be blasted in the city, etc.’ (Amos 3:6)” . . . and the whole essence [of PRE] is only to give a reason for why they enacted to blow the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* itself, and about this he said that it was a remembrance to the shofar they blew on that very day on account of the ascent of Moses our teacher, peace be upon him. The shofar blast of *Rosh Hodesh* has no relation to repentance, but rather a simple remembrance of the shofar blast of that time. The Tur further added of his own accord that also for the rest of the days of the month until its end they should blow the shofar. The reason for this blowing for the whole month was to awaken to repentance, and upon this matter the Tur brought the verse “if a shofar be blasted in the city, etc.” from which the nature of the shofar as an inspiration to repentance can be seen.<sup>58</sup>

*Binah le-Itim* is clear: the shofar blast in the wilderness on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* is the basis for the Sages’ original enactment of a shofar blast on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. The custom to blow for the entire month, however, developed later, and is primarily a call to repentance and secondarily an attempt to confuse the Satan. In saying this, *Binah le-Itim* supports our reading of Ra’avyah and suggests a two-stage development of this custom. However, while *Binah le-Itim* sees Tur as prescriptive—developing a new custom—we read Ra’avyah and those that follow as offering a descriptive textual basis that justifies an already existing practice.

*Binah le-Itim* makes one further argument which is essential for understanding both Tur and Ra’avyah and their positions on the text-tradition tension. He explains that Tur’s presentation of the two customs linked them so strongly that it misled *Beit Yosef* (R. Yosef Karo, 15th-16th century Spain-Israel) into understanding the Sages’ enactment as including both customs, the *Rosh Hodesh Elul*

<sup>57</sup> Referring to PRE; many of the texts brought here use terms like this to refer to PRE, reflecting a widespread medieval assumption that it was written by R. Eliezer b. Horkanos of the Tannaitic period.

<sup>58</sup> *Binah le-Itim, Et Ketz, Drosb* #56, (Warsaw, 1883 [reprinted Benei Berak, 1967]), p. 51a, cited also in the commentary of the Weinfeld edition of PRE (Jerusalem, 1973) 178.

blast and the month-long blowing.<sup>59</sup> In fact, though, *this seems to be* Tur's goal in linking the two. This permits understanding Tur as a more cautious member of Ra'avyah's school, desiring to preserve a *logical* distinction for the reader between the two customs while still presenting them both *historically* within the Sages' enactment. He does this as follows: while Ra'avyah's version reads, "Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* **the whole month every single year . . .**" Tur's version reads, "Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every **single year and the whole month . . .**" Tur's reading allows more room for teasing apart two independent practices, each with its own logical basis, as *Binah le-Itim* explains. (We will argue, however, that Tur did not want that historical distinction to be apparent, despite *Binah le-Itim's* recognition of it). For while Tur's words can be split between "every single year" and "and the whole month" to show these two customs, Ra'avyah's words permit no such split. Ra'avyah, by working "the whole month" earlier into the sentence, forces the reader to see one custom of blowing shofar for the whole month which is not made of two distinct parts.

For Ra'avyah, then, the PRE narrative becomes a historical source of a first shofar blast on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. From there, the Sages enact blowing from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* on, for which two additional reasons are given—awakening repentance and confusing the Satan. The shofar blast at Sinai ceases to be any more than the historical origin of a custom which then overtakes its source with an independent identity which absorbs even that first day of *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and that narrative basis. That is, Ra'avyah alleviates the text-tradition tension by collapsing two

<sup>59</sup> While *Beit Yosef* to *Arba'ah Turim*, ad. loc., attempts to explain why all three reasons are necessary to justify one unified custom of blowing shofar for the month of *Elul*, *Binah le-Itim*, as part of the ellipsed section in the quote above, explains:

And I am afraid to say that from reading between the lines of the words of the Rav z"l in the *Beit Yosef*, it seems that he understood these words [i.e., the section from "and the whole month" until "in order to confuse the Satan"] as being also from the body text of the *baraita* of PRE. Therefore he includes an entire discussion regarding the fact that since he already brought a proof from the shofar they blew in the wilderness, why does he need to include another proof from "if a shofar shall be blasted in the city, etc." . . . And after due pardoning [of *Beit Yosef's* honor; PRE, ed. Weinfeld (Jerusalem 1973), 178, quoting *Binah le-Itim*, adds here: "in the shade of God may he rest" (Ps. 91:1)], it seems that he has no need to say all of this, for the one who said this [i.e., PRE] did not say this [i.e., the section from "and the whole month" until "in order to confuse the Satan"—this was not in the original PRE], and the *baraita* did not bring the verse of "if a shofar be blasted in the city, etc."

So why did *Beit Yosef* not quote the simpler explanation? According to *Binah le-Itim*, the seamless interweaving of the two traditions, which we attribute to Ra'avyah's edited PRE, was so convincing that when replicated by Tur it convinced *Beit Yosef* that it was one continuous tradition with three independent reasons which were all interrelated.

customs with distinct histories and logical bases into one historical enactment with three reasons, creating an awkwardness with which subsequent texts struggle.

Tur's language, however, suggests a more cautious approach, but still one within the rubric of the Ra'avyah school. The cautious side of Tur is that which rearranges these phrases to take a step back from the complete merger that Ra'avyah performs, reminding the reader that there are in fact two distinct *logical* elements to this custom.<sup>60</sup> Tur likely sees the expanded PRE text in front of him and recognizes the two distinct historical and logical stages, although he does not originate the second as *Binah le-Itim* argues. Even so, Tur does not want the two *historical* stages to be apparent to the reader. To alleviate the text-tradition tension, perhaps, Tur unquestionably reads both those historical developments back into the original Sages' enactment, just as *Beit Yosef* understood him. If Tur had wanted to suggest that there was an original enactment and a later addition, he certainly would have separated the two sections with an explanation of that development. Thus, by retaining both customs under the unified language of "the Sages enacted", and simultaneously splitting between the justifications for the two customs, Tur both highlights the extreme rereading of Ra'avyah and stands as a more cautious version of him, a harmonizer of text with tradition to explain the medieval Ashkenazic practice.

#### B. REREADING THE SINAITIC SHOFAR—ROKEAH TEXTS

Rokeah (R. Elazar b. Yehudah Rokeah of Worms, 12th-13th century Germany), barely a generation after Ra'avyah, refers to PRE in two different locations. In his Commentary to the Siddur, in *Yom Kippur Ma'ariv*, he writes:

"*Atah vebartanu*" until "*zekher li-yetzi'at mitzrayim*" is forty-one words, corresponding to the forty days Moses spent for the Torah, which is one, and they ended on *Yom Kippur*, as it says in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, "Ascend to me upon the mountain and be there," (Ex. 24:12)<sup>61</sup> and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp. For Moses went up the mountain so that they would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, "God went up in the *teru'ah*-blast." (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every year.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See footnote 56 for a discussion of the possible sources for Tur's comments and a demonstration that no matter which source he builds from, we can understand this arrangement of language as deliberate.

<sup>61</sup> This verse is not found in any other edition or quote of PRE. It is a strange choice, because it refers to the first tablets, which are out of context here. See footnote 6 above.

<sup>62</sup> *Peirush Siddur ha-Tefilah le-ha-Rokeah, Ma'ariv le-Yom ha-Kippurim*, Par. 136 (Hershler edition, Jerusalem, 1994), p. 694-5.

Rokeah does not seem to dispute the *minhag* recorded here. However, his quote of it is a tangential point, unrelated to his primary purpose for quoting PRE. Nonetheless, his choice to include the final line, which for his purpose is dispensable, may suggest that he at least recognized this custom in some form, at least as the origin of whatever subsequent shofar blowing custom took place in *Elul*. It also shows that he preserved an original version of PRE that was unlike the revised version of Ra'avyah (with whom he corresponded).<sup>63</sup> Rokeah's community did blow the shofar for the entire month of *Elul*, however, as he writes in his major work *Sefer ha-Rokeah*:

Above<sup>64</sup> it is written we blow the shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* because they enacted that they blow for forty days until *Yom Kippur*, recalling the forty days that Moses ascended to the heights and said to blow every day in order that they not mistakenly follow idolatry, and in this kingdom we only blow until *Rosh Ha-Shanah*.<sup>65</sup>

This is evidence for the claim that the notion of blowing from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* meant until *Yom Kippur*, but an alternate tradition either developed from that or emerged independently to blow only for the month of *Elul*. Rokeah's comment implies that he knew of another tradition which did, in fact, blow from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* until *Yom Kippur*. One wonders if that might have been precisely the tradition of Ra'avan, mentioned above.<sup>66</sup>

The more difficult question to answer regarding *Sefer ha-Rokeah* is what textual basis he cites as the source of this custom. PRE makes no reference to the shofar being blown for forty days. In fact, it is clear that the blast is unique: first, the text clearly describes a blast that was blown on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*; second, it clearly states, “the Blessed Holy One was uplifted **on that day** [emphasis mine] through that shofar blast. . . !”<sup>67</sup> If Rokeah was using PRE, he either had a different version or read our version drastically differently. From the fact that he mentions “in order that they not mistakenly follow after idolatry”, Rokeah seems to point to the midrashic tradition which first finds its voice in PRE. However, the reading of a blast every day for forty days, while logical, is simply

<sup>63</sup> Avigdor Aptowitz, *Mavo le-Sefer Ra'avyah* (Jerusalem, 1934), 316.

<sup>64</sup> I have found no earlier reference to such a practice in Rokeah's work. It is unclear to what he is referring here.

<sup>65</sup> *Hilkhot Rosh Hashanah* Par. 207 (Shneurson edition, Jerusalem, 1967), p. 99.

<sup>66</sup> Or the *Sefer ha-Manhig*, which will be discussed below at the beginning of Section V.

<sup>67</sup> Not all versions have “on that day.” Horowitz puts it in parentheses in the Vienna 1544 edition, and Hiegger and Friedlander omit it. However, even without it, “through **that** shofar blast” seems to refer to a single shofar blast. To justify a reading of our PRE that the shofar was blown every day, one would have to read “through that shofar blast” as “through that shofar blast that was blasted each day for those forty days,” which is certainly not a straightforward reading.

not what our editions of PRE say. The alternative possibility is that Rokeah has some other midrashic tradition which records a shofar blast every day of Moses' sojourn on the mountain. However, a basic search of midrashic literature produced no such text.

Perhaps the answer to this question is found in a third source, *Ma'aseh Rokeah*. While authorship of *Ma'aseh Rokeah* is traditionally attributed to R. Elazar Rokeah of Worms, it is a subject of debate with ramifications for our study.<sup>68</sup> *Ma'aseh Rokeah* writes:

In PRE, when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the second tablets he said to them, blow the shofar in *Elul* so that you no longer err,<sup>69</sup> and they are sensitized by the shofar blast and they repent<sup>70</sup> for a nation confounded by invaders and there was an elder there etc., as if he were saying to exhort them to repent before *Rosh Ha-Shanah*,<sup>71</sup> and such is the practice that we blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* until *Rosh Ha-Shanah*.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> The editor of *Ma'aseh Rokeah*, R. Efrayim Zalman Margaliyot, argues in his introduction (published with the first printed edition in 1912, see footnote 72 below) that it was written by someone other than the author of *Sefer ha-Rokeah*. See his compelling arguments there. However, Hersh Goldwurm, *The Rishonim* (Brooklyn, NY, 2001), 139; Aptowitz, *Mayo* 316; and Avraham Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1998), 438-9, all identify the author of *Ma'aseh Rokeah* and *Sefer ha-Rokeah* as the same R. Elazar Rokeah of Worms, albeit without explanation.

<sup>69</sup> The editor inserts a long parenthetical citation here which is fascinating in its own right: "the version in front of us which is brought in the Rosh and Tur and Mordekhai is not [quoted] here, and it is: 'and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp. Moses went up the mountain so that they would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, "God went up in the *teru'ab*-blast, etc.' Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* etc.', and so it should say here." Not only is that *Mordekhai* no longer extant (see footnote 56 above), but neither do we have versions of Rosh or Tur which say "from Rosh Hodesh!"

<sup>70</sup> The text here seems corrupted, as the editor suggests (see previous footnote). Interestingly, the text from "for a nation" until "exhort them to repent" is a partial excerpt of a homily for *Shabbat Shuvah* found in *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* Sec. 24, par. 1. The homily, which utilizes a parable of an elder warning people of an impending attack as an allegory for a call to repentance, is on Amos 3:6, the very verse used in the expanded PRE! Based on this, it seems that there is a lacuna or corruption between "and they repent" and "for a nation."

<sup>71</sup> As noted in the previous footnote, the original source from *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*, a 6th or 7th century *midrash*, is a homily offered between *Rosh ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*. In this medieval text, however, it is used to induce repentance for a period from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* until *Rosh ha-Shanah*. This points to the move of the repentance period from *Tisbri* back into *Elul* in the medieval period, which was suggested in Section III (see footnote 39) as a major cause for the expansion of the shofar blasts in *Elul*.

<sup>72</sup> *Hilkhot Rosh ha-Shanah* Par. 120 (Hirschsprung Dukla edition, Sanok, 1912) p. 29.

This text clearly indicates that the source for this custom is PRE. It shares some aspects in common with the source Rokeah cites in *Sefer ha-Rokeah*; however, the period of the shofar blasts is different. The latter part, after “so that you no longer err,” seems to be the author’s own addition, in which he explains why Moses might have instituted a daily shofar blast for the month of *Elul*. That explanation clearly seems to be a retrojection of the logic of his time and the goal of the *Elul* period onto the history of Sinai, since the context of the midrashic Sinai narratives have nothing to do with *Rosh Ha-Shanah*—it is not even mentioned at all.

Given this, *Sefer ha-Rokeah* and *Ma’aseh Rokeah* offer an interesting new method within the school of harmonizing text and tradition. The author of *Sefer ha-Rokeah*, although citing the original version of PRE in his Commentary to the Siddur, offers an unidentified source that justifies the expanded practice of shofar blowing beyond *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. He takes Ra’avyah’s approach a step further—instead of simply revising the Sages’ enactment, he retrojects the actual practice of blowing shofar for an extended period all the way back to Sinai. In this way, it is a more extreme version of harmonization. Still, *Sefer ha-Rokeah* also shares characteristics of Ra’avan’s school (albeit for a different inconsistency), for he is comfortable acknowledging that for some reason<sup>73</sup> his practice of blowing in *Elul* not for a full forty days departs from the text which offers its original basis. However, I contend that his textual basis, given its unclear origins and Rokeah’s explicit choice to ignore the PRE he quotes in his siddur in favor of this other, mysterious text, earns him a place in this section.

In light of the *Sefer ha-Rokeah*, *Ma’aseh Rokeah*’s radical approach becomes apparent. *Ma’aseh Rokeah* presents a text which he identifies as PRE which is different from our editions of PRE and completely falls in line with the practice of his community. The natural periods of shofar blasts for Moses’s forty day sojourn on the mountain are either for the full forty days, or just at the beginning, or at the beginning and at the end. Only *Ma’aseh Rokeah* claims that Moses actually instructed the people to blow for thirty days. This seems to be the most radical rereading of original sources in order to bring them into consonance with communal practice.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> It is also striking that he offers no reason for this deviation, just like Ra’avan. Given that *Sefer ha-Rokeah* appears to be rereading the midrashic tradition anyway, why not reread it in consonance with the current tradition? Perhaps he didn’t feel comfortable creating as extreme a rereading as *Ma’aseh Rokeah*, and wanted to revise in a way that still matched the logic of the original narrative’s forty days of blasts. In this way, *Sefer ha-Rokeah* illustrates what he might have felt to be the limit of a legitimate rereading.

<sup>74</sup> If the versions we have of *Sefer ha-Rokeah* and *Ma’aseh Rokeah* are accurate, the differences between them in this paragraph certainly support the position that the two works had different authors. Alternatively, their approaches are similar in revising the Sinaitic shofar narrative, and in this they are different from all other medieval sources. It seems reasonable, minimally, to posit a very strong connection between these works.

The practice of blowing shofar for the month of *Elul*, to which *Sefer ha-Rokeah* and *Ma'aseh Rokeah* testify, is in line with the previously recorded custom of Ra'avyah, who lived in the same region of Germany barely a generation earlier. Although Ra'avyah's record of the custom is good evidence for this practice in the region, the question of the textual struggle is a different story. The approaches of *Sefer ha-Rokeah* and *Ma'aseh Rokeah* to resolving the tension between tradition and text, by citing an alternative midrashic tradition which refers to either a thirty or forty day period of shofar blowing at Sinai, are novel and not based on any prior text or approach in the medieval literature.

### C. LEAVING PRE BEHIND—MAHARAM'S SCHOOL

A new way of relating to this custom within Ra'avyah's tradition emerges in late thirteenth century Germany with the school of Maharam of Rothenburg (R. Meir b. Barukh *me-Rotenburg*, 13th century Germany-France).<sup>75</sup> The first source to document this new attitude is *Sefer Minhagim de-Bei Maharam me-Rotenburg*, a compilation of the customs of Maharam and his community, and a work with unknown authorship and exact provenance.<sup>76</sup> In the beginning of the section on the preparatory practices of Maharam's community for *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, it states:

They practiced to blow shofar every morning and evening after leaving synagogue<sup>77</sup> from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* until three days before *Rosh Ha-Shanah* in order to teach and inaugurate commandments as the master says: "we inquire about the laws of a festival thirty days before the festival (cf. *Tosefta Megilah* (Zuckerman) 4:5)." Also, in order that he [Satan] not figure out when *Rosh Ha-Shanah* will be. . . . I have also heard that it is because the Satan caused Israel to err during the first forty days [of Moses' time on Mount Sinai] as it is said, "for this man, Moses," (Ex. 32:1)<sup>78</sup> and caused them to make the Calf as appears in the *midrash*: and on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* when Moses went up to receive the second tablets they said, let us make an enactment so that he [Satan] not cause us to err again, and let us blow shofar in order to confuse him.

<sup>75</sup> Maharam's customs and practice were enormously influential in Germany and eastward; it is not surprising that his practice and justification begins a school of a similar style. See Goldwurm 142.

<sup>76</sup> See the Introduction to the Elfenbein edition (New York, 1938) for an overview of the scholarship on these questions and their general indeterminacy.

<sup>77</sup> Maharam's community seems to originate the custom of blowing morning and evening; interestingly, after leaving synagogue. One wonders where it took place if indeed it was not in the synagogue!

<sup>78</sup> See Rashi ad. loc., and *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber edition) *Parashat Ki Tisa* par. 13.

It is also written, “a great voice which did not grow,” (Deut. 5:19) and we translate it as which did not stop, teaching that the sound of the shofar was growing stronger the entire second forty days.<sup>79</sup>

Maharam’s community, like others in Germany, blew shofar for the month of *Elul*.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, in discussing the basis for this custom, this source all but leaves PRE entirely behind. The only mention seems to be the reference to the *midrash* offered as a third reason. Even that reading is substantially different from PRE as it originally appeared, here focusing on the confusion of the Satan which, even if it is a possible explanation of the *midrash*, is certainly not its simple reading.<sup>81</sup> This text offers the entirely new reason of training for *Rosh Ha-Shanah* practices thirty days beforehand, which removes from the custom any independent identity, instead seeing it merely as an introduction to the *Rosh Ha-Shanah* blasts. This approach differs from both types of harmonization seen above. It does not directly adjust PRE as Ra’avyah does, nor does it focus on Moses’ time on Sinai like Rokeah; rather, it leaves this for last, apparently preferring to justify the custom on grounds basically divorced from a historical basis. It is this novel approach of ignoring PRE (to greater or lesser extents) which characterizes the students of Maharam in Germany and surrounding regions, as we shall see.

R. Hayim Or Zaru’a (R. Hayim Eliezer b. Yitzhak Or Zaru’a, 13th-14th century Austria/Germany, henceforth referred to as Maharah), a student of Rosh and Maharam of Rothenburg,<sup>82</sup> writes:

And this is that which was customary to blow [shofar] from *Elul*, as it is said, “if the shofar be blasted in a city will the nation not tremble?” (Amos 3:6) Meaning, they will not tremble on their own, and this city is the synagogue, as it is said, “in the city of our God the mountain of God’s holiness,” (Ps. 48:2) and now it is called a miniature sanctuary.

Therefore the world practices blowing the whole month of *Elul* in order that they be used to blowing and not [make a] mistake. . . .<sup>83</sup>

Maharah records the custom of blowing shofar in *Elul*,<sup>84</sup> but he too has entirely left behind the original version of PRE and even any midrashic reference to

<sup>79</sup> *Seder Rinus le-Erev Rosh ha-Shanah* (Elfenbein edition, New York, 1938), p. 37.

<sup>80</sup> See further in the same section of *Sefer Minbagim de-Bei Maharam me-Rotenburg* for more discussion of stopping three days before *Rosh Hashanah*.

<sup>81</sup> It is also unclear what kind of shofar blowing would be necessary to confuse the Satan—just once on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, for the entire forty days, or for the month of *Elul*. See note 51 above.

<sup>82</sup> Goldwurm 149, and biography entry for R. Haim Or Zaru’a on Bar-Ilan Responsa Project CD, Version 13.

<sup>83</sup> *Derashot R. Hayim Or Zaru’a* Par. 32, 33 (from Bar-Ilan Responsa Project CD, Version 13).

<sup>84</sup> Despite the ambiguity in the first paragraph whether the custom to blow extends until *Yom Kippur* or not, the second paragraph makes it clear that the custom is for *Elul* alone.

Moses' sojourn on the mountain. The only remnant appears to be from the expanded PRE originated by Ra'avyah, with which he shares the verse from Amos, expanding on that homily. In addition, in the second paragraph, he adds a new reason altogether—so as not to make a mistake on *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, which he uses as a chance to further elaborate on what constitutes a mistake. From this source one wonders whether more than one simple blast was blown each day, or whether the single blast sufficed to “warm up” the shofar blower.

Was Maharah aware of PRE? While Maharam's tradition only briefly notes it as a textual basis, Maharah's other teacher Rosh includes it fully, as we will see. Thus, Maharah's omission of PRE is surprising, assuming his familiarity with this source in some form.<sup>85</sup> Perhaps this was Maharah's method of dealing with the tension between the source suggesting blowing shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* alone and the Austrian practice of blowing shofar for the month of *Elul*. To resolve this tension, Maharah cites only the section of Ra'avyah's PRE that directly acts as a basis for the practice. In addition, he offers a very practical basis for the custom. This constitutes a striking moment in the development of this custom. At this juncture, Maharah is the first to sever the tie completely to the original PRE, and justify the practice based only on later developed material.

This trend continues into fifteenth century *Ashkenaz*, where we find in *Sefer ha-Minhagim* (R. Yitzhak Tirna, 14th-15th century Czechoslovakia), a major collection of customs:

It is a proper custom to blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* until *Zekhor Berit* which is *Erev Rosh ha-Shanah*. Then we stop blowing and return to blowing again on *Rosh ha-Shanah*, this is 30 days. The support for this is “blow a shofar on the month” (Ps. 81:4), which implies a whole month which is thirty days. And it is all to confuse the Satan so that he will not know when *Rosh ha-Shanah* is and [not] prosecute, God forbid . . . Another reason [why we blow], is because Moses our teacher went up the mountain on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* to get the second tablets and they loudly sounded the shofar in order that they not mistakenly follow after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar as it is said, “God went up in that shofar, etc.” (Ps. 47:6); therefore we blow from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* [until Tishrei].<sup>86</sup> [This is found in *Arba'ah Turim*] *Orah Hayim*.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Especially given his use of the proof-text from Amos, it seems likely that Maharah saw a source which included the expanded PRE, such as *Sefer Ra'avyah* or *Piskei ha-Rosh*, in which case he presumably saw PRE as well. This is not certain, however. Just as Ra'avyah seems to have originated the reason, it could certainly have been re-innovated independently by Maharah without his ever having seen PRE. This does seem unlikely, though, given Maharah's being a student of Rosh and the regularity with which Rosh's other students quoted this PRE.

<sup>86</sup> “Until Tishrei” is bracketed in the Hebrew text from which this was translated.

<sup>87</sup> *Sefer ha-Minhagim: Elul, Yemei ha-Selihot* (taken from Bar-Ilan Responsa Project CD, Version 13, which cites Spitzer edition, Jerusalem, 1979).

*Sefer ha-Minhagim* cites a new homily as his primary justification for the practice of blowing shofar in *Elul*, following the creative Eastern European tradition begun by *Sefer Minhagim de-Bei Maharam* around a century earlier. To this, he appends the confusion of the Satan, and only subsequently mentions a reason based on the original PRE.<sup>88</sup> This may be understood as yet another variation on negotiating the text-tradition tension. *Sefer ha-Minhagim* removes PRE from a position of authority as the textual basis of the custom, instead offering a novel homily which he might have felt was a much better justification of the custom.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, he does append the *midrash*, perhaps given its significant place in the textual tradition regarding this custom.<sup>90</sup>

Following in the path of the *Sefer ha-Minhagim*, the contemporaneous *Sefer Maharil* (R. Yaakov ben Mosheh Halevi Moelin Segal, 14th-15th century Germany)<sup>91</sup> writes:

It is a custom throughout the Diaspora of Israel<sup>92</sup> to begin blowing the shofar from when *Elul* enters.

<sup>88</sup> Note that he does essentially include the original version of it, which is a retreat from the position taken by *Sefer Minhagim de-Bei Maharam* and Maharah before him of ignoring it completely.

An important direction for further analysis is a study of the cultural contexts of the communities in which these works were written. Particularly in this school, in which a variety of reasons, novel ones as well as old, are offered, the reasons may reflect the particular types of literature being written and the particular values or emphases of the community and author. For example, perhaps a Satan focus is more appropriate in a time in which superstition plays a stronger role, while a repentance/preparation focus fits a more pietistic community.

<sup>89</sup> The impact of relegating PRE to a tertiary justification has important repercussions: when R. Mosheh Isserles quotes *Sefer ha-Minhagim* as the source of his position on the custom, he does not cite PRE in his quotation, mentioning only the first two reasons! See *Darkhei Mosheh*, Tur *Orah Hayim* 581, comment *alef*.

<sup>90</sup> In quoting a version of PRE, however, *Sefer ha-Minhagim* must again grapple with the relationship between this *midrash*, which in its original form as he quotes it here advocates for shofar blowing on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* alone, and the custom. This tension is negotiated ambiguously by *Sefer ha-Minhagim* in his last line. Whether his “therefore we blow from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* [until Tishrei]” (which is not found in our editions of Tur *Orah Hayim* in any similar form despite the last line of *Sefer ha-Minhagim* claiming that it is) is meant to be understood as a part of the PRE-like tradition he is adducing, or meant to be his own comment afterwards, it does not reflect the original PRE, but rereads it as a basis for blowing shofar the whole month. Even after bringing a different midrashic basis for this custom, then, *Sefer ha-Minhagim*, like many before him, still feels compelled to understand PRE (or a text very much like it) against its original context in order to justify the communal custom.

<sup>91</sup> This work, which details the customs of Maharil, was written by his student R. Zalman of St. Goar.

<sup>92</sup> *Shinuyei Nuscha’ot* in the *Mekhon Yerushalayim* edition, letter *alef*, p. 260, has “*Asbkenaz*” instead of “the Diaspora of Israel” in two manuscript editions.

Mahari Segal<sup>93</sup> expounded that therefore we do not begin blowing the evening that *Rosh Hodesh* [*Elul*] enters, but rather on the morning of the first day of *Rosh Hodesh* because from that day until *Yom Kippur* is forty days, reflecting the forty days that our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, was on the mountain to receive the second tablets. And our teacher Moses, peace be upon him, went up in the early morning, as it says in the *Ki Tisa* portion, “and you should ascend in the morning” (Ex. 34:2), and that was *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, and Rashi explained similarly there. And he descended on *Yom Kippur* to inform Israel that the sin of the calf had been atoned for. Until here is found in [*Arba’ah Turim*] *Orah Hayim*. And Mahari Segal expounded the reason for the blasts from the entry of *Elul* as we say, from when *Elul* enters, we increase our repentance . . . Therefore we blow to warn and exhort the nation to repentance. An analogy by parable is [both] to a king who comes to lay siege to a city and to the lookout on the tower when he sees the legions coming upon the city: their way [i.e., that of the king and of the lookout] is to blast *teru’ah*-blasts and blow to warn the nation that they should stand on guard, and so it is in [*Arba’ah Turim*] *Orah Hayim*.<sup>94</sup>

Maharil records the custom to begin blowing shofar from the entry of *Elul*. Although he does not specify the terminus, it is likely that he follows the custom of Maharam’s school, in which he was trained, to blow only until *Rosh Ha-Shanah*. Although he argues for beginning the shofar blasts from the daytime of *Rosh Hodesh Elul* because the forty day period until *Yom Kippur* begins then, which suggests that forty days might be the duration of the blasts, the weight of evidence is against that argument. First, his teachers in *Ashkenaz* unanimously and explicitly wrote about blowing only until the end of *Elul*. Second, he cites Tur, who is clear about the custom being only for the month, without arguing against him. Third, the purpose for the blasts given by Mahari Segal is exhortation to repentance. While the period of Moses’ sojourn on the mountain was forty days, the period of preparation for repentance is really the month of *Elul*, culminating in *Yom ha-Din*, *Rosh ha-Shanah*. So a set of blasts meant to exhort people to repent would actually have ended on *Rosh Ha-Shanah*.<sup>95</sup>

Like his predecessors in this school, Maharil ignores the original PRE as the reason for the custom of beginning to blow during *Elul*. This is a noticeable omission since he cites that midrashic tradition as the reason to begin in the morning instead of the night, but not the basis for the practice altogether!

<sup>93</sup> This is the Maharil, as R. Zalman (see footnote 91) refers to him.

<sup>94</sup> *Hilkhot Yamim Nora’im* Par. 5 (*Makbon Yerushalayim* edition, Jerusalem, 1989), p. 260. See also p. 261, footnote 12 that the reference to *Arba’ah Turim* refers to the exhortation to repentance but not the parable, which does not appear in *Arba’ah Turim*.

<sup>95</sup> See also *Shinuyei Nusha’ot* ibid. letter *bet* which ends that first line “and to become accustomed to it, until close to *Rosh Hashanah*.”

Instead, he offers the alternative reason of exhorting the nation to repent. It is difficult to know whether Maharil's inspiration was Ra'avyah's expanded PRE<sup>96</sup> or whether he arrived at this reason independently.

This fifteenth century Eastern European attitude towards the custom and its relationship to the original text continues to be exhibited two generations after Maharil in *Leket Yosher* (R. Yosef b. Mosheh, 15th century Germany), a compendium of laws and customs of R. Yisrael Isserlein, author of *Terumat ha-Desheh*:

Let us return to repentance: from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and on one should begin [working on repentance] with alacrity and care, for it is then thirty days before the Day of Judgment, and the time of courts is thirty days (*Bava Metziah* 118a). And we blow shofar to exhort people to repentance and that one should seek his merits for the Day of Judgment. . . .<sup>97</sup>

A few pages later, *Leket Yosher* wrote as a heading to a homily, "I will begin by writing the headings of the homily. We blow from *Rosh Hodesh* to confuse the Satan and to exhort to repentance."<sup>98</sup>

*Leket Yosher* is characteristic of this school. His explanation of the custom begins with a creative reason, the period of courts, and returns to the two frequently offered reasons initially appended by Ra'avyah to PRE almost 300 years earlier. Yet again, the original PRE and Moses' sojourn on the mountain have disappeared. The text-tradition tension now exists only in echoes from the clash of reasons in slight disharmony with the custom's main movements.

#### D. SUMMARY

Three different schools emerge within the Ra'avyah school of resolving the text-tradition tension. In all three, the custom is widespread and well-accepted to blow shofar for the month of *Elul*, with minor variations regarding the terminus of the custom.<sup>99</sup> In addition, all three are based in Germany<sup>100</sup> and eastward. Two approaches initially coexist in the thirteenth century, exemplified by texts

<sup>96</sup> It could not have been more than an inspiration, since other than the reason of repentance itself, Maharil's omission of the verse from Amos and introduction of the parable shares nothing textual in common with Ra'avyah's suggestion of the custom being based on repentance.

<sup>97</sup> *Leket Yosher Helek Alef (Orah Hayim)*, Par. 4 (Freiman edition, Berlin, 1903 [reprinted Jerusalem, 1964]), p. 120.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, Par. 3, p. 123.

<sup>99</sup> The explicit possibility of blowing all the way until *Yom Kippur* surfaces seriously only in *Sefer ha-Rokeah*.

<sup>100</sup> For more records of the custom to blow shofar for the whole month in particular communities in *Ashkenaz* (collections compiled shortly after the medieval period that likely reflect customs dating back to that period), see Sperber 211. For two exceptions to this trend—records of Ashkenazic communities in the medieval period blowing shofar only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, see Aberlander 97 for his citation of *Da'at Zekeinim mi-Ba'alei ha-Tsafot* and footnote 9 there for his citation of *Peirushim u-Pesakim le-Rabbeinu Avigdor ha-Tzarfati*.

from Tur and Rokeah. Tur prefers to retain an expanded PRE like Ra'avyah before him; while left with the awkwardness of integrating the original version with the expanded reasons in order for the current practice to make sense, he maintains fidelity to the importance of PRE's role in the *minhag*. The Rokeah texts prefer to distance themselves further from PRE, either quoting a different tradition altogether in which the historical basis matches the current custom, or citing PRE but with a drastically different version of the story to accomplish the same ends. In that sense, while displaying a stronger emphasis on the current practice having a basis in a Biblical narrative<sup>101</sup> which matches it “blast for blast,” they are more willing to set aside the original text of PRE.

A third technique develops in the late thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, beginning with Maharam of Rothenburg. This trend briefly overlaps with the aforementioned approaches before eventually supplanting them completely. It almost entirely dispenses with the previous basis for the custom, preferring theological and pragmatic sources to ones grounded in a Biblical narrative; although it often turns back to the reasons offered by Ra'avyah long before, it does so without ever citing PRE. The tension between the original PRE (both the enactment and its narrative basis) and the practice of blowing for a whole month has not been creatively managed in the style of the former two schools, but has been obscured—even eradicated.

#### V. RA'AVAN'S APPROACH—LIVING WITH THE TEXT-TRADITION TENSION

The path paved by Ra'avan in the mid-twelfth century, acknowledging the deviation of the *Elul* shofar blowing custom from its origins, is next tread by a slightly later contemporary of Ra'avyah in *Sefer ha-Manhig* (R. Avraham b. Natan ha-Yarhi, 12th-13th century Provence-Spain):

The custom of *Tzarfat*<sup>102</sup> is to begin from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* to blow shofar, and I have a support for this in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, “Ascend to me upon the mountain,” (Deut. 10:1) and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp. For Moses went up the mountain, and they would not stray any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, “God went up in the *teru'ah*-blast, the Lord in the sound of the shofar.” (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh*

<sup>101</sup> I use this terminology to refer to the narratives based in the Bible with an understanding that the shofar blasts emerge from a Rabbinic reading of the story. Many of the texts we have seen are aware of this distinction in some way as evidenced by their use of the language of *midrash*, and their not assuming this Sinai blast to be a part of the plain-sense Sinai story.

<sup>102</sup> This generally refers to the northern region of France, as distinct from Provence; see Soloveitchik 18-9 (from footnote 1 above).

*Hodesh Elul* every single year, and the people of *Tzarfat* do it from then on.<sup>103</sup>

*Sefer ha-Manhig* does not have Ra'avyah's expanded PRE. It acknowledges that while the text offers the basis of a tradition to blow on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, the custom of *Tzarfat* is to blow from then on. Like Ra'avan, the terminus of the practice is left ambiguous—does it end with *Rosh ha-Shanah* or continue throughout the period paralleling Moses' stay on the mountain, until *Yom Kippur*? While this remains unclear in the text,<sup>104</sup> *Sefer ha-Manhig's* relation to the text-tradition tension is clear. Like Ra'avan, *Sefer ha-Manhig* maintains the original PRE even while acknowledging an expanded custom.

It is readily understandable how the expanded practice to blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and on got started in *Tzarfat* in the early thirteenth century. We might imagine that while *Mabzor Vitry's* community a century earlier only blew the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, either the community's practice naturally expanded because of internal factors, or the expanded practice was transplanted or adopted from other communities in France-Germany. *Sefer ha-Manhig's* traditional version of PRE is not surprising, since R. Avraham had little connection to the German school which produced the novel version of PRE and inclined toward harmonization. As a student of Ri of Dampierre, a member of the French Tosafist school with which Ra'avan maintained a correspondence,<sup>105</sup> he shared an intellectual tradition with Ra'avan, increasing the likelihood of their adopting a similar approach.

Later in the thirteenth century, an Ashkenazic work of unknown provenance follows closely the approach of *Sefer ha-Manhig*. *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi*,<sup>106</sup> a halakhic compendium reflecting the traditions of the *beit midrash* of Rashi, writes:

[Concerning] their practice of blowing shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, I found a basis for it in *midrash*, and similarly it is written in some aggadic texts: On *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, "Ascend to me upon the mountain." (Deut. 10:1) They loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp, for Moses went up the mountain so that they would not stray any longer after idolatry, and

<sup>103</sup> *Hilkhot Rosh ha-Shanah* Par. 24 (Warsaw, 1885 [reprinted Jerusalem, 1970s (exact date blurred)]), p. 87-8. See also Yitzhak Refa'el edition (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 328-329, lines 66-71.

<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, Aberlander 98 and *Entziklopedya Talmudit*, "Elul," vol. 2, p. 2, footnote 16 both cite *Sefer ha-Manhig* as saying unequivocally that the custom was only practiced during the month of *Elul*. It is not clear to me on what textual basis this reading is founded.

<sup>105</sup> Goldwurm 131, 171.

<sup>106</sup> See Urbach (see footnote 23 above) 322-65. For the date and provenance of the work, see 328.

the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that *teru'ah*-blast, as it is said, "God went up in the *teru'ah*-blast." (Ps. 47:6) Therefore their practice is to blow every single year.<sup>107</sup>

The language of the opening line bears great similarity to Rabbeinu Nissim as brought in *Shibolei ha-Leket*, and the approach matches *Sefer ha-Manhig*. The ambiguity regarding the terminus of the practice remains. *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi*, however, addresses the text-tradition tension in a subtly different way. Whereas Ra'avan and *Sefer ha-Manhig* directly juxtapose the PRE narrative and the expanded custom, thereby highlighting the gap between them, *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* introduces PRE as the basis for a custom to blow shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every year, but does not conclude by directly contrasting them. While he offers neither revision of PRE nor alternative reasons, *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* still softens the text-tradition tension by avoiding bringing one's attention to the mismatch between text and practice.

Because the authorship and location of this work are unknown, little can be said about its place in the geographic and historical schema of this study. However, what we do know (based on Urbach's research) reveals it to stand at an interesting juncture. The author of *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* mentions Ra'avyah, and *Sefer Ra'avyah* serves as a major source of this work.<sup>108</sup> In addition, the author cites Ra'avan in a number of places, and draws some content from *Sefer Ra'avan*.<sup>109</sup> If *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* was aware of and directly drew from both of these two divergent schools, the author's decision to follow Ra'avan's approach is particularly striking as a potentially conscious decision to prefer one approach to the other.<sup>110</sup>

Ra'avyah's version of PRE appears again in *Piskei ha-Rosh* (R. Asher b. Yehi'el, 13th-14th century Germany-Spain), around a century after the PRE revision first appeared. In an appended section to his laws of *Rosh ha-Shanah*, Rosh writes:

<sup>107</sup> *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi*, *Inyan Rosh ha-Shanah*, par. 3, in Urbach 352.

<sup>108</sup> Urbach 326.

<sup>109</sup> Urbach 324.

<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, there is a second comment about this custom later in *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* which seems to belong to Ra'avyah's school and bears great textual similarity to part of the comment in *Sefer Minhagim de-Bei Maharam me-Rotenburg* (quoted in the beginning of Section IV.C):

The nation customarily blows shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* since . . . he ascended the next day on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* to receive the second tablets, and Israel said, "when Moses went up the first time, the Satan caused us to err in making a 'molten calf.' (Ex. 32:4) Now come let us confuse him", and they began to blow the shofar. Therefore the generations customarily blew shofar from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* and the whole month to confuse him, so that he not prosecute Israel. (Urbach 356)

It is not clear whether these two comments in *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* were originally part of the same collection or not. See Sperber 205-6 for a discussion of the relationship between these two comments.

It is taught in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* Chapter 46, “Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha said . . . on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* the Blessed Holy One said to Moses, “Ascend to me upon the mountain,” (Deut. 10:1) and they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp. For Moses went up the mountain so that they would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, “God went up in the *teru’ah*-blast, etc.” (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year in order to warn Israel that they should repent, as it is said, “if a shofar shall be blasted in the city, etc.” (Amos 3:6) and in order to confuse the Satan so that he not prosecute Israel.” Therefore they practiced in *Ashkenaz* to blow shofar the entire month of *Elul* morning and evening after prayers.<sup>111</sup>

Rosh has the same version of PRE as Ra’avyah. In fact, Rosh is clear in his language that he sees the quote from PRE as extending all the way until the words “prosecute Israel.”<sup>112</sup> It is likely that this version was quoted directly from Ra’avyah, as Aptowitzer argues.<sup>113</sup> There is one striking difference between them, however. Rosh omits the words “the whole month” from his quote of PRE, even though it appears in Ra’avyah. In this way, Rosh continues in the tradition of Ra’avan. Even using Ra’avyah’s expanded PRE, Rosh maintains fidelity to what seems to be the original logic and language of the enactment. Perhaps Rosh removed the words “the whole month” because he felt that the Sages’ enactment in the context of PRE only made sense as an enactment for *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. Simultaneously, he records the expanded custom of *Ashkenaz* to blow shofar for the entire month, thereby acknowledging that the custom is an expansion beyond the logical basis of the text.<sup>114</sup>

Later in the fourteenth century, Rabbeinu Yeruham (R. Yeruham ben Meshulam, 13th-14th century Provence-Spain), Rosh’s student, writes:

<sup>111</sup> *Piskei ha-Rosh, Masekhet Rosh Hashanah* 4:14.

<sup>112</sup> This is made clear by the Rosh’s use of the language “*ad kan*,” “until here,” after those words. My quotation marks in the translation reflect that.

<sup>113</sup> Aptowitzer, *Sefer Ra’avyah*, vol. 2, 239, footnote 2.

<sup>114</sup> See also *Hidushei ha-Ran* (R. Nisim b. Reuven of Gerona, 14th century Spain) Appendix to *Rosh Hashanah*, s.v. *garsinan be-Pirkei de-R”E ha-Gadol*, who appears to have quoted from Rosh (see Aptowitzer, *Sefer Ra’avyah*, vol. 2, 239, footnote 2). He quotes the expanded version of PRE almost exactly but without Ra’avyah’s addition of “the whole month,” Ran even includes Rosh’s “*ad kan*” and concludes in language similar to Rosh’s: “and from here they relied in *Ashkenaz* to blow the whole month of *Elul* after prayers, morning and evening.” He adds, “and from here one can base the custom of those places that get up early from *Rosh Hodesh Elul*,” referring to *selihot* services. The use of PRE as a basis for the *selihot* period is an important point for further research on the relationship between *Ashkenaz* and *Sefarad* and for a broader understanding of the way the development of the shofar blowing custom fits into the larger context of the *Elul* period in medieval *minhag* literature.

They practiced in some places to blow from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every morning and evening to awaken the pathways of repentance, and similarly was the practice in Ashkenaz after prayers in the morning and evening. They based this on *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* Chapter 46 that on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* when Moses ascended upon the mountain they loudly sounded the shofar throughout the camp, for Moses went up the mountain so that Israel would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry. The Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast, as it is said, “God went up in the *teru’ah*-blast, etc.” (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every year in order to warn Israel that they should repent, as it is said, “if a shofar shall be blasted in the city, etc.” (Amos 3:6) and in order to confuse the Satan so that he not prosecute Israel.<sup>115</sup>

Following the textual development, Rabbeinu Yeruham has Ra’avyah’s expanded PRE. Like Rosh, however, he preserves the version that the original enactment was confined to *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, and acknowledges that as a basis of, but by implication not the whole justification for, the custom to blow the whole month. Although his language is not as clear as Rosh’s that the custom is just for the month of *Elul*, his reference to the custom of *Ashkenaz* makes it likely that in fact it is a month-long custom to which he is referring, and not until *Yom Kippur*.

One fascinating detail in Rabbeinu Yeruham not present in Rosh provides a window into his approach to the text-tradition tension. In his opening line, Rabbeinu Yeruham claims, “They practiced in some places to blow from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every morning and evening to awaken the pathways of repentance.” Only after this does he enter into his discussion of PRE. Perhaps Rabbeinu Yeruham is sensitive not only to the fact that the original enactment was to blow shofar only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, but that neither that original enactment nor the Satan argument seem an adequate basis to justify the expanded custom. He therefore takes the most compelling argument for a month-long custom, “awakening the pathways of repentance”, and privileges that at the front of his remarks. By elevating the status of this reason, he mitigates the tension which he exposes by retaining the custom and its origin in their inconsistent forms. Rabbeinu Yeruham hints at a reason for expanding from the original enactment to the current practice—awakening repentance—and in doing so he offsets the tension he exposes between the PRE basis and the current practice.

Also striking in Rabbeinu Yeruham is the differentiation between what appear to be two communities—the community of “some places” mentioned first, and that of Ashkenaz mentioned second. The practice of Ashkenaz is most probably based on Rosh, and reflects entirely what we have seen in Section IV, that the

<sup>115</sup> *Toledot Adam ve-Havah, Netiv 6 Helek 1* (Venice, 1553 [reprinted Jerusalem, ND]).

*Elul*-long shofar blowing custom was widespread in Germany. To where could “some places” refer? At first glance, two possibilities present themselves. Although exiled from Provence in 1306, Rabbeinu Yeruham might have been referring to a custom he observed there. From Provence, he went to Spain, where he studied with Rosh in Toledo. Because this custom was not referenced in any other Sefardic works to date as a Sefardic custom, it seems unlikely that Rabbeinu Yeruham is recording a custom in the Spanish communities in which he lived or traveled. Provence seems to be the most likely possibility. This would be the first evidence of the custom’s existence in Provence, and one of its rare mentions outside of Germany and northern France altogether.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>116</sup> A contemporaneous source with connections to Provence addresses this custom, but it probably cannot be read as part of Ra’avan’s school. *Orhot Hayim* (R. Aharon ha-Kohen of Lunel, 13th-14th century Provence-Spain) wrote:

A reason for the custom which they practiced in all places of Israel to begin and blow the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*: this custom has a basis in the *midrash*, and so it is written in PRE, it is a commandment (*mitzvah*) [Note: This is significantly different language for this practice than we find in any other literature, and this version of PRE does not appear in any known manuscripts or printed editions; see footnote 8] to blow the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* for on that day Israel blew, since it was the final *Rosh Hodesh* of the end of the forty years that Israel stood in the wilderness. And in the *aggadah* it says, on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* Moses ascended the mountain to receive the second tablets and they loudly sounded the shofar in the camp. For Moses went up the mountain so that they would not mistakenly follow any longer after idolatry, and the Blessed Holy One was uplifted through that shofar blast and that shofar [This version does not appear anywhere else—it is usually either “on that day and through that shofar blast,” or merely “through that shofar blast”], as it is said, “God went up in the *teru’ah*-blast, the Lord in the sound of the shofar.” (Ps. 47:6) Therefore the Sages enacted that they blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* every single year (*Hilkhot Rosh Hashanah* Par. *alef* (Jerusalem, ND), vol. 1, p. 214).

Is the custom described here to blow shofar for the whole month or only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*? While the textual proofs justify only *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, the crucial point lies in the language “to begin and blow (*le-bathil ve-litko’a*) the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*.” It could be read as ‘to begin to blow the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*,’ suggesting a custom whose duration is longer than a day, presumably for the month. Alternatively, the phrase could be read to mean ‘to begin [the month] by blowing the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*,’ or ‘to begin [before *Rosh ha-Shanah*] and blow the shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*,’ in which case it refers only to *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. While Aberlander 97 includes *Orhot Hayim* among the sources that record the custom to blow only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, Sperber 206 footnote 16 adopts the latter reading. However, the majority of the evidence seems to be against him. First, the two proofs both refer only to *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, including a *midrash* which does not appear in any other sources on this custom and supports the idea of

What characterizes the texts which maintain the tension between text and communal practice as pioneered by Ra'avan? One of the elements that unites them is actually what sets them apart from Ra'avan—they all utilize a direct, almost exact quote from PRE: the original version in *Sefer ha-Manhig* and *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi*, and the expanded Ra'avyah version in Rosh and his student Rabbeinu Yeruham.<sup>117</sup> These authors retain the centrality of PRE and record the current custom of blowing from *Rosh Hodesh Elul* onwards. Each deals with the tension inherent in quoting a textual basis which does not seem to justify the tradition it founds in a slightly different way.

Rosh and Rabbeinu Yeruham rely on the additional reasons of confusing the Satan and awakening repentance introduced by the expanded version of PRE (while maintaining intact the original version of the enactment to blow only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*). Rabbeinu Yeruham prioritizes the repentance explanation before introducing PRE at all. *Sefer ha-Manhig* uses language which suggests a weaker link between text and tradition. His “I have a support for this in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* . . .”<sup>118</sup> suggests his ambivalence about the extent to which these texts justify the current practice. *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* uses similar language and, as we saw, refrains from explicitly juxtaposing the source and the custom. In contrast, the texts from Ra'avyah's school of harmonizing text and tradition are characterized by direct causal language like “because” and

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blowing on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* only even more unambiguously than PRE (regarding this *midrash* and its unknown origins, see *Yosef Ometz* #60, par. 2). Second, *Sefer Kolbo*, widely believed to be a precursor to *Orhot Hayim* by the same author (see Goldwurm 181), in a paragraph with many textual similarities to the *Orhot Hayim* parallel (*Sefer Kolbo Hilkhhot Aseret Yemei Teshuvah* Par. 65 (David Avraham edition, Jerusalem, 1993), vol 4., column 189-190), clearly advocates blowing shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* only. Given this evidence, it seems like *Orhot Hayim* is describing a custom to blow shofar on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* only, in which case he is not relevant to this paper because he faces no text-tradition tension.

If, however, *Orhot Hayim* is understood according to this alternative reading, that the custom was indeed the whole month of Elul (whether the expansion was for the month of *Elul* until *Rosh Hashanah* or beyond to *Yom Kippur* cannot be known, but the absence of any explicit reference to the forty days of blowing shofar being practiced weighs against the latter option), then he faces an even greater amount of tension, balancing two texts which advocate for a *Rosh Hodesh Elul*-only custom against the current practice. The simple technique *Orhot Hayim* would be using in that case is the language of “this custom has a basis in the *midrash*,” which acknowledges the *Rosh Hodesh Elul* textual basis and leaves room for an expansion which took place for some unaddressed reason, a common technique also used by others in Ra'avan's school.

<sup>117</sup> Ra'avan's use of the paraphrase instead of the full direct quote likely stemmed from his use of the source in discussing the reason for forty blasts on *Rosh Hashanah*, a different context than directly relating to the custom to blow shofar in *Elul*.

<sup>118</sup> And according to the less preferred reading of *Orhot Hayim* (see footnote 116 above), *Orhot Hayim*'s language “this custom has a basis in the *midrash*. . .”

“therefore” which connect the source to the text in ways that imply a necessary and sufficient relationship.

The final commonality between these sources is their location outside the German world. *Sefer ha-Manhig*'s R. Avraham and Rabbeinu Yeruham began in Provence and made their way to Spain. Rosh began as a central figure in Germany but fled to Spain the end of the thirteenth century. Only *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* and Ra'avan are located squarely in *Ashkenaz*, and *Likutim mi-Sifrei de-Bei Rashi* seems to have been written towards the very beginning of the divergence of the schools. Interestingly, even among the Provencal authors, none make explicit reference to the custom being practiced in Provence. In fact, *Sefer ha-Manhig*'s description of the presence of the practice in France implies that in his time it was not present in Provence.<sup>119</sup> Rabbeinu Yeruham, writing a hundred years later in the early fourteenth century, does supply evidence that the custom may have begun in Provence. If so, it entered Provence much later than in northern France and Germany, and in a limited fashion—only for *Rosh Hodesh Elul* in some places,<sup>120</sup> if at all. While this may well be more correlation than causation, the relationship between the geographic commonality of Provence (and to a lesser degree Spain) to the attitudes of these authors to the text-tradition tension is striking.<sup>121</sup> That is, perhaps this custom can point to a

<sup>119</sup> See, however, Sperber 205 footnote 9 who may be arguing that the *Sefer ha-Manhig*'s language implies that shofar was blown in Provence on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* only.

One other mention of our custom from Provencal literature, even earlier than *Sefer ha-Manhig*, is *Ba'al ha-Ma'or* (R. Zerayah ha-Levi, 12th century Provence), which would provide crucial information about early evidence of the custom in Provence. Strangely, although three sources cite “*Ba'al ha-Ma'or sof Rosh ha-Shanah*”, not only do they disagree with each other—two of them arguing that he indicates the Sages' enactment was to blow for the entire month (Lurya 110, comment 20, and *Entziklopidya Talmudit*, “*Elul*,” vol. 2, p. 2, footnote 16), with the third claiming that he says the enactment was only for *Rosh Hodesh Elul* (Hurwitz's *Mahazor Vitry* 362, footnote *alef*)—but the referenced *Ba'al ha-Ma'or* is not found in the printed editions of the Talmud! I was unable to find the text of *Ba'al ha-Ma'or* to which these sources were referring.

<sup>120</sup> *Kol Bo*, and *Orhot Hayim* (footnote 116 above) according to the preferred reading. While we cannot know whether *Orhot Hayim* was talking about Provence when he wrote that the custom was “practiced in all places of Israel,” it seems likely he was. It is unlikely he was describing France or Germany, where many locales were already blowing for the whole month of *Elul*. Born in Provence, the *Orhot Hayim* was also expelled in 1306 and wandered until spending the end of his life in Majorca, a Spanish island. The question of whose customs he is describing is then similar to that which we asked of Rabenu Yeruham's “some places” above. Unlikely to be describing Spain, a locale for which we have no evidence that the custom was practiced, the *Orhot Hayim* was probably referring to a practice in Provence.

<sup>121</sup> A direction for further study in this context concerns the relationship between Provence and Spain in general. It would be instructive to examine the body of *minhag* literature from the medieval period for texts which fail to record this custom in contexts in which they would be expected to have done so. One such example is 13th century

characteristic attitude of the region and its writers: a willingness to hold the text-tradition tension and negotiate it without either rewriting or ignoring base texts.

## VI. CONCLUSION

We have shown the diversity of responses to a fascinating tension raised by the custom of blowing shofar in *Elul*: the divergence between the textual origins of the custom from PRE, to blow only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, and the actual practice throughout Ashkenazic Europe of blowing for the entire month and possibly, in a few places, until *Yom Kippur*. The general trend in Germany is harmonizing text and custom through three approaches: revising PRE, selecting other versions of the Sinai story, and, in the latest chronological stage, putting aside the narrative entirely in favor of alternative pragmatic or theological bases. A second school, beginning with Ra'avan but followed largely by texts located outside of Germany, prefers to retain a version of PRE which suggests a custom to blow only on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, consequently holding on to the tension and mitigating it through nuanced textual adjustments. The possible influence of the general intellectual culture of those communities (Jewish and secular) in those times to these two different approaches would be a future direction to continue this study.

The method of analysis used herein uncovers a layer of the complex fabric of Jewish medieval *minhag* literature. Rather than satisfy itself with examining the development of the custom through a mere collection of sources, it employs close readings of texts in an attempt to bring to the surface the ways in which texts engage with and respond to the customs they are describing. One possible outcome, as our case demonstrates, is the revelation of a range of techniques to manage those tensions. In fact, what we discover is a conflict of loyalties: the author of a text, at the interface between the universe of text and community, struggles to reconcile those two worlds as they repeatedly intersect over time. As textual histories and communal practices continue to develop in dialogue with each other, this method can help amplify and clarify the voices of the texts of *minhag* literature—voices that are often quieted by being heard as mere histories of custom and practice, but which in reality are raising and struggling with the tension between text and tradition.

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Provençal R. Asher b. Sha'ul of Lunel's *Sefer ha-Minhagot*, which does not mention this custom at all. It is possible that it was simply not as widely practiced in Provence as it was in Germany and northern France. If so, given the absence of this custom from Sefardic literature and practice, this might lend further credence to the general linkage between Provence and Spain. See regarding this Soloveitchik 18 and Ta-Shma 14 footnote 1.

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## RABBINIC SLEEP ETHICS: JEWISH SLEEP CONDUCT IN LATE ANTIQUITY<sup>1</sup>

Drew Kaplan

Sleeping occupies, on average, a third of a person's life. The halakhic system, striving as it does to regulate daily experiences, must therefore deal with sleep. While the Bible speaks of general categories of imperatives regarding sleep,<sup>2</sup> these are not necessarily carried over into rabbinic categories of sleep ethics. Note that when discussing sleep ethics, I am not dealing with the *moral-ity* of sleeping, per se.<sup>3</sup> My aim is to collect rabbinic prescriptions and proscript-

<sup>1</sup> My choice of the plural is deliberate—I wish to point to the multiple perspectives among the sages regarding the approach towards sleep. Given that the sages span several centuries and the lack of uniformity among them about sleep, “we should not expect to find in the literature of Rabbinic Judaism one single all-encompassing, comprehensive, systematic scheme in these matters. After all, ‘the Rabbis’ consisted of very many individual personages whose lives spanned hundreds of years and who lived in two greatly disparate geographical areas, Israel and Babylon.” (Chaim Milikowsky, “Trajectories of Return, Restoration and Redemption in Rabbinic Judaism: Elijah, the Messiah, the War of Gog and the World To Come,” in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. James M. Scott [Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001], p. 265.) Nevertheless, there is somewhat of a historical canonization of earlier statements which get adopted over time in terms of developing a uniform sleep ethic.

For a look at Biblical sleep ethics, the reader may refer to my “In Your Lying Down and In Your Rising Up: A Biblical Sleep Ethic,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34:1 (January–March 2006), pp. 47–50. Although it is a collection, rather than an analysis, the various statements and views found throughout the Bible, and does not distinguish between the various works and their authors’ individual views upon the matter, it does provide a basic understanding of Biblical sleep ethics. The rabbis themselves only draw from a few verses (Deut. 6:7 and 11:19, and Ps. 4:5 and 149:6) in addressing how to go about sleep.

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<sup>2</sup> These general categories of Biblical sleep ethics are “after retiring for the night, think/speak only of worthy matters; do not plan evil against other people; do not sleep before pressing duties have been performed” (Kaplan, “In Your Lying Down,” 50). It is interesting to note that the latter two categories are totally omitted in rabbinic sleep ethics.

<sup>3</sup> In Roman society, there was a moral component to sleep, such that “to be under the control of the need to sleep was to lack one of the standard moral virtues of rhetorical (and philosophical) theory, temperantia, self-control, in the same way as being controlled by the need for food, drink, or sex.” (Thomas Wiedemann, “The Roman Siesta,” in *Sleep*, ed. Thomas Wiedemann and Ken Dowden [Bari, Italy: Levante Editori, 2003], 131.)

tions in relationship to sleep and begin to categorize them temporally in relation to the sleep act.

#### PRECEDING ONE'S LYING DOWN TO SLEEP

Before one goes to sleep, the rabbis saw to it that a Jew take care of his<sup>4</sup> evening prayers. The *tannaim* required that one pray in the synagogue before returning home in the evening lest he procrastinate by eating dinner and sleep end up overtaking him (*Berakhot* 4b). One *tanna*, Abba Binyamin, took care to pray before heading to bed, perhaps even praying physically before his bed (*Berakhot* 5b).<sup>5</sup> In a related liturgical vein, the recitation of the *Shema* upon one's bed warranted a significant amount of Talmudic attention. The liturgical prescription was to recite the first paragraph of the *Shema* along with a blessing asking God for sleep when one entered into one's bed for that purpose (*Berakhot* 60b)<sup>6</sup>:

Blessed is He who causes the bands of sleep to fall upon my eyes and slumber on my eyelids, and gives light to the pupil of the eye. May it be Your will, O Lord, my God, to make me lie down in peace, and set my portion in Your Torah and accustom me to the performance of commandments, but do not accustom me to transgression; and bring me not into sin, or into iniquity, or into temptation, or into contempt. And may the good inclination have sway over me and let not the evil inclination have sway over me. And deliver me from evil hap and sore diseases, and let not evil dreams and evil thoughts disturb me, and may my bed be complete before You, and enlighten my

<sup>4</sup> My use of the masculine gender is deliberate, as the rabbis often saw the male as the norm.

<sup>5</sup> The ensuing Talmudic discussion brings later sources that contradict the possibility of praying physically before one's bed that might not have been problematic for Abba Binyamin. More difficult is the *beraita* (*Ber.* 6b) in which Abba Binyamin himself says that one should pray in a synagogue ("A man's prayer is heard only in the synagogue"), so it may be that he did not actually pray physically *before* his bed but rather *close* in timing to his going to bed. The possibility still exists that he would have prayed physically before his bed.

Although Rashi reads Abba Binyamin's statement as referring to the morning (s.v. *samukh lemitati*), he has to radically change the wording of the statement in order to fit his understanding. It seems to me that the reason Rashi came up with this reading is that he would have found it hard to believe that one would not have prayed before going to bed, denying the very real possibility that Abba Binyamin lived in a time when Jews were not careful to pray the evening service. (See *Berakhot* 27b for the tannaitic disagreement between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabban Gamliel over the optional or obligatory status of the evening prayer service.)

eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death. Blessed are You, oh Lord, who gives light to the whole world in Your glory.

The language used indicates a concern of falling asleep prior to reciting them. In fact, this was something with which the *amoraim* dealt.

Rav said that if one were to fall asleep while reciting the *Shema* after he had said the first line he has fulfilled his obligation (*Berakhot* 13b).<sup>7</sup> The early fourth-century sages Rabbah and Rav Nahman used to be careful about staying awake for the first verse, but not after that (*Berakhot* 13b), which follows both R. Yehudah ha-Nasi's practice (*Berakhot* 13b) and Rav's regarding the distinction between the first verse and the rest of the *Shema*.

The need to recite the *Shema* on one's bed, even though one had already recited it in the synagogue during one's evening prayers, was derived from the verse "Tremble and sin not; speak unto your hearts on your beds, and be utterly silent, *selah*" (Ps. 4:5).<sup>8</sup> R. Yehoshua ben Levi said that it was a commandment to recite it on one's bed (*Berakhot* 4b)—a very explicit instruction to do so—while R. Ze'era said that he had seen R. Shmuel ben Nahmani repeat *Shema* over and over again until he fell asleep (*Yerushalmi Berakhot* 1:1). The latter's practice diverged from that of R. Yehoshua ben Levi, who used to recite Psalms after reciting the *Shema* before falling asleep (*ibid.*).

The need to repeat *Shema* again was rejected by Rav Nahman if one was a scholar (*Berakhot* 4b-5a), since he is accustomed to learning.<sup>9</sup> However, in the following generation, Abbaye added that even a scholar should still recite a verse of mercy, even though he is not required to recite the *Shema* (*Berakhot* 5a). His contemporary Rava<sup>10</sup> might have commanded his children to not lie down to sleep without having read the *Shema* (*Pesahim* 112b), which might have been

<sup>6</sup> While MSS Oxford 366 and Paris 671 offer a slightly different reading, these variants do not affect our argument. While MS Paris has various lacunae, the Oxford version is as follows:

Blessed is the One who causes the bonds of sleep to fall over my eyes, the One who guards me like the pupil of the eye. May it be Your will that you should give me my portion in Your Torah and accustom me to the performance of commandments, and not to accustom me to transgression, and do not bring me to sin, nor to temptation, nor to disgrace; nor shall the evil inclination rule over me. And may you stand me up towards peace. Blessed is the lightgiver of the world.

<sup>7</sup> *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 2:1 contains a parallel discussion between R. Eleazar and R. Yohanan, the former declaring that one has fulfilled his obligation and the latter averring that he had not.

<sup>8</sup> See the statement of Rabbi Asi or Rav Yosef in describing Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's practice (*Berakhot* 4b) and the statement of Rabbi Aha and Rabbi Tahlifta, his son-in-law, in the name of Rabbi Shmuel ben Nahman (*Yerushalmi Berakhot* 1:1).

<sup>9</sup> Rashi, *ad. loc.*, s.v. *ve-im talmid bakham hu*.

<sup>10</sup> Freedman suggests reading Rava here instead of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi. (H. Freedman, *Pesahim*, The Babylonian Talmud Seder Mo'ed vol. 2 'Erubin and Pesahim, gen. ed. I. Epstein [London: The Soncino Press, 1938], p. 577, n. 8.)

that even though they were not obligated to recite it due to their status as scholars, it was still meritorious to do so.

Regarding positioning oneself during the recitation of the *Shema*, Rav Yosef stated that one should not lie on one's back when reciting it (*Berakhot* 13b; *Niddah* 14a). Rashi suggests that one is supposed to be accepting upon one's self the yoke of the kingship of Heaven and that lying on one's back is not a position that would indicate such an action.<sup>11</sup> The earlier sage R. Yohanan, who was noted to be rather obese, used to incline while reciting the *Shema* (*ibid.*), since he used to sleep on his back and it would have been too much trouble for him to get up just to read the *Shema*.

#### SLEEPING LOCATION AND POSITIONS

Another subject of sleep that the rabbis dealt with was where not to sleep. The *tannaim* proscribed sleeping in the shadow of a single palm-tree in a courtyard (*Pesahim* 111a), sleeping in the shadow of the moon (*ibid.*),<sup>12</sup> sleeping in a synagogue<sup>13</sup> (*Tosefta Megilah* 2:18; *Yerushalmi Megilah* 3:3), and sleeping on the floor, among other activities (*Gittin* 70a). Ben Azzai said not to sleep on the ground (*Berakhot* 62b),<sup>14</sup> and not to sleep in a cemetery<sup>15</sup> (*Tosefta Terumot*

<sup>11</sup> *Berakhot* 13b, s.v. *ki matzeli shapir dami*. While a clever possibility, it does not, however, seem likely that the prohibition is related to a concern of the person being "too noisy because he snores loudly on his back and the noise interferes with the sacred prayer" (Sonia Ancoli-Israel, "'Sleep Is Not Tangible' or What the Hebrew Tradition Has to Say About Sleep," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 63, no. 5 [September-October 2001], 785).

<sup>12</sup> The prohibition of these two might be due to the potential of demons injuring him (*Rashi*, *Pesahim* 111a, s.v. *dekel yehidi* and s.v. *be-batzer*), though it could also be due to people coming along, not seeing this person, and knocking into him. Whatever the reasoning for these, R. Yitzhak suggests that the verse from which we learn these proscriptions is Ps. 23:4.

<sup>13</sup> While the *Tosefta* proscribes sleeping in the synagogue, R. Yehoshua ben Levi minimized this proscription by adding that "synagogues and schoolhouses belong to sages and their disciples" (*Yerushalmi Megilah* 3:3). Furthermore, R. Hiyya ben Yose would receive guests and lodge them in the synagogue (*ibid.*). Similarly, in Babylonia, they would lodge guests in the synagogue (*Pesahim* 101a) and Rav Ashi used to sleep in the synagogue in Mata Mahasia (*Bava Batra* 3b). R. Yehoshua ben Levi's position seems to mitigate against the need for the solution (to the problem of the contradiction between T. Megilah 2:18 and texts discussing rabbis and guests sleeping in the synagogue) offered by Tosafot (*Bava Batra* 3b, s.v. *va'ayleh lefuryah lehatam*) that the latter sources are referring to a chamber close to, or connected with, the synagogue.

<sup>14</sup> While Ben Azzai might have proscribed this location due to fear of serpents (Maurice Simon, trans., *Berakoth*, The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Zerai'm, gen. ed., I. Epstein [London: The Soncino Press, 1948], p. 391, n. 4), it is also possible that it was out of concern for one's health, or perhaps comfort. As to the possibility that this is about one's

1:3). Shmuel pointed out that sleeping out in the sun was recognized to be harmful, except on a day of bleeding or on the summer solstice (*Shabbat* 129a).

Among later authorities, R. Levi discouraged (although technically permitted) sleeping alone in a house, as it is a time of risk (*Yerushalmi Shabbat* 2:6). R. Hanin, his contemporary, said that it was specifically prohibited for a man<sup>16</sup> to sleep alone in a house at night (*Shabbat* 151b), due to R. Yohanan's statement that if one were to sleep alone, Lilit<sup>17</sup> would seize him (*ibid.*).<sup>18</sup>

The only directions given regarding how to place one's bed are to position it north and south. Abba Binyamin stated that it was something that he particular-

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health, there could be a relation here to sleeping on the ground being one of the eight things that causes a diminution of seed, recorded on *Gittin* 70a (see also *Mitzpeh Eitan*, *Berakhot* 62b, s.v. *hutz min hakarka*). Another possibility, suggested by *Ya'abetz*, is that this is due to the cold [of the ground] (*Berakhot* 62b, s.v. *hutz min hakarka*).

A difficulty could be raised against this proscription from the teaching that one should learn Torah even if it impoverishes him so much so that he should sleep on the ground (*Avot* 6:6). (See also *Nedarim* 49a where R. Akiva is said to have slept on straw along with his wife at the outset of their marriage due to their poverty). The resolution offered by Rashi (*Avot* 6:4, s.v. *Pat be-melah tokhal*) is that this admonition is directed only towards those who can actually afford not to sleep on the ground. Even if one were truly poor enough to not be subject to the proscription, one might still choose to avoid it by wearing some sort of garment. (*Ya'abetz*, *ibid.*)

<sup>15</sup> The context of this position is not clearly proscriptive, but rather describing the signs of a deranged person, so it is possible, although unlikely, that sleeping in a cemetery was actually permissible.

<sup>16</sup> The specific gendering of this statement is not accidental. While from the local context, it would seem obvious that it would be men who should not sleep alone, otherwise Lilit would seize them, other statements in the Talmud with the phrase "it is forbidden to sleep. . ." (e.g., Rav's in *Sukah* 26b, Jerusalem's holy congregation as reported in *Yoma* 69a, *Betzah* 14b, *Tamid* 27b, and the statement in *Yerushalmi Sukah* 1:11) may not have made a gender distinction.

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, this is the only sexual mention of Lilit in the Talmud. However, there are a limited number of references to her, in both a *beraita* and a statement of Shmuel's attesting to her having wings (*Niddah* 24b), a *beraita* attesting to her having long hair (*Eruvin* 100b), and Rabbah bar bar Hanah attesting to her having a son (*Bava Batra* 73a-b).

<sup>18</sup> While in both the Vilna and Soncino printed versions, it is R. Hanina who makes these two statements as just one combined statement, all of the manuscripts split them up. While the printed versions both have R. Hanina speaking, the manuscripts (see MSS Oxford 23 (366), Vatican 106, and Munich 96 in addition to *Dikdukei Sofirim*, *Shabbat*, vol. 2, p. 367, note 90) have either R. Yohanan or R. Hanin (albeit in different combinations). It would seem that the manuscripts are more correct in this matter due to the unlikelihood that the same person who would say that an incident of ill portent would befall someone and then to prohibit it because of that effect. It seems more likely that first someone (in this case, the second generation amora, R. Yohanan) would state the effect, and then someone would come along and prohibit it (in this case, the third generation amora, R. Hanin).

ly troubled to do every day (*Berakhot* 5b). Similar encouragement is offered by R. Hama ben R. Hanina in the name of R. Yitzhak, who claimed that one will have male children if one positions one's bed that way, deriving it from Psalms 17:14 (*ibid.*).

As to one's body position<sup>19</sup> while sleeping, the third-century sages R. Yehoshua ben Levi and R. Yohanan viewed sleeping on one's back differently. The former would reprove whomever would do such a thing (*Berakhot* 13b; *Niddah* 14a),<sup>20</sup> presumably due to a concern for physical arousal leading to nocturnal emissions.<sup>21</sup> However, the latter used to sleep in this fashion, which is explained as an exception due to his obesity (*ibid.*). Despite R. Yehoshua ben Levi's concern, the later sage Rav Yosef made a statement (in formal halakhic language) implying that it was perfectly allowable for people to lie on their backs. An anonymous editorial comment proffers as a resolution the recommendation to lie on one's side (*ibid.*), even though it may not be necessary.

Finally, the few soporifics offered in Talmud are late editorial additions. The Babylonian Talmud suggest putting one's hand to one's forehead will help one to sleep (*Pesahim* 112a), which may "lift the ribs to make it easier to breathe, or it may be an attempt to raise peripheral body temperature."<sup>22</sup> The *Yerushalmi* seems to imply that putting on tefillin may also help one to get to sleep, though it forbids such an action (*Shabbat* 6:3).<sup>23</sup> The sages also recognized the soporific effect of a constant, steady, soft sound (*Eruvin* 104a). Wearing a fox's tooth might also help (*Shabbat* 67a).

#### APPROPRIATE TIME FOR AND AMOUNT OF SLEEP

Since night was seen as a time for sleeping,<sup>24</sup> it was important that it be used appropriately. Sleep was not something that was permitted to be sworn away for

<sup>19</sup> One source also addresses garments at the time of sleep—Shmuel said that wearing one's shoes to beds was to experience a taste of death (*Yoma* 78b). His father also forbade his daughters from sleeping together, seemingly implying one should not allow one's daughters to sleep together (*Shabbat* 65a), presumably because they would then familiarize themselves with the others' bodies (*ibid.*).

<sup>20</sup> Why R. Yohanan yelled at people who slept on their backs instead of formally making an a halakhic statement to the same effect is unclear, though it is possible that it was merely his view on the matter and not intended to become a formal prohibition.

<sup>21</sup> Rashi, *Niddah* 14a, s.v. *Afarkid*.

<sup>22</sup> Ancoli-Israel, "Sleep Is Not Tangible," 782.

<sup>23</sup> See also the statement of R. Ze'era quoting R. Abba ben Jeremiah, that one is not to sleep (*sheinat keva*—as opposed to nap) in tefillin (*Yerushalmi Berakhot* 2:2).

<sup>24</sup> Not only was it the time of sleeping (cf. *Berakhot* 1:3, position of the School of Hillel), but it was perhaps the primary time for sleeping — see the statement of Rav Yehudah that night was created only for sleep (*Eruvin* 65a).

a few days,<sup>25</sup> due to its unhealthiness.<sup>26</sup> Rav Nahman ben Yitzhak was concerned about the lack of mental clarity involved in the study of Torah due to the lack of sleep (*Eruvin* 65a), suggesting that one needs a good night of sleep for Torah study. An even more stringent teaching is that of R. Hananiah ben Hakinai, that one who stays up in the night and wastes his time is worthy of the death penalty (*Avot* 3:4). This is directed against wasting time that could be used for Torah,<sup>27</sup> or perhaps taking away from one's wakefulness, which (*a la* Rav Nahman ben Yitzhak) takes away from one's Torah study. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*,<sup>28</sup> however, suggests that if one is staying up discussing Torah, it is a good omen for him, while if he is discussing other matters, it is a bad omen for him (ARN 29).

The need for an ample and sufficient amount of sleep was surely important, but so, too, importance was placed on not sleeping too much.<sup>29</sup> Although we already find in Proverbs (20:13, 23:21, 24:33-34) warnings against sleeping too much,<sup>30</sup> the rabbis chose not to address these verses themselves in any of their statements regarding sleep. The rabbis saw sleep as beneficial in small amounts but actually *harmful* in large quantities (*Gittin* 70a; ARN 27:5), and by this, they surely also meant to prohibit sleeping excessively. Sleeping throughout the morning was proscribed by R. Dosa ben Harkinas (*Avot* 3:11), although it is

<sup>25</sup> See R. Yohanan (*Sukah* 53a) and *beraita* on *Yerushalmi Sukah* 5:2.

<sup>26</sup> The medicinal and curative effects of sleep were also noted by the rabbis. A *beraita* (*Berakhot* 57b) and R. Abbahu (*Gen. Rabbah* 20:10) state that sleep is helpful when sick, and the rabbinic consensus was to encourage sick people to sleep. They were so serious about this that they even exempted one who extinguished a candle on Shabbat for this purpose from punishment (*Shabbat* 2:5).

<sup>27</sup> While *prima facie* Rabbi Hananiah's statement is apparently not relevant to Torah study, the mainly tannaitic phrase "*mithayyev be'afsho*" ("worthy of the death penalty") in the third chapter of *Avot*, also expressed by Rabbi Ya'akov (3:8) and Rabbi Dosetai ben Yannai (3:9), is used in these two other statements to relate to the loss of one's Torah study. In fact, these three appearances of this expression in relation to Torah study are unique to this chapter and are found nowhere else in rabbinic literature, and seemingly are employed to highlight the importance of these three warnings. (See *Bava Kamma* 3:10, *Tosefta Avodah Zarah* 6:17, *Pesahim* 29a, *Megilah* 7b, and *Ketuvot* 30a for some other tannaitic instances of this term. *Gittin* 52b is one of the few usages of the term by an *amora*.)

<sup>28</sup> Schechter, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, Recension A, 87.

<sup>29</sup> Joshua Schwartz, "*Tarbut Homrit ve-Sifrut Hazal be-Eretz Yisrael beshelhi ha-et ha-atikah: Mitot, kle ha-mitah u-minhagei Shenah*" ("Material Culture and Rabbinic Literature in the Land of Israel in Late Antiquity: Beds, Bedclothes, and Sleeping Habits"), in *Retzef u-Temurah: Yehudim ve-Yahadut b'erez Yisrael haBizantit-Notzrit* (Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine), ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem and New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 2004), 208.

<sup>30</sup> For more on this subject, see my "In Your Lying Down and In Your Rising Up," 49. Cf. Charles David Isbell, "Sleep From The Eyes, Slumber From The Eyelids," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34:1 (January-March 2006), 41.

unclear how much of the morning he thought problematic.<sup>31</sup> *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* reframes R. Dosa ben Harkinas' statement in a religious context<sup>32</sup> (ARN 21<sup>33</sup>) by connecting his statement with that of R. Yehoshua that the latest time for reciting the *Shema* in order to fulfill the commandment is the third hour of the day, as it is "the way of kings to rise at the third hour of the day" (*Berakhot* 1:2).<sup>34</sup>

A further extension of the trade-off between learning Torah and sleeping is expressed when it was said that a minimum of sleep is one of the 48 things which enable one to acquire Torah (*Avot* 6:6). While diminishing one's sleep frees up more time to study Torah, it is hard to imagine that this was made into an extreme of sleeping tremendously little, as there were concerns (mentioned above, see statement of Rav Nahman ben Yitzhak) about mental clarity while studying Torah.

#### ARISING FROM SLEEP

Shmuel<sup>35</sup> praised remaining sleeping while the first rays of light came up over the horizon as beneficial to one's health (*Berakhot* 62b),<sup>36</sup> due to it being too

<sup>31</sup> Since the four actions within his statement are describing things which are damaging to an individual's social experience (or that "they operate against the good character of man," R. Berel Wein, Feb. 2004, Yeshivat Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, Israel), it would seem to indicate that he intended the *whole* morning. Additionally, it is also possible that he recognized the importance of waking up about the same time each day in order to keep one's circadian rhythm on the same schedule. (Ancoli-Israel, "Sleep Is Not Tangible," 783).

<sup>32</sup> *Avot deRabbi Natan* actually sees all four actions within Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas' statement within a religious framework, by casting each action as neglecting of Torah study and using scriptural proofs for each one.

<sup>33</sup> In recension A. However, in recension B (chapter 34), no explanation is given, rather it says that these four things tear man from this world and from the world to come (Solomon Schechter, *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan: Solomon Schechter Edition* (Vienna, 1897—reprint: New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1997), 73).

<sup>34</sup> R. Yehoshua's language, however, is that such people only lose out on reading out the *Shema* at its appropriate time, but nevertheless do nothing wrong by such actions. While this understanding of his statement may be correct, *Avot deRabbi Natan*, by tying these two different mishnaic statements together, tries to suggest one should not plan to sleep past the third hour of the day, thereby missing the commandment of reciting the *Shema* in its time.

<sup>35</sup> While Shmuel is mentioned as having said this in the printed editions, his name is missing in MSS Paris 671 and Oxford 366.

<sup>36</sup> See also Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *keastema lefarzela*. A note of caution may be urged here, as he seems to be speaking solely on the topic of relieving oneself (could Rashi have had a manuscript similar to MS Paris 671 that omits the portion of this statement?), though, nevertheless, the same could be said about sleep.

early in the day to rise and thus being “health-giving and invigorating.”<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, it is merely a suggestion, as opposed to a rule. Another health concern when rising was not to do so in such a swift manner, as that would give one light-headedness (*Gittin* 70a).

Waking up from sleep is significant as the starting point of one’s day, and hence warranted a blessing.<sup>38</sup> While the two Talmuds offer different blessings for what one should say upon arising (*Berakhot* 60b; *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 4:2), both of them see the act of waking up as something for which to thank God due to having replaced their souls to their “dead” bodies.<sup>39</sup> This view may be similar, if not identical, to R. Meir’s statement that “the soul fills the body, and when man sleeps it ascends and draws life for him from above” (*Gen. Rabbah* 14:9). The Babylonian Talmud goes on to list a blessing thanking God for removing the bands of sleep from one’s eyes as well as slumber (*Berakhot* 60b).<sup>40</sup>

#### DIURNAL SLEEP—NAPPING

While it seems that napping was widespread in the Mediterranean world,<sup>41</sup> the rabbis seldom speak about napping (*sheinat arai*).<sup>42</sup> When it does come up, it is usually not the focus of the discussion, but rather related to another activity under discussion. While there are instances where the rabbis proscribed napping, such as while wearing *tefillin*, outside of the *sukah*, or while in the study hall, they did not map out any special rituals regarding napping.<sup>43</sup> They did define the length of temporary sleep as enough time to walk one hundred cubits

<sup>37</sup> Abraham Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1949; New York: Schocken, 1995), 246.

<sup>38</sup> Although Rashi reads *Shabbat* 108b-109a as requiring washing upon arising, it seems that the hand-washing in this section is connected to the washing in the evening, as both Shmuel and R. Yehudah say. Thus, when one finds on *Berakhot* 60b that one already has said fourteen blessings before washing one’s hands (according to the printed Vilna edition), the *sugya* from *Shabbat* does not present a problem.

<sup>39</sup> There may be a connection here to the tannaitic notion of sleep being an insignificant portion of death (one-sixtieth) (*Berakhot* 57b).

<sup>40</sup> This text is according to the Vilna printed edition. For more on this prayer and variant versions, see Yitzhak Satz, “‘*Yehi Ratzon*’ *Ahar Hama’avir Shenah Shel Tefilat Shaharit*,” *Yeshurun* 3 (1997), 546-557, esp. 547, 551-554.

<sup>41</sup> Wiedemann, “The Roman Siesta,” 125.

<sup>42</sup> The term appears eight times in tannaitic sources (*Berakhot* 23b, *Sukah* 26a three times, *Sukah* 26b twice, twice more in *Sukah* 28a, and once in *Sukah* 41b) and twice in amoraic sources (*Megilah* 28a and *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 2:3).

<sup>43</sup> Unless the prayer said upon waking was meant for whenever one awoke, rather than just the morning; however, this does not seem to be the case.

(*Sukah* 26a-b). Rav declared that it was forbidden for a person<sup>44</sup> to sleep during the day a longer sleep than that of a horse (*Sukah* 26b). It might seem that the reason for his prohibition on diurnal sleeping was, as Rashi suggested, that it was because of a neglect of time used for studying Torah (ad. loc., s.v. *lishon bayom*). However, it could be that diurnal sleep's conflict with one's productivity<sup>45</sup> would render it problematic.<sup>46</sup>

The centrality of Torah study for the sages<sup>47</sup> naturally led to viewing the interruption of sleep as an unfortunate distraction. Nevertheless, there were but a few rare sages who were able to stave off slumber in the study hall and these exceptional actions were viewed as particularly meritorious on their accounts. Two *tannaim* in this category were Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, and his disciple R. Eliezer (*Sukah* 28a); two such *amoraim* were Rav Adda ben Ahavah (*Ta'anit* 20b), and R. Ze'era (*Megilah* 28a). The latter articulated a reason, saying that one who sleeps in the study hall, his knowledge will be reduced to tatters, deriving this idea from Proverbs 23:21 (*Sanhedrin* 71a), a harsher perspective than it simply impeding one's amassing of Torah knowledge.

<sup>44</sup> Rav's statement *prima facie* seems to be speaking specifically regarding men to the exclusion of women similar to R. Hanin's statement that it is forbidden for a man to sleep alone in a house at night (*Shabbat* 151b) (see above). However is unclear why there should be a gender distinction that only men should not sleep during the day. One possibility is that Rav's statement was really "It is forbidden to sleep . . ." and not "It is forbidden for a *man* to sleep. . ." as it is in MS BHMLR 1606 (ENA 850) and is meant to apply universally. However, as most of the manuscripts and both printed versions distinguish that Rav meant his prohibition for men, a couple of initial possibilities emerge. One is that men worked more than women and that it would seem lazily unproductive for a man to sleep that long, which seems possible from Rav Yosef quoting Proverbs 6:9 ("Until when will the lazy person sleep? When will you arise from your sleep?") regarding Abaye's sleeping on a journey. The other possibility is according to Rashi's suggestion (*Sukah* 26b, s.v. *lishon bayom*) that Rav made his statement due to neglect of learning Torah, it would seem that since women are not obligated in learning Torah, they were not included in Rav's statement.

<sup>45</sup> The comparison to horses supports this idea. They are the most alert of domesticated animals—horses spend about 88% of a 24-hour period awake. (Katherine Carson and D.G.M. Wood-Gush, "Equine Behaviour II: A Review of the Literature on Feeding, Eliminative and Resting Behaviour," *Applied Animal Ethology* 10 [1983], 186.) An alternative to this possibility was suggested to me by Professor Yaakov Elman, that the horse was held in high esteem in Persian culture, pointing out to me, for instance, King Shapur's response to Shmuel as to the animal upon which the redeemer will come (*Sanhedrin* 98a).

<sup>46</sup> An additional reason could be that were one to nap long enough, it would disrupt one's ability to sleep at night (Ancoli-Israel, "Sleep Is Not Tangible," 784).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Michael L. Satlow, "'And on the Earth You Shall Sleep': *Talmud Torah* and Rabbinic Asceticism," *The Journal of Religion* 83, no. 2 (April 2003), 204-225, esp. 218-221 for the sense of discipline involved in the endeavor of Torah study.

## CONCLUSION

In creating a sleep ethic,<sup>48</sup> the rabbis were primarily concerned with taking care of one's evening prayer before bed, recitation of the *Shema* and its parameters, where not to sleep, how not to sleep, soporific advice, getting enough sleep, setting boundaries for sleeping too much or too late, what to do upon waking, and to not sleep in the study hall. However, aside for the evening recital of *Shema*, sleep did not take up much of their attention in their halakhic system, as it was more likely seen as a very normal, quotidian activity, and one that did not require much action regarding it. Nevertheless, they were sure to mark this daily activity with cautions and guidelines. While I have made an attempt to chart out how the rabbis directed conduct regarding sleep, I do not believe that this is the final foray into this field.<sup>49</sup> Further study is required to further clarify the intellectual history of sleep and sleep ethics in the eyes of the rabbis of the Talmud.

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<sup>48</sup> Inasmuch as there are varying sleep ethics among the sages, I contend that they were attempting to achieve uniformity.

<sup>49</sup> Some questions that remain: Why did some prolific sages (such as Rava) make almost no statements regarding sleep? Why did sages from *Eretz Yisrael* focus to a much greater extent on the location of sleep? Why do the only formal proscriptive statements about sleep derive from sages from *Eretz Yisrael*?

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## DEFENDING *DERASH*: THE GUR ARYEH'S APPROACH TO HERMENEUTICS

David Kasher

It has become common in some Modern Orthodox circles for a reference to Rashi's commentary on the Torah to be rejected as "simply *derash*." Rashi has long been considered in Jewish tradition to be the greatest of the Torah commentators, essential to any serious student's understanding of the text, so it is surprising to find that Rashi has become a symbol for "naive misunderstanding." If anything, Rashi is introduced in *parshanut* discussions in these circles primarily as a foil, (as in, "Rashi states the following . . . but *that's not peshat!*") to be dismissed before proceeding to a "true" understanding of the verse.

What has caused Rashi to fall from favor? One possible answer is that we are seeing a reaction to the "Artscroll Revolution." With the rise in popularity of this publishing house, which specialized in English translations of classic Hebrew texts, came an increasing standardization of interpretation in English-speaking Jewish communities; and the interpretation that was always followed by Artscroll was Rashi's. Many felt frustrated with this approach, arguing that with this proclivity towards Rashi, the straightforward reading of the text was not only being ignored, but deliberately avoided. Increasingly, frustration grew into antagonism, as it became clear that Artscroll's choice was guided not only by textual considerations, but also ideological ones. Wary of both criticism of the Rabbinic tradition and of the sometimes overtly sexual or morally problematic nature of the Biblical narrative, Rashi's constant reference to Chazal and the reverential tone of his classical German piety was perfect for their agenda.

The paradigmatic example is the Artscroll translation of the Song of Songs, in which the intensely passionate and sometimes erotic interchange between two lovers is transcribed entirely into Rashi's exegetical explanation, in which the literal meaning is only an allegory for the love between God and Israel. Indeed, Artscroll was entirely upfront about its motives in translation:

As the entire gamut of Talmudic and Rabbinic literature relating to *Shir ha-Shirim* makes clear, this highly emotional, seemingly sensuous song is an allegory. As such, a literal translation would be mislead-

ing—even false—because it would not convey the meaning intended by King Solomon, the composer.<sup>1</sup>

This approach, however, has infuriated many, who criticize the paternalistic underlying assumption that the unsophisticated reader will be naively led astray by the words themselves, and so require a “filter” of sorts—in other words, a censor. It is only natural, then, that such an extreme approach should have produced an equally extreme reaction, and that where Rashi found an unusually privileged status in one community, he might be kept at a distance in another.

Nevertheless, the distaste for Rashi runs deeper than a circumstantial reactionary position. In fact, it reflects a much broader theory of interpretation. For in these same circles, rolled eyes are not simply reserved for Rashi; rather, anything that would fit under the rubric of “*derash*,” or homiletic interpretation, is often rejected. Anything that might be called “*derash*-like:” Rashi, the entire corpus of Midrash—not to mention Chassidic commentary—is regarded in these circles as “homiletical” at best. This is something of a revolution in itself, for Midrash is considered the classical Jewish form of interpretation, the very definition of Jewish hermeneutics. Instead, this camp celebrates the standard of “*peshuto shel mikra*,” the simple meaning of the text.<sup>2</sup>

Ironically, the popular resonance of this phrase comes from Rashi himself. In his famous comment to Genesis 3:8, he makes reference to the multiplicity of Midrashic interpretations possible, but says that:

“I have only come to give the simple meaning of the text.”

Yet his understanding of “*peshuto shel mikra*” does not match the contemporary usage, for anyone scantily familiar with Rashi is aware of his heavy reliance on Midrashic exegesis. Indeed, in the very claim to “*peshuto shel mikra*,” he goes on to say:

“. . . and the *agadah* (legends) which settle the words of the text, with each word expressing its character and meaning.”

Clearly, Rashi’s notion of “*peshat*” does not exclude homiletics. Moreover, he makes it clear that “simple meaning” is a reference to the easiest fit (settling) of the text into its larger context within the entire canon (presumably of the Oral Torah as well). In other words, “*peshat*” derives its significance from the closed system of the body of work within which it operates, and must be interpreted within that context.

This is not the way the phrase “*peshuto shel mikra*” is commonly used today.

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Artscroll Siddur: A New Translation and Anthologized Commentary*, ed. Rabbi Nosson Scherman and Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah, 1999 [2nd ed., orig. 1984]), 298.

<sup>2</sup> By so doing, this camp is attempting to recapture the approach championed by the medieval commentators Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and R. Yosef Kara.

Instead, “*peshat*” is a reference to literalism, i.e. to the question of what one would first think of when reading the verse. Knowing nothing else but the language, what would this sentence mean? Indeed “Literalism” is a good term for this methodology, which prizes the literal meaning of the text above all. The resistance to Rashi—and to Midrash in general—is based on the presumption that not only is the most literal read the “truest,” but more, that the text only has one level of meaning, one intent. The only question we ought to be asking when we read a verse is “What did the author of this verse intend when it was written?” Any attempt to expound upon that intent, or to suggest multiple layers of meaning, is considered by the Literalist as obfuscation, and is either appreciated solely for its entertainment or sentimental value or rejected out of hand.

To be fair, the Literalists have more than ideological preference motivating them. Indeed, most would probably say that their own sense of intellectual integrity is at stake in the debate over methods of interpretation. The promoters of *derash*, the Literalists would argue, are actually promoting a fundamentalist religious platform, in which all statements of the Rabbis, no matter how fantastic, are to be taken at face value, without critical inquiry. The choice seems to be between taking the verses of the Bible as speaking literally or taking the homiletic exegesis literally, and if these are the only options, the Literalists steer clear of Midrash, which often pushes against the bounds of reason if taken literally. But if the “Fundamentalists” seem to be pushing a dogmatic insistence on the literal truth of all Rabbinic statements, the Literalists push back with their own brand of fundamentalism, an uncompromising notion that Biblical text has one meaning, the simplest understanding of the verse, as it reads, representing the one and only original intent of the author.

This paper will claim that these are not the only two choices available to the believing, but critically thinking, reader of Jewish sacred texts. We hope to make clear a third path, one paved (or at least, re-paved) by that great luminary of Jewish thought, R. Yehuda Loew of Prague, Maharal, in his famous supercommentary to Rashi, the *Gur Aryeh*. Again and again in this commentary, Maharal defends Rashi’s interpretation, but insists simultaneously on the truth of the aggadic statement cited *and* the mistake of reading that statement literally. Instead, he argues, Rabbinic tradition of interpretation is elucidating the deeper, spiritual truth that the text is trying to convey, that accompanies its literal meaning. This is not to say that the Rabbis were speaking only in parable and metaphor. The statements of the Rabbis, according to Maharal are absolutely true, but not in the customary sense that their language provides a one to one correspondence with physical reality. Rather, they are using the best language available to describe an ultimately ineffable spiritual reality which is nevertheless real and true—indeed “truer” in some sense (or at least more significant) than the reality we know with our physical senses. Indeed, Maharal’s operating assertion is that Rashi (and the Rabbis before him) are attempting to describe this reality because that is the project of the Torah itself.

To begin with an example which typifies Maharal's approach in the *Gur Aryeh*, we turn to his comment on Rashi on the verse in Exodus 4:20, which details Moshe's trip back to Egypt with his new wife and children:

And Moshe took his wife and children and mounted them upon the donkey.

Rashi, commenting on the unexpected appearance of the definite article in front of "donkey," brings an explanation from *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*:

The designated donkey. This is the donkey that Abraham saddled for the binding of Isaac, and the one that the King, the Messiah, will be revealed upon, as it says, "A humble one, riding on a donkey." (*Zekhariah* 9:9)

A literal read of this Rashi would force us to accept that there was an actual donkey, that was created at the beginning of time, and that lived eternally, popping up every once in a while to service the great leaders of the Jewish people. This indeed would be a difficult proposition to accept, and the Literalist would throw it out immediately. But then what would he do with the definite article? Why does the Torah speak of "the donkey," a specific one? Either one would have to come up with a different answer—perhaps this was *the* donkey that Moses owned, and the Torah speaks from his vantage point (as in, "Honey, where did we park *the* car?")—or to simply say the Torah used imprecise language, and there is no need to question such a subtle distinction. Whereas the literal read of the Rashi may offend one's sense of reason, these answers are perhaps offensive to one's aesthetic literary sensibilities. Either the Torah's choice is relatively meaningless or it is sloppy, certainly not as well-crafted a turn of phrase as we might expect from a Divine text.

*Gur Aryeh* takes a different approach. He quotes the Midrash in full, which concludes: "this is the donkey that was created during twilight (of the sixth day of Creation)," and then goes on to say that the image of riding a donkey referenced in all these cases is very specifically chosen, for a donkey represents pure physicality—both in its usage in the world, and especially because the word for donkey, *hamor*, has the same root as the word for matter, *homer*. Therefore, in all these cases, when we speak of riding on a donkey, the "riding" is emblematic of being elevated above, or having mastery over, pure physicality—i.e. existing in a spiritual realm.

This may explain the significance of the image itself, but why would the Midrash speak of riding just one donkey, instead of three instances of one act with three different donkeys? Maharal's answer is that any thing or idea which is divided exists on a low spiritual level. When we speak of something which is spiritually elevated, we speak of it with as much unity as possible, for indeed,

because of the inherent spirituality in the act, it expresses a divine ideal act, which in turn expresses the divine unity. This inherent spirituality also explains the reference to the twilight of creation, says Maharal, for it was in that “in-between” hour that things were created which are neither purely physical, nor purely spiritual, but exist somewhere in-between. Here Maharal has given us the reason for the use of this imagery, a spiritual justification which suggests that something deeply important is being conveyed to us by the Midrash, and in turn, by the Torah itself, for which allegorical language is the best means of expression.

It might be suggested that Maharal believes these spiritual truths are being expressed, but he would still have us believe in the actual physical immortality of this donkey. To this, he answers explicitly:

The explanation is not that the donkey was alive the whole time, from the time of the creation of the world until the time of Abraham and Moshe and the Messiah. Rather, that during this twilight, the force was placed in the world to bring forth this “riding” to the world.

No, claims Maharal, the existence of a supernatural donkey is not literally true, but the idea that God created a potential for great people to elevate themselves above pure physicality—that is actually and absolutely, even literally, true.

Another striking illustration of this methodology can be found in *Gur Aryeh* attached to Rashi’s commentary on Deuteronomy 4:32:

For ask about the earliest days that came before you, since God created man on the Earth, and from one end of the heavens to the other, has there ever been a thing as great as this, or has such a thing ever been heard?

Rashi comments on the use of the phrase “from one end of the heavens to the other” using an *agadah* from *Hagigah* 12a, and tells us that this phrase refers back to the one that precedes it about the creation of man:

Its ‘Midrash’ teaches about the height of Adam, which was from the Earth up to the heavens, and that is the same measurement as ‘from one end to the other.’

Again we have a statement that is difficult for reason to accept without getting flustered, the notion that the first man’s physical being was tall enough to reach up into the sky. However, Maharal, certainly a man who prized his reasoning faculties, is wholly unfazed by the idea, not even introducing his comments with words of questioning or puzzlement (as he often does). Still, he is quick to plunge into a spiritualized interpretation, along the lines of the one we saw earlier. He begins, as above, by stating plainly that the language creates an image that serves as a symbol for a more profound concept. We are told that Adam

stretches from Earth to the heavens because Man, in his being, comprises elements of the lower, physical realm, and the higher, spiritual realm. This spiritual component of Man's being, the *Gur Aryeh* continues, is reflective of his *Tzelem Elohim*, the fact that he was created in the image of God.

A thing which is godly, it then follows, must include all—the higher and the lower—as God encompasses all. Moreover, it is precisely this godly essence of Man's being which tells us how to read this image of the Midrash:

And because of the force of the divine element which is in Man [Adam]—perforce, he must be All, undivided. And since this is the essence of the form of Man, we no longer regard him by the measurement of his body. For the essential thing in Man is the divine element within him, and beside it, the body is nullified, and has no characteristic, and we only consider that which is essential in Man.

In other words, if one was to read the *agadah* literally, one not only misses the point, but actually inverts its meaning entirely! Maharal's interpretation of the midrash explanations in Rashi is not a default position, a backpedaling apologetic based on his discomfort with such fanciful imagery; rather, it is precisely because of his full confidence in deep metaphysical truths that he is fully comfortable with the allegorical language which expresses them best.

It might be claimed that the in the *Gur Aryeh*, Maharal is simply using Rashi as a springboard to expound upon his own theology, but is not trying to articulate any particular theory of hermeneutics. In another example, however, Maharal makes it clear that he is well aware of the implications of his approach and the alternatives and is intentionally taking a stand in defense of Rashi and the midrashic tradition. In Rashi's commentary on Genesis, *Parashat Vayeitzei*, in the verses that bracket Jacob's dream, Rashi picks up on a textual inconsistency. At the opening of the *parashah*, in Chapter 28, verse 11, we read:

And he encountered the place, and he stayed there, for the sun had set, and he took from the stones of the place and placed them around his head, and he lay down in the place.

Then comes the famous dream with Jacob's ladder of angels coming up and down, and God standing above. And then Jacob awakens in verse 18:

And Jacob got up in the morning and took the stone that he had placed around his head and placed it as a monument and poured oil on its head.

Oddly, the stones, plural, have suddenly become just one stone. Furthermore, how was one stone placed around his head? The Literalist might argue that the Torah here is speaking imprecisely and means to tell us, simply, that Jacob took one of the stones that he had placed around his head. This *peshat*, however, is a difficult solution because again, it forces us to conclude that either the Torah is

sloppy in its phrasing, or that its awkward choice is deliberate, but meaningless.

Rashi's solution is midrashic. He preempts the question in an earlier verse, and commenting on the phrase, "and placed them around his head," he writes:

He made them like a gutterpipe around his head, for he feared wild animals. They began to quarrel with one another. This one would say: the Tzaddik (righteous man) should rest his head on me! And that one would say: he should rest it on me! Immediately, God made them into one stone. This is why it says (later), "and [Jacob] took the stone that he had placed around his head."

This *agadah* from *Hullin* 91b certainly explains the latter verse quite nicely, but this solution has its own difficulties, more intellectual than textual. For even if we were to accept that God could and would perform the miracle of uniting these stones to resolve a minor conflict, few reasonable people could sit easily with the idea that rocks have desire and intention that they express to one another in the form childish squabbling over the wishes of a simple piety. It is not difficult to see how the Literalist would be uncomfortable with such an answer. No "philosophically-minded" person would be inclined to see this story as literally true.

Maharal, no doubt a great philosophical mind himself, is well aware of this inclination, yet he cautions against pushing off this midrash too hastily:

And if you will ask, 'What quarrel was there for stones, who have no consciousness?!' This is what people ask. And these people do not know the intention of the Sages.

He goes on to give a lengthy interpretation of this intention, the fundamentals of which are premised on the assertion that Ya'akov is the embodiment of Oneness, as the representative of God's Oneness. Therefore, it follows in Maharal's metaphysics that his being will repel all division and draw things into unity. The argument of the stones is a representation of their physical disunity, for conflict is the conceptual version of division. As Ya'akov comes close to these multiple rocks, his own overwhelming presence so commands unity that it evokes divine assistance in bringing unity to the division around him.

This model may provide meaning to the imagery, but it does not yet resolve the nagging discomfort to our rational instincts. Whether or not we discover a deep conceptual framework, we are still left with the basic problem if we are to take this midrash literally. Stones, the very paradigm of inanimate objects, do not have consciousness, let alone powers of articulation in the world as we know it! Indeed, Maharal himself confirms this principle absolutely, and even takes it a step further. Things in the natural world, he says, function according to their nature, even those things without consciousness. Therefore, Maharal rejects not only the idea that the stones were actually speaking, but also the possibility of God literally joining the physical stones into one. However, he declares, this

event did not take place in nature! Yet he is not telling us that this is simply a metaphor, for he goes on to say that in fact, all the events of this night took place *above* the natural order, in the realm of the supernatural, which for Maharal is a very real, true level of existence.

It is at this point, after a thorough explanation of his own interpretation, that he reveals his awareness of the alternative approach:

There are commentators who interpret “from the stones of the place” as “from one of the stones of the place.” And these men bring forth a Torah of *hefker* (worthlessness), explaining it according to their will, because even a simpleton does not speak with words like these. For since he only took one stone—it would only have had to write “and he took a stone.”

This, says Maharal, clear to any thinking person. Why, then, would these commentators offer such an interpretation? Here he labels their method:

Only because they *radfu ahar peshat ha-katuv* (chase after the simple meaning of the verse), they make the Torah worthless.

Indeed, as Maharal closes his piece he makes it very clear that he is responding directly to such a hermeneutic, deliberately articulating a distinctly different position regarding methods of interpretation:

I was forced to write these words, to enlighten these blind-hearted men, who take words which are the hearthstove of the world and make them words of void, as if they had no substance, and words of stupidity, without taste or smell (reason or spirit), [and elevate them] to the greatest heights of world. . . . Each word in this image is a wondrous thing. And one should not think that the words that I explained above are the root and essence of the matter; they are but the beginning of understanding in the smallest way what it is possible for beginners. . . . Further, you should know that if you search after the words of the Sages as if they were secret treasures, then you will find a storehouse of precious vessels that they stored in their secret treasures. And the foolish man thinks, “these are just words of *derashah* which they only said to embellish their language!” And you, do not think thus; rather, every one of their words are the root of the Torah.

Here he makes his charge head-on, coming to defend *derash* not simply for its aesthetic or traditional value, but as the vessel in which the sages transmitted their understanding of the depth of meaning embedded in the words of Torah. Torah, through the Midrashic lens, is not only narrating a straightforward storyline or collection of laws, but also simultaneously imparting spiritual laws that map out the dimensions of a metaphysical reality just as real and relevant to us as the physical reality we live and breathe in. Here it should be strongly empha-

sized: one need not accept all of Maharal's descriptions of the contours of this dimension to appreciate the underlying premise that the text of Torah speaks simultaneously on multiple levels of meaning.

This simultaneity is perhaps the more essential point Maharal makes in the above quote. For he decries his version of our Literalists, the "*Rodfei Peshat*," rather dogmatically, but when he concedes that even his own explanation should not be taken as the "root and essence of the matter," he is telling us by implication that what he is really arguing for is not one meaning over the other, but the openness of the text to include multiple meanings at once. This presumably would include, though not be limited to, the simplest level of *peshat*. Indeed the text is certainly telling us the simple sequence of events: that Jacob took rocks, slept on them, and later picked one up to use as a monument. However, Maharal's purpose is to show that these same words are, concurrently, cluing us into the nature of Jacob's spiritual being and how this manifested in his presence as he interacted with the world around him. Indeed, the text contains other messages, infinite messages, as the handiwork of an infinite author.

In fact, this claim for multiple levels of meaning is something that Rashi himself would probably agree with. In the second citation of his we saw above, we start the quote midway through, where Rashi began to explain the "midrash," that Adam was as high as the heavens; but in fact, Rashi starts out giving another explanation to the phrase "from one end of the heavens to the other":

. . . and also ask all the creatures that are found from one end to the other. This is its *peshat*. And its *midrash* is. . . .

Here we see clearly that Rashi does not view his insertion of *midrashim* as a substitution for the simplest read of the verse, as it is often presented by the Fundamentalist camp, much to the frustration of our friends the Literalists. Instead he sees the *derash* as an accompaniment to the *peshat*, both extant in the verse at once, the one implicit and the other explicit. For Rashi believed in the same kind of Torah text that Maharal did, and indeed that Chazal did—a multivalent text that contained the potential for expressing many truths at once.<sup>3</sup>

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This question of the nature of our sacred text is really the central one in this debate. For we are not simply witnessing a difference in the way people under-

<sup>3</sup> The idea of a multivalent text is not only at the center of Rashi's work; it is the core of the literalists, such as Rashbam, and later writers including the Vilna Gaon. See further: *Bein Yebudim le-Notsrim be-farshanut ha-Mikra* by Sarah Kamin (Hebrew University, 1991); *The Approach of Classic Jewish Exegetes to Peshat and Derash and Its Implications for the Teaching of Bible Today* by Yeshayahu Maori (translated by Rabbi Dr. Moshe J. Bernstein) in *Tradition* 21:3; and *Hakhmei Zarefat ha-Rishonim* by Avraham Grossman, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1995.

stand words. What is really at stake here is the way we regard the Torah itself. Is it simply a text, like any other, to be treated like any other? Or do we approach the Torah as a wholly different kind of text? A text that sparkles with divinity because of its divine origins, and is capable, as we turn our heads this way and that, of reflecting the brilliant light of first one truth, then another, and then another, ad infinitum. As the Talmud in *Sanhedrin* 34a records:

It was taught in R. Ishmael's academy, "Are not my words like fire," said the Lord, "like the hammer shattering the rock?" Just as the hammer sends sparks flying, so does one text bring forth many interpretations.

The answer to this question will be found in one's philosophical and theological orientation. First of all, one certainly cannot accept Maharal's approach if one does not accept the notion of a spiritual reality at all. If one seeks a Judaism wholly without the supernatural, then surely the Midrash cannot reflect any concept of truth which depends on verifiability in the physical laws of nature, nor indeed can the Torah text have divine properties that place it in a textual category of its own.

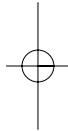
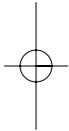
Yet even for the believing Jew, there is another philosophical question to answer—a question about the nature of truth itself. Many deeply faithful Jews are committed to the Rationalist philosophical claim of the Modern Age that absolute truth is singular and exclusive, and cannot coexist with another truth. Just as reality has one true dimension, so too, language which expresses this reality has one true meaning. Indeed, many feel comfortable in the Literalist camp precisely because they sense that this is a more modern approach, and are uncomfortable with a religion that would ask them to accept notions of reality and language that are antiquated.

Yet, one might ask if this Modernist notion of truth is itself quickly becoming antiquated. The "postmodern" approach to truth, which is gaining ascendancy in contemporary philosophy, would suggest that truth can only be understood as multidimensional and that language can never achieve a one-to-one correspondence with reality. This is not the space to explore in depth the implications of such a claim on Torah study; yet the student of Torah cannot help but notice that as the Modern worldview begins to crumble in the Academy, that it is these latest formulations of truth that have a greater correspondence with traditional statements such as the one found in another classic Torah commentary founded on *Derash, Or ha-Hayim*:

For the Torah has four paths: *Peshat* (Simple Meaning), *Remez* (Hinted Meaning), *Derash* (Homiletical Meaning), *Sod* (Hidden Meaning), and from these spread forth seventy faces, and every face into several ways, paths and trails, and this is the meaning of the verse, which says, "[In] my ways," in plural, "you should walk,"

meaning in all the ways and paths should you walk in your explanation of the verses, and one should not say that the Torah only has one *peshat*, understood to all.

Perhaps the roads of the future will eventually wind around and intersect with some of the well-trodden paths of the past.



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## MAIMONIDES' REJECTION OF ASTROLOGY

Michael Katzman

It is clear that Maimonides rejected the pseudo-science of astrology. His rejection of astrology shows intellectual courage, since astrology was a pervasive and widely accepted theory of his time, both in the Jewish and non-Jewish world. Maimonides argued that astrology was contradicted by the scientific knowledge of his time. Additionally, he maintained that a belief in astrology necessarily involved the acceptance of notions that were idolatrous and other ideas that were contrary to Judaism. Therefore, Maimonides rejected astrology for both religious and scientific reasons.

Before an understanding of Maimonides' rejection of astrology is explored, it is important to explain the basic medieval conception of the astral influences. The influences of the heavenly bodies upon the sublunar world were universally accepted by medieval thinkers. Existence, generation, and corruption were phenomena that were presumed to be dependent upon the celestial influences. Maimonides also accepted the idea that the existing order of things in the sublunar world is dependent on forces that emanate from the spheres. He quotes the Sages who say that "there is no single herb without its corresponding star above, that beats it and commands it to grow."<sup>1</sup> Since these celestial influences were universally recognized by medieval thinkers, astrologers argued that their art had a basis in natural philosophy.

Like nearly all medieval philosophers, Maimonides held that the bodies of the planets were the *efficient* causes that blended the four sublunar elements.<sup>2</sup> He based this element of his understanding of the celestial influences upon Aristotle.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle pointed to the manifest influence of the sun, and argued that the sun is

<sup>1</sup> *The Guide for the Perplexed* 2:10, trans. M. Friedlander (New York: Dover Publications M. Friedlander 1904), 164. This translation will be used for the rest of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Gad Freudenthal, "Maimonides' Stance on Astrology in Context: Cosmology, Physics, Medicine, and Providence," in *Moses Maimonides; Physician, Scientist and Philosopher*, eds. Fred Rosner, M.D., and Samuel S. Kotttek, M.D. (Northvale, NJ: Ktav, 1993), 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Guide* 2:4.

accountable for the mobility of the four sublunar elements. This movement of the four sublunar substances caused the constant growth and decay of living beings.<sup>4</sup> Aristotle had also mentioned the sublunar effects of the moon.<sup>5</sup> The medieval Aristotelians and astrologers extended this theory to the planets. All the planets were presumed to affect the sublunar elements. The *logos* (ratio of the four elements) of each sublunar substance was dependent upon the celestial bodies.<sup>6</sup>

Maimonides held that the *formal* cause informing sublunar matter was the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect was one of the separate Intelligences. The Active Intellect possesses pure form and instills form upon matter.

The Active Intellect had to possess pure form to allow it to inform matter. "For whatever passes from potentiality into actuality, requires for that transition an external agent of the same kind as itself."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in order for matter to pass from potentiality to an entity with form, it had to be informed by an external agent that possesses pure form. The external agent that informs sublunar matter is the Active Intellect.

Maimonides shared this conception of matter with his contemporaries. It is an extension of Aristotle's theory of matter. Aristotle's matter is passive in that it does not automatically become a form based on its *logos* (ratio of elements). Thus, the Peripatetics explained that the sublunar substances are given a form by an external agent. This agent that informs matter is the active intellect and is called by Avicenna, the "Giver of Forms."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the form is a result of the interplay of the efficient and formal causes. The efficient causes produce in matter a mixture characterized by a specific *logos* (ratio) of the elements. Thereafter, the *formal* cause "Giver of Forms" "imprints upon the *mixtum* a form *suitable to its material composition*."<sup>9</sup> The sum total of the efficient and formal causes was conceived to be that of God's general providence.<sup>10</sup>

Maimonides also identifies the sum total of the celestial influences, the efficient and formal causes, to be that of God's general providence. Maimonides in *Guide* 2:11 writes:

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *De gen anim.* IV. 10, F. Solmsen, Aristotle's System of the Physical World (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1960), 377-379 as cited by Gad Freudenthal, *Maimonides' Stance on Astrology in Context: Cosmology, Physics, Medicine, and Providence*, 78 and *Guide* 3:17.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle *De gen. anim.* IV. 10, 777b26ff as cited by Gad Freudenthal, *Maimonides' Stance on Astrology in Context: Cosmology, Physics, Medicine, and Providence*, 78.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Guide* 2:4.

<sup>8</sup> H. A. Davidson, "Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," *Viator* 3(1972): 109-178 as *Guide* 2:1 as cited by Freudenthal, "Maimonides' Stance on Astrology in Context," 79.

<sup>9</sup> Freudenthal, "Maimonides' Stance on Astrology in Context," 79.

<sup>10</sup> See *Guide* 3:17 where Maimonides explains the ultimate source of everything and providences has its ultimate origin in the most perfect intellect which is the intellect of God.

The ruling power emanates from the Creator, and is received by the Intelligences according to their order; from the intelligences part of the good and the light bestowed upon them is communicated to the spheres, and the latter, being in possession of the abundance obtained of the Intelligences, transmit forces and properties into beings of this transient world.

Furthermore, he explains in *Guide* 2:6 that ultimately formative power has its origins in God. “All Forms are the result of the influence of the Active Intellect, and that the latter is an angel (the Active Intellect).”<sup>11</sup> The Active Intellect, like that of the nine other Intelligences, is an angel of God, and serves as the medium for God’s providence or influence upon the world. Maimonides states that this medium that Aristotle calls the Intelligences are identical with the angels.<sup>12</sup> They are the means by which God interacts with the material universe.<sup>13</sup>

The Astrologers agreed with this general conception of the heavenly influences. This allowed the astrologers to claim that their science was based on science that was subscribed to by nearly all medieval thinkers. However, the astrologers differed in their understanding of the role of the Giver of Forms. Unlike Maimonides and the Peripatetics, they held that the “Giver of Forms” was not a transcendent intellect. The Giver of Forms was an influence that emanated from within the planets.<sup>14</sup>

Even though Maimonides believed in the aforementioned celestial influences, he held astrology to be utterly false. Maimonides states in his *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles* that truth can only come from three sources:

First, rational proof as in mathematical sciences; secondly, the perception by one of the five senses; . . . and thirdly tradition from the prophets and the righteous. It is accordingly incumbent upon every wise person to investigate his doctrinal beliefs and classify them according to one of the three basic sources from which they are drawn, namely, tradition, sensation or rational insights. One however who grounds his beliefs in any other but one of these guiding principles scriptures refers to him as “the simple believeth every word.”<sup>15</sup>

According to Maimonides, astrology did not base itself upon any of these three categories of truth. It could be rejected by the words of the prophets, perception and science.

Maimonides acknowledges that there have been many books written about astrology that claim that this art is based on knowledge and science. Yet he vig-

<sup>11</sup> *Guide* 2:6.

<sup>12</sup> *Guide* 2:7.

<sup>13</sup> *Guide* 2:4.

<sup>14</sup> Freudenthal, “Maimonides’ Stance on Astrology in Context,” 79.

<sup>15</sup> *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles*, trans. Leon D Stitskin, 119.

ously denies that any of these books has any truth in it and disregards them all as vanities. Maimonides maintains that people have wasted their time reading astrology books. The source of these books' errors and the errors of those who believe in their contents is that people assume that whatever is written in books, especially if ancient is necessarily true.<sup>16</sup> The numbers of books have consistently increased because each one based itself upon the authority of the earlier ones.

Furthermore, according to Maimonides' understanding of the limits of human knowledge, astrology was a futile pursuit. Even if astrological theories were true they were beyond the scope of human understanding. Shlomo Pines writes that according to Maimonides, "Aristotelian verities and certainties in so far as they do not concern the terrestrial world are regarded in the Guide as beyond the scope of the human understanding: in other words, metaphysics, celestial physics, and astronomy are beyond these limits."<sup>17</sup> Astrology based itself upon these three branches of knowledge.

The art of the astrologers depended upon an understanding of the influences and nature of the Intelligences and spheres. Maimonides states that the nature of the incorporeal Intelligences and their influence upon the world are well beyond the intellectual capacity and perception of humans. The sole exception to this rule was Moses who was given this knowledge as a "gift" from God.<sup>18</sup> Even an understanding of the corporeal spheres was "veiled" from the perception of humans.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, astrology was dependent upon realms of knowledge well beyond the capacity of humans.

Maimonides associated religion with truth. This meant that the ideas of religion cannot be left as mere dogma. Religious truths must be able to stand their ground against dispassionate rational science. In this context, one can understand why Maimonides ruled that the Torah's prohibition of astrology did not only involve the practice of astrology, but even a belief in it.<sup>20</sup> He understood astrology to be among the superstitious practices which were prohibited in Deuteronomy. Maimonides writes in the *Mishneh Torah*:

Whoever believes in these and similar things [astrology, sorcery] and thinks in his heart that they are true and scientific and only forbidden by the Torah is nothing but a fool, deficient in understanding. . . . Sensible people, however, who possess sound mental faculties, know by clear proofs that all of these practices which the Torah prohibited have no scientific basis but are chimerical and inane; and that only

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Shlomo Pines, "Maimonides and Philosophy," in *Moses Maimonides*, eds. Shlomo Pines and Yovel Yimmerzan (Jerusalem: Martinus Nishoff Publication, 1986), 6.

<sup>18</sup> *Guide* 3:17.

<sup>19</sup> *Guide* 2:19.

<sup>20</sup> *Mishneh Torah, Avodah Zarah* 11:16.

those deficient in knowledge are attracted to these follies and, for their sake, leave the ways of truth.<sup>21</sup>

Astronomy, like augury and other superstitions, was forbidden because of its falsehood. The Torah forbids these superstitious ideas in order to eradicate falsehood and spurious beliefs.

According to Maimonides, one of the Torah's goals is a "campaign of truth," which it accomplishes by prohibiting acting upon superstitions and believing in superstitions that are appealing to man. Maimonides writes in his Commentary to the Mishnah, *Avodah Zarah* 4:8, that the Torah "forbids that which is false."<sup>22</sup> He insists that the Torah forbade astrology just like it forbids in general that which is false. The same motivation lies behind the Torah's prohibition of sorcery, augury, and necromancy.

Maimonides says that there have been "many good and righteous people from our Torah that think that these things [superstitious practices] are true, but they are still forbidden by the Torah. They do not know that these matters are null and lies which the Torah forbids, just like it forbids that which is false."<sup>23</sup> Many believed that these are real yet forbidden forces. They assumed that the forces which made these superstitious practices work were impure or evil forces.

Maimonides admits that there are statements of the sages in the Talmud that support astrological ideas. The presence of these statements in the Talmud does not dissuade Maimonides from the veracity of his argument against astrology. In the *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles* he says: "This [the astrological statements of the rabbis] should not disturb you."<sup>24</sup>

Marc Shapiro writes that Maimonides offers a "three-pronged defense" to deal with the astrological statements of the rabbis.<sup>25</sup> This "three pronged defense" is elaborated in the *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles*. The first prong is that the truth may have eluded an individual sage. Second, the sage's statement which appears to support notions of astrology may be allegorical. Third, the statement may have been necessary for the particular time and place. This means that the statement was not an expression of the true beliefs of the sage, but means to achieving a just end. Maimonides writes in *Guide* 3:28 that similar methods are used by the Torah to establish morality and justice.

<sup>21</sup> *Mishneh Torah Avodah Zarah* 11:16. As cited by Y. Tzvi Langerman, "Maimonides' Repudiation of Astrology," in *Maimonidean Studies* 2 (New York: Yeshiva University Press 1991), 127.

<sup>22</sup> *Maimonides' Commentary to the Mishnah*, ed. David Kafach (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Cook, 1965). I will be using this edition for all references.

<sup>23</sup> *Maimonides' Commentary to the Mishnah. Avodah Zarah* 4:7.

<sup>24</sup> "Letter to the Jews of Marseilles," Stitskin, 127.

<sup>25</sup> Marc Shapiro, "Maimonidean Halakha and Superstition," *Maimonidean Studies* 4 (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1991), 65.

Maimonides was a systematizer, always trying to organize and classify information. Through systematizing he sought to bring clarity and objectivity onto the subject matter at hand. One can see this pattern in his logical arguments in the *Guide* and his innovative organization of the whole corpus of *halakha* in *Mishneh Torah*. Also, in his *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles*, Maimonides uses this method to objectify his arguments against astrology by insisting that truth can only come from three sources (rational proof, perception of the five senses, and statements of the righteous).

However, if we consider Maimonides' three categories from which truth may be derived in the context of his "three-pronged" defense against astrology, then objectivity in interpreting the statements of the Rabbis is lost. Maimonides' system to handle and interpret the words of the Rabbis allows for extreme subjectivity. Whenever one finds a statement of the Rabbis that contradicts the philosophic outlook of the interpreter, they may use one of the tools of Maimonides' "three-pronged" approach. The interpreter may say the statement is allegory, a mistake of an individual sage, or that it was just said in a particular context to achieve a lofty goal. As a result, the message of Judaism and the Rabbis may become culturally relative and could potentially lose all sense of counter-culturalism.<sup>26</sup>

Maimonides' approach to interpret the words of the Sages that contradicted contemporary science, philosophy, and logic was not without precedent. One can see that this mode of interpretation had its antecedents in the Geonim. Like the cultural milieu of Maimonides, science in the time of the Geonim denied the existence of demons and that evil forces caused one to become ill. Therefore, the Geonim interpreted the *sugyot* in the Talmud which talk about demons allegorically.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, the medical advice which is stated by the sages in the Talmud is ignored by the Geonim. In fact, R. Sherirah Gaon and R. Hai Gaon ruled in their responsa that it is forbidden to follow the medical advice of the Sages.<sup>28</sup> Like Maimonides, the Geonim attributed the sage's faulty medical advice to the science that the rabbis had available to them.

Similarly, Maimonides felt that certain sayings of the Sages which support notions of astrology can be attributed to the limited scientific knowledge that existed in the time of that sage. In describing the astronomical knowledge of the Sages, he writes in the *Guide*, "Mathematics were not fully developed in those days; and their statements were not based on the authority of the prophets, but

<sup>26</sup> I am not saying that this occurred in the in the works of Rambam, but this methodology leaves room for such a possibility.

<sup>27</sup> Mordechai Levine, *Otzar Hageonim* (Hebrew University Press, 1952). See *Berakhot* 6a and *Hagigah* 3b. I would like to thank Dr. Yaakov Elman for pointing me to where I could find these allegoric interpretations.

<sup>28</sup> "Sayings on the Interpretations of the Rabbis," *Milhamot Hashem*, ed. Rabbi Reuven Margaliyot (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1953), 95.

on the knowledge which they either themselves possessed or derived from contemporary men of science.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, one is not bound by the words of the Sages which are dependent upon scientific data.

Maimonides makes a distinction between the authority of the statements of the Sages which have been derived through “tradition” and prophecy and that which is just based on their logical inferences. The *Meor Einayim* aptly points out that when one considers the statements of Sages in this context, the authority of the rabbis on religious matters is not negated.<sup>30</sup> In the Maimonidean treatment of the Sages, they are the ultimate authority in religious matters, but are subject to objection in matters outside of the religious domain.

Maimonides’ son, R. Avraham, explicitly make this distinction between the authority of the Rabbis in scientific and rabbinic matters in *Ma’amar al Odot Derashot Hazal*. He states:

The superiority of the Talmudic Sages and the completeness of their qualifications in the exposition of the Torah, its details and the integrity of its statements in general and in detail—all this does not imply that we must defend and uphold their statements in matters of medicine, natural science, and astronomy, and to believe them as we believe them concerning the exposition of the Torah, where they have ultimate wisdom.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, it can be seen that R. Avraham championed the methodology by which his father used to determine the authoritative nature of Rabbinic literature on normative human conduct. The Sages possessed unquestionable authority upon religious matters, which did not extend to their opinions in scientific matters.

One must consider the possibility that the Sages’ statements which support demonology and astrology are neither allegorical, nor necessary claims, nor just sayings of individual rabbis. However, this possibility apparently was not tenable to the Geonim or Maimonides. They could not believe that the Sages believed in things which in their minds were completely absurd in light of contemporary science and philosophy.

The likelihood that the majority of the sages believed in astrology and demonology is reinforced when one considers Babylonian society in which the sages lived. In Babylonia the veracity of demons and astrology were not notions of mere metaphysical speculation. They were an accepted “scientific fact” like the existence of viruses and bacteria to modern day society as a source of sickness.<sup>32</sup>

Maimonides’ categorical rejection of astrology is very surprising because it has no clear basis in Rabbinic literature. In fact, while there are many statements

<sup>29</sup> *Guide* 3:14.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Yehuda Levy, “The Sciences as ‘Maid-servants of the Torah’ in Maimonides’ Writing,” in *Moses Maimonides: Physician, Scientist, and Philosopher* (London, 1993), 103.

<sup>32</sup> Yaakov Elman, personal interview. December 22, 2004.

in Rabbinic literature that clearly support notions of astrology,<sup>33</sup> there are no statements of the Sages that reject astrology categorically.

Several scholars have cited the statement of Rav and Rabbi Yohanan “*ein mazal le-Yisrael*” (there are no planets for Israel) as a rejection of astrology (*Shabbat* 156a).<sup>34</sup> However, this is clearly an apologetic use of this text to justify Maimonides’ position on astrology. The simple reading of this text is that according to Rav and Rabbi Yohanan the finality of the influence of *mazal* is limited to non-Jews. Rashi explains that Rav and Rabbi Yohanan argue that “through merit and prayer *mazal* can be changed” by Jews.<sup>35</sup> Rav and Rabbi Yohanan merely limit the power of *mazal*, but do not deny its influence upon individuals and events. Rabbi Yohanan cites Jeremiah Chapter 10 as a proof to his claim. Rabbi Yohanan says: “Thus says God, towards the ways of the nations you shall not learn and from the signs of heaven you shall not fear;’ for the nations must fear from them [signs in heaven]. *They* must fear, but not Israel.”<sup>36</sup> Additionally, there is a series of four stories cited after these statements as evidence to the truth of the claim of Rav and Rabbi Yohanan. All of these stories say that a certain person was pre-destined by the stars towards a certain detrimental event or to have a negative trait. Then, the person escapes this pre-destined event or trait because he is a Jew who performs a righteous act.

Therefore, it appears that in the subject of astrology Maimonides must either ignore or re-interpret the words of the Sages in order to make them fit into his theological and scientific beliefs.<sup>37</sup> One of the major reasons that Maimonides rejected astrology is that he felt that it was based on faulty scientific logic. He presents a clear scientific argument against astrology in his *Commentary on the Mishnah, Avodah Zarah* 4:7. Maimonides contends that astrologers claim that certain spheres are “good” and some are “bad.” He goes on to assert that they claim that certain spheres match or correspond to one another. Maimonides states that these two postulates are clearly wrong, since the men of science all agree that the spheres are homogenous in form and composition.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, in the *Guide* 2:12 Maimonides contends that astrologers believe in false astrological theory because of their confusion over the term *fayid* (emanation) and to what objects *fayid* is applicable. He criticizes the astrologers for

<sup>33</sup> See *Sukah* 29a, *Shabbat* 156a, *Makkot* 29a, and *Berakhot* 10a for a few examples.

<sup>34</sup> See “Letter to the Jews of Marseilles,” trans. Leon D Stitskin, in *Letters of Maimonides* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1977), 115.

<sup>35</sup> *Shabbat* 156a.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> This is not only true of astrology. Many would claim that the same can be argued about Maimonides’ understanding of the attributes of God, demons, and angels. In all of these cases he re-interprets the words of the Bible and the sages contrary to the simple reading of the text.

<sup>38</sup> *Commentary on the Mishnah, Avodah Zarah*, 4:7.

ascribing the attribute of *fayid* to describe the astral forces. Maimonides states in *Guide* 2:12 that *fayid* can only be applied to “God and to the intelligences or angels.”<sup>39</sup> Only God and the Intelligences can act by emanation. This emanation is an incorporeal force not restricted by distances.

Even though Maimonides uses the term *fayid* to describe the influence of the stars, he insists that more accurately, the forces of the stars should be described as forces (*quwwat*), which are restricted by the rules of physics. These forces are limited by time and distance. They diminish over time and distance, since these astral forces have their origins in the corporeal bodies of the spheres. As opposed to *fayid*, which is efflux (called an emanation by Friedlander), i.e. a non-corporeal force that is not restricted by the laws of physics.

Maimonides contends that the spheres are to be viewed strictly as corporeal bodies whose influences obey the laws of Aristotelian physics. The rules of physics dictate that in order for a corporeal body to influence another body, it “must either be directly in contact with it, or indirectly through the medium of stars.”<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, as Tsvi Langerman points out, the physical nature of the astral forces are not substantiated by Maimonides. He merely insists that the stellar influences can be described as the result of the action of bodies on one another.<sup>41</sup>

Maimonides acknowledged that the acceptance of the influence of the spheres could easily lead to astrology. He writes, “. . . the spheres are corporeal, and the stars, being corporeal, only act at certain distances, i.e., at a smaller or greater distance from the center, or at a distance from each other, a circumstance which led to astrology.”<sup>42</sup> People including himself described this interaction of the celestial bodies as *fayid*. And since the bodies act upon one another at smaller or greater distances the astrologers assumed that the term *fayid* is being used in the technical sense. Maimonides says that this is a mistake. The influences or interactions of the stars with other bodies must be understood in corporeal terms. They are limited in their ability to affect other bodies by distance. These celestial bodies vary in the distances in which they are able to influence other bodies.

It was well known in the ancient world that one could use a piece of glass to make fire when the sun was bright. Additionally, there is a perceived difference in the warmth on Earth when the sun is up. These are easily detectable stellar influences in the world. One can hypothesize that Maimonides and the Greek philosophers who believed in the physical nature of the influence of the stars based their assumption of the physical nature of the stellar influences on these well-known stellar influences. Since these stellar influences are physical, it was a logical conclusion that all other stellar influences should be physical and bound by the laws of physics.

<sup>39</sup> *Guide* 2:12.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 169.

<sup>41</sup> Langerman, “Maimonides’ Repudiation of Astrology,” 127.

<sup>42</sup> *Guide* 2:12.

A further scientific argument against the astrologers was an epistemological one. Maimonides wrote in his *Treatise on Asthma*:

Therefore those who rely upon experience lack logical reasoning and err. For sometimes things work out for them, and sometimes not. I therefore state; he who submits himself to a physician who has experience but does not understand the rules of logical reasoning is like someone setting out to sea who submits himself to the blowing of the winds. For they [the winds] do not proceed according to reasoning; sometimes they blow in accordance with the wish of the seafarer and in line with this purpose, and sometimes they [lead to] his drowning and the denial of his purpose. I have called this to your attention because many people perish as a result of treatment [which is based solely] on experience. It is by chance that one survives or perishes from [that type of treatment].<sup>43</sup>

He insisted that scientific theories must provide “some causal account of the phenomena, especially with regard to efficient causes, and that this account has the rigor of formal demonstration.”<sup>44</sup> Scientific theory cannot be completely dependent upon repeated experience. Experience is a necessary part of the scientific process, but the experiences must be buttressed by an account and further proofs of what is observed. Since astrology did not have a formal theory and proofs of the phenomenon that it claimed to exist, he rejects it in *Guide 2:12* as a product of the imagination.

It is apparent from Maimonides’ writings that he was motivated by science to repudiate astrology. However, the nature of his scientific objections to the postulates of the astrologers is not explained explicitly. They only can be deduced from places where these objections are raised as a tangent to another subject and by implication. The one exception to this is the aforementioned argument in his commentary to *Mishnah Avodah Zarah 4:7*. Here, he only explains one scientific objection and the objection is explained rather tersely. Therefore, it is worthwhile asking why he does not elaborate on his scientific objections.

Furthermore, Gad Freudenthal states that it may be asked why there is no extensive scientific explanation by Maimonides for his repudiation of astrology. He says that one may conjecture, that this intimates to the fact that Maimonides had an esoteric position on astrology. He asks, “Could it be that the reason for this silence is that while Maimonides regarded astrology as a dangerous doctrine, he was not all that certain of its falsity?”<sup>45</sup> This question is especially relevant if one accepts the opinions of Shlomo Pines,<sup>46</sup> Alexander Altman<sup>47</sup> and

<sup>43</sup> Langerman, “Maimonides’ Repudiation of Astrology,” 137.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, 127.

<sup>45</sup> Freudenthal, “Maimonides’ Stance on Astrology in Context,” 86.

<sup>46</sup> Shlomo Pines, “Maimonides and Philosophy,” in *Moses Maimonides*, eds. Shlomo Pines and Yovel Yimmerzan (Jerusalem: Martinus Nishoff Publication, 1986), 1-15.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Altman, “The Religion of the Thinkers: Free Will and Pre-destination in

others who contend that Maimonides sometimes actually holds esoteric views that are not stated explicitly in his writings.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of this, it is not very tenable to argue that Maimonides had an esoteric position on astrology based on his lack of explicit scientific arguments in his writings. As Freudenthal points out, one must consider the intellectual and social context in which he lived. The Muslim philosophers of the East, including al-Farabi and Ibn Sina had explicitly rejected astrology. Maimonides writes in the *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles*:

All of these words (about the truth of astrology) are not words of wisdom at all, they are stupid and I possess many proofs without fault to nullify all of the assumptions of the astrologers. And they did not deal with it (astrology) at all and none of them wrote treatises on the subject; not one from amongst the Greek wise men. . . .<sup>49</sup>

One can see that according to Maimonides the scientific proofs were so clear and already proven that he did not feel compelled to restate them.

Additionally, one must consider the character of the writings where Maimonides presented his views on astrology. It is not surprising that in a work like the *Guide* he did not explicitly elaborate his scientific objections. He says:

It was not my intention when writing this treatise to expound natural science . . . but my intention was, as has been stated in the introduction, to expound Biblical passages which have been impugned, and to elucidate their hidden and true sense, which is above the comprehension of the multitude.<sup>50</sup>

Also, when he elucidates his position on astrology in his *Epistle to Yemen* and *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles*, he is being asked this question as a religious authority. His audiences are not necessarily scientists or interested in the scientific debate on the issue.

In addition to Maimonides' scientific reasons for rejecting astrology, he had theological motivations for denying the claims of the astrologers. One theological reason for objecting to astrology was that according to astrology the destiny of man is dictated by the stars. This goes against what to Rambam is a fundamental belief of Judaism: free will. Maimonides defends free will in the *Guide*, *Shemoneh Perakim*, and in the *Mishneh Torah*. In his defense of free will in the

Saadia, Bahya, and Maimonides," in *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. S.D. Goiten (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 22-51.

<sup>48</sup> Altman, "The Religion of the Thinkers," 22-51. The fact that Maimonides' writings, especially the *Guide*, are sometimes esoteric is quite obvious and not under contention. The question is the extent of his esoteric views. Some scholars question whether Maimonides was truly a rabbinic/traditional Jew.

<sup>49</sup> Altman, "The Religion of the Thinkers," 22-51.

<sup>50</sup> *Guide*, 2:1, Friedlander, 155.

seventh chapter of *Shemoneh Perakim* he warns the reader against believing in the theory of the astrologers. The astrologers contend that that the position of the stars determines whether a person will be a good or bad person. He says:

The matter is clear from our Torah and the Greek philosophers, as they have proved with claims (proofs) of truth: that the deeds of man are handed to him, they are not compelled in them, and do not bring him-except himself-at all, that lead him to the lofty or to that which is lacking, unless he was prepared with a mixture (nature) alone, as we have explained: that would make the matter easy or hard for him; but that it should obligate him, or make it impossible—this is impossible.<sup>51</sup>

Maimonides does admit that some people may have physical pre-dispositions to act in a certain way. However, humans still have the ability to do good. People can change their natural tendencies and perfect themselves through habit and learning.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, any notions of rigid determinism or pre-destination delegitimize human responsibility. If man's actions are determined by the stars, how can man be held accountable for his actions? What is the point of the commandments? Maimonides writes that if pre-destination exists "that precepts are perfectly useless, since the people to whom the law is given are unable to do anything; they can neither do what they are commanded nor abstain from what they are forbidden."<sup>53</sup> If pre-destination exists, any notions of reward and punishment in relation to the commandments are arbitrary. In order to allow people to "earn" reward and punishment they must be able to choose to do good as well as bad.

Maimonides contends that human volition is distinguished from other ensouled beings, the spheres and animals. Human volition is different from an animal's volition in that they act according to their imagination. The imagination of animals conceptualizes objects as good or bad. Animals act on their instinct or desire in relation to the object. Based upon the animal's conception of the object, it will either seek or avoid the object.

Maimonides acknowledges that certain people possess inherent tendencies. The tendencies of people are determined by their composition (the specific ratio of the four elements). He says that certain people have a composition which can make them have bad or good tendencies.<sup>54</sup> The composition of people, like that of all terrestrial beings, is determined by the stars. However, even if one has a physical tendency towards sin he can overcome it. Maimonides explains in *The*

<sup>51</sup> "*Shemoneh Perakim*," the *Introduction to the Commentary on the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1961), 202-203.

<sup>52</sup> "*Shemoneh Perakim*," cap. 8.

<sup>53</sup> *Guide*, 2:16.

<sup>54</sup> *Guide*, 2:40.

*Laws of Knowledge* 1:1-2 that the tendencies of people due to their make-up are not so powerful that they cannot overcome them.

Humans, like the spheres, can act according to the intellect or reason. Any act which is not one of seeking or avoiding is an act of volition based upon the intellect. In the *Guide* Maimonides argues that the orbs move because of an intellectual choice to continue their specific motion.

However, man's intellectual choices are different from the orbs in that man makes his intellectual choices in constantly changing circumstances. Additionally, man chooses to make different movements, unlike the orbs who choose to make one repeated movement.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, one can see how in the Maimonidean understanding of human volition that humans possess free will and can "earn" reward and punishment. God gave people the ability to act different than animals who can only act according to desires and instinct.<sup>56</sup> Humans can choose to ignore or go against the imagination which at times draws them to do that which is bad. They have the power to restrict the effects of desire and instinct upon their actions.<sup>57</sup> Human beings can intellectualize stimuli which are affected by the *logos* of the person and the stimuli which is a result of the person's environment. Additionally, the make-up of humans which causes them to have tendencies can be overcome. The volition of humans is not rigidly tied to the celestial influences.

Human exercise of free will is, however, limited by the laws of nature and the limited number of choices that circumstances present. In this context one can understand why Arthur Hyman argues that the terminology "freedom of choice" is a more accurate description of the character of Maimonides' conception of human volition than "free will". This terminology is more accurate because what humans possess is really a freedom to choose and not the ability to choose to do whatever they desire to accomplish.<sup>58</sup>

An additional, theological motivation for Maimonides' rejection of astrology was that astrological ideas eliminate the possibility of divine justice. If humankind's destiny and events were determined by the stars there could not be divine justice in relation to the actions which people choose. Maimonides says that the "possessors of truth," those of the religion of Moses, know that there is divine justice. In his *Letter to the Jews of Marseilles*, he writes that the Torah testifies to the reality of God's justice and that this justice is a result of human actions. Maimonides writes, "All of his ways are just" (Deuteronomy 32:4), and the prophet explains, "your eyes observe all of the ways of man to give to them according to their ways and according to the fruit of their action" (Jeremiah

<sup>55</sup> *Guide*, 2:4.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 2:6.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 3:8.

<sup>58</sup> Professor Arthur Hyman, lecture, *Philosophy of Maimonides*, Yeshiva University, 4 January 2005.

32:19).’<sup>59</sup> God observes his creatures and rewards and punishes them according to their deeds.

Divine judgment and providence is affected by one’s intellectual perfection. “The greater the share is which a person has obtained of this Divine influence, on account of both his physical predisposition and his training, the greater must also be the effect of Divine providence upon him for the action of Divine providence is proportional to the endowment of intellect.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, Divine influence is not the same amongst all people. The greater the individual’s perfection of the intellect, the greater one’s benefit from Divine providence. “In the same proportion as ignorant and disobedient persons are deficient in that Divine influence, their condition is inferior, and their rank equal to that of irrational beings; and they are like unto beasts.”<sup>61</sup> Included among those who are ignorant and lacking in intellectual perfection would be the astrologers. People like the astrologers would necessarily lack the beneficence of providence.

Furthermore, Maimonides writes that if humankind does not acknowledge that all of the events which befall them are a result of divine judgment, then He will act upon them as though divine judgment does not exist. For a person who does not acknowledge God’s influence over the events that occur to him, God will allow events to proceed casually. This would presumably be true for one who attributes his fate to the stars instead of God.<sup>62</sup>

Maimonides strongly condemns astrology because of its historical link with idolatry. In the first chapter of *Mishneh Torah: Hilkhot Avodah Zarah* he explains how astrology served as the medium by which idolatry was introduced into the world. He writes that in the generation of Enosh, Enosh himself together with other people made a great mistake. They assumed that since by God’s will the stars and the spheres lead the world and were placed in a high and lofty place in the cosmic order, it is fitting to serve and honor them. The generation of Enosh thought that “this was the desire of the Holy One Blessed be He to raise and honor [the spheres and the stars] who He raised and honored, just as the king wants honor [given] to his servants and those who serve before him and this is the honor of the king.”<sup>63</sup> Based on this assumption, (i.e. that God wanted the spheres and the stars to be honored), people began to serve them by offering sacrifices and bowing to them. Maimonides writes this was the beginning of *avodah zarah* (idolatry) in the world. He writes in *Hilkhot Avodah Zarah* 2:1 that the essence of the prohibition of *avodah zarah* is not to serve anything besides

<sup>59</sup> “Letter on Astrology,” 285.

<sup>60</sup> *Guide* 3:18.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* They are like beasts in that they receive beneficence or providence only in regard to the species and not the individual. See *Guide* 3:17 for an understanding of the relationship between Divine providence and the intellect. Only humans possess intellect and thus can receive the beneficence of Divine providence.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Mishneh Torah: Hilkhot Avodah Zarah*, 1:1.

God Himself. Therefore, when Enosh served the spheres, he was committing an act of idolatry.

Initially, false prophets arose who claimed that God told them to serve these stars. These false prophets informed the masses of images of these stars that were revealed to them through prophecy. These images were worshipped under trees and in high places. These images became such an important part of humankind's worship that the name of God was lost. Next, various sects arose which claimed that there was no God except the stars and the spheres who had revealed to mankind the images that they served and God was only known to a few people: Noah, Methuselah, Shem and Ever.

Thus, we see the strong historical connection between astrology and idolatry. The worship and the study of the stars led almost inevitably the blotting out of God's name in the world. With this in mind, we can understand the harsh tone and clarity in which Maimonides repudiated astrology. Maimonides understood human history as a retreat from and return to monotheism. In his understanding of history, astrology played a crucial role in the introduction of paganism. The rejection of this belief was critical in keeping humankind on this retreat from paganism. If people once again engaged in astrology and believed in its efficacy the world could go along this slippery slope towards paganism.<sup>64</sup>

Maimonides claims that astrology was used by false prophets to control the people and subjugate them to their will. In a fascinating insight into human nature, he explains that astrological preachers threatened people who did not worship the stars in the manner in which they proposed. The astrological preachers claimed that if one did not worship the stars according to their rules then a person's property would be lost. Eventually, a bad incident would occur to a person who did not listen to these prophets and the people would then think that the mystical astrological ideas that these false prophets taught were confirmed.<sup>65</sup>

Maimonides is careful not to classify astrology as idolatry. However, it is clear that he felt that idolatry was almost an auxiliary to astrology. One sees this understanding of Maimonides in his explanation of the rationale of the second group of commandments which deal with magical practices. These magical practices lead to astrology, and then to star worship. These practices are integrally connected with astrology because "in all magical operations it is indispensable that the stars should be observed."<sup>66</sup> This mixture of magical practice and astrology inevitably leads to "a glorification and worship of the stars."<sup>67</sup>

Maimonides was motivated by theological and scientific reasons to reject astrology. He argued that astrology was repudiated by science and all of the

<sup>64</sup> Langerman, "Maimonides' Repudiation of Astrology," 30.

<sup>65</sup> *Guide* 3:37.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

great thinkers. Additionally, astrology could lead to fatalism. Therefore astrology was a waste of time and had potential negative effects on the psyche of humankind. Maimonides believed that an acceptance of the veracity of astrology necessarily leads to heretical notions such as a denial of free will, a denial of divine justice, and the threat of idolatry itself.

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## THE ROLE OF MESSIANISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HASIDISM\*

Rabbi Aryeh Leifert

After the conversion of the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi in 1666, world Jewry fell into a deep depression. Many had felt that the long-awaited Redemption had been imminent, but now they were condemned to live in an unredeemed world which continued to despise them.<sup>1</sup> Israel Baal Shem Tov (the Besht), and the followers of Hasidism, stepped into this vacuum of hope. Founded in the mid- to late-eighteenth century, Hasidism arose from the ashes of Shabbetai Tzvi and his messianic message. The question that has puzzled scholars for years, however, is this: What role did messianism play in the development of Hasidism? This paper will examine the arguments of various scholars of Hasidism, and draw conclusions about this revolutionary movement.

The single most famous Hasidic document related to messianism is a letter sent by the Besht to his brother-in-law, R. Gershon of Kutov, around 1752. In it, the Besht describes a journey of his soul to Heaven, where he meets the Messiah and asks when the Redemption will occur:

I went up stage after stage until I entered the palace of the Messiah where the Messiah studies Torah with all the *Tanna'im* and *Tzadikim* . . . and I asked the Messiah: when will he come, and he answered: until your teaching will spread throughout the world.<sup>2</sup>

According to Gershom Scholem, the version published by the Besht's close pupil, R. Yaakov Yosef, has a more authentic ring to it, especially the expanded answer of the Messiah:

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Martin, *A History of Judaism*, vol. 2. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 166-167.

<sup>2</sup> Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 182.

By this you shall know it: when your doctrine will be widely known and revealed throughout the world and what I taught you will be divulged outward from your own resources. . . . And then all the husks [the powers of evil] will perish and the time of salvation will have come. And I—continues the Baal Shem—was bewildered because of this answer and I was greatly aggrieved by the enormous length of time until this would be possible.<sup>3</sup>

Some scholars maintain that this letter proclaims the movement's Messianic character. Some also assume that the letter might not refer at all to the specific teachings of the Besht, but rather to his esoteric practices, such as fasting from Sabbath to Sabbath. Such claims seem strangely out of focus, says Scholem, for no one knew of the letter's existence during the Besht's lifetime.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, continues Scholem, the letter explicitly mentions the Besht's teachings and doctrines, and not any of his esoteric practices. Such practices were not instrumental in spreading Hasidism's fame, and were certainly not a vital aspect of the movement after the Baal Shem's death. Thus the letter, far from proving that messianism held a prominent position in Hasidism, shows how it became marginalized. For Hasidism, messianism could not be seen as an immediate hope. To be sure, the answer of the Messiah did not encourage the Besht. Rather, it saddened him, as he felt that the time of his teachings being known far and wide (and, thus, the time of the Messiah's advent) was a long while off.<sup>5</sup>

According to Scholem, Hasidism did not place messianism at the center of its belief system. Rather, Hasidism used messianism for a different purpose. In the years prior to the emergence of Hasidism, the study of Kabbalah was popular. One of its main aspects was messianism. Hasidism took on those aspects of Kabbalah which were capable of evoking a popular response, but stripped them of their messianic nature. Since the mystical and apocalyptic elements in Kabbalah were dangerous for a generation following Shabbetai Tzvi, Hasidism de-emphasized many of them. Scholem writes that instead of assuming that Hasidism eliminated any and all aspects of Kabbalah related to messianism, it is more correct to say that Hasidism "neutralized" messianism. Hasidism knew that to promote a movement revolving around messianism was akin to philosophical suicide. No one, save for the continued believers in Shabbetai Tzvi, would be interested in supporting such a risky movement. It was one thing to allot a niche to the idea of redemption, but quite another to place this concept, with all it implied, at the center of religious life and thought.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 183.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), 329-330.

There were many who feared that Hasidism would be a new form of Sabbateanism. The Hasidim introduced certain rituals and practices into their lives, such as ecstatic swaying during prayer, performing *shehita* with more finely honed knives than previously used, and frequenting their *rebbe*s for guidance, even for intervention with God.<sup>7</sup> At the time, such rites were considered bizarre. The Mitnagdim feared these deviations, and forcefully denounced Hasidism. Some historians claim that partly as a response to this opposition, Hasidism put its primary emphasis on personal religious growth, rather than on national salvation.<sup>8</sup> The idea of redemption, according to the Besht, was different from the traditional school of Lurianic Kabbalah. Redemption was no longer seen as a method of *tikkun olam*. It was now seen as a method to bring man and God together. *Deveikut*, or communion with God, was advocated as the goal of all people. Hasidism did not seek to destroy the exile from without; that is, bring on the ultimate Redemption. Rather, it sought to destroy the exile from within, by exhorting Jews to achieve closeness to God through heartfelt prayer and devotion.<sup>9</sup> In this way, Hasidism responded to its critics' fears that it advocated national salvation (that is, a new form of messianism). It continued, however, to promote a closer relationship with God, whereby believers could achieve their own personal salvation.

In contrast to Scholem, Raphael Mahler asserts that for many Hasidic *rebbe*s, messianism was a major part of their daily lives. According to Mahler, the Hasidim believed that the purpose of the exile was for Jews to gather together the "holy sparks" that had been scattered throughout the world since the days of Creation. As long as the sparks were still scattered, the exile would continue. R' Mendel of Rymanow (d. 1815), a Hasidic writer, felt that the laws passed by non-Jews permitting Jews to purchase homes were merely ruses meant to bind Jews closer to the exile, thereby preventing them from gathering the sparks. Mendel contrasted the European Jews with the tent-dwelling Egyptian Jews, whom he said did not wish to become permanent residents of the Diaspora.<sup>10</sup>

R. Mendel was not the only Hasidic leader to promote national redemption. Mahler cites several later Hasidic *rebbe*s, including R. Mendel of Kosow (1768-1826), R' Hersh of Zydaczow, and R. Naftali of Ropczyce (d. 1831), who actively spoke of the Messianic Age and imminent Redemption. According to Mahler, the faith of the ordinary Hasidism in the Redemption was as firm as their *rebbe*s'. One of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith, "Though he (the Messiah) may tarry, I await his coming every day," was a cardinal teaching

<sup>7</sup> Mordecai L. Wilensky, "Hasidic-Mitnaggedic Polemics in the Jewish Communities of Eastern Europe: The Hostile Phase." In Gershon David Hundert, ed. *Essential Papers on Hasidism, Origins to Present*. (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 253.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*. (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991), 217.

<sup>9</sup> Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 186.

<sup>10</sup> Mendel of Rymanow, *Menahem Siyyon*, 56-57. Cited in Raphael Mahler, "Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment." In Hundert, 416-417.

of the Hasidim. One rebbe took this saying quite literally. Mahler quotes a story told of R. Sholem Rokeakh of Belz who, when greeted with the traditional “Next year in Jerusalem!” when drawing water for his Passover matzot, responded, “Why should it be next year? We hope and pray that the water we have just drawn will be used tomorrow to bake matzoh in Jerusalem.”<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Scholem, who maintains that Hasidism promoted more of a personal redemptive quality, Mahler writes that the expositors of Hasidic doctrine taught the concept of a total redemption—both national and spiritual. Moses of Sambor, brother of Hersh of Zydaczow, stressed a three-fold goal: “We seek the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of David, and the rebuilding of the Temple.”<sup>12</sup>

Drawing on both Scholem and Mahler, Joseph Weiss maintains that one must make a distinction between two different schools of Hasidic thought. According to Weiss, the school of the Great Maggid, R. Dov Baer of Mezritch (1710-1772), and R. Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810), while espousing many similar views, differed in their understanding of the Messianic era. He writes that the Maggid’s theology was not centered around the three moments of Creation, Revelation at Sinai, and Redemption by the Messiah. His experience of God, however, was based on the perception of the divine essence which is present in all things.<sup>13</sup> Since the Maggid emphasized a personal, contemplative method towards drawing near to God, he minimized the intense interest in the Messiah and the collective redemption. Thus, no Messianic yearning exists in the mystical tenets of the Maggid. Since the mystical experience is not based on the historical event of the Revelation at Sinai, it is also not related to the post-historical event of the Redemption. According to Weiss, the lack of all Messianic tension is a characteristic feature of the Maggid’s “contemplative piety.”<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the Maggid’s school, the Bratslav school’s main emphasis was on the paradoxical ways of redemption. R. Nachman himself thought that his own soul was the soul of the Messiah, and at one time hoped that the final Redemption would occur during his lifetime. This is the climactic point of the two categories of Bratslavic belief: where “faith” born from despair converges at the eschatological point with “hope” born from despair. Both categories tended towards Messianic redemption, teaching that no one should lose hope that he would not see the final redemption, even if the existing situation implied otherwise.<sup>15</sup>

In relation to the state of affairs after the Messiah arrives, Weiss asserts that the Maggid and R. Nachman were consistent with their pre-Messianic beliefs.

<sup>11</sup> Isaac Ber Levinsohn, *Dover Shalom* (Przemysl, 1910), 41. Cited in Mahler, 417.

<sup>12</sup> Moses of Sambor, *Tefilah leMoshe*, Torah portion *Va’etchanan*. Cited in Mahler, 417.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph G. Weiss, “Contemplative Mysticism and ‘Faith’ in Hasidic Piety.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* IV, (1953), 21.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

The Maggid was extremely frugal in describing the changes that will take place in the days of the Messiah. In his teachings, there is no trace of a revolutionary conception of a Messianic future. As with the Revelation at Sinai, the Maggid's school did not deny that the Messianic redemption would take place. On the other hand, it never described the era of Redemption as something fundamentally different from the present state of the world.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, the school of R. Nachman hoped for radical changes to take place when the Messiah arrived. In the present world, faith is opposed to reason. In the future world, the Bratslavers believed, faith would *become* reason. While in this world, believers believe due to faith. When the Messiah arrived, however, rational evidence would support the believer, thus vindicating him.<sup>17</sup> Since the Bratslaver school placed so much emphasis on the Messianic age, it only made sense that when this age would occur, they would expect that the rewards for believers would exceed their greatest expectations.

Weiss concludes his argument with the following claim regarding Hasidism. He writes that in Hasidism there is no conformity on any basic religious question. Different schools of Hasidism offered different views on many aspects of Judaism. He does, however, group Hasidic thought into two theoretical systems: one direction, that of the Maggid, is of the mystical, contemplative type, with an idealistic and semi-pantheistic outlook. The other direction is based on the piety of faith, where fervent belief and trust in the coming of the Messiah may be all that is needed to hasten his arrival.<sup>18</sup>

Far from asserting that Hasidism's emphasis on personal redemption was an innovation, as Scholem claims, Moshe Idel maintains that such an emphasis was not new to the world of Jewish mysticism. Idel says that such ideas existed in the works of Jewish thinkers as early as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Consequently, there is no need to assume that there was a "neutralization" (as Scholem calls it) of external redemption, as there were more than a few earlier models for Hasidism to follow. Instead of assuming that Hasidism created new views of redemption, Idel says that it would be more plausible to consider whether the appearance of a Hasidic spiritualistic interpretation of redemption is related to existent views. Idel maintains that the special emphasis put on the doctrine of individual redemption in Hasidic thought was a result of a peripheral trend which had been marginalized over a long period of time. The reaction to Sabbateanism pushed these principles to the forefront of Jewish thought.<sup>19</sup>

Idel expands his assertion, saying that the spiritual metamorphosis in Hasidism is not limited to the transition from communal to personal redemp-

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 236-237.

tion. Rather, Hasidism also espouses spiritualizations of various topics only indirectly related to messianism, such as the Land of Israel, the Temple, and others. The “neutralization” of messianism in Hasidism is but one manifestation of a deeper shift in values within the Hasidic world. This shift spawned a model of mystical thought related to a kind of Kabbalah. Kabbalah was, after all, one of the factors responsible for Hasidism’s emphasis on personal redemption. According to Idel, an honest examination of the influence of messianism on Hasidism is more complex than an isolated discussion of the notion of individual redemption itself.<sup>20</sup>

Criticizing Scholem’s view of the role of messianism in Hasidism, Idel writes that during the time of Hasidism’s birth, there was awakening interest in and strengthening of a spiritualistic trend that had been relegated to the background of Jewish mysticism during the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries. Specifically, Idel faults Scholem for emphasizing those forms of mystical literature which differ dramatically from Hasidism, rather than those that are closer to it. The very recourse to the term *neutralization*, argues Idel, assumes that “authentic” messianism is limited to the national-political variety, so that the spiritual, or personal, conception of messianism can only be perceived as the revocation of this “ideal” messianic element. According to Idel, this assumption is based on the acceptance of the concept of individual messianism as a late and innovative development, emerging around 1750. His contention, however, is that from the thirteenth century onward, there were discussions of the Messiah as dwelling in an individual’s higher intellect, not necessarily as redeeming Israel, and that such ideas were not results of external influences, much less a reaction to Sabbateanism. Idel concludes, “Since it is a complete system of thought possessing its own internal logic, it deserves to be studied on its own terms and not considered as a mere reaction to specific socioeconomic factors.”<sup>21</sup> As opposed to Scholem, Idel believes that it is too easy to claim that Hasidism reacted to its surroundings, developing its messianic ideas around them. Instead, *perhaps* due to Shabbetai Tzvi, or perhaps due to merely a renaissance of Jewish thought, Hasidism drew on ideas long entrenched in Jewish mysticism.

It is clear that while it may be logical to conclude that Hasidism may have minimized messianism because of the debacle of Shabbetai Tzvi, the truth is that many factors probably led to the position of messianism in Hasidic thought. There is no question that Shabbetai Tzvi laid the groundwork for the enthusiastic acceptance of Hasidism by many Jews, as they were thirsting for a way to raise their spirits, “from out of the straits,” as the Psalmist put it. It is also clear that there were a number of other factors that led to the development of the

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 237.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 237-238.

Hasidic movement, and specifically, of the messianic element contained within. In addition to Sabbateanism, Hasidism was influenced by older ideas in Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah. It is also more correct to say that different streams of Hasidism held different views on the importance of messianism. As noted, historians have a wide range of disagreement with relation to the catalysts of the movement's spread, as well as to the role messianism played in it. Regardless of whether Hasidism originated the idea of personal redemption, marginalized the idea of national redemption, or embraced a combination of the two, one thing is certain: Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's movement altered the course of Jewish history and provided Jewish thinkers with a plethora of concepts to debate for years to come.

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## LEMEKH'S SONG: NARRATIVE CONTEXT AND THE POETRY OF VIOLENCE

Rabbi Nachman Levine

*Adah and Tzilah, hear my voice  
wives of Lemech, listen to my saying.  
For a man I killed for my wound (by my wound?)  
and a boy for my bruising (by my bruising?).  
For sevenfold will Cayin be avenged/(or punished?)  
and Lemech seventy and seven. (Gen. 4:23-24)\**

Commentators ask about the meaning of Lemekh's enigmatic poem and about its connection to its context. Perhaps one question answers the other if its literary import is only in giving meaning to the narrative, in being the poetry in a narrative about poetry and violence, in opposition of creativity and destruction. Perhaps, pointedly, the questions have no answer. What is clear, however, is that Lemekh's song of violence follows the narrative that establishes that he is father of the creators of weaponry and music.

What is the poem about and what does it mean? Is it a boast, confession, justification, elegy, lament, dirge, defense or protestation of innocence? (It is interpreted variously as all of these.) Is it a statement or a question? What about the genitive ambiguity of "my wound/my bruising"—has *he* wounded or has he *been* wounded? Do the opposites correspond: is a *man* synonymous with a *boy*, or did he kill a man *and* a boy, or does it refer to someone who is killed *both*? Who is the man or boy he killed—if he did kill him? Is this meant as a threat? (This, too, is one interpretation.) And what do his wives or Kayin have to do with it?

The more crucial question has been asked: more than what does this poem mean, what does this poem matter?<sup>1</sup> To which we might ask after interpreting the narrative: does it have to mean anything or matter at all? That is, if the nar-

\* Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> Murray H. Lichtenstein, "Biblical Poetry," *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 105.

rative describes the degeneration of the industries of civilization and urban collectivity<sup>2</sup> established by Lemekh and his sons into crafts of destruction, then the poem can reflect that process. It might have meaning as boast, justification, lament, defense, or threat, but perhaps significantly, if it is all of these—boast, justification, lament, defense, threat—it is consequently less. Though described as a poem that “follows the parallelistic pattern of Biblical verse with exemplary rigor,”<sup>3</sup> it may have little meaning other than being virtuosic incoherence, pure form its only substance. Lemekh’s poem may be emblematic of the narrative itself, expressing its degeneration as he, as the poet of destruction, celebrates chaos in pure form and no content. It may be enigmatic precisely because it says nothing and does so artfully, expressing little but the celebration of chaos as it conveys aggressive dominance as its true metaphor of art as cultural dominance and aggression. It is thus instructive to contrast the poem with the imbedded poem of his cousin Lemekh II (5:28), the relatively minor poet of Shet’s line that celebrates life and affirmation.

The poetics of the context may be clarified by examining the poem’s technical virtuosity. We could examine its form to seek its meaning (perhaps its form is its only meaning) in its stylistic devices, “horizontal” movement<sup>4</sup> (development within each line) and “vertical” movement (from line to line), and diachronic and synchronic structure and its ambiguities. Lemekh says to his wives, Adah and Tzilah:

עדה וצלה שמען קולי/נשי למך האזנה אמרתי//  
כי איש הרגתי לפצעי/וילד לחבורתי//  
כי שבעתים יקם קין/ולמך שבעים ושבעה//

*“Adah and Tzilah, listen to my voice/wives of Lemekh, hear my saying//  
For a man I killed for my wound (by my wound?)/and a boy for my  
bruising (by my bruising?)//  
For sevenfold will be Kayin avenged (? or punished?)/  
and Lemekh seventy and seven”//*

#### PARALLELISM AND SYMMETRY

It is a poem of three parts:

<sup>2</sup> Malbim M.L., (*Mikr’aei Kodesh*, Warsaw, 1874), Gen. 4:23, Umberto Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1978) p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> R. Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997) p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> R. Alter, “The Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry” in (R. Alter, F. Kermode, eds.) *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1987) p. 611, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985) Chapter III, “Structures of Intensification,” 62-84.

- A) ABAB: עדה וצלה שמען קולי//נשי למך האזנה אמרתי  
 B) ABAB: כי איש הרגתי לפצע//וילד לחבורתי  
 C) and as a coda: ABBA: כי שבעתים יקם קין//ולמך שבעים ושבעה

For a poem about killing and bruising, it has grace and balance, as well as symmetric resolution of semantic sense and sounds. In contrast to its subject, it resolves its consonantal tension (כי שבעתים יקם קין) as if a fist gently unfolding, with open assonantal release and understatement (ולמך שבעים ושבעה). It is noted that “this poem follows the parallelistic pattern of biblical verse with exemplary rigor. Each term in each initial verset has its semantic counterpart in the second. The first pair has four accented syllables in each; every subsequent verset has three accented syllables. The last pair with its numbers is a paradigm case for poetic parallelism in the Bible. There is a pronounced tendency to intensify semantic material in approximate synonymy.”<sup>5</sup>

There is, in fact, much to add about its parallelism. In the intensification<sup>6</sup> in A: **עדה וצילה**\\נשי למך: **עדה וצילה** are specific individuals and נשי למך is a general unspecified group who have a relationship with him. (If they are *his* property in which they lose their specific identities, “wives of Lemekh” intensifies the imperative to heed him.)

**שמען**\\האזנה is general, “to hear,” while **האזנה** is more specific and closer:<sup>7</sup> “to give ear,”<sup>8</sup> “to listen more intently,” or “to hear speaking in the ear.”

**קולי**\\אמרתי is general and metonymic, and **אמרתי** is specific and literal.

In B (four words//two words, three stresses//three stresses): the three syllables of **הרגתי**, the double-duty verb for both versets, alliteratively and assonantically intensifies in the five syllables of **לחבורתי**:

**איש**\\וילד *descend* in intensity: a boy is younger than a man and is easier to kill (though it is more brazenly cruel). **פצע**\\לחבורתי also descend: **פצע**, a wound,<sup>9</sup> is more intense (though a shorter word) than **לחבורתי**, a stripe.<sup>10</sup> This would be a form of escalation: I killed (or can or will kill) a man for wounding me, *or even* a boy for merely bruising me, creating the connection with extreme intensification in the next line.

In the last pair (C) **שבעתים**\\שבעים ושבעה *intensifies* exponentially to שבעים ושבעה. (In a coda of intensification C with its *sevens* is the only unit con-

<sup>5</sup> Alter, *Genesis*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> For intensification in parallelism, Malbim, Isa. 1, R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, Chapter III, “Structures of Intensification,” 62-84, James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Malbim, Deut. 31:1.

<sup>8</sup> BDB: אָזַן.

<sup>9</sup> Malbim, Ex. 21:25, Isa. 1:2., Prov. 20:30, BDB: פָּצַע.

<sup>10</sup> Malbim, Ex. 21:25, Isa. 1:2., Prov. 20:30, BDB: חִבּוּרָה, פָּצַע.

taining *seven* words.) Seventy-seven-fold is *eleven* times seven, much more than seven-fold of seven, which is forty-nine. It is a literary figure, an exaggeration, not a mathematical one; seven-fold, meaning “much, manifold,”<sup>11</sup> is exponentiated to “very much more manifold.” Being avenged or punished sevenfold is very disproportional retribution (the murder it avenged was literally overkill); *seventy-seven-fold* is very, very, extreme.

קין\ולמד: descends from forbear to descendant, a specific relationship of ancestor and descendant summing up *seven* generations from the first progenitor and killer of the line to the last progenitor and killer of the line. In the Midrash<sup>12</sup> as we will see, they are the ancestor who killed and the descendant who kills him.

The two double-duty words in B and C, הרגתי, “I killed” and יקם “will be avenged,” both modify their respective lines horizontally, as C results vertically from B. It is even possible that in poetic form הרגתי (“I killed”) here means “I will kill”<sup>13</sup> and יקם (“will be avenged”) means “was avenged” (thus contrasting with the implied “and Lemekh [*will be avenged*] seventy-seven”).

We can see a structural pattern contrasted this way in A:

עדה וצילה = specific (specified)  
שמעון קולי = general (hearing/my voice)//  
נשי למך = general (unspecified)//  
האזנה אמרתי = specific (pay attention/my saying)

Then a *specific* application in B (איש הרגתי לפצעלוילד לחבורתי) is juxtaposed to a *general* truth in C (שבעתים יקם קיןולמד שבעים ושבעה),<sup>14</sup> where הרגתי is *specific* and יקם is *general* (unspecified), with movement between a generalized relationship (איש\וילד) in B, and a specific relationship<sup>15</sup> of ancestor (*Kayin*) and descendant (*Lemekh*) in C. In C, שבעתים\שבעים ושבעה a *specific* idiomatic numeric relationship is contrasted with a *general* arbitrarily exaggerated sound multiplicity not numerically significant, multiplied by a non-meaningful eleven.<sup>16</sup>

“B and C are conceptually related and also formally coordinated, introduced by כי”<sup>17</sup> Thus A-B are connected in form (ABAB) and B-C are connected by being introduced by כי And A, the introduction, is *stylistically* connected with C, the coda, as we will see below.

<sup>11</sup> שבעה יפול צדיק (Prov. 24:16); ונמצא ישלם שבעתים (Prov. 6:31); מזוקק שבעתים (Ps. 12:7) שבעתים אל חיקם (ibid 79:12); ואור החמה יהיה שבעתים (Isa. 30:26).

<sup>12</sup> *Tanhuma* 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Ezra, R. David Kimhi (*RaDaK*), 4:23.

<sup>14</sup> Lichtenstein, “Biblical Poetry,” p. 105

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Alter, *Genesis*, p. 20, notes here the “paradigm case for poetic parallelism in the Bible, when a number occurs in the first half of a line, it must be increased, by one, by a decimal, or by a decimal added to the original number, as here in the second half of the line.” True, but while it might have a *literary* logic it isn’t a rational guideline for sentencing.

<sup>17</sup> Lichtenstein, “Biblical Poetry” *ibid.*

## STYLISTIC ELEMENTS AND CONTENT

Alliteration and chiasmic sound pairs<sup>18</sup> connect the parts. Besides the rhyme throughout A-B of קוליִאמרתִיהרגתִילפצעִילחבורתי עדה וצילה, the first pair (A): שמען קוליִנשי למך האזנה אמרתי connects alliteratively with the last pair (C), כי שבעתים יקם קיןִולמך שבעים ושבעה, *most* of the letters in the opening imperative שמען קולי in the first half of A are repeated and reversed in the second half, נשי למך האזנה אמרתי, and *all* of them are reversed alliteratively in C: כי שבעתים יקם קיןִולמך שבעים ושבעה, just as the opening rhyme עדהִוצילה is echoed in the closing שבעים ושבעה. (The first pair has *two* rhymes: עדהִוצילה (which rhyme with האזנה), and שמען קוליִהאזנה אמרתי (which rhyme with: לפצעִילחבורתי in B.)

In the first pair, (A) is a chiasmic sound pair reversal שמען קוליִנשי למך and in the last (C): כי שבעתים יקם קין. C's semantic *ABBA* pattern is echoed in its *sound* chiasmus: כי שבעתים יקם קיןִולמך שבעים ושבעה. A larger chiasmus is created as אמרתי in the first pair (A) is reversed in the last (C): שבעתים, as שמען קוליִנשי למך in A connects with and is reversed in קיןִולמך at the end in C.

In this way, the two women in the first verse are opposed to the two men in the last, so that נשי in the first becomes opposed to איש (itself opposed to ילד) in the second. A relationship with two women in a group is contrasted with a relationship of destruction with two separate men (in a chiasmic series: A1=two named ladies, A2=two unnamed ladies, B1-2=two unnamed men, C1-2=two named men.) Lemekh mentions his own name in the end of the first pair (נשי למך) and the end of the last pair (ולמך שבעים ושבעה) as the first rhyme (עדה וצילה) repeats itself in the last (שבעים ושבעה). The concluding phrase, ולמך שבעים ושבעה, in terse reversal of form (*ABBA*) and (unstated) syntax ([יקם קיןִולמך [יקם]) implying *yuqtol-x//we-x[yuqtol]* (verb/subject followed by its inversion, subject/verb) signals the *stylistic* end of the poem<sup>19</sup> as its *content* is about intensified reversal and retribution.

The poem connects Lemekh's past, present, and future,<sup>20</sup> all seven generations of his line from Kayin to his children.<sup>21</sup> But we could discern more of its internal relationships if we could only figure out some of the unresolved seman-

<sup>18</sup> For Biblical sound chiasmus and phonological parallelism see J.S. Kselman, "Semantic-Sonant Chiasmus in Biblical Poetry," *Biblica* 58 (1977), 219-33 and A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) chapter 6, "The Phonological Aspect: Sound Pairs," 103-126.

<sup>19</sup> On this phenomenon: A. Mirsky, "Stylistic Devices for Conclusion in Hebrew," *Semiotics* 5 (1977) 9-23, H.V.D. Payanuk, "Oral Typesetting: Some Uses of Biblical Structure," *Biblica* 62 (1981) 153-168.

<sup>20</sup> Lichtenstein, "Biblical Poetry."

<sup>21</sup> Yehudah Kiel, *Sefer Bereishit in Daat Mikra* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook 1997) p. 129.

tic questions. Is the *man* synonymous with the *boy*<sup>22</sup> or did Lemekh kill a man *and* a boy? And who is the man or boy he killed, and did he kill him or them? What about the genitive ambiguity<sup>23</sup> of “my wound/my bruising”: has he wounded or been wounded? Here are some technical possibilities:

Some commentators take Lemekh at his word; he has killed a man *and* a boy<sup>24</sup> and thus will be punished *even more* severely<sup>25</sup> than Kayin who killed one person, the connection between B and C. Two Midrashim provide other solutions. In *Tanhuma* 11, Lemekh’s wives separated from relations with him because he accidentally killed Kayin, his *ancestor*, and Tuval Kayin, his *son*. Lemekh was blind; when hunting, his son pulled the bow for him and accidentally shot Kayin. Clapping his hands in anguish, Lemekh killed Tuval Kayin, as well. Lemekh argued: *was* a *man* (Kayin) killed with *my* (intentional) wounding or a *boy* (Tuval Kayin) with *my* (intentional) bruising? It is not *my* murderous wounding or bruising that could be ascribed to me. If Kayin’s *punishment* for intentional murder was suspended for *seven generations*,<sup>26</sup> mine will be suspended for seventy-seven. (J. Kugel<sup>27</sup> suggests the identification of אֵלֶּם as Kayin is because only he is called this so far: ה' ותלד את קין ותאמר קניתי איש את ה' (4:1.) Alternatively, *Genesis Rabbah* 23:4: Lemekh killed no one; his wives separated from him because of the decree of the flood, punishment of Kayin’s *seventh generation*. Lemekh argued, “Did *I* kill<sup>28</sup> Hevel, a *man* in stature, a *boy* in years? Kayin did; if his *punishment* was suspended for *seven generations*, I who did not kill will be spared for seventy-seven.” In both Midrashim instead of A being the introduction and B-C the body of the poem, A is the main petition and B-C the argument.

In the first Midrash’s parallelism the *man* and *boy* are *Kayin* and *Tuval Kayin* respectively, Lemekh’s *ancestor* and his *son*; in the second Midrash the *man/boy*

<sup>22</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 23:4: “If a man why a boy; if a boy why a man?”, Stanley Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel*, “Lamech’s Song to his Wives”: Additional Note on ילד, “Boy” in the Parallelism ילד\איש (Chicago:University of Chicago, 1963) p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> J. Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), RaDaK, *Commentary on Genesis*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Ezra, Malbim.

<sup>25</sup> R. Saadiah Gaon, *Sefer HaGilui (Kitab AlKashaf)* in Y.Kafah, *Pirushei R. Sa’adia Gaon al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963), p. 18 note 11.

<sup>26</sup> Similarly Onkelos, *Genesis Rabbah* 23:4, Rashi, Ibn Ezra.

<sup>27</sup> *In Potiphar’s House*. In *Midrash HaBiur* (M.M. Kasher, *Torah Shilemah* Jerusalem: Beth Torah Shelemah, 1926) Lemekh meets *Kayin* and his (servant) *boy* in the field [(4:8) place of the first murder] and blasphemes them; when they *bruise and wound* him he kills them in self-defense.

<sup>28</sup> Kugel argues that כִּי אִישׁ הֲרַגְתִּי as a negative rhetorical question: “*Did I kill* a man?”, is Mishnaic form. However R. Sa’adia Gaon in *Sefer HaGilui (Kitab AlKashaf)* cites Job 6:22 (הכִּי אֲמַרְתִּי) for “כִּי” as negation and so interprets here in his translation of the Torah (as do the Targumim.). Similarly Ibn Ezra cites כִּי הָאָדָם עָץ הַשֹּׁדֶה (Deut. 20:19). Ibn Janah reads כִּי as “even though.”

is *Hevel*. The first Midrash has a parallelism between the first person ever born, the first killer, and the last born killer in his line of seven, the *ancestor* who killed and his *descendant* who kills him. The first murderer is killed by the last of his line, the first creator of weaponry who perfects his ancestor's craft.<sup>29</sup> In the second Midrash, *man/boy* in B is the first killed person contrasted with the first murderer in C, as the first beginning of a line (*Kayin*) is contrasted with the first end of a line (*Hevel*).

In both Midrashic readings "my wound" means the wound meted out, though James Kugel<sup>30</sup> suggests that the motif of Lemekh's *blindness* is embedded in "my wound," a wound *he received*. If so the ambiguity's two syntactic possibilities are incorporated. However *Genesis Rabbah* 23:4 read it as "Did I kill a man *that wounds should come upon me* because of him, or a boy that *bruises should come upon me?*" R. David Kimhi notes the genitive ambiguity explicitly in his *Commentary* here. He suggests the poem might be a threat to *Lemekh's wives*<sup>31</sup> and offers two readings: I can or will kill a man or boy *with my wound* or bruise, or: *for wounding or bruising me*: an extreme reaction like the sevenfold and seventy-sevenfold vengeance. It can be read as boast about the past or threat for the future (I have killed/or will kill a man and *even* a boy) or as vindication: "Did I kill a man or *even* a boy, did I wound *or even* bruise?," where the intensification is of innocence.

His reading yields interesting results. The threat to force violence upon the same receivers who receive his words makes the poem self-referential. Having forced the receiving of his *killing, wounding, bruising* (הרגתִּילפצעִילחבורתי) on their *receivers* (אישׁוֹלִיד) Lemekh now forces *receiving* (שמעוֹלֵהאזנה) his *voice* and *saying* (קוֹלִילאמרתִּי) on *their* receivers (עדה וצילהֵאנשי למך) (Roman Jakobson's communications model<sup>32</sup> [context+sender+message+receiver+contact+code] perhaps used *very* literally.) This connects the rhymes *קוֹלִילאמרתִּי*הרגתִּילפצעִילחבורתי which are all what Lemekh gives his receivers: poetry and violence in a poem about violence in a narrative about poetry and violence.

In the Midrashic versions Lemekh forces birth on them so that שמען (the apposite of האזנה: to listen to his words and poem) means *submitting to rela-*

<sup>29</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 23:3, Rashi and Ramban to 4:22.

<sup>30</sup> *In Potiphar's House*. R. Obadiah Seforno in his commentary to 4:24 reads Lemekh's poem as lament for his wounding *himself* by killing his father and and son. R. David Z. Hoffman reads it as Lamech's claim that he only meant to *wound* him ("with *my wound*"). Or Lemekh fought back and killed *when he was wounded* (as the Septuagint).

<sup>31</sup> Similarly *Hizkuni*, (R. Hezekiah b. Manoah, early 13th cent.) in (C.D. Chavel ed., *Commentary on the Torah*, Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1980) here.

<sup>32</sup> *Selected Writings* (Hague: Mouton 1967) 3:23. In the schema שמעוֹלֵהאזנה=*receiving*, קוֹלִילאמרתִּילפצעִילחבורתי=*given*, הרגתי=*given/giving*. "Adah and Tzilah" and "wives of Lemekh" (A), "man" and "boy" (B), and "Kayin" and "Lemekh" (C) are all passive *receivers* (or will be or have been) while "I" (=הרגתי, "I killed) (B) is the only one who has conferred an active transitive verb.

tions<sup>33</sup> (as in “ולא שמע אליה לשכב אצלה”, Gen. 39:10), in this reading the message itself. To *hear* him means to listen and *submit, obey*. So שמען, accepting relations and *birth*, the equivalent of האזנה, accepting his poetry in A, counterpoints *killing* in B. Reading שמען as submitting gives האזנה the sense of *obeying* his word besides hearing it. Conquest of women counterpoints his conquest of men. In fact Malbim sees עדה וצילה\נשי למך as intensification of aggression: *Adah and Tzilah* should submit; as women and as *his women* (נשי למך) they must *certainly* submit. (This implies the inherent message of art/song as cultural domination and possible polarity of male/female arts, discussed below. Read literally: if *men* have submitted to his killing and wounding certainly *his women* must submit to his art.)

עדה\וצילה may themselves be connected with שמען\האזנה, the distributed imperative to *hear* and *heed warning*. *Tzilah*, it is noted<sup>34</sup>, plays on צליל “ringing” or צלצלים, cymbals (with כנור ועוגב as here<sup>35</sup>). שמען connects with שמע (“ועוגב הללוהו בצלצלי שמע”, Ps. 150:4-6) as צליל with *hearing* (כל שמעה תצלנה שתי אזניו, I Sam. 3:11, כל שמעו תצלנה שתי אזניו, II Kgs 21:12, כל שמעה תצלנה אזניו, Jer. 19:3). *Adi* (as in “קום בלק ושמען\האזינה עדי בנו צפור”, Num. 23:18, “אזין עד תבונתיכם”, Job 32:11) is translated as hearing “*testimony*” (Septuagint, Peshitta) or based on its Akkadian meaning (“oath,” “covenant”) as hearing “*warning*,”<sup>36</sup> as in Gen. 43:3 העד העד and Ex. 19:21, העד בעם. So עדה\וצילה should *hear* and *heed* (שמען\האזנה) *warning*.

Thus שמען קולי at the poem’s beginning may connect to its end in its threat. The two double-duty words (B-C), הרגתי=“I killed” and יקם=“will be avenged” quote the aftermath of Kayin’s killing, “לכן כל הרג קין שבעתים יקם” (4:15), playing on the murder itself, “ויקם קין אל הבל אחיו ויהרגהו”, as יקם=“will be *avenged*” (4:15) is retribution for יקם=“and Kayin *got up*”<sup>37</sup> to murder<sup>38</sup> (4:8). The poem echoes elements of Kayin’s killing (“. . . ויקם קין ויהרגהו . . .”) (4:8) and its aftermath, imbedded poetry about its avenging (“והיה כל מצאי יהרגני”) (4:13-15) and יקם הרג קין שבעתים יקם (כל), an imbedded poetic fragment in inverted syntax and poetic language. There is a framing symmetry between the poetic speeches about Kayin’s killing in the narrative’s beginning and Lemekh’s poem at its close. Thus קולי, here connected with conquest and aggression, can echo its last

<sup>33</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 23:4: תבען לתשמיש אמרו לו . . . נשמע לך ונהיה פרות רבות למארה, Rashi to 4:23, based on this: להשמע לי לתשמיש. As a Midrashic idiom: *Bavli Sanhedrin* 82a: נשמעות לגיונותי, TJ *Sukah*: רצונך שאשמע לך; *Sifrei Num.* 131: השמע לי

<sup>34</sup> M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1991) p. 95

<sup>35</sup> II Sam 6:5, Ps 105:3, 5; Neh. 12:27; 1 Chr. 15:16, 25:1.

<sup>36</sup> S. Morag, “Archaic Strata: Linguistic Studies in the Oracles of Balaam” [Hebrew], *Tarbitz* 50 (1981) 1-24.

<sup>37</sup> As in Deut 22:26: כאשר יקום איש על רעהו ורצחו.

<sup>38</sup> As in Ex. 21:18-21: נקם ינקם. אם יום או יומים יעמד לא יקם. והכה איש את רעהו\אם יקום והתהלך [יתקיים]

use in God's (poetic) confronting of Kayin's archetypal conquest and murder, קול דמי אחיך צועקים אלי (4:10). Until then, and until *here*, קול was used only in reference to sin and confrontation: the first sin and its confrontation (וישמעו את קול ה' אלהים מתהלך בגן, 3:8) (the *man and woman* hear the sound of God after the sin) and Adam's response, "Because *Your voice I heard* (את קלך שמעתי בגן) (3:10)" to which God counters, "You *listened* to the *voice* of your wife," כי שמעת לקול אשתך (3:17), the *man* listened to the *woman's voice* to sin and not to His. Now in the threat Lemekh's wives must listen to him as he refers to the killing.

So *intensified aggressive* dominion moves horizontally *within* each line, developing vertically down from line to line to intensified crescendo. Adah and Tzilah, women, should listen to his voice; *all the more so* as *his* women, nameless "wives of Lemekh", the imperative is intensified to heed and give ear to what he says, all the more so *because* he has killed a *man* for just wounding him (or with just his wound) and *even* a boy just for bruising him (or with just a bruise) *because* Kayin who only killed *once* is to be avenged *sevenfold*, *but Lemekh* is to be avenged *seventy-sevenfold*. So, do not mess with Lemekh. As his poetry conveys aggressive dominance it conveys the true metaphor of cultural dominance and aggression.

#### BIRTH AND LEMEKH'S FAMILY: NAMES AND OCCUPATIONS IN THE NARRATIVE

What is obvious is that Lemekh's *song of violence* immediately follows the narrative which establishes that he, father of the seventh generation of Kayin, is father of the creators ("*fathers*") of the crafts of *music* and *weaponry*. The names of his sons foreshadow (proleptically) his resultant *song* and also refer backwards (analeptically) to the names of the protagonists and issues of the murder of which he sings.

While the narrative begins with killing and ends with killing<sup>39</sup> it also begins and ends with birth. After Kayin killed Hevel, and God confronted him telling of *sevenfold* retribution, Kayin started a line of descendants described in a verse or so without detail or description until his *seventh* generation.

And then (19-25):

And Lemekh took two wives, the name of one was Adah and the name of the second was Tzilah. And Adah gave birth to Yaval (יבל) he was the father of those who dwell in tents with livestock (הוא היה אבי ישב אהל ומקנה), and the name of his brother was Yuval (יובל) he was the father of all who take the lyre and flute

<sup>39</sup> Y. Kiel, *Sefer Bereishit*, p. 163.

(היה אבי כל תפש כנור ועוגב). And Tzilah, she, too, bore Tuval Kayin (תובל קין), father of all who forge tools of copper and iron (לטש כל חרש נחשת וברזל) and Tuval Kayin's sister was Na'amah.

And Lemekh said to his wives: "Adah and Tzilah, listen to my voice/wives of Lemekh, hear my saying for a man I killed for my wounding and a boy for my bruising.

For sevenfold will be Kayin avenged and Lemekh seventy and seven.

The names of *Yaval* (יבל), *Yuval*, (יובל) and *Tuval Kayin* (תובל קין), seventh generation of Kayin, Hevel's killer, all echo the names of *Hevel* (הבל) and *Kayin* (קין).<sup>40</sup> *Yaval*'s trade reflects Hevel's, shepherding, yet the word for livestock here, ומקנה, in its first Biblical usage, plays off Kayin's name, קין, and its stated etymology: *acquisition* (4:1: ותלד את קין ותאמר קניתי איש את ה' much like *cattle* from *chattel*. *Yovel* is a *ram*<sup>41</sup> and, by extension, also a musical *wind* instrument, a ram's horn (Ex. 19:13, Josh. 6:4-5), reflecting Hevel's craft and *name* (=breath) as in Yuval's musical craft. Tuval Kayin plays markedly on both names and the craft of the killer. Not only does his craft of sharpening metalwork reflect Kayin's craft of killing, in some interpretations raising it to craft and industry<sup>42</sup> but *Kayin* in Akkadian is a metal smith. Later associations of this root with the word for a smith occur in Southern Arabic and other Semitic languages.<sup>43</sup> *Kayin* may itself be the Hebrew translation of 'Tuval,' Sumerian for 'ironsmith'.<sup>44</sup> Y. Kiel cites משקל קינו (II Sam. 21:16) in reference to creating weaponry.<sup>45</sup> *K'nh* also has the sense of *making*, creating.<sup>46</sup>

The presentation of their crafts (יבול הוא היה אבי . . . יובל הוא היה אבי) at the end of the unit (and of Kayin's seventh generation) syntactically echoes the presentation of Kayin's craft (וקין היה עבד אדמה) at its beginning. Similarly והבל הביא גם הוא (4:4), parallels: וצלה גם הוא ילדה (4:22) parallels: והבל הביא גם הוא (4:4), as the same-verb

<sup>40</sup> Noted by Benno Jacob, *Das Erste Buch der Tora: Genesis*, (Berlin, 1934).

<sup>41</sup> See *Bavli Rosh ha-Shanah* 26a, *Yerushalmi Berachot* 9:2.

<sup>42</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 23:3, Rashi and Ramban to 4:22.

<sup>43</sup> Richard S. Hess, "A Comparison of the Omnastica in Genealogical and Narrative Texts of Genesis 1-11," *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, (Jerusalem 1970); G. Ryckmans, *Les Noms Propres Sud Semitiques* (Louvain: Bureaus du Museon, 1934) Vol. I, p. 190, and W.M. Muller "Al Sudarabische Beitrage zum Hebraischen Lexicon, *ZAW* 75 (1963) p. 314.

<sup>44</sup> Y.M Greenitz, יחודו וקדמותו של ספר בראשית, 1983, p. 5, note 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Sefer Bereishit im Pirush Da'at Mikra*. For Aramaic he cites Targum Jonathan translating צורף, a metal craftsman, in Jud. 17:4 as: קינאה and in Jer. 10:9,14, as: קיני, Isa 40:19, 41:7, 46:6 and similarly the Targum to Ps. 66:10, as well as *Yerushalmi Bava Batra* 2:2, כגון קיני או נפח, "such as a metal craftsman or blacksmith" (*Pnei Moshe* there: קיני=צורף). See also *Yerushalmi Sanhedrin* 9, *Bavli Sanhedrin* 81a.

<sup>46</sup> 122 Y. Kiel, *Sefer Bereishit*, p. 102 citing Ex. 15:16, Deut. 32:6, Ps.139:13. See also R. S. Hess, "A Comparison of the Omnastica."

*wayy-iqtol/qatal* pattern:<sup>47</sup> וַיִּבַּל אֶת יָבֶל אֶת־וַיִּתְלַךְ עִדָּה אֶת יָבֶל (20-22) parallels 4:2-6: וַיִּקַּן הָיָה עֶבֶד אֲדָמָה . . . וַיְהִי הַבֵּל רֹעֵה צֹאן וַיִּבְאֶה קַיִן מִפְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה: “והבל הביא גם הוא

As Tuval Kayin’s craft completes Kayin’s in his seventh generation Yaval’s craft of shepherding completes Hevel’s.<sup>48</sup> Lemekh’s *song* counterpoints curiously the strange *silence* of Kayin’s killing: “And Kayin *said to* Hevel his brother/ and it was as they were in the field and Kayin rose on Hevel his brother and he killed him” (ויאמר קין אל הבל אחיו ויהרגהו). The only *sound* associated with the murder was: קול דמי אחיך צעקים אלי (4:10) as the earth silently opened its mouth: מן האדמה אשר פצתה את פיה.

As Kayin and Hevel’s crafts are paralleled in Tuval/Kayin’s and Yaval’s, the silence that preceded the murder is counterpointed by the musical craft of Yuval and the violent song of Lemekh. It has been suggested that the sense of Kayin’s name *k’nh* as smith could also be the root for ‘*song*’ or ‘*dirge*’=קינה<sup>49</sup> a *song* of lament about *death*, connecting the names of Kayin and Tuval Kayin with the craft of Yuval. (See also Jer. 9:9: קינה ועל נאות מדבר קינה \\ על ההרים אשא בכי ונהי ועל נאות מדבר קינה (כי נצתו מבלי איש עובר ולא שמעו קול מקנה). Similarly Tuval Kayin’s sister Na’amah’s name reflects the Ugaritic *n’mh*=‘musician.’ In *Targum Yonatan* she is described as מרת קינין וזמרין, mistress of *dirges* and *songs*, as Tuval Kayin is father and master of the crafts of weaponry.<sup>50</sup> Here קינין (Aramaic for קינות) combines Kayin and Tuval Kayin’s killing and weaponry with Yuval’s music. In the Midrash she plays music (מנעמת), playing the drum for idol worship,<sup>51</sup> which uses the sense of *Naam* as to play music, as in: “נעים זמירות ישראל” (II Sam 23:1) and כל שאו זמרה ותנו תף כנור נעים עם נבל (Ps. 81:3). Tuval Kayin’s sister is Na’amah, his twin.<sup>52</sup> Music is the sister of violence.

Additionally, M. Garsiel<sup>53</sup> notes that their mother’s name *Tzilah* (צילה) plays on *Tzili*, (צליל), “ringing” or מצללים or צלילים (cymbals) mentioned often in connection with the כנור ועוגב (II Sam 6:5, Ps 105:3, 5; Neh. 12:27; 1 Chr. 15:16, 25:1) as here in connection with Yaval’s craft. And as Yaval, Yuval, and Tuval Kayin’s names echo Hevel’s and Kayin’s, with the association of the כינור with

<sup>47</sup> That is, where a finite verb (*wayyiqtol*) before the subject is followed by its inverted form (*qatal*) after its subject.

<sup>48</sup> Ralbag, *Commentary to Genesis*: “With this was filled for the human race what Kayin removed in killing Hevel as that craft was lost in his loss as he died without sons.”

<sup>49</sup> Hess, “A Comparison of the Omnastica in Genealogical and Narrative Texts of Genesis 1-11.”

<sup>50</sup> In *Zohar Hadash* 19b: “She was also expert in the craft of iron-forging like Tuval Kayin her brother.”

<sup>51</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 23:3. The motif of women playing on the drum: Ex. 15:20, Jud. 11:30, Jer. 31:3, Ps. 68:24.

<sup>52</sup> Hizkuni, Ramban, since it does not say *Tzilah continued to give birth*, as by Adah.

<sup>53</sup> *Biblical Names*, p. 95.

the נבל<sup>54</sup> (and Onkelos here translates כניור as “נבלא”) there is perhaps unspoken wordplay with *nevel* playing on *Hevel* (Garsiel<sup>55</sup> and Y. Zakovitch<sup>56</sup> note the phenomenon of tacit wordplay of a name suggested by the other word of an idiomatic word pair.) Additionally, *Hevel* means ‘breath’: Onkelos translates ועגב as אבובא, flute, a wind instrument as *Genesis Rabbah* 23:21 interprets כנור ועגב as ערדבלק וקרבלק, ερδραβλκ and χοραβλκ: in Greek: organ and flute, as both being wind instruments.<sup>57</sup> (Hevel’s name הבל, underscores his fate, ‘vanity’ and the shortness of life<sup>58</sup> (אדם להבל דמה ליימו כצל עובר), Ps. 144:34) or ‘breath’ cut off in its prime.<sup>59</sup>) It is argued that onomastic associations of the feminine names of Kayin’s line are all connected with art or music.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, *Adah* (עדה) could be associated with *Adi* (עדי) *jewelry*, ornamental *metalwork*,<sup>61</sup> as if connected with Tuval Kayin’s craft.<sup>62</sup>

There is the narrative sense that the industries of civilization become the crafts of destruction,<sup>63</sup> as Kayin the first murderer and his sons establish the crafts of civilization and urban collectivity: shepherding, agriculture, building cities, technology, and the arts, without an ethical base as calling on the name of God is profaned (4:26). Tuval Kayin’s craft (לטש כל חרש נחשת וברזל) is ambiguous, connoting either sharpening metal tools for agriculture (I Sam. 13:19-20: **וחרש** לא ימצא בכל ארץ ישראל . . . וירדו . . . ללטוש איש את מחרשתו ואת אתו) or for weaponry (Ps. 7:13 **חרבו ילטש**, 52:4: **כתער מלטש**), as if the potential for industry were perverted, plowshares beaten into swords. In the same sense of breakdown the Midrash<sup>64</sup> reads Yaval’s being **אבי ישב אהל ומקנה** to mean he built houses for idol worship, citing (Ez. 8:3) **סמל הקנאה המקנה**. The association of **מקנה** with idolatry is based on **הם קנאוני בלא אל** (Deut. 32:21), “They made Me *jealous* with non-gods,” following the interpretation of **הוא הוחל לקרא בשם ה’** (4:26) as the calling on the name of God then profaned. In the Midrash, Yuval, too, plays his **כנור ועגב** for idolatry, as Na’amah plays the drum for idol worship. Here is underscored the unspoken obvious association of Kayin,

<sup>54</sup> I Sam. 10:5, II Sam. 6:5, I Kgs 10:12, Ps. 33:2, 57:9, 92:4, 108:3, 150:3, I Chr. 13:8, 25:1,6 II Chr. 5:12, 9:11, 20:28, 29:25, et al.

<sup>55</sup> Garsiel, 102-110.

<sup>56</sup> The Status of the Synonymous Word or Name in Creating Name Wordplay”, [Hebrew] 1977, 100-15, “Explicit and Implicit Name-Derivations,” *Hebrew Annual Review* 4, 167-181.

<sup>57</sup> For כנור as wind instrument: *Bavli Berakhot* 3b

<sup>58</sup> Cassuto, p. 136, Garsiel, p. 92 notes the reversed alliteration of **הוא הבל הביא גם הוא** מבכרות צאנו ומחלבהך.

<sup>59</sup> Hess, “A Comparison of the Omnastica.”

<sup>60</sup> Hess, *ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> Hess, *ibid*, Kiel, p.121.

<sup>62</sup> It could also be connected with *Adah*, conception in Aramaic.

<sup>63</sup> Malbim, Gen. 4:23, Cassuto, p. 130.

<sup>64</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 23:3.

playing on *kinah*, “jealousy.”<sup>65</sup> This may be the wordplay in Deut. 32:21: הם קנאוני בלא אללכעסוני בהבליהם, playing on the *jealousy* and their names as in Eccl. 4:4: קנאת איש מרעהו וגם זה הבל. (R.Y.Z. Mecklenberg, *ba-Ketav ve-ha-Kabalah*, Gen. 4:1 conjectures that קנאה, *jealousy*, is related to desiring *acquisition*, קנה, the etymology of Kayin’s name in Gen. 4:1.) Destruction emerges in the crafts of the seventh generation of Kayin, first killer, and first builder (4:17).

Beyond sevenfold punishment in the seventh generation is the motif of birth and potential for craft and civilization or destruction. Lemekh’s family of seven is the largest family recorded so far in the text, the only one with two wives and multiple births, four children, both sons and daughters. The preceding line of individual sons is passed over in one verse without comment. In this *seventh* generation of Kayin (*murderer* of Hevel who died *childless*) are *seven* people in the creative Lemekh family (Lemekh, his two wives, two sons from one, and a son and a daughter from the other).<sup>66</sup> They are ‘fathers’ of their crafts and of all who will practice them, אבי as both *first* practitioner and *master* of the craft. In fact the word for father, אבי, appears here for the first time in the Bible. Nachmanides writes (Gen. 4:22): “In my opinion, Lemekh was a man who was very wise in every creative craft, and he taught his eldest son the matter of shepherding, and the second the science of music, and the third to sharpen and produce swords and spears and all weaponry.”

Yet in the creation of their destructive crafts they will actually *not* be fathers; they are the end of the line of Kayin, destroyed in the Flood. Lemekh’s being the first to take two women (ויקח לו למך שתי נשים, 4:19) foreshadows the breakdown of חרור אשר מכל אשר בחרו, “and they took themselves women from all they chose” (6:2) before the flood.<sup>67</sup> He is the first whose sons and daughters are listed but they develop crafts which will be used, as the poem implies, to dominate over men and over women. The fathers of the crafts will die, leaving over only the crafts and songs of death. Their line ends with them.

#### COUSIN LEMEKH, THE RELATIVELY MINOR POET OF BIRTH AND HOPE

Lemekh forms a clear opposed pair across the two ante-Diluvian genealogies<sup>68</sup> with his cousin Lemekh II, the minor poet of Seth’s line in 5:28. Each interrupts his genealogy with a largely enigmatic poem, Lemekh I who sings of killing and

<sup>65</sup> Play on *jealousy* is spelled out in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 21.

<sup>66</sup> In *Genesis Rabbah* 22:2, the *first* family had *seven* people: Kayin was born with a twin sister and Hevel with two; Kayin was jealous.

<sup>67</sup> Kiel, *Sefer Bereishit*, p. 136. In *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 21 and *Zohar* I 37a it is the sons of *Kayin* who take them.

<sup>68</sup> For the genealogies’ literary structure, see J. Fokkelman, “Genesis” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 36. In the commentary of Hizkuni: the wives, astrologically predicting the Flood, mistook “Lemekh” (I) for Lemekh (II).

receiving sevenfold and seventy-seven fold vengeance and Lemekh II who sings of birth and reprieve and lives to *seven hundred and seventy-seven* (5:31):

ויחי למך שתים ושמונה שנה ומאת שנה ויולד בן  
ויקרא את שמו נח לאמר זה ינחמנו ממעשנו ומעצבון ידינו מן האדמה אשר אררה ה' . . .  
ויהי כל ימי למך שבע ושבעים שנה ושבעה מאות שנה וימת

While not reported as if Lemekh II *said* a poem<sup>69</sup> but only as if the לאמר were meant to be an etiological explanation of the name Noah, it is a poem or poetic fragment and is indisputably poetic:

זה ינחמנו  
ממעשנו ומעצבון ידינו  
מן האדמה אשר אררה ה'

Kiel<sup>70</sup> notes how the contexts and poems contrast. Lemekh II's poem is prayer and prophecy; he mentions God's name and sovereignty; Lemekh I in his words and certainly his actions shows he has little interest in God.<sup>71</sup> While Kayin appealed to God for protection from the vengeance of which Lemekh sings, Lemekh asks God for nothing; the poem implies he can take his vengeance himself. Self-sufficient with his crafts and those of his sons, he emulates Kayin who was told to wander but instead settled, feeling no longer in need of God's protection because he built a city and registered it under his son's name (4:17-18). The line of Lemekh I ends with the sinful generation destroyed by the Flood; Lemekh II fathers a son who is a "perfect righteous man" who "finds favor in God's eyes" (6:7-8), who alone is worthy of surviving the Flood.

We add that the poems' style and content are also markedly different. Lemekh I's was about killing a man/boy, Lemekh II's is about a son's *birth*. Lemekh I's song is about himself and boasts or threats to the multiplicity of wives he took. Lemekh II's extends beyond himself *and his* wife who just had this son to all people, with whom he identifies. Lemekh killed a boy for the affront of a bruise; Lemekh II gives birth to a son who will comfort the world. His poem, like Lemekh I's sums up his past, present, and future, his son born now (זה) *will* be comfort for the curse of the *past*. Stylistically, Lemekh I's *rhymes* are about himself and dominance over individuals (קולי\אמרת\הרגת\לפצע\לחבורת\י); Lemekh II's are about compassion, comfort and empathy with the communal lot and industriousness of all his generation: ינחמנו\ממעשנו\ומעצבון ידינו.

In Lemekh I's poem, יקם revenge, is retributive reaction to ויקם (4:8), killing;

<sup>69</sup> It is almost unclear if it was Lemekh who called him this name or the people of his generation. The ambiguity itself shows how he gives them a collective voice. The form ויקרא את שמו נח echoes the naming of Shet, the head of his line (ויקרא את שמו שת, 5:3).

<sup>70</sup> *Sefer Bereishit*, p. 64.

<sup>71</sup> Lemekh is 'priest' in Akkadian, and 'strong' in Arabic.



foreshadows with the reversal of Noah's name (וּנַח מִצָּא הָן בְּעִינֵי ה') (6:8) God's subsequent series of reversals and the wordplays connected with them: [וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֱלֹהִים לְבוֹ] אִמְחָה אֶת הָאָדָם (6:6), וַיִּנְחֵם ה' כִּי עָשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ (6:7), וַיִּמְחַו מִן הָאָרֶץ, (7:23), וַתִּנַּח הַתִּיבָה, (8:4), וַיִּרַח ה' אֶת רִיחַ הַנִּיחָח וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים לֹא אֶסַּף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת הָאָדָמָה (8:21) as well as וְלֹא מִצָּאָה הַיּוֹנָה מְנוּחָה (8:9).

In the reversal, Noah becomes the אִישׁ הָאָדָמָה (9:20), inheriting the trade of Kayin the first "אִישׁ" (4:1), In *Tanhuma* 11 he was called Noah, זֶה יִנְחַמְנוּ, because until he came along, they tilled the earth with their hands (מְעַצְבוֹן יְדֵינָו); "and he prepared for them plows, scythes, and work tools." In this he becomes the surviving redemptive sublimation of Tuval Kayin, who perfected Kayin's murderous craft.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps Lemekh's poem means nothing and matters not at all. Perhaps only its narrative context has meaning, the poem itself is unclear and remains so. Just as the crafts of his children become destruction his song is only silence, there is nothing there but the virtuosity of his eloquent incoherence, its form its only substance.

Perhaps its only content is this: Lemekh, father of the fathers of the creative arts, of civilization, of industry and of song, Lemekh the arms dealer and poet,<sup>74</sup> father of weaponry whose brother and twin sister is music and poetry, at the height of his creative and destructive powers uttered this poem of exemplary pure form and no content, read simply and literally: You must listen to my voice and heed my saying because I have killed, and will kill, a man and a boy with my wounding and with my bruising because if Kayin will be avenged sevenfold Lemekh will be avenged seventy-seven fold.

And then, shortly thereafter, the Flood came.

<sup>74</sup> Nachmanides, 4:23.

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## FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: A NEW CONCEPT FOR ORTHODOX SYNAGOGUES

Mike Schultz

### INTRODUCTION

Some shuls have so many members that many families feel lost in the crowd, unnoticed and disconnected. Some shuls do not have a strong feeling of community. Some shuls have an amazing, dynamic rabbi, yet he takes on everything himself and is headed for a burnout. Some of those same shuls have many uninvolved members who would take on a leadership role and do a great job if they were only approached in the right way. Some shuls find that despite putting a lot of work into their programs, they are still poorly attended and the leadership is unsure why. These shuls and others could benefit from Faith-Based Community Organizing (FBCO).

Over the last fifty years, thousands of churches and shuls around the country have internally strengthened their congregations and externally improved the world around them through a technique called Faith-Based Community Organizing. However, to this writer's knowledge, no Orthodox shuls have fully implemented the use of this powerful tool. The purpose of this article is to introduce the reader to an exciting approach to improving a shul's life in the hope that some readers will consider implementing FBCO in their own shuls.

### WHAT FBCO LOOKS LIKE

#### *THE ONE-TO-ONE MEETING*

The key component to all FBCO is a one-to-one meeting between congregants in which the participants get to know each other on a deeper level. Although many of our shuls are blessed with a closeness and intimacy that larger congregations can only dream of, we often know each other very well on a surface level without knowing what really drives our fellow congregants. The goal of a one-

to-one meeting is to ask about and hear each other's story—where we come from, what were significant experiences in our lives that shaped who we are today, and what are our current goals.

It is not easy to do a one-to-one meeting, and it takes training and practice. Usually, in a single meeting, one person is asking about the other. A successful meeting requires the person being asked the questions to be willing to open up, something that we are not accustomed to doing in our society, particularly outside low-income communities. From the perspective of the questioner, the keys are active listening and empathy.

Listening means putting aside all of our own personal stresses and concerns and focusing entirely on what the other participant is saying. Active listening requires asking questions, to draw out what lies behind what is being said. “Why do you say that?” “How come it matters to you?” “Is there a story or experience of yours that underlies what you're saying?” In this way, probing without prying, one can find out where the other is really coming from and what is on his or her mind. Empathy means putting oneself in the other's shoes. Everyone's story is different, and none are less valid for being very different from one's own life. In this way, we can really get to know one another with great understanding and without being judgmental.

The goal of the one-to-one meeting, in addition to strengthening relationships by opening up on a deeper level, is to find out what the other's interests are. Not interests as in hobbies, rather interests meaning self-interest, the things people care about most for their own lives. Because Faith-Based Community Organizing is ultimately about moving from relationship-building to taking action, as we will see, a key part of the one-to-one meeting must be learning where the other's self-interest lies, since those are the same areas where the person will be motivated to take action.

Self-interest can generally be broken into two categories: self-preservation and self-realization. Self-preservation refers to the things a person needs for basic survival: The ability to afford housing, food, health insurance, and day school tuition. Self-realization means those things that this person needs to feel fulfilled, and it could include things like a feeling of achievement, advancement in Jewish learning, the opportunity to teach, taking a public stand on a matter one cares about greatly, being a better Jew, or being respected. Somewhere between these two categories lie the particular issues that matter to individuals, and we will consider later what some of the most common issues in our shuls might be.

Thus, the result of a successful one-to-one meeting is that one participant has formed a strong relationship with the other and now has a better sense of where they're coming from and what kinds of things matter most to them.

#### ***FBCO ON A SMALL SCALE***

Full-fledged FBCO involves hundreds of one-to-one meetings. However, before we look at that method, we will consider using the one-to-one technique in a

limited fashion that has the potential to get a much larger percentage of shul members actively involved in shul life in a way that they find fulfilling and that keeps the current leadership from burning out.

Rabbis and shul leaders should consider setting up one-to-one meetings with members who haven't been so involved in shul life but who the leadership thinks could have a lot to contribute. Similarly, they might look to meet with people who are currently involved in leadership but not finding it fulfilling. By having these meetings, the shul leadership shows that it really cares about the member, who may have been feeling isolated and unvalued, and also learns ways in which it can better involve the member. If, in conversation, one learns that a member really feels fulfilled when he or she teaches others, then the next step would be to find a place for the member within the shul's education program. If one learns that a member feels like an outlier in the current congregation, then perhaps they would be motivated to work on the shul's membership drive to bring in more members like themselves.

It is certainly no *hiddush* that it is a good idea to reach out to the membership, but it seems that this outreach often happens in a variety of formats. We are suggesting, based on many years of experience of those who do FBCO, that following the precise form of the one-to-one meeting will make this outreach more successful. The one-to-one needs to be face to face, with just the two participants, and should usually last 30-45 minutes. This format is more private and longer than the usual conversation, and is certainly more personal. By drawing out people's stories and interests in a way that gets them to reflect on what really matters to them and that helps you understand what they're really about, the leadership will be much more likely to figure out an appropriate way to match the congregant's self-interest with ongoing shul needs.

#### ***FULL-FLEDGED FBCO***

For the more adventurous shul, FBCO means a multiyear program of relationship-building, leadership development, and taking action on the issues that matter most to the congregation. Although the format varies to some degree from shul to shul, we will present a typical model of full-fledged FBCO in which dozens of shuls around the country have participated.

The commitment to trying out FBCO usually begins on the formal level, with board discussion and approval. From there, the shul forms a core team that is representative of the membership, perhaps ten to twenty people, who commit to doing a set number of one-to-one meetings over a specified time of a month or two. These leaders receive training in doing successful personal meetings and will orchestrate the campaign as it develops. The goals of those one-to-one meetings should include identifying additional leaders. At that point, after about two months, hopefully enough excitement will have been generated to expand the relationship-building across the shul. This may include an event of hundreds of simultaneous one-to-one meetings after shul one week instead of a sermon,

and hopefully transform into an extended campaign of one-to-one meetings and house meetings. House meetings, in which ten members gather together, directed by one of the trained leaders, become more practical than one-to-one meetings as the project grows in scope.

The goal of this expanded relationship building campaign, in addition to enabling the members of the congregation to get to know each other better, should be to identify major issues that come up again and again in one-to-one and house meetings. After three to four months of the expanded campaign, which might successively have one-to-one, then house, then congregation-wide meetings, the two or three most important and most common issues should be identified for the purpose of doing something about them.

There are any number of issues which might come up. Some shuls will choose to focus the conversations all along to a limited area; for example, B'nai Jeshurun, in New York, chose social justice work from the beginning and that's what the meetings focused on. However, it is not necessary to restrict the focus. One suggestion is that the congregation should try to identify two issues, one internal and one external. Internal issues might include membership size, handicapped access of the shul, the educational programming, teenage drug and alcohol use, or how the shul does outreach. Because of all the conversations that went into identifying these issues and the leadership that was developed along the way, the shul can be certain that these are issues of key importance and that shul members will now work to resolve them. External issues might include getting the local school district to pay for busing to or textbooks for the day school, working on zoning permissions to expand the shul, making the local parks handicapped accessible, creating more green space for kids to play in, prescription drugs for seniors, or larger communal issues such as getting affordable housing built or addressing the rising costs of health insurance.

Many of the congregations that have done FBCO on this level have focused on what we might consider larger communal social justice issues. However, for any shul to get excited enough about an issue to want to do something about it, they have to see effecting that change as being in their self-interest. Given that we are focusing on Orthodox shuls, one would hope that being a good, halakhic Jew would be religiously fulfilling for us and we would see it as being in our own interest. Thus, it is perhaps most incumbent on the rabbi to remind the congregation of the Jewish imperative to be involved in bettering the world around them, particularly in areas of housing, food, education, equal rights, health, and the environment.

Once the focal issues have been identified, the congregation should develop an action group for each issue to analyze the issue and determine which steps need to be taken next. Action is critical—some people have a tendency to enjoy speaking a great deal but won't move to action on their own, so it needs to be a clear part of the plan. Others, who put a lot of effort into the conversations, will be very frustrated if there is only talking but no action. For the campaign to be

worth all the time that went into it, it needs to culminate in action and, hopefully, success. Some shuls may be wary of “getting involved in politics,” but that is often the only way to accomplish the things that matter to the congregants. Because so much of the congregation has gotten involved and will support the action steps, the action taken will have the combined power of a whole congregation behind it and will be much more likely to succeed than if the shul had skipped the steps of relationship building and leadership development.

Congregations need not be alone in trying to do all this. There are professional organizers and various groups around the country who can provide the initial training and ongoing guidance both during the relationship building campaign and into developing and carrying out a successful plan of action. A plan of action for one of the external issues, in particular, can be quite complicated, involving determining all the people who have a stake in the decision and what their interests are and how to align their interests with the shul’s. This professional assistance requires some financial commitment by the shul. Additionally, in most major cities there is a broad-based organization of congregations who are all doing FBCO and who commit to working together. National umbrella networks of these organizations include the Industrial Areas Foundation, The Gamaliel Foundation, PICO National Network, and DART, the Direct Action and Research Training Center.

Should a shul consider joining one of these broad-based organizations, it has the benefit of joining their power with the power of dozen of other congregations in the area, leading to the potential for exerting major influence in the local arena. The downside, in addition to cost, is the difficult questions it raises about Jewish–non-Jewish interactions. We feel that in areas of bettering the community, there should be no hesitancy about working together with churches, and in fact this is precisely the primary area in which interaction should be happening. However, given that a common form of action is to bring members of all the congregations together in one place to confront the decision-maker on a particular issue, the halakhic question of entering into a church, which is often the only venue large enough to hold such events, must be considered.

There are also other possible models for the partnerships that a shul engaged in FBCO would want to form. Perhaps once a number of Orthodox shuls have begun participating in FBCO, an Orthodox FBCO network could be formed to share best practices, jointly fund training, and act on issues of common concern, such as Israeli poverty, anti-Semitism, the cost of day school tuition, and continued American support for Israel. Alternatively, shuls might partner with local nonprofit organizations active in the community, and it is this model that we will explore in a brief case study.

## CASE STUDY

B'nai Jeshurun (BJ), a Conservative synagogue on the upper west side of Manhattan, has three full-time rabbis and many hundreds of member families, so many that the shul has to work hard to maintain a strong feeling of community. As a synagogue with social justice among its core values and with a sense that its great numbers could bring about significant social change, BJ in 2002 was looking for ways to improve its social justice efforts when it found out about FBCO. After doing their research, the rabbis and board signed on to an effort that would be intensive and long but held the potential to both build community within the shul and transform the way social justice work was done in the shul. Appropriately, they called their campaign "*Panim el Panim*."

BJ followed the full-fledged model described above, beginning with a smaller set of personal meetings and then expanding their efforts with kickoff events for the whole shul on Yom Kippur and Sukkot in which hundreds of congregants simultaneously engaged in one-to-one conversation. After a year of planning and building relationships through one-to-one meetings and house meetings, the congregation identified four areas of broad interest: women's rights, environmental action, economic hardship / healthcare access, and children at risk. They created four action groups, each with a core team of leaders and a number of other committed congregants, and these groups had some significant successes. The work of the children at risk group led to a tutoring partnership between BJ and a nearby public school in Harlem. Most notably, the healthcare access group campaigned for and got a law passed in the city council providing health care for 6,000 grocery store workers and ensuring continued health insurance for thousands more. A law modeled on the BJ proposition has now been introduced in the state legislature.

FBCO on a large scale always requires partnerships, and BJ worked on its own to find the right partners for them. Although the local FBCO organization in BJ's area, Upper Manhattan Together, provided some of the initial training, BJ ultimately chose not to join that larger group. Instead, BJ formed individual partnerships with a number of groups, as well as a long-term partnership for training and action with a coalition of labor, community, and faith groups organized by New York Jobs with Justice. BJ's *Panim el Panim* campaign was very successful at strengthening BJ's community and deepening members' sense of the fundamental Jewish importance of social justice work, and at the same time, it made a significant impact on the well-being of many workers in the community.

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## DIFFICULTIES

There will be a number of challenges to implementing FBCO that must be overcome:

- Many people may be uncomfortable opening up in a one-to-one meeting, and so the leadership needs to be very honest from the start about the purpose of the meeting.
- There may also be resistance to starting the process in the first place, as there is against many new ideas. There needs to be considerable initial discussion among the board and other lay leaders and a clear decision made to go ahead with the full-scale FBCO.
- There may also be some resistance among those lay leaders who currently hold the “power” in the congregation to engaging in a process that is, in large part, about democratizing the shul. In the full process, there is a long ramp-up period of conversations before any action is taken, and this may leave some people feeling frustrated, but if the leadership is committed to having the conversations lead to action, ultimately the eager members should be satisfied with the result.

## SKILLS OR TRAININGS NEEDED

Whether a shul employs FBCO on a small or on a large scale, shul leaders who are involved need to be trained in the process of carrying out one-to-one meetings. For the full FBCO model, leaders also need to learn how to run effective house meetings, how to analyze an issue and come up with a campaign to address it, and how to effectively take action. The FBCO model for taking action, which we did not describe here, varies case by case but has specific frameworks and approaches that are not always intuitive.

## THE BENEFITS OF FBCO

There are many benefits to a shul that participates in FBCO, several of which we already alluded to in passing.

- Congregants feel included and valued.
- In a shul where a small number of members seem to dominate the current discussion, the result of FBCO can be a greater feeling of equality of all members.

- More congregants get involved in current shul activities, and greater lay leadership is developed.
- Stronger and deeper relationships develop within the shul.
- Programming develops from the bottom up and always meets congregants' interests. FBCO will not only lead to large campaigns, but the lines of communication it opens will also bring out ideas for ongoing programming. In this way, the programming leadership won't have to guess what people are interested in.
- Some of the most important issues to the congregants get addressed in a well thought out, satisfactory manner.

## CONCLUSION

A number of Orthodox shuls around the country have begun exploring the potential of community organizing as a tool for strengthening our communities and improving the world around us. Hopefully, there will soon be several model programs to learn from, demonstrating how these challenges are worked out in practice in an Orthodox setting and sharing great successes to inspire us all in this work.

## RESOURCES

Jewish Fund for Justice, [www.jfjustice.org](http://www.jfjustice.org)  
Industrial Areas Foundation, [www.industrialareasfoundation.org](http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org)  
Gamaliel Foundation, [www.gamaliel.org](http://www.gamaliel.org)  
DART Center, [www.thedartcenter.org](http://www.thedartcenter.org)  
PICO National Network, [www.piconetwork.org](http://www.piconetwork.org)  
B'nai Jeshurun, [www.bj.org](http://www.bj.org), Guy Austrian, Director of Social Action/Social Justice, [gaustrian@bj.org](mailto:gaustrian@bj.org) or 212-787-7600.  
Jewish Community Relations Council of Boston // Greater Boston Synagogue Organizing Project, lead organizer Meir Lakien.

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## ON THE COMMANDMENT TO BELIEVE IN GOD

Ari Weiss

It is generally assumed that there is a positive commandment to believe in God. The source of this assumption is the Ten Commandments which begins with the declaration that “I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of Egypt.”<sup>1</sup> This assumption was strengthened by the pervasive influence of Rambam who began his great work the *Mishneh Torah* by stating that “the foundation of foundations and the column of the sciences is to know that there is a First Existent, and He is the bringer into existence of every existing thing. . . . And knowledge of this is a positive commandment. . . . And anyone who entertains in his mind that there is another deity besides this, transgresses a negative commandment”<sup>2</sup> Despite Rambam’s influence, dissenting voices have always existed within the Jewish philosophical tradition which challenge the idea that beliefs, including belief in God, can be governed by the Law and its commandments. These minority opinions do not dispute that philosophy, which is the science of true beliefs, is essential to Judaism; what they do dispute is the ability of God’s Law to *command* a set of beliefs or dogmas. This disagreement is of the greatest importance to Jews who feel obligated to live their lives according to the Law and who allow the commandments to regulate their everyday behavior: What type of life does the *halakhah* envision? What type of being is Man and how does following the *halakhah* lead to his perfection? By separating philosophy from the Law, these voices challenge Rambam’s identification of the perfection of beliefs as the *telos*, or goal, of the Law and ultimate perfection of Man.

The division of beliefs and commandments predates Rambam by several hundred years. The *Halakhot Gedolot*,<sup>3</sup> the first work dedicated to enumerating the

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:2. Translations from Biblical texts are taken from *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985) except when the verses appear in a larger translated citation.

<sup>2</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “Yesodei ha-Torah” 1:1, 5-6 quoted in Warren Zev Harvey, *Hasdai Crescas’ Critique of the Theory of the Acquired Intellect*, doctoral diss., Columbia University, 1973 (University Microfilms, no.74-1288) (henceforth, Harvey 1973), p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> The authorship of *Halakhot Gedolot* is a matter of dispute. It has been ascribed to Sherira Gaon or Hai Gaon by the scholars of Spain and Provence and to R. Simeon Kayyara or Yehudai Gaon by the scholars of Northern France and Germany. See Yehoshua Horowitz, “Halakhot Gedolot,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971) 1167-1170.

six hundred and thirteen Biblical commandments omits belief in God as a commandment.<sup>4</sup> It is unclear why the *Halakhot Gedolot* omits this commandment. Ramban in his gloss to the first positive commandment in Rambam's *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*—in which Rambam counts the belief in the existence of as a positive commandment—gives the following rationale why the author of the *Halakhot Gedolot* did not include belief in God as a commandment:

The Rabbis of Blessed Memory interpreted [this commandment] as acceptance of His kingdom, may He be exalted, and this is belief in His Divinity. They said in the *Mekhilta* “why was ‘you shall have no other gods besides me’<sup>5</sup> spoken since God already said “I am Lord your God?”<sup>6</sup> An analogy to a king that went to rule in a new country. The king's official's said to him “legislate laws for the population.” The king responded “before I legislate laws for the population, the population must first accept my sovereignty. For if they do accept my sovereignty then how can they fulfill my laws?” Likewise the Omnipresent said to Israel “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods besides me I am He whose Kingship you accepted while in Egypt.” They said “yes.” “Just as you accepted my Kingship then, accept My laws now—do not have. . . .”<sup>7</sup>

After all this, I saw that the *Ba'al Halakhot* did not count this commandment within the 613 [commandments]. . . . And it appears from the opinion of the *Ba'al Halakhot* that the only laws he counted as a commandment within the 613 are those laws which He, may He be exalted, commanded concerning doing an action or refraining from doing an action. Belief in His Existence, may He be exalted, which He informed us through His signs and miracles and the revelation of His Presence in front of our eyes is the essence and root from which the *mitzvot* are born and are therefore not counted. And this is the saying of the sages [quoted above]: they [the king's officials] said to him [the king] “legislate for them laws” he responded, “first they must accept my sovereignty and then I will legislate for them.” He made the acceptance of sovereignty a topic unto itself and the *mitzvot* and the Laws a topic unto itself.<sup>8</sup>

Both opinions in this passage agree that the Law by itself cannot establish itself as authoritative since for the Law to be authoritative, it requires a prior event or

<sup>4</sup> The source for this genre is *Makkot* 23b-24a.

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 20:3.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* 20:2.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* 20:3.

<sup>8</sup> *Hassagot ha-Ramban al ha-Ramban* “First Postive Commandment.” My own translation.

principle to function as its justification. According to the opinion of the *Mekhilta*, the justification for the Law was the acceptance of God's sovereignty in Egypt. Having established God's right to legislate for the Jewish people, the Ten Commandments can begin with commandments of belief. Ramban's interpretation of the *Halakhot Gedolot* disagrees with the *Mekhilta*. According to this interpretation, all the miracles and signs which God displayed during the exodus were necessary for the Jews to believe in God. This belief in God, and its negative corollary not believing in other gods, can then serve as the justification for the Law. As a justification for the Law, they are not governed by the Law; the Law does not command them and they are therefore not commandments. Instead of commandment, their declaration by God at Sinai is a prolegomena for the Law. While this interpretation of the *Halakhot Gedolot* argues that the commandments are constituted only by actions and not beliefs, it is not clear why beliefs which are not principles of the Law cannot be commanded nor does it develop the implications of this argument. It will remain for the philosophy of the late fourteenth century thinker R. Hasdai Crescas<sup>9</sup> to develop the *Halakhot Gedolot's* thought into an innovative theory of the function of beliefs and why they cannot be commanded.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas (1340-1411) a philosopher and Talmudist was also the Chief Rabbi of Aragon and advisor to King John I and Queen Violante. He did much to rebuild the Jewish communities of Spain after the massacres and mass conversions of 1391 in which thousands were killed, including his own son, and over two hundred thousand Jews were forcibly converted. Four works of his are presently extant *The Epistle to the Jewish Communities of Avignon* detailing the massacres of 1391, a Passover sermon about free will and determinism, a Hebrew translation/paraphrase of *The Refutation of the Principles of Christianity* which was originally composed in Catalan, and his *magnum opus*, *The Candle of the Lord*, of which he only completed the introduction and the philosophical first section *The Light of the Lord* passing away before he completed the second section, *The Commandment Candle*, which was to have dealt with questions of Jewish Law. See Harvey, 1973, p. 13-20, Warren Zev Harvey, "The Philosopher and Politics: Gersonides and Crescas" in *Scholars and Scholarship: The Interaction between Judaism and other Cultures* ed. Leo Landman (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1990), (henceforth, Harvey 1990) p. 55-59, and Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004) (henceforth, Kellner), p. 108.

<sup>10</sup> See Kellner, p. 108-121. This is not to say that R. Crescas thought that beliefs and philosophy are not essential for Jewish practice. In *The Light of the Lord*, R. Crescas develops a four-tiered belief structure. The foundational level of beliefs are the *shorashim* (roots) of religion. They presuppose the Law and include the belief in God's existence, His unity, and His incorporeality. The second level of beliefs are the *pinnot* (cornerstones) of the *Torah* and are necessary for revelation. They include belief in God's knowledge of particulars, providence, God's power, choice, and the purposefulness of the *Torah*. The third level of beliefs are beliefs taught by the *Torah*, both implicitly and explicitly, and include belief in creation *ex nihilo*, immortality, reward and punishment, resurrection, eternity of the *Torah*, Mosaic prophecy, the revelatory ability of the *Urim*

R. Crescas begins his argument by substituting Ramban's analogical and textual reasoning with a logical analysis. R. Crescas asserts that "the root of the principles of the divine Law is the belief in the existence of God, may He be blessed."<sup>11</sup> Belief in the existence of God is a necessary condition for a divine Law since "the Law is composed and commanded by a composer and commander, and the signification of its being 'divine' is nothing other than that the composer and the commander is God, my He be Blessed."<sup>12</sup> A divine law is therefore *by definition* divine since its composer and commander is divine. It follows that to speak of a divine law, one would have to presuppose divinity; if God did not exist no law could be divine. Now this divine commander could not command belief in Himself since to do so "we would have to have posited a belief in the existence of God prior in knowledge to the belief in the existence of God!" However, if we were to posit a belief in the existence of God prior to the belief in the existence of God, we would require an additional commandment for this belief as well for "if we were to posit also that the prior belief in the existence of God is a commandment, it again would be necessitated that there be a prior belief in the existence of God, and so *ad infinitum*. And it would follow that the belief in the existence of God would be an infinite [number of] commandments! Now this is utterly absurd."<sup>13</sup> The commandment to believe in God logically leads to an infinite regress. This leads R. Crescas to conclude that "he<sup>14</sup> committed a notorious error when he counted as a positive commandment to believe in the existence of God, may He be blessed."<sup>15</sup>

*ve-Tummim*, the Messiah, that God answers prayers and the priestly blessings, the efficacy of repentance, and that the Day of Atonement and the other holiday arouse us to worship God. The fourth level involve beliefs regarding which the tradition is silent. They include the following questions:

- (1) Is the world eternal *a parte post*?
- (2) Can another world, or worlds, exist?
- (3) Are the spheres living and rational?
- (4) Do the movements of the heavenly bodies influence the fates of men? Do amulets and charms have effects on the activities of men?
- (5) concerning demons;
- (7) Can a human soul move? This is what one school of scholars calls transmigration.
- (8) Is the soul of an uneducated youth immortal?
- (9) concerning paradise and hell;
- (10) Does *Ma'aseh Bereishit* refer to physics and does *Ma'aseh ha-Merkavah* refer to metaphysics, as some of the scholars of our people have held?
- (11) Are the intellect, the intellectually cognizing subject, and intellectually cognized object identical or not?
- (12) concerning the Prime Mover;
- (13) concerning the impossibility of knowing God's essence. (R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord* (Vienna, 1859/60) p. 85a translated by Kellner, p. 116.)

<sup>11</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Preface translated in Harvey 1973, p. 223.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* p. 224.

<sup>14</sup> Don Isaac Abravanel takes this as referring to Rambam. See Kellner, p. 264.

<sup>15</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Preface translated in Harvey 1973, p. 223.

R. Crescas summarizes this argument in simpler language by stating that “inasmuch as it is evident that this belief is the root and principle of the entirety of the commandments, if we count it among the commandments, it will follow that it is its own principle. This is utterly absurd.”<sup>16</sup> The assertion that a principle is categorically different than what it serves as a justification for is Aristotelian in origin. According to Aristotle, the principle of a science cannot be something proved in that science and the principle of motion must be stationary.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the principle of the commandments cannot itself be commanded.

At this point R. Crescas has simply reiterated the Ramban’s interpretation of the *Halakhot Gedolot*, albeit in a slightly more sophisticated language. In order to move beyond the *Halakhot Gedolot*, R. Crescas must rethink what a commandment is and why beliefs cannot be commanded. According to R. Crescas “it will be seen from the signification and definition of the term ‘commandment’ that it does not pertain except to things which involve will and choice. Consequently, if beliefs and opinions do not involve will and choice, it will follow that the signification of the term ‘commandment’ will not pertain to them.”<sup>18</sup> The concept “commandment,” according to R. Crescas, governs only beliefs or actions in which human will and choice play a role. If a belief or action is brought upon by a “feeling of compulsion or constraint,”<sup>19</sup> then it does not “involve will and choice” and such an action or belief cannot be categorized as a commandment. R. Crescas did not believe that beliefs are open to “will and choice” for several reasons, one of which will concern us here.<sup>20</sup> Warren Zev Harvey has given the following definition of belief and the consequences of belief in R. Crescas’ epistemology. According to Harvey, a belief is

the affirmation that a thing is extramentally as it is the soul, [therefore a belief] must be ultimately determined by the extramental thing. Thus, he who believes something is *coerced* into believing it, and he has no escape from believing it; he does not have the choice to accept it or reject it, for the proofs, whether they be demonstrative or only probable, do not arise in his soul but extramentally. To put it another way: we cannot change our belief that  $1+1=2$  by willing to believe that  $1+1=3$ .<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p. 224.

<sup>17</sup> Harvey 1973, p. 225.

<sup>18</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Preface translated in Harvey 1973, p. 225.

<sup>19</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3. translated in Warren Zev Harvey, *Physics and Metaphysics in Hasdai Crescas* (Amsterdam Studies in Jewish Thought; Amsterdam, 1998) (henceforth Harvey 1998), p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> R. Crescas gives two other reasons: if beliefs were dependent on will then one could will oneself to believe in contradictory propositions thereby violating the law of non-contradiction and if beliefs were dependent on will, then the will would be the grounds for belief. However one could will oneself to believe in many things such as horses with wings. Therefore all beliefs would be somewhat suspect. See Harvey 1973, p. 225-226.

Beliefs, according to R. Crescas, are impressed upon the mind of the believer extra-mentally or from the outside. Once a proof is offered, the believer is compelled to believe it. For example, once someone learns the rules of mathematics, he cannot will himself to believe that  $1+1=3$ . Since beliefs are always accompanied by a “feeling of compulsion or constraint,” and are not subject to “will and choice” then, *categorically*, beliefs cannot be commanded. While R. Crescas thought that actions, like beliefs, were casually determined,<sup>22</sup> actions differ from beliefs in that actions are performed “in such a way that the agent does not feel any restraint or compulsion, and this is the secret of choice and will.”<sup>23</sup> Since actions are performed voluntarily and are not accompanied by “compulsion or restraint” only actions, and not beliefs, can be commanded. And since God is just, only commandments, and not beliefs, merit reward and punishment.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Harvey 1973, p. 226.

<sup>22</sup> According to R. Crescas all actions are casual in the sense that there are conscious and unconscious causes which determine our actions. Harvey writes that “everything has causes; and when these causes are present, their effects are necessary. But the causes also have causes, and those causes too have causes, and so on until the First Cause. Therefore all is causes, i.e., all is necessary.” (Harvey 1998, p. 140) According to R. Crescas, these causes can be decisive in a case in which “a man by virtue of his essence has the possibility of willing either of two alternatives equally, were it not for a *cause* that that necessitates his willing one of them.” (R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3 translated in Harvey 1998, p. 151).

<sup>23</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3 translated in Harvey 1998, p. 151

<sup>24</sup> “But as for acts performed under compulsion or restraint, that is, if an individual acts while compelled or restraint, and does not perform them voluntarily, then since he is not acting in accordance with the agreement of his appetitive and imaginative facilities [i.e. the will], it is not an action of his soul, and it is not proper that punishment accrue to it.” (R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 3 translated in Harvey 1998, p. 151) It follows from this thought that since one is only rewarded or punished for those actions or beliefs for which he is commanded, and beliefs are never commanded, it follows that one is never rewarded or punished for erroneous or deviant beliefs. R. Crescas modifies this thought by saying that although one is never punished for erroneous or deviant beliefs, he is rewarded for the joy he feels in holding proper beliefs and the anguish he feels for entertaining erroneous beliefs since joy and anguish are dispositions freely chosen by the will and can therefore be subject to reward and punishment. However this raises the following difficulty: if belief in the existence of God is the principle of the Law, and if this belief is not open for human will and choice to determine but is in fact casually determined, and if it is the Law which informs Jews that they are rewarded and punished for their choices which are the actions that they perform and the dispositions such as a joy in having correct beliefs or anguish which they feel, then what is the motivation for someone who does not believe in God’s existence to feel anguish over this fact. Either he realizes his beliefs are erroneous and, realizing his error, accepts belief in God or he will not believe that the Law is divine, since a Law is divine only if its giver is divine. Since the Law informs us that one receives reward or punishment over dispositions such as joy or anguish this person who rejects the divine nature of the Law is no longer commanded to feel anguish over this fact. Likewise, according to R. Crescas,

In separating beliefs from the Law, R' Crescas has demonstrated that the Law does not legislate beliefs and the purpose of the Law cannot be the perfection of belief. While philosophy might be prior to the Law, the Law itself is silent on issues of knowledge or dogma. In understanding the function of the Law this manner, R' Crescas not only challenges Rambam's opinion that belief in God is a positive commandment but several of the underlying premises of Maimonidian philosophy.

According to Rambam, intellect is the form of humanity.<sup>25</sup> It is on account of the human capacity for intellectual apprehension that it is written that "in the image of God created He him."<sup>26</sup> Humans are born with only the *hylic* intellect. That is, they only have an intellect *in potenita*.<sup>27</sup> In order to realize their humanity, it is necessary to actualize the *hylic* intellect and thereby acquire the acquired intellect. This is done through studying physics and metaphysics in which one can, perhaps, gain knowledge of the intelligibles.<sup>28</sup> Ultimate human perfection is achieved with "the conception of intelligibles, which teach true opinions concerning the divine things. This is the true reality the ultimate end; this is what gives the individual true perfection, a perfection belonging to him alone; and it gives him permanent perdurance; through it man is man."<sup>29</sup> The purpose of the Law, according to Rambam, is to bring us to "the soundness of the beliefs and the giving of correct opinions through which ultimate perfection [perfection of the soul] is achieved."<sup>30</sup> It is the attention given to matters of cor-

he should not be punished for failing to feel anguish since the commandment to feel anguish is commanded by the Law which is grounded in belief in existence of God a belief which he fails to believe in through no fault of his own.

<sup>25</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) 1:1, p. 22. All citations from the Guide of the Perplexed are from this edition.

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>27</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 1:68, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, Introduction to the first part, p. 6. Whether Rambam thought that it was possible for humans to gain knowledge of the intelligibles is one of the most obscure and debated subjects in Maimonidian philosophy until this day. Shlomo Pines in "The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Tews (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) p. 82-109 claimed that knowledge of the intelligibles is ultimately outside the possibility of human cognition while Alexander Altmann in "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics" in *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung: Studien zur jüdischen Geistesgeschichte* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987) p. 60-129 allowed for the possibility of some conjunction. It should be noted that R. Crescas doubted that Rambam's position allowed for any knowledge of the intelligibles. In explaining R. Crescas's interpretation of Rambam, Harvey writes "it is knowledge of incorporeal things which secures human immortality, and it is the incorporeal things alone which are humanly unknowable." Harvey, 1973 p. 60.

<sup>29</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:54, p. 635.

<sup>30</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p.511.

rect belief which make any given law code divine.<sup>31</sup> It so happens that the true Law is the Law of *Moses our Master*.<sup>32</sup>

Humans, however, are not purely or primarily intellect. They are composed of skin and blood, of wants and emotions. This material beingness is governed by the sensitive, appetitive, and imaginative faculties. Prior to reaching ultimate perfection, this human materialness must be overcome. The second purpose of the Law is to help humans transcend their embodiedness. This is accomplished by observing the majority of the commandments whose end is “the welfare of the states of people in their relations with one another through the abolition of reciprocal wrongdoing and through the acquisition of a noble and excellent character.”<sup>33</sup> It emerges from Rambam’s discussion that all but a small minority of commandments are functional; they are “not intended for its own sake, but for the sake of something else, as if this were a ruse invented for our benefit by God in order to achieve His first intention.”<sup>34</sup>

Belief or knowledge of God is not a functional commandment; its fulfillment leads to human perfection.<sup>35</sup> As a commandment which is not-for-another but for-itself, it is the *telos* of the other commandments and by extension the *telos* of the Law as a whole. In placing the belief and knowledge of God as the first positive commandment in the *Sefer Hamitzvot* as well as at the beginning of the *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam was applying what he wrote elsewhere about God: “He puts the ultimate perfection first because of its nobility; for, as we have explained, it is the ultimate end. It is referred to in the dictum: ‘For our good always.’”<sup>36-37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 2:40, p. 384. Shlomo Pines raises the following intriguing observation: in the *Guide* 2:39, Rambam categorically states the Judaism is the only possible divine law. However, in 2:40 Rambam gives the criteria for a divine Law as “inculcating correct opinions with regard to God, may He be exalted, and with regard the angels, and that desires to make him wise . . . that Law is divine.” (Moses Maimonides, *Guide* 2:40, p. 384). Now while Moses was the only possible law *giver* and that all other law givers are plagiarists, other law *codes* such as the Koran and the New Testament might be considered divine if they inculcate correct beliefs. See Shlomo Pines, “Translator’s Introduction: The Philosophical Sources of *The Guide of the Perplexed*,” in his translation of the *Guide*, p. xc.

<sup>32</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p. 511.

<sup>33</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p. 511.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* p. 527.

<sup>35</sup> Rambam formulates this commandment differently in different place. In *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* 1:1, Rambam uses the word belief. In *Mishneh Torah* “*Yesodei Torah*” 1:1, Rambam writes that the commandment is to know God. There are several possible answers to this contradiction including the possibility that Rambam might have changed his mind after he completed the *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, it could be that the Arabic term for belief that Rambam used in writing *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* is synonymous with knowledge, or it could be that they are two different commandments. See Harvey 1973, p. 221.

<sup>36</sup> Deuteronomy 6:24.

<sup>37</sup> Moses Maimonides, *Guide*, 3:27, p. 511.

Although R. Crescas claims that the Law is silent about philosophy, he himself hardly is. Throughout his writings, R. Crescas emphatically rejects the Maimonidian identification of the soul which survives death with the acquired intellect.<sup>38</sup> While R. Crescas agreed with Rambam “that the soul of man, which is his form, is a spiritual substance, disposed to intellectual cognition,” he disagreed that it is not “intellectually cognizing *in actu per se* [i.e. the acquired intellect].”<sup>39</sup> Rather, according to R. Crescas “the soul has an essence other than intellectual cognition, even though its quiddity is inscrutable to us.” It follows that R. Crescas would replace belief or knowledge of God with the voluntarily performance of the commandments as the true *telos* of the Law. In this vein, R. Crescas writes that:

According to what appears in the words of our Rabbis of blessed memory, the teleological element is the practical element. Thus, it appears in their discourses that some of them said “practice is greater [than study];” but in the end they voted and concluded that “study is greater in that study brings one to practice.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, they reckoned the practical element to be the final cause of the theoretical.<sup>41</sup>

As expected, in this passage R. Crescas substitutes the practical life for the theoretical life as the true purpose of the Law. In this scheme, it is knowledge and beliefs which are functional; they are necessary in as much as they serve as a foundation for the commandments.

However when discussing the “true happiness of the soul”<sup>42</sup> which is the ultimate human end, R. Crescas not only requires the performance of the commandments, he requires that they be performed with love. It is this “passionate love and the joy” which is “the desired purpose in acts of divine service and in good deeds.” By performing the commandments with love, the believer is serving God with the *will*, the human faculty which humans have the most control over and which, unlike beliefs, is always freely engaged. It is this “pleasure of the will in doing the good” which allow for the believer to conjoin with God which is human perfection.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> On the Maimonidean identification of the human immortal soul with the acquired intellect see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* “*Yesodei Torah*” 4:7-8, 7:1, “*Teshuvah*” 8:1-3, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:68 p. 165-166, 1:72 p.193, 2:4 p. 257-258, and 3:54 p. 635. See also Shlomo Pines, “Translator’s Introduction: The Philosophical Sources of *The Guide of the Perplexed*,” in his translation of the *Guide*, p. lxi-cxxiv as well as Altmann 1987. According to Harvey, R. Crescas produces eight arguments against this thesis, four based on tradition and four based on philosophy. See Harvey, 1973 p. 104-204.

<sup>39</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 6, 1 translated in Harvey, 1973, p. 187.

<sup>40</sup> Kiddushin 40b.

<sup>41</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, Introduction translated in Harvey, 1990, p. 60.

<sup>42</sup> This phrase is Harvey’s. See Harvey 1990, p. 61.

<sup>43</sup> R. Hasdai Crescas, *The Light of the Lord*, II, 5, 5 translated in Harvey, 1998, p. 154.

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What emerges from the disagreement over whether there is a commandment to believe in God is a meditation on the Law and its commandments: are all the commandments intrinsically valuable or are some of primary value while others are only secondarily important. Motivating this debate is a more fundamental disagreement about the *telos* of the Law and what constitutes the ultimate human perfection: is God reached through knowing Him or by serving Him with love and joy?

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## AN EXPLORATION OF RELATIONSHIPS IN *THE LONELY MAN OF FAITH*

Rabbi Avi Finegold

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's thought is noteworthy for grappling with the conflict between inner-life and outer-expression. One of the works which epitomizes this mode of thinking is his essay entitled *The Lonely Man of Faith*. The work deals with the relationship between man in the modern world, how he relates to a faith that is eternal, and in some details seems to be fundamentally at odds with modern ideas. Parts of this essay can be fruitfully compared to the works of the neo-Freudian school of psychology, especially those referred to as the object relations school. I would like to examine *The Lonely Man of Faith* in light of these thinkers and demonstrate how they can offer new insight into this work.

Early in the essay, R. Soloveitchik writes that whatever he says has no bearing on Jewish law, and many readers might be very well served by disagreeing with what he writes. Nevertheless if some might gain insight, then his exercise is valuable, and even if not, he writes that he needs to say these things because speaking of them and getting the thoughts out in the open helps the soul. This immediately brings to mind the Freudian maxim that psychoanalysis is the Talking Cure, and that the very act of discussing one's issues serves as a mental balm. This sets the tone for an essay which is both profound and personal. It allows a reader the freedom to read much into R. Soloveitchik's words as if he were confiding in an intimate friend.

This essay begins by comparing the two creation stories of Adam in Genesis and describes how these each represent a different aspect of mankind. Adam I, instructed to inhabit and conquer the earth, is driven by creativity and the need to dominate. Adam II, with a primary need for companionship, is driven by the need to understand his surroundings and the things and people to which he relates. He then spends the rest of the essay demonstrating how these two should not be seen as contradictory and how an understanding of this reconciliation will assist one in navigating the modern world. R. Soloveitchik is describing a very Freudian drive model of the human psyche, only to come around and question that very model. Adam I, driven by domination, discovers new things

and propagates his species in a way that seems to show his consciousness of the fact that death is imminent and one must attempt to remain Godly and eternal in some way. Adam II sees his relationships with his God and his people as primary and that this need to understand everything is driven by a love for both one's God and one's intimates.

Freud spoke of religion as being a replacement for one's parental influences. Alternatively, one's faith can be a different primal influence and not simply a replacement; it is this type of relationship that seems to be described by R. Soloveitchik when defining Adam II. When he speaks of the *mysterium magnum*, and how Adam II seeks to create intimate bonds with the divine by looking at the why and who of the abovementioned mysteries of creation, R. Soloveitchik is essentially describing the relationship between parent and infant. In other words, as a child, one has a strong connection to a source of support, yet one has only the vaguest idea of what this object really is. As the infant grows older, there is a natural desire to learn about this object which has been sustaining him. Nevertheless, in both cases, there is a natural tension, which forms the basis for any kind of psychology. With parents, as with God, one feels an overarching love at times, yet one cannot help but feel alienated by the idea that he is completely incapable of gaining an understanding of the object. Perhaps this is the true meaning of the idea of man being created in God's image; much as one is incapable of discerning the divine object, one cannot begin to fathom the depths of the human psyche in its entirety. The human is as fundamentally unknowable as the divine when it comes to knowing inner thoughts. Only God is "the knower of the secrets of man"—the true Psychologist.

The two Adams need two different kinds of objects. Adam I needs someone simply to help him achieve his goal in life, someone to work alongside. Adam II needs someone who can speak to his soul, with whom he can enter into a relationship. Of course, both of these seem to speak overtly of objects that are fundamental to development later in life. There does not seem to be a correlation between this and early childhood, on which most psychologists focus. This could be for several reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, R. Soloveitchik would see the primal relationship as being with the divine. This might be a useful stance for philosophical inquiry, but would not sit well with the post-Freudian thinkers who see parental influence as fundamental.

However, it might be possible to reconsider R. Soloveitchik's ideas of Adam I and Adam II to include early life. Adam I, whose goal is to be creative and conquering, sees parents as a resource to be mined for anything useful, and then moves on to bigger and better things. This is an echo of the biblical exhortation that one ". . . shall leave his mother and father" (Genesis 2:24). This is not to diminish the value of parents; rather, the creative, scientific Adam sees parents as valuable only inasmuch as they can serve his life. Filial responsibility throughout their life is still essential, but only in a seemingly utilitarian gesture. R. Soloveitchik emphasizes that Adam I gains dignity by fulfilling God's word and

that domination over basic forces of nature through a greater understanding of them is the primary goal. Seen in this light, Adam I “using” his parents is only fulfilling God’s commandment to gain dominion over one’s environment. Adam II, on the other hand, creates lasting positive connections with his early role models because they will serve as catalysts for later relationships, but more importantly because he sees inherent value in them. He looks towards the second half of the above verse, which states that after man leaves his parents he shall “cleave to his wife, and they shall be as one flesh.” If one is driven by the need to know “who” and “why,” and these questions cannot even be conceived of accurately when thinking of the divine, then one must look to his fellow humans to establish these relationships. This does not mean that he ignores the divine. Rather, he models his behavior on how one might act with humans. R. Soloveitchik speaks of how Adam II sees the wondrousness of the cosmos with the wide-eyed naïveté and incredulity of a child. The same way in which one can only understand the universe in a child-like way according to Adam II, one can only define his relationship with the divine in a basic primal way, similar to the manner that Fairbairn, Winnicott, and Erikson see the relationship between the infant and mother.<sup>1</sup>

As Fairbairn would see it, there is no structure without energy, and vice versa; man’s drive and psychic life can only exist with a framework in which they can operate. Adam I, who is more concerned with the “how” and “what” of life, is not divorced from divine life. He simply accepts it as the source of all knowledge and incorporates that into his worldview. Adam II, on the other hand, has “why” and “who” at the very forefront of his being. In this way, Adam II has God as the foundational idea upon which everything else in his life is based. In other words, Adam II by definition sees God as his primary object relation. By seeing the mutual, inter-defining nature of structure and energy in Fairbairn’s model, we can begin to see how Adam (both I and II) and God are mutually dependent on defining themselves in relation to the other. The question that inevitably arises out of such thinking is whether R. Soloveitchik could envision a God that is in any way dependent on humanity, almost like Heschel’s *God in Search of Man*. R. Soloveitchik would assume as a prerequisite that God exists completely independent of mankind. To bring this question back to Earth, so to speak, would be to ask whether a mother is fundamentally different after having a child than before. Just as a mother existed as an independent human being before she was a mother, so, too, God existed as an entity before mankind. Nevertheless, once there is a child (or a humanity) in the picture, there must be an understanding that each one is defined in relation to the other, whether the child vis-à-vis the mother, or the human vis-à-vis God. Without negating the self-sufficiency of the parent/God figure, one sees how they exist in relation to the other.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of these psychologists’ views, see *Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy, and the Self: A Basic Guide to the Human Personality in Freud, Erikson, Klein, Sullivan, Fairbairn, Hartmann, Jacobson, and Winnicott*, by Harry Guntrip, (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

Winnicott seems to be straddling the two Adams, and bringing both of their points of view together without losing the intent of either one, much like R. Soloveitchik's ultimate conclusion. Winnicott's most developed stage of human life is "towards independence," and in a sense this encapsulates his thinking that one can neither leave one's mother's embrace and influence, nor should one even try to do so. This is not because one is incapable, but rather because doing so would be detrimental to one's development. By acknowledging the debt we owe to our primal relationships, we are giving a nod to the fact that our creative life is somehow rooted in past achievements. This can easily be seen as a reconciliation of Adam I and II, in that Adam I can never fully reach his creative potential without realizing the immense debt owed to both God, and human objects of relationship. Additionally, while Adam II is very much a fully developed, thinking being, he cannot help but retain an almost infantile (in a neutral sense of the word) relation to his primal object. Not because he chooses not to know, as one who remains in blissful ignorance of his parents' influence on his own life, but because at some point there is an unbridgeable gap in how one can perceive the primal object, something that seems to be implicit in the theories of Winnicott.

It would seem that for R. Soloveitchik, the major psychological difference between the two Adams is that one seeks out an object in a needy, "I"-centered way, while the other is more interested in creating a "faith-community" in which he is only a member of a larger unit. While both of these ideas are echoed in the psychoanalytic literature (the former when dealing with others as object for self-gratification and personal usefulness, such as with Freud and Melanie Klein, and the latter in the interpersonal and relational models brought forth by people such as Mitchell and Winnicott), ultimately R. Soloveitchik says that neither one exists in a vacuum, and that the ideal man oscillates between the two as required. The question that remains is whether the need for balance between the two is paramount, or does one need to manifest either one whenever an appropriate situation arises. Looking at theories of self might help clarify this issue. Many of the current theories seem to have as a basic foundation the fact that there is no single self, just a variety of selves that manifest themselves as needed. In this model, no single self battles for domination over the other. Rather, each one emerges when the situation warrants. I believe this is what R. Soloveitchik means, especially given his other works and how they argue for a peaceful balance between opposing forces and thought processes (see, for example, *Halakhic Man* and its construction of synthesis out of scientific man and *Homo Religiosus*). Indeed, there is a tension between opposing forces in one's mind. Regarding the ensuing psychology that can result, given how R. Soloveitchik gives equal value to both Adams, any tension that may exist between them is meant to be overcome.

As a final point, it is noteworthy that R. Soloveitchik overtly rejects the I-Thou model of human/divine relationship, something that is central to the psy-

chology/religious philosophy for many others. When he speaks of a faith-based community, he sees it as a tripartite existence between two individuals, presumably in an intimate relationship, along with a divine presence. This I-Thou-He is the basic building block of relationships. Therefore, one cannot possibly conceive of any object relations without the ever-present third party of the divine.

This is but a glimpse into R. Soloveitchik's ideas of religious feeling and psychology. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's thought resonates with the human condition and the relationship that this particular human has with his faith.

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## RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK AS *PARSHAN*

Rabbi Yaakov Simon

It is not the plan of this essay to discuss the theological or philosophical impact of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's *The Lonely Man of Faith*.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it will focus on R. Soloveitchik's exegetical impact, and how he created a paradigm shift in *parshanut*.

For over two thousand years, rabbinic exegesis described a single narrative of creation, employing different interpretations to resolve the apparent discrepancies between the first two chapters of Genesis. In his groundbreaking work, R. Soloveitchik broke from this tradition: he affirmed the discrepancies as real, choosing to read the chapters as two separate narratives of creation. In so doing, he set a new exegetical precedent within the Orthodox world: aspects of Biblical criticism could be incorporated into traditional *parshanut* to create new interpretations of the text.<sup>2</sup>

R. Soloveitchik's intent was not to write an exegetical commentary, per se, on the first two chapters of Genesis. Rather, he used the differences between these chapters as a springboard to discuss the fundamental dichotomy of religious existence in the modern world. If we compare *The Lonely Man of Faith* to earlier rabbinic exegesis, it becomes clear that Rav Soloveitchik's work was the first Orthodox work to clearly state that there are two accounts of creation in Genesis.

I would like to summarize three major differences between the first two chapters of Genesis.<sup>3</sup> The first major difference is the name of God that is used; the first narrative uses the name *Elokim*, while the second one uses the name

<sup>1</sup> Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1992). (The essay originally appeared in *Tradition*, Summer 1965.)

<sup>2</sup> The parallels to the more extensive and systematic work of R. Mordechai Breuer in this regard are worthy of exploration.

<sup>3</sup> The chapters of the *Tanakh* were created by the Christian Church and 2:1-3 are not necessarily the beginning of the second creation narrative. *Hazal* placed the *aliyah* before 2:4, which possibly indicates that *pasuk* is the beginning of the second creation narrative.

YHVH.<sup>4</sup> The second major difference is that the first narrative describes seven distinct days of creation, while the second one describes one day of creation. The third major difference is that the first narrative describes the creation of the entire world and all of the animals. The second narrative includes no account of the creation of Heaven and Earth nor the animals. The first narrative describes Adam and Eve being created at the same time, while the second one describes Eve being created from Adam.<sup>5</sup>

In order to appreciate the context of R. Soloveitchik's work, we must examine earlier exegetical explanations of Genesis 1 and 2. Thus, I will summarize the approaches of several medieval commentators, as well as that of R. David Tzvi Hoffman; each of these commentaries is based upon an assumption that there is only one account of creation in Genesis.

Rashi<sup>6</sup> resolved the discrepancies by asserting that the Bible is not meant to teach the order of creation. Accordingly, the details of creation have been interspersed between the first two chapters of Genesis. Similarly, Radak<sup>7</sup> explains that the second chapter is complementary, not distinct, in nature. From the first narrative alone we do not know how the plants grew, so the second narrative teaches us that water was introduced to grow them. On the other hand, Ramban<sup>8</sup> assumes that the second narrative emphasizes the relationship between the rain and plant life. Thus, the verse which states that "plant life had not yet sprouted"<sup>9</sup> is actually describing the status of plants on day six, before there had been any rain. All of these medieval commentators agree that there is only one account of creation in Genesis.

In the 19th century, non-Orthodox, and non-Jewish Bible scholars claimed that the differences between the two chapters were the results of the work of multiple human authors. R. David Tzvi Hoffman countered that the two chapters were different descriptions of the same creation story. According to R. Hoffman, while the first creation narrative states that all of creation has a purpose which is particular to that creature, the second narrative states that all of creation is to serve humanity in general and the Jewish people in particular.<sup>10</sup> R. Hoffman, in attempting to reject the claims of Bible scholars, asserted that the different accounts were not the result of different authors, but that each account bears a distinct message. In summary, medieval commentators asserted that a sin-

<sup>4</sup> This would be another proof for 2:1-3 being the end of the first narrative because these verses use the name *Elokim*.

<sup>5</sup> Rav Soloveitchik emphasizes that the first narrative represents the social aspect of humanity; and the second one represents the alone and existential aspect.

<sup>6</sup> *Bereshit* 1:1, s.v. *Bereshit bara*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* 2:5-6, s.v. *ve-khol siah ha-sadeh*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* 2:4, s.v. *eleh toldot ha-shamayim*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* 2:5

<sup>10</sup> *Genesis* (B'nei Brak: Nezach, 1969), pg. 11.

gle narrative was divided over two chapters, and R. Hoffman maintained that one narrative of creation was repeated in two separate chapters, with different focuses.

R. Soloveitchik refuted the claims of Bible scholars while at the same time agreeing that there are, indeed, two distinct accounts of creation:

However, the answer lies not in an alleged dual tradition . . . but in a real contradiction in the nature of man. The two accounts deal with two Adams, two men . . . and it is no wonder that they are not identical.<sup>11</sup>

This assertion goes beyond R. Hoffman—the two chapters are not simply two perspectives on the creation of Adam, but creation narratives of two distinct Adams. Exegetically, this is a radical approach; R. Soloveitchik does not resolve these textual contradictions in order to create a religiously significant unified text. Like a Brisker *hidush*, he uses the differences between Adam One and Adam Two to create new religious insights. He does not seek to harmonize the two accounts, but to highlight two different aspects of the human condition.

In essence, R. Soloveitchik is stating that God wrote Genesis with two contradictory and independent accounts of the creation of the first human being. God wrote the Torah in this fashion in order to tell us that just as the creation stories of humanity are contradictory; so too human nature is contradictory. While human beings strive to harness and build institutions that are rooted in the reality of this world (Adam One),<sup>12</sup> they simultaneously have an existential relationship with the ineffable which is solely rooted in the supernal and spiritual world (Adam Two).<sup>13</sup>

In even the most cursory and superficial reading of the first two chapters of Genesis, there are obvious differences and discrepancies. For over a thousand years the rabbinic response to and exegesis of these differences was based on the assumption that there is only one narrative of creation. The differences were interpreted to highlight different aspects of the account of creation: How were Adam and Eve actually created? Who named the animals? Where did *Gan Eden* come from? Bible scholars, on the other hand, denied the basic assumption of textual unity and stated that the differences between the two chapters were the result of two narratives written by multiple authors. R. Hoffman responded that although there are two perspectives, there is only one narrative and one author. R. Soloveitchik's paradigm shift of *parshanut* began in combining aspects of the previously contradictory views of R. Hoffman and secular scholarship: he agreed with Bible scholars that there are two narratives of creation, but asserted that they were written by one divine Author. He used the discrepancies found by

<sup>11</sup> Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, pg. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

Bible scholars to create new religious meaning and to provide profound insight into the tension of being a religious Jew in the modern world..

It would be foolish to claim that R. Soloveitchik was suggesting that we study Biblical criticism in order to discover insights such as these. He did, however, set a precedent in revealing the possibility of using the methodology of Biblical criticism to find new interpretations of the Bible. In the wake of R. Soloveitchik's innovative approach, a lush garden of new *parshanut* has sprouted. Furthermore, R. Soloveitchik's work has allowed others to look at Biblical texts in new ways. *Parshanim* today analyze literary themes found throughout the Bible, as well as the poetic structure of Psalms and the Song of Songs. The rich variety of Orthodox Bible study around the world today owes a debt of gratitude to *The Lonely Man of Faith*.

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## SEEKING PROPHECY IN HISTORICAL NARRATIVES: *AHAZ AND HIZKIYAH IN KINGS AND CHRONICLES\**

Rabbi Hayyim Angel

### I. INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to the Book of Samuel, Abarbanel presents himself as the first to search for the fundamental nature of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Why does the conglomeration of Samuel and Kings omit major episodes that are later included in Chronicles? Why does Chronicles omit major episodes that are included in Samuel and Kings? Furthermore, why does Chronicles repeat entire passages already recorded in Samuel or Kings? One may ultimately ask why Chronicles was canonized in the Bible at all. Presumably, those stories omitted by Samuel-Kings were omitted deliberately, and those included were already told. Therefore, Chronicles appears superfluous.

. . . These are the doubts pertaining to this formidable question, but in searching for its solution, I remain alone and nobody joins me in this endeavor. I have not found any discussion—great nor small—in the words of our Sages of blessed memory; not the Sages of the

\* This essay is based on a lecture given at the second annual *Yemei Iyun* in *Tanakh* of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, in Teaneck, NJ (June 2004). In addition to the classical commentators on Kings and Chronicles, I have drawn from: Moshe Eisemann, *I & II Chronicles: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1987); Amos Hakham, *Da'at Mikra: Isaiah vol. 2* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1984), pp. 369-408; Yair Hoffmann (ed.), *Encyclopedia Olam ha-Tanakh: Isaiah* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dodzon-Iti, 1994), pp. 160-190; Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1977); Sara Japhet, *Old Testament Library: I & II Chronicles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); Yehudah Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: I & II Kings* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1989); Yehudah Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: I & II Chronicles* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1986); Bustenay Oded (ed.), *Encyclopedia Olam ha-Tanakh: I & II Kings* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dodzon-Iti, 1994); Bustenay Oded (ed.), *Encyclopedia Olam ha-Tanakh: I & II Chronicles* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dodzon-Iti, 1995).

Talmud, nor the later commentators. . . . God has added to my grief, in that there is no commentary on Chronicles in this land with the exception of the few glosses of Radak of blessed memory. And those comments are negligible in their brevity and he did not address this issue at all. Additionally, the Jews do not study Chronicles in their academies. I confess my own sins today: I have not studied it nor explored its issues until now.<sup>1</sup>

Until fairly recently, Abarbanel's lamentation from 500 years ago remained as accurate as when he wrote it—precious little attention was given to the Book of Chronicles. In the past generation, however, there has been a surge of scholarly interest in the nature and theology of Chronicles, and in its relationship with earlier biblical books. This essay will explore that relationship, specifically with regard to Kings *Abaz* and *Hizkiyah*.

Almost half of Chronicles has parallels in earlier biblical books. The rest of the material likely was drawn from other written sources and oral traditions extant at that time.<sup>2</sup> It is a retelling of history, which stands independently as a theologically significant narrative. A close comparison of the parallel accounts will enable us to refine our understanding of each book, especially when we focus on which events each book chose to include, and how each presented history in accordance with its respective religious messages.

## II. AHAZ IN KINGS

### A. THE EXTENT OF AHAZ' WICKEDNESS

He did not do what was pleasing to the Lord his God, as his ancestor *David* had done, but followed the ways of the kings of Israel. He even consigned his son to the fire (*ve-gam et beno he'evir ba-esh*), in the abhorrent fashion of the nations which the Lord had dispossessed before the Israelites. He sacrificed and made offerings at the shrines, on the hills, and under every leafy tree (II Kings 16:2-4).<sup>3</sup>

Though Kings judges *Abaz* negatively, the extent of his wickedness is subject to a range of interpretation. By “consigning his son to the fire,” did *Abaz* ritually pass him between two fires in such a way that he remained alive; or did he burn his son

<sup>1</sup> Abarbanel, *Nevi'im Rishonim* (Jerusalem: Torah ve-Da'at Press, 1955), pp. 163-164. See also his introduction to Kings on pp. 428-429.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), p. 1. See further discussions in Abarbanel, introduction to Early Prophets, p. 8; introduction to Kings, p. 428; Yehudah Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: I Chronicles*, introduction, pp. 51-55.

<sup>3</sup> Translations of biblical passages from NJPS *Tanakh*, 1985.

to death, in which case he was a murderer? Rashi and Ramban debate this point more generally in their discussions of passing one's son through fire for *Molekh* (see Lev. 18:21). Actually, the Kings narrative of *Abaz* does not explicitly mention any foreign deities. It is possible that *Abaz* performed all of the enumerated rituals for the sake of Heaven, even though he was gravely misguided in doing so.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, perhaps *Abaz* was guilty of murder and idolatry—the greatest crimes in the Torah; or perhaps he did not murder anyone, and was guilty of misdirected God-worship by offering sacrifices on the *bamot* (literally, “high places,” altars outside of the Temple), and the fire ritual with his son.

### B. THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITE WAR

Then King *Retzin* of Aram and King *Pekah* son of *Remaliah* of Israel advanced on Jerusalem for battle. They besieged *Abaz*, but could not overcome [him]. At that time King *Retzin* of Aram recovered Elath for Aram; he drove out the Judites from Elath, and Edomites came to Elath and settled there, as is still the case. *Abaz* sent messengers to King *Tiglat-pileser* of Assyria to say, “I am your servant and your son; come and deliver me from the hands of the king of Aram and from the hands of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.” *Abaz* took the gold and silver that were on hand in the House of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent them as a gift to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria responded to his request; the king of Assyria marched against Damascus and captured it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put *Retzin* to death (II Kings 16:5-9).

Given the negative overview of *Abaz* in Kings, one might conclude that *Abaz*'s use of Temple valuables was sinful. However, one might deem his actions to fall under the category of saving lives, and therefore permissible and even required. The concurrent military losses reported in verse six demonstrate that *Abaz* had genuine cause for alarm.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, *Abaz*'s son *Hizkiyah*, praised for his unparalleled faith (II Kings 18:5), also used Temple valuables to bribe the Assyrians (II Kings 18:15-16). Similarly, the righteous King *Asa* used Temple valuables to bribe Aram against the Northern Kingdom (I Kings 15:17-21). It is difficult to view *Abaz*'s stripping the Temple as unambiguously negative—he was acting on behalf of his nation, and in fact warded off disaster.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See also R. S.R. Hirsch on Lev. 18:21, and Yehudah Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: II Kings*, p. 669, who believe that this foreign act was performed for the sake of Heaven.

<sup>5</sup> Bringing the Chronicles account into the picture, *Abaz* would have an even greater reason to be terrified of the Aram-Samaria alliance: they already had inflicted heavy casualties on the South. See II Chr. 28:5-8, and discussion below.

<sup>6</sup> *Pesahim* 56a is critical of *Hizkiyah* for his submission. *Kobelet Rabbah* 9:3, on the other hand, favorably likens *Hizkiyah* to *Ya'akov*, who also made military preparations and sent gifts to *Esav* in addition to praying to God.

### C. THE ARAMEAN ALTAR

When King *Abaz* went to Damascus to greet King *Tiglat-pileser* of Assyria, he saw the altar in Damascus. King *Abaz* sent the priest *Uriyah* a sketch of the altar and a detailed plan of its construction. The priest *Uriyah* did just as King *Abaz* had instructed him from Damascus; the priest *Uriyah* built the altar before King *Abaz* returned from Damascus. . . . King *Abaz* commanded the priest *Uriyah*: “On the great altar you shall offer the morning burnt offering and the evening meal offering and the king’s burnt offering and his meal offering, with the burnt offerings of all the people of the land, their meal offerings and their libations. And against it you shall dash the blood of all the burnt offerings and all the blood of the sacrifices. And I will decide about the bronze altar.” *Uriyah* did just as King *Abaz* commanded (II Kings 16:10-16).

Given the negative overview of *Abaz* in Kings, one might conclude that copying the Aramean altar was sinful. However, *Uriyah* the High Priest was involved in its construction; elsewhere, *Yeshayahu* called him a “reliable witness” (Isa. 8:2).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it appears that *Abaz* specifically served God on this altar. Indeed, this element in the narrative plausibly might be interpreted as positive, i.e., *Abaz* enhanced the Temple by installing a larger altar that could handle a greater volume of offerings than the original altar built by *Shelomo*.<sup>8</sup>

### D. CHANGING THE FACE OF THE TEMPLE

King *Abaz* cut off the insets—the laver stands—and removed the lavers from them. He also removed the tank from the bronze oxen that supported it and set it on a stone pavement—on account of the king of Assyria. He also extended to the House of the Lord the Sabbath passage that had been built in the palace and the king’s outer entrance (II Kings 16:17-18).

*Abaz* changed the face of Temple as a result of his servitude to the Assyrians. Following the negative overview of *Abaz*, Radak asserts that he was motivated by the sinister desire to degrade the Temple. Rashi and R. Yosef Kara, however,

<sup>7</sup> This is assuming that *Yeshayahu* referred to the same *Uriyah*. Malbim, who believes that *Abaz* sinned by building this altar, maintains that *Uriyah* obeyed only because he was coerced by the wicked king. Alternatively, Amos Hakham asserts that this altar was built for the sake of Heaven, and therefore the righteous *Uriyah* willingly participated (*Da’at Mikra: Isaiah vol. 1*, p. 88, n. 37a). Some commentators maintain that the *Uriyah* in Kings is not the same *Uriyah* referred to by *Yeshayahu*.

<sup>8</sup> See I Kings 8:64, where *Shelomo* brought so many sacrifices during the Temple dedication that the altar could not handle them (cf. Yehudah Kiel, *Da’at Mikra: II Kings*, p. 674).

adopt a positive view and maintain that *Abaz* hid these utensils to protect them from further Assyrian plundering.

In summary, Kings depicts *Abaz* as a negative religious figure. However, the extent of his sinfulness is ambiguous, and his other actions are subject to interpretations ranging from Temple desecrator to Temple enhancer and nation protector. Regardless, he was worse than his Southern predecessors by offering sacrifices on the *bamot* and by passing his son through fire, even if these acts were done for the sake of Heaven.

### III. HIZKIYAH IN KINGS

He did what was pleasing to the Lord, just as his father *David* had done. He abolished the shrines and smashed the pillars and cut down the sacred post. He also broke into pieces the bronze serpent that *Moshe* had made, for until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it; it was called *Nehushtan*. He trusted only in the Lord the God of Israel; there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those before him. He clung to the Lord; he did not turn away from following Him, but kept the commandments that the Lord had given to *Moshe*. And the Lord was always with him; he was successful wherever he turned. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him (II Kings 18:3-7).

The Book of Kings extols *Hizkiyah's* faith, and includes among his accomplishments his unprecedented act of eliminating the *bamot*. Even his rebellion against Assyria is cast as an act of faith (Abarbanel). Despite his unrivaled faith, however, *Hizkiyah* suffered terrible military setbacks by the Assyrians, and stripped the Temple in order to pay *Sanheriv* to desist:

In the fourteenth year of King *Hizkiyah*, King *Sanheriv* of Assyria marched against all the fortified towns of Judah and seized them. King *Hizkiyah* sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong; withdraw from me; and I shall bear whatever you impose on me." So the king of Assyria imposed upon King *Hizkiyah* of Judah a payment of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. *Hizkiyah* gave him all the silver that was on hand in the House of the Lord and in the treasuries of the palace. At that time *Hizkiyah* cut down the doors and the doorposts of the Temple of the Lord, which King *Hizkiyah* had overlaid [with gold], and gave them to the king of Assyria (II Kings 18:13-16).

*Sanheriv's* devastating invasion is not presented as a punishment. Rather, it was the natural political outcome of *Abaz's* becoming a vassal to Assyria, *Hizkiyah's*

rebellion, and the ruthless imperial ambitions of Assyria. Like *Abaz*, *Hizkiyah* used Temple treasures in an attempt to save his nation. Unfortunately, *Hizkiyah's* bribe was ineffective, as *Sanheriv* still marched against Jerusalem.

From the *Ravshakeh's* taunting of the Judeans, it appears that *Hizkiyah* depended on God, and on an alliance with Egypt:

The *Ravshakeh* said to them, "You tell *Hizkiyah*: Thus said the Great King, the King of Assyria: What makes you so confident? You must think that mere talk is counsel and valor for war! Look, on whom are you relying, that you have rebelled against me? You rely, of all things, on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which enters and punctures the palm of anyone who leans on it! That's what Pharaoh king of Egypt is like to all who rely on him. And if you tell me that you are relying on the Lord your God, He is the very one whose shrines and altars *Hizkiyah* did away with, telling Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship only at this altar in Jerusalem' (II Kings 18:19-22).

Just like *Abaz*, *Hizkiyah* too depended on foreign military assistance.

In II Kings 19, *Hizkiyah* consulted *Yeshayahu* and engaged in prayer. *Yeshayahu* prophesied that God would protect Jerusalem. An angel then smote the Assyrian forces surrounding Jerusalem. It appears that the *Hizkiyah* narrative should have ended here as a fittingly dramatic climax to the righteous *Hizkiyah's* reign.

Instead, the narrative continues with *Hizkiyah's* illness, prayer, and recovery. From God's promise that He *will* save Jerusalem (20:6), it is evident that these events predate the miraculous salvation reported in chapter 19 (Rashi, Radak). *Berodakh-bal'adan* then arrived from Babylonia. Abarbanel (on II Kings 20:12), Amos Hakham, and Yehudah Kiel maintain that this royal visit was not out of concern for *Hizkiyah's* well-being; *Berodakh-bal'adan* wanted to revolt against *Sanheriv*, and traveled to Israel to determine *Hizkiyah's* worthiness as an ally.<sup>9</sup> *Yeshayahu* then condemned *Hizkiyah*:

Then *Yeshayahu* said to *Hizkiyah*, "Hear the word of the Lord: A time is coming when everything in your palace which your ancestors have stored up to this day will be carried off to Babylon; nothing will remain behind, said the Lord. And some of your sons, your own issue, whom you will have fathered, will be taken to serve as eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." *Hizkiyah* declared to *Yeshayahu*, "The word of the Lord that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "It means that safety is assured for my time" (II Kings 20:16-19).

<sup>9</sup> Amos Hakham, *Da'at Mikra: Isaiah vol. 2*, p. 401; Yehudah Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: II Kings*, p. 753. Josephus likewise suggested this possibility (*Ant.* X:30).

Amos Hakham views this exchange as a fundamental dispute between king and prophet. *Hizkiyah* wanted to do what appeared sound in the present (“it means that safety is assured *for my time*”), whereas *Yeshayahu* was prophetically looking into the future when the Babylonians would return as a mortal enemy. According to this interpretation, *Hizkiyah* never regretted his actions, even as he accepted God’s decree; rather, he defended his decision, even though it was against the will of *Yeshayahu*.<sup>10</sup>

Although *Yeshayahu* opposed alliances, the Kings narrative portrays *Hizkiyah* as superbly righteous, standing by *Yeshayahu* and his nation, praying, and ultimately meriting one of the great miracles of the Bible.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV. AHAZ IN CHRONICLES

##### A. THE EXTENT OF AHAZ’ WICKEDNESS

He did not do what was pleasing to the Lord as his father *David* had done, but followed the ways of the kings of Israel; he even made molten images for the Baals. He made offerings in the Valley of Benhinom and burned his sons in fire (*va-yav’er et banav ba-esh*), in the abhorrent fashion of the nations which the Lord had dispossessed before the Israelites. He sacrificed and made offerings at the shrines, on the hills, and under every leafy tree (II Chron. 28:2-4).

Unlike the ambiguities in Kings’ evaluation of *Ahaz*, there is no doubt as to Chronicles’ view. *Ahaz* was an idolater. Additionally, by transposing two letters from Kings’ *he’evir*, to Chronicles’ *va-yav’er* it is clear that *Ahaz* burned his sons.<sup>12</sup> Thus, *Ahaz* was an idolater and a murderer.

##### B. THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITE WAR

The Lord his God delivered him over to the king of Aram, who defeated him and took many of his men captive, and brought them to Damascus. He was also delivered over to the king of Israel, who inflicted a great defeat on him. *Pekah* son of *Remaliah* killed 120,000 in Judah—all brave men—in one day, because they had forsaken the

<sup>10</sup> Amos Hakham, *Da’at Mikra: Isaiah vol. 2*, pp. 407-408.

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller analysis of the three biblical accounts of *Hizkiyah* and their relationship to the prophecies of *Yeshayahu*, see Hayyim Angel, “Differing Portrayals of Hezekiah’s Righteousness: Narratives and Prophecies,” *Nahalab: Yeshiva University Journal for the Study of Bible 1* (1999), pp. 1-13; updated in Hayyim Angel, *Through an Opaque Lens* (New York: Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2006), pp. 226-242.

<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the singular “son” is used in Kings, whereas Chronicles uses “sons” instead. Insisting that *Molekh* worship involved burning children, Ramban (on Lev. 18:21) cites this verse in Chronicles as a proof-text against Rashi.

Lord God of their fathers. *Zichri*, the champion of Ephraim, killed *Ma'aseyah* the king's son, and *Azrikam* chief of the palace, and *Elkanah*, the second to the king. The Israelites captured 200,000 of their kinsmen, women, boys, and girls; they also took a large amount of booty from them and brought the booty to Samaria (II Chronicles 28:5-8).

In Chronicles, the Syro-Ephraimite alliance inflicted massive devastation on the Southern Kingdom, in direct contrast to the Kings account, in which they were unable to defeat *Abaz* (II Kings 16:5). In an effort to reconcile the accounts, Abarbanel and Malbim submit that the allies first inflicted destruction on Judea, as reported in Chronicles. Subsequently, they unsuccessfully marched on Jerusalem, as reported in Kings.

An equally surprising discrepancy between the accounts is that in Chronicles, the Assyrians did not help *Abaz*:

At that time, King *Abaz* sent to the king of Assyria for help . . . *Tilegat-pilneser*, king of Assyria, marched against him and gave him trouble, instead of supporting him. For *Abaz* plundered the House of the Lord and the house of the king and the officers, and made a gift to the king of Assyria—to no avail (II Chron. 28:16-21).

The commentary ascribed to Rashi<sup>13</sup> and Malbim both assert that this “trouble” refers to the bribe *Abaz* had paid the Assyrians. Assyria’s non-help cannot refer to events surrounding the Aram conflict, since Kings reports that Assyria did help against Aram; but rather against the other enemies who had taken advantage of Judah’s weakened state. Alternatively, Radak suggests that Assyria first defeated Aram as reported in Kings, but then attacked Judea.<sup>14</sup> Chronicles also deems *Abaz*’ use of Temple treasures to be unambiguously sinful and a cause of further punishment (v. 21).

### C. THE ARAMEAN ALTAR

In his time of trouble, this King *Abaz* trespassed even more against the Lord, sacrificing to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, for he thought, “The gods of the kings of Aram help them; I shall sacrifice to them and they will help me”; but they were his ruin and that of all Israel (II Chron. 28:22-23).

<sup>13</sup> See discussion of this attribution in Yehudah Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: I Chronicles*, introduction, p. 140; *II Chronicles*, appendix, pp. 89-90.

<sup>14</sup> It is noteworthy that in the Assyrian records, *Tiglat-pileser* was invading the region anyway, in order to control Aram and Tyre (James B. Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 283-284). From this point of view, *Abaz*’s bribe was unnecessary, and now obligated Judah to Assyria as a vassal.

Unlike the Kings account, where *Abaz* built a copy of the Aramean altar for the sake of Heaven, Chronicles reports that *Abaz* worshipped Aramean deities. Verse 22 emphasizes *Abaz*'s failure to repent despite the national suffering he had caused. This verse stands in direct contrast to *Menasheh*'s response to his suffering: "In his distress, he entreated the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers" (II Chron. 33:12). This detail establishes *Abaz* as the worst king in Chronicles.

#### D. CHANGING THE FACE OF THE TEMPLE

*Abaz* collected the utensils of the House of God, and cut the utensils of the House of God to pieces. He shut the doors of the House of the Lord and made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. In every town in Judah he set up shrines to make offerings to other gods, vexing the Lord God of his fathers (II Chron. 28:24-25).

In Kings, *Abaz* removed several Temple utensils. As discussed above, commentators debate whether he acted out of anti-God sentiments, or whether he was attempting to salvage what he could from the Assyrians. Chronicles, however, concludes its account with *Abaz*'s active promotion of idolatry. He committed the unprecedented crimes of shutting down the Temple and destroying its utensils. Thus, Chronicles eliminates all the ambiguities from the Kings account. It adopts the most negative portrayal of *Abaz*, and highlights the disasters of his reign.

#### V. HIZKIYAH IN CHRONICLES

II Chronicles 29-31, almost completely unparalleled in Kings, reports *Hizkiyah*'s remarkable cultic reforms. This presentation creates an expectation for reward, especially in light of the emphasis in Chronicles on direct recompense for righteous and evil behavior (see further discussion below). Instead, chapter 32 begins with *Sanheriv*'s invasion of the south! Several commentators suggest that although *Hizkiyah* was righteous, many in his generation were less pious.<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, Malbim (on II Chron. 32:1) submits that the Assyrian invasion was a potential *reward*, since the Messiah could have come then (see *Sanhedrin* 94a). Nothing in Chronicles suggests either answer, though.

Chronicles obviates this theological quandary by downplaying the Assyrian devastation: "After these faithful deeds, King *Sanheriv* of Assyria invaded Judah and encamped against its fortified towns with the aim of taking them over" (II Chron. 32:1). While *Sanheriv* "aimed" to conquer, there is no acknowledgement in Chronicles that he succeeded. Instead, *Hizkiyah* preached faith to his people

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Radak and Metzudat David (on II Chr. 32:1), and Abarbanel (on II Kings 18:17).

(32:6-8), prayed alongside *Yeshayahu* (32:20), and then God sent His angel to smite the Assyrian camp (32:21). The narrative of the Assyrian invasion concludes:

Thus the Lord delivered *Hizkiyah* and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from King *Sanheriv* of Assyria, and from everyone; He provided for them on all sides. Many brought tribute to the Lord to Jerusalem, and gifts to King *Hizkiyah* of Judah; thereafter he was exalted in the eyes of all the nations (II Chron. 32:22-23).

Thus, *Hizkiyah* appears to have *gained* from this invasion, as other nations brought gifts and held him in the highest esteem.

Other omissions in Chronicles include *Hizkiyah's* rebellion; consequently, *Sanheriv's* aggression appears unprovoked. Since Chronicles condemns the use of Temple treasures (as with *Abaz* in II Chron. 28:21), it omits the tribute *Hizkiyah* paid to the Assyrians from Temple funds in Kings. Finally, there is no reference to *Hizkiyah's* alliance with Egypt. Instead, *Hizkiyah* is depicted as relying exclusively on God.<sup>16</sup> As great as *Hizkiyah* is in Kings, he is far superior in Chronicles.

## VI. WHY THE ACCOUNTS ARE DIFFERENT

While many commentators have attempted to reconcile the two accounts, these reconstructions explain only what might have occurred historically. Returning to Abarbanel's inquiry cited at the beginning of our essay, though, we still must ask why the authors of each book selected and presented what they did.

### A. REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN KINGS AND CHRONICLES

Like many other biblical books, Kings leaves many events—good and bad—unexplained theologically. In contrast, Chronicles links virtually everything political and personal to direct reward and punishment. If, for example, a sin is mentioned in Kings, Chronicles almost always searches its written and oral sources to supply a relevant punishment to its narrative. If an act of righteousness is mentioned in Kings, Chronicles supplies a reward. If suffering is mentioned in Kings, Chronicles supplies a sin. If a good event occurs in Kings, Chronicles supplies an act of righteousness. Thus, Chronicles presents a far more systematic and transparent theological framework than Kings.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ralbag and Abarbanel (on II Kings 18) conclude from the Chronicles account that *Hizkiyah*, in fact, never allied with Egypt, and the *Rabshakeh* was wrong. However, *Yeshayahu* condemns an alliance with Egypt (Isa. 30:1-3; 31:1-3), and there is no reason to doubt the *Rabshakeh's* taunts in Kings. Nearly all other commentators assume that there was in fact an alliance. Chronicles omits it to protect *Hizkiyah's* image. See further discussion below.

<sup>17</sup> See Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, pp. 147-148.

Additionally, Kings teaches that the political and religious actions of one generation—both good and bad—can affect later generations. In contrast, Chronicles adopts the view of Ezekiel 18, and almost completely eliminates intergenerational merit and retribution from its historical narrative; “the person who sins, only he shall die” (Ezek. 18:4).<sup>18</sup>

Within the theological framework of Kings, then, *Abaz* could be wicked, yet suffer few repercussions during his lifetime. *Hizkiyah* could be righteous, yet inherit the consequences of *Abaz*'s politics and endure the near-destruction of Judea. In contrast, within the theological framework of Chronicles, *Abaz* was wicked, so Chronicles reports great losses in his lifetime. There were heavy military casualties in the war against Aram and Samaria, so Chronicles enumerates sins commensurate with those losses. *Hizkiyah* was righteous, so Chronicles omits *Sanheriv*'s devastation of the South. The invasion and its aftermath are portrayed as beneficial to *Hizkiyah* and his nation.

It must be stressed that Chronicles' recasting of history neither disputes nor replaces the Kings account. Instead, each book selects and presents its material in accordance with the underlying theological lessons it wishes to convey.

#### B. ALLIANCES IN KINGS AND CHRONICLES

Kings reports alliances as neutral political events, and therefore recounts how *Abaz* helped his country by bribing the Assyrians, and that *Hizkiyah* believed that Egypt and Babylonia could help him in his revolt against Assyria. In contrast, Chronicles' conception of good faith excludes all military alliances, adopting the prophetic standard of *Yeshayahu*: “Ha! Those who go down to Egypt for help and rely upon horses! They have put their trust in abundance of chariots, in vast numbers of riders, and they have not turned to the Holy One of Israel, they have not sought the Lord” (Isa. 31:1).<sup>19</sup> Chronicles expects people to pray to God for salvation. To promote this level of faith, Chronicles reports that *Abaz*'s alliance with Assyria harmed the Southern Kingdom. To preserve the righteous

<sup>18</sup> See further discussion in Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, pp. 138-154; Yehudah Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: I Kings*, introduction, pp. 124-127. See also Gershon Brin, *Studies in the Book of Ezekiel* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv University: The United Kibbutz Press, 1975), pp. 80-105; Mordekhai Tropper, “The Ethical Principles of Ezekiel the Prophet” (Hebrew), *Shematin* 114 (1994), pp. 33-38.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Isa. 7:1-9; 30:1-3. Prophets often opposed foreign alliances, mainly because 1) dependence on these alliances often was symptomatic of a decreased faith in God; 2) alliances often led to cultural influence; 3) they were politically unsound—nations would help only when it was in their own best interests, not because they genuinely cared about Israel; 4) the powerful nations might abuse the alliances, enslaving Israel. For a fuller exposition of this issue, see Menahem Boleh, *Da'at Mikra: Jeremiah* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1983), p. 29.

image of *Hizkiyah*, Chronicles avoids mention of *Hizkiyah's* pact with Egypt. He prayed, and God responded with a miracle.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Kings does not pass judgment against the use of Temple treasures to save the nation. Therefore, it reports that both *Abaz* and *Hizkiyah* did so in their respective efforts to protect Judea. In contrast, Chronicles condemns such behavior. Consequently, it states that this sin of *Abaz* led to further suffering, and also omits mention of *Hizkiyah's* doing likewise.

### C. A LONGER VIEW OF HISTORY

*Yeshayahu* was involved in the writing of some of the historical sources used by Chronicles (II Chron. 26:32; 32:32). We therefore might expect to find his imprint on the *Abaz* and *Hizkiyah* narratives in Chronicles.<sup>21</sup>

In Isaiah chapter 7, the prophet pleaded with *Abaz* not to appeal to Assyria for military assistance. *Abaz*, however, refused to listen. *Yeshayahu* subsequently prophesied that Judea would indeed achieve a short term victory against Aram and Samaria, but then Judea would suffer devastation. Thus, *Abaz* sowed the seeds for the downfall of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms by inviting the Assyrians to the region.

The destruction of the Temple and exile form the climax to the Book of Kings. That decree was sealed during the notorious reign of *Menasheh* (II Kings 21:10-15), and was fulfilled in *Tzidkiyahu's* time. Therefore, Kings casts *Menasheh*—the cause of the destruction and Babylonian exile—as the worst king, whereas *Abaz* was wicked but to a much lesser degree.

By the time of the writing of Chronicles, however, much of the damage from Babylonia was undone, i.e., the Babylonian exiles had permission to return to their land and the second Temple was standing. In contrast, the effects of the Assyrian invasions were felt acutely—the Northern tribes still were lost. Chronicles, therefore, casts *Abaz*—the cause of the Assyrian damage that ultimately proved more permanent—as the worst king. *Menasheh*, in contrast, repented and returned from exile in *Babylonia*—a striking parallel to the Returnees to Zion (II Chron. 33:11-13).

<sup>20</sup> Chronicles reports four invasions against righteous kings: *Zerah* the Cushite invaded *Asa* (II Chr. 14), *Baasha* of the Northern Kingdom invaded *Asa* (II Chr. 16), a confederation of nations invaded *Yehoshafat* (II Chr. 20), and *Sanheriv* invaded *Hizkiyah* (II Chr. 32). In three of the four instances, the kings prayed and received supernatural intervention. When *Asa* bribed Aram against *Baasha*, *Hanani* the seer condemned him (II Chr. 16:7-9). Thus, the invasions are not cast as punishments in Chronicles; they are presented as a form of divine test, where the proper response is to pray. Cf. *Encyclopedia Olam ha-Tanakh: II Chronicles*, pp. 114-115; 148-149. See also Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, pp. 221-223.

<sup>21</sup> For a broader discussion of the special role of the prophetic word in Chronicles, see Yairah Amit, "The Role of Prophecy and Prophets in the Theology of Chronicles" (Hebrew), *Beit Mikra* 28 (1983), pp. 113-133.

## VII. VIEWING PROPHETIC HISTORIES IN CONTEXT

The Talmud states that prophetic books were included in the canon on the basis of their enduring religious value, “Only the prophecy which contained a lesson for future generations was written down, and that which did not contain such a lesson was not written.”<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, however, Rashi distinguishes between the Torah on the one hand, and *Nakh* on the other:

*Torat Moshe* is called “Torah” because it was given for all generations. The prophets are called only “*kabalah*,” since they received each prophecy through divine inspiration for the needs of their time and generation.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the Torah’s primary audience is all Jews in all times. While also containing eternal messages, prophetic books simultaneously address the generations in which they were composed as their primary audience. Abarbanel similarly focuses on the time of the composition of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles as a key to understanding the overall purposes of each book.

Traditionally, Kings was composed in the era of the destruction of the Temple, by *Yirmiyahu*. Chronicles was composed at the beginning of the Second Temple period, by *Ezra*.<sup>24</sup> One of the main purposes of Kings is to vindicate God for the destruction—it was Israel’s fault, rather than God’s abandonment or injustice. Chronicles, on the other hand, wanted to inspire faith in the Returnees to Zion.

In the narratives we have been considering, *Abaz* was the antithesis of the goals for the Returnees to Zion: he ignored *Yeshayahu*, lacked faith in God, relied on a superpower, and was an unrepentant sinner. In contrast, *Hizkiyah* listened to the prophets, did not depend on foreign governments, prayed to God, inspired national religiosity, and threw his efforts into restoring the Temple.

Chronicles thus exhorts its original audience: do not depend on Persia—depend on God. Restore the Temple and listen to your prophets. The burden of the sins committed by Jews before the destruction will not weigh you down. Even the wicked *Menasheh* repented and God listened to his prayers! If you are faithful to God, good things will happen to you, and in your lifetimes.<sup>25</sup> Rather than viewing Kings and Chronicles primarily as histories, they are prophecies that employ historical events to teach eternal messages about God

<sup>22</sup> *Megilah* 14b.

<sup>23</sup> Rashi to *Hullin* 137a.

<sup>24</sup> *Bava Batra* 15a.

<sup>25</sup> See further discussion in Yehudah Kiel, *Da’at Mikra: I Chronicles*, introduction, pp. 7-9; Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, pp. 117-120.

and His relationship with humanity. It is exciting that attention to the interrelationship between Kings and Chronicles has been steadily growing. Through such study, we may sharpen our understanding of the underlying meaning of each biblical book, ultimately revealing the eternal prophetic voices veiled beneath the historical narratives.

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ON INTIMACY, LOVE, *KEDUSHAH* AND SEXUALITY:  
REFLECTIONS ON THE 5TH ANNUAL  
YCT RABBINICAL SCHOOL/COMMUNITY YOM IYYUN  
IN CONJUNCTION WITH  
CONGREGATION OHAB ZEDEK\*

Michelle Friedman, M.D.

INTRODUCTION

This unique *yom iyyun* was created in partnership between YCT Rabbinical School and Congregation Ohab Zedek. The title itself conveys a great deal about the ambitious agenda—we chose very specific words, and we encourage you, the reader, just as we encouraged the participants on December 26, to think about them, to pause and reflect on what they mean to you: “Intimacy, Love, *Kedushah* and Sexuality.”

For me, these are words for powerful and different states of feeling and experience that may or may not be experienced at the same time. However the words resonate for each individual, the operative word for the *yom iyyun* and this summary is *kedushah*, translated as “sanctity” and which should be accompanied by respect and modesty. In that spirit, we understand that it is not only possible, but necessary, to discuss these feelings and experiences associated with intimacy, love and sexuality using clear and direct language.

OVERVIEW

We understand that attitudes, values and behaviors are fundamentally rooted in the home. Children who come from loving homes where physicality is discussed

\* This event took place at Congregation Ohab Zedek in New York City on December 26, 2005.

have the best chance of themselves constructing emotionally and sexually healthy relationships in marriage. At the same time, no matter the home, education in schools and in other vehicles, such as *hatan/kallah* preparation classes, plays a crucial role.

The *yom iyyun* takes a closer look at these opportunities. Rabbi Allen Schwartz framed our inquiry in a Torah context. Our two panels of experts considered the broad topics of education and intimacy in marriage. For the first panel, Dr. Chaya Gorsetman, Professor of Education at Stern College, addressed the development of trust—the necessary precursor to intimacy—and sexuality in young children. She was followed by Rabbi Mark Gottlieb, Head of School at Yeshiva University High School for Boys and Dr. Jerry Zeitchik, Director of Guidance at the Ramaz Upper School, who explored issues of sexuality and education in the yeshiva high school setting. In the second panel, Rabbi Yosef Blau, *Mashgiah Ruhani* at Yeshiva University drew from his many years of experience in framing his remarks about contemporary challenges in sexuality and marriage. Shuli Sandler, an instructor at Drisha Institute for Jewish Education, and, together with her husband Ben, a *hatan/kallah* educator, presented an overview of their unique co-ed marriage preparation class. My own presentation was an overview of points drawn from a recent data study I did with several colleagues on the sexual life of observant Jewish women.

#### OBSERVATIONS DRAWN FROM “SEXUAL LIFE AND OBSERVANT WOMEN” STUDY

Besides chairing the department of pastoral counseling at YCT Rabbinical School, I also practice psychiatry on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Clinical involvement with observant Jews over the past 25 years in conjunction with a 1999 national secular report on sexual behavior led several colleagues and me to conduct a questionnaire based study that explored emotional and sexual experience of religiously observant Jewish women. We collected data from over 400 women in the United States and Israel and analyzed this material using statistical methodology. We also encouraged respondents to write narrative accounts that further enriched our research. The material in our study came from women who scrupulously adhered to *niddah* laws. We look forward to publishing a full description of our findings in the near future. Here are a few key observations relevant to the *yom iyyun* inquiry:

##### 1) EDUCATION

- **Women are not in the main learning about the basics of sex from their mothers or other family members.** More than 70% of our respondents learned about sex from friends their own age,

not generally the best source of accurate or appropriate information.

- While 90% of the women in our study took a *kallah* class prior to marriage, most felt that this instruction did not adequately prepare them for marital sexual life. They describe that their teachers' emphasis was to insure that students not commit halakhic errors, Teachers in general did not offer basic instruction that women felt would have been very helpful. Topics that the women repeatedly mentioned in which they wished they had instruction were the differences between male and female sexuality, couple communication, and basics of sexual practice.
- Women also described difficulty making the transition from *niddah* to non-*niddah* (i.e. sexually available) times. We found that when they do have sexual difficulties after marriage, they almost never ask their *kallah* teachers for help.

## 2) IMPACT OF NIDDAH ON SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL LIFE.

- Our respondents strongly advocated for the positive impact of a two week separation period in terms of reducing sexual boredom and increasing desire. However, only a minority felt that *niddah* observance improved their emotional relationship. Many women described feeling estranged from their husbands when physical touch was not available.

## 3) COMMUNICATION

- We found that one of the most significant predictors of sexual satisfaction in marriage was evenness of communication about sex. Responses of women who felt that they could initiate sex or express their preference for and response to specific activity was highly correlated with positive ratings about their intimate marital life.
- Husbands' sexual dysfunction also significantly contributes to marital sexual dissatisfaction. Here, as well, communication between the couple figures importantly. People are more likely to get help if they can first acknowledge that they have a problem.

## 4) SEXUAL ABUSE IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

- Sadly, we found the same statistics for sexual molestation and abuse of girls and teens as in the secular population. One quarter of our respondents reported sexual molestation as girls or teens. While patterns of molestation varied somewhat from secular stud-

ies, we must face up to the fact that, contrary to popular belief, traditional religious life does not guarantee protection for girls and teens in this arena.

#### 5) DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION

- Whether a woman affiliates as *Hassidic*, *Yeshivish/Agudah* or Modern Orthodox turned out to be statistically unimportant in terms of marital sexual satisfaction. However, whether she is a *ba'alat teshuvah* vs. being raised religious (*frum* from birth) is significant.
- Women who became religious reported better marital sexual satisfaction. Likely explanations for this are multi-faceted and will be explored in our longer paper, but we suspect that less inhibited attitudes towards sexuality among women who were not raised religious play a major role.

#### 6) RELIGIOUS GUIDANCE IN SEXUAL LIFE

- We found that while over 90% of our respondents ask rabbis questions about *Kashrut* and Shabbat, a much smaller percentage ask questions about sexual practice. This was not for lack of curiosity—half of our respondents had such questions, but very few ask for rabbinic guidance. Similarly, while the majority of women answering the questionnaire used birth control at some point, less than half reported asking for rabbinic guidance in making those contraceptive decisions.

These findings leave the observant community with much to think about. Since we are committed to the principle of *kedushah* guiding all major realms of life, we must wonder why significant areas of sexual life seem to be hovering on the outskirts of religious consciousness. We need to re-evaluate the place of relationship, intimacy and sexuality education in the yeshiva day school system as well as the curriculum and format of pre-marital preparation programs. Lastly, we must educate our future rabbis and religious teachers so that they are knowledgeable in and comfortable with this basic area of life. Only when these leaders model appropriately modest yet clear familiarity with issues of sexual life, will the community move forward in this regard.

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## A RESPONSE TO DEBBY KOREN\*

William Friedman

I thank Dr. Koren for her response, and I am flattered that my modest article merited such a learned study. She may rest assured that the limited scope of my original piece was a conscious decision, motivated by a desire to use a relatively uncontroversial example to open the conversation in this area (with the full awareness that something truly comprehensive was needed, which I promised in footnote 4 of my original piece). I also wished to demonstrate, implicitly, the underlying assumptions of *sifrei halakhah* directed towards women that control their readings of the sources, even when those readings are presented impartially. Dr. Koren has anticipated a principal line of argumentation that I intended to present in that fuller article<sup>1</sup>—*barukh she-kivant*, and as for me, *mitzvah she-ba le-yado al yahmitzenah*. I wish to add a few notes and to fend off some potential challenges to Dr. Koren's analysis, but ultimately I am in full agreement with her conclusion.

Dr. Koren is correct to point out that one limitation of the approach I presented<sup>2</sup> is that there are disputed opinions regarding women's obligations on several of the days on which *Hallel* is recited, and that the mainstream *pesak* regarding women's obligations on Sukkot, Shavuot, and the first day of Pesah is that they are exempt.<sup>3</sup> However, the need to then explain the difference could

\* See the Hebrew section of this volume of *Milín Havivin*.

<sup>1</sup> And for which I intended to thank Michael Rosenberg and Josh Greenfield for pointing out its cogency and utility.

<sup>2</sup> Namely, examining the relative weight of the *halakhic* obligation of men and women to recite *Hallel* on various occasions, and to claim that on those occasions when the obligatory statuses are equal, women can and ought to serve as *shelihot tzibur* on an equal basis with men.

<sup>3</sup> See, however, Ra'avyah, *Hilkhot Lulav*, 2:685, who holds that women *are* obligated to recite *Hallel* on these days. He quotes the opinion that they are exempt because it is a *mitzvat aseh she-ha-zeman gerama* in the name of his teacher R. Yitzhak ben R. Asher Ha-Levi (see Aptowitz, *Mavo le-Sefer ha-Ra'avyah*, pp. 23, 369), and disagrees, holding that the point of the Mishnah is to tell us the lowliness (*geri'uta*) of the unlearned man who needs to rely on these people (slaves, women, and children) to recite *Hallel*. Aptowitz (*Sefer Ra'avyah*, pub. *Hevrat Mekitzei Nirdamim*, p. 391, n. 12) suggests that Ra'avyah's *pesak* is based on his version of the Mishnah (attested to in manuscripts and other *Rishonim*), and adduces an additional proof from Rava's statement on *Sukah*

be seen as an advantage (minimally, as a chance for *Talmud Torah*; maximally, as a chance to overcome the sociological barriers to women's participation by pointing out the opportunities for participation that are well-supported by standard halakhic reasoning). Even granting its limitations, I would still contend that this approach is useful for those congregations who will either end up disagreeing with Koren's argument, who will find the sociological or halakhic implications troublesome, or who will not wish to change their *minhag* of recitation to conform with her conclusions. In addition, my analysis is still necessary for those who follow the custom of the Gr"a (to recite Psalm 118:1-4 responsively on days on which *Hallel* is *minhag*) cited by Dr. Koren (p. 9, and nn. 21 and 28). (On a different note, it is also important to clarify this issue for women themselves in order that they become aware of their obligations.)

Dr. Koren's argument proceeds as follows: In order for someone to fulfill his or her obligation to say *Hallel* through another (the *makreh* of *Mishnah Sukah* 3:10, who would need to be identically *mehuyav*), one needs to respond "*Haleluyah*" to each phrase read by the *makreh*. Already by the time of Rava, this had fallen out of practice,<sup>4</sup> and the customary recitation of *Hallel* was not in the manner of the *makreh* of the Mishnah but had taken on a new form that consisted of a remembrance of various earlier practices. Rashi, Tosafot, and Ritva all interpret Rava as belonging to an era in which everyone was already expert (*beki'in*) in saying *Hallel* and therefore were not relying on the *shaliach tzibur*, but rather only recalling an earlier practice.<sup>5</sup> Tosafot and *Arukh La-Ner* testify that in their communi-

38b which mentions only children but not women, suggesting that there is a distinction between women and children's reciting *Hallel* for adult men. Unfortunately, I have yet to locate a single *Rishon*, even among the students of Ra'avyah, who decide in accordance with, or even reference, his *pesak*. It was to this source that I was referring in my somewhat cryptic footnote 4 when I wrote: ". . . nor will I dispute the underlying assumption . . . that reciting *Hallel* on certain occasions is undisputably a *mitzvah she-hazeman gerama* from which women are exempt . . . is the correct explanation of the Mishnah." The possibility remains that a *posek*, under appropriate conditions, could decide like Ra'avyah or use him as part of a larger *halakhic* argument.

<sup>4</sup> This is already noted, and the development from Tannaitic times traced, by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Ha-Levi Dünnér, chief rabbi of Amsterdam from 1874-1914. See *Hidushei ha-Ritzad*, *Sukah* 38a, s.v. *sham be-dibbur hamathil mi shehayah eved ve-khulei*, p. 281, pub. Mossad haRav Kook.

<sup>5</sup> One might note that the custom described by Rava on *Sukah* 38b does not lead directly to the conclusion that in Rava's time the *sha"tz* was not relied upon at all. The *GemaraGemara* there says: "He says *barukh ha-ba* and they say *be-shem Hashem*. From here [one learns that] hearing is like responding (*shomei'a ke-oneh*)." The *Yerushalmi* (*Sukah* 3:10, *Megilah* 1:8) makes the same point: "They asked before Rabbi Hiyya bar Ba: whence [do we learn that] if one heard but did not respond he has fulfilled his obligation? He said to them: From that which we observed: great rabbis were standing in a congregation and these were saying *barukh ha-ba* and these were saying *be-shem Hashem*. And both were fulfilling their obligations." In addition to revealing a split between the custom of *Eretz Yisrael* (where the congregation was engaging in a responsive communal

ties all were experts and did not rely on the *shaliach tzibur*. In addition, Dr. Koren cites Meiri that a *baki* may only rely on the principle of *shomei'a ke-oneh* after the fact (*bedei'avad*) and not *le-khathilah* as evidence that it is preferable for a *baki* not to rely on the *shaliach tzibur* at all.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Dr. Koren contends that nowadays, in an era of ubiquitous *siddurim* with translations and with halakhic permission to say *Hallel* in any language, we are all considered experts.

Dr. Koren then considers whether current practices of saying *Hallel* require one to rely on the *shaliach tzibur* to fulfill one's obligation. She points out the widespread practice of reciting the first four verses of psalm 118 responsively with the *sha"tz*, with the congregation reciting only the first verse in response. Tosafot hold that one has nonetheless fulfilled his obligation because of *shomei'a ke-oneh*, a principle that only applies if the *mashmi'a* is obligated to the same level as (or a higher level than) the *shomei'a*. Instead of responding directly to this point<sup>7</sup>, Dr. Koren cites *Magen Avraham*, the Gr"a, *Mishnah Berurah*, and Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam, all of whom recommend that one not rely on the *sha"tz*, but rather say the entirety of *Hallel* him or herself. She concludes that in those places that follow the custom of reciting all of *Hallel*, including Psalm 118:1-4, as individuals with the *sha"tz*, a non-obligated person may "lead" a congregation of obligated people.

recitation) and the custom of Babylonia, it indicates that at least in Rava's community the congregation was relying on the *sha"tz* himself. Of those who claim that in Rava's generation the *sha"tz* was no longer fulfilling anyone's obligation, none respond to this point. The most obvious suggestion is to say that the language of the *Rishonim* when they said that "no one is relying on the *sha"tz* at all" was imprecise. Nevertheless, Dr. Koren still has the clear statements of the *Rishonim* and *Aharonim* she cites to support her contention that at various times, according to various *minhagim*, the *sha"tz*'s role when reciting *Hallel* was not to fulfill the obligation of the individuals in the congregation.

<sup>6</sup> The *Yerushalmi*, cited above in note 5, reveals an important point about *shomei'a ke-oneh*: that one can fulfill one's obligation through an agent even if that agent is not the formal *shaliach tzibur* and even (at least regarding *Hallel*) if one hears it from a group of people. This responds to a potential criticism of Dr. Koren's argument: Even if Dr. Koren is technically correct, perhaps one ought to worry about the minority who would need to rely on the *sha"tz*? (Such a situation would itself be extremely rare—the *sha"tz* would have to be reciting exactly the words that such a person is unable to recite himself, and the person must be able to understand them). Based on the *Yerushalmi*, in those congregations in which people sing *Hallel* together, such an obligated person could rely on hearing the recitation of the congregation, provided it included at least one other obligated person.

<sup>7</sup> It would be extremely tempting, based on the silence of the *Rishonim* to the point I raised in note 5, to say that somehow, for some reason, in such a limited case of call and response, one is not "relying" on the *sha"tz*. Without a plausible conceptual or explanatory framework, however, one would be hard-pressed to do so. (One extremely far-fetched explanation: perhaps both the *sha"tz* and the congregation said the words being recited by the other silently, so that it merely sounded like a responsive recitation. Neither this explanation nor the one I offer in the aforementioned footnote would support the aforementioned tempting claim.)

Two points, I believe, deserve further discussion. In her footnote 28, Dr. Koren says that no one objects to the suggestion of saying each verse by itself, as opposed to repeating “*hodu*” in addition to each verse.<sup>8</sup> R. Moshe Sternbuch, in *Teshuvot ve-Hanhagot (Orah Hayim 119)*, does seem to object to this suggestion, after quoting the custom of the Gr”a: “But [it is] from the essence of the law of *Hallel (me-ikar din Hallel)* to hear from the *shaliach tzibur* and to fulfill [one’s obligation] from him when he says each time ‘*yomeru na*’ and one responds ‘*hodu*,’ and it is appropriate on *yamim tovim* and *Hanukkah* that the *shaliach tzibur* alone should say ‘*yomar na*’ and the congregation should only sing [in reponse] to this ‘*hodu*.’”<sup>9</sup> Although R. Sternbuch’s point is well-taken, it is surprising that he would prioritize what is at best a *minbag* (acting as a *zekher*) over the negative consequences of maintaining the current practice (potentially not fulfilling one’s obligation by missing the words of the *sha”tz*). This is particularly strange given the elegance with which the solution of the Gr”a and *Mishnah Berurah* mitigates against that consequence.

This question opens the door to a more sweeping practical criticism of Dr. Koren’s argument: Why should a congregation choose a practice (appointing a non-obligated “*sha”tz*”) that leaves open the possibility of anyone not fulfilling his obligation? The response to this, I believe, is three-fold. First, we are already in such a situation, according to the Gr”a—in fact, retaining our current custom of recitation is the halakhically dubious option, and once we have remedied that situation, appointing a non-obligated *sha”tz* is a non-issue! Second, *Be’ur Halakhah (Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayim 422 s.v. Hallel)* records a *mahloket* over

<sup>8</sup> One of these is the *Nezirut Shimshon* (R. Samson [the Hasid] ben Moses Bloch, Hamburg, d. 1737), who comments on *Magen Avraham 422:8*: “*And it is better that they should say them [the verses of Psalm 118:1-4] to themselves—This does not appear right to me, for if so, how will one [be able to] say hodu three times, for this is not part of the decree (takanah) and is considered an interruption.*” While Dr. Koren is right that this only applies in the latter case, I would imagine, as a practical issue, that many congregations would want to retain their current practice as much as possible, and therefore deserves addressing. This argument was clearly not accepted by the Gr”a or *Mishnah Berurah*. Assuming they were aware of it, two possible legal explanations present themselves: 1) Unlike *Nezirut Shimshon*, who describes the *Hallel* practices as a *takanah* (and one wonders when such a *takanah* was established, given the changes and flexibility of recitation practices of *Hallel*, as articulated by Tosafot), these authorities might view it in the realm of *minbag* (in line with the simple sense of the Mishnah), with that category’s attendant flexibility; 2) they might take a more flexible view of repeating words in *tefilot* and disagree that it would constitute a *hefsek*. There is no practical difference between these two explanations for our issue.

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, *Peri Hadash* (R. Hezekiah di Silva, 1659-1697, Jerusalem) *Hilkhot Rosh Hodesh 422:3* (towards the end), claims that for those whose custom is not to recite *barukh ha-ba be-shem Hashem* responsively, the responsive repetition of Psalm 118:1-4 teaches *shomei’a ke-oneh* in its stead. Unlike R. Sternbuch, *Peri Hadash* offers this not as *halakhah le-ma’aseh* but rather as a theoretical solution to solve a problem in Rambam.

whether a *baki* may fulfill his obligation, even *bedei'avad*, through an agent. This could be formulated as a *safek de-oraita*, according to those who hold that *Hallel* is an obligation with Biblical force. Again, once this problem is remedied, there is no problem with a non-obligated *sha"tz*. Finally, and this is a practical response, implementing this change would actually force congregations to face the issues raised by their current repetitions.<sup>10</sup> As a practical suggestion, it might make sense, on those holidays on which there is significant doubt whether women have any obligation at all, for the *shelibeit tzibur* to be male for the first year when introducing this change in custom (such as, e.g., creating new melodies to sing all four verses without repetition), to avoid any potential confusion.

The second point concerns Dr. Koren's dismissal of the question of the curse (*me'eira*) as applicable only when the *sha"tz* is in the role of *makrei*, which she denies is the role of the *sha"tz* in her model. That role, based on *Magen Avraham*, is as a guide for the congregation in singing, a person who either cannot fulfill the obligation of the individuals in the *tzibur* since they are *beki'in* or will not because all are reciting every word together—is this not extremely close to, if not identical with, the role being fulfilled by those in the first clause of the Mishnah? Therefore, I think, it might be useful to examine the various reasons attributed to the curse and whether they might serve as impediments or cautions for our case.

Rashi gives a two-pronged explanation. First, he claims that one who is unlearned is cursed for his ignorance. This is clearly inapplicable to us since we have the status of *beki'in*. Rashi's reason for why learned men are cursed is that they disgrace their Creator by appointing agents such as these (sometimes quoted as "lowly" agents)—which is inapplicable in a social circumstance in which such people are not considered disgraceful. Tosafot disagree that the Mishnah can be referring to a learned person at all; they read the curse as applicable only to the unlearned person, and attribute the curse not to his ignorance, but rather to his disgracing his Creator by appointing an non-obligated person. Since this is entirely within the context of the unlearned person, it is similarly inapplicable in our all-*baki* situation.

*Meromei Sadeh* (R. Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1817-1893, Volozhin) attempts to reconcile Tosafot and Rashi by claiming the former are discussing a person in the home and the latter a person in the synagogue. That is to say, in the home only an unlearned person would appoint a *makrei*; in the synagogue, even a learned person would appoint a *sha"tz*—and in that case, appointing a non-obligated person out of his own laziness is a disgrace. This would be inapplicable when the decision to appoint an non-obligated *sha"tz* comes out of motivations other than laziness (such as, e.g., choosing a *sha"tz* with the best voice). *Tiferet Yisrael* (R. Israel Lipschitz, 1782-1860, Danzig) on *Sukah* 3:61 attributes the reason for the curse to the person's need for the learning of these

<sup>10</sup> There is, of course, a fourth argument, based on principles of *kavod ha-beriyot* and *merutzei le-kahal*—but such arguments would do little to convince nay-sayers, and so I have presented technical responses which all would have to admit have compelling force.

people and not going to *beit ha-keneset*. Since the very context of our discussion is the synagogue, this reason similarly falls away. All of the reasons proffered for the curse are therefore inapplicable to our situation, even without resorting to Dr. Koren's entirely defensible dismissal.

I will close with a few general comments. It seems absolutely clear to me that in a congregation that follows the custom of reciting all of *Hallel* with the *sha"tz*, in line with the *posekim* that recommend this practice,<sup>11</sup> Dr. Koren's approach is a readily acceptable way to allow women to lead the recitation.<sup>12</sup> It should also be noted that the line of argumentation advanced by Dr. Koren has potentially vast ramifications for women leading all parts of the service.<sup>13</sup> The *halakha* she cites (p.10) in the name of *Magen Avraham* (*Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayim* 53:20) is brought in the general context of describing an appropriate *shaliah tzibur*, minimally for the *Amidah*, and probably for *keri'at shema u-virkhoteha* as well. This is not a criticism; however, even if all halakhic problems were to be overcome, many women (and men) would still feel cheated being allowed to lead because of a devaluing of the position of *shaliah tzibur*.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, while I appreciate Dr. Koren's concern that my approach requires making fine distinctions between different occasions on which *Hallel* is recited, her approach also requires making distinctions, this time between different customs of reciting *Hallel*. I can't say for sure which distinction is harder for congregations to make, although I suspect that changing a widespread practice, particularly when it is, as she points out, beloved, will be at least as challenging. The ideal solution, I fear, has yet to be formulated.

<sup>11</sup> This is also the practice recorded in the widespread Artscroll siddur. See R. Nosson Scherman and R. Meir Zlotowitz (ed.), *The Complete Artscroll Siddur* (Brooklyn, NY, 1987), p. 638-9: "Each of the following four verses [of Psalm 118] is recited aloud by the *chazzan*. After each verse, the congregation responds, 'Give thanks to Hashem for He is good; His kindness endures forever,' and then recites the succeeding verse [emphasis added]."

<sup>12</sup> Presuming the issues to which I alluded in the introductory footnote to my original article have been addressed.

<sup>13</sup> A short analysis was already offered by R. Mayer Rabinowitz in a paper written in support of ordaining women as rabbis in the Conservative movement. See Simon Greenberg, ed., *On the Ordination of Women as Rabbis*, pp. 115-117. See also the critical response of R. Joel Roth, *ibid.*, p. 179, n. 69.

<sup>14</sup> I wish to thank Jenny Labendz for pointing this out (in a different context); it has also been suggested by R. Roth, *ad. loc.* and in personal communication. I do not think this is a reasonable criticism to level at one using this reasoning to justify women leading *Hallel*, since already *Rishonim* were aware that the *sha"tz* for *Hallel* was no longer serving in the role of fulfilling the obligations of the individuals in the community; nevertheless, the position has remained respected, no doubt in part because of the *havivut* of *Hallel* and the need for a highly competent *sha"tz* to lead it in a beautiful and pleasing way. Certainly *Magen Avraham* could not have meant to debase the role of *sha"tz*!

