

Meorot

A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse

(formerly *The Edah Journal*)

Tishrei 5769

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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Statement of Purpose

Meorot is a forum for discussion of Orthodox Judaism's engagement with modernity, published by Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School. It is the conviction of *Meorot* that this discourse is vital to nurturing the spiritual and religious experiences of Modern Orthodox Jews. Committed to the norms of *halakhab* and Torah, *Meorot* is dedicated to free inquiry and will be ever mindful that "Truth is the seal of the Holy One, Blessed be He."

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Directions for Submissions

Meorot invites submissions of original scholarly and popular essays, as well as new English translations of Hebrew works. Popular essays should be between 800-2000 words. The journal particularly welcomes halakhic, philosophic, and literary studies relating to *qedushah* in modern experience, the religious significance of the State of Israel, Jewish ethics, emerging Torah conceptions of and opportunities for women, *Talmud Torah* as an intellectual and spiritual discipline, pluralism, and Judaism's relation to gentiles and contemporary culture.

Submissions to *Meorot* should be sent online to meorotjournal@yct Torah.org, or mailed in duplicate to Editor, *Meorot*, c/o YCT Rabbinical School, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 244, New York, N.Y. 10015. Submissions should include a one paragraph abstract and one line biography of the author. Paper submissions should be accompanied by a diskette with essay in RTF, TXT or MSWORD format. Notes should appear as footnotes. Communications should be directed to the above email address.

Reader responses should be sent to the editor at meorotjournal@yct Torah.org for possible electronic publication at the journal's website.

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Editor's Introduction to the *Tishrei* 5769 Edition

Eugene Korn

Welcome to the 7:1 *Tishrei* 5769 edition of *Meorot*. This edition contains a number of important articles from authors in America, Israel and England. We have also added a new feature, *The Daled Amot of Halakhab*, that discusses halakhic issues in depth and that will be a regular part of future editions of *Meorot*.

Jews who observe Torah and *mitsvot* certainly believe that their religion is true. But is the Torah of Moses the *only* “true religion”? Must everyone practice and believe as observant Jews do to live religious truth? Maimonides was one of the few halakhic authorities who wrote a detailed picture of the messianic era (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings, chs. 11 and 12), and at the end of his great halakhic compendium he asserts that in this era, the nations of the world will all adopt (*yahzeru*) “*dat ha-emet*”—the true religion. Does Maimonides expect that all humanity will eat *matzah* on Passover, wear *tsitsit* and accept the Torah given to Moses at Sinai? Or is it possible that there is a different true religion and life-style for gentiles even in the messianic era?

This is significant for us living in pre-messianic times, since most eschatological statements imply judgments about the life we lead today. (After all, we merit final rewards by virtue of the life we lead in the here and now.) Hence whether *Torat Moshe* is the exclusive true religion has important consequences how we relate to gentiles their beliefs. For Modern Orthodox Jews, who live in a sociologically pluralistic world and regularly interact with gentiles—both secular and religious—this question is a serious practical one.

R. Chaim Rapoport (“*Dat Ha-Emet*” in Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*”) provides a close analysis of Maimonides’ usage of “*dat ha-emet*” and concludes that while the term refers to the content of Sinaitic revelation for Jews, Maimonides also

uses it to refer to God’s revelation to Noah that contains the seven Noahide commandments for gentiles. Thus belief in the Creator of heaven and earth combined with obedience to the moral commandments Noahide is what Maimonides had in mind for gentiles in the messianic era, when universal tranquility will prevail and the Jewish people will live in harmony with the nations of the world. Even then, gentiles will remain distinct from Jews and not be bound by the 613 Sinaitic commandments.

Prof. Menachem Kellner (“Maimonides’ ‘True Religion’: For Jews or All Humanity?”) disagrees with R. Rapoport, claiming that Maimonides identifies the Image of God (*Tselem Elokim*) with the conceptual faculty that enables human beings to come to a limited knowledge of God, and insists that all human beings are endowed with *Tselem Elokim*. For Maimonides, the realization of this rational faculty is the ultimate human perfection, and because this knowledge produces messianic conditions in which humans have reached their ideal state, in the messianic era there will be no difference between Jews and gentiles. All people will adopt the most promising path to attaining knowledge of God, which is the Torah of Moses. (How the Torah will be interpreted and lived is, famously, a controversial point among Maimonides scholars.) R. Rapoport provides a brief response to Prof. Kellner.

Seven years ago R. Mendel Shapiro penned a learned and provocative study (“*Qeri’at ha-Torah* for Women: A Halakhic Analysis,” *The Edab Journal* 1:2, *Sivan* 5761) of the halakhic issues surrounding women’s *aliyyot* to the Torah, and concluded that for communities that do not see women’s *aliyyot* as lessening its dignity, this practice is permitted. The article elicited a wide reaction in traditional circles, and a few congregations in Israel and America proceeded to institute *aliyyot* for women on its basis. The noted talmudic scholar, R. Daniel Sperber, followed Shapiro’s essay with his own study (“Congregational Dignity and Human



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Dignity: Women and Public Torah Reading,” *The Edah Journal* 3:2, Elul 5763) that contained similar conclusions.

In this edition, R. Shlomo Riskin (“Torah *Aliyyot* for Women”) rejects both permissive analyses, and insists that the theoretical license given to women’s *aliyyot* in the *beraita* in *Megillah* 23a is only for a time when all seven *aliyyot* were not halakhically obligatory. In our times, however, when *aliyyot* are obligatory, women may not discharge this obligation for men since females are not similarly obligated. For R. Riskin, the fundamental text for present practice is the *tosefta* (*Megillah* 3:11).

R. Riskin also maintains that public reading of the Torah is part of the obligation of Torah study that devolves only on males. R. Shapiro responds to R. Riskin’s arguments, attempting to demonstrate that they are not consistent with Talmudic sources and with how those sources were interpreted by traditional halakhic authorities. He also rejects R. Riskin’s attempt to transform the socially sensitive concept of *kevod ha-tsibbur* (dignity of the congregation) into an objective standard based on halakhic obligation.

Meorot is privileged to present a translation of an important Hebrew essay by the noted Israeli Bible teacher, R. Yoel Bin Nun. Because R. Bin Nun writes exclusively in Hebrew, his seminal works have been unavailable to a large number of American Jews. In “New Year or Beginning of The New Year?,” he examines and resolves a number of textual difficulties: Why is there is no biblical mention of *Rosh ha-Shanah*? Why do we celebrate the New Year two weeks prior to the festival of *Sukkot*, when in the Bible that festival occurs at the end of the year—before the New Year?

In his discussion of the importance of Tanakh study within Modern Orthodoxy, *Meorot*’s associate editor R. Nathaniel Helfgot examines the problematics of utilizing biblical criticism and modern academic tools in teaching *Tanakh* in Modern Orthodox classrooms (“Curricula, Methodologies and Values in Orthodox *Tanakh* Study: Where They Where Can Help Us”). He rightly notes that while many of the assumptions of Higher Biblical Criticism have no place in an

Orthodox setting that insists that the Torah was divinely revealed at Sinai, it is crucial that Modern Orthodox high school students and young adults be made aware of the phenomenon of Biblical Criticism. From his personal experience as an educator, he observes that when used properly many of the tools and analyses of modern methods can enrich an Orthodox student’s appreciation of Torah and contribute to *yir’at shamayim* (religious awareness). Like so much of Modern Orthodoxy that in principle does not deny modern life and scholarship, the correct Torah approach is a critical dialectical acceptance of the fruits of modernity and the rejection of what contradicts our fundamental values.

In our new regular feature, *The Daled Amot of Halakhab*, R. Yaakov Love presents an analysis of the talmudic prohibition of inviting gentiles to a holiday meal, lest a Jew violate the prohibition of cooking for the gentile on *Yom Tov*. R. Love analyzes the considerations and limitations of the original *halakhab*, as well as which conditions of modern life are relevant to the prohibition today.

R. Yitzchak Blau offers an extended review essay of an important new Hebrew book from Israel, *Orthodox Judaism, New Perspectives*. The book explores aspects of Jacob Katz’ distinction between modern society, which values and aspires to change, and traditional society, which views the past as its essential guide, as it is being played out in contemporary Orthodox communities. Katz’ contention was that Orthodoxy as we know it today is a modern phenomenon, a reaction to the changes brought by the Enlightenment and liberal Judaism. The book’s scholarly articles discuss the historical and philosophical themes in Orthodoxy and confront how modern sociological, economic and political factors have willy-nilly changed Orthodox life and values. Blau develops penetrating insights and critiques into the claims about Orthodoxy by these scholars.

We are all aware that contemporary Orthodoxy is the scene of a *kulturkampf* between those wishing to seal off modernity as an *a priori* ideal and who strive to incorporate the best contemporary high culture and scholarship into religious life. There have been countless descriptive analyses of this spiritual disagreement, but now R. Marc Angel has given us an engaging novel that dramatizes the fundamental

conflict. R. Alan J. Yuter sees this novel as a modern story in epic form and reviews the book's application to the institutions and tensions of contemporary Orthodoxy.

I trust you will enjoy the variety and depth of the articles in this edition of *Meorot*, and invite you to send your responses to the edition by emailing us at meorotjournal@yctarah.org.

B'verakhab,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eugene". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.