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The Academy was truly ahead of its time. Now the Jewish community is undergoing an historic change. The idea of pluralism and trans-denominationalism is now being recognized. While the movements continue to serve large segments of the community, there are increasing numbers of Jews, congregations, institutions and communities that are not or cannot be served by any one movement.

The vision of a new, creative, and inclusive approach to Judaism and the Jewish community has begun to inspire many of today's seekers. It is the Academy that has carried forth the banner for this vision all these years. Now there are a number of inter-denominational seminaries. The Academy for Jewish Religion applauds the flourishing of pluralistic approaches to Judaism and is proud of its role in fostering such growth.

AJR is pledged to respect the dignity of every person, for each of us is created in the Divine Image. We welcome students, faculty and staff, irrespective of age, gender, learning style or sexual orientation.

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Introduction

Dr. Ora Horn Prouser

IT IS AN HONOR to dedicate this volume of *G'vanim* to Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz, icon, teacher, colleague, and friend. Rabbi Zlotowitz has been connected with the Academy for Jewish Religion for many years in a variety of capacities, working with the AJR administration in developing curriculum, connecting with Jewish leaders and institutions, founding this academic journal, and, most importantly, as a beloved and cherished teacher to generations of Academy students.

Rabbi Zlotowitz's achievements and talents are so far ranging that it is difficult to adequately describe his achievements or his nature. What better way to do so than to go back to one of the texts he loves so much and teaches so well: *Pirke Avot*, Ethics of the Fathers. This beautiful and insightful guide to life begins as follows:

משה קבל תורה מסיני, ומסרה ליהושע, ויהושע לזקנים, וזקנים לנביאים, ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. הם אמרו שלשה דברים, הוו מתונים בדין, והעמידו תלמידים הרבה, ועשו סיג לתורה.

Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it on to the men of the Great Assembly. They (the men of the Great Assembly) said three things: Be careful in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence for the Torah.

It is fitting that this *mishnah* begins with a chain of tradition. Rabbi Zlotowitz takes seriously his own place in that chain, and passes that respect and reverence on to his students. Rabbi Zlotowitz also has respect for both the divine and human elements in our sacred literature and tradition. His love and reverence for this chain, and his place in it, as both student and teacher, enables him to express connection both to the past and the future in all of his dealings.

The Mishnah continues with three precepts laid out by our sages.

The first, “be careful in judgment,” emphasizes the care one must take in all dealings, legal and otherwise. Rabbi Zlotowitz during his illustrious career showed great care in legal matters as the author of Responsa and articles relating to all areas of biblical study. Being careful in judgment, however, also relates to the care that Rabbi Zlotowitz always takes in all of his relationships, caring for the individual, the needs of each person, and the importance of *derekh erez* in all of our actions.

“Raise up many students.” It has been the gift of generations of aspiring rabbis and cantors to be students of Rabbi Zlotowitz. He has raised up students who love him, quote him regularly, remember his insights, his jokes, and his kind utterances. They remember his combination of an ability to see the big picture and great attention to detail. They try to emulate his combination of academic rigor, and warm care for each student. They reminisce about his ability to incorporate humor and personal anecdotes into serious matters of study.

“Make a fence for the Torah.” Making a fence for the Torah entails treating the Torah with respect and care that is due our Sacred Literature. Rabbi Zlotowitz always exhibits a love of text and study and transmits this love to all who know him, and all who are privileged to study with him.

While Rabbi Zlotowitz shares these attributes and values with everyone who is blessed to engage with him, it is also true that each person has his or her own story of a special relationship with him. I, too, have one of those stories. I met Rabbi Zlotowitz through AJR. I have learned from him, laughed at his stories, and enjoyed deep dialogue in issues of text and Jewish life. Years after developing this relationship I learned of a further connection we share. My grandfather was an Orthodox rabbi in Brooklyn. When he died at a young age, leaving a synagogue and family bereft, it was a young Rabbi Bernie Zlotowitz who became rabbi of that congregation, and who saw to some early needs of my mother’s family. I have always so appreciated that additional connection, how Rabbi Zlotowitz, with his engaging personality, wisdom, and intelligence connects me with a grandfather whom I never knew.

With gratitude for all that he has done for AJR as an institution, and with appreciation for the academic, spiritual, and personal gifts he has shared with each one of us as individuals, we dedicate this volume of *G'vanim* in honor of Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz.

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Nothing to Sneeze At: Scholarly Support for Compassionate Action

Rabbi Regina L. Sandler-Phillips, MSW, MPH

“**Y**ou sneezed on the truth, Ms. [Sandler-Phillips]!” Fifteen years after my ordination through a *Beit Din* that included Rabbi Dr. Bernard M. Zlotowitz, I continue to channel the deliberate, twinkle-eyed articulation of his signature response to AJR students whenever my own students sneeze during a discussion – always *b’shem omro*/with proper attribution to “my honored teacher, he should live and be well!”

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel *z”l* is well-remembered in his reflection that “I felt my legs were praying” on his 1965 civil rights march through Alabama.¹ As a veteran of the 1963 civil rights march on Washington, Rabbi Zlotowitz has also taught generations of his students about prayerful footwork – another bodily response to the truth, and nothing to sneeze at.² For this essay, I have reviewed and updated a previously unpublished paper on “Reading the Book of Job in Pastoral Context” that I wrote for Rabbi Zlotowitz in 1998. Along with his highest grade, my teacher penned the comment: “You sure put your נשמה [soul] into it.” It is to Rabbi Zlotowitz’s concern for both soul and scholarship that I seek to pay tribute here, in reflecting on the Book of Job over my subsequent decade and a half as a rabbinic chaplain.

READING THE BOOK OF JOB IN PASTORAL CONTEXT

It may seem presumptuous to perceive a modern understanding of pastoral counseling in this ancient document. But this [sense of]

1. Susannah Heschel, “Following in my father’s footsteps: Selma 40 years later,” in *Vox of Dartmouth* (April 5, 2005).

2. Bernard Zlotowitz, “Why I Joined the March on Washington” (1963), reprinted in *G’vanim: The Journal of the Academy for Jewish Religion* 3, 1 (May 2007).

presumption would be based on the illusion that pastoral wisdom is a modern day discovery. The reality is that what we now perceive as pastoral wisdom is actually the intuitive wisdom of the ages . . . prior to any indebtedness of pastoral counseling to the insights of modern psychotherapy.

Dr. William Hulme³

The Book of Job has captured the imaginations of many throughout the generations and has provided ample material for theological and philosophical conjectures concerning sin and suffering, reward and punishment, and God's role in determining the course of human events. The story of an exemplary patriarch who suffers through no fault of his own is developed through a series of poetic/dramatic discourses to challenge a prevalent and long-standing contention of wisdom literature – perhaps best expressed in the Book of Proverbs – that one's misfortunes increase in direct proportion to one's misdeeds. The counterpoint theory which evolves through Job is that of suffering as a divine means of testing the righteous.

Theoretical analyses of Job abound across the disciplines in the academic literature. Far less attention has been paid to the practical ramifications of the book in a pastoral context, as a resource for coping with suffering and tragedy in our contemporary day-to-day lives. It is to this exploration that the present essay is dedicated.

CONTENT AND CONTEXT

From such literary evidence as that of the prophet Ezekiel (14:14, 20) and others, it would appear that Job as a later Biblical work most likely builds upon a recognized folk tradition which is reflected in the opening and closing prose of the book. At the outset, a pious and prosperous Job is set up by God at a heavenly tribunal to be tested by "the Satan," or Accuser. First, Job is subjected to the sudden and violent loss of his property and the death of his ten children. He responds by observing

3. William Hume, "Pastoral Counseling in the Book of Job," *Concordia Journal* (April, 1989), 121.

established procedures for mourning (tearing his garment, shaving his head), and reflects: “Naked I came out from my mother’s womb and naked I will return. God has given and God has taken; let the name of God be blessed.” (Job 1:21)

The Accuser is empowered by God at a second heavenly tribunal to test Job once more, this time by attacking his bodily health. Job is afflicted with boils which cover his entire body, and sits down among the ashes to scrape at himself with shards of pottery. He spurns his bereaved wife’s advice to “Bless [i.e., curse] God and die,” asking her rhetorically: “Shall we accept the good from God and not the evil?” (2:9–10) At this point, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar enter the picture (2:11–3:1):

And three friends of Job heard about all the evil that had befallen him... and they met together to come to shake their heads with him and to comfort him. And they lifted up their eyes from far off and [almost] did not recognize him [in his suffering and affliction], and they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their garments and threw dust upon their heads to the sky. And they sat with him to the ground seven days and seven nights, and not one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great. Afterwards Job opened his mouth...

The central drama of the book revolves around the ensuing debate between Job and his friends, who had ostensibly come to comfort him, concerning the nature and purpose of suffering as well as the greatness and justice of God. Through three poetic cycles of speeches in which Job is outspoken in his expressions of grief, his protestations of innocence and his questioning of the divine will, these friends attempt to reconcile the calamities which have befallen him with their own views of reward and punishment – mainly by inaccurate generalizations which lead them to accuse Job of some great and secret transgression/s that would render his afflictions explicable: “Is not your fear [of God] your security, your hope and the wholeness of your ways? Please recall, who that is innocent has been lost, and where have the upright been wiped out?” (4:6–7) Later, when the three friends fall silent, a younger

fourth accuser (Elihu) enters the discourse without prior introduction, and vanishes without subsequent reference after five chapters of heated and extended speech. It has been suggested that Elihu is the literary interpolation of a later author who wished to develop and highlight certain arguments of the previous friends, although scholars and translators differ as to his relative importance.⁴

Finally, God intervenes and answers Job “out of the whirlwind” in two speeches, challenging him to reflect upon the great mysteries of the cosmos of which Job can admit to only the most limited understanding. While Job is thus chastised, he has ultimately passed the test to which he had been subjected. His friends, however, are castigated far more severely, and are given to understand that they are the ones who have sinned: “My anger is aroused against you . . . for you did not speak to Me properly as [did] My servant Job.” (42:7–8)

Job’s friends are accordingly commanded to bring a sacrifice of atonement and are reconciled to God only upon Job’s prayerful intervention. Finally, God restores and even increases Job’s prior fortunes, and seven sons and three daughters are born to him – apparently to replace the seven sons and three daughters who had died. Interestingly, Job’s three daughters Yemima, Ketzia and Keren-Hapukh (and not his seven sons) are named at this juncture and are given an inheritance along with their brothers. The book ends with Job, having lived to see his descendants to the fourth generation, dying a peaceful and satisfied death.

EARLY RABBINIC PASTORAL PRINCIPLES

Hulmes’ contention that the pastoral insights of the Book of Job predate “any indebtedness of pastoral counseling to the insights of modern

4. Samuel R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Gloucester, MA: Meridian-Peter Smith, 1956), 429–430; Stephen Mitchell, *The Book of JOB: Translated and with an Introduction* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 97; Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Book of Job: Translation, Introduction and Notes* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), 38–40; Zvi A. Yehuda, *Job: Ordeal, Defiance and Healing* (New York: Hadassah, 1990), 62.

psychotherapy” is borne out by the teachings and commentaries of the early rabbis. In a Talmudic discussion of business ethics, a *baraita* (rabbinic teaching external to the Mishnah, but dated to the same period) is brought to bear upon the Mishnaic principle that:

Just as there is fraudulence in buying and selling, so is there fraudulence in words. . . . If afflictions come upon [someone], if illness comes upon him or if he buried his children, one should not speak to him in the way that Job’s friends spoke to him [saying]: ‘Is not your fear [of God] your security, your hope and the wholeness of your ways? Please recall, who that is innocent has been lost, and where have the upright been wiped out?’”⁵

This *baraita* can be found among those collected in the Tosefta⁶ and is later codified by Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah*.⁷

Rashi similarly criticizes the victim-blaming inherent in such verses as Job 4:6–7 in an extended commentary upon verse 42:7 in which God censures Job’s friends:

“For you did not speak [to Me properly] . . .”: For surely you did not speak to Me [with] a proper claim “as [did] my servant Job”, since he did not sin against Me except in that which he said (9:22 above): “The blameless and the wicked He destroys,” and [this] by means of the Satan who accuses the world, as it is said (9:23): “For if the whip should smite suddenly. . . .” And if he [Job] continued to speak, [it is] from the weight of the afflictions which strengthened [their hold] over him [that] he spoke – but you [friends of Job] sinned in that you condemned him by saying (4:6): “Is not your fear [of God] your security [*kislatekha* can also be translated as ‘your folly’] . . . ?” And you held him in the category of the wicked, and in the end you were silenced and vanquished before him. You were supposed to comfort [i.e., defend] him when Elihu made [his speech]; was it

5. BT *Baba Metzia* 58b.

6. *Baba Metzia* 3:25.

7. *Sefer Kinyan, Hilkhoh Mekhirah* 14:13.

not enough for Job in his suffering and afflictions that you added to your transgressions and sinned by aggrieving him?!

On the other hand, the initial gestures of Job's friends *before* they entered into theological debate with him (2:11–13) are cited with approval, and actually provide the paradigm for comforting mourners in Jewish tradition. The Talmud records the teachings of Rabbi Yoḥanan and others in this regard,⁸ which are later codified by Maimonides in his Laws of Mourning:

The mourner reclines at the head [of the company]. And those who would comfort him are not permitted to sit except upon the ground, as it is said: “And [Job's friends] sat with him to the ground . . .” And they are not permitted to say a word until the mourner opens his mouth first, as it is said: “. . .and not one spoke a word to him . . .” And it is written: “Afterwards Job opened his mouth . . .And Eliphaz answered.” And when he [the mourner] shakes his head, the comforters are no longer permitted to sit with him, so that they will not bother him too much.⁹

The attention prescribed by the early rabbis to the verbal as well as the nonverbal cues of the mourner anticipates the soundest principles of contemporary grief support. The injunction here, as in the various other laws of comforting mourners which have been codified by Maimonides from Talmudic sources, is clearly to forego one's own honor – literally, to get down on the ground with the bereaved and to bear witness to the depths of his or her grief. We should remember, furthermore, that Job was not “only” a mourner, but also a person afflicted with debilitating illness at the time his friends came to visit him. In this regard, it is important to note that Maimonides integrated the imperatives of visiting the sick with those of comforting mourners and honoring the dead, at the end of his Laws of Mourning:

8. BT *Moed Katan* 27b, 28b.

9. *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Eivel*, 13:3.

It is a positive rabbinic commandment to visit the sick, and to comfort mourners, and to accompany the dead. . . . The commandment to visit the sick is incumbent upon all. Even one who is great [in social status] should visit one who is [of humbler status]. . . . One who enters to visit the sick should not sit on a bed, nor on a chair, nor on a bench, nor in a high place [over the ill person], and not above his head. Rather, one should wrap oneself up and sit below the head of the bed, and request mercy on behalf of [the ill person]. . . .¹⁰

In this framework, visiting the sick becomes an extension of the support we are called upon to provide for individuals in their grief – again, an early articulation of what we have found to hold true in a contemporary context. Notably, Maimonides closes his discussion with a personal reflection: “It seems to me that comforting mourners takes precedence over visiting the sick, as comforting mourners dispenses loving-kindness to the living and to the dead.”¹¹

The initial behavior of Job’s friends, who were able to maintain a silent, respectful and supportive presence for the seven days which we have since come to designate and observe as *shivah*, represents an ideal to which we should all aspire. However, the rather disastrous subsequent attempts of the friends to respond to the full expression of Job’s grief also offer lessons for us, teaching that silence in the face of inexplicable tragedy is often the most appropriate response even *after* the mourner has begun to speak.

Rashi is decisive on this point in his commentary to 42:7 cited above: “You were supposed to comfort him . . . ; was it not enough for Job in his suffering and afflictions that you added to your transgressions and sinned by aggrieving him?!” Job’s apparent blasphemies are accepted (or at least pardoned) in context, as outcries “from the weight of the afflictions” under which he grieved. The rabbinic message, then, would seem to be clear: pious theological pronouncements are not

10. *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Eivel*, 14:1, 4, 6.

11. *Ibid.*, 14:7.

appropriate in the house of mourning, no matter how firmly they may be upheld in other circumstances. Those who would comfort must learn to put their own opinions aside and literally “ground” themselves in the feelings and needs of the bereaved.

THEOLOGICAL TENSIONS AND THEIR
IMPACT UPON WOULD-BE COMFORTERS

If the early rabbis are so clear on this point, then why should we – across the Jewish denominational spectrum – still find it so difficult to conduct ourselves according to the teachings presented above? The overwhelming popularity of Rabbi Harold Kushner’s book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* attests to an ongoing struggle with questions of theodicy and how to face suffering – our own as well as that of others. Ten years before Kushner, Dr. William Ryan had already advanced a secular social/political analysis of the problem along similar lines in his book *Blaming the Victim*.¹² All too often, we find ourselves in the position of “Job’s friends” (and perhaps, of Job himself before the onset of his own misfortunes), not as true comforters, but as defenders of a given worldview to which the innocent victims of the world – by their very existence, if not by their words – present a terrifying existential challenge.

Part of the difficulty lies in the tensions and contradictions of Jewish theology. The Book of Job, which can be seen as a protest against the conventional theology of the wisdom tradition, stands alongside the Book of Proverbs which epitomizes such conventional wisdom. Proverbs appears as a moral instruction book which contends that good fortune is dependent upon proper behavior, while misfortune is of necessity the consequence of sin. This, indeed, is the “wisdom” which the friends of Job bring to bear upon their attempts to confront the tragedy that has befallen him. On the other hand, the Book of Ecclesiastes appears to reach a conclusion diametrically opposed to that

12. William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Random House, 1971; revised ed. 1976).

of Proverbs, one which is perhaps influenced by an awareness of Job and which echoes some of his claims: there is no one clear relationship between behavior and its consequences, and we can only be certain that death comes equally to all. All three books are given a place in the canonized wisdom literature of Hebrew Scripture – a sign of the many voices through which tradition speaks and from which we draw our various frames of reference.

Rabbi Dr. Zvi Yehuda, in his study guide entitled *Job: Ordeal, Defiance and Healing*, draws an important connection between the often excoriated verse 4:7 of Job – which epitomizes the conventional theology of Job’s friends – and Psalm 37:25, which occupies an honored place at the end of the blessing after meals: “Young I was and I have aged; yet I have never seen a righteous person forsaken; nor his descendants begging bread!”

The faithful psalmist . . . ignores reality. Undoubtedly he has encountered “a righteous person forsaken,” yet he sees only what he wants to see. The psalmist’s verse is oblivious to both the agonies and the virtues of others. The Talmud insists that neither God nor human could have uttered such an absurd verse.¹³

Actually, neither the Talmudic citation itself nor its commentators (Rashi and Tosafot) express the righteous outrage of Dr. Yehuda.¹⁴ The latter confine themselves to a more technical discussion of whether the Talmudic attribution to “The Prince of the World” indicates that the verse was written by the angel Metatron. Nevertheless, the theological complacency which Yehuda describes has an undeniable place in our liturgy and in our general consciousness. Another example of this is the eleventh of Maimonides’ thirteen principles of faith, articulated in his commentary to *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 10:1 and popularized in the synagogue hymn *Yigdal*: “I believe with perfect faith that God rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress His commandments.”

13. Yehuda, *Job*, 63.

14. BT *Yevamot* 16b.

This is the same Maimonides who codified the laws of comforting mourners, which shun the victim-blaming tendencies of preaching divine retribution. While Maimonides' principle must be understood in the context of his writings in the *Mishneh Torah* that in certain cases such reward and punishment are reserved for the World to Come,¹⁵ it must also be noted that the Book of Job contains only the most preliminary (if poetic) speculations regarding an afterlife – and these are generally entertained by the despairing Job himself (14:7–15), not by his theologically expert friends. Nor would the premise of an afterlife necessarily be a source of comfort at the outset, as we know from the awkward attempts in our own time to console the bereaved with such comments as “S/He’s in heaven now.”

It is little wonder, therefore, that we – including our religious leaders – are often at a loss when faced with inexplicable suffering. Like Job himself, we may be reasonably comfortable with theories of divine retribution until tragedy strikes us personally – and then the story of Job assumes utmost urgency. Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, which analyzes the condition of Job, out of his own experiences with the illness and death of his son, which forced him to reconsider his own conventional theology.

Similarly, Dr. Yehuda's study guide on Job – which includes material related to the Holocaust – is “dedicated to the memory of my beloved son Ben Zion Yehuda, who gave his life for peace in Israel on Tu Bishvat, 5735... 1975.” The bereaved father's commentary on this dedication is limited to Job 16:18 – “O Earth! Cover not my blood! Let no place hide my outcry!” – and we can only speculate as to what extent Dr. Yehuda's anger at theological complacency has been influenced by his own personal experience of tragedy and the reactions of those around him. However, in his questions for discussion Yehuda also challenges readers to formulate a defense of Job's friends and to consider their background and claims.¹⁶

Kushner suggests that the dilemma of Job and his friends can

15. *Hilkhot Teshuvah*, 6:1, 8:1.

16. *Ibid.*, 68.

be seen as the simultaneous confrontation of three contradictory premises: (A) God is all-powerful, (B) God is just and fair, (C) Job is a good person.¹⁷ Both Job and his friends agree to premise (A), but they cannot then reconcile (B) and (C). Job insists upon his innocence (C) and accordingly challenges God's justice, while his friends uphold God's justice (B) and challenge Job's innocence.

Kushner, for his part, is willing to dispense with premise (A), that God is all-powerful, in the interests of formulating a theology of comfort: God is good, and the sufferer is also good. Moving from a discussion of free will as accounting for the evil – as well as the good – perpetrated by human beings, Kushner goes further to argue that even natural disasters should not be viewed as “acts of God.” Although, in essence, Kushner's God cannot control or prevent any evil from befalling His creatures, He grieves with us and shares our suffering, gives us solace and companionship, and helps us find the strength to grow beyond the tragedies of our lives.

Kushner's attempt to read his interpretation into the intent of Job's anonymous author is less than convincing, since he sees in God's speech from the whirlwind a statement of divine powerlessness rather than divine power.¹⁸ His theology reflects its own contradictions, and his discussion throughout the book is clearly conditioned by what he “would like to think,” as pointed out by such detractors as Abraham Cohen.¹⁹

However, Cohen is incorrect in his claim that Kushner's theology contains “no trace of the God known to Judaism.”²⁰ On the contrary, one could view the entire enterprise of *midrash aggadah* (interpretive teaching through story) as the theology of what the ancient rabbis “would like to think.” Among the contradictory midrashic pronounce-

17. Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Avon Books by arrangement with Schocken Books, 1981), 37.

18. Kushner, *When Bad Things*, 42–45.

19. Abraham Cohen, “Theology and Theodicy: On Reading Harold Kushner,” *Modern Judaism* 16, 3 (1996), 231–233.

20. *Ibid.*, 261.

ments of the rabbis in the face of tragedy – which certainly do not preclude blaming the victim – we have many examples of a God who mourns, weeps and even suffers physical pain at the death of God's creatures.

Such a God is presumably limited in the power to avert tragedy, but shares the sorrow of a bereaved humanity – as in the following early *midrash*, recorded in *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* (26:9), on the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. “And did they die ‘before God’? Rather, this teaches that it is difficult before God when the children of the righteous die during the lifetime of their parents. . . . It is twice as difficult before the Blessed Holy One as [before] their parents.” Earlier in the *Pesikta*, it is suggested that not only do the righteous often forego happiness in this world, but even “the Holy Blessed One [does] not rejoice in His world, and you want to rejoice in His world?!” Rather, the earthly righteous and the Holy Blessed One will rejoice in each other's works in the World to Come.²¹

It is instructive to hear the echoes of the ancient rabbis in our contemporary efforts, too often disjointed, to comfort the bereaved and reassure ourselves: “We all have to die sometime.” “You can't expect happiness in this life.” “They must have gotten what they deserved.” “God is with you.” “It was a blessing.” “It all works out for the best.” In the face of grief we often feel impelled to fix, to control – and to blame, or at least to explain. We search for some way of staving off the sense of chaos which threatens to overwhelm us in times of great loss. However, the greatest healing may come not from a flurry of activity or words, but from the “still, small voice” of an attentive silence – a compassionate presence.

FROM SUFFERING TO COMFORT –
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

What does it mean to answer someone about human suffering? For there *are* answers beyond the one-size-fits-all propositions of the

21. *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana*, 26:3.

theologians. But these answers can't be imposed from the outside. They will resonate only where the questioner lets them enter. . . .

There is never an answer to the great question of life and death, unless it is my answer or yours. Because ultimately it isn't a question that is addressed, but a person. Our whole being has to be answered. At that point, both question and answer disappear, like hunger after a good meal.

*Stephen Mitchell*²²

We have seen that, in navigating the three contradictory premises cited earlier in this essay, Job rules out God's justice (B), his friends rule out Job's innocence (C), and Kushner rules out God's omnipotence (A). Scholar and translator Stephen Mitchell reflects upon God's message from the whirlwind and suggests a fourth, previously unthinkable possibility: "*Suffering comes from God. God is just. Job is innocent.*"²³ In other words, embracing that which is Unknowable moves us beyond apparent contradiction to accept all three premises.

A full discussion of Mitchell's elegantly nuanced analysis is beyond the scope of this essay, which is ultimately concerned with the practice of comforting rather than the resolution of theological contradictions. However, for our purposes it is important to note that, regardless of his theological reflections, Mitchell does not espouse the theology of complacency. "Even if the friends are right about God's justice, their timing is bad. In fact, they don't speak to Job at all, they speak to their own terror at the thought of Job's innocence. And though they defend God's justice, they can't afford to understand what it is."²⁴ On the other hand, Job struggles with "the harrowing question of someone who has only heard of God . . . 'Why me?' There is no answer, because it is the

22. Mitchell, *The Book of JOB*, xviii–xix.

23. *Ibid.*, xiii, emphasis in the original.

24. *Ibid.*, xiv.

wrong question. He will have to struggle with it until he is exhausted, like a child crying itself to sleep.”²⁵

With this in mind, we can move into more practical considerations of pastoral care. If helping others feel God's presence with them in their suffering is not dependent upon resolving the contradictions of theology, then how is pastoral care to be realized? How can the Book of Job serve as a pastoral resource in this regard?

Beyond Kushner, the only book-length treatment of such issues in a Jewish pastoral context would appear to be *JOB ON TRIAL: A Book for our Time*.²⁶ It is written by one Israel J. Gerber – who seems to identify as a rabbi, but does not include any clear autobiographical information beyond passing references to some clinical pastoral training – and was apparently published by private initiative. *JOB ON TRIAL* is a rambling, uneven and self-contradictory text, more impressive for the range of the sources it brings to bear upon the subject than for any coherent synthesis of those sources.

Gerber speculates at length upon the psychiatric diagnoses of Job's various afflictions, musing over such possibilities as psychosomatic skin diseases, learned helplessness, and involuntional melancholia.²⁷ He reports presenting Job's "case history" to six psychiatrists, all of whom recommended electro-convulsive shock therapy – although his three more recent informants indicated that they would first prescribe anti-depressant drugs.²⁸ Gerber concludes that "Job's complaints of nightmares and paranoia indicate the need for extended psychiatric help."²⁹ The pastoral counselor faced with an individual in Job's circumstances should function as a supportive adjunct to a psychiatrist, mobilizing Jewish communal and other social welfare resources as appropriate to facilitate Job's "rehabilitation."

25. *Ibid.*, xv–xvi.

26. Israel J. Gerber, *JOB ON TRIAL: A Book for our Time* (Gastonia, North Carolina: E.P. Press, 1982).

27. *Ibid.*, 20–33.

28. *Ibid.*, 148.

29. *Ibid.*, 149–151.

Gerber suggests that the accusations of Job's friends constitute a kind of "shock treatment" which ultimately produces "salutary therapeutic results"³⁰ – thus bolstering his initial contention that "[the friends] were an invaluable asset . . . although they were not adept in the art of counseling. Imagine how helpful they would have been had they been trained."³¹ Although Gerber cites the work of Thomas Szasz, Viktor Frankl and others who "would reject a pathological diagnosis of Job," most of his book reads like a caricature of misguided medicalization rather than a guide to effective pastoral care.³²

However, Hulme – a professor of pastoral theology, ministry and pastoral care at a Lutheran seminary in Minnesota – also notes the "integrating effect" of Job's anger at his friends: "In his defiance Job is vital and triumphant."³³ Hulme observes that, while it is not his own counseling style to elicit anger deliberately, he has seen beneficial effects whenever he has evoked anger unintentionally. "In every such instance that I can recall, the anger seemed to be a strengthening influence. When a counselee expresses anger toward the counselor either verbally or nonverbally, it is important that the counselor both acknowledge and accept this anger."³⁴ The key, according to Hulme, is to maintain self-awareness – and not to react with blind defensiveness, as did Job's friends in their varying degrees of sophistication:

When the needs of others are at the center of our attention, we respond in empathy. When on the other hand we are threatened by the other's needs, particularly the other's *expression* of those needs, we *react*. In responding, the pastor in us comes forth and we are drawn out of ourselves in identification with the other. In reacting, our defensiveness takes over and we become preoccupied with our own tension.³⁵

30. *Ibid.*, 55–56.

31. *Ibid.*, ii.

32. *Ibid.*, 31–33.

33. Hulme, *Pastoral Counseling*, 131.

34. *Ibid.*, 126.

35. *Ibid.*, 124.

Because Job's articulation of his situation threatened their very worldview, his friends were unable to respond empathically and compassionately. While the "shock treatment" of their reactive accusations may indeed have had some beneficial effects, this is clearly not upheld as a model for intervention. Indeed, Job reminds his friends implicitly of the helpful initial response which they had abandoned: "Who will grant that you will be silent, and that this will be wisdom for you?! Hear my reproof, and listen to the arguments of my lips. . . . Be silent before me and I will speak, and let come to pass what may." (13:5–6, 13) Such admonishment is certainly in keeping with the traditional rabbinic injunctions to sit "below the head of the bed" when visiting someone who is ill, and to sit "to the ground" with persons in mourning.

Central to the message of all organizations that offer Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training is that pastoral care skills can be learned. While in recent decades such skills have become associated with and even expected of clergy, the imperatives of visiting the sick, accompanying the dead and comforting mourners are actually incumbent upon all Jews. In an interview with leading Jewish educator Joel Lurie Grishaver five years after the publication of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Rabbi Harold Kushner reported that he "now spend[s] a lot more time on how to comfort and how to help people and a lot less time on how to understand God's role." Grishaver, for his part, sees this as "a subtext of the entire Jobian endeavor of [Kushner's] book" – and goes on to reflect that, as of the time of the interview, "learning how to be a good comforter is an important Jewish skill which I've never seen dealt with curricularly."³⁶

However, Grishaver does recall the Orthodox day school in Chicago where he worked early in his teaching career. When tragedy struck twice in one year – the second time involving the death of a fourth grade student at the school – Rabbi Harvey Well, the principal, personally brought classes of students to the funeral and to the house

36. Joel Lurie Grishaver and Rabbi Harold Kushner et al., "A CAJE Symposium: Teaching the Problem of When Bad Things Happen to Good People" (New York: Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education, 1986), 3.

of mourning. In discussing this later with Grishaver, Well explained that the students not only learned the obligation to visit, but actually practiced the *mitzvah* of *niḥum aveilim* (comforting mourners) before they went:

I never sat in on one of the Rabbi's training sessions and at that time I didn't think to ask for details. In my imagination I know what took place. Not only did they run through the rituals of taking off shoes, shaking hands and not-greeting, and the other prescribed practices, but they also practiced talking. They shared their feelings and learned how to listen. They took turns being the mourners and then shared the things which comforted them and the things which made them feel worse. From that memory – and my imagination's expansion of that moment – I believe that we can indeed train the comforters.³⁷

Nearly 30 years later, our Jewish community still has far to go in making the art and skill of comforting an educational priority. It would even appear that there has been a retreat from the challenges of death education since the dialogue between Grishaver and Kushner. On the other hand, more recent paradigms of spirituality and healing have given contemporary resonance to ancient rabbinic imperatives. The rising popularity of CPE among Jewish seminarians and clergy is a welcome sign, but the broader community education of children and lay adults to respond in the face of illness and loss remains an important – and neglected – Jewish challenge.

A RESOURCE FOR BIBLIOTHERAPY?

We have seen how the image and story of Job can illuminate the nature of suffering and comfort. The Biblical Book of Job, however, is forty-two chapters long and written in an archaic language which is not easily accessible even to scholars. How useful, then, is the book as a whole in terms of a pastoral resource, especially for Jews?

37. *Ibid.*, 4, 11.

Gerber's comments on this subject are among the most useful in his *JOB ON TRIAL: A Book for our Time*. On the basis of a questionnaire which he prepared and distributed to equal numbers of Jews and Christians, Gerber found that Christians are twice as likely as Jews to have heard of the Book of Job, and five times as likely to be inspired by it. Christian schools are more likely to teach Job, and Christian clergy are more likely to preach Job, than are their Jewish counterparts. Gerber suggests that “[The Book of] Job’s negligible effect upon the modern Jew may be [because] its lofty solutions to the problem of suffering do not ease the troubled mind... [and] possibly because Christians place greater emphasis on the suffering of Jesus, while Jews choose to avoid the subject.”³⁸

Indeed, Hulme puts a characteristic Christian spin on his analysis of pastoral interactions in Job: “In theological terms Job and the three [friends] had been locked into the categories of the Law, and the answer to Job’s question is in the Gospel.”³⁹ But any theological answer “imposed from the outside,” as Stephen Mitchell has suggested, misses the point: “Because ultimately it isn’t a question that is addressed, but a person. Our whole being has to be answered. At that point, both question and answer disappear, like hunger after a good meal.”⁴⁰

In any case, the Book of Job – as a book – retains an unquestionable place in Jewish tradition. While the study of Torah is generally considered enjoyment and therefore not permissible during the initial days of mourning, mourners sitting through *shivah* “may read the book of *Job*, the story of the classic mourner.”⁴¹ In the days when the Temple was standing, the Book of Job was first among those books read aloud by or to the High Priest to keep him awake and vigilant during the night before Yom Kippur.⁴²

38. Gerber, *JOB*, 177.

39. Hulme, “Pastoral Counseling,” 134, also see 131.

40. Mitchell, *The Book of JOB*, xviii–xix.

41. Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1969), 134.

42. *Mishnah Yoma* 1:6.

Even so, the book's primary value is still manifest in "sound bites" and selected excerpts – such as those which underpin the laws of comforting, as above. Our very invocation of God as *Oseh shalom bim'romav* (the One who makes peace in the heavens) at the end of *Kaddish* comes from Job 25:2.⁴³ In practice, the pastoral comforter would do best to share such excerpts as s/he finds most meaningful with one who is suffering, rather than expecting the sufferer to read through the Book of Job in its entirety.

SOME FINAL REFLECTIONS (1998)

And no one says: "Where is God my Maker,
Who gives songs in the night?" (Job 35:10)

Suffering often drives us to reconnect with spiritual resources which might otherwise be forgotten or neglected. We are far more likely to reach out to God in moments of anguish and despair than in moments of serenity. This insight into "songs in the night" from Job 35:10 comes through the voice of Elihu, "the fourth counselor," who is often dismissed by interpreters and translators as external to the narrative integrity of the Book of Job.⁴⁴ Indeed, neither God, Job, or the original three friends refer or respond to Elihu's sudden appearance – or to his five chapters of extended monologue before he disappears.

However, Hulme sees in Elihu the pastoral counselor who truly makes a difference for Job – the only one who addresses the suffering man by name, the only one who ever reflects back and restates Job's position ("So you said in my ears, and the sound of [your] words I will hear" – Job 33:8). Hulme suggests that "[the] lack of any line of demarcation between Elihu's ministry to Job and Job's encounter with God is an example of effective pastoral counseling. The pastor is the midwife to the counselee's own involvement... with God, and when

43. Lamm, *The Jewish Way*, 154; Nosson Scherman, *KADDISH: A New Translation with Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (Brooklyn, NY: Artscroll / Mesorah Publications, 1980), 46–47.

44. Hulme, "Pastoral Counseling," 131.

this involvement takes place, the pastor fades from the scene.”⁴⁵ Yehuda also makes note of Elihu’s more personalized and engaged approach to Job.⁴⁶

In comforting mourners, we invoke God as *haMakom*: literally, “the Place” of consoling presence. So it is, perhaps, that God’s presence is most likely to be realized through the care we give each other in our suffering. God can be subjectively experienced, but cannot be objectively vindicated or indicted, proven or disproven. Ultimately, we learn that the theological conjectures of Job’s friends had nothing to do with the divine drama unfolding behind the scenes. However, the friends’ initial gestures of supportive presence are what made it possible for Job to find his voice in the first place. This initial support – simple and prosaic, before the long poetic debates began – continues to receive the least attention from contemporary scholars, but remains the most important ethical lesson of Job.

It is this assumption of responsibility for showing up and maintaining a compassionate presence, day after day, in the face of all the inexplicable tragedies and unanswered questions with which we continue to challenge God, that can bring true holiness into our personal and communal lives. We owe it to ourselves and each other to learn and grow in our practice of the art of comforting, and the Book of Job can contribute significantly toward this end.

REFLECTIONS IN PROGRESS (2014)

In “Wresting Blessings: A Pastoral Response to Suffering,” spiritual director Rabbi Myriam Klotz advocates a skillful balance of compassionate presence with sensitive guidance for finding meaning in the experience of suffering. She explores the dialogue between Job and his friends as “a cautionary tale,” contrasting the ineffective responses of the friends with the apparently effective responses of God: “It was

45. *Ibid.*, 136.

46. Yehuda, *Job*, 62.

not God's answer but God's presence that helped Job."⁴⁷ In a similar light, Klotz suggests that:

It is not the role of the pastoral caregiver to diminish the awesome mystery at the heart of the experience of suffering by explaining it away, but it can be helpful to sufferers in their journey to provide them with an understanding of theological contexts in which Jews have tried to understand God's relationship to suffering. Pastoral caregivers can offer some of this understanding, and can extend validating permission for sufferers to consider these frameworks as a possible springboard of meaning. At different times in life, one perspective can be more helpful than others.⁴⁸

In the years since I offered the foregoing conclusions to Rabbi Zlotowitz, I have continued to reflect upon various "springboards of meaning" as a Jewish chaplain in acute and long-term care, hospice and community settings. Above I cited *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* 26:9 on the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, with its rabbinic suggestion that God suffered along with their bereaved parents. I have since come to focus on the Biblical verses themselves (Leviticus 10:1–20), which seem to indicate that Moses – the prototypical "pastor" of our people – was unable to recognize and accept the grief he shared with his family over these deaths, as he demanded that Aaron account for particular lapses of priestly ritual.

In the face of the sudden, fiery loss of his two sons, "Aaron was silent" as his brother turned to explanation and interpretation, to the theology and ritual which seemed familiar and comfortable. (verse 3) Moses, like so many of us, could not face Aaron's silence, could not sit with the pain. From the depths of inexplicable tragedy, Aaron finally spoke in spare, simple words to confront his brother with a question:

47. Rabbi Myriam Klotz, "Wresting Blessings: A Pastoral Response to Suffering," in Rabbi Dayle A. Friedman, ed., *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001), pp. 41–42.

48. *Ibid.*

did God really require, or even desire, ritual business-as-usual at such a time? “Moses hearkened, and it was good in his eyes.” (verse 20)

“Aaron was silent . . . Moses hearkened.” Just as different family members grieve in different ways over what appears to be a shared loss, it can be difficult even for seasoned professionals to recognize when we are conflating the roles of mourner and comforter. The early rabbinic attention to nonverbal cues as codified by Maimonides remains paramount here.⁴⁹ If we can listen to the silences as well as the words of those who grieve, we will probably find our own wounds touched. And as our own wounds are touched, we may find the courage to face our own grief, to focus on our own needs for the healing that silence can bring.

This is especially true in the aftermath of great collective tragedies, when an entire community, city or nation becomes a very diffuse and global “house of mourning.” The events of September 11, 2001 – followed almost immediately by deadly postal attacks of bacterial anthrax – brought into stark focus the narrative of sudden violence, building collapse and skin disease that left the Biblical Job bereft of his children, property, and bodily health. More importantly, the post-9/11 disaster relief mobilization brought together people of all backgrounds, normally divided along any number of lines, in a shared undertaking. Wisely deferring most theological speculation (at least at the outset), the overall focus was on showing up for compassionate presence and practical support of those in need.

Responses to the 9/11 attacks highlighted the wisdom of classical Jewish teachings on our interfaith communal priorities in urban centers. Our actions reverberated with the echoes of spiritual guidance from very ancient sources:⁵⁰

It is taught: In a city that has within it non-Jews and Jews, they appoint non-Jewish and Jewish collectors to collect from non-Jews and from Jews, and sustain poor non-Jews and poor Jews, and visit

49. *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Eivel*, 13:3.

50. *JT Gittin* 5:9.

the sick among non-Jews and the sick among Jews, and bury the dead of non-Jews and the dead of Jews, and comfort the mourners of non-Jews and the mourners of Jews, and bring in the indigent of non-Jews and the indigent of Jews – for these are ways of peace.

Suddenly, issues that we prefer to push to the background under normal circumstances came to the forefront of consciousness. In particular, the tragedies of 9/11 highlighted our deeply spiritual human need to honor the bodies of the dead. The silent, ceremonial closing of the Ground Zero recovery efforts in May of 2002, in which an empty, flag-draped stretcher was carried out of the World Trade Center site, was a testimony to the bodies of more than 1,700 victims for whom no remains had then been found – as well as to the unspoken anguish of their survivors. This ceremony also followed the end of the 9/11 *sh'mirah* / vigil around the clock that had been kept through a pluralistic mobilization of more than 200 Jewish volunteers at the NYC Medical Examiner's office.⁵¹

In the soul-searching of our Jewish communities, many began to ask how well we are organized, on a regular basis, to fulfill the imperatives of watching over and taking care of our own at the sacred and vulnerable time of death. My experiences as a chaplain in the post-9/11 disaster relief became a primary impetus for my work to restore the *hevra kadisha* / sacred burial fellowship to its rightful place within the continuum of Jewish caring priorities. Several years into this “sacred undertaking” of participant research and action, I received a request from Rabbi Zlotowitz to read and write a review of *Bodies and Souls*⁵² by Isabel Vincent for the 2007 volume of this journal.⁵³

51. Jane Gross, “Stretching a Jewish Vigil for the Sept. 11 Dead,” *The New York Times* (November 6, 2001); Julie Wiener, “Psalms for a Grieving City,” *The Jewish Week* (September 6, 2002), 14–15.

52. Isabel Vincent, *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the Americas* (New York: William Morrow/HarperCollins, 2005).

53. Regina Sandler-Phillips, “Review: *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the Americas*,” *G'vanim* 3,1 (May, 2007). Available at: http://www.ajrsem.org/uploads/docs/book_reviews.pdf.

Vincent's narrative of the so-called "white slave trade" begins and ends at the graves of Jewish prostitutes in Brazil. *Bodies and Souls* uncovers the history – including repressed scholarly research – of how these trafficked immigrant women, shunned by mainstream Jewish society, opened their own cemetery in 1916. Ten years earlier, the Brazilian Jewish prostitutes had pooled their resources to organize their own *hevra kadisha*. Vincent's description of how Rebecca Freedman, one of the last known Jewish prostitutes in Rio, cleansed and prepared her sisters for burial is movingly accurate and true to Jewish tradition, down to the specific words of the liturgy for *taharah* / ritual purification and forgiveness.⁵⁴

By inviting me into scholarship beyond my more "mainstream" *hevra kadisha* research, Rabbi Zlotowitz enhanced my front-line efforts on behalf of our Jewish dead. I was reintroduced to compassionate action as a direct and vivid integration of justice and kindness in Jewish history – with clear implications for our communal priorities today, as the scourge of human trafficking continues to demand a Jewish response beyond denial.

ON ONE FOOT

Archibald MacLeish's Pulitzer Prize-winning verse-drama "J.B." imagines a compassionate reconciliation of Job with his traumatized wife.⁵⁵ Anonymous in the original Biblical text, she is named by MacLeish as Sarah. In response to Job's question of why she had left him, Sarah replies: "I loved you. / I couldn't help you anymore. / You wanted justice and there was none – only love."⁵⁶ As they begin to reclaim their shattered lives, Sarah offers the closing words of the play: "Blow on the coal of the heart and we'll know... / We'll know..."⁵⁷ Ironically, MacLeish's representation of the Accuser (who had tried to prevent

54. *Ibid.*, 108–115.

55. Archibald MacLeish, *J.B.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956, 1957, 1958; copyright renewed 1986).

56. *Ibid.*, 151.

57. *Ibid.*, 153.

the couple's reconciliation) previously comments: "All I wanted was to help. / Professional counsel you might call it . . ."58

My journeys into both chaplaincy and scholarship since 1998 have taught me to look beyond professionalism and credentialing in efforts to help. Jewish pastoral caregivers continue to seek authentic Jewish terms for such concepts as chaplaincy, pastoral care, and ministry. Yet our core language remains that of *bikkur ḥolim*/visiting the sick, *levayat hamet*/accompanying the dead, and *niḥum aveilim*/consoling the bereaved. These remain lay imperatives incumbent upon all Jews, regardless of professional training or employment.

Today I do not believe that the basic humanity of "Blow on the coal of the heart" can be overestimated. Above I quoted Hulme's contention that "The pastor is the midwife to the counselee's own involvement . . . with God, and when this involvement takes place, the pastor fades from the scene."⁵⁹ I am now struck by the metaphor of a midwife – a traditional healer who, for most of human history, was not professionally medicalized. Whether lay or professional, the midwife has always served as an attendant who bears witness to powerful natural processes, offering the supportive touch of experience as appropriate.

Like hospice care, the *hevra kadisha* offers a midwifery of attendants at the end of life. Both research and experience have confirmed my deep respect for all of the anonymous attendants who, without recognition or fanfare, serve the living and the dead of this world: changing soiled bedclothes and adult diapers, cleaning bedpans and floors, washing and wrapping up bodies, digging and filling graves. Those who make their living performing these tasks generally do not receive the "professional" benefits of regular or even periodic debriefing. Yet their quiet presence can teach us volumes about our shared humanity, if we take the time to notice the attendants we regularly encounter throughout our lives.

Death education pioneer Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross cites one such attendant in several of her books, going into greatest detail in a memoir

58. *Ibid.*, 145.

59. Hulme, "Pastoral Counseling," 136.

she published in 1997. I offer an extended quotation here, as I believe that all the particulars of this neglected history are crucial:

In these earliest days of what would become known as the birth of thanatology – or the study of death – my greatest teacher was a black cleaning woman. I do not remember her name, but I saw her regularly in the halls, both day and night, depending on our shifts. But what drew my attention was the effect she had on many of the most seriously ill patients. Each time she left their rooms, there was, I noticed, a tangible difference in their attitudes. . . .

Then one day our paths crossed in the hallway . . . I walked directly up to this cleaning woman, a confrontational sort of approach, which I'm sure startled her, and without any subtlety or charm I literally blurted out, "What are you doing with my dying patients?"

Naturally, she became defensive. "I'm only cleaning the floors," she said politely, and then walked away . . . Finally, one afternoon she confronted me in the hallway and then pulled me behind the nursing station . . . When we were completely alone, where no one could hear us, she bared her life's tragic history as well as her heart and soul in a way that was beyond my comprehension.

From Chicago's South Side, she grew up amid poverty and misery . . . One day her three-year-old son got very sick with pneumonia. She took him to the emergency room at the local hospital, but was turned away because she owed ten dollars. Desperate, she walked to Cook County Hospital, where they had to take indigent people . . . But after three hours of sitting and waiting her turn, she watched her little boy wheeze and gasp and then die while she cradled him in her arms . . .

It was so odd, and I was so naive then, that I nearly asked, "Why are you telling me all this? What does it have to do with my dying patients?" But she looked at me with her dark, kind, understanding eyes and answered as if she was a mind reader, "You see, death is not a stranger to me. He is an old, old acquaintance."

Now I was the student looking at the teacher. "I'm not afraid of him anymore," she continued in her quiet, calm and direct

tone. “Sometimes I walk into the rooms of these patients and they are simply petrified and have no one to talk to. So I go near them. Sometimes I even touch their hands and tell them not to worry, that it’s not so terrible.” She was then silent...⁶⁰

“Now I was the student looking at the teacher... She was then silent.” Kübler-Ross concludes: “All the theories and science in the world could not help anyone as much as one human unafraid to open his [*sic*] heart to another.”⁶¹

Another exemplary attendant whose name is lost to us is the maidservant of “Rabbi” – “Rabbi” being Yehudah haNasi, chief redactor of the Mishnah. A pious woman whose decisive actions are occasionally recorded in Talmudic discussions of Jewish law, the maidservant of Rabbi is perhaps best known for shaking his learned disciples out of their denial of Rabbi’s suffering when he lay terminally ill:

On that day that Rabbi died [literally, “that Rabbi’s soul rested”], the rabbis decreed a fast and asked for compassion [that he not die]. And they said: Anyone who says that Rabbi’s soul has rested shall be stabbed with a sword. The maidservant of Rabbi went up to the roof and said: Those above seek [to take] Rabbi, and those below seek [to keep] Rabbi; may it be [God’s] will that those below overpower those above. When she saw how many times he entered the latrine, removing and replacing his *tefillin*, and how he suffered, she said: May it be [God’s] will that those above overpower those below. Yet the rabbis did not cease from [praying for] compassion. She took a small clay pot and threw it from the roof to the ground. They ceased from [praying for] compassion [when they heard the vessel shatter], and Rabbi’s soul rested.⁶²

60. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D., *The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 143–144.

61. *Ibid.*, 143–144.

62. BT *Ketubot* 104a.

The anonymous attendants are the caregivers who bear witness to bodily particulars of human mortality – before, during, and after death – that many of us would find intolerable to confront on a daily basis. They often have the most to teach us by practical example about how to “Blow on the coal of the heart.”

Shimon the Righteous declared that the world stands on a tripod of study, worship, and caring actions.⁶³ Shimon ben Gamaliel further asserted that “I have found nothing better for the body than silence. And the study is not primary, but rather the doing.”⁶⁴ Both participant research and prayerful footwork suggest a need to rebalance today’s global tripod. When our Jewish communities run on the two business-as-usual legs of study and worship, the third leg of caring actions slows us down – and is invariably shortened to save time. Yet this third leg is the only one that can reliably support us “on one foot.”⁶⁵

Perhaps we can move our metaphor from tripod to tricycle. The tricycle apparently evolved from the first wheelchair, invented by a disabled 17th-century watchmaker named Stephan Farffler.⁶⁶ Can we reorganize our Jewish communities to move with compassionate action as the leading wheel, while the two wheels of scholarship and worship move back to supporting roles – since beyond the “one foot... all else is commentary?”⁶⁷ If we accept this ethical challenge, we will undoubtedly find ourselves moving more slowly, silently and mindfully through a frenzied world – and perhaps also more surely in the paths of God’s Presence.

I close with my deepest thanks to both Rabbi Dr. Bernard and Ms. Shirley Zlotowitz for inspiring these reflections. May they live and be well, and may we go from strength to strength.

63. *Mishnah Avot* 1:2.

64. *Ibid.*, 1:17.

65. *BT Shabbat* 31a.

66. Wikipedia, “Tricycle,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tricycle> (Last modified 3/22/2013); The Design Museum Holon, “The Coventry Rotary,” <http://www.dmh.org.il/pages/default.aspx?pageId=524&catId=5> (March 12, 2013).

67. *BT Shabbat* 31a.

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Gedolim on Public Affairs

Jerome A. Chanes

IT IS “NATURAL” IN A JOURNAL celebrating Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz to write about how rabbinic leadership responded to public-affairs. Rabbi Zlotowitz – friend, colleague, and mentor – has played a leadership role in the rabbinic world for decades, both as a congregational rabbi and as a public-affairs leader. To the point, Bernie Zlotowitz, representing the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, now the Union for Reform Judaism, had himself been deeply immersed in the public-policy agenda; our laureate has, over many years, made an important contribution to this issue.

The question of the involvement of *gedolim* – the top rabbinic leadership of any given year and age – in matters of public-affairs, has always been a sensitive one. Clearly – indeed, tautologically – halakhic considerations usually implicate the views of *gedolim* on matters of concern to the Jewish body-politic. (I say “usually,” because the question of *Da’as Torah* is an important one, and I will return to this matter later in this essay.)

Conventional wisdom – accurate in most cases – has had it that our *gedolim* have been primarily halakhists and have not involved themselves with *inyanei d’yoma*, public-affairs issues. This is of course nonsense. Conceptually, this notion creates an artificial distinction between *din* (law), halakhah and communal activities; as a practical matter, as leaders of the community – which in many cases they were – rabbinic leadership did concern themselves with issues that were of concerns to the Jewish polity.

This last observation suggests the question of who was doing the decision-making in Jewish communities. This important historical and sociological question, albeit related to our discussion, is separate; and in any case has been comprehensively, if not entirely adequately, addressed by many others.

It's all about boundaries. I go back to a time when the boundaries between, to take but one example, Agudath Israel and Mizrachi were permeable, whatever their ideological differences were over Zionism and orthopraxis. Most contemporary leaders of Yeshiva University (YU) will choose not to remember that what we now know today as Yeshiva University came about, at bottom, as a result of a “coalition” of Agudah and Mizrachi.¹ And, in another historically important instance, there were serious merger talks between YU and the Jewish Theological Seminary.

In this essay I will examine the activities of the nineteenth-century Netziv (Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Yehudah Berlin) and the twentieth-century Rav Yitzhak Hutner, and will add a word on Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.

The Netziv is, of course, well-known to us: the founder of the

1. Of course, there were instances in which the ideological line was drawn. A small but hardly trivial example is the genesis of the two *yeshiva k'tanas* (elementary school yeshivas) that were “it” in the Washington Heights of the 1940s and 1950s, where and when I grew up. In 1938, a cadre of Orthodox Jews who were committed to *Tarbut Ivrit* founded Yeshiva Rabbi Moses Soloveichik, a yeshiva that aggressively pursued two ideological goals: Hebrew – everything was taught *Ivris b'Ivris* – and Zionism. (We need to recall that – strange to the eyes and ears of Jews in 2014 – non-Zionism and even anti-Zionism were not only legitimate positions in American Jewish life but were *regnant* positions.) The Orthodox German-Jewish community in the Heights – the Frankfort community of the followers of the Neo-Orthodoxy of Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch – who were, to be sure, equally aggressively *anti*-Hebrew and *anti*-Zionist reluctantly, grudgingly, went along with the program. Yeshivah Soloveichik developed, as we know, into a premier school and a model for the *Tarbut Ivrit yeshivot* such as the Hebrew Academy of Miami Beach, the Crown Heights Yeshiva, Yeshiva D'Flatbush and others. The problem was that after a while the German Jews of the Heights – the “*Yekes*” – could not take all that Hebrew and Zionism; so, as a reaction to Yeshiva Soloveichik, they established in 1944 “Breuer’s.” The Breuer’s Yeshiva was of a piece with a well-established pattern in the sociology of Jewish organizations: if you don’t like what’s going on, you (1) go across the street; and if there is nothing across the street, you (2) start your own. “Breuer’s” came about as a counter-move to “Soloveichik,” purely on ideological grounds. There was no permeability of boundaries between the Eastern European Orthodox and the *Yekes* on the issues of Hebrew and Zionism.

yeshiva in Volozhin, the model for the “new-style” yeshivot in Eastern Europe, the author of *She'eilot U-teshuvot Meishiv Davar*, the *peirush* on the Chumash *Ha'amek Davar*, the connections to the Soloveitchik and Halkin families; proto-Zionist. It is the question of the Netziv as “proto-Zionist” that we address, via the Netziv’s views on antisemitism.

We know Rav Naphtali Zvi Yehudah Berlin as dean of Yeshivat Etz Chaim of Volozhin for some forty years. The Netziv’s life (1817–1893) spanned the nineteenth century, a period of profound change for Jews in terms of varying responses to modernity: Reform, Hasidism, Bundism, *Wissenschaft*, Zionism, *Haskalah*, changes within Orthodoxy itself (for example, Hirschian Neo-Orthodoxy). What is interesting about the Netziv, and has not to my knowledge been addressed, is that he was a polymath, and in this he did not follow the *Brisker* path of concentrating in one arena. He wrote a commentary, for example, on the early Geonic work the *She'iltot*, a commentary on the Tannaitic midrash *Sifrei, she'eilot u-teshuvot* (responsa) of an unusual range, and so on.

Three points on the Netziv:

First, the Netziv was quintessentially a “Litvak” in many ways, not the least of which in that he did not believe that there is one halakhic way, by fiat – *Da'as Torah* – on issues of the day. More about this issue below.

Second, the Netziv was obsessed with the idea of coherence – indeed unity – in the Jewish community. Indeed, one of his more celebrated responsa,² addresses an issue of issue of political import. Entitled “*'Al Yamin U'smol*” (“On [the Question of] ‘Right’ and ‘Left’”), the responsa addresses in the first instance political divisions, but ultimately the question as to whether traditional Jews (“Orthodox”) can and ought to sit down with “leftists,” that is, Reform Jews who were making their mark in Germany. The entire responsa is worth reading, but the bottom line is (my translation):

2. Responsa *Meishiv Davar*, Part 1, *Siman* 44.

... Israel has a mandate to be the “Rock of Israel” (“*Even Yisrael*”), that is, that they need to be bound up in one union, whatever the differences, and no nation will be able to vanquish them. The alternative is that Jew and Jew will be separated one from another, and the nations of the world will be able to come and progressively bleed us.³

In a different place – but the same context, countering the suggestion to establish separatist Orthodox communities – the Netziv wrote, “This proposal is as painful as a knife in the body of the nation.”⁴

Third observation: The Netziv developed his own analysis and historiography of contemporary Jewish affairs, which could be fairly characterized as “proto-Zionism.” The vehicle was an analysis, from a halakhic perspective, of antisemitism.

There were historically two approaches to the question of antisemitism. One was that antisemitism is at bottom a *disease* of society. If there is a disease, then there is a cure. A disease is open to diagnosis, and once diagnosed, a disease can be treated. In the case of antisemitism, the treatment consisted of emancipating Jews from their disabilities in various lands, affording them rights and equality, integrating them, and – poof! – antisemitism would disappear. This was the view of the majority of Jews in Western Europe. (They also believed in the tooth-fairy.)

The other view is the “Zionist construct.” The Zionists asked a simple question: “What planet are you on?” “If you think that antisemitism is open to ‘good-will’ approaches by so-called people of good will and it is going to matter a tinker’s dam when it comes to two thousand-plus years of Jew-hatred, you are deluding yourself!” In this the Zionists in effect agreed with the antisemites: the solution to the “Jewish problem” is to remove the Jews from whichever society in which they find themselves. For the Zionists, this meant finding a place – preferably Palestine, in which Jews could develop their own

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, Part 1, *Siman* 48.

polity. The historical underpinnings of what became known as “political Zionism,” as opposed to “cultural Zionism,” had everything to do with this dynamic.

Enter the Netziv. Sometime in the 1860s, it is not clear exactly when, the book was first published in 1886, the Netziv wrote a short book on antisemitism, *She’ar Yisrael* (“The Remnant of Israel”). Of course, in the 1860s the term “antisemitism” was not as yet in use, in any case, the constructs for anti-Jewish expression were different from those of today. My guess is that *She’ar Yisrael* was written well before the 1880s, since the pogroms that began sweeping Russia in that decade are not mentioned, but mention is made to “the difficulties in Romania and Morocco,” clearly *inyanei d’yoma*. Why did the Netziv wait twenty years? Rabbi Meir Berlin’s biography of his father, *Rabban shel Yisrael*, sheds no light on this question.

The Netziv takes the plunge right at the beginning of the book, asking, in effect, “Why do they hate us?” His answer was of a piece with his approach to the challenges of modernity in general, as we have seen. The Netziv understood that there were forces of modernization out there, and he did not respond *b’eimah uv’faḥad* – in fear and trembling – hysterically. Modernity to the Netziv was not necessarily a bad thing, but there were clear dangers that inhered in modernity. To use another twentieth-century expression, sociologist Milton Gordon’s construct of “identification assimilation” – what we call assimilation – resonated to the ears and the soul of the Netziv.⁵

To lay it out more fully, the Netziv did not view modernity as primarily an intellectual challenge to Judaism; if benighted *maskilim* and Reformers wanted to battle out Judaism, that was okay with the Netziv!⁶ But the challenge, to the Netziv, went much deeper; it was a socio-political challenge to the very survival of Jews. The Netziv’s

5. Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

6. The irony in this, of course, is that “benighted” has the connotation of “unenlightened,” and clearly these combatants were, by their own lights, very enlightened indeed.

historiography and sociology was one that discounted the theological anti-Judaism of classical Christianity, as played out since the early Church Councils. In *She'ar Yisrael* the Netziv argues that “*Eisav sonei et Ya'akov*” (“Esau hates Jacob”) is an old story, and we live with it. What is *new* is that for the first time Jews have been afforded the opportunity to be integrated into at least some societies, emancipation, as a result of the Enlightenment.

The unhappy by-product of emancipation is antisemitism, because the new ideas devalued traditional Judaism, and by extension Jews. The Netziv was not interested, or did not know about, the new strains of racist antisemitism, from seeds planted by Voltaire and coming to fruit in the writings of nineteenth-century central European and French antisemites. To the Netziv, antisemitism derives from Jews imitating the ways of others, and permitting themselves to be submerged by any other nation or people.

The book *She'ar Yisrael* is all biblical verses; it's difficult to read, but well worth the effort. The Netziv begins with the Covenantal mandate to Abraham, “Your children shall be strangers in a foreign land,” (Genesis 15:13) interpreting this as the first of many directives for Jews to be distinctively Jews forever. Yes, in Fichte's antisemitic words, “a state within a state.”

The Netziv's views are diametrically opposed to those who believe that Jewish separateness caused antisemitism and still causes antisemitism. Precisely the opposite, argues the Netziv, emancipation and integration caused hostility. The “contact hypothesis,” beloved of mid-twentieth-century social scientists, is nonsense, avers the Netziv. Integration breeds unhealthy competition with local populations, and leads to antisemitism. End of story.

Assimilation and antisemitism are inevitable. In this analysis the Netziv was in effect a proto-Zionist, agreeing with what would later become known as political Zionism. For the political Zionists, à la Herzl, the only cure for assimilation and antisemitism was to move Jews, en masse, to its homeland. The Netziv's support of the *Hibbat Zion* movement and of the “*Biluim*” of the First Aliyah, reflected his vision of an independent, autonomous Jewish society.

A parenthetical question revolves around the Netziv's son, Rabbi Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan), in terms of his involvement in the nascent Mizrachi. How much of the Netziv's Zionism rubbed off on Rabbi Berlin? Bar-Ilan was a child of the Netziv's old age, he was fifty years younger than his older brother Chaim Berlin, so it is not clear as to how much the Netziv went into Meir Berlin's Mizrachi activism.

* * *

Rabbi Isaac Hutner, for many years the dean of the Chaim Berlin Yeshiva in New York, is in some ways more interesting than the Netziv. Interesting in the sense that he arrived in America just before the flowering of American Orthodoxy, during a period in which the words "Modern Orthodoxy" had some meaning. Indeed, Rav Hutner was a manifestation of the post-War resurgence of Orthodoxy, and the "*yeshiva velt*," the world of Yeshivat Torah Vada'as, Yeshivat Chaim Berlin, and Yeshivat Ner Yisrael, did much to articulate the vocabulary of a new Orthodoxy.

Rav Hutner arrived in the United States after World War II and became head of Chaim Berlin in the early 1950s, where his powerful personal presence and unique combination of traditional learning, philosophical speculation, and interest in forgotten masters such as the Maharal of Prague, influenced hundreds of *talmidim* (students). These students in turn went on to create their own *yeshivot*, which in recent years have become increasingly sectarian. To take but one example, after first allowing their students to study in secular colleges, they tended to discourage, if not forbid outright, such distractions from Talmudic studies.

Rav Hutner is important, at least to the Orthodox eye, aside from being a leading *rosh yeshiva* of a leading yeshiva, for his dramatic foray into public affairs and history. I refer, of course, to his historical analysis of the Holocaust.

In 1976 Rav Hutner was asked the following question: What is the Holocaust? Or, to put it more precisely, the questions were three: (1) Is the term "Shoah" acceptable in describing the destruction of European Jewry during World War II? What about the term "Holocaust"? By

which term should Jews (*i.e.* Orthodox Jews) refer to the destruction? (2) Should the so-called Holocaust be taught as a discrete subject, or incorporated into the regular courses on Jewish history and taught as part of the studies on the twentieth century? And (3) if the latter, where indeed does the Holocaust fit in with the rest of Jewish history? In effect, what is the Orthodox view of the Holocaust?

In order to contextualize the question sent to Rabbi Hutner, we need to recall that by 1976 there was a growing consciousness of the Holocaust in the minds of many American Jews. Strange though it may seem to anyone under fifty, but the Holocaust was on no one's "radar-screen" before the 1960s. Personally, I don't ever remember hearing the word "Holocaust" when I was a kid. It was universally expected that the Eichmann trial in 1961 would bring the Holocaust front and center for American Jews. This indeed happened in Israel, but not in America. It was not until 1967, the Six-Day War with its attendant *Angst* of annihilation, that the Destruction of European Jewry was placed on the American Jewish communal agenda.

How did Rav Hutner approach this fascinating question? In a *shi'ur* to New York-based *roshei yeshiva* (yeshiva heads) that was later published as a special issue of the *Jewish Observer*, the Agudath Israel organ, Rav Hutner developed his historiography of antisemitism.⁷ Antisemitism, averred Rav Hutner, is a constant, an expected part of the historical pattern, and would not be ameliorated by enlightened ideas about rights being granted to Jews. In this respect Rabbi Hutner suggested that the European model was flawed and the Zionist remedy had something going for it.

What was new in the modern period, and here is where Rav Hutner tripped badly, was that in the twentieth century, for the first time, the forces of Ishmael, in the person of the Mufti, and the forces of Western antisemitism, personified by Hitler, came together. The several visits by the Mufti to Hitler and his top aides were, according to Rav Hutner, watershed events in the history of antisemitism, and led to, or at least

7. In those days the *Jewish Observer* was a serious journal and not just a vehicle for insipid hagiographies and moralistic screeds.

speeded up, the annihilation. This “first ominous step in the joining of the anti-Jews of the East with those of the West to accomplish their diabolic design”⁸ may have *seemed* new, but it was inevitable that the forces of Esau and the forces of Ishmael would combine. “And Esau went unto Ishmael and took Machlas the daughter of Ishmael . . . for a wife,”⁹ thereby setting in motion a historical pattern that culminated in the Holocaust.

This historiography is, of course, deeply flawed, and ought to be dismissed. But Rav Hutner’s historical contextualization of the Holocaust found resonance in the Orthodox world. The founders of Yad VaShem, who for their own political reasons were moved to find a new term, “*Shoah*,” for the destruction because of the proportions and dimensions of that destruction, were missing the point and were distorting history. Indeed, in Rav Hutner’s words:

“[Emptying] the *churban* of its profound meaning and significance. In appropriating a term that signifies isolation and detachment from history, they did not realize that the significance of the Holocaust is precisely in its intricate relationship with what comes before and after.”¹⁰

The pattern of Jewish history, Rav Hutner reminded his Orthodox world, is one of *hurban* – *galut* – *geulah*: destruction – exile – redemption, and the recent *hurban* is no different.

Therefore, asserted Rav Hutner, no new categories are needed, and terms like “Holocaust” and “*Shoah*,” which imply isolated and unique catastrophe, unrelated to anything before or after it, are unacceptable. “The *hurban Europa* – the *hurban* of Europe – is an integral part of our history and we dare not isolate and deprive it of the monumental significance it has for us.”¹¹ Rav Hutner suggested that using artificial terms such as “Holocaust” does not enhance, but rather diminishes

8. “Holocaust,” *Jewish Observer* (October, 1977), 8.

9. Genesis 28:9.

10. “Holocaust,” 9.

11. *Ibid.*, 8.

and dilutes, this significance. Rav Hutner was of course drawing the line, or, more accurately, was entrenching the line in the sand drawn by Ben Gurion and Yad VaShem, between the secularists and the traditionalists.

One final important note. It goes without saying that any *hurban* comes out of a *tokheifah*, the admonishment and rebuke that *Klal Yisrael* carries upon its shoulders as an integral part of its chosenness. Jews are sometimes sinners, and therefore must be punished, and they are punished by periodic destructions. There is clearly “*mipnei hatu'einu*,” a “Because of our sins” construct, in Rav Hutner’s analysis. An element which I question on the grounds that God could not have brought such a monstrous punishment on us, on the world, for our sins.

But Rabbi Hutner is careful to point out:

We have no right to interpret these events as any kind of specific punishment for specific sins. . . One would have to be a *Navi*¹² or a *Tanah*¹³ to claim knowledge of the specific reasons for what befell us; anyone on a lesser plane claiming to do so tramples upon the bodies of the *kedoshim*¹⁴ and misuses the power to interpret and understand Jewish history.”¹⁵

In this powerful admonition Rav Hutner was clearly, although he does not mention it explicitly, distancing himself and the world of the Orthodox *yeshivot* from the Satmar hasidim, and rebuking the Satmar, for whom the Holocaust was specifically and explicitly payback, not only for sin, but for the sin of Zionism. Rav Hutner and the yeshivas knew that the Satmar were fishing in some very murky waters. He was trying to square all circles whilst sticking it to Yad VaShem and to Ben-Gurion, and he did a pretty good job.¹⁶

12. Prophet.

13. Rabbinic sage from the 1st-early 3rd centuries.

14. Holy ones.

15. *Ibid.*, 9.

16. The question of Satmar anti-Zionism is a complicated one, not the least because it is beclouded by conventional wisdom that often confuses the Satmar with Neturei

Rav Hutner and the Netziv each developed a historiography based what they perceived to be the realities of their times. Were their historiographies flawed? Most definitely. But who cares? Rabbi Hutner and the Netziv grappled with the challenges posed by modernity in a way that is unfamiliar, foreign, and perhaps frightening to many in our present rabbinic leadership. We need to learn from them.

II

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “The Rov,” as he is known to generations of his students, is more complicated, not the least because his teachings have been grievously misrepresented in the years since his death. The *gilgulim* (transmigrations) through which Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik’s ideas have traveled since his death in 1993 tell us more about the changes in the Orthodox world over the past four decades than they do about the teachings of the Rov.

To set a context, a bit of history. I will not rehearse with you the narrative of Orthodoxy on the wane in the 1930s and that of its resurgence in the 1950s. The question at hand has to do more with that of the shaping of what came to be known as Modern Orthodoxy, and in this, Rabbi Soloveitchik, who was the scion of perhaps the leading family of Eastern-European talmudists, and who was universally acknowledged as a brilliant halakhist and Jewish thinker in his own right, as well as a charismatic teacher and orator, differed markedly from his peers in the breadth of his interests. Rabbi Soloveitchik played a leading role in the contouring of Modern Orthodoxy and of its professed ideal of *Torah U’madah*, excellence in both Torah studies and worldly knowledge.¹⁷

A series of controversies during the 1950s – over mixed seating in the synagogue, Jewish divorce procedures, and the appropriateness of Orthodox involvement with non-Orthodox, heterodox, bodies, clarified a distinction within American Orthodoxy. The distinction

Karta. Nothing could be further from the truth. This point was made by the author in a 2010 public lecture, “Chabad and Satmar: Are They Chasidim?”

17. The “Torah U’madda” ideal meant that religious and secular studies were not only not incompatible, but enhanced each other.

was between the “modern” version and the “yeshiva” version. That is, between the world of yeshivas Torah Voda’as and Chaim Berlin and Mir and Ner Yisrael. This distinction was virtually unknown before World War II, and let me puncture a couple of conventional-wisdom balloons here, only gradually achieved currency in the 1950s.¹⁸ By the end of the 1950s, the difference was obvious to all. Modern Orthodoxy saw itself as serving the broader Jewish community, including the community of the intelligentsia, and including the non-observant. Issues of social concern and of philosophical inquiry were addressed and were salient. In contrast, so-called “yeshiva” Orthodoxy, far more insular in its focus, tended to appeal to Jews who were already observant and Jewishly learned, and, while it did not ignore matters of social concern, these were not out front.

There was a significant change in the public perception of Orthodoxy in the 1950s. Orthodox Judaism was not, as had previously been assumed even by most Orthodox Jews, the practice of a multitude of traditional rituals and observances – “folk” religion, to use the anthropologists’ typology. Rather, it was now understood as a religion of Jewish *law* and *normative tradition* denoted by the Hebrew word *halakhah*. The very term “halakhah” had indeed not been a widely-used term-of-art in pre-War Modern Orthodox circles. By the late 1950s, however, the discovery that Orthodox Judaism was not an unthinking accretion of ancient practices but was meant to be a consistent regimen of religious law, with serious textual and intellectual underpinnings, served to enhance Orthodoxy’s prestige in the broader Jewish community. To use again the anthropologists’ typologies, “elite” religion had replaced “folk” religion, a complete reversal of what had been the situation from 1880 to 1940.

What about Rabbi Soloveitchik? We as logical-positivists know that the analytic method of Rav Hayim Brisker, the Rov’s grandfather, Rav Hayim Soloveitchik, the *Brisker Rov*, which became the norm in

18. Parenthetically, we do need to remember that the boundaries between Mizrachi/ the RCA/YU, the “modern” world, and the world of Agudath Yisrael were highly permeable in those years, strange though this may sound to 2014 ears.

the northern Eastern European yeshivot (the “*litvish*” *yeshivot*), was valid from the standpoint of analysis of the *sugya*, the discrete talmudic segment.¹⁹

Nonetheless, inherent in the *Brisker* approach was this understanding of the relationship between *sugya* and halakhic concept, first developed, according to the Vilna Gaon and Rav Hayim “Brisker” Soloveitchik, Rav Soloveitchik’s grandfather, by the Rambam.²⁰ When the Rov once quipped, “The *Bavli* was created for the purpose of being a *peirush* on the Rambam,” he wasn’t being entirely facetious. According to the Brisker, there was an intensely rationalist streak that underlay a tradition that can be traced through four points along a time-line: the “closing” of the Babylonian Talmud, the Rambam, the Vilna Gaon, and Rav Hayim Soloveitchik, the *Brisker Rov*.

That rationalist inquiry should inhere in the Brisker *derech*²¹ ought have been immediately obvious. So what happened?

It all began at Rav Yoshe Ber’s death. At a memorial service on April 25, 1993, Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University, urged Jews to

guard . . . against any revisionism, any attempts to misinterpret the Rav’s work in both worlds [Torah and *maddah*]. The Rav was not a *lamdan* [talmudic scholar] who happened to have a smattering of general culture, and he was certainly not a philosopher who happened to be a *talmid hakham*. . . We must accept him on his terms . . . Certainly burgeoning revisionisms may well attempt to

19. Let me take a step back here: The idea, understood by Maimonides, that each *sugya* in the Gemara represents a discrete halakhic concept, and that each *sugya*’s halakhic concept is crystallized in a halakhah of the Rambam in the *Mishne Torah*, was not necessarily valid from a *historical* standpoint. After all, Maimonides, A Jew of Spain and North Africa of the *twelfth* century, had a way of study that was different from Rav Hayim of Brisk of the turn of the *twentieth*.

20. For a discussion of the Brisker method of Talmud study, see Norman Solomon, *The Analytic Movement: Hayyim Soloveitchik and his Circle* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993). [ed.]

21. Method of study.

disguise and distort the Rav's uniqueness by trivializing one or the other aspect of his rich personality and work...²²

Rabbi Lamm was certainly onto something. Indeed, at the Rov's funeral, his brother, Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik,²³ a distinguished scholar in his own right, and a person who himself was hardly a stranger to secular culture, articulated an approach to the Rov's activity that could only be characterized as *apologetica*. Rav Aharon suggested that the Rav engaged in the study of philosophy and resorted to the use of the writings of philosophers extensively in his own essays to lend an air of respectability to traditional Jewish teaching by refracting that teaching through the prism of Jewish and general philosophy. In other words, to make Torah more palatable.

Not so, said the Rov's son-in-law, Professor Yitzhak Twersky of Harvard, a rabbi and the head of the Talner group of Hasidim. The reductionist approach of Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik, argued Professor Twersky, would suggest that traditional Judaism needs to be harmonized with some school of thought, to validate it by aligning it with Kant or Hegel in order to make it palatable to scholars. The use of science, philosophy, and the humanities, asserted Professor Twersky in his explicating the Rov's approach, is designed to deepen a Jew's understanding of the *masorah*, the biblical and rabbinic tradition. The purpose is not to reach the unreachable but to increase the sensitivity of the committed.

I outline the Twersky/Aaron Soloveitchik approaches because they prefigured significant and influential expressions on the part of several of the Rov's leading disciples – who went on to become rabbinic leaders.²⁴ One of these was and is Rabbi Hershel Schachter of Yeshiva University. Anything by Rabbi Schachter, who is an important *talmid*

22. Norman Lamm, "A Eulogy for the Rav," *Tradition* 28 (Fall, 1993): 4–17.

23. Note the differences in the spelling of the surname. Rabbi Joseph B., by adding the "t" to his name, "Soloveitchik," was suggesting a stab at individuality. The traditional spelling is "Soloveichik."

24. It is hard to do this without identifying some of the individuals who bought into,

hakham, is an invaluable contribution and commands respect, but in two collections of studies about Rabbi Soloveitchik, *Nefesh ha-Rav* and *P'ninei ha-Rav*, Rabbi Schachter reflects the revisionist view that would seek to minimize many of the more innovative features of the Rov's activity. These were features that might not sit well with the picture beloved by the "right," that of the great traditionalist *Rosh Yeshiva*, and Rabbi Schachter's books emphasized those traditionalist features. That the Rov *was* a great traditionalist *Rosh Yeshiva* and *maggid shi'ur* goes without saying, but he was an original. Rabbi Schachter, reflecting some of the "wish-list" of the anti-Modernist reductionists, would force the Rov into a traditional paradigm that leaves little room for his discourses on Jewish thought.

The fact is that the Rov's thought construct surely was informed by existing tradition, but it was more than an expansion of the tradition, it was a genuine innovation.

On specific issues the disconnects become clear. A few headnotes:

On women: The Rov was of the strongest view that women are to be taught *Torah she-baal peh*, and especially Talmud. He founded and guided the Maimonides School, where Talmud was incorporated in the curriculum for girls as well as boys. Rav Soloveitchik was enormously influential in this regard.

Influential, yes, but not welcome in some circles. Revisionists either omit mention of this arena, or sluff it off as being a side-show. One can assume that any innovative aspect of the Rov's teaching does not find favor in their eyes. More troubling, however, is the view of Rabbi Soloveitchik's nephew, Rabbi Moshe Meiselman, who has written about these issues. Rabbi Meiselman is also a noted rabbinic scholar, who started out life as a mathematician. In pursuit of his revisionist agenda with respect to, in fact in opposition to, women's prayer groups, *aliyot*, and other areas of the participation of women in the public activities of the synagogue, Rabbi Meiselman adopts a stance that

and fed, revisionism. But identifying is crucial, because these individuals were and are so influential.

has more to do with his (Meiselman's) abhorrence of feminism than with his uncle's innovative views on Jewish education.²⁵ Meiselman's "insider" view ("I was privileged to be part of his family and his household...") is directly and clearly contradicted by the "insider" views of other more-distinguished members of the Rov's family who were also his close disciples: Professor Yitzhak Twersky and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein.

On religious Zionism: It is clear from a reading of Rabbi Soloveitchik's moving essay "*Kol Dodi Dofek*," in which the Rov poetically and passionately writes about how God knocked on the tent of His beloved, who was wrapped in mourning, six times (each of the six "knocks" represents a discrete historical development); and, as a result of these knocks, the State of Israel was born – and other essays, that Rav Soloveitchik, basing himself on the view of the Rambam regarding *Yishuv Eretz Yisrael*,²⁶ maintained that the establishment of the State of Israel had deep halakhic significance, both intrinsically and as a vehicle for fulfilling the commandment of settling in Israel.²⁷ The Rov asserted that there is a complete identification between the land in its holiness and the State, and argued that the mitzvah of settling is fulfilled not just in cultivating the land but in exercising political sovereignty. This, in the Rov's words, "gives expression to the primary aspect of the commandment of settling."

A far cry, indeed, from the revisionists' view that the Rov was not a Zionist, and that indeed, by extension, the Religious Zionist (Mizrachi) agenda is suspect. Rabbi Meiselman observes that to the Rov "the importance of the State of Israel is evaluated in exclusively pragmatic terms." In Rabbi Meiselman's revisionism, to the Rov there is no intrinsic halakhic significance to the State of Israel.

25. Moshe Meiselman, "The Rav, Feminism, and Public Policy: An Insider's Overview," *Tradition* 33:1 (1988): 5–30.

26. Settling the Land of Israel.

27. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek: Listen, My Beloved Knocks* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing, 2006). It ought be noted that Maimonides does not include living in the Land of Israel as one of the "613 mitzvot." The Ramban does count this as a mitzvah.

One can argue about the merits of various views in Religious Zionism, but the revisionists' agenda is clear: An entire century of Religious Zionism, never beloved by the *Haredi* sectarian "right," is wiped away. Even to the followers of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, it is as if Rabbi Meir Berlin never lived.

Finally, an arena that is very much alive today, that of inter-religious relationships. I remember very clearly being present at the Rov's first public address on this matter, which was subsequently published as his classic essay "Confrontation," in which Rav Soloveitchik clearly laid out the guidelines for participation in interfaith dialogue.²⁸ Rabbi Soloveitchik said, and I paraphrase, *do* interact and engage with other faith communities on issues involving the health of society – war and peace, social justice, civil rights – indeed, in the "public world of humanitarian cultural endeavors, communication among the various faith communities is desirable and *even essential*." But on issues that go to the nature and essence of the faith community, theological dialogue, Rabbi Soloveitchik articulated a forthright "No."

The revisionists at best misunderstand, and in fact misrepresent, the Rov's stance in this area. Rabbi Meiselman again, speaking in effect on behalf of revisionists of the "right," said that the Rov viewed the opening of dialogue by Pope John XXIII in Vatican II as a "serious danger to Judaism, and declared that no such dialogue be pursued."²⁹ This is absurd. While it is true that Rav Soloveitchik insisted that inter-religious discussions on social issues of common concern be conducted within the parameters of halakhah, and that no theological dialogue take place, his position was *pro*, not *con*, interfaith activity in the social-justice and public-affairs arenas.³⁰ The issue of interfaith dialogue is, of course, part of the larger question of particularism and universalism, which has long been a hot button for the emergent "right,"

28. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation," *Tradition* 6:2 (1964): 5–29.

29. Meiselman, "The Rav," 22.

30. To give the revisionists their due, the most that ought be said was that Rabbi Soloveitchik, speaking in 1963, was concerned about the possibility of a conversionist agenda inherent in Vatican II.

and has been one the central issues in the dropping out of the Orthodox “center” over the past three decades.

The revisionists: The Rov was basically parochial. He viewed all social issues from one standpoint: how they would affect the spiritual and practical needs of the Jewish people. He was not involved in the issues of the day.

The reality is clear from the Rov’s own statements. First, as Rabbi Soloveitchik himself most interestingly acknowledged, historically the Jewish communal focus has indeed been parochial.

As long as we were exposed to a soulless, impersonal confrontation on the part of non-Jewish society, it was impossible for us to participate to the fullest extent in the great creative confrontation between man and the cosmic order. The limited role we played until modern times was not of our choosing... [but we] have always considered ourselves an inseparable part of humanity and were ever ready to accept the divine challenge, *mil’u es ha’aretz v’chivshuha*, ‘Fill the earth and subdue it,’ and the responsibility implicit in human existence.³¹

In a word, in an era of Jewish powerlessness, “quietism,” not activism, was the norm. But the world changed in the 20th century, and the Rov understood that change.

Further:

The Jewish religious tradition expresses itself in a fusion of universalism and singularism. On the one hand, Jews are vitally concerned with the problems affecting the common destiny of man... We are opposed to a philosophy of isolationism. On the other hand, we are a distinctive faith community with a unique commitment, singular relationship with God, and a specific way of life. We must never confuse our role as the bearers of a particular commitment and destiny with our role as members of the family of man.³²

31. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” 20.

32. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Addendum to the Original Edition of ‘Confrontation,’”

A much more nuanced position, yes, but a flag firmly planted in the soil of involvement with worldly issues.

* * *

The three *gedolim* under discussion, very different one from the other, suggest a paradigm for the foray into the varied arenas of public affairs on the part of rabbinic leadership. Sadly, much of our contemporary Orthodox leadership is mired in *Da'as Torah* – the idea that there is a “Torah view” on every instance and issue of politics, history, psychology, public affairs that comes down the pike. The activities over many years of our laureate, Rabbi Zlotowitz, indeed coming from a different movement, are entirely consistent with those of the Netziv, Rav Hutner, Rabbi Soloveitchik – to say nothing of Rabbi Feinstein and many others.

She-yibadel l'chaim aruchim!

in *A Treasury of Tradition*, Norman Lamm and Walter S. Wurzberger, eds., (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1967), 78.

Raising Awareness: The Symbolic Significance of *Hagbahah* and *Gelilah*

Rabbi Joseph H. Prouser

THE LITURGICAL HONOR of raising the Torah for the congregation to see (*hagbahah*),¹ and the task of rolling and dressing the Scroll for its eventual return to the Ark (*gelilah*), are frequently misunderstood and under-valued. “Since there are no blessings to recite, many people mistakenly have come to regard these tasks as having less religious significance than an *aliyah*, and so assign them to people who either cannot recite the Torah blessings or to children under the age of Bar Mitzvah.”² It is a sad irony that to the unlettered and uninitiated has been entrusted the ritual responsibility of opening the contents of the Torah to the Jewish community at large. The physical strength required safely and confidently to lift a Torah scroll, moreover, often means that brawn is the decisive factor in selecting recipients of this honor, rather than merit, piety, or personal spiritual stature.

In contrast to the current lack of esteem for *hagbahah* and *gelilah*, these functions were formerly viewed as signal honors, bestowed only upon the most deserving:

ואמר רבי שפטיה אמר רבי יוחנן: עשרה שקראו בתורה הגדול שבהם גולל
ספר תורה. הגוללו נוטל שכר כולן. דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: עשרה שקראו
בתורה הגולל ספר תורה קיבל שכר כולן. שכר כולן סלקא דעתך? אלא
אימא: קיבל שכר כנגד כולן

1. On the importance of assuring that the congregation can see the writing in the Torah scroll during *hagbahah*, see Soferim 14:14; Deuteronomy 27:26, Ramban, *ad loc.*

2. Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew* (Basic Books, 1980), p. 55. J.D. Eisenstein, *Otzar Dinim U'Minhagim* (New York, 1917) explicitly opines that *Hagbahah* and *Gelilah* are considered less desirable honors than an *aliyah*. It should be noted that among Western Sephardim, *hagbahah* – performed prior to the Torah Reading – is customarily executed by an honored community leader or by members of an honorary society designated for that liturgical function: *levantadores*.

Rabbi Shephatiah taught in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: When a congregation of ten reads the Torah, the greatest among them rolls (*golel*) the Torah scroll, and he who rolls it receives the reward for all of them. As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi taught: When a congregation of ten reads the Torah, the one who rolls (*golel*) the Torah scroll receives the reward for all of them. How could you think he takes the reward for all of them? Rather say: He receives a reward equal to all of theirs combined.³

The Mishnah Berurah codifies this passage with particular clarity: גדול שבאותם שקראו בתורה גוללו – “The greatest among those who read from the Torah rolls it (*golel*).”⁴

It is important to note that *hagbahah* and *gelilah*, lifting and rolling the Torah scroll, were originally combined into one act and executed by a single individual.⁵ Indeed, the role of *gelilah* and the lofty stature attributed to it in the passage from Tractate Megillah actually refer to the function we currently designate as *hagbahah*. The term *hagbahah* has a rich and nuanced history. The linguistic and halachic development of this term is essential to a fuller understanding of the ritual process now bearing its name, particularly at a time when the perceived honor attending the elevation of the Torah has inexplicably declined.

The act of lifting or raising an object is a procedure by which *qinyan*, ownership rights, may be formalized. The Mishnah thus provides: בהמה גסה נקנית במסירה והדקה בהגבהה, דברי רבי מאיר ורבי אליעזר – “Acquisition of large cattle is effected through delivery by the vendor; that of small livestock through lifting (*hagbahah*) by the purchaser. This is the opinion of Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Eliezer.”⁶

One engaging in *hagbahah* – lifting an object in order symbolically to secure legal possession thereof – may also designate the “purchaser” on whom ownership will devolve. אמר רמי בר חמא, זאת אומרת המגביה.

3. BT Megillah 32a. See also Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayim 147:1.

4. Mishnah Berurah 147:1.

5. See Shulḥan Arukh Oraḥ Ḥayim 147:4, Rema, *ad loc.* See also J.D. Eisenstein, *Otzar Dinim U'Minḥagim* (New York, 1917), 90.

6. Mishnah Kiddushin 1:4.

מציאה לחבירו קנה חבירו – “Rami bar Chama said: One who lifts (*magbiah*; that is, performs *hagbahah* on) a found object on behalf of another, the third party acquires ownership rights.”⁷ In both these scenarios, the object being acquired is lifted to formalize ownership of that object. This procedure is reversed, however, when ownership rights to a Canaanite servant are to be secured:

תנו רבנן: כיצד בחזקה? התיר לו מנעלו, או הוליך כליו אחריו לבית המרחץ, הפשיטו, הרחיצו, סכו, גרדו, הלבישו, הנעילו, הגביהו קנאו. אמר רבי שמעון: לא תהא חזקה גדולה מהגבהה, שהגבהה קונה בכל מקום

Our Rabbis taught: How is a Canaanite slave acquired through presumptive ownership (*ḥazakah*)? If the servant loosens the purchaser's shoe for him, carries his belongings after him to the bathhouse, undresses him, washes him, anoints him, dries him off, dresses him, puts on his shoes, or lifts him up, the purchaser thereby acquires the servant. Rabbi Shimon said: Do not consider presumptive ownership (*ḥazakah*) to be superior to lifting (*hagbahah*), for lifting (*hagbahah*) effects ownership in every situation.⁸

Rashi emphasizes the unique element in this form of *hagbahah*: הגבהה דעלמא לוקח מגביה החפץ, והכא אמרינן שהעבד מגביהו משום עבודה, – “*Hagbahah* in general involves the purchaser lifting the object to be acquired, while in this case the servant lifts the purchaser as a form of service, whereby the purchaser imposes submissive labor on the servant so as to acquire him through presumptive ownership.”⁹

Tosefta Kiddushin echoes the Gemara's estimation of the unambiguous efficacy of *hagbahah*:

אי זו היא חזקת עבדים? נעל לו סנדלו והתיר לו סנדלו והוליך אחריו כלים למרחץ הרי זו חזקה. הגביהו: רבי שמעון אומר: אין לך חזקה גדולה מזו

7. BT Baba Metzia 8a.

8. BT Kiddushin 22B.

9. *Ibid.*, *ad loc.*

How does one establish presumptive ownership (*ḥazakah*) of servants? If the servant fastens the purchaser's sandal or loosens his sandal or follows him to the bathhouse with his belongings, that establishes presumptive ownership. If he lifts him (*hagbahah*): there is no greater act of presumptive ownership than that.¹⁰

By applying this linguistic and halakhic background of the term *hagbahah* to the lifting of the Torah scroll after its public reading (or, in the Sephardi rite, immediately prior to the reading), the attentive worshipper comes more fully to appreciate the intent of that ritual. *Hagbahah*, lifting the Torah scroll, is a public act of *qinyan*, of establishing "ownership" rights. After the fashion of a Canaanite servant, the individual honored with *hagbahah* thereby indicates his willing submission to the service of his – here, Divine – master. It may be the unique clarity of *hagbahah* as a method of *qinyan* that accounts for Tractate Megillah's enthusiastic estimation of that function and its "reward" in the context of the Torah Reading. Once subsumed in the role of *hagbahah*, today's *gelilah* (or, in the Talmudic terminology of acquisition, *halbashah*: dressing) similarly, yet independently, enacts the willing submission of the individual charged with that ritual role into the service and domain of his Divine Master.

The imagery of the worshipper as the willing servant of God is given poetic expression in the traditional Torah Service, in the liturgical passage beginning בריך שמיה. We proclaim: אנא עבדא דקודשא בריך הוא, – "I am the servant of the Holy One, blessed be He, before Whom and before Whose glorious Torah I bow at all times."¹¹ It is instructive that some authorities prescribe recitation of this prayer in conjunction with *hagbahah* itself.¹²

10. Tosefta Kiddushin 1:5.

11. The Sabbath and Festival Prayerbook of Rabbi Morris Silverman, *inter alia*, renders this passage in the plural: "We are the servants of the Holy One... before whom... we bow..."

12. *Encyclopedia Talmudit* (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1957), vol. 8, p. 171, "Hagbahah," citing *Seder Hayom* (Rabbi Moshe ben Yehudah Makhir, 1599), *Kavanot* for Mondays and Thursdays.

Understood in the context of the laws of acquisition, *hagbahah* gives dramatic expression to the aspirations voiced in this Aramaic prayer: we submit ourselves to God's service.

Incorporation of methods of *qinyan*, and in particular *qinyan* whereby acquisition of servants is effected, into the symbolic choreography of the Torah Service, is not limited to *hagbahah* and *gelilah* (*halbashah*). Indeed, all those called to the Torah for the ostensibly more prestigious *aliyot* can also be understood to be enacting recognized forms of *qinyan* – submitting themselves to the service of the Divine Master, Who thereby “acquires” them:

כיצד במשיכה? קורא לה והיא באה, או שהכישה במקל ורצתה לפניו, כיון שעקרה יד ורגל קנאה. רבי אסי ואמרי לה רבי אחא אומר: עד שתהלך לפניו מלא קומתה. אמרי: בהמה אדעתה דמרה אזלא. עבד אדעתיה דנפשיה קאזיל. אמר רב אשי: עבד קטן כבהמה דמי

How is an animal acquired by drawing (*meshikhah*)? The purchaser calls it and it comes, or he strikes it with a stick and it runs before him. As soon as it moves a foreleg and a hind leg, he acquires it. Rabbi Asi (others say, Rabbi Aḥa) said: It must walk its full length before him. I say: An animal walks at its master's bidding, a servant only at his own volition. Rabbi Ashi said: A servant who is a minor is as an animal (in this regard).¹³

A servant's response to the prospective master's call is generally insufficient to effect *qinyan*: קראו ובא אצלו לא קנאו – “If the purchaser called him and the servant came, he has not thereby acquired him.”¹⁴ In the case of the minor, however, responding to such a summons is indeed a legitimate form of *qinyan*. Rashi explains: קטן, דלית ליה דעת, – “A minor, to whom no legal claim of independent judgment is applied, is comparable to an animal: if one calls to him for purposes of purchase and he comes, the

13. BT Kiddushin 22b.

14. *Ibid.*

purchaser thereby effects acquisition.”¹⁵ The minor, by responding to the master’s summons, enters into his service.

The inclusion of קריאה – “calling” – among methods of *qinyan* (acquisition of property rights) explains why each worshipper honored with an *aliyah* is ceremoniously called by name, a protocol not applied, for example, to *shelihei tzibbur*, *gabbaim*, or preachers. As much as the Torah Reading or the concomitant blessings, it is the “honorees” stepping forward in response to the formal summons that is essential. This act, too, conveys willing submission to the service of the Divine Master: קנאו לשם קריאה ובה אצלו, קנאו – If he comes in response to being called, *qinyan* is effected.

The central significance of the “summons” by which those honored with *aliyot* are called to the Torah (and with which they comply) is evident in their designation by that term: they are קרואים – “those who are called” – as in the following midrashic treatment of Genesis 29:2–3, describing Jacob’s experience at the well at which he meets Rachel.

וירא והנה באר בשדה, זה בית הכנסת, והנה שם שלשה עדרי צאן, אלו שלשה קרואים, כי מן הבאר וגו', שמשם היו שומעים את התורה... ונאספו שמה כל העדרים, זה הצבור, וגללו את האבן, שמשם היו שומעים את התורה ‘There before his eyes was a well in the open’ – This refers to the synagogue. ‘Three flocks of sheep were there’ – This refers to the three who are called (to the Torah). ‘For the flocks were watered from that well’ – That is, there they heard the Torah... ‘When all the flocks were gathered’ – This refers to the congregation. ‘The stone would be rolled from the mouth of the well’ – That is, there they would hear the Torah.¹⁶

The midrash refers to the three individuals honored with *aliyot* at congregational weekday morning worship simply as קרואים – “those who are called.”¹⁷ The allegorical reading of these verses may, in part,

15. *Ibid.*, Rashi *ad loc.*

16. Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 70:5.

17. Jastrow states that קרואים refers “frequently” and “especially” to “those who are called up to read from the Torah.”

have been inspired by the the verb וגללו – “they rolled” – in verse 3, in reference to lifting the stone from atop the well. The verb, revisited in verse 10 of the same chapter, when Jacob removes the stone cover unassisted, is the source of the term *gelilah* – which in antiquity encompassed both the lifting and the rolling of the Torah scroll. Jacob’s pioneering act of “*hagbahah*” was, notably, followed by two seven year long periods of servitude.¹⁸ This fact is accentuated by the seven-fold use of the root עבד (“to serve”) in Genesis 29.¹⁹

It is telling that the methods of *qinyan* to which the calling of worshippers to the Torah, together with *hagbahah* and *gelilah*, allude, are of less than flattering origin. Effecting acquisition of property rights through a compliant response to being “called” is applicable only to servants whose youth renders them devoid of דעת – any claim to independent judgment or personal legal responsibility.²⁰ *Hagbahah* and *gelilah* recall the actions of Canaanite slaves: heathens. In discharging these liturgical functions, the worshipper is compelled symbolically to assume the role of the most humble members of Israelite society. By basing the protocols and choreography of the Torah Service on these particular methods of *qinyan*, the ritual’s emphasis is placed squarely on our willing service to God, rather than on any coveted honor or prestige which may devolve on us by virtue of our liturgical role and public recognition. We are dramatically reminded by the most participatory elements of the public Torah Reading that honor is to be found in our willing submission to the will of God, and through the self-effacing service of our Divine Master.

POSTSCRIPT

The premise of this article was first presented during a Siyyum Masekhet Kiddushin, marking the fifth yahrzeit of my father and teacher, Melvin

18. See Genesis 29:20, 30.

19. See Genesis 29:15, 18, 20, 25, 27, 30.

20. Might this not account for the central, transformational function of being called to the Torah in the celebration of Bar Mitzvah?

Prouser, of blessed memory. During his storied 42 years as gabbai of Congregation B'nai Israel in Northampton, Massachusetts, he called – by his own estimation – some 25,000 friends, neighbors, and guests to the Torah, including, perforce, several thousand for the honors of Hagbahah and Gelilah. These moments were, as I recall, among the most cherished in his long life, and among the most instructive and formative in the life of his youngest son, who can only hope to aspire to his lofty example of calling others to the willing service of God.

A Universal Theory on the Development of Liturgy

Rabbi Jeffrey Hoffman

INTRODUCTION

A WHILE AGO, I came across the list of 14 elements proposed by religion scholar, Huston Smith, as “A Universal Grammar of Religion.”¹ It was his attempt to map the essence of that phenomenon found among nearly all human cultures called “religion.” Huston’s attempt caught my fancy in spite of its obvious presumptuousness. Presumptuous, because to attempt to reduce all of religion, in all cultures, over all of history, into one relatively small list of elements seems simple-minded at best, and impossible at worst. Nevertheless, the 14-element list rang truer to me than I had expected. It got me thinking.

Months later, in one of those rare, late-night, bursts of insight, I came up with an even shorter list of what seemed to me a possible universal theory on the development of liturgy. Liturgy is my field, and Smith’s rumination on the essence of religion in general inspired me to consider whether there might be universal elements to the development of that subset of religion, liturgy, that is the academic focus of my life. I was aware, when writing this insight down, that William James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) stood, among many other influences, behind my thinking. After I wrote it down, I fully expected that by the next morning, or by the next week at most, I’d dismiss the stages I’d identified as, well, simple-minded or just plain wrong. But with a minimum of revision, the outline I constructed remains, several

1. It was published in a few places, among them: Huston Smith, *Is There A Universal Grammar of Religion?: The Master Hsuan Hua Memorial Lecture*, (Peru, Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 2008).

years later, to ring true. I cannot impute more authenticity to this brief outline other than the feeling that it “rings true” to me as I continue my penchant to study liturgy. I have shared it with students in some courses, but I cannot claim to have tested it widely. Still, enough time has passed since I first wrote the outline down that I’m willing to share it in print in the hopes that it will garner enough interest to be refined, revised, and made into something that more closely resembles reality.

I am happy to dedicate these thoughts to my teacher, Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz. Bernie is a polyglot among rabbis: Interested in nearly every aspect of Jewish religion, and expert in more of them than any one person has a right to be! Combine that with a warm and accepting personality, a preternatural gift as a raconteur, a beatific smile, and you have the explanation for why so many happily and genuinely call him “my teacher.”

THE UNIVERSAL THEORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITURGY

The liturgy of almost any long-established religion tends to function as a good example of the typical historical stages found in the way religion – in general – develops over time. Clearly, it is a gross generalization to assert that these stages, or any set of stages, explain the history of worship of nearly every religion. Nevertheless, if one allows for many gray areas between the stages, adding sub-phases and developments between the main stages, and even assuming that sometimes stages will occur more than once, or in a different order, we will find that in most cases, it is a surprisingly accurate and valid depiction.

1. A new way of worship is introduced which represents a true break from the previously established traditions of worship. This new way of worship is successful in attracting followers because it more effectively helps people to express their spiritual needs than the older established traditions. The reason that older established traditions lose touch with the people’s needs is usually either because of events that occur in the history of a particular culture which cause enough of a change in the way people think about life and God (or “the gods”) as to make the

old ways seem outmoded, or because of contact with another culture which makes people deeply question the validity of their old ways.

2. Over time, the new way becomes canonized as the established tradition of worship.

3. Over more time, the newly canonized established tradition of worship itself loses touch with the people's needs for the same reasons that the old way it replaced had originally lost touch with the people's needs: significant historical events which changed the way people thought about life or contact with another culture which made people question the validity of their own traditions.

4. At this point, one of three things usually occurs:

A: A new way of worship is introduced which represents a true break from the previously established traditions of worship and the cycle begins again.

B: Out of loyalty to ancient customs, the established traditions of worship continue to be observed by people even though these customs no longer accord with the way people now think about life and God. The worship services consist mostly of people "going through the motions" of ritual without much real spiritual meaning. Sometimes, this form of worship is kept alive because the culture successfully cuts itself off from their surroundings. In this way, the adherents avoid contact with historical events and cultures that change the way people think about life and God.

C: Established traditions of worship continue to be observed by people, but they are re-interpreted in such a way as to adjust to the new ways people think about life and God; those new ways of thinking resulting from new historical events or contact with another culture. Usually, the "re-interpreters" will make the claim that the new interpretations are in fact, not new, but are just as old and traditional as the forms themselves.

Yesh em La'masoret, Yesh em la'mikra: Written and Oral Authority in Judaism

Rabbi Steven Kane

AS A YOUNG RABBINICAL STUDENT in the 1980s, I took a class in the laws of Passover. I recall my teacher, Dr. Elliot Dorff, the Rector at The American Jewish University, telling us the following story. "I was in rabbinical school and we were studying *hilkhot Pesah* (the laws of Passover) in the months before *Pesah*. Then, as now, Marlynn (his wife) began preparing for *Pesah* the day after *Purim*, so there was less and less of the kitchen that I could use. When I saw what Marlynn was doing, I said to her, 'You really don't have to do that. I can show you in the *Shulhan Arukh* that that is unnecessary.' At that point she said to me, 'Get out of here. I will not have you *treif* up my kitchen!' And who was her authority? Her mother, of course!"¹

Ever since that time, the question of which is more authoritative in Judaism, the written or oral tradition, has been of great interest to me. While it was clear that in my teacher's kitchen the oral authority passed down by his mother in law reigned supreme, was this true in theory as well as practice, or did the written tradition ultimately trump customs that were passed down orally?

There is no doubt that society in general favors the written over the oral. In the court room, lawyers will cite written precedent and legal decisions to provide proof for their case. Journalists look for a paper, or today an electronic, trail to bring credence to their reporting. Scientists work off of written results from experiments. Indeed, when we want to question whether something is permanent or temporary, we ask, "is it written in stone?"

In Jewish texts this question was first raised by the Babylonian Talmud in a number of *sugyot*, the most extensive of which is found in

1. As confirmed to me by Dr. Dorff and used by permission.

Sanhedrin 3b–4b. The text brings five separate instances where there is an argument over which is primary or authoritative, the written or oral tradition. They each revolve around the difference between the written text of the Torah and how to pronounce or read these written letters. In all but one case the written form of the Torah is in the singular form, but the oral tradition of how it is to be read is in the plural. This is possible because Hebrew, both ancient and modern, can be written *malei* (full) or *haser* (*defective*), i.e. with or without one of the *matres lectionis* that functions as a vowel and not as part of the essential root letters. When the letter in question is a *vav*, it can change the meaning of a word from singular to plural.² A word therefore can be written in a form that looks singular, but the context makes clear that it is to be read as plural.

The text in *Sanhedrin* uses an interesting and somewhat confusing term for both the written and oral traditions. It refers to the written tradition as *em la'masoret* and the oral reading as *em la'mikra*. What is confusing about this is that in other contexts in the Talmud the words have exactly the opposite meaning. For example, the Torah in Leviticus 11:13–19 and Deuteronomy 14:11–18 lists which birds may not be eaten. Unlike other animals, such as mammals (which must chew their cud and have split hoofs), no specific characteristics are given to determine which birds are acceptable. Thus the Talmud in *Hullin* 63b tells us that the only way to determine if a species of bird is permitted, or conversely, that it belongs to the twenty-four forbidden ones listed in the Torah (already in Talmudic times knowledge of some of the Hebrew terms had been lost), is through *masorah*. Clearly in that context the word *masorah* means a tradition handed down orally, to the exclusion of the written text.³

The same confusion occurs with the word *mikra*. In many places in the Talmud the word *mikra* refers to the written text. So for example, in *Yevamot* 11b we are taught that *ein mikra yotzei midei peshuto*, a verse can never lose its literal meaning. Here the reference is clearly not to

2. The four letters that can function as *matres lectionis* are *aleph*, *vuv*, *yod*, and *heh*.

3. See Rashi, who comments that this is received from one's teacher.

how a verse is read out loud, but rather to the written text itself. Yet, in our text in *Sanhedrin* it is clear that the meaning of *mikra* is the oral tradition of reading the text, while *masoret* is the tradition of the written text as it appears in the Torah.⁴

The context of the discussion in *Sanhedrin* is the number of judges needed to adjudicate a monetary case. The *mishnah* on 2a clearly states that three judges are needed, but the *Gemara* now brings a *b'raita* that says that Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi ruled that five judges are needed. What follows is an argument as to what Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi meant by insisting on five judges. Did he mean for example that a verdict always needed a minimum of three voting one way or the other? The *Gemara* ultimately concluded that there was an argument between Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi and the rabbis over the implications to be drawn from the verse in Exodus 22:8 which is the source for monetary cases.⁵

The verse states that *elohim yarshi'un*, (here interpreted as “the judges” in the plural, “shall condemn”) indicating through the use of the plural verb *yarshi'un* that two judges are meant. Earlier in the same verse the word *elohim* had already occurred, and so Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi understood that each use of the word *elohim*/judges refers to two judges, thus equaling four judges. A court cannot have an even number of judges in order to prevent an evenly split verdict, so we add one more to make five. The rabbis argue that the word *yarshi'un* is written defective, without the *vuv* in the text of the Torah, suggesting the singular form. Thus the word *elohim* in each case refers not to two judges, but to one judge each time, making for a total of two. A third is then added to make odd the number of judges.

The *Gemara* then concludes that their real argument is a general argument, with Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi holding that the oral reading of the Torah is authoritative (*yesh em la'mikra*) and the rabbis holding

4. See Rashi, San. 4a, s.v. *yesh em la'mikra* who defines *mikra* as how we read the text.

5. “In all charges of misappropriation . . . the case of both parties shall come before the judge (*elohim*): he whom the judge (*elohim*) declares guilty (Ex. 22:8).”

that the written text is authoritative (*yesh em la'masoret*). What follows are four similar arguments on this same topic, some of which are original elsewhere, but brought here to combine them into one narrative.

The second example the *Gemara* brings is from Rabbi Yehudah ben Ro'eitz. Here he is teaching his students who question him about the length of time a woman is considered impure after giving birth to a girl. The Torah states that she is impure for two weeks (*shevuayim*) after giving birth. His disciples note that one could use the same letters that form the word *shevuayim* and read them as *shiv'im*, seventy. So, they want to know, is it possible to say that a woman who gives birth to a girl is impure for seventy days? After bringing a proof as to why this is not possible logically,⁶ Rabbi Yehudah ben Ro'eitz runs after his students to tell them that this proof was not necessary because *yesh em la'mikra*, the way that we read the text orally determines our understanding, and in this case we read *shevuayim*, not *shiv'im*. It is interesting to note here that he is not opposed by anyone, as is the case in all the other examples that the *Gemara* will bring.

The third example the *Gemara* brings is from Beit Shammai. In this case they are arguing with Beit Hillel over the minimal application of blood to the horns of the altar regarding a number of different sacrifices. Beit Shammai concluded that in the case of a *ḥatat* (sin) offering, although the prescribed number of applications is four, if two are made then the offering is valid. Beit Hillel holds that only one application of blood needs to be made. The reason for Beit Shammai's ruling is because he holds *yesh em la'mikra*. The word *karnot* appears three times when the law is first mentioned in the Torah.⁷ Since it is plural, each use of the term minimally indicates two, and its use three times adds up to six. Since there are only four horns on the altar, the

6. He tells them that since the Torah text is clear that it is double the time for the birth of a male child in the case of her purity and that time is thirty-three days after giving birth to a boy and sixty six days after a girl – the same must hold true for her impurity time which is one week after giving birth to a boy and therefore must be two weeks after giving birth to a girl.

7. Leviticus 4:25, 30, 34.

first four refer to the prescribed amount and the last two refer to the minimum amount to make it valid.

Beit Hillel holds *yesh em la'masoret*. In this case the word *karnot* is written in the Torah twice without the *vuv* (indicating it could be singular) and once with it.⁸ So, the total number adds up to four, which is in reference to the prescribed application of four. Since there is nothing to indicate what the minimum amount is to make it valid, and there must be at least some application of blood, one application is understood to be the minimum.

The fourth text is about the building of a *sukkah*. The question that they are discussing is the minimum number of walls for a *sukkah*. According to the first opinion, which was anonymous, the minimum is two walls, plus a *tefaḥ* (a hand-breadth) for the third. Rabbi Shimon says that the minimum is three walls plus a *tefaḥ* for the fourth. Similar to the previous example, the argument is over the repeated use of a word that is written twice defective and one time full, though read each time as if it is full. The same “math” applies, with the first opinion teaching that the three mentions of *sukkot* add up to four (twice written defective or singular and once full or plural), and Rabbi Shimon saying that they add up to six (read three times as full, or plural). In each case you subtract one reference for the law of building the *sukkah* itself, which leaves the first opinion with three walls, and Rabbi Shimon with four. The *Gemara* goes on to say that in both cases, there is a tradition “from Moses at Sinai,” that is, an ancient tradition that reduces the last wall to a partial wall of one *tefaḥ*. On what do they differ? Rabbi Shimon holds *yesh em la'mikra*, and the first opinion, expressed now as “the rabbis,” holds *yesh em la'masoret*.

The final example from the *Gemara* involves Rabbi Akiva. This is an argument with the rabbis over whether two corpses could combine together to have enough blood to make an enclosed area a transmitter of impurity.⁹ This too is based on a word that is read as if it is plural,

8. It is interesting to note that the reading in our texts of the Torah is different than in the Talmud, as *karnot* appears all three times written *ḥaser*, defective.

9. According to the laws of impurity contacted through death, if a body or parts of

but written in the singular (*nafshot*). Once again, in this case the rabbis hold *yesh em la'masoret*, while the individual, Rabbi Akiva, holds *yesh em la'mikra*. Since the word is read as a plural, Rabbi Akiva holds that two or more corpses can combine to form a minimal amount that will cause impurity to be transmitted, while the rabbis hold that it must all come from one corpse and cannot be added together with others.

Having presented these five examples, the *Gemara* now goes on to question how anyone could hold the opinion that the written text is authoritative over the oral reading, using the example of the possible confusion of forbidding boiling a kid in its mother's milk. The word for milk, *halev*, could be read as *heilev*, fat! Yet all agree that the prohibition involves milk. Therefore, the *Gemara* concludes that there is no question that the oral reading of the text is most authoritative. It then proceeds to go through each of our cases and shows that the real argument was not about *yesh em la'mikra* or *yesh em la'masoret*. Rather, each one is resolved as arguing about some other principle, but all agree that indeed, *yesh em la'mikra*.

Having concluded that the preponderance of views is that the oral reading tradition is authoritative, the *Gemara* mounts one more challenge to this based on the tradition of having four compartments of the *tefillin shel rosh*, of the phylacteries that go on the head. It emerges from the text that Rabbi Ishmael continues to hold on to the concept of *yesh em la'masoret*, while Rabbi Akiva once again puts forth his view that *yesh em la'mikra*.

The *Gemara* first tried to resolve this by saying that when the written and pronounced forms differ, such as in the case of *sukkot* which is written both with and without a *vav*, there may be a disagreement. But when there is no difference, such as in the case of *halev/heilev*, which are both written exactly the same, there is no disagreement, but this too is

a body are in an enclosed area, it transmits impurity to all who enter the enclosed area. A cohen, for example, would be forbidden to enter such an area, except for his closest relatives. According to the Rabbi Akiba, the impurity of more than one body, or part thereof, can be added to another to render the area impure. According to the rabbis, the minimum must come from one body alone.

rejected. The *Gemara* ends without a specific conclusion, although the clear direction is that *yesh em la'masoret* is more authoritative, despite this opinion not being unanimously accepted.

What then can we conclude from this very interesting *sugya* about the authority of the written and oral traditions? It is clear that the direction of the *Gemara* is to accept the idea that what we hear orally is more authoritative than that which is written, though there is some hesitation to completely embrace this position. In the beginning of this essay I pointed out that in our society we tend to think of the written tradition as more authoritative. What is it then about the oral tradition that compelled the rabbis to recognize it, and not the written one, as authoritative?

It seems to me that there were two compelling reasons for this. The first is a practical one, reflecting the wisdom of our sages and the reality of authority. The sages understood that an oral tradition remains alive. Thus, the preponderance of opinion was to give weight to the spoken word, albeit with some dissenting views, to reflect that the word of God is a living word.

The other reason I suspect that the rabbis recognized the authority of the oral tradition has to do with Judaism's understanding of the nature of God. Recognizing God as non-corporeal meant that our ways of experiencing the Divine were limited. We can neither see nor touch God. What we can do though is "hear" God's voice, through the reading of scripture, and what we hear is considered the authoritative version. That is why in many synagogues today there are two people stationed on either side of the Torah reader (*gabaim*) whose job is to make certain that the reader reads each word correctly. What the congregation is doing is listening to the word of God, so to speak, which is a spoken, not a written word.

This is reflected in another way that we treat the Biblical text in Judaism. Throughout the entire Bible, we have what is known as *kt'iv/k'ri*. It is related to our subject, though it is even more radical. This is when the text is written one way, but the way that we read it differs from how it is written by adding, subtracting or substituting letters, and it changes the meaning of the word. Sometimes a *vuv* is read as a *yud*,

or vice versa. At times an even more radical change is made when the word is read. Yet the way that it is read is the accepted version, not the way that it is written, even though the written version remains in the written text.¹⁰ This is the case in the Torah, the *Haftarah*, or any other liturgical reading of scripture in the synagogue.

The Talmud was written down approximately 1,300 years ago, yet, we still refer to it as the Torah *she-ba'al peh*, the Oral Torah. It seems to me that this is because we have always understood that in order to have a living tradition, it must include not only an oral component, but the oral component must supersede even that which is “written in stone.” While the rabbis of the Talmud struggled with this, I think that their ultimate direction was to conclude *yesh em la'mikra*, the oral tradition is our highest authority. But perhaps we don't need the Talmud to teach us this, just ask Marlynn Dorff about her mother's *Pesah* traditions in the kitchen.¹¹

10. There are literally hundreds of examples of this in the Bible. The first occurrence is in Genesis 1:21, where an extra *yud* is added to the end of the word. Another early example is Genesis 25:24 where the written text is missing both an *aleph* and a *yud*, but we read it as if they are there.

11. Two important treatments of oral versus written traditions in Judaism are Menachem Friedman, “Life Tradition and Book Tradition in the Development of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism,” in Harvey Goldberg, ed., *Judaism Viewed from Within and from Without: Anthropological Studies* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1986), 235–255 and Haym Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Tradition* 28 (Summer, 1994): 64–131. [ed.]

A Tribute to Rabbi Zlotowitz

Rabbi Martin S. Rozenberg

THE TALMUD ADVISES US *acquire a true friend*. I have had the good fortune to acquire in Rabbi Zlotowitz such a true friend. Our friendship goes back 63 years when we first met as entering students in rabbinical school at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. This friendship blossomed to the point where we have come to feel a closeness of brothers. This bonding also extends to our wives and children so that both families consider themselves to be *mishpahah*. Bernie and Shirley have been to us a precious blessing.

Rabbi Zlotowitz comes from a rich rabbinic background. His Father, Rabbi Aaron Zlotowitz, was a respected rabbi and leader in the Orthodox movement, and Bernie graduated from the well known Yeshivat Torah V'daath. After ordination he became the rabbi of an Orthodox congregation. But with time Bernie began to undergo an inner spiritual struggle that cast doubt about his Orthodox philosophy and theology. This finally led him to enroll into a Reform rabbinic seminary. Yet, when Bernie tendered his resignation to his Orthodox congregation the Board refused to accept it and voiced no objection to their rabbi studying other interpretations of Judaism. They even expressed a willingness to accommodate Bernie with extra time to study.

It was at this time in Bernie's life that I came to know him and was made aware by him of his predicament. It was indeed tempting to stay in his rabbinic post and enjoy the emoluments that came along with it, but Bernie saw the ideological conflict that was involved, in moral and ethical terms. His conscience would simply not permit him to stay on and he resigned. His willingness to make a great sacrifice and stand for principle made a deep impression on me at the time. I immediately came to respect him greatly for his honesty and integrity – qualities that continue to describe him to this day.

All of us who count ourselves as Bernie's friends admire him for his scholarship, and love him for his *menschlichkeit*. With his knowledge

in the fields of Bible, biblical archaeology, and Greek text studies, he educated several generations of students who continue to admire him as a teacher par excellence. Bernie, with the personal warmth and compassion that he exuded, and with his human concern, taught not only his subject matter but also presented a model of how to be a *mensch*. This explains why those who have the privilege of knowing him feel honored to cherish his friendship.

I feel enriched to be Bernie's best friend and wish him and his family more years of good health and blessings of joy.

In Honor of Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz

*Rabbi Lynnda Targan (excerpted from her forthcoming book, *Funny You Don't Look Like a Rabbi*)*

"Those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:4)

DURING THE EARLY FORMATIVE years of the Academy when it was a virtual Mom and Pop operation, permanent classroom space didn't exist and classes were often held willy-nilly. A restaurant, café, a volunteer's apartment or Central Park in the sunshine afforded the opportunity for the exchange of Jewish ideas, ethics and values and the wisdom of the Rabbinic Sages to be explored.

By the late nineteen nineties, when I entered, the Academy rented space at the SAJ building on 86th and Central Park West, with the proviso that the AJR students vacate the building to make room for the Hebrew school children who filed into the classrooms after 4:00 pm. Like the Israelites who moved their portable *mishkan* from place to place in the desert, we wandered about looking for venues to hold late classes.

On Tuesday afternoons, author, and at that time, rabbinical student, Malka Drucker and her former partner, photographer, Gay Block, invited us to study in their rented apartment at the Belnord, a famous NY architectural landmark. An Italian Renaissance style pre-war building fronted by a superbly landscaped courtyard visible behind arched-iron gates, it stood in stark contrast to the corner Starbucks in which most of us were used to meeting.

A small group of aspiring rabbis and cantors gathered around the large oval oak table in Malka and Gay's dining room with the sun streaming in. At the head of the table sat our teacher, a delightfully cheery man with a cherubic face whose ruddy cheeks looked as though they had been scrubbed red with a rough sand brush.

He was a rabbi, but wasn't wearing a *kippah* on his bald head, which was trimmed with a thick circle of white hair above the nape of his neck. His style was in keeping with the Classical Reform training he received at Hebrew Union College where he was ordained in 1945, and it was a curiosity for me. Like children sitting on their father's knees, the students in the class revered Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz, a Greek and Hebrew scholar whom everyone called, "Rabbi Zlotowitz," or Rabbi Z, never using his first name, not that he would have minded.

During that semester, my first, he was teaching a course on *Translating Psalms*, and he was simultaneously completing a book on the subject, one of many in his prolific career. Except for the 23rd Psalm, which was read or chanted fairly often at funerals, the *Psalms* were generally mysterious to me, their language esoteric, poetic, difficult to access. Rabbi Zlotowitz was an expert, familiar with every nuance of tone, intent and meaning. I was eager to contextualize the *Psalms*, to explore their layers, to translate them into spiritual texts for our time.

"Ms. Targan," Rabbi Z boomed, initiating the process of role-taking and the requisite introductions, startling me with his resonant voice. "Are you a rabbi or a cantor?"

A rabbi or cantor? What? Are you talking to me? I thought. I looked over my shoulder. He said my name, but was he addressing ME?

"Ms. Targan, are you studying to be a rabbi or a cantor?" he repeated gently.

"I I I'm just studying," I stammered. "This is my first semester at the Academy as a non-matriculated student."

"Very good! Are you planning to become a rabbi or a cantor?" he asked, kindly, restating the question for a third time. The query threw me, though I had been on the rabbinic journey for a long time already.

"A a a rabbi. I I I'm hoping that someday I can be a rabbi," I answered timidly.

"Well then, welcome Rabbi Targan. Nice to have you in my class."

Rabbi Targan! Welcome indeed!

I perked up. It was the first time anyone had called me Rabbi Targan. The appellation was strange-sounding and made my blood surge. All of the valves and arteries of my heart began dancing in response.

Rabbi Zlotowitz was one of the first of my early mentors to imagine me as a rabbi. Rabbi Targan. It had a certain ring. I let the sound of it roll over in my mind like a first taste of fine wine swishing around the tongue. Naming me as he did gave me confidence, an assuredness that I was on the right path, comfortable in my own skin to pursue my destiny.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel is quoted as saying, “When I was young I used to admire intelligent people; as I grow older I admire kind people.” Rabbi Z is both intelligent and kind. Through the years, I sought him out as a teacher. He never disappointed. A raconteur with a soulful wit, and an erudite scholar and teacher, his casual and warm style made him a favorite. He motivated us with his learned and loving example, and we all adored him. Like all of the others in our community, I worked hard to meet his academic expectations.

Equally, if not more importantly, we wanted to uphold his mantle of *menschlichkeit*. Like my own *menschy* grandfather, people’s feelings were as important to him as people’s knowledge. “Call people back right away if they reach out to you,” Rabbi Z. instructed us as one important lesson in practical Rabbinics. “Return calls on the very same day, or at the latest early the next morning. Rabbis and cantors offer an important lifeline to humanity. Like doctors you can lift and heal a person’s spirit. Always remember that!”

Rabbi Z. also wrote lovely handwritten notes with beautiful pens he collected. If he received a card for Hanukah or the New Year, he wrote a personal thank you note, which in these days of impersonal internet connections serves as a stunning, enduring lesson.

At ordination, I requested Rabbi Zlotowitz to be on my *Beit Din* because I wanted to be embraced by his wise, practical and caring aura as I stood to receive the title, “*Rabbi and Teacher in Israel.*”

Rabbi Zlotowitz, I know I speak for all of us when I say that I aspire to live up to your brilliant example in my rabbinate and in my personal life. You’ve set the bar very high, so it’s challenging. But still, I try. Thank you for your magnificent inspiration. God bless you, now and forever...

For Rabbi Zlotowitz

Peg Kershenbaum

OUR PHONE CONVERSATIONS for years now have started something like this: “Raaabbi Kershenbaum!” “Raaabbi Zlotowitz!” “How are you my dear, dear friend? Are we on for tomorrow?” “I certainly hope so!” And we make our plans to work on our dictionary, the famous or infamous dictionary that has occupied us through the bar mitzvah of at least one of your grandchildren and the later college careers of a few more; through my ordination (when I went from “Kershenbaum” to “Rabbi Kershenbaum”); through the marriages of your first grandchild and of my first child; through the birth of two of my grandchildren; through sickness and health and a whirlwind move during which we almost lost several hundred pages of our Greek, Hebrew, Latin and English translations of the Tanakh.

We worked together at the offices of the URJ, *kibbitzing* with several regional directors who held your former title but never attained your prestige. We ate bagels at the same place near *Harold's* until it closed and we moved next door to that kosher emporium. Each week we'd ponder what delicacy to have them place between the roll. You'd eye the egg salad and tell me, “Shirley used to make the *best* egg salad. Now do you know what she makes?” “Nope. What?” “Reservations!” So we'd laugh and return to the office, push our volumes out of the way and have lunch surrounded by the morning's work.

When the Union moved its quarters, we took up residence on your dining room table, joined by “your good wife” Shirley who made us lunch or joined us as we made our way to *Bennie's* or the *Kosher Nosh* to break up our hours with Hatch-Redpath, Kittel and St. Jerome; with Brown, Driver and, of course Briggs; with Lewis and Short and Liddell and Scott (not a Jewish face in the bunch!) We pored over your meticulously handwritten manuscript pages, wrestled over each word, pulled out texts and grammar books and commentaries and decided on our ultimate entry together.

There were times when working on the dictionary that I'd come across a page on which you'd written across the top margin, "I don't know how I'm working through the pain." It would make me cry. It still does, just to think about it. And sometimes the pain led you to hospital stays. During one long bout that sent you to rehab, we worked on the facility's magnificent table, steering your chair through the corridors with all our papers on your lap. No matter how uncomfortable you were, the pain lifted as we worked.

We've got another new venue for our project now. We trundle down to the bar in the Five Star Premier lobby where we *could* get free coffee all day if we wanted (and if we had room on their tiny tables) and we debate over word meanings and formats or we remember times that we used this verse in some sermon or other. And that usually leads to your sharing a story.

I love the stories about your teachers, the Genius of Geniuses or Mr. Five-by-Five who ate yogurt and called you boys "mine dear," or The Dean, or your advisor Dr. Orlinsky (my "academic grandfather") in whose house you were a *ben bayit* as I am in yours (except for the gender!) I love the wisdom you share and the adventures and even escapades that illustrate whatever points come up during our conversations.

Now sometimes those conversations contain something of the bitersweet as we get to a point that we'd like to check either in an article you wrote or in a book that used to be in a certain place in your house. "I used to have that book. Now, it's in a box somewhere," you'll say. And many times I can respond, "I have that one," or "I packed that one for the Academy." There's a window at the Academy that allows people to see into the library where so many of your books now reside. It has your name on it and one of your favorite quotes.

There are times when I bring you the knotty problems that inevitably arise in a congregation. You and Shirley both react in such a supportive way! Your most empowering advice has been, "Kershenbaum, you're the rabbi." I can take that advice because I've "watched the way you tie your shoes" and heard the stories of congregants past who still call you or write or invite you to perform life cycle events. For

hundreds, if not thousands of Reform Jews in America and for dozens if not hundreds of Jews and Christians around the world; for heads of state from Ireland to France to Germany to Japan, “you’re the rabbi.”

As much pleasure as you get from reminiscing about family or colleagues or teachers, there are three things guaranteed to light up your eyes, each in its own way. There’s a sigh and a twinkle when we speak of your grandchildren. There’s a special softness when Shirley comes up or comes into the room. And there is the true delight when I say, “Do you know who sent you regards?” and you respond, “Of *cawsss!* He was my student! When did you speak with him?”

We both know the quote, “*Na-aseh v’nishma.*” But in the years that we’ve been working together, I’ve been lucky enough to have gotten it backwards. I’ve listened and have begun to put into practice what I’ve observed. I’ve observed you living two of your favorite quotes, “there are two types of people who are never jealous: a father of his children and a teacher of his students.” You give and share and rejoice and sometimes exclaim joyously, “my children have defeated me!” (or, more often, “my life is ruled by women!) You also absolutely embrace “I’ve learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues but the most from my students.” You *kvell* at our successes and are enlivened by them and continue to teach us to be so generous of spirit.

Sometimes you think about the past and say, “when you’re in the saddle, you’re who’s who. When you’re out of the saddle, you’re who’s he.” If, while you were in the saddle, you stopped to touch people’s lives, they remember. They tell your stories, read your articles, open your books and learn to act with the love, integrity, humor and selflessness that you’ve shown.

Just as our phone conversations have a fond and formal opening, so, too, they have a closing. When we’ve exhausted the somethings that we’ve saved to discuss after we make our arrangements to meet the next day, the call goes something like this: “Well, my dear, dear friend and colleague, we will see each other, God willing, tomorrow. Regards to Aaron.” “And to Shirley.” Well, my rabbi, teacher, colleague and dear, dear friend, I hope to see you next Thursday and the next and the next for many years to come.

A Poem for Rabbi Zlotowitz

Listen my children and you will see
The wit and wisdom of Rabbi Z
His stories and insight kept us afloat
As together we studied *Pirke Avot*.
Translations are there for all to see
But Zlotowitz says he doesn't agree
And it's his opinion that we seek
Whether it be in Ugaritic or Greek.

He's far from being your average Jew
He's been an NEC preacher and a cardinal too.
The nuns knit him a red *kippah*
"Oh, Cardinal Z, we are in awe."

He cut the ribbon for the Tappan Zee
That's why it survived past 2003.
Although it's the year 5768
Rabbi Z says – "computers aren't great"
"No computer for me – that's what I think
I can do it all with pen and ink."

There's a lot of wit between the Z's
And his heart and soul can't help but please.

From Moses and Sinai,
and down through the Sages
Wisdom is transmitted throughout the ages

And we have to say – because it's true
We've been privileged to learn some wisdom from you.

For our teacher, Rabbi Zlotowitz, with deep appreciation.

Jill Hackell, Jill Minkoff, and the entire *Pirke Avot* class at AJR 2008
(5768)

Driving with Rabbi Zlotowitz

Rabbi Gloria Rubin

FOR FOUR YEARS, EVERY TUESDAY, I had the honor of driving Rabbi Zlotowitz from his home in Fair Lawn to AJR in NYC. We would arrive early enough to stop for breakfast, sometimes joined by another student. While we ate, he would share his perspective on the latest Jewish issues – especially discussing *teshuvot* he was in the process of writing. He also shared anecdotes about his years in the pulpit and at the Union, provided support and suggestions about pulpit issues I was facing. All in all – a remarkable opportunity!

One day while we were driving east on 86th street and looking for a parking space, he suddenly shouted, “Stop the car!” I slammed on the brakes looking around to see what accident I had just avoided, ready to apologize for inadvertently endangering him. “What happened?” I asked. “Over there,” he pointed to a car pulling out on the west bound side, “there’s a spot over there.” He was asking me to make a U-turn in traffic on a busy street during rush hour! “I’ll get a ticket!” I replied. “You won’t get a ticket,” he insisted. “You’re with me.” “We’ll have an accident.” I protested “You’re going to be a rabbi! Don’t you have any faith?” He asked. “I have faith in God.” I answered. “Say a prayer and make a U-turn!” He insisted. Against my better judgement I listened. I turned. We parked. I asked him if he would have made a U-turn at that point. I can’t remember what he answered.