

## COMMUNICATIONS

### HALLEL AND YOM HA-ATZMAUT

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

Dr. Marvin S. Antleman, in his article on "Hallel on Yom Ha-Atzmaut," assumes that a rabbinical decree of every age has the Biblical validity referred to in Deuteronomy 17: 10-11 and he equates all rabbinic laws with that of the lighting of the Chanukah candles. "Thus," writes Dr. Antleman, "a *takkanah* by the rabbis of our generation has the authority of the word of God as revealed in the Bible."

Actually, there are at least three views on this matter (see the *Minchat Chinukh* on the 495th commandment). Maimonides in *Hilkhot Mamrim* invests only the *Bet Din Ha-Gadol* of Jerusalem with the power to legislate *takkanot*, interpret the Torah and declare which are the traditional laws — all in a manner which would make it biblically mandatory for us to observe them in accordance with Deuteronomy 17:10-11. When Maimonides writes: "You have no further to go than the court of your generation," he obviously refers to the *Bet Din Ha-Gadol* of

our generation . . . if it exists.

Nachmanides, at the outset of his commentary on the *Sefer Ha-Mitzvoth*, also limits the real rabbinic power to the *Bet Din Ha-Gadol* of Jerusalem . . . except that he removes *takkanot* from this category, to the chagrin of Dr. Antleman. Only the *Baal Ha-Chinukh* in discussing the 495th commandment is inclined to invest biblical authority to the Rabbis of our times.

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TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

According to the Gemara (*Shabbat* 118b), he who reads Hallel every day is like one who commits blasphemy. Rashi (*a.l.*) comments that when one recites Hallel at a time not designated by the prophets, he makes a mockery of the institution of Hallel.

The *Maharsha* (and the *Maharal* of Prague shares this view) explains that Hallel can be recited only in commemoration of an event that changed the laws of nature. It is interesting to note that the *Bahag* includes the recitation of Hallel on Chanukah and other occasions among the six hundred

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and thirteen commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, even though Chanukah was instituted at a much later time. The *Ramban* (Commentary on *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*) explains this by pointing out that Hallel was instituted *beruach ha-kodesh* (with divine inspiration) by Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and the Children of Israel who foresaw the event of Chanukah. He also makes a similar comment on *Pesachim* 117a.

It is, therefore, disturbing that people advocate the recital of Hallel in commemoration of events of our time. Hallel is unique. And we must not undermine its significance.

There are other ways in which we can thank the Almighty for His mercies to us. The blessing *she'asah nissim* was instituted to express gratitude for deliverance from danger in a miraculous fashion. *Birkhat ha-gomel* should be recited when the deliverance was wrought in purely natural fashion. But none of the *Poskim* suggests the recital of Hallel in either of these cases.

I have noticed recently that the *Chida* frowns upon the recital of Hallel for any events other than those cited in *Arakhin* 10. Instead, so he suggests, other forms of thanksgiving should be employed.

We should not attempt to introduce customs and laws of our own. When they are not mentioned by our sages, they cannot be for the betterment of the Jewish people.

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### UNITY THEME

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

I read Rabbi Norman Lamm's article in the Fall, 1961, issue of *TRADITION* on "The Unity Theme and its Implications for Moderns" with great delight. I have long ago learned to expect a satisfying experience in reading his articles. In particular, I admired his very lucid presentation of an otherwise extremely difficult subject.

However, I was somewhat amused by his conclusion. He develops a metaphysical theory of the all-embracing character of the unity principle and then concludes therefrom that this is the philosophic or the logical basis for the synthesis of secular and religious studies. To me this is reminiscent of the Kelemer and Slabodka Schools of Mussar which were wont to derive some profound moral message from a biblical portion and then apply it to some trivial aspect of human relationships such as the courtesy or amenities that we ought to show for one another. Similarly, to validate that which is pragmatically motivated with ontological theories appears to me to be as unworthy an effort as that of those who would emulate God only in His attribute of "dwelling with them amidst their profanities."

My purpose, however, is not to relate a subjective attitude. I prefer to discuss the substantive merits of Rabbi Lamm's conclusions. First, allow me to summarize his presentation as I understand it. After demonstrating how the Kab-

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balah has expanded the simple doctrine of unity as an all-embracing principle of existence, he proceeds to illustrate how Rav Kook has applied this teaching to the contemporary world. He says in behalf of Rav Kook that the *yichud* within God requires a similar *yichud* within man, such as the merging of "Intellect and Emotion" or "Reason and Will." In a theological sense, he concludes "there can be no *absolute* distance between the holy and the unholy." He cites the *Shelah's* treatment of the profane as the "not-yet-holy." Here we approach the crux of his "implication for moderns." He demonstrates so eloquently how American Jews are indeed guilty of adopting the non-Jewish dichotomy of the material and the spiritual.

This exposition of the Jewish view as "Yichud-obsessed" and as predicated on the dialectic relationship of the sacred and the profane leads him to his "critical re-evaluation of the whole educational structure of Orthodoxy today." He says that the yeshivot are violating this *yichud* principle because they allow secular studies to "merely co-exist" with the sacred studies; "the real answer — and this is the real meaning of the 'synthesis' of which Yeshiva University speaks and for which it stands — is the qualitative accommodation of both studies."

If my summary of the substance of Rabbi Lamm's argument is correct — and I think it is — then I would merely say that he is proclaiming the Messianic era somewhat early, and allowing for no

eschatological striving.

Surely, we all agree that in the ultimate sense when there will be the unity or *yichud* of "God is One and His name is One" then there will simultaneously be the *yichud* of the sacred and the profane, the secular and the religious. Even the non-Kabbalists, nay, the prophets speak of unity in eschatological times. But in this World of Disunity there is indeed the blurring of distinctions between the sacred and the profane. This is what the Kabbalists understood as the original sin of Adam from which there emerged this admixture of good and evil. Isn't Rabbi Lamm attempting to bridge Halakhah and Aggadah somewhat prematurely? If the *yichud* principle is valid within the realm of Halakhah, then what is the meaning of sin in halakhic terms? Is not the attempt to apply the *yichud* principle to the World of Disunity reminiscent of Sabbatai Zvi who also recognized that the sacred must sanctify the profane? Even in kabbalistic terms, therefore, we can speak of a striving for *yichud* which is realized in Messianic times; but this striving is not yet realized.

It is true that the Kabbalists urged man to participate with God in this striving for *yichud*, much the same as the Talmud urged man to be the partner of God in Creation; but there are some definite limitations set upon the extent to which man participates in this partnership. Let me cite briefly a poignant *chazal*, which I think makes this point. Referring to the passage,

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“Ye shall be holy, for I am holy,” the rabbis state: “I would think that man’s holiness is the same as God’s; therefore, it is written ‘for I am holy’ my holiness is greater than yours.” Holiness or *kedushah* as we understand it, particularly in the Kabbalah, is the process of immanence and transcendence coupled together. Like God, man, too, is to be holy by being both immersed in this world and yet exalted and sanctified. Does this then mean that man can run the risk of “dwelling in the impurities” in order to achieve the transcendence of *kedushah*? No, for man’s holiness is not that of God who alone is capable of such immersion and exaltedness at one and the same time. (Interestingly enough, Reb. Tzadok Hakohen, a recent Hasidic Gaon, uses this text to explain the fallacy of Jesus.) Here the rabbis clearly delineated the limit of man’s attempt to completely emulate God.

What criteria then, one might ask, shall we use to determine the areas in which we ought to seek or strive for *yichud*? Obviously, Torah — by which I mean the Halakhah — sets the limitations of these areas. The Halakhah as we know it today in the World of Disunity is our guiding principle; not the Halakhah of the future — of Beth Shammai — but the Halakhah of Beth Hillel.

In the Kabbalah, Torah is viewed as the Name of God — *Shemot shel ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu*. Torah thus preceded Creation and served as its basis. The Rabbis speak of the desire of the angels

to take the Torah. On other occasions they spoke of God’s readiness to give the Torah to the nations of the world. Were either of these competitors of the Jews to have succeeded in obtaining the Torah, it would then have been either more or less spiritual, as the case might have been. The angels would have received a more spiritualized Torah; the Gentiles, a less spiritual Torah. As given to the Jews, Torah is geared to their needs in this earthly life, in the World of Disunity. This is not to say that Torah in the eschatological sense has no relation to man today. It does suggest, however, that Torah as presently constituted does clearly delineate and separate the holy from the unholy.

For example, Rambam’s statement on the irreconcilability of God’s omniscience with human free-will is, in the Kabbalah, refuted by the application of the *yichud* principle. The Kabbalists saw no conflict therein in the ultimate sense. Yet in human terms it is clear that the problem is insoluble. To paraphrase the Kabbalists, therefore, I would say that in the world of *atzilut*, *yichud* reigns supreme. But in the world of *Assiyah*, the Halakhah with its confrontation of the dichotomies of the holy and the unholy, the sacred and the profane, does indeed prevail.

All that I have said does not mitigate the value of Rabbi Lamm’s insights in terms of what human striving is aimed at and what ultimate redemption will represent. It does, however, cast doubt

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on his particular conclusions especially his synthesis of the secular and sacred studies and their respective disciplines.

Surely there were great giants among our people who mastered the sciences and arts as well. If we were able to learn Torah as did the Vilna Gaon or Rambam (with all the elements of *kedushah* and *lishmah* that the Rabbis spoke of), our knowledge of the categories of secular thought would emerge from Torah's intrinsic all-embracing quality. This is, I think, what Rav Kook meant by stressing the rabbinic comment of *de'kullah bah*. However, because our study of Torah is eclipsed, we cannot grasp this quality of Torah and we are compelled to study these categories "outside" and then attempt to integrate them with Torah. But this is not to say that this is, metaphysically speaking, the ideal. The synthesis of the secular and the religious is possible, I agree, from within the endless stream of Torah itself. It cannot, however, be achieved by studying the secular discipline, borrowing it, as it were, outside of Torah.

We are in agreement that secular education has its place in "American Jewish life." But what

is a practical necessity should not be awarded ontological validity. More significant is the tremendous psychological difference between accepting this surface synthesis as a "necessary evil," or a utopian realization.

In conclusion, I might add that it is ironic but his excellent exposition seems to offer the most devastating critique of secular education. For he clearly recognizes that the secular tends to fragmentize, and thus he negates the principle of *yichud*. He is content, apparently, to dismiss this as merely coincidental to its development. But is it not possible to argue forcibly that this is an inevitable facet of any man-made system? If man lacks unity — as he most certainly does — then his system will surely reflect that lack. Only in Judaism, in the God-given Torah, is *yichud* which emanates from God's *yichud* possible.

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[Rabbi Lamm's answer to these criticisms as well as to those contained in Rabbi Wurzbarger's article on "Puralism and the Halakhah" will appear in a forthcoming issue of TRADITION.

—Ed.]