

Mendell Lewittes

The sweeping technological upheavals of our time have created a host of difficulties in the area of Sabbath observance. With the emergence of the State of Israel, the problems — as can be seen from the article on "Public Services on the Sabbath" appearing elsewhere in this issue — have become especially acute. Some daring scholars have, therefore, suggested bold revisions in the law to be based upon what they assume to be the *rationale* of the Halakhah. This controversial position, recently advocated by Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, a leading spokesman for this school of thought, is criticized in the current review by Rabbi Mendell Lewittes, spiritual leader of the Young Israel of Montreal. The author, a vice-president of the Canadian Region of the Rabbinical Council of America, was ordained at Yeshiva University and received his Master of Arts degree from Harvard University. In addition to his extensive contributions to various scholarly journals, Rabbi Lewittes translated Maimonides' *Sefer Avodah* for the Yale Judaica series. Rabbi Rackman replies in the pages immediately following this paper.

THE SABBATH OF THE HALAKHAH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY CIVILIZATION

The Sages of the Mishnah have already forewarned us (*Chaggigah* 1:8) that "the laws of the Sabbath are like mountains suspended on a hair, for the biblical precepts are few whereas its halakhic rules are many." Consequently, to trace each rule of the Sabbath to the general

principle from which it is derived is a formidable task. Compounding the difficulty today is the necessity to apply these rules, first formulated many centuries ago, to our complicated way of life bristling with technological devices undreamt of by the ancients. Add to

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

this the antinomian character of the modern liberal outlook, and we can well appreciate the challenge involved and the courage required to make Sabbath observance in the traditional manner, as prescribed by the *Shulchan Arukh*, reasonable and palatable to a generation swept up in the rapid current of twentieth century civilization.

Dr. Emanuel Rackman, past president of the Rabbinical Council and noted spiritual leader and faculty member of Yeshiva University, possesses the daring as well as the competence to undertake this challenging task. In a number of articles which have appeared in various publications, he has proved his ability to present in an articulate and cogent manner the traditional concepts of Jewish life and to demonstrate their viability in our modern times. In the booklet under review, one of a series of *Studies in Torah Judaism* projected by Yeshiva University,* he has made a valiant effort to counter some of the frequently heard arguments against the rigidity of Sabbath law by disclosing the inherent goals of Sabbath observance and making apparent our continued need for them in the modern scheme of life. I regret to report that, in my humble opinion, the effort has fallen short of the challenge.

Rabbi Rackman's thesis follows the approach to Jewish tradition which has already been outlined

in the first of the *Studies* written by Yeshiva's President Belkin and entitled, *The Philosophy of Purpose*. This approach, as pointed out by the general editor of the series, Dr. Leon Stitskin, in his introduction to Rackman's opus, is predicated upon the premise that Judaism is "teleologically oriented," i.e., that the *mitzvot* of the Torah as defined by the Sages of the Halakhah are related to a metaphysical set of values or ends, which not only reveal the purpose of the *mitzvot* but also indicate how the Halakhah can be — rather, should be — modified in order to be in closer harmony with modern habits of living. Dr. Rackman posits these ends as far as the Sabbath and Pilgrimage Festivals are concerned and attempts to show how the masters of the Halakhah were guided by these ends in their legislative activity. He nevertheless acknowledges that the creation of the State of Israel has given rise to a host of problems in connection with strict adherence to Sabbath law. And he therefore concedes that the rules of the Sabbath will change, as they have in the past, but only if we follow this path already trodden by previous rabbinic legislators.

Before Dr. Rackman addresses himself to these specific problems, he sets out to examine the Halakhah in general. He assails both the fundamentalists and the proponents of the historical school (Reform

**Sabbath and Festivals in the Modern Age*, by Emanuel Rackman (New York: Yeshiva University, 1961).

The Sabbath of the Halakhah and Twentieth Century Civilization

and Conservative) as being equally inadequate to explain the workings of the Halakhah. He then proceeds to describe the so-called teleological approach which, in his thinking, provides the only answer to the problem of the Sabbath today. To my mind, this preliminary discussion of the nature of the Halakhah was an unfortunate point of departure for more reasons than one. It has diverted the author, as it will no doubt divert the reader, from what should have been his primary concern, namely the many laws of Sabbath and Festival observances which are particularly considered out of step with the times. These are not given the full treatment they deserve. Furthermore, the question of the nature of the Halakhah is too fundamental and complicated an issue to be treated merely as introductory to one specific area of Halakhah. It does seem odd that Rackman already presents a definitive philosophy of the Halakhah as taught by his mentor Rabbi Soloveitchik when, according to the announcement of the projected series, number 2 of the *Studies* poses the question, *Is a Philosophy of the Halakhah Possible?*, to be answered by Rabbi Soloveitchik himself. (This study has not yet been published; Rackman's study is numbered 5 in the series).

Since Rabbi Rackman does raise the issue of Halakhah, it behooves us to examine carefully what he has to say about it, for one's concept of the Halakhah is the touchstone of one's Orthodoxy. Our author begins by describing the posi-

tion of the fundamentalist as one who maintains that "the law is handed down by a divine sovereign. . . . The judicial process consists in discovering what the law is. Analysis of the law must be engaged in, *but with no reference whatsoever to social or economic conditions.*" The extremist position implied in this last phrase is so easily proved untenable and it is so easy to demonstrate that it did not serve as the guiding principle of the preponderant majority of the masters of the Halakhah in all ages, that one wonders why our author found it necessary to set up this straw man merely to demolish him. Surely he cannot hope to move the fundamentalist himself, who is impervious to argument and citation. But in attempting to steer clear of this position, Rabbi Rackman almost founders on the rock of the Conservative Historical approach, only to rescue himself by veering to the right again and calling his corrected position the "teleological" one.

The waters between the Scylla of Fundamentalism and the Charybdis of the Historical School are treacherous indeed. They lead Rabbi Rackman, who seeks "radical creativity" in Jewish law today, to reject the idea of reconstituting the Sanhedrin, asserting that it is only the fundamentalist who makes creativity dependent upon a Sanhedrin. This is precisely the view of Conservative Judaism; but it certainly cannot be construed as the traditional halakhic approach. And what is all the more surprising is that Rabbi Rackman gives

up the idea of a Sanhedrin primarily because of the opposition of the fundamentalist whose whole approach to Halakhah he has just proved fallacious and untenable.

It is not only the need for "radical creativity," but the need for authoritative halakhic decision as well that makes the revival of the Sanhedrin an urgent necessity today. For example, we are faced with the question of the use of electricity on the Sabbath, concerning which — as Rabbi Rackman points out (pp. 6-7) — there is a wide divergence of opinion even among the fundamentalists. I dare say that this question will not receive any definitive and halakhically binding answer merely with the publication of a responsum by an individual scholar, no matter how renowned his reputation or brilliant his arguments. Such arguments necessarily depend upon an inference from legal precedent, an almost impossible task in the case of electricity, which is something *de novo* and for which a precedent has first to be established. A Sanhedrin, after due process of research and argumentation, can adopt and promulgate a decisive opinion which becomes binding upon all those who accept its authority. As for those who refuse to accept such authority, they may be regarded as were the Sadducees in their day, who based their refusal to accept the decisions of the Sanhedrin on what they consider-

ed the solid ground of biblical injunction.

Only a Sanhedrin that functions as it did in the days of the Sadducees, i.e., a duly constituted body of *talmidei chakhamim* prepared to assume the prerogatives of scriptural interpretation and the making or rescinding of *takkanot* and *gezerot* within the framework of traditional halakhic procedures, can make the bold decisions involved in radical creativity. Such a Sanhedrin will be able to revoke — on the basis of the modern rapidity of communication as compared with the messengers on horseback of old — the Talmudic *gezerah* to add for Diaspora Jews an extra day to each of our Festivals,* a problem which Rabbi Rackman takes no cognizance of, though it is an acute one for every observant Jew outside of Israel. Using its power of interpretation, a Sanhedrin may revise a previously accepted deduction (Rambam, *Hilkhot Mamrim*, 2,1) and thus endow women with a biblically sanctioned right to testify (cf. *Shevuot* 30a, *Baba Kama* 15a, *Tosafot Chagigah* 16b, s. v. *daber*) and to sit in the *sukkah*. Rabbi Rackman is at a loss to find an historical reason why women need not sit in the *sukkah* but are required to eat *matzot*. Might I suggest that the former, done outside of the confines of the home, was considered unseemly for a woman — "the honor of a princess is within" — whereas the latter, performed with-

* The author's view is apparently contrary to the talmudic position on *minhag avoteikhem* (*Beitzeh* 4b). Cf. also *Hilkhot Kiddush ha-Chodesh* (5:5).—Ed.

The Sabbath of the Halakhah and Twentieth Century Civilization

in the home, was considered obligatory.

The question of the procedure required by the Halakhah for the re-establishment of the Sanhedrin has already been dealt with by both earlier and later authorities, by Maimonides in *Hilkhot Sanhedrin* (4:11), and by scholars in sixteenth century Palestine, when an actual attempt was made to revive the ancient *Semikhah*. Perhaps we are faced here with a dilemma similar to the one our Sages saw in the manufacture of the first pair of tongs (*Perkei Avot* 5:9), and we require for such a task scholars who already possess the "creative radicalism" which is a hallmark of a member of the Sanhedrin.

This ignoring of the Sanhedrin has led our author to an indiscriminate use of the term "sages," which he utilizes with reference not only to the Tannaim, the true "Masters of the *Masorah*," but to latter-day scholars as well. On page 41 he says that "our sages prepared a manual" for the night of *Shavuot*. Who were these sages, and since when does a creation of a latter-day Kabbalist become a norm of Judaism? Similarly, on page 45 he attributes to "our sages" the holiday of *Simchat Torah*, which first arose in medieval times, (cf. Shelomoh Yoseph Zevin, *Moadim be-Halakhah*, pp. 135 ff.). Though we may reject the historical approach we cannot abandon history. Look how careful Maimonides was in his *Mishneh Torah* to distinguish even between clear scriptural legislation and legislation based upon *divrei soferim*, rabbinic inferences; (cf.

Rabbi Meir Simchah Kagan, *Or Sameach* to *Hilkhot Mamrim*, 2:1).

I agree that much can be done to revise the Halakhah, especially with regard to the Sabbath, even before a Sanhedrin begins to function, provided the rabbis today would follow the bold example of many post-talmudic authorities. I take an illustration at random. Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits (*Jewish Medical Ethics*, page 74 ff.) catalogues all the details of the rabbinic prohibition against the use of medicines on the Sabbath, many of them meaningless today. Why could he not have suggested that the *gezerah* against medicines no longer applies since the average person no longer compounds his own spices? Did not latter-day authorities (commentaries to *Orach Chaim*, sec. 275) rule that the tannaitic *gezerah* against reading on Friday night by the light of a lamp does not apply to a wax taper? Furthermore, in our strictures against the fundamentalist it must be borne in mind that if he refuses to accept a change in the law it is not always because — as Rabbi Rackman claims — he ignores the social facts, but that these facts are different for him and for the modernist. The Jew of Meah Shearim does not live in the same social milieu as does the Jew of Far Rockaway. Take the matter of the use of soap or the brushing of one's teeth on the Sabbath. Arguments of equal force can be advanced either for or against these hygienic amenities (cf. *Noam*, vol. 3, p. 48 ff.) and one's decision will

no doubt be influenced by one's social environment.

Let us come to the main burden of our author's thesis: namely, that the "teleological" approach is the guide and answer to our vexing problems. The essential purpose of this approach is to reconcile the necessarily objective and unchanging character of a law divinely revealed with the subjective and flexible pronouncements of the masters of the Halakhah. Rabbi Soloveitchik, author of this approach and quoted as such by Rabbi Rackman, has a sort of Platonic conception of the Halakhah. Every halakhic statement reflects some divine universal or immutable idea, a subject of revelation. But these ideas are somehow refracted in the mind of the individual scholar and thus reflect also the personality (sic) of the scholar. Thus the task of the scholar is "to assimilate a transcendental content disclosed to him through an apocalyptic revelation and fashion it to his peculiar needs" (page 15).

The problems which this approach raises are quite serious. Are we to understand that every rabbinic statement is a reflection of an apocalyptic revelation? Shall we interpret literally the oft-quoted statement that "everything which a learned disciple is destined to innovate was already revealed at Sinai"? And how does one dissect a rabbinic statement in order to determine which part of it is divine and infallible and which part human and fallible? In one instance Rabbi Rackman seems ready to

accept rabbinic innovations as subjects of divine revelation and expressions of God's will. He cites the benediction over the Chanukah candles as proof of continuing revelation, since we say, "O Lord . . . Who has commanded us, etc." The rabbis of the Talmud did not jump to such conclusions. They based the law of Chanukkah upon the general powers granted religious authority to decree new legislation (*Shabbat* 23a). From more than one statement in the Talmud we gain the impression that the divine character of the Halakhah is not in its revelatory nature, but in the divine sanction given to the human pronouncements of the ordained masters of Jewish law. Once God handed over the Torah to his children, He surrendered the right to make any decisions from on high and vested in them the authority to expound and apply the written word (cf. *Baba Metzia* 59b and 86a). That is why "the scholar is superior to the prophet." The only limitation placed upon the scholar was to find justification for his opinion or innovation in Scripture (cf. *Megilah* 3a). Thus, though Rabbi Rackman may be right in saying that "the Halakhah is more than texts," the text was and is of prime importance.

The "teleological" approach leads us to another dilemma. Rabbi Rackman argues that the ends or goals of halakhic legislation are the revealed and expressed will of God, but they are not revealed directly and overtly. Only an examination of the Halakhah will

The Sabbath of the Halakhah and Twentieth Century Civilization

disclose what has been revealed, and it is the task of the scholar to probe and probe in order to discover these ends. Then, having discovered these ends from the existing Halakhah, we can proceed to revise the Halakhah upon the basis of our discovery. A vicious circle, indeed! How hazardous an undertaking this is we shall soon see, as we examine how our author has discovered the supposedly revealed ends of Sabbath observance.

The Pentateuch itself — and I am sure that Rabbi Rackman will agree that the content of the Pentateuch was divinely revealed — states quite clearly that the purposes of Sabbath observance are two: one, to know that God created the world, and two, to provide for a day of rest. The first of these clearly revealed ends Rabbi Rackman ignores; the second he rules as of little consequence. But on the basis of his studies of the Halakhah, he has discovered — I suppose through some apocalyptic revelation — that the purpose of Sabbath observance is to curb man's greed and envy. When somebody claims that he has received an apocalyptic revelation, it is difficult to argue with him. He was privy to it, we were not. But if this discovery is based upon an examination of the Halakhah, then we can take issue with him.

From the command to "remember the Sabbath day" our Sages derived the duty to recite the Kiddush on Friday night. By doing so we are testifying to the fact that God created the world. That

is why when we recite "*Vayekhulu*" we are obliged to stand, in the manner that witnesses before a court of law are obliged to stand, (*Tur, Orach Chayim*, sec. 269). A man who fails to observe the Sabbath was ipso facto regarded by our Sages as denying Creation, and therefore was branded an idolator (*Chullin* 5a and Rashi ad. loc.) Had Rabbi Rackman given due recognition to this end, he would have been able to render a great service — which some recent authorities have already done — to so many of our co-religionists who do not observe the Sabbath but nevertheless recite the Kiddush on Friday night and thus testify to their faith in Creation. He could have removed from them the stigma of "*keakum lekhol devorov*."

It is amazing how Rabbi Rackman denigrates the whole idea of Sabbath rest because he has accepted the vulgar concept of rest and has forgotten that the rest which Shabbos gives us is, as we say in our prayers, "a perfect rest that Thou desirest." One of the major weapons in our arsenal on behalf of halakhic Judaism is the kind of rest which only a traditionally-observed Sabbath can bring to a tense, fear-ridden society. How true today are the words of our Sages (quoted in Rashi to Genesis 2:2), "The world after creation was lacking nothing but rest. Came the Sabbath, came the rest." Our technological society lacks nothing, we have all the gadgets we need. But one thing is missing; true peace of

mind, a haven from the constant rush and scurrying about which is the scourge of modern society. Speeding on crowded thruways to reach the golf course will not give the desired physical or mental rest. Jumping up at the jangling of the telephone or going down to the office to see the mail will not bring surcease from business worries. Going shopping for the latest bargains will not give the housewife the relief, physical and mental, which only the traditional Sabbath brings to the *Shomeret Shabbat*. That the Sabbath is a day of rest and relaxation, Rabbi Rackman, is one of the choicest pearls of Jewish life, and is the divinely revealed purpose of Sabbath observance. And the only setting in which this pearl can shine is the one of *Hilkhhot Shabbat*.

Does a study of the Halakhah reveal, as Rabbi Rackman claims, that the crucial and Halakhah-determining goal of Sabbath observance is the curbing of greed through a denial to man of the right to exploit Nature on the Sabbath? It might be significant that the very first Halakhah of the Sabbath (Mishnah, *Shabbat* 1:1) prohibits one to perform an act of almsgiving, certainly no greedy performance, because it involves the doing of a *Melakhah*. And it is a straining of logic to assert that "any activity connected with the construction of the Temple . . . is any taking from nature, or any creation from, or improvement upon, matter." Setting a brick, which was manufactured before

the Sabbath, in a building under construction, constitutes a violation of the Sabbath, even though there was no creation from or improvement upon matter. On the other hand, shelling nuts is an improvement upon nature, but is permitted on the Sabbath if done for immediate consumption. If Rabbi Rackman were to reexamine the thirty-nine categories of work as listed in the Mishnah, he would find that what were prohibited were primarily agricultural and industrial processes. And he will find no answer to the problems of a *kibbutz* in Israel if he will remain a Shammaite, as when he says that "millstones were to come to a halt" (cf. *Shabbat* 18a). If not for the opinion of the Hillelites that automatic procedures begun before the Sabbath may continue to operate and exploit nature on the Sabbath it would be impossible to adapt modern techniques to Sabbath observance.

Rabbi Rackman has a curiously ambivalent attitude towards the rabbinic restrictions on the Sabbath. In the past they were useful, he says, for "they made for greater preoccupation with Sabbath goals." But at present, "excessive preoccupation with Sabbath prohibitions most often excludes adequate consideration of the positive values to be achieved." Our author would have us all be philosophers and "dedicate our conversation (at the Sabbath table) to the ends of life or the spiritual quest of man." I wonder how much philosophical discourse contributed to the unique beauty and serenity of the Jewish

The Sabbath of the Halakhah and Twentieth Century Civilization

Sabbath as described in the poetry of Heine or the paintings of Chagall. The sanctity of the Sabbath will be preserved, as will many other values of halakhic Judaism, only if the inculcation of respect for rabbinic law will be matched by its continued vitality and sensitivity to the needs of our time. This is a task, not for philosophers, but for halakhic scholars who are equally at home within the "four ells of the Halakhah" and amidst the surging tempo of modern life.

Rabbi Rackman's treatment of the Festivals follows the general approach he had adopted with regard to the Sabbath, though here he has permitted his homiletical ingenuity freer play. He has crossed over the imaginary line between Aggadah and Halakhah, and thus has made for more interesting and perhaps more persuasive reading. His sermonic hyperbole, however, has led him to a number of inaccurate statements. In discussing, for example, the fixing of the lunar calendar, he says that "the law permitted the courts to be indifferent to the facts of nature." The fact of the matter is, as can be seen from the discussion in *Sanhedrin* (11a, b) it was precisely the facts of nature which had to be taken into account when fixing the calendar since the Pilgrimage Festivals had to coincide with the natural seasons. Again Rabbi Rackman permits himself to derogue

the purpose of the law as revealed specifically in the Torah and place in the forefront of our thinking the purposes discovered by Aggadic homily. "The festival of Tabernacles has the least historical significance," he says, "*and sometimes (sic) it was even deemed* the symbol of Israel's earliest history." Thus to overshadow the clearly stated divine purpose of the *mitzvah of sukkah* (Leviticus 23:43) is beyond the limits of homiletic license.

I do not know why the *Yomim Noraim* were excluded from this survey. Undoubtedly, because of their importance they deserve special treatment, but there is no indication in the projected series of studies that a brochure on the High Holydays will be published. If such a study is made, it is our hope that it will be a more practical and seasoned work than the one under review. One even hopes that this work will be rewritten, not only to correct some of the inaccuracies and unfelicitious phrases, but to make our people better realize that in the traditional Sabbath we have a most precious gift from God. Scripture says, "See that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath" and our Sages add, "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, 'I have a precious gift in my treasure house called Shabbos, and I want to give it to Israel. Go and make it known unto them.'"

A REPLY

Rabbi Rackman replies:

Needless to say, as the author of the essay discussed by Rabbi Lewittes I would have preferred a favorable review. However, as an associate editor of *TRADITION*, I take justifiable pride in the fact that *TRADITION* provides a forum for those who adversely review books by even the editors themselves. *TRADITION* does not engage in that form of literary dishonesty — so prevalent in our age — of finding reviewers who will praise that which it wants praised. Yet, in all fairness to myself I must reply not to Rabbi Lewittes' general appraisal of my essay, which he has every right to deprecate, but to his misunderstanding of it.

The Sabbath is undoubtedly too broad and too significant a theme for one man and one essay. However, one third of Rabbi Lewittes' review is devoted to my position with regard to a future Sanhedrin. Why? No place in the essay, or elsewhere, have I revealed it. What I did say in my essay is that the fundamentalists oppose the convocation of a Sanhedrin. And did I identify myself with them? The fundamentalist does make creativity dependent *exclusively* upon a Sanhedrin which he does not want to help convene, while many non-fundamentalists like myself may also look to a Sanhedrin for creativity and legislation. However, until this comes to pass, is creativity to be put on ice? The funda-

mentalist says yes; I say no. Where does Rabbi Lewittes stand?

Indeed, it appears that, like the fundamentalists, he wants to await the convocation of a Sanhedrin for any and all authoritative halakhic decisions, though he calls their position that of a "straw man." Perhaps because he thus waits he is unable to "follow the bold example of many post-talmudic authorities" and permit the use of drugs on the Sabbath, as I have. I may be no sage in the limited sense that Rabbi Lewittes would have me use the term or in any other sense. Yet he, too, I am sure like most of us, is more constrained in halakhic decisions by *Acharonim* — latter-day authorities — than by their more liberal predecessors, the *Rishonim*. One wonders, therefore, why he frowns upon my usage of the term "sage" for all scholars whose views play a part in halakhic development.

Furthermore, where in my essay did I reveal my unawareness of the differences between social facts in different ages and places that Rabbi Lewittes should deem me oblivious of the contrast between a Jew of Meah Shearim and a Jew of Far Rockaway? Indeed, my essay pleads for the recognition of all social facts and also cites one difference between contemporaries — the kings of Judah and kings of Israel.

Rabbi Lewittes wrote that I am at a loss to find a *historical* reason why women need not sit in the *sukkah* but are required to eat

The Sabbath of the Halakhah and Twentieth Century Civilization

matzah. He gives a reason but not a historical one. I, too, might have undertaken to rationalize the difference, but my essay was not directed to that purpose. I simply said that the historical school could not furnish the answer. And he apparently agrees.

Essentially Rabbi Lewittes' misunderstanding of the teleological approach in my essay is that he equates it with *Nevuah* — revelation and prophecy. It is difficult to reply to this virtually hysterical misinterpretation. If teleology and revelation are the same, what is the meaning of "teleology of revealed texts" with which my essay is preponderantly concerned? Is it "revelation of revelation"? If so, Rabbi Lewittes should have called my reasoning tautological and rested his case. The fact is that I did not resort to any "apocalyptic revelation" that was vouchsafed unto me. Yet, Rabbi Lewittes should not make light of either religious commitment or mystical illumination in halakhic decision. Otherwise, the religious loyalty of a halakhic expert would be irrelevant to the validity of his conclusions. Would any Orthodox rabbi maintain this? True, texts play a very decisive role but so does their interpretation and their teleology as understood by saints — not only sages.

Moreover, I wonder why Rabbi Lewittes ignored my references to the Sabbath as a reminder of God the Creator (on page 21) and to Sabbath rest and relaxation (on page 16). But the objective of my essay was to meet the challenge

of moderns who say that they can rest and be aware of God in less restrictive ways than the Halakhah ordains. Let Rabbi Lewittes write a lengthy essay expounding what is universally accepted but I wrote with an objective clearly and unequivocally stated. The duty of a reviewer is to examine what was done. He can question the importance of the author's objective. He can also question the adequacy of its fulfillment. But because an author does not expand on what most Jews take for granted is no justification for a reviewer to assume that the writer did not regard the assumption as significant when he in fact stated them, but undertook to go beyond them.

Rabbi Lewittes would have had me demonstrate how desperately modern man requires the Sabbath. I share his views. I even used his phrase "peace of mind" (on page 19). Indeed, my entire essay addresses itself to the situation of modern man in a highly technological society. Our principal difference is that he regards speeding to the golf course as doing violence to the purpose of the Sabbath and I am not so enamored of the game itself for spiritual sustenance. I leave it to the reader of the essay to judge whether I made my point. Furthermore, I leave it to the reader to decide whether constructing a building is not creating from matter and whether the question of food preparation was not adequately discussed (on page 22).

What does concern me, however, is Rabbi Lewittes' preoccupation with what is known to the least

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

tutored of Jews and his objection to my glossing over the obvious. Of course, the calendar was based on nature. But what is not so well known — and worthy of comment by one writing for adults rather than children — is the manner in which the Law permitted the courts to be indifferent to nature. And Rabbi Lewittes knows this for he has not yet observed a Day of Atonement on a Friday or a Sunday — not because nature would not have it so but because the rabbis would not have it. And what could have made him think

that I ignored the historical aspect of the festival of Tabernacles when (on page 45) I wrote of the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*:

“The performance of the *mitzvah* was incomplete without awareness of its association with the exodus from Egypt.”

Therefore, my sentence, quoted by Rabbi Lewittes, can only refer to the earlier history of our people — post-Mosaic but early.

But then reviewers, alas, should not be expected to remember the text as well as the author.