

COMMUNICATIONS

Recent disclaimers of anti-Semitism on the part of Russian authorities lend added contemporary relevance to a heretofore unpublished letter by T.S. Eliot, one of the foremost literary figures of our time. Dr. William Kolodney, to whom the letter is addressed, is the Educational Director of the 92nd Street Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association.

INTRODUCTION

1953 was the year of the famous Slansky trial in Russia. At that time I wrote prominent poets who had read at the 'Y' Poetry Center to give me their reaction. It was planned to have the Poetry Center publish a pamphlet containing these statements in response to my letter but for various reasons, the pamphlet was not published. T.S. Eliot sent the following reply.

—*William Kolodney*

17 February 1953

Dear Dr. Kolodney,

As one of the poets who have enjoyed the hospitality of the Poetry Center, I cannot fail to respond to your request of the 12th instant. But a mere expression of agreement with "a public stand against the present anti-semitic policy of the Soviet Government" is not enough — for what decent individual could decline to support such a protest? One ought, I think, to say a little more than that.

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The only striking difference between the present anti-Semitism in Russia, and the anti-Semitism of Hitler's Germany, seems to me this: that the Russians have learned from the mistakes of the Germans, and are much shrewder propagandists. The Nazis persecuted Jews for being Jews, and thereby incurred at once the antipathy of all civilized people. The Russians refrain from any overt doctrine of racial superiority, which would too flatly contradict their supposed principles, and interfere with their foreign policy. Just as they have condemned and destroyed their more important Christian victims, not on the ground of their being Christians, but always on some pretext of treason or civil crime, so the Jews who are condemned to death — or worse — are condemned on some other ground, than that of being Jews. But it comes to the same thing in the end.

In all anti-Semitic movements there is a similar pattern of *policy* and *hysteria*. The hysteria of the crowd is aroused by deliberate calculations. But there is an element of hysteria in the calculation itself. True anti-Semitism — as distinguished from anti-Semitism in Arab countries, which has much more of the nature of ordinary racial, nationalistic and religious conflict — is a movement *within* a country, of a government against Jews who are its own citizens. It is a symptom of profound difficulty, disorder, and maladjustment in the economy and in the spiritual life of that nation; and is exploited by rulers as a desperate remedy which only aggravates, in the end, the malady of which it is a symptom. This reflection provides a more rational ground for the belief which I hold anyway, that any government which persecutes and stigmatizes any body of its own nationals — and most notably the Jews — will in the end have to pay the full penalty for so doing; and the unfortunate people whom it rules will have to make expiation for having such a government.

Yours sincerely,

T.S. Eliot

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AN AUTHOR RESPONDS

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

I appreciate the extensive review which Rabbi Spero wrote of my book, *Ever Since Sinai*, and I do not take it amiss that he criticized it for not coming to the conclusions of Orthodox Judaism. That was to be expected. (Elsewhere the book has been criticized for not being "Reform" enough.) But there is one sentence in Rabbi Spero's review which tends to distort my religious position, and I trust that you will find it possible to publish a correction.

Rabbi Spero writes, on page 103, "In a more general vein, Dr. Petuchowski himself identified as his pet peeve against the orthodox view on Revelation the fact that 'it posited the supernatural. It affirmed the miraculous.'" As his source, Rabbi Spero quotes an article of mine which appeared in the *Journal of Religion*, January 1961.

I regret to say that Rabbi Spero "quoted out of context." The words do indeed occur in my article. They form the transition from my description of the medieval views on Revelation to my outlining of the approach taken by 19th-century thinkers. In other words, the sentences quoted by Rabbi Spero attempt to sum up what it was in the medieval heritage against which the 19th-century thinkers reacted. But this summary cannot legitimately be construed as an identification of my own "pet peeve." It need no more reflect my own theological position than the para-

graphs which precede and follow it, attempting to outline the medieval and the 19th-century positions respectively.

As a matter of fact, the whole tenor of the end of my article in the *Journal of Religion* can leave the unprejudiced reader in no doubt that I personally reject the solutions offered by the 19th-century thinkers. From this it does not necessarily follow that I affirm the position against which the 19th century reacted. But, by the same token, it also does not follow that I accept the negation of that position.

Perhaps, if Rabbi Spero had been less concerned with the fact of my being a Reform Rabbi, and more with the fact that, like him, I affirm that "a viable Judaism requires that after the Revelation, the person be impelled to normative conduct," (cf. *Ever Since Sinai*, pp. 73 ff.) his courteous treatment of my book might have proven an even more suitable basis for dialogue.

(Rabbi) JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI
Cincinnati, Ohio

RABBI SPERO REPLIES:

While Dr. Petuchowski makes it quite clear indeed that he *rejects* the *solution* offered by the 19th-century thinkers, it appears to me that the entire tenor of his article tends to indicate that he, as all "moderns," *accepts* the 19th-century thinker's *criticism* of the medieval views, which is the only point in question. But what I find most curious is that Dr. Petuchowski questions the logical validity

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of my inference rather than its truth! Nowhere in his letter does he deny that "the supernatural and the miraculous" are unacceptable to him. He merely challenges my right to infer it!

The truth of the matter is that I am tremendously concerned with Dr. Petuchowski's affirmation of the proposition that, "a viable Judaism requires a Revelation after which the person be impelled to normative conduct." And it is precisely for this reason (and this reason only) that I cannot comprehend why he didn't come to the conclusion of Orthodox Judaism! For, given the requirement (on which we agree) I believe Dr. Petuchowski has failed to show that there is any alternative.

Of course I may be wrong that the "miraculous and the supernatural" are "peeves" of Dr. Petuchowski. But in that case I would like to invite him to tell us what it is indeed in the Orthodox view of Revelation (that he has not already covertly accepted in *Ever Since Sinai*), that he finds unacceptable.

(Rabbi) SHUBERT SPERO

HALAKHIC TELEOLOGY

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

By chance, a copy of your esteemed journal came to my notice this week, the specific issue being Vol. 3, No. 2, of Spring 1961. I am indeed sorry that I did not previously know of the existence of *TRADITION*, which appears to me a most valuable production, and I would be happy to receive

copies; as well as back copies, if possible.

In the issue before me, there is an article by Rabbi Rackman entitled "The Dialectic of Halakhah" which I found of interest, in that it presents a consistent pattern of logical development of reasoning, insofar as it reflects Rabbi Rackman's evaluation of halakhic concepts.

One appreciates the progressive attitude taken by the author vis-à-vis the developmental exposition of the Law. Yet at the same time one has a feeling that he rationalizes halakhic regulations onto the level of pure ethical aesthetics, whereas indeed the motivations for various laws are to be sought in other aspects of human and sociological experience.

In other words, when it comes to a question of *Darshinan Ta'ma Dikra*, his otherwise keen analysis tends to become centered on one aspect only of halakhic teleology.

The truths of Halakhah, to be fully appreciated and to be capable of realistic development and projection into each age, must be related to deeper and wider fields of contemporary human experience than religio-ethics alone. For only thus will religio-ethics be able to become the ultimate control of Man in Society. It was for this reason that the Vilna Gaon insisted that a serious study of many sciences was necessary for deriving the fullest evaluation of Torah and Torah motivations.

(Rabbi) LIONEL SINGER
Sydney, Australia

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AN AUTHOR'S REJOINDER

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

[In his review on *Maimonides, on Sexual Intercourse*] Mr. Dienstag [TRADITION, Spring 1962] states that the work was written at the request of Sultan Al-Muzaffer. This is very misleading since we really do not know for whom it was written; the spurious work lists this Sultan as the one it was written for. Here it is noteworthy to mention that the reviewer does not even state that two works were translated — (1) the work by Maimonides — (2) a spurious work attributed to Maimonides. That the second work is spurious has been clearly shown by the present writer. It is also noteworthy that this proof of the spuriousness of the second work is appearing for the first time in print. From the time of Steinschneider till the present work, no one has questioned the authenticity of this spurious work, yet this very important piece of information was not even mentioned by the reviewer! The reviewer states further that the book was published with a German translation followed by a commentary and Hebrew translation . . . Kroner published two separate works, the Hebrew first, the Arabic second.

Next, the reviewer makes the following . . . statement — “The work before us contains an English translation from the German of Kroner,” though the claim on the title page is that it was “translated from the Arabic.” This statement is brazenly false to any one who has read Kroner and seen the

book. First of all, it can be clearly seen from the translation and notes, that the translation depended very strongly on the Hebrew versions. How then could this work contain a translation of the German of Kroner? What was done (as was clearly stated in the preface) was to use Kroner's version as a basis. The Arabic was also checked against Kroner's version, and where it was felt Kroner was wrong, his version was not used. It is true that the translation was not done directly from the Arabic *per se* as stated previously, (where the version was compared against the Arabic original), however, it was translated from the Arabic.

The next statement of Mr. Dienstag is so illogical that it is difficult to understand. He states that he can't understand the purpose of the work since no attempt was made to set up a scholarly apparatus. According to the reviewer, if no scholarly apparatus is set up, there is no purpose in the work. Horrors! He then asks if this work is for the general reader, why was it necessary to interpolate the text with a “commentary” in which the author displays overabundant erudition in aphrodisiac literature. The reviewer now makes an assumption that the work is for the general reader on the most illogical grounds . . . In the next sentence, the reviewer states that the title page carries the presumptuous title Medical Historical Studies. Why this is presumptuous is not clearly stated by the reviewer. The reviewer then infers that the work is not written in a coherent man-

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ner and gives an example. Let the reader judge on this statement by either reading the book or even just the example given by the reviewer.

In the next paragraph, the reviewer steps completely out of the bounds of propriety. He states that in order to make the volume more bulky, an appendix entitled Source Material was added. Where and on what grounds does a reviewer have the audacity to make such a statement.

The reviewer then states that the work was poorly edited and that the bibliography was sloppily arranged but gives no facts or even reasons to back these statements up.

A review of this work appeared in the May 1961 issue of *Korot* (Israeli Journal of the History of Medicine) by Dr. Muntner, and in the August issue of the New York State Journal of Medicine. Both reviews were done by physicians. Dr. Muntner of course is known as one of the greatest scholars on Maimonides' medical works. The interested reader is referred to these reviews for comparison with Mr. Dienstag's review.

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MR. DIENSTAG REPLIES:

In rereading my review in the light of Mr. Gorlin's vehement tone, I am at loss to know in what way I have judged his work unfairly. Mr. Gorlin takes me to

task for stating that the work was written at the request of Sultan al-Muzaffer. My information is based upon the elaborate work of the late historian of Maimonidean medicine, Max Meyerhof, (*The Medical work of Maimonides, Essays on Maimonides*, edited by Salo W. Baron, New York; Columbia University Press, 1941, p. 278). So far, no one has disproved this fact. But does it really matter for whom this work was written? He was the physician of a Moslem court and harem and was duty-bound to reply to questions of this nature regardless of his personal contempt for the subject. Surely, Maimonides did not take time out to write such a work for his own co-religionists.

This is not the place to go into a study of Maimonides' metaphysics of marriage, but it is well known that he considered the sense of touch degrading. And it is on this point that he was severely criticized by the author of *Iggeret ha-Kodesh* attributed to Moses Nachmanides. For whatever he had to teach his co-religionists about the medical aspect of the subject he managed to cover the theme in just one paragraph of his Code (*H. Deot*, 4:19).

I cannot touch upon the spuriousness of the second work attributed to Maimonides until I can avail myself of the critical edition planned by Dr. S. Muntner. Is it a crime on the part of the reviewer to refrain from making remarks about which he feels he desires more information from an authority in the field?

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Mr. Gorlin complains about my remarks that the work contains an English translation from the German of Kroner, though the claim on the title page is that it was "translated from the Arabic." In what way is my "statement brazenly false?" Mr. Gorlin, in his preface, states that his "thanks are due to Ismar Lipshutz who translated both texts from the German of Kroner." Mr. Gorlin continues in the next sentence: "My translation is in part based on his version." I don't understand Mr. Gorlin's quibbling. Did he translate the work from the Arabic or did he translate from Mr. Lipshutz's English translation from the German of Kroner?

Mr. Gorlin, in his reply, now claims that the work is not for the general reader. May I then deduce that it was intended for the scholar? If that is so, my criticism is justified when I stated in my review that I am at a loss to understand the purpose of this publication, in which the editor admits that "no attempt has been made to set up scholarly apparatus of various versions, translations, etc."

My complaint is not against Mr. Gorlin's ignorance of the German or Arabic languages. If it is not intended for scholars, it is pardonable. Our conclusion, then, is justified, that the work is intended for the general reader. If that is so, I must emphatically repeat my question: Why was it necessary to interpolate the text with a "commentary" in which the editor displays over-abundant erudition in aphrodisiac literature?

The source material appended to the body of the translation contains about twenty-six pages full of quotations from aphrodisiac literature intended for the above mentioned reader.

Does Mr. Gorlin expect us to take him seriously or does he expect us to believe that he takes himself seriously? I am fully aware that the truth is painful. Is it for this reason that he accuses me of having the audacity to make the above statements?

Mr. Gorlin complains about my criticism that the work is not written in a coherent manner. In my review I quoted the following example: He (Maimonides) fell ill in 1200 and probably was unable to appear at the court until his death in 1204 (pp. 11-12). Let the reader judge whether this is correct usage or not.

The bibliographical entries are very confusing; for in most cases the given names of the authors are omitted which would make it difficult for the student not acquainted with the material to consult these books in a catalogue. The author lists encyclopedias without citing the titles of the articles he intends the reader to consult. In most cases, pages of the works referred to are not listed.

Mr. Gorlin refers the readers to reviews of his book in other journals. I have examined those journals and have found that the authors of those brief notices (one of them consists of just one single paragraph) either were not interested in going into an analytical discussion of the book or were

hesitant to involve a journal in a polemic. So they dispensed with it by giving brief non-committal notices which are not considered full length reviews. I sincerely believe that Mr. Gorlin should feel grateful for the attention TRADITION has given to his book.

JEWISHNESS OF SOCIAL WORK

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

We can be grateful that [Rabbi Abraham] Amsel has made a contribution [TRADITION, Fall 1962] to the sparse literature on Jewish social work. How good it would have been if he had used his Torah scholarship and his time to demonstrate how specific *Halakhot* and the "philosophy of purpose" of Torah-Judaism could enrich social work practice in Jewish communal services. Amsel moves in this direction when he stresses *Tzedakah* as "duty," when he abhors the evils of waiting lists or of bureaucratic behavior, and when he asks us, by implication, to reassess the values of our society. He has, perhaps, when he moves from this area, acted in the spirit of *Chazal* of whom Chajes has written in his *Student's Guide Through the Talmud* (page 158): "It was, simply, the method of the Rabbis to exaggerate the seriousness of sins so as to lead man to be on his guard against falling into them . . . Again in their exaggerated praise of those who practice kindness (in order to achieve the) awakening of the people and stimulating them to keep to the straight path."

It is unfortunate that Amsel presents the quote about Nachum Ish Gamzu without drawing the correct moral lesson . . . Carrying out a duty devoid of compassion . . . and to relish one's own giving . . . was the sin . . . Students [of social work] must learn to focus not upon the giver's but the recipient's need . . . One of the primary factors [responsible for this change of focus] is our school's emphasis upon development of self-awareness and professional self-discipline . . . This has made social workers . . . ever concerned about . . . *Tzedakah Lishmah*. Read our literature and see what social workers themselves say about "duty," about "waiting lists" and all the inadequacies we must struggle with. This, unfortunately, Amsel overlooks in his urgency to develop *pilpul* . . .

He errs when he seeks in our code of ethics a statement on goals of public policy. A code of ethics is designed to protect the vulnerable client from the professional into whose hands he places himself; the code does not purport to express the goals and objectives of the profession. The need of the client is [the] uppermost . . . concern [of] any properly educated social worker . . . it is the client's need which must be met skillfully and helpfully.

I think Amsel knows this, but he must de-emphasize this in order to strengthen his weak argument against social agencies . . . It is through the social agency that the social worker provides his services. We have found that the help

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comes from the skill of the social worker as he uses himself in relationship to another, and from the social worker's ability to represent the agency so that the client must meet the reality of the agency as a way of mobilizing himself to ask for and to receive the help which the agency offers as a community sponsored institution . . . One may weep with Amsel at "red tape," but rules have positive effects if they are recognized as guides for human relations. Some procedures mean a better or *caring* service; some procedures help produce other forms of help; some procedures assure equalization of services to prevent undue influence; and they also help keep an agency and its staff accountable for its services.

It is well known that rules and regulations can be experienced as constricting by the "giving" social worker and by many clients who seek help on their own terms (not on their needs!). As a Torah Jew, I also know the creativity that form can release . . . Think of the havoc if each social worker were not accountable; if each of us would return to the days of the Judges when each man did what was right in his own eyes! By virtue of being a professional, the social worker exercises his professional right and responsibility to make professional judgments, but these must be made within the framework of the profession and the social agency.

The social worker by education and by commitment is responsible for the general welfare, and

through his professional organizations and as a citizen, he should seek every opportunity to express his duty! And he does! It is deep respect that the social worker expresses in his work for the *Tzelem Elokim*, for the individual . . .

More should be said in order to clarify the social work profession, and even more needs to be said about what makes *Jewish* social work. *Imitatio Dei* ("Thou Shalt Cleave . . .") is a principle that needs expression and can come best from Jewish young men and women who not only relate themselves to God and the Torah, but also who can fulfill their sense of duty with respect for the receiver

In this spirit we offer our help. We look forward to those men and women of our school who are rooted in Torah, to "turn it and turn it" until the profession of social work can be practiced in the spirit of Torah . . . Our rich tradition, and our experience as a people, have given us Jewish guidelines which, we believe, can improve practice. I hope Amsel and others like him who are integrating Torah and social work practice, will share their knowledge and experience. This will not, however, take us very far if it is given in negative terms, if it lacks a framework and if it arises merely in opposition.

Problems in practice requiring positive direction are many: adoption, foster home placements (Rabbi M. Spiegelman in Cleveland prepared an interesting halakhic discussion for the Jewish Family Serv-

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ice there), Sabbath programming, Kashrut, Camping (see Boy Scout manual for camping on Shabbat), settlement and residence laws, relative responsibility laws, higher grants of relief for indigent families and the Welfare State, to name a few. Answers exist in *The Orakh Chayyim*; let's put them out for examination and use.

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Assistant Professor
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TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

I read with great interest the article by Rabbi Abraham Amsel on "The Case for Distinctively Jewish Social Work" in the Fall 1962 issue of your excellent magazine. My comments deal not with the contents of the article, but rather with the omissions of same. As a matter of fact, . . . we are reprinting this article in the News Service of the Commission on Synagogue Relations of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York . . .

In 1952, Federation founded the Department on Religious Affairs, which I have headed since its inception. The Department works primarily through the Commission on Synagogue Relations, which is a body consisting of rabbis, synagogue leaders, and social workers. The objective of the Commission is to bring about a better understanding between the synagogue and our health and welfare institutions . . .

I feel that our greatest contribution has been in the area of the

relationship of the rabbi to the Jewish social worker. The question of Jewish content is uppermost in our minds, and has taken up a great deal of our time through the years . . .

As part of this program, we have been successful in getting the cooperation of our agencies in a novel way. Our agencies have assigned a specific person on their staffs to whom the rabbis can turn with any specific problem relating to their congregants . . .

Rabbi Amsel did mention the Jewish Orientation and Training Seminars conducted by the Jewish Education Committee of New York in cooperation with Federation. These seminars have made an important contribution to the field. While they are not a substitute for a Jewish school of social work, they have done a great deal to help individual social workers better to understand Jewish history, tradition and customs . . .

Perhaps we have only scratched the surface. But in my mind, our greatest contribution thus far has been the creation of a platform where rabbis, case workers, and group workers meet frequently and learn to understand and respect each other's professions. Just as social workers have much to learn from the rabbi, there is much the rabbi can learn from social workers.

(Rabbi) ISAAC N. TRAININ
Executive Director
Commission on
Synagogue Relations
Federation of Jewish
Philanthropies of N. Y.

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RABBI AMSEL REPLIES:

The common denominator of nearly all of the critics seems to revolve around the claim that I am guilty of omissions and incompleteness. Perhaps to everyone's surprise I plead, "guilty as charged." However, I cannot see how in dealing with a vast subject such as this, in a short essay, I could have done otherwise . . .

It should be realized that it was not the purpose of this article to give a comprehensive, complete picture of the case for distinctively Jewish social work practice. Rather I wanted to establish "a base, a foundation" upon which Jewish social work rests. I wanted to establish the fact that Jewish social work . . . rests upon the "concept of *Tzedakah*" (which by definition views charity as springing from elementary considerations of justice) — and not on the secular concept of social responsibility (our present base of operations), which, although a satisfactory concept, is in my opinion, inferior to *Tzedakah*. The body of this essay attempted to establish "only" this basic principle, from which implications follow for Jewish social work "practice." It was not my intent to delve upon the implications for practice "at length" except insofar as to firmly establish the fact that these implications do exist, and are wide and far reaching.

It is equally true that I have omitted important steps in the development of the Jewish component in the last two decades. However, again, it was not my intent to point these out except insofar as it was

necessary to indicate the confusion that existed and that still exists around the subject matter. I am fully cognizant and appreciative of the very useful work and accomplishments of the Commission on Synagogue Relations. As Rabbi Trainin points out "the Commission's greatest contribution has been in the area of the relationship of the Rabbi to the Jewish social worker" — through which more understanding has been created between the two disciplines. However, the goal of creating more understanding between the two professions is not identical with the goal of changing the complexion of Jewish social work under the banner of *Tzedakah*. This is a very good but indirect approach while the approach I propose is direct, reaching at the very roots of our social work practices proper. Moreover, I am not at all certain it is one of the commission's goals to establish *Tzedakah* as the base for the practice of Jewish social work.

My colleagues also agree that more needs to be said and done to clarify the prevailing confusion around the subject matter, which brings me to the main purpose of my comments. Professor Green writes "I should have used my Torah scholarship to demonstrate how specific *halakhot* could enrich social work practice in Jewish communal service." I say to Professor Green, this is exactly my intention.

Let us coordinate our efforts in behalf of a new kind of social action, *the creation of Jewish social work*. Let us combine into a united team in this historic undertaking, under the banner of *Tzedakah*.