

COMMUNICATIONS

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

REPLY TO RABBI LEWIS

Rabbi Lewis [*TRADITION*, Fall 1963] seems to forget that in his book, *My Faith and People*, he wrote on page 79 "Instead of opposing the rampant Secularism in the land, the religious parties are rather satisfied with it. It enables them to be 'religious' without sacrificing pleasure or comfort." And again on page 81 he writes "In accepting the state and in rejoicing in it while at the same time refusing responsibility for its function, the religious parties bring dishonor to the Torah." In addition, on page 74 he writes "This spirit of blind submission to the Halakhah regrettably characterizes almost the entire volume, and especially the article by the Chief Rabbi and by Rabbi Maimon." He then goes on to write that an article "Legislation and the Law in the Jewish state," by Chief Rabbi Herzog is. "I regret to state, as out of reach with reality as is Rabbi Maimon's dissertation on the Sanhedrin. . . . The lack of realism on the part of the Rabbis is deplorable."

On the other hand, Theodore

Lewis seems to delight in the fact that Doctor Leibowitz has written "A bold and challenging volume . . . on the failure of the Rabbinate in Israel." (Page 78)

However, Theodore Lewis evidently did not read the first line of my review in which I wrote "A sincere love for Jews and an attachment to Israel is found in *My Faith and People* . . ." But, like so many others who would like to see Halakhah and Jewish Law brought down rather than bring the people up to its level, Rabbi Lewis, too, would rather see the Halakhah changed to satisfy the needs of the hour.

Louis M. Tuchman
San Francisco

PESHAT

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

While reading L. Rabinowitz's interesting article on the original meaning of "peshat," I was expecting to find somewhere mentioned in the article or perhaps, in the notes, the names of Dr. J. Z. Lauterbach and Dr. Wilhelm Bacher. Dr. Lauterbach is the author of the

Communications

article "Peshat" in Volume IX of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1905) in which he states: "'Peshat' originally had, therefore, the same meaning as 'darash.' A distinction between 'peshat' as the literal sense of the Scripture and 'darash' as the interpretation and derivation from the Scripture could not have been made in antiquity for the simple reason that the Tannaim believed that their Midrash was the true interpretation and that their 'darash' was the actual sense of Scripture, and therefore, 'peshat.'"

Similarly, Dr. Bacher, in a work entitled *Erchei Midrash*, (1899) disposes of this same point in an oblique reference on page 269 note 3. (Dr. Bacher's work originally appeared in German, was translated into Hebrew and published in Tel Aviv in 1924. The reference is to the Hebrew edition.)

Another source, although much later, where the same contention is made is in the *Milon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit* by Eliezer Ben Yehudah. In the notes to Volume VI, page 5625, Dr. Tur Sinai discusses the word *Peshat* and *Pashot* etymologically and also affirms that the talmudic conception of 'peshat' is different from the modern conception, quoting Bacher as his source.

If L. Rabinowitz is correct in distinguishing between the talmudic conception and the medieval or modern conception of 'peshat', then the editors of the *Encyclopedia Talmudit* have made an error of omission in not taking cognizance of this distinction, having willy nilly adopted Rashi's explanation of the term. (See *E. T.* Volume 1, page 317 *ein mikra yotze midei peshuto*).

JOSEPH GOLDBERG
Long Beach, New York