

## COMMUNICATIONS

### THE BIBLICAL JUBILEE YEAR

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

I have read Mr. Carmell's letter and Dr. Hoenig's reply [Spring issue, 1966]. Much of the latter is irrelevant to Mr. Carmell's criticisms. I shall deal only with the most patent incongruities in Dr. Hoenig's answer.

His claim that acceptance of a new calendrical system in addition to adoption of nomenclature came from Babylon, is an assertion without authoritative basis and is contrary to the total tradition of Judaism. Cessation of Jubilee, assuming this was the case in Second Temple days, only meant cutting out a year, not a new reckoning of time, and this is within the scope of the Halakhah, to be applied under a certain given set of circumstances, *בשאינן כל יושביה עליה*.

Par. 3-4. Difficulties are raised by the reference of the Torah only to *שלוש שנים* in the case of *ארבע שנים*, rather than *שמיטה* in the case of *יובל*, but silence on this is less proof than silence of the Torah concerning a year of 49 days (!), if Dr. Hoenig's con-

jectured "year" were meant by the Torah.

Par. 5. The suggestion that according to R. Judah (or the *חכמים*) a Jubilee year of 365 (actually 354, or 383 in a leap year which was most unlikely in *יובל*) days is "inserted" after Yom Kippur is of course incredible and quite fantastic, and nobody suggested this! Jubilee started with Rosh Hashanah, but slaves were freed on the tenth of Tishri.

Par. 7. It is not acceptable in halakhic thinking to say "I believe" one Tanna is correct versus another Tanna or Tannaim.

Par. 9. The Torah does not need to confirm or deny the presence of a word, but even if the word creates a difficulty it is not answered by imaginary explanations. Moreover, the *שערי התירושים לא ננעלו*! The Torah's repetition of the word *שנה* lays stress on its being a full year of 354 days, and the word *ימי* does not reduce the size of the year to 49 days!

Par. 10. The statement that Jubilees were associated only with solar reckoning has no basis in any source, and the quotations from R.

## TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Thought

Mecklenburg and R. Hoffman are irrelevant. R. Hoffman only says that in civilian life the solar reckoning was used; he does not say that Biblically there was a solar year to the exclusion of the lunar year.

The lunar-solar year of Judaism is clear from so many sources that quotation would be an ostentatious display of erudition.

Par. 16. There is mention of Rosh Hashanah in Ezekiel 40:1, and see all the commentaries *ad loc.* I already pointed out to Dr. Hoenig personally that Leviticus 25:11, in which זריעה, קצירה, and בצירה are forbidden in the Jubilee year, can only apply to a year of twelve months, and cannot refer to a year of 49 days. This is actually more than enough to rebut Dr. Hoenig's thesis.

In his final paragraph there is an indictment of Dr. Hoenig by Dr. Hoenig.

העומס במקרא מדה ואינה מדה  
To divide Judaism into Biblical and Rabbinic varieties is a Karaite approach. To treat the Jubilee as of Biblical and not of "Rabbinic" concern is quite exclusive of the objects of your fine Journal "TRADITION — A Journal of Orthodox Thought."

Arthur B. Hyman, M.D.

DR. SIDNEY B. HOENIG REPLIES:

— 1 —

My critics contend that the Pentateuch in its original setting follows a lunar calendrical system. *Peshat*, plain sense of the biblical

text, without midrashic eisegesis, does not support this notion. See, for example, the chronology of the flood.<sup>1</sup> Also, no intercalated month is ever mentioned or even hinted at in the Bible to presume the existence of a lunar-solar reckoning, then.

Only in accord with a solar system can one explain simply, without even recourse to Amoraic conciliation, the pentateuchal discrepancy of a biblical Day of Atonement on the *ninth* and on the *tenth* days of the seventh month,<sup>2</sup> or the usage of a phrase "from evening to evening,"<sup>3</sup> which is definitely unnecessary for reckoning in a lunar calendation. Why is the phrase applied to Yom Kippur and to Chag ha-matzot — not for Sukkot, Shavuot or even the weekly Shabbat? Only a solar calendar explains this, without resort to dialectics. (See my article in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, April 1959 "The Duration of the Festival of Matzot.")

— 2 —

Is it plausible that the Torah imposed upon the Jews in biblical times a hardship of two full consecutive years (either of 354 or 365 days): the 49th year (Shemittah) and the 50th (Jubilee)?

So is it generally believed, and to substantiate this Rashi's interpretation<sup>4</sup> of

שנת חמשים עולה לכאן ולכאן  
is invoked: The 50th year (after the seventh cycle, *i.e.*, after the previous 49th year) is both Jubilee and the first year of the *new* cycle. Then we count 5 years more. The next year — the 7th — is again

## Communications

Shemittah. This means that there were not only *two consecutive fallow years* — 49th and 50th — but, moreover, the first cycle always had two years of fallow: the *first* year (Jubilee) and the *seventh* year (Shemittah), with only five years of agricultural pursuits in that first cycle (not “six years shalt thou sow, etc.”).<sup>5</sup> Is this truly acceptable?

Surely the Malbim whom my critics ignore, (though I already cited him)<sup>6</sup> understood the difficulty of the verse better than they when he remarked on Rashi’s comment that “the blessing should have been for *four* years because the text deals with Jubilee.” It cannot be gainsaid that the rabbinic interpretation “in two ways” is an attempt at conciliation in the light of rabbinic purview; in no wise is such to be conceived to be an historic evaluation of the biblical mode *as it originally was*, which is my singular desire in this probing.

— 3 —

Reviewing the biblical text we note that the 49th year equates the 7th. Does the 50th (Jubilee) then equate the 8th year? If so, why does the divine text of blessings mention, without limitation, “you shall sow on the eight,”<sup>6a</sup> if there is a probability of Jubilee? It can then only be explained that in such case the 8th year does not equate but only *follows* the Jubilee. In other words, the Jubilee year is included in the 7th (*i.e.*, the 49th) year.

The verse sequence indicates this in that in counting 49 years, then

“Ye shall sanctify the 50th year on the Day of Atonement.” What about the interim until Yom Kippur? Was this interim also observed as Jubilee? Does it mean that basically it was an 8th year after the *Shemittah* and that from the biblical first month on, seeding and plowing was permitted (being the 8th year) and this continued till the sanctification of the 50th year, on Yom Kippur, when fallow rules began? Or, was agriculture prohibited from the biblical first month of Aviv<sup>6b</sup> because it was already a Jubilee year from the very beginning?

These complexities are solved simply by *noting that in biblical days in actual practice the Jubilee year came in between the Shemittah periods* which are definitely in the 49th year. Hence, with the additional Jubilee, the 7th Shemittah (49) was an elongated year. Because of the insertion of “separation” (וקדשתם) therein of a “year of days” this period, known as the 50th, (in between the two parts of the 49th — Shemittah year) is called “Jubilee” (יובל היא). This is the sense of שנת חמשים עולה לכאן ולכאן: The Jubilees belonged to the 49th year (Shemittah) but are also called the 50th as a *separate* reckoning. The following year was the 51st, or the first year of the cycle, or the biblical 8th year, when sowing, etc. was permitted according to the biblical text, applicable to all circumstances: Shemittah alone or a “Shemittah - Jubilee” combination.

My interpretation of עולה לכאן, ולכאן with the usage of the phrase “between, *i.e.*, applied to before

and after" is supported by the Yerushalmi Kiddushin 59a<sup>7</sup> which utilizes the term באמצע, "in the middle, or between" to describe the Jubilee being *in the middle* of Shemittah.

The 49th year Shemittah, beginning with the biblical first month, the normal spring agricultural season (Aviv) was observed throughout the first half year and ten days (*i.e.*, throughout the seasons of plowing, sowing and harvest) till the tenth day of the seventh month. Then the 50th year was sanctified (or separated) in *between* or in the middle of Shemittah, for such could be possible: אפשר ליובל לחול באמצע השמיטה.<sup>8</sup> Observance of fallow was then continued till the new (Aviv) spring season arrived. This second half-span, that is, from the period of harvest throughout the autumn rains — was normally not an active agricultural season of labor. It was not unlike any other year (after the crops were in), and so did not affect the economy abnormally. It meant only that late planting was curbed.

Thus the biblical text reveals that in the case of a Shemittah (49th) and Jubilee (50th) period there were NOT two full years of fallow (*i.e.*, two times 364) but rather 364 + 49 days. At the end of this elongated year the adjunct of שומר את חדש האביב,<sup>9</sup> of reckoning from the spring, was again invoked, bringing full adjustment of the calendrical seasons.

— 4 —

This conclusion is also supported by an analysis of Deut. 31:10, per-

taining to the public assemblage of reading the Torah.<sup>10</sup> It is generally accepted that the recital was on the 8th year — post sabbatical. Yet the Torah renders it as the "season of the Shemittah year." Rashi explains that it is so called because in the 8th year there is still prohibition of using any Shemittah harvest.<sup>11</sup> But this truly does not explain the plain sense of the text which mentions Shemittah (7th year). Abrabanel however noted that the public reading was *in* the Shemittah year, even as the verse clearly notes.<sup>12</sup>

Abrabanel's view is in line with the investigation of the Shemittah and Jubilee problem presented here: The Torah was read towards the end (or summer [מקץ<sup>13</sup>]) of the seventh year in the season of the Shemittah year, or Sukkot. This second half of the year was soon the beginning of the rainy season or the end of the normal period of agriculture. In this Shemittah year, particularly when the land was fallow in the first half, it was essential that the Israelites uphold all the tenets. When Shemittah included also an inserted Jubilee year, the impressiveness of the period was especially important, for emphasis on adhering to the words of the Torah on carrying out all agrarian and social laws. Hence — the reading of the Torah on Sukkot, after the beginning of the Jubilee year on Yom Kippur.

— 5 —

To offset my view of a biblical solar calendar it is stated "there is mention of Rosh Hashanah in Ezekiel 40:1 and see all the com-

## Communications

mentaries *ad loc.*” Despite the ingenuity of “all the commentators,” that date does not refer to “Rosh Hashanah on Yom Kippur (Jubilee),” but rather to the 10th of Av. Ezekiel refers in that verse to the anniversary (ראש השנה) of the exile (לגלותנו) and the capture of the city. The first Babylonian deportation was 597 BCE (25 years before) and the destruction of Jerusalem was 586 BCE (14 years before). These numbers are recorded in the text; compare with Jeremiah 52:12. In 572 BCE, on the anniversary of the memorable date of the Destruction, Ezekiel was given the vision of rebuilding the Temple.

— 6 —

Moreover, to assert that the Sforno “is actually explaining how the Jubilee years function in the solar-lunar system that we use today” implies that the Sforno held that Jubilee is observed today. This cannot be. He well knew that Jubilee years were not observed in Second Temple days and beyond. He simply points out that a lunar system cannot be followed for a Jubilee count, particularly because the Jubilee deals with *seasons*. Hence his added remark that Shemittah, planting, etc., depends also on solar reckoning, since agriculture is solely dependent upon solar *seasons*, and not on lunar monthly reckonings.

— 7 —

To argue that solar reckoning “denies one of our God given mitzvot קידוש החדש, substituting for it a rabbinic decree,” reveals forget-

fulness of the special, oft repeated rabbinic power to regulate the calendar: אלה מועדי ה' אשר תקראו אתם: (אתם). It also ignores the reason for our liturgic use of מקדש ישראל והזמנים signifying “rabbinic decree.” Moreover, the term קידוש החדש is a misnomer, as we see in Rosh Hashanah 10b. חישוב החדש אין קידוש החדש לא מהו מקודש מקוים 58a, referring to rabbinic authorization. It is interesting that Mekilta on כזה היו רואין does not mention לבנה, only חדש; this may be a “time” *renewal* or reckoning, as is the word שנה, REPETITION.

— 8 —

To interpret שמות החדשים העלו מבל with a belief that our ancestors, returning from Babylon with piety, adopted exclusively a pagan nomenclature — Elul, Sivan, Tammuz, etc., names of Avodah Zarah — may be the view of my critics. Factually, however, this nomenclature is only part of a system. So today we use July and August, named after Roman emperors and are not perturbed about the names. We think only of the calendrical system and not of the imperial nomenclature.

— 9 —

The Bible is not silent about the 49 days as being the “year.” Rather, it is very specific, when one reads carefully the text (verse 8): והיו לך ימי (שבע שבתות השנים) תשע וארבעים - שנה “ימי” indeed *does reduce* the size of 49 DAYS to THE year. Is there any other *number* in that verse?

The *repetition* of the word שנה

in the text therefore cannot mean 354 (lunar) days, as suggested by my critics. Indeed, the commentators already were concerned about this repetition of שנה.

In the Second Commonwealth there was no "cutting out a year." This is only applicable where "a part of a year is called a year" (חלק השנה קרוי שנה), e.g., even a day within the month is at times considered as a month, or a month as a year. Hence 49 days could be calculated as "a year". History has many instances of "little years." כשאינן כל יושביה עליה is only Amoraic apologia for the calendrical change as applied to abrogation of Jubilees, as is also בזמן שיוביק. Is there expectation of the return of the two and a half trans-Jordanic tribes!

— 10 —

I have refrained from commenting on such phrases as "irrelevant," "imaginary explanation," "contrary to the total tradition of Judaism," "without authoritative basis," "quotation would be an ostentatious display of erudition," "it is not acceptable in halakhic thinking," etc., etc., (*de gustibus non est disputandum*) — which are so glibly used by my critics without support of these pronouncements or by giving any definite sources to refute my arguments.

I await from them a LIST of BIBLICAL SOURCES, pertaining to the lunar solar system therein, which they claim to possess.

My research is only based on the historic analysis of the Talmud; it has clarified to me the

growth and expansion of Jewish law and life during the many centuries, illustrating that Judaism is not limited to archaic modes found in ancient records, as implied by my critics.

Intellectual honesty and open-minded scholarship — rabbinic and non-rabbinic, derived from study of internal evidence, which the critics abhor — therefore seek only to corroborate, from early records, Jewish life as it actually was lived in ancient days. Such probing however does not clash with present practice or belief — צדיק באמונתו יחיה. Nor is there an attempt at halakhic decision: פסק הלכה for today's mode of observance. This realm belongs to and should be clearly enunciated by those at the helm of rabbinic authority, which they can exercise for present day conduct, if they so sincerely desire.

*Halakhah per se* is a result of rabbinic discipline בכל אשר ירוך. But *Halakhah*, as defined today in many circles, is very distant from the "way of life" which our ancestors lived, as is revealed by the research into their past.

It is known that we have מקרא מועט והלכות מרובות; and also מקרא מרובה מדרש והלכות מועטות. The latter situation applies particularly to many details of the agrarian laws in the Bible (סרקעות) — See *Tosefta Chagigah* 1:9 which mentions this specifically. Jubilee is fully explained in the Pentateuch, unlike other basic laws, and has remained biblical, and not beyond that.

## Communications

— 11 —

To indict me by asserting "to divide Judaism into biblical and rabbinic varieties is a Karaite approach" displays a lack of comprehension of דברי תורה in contrast to דברי סופרים. Moreover, my critics should have recalled the second part of the Talmudic phrase, העוסק בתלמוד אין לך מדה גדולה מזו, to understand rabbinic superiority over even Biblical text.

The division of Judaism into Biblical and Rabbinic categories is not of my making, nor is it Karaite, despite the many barbs of my critics. The Mishnah already delineated this in Sanhedrin 11:3,<sup>14</sup> stressing therewith the rigidity of Rabbinic decision over the Biblical mode of conduct.

The Karaites stressed the *Biblical* versus the *Rabbinic* in their observances. We stress the *Rabbinic* versus the *Biblical* in our practice of Judaism. Judaism today *is* and

hinges upon Rabbinic practice. The Talmudic Rabbis indeed revered the Pentateuch as their basic source and constitution, but since Ezra's days all detailed, actual guidance in life was derived strictly from Rabbinic interpretation. It was not fixed on the original or plain sense of the Biblical context.

To reiterate — in the Bible we have a solar year, but the Rabbis wisely adopted the lunar-solar system because of the many difficulties arising. Consequently they reinterpreted the Pentateuch accordingly, just as they did with עין תחת and לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו עין. This was their profound power — harmonization by halakhic interpretation, or better, by *Midrash Torah* — "Exposition of the Torah." Indeed, it is this eisegesis which made for vitalizing the "way of life," הדרך אשר ילכו בה. Herein lies the strength, the flexibility and the progress of traditional Judaism.

### NOTES

1. Gen. 7.11; 8.14, etc.
2. See the Amoraic homily in Yoma 81b: כל האכל ושותה בתשיעי מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו התענה תשיעי ועשירי ערב יה'כ עם חשכה לא היו מניחים אותו לאכול הרבה . . .  
Comp. with *M. Yoma* 1.4:
3. מערב עד ערב.
4. *Arachin* 33a: אלא לרבי יהודה דאמר שנת חמשים. הוויא שנת יובל נמי למגין שמיטה הבאה.
5. שש שנים תזרע שדך.
6. See TRADITION (Spring 1966) p. 118.
- 6a. Abrabanel remarks: וכפי רש"י יהיה זה וזרעתם את השנה השמינית שהיא אחר כל שמיטה ויקשה להם למה לא נאמר זה למעלה בפרשת השמיטה ונאמר כאן בפרשת היובל . . .  
ואולם הקושי במאמר . . .  
In of Eliyahu Nakamedia (1866) we read: וזרעתם את השנה השמינית שאם החשש בשביל היובל הלא שנה השמינית היא

## TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Thought

יובל והכתוב אומר ביובל לא תזרעו ובעלי הקבלה אמרו שבשמיטה הכתוב מדבר ואולם סדר הענינים מוכיח כאשר העירנו שזכוח הדברים בשביל היובל.

6b. R.H. 1: באחד בתשרי ראש השנה לשנים ולשמיטין וליובלות  
is the rabbinic re-adjustment of the calendar in contrast to the biblical  
החדש הזה הוא לכם ראש חדשים ראשון הוא לחדשי השנה.  
ברם כמאן דאמר היובל עולה ממניו שני שבוע פעמים שהוא בא באמצע.7.  
שני שבוע.

ולירושלמי on R.H. 9a: יפה עינים See comments of

שיטה אחרת דס"ג גם לר' יהודה הא דיובל עולה במנין היינו למנין שמיטה אבל לא למנין יובל דליובל היה נמנה חמשים מחדש אחר שנת יובל ע"כ אמר בקדושין פ"א ה"ב דלרד"י אפשר ליובל לחול באמצע השמיטה ודעת הבבלי אינו כן.

8. See previous note.

9. Maimonides likewise associated the seasons with solar reckoning based on this phrase: והשנים שאנו מחשבין הם שני החמה שנא' שמור את חדש האביב: Compare also ערוך השלחן on Kiddush ha-hodesh 86.5:

והשנה הולך אחר חדשי החמה כדכתיב שמור את חדש האביב שמור תקופת ניסן של חמה שיהא בתוך חודשה של לבנה דאביב הוא ניסן של חמה שאין ניסן קרוי אביב אלא ע"פ בישול של תבואה וגודול התבואה ועתי הקיץ והחורף לחשבון החמה . . .

10. מקץ שבע שנים במועד שנת השמיטה בחג הסכות . . . תקרא את התורה . . . הקהל.

11. מקץ שבע שנים בשנה ראשונה של שמיטה שהוא שנה שמינת ולמה קורא אותה שנת השמיטה שעדיין שביעית נוהגת בה בקצור של שביעית היוצא למוצאי שביעית.

12. לא תהיה הקריאה תדירה בכל שנה כי אם בשנת השמיטה לפי שבשנה ההיא יהיו פנויים.

13. Ibn Ezra, Deut. 15.1 and 31.10 remarks — תשרי ר'ה לשנים (naturally following the rabbinic notion)

14. *Sanhedrin* 11.3: חומר בדברי סופרים מדברי תורה.

## Communications

### THE SOURCE

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

I have read with care and with interest the devastatingly derogatory critique to which Dr. Maurice Wohlgelernter [*TRADITION*, Summer 1966] subjects James Michener's latest work, *The Source*. At a loss to understand the reason for the book's tremendous popularity and its place on the best-seller list over such a long period of time, the author of this critique ascribes such overwhelming support by the reading public to the fact that Mr. Michener was determined to hold the interest of the "ordinary reader" and therefore used historical facts as the basis of a work of fiction which he calls a novel. (This purpose of pleasing the "ordinary reader" is repeated again and again as if it were a cardinal sin of an author to desire his work to find popular favor.)

Unfortunately, concludes Dr. Wohlgelernter, the author failed miserably, since his work is neither good fiction nor good history (because it contains factual errors concerning the long and complex story which is the history of the Jewish People). In any case, it is not a novel.

May I point out immediately that it is not my purpose to refute our critic's dogmatic statement that *The Source* is "neither fiction, nor art, nor literature, nor a novel at all — it is a pseudo-novel". Aside from being a matter of personal opinion, I would not attempt to argue this point with Dr. Wohlgelernter who is a professional and

distinguished student of world literature. I do, however, offer the observation that were his criteria for historical novels to be followed, I fear that quite a number of works which have found favor in the eyes of both critics and the "ordinary reader" would hardly pass the test of these criteria (e.g., John Hersey's *The Wall*).

What has, in fact, motivated my writing this letter is to protest Dr. Wohlgelernter's accusation that in attempting to please the various categories of potential readers, Michener has thereby falsified Jewish history and corrupted the authentic Jewish spirit. Not only is this an unfair and unwarranted criticism but the very examples which our critic mentions are invalid and readily refuted.

In fact, Dr. Wohlgelernter tends to contradict his very own words. He condescendingly admits that, despite all its faults, this book is not valueless, since "many such novels contribute valuable information or interesting ideas." But within a few lines the author offers his opinion that "it offers insights which might just as gainfully be obtained in, happily fewer pages, from a perusal of *The New York Times*". Either Dr. Wohlgelernter was caught up in a moment of irrational exaggeration, or as it must appear to anyone who has read the work, the remark is devoid of serious meaning.

Dr. Wohlgelernter mentions several outstanding examples to buttress his accusation that Michener "displays not only a lack of knowledge but also an unbecoming genuflection to the uninitiated every-

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

where whose derisive comments about Halakhah display as much arrogance as illiteracy about the nature of Talmudic thought" (page 90).

I do not deny the fact that there may be in the course of a work of a thousand pages errors of fact in Jewish history or Jewish tradition; but a Jewish critic must approach the work as a whole with an understanding of Michener's avowed purpose, namely to convey to the general public something of the epic sense of historic continuity and spiritual magnificence which constitutes the history of our people and its relationship to its God, its Law and its Land. Has Michener succeeded? I think he has. Dr. Wohlgelernter sees only miserable failure in fulfilling this purpose. He supports his view by quoting from the book itself.

Dr. Wohlgelernter writes "nothing moves the ordinary reader to rush to the nearest bookstore, here and abroad, as much as an ignominious attack on the Talmud and tradition" (page 88). Where does he find such an attack, in the words of the young Sabra who, during his dialogue with the Rabbi says: "You Rebbis have made the Talmud a prison of the spirit, and if we have to surrender what goodness there is in the Talmud to break out of that prison we'll do so. Then go back to pick up what's good and necessary."

But, I submit, that Mr. Michener himself immediately permits the Rabbi to emphatically plead that his young friend "not base his whole philosophy of Jewish history solely on the events that took place

during the 'war of liberation', since it consists of other factors, more significant and more telling, which took place during the intervening years — some two thousand of them—when the Jews were forced, however tragically, to live in such countries as Poland and Russia," and he adds: "What happened to them there has determined their history, their character. Would you erase Maimonides, who lived in Egypt, and Baal Shem Tov, who lived in Poland, and the Vilna Gaon, who lived in Lithuania?"

What in reality is Michener attempting to convey through the medium of his fictional characters? It is obvious to anyone acquainted with the facts of life in modern Israel today. He is presenting to us a capsule analysis of the unfortunate *Kultur Kampf* and spiritual struggle among the various elements comprising the new Jewish community in Israel. I see in this a remarkable example of the author's insight. Dr. Wohlgelernter sees only "an attack on Talmud and tradition" for the purpose (and he says this quite explicitly) of selling more books to the general public.

On page 442 of *The Source* we find the statement that "Rashi passed the Oral Law on to Maimonides". Our critic deems this an excellent example, among many others, of the most elementary mistakes "which would make even a Sunday Schooler blush for shame". How does Dr. Wohlgelernter interpret these words? Obviously, not in the purely literal sense; but rather in that Midrashic sense which guided Jewish history by providentially supplying the Jewish people

## Communications

in each century with a great leader to carry on the work of his predecessor. This I believe is Michener's point in this statement.

Dr. Wohlgelernter does, reluctantly, agree with some of the ideas and insights which he finds within the pages of this book. But once again he ascribes to the author the same purpose: "to titillate the vast audience with what is current, popular, and acceptable."

Michener writes, through the words of one of his characters, "Judaism traditionally must be the only major religion that doesn't stress beautiful temples. Perhaps it has something more important . . . a sense of participating brotherhood, of unity in diversity". Or again "Why do we hate you Jews so deeply? The answer is swift and direct. Because we bear testimony that God is one; we were placed among you to serve as that reminder."

Our critic agrees with the above insights but quickly adds that "these and similar views, of course, cover those who do not equate Jewish history with book sales promotion."

I write with a sense of protest not against any of Dr. Wohlgelernter's personal opinions to which he is entitled, but rather against the whole spirit of his critique and its failure to meet Michener's work on a truly serious level. To him the purpose of writing *The Source* was merely to achieve a best seller. To me, it is a remarkable attempt to understand the historical relationship between a People, its Law, and its Land. For that attempt and for its result, I, for one, am very

grateful.

(Rabbi) Philip Kaplan  
Attleboro, Mass.

### DR. WOHLGELERNTER REPLIES:

Out of Attleboro has come the word! My schoolmate Rabbi Kaplan has risen to the defense of Michener's *The Source* in the best tradition of the "ordinary reader."

That he should direct all his remarks to the "historical" contents of this novel, saying nothing about its "literary" qualities, is not at all surprising when we note, with marked disbelief, that he considers *The Wall* an historical novel. Anyone acquainted with the nature of fiction could hardly agree less with the Rabbi's judgment. If anything, it is fiction in the form of diary, never history.

Be that as it may, our correspondent has, for reasons not too difficult to understand, misread or misunderstood the entire first half of my comments. Had he not done so, he would have noticed that I am not at all "at a loss to understand the reason for the book's tremendous popularity." (The quotation marks around the term "ordinary" reader, incidentally, should surely have taught him what every student in Freshman English knows, namely, that this word was never meant to be pejorative). Countless "ordinary" readers, many of whom are members of Men's Clubs, women's leagues, luncheon study groups, and Temple sisterhoods have, like our correspondent, learned — some, alas, for the very first time — "to understand the

## TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Thought

historical relationship between a People, its Law, and its Land." Thus, it should be obvious why I believe — and still contend — that, despite all its faults, *The Source*, like many such novels, contributes valuable information or interesting ideas to those "ordinary" readers who, for lack of understanding, or ability, or initiative to wrestle with the sources, pursue the course of Jewish history by reading novels. Nevertheless, it is not an "irrational exaggeration" to confirm that, as regards the contemporary Jewish scene to which Michener devotes the latter part of his work, this pseudo-novel offers "insights which might just as gainfully be obtained in, happily, fewer pages from a perusal of the *New York Times*." (Would he rather I have said: *Jerusalem Post*, *Ha'aretz*, *Ha'maariv*, *Hatzofe*, or *Yediot Achronot*?).

It is quite obvious, too, that our correspondent, in his fit of passion, has ascribed to *The Source* a "providential" quality which might even make Michener blush. Admitting, one notes joyfully, that "there may be in the course of a work of a thousand pages errors of fact in Jewish history or Jewish tradition" (just why a work of history, however long or short, should contain errors is beyond comprehension!) our correspondent would defend them on the grounds that a critic — any critic — of the novel no less, must interpret such blatant nonsense with "Midrashic sense." That Rabbi Kaplan has this "sense" is laudable but that he should wish to impose it on others who would thus serve as a kind of "commentary" on such "Tractates" as *The*

*Source* is, to say the least, puerile. Unlike our correspondent, not every reader has the power to fathom the "avowed purpose" of an unfathomable, though popular, work.

Needless to say, it thus becomes obvious why I suggested — nowhere do I state that Michener "falsified Jewish history and corrupted the authentic Jewish spirit" as our correspondent incorrectly contends — that if unable, for whatever reason, "to do his homework more adequately," the author should have had it "checked more carefully." Then, devoid of all historical mistakes, it might have served, if not as a representative novel in a seminar in Contemporary Fiction, at least as a supplementary text for an introductory course in Jewish history in many — alas! — American communities, including, of course, Attleboro, Mass.

Maurice Wohlgelernter

### HIRSCH AND NEO-ORTHODOXY

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

[In the Fall 1965 issue of *TRADITION*] Dr. Rudavsky writes: "It was left, however, to Samson Raphael Hirsch, an ardent disciple of Bernays, to formulate the basic rationale for the Neo-Orthodox sector which deviated from Old-Orthodoxy in that it accepted secular culture. The supporters of this new trend in traditional Judaism in the 19th century did not, of course, capitulate to the Enlightenment; they merely came to terms

## Communications

*with it.*" (my italics) . . .

It is quite true that Hirsch never created any new principle with his "Torah im Derech Eretz" — all he did was to bring back to life an idea which had been practiced for centuries in various countries, but was temporarily impossible in Germany and Central Europe due to the persecutions, enforced ghettos and similar limitations.

Had Samson Raphael Hirsch been alive today and had anyone called him a reformer, I am sure he would only have been amused. But he would have been justified in protesting with all the weight of his knowledge and force of his will-power, if anyone would have had branded him as a Neo-Orthodox, one who had agreed to make certain concessions to the spirit of his time.

It was Hirsch who designated "Zeitgeist" as the greatest enemy of Judaism. Samson Raphael Hirsch was in no way opposed to the "Altgläubigen," but he showed by his program and methods how one can live as an "Altgläubiger" together with his children and grandchildren, in the best possible way. . . .

Hirsch's commentary to Leviticus clearly shows his attitude [towards] secular culture.

The permission to occupy ourselves with other spheres of knowledge is assumed. Only as accessory knowledge and in so far as they serve to truly help the study of the Torah and are subordinated as the *טפסל* to the *עיקר* are they to be studied. . . . But as surely as the Torah comes from God and all other knowledge and wisdom which

have been found by man, only consists of the results of man's limited insight into the actual nature of things, so sure is it to us, that for us there is only one teaching, knowledge and truth by which all else must be measured, and all others have only conditional acceptance and can only have value in conformance with it. So that when we study and occupy ourselves with other spheres of knowledge, we still never leave the basis and aims of the Torah to which alone our intellectual work is dedicated. . . .

Would you call this "to come to terms with the Enlightenment of the 19th Century?"

D. Lowy

Prestwich, Manchester, England

### JACOBS AFFAIR

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

In the course of his eminently readable account of the situation in Anglo Jewry published in the summer issue of *TRADITION*, Mr. Norman Cohen honors me by alluding in the following terms to a conversation, one of many, which I had with him several years ago:

I was told by Sefton Temkin, now in the U.S.A., but then a columnist of the *Jewish Chronicle* and a strong Jacobs supporter, that the Chief Rabbi was threatened that, unless the appointment was made Dr. Jacobs would follow Dr. Alexander Altman, at Brandeis since 1959, on the "brain drain" to the United States and he would then have to account to an outraged public opinion for the loss in quick succession, of two of the leading clergymen under his jurisdiction.

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

It is not clear whether the reference to the alleged threat to the Chief Rabbi purports to be a quotation of my remarks to Mr. Cohen or his own interpretation of the position derived from the information which I gave him. Probably it is the latter! I cannot flatter myself to believe that my conversation leaves such an indelible impression on the mind.

In *Conservative Judaism*, Fall, 1963, page 31, I alluded to what had happened in these terms:

In 1959 it was feared that Dr. Jacob might accept an invitation to teach in the United States, which would have been a serious loss to a community all but bereft of scholarly preachers. It was known that the then Principal of Jews' College was due to retire within a couple of years and a place on the staff was made for Dr. Jacobs, obviously with the anticipation that he would succeed to the highest office.

Amplifying what appeared in print, the position as I knew it and as I discussed it with Mr. Cohen on one of the occasions when he kindly entertained me in his home was as follows:

When Dr. Altman accepted his present position at Brandeis University the Chief Rabbi remarked to X — another friend of mine — that had Dr. Altman consulted him first he would have seen to it that a satisfactory position had been found for Dr. Altman in England; and when later Dr. Jacobs received the offer of a teaching position in the United States X, with this earlier conversation in mind, and possibly alluding to it directly, promptly took up with the Chief Rabbi the urgency of

making a counter offer which would keep Dr. Jacobs in England.

Where such representations involved a threat to the Chief Rabbi I do not see, but some contact with these matters convinces me that belief in the existence of a threat depends on the position from which you are looking. When one wing declares that some one is being "threatened" (a variant phrase is "subjected to undue pressure"), the other declares that he has "had the facts put before him in their true light" (or "been acquainted with the true facts of the situation"). An examination of Anglo-Jewish history would show that for seventeen years and on a variety of subjects Chief Rabbi Brodie was being "threatened" and having "the facts put before him in their true light" simultaneously.

S. D. Temkin  
Lowell, Mass.

### MR. COHEN REPLIES:

Mr. Temkin does too much justice to Dr. Jacobs and too little to himself. His telephone call to announce the Jews' College appointment *did* create an indelible impression, with its triumphant report of the successful pressure brought to bear on Dr. Brodie.

His suave account of the matter is demolished by one undeniable fact, Dr. Epstein's vehement opposition to bringing Jacobs into the College. I find it unbelievable that Dr. Brodie, merely on the strength

## *Communications*

of a casual conversation with "X," should have thereupon resolved to violate the deeply-held feelings of the Principal of Jews' College, who was a colleague of many years' standing as well as being one of the greatest Jewish scholars of his time.