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A SYMPOSIUM ON DIVIDED AND DISTINGUISHED WORLDS

The following introductory statement and questions were sent to twenty-five men and women, each doing significant work for the Jewish community, as their invitation to participate in this Symposium on Orthodox Jewish life today. *Tradition* wanted to introduce voices that are not often heard, to elicit fresh insights and comprehensive approaches, to bridge the gaps among well-intentioned groups. The formulation of the questions, a group effort as several respondents guessed, is based on a vision of a united community; the differences were viewed as small, not as chasms.

For various reasons, some did not send in essays; a number indicated concern about what would happen to them or their work if they would say what they honestly think.

No one questioned the title; it was understood by all that the observant community does contain a number of "worlds." But one rabbi who chose not to participate questioned the phrasing: "*Minor variations*"? "*slightly different opinions*"? By underlining the descriptive words twice, he demonstrated how strongly he felt that this was not an objective statement of the issues.

But he touched the theme that runs through all these responses: the perception of difference—between observant and non-observant, between woman and man, among different traditions, between self and others. Compare the reactions to those perceived to be different: acceptance, respect, humorous appreciation, distrust, dislike or attack.

Miriam Adahan, who was involved with the publication of her new book, *Living With Difficult People—Including Yourself*, could not write an essay but did mention in her response that "There are those who have changed the mitzvah of 've-ahavta le-re'akha kamokha' to 've-ahavta le-re'akha shekamokha'. That little *sheh* has done terrible damage." Her recommendation is to change "the highly critical atmosphere in which most children are brought up. . . . The hatred toward others is only an expression of the essential self-loathing of so many people. Change must begin in the home." And in the school and the shul.

THE QUESTIONS

The mood in the Orthodox community has been one of celebration; the retention of our youth and the “return” of non-observant Jews to observance are cause for optimism. But observant Jews are still only ten percent of our people and for most Jews in the United States, Judaism no longer matters.

At the turn of the century, two approaches were taken to modern culture: reject it, or embrace it and select what is compatible with Torah. Neither approach has touched the lost Jews, not in 5700 nor in 5750.

Like the varied nationalities of the former USSR, we divide ourselves into small warring groups. There are many circles with the wagons drawn round; any intruder from another circle is attacked. Who are the intruders? Like the attackers, they are observant Jews, with slightly different opinions or modes of dress. A dangerous phrase in Jewish life today, whether expressed as *fun unsere* or *mi-shelanu*, is “one of ours.”

How can we change from the fog of conflicting claims of superiority to a clear climate where Torah values and living are one, where we can fulfill the Rambam’s “making God’s name beloved through our actions”? We asked educators and *rabbanim* who are working in their communities to address these larger questions:

1. What are the major halakhic issues the Orthodox community should confront? How can we bring the Jewish community together at a time when minor variations in dress and custom divide and define us?
2. What can we do to involve the majority of the community that is either minimally or not at all concerned with its Jewishness? What attitude should we take toward Jews with a different background from our own, particularly toward *ba‘ale teshuva*?
3. In what ways is contemporary Jewish education of women adequate or inadequate? Are attitudes toward women in the Orthodox community today in consonance with Torah values?
4. How do we balance the concern for the community at large with our individual level of observance? How do we avoid the two extremes: neither the sanctimonious “checking up” on others, nor the lowering of one’s own standards?

David Berger:

The central issue raised in this symposium is the capacity of Orthodoxy to deal with the threat to Jewish unity posed by internal Orthodox diversity as well as by the divisions in the Jewish community at large. Even before the massive migration of Soviet Jews, this was a historic challenge, reflected in controversies about conversion, intermarriage, *mamzerut*, patrilineal descent, *haredi-dati*-secular divisions as well as intra-*haredi* hostility in Israel, interdenominational cooperation in the United States, "centrist" Orthodoxy and its relationship with the Orthodox Right, traditionalist defections from Conservative Judaism, the role of women, and the growing cultural gap between American and Israeli Jews. While some of these issues have analogues in earlier Jewish history, many do not, and the Soviet migration may well force a confrontation with key halakhic questions already on the agenda which cannot be restricted to the Orthodox community or to the United States: What are the minimally acceptable standards for conversion to Judaism, how do we deal with uncertainty about Jewish descent, and what is the proper Orthodox stance in a Jewish community that is increasingly non-Jewish?

Independently of the influx of Soviet Jews, the Reform acceptance of patrilineal descent and the non-Orthodox conversion of intermarried Gentiles has impelled at least some segments of American Orthodoxy to confront these questions. Efforts to establish criteria for conversion that would satisfy Orthodox standards even where the convert clearly intends to be a Reform Jew have not met with an enthusiastic reception, and despite the great communal benefits that such criteria would confer, the religious price appears too high to pay. Notwithstanding the existence of some lenient precedents with respect to *kabbalat mitzvot*, the metaphysical transformation involved in creating a new person with all the obligations of a Jew appears incomprehensible in the absence of a genuine intention to observe the Torah as Orthodoxy understands it.

What this means is that we face a future in which a significant segment of Reform Jewry will not be Jewish according to *halakhah*. Even under such circumstances, cooperation with non-Orthodox Jews—including the righteous Gentiles among them—strikes me as critically important. A radical severing of ties would not only weaken the Jewish voice with respect to issues like Israel and antisemitism; it would limit access to potential *ba'alei teshuvah* and make it impossible to persuade Reform leaders that couples contemplating divorce should obtain Orthodox *gittin* in the interest of Jewish unity. Even with the best will, however, American Jewry faces wrenching dilemmas and a difficult period of adjustment with respect to the fundamental issues of Jewish identity.¹

In light of the already grave dimensions of this problem in the United States, the questionable Jewish status of some Soviet immigrants will

exacerbate the situation without, however, altering its essential contours. The fabric of the Jewish community will not be drastically transformed if Orthodox Rabbis tell such immigrants what they already tell Reform converts and patrilineal Jews: that they must convert to genuine Orthodoxy before they or future offspring will be recognized as Jews. For those who are already Jewish, an obstacle to integration may be posed by the possibility of *mamzerut*. Most decisors, however, appear to be leaning toward R. Moshe Feinstein's permissive ruling invalidating Reform and (by a probably valid extension) most Soviet marriages, a ruling that blocks *mamzerut* by preventing second marriages contracted without a prior divorce from constituting adulterous relationships.

In Israel, however, the large-scale migration, for all its providential wonder, poses a conundrum with explosive potential. Though estimates vary widely, it is not unlikely that approximately twenty percent of the recent immigrants are halakhically Gentiles. Since very few of these are at all interested in observing the Torah and can therefore not be converted to Orthodox Judaism, we confront the question of how they or their descendants will marry in a state which has no provision for civil marriage. In the United States, the absence of religious empowerment grants us the luxury of stringent rulings on the criteria for conversion. The Israeli Rabbinate faces far greater pressures which have already led to instances of hypocritical conversion. To cite one illustration, a non-Jewish woman from Scandinavia came to a secular kibbutz that observes a level of *kashrut* inadequate by Orthodox standards, fell in love with a member of the kibbutz and expressed her willingness to convert so that the marriage could take place in Israel. At the end of the training process, a rabbi came to visit and was shown a separate set of dishes that the woman would allegedly use after her conversion. My informant, whose daughter lives on the kibbutz, maintains that all parties involved were perfectly well aware that this was a charade. Nonetheless, while the very same rabbi in the diaspora would probably have refused involvement with this conversion, the unavailability of civil marriage in Israel forced him into an impossible situation. It is overwhelmingly likely that the rabbi who performed the wedding ceremony holds a stringent position—as he should—on the requirement of *kabbalat mitzvot* and that he was consequently engaged in an enterprise replete with violations of the Torah ranging from *berakhot levattalah* to the indication that the Jew and Gentile standing before him may henceforth live as man and wife.

Hypocrisy on a massive scale will be much more difficult to sustain, and even if some rabbis would countenance it, I suspect that many of the immigrants would refuse to cooperate. How, then, can this situation be resolved without doing violence to the integrity of the *halakhah*? The simple introduction of civil marriage and divorce in Israel would raise the disastrous specter of *mamzerut*. Since almost all secular Israelis have been

married by Orthodox rabbis and many would continue to choose Orthodox ceremonies, R. Moshe's *hetter* would not work; we would have replaced a terrible problem with a catastrophic one.

With considerable diffidence, I am inclined to propose that Israel permit civil marriage on condition that the union pose no danger of *mamzerut*. A couple wishing to marry would need a certificate from the Rabbinate to this effect even in cases where the marriage is not halakhically permissible. To render this proposal practical, it would probably be necessary to keep the dissolution of marriage in rabbinic hands. In the case of a union between a Jew and a Gentile, the rabbis would, of course, declare a *get* unnecessary and send the couple to authorities responsible for granting a civil divorce. This is not the forum for working out the details of such a system or discussing its far-reaching advantages and undeniable disadvantages, and I am well aware of the hurdles that it would face in the political arena. In reality, we will probably muddle through—although how we will do this is not quite clear—at enormous cost to honesty and the true requirements of the Torah. If, however, we genuinely care about those requirements and wish to create an Israeli society in which they will be respected the most and resented the least, this is the only sort of solution that I can see.

To return to the United States and to the Orthodox community, we must look at the divisions among us in perspective. Sharp disagreements have divided Jews in the past. Expectations of Orthodox unity result in part from the fact that Orthodoxy is now only one segment of the Jewish people. While nations are expected to have factions, factions are not. The truth is, however, that vigorous disagreement can be a sign of health, provided that it stops short of the true danger of Orthodox factionalism, which lies in delegitimation.

The admirable religious passion often characteristic of the Orthodox Right combines with the conviction that particular rabbinic leaders enjoy divinely assisted insight to produce certainty that Judaism unequivocally demands a narrowly defined set of *hashkafot*. Deviations that lie well within the parameters of the traditional principles of faith are too readily labeled blasphemous or heretical and the bearers of those views are read out of the fold. On the fringes of the Right, a book that routinely refers to Rav Kook with the epithet “may the name of the wicked rot” (*shem resha'im yirkav*) can be published with a string of approbations from luminaries of Satmar and the *Edah Ha-Haredit* among others.² In more mainstream circles, such enormities are absent, but kindred phenomena ranging from disrespectful references to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik to the exclusion of Yeshiva University High School students with impeccable credentials from summer camps they had attended before entering YU testify to a tendency that can only be described as sinful.

It is particularly difficult to uproot the evil inclination when it masquerades as its opposite, and exhortations to repent are likely to fall on

deaf ears. Nevertheless, the tendency toward delegitimation is still merely a threat rather than a full blown reality, and I am guardedly optimistic that it can be checked. One way to retard or prevent this development is for Modern Orthodoxy to carry out the agenda that it should pursue irrespective of the problem of unity: the fostering of heightened observance, the producing of first-rate young *talmidei hakhamim*, and the vigorous, uncompromising insistence on the religious desirability of its core positions without fostering disrespect for those who disagree.

Partly because of the influence of the Right, an influence that needs to be simultaneously welcomed and resisted, modest but meaningful progress is clearly discernible in the first two areas. As for the third, we face a delicate challenge. Modern Orthodox Jews must be prepared to say that we are flatly right about the religious value of pursuing a higher secular education. In this regard, there is considerable irony in the pride that Agudat Yisrael takes in its highly educated constituency which has violated the educational ideal that the leadership of the movement so vigorously proclaims. At the same time, it would be dishonest and inappropriate to refrain from acknowledging the positive religious consequences of that ideal. We must be prepared to say that we are flatly right about the religious significance of the State of Israel. Here there is nothing good to be said about the grievous error in *hashkafah* of the non-Zionist Right, but it is manifestly not an error that undermines its religious credentials or diminishes the respect owed to *gedolei Yisrael* holding such a view. Finally, we need to be careful about indiscriminating criticism of the Right for its predilection toward *humra*. There are instances in which such criticisms strike me as eminently justified, but making the avoidance of stringency into a basic ideological issue runs the risk of confusing *humra* and *dikduk be-mitzvot* and reinforcing the greatest weakness in the Modern Orthodox community.

The role of women in contemporary Orthodoxy has, of course, served as another source of controversy, although here the lines are by no means neatly drawn. On the most serious level, and despite the fact that the attitudes and actions of many rabbis are beyond reproach, I cannot ignore a wealth of anecdotal evidence testifying to the failure of certain *battei din* to take halakhically legitimate steps to alleviate the dilemma of *agunot* victimized by spiteful or extortionate husbands. In more general terms, a combination of concern for modesty and a societal denigration of women over the centuries has produced customs and behaviors which stand in some measure of tension with straightforward *halakhah* or Jewish values. These include the laying out of synagogues with utter indifference to the ability of women to see or hear, the prevailing custom—which has finally begun to change—that women do not recite the standard daily prayers, the widespread reluctance to have women recite *birkat ha-gomel*, the assumption that women will not be interested in *mayim aḥaronim*, the

failure of women to exercise their option of *zimmun* among themselves, and the centuries-long absence of education for women even in *Torah she-bikhetav*.

In some hasidic circles, this last condition persists to our own day and is best illustrated by an experience of the late Rebbetzin Tonya Soloveitchik, who once struck up a conversation with a little girl from Williamsburg and asked her whether she attends Bais Yakov. “Bais Yakov?!” stammered the girl in wide-eyed horror. “*Dort—dort—dort lernt men khimesh!*” For the most part, however, women’s education has improved dramatically even among those who refrain from including Talmud in the curriculum. Despite this improvement, attitudinal changes lag behind. Even in Modern Orthodox circles, women are rarely invited to deliver *divrei Torah* at family gatherings or other appropriate occasions. On the Right, where such an address would be regarded as a violation of modesty, women are often not even expected to listen to speeches delivered by men. In a particularly egregious but fully illustrative example of this attitude, the photographer at a recent Bar Mitzvah chose the speech of the boy’s *rosh yeshivah* as the appropriate time to take table pictures on the women’s side of the *mehitzah*, and with the honorable exception of my wife, he received full cooperation. Even more recently, I happened to be present at a lecture called “*Emunas Hakhomim*” delivered by a prominent figure in the Aguda to an almost exclusively female audience. The level of the presentation, which consisted largely of stories concerning *gedolim*, would unquestionably have been entirely different had the talk been directed to men.

Needless to say, the Torah does envision different religious roles and obligations for men and women, and no amount of apologetics can or should wholly erase those distinctions. The argument that even permissible actions should sometimes be restricted because of the direction in which they lead is by no means frivolous. At the same time, permissible expressions of piety and a thirst for the word of God deserve our utmost respect, not only with regard to women’s issues but along the entire spectrum of concerns that divide, challenge, and stimulate the Orthodox community.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed argument in favor of the positions outlined in the last two paragraphs, see my “On Marriageability, Jewish Identity, and the Unity of American Jewry,” in *Conflict or Cooperation? Papers on Jewish Unity*, American Jewish Committee and Clal, New York, 1989, pp. 69–77.
2. See Menashe Philipp (transliteration uncertain), *Sefer Parashat Ha-Kesef*, Brooklyn, 1981, pp. 353, 354, 356, and more. To be fair, not all the authorities read the entire book, but several apparently did.

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Judith Bleich:

A Yiddish ditty proclaims, “One must hide well an old *spodek* in an innermost chamber that it may be a marvel to our children. This was worn by an *ehrllicher Yid!*” Previous generations spoke, not of right-wing or left-wing Orthodox, but of a sincerity of conviction, single-mindedness of purpose and authenticity of being conjured up in our minds by the phrase, an “*ehrllicher Yid*,” viz., a Jew who could be counted upon meticulously and selflessly to fulfill personal and communal responsibilities, to resist the enticing blandishments of an alien environment, unwaveringly to maintain the highest standards of religious scrupulousness whatever the cost or difficulty. To such an individual, Torah was paramount, primal and central. Whether educated secularly or unlettered, whether learned Jewishly or untutored, the *ehrllicher Yid* was an individual who personified allegiance and loyalty to Torah, a person to whom Judaism in its pristine sense was the animating principle of life.

The ditty speaks of a *spodek*, a form of Hasidic headgear. Yet perhaps one of the most contentious aspects of the contemporary socio-religious scene is the phenomenon of the black hat. I write as the daughter of a sainted father who wore a (broad-brimmed, rabbinic) black hat and as the wife and mother of wearers of black hats to whom that mode of headgear has no “religious” connotations whatsoever. In the past, the hat was never regarded as the symbol of any distinctive level of religious attainment nor was its use or non-use considered indicative of any measure of spirituality. *Giluy rosh*—a bare head—does have a negative religious connotation, but the style or color of head-covering, although often revealing as a reflection of background, taste, style or profession, is hardly to be viewed as an index of piety.

Do clothes reveal or do clothes conceal? One can make a good case for both propositions (as is evident from the exegetical comments of Ibn Ezra and Redak on Psalms 104:1). There are indeed positive reasons for adoption of attire that identifies the wearer as an adherent of a group committed to certain standards of observance. Voluntary adoption of such identifying signs of belonging may serve a useful purpose. *Hazal* certainly viewed the concept of an *itztala de-rabbanan* in a positive light. But the converse does not necessarily hold true. Absence of such garb certainly need not denote lack of loyalty or commitment. Excessive focus on distinctions in mode of garb and use of the terms *shehorim* and *kipot serugot* as if these were uniforms worn by contending teams in some worldwide athletic competition is, at best, offensive and, at worst, socially divisive. Misplaced emphasis on such distinctions and the accompanying labelling has long been one of the sadder characteristics of the Israeli Orthodox scene. Transposition of such attitudes to these shores is one of the few negative aspects of an otherwise rich cultural and religious cross-

fertilization fostered by the thousands of young men and women who have spent time in Israel as part of their ongoing pursuit of Torah studies.

The Jewish community was never monolithic in its composition or in its practices. From time immemorial, differences of custom have abounded between inhabitants of *Eretz Yisra'el* and those of Babylon, Ashkenazim and Sefardim, Hasidim and Mitnagdim. Those differences are part and parcel of the richness and variety of our historic legacy. Such diversity need not detract from motivation toward a common goal or from responsibilities and ties that bind "Your people Israel, *goy ehad ba-aretz*," a united as well as a singular nation.

To a certain extent there has also always been attitudinal diversity within our community. For the most part such diversity has been instrumental rather than teleological, focused upon means rather than ends. Undue concentration upon shadings and divisions within our community, even when such activity assumes the form of analysis and discussion within an academic framework, only exacerbates and intensifies such factionalism. Forums, lectures and symposia devoted to matters pertaining to "left-wing" and "right-wing" and "centrist" labelling become self-fulfilling prophecies. The more these frequently misleading appellations are paraded, the more vying there will be among the factions and the higher the artificially constructed barriers will rise. Talk about a problem long enough and it will become real. Tell a child often enough that he is not doing well in his studies and he will indeed become a failure. That certainly does not mean that the child is not experiencing problems or that one should ignore the child's learning difficulties. It means simply that emphasis of the wrong nature merely serves to increase self-consciousness and hence is counterproductive. Only someone who is uninformed or naive could be unaware of the polarization that has come to mark large segments of the Orthodox community. But undue emphasis on these distinctions and establishing social and educational agendas on the basis of such, often spurious, differences seriously serves to increase the danger of fissure within our community.

Over a century ago the Orthodox ideologue Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer expressed his frustration at the fragmentation and negativism that impeded the cause of Torah in his own time: "Indeed, I am assured that only with regard to what should not be done is there ever agreement among *Gedolei Yisra'el*, but not with regard to what may be done . . . always in our midst there is only 'No' and 'No'. But . . . the main thing is to build" (*Iggerot Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer*, ed. Mordecai Eliav [Jerusalem, 1965], Hebrew section, p. 35).

A historic accomplishment of the Agudath Israel movement in pre-World War II Europe was the achievement of a significant form of cooperative activity on the part of an Orthodox community composed of widely disparate segments that included adherents of Hasidic dynasties,

products of Lithuanian yeshivot and persons reared in the Hirschian tradition of *Torah im derekh erez*. That even this type of coalition of like-minded traditional groups shows signs of disintegration is a step backward.

We should recognize that indigenous American Jewry was cut off from traditions of the past. Even those who remained observant had to fight a constant battle against an alien environment. Children grew up in the midst of a *Kulturkampf* between home and the dominant society and, more often than not, without benefit of the permeating religious atmosphere of Jewish schools of old. The result was an unprecedented break in the experiential *mesorah* and much that was authentic was simply lost in the process. Educational institutions can readily impart book knowledge, but find it extremely difficult to transmit insights, values, emotions and cultural flavor best gained in a home.

To a significant extent, the differences between the various contemporary groups within Orthodoxy are rooted in culture rather than ideology and conscious efforts to establish a “*nusah America*” have not helped matters insofar as reciprocal acceptance is concerned. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is not entirely without a silver lining. Corrective measures are clearly necessary in response to the increasing isolation and insularity that is becoming endemic in some circles. The American experience has brought with it an openness and receptivity that is salutary. On the other hand, the sense of total commitment to observance and unswerving loyalty to Torah ideals taken for granted in more self-contained sectors and expressed without equivocation is a necessary antidote for the acculturation that has also led, at least for some, to a diminution of observance.

In part, the contentiousness within our community is an outcome of the intensity of feeling engendered by religious issues of common concern. Rabbi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg, in his impassioned essay, “*Et Ahai Anokhi Mevakesh* (My Brothers Do I Seek) (Bnei Brak, 1966, pp. 58–59), remarked that the religious mentality eschews tolerance, not out of narrow-mindedness, but because of a depth of commitment that leads to an equation of tolerance with indifference. “Tolerance—a modern invention!” he wrote. “I can love my brother or hate him, but under no circumstances am I, or can I be, tolerant toward him. From my brother I demand—and have the privilege to demand—that he not deny me the opportunity to love him properly, as one loves a brother. . . . Not manners and restraint but warmth of feeling, not tolerance and indifference but love and brotherhood, we ask and demand of you!”

In an ideal world, people would know both their strengths and deficiencies. Positive interaction would redound to the benefit of all. To our loss, an organization such as the Rabbinical Council of America has become representative mainly of American non-Yeshiva world rabbis and the Agudat ha-Rabbanim is rapidly becoming defunct rather than regenerating itself as a body representing *talmidei hakhamim* of all streams.

Similarly, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America has failed to serve as a binding force uniting all within the Orthodox camp. For a variety of reasons Agudath Israel, which has emerged as a major social and religious service organization, could not succeed as an umbrella group. The time is long overdue for serious and concerted efforts for the establishment of unifying organizations, both rabbinic and communal.

It is a truism that, within the Orthodox community, that which binds us is far, far more significant than that which separates us. A deeply shared commitment to Torah and *mitzvot* far, far outweighs the superficial distinctions that characterize many of the disparate groupings. Where there is a genuine concern for Torah and *mitzvot* there must, by definition, exist a unity of purpose in which conflicting claims of partisanship fade into insignificance.

Instead of bemoaning the “split” within the community and analyzing its provenance our attention should be directed toward our numerous shared concerns in the areas of education, philanthropy and communal affairs. Instead of inviting speakers to expound upon the differences between “Modern Orthodoxy” and the “Yeshiva world” or between the “left,” “right,” and “center,” we should be inaugurating programs designed to enable those who are knowledgeable, responsible and authentic to enlighten and teach the public at large. Scholars representing diverse streams within our community should be encouraged to join one another on shared podiums for the common goal of dissemination of Torah.

The authentic teachers of our tradition are always recognizable and partisan labels only detract from their effectiveness. E. B. de Vito, in his poem, “Graduates” (*American Scholar*, Spring, 1988, p. 282), has written:

Knowledge comes, in a way, unsought,
as in the Chinese tale
of the youth who came for daily lessons
in what there was to learn of jade.
And each day, for a single hour,
while he and the master talked together
always of unrelated matters,
jade pieces were slipped into his hand,
till one day, when a month had passed,
the young man paused and with a frown,
said suddenly, “That is not jade.”

An authentic Jewish voice, the voice of an *ehrllicher Yid*, like jade, is unmistakable. But, like knowledge of jade, authenticity is unmistakable only to those who have been trained by proficient teachers. Knowledge, even of jade, must be mastered. Regrettably, there are countless numbers of Jews who have never been exposed to the masters. It requires training to differentiate between that which is authentic and that which is a facsimile. Such training can only come through exposure.

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There are hundreds of thousands of our coreligionists who are ignorant of the fundamentals of our heritage and remain deprived of their birthright, the *morasha kehillat Ya'akov*. The Sages speak of ten famines decreed by Heaven to reprove mankind. The final famine—and the gravest—is a hunger of the spirit. That hunger, a need that is more difficult to assuage than a hunger for bread or a thirst for water, is evident all around us. Wherever educational programs targeted to reach the Jewishly untutored, of any and every age level, have been instituted they have met with remarkable success. Seed programs of Torah u-Mesorah, Chabad houses on college campuses, NCSY, Yeshiva Seminar and Ohr Sameach weekends, learning programs for young adults, for older adults, for singles, for families, in the spiritual wastelands of the metropolis, in the smaller, more isolated communities, on the campus, throughout the United States, in tiny communities in the Caribbean, in newly reconstructed centers of Jewish life in Western Europe and newly accessible communities in Eastern Europe, in remaining strongholds of Jewish consciousness in Morocco, in Turkey and in the multi-faceted—so rich and yet so poor!—communities in Israel, in every locale in which such programs are in operation they have borne fruit. But there is no city, town or hamlet in any of these countries in which the programming and the institutions are adequate. I have been present at teaching seminars in Athens, in Istanbul, in Casablanca, in Moscow, in Prague. There was never enough time, there were never sufficient personnel and there were rarely enough seats to accommodate those who wished to attend. The day is too short; our resources too meagre; the task overwhelming.

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America, a blue-ribbon commission composed of prominent educators in the United States, has concluded its deliberations with an acknowledgement of the abysmal ignorance of Judaism that characterizes the vast majority of Jews in this country and has issued a recommendation for a reordering of communal priorities in order to initiate wide-ranging and innovative programs of Jewish education. It is reassuring that the Commission has ended its deliberations with the conclusion that the earth is round and not flat. Any pulpit rabbi, yeshiva *rebbe*, outreach professional, or NCSY advisor who is not half-asleep could have told the members of the Commission as much at the very outset of their investigations. But, no matter, now even the commission agrees. It is related that one year, following the annual *Shabbat ha-Gadol* discourse in the course of which he made the customary appeal for Passover provisions for the poor, Rabbi Naftali Ropshitzer remarked wearily that he felt he had been at least partially successful: the poor were willing to accept; whether the rich were willing to give remained to be seen. That there is a critical problem

is now finally acknowledged by all responsible segments of the community. That there is a receptive, eager, and even starving, audience is also finally being appreciated. But how much the community is willing to sacrifice in order to address this problem, to what extent those who are rich in talent and knowledge are prepared to devote their energies to this endeavor and to what extent those who are rich in material resources are prepared to support such programs wholeheartedly and wholehandedly remains to be seen.

Redak offers a remarkable insight in his comment on Psalms 78:4, “We will not hide from their children (*mi-beneihem*) declaring unto the last generation (*le-dor aharon*) the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” Troubled by the apparent discrepancy between the pronouns “we” in the subject of the verse and “their” modifying the object, Redak’s exegesis addresses the unspoken question, who are the “we” and who the “they?” Redak declares, “From their children, the children of our ancestors—and they are our brothers—who do not learn and do not know the tradition, we, who know, are obligated (*hayyavim anu ha-yod'im*) to remind them and not to desist from them until also they will declare unto their children, and their children unto their children’s children, until they declare the praises of the Lord unto the last generation.” We are obligated not to desist until the *dor aharon* is reunited with us in its entirety, that is, until there is no longer a “we” and a “they.”

A mode of parlance has come into vogue that distinguishes between BT’s and FFB’s—*ba’alei teshuvah* and those who are *frum* from birth. There is something offensive about the way this dichotomy is bandied about. Who among us is not perforce a *ba’al teshuvah* in some manner of speaking? Or better, who among us need not strive to become a *ba’al teshuvah* in the full sense of the term? And why should the designation “*frum* from birth” be necessary as a cognizable demarcation? Such nomenclature hints at an attitudinal segregation, and even prejudice, that is ill-suited to a community guided by Torah values. The goal is to obliterate distinctions that give rise to a “we” and a “they,” not to enshrine them.

There are no truly meaningful distinctions among observant Jews who have been privileged to learn and to become the recipients of the legacy of Sinai. There is only the painful distinction between those who have been so privileged and those who have been deprived of this tradition. In face of that distinction, all other distinctions between “we” and “they” are petty and trivial.

The question of how one balances one’s personal concerns with communal needs is one that a mature, responsible Jew learns to resolve in the context of assimilating the myriad teachings of Torah in which the needs of an individual and the responsibilities toward the community are

explicitly delineated. The role of *mesirat nefesh* and self-sacrifice is one of those teachings. In the vast majority of cases the problems that arise are surmountable and, in face of the gargantuan educational needs of our time, most such issues become secondary. Obviously, there are occasions on which questions arise that involve the possibility of serious compromise of religious standards and such questions must be confronted forthrightly as they are encountered. Those are halakhic issues and must be resolved on their merits by those whose expertise lies in that area. But “*hayyavim anu ha-yod'im*” is an obligation incumbent upon all. The obligation is clear and unequivocal. The day is too short; our resources too meagre; the task overwhelming. The road to the *dor aharon* beckons.

3

Questions relating to feminist concerns and ideology are assuredly among the most significant issues affecting the Jewish religious community. Those issues have transformed the social fabric and fundamental structure of modern society. Such questions and the underlying sensibilities they reflect are ignored only to our peril.

In what way is contemporary Jewish education of women within the Orthodox community adequate or inadequate? Is any system of education ever adequate or is it, at most, forever in a state of striving or becoming? A few observations:

The author of *Words on Fire: One Woman's Journey into the Sacred* (San Diego, New York, London, 1990), a personal memoir portraying various Torah study groups for women in Israel, reports that “friends in Jerusalem said they hoped I would let women know that Torah is open to them. I remain unsure if Torah and Torah learning communities *are* altogether open to women” (p. 326). But despite her skepticism, the author concludes, “Yet there are grounds for some optimism.”

The single most dramatic change in the Orthodox community within the past century is the transformation which has taken place in the education of women. Within the Orthodox community religious education of women is now ubiquitous. There is no group within the spectrum of Orthodoxy that does not provide some form of formal religious education for women. The changes that have taken place may be attributed to multiple factors. Among these are: (1) the transformation in attitudes to education of women that has taken place within the dominant culture; (2) an increasing awareness of, and sensitivity to, the needs and aspirations of women; (3) a realization that exposure to secular education results in the cultivation of values antithetical to Jewish teaching and tradition and hence espousal of the view that religious education for women is necessary, if not for its own sake, then, at the very minimum, as an antidote to secular influences; (4) the desire on the part of *roshei yeshiva*

to foster the development of like-minded women as marriage partners for students of yeshivot and *kollelim* committed to intensive study despite anticipation of resultant diminished professional and economic opportunities; and (5) the relative affluence of the Orthodox community that makes extended higher education economically possible. Examination of the curricula of Orthodox educational institutions for women reveals emphasis upon biblical, linguistic and historical studies. In these areas the curricula of institutions devoted to the education of women are often richer than those of the corresponding male institutions. Tensions exist in some institutions with regard to the question of the propriety of the study of Talmud on the part of women. The clamor for curricular parity should not, however, obscure the dimensions of the change that has taken place.

Within the Orthodox community there is indeed a constant tension between change and tradition. Unashamedly and unabashedly, Orthodox Jews admit to being “conservative” and “traditional.” Orthodox Jews are proud to be known as *Shulhan Arukh* Jews, rabbinic Jews or talmudic Jews. As Hatam Sofer put it: “Do not say the times have changed, for we have an old Father who has not changed and will not change” (Last will and testament, published in S. Schreiber, *Hut ha-Meshulash* [Tel Aviv, 1963], pp. 152–153). We are the bearers of a tradition transmitted from generation to generation that encompasses all aspects of ritual, religious, personal, professional and communal life. In aspiring for renewal, vitality and dynamic adjustment there has nevertheless always been an emphasis upon the traditional. Educational change and development in the Orthodox community will result from a perceived need for satisfaction of spiritual aspirations and enhancement of religious expression rather than as an endeavor designed to curry favor with one group or another.

The teaching of Torah does not take place in a vacuum. Education, of necessity, reflects antecedently recognized goals and aims. The Sages refer to Joseph’s awareness of the powerful moral force personified for him in the image of his father, the *demut deyukno shel aviv*. In Jewish tradition there is also a *demut deyuknah*, a personal image of the mother. Not the negative image portrayed in some misrepresentations of a passive, docile, “absent” individual, overlooked by the tradition, “the Jew who wasn’t there,” but the positive image of a powerful spirituality that expressed itself in a conscious modesty. That model, the *demut deyuknah*, or hallmark of the Jewish woman, is not one imposed by external patriarchal coercion but accepted as a royal prerogative, the distinguishing feature of a spiritual aristocracy, *kol kevudah bat melekh penima*. In defining goals and setting educational standards, we must remember that our tradition has its own paradigmatic models and standards.

Feminist agendas constitute a response to inequities in society. A revolution comes to free those who are shackled. However, in the process of adjustment and innovation and in the reordering of professional, social

and societal priorities, much of the fabric of traditional society has been so reconstituted that the institutions of family and marriage as we know them are threatened. In light of the enormous transformations wrought in society in our time, the biblical verse “*hokhmat nashim bantah beita*—the wise woman builds her house” (Proverbs 14:1) assumes a new meaning and gives voice to a new challenge. Will the accomplished professional understand that whatever she may choose to “do with her life,” it is the wise among women who builds her house?

The challenge of our times is for achievement of Jewish education for women within a framework that fosters highest academic accomplishment while retaining fidelity to our own unique religious models.

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Irving Breitowitz:

1

The existence of intra-Orthodox polarization and hostility, while not entirely new, has taken on a new intensity. Accusations and counter-accusations poison the air. The Right Wing (I use these terms loosely) accuses the Centrists (formerly: Modern) of playing fast and loose with halakhic norms, while the Centrists accuse the Right Wing of rigidity, inflexibility, and lack of *ahavat Yisrael*.

While there are, and undoubtedly always were, major ideological divisions within the Orthodox camp on issues such as the role of the State of Israel and the desirability of involvement in secular education and culture, the existence of divergent approaches, each rooted in authentic Torah thought and ideology, should be no cause for condemnation. Stridency, accusatory tones, snideness, and disdain have no place where sincere people on both sides are struggling to discern God’s will in times of great upheaval and confusion, times that may indeed be pre-Messianic but are still times of *hester panim*, God’s hidden face.

Unfortunately, I can suggest no real cure for this sickness of the soul, nor do I see any signs of the situation improving. The following steps, however, may be a start:

First, let us rededicate ourselves to emphasizing the *halakhic* obligations of *kevod ha-beriyot*, *ahavat Yisrael* and all of the *mitzvot ben adam lehavero*. The time is ripe for a resurgence of the Mussar movement of R. Yisrael Salanter. The notion that greater *humra* means greater religiosity (an issue I don’t purport to address) must be broadened to include not only restrictions on what goes into one’s mouth but what comes out of it as well. This renewed commitment to *middot* and *derekh*

eretz must permeate all levels of our society—schools, shuls, yeshivot, public gatherings, retreats.

Second, as believers in Torah and mitzvot, there really is much more that unites us than separates us, and cooperation in the many areas of common concern should be fostered. We face many problems but also great opportunities. Consider a partial agenda: bringing thousands of Jews back to Torah; addressing the scourge of intermarriage; responding to the miracle of Soviet Jews allowed to emigrate and practice their religion; raising the moral calibre and ethical consciousness of even the *frum* in *middot* and *ben adam lehavero*; insuring high standards of kashrut in an era of additives and hi-tech food technology; training and setting up competent *bate din* and *poskim* to provide guidance and adjudication in business disputes and complex areas of technology; dealing seriously with the *agunah* problem and the apparent reluctance of rabbis to take an active role; funding Jewish education; limiting material excess at *semahot* and needless squandering of resources; addressing the needs of special groups such as the handicapped, mentally-retarded, or chemically dependent, and providing mechanisms to deal with the dysfunctional segments of our community; counselling couples and parents by offering psychological services consistent with Torah ideology at a time when the divorce rate among Orthodox Jews has reached record levels and many of our people are faced with stresses beyond their ability to control; dealing with the manifold problems of *gerut*, *mamzerut*, etc. arising from Reform deviations; confronting the perception of many nonaffiliated Jews that the Orthodox are intolerant and indifferent to anyone's interests other than their own.

These are just a few of the major issues that demand a response. We squander and dissipate our limited energies and resources in petty squabbling when through concerted united effort, there is so much that we could be doing.

Third, let us learn to cultivate within ourselves the quality of *heshbon hanefesh* instead of seeking fault in others. Centrist Orthodoxy must ask itself some hard questions. Do we strive for our children to become *talmide hakhamim*? Do we consider the quality of Jewish education to be *at least* as important as secular? Is it true, as oft stated, that *on the whole* Centrist Orthodoxy produces individuals who are as spiritually committed as their counterparts on the right? Are we in fact as committed to *limud ha-torah*, *tefillah betzibur*, and meticulousness in kashrut as is commonly assumed? Is Centrist Orthodoxy as practiced a truly integrated philosophy of life or a convenient cop-out? Perhaps we must open our hearts and souls and learn from the Right Wing a greater sense of reverence and *kedusha*. Perhaps we have lost the capacity to be outraged by sin and are no longer capable of a sense of *kana-ut*. Could it be that our oft-praised tolerance of nonhalakhic deviations is essentially predicated on indifference?

Conversely, perhaps certain segments of the “Yeshiva world” could be encouraged to broaden their own horizons and to recognize diversity not as a sign of decay but of vibrant growth. Heresy-hunting and triumphalism often accompanied by a spirit of smugness and arrogance serve no useful purpose, alienate our fellow Jews, and bring Orthodoxy into disrepute. Frank acknowledgment of our own inadequacies and failures and willingness to learn from others may go a long way in bringing Torah Jews together.

Fourth, and this may seem a bit paradoxical, if a true rapprochement is to be attained, the Centrist camp must learn to be intolerant of ideas that are fundamentally incompatible with Torah and must unequivocally disassociate itself from spokesmen and statements that degrade *Da’at Torah*, denigrate *gedolim*, or dilute halakha. In our desire to be liked and accepted, we must not betray our sacred heritage by deliberate distortion. If this amounts to the horrendous accusation of “turning to the right,” then let us plead guilty with no apologies.

2

There are really two parallel paths that must be cultivated. The first involves greater professionalism in organization and educational programming. Programs must be developed that attract the nonaffiliated to Judaism without imposing overly rigorous educational requirements or religious commitment. Beginners’ services, Hebrew classes, Friday night meals, life-experience workshops (e.g., how to build a Succah or conduct a *seder*), retreats, small discussion groups in people’s homes are ideal vehicles for this type of exposure. Classes and lectures must be provided in areas that show the impact and relevance of Torah to daily life concerns: Marriage, raising children, dealing with elderly parents, issues concerning death and bereavement. These are likely to be areas where people anxiously seek moral guidance in their traditions. Needless to say, personalized contact and concrete demonstrations of care and concern for the individuals involved are absolute prerequisites for successful outreach and indeed, in the long run may prove even more important than the quality of the educational programs. There must also be continual follow-up. Far too often, as soon as one person becomes observant, we chalk up a victory and go on to the next one without realizing that even our first *ba’al teshuva* is still in need of assistance.

Much in these areas has already been accomplished; we need to build and expand on the very good work that is already in place. To be frank, this requires major financial commitments; if the Orthodox community is unable or unwilling to take up the slack, some of this funding may have to come from foundations outside of the Orthodox camp, a prospect which

raises sticky questions of control. We need to have more people committed to *kiruv*; perhaps the growing cadre of *ba'ale teshuva* should themselves be enlisted in this effort. The yeshivot should place a higher value on outreach activity. At the same time, those who desire to enter *kiruv* fields should be provided with special skills beyond traditional erudition in Talmud: training in counselling and in sensitivity to the often volatile human emotions they will be facing; exposure to difficult *hashkafa* issues not always adequately addressed in the yeshiva curriculum; the halakhic issues that *ba'ale teshuva* regularly face with family and in the workplace; the parameters of *tokhaha* and *lifne iver*; as well as training in writing and public speaking. At present, many of our best and brightest simply flounder in dealing with these dilemmas. Surely we owe them a little assistance. We need better public relations to get our message out to the hordes of apathetic Jews whose interest could be sparked if the right methods were used.

Investment of resources and increased professionalism, however, are only one side of the coin. Outreach is too important to be left to the professional. Every Jew is, and must be, a potential teacher. Far too often, we shun the outsider out of fear, embarrassment or awkwardness. Many may feel incapable of addressing the deep, philosophical issues that (they feel) the *ba'al teshuva* or the “not yet frum” Jew will invariably pose. Yet there is no shame in admitting we don't know and that our warmth, concern and sincerity may touch our brothers and sisters far more deeply than whatever brilliant answers to their questions we may manage to come up with. The obligation on each Jew to make the name of Hashem beloved can start in small ways: a cheerful good morning to our neighbors, complimenting our co-workers, being exemplary in our conduct in the workplace, the market, or the street. Perhaps, because of our long history of *galut*, we have acquired a remarkable defensiveness and even embarrassment about our *Yiddishkeit*. We avert our glances as we pass our neighbors; we don't respond with a “good shabbos”; we demean other cultures gratuitously; we are fearful of initiating contact because we'll be sucked in further than we are ready to go. To some degree, there is a public persona of rudeness or lack of delicacy in interpersonal relations that many find profoundly disturbing, a result of not caring what the world thinks of us. To the extent any of us share these failings, we must commit ourselves towards their eradication. As always, the best way to influence others is to improve our selves.

Some general observations for dealing with both the *ba'al teshuva* and the “not yet Orthodox”:

(1) Separate out the core of *Yiddishkeit* from its sociological trappings—the fact that someone wears a knitted yarmulke in shul is not as important as the fact that he is in shul. A different *rebbe*, a different

way of doing things, doesn't mean he's wrong. Define your priorities; learn what is important and what is secondary.

(2) Respect the person you're dealing with; don't view him as a mere object for your *mitzva* to be discarded if your attempts are unsuccessful. Treating a person as an object for your spirituality and merit demeans that person's *tzelem elokim* and will ultimately be sensed and resented.

(3) Recognize that *kiruv* is effective only if it comes from a caring and loving heart and a sense of respect for the person's ability and character, and only if it takes place in an atmosphere of mutual learning and shared growth—we who are committed learn from our *ba'ale teshuva* and do not merely teach them. In some ways, they may be greater than we.

(4) *Ba'ale teshuva* are people of accomplishment, talent, and *mesirat nefesh*, people who have made great sacrifices in their attempts to live Jewish lives and are worthy of our admiration, not our put-downs.

(5) Success does not have to be measured by 100% observance. The goal is not necessarily to make someone Orthodox but to help others become better Jews who are more receptive to Torah and Kedusha. In that process, every *mitzva* counts and, as such, there are no real failures in *kiruv*. Moreover, whether or not you're "successful" may in fact be besides the point. Remember that the *mitzva* of *ahavat Yisrael* may well apply even if the person *never* becomes observant.

(6) Continue to grow in your own *Yiddishkeit*. If Jewish life and Torah observance is vibrant and exciting to you, the excitement will be contagious. If your Judaism is stale, boring, and unexciting, that too will be communicated.

(7) Be a source of *kiddush Hashem* in family life, interpersonal relations, and honesty in business. In the long run, showing the ennobling effect of Torah will do much more to influence others than multitudes of sermons. The bonus is that this involves no more effort than the *Shulhan Arukh* already requires.

(8) Remember that success in *kiruv* is a divine gift. You do no one a service by diluting, compromising, or distorting the teachings of our faith in order to make them more palatable.

(9) Be sensitive to the very serious halakhic issues that outreach activities may present and be willing to abide by halakhic dictates even where personally uncomfortable or where they seemingly have detrimental impact on *kiruv* prospects.

The soil for *kiruv rehokim* is fertile; the souls are just waiting to be ignited. At a time when society has begun to sense the emptiness of a life devoted exclusively to the material, the world is ripe for an infusion of *kedusha*.

3

Contemporary Jewish education for women is superb. Our seminary graduates have far better grounding in Jewish belief, philosophy, halakha, and Tanakh than most of the average graduates of our yeshivot. The halakhic and historic reluctance to provide women with formalized instruction in Talmud has opened up marvelous vistas of Torah thought that for the most part remain unexplored, if not inaccessible, by most of our yeshiva graduates. If anything, we should be seeking ways to incorporate parts of Bais Yaakov curricula into the yeshivot rather than seeking a greater masculinization of the former. Without entering into the halakhic discussion of what texts are appropriate for female instruction, most would agree that women need and should have a wide array of classes at a high intellectual level. These opportunities should be made available for mothers as well by providing child care services and the like. Certainly, Hazal did not contemplate the anomalous and illogical situation of the well-educated professional woman who remains ignorant of her sacred heritage.

Attitudes are, of course, a different matter and are much harder to change. With the rise of the feminist movement, Torah Judaism has been assaulted with a barrage of concerns: Why *mehitza*? Why not have women's services, aliyot, rabbis, cantors, or sofrim? Learned responses are formulated and occasional concessions are made; but as soon as one issue is answered, another pops up. I am convinced that the angst that so many women feel is not a function of this or that specific issue (after all, how many women do want to be rabbis?) and will not be dissipated by a dispassionate, coolly-objective halakhic analysis of such issues. Rather, rabbis and teachers, men and women, must become attuned to hear and respond to the questions that are not being asked- the silent cry from the heart asking how do I fit in? Am I appreciated? How do I relate to Hashem? Who are my role models in my tradition and what should I learn from them in trying to be a *bat Yisrael*, wife, and mother? It is only in the context of a total appreciation of the overall content and structure of Jewish family life and only in the experiencing of that life that these concerns can be addressed. Otherwise, one is simply engaged in the futile exercise of shooting ducks in a row and having new ones appear.

To that end, we must stress to both men and women that the home, rather than the synagogue, is the focal point of Jewish life. We must cultivate and inculcate our young men, including *kollel* fellows and young Torah scholars, with an appreciation of family life, a sense of the importance of gratitude and admiration for one's spouse, and a commitment to spend time and communicate with one's spouse. If we don't internalize or believe our own pious platitudes, why should women view them as sincere?

We must identify the “core” meaning of being a Jew. It is only because of our spiritual impoverishment that we have reduced Judaism to a series of public rituals, the performance or nonperformance of which marks one as observant. What about *ahavat Hashem*, *yir’at Hashem*, *gemilut hessed*, *bitahon*—spiritual goals to which men and women are equally enjoined to aspire? Seen in perspective, the differences between men and women comprise only a relatively small part of Torah life and even within that small part, women may participate as an “*ena metzuvah ve-osah*.”

We must open up avenues for intellectual advancement within halakhic parameters. In our day and age, women should be encouraged to grow in Torah knowledge and insight. *Shi’urim* must be provided for men and women offering Torah perspectives on relationships, family life, and child rearing. Jewish insights on the balancing of professional, personal, family, and communal obligations are especially helpful for today’s women. Far too often, our students have no grounding in these sensitive areas and certainly, *ba’ale* and *ba’alot teshuva* need to see how the Torah speaks to their concerns and problems.

We must make sure that women feel welcome in the synagogue. There is no reason why an *ezrat nashim* should be filthy or unattractive. To the extent halakha permits women to assume certain positions of authority within the synagogue structure—and this must be determined by the *mara de-atra*—their input should be gladly accepted. Shuls, schools, and the like should assist with child care arrangements to enable mothers of young children to attend events or *shi’urim*.

We must strive to create communities where we are models of considerate spouses and loving parents. At the same time, we must pay special attention to the single woman. Where does she fit in? How does she achieve her potential? Is she simply in a holding pattern?

Women must try to recapture their authentic voice—their historical expression of Judaism forged through bonds of community and family—rather than blindly copying male symbols. Women’s relationship to each other and to Hashem becomes impoverished and demeaning when it is nothing more than an imitation of someone else’s *derekh*. The fact that halakha may technically permit certain deviations from long-established ritual practices doesn’t necessarily mean that such deviations are proper. Manipulation of halakha is, I feel, a band-aid, a stopgap measure that may usefully be employed on a short-term basis but cannot possibly create any long-term benefit. It will invariably lead to either a dilution of halakhic commitment or engender increasing hostility and frustration.

It is only the discovery of the uniqueness of their role and having that uniqueness appreciated by others that will ultimately allow women to achieve their ennobling, redemptive potential. As such, perhaps their specific questions won’t be fully answered but they will cease to be an

obsession. Then, all of us—men and women—can get down to the real business of how to be Jews, *‘ovde Hashem*, and fine human beings so that we may live life rather than endlessly talk about living it.

4

Can there be tolerance without compromise? Can I remain firm in my convictions but avoid communicating sanctimonious and arrogant attitudes of “holier-than-thou”? Admittedly, this raises a difficult dilemma. Generally speaking, the more commitment one has towards an ideal—the more important it is—the less tolerant one will be towards its abrogation. Yet, ironically, the Torah itself seems to demand two contradictory responses. Avraham Avinu, possibly the first outreach professional, is described as Avraham ha’Ivri, a person whose convictions were so strong and steadfast that he could withstand all the pressures in the world. The whole world could be on one side and he could be on the other. Yet that same Avraham, solid, immovable, uncompromising in the rectitude of his beliefs, is the pillar of *hesed* who perceived the redemptive potential of Godliness even in the depravity of Sodom and prayed on their behalf, welcomed idolaters into his house to offer them food, drink and comfort, and brought thousands under the recognition of God through neither criticism nor rebuke, but by love, concern, and compassion. Pinhas, who exhibited zealousness in the eradication of an evil that threatened to destroy Israel, was the same Pinhas who is described as the grandson of Aharon, the “lover and pursuer of peace.” Only one who acts out of selfless love and concern for all Jews has the right to assume the mantle of the zealot. (See Sihot R. Hayyim.) The Sages were well aware that the obligation of rebuke necessitates an extraordinary measure of sensitivity, concern, and love that may very well be lacking today. Accordingly, they wondered if there was anyone in *their time* who was capable of meeting its requirements or if indeed a misplaced or overly harsh rebuke could do far more harm than good. In light of the fact that we may be incapable of giving proper *tokheha* coupled with the general *hester panim* in the world around us, many have convincingly argued that the halakhic categories of *rasha* do not apply to the vast majority of irreligious Jews and the mitzva of *ahavat Yisrael* is fully operative. Whether this be accepted or not, this pejorative category certainly can have no application to a believing shomer mitzvot whom we are absolutely commanded to love and not to embarrass or harm, regardless of whether he subscribes to my manner of dress, speech, minhag, etc. In short, we should consider the following points:

While we are enjoined not to water down, dilute, or distort our teachings and beliefs, we must be cognizant that the mitzvot of *ben adam lehavero* are part of Torah and that the concepts of *kevod ha-beriyot* are legitimate halakhic considerations that must always be taken into account.

We must recognize *emet* even if it does not appear in the form we are used to.

We must be non-judgmental, respecting the inner spirituality and the Godly potential of persons who have not yet chosen the full path to Torah and certainly of those who have. We must recognize that irreligious Jews are in actuality the “not yet religious” (to use Rabbi Riskin’s felicitous expression), who can be brought to Torah not through criticism and rejection but through love and concern.

Last, we must be cognizant of our fallibility, our weakness, and our ignorance of the proper parameters of *tokheha* (admonition). Remember that the arrogant and smug cannot remain in the presence of Hashem.

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David Ebner:

I must preface my response to the symposium questions with two remarks:

1) The questions are grounded in the assumption that there are, in fact, problems. Space limitations necessitate answers which assume the form of cursory generalizations. I remind the reader of the Janus-like observation of Justice Holmes that man’s task is to make generalizations, but that no generalization is worth a damn.

2) I live in Israel and, although most of my work is with American students, my experience and self-definition are no longer fully rooted in the American Jewish community. Nonetheless, whether as the madman of the Nietzschean parable or the outsider of the social science model whose disconnections allows the objective weighing of human reality, I hope that I may add some small contribution in stimulating thought and action.

1

The American Orthodox community has been unusually successful at addressing these issues. Responsa literature stays abreast of the dizzying pace of social and technological change while awareness of the demands of Halakha is fairly widespread. Orthodoxy is self-confident and no longer burdened with the last generation’s fear that the only future for halakhic concerns was that of a fossil or sacred relic. Everybody is *glatt*, pure vegetable shortening is known to be a misnomer, and Dugan’s products are a dimming memory of the way things used to be. *Eruvin* are the American equivalent of the JNF forests of our youth and video recorders are the technological improvement to the popular “heter” to put the television on a shabbat clock. Not only can students unselfconsciously wear yarmulkes in Harvard Yard, they can reasonably look forward to *shomer shabbat* residencies in the best hospitals.

Of course, in the wider community the problems are so numerous that they defy cataloging. Our fellow Jews appear halakhically terminal (so why be concerned if the Conservative movement ordains women?) and cousin Martin's children are not Jewish despite a Cohen patronymic. The issue raised in the stormy debate of the past about our position vis-a-vis the legitimacy of the "other branches" of Judaism is becoming a moot point. The Jewishness of Beta Israel may be a vital halakhic issue; patrilineal descent or non-Orthodox conversions are not. And surely no halakhic authority of any school will allow participation in mixed Rabbinical groups in which non-Jews would be addressed as Rabbis.

Thus, other than the problem of our state of mourning for the spiritual demise of the greater House of Israel, the Halakhic questions do not seem overwhelming. However, to paraphrase Rav Yisrael Salanter: "In my *Shulhan Arukh* there is a problem."

Max Weber lamented the fact that the modern heirs of Calvinism whom he knew as capitalists appeared to be "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart." Without entering into the legal intricacies of the question of intent in *mitzvot*, the fact remains that the Rema finds fit to gloss the very beginning of *Shulhan Arukh* with the reminder that God-consciousness and awareness are the very foundation of Jewish law. Why we are acting as we do and who the audience is are the very *raison d'être* of Halakhic Judaism. Bereft of this dimension, we are Mertonian ritualists, mere bureaucrats of Divine, Inc. Absent this awareness, we may regularly sit at Elijah's feet but we shall never be so foolish as to slaughter the oxen.

Of course, what I am suggesting may itself be the most fundamental issue of the religious life. American Orthodoxy, from the gourmet glatt restaurants of Manhattan to the chandeliers of Boro Park, has traded in the dream of holiness for the Jeffersonian focus on happiness and its cultural manifestation in comfort. "If I had the strength," said Rabbi Moshe of Kobryn, "I would go up to the roof above the marketplace and shout that you are sinning. For the Torah wants us to be holy and you are not."

We awake to wash our hands and carefully measure the proper amount and we must do so. But are we doing so because we shall soon stand before God's altar? Is the water a washing away of and purification from the evil spirits of the night in which "You dozed, and watched the night revealing / The thousand sordid images / Of which your soul was constituted"? Is the thread that runs through the life of the American Orthodox Jew one of the sanctification of God's holy name? Or is it a mad attempt to live a compartmentalized life in which the body is Jewish while the jugular pulse beats to the rhythm of success and happiness defined by the civil religion?

Indeed, these questions are not new to Orthodoxy nor endemic to the American experience. Nonetheless, the openness and opportunity pre-

sented by America are of such dimension that the danger is invidious in its very silence. For many, the Emancipation meant that one could be a member of European society but, as Heine noted, the price of admission was baptism. America doesn't require this union card; instead it beckons with the siren call of the possibility of *menuval bireshut haTorah*.

That great sage of the American spirit, Dwight D. Eisenhower, put it best in two profound statements. In the first he maintained that to be an American one had to have a religion but it made no difference whether one was Protestant, Catholic, or Jew. Imagine that! The Jew can eat kosher and say all the requisite *berakhot* as long as he eats apple pie and sends Mom a card on Mother's day. In the second, he defined an atheist as one who didn't care who won the Notre Dame vs. Southern Methodist University game. And how loudly we cheer the American dream team, even if we wave the pennant of halakha.

The result of being robbed with a six-shooter or a fountain pen remains the same. We are being conned out of holiness in the Disneyland shopping center and entertainment disco of America. But the con man succeeds because his pigeons want so desperately to believe that his brand of snake oil will be the elixir of wealth and eternal life. Can we be saved by checking for *shatnez* in our clothing while admitting it in our hearts? If Jewish history has generally been peopled with villainous *goyim* and is "a nightmare from which we are trying to awake," our American dreams are those of Maimonides' deep slumber in the vanities of time in which the yearly call of the shofar is an alarm set on the lowest volume.

Indeed, I would suggest that much of the infighting among the Orthodox groups is directly related to this problem. Of course, I do not discount the sociological reality of distinct and disparate European communities finding themselves in the same shtetl and arguing about which *nusah* to *daven*. It is an expression of their will to survive and remain faithful to their ancestors as much as a will to power. However, I am troubled by the suspicion that much of this may be a contest in which matters of dress and style become the final arbiters of who has assimilated less, more, or not at all. I am troubled because in the end assimilation is a matter of the spirit before it is a matter of the body. I am troubled because this obsession means that God is less our audience than is our fellow Jew.

The sensitive reader may object to this argument as being akin to Martin Buber's harsh critique of Orthodoxy. However, the fact that charges are raised by enemies does not vitiate them. Inwardness, spirituality, or the living presence of God may be the buzz-words of our detractors but this should in no wise detract from their critical importance if we seek our continued spiritual excellence or mere cultural survival in the melting pot-pluralism that is America.

However, outer action and inner passion are not mutually exclusive

and we are not called to make an either/or choice. From a sociological perspective, when Halakha becomes a shell enclosing empty space or American values, it will not protect us from assimilation. Those who think it will are the victims of their own Trojan horses. In its attack on Modern Orthodoxy, the right wing claims that the advocates of *Torah u-Madda* have allowed the Greek “pig” in the Temple. But Greece had many faces and they were not all philosopher’s masks. Halakha itself recognizes that an improper thought (that may ultimately be rooted in convenience) can render unfit the sacrificial efficacy of even the most kosher animal.

Is there hope? Certainly. But only if we are ready to admit that what we agree upon is the great American dream—and how we agree on that! The question of membership in the New York Board of Rabbis is not unimportant, but it pales in light of the question of New York values.

Finally, I cannot help but end with a note that primarily concerns those Jews who classify themselves as Modern Orthodox or Centrist. Specifically, those Jews who maintain that the State of Israel and the effort that is here taking place are positive values in Jewish life (aside from the *mitzvah* of living in the land) are faced with a serious problem. If such a Jew earnestly recites the prayer for the welfare of the *State*; if he says Hallel, even without a *brakha*, on Yom Ha’atzmaut; and if all of this is said with genuine intent, why in the world does he not consider *aliya*? If the answer boils down to the issue of comfort, whether it be in the size of house or car or the fact that his life may be interrupted for thirty days every year by an Army reserve call, it is worth thinking about. I recognize that this may sound like a broken record playing a very old song but sometimes truth doesn’t sink in until it is heard many times.

Many immigrants saw the abandonment of *shabbat* observance as a necessity for survival in America. Yet, there were those who remained firm and succeeded without abandoning *shabbat*. It is considered a great victory for Orthodox Jews that many states protect their right to Sabbath observance in employment by law. Is Israel not the latter-day equivalent of *shabbat*? After all, everybody knows that you can’t make a living in Israel. “Self-deception,” notes Peter Gay, “substitute[s] good reasons for real reasons.”

George Steiner has characterized the fall of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe as being primarily related to their people’s frustration with the denial of Western comfort and their frenzied drive to participate in “the long march to California.” If they get near the front of the bands of marchers they may find one most odd: it marches quickly backward, its feet carrying it West while its face turns to the East. How terribly odd!

And how terribly odd that a journal generally associated with that stream of Orthodoxy can have a symposium entitled “Divided and Distinguished Worlds” in which the issue of Israel for *Orthodox American Jews* is not explicitly raised. Is the issue passé only 42 years later?

2

The Alter of Novardok once defined his theory of education that led to the establishment of a magnificent network of yeshivot. "Sow everywhere," he said, "and reap where it grows." From the work of the Rabbi London brothers to those of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; from the efforts of NCSY and YU Seminars; from the establishment of Young Israel to that of Project Seed to National Jewish Outreach, from the tireless efforts of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz to those of Rav Moshe Besdin, we have the right models and inspiration. What we lack are the numbers. The Orthodox community must see this as the American equivalent of the Israeli *hesder* yeshivot and recognize that a spiritual war is being fought and precious souls are being slaughtered in the trenches of assimilation. Until such determined decision, we may win battles, important battles, but we shall lose the war.

The depth of Torah is so boundless and the meaning of Judaism so profound that when properly and devotedly carried to the community of the unaffiliated it cannot fail to strike root. In any case, our numbers are small. But why are so few serving in the ranks? The ghetto mentality, the circling of the wagons, is not without value but neither is the ransoming of captives. And when the ghetto mentality is predicated on the consideration that it is more comfortable, is that not the very cancer of the religious life of which we have already spoken? Is it truly *pikuah nefesh* for us to educate and demand from our children that they spend a part of their early married life in this effort? Or would this be too much of a break from the race to pass Go and collect the funds that will enable the purchase of yet more property?

If we are not all *ba'ale teshuva*, then we are either complacent scoundrels or exalted angels. *Teshuva* is an essence of Torah and Judaism since all humans sin. The suspicion and condescension that are so often attached to those in whose presence *tzaddikim gemurim* cannot stand is an indication of our religious failing and the lies we tell ourselves. Certainly there are *ba'ale teshuva* with problems which they are neurotically trying to resolve through halakhic Judaism. But, to be brutally blunt, there are *frum* from birth Jews whose religiosity is equally neurotic. I am not naive and I know that there are special issues here but they are just that, special and limited. I do not see the *ba'al teshuva* who criticizes Orthodoxy for being unconcerned with the tens of thousands who die of starvation every day throughout the world to be any less or any more of a nudnik than the born *frum* who checks my *tzitzit* or is sure he can explain the death of a million children in the Holocaust. In fact, I don't consider him a nudnik at all. And when a student tells me that another *ba'al teshuva* has rejected him for a possible *shiddukh* because he is not to be trusted in his religious dedication, I may comfort him with a warm word, but I cry inside.

3

This issue cannot be answered without reference to the success or failure of contemporary Jewish education for men. I think the picture is fairly complicated and the issue of attitudes toward women are partly a result of that complication. However, we should not mistakenly imagine that if women were as fully educated in Talmud as men under the present system, success will have been attained. We might just have as many women graduates who can't read a line of *Gemora* properly as there are now men in the same educational predicament. (This is irrespective of the fact that they might be able to "say over" a complex *sevara* or even express themselves in the "right" jargon.)

Space limitations force me to limit my remarks to this point although this is merely an introductory observation. However, I would close with the record of a nightmare that Rav Moshe Besdin once recounted to me. He dreamed that he was called to be a witness for a plaintiff who was suing his yeshiva because his twelve years of education had left him functionally illiterate. He could not read a Rashi without an interlinear translation. Rav Besdin found it a nightmare because truth and justice would demand that he testify against the yeshiva. And, I would add, that those schools which see no problem in cheating on tests in secular subjects so that their students will have more time to become Jewishly literate are merely exchanging textual literacy for moral illiteracy.

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Moshe M. Eisemann:

I feel a vague sense of unease in trying to grapple with the issues raised in this symposium. Clear thinking is difficult against the background noise of grinding axes. What does the third question have to do with "divided and distinguished worlds"? Are we really divided by "minor variations in dress and custom"? Who determines what is minor and what is major?

In short, the agenda seems loaded—and that may be a part of the problem.

1

The question presupposes that it is a good thing for the Orthodox community to be "brought together" rather than to allow itself to be divided by "minor variations in dress and custom." I believe that the premises are incorrect and the problem therefore a spurious one.

People may dress in a particular way as an easy way of announcing their identification with a particular group, but it is never the mode of

dress which gouges out the chasm that separates the respective ideologies from one another. A black hat and a *kippa seruga* respectively, cover heads which harbor profoundly differing ideas about the nature of *Kelal Yisrael*, *Medinat Yisrael*, *Emunat Hakhamim* and a host of related issues which are anything but trivial. If the two groups find it hard to communicate, it is because they believe honestly and passionately that the other side is misreading Israel's history and destiny in ways which shake the very foundations of our being.

I have been in a *yeshivat hesder* and heard the *haredi* community described as heretics [!] because, from their perceived attitude towards the *Medina*, they clearly "deny God's providence in history." I have heard adherents of the *yeshivat hesder* ideology described in similar terms because, so it is claimed, they drain Judaism of all content by going it alone and refusing to be guided by *Da'at Torah*.

These are no small matters. They are worth fighting over. Moreover, they make talk of "major halakhic and religious issues which unite the Orthodox community" meaningless. The opinions held in these areas of cosmic significance color the entire gamut of the religious enterprise.

I have chosen one particular area of tension familiar to us all. There are many others, between other groupings, of equal weightiness and import.

It is simply wrong to claim, in general terms, that we are divided by trivialities.

Are these divisions tragic?

Yes and no.

A *mahloket leshem shamayim*, *Pirkei Avot* reminds us, is not all bad. A *mahloket shelo leshem shamayim* is, of course, catastrophic.

Who are we to judge whether the issues which divide us belong to the one category or to the other?

For those of us who tend to minimize such differences and to view them as insignificant, there is the following to consider:

There may well be such a thing as too much tolerance. If I can remain cool and accepting in the face of perceived heresies, then perhaps it is not because I love humanity so much but because I am concerned too little for Jewish truth—for God.

Sotah 13b teaches that Joseph was described as "bones" (Genesis 50:25) while he was yet alive, because he failed to protect his father's honor (when the brothers referred to Jacob as Joseph's servant). Maharal explains that if we can remain unmoved in the face of terrible travesties, then something, some feeling faculty, must have died within us. We have truly become a bundle of bones instead of a warm sentient human being. I wonder how many such skeletons are rattling around in our tolerant family closets.

My daughter, while studying in a seminary in Jerusalem, went to watch a demonstration—one of the famous *hafganot* against *hillul*

Shabbat. She was all ready to look askance upon the wild people throwing stones. It was not the kind of thing she had been taught. Instead, as she wrote home, that experience changed her life. For hours, she stood next to an old Jerusalem grandmother—the female counterpart of the stone-throwers. Throughout the demonstration this elderly lady was shedding bitter tears. “Shabbes, Shabbes!” she kept on sobbing.

I hope my daughter never forgets that experience.

Those of us who have cried over other’s failings have the right, perhaps even the duty, to condemn excesses. Those of us who have not, had better look within ourselves. If it is true that he who hurls a stone were well-advised to be pretty sure that he is doing the right thing, I believe that the one who feels no urge to do so, must engage in even deeper soul-searching.

I am reminded of a moving passage in a Le Carré novel: “Either you’re in or you’re out. Either you’re involved or you’re not. Or would you rather be Swiss?”

2

There is a great deal that we can learn if we look back at the last twenty-five years of Jewish experience in America.

I recently picked up a copy of *Tradition* from the year 1967. I read the following which I quote in some detail for reasons which will become clear:

This panic on the battlefield of religious belief has struck two extreme reactions in the Orthodox camp. One reaction is paralysis. Some leading and respected Torah scholars . . . have become immobilized at the staggering upheaval that the rampant secularism has caused in the public forum. . . . They have turned to the secure little ghettos of the mind. . . . Having embraced eternity they have abandoned the present. . . . They have become piety locomotives. As the locomotive roars along its track intent only on its destination with complete disregard of the countryside, so do these men, piously aiming in the right direction, roar along the track of their unencumbered faith. . . . Their occasional ventures into the field of the community are basically negative interjections against sitting with deviationists. . . . Their pronouncements . . . are chimney blasts that are sometimes worthy, but often only blacken the sky and obstruct the view.

That *Tradition* today would not, to its credit, print such an article is itself part of the story.

The *roshey yeshivah* were right. They were right in their educational agenda and, note well, although this is not strictly speaking germane to the symposium, they were right in their interdiction against sitting with deviationists. Look well at history, and I think that you may agree.

If indeed our *roshey yeshivot* of yesteryear were piety locomotives, then theirs is the story of *The Little Engine that Could*. The *yeshivot* which

they built, with no other programme than that Jewish young men must be steeped in Jewish learning, have, in the course of time, generated the vast endeavors in *tikkun 'olam be-malkhut shaddai* which we can witness today. The list is endless: mini and community kollels in most medium sized cities; Seed programs which have become truly world-wide, including, this year, the Soviet Union; huge publishing ventures which reach tens of thousands of readers, many of them outside the Orthodox community; *shi'urim* on radio and telephone; *kiruv rehokim* projects of truly heroic proportions, including the astounding *Arakhin* Seminars which alone have helped literally thousands to find their way back; fruitful and ever-growing involvement with Soviet Jewry both here and in *Eretz Yisrael*, and much much more.

The *roshey yeshivot* understood what the writer of the article did not. They knew that by doing our own thing, shutting themselves in the ghettos of the mind, learning, learning and then learning some more, authentic Jews would be educated who would, in the fullness of time, equipped with Jewish knowledge, Jewish will-power and Jewish *yir'at shamayim*, do what needs to be done. A ripple effect would be set in motion which would reach far beyond the Orthodox community. It has by now touched some of the most lost and abandoned of our people. It will, if we have enough sense to stick with it, go on to conquer ever widening horizons.

It is simply not true to say that we have made no inroads at all. We have touched many thousands, and will, with God's help, touch many more.

I think that talking of reaching the estranged millions is an exercise in self-indulgence, working only to excuse us from any effort. We all know that it cannot be done. But if we bend our wills and energies to what we can do, and do very well—build yeshivot, make ourselves and our children authentic *talmide hakhamim* and *yir'ei shamayim*, then we will reach the tens, the twenties, the fifties, and, ultimately will have given a respectable accounting of ourselves.

I have seen no other way which works.

3

The test of whether the education of Jewish women is adequate or inadequate is, in my opinion, the extent to which it imbues them with an intuitive grasp of the nature of the Jewish community and, more particularly, the Jewish home.

I quote Rambam, *Hilkhos Ishut* (15:19–20).

So too did the Sages command that a man honor his wife even more than himself, and love her as he does himself. If he has money, let him devote it to her benefit to the extent that he is able. Let him not be overbearing but speak with her gently. Let him be neither moody nor bad tempered.

So too did they command the wife to honor her husband excessively. Let her stand in awe of him and let her actions be directed by him. Let him be in her eyes like an officer or a king, so that she walks along a path that reflects his heart's desires, holding at a distance all that he dislikes.

This is the way of Jewish men and women who are holy and pure in their marital relations. By acting thus, their married life will be beautiful and admirable.

If some of this sounds strange to modern ears—the problem, I truly think, is with the ears.

Jewish society, as also the Jewish home, is based upon the primacy of Torah learning. The *talmid hakham* is the central figure. He is the inspiration of the community, the glory of the home.

Within the space constraints of the symposium it is impossible to elaborate on the details of such a societal model, but I am sure that readers of *Tradition* can easily fill in the gaps.

In the Torah scheme, the *talmid hakham* is a man. We are enjoined from teaching our daughters the oral law. Rambam's recipe for marital bliss flows from this assumption. This scheme cannot change, will not change, and we ought not to wish to change it.

I have seen the Rambam's system lived in real life—and it works spectacularly well.

I know of no other formula to equal it.

Many years ago I happened to be in the home of a young couple, recently married. I was talking to the lady of the house; her husband was not in the room. During our conversation he came in. As he entered, the young wife stood up and remained standing until he had reached his seat. She then sat down. He was the *rosh ha-yeshiva* of her home, the *talmid hakham* who lent luster to her wifedom—and it is thus that she acted towards him. At the time I said to myself: This will be a happy home. Years passed, the family had more than a usual share of pain and sorrows. Today, the home is as serene and happy as I had anticipated. It is a Jewish home in the very best sense of the word.

Our daughters, it seems to me, are best educated in the *yeshivot* in which we educate our sons. By this I mean that if we can produce men who are true *talmide hakhamim*, *yir'ei shamayim* in the best sense of the word, then the old true and tried ways will work well for us. We will produce a society in which the Torah stands at the head of our value hierarchy, and all of us, men and women alike, will function happily and constructively within the roles which such an ideal community would impose upon us.

Understanding what women, educated today beyond the dreams of their grandmothers, would need in order to achieve self-fulfillment and spiritual growth within such a framework, the paths which lead to their *yir'at shamayim*, what will make them into the spiritual giants which, it goes without saying, they too should and can become—all this can easily

be solved by drawing upon traditional models. None of us need to be reminded of the *neshe hayil* of our past. Our problems arise when we allow foreign values to invade our most intimate relationships. I venture to say that, for the education of the true *bat Yisrael*, for the structuring of the ideal home, for the best balance between the sometimes conflicting needs of men and women, we have nothing at all to learn from secular society.

We have secrets which they do not share.

Go and learn—all else is commentary.

4

I have already overstepped the word limitation imposed by the symposium coordinator and must needs be brief. In any case, it seems to me that the solutions to the question raised here are mainly of the common sense variety.

We should however note in passing that not every “checking up” is “sanctimonious.” We have duties towards each other and, as Rabeinu Yonah teaches in his *Sha‘arey Teshuva*, the mark of the loyal servant is his concern that others too should do their duty.

Perhaps it all goes back to our thoughts on the first question. One man’s sanctimoniousness may be the next man’s loving concern. It all ultimately depends upon how much we really care.

And that just about sums up my thoughts in this paper. If we can find it in ourselves to be more caring of our Jewish values, we will come out all right in the end. Let us not shortchange ourselves. Things are not as bad as they seem; they could be much better if we learned to look for solutions from within.

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Hillel Goldberg:

For ten years, our family was neighbors with a warm and friendly Sefardi family from Morocco. It was no more than three meters from our front door to theirs, and, in fact, virtually no day passed throughout the decade when at least one member of our family did not spend time with theirs. We came to know each other well, and developed quite a mutual affection. I was continually perplexed as to why these Sefardi neighbors harbored a subterranean inferiority complex vis-a-vis Ashkenazi Jews. On the objective plane, there was no reason for it. Their children were reaching heights in Torah study and observance; their cultural traditions were self-validating; their sense of Jewishness was firm and unself-conscious. To a minor extent, I could attribute this inferiority complex to the growth of

ethnic Sefardi politics in Israel in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This political culture, which culminated in the Shas party, posited that Sefardim had been suppressed—regarded as inferior—in Israel. This was true, but my neighbors' feelings were in evidence before the development of ethnic Sefardi politics. In fact, they seemed to have been imported from Morocco itself.

I noticed these same feelings in many other Sefardim with whom I dealt, from contemporaries in *kolel* to vendors of fruits and vegetables, and I was perplexed. How could such feelings be pervasive, especially when they seemed to have no basis in reality? How could they sustain themselves even in geographical locales where no Ashkenazim were present?

I adumbrate here the first sketches of a theory for whose as yet unelaborated character I beg the reader's indulgence. The theory is this: These feelings of inferiority weave themselves backward in history all the way to the Expulsion in 1492. There was something about the experience of being devastated in an irreversible, monumental way that yielded a sense of cultural inadequacy. Perhaps the subsequent Marrano experience, with its undertones of betrayal, also contributed to this. The consequences of this inadequacy were to trumpet customs of Sefardi culture in the Shakespearian sense of protesting too much. Particular customs came to be valued not merely because of their intrinsic religious validity, but also because of their power to reassure their practitioners of their own Jewish worth.

Now a similar malady has infected Ashkenazi culture, this time as a consequence of the Holocaust. Again, the experience of being devastated in an irreversible, monumental way has yielded a sense of cultural inadequacy; here, too, perhaps the Judenrat experience, with its undertones of betrayal, also contributed to this sense of inadequacy. Its consequences are to trumpet customs that once were valued exclusively for their intrinsic religious validity, but now are also valued for the compensating sense of worth they bestow on their practitioners.

Let me be perfectly clear about what is, and is not, the problem. The problem is *not* Orthodox religious differentiation per se. The more distinctions in Sefardi and Ashkenazi custom (and all their shadings) the better, since the Torah vouchsafes individuality of tone and sensibility within the one halakhic corpus. The resurgence of everything from Yemenite *nusah* to Belzer *hasidut* is splendid. The problem arises when individuality becomes an attempt to compensate for some sense of inferiority, however subterranean; since by definition such individuality of religious expression is then taken by its practitioners to signal superiority to other forms of Torah Judaism. We reach a vicious and paradoxical circle: disdain for others' customs derived from doubts about our own, rather than appreciation of diversity within Torah Judaism.

If unchecked, this problem could be with us for some time; since if an obverse gesture of inferiority and superiority in Sefardi Jewry stems ultimately from the Expulsion, Ashkenazi Jewry's proximity to the Holocaust will sustain the Ashkenazi variation on this gesture all the more intensely. Proximity to the Holocaust also exacerbates the gesture. The Israel-related presumption of Jewish superiority in the acerbic suggestion of "Arab transfer," and the Diaspora-related presumption of Jewish inferiority in the abject suggestion of Jewish-Christian intimacy, though seemingly mutually exclusive, are but two sides of one coin: the obverse gesture that devastation engenders.

The problem requires two related responses. The first is *nosei be-'ol 'im havelo*. If the presumption of superiority within individual expressions of Torah derives from devastation, then the response must be empathy—willingness to share in another's pain. The response must be to rise above the implicit or explicit insult purveyed by expressions of superiority, and to appreciate the Torah values and pride they do contain, however imperfectly. This leads to the second response: *ahavat Yisrael*, the genuine, unself-conscious appreciation for each player in the Divine orchestra. *Ahavat Yisrael* can only reinforce appreciation for the pain from which expressions of superiority come. If Jews relate to each other's inner pain rather than to its outer form, which can smack of chauvinism and superiority, Jews can heal the divisiveness in the Torah community. Put simply: Often we are too hard on each other.

Devastation has many faces. In the Expulsion and the Holocaust, devastation was primarily physical; in the free societies in which Jews have increasingly found themselves since the French Revolution, it is primarily spiritual. In both cases, the underlying dynamic is the same. Jews minimally concerned about their Jewishness, who are then touched by the Torah community, are subject to the same obverse gesture of inferiority and superiority as the devastated Sefardi and Ashkenazi communities. Assimilated Jews' discovery of their roots can lead to a trumpeting of their religious expression, reflecting an implicit acknowledgement of the inferiority of their previous lives and a misplaced sense of superiority of the particular religious shading of their new lives. Again, the obverse gesture.

The response of the Torah community to *ba'ale teshuva* too often parallels the response to particular Sefardi or Ashkenazi forms of religious expression: a sense of chauvinism and superiority. Humility is called for, since the two-sided gesture of *ba'ale teshuvah* is that of parts of the Torah community itself. The dynamic being the same, the response must be the same: *nosei be-'ol 'im havelo*, an appreciation for the returnees' burden, which can yield an unattractive chauvinism; and *ahavat Yisrael*, an appreciation for new notes that *ba'ale teshuva* introduce to the symphony of *'Am Yisrael*. As for the not yet *ba'ale teshuva*—

the uninvolved Jewish majority—it is empathy for their pain, their distance from *kedusha*, that will motivate the Torah community to reach them; and it is love for their potential that will make the Torah community effective in reaching them. Again: *nosei be-'ol 'im havelo* and *ahavat Yisrael*. Without the requisite love and motivation, even the best *kiruv* techniques have little lasting effect.

In sum, a single dynamic—oscillation between a sense of inferiority and superiority—undergirds disdainful distinction-making in Sefardi, Ashkenazi, *ba'al teshuva* and assimilated Jewry; and a single dynamic—*nosei be-'ol 'im havelo* and *ahavat Yisrael*—is the effective response.

When imbued with *nosei be-'ol 'im havelo* and *ahavat Yisrael*, Jews know that there is no need to “balance” concern for the community at large with one’s personal level of observance. To set these two concerns against each other is a false dichotomy. To think that outreach work endangers observance is a statement that can only come from a person never involved in, or improperly guided in, *kiruv*. Such a statement is itself evidence of the fear within the subterranean inferiority complex engendered by devastation. Commitment that springs from neither inferiority nor superiority knows that concern for others and concern for oneself are one and the same, affirmatively symbiotic, mutually reinforcing. The best statement of this organic truth is still “To Turn the Many to Righteousness,” the twelfth chapter of *Madregat ha-Adam*, by Rabbi Joseph J. Hurvitz, the “Alter of Novorodock,” originally set forth in 1919. The Alter wrote with a passion that is unique, poetic in its impact and tightly reasoned in its form. A summary of his two arguments pertinent here is, first, the bestowal of the merit of *mitzvot* on others is simultaneously the bestowal of merit on oneself. Second, the process of bestowing merit on others is not an objective accomplishment that nonetheless leaves one subjectively drained, emptied of the benefits of religious fellowship (*haverut*) and growth (*aliya*). To the contrary, this process is a unique way to raise one’s level of Torah knowledge and observance: the process of making Torah understandable to others compels one to make it understandable to oneself in a way unattainable in other settings; and the process of effectively demanding higher levels of observance from others renders it impossible not to make the same demands of oneself.

The way to avoid both sanctimony and compromise is to summon the will—the love and motivation—to teach Torah to uninvolved Jews for its own sake. When the aspiration is not to make someone feel superior or inferior, new Jewish communities are born. New constellations of *kedusha* are created. Also, the effects of devastation on Sefardi and Ashkenazi Jewry are healed, since there is nothing so universally effective in healing divisiveness as the sight of an earnest, loving *ba'al teshuva*, practicing Torah for its own sake. Perhaps this is included in *Hazal’s*

statement, *makom she-ba'ale teshuva 'omedim, tzaddikim gemurim enam 'omedim* (Berakhot 34b).

A lesser face of devastation is Jewish education of women. Do we wish Jewish women to have a secular education so as not to feel inferior to an external, non-Torah standard—and thus to be, in fact, inferior? Or do we wish them to have a secular education so as not to feel inferior to an internal, Torah standard—and thus to feel superior to Jewish women without a secular education? Do we wish Jewish women to be aware of contemporary “culture”—with its slippage into non-verbal discourse and corresponding inclination to violence, promiscuity, and sexual deviance—and thus to be inferior by the Torah’s standards of *tzeni'ut*? Or do we wish Jewish women to be sheltered and *tzenu'ot*, and thus perhaps less able to transmit Torah to uninvolved Jews?

Whatever their differences in practical application, these quandaries do not, in principle, discriminate between sexes; except that, on the curricular plane, the aspiration to make Jewish education for women resemble Jewish education for men misses the point. The ultimate response to these quandaries is to summon a Jewish society in which relationship with God is of the essence—in which cognitive learning, by men or women, is acknowledged to be only part of Jewish education. Cognitive learning must take place in a setting that presumes the *heshek* to pray, and the power to weep during prayer. The most insidious devastation in contemporary Judaism is precisely the disappearance of this *heshek* and this power. Only with their restoration can cognitive learning achieve a place in relationship with God. Only when Jews summon the desire and the power to feel themselves standing in and humbled by God’s presence through *tefilla* will divisiveness depart—will questions of inferiority and superiority become irrelevant. *Devekut* is beyond devastation.

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Matis Greenblatt

Each Jew has a dual identity: he is a unique, special individual and he is a portion of the body or entity of *Knesset Yisrael*, not just the contemporary Jewish community, but the entity that spans all the generations of Jewish history. When a Jew brought First Fruits to the Kohen, he pronounced an amazing statement: “I have demonstrated to God today that I came to the Land.” Though his forefathers first entered the Holy Land many years earlier, this Jew was saying that he himself had entered the land. It seems to me that this passage, though expressed in an almost matter-of-fact manner, contains the startling truth that Jews of all generations are one entity, *Knesset Yisrael*, and from this point of view a latter-generation Jew

did in fact enter the Land. Once we absorb this concept, many chapters of the Torah assume a fresh clarity.¹

If we approach inter-group conflicts with a basic belief in *Knesset Yisrael*, not as an abstract concept but as an operating reality, there is some hope of better understanding.

HALAKHIC ISSUES

The major halakhic issues confronting the Orthodox community are the questions relating to personal status. The problems resulting from inadequate handling of divorces and conversions have reached crisis proportions. Unfortunately, those who have written the most concerning these issues have provided the least satisfactory solutions. They have generally advocated a watering down of standards in the hope of heading off a split in the Jewish people. In reality, the most effective way to prevent such a split is by communicating to our Conservative and Reform brethren that we cannot and will not accept divorces and conversions which do not conform to halakha. The shock waves which reverberated throughout the non-Orthodox communities when the "Who is a Jew" issue was being debated have had a positive, though painful, impact. Previously ignorant individuals gained a new awareness of the disastrous consequences flowing from disregard of halakha. Such groups as "Kayama," whose goal is to prevail upon non-Orthodox couples to conform to Orthodox divorce standards so as to avoid subsequent problems of illegitimacy, have gained greater acceptance in the wake of the "Who is a Jew" debate. One cannot suppress the thought that had the proposed law been passed, the current problem of dealing with non-Jewish Russian immigrants to Israel—between twenty and thirty percent—with all the unnecessary self-sacrifice which that entails, might have been avoided. (Hopefully this group will agree to undergo conversion.)

However, confrontation and conflict are not likely to endear us to our non-Orthodox brethren. Thus, simultaneous with the *semol dokheh*, the *yemin* must be *mekarev*. While we strengthen our Orthodox communities, we must not forget our responsibility towards our non-Orthodox brethren. For after all, they too are part of *Knesset Yisrael*.

REACHING OUR NON-ORTHODOX BRETHREN

"Hillel the Elder said: At a time of ingathering disseminate; at a time of dissemination gather in" (Berakhot 63a).

The former is demonstrated by the intensity and insulation of the *haredi* communities, while the latter is exemplified by the diverse outreach groups. What advice would Hillel provide for a generation comprised of centripetal and centrifugal forces operating simultaneously?

Both ingathering and dissemination have their dangers. Individuals involved with their own group's development must and should believe in the integrity and legitimacy of that group's approach. However, by concentrating exclusively on their own group they may lose sight of their responsibility to *Kelal Yisrael*. Therefore, Hillel admonishes that we disseminate. On the other hand, emphasis on dissemination, which frequently necessitates contact with alien or antagonistic cultures, may take its toll. It is therefore necessary to "gather in" or recoil into the warmth of a purer, more comfortable atmosphere. To be effective and remain authentic in our generation requires a balance between dissemination and ingathering.²

THE AWARENESS OF THE CREATIVE AND DYNAMIC NATURE OF JEWISH HISTORY AND LAW AS AN ANTIDOTE TO POLARIZATION

There is both a conscious and unconscious tendency within the Orthodox community to shy away from discussion of the dynamic nature of Jewish history and halakha. It seems simpler to act as if Judaism is inherently static and that we are merely transmitting a closed system to our progeny and future generations. The result of this aversion is that Orthodoxy is frequently portrayed as narrow, rigid and inflexible. This image impedes Orthodoxy's ability to reach large segments of the non-Orthodox world. Admittedly, a not insubstantial segment of the Orthodox community also believes that this image is accurate.

I believe that it is time that Orthodoxy (a term which observant Jews have unfortunately been saddled with by their opponents) articulate its creative and dynamic nature. If Judaism is the reflection of the "Torah of life," then surely God must have given a Torah applicable for all times. Yet, the Torah given at Sinai was eternal and unchanging. This apparent paradox is resolved by the Torah itself: "For the Great Voice does not cease," meaning that God continues to speak through his inspired emissaries. And even when prophecy had ceased the Sages continued to know the truth, in the words of Nahmanides, by "the Holy Spirit within them." Thus, the true Sages incorporate within themselves a unique marriage of the human and the divine which is the essence of the Oral Law. The *Shelah hakadosh* points out that in our daily blessing we refer to God as the one "who gives the Torah" rather than the one "who gave the Torah." The Torah is a "*ma'ayan ha-mitgaber*," a gushing well,³ containing within itself a latent source of renewal for each generation.

The works of the Polish hasidic masters of Pshiskha, Ger, Izbitz and Radzin and particularly the great R. Zadok of Lublin, the Netziv, Rabbis Abraham Y. Kook and Yitzhak Hutner articulated a dynamic view. Unfortunately, very little of their writings is available to the English reading

public. Several writers have begun to explicate the dynamic, Orthodox view for the modern reader.⁴

HISTORICAL AWARENESS AND THE CONCEPT OF KNESSET YISRAEL

Though more knowledge of history is available to us than ever before we live in an ahistorical era. What should be the attitude of the Jews towards history and how does it fit in to our world view? Rabbi Hutner once wrote that Jewish history is really Torah. The problem is that it is Torah which has no Rashi.⁵ The biblical period during which prophecy was available to interpret events is amply documented. However, once prophecy ceased, the Jewish people seemed to lose interest in history. It was as if to say, 'without divine assistance in interpreting events, why bother.'⁶

Within the past century, there has been an explosion of knowledge of Jewish history. Though we are unable to play the role of prophets, there is much that we can learn and understand about the spiritual challenges and achievements of our forefathers. In the centuries before Emancipation,⁷ their responses to the world around them—stimulated by the challenges they found—added new dimensions to the depths of Torah. These accruals of spirituality, whether medieval philosophy, post-expulsion Kabbala or eighteenth-century Hasidut, have in a very dynamic way increased the spiritual stature of the collective self of *Knesset Yisrael*, an entity of which every Jew is a part. Thus, greater historical awareness is, in effect, greater self-awareness. Such a perspective of history will help break down the barriers within Orthodoxy.

But, one may ask, with such a broad perspective how can one remain loyal and devoted to one's own group? Basically, there are three approaches to one's own unique way of life: First, it is the ideal, preferred or best way. Second, it is part of a dialectical process in which the ideal will be attained by interactions with other paths and systems. Third, they are different paths, each of which may have legitimacy in its own right.

Most controversies arise because of those who assume the first approach; after all, it is human and natural to assume that 'my way is *the* way.' It is satisfying and soothing and provides emotional strength and security. The problem is that it is not true and that we no longer have the luxury of allowing this approach to prevail. The third approach, while more difficult than the first, seems attainable. But how could such an approach be imparted? I believe that a concerted effort must be made by educators to incorporate aspects of different paths in the educational process while stressing and underscoring one's unique path.

Also, a greater knowledge of history reveals the multiplicity of approaches but need not negate or diminish the legitimacy of one's own

approach. Torah education must continue to strengthen one's individual path, while educating each child not merely to tolerate other approaches but to recognize their legitimacy, providing, of course, that they fall within the parameters of authentic halakha and hashkafa.

For example, variations in dress have ample halakhic precedent. The distinctive dress of Hasidim and the dress of Orthodox Jews who wear the same clothing as their non-Jewish neighbors are both grounded in the views of *poskim*. Many Hasidim are unaware of this halakhic difference of opinion and look askance at the modern dress of other Orthodox Jews. Conversely, many modern Jews look with disdain at the 'old-fashioned' dress of Hasidim, not realizing that there is halakhic basis for a distinctive Jewish dress.⁸

On the other hand, one cannot overlook the relative laxity in observance among *certain* "Centrist" Orthodox Jews as compared with their more traditional brethren.⁹ Also, the level and intensity of Torah study among Centrist Jews is generally far less than among the traditionalists.¹⁰ Such disparities relate to fundamental matters and would seem to make understandable the traditionalist's wariness of those Centrists.

INTERGROUP MOBILITY

One of the best means of increasing understanding between different groups within Orthodoxy is greater tolerance for an individual born into one group moving into another group more congenial to his makeup and development. We all know of cases of individuals born into more restrictive environments who were able to flourish in more open surroundings. Similarly, children of liberal homes may feel more comfortable in a more Yeshivish or Hasidic environment. In either case, greater acceptance by family and community would go a long way towards better understanding between the groups. Looking upon the child as a defector or renegade exacerbates relations with the child as well as between the different groups.

INVOLVING THOSE INDIFFERENT TO THEIR JEWISHNESS

This is a vast topic. One area which has not been sufficiently utilized is television. At a bare minimum, nationwide talks before each major Yom Tov by a major figure would help to reach many Jews with little or no awareness of their Jewishness. Although quite expensive, the resources are available and such exposure could be a first step for many estranged Jews.

Rav Kook never tired of emphasizing the importance of enhancing Torah leaders' knowledge of the spirit of Torah, meaning the whole area

of Aggada, thought, Musar, Kabbala, etc. Such emphasis would strengthen their love and appreciation of Torah and enable them to communicate their love to the unlearned masses. This is how he interpreted the rabbis' statement 'if you see a generation which does not love Torah, gather in': deepen your understanding of the meaning of Torah and then you can disseminate.¹¹

NOTES

1. See for example, Deut. 29:14, "... and those who are not here today." Also, Shabbat 146a; Deut. 17:14, "... and they will not sin again," implying that the seemingly innocent people sinned by virtue of the sin of the *Zaken Mamre*; Deut. 21:8, "Forgive your people Israel whom you redeemed" and the remarkable interpretation of this passage in Horayot 6a; the concept of "*En Tsibbur Met*"; R. Yehuda's concept of *gerara*, by which innocent *shevatim* must bring a *par he'lem davar* because of the sin of one *shevet* (Horayot 5a). Of course, the concept of *Knesset Yisrael* as a separate entity, and not merely the sum of all Jews, is not new. See Rabbi A. Y. Kook, *Mishpat Kohen*, p. 273, letter to Rabbi M. D. Plotzki. For the view of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, see Gerald J. Blidstein, "On the Jewish People in the Writings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," *Tradition*, Spring 1989. Also, see Rambam, *Yesode HaTorah*, 8:1, "... And why did they believe in him [Moshe] ... because our eyes saw ... and our ears heard ...," and Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen, *Meshekh Hokhma* to Exodus 19:8. I believe that this concept is broader than "*Arevut*," which may be derived from it.
2. Rabbi A. Y. Kook, *En Ayeh*, volume 11 (Jerusalem, 1990), Commentary to Berakhot 63a.
3. See Rav Kook's use of the simile of the well in his brilliant introduction to *En Ayeh*.
4. See, for example, Yaakov Elman's *R. Zadok haKohen on the History of Halakha*, *Tradition*, Fall 1985, pp. 1-25; Rahel Katz, *Mishnat HaNetziv* (Jerusalem 5750), chapters 1 and 2; Shalom Rosenberg's *HaHitgalut Hamatmedet, Shelosha Kivunim*, in *Hitgalut, Emuna, Tevuna* (Ramat Gan, 1976), pp. 131-143. For Rabbi Hutner's concept of historical replications or renewals of the Sinai Covenant, see his introduction to *Darkei Moshe haShalem to Hoshen Mishpat* (Makhon Yerushalayim, 1979), and the abbreviated version in translation in the Spring/Summer 1988 issue of *Jewish Action*.
5. *Iggerot uKetavim* (New York, 1981), pp. 162-3.
6. See Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* (Shoken Books, New York), Chapter 1.
7. Post-Emancipation Jewish history, which saw an unprecedented decline in Judaism, must be treated differently. However, it is interesting to note that the movements for Aliya to Eretz Yisrael which arose in both hasidic and mitnagdic camps coincided with that decline.
8. See Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Iggerot Moshe*, *Yoreh De'a* 1:81; Z. Y. Zimmels, "Inyan Hukot haGoyim beShe'elot uTeshuvot" in *Sefer haYovel le-H. Albeck* (Jerusalem, 1963), pp. 409-411.
9. Samuel C. Heilman and Steven M. Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials, Modern Orthodox Jews in America* (The University of Chicago Press, 1989). See for example pp. 173-178. Though Heilman's sample does raise questions as to the extent of its validity, it is at least valid for those sampled.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77. Rabbi Norman Lamm took cognizance of this disparity in his 1989 Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Lecture, as did Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein in his speech at the 1990 convention of the Orthodox Union.
11. *En Ayeh*, 7.

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Michael Rosensweig:

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, the Jewish community faces no dearth of formidable and even monumental challenges. The range and scope of the issues that confront us is impressive. Some issues reflect age-old and indigenous problems common to other eras, or at the very least as yet unresolved by the previous generation. This list includes such crucial policy questions as how one should balance the various interests of competing values. What, for example, is the proper equilibrium between the obligation of outreach to others and religious self-development both with respect to allocation of time and resources, and the potential sacrifice in terms of ideal standards of religious conduct? The twin phenomena of a predominantly irreligious Jewish world threatened by even further erosion on the one hand, and a growing *ba'al teshuva* movement on the other, have served to accentuate and further complicate the fundamental tension between the insular and integrated perspectives and impulses in Jewish communal life that have often been a subject of debate throughout our history.

Other challenges stem from, or at the very least are further complicated by, specifically contemporary factors and circumstances. These, by virtue of the fact that they constitute uncharted territory and inasmuch as they invariably touch upon matters that are controversial, represent a potential threat to the very cohesion of the already fragmented halakhic world that transcends the objective issues themselves. The proper role of modern technology in areas that concern halakhic practice—be it in the realm of Shabbat, medicine, etc.—is a case in point. Yet, the most thorny halakhic concern of our age is unrelated to any scientific or modern advance. It can be traced to the unfortunate realities of the Jewish world, and even in part to our own failure in the religious community to impose and apply uniform standards. There is probably no single issue that is more crucial to the present and future of *Kelal Yisrael*, and more potentially divisive, than the question of personal status and *yohasin* as it relates to marriage.

The fundamental problem, of course, whether it take the form of *safek mamzerut* or suspect *gerut*, has always inspired a special sense of urgency given the stakes involved, and is one which is indigenous to any Jewish community. Obviously these questions have necessarily been confronted by halakhists throughout our history. There are, however, important differences between the modern problem and its classical antecedents. For one thing, the very concept of community in the narrow geographic sense has been eroded, if not entirely obliterated. Previously, one could assume specific roots for individuals, with the result that members of their community could vouch for their personal identity and status, insuring some semblance of *hezkat kashrut* on this basis. Given the present

mobility of the Jewish world, this factor of an ongoing stable and knowledgeable unit has all but disappeared. Moreover, the staggering numeric proportions of this question in our day—the results of civil marriage and divorce, intermarriage, and the recent phenomenon of the growing *ba'al teshuva* movement, and further escalated by the historic emigrations from Russia and Ethiopia, radically distinguish the modern problem. This reality and the not inconsiderable factor of the spotlight afforded by modern communication and travel with its attendant result of almost total and immediate visibility of the entire Jewish world, effectively transform what was previously an individually focused question of personal status addressed by specific *poskim* into a question of public halakhic policy with staggering implications and potentially frightening ramifications with respect to the future of Jewish unity in its most basic sense. This transformation is particularly significant when one considers the subtle yet crucial difference in perspective that may legitimately result when one must evaluate factors in terms of broad policy, as opposed to simply considering the merits and idiosyncratic circumstances of a particular case in isolation. The fact that despite this consideration the specific circumstances and details of individual cases remain halakhically relevant, further complicates this picture. While there are precedents in the halakhic treatment of the status of groups such as Karaites for a basically group-oriented approach to personal status, clearly the issues in our day are much more diverse inasmuch as they do not reduce primarily into ideological categories.

That the glare of the spotlight coincides not only with the epidemic proportion of the dilemma, but with an unfortunately unprecedented era of fragmentation and even hostility within the Torah world in all of its segments, has clearly compounded the difficulty of confronting these questions. The fact that beyond the instances of civil marriage and divorce, the problem of personal status is partially linked with the actions of the Conservative and Reform movements in the areas of *ishut* and *gerut* is another complicating facet. Notwithstanding the more concrete halakhic determination of individual cases, the thorny question of implied religious recognition constitutes a legitimate consideration in terms of the public policy implications of resolving status, but one which generates intense emotions, adding to the distinctively modern flavor of this dilemma, and exacerbating the potential for its resolution. At a time when factors have coalesced that demand a consensus approach to a problem which threatens the national destiny of a unified *Kelal yisrael*, many of the same factors are responsible for the inexcusable divisiveness of the Torah world which militate against the likelihood of such a consensus emerging.

And emerge it must. Notwithstanding this pessimistic portrayal, the only means by which we can confront this growing problem, and thereby

fulfill our responsibility to the future destiny of a unified Jewish world, is if we take a constructive approach that will allow the gravity of the problem to inspire us to transcend our relatively petty differences in an attempt to grapple with this national problem. In addition to the compelling moral-halakhic obligation to *Kelal Yisrael* per se which is so primary that it needs no further reinforcement, there must be a pragmatic recognition by the entire Torah world that the implications of these questions affect all of us equally. The encouragement of the process of *teshuvah* and *kiruv rehokim*, if it is sincerely pursued, necessarily must preclude glossing over this problem of problematic personal status.

At the same time, the resolution of this issue requires a consensus not merely because it is desirable generally, and particularly in the matters of great import, but because anything less simply would be ineffective or counterproductive, substituting one problem for another. If the result of any given approach to this issue will be the irrevocable alienation of any significant part of the Torah world in terms of future prospects of marriage between different sectors within our world, the price paid for a comprehensive resolution of some of these problems, even if halakhically compelling and convincing to its proponents, may very well prove to be too steep. In a situation of this magnitude, it is questionable whether any group has the luxury generally reserved for sincere and competent *poskim* of simply relying on his own conviction on the basis of *en le-dayan ela ma she-'enav ro'ot*, and rooted in the principle of *elu va-elu divre elokim hayyim*. In this sense, every part of the halakhic world is hostage to the general consensus of that whole world with respect to this issue. If it becomes impossible to achieve even a relatively unified consensus, it would be more desirable to confront every case on an individual and ad hoc basis, as problematic as this might be.

In any case, it is the projection of this sense of overriding urgency of common obligation and interest that represents the first step in mobilizing a cooperative effort towards a comprehensive review of options. The possibility that significant groups of Jews committed to Torah would be unable to intermarry, or that *sifre yahasin* would conventionally replace any semblance of *hezkat kashrut*, clearly mandate that concerted effort be undertaken to at least explore the possibilities of alternatives.

Such an effort if it is to have even a remote chance of success must take place far away from the glare of the public spotlight. It must be undertaken in a spirit of confidentiality in order to eliminate as much as possible the pressures that inevitably result from the involvement, and even the knowledge of specific constituencies. Moreover, the issues in question involve the determination of subtle halakhic categories and entail the delicate weighing of competing halakhic considerations, not the least of which is the inherent tension that exists between the importance of projecting high religious standards as both an ideal and a means of

protection of the integrity of the halakhic system in an era in which that system is correctly perceived as very vulnerable to other societal pressures, and the value of dealing sensitively and sympathetically with the many sincere individuals whose very status is at stake through no fault of their own. Determinations of this sort are the exclusive domain of responsible *ba'ale halakha*, and are jeopardized by the interference, however sincerely motivated, of the larger public. The misconception popularly trumpeted in certain circles that where there is a halakhic will there is a halakhic way, is not only patently incorrect, but reveals a total insensitivity to the dynamics of halakha, and even constitutes an insulting trivialization of the integrity of its processes. There are halakhic issues that are in the final analysis intractable, notwithstanding the pain of *ba'ale halakha* who empathize with the victims of such circumstances. Moreover, the integrity of the halakhic system and process is a value which cannot be underestimated, for in its absence the entire structure and fabric of the halakhic world literally unravels. This consideration is often lost on the broader *kehilla*, but is passionately felt by all *ba'ale halakha* who perceive themselves as entrusted with this delicate legacy. It is these considerations that lead us to conclude that public expectation and advocacy that transcend the initial urgency to bring an issue to the agenda of halakhic discourse cannot but undermine the elusive goal for an emerging consensus. The historical-halakhic responsibility to *Kelal Yisrael* demands nothing less than an exhaustive effort of cooperation and analysis to this end, as well as the maximizing of conditions that might contribute to its success.

Perhaps in setting aside our squabbles and rising above perceived agendas and even legitimate ideological and spiritual differences in the name of common commitment to halakha and the advancement of its values, the Torah community can refashion a relationship of mutual respect and purpose among its constituent parts. Such an achievement would constitute a great *kiddush Hashem* and would establish the foundation for a much more effective presence in the larger Jewish community.

Rambam, in *Hilkhot Mamrim*, formulates his classic three-tiered description of *Bet Din haGadol* by concluding with their national function—*u-mehem hok u-mishpat yozeh le-khol Yisrael*. Apparently, Rambam perceives this function not merely to flow from their elevated status, but as constituting a dimension of that very status itself. Thus, he elaborates that the Torah relies upon them and that all believing Jews are obligated to base their religious behavior on their rulings—*lismokh ma'aseh ha-dat 'alehen*, and to generally lean on them for support in matters of religion—*ve-lisha'en 'alehen*. Thus, responsibility for the future and destiny of the entire community of *Kelal Yisrael* is entrusted to halakhic authorities, and constitutes an important element in their very

self-definition. Ultimately, our generation and its halakhic leadership will be judged not only by the number of yeshivot they establish, and amount of Torah they produce, but also by the extent to which they faithfully dedicate themselves to insuring as much as is possible the future integrity and unity of *Kelal Yisrael*. Hopefully, by virtue of the seriousness with which we address pressing halakhic issues such as these, we, too, will emerge as faithful chains in the *Hakhme haMesora* in all of its manifold dimensions.

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Jacob J. Schacter:

In the late 1940's, the prominent British philosopher, Isaiah Berlin, served as a visiting professor at Harvard University. Upon returning to England, he penned a brief essay describing the type of students with whom he came into contact there. Among other characteristics, he was particularly struck by their intense selflessness, a trait which they expressed to such an extreme degree that he considered it to be one of the "enemies" of "the intellectual life of American universities." Berlin wrote:

The second enemy is the state of mind of academic persons themselves whom war service or some other sharp new experience has made painfully aware of the social and economic miseries of their society. . . . A student or professor in this condition wonders whether it can be right for him to continue to absorb himself in the study of, let us say, the early Greek epic at Harvard, while the poor of south Boston go hungry and unshod, and negroes are denied fundamental rights. . . . With society in a state of misery or injustice, his occupation is a luxury which it should not be able to afford; and from this flows the feeling that if only he can devote some—perhaps the greater part—of his time to some activity more obviously useful to society, work for a Government department, or journalism, or administration and organization of some kind, etc., he might still with this pay for the right to pursue his proper subject (now rapidly, in his own eyes, acquiring the status of a private hobby).¹

The observation is significant for us today because it reflects precisely the opposite of what exists now on the university campus and in society at large. Instead of a burning passion to help others even at the expense of personal advancement, what is emphasized today is a desire for personal growth for the sake of one's own economic and social aggrandizement with a concomitant disregard for the needs of society as a whole. So much of university life today is geared to pre-professional interests (I once addressed some Brandeis University students planning to be rabbis who founded a group known as "the pre-rabbs") in a world

which, on the whole, stresses the value of the personal over the public, of self over society.

It is unfortunate that this mentality pervades in a large segment of the contemporary Orthodox Jewish community as well. To put it in the most positive way: the welfare of other Jews (whether economic *or* spiritual) is simply not an important item on our agenda. As long as I and my family are well and financially secure, and as long as my shul (or *shtibel*), yeshiva, *eruv* and local *mikvah* are functioning, I am happy, comfortable and satisfied. To be sure, none of those goals is easily and automatically attainable; they take a great deal of commitment and hard work. But, nevertheless, my priorities stop at the doorway to my home, backyard or *bet midrash*.

Such an attitude is clearly lamentable and unacceptable in a world where the total Jewish community is shrinking through the multiple scourges of assimilation and intermarriage. A sense of Orthodox triumphalism felt and expressed in some circles today is ludicrous and laughable in the face of the incontrovertible evidence that, in spite of all the dramatic achievements of *ba'al teshuva* and *kiruv* organizations in the last few years, we are still losing more than we are gaining. With the exception of a few pockets of strongly committed Jews, American Jewry is diminishing. It is therefore incumbent upon concerned Orthodox Jews to move beyond their immediate families and communities and make some effort to try and influence the larger Jewish world to come closer to Torah and *mitzvot*.

A great deal has been written lately about the importance of *kiruv* in today's society.² I would like to extend this discussion by suggesting other sources relevant to it.

1) A well-known passage in Rashi's commentary on the Torah has made it almost a commonplace to unfavorably contrast Noah with Avraham. "Noah was a righteous man and perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9)—"Some of our rabbis explain it to his credit, for certainly had he lived in a generation of righteous people he would have been even more righteous. Others, however, explain it to his discredit, for only in comparison with his generation was he considered righteous, but had he lived in the generation of Avraham he would have been accounted as being of no importance."³

In a very interesting comment, R. Meir Simha of Dvinsk develops a midrashic passage which contrasts Noah with Moshe. The *Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 36:3)* states: "R. Berakhya said, Moshe is more beloved than Noah. Noah is first called 'a righteous man' (*ish tzaddik*; Genesis 6:9) and then is referred to as 'a man of the earth' (*ish ha-adamah*; Genesis 9:20). But Moshe is first called 'an Egyptian' (*ish mitzri*; Exodus 2:19) and then 'a man of God' (*ish ha-Elokim*; Deuteronomy 33:1)." R. Meir Simha attributes this difference to their different approaches to *kiruv*:

There are two approaches to 'avodat Hashem. One way is [represented by] one who singularly devotes himself to His service by isolating himself. Alternatively, there is one who is involved in *tzorkhei tzibbur*, who belittles himself (*mevatel 'atzmo*) for the *kelal* and who abandons his own soul for their sake. By logic, one would think that the one who isolates himself would rise higher and higher while the latter would fall from his position. . . . Nevertheless we find that Noah isolated himself and did not rebuke his contemporaries and, as a result, it was said about him that he too was worthy of destruction. . . . Therefore, after he was called an *ish tzaddik* he went down from his position and was called an *ish ha-adamah*. But Moshe who was called *ish mitzri* and who was forced to go into exile which points to a lowering of the soul, since he devoted himself to the Jewish people by killing the Egyptian, he was called *ish Elokim*, for he reached the ultimate of perfection which is possible for a human being to attain.⁴

Noah entered the biblical stage in a blaze of glory but, having focused only on his own betterment, ended his life debased, considered as being nothing more than an *ish ha-adama*. Moshe, however, is first introduced by the lowly description of "Egyptian" but having devoted his life to the Jewish people, he was able to attain the highest appellation of "a man of God." The sense of priorities expressed here is obvious; surely it is better to be "a man of God" than "a man of the ground."

2) One of the concerns which militates against involvement in *kiruv* work by those who at least take the time to consider it seriously is the fear that exposure to the values and lifestyles of non-observant Jews might dilute the intensity of their own commitment to Torah. Indeed, R. Moshe Dov Wolner discourages someone from leaving a Torah community for the sake of engaging in outreach in a distant city bereft of a Torah atmosphere. He notes that the *Pithei Teshuvah* cites the opinion of the Radbaz that a Jew is not obligated to put his own life in jeopardy in order to save his co-religionist even from certain death.⁵ While a full treatment of this issue (*hiyyuv le-hakhnis et 'atzmo be-safek sakanah kedai le-hatzil et haveru mi-vadai sakanah*) from the context of *kiruv* work is a desideratum, suffice it to say that this ruling is by no means universally accepted and R. Yosef Karo, for one, maintains that such an act is, indeed, required.⁶ Although R. Karo did not include this ruling in his *Shulhan Arukh* because, according to one opinion, it is not cited by either the Rif, Rambam, Rosh or Tur,⁷ this does not simply allow someone to dismiss his or her responsibility for *kiruv* on the grounds that they may be endangering their own spirituality in the process. The *Pithei Teshuvah* continues with a caveat, cited in the name of the *Sefer Agudat Ezov*, that is very important in our context: "However, one must weigh the matter very carefully to determine whether, in fact, there is a real possibility that he may be indeed endangering himself. He should not be too strict about this. . . ." ⁸

Once again, the implications of this for our current predicament are obvious. How many of us have thought through the situation so carefully and have come to an objective determination that there is a strong

possibility that our *ruhniyut* or *yir'at shamayim* will, indeed, be seriously in danger if we engage in some form of *kiruv*? After all, we even have a *berakhah* and *havtahah* from the late R. Moshe Feinstein z.t.l. that we will not be adversely affected by such work. At the end of an English essay based on oral remarks he once made, he is quoted as having said: "When one does this (i.e., *kiruv*) in the manner prescribed by our Torah leadership, then God will give him strength so that association with people estranged from our religion will not harm him. When one follows the ways of the Torah, he is indeed protected by God from all harm."⁹ Given such a blessing, can we genuinely excuse our lack of involvement with non-observant Jews? Hardly.

3) The most important thing to remember in this context is that the act of exposing another Jew to the beauty and meaning of Torah and *mitzvot* has the potential not only of being for his or her benefit but for ours as well. Not only does it result in a stronger, more firmly committed Jewry at large which ultimately clearly redounds to the benefit of us all, but the benefit is more direct than that. In a famous comment on the rabbinic dictum of *kol yisra'el 'arevim zeh ba-zeh*, all Jews are responsible for one another, the Ran writes: "All of Israel are the guarantors (*'arevim*) for one another's *mitzvot*, and since his friend has not fulfilled his obligation, it is considered as if he did not fulfill his either."¹⁰ My interest in my friend's level of observance is not simply an expression of my concern for *his* welfare (in this world and the next) but fulfills a very important need for me as well, for if my fellow Jew does not observe *mitzvot*, then I am not considered as fully observing them either. This is a most remarkable, far-reaching principle which, if taken at face value, must perforce preclude *anyone* from being a fully observant Jew today.

This same notion (that doing for someone else is really doing for yourself) is found in another context as well. In his *Mishneh Torah*, the Rambam rules:

It is one's duty to rejoice and be of cheerful heart on these [festival] days, together with his children, his wife, his grandchildren, and all the other members of his household. . . . Thus children should have clothes and pretty trinkets bought for them, according to one's means; and men should eat meat and drink wine, for there can be no real rejoicing without meat to eat and wine to drink. And while one eats and drinks himself, it is his duty to feed the stranger, the orphan, the widow, and other poor and unfortunate people, for he who locks the doors to his courtyard and eats and drinks with his wife and family, without giving anything to eat and drink to the poor and the bitter in soul—his meal is not a rejoicing in a divine commandment, but a rejoicing in his own stomach. It is of such persons that Scripture says, "Their sacrifices shall be to them as the bread of mourners, all that eat thereof shall be polluted; for their bread is for their own appetite" (Hosea 9:4). Rejoicing of this kind is a disgrace to those who indulge in it, as Scripture says, "And I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your sacrifices" (Malachi 2:3).¹¹

It seems to me that the Rambam is not maintaining that my obligation of *simhat yom tov* is a double one: first, to gladden myself and, second, to gladden my friend but, rather, he is stating that gladdening my friend is an extension of gladdening myself. For, rules the Rambam, if I did not bring *simhah* to my friend, I have not brought it to myself either.¹² In a similar vein perhaps, one can suggest that bringing the *simhah shel mitzva* to a non-observant Jew is bringing the *simhah shel mitzva* to myself. Since, I am obligated to serve Hashem with *simhah* (Psalms 100:2), I cannot do so without also involving my friend. Indeed, I am not doing it for him or her (only); I am doing it (also) for myself.

Lest one think that such activity is a major undertaking which requires a high level of training as well as a substantive commitment of time, be advised that this is not the case at all. *Kiruv* opportunities abound in a multitude of circumstances—with our relatives, neighbors and professional colleagues—and do not require great intellectual or emotional sophistication. Explaining the significance of *Shabbat*, *kashrut* and *netilat yadayim* in the office, inviting relatives for a *Shabbat* meal and studying *Humash* with a neighbor for a few minutes a week are all easy ways of fulfilling our obligation. If each of us undertook even just this small commitment, how different would the Jewish community look and how much more assured would be our future as a people.¹³ To go even further, outreach need not even involve direct interaction with others. If we were to just act in an ethical manner when it came to all our interpersonal human relationships, our impact could be great, for those who would observe us could not fail but be impressed by the decency and morality of a Torah way of life.¹⁴ Furthermore, our goal need not be a full “conversion” to observant Judaism. Even a small change can go a long way in bringing a Jew one step closer to Hashem and His Torah.

The obligation to do so is ours. We must recapture the passion for communal involvement felt by those young students Isaiah Berlin encountered at Harvard three and a half decades ago. And the time to do so is now.

But while the relationship between Orthodox Jews and their non-Orthodox brethren is primarily a function of apathy and indifference (on the grassroots level, the two simply have really very little to do with one another), relations between the various groups within Orthodoxy are much more charged with passion and emotion. They are like members of the same immediate family who are very close because they share identical ancestors and experiences but whose very closeness is the cause of much anger, tension and frustration. While I am optimistic that the current proliferation of organizations devoted to *kiruv* will have a

positive impact on the “not yet observant” community and will motivate at least a few concerned observant Jews to reach out to their co-religionists, I am far less optimistic, even quite pessimistic, about a change in the state of affairs that currently exists between the different segments within the Orthodox community today—between Hasidim and Mitnagdim, and between the so-called “modern Orthodox” community and the “*yeshivishe*” or *haredi* community. There is a growing level of outright hostility expressed especially by the latter to the former in each of these two cases that is very disturbing, frightening and devastating for *kelal yisrael*. It is not only the style of their criticism but the substance as well that is offensive, their acting as if their adversaries are only pretenders to the crown of Torah rather than its authentic spokesmen and interpreters. For surely they are authentic, as are those who criticize them. And, indeed, what these men, distinguished gentlemen all, have in common is far more significant than what divides them.

Will we survive disgraceful name-calling and scandalous behavior? Of course. Jewish history has seen worse, far worse. In the latter half of the fifteenth century a controversy broke out in Regensburg between the followers of the renowned R. Yisrael of Bruna who recently settled there and those of a R. Anshel who had been serving as rabbi of the community for some time. R. Moses Mintz describes how, in the course of the conflict, “crosses were etched on the seat of R.Y.B. (R. Yisrael Bruna) in the synagogue and the word *apikorus* was written thereon, in addition to several other curses, insults (*hirufim ve-gidufim*) and other such (statements), the likes of which had never been heard before. . . .”¹⁵ Close to three centuries later, R. Ya‘akov Emden accused R. Yonatan Eybeschutz in print, among other things, of behaving in an extraordinarily outrageous way!¹⁶ And yet, Judaism survived.

But, surely, at great cost. No one could possibly deny that Judaism paid a very dear price for these sordid public spectacles. Rabbinic authority was dealt a decisive blow, particularly by the Emden-Eybeschutz controversy, one from which it never recovered.¹⁷ Similarly, whatever vestiges of *kevod ha-Torah* and respect for its greatest luminaries that exist today must, perforce, be damaged by the current unbecoming behavior. This is a state of affairs that the Jewish world today can ill afford.

Will the situation change in the near future? As I already stated, I don’t think so. To paraphrase a famous quote, “Hell hath no greater fury than an ideology spurned.” But we must continue to call for the lowering of the level of the rhetoric and when we are tired of doing so, call for it again. In this regard, and in this regard only, we must be fanatics, mindful of Winston Churchill’s definition of that word: “A fanatic is someone who will not change his mind and refuses to change the subject.” Perhaps some day the situation *will* change and all of those energies expended in

attacking other Jews will be spent in positive, constructive pursuits, *le-hagdil Torah u-le-ha'adirah*.

NOTES

1. Berlin's article was printed in three parts in a London weekly, *Time and Tide* XXX:46 (12 November, 1949); 47 (19 November, 1949), 1157–58; 48 (26 November, 1949), 1187–88. The quote is from pp. 1157, 1158. It was brought to my attention by Bernard Bailyn, "Fixing the Turnips," *Harvard Magazine* (March–April, 1991), 77–78.
2. Most recently, see the very interesting presentation in Moshe Weinberger, *Jewish Outreach: Halakhic Perspectives* (Hoboken, 1990). Rav Yehuda Amital's paper on the subject will be published in the forthcoming proceedings of the Orthodox Forum, *Jewish Tradition and the Nontraditional Jew*, ed. by Jacob J. Schacter.
3. This is an elaboration of a talmudic statement in the name of R. Yohanan cited in *Sanhedrin* 108a. There the contrast to Avraham by name is not mentioned.
4. *Meshekh Hokhmah* (Jerusalem, 1976), 9a (on Genesis 9:20).
For a similar idea, see *Sefer Hatam Sofer 'al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1959), 44 (on Leviticus 19:2).
5. See *She'elat Hemdat Tzevi*, I, #44; *Pithei Teshuvah*, *Yoreh De'ah*, #157:15; *Hoshen Mishpat*, #426:2; *She'elot u-Teshuvot haRadbaz* III, #627. This responsum is cited in M. Weinberger, *op. cit.*, 58.
6. He bases this on the opinion of the Talmud Yerushalmi. See *Kesef Mishneh*, *Hil. Rotze'ah* I:14; *Bet Yosef*, *Hoshen Mishpat*, #426:2.
7. *Sefer Me'irat 'Enayim*, *Hoshen Mishpat*, #426:2.
8. *Pithei Teshuvah*, *Hoshen Mishpat*, *op. cit.* See also *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, *Hoshen Mishpat*, #426:4; *Mishnah Berurah*, *Orah Hayyim*, #329:19.
For recent surveys of this issue, see Matityahu Blum, *Sefer Torah laDa'at* I (New York, 1984), 166–68; Elimelekh Winter, *Shema'atin* XXIV:87 (1987), 45–50. See also R. Yehudah Gershuni, "Pidyon Shevuyim le-Or ha-Halakhah," *HaDarom* XXXIII (1971), 31–34.
9. See "A Time for Action," *The Jewish Observer* IX:4 (June, 1973), 6. Many of the points made there are also found in his *Iggerot Moshe*, *Even ha'Ezer* IV:26:4.
10. *Ran on Rif*, *Rosh Hashanah* 29a (8a in *Rif*), s.v. *tani*. For this principle, see *Sanhedrin* 27b, *Shevu'ot* 39a.
This *Ran* is already cited by M. Weinberger, *op. cit.*, 126, n. 6 in the context of *kiruv*.
11. *Hil. Yom Tov* VI:17–18. See also *Hil. Hagigah* II:14.
12. For developments of this point in the Rambam, see *She'elot u-Teshuvot Ketav Sofer*, *Orah Hayyim*, #78; R. Betzalel Zolty, *Mishnat Ya'avetz*, *Orah Hayyim* (Jerusalem, 1976), #7, 16b–17a; R. Moshe Sternbuch, *Mo'adim u-Zemanim ha-Shalem* VII (Bnei Brak, 1981), #115, 14a–b.
13. For other arguments against *kiruv* work being best left only to the "professionals," see Yitzchok Chinn, "The Four Sided Question," *The Jewish Observer* XV:7 (Summer, 1981), 4–6; David Gottlieb, "The Amateur's Burden in Reaching Out," *ibid.*, 7–11; Nosson Scherman, "The World is Watching," *ibid.*, XIX:3 (March, 1986), 15–17; Ze'ev Kraines, "The Guy at the Next Computer Terminal," *ibid.*, XXII:3 (April, 1989), 11–15.
14. See *Yoma* 86a regarding *kiddush Hashem* and *hillul Hashem*.
15. *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharam Mintz*, #76. See Eric Zimmer, *Harmony and Discord* (New York, 1970), 124.
16. R. Ya'akov Emden, *Akitzat 'Akrav* (Amsterdam, 1752), 9a.
17. For some comments on the diminution of rabbinic authority at that time, see C. Abramsky, "The Crisis of Authority Within European Jewry in the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History* (Alabama, 1979), 13–28. Most recently, see Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York, 1990).

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1

The assumption of this question (and, indeed, of the entire symposium) seems to be that what divides observant Jews are “slightly differing opinions or modes of dress” and that it would be best to de-emphasize these distinctions in order to bring the “Jewish community together” in a climate where “Torah values and living are one.” This is an assumption which I do not share. Further, it can potentially inflict severe spiritual damage should the message be heeded.

We might divide contemporary Orthodox Jewry into four distinct groups. They are the Hasidim, the Yeshivish, the serious Modern Orthodox and the hopelessly confused Modern Orthodox. It would seem safe to say that many who gather under the banner of Modern Orthodox have only a hazy allegiance to the doctrines and laws of Torah. I have written and spoken at length on this state of affairs elsewhere and see no reason to restate the obvious here. There is also an element among the Modern Orthodox that is thoroughly Torah-committed and may be best represented by those in the Yeshiva University Beit Midrash or in Israeli Hesder Yeshivot.

The differences between the “confused” Modern Orthodox and other Torah Jews are not merely “slightly differing opinions” or “modes of dress.” These people may subjectively be *tinokot shenishbu*, but objectively they are *kalim* who willfully and comfortably ignore basic Torah laws and doctrine. Easy social mingling with them could prove to be most dangerous to serious Torah Jews. They may, of course, be approached by experts in *kiruv* with that goal in mind, but to suggest that they be brought into the Torah community as “ideological” and communal equals is flawed philosophically and threatening to all normative Torah lifestyles.

To illustrate: A Torah Jew would not want his children frequenting a Jewish home where, for example, washing, *benching*, *tzitzit*-wearing, laws governing women’s dress and hair-covering, laws prohibiting mixed dancing and swimming, laws prohibiting certain forms of entertainment (the list goes on and on) are comfortably ignored, nor would he want his children attending a school or camp where the children of such homes predominate, nor would he himself want to *daven*, learn or socialize in an environment where products of such homes form the majority.

My comments have thus far covered the “confused” Modern Orthodox (a sizable contingent, with strangely silent leaders); the serious Modern Orthodox are quite different. They are part of the Torah world, and it is to that world that we now turn. Here, it seems to me, almost all

heated differences are the result of arguments which touch on questions basic to the spiritual and physical survival of *Kelal Yisrael*. As such it seems unrealistic and probably wrong to ask that these disagreements be seen as “slight.”

Is that which divides Neture Karta from Gush Emunim “slight”? Is Rav Shach’s critique of Lubavitch “slight”? Does Oz VeShalom see Kach as a force with which it should live together, or vice versa? Was the Belzer Rav’s attack on the Eda in the early eighties based on “modes of dress” or a “minor divergence”? Can the Satmar condemnation of Lubavitch be seen as “differing opinions”?

All the above and many other instances are cases where leaders and segments of *Kelal Yisrael* see other leaders and segments as guilty of grave doctrinal error, at times bordering on or going beyond heresy, or at least representing immediate spiritual and at times physical danger to all Jews. It is inconceivable that these conflicts be not heated. In fact, it seems to me that those who constantly ask “Why are we fighting?” are generally those who are indifferent ideologically and hence emotionally, to the questions at stake. Kach, Neture Karta and Oz VeShalom see each other as distorting Judaism and endangering Jews. This is a matter of conviction and passion—and should be.

(Conceivably a person might say that he finds the truth of the above questions beyond him. He is, therefore, an agnostic on the above matters. Yet, he too would have to admit that those who have opinions cannot be calm or quiet about them.)

America, by its very nature, poisons its inhabitants into spouting meaningless cliches such as “everyone is entitled to his own opinion,” “at least he’s sincere,” or “if it makes him happy.” All these slogans are primitive extensions of Enlightenment relativism. Torah Jews are by their nature full of passion, a passion that abhors heresy and decadence. It is only natural that if a Torah Jew feels that someone else is distorting the Torah’s message, he will be angered by it.

As for halakhic issues, the Orthodox community should confront one area which comes immediately to mind: Jewish–Gentile relations ranging from *gezel ‘akum* to *hitgarut ba-umot*. Whether it be the approach to Gentile monies by the traditional Right, or Gentile lives by the Religious Zionists; whether it be storming a police station in Williamsburg or a convent in Auschwitz; whether it be endorsing Gentile candidates for public office who support the liberal decadence that envelops us simply because they dispense government funds freely, or publicly disgracing the President or the Pope because they fail to respond to our personal political agenda, we need to rethink seriously the implications of all halakhot governing our status as a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” in Exile.

2

The problem of attracting Jews not in touch with their Judaism is a tragic one of pressing importance. What we must not forget is that the heresies of Reform, Conservative and Reconstruction are outside the pale. Some Orthodox Jews have stumbled into terrible errors on this point due to a misguided devotion to *kiruv*. We do no one a service by blurring these life-and-death distinctions.

The spreading of the Torah message should ideally proceed on three levels. Two are of immediate relevance while the third is of long-term significance. First, we must recognize the increasingly non-cognitive, non-verbal nature of contemporary man. Mass consumerist capitalism, egalitarian democracy, the near-total erosion of authority and tradition, and heterogeneous pluralism cannot be pursued for decades without the chicken coming home to roost. The chickens are roosting, TV man is upon us and his reflective capacity is severely limited. Assimilated Jews are captives of this deluge of primitivism, and outreach efforts must be geared to the light and sound stimuli of modernity. Less talk and more pictures, less reading and more loud noise. Undoubtedly this is a sad situation (a cynic might ask how much many of those who bemoan this state contributed via their political and social efforts to bringing it about?) but one we need acknowledge if mass *kiruv* is our goal.

Second, if all Torah Jews embodied Torah virtues at all times in all places, then the assimilated would regard us as "princes of God in their midst." In business, while driving, when standing in line in the supermarket or riding public transportation, we are always representing *Torat Hashem*. If we would only act accordingly, the results would probably be pleasantly shocking.

A well-rounded, rationally sound Torah apologetic is far from completed. Questions have been raised over the past two centuries from assorted disciplines and philosophies, many of which remain unanswered. These answers should be attempted by genuine Torah scholars. I think our generation as currently constituted will not be much influenced by the lucidity of their efforts, but who knows whether future generations, forced into a catacomb-like existence in a West uninhabitable by civilized man, may not turn to us for guidance. We should be there with appropriate answers if and when that happens.

3

"Contemporary Jewish education of women" is quite a broad phrase. Girls in the Ramaz schools are taught rather differently from those in Mea She'arim. Essentially, Torah education for women is divided between those who accept the role assigned to women by traditional society and those who feel that modernity's critique of that role carries some (or

much) validity. (The Bais Ya'akov movement, as originally conceived, accepted the traditional view but grudgingly made certain concessions to the dangers presented by changing times. This should not be confused, as it often is, with the contemporary rejection of the traditional ideal of Jewish womanhood.)

Throughout the centuries, based on numerous sources in Torah, Jewish women achieved their purpose before God by way of faith and trust in Him, caring materially and spiritually for their homes, providing their sons and daughters with the basics of *emuna*, supporting and encouraging the Torah learning of their husbands and sons, their households, and scrupulously adhering to the law and spirit of *tzeni'ut*. This image is a direct refutation of modernity's dogma of absolute egalitarianism and causes an extraordinary amount of bitterness among those women (and men) whose agendas and feelings are shaped by the *zeitgeist* first and Torah second.

The antidote to all this is to cease functioning as a terrified catering service eager to provide those upset by Torah norms with a Judaism that will not disturb the value system of the *New York Review of Books*. The assault on the traditional role of women is currently only in vogue among white Europeans. It is not taken seriously in the Third World or among Third World peoples soon to be a majority in the West. Chroniclers of our civilization's demise will probably see it as just another of the frenzies which gripped the European as he performed auto-demolition on his faiths, his races, and his way of life. Surely we as Jews can do far better than pursuing the wisdom of the Donahue show against that of all peoples in all times and places except the post-World War II West.

In general, Jewish women need to be educated from traditional Jewish sources on the beauties and joys of faith and modesty, the calling of a true *eshet hayil*.

4

The standard by which all Jewish behavior is to be measured is *Torat Hashem*. Both our own individual level of observance as well as communal concern are Divine imperatives. The precise parameters of these two claims, at times contradictory, are to be defined by each generation's Torah leaders and *poskim*.

Clearly, though, certain things are definitely illegitimate: we may not falsify Torah in any way in order to be *mekarev* others; we may not sin in order that others may benefit; perhaps most immediately relevant, we must not present Torah options which may lead masses of Jews into an easy acceptance of American lifestyles, values and dogmas, thereby endangering and weakening their faith, causing them to violate serious prohibitions and to neglect basic mitzvot.

In general, “the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God.” Since the “fear of God” is all that the “Lord your God demands” of us, we must always be on guard against sin and compromise. If we fear God and approach *kiruv* in that spirit, then we cannot go too far wrong. If by so doing we cannot, God forbid, bring all of *Kelal Yisrael* back to Torah, then that is, as the Brisker Rav once said in a similar context, “*der Ribbono shel Olam’s heshbon*,” not ours.

I have more difficulty with the phrase “checking up on others.” Both the leaders and the laymen of *Kelal Yisrael* are commanded to worry about the spiritual state of their flocks and peers. This does not imply checking up as much as it does seriously stating, with clarity, passion and love the boundaries of Torah faith and practice. When Rav Aharon Kotler and the Satmar Rav came to America, they were both told that this country was different. Here they would have to compromise their standards. Their fiery refusal to do so contributed significantly to the creation of the flourishing hasidic and yeshivishe communities on these shores.

Did they “check up” on their adherents? No, not in the police-state sense; but they created worlds where Torah and mitzvot are seen as a source of joy and fulfillment and not tedious drudgery. The very notion of “checking up” is connected to seeing Torah as a burden and not a blessing—an attitude I see prevalent only amongst those who present our faith halfheartedly while they open, à la Vatican II, “windows to the world” and reap much the same disastrous results as did that sorry spectacle of compromised faith.

We all must be wary of lowering our standards. Whether it be a Hasidic Jew allowing English to be spoken at home, or whose *bekeshe* grows shorter, or whose *payot* and beard become trimmed, or the yeshiva man enamored by white-on-white shirts, silk ties or a large head of hair, or whose wife maintains the halakhic forms of *tzeni’ut* while having lost its meaning, there is a potential for weakness in all of us. We must preserve the outer forms of our Yiddishkeit as well as their inner essences.

This is a monumental task in the amusement-park atomosphere that pervades much of the contemporary West and always threatens to seep into our communities, homes and souls. The antidote is Torah, prayer, careful and loving observance of *mitzvot*, and an ever-ready vigilance to protect against the outer and inner decadence of our times.

Life is an awesomely complex place. Ideas and options are confusing and our time is frightfully short. Ultimate truths on many issues may be hard to come by. All we know in the end is “. . . fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole of man.” It is Divine counsel. May we all be worthy of taking it to heart.

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