

COMMUNICATION

ARTSCROLL

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

Permit me to make a few comments on some of the material in the Spring, 1981, issue of *Tradition*.

In Professor Levy's review of the ArtScroll works, the opening sentence, as well as the closing sentence are very crass, crude, and offensive. While much of Professor Levy's criticism of the Artscroll publications is valid, nevertheless, the references to a pig and unkosher meat are uncalled for and out of place. I am surprised that you, as editor, let such statements be published. They are unworthy of *Tradition*.

In addition, what makes Professor Levy so sure that the rabbinic portrayal of King David as a Torah sage is anachronistic? While David might not have been a "rabbi," we would nevertheless have expected him to fulfill the injunction to study Torah all the days of his life, as commanded in the Book of Deuteronomy (17:19), as well as in the Book of Joshua (1:8), in reference to the King of Israel. After all, there are a number of Psalms which are very likely from King David himself in which the study of Torah is highly prized and admittedly observed (II. Sa. 22:23 = Ps. 18:23; Ps. 1:2). The early dating of many Psalms is now acceptable even in critical circles.

The reviewer's reference to Chajes as a normative biblical commentator is very strange. If his reference is to Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes, he is no biblical commentator. If he meant his grandson, Tzvi Peretz Chajes, the latter was a follower of the critical school, as is evidenced by his commentary to the Psalms in the series *Beur Mada'i*.

On page 84 of *Tradition*, Rabbi Feldman asserts that Rabbi Soloveitchik's distinguished family begins with Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, the "Brisker Rav." Actually it begins much earlier, with R. Chaim of Volozhin, the disciple

of the Gaon of Vilna. The name of Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik of Brisk (Rabbi Yosef Baer, the *Bet Ha-levi*) would have been more appropriate.

On page 35, Rabbi Spiro resorts to a most specious argument to refute his literary opponent, who cited Hillel's injunction to the heathen: "Do not unto your neighbor what is hateful to you," to buttress his point. Rabbi Spiro calls attention to Rashi's alternate interpretation that the reference is to the love of God as though Rashi intended to deny the love of neighbor as a biblical commandment. Rashi was simply seeking to make the commandment all-inclusive so as to include even God as a 'Re'a'. He certainly did not wish to deny the all-encompassing character of Lev. 19:19 as is evident from Rabbi Akiba's great principle quoted in *Sifra*. Again, how does Rabbi Spiro know that the application of the commandment of love to a criminal refers only to a case where the criminal confessed prior to execution? There is no evidence to such limitation. Does Rabbi Spiro imply that he who has not confessed to his crimes may be tortured? God forbid.

Sincerely yours,

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P.S. There is actually no evidence that Rashi in *Shabbat* 31a is referring to Lev. 19:19. He is referring to the statement of Hillel. See, however, the quotation from *Tanna debe-Eliyahu*, cited in W. Jawitz, *Toledot Israel*, Vol. IX, p. 36 and the notes 9-10. (I could not find this quotation in our texts of *Tanna debe-Eilyahu*.) Rabbi Spiro's reference to *Avot* I points to the very opposite of what he says. Hillel declares the love of mankind as a propadeutic to bringing mankind to the Torah, not the reverse.