

## COMMUNICATIONS

TO THE EDITOR OF TRADITION:

Barry Levy's review of the ArtScroll series of Biblical Mishnaic commentaries is an angry hatchet job which goes far beyond the bounds of good taste. (To begin a review of biblical commentaries by making an unfelicitous reference to a pig is indefensible, no matter how angry the reviewer may be.)

Not only is the review lacking in good manners, it also sets up dubious straw men. ArtScroll, he says, tries to present itself as "modern, scientific, permanent, with class"; and proclaims itself to be "organized, scholarly." The fact is that ArtScroll nowhere makes such claims. Levy derives these claims simply from "signals" which he says are "clear," and "are delivered with all the skill of a sophisticated Madison Avenue blitz." He finds such "signals" in the attractive covers, in the tables of contents, and in other such vague and amorphous sources. Then, having cleverly spotted these signals, Levy proceeds to demon-

strate that they are pig-like, deliberately deceptive signals.

I carry no special brief for ArtScroll. Certainly there are elements within it which are in need of improvement, and for which its editors can be called to task. But this is a phenomenon on the American Jewish scene which should be taken seriously, and it raises a number of thoughtful questions. For example, who is the readership of ArtScroll? Are they graduates of our Yeshivot? If so, what does this say about our Torah institutions whose graduates must resort to English translations and English anthologies? What does ArtScroll's popularity say about modern American Orthodoxy?

These, I submit, are some of the areas which might legitimately have been discussed in a journal such as *Tradition*. The thoughtless and intemperate attack on ArtScroll does little credit to *Tradition*, to the reviewer, or to Orthodoxy itself.

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*The Editors fully concur with the judgment of Rabbi Feldman, a distinguished member of our Editorial Board.*