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INTRODUCTION

The *Aron*, the Holy Ark, had two poles, *badim* with which it was to be carried. Surprisingly, despite the divine design of the Temple, when the Ark was placed in the Holy of Holies, these two poles, which were never to be removed, were not completely contained within the cubits of the sacred chamber and therefore protruded into the curtain, the *parokhet* which separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies.

The Ark containing the Torah was cloistered in the secluded Holy of Holies, where no one, save the High Priest on *Yom Kippur*, may enter. This represents the pristine, unadulterated quality of the Torah. Above the Ark were the *keruvim*, the cherubs, with their childlike faces, representing the innocence and purity of Torah. Yet while the Torah must remain pure, undiluted and unchanging as the day when it was plucked from its heavenly abode to be given to man, it must leave the Sanctum Sanctorum to animate all of life outside the protected environment of the Holy of Holies. The *badim* represent the portability of Torah and its significance in all times, circumstances, places and areas of human endeavor. From its protected sacred quarters, the immutable Torah radiates sanctity and meaning to our ever changing lives. From its secluded private realm, which must be guarded and sheltered, the Torah bursts forth to the hurly-burly of the marketplace and public domain.

The Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *zt"l*, represented in his life's work this dimension of the *Aron*. He protected the integrity of our traditions, both intellectual and practical, from all illicit incursions into the Holy of Holies. But he was not satisfied to live in an ivory tower, isolated from the contemporary scene, for that would have limited the impact, message, and thereby, the grandeur of Torah. He made Torah portable, relevant and alive even in the modern environment, far from the protected existence he had known as a child.

Our Rabbis (*B. Yoma* 54a) interpret the verse, "My beloved is unto me as a bag of myrrh, that lieth betwixt my breasts" (*Song of Songs*

1:13) as an allusion to the protrusion of the *badim* into the parochet. This represents the eternal, life-giving nourishment which the Torah grants us. So too, were we nourished by the richness of the Rav's personality and erudition, "as a nursing-father carrieth the suckling child unto the land which thou didst swear unto their father" (*Num.* 11:12).

When Rabbi Yehuda haNasi died, the bitter news was communicated with the metaphor that the Ark had been captured. Rabbi Yehuda, the author of the *Mishna*, who saved Torah in a time of great transition, personified the Torah, the *Aron haKodesh*. Our own rebbe's brilliant life of commitment and devotion in times of great challenge is also personified by the *Aron*—the *Aron* with the *badim*.

This memorial volume, dedicated to the Rav's memory, is in small measure reflective of the Rav's vast range. I want to thank the Rabbinical Council of America, and TRADITION's editor, Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, for affording me the opportunity of serving as editor of this special issue. Special thanks to Dr. Joel B. Wolowelsky, without whose sage advice on many editorial and technical matters, this volume would not have been possible.