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ISRAEL SALANTER'S SUSPENDED CONVERSATION

> Not everything that one thinks should one say; not everything that one says should one write; not everything that one writes should one publish.
>
> —Israel Salanter

Those who look back on the life of Rabbi Israel Salanter 100 years after his death can only regard it as a conundrum. An acclaimed talmudic scholar, communal leader of Lithuanian Jewry, and staunch opponent of East European *haskalah* (Enlightenment), Rabbi Israel (1810–1883) abruptly departed from Eastern Europe at the height of his influence and moved to Germany, the heartland of Jewish Enlightenment. For twenty-eight years he wandered across Western Europe—to Memel, Paris, Friedrichstadt, Halberstadt, Koenigsberg, and Berlin. His writings, one might expect, would reflect an emergent detachment from traditional culture, a growing awareness of European culture and an increasingly individuated consciousness, but the expected progression seems to run in reverse. It was before Rabbi Israel could read German, and before he left Eastern Europe, that he first articulated his understanding of the unconscious psychological determinants of behavior, attitude, and perception.[1] It was before he withdrew from traditional society that he cloaked his thought in his most personal, self-conscious, and passionate idiom, and it was in Lithuania that his criticism of traditional society was most pungent. Early in the crisis of traditional society in 19th-century Eastern Europe, Rabbi Israel charted a path which set him apart equally from the traditionalist and from the

This article was written in commemoration of the one-hundredth *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Israel Salanter, only fragments of whose greatness we have been privileged to glimpse.

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modernized East European Jewish intellectuals who, like himself, uprooted themselves in disturbed search across the face of Europe.

Idiosyncratic in his vision, Rabbi Israel fit neither the pattern of East European Orthodoxy, which by the time of the closure of the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1892, had sharply and indiscriminately rejected contact with European culture, nor the pattern of the modernizers' attempts, borne out of a perceived petrification of traditional society, to encounter European culture. From Rabbi Israel's perspective, the complexities of the emergent Orthodoxy—the debates between the Hasidim and the Mitnaggedim, the Zionists and the anti-Zionists, the theoretical and the practical talmudists—were overshadowed by their common inability to appreciate what he regarded as Judsism's unconditional demand for social ethics, personal integrity, and psychic health. Similarly, to Rabbi Israel, the complexities of the emergent *haskalah*—the debates between the Russifiers, the Hebraists, and the Yiddishists, between the assimilationists and the acculturationists—were overshadowed by their common renunciation of Talmud as the indispensable sustenant of Jewish spirituality and intellect.

Rabbi Israel founded a pietistic *Musar* movement both to revitalize tradition and to build bridges with the modernizers. Renewal and reconciliation would come through recognition of the common plague of self-deception, and the common task of identifying, subjugating, and ultimately transmuting unconscious roots of malignant will and passion. It was precisely Rabbi Israel's cross-cultural aspirations, his refraction of a mass of hues in the ideological spectrum of European Jewry, that makes him a fruitful object of study in understanding the major lines in the transformation of traditional East European society. Since biographical information on Rabbi Israel is most sparse, it is his small but dense literary legacy which must be plumbed to establish the link between him and his time. Elsewhere I have written on the psychological, theological, and philosophical import of Rabbi Israel's corpus.[2] Here, I shall write on the most direct evidence of Rabbi Israel's idiosyncratic position: his experimentation with literary techniques. The aim of this article is to probe Rabbi Israel's literary development—the metamorphosis of his style through his Vilna, Kovno, early and late German periods—for clues to the impact of empirical exigencies upon that metamorphosis.

And a veritable metamorphosis it was. In Vilna, Rabbi Israel began haltingly, awkwardly, poignantly. He wrote pithily, cryptically, powerfully. When he moved to Kovno, he wrote more clearly and more expositorily, but also less poignantly and less powerfully. When he moved from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, he wrote still more clearly and analytically, and still less inspirationally. At the

climax of his literary career, he wrote sheer analytic, rigorous prose. He stood his style on its head. It began with passion and obscurity and ended with restraint and lucidity.

Lucidity, yes; self-disclosure, no. Throughout Rabbi Israel's writings there is a certain reserve which the reader is never allowed to penetrate. Rabbi Israel's early epigrammatic style, in provoking a personal response to what was being said, no less than his later analytic style, which crowded out personal response in favor of intellectual assent or dissent, masks an extreme solitude and isolation, a "hiddenness of life" which Rabbi Israel, unlike Nietzsche, who first applied this term to his own solitude, could not transcend even vicariously and partially through anguished cries in private letters. Rabbi Israel's writings, then, are keys to programs that he aspired to mount, to intellectual syntheses that he sought to fashion, and to intellectual retreats that he was compelled to make, but not to who he was. This does not devalue Rabbi Israel's writings. Quite the contrary; they are the most definitive record we have of his lonely quest.

Rabbi Israel's earliest writings (1849) are wholly doctrinal statements set forth in personal letters penned immediately upon his departure from Vilna. It is difficult to exaggerate both the richness and the difficulty of these letters. They jump from one topic to another as if in free association, cite no sources, are intimate in mood, and consist of series of jottings more often than expository discourse. They bristle with recondite expressions and odd phraseology; too, they are punctuated with arresting, vivid expressions. They are neither prose nor poetry, neither modern Hebrew nor "the mixed Hebrew-Aramaic idiom which was the *lingua franca* of Talmudic scholars."[3] Rabbi Israel's early idiom defies categorization. It almost possesses its own syntax and grammar: phrases simultaneously conclude and introduce passages while frequently connoting alternative meanings in relation to the respective preceding and succeeding words; dependent clauses lack apparent referents and often contain a string of subclauses that propound a series of ideas not expositorily germane to the initial topic; commas and periods repeatedly lack any apparent function that is commensurate with their standard or even the looser rabbinic usage; and transitions are irksomely unspecific.

It is not just the grammar, syntax, passion and oddness of Rabbi Israel's letters which are prominent. It is, as well, a taut, highly elliptical and epigrammatic quality, an extreme economy of expression. To unravel the plain meaning he compresses into ten lines can require many pages of exposition.[4] Rabbi Israel's early letters, then,

are pregnant with inferential meanings. They lack the sophistication—the attention to detail, the substantive texture, the discursive embellishment—of either a professional philosopher or a psychological theorist. Yet, they evince catholicity, agility and an unerring instinct for abiding issues. They broach a broad spectrum of potential antinomies—instinct and intellect, emotion and ratiocination, subjective being and objective truth, introversion and extroversion, manipulation and altruism—and then ultimately resolve these antinomies.

It is not the ultimate resolutions, but the methods toward resolution, which shed light on Rabbi Israel's disjointed, elliptical style. He repeatedly insisted that his resolution of polarities could be understood only by learning to embody both sides of a polarity, and that in order to do that it was necessary to grasp not only his methods of behavior modification, but also both the malignant human seedbed in which the methods germinated, and the method's lofty aims. Rabbi Israel had to stress not only the ultimate resolution of polarities, but the polar conditions which cried out for reconciliation. For example, were Rabbi Israel to stress the power of only the instinct or the intellect, then the undertaking of his methods would appear to be either beyond reach or superfluous.

Rabbi Israel had to devise a literary style in which staccato, not flow, predominated, a means of expression whereby each phrase, each element of polarity or paradox, could be absorbed individually. Accordingly, the most pronounced grammatical peculiarity of the Vilna letters was the inordinate use of commas and periods.[5] Similarly Rabbi Israel often embarked upon a series of digressions within a single dependent clause, each digression set off by itself. His transitions were abrupt. He intended that each of his phrases be read, contemplated, and digested as a unit in and of itself. It was less important to Rabbi Israel that his thought be grasped systematically, as a whole, than that each segment of his thought be absorbed fully, as a particular unit of the whole, for if individual segments actually penetrated the reader their interrelationships would emerge in their implementation.

Every aspect of the Vilna writings—their systematic content as well as their unsystematic form—testified to an enduring desire for action. Rabbi Israel's methodology was the axis of his early thought; his pithy, epigrammatic idiom was designed to nettle the reader, to sting him to turn into himself, to open up to the biting aphoristic phrases in the early letters, in a word, to take the first step on the path of Salanterian methodology: introspection. But even if Rabbi Israel's purposes were perfectly understood and fulfilled by the recipients of his five letters, the contemporary reader will regard them as

inordinately obscure, even opaque, unless he is willing to exert himself greatly to step into Rabbi Israel's world.

The literary eccentricities in the Vilna letters may be traced not only to programmatic motives and stylistic inadequacies but also to Rabbi Israel's personal dilemma of 1849, when he left Vilna. He was confronted with an unprecedented problem: communication not through the expansive, or, as he would say, the imaginative mode of oratory and pedagogy, but through the new medium of the written word. He wanted to imbue it with all of the fire and intensity that reportedly characterized his public sermons and classroom lectures. The new medium proved intractable. The written word would not yield the fervor of his lectures. Though his ardor burst forth in his letters with telling, vivid phrases, the ardor rarely sustained itself. It was essentially muted, below the surface, between the lines. With its distinct tone of urgency, the early style of Rabbi Israel was an admixture of passion and remoteness. He emerges essentially as an ethicist, a propagator more than a formulator, a preacher more than a thinker.

Whole topics of Rabbi Israel's Vilna discourse were omitted *in toto* from his Kovno corpus. References to malignant, unbridled psychological or biological forces, for example, virtually ceased. In Kovno evil propensities were enunciated laconically and treated as a principle that was already understood. It was the predilection of Rabbi Israel of Vilna for dwelling on techniques of transforming the human personality that emerged as the near total focus of Rabbi Israel of Kovno.

More than a substantive sharpening of focus rendered Rabbi Israel's Kovno thought more accessible than his Vilna thought. The Kovno texts shed some of the recalcitrance of the Vilna letters. The alternative use of several terms to denote one concept and of one term to denote several concepts, the tight, elliptical succession of phrases, the convoluted sentences and paragraphs of Vilna gave way to simpler terminology and a measure of orderly development and continuity of phraseology in Kovno. Solecisms were not wholly eliminated from the Kovno corpus and content was still very much submerged in relations which obtained between various technical terms. These terms—stock medieval Hebrew philosophic terms drawn from sources like Crescas and commentaries on Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*[6]—braced Rabbi Israel's major Kovno effort, his first published article, the Musar Letter (*Iggeret ha-Musar*).

Rabbi Israel wrote the Musar Letter immediately prior to his departure from Lithuania and published it when he arrived in Prussia

in 1858. If his early letters barely veiled the flux of felt experience, the Musar Letter foreshadowed the transformation of experience into ideology, the extraction of doctrine from the dynamic response to ethical laxity and spiritual inauthenticity. In the Musar Letter Rabbi Israel shed much of the Vilna passion and vitality borne of a living experience too vivid and fluid to objectify; in Kovno his style acquired a measure of orderliness and dispassion. He became more the formulator than the propagator of ideas, for he had already observed the limited success of his ethical program. Failure turned him westward; it would be necessary to become more the thinker than the preacher. The Musar Letter, then, was a transition between Rabbi Israel's awkward yet animated early writings and his analytic, mature articles. The Musar Letter's intrinsic importance lay in a certain constructive ambiguity that it shared with the Vilna writings.

The Musar Letter's free-verse introduction concluded with a call to impassioned study of poetic, sacred texts as the best means to countering what he called the sickness of the instinct, the dark night of the soul. Then the Musar Letter launched into a long discourse on the indispensability of new methods: contemplative, noetic, nonpassionate techniques. At the Musar Letter's conclusion these techniques were abruptly shunted aside with an outburst of despair about man's being irredeemable, and with the recrudescence of certain Vilna methods, such as impassioned study, as the keys to personal redemption. The Musar Letter, never recanting but always resummoning methods which had apparently been superseded, or at least complemented, by new ones, was open to multiple interpretation. Rabbi Israel's Vilna-Kovno methods, as simple mandates rather than developed doctrines, were capable of engaging both simpleton and scholar, sincere layman and serious student, for simplicity, it has been argued, has two poles.

> . . . as Coleridge pointed out, "all truth indeed is simple, and needs no extrinsic ornament. And the more profound the truth is, the more simple: for the whole labor and building up knowledge is but one continued process of simplification." But let us remember in just what sense. There is, to paraphrase Bergson, a simplicity below intellect and a simplicity above—or, better said, within—it; a simple unity resulting from exclusive denudation and from comprehensive integration; that of the amoeba and that of the universe. The "simplicity" of the equation Einstein so painfully sought in his last years is very different from the "plainness" Locke approvingly ascribed to religion . . . .Simple majesty is, in a sense, the terminus of the religious life. It is only attained, however, through arduous grappling with the related complexities of action, emotion, and thought.[7]

Having issued from a preeminent Talmud scholar who, in Lithuania, was widely regarded as one who had arduously grappled

with the complexities of action, emotion and thought in exemplary fashion, Rabbi Israel's unadorned categories of method could be, and were, taken as keys to simple majesty as the terminus rather than as the inception of the religious life. They were seen as the outcome of, and the path to, the long labor and the continued process of comprehensive integration, the more profound for being the more simple. Accordingly, they won over an elite of mid-nineteenth century Lithuanian traditional students.[8] At the same time, they were easily cast as suitable for lesser figures, even for Locke's ignorant "laborer with plough and spade in hand." Simple emotional outpouring, hellfire-and-brimstone sermons, personal soul-searching, perusal of the most elementary halakhic works, all these were legitimate constructions of Rabbi Israel's texts.

Intrinsic to Rabbi Israel's methods was a capacity to stimulate not only very different levels of religiosity but also a variety of definitions of the methods and of how they were to be interrelated. Ramified interpretation stemmed not only from Rabbi Israel's disjointed exposition—the apparent fluctuation between ascription of supremacy to the Vilna technqiues, to the Kovno techniques, or to the techniques common to Vilna and Kovno—but also from the general nature of all his techniques. As polestars rather than programmatic handbooks, Rabbi Israel's methods constituted a corpus pregnant with inferential possibilities. One who commited himself unswervingly to Salanterian *musar* could tailor it to his individual needs, or the needs of his students, without feeling that he had transgressed it. Latently ambiguous, Rabbi Israel's East European writings generated a variety of Musar schools: deliberate, self-contained Kelm; flamboyant, expansive Novorodok; intellectional, cross-cultural Slobodka.[9] When Rabbi Israel uprooted himself from Lithuania and embarked upon an analytic quest for doctrine, he left behind a corpus which nurtured a limited but living actualization of his Vilna-Kovno methods.

With Rabbi Israel's early German-period writings we pass into a new mode of discourse. Rabbi Israel himself explained the change in his introduction to *Tevunah,* a journal he founded and edited in Koenigsberg—the first journal of Jewish ethical thought and talmudic *novellae* in the modern world. Rabbi Israel wrote that an editorial assistant had helped him prepare his *Tevunah* articles, which, indeed, shed certain forbidding stylistic eccentricities and encumbrances found in his earlier writings. Rabbi Israel did not seek to improve his style solely for aesthetic reasons. Through *Tevunah* he made the first of many attempts to use public and scholarly media in

Germany.[10] The story of these attempts to penetrate German Reform and scholarly circles is not our present concern, but they do provide a backdrop to his unprecedented solicitude for style.

In Germany it was not only Rabbi Israel's style but the substance of his writings which changed. His thought ripened into topics whose interrelationships were no longer potential or fragmentary but, for the most part, explicit and whole. In addressing a West as well as an East European audience, Rabbi Israel's writings were less personal, less ambiguous, more reasoned, and more detailed than his East European corpus. The new formalism in his writings was the product not only of his own quest for ideology but also of the chill which greeted him—the bearded, Yiddish-speaking, impassioned, East European rabbi—in Prussia. To compensate, Rabbi Israel's *apparatus criticus* in *Tevunah* was far more explicit than ever before, and, indeed, a veritable *tour de force*.

In his major article, his second contribution to *Tevunah*, he analyzed in a mere fifteen pages nearly eighty sources rooted in virtually every phase of pre-modern Jewish literature: Bible, halakhah, midrash, homiletics, *musar*, philosophy, and kabbalah.

In Rabbi Israel's use of diverse modes of Jewish intellectual expression, two general and interrelated points emerge, one doctrinal, the other literary. Doctrinally, Rabbi Israel regarded all earlier literature as sacred. Throughout his life he maintained that the words of neither the talmudic rabbis (*Hazal*) nor the earlier or later authorities (*rishonim* and *aharonim*) should be questioned. He did not restrict his reference to *Hazal, rishonim* and *aharonim* to halakhic contexts but regarded both legal and extra-legal, aggadic texts as authoritative. Philosophic, kabbalistic, and ethical texts were likewise regarded as authoritative. Literarily, Rabbi Israel applied the same analytical tools to explicating extra-legal texts as he did to legal texts. All modes of thought, but especially the halakhic, aggadic and ethical modes, were interlinked under the impact of his unitary approach, vast erudition and finely honed talmudic mind.

Nonetheless, Rabbi Israel sometimes deviated from his professed doctrinal attitude to earlier literature as sacrosanct. With a recurring pithy phrase and in a passing remark in parantheses, he apprised his readers that his critical analysis was applied to earlier sources in order to derive ideas from them that might not represent the initial intent of the sources. This was a striking practice for a writer whose veneration of tradition was explicit and comprehensive. However, whenever Rabbi Israel's ideas were labeled as possibly nonderivative, or when the reader senses that cited sources prop up Rabbi Israel's own notions rather than constitute the origin of his notions, Rabbi Israel either was supplementing ideas already strictly

derived from other sources or was describing untutored, changing or ideal man. It was a fresh view of the nature of man, not of the authority of tradition and its demands upon man, that underlay what Rabbi Israel called his possible taking of liberties with sources.

In the end, then, Rabbi Israel's argumentation, based upon his own as well as upon divine authority; *Tevunah*'s relative clarity and detailed discussion; and the contemporaneity of the issues Rabbi Israel discussed (the unconscious, autonomy of reason, and autonomy of ethics) were vitiated by his rootedness in traditional Jewish theology. As liberal Christendom in 1850 was little interested in the demanding, neo-Orthodox, existentialist Christianity of Kierkegaard, so, too, liberal Judaism in Western Europe in 1862 was little interested in the demanding, neo-Orthodox, ethico-psychological Judaism of Rabbi Israel. His early German-period writings also had virtually no impact in Eastern Europe, even among his own disciples. To them it was precisely his encounter with certain contemporary currents—that which made his thought potentially, but not actually, attractive in Western Europe—which was unattractive. *Tevunah*, founded in 1861, folded in 1862.

Rabbi Israel's final literary effort, a long article in *Etz Peri* (1881), is bereft of the grammatical, linguistic and syntactic eccentricities which permeated his earliest letters and then tapered off in each successive cluster of his writings.[11] In *Etz Peri* there was no multiplicity of synonymous key terms, no disordered skipping from one topic to another, no fragmentariness in the exposition, and no submergence of key terms in ostensibly innocuous phrases or paragraphs. Rabbi Israel set forth his ideas in well-integrated, analytic fashion.

His analytic style was matched by a corresponding maturation in the substance of his thought. Here we must momentarily digress and note that Rabbi Israel's thought was man-centered throughout his Vilna, Kovno and early German periods, and was God-centered in both the Vilna period and, in a minor way, the early German period. Now, in the late German period, Rabbi Israel's thought was both man-centered and God-centered, but whereas in his earlier periods the link between the two foci was tenuous, in his last period it was integral and lucid. Moreover, not only the integration of the two general foci of Rabbi Israel's thought but also each focus itself manifested substantive maturation. Rabbi Israel recapitulated, with increased cogency, certain central and enduring themes in his earlier man-centered and God-centered writings.

It was Rabbi Israel's move from Lithuania to Germany in 1858 which lay at the root of the solicitude that he then began to demonstrate for matters of style and for assembling the fragments, and actualizing the potentialities, of his earlier thought. In *Tevunah* (1862) Rabbi Israel addressed himself to an audience more diverse than his Lithuanian following. Here, in *Etz Peri* (1881), it was also response to diversity which lay at the root of Rabbi Israel's solicitude for stylistic and substantive clarity. In *Etz Peri,* however, Rabbi Israel did not need to look either to German or to Parisian Jewry (in whose midst he was then living) for diversity. He did not need to look beyond his native Lithuania, where the breakdown of traditional Jewish society was then underway.

Whereas Rabbi Israel had previously attributed ethical laxity to imperfections in the pious, in 1881 he observed that the whole body politic of Lithuanian Orthodoxy had contracted; the attraction of secular studies, the flow of traditional charity monies elsewhere, and the breakdown of the family had taken a massive toll, he wrote. These observations and the pain that lay behind them could resonate only among circles still bent on retaining the tradition. If, then, Rabbi Israel's solicitude for style and his substantive maturation in *Etz Peri* was a response to diversity, it was a response designed to make him effective not, as in his early German period, in addressing assimilating West European as well as traditional East European Jewry, but in speaking solely to the shrinking traditional world in Eastern Europe. Accordingly, his visions, embryonic or developed, of encountering European culture, of addressing certain contemporaneous philosophic and social concerns outside the the Jewish world, had vanished. Rabbi Israel, in other words, had retrenched.

His withdrawal from intellectual encounter was a first expression of the siege mentality that would become more dominant in Orthodoxy with the rise of secular Zionism and the accelerated secularization and urbanization of East European Jewry. Paradoxically, Rabbi Israel's failure to capture the imagination of traditional Lithuanian Jewry with his notion of an ethically and spiritually revitalized neo-Orthodoxy generated his literary success in his late German period. Precisely because his field of vision had narrowed, his treatment of enduring themes in his thought was brought into high focus. With the collapse of the grandiose expectations behind his philosophic platform, which always had been long on vision and short on detail, it became possible for Rabbi Israel to assess that platform more deliberately and to deepen it. Unhesitantly and in clear, direct strokes, Rabbi Israel in 1881 set forth his view of the psyche, of evil, and of their interrelation. He was no longer probing, exploring, groping; he was holding forth. No longer possessed of

hopes (in the phraseology of his students) of conquering the world, he could write analytically rather than hortatively, could limit himself to two themes and develop their interrelationship rather than sketch a multiplicity of themes.

But even Rabbi Israel's narrowed focus drew him inexorably back to exhortation. Let us see how. Though divine judgment, he said, was inscrutable, there were exceptions. He enumerated certain deeds of moral import so immense ("for the sake of God") that even the spiritual dwarf who was far from piety and far from ethical perfection could know that God rewarded his performance of these deeds. Primarily but not exclusively, these deeds were study of Torah, support of those who studied Torah, and raising children to study and observe Torah. Having developed these notions in twelve two-column pages, Rabbi Israel concluded—in one line—by exhorting his readers to rededicate themselves to Torah study and to support students in his Kovno talmudic academy ("the Kovno Kolel"). Exhortation in 1881 followed analysis rather than supplanting or preceding it. Exhortation was laconic rather than pervasive, and it was aimed at a small group of known faithful rather than at a large group of presumed faithful. But it was exhortation nonetheless.

Thus practical ethics, in 1881 as well as in 1849, was Rabbi Israel's prime concern. It no longer emerged as the upshot of an emphasis on methods for changing man or as the implicit message of a series of resolved antinomies. Neither was it any longer the result of an incorrigibly pessimistic view of untutored man, for notwithstanding Rabbi Israel's delineation in *Etz Peri* of deep-seated psychic wellsprings of evil, his view of untutored man was more optimistic than ever before. For the first time, he conceived of an individual whose innate inner forces, if only they be properly nurtured, could alone engender ideal behavior. These forces did not need to be transmuted; they were not inherently evil.

This greater faith placed in man may be correlated with the reduced tension of the *Etz Peri* article, the delineation of aims for man which do not stretch his imagination beyond the breaking point. Man's freedom was said to be not necessarily able to transform his economic, social or physical fortune. His freedom could carry him only so far. The demands placed upon him impinged only upon his spiritual and moral life. While no suprareligious achievements were explicitly included in Rabbi Israel's pre-*Etz Peri* concept of freedom, neither were they explicitly excluded. Having explicitly excluded them in *Etz Peri,* having sketched a more optimistic view of man, and having exhorted his readers with restraint and after considerable analytic justification, Rabbi Israel's ethical impulse lost its stridency. The impassioned ethicist and vivid preacher of Vilna, 1849, had

become the analytic ethicist and controlled theoretician in Paris, 1881. The stylistic metamorphosis was complete.

But only in an artificial sense; Rabbi Israel simply died before he could write further. What he did write—whether in letters or in articles, whether in Eastern Europe or in Western Europe—revealed a dialectical tension between Rabbi Israel the private servant of God, for whom prayer, Torah study, and anonymous deeds of kindness, were central, and Rabbi Israel the communal leader, for whom ceaseless mundane tasks submerged the inner religious ardor. Rabbi Israel the anonymous servant preferred not to write; it was distracting. In this man of many tensions one type of inner struggle was never found, the struggle whether to regard literary talents as being divine gifts or temptations, sources of pride leading away from God.[12] Rabbi Israel was neither gifted nor tempted. As a public leader, however, he was compelled to write, for there could be no ethical revolution in the community solely on the basis of personal example or even of ethico-religious *Musar* communities in the orbit of talmudic academies. Between Rabbi Israel the private seeker and the public leader there emerged a literary corpus which was extremely small, a style in which hardly a stroke was superfluous, and a doctrine which was replete with intimations of philosophical, ethical and programmatic perspectives rarely, alas, spelled out. In reading Rabbi Israel one waits in vain for the final fruition. At the end of his last article it is as if (to quote Edmund Wilson on Christian Gauss) the long conversation with him was simply forever suspended. To have cherished the inner devotion to God for its own sake, and not, as with Kirkegaard, also for the sake of literary activity, and at the same time to have returned intermittently but inexorably to the public arena, engendered a corpus which, notwithstanding its radical metamorphosis, could never have even approached a final realization. It would forever change.

NOTES

Treated in this article are the Vilna-period letters (1849), *Or Yisrael,* ed. Y. Blazer (Vilna, 1900); the Kovno-period *Iggeret ha-Musar,* appended to *Tomer Devorah* (Koenigsberg, 1858); the early German-period articles, *Tevunah* (Koenigsberg, 1961–62); the late German-period article, "*Ma'amar be-Inyan Hizzuk Limmud Toratenu ha-Kedoshah,*" *Etz Peri* (Vilna, 1881).

Regarding the irrelevance of the other Vilna-period writings for present purposes, see note 15. Four unimportant letters are extant from the Kovno period. Of the extant letters from Rabbi Israel's early and late German periods, many are unimportant—two-line acknowledgements of the receipt of a book, for example—and others manifest stylistic developments parallel to that in the major articles.

Treatment of the undated letters, a small segment of the Salanterian corpus, is a highly technical enterprise which is neither important to nor possible within the framework of the present study.

1. Hillel Goldberg, "An Early Psychologist of the Unconscious," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* April-June, 1982.
2. *Ibid.*; Hillel Goldberg, *Israel Salanter: Text, Structure, Idea* (New York, 1982).
3. The phrase is Isadore Twersky's.
4. For example, Goldberg (note 2), Part Two, note 58.
5. Since the Vilna letters were published posthumously, and since no original manuscripts are extant, one cannot exclude the possibility that the publisher, Y. Blazer, was responsible for the punctuation. However, Rabbi Israel's *Iggeret ha-Musar,* that publication issued soonest after the Vilna letters, and published in Rabbi Israel's lifetime under his supervision, is similarly if not so radically punctuated. In any case, the pithiness, the staccato, and the tautness of the early letters is accentuated, not created, by the punctuation.
6. Goldberg (note 2), Excursus, "Did Israel Salanter Study Philosophy and Kabbalah?"
7. Aharon Lichtenstein, *Henry More: The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 213–14.
8. These included Yitzhak Blazer, appointed to the highest rabbinic position in Russia (at St. Petersberg) while still in his twenties; Simhah Zisl Broide, scholar and founder of the first talmudic academy in Eastern Europe which included secular studies; Yaakov Yosef, Chief Rabbi of New York City; Eliezer Gordon, preeminent yeshiva dean; and the young Avraham Y. Kuk, later first Chief Rabbi of Palestine.
9. Disciples of Kelm have not become known to the Western world. Disciples of Novordok are described in novels and stories by Chaim Grade. Slobodka generated the most diverse intellectual offshoots, usually at the highest level: scholarly, talmudic, and halakhic-judicial masters such as Professor Harry A. Wolfson, the Harvard historian of Western philosophy; Professor Saul Lieberman, preeminent scholar of rabbinic literature; Rabbi Aharon Kotler, the East European talmudist who successfully transplanted intensive, culturally insulated Talmud studies to the United States; and Rabbi Dr. Yehiel Y. Weinberg, the West European scholar and halakhic expert.
10. Besides publishing *Tevunah,* he proposed the preparation of an Aramaic-Hebrew dictionary to facilitate study of Talmud, the translation of the Talmud into Hebrew and European languages, the elucidation of the methodological principles of Talmud study, and the introduction of Talmud into university curricula in order to win respect for it among assimilated Jewish students. Rabbi Israel was ahead of his time; none of these projects was implemented for 30 to 100 years after he first proposed them.
11. It could be argued that none of the stylistic developments in *Etz Peri* originated with Rabbi Israel himself since his article was written down not by him but by an editorial assistant. Yet in his earlier periods his articles were also produced with the aid of editorial assistance and all of these articles reflect the thought of a single author. Recurrent concerns and sustained modes of addressing these concerns apprise us of the single authorship of these writings. If, within this underlying unity, we observe a progressive clarity and simplicity in exposition, we must attribute these stylistic developments not just to Rabbi Israel's editorial assistants but to Rabbi Israel's own development. Although Rabbi Israel's earliest homilies (1843), which were produced wholly by an editorial assistant and then approved by Rabbi Israel, mark the first stage of his literary development, I have not treated them here because they were edited a full forty years after they were delivered. Because Rabbi Israel approved them, they can serve as a reliable barometer of his early thinking, but given the long span between the delivery of these homilies and ther editing, their reliability as a barometer of Rabbi Israel's early style is doubtful. Cf. Rabbi Israel's letter to his editor, S. Z. Hirshowitz, in the latter's *Even Yisrael* (Warsaw, 1883).
12. The phrase is James Collins'.