

EDITOR'S NOTE

In his founding Editor's Introduction in 1958, Rabbi Norman Lamm announced the "function" of *TRADITION* will be "to teach, to interpret, to explain. . . In these pages responsible thinkers will explicate our faith, teach its principles, and demonstrate its relevance to the concerns of contemporary men." While much has changed in the six-plus decades since our founding, our core commitments have not. Insofar as *TRADITION* remains a compelling vehicle for the exploration and communication of these ideas, we are indebted to the editors who carried forth R. Lamm's charge: Rabbis Walter Wurzburger ז"ל, Emanuel Feldman, and Michael Shmidman. Most recently Rabbi Shalom Carmy, who has served our journal with singular dedication in several capacities since 1979, now completing his fifteen-year tenure as editor, has maintained and shepherded our founding vision with distinction. Writing in these pages in a 1998 symposium, R. Carmy explained his motivation as a teacher, and we readers of *TRADITION* surely count ourselves among the ranks of the *talmidim* he describes:

Each day brings with it the prospect of discovering a new facet of Torah or a new way of communicating to others what I have already gained. Each day brings with it the possibility that my Torah study, to a lesser extent my other reading, and my interaction with *talmidim* will help to make me a different person for the better. The excitement of learning, the shudder of insight, the awareness of commitment to my students, and the inspiration I draw from them (including those whose path is not always smooth)—these driving feelings often seem palpable: as if the Torah were nourishment, and its transmission electric. . . . [I]t gives one a good reason to set the alarm clock early and to awake before it rings.

I am honored that the leadership of the Rabbinical Council of America has entrusted me to lead *TRADITION* into the next generation, and I hope that under my editorship *TRADITION* will build on the commitments and accomplishments of my distinguished predecessors, drawing in new readers and new authors who will offer compelling treatments, commentary, and analysis of the nexus of topics facing Orthodox Jewish thought in North America, Israel, and worldwide. It may be tautological to state the following so plainly to those who are already readers of our journal, but it is imperative that our Modern Orthodox community continue to grapple with the ideas, texts, and thinkers that help guide and animate religious life and practice. *TRADITION* has always aspired to be a lens through which we engage in the best of religious thought to enrich our lives as individuals and as a community. Above all, we have always endeavored to

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impact the life of a religious community, and to help shape its discourse. The writing we will feature, and the new voices of women and men we hope to involve, will continue this mission in ways that will be even more relevant to our contemporary readers.

Launched just three years after sociologist Marshall Sklare proposed that American Orthodoxy might be best analyzed as “a case study of institutional decay,” *TRADITION* strove to be responsive to its time. In that first column, R. Lamm counterpunched with a keen diagnosis: “Orthodoxy [has not been] tried and found wanting but—to paraphrase a famous writer—it was not tried in the first place by great numbers of people as a working philosophy in the context of modern life.” A perusal of the nearly 2,000 items in the *TRADITION* archives (open access at TraditionOnline.org) demonstrates how we have provided such working philosophical responses to contemporary life. Over time, concerns and problems change, and we have responded in kind. Indeed, our archives serve as a time capsule documenting trends and challenges, fads and communal frictions. Clearly, the polemical impulse implicit in R. Lamm’s words, which animated so many of our articles in the early years, seems antiquated to us today. Institutional decay? Hardly! Religious life has never been as strong as it is now. Yet, despite the incredible strength and success of Modern Orthodoxy, challenges of different sorts abound, and *TRADITION* stands at the ready as a platform to explore authentic Jewish responses to the complicated world in which we live, continually drawing wisdom and insight from our sources of tradition.

When we began publishing in the late 1950s we were the only show in town. Today, *TRADITION* is one of multiple platforms—digital and print—competing for your attention. In the spirit of “intellectual competition increases wisdom” (*Bava Batra* 21a), we recognize the contributions of other publications which have been established to serve complementary goals within our community, chief among them *The Torah u-Madda Journal*, *Hakirah*, and more recently, *The Lehrhaus*. We vow to work hard to earn your attention, convinced as we are that thinking Jews will still profit from the encounter with what *TRADITION* publishes, and that making the time to wrestle with a 20 or 30 pages scholarly article, well researched and well written, improves ourselves and our community.

Toward these goals we hope to expand the scope of *TRADITION* beyond the quarterly print journal, incorporating social media, a newly redesigned website where original content will be regularly published, and live symposia, all aiming to engage new and larger audiences. In an age when many of the next generation’s leading minds have never written anything longer than a blog post, the editorial board is committed to working with

new and especially younger authors to help guide manuscripts from idea to publication. Contact the editor to explore these new mentoring opportunities. Finally, I am pleased to announce that *TRADITION* has instituted double-blind peer review of all article submissions. This is the professional standard of reputable journals the world over, and will increase the integrity of our work and improve the quality of our publication.

And yet, with these innovations, our name remains *TRADITION*, an apt title for a journal that has nobly served a community with “tradition” as its polestar. Ours is a journal of “excavation and encounter”: returning to sources—halakhic, philosophical, cultural—that might be wellsprings for modernity while at the same time adopting a forward-facing attitude as we explore the contours of the world in which we live and the religious future we hope to shape. As a scholarly, but not specifically academic journal, the scholarship we publish—be it “*lishma*,” for its own sake, or more programmatic—will continue to further these aims.

As for myself, I first encountered *TRADITION* as a teenager in the mid-1980s, perplexed by an array of questions and in the process of a religious journey. A youth group advisor lent me a copy of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s monumental essay “The Lonely Man of Faith” which was then available only as a blurry photocopy of its original 1965 appearance in *TRADITION*. Like so many other readers of that essay and the periodical that first published it, my spiritual and intellectual life has been enriched by this journal.

More recently, it has been my honor to serve as an associate editor these past 15 years under the editorship of R. Shalom Carmy. Along with our entire community of readers, I am grateful to him for his stewardship of *TRADITION*, and even more so, for serving as a beacon of intellectual rigor and a model of serious engagement with ideas in a way that enhances us all as, in his words, “thinking religious individuals.” I hope that together with our editorial board we will continue these traditions as we continue to teach, to interpret, to explain.

JEFFREY SAKS