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TRADITION

The Sea Change in American Orthodox Judaism: A Symposium

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THE SEA CHANGE IN AMERICAN ORTHODOX JUDAISM: A SYMPOSIUM

Introduction HILLEL GOLDBERG

I

Individual lines seem to jump out from these Symposium contributions. I quote—I stress, out of context—the following excerpts:

• • •

“The drive to replace the terrible losses in the crematoria was succinctly described to me by a hasidic cousin in Israel: ‘My ambition in life is to leave as many grandchildren at my death as my grandfather did when he went to Auschwitz. He had 40 of them. I now have, thank God, 44’ ” (*Victor Geller*).

“To gain a perspective on the pitifully small number of Jews in the world at large, we need to remember that the most widely cited number today, thirteen million, is simply the margin of error in the Chinese census!” (*Jacob J. Schacter*).

“Who is the weakest link? We cannot afford to point fingers right now. If 20,000 Jewish kids were being killed each year, we’d be jolted into action. . . . We’d take anyone committed onto our team. No questions asked” (*Noah Weinberg*).

“With the odor of destruction all around them, they pressed on, determined that Judaism and Torah would once again flourish. A Dr. Belkin, a ‘Mister’ Mendelowitz, Irving Bunim, Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Y. Hutner, the Lubavitcher Rebbe . . . the innumerable Daf Yomi learning groups . . . the marvelous growth of *yeshivot* and *kolelim*. . . .” (*Alfred Cohen*).

• • •

“[Among] the different challenges that today’s deviationists present: the burgeoning phenomenon of non-Jewish Jewish leaders” (*Matis Greenblatt*).

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“The greatest danger to Orthodoxy . . . comes . . . from a group of non-Orthodox [Orthodox] Jews . . . Lubavitch Messianists” (*David Berger*).

“Secularism does not satisfy the thirst of a parched soul, but deviationist religious movements can do so—if only for a generation” (*Moshe Tendler*).

• • •

“Those who have correct beliefs and practices are in the Torah camp regardless of other differences . . . from the Ramaz School to Neturei Karta” (*Mayer Schiller*).

“Both Rav Mordechai Gifter, *shlita*, and Rav Yehudah Amital, *shlita*, in spite of their separate outlooks, wrote essays in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War which warned against a glib response from the *frum* community” (*David Horwitz*).

“. . . the Orthodox are now more united . . . disagreement about the State of Israel . . . has substantially dissipated. . . . There is also a coming together about the fruit of modernity, as the modern Orthodox are less prone to embrace questionable attributes of the host culture and the yeshiva world . . . has become more open to forms of secular higher education. . . .” (*Marvin Schick*).

“As for unity among Orthodox factions, I am not sure I want it . . . these separate rivers of ideas that flow through our Orthodox landscape . . . carry vital ideas into public view and bring passion into all corners of our community” (*Daniel Lapin*).

• • •

“A large percentage of world Jewry is in the intensive care unit, Jewishly speaking. [It is true that we could say “We told you so!” but] Orthodoxy must see itself as the doctor and not as the judge” (*Berel Wein*).

• • •

“Labels are to Jewish life what money is to commercial life—the root of all evil. We have labelled Judaism to death” (*Reuben P. Bulka*).

“At best, the yeshiva world views the Rabbinical Council of America as a kind of red heifer, perhaps purifying the ‘impure’ moderns but contaminating the ‘purer’ yeshiva people” (*Samuel Heilman*).

“I would not expect everyone in the various yeshiva and haredi

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communities to abide by decisions originating in the RCA Halakhic Commission, but Torah tradition demands deference and reverence to Torah sages whether we follow them or not.” (*Rafael Grossman*).

• • •

“The way one loves, the way one conducts oneself in business, the way one eats, are potentially no less holy than praying and fasting.” (*Avi Weiss*).

“Love of Hashem is measured by the impact one has on others, by the calm of one’s rhetoric, the pleasantness of one’s dealings. In this we are failing” (*Menachem Genack*).

“Where is the humility, contrition, anxiety, and soul-searching of a group which states regularly before God that its exile status is, to a large degree, its own fault?” (*Ilan Feldman*).

“I brought a guest to shul . . . a spiritually earnest young woman I hoped to interest in Torah. . . . When we arrived I found to my humiliation that, if you closed your eyes, you could imagine you were in a baseball stadium” (*David Klinghoffer*).

• • •

“The need to be cautious about associations is felt more intensely in this era of instant communications . . . Every ad hoc gathering and casual remark is bruited across the globe, often in mangled form; worse still, society has been conditioned . . . to take all actions as symbolic ‘statements.’ It is very understandable if . . . groups are more nervous about whom they sponsor, and individuals more nervous about what they say and to whom they’re seen saying it” (*David Shatz*).

• • •

“The Center cannot make do without the Right because the Center cannot provide Torah education to our children. It still encourages its brightest young men and women to enter every profession except the one we need most to survive” (*Yitzhak Adlerstein*).

“[Absence of professional preparation by yeshiva boys, entailing families living on welfare] leads to many of the same pathologies . . . that we see in the non-Jewish welfare communities . . . I fear . . . this will eventually produce a new *Haskala* reaction” (*Joel Wolowelsky*).

“Modern Orthodox Jews should realize that . . . if we aim to be moderate, we’ll end up casual. If we aim to be casual, we’ll end up, God

Symposium: Introduction — Hillel Goldberg

forbid, with Episcopalian grandchildren!" (*Ephraim Buchwald*)

"In the absence of leadership we have squabbles, a push for conformity within each group, and nostalgia for an imagined past" (*Rivka Blau*).

• • •

"We are living in a transitional period vis-a-vis the role of women in religious life . . . it will probably be several generations before we reach a real consensus as to what will be deemed 'normative'" (*Marc Angel*).

"The new Orthodox feminism, some of which is neither authentic nor honest, represents dangers that may lead to a new edition of Conservative Judaism" (*Pinchas Stolper*).

• • •

"A religious movement which is perceived as a wishy-washy compromise has little hope of success in an age of polarization, in which the spiritually rich get richer, while the spiritually poor get poorer" (*Walter Wurzbarger*).

"The acceptance of reason as an important and inherent component of the Jewish religious experience will eventually re-emerge and Orthodox Jewish life will return to a more normal state" (*Sol Roth*).

"Living in Israel with my wife, all my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, I have a sense of personally participating in . . . the culmination of a very long journey that started . . . in this very land" (*Shubert Spero*).

"I derive most of my spiritual nourishment from Torah: scriptural and rabbinic. But I also derive spiritual nourishment from Mozart and Beethoven, Hoelderlin and Rilke, Plato and Kant, Viennese painting and that of Paul Klee. That is what makes me a modern Orthodox Jew. If I am wrong, I will pay for it. But that is how the truth appears to me" (*Michael Wyschogrod*)

"Often . . . narrowness [is] a result not so much of a conscious negation of secularity as of an intensive . . . immersion in the study of the words of the living God to the exclusion of all else" (*Judith Bleich*).

"Standing shoulder to shoulder [at the funeral of R. Shlomo Z. Auerbach] were people of all walks of life, Orthodox, secular, Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Yemenite, whatever. Here *was klal Yisrael* paying its respects to a Great Man in Israel. That gave me strength—and hope" (*Mordechai Breuer*).

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II

Each of these excerpts is, to use a metaphor from Harry A. Wolfson, but a floating buoy, a snippet linked to an in-depth approach whose complexity is only hinted at in the excerpt itself. The contributions to this symposium express a diversity of opinion too subtle to be summarized. But two general observations stand out.

First, the American Orthodox Jewish community is boldly confident of its future. It has survived both the Holocaust and the devastations of assimilation. It looks down the generational pike and sees continuity in the flesh—grandchildren and great-grandchildren, born of Jews and marrying Jews. Perhaps the firmest sign of Orthodoxy's confidence is its willingness to engage in self-scrutiny, which fills this Symposium. Orthodoxy's self-criticism is often biting, sometimes excessive. Its severest critic is no body or group outside it, but it itself.

Orthodoxy is keenly aware of its heroic rebirth and suffused with a sense of inner turmoil. It marvels at its achievements, and wonders whether in their pursuit a deeper spirituality has been overlooked or compromised. It witnesses its unexpected resurgence and paucity of impact; its obvious success and ambiguous reputation beyond its perimeters. It is a paradoxical community, reaching the heights and aware of the depths, never before so strong or so riven with division. It is filled with optimism and pessimism, its confidence tempered by an inchoate foreboding.

Second, Orthodoxy stands at overlapping crossroads facing Orthodoxy itself and facing American Jewry at large.

This symposium collectively sets forth a question: Is there still one American Orthodox Jewish community? The reader will find much argument in the symposium to answer the question either way. Taking this discourse on a subterranean level, listening beneath the surface for the rumblings that signal the deeper forces at work, the issue reduces itself to this: Yes, we, the Orthodox, have defied sociological prediction and survived; yes, we have not only survived but created a solid structure of educational institutions, publishing houses, musical enterprises, and demographic facts; yes, we have shown that the Torah, traditionally interpreted, is the only mechanism for retaining the commitment of Jewish youth; yes, we have achieved all this without falling prey to intermarriage and a thousand other compromises, large and small; yes, but—and it's a big but—can we survive our own success? Can we embody the solidarity that our common intellectual commitments would seem to dictate? Can we put the same energy into fighting internal dis-

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cord that we put into fighting assimilation? Or, are we plagued with our own version of communal sterility? Are we doomed to let divisions grounded in considerations philosophical and lofty, or petty and personal, split us apart? Not subdivide us into a mosaic of colorful yet complementary entities, but split us into competing, mutually exclusive religious spheres? This is the crossroads facing Orthodoxy.

This same crossroads is increasingly facing American Jewry at large. The reason is demographic. If Orthodoxy continues to grow at current rates, which dwarf those of American Jewry, Orthodoxy will be less and less a segment of the total Jewish community and more and more equivalent to the total community. The debates reflected in this symposium will gradually supplant the sources of division between Orthodoxy and non-Orthodoxy. Problems in Orthodoxy will become the problems of American Jewry at large.

Paradoxically, if the non-Orthodox will increasingly face the Orthodox, the opposite is also true. Some respondents in this symposium witness what they take to be non-Orthodoxy's suicidal policies and believe that the march of Orthodoxy, to the demise of non-Orthodoxy, is inevitable. I regard this as naive, *even if* current demographic trends continue. The reason is encapsulated in the excerpt of Matis Greenblatt: "[Among] the different challenges that today's deviationists present [is] the burgeoning phenomenon of non-Jewish Jewish leaders."

Yes, by Orthodox definition, the non-Orthodox Jewish communities will, if current trends continue, radically shrink; yes, the Torah and matrilineality will predominate; yes, Jewishly literate, halakhically committed youth are the wave of the future. But all this is neither identical to nor inconsistent with the persistence of a strong non-Orthodox Jewish community. For this reason: As the non-Orthodox become non-Jewish, through the inclusion of Jews neither born of a Jewish mother nor converted according to halakhah, it is only the Orthodox who will not view these non-Jewish Jews as Jewish. From countless perches in American society—a city mayor writing a congratulatory letter to a temple on its anniversary, a religion writer on a city daily covering his beat, a Yellow Pages clerk compiling his city's synagogue listings—the non-Orthodox institutions will be as much a part of the Jewish community as the Orthodox ones. That many or most of the people in these institutions may no longer be halakhically Jewish will be irrelevant, societally speaking.

Peering into this fragmented future, I can only say: The American Orthodox Jewish community can ill afford to allow that which divides it to overshadow that which unites it. We do not live in a vacuum. The quandaries of bastardry, intermarriage, and compromised conversion

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will infiltrate us too, *if* we do not put our energy into building intra-Orthodox solidarity, rather than tearing it down.

Before any Orthodox Jewish organization undertakes any public statement or act, it should first ask itself, "Will this build or tear down intra-Orthodox Jewish solidarity?" Matters of principle sometimes will and should take precedence, but, at a minimum, intra-Orthodox solidarity should be a constant, conscious, and weighty consideration in every statement and act by every Orthodox institution or spokesman. Restraint would go a long way to sustaining Orthodoxy's success and tempering its turmoil.

III

Some technical notes, to make this Symposium easier to understand:

1. *The Questions.* Respondents were asked five questions primarily about the Orthodox Jewish community in America. Some answered only a few of the questions; some responded with a unified essay; some numbered their answers according to the questions—this accounts for paragraphs that begin "1" or "2b and 4," etc. Given the relationship between Orthodoxy communities everywhere, occasional comment on Orthodoxy outside America was inevitable.

2. *Participants.* The aspiration was not to invite all eligible, articulate, American Orthodox Jewish thinkers, but every type thereof. Without intending to label or oversimplify anyone's contribution, and without implying that the following types are comprehensive, mutually exclusive, or equally represented in this symposium, it remains fair to say that they span as wide a spectrum of opinion in American Orthodoxy as is found anywhere: modern, center, right, etc.; male and female; *ba'al teshuva* and "*frum* from birth"; East coast, West coast, mid-America, and Americans on *aliyah*; Sephardi and Ashkenazi; young, middle-aged, and retired; pulpit, professional, academic, and organizational (Jewish and secular); politically liberal and conservative. A high percentage of the invitees to the symposium responded. To the extent that any type is underrepresented, it is not because it was not invited.

3. *Terminology.* No attempt was made to impose an entirely uniform system of terminology. The personal nature of the symposium required, within limits, that its contributors be allowed their individual manner of expression.

Finally, thanks to Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, editor of *Tradition*, for conceiving this Symposium, helping formulate the questions, and extending every courtesy in aiding its completion.

THE QUESTIONS

1 The program of the February, 1956, conference of the Rabbinical Council of America lists Rav Moshe Feinstein, z"l, and Rav Mordechai Gifter among the speakers. Rav Aharon Kotler, z"l, also addressed the RCA in those days. It is fair to say that today such invitations to luminaries of the Yeshiva world would neither be issued nor accepted. What has happened to effect this sea change in relationships?

2 a) What were the epochal events that shaped Jewry in the last sixty years, and how would you evaluate the response of Orthodoxy to these events? b) Related to this, what have been the greatest successes of Orthodoxy, and its greatest failures?

3 Which presents the more serious challenge to Orthodoxy: the deviationist religious movements, or secularism? Have our past strategies in relating to either of them been effective? If not, how should the strategies be changed?

4 Which of the various groupings within Orthodoxy—Centrist, Rightist, Hasidic, Yeshiva, Haredi or others—do you consider the most vital in the long term, and which the weakest? Why? Do you see further splits between them, or greater cooperation?

5 As a believing Jew, what facets of Torah life give you the most personal strength to thrive spiritually as an Orthodox Jew in a hedonistic environment that is not conducive to Torah values?

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YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Edgar Magnin presided over the Reform rabbinate of Los Angeles till a ripe old age. He listened one day as a desperate caller mournfully unburdened herself on a local talk show, "Rabbi, what am I to do? I brought up my son just the way I was supposed to. I sent him to confirmation classes; he had a lovely Bar Mitzvah party. I even sent him to Israel for a summer after his junior year in college. But something happened there. He found his way to one of those *yeshivot* for beginners. Now he's come back with all kinds of strange practices, all the things I thought I had taught him were part of the primitive past. He wants me to buy only kosher meat; he won't eat from my dishes! What am I to do?"

Forever the high priest of classical Reform, Magnin intoned his response. "My dear, you have my complete sympathy. I have long maintained that one of the things that perished from Judaism during the Holocaust was common sense."

He was right, to a point. But it wasn't common sense that we lost. There is plenty of the common and ordinary around. Fifty years after the Holocaust, though, we still miss out on a good deal of uncommon sense that should have been ours.

The greatest accomplishment of Orthodoxy over the past sixty years is its dramatic rebirth after the Holocaust. Through *hasdei Ha-shem*, we not only rose from the ashes, but came back with a vengeance. Each post-War generation of American Orthodoxy has been better educated and more halakhically aware than the one that preceded it. It is claimed that there are more students studying in advanced *yeshivot* than in pre-Holocaust Europe. The Lubliner Rov could never have imagined the show of Torah strength at the recent *siyyum ha-shas*.

This accomplishment is all the more impressive when we realize that it occurred with only a fraction of the Torah leadership that should have been available to us. Jonathan Swift said that the problem with religion is that there is enough of it for us to hate each other, but not enough for us to love each other. There is enough Torah around to answer most of our *she'eilot*, and to fill vacancies in the classroom. There is not enough to teach us how to live balanced Torah lives.

The most sophisticated lessons can only be taught by the truly exceptional. The average *talmid bakham* can teach us to tell the difference between black and white (or black and blue-and-white!). Only the great can teach us the art of subtle discrimination. It takes just that to understand how to receive your ideological opponent respectfully, how

to honor his greatness without weakening your own ability to disagree forcefully. This is precisely what both sides need—and lack—in order for a representative of the yeshiva world to address an RCA convention. It requires more discrimination than most people today have access to. It is the kind of thing one picks up from close association with a Torah luminary, and that is exactly what most of us have never had the opportunity to experience personally.

The small groups of Torah giants that survived the war could teach and guide, but they could not make up for their diminished number. Except for a small inside group privileged to know them well, the majority of our people had to make due with their surrogates. The next generation would know them only through Artscroll biographies. We can flip through the channels of Torah living, but we have lost the fine-tuning button. We owe our spiritual lives to their accomplishments, but there were not enough of them to teach us subtlety.

One of the reasons we continue to mourn each year for the students of R. Akiva who perished in a plague is the ripple effect their passing continues to have on our lives. How much stronger would our community be today if those thousands of students had lived full lives, each of them influencing many disciples of their own? We are plagued today by the consequences of too few *gedolim* in the last generation. It has meant having far fewer *gedolim* today than we need. And in a community so spiritually impoverished in some regards, many of today's leaders spend too much of their energies holding together fractious communities. They often have to hold back expressing their true feelings for fear that the sometimes less-than-discriminating masses will bolt their authority altogether. It is no surprise that positions have hardened on all sides.

(I must pause to offer a perspective different from that offered earlier in these pages by Haym Soloveichik. It is the loss of *gedolim* I mourn, not the demise of the mimetic tradition in halakhic observance. The collapse of the mimetic, community-based Judaism of the past could have plunged halakhic practice into chaos. Instead, we have replaced it in miraculously short order with a text-based system that speaks convincingly to a growing number of sophisticates who can access it. Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Litvak, Hungarian, BT and FFB—they are all separated from the countries of the *zaydehs*, but no one is distant from convincing halakhic definition. We have witnessed the resiliency and fortitude of halakha itself. We have seen the Hand of Divine Providence rescuing halakha, assuring the continuity of Torah practice. This is nothing to mourn, but to celebrate!)

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The dearth of *gedolim*, measured per capita, happened to us in another way. We missed out on the availability of personal spiritual mentors. We did not witness the day-to-day lives of those who had it all together. Today, we are drowning in a flow of material *shefa berakha* that Hashem has given us. Scores of generations of Jews could not have imagined the general material well-being that Hashem has granted us today. But we do not know how to use this gift without compromising the focus on *avoda*—personal service of and relationship with God.

Here is the challenge to Orthodoxy. Not in the forum of ideas, but in the plethora of choices in the market. History has shown that if we do not utilize what God has given us as tools in His service, they are taken away. The *gedolim* that we should have had could have shown us by example how to take from this world, with happiness and in good measure, without bifurcating our lives between sensuality and spirituality. We have managed to avoid pig in our foods, but not pigging-out in our tastes for comfort, convenience, and entertainment.

Here is the challenge, and nowhere else. Certainly not in the heresies of the heterodox. I am reminded of the scene in Louis Rapoport's *Stalin's War Against the Jews*. Days after the stroke that felled Stalin in the midst of his planning the immediate deportation of all Soviet Jews to the Gulag, the inner circle stood over him, debating succession. Stalin suddenly stirred, and Beria fell to his knees, trembling, asking forgiveness from the Master.

His fears were unfounded. There was no more real life left in that body, and there is none in the Reform and Conservative movements. (Those groups long ago made the synagogue the fulcrum of Jewish life. Using synagogue attendance as a logical standard, calling those movements comatose would be generous. On a given *Shabbat*, the Conservatives can show only an eight percent rate of participation; it falls a bit for the Reform.) The deviationists pose no threat to us. Whomever they could entice from observance fell victim in the 1950s. They have nothing to offer our better-educated laity today; we will lose nothing by finding more and more opportunities to reach out to them as neighbors and coworkers. They know so little about us, save for the disinformation fed by their leaders. So many of them live in a spiritual vacuum, waiting to be filled. We must approach them and bind them *be-avotot ha-ahava*—the chains of love that the *Hazon Ish* spoke of. We can and must reclaim many.

Which of our own groups will grow stronger? Only those that can provide the Torah scholarship and authenticity that better-educated

generations of Jews clamor for. We will find through all of this that we need each other even more than before.

The center cannot make do without the right because the center cannot provide Torah education to our children. It still encourages its brightest young men and women to enter every profession except the one we need most to survive. Only the right successfully motivates young people to devote their lives to the teaching of Torah, despite less than adequate compensation. The right, on the other hand, has chosen to fully focus on the rebirth of Torah, but has never been comfortable describing just what kind of livelihood the young families of the future could expect to find in a changing world. It will need the center, both for the secular savvy to solve many of its problems and to help develop the notion of the learned and committed *ba'al ha-bayit* whose secular knowledge has led to no spiritual infirmity.

What will unite both groups is their growing commitment to Torah study and greatness. No one could deny the right its deserved credit for the *kiddush Hashem* of the *siyyum ha-shas*. But neither could any of the attendees of the observances around the country fail to take note of the significant proportion of centrist Orthodox laymen who completed the last cycle, both as students and teachers. Both groups will continue to share the idiom of Torah learning. The left, however, will disappear entirely. It has neither Torah luminaries nor the ability to produce any. Unable to produce Torah thinkers even approaching the caliber of those in the other groups, it will become increasingly irrelevant and out of sync with the needs of the majority.

Committing these lines to paper makes it easy to answer the last question. When my spiritual forces ebb, when I feel myself drowning in the trivial and the ugly, I find strength in two things. First, working in the outreach community, I draw inspiration each day from the courage and strength of the tens of thousands of *ba'alei teshuva* who often understand the beauty of Torah Judaism so much better than the rest of us. Second, I take the advice of someone who, were he alive today, would certainly have returned to observance. Bialik lived long enough to see the bitter fruit of a generation of Jews whose “enlightenment” cost them their very allegiance to their people. Long enough also to pen these remarkable lines:

Then enter the House of God,
The House of Study, old and gray
And then your heart shall guess the truth,
That you have touched the sacred ground

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Of a Great People's House of Life,
And that your eyes do gaze upon
The treasure of a nation's soul

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MARC D. ANGEL

1) The assumption of this question is false. Members of the Rabbinical Council of America have studied at a wide variety of *yeshivot*, and the RCA has always been interested in drawing speakers from the broad spectrum of *yeshivot*. Over the years, the RCA has issued invitations to a number of individuals associated with the “right wing” *yeshivot*, but most have chosen not to accept.

When I became president of the RCA in 1990, I met with a leader of the Agudath Israel and invited him to address the Executive Committee of the RCA. He declined, informing me that no one from the Agudah world would attend an RCA event unless we pulled out of the Synagogue Council of America. Well, the SCA no longer exists. Will they now be agreeable to grace us with their presence? We shall see.

The RCA has always been receptive to respectful dialogue and communication with the various segments of the Orthodox community. Unfortunately, this attitude has not always been reciprocated. The dominant behavior of the “right wing” yeshiva community has attempted to isolate and delegitimize modern Orthodox institutions. This relates not only to the RCA, but also to Yeshiva University and the Orthodox Union.

The “sea change” mentioned in the question is a result of growing authoritarianism and intolerance on the right. When it will accept our invitations and invite us to participate in its meetings and conferences, then we will know we are on the path to healing rifts in the Orthodox community. We are—and have always been—desirous of amicable relationships.

2) I will focus only on one issue of the many which could be addressed: the role of women. The past sixty years have witnessed a remarkable transformation in the status of women in general society, and this has obviously had an impact on Orthodoxy.

While some segments of the community do their best to deny or ignore the changed reality, others attempt to find ways of expanding women's role in Orthodox life within the parameters of halakha. While in some Orthodox communities it is forbidden for women to study Talmud, in others it is allowed and encouraged. While some Orthodox communities have made no efforts to expand ritual opportunities for women in synagogues, others have instituted women's prayer groups, Megilla readings, *hakkafot*. Women serve on the boards of a number of Orthodox synagogues, and also are involved in education and *hesed* work.

We are living in a transitional period vis-a-vis the role of women in religious life. Different approaches are being tried; but it will probably be several generations before we reach a real consensus as to what will be deemed "normative."

The wisest approach is to keep our options open. We need to explore halakhically acceptable ways of meaningfully involving women in as many aspects of religious life as possible. No one today should state with certainty what the "truth" is on this topic because no one really can know for sure how things will develop. One hundred years ago, it would have been deemed sinful to teach Talmud to women; today, some of our best and brightest Orthodox women study Talmud. Again, let me emphasize: the role of women—as of men—must always be within halakhic boundaries.

3) Anything that moves Jews away from traditional faith and observance is a threat to Orthodoxy. This includes the non-Orthodox movements as well as secularism.

One general response has been to strengthen ourselves so that we and our families are not swept away from Torah and *mitsvot*: we have built synagogues, day schools and *yeshivot*, communal institutions; we have published books and magazines; we have utilized modern technology to spread Torah study through tapes, videos, the Internet.

We have also sought to reach the non-Orthodox in various ways. Some have chosen the road of dialogue and friendship; others have emphasized outreach programs; some have separated themselves from direct contact with the non-Orthodox.

Our strategies have had some success, yet all of them have failed. The evidence of this failure is that the vast majority of Jews do not share our commitment to Torah and *mitsvot*. In spite of all the heroic and inspired work of generations of Orthodox Jews, the overwhelming number of Jews are not Orthodox—and many are anti-Orthodox. The assimilation rates among the non-Orthodox are frightening.

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Creative, dynamic Orthodoxy should be providing non-Orthodox Jews with vibrant, alternative models. We need to foster a healthy diversity within Orthodoxy, giving as many options as possible for non-Orthodox Jews to find a suitable entry point for a life of Torah and *mitsvot*. Whether right wing or left wing or centrist, whether Sephardi or Ashkenazi, whether rationalistic or kabbalistic—the more diversity within Orthodoxy, the more the possibility of reaching those who are not presently within our camp.

Yet, precisely now, when we vitally need legitimate diversity, we are witnessing a shrinking of options within Orthodoxy. The growing narrowness in Orthodoxy is reflected by the growing narrowness in clothing styles deemed appropriate for Torah-true Jews. Worse, the range of legitimate intellectual and halakhic options is contracting. The forces for conformity are powerful; and one who dares not to conform will be intimidated or isolated. We have Moroccan and Yemenite rabbis in Israel who dress like Eastern European rabbis because they feel they will not be accepted as rabbis if they do not conform. We have people afraid to make controversial statements in public because they fear communal reprisals. One rabbi has referred to the contemporary situation as the “Artscrolling of Judaism,” i.e., only a certain range of interpretation is allowed, and only certain sages are given recognition.

If Orthodoxy is to meet the critical challenge of this generation, then it must reject the tendency toward narrowness and unthinking authoritarianism. It must be open, fresh, imaginative; it must give sway to the human mind and soul; it must foster diversity of thought and diversity of style—all within the boundaries of Torah and halakha.

The Orthodox community must be governed by the principle of *derakheha darkhei no'am*. We must represent Torah as a sweet, pleasant and meaningful way of life. To do otherwise is to discredit Torah and to generate hatred toward Orthodoxy.

4) All are important for Orthodoxy in the short term and the long term. It would be desirable for the various segments of the Orthodox community to have cordial, cooperative relationships. If we could coordinate our efforts, we could accomplish more of our shared goals. Do I think this is likely? Not very. But it is possible, if we start to think seriously about the whole Jewish people and not just about our own immediate group. What is needed now is a powerful, unifying, and transcendent vision that will harness the energies of the Orthodox world.

Tendencies in religious life vary from period to period. Sometimes the mood is more to the right, sometimes more to the left; but most of

the time it hovers near the center. People, by and large, are not extremists and will not live indefinitely with extreme positions. They, or their children or grandchildren, will seek a more balanced outlook.

5) A religious Jew must be heroic; must have a deep sense of inner calm and confidence; must not be afraid to be different. It is valuable to draw on the ethical and moral guidance of our great Musar writers. I personally have found much strength in the *Pele Yoets* of Rabbi Eliezer Papo.

Rabbi Marc Angel, a former president of the Rabbinical Council of America, is rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in New York City.

DAVID BERGER

Sixty years ago, world Jewry was overwhelmingly European, with the sword of Damocles hanging over its head. On one end of the periphery stood the relatively young, religiously marginal community in the United States, poised on the threshold of the long-sought achievement of thoroughgoing Americanization. On the other was the tiny but vigorous *yishuv*, struggling for the normalization of Jewish existence without the torment of exile and without its God.

The sword fell, and the periphery became the core.

At this point, the preservation of authentic Judaism became contingent upon arresting and if possible reversing the religious trajectory of both Israeli and American Jewry. At first glance, we might reasonably assume that the Holocaust would have posed a major obstacle to the renewal and even perpetuation of faith. For some, particularly those who lived through the European hell and its horrors, this surely was the case, but on a massive scale, the abandonment of religion did not follow. Paradoxically, the Holocaust was too horrific an event to have such a consequence, and not for so grandiose a reason as the commandment not to bestow a posthumous victory upon Hitler. The ordinary human psyche cannot readily survive a sustained, unflinching gaze into the depths of the maelstrom; the Holocaust is a black hole that can suck up and utterly annihilate those who venture too close. Most survivors set up a protective shield, and those who knew of the terrors only from afar assimilated the catastrophe both psychologically and theologically into the long litany of Jewish suffering through the ages. By now, the challenge is how to remember, not how to forget.

In the United States, which is the primary focus of this sympo-

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sium, Orthodoxy had withstood the dismissive contempt of both Jews and Gentiles to establish significant institutions well before the war, and we are guilty of a churlish lack of gratitude when we describe an undifferentiated spiritual wilderness which greeted the pioneers of the forties. At the same time, we exhibit a similar defect if we fail to recognize the transformation effected by Orthodox leadership in the last fifty years. It is precisely this success which shapes many of the difficulties which we now confront.

Cooperation between modern and traditionalist Orthodoxy in the early post-war years was to a significant degree a reflection of weakness. The traditionalist rabbinate needed support, and it also understood and appreciated what a beleaguered Orthodoxy, most of it modern, had accomplished in an unwelcoming environment. Whatever the differences, most streams of Orthodoxy stood together as partners against the dangers of secularism, assimilation, and alternative denominations which threatened the very survival of authentic Judaism in the United States.

As Orthodoxy has grown and gained confidence, the sense of external threat has waned, and internal differences loom larger. To the Orthodoxies of the right, the modern stream is depicted not as an ally against the Other but as the Other itself, not as an alternative means of spreading Torah but as a force working to dilute it.

The confidence that we have begun to experience is young and precarious, and our self-congratulation only partly deserved. Orthodox successes are a function not only of heroic self-sacrifice but of larger social changes that may or may not persist. Much as religious Jews may disdain the relativism of a multicultural society, we are among its beneficiaries. We are also a part of the unanticipated rise of religious fundamentalism in a presumably secularized world. We have benefitted, in short, from two opposing forces in contemporary America, each of which also confronts us with deadly dangers. On one level, of course, Orthodox Jews are aware of those dangers to the point that much of the "yeshiva world" rejects even an education aimed at comfortable employment by pointing to the unprecedented blandishments of the university and the street. At the same time, one senses a smugness which is unseemly and, I fear, unrealistic. Unity remains not merely a value but a necessity.

Within limits, the ideal of unity must also govern our relationship with non-Orthodox Jews. Aside from the evident political importance of mobilizing the largest possible Jewish community to support the needs of *kelal Yisrael*, there are compelling religious reasons to hope

that Conservatism and Reform retain their constituencies. At this point in history, these movements do not seriously threaten the loyalties of Orthodox Jews. For most Conservative and Reform Jews, the realistic alternative to their current affiliation is termination of their Jewish identity. In the absence of an acute threat, we must consider the religious preferability of a life of partial observance to one of radical estrangement; indeed, R. Moshe Feinstein argued that people brought up as Reform Jews may well be rewarded for their *mitsvot* while remaining free of punishment for transgressions that in the final analysis are not their fault.¹ Even the hope that non-Orthodox Jews may be won over depends on preserving their ties to Judaism until they or their descendants might embrace the Torah in its fullness. For the modern Orthodox, such Jews also provide a service we may be uncomfortable in acknowledging: a buffer against the outside world, the psychological comfort of feeling more religious than other Jews, protection against a naked encounter with a challenging environment.

The great deterrent to a policy of cooperation is the specter of legitimating deviationism. The problem is exacerbated by attacks against delegitimation from within and without. Orthodox advocates of friendship, civility, and engagement with non-Orthodox movements must liberate themselves by saying publicly, unequivocally and as often as necessary that we do delegitimize. Reform and even Conservative Judaism as currently constituted diverge in fundamental ways from Jewish belief or practice and are consequently not legitimate expressions of the historic faith. But they have religious value, their adherents are for the most part our fellow Jews, in their own way they care about the Torah, and their communal commitments often coincide with our own. We need not be embarrassed to embrace a policy of constructive cooperation and dialogue. As Reform Judaism expands to include a growing number of righteous Gentiles, this will become more difficult, but *dayya le-tsara be-sha'ata*.

The greatest danger to Orthodoxy, which is not likely to be mentioned in any other contribution to this symposium, comes not from the obvious "deviationist movements" or from secularism but from a group of non-Orthodox Jews who are widely perceived as Orthodox. Precisely because most of Orthodoxy sees them as within the fold, Lubavitch Messianists threaten to undermine a key element of the Messianic faith of Judaism by having us recognize the Second Coming as a legitimate Jewish belief. The Rabbinical Council of America has, thank God, formally declared that this doctrine has no place in Judaism; nonetheless, should we continue to treat Messianists as Orthodox Jews in good

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standing, late twentieth-century Jewry may well be remembered as the generation which allowed a historic transformation of the Jewish religion to take place.

A significant segment of this movement now declares openly that the late Lubavitcher Rebbe is not only the Messiah but God. As of this writing in late 1997, the last year-and-a-half has witnessed various Lubavitch writings calling the Rebbe "our Creator," "the Holy One Blessed be He," the "*Ba'al haBayit* of all that occurs in the world," "omnipotent," "omniscient," "our God," "indistinguishable" from God, one who underwent an "apotheosis" on 3 Tammuz 5754, whose "entire essence is divinity" and to whom one may consequently bow in prayer. These formulations, complete with prooftexts, appear in publications in which Lubavitch educators participate and reflect views that can be found not only on the movement's periphery but also at its core. Without serious investigation, Orthodox Jews are accepting the *shehita* and contributing to the educational institutions of a group containing a significant segment of idolaters. The central objective of Avraham Avinu's migration from his land, his birthplace, and the home of his father is being undermined not with a bang but with a whimper.

Just as we must learn to delegitimize, we must learn to refrain from delegitimation. The effort in some circles to stigmatize modern Orthodoxy places a central stream of Jewish thought through the ages outside the fold by ignoring or willfully distorting the views of many *gedolei Yisrael* and entire communities of Jews.² Controversies over women's issues have lately created a particularly great danger of fragmentation, and we must beware of making disagreements which do not touch upon fundamentals of the faith the cause of schism within modern Orthodoxy itself.

At this point, all segments of Orthodoxy, including our own, are vital and growing. But the future will be determined by our response to challenges ranging from the ideological to the economic to the political and by developments in the State of Israel, ignored in this brief contribution but standing at the center of Jewish destiny. In the final analysis, through all our angst and trepidation, and in all our celebration and triumph, we can only place our trust in the true Guarantor of the future of Torah, whose unequivocal assurance of *lo tishakah mi-pi zaro* is the only lodestar by which we can navigate through all the uncertainties of our encouraging but problematic state.

NOTES

1. *Iggerot Moshe, Even haEzer* 4 (New York, 1985), responsum 26c, p. 54.
2. On this issue, see Gerald Blidstein, David Berger, Shnayer Z. Leiman, and Aharon Lichtenstein, *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?*, ed. by Jacob J. Schacter (Northvale, N.J. and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1997).

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RIVKAH TEITZ BLAU

If a variation on Honi haMe'agel could happen and Rav Meir Shapiro and Sara Schenirer could return to us today, what would be their reaction to the world they found?

I think they would thank Hashem for allowing us to live in Israel. Instead of there being a "Jewish question," as it was called in the 1930s, we have an answer, a home of our own. From 1948 on, the *kibbutz galuyyot* of the Jews of Yemen, Ethiopia, Russia and tens of other countries has been in progress.

They would have to learn a new definition of *ba'al teshuva*. In their time, it meant a person who returned to the observance of his youth; there were so few in the early years of this century that Dr. Nosson Birnbaum was referred to as "the *ba'al teshuva*." Now, a person does not "return," but more accurately retrieves a family legacy that had almost been lost. The hunger of thousands is not for bread, their thirst not for water, but to hear the word of God.

They would be impressed with how much easier it is to observe *Shabbat*, *kashrut*, and other *mitsvot* today. They would be surprised that Conservative temples, which seemed to be the wave of the future in the United States in the 1930s, are now empty except for special events. I think they would be happy with the flourishing of the Daf Yomi and Bais Yaakov school system, and would rejoice at the number of people learning Torah in Israel and the Diaspora. I am sure that they would think of new ideas.

They would mourn for one third of our people, murdered between 1939 and 1945. They might wonder at our having difficulty finding appropriate ways to commemorate the major events of our time. Are picnics and children hitting each other with plastic hammers a fitting means

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of celebrating that Israel is in Jewish hands? At least the first custom means going out to the countryside, but what reason is there for the second rite in the cities of Israel? Why have we not thought of a meaningful way to express our loss in the *Shoa*? Perhaps we will yet adopt the idea of teaching our children on the seventeenth of Iyar, the Hebrew date of Hitler's suicide, what happened, then celebrating in the evening, the eighteenth of Iyar, which is *Lag baOmer*, with a joyous affirmation of our continuity at a family *seuda*. If the meal is served at a celebration, say, a wedding, it would be an even more powerful statement of the eternity of our people.

Let the supposing end and let us look with our own eyes.

In the absence of leadership we have squabbles, a push for conformity within each group and nostalgia for an imagined past. In Europe in the 1930s Jews faced poverty, anti-Semitism, eradication of every religious institution by the Communist government, and wholesale defection from observance. In some communities, we have the Disney version of the *shtetl*. We can try to observe *mitsvot* in as genuine and profound a way as our ancestors in Lithuania and Galicia (or, not to be Euro-centric, in Iran and Iraq), but it is pointless to recreate a time-bound milieu. It is inaccurate to say there were no problems.

Labels do not matter; the egocentricity and desire for power that beset us in Korah's time and at the end of the Second Temple have always been with us and are not confined to one group. A danger peculiar to our time is that ego combined with a public relations campaign can waste enormous sums of money and cause needless pain. A curious locution in our day is "he portrays the image of *tsaddik*." It would be better for him and the community if he *were* a *tsaddik*.

Predictions can be confounded. In the 1950s, when day schools were attacked for separating children from the American mainstream, and feared because a child might grow up to be a rabbi, who would have dreamed that in the 1990s community federations would promote Conservative and Reform day school education.

What happens when a child learns to read Hebrew and to understand texts? When the child reaches the verses about *kashrut*, she will ask, "Why are we disregarding this?" After a *Shabbat* party at school, he will want a whole experience of the day at home. A little knowledge, if it opens the way to more Torah knowledge and experience, can be a wonderful thing.

The greatest threat to the Jewish people is ignorance. The majority of Jews today cannot read Hebrew, have no knowledge of our sources and no clue as to what Torah life is. It is as though they were given the

diamond of Judaism at birth but not taught how to polish it; they toss it away as though it were a rock, instead of enjoying the light of all its facets.

For decades our *yeshivot* have been supported through parents' payment of tuition and contributions. Mothers earning money outside the home enable schools to meet their budgets. The *kolel* system is predicated on women choosing to support Torah learning through their hard work. Meeting the needs of women is not the concern of women only; the growth and health of the community depend on encouraging women to see and hear what is going on, and on restoring *kavvana* to our prayers and dignity to our Torah reading. Anger has been expressed; now we must address the valid issues of women's learning and participation. I do not know what the solution will be for insecure men who need to denigrate women; I can only report that a genuine *talmid hakham* follows the instructions of *Pirkei Avot* in all dealings.

It is important to remember that Mrs. Schenirer was a private person who was inspired by the ideas of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, and that, while Rabbi Shapiro brought it to the attention of world Jewry, Rabbi Moshe Menachem Mendel Spivak conceived the idea of Daf Yomi. Who knows which young man or woman will be inspired with a new idea? Hashem does not abandon us; new ideas and new leaders will appear.

Dr. Rivka Blau, author, lecturer and member of Tradition's editorial board, has recently written a memoir of her parents, Rabbi and Mrs. Pinchas M. Teitz.

JUDITH BLEICH

Devastating loss and wondrous revival are the hallmarks of our age. My earliest childhood memories are of the refugee communities in England during the closing years of World War II and of my family's subsequent arrival in North America. Those memories are intertwined with a flow of *niggunim* that seem almost paradoxically to have emerged from the horrors and atrocities of the war. It was as if, despite everything, our people could and would yet sing. Their songs expressed two central themes: gratitude for survival and an unextinguished and inextinguishable love for Torah.

The melodies resonated with the words of "*Hasdei HaShem ki lo tamnu . . .*" (*Lamentations* 3:22); "*Zot nehamati be-onyi . . . zaidim helitzuni ad me'od, mi-Toratekha lo natiti . . .*" (*Psalms* 119:50-51); and

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“*Lulei Toratekha sha’ashu’ai az avadeti be-onyi*” (*Psalms* 119:92).

In retrospect, I now realize that the words of these songs were an expression of the absolute commitment and boundless love that was to become the driving, energizing force for the regeneration of a Torah community that was to rise phoenix-like from the ashes of the crematoria.

In a proclamation issued by R. Hayyim of Volozhin heralding the yeshiva he sought to establish he called for public support, not so much for the benefit of the yeshiva, but because of a compelling need for Jews to cleave to Torah as to a life-saving raft.¹ In his *Nefesh haHayyim*, R. Hayyim of Volozhin renders the phrase “It is a tree of life for those that seize it” (*Proverbs* 3:18) quite literally, stating that the verse teaches a simple truism. A swimmer who finds himself in turbulent waters will hang on to a floating plank for his very life. So also must a Jew cast adrift amidst the perils of a turbulent world hang on for dear life to the Torah as a veritable life-preserver.²

Orthodox Judaism certainly existed in the United States before World War II, but it was an embattled Orthodoxy. Standards of observance had become eroded and ignorance of things Jewish was ubiquitous. Among the immigrants who arrived in the wake of World War II were remarkable individuals who devoted all their energies to furtherance of the goal of Torah study as an end in itself. Rabbi Ahron Kotler, of blessed memory, and the *kolel* he founded in Lakewood—a phenomenon looked upon in its time as a preposterous endeavor in an American milieu—the transplantation of the Mirrer Yeshiva and re-establishment of other *yeshivot* as well as the individual scholars who found their way to faculties of existing Torah institutions all combined to create a new intellectual climate. No longer were *yeshivot* regarded solely as institutions for the training of religious professionals. Torah study came into its own not only as an intrinsic value but as the paramount value in the lives of members of a rapidly expanding Torah community. A concomitant of the new reality was the establishment of *yeshivot ketanot* throughout the length and breadth of the country. Products of the newly established or freshly invigorated Torah institutions had a burning desire to devote their lives to further study and teaching. Their love of Torah was infectious. The result was a renaissance in Jewish education on every level.

The late Rabbi Pinchas Teitz once remarked that during the early decades of his rabbinate in Elizabeth, New Jersey, on the rare occasions that he entered a congregant’s home and found a *shas*, he could be quite certain that the volumes belonged to an aged grandfather. In later years when he entered a congregant’s home and beheld a *shas*, he could be quite certain that the volumes belonged to the young grandson.

Today, those grandsons have grown to maturity and their children possess, and assiduously use, libraries of their own.

Whatever the failings and flaws of our times—and they are manifold—the criticism that the Gemara, *Bava Metsia* 85b, levels at the Jews of the Second Temple era “who did not bless the Torah first,” i.e., who neglected Torah study by not placing it at the forefront of their concerns, does not apply to the post-war generation of the Torah community. Nor has our youth flocked to Torah as an intellectual escape or as a salvation from the threats posed by an alien culture. Rather, they have responded to Torah study as a sheer delight. Intoxicated with its majesty, they are passionate in their love of learning.

In some circles the passion for learning and fervent religiosity has bred a certain narrowness of focus. Often, however, that narrowness has been a result, not so much of a conscious negation of secularity, as of an intensive concentration upon Torah learning to the exclusion of all else. This absorption has led to a single-minded dedication to Torah study in the spirit of the Psalmist’s yearning, “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that shall I seek . . . that I dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life . . .” (Psalms 27:4).

Unlike those of previous generations who often stood in exaggerated awe of the wisdom epitomized by the university, our own youth reflect an attitude resonating with the view expressed by Maharal of Prague. With all due regard for worldly wisdom and science, Maharal asserted that “the wisdom of all the wise men of the gentiles is considered as naught and nothingness in contrast to the least of their [the Sages of the Torah] words.”³ For our youth the move toward more intensive engagement in Torah study and the concomitant movement away from secular studies represents a choice freely made only after thoughtful examination of alternative options.⁴

The newly evolved dedication to Torah study for its own sake has had a profound effect even beyond the confines of the recently developed Torah enclaves. The mere presence of this community with its norms and values served to establish a new model and demonstrated quite dramatically that Old World Judaism could transplant itself, survive and thrive even in America. The role of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, should also be appreciated. As an extraordinarily eloquent exponent of the analytic methodology of the Lithuanian school of talmudic scholarship, he demonstrated the intellectual rigor of rabbinic scholarship in a manner that could not fail to make a profound impression upon university-trained audiences.

As a result of these factors, Torah scholarship acquired not only

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respect but also a certain cachet. Today, we see the fruits throughout the spectrum of the Jewish community. Thirst for Jewish learning is pervasive and has brought with it a corresponding enhancement in the observance of *mitsvot*.

However, with the growth and strengthening of the Torah community, and perhaps because of that phenomenon, ripples have arisen that threaten to widen into a rift and ultimately into a chasm that may not easily be bridged. On the one hand, there exists a yeshiva-centered Orthodoxy characterized by a certain degree of insularity and lack of intellectual openness; on the other, an observant community that is much more acculturated and comfortably integrated within the dominant society.

In part, the differences are external and superficial. Neither group appeals to the *Shulhan Arukh* in justification of a black fedora over a *kippa seruga* or vice versa as the preferred sartorial garb; nor has anyone produced a scintilla of evidence demonstrating that white shirts are religiously preferable to colored ones. Yet, more often than not, members of each group can be readily identified by, what amounts to, their uniforms. The clothes in question certainly do not make the man but they do serve to identify his socio-religious orientation. Members of the different groups tend to live in different neighborhoods. When they do live in relatively close proximity, one group tends to frequent long-established synagogues; the other is attracted to smaller, less formal *shtiblakh*.

These differences seem to be minor, trivial, bereft of serious significance. But they are symptomatic of a broader divide. To some extent the differences are cultural in nature. One group is essentially American, descendants of people who came to America when a melting-pot philosophy was in vogue and when the public school was the vehicle of Americanization. Acceptance was the challenge, economic, professional and social integration the desideratum and acculturation the norm. Given that agenda, it was no mean feat to preserve authentic Jewish identity and to retain a staunch commitment to the teachings and practices of Judaism. When successful, the result was an American Jew of deep and abiding faith and practice, but American to the core.

The other group, in contrast, is essentially Old World in cultural outlook, with a heavy overlay of Americanism to be sure, but the underlying character remains European in nature. Their children, and by now their grandchildren, grew up in a different America. Post-World War II immigrants did not feel a compelling need to blend into the woodwork. Economic opportunities abounded; America was no longer a melting-

pot but a mosaic; ethnic pride had become as American as apple pie. That generation did not seek to emulate their neighbors; if anything, they regarded them with disdainful superiority. For them Americanism was welcome, but Americanization was to be shunned.

There is little in the story that is new to Jewish history. Assuredly, the cultural differences between a Galician Jew and a Hungarian Jew or between a Lithuanian Jew and a German Jew were just as great; the differences in customs and traditions that separated a *hasid* from a *mitnagged* or an Ashkenazi Jew from a Sephardi were even greater. But heretofore the cultural gap was usually accompanied by a geographical divide; generally, the different groups simply did not live in such close proximity.

More significantly, with the possible exception of *hasidim* and *mitnaggdim*, each sector did not question the authenticity, fervor or commitment of a disparate group. In this country, the post-World War II immigrants found ample grounds to question the standards of observance of the indigenous population. The acculturation they encountered gave them even more reason for suspicion. And yes, the lack of erudition that was all too frequently emblematic of the rabbinate of the day did not serve to inspire confidence.

The newly arrived group, and those who came to identify themselves with that group, were not always welcomed unreservedly by their confreres. Their tenacity in preserving their distinctive lifestyle was, at times, seen as a reproach. Uncompromised standards of observance were perceived as excessive pietism; “*humrization*,” as it was seen to be, was often equated with delegitimization of the existing community and its religious leadership.

One would have hoped that over a period of time these groups would have developed a common ground. Unfortunately, this has not occurred. Quite to the contrary, in recent years there has developed a growing sense of two camps, separate and distinct from each other. Our vocabularies have become filled with divisive labels—right-wing, left-wing, centrist, *haredi*—and rhetoric that fosters a mentality of “us” versus “them.”

If the Orthodox community is to be united for a common purpose that goal must be pursued consciously both in word and in deed. As a community, we should have—but, alas, have not—become sensitized to the need for caution and responsibility in public—and private—rhetoric. It would be salutary for our vocabularies to be purged of divisive terminology and nomenclature that is out of place in a Torah community.

More significantly, if the community is not to become schisma-

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tized, particular care must be exercised in formulating policy with regard to areas of ritual and practice that have an impact upon the entire community. Practices that are bound further to splinter and fragment an already fractious community must be eschewed.

An anecdote may serve to illustrate this point. In 1960 the eminent scholar and halakhic decisor, Rabbi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg, then of Montreaux, responded to an interlocutor from the United States who consulted him for guidance in reacting to a proposed governmental regulation that would have required animals to be rendered unconscious prior to *shehita*. This was a matter that Rabbi Weinberg had researched extensively over a period of decades. In a very brief responsum, Rabbi Weinberg counseled that, apart from the halakhic technicalities involved, a permissive stance with regard to that issue would be extremely unwise. Since large sectors of the Orthodox community would not, under any circumstances, countenance changes in the practice of *shehita* that had been customary from time immemorial, a permissive ruling would only "lead to dissension and to the fashioning of two *Torot* in Israel."⁵

That cautionary note is relevant to any innovation that carries with it the potential for communal fissure and for creating a perception that there are two distinct *Torot*. Such reticence does not stem from lack of courage or from fear of censure but from a deep-seated love and appreciation for the grandeur of *kelal Yisrael*.

The role of the synagogue as a potentially unifying force should not be overlooked. In a recent op-ed article in the *Forward* (Oct. 31, 1997), Leonard Fein notes that most synagogues in the United States do not play a crucial role in shaping collective Jewish life or in defining or molding values. Synagogues, he states, are usually "available at critical times but [are] not in themselves critical."

For Orthodox Jews synagogues *are* critical institutions. Our religious faith is nurtured by our synagogues and our *yeshivot*. Both institutions are critical in themselves; both institutions are essential for the continued well-being of our religious society. Currently, as a result of the polarization within Orthodoxy, there is an ever-widening gap between these institutions. That gap, in turn, has itself become a contributing cause exacerbating polarization. It is in the synagogue that the different sectors of the Orthodox community should find the opportunity to engage in cooperative efforts and to function harmoniously for the enhancement of the spiritual life of the entire community. Unfortunately, to our detriment, too many *benei Torah* have shirked that responsibility.

Each of the various sectors of our community has its own strengths and failings. Cross-fertilization would allow each to absorb the strengths

of the other and to remedy its own deficiencies. For that to happen channels of communication must be developed and a spirit of fraternal openness fostered.

Perhaps it is because I am privileged to spend a large portion of my time with young people whose delight and passion is in study of Torah and who have a wholesome disregard for communal politics that I remain an optimist. I remain confident that ultimately the responsible and sincere elements in our community, those not driven by partisan concerns but who seek only “to do Your will with a complete heart,” will join in “a single union” and make common cause for the furtherance of Torah values.

Our energies should not be squandered on internecine factionalism, nor should our talents be dissipated in sterile competitiveness. The challenge of our generation is to stem the hemorrhaging that, Jewishly speaking, consigns far too many of our coreligionists to oblivion.

The prominent nineteenth-century Reform spokesman, Isaac Mayer Wise, predicted mistakenly that in the twentieth century the majority of Americans of all faiths would become Jews, but he also predicted that there would be no future for adherents of what he termed the “half-civilized orthodoxy” and those who “gnawed the dead bones of past centuries.”⁶ He was fully conscious of a sharp divide that separated Reform congregations from other elements of the Jewish populace and was even desirous of formalizing the distinction. Bluntly, he stated: “It is next to an impossibility to associate or identify ourselves” with the Orthodox because “We are Americans and they are not. . . . Besides the name we have little in common; we let them be Jews and we are American Israelites.”⁷ Wise would have been astounded to discover that, at the close of the twentieth century, the most vital and dynamic sector of the Jewish community is precisely the Orthodox group he so thoroughly disdained.

It would be a gross error to respond simplistically to the complexities of our own era on the basis of historical analogies. A very high proportion of the constituencies of the twentieth-century Reform and Conservative movements have not really rejected traditional Judaism. They are individuals whose contact with Torah and tradition has been tenuous at best, whose *Weltanschauung* has been shaped by a secular society, and who are fully within the category of those whom Rav Kook described as “turned from Torah and the faith by the raging currents of the times”⁸ whose eventual return to Torah and *mitsvot* can best be achieved by reinforcing their instinctive love for and identification with their people. These ties must be nurtured if intellectual and spiritual tutelage is to be effective.

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In the current atmosphere of politicized squabbling and mutual recrimination, achievement of this ultimate goal is severely impeded.

The tragedy is compounded by the fact that never has there been a more propitious time for dissemination of Torah. The Reform movement that once cavalierly cast aside one ritual after another in a desire to conform to a homogenized Western society is now gradually returning to an appreciation of the unique religious practices that distinguish Judaism from all other faiths. Belatedly, its leadership has also come to a recognition of a truth that the Orthodox have always known, namely, that "Torah is the best *sehora*" (merchandise). This most welcome trend presents an unprecedented opportunity for reuniting vast numbers of Jews with their Jewish legacy. We must seize the initiative in fashioning meaningful programs and reaching out to the nonobservant. Neither invective nor organizational dialogue will accomplish the goal; it is simple unadorned *talmud Torah* that points the way to reconciliation.

It has been said that a typical page of the Talmud reflects the history and geography of the Jewish people. The Mishnah was written in *Erets Yisrael*, the Gemara compiled in Babylonia, the commentaries of Rashi and *Tosafot* were authored in Germany and France, the supercommentaries in Poland and Lithuania and—on the outer edges of the page—the blank margins represent the contribution to Jewish scholarship of American Jewry. That, thank God, is no longer the case. Torah scholarship in America has come of age. We are privileged to live in a generation that is beginning to fill in the blank space. Shall we then fail to transmit that page of Talmud to our fellow Jews?

NOTES

1. Open Letter, dated Fast of Gedalia, 5563 (1802), published in Moshe Shmuel Shapiro-Schmukler, *Toldot Rabbenu Hayyim miVolozhin* (Bnei Brak, 1957), p. 167.
2. *Nefesh haHayyim* (New York, 1944), *sha'ar* 4, chap. 3, p. 124
3. *Be'er haGola*, *be'er ha-hamishi* and *Hiddushei Aggadot*, *Yevamot* 62b.
4. It is noteworthy that, as a pedagogue, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch counseled that religious schools not overly delay exposure of youngsters to secular studies lest those students feel "robbed of their youth" and develop an unwholesome interest in forbidden fruit. In the United States the ready availability of secular studies assured that the election of exclusive *kollel* study by those young men who were so inclined was a free and willing choice. Whether, in some circles, that situation will still pertain in the next generation of students is another matter.
5. *Seridei Esh*, III (Jerusalem, 1966), no. 90, p. 285.
6. *The American Israelite*, vol. 33, no. 31 (Jan. 28, 1887), p. 4.
7. *Loc.cit.*

8. Letter, dated May 20, 1908, in Rabbi Abraham I. Kook, *Iggerot haReiya*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 170. An English translation is included in *Rav A. Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, trans. and annot. Tzvi Feldman (Maaleh Adumim, Israel, 1986), p. 51.

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MORDECHAI BREUER

1) Unlike Orthodox communities in Hungary and Germany, Polish and Lithuanian Orthodox Jewry had no separatist communal tradition. The universally revered head of the yeshiva of Volozhin, “the mother of Lithuanian *yeshivot*,” R. Naftali Tsevi Yehuda Berlin, spoke out against separatist and isolationist tendencies in Jewish communal and social life.¹ Secessionist communities or congregations were unknown in Poland and Lithuania, even where the local community was led by a board composed exclusively or mainly of unobservant Jews.

The shift to separatism and isolationism in Lithuanian yeshiva circles is a post-Holocaust phenomenon and has, in my view, much to do with “the swing to the Right.”² It should be borne in mind that this swing was rarely initiated by Orthodox leaders; it was mostly the rank and file who set the “rightist” tone. The politics of the haredim is not dictated from “above” but from “below,” i.e. by the masses. From personal knowledge I can testify to one of the outstanding masters of halakha in Israel being consulted on a halakhic issue and coming to a lenient conclusion. When asked to publicize his decision he declined for the following reason: “My friends and followers, those who listen to my voice, expect me to be stringent in my halakhic decisions. I cannot disappoint them.” We have here the basic failure of responsible rabbis and *posekim* to consider the needs and expectations not only of their immediate social environment but of the population as a whole.

2a) Of course, the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel and its continued existence were the two epochal events for the Jewish people as a whole and Orthodoxy in particular. The Holocaust decimated Orthodoxy and deprived it of its greatest spokesmen and spiritual guides to a degree incomparable with other sectors of Jewry. The establishment of the State thus found Orthodoxy in a situation of utter weakness bordering on helplessness and despair, and that at a time when strength, resolution, and resourcefulness were essential for Orthodoxy to subsist and successfully pass the test of modern statehood.

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The response of large sections of Orthodoxy to both these events was disappointing. There was—and still is—a denial of the unprecedented and unparalleled character and significance of the Holocaust, a denial one meets even in modern Orthodox circles. It stems, I think, from the enormity of the event and the difficulty of accommodating it within traditional faith and trust other than of the most naive sort. Regarding Israel, after initial attempts at a unified Orthodox response and politics (United Religious Front), Torah Judaism became entangled in disastrous political splits and wrangling.

2b) The greatest success was Orthodoxy's survival and perseverance in the face of its opponents' assurance that its days were numbered. (When Jacob Herzog ז"ל asked David Ben Gurion why he sustained the religious school system while dissolving the Labor trend, since his aim was to establish one uniform state school system, Ben Gurion replied that the religious schools were doomed and would not last more than ten to fifteen years). Along with Orthodoxy's persistence goes the extraordinary flowering of the *yeshivot* (in the number of students, not in the quality and standard of studies) and the transformation of a backward Mizrahi school system.

The greatest failure was the misrepresentation of religious Zionism and its values by Gush Emunim. While fulfilling an important mission in setting up dozens of new settlements in Judea and Samaria, Gush Emunim distorted the image of Orthodoxy with a resultant *hilul Hashem* of the worst kind. Instead of concentrating on paving the way toward the Torah state, Gush Emunim disguised Judaism as a mix of religion and chauvinism, causing a repulsive identification in Israel and abroad of Orthodox Judaism with Iran-like fundamentalism.

3) The most serious challenge is presented by secularism, or, more accurately, by confrontation with the modern world, which, in Israel, means confrontation with the modern Jewish state. Liberal and Conservative Jews are in my view preferable to totally secularized Jews whose lives are spent in utter religious and Jewish nihilism. Therefore, support by the State of Israel of liberal and Conservative synagogues is vastly preferable to the maintenance of a secular Jewish school system by the state Ministry of Education, to the budget of which Orthodox Jewish taxpayers contribute no less than secular ones. However, if Reform Jews wish to be represented on the municipal Religious Councils, it is difficult to see how they can do so honestly so long as these Councils are by law expected to conduct or supervise Orthodox mar-

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riages, divorces, cemeteries, *kashrut* agencies, etc. To change the law, Reform Jews from overseas (their number in Israel is negligible) would have to make a mass aliya. I would welcome such an aliya, as I would of any group of Jews. It is their only chance.

Another change of strategy I would suggest concerns the confrontation of *medinat hok*, meaning a state governed by secular law, with *medinat halakha*, presumably meaning a state coercing its citizens to observe Jewish law. As I see it, the distance between these two notions is far narrower than some Orthodox and secular propagandists would have us believe. The correct definition of *medinat halakha* is not “a Jewish state whose laws do not collide with halakha,” but “a Jewish state whose laws follow halakha.” As is well known, the code of halakha covers very few of the public affairs which are the concern of the ministries and departments of a modern government. Even large sections of the Talmud dealing with civil laws are based on *minhag ha-medina*.

4) I will respond only to the last part of the question. I see further splits and I welcome them because, the situation being what it is, only thus can the monolithic grip of present Orthodox groupings be reduced and give way to new orientations. Renewal should be the watchword of Orthodoxy. Its tragedy is not the violation of the famous “status quo” by the secular parties, but the unimaginative clinging of Orthodoxy to its own “status quo”: its inability or unwillingness to forge new, more effective, less futile policies in its struggle for a state which should not only be a state of Jews but a Jewish state.

5) When I attended the funeral of Rav Shelomo Zalman Auerbach *z”l* three years ago, I was stunned standing in the midst of a mass of mourners whose number was larger than that of any crowd ever seen in Israel at any event. Standing shoulder to shoulder were people of all walks of life, Orthodox, secular, Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Yemenite, whatever. Here was *kelal Yisrael* paying its respects to a Great Man in Israel. That gave me strength and hope.

NOTES

1. *Meshiv Davar* I, 44.
2. Haym Soloveitchik, “Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Tradition* 28:4 (1994), pp. 64-129.

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EPHRAIM BUCHWALD

Two great events have shaped Jewish life in the last sixty years: the Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel. Ironically, sixty years later, two great untruths have emerged from these two epochal events, threatening the viability of Jewish life today.

The untruth concerning the Holocaust has become the veritable mantra of contemporary Jewish life. The second untruth stems from statements which Jews have recited for the last 2000 years, affirming our undying devotion to the land of Israel, but which in the last 50 years have been shown to be hollow and meaningless.

The vow “Never Again” is one of the very few things that Meir Kahane ever uttered that the world Jewish community has universally embraced. This pledge underscores the determination and resolve of world Jewry to never allow the wholesale destruction of the Jewish people to take place again.

But while the American Jewish community has been chanting its “Never Again” slogans and expending hundreds of millions of dollars on Holocaust museums and memorials, a “silent holocaust” has been raging throughout North America, indeed throughout most of the Jewish world—a holocaust of assimilation.

Our parents prayed for a melting pot, but instead we’ve gotten a meltdown! While, thank God, this time there are no storm troopers, no barbed wire, no barking dogs, no gas chambers, the net result is exactly the same—no Jews. Prime Minister Netanyahu pointed out recently that since the end of 1945, the American Jewish community has in effect lost “six million” Jews. Since the end of World War II, the general American population has more than doubled, but the American Jewish community, because of assimilation and low birth rate, has remained numerically the same.

Tragically, as American Jews were vowing “Never Again,” building award-winning buildings on the mall in Washington, and singing “*Ani Ma’amin*” (“I believe in the ultimate redemption”) each year at Holocaust memorial programs held at Madison Square Garden or Temple Emanuel, one million American Jewish children were being raised as non-Jews (700,000 were raised as Christians and 300,000 without any religion whatsoever). Yet despite this unprecedented hemorrhaging of the American Jewish community, there is no sense of alarm, no sense of emergency, no outrage. Yes, unproductive “continuity” meetings and conferences have been abundant, but for all practical purposes, nothing, absolutely nothing, has been done effectively to address the incredible

erosion of non-Orthodox Jewish life in America.

And so, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of American Jews wait desperately to be touched, yearn to be welcomed, but don't know where to turn. The overwhelmed and underfunded outreach organizations are outmaneuvered and "outgunned," capable of reaching only relatively small numbers.

It's time to send out the ocean liner instead of the rowboat. A significant rescue effort to reach the four or five million unaffiliated or marginally affiliated Jews must be initiated. However, an effort of this proportion can succeed only if the so-called "committed" Jews are mobilized to reach out to the non-committed. Efforts to invite unaffiliated Jews to our *Shabbat* and holiday tables, and one-on-one learning drives must be organized. Unless we do so, and do so now (I fear that ten years from now most unaffiliated American Jews will be irretrievable!), history will say about us: "American Jews cannot, like the generation of the Holocaust, claim that they did not know. This generation just didn't care!"

The second great lie of contemporary Judaism is the declaration, "*LeShana haBa'a biYrushalayim*," "Next year in Jerusalem." For 2,000 years, Jews have hoped, prayed, badgered, begged, and cried to the Almighty: "Restore us, O Lord, to your land," "Rebuild Jerusalem," "Restore Your glory to Zion," "Lead us upright to our land."

Perhaps we should all begin to consider why the government of Israel is relinquishing land in exchange for what appears to be fatuous peace. Perhaps the reason the Palestinians appear to be winning back the Holy Land is that they love the land of Israel more than we Jews do. They are willing to fight for it, they are willing to live in abject poverty and to starve for it, they are willing to die for it. At the same time, the American Jewish community, the wealthiest community in all of Jewish history, the community with the greatest opportunity and the most resources of any community in all Jewish history to return to Zion, has frittered away this historic opportunity.

God has knocked—knocked louder and harder in our generation than, probably, in any generation since the Revelation at Sinai—but we have failed to respond. Consequently, we see the land of Israel eroding before our very eyes. Only the Almighty knows whether, God forbid, it will be taken away from us entirely because of our failure to respond.

World Jewry's failure to respond has much to do with "Yeshurun waxing fat"—Jewry's unprecedented economic success and its obsession with material comfort. Clearly, American Orthodoxy is in a paradoxical state of denial. Orthodox Jews look with pity upon the four to five million American Jews who are at risk of vanishing, trusting, with a false

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sense of security, that our “Torah and *mitsvot*” will protect us from assimilation. But assimilation is taking its pernicious toll on the Orthodox as well. While not in the form of the dreadful plague of intermarriage—taking our children into captivity (although that too is becoming more common)—assimilation manifests itself in a far more subtle and perfidious form: corruption. Corruption of values brought on by undue emphasis on materialism.

American Jews long ago lost the right to consider themselves a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The new scandals we hear about weekly, indeed daily, the all too common public desecrations of God’s name, featuring improprieties in business and personal life committed by so-called Orthodox scoundrels, must be recognized as the inevitable result of a people who reject God and His Holy Land. The rot seems to be infecting even the best of our people.

Non-Orthodox American Jews are not alone. Without a dramatic turnaround in values, the Orthodox community also seems bent on a road to oblivion.

The tragic paradox of this generally lugubrious portrayal of Orthodoxy today is that there is much in Orthodox life in America of which to be proud. In fact, someone should inform the Union of Orthodox Rabbis that the battle with the Conservative and the Reform movements is over; the Orthodox have won. Because of the wisdom and foresight of great Jewish leaders of the 1940’s and 1950’s, Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, Rabbi Zev Gold, who invested all of Orthodoxy’s efforts and wherewithal into the day school-yeshiva movement, Orthodoxy has emerged with an infrastructure that nurtures Jewry today. Clearly, the renaissance of Orthodox Jewry is due primarily to the success of the day school-yeshiva movements and to the burgeoning Orthodox Jewish fertility rate. Unless the Reform and Conservative leaders recognize that the traditions of Israel (read, Torah and ritual observance) are the stuff that keeps us alive, their movements are doomed to oblivion. It is therefore imperative for the Orthodox to reach out to the non-Orthodox movements in brotherhood and love and share with them the insights of our faith system and the elements in our system which are working for us, and demonstrate how they can work for the non-Orthodox. While tensions with the non-Orthodox movements at the time of this writing are high, I believe that the leaders of these movements in their communities are open to sharing with us.

As a student of Yeshiva University and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, I believe in the efficacy of modern Orthodoxy and am of the firm opinion that the confluence of modernity and Torah is enriching. This

melding, I believe, is the true “normative” mode of Judaism. The question, however, is this: is now the proper environment in which to affirm the primacy of modern Orthodox belief and practice? I think not. Given the hedonistic, often decadent environment of America, we see only too often that instead of “*mehadrin min ha-mehadrin*,” modern Orthodoxy has become “modern *min ha-modern*.” “Modern Orthodoxy,” in its pristine mode, should mean that whenever modernity clashes with Orthodoxy, Torah and halakha should prevail. That, unfortunately, has not been the case. Modern Orthodoxy has, in many instances, come to stand for “casual” religiosity. Consequently, the “turn to the right” may be a very good thing, perhaps a long overdue correction for modern Orthodoxy, which has been losing direction. Modern Orthodox Jews should realize that even if we aim to be passionate in our commitment to Judaism, given the inimical environment, we’ll end up moderate. If we aim to be moderate, we’ll end up casual. If we aim to be casual, we’ll wind up, God forbid, with Episcopalian grandchildren!

Given the general state of Orthodoxy today, both the modern Orthodox and the right-wing *yeshivish* Orthodox have serious problems. There is no room for triumphalism in either camp, for we are both communities at risk. We can and should be learning (the good) from each other. Productive cross-pollination need not be a fantasy, since significant numbers of “modern” rabbis, especially those of the younger generation, are open to the yeshiva world. My frequent experiences with the yeshiva world lead me to believe that a significant number of its leaders are becoming more open to those in the modern Orthodox world. We can only benefit from a mutual interface. I believe that the recent *shiur* given to the Rabbinical Council of American by Yeshiva Sha’ar HaTorah’s Rav Zelig Epstein—one of the great Torah personalities of today—is a wonderful beginning and perhaps a forerunner of a closer and warmer interface between the RCA and the yeshiva world. We should all look forward to, and work for, more communication and better relations between the Orthodox.

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REUVEN P. BULKA

1) That there has been a decline in the relationship between the world of the rabbis and the yeshiva world is indisputable. But this change goes

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back decades, and was actually debated in this journal. The explanation for the change is probably multi-dimensional. The yeshiva world and the rabbinical world are two different realities. The yeshiva is a world swimming in contemplation of the ideal; the rabbinical world swirls in wrestling with the practical.

Rabbis endeavor to bring the congregation closer to tradition. In the process, the rabbi swallows many harsh realities, must often look the other way, and is obliged to tread gently rather than setting strict and potentially alienating rules. The yeshiva is quite different. The rules are set, and the students must conform or else they are dismissed, or do not enter in the first place.

A yeshiva student who comes back home sees the congregation and its rabbi in a changed light. The rabbi seems to be a compromiser, and the *rosh yeshiva* the true manifestation of authentic, unvarnished Judaism.

Having proposed this explanation does not suggest my agreement with its inherent presumption, that the rabbi is by definition a compromiser or a less authentic proponent of Judaism.

Additionally, by way of explanation, it is also fair to say that because more significant time is spent in yeshiva, the student is likely to have a closer relationship with a rebbe than with a congregational rabbi. To whom will the student turn for personal guidance, and for halakhic definition? In the competition for the heart and soul of the future generation of yeshiva graduates, the rebbe wins over the rabbi most of the time.

Specifically with regard to communal policy, rabbis are more likely to push for an integrationist approach, whereas the *rashei yeshiva*, who live in a different environment, are more likely to condemn such an approach. *Rashei yeshiva* have always been known to “question” communal rabbis for what they perceive to be deviations from Torah norms. Rabbis have been known to express chagrin at the narrow views of some *rashei yeshiva*. This only further entrenches the divide between the two worlds.

At the same time, there are definite strides being taken to narrow the chasm, and to bring the two worlds closer together. There really is no reason why leading *rashei yeshiva* should not be invited to RCA gatherings, and vice-versa. The first invitation may not be accepted, but the second and third might be. We need to be serious about this because any long range harmony in the Jewish community is contingent on meaningful interaction between all groups.

2) From a Jewish perspective, the epochal events of the past 60 years were undoubtedly the brutal murder of six million Jews, the reestablishment of the State of Israel, and the rescue of Soviet, Ethiopian, and Syrian Jewry.

These events are rooted in two opposites: vulnerability and power. The Holocaust unfolded in the face of Jewish vulnerability and powerlessness, a powerlessness made even more painful by the refusal of people in power to take effective action.

The rebirth of the State of Israel gave power to the Jewish people; power, that is, to push governments into action, and power to stop potential horrors in places where Jews were vulnerable, most notably the then Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and Syria.

The rescue efforts in these countries were essentially transdenominational, or, more precisely, denomination-blind. Every committed Jew took up the cause, in thought or in deed. I do not know whether one can isolate an Orthodox component in these events, or whether it is wise to do so. These events involved all Israel; they brought moments when everyone was of one mind and one purpose.

Following the rescue, there were problems related to the Jewish status of the new *olim*, which generated controversy, but that was minor compared with the more recent “Who is a Jew” trauma.

As far as Israel itself is concerned, the record of the Orthodox community is quite remarkable. The building of *yeshivot* in Israel and the high percentage of Orthodox *olim* to Israel are singular achievements of the Orthodox community. The *hesder* contribution on the military front is another truly inspirational story. But there have also been disappointments, behavior within different segments of the Orthodox community, in Israel and outside Israel, that at times have been at the very least embarrassing, not to mention unrepresentative of authentic Torah values.

The greatest frustration has been that in spite of all the Orthodox successes in Israel and for Israel, we have failed to convey effectively the full scope of these activities to the general population in Israel and abroad. People today still think of yeshiva students as draft dodgers, when this is not the case. People still paint their picture of Orthodoxy based on the latest and most glaring crazy action or statement. What Orthodoxy truly stands for—a binding, unshakable commitment to the people of Israel and to Jews everywhere—has not penetrated the maze of unfortunate, headline-grabbing silliness.

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3) Which is the more serious challenge to Orthodoxy, deviationist movements or secularism? The answer depends on whether one judges by news copy or by hard facts on the ground. The hard news seems to be dominated by inter-denominational squabbles. But the facts on the ground are the three million Jews in North America who have no Jewish affiliation whatsoever. That is the most serious problem facing us today. Inter-marriage is the consequence of the more serious and immediate problem, the lack of any Jewish link for three million Jews. We are losing them.

The question is, do we view these three million as a challenge to Orthodoxy? In other words, what ultimately is the Orthodox agenda? Clearly, the agenda should be to bring the Jewish message to all Jews, specially those who have absolutely no affiliation. There are some Orthodox groups who excel in this area, but we do not yet have a concerted Orthodox strategy to save these three million. This challenge is more difficult than the rescue of the three million Soviet Jews from political oppression.

The image of Orthodoxy as genuinely concerned for the entire community is, as noted, quite weak. A massive, dedicated approach to the unaffiliated, if for no other reason than to reconnect them to their Jewish roots, should be our highest priority. Right now, much of this work is being done by too few. The burden is back-breaking or burn-out-inducing. The OU and the RCA working in tandem could put together the human, spiritual, and financial resources necessary to pull off such a program.

The main challenge to Orthodoxy comes not from other movements. The main challenge to Orthodoxy is to realize its larger responsibility to the community, to share the strength of its commitment with those who for whatever reason do not fully appreciate Judaism, and to avoid as much as possible the enervating squabbles that almost inevitably damage Orthodoxy's credibility; even though the causes they represent are just and the media treatment they receive is unfair.

4) Labels are to Jewish life what money is to commercial life—the root of all evil. We have labelled Judaism to death, creating different brands and therefore the rejection of undesirable brands. We are knee-deep into the subdivisions. It bodes no good for the future to break Judaism down in this manner.

In the long run, what is most vital is this: that the Torah that is espoused be serious, authentic, sincere, consistent, honest, loving, and caring. We must eschew name-calling and delegitimizing, and instead realize that the different varieties are part of a mosaic. No variety is a

threat to the others; on the contrary, it is an enhancement.

All the groups have strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, the strengths are imparted to the other groups; the weaknesses are reduced by learning from the other groups. For example, with apologies for the generalization, the haredi community has passion, which sometimes runs out of control. If the centrist community borrowed the passion and the haredi community the balance, that would be messianic.

What happens in the future is in the hands of our leaders, and is a matter of mindset. If we see the other groups as competition, we are in trouble; if we see them as complementary, we can all grow together.

5) Hedonism has been with us at every turn, and will continue to be with us. Lamentably, some of that hedonism has been embraced even by the very religious community, in the form of lavish celebrations, luxurious abodes, exotic vacations, etc.

Some have made their peace with hedonism by amalgamating it into the Torah lifestyle, but with obviously mixed results. Functionally, the Torah seems to remain intact, but it is hard to imagine that there is no profound and serious compromise of authentic Torah values in the process. Hedonism is destructive to the people who think that their fulfillment derives from their hedonism. Everyone who embraces this track is rudely awakened at some point in life.

The Torah does not reject pleasure in life. What it rejects is meaningless, often mindless pleasure. What the Torah affirms is pleasure rooted in ultimate values, pleasure that is serious and life-enhancing.

The eternal wisdom of the Torah as a viable antidote to anything meaningless that society offers is invigorating and spiritually uplifting, with not surprising spillover into the congregation and community. It is via the unconditional acceptance of the Torah that its enduring meaning comes through, and helps me pull through the unique complexities of this often misguided generation.

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ALFRED COHEN

Honored as I am to be asked to participate in this symposium, I do not flatter myself that my words, or the words of the esteemed and erudite panel of discussants, will actually effect the seminal change in thinking

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of the symposium's readers which seems to be anticipated.

Years ago, thirty or forty years ago, it might have been important carefully to expound one's ideology, to try to win the hearts of the public through rational or passionate discourse. However, in our own day and age, most people feel themselves drowning in verbiage. As a result, words have lost much of their power to inspire or even outrage. A public overwhelmed by politicians who spout beautiful sentiments while involved in the most crass chicanery—that public has grown weary and cynical, and is inured to the noble sentiments that we might express on paper. Minds and hearts are turned, nowadays, more by deed than by word.

Question 1 notes, probably correctly, that today Rav Aharon Kotler, ז"ל, would almost certainly not accept an invitation to speak to a conference of the Rabbinical Council of America, which he did agree to address forty years ago. But if he declined to address that group today, would he be missing a wonderful opportunity to influence hearts and minds? It is well known, for example, that Rav Aharon Kotler was opposed to the erection of an *eruv* in major cities. Were he to present this view to an RCA Convention, is there the slightest chance that he would be able to change the thinking of the members or the leadership? Are we not all hardened in our positions? Are we living in a society where words can sway us from our chosen paths? Would Rav J. B. Soloveitchik, with all his vast erudition, be able to change the thinking of Satmar hasidim regarding the State of Israel? Thus, declining to address an assembly of the RCA would not represent a breakdown in tolerance between groups, but rather a realistic evaluation that, generally, people are set in their ways and are not anxious to make sweeping changes in their thinking. We live with the tacit motto, "Don't confuse me with the facts, I've already made up my mind."

Few would argue with designating the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel as the most outstanding events of the past sixty years. Nevertheless, as much as "epochal events" grab our attention, I think that what has really shaped Judaism in America in the past sixty years has been the inspiration derived from the many Jewish leaders in America and in Israel who devoted their lives and strength to rebuilding the Jewish world, especially the Torah world, that was lost during the Holocaust.

Rav Tsaddok writes that the greatest construction is that which is built after a destruction. In America, we have witnessed heroic achievements by individuals who persisted in building, even in the face of unbelievable desolation. With the odor of destruction all around them,

they pressed on, determined that Judaism and Torah would once again flourish. A Dr. Belkin, a “Mister” Mendelowitz, Irving Bunim, Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Y. Hutner, the Lubavitcher Rebbe—these were all individuals who, by their exceptional efforts and their total dedication were able to inspire a generation and elicit an unbelievable response. The innumerable Daf Yomi learning groups in all corners of the world, the tremendous participation in the *Siyum haShas*, the marvelous growth of *yeshivot* and *kolelim* in all parts of our country are testament to how well they succeeded in their lifework.

A man like the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who spent some fifty years involved only in spreading Jewish thought and observance—his example was able to fire the souls and the imaginations of thousands. Without saying much, the Rebbe was an earth-shattering phenomenon: he was not concerned with his own “self-fulfillment,” nor with his “image”; he never went on vacation, he needed no limousines nor mansions, he only wanted to enhance the glory of God. An individual like R. Moshe Feinstein, *z”l*, who was accessible to all, who for decades lived in his modest apartment on the East Side, answering questions from humble Jews as readily as those of great Torah scholars—that is the kind of person who, *by example*, effected enormous change in the thinking of an entire generation.

Rav J. B. Soloveitchik succeeded in firing up hundreds of young men to study Torah by his indefatigable example, giving *shiurim* night and day, in New York and Boston; he even used to take selected students along when he went on vacation, so desolate he was without those to whom he could teach Torah.

I doubt that many people heard Rav Aharon Kotler *z”l* make speeches. It wasn’t necessary—everyone knew what he stood for because he spent every moment of his life and every bit of his energy developing the *kolel* in America and Torah education in Israel. The way he led his life spoke volumes, more than any speech: when a wealthy admirer wanted to put an air conditioner into his office in Lakewood, Rav Aharon refused to accept it until the *bet midrash* was air-conditioned as well. His total fervent devotion to spreading Torah inspired hundreds, eventually thousands, and changed the face of Orthodoxy in America. But it was not his speeches that did it, only his example.

The Orthodox Jewish community today is far different from what it was two generations ago. It is far more knowledgeable and committed. What our generation needs is less convincing but more uplifting and inspiration. The leaders of Orthodoxy, thank God, no longer need to spend that much time convincing their constituents that loyalty to

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the *Shulhan Arukh* is still necessary—and feasible—in a modern society. I think we are beyond that. Today the challenge is to find ways to make our commitment to an Orthodox lifestyle go beyond mere pro forma observance of the letter of the law. Our greatest danger is not from the “deviationist movements” but from the secular environment. It steadily and subliminally erodes our values. In my view, a glatt kosher nightclub presents a more insidious danger to the Orthodox Jew than does the presence of a Reform temple.

The challenge of the last generation was to rescue and rebuild the remnants of the Torah world on a new soil. Ours, I believe, is to bring back to the fold those millions of Jews whose faith was lost or destroyed or forgotten. It is not enough to see Orthodoxy flourish, as it does, thank God. We must aspire to bring all our fellow Jews back into the fold of practical observance of *mitsvot*. There is only one strategy to attain that—by inspiring others through our example, by living sincerely, with the dedication to the true values of the Torah and not only to the letter of the law, and by demonstrating *mesirut nefesh* for fellow Jews.

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ILAN FELDMAN

We are still in exile.

This is a necessary declaration because this generation has witnessed the impossible rebirth of a vibrant Orthodoxy in America, recorded battles of biblical proportions in the Holy Land in which the descendants of the Twelve Tribes of Israel were victorious, and witnessed the physical ingathering of millions of exiles. We can be excused for needing to be reminded that we have not yet arrived home.

The recognition that we are in *galut* beckons us to self-examination, and requires the creation of an experience of ourselves and of God we have not yet had, one which will commence only when we successfully absorb attitudes and values we do not currently possess. If *mipnei hata'enu galinu me-artseinu*, then it is true that our *hata'im*, our sins, represent a form of drifting from our Jewish psyche that is merely mirrored in physical expulsion. Alienated from our souls, estrangement from our brothers was quick to follow. When we were driven from Zion, we were already in exile from our true selves, and from our po-

tential. Our complete, unchallenged return awaits the moment we are willing to confront ourselves—and each other.

It is bothersome, therefore, that the one expression of Judaism that believes quite literally in Maimonides' twelfth principle of faith and awaits redemption from this physical and spiritual exile appears in its public forums, statements, and actions, to be so smug. Where is the humility, contrition, anxiety, and soul-searching of a group which states regularly before God that its exile status is, to a large degree, its own fault?

Nowhere is this paradox manifest more than in the way Orthodox groups relate to each other.

It should not be disquieting that there are strongly differing views on important issues facing the Torah community. Perhaps some in my generation are unaware of the overriding sense, immediately following World War II, that Orthodoxy was doomed in the United States. Fighting for its life in the 1940's and 1950's, the Orthodox community did not have the luxury of discussing more than its basic survival. The only issue then—how to salvage Torah in America from dilution and compromise—was enough to unite those who cherished *Torah miSinai*. Once recovery was achievable, new questions became relevant: How much of the relatively new American Diaspora is a threat to us, and how much is to be used in God's service? How are we to react to the intoxicating acceptance at all levels of political and professional life? Are we to be American Orthodox Jews, or Orthodox Jewish Americans, or displaced European Orthodox Jews? As we absorbed the surprise of material and spiritual success, we knew it would certainly be a great challenge to apply the teachings of the previous generation's leaders to this new setting without some disagreement. The fact that differing, sometimes competing, streams of Orthodoxy carry on a vigorous debate about the proper response to these issues, each claiming direction from luminaries of earlier generations, speaks well about a vital Orthodoxy. Ideological fissures have been a regular and healthy phenomenon in *kelal Yisrael's* history. *Kelal Yisrael* is usually the beneficiary of a sort of amalgam of earlier opposing viewpoints a century or two after their appearance.

What causes consternation is the tenor of the discussion. It is not just that it is not *mentshlek*; it is that it reveals an arrogance and a closed-mindedness inconsistent with a spiritual persona. Such things brought us into exile.

We are the Jews who claim to have Truth, to pursue Truth, so committed to Truth that we gladly sacrifice convenience, material advancement, and popularity in the name of this commitment. But we

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cannot, dare not, invite a revered scholar and leader representing a different view to our conventions, too insecure about our perception of Truth, or too arrogant, to allow ourselves the chance to be challenged by something he might say.

Our respect for Truth is evidently not resolute enough to make it safe for an individual to have a strong opinion. “Name Withheld by Request” is one of the more commonly found signatures in Orthodox periodicals’ Letters-to-the-Editor section. Frank discussion of issues in the Orthodox community is governed by fear. Debate, the precursor of Truth, is not encouraged.

Orthodoxy believes that responsibility for the spiritual well-being of other Jews defines us as an *am*, that executing our responsibilities of *arvut* will hasten our redemption. But we hear no rousing challenges at Agudah or OU Conventions to reach out to other Orthodox Jews of differing persuasions. Assuming Avraham Avinu was obviously a centrist, or obviously a haredi (he was, obviously, whatever I am), do we expect he would turn down an opportunity to talk to his children at the other convention? How would we explain that two organizations serving people who believe in *Torah min ha-shamayim* schedule their conventions on the same weekend precisely because there is no danger that typical Orthodox lay people would find themselves in a dilemma about which convention to attend?

There are historical and ideological reasons for this state of affairs, and for the unlikelihood that any of the leading non-Centrist *rashei yeshiva* would be found addressing an RCA convention. But is it naive to expect the state of emergency in which we find ourselves somehow to compel us to transcend these reasons?

This, I believe, is our greatest failure: we don’t act, in our affairs, as if we are in a state of emergency. But if we are in exile, we are in a state of emergency.

Our collective approach to outreach to the unaffiliated is such an example. Even after pausing to laud the successful efforts of the OU’s National Conference of Synagogue Youth, Torah Umesorah’s SEED Program, the Ohr Sameach and Aish Hatorah centers sprinkled here and there, and other wonderful individual efforts at reaching “lost Jews,” we still must face the fact that, by and large, the Orthodox community has failed to marshal its rank and file in the face of a spiritual holocaust claiming the majority of America’s Jews—an emergency. Outreach, an area in which Orthodoxy has realized its greatest success, is, paradoxically, one of its greatest failures. It is still an enterprise assigned to specialists, delegated to those who are “good at it,” while the rest of

the Orthodox world carries on in smug isolation, enjoying its own day schools and *yeshivot* and restaurants and Jewish music concerts, rarely and meekly challenged by its leadership to join the war effort. How many Orthodox homes have avoided hosting even a single non-Orthodox relative, co-worker, employee, or employer for a *Shabbat* meal? Those who look back on our era will wonder why our generation, after having proven the “marketability” of this priceless commodity we call Torah, nevertheless failed to be galvanized sufficiently to declare a war on assimilation.

Complacency, emergency’s anesthetic, has arrived with its more venerated and welcome partner, respectability. Both the centrists and haredim seem to be “doing their thing” too well. Yes, it is true that the haredi community is singularly marked by passion and deep commitment to a vision, but what is this vision? Here and in Israel, the yeshiva world (of which I am gratefully a part and which has nurtured me) seems too ready to embrace a present which is merely a replication of its European antecedents. Submission to *mesora*, rightfully a key underpinning of the haredi world view and the key to its amazing resurgence, does not eliminate the need to create a new paradigm, in much the same way the yeshiva as we know it was conceived. Does the road back to *Yerushalayim ha-benuya* necessarily take us through Europe, or should it be built upon it?

While the centrist Orthodox readily admit that their version of *Torah im derekh erets* is not for the faint of heart, and count on the Torah to keep their *derekh erets* holy, too often those calling themselves centrist Orthodox look more like *derekh erets im Torah*. Which part of *galut* would centrist laity like to end? What would they sacrifice to end it?

Our response to America’s unique *galut* challenges, whether they be the deviationist movements or the far more beguiling secularism-materialism, also requires adjustment for the new reality. Negative propaganda does us no good; it is a prop in a drama whose tension long ago was resolved. Is there an attentive Jew alive who thinks the other movements are the wave of the future? Their militancy comes not out of conviction, but out of a desperate search for legitimacy and self-respect. What is called for is nothing that resembles triumphalism; perhaps we should give freer reign to *ahavat yisrael*, even when the *yisrael* does not meet our standards. Rather than emphasize non-cooperation with non-halakhic entities (I question the emphasis, not the halakha), the value in personal, unofficial contacts with non-halakhic leaders at all levels of the Jewish world should be emphasized. Our efforts should be

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focused in combating contemporary America's *galut* emergency: the spiritual and religious apathy of the masses.

What may seem my rather sullen view of contemporary Orthodoxy's state of affairs is actually what makes me optimistic about the eventual outcome of the so-called split between the centrists and the haredi worlds. I view American Orthodoxy as a mature adolescent—still not fully formed, but beginning to feel comfortable with itself. The two worlds will have no choice but to borrow from each other's repertoire, though neither camp will likely admit it. The result, I pray, will be a consensus favoring *yirat shamayim im derekh erets*.

Ironically, it is my understanding of *galut* that encourages me to maintain my distinct identity as a Jew. I see myself as a visitor or a tourist, even a refugee, very much not at home, aware that I have a purpose in being away from home, expecting and seeking no full comfort until I return home, taking the necessary steps to maintain a close connection to home, afraid I will forget home. Meanwhile, God has a *galut* mission for me. It is my brethren I seek. When I find them, it will be because I found myself and God, and I will be home.

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VICTOR GELLER

1) In 1956 the RCA was at its peak. It had replaced the *Agudat haRabbanim* as the premier Orthodox rabbinic body in the United States. It enjoyed the peerless patronage of Rav Soloveitchik. The luminaries in the question cited had not yet reached their high points in American Jewish life. They did not actively seek dominance (Rav Moshe Feinstein), or were too new in America (Rav Aharon Kotler). The RCA conference was an influential platform for these leaders to present their Torah views.

Today these personalities—their successors—neither need nor want the auspices of a rabbinic body whose importance has declined, and whose viewpoint is considered discredited. The remarkable achievements of these and other *rashei yeshiva* would today justify the conclusion that theirs is the proper *derekh*. More than bringing Torah to America, they have taken young men born in America—including more than a few sons of RCA rabbis—back to the European Torah they never knew.

2) The death of European Jewry and the rebirth of the State of Israel are the overarching phenomena of the twentieth century. They dwarf all other events. There were, however, three developments in the past sixty years that had—and will continue to have—a powerful impact on Orthodox Judaism.

a) Contrary to dire predictions, the Torah seedlings planted during the first quarter of the century in America by a stubborn cadre of believers survived and began to grow. Their persistence, which has not been appreciated, provided the foundation upon which the Torah greats of the post-war era were able to build.

b) Orthodox Jews became wealthy. Never before in the history of the Diaspora has so much money been in the hands of Torah Jews. This has funded a vast network of Orthodox causes. It also brought Orthodoxy a measure of self-confidence in religious, social, and communal affairs that has no equal in 2,000 years.

c) Torah study has become women's business. More women are involved in Torah scholarship than ever before in our history. They are developing competence in primary sources, in original texts. As the late Rabbi Moshe Besdin, the great educator, used to say, "They don't learn *about* it, they learn *it*." Women are acquiring unprecedented knowledge. With it will come power.

Two other points. Orthodoxy responded to the Holocaust by galvanizing its resources in a fight for survival. The battle has been waged on two fronts, education and population.

a) The quantity and quality of current Torah education has taken a quantum leap forward, matching the finest days in Eastern Europe.

b) The drive to replace the terrible losses in the crematoria was succinctly described to me by a hasidic cousin in Israel: "My ambition in life is to leave as many grandchildren at my death as my grandfather did when he went to Auschwitz. He had 40 of them. I now have, thank God, 44." He told me this in 1979. Today, the number has passed 80.

The only flaw in this sound strategy of education and population is the questionable tactics. Instead of putting all our wagons in one powerful circle, we have chosen to form several, unrelated circles. I don't know whether this confuses the "Indians," but I do believe it makes us strong.

Of our own failings, I briefly mention two that deserve fuller treatment. First, rabbinic scholarship has outpaced rabbinic courage. Too many Orthodox rabbis are constantly looking over their shoulders (the right one only) for early sighting of newly arrived *humrot*. Second,

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the *rashai yeshiva* have overwhelmed the pulpit rabbinate as the focus of local halakhic authority. The exercise of the *posek* has been moved from the pulpit to the *bet midrash*.

3) The question implies that combating Conservative, Reform and secular Jews should be high on Orthodoxy's agenda. I don't think so. Other than feed our already inflated self-righteousness, this would serve no purpose. I would rather pause, listen, watch, and do my homework.

Conservative and Reform Jews argue that they are separate (in outlook) but equal (in merit). They deem themselves alternatives who neither seek nor require Orthodox approbation. What they do demand is our respect. Failing that, they insist that we acknowledge the objective fact that, regardless of our attitude, they are real.

While Conservative-Reform invest recognition with great importance, it is not their primary problem. Conservative-Reform no longer feed off the ranks of disaffected Orthodox and, despite Conservative-Reform's best efforts, non-Jewish spouses and offspring will not compensate. Their challenge will be to reproduce both in numbers and particularistic Jewishness future generations. I wouldn't bet on it.

The secularists are a sad fact of Jewish life—and death. They are wasting away from a terminal spiritual malaise. We watch, we deplore, and we hope it's not contagious.

What should Orthodoxy do? First: Continue *kiruv* work. While it reaches only a few, it is more than we ever reached before. Second: Stop preening. Stop wearing *mitsvot* like medals. We should prefer to be kind instead of right. We should, in short, try to be as *frum* as we think we are. Add a dose of humility and we won't need "strategies" vis-a-vis other Jews.

4) History has—or should have—taught us that "long term" is a shrouded area. A glib game of "pick the winner" is neither valid nor provable. The challenge facing Orthodoxy is to recognize that all Torah groups and components can, should, and do make a worthy contribution to the whole. (Incidentally, the omission of Sephardim underscores the Ashkenazi bias). Torah is not a winner's prize in a 100 yard dash. It is a baton that all runners in a relay race must carry and hand on.

The Centrist has much to learn from the more careful and thoughtful behavior in halakha and *kavvana* of the Right. The haredi-hasidic could benefit from the centrist involvement in the wider world in which complexity, crowding, and communications make insularity more difficult. Clannishness is cozy, but costly. It breeds contempt and fosters

dismissal of those “different from us.” Regrettably, *eilu ve-eilu divrei Elokim hayyim* is not operative in Orthodox life.

I wish I could see greater cooperation in the short term, but I do not. Competition and petty triumphalism have greater appeal.

5) The universe is not a random accident. From nebulae to genome, the universe is a purposeful design. The order with which it functions and the unitary laws by which it is governed are the expression of that profound purpose. We call it “Hashem.”

Humankind, a unique species, on a tiny, uniquely supportive globe, is also part of that purpose. Man was endowed with a conscious awareness that has permitted—and compelled—him to understand who, what, and why he is.

Unique among men, the Jewish people were endowed with a unique sensitivity to probe that purpose. They are granted a unique instrument to guide them in their quest. We call it Torah. It was designed to foster our millennial encounter with Hashem. *Mitsvot* are a uniquely crafted set of tools to help in our quest.

In a world of the foolish, shallow, and transient, Hashem and His Torah point to integrity, responsibility, and compassion as the better way. It’s really no contest.

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MENACHEM GENACK

All of us are still victims of the Holocaust; its seismic waves still rock the Jewish world. With a wound as profound and as deep as the destruction of one-third of world Jewry and the shattering of its centuries-old centers of learning and culture, Jewish life remains exceedingly vulnerable to assimilationist trends. Jews are the only identifiable people on the globe that will end this century with a smaller population than that with which they began the century, and the ominous trend is accelerating. But for the establishment of the State of Israel, the Rav, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *zt”l*, would often say, most American Jews would be wiped away in a tidal wave of assimilation. Today, that tidal wave is almost upon us. Given that Israel plays such an important role in the American Jew’s sense of Jewish identity, it is especially lamentable to see the

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Conservative and Reform's unbridled push for recognition in Israel, even at the expense of the American Jews' relationship to Israel and their essential Zionistic links.

The demographic disintegration of the American Jewish community is a result of the historic social forces that are much greater than those related to denominational affiliation. There has never been a society so open and generous to Jews. The blessed freedom afforded to the Jew has represented the greatest challenge for Jewish survival, as the Jews assimilate into the prevailing culture.

Bet haLevi commented on the apparent redundancy in Jacob's prayer, when he was confronted by Esau, *save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau*, that Jacob prayed to be saved from Esau when he was in a bloodthirsty confrontational mode, as well as when he prepared as a loving brother, wishing to come close. We have in this century barely survived the murderous hands of Esau, now to fall into the hands of the brotherly appeasing Esau.

Studies have shown that the rate of intermarriage for the third-generation emancipated Jew has historically been very high. The impact of deviationist movements on the critical area of Jewish survival and identity, while significant in the 1950's and 1960's, is today marginal. It is not the liberal movements that influence this frightening trend, but rather the overall social currents that mold the liberal religious movements. Once we recognize this fact, we should mobilize our resources to fight the appalling ignorance of the American Jew, which makes him or her easy prey to the assimilationist current, and not waste our resources in doing battle with the organizational structure of Reform. The battle with Reform is perceived by its adherents and the larger population of unaffiliated Jews as lacking in civility, further alienating them from Torah.

The most remarkable phenomenon within this otherwise bleak picture is the vitality of the Orthodox Jewish community with its chain of day schools across the map of America. Also the strength of the yeshiva and hasidic worlds is nothing less than miraculous. One can only admire their achievements, meticulous standards, and devotion.

With the renaissance and new vitality of the yeshiva world, a phenomenon that could not have been easily anticipated in the mid-1950s, has come an attendant sense of its own viability and staying power. With the remarkable growth in its numbers and institutions, there is a notion that they are less dependent on the "outside" Jewish world, including other shades of Orthodoxy. They can now afford to be insular and isolated, thereby protecting their ideological purity. This new tri-

umphalism did not exist two generations ago, when the yeshiva world was small and insecure.

It is possible that socio-economic forces may overtake this sense of invincibility. Will the hasidic and yeshiva world, in an American economy of shrinking social need budgets and emphasis on educational skills in the new information age, have the financial base to sustain its growth or even maintain its sense of community? The answer remains unclear. Economic realities may force more integration between the yeshiva and centrist Orthodox Jewish worlds.

At this stage we can only bemoan the divisions within our small, fragile Orthodox community. The dismissiveness and lack of respect for those of a somewhat different stripe, whether on the right or the left, reverberates negatively beyond the borders of our community.

The hasidic and yeshiva worlds must find a balance between their necessary insular existence, isolated from the religiously corrosive American environment, and the need for outreach to the endangered general Jewish population and for integration into the economic life of America. It is a balance that, under the best of circumstances, is difficult to achieve.

It is also fair to say that the caliber of leadership of a Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Moshe Feinstein, or Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky derived from their having been nurtured in pre-war Europe and having witnessed destruction of the world they knew. This background engendered in them a greater sense of the ambiguities of life. This is missing in the current cadre of leaders in both the yeshiva and centrist Orthodox worlds.

One is reminded of the famous aphorism of the Kotzker Rebbe. The Talmud in listing the disciples of Hillel states that the greatest of them, Rav Yonatan ben Uziel, singled a bird flying overhead because of the intensity of his Torah study. If this was the *talmid*, what was the *rebbe* like? The Kotzker replied, *der talmid brent un brent un der Rebbe brent nisht*. The *talmid* burns and burns, and the *rebbe* does not.

Neither in Israel nor here will we, through coercion, move the vast numbers of alienated American Jews back to Torah. The emptiness of a life devoid of religious depth and values in a hedonistic society may swing the pendulum back toward greater religious identity and commitment, but only if the Orthodox community portrays itself as caring and embracing.

Who is an *ohev Hashem*? The Talmud, in defining the *mitsva of ahavat Hashem*, loving God, states: “‘You shall love Hashem, your God, with all your heart’: so that the name of Heaven will become beloved through you. A person will read scripture and study Torah, and

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his speech will be calm with other people, and his business dealings pleasant . . . what do other people say of him? Fortunate is he who learned Torah, fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah. Observe him who studied Torah, how pleasant and beautiful his actions are, how appropriate his ways” (*Yoma* 86b). Love of Hashem is measured by the impact one has on others, by the calm of one’s rhetoric, the pleasantness of one’s dealings. In this we are failing.

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HILLEL GOLDBERG

4) To be vital, each grouping within Orthodoxy needs to solidify its family structure and to develop a more sophisticated theology—and the two are interrelated. Demographically, the Orthodox Jewish community is growing by leaps and bounds. The quantity of the growth is one thing, the quality is quite something else. Quantity is not enough. It is insufficient to note that other sectors of the Jewish community are not reproducing themselves, and unwise to measure one’s success against others’ failures. The quality of Orthodox Jewish family life in every sector needs major improvement if there is to be a truly vital Orthodox Jewish community.

What I shall define as a normal, Orthodox Jewish family is a very small percentage of the total number of Orthodox Jewish families. By the term “normal,” I mean no value judgement. As I shall explain, it is often the consequence of heroic commitment that so many of our families are not normal. *As the Jewish people returns to normalcy, it is impossible for many of its families to be normal.* This paradox is a critical problem that needs to be defined and acknowledged before it can be addressed.

Today, many, perhaps most, Orthodox Jewish families display at least one of the following structural characteristics: at least one parent is a convert, a *ba'al teshuva*, a child of a *ba'al teshuva*, a child of Holocaust survivors, a former practitioner of non-normative behavior (crime, drugs, etc.), or, there is only one parent. These structural characteristics cut across the entire Orthodox spectrum (perhaps one subgroup is statistically stronger than another; I do not know). I hasten to repeat: the background to most of these structural characteristics is admirable.

Contrary to its popular image in the larger American Jewish community, the Orthodox community is resplendently inclusive. Certainly not each Orthodox Jewish institution or Jew, but, collectively speaking, Orthodox Jewry reaches out to the full panoply of Jews, from the brilliant academic to the mentally ill, from the social elite to the social misfit, from the lapsed Orthodox Jew to the totally ignorant Jew, from the criminal to the upstanding to the creative to the handicapped. The objective consequence of this unrestricted *ahavat Yisrael* is a critical problem. Many Orthodox Jewish families must function as Orthodox families for the first time, or for the first time not under extreme duress. They do so without a normal Orthodox-family role model. They need guidance and are not getting it, or not getting enough of it.

Only now, for the first time since the Holocaust, which roughly is coterminous with the birth of the *teshuva* movement, a few Orthodox families now evince a second-generation, normal structure: an Orthodox family that had its own Orthodox family role models of the previous generation. But they are only a few. Look around. Count your friends. See who sits next to you in shul. You'll see. The number of Orthodox Jewish families evincing a wholly normal Orthodox family structure—two Orthodox-born parents, never married but to each other, each the child of two Orthodox-born parents, also never married but to each other and not raised not under extreme duress—is a limited number.

And so, many Orthodox Jewish families need guidance, role models, people raised in a normal Orthodox family structure to seek counsel from—counsel about childraising, *hinnukh*, and *shiddukhim*, about spouse, sibling and in-law relations, about time management (Torah study vs. *hesed* vs. *parnasa* vs. parenting). I intentionally omit the typical issues that pertain to any family, Jewish or otherwise. I do not refer to issues created by common distortions and difficulties between spouses or between parents and children. The Orthodox Jewish family needs wisdom in these areas, the same as any family. It must be acknowledged that there are specifically Orthodox issues that only an Orthodox-family role model can provide. We have too few such role models, and virtually no consciousness of the need for any. There shall be no genuine vitality unless Jewish leaders are sensitive to this structural problem and create resources to ameliorate it.

Of course, to be raised in a normal Orthodox family is no guarantee of being able to establish one, and not to be raised in a normal Orthodox family is no guarantee of being unable to establish one. Personal qualities can undermine a cohesive heritage or triumph over a confused one. But with all the exceptions taken into account, it remains critical

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for the Orthodox Jewish community, taken as a whole, to acknowledge its structural, family challenges.

A related, non-structural characteristic in many contemporary Orthodox Jewish families is the lack of an explanatory, theological framework for deviation from the norm. Present in all Orthodox sectors is an oversimplified conception of family life that leaves it bereft of a credible theological framework to explain family idiosyncrasy. I do not refer to dysfunction, to psychological dynamics, to the typical distortions and difficulties for which the Orthodox Jewish family needs wisdom, the same as any family. I refer to contemporary, specifically Orthodox Jewish-family expectations that both preclude and eviscerate a meaningful Jewish theology.

Specifically: In many Orthodox Jewish families today, everything is supposed to go right, and go right comprehensively. One is supposed to be married, at the right age, and to the right person. One's spouse, if male, is supposed to be the perfect Torah scholar, or perfect professional, or perfect Torah-scholar-cum-professional (depending on one's Orthodox subgroup); and, if female, is supposed to be the perfect *tsenu'a cum* supporter of her Torah-scholar husband, or the perfect *melumedet cum* professional (also depending on one's subgroup). The couple is supposed to make money or have money. The couple is supposed to have children. The children are supposed to be healthy. They are supposed to be successful. There is not supposed to be any bump along the road. There is not supposed to be adolescent rebellion, or learning disability, or poverty, or singlehood, or infertility, or physical handicap, or any other idiosyncrasy. Everything is supposed to be perfect because, if we are Orthodox, then God is supposed to reward us, and reward us unconditionally. We keep the faith, and God must reward us for that.

Of course, life, including Orthodox Jewish life, has its conundra, quandaries, or tragedies. They are painfully compounded by an oversimplified theology that provides no approach to idiosyncratic fate. Perhaps because literally or figuratively we are all Holocaust survivors, many of us have shied away from delving into theology to cope with life's mysteries. Perhaps because we live in an age of radical assimilation, many of us have been horse-blinder determined, absolutely singleminded, about the basics of family continuity, and therefore gave no thought to theologically challenging idiosyncrasy. Be this as it may, just as we shall need to provide issue-oriented guidance for the non-normal Orthodox Jewish family, we shall also need to provide sophisticated theological guidance. We shall not sustain our vitality otherwise.

5) Belief is discussed, faith is lived. Sources of belief are books, ideas, thoughts. Sources of faith are people, experiences, feelings. Belief gives me intellectual delight, faith gives me strength. Here are some of my sources of faith—of strength:

Shabbat.

Having seen Rav Yaakov Moshe Lessin.

Ne'ila, at the end.

Learning Torah under the late Reb Elya Sobel.

Standing next to Meir Shuster when he davens.

Mt. Evans, its secret lakes, its austere snowy peaks, its sloping grasses, its absolute silence, its chilly wind rustling the clouds above. Especially the clouds—the *ispaklarya ha-mei'ra*, the lens Above.

Stories of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

Shabbat; again, *Shabbat*. Its metaphysical separation from this world.

Passover's metaphysical separation from this world.

Memories of certain, specific moments of praying.

Rav Binyamin Zilber.

The *bitahon*, the trust in God, of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter.

Tisha B'av's illumination of every generation that lived its faith.

A remark once made, in passing, about the Prophets, by a pious woman in Jerusalem.

Tefilin.

Keri'at haTorah, the Torah reading on *Shavuot* at daybreak in the Novorodock yeshiva in Jerusalem, 5740. Mount Sinai!

The Bostoner Rebbe's *davening* on *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Rosh Hodesh*.

The Saturday evening lectures of the Rav (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik)—his haunting tones summoning the transgenerational link between all Jews and their privileged bond to the Divine mission beginning with Abraham our Father.

Memory of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein *davening* on *Yom Kippur* in 5727.

Standing atop the Old City walls, gazing at the rolling hills of Arab homes in East Jerusalem, especially at sunset.

Abnegation in prayer induced by the Western Wall.

The study of astronomy.

The birth of our children.

Being a grandfather.

Sha'atnez.

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Fear of Divine punishment.

R' Eliezer Ben Zion Bruk. His simple, perfect faith.

Dancing. *Simchat Torah*. In the “*tsrif*” in Sanhedria Murhevet in Jerusalem. Particularly with Moshe Meir Heisler.

“Insanity” on *Purim* in the same place and, thank God, in many subsequent places.

Maran. Rabbi Joseph Karo.

Aleinu.

Eyes closed, as I recite the priestly blessing, imagining the Divine presence resting on the fingers of my forbear, Aaron the High Priest.

The faith of the late Rabbi Samuel Adelman.

Categories of halakhic study (*mode be-mitktsat, ha'na'n, ketafres eino hibbur*, etc.).

The book of Psalms.

Lekha Dodi at TRI, Denver.

Iggerot Moshe.

The Six Day War.

Again, perhaps one word above all: *Shabbat*.

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MATIS GREENBLATT

1) It is probably not correct to say that a sea change has occurred. On a pragmatic level one could argue that in the past the general weakness of the different segments of Orthodoxy brought them together, and their more recent move to the right has tended toward greater rigidity and creates antagonism between differing groups.

Nevertheless, one must concede that “the luminaries of the Yeshiva world” were uncomfortable, even in those days, with what is today called *Torah uMadda*. For the most part, they did not oppose secular knowledge as such. As Shnayer Z. Leiman points out in his contribution to *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures*, “no serious Torah scholar would deny the value of *derekh erets*, whether defined minimally as ‘gainful employment, or maximally so as to include in its purview secular wisdom and all aspects of general culture that enhance one’s understanding and appreciation of God’s creation.” For example, there was no field of knowledge that did not interest my late rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner *zt”l*. The question was one of making it clear what was

primary and what was secondary, what was *kodesh* and what was *hol*, and never blurring those distinctions. When Dr. Leiman describes the involvement of R. David Friesenhausen and R. Jacob Ettlinger in secular studies, he points out that even while they were studying secular subjects their Torah study continued to be their central area of study.

Ironically, the primacy of Torah study is now accepted among more and more so-called modern Orthodox youth. Yet, sometimes it appears that the gulf between the modern and haredi worlds continues to widen. Hopefully, the ultimate recognition that the two groups are really closer than they realize will enable them to work together, even if all their views are not synonymous.

One must also recognize that individuals of the calibre and stature of Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Moshe Feinstein and *yibadel le-hayyim* Rav Mordechai Gifter could work with and appreciate the contributions of individuals and groups with whom they were not in total agreement. In 1954, the late Telshe *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi E. M. Bloch, wrote: "I know that our views do not agree with those of the Mizrachi and therefore we may also disagree on a particular course of action. Nevertheless, there are many areas where we could act together and thereby strengthen the power of religious Jewry and its influence on the life of the people." Rabbi Zev Gold, the Mizrachi leader, was one of the founders of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in 1917 and gave the yeshiva its name.¹

3) The question as to which challenge is the more serious is of no significance because whatever their relative strengths, each has a noxious effect and must be confronted. Prior to discussing changing strategies, one must clearly understand the different challenges that today's deviationists present.

1) In the past, the deviationists were Jewish. Today we must confront the burgeoning phenomenon of non-Jewish leaders.

2) The deviationists themselves were familiar with Orthodox life and, in many instances, recognized that it was they who had departed from the *mesora*. They fully understood why Orthodoxy rejected them. Today, many deviationists genuinely believe that their version of Judaism is just as authentic as Orthodoxy and do not really understand why the Orthodox cannot accept their legitimacy. In their abysmal ignorance some even believe that their version of Judaism is more authentic than Orthodoxy.

3) The democratic principles which they have imbibed are so at variance with the claims of Orthodoxy as to make those claims appear incredible and outlandish.

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4) As Orthodoxy grows stronger the deviationist leadership has become increasingly antagonistic and aggressive.

The deviationist leadership has repeated the canard that Orthodoxy does not recognize the Jewishness of the non-Orthodox. It is essential to communicate the fact that Orthodoxy does not question the Jewishness of those born Jewish it *does* question the validity of deviationist conceptions of Judaism. The leadership appears bent on blurring this critical distinction.

Strategies should address the deviationist lay person, who, for the most part, is ignorant. Those who are still Jewish must be educated to understand how the deviationists are decimating the Jewish people by the patrilineal concoction, which has no basis in Jewish law. They must also be educated as to Reform's dispensing with a host of fundamental principles and commandments of Judaism. For example, Abraham Geiger denounced circumcision as a "bloody, barbaric rite." Emil Hirsch performed one of the more obscene acts of Jewish history when he ordered the Torah scroll and the ark removed from his Chicago "synagogue." Education should demonstrate how the deviationists sold out the eternal Torah for the comforts and advantages of the moment; and also that a contemporary Jew may observe the Torah in its fullest sense.

We should be careful not to use "strategy" in the sense of deception or trickery and not be carried away by the public relations emphases of appearance over truth and reality. On the other hand, all the tools of modern videos and the whole gamut of state-of-the-art technology should be employed. Our most talented, inspired, and articulate spokespersons should become accessible to the widest possible audience. The overarching principle should be *le-karev be-yemin*. A friend recalls attending a talk given to the non-religious Workmen's Circle many years ago by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zt"l*, in which he vividly described the beauty and power of *limmud haTorah* and the importance of sending children to yeshiva. My friend overheard a man quizzically commenting to his neighbor, "why don't *we* do that?"

The contrast between the moral stature of deviationist leaders as compared to the stunning array of *gedolim* and *tsaddikim* is a point that needs to be underscored, analyzed, and discussed as a means of demonstrating how the Orthodox way of life has molded and produced spiritual giants. The same should be shown for ordinary "*erlikhe yidden*."

In the past, secular Jews were written off. Today, the non-affiliated, who are for the most part secularist, have rapidly grown and can no longer be ignored. Closer to home, the insidious force of secularist cul-

ture affects us all and needs to be confronted from behind our own ramparts. There is a growing recognition of the need to complement and enhance our external fulfillment of *mitsvot*, with a deeper spirituality, on which more below.

4) I believe that each of these groups is vital and has something to contribute to the other groups.

Each of the groupings has its own inner dynamic which arose in response to specific historical and sociological situations; each unveiled a different nuance inherent in Torah which was waiting to be revealed. However, the laws of Jewish history contain a unique spiritual and Divine aspect which differ from that of general history, as was even perceived by the great non-Jewish Italian philosopher Vico. Whatever the genesis of a particular approach, it eventually assumed a life of its own. It is my contention that our current open society requires the approaches of all to survive. Each *derekh* complements the other, and each has a role to play; and each group ignores the other at its own peril.

Thus, the centrist Orthodox, by relating most directly with the surrounding culture, perform an indispensable role by insuring that we function in the existing world and interact with the non-Jewish world in a respectful, honorable manner. With the lack of respect for the non-Jew in some groups is the root of the many instances of *hilul Hashem* in the last few years. For example, those children who find it difficult to say good morning in response to a non-Jew's greeting reflect a profound deficiency in the fabric of their Yiddishkeit. For if their way of life precludes their observance of Hazal's admonition to greet every human being graciously, then their education is sorely deficient.

Before the advent of the yeshiva world American Orthodoxy was headed for catastrophe. I vividly recall sociological articles of the fifties in respectable publications unhesitatingly predicting Orthodoxy's demise. To a very large extent, the growth of *yeshivot* prevented that catastrophe.

The hasidic world has demonstrated the warmth of Yiddishkeit and its non-intellectual, spiritual power; hasidic thought often captures the essence of basic principles far more potently than philosophic discourses. Much of the thought of Rav Kook and Rav Hutner is indebted to hasidic thought and both of those giants recognized how important it was to communicate the soul of Torah (*nishmat haTorah*) in order to capture the hearts and souls of the generation. That is why, though they were both true halakhic *gedolim*, they devoted so large a portion of their writings to non-halakhic matters. Hasidic prayer and fulfillment of

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mitsvot contain an added dimension which all sectors of Judaism would do well to absorb. It has also demonstrated the power of community more than any of the other groupings.

Each group needs the others and must learn to integrate the contributions of the others.

NOTES

1. It is ironic, but highly probably, that Rabbi Gold borrowed the name of the Yeshiva from the controversial Lida yeshiva founded by Rabbi Yitshak Yaakov Reines in 1905 and intended that it subscribe to a similar philosophy and curriculum

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RAFAEL G. GROSSMAN

The Rabbinical Council of America has been involved in a continuous struggle since its founding convention in 1935.¹ The RCA was then perceived as a threat by the older Agudath ha-Rabbonim, which had been the sole Orthodox rabbinic body in the United States. Principally, language differentiated the Agudath ha-Rabbonim from the RCA. This new rabbinic group spoke English, unlike the older, Yiddish speaking Eastern European rabbis. In time, the differences grew wider. There were RCA rabbis serving congregations with profound halakhic deviations. These synagogues became known as modern Orthodox or Traditional congregations.

In an essay,² Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller refers to a remark made in 1953 by Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch, the respected *rosh yeshiva* of Telshe: "We no longer have to fear Conservatism—that is no longer the danger. Everyone knows that it is *avodah zarah*. What we have to fear is modern Orthodoxy." Rabbi Keller elaborates: "What we do have to fear, though, are movements that still speak in the name of Orthodoxy and tradition but which in thought and action represent an entirely new concept of Torah and *yiddishkeit*." Rabbi Keller then offers examples of halakhic deviations found within some modern Orthodox synagogues. They include "lowering or complete disappearance of the *mehitsa*, the displacement of the *bimah* from the center of the shul, the use of microphones on *Shabbat*, late Friday evening services, confirmation ceremonies," all of which he correctly identifies as Reform practices.

At the time Rabbi Bloch severely criticized modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, revered leaders of the yeshiva world, addressed an RCA convention, and Rabbi Aaron Kotler, the world's most respected *rosh yeshiva*, spoke at an RCA meeting. Since that time, radical changes occurred in both the RCA and almost all the synagogues served by its members. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav, became the principal halakhic decisor of the RCA, and his leadership inspired member rabbis to intensify their efforts to achieve proper halakhic standards. Non-*mehitsa* synagogues either abandoned Orthodoxy for Conservatism or installed a *mehitsa*, and a resurgence to Torah observance and learning followed. Today, only a handful of non-*mehitsa* synagogues are led by RCA rabbis. These rabbis are presently engaged in serious efforts to raise their congregation's halakhic standards. RCA rabbis, as a result of the Rav's urging, helped found the day schools and yeshivot in many of America's large and small Jewish communities. They built *mikva'ot*, created outreach programs, sent thousands to yeshivot both here and in Israel, successfully encouraged aliyah and many other programs. They were successful in averting the demise of Orthodoxy, predicted by many. But in spite of these amazing achievements, elements within right-wing Orthodoxy refuse to give their approbation or to validate this work and those responsible for it.

There is a chasm today between centrist Orthodoxy, the adjective used to describe the ideological positions of most RCA members, and the right-wing yeshiva, hasidic and haredi communities. The separation of centrist Orthodoxy and the rightist communities no longer relate to halakhic disparities, as they did during Rabbi Bloch's critique. RCA *kashrut* standards as implemented by the Orthodox Union, a joint responsibility of the RCA and the OU, are maximal. Religious observance among the synagogue laity it serves has been substantially enhanced. Torah *shi'urim* and standards of scholarship favorably compare with *rabbanim* elsewhere. The lines of differentiation, however, are clearer today than they were in the day of the RCA founding convention or of Rabbi Bloch's remarks. Four distinct issues divide Orthodox centrists from others called Orthodox: 1) religious Zionism; 2) the inclusion of worldliness and higher education within the Torah world view; 3) a willingness to work with non-Orthodox in matters concerning the totality of *Klal Yisrael*; 4) regard for all Torah scholarship with prejudice to none. Let me elaborate.

At the time of the RCA's founding, commitment to religious

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Zionism was almost universal among Orthodox rabbis. Most in the Agudath ha-Rabbonim, like their colleagues in the RCA, identified with Mizrachi. Few of today's American Orthodox rabbis outside the RCA are identified with Mizrachi or religious Zionism, and RCA rabbis are by no means monolithic in their religious Zionism. Their commitments vary and cover the full spectrum, which includes messianic perspectives and support for peace strategies of the left. Nevertheless, they are all framed within Torah and universally recognize the phenomenon of Israel's existence. The *hesder* yeshivot, B'nei Akiva yeshivot and Mercaz Harav, Israeli institutions of higher Torah learning, reflect the thinking and views of the great majority of RCA rabbis. In the United States, the RCA rabbi finds his views best expressed at RIETS of Yeshiva University.

These RCA rabbis see the emergence of the State of Israel as an act of Divine intervention. Inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, they disagree with secularism but appreciate the secular in Israel's government for the valued service they perform to sustain the state and protect its people. The RCA at a convention in 1948³ resolved to recognize Israel's Chief Rabbinate as the sole halakhic authority in matters pertaining to Israel. Prayers for the State of Israel are recited every *Shabbat* in synagogues led by RCA rabbis as well as *Hallel* on *Yom ha-Atzma'ut* and *Yom Yerushalayim*. Graduates from high schools enjoying RCA member influence will invariably spend a year in Israel studying at a *hesder* type yeshiva or women's school. Israel as a state and as *Eretz Yisrael* has a daily impact in the work and environs of most RCA rabbis. The hasidic, yeshiva and haredi leaders continue to refuse recognition of the state as sacred and essential to Jewish survival. As centrist Orthodox rabbis bonding with Israel, Israel's impact upon their congregants is dramatic and yields a greater commitment to all matters Jewish, most especially Torah study and *mitsvah* observance.

College enrollment and the pursuit of professional careers are universal within the centrist Orthodox community. Though many students at right-wing yeshivot attend college classes and earn degrees, opposition to higher secular education by their *rashei yeshiva* creates a dichotomy, causing confusion and at times defection within and from their Torah commitments. At best, these non-religious studies are seen as a compromise. In the centrist Orthodox view, higher education is not a compromise but a complement to Torah learning, a means for achieving *Tikkun Olam*. There is great respect and appreciation, however, for those who choose a life's vocation in the study of Torah.

The RCA historically bore the brunt of severe criticism by some of

its own members as well as great *rashei yeshiva*, who decried its membership in a mixed rabbinic body, specifically the Synagogue Council of America. This SCA no longer exists, but members of the RCA do participate in non-denominational bodies such as the rabbinic cabinets of the United Jewish Appeal and Israel Bonds. This is part of a greater commitment to support life-saving efforts, Israel as a state, and shared humanitarian interests of the total community. There is also an unswerving commitment to be part of *klal Yisrael* and not isolationist. This requires both ongoing and *ad hoc* involvement which the right wing of Orthodoxy abhors.

Torah was not meant to be monolithic. The principles of *eilu ve-eilu* should encourage pluralistic views within the parameters of halakha and the tenets of belief. In recent times, the rulings of Rabbis Moshe Feinstein and Shlomo Zalman Auerbach have been as respected in the RCA as those of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who was teacher to most of its members. The members of the RCA Halakhic Commission, headed by Rabbi Gedalia Schwartz, while walking in the paths of Rabbi Soloveitchik, apply and advocate the conclusions of recognized halakhic decisors without prejudice. This cannot be said for many in the right wing of Orthodoxy. I would not expect everyone in the various yeshiva and haredi communities to abide by decisions originating in the RCA Halakhic Commission, but Torah tradition demands deference and reverence to Torah sages whether we follow them or not.

An obituary for Rabbi Soloveitchik appeared in a rightist Orthodox periodical denied him the usual epitaph, *tzaddik*, given to a deceased Torah scholar. The anonymous author must have taken this audacious liberty as a result of an imagined conflict he saw in the Rav's confluence of Brisk and Berlin, of Torah and secular thought. He also minimized the Rav by failing to acknowledge, in the parlance of the yeshiva world, that he was a *gadol*, a very great Torah sage. Rabbi Soloveitchik epitomized saintliness, and like Rabbi Akiva,³ he "entered the garden" and "departed unhurt." Rabbi Akiva's searching and struggling were victories for Torah. His word was the ultimate halakhic decision, and the Rav in our time won the battle for Torah. Rabbi Soloveitchik's triumph is a modality for contemporary Orthodoxy in its struggle against hedonism and secular modernity.

The symposium questions include a request for a description of the epochal events that shaped Jewry in their last sixty years and Orthodoxy's response to these events. The advent of Israel's emergence in the aftermath of the Holocaust is the singular epochal event of our time. Our Jewish *Weltanschauung* has radically changed and given rise to

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great hope for Jews. The haredi and yeshiva worlds have been major beneficiaries of the Jewish state. Though they deny it, their growth and success must be attributed to the new fact—Israel. This secular state provides the wherewithal and environment for the growth of yeshivot and for the ambience of *Erets Yisrael*. Without the state, the dynamic growth of Orthodoxy in Israel and abroad would not exist.

The divergent views within Orthodoxy are equally vital, and we dare not, at this time so distant from revelation on Sinai, diminish any halakhic approach to Torah. Each contributes necessary ingredients for a successful perpetuation of Torah life. This, above all, must be recognized. We can no longer afford the luxury of internal infraticide and incessant back-biting. Exponents of different views may defend their views with passion, but must scrupulously avoid the disparagement of others or the invalidation of differing views within halakha. This invalidation creates a chasm-wide separation, which only weakens Orthodoxy. American Orthodoxy, in particular, enjoys resurgent interest, but in some quarters, this growth is interpreted triumphalistically. Orthodox Jews, by whatever definition, represent between seven and nine percent of the total of American Jewry.⁶ It is my conviction that halakhic Jewry must establish a modicum of unity. This is both necessary and possible as long as we recognize “the seventy faces of Torah.”

I cannot choose from a menu of adjectives to describe my own commitments as an Orthodox rabbi and Jew. I consider myself a centrist and a haredi. I am the protégé of a father who studied under the Hafets Hayyim and of a rebbe, the late Rabbi Yisroel Gustman, who suffered the Holocaust and emerged with even greater love for Torah and Jewry. I dare not be eclectic. I determine my views and rabbinate as a committed *Ohev Yisrael* as our hasidic teachers taught, a modernist as Rav Kook and Rav Soloveitchik perceived modernity, and a Jew who will not permit the perpetrators of a Holocaust success while Jewry self-destructs. Only God and Torah can redeem His people, and with Israel a fact in our time, I more realistically await the ultimate redemption, the coming of the righteous deliverer.

NOTES

1. Louis Bernstein, *Challenge and Mission: The Emergence of the English Speaking Orthodox Rabbinate* (Shengold), p. 9.
2. Chaim Dov Keller, “Modern Orthodoxy: An Analysis and a Response,” *The Jewish Observer* (June 1970), pp. 3-14.
3. Bernstein, p. 215.
4. *The Jewish Observer* (May 1993), p. 43.

5. *Hagigah* 14b.
6. "1990 Survey of American Jewry," Council of Jewish Federations.

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SAMUEL HEILMAN

Clearly there is today a divide within contemporary Orthodoxy. On one side are modern Orthodox Jews and on the other those who are increasingly called "haredim." The modern Orthodox are people who embrace the principle of cultural dualism, who believe that devotion to Jewish tradition and strict observance does not necessarily require that they isolate themselves from the larger host culture and civilization in which they find themselves. On the contrary, they believe in the possibility of what Lawrence Kaplan once described as an "exciting, if perilous, confrontation and interaction" between their Jewish and host culture. As Jews who integrate their modern and Orthodox commitments rather than compartmentalize or evade the tensions between them, they ideologically strive to illumine and deepen their Jewish understanding and practice by perceiving it through the prism of contemporary cultural attachments and a secular university education (which they highly value not simply as a means for making money but as an end in itself).

Haredim, in contrast, conspicuously do *not* want to acculturate or blend into American life. They want clearly marked borders between themselves and those others who do not share their values and way of life. Unlike the modern Orthodox, they generally try to remind themselves that they might be *in* America but are definitely not part of its ethos or culture. They eschew the American dream of a university education, career, and a share of in the American dream as "*goyim nahas*," the pleasure of the non-Jew. The true home of the haredim is within the fortress of the yeshiva; its folios and the rabbis who make their way through them are for them the only true authorities.

In many ways, the Rabbinical Council of America has come to represent—rightly or wrongly—those rabbis who have abandoned the yeshiva for the modern Orthodox pulpit. As such they are viewed as leaders of the "other side" in this cultural divide. To share a platform with them is thus more and more a sign that one has embraced their values, the values of cultural dualism. For a yeshiva world that views the

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host culture—whether in America or Israel—as fundamentally contaminating, that considers cultural contact too perilous and insufficiently rewarding, the risks of contamination are just too great. At best the yeshiva world views the RCA as a kind of red heifer, perhaps purifying the “impure” moderns but contaminating the “purer” yeshiva people.

While there is much that may account for the development of this attitude, there are two determinants that stand out. First is the fact that, while succeeding in establishing itself in Western culture and society without compromising its essential fidelity to Torah and halakha, modern Orthodoxy has, nevertheless, largely abandoned the domain of Jewish education to the traditionalist and religious right. While its young pursued successful careers in law, the sciences, the university world, and business, few if any chose to be teachers of Judaica either in day schools or *yeshivot*. Rather, while embracing the idea of a day school or yeshiva education for their young, the modern Orthodox have allowed the education to be handled by those who remained in the Torah-dominated world. And in case that was not enough, they have sent their young (after twelve or more years of day school education) for an additional year or two to a yeshiva in Israel or America in which the leadership, ethos, and training are provided by people who often reject the very world from which these students come and from which the money that pays for their education comes. The impact on their young students cannot be minimized.

Second and closely related to this has been modern Orthodoxy's failure to produce a rabbinic and religious leadership that embraces the ideal of engagement with contemporary culture and modern values while maintaining powerful attachments to Jewish practice and beliefs. Orthodoxy is increasingly led by those who accept the yeshiva world's view that the best attitude is the retreat from engagement in the contemporary world, a world that in many ways has become more accessible and welcoming to Jews than ever before in history. Orthodoxy today fails to find a way to stand with a foot in both worlds. Our success in creating day schools and yeshivas in a world where once it was thought they could never thrive, a world where once it was said Jews would survive but Judaism would not, has also been the source of our greatest continuing challenge. We have found new ways to teach math and science, even history and literature, but not new ways to engage the Torah in contemporary life. Our increased Torah learning has pulled us away rather than toward engagement with contemporary culture.

This is an Orthodox tragedy. After centuries of intellectual development, during which the great Torah academies produced scholars

whose thinking touched on philosophy, history, mysticism, and a new flowering of biblical scholarship, the *yeshivot* that predominate in the contemporary period have devolved into academies that, separating themselves from the laity in reaction to the intellectual explorations and perceived heresies of the period of Jewish enlightenment and emancipation that blossomed in the nineteenth century, restricted the curriculum to the study of Talmud, almost to the exclusion of everything else. Such study not only fills the day in the *bet midrash* but replaces all other knowledge (except codes that were essentially extracted from Talmud). Moreover, the study of these texts is carried on in a ritualized fashion in which the traditional pathways of exegesis are seen as the only avenues to thinking; knowledge, something to be acquired, not expanded. In the *bet midrash*, where the best questions to ask are those that have been asked before rather than new ones, where intellectual trailblazing is discouraged because of its iconoclasm, where reason is subordinated to religion and study is a kind of imitation of the ancients, the results have often been narrowness and rigidity.

The *yeshivot*, especially in the last half of the century (in spite of some important teachers of original thinking, like Joseph Dov Soloveitchik) have too often become bastions of conservatism and sanctuaries of tradition, as well as shelters from the storm of cultural engagement. Indeed if they were to become anything different, they would no longer fulfill their implicit mission as bulwarks of insular Orthodoxy. It is no accident that the heads of the yeshiva rail against the university and its kind of thinking.

While no one can know whether the greater threat to Orthodoxy comes from the deviators of the liberal left or the isolationists of the right, the greatest threat comes from an Orthodoxy divided against itself. This is an Orthodoxy that seeks to take from the contemporary world in which it finds itself but not contribute to its character. What is needed is an Orthodoxy that seeks not to create walls around itself but to find doorways that can be opened between our powerful traditions and contemporary civilization. Too many use those doorways in only one direction. What is needed is an informed and Torah-learned Jewry that is scrupulous in religious commitments but secure enough in them to take them into the world.

These are the people who study Torah during the work day, even as they make their way along rigorous and engaging career pathways. They are people who stop in the flow of their individual pursuit of happiness to make it to a *minha minyan* in the middle of the day. They are people who embrace the hopes of messianic redemption but neverthe-

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less live their everyday lives responsibly as if no miraculous end to history were around the corner that somehow would help them ignore contemporary realities. They are Jews who do not just give lip service to the idea of combining Torah and science or Torah and *derekh erets*, but live lives that try to harmonize the two. These are Jews who do not give the task of Jewish education exclusively to those who pursue Torah as a vocation but see it as part of the ongoing requirement of all Jews to “teach it diligently to your children.” These are Orthodox Jews who know that it is not the shade of one’s hat or cut of one’s coat or even the length of one’s *tsitsit* that measure a person’s Jewish commitments but the willingness to test those commitments against the challenges of contemporary life and culture.

It is all too easy to remain a committed Jew in the shelter of the yeshiva under the cover of a black hat or beard. But this is a Judaism that remains reified. The Judaism that will survive longest, is, I believe, one that finds a way to come out from the shelter and cover and stand proudly as it engages all the new open society has to offer.

Dr. Samuel C. Heilman, internationally-known authority on sociology, is a professor at City University of New York, and the author, most recently, of Synagogue Life.

DAVID HORWITZ

1) The point of Rav Aharon Kotler *zt”l*’s appearance before the RCA, when its convention was held in Lakewood, was to persuade the RCA to refrain from issuing a precipitous *pesak* permitting the use of microphones in shuls on *Shabbat*. Subsequently, when *Maran haRav* Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zt”l* became chairman of the halakhic commission of the RCA and prohibited such use of microphones, the issue became largely moot. A cursory glance at Rabbi Louis Bernstein’s *Challenge and Mission*, which describes this incident, also reveals that relations between the RCA and both the *Agudat haRabbanim* and the *Iggud haRabbanim* were always quite rocky. We should not romanticize a past that never existed.

What does seem to have occurred over the past forty years is a reification of subcategories. In previous years, one rubric of “Orthodox Jews” was a sufficient category for most members of the various subgroups. Few people felt a need to cast the differences that distinguished the subsets of Orthodoxy in bold relief. I do not find it edifying to ruminate and speculate upon the causes of this hardening of bound-

aries. As one who is writing from Yeshiva University (which can serve as a metonym for the RCA), I consider it important to insist that we do not impose a reciprocal reification of subcategories. Insularity in this area, just as in any other, necessarily breeds ignorance. This, in turn, gives birth to falsehood, and must be avoided at all costs.

2) Any event that occurred in the past sixty years pales in the face of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. The *aggada* concerning Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and Vespasian (*Gittin* 56b) tells us that after the catastrophe of the *hurban*, attempts were made to secure Yavneh and its *bakhamim*, a doctor to treat the ailing R. Tsaddok, and the preservation of Rabban Gamaliel's dynasty. All three elements: *talmud Torah*, ethical action towards other Jewish individuals as an expression of *ve-halakhta bi-derakhav*, and, finally, concern for the Jewish community as such, as exemplified by the person and dynasty of Rabban Gamaliel, must be included in the normative Jewish response to catastrophe. In the half-century that has followed the Holocaust, different elements within the Jewish community have succeeded only to the extent that they have fulfilled all three mandates.

A correlative of "preserving Rabban Gamliel's dynasty" in our time entails working actively to enhance the religious character of the State of Israel. Over forty years ago, in his essay *Kol Dodi Dofek*, the Rav *zt"l* dramatically depicted the challenge and opportunity that the establishment of a Jewish state presents to religious Jews. We are all aware of the divisions between those Orthodox Jews who see the establishment of the State of Israel as a Divine gift (and a chance to fulfill the vision of the Ramban) and those who do not. We have also seen sharp recriminations recently develop between those who are "pro-Oslo," "anti-Oslo" and various shades in between. These distinctions should not, God forbid, obscure the primary responsibility we all have to Israel as such. Both Rav Mordechai Gifter, *shlita*, and Rav Yehudah Amital, *shlita*, in spite of their separate outlooks, wrote essays in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War which warned against a glib response from the *frum* community which asserts, "this is what happens when one assumes that *kokhi ve-otsem yadi asa li et ha-hayyil ha-ze!*" We should never act like Job's "friends" and engage in haughty finger pointing.

I was taught as a young boy that "news from Israel" is important and I am grateful for that lesson, as one cannot love something that one does not value and ascribe importance to. Whatever our particular view on specific issues, we must be passionately concerned about *Erets Yisrael*. In this area, as in so many others, I am inspired by Rav Ahron Solo-

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veichik, *sblita*, and *mori ve-rebbi* Rav Aharon Lichtensein, *sblita*, who by the example of their actions constantly remind the Jewish community of the sense of vocation that every serious Jew must have. By the same token, although I am not sanguine about the improvement of the relationship between the various Orthodox subgroups, I maintain that it is morally repugnant to succumb to the pagan trait of “watching a good fight” and to resign oneself to the current state of affairs. An earnest dialogue that is unsuccessful in convincing one’s opponent to another point of view is still far preferable to a cloistered cynicism that breeds arrogance but not much else.

While mourning for his sister Drusilla, the Roman emperor Caligula nonetheless played dice and thereby incurred the wrath of Seneca. “What a disgrace for the empire!” the latter wrote. “A Roman prince, in mourning for his sister, who consoles himself playing dice!” Skeptical passivity is not the appropriate Jewish way to deal with tragedy—or with any situation.

5) A passage in the first chapter of *Berakhot* (5a) states that if one cannot, by the sheer force of his will, cause his good inclination to overpower his evil one, he must study Torah. As the Rav *zt”l* declared in a celebrated address to the RCA, “God gave us the Torah in order to redeem us, to save us!” Yet *Berakhot* admits that for some people, this antidote may not always be effective. In that case, continue Hazal, man must remember the day of his death. The application of this *gemara* to the study of *mussar* is well known. Somehow, some way, every Jew must reach inside his soul to use all the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual resources at his disposal to come closer to God. No one should become so sophisticated that he considers this *gemara* irrelevant.

One route that can lead toward a closer relationship with God, of course, is prayer. We possess three chances every day to heighten our religious sensibilities through *tefilla*. This leads to intensely personal questions. How much *kavvana* does one currently possess? How can one enhance it? If a person studies *hilkhot tefilla* from a halakhic perspective, or analyze the phenomenology of prayer from a philosophical or ethical perspective, one might be able to use the insights thereby gained to augment the quality of his own prayers.

As a recent treatment of prayer in the thought of the Rambam (Ehud Benor, *Worship of the Heart*) pointed out, we must understand certain issues concerning the Rambam’s view of *tefilla* in the context of the conflict between the speculative life of the philosopher and the life of practical virtue. According to the Rambam, true intellectual virtue is

necessarily morally transformative. We must never lose sight of that fact as we aim for as much intellectual and moral perfection as possible. Yet the only way we can even begin to do so is first to admit our present deficiencies and the resolve to strive for such perfection.

Rav Yitzhak Twersky *zt"l* concluded his article "The *Shulhan 'Aruk*: Enduring Code of Jewish Law" as follows: "If the Psalmist's awareness of 'I have set God before me continually' (Psalms 16:8)—the motto of the *Shulhan Aruk*—is one of the standards of saintliness, then all *Shulhan 'Aruk* Jews, all who abide by its regulations while penetrating to its essence and its real motive powers, should be men who strive for saintliness. But strive they must, zealously, imaginatively, and with unrelenting commitment." May God give us all the strength never to cease our quest as we strive for the ideal.

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DAVID KLINGHOFFER

In this symposium about challenges faced by Orthodoxy, three of the five questions posed concern Jewish factionalism. It seems the editors of *Tradition* approach the subject at hand with an unstated assumption, namely that the main such challenge comes from a combination of rivalries among sects of Jews, Orthodox and otherwise. I don't share that assumption.

What in fact is the greatest challenge we face? As Elliott Abrams reports in his book, *Faith and Fear: How Jews Can Survive in a Christian America*, American Jews are in the process of evaporating like a drop of water on a hot sidewalk. We stand currently at 2 per cent of the American population, down from 3.7. Given that a third of all ethnically Jewish Americans no longer claim any variant of the Jewish religion as their own, we appear destined to shrivel to even smaller numbers. If trends continue, we Orthodox Jews may someday find ourselves the sole surviving fragment of American Jewry, passionate but statistically puny.

Much has been made of the supposed triumph in which tens of thousands of Jews, raised secular or in liberal Jewish environments, have been welcomed home to authentic Judaism as *ba'alei teshuva*. That phenomenon ought to have the potential to save American Jews from near extinction, but it seems very far from the point at which it could begin to do so. Those who have returned are not nearly enough to off-

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set the legions lost to secularism and non-Jewish religions. The question one never hears raised should be obvious: Why is the number of *ba'alei teshuva* so pathetically small?

I am reluctant to offer an answer for fear of offending readers whose religious principles I fervently share. Yet the truth is known to most every Jew who, like me, had lived exclusively in the secular world and then migrated to the Orthodox one. Perhaps it is also known to many Jews who grew up Orthodox. So, because I'm sure the editors of this journal sincerely want to know what the "greatest failures" of Orthodoxy really are, I'll be frank.

We assume that the vast majority of non-Orthodox Jews steer clear of us because they are put off by the burden of Torah obligations we shoulder. But the truth is that many more such Jews would be open to exploring the Torah as a way of life if the culture of the Jews most associated with Torah were not in large part—for reasons having nothing to do with halakha—rather unattractive. The problem isn't Torah. At three levels—when we pray in our synagogues, when we interact with non-Orthodox Jews, and when we are in our own communities apart from prayer life—the problem is us.

As the political scientist John DiIulio has quipped, the plural of "anecdote" is "data." I can only tell you what I have heard and what I have seen. The principle identifying activity of a Torah Jew, apart from Torah study, is prayer, yet I am embarrassed to take non-Orthodox Jews to Orthodox synagogues. They grew up in Reform and Conservative temples where people go, however deviant the liturgy, to pray. Many of us go to talk. The first time I brought a guest to shul it was in an unfamiliar city and I had failed first to check out the volume of conversation during davening. My companion was a spiritually earnest young woman I hoped to interest in Torah, perhaps to marry. When we arrived I found to my humiliation that, if you closed your eyes, you could imagine you were in a baseball stadium. Almost everyone was chatting away, and more or less ignored the *amida* of *musaf*. Most shuls are quieter than this, but not by that much.

Even in the absence of conversation, many Jews from non-Orthodox backgrounds find it difficult to concentrate on prayer in Orthodox shuls. There's always the guy next to you who davens so loudly as to block your every attempt to achieve a reasonable degree of *kavana*. Or there's the fellow on your other side who's forever busy thrusting his pelvis forward and backward, or walking obsessively up and down the aisle, creating an insistent visual distraction.

A secular Jew hungry for Torah may visit a randomly selected shul,

and woe to him if he picks the wrong one. But he is more likely to encounter *frum* Jews in other settings, like airports or on city sidewalks. What, by our appearance and by our behavior, do we tell him about ourselves? There is, to my knowledge, no *halakha* which says that every religious Jew should look, speak, and act exactly like every other religious Jew, as one chicken looks and acts exactly like every other chicken. And indeed most Orthodox Jews have individual personalities, which they express outwardly. Yet I confess that I often have a hard time telling them apart, and not only the *haredim*, either. Modern Orthodox Jews wear their own uniform. Walking around New York City I'll see a clean-shaven young man from half a block away and, just from his appearance (the patterned sweater, the little oval glasses, even, I'm convinced, a certain facial expression), I'll guess he's wearing a *kip-pa* with his name sewn into it ("JOSHIE"), and, when I turn around and look, I'll be right 90 per cent of the time.

It wouldn't be so bad that we tend to look alike if that Orthodox look were associated with an obvious quality of refinement. But no. In crowded public places, I always cringe as I watch the gentleman in the long beard and black frock coat shoving past everyone to get on the bus to Monsey or the plane to Tel Aviv.

Of course these are the impressions we give even before they have met us. As non-Orthodox Jews discover if they encounter us on our own turf, a uniformity of personal tastes and tendencies is also encouraged in Orthodox culture. Again, this isn't true of all, or even most Orthodox Jews, but it's true of plenty. You can tell that a *ba'al teshuva* has really gone native and abandoned his former self entirely when he starts adopting certain characteristic "frum-isms" such as the grammatical errors (e.g. the substitution of "by" for "with" as in "I spent Shabbos by Dovie's family"), or that odd "Orthodox" accent (a variant on a Long Island accent). Presumably God has given us the potential of an individual personality for a reason; but too many of us don't know what that reason could be.

Again, none of this would be so terrible if it were accompanied in our communal life by uniformly exemplary, refined behavior. Yes, of course, I know very many Orthodox Jews who are paragons of refinement. But I know lots who aren't—as anyone will confirm who has witnessed the tableaux at a particularly lavish *kiddush*, as the Jews, like so many Somalian refugees, push and elbow each other to get at the *cholent*.

This past Sukkot I came across a *mishma* in *Sukka* with a contemporary ring to it. The passage describes a scene that took place at the

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Temple in Jerusalem. When the first day of *Sukkot* fell on *Shabbat*, the Jews would bring their *lulavim* to the Temple Mount on Friday afternoon, so as not to carry on the Sabbath. The *lulavim* were stored overnight and distributed the next morning. Attendants would toss the bundled *minnim* to the crowd, who grabbed at them with such violence that what sounds like a small riot ensued.

That *mishna* tells us more about what's wrong with Orthodox culture than the observation that Rav Feinstein and Rav Kotler, were they alive today, might or might not address the Rabbinical Council of America. For it goes on to say that the religious authorities at the time found the goings-on so unacceptable that they changed religious practice to put a stop to it.

To join the Torah community is to attach oneself not simply to the study and observance of the Divine teaching, but to an actual, flesh-and-blood community. Non-Orthodox Jews know this; and while Torah itself, with its electrical charge of Truth, appeals to many of them—and how could it not?—we Torah Jews appeal to far fewer. Commenting on the *mitsva* not to gash or scratch the flesh in mourning for the dead, Rashi in *Deuteronomy* states that, after all, “You are children of the Omnipresent, and it is fitting that you be comely.” It is indeed fitting for us to be comely, and in the past our rabbis knew how to help keep us that way. One can only hope they rediscover their authority to do so and act on it before, demographically speaking, it's too late.

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DANIEL LAPIN

I am a little diffident about the formidable task of contributing to this evaluation of American Orthodoxy. Here is why. Analyzing any organization means first identifying its goals. Beginning this way makes it easier to determine whether the organization is succeeding in its mission or whether changes are necessary. The trouble is that I am not sure I know what the goal of the organized Orthodox community really is.

A family, for instance, might identify unity and education for the children as its goals. A multinational corporation's goals might be enhanced return on equity and increased market share. In one case, to identify goals is to help parents and children agree on everything from allocating family resources to administering discipline. In the corporate example, clearly defined goals allow managers to plan, confident they

know the standard by which they will be judged. Therefore, before proceeding with any evaluation, I ask a preliminary question: What are the *goals* of American Orthodoxy?

What should our goals be? Growth in proportionate as well as in absolute numbers, increased unity among factions across the Orthodox spectrum, greater recognition of Orthodoxy as normative and of Orthodox organizations as legitimate spokesmen for all of American Jewry—these are some of the goals we could adopt.

Sadly, were we to adopt these as our goals, honesty would compel us to grade ourselves rather poorly. As a percentage of the American Jewish population, our numbers have not increased conspicuously. Unity between the yeshiva hierarchy and pulpit rabbis, let alone between the haredi and centrist Orthodox communities, is a far off dream. Not only are we not perceived as representing normative Judaism, we are under greater assault than ever by large deviationist movements determined to extirpate halakha as the constitution of Judaism. But the good news is that perhaps these goals are not really our goals at all. Perhaps they are the benefits we could expect from the adoption of the right goals.

After all, is numeric growth in our numbers really *our* job? With all due respect, this was an obligation that God assumed, even to the extent of issuing us a covenantal guarantee. No *mitsva* compels us to take responsibility to increase the population of observant Jews by means other than having children and educating those children effectively. This is hardly the job of our Orthodox establishment.

As for unity among Orthodox factions, I am not sure I want it. According to Maharal, the great sixteenth century Rabbi Loew of Prague, disunity in our ranks is a symptom of impending Great Times. He reasons that disunity reveals intense ideological and spiritual commitment. Folks indifferent to their philosophies or with no ideologies at all do not argue much. Perhaps these separate rivers of ideas that flow through our Orthodox landscape are all destined to coexist. Their fast currents carry vital ideas into public view and bring passion into all corners of our community.

The last item I suggested, the better marketing of Orthodoxy, is complex. To many of us, Orthodox Judaism does seem pretty normative. After all, Orthodox Jewish children can be raised within whining distance of a *halav Yisrael* pizza parlor in a dozen American cities. However, to many Jews, this evidence of contemporary halakhic fidelity has little relevance to spiritual growth and closeness to *Hashem*.

Wouldn't it be nice if all Jews were individually free to conduct

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their religious lives as they chose but nonetheless accepted halakhic Judaism as defining Jewish normality? Wouldn't it be nice if all American Jews felt the tug of authenticity and gradually stepped onto the escalator of Torah growth? Wouldn't it be nice if only the Orthodox rabbinate spoke for American Jewry? Of course it would, but this does not mean that we have failed, it just means we have to redefine our goals. Or, to be more accurate, we must identify our priority, which means finding our one paramount goal.

This goal can be nothing less and nothing more than fostering *kiddush Hashem*. To be sure, a concern for *kiddush Hashem* already informs policy in many of our organizations, but in a theoretical way. Let me try and explain by means of an example from the marketing manual for the old Rolls Royce Motor Car Company. Their approach used to be that advertising was a bit vulgar. By claiming that your car is best you merely trigger your competitor's claim that no, his is better. Far more effective, according to those mandarins of motoring excellence, would be to build cars that would be advertised only by the visible satisfaction of the owners.

We could perhaps take a page from that book. We could focus on demonstrating the authenticity of Orthodoxy rather than on claiming it. How? By focusing on *kiddush Hashem*.

I am wondering whether we shouldn't try to beef up our *kiddush Hashem* commitment a bit. Couldn't we perhaps implement Abaye's approach in *Yoma*, "How woeful is the condition of people who have never studied Torah?" Couldn't we demonstrate the corollary—that life with Torah is just better? That's all there is to it. The old Rolls Royce approach.

I think we may be mistaken in naming the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel as the epochal events that have shaped the past sixty years of Jewish life. We Jews have a principle that those things that we humans accomplish are more lasting and profound than the achievements of God Himself. *Yom Tov* needs no spice at its conclusion because unlike *Shabbat* its timing is fixed by man and thus it better endures. Mt. Moriah, the site of Avraham Avinu's great act, is more important to us than Mt. Sinai, the scene of God's great Revelation. It is obvious that both the Holocaust and the State of Israel were God's doing. However, there may be something we Orthodox Jews did which has had a more profound impact on Jewish life, and whose undoing would have a more lasting impact.

In spite of being dedicated guardians of Torah, many of us no

longer see it as the ultimate definition of universal truth that it is. We no longer proclaim it to be the comprehensive blueprint governing the totality of all existence. Instead, Torah is now tragically perceived by many as little more than an onerous list of *dos* and *don'ts* whose only purpose is to regulate in picayune detail the lives of a tiny and ever more insignificant minority. God didn't inflict this public relations catastrophe upon us; we did it to ourselves. This suggests that we are also capable of repairing this damaging perception. Embarking upon this restorative enterprise could indeed bring about the most profoundly powerful and durable achievement of our time. It would be a monumental *kiddush Hashem*.

How might we do this? Perhaps by trying to position ourselves as guardians and advocates of *transcendent* Judaism rather than of *authentic* Judaism. Apart from anything else, this would help eliminate dispute among our own people over who exactly holds the exclusive franchise on authenticity. The point is not the argument over who has the right Judaism, it is that Orthodox Judaism stands for *Torah min ha-shamayim*. That is a powerful fundamental truth. Almost every nominally Orthodox body could contribute to promoting a broader understanding that Hashem spoke to humanity through His *mamleket kohanim* and *goy kaddosh*. This proud proclamation would most directly refute today's secular challenge to our youth.

It would also strengthen Orthodoxy within American Judaism because today people yearn for spiritual substance. It would also help to refute the potentially dangerous perception in Gentile America that all Jews are secular and, above all, it would be a *kiddush Hashem*.

There is no question that the American Orthodox community has made tremendous strides since World War II. One glance into Orthodox neighborhoods, a mere glimpse at the wide spectrum of serious education available at all levels, a taste of the indescribable variety of facilities for the *kasbrut*-observing Jew, are all testament to the vitality and success of Orthodoxy. I humbly propose a new and simplified road map in the form of a restatement of goals. Still, with diffidence, I propose that this clarification of goals could paradoxically be the best way to bring about all the benefits we originally considered to be our goals.

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SOL ROTH

The most important transformations that took place during the past sixty years, insofar as Orthodox Judaism is concerned, relate to attitudes. The religious option, and particularly, its classic variety, namely, Orthodoxy, has become more attractive as a pattern of meaningful living, even while the Orthodox Jew, because of a deterioration of commitment to traditional values in the larger community to which he was exposed, witnessed an erosion of serious magnitude in his own community. The response to the perceived threat brought about a deepening of passionate commitment, with a devaluation of Judaism's rational component. This resulted, among other consequences, in the introduction of damaging and unfortunate tensions into the Orthodox community.

The second half of the twentieth century rejected the spirit of utopianism which characterized its earlier portion. Utopianism, in any of its forms, is fundamentally the doctrine that man is equal to the task of creating an ideal society in which mankind can realize its highest and most noble aims. The emergence of modern science and the introduction of theories of social organization which proposed arrangements that held promise of solving fundamental human problems introduced a sense of optimism that the unfolding history of mankind could not subsequently justify. Advances in science appear to threaten mankind, whether in the form of atomic devastation or of ecological corruption, and social metamorphoses have, in some instances, wrought havoc with the society they were intended to redeem. Man, in addition, has revealed himself to be capable of degrees of brutality (the Holocaust) unmatched by any acts of bestiality committed heretofore. In general, man lost confidence in his own abilities and many found it necessary to look elsewhere. Religion became an appealing option and this translated, in Jewish life, into a reawakened interest in Orthodoxy.

On the other hand, we live in an era of the deterioration of values. Man, as a result of his former arrogant belief that he is equal to the task of assuring the salvation of mankind, undertook axiological initiatives that have proven to be disastrous. Man has succeeded in destroying classic human values without introducing anything that would truly enhance human life in their place. The deterioration of commitment to traditional values in our century was manifest in the emergence of fascism and communism, in the adoption of novel moral creeds such as situation ethics and radical theology, in the determination to sanctify patterns of conduct that are biblically identified as abominations (the homosexual lifestyle). This process of deterioration advances even while confidence in the

cogency of novel systems of morality continues to fade. What happens in the larger society is invariably reflected in the Jewish community. Commitment to Jewish values weakened and Orthodox Jews felt threatened.

Religion has its own dynamic. Fundamentally it involves a relation with God. Those for whom religion is a serious matter and indispensable to a meaningful life tend to maximize that involvement. A half-hearted response to the Supreme Being leaves the genuinely religious personality with a sense of dissatisfaction. It is a close relation with God that is essential to his well being, and the closer the better. This is clearly the case for Orthodox Jews who, as a matter of both principle and psychological need, seek a maximum involvement with God through obedience to his commandments.

Maximum involvement is manifested in passion. Because it is directed to the Infinite Being, passion often prompts the religious personality to strive to exhibit it in infinite degree, a tendency that is easily translated into extremism and, with some, intolerance. The antidote to this state of affairs is also a desideratum of Judaism, namely, the application of reason. The primary function of reason in the Jewish perspective is not to demonstrate religious truths but to gain a coherent grasp of the contents of Judaism, and to restrain passion, to channel it so that it might always be expressed in a constructive way.

There have been and, in all likelihood, always will be different halakhically acceptable approaches to Jewish religious life. These are, in most instances, reflections of diverging tendencies in the human personality. There are the tender-minded and the tough-minded. The former approach life emotionally; their fundamental religious needs are of a psychological nature and they seek the satisfactions that flow from the feeling of personal attachment to the Divine Being. They express their religious sentiments principally in prayer, but also in study, which is often regarded as primarily an act of piety, rigorously logical though Talmudic analysis may be. The latter are essentially rational and intellectual; they find religious fulfillment most of all in the understanding and the practice of the Torah. These are perceived as obedience to His Will and restraints that limit what otherwise might be uncontrolled eruptions of feeling. The former are also responsive to the mystical discourse of kabbalistic literature; the latter, less so. There are at present varieties of halakhically acceptable religious expressions: *Torah uMadda*, Torah without *Madda*, hasidic, etc. Some adopt a more rational and others a more emotional approach. There is no reason to assume that any of these will disappear.

It is safe to suggest, however, that in different sociological circum-

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stances, different forms of Orthodoxy will dominate because the approach adopted will also and invariably be a function of the temper of the times. In a rationalistic period, the intellectual approach may very well be controlling; at a time when reason is in disrepute, there will be a greater tendency to emotional religious expression. When commitment to traditional values is strong, there will be a more relaxed attitude with respect to the task of assuring their preservation. When such commitment is weak, the tendency to adopt heroic methods to preserve it are more likely.

Because in recent decades commitment to moral and religious values has been generally weak, resulting in erosion even in the Orthodox Jewish community, many Orthodox leaders found it necessary to adopt heroic methods to assure their community's preservation. Their approach led to the intensification of religious passion and the reduction of the role of reason in religious expression. Heroic methods included stricter adherence to the precepts of Jewish life, that is, the acceptance of the more stringent of conflicting halakhic views; the isolation of communities, not only from non-Jews and secular Jews but also from Orthodox Jews whose views are at odds with their own; the insistence on the unquestioning acceptance of the authority of their spiritual leaders; and even, on occasion, derogatory references to those in the Orthodox community whose views diverge, in whatever degree, from their own. This is an unfortunate state of affairs. However, given differences in personality and social transformations that inevitable occur, it may safely be concluded that this is also a temporary state of affairs. The acceptance of reason as an important and inherent component of the Jewish religious experience will eventually reemerge and Orthodox Jewish life will return to a more normal state in which the indispensable religious passion, tempered by reason, will allow for a more relaxed attitude, a greater degree of individual autonomy, a more respectful relationship not only with other Orthodox Jews but also with those who deviate from Orthodoxy, and greater communication and acceptance within the entire Jewish community.

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JACOB J. SCHACTER

2b and 3) In his well-known analysis of Conservative Judaism first published in 1955, Marshall Sklare wrote, "Orthodox adherents have succeeded in achieving the goal of institutional perpetuation to only a

limited extent; the history of their movement in this country can be written in terms of institutional decay.”¹ What Sklare could assert over forty years ago was, indeed, a true reflection of the state of Orthodoxy in this country up until that time. Even by the middle of this century, Orthodoxy had not succeeded in rooting itself in an American soil that consistently swallowed up even those traditional Jewish immigrants who sought to make a new life here. At the turn of the century, Rabbi Jacob David Wilowsky, the great scholar and sage known as “the Slutsker Rav” or “the Ridbaz,” could speak only with great pessimism about the state of traditional Judaism in this country. Addressing the second convention of the newly founded Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America on December 30, 1900, the Ridbaz

deplored the condition of orthodox Judaism in America. . . . He claimed that whoever came to America is *Poshe Yisrael*, for here, Judaism, the Torah *She-Be-al-Pe*, is trodden under foot. It was not only home that the Jews left behind them in Europe; it was their Torah, their Talmud, their *Yeshivot*s, their *Chochomim*. His heart was rent by the sights to be seen. . . . In Europe they say that *Yiddishkeit* in America is nothing, but gold is found in the gutter. The fact is, neither gold nor *Yiddishkeit* is to be found here.²

And what was true then, remained an accurate description of the situation for many years. I recall hearing many times from Rabbi Leo Jung, my distinguished predecessor at The Jewish Center, that “Orthodoxy was a bad joke” in the first few decades of this century and even as late as 1955 Sklare was able to accuse Orthodoxy of “institutional decay.”

The most significant success of American Orthodoxy is that it has resoundingly confounded all these negative prognostications. Simply put, we are still here! But it is much more than mere continued existence. The greatest sociological surprise (or miracle, depending upon your perspective) of twentieth century American Judaism is not only the dogged continued presence of Orthodoxy in this country, defying all odds, but the extraordinary growth that it has experienced. And the most remarkable growth has come from the *haredi* community, that segment of Orthodoxy where such growth was least expected. With its increasing confidence, institutional strength, and extraordinary unselfconsciousness, Orthodoxy has achieved a presence and a prominence in America simply and literally unimaginable even a mere four decades ago.³

But none of this is cause for smug self-satisfied triumphalism. I don’t remember the entire Yiddish story but I do remember the punch-

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line: “*oyb es is azoy git, farvus is azoy shlecht*” (if it is so good, why is it so bad). First, to gain a perspective on the pitifully small number of Jews in the world at large, we need to remember that the most widely cited number today, thirteen million, is simply the margin of error in the Chinese census! And, within the Jewish community, we cannot seem to break above the ten-percent mark. Our competition no longer comes from the specific ideologies and positions of the various non-Orthodox movements. Far more formidable an adversary is the notion of individualism and the emphasis upon the sacred right of personal autonomy so pervasive in American culture today, surely a major component in the positions of some of the non-Orthodox movements but by no means limited to them. Contemporary American sociologists of religion have recently pointed to this essential feature of American life, an attitude surely inimical to that espoused by any organized religion. *I will decide; I will act; I will determine my own destiny.* The most famous example of this phenomenon is that described by Robert Bellah and his colleagues in their celebrated analysis of current trends in American religion. They write:

One person we interviewed has actually named her religion (she calls it her “faith”) after herself. . . . Sheila Larsen is a young nurse who has received a good deal of therapy and who describes her faith as “Sheilaism.” “I believe in God. I’m not a religious fanatic. I can’t remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It’s Sheilaism. Just my own little voice.” [JJS: just imagine what her faith would have been called had her name been Judy . . .]⁴

And if this is the tendency in America at large, recent research has shown that it is even more so the case in the Jewish community. If choice is central to Americans in general, it is even more so for Jews.⁵ Jonathan Sarna recently noted that once upon a time, cultural identity was determined by *descent* while now it is based, to a considerable degree, on *consent*.⁶ I would rephrase that statement by suggesting that in the last two hundred years we have changed from a community of *descent* to a community of *assent*. Even if “religion” has returned to “the secular city,” and even if the name and concept of God has reentered the vocabulary of contemporary America (see below), it is not a religion or a notion of God that is even remotely prepared to accept the fundamental obligation central certainly to traditional Judaism, to submit oneself—wholly and uncompromisingly—to Torah and *mizvot*, a normative religious system which demands something of its adherents.⁷

We will be successful only if we are able to construct a compelling argument in favor of the importance of submitting one's life to a transcendent God, to convince Jews voluntarily to choose to abdicate their freedom of choice.

5) A friend of mine was davening at the Kotel during a recent trip to Israel when a blind Sephardi man slowly made his way to the front of the Wall. He put down his stick and slowly caressed its stones, lovingly running his hands over them. After about two minutes, he recited a few chapters from *Tehillim* and then began to speak to God. "*Ribbono shel Olam*," he said, "I have not had the opportunity to be here for a few weeks so I need to bring You up to date about my life and my family. You remember I told You about my son who was getting ready to go into the army? Well, he started about ten days ago. I don't know where he is, but You surely do. Please watch out for him. And then, of course, You remember my daughter. I mentioned to You the last time we spoke that she was ready for a *shiddukh*. In fact, she started dating and she is finding it much more difficult than she thought it would be. Please help her. And then, my third child . . ."

By this time, my friend was feeling uncomfortable eavesdropping on what was obviously a private conversation, but he was mesmerized by the obvious closeness this man felt for God. He had never heard someone speak to God in such a real, direct, and unselfconscious way. After another minute he could not help hearing him say, "And about my youngest child. . . . Oh I'm so sorry, I don't mean to take up Your time. I just remembered that I told You everything about him the last time." And, when I heard the story, I thought to myself, does one have to be blind to see God in such a direct way?

I find a growing comfort level among colleagues and students in talking more freely about God and His role in their lives. "God talk" is in now, and it is not limited to the Jewish community. Note the following exchange in one of John Updike's novels:

"The most miraculous thing is happening," my visitor proclaimed with a painful sincerity, probably overrehearsed. "The physicists are getting down to the nitty-gritty, they've really just about pared things down to the ultimate details, and the last thing they ever expected to happen is happening. God is showing through. They hate it, but they can't do anything about it. Facts are facts. And I don't think people in the religion business, so to speak, are really aware of this—aware, that is, that their case, far-out as it's always seemed, at last is being *proven*."

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“Dr. Lambert, aren’t you excited by what I’ve been trying to describe? God is *breaking through*. They’ve been scraping away at physical reality all these centuries, and now the layer of the little left we don’t understand is so fine God’s face is staring right out at us.” . . . “Let me put it another way: God can’t hide any more.”⁸

More and more sensitive souls are feeling the presence of God, what Rav Hayyim Brisker refers to as an indispensable component of *tefillah*, the awareness of being “*omed lifnei Hashem*.”⁹ I personally identify with the well-known statement of the Rambam in the *Mishneh Torah* associating “love and fear” of God with seeing Him in the natural world, contemplating “His great and wondrous works and creatures (*bi-ma’asav u-veruav*).”¹⁰ Striving to see God in His world and bring him into my personal life is what helps me most in my effort to try to be an observant Jew in today’s turbulent times.

• • •

We look to the next century of American Jewish life with trepidation and with confidence, trepidation for the Jewish future of millions of our co-religionists and confidence in the *hesed* of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* that *nezah Yisrael lo yishaker*. I am reminded of Simon Rawidowicz’s conclusion to his famous essay, “Israel, The Ever-Dying People”:

A people dying for thousands of years means a living people. Our incessant dying means uninterrupted living, rising, standing up, beginning anew. We, the last Jews! Yes, in many respects it seems to us as if we are the last links in a particular chain of tradition and development. But if we are the last—let us be the last as our fathers and forefathers were. Let us prepare the ground for the last Jews who will come after us, and for the last Jews who will rise after them, and so on until the end of days.¹¹

We have faced bleak situations before and, *be-ezrat Hashem*, are still here to tell the tale. Our very continued existence after the devastation wrought upon us in the Holocaust is, itself, the greatest testimony to our tenacity and resiliency. With the help of God, we will continue successfully to meet all the challenges that do and will confront us well into the twentieth century—and beyond.

NOTES

1. M. Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, 1955), 43. This statement also appears in both reprints of the book

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- (New York, 1972 and Lanham, New York and London, 1985).
2. *American Hebrew* 68:7 (January 4, 1901):236. See also Abraham J. Karp, "The Ridwas: Rabbi Jacob David Wilowsky, 1845-1913," in *Sages and Saints*, ed. Leo Jung (Hoboken, 1987), 164; Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Year Book 1965* (New York, 1965), 29; *idem.*, *The Ambivalent American Jew* (Philadelphia, 1973), 52-57.
 3. For a recent assessment of contemporary American Orthodoxy, see Samuel C. Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the 20th Century* (Seattle and London, 1995), 144-59. Compare Marshall Sklare's negative comments cited at the beginning of this essay with Heilman's following remark: "Without question, . . . the Orthodox have been tremendously successful in building their institutions in America" (p. 152). The contrast between the situation in 1955 and 1995 could not be more sharply formulated.
 4. Robert N. Bellah, *et. al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 1985), 220-21. See also Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick, 1987), 32-33.
 5. See Bruce A. Greer and Wade Clark Roof, "'Desperately Seeking Sheila': Locating Religious Privatism in American Society," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31 (1992):350-51.
 6. J. D. Sarna, "The Secret of Jewish Continuity," *Commentary* 98:4 (October, 1994):57.
 7. In 1965, Harvey Cox published a book entitled *The Secular City* (New York, 1965). Nineteen years later he published a book entitled *Religion in the Secular City* (New York, 1984).
 8. *Roger's Version* (New York, 1986), 10, 20-21.
 9. *Hiddushei Rabbenu Hayyim Halevi, Hil. Tefillah* 4:1.
 10. *Hil. Yesodei ha-Torah* 2:2. Cf. R. Aharon Lichtenstein, "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict," in *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?*, ed. Jacob J. Schacter (Northvale, 1997), 239, who approvingly cites Newman's comment that he did not believe in God because he saw design in nature but, rather, saw design in nature because he believed in God. Interestingly, R. Ahron Soloveichik has suggested that the Rambam here also presupposes seeing God in Torah (this is how he interprets *ma'asav*) as a prerequisite for seeing God in nature (*veru'av*), thus explaining the order of the Rambam's formulation, first *bi-ma'asav* and then *u-veruav*. See his "Torah U'mada: A Halachic Analysis," in *Logic of the Heart, Logic of the Mind* (Genesis Jerusalem Press, 1991), 39.
 11. S. Rawidowicz, *Israel the Ever-Dying People and Other Essays* (London and Toronto, 1986), 63. See also M. Sklare, "American Jewry—The Ever-Dying People," *Midstream* 22:6 (1976):17-27.

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TRADITION

MARVIN SCHICK

The divisions within Orthodoxy are real and serious and they can be painful because too often they are accompanied by an excess of nastiness. Much of the same can be said about conflict between religious and secular Jews, as well as the abandonment of Jewish identity by an extraordinary number of American Jews.

These major features of the contemporary American Jewish landscape have strong echoes in Jewish history, a consideration that should provide a certain perspective. All that we are experiencing already was, perhaps not in the same ways. It is, however, difficult to appreciate the point that history is repeating itself, for our age requires a rush to judgment and quick answers; in the process we forfeit the capacity to consider what we are now experiencing in the light of the Jewish past.

Conflict is at the nerve center of all social intercourse. Because combatants in religious affairs tend to believe that they are doing God's work or engaged in matters whose transcendence does not permit compromise or accommodation, the language and, at times, the actions accompanying religious conflict are harsh, even brutal.

I do not want to minimize the splits within Orthodoxy and certainly not between the Orthodox and the ninety percent of American Jews who are minimally or not at all observant, but they ought not be magnified. They are not the entire story or even the main story in contemporary Jewish life, not by a long shot.

As for intra-Orthodoxy conflict, ultimately it will be diminished, though certainly not eliminated, when people of greater stature arise to leadership. Lesser people beget greater problems. A second precondition for increased communal tranquillity is the establishment of a religious equilibrium, an achievement that may be distant in view of the perpetual-motion, transitional character of contemporary life. For the moment, which may turn into a long while, it is doubtful that any strategy will ameliorate conflict among the Orthodox. There will be changes, for change is a key component of social transactions. When and in what directions change will occur is no more than a guess, educated perhaps, but still a guess. There is reason to believe that in the coming period the divisions in Orthodoxy will be exacerbated. But it is well to note that in some ways the Orthodox are now more united. As one important example that has received little notice, disagreement about the State of Israel, which used to be nasty, has substantially dissipated, partly because religious Zionists, without compromising their ardor for Israel, are less enamored of Zionism as a movement, and also

because in the haredi sectors, there is greater receptivity to the idea of a Jewish state.

There is also a coming together about the fruit of modernity, as the modern Orthodox are less prone to embrace questionable attributes of the host culture and the yeshiva world—for all of its continued negativism about secular knowledge—has become more open to forms of secular higher education which are presented as career preparation.

As for relations between the Orthodox and the other movements, as well as secular Jews, there is nothing that religious Jews can do to alter the pattern of sharp division, short of accepting the notion of pluralistic legitimacy. These movements are permanently compromised by compromises made long ago and, as last year's seminal study of Conservative Jews demonstrated, their members are far more outside the pale of traditional Judaism than their rabbis and leaders.

Except in one paradoxical way, Orthodox Jews can exert little influence over the course taken by the Reform and Conservative movements. Neither friendship nor our animosity will make much of a difference. These movements march to a different drummer and it is idle to seek strategies to improve our relationship.

The single exception is their paradoxical and transmuted receptivity to the message that, after all, Judaism is a religion. In some sense, they are attempting to become more religious and while this new religiosity is shaped by commitments and pressures that inherently reject most of the practices that we regard as central, there is a sincerity to what is being preached. Some of our rhetoric and conventions are being incorporated into the non-Orthodox outlook, so that it is now common for Reform and Conservative leaders to lecture on the importance of Torah study and *kiruv* and, like us, these movements sponsor *shabbatonim*, *yemei iyyun*, and much else.

Had these developments occurred a generation ago, when American Jews were rejecting *mitsvot* and intermarrying, it would have been possible to salvage a much larger proportion of American Jewry. It is now too late. Advanced assimilation, including wholesale intermarriage, has ensured that most of our losses are irreversible.

In the blink of an eye in the eternity of the Jewish people we have witnessed the emergence of a new kind of Jew—the phenomenon can be called sociological Jews or crypto-Jews or identity Jews. These are Jews who observe little and know little, who sincerely believe that intermarriage and Jewish continuity are compatible. Our community is aflood with these crypto-Jews, an ever-expanding number of whom are not Jewish according to halakha.

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Likely, as we Orthodox believe, most of these Jews will fade from Jewish life. It is not possible to sustain a Judaism that rejects the practices and beliefs which have sustained us as a people. But not all of them will be lost. Besides, our communal decisions are not determined by what will happen well into the next century but by contemporary needs and pressures, including pressures from these Jews who already comprise a group that in number is greater than all of the Orthodox, and their ranks are growing rapidly.

This new group of Jews brings to contemporary Jewish affairs additional complications and much confusion, particularly regarding status, and we Orthodox are not exempt. For all of our insistence that halakhic standards be maintained, we are limited and compromised by personal and communal commitments that compel us to accept what we proclaim to reject. The contradictions are apt to grow as the consequences of intermarriage spread and as our own activity, notably *kiruv*, reaches out to persons whose Jewishness is questionable.

It is frightening to contemplate what awaits us in developments that already are in the womb of time. Historical perspective once more provides a measure of comfort, for the glorious Jewish past was frequently troubled by issues of status, some of which were not resolved for generations.

While we urgently focus on questions arising from intra-Jewish relations, too little attention is paid to our relations with the 99.8% of the world's population that is not Jewish. Halakha provides guidelines for our behavior, yet I believe that there are serious matters we have not addressed. I specifically mean the language we employ when we talk about Gentiles, language, to put the matter directly, which too often is indecent and should be unacceptable.

Centuries of persecution culminating in the Holocaust have resulted in a great reservoir of hostility toward non-Jews. We are at once angry and afraid, nearly to the point of group paranoia. Still we must insist that God did not choose us as His people to be a nation of haters, to declare war or heap abuse against five or six billion other humans. We are a sanctified people only as the outcome of our living in ways that sanctify God's name. We are not elevated when we attempt to denigrate others. Directly put, we must put a halt to speech that too often degrades the speakers and listeners alike. As a matter of strategy, it is folly to be hateful toward nearly all others who inhabit this globe. Worse, it is a desecration of God's name to be hateful toward those who were created in His image.

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MAYER SCHILLER

1) Post-war Orthodoxy found its hands quite full with the business of mere survival. It was only when this task was basically accomplished that philosophical differences within the fold became more clearly articulated.

Thus, it was the success of Torah Jewry in America and Israel that enabled it to devote more time to the process of debating and clarifying the minutiae of respective doctrinal packages. This process seems an inevitable part of an intelligent, articulate, and thoughtful people with the leisure to study, think, speak, and write.

Of course, cultural differences play a large role in current divisions. Language, dress, speech rhythms, humor, deference, and all the myriad, often dimly perceived, nuances of daily life are so pronounced and different today among the various camps within Orthodoxy that they simply wouldn't be comfortable with each other's company.

However, there is another, more troubling, factor at work. For too many Orthodox Jews, the basics of faith are dimly perceived and barely articulated. It needs to be restated constantly that there are binding doctrines and practices that define our faith—for simplicity's sake, the *ani ma'amin* and *Shulhan Arukh*—with the corollary that those who have correct beliefs and practices are in the Torah camp regardless of other differences and those who do not are outside it. From the Ramaz School to Neturei Karta, this is what distinguishes us from those, as blameless as they may be due to historical and social pressures, who are outside the fold of correct doxa and praxa. It is the articulation of this simple truth which would go a long way toward healing divisions within Orthodoxy. Our current emphasis on divisions over secondary matters renders gatherings such as those of the fifties impossible today.

2) The Holocaust provided the final impetus for the creation of Israel as well as theological justification for parochial Jewish socio-political orientations elsewhere. It thus did much to ensure, in a macabre way, Jewish survival. It also dealt a devastating blow to those non-Jews who sought to limit Jewish entry into and involvement with the affairs of the nations. Thus, Western nations, fearful of cultural homogeneity's excesses, welcomed the Jew. The downside was the very secularism and increasing decadence of these nations now threatened the spiritual life and survival of the Jewish people. Thus, the ever present enigma and moral dilemma of Diaspora Jewry's social stance—pluralism for them; group solidarity for us—became in the long run part of its undoing. To the degree that many of our non-Orthodox brethren have booked pas-

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sage on this sinking ship of the West, they have solidified their assimilation to an ever more frenzied and ultimately doomed nihilism.

For Torah Jewry, the choice became one of either rejecting the civilization in its entirety or trying to rescue whatever embers of beauty, insight, or decency still flickered in its ashes. Of course, the latter path ran the risk of sullyng one's hands with the dirt of those ashes while the former tossed some clean babies out with gallons of filthy bath water. Both responses are tantamount to divorce from civilization as a whole, whether their proponents devote themselves solely to the needs of Orthodox (including *kiruv* efforts) or even enlarge their interests somewhat to include nationalism via Zionism, anti-anti-Semitism, and other particularistic causes.

These approaches have in common the belief that the political-social world view of Jews is forever fated to be tribal. Alternatives of the leftist-universalist or rightist-Eurocentric sort, or of some amalgamation of the two, barely exist within the Torah camp. It is this obsessive particularism, forever nurtured by the Holocaust and anti-Gentilism, which is the foremost social characteristic of Orthodoxy as it confronts the events of our time.

The success of Orthodoxy has been precisely in the severing of its links to the "other" and concentrating on its own institutions, which flourish at present in all camps. The price of this success has been a faith and morality that, although extraordinarily vibrant and often sincerely pious, is very much alone.

3) The deviationist religious movements, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist, *are* secularist. They have chosen to worship the agendas and bigotries of modernity as opposed to the eternal verities of Sinai. Hence, they are powerless to resist, for any length of time, the pull of popular dogmas concerning everything from sexual perversion to silly assertions of "gender egalitarianism" to intermarriage, patrilineal descent, and the total rejection of halakha. They are part of the two-century-old trend which has now become a dominant force in the West—to desecralize reality and replace dethroned God with the Cult of Man.

In order to evaluate strategies in dealing with "deviationist movements" or the general culture of amoral, "pop" secularism, we must first state our obligation as believing Jews vis-a-vis these forces. Our concern is twofold. We must seek to wean those Jews captured by Siniless creeds back to their ancestral faith, and we must protect, clarify, and inspire the commitments of those already in the fold. All Torah Jews are pledged to the above dual agenda.

Some emphasize the stark differences between faith and heresy, between halakha and subjectivist religious whimsy. Others feel that a more prudent tactic is to leave these matters unstated at the outset while emphasizing that all Jews are members of the same people, with the Torah and *mitsvot* as our national *raison d'être*. These are tactical differences, not essential.

What unites both of them is their failure to influence more than a small fragment of our not-yet-*frum* brethren. And, although we hope and pray that we may yet be more successful, the probability is that we shall never see more than a trickle of *ba'alei teshuva*. The all encompassing nature of media and education in the West today makes it extremely difficult for individuals to think independently, to reject the cults of secularism and decadence.

In general, outreach efforts should realize that contemporary Jews are no longer bothered by scholarly critiques of the faith. Apologetics are irrelevant. What is needed are forceful, experiential tastes of Judaism. These should include Torah study, but attempts to validate the truth of Torah or to refute objections are merely bygone relics of a reflective European civilization that no longer exists.

Strategies aside, there is no doubt that the consistently worsening situation in American public schools is creating a large clientele willing to consider Jewish private education. This has led to the growth of the Solomon Schecter schools and, with creativity, may reap dividends for Orthodoxy as well. Indeed, the fragmentation of the American melting pot and elimination of a national culture or identity, although sure to provide many perils for Jewry in the twenty-first century, will have the effect of reaffirming our group solidarity. It will also create opportunities for successful Torah propagandizing.

4) “Centrist, rightist, hasidic, yeshiva, haredi and others”—what a fascinating list of designations! Is there no Orthodox left? And aren't “hasidic yeshiva, haredi” all parts of the right? And isn't haredi Judaism merely a general term encompassing hasidic and yeshiva groups?

Semantics aside, the long-term projection for right wing Orthodoxy's “vitalism” seem correct. Despite a small number of dropouts—usually among those incapable of succeeding in the demanding yeshiva day of intensive Talmudic study—the right has an exploding population, largely loyal to its world view.

Pessimists often point to the economic precariousness of these communities, the hasidic ones in particular. However, the Welfare State provides for the basic needs of its underclass and despite rhetorical

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numbling to the contrary, the Welfare State is so afraid of its solidarity that it will never significantly curtail benefits. Thus, until the entire system can no longer support itself, sometime in the next century probably, right wing haredim in America will be provided for. Granted, this is a difficult existence, but it is one which large segments of the right are locked into. What is a twenty-three-year-old father of four (destined to be a father of twelve!) who can barely speak or read English to do?

One of the most distressing aspects of this community is the conformist nature of its economic existence. It is a world whose majority feels compelled to keep up with the Jones's weddings, wedding gifts, clothing, furniture, and almost every conceivable item of material existence. Rich or poor, far too many feel compelled to spend ostentatiously and well beyond their means.

Among what used to be called the modern Orthodox, three trends vie for popular loyalty.

There is the heightened sense of religiosity, largely imported from Israel and the post-1967 revival of Torah scholarship and practice among *dati* Zionists there. This newfound passion for Torah and *mitsvot* steadily permeates the synagogues and schools of the movement and has created a spiritual revival that grows stronger with every passing day.

Conversely, the heavy weight of American culture of the nineties still burdens many of the moderns, although its negative effects are more pronounced among those who did not undergo the "Israel experience." This retreating remnant, still attached to the popular modern Orthodoxy of the fifties, with its ignorance and laxity, is attempting a rear guard action against the newfound enthusiasms. The emptiness of its persuasion will doubtless allow it to win the hearts of those to whom the dominant culture is still the primary source of ideology and lifestyle.

Recently, the intellectual Orthodox left, long dormant, has also emerged to contest the movement's newfound religious solidity. Spouting trendy clichés, rooted in the latest assumptions of the "secular city" concerning "feminism," "pluralism," and "tolerance," they have brought major financial resources to their struggle. Yet theirs is a cause without a following. Those among the moderns devoted to Torah and halakha cannot take this ideology seriously, and those bereft of same don't need ideological justification for living as dutiful servants of popular media.

Losing in all this are the dwindling ranks of those committed to *Torah im derekh erets* or *Torah uMadda*, to whom knowledge, beauty, and experience are significant, but whose world view remains unsmitten by the dogmas of Oprah. With the Breuer community having largely metamorphosized into standard yeshiva-ites, and with Yeshiva University

split between an ever growing number of *yeshivish* Zionists, of the generally disinterested whose ranks shrink in face of the above mentioned explosion of Torah passion, and of a tiny faction of zeitgeist-obedient leftists, there is no communal home for those who remain pledged to the God of creation and revelation.

Across the board in Orthodoxy there seems to be a sense that, although the community is strong, growing, and committed to Torah study and practice, something of a spiritual nature is missing. Hence, the turning in some circles toward mysticism, music, or hasidic doctrine. Even among hasidim the routinization of charisma and passion is often commented on. It would take a larger context to expound on this, but the fundamental problem seems to be the lack of an immediate attachment of God and of personal faith. Is there some revival, on the horizon, or does the nature of contemporary society create too much cynicism for spiritual renaissance?

As religious Zionism in Israel and modern Orthodoxy in America continue to raise their Torah standards and with the Agudah orbit having largely shelved its principled opposition to Zionism, we may look forward to continued cooperation between the worlds. The leftist ideologues among the modern Orthodox will become increasingly isolated because this rapprochement will take place outside the zeitgeist's ideological prison and, hence, without their participation.

5) My personal spiritual resources are varied. The following list is not complete nor is it necessarily in order of importance, but each item has allowed me effectively to abjure modernism's realm and dwell in the rival universe of faith.

Study of Talmud. Nothing fortifies faith as well as working one's way carefully through a "*shvera shtikel gemara*." As the Slonimer tradition would have it, *Talmud Bavli* because it "teaches the *mevulbal* (confused)."

Prayer. *Davenen*. *Lebidig*. Pronouncing the words. Sometimes fast. Sometimes slow. But always with the realization that these words have the power to alter one's soul and the metaphysics of the cosmos.

Spiritual events participated in with rebbes and hasidim. It is there, in the bosom of the hasidic rebbes and traditions I have followed, that a living God is invariably found.

Hasidic works. Doctrine or merely tales. And the more direct and simple the better for inspiration.

Modern Orthodox intellectualism. There is no journal, book, or serious article written by the reflective class of "centrism" that I do not regard as a source of personal consolation. Thoughtful, scholarly, and

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Orthodox creativity is a staple of my faith and a constant source of inspiration.

Orthodox Christian thinkers. Primarily Catholic (Belloc, Chesterton, Newman, von Hilderbrand and dozens of other novelists, thinkers and poets). They have all helped provide insight, inspiration and understanding over the years.

Jewish music. It is a means to reestablish one's connection to God.

Political and social thought, rooted in the great faiths and cultures of Europe, has always helped me to understand and act upon the connection between Truth, history, and the social fabric.

Beauty—God-made and man-made (of cultures high and low). The vast panorama of creation in general is a path back to its Creator.

The human condition, with its loves, hopes, dreams, ironies, ambiguities, tragedies, and triumphs, has often left me with the conviction that existence's awesome confusion is ultimately reconciled in the embrace of its loving Creator.

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DAVID SHATZ

Strength can breed weakness and weakness strength. In this spirit, I would suggest that the “sea change” described in the symposium questions is, to some extent, a sign of community vigor—albeit one that exposes deep flaws in how Orthodoxy has adjusted to success.

In 1956, we were striving together to survive and to build in the face of dire predictions about Orthodoxy's imminent demise. There were ideological divisions and political goings-on, of course, but often lines were crossed. The decades since have seen tremendous educational and spiritual invigoration: an explosion of books, journals, tapes, websites, good speakers and teachers, shuls, day schools, yeshivas, *kolelim*, *Daf Yomi* students, synagogue *batei midrash*, *kashrut* organizations, and more. At the very same time—and therefore all the more remarkably—Orthodoxy has flourished *kelapei huts*, earning a conspicuous presence and acceptability at campuses and workplaces, including centers of federal and big-city politics. But precisely because Orthodoxy today enjoys a large constituency, along with significant power and resources, each of its subgroups has won the luxury of pursuing certain key objectives even while keeping studiously apart from, indeed dis-

paraging, other groups and individuals. Furthermore, to define itself and its *raison d'être* in the face of ever increasing diversity, a group, if suitably empowered, naturally feels impelled to draw lines of division sharply. It is more likely than not to lay exclusive claim to authenticity—and to be wary of associations.

In a word, we have not dealt perfectly with success. Rather, bereft of former leaders, *gedolim* who befriended and palpably respected one another and whose passing is among the most repercussive events of recent times, we have mismanaged extraordinary achievement into partial failure. We have failed to make the Torah “your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations” (Deuteronomy 4:6) or, for that matter, in the eyes of everyone in our own nation; nor have we demonstrated to the world, even to ourselves, that *derakheha darkhei noam vehkol netivoteha shalom*. It is true that *ba'alei teshuva* are numerous and that Jews of all persuasions as well as non-Jews admire, for example, some of our present scholars and literary productions. Even so, by now enough people have told us that we “have no idea how bad Orthodoxy’s reputation is out there in the world,” to give us, I fear, a pretty good idea. Many observers know only or primarily our public disrespect and incivility. Such negative images are bound to lose us devotees in a battle with higher stakes than any intra-Orthodox one: that against intermarriage and assimilation.

Is it not striking that in Orthodoxy you may be ostracized by some not because you hold wrong views, but because you refuse to “delegitimate” all those whom you, no less than your antagonist, regard as mistaken? Or even because you respect and cooperate with people whose views you *are* prepared to delegitimate? Intolerance is perceived by some as a virtue, a touchstone of genuine commitment; indeed, not only is tolerance incorrect, it is precisely what is not tolerated. In addition, for many years now, biblical verses, *maamarei Hazal*, and grave *halakhot* about sinners have been used to create a stockpile for personal insults, which at times are thrown about with all the abandon and hyperbole of, *lehavdil*, epithets in the vernacular. There is, to be sure, some asymmetry. Centrist synagogues and communities invite, welcome and accord respect to yeshiva world speakers far more than the reverse (just as they support yeshivot on the right and attend their fundraising events without finding their *tsedaka* reciprocated in the form of contributions to institutions like Yeshiva University). But in light of the ugly rhetoric sometimes levelled at the right, from whose piety and devotion all need to learn, it is fairest to bemoan the underlying attitudes and practices in more general terms.

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The remedy for our internecine bickering and battling is not merely, as many suggest, to proclaim that Orthodoxy should cultivate diversity. Diversity in Orthodoxy is not the solution, it is the origin of the problem. For arguably the benefits of diversity accrue only when groups aggressively continue their individual traditions and agendas. Promoting diversity means letting groups intensify their identities and generate sharp definitions of their respective principles and goals. Hence the problem. On the other hand, quashing diversity is no solution either. Unlike forced homogeneity, diversity—when supported, I hasten to add, within limits—respects, first, traditions, second, the idea of *eilu ve-eilu divrei Elokim hayyim*, and, third, individuality. (The dangers of coerced uniformity were emphasized by the Netziv in his commentary to Genesis 11:4 as well as his introduction to the book.) Furthermore, diversity and disagreement force each group into clearer self-definition, heightened erudition, intellectual honesty, and better articulation of principles. Having multiple models of Orthodoxy also expands potential points of entry for *ba'alei teshuva*. Movements like Hasidut and Beit Yaakov that were pummeled at their inception have in the long term made marvelous contributions to the health of Yiddishkeit; Jewish life would be immensely poorer without them.

But even granted this analysis of our present dilemma, must the need for clear self-definition warrant a refusal to associate with other groups and their key figures? This issue of cooperation has now come truly to bedevil us even in intra-Orthodox relations. We need not acquiesce to the curious assumption that to speak before a particular Orthodox group, even with so benign an aim as to teach Torah, is to accept every one of the group's principles, or to the patent absurdity that to appear on a program with an Orthodox speaker you disagree with—even when you appear *in order to disagree*—is to say you agree. I realize that in many instances we hear about, one is afraid that even to disagree on the same program will imply “legitimation” or (I believe this is a separate concern) will tarnish integrity. These are hardly frivolous worries. But too often, disagreeing on a sensitive topic turns instantly into delegitimizing. Also, *prima facie* there is something sad and anomalous about the fact that Orthodox organizations meet and join with Christians in political coalitions, yet often refrain from joining with certain other Orthodox Jews for fear of “legitimizing” them or of sacrificing integrity; this, even when common interests and objectives are at stake and duplication of effort will drain everyone's resources.

There are other reasons for the sea change (putting aside the oft-invoked swing to the right in general society). The need to be cautious

about associations is felt intensely in this era of instant communications and aggressive, ever burgeoning media. Every *ad hoc* gathering and casual remark is bruited across the globe, often in mangled form; aggravating matters, society has been conditioned to relish sound bites more than it appreciates context, and to take all actions as symbolic “statements.” It is very understandable if, quite apart from concern for their integrity, groups are more nervous about whom they sponsor, and individuals more nervous about what they say and to whom they’re seen saying it. Regrettably, such fear of being caught by the media at the wrong assembly has not rubbed off to deter ethical violations and offensive pronouncements that, when made public, have brought disrepute and humiliation to both individuals and the Orthodox community.

Another contributor to increased polarization is the deterioration of the general culture. Consideration of this point will aid us in assessing where American Orthodoxy is going. Precipitous changes in morality and philosophy have lowered the threshold for the right’s tolerance of the center. No longer are society’s morality and Orthodoxy’s reasonably convergent. It is easier than ever, therefore, for centrist Orthodoxy’s openness to the secular world to be mistaken by detractors for insensitivity to spiritual dangers.

Of course, this misunderstanding (or, in some instances, willful misrepresentation) is slanderous. Centrist Orthodox Jews care—profoundly so—about sexual mores, abortion, assisted suicide, pornography, untrammelled autonomy, and relativism. However, they think that the challenge of secularism is best met not by isolation—which leaves culture in the hands of non-Jews, secularists, and others outside Orthodoxy—but by seizing today’s unprecedented opportunities for participation and influence. To create a culture to our liking is a goal that the Orthodox right shares with the center and left; after all, the souls of our own children are at stake. Organizations across the Orthodox spectrum at bottom know this—and act on it. But only centrists expressly and publicly draw the inference that integrating Torah and culture is desirable. Positive aspects of culture need to be recognized and turned to advantage, including, for example, the resurgence of religion in public and private life and the recent emphasis in philosophy on tradition and community (albeit, to be sure, relativism and “post-modernism” play a role in these developments). Even though he did not use the terminology, Rav Kook in essence implied in his address at the dedication of the Hebrew University in 1925 that *Torah u-Madda* asks not simply what *madda* can do for Torah, but also what Torah can do for *madda*.

The present onslaught against centrist Orthodoxy is ironic. Notwith-

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standing the oft-noted proliferation of *kolelim*, Orthodox Jews are perhaps more extensively involved in secular education than before, as credentials for well paying jobs have become more and more demanding. Even so, there are more and more Orthodox doctors, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, economists, and even professors who *deny any allegiance to the ideal of integration*. In the pointed words of Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks, the combining of Torah and secular studies is “systematically in evidence as empirical reality and in eclipse as religious ideology” (*Jewish Action* [Summer 1989]).

This gap between ideology and reality is puzzling. Is it not more evident than ever that we all profit from Jews’ receiving first-rate educations that place them at society’s cutting edge? Try imagining what the world would be like for us if Orthodox Jews rejected secular education altogether; surely more would suffer than just personal levels of livelihood. Why, then, does the pursuit of serious education and the carefree utilization of *frum* professionals proceed apace without a scintilla of ideological concession? It is worth noting, if only as a piece to explain this puzzle, that centrist Orthodoxy’s message is more difficult than ever to get across given the decline of the liberal arts vision all across universities and its replacement with a pre-professional stress. If society as a whole sees little worth in university study beyond its role in helping one to earn a livelihood, the notion that university study serves broader ends related to spiritual growth and community health is likely to fall on uncomprehending ears.

What can we expect in the future (Question 4)? With intolerance rising in the Orthodox community and rapidly approaching the status of a religious obligation, there probably will be further delegitimations and splits. Increased diversity and disunity, abetted by the very proliferation of shuls and *minyanim* that signals growth and strength, will then breed more tension, unless we change our assumptions about how to treat those with whom we disagree. With the culture declining, the nature of university education changing, and Israel’s troubles leaving many with a feeling of shattered hope, centrist Orthodoxy, I regret to say, will probably be rejected more and more as an ideology, even while some of its bottom lines on secular education, dealing with non-Jews, the “proper place” of women, and collaboration with Israel’s secular government will *de facto* be implemented more overtly across the Orthodox spectrum. In part, centrist Orthodoxy suffers from the fact that the public prefers ideologies that are cast in black and white to those that are highly qualified and complex. It is appropriate to note, therefore, as has Rabbi Mayer Schiller (*Torah u-Madda Journal*, vol. 6

[1996]: 58-90), that the right's relationship to the world is in reality much more perplexing and fraught with tension than official pronouncements reveal.

It is crucial to appreciate that the bickering, too frequent delegitimation, fanaticism, and criminal behavior that distress many of us are a reflection neither of Judaism nor of *am yisrael* but of individual Jews. Judaism itself—Torah—is, now as ever, a thing of beauty and a worthy object of our love. Its texts bring us intellectual excitement; its beliefs, practices, and books connect us to Jews across all time and space; its devotees live inspired and inspiring lives; its myriad regulations impart structure and discipline to our otherwise banal existences, thus linking us to the source of all life. There is *mesirut nefesh* in this community, there is *hesed*, there is holiness, there is awesome erudition and uplifting passion. Let us hope for the day when we can see around us nothing but these goods. Even in troubling times like these, however, the rewards of Torah can fill our lives with existential meaning—and justified pride.

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SHUBERT SPERO

1) The spectacle of yeshiva heads addressing a gathering of the Rabbinical Council of America, which evidently occurred in the 1950's, would appear to testify to a measure of cooperation, openness, and understanding between what today are considered two separate worlds. While in those days there may have been more cooperation and openness, it was actually made possible by a *lack* of understanding! For then neither the yeshiva heads nor the modern Orthodox understood what they really represented. Jews had been utterly devastated by growing reports of the horror and extent of the Holocaust. A wave of bewilderment and despair had engulfed American Jewry and particularly the yeshiva heads who managed to reach American shores. Such a climate did not encourage critical ideological scrutiny. Traditional Jews huddled together for spiritual warmth, grateful to be alive.

In time, as the yeshiva world began to regenerate and took a closer look at American Orthodoxy and its leaders, the fissures, social and ideological, began to open and widen. While in a sense unfortunate, this situation resulted ultimately in both sides achieving a deeper self-understanding. Self-confident and self-sufficient, the yeshiva world continues in its

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traditional way. Modern Orthodoxy has been compelled to take note of the ways it differs from the yeshiva world and to justify its beliefs and practices. However, there is an asymmetry in the relationship. If today, the RCA does not invite yeshiva heads to address its conferences, it is only because the RCA knows that they would not accept. The “estrangement,” such as it is, is mainly from the side of the yeshiva world.

2) Clearly the epochal events that shaped Jewry over the past 60 years were the Holocaust and the establishment and successful development of the State of Israel. Any serious attempt to *evaluate* Orthodoxy’s response to these events must first clarify the options open to Orthodoxy and the criteria against which the judgement is being made.

Orthodoxy’s response to the Holocaust, materially and emotionally, followed well-trodden traditional lines: there were prayer-meetings, and the Vaadot Hatzala, which were impressive, given Orthodoxy’s poor organizational structure at the time. Conceptually, Orthodoxy dealt with the Holocaust the way all national tragedies are dealt with, with a call for soul-searching and a turning to God with ever greater fervor. If there were any special lessons to be learned from the Holocaust, they did not appear in the Orthodox responses. However, the fulfillment of the Zionist dream confronted Orthodoxy, leaders and laity alike, with a novel situation for which no ready made response could be found. Considering that Orthodoxy, alone among segments of Jewry, had the background to appreciate the significance of a return to *Eretz Yisrael*, the response of the Orthodox leadership must be judged as, at best, confused. Since the Six Day War, however, Orthodoxy’s response in terms of aliyah and settlement has been noteworthy, relative to the rest of Jewry.

While the Holocaust and Israel can be characterized as “events,” there has been an ongoing process that reached a certain climax during the last 60 years. In the long run, this must be judged as the most influential of all. I refer to the advances in technology and science, on the one hand, and the defeat of the totalitarian regimes and their ideologies, on the other. Both have brought about a much deeper understanding and appreciation of the concepts of “modernity” and “democracy.” Orthodoxy has yet to deal with these in a systematic manner.

Specifically, Orthodoxy’s success is to be seen in its ability to fashion in the United States, under conditions of unprecedented freedom and opportunity, a network of institutions, including synagogues, day schools, centers, summer camps, youth movements, *kashrut* organizations, and a university, enabling Jews to participate in modern life to the extent their philosophy permits, while remaining Torah-committed and

observant. Orthodoxy's greatest failure has been its inability to unite within itself and to relate to non-Orthodox Jews in ways which would convey its basic love and responsibility for all Jews. Modern Orthodoxy's failure, in particular, has been its inability, to date, to articulate a Torah philosophy that would mandate its openness to modern culture, its acceptance of every Jew, a heightened role for women in Judaism, and its perception of Israel as the beginning of Redemption.

3) Alternative world outlooks from paganism to Hellenism, from Christianity to communism, from Unitarianism to Reform Judaism, have always constituted a *challenge* to Orthodoxy, and a *threat*, when accompanied by political pressure. They become a serious challenge in the realm of ideas only when Orthodoxy permits itself to become vulnerable by ignoring new features in the environment or newly felt needs of people, which makes Orthodoxy appear rigid, outmoded, blind and narrow; or by neglecting the education of our young so that, ignorant of their own heritage, they are attracted to offerings from without. Deviationist religious movements within Judaism were a threat during a short period of time during the 1930's and 1940's, when children of East European immigrants, eager to participate in American culture and perceiving Orthodoxy to be hopelessly incompatible with the American way of life, were attracted to abbreviated forms of Judaism in the expectation that only thus could they remain Jews in America. The emergence of a viable modern Orthodoxy has largely neutralized this threat.

Secularism, as an attempt to live without religion at all, has proven a colossal failure. Witness: the experience of the atheist communist regime in the Soviet Union and the pathetic state of secular Jews in Israel today. It would seem that the human condition is such that man must sooner or later seek out the transcendent.

4) It is quite apparent that the haredi communities in all their shadings, hasidic, yeshiva, Shas-sefaradi—are exhibiting a tremendous vitality. They are developing, increasing and thriving. They show an ability not only to retain their natural growth but to attract outsiders. Sociological studies have suggested that the modern Orthodox (such as myself, my children and grandchildren) are an “endangered species.” I am not sure. Perhaps there are less modern Orthodox than haredi Orthodox but that is because to grow up haredi is natural, whereas to grow up modern Orthodox one must make conscious decisions and choices.

If all the Orthodox Jews in America become haredi, it would be something to be applauded! If all the Orthodox in Israel become haredi,

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it would be a disaster, because we have a responsibility to run a state of our own and cannot leave it all to the *goyim*! One can expect cooperation between all shades of Orthodoxy only if faced by a common threat and if a common strategy can be agreed upon. Otherwise, forget it, until Elijah the Prophet appears!

5) As a believing Jew, I derive great personal inspiration from the rhythm of the Torah life-cycle: from the Jewish year punctuated by the historically rich festivals and holidays, the Jewish week crowned by the Shabbat, which affords the opportunity to become “satiated with Thy goodness,” and the round of thrice-daily prayer, which lifts man out of his “loneliness” and affords an experience of the presence of God.

Most important of all, living in Israel with my wife, all my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, I have a sense of personally participating in that which I believe to be the culmination of a very long journey that started with my fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this very land, speaking this very language. My sense of excitement as to what is to come and my sense of self-fulfillment know no bounds, *barukh Hashem*.

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PINCHAS STOLPER

The survival of the Jewish people in the wake of the Holocaust was nothing short of a miracle. Any other people would have disintegrated under similar mortal blows. Along with the ashes of one-third of our nation, ninety percent of our observing Jews and ninety percent of our rabbis and *talmidei hakhamim* were obliterated.

Most Jews point to the rise of the State of Israel as the great miracle that followed the Holocaust. But there was a second, even greater miracle: the rebirth and resurrection of the Torah world, the *am ha-Torah*, the world of Jewish spirit, the reemergence of Torah students and Torah scholarship, of *yeshivot* and Torah neighborhoods to the point where today Torah Jewry is the most creative, dynamic, and regenerative center of Jewish life.

The viability, vitality, idealism and creativity of Orthodoxy are no longer open to question. Orthodoxy is the creative core, the burning furnace which keeps the House of Israel from freezing on the barren

wastelands of secularism, materialism, assimilation, and disintegration. The tables have turned.

The greatest issue of our day is the challenge to revive that portion of the House of Israel that does not yet keep *Shabbat*, that is estranged from the world of *Humash*, Rashi, *gemara* and *Tosafot*. Without reviewing statistics we are all familiar with, Jewry today is confronted by an enemy no less threatening than the horrors of Auschwitz. We are experiencing the demise of eighty percent of our people, a figure derived from the percentage of our youth who are never to be found in the synagogue.

While the non-Orthodox Jewish community in America is somewhat analogous to pre-World War II Western European Jewry in its whirlwind rush towards self destruction, the American Orthodox community is somewhat analogous to East European Jewry in its intensity, fervor and commitment. We differ from pre-war East European Jewry in that American Orthodoxy shares the status, affluence, professionalism, and clout of the non-Orthodox. This makes American Orthodoxy unique. It also makes our potential and challenge unique.

World Jewry today can be likened to two speeding express trains traveling on parallel tracks, but in opposite directions, one running headstrong to assimilation, the other to Torah study and observance. If the overriding concern of our day is to win the battle for Jewish survival we must begin to marshal our resources—to wage the struggle with cannons instead of pea shooters. The battle for the Jewish soul rages on all continents. On each front we are fighting an ideological battle against an all pervasive secular and impersonal environment which would “make them forget Your Torah and compel them to abandon Your laws.” On each continent it is our *yeshivot* and *kolelim*, allied with the *teshuva* phenomenon, which have the potential to reverse the tragic rush toward mass assimilation and disintegration.

The motor which drives American Orthodoxy are our *yeshivot* and *kolelim*. The miracle of American Orthodoxy is sustained by the many young people who are moved to devote their youthful energies to Torah study. Despite wishful thinking to the contrary in some quarters, today’s *musmakhim* of Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yitshak Elhanan are overwhelmingly of the same mettle and cloth as the *musmakhim* of most American *yeshivot*. At a recent Orthodox Union forum a speaker urged that “we refer halakhic questions to ‘our *poskim*,’” implying that there was a sociological or ideological divide that separated “modern” from “traditional” *poskim*. After his address I challenged him to “name one” and he admitted that he could not.

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Despite subtle and not so subtle differences in attitudes and lifestyle, American Orthodoxy is blessed with a unity of *pesak* and a core inner unity that should enable us to set aside fringe differences in favor of a broad consensus agenda.

A humorous aside in Orthodox circles is that a prerequisite for membership in the *Moetset Gedolei Torah* of Agudath Israel of America is a college degree. What this points to is that in essence today's Orthodoxy is an American Orthodoxy. There are more Orthodox professors, physicians, attorneys, etc., who are "right" than those who are "left." The differences are often more stylistic than substantive.

Were an effort made by the leadership of modern Orthodoxy to acknowledge that we are indeed one community, and to cultivate relationships with many *rashai yeshiva*, especially now that the Synagogue Council of America no longer exists, many would cross, in either direction, the imaginary border that separates "left" from "right." During the past few years I have detected a softening of the attitudes and relationships between "left" and "right." Notwithstanding the notoriety of a few exceptions, right wing publications are less strident and more inclusive. This was evident in the effort to include the leadership of modern Orthodoxy in the *Siyyum haShas*.

Much of modern Orthodoxy is on the defensive, lacking imagination and courage. It is caught in the cobwebs of self-doubt. While there are modern Orthodox Jews significant numbers of whom are genuine *benei Torah*, there is limited, effective leadership and much of this leadership is fractious and fragmented. Modern Orthodoxy possesses many millionaires but has no focused concept of what to do with its resources. Too few modern Orthodox youth are motivated to become *mehankhim*; by default, modern Orthodoxy abdicates education and the rabbinate to the "right." In fact, few Torah Jews who are themselves modern Orthodox take seriously the notion of modern Orthodoxy as a force or movement. To be such a force in the coming years, modern Orthodoxy must see the establishment of a national chain of modern Orthodox, senior *yeshivot*, colleges and *kolelim*.

Unfortunately, despite notable exceptions, Orthodoxy lacks a commitment to activism. If the lay leaders of Orthodoxy, left and right, would invest ten percent of their time and funds in growth projects and institutions as they do invest in large cap growth stocks, we would witness so mighty a Heavenly response that Orthodoxy in the next 20 years would not only grow faster than in the past 20, but would so intensify its spiritual and intellectual depth that it would succeed in reaching significantly

large numbers of frozen Jews. The recent Daf Yomi *siyyum* provided a taste of what American Orthodoxy is capable of. No other civilization, people, movement, or cause since Sinai has so demonstrated its commitment to a similar intellectual or spiritual enterprise.

The new Orthodox feminism, much of which is neither authentic nor honest, represents dangers that may lead to a new edition of Conservative Judaism. Many fear that in a generation or two they too could join the plunge to oblivion. Finally, modern Orthodoxy includes too many on the fringes who are Orthodox by rote; they too are Jews-at-risk.

To wage the battle for Orthodoxy within the press is often dangerous. Extremism and divisive pronouncements alienate potential friends, create hatred, and provide our enemies with a pretext to pull *tinokot she-nishbu* away from growing closer to Torah. A newspaper advertisement informing people of the dangers of davening in non-*mehitsa* shuls has an alienating effect, while a full page ad explaining the importance of *kedushat beit ha-knesset, tzeniut, mehitsa* and fidelity to Hazal would have a positive effect.

We suffer from the afflictions that our *gedolim* railed against over the centuries. Our *avoda zara* is our homes, clothing, jewelry, vacations, and lavish *semahot*, rather than education, *kiruv*, the poor, and Torah in *Eretz Yisrael*. The deviationist movements have run out of steam. Their decline is frightening. They will tragically soon join the dustbin of history. Reform and Conservative Jews become Orthodox while the opposite rarely takes place. Orthodoxy's enemy is not the deviationist movements, but the powerful magnet of materialism, technology, and the richness of American civilization. Our great challenge is to overcome the material and narcissistic temptations of America. Paradoxically, we live in the best diaspora ever. We possess the means, the potential leadership, and the clout with which significantly to halt the downward spiral of world Jewry. If we were serious enough about our Jewishness and about our challenges, our impact would be staggering. We possess the power to create a moral and spiritual revolution of unprecedented proportions. Our biggest enemy is complacency, the avoidance of communal responsibility, the dramatic absence of leadership, commitment, drive, and creativity.

Finally, I derive personal strength from a) the heroic ability of tiny *kelal Yisrael* to weather all storms. To quote Rav Hutner, "*om ani homa*, we are not a 'nation'—we are a wall, a fortress"; from b) the frequent unfolding of scientific evidence that reveals the grandeur of the Creator; and from c) the constant, almost daily manifestations I have personally

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witnessed of the *hashgaha* as a living, immanent, pulsating force. *Mibesari eheze*. Come to NCSY and observe how Eliyahu Hanavi walks amongst us.

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MOSHE D. TENDLER

1) I would question the assumption that Reb Moshe *zt"l* would refuse such an invitation today. Sadly, such an invitation would not be proffered by the leadership of the Rabbinical Council of America lest he would reiterate his halachic ruling against “dialogue” and “tolerance” of pluralism.

The wedge that splintered the relationship that existed between the “older” *rabbanim* and the RCA was the decision to engage in dialogue with Christian and liberal Jewish clergy. Dialogue, also known as pluralism, tolerance, Jewish unity, expressed itself in RCA leadership’s involvement in theological conferences with Christian and liberal Jewish clergy, and in membership in the now defunct Synagogue Council. In today’s organizational line-up some who purport to be in consonance with halakhic standards boast of their readiness to accept pluralism as a means of fostering Jewish unity. These organizations are viewed by the *rashei yeshiva* of almost all *yeshivot*, including Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, affiliate of Yeshiva University, as a threat to Torah-true Judaism. The willingness of some RCA *rabbanim* to accept Reform or Conservative clergy as “authentic” or “valid” Jewish religious leadership casts doubt on their commitment to a halakhic Judaism, since Reform has deviated so greatly from halakhic Judaism as to represent nothing more than the liberal-left culture dominant in the USA today. The “luminaries of the Yeshiva world” cannot understand the reluctance of some of the leadership of the RCA to accept this reality. A listing of the non-beliefs of the Reform movement, they argue, should be adequate reason to disengage from any contact with Reform clergy lest we legitimize the illegitimate. The passage of time has obliterated the Jewish component of Reform Judaism. Reform’s absolute commitment to unrestricted autonomy in belief and practice allows for:

1. Patrilineal descent
2. Inter-marriage
3. Non-theist Judaism
4. Total denial of the obligatory nature of any of the Biblical im-

peratives including circumcision, *Shabbat*, *kashrut*, *taharat mishpacha*, or the need for a halachic divorce (*get*) prior to remarriage, resulting in the stigma of bastardy on any children from the second marriage.

5. Acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle.

6. Conversion to “Judaism” without need for circumcision, *mikveh*, or acceptance of any obligatory religious practices.

7. Extramarital sex as a matter of personal conscience, not moral turpitude and sin.

Conservative theology differs little from Reform. The support being given by Conservative leadership to Reform demands for acceptance as a legitimate variant of Judaism affirms the identity of their beliefs.

It is a tragedy of historical proportions to assert that the Reform movement has severed its ties with Judaism. But denying reality does not mitigate the tragedy. I have tried unsuccessfully to determine exactly when our sages affirmed that the early Christians had severed their ties with Judaism. But I am convinced that Reform today has drifted further from Judaism than did the early Christians. The intemperate aggressive denigration of Orthodox beliefs and practices by Reform and Conservative leadership is a new development that exacerbates the pain of the estrangement.

The “sea change” that has occurred was caused by the RCA drifting with the tide rather than anchoring in the safe haven of immutable halakha as it directs interpersonal and inter-organizational relationships.

2) These are the epochal events during the last 60 years:

1. The Shoah, shifting the center of Orthodox society and scholarship to the United States of America and to Israel

2. The birth of the State of Israel—with the ingathering of exiles and the Six-Day War

3. The demise of Communism and the emigration of a million Jews of the USSR to Israel, the USA, and Europe.

4. The failure of secular Zionism whose proponents now speak of the “post-Zionist era”

Secular Zionism imbued its adherents with a sense of dedication and willingness to sacrifice to build a Jewish homeland, but only for one or two generations. Unlike religious Zionism, it did not have sufficient appeal to mind and soul to compete with the lure of a hedonistic society, to which the children of these homeland builders are exposed. Secular nationalism could not substitute for the Divine *mitsva* of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*.

5. The accusative finger of history pointing to Christianity’s and Islam’s failure to humanize animal man.

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The holocaust, ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, Biafra, Bosnia, Sudan and religious strife in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan with the attending inhuman cruelty, deny that these religions are a moral force in the world society. The silence of most of the religious leaders of these faiths in face of these almost incomprehensible atrocities is an indictment of these faiths as value systems unable to discipline its adherents to maintain even minimal standards of moral and ethical behavior. Our Divine mission “to be a light unto the nations” thus has a special urgency in our generation.

Orthodoxy’s response to these epochal events has been, at best, inadequate. Whereas Torah scholarship in the USA benefited from the influx of the Torah greats who survived the terrible destruction, the masses of immigrants did not receive the welcoming embrace that might have returned them to Torah Judaism and strengthened our decimated nation.

Orthodoxy remained ambivalent about the educational potential as well as the historical import of Israeli statehood. Its leadership sent a mixed message which vacillated from messianism to villification.

The Six-Day War influenced secular Jews more strongly than the War of Liberation. A second chance to integrate the reality of Israel’s statehood into Orthodox life and project it to our secularized Jews worldwide was given us following the Six-Day War. Orthodoxy failed to capture the evanescent emotional urge and the heightened readiness of secularized Jews to identify with and share the destiny of the Jewish people. We missed the great opportunity to channel this emotional surge into constructive interaction with Torah educators who could have reclaimed thousands of Jews for authentic Judaism.

We have also failed to speak with the strength of historic truth to the Christian communities. Whereas it was deemed proper to demand monetary reparations from our tormentors, Orthodox leadership still refrains from demanding unambiguous statements of admission of guilt from Christian leadership. To date, the Vatican has not issued a statement declaring that the killing of a Jew, because he is a Jew—even in an attempt to convert him to Christian beliefs—is theologically a cardinal sin punished by excommunication in this world and eternal damnation in the world to come. A more “moderate” statement will not suffice to even stem the worldwide increase in anti-Semitism, let alone eradicate its deep roots within Christian theology and mentality.

3) Without doubt, the deviationist Reform-Conservative movements present the most serious challenge to Orthodoxy. Secularism does not

satisfy the thirst of a parched soul; deviationist religious movements can do so—if only for a generation. There are no Jewish descendants of the original founders of Temple Emanuel, but the temple still stands and continues to alienate Jews from Judaism. The newly aggressive attacks on Orthodoxy by Reform-Conservative leadership must be viewed as a desperate attempt to divert the attention of their nominal adherents from the demographic tragedy that has befallen them. With 65% of their children marrying non-Jews it is becoming a rarity among them to have a Jewish grandchild!

The past strategy of Orthodoxy has been tepid cooperation with an unwritten gentleman's agreement not to feud publicly. It resulted in Orthodoxy's economic dependency on Federation dominated by "liberal Jews," and on Hebrew day schools with students whose mothers were not of the Jewish faith. We now suffer the further indignity of Reform leadership claiming that they, with their non-theist, homosexual "rabbinate," are "authentic Jews." Our present strategy must be to expose the non-beliefs of the liberal deviationists, and their demographic failure, to public view. The light of truth will attract those who want a religious experience to Orthodoxy—even if they lack the discipline to observe all of *Hashem's mitzvot*. The "irreligious" Orthodox Jew is no threat to our survival, the hyphenated Jew is!

4) The groupings listed overlap greatly. It is difficult to discuss the "party planks" that make up the platform of the groups. In halakhic observance, they share the same imperatives. "Centrist" appears to be a poorly defined position since "Rightist," "Yeshiva," "Hasidic" and "Haredi" may have the same life-style. Hasidic garb or an \$800 *sha'atnez*-tested Italian design suit may clothe a devout hasid or a physician or a millionaire businessman. All of these groups have been successful in transmitting their value system to their children and grandchildren. Among them "marrying-out" is a rare occurrence.

"Centrist" appears to be the most artificial of the groupings and will most likely fade away into the general coalition of "halakhic Jewry." The hasidic group is potentially the weakest if we spin off the hasidic sects who have a tradition of Torah scholarship. Those without this tradition—the majority of Hasidim—will be hard pressed to perpetuate their life style if governmental welfare eligibility requirements are rigidly enforced. To many, their economic base is medicare, welfare, section eight and food stamps. If this base is removed and they are forced to enter the mainstream of America to earn a living, I fear that many will be tempted to give up their hasidic lifestyle in favor of American hedo-

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nism. Without the grandeur of Torah scholarship they may suffer many losses to the secular world.

5) It is difficult for me to dissect the many positive influences on my life, and focus on those that are greater sources of strength. My good fortune has been to have family, community, and professional commitments in full consonance. I start my day in Yeshiva and end it in association with members of my family and my Orthodox community. Yet one "source of strength" does stand out. It is the comparison of "we run and they run." The truth and beauty of Torah directives for ethical and moral behavior for all the many activities of modern man constantly reaffirm the Divine source of these directives. "*Halakha le-ma'ase*" is the ultimate affirmation that immutable Torah law is designed to allow for the development of a society pleasing to God and man.

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BEREL WEIN

If anything is clear in the confused and troubled Jewish world at the end of this bloodiest of all centuries, it is that the only section of Jewry that has survived stronger, more vital and optimistic than before is the Orthodox community. The non-Orthodox forms of Judaism are slowly but surely facing extinction, demographically and spiritually. The secular element of the Jewish people still worships the liberal gods that reigned for the past centuries over much of the world. But the king is naked. The ideals of liberalism have bankrupted in this century and secular Jewry is adrift, without creative ideals, programs, or heroes. The sword of assimilation and self-hatred hangs dangerously close to its head and, having abandoned Zionism if not the State of Israel itself, secular Jews twist and turn looking for a *raison d'être* to remain Jewish. None of this should cause us in the Orthodox world joy. It is true that we could say, "We told you so!" but that will be of little comfort to anyone concerned. A large percentage of world Jewry is in the intensive care unit, Jewishly speaking. To holler at the patient, to blame him for the disaster, will not contribute to the recovery and rejuvenation of the ill. Orthodoxy must see itself as the doctor and not as the judge. And this will require a sea change in the mindset and behavior of all of us.

It is the very success of Orthodoxy that has robbed us of the opportunity for meaningful victory in our struggle for the soul of the Jewish people. It is our triumphalism, the fact that we are so many and so successful, that does not allow us to be open to others that are even slightly "different" from us. Forty years ago the leaders of the haredi community were invited to and in fact did speak then at RCA conventions because all of American Orthodoxy was in apparent danger of disappearing. For the elections to the first Israeli Knesset, Mizrachi and Agudah formed a united front as one list. When it became apparent that each group had sufficient strength to go it alone, each chose to do so, even though this diminished the influence and political power of the religious parties in the State of Israel. The different shades of the Orthodox community each feel that they do not need the other groups within Orthodoxy. They therefore emphasize the differences between these groups, convinced that their group is the sole legitimate representative of Torah Judaism. Sephardim, Ashkenazim, tens of different groups of hasidim, dozens of different "Lithuanian" *rashei yeshiva*, each with his own method of study and world view, many political parties, and infinite shades of opinion and practice and custom, all characterize the Orthodox world today, and have *always* characterized the Orthodox world over the past millennia. I am convinced that all of the groupings of Orthodoxy will continue to prosper. In fact, in spite of all partisan denials, they are complementary and necessary one to another. We should revel and celebrate in this variety of Torah Jews instead of building unnecessary and artificial barriers and denigrating one another.

The future of the Jewish people is in the Land of Israel. The Diaspora is closing down. American Jewry, British Jewry, French Jewry are all shrinking. Orthodoxy, in all of its forms, must deal with the reality of the existence and the problems of the State of Israel. Ignoring its existence, cursing its spiritual weaknesses, not encouraging immigration to the Holy Land, attempting to interfere in the external and internal affairs of the country, are all sins that Orthodoxy is guilty of. The program of Orthodoxy in the Diaspora is to save what we can and whoever we can. It is a holding action, a defensive posture. We are successful in this effort, but I do not feel that this is the main battle that faces us. The battle for the soul of the State of Israel is the crucial struggle that faces us. In Israel it is a question of building a new Torah society, a modern state built upon ancient and Divine principles. Orthodoxy must have a positive program how to achieve this. It is insufficient, almost tragic, to think that Orthodoxy can safely ignore any participation in the basic issues that affect the State of Israel and restrict itself to purely

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“religious” matters. And to develop such a positive and necessary program will require a fresh look and a great deal of courage on the part of all Orthodox Jews, leaders, and disciples. It will not be easy to do, but it is inescapable.

The success of Orthodoxy over the past decades, as in all of Jewish history, has been fueled by the growing numbers of Jews engaged in the study of Torah. Every group within Orthodoxy has experienced great growth in the intensity, quality and quantity of Torah study. The efforts to continue to strengthen meaningful Jewish education, the continued creation of new schools, *yeshivot*, women’s seminaries, the dissemination of books, tapes, and video cassettes on Jewish subjects, all must be strengthened. Orthodoxy abandoned the media and technology fields to others and we have paid a heavy price for this shortsightedness. The Torah is true and eternal. We should therefore never fear the progress of science and technology. The Torah speaks for itself and is the most effective tool for Jewish identity and survival. Therefore, it is clear that every effort to disseminate Torah through all means possible must be pursued in the Diaspora and in Israel. We cannot afford to appear to be “anti-technology” in today’s world. Jews are not the Amish. “Fear not, my servant Jacob” should be our motto in facing the complexities of modern society. As long as the Torah and the God of the Torah are an integral and constant part of Orthodox life—nay, of all Jewish life—our future is assured, even if problem-laden.

The greatest danger to Orthodox life lies in the disintegration of family life. Divorce, absentee parents, singles, all pose serious threats to our future. Jewish values and practice always were transmitted in the family home. Schools are poor substitutes for parents, grandparents, family meals, and the solidarity of a normal, loving home. We should emphasize the necessity of training for good marriages, good parents, good health, and emotional maturity and strength. The Jewish home is where the battle for the Jewish soul will be won.

I am a product of the generation that saw European Jewry decimated, the State of Israel created, the study of Torah restored to its rightful primary position in Jewish life, and the resurgence of traditional Jewish life among many Jews who were once alienated from Judaism. Thus I am a witness to God’s hand in the history of the people of Israel. The double miracle of the survival of the Jewish people and the resurgence of Torah study and life within that people in this century is a source of never ending encouragement and strength to me. The fact that I am somehow living in Jerusalem, teaching Talmud daily to young Jewish men who were raised without any Jewish background, speaking

Hebrew (albeit imperfectly, but nevertheless constantly and publicly), and participating in many facets of a Jewish life and society bring me daily wonder and inspiration. I have opportunities that my forebearers only wept and prayed to see. All of us who live in this wondrous time have innumerable opportunities to spread the message of Torah, to realize our own spiritual goals and dreams, to make “the name of Heaven beloved through you and your behavior.” This realization is the strongest support that I have for my faith and my way of life. It is my challenge and comfort, my goal and strength.

To appreciate these opportunities, the Orthodox must become less defensive, more open, smile more and frown less, and realize that *we* and only *we* are the address for the future of Jewish people as a whole and not just for own particular group. Let us be strong, let us be strong, and strengthen all of Israel and mankind.

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NOAH WEINBERG

1) For over 3000 years—at least half that time under the harsh conditions of the Diaspora—we knew with confidence that we had been empowered as a Light Unto the Nations. Jews were committed to that goal. We had a sense of leadership and responsibility. And we were willing to sacrifice for it.

But today we have lost that feeling. We have lost our sense of national destiny. And I believe that’s a direct result of our weakened sense of *kevod haTorah*. The study of Torah and honoring those who know Torah have always been the backbone of our strength and commitment. Jewish leaders—whether prophets, kings, philosophers, or rabbis—have always been *talmidei hakhamim*. When R. Akiva’s students didn’t honor each other sufficiently, they all died. And now, through the Enlightenment, the destruction of the main Torah centers in Europe during the Holocaust, and today’s American secularism, the concept of *kevod haTorah* has all but disappeared. That is our Achilles’ heel. We just don’t believe we can fulfill our destiny.

2) In the past sixty years, the Orthodox world has been consumed with revitalizing Torah study after the Holocaust, but we have neglected to

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formulate a strategy for counteracting the secular tide. Our Jewish youth are dropping out by the thousands every year and we can no longer afford to wait. We must go on the offensive with whatever resources we have. We can organize Torah study groups. We can promote Torah on the internet. We can be more vocal in the media. We have truth and meaning on our side, and we must be pro-active in exposing the secular confusion, emptiness, and contradictions. If we make the effort, I believe we'll be surprised at how vulnerable the secular position is.

There is no question that we need to draw from the secular wisdom and employ the fastest computers to state our case. But we get confused when we begin to think that "modernism" is somehow the solution to our problem. The idea that "modernism equals better" is a grave mistake, and it is a major threat. Modernism is merely a tool. The solution is simply Torah.

3) The most serious problem of the last sixty years is the rise of secularism. Pursuit of materialism, agnostic education, and the secular media have become an accepted norm. This is ludicrous! The secular world doesn't even know the meaning of existence. It doesn't know how to make a marriage work. It doesn't know how to achieve true happiness. For proof, we only have to look at the shambles of the secular social structure!

Not only has secularism drawn away a major part of our people, but it has seeped into the observant community as well. Up until recently, the Jewish people never knew of juvenile delinquency or any of the other horrific abuses out there today.

The solution is for observant Jews to be role models and to communicate how the beauty of life derives directly from Torah. We need to tie every Jew to a pride in his heritage, to a confidence in our future, and to an appreciation of how precious his involvement with the Jewish people can be—for himself, his children, his grandchildren, and all humanity. Eventually, everyone will recognize the truth of this message. This is the essence of *kiddush Hashem*.

The yeshiva community is clearly the most vital for the long-term success of our people. Its knowledge, commitment, and idealism form the core around which the Jewish renaissance is being built. If we could harness its potential for activism, we could turn around the Jewish people.

Who is the weakest link? We cannot afford to point fingers right now. If 20,000 Jewish kids were being killed each year, we'd be jolted into action and launch a movement to save them. We'd take anyone committed onto our team, no questions asked. Why would we even

consider divisiveness at a time like this? Anyone with a solid foundation in Torah and *mitsvot* has the tools to accomplish the job.

5) Rambam says that if you love God, then you will want to share that sensation with others. Our main obligation as servants of God is to reach out to unaffiliated, disenfranchised Jews and communicate to them the power and beauty of our Jewish heritage. The problem in the observant community is that we don't expect these young people to have the spiritual sensitivity to know the truth when they see it. But I know that's not true! You give us any secular professional to learn with us for three months—and we'll turn him around to our side. If he's a university professor, so much the better. The more intellectual he is, the easier the job!

We need to take a lesson from the outreach movement: we have the ammunition on our side. You light a fire under a Jew and you never know how far he will go. I've seen it time and time again. For any observant Jew this is incredibly energizing. It strengthens one's *emuna* and concertizes our hope for the *geula*.

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AVI WEISS

1) In the spirit of *eilu ve-eilu* all Orthodox speakers should be invited to teach Torah. It was Seforno who pointed out that the sin of the *dor ha-flaga* was not allowing for differences of opinion. We can glean from this idea the importance of hearing different voices within Orthodoxy. It is therefore my strong feeling that we ought to invite individuals from across the Orthodox spectrum to teach Torah in conferences and in our shuls.

Unfortunately, no matter how great the person's Torah knowledge, we do not only ask ourselves the question of whether or not we can benefit from that knowledge. Too often we base our decision solely on whether we can gain or lose legitimacy by their presence. Therefore, scholars from the right would be welcome as they serve to legitimize us, while those from the left are not invited as they serve to delegitimize us.

It follows that *rabbanim* like Rabbi Feinstein and Rabbi Kotler would be invited by the RCA today not only because of their Torah knowledge, but also because of the legitimacy they bring. (They would be welcome as long as there are not too many rabbis invited from the right to any given forum, as this could erode the fabric of the RCA by sending the message that true Torah only comes from the right.) Although no

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one could be sure, I feel that rabbis from the Orthodox right would refuse these invitations because their acceptance would legitimize their left and in turn cause them to lose respect in the eyes of their community.

Forty years ago, in contrast, seeking legitimacy from those on the right, invitations to these rabbis were offered. These *rabbanim* accepted, as the right was then much weaker and speaking for the RCA gave them more legitimacy.

All this, of course, is quite sad. Instead of extending and accepting invitations based on merit—legitimacy has become the deciding factor.

2a) The Holocaust, the establishment of the State of Israel—reaching its crescendo with the Six Day War—and the exodus of Soviet Jews are the three epochal events that have shaped Jewry over the past sixty years.

Holocaust: While our greatest success has been a tremendous revival after this greatest challenge to our belief, the Orthodox community has failed to properly memorialize the six million. History indicates that events are remembered when they become part of Jewish ritual. For example: we remember the destruction of the Temples because of the institution of fasting and reading *kinnot* on *Tisha beAv*. But no similar ritual exists to commemorate the Shoah. While there is a sense in our community that we no longer have the power to introduce ritual, unless we do so, five hundred years from now, the Shoah, much like the Crusades, will be remembered only as a footnote in history.

Israel: Orthodox Jewry played a relatively minor role in fighting for the establishment of the State of Israel. By the Six Day War, however, the contribution of Orthodoxy was much more significant as many in Israel's top military units came from *yeshivot hesder*. In the aftermath of the Six Day War, religious Zionists continued to play a major role in the Zionist enterprise as they spearheaded the movement to incorporate the Biblical lands of Judea and Samaria.

There is, however, merit to the argument that religious Zionists have been so focused on land that the religious spiritual quality of the nation has suffered. Where is the religious Zionist voice in reaching out to touch souls? The reality is that the *kiruv* movement has been almost entirely dominated by religious non-Zionists. By and large, religious Zionists have excelled in *kiruv adama* but have failed in *kiruv neshamot*. Our mandate must be to do both: while accentuating the importance of land we dare not abdicate our responsibility to energetically and lovingly reach out to spiritually ennoble the lives of Jews everywhere in Israel—explaining how the State can become the embodiment of *or la-goyim*. Where is the religious voice on automobile accidents in Israel? More

Jews have been killed on the roads of Israel than in all wars combined. Where is the religious voice on health care? Where is the religious voice in creating a “Sunday” to facilitate greater *shemirat Shabbat*? The religious community should be heavily invested in economic planning to move the Israeli economy to a five day week.

All this applies to Israel. In America, modern Orthodox support for Israel has been mixed. On the one hand, American Orthodoxy has been supportive of the Jewish State, albeit in a far less enthusiastic manner than our brethren in Israel. On the other hand, we in America have failed to make the State of Israel a central focus of our lives. To wit, aliya is not a high priority on our agenda; we don’t teach that Israel is the only place where one can live a life of a complete fulfilled Jew, and neither *Yom ha’Atzma’ut* nor *Yom Yerushalayim* are celebrated as central holidays of the Jewish year.

Soviet Jewry: Some groups within Orthodoxy played a central role in the struggle for Soviet Jewry. Lubavitch, for example, was critical in developing clandestine Jewish centers throughout the former Soviet Union in the most difficult days. And the grassroots of modern Orthodoxy recognized the importance of public protest as being the engine that enabled quiet diplomacy to be effective.

But generally speaking, the Orthodox community has failed to integrate Jews from the former Soviet Union into our community. Perhaps this is because it is easier to speak out on behalf of a large collective whole than it is to impact upon the life of an individual Jew.

2b) The greatest success of Orthodoxy is the growth of Torah learning and religious observance. In the same breath, however, we have failed to complement this rise of commitment with an increase of inner spirituality and a sense of the presence of God.

3a) There has always been debate as to whether it is preferable to have no belief in God, or a misguided conception of God. Both positions are dangerous. But in the end, I prefer misguided spirituality over no spirituality.

At a time when intermarriage is spiraling and the future of American Jewry is in jeopardy, Orthodox Jews must understand that Conservative and Reform play a role in reaching Jews who would otherwise be totally lost. Our energies should not be expended on castigating the Conservative and Reform movements, but rather on focusing our energies on the more serious challenge—secularism, Jews who identify with no religion.

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, one of the great Torah giants of our generation, seemed to support this position when he wrote, “nor do I

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share the glee some feel over the prospective demise of the competition. Surely we have many sharp differences with the Conservative and Reform movements and these should not be sloughed over or blurred. However, we also share many values with them and this, too, should not be obscured. Their disappearance might strengthen us in some respects, but would unquestionably weaken us in others. Can anyone responsibly state that it is better for a marginal Jew in Dallas or in Dubuque to lose his religious identity altogether, rather than drive to his temple?" (*Tradition*, Spring, 1982)

3b) There has been a strategy that any contact with Reform and Conservative Jews is "verboden" as it lends them legitimacy. While one could argue that at its inception it was appropriate to fight Reform in order not to let it take root, today we are dealing with a different reality. The fact is that Reform and Conservative movements have attracted millions of adherents. Making public pronouncements of delegitimization serves no constructive purpose.

A more appropriate approach was the one first articulated by Dr. Samuel Belkin, former president of Yeshiva University, who insisted that in areas of national concern, such as the security of Israel and oppressed Jews, we are "all Jews, united as one."

I would take it a step further. As much as I disagree with Reform and Conservative on a whole host of issues—from *Torah miSinai* to their understanding of halakha—nonetheless we must recognize that we can learn from one another. Specifically, the Orthodox can learn from the non-Orthodox universalistic agenda of *tikkun olam*, i.e. programs for the homeless, AIDS awareness, etc. In the same spirit, the Conservative and Reform movements' greater sensitivity to day school education and increased emphasis on ritual and learning Torah has much to do with Orthodox influence.

4a) There is a common bond amongst the rightist, hasidic, *yeshiva* and haredi communities—they are insular. With the noted exception of Lubavitch and Aish HaTorah, these groups have minimal contact with non-observant Jews. In fact, few non-observant Jews pray or otherwise interact Jewishly with the Orthodox right.

To be sure, there is a certain safety net in being insular, as there is a greater guarantee of continuity. Still, it is not the case that what is safest is best. We must be true to the mission of Torah, and that is to redeem the Jewish people through which the entire world will be redeemed. What sets modern Orthodoxy apart and makes it the most vital in the

long run is the fact that it is not insular. It is the one movement in Orthodoxy which can reconcile more rigid halakhic practices, which I believe are positive, with a commitment to impact on the broader Jewish community. It is for this reason that I believe that the term that best describes this vision of Orthodoxy is “Open Orthodoxy.” It is open in that our ideology acknowledges and takes into account in varying ways a wide spectrum of voices. It is Orthodox in that our commitment to halakha is fervent and demanding.

4b) It is clear that there are disagreements between the groups that comprise the Orthodox right and modern Orthodoxy. What is more troubling is that the modern Orthodox camp appears to be splitting at the seams.

When a prominent *rosh yeshiva* at Yeshiva University suggests that YU is no different than Ner Yisrael—except that it has more beginner students—it indicates a denial of one’s place within the modern Orthodox camp. When many leaders of the Young Israel movement attend an Agudah convention, instead of a convention sponsored by 21 modern Orthodox groups it is again symptomatic of a movement away from modern Orthodoxy. Indeed, when Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is denied the right to speak in the YU *bet midrash*, when an invitation to speak at a modern Orthodox convention is offered to Rabbi Saul Berman only to be rescinded, and when YU *rabbeim en masse* refuse to speak for MeORoT (Modern Orthodox Rabbinic Training Fellowship)—bifurcation is perpetuated.

The reality is that many in modern Orthodoxy are moving to the right. At the same time Conservative Judaism is moving leftward, closer to Reform, which in the area of ritual is moving right. In time, the Conservative and Reform movements will merge. Standing between the Orthodox right and Conservative-Reform Judaism are those in the Orthodox camp who are no less halakhic than the Orthodox right, but far more ideologically open.

5) On a universal, national and personal level, Torah ideology is antithetical to hedonism. Torah places emphasis on the “other”, hedonism places emphasis on the “self”. Consider the concept of *ahavat ha-briyot*. The human being created in God’s image has the power to become God-like. As God reaches out and cares for all, so too should we, created in God’s image, reach out and care for others. The Torah’s emphasis on *ahavat ha-briyot* inspires one to reject hedonism, a total emphasis on the “I”.

Separate from *ahavat ha-briyot* is *ahavat Yisrael*. While loving all of humankind created in the image of God, we naturally have a stronger emotional attachment to our own people. Hedonism promotes the idea

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of self absorption. *Ahavat Yisrael* inspires one to be concerned for one's nation, one's extended family.

No doubt, Torah ideology recognizes the importance of people loving themselves—what can be called *ahavat atsmit*. In fact, the sentence “love thy neighbor as thyself” (*Leviticus* 19:17) may mean that one can only love another if one first loves himself/herself. But even here, Torah ideology deflects dramatically from hedonism in its emphasis on the concept of *kedusha*. Rather than deify the body, the cornerstone of hedonism, *kedusha* inspires us to recognize that the body should be sanctified. For the believing Jew, the pathway to spirituality is not the glorification of the physical, but rather the discovery of meaning and spirituality within it.

I am deeply indebted to my associates, Rabbi Barry Gelman, Rabbi Aaron Frank and my son Dov Weiss for their input in developing these responses.

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JOEL B. WOLOWELSKY

The greatest challenge to Orthodoxy comes from neither the Reform nor the Conservative movements, nor the secular community; it comes from within Orthodoxy itself.

I am regularly struck—especially when I visit Israel—by the Torah's promise that the moral superiority of the Torah way of life will be universally recognized and earn us the envy of the world. Here we are with a most powerful Orthodoxy, vibrant and self-confident, blessed with an unprecedented, successful educational system, significant economic resources, sophisticated public relations skills—and a very significant percentage of the Jewish community holds us in contempt. There can be no greater failure than this, and it is all too easy to blame this situation on a Shulamit Aloni or “deviationist rabbis” who are misleading others in order to justify their own non-halakhic lifestyles. It is we who are doing something wrong.

It is refreshing to see this realization expressed—partially, at least—throughout the Orthodox spectrum. The recent seventy-fifth anniversary issue of Agudath Israel's *Jewish Observer* is replete with reminders that violent or vulgar confrontations with those with whom we disagree are counterproductive, and replete with admonishments that personal integrity and honesty should be the hallmark of those who

claim to be *benei Torah*. But these *mea culpas* relate to the actions of individuals within the Orthodox community, not to its institutions. Certainly, we all cringe when newspapers expose yet another thief within our community, and it is true that our yeshiva educational systems do not stress enough the requirement that *benei Torah* must be scrupulously honest in their everyday businesses. Yet, if a person who leads an outwardly religious lifestyle is convicted of major fraud, fair people realize that the Torah forbids various behavior because it knows that *everyone* is susceptible to failure in these areas of life, including those who observe the laws of *Shabbat* and *kashrut* meticulously.

However, when people do not have confidence that *batei din* will dispense justice, the failure is that of the community and its leaders. Jewish folklore is full of stories of Christians and Moslems who preferred to be judged before the local rabbi because true justice could be found there. The existence of a state-supported system of religious courts in Israel gave an unprecedented opportunity for the Torah community to demonstrate that its rules are wise and its justice impartial and honest. But few secular Jews would approach these courts voluntarily—and all too many Orthodox people who feel halakhically obligated to appear before these courts (or their counterparts in America) do so without a sense that justice will be administered impartially—without any regard to the public standing of the litigants. This is especially true of women who must appear in divorce proceedings. This is not the place to spell out the deficiencies in these should-be halls of justice, but they are well known to our religious leaders, who long ago should have pronounced them intolerable.

Yet it is not really the status of religious courts that generates most of the derision heaped upon Orthodoxy. There are other issues, more public, that work against us. One of these is the way too large a segment of Orthodoxy has responded to the establishment of the State of Israel. We hear many complaints as to how the secular community in Israel has developed and enforced programs that do not reflect Torah values. Lost in the discussion, however, is the fact that the secular community had control of the State's institutions because the Torah community was for the most part not there at the beginning, having abandoned the upbuilding of the State to those who lacked a Torah perspective. Now that the broader Orthodox community realizes the practical importance of being involved in the day-to-day workings of the State, it forgets that it must give up its attitude of contempt. Some Orthodox shuls maintain that they cannot say the Prayer for the State of Israel each *Shabbat* because they cannot acknowledge Israel as *reishit tsemihat ge'ulateinu*.

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But their additional refusal to say the simple prayer for *Tsahal* exposes the truth that it is an historic attitude of derision of the State that cannot be jettisoned. This attitude influences our community image. A hundred Aish Hatorah seminars cannot undo the damage of a group of haredi men and women remaining seated on a public bus in Israel when the sirens sound on Yom haZikkaron.

Even more damaging, of course, is the insistence of the haredi community in Israel that its young men not serve in the army. I think that most Israelis would object to exemptions for serious yeshiva students no sooner than they currently do to exempting exceptional students in secular subjects—although they might insist on some sort of rabbinical state service in return. The problem is—as everyone knows—that these exemptions are not limited to serious students. To stay out of the army is the haredi community's goal for every *frum* future *ba'al ha-bayit*, not simply future rabbinic leaders. It is not necessarily anti-religious animus that motivates people to suggest that this policy flows to some extent from the reality that people in the army suffer economic and financial dislocation and get killed more often than those in yeshiva. If *rashei yeshiva* insisted that all the non-serious students serve, the exemption of critical *talmidei hakhamim* would not be the awful *hillul Hashem* it currently is.

This is not to suggest that the religious Zionist community is blameless for the state of contempt in which we are found. To be sure, this community was there at the beginning, recognizing God's hand in the renewal of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel and being actively involved in all of the State's institutions. But something went wrong in the last decade or two. The Land of Israel movement became synonymous with religious Zionism, whose leaders all but abandoned other social agendas such as *kiruv*, environment, and poverty. They denigrated anyone who considered territorial compromise acceptable and missed countless opportunities to continue their interaction with the more general community. One need not have any trust in the would-be peace process to acknowledge that there is more to Torah in general and religious Zionism in particular than full control of Judea and Samaria. Too much of the modern Orthodox community in America did not do much better. Most of its leaders, without the least embarrassment about not living in Israel themselves, reacted with scorn for those who tolerated the notion of land-for-peace.

One of the greatest successes of the Orthodox community in Israel and America has been the creation of a wide network of *yeshivot*. This program included the laudable policy that our future top rabbinic

leaders should be supported in *kolelim* until they reach a level of advanced scholarship available to serve *kelal Yisrael* properly. But this process has been abused and now nurtures the perception that it is not respectable for yeshiva boys to prepare for a profession. There are far too many young men who have no dream of being serious rabbinic scholars and yet give no thought as to how they will support their families. Too many of these families live on welfare—here and in Israel—and we are beginning to see many of the same pathologies developing among them that we see in the non-Jewish welfare communities here, with which, to put it mildly, we do not identify. This social problem is recognized privately by many haredi leaders who do not have the courage to discuss it publicly and propose the obvious changes required in their educational systems. Of course, this is effective social control—people do not have the resources necessary to leave the community. I fear, though, that this will eventually produce a new *Haskala* reaction in this population, one for which all of Orthodoxy will pay dearly.

Perhaps our greatest success these past decades has been the development of pride in public halakhic observance. *Kippot* abound in hospitals and law firms, *kashrut* is the norm at most official meetings of secular Jewish organizations, and Jewish literacy is becoming more and more a *sine qua non* for leadership in any Jewish community structure. But we have all too often allowed this to disintegrate into a policy of contempt for those who do not meet our own standards. Not only has cooperation with Reform and Conservative organizations been declared heresy, but too many in our community view individual Reform and Conservative Jews as “enemies” to be defeated or ridiculed, not siblings with whom we should be involved and with whom we should empathize. As ideological rhetoric takes ever-increasing control of our opinions, values, and actions, we find that relations within the broader Orthodox community have been poisoned as well.

Yeshiva leaders proudly proclaim admission policies that would have excluded themselves a generation ago. Young Israel people exclude non-*shomer Shabbat* students from their ranks with the same zeal that haredi *yeshivot* exclude students who wear a *kippa seruga*. This is an attitude that emanates from the right, and explains to a large extent why yeshiva and haredi leaders would no longer accept an invitation to speak at the Rabbinical Council of America. The modern Orthodox community should take a firm and public stand against this policy of exclusion.

All this having been said, I nevertheless close with a personal optimistic note. When we look past institutional concerns, political stands, and failure of leadership, we still see unparalleled *hesed* in the Orthodox

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community, hundreds of thousands of people who are struggling and sacrificing to hear the *devar Hashem*, unmatched loyalty to *kelal Yisrael*. It is this *amkha* that gives hope that there will yet be a time when everyone will appreciate, "Surely, this is a great nation of wise and discerning people."

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WALTER S. WURZBURGER

The end of the twentieth century represents the worst and the best of times for American Orthodoxy. On the one hand, we have to contend with the lure of a materialistic and hedonistic culture that exacts a heavy toll on Jewish loyalty. The unprecedented heights of total assimilation and intermarriage jeopardize the very survival of the Jewish community. On the other hand, disenchantment with the emptiness of this culture creates tremendous opportunities for Orthodoxy. As evidenced by the success of the *ba'al teshuva* movement, substantial numbers of Jews seek a way of life that endows their existence with a sense of meaning and purpose.

There are good reasons why we witness, all over the world, disillusionment with modern secularism. For all its glitter and splendor, contemporary civilization suffers from a value crisis, which manifests itself in the widespread recourse to various escape mechanisms, ranging from obsessive quest for instant gratification to drug addiction and suicide. Moreover, the very fabric of our society is eroded in an age of narcissism, which breeds utter permissiveness, family disintegration, *anomie*, and crime.

Widespread disappointment with the ethos of modernity has precipitated the phenomenal rise of religious fundamentalism. In keeping with Heine's law, which declares that developments in the Jewish community mirror those of the surrounding environment, Orthodoxy has witnessed a totally unexpected resurgence. Fifty years ago, most observers dismissed American Orthodoxy as a species on the verge of total extinction. But nowadays, contrary to all prognoses, Orthodoxy is widely recognized as a dynamic and thriving movement. Most impartial observers agree that demographic trends warrant the expectation that Orthodoxy's prominence and influence will increase in the future.

I am fully aware, of course, that the relative strength of modern

Orthodoxy has declined considerably in comparison with other sectors of the Orthodox community. Half a century ago, Orthodox Jewry still consisted largely of immigrants. They were viewed as the poor cousins, financially, educationally, and socially. Whatever little influence and prestige Orthodoxy possessed was concentrated in the more Americanized circles of modern Orthodoxy.

By now, the situation has changed dramatically. The haredi community excels in the attractiveness of its English publications and in the mastery of the art of public relations, which, combined with its affluence, has rewarded it with considerable political influence. If any evidence were required, we would need only mention the spectacular success of the Artscroll phenomenon, the attractive format and polished literary style of the *Jewish Observer*, the extraordinary impact of the Madison Square Daf Yomi *siyyum*, and the recognition accorded to haredi spokesmen by politicians.

Although modern Orthodoxy is widely perceived as less authentic than that of the haredi community and, therefore, is less appealing to those who are “turned off” by modernity, I have not changed my approach. I am convinced that in the long run modern Orthodoxy holds the greatest promise for the future, because its conception of halakhic Judaism makes it possible to have the best of two worlds. We can absorb what is valuable in modernity without forfeiting the spiritual advantages of a Torah-centered life, which gives meaning and purpose to human existence.

While I recognize that the ethos of modern culture is flawed and poses many challenges to my spiritual integrity, I do not reject it hook, line and sinker. There are many valuable insights in modern literature, philosophy and various other branches of the humanities. Torah is not an escape mechanism from the harsh realities of life, but a *Torat hayyim* which directs me, not to withdraw, but to address all facets of human existence. I therefore neither endorse nor reject modernity but confront it critically in the light of my understanding of what Torah demands of me.

I was taught by my illustrious teacher and mentor, HaRav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *zt”l*, that unlike many other-worldly religions, we do not look upon this world as a vale of tears from which we seek to escape by flight into transcendental realms, where we shall be relieved of the struggles and conflicts of life on earth. Halakha mandates that we endow our existence in the “here and now” with transcendental significance. We are enjoined not to suppress but to sanctify our various natural inclinations and drives. Moreover, it is our task to employ our creative capacities toward harnessing the forces of nature for the benefit of humanity.

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The appeal of this approach was demonstrated to me by a theology student who wanted me to convert her to Judaism. When I asked her why she was so insistent upon becoming Jewish, since according to our belief, pious non-Jews have a share in the world-to-come, she replied: "I realize this. But I don't want to wait for it. I want the world-to come already in the here-and-now."

It is regrettable that the approach advocated here is frequently misinterpreted as a compromise between Orthodoxy and modernity and is, therefore, less authentic than that of haredi Orthodoxy. What contributes to this misunderstanding is the prevailing impression that modern Orthodoxy is relatively lax in its observance of many rituals and that it does not match the passion and religious fervor of the haredi community.

It is, therefore, imperative that the modern Orthodox community embark on all-out efforts to correct this misconception by demonstrating its commitment to meticulous observance of halakha and to Torah study. A religious movement which is perceived as a wishy-washy compromise has little hope of success in an age of polarization, in which the spiritually rich get richer, while the spiritually poor get poorer. (While the demand for *kosher* products has decreased, that for *glatt* has escalated.) A modicum of religious conformity is no longer required for social acceptability. To succeed, however, a religious movement must appeal to those who are in quest of genuine authenticity.

Current reality dictates that we revise our strategies toward deviationist movements. Years ago, when religious affiliation was a social, political, and business necessity and people would satisfy this requirement by affiliating with religious groups which demanded only minimal involvement, the stringent requirements of Orthodoxy made it unpopular. But nowadays conditions are radically different. There is no longer any pressure to belong to religious institutions. People will take their Jewishness seriously only if they find it to be authentic, satisfying their quest for spiritual meaning. It is in this respect that Orthodoxy enjoys enormous advantages over less demanding movements.

Our greatest threat comes from different quarters. In the "open society" and with anti-Semitism ceasing to be a major force, we no longer need to identify as Jews. There are no longer any barriers that protect us from being totally submerged in the surrounding culture. We enjoy a high social and economic status. Ethnic loyalties are declining. In the broader community, most younger Jews no longer have any aversion to intermarriage, which poses a growing menace to Jewish survival.

Under these conditions, unless there is a will to survive as Jews, Jewishness will be dismissed as irrelevant, leading to mass defections

from the Jewish community. We therefore should change our attitude toward deviationist religious movements. Notwithstanding our profound and irreconcilable theological differences, we should look upon them as allies in the struggle to preserve the Jewish community. After all, deviationist religious movements provide many Jews at least with a religious reason for self-identification as Jews.

When secular Judaism was still a force, we were willing to cooperate with it in areas of common concern (protection of Jewish rights, philanthropy, welfare of the State of Israel). Why should we not, then, without compromising our principles, treat other religious movements as our allies in the struggle to insure the survival of the American Jewish community? There are far greater opportunities for persuading Conservative or Reform Jews to accept Torah and *mitsvot* than there are to appeal to totally alienated individuals, who are no longer conscious of their Jewish identity.

The approach advocated here must not be confused with the espousal of religious pluralism. It represents simply a realistic response to the dismal contemporary situation, in which so many lack even the will to survive as Jews.

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MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD

The questions posed in this symposium seem designed to elicit an evaluation of modern Orthodoxy's current state of health, although the term "modern Orthodoxy" is not used in the questions. Instead, in question 4, when the various groupings of Orthodoxy are enumerated, the term "Centrist" is used to describe, I assume, the Orthodoxy associated with Yeshiva University and the Rabbinical Council of America. What is gained by characterizing this Orthodoxy as "Centrist" rather than "modern?"

The discarding of the term "modern" and substituting "Centrist" for it constitutes, it seems to me, a loss of nerve right at the outset. If "Centrist" is to have any meaning, there must be something to the right of it and something to the left. We know what is to the right of Yeshiva University and the Rabbinical Council of America. But what, in Orthodoxy, is to the left of these institutions? Not much, and if that is so, the

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term “Centrist” is an invention designed to avoid using the term “modern” which some apparently find distasteful. Since few wish to be seen on the extremes, “Centrist” conveys a tone of moderation that makes all others extremists, to one degree or another. I do not think this maneuver is fair and as I find nothing wrong with the term “modern,” I have no difficulty in speaking of “modern Orthodoxy.”

We are modern in the sense that we prefer a higher education for our children and expect them to live a life loyal to Torah observance while participating in all aspects of modern life, be it in business or the professions. Some of those to the right of us also obtain a higher education but most do not because they consider secular education a waste of time at best and a grave danger to faith at worst. Those in the rightist camp who do attend a college or university generally do so with a guilty conscience. They see it as a concession to “*parnosse*” (making a living) with no spiritual benefit to be gained at all. The modern Orthodox do not see it that way.

The question is this: Is there any *spiritual* benefit to be gained by studying physics and mathematics, poetry, philosophy, music, history and painting, or is there not? If the answer is no, then we ought not to deal with these subjects except to the extent necessary for practical considerations of earning a living. Jewish sickness, it can be argued, can be cured by gentile physicians and Jewish buildings can be designed by gentile architects. From the point of view of the right, Jewish spiritual sustenance should be derived only from Torah and everything else is only of instrumental value.

Modern Orthodoxy, as I understand it, looks to Torah as its primary source of spiritual nourishment but not its only source. God speaks to us first in Torah but also in mathematics and physics, cosmology, the symphonies of Mozart and the poetry of Rilke. To cut ourselves off from these realities is to hurt our souls and to ignore the truth. Our Torah is a Torah of truth and all search for truth is therefore part our spiritual lives.

Modern Orthodoxy is fairly comfortable with the natural sciences and to some extent even with the social sciences, particularly history. The natural sciences are relatively safe because compartmentalization is not difficult and to some extent this is also true of the social sciences. One can be an Orthodox Jew who practices “objective” history as long as the biblical period is not investigated. But that won’t do. There ought to be no off-limit areas of investigation. Judaism must be true and wherever human beings search for the truth, God’s spirit is present. Of course, the concept of truth is not simple and we must not proceed with

a naive historical positivism. We must distinguish questions of faith that are beyond the scope of historical investigation and the more empirical issues that are open to historical investigation. The issues that are beyond the scope of historical investigation are so not because it is forbidden to investigate them but because the discipline of history is not able to determine, for example, whether a prophet truly speaks God's message or his own. We must struggle with such questions openly and courageously. That is our spiritual strength.

Our greatest failure has been in the humanities. Where are the modern Orthodox poets, composers, painters and novelists? To many, this diagnosis will sound odd. Poetry has something to do with fancy language and rhymes, none of which is necessary for anything Jewishly important. The hasidic *niggun*—much of which moves me deeply—is all the Jewish music we need. Serious Jews study halakha and Jewish philosophy and, perhaps, physics and chemistry. But poetry?

Poetry, at least good poetry, is not fancy language and rhymes. It is the natural medium in which spiritual awareness expresses itself. In poetry, language transcends itself and reveals new linguistic possibilities, thereby renewing the language and preventing ossification. In poetry, language not only communicates meaning but creates a realm in which the holy manifests itself. The Bible and Jewish liturgy are deeply poetic because they came out of living relationships with God by people who insisted on singing a new song (Psalms 98:1) to the Lord instead of just repeating an old one. Of course, if the search for the new includes or consists almost exclusively of halakhic vandalism, then it is a search for novelty that we do not need. But if the halakhic foundation is respected—though here, too, organic development must not be ruled out—then artistic innovation is essential for Judaism. If there are no or very few modern Orthodox poets and composers who advance Judaism through their work, then modern Orthodoxy is not in the best of health.

Human beings cannot judge which groupings in Orthodoxy are successful and which are not. We can observe external manifestations such as numbers of adherents, etc., but in the religious realm such things prove nothing. The only criterion that counts is pleasing God and that, in the absence of prophecy, we can never know with certainty. The temptation is to persuade ourselves that God has delegated his sovereign power of judgment to humans—in right-wing circles these are the *gedolim*—whose judgement is infallible. But God has not retired and human beings are never infallible. So our convictions must always be characterized by a prayerful tentativeness. We have no choice but to interpret the truth as we see it, but we cannot be certain that the others

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are wrong and we are right. It hurts me that the *gedolim* of the right do not wish to speak to us and that modern Orthodox institutions would not invite them. Dialogue is essential with the *gedolim* of the right and the leaders of the left because the termination of dialogue is the first step to violence. Not to be on speaking terms with someone is not a neutral stance.

Ultimately, every human being is responsible only to God and must act as he or she understands the will of God. Human Torah experts are of great help but they cannot be turned into absolute authorities. On the day of judgment, the claim that Rabbi X told me so will not be an absolute defense because God will say: "Why did you worship a human being instead of me?" So I cannot shift responsibility totally to another human being, no matter how learned and holy. I must listen to and learn from such persons and from the totality of the tradition. But at the end of the day, the responsibility is mine because God will hold me responsible.

I derive most of my spiritual nourishment from Torah: scriptural and rabbinic. But I also derive spiritual nourishment from Mozart and Beethoven, Hoelderlin and Rilke, Plato and Kant, Viennese painting and that of Paul Klee. That is what makes me a modern Orthodox Jew. If I am wrong, I will pay for it. But that is how the truth appears to me.

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SYMPOSIUM ON ORTHODOXY: AN ADDENDUM

The respondents were asked these five questions:

- 1. The program of the February, 1956, conference of the Rabbinical Council of America lists Rav Moshe Feinstein, z"l, and Rav Mordechai Gifter among the speakers. Rav Aharon Kotler, z"l, also addressed the RCA in those days. It is fair to say that today such invitations to luminaries of the Yeshiva world would neither be issued nor accepted. What has happened to effect this sea change in relationships?*
- 2. a) What were the epochal events that shaped Jewry in the last sixty years, and how would you evaluate the response of Orthodoxy to these events? b) Related to this, what have been the greatest successes of Orthodoxy, and its greatest failures?*
- 3. Which presents the more serious challenge to Orthodoxy: the deviationist religious movements, or secularism? Have our past strategies in relating to either of them been effective? If not, how should the strategies be changed?*
- 4. Which of the various groupings within Orthodoxy—Centrist, Rightist, Hasidic, Yeshiva, Haredi or others—do you consider the most vital in the long term, and which the weakest? Why? Do you see further splits between them, or greater cooperation?*
- 5. As a believing Jew, what facets of Torah life give you the most personal strength to thrive spiritually as an Orthodox Jew in a hedonistic environment that is not conducive to Torah values?*

SHALOM CARMY

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 am regularly accompanied, and motivated by, thoughts of my father, his steadfast faithfulness to a life of *Torah u-mitsvot* under unpropitious conditions, his stubborn moral integrity, and of the dedication and religious-intellectual wholesomeness of my teachers. The climactic recurrence of Yom Kippur with its promise of regeneration serves to concentrate these thoughts, and is thus the high point of the year. All this may not amount to the “spiritual thriving” mentioned in the questionnaire, but

it gives one a good reason to set the alarm clock early and to awake before it rings.

I have not found the vaunted hedonism of our society seductive, mainly because the votaries of pleasure get so little enjoyment out of it. Dining among people of modern sensibility, I usually feel like Babe Ruth at a conclave of Kafkas. Contrasting the frankness of my enjoyment with the painful, laborious, premeditated fussiness of theirs, I cannot help inferring that they are either deficient in the capacity for pleasure or investing their pleasures with an exorbitant, disproportionate significance that can only end in disappointment. Their relentless hopefulness in the pursuit of momentary pleasure, their wistful perseverance in the quest for contentment, I sometimes find moving, but rarely distracting.

I wish the same could be said about some of the unattractive phenomena that bedevil our communities. Both in the *Yeshiva velt* and in the corridors of academic scholarship, the two groups with which I have contact, religion is too frequently exploited in the service of self-indulgent moral standards; cynicism parades prominently as pious cleverness; ill-disguised envy and lust for personal self-aggrandizement eclipse the virtues of humility and simple intellectual and psychological honesty; invective blockades the slightest self-criticism. When these vices are shrugged off as normal, and even more so, when those guilty of them possess virtues (or power) by dint of which I am compelled to devise excuses on their behalf, I feel tainted by worldliness and disheartened in my vocation.

Any success I have had in maintaining a critical perspective on secular society and a critical detachment towards the anti-Torah aspects of the Orthodox world is due, in no mean measure, to a liberal arts education conjoined to the primacy of Torah. Thus simple gratitude would make me wish that this type of education be available to the children of my *talmidim*. No religious community can genuinely thrive without a vigorous commitment to Torah and the intellectual vocabulary to engage in rigorous self-examination and self-understanding. Wisdom, the Mishna teaches, is the willingness to learn from all human beings. It is an exigent quality, and one in short supply.

In practical terms, the non-Orthodox groups are a syncretism of Torah and secularism. What is pernicious in them is due mostly to the secularism. Most of their adherents are interested in enriching what is fundamentally a secular outlook with the psychological or ethnic comforts they associate with the rituals and language of religious culture. Thus the true enemy is secularism. An intellectually honest Jew ready to cast off the yoke of secularism, would, other things being equal, look

for God within what is presumably the most authentic framework—namely Orthodoxy. Such an individual may end up dissatisfied with what we are offering, or may not give us a fair chance. Perhaps the searching individual is still enslaved to the regnant culture. But it may be our fault too, as when it is perceived, rightly or wrongly, that the Orthodox teachers whom they encounter are obtusely arrogant or militantly ignorant in responding to their questions. (Humble confession of intellectual limitations may not be enough to deter honest seekers.)

Sincere individuals may also go elsewhere if they are repelled by unethical character traits and behavior ascribed to us by our adversaries. We know too well that such accusations are not entirely baseless, especially when it comes to our attitudes toward non-Jews and other outsiders: we are paying dearly for not keeping our house in order. Women's issues present a special challenge. Halakhic Judaism is surely in a position to criticize the unstable synthesis and distortions of liberal secularism, but has not yet realized a viable model that would encompass the legitimate but conflicting tug of individual growth, on the one hand, with family obligation, on the other hand.

That wise man, Rabbi Norman Frimer, once chided me, a fire-eating student, for my impatience with Jews. Do not forget, he said, that the community to which you must minister is a community of cripples. He did not mean only, or primarily, the effects of the Holocaust. He was referring to the total dislocation that affected Jewish life early in the century, the unprecedented allure of social mobility, the bottomless dream of acquisitiveness. No generation needed more desperately an inner-directed sense of spiritual conviction, and no generation was more lacking in spiritual resources. Broken by old country hatred, bereft of knowledge and confidence in Judaism, prostrate before the glittering altar of American-style status and success, the immigrant society could only submit wistfully to the high tide of secular civilization, clinging to ragged fragments of the past, as an orphaned child clutches helplessly a familiar toy.

A generation of cripples, in which my father's *shemirat Shabbat* and Torah study made him a virtual freak of nature, gave birth to one in which an individual can aspire to the most rigorous standard of religious observance, to the greatest sophistication in Torah study, limited only by his, or her, ability and will. Nor are such individuals isolated. It is usually within their power to choose friends and teachers whose influence will guide them where they wish to be led, towards a richer fulfillment of the life of Torah, in their intellect, in their emotions, in their relations with other human beings.

Yet American Orthodoxy hasn't really beaten back the encroachments of secularism. Our culture remains fixated on external status and material baubles, among which educational achievement has its allotted place of pride as do Jewish accomplishments. The number of leisure activities and socioeconomic goals, all prominently featuring money, that typically, and unthinkingly, cut to the head of the line in front of training in Torah and *yirat Shamayim*, help explain why schooling as prolonged as it is expensive often yields inexplicably thin results. And as in the host culture, the popularity of divorce is symptomatic of a weakened responsibility to that which makes for family stability. When the teacher awakens "too" many hours before his appointed time, it is usually to agonize over such tragedies, and to contemplate the vain task of reversing by words and will alone what has long been inculcated by habit.

Having started with the last question, I have worked my way back to the beginning. For me, and others similarly occupied in America or Israel, who attends conventions and who doesn't is not a matter of earth-shaking import. There is too much work to be done and too little cause for self-satisfaction on the part of any segment of Orthodoxy. On any given day, that work engenders both intractable frustration and transcendent joy.

Rabbi Carmy, Consulting Editor of Tradition, teaches Jewish Studies and Philosophy at Yeshiva University.

TZVI HERSH WEINREB

I approach the task of responding to *Tradition's* questions from a dual perspective. I have been a pulpit rabbi for nearly ten years, of a large diverse metropolitan synagogue. I came to the pulpit after more than twenty years of experience as a psychotherapist, with a concentration upon members of the Orthodox community. These two vantage points have allowed me a view of what we might call the underside of that community: its deep frustrations, its anxieties and depressions, its feelings of bitterness, disappointment, and anger; its flight into drugs and alcohol; its family discords; its disruptive classroom behaviors; and its aggression and violence. I am familiar and proud of its growth and many successes, but I cannot turn a blind eye to the severe community mental health problems which I observe daily, and which are corroborated by the many mental health professionals who work in our *frum*

communities, and who consult with me as I travel to lecture across the United States.

I will not use this forum to describe in detail the ugly and frightening picture which I discern. I think that the picture is glimpsed by all who function in the rabbinate, in Jewish education, and in Jewish social services. I will merely speculate on two factors which lie behind the picture.

The first of these factors is a sociological one. It is the tendency for cultural sub-groups to differentiate themselves from similar sub-groups, perceiving the others as competitively threatening. As time goes on, this process of differentiation accelerates in the direction of increased separation and insulation, with the concurrent rejection and even demonization of the perceived competition. The second factor is a psycho-spiritual one. There is a tendency for members of religious groups to become increasingly attached to the external forms and rituals of religion, and increasingly alienated from its central philosophical message and spiritual emotions. This process is one which is already alluded to in the Torah. It was the profound concern of our prophets, and plagued *gedolei Yisrael* throughout the centuries from Bahaya Ibn Paquda to the founders of Hasidism and to the leaders of the *Musar* Movement. I refer to this process as spiritual alienation.

And now to the questions:

1) In the 1950's, Orthodox Jewry saw itself as one sub-group with common beliefs and practices: a common Holocaust survivor status, and a common destiny. This sub-group saw the non-Orthodox as the only competition and struggled to distance itself from them. As time has marched on, however, sub-groups within Orthodoxy have proliferated, boundaries between these sub-groups have hardened, common beliefs and practices are obscured by superficial differences, the Holocaust is a haunting memory, and we no longer experience ourselves as traveling towards the same objective. *Rashei yeshiva* of the type who spoke to the RCA audiences in the 50's are members of sub-groups that have sharply differentiated themselves from such a potential audience, much the same as the RCA has gone through a similar process of self-definition. This is sad, indeed tragic, but such is the reality of the sociological vectors which have determined our current reality. On an encouraging note, however, the most recent convention of the RCA, held in Washington, D.C. in May of 1998, did include a visit by the rabbis attending the convention to Yeshivas Ner Israel. During this visit, the convention was addressed by the *rosh yeshiva* and by its *menahel*. While not without its moments of tension, this visit can be seen as a harbinger of possible dialogue.

2) The epochal event of the past fifty years was the Holocaust, and the almost total destruction of traditional Ashkenazic Torah culture. In this country, that culture had already been weakened by the dislocations common to all migration, but especially by the specific nature of the American experience. The contemporary American scene can largely be understood in terms of the differential responses to the Holocaust by the various sub-groups within our people, and the differential impact that Holocaust survivors with leadership capabilities had upon those sub-groups. Certainly the twenty years immediately subsequent to the Holocaust can be seen as years of ferment and transition toward our current condition, and our current condition can only be understood in terms of those twenty years.

The simple most obvious manifestation of this process has been in the area of Torah study. The proliferation of Torah institutions, Torah students, new *sefarim* written and old *sefarim* published is revolutionary and unprecedented. Those leaders whose response to the Holocaust emphasized serious Torah study have proven successful. This is clearly the area of greatest success.

Less successful, however, have been attempts to recreate other cultural and social aspects of the lost traditions, and much less successful have been the attempts to recapture the sincere piety and inner religiosity of times past. We have not succeeded in recreating the societal forms which were traditionally ours, hence, the family disarray, hence the unbridled materialism, hence the assimilation of numerous alien values. We have certainly failed to regenerate the spirituality of our tradition—we have our talmudists, our halakhists, but where are our poets, philosophers, mystics, ethicists, or new charismatic rebbeim?

3) Secularism is an alternative, in our free society, to religion. It is an option, and to an extent, a tempting one, and as such it is a challenge. But if what we are trying to “market” is spirituality and inwardness, meaningfulness and relevance, we must wake up to the challenge of the Conservative and Reform movements. There is a great danger that our sense of triumphalism, stimulated by the successes in recent decades of recruited multitudes of non-Orthodox to our camp in their search for spirituality, will lull us into a false security. We must study the competition and realize that the other streams promise a spirituality of their own, and are producing innovative methodologies and stimulating literature of their own which threaten not only to attract that population from which we have been drawing our “*ba’alei teshuva*”, but which even threaten to attract those within our ranks who are searching for a

spiritual component which they do not find in the Orthodox domain. This is a new phenomenon, indeed, but one that I have begun to observe, and with the growing assertiveness of the non-Orthodox denominations, we will have to seek new strategies of coping with this invigorated competition. Our past strategies will not be effective for those who find both tradition and meaningfulness in the other denominations. We will have to intelligently present our position in contrast to the liberal streams, pointing out clearly why we feel that they are invalid and inauthentic. We must also find methods within our tradition to address some of the emotional and psychological needs which the non-Orthodox streams are attempting to address head-on.

4) Having outlined the two-factor nexus above, one would predict that the various groupings within Orthodoxy will further splinter and will draw farther apart as time goes on. As each group succumbs to its objective of differentiated self-definition, it will define its boundaries more and more firmly. The degree to which each group can meet the inward needs of its constituents will determine its vitality. Ironically, those groups which the lay observer would certainly consider most vital are often seen by the mental health practitioner as suffering the greatest psychological malaise. They also suffer the most from the fallacy that a group's spirituality can thrive when it projects hostility toward other sub-groups.

The lesson to be learned is that spirituality is not diminished by openness to other components of Orthodoxy; quite the contrary, Spirituality is fostered by such openness. To this end, it is encouraging to see that certain elements in the hasidic and Haredi worlds which typically eschewed outreach, have now begun to embrace it with the resultant invigoration of their own spirituality.

5) On a personal level, the facets of Torah life which give me the strength to keep struggling spiritually, if not thrive, include daily Torah study, particularly Daf Yomi, careful *Parsha* study, and the study of *musar* and *hasidut*. Doing this study in a social context, *be-rabbim* and with *chaverim*, offers special spiritual benefits. Breslover style "*hitbodedut*", solitary meditation, and prayer is important, especially when done with simplicity and persistence. An occasional "*tish*" with *nigunim* and atmosphere is essential. Participation in earnest, self-examining dialogue with a spouse, friend, or therapist, if necessary, is another important ingredient. Finally, a relationship with a rebbe, or mentor, is an absolute must.

TRADITION

The future success of the Orthodox community lies in (1) its ability to stop the process of frantic differentiation of its various sub-groups, and start a reverse process of mutual respect and learning from each other, and (2) an invigoration of our inner experience, an openness to those aspects of our heritage which can touch our emotional lives and heal our souls.

The successful redirection of the process I have outlined will help change the troublesome picture of our community's mental health, and will transform our entire prospect, from our deepest inner life to our public institutions and organizations.

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