Kol Hamevaser

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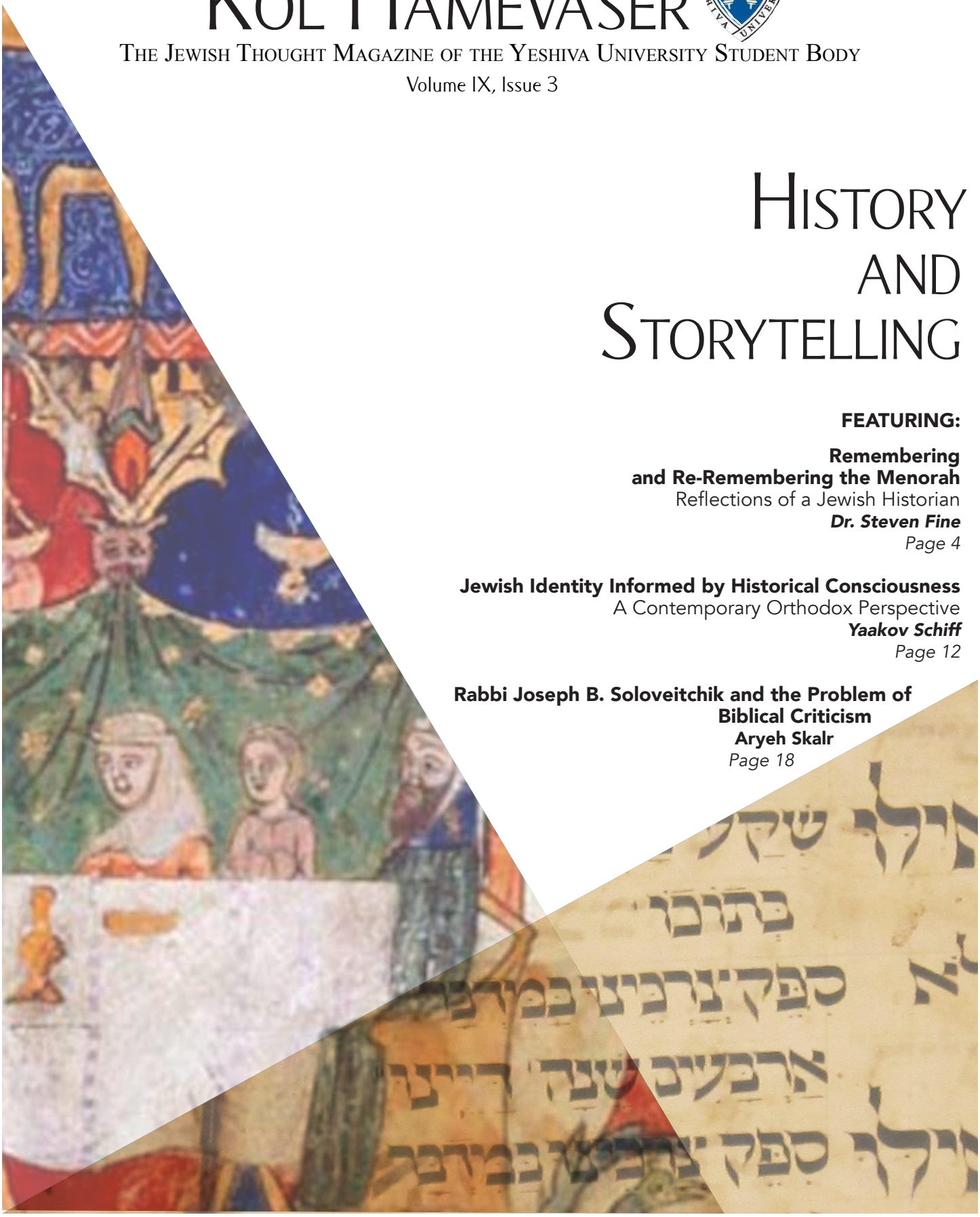
History and Storytelling

FEATURING:



HISTORY AND STORYTELLING

Letter from the Editor

BY MINDY SCHWARTZ

The history of mankind is made up of our stories. Jewish history is no exception; our collective narrative is comprised of a great meddling of stories, from the histories of Philo of Alexandria to the folk tales of Chelm. The stories we were told as children, the stories we tell others, the stories we pass on- each and every one of these will continue to add another layer to the great historical stratigraphy of the Jewish People.

Historians are storytellers; storytellers create history. The tales of the famous yiddish writer Shalom Aleichem about Tevye the Milkman and his five daughters, the precursor to Fiddler the Roof, have left an undeniable imprint consciousness of the Modern American Jew. When the Roman Jewish historian Josephus Flavius recorded the story of the last stand of the Jewish Sicarii rebels at Masada in the Great Revolt, he crafted a tale that still holds power over Zionist perceptions of Jewish strength and bravery in the State of Israel. Although the historical veracity of Josephus's account of Masada has been called into question, a careful historian can see a story as more than just true or false; the impact of a story, maybe even on a culture centuries down the road, defies such simple measures.

In this issue we delve into the power of these stories and of the power of history in general. Dr. Steven Fine, Professor of Jewish History at Yeshiva University, shares his reflections as a Jewish historian on one our greatest pictorial stories - the relief on the Arch of Titus of the Temple vessels paraded through Rome. Yaakov Schiff and Yisrael Ben-Porat both ponder the value of studying Jewish history, in the abstract of Jewish philosophy and in normative practice. Aryeh Sklar reflects on our greatest stories as a people - those of the Bible. Chani Grossman investigates the way the Abarbanel's personal story impacted his work through the lens of his Haggadah. Aryeh Helfgot delves into the stories told by both secular historians and our Sages, and what the divergences in these stories can teach us.

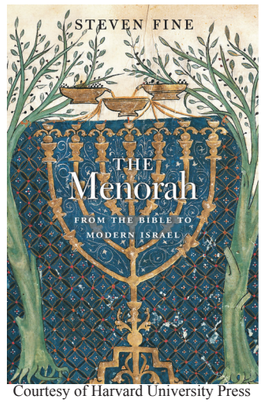
Just like a good story, these articles are meant to shared and discussed with enthusiasm.

We hope this edition of Kol Hamevaser will give you pause to think.

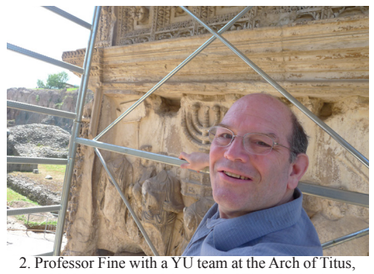
Remembering and Reremembering the Menorah

By Dr. Steven Fine

Recently I concluded *The Menorah: from the Bible to Modern Israel* (Harvard University Press, 2016). This volume is a personal history, my own "take" on the biblical menorah and its place in western civilization. *The Menorah* was written with both the scholar and the lay reader in mind. My imagined audience was "you" students, fellow scholars and also my college friend who seriously considered becoming a Jesuit and also a not-so-frum physicist in San Diego. Writing for so many audiences was complex, and I hope that I pulled it off. *The Menorah* has been "in the works" for a very long time— ever since I was in high school. It reflects my passion to see and to read and to learn, an excitement that carried me to within inches of the Arch of Titus menorah (figure 2), into more lonely archaeological sites, crowded *batei midrash* and dusty archives than I can now remember!



Courtesy of Harvard University Press


2. Professor Fine with a YU team at the Arch of Titus, 2012 (Courtesy of the Arch of Titus Project)

I have not written a simple linear "history" of an icon, but rather a reflection on how really hard and complex it is to understand— let alone pass on— our received traditions. This is how I conclude the book:

> While this has been a story of a single significant "symbol," it as much a story of discontinuity, of cultural twists and turns of profound significance— under the cover of continuity. It is a story of memory created and recreated, of a past forgotten and sometimes reremembered— again and again. In this sense, the history of the menorah is a test case for thinking about symbols and ideas and institutions and relationships that appear to be "timeless," and a challenge to maintain relationship with our root symbols even as our culture reaches toward its inevitable next stages.

I wrote *The Menorah* as a historian, and for the historically-minded. I therefore assume that each text and each artifact has its own story to tell of a world in which they existed, but I do not. They are survivors of many different, sometimes intersecting, worlds that have "passed by." My role is to let each and every artifact communicate as best it can— to provide a framework where the hints imbedded in each text or "thing" can be given sufficient context that even I— sometimes millennia later, sometimes only half a century— can begin to understand how a *pasuk* of the Torah, a noun in the Mishnah, an illustration in the Rambam, an ancient Jewish burial catacomb in Rome or even an article in an early Hebrew newspaper functioned and might have been understood in its own time.

This requires a level of *beqiut,* of broad knowledge, that often stretches across the human experience, encompassing the borderless places where *Torah* and *madda*[1] are not separate things, but as the *vav* of *u-madda* asserts the consecutive interaction between all of our parts that make us whole people of our own time— and made our ancestors whole people of their own times. I often tell my own students that my goal is to understand Rabbi Akiva not just for his *shitot*, his legal positions, but the entire person— what he ate, where he lived, how he interacted with others— and even how he smelled (which, as any doctor might tell you, can tell me much about other aspects of his life). My goal is to imagine how Jews before me lived in their worlds, thought about their own places, and lived the life of Judaism. In a real sense, my impossible goal is to make their mouths "move" each time their words are cited— and to fully understand what they "mean" (or don't mean) when I hear their voices and watch their lips.

What did Rabbi Akiva "see" fifty or more years after the *Ḥurban,* the destruction of Herod's temple, when he envisioned the menorah? What could have been in Judah Maccabee's mind when he relit the altar and the menorah at the solstice of 166 BCE— renewing light to a darkened temple, at the moment the world itself was about to become just a bit brighter? What did pilgrims "see" when they came to the *Beit ha-Miqdash*— to Herod's temple— on the pilgrimage festivals, and the *kohanim* took out the *kelim* so that all could marvel at the menorah and the table of showbread? What contact did Rashi have with the world around him as he described the biblical menorah using the technology of his period, imagining a lampstand strikingly similar to those created as church appurtenances of his time? This list of questions, many of which I discuss in the book, could go on and on— and in fact it does for 300 pages. The point is that each and every exemplar requires deep penetration into the worlds of our ancestors. Context is everything.

Let me give one example. From the latter Second Temple period onward— at the very latest, Jews imagined the biblical menorah having rounded branches. We know this from many discoveries of incised menorahs in Eretz Yisrael— from a tomb, on the side of a sundial, a drawing from a patrician house in Jerusalem, and most recently on a stone discovered in a synagogue at Migdal, a fishing town on the Sea of Galilee. The branches are always round. Both the Jewish philosopher and communal leader, Philo of Alexandria (died circa. 50 CE), and the historian Flavius Josephus (aka, Yosef ben Matityahu, d. ca. 100 CE), tell us why. Both of these ancient authors, a generation apart, describe the branches as rounded so as to represent the paths of the five visible planets and the moon around the sun. Philo writes:

> The candlestick he [Moses] placed at the south [of the Tabernacle] figuring thereby the movements of the luminaries above; for the sun and the moon and the others run their courses in the south far away from the north. And therefore six branches, three on each side, issue from the central candlestick, bringing up the number to seven, and on all these are set seven lamps and candle bearers, symbols of what the men of science call planets. For the sun, like the candlestick, has the fourth place in the middle of the six and gives light to the three above and the three below it, so tuning to harmony an instrument of music truly divine.[2]

This association, also mentioned in rabbinic sources, relates to Zechariah's notion that the lamps of the menorah represent the "eyes of God" (Zechariah 4:1-14). The roundness of the branches has been an unspoken "given" in almost all images of the menorah since then— Jewish, Christian, Samaritan and Muslim. It is, in a way, so basic that it has hardly been questioned. It is as much a component of the menorah as black paint is to *tefillin.* Truth is, the ancient rabbis struggled to describe the arched branches. On one occasion they wrote that "two branches go [*elekh*] from it [from the central stalk]."[3] The Babylonian Talmud, Menaḥot 28b preserves an almost untranslatable (though poetic) attempt that employs the same verb three times: "from here [the central stalk] and onward they go and go"— *mi-kan ve-elekh holekh ve-elekh.* There was just no word yet for "arched" in their vocabulary (*kashti* from the word *keshet,* a bow, came later).[4] Rashi (d. 1105) to Exodus 25:32 enlisted the Greek loan word *alkason*, which means kinda diagonal, and in his


3. Rashi, Commentary on the Pentateuch, Exodus 25, France, early 13th century, Bodleian Library, Oxford (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

own manuscript (a copy of which was prepared at the time of *Baalei Tosafot,* figure 3), illustrates rounded branches.

That is, until the Rambam (d. 1204) drew a rather crude image of a menorah with straight branches in his Mishnah commentary, in order to illustrate the parts of the menorah. Happily, this manuscript, believed to have been written by the Rambam himself, is preserved at Oxford University. The Rambam was quite aware of his limited skill as a draftsman, even commenting on it in his commentary. This might have been the end of the story, except that the Rambam's son, Abraham, wrote explicitly in his commentary that his father intended straight branches: "The six branches extend from the central shaft of the menorah to its height in a straight line, as depicted by my father of blessed memory, and not rounded as depicted by others."[5] This assertion generated a manuscript tradition of drawing manuscripts with straight branches that found its way to medieval Spain, and then to Yemen. This tradition never "caught on" beyond Maimonides manuscripts, however.

Resting behind this stance is the notion that since *Ḥazal,* the ancient rabbis, never discussed the shape of the branches, the simplest assumption would be that the branches were straight, and not curved. The textual interpretation— at best a *da'at yaḥid,* the interpretation of a lone (if highly significant) medieval commentator— here takes precedence over more than two thousand years of lived experience. This approach to text has found many followers in recent decades, as my colleague Haym Soloveitchik has shown, and has rightly lamented.[6] A thousand years after his death, the Maimonides position found a new audience, in modern Israel. Yemenite chief rabbi, Yosef Qafiḥ (today generally pronounced Qapaḥ), flagged it in his 1965 edition of the Mishnah commentary as an alternative to the Arch of Titus menorah that was chosen as symbol of modern Israel in 1949.[7]

Rabbinic interpreters have long had difficulty with the Arch menorah— beginning with Moses Mendelssohn (d. 1786),[8] and continuing to Ashkenazi chief rabbi Isaac ha-Levi Herzog during the 1950's.[9] I cannot go into the many reasons that people like Rav Herzog disliked this image, except to note that his sense that religious Zionism left no place for a menorah— or a state— that did not conform (or could not ultimately conform) to *Ḥazal's* vision. Since the Arch of Titus menorah base is not constructed as a tripod— as is described by *Ḥazal* (and was standard for lampstands in Roman times) Rav Herzog believed it to be unfit to serve as symbol of a state worthy to be *reshit tsemiḥat geulateinu,* "The first sprouts of our redemption" (a phrase that he used in the "prayer for the state"). Rav Qafiḥ went further, condemning the branches as well, based upon the Oxford Rambam manuscript. This was no mere academic discussion, and his language is unusually heated. Discussions of the menorah were a cipher for the identity politics of early Israel, especially within the religious Zionist community.

In the next phase, in 1982 Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (d. 1994), the Lubavitcher Rebbe, noted Rav Qafiḥ's argument, and promoted the "Rambam menorah" as the "authentic" menorah.[10] This too was not just an academic discussion, but rather a significant— and brilliant— attempt by the Rebbe to destabilize the image of the menorah— both that of Zionism and the larger Jewish community— and to replace it with a Chabad-branded menorah. It was a piece of his continuing war against Zionist messianism, and his attempt to usurp its symbolism into his own messianic program. As one anonymous *misnaged* put it, with characteristic sarcasm, "every new religion needs a symbol."[11]

I tell this story here in some detail, but not nearly in the detail with which I engage it in my book. There I trace it across periods, from the Tabernacle to *Ḥazal* to medieval contexts, up to the contemporary world. In each case, my goal is to "see" what Jews saw and to imagine what they thought— with compassion and I hope, with depth. It is no easy matter to reach behind the text and beyond the image to touch the "real" people looking out from behind them. In dealing with our culture heroes— *Ḥazal, Rishonim, Aḥaronim*, great leaders of our times, and simple Jews of all times— I feel an even greater responsibility. Truth is, sometimes I imagine Rabbi Akiva (not to mention Judah Maccabee, Rambam, Rav Herzog and all of the other people whom I study) looking out at me and nodding approvingly, at other times disapprovingly, and at still others rather quizzically. Never before, until the modern era, did Rabbi Akiva have to contend with probing historians like me coming "to visit." The kinds of questions that I ask— and wrote about in *The Menorah: From the Bible to*

Modern Israel, reflect my world, and our shared experience. I do hope though, that at the end of the day, Rabbi Akiva would be pleased that I have stopped by.

1 Torah UMadda, roughly " Torah and secular knowledge," has been the logo of Yeshiva University since 1946, and was developed as an ideology under the leadership of Rabbi Norman Lamm. In general, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah_Umadda, and the sources cited there.

2 Philo of Alexandria, The Life of Moses, 2, 102-3; idem, Questions and Answers on Exodus, 75. Josephus, Jewish War 5.216-17; idem, Antiquities of the Jews 3.146, both cited from Harvard University Press' Loeb Classical Library editions.

3 Baraita De-Melekhet Ha-Mishkan: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Translation, ed. R. Kirschner (Cincinnati, 1992), ch. 6, p. 193.

4 Elieser Ben Yehuda, Thesaurus Totius Hebraitatis et Veteris et Recentioris, ed. N. H. Tur-Sinai, (Jerusalem, 1980), 14: 6273.

5 Abraham ben Moses ben Maimon, Perush Rabbenu Avraham ben ha- Rambam z"l al Bereshit ve- Shemot, trans. and ed., A. Y. Weisenberg (London, 1959), 296–297.

6 Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," Tradition, 28, no. 4 (1994), 64-130.

7 Moses Maimonides, Mishnah im Perush Moshe Ben Maimon, trans., ed., and commentator Yosef Qafih (Jerusalem, 1965), to Menaḥot 3:7 (3:117–120). See also Qafih's commentary to Maimonides's Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Beit ha- Beḥirah 3:7 (Jerusalem, 1983), 12:54–58.

8 Moses Mendelssohn, Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom (Berlin, 1783), to Exodus 25.

9 Isaac ha-Levi Herzog, "The Shape of the Menorah in the Arch of Titus," Scritti in memoria di Sally Mayer (Jerusalem and Milan, 1956), 95-8, in Hebrew.

10 Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Hilkhot Beit ha-Beḥirah, (Brooklyn, 1986): ch. 8, pp. 50-51.

11 Cited by David Berger, The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference (London and Portland, 2001), 62.

The Science of the Past

By Yisroel Ben-Porat

May one read history books on Shabbat? Although it may seem to be an innocuous activity, reading history actually poses several halakhic and hashkafic problems, some of which may apply even during the week. Perhaps a better question is, may one read history books *at all*? Various sources address these issues, constituting a small, yet significant discussion with implications for how we should spend our time – especially on Shabbat – and to what extent Judaism values the study of history.

One potential problem with reading history on Shabbat is the prohibition of reading business documents, referred to as *shitrei hedyotot*, such as inventories, contracts, and receipts.[1] Although this prohibition is Rabbinic, it even includes texts that may *cause* one to read business documents; for example, one may not read a caption that runs under a picture or portrait, lest one inadvertently read *shitrei hedyotot*.[2] Tosafot draw a parallel between image captions and history books: "It seems to Rabbeinu Yehuda that one may not look at those war chronicles (*milhamot*) that were written in foreign languages, for it is no less [problematic] than... the caption that runs under a picture or portrait, [which] one is forbidden to read on Shabbat."[3] In other words, according to R. Yehuda, the concern of *shitrei hedyotot* applies equally to history books, and thus one may not read such texts on Shabbat.

Additionally, there is another, more general problem with reading history. The Psalmist states, "Praiseworthy is the man who does not... sit in the company of scoffers (*moshav leitsim*), but rather his desire is for the Torah of God."[4] What constitutes a *moshav leitsim*? The Gemara invokes this verse regarding one who attends non-Jewish comedies, circuses, farces or other pointless entertainments that cause one to neglect his Torah learning.[5] The Tosafot cited above apply the prohibition of *moshav leitsim* to reading history books: "And even during the week [R. Yitzchak] did not know who permitted it, for it is a *moshav leitsim*."[6]

Shulhan Arukh rules in accordance with Tosafot; however, Rema makes an important qualification, inferring that R. Yehuda only prohibits reading war chronicles "written in foreign languages" but permits reading histories written in Hebrew.[7] What is the basis for this distinction? Rema argues that Hebrew "has inherent holiness, and one learns *divrei Torah* from it." This statement seems to consist of two arguments: (1) Hebrew is inherently holy;[8] (2) reading Hebrew improves one's ability to learn Torah;[9] thus the Sages would surely not prohibit reading Hebrew history books on Shabbat.[10] Additionally, Rema stresses that because the prohibition of *shitrei hedyotot* is only Rabbinic, one may rely upon his inference. Finally, Rema concludes that the *minhag* accords with his leniency to permit reading Hebrew history books on Shabbat.[11]

However, Taz rejects Rema's distinction for three reasons.[12] Firstly, he counters that R. Yehuda only refers to foreign-language chronicles in order to provide a common example of what he prohibits, not to imply that reading Hebrew chronicles would be permissible. Secondly, he points out that Hebrew does not have inherent holiness, for one may speak Hebrew non-Torah content in the bathroom.[13] Finally, he suggests that Hebrew texts do not escape the prohibition of *moshav leitsim*.

The dispute only centers around works of non-Jewish history; however, all agree that one may read Jewish history books on Shabbat. Permitted works include classical *sefarim* such as *Sefer Yosippon* – a 10th-century chronicle of Jewish history from creation to the age of Titus – *Sefer Yuhasin* – a similar work from the early 1500's – and *Shevet Yehuda* – a history of anti-Semitism and persecutions from antiquity to the Spanish expulsion of 1492. *Bah* provides the following rationale: "For one learns words of *mussar* and *yirat shamayim* from them."[14] In other words, because such texts have religious value as a source of inspiration, there is no concern of *shitrei hedyotot* or *moshav leitsim*. The same holds true even if such works are written in foreign languages.[15] Similarly, one may read contemporary Jewish history books and biographies of *gedolim* on Shabbat[16].

R. Yaakov Emden qualifies and elaborates on this leniency.[17] He stresses that although Jewish history books are considered holy, one should avoid reading them too much on Shabbat, for it may lead to undue neglect of Torah study; rather, he recommends doing so only occasionally. He also cautions that one may not read about depressing aspects of Jewish history, such as persecutions, on Shabbat.[18] However, he encourages reading such material on weekdays, especially during the Three Weeks. Finally, he notes that sections of *Sefer Yosippon* and *Shevet Yehuda* contain secular historical information largely irrelevant to Jewish history; he only permits reading such material in places or situations where learning Torah is prohibited or very difficult— while in the bathroom or on a trip, for example.

Regarding this limited study of secular history, R. Emden provides several justifications: "So that a Torah scholar should not be ignorant in the knowledge of past events and mass changes, in order to know how to respond to one who asks him something, and not seem to be a simpleton and fool in worldly matters; additionally, sometimes it has significance regarding historical information that is relevant to our nation, by learning from one [history] to the other."[19] Alternatively, R. Emden suggests that the study of non-Jewish history can help guide political decisions, especially when dealing with gentile governments.

Yet perhaps there are grounds to permit the study of secular history even on Shabbat. The *rishonim* dispute whether one may read books of secular knowledge, referred to as *sifrei hokhma*, on Shabbat; Rambam maintains that one may only read *divrei Torah* on Shabbat, whereas Rashba permits gazing into an astrolabe and reading medical books on Shabbat.[21] By extension, Rashba's leniency includes all *sifrei hokhma*, with the assumption that such texts will not cause one to inadvertently read *shitrei hedyotot*, and that *sifrei hokhma* do not constitute *moshav leitsim* because they contain valuable information. Shulhan Arukh cites both opinions, and Mishna Berurah rules that the *minhag* is to be lenient in this regard.[22] Perhaps, then, if history is a *hokhma*, it should be permitted to read even non-Jewish history books on Shabbat.

But is such an argument viable? The *rishonim* seem to have a negative view of the study of history, considering Tosafot's comment above that history is *moshav leitsim*. Yet many later authorities express more positive views toward the study of history; R. Hirsch advises us to "view the world through the eyes of a King David and listen to history with the ears of an Isaiah," and Hazon Ish states that "history is highly instructive to the wise; he will base his wisdom on the developments of the past."[23] Mostly significantly, R. Elchonon Wasserman articulates perhaps the most favorable view, based on the verse, "Remember the days of yore; understand the years of generations."[24] Although *Sifrei*[25] understands this verse to refer to specific events in Jewish history, R. Wasserman emphasizes that the plain meaning of the verse applies to *all* history. He argues that just as the world was created for the sake of the Jews, so too all history – even in the most remote places, no matter how unlikely it may seem – occurs for our sake, either as a reward or punishment, and thus it is our duty to attempt to decipher the divine plan[26].

Additionally, perhaps we can distinguish between the quality of historical studies in the times of the *rishonim* and the current state of history as a discipline. In the Middle Ages, history was not a well–developed field; most texts consisted of pointless information such as chronicles, legends, and folklore. However, today history is considered a legitimate field of study with its own standards, methodologies, and analyses; it is the science of the past. Contemporary scholarly history books are complex works containing analyses of primary sources to produce a hypothesis regarding a particular era – such material vastly differs from the medieval *milhamot* to which Tosafot referred. Thus, if one wishes to study such material in order to sharpen one's intellect or to strengthen one's *emunah*, it seems reasonable to suggest that such a pursuit is not a *moshav leitsim* but rather a *hokhma*, which is permitted on Shabbat.[27]

There is an additional reason to permit reading non-Jewish history on Shabbat. Shulhan Arukh – as understood by Magen Avraham – permits one to read image captions on Shabbat if it is an *oneg* (enjoyment) for him.[28] In other words, the Sages allowed the principle of *oneg Shabbat* to override the concern that one may inadvertently read *shitrei hedyotot*. Since the Tosafot above equates history books with image captions, it thus follows that one may read the former if it provides *oneg*. Although we do not follow Magen Avraham in normative halakha, we may rely upon him in conjunction with other arguments for leniency– in this case, perhaps we may invoke the aforementioned suggestion that history is a *hokhma*.[29]

Thus, one can invoke a total of three arguments toward the study of secular history on Shabbat: (1) R. Elchonon's positive view regarding the study of all history; (2) the possible distinction between *milhamot* and modern history books; and (3) the leniency of Magen Avraham regarding *oneg Shabbat*. So, may one read history books on Shabbat? The answer seems to be yes.

1 Shabbat 116b, 149a.

2 Ibid., Rashi ad. loc., s.v. asur. For the reason behind the prohibition, see Ritva ad. loc., s.v. mai beinaihu; Rosh ad. loc. (§1); Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Shabbat 23:19.

3 Tosafot to Shabbat 116b, s.v. ve-kol she-kein. All translations in this article are my own, unless otherwise noted.

4 Tehillim 1:1-2.

5 Avodah Zarah 18b, cited in Magen Avraham, Orah Hayim 307:22. For other halakhic applications of moshav leitsim, see Rosh to Shabbat 149a (§1), cited in Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 307:16.

6 Tosafot to Shabbat 116b, s.v. ve-kol she-kein.

7 Shulhan Arukh, ibid.; the following discussion of Rema's opinion is based on his gloss (ad. loc.) and Darkei Moshe, Orah Hayim 307:8.

8 Cf. Rambam, Moreh Nevukhim 3:8; Ramban to Shemot 30:13.

9 Rema's leniency does not apply to fluent Modern Hebrew speakers because reading such texts does not improve their Torah learning (R. Asher Weiss, Responsa, Minhat Asher, 19:3).

10 Cf. the opinion of R. Nehemia (Shabbat 116b), who maintains that the Rabbis prohibited reading Ketuvim on Shabbat so that people would a fortiori abstain from reading business documents.

11 See the very end of his gloss to Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 307:16.

12 Taz, Orah Hayim 307:13.

13 Shabbat 40b.

14 Bah, Orah Hayim 307:13, s.v. mihu.

15 Mishna Berurah 307:58.

16 Piskei Teshuvot 307:24.

17 The following discussion of R. Emden's view is based on Mor Uktsia, Orah Hayim 307.

18 For it is a violation of the requirement to enjoy Shabbat; see Yeshaya 58:13.

19 Mor Uktsia, Orah Hayim 307.

20 See Yehuda Levi, Torah and Science: Their Interplay in the World Scheme (Feldheim, 2006), 243.

21 See Beit Yosef, Orah Hayim 307:17.

22 Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 307:17; Mishna Berurah 307:65. However, Eliah Rabbah (cited ibid.) stresses that God-fearing people should exercise stringency in this matter.

23 R. S.R. Hirsch to Devarim 4:23 and Hazon Ish, Emunah U-vitahon 1:8, cited in Levi, Torah and Science, 244.

24 Devarim 32:7

25 Ad. loc.

26 See R. Elchonon Wasserman, Kobeits He'arot, Appendix §12.

27 Piskei Teshuvot 307:27 includes history within the hokhma of elokut, divinity, i.e. understanding God's guiding of historical events. Cf. "Hokhma" in Hida, Devash Le-fi.

28 See Magen Avraham, Orah Hayim 301:4.

29 See e.g. Piskei Teshuvot 307:22, esp. fn. 188-89.

Keeping Our Oldest Story Relevant

By Chani Grossman

Storytelling has been a part of Jewish history since the inception of the Jewish nation. One of the first commandments we received as a nation was a multi-part commandment to tell the story of the Exodus from slavery over to our children – "and you shall tell your son on that day saying..."[2] In the millennia since then, telling over this story of our emergence as a people and redemption from servitude has been a vital part of both Jewish ritual and Jewish identity. The stories reaches its apex with the commandment of *sipur Yetzi'at Mitsrayim,* telling over the story of exodus from Egypt, on the *seder* night, during which we are told to imagine as though we ourselves have been set free.

Over these same millennia, this story has been a beacon of hope, a light in the midst of despair, for Jews in times of trouble. Amidst the persecutions and expulsion and pogroms, Jews could think, "my ancestors have been here too, and experienced much worse, and just as God rescued them from the depths of their suffering, He will soon redeem us as well." The *haggadah* is an excellent echo of – or perhaps even a counterpoint to –the experiences of a Jew suffering in the *galut* (exile).

Don Yitzchak Abarbanel, one of the most well-known of the biblical exegetes from the end of the era of the *Rishonim*, was one of those who saw within the story of the Exodus from Egypt parallels to the suffering and hardship which were so pervasive in his life as well as a message of hope. While he is deservedly well-known for his commentary to Tanakh, he also produced a *haggadah shel Pesach*, which he titled "*Zevach Pesach*." Much like his commentary to Tanakh, the *haggadah* is comprised of lists of questions and answers, in this case one hundred of each. While the complaint has been made that Abarbanel's *peirushim* may have been over-contextualized within his personal time and life story,[3] in the case of his *haggadah* it is nonetheless instructive to place the work in context of Abarbanel's personal life.[4]

Much of the detail we have about Abarbanel's life comes from his own writings, particularly the introductions to his commentary on the *haggadah* and some of his other *Tanakh* commentaries.[5] He was born in 1437 in Lisbon to a family of financiers who had fled there to escape massacres in Spain. Educated in both Jewish and secular subjects, Abarbanel soon became a wealthy and important financier to the king of Portugal; at this time, he also commenced writing his works on the Torah and developing a scholarly library. He was rich and successful, living what would end up being the happiest years of his life until his patron, King Alfonso V of Portugal, died in 1481. Abarbanel was subsequently forced to flee, somewhat ironically, to Spain in order to escape a purge of Portuguese nobles by Alfonso's newly crowned son, Joao, whom Abarbanel describes as having been "tyrannical and seeking wealth."[6] Though he left everything behind, Abarbanel's skills as a financier were still in high demand, and he soon reestablished himself as a court financier to Ferdinand and Isabella of Aragon and Castile. This new stage of life was a catalyst for increased productivity; it was at this time that Abarbanel was most prolific, writing over 400,000 words of Torah (mostly on *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*) in the 4 months before he attained his post. While Abarbanel may have hoped for more stability in his life, he soon was faced with the Inquisition and Expulsion of the Jews from Spain. As a valuable resource and friend to the throne, he personally was not forced to leave; however, Abarbanel refused to stay behind in Spain as his fellow Jews were expelled, after his pleas (and enormous bribes) for the decree's reversal were rebuffed.

This was the beginning of a part of Abarbanel's life in which, biographers note, he began to turn more toward the study of the redemption.[7] He witnessed Jews being herded onto airless, filthy boats with little food and emerging from them, Benzion Netanyahu compared, looking like survivors of German concentration camps.[8] He saw people who had run to Portugal for sanctuary be hit by the long arm of the Inquisition, and ultimately the Expulsion, there as well. Abarbanel himself wound up in Naples, Italy, where he briefly regained his status as a financier to the court only to lose it again to regional political strife. He moved throughout Italy and in his newfound free time wrote many of his Judaic works. In his new home of Monopoli, Eric Lawee writes, "Never was his mood more brooding or his literary timbre more tenebrous."[9] Abarbanel had suffered incredible losses and was continually witnessing the suffering and hopelessness of his fellow Jews. It was in this time period that he wrote a three-volume series on redemption and the Messianic era – titled *Ma'ayenei Ha-yeshu'ah, Mashmi'a Yeshu'ah* and *Yeshu'at Meshicho* – which exceeded in scope anything written before on the topic. During this time he also wrote his commentary on Yeshayahu, which in part dealt with similar themes: conflicts between the nations; the Jews' place within these conflicts; and the messianic spirit that engulfed the author as he and the people around him searched for answers for their suffering.

One of the smaller commentaries Abarbanel produced in this turbulent, messianic-intoned period, at a weary age 58, was a relatively small commentary on the *haggadah*, which he called *Zevach Pesach*. While some of the aforementioned works are more famously connected to his despair and hope for the messianic era, it is very clear how much this particular commentary is a reaction to his suffering. Abarbanel makes this evident in the introduction, in which even as he observes and reflects on the pain so recently endured by him and his fellow Jews, he also clearly remembers better times and happier Pesach celebrations, when in Portugal and Spain he had been able to sit with his wife and children around him at a luxurious table. Even if he cannot have a Pesach feast this year, he writes, this commentary will hopefully be a substitute, a way to keep up his hopes and the hopes of fellow wanderers. Though during this Pesach he and his audience may still be enslaved, Abarbanel tries to open a window of hope to the future.

However, the commentary also serves as an opportunity for repentance for earlier blame and despair. In his introduction, which is almost entirely composed of clever literary allusions to various verses in Tanakh, Abarbanel begins by mentioning the good fortune that he had been blessed with in a previous life. He then begins a cascade of expressions of his depression, loss and trauma, going through the various cycles of good and bad fortune he had experienced, as well as the general feelings of horror at the fate of the rest of the Jewish people. He puts the Inquisition and Expulsion into *Hurban*-esque terms, with sentences describing God's "deciding to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion,"[11] "the exile of Jerusalem that is in Sefarad,"[12] and describing an "expulsion of unlimited numbers,"[13] as well as other expressions of horror related to past destructions. As Dr. Avigail Rock points out, there are some very significant examples that illustrate Abarbanel's angst.[14] He writes that "God was the enemy to destroy, kill and obliterate all of the Jews," a clear allusion to the expression used by Ahashverosh and Haman in their campaign to annihilate the Jewish people in Megillat Esther – "letters shall be sent…to destroy, kill and obliterate all of the Jews."[15] He also writes that he has seen God "battling with his nation"[16] and mentions many of God's well-known expressions of anger, including those mentioned in the *haggadah* as He used against the Egyptians, to describe God's current attitude toward the Jewish People. He uses clear imagery that assigns God as the enemy of His own people, mindfully going out to destroy those whom He cherishes with as much malice as their deepest enemies. In this cycle of brief spots of hope punctuated by periods of despair, Abarbanel expresses the question many Jews were asking at that time (as well as in all dark eras in Jewish history) – does God hate the Jewish People? Is there an end to our suffering, or has God simply turned His back on us as He did in the past to our enemies?[17]

Abarbanel then mentions how he had heard there, in Monopoli, people discussing the coming of Pesach, the holiday of redemption, and painfully remembers happy times of old with his family in Portugal. He discusses his pain and the decrees made against him by God and tries to justify it due to God's inherently just ways. He decides to improve his spirits by expounding on the Torah, he writes, "because they are the source of the waters of life."[18] His goal, despite the great negativity that his suffering has brought him, is to focus on the redemption, the *ge'ulah* and on the way that God will fulfill His promises – just as He did at the time of the Exodus. He selects the *haggadah* as a topic for a commentary to remind everyone of the stories told throughout the millennia and of the promise of redemption they contain. He decides to bring something new to the discussion, not like those who came before him, by specifically focusing upon the redemption.[19] In keeping with the work's goal, he entitles his commentary *Zevach Pesach*, as it stands as a sacrifice "to God from a shattered spirit" at a time when there can't be a real Pesach offering, or even a Pesach feast.[20] In a place and time when people felt like God had abandoned them, Abarbanel would interpret the *haggadah*, the quintessential story of redemption from hardship, to show that there was indeed hope for the future.[21]

In the *haggadah*, many of his interpretations, true to his introduction, were keyed into the challenges of the day: waiting for the redemption and living through the present. He asks questions of a sort that were bound to eat away at the minds of people living through their own personal enslavement: In the opening paragraph of *maggid*, we synopsize that we were slaves in Egypt, and God took us out from there – and were this to not happen, we would still be enslaved there. But, Abarbanel asks, why are we grateful that we are no longer in Egypt when it's very possible that the situation in which we are now is worse? And how can someone who is currently in exile feel as though he has left Egypt when for all meaningful purposes he is still there? The first question he answers hopefully, interpreting the three phrases that continue this section of the *haggadah*: "*Kulanu chachamim,"* – we are now wise enough to see how unique our relationship with God is; "*kulanu nevonim,"* – we understand the status that the Exodus and subsequent settlement in Eretz Yisrael gave us; and *"kulanu yode'im et ha-Torah,"* – we realize how much receiving the Torah – as the sequel to the Exodus – transformed us.[22] The second question he answers in a way that is simultaneously bleak, encouraging, and completely appropriate for his audience: if you are alive, in any conditions, to hold a *seder* and tell the story of the Exodus, you have lived through a miracle. He invokes Ramban's comments first written in the chapters of the Exodus and applies them to his own time: every individual's survival in the Spanish exile is because of hidden miracles from God.[23] This is exactly the kind of sentiment with which someone who, against all odds, had survived so many different expulsions and trials would identify.

Abarbanel's experiences with the Inquisition also informed his understandings and interpretations of various elements of the *haggadah*. He explains the phrase *"va-yera'u otanu ha-Mitzrim"* to mean that the Egyptians saw the Jewish People as inherently evil and wrong, which led to their persecuting them – an idea that would be readily understandable to his fellow refugees from the Christian Inquisition.[24] In his explanation of "*ve'et lahatzenu- zeh ha-dehak*," he emphasizes the stress inflicted on the Jews as they lived in secret and hid their children, and further, how these sorts of emotionally traumatizing stressors can be more harmful than actual physical injury.[25] This would be very familiar to his fellow survivors of the Inquisition, particularly those who were ex-*conversos* – like Abarbanel's grandfather Samuel was two generations prior.[26] The incredible stress of hiding Jewish practices from the inquisitors while maintaining a good Christian facade, especially when it was known that being caught could mean being burned in an *auto-da-fé* , could be clearly paralleled with the stress in the *haggadah*, linking the two experiences in the minds of the Jews of Abarbanel's time.

Predictably, Abarbanel ultimately promotes a positive outlook for the Jews – the fact that he compares the slavery of the expelled Jews with that of their enslaved ancestors could link as well the redemption their forefathers received with one that the Jews of his era could hopefully soon experience. He emphasizes the Heavenly hand that led Ya'akov and his children down to Egypt in the first place, that they were "*anus al pi ha-dibur*," completely compelled by a decree from God.[27] This could stand as a parallel to the control that God has over the situation of the Jews of his era as well. He specifies that when the Jewish People say "blessed is He who guards His promise to Israel" they are not really declaring thankfulness to God keeping His promise, but rather for fulfilling His promise through them, even though He could have fulfilled it through Avraham's other descendants. God chose the Jews in particular, and the Jews reciting the *haggadah* even in exile should remember their chosenness.[28] Abarbanel also expands on the traditional reason why "I love Him because He listens"[29] is recited: not only because God currently listens, but also because it is known that He listened in the past, and thus will soon listen again. Just as God listened to the Jews in Egypt when they cried out, He will listen again even in Abarbanel's terrible situation. When he interprets "I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted,'"[30] he draws an

explicit parallel between the *seder* and his current situation: Just as every year Jews sit at the *seder* and remember the way the Egyptian suffering ended, soon Jews will be able to look back on the current exile and remember the way their suffering ended.[31]

Abarbanel stayed in Monopoli only for a few years after he completed his *haggadah*. He remained just as prolific until his final days in Venice, where he passed away in 1508 at the age of 70. He had lived through a turbulent and frightening time and was an anchor of hope, through his works, to many of his fellow Jews in similar situations who may have given up faith otherwise. Among all of his works, the *haggadah* stands out as linking the story told about the salvation in the past to the story of the tumultuous present to the story which hopefully will be told soon, with the coming of the redemption.

1 A tremendous amount of credit for the inspiration for and structure of this essay, as well as some ideas within it, goes to Dr. Avigail Rock's pre-Pesach lecture on this topic at Stern College for Women, 2016. All research was my own.

2 Shemot 13:8

3 See Angel, Hayyim, "Abarbanel: Commentator and Teacher Celebrating 500 Years of his Influence on Tanakh Study," Tradition 24,3 (2009)

4 When writing, I referred to the text of the Mosad HaRav Kook edition of the Haggadah, put together by R Yisrael Meir Persser. All footnotes based on its pagination.

5 For more information about Abarbanel's life, see Minkin (Abarbanel and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain) and Netanyahu (Don Isaac Abravanel, Statesman and Scholar), among others.

6 Abarbanel's introduction to the Haggadah, page 67

7 In addition to the mentioned biographies, see Feldman (Philosophy in a Time of Crisis: Don Isaac Abravanel-Defender of the Faith) and Lawee (Isaac Abarbanel's Stance Toward Tradition- Defense, Dissent and Dialogue) for further discussion on this.

8 Netanyahu, Don Isaac Abravanel, Statesman and Scholar

9 Lawee, Isaac Abarbanel's Stance Toward Tradition-Defense, Dissent and Dialogue p 21

10 All examples in this paragraph from Abarbanel's introduction, pages 70-71

11 Translation is the author's - the phrase is an allusion to Eicha 2:8

12 Allusion to Ovadiah 1:20

13 Allusion to Tehillim 40:13

14 Pre-Pesach lecture of Dr. Avigail Rock at Stern College for Women, 2016

15 Esther 3:13

16 Allusion to Devarim 32:9

17 All examples in this paragraph in Abarbanel's introduction, pages 68-69

18 Allusion to Yirmiyahu 2:13

19 This focus on redemption can be seen in his other works written in Monopoli as well

20 Allusion to Tehillim 51:19

21 All examples in this paragraph can be found in Abarbanel's introduction, pages 70-71

22 Haggadah page 108

23 Ibid page 245

24 Haggadah page 176

25 Ibid page 181-182

26 See Netanyahu

27 Haggadah page 164-166

28 Haggadah page 139

29 Tehillim 116

30 Tehillim 116:10

31 Haggadah page 163-164

Comparing the Parallel Historical Accounts of the Talmud and Josephus

By Aryeh Helfgot

Several historical accounts found in the Talmud are paralleled by accounts recorded earlier in the works of Josephus, the first-century Roman Jewish historian. While the rabbinic sages of the Talmud (Hazal) surely had historical traditions of their own, they likely had traditions from sources that were based on Josephus as well.[1] Thus, when it is clear that a Talmudic account is based upon Josephus, the divergences of the Talmudic version from Josephus's version may have been embellishments, used to highlight a specific point or theme. This essay will explore two examples of this story-parallelism, and theorize as to the deeper messages that Hazal embedded into their own accounts.

Story 1: The War of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus

When Alexander Yannai, one of the last Hasmonean kings, died in 76 B.C.E., his widow Salome Alexandra succeeded him and took control of Judea.[2] After she died in 67 B.C.E., her two sons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, fought one another for the throne. Hyrcanus besieged Jerusalem, locking Aristobulus and his supporters inside the city. During this stalemate, both brothers appealed to the Romans, who had been conquering land nearby in Syria. When the Roman general Pompey sided with Hyrcanus, Aristobulus's supporters refused to submit to the decision.[3] As a result, Pompey stormed Jerusalem, fought the remaining Jews, and raided the Temple. His subsequent victory inaugurated Roman control over Judea, which eventually led to the termination of the Hasmonean dynasty and had a significantly negative impact on the Jews in Judea for years to come.

Josephus records a particular occurrence that happened during Hyrcanus's siege of Aristobulus in Jerusalem:

> While the temple priests and Aristobulus were besieged, the festival of Passover came, at which it is our custom to offer a great number of sacrifices to God; those that were with Aristobulus wanted sacrifices, and desired that their countrymen outside would furnish them with such sacrifices, and assured them they should have as much money for them as they should desire; and when they required them to pay a thousand drachmae for each head of cattle, Aristobulus and the priests willingly undertook to pay for them accordingly, and those within let down the money over the walls, and gave it them. But when the others had received it, they did not deliver the sacrifices but arrived at that height of wickedness as to break the assurances they had given…[4] [5]

Hyrcanus's men deceived Aristobulus's men by not giving them the animal sacrifice for Passover that they had purchased. In the Talmud we find an almost identical account:

> Our Rabbis taught: when the kings of the Hasmonean house fought one another, Hyrcanus was outside and Aristobulus was within [the city wall]. Each day [those that were within] used to let down [to those outside] coins in a basket, and haul up [in return] animals for the daily sacrifices. An old man knowledgeable in Greek wisdom said [to those outside] in Greek: 'As long as they carry on the Temple service, they will never surrender to you'. The next day, they let down coins, but they hauled up a pig. When it [the pig] reached halfway up the wall, it stuck its claws into the wall and the land of Israel was quaked a distance of 400 parasangs. At that time they declared: "Cursed is the man who raises pigs, cursed is the man who teaches his son Greek wisdom."[6] [7]

Like Josephus's account, the Talmud's account includes Hyrcanus's siege of Aristobulus and his deception of those within the city regarding the sale of an animal sacrifice. In addition to the Talmud's similarities to Josephus, the fact that this Talmudic passage identifies the Hasmonean brothers using their Greek names "Aristobulus" and "Hyrcanus", as opposed to most other Talmudic stories where Greek names are converted into their Hebrew forms, suggests that Hazal imported this story from an outside source derived from Josephus, who wrote in Greek.[8] Thus, we can view Josephus's version as the "control" to which to the Talmudic version can be contrasted.

Having established this, it is worth noting the differences between the two versions. One is that in Josephus, the conflict is about the sacrifices of Passover, but in the Talmud, it is about the daily sacrifice. Also, in Josephus, Hyrcanus's deception is to haul up no sacrifice, but in the Talmud, it is the hauling up of a pig. We may theorize that Hazal added the element of the pig to the story to underscore their broader view of this Hasmonean civil war. The idea of a pig as a sacrifice hearkens back to the religious decree of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV that forced Jews to sacrifice pigs in the Temple to Greek gods (168 B.C.E.).[9] [10] The motive for Anitochus's decrees, according to some, was to spread Hellenistic rites and culture.[11] Thus, Hazal's placement of the pig into the story as the item of deception may symbolically convey that this civil war was due to the spread of Hellenism amongst Jews. Indeed, during this period, many Hasmoneans became greatly influenced by Hellenism and were estranged from Jewish observance.[12] There was disunity between the Hellenizers, who embraced Greek culture, and the non-Hellenizers, who did not. The notion that Hellenism caused the strife is also reflected in the Talmud's assertion that the deceitful plan to haul up the pig was initiated by a man knowledgeable in Greek wisdom. Additionally, this Talmudic passage is written in the context of a discussion of the prohibition of learning Greek wisdom.[13]

Alternatively, it may be suggested that the pig is a symbol of Rome, as the two are often associated throughout rabbinic literature.[14] [15] As mentioned above, the brothers' appeal to Pompey led to Pompey's conquest of Judea and the end of the Hasmonean dynasty. Thus, perhaps Hazal wished to emphasize that their disunity caused the Roman infiltration of Judea.

Story 2: The Prophecy of Vespasian's Ascent

In 66 C.E., Jews throughout Judea began a rebellion, later known as the Great Revolt, against the Roman emperor Nero in hopes of gaining autonomy. Roman forces mobilized to different parts of Judea and the rebellion was crushed. In 70 C.E., the Temple was destroyed.[16]

The Talmud records a story about the Roman siege of Jerusalem right before the destruction of the Second Temple is recorded.[17] It says that R. Yohanan ben Zakkai, a leading rabbinic figure, encouraged the Jews to surrender to the Roman general Vespasian. A group of rebels, however, refused and instead wished to battlefight. When R. Yohanan ben Zakkai realized that the rebels' actions would lead to the destruction of the Temple, he told his students to carry him out of the city in a coffin to deceive the rebel gatekeepers into allowing them to leave for the sake of burying the dead. After he escaped, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai went to the Roman camp, approached Vespasian, and predicted that Vespasian would become the new emperor. Soon after, word was delivered that Nero had died and that Vespasian had indeed been crowned the new emperor. When offered a reward for his correct prediction, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai requested that he be given the city of Yavneh to reestablish Jewish life. The request was granted but, as expected, Jerusalem was destroyed.[18]

Fascinatingly, this entire Talmudic account parallels a certain story that Josephus writes about himself. Before Josephus became a Roman historian, he was the head of the Jewish forces in the city of Jotapata during the Great Revolt.[19] Josephus writes that when the city fell to the Romans, he escaped into a cave with forty other people.[20] Much to Josephus's dismay, they all voted to commit a mass suicide instead of surrendering to the Romans. They drew lots to determine the order and, by luck of the draw, Josephus and one other man remained as the last pair. Josephus convinced the other man to surrender with him and, when they did, Josephus approached Vespasian saying:

> You believe, Vespasian, that I am merely a prisoner, but I come to you as a herald of greater destinies...You will be Caesar, Vespasian. You will be emperor… [21]

Later in 69 C.E., when Vespasian was proclaimed emperor, Josephus was granted Roman citizenship. He eventually became an advisor and historian for the Romans.

Both Hazal and Josephus tell a story of a leader who surrenders to the Romans in opposition to other Jews, prophetically predicts the crowning of Vespasian, and is rewarded for his efforts. It should be noted that Josephus's narrative fits naturally within historical context. When the Romans captured Jotapata along with the rest of the Galilee in 67 C.E., Vespasian was indeed commanding the offensive there and was still a general.[22] [23] However, Hazal's version does not seem to fit in historical context. The Roman siege of Jerusalem took place in 70 C.E., when Vespasian was already the emperor and back in Rome.[24] Thus, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai could not have met Vespasian outside Jerusalem and Vespasian was already declared emperor. It is then reasonable to assume that Hazal had a tradition from a source based on Josephus and applied it to R. Yohanan ben Zakkai in order to make a point.

In telling this story, perhaps Hazal wished to promote a certain approach to the post-Temple era. While many Jews felt uncomfortable under the rule of the Romans and felt hopeless without a Temple, Hazal wished to emphasize that Jewish life could nevertheless continue and adapt. R. Yohanan ben Zakkai was the hero of that movement, since he was the one who made various religious enactments after the destruction of the Temple. These enactments allowed for Temple-bound Jewish practices to be done outside the Temple, allowing Judaism to thrive in a new diaspora reality. Some of these enactments

include: (1) taking the Lulav bundle for all seven days of the holiday of Sukkot, an act originally only done in the Temple;[25] (2) blowing the Shofar for Rosh HaShana even on the Sabbath (if there was a court in the city), something originally only done in the Temple;[26] and (3) having the Temple priests bless the people while barefoot, also something only done in the Temple.[27] Thus, Hazal's portrayal of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai as a pseudo-prophet who surrendered to the Romans in return for the Yavneh might have been their way of affirming the philosophy of progressing and continuing Judaism without political autonomy or a Temple.

The notion of surrendering to the Romans to ensure the future survival of Judaism is highlighted in the contrast between Hazal's and Josephus's accounts. Whereas in Josephus, the prophecy to Vespasian is delivered for self-interest and ends in the protagonist joining the enemy side, in the Talmud, it is delivered for the needs of others and for the broader interests of Judaism.

While we have pointed out that the inspiration for Hazal's story may have come from Josephus, many elements of the R. Yohanan ben Zakkai story also parallel the story of the prophet Jeremiah during the destruction of the First Temple.[28] Both lived in a besieged Jerusalem, foresaw the city's destruction, and advocated surrendering to the foreign nation.[29] Both ran into trouble while trying to exit the city gates.[30] Both were rewarded by an enemy leader in response to their prophecies.[31] By portraying R. Yohanan ben Zakkai in the image of Jeremiah, Hazal may have wished to underscore the foresight and hopefulness of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai.

Conclusion

By contrasting similar accounts found in Josephus and the Talmud, we can identify instances where Hazal may have sought to emphasize or alter details in their historical narratives in order to embed their stories with certain messages and lessons. By analyzing these contrasts, we can better study historical narratives and their broader historical periods through the mindset and outlook of Hazal.

1 Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Parallel Historical Tradition in Josephus and Rabbinic Literature," World Congress of Jewish Studies 9 (1986) Division B, vol.1.

2 Lawrence Schiffman, From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1991), 100-104.

3 Hershel Shanks, Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 283, 287-288.

4 Antiquities of the Jews, XIV 2.2. Translation of Josephus's works is from the William Whiston translation (1737), with some minor modifications.

5 Translation of Josephus's works is from the William Whiston translation (1737), with some minor modifications.

6 Sotah 49b; Menachot 64b.

7 Translation of the Talmud is from the Soncino Talmud, with some minor modifications.

8 Vered Noam, "Unity, Schism, and Foreign Culture: The War of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus and the Murder of Onias." Web. Accessed 13 February 2016. https://us.ivoox.com/en/vered-noam-on-unity-schism-and-foreign-culture-audios-mp3_rf_10245314_1.html.

9 Dov Linzer, "Menachot 64- Josephus, Hyrcanus, and the Pig on the Wall," A Message from the Rosh HaYeshiva: Torah From Our Beit Midrash, available at rabbidovlinzer.blogspot.com

10 1 Maccabees, 1:44-48.

11 See Mitchell First, "What Motivated Antiochus to Issue his Decrees Against the Jews?", Hakirah 16 (Winter 2013): 193-211

12 Schiffman , 101.

13 Sotah 49b.

14 Lev. Rabbah 13:5; Gen. Rabbah 65:1; Pesachim 118b.

15 Linzer, "Menachot 64- Josephus, Hyrcanus, and the Pig on the Wall."

16 Schiffman, 157-161.

17 Gittin 56a-56b; Avot Di-Rabbi Nathan A, Chapter 4; Avot Di-Rabbi Nathan B, Chapter 6; Lam. Rabbah 1:29.

18 It should be noted that there are many discrepancies amongst the rabbinic versions.

19 Gary William Poole, "Flavius Josephus," Encyclopedia Britannica Online, available at www.britannica.com.

20 Jewish War 3.7-8.

21 Jewish War 3.8-9.

22 Amram Tropper, Rewriting Ancient Jewish History: The History of the Jews in Roman times and the New Historical Method (New York: Routledge 2016), 149-157.

23 The fact that it fits into historical context indicates that the story might have originated with Josephus. However, in terms of historical truth, Josephus may have claimed to have his prophecy in order to aggrandize himself in face of, what many might have thought of as, his traitorous actions in joining the Romans. See E.D. Huntsman, "The Reliability of Josephus: Can He Be Trusted?" Bringham Young University Studies 36, no. 3 (1996), 392-402.

24 Tropper, 149-157

25 Sukkah 41a.

26 Rosh Hashana 29b.

27 Rosh Hashana 31b.

28 Tropper , 149-157

29 Jeremiah 38:18.

30 Jeremiah 37:13.

31 Jeremiah 39:11-12.

Jewish Identity Informed by Historical Consciousness

By Yaakov Schiff

In a recently published essay, Rabbi Dr. Carmi Horowitz presents a reverent intellectual-biographical sketch of his formidable teacher, the late Professor Isadore Twersky. In the course of describing the legacy of the complicated man who was simultaneously heir to the Talner Hassidic dynasty, a premier student and son-in-law of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and longtime Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy at Harvard University,[1] Horowitz offers the following telling anecdote:

> Once, during my first or second year at Harvard, I asked [Prof. Twersky] at the urging of one of my friends, "Does not the study of Jewish history border on *bittul Torah* (i.e., a failure to maximize all of one's time in the study of Torah)?" He answered me immediately, "Whatever we are doing here in the seminar room is a fulfillment of *talmud Torah* (the study of Torah)."

No doubt, Horowitz puts it mildly in qualifying that Prof. Twersky's graduate seminars were "not exactly classic exercises in *talmud Torah*." Nevertheless, he reflects boldly,

> There was a seamless connection in [Prof. Twersky's] eyes between his scholarly endeavors and the religious obligation to study Torah.[2]

Whatever this or any reader may happen to feel about the general compatibility of Torah commitment and secular studies, the notion that such a powerful continuum might exist between the academic study of Jewish history and *talmud Torah* is striking and not at all obvious; indeed, Horowitz himself spends much of the remainder of his piece examining how, in his view, such a remarkable synergy was achieved through the life, work, and legacy of his eminent teacher. For those who do espouse an integrative religious philosophy which encourages the halakhic Jew to engage fruitfully with the best offerings of general culture, Prof. Twersky's intriguing example challenges the reader to explore and possibly rethink the way twenty-first century Orthodox Jews relate to the study of history in general and their own national history in particular.

On one level, one might ask what religious value the study of history – specifically, Jewish history – has on the collective theoretical plane. In this respect, one might consider questions like what value Hazal placed upon the study and/or consciousness of history, how contemporary Jewish thinkers have weighed in upon the issue, and whether patterns of difference and/or consensus among them may be identified. On another level, one might explore this same inquiry on a personal plane, from the vantage point of praxis rather than theory. In this vein, one might investigate questions like whether and how the study of Jewish history has potential for positive religious value to the contemporary religious individual on the one hand, and/or engenders risk for negative religious value to the contemporary religious individual on the other. Although extensive exploration of this matter is wont to lead to a rich multiplicity of perspectives, a truly adequate survey of those perspectives is beyond both this writer's expertise and the scope of this essay.[3] Instead, this piece shall attempt the more modest goal of constructing an informed case on behalf of the relevance and value of academic historical study from a contemporary Orthodox perspective in light of these guiding questions.

Turning first to the matter at hand as it relates to the theoretical, collective plane, does Judaism as a faith place any particular value upon historical consciousness? In an expansive essay dedicated to the purpose of exploring the relationship of Torah and Western culture in general, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein comments upon what he understands to be the significance of historical inquiry to the Jewish worldview on a broad scale and to the thinking, Torah-observant Jewish individual on a local scale. Of the former, he writes:

> If science probes one facet of immanent revelation, history describes another. Its sphere, however, is not God's exclusively but the interaction of the human and the divine. From the perspective of faith, historical study consists of the exploration and analysis of the events and records of the drama of conjunction and confrontation between providential direction and creaturely freedom. The nature and proportions of that interaction constitutes a major crux of religious philosophy.[4]

For R. Lichtenstein, the celebrated Maimonidean teaching that love and fear of God may be achieved through contemplation of the wisdom inherent in nature[5] finds a worthy analogue in the realm of the humanities in the form of the study and appreciation of history.[6] The very notion of Divine immanence dictates that the myriad doings of humankind and the events of world history are (in some measure) themselves a live, ongoing forum for interaction between God and His creations. From the theoretical standpoint of faith itself, these events rightly demand pause and attention as a sort of blueprint to the Divine hand, and perhaps even a showcase for historical teleology: "Remember thee the days of old, contemplate the years of each generation," they exhort; "ask thy father and he shall tell thee, thy elders and they shall say over to thee," they whisper.[7] As R. Lichtenstein puts it:

> [H]istory at once challenges us to seek an insight into the modus operandi of Providence and provides tools and materials requisite for the quest. To be sure, modern man is far less predisposed than his predecessors to read the past theologically… Nevertheless, to the committed Jew, the spiritual significance of viewing God's historical handiwork remains paramount.[8]

Without a doubt, various Jewish thinkers of the past century-and-a-half have debated as to how appropriate it is to actively read Divine agenda into the events of history. One specific example of such a debate is the discussion among rabbinic leadership figures of the past seventy-five years concerning the eschatological significance of the Holocaust and subsequent rise of the State of Israel: While R. Soloveitchik was famously prompted to change his political alliance from Agudat Yisrael to Mizrahi in the 1940s and notably highlighted "six knocks" of God upon the door of Israel in its recent history,[9,10] Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler famously rejected out of hand the very possibility of passing post-facto historical judgement upon the reticent leadership decisions of *gedolei Yisrael* in pre-WWII Europe.[11] And while such prominent figures as Rabbis Shlomo Goren, Isaac Herzog, and Zvi Yehudah Kook conspicuously attributed proto-messianic import to the modern Israeli state, many others – men as disparate as Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, the late Grand Rabbi of Satmar Hassidism, and Rabbi Norman Lamm, chancellor emeritus of Yeshiva University – were (to varying degrees) notably less definitive in pronouncing the State of Israel to be "the beginning of the flowering of our Redemption." More recently still, Rabbis Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l and Yehudah Amital zt"l expressed reservations as to the categorical attribution of definitive eschatological significance to the modern Israeli State: the former in stressing the need for reorientation toward the more soberly pragmatic "tragic dimension of trust [in God]" in the modern Israeli context,[12] and the latter in going so far as to suggest that "it may be that all those who spoke about the beginning of the flowering of our redemption were mistaken."[13] [14]

That it might be appropriate for individuals in any setting to actively "read into" the teleology of historical or even contemporary events is a very controversial issue. Setting aside the question of individual behavior, though, the notion that Judaism as a belief system puts emphasis upon the concepts of inherent design and progressive trajectory innate to the course of human history would appear to be far more straightforwardly acceptable. One need hardly look any further than feature halakhic imperatives to find conspicuous expression of this emphasis: Mizvot like remembering the exodus from Egypt - both through the daily and nightly recitation of *keri'at shema* and the heavily experiential rituals of the Passover holiday – embody the importance of reinforcing awareness of foundational events in the Jewish cultural past; customs, liturgy, and ritual commemorate seminal

events in Jewish national history, such as the destruction of the Jewish temples and subsequent national exile which have defined Jewish history since the close of the biblical period[15]; and even some of the most basic articles of Jewish dogma, such as the belief that God created the universe and the age-old messianic hope expressed through the words of the Prophets, demand sensitivity to the telos of history in constituting the intellectual underpinning of Jewish axiology. Still, even given all this evidence, it is crucial to point out that there may be a very significant difference between the conception of historical consciousness expressed through Jewish tradition and the conception of historical awareness and study advanced by the contemporary academy. Indeed, while the academic conception of history may be characterized as *linear*, Jewish tradition's conception of human history might best be described as *cyclical*: for while the academic study of history is characterized by regard for meticulous facticity, critical examination and chronological accuracy, Jewish tradition appears to prioritize experiential symbolism – what the late Prof. Yosef Chaim Yerushalmi famously dubbed "collective cultural memory"[16] – over and above sheer historical precision.

On a theoretical level, of course, this seems all well and good: Judaism as a faith tradition reserves every right to emphasize or even prioritize certain values above others, nonconformance with certain contemporary academic sympathies and sensibilities notwithstanding. Indeed, from a sociological standpoint, the notion of prioritizing cultural memory may not be so controversial or even particular to Jewish tradition at all. "[C]ollective memory, a set of transmitted values and experiences relevant to a broad group as opposed to a specific individual, is a central component in the construction of social and cultural identity," writes Jacob J. Schacter; "the process of 'how societies remember' is fundamental to defining what societies are." [17] There are, moreover, different ways to state this issue: from the vantage point of axiology, for example, it has been plausibly suggested that Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's quasi-scientific, a priori conception of the halakhic system – especially as advanced in his celebrated essay *Halakhic Man* – conforms quite well with the premeditated ahistoricity implied by the prioritization of cultural memory over historical facticity.[18] That halakhic life is about the experience of the individual in active concert with national heritage, rather than despite it or even because of it, is a claim to which most Orthodox Jews will proudly assent.

Nevertheless, there is a point past which Judaism's prioritization of memory over history becomes ethically troubling or even threateningly contradictory—as when the devaluation of historical fact verges on the disingenuous and pernicious. In a recent essay dedicated partially to this topic, David Shatz writes compellingly of the dangers associated with this folly:

> Cases of deliberate misattribution of views for the sake of bolstering a halakhic position are, to be sure, only a subset, though a large one, of the total number of falsifications in *Haredi* historiography. Nevertheless, the basic point about the cost of systemic falsification can be extended, for if a community moves from misattribution of views to other sorts of historical misrepresentations, there is a danger of it turning into a culture of suspicion, in which nothing of significant import that anyone relates should be trusted.[19]

Going perhaps further than Shatz, R. Aharon Lichtenstein offers justification on behalf of the positive religious potential of historical study specifically as circumscribed by the hallmarks of academic rigor. Insofar as the Torah's mandate to contemplate Jewish history is motivated by a faith that "it is in the context of God's unique relation to His chosen people that the workings of Divine Providence are most fully manifested and can be most readily perceived," it is nothing short of imperative that the study of that history be pursued with genuine regard for and sensitivity to historical accuracy—a goal which simply "cannot be attained by hagiography or moralizing alone." [20]

If Judaism's regard for historical consciousness on the plane of theory is a matter of debate, Judaism's regard for historical study on the plane of personal practice is only more so. In the same piece quoted previously, Shatz highlights an intriguing delay in the mainstream acceptance of the Orthodox Jewish scholar of history as a "*Torah U-Madda* ideal," even as the models of the Orthodox Jewish mathematician, scientist, and philosopher were commonly celebrated in Modern Orthodox communities of the twentieth century.[21] Shatz points to three putative factors in an attempt to explain this sociological phenomenon, and the very first among these is that "applications of historical method had led to biblical criticism and shaken the foundations of traditional belief." He explains:

> Historians [of the nineteenth century] sought to dispel the aura surrounding the talmudic sages by presenting them as influenced by their social standing and context… [I]ndeed, failure to include academic Jewish studies in descriptions of [Yeshiva University]'s educational mission was in part due to the discipline's potential to undermine traditional beliefs. In the words of Yosef Yerushalmi in his celebrated book *Zakhor,* speaking generally of critical research into Judaism: "History becomes what it has never been before - the faith of fallen Jews."[22]

What emerges from Shatz's assessment is an honest recognition that there are risks from the standpoint of religious reverence and fidelity concomitant to association with the academy. Interest in and openness to broader exploration of historical fact is one thing; the assimilation of values, assumptions and predispositions irreverent of traditional Jewish faith and *weltanschauung* is quite another. Nor, indeed, can one naively presume that the beliefs and attitudes characteristic of the academy today diverge so significantly from those of the academy of yesteryear on this matter as to effectively mitigate these risks to the point of obsolescence.

Recognizing these dangers full well, R. Lichtenstein too develops a qualified approach to this matter. Concerning involvement in secular branches of study in general, he writes pointedly and frankly of the associated risks:

> [One major] concern is religious, especially as regards the sensitive area of faith and dogma: "*'After your own heart' – this refers to infidelity*." This, too, is multifaceted, relating in part to faith in its universal aspect, and in part to specific dogmatic elements… History often purports to present findings which contravene Scripture or tradition; or, alternatively, it may distort the tensile balance between the eternal and temporal aspects of Torah by overemphasizing the contextual cultural matrix within which it flourished.

The first danger which R. Lichtenstein highlights is a very serious one. While for many people, it may not be so difficult to affirm religious conviction in the face of everyday practice or even occasional interpersonal confrontation, the delicacy inherent in (a) constantly discerning what is and isn't acceptable to an Orthodox Jewish faith-based mindset during the course of rigorous academic engagement – as well as (b) operating with a confusing of duality in standards of credence and acceptability – can pose an enormously difficult challenge to manage. In continuing further, though, R. Lichtenstein notes a second concern of no less import:

> Beyond confrontation, moreover, lurk subtler dangers – some, the flip side of palpably positive elements. Comparison with other civilizations is a case in point. On the one hand, it heightens and sharpens our awareness of the genuine character of Torah, [while] on the other hand, the very act of comparison often jades a sense of uniqueness…

While somewhat less popularly discussed, the jadedness of religious conscience of which R. Lichtenstein writes is a very serious concern which undoubtedly requires address – and redress – in the contemporary milieu. Attitude toward comparative religious scholarship can be a profoundly difficult thing to balance with particularized religious faith on a consistent, individualized basis – and yet, if compatibility between dedicated religious conviction and serious academic scholarship is indeed possible, just such a balance must be consciously struck. If not, the religious individual runs a substantial personal risk, as mere "[intellectual] diffusion per se may undermine the centrality of one's primary [religious] base."[23]

Risks notwithstanding, it is by no means the purpose of this essay to discourage individuals from engagement with academic historical scholarship; indeed, quite the contrary is the case. Apart from extolling the positive religious value of historical study and consciousness, one might easily point to what R. Lichtenstein would call 'the cost of ignoring *ḥokhmah*' to both the collective and the individual. It is, however, the intention of this writer to temper an unrestrainedly enthusiastic embrace of *ḥokhmah* by insisting upon the importance of conscious awareness of the real dangers associated with individual engagement in academic historical study. Over the past half-century, the broader Modern Orthodox community has produced increasing numbers of great and well-regarded men and women who specialize in the discipline of academic history, and God-willing it will continue to do so in the years to come. This is, surely, a wonderful thing. But let not a passion and regard for the conspicuous cultural value, which rightly ought to be attributed to historical inquiry lead to a blindness to the religious pitfalls with which it presents the contemporary Orthodox Jewish individual. Knowledge is undoubtedly a powerful thing – and cognizance of the risks related to academic study stands to empower us as stronger and more complete religious individuals even as we seriously and wholeheartedly engage it.

1 Horowitz, Carmi. "Professor Yitzhak Twersky—The Talner Rebbe z"l: A Brief Biography." The Torah U-Madda Journal 8 (1998): 43-58.

2 Soloveichik, Meir Y., Stuart W. Halpern, and Shlomo Zuckier. "Halakha and History, Intellectualism and Spirituality." Torah and Western Thought: Intellectual Portraits of Orthodoxy and Modernity. (2015): 249-280.

3 For more information on this worthwhile topic, see J. J. Schacter's "Facing the Truths of History," The Torah U-Madda Journal 8 (1998), 200-276; David Shatz's "Nothing but the Truth? Modern Orthodoxy and the Polemical uses of History," Jewish Thought and Jewish Belief (2012), 141-176; and Amos Funkenstein's "Perceptions of Jewish History," Los Angeles 1993, 16-18.

4 Lichtenstein, Aharon. "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict." Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration: 217-292.

5 "And what is the path to loving and fearing [God]? When a person contemplates [God's] great and wondrous actions and creations, and intuits from them [God's] boundless wisdom, immediately he shall love and praise and venerate and long a mighty longing to know God… And when he contemplates these things immediately shall he recoil and fear and know that he is a small and weak being, standing with tiny, weak intelligence before He of perfect wisdom… And it is thus for this reason that I shall explain certain great principles from the work of the Master of the Universe: such that they should be an opening to the understanding one to love God, as the Sages said concerning love, that through [appreciation of nature] you shall come to recognize God…" (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilhot Yesodei ha-Torah 2:2).

6 Maimonides' own attitude toward the inherent religious value of history and historical study is less clear and subject to some debate. See for example Shubert Spero's "Maimonides and the Sense of History," Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought 24:2 (1989), 128-137.

7 Deuteronomy 32:7

8 Lichtenstein, Aharon. "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict." Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration: 217-292.

9 Angel, Marc. Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1997.

10 Soloveitchik, Joseph B. "Kol Dodi Dofek: It is the Voice of My Beloved that Knocketh." Fate and Destiny: From Holocaust to The State of Israel (1992).

11 Dessler, Eliyahu E. Strive for Truth! (translation of Mikhtav me-Eliyahu), transl. Aryeh Carmell, 6 vols, Jerusalem (1985-1999), vol. I, p. 217.

12 Ziegler, Reuven, and Aharon Lichtenstein. By His Light: Character and Values in the Service of God. KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2003.

13 Mayah, Mosheh, and Yehudah Amital. A World Built, Destroyed, And Rebuilt: Rabbi Yehudah Amital's Confrontation with the Memory of the Holocaust. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2004.

14 Wein, Avraham. "Of Sensitivity and Humility: An Exposition of Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's Approach to the Suffering of Others." Kol Hamevaser, November 6, 2015. Accessed September 9, 2016. http://www.kolhamevaser. com/2015/11/of-sensitivity-and-humility-an-exposition-of-rabbi-aharon-lichtensteins-approach-to-the-suffering-of-others/.

15 An especially excellent example of this may be found in the kinnot recited on Tish'ah be-Av, which recall a myriad of historical Jewish tragedies in an attempt to sensitize readers to the connectedness of Jewish experience.

16 Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory. University of Washington Press, 2012.

17 Schacter, Jacob J. "Remembering the Temple: Commemoration and Catastrophe in Ashkenazi Culture," The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah, ed. S. Fine, Leiden and Boston (2011), 276.

18 See David Shatz's "Nothing but the Truth? Modern Orthodoxy and the Polemical uses of History," Jewish Thought and Jewish Belief (2012), 141-176.

19 Ibid. 172.

20 Lichtenstein, Aharon. "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict." Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration: 217-292.

21 Despite this, of course, there have been many notable (Neo-)Orthodox Jewish proponents of involvement in academic historical study in the modern era. As far back as the mid-nineteenth century, for example, scholars like Rabbis Azriel Hildesheimer and David Zvi Hoffman gained fame as proponents of appropriating the tools and methodology of the Wissenschaft des Judentums in the service of complementing – rather than battering – traditionalist Jewish faith.

22 Ibid. 144. See also previous footnote.

23 Lichtenstein, Aharon. "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict." Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration: 217-292.

The Missing Two Hundred Years and the Historical Veracity of Hazal

By Mindy Schwartz

Modern Jews often encounter a tug of war between scholarship and rabbinic tradition. Hazal have left us with an extensive and exacting record of what to do and what to believe. It is our task to sift through this record and determine which parts of this record are incumbent upon us today. While the halakhah laid down by Hazal is indisputably binding for Orthodox Jews, some of Hazal's statements may be overlooked as anecdotal advice, such as in the realms of beauty, medicine, and astrology. Where do Hazal's view on history fall in this discussion? Is the Jewish historical timeline set out in the midrashic work known as Seder Olam Rabban ("The Long Order of the World," sometimes called simply as "Seder Olam") merely a record of the world as they saw it in their time or an integral part of an Orthodox Jew's hashkafic to-do (or believe) list? This question, as well as the tension between modernity and tradition that lies beneath it, come to the fore in the discussion of the so-called missing two hundred years of Jewish history.[1] This refers to the discrepancy in dating the Jewish timeline between the secular Greek historical sources and the midrashic, Rabbinic tradition of Seder Olam, which amounts to about 164 years.[2] Do we wave the white flag and take up the position of the secular historians or must we defend Hazal's account of Jewish history as a key aspect of our Jewish belief?

The debate between Seder Olam and the Greek secular scholars focuses on the length of the Persian' rule over the Jews before Alexander the Great overthrew them. The secular scholars claim that the Persian period began about 164 years prior to the date given by the Rabbinic scholars. Their opinion is based off of their records of at least thirteen Persian kings during this period of time, which calls for a sufficient period of time to accommodate them all.[3] The Rabbinic tradition as laid out in Seder Olam measures the Persian rule as about 164 years shorter than the dating of the Greek historians. It may be tempting for modern Jews to shrug off this discrepancy and squarely place the historical account of Seder Olam in the same aggadic, non-binding bin as the Rabbinic advice on stomach pain cures and astrological harbingers, but the implications of the "missing" (or, more accurately, misplaced) years are much greater. Because Seder Olam based its calculations of the Persian rule on a *peshat* understanding of a prophecy by the prophet Daniel, the debate between the secular and Rabbinic dating may in truth be an issue that challenges the sacred text of the Bible itself. [4]

In the critical verse Daniel tells Cyrus, "And now I will tell you the truth: Persia will have three more kings, and the fourth will be wealthier than them all; by the power he obtains through his wealth, he will stir everyone up against the kingdom of Greece."[5] Seder Olam understands this verse to mean that there were four Persian Kings before the reign of Alexander the Great brought an end to the Persian Empire: Darius the Mede, Cyrus, Ahasuerus, and Darius.[6] Because there were only four Persian Kings, the timespan of the Persian rule in Rabbinic tradition is much shorter than that of the Greek scholars who believe there to have been as many as thirteen kings.[7] It seems that Hazal's understanding is the simple reading of the verse; thus the Greek historical record appears to directly contradict Daniel's prophecy.

The classic commentators corroborate, at least in part, Hazal's interpretation of the verse. Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra explain that the plain meaning most clearly points to five Persian kings, Cyrus plus four more, but note that the Seder Olam's reading of four kings can fit with the plain meaning as well. Rashi, quoting from the list of Persian Kings laid out in Josephus, names Bambisha, Cyrus's son, who most scholars pair with the Greek name Cambyses, as the fifth Persian King.[8] Although Rashi and Ibn Ezra favor the interpretation of five kings, which goes against the opinion of Seder Olam, they both seem to draw the line at the existence of five Persian Kings, placing them in the basic confines of Hazal's historical account. Ibn Ezra is even more emphatic than Rashi in this regard. He quotes the opinion of the *rishon* Rav Moshe ha-Cohen, who claims that there were six Persian kings, and strongly rejects this interpretation as a contradiction of Daniel's words.[9] Rav Sa'diah Gaon in Emunot ve-de'ot also refers to this controversy; he responds to the claim that there were some seventeen Persian Kings with a similarly emphatic response that such a position directly contradicts Daniel 11:2 and thus could not possibly be true.[10]

Can Orthodox Jews accept the Greek historical timeline as historical fact if it contradicts the prophecy of Daniel? If one chooses to accept the veracity of Hazal's timeline in Seder Olam the upwards of thirteen Persian Kings documented by name in Greek sources must be accounted for in some way. Seder Olam addresses this issue by quoting the Talmudic statement, "He is Cyrus, he is Darius, he Artaxerxes; Cyrus because he was a good king, Artaxerxes was the name of the kingship and Darius was his name."[11] This statement accounts for the Greek's long list of Persian Kings in two ways. Firstly, many of the kings could have had more than one name. Darius was called by the nickname Cyrus to compliment his kingship, a practice that may have manifested itself amongst other rulers as well. Thus some of the Persian kings known to the Greeks may be repeats of the same person. Secondly, it is noted that Artaxerxes was the Persian term for ruler, similar to Pharaoh in Egypt. Thus each Artaxerxes does not refer to a new Persian king, but rather the title for a king already named.[12]

The second approach would be to accept the veracity of the secular historians. Azariah Dei Rossi, a 16th century Orthodox Jewish scholar who lived in Italy during the Renaissance, was the first to discuss this issue in depth. Dei Rossi was well versed in both the Jewish and Classical Greek sources and believed that Hazal had no special authority over historical documentation as they do over halakhah.[13] Concerning the issue of the misplaced years of the Persian rule, Dei Rossi, controversially, sided with the secular scholars.[14] Rabbi Yehudah Loew of Prague, commonly known as Maharal, addressed Dei Rossi's claim on the misplaced years issue specifically in his *sefer Be'er ha-Golah.* Using the *peshat* understanding of the text along with the interpretations of Rashi and Ibn Ezra, Maharal points out that Dei Rossi's favoring of the Greek secular source ends up contradicting the plain meaning of Daniel's prophecy. Maharal sharply condemns Dei Rossi's opinion because he sees it as a blatant dismissal of the biblical text. Dei Rossi's stance was so controversial that Rabbi Yosef Caro considered putting him in *herem,* although Rabbi Yosef Caro passed away before the idea ever reached fruition.[15]

How can we reconcile Die Rossi's stance, which seems particularly appealing to the modern Jew, with the plain meaning of Daniel's prophecy? Rav Shimon Schwab famously claimed that the prophecy of four Persians kings is inaccurate, and the Greek historical account is in fact correct. Daniel was commanded to confound the calculations of Mashiah, derived from another verse in Daniel, "close the words and seal the book," and thus this prophecy was meant to throw us off the scent of the *ge'ulah.*[16] However this understanding would also mean that Daniel was commanded to intentionally sabotage the calculations of the *yovel* and *shemmtah* years; in light of this Rav Schwab later retracted his statement.[17]

Another possible understanding of this issue lies in a re-interpretation of the verse in Daniel. When Daniel tells Cyrus "Persia will have three more kings, and the fourth will be wealthier than them all," he is simply highlighting the three or four Persian kings that will be most noteworthy in the greater scheme of history.[18] In this light, Dei Rossi's acceptance of the secular sources over Seder Olam is not so dangerous. Maharal's critique of Dei Rossi focuses on the fact that Seder Olam's account is based on the straightforward understanding of a verse in the Bible. However, if one can read the verse in a way that allows for the existence of more than five kings, then Dei Rossi's embrace of the secular sources does not contradict the Bible.

The highlighting method of listing characters is one that we are familiar with in the Bible. For example, there were more prophets during the first temple years than are delineated in the Bible, but only those who delivered eternal messages relevant to later generations were recorded in the Bible.[19] The biblical narrative focuses on these figures, but acknowledging the existence of other prophets in no ways contradicts that scared narrative. The concept of highlighting key figures can also be seen in the commentary of Rabbi Samuel David Luzzatto, more commonly known as the Shadal, on the descendants of Levi as listed in Shemot Chapter 6. The Bible lists three generations from Levi until Moshe and gives the count of the tribe at the time of Moshe as totaling 22,300 people.[20] Shadal claims that there must have been at least two missing generations between each generation explicitly recorded in order to account for the massive number of Levi's descendants. The Bible chooses to record the generations of Kahat, Amram and Moshe because these generation produced the most noteworthy figures for our narrative, but other generations must have existed and gone unnamed.[21] In the same vein, it is possible that Daniel's prophecy refers to the four (or five) major Persian kings as listed by Seder Olam, while many more Persian Kings, as fitting with the secular historical record, existed in addition

It is incumbent upon modern Jews to determine for ourselves how we view the veracity of Hazal's historical record. Many great scholars, like Rav Sa'adiah Gaon and Maharal, have declined to privilege secular historians and have instead chosen to defend the Jewish historical account laid out by Hazal in Seder Olam Rabbah. However the approach of Azariah Dei Rossi, which places Hazal's historical views in the realm of aggadah and advice, may be more appealing to many Orthodox Jews facing the challenges of modernity. The misplaced 164 years of Jewish history bring this issue to forefront. Although Hazal's historical interpretation may fit more smoothly with the plain meaning of Daniel's prophecy, if one views the verse as more of a "best hits tour," then Dei Rossi's interpretation can also be defended. Thus the modern Jew can certainly find support in viewing Seder Olam as an aggadic work, rather than a strictly binding historical narrative. Of course even if we understand Seder Olam in this light, it is still incumbent upon us, as with all works of Hazal, to find meaning within it.

1 I extend my gratitude to Ellie Schwartz for introducing me to this topic and many of these sources.

2 "Missing Years (Jewish Calendar)." World Public Library. World Public Library Association. Web. 07 Feb. 2016. <http://www.worldlibrary.org>.

3 Ibid.

4 Seder Olam Rabbah chapter 28

5 Daniel, 11:2

6 Seder Olam Rabbah

7 "Missing Years (Jewish Calendar)." World Public Library. World Public Library Association. Web. 07 Feb. 2016. <http://www.worldlibrary.org>.

8 Landy, Yehuda. Purim and the Persian Empire: A Historical, Archaeological, & Geographical Perspective. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2010. Print. Page 13.

9 *Mikrot Gedolot, Commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra on Daniel, 11:2*

10 *Sefer Emunot ve-de'ot, end of Miamar 8*

11 *Mesechet Rosh Hashana 4a, Quoted in Seder Olam Rabbah Chapter 30*

12 *Landy, Yehuda. Purim and the Persian Empire: A Historical, Archaeological, & Geographical Perspective. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 2010. Print.*

13 *Encyclopedia Judaica p.317*

14 *Sefer Me'or Einayim, Imeri Binah (third section)*

15 *Encyclopedia Judaica p.317-318*

16 *Daniel 12:4*

17 *Missing Years (Jewish Calendar)." World Public Library. World Public Library Association. Web. 07 Feb. 2016. <http://www.worldlibrary.org>.*

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Clinton, Boruch. "Isaiah (Yeshayahu)." Torah.org - The Judaism Site. Project Genesis, Inc. Web. 07 Feb. 2016.*

20 *Shemot, 6:16-30*

21 *Commentary of Shadal on Shemot, 6:16-30*

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and the Problem of Biblical Criticism

By Aryeh Sklar

Did the Rav, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, deal with the major theological issues that result from the conclusions of Biblical criticism?[1] On the face of it, he did not. In fact, he seemed generally unconcerned with the historical-critical method that so dominates academia. In part based on this supposed fact, Moshe Sokol and David Singer declare that the Rav should not be considered truly "Modern Orthodox."[2] This should be surprising to anyone who knows the Rav's legacy as a great Modern Orthodox leader who courageously confronted the challenges of modernity – modern-day Maimonides. Sokol states boldly, "In my judgment this is the myth of R. Soloveitchik, a myth which for good sociological reasons found enormous currency amongst many Modern Orthodox Jews, who required an authority figure to make sense of and to some degree justify their participation in modernity."

Sokol suggests several reasons why he thinks the Rav did not deal with these issues.[3] Firstly, he contends, the Rav had a philosophical orientation that did not care too overly much about history and texts, but instead about abstract categories.[4] Sokol's second suggestion is that the Rav understood all too well the potential religious problems inherent in the study and discussion of Biblical criticism, and decided therefore not to confront it at all. He suggests that this ties into what he believes is a third reason, that the Rav sees the religious "man-child" as an ideal. After all, the Rav has stated:

> The adult is too smart. Utility is his guiding-light. The experience of God is not a businesslike affair. Only the child can breach the boundaries that segregate the finite from the infinite. Only the child with his simple faith and fiery enthusiasm can make the miraculous leap into the bosom of God.[5]

Sokol argues that the Rav believed that the "man-child" doesn't require rational proofs. Only the experience is important to him. To Sokol, this explains why the Rav claims in *Lonely Man of Faith* that he has "never even been troubled" by Biblical criticism. Thus, Sokol proposes that the Rav idealized an avoidance and aversion to rationality in the God experience, and therefore he did not attempt to resolve historical scholarship when it came to the Bible.[6] As we will see, others have interpreted Sokol's three reasons for the Rav's ignoring of the problem of Biblical criticism as themselves answers to the issue, not an avoidance of it.

It pays to see the passage alluded to above regarding the Rav having "never been seriously troubled" by Biblical criticism, since it has become the most often quoted of the Rav on Biblical criticism, arresting in its triggering of the reader's curiosity. The Rav writes:

> I have never been seriously troubled by the problem of the Biblical doctrine of creation vis-a-vis the scientific story of evolution at both the cosmic and the organic levels, nor have I been perturbed by the confrontation of the mechanistic interpretation of the human mind with the Biblical spiritual concept of man. I have not been perplexed by the impossibility of fitting the mystery of revelation into the framework of historical empiricism. Moreover, I have not even been troubled by the theories of Biblical criticism which contradict the very foundations upon which the sanctity and integrity of the Scriptures rest. However, while theoretical oppositions and dichotomies have never tormented my thoughts, I could not shake off the disquieting feeling that the practical role of the man of faith within modern society is a very difficult, indeed, a paradoxical one…[7]

R. Jonathan Sacks calls this passage "tantalizing, because nowhere in his writings does Soloveitchik explain the reason for his lack of perplexity."[8] However, the scholars we shall discuss understood there to be a reason behind his seeming disinterest in Biblical criticism. It is almost as if this passage represents a necessary piece of the puzzle to be solved regarding the Rav's relationship to Biblical criticism.

R. Shalom Carmy claims that though "the Rav was avowedly untroubled by, and manifestly not preoccupied with, the methods and conclusions" of Biblical criticism and other academic disciplines, it should not "signify lack of curiosity."[9] Carmy reports that even in the Rav's old age, he would allude to issues raised by Biblical critics. On the other hand, says Carmy, R. Soloveitchik was not nuanced when it came to refusing to accept any of the conclusions of academic Biblical scholarship. Carmy quotes, on more than one occasion, [10] a letter of the Rav, where he denies any possibility of the RCA's involvement in the 1953 JPS translation of the Bible.[11]

Despite these interpretations, other scholars of the Rav have considered areas of the Rav's thought which could be viewed as directly or indirectly responding to Biblical criticism.[12] The following is an outline of several such approaches. These approaches are often mere shades different, sometimes simply a varying angle, but are separated only by a certain emphasis in the approach. Some also complement each other, and can be used to answer questions inevitably raised by others.

I. The Man of Faith The Man of Faith

Dov Schwartz suggests that the Rav's emphasis on the man of faith, as opposed to the man of nature, indicates the Rav's approach to Biblical criticism. Though Sokol, as we saw above, read the passage in *Lonely Man of Faith* quoted above as a reason why the Rav didn't try to discuss Biblical criticism at all, Schwartz sees it as a philosophical outlook that is indeed a response to the issues of Biblical criticism:

> He is well aware of the concern that biblical criticism had evoked in the nineteenth century among a considerable number of Jewish thinkers. Nevertheless, he holds that the faith of the modern individual is not at all troubled by this question... Soloveitchik, then, removes the modern concept of "faith" from its traditional contexts and problems.[13]

Why is the man of faith not concerned with such problems? Because, Schwartz writes, the Rav believes that:

> "Majestic man" strives to control reality and its forces in his benefit... For this purpose, he creates an array of ideal structures—mathematical and physical—that imitate reality, through which he indeed subdues it according to his needs. In contrast, "the man of faith" "explores not the scientific abstract universe but the irresistibly fascinating qualitative world where he establishes an intimate relation with God." Soloveitchik's version of faith is thus closely linked to an understanding of the foundations of concrete existence—removed from ideal existence—and characterizes life as an "existential experience."[14]

To Schwartz, the man of faith is concerned about the existential dialectic of having a relationship with God in the world. The man of faith is only focused on the constant searching for a solution to the loneliness that pursues him. Schwartz notes that this approach makes the Man of Faith impervious to the kind of issues raised by Biblical criticism. "A faith of this type, allowing a dialogue with the other and with God, cannot be subject to cognitive or pragmatic reduction."

Another approach that exists within the "Man of Faith" paradigm is the idea that the faith in particular needs to believe in certain non-rational historical truths to maintain meaning and self-worth. We noted earlier that Sokol attributes the Rav's idealized form of religious cognition, the "man-child," as one of the reasons why he did not discuss the issue of Biblical criticism. Rational proofs are not necessary for the man of faith.[15] Though this would seem, as Sokol suggests, a non-answer to Biblical criticism, the Rav actually uses this concept of non-rational, "apodictic," truth when it comes to historicity and the Bible in the same way. In his discussion early on in *Abraham's Journey*,[16] he discusses the problem presented by Bible critics, "Jew or gentile," who "cast serious doubt upon the authenticity of the narrative." There, the Rav presents two arguments to head off this issue. Firstly, new discoveries are occurring constantly in archeology that could prove or buttress the biblical report, creating a situation now where "skepticism regarding the biblico-historical account has, of late, lost much of its vigor and arrogance… The fury of the historian - the passionate seeker of truth - against the 'Abraham myth' has abated."[17] Secondly, and more importantly for our discussion, the Rav states that "to us, this problem" of historicity is "almost irrelevant." He goes on, "We need no evidence of the historical existence of our patriarch, just as there is no necessity for clear-cut logical evidence concerning the reality of God." The Rav posits that just as God is axiomatic to any cognitive activity, so is belief in the historical reality of Abraham. This is because:

> As the architect and founder of our nation, Abraham left such an indelible imprint upon our unfolding historic destiny that he has been integrated into our historical consciousness… The narrative about his life is almost, to use a Kantian term, an apodictic truth, a constitutive category that activates our great historical experience and lends it meaning and worth. If we were to deny the truth of the Abraham story, our historic march would be a fathomless mystery, an insensate, cruel, absurd occurrence that prosecutes no goal and moves on toward nothingness, running down to its own doom… If Abraham were a myth, a legend, a beautiful but fantastic vision, then we would be faced with a tragic hoax and the ridicule of the centuries and millennia.

The Rav considers non-rational motives of meaning and loss thereof that require the Jew to cling to a belief in the reality of Abraham. Presumably, this would apply to many other areas of the Biblical account, including the forefathers and Moses, and therefore the Bible's revelatory event itself. This kind of approach is interesting, as it employs meaning, and the unwillingness to face the "tragic hoax" of Jewish history if it were found to be falsified, as a response to Biblical criticism. While it can hardly establish truth of history, we can say that the Rav was getting at a reticence to rely on falsifying conclusions when other paradigms continue to be worthy. This may be why he puts forth his first answer of archeological findings confirming Jewish history, since that means we can still hold onto the truths present in it.

II. The Use of Typological Categories

A similar approach is taken by Rabbi Reuven Ziegler (citing Rabbi Shalom Carmy),[18] namely that the Rav employs differing assumptions as an exegete of the text of the Bible, as opposed to the common assumptions employed by Bible critics. This is exemplified in *Lonely Man of Faith*. After saying that he is uninterested in the problems of Biblical criticism, the Rav uses a method of exegesis that resolves a problem of textual scholarship - examining the two incongruent descriptions of man's creation and his purpose in the Garden of Eden from chapters one and two of Genesis. His resolution, that the two narratives represent the multi-faceted and dialectical nature of man, Adam I and Adam II, can be broadly characterized as providing differing approaches to man's identity and purpose in the world. The Bible contains dialectical approaches, which don't have to be resolved or harmonized in any way, but rather interpreted as such. Carmy suggests that this represents the best kind of approach to Biblical criticism, which is to deal with it obliquely by presenting "a compelling alternate understanding." The other way is to "respond to them point-by-point," which is problematic because "one is playing in their arena and is constantly on the defensive."

III. The Halakhic Man and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative

In Part I of *Halakhic Man* the Rav builds up the personality of the ideal Jew, the Halakhic Man, who successfully harmonizes the dialectic present in every human through the use of the Halakha. In Part II, he describes Halakhic Man's great capacity for creativity. He takes every theoretical position and converts it to practical Halakha. The Rav describes this man looking at Scripture and deriving Halakhic principles out of even the most mundane narrative. He celebrates the Midrashic passage that speaks of the narrative portions as even more important than the legal portions, and sees practical Halakha even in the eschatological vision.

Every line and letter of Scripture "alludes to basic principles of Torah law."[19] The story of creation is neither mere dogma nor the revelation of metaphysical mysteries, "but rather in order to teach *practical* Halakha. The Scriptural portion of the creation narrative is a legal portion…that man is obliged to engage in creation and the renewal of the cosmos."

The Rav's Halakhic Man may have been able to respond to Biblical criticism through conversion of narrative into Halakhic imperatives and principles. Scripture becomes ahistorical when viewed as a legal textbook that is not bound in time. A Bible scholar's objections regarding the historical realities of the Bible's creation are a non-sequitur to the Halakhic Man, who ignores such theories in favor of his own halakhic worldview and vision.

IV. The Halakhic Mind and Epistemological Pluralism

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in several places,[20] writes about what he sees as the Rav's idea of epistemological pluralism. In Sacks's book *Crisis and Covenant*, he uses this idea to answer the question of the Rav's response to Biblical criticism. Science and religion never require synthesis because, as Sacks writes, "The scientist, the sociologist and the poet each bring their different methodologies to bear on reality and as a result they see it in different ways, through different concepts."[21] Sacks identifies this train of thought most explicitly in *Halakhic Mind*, in which the Rav wrote that "the object reveals itself in manifold ways to the subject," and that "a certain *telos* corresponds to each of these ontological manifestations." Thus, the reason why Biblical criticism and other fields of scholarship seem to conflict with religious belief is because of a misapplication of these categories. The scientific outlook is concerned for causality, but the religionist's faith is completely unconcerned with how it came to be and is, in the Rav's words, "aboriginal." The religious faith in revelation, explains Sacks, "resists explanation in terms of prior causes...The fact that the biblical text, for example, contains apparent contradictions is not the result of its having been written by many hands, but rather evidence that it reflects and endorses conflicting dimensions of the human condition, with which the religious personality has to struggle in ceaseless dialectic."

Both Sacks, and Walter Wurzburger, see this ceaseless dialectic in the Rav's emphasis on typological categories. The Rav describes these categories as existing in each person, creating a state of tension that a person must resolve. If so, a similar situation occurs when one is confronted with issues of Biblical criticism. Examining *Lonely Man of Faith*'s dialectical Adams makes this clear. Adam I (from chapter one of Genesis) recognizes the ways of nature, archeology, and the scientific world. However, Adam II (from chapter two of Genesis) is a man of faith, in a religious, God-conscious mode of thinking through which he seeks to solve his existential loneliness. These will always be in tension, and never be fully and actually resolved. Walter Wurzberger argues that the Rav only accepted scientific conclusions outside of the religious experience:

> ...for the Rav the endorsement of scientific methods is strictly limited to the realm of Adam I… causal explanations are irrelevant in the domain of Adam II, who can overcome his existential loneliness only through the establishment of a 'covenantal community,' enabling him to relate to transcendence.[22]

Both Sacks and Wurzburger see the Rav's use of Halakha as the response to the crisis found in the tension between the two modes of thinking in the modern world. As Wurzburger puts it, "According to R. Soloveitchik, scientific methods are appropriate only for the explanation of natural phenomena but have no place in the quest for the understanding of the normative and cognitive concepts of Halakha, which imposes its own a priori categories, which differ from those appropriate in the realm of science. It is for this reason that the Rav completely ignores Bible criticism…" Halakha assumes different categories of reality than science does, and thus, the two methods cannot interact. This brings us to the next kind of answer.

V. The A Priori Torah and The Normative Halakha

To Norman Solomon, because the Rav believes halakha to be an "a priori system," (meaning a system that assumes propositions preceding logical deductions), this "renders it immune to history, just like geometry is unaffected by the historical circumstances of its discovery."[23] The Rav's words in Halakhic Man leave no doubt about this:"When Halakhic Man approaches reality, he comes with his Torah, given to him from Sinai, in hand... When Halakhic Man comes across a spring bubbling quietly, he already possesses a fixed, a priori relationship with this real phenomenon: the complex of laws regarding the halakhic construct of a spring." Can this relate to the problems of Biblical criticism? The Rav uses the phrase, a "Torah, given to him from Sinai," which stakes a historical claim, yet from the perspective of the Halakhic Man. Solomon assumes that if Halakha is axiomatic to the Rav, the historicity of the Torah would be as well, though this might be conflating the two. However, we might combine this with what we saw in *Abraham's Journey* above, that the reality of Abraham is a given, axiological to the historical identity of the Jew. As Solomon puts it, the Rav represents a change from Maimonides' assertion of the historicity of the Torah, because it has transformed from a "historical claim to a metaphysical, unverifiable, and therefore unfalsifiable one."

Almut Bruckstein contends that the Rav was something of a neo-Kantian in his view of the halakha, arguing in particular that *Halakhic Mind* and *Halakhic Man* are two works which bear the distinctive marks of neo-Kantian methodology. In so doing, she argues toward a new understanding of the Rav's understanding of Halakha, in which belief in Torah from Sinai is a "halakhic construct," instead of an empirical claim. She writes:

> The traditional formulation of the Halakha as an expression of the divine will is interpreted in neo-Kantian terms as the objectification of a person's normative relationship to the world within the context of propositions genuine to Halakha… Consider then the following intriguing implication of JBS's claim that halakhic reasoning is a cognitive act based upon a priori, autonomous, and ideal categories. This claim by definition excludes any external empirical factor (historical, social, psychological or otherwise) from being a constituent of the halakhic process. Taking this proposition rigorously, we will have to reject the idea that the Halakha had a historical beginning. Any attempt to base the genesis of halakhic thinking upon empirical circumstances would be a contradiction in terms - even if such an empirical claim were only to apply to its inception at a single place and a single moment in time; it would abrogate the a priori character of halakhic reason and turn it into an a posteriori affair. The concepts "*mattan Torah*" and "*Moshe kibbel Torah miSinai*," are to be viewed then as halakhic constructs themselves, rather than as historical constituents.[24]

Interestingly, Bruckstein suggests that according to the Rav, normative halakha renders the story of the Sinaitic revelation true through "the 'perpetuation' and 'reenactment' of that moment of Truth at any moment of a person's studying Torah."[25]

Aviezer Ravitzky puts it similarly, that the Rav turned,

> ...from the logos of the cosmos to the logos of the halakhah, from the knowledge of God's action (Creation) to the knowledge of God's word (Sinai)... In other words: the halakhah, like creation, implies construction and formation by means of quantification and definition, distinction and separation. In sum, creation is an "halakhic" occurrence, while halakhic activity is a "creative" occurrence. The Divine creative act, establishing the real, on the one hand, and the human creative act, concretizing and actualizing the ideal, on the other hand, are contiguous… The argument about the mutual connection between the world and the halakhah refers to the very existence of the world, its very being, rather than to its being as it is, its qualities and specific inner laws. It concerns the "is" as such, not the "what" and "how."[26]

Again, we find the "normative halakha" can create a "halakhic reality" that changes the very meaning of our perception of reality. Creation becomes a task that a halakhic man accomplishes, rendering "God's creation" a daily ritual that indeed does happen. And from another angle, belief is not toward an empirical reality but a halakhic one. This "halakhic reality" need not align with what we would call "historical facts," yet are true nonetheless, since they are based on valid "a priori" principles.

VII. Subjective Truth Turned Objective Perspective

By combining several approaches, we can use the approach of the Rav from *Halakhic Mind* that the halakhic epistemology has a kind of "objective truth" that starts with subjectivity of life. If Halakha is the objectification of a subjective data set, which is what the Rav claims in this work then we can contend that this legitimates other views of religion, because others could have a different objectification using different a priori facts. Thus, one can legitimize Biblical criticism as a different perspective, but not legitimate within one's own system. This combines Sacks's approach of epistemological pluralism, with Solomon's a priori Torah, together with Bruckstein's normative Halakha.

We find this used most in the Rav's essay on interfaith dialogue, "Confrontation." Sokol and Singer consider "Confrontation" as less modern in the Rav's thinking, containing what they call "vestiges of Brisker" conservatism. But, in fact, "Confrontation" contains a far-reaching philosophical framework that indicates that one can recognize that others maintain a conceptual system that is at odds with one's own, and their beliefs are legitimate within their system, but not within one's own. Thus, the reason the Rav was against interfaith dialogue was that engagement in faith dialogue is a philosophical error. Indeed, the Rav applies this even to talking to people of one's own faith community. "The great encounter between God and man is a wholly personal private affair incomprehensible to the outsider - even to a brother of the same faith community."[27] Why can't you speak to a "brother of the same faith community", a fellow Jew, regarding faith? The Rav says it is completely private and personal, but he does not explain it further. In this author's opinion, he means to say that everyone carries a subjective view of the world and their religious experience cannot be compared to others. Thus, to speak and be forced to use similar language to communicate, as if they can be compared, is inappropriate and incorrect. Yet, he cannot be calling another Jew's religious experience incorrect. So he must provide for them a legitimacy outside of his own perspective and his own religious experience.

In fact, the Rav constantly seems to apologize for describing his own perspective on Jewish religious experiences. In his introduction to prayer in *Worship of the Heart*, he says that he does "not claim universal validity for my conclusions."[28] He hopes only to allow people to gain insight from his "clear language", describing his individual experiences of prayer in such a way that it would allow others to gain benefit. He continues this pattern in *Lonely Man of Faith*, where he states, "Before I go any further, I want to make the following reservation. Whatever I am about to say is to be seen only as a modest attempt on the part of a man of faith to interpret his spiritual perceptions and emotions in modern theologico-philosophical categories. My interpretive gesture is completely subjective and lays no claim to representing a definitive Halakhic philosophy."[29]

In this author's opinion, this represents one aspect of the Rav's perspectivist philosophy. Indeed, the Rav indicates that even among other Jews, it is impossible to relate the perspective of one to another. Yet the Rav does not hold back from doing so in this sense, because it can inform the other Jew about his own observance through the delineation of clear categories. But what can the Jew do in this to help a Christian, who bears no similarity in his conception, for example, to what prayer is and its experience? Creating Jewish categories of prayer and typological categories would not aid the Christian very much. In sum, from one's own perspective and experience, something can be wrong, while simultaneously others have truth from their perspective. Applied to Biblical criticism, this approach has the advantage of granting validity to it as a notion, but not to someone whose religious experience deems it false. The Rav was not interested in Biblical criticism, perhaps, only within his own religious perspective, but granted the allowance to others who maintained a differing religious perspective. This attitude may seem like maddening nonsense to some ("either it is true or it is not?!" they might fume), but in a postmodern world that refuses to create objective standards of right and wrong, true and false, it can be an acceptable approach.

What we have seen from these various approaches is the use of the vast corpus of the Rav's writings to respond to the challenge of Biblical criticism from his perspective. There are multiple avenues of understanding, many of which overlap, as one would expect from such a varied array of sources and presentations. So is Sokol right in asserting that the Rav completely ignored the problems of Biblical criticism facing the modern Jew, and thus cannot be

correctly deemed a "modern Orthodox" leader? As we have shown, many interpreters of the Rav disagree with this accusation and understand the Rav as having at least laid a foundation that would render the question irrelevant or as an existential dialectic that constantly remains in tension. Instead of wondering why the Rav would not be concerned with the issues of Biblical criticism, as he states in *Lonely Man of Faith*, we can rest assured that the groundwork already exists in his thought to deal with it and any other empirical issue.

1 Biblical criticism encompasses many fields and categories. In this essay, it refers to the broadest historical claims of Bible critics regarding the Pentateuch in particular, i.e. denial of the historicity of a revelation at Sinai, claims of multiple authors, and late attribution to much of its writing.

2 David Singer, Moshe Sokol, "Joseph Soloveitchik: Lonely Man of Faith," Modern Judaism, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Oct., 1982), 227-272.

3 ibid. 249-250.

4 For an explicit claim from the Rav that this is the case, I would suggest one should see especially Alan Brill's transcription of a speech the Rav gave in 1959 that would become the precursor to his publishing Lonely Man of Faith. The Rav states there that Bible critics make the mistake of not reading the biblical text for its philosophical content, instead "they substituted source criticism for philosophic ideas...I am not interested in the source, [but] rather the literary structure for the two accounts. The story is not something arbitrary. The story of bringing Eve was intended to show that one account is not sufficient." https://kavvanah.wordpress.com/2012/08/16/rav-soloveitchik-religious-definitions-of-man-and-his-social-institutions-1959-part-4-of-7/.

5 Joseph Epstein (ed.), Shiurei Harav (New York, 1974), 63-64.

6 See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, The Emergence of Ethical Man, ed. by Michael S. Berger (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2005), 4-5, where the Rav declares disinterest in resolving the issue of evolution versus creation, since one can easily find a solution to that question. The more pressing issue borne from the narrative, he states, is the "theoretically irreconcilable... concept of man as the bearer of the divine image with the equaling of man and animal-plant existences."

7 Soloveitchik, The Lonely Man of Faith. (New York, 1992.), 7.

8 Jonathan Sacks, Crisis and Covenant: Jewish Thought After the Holocaust, (Manchester University Press, 1992), 191. Interestingly, Tamar Ross, too, calls this passage "tantalizing." Tamar Ross, "Orthodoxy And The Challenge Of Biblical Criticism," 11

9 Shalom Carmy, "Of Eagle's Flight and Snail's Pace," Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, 113.

10 ibid., 114, as well as Carmy, "A Room With A View, But A Room Of Our Own," Modern Scholarship in the Study of Torah: Contributions and Limitations, (Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 27; idem, "The Human Factor: A Plea for Second Opinions," Mind, Body, and Judaism: The Interaction of Jewish Law with Psychology and Biology, (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2004), 99.

11 Soloveitchik, Netan'el Helfgot, Community, Covenant, and Commitment: Selected Letters and Communications of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., Jan 1, 2005), 110. Seth Farber, however, argues that this had more to do with the Rav's burgeoning position on inter-denominational dialogue, which was becoming more restrictive when it came to ideological issues. See Seth Farber, "Reproach, Recognition and Respect: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Orthodoxy's Mid-Century Attitude Toward Non-Orthodox Denominations," American Jewish History, Vol. 89, No. 2 (June 2001), 199.

12 Rabbi Carmy told me (Feb. 2016 correspondence) that in his opinion, any other opinions on the subject represent "authors speculat[ing] in accordance with their own predilections."

13 Dov Schwartz, Faith at the Crossroads: A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism (BRILL, Jan 1, 2002), 38-39.

14 Ibid.

15 Indeed, the Rav has high praise for Kierkegaard in a lengthy footnote to Lonely Man of Faith: "Does the loving bride in the embrace of her beloved ask for proof that he is alive and real? Must the prayerful soul clinging in passionate love ecstasy to her Beloved demonstrate that He exists? So asked Soren Kierkegaard sarcastically when told that Anselm of Canterbury, the father of the very abstract and complex ontological proof, spent many days in prayer and supplication that he be presented with rational evidence of the existence of God."

16 Soloveitchik, Abraham's Journey: Reflections on the Life of the Founding Patriarch, (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2008) 2-4.

17 ibid, 2.

18 Ronnie Ziegler, "Introduction to the Philosophy of Rav Soloveitchik," 20b http://etzion.org.il/vbm/english/archive/rav/rav20b.htm. See also a much broader discussion of this in his book, Majesty and Humility: The Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Solovetchik, (Urim Publications, 2012), Ch. 17.

19 Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man, (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), 99-100.

20 See also Sacks, "Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik's Early Epistemology: A Review of the Halakhic Mind," Tradition Journal, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Spring 1988), 75-87

21 Sacks, Crisis and Covenant: Jewish Thought After the Holocaust, (Manchester University Press, 1992), 191.

22 Walter Wurzburger, "Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik As Posek Of Post-modern Orthodoxy,' Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1997), 7.

23 Norman Solomon, Torah from Heaven: The Reconstruction of Faith, (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2012), 244-247.

24 Almut Bruckstein, "Halakhic Epistemology in neo-Kantian Garb: J. B. Soloveitchik's Philosophical Writings Revisited," Jewish Studies Quarterly, Volume 5 (1998), 352, 359-360

25 Ibid 360, n. 68. We can add that the Rav's description of recreation of the cosmos through the Halakhic process we saw quoted before in Halakhic Man Part II, can render the creation story true as well by virtue of it happening through the study of Torah every day.

26 Aviezer Ravitzky, "Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik on Human Knowledge: Between Maimonidean and Neo-Kantian Philosophy," Modern Judaism, Vol. 6, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 157-188

27 Soloveitchik, Confrontation and Other Essays (New Milford, CT: Maggid, 2015), 109

28 Soloveitchik, Worship of the Heart: Essays on Jewish Prayer (New York, NY: KTAV Publishing House, 2003), 2

29 Soloveitchik, The Lonely Man of Faith

Of Perspective and Paradox

By Avraham Wein

In the opening of his famous essay "Sacred and Profane," Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik writes, "In the same fashion that *kodesh* and *hol* form the spiritual framework of our halakha, so do the *kodesh* and *hol* determine the dichotomy of living experience into sacred and profane… This dualism has often been misapprehended. The halakhic conception of the essence of *hol* and *kodesh* is… diametrically opposed to universally accepted formulation in the circles of religious liberalism, Jewish as well as non-Jewish."[2] By explicitly attributing great significance to the role of *kodesh* in one's religious perspective, and through provocatively claiming that the halakhic approach to *kodesh* conflicts with the common religious approach, Rabbi Soloveitchik beckons the reader to investigate the essential topic of the nature of *kodesh* and *hol*. In addition to the aforementioned essay,[3] the Rav analyzes the topic in other contexts, including in his major work *Halakhic Man*, where he uses the halakhic understanding of *kedushah* as a critical distinction between halakhic man and *homo religiosus*.[4] In order to both understand and appreciate the novelty of Rabbi Soloveitchik's approach to holiness, it is necessary to understand both its philosophical and theological background. It is also important to examine the consequences of his opinions as expounded in his other writings and through the works of his students. This analysis will demonstrate how his understanding of holiness is both novel and very much consistent with a number of other critical elements of his broader philosophy of Judaism.

The Rav's Approach

In *Halakhic Man*, the first of his book-length publications, the Rav sought to define the characteristics of a complex ideal type, the halakhic man. In order to do so, the Rav contrasts him with two other ideal types: "cognitive man" and "*homo religiosus*." Cognitive man is a scientist solely focused on the physical world. Similar to the ideal type of "Adam the First" depicted in *Lonely Man of Faith*, cognitive man seeks to intellectually conquer and master the physical world. In contrast, the *homo religiosus* is otherworldly, attributing significance only to a spiritual world. He is a religious figure, engaged in the mystical and esoteric in hope of transcending the physical world. He seeks not to conquer nature but to encounter the mystery found therein. The *homo religiosus* is also often not emotionally and physically stable as a result of neglecting physical pleasures and abandoning earthly life.

Halakhic man contains elements of both cognitive man and *homo religiosus*, yet "taken as a whole he is uniquely different from both of them."[5] Halakhic man, a synthesis of the other two types, recognizes the transcendent realm but instead of attempting to ascend up to it, he desires to bring it down it down to the physical world. The Rav succinctly describes it as "Homo religiosus ascends to God; God, however, descends to Halakhic man."[6] Moreover, halakhic man is similar to cognitive man in that he sets up a priori concepts and laws that are the prism through which he views the world. In this manner, Halakhic man is also a creative being because he takes the laws given by God and creates his own interpretation and conceptualization of them. The Rav goes so far as to describe this relationship as a partnership between Man and God.

Within this framework, the Rav presents his approach to holiness.[7] He writes: "The idea of holiness according to the halakhic world view does not signify a transcendent realm completely separated and removed from reality… Holiness, according to the outlook of Halakhah, denotes the appearance of a mysterious transcendence in the midst of our concrete world, the 'descent' of God, whom no thought can grasp, onto Mount Sinai, the bending down of a hidden and concealed world and lowering it onto the face of reality… Holiness is created by man, by flesh and blood."[8] Two critical points emerge from the Rav's statement. First, while holiness may stem from God's "descent," it also exists in our earthly reality. Secondly, enduring holiness does not exist on its own but instead requires human action in order to be created. These two points form the foundation of the Rav's halakhic understanding of *kedushah*,[9] and is strongly reminiscent of the Rav's description of the Halakhic Man as conceptualizing divine realities so as to perceive them in the mundane, physical realm.

The Rav's human-oriented approach to kedushah is reflected by many examples in a variety of contexts. In *Halakhic Man* itself, the Rav mentions a few relevant examples. One example is the *Beit ha-Mikdash*, where the Divine presence is brought down to the lower realm specifically by man to dwell in a confined physical space. An important proof the Rav offers is the Targum to the verse in Isaiah (6:3), repeated in the daily kedushah prayer, where it is clear that holiness begins in the highest of realms yet is also proclaimed to exist in the physical and concrete world. The Rav also quotes the verses in *Va-Yikra* which describe observing laws that "regulate human biological existence" such as laws against certain foods and sexual relationships.[10] He also describes how human actions create holiness in other instances, for example, by the ability of human speech to consecrate animals as holy offerings, and the sanctifying the Land of Israel through human conquest. These are examples listed in *Halakhic Man* as instances where human input is necessary to create holiness.

In several other works, the Rav uses his approach to kedushah to either explain or disagree with certain opinions. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this is the Rav's approach to *kedushat Eretz Yisrael* (the sanctity of the Land of Israel), where he takes a very strong stance on the source of its holiness.[11] In *Emergence of Ethical Man*, the Rav writes:

> "Kedushah, under a halakhic aspect, is man-made; more accurately, it is a historical category. A soil is sanctified by historical deeds performed by a sacred people, never by any primordial superiority. The halakhic term *kedushat ha-aretz*, the sanctity of the land, denotes the consequence of a human act, either conquest (heroic deeds) or the mere presence of the people in that land (intimacy of man and nature). Kedushah is identical with man's association with Mother Earth. Nothing should be attributed a priori to dead matter. Objective *kedushah* smacks of fetishism."[12]

This statement by the Rav explicitly reflects his opinion that at least from a halakhic perspective, holiness derives only from the acts of man and is not inherent to anything. For the Rav, *kedushah* must always be human-produced. This is also an example of where his broader understanding of holiness leads the Rav to take very strong stances on issues debated by prominent Rishonim, as will be discussed later on.

Kedushah as Sacrifice

In his posthumously published book *Family Redeemed*, the Rav makes a critical qualification as to what types of human acts can produce holiness. In context of a broader analysis of Judaism's approach to marriage, the Rav argues that the term *kiddushin* is a proof of the holiness that is implicit in the marital relationship. Marriage for the Rav is a holy convention. Within this framework the Rav makes an important statement that "Sacrifice and holiness are synonymous concepts in Judaism. The more alluring the vision of conquest, the stronger the temptation, the more intoxicating the performance, the greater and more heroic the act of retreat - the more the threads of the person practicing it are woven into the fabric of sanctity."[13] This is an essential point because it limits the categories of human acts which could produce holiness only to acts of sacrifice and courage. The Rav's qualification is further developed later on in the book when he writes that "Judaism considers the body the wellspring of kedushah... Kedushah is a passional experience born of bewildering and painful events, of struggle and combat with one's self and others… it is a heroic performance attained only when one's life story becomes an *epos*, a narrative of great and courageous action. Holiness is not won easily, at no sacrifice."[14] Consequently, the types of human acts that create *kedushah* are cut down. The Rav explicitly mentions that both prayer and the cult ceremonial acts can never bestow sanctity upon a person because despite their obvious religious merits they are only symbolically sacrificial and cannot be considered passional actions.

Using this background which places man's perspective as the pivotal condition for holiness, the Rav masterfully explains a surprising and confusing

mishnah found in Tractate Gittin. The *mishnah* details a few opinions of what are considered to be legitimate and appropriate grounds for divorcing a woman. One opinion quoted is that of Rabbi Akiva, who is quoted as saying that if a man finds another woman to be more attractive than his wife that is appropriate grounds to divorce her. This seems surprising because it would seem to undermine the integrity and strength of the marital relationship if this alone is sufficient grounds for dissolving the marriage. The Rav explains that "this very desire is an adulterous thought which cancels the pristine sanctity of the marriage. A sinful wish and inner betrayal of the wedded partner desecrates the covenantal endowment of marriage… The marriage has been desecrated and de-covenantalized."[15] The Rav's explanation of Rabbi Akiva's seemingly startling opinion flows beautifully with his earlier statements about *kiddushin*. Since *kiddushin* is a reflection of the sanctity of the relationship as invested by Man,[16] when the man corrupts the marriage with desire for another woman, he has thereby profaned the sanctified marriage and thus divorce is merely the formal action which concludes the process of disintegrating the marriage.[17] As the Rav succinctly puts it, "If something is not experienced as sacred, the object or the institution forfeits its uniqueness and numinous character."[18] This example demonstrates the far reach and implications of the Rav's approach to holiness.

Historical Approaches to Holiness[19]

In order to properly appreciate and comprehend the novelty and significance of Rabbi Soloveitchik's position on holiness, an understanding of the Rav's historical background is necessary.[20] During the Rav's time, the prevalent and most popular approach to the nature of holiness was that of Rudolf Otto, as presented in his book *The Idea of the Holy*. Otto famously considered holiness to be something "wholly other" and beyond man's understanding. He argued that holiness is entirely removed from reality. He writes that holiness is a "non-rational, non-sensory experience or feeling whose primary and immediate object is outside the self."[21] The Rav clearly had Otto on his mind when he wrote, as he had incorporated some of Otto's thought into his own philosophy. This is implicitly clear when the Rav describes holiness as "a mysterious transcendence," similar to Otto's perspective. Like Otto, he considers it to originally exist removed from the world. Yet the Rav also clearly diverges from Otto when he writes of how holiness can be brought down to exist "in the midst of our concrete world"[22] since Otto believes that holiness is entirely removed from our reality.

Another critical historical perspective on holiness was that of Hermann Cohen. Although Cohen and Rabbi Soloveitchik never met, the Rav was clearly very familiar with Cohen's philosophy as reflected by his choice to write his dissertation on other areas of Cohen's thought.[23] In stark contrast to Otto, Cohen defined holiness as an ethical category. For Cohen, "Holiness becomes morality."[24] The Rav diverges from Cohen in that holiness is based in the *halakhah* and not morality. Secondly, the Rav argues with Cohen by calling holiness "a mysterious transcendence," clearly not just an ethical category.[25] Yet the Rav does agree with Cohen in that he believes man's input is critical for the creation of holiness. Thus the Rav diverges from two popular conceptions of holiness which were intellectually dominant in his time period.

The Rav and Rishonim

As previously mentioned, the Rav had a very strong stance about the nature of *Kedushat Eretz Yisrael*. He sharply comments that "objective *kedushah* smacks of fetishism." Nevertheless, as the Rav himself mentions, this is actually the opinion of a number of prominent *rishonim*. He explicitly mentions the views of R' Judah Halevi in the Kuzari and Ramban in his commentary on the Torah.[26] He writes that "Judah Halevi... attributes special metaphysical qualities to the land and endows it with a spiritual climate: the air of your land is the breath of life for our souls… Nahmanides followed in Halevi's footsteps as did the mystics. For them, the attribute of kedushah, holiness, ascribed to the land of Israel is an objective metaphysical quality inherent in the land."[27] The Rav's strong attack on this approach is both uncharacteristic and surprising given his respect, admiration, and appreciation for *rishonim*. Nonetheless it certainly reflects how deeply seated this position was for Rav Soloveitchik that he was willing to go so far as saying this opinion "smacks of fetishism."

Another opinion in the *rishonim* from which the Rav diverges is that of Rambam. Rambam, a rationalist, didn't think holiness actually existed in the world, so no one object or place is more sacred than any other. In his book *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism*, Menachem Kellner neatly sums up the Rambam's approach. He writes that

> "Maimonides... held a different view of holiness. Holy places, persons, times, and objects are in no objective way distinct from profane places, persons, times, and objects. Holiness is the name given to a certain class of people, objects, times, and places which the Torah marks off. According to this view holiness is a status, not a quality of existence. It is a challenge, not a given; normative, not descriptive. It is institutional (in the sense of being part of a system of laws) and hence contingent. This sort of holiness does not reflect objective reality; it helps constitute social reality."[28]

The Rav clearly disagrees with this understanding of the Rambam's approach.[29] Holiness as a "mysterious transcendence" for the Rav surely does exist. This demonstrates how the Rav's stance dramatically diverges from two major opinions found in the Rishonim.

Impact on Talmidim

The Rav's novel understanding of the nature of holiness had a clear impact on the thought of his disciples.[30] One major disciple, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, is a very clear example of this phenomenon and an analysis of his thought will provide greater insight into the Rav's approach. In a sermon titled *Sanctity and Impurity*,[31] Rabbi Lichtenstein addresses the nature of holiness. He writes:

> "The Jewish approach in this regard differs from the two other prevalent attitudes to this issue. The magical approach claims that there are in fact forces of sanctity and impurity inherent in the world, but they are primordial, embedded within the natural order. There are demons, evil spirits and the like, but man does not and cannot bring them into existence; they emerged together with the rest of creation. The scientific approach, by contrast, maintains that no forces of sanctity or impurity exist in the world whatsoever. No object can be seen as more sacred than the next, no given place can be considered holier than the next, and no quality of impurity can be attributed to corpses or anything else. Simply put, science outright rejects all these concepts."

Rabbi Lichtenstein's statement is noteworthy for two reasons. The first is his titles for the other approaches, the magical and scientific approaches. He claims that neither of these represents the Jewish approach. Such sharp words are surprising because as noted, many ascribe these positions to the great figures of Jewish thought, namely, Ramban, the Kuzari, and Rambam. Secondly, it is clear Rav Lichtenstein is following in the Rav's footsteps by rejecting these approaches. In the continuation of the sermon, Rabbi Lichtenstein explicitly makes use of Rav Soloveitchik's understanding. He argues that Judaism rejects both of those positions since it believes in the existence of holy and unholy, and also rejects the "magical" approach because sanctity is not inherent, but rather emanates from Man. In the same vein as the Rav, he writes that it is Man who creates holiness.

Rabbi Lichtenstein mentions a number of other examples in addition to the previously noted examples of korbanot and holidays. The first is that Man writes Torah scrolls and tefillin, which Man infuses with holiness. More significantly though, he cites another example from the Rav. He relates: "Rav Soloveitchik writes that Mount Sinai, the site of the most sacred and exalted event of all time, stands today bereft of any sanctity whatsoever; we do not even know where it is. By contrast, the most sacred site in the world for Jews is perhaps the Temple Mount, which received its sanctity from specifically human endeavors: it is the place where man reaches out to the Almighty. Mount Sinai lost its sanctity, as its kedushah emanated from God alone, not man." Aside from being another example of the Rav's approach to holiness, Rabbi Lichtenstein's example is significant for two other reasons. First, it presupposes that there can be two types of holiness depending on whether it stems from Man or God. Secondly, it seemingly introduces another factor for consideration, the stability of the holiness. Kedushah created by Man is more permanent and significant in Judaism than kedushah that emanates from God alone.[32]

Fitting In With Broader Themes

The Rav's opinion about the nature of holiness fits in with his broader philosophy of Man and Judaism and therefore may explain his conviction. In other works, the Rav emphasizes the majesty and humility of Man.[33] On the one hand, Man is clearly majestic and capable of great accomplishments. In *Halakhic Man*, Man is described as a partner with God. In *Lonely Man of Faith*, Adam the First is an accomplished and creative being who achieves a great deal in his quest for dignity. In *Uvikkashtem mi-Sham* the Rav speaks about how man can draw close to God. Yet man is also humble. When he draws close he also retreats, and recognizes his distance from God. He is awed by his encounter with God and realizes how small he is. The Rav's approach to holiness can also be similarly understood. On the one hand man is capable of bringing down the mystical transcendence of holiness to this concrete world, thus reflecting his "majesty." On the other hand, holiness is also a mysterious transcendence which needs to originate in the higher realms and not on man's earth. This reflects the humility of man via the recognition that some things are beyond him.

A second way the Rav's approach fits in with his broader philosophy is that the Rav doesn't see religion as a paradise, where all is calm and no effort or struggle is necessary. As previously mentioned, the Rav believes holiness can only be created through sacrifice. Man needs to act in order to create holiness. This fits in with the Rav's broader philosophy of Judaism. In many of his writings man is portrayed in a state of dialectical tension,[34] thus reflecting the conflict and difficulty inherent to religious life. Additionally, in his homiletical address *Sacred and Profane*, the Rav writes about the struggle of holiness. He declares that "kedushah elevates man, not by vouchsafing him harmony and synthesis, balance and proportionate thinking, but by revealing to him the non-rationality and insolubility of the riddle of existence. Kedushah is not a paradise but a paradox."[35] This declaration by the Rav reflects the necessity of struggle and for human input in religious life. Similarly, holiness does not exist on its own but rather requires human effort and devotion for it to be created.

Issues with Man Creating Holiness

While it has been demonstrated how the Rav's approach to holiness works smoothly in many cases, there are a few examples which seem to conflict with the Rav's understanding. The first is Shabbat, which is described as a holy day, seemingly independent of man's input.[36] Shabbat seems to be sanctified by God, unlike the festivals which seem to be sanctified by Bnei Yisrael.[37] In *Shiurim le-Zekher Abba Mari*, the Rav suggests that one aspect of Shabbat's kedushah is dependent on human sanctification. While this diminishes the problem by including some element of human input, the God-created aspect of Shabbat's holiness still poses a problem for the Rav. Another case which seems to contradict the Rav's approach is *bekhor*. The firstborn animal is considered to be sanctified from birth. This poses an issue for the Rav because there seems to be an element of sanctity which is inherent and not created by man. Similar to Shabbat, though, one can suggest that the Halacha of sanctifying the *bekhor* despite its already being sanctified is that man is adding an additional dimension of holiness to the animal. Nevertheless, the inherent sanctity of the *bekhor* from birth is still a question for the Rav.[38]

Conclusion

The Rav's philosophy of holiness is a novel one which clearly diverges from the prevalent philosophical approaches to holiness which were current in his day as well as from the opinions of highly esteemed Rishonim.[39] The reason for this conviction may be because his approach to holiness is part and parcel of the Rav's broader philosophy of Judaism, which believes in the majesty and humility of man as well as the necessity of struggle and turmoil in Judaism. Thus the Rav's teachings about the nature of holiness are not only important for the specific issue of *kedushah* but rather provide insight and lessons relevant to religious life as a whole.

1 I would like to thank Rabbi Shalom Carmy, Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier, and Dr. Moshe Cohen for their help in preparation of this article.

2 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Shiurei Harav ed. Joseph Epstein (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Pub. House, 1974), 6

3 Sacred and Profane is from the homiletical portion of the Rav's yahrtzeit shiur and thus is not meant to be the same type of philosophical treatment of holiness as found in some of the Rav's more rigorous philosophical works. Therefore this paper will primarily not be addressing that piece but will relate back to it towards the end of the paper. (Rabbi Reuven Ziegler, personal communication).

4 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 44-48.

5 ibid. 3.

6 ibid. 45.

7 Kedushah is a function both of man's yearning for transcendence as well as his concrete engagement with the material world; creating kedushah is therefore an essential goal of the halakhic man. This point is made explicit by S. Spero, "Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik and the Philosophy of Halakha," Tradition 30:2 (1996), reprinted in Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, ed. Marc Angel (New York, 1997) pp. 147-178

8 ibid. 45-47.

9 See Reuven Ziegler, Majesty and Humility, (New York, NY: OU Press, 2012), 311-312.

10 The statement in the book would seem to include both positive and negative commandments.

11 It is also worthwhile to compare Rabbi Soloveitchik's views with Rav Kook's. Rav Kook believed that Eretz Yisrael was bestowed with holiness even prior to Bnei Yisrael's conquest. See Reuven Ziegler, Majesty and Humility, (New York, NY: OU Press, 2012), 294-295.

12 R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, The Emergence of Ethical Man (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Pub. House, 2005), 150. For a similar formulation, see Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships (Hoboken, NJ: Toras Horav Foundation, 2000), 64.

13 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships (Hoboken, NJ: Toras Horav Foundation, 2000), 63-64.

14 ibid. 74.

15 ibid. 66.

16 For a presentation and analysis of the formal aspects of kedushah in a marriage and the relationship to hekdesh, see Rabbi Danny Wolf's chapter on kiddushin in Minhah Le-Aharon

17 Dr. Moshe Cohen pointed out to me that this sounds like a classic hakirah, logical division, between the ma'aseh, formal act, and the kiyum, essential fulfillment.

18 Family Redeemed, 66.

19 I came to much of the information in this section as a result of an unpublished article by Shlomo Zuckier entitled Whence Holiness: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Kedushah, sources available at www.yutorah.org/download.cfm?materialID=515907

20 By historical background I mean the dominant theories of his time to which he might have been reacting.

21 Rudolf Otto, The Idea Of The Holy, p. 112.

22 Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 46.

23 For a discussion of the impact of Cohen on the Rav's thought specifically regarding holiness and purity see Dov Shvartz, Religion Or Halakha: The Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Brill: Boston, 2007) pp. 37-53, 79-82, and 287-288.

24 Hermann Cohen, Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 96.

25 The Rav makes his divergence from Cohen's view (and that of Moritz Lazarus) explicit in note 51 on p. 150 of Halakhic Man, although the Rav does not call attention to his view of holiness as an objective reality.

26 The opinion of Ramban in particular deserves further study beyond this simple categorization. See Menachem Kellner, Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2006) p. 10, 51 regarding the Ramban's position.

27 R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, The Emergence of Ethical Man (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Pub. House, 2005), 149-150.

28 Maimonides, 88. It should be noted, however, that this interpretation of Rambam is contentious. Kenneth Seeskin, in his introduction to the Cambridge Companion to Maimonides, wrote (p. 8) that Kellner's essay on this topic was the most religiously controversial in that collection.

29 It is worthwhile to note, however, that the Rav himself does not directly ascribe this view to Rambam.

30 See Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's essay on holiness in his book The Living Tree (2014). He explicitly makes reference to the Rav's impact on his own approach to holiness.

31 http://etzion.org.il/en/sanctity-and-impurity

32 For an approach similar to the Rav's in some respects, see A.J. Heschel's book The Sabbath.

33 He even has an essay by that title.

34 The most prominent example of this is of course in Lonely Man of Faith.

35 Joseph Epstein, Shiurei Harav (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Pub. House, 1974), 7-8.

36 See Joseph B. Soloveitchik, The Lord is Righteous in All His Ways, p. 211.

37 This is reflected in the brachot made in the prayers of those day; mekadesh hashabbat vs. mekadesh yisrael v'ha'zmanim.

38 My esteemed teacher Rabbi Shalom Carmy once argued that the kedushah of the kohen also poses an issue for the Rav. See pages 109-122 in Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's Mevakshei Panecha for a discussion between Rabbi Haim Sabato and Rabbi Lichtenstein on the same matter.

39 For a comparison of the Rav's perspective to other modern thinkers see Shlomo Zuckier's unpublished article entitled Whence Holiness: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Kedushah. For the sources themselves see Meshech Chochmah to Ex. 32:19, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "The Territories," Judaism, Human Values and the Jewish State, p. 227, and Abraham J. Heschel, The Sabbath, p. 79.

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