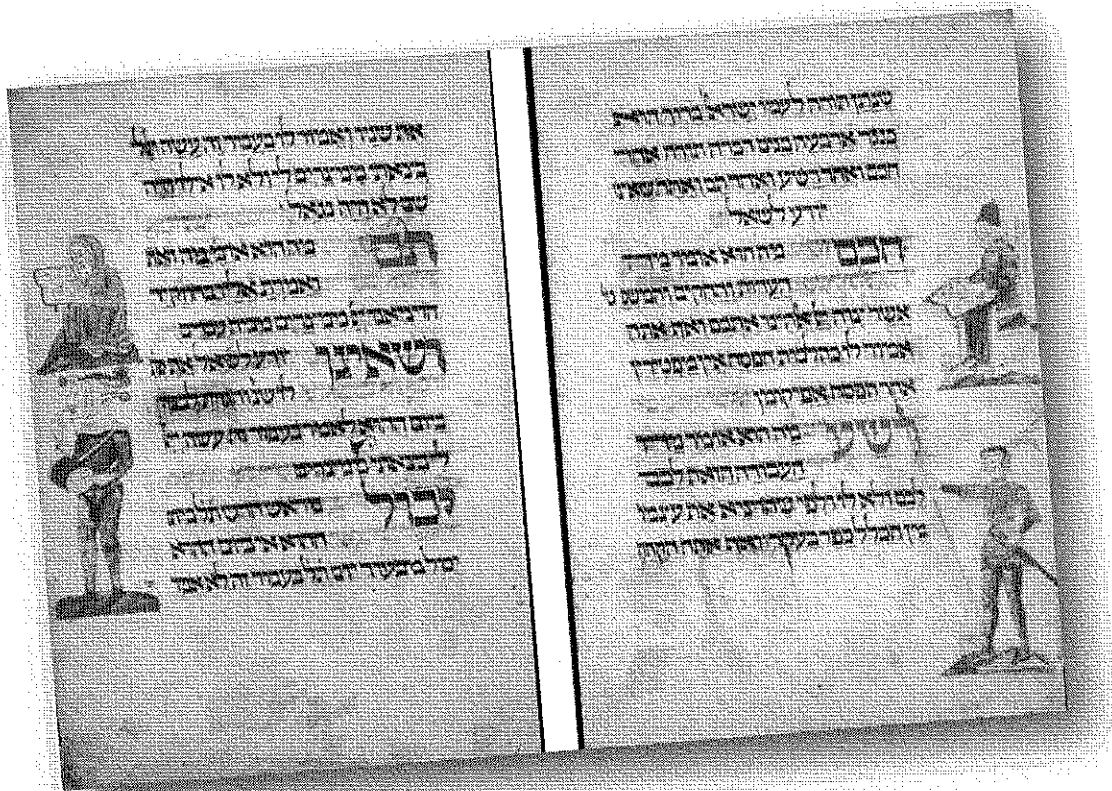


# From Rasha With Love: The Wicked, Intermarried, Off the Derech & Every One of Us

*Sponsored by Dr. Avraham and Elana Belizon as a Zechus for a  
Refuah Shlaymah for Avraham's beloved father, Dr. Yitzchak Belizon*



Rabbi Efrem Goldberg  
Boca Raton Synagogue  
Shabbos Ha'Gadol 2014/5774



1. Depictions of the Rasha in Haggados

**רשע** מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם  
 ולא לו ילפי שחוצי' את עצמו מן הכלל  
 ורשע מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם  
 ולא לו ילפי שחוצי' את עצמו מן הכלל

**הנה**  
 רשע מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם  
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Matteh Aharon Haggadah 1710

**רשע**  
 מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם  
 ולא לו ילפי שחוצי' את עצמו מן הכלל

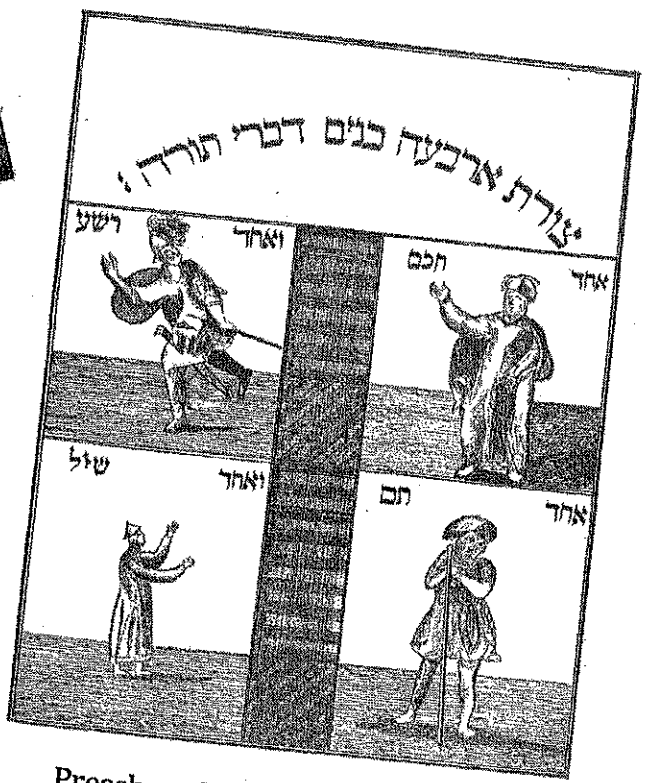


Kittsee Haggadah 1760

**רשע**  
 מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם  
 ולא לו ילפי שחוצי' את עצמו מן הכלל



Tel Aviv Haggadah 1771

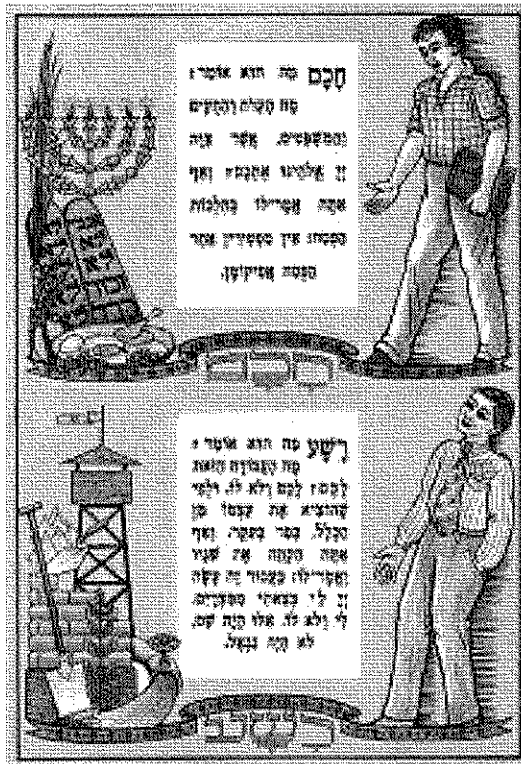


Pressburg Haggadah 1777



Chicago Haggadah, 1879

Leon David Israel, 1920



Tzvi Livni, Tel Aviv 1955

2. R. Dr. Raymond Apple

OzTorah  
By Rabbi Dr. Raymond Apple AO FRED  
Emeritus Rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney

## Should we abolish the Rasha?

That there are four sons (really four human types) in the Haggadah everyone knows. The precise identification of each of the four always gives *seder* participants a field day. That is one of the beauties of the Haggadah, that it seizes our imagination and provokes our thinking. If this is true of the other three sons, how much more does it apply to the *rasha*, the wicked son.

Jewish history has often attached epithets to famous (and infamous) names – *Avraham Avinu* (Father Abraham), *Rachel Immenu* (Mother Rachel), *Yoseph HaTzaddik* (Joseph the Righteous), *Moshe Rabbenu* (Moses our Teacher), *Miriam HaN'viah* (Miriam the Prophetess), *David HaMelech* (King David), *Eliyahu HaNavi* (Elijah the Prophet), *Yehudah HaNasi* (Judah the Prince); *Bil'am HaRasha* (Balaam the Wicked), *Haman HaRasha* (Haman the Wicked). Note that the term *rasha* has been sparingly used, and then only in relation to notorious villains.

So when the Haggadah applies the term to a fellow-Jew, we are taken aback. It must imply ultimate disapproval. Akavya ben Mahalalel, when criticised by his Mishnaic colleagues, said, "I would rather be called a fool all my days than a *rasha* even for one hour".

We do not know who was the original *rasha* of the *seder*. Later commentaries and illustrations sometimes see him as a soldier; as a philosopher; as a man about town, intent on pleasure and indulgence. Many Haggadot see the *rasha* as a heretic whose question, "What does this service mean to you?" places him outside the pale. At times the wicked son was a Karaite, a member of a dissident sect. In the 19th century some saw him as a reformer.

The message is obvious: a wicked son is not politically correct. A wise son does not dissent from tradition; a wicked son does. Today, though, the battle-field is larger. Orthodox and Reform (and Conservatives) trade insults, not only on Pesach but throughout the year. Chasidic communities cast aspersions on each other. Chasidim and non-Chasidim indulge in name-calling. The religious and the secular have a go at each other. In Israel, not just the religious spectrum but the political divide brings extreme epithets.

Some say this lusty language is part of the democratic process. People have freedom of speech and opinion, so if a Jew believes another Jew is profoundly wrong, should he say nothing? The problem, however, goes far beyond the issue of democracy and free speech. Verbal violence tears the Jewish people apart. If we can't speak respectfully of others, however much we disagree with them, we will dissipate our energies and fail to see the spark of potential in innumerable others who, like ourselves, are groping for a Jewish response to the complexities of today.

Rabbi Yehudah explains the verse, "You are sons to HaShem your God": "When you behave as sons then you are called sons, but not when you do not behave as sons." Rabbi Meir says, "In either case they are called sons." The *rasha* is a son, brother, daughter, sister. His attitudes may pain us. But the time has come to moderate our language about him. Hurling epithets across a divide achieves very little. Civility may work better.

## Tablet

### Confessions of a Wicked Daughter

3. Deena Shanker

**Every Passover, my family makes me the Seder's "wicked son." I don't mind—it's a part I was born to play.**

By Deena Shanker | March 25, 2013 12:00 AM

I don't particularly like my family's Seders. They are long and boring, and (the year someone brought Ten Plagues finger puppets notwithstanding) each Seder is pretty much just like the last. We always start later than planned, forcing me to spend the first half of the evening starving and sneaking more salt-water-dipped-*karpas* than is permissible under *halachah*, at least according to my brother-in-law, our resident Orthodox rabbi. And while I happily comply with the Haggadah's clear instructions to drink plenty of wine, this particular observance always engenders a certain amount of suspicion at the table. ("Are you sure that's only your second glass, Deena?") My usual move is to stay through the meal, "help" my mom with the dishes while everyone is benching, and eventually quietly drift upstairs to my bedroom, where I promptly fall asleep. I remember "Chad Gadya" fondly, but I can't remember the last Seder when I was awake to sing it at the end.

Just as predictable, though, is what will happen after the salt water and the wine but before my early exit: When we get to the part about the Four Sons, the whole family looks to me to read the part of the *rasha*, aka the Wicked Son. In one of the best-known parts of the Seder, the Haggadah tells us the story of four children (all male, of course), characterizing them by the questions they ask. The *chacham*, or so-called wise son, wants to memorize the boring details: "Tell me the laws, the regulations, the ordinances." The simple son, meanwhile, can only handle the broad strokes: "What is this?" he wants to know. The one who cannot even ask a question has nothing to say; the father has the imperative to open the conversation. But it is the one son who asks a real question, one that requires some original thought and an actual challenge, who we label "wicked." And the question that has earned him this title? "What is this service to you?" By questioning his religious obligations and adding "to you," he separates himself from his family and his community. Our response: We shun him right back. ("... because God took me out of Egypt, me and not you.")

Every year, I'm the wicked one. Always have been. Always will be.

I can't remember when I officially became the family *rasha*, but family lore puts it at around the time I introduced my third non-Jewish boyfriend. It didn't matter that I was the only one of my parents' three daughters with a job, paying my own rent, and headed to an Ivy League law school. Or that I was the only one to reliably send flowers on Mother's Day, call my *bubbe*, and buy every single family member a Hanukkah present. What mattered was that I was breaking the cardinal rule of the Shanker household: Thou Shalt Not Have Gentile Boyfriends. Even if we lived an hour away from the closest Jewish community, even if my yeshiva had only one good looking guy in the whole high school (who would later marry Ivanka Trump), and even if my eventual transfer to public high school would introduce me to one cute *goyishe* boy after another.

But the truth is that I was the family *rasha* long before I met Andrew, my very first non-Jewish boyfriend, and I will likely remain the family *rasha* even after I meet the next one. (Sorry, Mom and Dad; I can't promise the last one was the *last*. Is it my fault I have a weakness for handsome, hard-bodied men?) The *rasha* is not wicked for breaking the rules—he is wicked for questioning them, and I have been challenging convention, for better and sometimes for worse, for as long as I can remember.

The rabbis offer plenty of explanations for the nature of the Wicked Son, and the more of them I read, the more I realize that my family has it right about me. I am "wicked." I do believe, as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch said about the *rasha*, that I have "'progressed' far beyond [my] elders," though I don't think that makes me a "mocker"—just a liberal. I truly do not understand how an animal raised in the torture of a factory farm can be considered kosher, or why the fact that men can't control their libidos means that women need to cover their hair. I cannot come to terms with Jacob stealing his brother's birthright by tricking his blind, dying father; and I can't help but notice that the whole scheme was organized by the one woman in the story, the mother. And I cannot believe that any just God would punish me for marrying a man I love, even if he is not a member of the tribe, has never been to a Seder before, and can't pronounce *l'chaim*, *chutzpah*, or *charoset*.

Depending on whom you asked and when, Rabbi Yitzchak Sender's explanations for the Wicked Son also work as descriptions of my own lifestyle choices. I might have outgrown the bacon-cheeseburger phase of my Jewish rebellion, having given up *kashrut* to become an unapologetic omnivore, before morphing into an ethical meat eater and then deciding to become a vegetarian who occasionally eats fried (organic, local, humanely raised) chicken. But it wouldn't be off the mark to call me an "unregenerate heretic," who despite being "educated in the ways of Torah ... willfully and spitefully ... reject[ed] everything [I] learned." After all, it was me who, at 13, sat in the back of my yeshiva high-school classroom and challenged the rabbi to explain what was really so "blasphemous" about gay sex. And it was me, years later, learning Torah with my father and his rebbe, who explained—to their shared amusement—that I rejected the Torah's notion of gender roles, and would never marry a man who wasn't willing to help around the house. A product of both Solomon Schechter and yeshiva, I was always encouraged to ask questions—they were just supposed to be the right ones. ("Why do we have two Seders? Can't we just have one?" "Deena, the real question is why we have any Seders at all.") Sure, my sisters went through their own "rebellious" phases in high school; but even if they occasionally violated certain tenets by drinking too much on Simchat Torah or even eating hot wings at Hooters, neither veered as far as I did from the Nice Jewish Girl path—which I did by questioning those basic tenets altogether.

Sender's other exposition of the Wicked Son, that he "has become blinded to the truth as a result of his having become accustomed to a lifestyle characterized by addiction to his own desires without restriction," is also a fairly apt description of my lifestyle. But I don't think my vices have blinded me to the truth so much as they have opened my eyes to it. It was only after smoking a pot-spiked hookah in my Hebrew University dorm room that I realized that a career in Middle Eastern politics would be futile for me, that the conflict was too entrenched, and that a Jewish girl from New York, no matter how well-meaning, was never going to be seen as an impartial peace broker. And as a strong believer of *in vino veritas*, I've come to consider alcohol a critical component of my writing career. (Hey, it worked for Hemingway.) If these things make me wicked, then wicked I am. But also fun-loving, truth-seeking, and honest.

Lucky for me, though, not everybody is so hard on the Wicked Son. My favorite interpretation comes from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who tells us in a Chabad Haggadah that "there is only a slight distance between [the wicked son] and his [wise] brother." My family has not officially chosen our *chacham*, but it seems like my brother-in-law, the Orthodox rabbi who comes to every Seder equipped with an all-Hebrew Haggadah penned by his grandfather, has more than earned the mantle. I might roll my eyes when he scolds me for eating too much *karpas*, but I also recognize that there are reasons behind the limits he is imposing, and that they were probably discussed, dissected, and ultimately determined by a long series of arguments based in both Torah and logic. But while I appreciate that there are people learning all of these rules, I also want to thank the Lubavitcher Rebbe for recognizing that we *rashas* could memorize the laws and regulations, too; we just choose not to. Like the great *rashas* before me, from Betty Friedan to Larry David, I know the social norms and conventions; I simply reject them. Any *chacham* can learn the rules of *kashrut*, *tzniut*, or a conventional marriage. But it takes a *rasha* to ask why we have these rules at all.



4. Tehillim - Kabbalas Shabbos

**יהוה מלך** *When HASHEM will reign,\* the world will rejoice; numerous islands will be glad. Cloud and dense darkness will surround Him;\* righteousness and justice are His throne's foundation. Fire will advance before Him\* and consume His enemies all around. His lightning bolts will light up the world, the inhabitants of the earth will see and tremble. Mountains will melt like wax\* before HASHEM, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens will declare\* His righteousness, and all the peoples will see His glory. Humiliated will be all who worship idols, who pride themselves in worthless gods; to Him all the powers will bow. Zion will hear and be glad, and the daughters of Judah\* will exult, because of Your judgments, HASHEM. For You, HASHEM, are supreme above all the earth; exceedingly exalted above all powers. Chazron— O lovers of HASHEM — despise evil! He guards the lives of His devout ones, from the hand of the wicked He rescues them. Light is sown for the righteous;\* and for the upright of heart, gladness. Be glad, O righteous, in HASHEM, and give grateful praise at the mention of His Holy Name.*

**יהוה מלך** תגל הארץ, וְשָׁמְחוּ אִיִּים רַבִּים. עֲנַן וְעָרָפֶל סָבִיבוּיָו. צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט מִכּוֹן כִּסְאוֹ. אֵשׁ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְהַלְהֹט סָבִיב צִרְיוֹ. הַאֲיִרוֹ בְּרָקָיו תִּבְלֵ, רֶאֱתָהּ וְהַחֲלֵל הָאָרֶץ. הָרִים בְּדוֹבַגּ נִמְסוּ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה, מִלִּפְנֵי אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ. הַגִּידוֹ הַשְׁמַיִם יִצְדָּקוּ, וְיֵרְאוּ כָּל הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ. יִבְשׂוּ כָּל עֲבָרֵי פֶסֶל הַמִּתְהַלְלִים בְּאֱלִילִים, הַשִּׁתְחַוּוּ לוֹ כָּל אֱלֹהִים. שָׁמְעָה וּנְתַשְׁמַח צִיּוֹן וּתְגַלְגֵּל בְּנֹת יְהוּדָה; לִמְעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיהָ יִהְיֶה. כִּי אָמַת יְהוָה עֲלִיוֹן עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ, מֵאֵר וְעֲלִיָּתָהּ עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים. אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה שָׂנְאוֹ רָע, שֹׁמֵר וּפְשׁוֹת חֲסִידָיו, מֵיַד רְשָׁעִים וְצִלְמָם. אִוֵּר וְרָע לְצַדִּיקֵי, וְלִישָׁרֵי לֵב שִׁמְחָה. שָׂמְחוּ צַדִּיקִים בַּיהוָה, תְּהוֹדוּ לְקָבֵר קֹדְשׁוֹ.



FIRST THINGS

<http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/05/the-virtue-of-hate>

THE VIRTUE OF HATE

During my regular weekly coffees with my friend Fr. Jim White, an Episcopal priest, there was one issue to which our conversation would incessantly turn, and one on which we could never agree: Is an utterly evil man-Hitler, Stalin, Osama bin Laden-deserving of a theist's love? I could never stomach such a notion, while Fr. Jim would argue passionately in favor of the proposition. Judaism, I would argue, does demand love for our fellow human beings, but only to an extent. "Hate" is not always synonymous with the terribly sinful. While Moses commanded us "not to hate our brother in our hearts," a man's immoral actions can serve to sever the bonds of brotherhood between himself and humanity. Regarding a rasha , a Hebrew term for the hopelessly wicked, the Talmud clearly states: mitzvah lishno -one is obligated to hate him.

Some would seek to minimize this difference between our faiths. Eva Fleischner, a Catholic interfaith specialist and another *Sunflower* symposiast, argues that "Christians-and non-Christians in their wake-have misread, and continue to misread, [Christian texts] interpreting Jesus' teaching to mean that we are to forgive anyone and everyone . . . The element that is lost sight of is that Jesus challenges me to forgive evil done to me . . . Nowhere does he tell us to forgive the wrong done to another." Perhaps. But even so, a theological chasm remains between the Jewish and Christian viewpoints on the matter. As we can see from Samson's rage, Judaism believes that while forgiveness is often a virtue, hate can be virtuous when one is dealing with the frightfully wicked. Rather than forgive, we can wish ill; rather than hope for repentance, we can instead hope that our enemies experience the wrath of God.

There is, in fact, no minimizing the difference between Judaism and Christianity on whether hate can be virtuous. Indeed, Christianity's founder acknowledged his break with Jewish tradition on this matter from the very outset: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." God, Jesus argues, loves the wicked, and so must we. In disagreeing, Judaism does not deny the importance of imitating God; Jews hate the wicked because they believe that God despises the wicked as well.

Among Orthodox Jews, there is an oft-used Hebrew phrase whose equivalent I have not found among Christians. The phrase is *yemach shemo*, which means, *may his name be erased*. It is used whenever a great enemy of the Jewish nation, of the past or present, is mentioned. For instance, one might very well say casually, in the course of conversation, "Thank God, my grandparents left Germany before Hitler, *yemach shemo*, came to power." Or: "My parents were murdered by the Nazis, *yemach shemam*." Can one imagine a Christian version of such a statement? Would anyone speak of the massacres wrought by "Pol Pot, *may his name be erased*"? Do any Christians speak in such a way? Has any seminary student ever attached a Latin equivalent of *yemach shemo* to the names "Pontius Pilate" or "Judas"? Surely not. Christians, I sense, would find the very notion repugnant, just as many Jews would gag upon reading the Catholic rosary: "O my Jesus . . . lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of thy mercy."

Why, then, this remarkable disagreement between faiths? Why do Jews and Christians respond so differently to wickedness? Why do Jews refuse at times to forgive? And if the Hebrew prophets and judges believed ardently in the "virtue of hate," what about Christianity caused it to break with its Old Testament roots? ...

Jewish intolerance for the wicked is made most manifest in Maimonides' interpretation of damnation. In his view souls are never eternally punished in hell: the presence of the truly wicked is so intolerable to the Almighty that they never even experience an afterlife. Rather, they are, in the words of the Bible, "cut off": after death, they just . . . disappear.

The Protestant theologian Harvey Cox, who is married to a Jew, wrote a book on his impressions of Jewish ritual. Cox describes the Jewish holiday of Purim, on which the defeat of Haman is celebrated by the reading of the book of Esther. Enamored with the biblical story, Cox enjoys the tale until the end, where, as noted above, Esther wreaks vengeance upon her enemies. Like Sister Johanna, he is disturbed by Jewish hatred. It cannot be a coincidence, he argues, that precisely on Purim a Jew by the name of Baruch Goldstein murdered twenty innocent Muslims engaged in prayer in Hebron.

There is something to Cox's remarks. The danger inherent in hatred is that it must be very limited, directed only at the most evil and unrepentant. According to the Talmud, the angels began singing a song of triumph upon the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt until God interrupted them: "My creatures are drowning, and you wish to sing a song?" Yet the rabbis also state that God wreaked further vengeance upon Pharaoh himself, ordering the sea to spit him out, so that he could return to Egypt alone, without his army. Apparently one must cross some terrible moral boundary in order to be a justified target of God's hatred-and of ours. An Israeli mother is right to raise her child to hate Saddam Hussein, but she would fail as a parent if she taught him to despise every Arab. We who hate must be wary lest we, like Goldstein, become like those we are taught to despise.

Another danger inherent in hate is that we may misdirect our odium at institutions in the present because of their past misdeeds. For instance, some of my coreligionists reserve special abhorrence for anything German, even though Germany is currently one of the most pro-Israel countries in Europe. Similarly, after centuries of suffering, many Jews have, in my own experience, continued to despise religious Christians, even though it is secularists and Islamists who threaten them today, and Christians should really be seen as their natural allies. Many Jewish intellectuals and others of influence still take every assertion of the truth of Christianity as an anti-Semitic attack. After the Catholic Church beatified Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Christianity, some prominent Jews asserted that the Church was attempting to cover up its role in causing the Holocaust. And then there is the historian Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, who essentially has asserted that any attempt by the Catholic Church to maintain that Christianity is the one true faith marks a continuation of the crimes of the Church in the past.

Burning hatred, once kindled, is difficult to extinguish; but that is precisely what Jews must do when reassessing our relationship with contemporary Christianity. The crimes of popes of the past do not negate the fact that John Paul II is one of the righteous men of our generation. If Christians no longer hold us accountable for the crime of deicide, we cannot remain indifferent to such changes. Christians have every right to assert the truth of their beliefs. Modern anti-Christianity is no more excusable than ancient anti-Semitism.

Yet neither does this mean that hate is always wrong, nor that Esther's actions were unnecessary. The rabbis of the Talmud were bothered by a contradiction: the book of Kings describes Saul as killing every Amalekite, and yet Haman, according to his pedigree in the book of Esther, was an Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekite king. The Talmud offers an instructive solution: after Saul had killed every Amalekite, he experienced a moment of mercy, and wrongly refrained from killing King Agag. This allowed Agag a window of opportunity; he had several minutes before he was killed by the angry Samuel. In those precious moments, Agag engaged in relations with a random woman, and his progeny lived on to threaten the Jews in the future. The message is that hate allows us to keep our guard up, to protect us. When we are facing those who seek nothing but our destruction, our hate reminds us who we are dealing with. When hate is appropriate, then it is not only virtuous, but essential for Jewish well-being.

Archbishop Tutu, who, as indicated above, preaches the importance of forgiveness towards Nazis, has, of late, become one of Israel's most vocal critics, demanding that other countries enact sanctions against the Jewish state. Perhaps he would have Israelis adopt an attitude of forgiveness towards those who have sworn to destroy the only democracy in the Middle East. Yet forgiveness is precisely what the Israeli government attempted ten years ago, when it argued that the time had come to forget the unspeakable actions of a particular individual, and to recognize him as the future leader of a Palestinian state. Many Jews, however, seething with hatred for this man, felt that it was the Israeli leaders who "knew not what they were doing."

At the time, my grandfather, a rabbi, joined those on the Israeli right in condemning the Oslo process, arguing that it would produce a terrorist state responsible for hundreds of Israeli deaths. As a rabbinical student, I could not understand my grandfather's unremitting opposition. He was, I thought, so blinded by his hate that he was unable to comprehend the powerful potential of the peace process. Now, many hundreds of Jewish victims of suicide bombings later, and fifty years after the Holocaust, the importance and the necessity of Jewish hate has once again been demonstrated. Perhaps there will soon be peace in the Middle East, perhaps not. But one thing is certain: we will not soon forgive the actions of a man who, as he sent children to kill children, knew-all too well-just what he was doing. We will not-we cannot-ask God to have mercy upon him. Those Israeli parents whose boys and girls did not come home will pray for the destiny of his soul at the conclusion of their holiest day, but their prayer will be rather different from the rosary:





10. Mechilta D'Rebbe  
Yishmael

It emerges that there are four sons: one is wise, one is ignorant, one is wicked and one does not know how to ask.

**The wise son** - what does he say?

"What are the testimonies, statutes and laws that the Lord our God commanded us? You shall thus begin speaking to him about the laws of Pesach - "One does not partake of afikoman dessert after partaking of the Pesach offering."

**The ignorant son** - what does he say? "What is this?" And you shall say to him: "The Lord took us from Egypt, from the house of bondage with a mighty hand."

**The wicked son** - what does he say? "What is this service for you?" - for you and not for him. Since he excluded himself from the nation and spoke heresy you shall thus sharply condemn him and say to him, "It is because of what the Lord did for me when I left Egypt - for nad not for you - had you been there, you would not have been redeemed."

**The son who does not know how to ask** - you shall initiate on his behalf... did it, but He did not do it for you.

והיה כי ישאלך בנך מחר יש מחר עכשיו ויש מחר לאחר זמן: מחר לאמר מה ואת הרי מחר לאחר זמן מחר יהיה האות הזה (שמות ח יט) הרי מחר עכשיו <מחר אנכי נצב (שם יז ט) הרי מחר עכשיו> מחר יאמרו בניכם לבנינו (יהושע כב כד) הרי מחר לאחר זמן: מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אותנו (דברים י כ) נמצאת אמר ארבעה בנים הם אחד חכם ואחד רשע ואחד תם ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול. (חכם) מה הוא אומר מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלהינו אותנו אף אתה פתח לו בהלכות הפסח אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן. (רשע) מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת לכם לכם ולא לו ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל וכפר בעיקר אף ארתה הקדה את שיניו ואמור לו בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים (שמות יג ה) לי ולא לך אלו היית שם לא היית נגאל. (תם) מה הוא אומר מה ואת ואמרת אליו בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים. (ושאינו יודע לשאול) את פתח לו שנא והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא וגו'. ד"א מה העדות והחקים ר' אליעזר אומר מנין אתה אומר שאם הייתה חבורה של חכמים או של תלמידים שצריכים לעסוק בהלכות פסח עד הצאת לךך נאמר מה העדות וגו'.

11. Talmud Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:4

Rabbi Chiya taught: The Torah spoke in reference to four sons: a wise son, a wicked son, an ignorant son, and a son who does not know how to ask.

**The wise son** - what does he say? "What are the testimonies, statutes and laws that the Lord our God commanded us?" You should then say to him, "The Lord took us from Egypt, from the house of bondage, with a mighty hand."

**The wicked son** - what does he say? "What is the service for you? What is this trouble that you are forcing upon us each and every year?" Since he excluded himself from the nation, you shall thus say to him, "It is because of what the Lord did for me - He did for me, and not for that person. If that person had been in Egypt, he would have never been worthy to be redeemed from there."

**The ignorant son** - what does he say? "What is this?" You shall thus teach him the laws of Pesach, that one does not partake of an afikoman dessert after [partaking of] the paschal offering, so that he will not leave one group and join a different group.

**The son who does not know how to ask** - you shall first initiate on his behalf.

גמ' חגי ר' חיייה כנגד ארבעה בנים דיברה תורה בן חכם בן רשע בן טיפש בן שאינו יודע לשאול. בן חכם מהו אומר (דברים ה) מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה יי' אלהינו אותנו אף אתה אמור לו (שמות יג) בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים. בן רשע מהו אומר (א) (שם יב) מה העבודה הזאת לכם מה הטורח הזה שאתם מטריחין עלינו בכל שנה ושנה מכיון שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל אף אתה אמור לו (שם) בעבור זה עשה ה' לי עשה לאותו האיש לא עשה. אילו היה אותו האיש במצרים לא היה ראוי להגאל משם לעולם. טיפש מהו אומר (שם) מה זאת אף את למדו הלכות הפסח שאין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן שלא יהא עומד מחבורה זו ונכנס לחבורה

אחרת. בן שאינו יודע לשאול את פתח לו תחילה א"ר יוסה מתניתא אמרה כן אם אין דעת בבן אביו מלמדו:

12. Mishlei 22:5

וְיִכְבֹּד וְיִסְתַּיֵּם צַיִם פְּחִים בְּדֶרֶךְ עֲקֵשׁ שׁוֹמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְחַק מֵהֶם: כִּי  
לְנֹעַר עַל-פִּי דַרְכּוֹ גַם פִּי-זָקֵן לֹא יִסּוּר מִמֶּנּוּ: עֲשֵׂיר בְּרָשִׁים יִמְשֹׁל

will distance himself from them. <sup>5</sup> Train the youth according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not swerve from it. <sup>\*7</sup> A rich man dominates paupers, \*

How did they know which son was which?

Are there any hints in the text

13. Meshech Chachma - Shmos 13:14

R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926)

על ירך", כי שם מדבר הכתוב במי שאינו יודע לשאול, וכמו דכתיב "והגדת לבנך וכו'". ולכן<sup>4</sup>, כתיב "ביום ההוא" (פסוק ח) להוציא מראש חודש<sup>5</sup>, כי הוא אומר בלא שאלה, ולכן סלקא דעתך אמינא שיאמר מראש חודש<sup>6</sup>, ולזה כתיב "ביום ההוא", מה שאין כן בכולהו בניס, כתיב "כי ישאלך", ובודאי אינו שואל רק בזמן שרואה שינוי<sup>7</sup>, ולא צריך למעט שיאמר לו רק "ביום ההוא". וכיון שהוא מדבר במי שאינו יודע לשאול, לאו בר דעת הוא שיהא יודע להתנהג בקדושת תפילין, וכמו שכתבו התוספות בריש ערכין (ב, ב ד"ה שהגיע). ולכן אינו אומר לו אביו, "זהה לאות על ירך"<sup>8</sup>. וכן מפורש במכילתא על פסוק "ושמרת את החוקה הזאת למועדה" — במי שיודע לשמור<sup>9</sup>, עיין שם והבן כל זה.

יג, ידימו והיה כי ישאלך בנך מחר וכו' והיה לאות על ידכה.

יתכן כי זה יאמר האב אל הבן עד סוף הפרשה — הכל מוסב על "ואמרת אליו", שתאמר לו אלו הדברים<sup>1</sup>. וכמו שאמרנו<sup>2</sup>: קטן היודע להגיד תפילין, אביו לוקח לו תפילין. ולכן אמר "כי בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים" — היינו "אותי" "ואותך", האב והבן<sup>3</sup>. ולכן בפרשת קדש כתיב (פסוק ט) "הוציאך ה' ממצרים", שזהו מדברי ה' אל ישראל, כי שם אינו רשאי האב לאמר אל הבן "והיה לך לאות



וכתב שם החיד"א שאמר בזה בדרך צחות לדמות דברי החכם והרשע לפסוק בקהלת<sup>51</sup>: "וראיתי אני שיש יתרון לחכמה מן הסכלות, ביתרון האור מן החושך". כלומר בכריאת האור נזכר שם אלהים שנאמר<sup>52</sup>, "ויקרא אלהים לאור יום", ועל החושך לא נזכר שם אלהים, אלא נאמר שם, "ולחשך קרא לילה"<sup>53</sup>, וכן כאן, החכם מזכיר שם שמים במאמרו, והרשע אינו מזכיר. ר' מרדכי ורבינשטיין בהגדה מר דדור<sup>54</sup> הוסיף להסביר על דרך הדרש המשך המאמר. "ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל, כפר בעיקר". וביאר שמלת "עצמו" הוא כינוי לחקב"ה, כמו שאומרת הגמרא בגיטין<sup>55</sup> שטיטוס הרשע גידד (דקר) את הפרוכת ונעשה נס והיה דם מכצבץ ממנה וכסבור שהרג את עצמו, ומירש רש"י שם: עצמו - כינוי כלפי מעלה. וזהו הכוונה, ולפי שהוציא את עצמו, היינו את הקב"ה, מכלל דבריו, כפר בעיקר.

14. Hedyonei Halacha Hagaddah Quoting R. Mordechai Rubenstein

15. R. Ari Kahn - Echoes of Eden



The sages who formulated the Mechilta had consciously created their own teaching in a similar manner. They rejected the biblical response to the son and insisted that such a question, such a questioner, is wicked, apparently reacting to the philosophical trends which must have been current during the formation of the Midrash and served as the model for this dialogue. There must have been dissidents on the fringe of the Jewish community who articulated their ideology in this manner.

We may attempt to identify each of these wicked sons historically, with early Judeo-Christian sects who deviated from the Jewish mainstream at the time our sources were developed. Scholars have traced the theological development of various distinct streams of thought which later branched off from Judaism completely. Two of the major trends of thought espoused by these groups are voiced precisely by the wicked sons in each of our sources: One Judeo-Christian sect considered itself completely "Jewish," but would not take sides politically in the struggle against Rome. To this sect, our Sages may very well have said:

To you and not to himself. And because he separated himself from the community and he rejects that which is essential [i.e., is guilty of heresy]...

The sages condemn this political neutrality as incompatible with Jewish identity: One who separates himself from Jewish destiny also cuts himself off from Jewish history. He cannot remain in the religious community if he takes no part in the historical community and does not feel the historical continuity which begins with the Exodus and culminates in the final messianic redemption. Such a Jew, the sages of the Mechilta intimate, would not have been redeemed from Egypt; such a Jew would possibly have expressed sympathy for Egypt. He may even have refused to take part in the Exodus.

According to historians there were two occasions when the Judaic Christians separated themselves from the community. One was the battle against Rome in 68 CE which culminated in the destruction of the Temple. The second occasion was during the Bar Kochva rebellion some 60 years later. We can clearly see why the Judaic Christians failed to rally around Bar Kochva, a man labeled "The King Messiah" by no less of an authority than the great Rabbi Akiva. The Christians felt that they already had their Messiah and had nothing at stake in this parochial battle between the Jews and Rome.[3] At just the time of these events, the Mechilta was formulated. It then comes as no surprise that the rifts in the Jewish community are reflected in the Midrash.

The sages who later compiled the Haggadah created their own unique teaching by dropping off one letter which appears in the Mechilta. The Mechilta version has an extra letter (in the Hebrew text; in the English it becomes an entire word) as compared to the version in the Haggada. The Haggada equates the wicked son's heresy with his separation from the community:

To you and not to himself. And because he separated himself from the community, he rejects that which is essential [i.e., is guilty of heresy]...

The wicked son of the Yerushalmi has other historical parallels in Judeo-Christian theology. We know of the early Christians' objection to the entire practice of sacrifice, and of the particular significance they credited to the Pesach sacrifice. It is not difficult for us to associate the Christian concept of the obsolescence of sacrifice after the crucifixion with the point of view of the wicked son in the Yerushalmi. In stressing the word "service", he asks specifically why the sacrifice must continue to be offered year after year, implying that its utility is outdated. The new symbol of redemption, the "ultimate Paschal lamb", has made continued sacrifice unnecessary according to this view. It is to this specific claim that the Sages in the Yerushalmi respond:

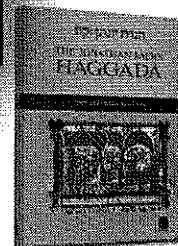
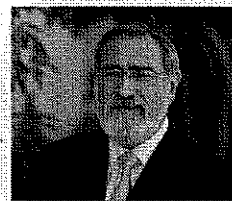
G-d acted for me; for me and not for that man. Had that man been in Egypt he would not have been worthy of redemption from there for eternity. 'That man', אֹרֵנוּ הָאִישׁ, the Christian answer to Paschal sacrifice, was not himself worthy of redemption; it would therefore be absurd to believe that his life or his death could redeem others. This is the theological answer to Judeo-Christian theology.

It is fascinating to trace Rav Chiya's adaptation of the earlier teaching to match the rasha of his own day. In a sense, this process of adaptation has been applied for generations. The rasha remains a dissident, either at the edge of, or outside of the Jewish community. Mainly through artistic representations, we have clear evidence how the face of the rasha has evolved, to match that which was considered askance in a particular place or time.

The rasha in the Mechilta "won" over his relative in the Yerushalmi, and serves as the direct source for the formulation incorporated in the Haggadah, most likely for a number of reasons: The Mechilta enjoyed a greater sphere of influence, it represents the original formulation, and its teaching seems somewhat broader. Nonetheless, we have noted the slight change which was made upon incorporation in the Haggada, labeling the wicked son's separation as his heresy as opposed to being in addition to his heresy. Ostensibly, this change was made in order to fashion a generic rasha who could be used as an example of infamy at Sedarim for millennia.

16. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Hagaddah

The two men – Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai - from whose schools these teachings come, lived in the second century CE, through one of Judaism's most turbulent and tragic eras. They witnessed the ferocity of Rome in suppressing Jewish life. They saw Jews defect from Judaism – some to ally themselves with Rome itself, others to join the new Christian sect. Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Shimon were different personality types, the former a rationalist, the latter a mystic, but they were both intensely loyal to Jewish identity and destiny and shared a sense of distress, verging on anger, at Jews who left the fold. We can now place their comments on 'the wicked son' in a specific historical context. It was not Pesach as such, nor were they speaking about young children. They were talking about Jews who, seeing the fall of Jerusalem and the rise of Rome, changed sides and allied themselves to forces that were in the ascendant. This was, for the rabbis, a kind of betrayal.



Behind the simple paragraph about 'the wicked son' is a long and painful history of Jews who, faced with persecution on the one hand and the blandishments of the ruling power on the other, chose to abandon Judaism. Viewing this history it is hard not to feel the irony of the fact that ancient Greece and Rome, two civilizations that prided themselves on their tolerance, and medieval Christianity which claimed to worship the God of love, showed surprisingly little tolerance and love when it came to Jews. Their principle often seemed to be that Jews were to be tolerated and loved, *provided* that they relinquished their Judaism. There can, however, equally be no doubt – it is reflected in the harshness of the reply to 'the wicked son' – that Jews themselves felt betrayed by those of their number who, at times of crisis, went over to the other side, to the persecuting power.

18. Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 2:5

ה (ח) מזו [ב] מומר (ו) להכעיס [יד] 'אפי' (ו) לדבר אחד " או שהוא י"ו מומר לעבודת כוכבים או לחלל שבת (ט) (ח) בפרהסיא [טז]. או שהוא מומר לכל התורה אפילו חוץ משתים אלו. דינו (ט) בעובר כוכבים (ז) ירוסס):

דנה [טז] וחי שאינו חושש להחיות ואוכלו נבלות בלל טיבן חף על סי שאינו שוסק להכעיס דיוו כחומר להכעיס (ק) העלה טכ"י מלכרי לר"ט):

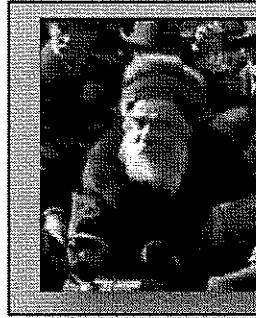
17. Shulchan Aruch E.H. 44:9

ט (ז) מן (ט) ישראל מומר (ו) שקדש קדושין קדושין (ז) נמורים וצריכה ממנו גט (י) יב ק (ז) ואפילו זרעו שהוליד משהמיר אם קידש אותו זרע (ט) ישראלית קדושין קדושין ודוקא שהולידו מישראלית אפילו מומרת אבל אם הולידו מן הכותית דינו כמותי אפילו היה המוליד ישראל שאינו מומר (ח) אבל ישראלית נמורה עט לה זרע עט כמותי שקידש קדושין קדושין (נודדי סוף סמוע):

18. Rashi Chullin 5a

דקמי מקבלן חסות: אלא לאו היק דקבלן קריטת נוסחי ישראל כמור לדבר הורו מן הכעור לנכר חת היין (לחלל שבתות דבני חמירו אומת מור לעבודת כוכבים כמותי לכל הכורים כולה דמי. ה"ל דלא חמירא ליה שבת כעבודת כוכבים והעובר עובדת כוכבים סמך בהקב"ה והחלל שבת כוכר כמחשבו וחסיר סמך עלה שבת הקב"ה כמותה כחשית: ופ"ל חסות חסותם נקטת: דאין מקבלן קריבן מן העמרין:





19. Minchas Elazar  
1:74  
Munkatche Rebbe  
(1868-1937)

**שוב** ראיתי בקו"ט מהר"י אשכנזי (להג"י וחלוצניצ'ער ז"ל) חז"ד ק"י ט"ז ע"ב בקטעיט דהנהלל שנה צפרסקיא אינו אוסקר י"ן צונגען וקרי ל"י וואר"י צהוראה ב"ו סכעלס ווונט דברי סריצ'ס אופורטיס שאוסקר י"ן צונגען וכן כראש צונצ"ע כ"ל. ווי"ש ב"ן שטיק פא'יקור קה"ס י"כס וואס חיהון ולי"ש ז"ס ציפראל ונהלל שנה. הנה צפרי מד"ס (ק"י ק"י"ב) אוסקר פה על קרא"ס וצחשו וואר"י אפאל הכו' (ק"י ל"א חז"ד) ציאר ל"פ"י ר"י דצאנה אקור. להסתחן עם סנהלל שנה צפרסקיא דאליכ הא"ך סצ"א ספרי"ט ר"י וואר"י וצ"ע הכו' דהקרא"ס הנהלל'ס אה הוועדוה כאלו ונהלל'ן אה הסצות וכו' ואקור להסתחן עמ"ס וואס כאלו דנהלל שנה צפרסקיא וואר צמיחן עמו הל"א ת"י צדל"א ת"י"א דנהלל שנה צעלאו וואר להסתחן ווא"ך אק"ר הקרא"ס אצ"כ פטיע"א ל"י להפרי"א דנהלל שנה אקור להסתחן עמו ע"כ דן ע"י צ"ה ל"אקור הסחון צקרא"ס ג"כ עפ"י דהצ"ע ב"ן דנהלל'ן אה הוועדוה ה"י כנהלל שנה צפרסקיא וואר ע"ש ע"ד צוהר"י"א דהעלה צאנה דאקור להסתחן עם ונהלל שנה צפרסקיא וצ"י צפטיק כוללת לה"י יקרי סחור"ס להגאון חת"ס ז"ל סדר"ס צרוצ"ן על קדושת ד' פראג (צו"ר ז"ל ונוסד"ך על"י בהקדמתו חלק ו') כראש ג"כ וואו סצ"אר דא'יקור חיהון שלא ילוד ווועג"י ע"ש ע"כ צדל"א אקור צמוצ"י זמרי"ט שנהלל'ס סצות צפרסקיא וואס נחצ"כ'ס אחרי דעות פסקוה סלע"דוס הוור"ס סרע"ס צילדוהס או וואצות"סס אפשי"טו שר"ס סור"ס ר"ש ולג"ה וכה. הסופרי"ס הנהלל'ס סהסת"ו צדוהס סקרוצ"ס צערי"ה וצ"ה ס"ך צדל"א א'יקור חיהון וועט שלא ילוד ווועג"י"הס סרע"י וכה סרע"ה סז"א סאוור"ס א"ן תורה ו"ן סעו"ס ר"ן כל א"ס ס"ס צע"י"ו יצ"ה"ר לו א"ס ו"ל"ה וד"ה תו"ס"ק להנסב צ"ס כ"י א'יקרא א"ס יוד"י לפי דעמו סנצ"הס וא"ך סהצ"א"ס אחר"ס סו"ס (לצ"ס וואס) דו"ס כחי"כ סנצ"הס לצ"ן סעכ"ס אצות"י ספוש"ס ח"י"ו סרי סקור"ס כו"ך ווספ"ה הוור"ס סנהלל'ס ע"כ צדל"א צאנה ס"ך א'יקור חיהון כ"י שלא יערצ צ"הס ולא ילוד ווועג"י"הס וזה ע"בן צפטיעות. ווא"כ סל ייקור ו"ה דפטיע"א ל"י להרצ (וואר"י אשכנזי ז"ל) הכו' ד"ש א'יקור חיהון צנהלל' סצות ח"א ככו'. ג"ס ו"ש ע"ס בהשו"י וואר"י אשכנזי צ"ס י"ד אפרי"ס ססצ"א צ"ס סהצ"ן סנהס לא וואר"י צדצ"י כלל ווספ"ה צ"ל סהצ"ן וואר"י ר"ן סהשו"י סנדוד"ר צע"ן פא"טיק"ס כה"ך ד"ש"ע ק"י ק"י"ד סע"י ט' וצ"ל ספ"ר סהצ"ן לא נע"ל כלל לע"ן ונהלל שנה א"ס אוסקר י"ן צונגען ע"כ פשוט דא"ן לסקל צ"ה כלל. ווא"י יעו"ר כ"ס צ"ה ישראל ויצ"ע סקול"ס וכו"ס ל"ן סוואו"ר סו"ר ו"ה דוואל"ט"ה צ"צ צר"ח"ס :

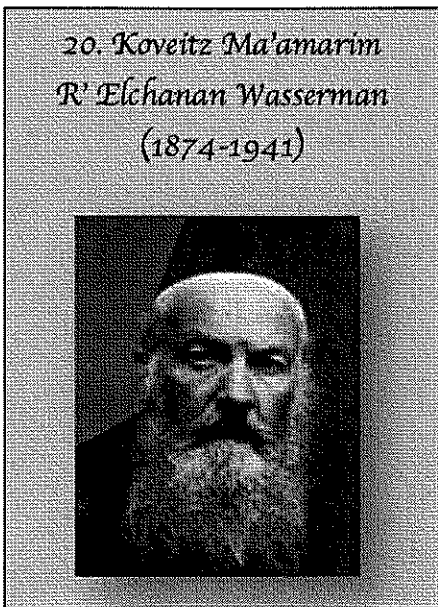
**ע"כ** צדל"א פשוט דנהלל שנה צפרסקיא אוסקר י"ן צונגען וכו"ס סנצ"הס כ"כ. וואר"י צפרי"ט אחר"ן חל"ח"י (להס"י וואר"י ע"דע"ק) ק"י ל"ע ו"י ו"ה וכו' ג"כ לאקור. א"ך ו"ש ע"ס ד"ד"י ס"ס צד"ע"ד סק"ס כ"כ ישראל ס"ן ודק"ר יוד"י וכו"ד לו א"ס"כ ס"ס"ן לא נש"ר ווונט דק"ר סנהלל שנה צפרסקיא וכו' ע"ס לדון ד"י לה"ן חוקה ס"ס עד סרוד"ע וואס ע"ס א'יקור ווונט דק"ר סקלאו ווונט ולצ"ד ל"ע א"ס ס"ך לוא"ר ס"ס חוקה ס"ס לה"ן סק"ס ודק"ר סווע"י ישראל כ"ה ו"ס סח"ן על דק"ר סצ"י"ו סל"דו צצ"א א"ח"ז"ס סו"ה צ"ל צע"י"ה כל צ"י לא יסו"ן ר"ל כ"י לו"ד"ס ע"ס צע"י"ו סרצ"ד צרי כפ"ה וואו"ר"ס סרע"ס, ז"ל ווע"י ווע"י נש"ר יכ"ס סווע"ד"ס על נפ"ס צ"ק"ן (וואר"י אשכנזי יווא"ו וואס כ"הס וכו"ה סווא"ק"ס ע"י צאו"הס כ"י וצווא"הס א"ל) צו"ד"הס ס"ק"ן סר"כ"י צע"י"ה כ"י כווע"י ג"ס ו"יטו"ה דו"יטו"ה לא י"לל וואס ל"ל"ה צ"כ"ש"ר וצ"י סו"ה וואר"י ק"י ס"י"ה וס"י"ה סע"י דע"ס וואס וואר"י קו"ה ק"י צ"י ווא"ו חוקה כ"הס ל"ק"ר כ"ס או י"ו סע"א"ו"ה צ"ד"ן סאל"ו אחר"י כ"י סו"ו וואר"י"ס ל"פ"ו ישראל כ"ו ר"ן כ"ו"ן א"ס ל"ע"ס ספ"י דחוקה כ"הס ווע"ס ר"ו סו"ו ד"ל"א סו"ו ונהלל ר"ו צ"א סכ"ר"ס צווע"הס ו"ס ל"א"ר סע"ו"ס דחוקה כ"הס ד"ר חוקה צע"לס י"ל ד"א"ר"ע ג"י כ"א"ר א"ו רוא"ס ד"כ"ס צע"י"ה צו"ד"הס ולי"ע ג"ס צ"פ"י צד"ע"ד כ"ו"ד"ל ד"י"י א"ס ל"ר"ו ל"ק"י כלל. ווא"ש ע"ס סכ"הס צ"כ"הס ג"ל"הס לא ח"ק"י ונהלל שנה ס"י צע"י"ה ר"ו ח"י"כ"ה ד"י"ו ל"כ"ו ע"י ג"י א"ל לא ע"ס קול"ל ל"כ"ו צע"ל"ו וכו"כ צ"ח"י ס"ס ח"ק ס"ו ס"י ק"י"ס ד"י"ו ס"י"ו ע"י ס"י"ה ג"י א"ל כ"כ"הס צ"דו צ"כ"הס ג"ל"הס ח"י"צ סע"הס כ"כ סה"ח"ס. וכו"ן סווא"ר צ"א"ק"ו"ס ס"ל צ"ה"ג צ"י"ס וצו"ד"י"ט סנהלל שנה צפרסקיא אוסקר י"ן צונגען צ"י ע"ס חול"ק סהר"א"ו"ס ע"כ צדל"א א"ן ל"ח ו"ה :



שיבוש בדיעות<sup>5</sup>

בכפירה לא שייך שוגג דהא מימי אינו  
מאמין וא"א להיות בכלל ישראל בלא  
אמונה

כתב שגדולים וטובים מעו בזה מפני האגרות המשבשות הדעות. ושמעתי בשם  
כ' מו"ר הגר"ח הלוי וצ"ל מברסק בדעת הרמב"ם כי בכפירה לא שייך שוגג  
דהא מ"מ אינו מאמין וא"א להיות בכלל ישראל בלא אמונה, ואומרים משמו  
בה"ל "דער וואס איז געבין אן אפיקורוס איז אויך אן אפיקורוס", ולכאורה  
דבריו מוכרחין שהרי כל הכופרים וכל עובדי ע"ז הם מוטעין. ואין לך מוטעה  
יותר מהמקריב בנו למולך והוא חייב מיתה. אבל קשה דהא תינוק המוטל  
בעריסה ג"כ אין לו אמונה, ומ"מ הוא בכלל ישראל, ותינוק שנשבה לבין  
העכו"ם מביא קרבן על שגגתו, ואין דינו כמומר (שבת ס"ח ע"ב), ומוכח דאנום  
רחמנא פמרי' גם בחסרון אמונה.



יסודי האמונה מוכרחין, ורק רצון  
האדם לפריקת עול משה את שכלו  
למעו בדברים משונים ומוכרחים

ו"ל לפי המבואר למעלה כי יסודי האמונה  
מוכרחין ודעת האדם מצד עצמה לא תתן  
מקום לכפירה, ורק רצון האדם לפריקת עול  
משה את שכלו למעו בדברים משונים ומוכרחים וע"כ שגגתו עולה ודון. אבל  
האומר מותר לעבוד ע"ז הוא שוגג ופסור ממיתה בין שמכור שעושה ברשות  
התורה.

המטעה בהבנת הכתובים והי כאומר  
מותר ודינו כשוגג

ואפשר שזו היא כונת הראב"ד "מפני האגרות  
המשבשות הדעות" היינו שמעותן אינה מדעת  
עצמן אלא מפני שמבמלין דעתן לדעת האגרות. והוה בכלל אומר מותר דחשוב  
שגגה גם בכפירה, ותתישב בזה מה שמקשין מהא דאמר ר' הלל (סנהדרין צח:)  
אין משיח לישראל שכבר אכלהו בימי חזקיה, ואיך אפשר לומר שר' הלל יצא  
מכלל ישראל ה"ז שהרי כבר באחד מעיקרי הדת, ולפי המבואר ניהא שר' הלל  
אמר בן מפני שמטעה בהבנת הכתובים והוי כאומר מותר ודינו כשוגג. ומש"ה  
קאמר רב יוסף התם שרא ליה מריה לר' הלל. ודעת הרמב"ם כי המעות בענין  
הגשמה באה מדעת עצמן ולא מפני האגרות, כי אילו היתה דעתן צלולה לא  
היו האגרות ממעות אותם והיו מוצאים דרך ליישב דברי האגרות שלא יהיו נגד  
הדעת.

אמו יראה מילתא זמרתא וזאת היא  
לגבי משה מילתא זמרתא וזאת היא  
האמונה מוכרחין אלא שרצונותיו של  
האדם להפקרות ממין שכלו, ואצל משה  
רצונותיו לא משלו עליו

(ב) ובה יש מקום לכאור הא דפריך בגמ'  
(ברכות לג:) אמו יראה מילתא זמרתא היא,  
ומשני אין לגבי משה מילתא זמרתא היא,  
וצריך ביאור מה בכך הא הכתוב לכל ישראל  
נאמר ולא למשה לבדו ואצלם לאו מילתא זמרתא היא (עיי"ש במהרש"א  
בחא"ג). ו"ל לפי המבואר דיסודי האמונה מוכרחין אלא שרצונותיו של האדם  
להפקרות ממין שכלו, ונמצא דהאמונה מצד עצמה קלה מאד לחשינה ומצד  
השני היא קשה מאד, כי הרצון ישפיע על השכל להטעותו. ודעת המקשן היה  
מאחרי שבפעל קשה להשיג את היראה (חבאה ע"י האמונה) לא שייך לשון  
הכתוב "מה", והתרצן השיב דהא חוינן שאצל משה היתה היראה מילתא  
זמרתא מפני שרצונותיו לא משלו עליו, אלא הוא משל עליהן, ומוכח מזה  
דהיראה מצד עצמה לולי רצונותיו של האדם היא מילתא זמרתא לירא ממי  
שבידו נפש כל חי, ושפיר שייך לומר לשון "מה" מאחר שמצד עצמה אינה קשה  
כלל להשיגה.



**דבר** ימי טעם התורה נרבים לתועלת לנו מחייקי. הנה בעלמנו קדע להסנהג דוקא ע"י דעת חז"ל היינו התלמוד וטו"ע קדמיה כי כן רלוו יומר לא יטע טע"י. איזה חרם נהיה כן צניע ראשון שהיו מחייקי הנה י"ט שאינם עובדים ע"י, מקריבים צדמות חוץ לשמים אע"פ הוא באיסור כרת, מ"מ עשו עפ"י דברי כהני כמות שהיו חקשים חללים ואמרו כי בזה האופן יתא נוח להשיג אהבה ודבוקות להקב"ה לא נהיה נלכך לבא דוקא לירושלים להקריב, ומשום שחשבו עבירה למאזה לא היו מלכי יהודה הצדיקים כמו אחא ויהושפט יכולים להעבירם מזה החטא כדכתיב עוד העם מובחים ומקטרים צדמות י"ב היו מחייקים למאזה עד שכתב ב"ה יחזקיהו המלך ובטל הצדמות הנה רבקה ובי תאמרו אל ה' אלהינו צדמתו הלא הוא יחזקיהו י"ג הסיור את צדמתו ואת מובחיו ויאמר ליהודים לפני המזבח עד שצדמתו ועליו מקטירו, הרי משב רבקה לטון גדול ליחזקיהו, היינו משום שהיה מומרו ובקמתו שמת מציה אביו שהוא פון נהנה את העם מדבוקות ואהבת ה', ובאמת ה' בזה איסור כרת, אם נחקור באיזה כח התגבר יחזקיהו על דעת העם יותר מאחא והאמת, אין זאת אלא בזה שהריץ תורה נרבים אע"פ שהיה לא לשמה אלא מפני פחד המצב, מ"מ הופיל בזה למנוע מן העם ולעשות כדעת תורה, ולא כדעת אנושי, ובה יק נדרות הללו הרבה מחייקי הנה ירלוו ה' מתנהגים בדעת שלמים להשיג אהבת ה' אע"פ שאינו לפי דעת התלמוד וטו"ע וטומים על מחמר ש"ל (בכמהדורין דף ק"ו) רחמנא לבא בני ובאים מחמת זה להרבה עבירות והכל לש"ס כדי להשיג אהבת ה' האגורה צדיקים חבל אם יצילו נרבים התורה ע"מ לפנות כפי התורה אז יהיו נשמרים מצוה קטנה וקטנים קורח כל אחד צדו. ח"ו אלא הכל יהיה ע"ד התלמוד:

**דבר** אם באמת ובתמים אנו באים להחזיק הנה אין ענה כי אם לעשות מעטק לימוד וכלי שום נפקא מינה אם הוא לשמה אז שלא לשמה חס הינו אלא מסור לגב וידוע להקב"ה עד להלליח את הלימוד, אבל לנו אין לדעת ולחשוב בזה מאומה, הנה האופן ירבו לומדי התורה בהנה והנה, וגם המתחכמים יצירו כי קיום התלמוד הוא לנו לחומה:

נפתלי צבי יהודא ברלין.

23. Meishiv Davar 1:44  
 Netziv  
 R' Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin  
 (1816-1893)



**סימן סד  
 על ימין ושמאל**

בע"ה ולשמו ית'.

**ראיתי** בעלה מחייקי הנה גליון ג' מאמר נערך ממערביי פעלים, הנקרא המאמר בשם ימין ושמאל ובהו בזה לדרוש בתורה טאלס הנדרש להקונה, ובאשר עלינו להסתפק בהחזקת הנה בנפאל לא יכולנו חלט נפשו ולהגיע לפני פדה ה' בעלי מחייקי הנה יברכס ה' את אשר בלבו בחקירה זו, ומי שם נידו להשיב ולברר הדברים צלוסן אחר יבאו דבריו ויאירו דרך חיים כי איך שפגעו רחוקים ומ"י במקום דירה סגנו קרובים זה לזה ברטון ומקל לבא אל המקרה, בעור האל דעה תורה: **הן** הסריט לטון החקירה, (א) הכול דת ישראל להחלק לעגמה נרים, (ב) הנחלה ימין ושמאל והאמצע במהלך חמונתו, והופיעו כי לדעתם טעון ימין ושמאל והאמצע בדה היו לפני פנות קדם, אולי נמאלו בישראל שלם כמות באלה, היינו הצדיקים אשר התרחקו מכל היותם העולם עד אשר לא ינהנו מעולם הנה אשילו באמצע קטנה, ולעומתם נמאלו רשעים פורקי עול תורה ויראה את מחסרון ידיעה אם בשאל נפש וברון, והאמצעים תמימים נדרשים חלטי בדרך העולם ולא כעטו בתורה:

כ"ט.

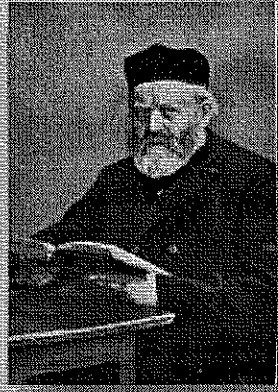
**ש א ל ה:**

בסנין שלנו יש אחד או שנים שמחללים שבת בפרהסיא לא לכר במלאכתם כי אם גם עושים סוגמר, ואפילו קידוש והברלה אינם עושים, אי שרו לצרפם לסנין.

**ת ש ו ב ה:**

הפרט"י סי' נ"ה באשל אברתם סי' ק"י כי דמחלל שבת בפרהסיא אין מצרפין למנין וכ"כ בתשו' חכם צבי. סי' ל"ח, ואף דבשאלית יעבץ ח"י סי' מ"ט משמע רכל עבריון מצרפין למנין כל זמן שלא נידוחו סי'ם לא כתב בפירוש דגם מחלל שבת בפרהסיא מצרפין ואפשר רמורה בזה ראין מצרפין ועיין סי'ש לענין זה בשו"ת משיב דבר סי' מ' שאוסר, וכי חמוניא סי' קצ"ט סי' ק"י כי שהוא רשע בפרהסיא אין מומנין עליו. וראיתי בשו"ת רשב"ן סי' צ"י שהביא בשם שו"ת דורש לעיין דוה דוקא במומר להכעים ובימינו אין עושין להכעים (וע' שו"ת רשב"ן סי' ס"ו) ותמוה להכעים אפילו בא' משאר עבירות אין מצרפין אותו כמבואר בפרט"י הגיל סי' נ"ה, גם הביא שם בשו"ת רשב"ן בשם ליקוטי חבר חלק ה' דף ק"ו שאחרי שגברו בעלי זרוע אין כח בדינו להוריד בהן כוח אם עולה לדוכן. — וע"ש עוד סי' קל"ט השוכח מהרד"ק מ"ה חיים צבי מאנהיימער וצ"ל, ושם הביא ג"כ שו"ת מהר"י אסאד י"ד סי' נ"י שמחללי שבתות בומנינו כ"ו שלא העירו עליהם בפניהם ובא דברי' שחללו בפני' מישראל אין אוסרים ין במגעם, שיש הרבה אחרונים סוברים דהא רמומר לחלל שבת הווי מומר לכל החורה הוא רק מדרבנן עיי"ש בשו"ת יהורה יעלה. — היוצא מכל הנ"ל שעמ"י דין

24. Melamed L'Hoil O.C. 29  
 R' Dr. David Zvi Hoffmann  
 (1843 - 1921)



In these times we are accustomed to rule leniently even in Hungary and in all of Germany. I remember that once, one of the men of our community who kept his store open on Shabbat was in mourning. He took his place leading the prayers in the synagogue during his mourning period. ... When I asked the gaba'im why they did not prevent him, they told me that this was the custom from days of old. In the Beit Ha-midrash here, they do not prevent one whose business is open on Shabbat from leading the prayers. Since the earlier rabbis were men of great renown, they must have had good reasons not to object...

The Rav also told me ... that the Gaon, the author of the Sho'eil U-meishiv, wrote that people from America who desecrate the Shabbat are not disqualified through their lack of observance because they are equivalent to children who were taken captive...

There is another reason to be lenient today and not to consider them public Shabbat desecrators - because there are so many who transgress. When there is a strong majority who keep the Torah and a small minority who transgress publicly, they are seen as acting brazenly, denying the Torah. Such a one is acting (as the Torah says) 'with a high hand,' and separates himself from the community of Israel. Since today, unfortunately, we have sinned to the degree that most Jews have broken with tradition, an individual who desecrates the Sabbath does not think that he is committing such a grave sin. He therefore thinks that there is no reason to act only privately. His public sin is thus no different than a private one.

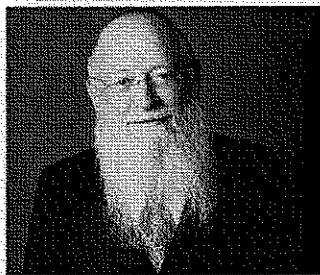
מחלל שבת במרחסו אין מצטרף למנון, אך בזמן הזה נוחזן להקל אף בארץ אונגארן ומשכ"כ בארץ אשכנז, וזכורני שפעם אחת אירע אבילות לאיש אחד שחננתו פתוח בשבת, והוא אחר מבעלי בתים של קהלתנו, קהל עדה ישראל, וירד לפני התיבה בבית הכנסת של קהלתנו, אך הנבאי ירע לרעות אותו ולפייסו שלא יירד עוד מפני שהקהל ירננו על זה, ואח"כ הלך זה האיש לכהני"ג של חברת ש"ס, ואף שהנבאי רשם היה איש חרדי ויראי, הניחו לירד לפני התיבה בלי מניעה, וכאשר שאלתי את הנבאי למה לא מנעו, אמר לי שכן הוא ג"כ מנתן סימנים קדמונים בבית המדרש דפה שאין מונעין מלירד לפני התיבה האנשים שמסחרם פתוח בשבת, וכיון שהרבה דשם שהיו אנשי שם לא סרחו מסחמא היה טעמם ונימוקם עמם, ואפשר שסמכו ע"ז מה שכתוב ג"כ בשו"ת בנן עיון החדשות מי כ"ג שמחללי שבת בזמנינו נחשבים קצת כתינוק שנשבה לבין הנכרים, מפני שבעוה"ר רוב ישראל בארצנו מחללי שבת הם, ואין דעתם כזה לכפור בעיקרי אמונתנו ע"י"ש, וכן חנדי לי הרב מ"ה משולם ולמן הכתן ו"ל בשם הגאון בעל שו"ת ומשיב שכתב שהאנשים מאמערקא אינם נפסלים ע"י חילול שבת שלהם מפני שהם כתינוק שנשבה לבין הנכרים אח"כ מצאתי כעין זה בהנהגת רע"א ל"ד סי' רס"ד וע"י"ש סכרות להקל, אבי ע"י פ"ט"ג אינו סי' רמ"ב אי"א סי' ד', וע"י ספר חסידים סי' תשס"ח (וא"י לי פנאי כעה לחפש תשובה זו רמ"ירי לענן נימון בפנים בשו"ת שו"מ). יהי א"ך שה"י המקיל לצרף אנשים כאלו למנון יש לו על מי שייסמוך, אך מי שיכול לילך לכהני"ג אחר בלי להכלים איש, ששיטת דמהות טוב שלא יסמוך על היתר זה, ויתפלל עם אנשים כשרים. עוד יש סוף להקל דבזמננו לא מיקרי מחלל שבת במרחסו, כיון שרובנו עושין כן, רבשלמא אמר רוב ישראל זכאין, ומעטים מעינים פניהם לעשות איסור זה הרי הוא כופר בתורה ועושה תועבה ביד רמה ומורש עצמו מכלל ישראל, אבל כיון דבעוה"ר רובם פורעים הגדר תקנתם קלקלתם, היחוד הושב שאין זה עבירה גדולה כל כך וא"צ לעשות בצנעה, ופרהסיי שלו כבצנעה, ואדרבה היראים קרואים בזמננו פרושים ומובדלים, והפושעים הם התולכים בדרך כל הארץ.

It seems that the law of 'downing' the heretic applies only to a time that God's providence is evident, as in the times when there were open miracles and there was use of heavenly voices and the righteous of the generous were subject to special providence which could be seen by all; and those who denied were with special perversion through the motivation of the evil inclination to lust and licentiousness...But in the time of obscurity when faith has been torn from the impoverished of the people, 'downing' does not constitute mending of the breach, rather adding to the breach, for it will appear to them like corruption and oppression, heaven forbid. Since the whole purpose is to repair, the law does not apply when it is of no constructive value and it devolves upon us to bring them back with bonds of love and to place some in the ray of light as much as it is in our power

25. Chazon Ish Y.D. 2:16  
R' Avrohom Yeshaya  
Karelitz,  
(1878 - 1953)



הנראה דאין דין מירידין חלל בזמן שהשגחתו ית גלוי כמו בזמן שהיו נסים מליון ומשמש בה קול, ונדיקי כדור תחת השגחה פרטית כנראה לטוב כל, והכושרין אז הוא בגלות מיוחדות כבעיות ה"ר לתאוות והסקרות, וזה היה ציטור רשעים גדרו של עולם שהכל ידעו כי כדחה כדוה מצוה פורעניות לעולם ומצוה דבר וחזק ורעב בעולם, חלל בזמן הבעל. שכתבת האמונה מן דלת העם אין צמטטת הורדה גדר הפירה חלל כוספת הפלה שיהי צמיינס כמעט השחתה ואלמות ח"ו וכיון שכל מלמדי לחקן אין הדון נודג צמטט שאין צו תיקון ועליו להחזירם בצנעות. אהבה ולהטמדם בקרן אורה כמה שירדו נגמט.



26. Rabbi Dr. J. David Bleich  
*"May a Shabbath Desecrator Drink Wine?"*  
Tradition 44:3

## VII. AN AFTERWORD

In mid-nineteenth-century Western Europe Rabbi Ettlinger and Mahari Aszod became aware that many of their coreligionists were compromising Sabbath observance because of financial concerns coupled with accelerating ignorance of the severity of their infractions. A century later, in a totally different milieu in twentieth-century Egypt, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef described the phenomenon of large numbers of Jews who attended early services on the Sabbath and then proceeded to their work places and yet scrupulously observed those Sabbath laws that did not interfere with earning a livelihood.

In mid-nineteenth-century America, Sabbath observance was even more besieged than in Europe. R. Abraham Rice, in his youth a fellow student of R. Jacob Ettlinger in Würzburg, was the first ordained rabbi to settle in the United States. He arrived in 1840 and sometime thereafter ruled that Sabbath-desecrators were not to be called to the reading of the Torah. When this ruling was flouted, he instructed that those faithful to his guidance not respond "Amen" to the blessings pronounced by Sabbath-desecrators. Unsurprisingly, Rabbi Rice's stance was exceedingly unpopular and aroused much dissension.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a result of dire economic circumstances, tens of thousands of otherwise observant Jews felt constrained to work on the Sabbath. The six-day workweek and strictly enforced blue laws resulted in many employers insisting upon labor on Saturday as a condition of employment. Sabbath observance declined at an alarming rate. One historian of American Jewry reports with irony that the members of Congregation Shomrei Shabbos, a Boston Orthodox synagogue, were overwhelmingly Sabbath-violators. He also records a Yiddish women's tehinah prayer, published in America, that bemoans the difficulty of Sabbath repose when the "burden of making a living is so great" and beseeches the Almighty to "Grant a bountiful living to all Jewish children that they should not...have to desecrate your holy day."

This writer recalls a visit to Curacao sometime in the early 1970s. The island boasted a single Orthodox synagogue in which the only Shabbat service commenced at 7:00AM in order to accommodate worshippers who, without exception, at the close of services left to open business establishments that catered to a bustling Saturday tourist trade.

Decades later, in our own day, society has developed a far different workplace ethic and even legal safeguards designed to protect Sabbath-observers are available. Today the material situation of Sabbath-observers is vastly improved even while, sadly, countless fellow Jews have grown to adulthood in secular households in which ignorance of the Sabbath and its practices reigns. The net result is, strangely, that although nonobservance of Sabbath on the part of those individuals is hardly an act of brazen heresy or purposeful disavowal of Judaism, the opposite has often become

a significant signpost. Moving—even if slowly—toward committed Sabbath observance has become a marker of a return to Judaism. If, in the early twentieth century, Rabbi Kook accurately described the phenomenon of nonobservance as the effect of the raging currents of a seductive, alien culture, the dawn of the twenty-first century heralds an era in which, as he wrote, those who were distant will return intellectually and "out of love." May his prayer that they "will return in a highly exalted state be speedily fulfilled.





27. Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt  
"Confronting Disbelievers"  
Tradition 23:1, 1987

The conclusions of Hazon Ish are amazing. He actually reversed the halakhic decision of the Talmud and Rambam in the way we have to relate to "heretics"; he recommended effecting a change in their ways by a bond of love rather than by counterproductive harshness. Ideologically he concedes that given the modern milieu heresy need not be the result of moral aberration but a "genuinely" arrived-at "error." His words should apply as much to leaders of Reform and Conservatism as they do to the secular Jew.

One of the tragedies of our time has been the persistence of the extreme right community to treat all non-believing, non-practicing Jews, or at least the educated and the intellectuals, as *resha'im*—wicked, immoral people—and not as the ideological children of their generation. Probably never before has such a high percentage of our people strayed from the Torah path, but concurrently, the pathway of *teshuvah* is wider and more accessible than ever. Because secularism has never been more successful than over the past 100 years, its results are also more devastating than ever before.

It is not surprising that *Hazal* spoke about the *ikveta di-meshiha* (footsteps of the Messiah) in terms of a society which is only too familiar to us. They seem to be suggesting that the decadence created by the secular society contains the antithesis, the thrust towards the Messianic era (an almost Hegelian idea). But these goals can only be achieved with "the bonds of love," not by fire and not with stones. In the words of Hillel, "Love people and bring them close to Torah."<sup>13</sup>

I do not subscribe to the often well-intentioned but unfeasible and undesirable attempts at institutional integration with the heterodox "for the sake of Kelal Yisrael and in the name of Ahavat Yisrael." I am, though, for dignity and dialogue both in Israel and America. This means talking initially with Reform and Conservative leaders—bonds of love cannot be created from afar. At the same time, Halakhah should not be ruthlessly manipulated to accommodate external humanistic goals; it is simply not true that "where there is a rabbinic will there is a halakhic way."<sup>14</sup> But we must come to terms with the fact that secularism and its effects are here to stay for a while, in spite of all the successes of the various *teshuvah* efforts; that the people affected by these ideas are not *ipso facto* degenerates and derelicts; and that our response must be with dignity and dialogue. It may be frustrating and seemingly hopeless at times to achieve any *modus vivendi* or understanding, but the Tannaitic description of *ikveta di-meshiha* ends with the undaunted expression of faith: "And we have no one to lean on but our father in heaven." That should be enough to keep us going!



Judish's point allows us to understand why Judaism asks its *kohanim* and clergy to found families, marry, and bear children before engaging in positions of leadership. Judaism insists on marriage and childraising because it insists that if we are to learn to love others, we must begin by loving those who are closest to us. Why, for Judaism, is preferential love so important? The answer lies in the distinction between sympathy and empathy. Judaism would argue that one who has no exclusive loves cannot truly feel the emotional highs and lows experienced by one involved in these relationships. One who does not lie awake worrying about his own children can understand, but not fully empathize with, one who does; one who has not experienced the exclusive love that is marriage can understand, but not fully feel *with* another, the pain experienced by someone who has lost a spouse. Judaism therefore insists that both for the *kohen* and the layman, the experience of the family life is essential to truly understanding, and ministering to, humanity; rather than detracting from the love of others, it is essential to the very endeavor, for it is precisely the love for one's own that galvanizes him toward love of the outsider. As such, a prophet or pastor's love for his own children is the starting point toward cultivating compassion for other people's children. The case for celibacy appears to posit a choice between exclusive and expansive love, between special relations and *agape*, but this is a false choice. In Jewish words, "special relations are prior to *agape*, and one learns *agape* from them, and the universalist voice, once established, is truly a different voice—but neither voice obviates or overwhelms the other."<sup>15</sup>

#### JUDAISM, UNIVERSALISM, AND THE "LOVE LEAP"

What is embodied by the hierarchy of relationships in the life of the *kohen gadol* is also made manifest in the hierarchy of concerns incumbent upon every member of the *am mamlechet kohanim*. Bar-Ilan University Professor Ze'ev Maghen relates how he was once sitting in a restaurant in Tel Aviv when he heard that a plane crash in East Asia had killed hundreds of people. Utterly unperturbed, he continued with his meal. He then paused, thought to himself how he would feel if those killed were Israelis, and found himself without an appetite. It is preferential love for one's own nation, he realized, that can lead to compassion for others:

✳ Preferential love is the most powerful love there is, the only truly *motivating* love there is. It is by *means* of that love—the *special* love we harbor for those close to us—that we learn how to begin to love others, who are farther away. Genuine and galvanizing empathy for "the other" is acquired most effectively and lastingly through a process which involves, first and foremost, immersion in love of self, then of family, then of friends, then of community . . . and so on. It is via *emotional analogy* to these types of strong-bond affections that one becomes capable of executing a sort of "love leap," a transference of the strength and immediacy of the feelings one retains for his favorite people, smack onto those who have no direct claim on such sentiments.<sup>16</sup>

This "love-leap" is precisely what the *kohen gadol* performs: from his immediate family to his extended family, and from there to all Israel. But it is also what Jews, the *kohanim* of the world, are called to embody. It is precisely the fact that Jews love their own so dearly that allows them to desire the improved welfare of the world. To love everyone equally is to love no one truly at all.

#### 28. "The Universalism of Particularity"

##### Orthodox Caucus

Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik

#### CHOSENNESS AND THE MODERN ORTHODOX FUTURE

In response to the questions facing this Forum, I have briefly outlined how a dedication to *kelal Yisrael* can be emphasized without leading to a lack of concern for others, and indeed how exclusive love can help foster universal concern. I would add, however, that one of the central questions we ought to face is not only whether Modern Orthodoxy can foster among its adherents a concern for the world, but also whether the next generation of Modern Orthodox Jews will ably respond to the challenge that the world, and especially the academy, will present philosophically to the notion of Jewish peoplehood. It was Shlomo Carlebach who said that when he visited an American college campus, "I ask students what they are. If someone gets up and says, I'm a Catholic, I know that's a Catholic. If someone says, I'm a Protestant, I know that's a Protestant. If someone gets up and says, I'm just a human being, I know that's a Jew."<sup>19</sup> It is in such an environment that the following questions will be put to Modern Orthodox students, by professors and students, Jews and non-Jews: Ought we not to love all human beings equally? Is not loving one's own kin preferentially a form of xenophobia? Is not caring particularly for Jews on the other side of the world because of a blood kinship a form of bigotry, or racism? Is not Hebrew scripture's notion of the nation state outdated? Would not the world be better off if divisions between countries were undone, if

decisions were made by the United Nations, or the International Court of Justice at The Hague, and we all became, to paraphrase President Obama's speech in Berlin, "fellow citizens of the world"?

It is to these questions that the next generation of Modern Orthodox Jews must be able to respond. In doing so, they must ably defend their Jewish identity not as a dialectic fraught with tension, but rather as encompassing a complementary hierarchy of obligation, a moral philosophy whose genius was wrongly ignored, denied, and derided throughout much of the history of ethical thought, and that the world today ignores at its own peril. It is no coincidence that the Abraham who desperately desired a son also pleaded passionately for Sodom, that the Moses who went out "among his brothers" also saved the Midianites at the well, and that the Isaiah who sought and strove for the *teshuvah* of his own brethren also longed for a day when all the nations would seek instruction from the mountain of the Lord.

This is a lesson that not just the world but many Jews have forgotten. In Judaism's estimation, when one claims to be without roots, to be nothing but a human being, he denies not only his particular identity but his very humanity. "Nothing could be more striking," notes Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "than the fact that a people whose very reason for being in the past was to be different, chosen, particular, should today define itself in purely universalist terms, forgetting—surely not accidentally—that it is precisely in our particularity that we enter and express the universal human condition."<sup>20</sup> This is the perspective that the next generation must be able to argue; as *kohanim* to the world, they must be not only ministers of monotheism but also proud proclaimers of the genius of Judaism's moral message. Whether we will prepare them to deliver this message cogently and courageously remains to be seen.

# My So-Called Opinions

29. Zachary Fine

By ZACHARY FINE

April 6, 2014, 5:00 pm

**The New York Times**

Critics of the millennial generation, of which I am a member, consistently use terms like “apathetic,” “lazy” and “narcissistic” to explain our tendency to be less civically and politically engaged. But what these critics seem to be missing is that many millennials are plagued not so much by apathy as by indecision. And it’s not surprising: Pluralism has been a large influence on our upbringing. While we applaud pluralism’s benefits, widespread enthusiasm has overwhelmed desperately needed criticism of its side effects.

By “pluralism,” I mean a cultural recognition of difference: individuals of varying race, gender, religious affiliation, politics and sexual preference, all exalted as equal. In recent decades, pluralism has come to be an ethical injunction, one that calls for people to peacefully accept and embrace, not simply tolerate, differences among individuals. Distinct from the free-for-all of relativism, pluralism encourages us (in concept) to support our own convictions while *also* upholding an “energetic engagement with diversity,” as Harvard’s Pluralism Project suggested in 1991. Today, paeans to pluralism continue to sound throughout the halls of American universities, private institutions, left-leaning households and influential political circles.

However, pluralism has had unforeseen consequences. The art critic Craig Owens once wrote that pluralism is not a “recognition, but a reduction of difference to absolute indifference, equivalence, interchangeability.” Some millennials who were greeted by pluralism in this battered state are still feeling its effects. Unlike those adults who encountered pluralism with their beliefs close at hand, we entered the world when truth-claims and qualitative judgments were already on trial and seemingly interchangeable. As a result, we continue to struggle when it comes to decisively avowing our most basic convictions.

Those of us born after the mid-1980s whose upbringing included a liberal arts education and the fruits of a fledgling World Wide Web have grown up (and are still growing up) with an endlessly accessible stream of texts, images and sounds from far-reaching times and places, much of which were unavailable to humans for all of history. Our most formative years include not just the birth of the Internet and the ensuing accelerated global exchange of information, but a new orthodoxy of multiculturalist ethics and “political correctness.”

These ideas were reinforced in many humanities departments in Western universities during the 1980s, where facts and claims to objectivity were eagerly jettisoned. Even “the canon” was dislodged from its historically privileged perch, and since then, many liberal-minded professors have avoided opining about “good” literature or “high art” to avoid reinstating an old hegemony. In college today, we continue to learn about the byproducts of absolute truths and intractable forms of ideology, which historically seem inextricably linked to bigotry and prejudice.

For instance, a student in one of my English classes was chastened for his preference for Shakespeare over that of the Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat. The professor challenged the student to apply a more “disinterested” analysis to his reading so as to avoid entangling himself in a misinformed gesture of “postcolonial oppression.” That student stopped raising his hand in class.

I am not trying to tackle the challenge as a whole or indict contemporary pedagogies, but I have to ask: How does the ethos of pluralism inside universities impinge on each student’s ability to make qualitative judgments outside of the classroom, in spaces of work, play, politics or even love?

II.

In 2004, the French sociologist of science Bruno Latour intimated that the skeptical attitude which rebuffs claims to absolute knowledge might have had a deleterious effect on the younger generation: "Good American kids are learning the hard way that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on." Latour identified a condition that resonates: Our tenuous claims to truth have not simply been learned in university classrooms or in reading theoretical texts but reinforced by the decentralized authority of the Internet. While trying to form our fundamental convictions in this dizzying digital and intellectual global landscape, some of us are finding it increasingly difficult to embrace qualitative judgments.

Matters of taste in music, art and fashion, for example, can become a source of anxiety and hesitation. While clickable ways of "liking" abound on the Internet, personalized avowals of taste often seem treacherous today. Admittedly, many millennials (and nonmillennials) might feel comfortable simply saying, "I like what I like," but some of us find ourselves reeling in the face of choice. To affirm a preference for rap over classical music, for instance, implicates the well-meaning millennial in a web of judgments far beyond his control. For the millennial generation, as a result, confident expressions of taste have become more challenging, as aesthetic preference is subjected to relentless scrutiny.

Philosophers and social theorists have long weighed in on this issue of taste. Pierre Bourdieu claimed that an "encounter with a work of art is not 'love at first sight' as is generally supposed." Rather, he thought "tastes" function as "markers of 'class.'" Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argued that aesthetic preference could be traced along socioeconomic lines and reinforce class divisions. To dislike cauliflower is one thing. But elevating the work of one writer or artist over another has become contested territory.

This assured expression of "I like what I like," when strained through pluralist-inspired critical inquiry, deteriorates: "I like what I like" becomes "But why do I like what I like? Should I like what I like? Do I like it because someone else wants me to like it? If so, who profits and who suffers from my liking what I like?" and finally, "I am not sure I like what I like anymore." For a number of us millennials, commitment to even seemingly simple aesthetic judgments have become shot through with indecision.

It seems especially odd because in our "postcritical" age, as the critic Hal Foster termed it, a diffusion of critical authority has elevated voices across a multitude of Internet platforms. With Facebook, Twitter and the blogosphere, everyone can be a critic. But for all the strident young voices heard across social media, there are so many more of us who abstain from being openly critical: Every judgment or critique has its weakness, making criticism seem dangerous at worst and impotent at best.

This narrative runs counter to the one that has been popularized in the press about the indefatigable verbiage of blog-hungry millennials, but it is a crucial one. The proliferation of voices has made most of them seem valueless and wholly interchangeable, even for important topics. To use social media to publicly weigh in on polarized debates, from the death of Trayvon Martin to the Supreme Court's striking down of the Defense of Marriage Act, seems to do nothing more than provide fodder for those who would attack us. This haunts many of us when we are eager to spill ink on an issue of personal importance but find the page to be always already oversaturated.

III.

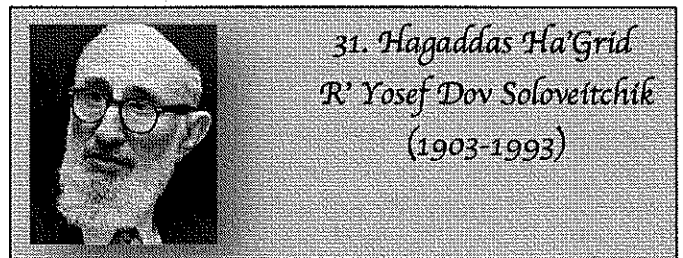
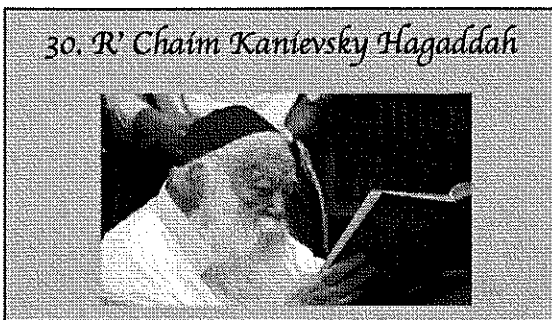
Perhaps most crucially, the pluralistic climate has confused stances on moral judgment. Even though “difference” has historically been used, according to the philosopher Cornel West, as a “justification for degradation and a justification for subordination,” we millennials labor to relish those differences and distances separating individuals, exalting difference at all costs.

We anxiously avoid casting moral judgment. Because with absolute truths elusive, what claims do we have to insist that our moral positions are better than those of someone from a different nation or culture?

Consider the challenge we might face when confronted with videos from the popular youth-oriented news outlet Vice. Here, viewers can watch videos of communities, from across the globe, participating in a host of culturally specific activities, ranging from excessive forms of eating to ritual violence to bestiality. While the greater Western culture may denounce these acts, a substantial millennial constituency would hesitate to condemn them, in the interest of embracing “difference.”

We millennials often seek refuge from the pluralist storm in that crawlspace provided by the expression “I don’t know.” It shelters the speaking-subject, whose utterances are magically made protean and porous. But this fancy footwork will buy us only so much time. We most certainly do not wish to remain crippled by indecision and hope to one day boldly stake out our own claims, without trepidation.

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ונראה דדברי הגר"א מפורשים ברמב"ם, והנהגה ז"ל הרמב"ם בהלכות חמץ ומצה (פ"ז ה"ב): לפי דעתו של בן אביו מלמדו כיצד אם הי' קטן או טיפש אומר לו בני כולנו היינו עבדים כמו שפחה זו או כמו עבד זה במצרים ובלילה הזה פדה אותנו הקב"ה ויוציאנו לחירות ואם הי' הבן גדול וחכם מודיעו מה שאירע לנו במצרים ונסים שנעשו לנו ע"י משה רבינו הכל לפי דעתו של בן עכ"ל. ולכאורה צריך ביאור למה השמיט הרמב"ם את התשובה לבן הרשע. ולפי דברי הגר"א יתבאר היטב, דבאמת אין משיבים לבן הרשע כלל, ורק משיבים לבנים האחרים, ולהכי השמיט הרמב"ם את התשובה לבן הרשע, כיון דאין משיבים לו.

**אלו הנה שם לא הנה נגאל — Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed**

Rav Chaim notes that we do not address the wicked son directly and say, “Had you been there, you would not have been redeemed.” This is because we do not engage in direct dialogue with truly wicked people. If he raised a valid point, we must address it, but we do not engage in conversation with him and legitimize him with a direct response.



32. Rav Aharon Kahn  
YUTorah.org

The son called a Rasha in the Haggadah of Pesach sits at the table with all the others. He comes home for the Seder. This is no small thing, especially if we look at him with the insight of the Gaon of Vilna. According to the Gr"a z"l, the text of the Haggadah implies that we never address the Rasha directly. After stressing the girso of the Haggadah which says: "Li Velo Lo, Ilu haya sham lo haya nigal," (using the third person pronoun), the Gr"a argues: Should not the second person pronoun "lecha" have been used? If the father is speaking to the Rasha who sits at the Seder table in front of us, should he not say: "If you were in Egypt you would not have been redeemed?" Should not the Rasha been spoken to with the words: "velo lecha...haya sham" rather than "velo lo...haya sham?"

Furthermore, continues the Gra's argument, are not these words that we quote to the Rasha (from the posuk: Ba'avur zeh...) the very words that we say to the youngest child who cannot even ask? Why do we use that same posuk to instruct the Rasha if it is not the posuk addressed to the Rasha? Thus, proves the Gr"a, we see that the Haggadah wishes that we do not address the Rasha at all. Indeed, by means of our oblique reference to the Rasha we teach the little ones how to deal with the Rasha. We instruct those who cannot yet even ask their own questions that there is an ultimate truth which is absolute, which is Divine, which cannot and must not be challenged. We speak not to the Rasha but about him. We speak in the harshest of terms as we explain to the littlest children why such a Rasha would not have made it out of Egypt. The Rasha at the table learns and is given his opportunity to do teshuvah by being snubbed and rejected!

When is rejection merely rejection and when is it education? If the father, in anger and righteous indignation, would have thrown the Rasha out of his house forever, if he would have barred him from entering his home that Seder night, in the first place, that would have been rejection with "both hands."

Rejection as education, on the other hand, draws the Rasha into the home and towards the Seder table. By the father's refusal to respond to the Rasha's challenging and offensive diatribe, the Rasha learns that his questions are not quest and that his demeanor is "attitude." The Rasha learns that he does not deserve an answer because he cannot yet hear an answer. It is as Rav Chaim Volozhiner once remarked: "To questions you can give answers, to answers you cannot give answers."

33. R' Yehuda Henkin  
"Understanding Tzniut:  
Modern Controversies in  
the Jewish Community"

It took recent generations to apply the concept of *tinok she-nishba* to simple backsliding, even in the absence of a competing religious claim. The problem with this expanded application of *tinok she-nishba* is that it can be misused to justify or exonerate everything and anything. The worshippers of the Golden Calf? Why, they were all *tinokot she-nishbu* as slaves in Egypt. The worshippers of Ba'al? *Tinokot she-nishbu* on account of the pervasive Canaanite influence in the region!

Taken at face value, some other Talmudic statements can also be misemployed to free the individual from responsibility for his actions. In *Sotah* 3a, "No one violates a prohibition unless he is first possessed by a craze (*ruach shel sbtus*)."  
Or in *Yoma* 86a, "If one violates a prohibition and repeats it, it [then] seems to him to be permitted." One who is temporarily crazed or who believes that what he does is acceptable, is hardly culpable, nor is someone whose beliefs and behavior can be completely attributed to his upbringing and environment. And while the above are non-Halachic formulations, *Tsafot* in *Sanhedrin* 9b refer to someone as being "coerced (*anoos*) by his sexual inclinations."

As Orthodox Jews today cast the net of *tinok she-nishba* wider and wider, using it to exonerate increasingly larger circles of Jewish society, they run the risk of the ultimate corruption: applying the concept of *tinok she-nishba* to themselves, thereby eradicating any sense of guilt and precluding the need for and possibility of *teshuvah*. That is the prospect that gives one pause, even as one supports every individual display of graciousness shown to those who suffer from being homosexuals.



34. Haggadah of the Ray

The rasha, the evil child, challenges us, saying that Yeziat Mizrayim no longer has any significance. However, this is not so, as the great story of our tradition can encounter any opposition or challenge. One may emerge victorious even with the radical atheist if one uses the proper terms and the proper categories. The Torah that God gave us is all-inclusive, all-embracing, all-pervading. It has the answers to all problems, even though we cannot always decode its language. The Torah is not afraid. We do not have to retreat into isolation or solitude because the street is "contaminated." To retreat means to lose. "Tehillat nefilah nisak, the beginning of defeat is flight," the Talmud says (Sotah 44b). The enemy will conquer when the army begins to withdraw, to retreat, to flee. On the contrary, we face the rasha. The Torah did not say to throw the rasha out of the house. Rather, engage him in debate and show him that he is wrong: "blunt his teeth." Talmud Torah requires bringing the one who got lost, the child who was alienated, back into the fold. He or she is a rasha now, but there is potential in the rasha.

(Kol ha-Ray)



35. Igros Ha'Reiyah  
R' Avraham Yitzchak Kook

קלח

כיה, עהיק יפו ה"ו, י"ט אייר תרס"ח.  
שני וברנה סודות, ל"י ידיו חנני ח"ב חכב בתורה ודאית ד'  
אחרות מרת דבמר מינפסיין שליט"א.

זה לי ימים רבים אשר לשמחה לבבי היעני מתב כה"ד, שמתני לראת דבריו היקרים לי כחל אהבים נאמנים, אבל נעצמתי ג"כ הרבה מצערן של ידדי על דבר בניי, זה כמה שהני מבקש לתב ל כבקשתו, וטרודתי ימנעתי, עד אשר נדחתי כעת על זמן קצר לכתב מעט.  
כן ידדי, הנני מבין הרבה את דאבון לבבו, אבל אם יחשוב כה"ד כרב המון הלומודים, שראוי בזמן הזה לעונב להפקר את אותם הבנים אשר סרו מדרך התורה והאמונה על-ידי זרם המון הסודע, הנני אומר בפה מלא שלא זו הדרך אשר ד' הפץ בה, כשם שכי' הוסי' סתודין כ"ו ע"ב ד"ה נחשוה, ידש סברא לומר דלא יפסל השור על התעיות לערות משום החשיב כמו אונסי' משום דיצרו תוקפא.

דמרגי שכי' כן הוסי' גישין מ"א ע"כ ד"ה כופין, שכיון שהשפחה משדלתם לזנות וחשיבי באונסין, כן היא ה"שפחה בישאי' 1 של זרם המון שנתנו לה מן השמים שליטה סרם שתחלה לגמרי ותנודן כעשן, שהיא משדלת בכל כשפיה הרבים את בנינו העצירים לזנות אחריה. הם אנוסים גמורים והלילה לנו לזון אונס כרצון. על-כן יש מכל אלה אחריה חוקה, הנשמה הפנימית של קדושת ישראל מסתרת בקרב לבנם בכמה מדות טובות הנמצאות בהם, וכל עיקר מה שכלה ה"רעה לתתם אותם בלבם 2 הוא ג"כ מצד נטייתם הפנימית לטוב ולחסד, ע"כ כאשר הציעה לפניהם את רב העול הנעשה בסדרי-המדנות לפי השקפתם נעשו ללחמים כעד הכלל, אע"פ שהם טועים בזה לגמרי מצד-צדדים, מ"ז אי"א לזמות אותם לרשעים דחלכים רק אחרי תאוות הבהמית באין שום מטה של ישר, ואם לא נדחה אבן אחרי נפלים כאלה כ"א נקרם כפי היכולת או כאשר זרם-הזמן יתהפך ויכירו את המעור הנדולה הנמצאת בעיקר הרעיות, שכשכלו זמנו את בית-היהודים, יהיו מוכנים לתשובה ולהסבה, והדורות הבאים יקשרו ע"י זה לזרות רמים ונעלים כאד, מחזיקים בתפארת ישראל 3 ובאור ד' המצד בקרבנו בכל הם ועו.

חזוב להעמיס על עצמנו, אבל כמה שיש יכולת בידו יקרובם בסוד לצרכי פרנסתם וצרכיהם המותרות, ויהי לו בזה מקום להביע דברי מוסר בשכל טוב במכתבים. זכירת כדוהה היא לדברים היוצאים מן הלב, שהם נועלים אם הרבה ואם מעט, אבל גם המעט הוא יקר מאד.

היעיקר של דרך המוסר לצעירים כאלה, הוא לעת-עמה לעורר אותם שלא יעזבו את אהבת עמם, אשר ממנו חוצבו, ולא ישנו בדמיונות כ' יהי להם מעמד הנון ומסבד בוקים ע"י קרבה בני-גבר, אשר הם מקרבים אותם רק בשעת הנאתם, ואח"כ בכל עת כשלהם הנם שמחים במפלתם, וע"י ההתעוררות של אהבת האומה יזכער חזיק של רגש אמונה ונטיית קדושה, הממון בעמקי הנשמה הישראלית, ויוכל לבא חזר ג"כ עד לירי תקון המעשים, שיוכל להביא באחריה מרפא של תשובה גמורה, ואין להתאש כלל משום אחד מודע-שודש, ולאסא דסאי בניי חילפי אסא שפיה ואסא קרו ליה 4.

ידע כדרי, שהתשובה שתבא מתוך הכרת השכל והשוקת היושר, אחרי המרץ הרבה הגדול שנפרך עכשו אע"פ שאין אנו צריכים לצידד אותה בציד של עצבון מרד ופחד משבר כל העצמות, כפי המזון של התשובה הפשוטה, אלא שהיה שכלית משוטה, כמו אדם שחוזר בו מטעות בחשבון שנתברד לו ע"י מספרים כרדוים, -- מובן חזר שאין-אפשר כלל שלא יהי' הלב הומה ממראה הדרך העקום החלוו שהלכנו בה בתעותנו כ"א לפי דרגה דילגי' -- מ"ז כיון שבאלה שננסחו על בודיו המלחמה של הזמן, בכל צד של אלה הנמיות, היתה להם מטה שלכלית לפי דעתם, כשישובו ישובו ג"כ בשכל והתשובה השכלית היא באמת תשובה מאהבת, שהיא חוקה הנבדלת מאד, ועל זה נאמר, "לשבי פסע ביעקב" הפושעים המודדים.



שהם אינם אסירי תאוה כי-אם מוטעי דעת, הם ישובו במעלה אדירה מאד. ע"כ יש תקוה גדולה לכל בנינו, רובם ככולם, ונחזיק בהם ואל נרפם, ובמקום אשר יאמר להם לא עמי אתם יאמר להם בני אי חיי. אחתום בברכה ואה"ר, כנה"י ונפש ידי"ע דוש"ת ומברכו שיראה בטוב ד' באה"ק ובשמחת עם ד' עלי' בבי"א.

ה"ק אברהם יצחק ה"ק

36. *Iyun Tefila Hagaddah*  
R' Yaakov Mi'Lisa  
(1760-1832)

סתמורר לשאלו עליכם: רשע מה הוא אומר. ח"ו שאלו ראיה לכן רשע כולנו מאמין בכל? מה העבודה הזאת לכם (שמות יג, ט) עס לא נאמר כי ישאלך נק' עה"ה שאלו על מנת לדעת חל"ה כי יאמרו אליכם בניכם שיאמרו בהחלט שאין צורך לכל זה וכלשון הירושלמי, והשאלו הזאת נאמרה בספק מצרים שאלו היו רוב הבנים הצעירים רשעים כי לא נהחנכו על צרכי התורה, לסיכך נאמרה כלשון רבים: בעבור זה

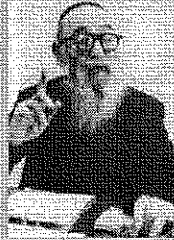
37. *R' Shlomo Carlebach Hagaddah*  
(1925-1994)



Here's the most beautiful Belzer Torah. The Haggadah says, "When you talk to the wicked son blunt his teeth." It's a little heartbreaking — he came to the Seder, after all, and he didn't have to come at all. Now, the word רשע, "wicked," is made up of three letters. The outside letters are ר and ע, making רע, "bad"; but the inside letter is ש. And what does that mean? The three lines that make up a ש symbolize Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. If the *shin*, with its three lines, is on the inside of the *rasha*, that's to tell you that every Jew in the world is connected to our forefathers. His inside, his *neshamah*, is connected to them. So we tell the father, "blunt his teeth — *shinav*, his *shin*." If you want to educate this boy, knock his *shin* loose from the rest of him; bring out his inner nature, that's connected with the Fathers. Give him courage. Tell him not to make you think that he's not holy, because you know that he really is holy.

ואף אתה תקחה את שגיו ואמור לו בעבור זה. התורה אמרה לנו: "הגדת לבנך", רק אמירה בעלמא ומדוע מיעץ לנו בעל ההגדה לעשות לבן הרשע גם מעשה הייגו להקנות את שיניו? ונראה שבשעה שאנו מתוכחים עם רשע אודות מצאות ה' ואודות החיוב לעבוד אותו (מה העבודה הזאת לכם) עלינו לזכור שהוא צוגע בדבר, כי העובד ה' מאמין באמת, ובשביל אמרתו מעמיד על עצמו עול של תורה ומצוות. אבל הרשע שהוא רוצה בעולם של הפקר טוב לפניו יותר לומר: לית דין ולית דיין ח"ו. ומפני שהוא רוצה להיות בלי עול, לאכול ולשתות כל מה שלבו חפץ, לכן הוא כוסד בעיקרו, ומשום כך יעץ לנו בעל ההגדה להקנות את שיניו של הבן הרשע, וכשלא יחיו לו שינים, ולא ירדוף אחר תאוות העולם הזה, אז לא יהיה משוחד בדעתה ואולי יתחיל להאמין בה' ובתורתה. אחרי שסרה התאוה ממנו ולבו חלל בקרבנו. ואף על פי שיש גם תאוות אחרות מלבד האכילה, אבל מפני שתבן הוא קטן, עיקר תאוותו היא האכילה וד"ל. ולכן קודם שאתה אומר לו "בעבור זה עשתה ה' לי", צריך להקנות מקודם את שיניו, ולבטל תאוותו, ואז ישמוץ מישרים...

38. *Ha'Shir V'HaShevach*  
*Hagaddah*  
R' Zalman Sorotzkin



בעמדנו על סף השנה החדשה הבאה עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה, במצב של תקווה והתעוררות לעומת כל הדכאון אשר עבר עלינו בשנה זו העומדת לחלוף מול עבר פגינו, וממעמקי הלב נאמר עליהם "תכלה שנה וקללותיה ותחל שנה וברכותיה" ג. ואנו נזקקים לפשפש המעשים ולהתקרבות לאורת התשובה המביאה גאולה ורפואה לעולם<sup>א</sup>, לפי מצבנו בעולם בכלל ובארץ ישראל שלנו בפרט, הננו צריכים לציין את הגוון המיוחד הדרוש להיות מובלט אצלנו בכלון היסודי הזה.

דומה לנו שהננו מחולקים לשני מחנות. תמיד רגילים לצלצל אצלנו בשני השמות המהוים את הקהל שלנו בכלל, והם "חרדים" ו"חפשיים". שמות חדשים אשר מאז לא היו רגילים להיות מתבטאים אצלנו כלל. ידענו שאין בני האדם שוים במדרגותיהם, ביחוד במה שנוגע לתוכנם הרוחני, שהוא יסוד החיים, אבל שיהיה שם מוגבל ומיוחד לכך המתאר סיעות ומפלגות, מזה לא ידענו. וכדומה שבזו ודאי יש לנו לומר שהימים הראשונים היו טובים מאלה, והלאי שנוכל להשיג מאתנו, בכלל, את אלה שני השמות העומדים לנו לשטן על דרך החיים האיתנים והטהורים הראויים להיות שבים אלינו באור ד' אשר יאיר לנו.

ההבלטה של שני השמות הללו וההסכמה הזמיונית המקשרת את האישים הפרטיים — שכל אחד מהם יתאמר לומר: אני הנני ממחנה זה, השני אומר גם הוא: אני הנני ממחנה זה, וכל אחד ואחד הוא מרוצה מעמדתו, — הרי הוא סותם את הדרך של התיקון ושל ההשתלמות משני הצדדים. "החרד", כלומר מי שהוא חושב את עצמו שהוא שייך למחנה זה שקוראים לו "חרדים", הרי הוא מביט הבטה מלמעלה למטה אל המחנה השני "החפשיים". ובמה שנוגע למחשבות של תיקון, של חיפוש מעשים ושל תשובה הלא מיד הוא שולח סקירת עין אל המחנה השני העומד לפניו בכל מערומיו מתורה ומצוות והוא חושב בדעתו, שהתשובה במלוא מובנה הלא שם היא דרושה, אליהם הדברים מכובנים, להם ולא לו. ו"החפשי", כלומר, מי שהוא עומד בזה המחנה שהוא מתאמר בשמו המודרני הזה, הרי הוא בודאי חושב, שכל הרעיון של תשובה הרי הוא נוסח "חרדי" שאינו שייך לו כלל. ונמצא, שמכאן ומכאן הננו עומדים קרחים, ומוצא לרפואת מכאובינו הנפשיים מאין יבוא?

זהו העיכוב האחד. ועוד עיכוב שני, מה שהוא איננו קל מן הראשון, כמו קיר ברזל עומד לפנינו בין מחנה למחנה, וההארה הכללית ממקור האחדות האלקית הקדושה המזכרחת להיות שורה על ישראל הגוי כולו, הרי היא כמו מתעלמת מעינינו, והננו ממששים כעורים באשילה.

אין לנו עצה אחרת, אמנם, כי אם להסיר את שמות הבעלים הללו מעל מחנותינו. באמת, לא שני מחנות כי אם שלשה מחנות הננו מונים מאז. מסורת ישנה היא ש"צבור" הוא כולל במובנו כפי הנוטריקין שלו "צדיקים בינונים ורשעים", אבל זהו דוקא תיאור אישי, ועל כל אדם בפרט למדנו ש"אפילו כל העולם כולו אומרים עליך צדיק אתה, היה בעיניך כרשע"<sup>א</sup>. וטוב מאד לאדם שיהיה שקוע לחשב חשבון עצמו, ולחטט במומיו הנפשיים ולהביט בעין יפה על אחרים שיוכל באמת להיות שייך במצפונם גם אוצר טוב הסמוי מן העין.

והננו צריכים להחליט, כי כוח כמוס של הצעדה לטובה ישנו בכל המחנות ובכל אישי האומה, וביחוד בכל אלה שהערך הכללי של ישראל ותקוותו יקרים להם באיזו מדה שהיא.

נחודע איש אל אחיו בשם ישראל הכללי, לא בשם מפלגתי ומחנתי. נדע, שיש לנו בכל מחנה הרבה מה לתקן והרבה מה לקבל מהאור והטוב זה מזה, ואז תופיע עלינו האורה העליונה הכללית אשר בה נושע תשועת עולמים, ותתקיים בנו התפילה המוקדשת קודש קדשים, שהננו עתידים להביעה בכל כך המית נפש "ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם"<sup>א</sup>.

(ה"יסוד" גליון ס', כ"ז אלול תרצ"ג)

39. Ma'amrei  
Retya  
Rav Kook



41. Rav Aharon Solovitchik

Some children pass through four stages, namely, infantilism, dependence, resentment and independence. The *tam* corresponds to the stage of dependence, the *rasha* to the stage of resentment, and the *chacham* to the stage of independence.

The first stage in the life of a child is infantilism. Babies lying in their cribs cannot differentiate between themselves and others. Everything is part of that great oceanic feeling that includes themselves, their cribs and their mothers who feed them. Babies at this age have no consciousness of themselves as individuals.

Then comes the second stage — one of dependence. Children come to recognize that they are different from other people, and they realize that there are others who are more powerful than they. They are dependent upon others for food, warmth, love and protection. At this stage children feel especially dependent upon their fathers, whom they consider to be omniscient, and of whom they ask all questions, most of the time in the form of "What is this?" as the *tam* asks in the *Haggadah*:

Then, as children begin to feel that they are not ready to stand

on their own feet, they pass through the stage of resentment. Finally, children make the adjustment and attain the stage of independence.

The truth is that these stages overlap one another. No child passes completely from the stage of infantilism into the stage of dependence, or from the stage of dependence into the stage of resentment, etc. As children pass from the stage of infantilism into the stage of dependence, they retain a touch of infantilism. This means that there is no one child who is completely retarded and another child who is completely smart. The smart child has a touch of retardedness and dullness, and the so-called *rasha* has considerable goodness within him. The *chacham* is considered wise only because he possesses more independence than the *tam*; it is merely a question of degree.

Every child is to be approached individually. To the extent that a child is limited, the child's maximum potential is to be reinforced and galvanized. This, of course, will require consum-

40. Rav Aviner Haggadah

**ארבעה בנים** נראה שכל בן עובר דרך ארבעה שלבים אלה במהלך התפתחותו, והם ארבע המידות של הידועים לפני החכמים: משפך וספוג, משמרת ונפה (אבות ה'טו). בראשית חייו הוא אינו יודע לשאול, חסר יכולת קליטה, ודומה למשפך שמכניס בו ומוציא בו. בגיל צעיר הוא תם, המאמין לכל דבר, הדומה לספוג שסופג את הכל. בגיל ההתבגרות הוא בחינת רשע, עובר משבר קשה של סירוב, ודומה למשמרת שמוציאה את היין וקולטת את השמרים, כלומר נאחז דווקא בפסולת של החיים. כאשר התגבר וגבר על משבר ההתבגרות הוא מגיע לדרגת חכם, הדומה לנפה שמוציאה את הקמח וקולטת את הסולת, את המוכרח. כמובן, האהבה מקיפה את הילד בכל שלביו. הו"ל אומרים שהפסוק "בנים אתם לדי' אלהיכם" (נזרים יד א) כולל את כל האומה כולה (קירושין לו א). אמנם רבי יהודה אומר: "בזמן שאתם נדהגים מנהג בנים, אתם קרויים בנים, אין אתם נדהגים מנהג בנים, אין אתם קרויים בנים". אך הלכה כרבי מאיר (עין איגרות הראיה איגרת תקנה שאומר: "בין כך ובין כך אתם קרויים בנים", ומביא בהוכחה ארבעה פסוקים: א. "בנים סכלים המד". אף על פי שהם טפשים ועושים שטויות, הם נקראים בנים. ב. "בנים לא אמון כס". חומר מזה, אפילו אין בהם אמונה, הם עדיין בנים. ג. "זרע מרעים בנים משחיתים". יתר על כן, אפילו הם רשעים, נקראים בנים. ד. ושמן תאמר: כל אלה הם אמנם בנים, אך רק בנים סוג ב' — לא כן, "ודיה במקום אשר יאמר להם לא עמי אתם יאמר להם בני אל חי", הם בנים מעולים (קירושין שס). כך הוא בהתפתחות הילד. בראשונה הוא אינו יודע לשאול, בבחינת סבל, אחר כך הוא אמנם תם, ומתנהג כראוי, אך חסר עומק של אמונה. אז מגיע גיל משבר ההתבגרות והוא בבחינת רשע שמשחית. ובי"ה לבסוף הוא חכם, בן מעולה, אך בכל המצבים איננו חיים מלחבבה.

42. Rabbi Lord Sacks

The four children

It may be that the 'four children' are not different people but successive stages in the development of a child. We begin by being unable to ask. We accept the world as given. The next stage in intellectual growth is curiosity (the 'simple' son). We ask questions with no ulterior motive. We simply want to learn. This is often followed by a period of testing and challenging the values we have received (the 'wicked' or adolescent son). The Hebrew word for adolescent, *na'ar*, also means 'to shake off'. The teenage years are ones where we develop our own identity by putting received values to the test. This can sometimes lead to rebellion as a form of self-exploration. The culmination of cognitive growth is 'wisdom', the point at which we have both internalised the values of our heritage and are sufficiently mature to see their objective merits. Although the Haggadah uses the word 'wise', rabbinic tradition preferred the phrase *talmid chacham*, a 'wise disciple'. Wisdom, in Judaism, is not a state, but a process of constant learning. That is why it lies as much in the questions one asks as in the answers. Every answer is itself the prelude to a deeper question, and thus there is constant growth as we move to new levels of understanding.

# Commentary

43. Jay Lefkowitz

## The Rise of Social Orthodoxy: A Personal Account

04.01.14 - 12:00 AM | Jay P. Lefkowitz

Much has been written about the Pew Research Center's recent survey of American Jews, and most of the coverage has focused on the rapidly increasing pace of assimilation and intermarriage. The survey also revealed another troubling trend: 22 percent of all American Jews describe themselves as having no religion at all, and among Jews under 35, nearly one in three claim to have no religion. Alan Cooperman, deputy director of the Pew survey, painted a dim picture for the future: "It's very stark. Older Jews are Jews by religion. Younger Jews are Jews of no religion."

Yet the Pew survey revealed that Orthodox Jews, who make up only 10 percent of the community and are the smallest of the three major denominations, are the *youngest* segment of the Jewish community, have the most children, and rarely intermarry. This is among the reasons why the historian Jonathan Sarna has called Orthodox Judaism "the great success story of late-20th-century American Judaism," and all the data suggest the same will be true for the 21st. Among the American Jewish community at large, the birth rate for those ages 40–59 is actually below the national average, with only 1.9 children per adult, and only 1.3 for the non-Orthodox. Within the Orthodox community, the number is 4.1. Twenty-seven percent of Jewish children today are growing up in Orthodox homes.

Just who makes up the Orthodox Jewish community? In popular culture, Orthodox Jews are hard to miss, especially the men: They wear white shirts, long black coats, and black hats, with sidecurls and long beards. This image is not inaccurate: The Pew data revealed that two-thirds of self-identifying Orthodox Jews are "ultra-Orthodox" Haredim (literally "tremblers before God"), and most of them dress much as their ancestors dressed in 18th-century Europe. But there is another segment of the Orthodox community, the Modern Orthodox, who look nothing like their Hasidic-looking co-religionists. This is my community, and it is a success story of its own.

Modern Orthodoxy has its origins in 19th-century Germany, where two leading rabbis, Samson Raphael Hirsch and Azriel Hildesheimer, argued that Jews could no longer seclude themselves behind shtetl walls but instead had to engage with the secular world and embrace modernity. Under the rubric of the catchphrase *Torah im Derech Eretz* ("Torah with the way of the land"), these rabbis posited that secular education was an affirmative duty for Jews. Hildesheimer even established schools for men and women that taught both religious and secular subjects.

It was in America in the 20th century that Modern Orthodoxy matured intellectually, under the "Rav," Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (1903–93). He made a titanic effort to harmonize rigorous Jewish practice and thought together with all aspects of modernity—and became the champion of what is known as *Torah Umadda* ("Torah and secular knowledge"). At the same time, Modern Orthodoxy established itself as a social movement within American Jewry. Co-educational high school yeshivas and summer camps were established, as was Yeshiva University, the first institution of higher education in America established to teach both Jewish and secular studies. By the end of the 20th-century, a vibrant community of Modern Orthodox Jews had risen to positions of prominence in medicine, law, journalism, and academia. One was even nominated to be vice president; another became White House chief of staff and is now the secretary of the treasury; others commandeer boardrooms on Wall Street that were once closed to Jews.

Yet within this success there has been constant struggle in balancing the demands of a fully Jewish life and a place within the non-Jewish world. Living in their cloistered communities, Haredi Jews in certain respects have created an environment in which they can flourish through avoidance and rejection—of popular culture and the secular world. But for the Modern Orthodox, the challenges of modernity are unceasing. These Jews live in the present and engage it fully: Their children attend the nation's best colleges and graduate schools, participate in athletic programs that often pose difficulties for Sabbath observance, are constantly surfing the Internet, and extensively interact with non-Jews.

And of course, owing to their engagement with the secular world, the Modern Orthodox have found themselves fully immersed in debates centered around the two great cultural fault lines of our generation: women's rights and gay rights. Although many in the Modern Orthodox movement have tried to resist the pressure to afford women a more active role in synagogue services and have simply refused to acknowledge a role for homosexual couples within Orthodoxy, both of these walls are increasingly being breached.

The breach has been most pronounced in the case of women's rights. Over the last decade, there has been a burgeoning of new "partnership" synagogues, in which men and women, divided by an Orthodox *mechitza* (a partition, so the sexes are separated when praying in synagogue), both participate as leaders in the services. And in the past few years, a prominent Orthodox rabbi, Avi Weiss, has begun to ordain women to serve as congregational rabbis. He has even established a women's rabbinical college in New York. But the most recent indication that Modern Orthodoxy continues to bend to the zeitgeist comes from two of the most prominent Modern Orthodox high schools in New York City. These schools declared that girls are now permitted to wrap tefillin around their arms and foreheads when they say their morning prayers. Underscoring the tension inherent in being both "Modern" and "Orthodox," rabbinic leaders at both schools made clear that even though such a practice was halachically (that is, legally) permissible, it was a communally "complicated" issue and would not be "recommended."

Likewise, although Modern Orthodoxy has not followed Conservative and Reform Jews in approving gay marriage, a group of prominent Modern Orthodox rabbis issued a joint statement in 2010 urging members of their communities to accept homosexuals. And now gay couples are joining Modern Orthodox synagogues.

All of which raises the question: Are the Modern Orthodox in America really Orthodox?

As a matter of doctrine the fundamental tenet of Orthodox Judaism is the belief that on Mount Sinai, God transmitted to Moses both the written law (the Torah) and the oral law (the Talmud and certain other rabbinic texts). That is why Orthodox Judaism is generally resistant to changing interpretations of the law, except where there is some precedent for it in traditional law. To be sure, many Modern Orthodox rabbis and some of their congregants are steadfast in their faith and look to halacha to guide all aspects of their lives precisely because they believe it is the revealed word of God. But if unwavering acceptance of the Torah as divine is the precondition for Orthodoxy, then the term "Modern Orthodox" may well be a misnomer for many Jews who identify as Modern Orthodox. They might more accurately be described as Social Orthodox, with the emphasis on "Social."

The Pew study offers insights that support this assessment. When compared with ultra-Orthodox Jews, Pew found that Modern Orthodox Jews are much less doctrinaire. Consider, for example, the question of faith. Among the ultra-Orthodox, 96 percent report that they believe in God with absolute certainty and 89 percent say that religion is very important in their lives. The percentage among Modern Orthodox Jews who feel equally certain in their faith is 77 percent, with a similar number reporting that religion is very important in their lives.

On the other hand, even though many Modern Orthodox Jews express a degree of doubt about their faith, in several important respects they are the most engaged part of the American Jewish community. For example, Modern Orthodox Jews are significantly more likely to be members of Jewish organizations (52 percent) than the ultra-Orthodox (33 percent), Conservative (27 percent), or Reform (20 percent). And when it comes to their attachment to Israel, the contrast is even greater, with 79 percent of Modern Orthodox Jews reporting that "caring about Israel" is an essential part of being Jewish, as compared with only 56 percent among the ultra-Orthodox, 58 percent among Conservatives, and 42 percent among Reform.

These survey results are reinforced by observing communities with great concentrations of Orthodox Jews. Two years ago, the UJA-Federation conducted a survey of the New York Jewish community, which, with nearly a half million Orthodox Jews, is the largest such community outside of Israel. Taking a more granular view than Pew did, the UJA subdivided the Orthodox into three categories: Hasidic, yeshivish, and Modern Orthodox. The first two, which account for two-thirds of New York's Orthodox Jewish population, share several features in common and generally fit within the broad grouping of Haredim. They are very strict in their interpretations of Jewish law and live predominantly in concentrated communities often segregated from other Jews and non-Jewish communities. (A significant difference between Hasidic and yeshivish Jews is in education: The latter are more likely than the former to send their children to college.)

One of the major findings of the UJA study was that the Modern Orthodox (whom the UJA survey concluded were almost as distant from the Haredim as from the non-Orthodox) are more engaged in broad Jewish communal life than either the Haredim or the less observant and much more numerous Conservative and Reform communities. In totality, the Modern Orthodox are by far the most engaged group of American Jews. They reported greater participation in Jewish-community-center programs, more visits to museums or Jewish cultural events, more use of the Internet for Jewish purposes, along with their significantly greater attachment to the state of Israel. And while their birthrate is significantly lower than that of the Haredi community, it is double that of non-Orthodox Jews. The fact is that with an intermarriage rate among non-Orthodox Jews now higher than 70 percent, and with the ultra-Orthodox disengaging from the secular world as they cloister themselves in their self-contained communities, the Modern Orthodox may well be the best hope for an ongoing American Jewry that is part of the fabric of 21st-century American life—despite being only 3 percent of the total community.

What can we glean from all this data? That many self-identifying Modern Orthodox Jews, despite being more “Modern” than “Orthodox,” are living intensely Jewish lives. And precisely because of their dogma-averse approach to theology and to halacha, they are recapturing some of the creativity of rabbinic Judaism, which has ossified over time as, in the words of the Orthodox theologian Eliezer Berkovitz, many Orthodox Jews have become “Karaites of the Oral Law.” And this is the essence of Social Orthodoxy.

Social Orthodox Jews fully embrace Jewish culture and Jewish community. And they are committed to the survival of the Jewish people. Indeed, that is their raison d’être. Furthermore, because religious practice is an essential component of Jewish continuity, Social Orthodox Jews are observant—and not because they are trembling before God.

Some years after I first channeled the Jets to explain my Judaism, I had a conversation about religion with a devout Catholic friend. When I explained that I was an observant Jew and began each day by reciting the morning prayers but wasn’t really sure how God fit into my life, he was perplexed. When I admitted that these theological questions didn’t really occupy much of my attention and certainly weren’t particularly germane to my life as an observant Jew, he became agitated. And when I told him that I certainly wasn’t sure if Jewish law was divine or simply the result of two millennia of rabbinical interpretations, he threw up his hands and said: “How can you do everything you do, and live a life with so many restrictions and so many obligations, if you don’t even believe in God?”

I responded that there is a long tradition in Judaism of engaging first in religious practices and letting matters of faith come later. In the book of Exodus, after Moses has received the Commandments from God, he begins to instruct the Jewish people in the law; their immediate response is *na’aseh v’nishma*: “We will do first and understand afterwards.” I explained that while I understood that Catholicism, along with the other branches of Christianity, was essentially a religion based on the belief that Jesus is the son of God and the savior of humanity, Judaism is a complex blend of radical monotheism and peoplehood. In the Bible, the Jewish people are referred to not as a religious denomination, but as *b’nai Yisrael*, the children of Israel, the descendants of Jacob. Throughout history, Jews have referred to themselves as *am Yisrael*, the nation of Israel. The vast corpus of Jewish law, all 613 biblical commandments as well as the Oral Tradition, is a guide to how one lives a Jewish life as a member of the Jewish people.

And so for me, and I imagine for many others like me, the key to Jewish living is not our religious beliefs but our commitment to a set of practices and values that foster community and continuity. In this way, both Modern and Social Orthodoxy owe an ironic debt to Mordecai Kaplan, perhaps the most iconoclastic American rabbi and thinker of the 20th century. In the first decades of that century, Kaplan occupied pulpits in two of the most prominent Orthodox synagogues in New York City—Kehilath Jeshurun and the Jewish Center—and he was one of the founders of the Modern Orthodox “Young Israel” synagogue movement. He taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the center of Conservative Judaism. And then he made the radical move of creating an entirely new movement, Reconstructionism. In 1945, he was excommunicated by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis for what it deemed an unforgivable act of heresy—authoring a Prayer Book in which he eliminated every reference to the Jews as the “Chosen people.” His excommunication ceremony concluded with a public burning of the book.

Although Kaplan followed Jewish practices rigorously all his life (he died in 1983 at the age of 102), he was also a modernist who believed that modern science and archeology discredited faith in a divine supernatural being who acted in history, dishing out rewards and punishments. As he wrote in 1937 in *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, “the very notion that any text written hundreds of years ago, at a time when the social situation was radically different from what it is today, can give us clear and valuable guidance in deciding, ethically, issues that did not arise until recent times is utterly antagonistic to the modern evolutionary outlook.”

He was deeply influenced by Ahad Ha’am (1856–1927), the founder of Cultural Zionism and one of the people responsible for the rebirth of Hebrew as a spoken language. Like Ahad Ha’am, Kaplan also believed powerfully in Jewish peoplehood and culture. He dedicated himself to developing a Jewish theology that would reconcile reason and faith in the service of building Jewish community. As he explained in his most famous work, *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), Judaism comprises a variety of what he called “sancta”: ethical principles, sacred texts, language, land, traditions, a unique calendar, and other indicia of community.

Kaplan’s Reconstructionist movement, from its inception, has remained a tiny minority within a minority. And yet, nearly 70 years after his excommunication, Kaplan’s perspective is surprisingly resonant within that of the Modern Orthodox world. As both the UJA and Pew data revealed, many Modern Orthodox Jews are more focused on living a Jewish life than they are on theology or a rigid set of rules. Modern Orthodox day schools teach evolution unapologetically, notwithstanding the literal text of Genesis.



And they have begun to accommodate gay and lesbian students, notwithstanding the literal text of Leviticus, with one school even establishing a club as a forum for students to discuss matters of sexuality and identity. Notably, in Modern Orthodox day schools, much to the chagrin of their teachers, many students have taken to observing what they call "half shabbos"—the practice of going to synagogue and keeping the Sabbath, but using their iPhones and Blackberries to text on the Sabbath, despite the rabbinical prohibition on using electronics.

The *Jewish Week*, a New York paper, sent shock waves through the city's Orthodox community a few years ago with an exposé reporting that texting on the Sabbath is becoming "an increasingly common 'addiction'?" among Modern Orthodox teens. Rabbi Steven Burg, the international director of the Orthodox Union's NCSY youth group, freely acknowledged in the article that "teens who text on Shabbat are an open secret in their schools and social circles." And although two professors at Yeshiva University's graduate school of education determined, in a survey hastily conducted the week following the publication of the article, that the percentage of Modern Orthodox teens who regularly text, surf the Internet, or use their cellphones on the Sabbath was only 15 percent, anecdotal evidence suggests it is much higher.

Yet despite such halachic foot-faults, these same Modern Orthodox Jewish teenagers and their families lead lives that are completely focused on Jewish values, ideals, and rituals. The adults attend synagogue regularly, participate in Torah and Talmud classes organized by their synagogues, donate significantly to Jewish communal organizations, and travel to Israel frequently. Their children study in dual-curriculum schools (often for 13 years); many then take a year off before college to study Talmud in Israel; and a great number spend their summers in Zionist Orthodox camps.

In perceiving the need to root American Judaism in something more tangible and rational than pure faith, Kaplan foresaw American Jewish practice that was focused primarily on community and secondarily on God. Many of his innovations, which still flourish today, gave structure to his reconstruction of Judaism. He instituted the practice of giving girls bat-mitzvahs (his daughter had the first one in 1922); after long resistance, Modern Orthodoxy has figured out ways to accommodate this ritual. Kaplan organized the first synagogue-as-community in America in 1916 when he founded the Jewish Center on the Upper West Side—the first "shul with a pool." That innovation has been adopted widely in the Modern Orthodox community, with every synagogue now running a wide range of educational and social programs for adults and children.

In one critical respect, however, Kaplan missed the mark. Drawing on his background in sociology, Kaplan argued that with respect to organizing one's life as a Jew, "belonging precedes behaving precedes believing." By this he meant that the feeling of being a member of a group generally comes before adopting the group's distinctive practices, which in turns comes before accepting the group's core beliefs.

Because he sought to differentiate himself from traditional Orthodox Judaism, which centers on believing and behaving, Kaplan argued that the most elementary form of Jewish identification is *belonging*—what Reverend Stefan Jonasson has described as "the intuitive sense of kinship that binds a Jew to every other Jew in history and in the contemporary world." Unquestionably, belonging is a powerful component of Jewish identity. After all, we constantly invoke our connection to our ancestors—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and annually re-create the Exodus from Egypt, so we can feel that sense of belonging. Kaplan was wrong, however, in concluding that belonging *precedes* behaving. In fact, for many observant Jews, and certainly for Social Orthodox Jews, behaving is the first step. And it is actually the one necessary step. For it is through one's behavior as a Jew—whether traveling to Israel as part of an organized tour, participating in a Passover Seder, attending a Sabbath meal, or just speaking Hebrew—that one gains the powerful feeling of belonging.

The best evidence that neither belonging nor believing promotes Jewish continuity as powerfully as behaving is found in the last part of the Pew study, where the authors describe their findings from interviews with several hundred individuals who are not Jewish under any recognized definition (they have no Jewish parent and have not converted), but who nevertheless claim to have an affinity for Judaism.

Ironically, these non-Jews who claim to belong to the Jewish community (and Pew suggests that more than a million individuals fit into this category) tend to be more God-centered in their faith (at least when measured by their faith in God) than the rest of the Jewish community—and nearly a third of this group root their Jewishness in the fact that Jesus was Jewish. Not surprisingly, the Pew study found that this group (which only rarely engages in Jewish rituals) is far less involved in Jewish communal life (whether synagogue attendance or membership in Jewish organizations) than those of any denomination who are born into Jewish homes or convert to Judaism.

In short, they do not behave, so they do not really belong—whatever it is that they believe.

As for me: I start my day each morning by donning my tefillin before heading to my office at a law firm. I eat out in restaurants several times a month only to pass up 90 percent of the menu in favor of vegetarian fare because I keep kosher. I occasionally find myself stuck in cities on a Friday far from home because I cannot travel back to New York City in time for the arrival of the Sabbath. I go to synagogue each week and celebrate all the Jewish holidays. My children attend a Modern Orthodox day school, and my college-age daughter served as a soldier in the Israeli army. And I am proud to be a Zionist. Unless one were to look very carefully, I would appear to be the very model of an Orthodox Jew, albeit a modern one. But I also pick and choose from the menu of Jewish rituals without fear of divine retribution. And I root my identity much more in Jewish culture, history, and nationality than in faith and commandments. I am a Social Orthodox Jew, and I am not alone.

I once asked my father why he studies Jewish texts and practices Jewish rituals so rigorously. I knew he was agnostic when it came to matters of faith. He told me that he observes the Commandments because that is what connects him to Jews across continents and centuries. He said that he views halacha as a compass, and that every Jew, even if he or she chooses to take some detours along the way, should know which direction is true north.

Whether such a cultural tradition can be sufficiently transmitted to the next generation is a fair question. Certainly, a neat theological package provides parents with a more direct message to convey to their children. Yet there is also an authenticity in a dynamic Judaism that recognizes its origins as a national identity. As Leon Roth, the first professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University observed, dogmalessness is “the only dogma in Judaism.”

So it is with many Social Orthodox Jews. We generally choose to head north, where halacha dictates. But we live in the modern world, and occasionally we explore the pathways around the edges of halacha. Much more important to us than theology, however, is maintaining the continuity of the Jewish people.

What Kaplan called “civilization” and Ahad Ha’am called a “national culture” is what moves many of us. We behave as Jews so we can belong as Jews. Some of us may even come to believe. The key, however, is that we live Jewish lives so we will not be disconnected, and we will never be alone.



44. *Minchas Asher Hagadah*  
R' Asher Weiss

אנחנו אלא גם עבדים ותפקידו של  
עבד לעבוד את אדונו. עבדי ה' אנחנו  
ואנו מצוים לעבדו ברמ"ח אברינו  
ושס"ה גידנו ורק משום כך יצאנו  
ממצרים.

וזאת תשובתנו לבן הרשע שהוציא  
את עצמו מן הכלל "בעבור זה  
עשה ה' לי, לי עשה לאותו האיש  
לא עשה, אילו היה אותו האיש  
במצרים, לא היה ראוי להגאל משם  
לעולם" (לשון תירוטלמי אס), שהרי לא  
הוציאנו ממצרים אלא שנהיה לו  
לעבדים שנאמר "כי לי בני ישראל  
עבדים עבדי הם אשר הוצאתי אותם  
מארץ מצרים".

מה העבודה הזאת לכם  
הרשע מתרעם על ה"עבודה" וכלשון  
הירושלמי (פסחים ע' ע"ג) "בן  
רשע מה הוא אומר מה העבודה הזאת  
לכם מה הטורח הזה שאתם מטריחין  
עלינו בכל שנה ושנה", וכי לא די לו  
לאדם מישראל להיות "יהודי בלב"  
לאהוב את ה' ולכבד אותו, מה כל  
ה"עבודה הזאת". הלא בנים אנחנו לה'  
אלקינו ולא עבדים.

מענה זו מטיחים בנו בכל דור ודור,  
דור דור וסגנונו, ואין בה אלא  
פריקת עול, הקב"ה הוציאנו ממצרים  
כדי שנהיה לו ל"עבדים". לא רק בנים

”רשע מה הוא אומר, מה העבודה הזאת לכם?”

45. Beis Aharon Hagaddah  
R' Aharon Asher Volnitz

”רבי אברהם זצ”ל משכנעוהו הי אומר, הרשע שואל, מה העבודה הזאת לכם למה לכם כל המצוות המעשיות (הצדקותיות), רחמנא לבא בעיניי, לכם, ולא לר, לכם לבני אדם פשוטים ניתנו המצוות הומעשיות טובים, ולא לר, הוא איש המדע החכמות, אינו צריך לכל אלה. ולפי שהוציא את עצמו מן הכלל, כבר בעיקר, כי המצוות המעשיות שמירתן, וקיומן הן הן עיקר היהדות, יסוד ושרש המוסר הישראלי, ואף אתה אומר לו, אלו הי שם לא הי נגאלי, לפי שיטתו שאפשר לעבוד את ד' בעבודה הלב גרידא, במחשבה בלבד, הרי זאת הי יכול לקיים גם במצרים.

That is the history behind ‘the wicked son’. Nowadays, however, the situation is somewhat different. Throughout the Diaspora, Jews are again assimilating and outmarrying. As in the days of Rome and Spain the Jewish people faces a crisis of continuity. This time, however, the cause is not persecution but something else: indifference, perhaps, or ignorance, or the sheer pressure of an age and culture in which long term commitments are becoming rarer and harder to understand. Each age brings its own challenges, and because ours is new, I am inclined to offer a radical re-interpretation of the passage, ‘What does the wicked son say?’

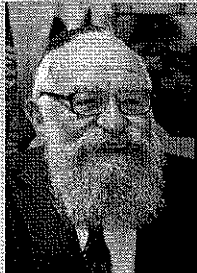
46. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

What is the child whom others see as wicked – the adolescent, the rebel, the breakaway – really signalling by his conduct? We know what he says. But what is the question *beneath* the words, the inarticulate cry? ‘Father, mother, what does Judaism mean to you? You sent me to Hebrew school. You gave me a bar mitzvah. You hired teachers for me. I know what Judaism is supposed to mean. I listened to the lessons. I read the books. But all the time I was growing up, you sent me mixed messages. When I neglected my secular education, you were angry, but when I missed Hebrew lessons, you never seemed to mind. I learned about the laws of Jewish life, but you did not seem to keep them, or if you did so, you did it selectively. What you *said* was that Judaism mattered, but what you *did* seemed to show that it did not matter very much. At my bar mitzvah, you were more concerned about the catering than about how much I understood of the words I said in synagogue. As I grew older, you seemed more interested in which college I went to and which career I pursued than whether I was continuing to study and practice Judaism. You wanted me to marry a Jewish girl, but you never gave me a real reason why. I know what Judaism is supposed to mean to me – but you are my parents. I am Jewish only because you are. So I ask you from the depth of my soul: what does Judaism mean to you?’

This is a deep question and it brooks no evasion. The only answer one can give – the existential response which alone is capable of reaching from soul to soul - is to say what Judaism means to me – not to him. We must *own* Judaism before we can pass it on. We must live it if we are to inspire those who will live on after us. The Torah says, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might... And you shall teach these things to your children.’ Rabbi Moses Alshekh, explaining the connection, said simply: we can only teach to our children what we ourselves love.

What prompts such honesty? The knowledge that without it, ‘Had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.’ No parent can leave a child unredeemed. Therefore to be a parent is to be willing to take one’s child and walk, hand in hand, part-way on the Jewish journey, showing that we are prepared to live by the faith we want him or her to continue. On this reading, the ‘wicked child’ is not wicked, merely confused, and it is we, his parents, who have confused him. To end his confusion we must first end ours by asking, in the depths of self-knowledge, what Judaism means to us.

47. R' Yehudah  
Amital  
Sicha - Parshas  
Vayigash  
"Ya'akov was Reciting  
the Shema"



Throughout the generations, there have been detractors who have claimed that the only thing that is important is the message behind the mitzvot, and they have correspondingly downplayed the significance of the actual performance of mitzvot. This was true of Christianity, and it was true in a more moderate form with more recent reformers within Judaism. We unequivocally reject such an approach. However, in our battle to preserve mitzva observance, we often go too far to the opposite extreme, emphasizing performance of mitzvot to the exclusion of sensitivity to their underlying messages. We need to bear in mind that proper mitzva performance integrates both of these aspects.