



A national convention of Agudath Israel of America is an opportunity to hear leading Torah figures discuss vital issues from a timeless perspective. Among the various presentations that addressed this year's convention theme, "The Clash Between Modernity and Eternity: Standing Up For Torah Principles," are two by members of the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah (Council of Torah Sages)—Rabbi Elya Svei, שליט"א, and Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, שליט"א—which have been adapted for publication in these pages. While both essays touch upon many of the same issues, each offers unique insights and understandings, which make each a singular experience in applying da'as Torah to pressing problems of the day.



The Mandate to Promote Kiddush Sheim Shamayim

Based on an address by Rabbi Elya Svei, שליט"א, Rosh Hayeshiva of the Yeshiva of Philadelphia.

I. OF OVER-CONFIDENCE AND SETBACKS

Every unusual, seemingly inexplicable occurrence that befalls Klal Yisroel, Chazal say, must have some sort of initial cause, with a lesson to teach us. Thus, the violation of Dena by Shechem (see *Bereishis*, Chap. 24), so contrary to the values and conduct of Yaakov Avinu's family, must have come from some earlier weakness. Indeed, the *Midrash* points out that the misfortune befell Yaakov because he had transgressed the principle: אל תתחלל ליום מחר—"Do not be sure of yourself in regard to the morrow" (*Mishlei* 27,1).

When Yaakov had arranged the terms for his tending Lavan's sheep, he set up a number of safeguards to protect Lavan's property from embezzlement, adding, "My integrity will answer for me on the morrow" (*Bereishis* 30,33). According to Rabbi Yehuda ben Rav Shimon, G-d responded: "You are so assured of your

integrity on the morrow. On the morrow your daughter will be violated."

This may seem difficult. After all, as long as Yaakov was in Lavan's employ, his devotion and integrity were so exemplary that Yaakov emerged as the paradigm of *Emes*, to be eternally identified with this attribute. Yet Yaakov was still faulted. His self-assurance somehow implied a relaxing of his guard against a lack of adherence to principle. As a result, his family ultimately suffered a major breach in its integrity.

Like Passengers Aboard a Sinking Ship

This past year we have endured a *Chillul Hashem* of major proportions that reflects unfavorably on our Torah institutions. Unfortunately, we cannot proudly declare: "My integrity will answer for me" on this morrow.

Reading the Report of the Nunn Commission on the misappropriation of government funds by certain edu-

cational institutions¹, we cannot shrug off the smear against us by saying, "It was *that* institution... *their* actions." The *Chillul Hashem* must be borne by all of us, for the status of all Torah students has fallen. This affects us all.

As Targum Yonasan ben Uziel says in regard to the command, "Do not steal": "Do not be friends or partners with thieves, lest your children grow up to be thieves." It is thus the responsibility of the entire *Klal Yisroel* that there be no thieves amongst us.

Historically, our *shtadlonim*, those who advocated and lobbied with officials on behalf of the Jewish People, were invariably *Gedolei Torah* (such as Reb Itzel Volozhin in his time, the Chofetz Chaim and Reb Meir Shapiro in their times). By contrast, today the situation is such that any young upstart who has some kind of connection in the nation's capital will employ unacceptable tactics, and we are prepared to become his partners.

The Chazal's parable for this situation is well known.

A passenger aboard a ship drills a hole in the floor of his compartment, and all the other passengers are in uproar: "You're endangering our lives!"

"Mind your own business," he retorts. "I paid my way. The hole is in my compartment."

But the seas are stormy, and everyone's ship will sink.

Our present-day situation is no different. We are being tossed about in stormy seas, and a problem in one compartment can sink the entire ship.

Some may rationalize that the proceeds are marked for support of To-

rah institutions. But take note of a letter from Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, זצ"ל, written 17 years ago:

We must be grateful to G-d that after the Churban [of World War II], He brought us to a benevolent country that supports students in their studies, and helps *bnai Torah* maintain their courses of Torah study. We must be grateful [to this nation] and pray for its welfare and for the well-being of its leaders. At the same time, we must be aware that G-d in His Torah commands us to take heed not to take more than the officially prescribed amounts, even if loopholes exist for evading the rules.... And quite apart from thievery, such acts are forbidden as deception, misrepresentation and—worst of all—*Chillul Hashem*. In addition, they constitute a *bizayon* which besmirches Torah and its scholars. There is no way in

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the world in which this can be permitted. Just as G-d despises a *korban olah* brought from stolen funds, so too does He despise Torah support that comes from illicit sources.

The letter is clear and needs no elaboration.

When Shimi ben Geira cursed Dovid Hamelech, Dovid said, "The curse does not come from Shimi, it comes from G-d." We, too, must view the critique of our community as not emanating from the Nunn Commission, but from *Hashem* Himself for our falling short of our calling as Torah Jews: to sanctify the *Sheim Shamayim* through our actions.

Torah Transforms Those Who Are Near

Torah is described as *Aish Dos—Fiery Law*—according to the *Sifra* because just as fire leaves

its impact on whatever is near, so too must Torah transform whoever is exposed to it: he learns wisdom, humility, modesty, good deeds, appropriate conduct.

When a person studies Torah, it should be apparent in his conduct, in his very being. Thus every Torah Jew must realize that he carries the *Ribbono Shel Olam's* Torah with him in all his endeavors—in his business transactions as well as in his social interactions.

When the Jews reached Mara on their way to Sinai, Moshe Rabbeinu taught them *chok umishpat*—statutes and ordinances. The Ramban spells out Moshe's lessons. Having left Egypt together *en masse*, in such close quarters to each other, the Jews must maintain certain levels of conduct: You must love one another, otherwise you will never survive. You must accept the counsel of the sages. You must establish safeguards of modesty, especially in view of your crowded living conditions. You will inevitably encounter bands of non-Jews who will be selling you their wares; deal with them with integrity....

This code of conduct was issued to the Jews *before* the Torah was given at Sinai. We certainly carry a charge to promote *Kiddush Sheim Shamayim*! Perhaps such effort on our part will contribute to a mitigation of the terrible *Chillul Sheim Shamayim* currently plaguing us.

Even with our current public image problem, however, our successes are undeniably the envy of the secular world. One need only note the contrast between our dedicated young men in pursuit of Torah knowledge, guiding their lives by Torah values, and their secular counterparts, adrift at sea without a moral compass, subject to the capricious trends of society. The difference is hard for others to swallow, and inspires all sorts of contorted views of our community. For example, sociologist Samuel Heilman, who is an "expert" on Chareidi society, is cited in a cover story of the New York Jewish Week (Dec. 3, '93) on the current Pell Grant problems:

To Samuel Heilman, the scholar of Orthodox Jewry, one thing about the schools' pattern in Pell Grant exploitation is most informative.... It virtually exploded in the last three years after many years at a fairly constant level.

¹Editor's Note: Rabbi Svei is referring to the hearings held on October 27 - 28, 1993, before the US Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, chaired by Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, at which testimony was presented detailing allegations of various abuses of the federal Pell Grant program of assistance to higher education. The allegations of abuse were directed at a number of entities referred to by the Nunn Committee staff as "relatively small institutions" that offer courses in "Judaic Studies" and "Immigrant Culture", which "should not be confused with rabbinical seminaries." The allegations raise issues of varying degrees of severity, some of which are being contested by the institutions under investigation.

JO plans to publish in a forthcoming issue a further discussion of this topic based on a symposium at the recent national convention of Agudath Israel of America.

If we were not as wary of the violations of integrity as we should have been, we certainly are now sufficiently alarmed to correct such lapses. At the same time, however, we should not be derelict in our well-earned pride in our noble youth who continue to advance in Torah study with ultimate devotion.

It was three years ago, he observed, ...[that a particular] family, one of the major contributors to ultra-Orthodox institutions, went bankrupt amidst a hardhitting general recession that struck the community hard.

With little support from the established Jewish community, and no base of support in their own hard pressed community, Uncle Sam must have seemed the only help at hand, he said.

If the federal government now does withdraws its funds, said Heilman, "The students will go out and work. And that means they will have to make compromises, as happens when you work. The insulation they have built up over the last 25 years... will end. They're on a precipice, and they know it."

I would strongly recommend that both the writer of the above-quoted article and the expert cited therein visit Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, which is the largest Torah institution of its kind in the world. They would then see for themselves how Torah study actually flourishes.

The Vilna Gaon declared that Torah cannot thrive on the basis of fraudulently gained funds. He refers to the well-known incident of how Rabbi Chiya saved Torah from being forgotten by personally instructing children (*Babba Metzia* 85b). The account begins with Rabbi Chiya planting flax to harvest linen for the purpose of fashioning nets; these he used to trap deer, whose hides he cured for parchment, on which he wrote Torah scrolls. Rabbi Chiya personally executed all of these preparatory labors, to ensure that no ill-begotten funds be used for teaching Torah to children. The Gaon goes on to say that if *seforim* (sacred books) are printed with funds borrowed on *ribbis* (usury), which is forbidden, the children are destined to forget the Torah they will learn from these books....

Torah on the scale of the Lakewood

Yeshiva could never have taken root by virtue of funds gained illicitly.

How, then, is Torah propagated in our times? Intellectually gifted, talented *Yungeleit* (young men), who could have their choice of well-paying careers in professions and the business world, have renounced such opportunities in the favor of devoting themselves to Torah study, which they love so intensely, finding it "more precious than pearls." They seek closeness to G-d, for which they are willing to endure any hardships.... Young women enter into partnership with their husbands, devoting all their energy, working to help their husbands in their quest for growth in Torah. Parents and in-laws share in the support of their children, to enable them to advance in their studies. And generous *nedivei am* (philanthropists) extend themselves in support of these scholars and the institutions that house them.

The Meshech Chochma comments on the classic partnership of Yissachar, the dweller of the tents of Torah study, and his brother Zevulun, who sponsored him through his commercial ventures: "And Leah called him 'Zevulun' to say... now my husband (yizbeileini) will make his permanent home with me." (Bereishis 30, 20).... Yissachar could not have had a house of study without Zevulun's active support. Zevulun is a key contributor to Yissachar's function as a scholar.

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II. THE OUTWARD GLANCE

According to Chazal, Dena's violation by Shechem was the result of yet another frailty: "And Dena went out to see *Bnos Ha'aretz*—the daughters of the land" (*Bereishis* 34, 1). In our present-day situation we need not "go out" to see "the daughters of the land." They and their value system have free entry into our homes and our educational facilities.

A sub-denomination of Judaism has been created that is dedicated to incorporating the value system of *bnos Haaretz* into Orthodoxy, calling itself Centrism. One can reduce our differences with this group to several primary points.

◆ We labor under the awareness that the chain of generations becomes progressively weaker. We cannot reverse this trend, but at the very least, we subjugate ourselves to the wisdom of the sages of the previous generation. In this way we can receive the *Mesora*, the sacred tradition, and maintain it to the best of our abilities. The Centrists deny this steady diminution. They promote a *Torah Umadda* ideology, whereby Torah is enhanced by the added factor of *Madda*. Thus, in their view, as generations advance and the *Madda* factor increases with added scientific insights, so too does the resultant hybrid, *Torah Umadda*, benefit. This flies in the face of our *Mesora*. *Madda* was not present when the Torah was given at Sinai, nor was it ever a component in the Torah taught in subsequent generations (including that of Reb Chaim of Brisk).

Not surprisingly, then, Modern Orthodoxy tends to glamorize innovation in both *halacha* and *hashkafa*², and even members of such groups as the Orthodox Roundtable, who were once threatened with expulsion from the Rabbinical Council of America for their radical departures from halachic norms, today are touted as respected speakers at Centrist conclaves.

² For example, in the next paragraph, a statement from Blu Greenberg is cited. She is the wife of Rabbi Yitzchak Greenberg, who also touts his own vision of *Klal Yisroel*, in the form of CLAL, which includes Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist com-

◆ Centrists have a different view in regard to the woman's role in Judaism. They have moved in the direction of the general worldview that distinctions between men and women should be obliterated. What are the results? A widely publicized article by an "Orthodox feminist" published in Moment Magazine (Dec. '93) expresses anguish that Orthodoxy lags behind the Conservative and Reform, which ordain women, while the Orthodox do not. After all, she claims, women also study Talmud nowadays, and they are familiar with the *halacha*—to at least the same degree of mastery as their male counterparts. Orthodoxy should also ordain women, she proposes. True, they are not counted in a *minyan*, but that hurdle will be overcome in time, she posits.... One cannot help but fear that, should the modernists within Orthodoxy continue on their current course, her prediction will come true.

This deterioration within modern ranks is the result of two forces at work among them: They do not segregate boys and girls in their educational institutions, and their standards for *tzenius* (personal modesty) in their homes has declined. Unfortunately, their achievements are suffering erosion because of these weaknesses.

We, for our part, must avoid the trap of "do not be sure of yourself in regard to the morrow." In our ranks, as well, *tzenius* has suffered deterioration. Recently, in Orthodox circles, for example, women have been delivering addresses at celebrations of their *simchas*, against their inherent nature as women: The *Midrash* relates that when G-d created Chava, He tapped her on every limb, commanding, "Be *tzenu'a* (modest)." *Tzenius* is the very foundation of a Jewish home. Men have been given Torah as the antidote to their *yeitzer*

ponents. What can Klal Yisroel gain from the inclusion of official Reform clergymen, when their ranks are so suffering from defection through intermarriage that they propose active outreach to non-Jews to replace their losses? Can Klal Yisroel be enriched by the inclusion of Reconstructionists who outdo themselves week after week with their outrageous pronouncements? (In mid-November, the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent* published an article by one of their rabbis expressing admiration for Esau, the worldly outdoorsman, as compared to the cloistered Jacob, "who dwelt [only] in tents!")

Some women from less traditional circles seem to be seeking new *mitzva* expressions, such as wearing *tefillin*, or dancing with a *Sefer Torah* on *Simchas Torah*. As if they lack *mitzvos* of significance!

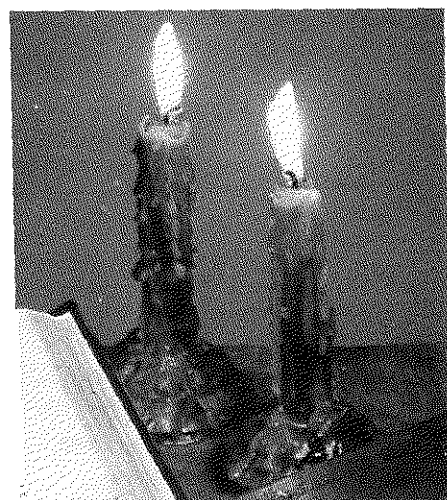
hora (evil inclination), and women have been granted *tzenius* for this purpose. Public speaking before a mixed audience is in total violation of this attribute of *tzenius*.

Women: Their Agenda, Their Mission

Some women from less traditional circles seem to be seeking new *mitzva* expressions, such as wearing *tefillin*, or dancing with a *Sefer Torah* on *Simchas Torah*. As if they lack *mitzvos* of significance! This search for the new is truly pointless, for women are already charged with specific *mitzvos* that are crucial to the formation of our people:

◆ *Sforno* explains that the *mitzva* of *challa* was introduced to Klal Yisroel immediately after the Sin of the *Meraglim* (the Twelve Spies). The People had forfeited their high level of *bitachon* (trust in G-d) when they balked at entering *Eretz Yisroel* because of the *Meraglim's* negative report about the Land. When women were commanded to separate the *challa* portion from their dough, they were given the opportunity to express renewed *bitachon*—declaring that all bounty comes from G-d's hands. This in turn brings blessings on the Jewish home: *Bitachon* and blessings, thanks to the Jewish women and their *mitzva*.

◆ Adam and Chava were meant to fulfill Creation's purpose by tending *Gan Eden* as commanded, but they failed. Subsequently, *Tikun Olam*, re-



Through preserving our own heritage of *tzenius*, *kedusha* and *tahara*, we can fulfill our destiny of being a *Mamleches Kohanim veGoy Kadosh*. What, by contrast, can *Bnos Haaretz* teach us?

pair of the world, could come about only through future generations. But they would have to be generations of *kedusha* (sanctity) and *tahara* (purity). The Jewish woman as custodian of the laws of family purity passes on this *tahara* through her offspring to future generations.

◆ Adam's spirituality suffered a terrible decline through his initial sin. This could be restored only through the *Shabbos*. By ushering in the *Shabbos* through kindling the *Shabbos* lights, the Jewish woman brings in the *neschama yeseira*, the "additional *neschama*," to her home, restoring spirituality to her family.

Thus the keys of *bitachon*, *tahara*, and *kedusha* are entrusted to her hands.

◆ How do women merit the after-life? "By watching over their

children's Torah educations." The Jewish woman guards the transmission of our values and our loyalty to Torah for future generations!

The decline from previous generations to ours is precipitous to the extreme. One wonders why. Perhaps one can suggest that women hesitate to cry, to pour out their tears, as *Yiddishe Mammehs* once did, when they beseech G-d on behalf of their children, that they grow up to be *talmidei chachamim* and *ba'alei middos tovos*—at *tefilla* and when they *bentch* *licht*.

One dare not underestimate the power of those precious tears! Tears cleanse the heart and open up the portals of *kedusha* and *tahara*. What, by contrast, can *Bnos Haaretz* teach us? Only the revelation of all sorts of hidden drives and desires, and a focus on the need for—and the perceived entitlement to—immediate gratification.

Through preserving our own heritage of *tzenius*, *kedusha* and *tahara*, we can fulfill our destiny of being a *Mamleches Kohanim veGoy Kadosh*.

III. OUR CONCERN FOR SECURITY

The *Zohar* relates a dialogue between the Sar (guardian angel) of Yishmael and G-d. The Sar demanded that Yishmael, as bearing a *bris mila* (circumcision), was entitled to the same closeness to G-d as Yitzchak enjoyed.

Not so, answered G-d. Yitzchak's *mila* was complete; he was circumcised on his eighth day, with *pri'ah* (an additional incision), whereas Yishmael was not circumcised until 13 years of age, and lacked *pri'ah*. As long as Yitzchak is complete in his *kedusha*, Yishmael has no claims to his legacy in *Eretz Yisroel*. But should Yitzchak, or his descendants, fall short in infusing *Eretz Yisroel* with *kedusha*, then Yishmael's children will indeed have claim to *Eretz Yisroel*.

While ordinarily one may find it difficult to conceive of *Eretz Yisroel* as "lacking" in *kedusha*, the government that is currently in power has made it its goal to rid the State, its official pronouncements, and even its school system of mention of G-d's name.

The *Ponevezher Rosh Yeshiva* (Rabbi Schach) is in anguish because *Rehovos* elected a left-wing mayor on his platform of preventing the closing of theaters on *Shabbos*. This triumph of an anti-*Shabbos* spirit, the judicial decision to permit the import of non-kosher meat to Israel for the first time in 45 years, among other trends, all serve to create a vacuum in the *kedusha* of the Land. And as a result, the Arabs are on the threshold of controlling territories that they previously did not hold. We can prevail over the Arabs in their struggle to gain control over our land, if only *kedusha* reigns in the Holy Land.

The struggle for *kedusha* is a key aspect of our battle to maintain Torah values in spite of the attractions of foreign value systems and calls for change. Through perseverance, we can flourish as a Torah people, promote *Kiddush Sheim Shamayim* in all our activities, and bring security to our beleaguered brethren in *Eretz Yisroel*. ■

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