

Contemporary Halakhic Problems
VOLUME VII



Rabbi J. David Bleich

**CONTEMPORARY
HALAKHIC
PROBLEMS**

VOLUME VII

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*Dedicated to the memory of
my revered mother-in-law*
מידל עטל בת שמואל יצחק ע"ה

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Preface

As was the case with the earlier volumes in this series, much of the material presented in this volume originally appeared in my “Survey of Recent Halakhic Periodical Literature” which is regularly featured in the columns of *Tradition*. Many of those items have been expanded and amplified for presentation in their present form. Portions of this work served as the subject matter of *shi’urim* and seminars on behalf of the students of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and its *Kollel le-Hora’ah* as well as of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

This work is not intended to serve as a practical halakhic guide and, indeed, no attempt has been made to present definitive *psak halakhah*. It is devoted to an analysis of Halakhah and halakhic reasoning rather than to definitive statements of halakhic determinations. As such, it is directed primarily to those who have at least some background in the study of rabbinic literature but lack the requisite skills or leisure to assimilate and analyze the maze of responsa pertaining to the topics treated in this volume. It is intended as an invitation to the reader to join in the noblest of Jewish activities and the supremest of joys—the study of Torah.

Contemporary Halakhic Problems

I wish to express my thanks to my brother-in-law, Rabbi Mordecai Ochs, for his painstaking reading of the manuscript; to my son, Rabbi Dr. Moshe Bleich, for drawing my attention to sources that otherwise would have eluded me and for his many valuable insights; also to *Tradition's* very able editorial assistant, Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier, and to Rabbi Yitzchak Adlerstein for their corrections and comments; to Dr. David Marks for making his scientific and technical expertise available to me; to Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, Mr. Zalman Alpert and Mr. Zvi Erenyi of the Mendel Gottesman Library for their constant helpfulness; to Mrs. Racheline Habousha of the library of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine for her unfailing graciousness in expediting my requests; to my secretary at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Miss Kaaron Saphir, for her patience and understanding; to Mr. John Ludwig for his assiduous assistance in my research and for his work on the index of this volume; to my esteemed friend, Mr. Ernest Grunebaum, for noting typographical errors in earlier publications of this material; most especially to my granddaughter Hadassah Gurwitz whose thorough and meticulous proofreading and incisive observations have spared this work from many inadvertent errors; and last, but certainly not least, to my students for their relentless and provocative questioning.

My gratitude to Mr. Matthew Miller, Rabbi Reuven Ziegler and Tomi Mager of Maggid Books (an imprint of Koren Publishers Jerusalem) for their painstaking efforts in shepherding the manuscript through the various stages of publication.

With the publication of this volume, the seventh in the *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* series, I express my thankfulness to the Almighty for His continued beneficence and mercy in sustaining me in life and granting me the privilege of dwelling in the tents of Torah. Above all, I am grateful to the Almighty for my cherished collaborators—the members of my family. Our prayer to the Almighty is that we continue to be numbered among the *mashkimim le-divrei Torah* and, to paraphrase the words of the *hadran*, *ke-shem she-'azartanu le-sayyem sefer zeh, ken ta'azrenu le-hathil sefarim aherim u-le-sayyemam, lilmod u-le-lamed, lishmor ve-la'asot u-le-kayyem*.

Introduction

*Knowledge comes, in a way, unsought,
as in the Chinese tale
of the youth who came for daily lessons
in what there was to learn of jade.
And each day, for a single hour,
while he and the master talked together
always of unrelated matters,
jade pieces were slipped into his hand,
till one day, when a month had passed,
the young man paused and with a frown,
said suddenly, "That is not jade."*

E.B. deVito, "Graduates,"
American Scholar, Spring, 1998, P. 282.

As, by the grace of the Almighty, I approach the stage of *gevurot*, I find myself reflecting upon the transformations within the American Jewish community that I have witnessed. The term "*gevurot*," literally, "strengths," it seems to me, connotes the psychological and emotional stamina to see matters as they are without burnishing the past, distorting the present or rose-coloring the future. Self-delusion, both individual and communal, is a mechanism for avoiding despondency and protective armor against resignation. One hopes that the mellowness of age brings with itself the strength of detachment necessary to perceive the verities of the past, the actualities of the present and realistic anticipations for the future.

It required a great measure of *mesirat nefesh*, inordinate self-sacrifice, for my revered parents, of blessed memory, to send their sons

to a distant yeshivah at a tender age. They did so because they recognized full well that Torah and its accompanying values can only be transmitted by a singular type of pedagogue. *Torah she-be-al Peh* in each of its facets can be acquired only from living teachers who themselves have embodied, and have come to exemplify, the *masorah*. “For the lips of the priest shall preserve wisdom and Torah shall they seek from his mouth for he is a *malakh* of the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7), declares the prophet. The term “*malakh*” can mean either “messenger” or “angel.” The Sages, *Mo’ed Katan* 17a, accepted the second meaning in elaborating, “If the master is comparable to an angel of the Lord of hosts, Torah shall they seek from his mouth.”

The quintessence of Judaism is a sense of *masorah*, transmission from generation to generation. Fundamentally, that *masorah* is the corpus of the revealed Halakhah received at Sinai, passed on from generation to generation, father to son, teacher to pupil. But it is far more. “This is my God and I will beautify him; the God of my father and I will exalt him” (Exodus 15:2). How does one beautify God? Beauty as ascribed to the Deity is an anthropomorphic depiction but even such figurative descriptions have limits. As the medieval philosophers well understood, the essence of God is certainly beyond human comprehension but the results of divine activity are perceived by men and so we speak of those actions and their results in the only terms that we can comprehend, *viz.*, the language of human acts and resultant effects. But beauty is neither an act nor a description of the effect of an act. Moreover, anthropomorphic language may be appropriate in describing God’s relationship with us but how could we possibly have any effect upon God? Yet the verse reads, “and I will beautify Him.” What could the attribute of beauty, as applied to the Deity, possibly signify? Even more incomprehensible is the notion that man can somehow endow God with beauty that He otherwise lacks. Understood literally, the words border on the blasphemous.

Quite frequently in rabbinic literature answers are presented without prior formulation of a question. The questions are either obvious or much too subtle to be grasped by every student. But the answers are of tremendous importance and when the answers are properly appreciated one finds that the questions have evaporated. And so the lesson conveyed by the answer is sufficient. The difficulties inherent in the verse “and I

will beautify Him” are so obvious to the inquiring mind that they need not be formulated. The answer presented by the Sages, *Shabbat* 133b, is a rendition of the verse as “make yourself beautiful before Him in performance of *mizvot*: a beautiful *sukkah*, a beautiful *lulav*, a beautiful *shofar*, etc.” God could not possibly be beautiful or not be beautiful. But man can and must harness his God-given sense of aesthetic appreciation and channel it to the service of God.

Not explicitly addressed by the Sages is the second clause of that verse, “the God of my father and I will exalt Him.” Scripture is not mere poetry. Phrases are not simply repetitive and synonyms are not employed solely for emphasis. ““This is my God’—even the maidservant witnessing the splitting of the Red Sea experienced a beatific vision of the Deity surpassing that of Ezekiel and the prophets,” declares the *Mekhilta, ad locum*. For one privileged to enjoy that beatific experience the prophetic vision is undeniable and self-validating. Faith is not required to accept that which is apprehended by the intellect. “*This is my God*”—the maidservant perceived God; she accepted God’s existence because of knowledge born of her own perception rather than on the basis of faith in what was taught by others.

For one who can exclaim “*This is my God*” while experiencing a personal encounter with the Deity, what need is there further to describe Him as “the God of my father?” The passage reflects a recognition that even a prophetic experience does not exhaust the totality of religious awareness. Much of that awareness is conveyed on the basis of a received tradition, a tradition transmitted by the previous generation. Thus, a perception that “*This is my God*”—powerful and convincing as it may be—is incomplete without the complementary awareness that He is “the God of my father.” To be properly comprehended, the awareness that “*This is my God*” must be accompanied by an appreciation—and acceptance—of the *masorah* transmitted by an earlier generation. “The God of my father” expresses the notion that one can properly experience “*This is my God*” only within the framework of a *masorah* received from one’s forebears.

I remember quite vividly a discourse delivered by the late R. Ya’akov Kamenetsky that I attended in my youth in which he quoted a statement of *Sefer ha-Yashar*. Abraham, raised as an idol-worshiper,

became convinced of the existence of the one God at a very early age on the basis of his formulation of a teleological argument. But upon becoming convinced of God's existence, states this source, Abraham sought out Noah, who was still living, and his son Shem.¹ That fact in itself did not strike me as remarkable. Abraham either actually heard of the Seven Commandments of the Sons of Noah or recognized that God might have revealed Himself to mankind. The contents of the Seven Commandments cannot be discerned by reason alone. There are myriad minutiae in the application of the Noahide Code that remain ambiguous even today.² Abraham was certainly in need of guidance with regard to such matters. But *Sefer ha-Yashar* reports that Abraham had a far more ambitious agenda: Abraham went to Noah and Shem "and lived with them in their home to learn the instruction of God (*mussar*) and His ways ... and Abraham served Noah and his son Shem many years."³ Certainly, information concerning the content of the Noahide Code could be obtained only from the recipients and their successors. But the *masorah* that Abraham seeks from Noah and Shem is much more encompassing. It includes divine "*mussar*" and the "ways of God." Even that which Abraham was able to fathom on the basis of intellect required confirmation by means of *masorah*.

Human intellect is fallible. Even when its apprehension is correct there can be no certainty precisely because a wise person knows that his

1. See *Sefer ha-Yashar, Parashat Noah*.

2. For example, the principle that organ meat of an animal in which the trachea and esophagus have been severed while the animal is yet alive is regarded "as placed in a basket" and hence forbidden as "a limb torn from a live animal" is not a regulation that can be intuitively grasped by the intellect. Those organs are permitted to Jews only if the animal is slaughtered in accordance with the law handed down at Sinai. Would an improperly performed act of *shehitah* have rendered such organs permissible to Abraham? See R. Moses Sofer, *Teshuvot Hatam Sofer, Yoreh De'ah*, nos. 18-19. R. Meir Dan Plocki devotes a section of *Kuntres Ner Mizvah*, published in his *Hemdat Yisra'el*, to an examination of many matters pertaining to the Noahide Code regarding which determination is far from obvious. Numerous aspects of the Noahide laws are elucidated in *Mishneh le-Melekh, Hilkhos Melakhim 10:7*. In recent years a number of compendia have been published codifying the prescriptions of the Noahide Code.

3. See *Sefer ha-Yashar, Parashat Noah*.

intelligence may mislead him. Abraham was in need of confirmation of his own rationally perceived conclusions. Adam received the *masorah* directly from God; from Adam the *masorah* passed to Seth and Enoch and ultimately to Shem.⁴ Abraham sought out Noah and Shem in order to acquire from them not only instruction in the myriad details of both theological and halakhic teachings but also an understanding of the ways of God that may be attained only on the basis of the *masorah*. Without that tradition, Abraham's beliefs and comportment, not to speak of his observance of the Noahide Code, would have been riddled with lacunae.

In context, the phrase "God of my father" expresses transmissional validation of the experiential proposition "This is my God." Moreover, the phrase "and I will exalt Him" serves a similar purpose—but one that has halakhic import as well. The *lulav*, *hadassim* and *aravot* must not only be held together but must be bundled and held in place with a band of some sort. The Gemara records a controversy with regard to whether the "bundling" is a necessary requirement intrinsic to fulfillment of the *mizvah* or whether it is required simply because of the aesthetic consideration expressed in the verse "This is my God and I will beautify Him," i.e., by means of a beautiful *lulav*. Whether bundling the various species or binding them together is intrinsic to fulfillment of the *mizvah* or a requirement grounded in aesthetics is a matter of halakhic consequence. For technical reasons, if "bundling" is an intrinsic requirement the material used to bind the several species together must be derived from one of those four species rather than an extraneous substance; if the requirement is aesthetic in nature any material may be employed for that purpose. The Mishnah, *Sukkah* 36b, records a controversy between R. Judah and R. Meir with regard to that matter. R. Meir further reported that the people of Jerusalem used ringlets of gold to bind their *lulavim*. His colleagues then proceeded to inform him that those persons also tied the bundle with a frond of the *lulav* before affixing the gold ringlets. R. Meir asserted that the "bundling" was an aesthetic consideration as witnessed by employment of gold ringlets by the people of Jerusalem. Ostensibly, his colleagues' rejoinder was that the people of Jerusalem

4. Zohar *Ḥadash*, *Midrash ha-Né'elam*, ed. R. Reuben Margolis (Jerusalem, 5738), p. 22b.

did not comport themselves in accordance with R. Meir's view; on the contrary, they maintained that bundling was intrinsic to the *mizvah* as evidenced by the fact that the people of Jerusalem first tied the bundle with a *lulav* frond before adorning the *lulav* with gold. Once properly bound with material derived from one of the four species, further adornment could not impair the validity of the *mizvah*.

The unasked question is to what purpose did R. Meir's colleagues offer their rejoinder? The controversy between R. Meir and R. Judah is predicated upon one of the hermeneutical principles of exegesis, a *gezerah shavah* that is a matter of received tradition. R. Judah possessed such a tradition; R. Meir did not. Informing R. Meir that the people of Jerusalem were also recipients of R. Judah's tradition would hardly have swayed him.

Hatam Sofer, in his commentary on *Sukkah* 36b, employing but a few succinct words, interprets the Sages' rejoinder as addressing an entirely different matter. In effect, *Hatam Sofer* asserts that the exchange between R. Meir and his colleagues does not reflect the earlier controversy between R. Meir and R. Judah with regard to the nature of the requirement for bundling but expresses a peripheral disagreement. R. Meir, who maintains that bundling is an expression of "This is my God and I will beautify Him," pointed to the people of Jerusalem as exemplifying such an attempt at beautification, i.e., they went to great lengths to beautify the *lulav* in using gold for that purpose. The riposte of his colleagues, asserts *Hatam Sofer*, was that the people of Jerusalem did not at all fulfill that requirement by using ornaments of gold; they fulfilled the statutory aesthetic requirement by using a piece of the *lulav* itself. The definition of "I will beautify Him," declares *Hatam Sofer*, is also subject to halakhic definition. Beauty, for halakhic purposes, is defined by Halakhah itself; it is not in the eye of the beholder. Halakhic beauty is a matter of normative prescription rather than subjective aesthetic taste. Halakhic beauty is unchanging; conventional beauty is a matter of subjective perception and subject to change. Such was the import of the statement of R. Meir's colleagues. *Hatam Sofer* concedes that the conduct of the people of Jerusalem was not without merit. But they were expressing a subjective *hibbuv mizvah*, or love of the *mizvah*, rather than statutory beautification of the *mizvah* in the nature of *hiddur*

mizvah. Embellishment in the form of *hiddur mizvah*, beautification of a *mizvah*, is itself a matter of Halakhah for which a person is enjoined to expend up to an additional third in determining the amount of money to spend in fulfillment of the *mizvah*. Use of the frond of the *lulav* is a matter of statutory *hiddur*; gold is merely a subjective expression of *hibbuv*.

It seems to me that *Hatam Sofer's* analysis is reflected in the phrase "the God of my father and I will exalt Him." The initial phrase of the passage reflects the obligation to beautify performance of *mizvot*. But how is "I will beautify Him" to be expressed? What is the appropriate mode of beautification? The second half of the verse serves to answer that question. In order to determine how I am to "exalt Him" recourse to the "God of my father" is necessary, i.e., such matters are defined by the *masorah*. *Hibbuv mizvah*, love of a *mizvah*, may be expressed subjectively but modes of *hiddur mizvah*, enhancing a *mizvah*, are derived from *masorah* no less so than fulfillment of basic requirements. Mode and manner of performance of fulfilling God's commandments are transmitted from parents to children, generation after generation.

Judaism, and the *masorah* integral to its essence, involves much more than divine service. It encompasses mores and values that both reflect and enhance performance of *mizvot*. Often such matters can be articulated only with difficulty; they must be lived rather than taught. They are encapsulated in familial, social and cultural experience. *Masorah* is taught by comportment even more so than by explicit instruction. As the Gemara, *Berakhot* 7b, underscores, serving Torah scholars, and thereby observing their conduct, is of even greater import than that which they teach. The words of *Sefer ha-Yashar* are precise: "... and Abraham served Noah and his son Shem many years."

E.B. DeVito's poem "Graduates" gives eloquent expression to a Chinese tale. A young man comes to his teacher for instruction in how to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit jade. Each day master and student discuss matters various and sundry and all the while pieces of jade are passed between them. One day, after a period of time, the young man pauses, frowns and suddenly exclaims, "This is not jade!" The point of the narrative is that some forms of knowledge cannot be taught directly. Ability to distinguish between the genuine and the imitation requires time, experience as well as repeated and continual exposure to the authentic.

Acculturation and assimilation were the scourge of post-Enlightenment European Jewry. Conscious disaffiliation resulted in the loss of countless numbers of Jews and their total alienation from Judaism. The early American experience was far different but no less tragic. Jews crossed the ocean and established themselves in the New World but the *masorah* in its pristine, authentic guise did not accompany them. The reasons are many and varied: the immigrant generation tended to be less knowledgeable than confreres left behind; religious leaders were often men of inferior erudition, of less than sterling character and stellar piety; Jewish education was poor to non-existent; a sense of community was lacking; poverty was rampant; and the desire successfully to forge a new life was all-pervasive. The *masorah* offered by the immigrant generation to the successor generation was adulterated at best. The result, precisely because it was unintended, was all the more tragic.

The *masorah* that was transmitted was attenuated and hence less than fully authentic. The result was not only compromise, both personal and communal, in religious practice but also a compromised, and hence less than authentic, value system. There is no need to cast aspersions or to assign blame—but the facts remain. The greatest misfortune is that the attenuated *masorah* came to be regarded—and in some circles is still regarded—as entirely authentic. It is not compromise, but the hallowing of the compromise, that is deplorable. Heavy-hearted resignation in light of changed circumstances might have been acceptable but idealization of the compromise as a norm is a denial, nay, a perversion, of the *masorah*.

During that epoch, the final years of which I experienced, the level of Torah knowledge both among the laity and members of the American-born rabbinate was appalling. Efforts were concentrated upon prevention of further deterioration of religious observance rather than upon enhancement. Corrective measures could not be undertaken or, if undertaken, met with only limited success because the strength of the *masorah*, the chain linking each generation to the next, had been severely compromised.

World War II was an unspeakable tragedy for mankind and most certainly for world Jewry. Mysterious are the way of God. Paradoxically, the ashes of the tragedy made possible a phoenix-like blossoming of Judaism on American soil. The *masorah* that had been disrupted in the

United States remained intact in Europe. Post-war immigration of Jewish survivors took place in a social, cultural and economic climate entirely different from that confronted by earlier waves of immigrants. Communities succeeded in reestablishing themselves with both institutions and mores intact and, with time, flourished on American soil. Their *masorah* remained unbroken and undiminished. By and large, the post-war immigrant generation did not consciously attempt to transform what by then was the indigenous Jewish community, but transform that community it most certainly did. To the unpracticed eye, counterfeit currency may seem real but often the difference becomes readily recognizable when the authentic is placed against the inauthentic. The profound influence of the immigrant community was often both unintended and unrecognized but that influence cannot be overstated. Wonder of wonders, the authentic *masorah* was reestablished in a plethora of accents and vocabularies.

In many ways standards of religious observance and practice now exceed those of pre-war Europe. Economics, technology and economy of scale have contributed to an across-the-board raising of the bar in dietary *kashrut*. *Glatt* kosher has become *de rigueur*; *Bet Yosef glatt* is the new platinum standard. Once the story of how the *Sha'agat Aryeh* travelled with his own cooking utensils was the sum total of most individuals' knowledge of *yashan*, assuming that they knew the meaning of the term. Today, in many communities it is impossible to find a bakery that is not scrupulous with regard to the distinction between *yashan* and *hadash*. In my youth the cognoscenti went to considerable lengths and expense to procure *tefillin* made of leather obtained from *gassot*. Recently, I discovered that the less expensive *dakot* of reliable *kashrut* are no longer available. They are not produced because there is no market for them. Modern technology makes it possible routinely to produce *tefillin* whose deviation from a perfect square can be measured in microns. I am informed that use of "*zisse klaf*," if it has not already become, is rapidly becoming the standard for *sifrei Torah*, *tefillin* and *mezuzot* without the legendary man in the street being aware that there ever was a possible problem requiring a solution. A hybrid *etrog* candidly acknowledged to be the product of interspecies grafting is hard to find; the price of the *etrog* is commensurate with the strength of its pedigree. The most fundamental expression of "*Zeh Keli ve-anvehu*—This is my God and I will

beautify Him” is scrupulous avoidance of halakhic doubt in performance of *mizvot*. The ultimate beauty of the *mizvah* is its highest common denominator. “The God of my father and I will exalt Him,” the *masorah* of earlier generations has been reestablished in its pristine beauty!

Nowhere is this transformation more pronounced than in devotion to Torah study. Aspiration to single-minded pursuit of Torah study was always regarded by Jews as the most noble of endeavors. Throughout the generations, there were always individuals for whom “their Torah was their craft.” They were the pride of the community and held in highest esteem. Such persons did not seek honor, glory or prominence. Often they shunned positions of leadership and responsibility. Yet it is precisely those individuals who are endowed with the discernment necessary to distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic. The community at large was keenly attuned to the correlation between Torah scholarship and transmission of the *masorah* expressing the quintessence of Judaism.

Among the lacunae of tradition as transmitted to the American continent was pursuit of Torah study for its own sake. Absent that goal, a cadre of accomplished indigenous Torah scholars could not possibly have been developed. Nature abhors a vacuum. It is the nature of scholarship that it, too, abhors a vacuum. In the absence of erudite leadership, the mantle of authority and the role of communal spokesmen was assumed by individuals of lesser knowledge and a diminished commitment to the ideological postulates of Judaism that so often accompanies a lack of scholarship. Unfortunately, that phenomenon still persists. But now, to paraphrase the comments of R. Naphtali Zevi Judah Berlin, in section IV of the introduction to his *Ha’amek She’elah*, the prescient observer recognizes that bridal adornments worn by anyone other than a bride are at best a charade.

A remarkable transformation has indeed taken place. Most apparent in the post-war transplantation of undiluted authentic traditions of European Jewry is the reestablishment of educational institutions in the New World replicating those that had been destroyed with standards of scholarly excellence mirroring those they were designed to replace. In terms of sheer numbers, in the aggregate, their enrollment now surpasses the number of students pursuing Torah wisdom for its own sake during any earlier period in recorded history. The influence of the post-

war immigrants upon the American-born Jewish community has been profound. Instead of assimilating into what was then the dominant community, large segments of the already existing community have identified themselves with the Torah culture of the new arrivals. The result is an explosion of Torah scholarship.

Despite the many salient developments that we have witnessed, jubilation is hardly in order. The *masorah* has been reestablished within the committed community and many youths have been attracted precisely because of the genuineness of its teaching. But the countless souls that have not been awakened have become more and more estranged from authentic Judaism. The attenuated allegiance to Judaism that was emblematic of past generations of American Jews has become weaker and weaker. The result is a polarization between those who have accepted the *masorah* in its fullest sense and those to whom it is an alien concept.

The phenomenon of the “3-y Jew,” *yahrzeit*, *yizkor* and *yamim nora'im*, is fading into oblivion. A generation ago, a person attending a typical American synagogue would often have heard at least half of the attendees reciting *kaddish*. Those individuals were mourners and men observing a *yahrzeit* who were in the synagogue solely for the purpose of reciting *kaddish*. Today, when no mourner is present, I am frequently asked whether it is appropriate, as indeed is the ruling of Rema, for another worshipper to recite the mourner’s *kaddish*. There was a time when there was standing room only at *yizkor*. I recall a mailman who serviced the route that included my own synagogue whom I saw in *shul* with mailbag in tow exactly three times a year. Each time he was present for no longer than half an hour, the half-hour timed precisely to include *yizkor*. Now increased attendance at *yizkor* is barely discernible. There are still three-day-a-year *yamim nora'im* Jews but their numbers are rapidly dwindling.

In my memory, there was a time when there were no *shi'urim* on Sunday for classes in the ordination program of *Yeshivat Rabbenu Yizhak Elhanan*. The students were otherwise occupied as teachers in Talmud Torahs that met several weekday afternoons and on Sunday morning. Talmud Torahs are now virtually non-existent. True, some of the counterparts of the Talmud Torah students of yesteryear now attend day schools and *yeshivot*—and surely that is to be applauded. But it is

a source of great anguish that countless others do not receive even the minimal exposure to Jewish teaching that was provided by the most inadequate of Talmud Torah schools.

One may be alarmed by the ever-increasing rate of intermarriage but the phenomenon should not be a surprise. Lack of Torah education results in diminished observance. With the passing of time, observance becomes more and more diluted. The *masorah* of Judaism is not passed from one generation to another. Judaism without its *masorah* is devoid of meaning. What remains is simply a residual ethnic taboo against marrying a person who is not of Jewish lineage. Surely, that is the poorest of all reasons for marriage only within the Jewish community. Small wonder, then, that in the sectors of our community in which the magnetic force of the *masorah* is not felt, intermarriage is rapidly becoming the norm.

The Psalmist writes: “We will not hide from their children declaring unto the last generation the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done” (Psalms 78:4). Redak’s elucidation of this verse is remarkable. Redak renders the verse as: “From their children, the children of our ancestors—and they are our brothers—who do not learn and do not know the tradition, we, who know, are obligated (*hayyavim anu ha-yod’im*) to remind them and not to desist from them, until also they will declare unto their children, and their children unto their children’s children, until they declare the praises of the Lord unto the last generation.”

Redak spells out the challenge and the obligation quite clearly. We are charged with sharing the *masorah* in all its complexity and beauty with each and every one of our brothers and sisters. The very concept of *masorah* entails the notion that, not only must it be received, but it must be passed on as well—passed on, not only to the next generation, but also to those of our generation who have not yet been reached.