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# Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

*Celebrating 25 years of diversity and dialogue*

## In this issue

**Is there inherent value in truth or beauty? Or can it be spoiled by a contaminated source?**

**Three voices, three views.**

## Using nazi experimental data--asking the right question **Barry Freundel**

It is an almost inviolable principle of belief and behavior of almost all serious Jews to oppose any attempt at giving affirmation or approbation to anything done by the Nazis during the Shoah. With the generation of the survivors passing from the scene and the history of the events being challenged by revisionists, that opposition becomes, if anything, even more understandable.

Add to that the attempted "Christianization" of the event apparently underlying efforts to produce saints and shrines out of concentration camps and the appropriation of the terms and imagery of the Holocaust in everything from the feminist portrayals of Salem Witch Trials to frequently encountered depictions of the Black experience in America to discussions of Somalia or Bosnia, and it is no wonder that protecting the Holocaust as a unique, unparalleled singular horror visited on the Jews evokes the most heartfelt passion.

### Precious Data

Against this background, it is also no surprise that any suggestion of using information gathered during the monstrous human guinea pig experiments of the Nazi "scientists" as the basis for further scientific research or even for therapeutic need has engendered much opposition. Most secular bio-ethicists are opposed to using such data and the Environmental Protection Agency, which might have used some of the Nazis' work on possible antidotes to poison gas, ultimately refused to do so.

Some have made the claim that the data should be excluded because poor scientific technique was used and, therefore, because of potentially faulty conclusions. While this is an matter of considerable scientific debate, it is also at least somewhat counter-intuitive given the German cultural penchant for meticulousness and detail. Part of the problem is that assuming we have learned any moral lessons at all from the Holocaust, these experiments and their results are not reproduced. As a result, scientific challenge of this kind cannot, in a purely scientific sense, be responded to adequately or accurately. In precisely the same way, however, if the information is accurate, its irreplaceability may make it irreplaceably valuable in some situations and that, of course, is the rule.

### Hard-nosed Pragmatism

Where then does Jewish thought guide us in this conundrum? First, some philosophical background: Eliezer Berkovitz speaks of halakhah as the "Wisdom of the Feasible". There is a hard-headed pragmatic side to Jewish law that is not always appreciated.

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It has often been said that the history of medical progress is strewn with the history of immoral experimentation. From the illegal autopsies of medieval times to our own day, medical knowledge has often advanced in immoral ways. The first heart transplants (not surprisingly done in South Africa), were done without an adequate definition of death being applied to the donor and without immuno-suppressant drug therapy for the recipient. As R. Moshe Feinstein wrote in commenting on these early procedures, "This constitutes the murder of two people", i.e., the donor and the recipient.

So, too, many social psychology experiments studied by many of us in our Basic Psychology 101 courses would not meet ethical muster today. Finally, fetal tissue experimentation that involves the products of halakhically impermissible abortions will likely yield many important results in the years ahead.

In these and many other instances, information can be and is obtained in ways that do not meet Judaism's halakhic ethical and moral standards. What is then to occur? Should the textbooks be censored for all references to information gained in these ways? Should a halakhically observant Jew who needs medical treatment insist that this knowledge not be used to help determine the appropriate course of treatment? Obviously this is neither feasible nor realistic, and Jewish law does not require it. Rather, all information available and all still that can be marshalled are appropriately brought to bear on the problem to restore the patient's health as quickly as possible.

### The Imperative To Heal

Second, Jewish law always focuses with laser-like precision on the *Choleh Befaneinu*, the actual and present sick person in need, in preference to any external or distant considerations--even heartfelt historical national traumas. Judaism sees each life as infinitely valuable. In a very real sense that means that each individual is as valuable as the whole. If someone's life is in danger and immorally produced scientific data is the best way to help, saving the life that is immediately in danger becomes the overriding imperative. We are only precluded from harming others to help someone who is ill. However, if someone else has done so, while they are to be punished to the fullest extent of the law, we are obligated to use the information gained to aid those who can be helped by it.

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**BARRY FREUNDEL is a *Sh'ma* Contributing Editor and rabbi of Keshet Israel Congregation in Washington, DC.**

Talmudic precedent also exists for this conclusion. *Niddah* 30b tells of Cleopatra experimenting on some pregnant maidservants who were being put to death by royal decree to determine the developmental stages of male and female fetuses. These executions may have been immoral (see the Soncino translation note on the page), the abortant used to remove any existing fetuses and ensure that the true date of conception was known was doubtlessly impermissible, and the experiments themselves were, in all likelihood unethical, yet the talmudic argument about the admissibility of the information gained from these experiments never raises the issue of the moral acceptability of the source. The one issue of concern is the one with which we began, i.e., can the results be assumed to be scientifically accurate.

### A Last Avenging?

Finally we come to the issue which evoked the title of this brief monograph. The question of Nazi experimental

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## **Sh'ma** A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

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data is usually phrased as, "Should information obtained in this unspeakable way be given the status of scholarly respectability by being used and cited in a positive way?" In my mind, though entirely understandable, this is the wrong formulation. My way of phrasing the question is, "Given the horror perpetrated by the Nazis, should we grant them even one more victim by preventing the use of what in the final analysis are objective scientific facts concerning nature and its workings?"

Put another way, "Should the Nazis be allowed to totally pollute this information with their crimes so that it is ruined along with everything else they destroyed?" Put this way, I would argue that combating the Nazis means answering with a resounding "No" and using the information whenever nothing equally helpful exists.

One small detail remains and that is attribution of this material when used in scientific publications. Would not a series of positive citations to Mengele and his cohorts be a continuing moral abomination? A suggestion then. The knowledge should be used where appropriate and needed, i.e., when it is the best available. However, a standard citation should be developed to be used whenever the information is referenced publicly that reflects our moral outrage at the source. Repeatedly reading or hearing something like "from Nazi experimental data whose very existence violated the norms of humanity and the essential purpose for which scientific research exists" might help prevent science and scientists traveling down this road again. This scholarly equivalent of *yemach shmam vezikhbram* (may the name and memory be blotted out), the colloquially used epithet that accompanies all mentions of Hitler or the Nazis in some people's vernacular, may also be the key to resolving the issue of high emotion and moral contretemps. □

## Beauty from tainted sources

Raymond P. Scheindlin

When you hear the very first measure of *Tristan und Isolde*, you already know that you are in for an evening in which adultery and betrayal will be ennobled. The sickness of the subject matter is engraved in the opera's very first musical phrase. How much does that bother you?

Part of the greatness of such a work is that it compels us to put aside our ordinary moral standards for a time and adopt the work's own point of view even though doing so

RAYMOND P. SCHEINDLIN teaches Jewish literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

means betraying our own. When the show is over, we revert to being who we were before. But we must also be changed ever so slightly, or why would we put ourselves through the experience?

By subjecting ourselves to works of art that celebrate values contrary to our own, we allow ourselves to explore under controlled circumstances the dark parts of our souls that are too dangerous to deal with in our conscious lives. Artists, especially since the romantic period, are individuals who have fewer inhibitions than the rest of us in exploring that dark inner world. And so it is that when we ordinary folk think about artists and their work, we often find our moral selves repelled.

But we do not need to look to extreme cases in order to be uncomfortable with art. Beauty itself does not escape moral scrutiny. Is any beauty not tainted? The rabbinic tradition recognizes beauty as a legitimate category only in connection with ritual acts. The admiration of beauty--except in honor of God--is suspect of being an arrogant celebration of human pride or an idolatrous celebration of something created.

## Can We Love What Hated Us?

Even if we don't insist on absolute standards, we constantly come up against conflicts between the beautiful and ordinary moral standards. How can one attend a bullfight? Wear a fur coat? Enjoy works produced by awful people like Beethoven, or monsters like Picasso, or antisemites like Pound?

We Jews have problems of our own. When we listen to Wagner's operas, we have constantly on our minds the composer's antisemitism and the role of his work in the cultural program of Hitler's Reich. When we listen to the masses and cantatas of Bach and other classical composers, part of us is uncomfortable because of their Christian doctrinal content and their occasional expressions of hatred for Jews. Can a Jew listen to such works? Perform in them? Can a Jew appreciate paintings that depict Christian iconography? Can we delight in an iconic tradition that portrays us as the demonic murderers of the Man of Sorrows?

These conflicts have no resolution. Perhaps we can suggest a way to think about them.

Our thirst for beauty does not arise from an act of the will, but is instinctual. We incline naturally and automatically toward the beautiful; as Moses Ibn Ezra put it, "With beauty's children only can we live." Only secondarily do we consult our scruples, and then only to the extent that we have trained ourselves to do so and at the cost of a certain artificiality. Many of us are aware from time to time that the beauty we delight in may have been produced at a moral cost; but we put up with a certain amount of inconsistency in this, as we do in other areas of life, finding the balanced life more

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interesting and productive than the life dedicated to a single cause.

The instinct for beauty, like other appetites, varies in its power over different individuals, as does the inclination toward rationality and the sharpness of the moral sensibility. The moral approach to art is threatening to those who create the beautiful, to those who thirst for the discovery and experience that art affords. Such persons can tolerate artistic material that others cannot and are more inclined to overlook the moral failings of artistic genius. They can discuss seriously the meaning of Serrano's *Piss Christ*, while others can only recoil at its blasphemy. Those in whom the craving is less intense or less developed can more easily dispense with art's challenges. They can satisfy their need for beauty with banal hymns to conventional wisdom and bland portrayals of comfortable familiarities, and indulge themselves while railing at the decadence that they perceive in more complex works of art.

But this is not simply polarity, for we are not simply divided into "beauty people" and "morality people". Those of us who are neither artists nor moralists hear the voice of morality in the back of our heads when we attend the theater, read a novel, or go to the movies; sometimes the voice whispers a quick judgment in our ears, sometimes it buzzes insistently, sometimes it shouts so that we have no choice but to yield to it. People differ in how much such background noise they can stand. As in most human affairs that involve moral questions, the product of this variation is indignation, self-righteousness, and a lot of name-calling.

### Liquid Scruples

To compound the annoyance, moral scruples can be cyclical, as when specific issues become fashionable for a time. People who previously displayed little interest in moral questions and perhaps little sensitivity in the general conduct of their lives discover some cause like veal or fur or grapes and embrace it with sudden zeal. Behavior that was normal yesterday becomes a test of character for a season or two, until replaced by some other cause or abandoned. This phenomenon has little to do with morality, more with conformity, but it can rise to the level of politics. It is only dangerous when a moral fashion becomes a single criterion against which all of the activities of life are judged; then everyone has to watch his step, and art is most vulnerable. It can also be amusing to watch different groups embracing conflicting moral causes with equal zeal. Such situations bring intelligent public discourse to a halt, since it becomes almost impossible to say anything without offending someone, or to hear anyone explain his position for all the shouting.

It is easier to be aware of conflicts between the lure of beauty and the demands of morality when they occur in

someone else's culture. Americans tend to be self-righteous about bullfighting, which to Spaniards and Mexicans is an art-form akin to tragedy and as natural and popular as baseball. We Jews tend to be particularly intolerant of it, at the same time excusing ourselves for consuming meat. There is indeed a difference between the reverent slaughtering of an animal and tormenting one to death—from the perspective of the killer; but from the animal's point of view, the difference probably isn't the essential moral issue. Whether it dies for art or appetite, it is dying for the pleasure of humans.

### Living Within The Tension

Self-righteousness is odious. It is better to accept that we are creatures of mixed impulses, children of compromise. The reasonable thing to do is to give each part of our makeup its due, and not even try for consistency. The thought was expressed compactly by Samuel the Nagid in a poem that deals with balancing the life of pleasure and the life of religion, but which may be applied to our problem of balancing beauty and morality:

"To God give half your day, to work the rest; but give the jug no rest throughout the night!"

The ratios fixed in this passage are not necessarily right for everyone; each of us must find the balance that matches his own temperament. Those who finesse the quest by pursuing the extreme of beauty are morally obtuse; those who evade it by pursuing only morality are prigs.

The former never really find beauty, and the latter never really find righteousness. Art serves its purposes best when it is morally complex; and beauty without ambiguity is static and banal. Conversely, morality is meaningful only in a world of conflict; there is no virtue in being righteous when you have neither the opportunity nor the inclination to sin. We might almost conclude that there is only one kind of beauty that really engages us, tests us, refines us and fulfills us, and that is the kind described in the title of this essay: beauty from tainted sources. □

## Sweet waters from a tainted source

Sara Horowitz

Although its pithy aphorisms trip off my tongue, I've had a long-time aversion to *Pirkei Avot*. The co-ed Orthodox day school I attended instituted gender segregated classes in the fifth grade. While the boys pitted themselves

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SARA HOROWITZ teaches Jewish Studies at the University of Delaware and is co-editor of *Kerem, creative explorations in Judaism*.

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against knotty talmudic issues, the girls began a seemingly endless study of the hodge-podge of sayings collected in *Pirkei Avot*. In retrospect, *Avot* came to symbolize for me the exclusion of girls from the study of important Jewish texts.

However, my distaste for *Avot* is even more concretely based, though no less connected to matters of gender. I recollect feeling offended--indeed, profoundly disturbed--by some of what I read.

There we were, a group of 18 or so girls, with our male rabbi teaching us: *Al tarbeh siha im ha-isha*, "Do not prolong conversation with a woman". What did this say about us, about our relationship to our male classmates with whom, side by side, we studied math, literature, social studies and science, but not Torah, Talmud, *dinim* (laws)? How were we to envision our relationship with a future spouse? And how did all this connect with the Americanized ways in which most of our families organized our households?

Our teacher staunchly defended the text, yet there he was on Shabbat chatting with his wife and other couples. Should we devalue the text or our lives?

Some of my classmates simply ignored offending passages and developed an affection for the wise and pithy opinions of the Sages. For others, the unacceptable dictum regarding women's voices became a marker for the irremediability of the text as a whole.

Now girls learn Talmud as a matter of course at most day schools, and women study a plethora of traditional texts. However, one outcome of expanded Jewish education for women is our increased familiarity with central Jewish texts which say problematic things about us. Given the halakhic disenfranchisement of woman and her diminished portrayals, many contemporary Jewish women wonder whether we can at all accept these texts as the distillation of ancestral wisdom and ethical guidance.

### Can Anything Be Salvaged?

A streak of misogyny and its flip-side, philo-gyny, attest to the "outsider" status of women. Many ideas about women and women's sexuality are deeply offensive; moreover, these concepts injure women, because they have real consequences in the world, both in terms of halakhah and in terms of attitudes of Jews towards women. Even at moments when Talmud sees woman as human, she remains largely extraneous to the production of Jewish knowledge.

Recently a Jewish feminist e-mail list was swamped with postings about just this issue--do talmudic views on women so taint the source that we, as women, cannot extract from the sweet, fortifying waters? Many women

thought so. For those of us who love where we come from, who feel nurtured by Jewish ways, this realization comes painfully. Several women rabbis feel that the Talmud reflects the human flaws of its personages and their times, but that one nonetheless senses God's presence behind the text.

Analogous issues crop up frequently in other domains--in literature and philosophy, for example. The disparity between the life lived and the life work of an important thinker or artist troubles admirers--T. S. Eliot's antisemitism, for example, or Robert Frost's unkindness to his wife. Most of us acknowledge that someone can think brilliantly and even ethically, yet may lead a less than perfect life.

But something deeper, even more problematic is at stake in the case of Jewish texts, where not merely some aspect of the Sages' lives, but their very teachings, offend women. This is comparable to contemporary thinkers and writers whose questionable ideology may infuse their lifework, shaping the aesthetic or philosophical system they develop. When foundational thinking emerges out of an ethically problematic matrix, can one find what is "useful", even brilliant, and extract it in some purified form, or does the source taint the extract?

### Tainted Thinker, Tainted Thoughts

The relationship of a thinker's moral character to his thought is no trivial matter. Take the case of literary theorist Paul de Man, for example. Posthumous revelation of de Man's wartime writing for a Belgian Nazi publication led some of his admirers to reassess his work, most notably the reading practice known as deconstruction. De Man was criticized not merely for contributing to an antisemitic publication during the Holocaust. More disturbing still was his silence about these activities during the four decades following the war, when he built a stellar career as a highly esteemed and influential thinker whose work rethought the relationship of readers to language, to texts.

Some of de Man's admirers never lost faith in him; they interpreted his silence about Nazi associations as an ethical stance: a refusal to reason away his responsibility. They saw in deconstruction's unravelling of "totalizing" systems a moral response to fascism. Others found his silence reprehensible, deconstruction's anti-historical tendency, and its assertion of no world beyond text the means by which de Man side-stepped responsibility. For these readers, deconstruction itself was rendered suspect, colored and shaped in its very inception to accommodate de Man's guilty past. Still others deplored de Man's

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wartime writing and the ensuing silence, but respected his insights on texts and reading.

These responses parallel the responses of Jewish women to talmudic misogyny and exclusion: the Talmud's ways are superior to values of modernity; the Talmud is systemically irredeemable; the Talmud codified problematic attitudes, but at the same time brought forth an ethical and God-mindful system of behavior.

### Respond With Love

How does one navigate and adjudicate systems of thought whose foundations contain profoundly unacceptable concepts? Is it a matter of a house with many rooms, some of whose walls were built of inferior materials that need to be dismantled and replaced? Or a house built upon toxic materials--with radioactive nuggets mixed into the foundational cement--which seep into every room?

Perhaps it is a matter of intent. I am convinced that the rabbis embarked on an ethical project, less persuaded that de Man did so. But on what basis do I decide?

Or perhaps it boils down to something as simple and as complicated as love, which makes us countenance a person, a community, a body of texts, or a system of practices, even when flawed. This suggests that one must scrutinize a system of thought or practice, like a life partner, to determine whether it permits one to flourish, to develop in ways which seem desirable.

A project which at heart seems a genuine attempt to evolve an ethics may be refined and redeemed when regarded with honesty. A project which seems largely about power, expedience or exploitation cannot. But the call is difficult, often highly personal. Separating the sweet waters from the tainted is far more precarious and wrenching than separating the holy from the mundane at the end of Shabbat. □

## Endthoughts

### When parents intermarry

Vanessa L. Ochs

I had never found any occasion to discuss my father's marriage to a non-Jew until my Jewish office-mate

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VANESSA OCHS, author of *Safe and Sound: Protecting Your Child in An Unpredictable World* (Penguin) is a Dorot Fellow at CLAL.

happened to mention that his three stepbrothers were named Mario, Carlo and Dino. I countered: "Yeah? My half-sisters are Adrian and Dorian." It turned out that both of our fathers had, in their third marriages, married non-Jewish women; my office-mate's step-siblings are not Jews, and my newest half-siblings are not either, at least according to Conservative and Orthodox practice.

When Jews talk about intermarriage, we are usually talking about our children. We rarely think upward, toward divorced or widowed parents who might intermarry. Why? Because we simply don't expect it to happen? Because we consider it inconsequential, as if having an intact Jewish home matters less when children are grown?

My father's first wife, my mother, and his second wife are traditional Jews from observant families. I would not begin to suggest that the failure of either of these marriages had anything to do with their religion or ethnic background.

Still, after two strikes out, it was tempting to surmise that my father was not meant to have lasting relationships with Jewish women.

### Be Careful What You Wish

Once, some time ago, when my father was visiting, we reviewed his romantic history, considered his current romantic prospects, and looked toward the future. (If you have never had this kind of discussion with a parent, you should know that it is an awkward business and humor helped.) Here was the scorecard: two Jewish wives, two divorces. Now he was dating yet another Jewish lady, but to tell the truth, I imagined that if this romance led to marriage, he would probably end up scoring another divorce.

Jokingly, and, I confess, basing my remarks on the ethnic and professional stereotypes many of us use only in private, I suggested he might be on the look-out for a Gentile woman, perhaps a nurse in his office, a nonsense kind of person who would be charmed by his *luftmensch* qualities, and would still manage, with puritan-sternness, to keep him in line and care for him. For several years, we referred to this imagined savior as "Colleen", as in, "So *nu*, have you met Colleen?"

They say to be careful of what you wish.

Soon enough, I was at my father's third wedding ceremony, a small, dignified affair in a hotel. A justice of the peace presided, and thus, I acquired my first non-Jewish stepmother, a nurse.

Welcome to the world of multiple religions. Look--once your nuclear family shatters, any of the permutations of family life that fall in your lap afterwards feel

pretty much the same. For me, despite my affection for the newly acquired kinfolk, it kind of boils down to: "Who are these people?" At 4 or 40, most children of divorce continue to resent the rupture in normalcy. As far as I'm concerned, it doesn't really matter if your stepmother pulls all-nighters for a week preparing for Passover (as my first stepmother did) or whether she dyes Easter eggs. In my evaluation of stepmothers, only one thing counts: They have to know when it's judicious to say, "Your father really does love you."

### And Then There Were More

I didn't think that this intermarriage would have much consequence for me or my family. We live far, far away, and communicate only sporadically. Did I fear that my father has set a poor example for my own daughters? I would say that if they do or don't marry Jews, it will have very little to do with this one curious branch on a family tree that otherwise represents the many standard varieties of Jewish experience. I have not imagined either daughter ever saying to me, "But Mom, if Grandpa married a non-Jew, why can't I?" Maybe I'd answer, "When you're sixty years old, you can do as you like."

I never imagined that my father and his new wife would give birth to two little girls, substantially younger than my own children, who would become my non-Jewish half-sisters. Who imagined my father would, in his sixth decade, increase and multiply like a Patriarch? Had I considered this, would I have dreamed up "Colleen"?

I'm told the little girls go to synagogue with my father on Friday night, to church with their mother on Sunday. They help prepare for the Seder and anticipate Christmas. While I'm generally not too keen on the "raise the children in both religious traditions and then, when they're older, they can choose" approach to child-rearing in an intermarried family, my father's situation does seem to make this solution preferable. His wife is a *frum* Christian, and he is a proud and learned Jew who is still thrilled when he is asked to be a *shaliach tzibur* or is invited to sing *klezmer*-style songs. Neither has any intention of relinquishing heritage for the sake of a more homogeneous childhood experience.

### Partly, A Jewish Home

I think my father keeps expecting me to suggest he convert the girls to Judaism. (I also think he expects me to lay a "guilt trip", but that's not my style.) Perhaps if the girls were on the verge of marriage to a Conservative or Orthodox fellow, I would suggest conversion, or if they were about to make *aliyah*. I know stranger things have happened, but would either of these situations come

## Ta sh'ma

We invite you to send us your favorite text and comment. Submissions should not exceed 200 words. Be sure to include proper citation of sources. Hebrew will appear in transliteration.

**David L. Sieradzki**

*"Titen emet l'Yaacov, hesed l'Avraham, asher nishbata l'avoteinu mi'yimei kedem."*

"You will give truth to Jacob, lovingkindness to Abraham, as you promised to our forefathers from days of old."

MICAH 7:20

Many translators have rendered this as "You will be truthful (or faithful) to Jacob, merciful to Abraham." I prefer to see it as expressing our hope and confidence that God will supply us with our missing attributes.

Each of us lacks some critical qualities and virtues. Jacob was great in many ways, but he had a hard time with *emet*, truth. Similarly, Abraham was a paragon of faith and courage, but in the stories of the exile of Hagar and Ishmael and the binding of Isaac, he displays a troubling lack of *hesed*, lovingkindness.

Micah prophesies that God will supply Abraham and Jacob with their missing attributes. Similarly, we can hope and pray that God will supply each of us with the virtues that we lack. This sentence in Micah, as well as the quotation from it as it appears in the liturgy, is linked closely with descriptions of *teshuvah*, repentance, and the messianic era. As we do our limited best to do *teshuvah* and return to God, God will provide us with the personal qualities we need but lack, and then the world will truly be transformed.

DAVID SIERADZKI lives in Silver Spring, MD and attends Tifereth Israel Congregation in Washington, DC. He works as an attorney at a federal agency.

to pass? Who knows? Only one thing seems more or less certain. My father's third wife, who is my age, will most probably find herself raising the children alone some day. From this perspective, it has seemed to me that these little girls will fare better if they identify strongly with the religion of their mother and the religious community that embraces her. As you can see, perhaps I don't have the appropriate missionary zeal. Perhaps I recognize these

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little girls have a pretty complicated lot that needn't be made more complicated.

What, then, are the consequences of parents intermarrying? I am not recommending it, but I'd have to honestly say that in my father's case, the Jewish community has not lost out, if that is a significant measure. At his wife's church and in interfaith settings, my father is now continually offering presentations on Jewish belief and practice; his wife offers the synagogue childcare during the High Holidays services. And two little girls are learning household Yiddish and the standard blessings of a Jewish childhood from a man who quickly realized that if he doesn't take a more hands-on approach to Jewish fathering, he will have so much less in common with these children. □

## But others say about...

### Baruch Goldstein And The Shamgar Report

For an essay entitled "One Year Later: Reflections on the Incident at Hebron" (*Sh'ma* 25/487), Aaron L. Reichel devoted surprisingly little attention to last year's Hebron tragedy, instead quickly proceeding to lionize Meir Kahane.

So briefly did Reichel address Hebron that a reader could easily miss his assertion that Goldstein's was "...one man's preemptive attack on the precise day of the scheduled re-massacre of Jews by Arabs, according to the Israeli government's own almost universally ignored (in this respect) Shamgar Report!"

In truth, the Shamgar Commission Report on the official investigation of what happened states no such thing. To affirm this point, Israeli Justice Ministry Spokesperson Ety Eshed wrote me in December that although the report acknowledged there had been concern about an attack by Arabs against Jews, nothing in the report can be interpreted to verify the claim that Goldstein acted to forestall a massacre, and that such an assertion is "pure speculation".

The letter continues:

"...More specifically, it is *not* stated anywhere in the Commission's Report that it was in any way proven that

Goldstein carried out his actions in an effort to forestall a similar massacre of Jews on the part of the Hamas...." Eshed concludes that the Justice Ministry regrets "...irresponsible attempts of this kind to misrepresent the findings of the Shamgar Commission."

Alas for embracers of the myth, it simply isn't based on verifiable fact. Goldstein's actual motivations are unknowable. The deed itself was no more heroic than the terrorist attacks of the suicide bombers. The very best that can be said is that, in the end, he was a highly flawed figure, and that his violence was a sick act.

Reichel will believe what he chooses. However, it ill behooves a rabbi and lawyer to propagate an immoral myth which, ultimately, can only serve to rationalize the mass murder of people at prayer. We Jews know all too well the barbarity that can result from such rationalizations.

Gene Burger  
Project Nishma, Washington, DC

### On The Eclipse Of Jewish Men

I was puzzled and angered to read the article by Rabbi Clifford E. Librach (*Sh'ma* 25/486). I share Rabbi Librach's dismay at the exodus of many men from Jewish religious life. (I am equally saddened by the departure of many women from the Jewish community.) However, I was shocked to see that he seems to attribute this phenomenon to "the continuous attacks by a generation of feminist critics upon traditional Judaism and its male domination". This simplistic and reductive argument ignores a great many factors which cause Jews of both genders to leave Jewish life.

Rabbi Librach argues that the participation of women in Jewish communal and religious life is diminished by the departure of men who feel threatened by our presence. As the female vice-president of a Conservative synagogue with a female president, I suppose that I am one of those about whom he writes when he says, "For women in synagogue life, the glass ceiling has been shattered only to discover that there is no one upstairs."

Rabbi Librach, there is someone upstairs. Women like me are upstairs, sharing the space with men whose egos are not too frail to enjoy Jewish privileges and responsibilities with us.

Ruth Bienstock Anolik  
Penn Valley, PA

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# Sh'ma

99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300  
New York, NY 10016-1599

19951110\*510264  
Harry & Ruth Cronson  
1 Fulton Road  
Lexington, MA 02173-2317

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