

Rupture and Reconstruction

The Transformation of Contemporary

Orthodoxy

This essay is an attempt to understand the developments that have occurred within my lifetime in the community in which I live. The orthodoxy in which I and other people my age were raised scarcely exists anymore. This change is often described as “the swing to the Right.” In one sense, this is an accurate description. Many practices, especially the new rigor in religious observance now current among the younger Modern Orthodox community, did indeed originate in what is called “the Right.” Yet in another sense, the description seems a misnomer. A generation ago, two things primarily separated Modern Orthodoxy from what was then called ultra-Orthodoxy, or the Right: first, the attitude to Western culture, that is, secular education; second, the relation to political nationalism, that is Zionism and the State of Israel. Little, however, has changed in these areas. Modern Orthodoxy still attends college, albeit with somewhat less enthusiasm than before, and is more strongly Zionist than ever. The ultra-Orthodox, or what is now called the *haredi*¹ camp is still opposed to higher secular education, though the form that the opposition now takes has local nuance. In Israel the opposition remains total; in America the utility, even the necessity of a college degree is conceded by most, and various arrangements are made to enable many *haredi* youths to obtain it. However, the value of a secular education, of Western culture generally, is still denigrated. And the *haredi* camp remains strongly anti-Zionist, at the very least, emotionally distant and unidentified with the Zionist enterprise. The ideological differences over the posture toward modernity remain on the whole unabated—in theory certainly, in practice generally. Yet so much *has* changed, and irreducibly so. Most of the fundamental changes, however, have been across the board. What had been a stringency peculiar to the Right in 1960, a

“Lakewood or Bnei Brak *humra*,” as—to take an example that we shall later discuss—*shiurim* (minimal requisite quantities) had become, in the 1990s, a widespread practice in modern Orthodox circles, and among its younger members, an axiomatic one. The phenomena were, indeed, most advanced among the *haredim* and were to be found there in a more intensive form. However, most of these developments swiftly manifested themselves among their co-religionists to their left. The time gap between developments in the *haredi* world and the emerging modern Orthodox one was some fifteen years, at most.

It seemed to me that what had changed radically was the very texture of religious life and the entire religious atmosphere. Put differently, the *nature* of contemporary spirituality has undergone a transformation; the ground of religiosity had altered far more than the ideological positions adopted thereon. It further appeared that this change could best be studied in the *haredi* camp, for there it takes its swiftest and most intense form. With this in mind, I read widely in the literature of the *haredim*, listened to their burgeoning cassette literature, and spent more time than was my wont in their neighborhoods. I tried my best to understand what they were doing in their terms and what it meant in mine. And the more I studied them, the more I became convinced that I was, indeed, studying myself and my own community. I uncovered no new facts about them or us but thought that I did perceive some pattern to the well-known ones. As all these facts are familiar to my readers, the value of my interpretation depends entirely on the degree of persuasive correspondence that they find between my characterizations and their own experiences.

If I were asked to characterize in a phrase the change that religious Jewry has undergone in the past generation, I would say that it was the new and controlling role that texts now play in contemporary religious life. And in saying that, I open myself to an obvious question: What is new in this role? Has not traditional Jewish society always been regulated by the the normative written word, the Halakhah? Have not scholars, for well over a millennium, pored over the Talmud and its codes to provide Jews with guidance in their daily round of observances? Is not Jewish religiosity proudly legalistic, and isn't exegesis its classic mode of expression? Was not “their portable homeland,” their indwelling in their sacred texts, what sustained the Jewish people throughout its long exile?

The answer is, of course, yes. However, as the Halakhah is a sweepingly comprehensive regula of daily life—covering not only prayer and divine service but equally food, drink, dress, sexual relations between man and wife, the rhythms of work and patterns of rest—it constitutes a way of life. And a way of life is not learned but rather absorbed. Its transmission is mimetic, imbibed from parents and friends, and patterned on conduct regularly observed in home and street, synagogue and school.

Did these mimetic norms—the culturally prescriptive—conform with the legal ones? The answer is, at times, yes; at times no. And the significance of the no may

best be brought home by an example with which all are familiar—the kosher kitchen, with its rigid separation of milk and meat—separate dishes, sinks, dish racks, towels, tablecloths, even separate cupboards. Actually little of this has a basis in Halakhah. Strictly speaking, there is no need for separate sinks, for separate dish towels or cupboards. In fact, if the food is served cold, there is no need for separate dishware altogether. The simple fact is that the traditional Jewish kitchen, transmitted from mother to daughter over generations, has been immeasurably and unrecognizably amplified beyond all halakhic requirements. Its classic contours are the product not of legal exegesis, but of the housewife's religious intuition imparted in kitchen apprenticeship.

An augmented tradition is one thing, a diminished one another. So the question arises: did this mimetic tradition have an acknowledged position even when it went against the written law? I say “acknowledged” because the question is not simply whether it continued in practice (though this too is of significance) but whether it was accepted as legitimate? Was it even formally legitimized? Often yes; and, once again, a concrete example best brings the matter home. There is an injunction against *borer*—sorting or separating on Sabbath. And we indeed do refrain from sorting clothes, not to speak of separating actual wheat from chaff. However, we do eat fish, and in eating fish we must, if we are not to choke, separate the bones from the meat. Yet in so doing we are separating the chaff (bones) from the wheat (meat). The upshot is that all Jews who ate fish on Sabbath (and Jews have been eating fish on Sabbath for at least some two thousand years)² have violated the Sabbath. This seems absurd, but the truth of the matter is that it is very difficult to provide a cogent justification for separating bones from fish. In the late nineteenth century a scholar took up this problem and gave some very unpersuasive answers.³ It is difficult to imagine he was unaware of their inadequacies. Rather his underlying assumption was that it *was* permissible. There must be *some* valid explanation for the practice, if not necessarily his. Otherwise hundreds of thousands, perhaps, millions of well-intending, observant Jews had inconceivably been desecrating the Sabbath for some twenty centuries. His attitude was neither unique nor novel. A similar disposition informs the multivolumed *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, the late-nineteenth-century reformulation of the *Shulhan Arukh*.⁴ Indeed, this was the classic Ashkenazic position for centuries, one which saw the practice of the people as an expression of halakhic truth. It is no exaggeration to say that the Ashkenazic community saw the law as manifesting itself in two forms: in the canonized written corpus (the Talmud and codes), and in the regnant practices of the people. Custom was a correlative datum of the halakhic system. And, on frequent occasions, the written word was reread in light of traditional behavior.⁵

This dual tradition of the intellectual and the mimetic, law as taught and law as practiced, which stretched back for centuries, begins to break down in the twilight years of the author of the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The change is strikingly attested to in the famous code of the next generation, the *Mishnah Berurah*.⁶ This influential work reflects no such reflexive

justification of established religious practice, which is to say that it condemns received practice. Its author, the Hafetz Hayyim, was hardly a revolutionary. His instincts were conservative and strongly inclined him toward some post facto justification. The difference between his posture and that of his predecessor, the author of the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, is that he surveys the entire literature and then shows that the practice is plausibly justifiable in terms of that literature. His interpretations, while not necessarily persuasive, always stay within the bounds of the reasonable. And the legal coordinates upon which the *Mishnah Berurah* plots the issue are the written literature and the written literature alone.⁷ With sufficient erudition and inclination, received practice can almost invariably be charted on these axes, but it is no longer inherently valid. It can stand on its own no more.

Common practice in the *Mishnah Berurah* has lost its independent status and needs to be squared with the written word. Nevertheless, the practices there evaluated are what someone writing a commentary upon *Shulham Arukh* would normally remark on. General practice as such is not under scrutiny or investigation in the *Mishnah Berurah*. It is very much so in the religious community of today.

One of the most striking phenomena of the contemporary community is the explosion of halakhic works on practical observance. I do not refer to the stream of works on Sabbath laws, as these can be explained simply as attempts to determine the status, that is to say, the permissibility of use, of many new artifacts of modern technology, similar to the spate of recent works on definition of death and the status of organ transplants. Nor do I have in mind the halakhic questions raised by the endless proffer of new goods in an affluent society. I refer rather to the publications on *tallit* and *tefillin*, works on the daily round of prayers and blessings in synagogue and home, tomes on High Holiday and Passover observance, books and pamphlets on every imaginable topic. The vast halakhic corpus is being scoured, new doctrines discovered and elicited, old ones given new prominence, and the results collated and published. Abruptly and within a generation, a rich literature of religious observance has been created, and—this should be underscored—it focuses on performances Jews have engaged in and articles they have used for thousands of years.⁸ These books, moreover, are avidly purchased and on a mass scale; sales are in the thousands, occasionally in the tens of thousands. It would be surprising if such popularity did not indicate some degree of adoption. Intellectual curiosity per se is rarely that widespread. Much of the traditional religious practice has been undergoing massive reevaluation and by popular demand or, at the very least, by unsolicited popular consent. In Bnei Brak and in Borough Park and to a lesser, but still very real extent, in Kiryat Shmuel and Teaneck, religious observance is being both amplified and raised to new, rigorous heights.

Significantly, this massive, critical audit did not emerge from the ranks of the left or centrist Orthodoxy, some of whose predecessors might have justly been suspect of religious laxity,⁹ but from the inner sanctum of the *haredi* world, from the ranks of the Kolel Hazon Ish and the Lakewood Yeshivah. It issued forth

from men whose teachers and parents were beyond any suspicion of ritual negligence or causalness. Moreover, it scarcely focused on areas where remissness had been common, even on the left. Indeed, its earliest manifestations were in spheres of religious performance where there had been universal compliance. The audit, rather, has encompassed all aspects of religious life, and its conclusions have left little untouched. The best example and also one of the earliest ones, is *shiurim* (minimal requisite quantities). On Pesach evening one is obliged to a minimal amount of *matzah*—a quantity equal to the size of an olive. Jews have been practicing the Seder for thousands of years, and no one paid very much attention to what that *shiur* was. One knew it automatically, for one had seen it eaten at one's parents' table innumerable Passover eves; one simply did as one's parents had done. Around the year 1940, R. Yeshayahu Karelitz, the *Hazon Ish*, published an essay in which he vigorously questioned whether scholars had not, in effect, seriously underestimated the size of an olive in talmudic times. He then insisted on a minimal standard about twice the size of the commonly accepted one.¹⁰ Within a decade his doctrine began to seep down into popular practice and by now has become almost *de rigeur* in religious, certainly younger religious circles.¹¹

This development takes on significance when placed in historical perspective. The problem of “minimal requisite quantities” (*shiurim*) has been known since the mid-eighteenth century, when scholars in both Central and Eastern Europe discovered that the *shiurim* commonly employed with regard to solid food did not square with the liquid-volume *shiurim* that we know in other aspects of Jewish law. The ineluctable conclusion was that the standard requisite quantity of solid food consumption should be roughly doubled. Though the men who raised this issue, the GRA and the Noda Beyehuda,¹² were some of the most famous Talmudists of the modern era, whose works are, to this day, staples of rabbinic study, nevertheless, their words fell on deaf ears and were without any impact, even in the most scholarly and religiously meticulous circles.¹³ It was perfectly clear to all concerned that Jews had been eating *matzot* for thousands of years and that no textual analysis could affect in any way a millennia-old tradition. The problem was theoretically interesting but practically irrelevant.

And then a dramatic shift occurs. A theoretical position that had been around for close to two centuries suddenly begins, in the 1950s, to assume practical significance and within a decade becomes authoritative. From then on, traditional conduct, no matter how venerable, how elementary, or how closely remembered, yields to the demands of theoretical knowledge. Established practice can no longer hold its own against the demands of the written word.

Significantly, this loss by the home of its standing as religious authenticator has taken place not simply among the modern Orthodox, but first, indeed foremost, among the *haredim* and in their innermost recess—the home. The zealously sheltered hearth of the *haredi* world can no longer validate religious practice. The authenticity of tradition is now in question in the ultra-Orthodox world itself.

This development is related to the salient events of Ashkenazic Jewish history of the past century.¹⁴ In the multiethnic corporate states of Central and Eastern Europe, nationalities lived for hundreds of years side by side, each with its own language, its own religion, its way of dress and diet. Living together, these groups had much in common, yet at the same time they remained distinctly apart. Each had its own way of life, its own code of conduct, which was transmitted formally in school, informally in the home and street—these are the acculturating agencies, each complementing and reinforcing one another. Equally significant, each way of life seemed inevitable to its members. Crossing over, while theoretically possible, was inconceivable, especially when it entailed a change of religion.

These societies were traditional, taking their values and code of conduct as a given, acting unself-consciously, unaware that life could be lived differently. This is best epitomized in the title of one of the four units of the *Shulhan Arukh*. The one treating religious law is called *Orah Hayyim* (The Way of Life). And aptly so. In the enclaves of Eastern Europe, going to *shul* (synagogue) in the morning, putting on a *tallit katan* (fringed garment), and wearing *pe'ot* (sidelocks) were for centuries the way of life of the Jew. These acts were done with the same naturalness and sense of inevitability as we experience in putting on those two strange Western garments, socks and ties. Clothes are a second skin.

The old ways came, in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early ones of the twentieth, under the successive ideological assaults of the Socialist and Communist movements and that of Zionism. In the cities there was the added struggle with secularism, all the more acute as the ground there had been eroded over the previous half century by a growing movement of Enlightenment. The defections, especially in urban areas, were massive; traditional life was severely shaken, though not shattered. How much of this life would have emerged unaltered from the emergent movements of modernity in Eastern Europe, we shall never know, as the Holocaust, among other things, wrote *finis* to a culture. There was, however, little chance that the old ways would be preserved by the “surviving remnant,” the relatives and neighbors of those who perished, who earlier had embarked for America and Israel. These massive waves of migration had wrenched these people suddenly from a familiar life and an accustomed environment and thrust them into a strange country where even stranger manners prevailed. Simple conformity to a habitual pattern could not be adequate, for the problems of life were now new and different.¹⁵ What was left of traditional Jewry regrouped in two camps: those who partially acculturated to the society that enveloped them and those who decisively turned their back on it, whom we, for lack of a better term, have called *haredim*. They, of course, would define themselves simply as Jews—Jews resolutely upholding the ways of their fathers.

They are that indeed. Resolve, however, is possible only in a choice, and ways of life that are upheld are no longer a given. Borough Park and Bnei Brak, not to speak of Riverdale and Teaneck, while demographically far larger than any shtetl,

are, as we shall see, enclaves rather than cultures. Alternatives now exist, and adherence is voluntary. A traditional society has been transformed into an orthodox one,¹⁶ and religious conduct is less the product of social custom than of conscious, reflective behavior. If the *tallit katan* is worn not as a matter of course, but as a matter of belief, it has then become a ritual object. A ritual can no more be approximated than an incantation can be summarized. Its essence lies in its accuracy. It is that accuracy that religious Jews are now seeking. The flood of works on halakhic prerequisites and correct religious performance accurately reflects the ritualization of what had previously been routine acts and everyday objects. It mirrors the ritualization of what had been once simply components of the given world and parts of the repertoire of daily living. A way of life has become a *regula*, and behavior, once governed by habit, is now governed by rule.

If accuracy is now sought, indeed deemed critical, it can be found only in texts. For in the realm of religious practice (*issur veheter*), custom, no matter how long-standing and vividly remembered, has little standing over and against the normative written word. To be sure, custom may impose an added stringency, but when otherwise at variance with generally agreed interpretation of the written law, almost invariably it must yield.¹⁷ Custom *is* potent, but its true power is informal. It derives from the ability of habit to neutralize the implications of book knowledge. Anything learned from study that conflicts with accustomed practice cannot really be right, as things simply can't be different than they are.¹⁸ Once that inconceivability is lost, usage loses much of its force. Even undiminished, usage would be hard pressed to answer the new questions being asked. For habit is unthinking and takes little notice of detail. (How many people could, for example, answer accurately: "How many inches wide is your tie or belt?") When interrogated, habit replies in approximations, a matter of discredit in the new religious atmosphere.

There is currently a very strong tendency in both lay and rabbinic circles towards stringency (*humra*).¹⁹ No doubt this inclination is partly due to any group's need for self-differentiation, nor would I gainsay the existence of religious one-upmanship. It would be unwise, however, to view this development simply as a posture towards outsiders. The development is also immanent. Habit is static; theoretical knowledge is dynamic and consequential, as ideas naturally tend to press forward to their full logical conclusions. "Only the extremes are logical" remarked Samuel Butler, "but they are absurd." No doubt. What is logical, however, is more readily agreed upon than what is absurd. When the mean is perceived as unconscionable compromise, the extreme may appear eminently reasonable.

It is one thing to fine-tune an existing practice on the basis of "newly" read books; it is wholly another to construct practice on the basis of books. One confronts in Jewish law, as in any other legal system, a wide variety of differing positions on any given issue. If one seeks to do things properly (and these "things" are, after all, God's will), the only course is to attempt to comply simultaneously with as many opinions as possible. Otherwise one risks invalidation; hence the policy

of “maximum position compliance,” so characteristic of contemporary jurisprudence, which in turn leads to yet further stringency.

This reconstruction of practice is further complicated by the ingrained limitations of language. Words are good for description, even better for analysis, but pathetically inadequate for teaching how to do something. (Try learning, for example, how to tie shoelaces from written instructions.) One learns best by being shown, that is to say, mimetically. When conduct *is* learned from texts, conflicting views about its performance proliferate, and the simplest gesture becomes acutely complicated.²⁰

Fundamentally, all the above—stringency, “maximum position compliance,” and the proliferation of complications and demands—simply reflect the essential change of the nature of religious performance that occurs in a text culture. Books cannot demonstrate conduct; they can only state its requirements. One then seeks to act in a way that meets those demands.²¹ Performance is no longer, as in a traditional society, replication of what one has seen, but implementation of what one knows. Seeking to mirror the norm, religious observance is subordinated to it. In a text culture, behavior becomes, inevitably, a function of the ideas it consciously seeks to realize.

No longer independent, religious performance loses, then, its inherited, fixed character. Indeed, during the transitional period (and for some time after), there is a destabilization of practice, as the traditional inventory of religious objects and repertoire of religious acts are weighed and progressively found wanting. For many of those raised in the old order, the result is baffling, at times infuriating, as they discover that habits of a lifetime no longer suffice. Increasingly, they sense that their religious past, not to speak of that of their parents and teachers, is being implicitly challenged and, on occasion, not just implicitly.²² But for most, both for the natives of the emergent text culture and its naturalized citizens alike, the vision of perfect accord between precept and practice beckons to a brave new world. And as ideas are dynamic and consequential, that vision beckons also to an expanding world and of unprecedented consistency. The eager agenda of the religious community has, understandably, now become the translation of the ever increasing knowledge of the Divine norm into the practice of the Divine service.

So large an endeavor and so ambitious an aspiration are never without implications.²³ Translation entails, first, grasping an idea in its manifold fullness and then executing it in practice. This gives rise to a performative spirituality, not unlike that of the arts, with all its unabating tension. What is at stake here, however, is not fidelity to some personal vision, but to what is perceived as the Divine Will. Though the intensity of the strain may differ between religion and art, the nature of the tension is the same, for it springs from the same limitations in human comprehension and implementation. Knowledge rarely yields finality. Initially, thought does indeed narrow the range of interpretation by detecting weaknesses in apparent options, but almost invariably, it ends with presenting the inquirer with a number of equally possible understandings, each making a comparable claim to

fidelity. Performance, however, demands choice, insistent and continuous. Whatever the decisions, their implementation is then beset by the haunting disparity between vision and realization, reach and grasp.

A tireless quest for absolute accuracy, for “perfect fit”—faultless congruence between conception and performance—is the hallmark of contemporary religiosity. The search is dedicated and unremitting; yet it invariably falls short of success. For spiritual life is an attempt, as a great pianist once put it, to play music that is better than it can be played. Such an endeavor may finally become so heavy with strain that it can no longer take wing, or people may simply weary of repeated failure, no matter how inspired. The eager toil of one age usually appears futile to the next, and the performative aspiration, so widespread now, may soon give way to one of a wholly different kind, even accompanied by the derision that so often attends the discarding of an ideal. Yet this Sisyphian spirituality will never wholly disappear, for there will always be those who hear the written notes and who find in absolute fidelity the most sublime freedom.

In all probability, so arduous an enterprise would not have taken so wide a hold had it not also answered some profound need. “The spirit blows where it listeth” is often true of individuals, rarely of groups. The process we have described began roughly in the mid-1950s,²⁴ gathered force noticeably in the next decade, and by the mid-1970s was well on its way to being, if it had not already become, the dominant mode of religiosity. The shift of authority to text, though born of migration, did not then occur among the immigrants themselves but among their children or their children’s children.²⁵ This is true even of the post-Holocaust immigration. *Haredi* communities had received a small, but significant, infusion after World War II, which had strengthened their numbers and steeled their resolution. Unlike their predecessors, these newcomers came not as immigrants but as refugees, not seeking a new world but fleeing from a suddenly beleaguered old one. And they came in groups rather than individually.²⁶ However, equally unlike their predecessors, they did not hail from the self-contained shtetl or the culturally isolated ghettos of Poland and the Pale. Few from those territories escaped the Holocaust. These refugees came from the more urbanized areas of Central Europe, especially Hungary, and their arrival in America was not their first encounter with the contemporary world.²⁷ The rise of the text culture occurred only after a sustained exposure to modernity, in homes some twice removed from the shtetl.

This exposure finally made itself felt, as the century passed its halfway mark, not in willful accommodation, God forbid, but in unconscious acculturation, as large (though, not all)²⁸ segments of the *haredi* enclave, not to speak of modern Orthodoxy, increasingly adopted the consumer culture and its implicit values, above all the legitimacy of pursuing material gratification.²⁹ Much of the *haredi* community took on an increasingly middle-class lifestyle. The frumpy dress of women generally disappeared, as did their patently artificial wigs. Married women continued, of course, to cover their hair, as tradition demanded, but the

wigs were now fashionably elegant, as were also their dresses, which were, to be sure, appropriately modest but now attractively so. Elegant boutiques flourished in Borough Park. Ethnic food gave way to culinary pluralism, and French, Italian, Oriental, and Far Eastern restaurants blossomed under the strictest rabbinic supervision. Dining out, once reserved for special occasions, became common. Rock music sung with “kosher” lyrics was heard at the weddings of the most religious.³⁰ There had been no kosher jazz or kosher swing, for music is evocative, and what was elicited by the contemporary beat was felt by the previous generation to be alien to a “Jewish rejoicing” (*yidische simche*). This was no longer the case. The body syncopated to the beat of rock, and the emotional receptivities that the contemporary rhythm engendered were now felt to be consonant with the spirit of Jewish rejoicing. Indeed, “Hasidic rock concerts,” though decried, were not unheard of. The extended family of the old country (*mishpokhe*) gave way considerably to the nuclear one. Personal gratification, here and now, and individual attainment became increasingly accepted values. Family lineage (*yikhes*) still played an important role in marriage and communal affairs, but personal career achievement increasingly played an equal, if not a greater one. Divorce, once rare in religious circles, became all too familiar. The divorce rate, of course, was far lower than that of the surrounding society, but the numbers were believed to be sufficiently large and the phenomenon sufficiently new to cause consternation.³¹

Even the accomplishments of Orthodoxy had their untoward consequences. The smooth incorporation of religious practice into a middle-class lifestyle meant that observance now differentiated less. Apart from their formal requirements, religious observances also engender ways of living. Eating only kosher food, for example, precludes going out to lunch, vacationing where one wishes, and dining out regularly as a form of entertainment. The proliferation of kosher eateries and the availability of literally thousands of kosher products in the consumer market,³² opened the way to such pursuits, so the religious way of life became, in one more regard, less distinguishable from that of others. The facilitation of religious practice that occurred in every aspect of daily life was a tribute to the adaptability of the religious and to their new mastery of their environment; it also diminished some of the millennia-old impact of observance.

Not only did the same amount of practice now yield a smaller sum of difference, but the amount of practice itself was also far less than before. A mimetic tradition mirrors rather than discriminates. Without criteria by which to evaluate practice, it cannot generally distinguish between central and peripheral, or even between religious demands and folkways. And the last two tended to be deeply intertwined in Eastern Europe, as ritual, which was seen to have a physical efficacy, was mobilized to ward off the threatening forces that stalked man's every step in a world precariously balanced between the powers of good and evil (*sitra ahara*). The rituals of defense, drawn from the most diverse sources, were religiously inflected, for the Jew knew that what lay in wait for him was not goblins, as the peasant thought, but *shedim*, and that these agents of the *sitra-ahara* could be

defeated only by the proven weapons of traditional lore. Prophylactic ritual flourished as it served the roles of both religion and science. Its rites were thoroughly intertwined with the normative ones and, to most, indistinguishable from one another. Joined in the struggle for health, for example, were amulets, blessings, incantations, and prayers.³³ In the world now inhabited by religious Jewry, however, the material environment has been controlled by a neutral technology and an animistic, value-driven cosmos replaced by a mechanistic and indifferent one. Modernity has thus defoliated most of these practices and stripped the remaining ones of their signifi- cance. People still gather on the eve of circumcision but as an occasion of rejoicing, not as a nightwatch (*wachnacht*) to forestall the forces of evil from spiriting away the infant.³⁴ A Jewish hospital differs from a Catholic one in the symbols on its walls and in the personal religion of its staff but not in any way in the procedures of health care. As religion ceased to be called upon to control directly the natural world, many vital areas of activity lost their religious coloration and, with it, their differentiating force.

It would be strange, indeed, if this diminution of otherness did not evoke some response in the religious world. They were “a nation apart,” and had lived and died for that apartness. Their deepest instincts called for difference, and those instincts were not to be denied. Problems of meaningful survival were not new to religious Jews, and they were not long in evolving the following response:

If customary observances differentiated less, more observances were obviously called for. Indeed, they always had been called for, as the normative texts clearly show, but those calls had gone unheeded because of the power of habit and the heavy hand of custom. The inner differences of pulse and palate may well have been leveled, and the distinctive Jewish ideals of appearance and attractiveness may equally have been lost. This was deplorable, and indeed our religious leaders had long railed against the growing pursuit of happiness.³⁵ But small wonder, for people had failed to take stock in the New World. They had turned to habit and folklore for guidance rather than to study, and despite the best of intentions, their observances had been fractional. Even that fraction had been less than it seemed, for superstition had been confused with the law and on occasion had even supplanted it. Religious life must be constructed anew and according to the groundplan embedded in the canonized literature and in that literature alone. While this reconstruction was going on, the struggle for the inner recesses of the believer would continue as before, only now it would be bolstered by the intensification of religious practice. And there was hope for the outcome, for our moralists (*hakhmei ha-mussar*) had always insisted that “the outer affects the inner,” that constantly repeated deeds finally affect the personality. As for the so-called stringency, some of it was simply a misperception based on the casual attitude of the past, much only legal prudence. As for the remainder—if there was one—that too was for the good, for there could not be too much observance when dwelling amid the fleshpots of Egypt.

An outside spectator, on the other hand, might have said that as large spheres of human activity were emptied of religious meaning and difference, an intensifi-

cation of that difference in the remaining ones was only natural. Moreover, the more pervasive the influence of the milieu, the more natural the need of a chosen people to reassert its distinctiveness and to mark ever more sharply its identity borders. As the inner differences erode, the outer ones must be increased and intensified, for, progressively, they provide more and more of the crucial otherness. In addition, the more stable and comprehensive the code of conduct, the less psychologically threatening are the subtler inroads of the environment. The narrowing of the cultural divide has thrust a double burden on religious observance, as ritual must now do on its own what ritual joined with ethnicity had done before. Religious practice, that spectator might have added, had always served to separate Jews from their neighbors; however, it had not borne alone that burden. It was now being called on to do so, for little else distinguished Jew from Gentile, or the religious Jew from the nonreligious, for that matter.

But then, there always is a dissimilarity between what is obvious to the participant and what is clear to the observer.

Both participant and observer, however, would have agreed that it was the mooring of religion in sacred texts that enabled this reassertion of Orthodoxy's difference. And for those who sought to be different and had something about which to be genuinely different,³⁶ the 1960s in America were good years, as were the decades that followed. The establishment lost much of its social and cultural authority.³⁷ Anglo-conformance now appeared far more a demeaning affectation than part of the civilizing process by which the lower orders slowly adopt the refinements of their betters. The "melting pot" now seemed a ploy of cultural hegemony and was out; difference, even a defiant heterogeneity, was in. Not only in, but often it even told in Orthodoxy's favor. The repugnance in many quarters with the emergent permissive society stood the religious community's difference in good stead, and Orthodoxy's dissent from contemporaneity gained stature from the widespread disenchantment with modernity and with the culture that had brought it to pass.³⁸

Not that the collapse of the WASP hegemony led to Orthodoxy's resurgence; rather, the new climate of inclusion reduced the social and psychological costs of distinctiveness; and in the new atmosphere, the choices of their parents seemed ever more problematic. What had appeared, at the time, as reasonable adjustments, now appeared as superfluous ones, some verging even on compromise.³⁹ This only strengthened the new generation's quiet resolve that in the future things would be different, which, together with a respectful silence and a slightly bemused deference, often accompanies the changing of the guard in a traditional society or in one that still takes its reverence seriously. To the children and grandchildren of the uprooted, the mandate was clear; indeed, it had been long prefigured. Judaism had to return now, after the exile from Eastern Europe and its destruction, as it had returned once before, after the Exile and destruction of the Second Temple, to its foundational texts, to an indwelling in what the Talmud had termed "the four cubits of the Halakhah."⁴⁰

As separate as religious Jews may feel themselves to be from their irreligious and assimilated brethren and as different as they may be from them in many of their ways, nevertheless, they are historically part of the larger American Jewish community, and their reassertion of difference was one facet of that community's wider response to the conjunction of third-generation acculturation with the civil rights movement and with the decline of the WASP ascendancy. The rapid emergence of the text culture in the late 1960s and 1970s and its current triumph should be viewed alongside two parallel developments; the sudden centrality, almost cult, of the Holocaust, an event that had prior to the 1960s been notable by its absence in American Jewish consciousness,⁴¹ and the dramatic rise in intermarriage that occurred in these same years. Intermarriage, which, until the mid-1950s, had been extraordinarily low and stable for close to a half century (4–6%), quadrupled in a dozen years (1968) to some 23 percent, and within the next two decades approached, if it did not pass, the 50 percent mark.⁴²

Most of the children of the immigrants had decisively turned their backs on the old ways of their parents. Many had even attended faithfully the chapel of Acceptance, over whose portals they saw inscribed *Incognito Ergo Sum*, and which, like most mottoes, was both a summons and a promise.⁴³ Whether that promise was more real than illusory may never be entirely known, for only rarely could the summons be fully met. Most Jews had imbibed from their immigrant parents' home far too many culturally distinctive characteristics for them to be indistinguishable from the rest, not to speak of being joined with other ethnic groups in so intimate an enterprise as marriage. For the second generation, this sense of otherness was reinforced by the social and career exclusions they experienced at home and the growing crescendo of persecutions they witnessed abroad.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, however, otherness collapsed from both within and without. A third generation, raised in American homes, came of age just at the time when the civil rights and Black Power movements were discrediting racism in many circles. With this uprising, America discovered that it had been born, indeed, had long lived in, sin; and the establishment's sudden awareness of its centuries-long unawareness shook its confidence in its monopoly of virtue, a necessary illusion of any ruling class. Its agony and confusion over foreign policy, long an area of special establishment accomplishment, induced a further loss of nerve. The center ceased to hold; meanwhile, ethnic barriers were crumbling among the grandchildren of the immigrants, as were the enforced solidarities of discrimination. This was especially true on the campuses, where young Jews were found in inordinate numbers. Many of them no longer saw nor found any bar to intermarriage. Others now sought their uniqueness outside themselves, in the unspeakable deeds of the Nazis. What had been previously known as "the destruction of European Jewry" became simply "the Holocaust," a word that now resonated with new and singular meaning. Admittedly, the astonishing victory of the Six-Day War may have had to occur before Jews could dwell on their past vic-

timization without fearing that it might be seen as a congenital defect. And probably only a new generation, unburdened by the complicity of silence, could bear aloft the memory of a frightful and premonitory past. But what is memorable, even inviolable, is not necessarily unique. The sudden, passionate insistence that the suffering of one's people was *sui generis* and incomparable with that of any other nation in the long and lamentable catalog of human cruelty betokens, among other things, an urgent need for distinctiveness, which must be met but cannot be satisfied from within, from any inner resources. Finding one's inimitability in the unique horrors that others have committed against oneself may seem a strange form of distinction, but not if there remains a powerful urge to feel different at a time when one has become indistinguishable from the rest.

One can respond to a loss of identity borders by intermingling, by finding a new source of difference or by re-creating the old differences anew. And much of American Jewish history of the past generation has been the intertwined tale of these conflicting reactions. People respond to situations according to their temperaments and backgrounds. At the time, they appear divided by the different positions they adopt, as indeed they often deeply are. In retrospect, however, they also appear united by the shared burden of the need for response and by their common confinement to the solutions that lay then at hand.

Just as the religious response of difference should be seen not only in its own terms but also horizontally, as part of wider, contemporary developments, so too should its acculturation be viewed vertically: plotted on the long curve of the history of Jewish spirituality. The growing *embourgeoisement* of the religious community, repercussive as it was in itself, was also a final phase of a major transformation of values that had been in the making for close to a century, namely, the gradual disappearance of the ascetic ideal that had held sway over Jewish spirituality for close to a millennium.⁴⁴ While there was sharp division in traditional Jewish thought over the stronger asceticism of mortification of the flesh, the milder one of distrust of the body was widespread, if not universal.⁴⁵ The soul's control over the flesh was held to be, at most, tenuous; and without constant exercises in self-denial, there was little chance of man's soul triumphing over the constant, carnal pull. Certain needs and propensities had indeed been sanctioned and in the instance of martial relations even mandated by the Law. Sanction and mandate, however, do not mean indulgence, and the scope of what was seen as indulgence was broad indeed.⁴⁶ Natural cravings, if not closely monitored, could turn easily into uncontrolled desires; and while they need not be negated, they should be reduced to a minimum. To be sure, states of joy were encouraged by some, appropriate moments of rejoicing advocated by all; but joy, unlike pleasure, is preeminently a state of mind, for unlike pleasure it reflects not simply the satisfaction of a natural impulse but of a coming together of such a satisfaction with the experience of a value. Through a millennium of ethical (*mussar*) writings runs a ceaseless warfare between will and instinct, as does the pessimistic feeling that the "crooked timber of humanity" will never quite be made straight.

Little of all this is to be found in the moral literature of the past half century.⁴⁷ There is, to be sure, much criticism of hedonism; restraint in all desires is advocated, as is a de-emphasis of material well-being. However, what is preached is “plain living and high thinking,” rather than any war on basic instinct. The thousand year struggle of the soul with the flesh has finally come to a close.⁴⁸

The legitimacy of physical instinct is the end product of Orthodoxy’s encounter with modernity that began in the nineteenth century, as the emergent movements of the Enlightenment, Zionism, and socialism began to make themselves felt in Eastern Europe; and the current, widespread acceptance of physical gratification reflects the slow but fundamental infiltration of the this-wordly orientation of the surrounding society.⁴⁹ This metamorphosis, in turn, shifts the front of religion’s incessant struggle with the nature of things: the spiritual challenge becomes less to escape the confines of the body than to elude the air that is breathed. In a culturally sealed and supportive environment, the relentless challenge to the religious vision comes from within, from man’s bodily desires. In an open but culturally antagonistic environment, the impulses from without pose a far greater danger than do those from within. On the simplest level, the risk is the easy proffer of mindless temptation; on the deeper level, the risk is cultural contamination. The move from a self-contained world to a partially acculturated one engenders a transformation of the religious aspiration, as the quest becomes not so much to overcome the stirrings of the flesh as to win some inner deliverance from the osmosis with the environment. Purity, as ever, is the goal. However, in a community that chooses, or must choose, not flight from the world, as did once the monasteries and as do now the Amish, but life within the larger setting, the aspiration will be less to chasteness of thought than to chasteness of outlook, more to purity of ideology than of impulse.

Religion has been described as “another world to live in.” Of nothing is this more true than of the enclave, with its inevitable quest for unalloyed belief and unblemished religiosity. And the other world in which the religious Jews seek now to dwell and whose impress they wish to bear is less the world of their fathers than that of their “portable homeland,” their sacred texts, which alone remain unblighted by the contagion of the surroundings.

But could the world that was emerging from these sacred texts be seen as differing from that of their fathers, whose ways the *haredim* so strove to uphold? Such a perception would have undermined the entire enterprise of reconstruction. Memory now came to their aid, as did, unwittingly, the Holocaust. The world of their fathers had left no history, for like any traditional society, it had seen itself as always having been what it was; and when little has changed, there is little to tell, much less to explain. Of that world, there were, now, only the memories of the uprooted and the echo of those memories among their children; and memories are pliant, for recollection comforts as much as it recounts. Memories are our teddy bears no less than our informants, treasured fragments of an idealized past that we

clutch for reassurance in the face of an unfamiliar present. The strangest and most unsettling aspect of the world in which the *haredim* now found themselves was its relentless mandate for change. Memory filtered and transmuted, and the past of *haredi* recollection soon took on a striking similarity to the emerging present. Nor was there, after the Holocaust, an ambiguous reality to challenge *their* picture of *its* past. The cataclysmic events of the 1940s gave a unique intensity to the reconstruction of the *haredim*, as no one else was now left to preserve the flame; it also gave them free reign to create a familiar past, of which the present was simply a faithful extension.

Among the immigrants, especially those of the post-World War II wave, this new past was, in many ways, the creature of recollection⁵⁰ but not among their offspring. Nor could the memory of the parents now be transmitted, as in the past, by word of mouth, for the children had acquired alien ways of knowing, even in the most sacred of all activities, the study of the Torah. Halakhic literature, indeed, traditional Jewish literature generally, has no secondary sources, only primary ones. The object of study from childhood to old age was the classic texts—the *Humash* (Pentateuch), the Mishnah and the *Gemara* (Talmud). For well over a millennium all literary activity had centered on commenting and applying those texts,⁵¹ and every several centuries or so, a code would be composed that stated the upshot of these ongoing commentarial discussions. Self-contained presentations of a topic, works that would introduce the reader to a subject and then explain it in full in the language of laymen did not exist. There were few, if any, serious works that could be read independently, without reference to another text which it glossed.⁵² Indeed, the use of such a work would have been deeply suspect, for its reader would be making claim to knowledge which he had not elicited from the primary texts themselves. Knowledge was seen as an attainment, something that had been wrested personally from the sources. Information, on the other hand, was something merely obtained, passed, like a commodity, from hand to hand, usually in response to a question.

Study of primary sources is a slow and inefficient way to acquire information, but in traditional Jewish society the purpose of study (*lernen*) was not information, nor even knowledge, but a lifelong exposure to the sacred texts and an ongoing dialogue with them.⁵³ *Lernen* was seen both as an intellectual endeavor and as an act of devotion; its process *was* its purpose. The new generation, however, obtained its knowledge in business and daily affairs, in all its walks of life, from books, and these books imparted their information in a self-contained, straightforward and accessible format. They saw no reason why knowledge of the Torah should not equally be available to them in so ready and serviceable a fashion, not as substitutes, God forbid, for the study of primary sources, but rather as augmentation.⁵⁴ Learning groups (*havrutot*) and classes in Talmud were now flourishing in the “new country” as never before, and the resurgence of these traditional modes of study could only gain by such a natural supplement. In response to this widespread feeling, the past twenty years have produced a rapidly growing,

secondary halakhic literature, not only guides and handbooks but rich, extensive, topical presentations, many of high scholarly caliber.⁵⁵

In Israel these books are in modern Hebrew; in America and England they are in English. And this constitutes yet a greater break with the past. Since the late Middle Ages, Ashkenazic Jewish society was “diglossic,” that is to say, it employed both a “higher” and “lower” language. Yiddish was used for common speech and all oral instruction; Hebrew for prayer and all learned writing, whether halakhic, ethical, or kabbalistic.⁵⁶ The only halakhic works published in Yiddish were religious primers, basic guides written, ostensibly, for women—in reality, also for the semiliterate but viewed by all as “woman’s fare.”⁵⁷ Even Hasidic tales and aphorisms, concerned as the writers were to preserve every nuance of the holy man’s Yiddish words, were nevertheless always transcribed in Hebrew.⁵⁸ Things have changed dramatically over the past twenty-five years. Admittedly, the revival of the Hebrew language in Israel and its attendant secularization have diminished some of Hebrew’s aura as “the sacred tongue”; nevertheless, the emergence of a rich and sophisticated halakhic literature in English stems less from the fact that Hebrew has been desacralized than because English is now the mother tongue of the Anglo-Saxon *haredi* society, as is modern Hebrew to their Israeli counterpart.⁵⁹ The contemporary Jewish community is linguistically acculturated, unlike the communities of Eastern Europe, 80 percent of whom, in Poland, for example, still gave, as late as 1931, Yiddish rather than Polish as their first language.⁶⁰ The flood of works on halakhic prerequisites and the dramatic appreciation of the level of religious observance are proud marks of the *haredi* resurgence. This flow and swift absorption are possible, however, only because that community has unwittingly adopted the alien ways of knowing of the society in which it is enmeshed and whose language it now intuitively speaks.

With this acculturation came also the discovery of “the historicity of things.” The secular education of many of the *haredim* was rudimentary, but it was enough for them to know that the record of the past is found in books. Any doubt of this was put to rest by experience. In life, one had to anticipate the future, in some way, so as better to get a handle on it. The only way to do that was by knowing the past—one’s medical past, the past performance of a stock, of a business, or of a politician. There could be little memory of such pasts, but there was information, written records, and from these documents, a “history” could be reconstructed. If all else had a history, they too had one. To be sure, theirs was not “History,” in the upper case, the sacred, archetypal record of the Bible and Midrash, with its “eternal contemporaneity,”⁶¹ but the more mundane sort, “history” in the lower case, replete with random figures and chance happenings. Hardly paradigmatic for posterity, still it was sufficiently significant to its immediate successors to merit their pondering its lessons. So alongside the new genre of secondary works in Halakhah, there has appeared, in the past generation, a second genre, equally unfamiliar to their fathers—that of “history,” written accounts of bygone events and biographies of great Torah scholars of the recent past, images of a nation’s

heritage that once would have been impaired by the vibrant voices of home and street but now must be conveyed, like so much else in the “new world,” by means of book and formal instruction.⁶²

These works wear the guise of history, replete with names and dates and footnotes, but their purpose is that of memory, namely, to sustain and nurture, to inform in such a way as to ease the task of coping. As rupture is unsettling, especially to the traditional, these writings celebrate identity rather than difference. Postulating a national essence which is seen as immutable, this historiography weaves features and values of the present with real and supposed events of the past. It is also hagiographic, as sacred history often is. Doubly so now, as it must also provide the new text culture with its heroes and its educators with their exemplars of conduct.

Didactic and ideological, this “history” filters untoward facts and glosses over the darker aspects of the past. Indeed, it often portrays events as they did not happen.⁶³ So does memory; memory, however, transmutes unconsciously, whereas the writing of history is a conscious act. But this intentional disregard of fact in ideological history is no different from what takes place generally in moral education, as most such instruction seems to entail a misrepresentation of a harsh reality. We teach a child, for example, that crime does not pay. Were this in fact so, theodicy would be no problem. Yet we do not feel that we are lying, for when values are being inculcated, the facts of experience—empirical truth—appear, somehow, to cease to be “true.”

If a value is to win widespread acceptance, to evoke an answering echo of assent in the minds of many, it must be experienced by them not simply as a higher calling, but as a demand that emerges from the nature of things.⁶⁴ When we state that honesty is “good,” what we are saying is that, ultimately, this is what is best for man—what we call, at times, “true felicity,” to distinguish it from mere “happiness.” We believe that were we to know all there is to know of the inner life of a Mafia don and that of an honest cobbler, we would see that honesty is, indeed, the best policy. The moral life makes claim to be the wise life, and the moral call, to most, is a summons to realism, to live one’s life in accord with the deeper reality.⁶⁵ A statement of value is, in this way, a statement of fact, a pronouncement about the true nature of things.

When we say that crime doesn’t pay, we are not lying; we are teaching the child the underlying reality that we believe in or intuit, rather than the distorted one of our fragmentary experience. Just as moral instruction imparts the lessons of a reality deeper than the one actually perceived, so too must sacred history reflect, to the believer, the underlying realities of the past, rather than the distortions arising from the contingencies of experience coupled with the haphazardness of documentation.

And the underlying reality of Jewish history to the *haredim* has been the Covenant that they had sealed with the Lord long ago at Sinai and which alone explains their miraculous continuance. There had been backsliding enough in their long and stiff-necked history, for which the foretold price had been exacted with

fearful regularity. But when they had lived rightly, they had done so by compliance with that pact, living, as it were, “by the book”—abiding fully in their “portable homeland” and living only by the lights of His sacred texts. How else *could* the People of the Book have lived?

So alongside its chiaroscuro portrait of the past—the unremitting struggle between the sons of Light and Darkness—common to all sacred history, comes the distinctive *haredi* depiction of the society of yesteryear, the world of their fathers, as a model of text-based religiosity, of which their own is only a faithful extension. The past is cast in the mold of the present, and the current text-society emerges not as a product of the twin ruptures of migration and acculturation but as simply an ongoing reflection of the unchanging essence of Jewish history.

And before we reject out of hand this conception of the past, we would do well to remember, even if it be only for a moment, that at the bar of Jewish belief and perhaps even over the longer arc of Jewish history, it is the mimetic society “moving easy in harness” that must one day render up an account of itself.

Though born of migration and acculturation and further fueled, as we shall see, by the loss of a religious cosmology, the current grounding of religion in written norms is well suited to, indeed, in a sense is even sustained by the society in which Orthodox Jews now find themselves. Religion is a move against the grain of the tangible, but only for the very few can it be entirely that. As deeply as any ideology may stand apart from, even in stark opposition to, its contemporary environment, if this outlook is to be shared beyond the confines of a small band of elite souls, who need no supportive experience to confirm them in their convictions, its beliefs must in some way correspond to, or at the very least somehow be consonant with, the world of people and things that is daily experienced.

The old religiosity of prescriptive custom fitted in well with, indeed could be seen as a natural extension of, the Eastern European pattern of authority, of compliance with accustomed ways and submission to long-standing prerogative. Authority came with age in the old country. The present received its empowerment from the past, so it seemed only right and natural to do things the way they always had been done.

The world now experienced by religious Jews—indeed by all—is rule-oriented and, in the broadest sense of the term, rational. Modern society is governed by regulations, mostly written, and interpreted by experts accounting for their decisions in an ostensibly reasoned fashion. The sacred world of the Orthodox and the secular one that envelops them function similarly. While sharing, of course, no common source, they do share a similar manner of operation. As men, moreover, now submit to rule rather than to custom, the Orthodox and the modern man also share a common mode of legitimacy; that is, they have a like perception of what makes a just and compelling claim to men’s allegiance, a corresponding belief in the kind of yoke people should and, in fact, do willingly bear. Religion can endure under almost all circumstances, even grow under most, but it

flourishes more easily when the inner and outer worlds, the world as believed and the world as experienced, reflect and reinforce one another, as did a mimetic religiosity in a traditional society and as does now, to a lesser but still very real extent, a text-based religiosity in a modern, bureaucratic society.⁶⁶

The shift of authority to texts and their enshrinement at the sole source of authenticity have had far-reaching effects. Not only has this shift contributed, as we have seen, to the policy of religious stringency and altered the nature of religious performance, but it has also transformed the character and purpose of religious education, redistributed political power in non-Hasidic circles, and defined anew the scope of the religious in the political arena.

A religiosity rooted in texts is a religiosity transmitted in schools, which was hardly the case in the old and deeply settled communities of the past. There the school had been second by far to the home in the inculcation of values. Basic schooling (*heder*) had provided its students with the rudimentary knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the Jewish way of life, while reinforcing and occasionally refining the norms instilled in the family circle. The advanced instruction (*yeshivah*) given a small elite was predominantly academic, cultivating, intellectual virtuosity and providing its students with the expertise necessary for running a society governed by Halakhah. Admittedly, underlying all study was the distinctive Jewish conviction that knowledge gave values greater resonance and that in the all-consuming intellectual passion that was called love of "learning," as in mundane love to which it was compared, the self was submerged, and one fused with that toward which one strained: understanding, the truth—the Torah.⁶⁷ And indeed, more was demanded of those who knew more. Useful as this cultural expectation may have been in tempering both behavior and character and in moderating, perhaps, the prerogative of a clergy, it only intensified the emphasis on study in traditional education. The affective powers of knowledge were held to be so great that the need of schooling to concentrate on its acquisition seemed ever more essential.

Now, however, the school bears most of the burden of imprinting Jewish identity; for the shift from culture to enclave that occurred in the wake of migration means precisely the shrinkage of the religious agency of home and street and the sharp contraction of their role in cultural transmission. This contraction has become ever more drastic in recent decades. Indeed, it verged on elimination, as a result of developments in the larger community, where, with the full advent of modernity, the sense of right and wrong was no longer being instilled at the hearth. The family in America, indeed, in the West generally, almost ceased to serve as the inculcator of values, and the home lost much of its standing as moral educator. While the religious home was generally stronger than the one of the host society, nevertheless, it too suffered from the general depreciation of parental authority and from their rapidly diminishing role both as exemplars of conduct and as guides to the true and the proper. As the neighborhood will not and the family

now cannot adequately instill fealty to a way of life different from the one that envelopes them, formal education has now become indispensable for imbuing a religious outlook and habituating religious observance. The time spent by all in school has also been immeasurably lengthened, for convictions must be ingrained and made intimate, proprieties of behavior need to be imprinted by the deliberate enterprise of teaching, and for the impress to be durable, the individual must be kept in the mold during his formative years. So youth and early manhood too are now spent within the “walls of the yeshivah,” for the current purpose of that institution is not simply higher education but also, indeed, predominantly an apprenticeship in the Jewish way of life.⁶⁸

Having stepped into the breach left by the collapse of the traditional agencies of Jewish upbringing, the yeshivah has become a mass rather than elite establishment, more a religious institution than a academic one. To be sure, contemporary yeshivot seek to produce great scholars now no less than in the past and often successfully so, but currently their major function is molding the cadres of the Orthodox enclave, people whose religious character and countenance are a product not of home breeding but of institutional minting. Sensing this shift in the educational imprimatur, intuiting that the new source of religious identity entails changes in the old religious model, the enclave has already coined a distinctive term for the new, emergent exemplar, namely, the *ben Torah*, the young adult who will bear the yeshivah ethos throughout his life, despite continuous exposure to the invasive culture of the surroundings.⁶⁹

So great is this transformation in the traditional role of education that, at the outset, very few perceived it. Nor, for that matter, was it immediately felt. It is remarkable just how scant a number of educational institutions were erected by the immigrants or by their children, and not for lack of energy or dearth of organizational impulse. No sooner were the new arrivals off the boat, than they created free-loan societies, burial societies, immigrant aid associations, and *landsmannschaften*. Synagogues, lodges, and ladies auxiliaries were formed, hospitals established, networks of social services instituted, and charities for every sort erected for local needs, for overseas kin, and for the nascent settlements in Palestine. Temples, community centers, and YMHAs soon dotted the residential landscape.⁷⁰ Jewish schools, however, were scarcely to be found. True, Hebrew schools were established in abundance, but attendance there ended with the onset of adolescence, and the education received was, at best, rudimentary. These were Americanized versions of the *hederim* that the immigrants had known in the old country, imparting the basic skills of reading and writing Hebrew, only here they bore the additional burden of preparing boys for their Bar Mitzvah.

Nor did Orthodoxy present a much different picture. At the end of World War II, only thirty day schools of any sort existed in the entire United States, with a total student population of some 5,800.⁷¹ Yeshivot were far, far fewer, and the population of these institutions was minuscule.⁷² Seminaries for the training of rabbis had, of course, been swiftly erected by each and every religious stream—Orthodox,

Conservative, and Reform.⁷³ The need for rabbis was perceived by all, and all equally realized that rabbis were made rather than born. Jews, however, were seen as simply being born—for Jewishness was something almost innate, and no school was needed to inculcate it. And if there chanced to be some Jews who thought they had eradicated their Jewishness, one could always rely on the *goyyim* (gentiles) to remind them that they hadn't. To be sure, the ideology of the "melting pot" played a very significant role in this educational passivity, as did equally the natural aspiration of immigrants that their children receive native certification and imprimatur. Yet it would be a mistake to view this inaction solely as surrender or default. It stemmed also from the conviction that their children's *yidishkeyt* (Jewishness), like their own, was something deep in their bone, and that schools need not—in all probability, could not—instill it. Certainly, there was nothing in their own experience nor in the rich educational past of their Eastern European forefathers that could, in any way, have led them to think otherwise. Until mid-century, the children of the immigrants on the right imbibed their religiosity primarily from home and ethnic neighborhood, much as the children of their far more numerous brethren on the left and center imbibed their Jewishness from much the same sources.

And for a while, this sufficed. So palpable the heritage of the past, so primary and nonnegotiable in this period was the sense of Jewish otherness that intermarriage was a rarity; and so self evident was then Jewish identity that it was seen as concordant with the widest variety of views. Indeed, this identity dwelled in vigorous harmony with what, at least in retrospect, seem to be the most incompatible ideologies. Jewish intellectuals and activists passionately advocated Jewish communism, Jewish socialism, and even "secular Judaism," though the same people, one suspects, would have been the first to smile at a similar claim of "Protestant communism" or secular Catholicism." These ideologies may well have been confined to a small and articulate minority, but large segments of the population shared their underlying assumptions—that the essence of Judaism lay not in law or ritual, but in a social vision (*yoysher*) and a moral standard of conduct (*mentshlikhkeyt*), that Jews, almost innately, shared this vision,⁷⁴ and that in the still moment of truth these values would rise to reclaim all allegiances.⁷⁵ To the immigrants and to those raised in immigrant homes, identity was fixed; it was ideology that was variable. The next generation, the first one to be raised in American homes, found identity to be anything but a given and ideological identification a necessity. The mimetic religiosity came to an end soon after the twentieth century rounded the halfway mark, at approximately the same time as "secular Judaism" was fading from the horizon, as were the low intermarriage rates.⁷⁶ Their common disappearance marked the end of the Eastern European heritage of self-evident Jewishness, the close of an age in which religious and irreligious alike, each in their own way, were Jewish by virtue of what they thought, were, in other words, still Jews by upbringing rather than by education.

Then—around midcentury—the hour of education arrived. Within the last fifty

years, the number of day schools has leapt from 30 to 570; its population skyrocketed from under 6,000 to well over 160,000, while the count of advanced yeshivah students has increased more than fifteenfold.⁷⁷ The religiosity of the culture gave way to that of the enclave, and the mimesis of home and street was replaced by the instruction and apprenticeship of the school. Just how essential this instruction and apprenticeship are, even in the *haredi* world—indeed, even for its most insulated sector—may be seen in the numerous Hasidic yeshivot now in existence and almost all of recent origin. For close to two hundred years, Hasidism had looked askance at the institution of yeshivot, viewing them not only as competing sources of authority to that of the Hasidic rabbi (*rebbe*) but also as simply far less effective in inculcating religiosity than the Hasidic home and the local Hasidic synagogue (*shtibel*), not to speak of the court of the *rebbe* himself. To be sure, several dynasties with a more intellectual bent had founded their own yeshivot.⁷⁸ These, however, were the exception and not the rule. Moreover, these institutions addressed a tiny, elite body only, and their role in the religious life of the community was peripheral. Within the past thirty years, Hasidic yeshivot have become a commonplace, and attendance is widespread, as Hasidim have decisively realized that, in the world in which they must currently live, even the court of the holy man may well fail without the sustained religious apprenticeship of the school.

This apprenticeship is long and uncompromising, but it has proven surprisingly attractive. The prevalence of higher education in modern society makes the time now spent in the yeshivah quite acceptable, but it does not, in itself, make yeshivah attendance alluring. The draft exemption in Israel does, indeed, provide strong inducement; but this leaves unexplained the same resurgence of yeshivah in the United States and England. Unquestionably, the new affluence of the religious plays a major role in maintaining the new and growing network of schools. Wealth, however, enables many things, and massive support of higher non-career-oriented education need not necessarily be one of them.⁷⁹ The yeshivah has won its widespread support, and young men now flock to its gates, not only because it has become the necessary avenue to the religious perspective and behavior but also because it holds forth a religious life lived without the neglects and abridgements of the mundane environment. Resolutely set off from society, yet living in closest proximity to the ideals to which the larger community aspires, the yeshivah has, to some, all the incandescence of an essentialized world. Institutions of realization, such as monasteries, kibbutzim, or yeshivot, where the values of society are most uncompromisingly translated into daily life, often prove to be attended to youth's recurrent quest for the authentic. When the tides of the time do flow in their direction, their insulation from life appears less a mark of artificiality than a foretaste of the millennium, when life will finally be lived free from the pressures of a wholly contingent reality. Needless to say, such institutions have generally exercised an influence on society wholly disproportionate to their numbers.

What animates the yeshivah in so intensive a form also works its effect on the daily life of the enclave. One of the most striking phenomena of the religious re-

surge is the new ubiquity of Torah study and the zeal with which it is pursued, something which had not characterized the previous generation, even in *haredi* circles. Classes in Talmud and Halakhah, at all hours of the day, have sprung up, numerous small study groups (*havrutot*) dot the religious community as never before, scholarly secondary works on halakhic topics are snapped up and read, and the institution of *daf yomi* (literally, “daily page”) has become widespread. And the latter is emblematic of the wider developments. In 1923, an educational curriculum, as it were, of talamudic study for those outside yeshivot established a uniform “page a day” of the Talmud to be studied by Jews the world over. Its pace was rapid, and if scarcely conducive to profundity, nevertheless, it enabled the Talmud to be studied from beginning to end within seven years. For close to half a century, the institution languished, as both the pace and quantity were far too much for most. The past twenty years has witnessed its dramatic resurgence. The twenty thousand people who thronged Madison Square Garden in spring 1990 for the festive conclusion of the seven year cycle,⁸⁰ were, even after all allowances are made for the inevitable sightseers, still only a portion of those actually engaged in this enterprise. To meet the growing demand for Torah study and to further ease access to it, modern technology has been mobilized. Tapes of classes of Halakhah and of Talmud are widely distributed. These are played at leisure moments and when traveling to and from work. In the United States, there are toll-free lines, where a record of that day’s lesson is available for those either too busy to attend *daf yomi* classes or who occasionally missed them. The traffic is so great, at times, that some communities have several lines operating simultaneously. Nor is this service restricted to the *daf yomi*. In major cities, there is now dial-a-*mishnah*, dial-a-halakhah, dial-a-*mussar* (ethics) and more.⁸¹ To be sure, the level of instruction often leaves something to be desired, as might be expected of any mass enterprise; however, the broad-based aspiration and widespread effort are new and noteworthy.

To the religious, this is only proof again of their supernatural continuance and of the Divine assurance that regardless into what new and alien world the Torah may be cast, Jews will always return to it as their predestined home. The will to survival of any group, its determination to maintain its singularity and transmit it undiminished to the next generation, eludes, indeed, full explanation. However, the different guises that this will assumes and the reason one form is more effective at certain times than another do lend themselves to analysis.

For at least two millennia, Torah study (*talmud Torah*) had been axial to Jewish experience. Indeed, it was believed by Jews the world over to be necessary for their very existence as a people. As central as *talmud Torah* may have been to national identity, it had not been essential for the Jewish identity of the individual. That had come automatically with birth. Imbibed from infancy—first in the family circle, then from street and school—cultural identity is primordial. Coeval with conscious life, it is inseparable from it. In contemporary society, however, Jewish identity is not inevitable. It is not a matter of course but of choice; a conscious

preference of the enclave over the host society. For such a choice to be made, a sense of particularity and belonging must be instilled by the intentional enterprise of instruction. Without education there is now no identity, for identity in a multi-culture is ideological. Once formed, this identity required vigilant maintenance, for its perimeter is continually eroded by the relentless, lapping waves of the surrounding culture. Assaulted daily by contrary messages from the street and workplace, enclave identity needs ongoing reinforcement: its consciousness of proud difference must be steadily replenished and heightened. Identity maintenance and consciousness raising are ideological exigencies, needs that can be met only by education. Not surprisingly, then, does the still mysterious impulse for Jewish survival—for the preservation of Jewish distinctiveness—currently translate itself into a desire for Jewish instruction, into an avidity for Torah study in all its varied forms. The necessity of *talmud Torah* to Jewish existence, which in the traditional society of the old country had been only a metaphysical proposition,⁸² at most a religious belief, has become, in the enclaves of the new world, a simple, sociological fact.

If religion is now transmitted to the next generation by institutional education, small wonder that the influence of the educators has increased dramatically, especially the sway of the scholar, the one most deeply versed in the sacred texts. For the text is now the guarantor of instruction, as the written word is both the source and the touchstone of religious authenticity. This, in turn, has entailed a shift in political power in non-Hasidic circles.⁸³ Authority long associated in Eastern Europe with the city rabbi, who functioned as a quasi-religious mayor, has now passed, and dramatically so, to talmudic sages, generally the heads of talmudic academies—*roshei yeshivah*.⁸⁴ Admittedly, the traditional European rabbinate, urban, compact, and centralized, had no chance of surviving in America or Israel. It was ill-suited to the United States with its sprawling suburbs and grassroots, federal structure of authority. It was no less redundant in Israel, where the state now provides all the vital religious and social services previously supplied by the community (*kahal*), of which the rabbi was the head. However, the power lost by the rabbinate did not have to accrue necessarily to the *roshei yeshivah*. It is their standing as the masters of the book par excellence that has given them their newly found authority. In Eastern Europe of the last century,⁸⁵ the *rosh yeshivah* was the equivalent of a head of an advanced institute, distinguished and respected but without significant communal influence. He was appointed because of his mastery of the book, and to the book and school he was then confined. This mastery now bestows upon him the mantle of leadership.

And that mantle has become immeasurably enlarged, as the void created by the loss of a way of life (the *orah hayyim*), the shrinkage of a culture, manifests itself. Social and political issues of the first rank are now regularly determined by the decisions of Torah sages. Lest I be thought exaggerating, the formation of the 1990 coalition government in Israel hinged on the *haredi* parties. For months, Shamir

and Peres openly courted various talmudic scholars and vied publicly for their blessings. Indeed, the decision to enter the Likud coalition lay in the hands of a ninety-five-year-old sage, and when he made public his views, his speech was nationally televised—understandably, as it was of national consequence.

Admittedly this need for direction and imprimatur is partly the product of the melding of Hasidic and *misnaggdic* ways of life, as the two joined forces against modernity. The Hasidim have adopted the mode of talmudic study and some of the ideology of *misnaggdim*. In turn, the *misnaggdim* have adopted some of the dress of the Hasidim and something of the authority figure who provides guidance in the tangled problems of life. This blending of religious styles is, to be sure, part of the story, but the crisis of confidence in religious circles is no less a part.

This new deference is surprising, as political issues generally lie beyond the realm of law, certainly of Jewish law (Halakhah), which is almost exclusively private law. When political issues do fall within its sphere, many of the determinative elements—attainability of goals, competing priorities, trade-offs, costs—are not easily reducible to legal categories. Yet the political sphere has now come, and dramatically so, within the religious orbit.

Political reactions are not innate. Opinions on public issues are formed by values and ways of looking at things. In other words, they are cultural. What had been lost, however, in migration was precisely a “culture.” A way of life is not simply a habitual manner of conduct but also, indeed above all, a coherent one. It encompasses the web of perceptions and values that determines the way the world is assessed and the posture one assumes toward it. Feeling now bereft, however, of its traditional culture, intuiting something akin to assimilation in a deep, if not obvious way, the acculturated religious community has lost confidence in its own reflexes and reactions. Sensing some shift in its operative values, the enclave is no longer sure that its intuitions and judgments are what it has aptly termed—“Torah-true.”⁸⁶ It turns, then, to the only sources of authenticity, the masters of the book, and relies on *their* instincts and *their* assessments for guidance. Revealingly, it calls these assessments *da’as Torah*—the “Torah-view” or the “Torah-opinion.”⁸⁷

To be sure, shifts in power are rarely without struggle, and authority that appears, from without, as total and monolithic is only too often partial and embattled when seen from within. And *da’as Torah* is no exception. Much of the current politics in some religious organizations in America⁸⁸ and certainly the rivalry between certain *haredi* parties in Israel (Agudat Yisrael and Degel Ha-Torah) reflect the clash between the old order and the new power of the *roshei yeshivah*. This, however, is never stated publicly—indeed, *can* never be stated publicly—for in the religious atmosphere that now prevails, especially among the younger generations, the primacy of *da’as Torah* is almost axiomatic.

One could hardly overemphasize the extent of the transformation. The lay communal leadership had always reserved political and social areas for itself. Even in the periods of maximum rabbinic influence, as in sixteenth century Poland, political leadership was firmly in the hands of laymen.⁸⁹ Indeed, as there is

no sacerdotal power in Post-Exilic Judaism, the structure of authority in the Jewish community is such that the rabbinate has social prerogative and deference but little actual power, unless the lay leadership allows them to partake in it. Lacking the confidence to decide, that leadership now shares its power with rabbinic authority to an extent that would have astonished preceding generations.⁹⁰

Losing confidence in one's own authenticity means losing confidence in one's entitlement to power—that is, delegitimation—and a monopoly on authority swiftly becomes a monopoly on governance. It is the contraction of a once widely diffused legitimacy into a single sphere, and the change in the nature of authority that this shrinkage entails is the political tale told by the shift from culture to enclave.

Authority was broadly distributed in traditional Jewish society, for the Torah, the source of meaning and order, manifested itself in numerous forms and spoke through various figures. It was expressed, for example, in the home, where domestic religion was imparted; in the *shul* (synagogue), where one learned the intricacies of the daily Divine service and was schooled in the venerated local traditions; and in the local *beys medrash* (study hall), where the widest variety of “learning” groups met under different local mentors to engage in various ways in the study of the Torah (*lernen*). These and other institutions were linked but separate domains. Each had its own keepers and custodians who, in authoritative accents, informed men and women what their duties were and how they should go about meeting them.

The move from a corporate state to a democratic one and from a deeply ethnic to an open society meant a shift from a self-contained world to one where significant ways of thinking and acting received some of their impress from the mold of the environment. This acculturation diluted the religious message of home and synagogue, compromised their authenticity, and finally, delegitimated them. Only the texts remained untainted, and to them alone was submission owed. As few texts are self-explanatory, submission meant obedience to their interpreters. The compartmentalization of religion, typical of modern society, shrinks dramatically religion's former scope and often weakens its fiber. But where belief still runs strong, this constriction of religion means its increasing concentration in a single realm and a dramatic enhancement of the authority of the guardian of that realm. The broad sway of their current prerogative stems from the shrinkage of the other agencies of religion, and it is the deterioration of these long-standing counterweights that gives this newly found authority its overbearing potential.

Thus, modernity has, in its own way, done to the non-Hasidic world what the Hasidic ideal of religious ecstasy had done to large tracts of traditional Jewish society in the eighteenth century.⁹¹ This consuming aspiration marginalized synagogue, school, and family alike, for they could, at most, instill this pious ambition but scarcely show the path to its achievement. This, only the holy man, the *zaddik* could do. It also delegitimated the rabbi and the traditional communal structure whose authority and purposes were unlinked to this aspiration. Then, in

the eighteenth century, the intensification of one institution depreciated the authority of the others; now, the devaluation of other institutions has appreciated the power of the remaining one. The end result is the same: a dramatic centralization of a previously diffused authority. This centralization is now all the more effective because modern communications—telephone, newspaper, and cassette—enables the center to have ongoing contact with its periphery as never before.⁹²

This concentration of authority has also altered its nature. Some nimbus attends all figures of authority, for if one did not feel they represented some higher order, why else submit? Yet when authority is broadly distributed among father and mother, elders and teachers, deference to them is part of the soft submission to daily circumstance. There are, moreover, as many parents as there are families, and every village and hamlet has its own mentors. Their numbers are too large and the figures far too familiar for them to be numinous.

Concentration of authority in the hands of the master Talmudists shrinks the numbers drastically and creates distance. Such men are few and solitary. Moreover, they now increasingly validate the religious life of the many, as acculturation undermines not only authority but also identity. Even partial acculturation is a frightening prospect for a chosen people, especially for one that was bidden “never to walk in the ways of the Gentiles” and, faithful to that mandate, had long “dwelt alone.” Threatened with a loss of meaningful existence, the enclave’s deepest need is for authentication. Those who answer that need, who can provide the people with the necessary imprimatur, are empowered as never before. True, a divinity had always hedged great scholars in the Jewish past. Now, however, they validate religious life rather than simply embody it, and their existence is a necessity, not simply a blessing. To a community of progressively derivative identity, these guarantors of meaning appear unique and wholly other, as if some chaste and potent spirit “inhabited them like a tabernacle.” Though grounded in verifiable, intellectual excellence, their authority has become ever more charismatic. Proof of that spiritual singularity, of their religious election, is now provided by the growing accounts of their supernatural power. The non-Hasidic culture, in which the mockery of the miraculous doings of holy men had been, in the past, a comic leitmotif,⁹³ has currently begun to weave its own web of wonder stories around the figure of the talmudic sage.⁹⁴

The increasing fusion of the roles of *rosh-yeshivah* and Hasidic rabbi is, then, not simply a blending of religious styles, as noted before, but flows also from a growing identity in the nature of their authority. For religious Jews sense that in the modern world, which they must now inhabit, unblemished knowledge of the Divine mandate is vouchsafed to few, and that religious authenticity is now as rare and as peremptory as was once the gift for Divine communion in the old, enclosed world in which they had long lived.

I have discussed the disappearance of a way of life and the mimetic tradition. I believe, however, the transformations in the religious enclave, including the *haredi*

sector, go much deeper and affect fundamental beliefs. Assessments of other peoples' inner convictions are always conjectural and perhaps should be attempted only in a language in which the subjunctive mood is still in vigorous use. I can best convey my impression—and I emphasize that it is no more than an impression—by sharing a personal experience.

In 1959, I went to Israel before the High Holidays. Having grown up in Boston and never having had an opportunity to pray in a *haredi* yeshivah, I spent the entire High Holiday period—from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur—at a famous yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The prayer there was long, intense, and uplifting, certainly far more powerful than anything I had previously experienced. And yet there was something missing, something that I has experienced before, something, perhaps, I had taken for granted. Upon reflection, I realized that there was introspection, self-ascent, even moments of self-transcendence, but there was no fear in the thronged student body, most of whom were Israeli-born.⁹⁵ Nor was that experience a solitary one. Over the subsequent thirty-five years, I have passed the High Holidays generally in the United States or Israel and occasionally in England, attending services in *haredi* and non-*haredi* communities alike. I have yet to find that fear present, to any significant degree, among the native-born in either circle. The ten-day period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are now Holy Days, but they are not *Yamim Noraim*—Days of Awe or, more accurately, Days of Dread—as they have been traditionally called.

I grew up in a Jewishly non-observant community and prayed in a synagogue where most of the older congregants neither observed the Sabbath nor even ate kosher. They all hailed from Eastern Europe, largely from shtetlach, like Shepetovka and Shnipishok. Most of their religious observance, however, had been washed away in the sea-change, and the little left had further eroded in the “new country.” Indeed, the only time the synagogue was ever full was during the High Holidays. Even then the service was hardly edifying. Most didn’t know what they were saying, and bored, wandered in and out. Yet, at the closing service of Yom Kippur, the *Ne’ilah*, the synagogue filled, and a hush set in upon the crowd. The tension was palpable, and tears were shed.

What had been instilled in these people in their earliest childhood and what they never quite shook off was that every person was judged on Yom Kippur, and as the sun was setting, the final decision was being rendered (in the words of the famous prayer) “who for life, who for death, / who for tranquility, who for unrest.”⁹⁶ These people did not cry from religiosity but from self-interest, from an instinctive fear for their lives.⁹⁷ Their tears were courtroom tears, with whatever degree of sincerity such tears have. What was absent among the thronged students in Bnei Brak and in other contemporary services—and lest I be thought to be exempting myself from this assessment, absent in my own religious life too—was that primal fear of Divine judgment, simple and direct.⁹⁸

To what extent God was palpably present on Yom Kippur among the different generation of congregants in Boston and Bnei Brak is a matter of personal

impression, and moreover, it is one about which opinions might readily and vigorously differ. The pivotal question, however, is not God's sensed presence on Yom Kippur or on the *Yamim Noraim*, the ten holiest days of the year, but on the 355 other—commonplace—days of the year: To what extent is there an ongoing experience of His natural involvement in the mundane round of everyday affairs? Put differently, the issue is not the accuracy of my youthful assessment, but whether the cosmology of Bnei Brak and Borough Park differs from that of the shtetl, and if so, whether such a shift has engendered a change in the sensed intimacy with God and the felt immediacy of His presence? Allow me to explain.

We regularly see events that have no visible cause: we breathe, we sneeze, stones fall downward, and fire rises upward. Around the age of two or three, the child realizes that these events do not happen of themselves but are made to happen; they are, to use adult terms, “caused.” He also realizes that often the forces that make things happen cannot be seen but that older people, with more experience of the world, know what they are. So begins the incessant questioning: “Why does . . . ?” The child may be told that the invisible forces behind breathing, sickness, and falling are “reflex actions,” “germs,” and “gravitation.” Or he may be told that they are the workings of the “soul,” of “God’s wrath,” and of “the attractions of like to like” (which is why earthly things, such as stones, fall downward, while heavenly things, such as fire, rise upward). These causal notions imbibed from the home are then reinforced by the street and refined by school. That these forces are real, the child, by now an adult, has no doubt, for he incessantly experiences their potent effects. That these unseen forces are indeed the true cause of events, seems equally certain, for all authorities—indeed, all people—are in agreement on the matter.

When a medieval man said that his sickness was the result of the wish of God, he was no more affirming a religious posture than is a modern man adopting a scientific one when he says that he has a virus. Each is simply repeating—if you wish, subscribing to—the explanatory system instilled in him in earliest childhood, which alone makes sense of the world as he knows it. Though we have never actually seen a germ or a gravitational field, it is true only in a limited sense to say that we “believe” in them. Their existence to us is simply a given, and we would think it folly to attempt to go against them. Similarly, one doesn’t “believe” in God, in the other explanatory system, one simply takes His direct involvement in human affairs for granted.⁹⁹ One may, of course, superimpose a belief in God, ever a passionate and all-consuming one, upon another casual framework, such as gravity or DNA. However, a God “believed” over and above an explanatory system, functioning *through* it as indirect cause, in brief, a God in a natural cosmology, is a God “believed” in a different sense than the way we now “believe” in gravitation or the way people once “believed” in God in a religious cosmology, a God whose wrath and favor were the explanatory system itself.

God’s palpable presence and direct, natural involvement in daily life (and I emphasize both “direct” and “daily”), His immediate responsibility for everyday

events, *was* a fact of life in the Eastern European shtetl as late as several generations ago. Let us remember Tevye's conversations with God portrayed by Sholom Aleichem. There is, of course, humor in the colloquial intimacy and in the precise way the most minute annoyances of daily life are laid, package-like, at God's doorstep. The humor, however, is that of parody, the exaggeration of the commonly known. The author's assumption is that his readers themselves share, after some fashion, Tevye's sense of God's responsibility for man's quotidian fate. If they didn't, Tevye would not be humorous; he would be crazy.

Tevye's outlook was not unique to the shtetl or to Jews in Eastern Europe; it was simply one variation of an age-old cosmology that dominated Europe for millennia, which saw the universe as directly governed by a Divine Sovereign.¹⁰⁰ If regularity exists in the world, it is simply because the Sovereign's will is constant, as one expects the will of a great sovereign to be. He could, of course, at any moment change His mind, and things contrary to our expectations would then occur—what we call “miracles.” However, the recurrent and the “miraculous” alike are, to the same degree, the direct and unmediated consequence of His wish. The difference between them is not of kind but rather of frequency. Frequency, of course, is a very great practical difference, and it well merits, indeed demands of daily language, a difference in terms. However, this verbal distinction never obscures for a moment their underlying identity.

As all that occurs is an immediate consequence of His will, events have a purpose and occur because of that purpose. Rationality, or as they would have it, wisdom, does not consist in detecting unvarying sequences in ever more accurately observed events and seeing in the first occurrence the “cause” of the second. Wisdom, rather, consists in discovering His intent in these happenings, for that intent is their cause, and only by grasping their cause could events be anticipated and controlled. The universe is a moral order reflecting God's purposes and physically responsive to any breaches in His norms. In the workings of such a world, God is not an ultimate cause; He is a direct, natural force, and safety lies in contact with that force. Prayer has then a physical efficacy, and sin is “a fearful imprudence.” Not that one thinks much about sin in the bustle of daily life, but when a day of reckoning does come around, only the foolhardy are without fear.

Such a Divine force can be distant and inscrutable, as in some strains of Protestantism, or it can be intimate and familial, as in certain forms of Catholicism. In Eastern Europe it tended toward intimacy, whether in the strong Marian strain of Polish Catholicism or in the much supplicated household icon, the center of family piety in the Greek Orthodox devotion. And much of the traditional literature of the Jews, especially as it filtered into common consciousness through the Commentaries of Rashi and the *Tzenah Re'enah*,¹⁰¹ contained a humanization of the deity that invited intimacy. God visits Abraham on his sickbed; He consoles Isaac upon the death of his father. He is swayed by the arguments of Elijah or the matriarchs, indeed by any heartfelt prayer; and decisions on the destiny of nations and the fate of individuals, the length of the day and the size of the moon, are made

and unmade by apt supplications at the opportune moment. The humor of Sholom Aleichem lay not in the dialogues with God but in having a “dairyman” rather than the Baal Shem Tov conduct them.¹⁰² The parody lay not in the remonstrances but in their subject matter.

The world to which the uprooted came and in which their children were raised, was that of modern science, which had reduced nature to “an irreversible series of equations,” to an immutable nexus of cause and effect, which suffices on its own to explain the workings of the world. Not that most, or even any, had so much as a glimmer of these equations but the formulas of the “new country” had created a technology which they saw, with their own eyes, transforming their lives beyond all dreams. And it is hard to deny the reality of the hand that brings new gifts with startling regularity.

There are, understandably, few Tevyes today, even in *haredi* circles. To be sure, there are seasons of the year, moments of crest in the religious cycle, when God’s guiding hand may be tangibly felt by some and invoked by many, and there are certainly occasions in the lives of most when the reversals are so sudden, or the stakes so high and the contingencies so many, that the unbeliever prays for luck, and the believer, more readily and more often, calls for His help. Such moments are only too real, but they are not the stuff of daily life. And while there are always those whose spirituality is one apart from that of their time, nevertheless I think it safe to say that the perception of God as a *daily, natural* force is no longer present to a significant degree in any sector of modern Jewry, even the most religious. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that individual Divine Providence, though passionately believed as a theological principle—and I do not for a moment question the depth of that conviction—is no longer experienced as a simple reality.¹⁰³ With the shrinkage of God’s palpable hand in human affairs has come a marked loss of His immediate presence, with its primal fear and nurturing comfort. With this distancing, the religious world has been irrevocably separated from the spirituality of its fathers, indeed, from the religious mood of intimate anthropomorphism that had cut across all the religious divides of the Old World.

It is this rupture in the traditional religious sensibilities that underlies much of the transformation of contemporary Orthodoxy. Zealous to continue traditional Judaism unimpaired, religious Jews seek to ground their new, emerging spirituality less on a now unattainable intimacy with Him than on an intimacy with His Will, avidly eliciting Its intricate demands and saturating their daily lives with Its exactions. Having lost the touch of His presence, they seek now solace in the pressure of His yoke.

Notes

Several points very much need underscoring at the outset. First, the Orthodox community described here is of European origin. This essay does not discuss religious Jewry issuing

from Muslim countries, commonly called *Sefaredim*, primarily because, unlike their Western brethren, their encounter with modernity is very recent. Second, it deals with *misnaggadic* and not Hasidic society, though I do believe that many of my observations apply to those Hasidic groups with which I am most familiar, as Ger (Gora Kalwaria), for example. Nevertheless, Hasidic sects are so varied and my acquaintance with the full spectrum of them so spotty, that, despite their occasional mention, it seems wiser not to include them in the analysis. Third, the essay focuses on the *contemporary* communities of Israel, England, and America, each, alike, the product of migration. Contrast is made with the traditional community of Eastern Europe of the past century. Migration is a sharp and dramatic rupture with the present, as well as with the past. People, however, can undergo change on their native soil, as did the Jews of Eastern Europe, in the waning years of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth, as their long and deeply settled communities encountered the emergent movements of modernity. Not surprisingly, a number of the traits and some of the outlook described here first made their appearance, albeit in an inflected form, among the religious elite of these communities. This process intensified in the interwar period, in the wake of the successive dislocations of World War I and the Russian Revolution. No transformation is without roots and antecedents, and the current text culture is no exception. However, a nuanced filiation of each characteristic of contemporary Orthodox society lies beyond the scope of this study. Fourth, the transformations that were then set in train by the advent of modernity were first sensed by the Hafetz Hayyim. Indeed, in one sense, much of this essay is simply an elaboration of an insight he expressed in his ruling on women's education (see below n. 6).

As the transformations studied here generally occur first in the *haredi* world and only later spread to the modern Orthodox one, often a phenomenon discussed is currently to be found with point and clarity in the first community, but only incipiently in the second; in other cases, it is already found to an equal degree in both. Not surprisingly, my analysis shuttles to and from these two worlds. If some readers find this constant shifting and tacking disconcerting, I can only ask their forbearance. I am equally aware that some readers will occasionally feel that the developments that I describe as characteristic of the *haredim* typify already the world of modern Orthodoxy and, conversely, that some of the traits ascribed to the broader religious community are still only the hallmarks of the ultra-Orthodox. The transformations discussed in this essay are in the process of evolving, and where on the religious spectrum any given development stands at a given moment often depends on the location of the observer and the contingencies of his or her personal experience. I hope that these occasional and inevitable differences of perspective between author and reader will not detract from the overall suasion of the analysis.

Anyone who distinguishes between a traditional society and an orthodox one is drawing on the categories of Jacob Katz, set forth in print, somewhat belatedly, in 1986 (see below n. 16), but adumbrated over the past several decades in talks and colloquia. In general, the debt owed to Katz by all discussion of tradition and modernity in Jewish history exceeds what can be registered by bibliographical notation.

Two subjects are notably missing from the current presentation, ideology and women's education. The essay treats the factors contributing to the new power of the *roshei yeshiva*; it does not address, at least not adequately, the ideological climate that legitimated this shift in authority. While the religious practice of both men and women had in the past been mimetic, their educational paths had diverged: male instruction had been predominantly textual, female instruction predominantly mimetic. The disappearance of the traditional

society and the full-scale emergence of the text culture could not fail then to impact on women's education. I hope to address both subjects in the future.

The ideas advanced here were first presented in a lecture at the Gruss Center of Yeshiva University in Jerusalem in March 1984, and then again, at a conference of the Kotler Center for the Study of Contemporary Judaism of Bar-Ilan University in the summer of 1985. I do not believe that I would have dared venture into an area well over 500 years removed from that of my expertise had I not known that the leading authority on *haredi* society, Menahem Friedman, agreed with my basic ideas. Friedman's article "Life Tradition and Book Tradition in the Development of Ultraorthodox Judaism" appeared in Harvey E. Goldberg, ed., *Judaism from Within and from Without: Anthropological Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 235–55.

This essay appeared in a somewhat altered form and with far fewer footnotes in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

Hebrew and Yiddish, though sharing a common alphabet, have different rules of transliteration. The different spellings employed for identical letters, even identical words, depend on whether a Yiddish or Hebrew word is being transcribed.

Working far from my habitat, I was very fortunate in my friends and critics. Arnold Band, Yisrael Bartal, Menahem Ben-Sasson, David Berger, Saul Berman, Louis Bernstein, Marion Bodian, Mordecai Breuer, Richard Cohen, David Ebner, Yaakov Elman, Emanuel Etkes, David Fishman, Rivka (Dida) Frankel, Avraham Gan-Zvi, Zvi Gitelman, David Goldenberg, Judah Goldin, Jeffrey Gurock, Lillian and Oscar Handlin, Samuel Heilman, Jacob Katz, Steven Katz, Benjamin Kedar, Norman Lamm, Leo Levin, Charles Liebman, Moshe Meiselman, Jacob Rabinowitz, Aviezer Ravitzky, Sara Reguer, David Roskies, Tamar and Yaakov Ross, Sol Roth, Anita Shapira, David Shatz, Margalit and Shmuel Shilo, Michael Silber, Emmanuel Sivan, Chana and Daniel Sperber, Prudence Steiner, Aviva and Shlomo Sternberg, Yaakov Sussman, Chaim I. Waxman, Leon Wieseltier, Maurice Wohlgelemer, and Avivah Zornberg all read and commented on various drafts. Todd Endelman and Zvi Gitelman provided me with bibliographic guidance in the respective fields of acculturation and Eastern European nationalism. I am especially grateful to the Jerusalem-Constance Center for Literary Studies and its directors, Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, who enabled me to present this study for discussion at their conference in Jerusalem in the late summer of 1991. Wolfgang Iser was kind enough to further spend a Friday afternoon with me discussing some assumptions of the essay. Had I followed all the wise counsel I received from my numerous readers, the final product would have been far better.

A final debt must be gratefully acknowledged. Without the unfailing assistance of the staffs of both the Gottesman and Pollack libraries of the Yeshiva University, especially Rabbi Dov Mandelbaum, Zvi Ehrenyi, Hayyah Gordon, and John Moryl, much of the research for this essay would scarcely have been accomplished.

1. The term *haredi* has gained recent acceptance among scholars because of its relative neutrality. Designations such as "ultra-Orthodox" or the "Right" are value-laden. They assume that the speaker knows what "Orthodoxy," pure and simple, is or where the "center" of Orthodoxy is located.
2. Eating fish on Sabbath is mentioned in *Bereshit Rabbah* and was already noted by Persius, a Roman satirist of the first century. See Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Sciences and

Humanities, 1976), pp. 436–37. For the rich lore on fish and its consumption on Sabbath, see Stern's notes to the above-cited passage, to which should be added Ya'akov Nacht, "Dagim" *Sinai* 8 (1939): 326–33; idem, "Akhilat Dagim be-Shabbat," *Sinai* 11 (1942–43): 139–55; Moshe Halamish, "Akhilat Dagim be-Shabbat—Ta'amim u-Fishrehem," in Moshe Halamish, ed., *Alei Shefer: Mehkarim be-Sifrut ha-Haggut ha-Yehudit Mukkdashim li-Khevod ha-Rav Dr. Alexander Safran* (Bar-Ilan University Press: Ramat Gan, 1990), pp. 67–87. (Popular lore has it that gefilte fish was introduced into the Sabbath menu to avoid the very problem of *borer*. Be the accuracy of this popular explanation as it may, gefilte fish is an East European dish, and Jews had been eating fish on Sabbath for some fifteen centuries before this culinary creation. Even in Eastern Europe, I know of no instance of someone being labeled a *mechallel Shabbas* and run out of town for eating "non-gefilte" fish. Indeed, in the famous communal ordinances against laxity in Sabbath observance, there is no mention of fish eating whatsoever. See H. H. Ben Sasson, "Takkanot Issurei Shabbat u-Mashme'utan ha-Hevratit ve-ha-Kalkalit," *Zion* 21 [1957]: 183–206.)

3. *Mishnah Berurah* 319:4. For critique, see A. Y. Karelitz, *Hazon Ish, Orah Hayyim* (Bnei Brak: n.p., 1973), 53:4. (For contemporary comments see Isaac Maltzan, *Shevitat ha-Shabbat* (reprint: Jerusalem, 1976) *Melekheth Borer*, fol. 10b–11b). This case has been used for simplicity's sake only. This mode of reasoning is atypical of its author, as we so emphasize in the text. Any of the rulings of the *Arukh ha-Shulhan* cited in n. 7 would have been far more typical. However, their presentation in the text would have been more complicated. The instance of *Orah Hayyim* 345:7, for example, would have entailed explaining details of the laws of *hotza'ah* and *'eruv*. The example of fish, once chosen, does, however, have its virtues. It illustrates at the same time (as does the ultimate *conclusion* of 345:7) that the emerging text culture of the *Mishnah Berurah* had its clear bounds. There were, then, limits to the critique of common practice, and the plausibility that widespread practice could be egregiously in error, while conceivable (see n. 7 end), was not fully entertained even by the Hafetz Hayyim. See also the article of Menachem Friedman, "The Lost Kiddish Cup," cited below n. 11.
4. R. Yehiel Michel Epstein, *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, first printed late in the author's life and parts even posthumously, in the years 1903–1909. See n. 6.
5. Haym Soloveitchik "Religious Law and Change: The Medieval Ashkenazic Example," *AJS Review* 12 (1987): 205–13. This phenomenon finds its most evident expression in the *Tosafot* on *Avodah Zarah*. Full documentation will be found in my forthcoming book on *yeyn nesekh*.
6. Israel Meir ha-Kohen, *Mishnah Berurah*. This six-volume work, which has been photo-offset innumerable times, was initially published over the span of eleven years, 1896–1907 and appears contemporaneous with the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*. Bibliographically, this is correct; culturally, nothing could be farther from the truth. Though born only nine years apart, their temperaments and life experiences were such that they belong to different ages. The *Arukh ha-Shulhan* stands firmly in a traditional society, unassaulted and undisturbed by secular movements, in which rabbinic Judaism still "moved easy in harness," R. Israel Meir Ha-Kohen, better known as the Hafetz Hayyim, stood, throughout his long life (1838–1933), in the forefront of the battle against Enlightenment and the growing forces of Socialism and Zionism in Eastern Europe. His response to the growing impact of modernity was not only general and attitudinal, as

- noted here and below (n. 20 sec. c), but also specific and substantive. When asked to rule on the permissibility of Torah instruction for women, he replied that, in the past, the traditional home had provided women with the requisite religious background; now, however, the home had lost its capacity for effective transmission, and text instruction was not only permissible but necessary. What is remarkable is not that he perceived the erosion of mimetic society, most observers by that time (1917–18) did, but rather that he sensed at this early a date, the necessity of a textual substitute. (*Likutei Halakhoh, Sotah* 21a [Pieterkow, 1918].) The remarks of the Hafetz Hayyim should be contrasted with the traditional stand both taken and described by the *Arukh ha-Shulhan, Yorch De'ah* 246:19. One might take this as further evidence of the difference between these two halakhists set forth in the text and documented in n. 7. One should note, however, that this passage was written at a much later date than the *Mishnah Berurah* at the close of World War I, when traditional Jewish society was clearly undergoing massive shock. (For simplicity's sake, I described the *Mishnah Berurah* in the text as a "code," as in effect, it is. Strictly speaking, it is, of course, a commentary to a code.)
7. Contrast the differing treatments of the *Arukh ha-Shulhan* and the *Mishnah Berurah* at *Orah Hayyim* 345:7, 539:15 (in the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*) 539:5 (in the *Mishnah Berurah*), 668:1, 560:1, 321:9 (*Arukh ha-Shulhan*) 321:12 (*Mishnah Berurah*). See also the revelatory remarks of the *Arukh ha-Shulhan* at 552:11. For an example of differing arguments, even when in basic agreement as to the final position, compare 202:15 (*Arukh ha-Shulhan*) with 272:6 (*Mishnah Berurah*). This generalization, like all others, will serve only to distort if pushed too far. The *Mishnah Berurah*, on occasion, attempts to justify common practice rather unpersuasively, as in the instance of eating fish on Sabbath, (319:4), cited above n. 3, and de facto, ratifies the contemporary *eruv* (345:7). Nor did the *Arukh ha-Shulhan* defend every common practice; see, for example, *Orah Hayyim* 551:23. (S. Z. Leiman has pointed out to me the distinction between the *Arukh ha-Shulhan* and the *Mishnah Berurah* is well mirrored in their respective positions as to the need for requisite *shiurim* in the standard *tallit katan*, noted by Rabbi E. Y. Waldenburg in the recently published twentieth volume of his *Tzitz Eliezer* [Jerusalem, 1994], no. 8, a responsum that itself epitomizes the tension between the mimetic culture and the emerging textual one.)
 8. To give a simple example: blessings over food (*birkhot ha-nehenin*) is a classic area of the mimetic tradition. The five basic *berakhot* are taught to children as soon as they begin to speak, and, by the age of four or five, their recitation is already reflexive. Grade school adds a few refinements and pointers about compounds, such as, sandwiches, or hot dogs, and there things more or less stand for the rest of one's life. Or at least, so it stood in the past. This is no longer so. In 1989 *The Hakachos of Berachos* by Yisroel P. Bodner appeared in both hardcover and paperback form and has been reprinted three times in as many years. Nevertheless, it did not slake the current thirst, for 1990 saw the appearance in the Art Scroll Series of *The Law of Berachos* by Binjamin Furst, a large and full tome of some 420 pages (Bodner's work was only 289 pages), and which, within a year, was already into its third printing! (The Bodner volume was printed in Lakewood, New Jersey, and copyrighted by the author; the Art Scroll book was printed by Mesorah Publications, New York.) (A comparison becomes all the more telling if one considers that attempts at translation and mass diffusion, analogous—in a sense—to Art Scroll, were made of both these books. The

- Seder Birkhot ha-Nehnin* of the *Shulhan Arukh* of the *Rav* was translated into Yiddish [Wilno, 1851] as was the *Hayyei Adam* [Wilno, 1884]. The popular handbooks of or those that included *birkhot ha-nehenin*, such as the *Kehillat Shelomoh* of Shelomoh Zalman London or the *Birkhot Menahem* of Gershon Menahem Mendel Shapira, are skeletal. [In the attempt at popularization, the translators of the *Hayyei Adam* felt they needed, in addition to the discussions of the original, a straightforward product guide and incorporated that of the *Birkhot Menahem*. Even this combined text has nothing of the scope of the above cited English works.] The Israeli counterpart is well exemplified by the two volumes, comprising some 630 pages, on the laws and customs of 'omer and *sefirat ha'omer*, published recently in Bnei Brak, a subject that had rarely, if ever, rated more than a hundred lines in the traditional literature. (Tzvi Cohen, *Sefirat ha-Omer* [Bnei Brak: n.p., 1985], idem, *Bein Pesach le-Shevu'ot* [Bnei Brak: n.p., 1986].)
9. See, for example, Carol Silver Bunim, *Religious and Secular Factors of Role Strain in Orthodox Jewish Mothers* (Ph.D. diss. Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University, 1986), pp. 161–76.
 10. The essay is now readily available in *Hazon Ish, Orah Hayyim, Mo'ed* (Bnei Brak: n.p., 1957), sec. 39 (*Kuntras ha-Shi'urim*). I have presented the famous upshot of his argument, germane to our discussion rather than the formal argument itself.
 11. Menachem Friedman, "Life Tradition and Book Tradition in the Development of Ultraorthodox Judaism" in Harvey E. Goldberg, ed., *Judaism Viewed from Within and from Without* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 235–38; idem, "The Lost Kiddush Cup: Changes in the Ashkenazi Haredi Culture: A Lost Religious Tradition," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), pp. 175–86. (See also David Singer, "Thumbs and Eggs," *Moment* 3 [Sept. 1978]: 36–37.)
 12. *Tzion le-Nefesh Hayyah* (*Tzlah*) (Prague, 1782), to *Pesachim*, fol. 116b; the opinion of the GRA is reported in the *Ma'aseh Rav* (Zolkiew, 1808).
 13. This point needs underscoring. The scholarly elite lived their lives, no less than did the common folk, according to the mimetic tradition. They may well have tried to observe more scrupulously certain aspects of that tradition and to fine-tune some of its details, but the fabric of Jewish life was the same for scholar and layman alike. The distinction in traditional Jewish society was not between popular and elite religion but between religion as received and practiced and as found (or implied) in the theoretical literature. This is what distinguishes the mimetic tradition from the "Little Tradition" formulated by Redfield. See Robert Redfield, *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.)
 14. Two points bear stating. First, because I am presenting the traditional society solely as a foil for my analysis of the contemporary condition, I present only those facts necessary for my argument. No world is homogeneous when seen from within; it admits of such a description only when viewed comparatively, as here. Second, Orthodox society is composed of Jews of Russian, Lithuanian, Polish, Galician, and Hungarian origin. In their contemporary form, these Jews have, I believe, common characteristics. When, however, one traces their past in a single paragraph, telescoping is inevitable. The dates given in the text are those that roughly approximate the Eastern European process. The Central European (i.e., Hungarian) encounter with modernity has its own time frame. Experiencing modernity without migration, Hungarian Orthodoxy

- displayed, often in an inflected form, several of the characteristics of current *haredi* society. The tendency to stringency appeared there early, though one feels it was more a response to the allowances of the Reform than to the processes described here. Similarly, the return to texts expressed itself not in a reconstruction of religious practice, as the received ones remained much entrenched, as in a total submission to the text of the *Shulhan Arukh*, a work which hitherto had been of great, but not binding, authority. On Hungary, see Michael Silber, "The Historical Experience of German Jewry and Its Impact on the Haskalah and Reform in Hungary," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Towards Modernity: The European Model* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987), pp. 107–59; and the latter's outstanding essay, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition" in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The Use of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* (above n. 11), pp. 43–85, and Jacob Katz's forthcoming work on Orthodoxy and Reform in Hungary, to be published by Mercaz Shazar, Jerusalem. The shtetl remained culturally isolated and wholly cut off from the surrounding gentile society to the end; see Ben Cion Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule: Eastern Poland on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 12–20; Celia Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: The Jews in Poland between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 7–20.
15. In these two sentences, I borrow and rearrange phrases from Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), pp. 5–6.
 16. Jacob Katz, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," in P. Y. Medding, ed., *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 2:3–17, and idem, "Traditional Society and Modern Society," in Shlomoh Deshen and W. P. Zenner, eds., *Jewish Societies in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C., 1982), pp. 33–47.
 17. For a survey of the legal status of custom, see M. Elon, ed., *The Principles of Jewish Law* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1975) s.v. *Minhag*. For overriding written law (*minhag mevattel halakhah*), see columns 97–99, and see "Laws of the Day of Atonement," in *Code of Maimonides, Book of Seasons* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 3:3; *Peri Hadash, Orah Hayyim* 496:2: 10; *Sedei Hemed, Ma'arekhet Mem, Kelal*, 39. (As consent is the controlling factor in most areas of civil law, common usage is usually taken as a self-understood, mutually agreed upon condition.)
 18. The traditional kitchen provides the best example of the neutralizing effect of tradition, especially since the mimetic tradition continued there long after it was lost in most other areas of Jewish life. Were the average housewife (*bale-boste*) informed that her manner of running the kitchen was contrary to the *Shulhan Arukh*, her reaction would have been a dismissive "Nonsense!" She would have been confronted with the alternative, either that she, her mother, and grandmother had, for decades, been feeding their families nonkosher food (*treifes*) or that the *Code* was wrong or, put more delicately, someone's understanding of that text was wrong. As the former was inconceivable, the latter was clearly the case. This, of course, might pose problems for scholars; however, that was their problem not hers. Neither could she be prevailed on to alter her ways, nor would an experienced rabbi even try. There is an old saying among scholars, "A *yidische bale-boste* takes instruction from her mother only."
 19. Chaim I. Waxman, "Towards a Sociology of Pesak" *Tradition* 25 (1991): 15–19. As n. 40 points out, a dramatic swing toward *humra* occurred in the Ashkenazic community during the waning of the Middle Ages. However, as further noted there, what is comparable is not necessarily similar and the parameters of this essay are the last three

hundred years of Eastern Europe Jewish history. There was something akin to a movement toward *humra* in Ashkenazic society with the advent of Lurianic kabbalah. That movement is so complex that any comparison to contemporary developments is beside the point. Suffice it to point out that what fueled much of that impetus was the perceived theurgic nature of religious performances, which led equally to the creation of new religious rites. See Gerson Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation in the Ritual of the Kibbalists," in Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 118–57. One of the salient characteristics of contemporary religious society is the disappearance among them of the animistic and symbolic universe that had nurtured this ritual impetus. Indeed, their intensification of ritual is partly a counterbalance to the defoliation of theurgic ritual that occurred in the wake of the acceptance by religious Jews, including the *haredi* sector, of the mechanistic cosmos of modern technology. See text below.

I find it difficult to view the *ba'al teshuvah* (new religious) movement as instrumental in the recent empowerment of texts, though the construction of religious life on the basis of texts is most noticeable with them, as they have no home tradition whatsoever. First, the process begins in *haredi* circles well before any such movement came into existence. Second, the impact of *ba'alei teshuvah* on such *haredi* bastions as Bnei Brak, Borough Park, and Stamford Hill, not to speak of such elitist institutions as the yeshivah, is less than negligible. It would be a mistake to equate their occasional prominence in the modern orthodox world, especially in outlying communities, with the deferential and wholly backseat role they play in the *haredi* order. Finally, the *ba'al teshuvah* movement is phenomenologically significant, not demographically.

20. (a) These tendencies have gained further impetus from the publication developments and the photo-offset revolution. The past thirty years have seen the publication of manuscripts of innumerable medieval commentators (*rishonim*), and photo-offset has further made them widely available. The number of different opinions currently available on any given issue far exceeds that of the past. One who has abandoned the past as a reliable guide for conduct in the present must now contend with a hitherto unheard-of variety of views.

(b) Hasidim, arriving in groups, rather than as individuals, and clustering centripetally around the court of the *rebbe*, generally maintained the mimetic observance a generation or so longer than their non-Hasidic counterparts. However, the past fifteen to twenty years has witnessed the initial absorption of the younger male generation of some Hasidic groups, such as Ger, for example, into the dominant text culture. Similarly, many married women of Ger have begun to attend classes on practical religious observance, as ongoing supplements to their education. As Hasidic women have been, traditionally, among the most ignorant segments of the religious population, the proliferation of such classes is a major development. The current need for some manner of education for women is clear, though its practical implications are viewed as undesirable, and attempts made to neutralize them. Hasidic women are taught that, when in conflict, book knowledge always yields to home practice. See Tamar El-Or, *Educated and Ignorant* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1994), pp. 89–135, esp. pp. 111–26.

(c) The contemporary shift to text authority explains the current prevalence in yeshivah circles of the rulings of the GRA. The GRA, while far from the first to

subject the corpus of Jewish practice to textual scrutiny, did it on an unprecedented scale and with unprecedented rigor. No one before him (and quite possibly, no one since) has so often and relentlessly drawn the conclusion of jettisoning practices that did not square with the canonized texts. Great as was the GRA's influence upon the *mode* of talmudic study and awesome as was his reputation generally, nevertheless, very few of his radical rulings were accepted in nineteenth-century Lithuania, even in the yeshivah world. (To give a simple example: the practice in the Yeshivah of Volozhin was to stand during the *havdaleh* service as was customary, rather than to sit as the GRA had insisted.) See also Aryeh Leib Fromkin, *Sefer Toldot Eliyahu* (Wilno, 1990), pp. 70–71. Seeking there to demonstrate, to an elite Lithuanian audience at the close of the nineteenth century, the uniqueness of his distinguished father and uncle, Fromkin points out that they were numbered among the very few who followed the rulings of the GRA. Most towns in Eastern Europe had traditions going back many centuries, and even the mightiest names could alter a practice here and there but could effect no wholesale revision of common usage. Indeed, the GRA's writ rarely ran even in Vilna (Wilno), outside of his own *kloyz* (the small synagogue where he had prayed). (I have heard this point made by former residents of Vilna. See also *Mishnah Berurah*, *Biur Halakhah*, 551:1, and note how rare such a comment is in that work.) Mark should be made of the striking absence of the GRA from the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, *Orah Hayyim*, written by one who was a distinguished product of the Yeshivah of Volozhin and rabbi of that bastion of Lithuanian talmudism, Navahrudok (Novogrudok). Indeed, the first major work known to me that systematically reckons with the *Biur ha-Gra* is the *Mishnah Berurah* and understandably so, as that work is one of the first to reflect the erosion of the traditional society (see, above, text and n. 6). With the further disappearance of the traditional *orah hayyim* in the twentieth century, the ritual of daily life had to be constructed anew from the texts; the GRA's work exemplified this process in its most intense and uncompromising form and with the most comprehensive mastery of those texts. It is this consonance with the contemporary religious agenda and mode of decision making (*pesak*) that has led to the widespread influence of the GRA today in the yeshivah and *haredi* world. (See below n. 68.) (S. Z. Leiman pointed out to me that S. Z. Havlin arrived at similar conclusions as to the delayed influence of the GRA on *pesak* and further corroborated them by a computer check of the Responsa Project of Bar-Ilan University. He presented his findings, in a still unpublished paper, at the Harvard Conference on Jewish Thought in the Eighteenth Century, April 1992.) (1) I emphasize that my remarks are restricted to *pesak* and do not refer to modes of study. In the latter field, the GRA's impact was both swift and massive. (2) In light of my remarks above, I should take care to add that though the GRA is noticeably absent as an *authority* in the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, that work is written in the spirit of the GRA, whereas the *Mishnah Berurah*, for all its deference to the GRA, is penned in a spirit antithetical to the one of the Gaon. The crux of the Gaon's approach both to Torah study and *pesak* was its independence of precedent. A problem was to be approached in terms of the text of the Talmud as mediated by the *rishonim* (and in the Gaon's case even that mediation was occasionally dispensed with). What subsequent commentators had to say about the issue was, with few exceptions (e.g., Magen Avraham, Shakh), irrelevant. This approach is writ large on every page of the *Biur ha-Gra*, further embodied in the *Hayyei Adam* and the *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, and has continued on to our day in the works of such Lithuanian *posekim* as the

Hazon Ish and R. Moshe Feinstein. The *Mishnah Berurah* rejects de facto this approach and returns to the world of precedent and string citation. Decisions are arrived at only after elaborate calibration of and negotiation with multiple "aharonic" positions.

21. See also Michael Oakeshot, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), p. 474. The entire essay "The Tower of Babel" is relevant to our larger theme, as is the one announced in the title.
22. The impetus to *humra* is so strong and widespread that the principle of *le-hotzi la'az 'al rishonim* has, for all practical purposes, fallen into desuetude. (*Le-hotzi la'az* states that any new stringency implicitly casts aspersions on the conduct of past generations and, hence, is to be frowned upon.)
23. I am addressing the intensification of ritual, not the nature of ritual in a highly performative religion, such as Judaism.
24. I make this observation on the basis of personal experience and conversations with members of the *haredi* community. The note of newness is noticeable in the 1954 statement of Moshe Scheinfeld, quoted in Menachem Friedman, "Haredim Confront the Modern City," in Medding, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (above n. 16), 2:81–82. On the exact text of that citation, see Chaim I. Waxman, "Towards a Sociology of *Pesak*," in Moshe Z. Socol, ed., *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1992), p. 225, n. 17. In Israel the trend had crystallized by 1963, but it was still viewed then, even by a perceptive observer, as a local phenomenon, characteristic of Bnei Brak and its satellite communities; see the citation of Elberg in Friedman's article (above n. 11), p. 235.
25. *Haredim* in America are at most third-generation, as there was no *haredi* presence or group formation in the period 1880–1920. See also Egon Mayer, *From Suburb to Shtetl: The Jews of Boro Park* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), pp. 47–51, and Samuel C. Heilman and Steven M. Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 191–92. Orthodoxy in America is, indeed, older; however, the text culture emerges from the *haredi* community. Its aptness is sensed by the younger orthodox generation, the first generation that was not raised in a Yiddish-speaking home, and has been swiftly appropriated by them.
26. I owe this observation to Samuel Heilman.
27. Mayer, *From Suburb to Shtetl*, p. 55. Eastern European Jewry encountered modernity with migration; Hungarian Jewry first encountered modernity in the nineteenth century and migration only in the mid-twentieth. As mentioned in n. 14, Central Europe had its own time frame. In this essay I deal primarily with the Eastern European experience while attempting to make some references to and allowances for the Hungarian one.
28. Certain Hasidic groups, segments of the *yishuv ha-yashan*, and those in *kolelim*. "Yeshivah towns," settlements built around a famous yeshivah or clusters of *kolelim* tend to have a far more modest lifestyle. This is a function in part of lower income, in part of ideology—not surprisingly, as people of university towns tend generally to live more simply than their urban brethren. The test of nonacculturation to the consumer culture comes when young couples leave the *kolel* environment for the city enclaves and move up the economic ladder.
29. Mayer, *From Suburb to Shtetl*, ch. 4, and his remarks at pp. 138–39. In this section I discuss the factors operative in the American *haredi* community (not to speak of the

one of modern Orthodoxy). The same forces are at work, in my opinion, in the Israeli community. However, because Israeli society first began to experience affluence only in the 1970s and because religious Jews there, especially *haredim*, constitute a far larger percentage of the general population than they do in America, the Israeli acculturation is less advanced, and forces exist that still resist the consumer culture. But acculturation there is, as any acquaintance with *haredim* will evince and as Menachem Friedman and Samuel C. Heilman document in their article "Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the Haredim," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalism Observed* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), pp. 197–264. Its presentation, however, would have entailed breaking both the format and the space limitations of the essay. For the portrayal would have to describe, for example, the pull of the *yishuv* and *kelitah*, which was similar to but far from identical with that of the melting pot. The loss of social and cultural control by the men of *aliyah bet* and the decline of the Socialist and Zionist ideologies after the establishment of the State of Israel would have to be placed alongside and compared with the loss of the authority by the WASP establishment in the 1960s. Nor could any analysis of the orthodox resurgence in Israel avoid making some correlation with the contemporary Sefaredic reassertion, much as the American Orthodox resurgence is linked, as we shall soon note in the text, with the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

30. The first record of the *neo-nigunim* was made by Sholomo Carlebach, *Haneshamah Loch*, cut in 1959. His compositions, thought innovative, were not rock. His numerous successors adopted wholeheartedly the contemporary beat. By the 1970s this music had reached floodtide and has continued unabated. See Mordechai Schiller, "Chassidus in Song—Not for the Record," *Jewish Observer*, March 1975, p. 21. Bodily response to syncopation seems a natural reaction. We do not syncopate, however, to Indian or Japanese music. Syncopation, which is experienced as a primal, almost involuntary response to a felt correspondence between an outside beat and the natural rhythm of the body is in reality culturally acquired. Precisely because it seems elemental, is it so significant an indicia of acculturation. Undeniably, the high sales and diffusion of the "neo-niggunim" also reflect the growing ubiquity, even need, of music by the populace, engendered by the high-fi revolution and that of the Walkman. This, however, would only underscore the extent to which all wings of the religious community partake in this transformation of taste of the host culture. The recently instituted *hakafot sheniyyot* amply make this point. See "Music to Tame the Heart or to Incite the Beast," *Jewish Observer*, January 1988, pp. 39–41. (Note also the arguments made by the critic in Mordechai Schiller, "Postscript #2: Jewish Music for the Record," *Jewish Observer*, December, 1975, pp. 25–26.)
31. See the newspaper articles quoted in Mayer, *From Suburb to Shtetl*, p. 171 n. 30; and see Chaim I. Waxman, *American Jews in Transition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), pp. 164–65; and Samuel C. Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith* (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), p. 123.
32. To give the reader some idea of the order of magnitude involved, I would simply note that the Union of Orthodox Congregations alone currently has some sixty to eighty thousand (!) products under its supervision. (So I have been informed by sources both in that organization and in the Rabbinical Council of America.) All figures are fluid, as much depends on how one should count, for example, the 57 varieties of Heinz's soup; by company, by item, or by number of separate ingredients

requiring rabbinic supervision? Even by a very restrictive count, the number would seem to be around 16,000, see "Food, Food: A Matter of Taste," *Jewish Observer*, April 1987, pp. 37–39. In my readings, I came across this passage and jotted it down: "The proliferation of Continental or Oriental eateries, Caribbean cruises, and Passover vacation packages, all under the strictest rabbinic supervision, serve witness to the fact that an upwardly mobile (conspicuous) consumer need not compromise his religious principles." Although somewhat exaggerated, the point is well taken. Unfortunately, I forgot to note the source. The parallel between the *embourgeoisement* of the lifestyle of contemporary Orthodoxy and that of the nineteenth-century German one is striking; see Mordecai Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 225–36.

33. See, for example, Sylvia-Ann Goldberg, *Les deux rives du Yabbok: la maladie et la mort dans le judaïsme ashkénaze: Prague XVI^e–XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1989). During most of this period the practices of Central and Eastern Europe were much the same. See, for example, the matter of *wachmacht*, in the next note.
34. On *wachmacht*, See Herman Pollack, *Jewish Folkways in German Lands* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1971), pp. 19–20; and Elliot Hurwitz, "The Eve of Circumcision: A Chapter in the History of Jewish Nightlife," *Journal of Social History* 23 (1989): 46–69, esp. n. 9. The practice was scarcely restricted to Central Europe, as the Weinreich's and Herzog's studies show. Uriel Weinreich, "Mapping a Culture," *Columbia University Forum* 6 no. 3 (1963): 19, map 3; Marvin Herzog, *Yiddish Language in Northern Poland: Its Geography and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), pp. 28–29. Any study of the primary sources cited by Pollack or by Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study of Folk Religion* (reprint: New York: Atheneum, 1970) shows to what extent Polish Jewry shared common folkways with their brethren in German-speaking lands.

Mention of demons evokes nowadays unease in most religious circles, including *haredi* ones. For the contemporary Ashkenazi community is acculturated, and one of its hallmarks, as will be noted subsequently in the text (and below n. 103), is its basic acceptance of the mechanistic universe of modern science with its disallowance of ghosts and demons. The simple fact, however, is that demons are part of both the talmudic and kabbalistic cosmology and equally, if not more so, of the traditional, Eastern European one. Only one major halakhic figure, Maimonides, influenced by the no less mechanistic universe of Aristotle, denied their existence. For this he was roundly castigated by the GRA, who equally pinpointed the source of Maimonides' skepticism on the matter *Bi'ur ha-Gra, Yoreh De'ah*, 179:13). Despite the enormous influence of the GRA today (see above n. 20), his words on this issue have fallen on deaf ears, or rather, consigned to oblivion.

Significantly, demons and ghosts are still part of the popular Israeli Sefaredi cosmology, and this is reflected in the preachings available on cassettes in Israel. This difference should be corollated with the divergence that exists on the issue of "hell-fire." Direct appeals to the horrors that await sinners are strikingly absent from contemporary Ashkenazic writings and equally from the burgeoning cassette literature. It is found abundantly, however, on the cassettes by Sefaredic preachers (e.g., R. Nissim Yagen in the series *Ner Le-Me'ah*: no. 41, *Neshamot*, no. 86, *Ha-Parpar ha-Kahol*, part 1, no. 140, *Ha-Shoshanah she-Navlah*; in the series *Hasdei Naomi*: no. 3, *Omek*

ha-Din). This suggests that in the Ashkenazic community, after some five or six generations of exposure to modernity, thoughts of the afterlife have lost much of their vivacity. The Jews from Muslim countries arrived in Israel soon after its founding in 1948. For those who came from rural areas this was their first encounter with the modern world; the same was true even for some coming from more urbanized settlements. Only a generation removed from their former culture, their vivid sense of the afterlife has not been dulled by modernity. See below n. 103. (Terror of the afterworld, one should add, has little to do with religious observance, for such fears continue as "popular beliefs," long after religious observance and even belief have been discarded.) The difficulty in proving such an assertion lies in the fact that in the written Ashkenazic literature of previous centuries, to the best of my very limited knowledge, there is equally little hellfire. Judaism did not have its Jonathan Edwards; and hellfire, even when preached, was not committed to writing. For example, the most famous hellfire preacher of nineteenth-century Lithuania was R. Mosheh Yitzhak, the *maggid* (preacher) of Kelm (d. 1900). Yet his published sermons, *Tokahas Hayyim* (Wilno, 1896), reflect little of this. Unless my cursory reading of contemporary Sefaredic works misleads me, there is equally little in Sefaredic writings that compares, either in extent or intensity, with their cassette literature. These issues are vital in understanding contemporary Jewish religiosity, and they well merit study by more knowledgeable people than myself, employing methods more sophisticated than the ones at my disposal. (For a similar transformation in spirituality, see our discussion of Divine Providence in the close of the essay.)

[1] There is little on contemporary Sefaredic religiosity, for the moment, see H. E. Goldberg, "Religious Response among North African Jews in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992], pp. 119–44, and the essay by Shelomoh Deshen "Ha-Datiyyut shel ha-Mizrahim: ha-Tzibbur, ha-Rabbanim ve-ha-Emunah," in the fall 1994 issue of *Alpayyim*. [2] A society without movies, television or radio, where the written word may inform but not titillate, will turn to preaching for both edification and entertainment. The growing popularity, indeed ubiquity, of cassette literature in *haredi* society is not then surprising. Its diffusion is further facilitated by free lending libraries run by both *haredi* institutions and public-spirited individuals. Thus, cassette tapes, the spoken word itself and not some written transcription thereof, constitute a major source for the study of contemporary spirituality. Yet to the best of my knowledge, this repository has remained virtually untapped by scholars. The only works known to me that have employed cassettes are the recently published study of Menahem Blondheim and Kim Caplan, "On Communication and Audio-Cassettes in the Haredi World," *Kesher* 14 (1993): 51–63, and an essay by the same Kim Caplan, "Al Derashot Mukklatot be-Hevrah ha-Haredit," in *Yahadut Zemaninu*, summer 1996. Indeed, with the notable exception of the Harvard College Library, whose Judaica librarian, Charles Berlin, has repeatedly shown himself to be some ten years ahead of scholars in recognizing what is essential material in their own disciplines, no library even collects these tapes systematically.)

35. See Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith*, pp. 98–100, 248–52; and Tamar El-Or, *Educated and Ignorant: Ultraorthodox Jewish Women and Their World* (above n. 20), pp. 189–200. I am unacquainted with a single religious leader who has not bemoaned the growing *embourgeoisement* of the Orthodox community.

36. I say "something about which to be genuinely different," for much that goes under the name "new ethnicity" appears, to my untutored eye, to have been aptly characterized by Gans as "symbolic ethnicity." See Herbert Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Culture in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2 (January 1979): 1–20. Characterize it as you will, Jewish religious distinctness is far more substantive than that of most ethnic groups in the United States and has a far more assured future.
37. This holds true, *mutatus mutandis*, of Israel; see above n. 29.
38. On the background of this "swing to the right" in the general Jewish community, see Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, pp. 183–93. For the broader American scene, see, for example, Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah, *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
39. To give a small but characteristic example: The previous generation has accepted as a matter of course the use, in documents, publications, even letterheads, of English name forms, as Moses, Nathan, Jacob, and the like. The members of the current generation decline to allow a hegemonic majority to first appropriate their own names and then return it to them in an altered state. They sign Moshe, Nosson, or Yakov.
40. *Berakhot* 8a. Some of the phenomena outlined here have parallels in previous periods of Jewish history, such as the retreat to "the four cubits of the Halakhah" mentioned here, the shift away from orality that attended the writing down of the Mishnah, the wholesale audit of contemporary practice in light of newly explicated texts that came in the wake of the intellectual revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the dramatic swing to stringency during the waning years of the Middle Ages. Nor should the developments in post-Expulsion Sefaredic communities be forgotten. What is parallel, however, is not necessarily comparable. Each occurred in a different historical setting, and its significance varied considerably from context to context. Be that as it may, the point of the essay is that this development is new in the sweep of Eastern European Jewish history of the last 350 years. See also above, n. 19.)
41. Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972), pp. 171–72. Among other things, he writes, "Indeed, when *Commentary* addressed a series of questions on Jewish belief to a large group of young Jewish religious thinkers and writers in 1966, the Holocaust did not figure among the questions, nor, it must be said, did it figure much among the answers."
42. O. U. Schmelz and Segio DellaPergola, "The Demographic Consequences of U.S. Jewish Population Trends," *American Jewish Yearbook* 92 (1992): 124–28. The precise numbers are subject to some controversy, as is often the case with such statistics. There is, however, little question as to the overall magnitudes.
43. "Incognito ergo sum" is not a phrase of my own minting but one I once heard in my college days.
44. I have used the term "close to a millennium" because there is considerable controversy as to the nature—indeed, the very existence—of asceticism in rabbinic Judaism. The various positions are discussed in Steven D. Fraade, "Ascetic Aspects of Ancient Judaism" in Arthur Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1987), pp. 253–88.
45. Unfortunately, no single work on medieval Jewish asceticism exists. Linked as it is with the purpose of human existence, its ubiquity is not surprising in a world steeped in Neoplatonic thought and which had its eye fixed steadily on the afterlife. The reli-

gious impulse continued long after the original philosophical component had disappeared. The ascetic ideal begins with what is perhaps the most influential ethical work in Jewish thought, Bahya Ibn Paquda's *Hovot ha-Levavot*. The ideal wends its way through such influential works as *Sefer Hassidim*, *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, *Sefer Haredim*, *Reshit Hokhmah*, *Shevet Mussar*, *Mesillat Yesharim*, down to the writings of R. Israel Salanter and his school in the late nineteenth century. (On *Hovot ha-Levavot*, see Alan Lazaroff, "Bahya's Asceticism against Its Rabbinic and Islamic Background," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1970): 11–38, with bibliography, and more recently, Hayyim Kreisel, "Asceticism in the Thought of R. Bahya ibn Pakuda and Maimonides," *Da'at* 21 (1998): 5–22. Much material on the later Middle Ages, often slighted in general surveys, can be found in Yaakov Elbaum, *Teshivah be-Lev ve-Kabbalat Yissurim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993). The waning of the ascetic and pessimistic dualism is already noticeable among some of R. Israel's successors, if I read them correctly. See Tamar Ross, *Ha-Mahshavah ha-Iyyunit be-Khitvei Mamshikhav shel R. Israel Salanter* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1986).

46. See, for example, the formulations of the *Shulhan Arukh* on conjugal relations, in *Orah Hayyim*, 240:8–9. Maimonides' position, expressed in the *Moreh Nevukhim* (2:36) that sexual activity was shameful, indeed, bestial, was rejected in view of the religious imperative of marriage and procreation. However, sexual relations beyond the minimum required by the Law or with any intent other than that of fulfilling the Law, or of a theurgic nature, were decried by most writers, such as Rabad of Posquieres in his influential *Ba'alei ha-Nefesh*, *Sha'ar ha-Kedushah*; Nahmanides, in his *Perush al ha-Torah* (to Lev. 18:6, 19:2); and the influential *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*. To what extent the ascetic ideal could and did compromise the most basic family obligations, including the most elementary conjugal ones, even among the most religiously scrupulous, as late as the nineteenth century, see Emmanuel Etkes, "Marriage and Torah Study among *Lomdim* in Lithuania in the Nineteenth Century," in David C. Kraemer, ed., *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 153–78, esp. pp. 170–73 and the citations of and about the GRA at pp. 154–55. (The GRA was probably conforming to R. Bahya's admonition in the *Sha'ar ha-Bittahon* against allowing a concern for wife and children to deflect attention from one's proper spiritual endeavors.) (There is, unfortunately, no serious study in either English or Hebrew of the traditional Jewish perception, or perceptions, of marital relations. A brief but convenient survey, indeed the only one on this subject, is George Vajda's "Continence, marriage et vie mystique selon le doctrine du judaïsme," now available in his *Sages et penseurs sépharades de Bagdad à Cordoue* [Paris: Cerf, 1989], pp. 45–56. The introduction and notes of Charles Mopsic's translation of *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*, namely *Lettre sur la sainteté* [Paris: Verdier, 1986], contain much useful and some out of the way material. See also J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, translated and with an Afterward by Bernard Dov Cooperman [New York: Schocken Press, 1993], p. 212. I should, perhaps, emphasize that the subject of the *Iggeret ha-Kodesh* is sexual relations, not pleasure. One might, at most, infer from a doctrine that it *logically* entails a legitimization of pleasure. Entailment, however, is not existence. For the latter, evidence must be brought that the thinker actually drew such a conclusion. I know of no medieval writer who legitimized pleasure or even entertained such a notion. Cf. Moshe Z. Socol, "Attitudes towards Pleasure in Jewish Thought: A Typological Proposal," in Jacob J. Schacter, ed., *Reverence, Righteousness, and Rahmanut*;

Essays in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung [Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc., 1992], pp. 293–314).

47. This conclusion is tentative, as I have made no thorough study of contemporary ethical literature. I can state that asceticism is noticeably absent from the writings of two of the most influential figures of our times, R. Eliyahu Dessler and the Hazon Ish. Nor have I found it, except in the most attenuated form, in a random sample of thirty-odd works of contemporary *mussar*, whether in English or Hebrew, by writers both famous and little known. The contrast between these writers, many of whom are the spiritual heirs of the *mussar* movement, and the writings of that movement itself is striking. See R. Eliyahu Dessler, *Mikhtav me-Eliyahu* 4 vols. (reprint; Jerusalem: n.p., 1987) (the passage in vol. 3, pp. 152–53 is the exception that proves the rule); Hazon Ish, *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bittahon* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1954); idem, *Kovetz Igrot*, 3 vols. (Bnei Brak: n.p., 1990). Further indications may be found in the absence of any accounts of ascetic practices in the biographies, possibly hagiographies, that are published now. Whether the various talmudic greats of recent memory practiced asceticism awaits determination. Clearly, however, tales of such practices either are not current or they would not be well received by the contemporary audience. For sample biographies, see the volumes mentioned in n. 62, as well as Aaron Sorasky, *Reb Elchonon: The Life and Ideals of Rabbi Elchonon Bunim Wasserman of Baranovich* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1982); Shimon Finkelman, *Reb Chaim Ozer: The Life and Ideals of Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski of Vilna* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1987).
48. To be sure, there still are some groups among Hasidim that practice some forms of asceticism. For example, Ger (or elite groups in Ger) looks askance at sexual foreplay and seeks to restrict sexual relations to the reproductive act itself. Slonim discourages eating precisely those foods for which one has a strong preference. Significantly, however, these aspirations and directives are kept secret, and great pains are taken to insure that they are not made known to the larger public, who being totally unattuned to the ascetic impulse, indeed, unable even to comprehend it, would immediately stamp these Hasidic groups as strange and extremist. The pamphlet of Ger on sexual relations is literally unobtainable to outsiders and is known beyond the circle of Ger only by word of mouth, though it has generated a counterliterature, e.g., *Mishkan Yisrael* 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: n.p., 1991). Any comparison of this work, which has the approbation of such distinguished Talmudists as Rabbis Y. S. Elyashiv, N. Karelitz, and S. Volbeh, with the classic works cited above (n. 46) will evidence just how far contemporary Orthodoxy, including its *haredi* sector, has moved from the asceticism of the past. (I am indebted to Rabbi Moshe Meiselman both for the information about Slonim and for the reference of *Mishkan Yisrael*.)
49. Not that the ascetic impulse has now wholly disappeared from the surrounding society. There seems to be a fixed quantity of pain that people, in all periods, which to inflict upon themselves for the sake of some distant, possibly unattainable *summum bonum*. The rigors of monastic asceticism or of the flagellants find their equivalent in our ceaseless exercise and unremitting self-starvation undertaken for the sake of Beauty or in the name of something called Fitness. Now, as then, it is those free from the immediate burdens of subsistence who most hear the call of that higher good and voluntarily undertake to wear the hair shirt. This impulse is often linked to an attempt to move backward in time. We strive, no less than medieval men, to move backward

in time, we to Youth, they to Eden. To them the body was born with the taint of original concupiscence; to us it acquires too swiftly the odor of Age. They mortified the flesh to enable the soul to escape the confines of the body, we to enable the body to escape the ravages of time—each of the two equally impossible, by all rules of common sense, yet each pursued with equal vigor. To be sure the overwhelming majority of people eschewed the rigors of asceticism but probably never denied the rightness of the enterprise. Man, perhaps, even made some half-hearted attempts to engage in it themselves, much as exercise bikes and running shoes gathering dust in countless homes stand as witnesses to an aspiration rather than to any actual endeavor. (My remarks refer to American society generally, rather than to the religious Jewish community, who participate tepidly, at best, in this form of asceticism. In this regard, at least, contemporary Orthodoxy is still unacculturated. Nevertheless, as this community is the subject of this essay, I felt it more appropriate to use “original concupiscence” rather than “Original Sin.” The latter is alien to Jewish thought; the former is not. On man’s fall and his diminished, concupiscent state, see, for example, Bezalel Safran, “Rabbi Azriel and Nahmanides: Two Views of the Fall of Man,” in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides: Explorations in His Religious Virtuosity* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983], pp. 75–106.)

50. My remarks are based on personal acquaintance. I am unaware of any study of the recollections of the “old country” in the religious or *haredi* community in the decades following the Holocaust.
51. Creativity took the form of exegesis for the reasons spelled out by Gershom Scholem, in “Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism,” in his *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 289–90.
52. The *Sefer ha-Hinukh* comes to mind, as does the *Tzedah le-Derekh*. The former, however, is a primer, and the latter a handbook. I should underscore that I am referring to scholarly, secondary sources and not to codes, though there was no lack of opposition to codes, not only because of their tone of finality but also on account of their detachment from the life-giving, primary texts. On the opposition to codes, see Menahem Elon, *Ha-Mishpat ha-Ivri* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973), vol. 3, pp. 1005–18, 1140–41, 1145–72.
53. On the dialogic aspects of *lernen*, see the remarks of Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 16–24, esp. pp. 18–20.
54. The current popularity of the *Beit ha-Behirah* of R. Menahem ha-Meiri reflects this change in modes of learning. Meiri is the only medieval Talmudist (*rishon*) whose works can be read almost independently of the talmudic text upon which it ostensibly comments. The *Beit ha-Behirah* is not a running commentary on the Talmud. Meiri, in quasi-Maimonidean fashion, intentionally omits the give and take of the *sugya*; he focuses, rather, on the final upshot of the discussion and presents the differing views of that upshot and conclusion. Also, he alone, and again intentionally, provides the reader with background information. His writings are the closest thing to a secondary source in the library of *rishonim*. This trait coupled with the remarkably modern syntax of Meiri’s Hebrew prose have won for his works their current widespread use. It is not, as commonly thought, because the *Beit ha-Behirah* has been recently discovered. True, the massive Parma manuscript has been in employ only for some seventy years. However, even a glance at any Hebrew bibliography will show that much of the *Beit ha-Behirah* on *seder mo’ed*, for example, had been published long before Avraham

Sofer began his transcriptions of the Parma manuscript in the 1920s. (E.g. *Megillah*—Amsterdam, 1759; *Sukkah*—Berlin, 1859; *Shabbat*—Vienna, 1864.) Rather, Meiri's works had previously fallen stillborn from the press. Sensing their alien character, most scholars simply ignored them, and judging by the infrequent reprintings, if any, they also appear not to have found a popular audience. They have come into their own only in the past half-century. (On Meiri's quasi-Maimonidean intentions, see *Beit ha-Behirah, Berakhot*, ed. Y. Dickman [Jerusalem, 1965], introduction, pp. 25–32. Meiri consciously follows Maimonides in addressing the halakhic dicta rather than the talmudic discussion, in gathering scattered halakhic dicta under one roof, and in writing in neo-Mishnaic rather than rabbinic Hebrew. He parts company with Maimonides and follows R. Judah ha-Nassi in writing not topically but tractatewise and in registering multiple views. Indeed, no one writing after the dialectical revolution of the Tosafists could entertain again the Maimonidean notion of halakhic univocality.)

55. E.g. David I. Sheinkopf, *Issues in Jewish Dietary Laws: Gelatin, Kitniniyyot and Their Derivatives* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1988); Chaim B. Goldberg, *Mourning in Halakhah* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1991); not to speak of J. David Bleich's series *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* (New York and Hoboken: Ktav/Yeshiva University Press, 1977, 1981). The first large-scale, serious halakhic presentation in English was, to the best of my knowledge, that of Shimon D. Eider, (1970), which went through five printings in as many years. This, however, might yet be understood as an attempt to grapple with halakhic status and permissibility on Sabbath of the hundreds of new products of the modern consumer market, parallel to the groundbreaking work of Y. Y. Neuwirth, *Shemirat Shabbat ke-Hilkhatah*, which had appeared in Jerusalem some five years earlier. Whatever its nature at the time of publication, in retrospect it was clearly a harbinger. (The first scholarly, secondary text in Halakhah known to be was Y. Y. Greenwald, *Ah le-Tzarah* [New York, 1939]. It was well received, for it dealt with the laws of mourning, an area of religious observance that second-generation American Jews by and large still kept. Its success was due to its utility as a rabbinical handbook, rather than to any cultural receptivity to secondary texts, as nothing similar appeared for the next quarter of a century. *Ah le-Tzarah* has been republished recently under the title *Kol Bo 'al Aveilut* [New York: Feldheim, 1973].)
56. Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), pp. 247–57. There is, strictly speaking, no proper term for the phenomenon described. "Diglossia" is the use of an upper and lower dialect of the same language, as classical and colloquial Arabic. However, I find this term preferable to "internal bilingualism" and other such locutions used to distinguish the case of Yiddish and Hebrew in the Ashkenazic world from ordinary "bilingualism." Bilingualism, generally, denotes the use of two languages, such as English and French, reflective of two distinct cultures, rather than, as here, the use of two separate languages, both of which are the exclusive products of a single culture.) Whether the cleavage fell along the lines of oral and written discourse, rather than learned and popular or sacred and secular, is irrelevant to our presentation.
57. Khone Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yiddish be-Polin* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981), pp. 52–56; idem, *Sifrut Yiddish, Perakim le-Toldotehah* (Tel Aviv: Mif'alim Universita 'iyyim le-Hotza'ah le-Or, 1978), pp. 9–24, 37. See also *Teshuvot Maharil he-Hadashot* (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1977), no. 93.

58. Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yiddish, Perakim le-Toldotehah*, pp. 20–21 and n. 16. So deep ran the perceived necessity of Hebrew that works originally composed in Yiddish would be translated and printed in Hebrew. The printed Hebrew text would then be translated back into Yiddish, and this translation, rather than the original Yiddish text, would be published. A book that was published in Yiddish was not perceived as really “existing”; Hebrew books alone existed, and, translations could only be made of “existing” works. See Sara Zfatman, *Nissuei Adam ve-Shedah* (Jerusalem: Akademion, 1988), pp. 21–24. The “non-existence” of Yiddish works expressed itself also in their frequent destruction. Unlike books printed in Hebrew, no aura of sanctity attended them, and no effort was made to preserve them. See Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yiddish be-Polin*, p. 23.
59. Despite almost uniform *haredi* insistence, in the United States, England, and Israel, on the use of Yiddish, both in the yeshivah and at all official functions, nevertheless, there is little tape literature in Yiddish. The preachers are only too well aware that to reach people they had best speak in the mother tongue of the community. (The flat statement in the text of linguistic acculturation is somewhat less true of the more separatist and better segregated sectors of the Hasidic community, which, unlike the yeshivah world, make specific efforts to speak Yiddish also in the house—and with some degree of success. Yet the evidence of the tapes, together with the high total absence of any Yiddish works in the current explosion of religious publications, would seem to indicate the ultimate failure of their valiant efforts.)
60. Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 29–32. For Lithuania, see pp. 233–35, 227; Latvia, pp. 250–52; Rumania, pp. 180–83.
61. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1982), pp. 5–52.
62. E.g., the biographies cited above in n. 47 and the works cited below in n. 94 (most of which were initially published in Hebrew); to which one could add Nisson Wolpin, ed., *The Torah Profile: A Treasury of Biographical Sketches. Collected from the Pages of The Jewish Observer* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1988); Jacob H. Sinason, *The Gaon of Posen: A Portrait of Rabbi Akiva Guens-Eger* (London: J. Lehman, 1989); Yaakov M. Rapoport, *The Light from Dvinsk: Rav Meir Simcha, The Ohr Sameyach* (Southfield, Mich.: Targum Press, 1990). To be sure, biographical notes and reminiscences appeared in the previous century soon after the death of numerous famous Talmudists. These, however, were more in the nature of eulogies and necrologies than of biographies. More significantly, these were read by few, if at all. The popular image was a product of collective memory, scarcely of these ephemera.
63. To be sure, the line between the writing of history as it must have happened and the rewriting of history as it should have happened is fine indeed, as is often the line between believer and committed partisan. It is, however, no less real for the fact. A good example of ideological history in English (without any stand taken on which side of that thin line it falls) is Berel Wein, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jewish People in the Modern Period* (Monsey: Sha’ar Press, 1990); see Monty N. Penkower’s review in *Ten Daat* 6 (1992): 45–46. Another instance is the recent and much publicized withdrawal from print, by a famous yeshivah, of a translation of a well-known early-twentieth-century autobiography (*Mekor Barukh*), because its accounts do not square with the current image of the past. See Jacob J. Schacter, “Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Close of the Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1892,” *The Torah U-Madda*

- Journal* 2 (1990): 76–133. (See, further, nn. 1 and 5 for examples of intentional censoring by the translator himself.) A good Hebrew example of this genre is Yehudah Salomon, *Yerushalayyim shel Ma'alalah* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 1992).
64. These remarks are psychological rather than philosophic: not what makes the moral act, obedience or insight, but how is the sense of the dictate's rightness instilled? What evokes the answering echo of assent to its mandate?
 65. More broadly, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 126–41, and idem, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968), pp. 35–55.
 66. Ibid.
 67. I am indebted to Robert Redfield's essay "The Genius of the University" for the analogy and, for all purposes, also for the very phrasing. The passage is found in Redfield, *The Social Uses of Social Science: The Papers of Robert Redfield* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), vol. 2, pp. 244–45. (I altered the verbs, as I felt that "submerged" was more apt than "lost.")
 68. Argument might be made, and indeed it has, that the widespread attendance of yeshivot is a major cause of the emergence of the text culture. No doubt there is currently some mutual reinforcement; however, to my mind, such a contention confuses cause with effect. The text culture arose as the mimetic society faded, and that *same* disappearance created the new role of the yeshivot. As long as the mimetic society was vibrantly alive, as it was during the lifetime of the Yeshivah of Volozhin, practice was governed by tradition rather than by text, even in the archetypical yeshivah bastion of the GRA. See above n. 20. Indeed, to the best of my limited personal knowledge, religious practice in the yeshivot of both Mir and Telz (Telsiai) in the interwar years, was still governed by tradition. The text culture, as we know it today, was not then present in those institutions. The current practice of *shiurim*, for example, was restricted to isolated individuals, usually one who had some family tradition on the matter.
 69. Thus, the plaint voiced in some quarters, that in Europe, unlike contemporary America or Israel, only a handful of students, and an elite group at that, studied in yeshivot or *kolelim*, while today it has become mass education, even for the untalented, is historically correct but sociologically beside the point. The role of yeshivot and *kolelim* has changed dramatically, and the new demographics—the mass attendance—simply mirror this fact.
 70. See Oscar and Mary F. Handlin, "A Century of Jewish Migration to the United States," *American Jewish Year Book* (1948–49): 30–42, 45–64. The full list may be found in *The Jewish Communal Registrar of New York, 1917–1918* (New York: Kehillah [Jewish Community], 1918). (I would like to thank Jeffrey Gurock for providing me with the last reference.)
 71. The figures given are for the year 1942, which was investigated by Dr. Don Well in a study based on demographic data collected by the Board of Jewish Education of New York. I would like to thank him for sharing with me his findings. (The term "day schools" includes both day schools and what are called "yeshivah high schools," i.e., the number cited is for institutions both of the "right" and of the "center.")
 72. The term *yeshivot* is here used to denote post-high school education. Exact figures are hard to come by but not the order of magnitude. It would be surprising if the number of yeshivah students exceeded 750 at the close of World War II.

73. Charles Liebman, "The Training of American Rabbis," *American Jewish Year Book* 69 (1968): 3–112 (reprinted in idem, *Aspects of the Religious Behavior of American Jews* (New York, 1974), pp. 1–110.
74. For a convenient collection in English by one of the secularists, see Saul L. Goodman, ed., *The Faith of Secular Jews* (New York: Ktav, 1976). See also Ruth Wisse, "The Politics of Yiddish," *Commentary* 80 (July 1985): 29–35. (I would like to thank David Fishman for drawing my attention to Goodman's book.)
75. Such a moment, to some, was *Slihos* time, early September of 1910, when labor and management reached agreement on the famous "Protocol" that resolved the Cloak-makers' Strike.
76. The social ideologies disappeared as the Jews moved out of the proletariat. "Secular Judaism," however, was rooted in cultural rather than class assumptions, and the reasons for its demise lie outside the economic sphere. Ethnic neighborhoods disappeared at the same time and for the same reason. As long as Jews felt themselves, however resentfully and unwillingly, as essentially different, in some sense, from the rest of the populace, living alongside Gentiles, not to speak of close friendships with them, was not realistic. With the sharp shrinkage of the sense of social alienation from both within and without, that is, with the disappearance of the felt sense of otherness by third-generation Jews, on the one hand, and the concomitant or parallel lessening of social anti-Semitism, on the other, Jewish residential patterns changed. Jews moved into neighborhoods that were partially or even predominantly Jewish, but these were a far cry from the tightly meshed, almost hermetically sealed, ethnic neighborhoods of the first half of the century, in which one could walk for blocks without ever seeing a Gentile face.
77. Study of Dr. Don Well cited above, n. 71. (The numbers given in the study are 5,800 and 168,300.)
78. Notably the dynasties of Fer, Sochaczew, and Alexandrów. Lubavitch established a yeshivah toward the end of the nineteenth century. (Not that *talmud torah* was peripheral to these dynasties, rather its institutional expression in the form of yeshivah was.) I am unaware of any study of Hasidic *yeshivot*. Some basic data may be obtained from Samuel K. Mirsky, ed., *Mosdot Torah be-Iropa be-Binyanam u-be-Hurbanam* (New York: Ogen, 1956). There is much information on the rise in the axiological standing of Torah study *talmud Torah* in Polish Hasidism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Mendel Piekarz, *Hassidut Polin: Megamot Ra'ayoniyyot Bein Shetei ha-Milhamot u-be-Gezeirot Tash-Tashah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1990), pp. 50–81. He sees this rise as a response to the growing inroads of secularization, which would, *mutatus mutandis*, dovetail with our basic thesis, as would equally—what others have told me—that the yeshivah played a progressively more central role in Ger during the interwar period. Eastern European *haredi* communities were severely affected by the dislocations wrought by World War I and the Russian Revolution. Indeed, the more one studies the interwar period, the more one senses that a number of the traits of the text culture outlined in this chapter began first to then take shape.
79. To explain the *haredi* resurgence by its newly acquired affluence leaves unexplained why in the 1930s and 1940s every step up the economic ladder meant a step away from Orthodoxy and why that same upward mobility now makes simply for an affluent Orthodox Jew. As large a role as money may play in human aspirations, nevertheless, a bank account in itself neither reduces nor induces religiosity.

80. *New York Times*, April 26, 1990, section B. pg. 1; *The Jewish Observer*, May 1990, pp. 4–14.
81. Eliezer Bruchstein, "The Impact of Automation on the Torah World," *Jewish Observer*, September 1987, pp. 47–51. TCN (Torah Communications Network) has twenty-six centers in major cities of the United States and Canada.
82. Most explicitly by R. Hayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* (reprint: New York, 1972), *Sha'ar ha-Revi'i*. See Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1989).
83. The political and religious power of the *rebbe* remains intact, though unless I am very much mistaken, the growth of Hasidic yeshivot will ultimately take its political toll, not in the delegitimation of the *rebbe*'s political power but in the marked restriction of his competency in halakhic matters, with all its far-reaching implications.
84. I say "generally," for power could equally shift to the other master of the book, the *posek* (religious decisor), who rules on the unending stream of questions that members of a text society inevitably pose. Indeed, in Israel it would appear that the successors to the current embodiment of *da'as Torah* will be prominent *dayyanim* (judges) and *posekim*, such as Rabbis N. Karelitz and S. Z. Auerbach. (I am indebted to Rabbi Moshe Meiselman for this point.)
85. (a) I emphasize "in the last century," for the nineteenth century is the proper foil for the twentieth-century developments being described here. In prior centuries, yeshivot had been municipal institutions. The standard rabbinical contract gave the rabbi the right to maintain a yeshivah of a specific size, to be supported by the local community. The founding of the Yeshivah of Volozhin in 1803 established the yeshivah as a regional institution. It proved archetypical of most major yeshivot founded subsequently. See Shaul Stampfer, *Shalosh Yeshivot Lita'iyot be-Me'ah ha-Tesha-Esreh* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1981), pp. 1–8, and more generally, Jacob Katz, "Jewish Civilization as Reflected in the Yeshivot," *Journal of World History* 10 (1966–67): 674–704. I have found little evidence that the traditional authority of the rabbinate was eroded over the course of the nineteenth century (cf. Emmanuel Etkes, "Talmudic Scholarship and the Rabbinate in Lithuanian Jewry," in Leo Landman, ed., *Scholars and Scholarship: The Interaction between Judaism and Other Cultures* [New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1990], pp. 127–29). Until the death of R. Hayyim Ozer Grodzinski in 1940, political leadership was firmly in the hands of the rabbinate. Prestigious rabbinic posts were seen as the true reward of scholarship, and the attainment of such posts as Kovna (Kaunas), Vilna, and Dvinsk (Daugavpils) was the widespread aspiration of talmudic scholars the world over. (The Hungarian pattern was somewhat different; however, as stated in n. 14, our discussion follows the lines of development in Eastern rather than Central Europe.) (b) One should add that while it is correct that R. Hayyim of Volozhin and his son R. Yitzhak did exercise political power and were viewed, on occasion, as the representatives of the Jewish community of Russia, this was due more to R. Hayyim's stature as the leading pupil of the GRA and the mystique that attended his personal relationship with that almost legendary figure (a mystique that carried over to his son), not to their standing as *roshei yeshivah* of Volozhin. Significantly, their successor, R. Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, commonly known as the Netziv, had no similar status during his long and distinguished tenure as *rosh yeshivah*. Indeed, he was not even first among rabbinic equals.

- That sobriquet, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, would have been bestowed on his contemporary, R. Isaac Elchanan Spector of Kovna.
86. This was a creative mistranslation of the German *Thoratreu* (faithful to the Torah), used by the neo-Orthodoxy of Germany. It was first used by modern Orthodoxy but subsequently attained far greater currency among what is called right-wing (though not *haredi*) Orthodoxy. See Jenna W. Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews: The Orthodox Community in the Interwar Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 4.
 87. *Da'as Torah* first made its appearance, in the modern sense of the word, in Hasidic writings of the late nineteenth century and was amplified in the interwar period by the Agudat Yisrael in Poland to advance claims of empowerment of a scholarly body (*Mo'etzes Gedolei ha-Torah*) that remained, nevertheless, largely powerless. It comes into its own as a political and ideological force only in the postwar period. On Hasidic Poland, see Mendel Piekarz, *Hassidut Polin: Megamot Ra'ayoniyyot Bein Shetei ha-Milhamot u-be-Gezeirot Tash-Tashah*, pp. 86–96. On Agudat Yisrael, see Gerson Bacon, "Da'at Torah ve-Hevlei Mashiah," *Tarbiz* 52 (1983): 497–508. See Lawrence Kaplan, "Daas Torah: A Modern Conception of Rabbinic Authority" in Moshe Z. Socol, ed., *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1992), pp. 1–60, esp. n. 84. Jacob Katz, in the introductory essay of his *Ha-Halakhah be-Metzar* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), pp. 19–21, sees the origin of the current *da'as Torah* in the religious struggles with the Reform movement in Central Europe. This etiology may well be correct and does not conflict in any way with our interpretation. Nevertheless, I think that, if left unqualified, it may obscure more than enlighten. The struggle with Reform was a religious struggle and fought on religious issues. It is one thing for the laity to believe that decisions on ritual, even those that were halakhically neutral, should be in the hands of the rabbinate and that their decisions on such matters should be binding, even if no halakhic chapter and verse could be cited for such rulings. It is a wholly different thing to defer to rabbinic authority on social and political issues that are only tangentially religious, if at all. It is the latter, the new political empowerment, that is the subject of both Bacon's study and this essay. I should add as a caveat that I have made no personal study of the *term* (as opposed to the reality of) *da'as Torah* but have relied here on the studies of others. (See also the understandable *haredi* reaction to the suggestion that *da'as Torah* is a modern phenomenon, in Yaakov Feitman, "Daas Torah—an Analysis," *Jewish Observer*, May 1992, pp. 12–27. Talmudic authorities did indeed take stands on political issues in the past. What is new in the contemporary scene is the unprecedented frequency and scope of these stands and the authority currently ceded to them.)
 88. I am indebted to Rabbi Moshe Meiselman for this point. (The term "old order" merits comment. The "old order" in the Eastern European past was predominantly a lay one, composed of powerful *ba'alei battim*, and in this sense has this term, or its equivalent, been used throughout the essay. The "old order" of contemporary Orthodoxy, the subject of this paragraph, is the alliance of members of the traditional establishment—influential laymen, Hasidic rabbis, and elements of the old rabbinate—currently arrayed against the masters of the book.
 89. Edward A. Fram, *Jewish Law and Social and Economic Realities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Poland* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1991).
 90. *Da'as Torah* may not be wholly as strange as it first appears to an American outsider.

The United States similarly believes that issues as broad as racial integration and as intimate as birth control can best be decided by nine sages steeped in the normative texts of the society and rendering their opinions in its legal idiom. And a Jewish historian might note that America, equally, has no mimetic tradition, either of peasantry or aristocracy—nor of clergy, for that matter. Perhaps a nation that saw its birth in one text and was bonded by another, and had throughout its history amalgamated its ceaseless flow of immigrants by fealty, yet again, to a text, has something in common with contemporary Orthodox society.

91. See Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (above, n. 46), pp. 197–213. I have used ecstatic religiosity for expositional purposes only. I take no stand on what unique aspect of the Hasidic *zaddik* delegitimized the traditional religious structure: his virtuosity in religious ecstasy or his standing as the *axis mundi*, the channel through which the Divine force nurtures the world. See Arthur Green, “Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq,” in Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 127–56, and notes throughout. (For a full bibliography on this issue, see Rachel Elior, “Temurot be-Makshevah ha-Datit be-Hassidut Polin: Bein Yir’ah ve-Ahavah le-Omek ve-Gavvan,” *Tarbiz* 62 [1994]: 387 n. 9.)
92. I am indebted to Michael Silber for this point.
93. A. A. Droyanov, *Otzar ha-Bedihah ve-ha-Hiddud* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1939), vol. 1, chap. 6. This collection is of the gentler humor. The more mordant jokes still await compilation. (I am not referring to literary satire, of which there was no lack, but to popular humor, which is probative of our point.)
94. For examples in English, see Shimon Finkelman, *The Chazon Ish: The Life and Ideals of Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1984), pp. 203–12; idem, *Reb Moshe: The Life and Ideals of Hagaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1986), pp. 237–49. (a) It is true that for several decades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some wonder stories circulated about the GRA. This arose both as a counter to Hasidic *rebbeim* and as a consequence of the singular charisma of the GRA. Here, as occasionally elsewhere [see n. 85], this charisma spilt over to his prime pupil, R. Hayyim of Volozhin, and in the general atmosphere of the time, some stories told of any subsequent *misnaggdic* rabbi, including R. Hayyim’s son, R. Isaac of Volozhin. On wonder tales of the GRA and R. Hayyim, see Emmanuel Etkes, “Darko u-Fo’alo shel R. Hayyim mi-Volozhin,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Social Research* 38–39 [1972]: 44 n. 128. (b) The loss of antipathy to miracles, albeit still told about Hasidic rabbis, may well have begun earlier. Note the surprising signatories of the letters of approbations [*haskamot*] of Gerson E. Stashevski’s *Sefer Gedulat Mordecai u-Gedulat ha-Tzaddikim* [Warsaw, 1934]. David Tamar once pointed out this text to me in a different context.) (The growing iconic role of the Torah sage also reflects, to an extent, the sensed uniqueness of his religious authenticity and the comfort that his visual presence provides for an increasingly acculturated community. See Richard I. Cohen’s recent essay on the role of pictures of *gedolei Torah*, “Ve-Yihyu Enekha Ro’ot et Morekha: ha-Rav ke-Ikunin,” *Zion* 58 [1993]: 407–52.)
95. Needless to say, some of the older congregants, including, of course, the *roshei yeshivah*, were Eastern European-born, and the fear that had been instilled in them in their youth was palpable.

96. I have borrowed the vivid lines of the *u-netaneh tokef* prayer only to convey the atmosphere of *Ne'ilah*. The prayer itself is, of course, recited in *musaf*. (I should add that the borrowing is apt, for the only other time the synagogue filled up was at the recitation of the starkly personal and anthropomorphic *u-netaneh tokef*.)
97. For an *analogous* instance of the persistence in Eastern European immigrants of early notions of causation and punishment, see Barbara Meyerhoff's account of the efficacy of curses in *Number Our Days* (New York: Dutton, 1979), esp. pp. 164, 183.
98. I shared this impression with my father in 1969 and discovered that he was of a similar mind, at least about the American community with which he was familiar. Indeed, he had given expression to something much akin to this in a speech a few years before; see J. B. Soloveitchik, *Al ha-Teshuvah* (Jerusalem: Histadrut ha-Tziyyonit ha-Olamit, 1975), p. 199.
99. See, for example, Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982). It is worth adding that a religious cosmology, or what is sometimes mistakenly called an "Age of Faith," does not necessarily entail greater religious observance, though this is sometimes assumed. There is no necessary relation between the two. The difference between a religious cosmology and a natural one lies in the way the notion of God is entertained: as a belief or as an invisible reality. The question of religious observance lies in the strange disjunction that exists in human beings between knowledge and action. One can take the reality of God as a physical given and still be casual about *kashrut* or eating meat on Friday, just as one can smoke and lead the life of a couch potato without for a moment doubting the reality of cancer cells or cholesterol.
100. See, for example, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971); David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Boston: Badger, 1918), vol. 1, pp. 205–306.
101. The *Tzenah Re'enah*, of R. Jacob of Janow, is far more than simply an amplified translation of the Torah, it is rather a vade mecum to the entire Midrashic world. Between 1622 and 1900 it was reprinted no less than 173 times (Shmeruk, *Sifrut Yiddish: Perakim le-Tolodotehah* [above, n. 57], p. 115), and its cumulative impact on the religious outlook and spirituality of Eastern European Jewry was incalculable.
102. Much source material on this theme can now be conveniently found in Anson Laytner, *Arguing with God: A Jewish Tradition* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1990).
103. The striking, palpable silence of the Ashkenazic *haredi* community in the Peretz affair is, to my mind, indicative of this loss. Rabbi Isaac Peretz, a Sefardi *haredi* and Israeli minister of interior, stated that the seventeen children and five adults killed when a train ran over their school bus died because of the recent public desecration of Sabbath in Petah Tikvah. These remarks caused a furor in the general community. Yet, other than a statement of support by Rabbi Shakh immediately after the storm broke (*Ha-Modi'a*, June 28, 1986, pp. 1, 3), the Ashkenazi *haredi* press made no further mention of the matter despite the furor of the next two months. Not for lack of opportunity, however, as those months witnessed continuous demonstrations against the theaters in Petah Tikvah, all of which was covered in the *haredi* press, both in *Ha-Modi'a* and the newly formed *Yated Ne'eman*. Rabbi Peretz's remarks simply expressed the classic religious explanation of linking misfortune with guilt (*pishpush*

be-ma'asim), which would have been uttered by a preacher of the past millennium. Indeed, R. Nissim Yagen, the Sefaredi preacher, brought further proof of the causal link, as would have preachers of the past, by pointing out a number of correlations: first, that the number of the dead totaled twenty-two, which was also the date of the public opening of the movie theaters in Petah Tikvah (22 Sivan); second, the sum total of the dead and wounded amounted to thirty-nine, which corresponds to the number of types of work forbidden on the Sabbath (*lamed-tet avot melakhot*). As noted above (nn. 34, 19), the Sefaredic world has encountered modernity only recently, and in many ways, as in the palpable sense of the rewards and terrors of the afterlife and of God's immediate involvement in human affairs, remains far closer to the religious sensibilities of their fathers than does the more unconsciously acculturated members of the Ashkenazic community. This distance is true even of one of the least acculturated elements of the Ashkenazic *haredi* world, Hasidic women; see Tamar El-Or, *Educated and Ignorant* (above, n. 20), p. 154. (R. Peretz's remarks were first reported in the Jerusalem weekly, *Kol Ha-Ir* of June 21, 1985. [I am indebted to Chaim I. Waxman for this reference.] Rabbi Yagen's remarks are on the tape series, *Ner le-Me'ah*: no. 41, *Neshamot*.)