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## Facing the Truths of History

In its 24 Teves 5754 issue, the English edition of the *Yated Ne'eman* published a brief biography of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler by one of his most devoted disciples in commemoration of the fortieth *yabrtzeit* of that great twentieth century Jewish leader. In the course of describing R. Dessler's childhood, the author included a section entitled "Torah Im Derech Eretz—Kelm Style" where he discussed some of the influences to which "little Elia Laizer" was exposed as a young boy. His father, R. Reuven Dov Dessler, was a student of R. Simḥah Zissel Ziv who, in turn, was a student of R. Yisrael Salanter. In keeping with R. Yisrael's desire to create Torah institutions which would inspire "*ba'alei batim* filled with Torah and *mussar*," R. Simḥah Zissel founded a yeshiva in Grobin which included the teaching of Russian language, history, geography and other secular studies as part of its formal curriculum, in addition, of course, to traditional Jewish texts. He felt that "*ba'alei batim*" would need to know more than "Torah and *mussar*" in order to be successful. R. Reuven Dov studied in this yeshiva as a young boy, internalized its values even as he became an affluent businessman, and was intent upon transmitting them to his own son. During his childhood years, Rabbi Dessler was taught at home and, wrote the author of this article, "true to the principles of his *rebbe*, R' Simcha Zissel, the boy's father included general studies in the curriculum. Among these were some classics of world literature in Russian translation. One of them (so Rabbi Dessler told me) was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The reason for this choice is not far to seek."<sup>1</sup>

A reaction to this part of Rabbi Dessler's biography was not long in coming. Three weeks later, in its 16 Shvat 5754 issue, the *Yated* pub-

lished a letter to the editor which was extremely critical of that newspaper's decision to publish this information. Expressing his "amazement and outrage," the correspondent noted the enormous responsibility which rests upon the editorial staff of the *Yated* to "maintain a constant vigilance over every sentence and phrase that it publishes, in order to ensure that *emunah, Torah and yiras Shomayim* shall be strengthened by that phrase." Since, he continued, "you will surely admit that the references to 'some classics of world literature in Russian translation,' etc. 'including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,' will not strengthen *emunah, Torah and yiras Shomayim* in any one of your readers," a grievous error was committed by their having been published.

Then, in conclusion, the author of the letter wrote: "One of the great features which distinguish the world of *Bnei Torah* from the other sections of Orthodox Jewry, is the readiness on our part to be '*modeb al ha'emess*,' to admit to the truth when we have made an error, because '*emess*'—the truth, the seal of the Almighty—is our greatest pride and possession. It should, therefore, be admitted, without hesitation, that the publication of the aforementioned chapter was an error, and special care should be taken to insure that such errors shall not be repeated in the future."<sup>2</sup> In this final argument, the author of this letter invoked truth as requiring the editors of the *Yated* to honestly acknowledge that they had made a mistake.

I understand and appreciate the first point made in this letter. Its author is arguing that he, as well as the editors of the *Yated*, are part of a community with a clearly understood and well articulated set of rules and norms about what kind of material is appropriate for inclusion in a "Torah" newspaper. Indeed, every newspaper, or any other publication for that matter, has a set of standards and guidelines which determine what type of material should or should not be included within its pages; rules governing inclusion and exclusion are commonly accepted in every aspect of any culture, with the possible exception of a few extreme cases. While one may disagree and feel that writing about Rabbi Dessler's reading classics of world literature including *Uncle Tom's Cabin* should not fall into any proscribed category, the author of the letter clearly feels that it does, and I therefore understand the essence of his argument that it should not have been published. Doing so has violated certain shared accepted norms, to paraphrase his argument.

What is problematic here, however, is that it was not R. Reuven Dov himself, and certainly not "little Elia Laizer," who decided that the young boy should study "classics of world literature in Russian translation." Rather, by exposing his son to "general studies," writes

the author of the article, R. Reuven Dov was simply being “true to the principles of his *rebbe*, R. Simcha Zissel.” R. Simḥah Zissel is the one who wanted him to engage in these studies. Surely this great *gadol* and *talmid* of R. Yisrael Salanter would never have done anything other than to strengthen “*emunah, Torah and yiras Shomayim*” in young yeshiva boys, and yet he obviously felt that such studies *were* appropriate. On what authority, then, does the author of this letter disagree with R. Simḥah Zissel and maintain that such studies indeed “will not strengthen *emunah, Torah and yiras Shomayim*?” It would have been more appropriate for the author of the letter to have acknowledged that while R. Simḥah Zissel had one opinion, times have changed and, therefore, “you will surely admit that the references to ‘some classics of world literature . . .’ will *no longer* strengthen *emunah, Torah and yiras Shomayim*. . . .”

But I want to raise a more fundamental problem with the final argument adduced in this letter, i.e., the argument from truth. Is it not possible, in fact, to invoke this very same argument to arrive at the very opposite conclusion? Does not being “*modeh al ba’emess*” even more fundamentally force one to acknowledge the historical *emess* that, in fact, Rabbi Dessler *did* study “some classics of world literature in Russian translation” including *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? The issue here is no longer one of propriety or appropriateness; the issue now is one of truth. That being the case, instead of appealing to truth to *deny* the appropriateness of including this fact in a retrospective on Rabbi Dessler, does not this appeal to truth require *acknowledging* the truth of the fact itself? Does this not explain why the editors of the *Yated* decided, to their credit, to print this information in the first place and did not issue a retraction after the letter was printed? Yes, the author of the letter does not deny that Rabbi Dessler read this work, but is not the implication of his remarks that he would be happy to have others make this claim in the future without fear of contradiction? Where, then, is the real being “*modeh al ba’emess*”?<sup>3</sup>

The truth is that historical “truth,” per se, as an independent value in and of itself, has not fared well in Jewish tradition. It has already repeatedly been noted that the entire enterprise of history as we understand it today was not valued by Ḥazal. Scholars have long recognized that “the historical dog [did] not bark . . . loudly” in the Jewish past.<sup>4</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano put the matter very clearly: “On the one hand the postbiblical Jews really thought they had in the Bible all the history that mattered . . . . On the other hand the whole development of Judaism led to something unhistorical, eternal, the Law, the Torah. The significance which the Jews came to attach to the Torah killed

their interest in general historiography. . . . History had nothing to explain and little to reveal to the man who meditated the Law day and night.”<sup>5</sup> Although recent scholarship has refined the far reaching implications of this statement, arguing that rabbinic literature *does* reflect a more sophisticated understanding of and appreciation for certain aspects of historical thinking,<sup>6</sup> it remains quite clear that “the Talmudists were no historians”<sup>7</sup> and did not consider the pursuit of historical truth as a significant component of their system of values.<sup>8</sup>

This lack of interest in the details of history is characteristic of much of the medieval period as well. Whereas memory of the past was a crucially important component of Jewish thought and writing in the Middle Ages, there was “comparatively little interest in recording the ongoing historical experience of the Jews.” With few exceptions, liturgy and ritual served as the repository of Jewish memory, not historical writing.<sup>9</sup> Maimonides’ well known disdain for history, referring to it as “*ibbud ha-zeman bilevad*” (“merely a waste of time”), is representative of the attitude which characterized much of medieval Jewry.<sup>10</sup> While it has recently been argued that the relative paucity of Jewish historical writing in the Middle Ages does not reflect a uniquely Jewish repudiation of history and that attitudes towards history in the medieval halakhic tradition were not as negative as previously thought,<sup>11</sup> it is nevertheless clear that the intellectual *paideia* of medieval Jewry did not reserve a place of prominence for the study of history. A concise presentation of this pre-modern position was formulated by R. Ḥayyim ‘Ozer Grodzenski in his often-cited approbation to R. Yehudah Halevi Lipschitz’s *Sefer Dor Yesharim*, a traditionalist response to *Dor Dor ve-Dorshav* by Isaac Hirsch Weiss:

גדולי התורה מאז ומעולם לא שמו לבם להעמיק בידיעת דברי הימים לבני ישראל. אף כי לכתוב בספר תולדות גדולי וחכמי ישראל מדור דור. דברי רבותינו הראשונים והאחרונים הלא חיים וקיימים בפיות תופשי התורה. כל בתי מדרש מלאים מן אל זן מרבנן ותלמידיהון הלומדים תורת חיים כאילו נאמרו ונשנו היום ואין עושין נפשות לצדיקים שדבריהם הן זכרונם.

גם אלה הגדולים המועטים אשר התעסקו בדברי הימים. היו מעשיהם בזה בדרך מקרה ובדרך אגב. ומבחרי עתותיהם הקדישו לידיעת התורה הרחבה מארץ מדה והעמוקה מני ים. בה שמו מעינים לכל מקצועותיה, ומשם שאבו גם ידיעת דברי הימים. בדברי רבותינו העמיקו חקר ולא בתולדותיהם ומקומות מושבותיהם.<sup>12</sup>

True, there were those at the threshold of modernity who had a more favorable attitude to the enterprise of history as a whole. For example, Rabbi Ya’akov Emden expressed strong general support for this discipline, rejecting the opinion of R. ‘Ovadyah Bartinoro who included the study of Gentile history in the category of those “external

books (*sefarim hizzonim*)” whose readers forfeit their share in the world to come.<sup>13</sup> While recognizing that preoccupation with history should not result in the neglect of Torah study, R. Emden insisted that “the scholar is obligated to know at least those works composed in Hebrew. It cannot be otherwise. It has significant implications for the explanation of biblical verses and rabbinic statements as well, as I brought to your attention in my commentary on *Seder ‘Olam* and that appended to it [i. e., *Megillat Ta’anit*],<sup>14</sup> as well as in many places in the Talmud.”<sup>15</sup> Although he continued that “those composed in a foreign language should be studied by the intelligent person (*adam maskil*)” only for the sake of providing information necessary to respond to challenges to Jewish tradition, R. Emden clearly indicated that those written in Hebrew had significant intrinsic value.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, while significant, this view was rather idiosyncratic and is not reflective of the standard position on this subject in the Jewish community even as late as the second third of the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

In the modern period, a change occurred and two opposite approaches to history began to coexist in the traditional community. On the one hand, even those who argue for a more open attitude towards history in pre-modern Jewry acknowledge that “negative attitudes towards history” existed there in early modern times<sup>18</sup> and this continued to be a significant feature within it. Put simply, the study of history was and is deemed *bittul Torah* and not valued as a worthwhile use of one’s time.

An extraordinary formulation of this position is forthcoming in a letter written in 1897 by R. Hayyim Berlin, an outstanding Torah scholar and son of R. Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin (the Neziv), the famed *rosb yeshiva* of Volozhin throughout most of the second half of the nineteenth century. R. Berlin was responding to those who bemoaned the lack of a biography devoted to the life and accomplishments of his famed, illustrious father. In a long response, he expressed his father’s opinion about such rabbinic biographies in a way which makes it directly relevant to the topic under discussion here:

הגיעני מכתבו בזמנו, ואחר עד עתה מלהשיבו מטרדותיי בענינים שונים שהוכרחתי להשיב לשואלי דבר ה' זו הלכה, ובעיקר הענין, האמת אגיד למעלתו, כי לא נפעלתי כל מאומה מהקנאה אשר קנאו רבים לכבוד מר אבא עט"ר הגאון מאוה"ג זצלה"ה, מאשר עוד לא נכתבו תולדותיו בספר במחברת מיוחדת כנוהג שבעולם בזמן הזה, וכשאני לעצמי הנני רחוק מקנאה זו, יען כי ידעתי היטב את רוחו הקדוש והטהור, אשר בתוך כל מנהגי הזמן אשר היו משחק לו וכלא נחשבו בעיניו, היו גם המנהגים הללו שנתחדשו בימיו לכתוב תולדות אדם גדול על ספר ולצייר תמונתו עלי גליון מחוקה בששר, ואנכי הנני מעיד בעדות נאמנה, שהגאון

ר' עקיבא איגר ז"ל מרום וקדוש היה בעיני מר אבי הגאון ז"ל עד למאוד, ובכל עת שהזכירו היה מירתע כולא גופי' מגודל קדושת תורתו וצדקתו. וספר תשובותיו לא פסק מעל שלחנו. ומרגלא היה בפומיה שכל המעיין בספר תשובות רע"א ז"ל בעין חודרת לא רק גדולות ונפלאות ימצא שמה מעמק עיונו וחריצת שכלו הבהיר, כי אם גם יראת ה' טהורה וענוה יתרה ימצא בכל שורה ושורה. ואין לך ספר מוסר גדול ממנו. כה היו דבריו תמיד. ותיבה ממש אחת מלשון רע"א ז"ל היה מכריע בעיניו כמה וכמה דפין מפלפולי ספרים אחרים. ודעת רע"א ז"ל בהוראה להלכה אם להקל או להחמיר היה מכריע אצלו דעות כמה פוסקים. קצרו של דבר כי למלאך ה"צ היה נחשב בעיניו. ואחרי כל זה באזני שמעתי מפיו הקדוש. בעת שהגיע לעיניו תולדות רע"א ז"ל שיצא לאור בראשונה בספר הגהות רע"א על יו"ד שנדפס בברלין בשנת תרכ"ב. לא רצה להביט עליו אף במעוף קל. ואמר שכל זה בכלל האמור בירושלמי אין עושין נפשות לצדיקים שדבריהם הן זכרונם. ומה מני יהלוך לדעת יום הולדתו או יום פטירתו. או תואר פרצוף תמונתו אם כה היה או כה. והעיקר לשום עין ולב על דברי תורתו. ואמר שכל הענינים האלה הם מתחבולות השטן. עפ"י מש"כ רבינו הגר"א זצ"ל בביאורו לספר משלי. שהשטן מוסר נפשו על בטול תורה. יותר מעל כל שארי עבירות שבתורה. והוא הצליח לו בדורנו זה להמציא דרכים לבטל גם רבנים גדולי תורה ויראה משקידת תורתם. באשר אנשים כאלה הלא לא ימשכו אחרי ספרי חזונים בדברים בטלים. והתחכם למצוא דרכים גם למענם להכשילם בביטול תורה באופנים שיקחו את לבבם. וזו אחת מן הדרכים האלה לשון לב לסיפורי תולדות גדולי ישראל. כל זה שמעתי מפיו הקדוש. ומעתה הנני אומר כמו שאמר רב חסדא במו"ק דף כ"ה א'. מילתא דבחייה לא ס"ל השתא ליקום ליעבד ליה. על כך איני בהול כל כך לקנאה זו. ואף אני אומר על מר אבי הגאון ז"ל. כמו שאמר הוא על הגרע"א ז"ל. שרובי תורתו וצדקתו בספריו הקדושים העמק שאלה והעמק דבר. וגודל שקידתו הנודעת בכל העולם כולו בהפלגה יתרה אשר לא נשמע כמוה. ויגיעותיו הגדולות והעצומות בהרבצת תורה בישיבתו הקדושה כחמשים שנה. ואשר העמיד תלמידים למאות ולאלפים בכל קצוי ארץ. כל אלה הן הן תולדותיו וזכרונותיו. וזכר צדיק לברכה.<sup>19</sup>

But, at the same time, by the middle of the nineteenth century other sentiments also began to be expressed in the traditional community. The leadership of this community began to understand that modernity had brought with it a new challenge, the use of history in the spirit of the new *Wissenschaft* which presented what it considered to be a fallacious and misleading picture of the tradition. This new historiography of the nineteenth century, with its sustained anti-traditionalism,<sup>20</sup> began to elicit a traditionalist alternative history designed to counter its conclusions. If, "for the first time, history, not a sacred text, becomes the arbiter of Judaism,"<sup>21</sup> then the historical record would have to be set straight. In a world where "virtually all nineteenth-century Jewish ideologies, from Reform to Zionism, would feel a need to appeal to history for validation,"<sup>22</sup> Orthodoxy could be no exception. In fact, the greater the perceived danger posed by this new emphasis on history, the greater was the effort expended to present a version of the past more in keeping with traditionalist values. The result was that historical writing which hitherto enjoyed, at best, only

a secondary status in traditional Jewish life was catapulted, for purely defensive purposes, into a position of some prominence and significance.

Indeed, after acknowledging the lack of interest in history among pre-modern rabbinic scholars in the passage cited above, R. Ḥayyim ‘Ozer Grodzenski continued to note that, with the advent of Reform, those non- or anti-traditional Jews who were engaged in the study of history were removed from a first-hand knowledge of the tradition and presented it in a warped way. “They desecrated history and forged it” in an attempt to discredit the fundamentals of the Written and Oral Torah, he wrote. It is therefore now vitally necessary, he said, to combat this “poison” and present the real history “with holy purity (*‘al tabarat ha-kodesh*).”<sup>23</sup> Just as historical scholarship was being used in the service of reform,<sup>24</sup> so did it come to be used—albeit sometimes in a different way—in the service of tradition.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of the fact that much of this history writing is subjective, anachronistic, typological, and uncritical, reflecting the biases and tendentiousness of hagiography at its historically most inaccurate,<sup>26</sup> there were Orthodox writers who stressed absolute fealty to the truth as the distinguishing characteristic of their historical enterprise. They were different from the Reformers and advocates of *Wissenschaft*, they argued, because they would be honest and tell the truth, the *real* truth. In his previously cited passage, R. Ḥayyim ‘Ozer Grodzenski complimented R. Yiḏḥak Isaac Halevi, author of the traditionalist *Dorot ha-Rishonim*, for “demonstrating the falsehoods and mockeries of the forgers. He sanctified the name of Heaven, *to establish the unequivocal truth (le-ba-‘amid et ha-emet la-amito)*.” He also noted approvingly that the author of *Sefer Dor Yesharim*, the book for which he was writing this approbation, “especially set for himself a goal to clarify the *events with a truthful critique (be-bikoret amitit)*. . . . *This truthful critique (ba-bikoret ha-amitit)* will expose the[ir] scabs by the light of the sun.”<sup>27</sup> The well-known Orthodox historian and memoirist, R. Ya‘akov Halevi Lipschitz, pledged in the introduction to the first volume of his work that he will present “the facts and actual deeds *that were proven to be true in life (she-nit’amtu ba-ḥayyim)*, the veracity of which could never be doubted at all. . . . Those who strive to ascertain *the clear and absolute truth (ba-emet ha-barur ve-ha-gamur)*, to establish its place in history, will find fulfillment and abundant material in my memoirs, in order *to bring forth judgment in truth (le-bozi le-emet mishpat)*.”<sup>28</sup> In his own introduction to this work, Lipschitz’s son highlights his father’s “*phenomenal love of truth (aba-vato ba-‘azumah el ha-emet)*” which led him to present only “things as they were, events as they occurred.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, in a response

to critics written in 1898, the Orthodox historian, Ze'ev Jawitz, wrote, "Behold, every reader of our book knows that the method of our investigation in the history of the Jews is distant from the method of Graetz as is the distance between East and West. . . . With it all, *we dare not deny the truth (halilah lanu le-bitkavesh el ha-emet)*."<sup>30</sup> Finally, Avraham Shmuel Heilman, the traditionalist author of a three part biography of the earliest *rebbe*s of Chabad/Lubavitch, wrote in his introduction that he went to great lengths to base his work on reliable sources, both written and oral, often citing the reference for the benefit of his reader. If, however, someone wants to take issue with anything he wrote, he continued, let them cite the appropriate text and, "if they will do this, then we too will admit [our error] and not be ashamed. We will accept the truth from whoever states it *for truth is more beloved than anything (u-nekabel ha-emet mimi she-yomar ki ha-emet abuv min ha-kol)*."<sup>31</sup>

In their search for the historical "truth," these nineteenth and early twentieth century traditionalist writers echoed a value expressed decades later by modern academic scholars of Jewish history. The late Gershom Scholem wrote about "viewing the questions, events and thoughts in accordance with the truth of their reality (*lefi amitut havayatam*)" and my teacher, the recently deceased Jacob Katz, stressed "objective truth which is the universal standard of scholarly research."<sup>32</sup> In a recent thoughtful reflection on the enterprise of history-writing and historiography, Katz paralleled the work of the historian to that of the judge, suggesting that they both have in common their desire "to achieve factual truth (*le-bagia' le-emet 'uwdatit*)."<sup>33</sup> And Jewish scholars had no monopoly on the search for truth or even on the historian/judge analogy. Another contemporary scholar wrote that, "The objective historian's role is that of a neutral, or disinterested, judge . . . historians, as historians, must purge themselves of external loyalties: the historian's primary allegiance is to '*the objective historical truth*."<sup>34</sup> Another noted, ". . . no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist . . . . Historians are professionally obliged not to get it wrong, or at least to make an effort not to. . . the historian leaves his or her convictions behind when entering the library or the study."<sup>35</sup> The entire enterprise of history is constructed on the value of truth or on "getting it right."

Obviously a measure of subjectivity is inevitable, from, at the very least, the particular subject any given historian chooses to investigate to matters of interpretation and value judgement. Also, not every single relevant fact may be known to the historian attempting to present a particular story or narrative. A few months before he passed away,



my late teacher, Professor Isadore Twersky, told me in the name of his teacher, Professor Harry Austryn Wolfson, that, “Scholarship is not what you *happen to know* about a subject; scholarship is *what there is to know* about that subject.”<sup>36</sup> Yet, how many of us who toil in this vineyard can say with certainty that we have uncovered every cluster, plucked every grape and maximized the yield of every vine? Have any of us, indeed, *ever* fulfilled Wolfson’s dictum in all of its intimidating detail? The British historian Edward H. Carr wrote: “The facts are really not at all like fish on the fishmonger’s slab. They are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use—these two factors being, of course, determined by the kind of fish he wants to catch. By and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants. History means interpretation.”<sup>37</sup> In his 1931 presidential address to the members of the American Historical Association, Carl L. Becker noted:

Left to themselves, the facts do not speak; left to themselves they do not exist, not really, since for all practical purposes there is no fact until some one affirms it. . . . However “hard” or “cold” they may be, historical facts are after all not material substances which, like bricks or scantlings, possess definite shape and clear, persistent outline. To set forth historical facts is not comparable to dumping a barrow of bricks. A brick retains its form and pressure wherever placed; but the form and substance of historical facts, having a negotiable existence only in literary discourse, vary with the words employed to convey them. Since history is not part of the external material world, but an imaginative reconstruction of vanished events, its form and substance are inseparable. . . . It is thus not the undiscriminated fact, but the perceiving mind of the historian that speaks.<sup>38</sup>

In his presidential address before that same august body only two years later, Charles Beard echoed similar sentiments. He stated that “The historian . . . consciously or unconsciously performs an act of faith . . . his conviction is a subjective decision, not a purely objective discovery.”<sup>39</sup>

History today has come a long way from nineteenth and early twentieth century notions, propounded by Leopold von Ranke and others, which stressed the primacy and legitimacy of the “facts” alone, maintaining that an objective, comprehensive and definitive reconstruction of the past was not only desirable but possible. As late as 1900, a French scholar speaking at the opening session of the First

International Congress of Historians said, “We want nothing more to do with the approximations of hypotheses, useless systems, theories as brilliant as they are deceptive, superfluous moralities. Facts, facts, facts—which carry within themselves their lesson and their philosophy. The truth, all the truth, nothing but the truth.”<sup>40</sup> “It is not I who speak, but history which speaks through me,” said Fustel de Coulange.<sup>41</sup> In instructing those chosen to collaborate on the first *Cambridge Modern History* over a century ago, Lord Acton wrote, in what has become a celebrated example of this position, “Our Waterloo must be one that satisfies French and English, Germans and Dutch alike.”<sup>42</sup> In fact, historians today recognize that “facts” alone do not guarantee truth, and that it was Fustel who spoke through history, not the other way around. History is relative, not objective, and the notion of telling the story *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* is not only impossible but also meaningless. “It used to be said that facts speak for themselves,” wrote Edward H. Carr. “This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context.”<sup>43</sup>

But while all this is certainly true, it is clear that the act of history writing places a premium on the search for the facts as they occurred, to the extent to which such a search is possible. Even if a story can be explained in multiple ways, each reflecting the particular bias and orientation of the storyteller, the facts of the story that can be known and are verifiable must be told as accurately, honestly and truthfully as possible. Differing interpretations of various historical events<sup>44</sup> or even debating the question of whether it is possible at all to attain historical truth is one thing (and, surely, the recent work of deconstructionists, poststructuralists, hermeneuticists, critical theorists, and cultural relativists has argued that this is impossible);<sup>45</sup> to engage in conscious overt lying and distortion of reality is quite another.

Yet, in spite of the obvious objective value of truth and the morally reprehensible nature of lying, it has often been noted that “Generally speaking, there are official or unofficial restrictions on the writing of history in every society. No society has been entirely successful in implementing the ideas of freedom of expression and objectivity in the study of history.” This quote comes from an article by Andrus Pork analyzing the “magnitude of distortions, lies and half-truths in Soviet historiography over a number of years,” all brought to light by new documents made available in the wake of *glasnost*. He divides his analysis into two parts, discussing distortions of the “direct lie” method, widespread in Stalinist historiography, and the “blank pages” method, where falsehood is not directly perpetrated but facts are selected to create an overall distorted picture of reality.<sup>46</sup> This is

reminiscent of George Orwell's description of communist authorities dumping inconvenient history "down the memory hole."

While Pork makes the point that the socialist societies of Eastern Europe have been particularly guilty of this egregious behavior, he notes that every society is somewhat guilty, the matter being "usually one of degree."<sup>47</sup> Examples abound of this phenomenon, but a few selected ones will have to suffice here. In his work on pre-sixteenth century America, Samuel D. Marble wrote: "As a subject for research, the possibility of African discovery of America has never been a tempting one for American historians. In a sense, we choose our own history, or more accurately, we select those vistas of history for our examinations which promise us the greatest satisfaction, and we have had little appetite to explore the possibility that our founding father was a black man."<sup>48</sup> Scholars have shown that George Bancroft's account of the Battle of Lexington during the Revolutionary War "shows a national bias which does violence to the facts."<sup>49</sup> In fact, Frances FitzGerald has written an entire book demonstrating how American history textbooks are changed every generation to reflect the then current prevailing attitudes and values. In that context he notes that "The surprise that adults feel in seeing the changes in history texts must come from the lingering hope that there is, somewhere out there, an objective truth. The hope is, of course, foolish. All of us children of the twentieth century know, or should know, that there are no absolutes in human affairs, and thus there can be no such thing as perfect objectivity. We know that each historian in some degree creates the world anew and that all history is in some degree contemporary history."<sup>50</sup> Reflecting upon the widespread nature of this phenomenon, David Lowenthal wrote: "As with memory, we reinterpret relics and records to make them more comprehensible, to justify present attitudes and actions, to underscore changes of faith. The unadulterated past is seldom sufficiently ancient or glorious; most heritages need ageing and augmenting. Individually and collectively we revise the inherited past to enhance self-esteem, to aggrandize property, to validate power. Hence genealogies are fabricated to bolster titles of nobility, decrees forged to justify papal dominion, relics planted to demonstrate pre-Columbian discoveries."<sup>51</sup> Finally, in describing various methods of writing history, Bernard Lewis wrote, "The invention of history is no new invention. It is an ancient practice dating back to remote antiquity and directed to a variety of purposes. Again, it is common to all groups, ranging in type from the primitive heroic myths of nomadic tribes to Soviet official historiography or American revisionism."<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, not only the victor but the victim too is guilty. After the

Second World War, “the French had to invent a victorious history,” said a prominent French filmmaker. “It was nonsense,” he continued, “but it was understandable.”<sup>53</sup> Another prominent Frenchman said, “For us, history is propaganda. So much of what was taught to us as history was pure invention, and it’s still constantly being rewritten.”<sup>54</sup>

In fact, a measure of “invention” or distortion occurs in almost every segment of our culture. Contemporary folksingers simply leave out part of the classic *Oh Susannah* because it contains a stanza perfectly reasonable in the nineteenth century but considered unacceptably racist by today’s standards: “I jumped aboard de telegraph/ And trabbled down de ribber/ De ‘lectric fluid magnified/ And killed five hundred nigger.”<sup>55</sup> High school anthologies routinely excise whole chunks from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* without ever noting the fact that their version is incomplete. Not only are lines containing sexual material excised, but also other kinds of passages are deemed inappropriate as well.<sup>56</sup>

The Jewish world is by no means exempt from such behavior and the current raging debate over various events surrounding the founding of the State of Israel is a good example. In the late 1980’s, Israeli historiography underwent a radical change with the emergence of a new school of historians who challenged the hitherto prevailing view of the founding and first few years of the new state. This group, led by Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappé, contended that “the old historians . . . offered a simplistic and consciously pro-Israeli interpretation of the past, and generally avoided mention of anything that reflected poorly upon Israel.” These “new historians” recognized that such “deceitful” and “misleading” descriptions may have been necessary in the early years of the state when its future was not yet assured and, therefore, “blackening Israel’s name . . . would ultimately weaken Israel in its ongoing struggle for survival. *Raisons d’etat* often took precedence over telling the truth.” However, with a more recently achieved self-confidence, with newly declassified archives available now for the first time, and with the “objectivity” and “impartiality” of a new generation of scholars who “matured in a more open, doubting, and self-critical Israel,” an entirely different set of conclusions was now possible and appropriate.<sup>57</sup> It was now argued, for example, that the Arab world did *not* fully devote itself to destroying the nascent Jewish state in May-June of 1948, the combined Arab force then was *not* overwhelmingly stronger than that of the Yishuv, the Palestinians did *not* flee their homes then “voluntarily” or in response to orders from Arab leaders, and finally, it is simply not true that, at the end of the war, the Israelis wanted peace, only to be

repeatedly rebuffed by their recalcitrant and intransigent neighbors.<sup>58</sup>

A ferocious counterattack on this radical revisionism of Zionist historical dogma was not long in coming. Led primarily by Shabtai Tevet and Efraim Karsh, the defenders of the previously accepted view struck back, asserting that these “academic Israel bashers” “misuse . . . historical evidence to serve preconceived dogmas.” Theirs is not simply “myth debunking” but “The work done before our eyes is merely the rewriting of the one-hundred-year Zionist history in the spirit of its enemies and opponents.”<sup>59</sup>

None of this would belong here if not for the fact that, in addition to one side accusing the other of “sloppiness,” “apologetics,” “serious professional flaws,” “exaggeration,” “failure of understanding,” “basic poor scholarship,” “painting a totally false picture,” “superficial eclecticism,” “derogation of opponents through personal innuendo and blanket stigmatization,” engaging in a “good measure of textual acrobatics,” “wholesale efforts of free interpretation,” “customary, highly personalized, reading of Hebrew texts” and “selective choice of sources,” of being “incomplete,” “ridiculous,” “unctuous,” “highly biased,” “uninformed,” “erratic,” “less than candid,” “simplistic,” “clos[ing] one eye and narrow[ing] the other, oblivious of their surroundings and blind beyond the ends of their noses,” and more, each charged the other of going so far as to falsify the historical record to achieve its aims. The “new historians” repeatedly made this claim in their works, and it was more recently repeated by Benny Morris: “In trying to produce or maintain an unblemished record, nations and political movements sometimes rewrite not only their history but also, it appears, the documents upon which that historiography must necessarily be based. The Zionist movement and the State of Israel are no exceptions; indeed, they may be among the more accomplished practitioners of this strange craft.”<sup>60</sup>

But their opponents fully responded in kind. At the end of his introduction to his latest attack on Morris and company, Efraim Karsh wrote: “Violating every tenet of *bona fide* research, the misrepresentation of the historical record by the ‘new historiography’ has ranged from the more ‘innocent’ act of reading into documents what is not there, to tendentious truncation of documents in a way that distorts their original meaning, to ‘creative rewriting’ of original texts by putting words in people’s mouths and/or giving false descriptions of the contents of these documents. The ‘New Israeli Distortography’ would not be an inaccurate description of this foul play.”<sup>61</sup>

My major interest here, however, is in the presence of this phenomenon specifically within the Orthodox community. Surely every culture

and value system expends an enormous amount of time and energy on transmitting its values to the next generation, and those committed to Orthodoxy are certainly no exception, especially given their conviction that those values are somehow reflective of the Divine will. In its effort to perpetuate itself, would we not expect Orthodoxy to base its presentation on nothing but the truth? There is no question that its adherents have the conviction that the tradition, as they understand it, is strong enough to withstand any challenge or test, including the test of truth. Surely *emet*, ultimate *emet*, needs not be based and should not be based on anything but *emet*. But, yet, the matter is not so simple and straightforward.

Furthermore, I recognize that I focus here on only a small number of examples of a few individuals within the Orthodox community. This is not because I believe them to be the only ones guilty of the kind of phenomenon I discuss in this article. Indeed, no one within Orthodoxy has an absolute monopoly on such behavior. I choose these individuals primarily because some of them or their supporters have mounted a carefully reasoned defense to justify their position, a defense I would like, on the one hand, to further expand and amplify and, on the other hand, to critically examine and ultimately challenge.

A few years ago, Rabbi Aharon Feldman published a critique of what he referred to as “‘*gedolim* books’—biographies of great Torah personalities.” In his view, these books, while being “vital components in the rejuvenation of the Torah life of post-Holocaust Jewry,” suffer from two major flaws. First of all, all *gedolim* are presented in a stereotyped fashion, their lives all following the same trajectory from child prodigy to precocious adolescence to marrying a pious woman and, finally, to Torah greatness. Such presentations, argued Rabbi Feldman, “frequently ignore the self-sacrifice and dedication which of necessity must have gone into the development of every *gadol*. They often overlook the fact that certainly these men must have surely had their moments of self-doubt, error and human frailty . . . . Great men are, of course, humans as well; on the contrary, they are great because they overcame their human shortcomings.”<sup>62</sup> He is sympathetic towards the sentiment expressed by “a certain woman who, after having read a few of these stylized stories, remarked in all seriousness, ‘How interesting to note that all *gedolim* lived identical lives.’”<sup>63</sup> Secondly, continued Rabbi Feldman, these works mistakenly highlight the brilliance and genius of their subjects. He writes that “it would serve the reader better to emphasize the hard work, sweat and tears that went into making them *gedolim*. Portraying *gedolim* as geniuses tends to make their accomplishments appear unattainable: how can anyone not born with such extraordinary gifts ever expect

to emulate them?” He writes that Rabbi Aharon Kotler “used to cherish Edison’s adage (which one of his students once cited before him) that ‘genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.’”<sup>64</sup>

While all this is correct, there is a third and, I believe more serious, problem with these works as well as with some other biographical descriptions of *gedolim*. Not only do they present a stereotypical portrait of their subjects and ignore descriptions of their struggles, they actually make statements that are not true. In fact, these non-truths fall into a number of different categories: (1) overt falsification and distortion; (2) simple naive acceptance of hearsay evidence as fact without bothering to verify its accuracy. This second category does not include cases of willful, deliberate misrepresentations by authors who know better, but reflects an obliviousness to the need for corroborative evidence before accepting hearsay or rumor as fact; (3) simple carelessness, historical incompetence or poor research skills on the part of those not trained as historians. A number of examples will follow:

- Much attention has recently been paid to the teachings and legacy of the Gaon of Vilna in the wake of the two hundredth anniversary of his death which was commemorated in October, 1997. One issue of particular importance and controversy is the Gaon’s position regarding so called “secular” or “general” knowledge.<sup>65</sup> And, with regard to this matter, one oft-cited text stands out as especially significant. In the introduction to his Hebrew translation of Euclid’s book on geometry, R. Barukh Schick of Shklov wrote:

והנה בהיותי בק"ק ווילנא המעטירה אצל הרב המאור הגאון הגדול מ"ו מאור עיני הגולה החסיד המפורסם כמוה"ר אלי' נר"ו בחודש טבת תקל"ח שמעתי מפי קדוש כי כפי מה שיחסר לאדם ידיעות משארי החכמות לעומת זה יחסר לו מאה ידות בחכמת התורה כי התורה והחכמה נצמדים יחד ואמר משל לאדם הנעצר יתבלבל שכלו עד כל אוכל תתאב<sup>66</sup>

The author of a popular Hebrew biography of the Gaon casts doubt on the authenticity of this account and suggests that R. Barukh may have misunderstood what he was being told. He based his conclusion on the fact that this sharply worded formulation is not found in the writings of even a single one of the Gaon’s students who praised his wide-ranging secular knowledge and that R. Barukh was known to have been influenced by Moses Mendelssohn and the Haskalah.<sup>67</sup>

That a traditionalist Jew would be unhappy with this statement cited in the name of the Gaon is not surprising. In their attempt to reform the traditional curriculum and expand it to include secular studies, nineteenth century maskilim often cited this passage in support for their position. After all, look at what the great and highly

respected Gaon of Vilna told R. Barukh of Shklov, they repeatedly asserted. Surely that should serve as support for the changes they were intending to make.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, if the Gaon had never made such a statement, the traditionalist “Torah only” position would be easier to defend.<sup>69</sup>

However, all evidence points to the fact that, indeed, this statement is authentic. First of all, this is not the only source that reflects a positive attitude on the part of the Gaon to “*ḥokhmah*.” Passages written by R. Avraham Simḥah of Amtchislav (the nephew of R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin), R. Israel of Shklov, and by the sons of the Gaon himself confirm this position.<sup>70</sup> Secondly, there is no compelling reason to believe that R. Barukh, scion of a prominent rabbinic family, respected talmudist, *dayyan* and member of the Polish rabbinic elite, would distort the Gaon’s position. Indeed, there is no evidence that he had ever before been accused of misrepresenting the position of the Gaon, or anyone else’s for that matter. For two hundred years his integrity had never been called into question. And, as far as his maskilic predilections are concerned, recent scholarship has shown that, in fact, he was not a full enthusiast of the Haskalah’s agenda.<sup>71</sup> Finally, one cannot underestimate the significance of the fact that this report was published during the Gaon’s lifetime, no less than seventeen years before he died! Surely the Gaon had more than enough time to deny its accuracy had he chosen to do so. No evidence exists that any contemporary of R. Barukh, including the Gaon himself, ever questioned its authenticity.<sup>72</sup>

While this statement, then, accurately reflects the Gaon’s position, to be fair and “true” it must also be made equally clear that there is no evidence that the Gaon valued secular studies for their own sake. On the contrary, their value for him was instrumental at best, limited to being “*rakahot ve-tabahot*” to Torah and nothing more.<sup>73</sup>

If this statement in favor of *ḥokhmah* is authentic, so is another anti-philosophic one whose authenticity has also been disputed, this time for exactly opposite reasons. The same Gaon of Vilna who lauded *ḥokhmah* in general attacked Maimonides in a celebrated passage in his commentary to *Yoreh De’ab* for his emphasis on philosophy. He wrote: והוא נמשך אחר הפלוסופיא הארורה ולכן כ’ שכשפים ושמות ולחשים . . . . ושדים וקמיעות הכל הוא שקר אבל כבר הכו אותו על קדקדו . . . .<sup>74</sup> This absolute condemnation of philosophy flew in the face of the claim of various maskilim who sought to portray the Gaon as one who shared their general openness to worldly wisdom and, this time, some of them even went so far as to claim that it was a forgery. In a letter to Shmuel Yosef Fuenn, Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Katzenellenbogen wrote that he heard from the well known R. Menasheh of Ilya that the Gaon never



wrote these words but they were added later by someone who wanted to falsely present him as an opponent of philosophy.<sup>75</sup> One writer even argued that the verbosity of this gloss proves that it could not have been written by the Gaon whose style was generally distinguished by its brevity and cryptic nature.<sup>76</sup> Also, in an attempt to partially mitigate the harshness of this comment, some printed editions of this commentary simply omit the word “*ba-arurab*.” While one of the Gaon’s disciples, R. Israel of Shklov, already noted that later copyists did tamper with the text of some of the Gaon’s glosses,<sup>77</sup> it is clear that this statement, like the one written by R. Barukh of Shklov, is authentic and accurately represents the Gaon’s attitude toward this discipline. R. Shmuel Luria, owner of many of the Gaon’s writings, testified that he found those very words in the margin of the Gaon’s own volume of the *Shulḥan ‘Arukh* written in his own handwriting.<sup>78</sup>

- The intellectual legacy of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch is the subject of continued heated controversy in the Orthodox community. Some adherents of the “Torah only” school of thought, faced with the clear openness to secular culture reflected in R. Hirsch’s “*Torah ‘im derekh erez*” ideology, argue that none of it was ever meant as an optimal, *lekhathila* position but only as a *hora’at sha’ab*, a grudging concession to the unique exigencies and needs of R. Hirsch’s own community and intended solely for mid-nineteenth century Germany. Others of the “Torah and” school insist that “*Torah ‘im derekh erez*” was a central and fundamental component of R. Hirsch’s philosophy of Judaism and is as relevant at the end of the twentieth century as it was some one hundred and fifty years ago.

Dr. Shnayer Z. Leiman has recently proven that revisionist efforts to narrow the focus of the Hirschian “*Torah ‘im derekh erez*” ideology are simply a misrepresentation of that great scholar’s thinking.<sup>79</sup> I need not repeat that evidence here. I simply want to draw attention to a statement made by Rabbiner Dr. Joseph Breuer, R. Hirsch’s grandson and leader first of the Hirschian community in Frankfurt and then of the “Breuer” community in Washington Heights. He wrote over thirty years ago:

Certain circles which found it difficult to remain unaware of the greatness of Rabb. Hirsch maintain that his demand of Torah im Derech Eretz was but a הוראת שעה [i. e., a temporary injunction] essentially prohibited for the Torah-true Jew and only found necessary for the salvation and strengthening of Torah. It is claimed that its validity, as that of every הוראת שעה, is limited to the conditions of life prevailing in the time of Rabb. Hirsch.

Anyone who has but a fleeting insight into the life and work of Rabb. Hirsch will realize that his Torah im Derech Eretz formula was never intended by him as a הוראת שעה.

He continues, “We ask: are the conditions which led Rabb. Hirsch and the rabbinical leaders to the supposed הוראת שעה of Torah im Derech Eretz any less valid in our own time? Are they not rather more acute and far more pressing?”<sup>80</sup>

• *Sefer Mekor Barukh*, the memoirs of R. Barukh Halevi Epstein, most well known as the author of the *Torah Temimah* commentary on the Torah, contains a great deal of information about Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. Particularly valuable are his descriptions of the leading *gedolei Yisrael* of the time, especially that of his uncle, R. Naphtali Zevi Yehudah Berlin (the Neziv) and the members of his family. This book contains an entire chapter on Mrs. Rayna Batya, daughter of R. Iẓele Volozhiner, granddaughter of R. Ḥayyim Volozhiner and first wife of the Neziv.<sup>81</sup> At the beginning of his presentation, R. Epstein describes the books that she read:

וכך הי' דרכה לשבת תמיד בסמיכות לתנור החורף אשר בבית האוכל. וגם בימי הקיץ. ולפניה שלחן צבור ספרים שונים: תנ"ך, משניות, עין יעקב, מדרשים שונים, מנורת המאור, קב הישר, צמח דוד, שבט יהודה, ועוד כמה וכמה ספרים ממינים אלה ומספרי אגדה.<sup>82</sup>

An English “rendering” of this volume appeared in 1988 which contains the following version of this statement: “It was her habit to sit by the oven in the kitchen—even in the summertime—next to a table piled high with *seforim*. These included a *Tanach*, *Ein Yaacov*, various *midrashim*, *Menoras HaMaor*, *Kav HaYasbar*, *Tzemach Dovid*, *Shevet Yehudah*, and many other books of this nature.”<sup>83</sup> Conspicuous by their absence are the references to *Mishnayot* and *sifrei Aggadab*. While the subject of women studying *Torah she-be'al peh* is still a controversial one in the Orthodox community, there is no doubt that this great woman—wife, daughter and granddaughter of the most illustrious *rashei yeshiva* of the greatest yeshiva in nineteenth century Europe—at least read, if not studied, that literature.<sup>84</sup>

• It has been commonly accepted that the Neziv decided “to close the doors of the famed Volozhiner Yeshiva rather than introducing secular studies into its program.” In an earlier article I have demonstrated that “There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the Neziv allowed secular studies in Volozhin,” the yeshiva he headed with great distinction and *mesirat nefesh* from 1853 until its closing in 1892. At

the same time, “There is also no doubt whatsoever that he did so entirely against his will, when circumstances beyond his control forced him, ‘as if compelled by a demon,’ to do so.”<sup>85</sup>

• The legacy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (the Rov) continues to be the subject of heated argument within the Orthodox community, with different factions claiming—with equal certitude and intensity—to be the most authentic representatives and spokesmen of his position. Figuring prominently in this ongoing debate, perhaps its most significant underlying issue, is the nature of the attitude of the Rov to secular studies. Put simply, did he consider the concept of *Torah u-Madda*, however one wants to define it, to be a *lekbathila* or a *bi-di’eved*? In an article printed a few years ago, one of the Rov’s most illustrious students wrote:

לימודי חול: רבים תמהים על כך שרבנו ז”ל נסע לברלין ללמוד באוניברסיטה שמה. דמה הניעו לעשות כזה. ושמעתי מהר”ר מרדכי סומר, שיחי, בשם הגב’ שינדל קרקובסקי, תחי, (אשר היתה קרובה למשפחת רבנו) דמעשה שהי’ כך הי’. שהמשפחה שמעה מהממשלה שעומדים לגייס את הבחור ר’ יוסף בר לפרזיוו (לצבא), והנבחרים הי’ נשארים שמה בצבא על יותר מעשרים שנה. ובכדי לשחררו מהצבא נתנה משפחת פיינשטיין (שעשירים היו) הון רב לאחד מהפקידים שבמשרד שמה לסלק את שמו של ר’ יוסף בר מרשימת הנבחרים. והלה לקח את הכסף לעצמו ולא סילק את שמו. והוכרח הצעיר לברוח למקום רחוק שלא הי’ תחת שלטון ממשלתם. ועל כן החליטו שישע אל מחוץ למדינה להנצל שמה. ומאחר שהוכרח לעזוב את מקום אביו, ממילא החליטו שמסתמא כבר כדאי הדבר בעדו לנסוע לברלין וליכנס שמה לאוניברסיטה. אבל לולא הדוחק של סכנת הפרזיוו, לא היו מתאמצים כל כך בדבר שילמד למודי חול באוניברסיטה. [ועי’ ברכת שמואל סוף מס’ קדושין].<sup>86</sup>

This reconstruction of the Rov’s transition from his parental home in Warsaw to the University of Berlin is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, a detail of the story is historically anachronistic because, by the 1920s, army service in Eastern Europe was no longer a twenty year commitment.<sup>87</sup> Secondly, there is an inconsistency in the inner logic of the story. If studying in the University of Berlin was intrinsically of value, could this not, in and of itself, explain the decision of the Rov and his family that he study there? And if it was not intrinsically of value, then the need to escape from the draft does not explain why the Rov found himself there, for, surely, there were an almost infinite number of other destinations to which he could have escaped. Why stop his flight from the Polish authorities only in the registrar’s office of this major university? Thirdly, reliable evidence exists that contradicts this version of the story. On July 30, 1926, the Rov’s great-uncle, Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan, wrote a letter in which he described a recent visit of his to the Warsaw home of Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik and his son R. Joseph Ber. He wrote:

. . . ובבוא לידי להיות בוורשה שעות אחדות. מן הבקר ועד הערב. השתמשתי בשעה זו. אף כי היתה השעה דחוקה מאד. לראות ולהכיר את נכד אחותי מר יוסף דב סלוביצקי. דברתי עמנו. גם עם אביו הגר"ם סלוביצקי על אודות הישיבה [רבינו יצחק אלחנן בניו יורק] וההצעה לבוא שם. אמנם צעיר נפלא הוא בידיעותיו הרבות וחדושו המצוינים. אבל זו רעה חולי [כך] שאביו מחשיבו בפניו ושלא בפניו להגאון היותר גדול שבדור ולרב רבנן וכל שכדומה לזה. מתוך נקודה זו מצא הר"מ סלוביצקי נעלב במכתבו של ידידנו הר"ש פוליאטשיק על אודות בנו. כי לא כתב שם כמו שהיה הוא חפץ שיכתוב עליו. הר"מ סלוביצקי חפץ היה שלא יהיה זמן קבוע לשעוריו של בנו מכיון שהוא אומר שבכל זמן שיצטרך יגיד ויחדש ויעשה את כל המוטל עליו. אבל מכיון שהר"ש פוליאטשיק כתב שאינו יודע באיזו מחלקה ירצא [כך] הרי הוא חושש כן יתנו לו את המחלקות הקטנות ולא הגדולות. **מלבד זה נתקבל ר' יוסף דב זה בהאוניברסיטה שבברלין בתור סטודנט מן המניין. וחושש הוא אביו כי בבואו לאמריקה לא יוכל להיות סטודנט גמור כהלכה.** ובכל הנחתי את הדבר בצריך עיון שם. אם כי אנכי יעצתי שיבוא.<sup>88</sup>

It is thus manifestly clear that the Rov had another opportunity available to him to escape the draft, i.e., to take a position as a *rosb yesbi-va* in Yeshivat Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchanan in New York City. He could have thus maintained his involvement in full-time Torah study while, at the same time, avoiding the clutches of the Polish army. Yet, his father rejected this option for him, fearing lest he would thereby jeopardize his status as a matriculated student at the University of Berlin. It was his father who thus insisted that young R. Joseph Ber attend that school.<sup>89</sup> Finally, the reference to the strongly anti-secular studies statement of the *Birkhat Shmuel* in *Kiddushin* is also questionable. Is it even remotely conceivable that R. Barukh Ber Leibowitz, the author of that work, would ever have sent a son of his who needed to escape the draft in Poland "to study secular subjects in the university," under any circumstances, even with the greatest reluctance? What is the point of introducing this position here?<sup>90</sup> Indeed, to attribute the Rov's attendance at that German university solely to his need to escape the draft and not to his and his father's genuine desire that he broaden his secular knowledge simply misrepresents the position of the both of them with regard to the value of those disciplines.

Shortly after this article appeared, I had occasion to visit my late teacher, Dr. Isadore Twersky, who told me that he was quite upset by what he considered to be this misleading characterization of his father-in-law's attitude towards *madda* or non-Torah disciplines. He read this passage, as did I, not as an explanation as to why the Rov went to the University of Berlin *when he did*, providing the context for the decision being made *when it was*, but why he ever went *at all*. Dr. Twersky told me that when the Rov was a teenager, his father, who was then extremely poor, hired a tutor to teach him secular studies. Dr. Twersky also promised me that he would write an article for

this journal presenting an accurate portrayal of his father-in-law's position but that, in the meantime, I should consult part of a eulogy of his father-in-law that he had then recently published which dealt with the issue. A few months later, after he became ill, I visited him in his home and he reiterated his promise, hoping that the *Ribbono shel 'Olam* would grant him the strength to fulfill it. Alas, his illness overcame him and this article will never be written. We are left only with the words of the eulogy that I quote at length, as much in memory of my teacher as in my attempt to correctly portray the attitude of his father-in-law:

There is, in my opinion, no justification for debate or equivocation concerning the Rov's relation to general culture—philosophy, science, literature—but it is necessary to put this in a proper perspective. The facts are unmistakable. He achieved sovereign mastery of these fields. . . . He often reminisced with me about his student years and his unquenchable thirst for knowledge. . . . The impact of those years on him was great and lasting; his quest for wide-ranging scientific-humanistic knowledge was successful. The record of his dedicated quest for and ongoing use of this knowledge is clear and unambiguous.

Similarly, if you knew nothing about the Rov's biography and merely studied the *Isb Ha-Halakhab* (published in 1944) you would confront a massive, strategic reliance on the history of philosophy and science. The first two pages introduce you to Hegel, Kierkegaard, Rudolph Otto and Karl Barth, Eduard Spranger and Ferdinand Lasalle, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Bergson, Spengler and Heidegger—a breathtaking list. A page later you meet Plato and Aristotle, Galileo and Newton and soon thereafter Husserl, Scheler, Berkeley and Hermann Cohen. If you persisted and made your way to the end of this remarkable philosophical-spiritual meditation, the very last note refocuses your attention on a cast of influential figures: Kant and Hermann Cohen, Kierkegaard, Ibsen, Scheler and Heidegger together with the Rambam and ibn Gabirol and then once again, after a passing reference to Duns Scotus, on to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. These references reflect not only great erudition and precision in the history of philosophy but also a philosophic temper, a philosophic mode of thinking, a subtle, analytic mind.<sup>91</sup>

The centrality of secular studies for the Rov is also evident from the writings of other members of his own immediate family.<sup>92</sup> In an article written some thirty-five years ago, the Rov's other son-in-law, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, described his father-in-law's early involvement in secular studies and his years of study at the University of Berlin:

Only in his later years did he achieve the equivalent of a secular education. However, he acquired a lifelong taste for literature from his mother, who led him from fairy tales to Ibsen, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Bialik. When he reached his latter teens, R. Soloveitchik attained the equivalent of a “*gymnasium*” (i.e., high school and junior college) education from a series of tutors. . . .

When he was twenty-two, R. Soloveitchik entered the University of Berlin and for the first time approached the serious study of a secular discipline. His chosen field was philosophy. At the University, he plunged into the more abstract and abstruse aspects of philosophy, focusing his interest on a study of logic, metaphysics and epistemology. In all these areas—particularly the last two—the current approach was influenced by the thought and philosophy of Kant, and Soloveitchik steeped himself in Kantianism and its dicta.<sup>93</sup>

A few years ago, one of the Rov’s sisters published her reminiscences about her childhood, including much information about her father and older brother. In addition to noting that “a tutor was engaged [in Khaslavichy] for my two brothers to instruct them in Russian and mathematics,”<sup>94</sup> she specifically described the circumstances surrounding her brother’s move to Berlin:

Influenced by my mother’s deep conviction that there is no room for ignorance in an observant Jew, Father adopted an entirely different approach to secular education. He now maintained a new philosophy: that in this changing world both religious and general education were necessary if one was to have an effective influence on Jewish young people. . . .

Secular education thus became part of our life. The best private tutors were engaged to prepare my two older brothers for the university. They responded enthusiastically to their new course of studies and within a few years were ready for their entrance examinations. To fulfill their lifetime dream about Joseph Dov’s future role in Jewish life, *my parents decided to leave the decision regarding his university education to him. His choice was the University of Berlin*, famous for its philosophy department, which became his field of interest.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, the Rov’s father called attention with great pride to his son’s wide-ranging secular knowledge, and specifically to his philosophy degree from the University of Berlin, in a celebrated letter he wrote in 1935 recommending him for the position of chief rabbi of Tel Aviv. In the course of a remarkable description of his son’s qualities, he wrote:

בדורות הקודמים דימו שאי אפשר במציאות להיות תורה ושאר חכמות משולבים יחד. אמנם, בדור זה כבר פוגשים תורה וחכמה מחוברים. אבל באופן הזה גדול הדור בתורה באופן מבהיל, כאחד מגדולי הדור בדורות הקודמים. ואם בשאר חכמות באופן גדול הנו היחיד ומיוחד. אין ספק כי הוא כעת יחיד הדור בהבנת התורה. הבנתו היא המשקולת ודעתו היא המכרעת בכל דיני התורה, קלות וחמורות. עוד רבות בשנים מכבר כתב עליו הגאב"ד דקאוונא שהלכה כמותו בכל מקום (הנני מסגיר בזה העתק ממכתבו). ומה גם עתה, שהרי ת"ח הם כל שמוקינים דעתם מיושבת עליהם. . . .

השיג את תאר ד"ר פילוסופי באופן הכי מצוין בהאוניברסיטה דברלין, והפרופסורים דשם היו בהתפעלות מגודל כשרונותיו ורוחב הבנתו העמוקה שלא ראו כזאת. ומחדש גם בחכמה זו כגאון הדור, כבר הדפיס מעט בשפה האשכנזית, והכל על טהרת הקודש.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, and most remarkably, a short curriculum vitae of the Rov which he himself signed states explicitly that he already attended university in Warsaw prior to leaving for Berlin! It reads, "I, Joseph Solowiejczyk, was born February 27, 1903, in Pruzna, Poland. In 1922 I graduated from liberal arts 'Gymnasium' in Dubno. Thereafter I entered in 1924 the Free Polish University in Warsaw where I spent three terms, studying political science. In 1926 I came to Berlin and entered the Friedrich Wilhelm University."<sup>97</sup>

- Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz was one of the most extraordinary American Jewish educational visionaries of the last hundred years, largely responsible for setting the foundations of Orthodoxy in this country in the first half of the twentieth century. Born in Austria-Hungary in 1886, he arrived in the United States at the age of twenty-seven and, after serving for seven years as a teacher/principal in a Torah school in Scranton, PA, he became the principal of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn, NY, in 1921. In addition to serving as one of America's most important *rashei yeshiva*, he also founded or helped in the founding of other important communal institutions like Torah Umesorah, Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, Bais Medrash Elyon in Spring Valley, Mesivta Chaim Berlin, Telshe Yeshiva, Camp Mesivta, and the Orthodox weekly, *Dos Yiddishe Licht*, as well as Torah schools for girls.<sup>98</sup>

A recent biography of R. Mendlowitz contains a section entitled, "Against Going to College." The author wrote that R. Shraga Feivel was totally opposed to this type of secular education for two reasons: 1) no one attending college could ever develop into a *gadol ba-Torah* because mastery of Torah required a full-time commitment, and 2) the heretical ideas to which the *yeshiva bochur* would be exposed in college would prove to be too great a challenge to his faith. Nevertheless, a number of boys persisted in going and, to deal with the problem, some members of the yeshiva's board of directors de-

cided to open their own college—in conjunction with Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin and Yeshiva Rabbi Jacob Joseph—that would feature secular studies with proper direction, under appropriate auspices. All arrangements were made, but when they came to inform Rabbi Mendlowitz about their plan, he responded that it would require the support of leading *gedolei ha-dor*. He himself consulted with Rabbi Aharon Kotler, and when the latter expressed opposition to it, the entire plan was dropped.<sup>99</sup>

The archives of the Board of Regents of New York State contain the original records of this aborted institution, to be called the American Hebrew Theological University, and the story told there is significantly different. In 1946, the board received a request for a charter for this school which would offer a full undergraduate secular program and was also considering establishing three graduate schools requiring a B. A. degree for admission: a School of Theology, a School of Social Studies, and a School of Administration. Rather than having been informed about this project at the end of the process, the records indicate that Rabbi Mendlowitz, together with Rabbi Yizhak Hutner, *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin, was a member of the Board of Trustees. Indeed, he was the designer and moving force behind this entire effort.<sup>100</sup>

• At the end of the section on “Fast Days” in his popular survey of the Jewish festivals, *Ha-Mo’adim ba-Halakhah*, the late Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin discussed the halakhic obligation to tear *keriyah* upon seeing the *‘arei Yehudah*. He concluded his remarks with the following: כותבו הפוסקים: חורבן של ערי יהודה הוא שעכרם מושלים עליהן. מסתבר, שעם שיחרורן של ערי יהודה משלטון נכרים והקמת מדינת ישראל (אשרינו שזכינו לכך!) בטל דין הקריעה על אותן הערים.<sup>101</sup>

In 1981, an English translation of this work appeared in which this passage appears in the following way: “The commentators on *Shulchan Aruch* define the term ‘the cities of Yehudah in ruins’ as meaning that the gentiles are ruling over them. It could be argued that since the liberation of the cities of the Judean hills from gentile rule the law of rending the garments for these cities may no longer be in force.”<sup>102</sup> Strikingly, and without explanation, the Hebrew phrase, printed above in bold print, is conspicuously absent.<sup>103</sup> It is interesting to note that R. Zevin himself was sensitive to the nuances of editorial tampering. In another of his celebrated works, *Ishim ve-Shitot*, an analysis of the character, personality, and halakhic methodology of various late-nineteenth and twentieth century *gedolei Yisrael*, R. Zevin drew attention to an act of censorship perpetrated by the publishers of R. Hayyim Volozhiner’s *She’elot u-Teshuvot Hūt ha-Meshulash*. He wrote:



ר"לא נורא" אם אפילו לפעמים נוטים מפירושי הראשונים. כשפשטות ההבנה דורשת כך. הרי אפילו בהוראה למעשה כתב ר' חיים: "וכבר הוזהרתי בזה מפי מר"ר גאון קדוש ישראל רבינו הגדול החסיד מ' אליהו נ"ע מווילנא שלא לישא פנים בהוראה אף להכרעת רבותינו בעלי השלחן ערוך" (בשו"ת "חוט המשולש" נתפרסמה התשובה בשלימותה ואחרי המלה "בהוראה" נשמט המשפט "אף להכרעת...". ובמקומו כתוב: "וכ"). כל שכן כשאין הדבר נוגע להלכה למעשה, אלא לבירור הפשט. זה הכלל: "בתורה דכתיב בה אמת. בלתי אל האמת עינינו" ("חוט המשולש", סימן י"א).<sup>104</sup>

- On Sunday, May 9, 1954, the Orthodox Jewish Association of Cleveland sponsored a Yom Ha'azma'ut celebration at the Taylor Road Synagogue in Cleveland Heights in honor of the sixth anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. The "Hospitality Committee" consisted of Mrs. Sol L. Bloomfield representing Mizrachi Women and Mrs. Mordecai Gifter representing Neshai Agudath Israel, and the "presentation of colors" was done by representatives of B'nai Akiva and Pirchei Agudath Israel. The program featured a panel presentation on the theme "Looking Ahead with Religious Zionism" that was addressed by Rabbi Hugo Klein (Hapoel Hamizrachi), Rabbi Israel Porath (Mizrachi) and Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch, the *rosh yeshiva* of the Telsh Yeshiva in that city (Agudath Israel).<sup>105</sup>

In 1969, Rabbi Joseph D. Epstein published a book entitled *Mizvat ha-Shalom* in which he included a letter written by R. Bloch, dated May 16, 1954, defending his participation in this event. In this remarkable text, R. Bloch expressed strong positive feelings about the great significance of the State of Israel. He wrote:

עצמאות ישראל והקמת המדינה הרי זה מאורע חשוב בחיי עמנו... לדעתי למרות כל הלקויים והמגרעות שבהנהגת מדינת ישראל עצם קיומה שנתהוה ע"י נסים גלויים יש לו חשיבות שצריכים אנחנו להתייחס לו בהכרה ושביעת רצון. והכרה זו צריכים אנו להביע קבל עם משני טעמים. חדא, כי האמת צריכה להאמר ולהתגלות ושנית למען ידעו הכל ויכירו כי מלחמתנו נגד ממשלת ישראל אינה מכוונת נגד עצם קיומה של המדינה....

... דעתי היא שהקמת מדינת ישראל היא באמת מאורע חשוב בחיי עמנו והתייחסותנו לזה חיובית היא.

In addition, he defended the importance of Agudath Israel's joint cooperation with the Mizrachi, despite very real differences between them, as long as Agudah's independence would not be compromised. "There are many things which we can do together and thereby strengthen the force of Orthodox Judaism and its impact on the life of the nation," he wrote. He ended with the following extraordinary paragraph:

בכלל כבר הבעתי את השקפתי כי הרבה אבדנו ע"ז שנמנענו מלהכיר בדברים נכונים בשביל שהחפשים ומשמשיהם המזרחיים דוגלים בהם כדי לחזק ע"ז את דעותיהם הכוזבות. לדעתי לא מצאו השקפותינו הד בלבנות הקהל הרחב לא בשביל עמדתנו הנכונה נגד הדעות הכוזבות אלא בשביל עמדתנו השלילית נגד הדברים הנכונים כמו למוד התנ"ך. לשון הק' וא"י. הקהל אינו יכול להבין את חששותינו ואדרבה כשאנו מדגישים את עמדתנו החיובית להקורטוב של אמת אשר ביד החפשים ולוחמים נגד השקר שלהם יבין הקהל אותנו. גם זאת עלי להביע כי הנהגתנו זו לא נתחדשה בשנים האחרונות ותחת רוח חיי אמריקא. כך היתה הנהגתנו ג'כ בליטא למרות שכמו אז כן עתה הננו קנאים גמורים בנוגע למה שהוא ח"ו שלא לפי רוח התורה ולא נסוגנו אחר מפני רדיפות והשמצות ופעמים גם סבל וצער ונזק רב לנו ולישיבה הקדושה.<sup>106</sup>

How striking, however, is the fact that, when this book was reprinted in 1987, this letter was left out.<sup>107</sup>

- In addition, there other examples of this phenomenon, some of which I will simply mention here: the controversy over the excision of part of the farewell speech delivered by the then Belzer Rebbe in 1944 when he left Budapest for Erez Yisrael;<sup>108</sup> the story of the succession of R. Yizḥak Ze'ev ("R. Velvel") Soloveitchik to his father's position as rabbi in Brisk;<sup>109</sup> the controversy over the Holocaust story of the ninety-three Bais Yaakov girls in Cracow;<sup>110</sup> the dispute over the commentary of R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid to the Torah published by R. Yizḥak Shimshon Lange in 1975;<sup>111</sup> the retraction of *The Jewish Observer* of a story it printed about Moses Mendelssohn;<sup>112</sup> the question as to whether or not Rabbi Moshe Feinstein read newspapers<sup>113</sup> and the removal of part of a footnote in the second edition of Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth's *Shemirat Shabbat ke-Hilkhatah* which states that the son of the Ḥafez Ḥayyim wrote part of the *Mishnah Berurah*.<sup>114</sup>

In sum, the historical evidence makes it undoubtedly clear that Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a young boy; the Gaon of Vilna decried the ignorance of "*she'arei ha-ḥokhmo'*" in a conversation with R. Barukh of Shklov; R. Samson Raphael Hirsch intended his *Torah 'im derekh erez* ideology as a *lekhatḥila*; Mrs. Rayna Batya Berlin read, if not studied, Mishnayot; secular studies were allowed in Volozhin; Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik attended the University of Berlin not merely to avoid the Polish draft; Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz was actively involved in the founding of the American Hebrew Theological University; Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin praised the State of Israel; and Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch participated in a Cleveland community-wide celebration of Yom Ha'azma'ut. That all this is "true" is clear. Is there, then, any justification for omitting or distorting these "facts"? Can one, in good conscience, sanction the behavior of anyone who acts as if he agrees with the following sentiment,

“If you do not like the past, change it?”<sup>115</sup> Does anyone have a right to sanitize or whitewash history and engage in “inventing the truth?”<sup>116</sup> Is not an *emet* based on *sheker* ultimately nothing other than *sheker* itself?

Jewish tradition offers some insight into this problem.<sup>117</sup> In presenting their case to Moshe, the daughters of Z̄elafḥad said, “Our father died in the desert, and he was not among the group of those who were convened against the Eternal in the congregation of Korah but died as a result of his own sin” (Numbers 27:3). The exact nature of that sin is not described here and Ḥazal have tried to fill in the gap left in the biblical narrative by associating Z̄elafḥad with another sin mentioned earlier in the Torah, “And while the children of Israel were in the desert, they found a man who was *mekosbesh* wood on the Sabbath” (Numbers 15:32). The *Sifri* states: “And who was he? Z̄elafḥad. These are the words of R. Akiva . . . R. Yehudah b. Bathaira said, ‘Whoever says that Z̄elafḥad was the *mekosbesh* will have to render judgement in the future (*‘atid liten et ha-din*). If He Who spoke and the world came into existence (i. e., God) shielded him, you uncover him?’”<sup>118</sup> Similarly, the Talmud (*Shabbat* 97a) states: “‘And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed’ (Numbers 12:9). This teaches that Aaron too became leprous. These are the words of R. Akiva. Said R. Yehudah b. Bathaira to him, ‘Akiva! In either case you will have to render judgement in the future. If you are right, the Torah shielded him and you uncover him; and if not, you cast a stigma (*atab mozi la’az*) on that righteous man.’”

Is not our question here precisely what is at stake in this disagreement? Simply stated, may one publicize the truth about biblical figures even if that truth is, to put it sometimes mildly, less than flattering? In the opinion of R. Akiva, it is legitimate to broadcast the inappropriate behavior of even a biblical figure, and even where the Torah “shielded him.” According to R. Yehudah b. Bathaira, however, even if, in fact, Z̄elafḥad was the *mekosbesh*, one has no right to publicize information about him that the Torah saw fit to omit. The disagreement here is not over the truth, for both may very well agree regarding the facts; it is, rather, over the appropriateness of the presentation of that truth or those facts. Was Z̄elafḥad the *mekosbesh*? Both can agree that he was. Yet R. Yehudah b. Bathaira proscribes exposing that information. In his view, the truth is the truth, but not every truth needs to be publicized.

It is interesting to note that a similar sentiment exists even where the Torah *does* explicitly record that the person in question sinned and, in this case, all agree that public exposure of that fact is inappropriate.

The Mishnah states (*Megillah* 25a): “The incident of Reuven is read [in the synagogue] but not translated. The story of Tamar is read and translated. The first account of the golden calf is read and translated and the second is read but not translated. The blessing of the priests and the story of David and Amnon are neither read nor translated.”<sup>119</sup>

Two separate considerations are operative here, only the second of which is relevant to our discussion. One is concern for a misunderstanding of the text that may result from trying to translate it, potentially leading even as far as heresy (e. g., the first account of the golden calf and the blessing of the priests).<sup>120</sup> The other is a care, once again, not to sully the reputation of a revered biblical figure. For example, we “read” the words, “And Reuven went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine (Genesis 35:22),” but we do not translate them out of concern for his embarrassment.<sup>121</sup> We avoid translating the second presentation of the story of the golden calf (Exodus 32:21-25) in order to protect the reputation of Aharon.<sup>122</sup> In the view of the Mishnah, did Reuven “lie” with Bilhah? Was Aharon involved in the fashioning of the *‘egeḥ*? In both cases the true answer is “yes,” as presented in the Torah text.<sup>123</sup> Yet, Ḥazal require suppressing that information if exposing it will result in a diminution of the respect due those otherwise exalted biblical figures. Once again, the truth is the truth and in these cases the truth is explicitly mentioned in the text, but not every truth needs to be publicized.

In fact, to go one step further, Ḥazal in general do not hold truth to be an absolute value. For example, peace takes precedence over truth as stated in the rabbinic dictum simply translated as, “One is permitted to modify (*Ieshanot*) for the sake of truth” (*Yevamot* 65b). But while the example cited there of Abraham and Sarah (“I am old;” “my master is old”) is, indeed, one of “modification,” or not telling the whole truth,<sup>124</sup> the example of Joseph and his brothers also cited there is one of straightforward lying for they told Joseph something in the name of their father that he, in fact, never said. And yet, for the sake of a higher good, i.e., peace, the rabbinic view is that truth can be withheld, suppressed or ignored.<sup>125</sup>

Or consider the following Midrash: “R. Simon said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels were divided into separate groups. Some said he should not be created and some said he should be created . . . *Hesed* said he should be created for he does acts of kindness. *Emet* said he should not be created for he is full of falsehood . . . What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He took *emet* and cast it to the ground, as it is written, ‘And you cast truth to the ground’ (Daniel 8:12) . . .”<sup>126</sup>

Once Ḥazal have clearly indicated that truth, in certain circum-

stances, including assessing the personality and behavior of biblical figures, is not an ultimate value, is it not possible to extend this line of reasoning not only to them but also to *gedolei Yisrael* of every generation? As in the case of Zelaḥad or Aharon, could one not argue that disregard for historical accuracy is a small price to pay for maintaining a positive and respectful image of a revered Jewish leader, whenever he may have lived? So what if the truth will not be told in its entirety? Given a choice between a truth which is less than praiseworthy and the absence of a truth that is, have not Ḥazal already shown long ago that the latter is the preferable option? After all, the purpose of *gedolim* biographies is not to present the life story of their subjects as such, but rather to inspire and uplift, to motivate their readers to strive for their own higher levels of “*emunah, Torah and yiras Shomayim*.” Absolute precision of details and total accuracy of presentation are irrelevant, and suppression, then, may be perfectly appropriate.

Finally, at the beginning of his article cited earlier, Rabbi Aharon Feldman wrote, “When we read how a Reb Chaim Ozer, a Reb Shimon Shkop, or a Reb Moshe Feinstein lived, we are moved to demand more from ourselves and to rise beyond the least common denominators of our times, so sadly ‘least’ and so pitifully ‘common.’”<sup>127</sup> These biographies serve the purpose of helping create a “theology” of proper behavior that should be emulated by all.<sup>128</sup> And, in fact, the genre of hagiography, with its emphasis on pious panegyric and absence of personal intimacies or unflattering blemishes, is not unknown throughout Jewish history.<sup>129</sup>

Indeed, this type of defense was suggested by Dr. Haym Soloveitchik in his celebrated article on the distinction between mimetic and book culture in contemporary Orthodoxy. He wrote:

These works wear the guise of history . . . but their purpose is that of memory . . . 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. . . .

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. 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.”<sup>130</sup>

Yet, the relevance of all this to the collection of examples I cited earlier must be further refined and ultimately challenged. There are two separate issues that need to be addressed. First is the difference, if any, between a passive withholding of the entire truth and an overt lie. All of the rabbinic sources cited earlier discuss ignoring or covering up the facts, leaving certain truths untold and therefore hidden from public view. Better people not find out that Reuven had relations with Bilhah, that Aharon was involved in creating an idol, and that Zelfahad was the *mekosbesb* than be told that information, they maintain. The parallel here would be (assuming for a moment that all the following acts are “sins;” more on this below) that it is better that no one ever find out that Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, that Mrs. Rayna Batya Berlin studied *Mishnayot*, that Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin praised the State of Israel, or that Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch participated in a public Yom Ha’azma’ut celebration. After all, no one is lying; only the whole truth is not being told. In such circumstances, absolute precision of details and total accuracy of presentation are irrelevant, and suppression, the argument goes, may be perfectly appropriate.

Yet, does not the danger still remain that if this information is not made public, someone will be able to state with impunity at some future point that Rabbi Dessler *never* read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, that Mrs. Berlin *never* studied *Mishnayot*, or that Rabbi Bloch *never* participated in a public Yom Ha’azma’ut celebration? This, of course, would be a lie. When the Mishnah states in *Megillah* that certain passages are read but not translated, we are at least told the truth in the written record which is readily available. In the cases under discussion here, however, there is a danger that at some point a lie will be told. Is then not telling the entire truth ultimately as egregious an act as telling a lie?

Furthermore, is there any logical merit to this fundamental distinction? Is overlooking part of the truth, in fact, any less of a lie than actively distorting it? Do not both result in a less than true—let us call it what it really is, i. e., false—picture of the facts or figure being presented? W. E. B. Du Bois wrote: “One is astonished in the study of history at the recurrence of the idea that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over. We must not remember that Daniel Webster got drunk but only remember that he was a splendid constitutional lawyer. We must forget that George Washington was a slave owner . . .

and simply remember the things we regard as credible and inspiring. The difficulty, of course, with this philosophy is that history loses its value as an incentive and example; it paints perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth.”<sup>131</sup> Is it not the responsibility of truth to help avoid error as much as it must help avoid falsehood?

The problem is further compounded because some of the examples I cited go beyond just ignoring or suppressing information. To deny that the Gaon of Vilna reflected a positive attitude towards “*she’arei ha-ḥokhmot*” or a negative attitude towards “*ba-filosofiyah ha-arurah*,” that R. Samson Raphael Hirsch meant his *Torah im derekh erez* ideology as a *lekbathila*, that secular studies were allowed in Volozhin, that Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik attended the University of Berlin not merely to avoid the Polish draft, or that Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz was actively involved in the founding of the American Hebrew Theological University is not merely ignoring the truth but actively contradicting it. When Ḥazal asserted that, “Whoever says that Reuven . . . the sons of Eli . . . the sons of Shmuel . . . David . . . Shlomo . . . Yoshiyahu sinned is only making a mistake” (*Shabbat* 55b-56b), they were not contradicting the truth but defining it. What they were doing was claiming that the truth is that all these distinguished gentlemen did *not* sin, and that the texts which assert they did need to be reinterpreted.<sup>132</sup> In the cases under consideration here, however, such reinterpretation is not warranted and we are left with more than the overlooking of truth; we are left with the active distortion of truth.

There is also another crucial factor that needs to be taken into consideration, and that pertains to the value judgement ascribed to the act that was allegedly done or the event that allegedly took place, and this point is, I believe, the real issue at stake here. All the rabbinic precedents cited above presuppose that the act performed by the biblical figure in question, be he Zelaḥad, Reuven or Aharon, would be considered by anyone as sinful and embarrassing. Everyone considers public *ḥillul Shabbat*, sexual relations with one’s father’s wife or helping build an idol to be unacceptable. In such circumstances, Ḥazal deemed exposure of this information to be improper and inappropriate. What is to be gained by sharing it?

However, in the case of the examples cited here, not all agree that the interest expressed by the Gaon of Vilna, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch and R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik in “*she’arei ha-ḥokhmot*” or the activity of R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin or R. Elya Meir Bloch in connection with the State of Israel was in any way wrong or problematic. On the contrary, many applaud this very behavior as praiseworthy and meritorious. One engages in omission or distortion here, therefore, not simply to

protect a potentially damaged reputation but to present the view of a given *gadol* as being supportive of a particular position which one favors. What is at stake here are no less than the hotly contested and sharply debated issues which go to the heart of contemporary Orthodoxy, i.e., attitude to secular studies, Zionism, and women and Torah study. In such circumstances, ignoring the truth, and certainly distorting it, is fraught with much more serious implications. When the intention is to support a contemporary agenda or score a polemical point, the enterprise becomes particularly problematic.

To go even further. In a real sense, to consider this entire matter as relevant merely to “history” is to trivialize it significantly. For, indeed, distorting the words of a *gadol* is not just distorting history, it is distorting Torah. A *ma’aseh rav* of a *gadol bi-Yisrael* is also Torah, not only his *hiddushei Torah* on *gud achis meḥizta*. Is not intentional distortion of the behavior of a *gadol* tantamount to rewriting a problematic Tosafot? Is it not *giluy panim be-Torat ha-gadol shelo ke-balakhab*, even if the distorter is absolutely convinced that his opinion is the *real* Halakhah?

Also, once it becomes clear that the author is not telling the truth and, moreover, believes that falsification is justified as a policy, does he not lose his *ḥezkat kasbrut* and does not his entire work lose its usefulness? If he is prepared to distort the truth in one case, how can one be assured that he will not do so in another case or in a dozen other cases? Ultimately, his work will be considered nothing more than fiction or a fairy tale, and how inspirational can that ever be? I have already quoted Rabbi Feldman who wrote that, “When we read how a Reb Chaim Ozer, a Reb Shimon Shkop, or a Reb Moshe Feinstein lived, we are moved to demand more from ourselves . . . .”<sup>133</sup> But how are we to know that we are, indeed, reading an honest presentation of how they “lived”? Maybe some aspects of the presentation are not true? How much inspiration can the reader draw from a work whose reliability has been severely undermined? Someone once homiletically interpreted the rabbinic phrase, “*keshot azmekha ve-aḥar kakh keshot aḥerim*” (*Bava Batra* 60b) as meaning, “First be true to yourself and then you can be true to others.” In order for history to be inspirational, it need be factual. An *emet* based on *sheker* is not an *emet*.<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, can one not argue that *en la-davar sof?* Again, *mima nafshokb*. If the falsification of history has no precedent among earlier authorities, then how can anyone today who is part of a society where precedent is crucial in determining appropriate behavior engage in it—at any level? And if there *is* precedent for it, how can one trust as true anything anyone *ever* wrote or said? Maybe they too were falsify-



ing for the sake of establishing or supporting a particular ideology?

In addition, does such behavior not betray an extraordinary sense of hubris? Are not all these later writers claiming that they know better than the Gaon of Vilna or R. Hirsch or R. Soloveitchik or R. Zevin or R. Bloch what appropriate Jewish behavior entails? Is it not a distortion of the “*da’as Torah*” of R. Zevin, for example, to omit those words of his about the State of Israel or that of R. Bloch to omit his letter about the State? Maybe they both wanted this information to be known? Perhaps the Gaon was happy with how R. Barukh of Shklov described their conversation and would be upset with the current effort to deny it? Maybe R. Hirsch would be offended by what he would consider to be the contemporary distortion of a position he held very dear? Indeed, what right does someone today have to come along and say that he knows better? In these circumstances, distorting the truth preserves the author’s view of what he believes the *gadol* should have been and not what, in fact, he was. I am reminded of a quote by James Russell Lowell, “The mythic instinct erelong begins to shape things as they ought to have been, rather than as they were.”<sup>135</sup>

But the problem is even deeper than a disrespect for authority. There is an essential inconsistency here. Again, *mima nafshokh*. If the distorter genuinely believes that the *gadol* has erred on a fundamental issue of *bashkafah*, then why admire him at all? Why consider him as an authority at all, whose views need to be sanitized? Why does he not lose his status of “*gadol*” entirely? If, for example, Rabbi Zevin or Rabbi Bloch erred with regard to Zionism, why should anyone care what they thought? And if they *do* remain authority figures, should not knowledge of what they *really* believed alter the very ideology the distorter is trying to protect? In a sense, then, does not the entire enterprise reflect a fundamental flaw? One invents a false position of a *gadol* and then appeals to the authority of that very *gadol* to uphold it.<sup>136</sup>

In this context, part of a letter written by the Ḥazon Ish is relevant:

... דעתני כי ראוי להמחזיקים בתורת ד' לדעת את גדוליה באופים האמת. ואם הותר לדבר לה' על אומן באומנותו. להאיש הדורש עליו לצורך. על מי שתורתו אומנותו לא כש"כ שמותר להודיע להמחזיקים בתורה. וצריכים לדעת. כי הידיעה של חכמי הדור לבם ומדתם הן הן גופי תורה. מ"מ צריך לזה זהירות יתירה ופן משנה הדבר בקוצו ש"י ונמצא מוציא ש"ר על ת"ת.<sup>137</sup>

It would appear to me that the Ḥazon Ish is advocating some level of acknowledging and facing the truth when it comes to matters pertaining to the “character” of *gedolei yisrael*.

A number of years ago, Rabbi Shimon Schwab wrote:

What ethical purpose is served by preserving a realistic historic picture? Nothing but the satisfaction of curiosity. We should tell ourselves and our children the good memories of the good people, their unshakable faith, their staunch defense of tradition, their life of truth, their impeccable honesty, their boundless charity and their great reverence for Torah and Torah sages. What is gained by pointing out their inadequacies and their contradictions? We want to be inspired by their example and learn from their experience. . . .

Rather than write the history of our forebears, every generation has to put a veil over the human failings of its elders and glorify all the rest which is great and beautiful. That means we have to do without a real history book. We can do without. We do not need realism, we need *inspiration* from our forefathers in order to pass it on to posterity.<sup>138</sup>

How ironic it is that, as we “tell ourselves and our children” about the “life of truth” and “impeccable honesty” of “the good people,” we need not be truthful and honest ourselves.

Two concluding thoughts. First, there is a most remarkable and extraordinary essay by Rabbi Dessler himself which radically redefines the nature of truth and which is directly relevant to this discussion. For him, truth has nothing to do with the reality of what was or is. Truth, rather, is what is in keeping with God’s will. He wrote:

What is truth and what is falsehood? At the beginning of our education we were led to understand that truth is when one tells the facts as they occurred and falsehood is when one deviates from this.

However, this is so only in simple cases, but in reality there are many circumstances when the matter is not so. Sometimes it is prohibited to relate things as they are, such as to tell something unpleasant to his friend without any purpose or need and sometimes one must deliberately modify when the truth will not help but damage. For then, what appears to be true is false for it causes outcomes of evil, and that which appears as false brings to the ultimate truth.

It would appear that truth is what brings to good and to [fulfilling] God’s will, and falsehood is what grants success to the force of evil, the *Sitra Agra*.

At the end of this brief essay, R. Dessler goes so far as to write that, “Falsehood for the sake of such a truth that is truth.”<sup>139</sup> If this is so, can one not make a case that, for R. Dessler, disregarding historical accuracy in such circumstances is precisely what the real truth requires, assuming, of course, that one knows the truth about what the real truth requires. . . .

Second, a defense of the approach under discussion here is forthcoming from an unlikely and unexpected source. A recent issue of the journal *History and Memory* contains an article that argues for a fundamental distinction between what its author calls “history” and what he calls “heritage.” He writes:

Heritage should not be confused with history. History seeks to convince by truth, and succumbs to falsehood. Heritage exaggerates and omits, candidly invents and frankly forgets . . . . Heritage uses historical traces and tells historical tales. But these tales and traces are stitched into fables closed to critical scrutiny. Heritage is immune to criticism because it is not erudition but catechism—not checkable fact but credulous allegiance. Heritage is not a testable or even plausible version of our past; it is a *declaration of faith* in that past. Loyalty and bonding demand uncritical endorsement and preclude dissent. Deviance is banned because group success, even survival, depend on all pulling together . . . . Heritage diverges from history not in being biased but in its view of bias. Historians aim to reduce bias; heritage sanctions and strengthens it.

He continues to note that, “Heritage mandates *misreadings* of the past. . . . In sum, heritage everywhere not only tolerates but thrives on historical error” and concludes his essay with a quote from George Orwell, “we must add to our heritage or lose it.”<sup>140</sup> I believe that if one were simply to substitute the word “*mesorah*” for “heritage,” one would have an extraordinarily accurate description and defense of all the examples I have cited in this article but, in light of everything written above, it is a defense that I would find to be highly problematic and ultimately unconvincing.

All of which brings me to Rabbi Yehiel Ya‘akov Weinberg. The previous issue of this journal contained an article by Dr. Marc Shapiro presenting an English translation of a number of hitherto published and unpublished letters written by that great twentieth-century scholar and communal leader to Dr. Samuel Atlas, a professor of Talmud and philosophy at the Reform Hebrew Union College and long-time close personal acquaintance of Rabbi Weinberg’s.<sup>141</sup> After giving the matter a great deal of thought for reasons that will become apparent shortly,

and after consulting two individuals whose opinion I respect and who strongly encouraged me to print these letters, I decided to go ahead with their publication.

The reaction to the appearance of these letters was extreme on both sides, extremely favorable and extremely critical. A number of people strongly commended me for making available in print a window into the innermost feelings and thoughts of this great *gadol ba-Torah*. They were grateful to me for demonstrating via these letters, as few other texts could, that not all *gedolei Yisrael* are necessarily cut from the same cloth, fitting the exact same mold. The letters reflect a highly respected, first-rate Torah scholar and undisputed halakhic giant who obviously enjoyed a remarkably close, intimate and personal relationship with a professor of Talmud at a Reform institution to whom he turned to have a religious influence on nonobservant members of his own family, who wrote with respect for Reform rabbis, who expressed support for the enterprise of academic Jewish scholarship in spite of the significant opposition it engendered in some circles, who was harshly critical of certain elements within the religious community in Israel, and who struggled deeply with the attitude of Jewish law towards Gentiles. What does one make of this unusual and extraordinary combination? What does this tell us about the intellectual and social boundaries of modern *gedolei Yisrael*? What a wonderful opportunity we now have, I was told, to behold an alternate image of a *gadol* and to substantively address the implications of such an image for contemporary Orthodoxy.

Knowing about Rabbi Weinberg's struggle regarding the rabbinic attitude to Gentiles is particularly important, I was told, because it enables Jews deeply troubled by these issues to retain their spiritual compass; to recognize that such inner struggle can be legitimate as long as it takes place within the context of an ultimate commitment to the sacrosanct and immutable character of the halakhic tradition. Furthermore, Rabbi Weinberg's support of the position of the Meiri is not only of conceptual interest but has halakhic ramifications, and places this more liberal and tolerant position more into the center of contemporary halakhic thinking and decision-making.

These letters also portray Rabbi Weinberg *the man*—his lonely, frustrated, bitter and tragic life after the destruction of his world during the Holocaust—and therefore, I was told, help us appreciate even more the greatness and personal achievements of Rabbi Weinberg *the gadol*. He saw through everything that surrounded him and could not abide flattery, hypocrisy or extremism, in whatever circles he may have found them. To see Rabbi Weinberg's deep inner struggles and to know that, in spite of it all, he still remained Rabbi Weinberg is

religiously inspiring. Rather than diminishing his stature, these letters enrich our understanding of this great man and, on the contrary, I was told, serve to raise his stature in our eyes. Finally, modern Jewish scholarship has been advanced, I was reminded, because, as a result of the insights into his life made available by the publication of these letters, a true, complete and accurate portrait of this great man's personality will now be possible. For all these reasons, I was to be commended, many said, for providing a great service to the Orthodox and scholarly communities.

I was sharply criticized for much of the same reasons, and more. How could I dare let the world know that a great *gadol be-Yisrael* obviously enjoyed a close, intimate and personal relationship with a professor of Talmud at a Reform institution to whom he turned to have a religious influence on nonobservant members of his own family, that he wrote with respect for Reform rabbis, that he expressed support for the enterprise of academic Jewish scholarship in spite of the significant opposition it engendered in some circles, that he was harshly critical of certain elements within the religious community in Israel, and that he struggled deeply with the attitude of Jewish law towards Gentiles? In fact, in a telephone conversation, someone even went so far as to accuse Dr. Shapiro and me of forging these letters because it was inconceivable to him that any *gadol* could ever write such words.

I want to state at the outset that I am prepared to consider the possibility that I was wrong in publishing these letters, and want to explain my reason for having come to this conclusion. But first, some preliminary remarks about Rabbi Weinberg. It has long been known, decades before the publication of these letters, that Rabbi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg was not a "typical" *gadol be-Yisrael*. The recent doctoral dissertation on Rabbi Weinberg by Dr. Shapiro and the almost book-length article on him by Dr. Judith Bleich portray, to be sure, a *gadol* trained in the classical East European yeshivot of Mir and Slabodka, who sat at the feet of the great *ba'alei mussar* of the last century (like R. Naftali Amsterdam, R. Yizhak Blazer, and R. Simḥah Zisel), who spent a lifetime of "nights like days" steeped in Torah study, who authored hundreds of learned responsa and talmudic *hiddushim*, who expressed reverential deference to the *gedolei Yisrael* of his day and unyielding opposition to the Reform movement, who was selflessly involved from a young age in *zarkhei zibbur* and who was totally committed to the absolute primacy of Torah in every way possible.<sup>142</sup>

But yet, at the same time, we are presented with aspects of a life very different from those one would normally associate with a *gadol*

*be-Yisrael* in the twentieth century. We confront a figure who, as a teenager, read all the works of the well-known maskilim Peretz Smolenskin and Avraham Mapu, who left the Mir at the age of twenty for Grodno to study Russian (his *rebbe*, R. Nosson Zevi Finkel, the “Alter from Slabodka,” made a special trip to Grodno to dissuade him from this decision but to no avail), who frequented Berlin’s *Bet Va’ad ha-Tvri* (the Hebrew Club) in the 1910s where he met Zalman Rubashov (later Shazar), Shmuel Yosef Agnon and Gershom Scholem, who published favorable essays about Ahad Ha’am, Micha Yosef Berdichevsky and Theodore Herzl, who studied the Hebrew Bible with Christian scholars at a secular university with the recommendation of Albert Einstein to whom he referred as “the great son of our people,” who wrote his dissertation on the Syriac translation of the Bible, who published works of modern biblical scholarship citing Christian exegetes (like Dalman and Kautsch) alongside Abraham Ibn Ezra and others, who made reference in his writings to the Septuagint and Samaritan versions of the biblical text and to the work of Wellhausen, who co-authored an article on Mishna fragments in the Geniza with his Christian university teacher which was published in the Reform sponsored *Hebrew Union College Annual*, who expressed very positive feelings about Zionism and the State of Israel, who was unusually sensitive to “feminist concerns,” and who became a leading advocate and supporter of Hirschian German Orthodoxy.

Even the specific issues raised in connection with the publication of these letters are not new. 1) Rabbi Weinberg’s close relationship with Professor Atlas was already long well known. He cited Atlas in his first rabbinic book, *Mehkarim bi-Talmud*,<sup>143</sup> and included a *teshuvah* addressed to Atlas in the second volume of his *Seridei Esb*.<sup>144</sup> Atlas returned the compliment and included Rabbi Weinberg’s notes at the end of his edition of Rabad’s commentary to *Bava Kamma*.<sup>145</sup> In all of these cases, the honorific titles each one used for the other reflect a mutual personal warmth and great respect. That Rabbi Weinberg was totally comfortable with the public nature of his relationship with Atlas is made clear in a letter to him written in April 1965:

תירוצו על החילוק בין כופר בפקדון ובין כופר בעדות הוא טוב מאד. ולכן אני מיעץ  
 לו להדפיס כל דבריו בחוברת מיוחדת. ואם לא ירצה לעשות כן יואל נא לשלוח לי  
 העתקה ממכתבי אליו וכן ממכתבי זה ואולי אכניסם בחלק שלישי של ספרי . . .  
 וכמובן אכניס את דברי כת"ר בשם אומרם. אף כי במעשה זה אעורר נגדי חמת  
 המתלוננים מקרב הקנאים. שלא מחלו לי על שהכנסתי דבריו בחלקו השני של שרידי  
 אש.<sup>146</sup>

Finally, the warmth of two appreciations Professor Atlas penned in memory of Rabbi Weinberg after his death in 1966 indicates again

that their relationship was far more than merely an intellectual one.<sup>147</sup> At the beginning of an entire article devoted to his dear friend, Atlas noted that they first met in the early 1920s and, מיום שהתודענו איש אל רעיו חיבה יתירה נודעת לי ממנו וקשרי ידידות נרקמו בינינו . . . כל ימי שבתי בגרמניה הפגשנו לעתים קרובות ובצאתי משם עמדנו בחליפת מכתבים בפטירתו נלקח ממני, בפיטירתו נלקח ממני, בפיטירתו נלקח ממני, בפיטירתו נלקח ממני.<sup>148</sup> In addition, Atlas responded in writing to the editor of *De'ot* after an article in memory of Rabbi Weinberg was printed in an earlier issue of that journal. In the course of his comments he wrote:

אין די מלים בפי לתאר לכם את צערי העמוק לרגלי האבדה הגדולה הזאת. נלקח ממני חלק בעצמי בהלקח ממני ידיד נפשי האהוב אשר נפשי קשורה בנפשו. וגם הגריי' זצ"ל היה קשור אלי בקשרי אהבה בכל נימי נפשו מיום שהתודענו איש אל רעהו.<sup>149</sup>

There is no reason to question the sincerity of these words.

2) Although Rabbi Weinberg took a strong position against the Reform movement, there already was evidence that he wrote with respect and sensitivity about particular individual Reform rabbis. In a letter to Rabbi Avraham Yizhak Hakohen Kook dated September 9, 1914, Rabbi Weinberg informs him that: תודה לה' כי כבר הונח לי בהשתדלותו של רב ליברלי של העדה הליברלית. (דווקא ע"י רב אחד מרבני העדה הליברלית, כאלו רוצה לזכות את כל ישראל במעלות שונות שיש בזה מה שאין וכו'), קבצו לי סכום כסף לפרנסתי.<sup>150</sup> One does not normally expect this kind of language from an Orthodox Torah scholar.

3) Rabbi Weinberg's commitment to academic scholarship is well known from even a cursory review of his printed works and it need not be spelled out here in great detail.<sup>151</sup>

4) Rabbi Weinberg's sharply worded criticism of the hypocrisy, extremism and unethical behavior he found within Orthodoxy was also already known prior to the publication of these letters. They can be found, among other places, in the *Seridei Esh* published by Rabbi Weinberg himself, in letters published by a very devoted student of his and in a journal sponsored by Poalei Agudat Yisrael.

In the Fall of 1953, Rabbi Weinberg wrote the following letter to the prominent religious Zionist leader, R. Shlomo Zalman Shragai:

ב"ה ועש"ק וירא. תשי"ג מונטרע  
לידידי מכובדי הרה"מ והסופר הדגול  
מהרש"ז שרגאי שליט"א  
של' וברכת רפואה שלמה ומהירה!

הצטערתי לשמוע שכ"ת כבר עזב את מונטרע מבלי שנפרדנו בברכה כנהוג ומבלי שנתנה לנו ההזדמנות לשוחח בעניינים העומדים ברומו של עולמנו. דבר אחד מעיק

על לבי: הירידה המוסרית בתוכנו והסבלנות מופרזה ביחס אל הרמאות המצטבעת בצבע של חסידות ודאגה לעלבונה של תורה. הרמאות מתגברת והולכת. היא עובדת בערמה ובחוצפה ובלעיגה לתמימות המאמינים להם. אלמלי נתנה רשות לגלות את ערמתם וערמימיותם של הרמאים הצבועים ה' העולם נבהל ומשתומם: אבל הרמאים מפילים את מוראם ופחדם על הכל בכלי נשק של רכילות, עלילת עלילות, מלשינות והלבנת פנים מחוצפה. ויש שרואים ומציצים בין החרכים אבל הם "נכבשים" ע"י חנופה וחלוקת כבוד מזויפת. ובין כך וכך הרמאות מצליחה ובהצלחתה היא מרעילה את האויר וגורמת ליאוש שיתגבר מתוך הכרה כי כן מנהגו של עולם: צדיק ורע לו ורשע וטוב לו. ברי לי כי בטוהר רוחני ובהרמת הגובה המוסרי תלוי' שאלת קיום עמנו וקיום מדינתנו. אלו המדקדקים בדיני כשרות, שעטנז, מנהגי ביה"כ וכדומה ועוברים בגלוי ובשאת על עיקרי המוסר והנימוס האנושי גורמים לריחוק בני הדור מן הדת וקיום מצות'. הצרה הגדולה ביותר היא שהעסקנות לשם הרבצת התורה ולשם שמירת הדת נעשתה מקור לפרנסה ולסולח המוליך לדרגא חברתית גבוהה. יש בתוכנו אנשים שרק בעזרת עסקנות זו זכו לשם ולפרסום. ההרגשה שהעולם מתחשב עמם מפיתה בהם יצר המלחמה. אנו צריכים להשתטח על קברי "המשכילים" שלחמו נגד הצבועים ולבקש סליחתם על פגיעתנו בכבודם. הם לחמו בעד האמת שלהם בחרוף נפש. עכש' כל אדם רוצה להיות מקובל על הבריות ומשלימים עם החנפים, ועם השנוורין עזי-הפנים, ועם האדמו"רים הקטנם שאין להם בעולמם ולא כלום. נרד לטמיון ח"ו אם לא נתעורר ונתנער מעפר השקר והחנופה.

שבתא טבא גם לבני. יחיאל יעקב ווינברג

רציתי לכתוב שורות אחדות של ברכת פרידה ויצא מכתב ארוך של השתפכות נגד

כוונת!

צאתך לשלום ובוואך לשלום ותהא ברכת השם שורה על מעשיך!<sup>152</sup>

Nothing in the collection of letters printed here rivals the intensity and sharpness of what has already been expressed in this previously printed letter.

Another two examples are forthcoming from a collection of letters of Rabbi Weinberg's published by an especially close student of his in 1983. Unfortunately, they were printed without their dates:

באמת לא חשבתי מעולם להתיר את חגיגת הבת מצוה בבית הכנסת מפני הטעמים שכתבתי במאמרי (נפלו בו שגיאות דפוס רבות) ולא רציתי אלא לברר את ההלכה של חוקות הגוים שטעו בה רבים משום שלא ירדו לברר ממקומות הש"ס, ובכלל אין לפחד מצעקת ההמון, מרבנים שרוצים להתהדר בחומרתם. כוונתי לשם שמים ולברר את האמת.<sup>153</sup>

קבלתי מכתבו. כל דבריו צודקים ולא רק שאיני מתרעם ח"ו עליו, אלא אדרבא ראיתי בהם סימן לידידות כנה, בודאי שלא נעלמו ממני כל חששותיו, אלא שלא ידעתי מוציא אחר, כי אי אפשר לי לעבור על מידת הנימוס ברגל גסה, במידת נהיגת כבוד אפשר להשפיע יותר מאשר בחרופים וגידופים, וכך היה מדתו של אהרן שהקדים שלום לרשע ועי"כ החזירו למוטב, יודע אני כי הקיצוניות התגברה ביהדות החרדית של היום, אבל במדה זו התמעטה גם השפעתה על חוגים אחרים, אני דואג לחיזוק הדת ולא למה שיאמרו אלה המתמימים להיות מנייה.<sup>154</sup>

Note also the following two letters, published in *Ha-Ma'ayan* in 1992:



ב"ה יום ד' בשלח תשי"ד  
 ידידי היקר הרה"ג וכו' מהר"י אפפעל נ"י  
 המציאו לי חוזר אנגלי ע"ד הרצון להחרים את הרב ד"ר א. [אלטמן] והוא עורר בי  
 צער גדול ואני מלא חימה על הקנאים הנבערים מדעת ועל האנשים המסיתים מתוך  
 נגיעות שפלות שבשפלות. הצביעות משחיתה את עולמנו ואי אפשר לצאת נגדה כי היא  
 מתלבשת בבגדי צביעונים של יראה דתית.  
 ידידו מוקירו  
 יחיאל יעקב ווינברג

ב"ה ב' כסלו תשט"ז מונטרה  
 לכבוד הרה"ג החה"ש מהר"י הכהן ד"ר גרינפלד שליט"א  
 אחד"ש כת"ר בידידות רבה!  
 פותח אני בהודי לכת"ר על מכתבו היקר שגרם לי הנאה מיוחדת. במיוחד שמחתי  
 לראות שכת"ר עוסק בהוצאת כתבי הגרש"ר הירש זצ"ל באנגלית, ונתגלגלה זכות הרבים  
 ע"י זכאי כמותו י"ב. סובר אני ככת"ר כי בימינו אין לנו עוגן הצלה נגד שטף ההתבוללות  
 וההתנכרות ליהדות אלא הפצת שיטת גדולי אשכנז ז"ל בכונן של תורה וד"א. לצערי  
 התגברה בקרב חוגים ידועים של אג"י ההתנגדות לשיטה זו. לפ"ד התנגדות זו מעידה על  
 סמיות עין וצמצום מחשבה. ולכן יש צורך להגביר את התעמולה בכונן הנ"ל, והפצת  
 כתבי הגרש"ר הירש ז"ל הוא המכשיר היותר מעולה.<sup>155</sup>

Lastly, Rabbi Weinberg himself printed explicitly sharp critiques of the "*ḥaredim*" in his *Sedirei Esb*, his collection of responsa that he undoubtedly hoped would be read by all sectors of Orthodoxy. For example, he wrote:

ואמנם מבין אני לרוח קצת החרדים המרננים נגד "ישורון" שהם רואים במנהגיו סטיה  
 מן המנהגים שהורגלו בהם באורח חייהם בפולין ובאונגארן. אולם הם מעלימים עיניהם  
 מן המצב בצרפת כמו שהוא. ליהודים החרדים מן הסוג הישן אין שום השפעה על מהלך  
 החיים. הם מרוכזים בתוך חוגם המצומצם ואינם שמים את לבם לתהליך ההתבוללות  
 העושה שמות גם בקרב החרדים. אף החרדים שולחים בניהם ובנותיהם לבתי ספר  
 נכריים. ואין להם שום ערובה שיהי' בכוחם לעמוד נגד הזרם השוטף ומכלה. הם בוטחים  
 בעצמם ואינם דואגים דאגת מחר לעתידם הדתי של ילדיהם.<sup>156</sup>

5) Finally, Rabbi Weinberg's sensitivity towards the treatment of Gentiles in Jewish law was also well known. In his writings he went out of his way to explain various laws that seemed to reflect negatively on Gentiles. An entire responsum of his is devoted to explaining the rabbinic phrase, "נכסי עכ"ם הרי הם כהפקר", although there his concern is to blunt the arguments of anti-Semites who used this text against the Jews.<sup>157</sup> In a brief essay on the issue of the disqualification of Gentiles from serving as witnesses, however, he seems to be responding to a dual concern, first to the apparent unethical nature of the law itself and only then to the potential misuse of it by our enemies. He wrote:

ידועה דעת רבנו יקיר שהובאה במרדכי גיטין (דף י"ג) (וראה בתשב"ץ סי' ע"ח בשם חכמי צרפת) שגם מי שאינו בן ברית כשר לעדות. אמנם כידוע אין פוסקים כן למעשה והלכה עכ"ם פסול לעדות.

עובדה זו מבטאית לכאורה יחס של חשד ואי איוון מצד המשפט העברי לגבי מי שאינם בני ברית. מפאת היותם בלתי יהודים הפסידו בעיני המשפט העברי את אמונם ואת נאמנותם להעיד עדות של אמת. הא כיצד? וידוע כי זהו מן הדברים אשר שונאי ישראל מונים אותנו בהם, כי אנחנו מגרעים את ערכו של חסידי אר"ה מערכו של יהודי פשוט שבפשוטים.<sup>158</sup>

I interpret the *vav* at the beginning of “*ve-yadu‘a*” as the beginning of his second consideration, a concern for what “*son’ei Yisrael*” will say following a more fundamental concern with the ethics of the law itself.

Rabbi Weinberg also devoted an entire essay, first printed in 1913 and reprinted in his *Le-Perakim*, to “Ha-Yahas le-Nokhrim” in which he made it very clear that none of the discriminatory laws in the Talmud against Gentiles are to be understood as relevant to those living in contemporary times. In the course of his comments, he made explicit reference to the position of the Meiri he cited again in the letters under discussion here. And, once again, one gets the impression that his concern is much more than simply refuting the baseless charge of anti-Semites.<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, the Jewish attitude towards Gentiles was not the only halakhic ruling which “pained” Rabbi Weinberg. In discussing the appropriateness of a particular couple to get married, he wrote that it would not be permissible:

כת"ר שאל על רווק זקן—למעשה אין אפשרות להתיר לבחור מסכן זה שישא את הנערה הזאת. כי מי יהין וירחיב לפסוק נגד דין מפורש בשו"ע. לא זו הפעם הראשונה שמעשה כזה בא לפני. ואודה על האמת. שאיסור זה גורם לי צער גדול.<sup>160</sup>

Also highly significant in this context is the fact that Rabbi Weinberg was himself strongly opposed to any sort of historical revisionism. In an article he wrote about Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, he warned against misinterpreting and distorting R. Hirsch's approach by suggesting that R. Hirsch meant his *Torah 'im derekh erez* ideology as a compromise relevant only to his own time.<sup>161</sup> In the clear words of Dr. Bleich, “Rabbi Weinberg regarded such categorization of Hirsch's educational philosophy as a perversion of historical truth.”<sup>162</sup> He strongly insisted that the openness of Rabbi Hirsch not be misrepresented by those who later became uncomfortable with a position they found to be at odds with their own. If, therefore, it is clear that historical truth was important to him with regard to Rabbi Hirsch, and if

intellectual honesty was a paramount value to him as it was,<sup>163</sup> would it not be fair to assume that he would want nothing less for himself? Would he not have insisted that the true “real” Rabbi Weinberg be preserved for posterity? Indeed, it is the height of historical irony that Rabbi Weinberg has now become the victim of the very phenomenon he so valiantly strove to avoid in others.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, Rabbi Avraham Abba Weingort, in his “Letter to the Editor” printed at the end of this volume, accuses me (as did others as well in oral and written communications) of violating the *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom* which prohibits the reading (and, I imagine, certainly the publication) of someone’s private correspondence. In addition, Rabbi Weingort expresses his deep upset at my having violated Rabbi Weinberg’s confidentiality and makes reference to an article that prohibits publishing anyone’s *divrei Torah* without permission.

In response, I would first like to point out that it is not clear to me that the *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom* is relevant here. Without entering into the complex and thorny discussion of whether reading someone’s mail even falls into the category of those behaviors proscribed by a *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom*,<sup>165</sup> it should be pointed out that some of those texts which do include it in their list add a significant caveat very relevant for our circumstances. They formulate this *herem* as follows: חרם שלא לראות בכתב חבירו ששולח לחבירו בלא ידיעתו ואם זרקו מותר. <sup>166</sup> Who threw out the letter? One can safely assume that the reference is to the recipient, for who else would be in a position to do so? But what about the sensitivity of the sender? Perhaps he is still uncomfortable with the contents of the letter he wrote becoming public knowledge? In fact, Rabbi Ya’akov Ḥagiz prohibits the reading of such a letter precisely on such grounds. In a responsum on this subject, he wrote:

**שאלה** המוצא אגרת פתוחה בשוק וכתוב עליה ופגיון דרגמ”ה אם מותר לקרותה ואם חייב להחזיר. **תשובה** נהי דלגבי המקבל איכא למימר כיון דנפל איתרע ולא חש לה אכל שולח שמא אין רוצה שידעו בעסקיו ולפי זה אם היא חתומה כ”ש שאין ליגע בה וחייב להחזירה דמסתמא אין לומר שהשליכה קודם שיקראנה.<sup>167</sup>

It must be noted, however, in assessing the relevance of this responsum for the discussion here, that Rabbi Ḥagiz is addressing a circumstance where the phrase “ופגיון דרגמ”ה” was specifically written on the letter. Indeed, in a comprehensive responsum dealing with this issue, R. Ḥayyim Palaggi states specifically that the *herem* applies only in such a circumstance: נראה דעיקר החרם שחל הוא כשרשום על האיגרת: <sup>168</sup> None of Rabbi Weinberg’s

correspondence with Professor Atlas contain this phrase. Secondly, R. Ḥabiz was apparently unaware of the previously cited alternate reading of this prohibition which, I suspect, assumes that the sender is fully cognizant of the fact that his letter may be discarded and, unless he specifically states otherwise, implicitly transfers jurisdiction over its fate to its recipient.<sup>169</sup> In fact, this very same question was posed to Rabbi Moshe ben Ḥabib and he cited this very alternate version to permit the reading of such letters:

**שאלה** המוציא אגרת פתוחה בשוק וכתוב עליה (ופג'ן ברגמ"ה) [ופג'ן דרגמ"ה] אם מותר לקרותה ושכמ"ה: **תשובה** איתא בתשובות מהר"מ גם בתשובות מינץ סי' ק"ב תקנות רגמ"ה וכתוב שם בלשון הזה חרם שלא לראות בכתב חבירו ששולח לחבירו בלי ידעתו אסור ואם זרקו מותר עכ"ל. ומהך לישנא דקאמר ואם זרקו מותר משמע דהמוציא אגרת בשוק פתוחה מותר לקרותה ואין לו דלא התירו אלא בשאני רואה שזרקה אבל המוציא בשוק דחייש' דלמא נפל ממנו שלא בידיעתו ועדיין הוא מקפיד שלא יראנה חברו וספק חרם הוא כספיקא דאורייתא דאזלינן לחומרא כמבואר בדברי הפוסקים דהא ודאי לאו מלתא היא דמלשון התקנה אני (בן) [דן] שאמרו חרם שלא לראות בכתב חבירו ששולח לחבירו דמשמע דדוקא בשעה שהוא שולח לחבירו גזרו בשעה שהאגרת ביד השליח המוליכה גזרו שלא יקראנה שלא ידע סודות חבירו ובחוצתו אבל בשעה שהיא מושלכת בשוק פתוחה חזקה שנפלה מיד מי שנשתלחה לו וכיון שראה שאין בה עתה שום סוד שמקפיד חבירו לא נזהר בה בשמירתה ...

R. Ḥabib goes even further and states quite emphatically that the *herem* is only applicable if the sender verbally articulated it; simply writing even "ופג'ן דרגמ"ה" is not sufficient:

אחר העיון יר' דאע"ג דכותבין על האגרות ופג'ן דרגמ"ה אם יקראנה אינו עובר על החרם משום דאף בעלי הכתב כשכתב ופג'ן דרגמ"ה לא פצו שפתיו להחרים כל מי שיקרא את כתבו אלא שכתב ופג'ן דרגמ"ה וכתובה כה"ג לחובה לאו כלום הוא ...

וא"כ כיון שהדבר ברור וידוע דאין אדם שיטול חרם ממש בפיו ובשפתיו לרואה את כתבו אלא שכותב בלבד ופג'ן דרגמ"ה **מלתא דפשיטא הוא דאין לחוש משום חרם** וכיון דליכא משום חרם ולית כאן שום ספק חרם בנ"ד יכול לקרותה כיון שמצאוה בשוק תלינן שהשליכה מפני שידע שאין בה שום סוד א"נ כיון שידע שאין בה סוד לא נזהר בשמירתה ...

He concludes his responsum by limiting the application of the *herem* in any case only to one who *opens* a letter and not to one who reads an already opened one: **א"כ ה"ז באגרת שישאול אדם לחברו אם יפתחנה לקרותה** <sup>170</sup>הוי שולח יד בפקדון והוי גולן

The limitation of this *herem* only to one who *opens* the letter is also explicitly found in other sources that deal with it. See, for example, the formulation of the *Shiltei ha-Gibborim*:

ומה שנוהגים לכתוב על האגרות דאיכא חרם דר"ג נראה דאם הפותח האגרת יודע שיש חרם ר"ג בזה דאז אפי' לא היה האיש שרשם על האגרת החרם בר סמכא ואפי' תימא שאינו מנודה הפותח עם שינודוהו מ"מ הוי הפותח בנידוי...<sup>171</sup>

This is also echoed by the *Birkei Yosef* in his commentary on *Yoreh De'ab*: הפותח איגרת חבירו עובר על חרם רגמ"ה וכר'.<sup>172</sup> Of course, the real question here is that even if Professor Atlas (or his widow, see below) may not have felt that any of the letters included שום סוד שמקפיד חבירו, others closer and more sensitive to Rabbi Weinberg specifically feel that they do and objected to the publication of these letters on those grounds alone. I have already partially addressed this claim and will return to it again at the end of this article.

But before leaving the question of the *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom*, a few more points are in order. R. Ya'akov Hāgiz devotes another brief responsum to this subject as well:

**שאלה** השולח כתב ביד חבירו חתום בפג"ן דרגמ"ה והלה חושש שיש בתוכו דבר המזיקו (\*כיוצא מההיא דכתב דוד לאוריה) מהו. **תשובה** נבון הוא זה **אם יפתחנה מועל בחרם** אם יולכנה שמה כתוב עליו דבר מה. להחזירה לבעלים ישלחנה ביד אחר: אין לו תקנה אלא פורר וזורק לרוח או מטיל לים.<sup>173</sup>

Once again it appears that two considerations are important to consider before determining the applicability of this *herem*, "פג"ן דרגמ"ה" written on the letter and *opening* the letter.<sup>174</sup> And, once again, neither of these apply in the correspondence between Rabbi Weinberg and Professor Atlas. Firstly, nowhere does this phrase appear on any letter of Rabbi Weinberg we published and secondly, and much more significantly, neither Dr. Shapiro or I opened any of them. On the contrary. These letters are available to the public in the Rare Book Room of the Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, having been donated there by Professor Atlas' widow. Not only have we not opened the letters, we have not even removed them from anyone's private *reshut ha-yahid* into the *reshut ha-rabbim*, to borrow a phrase from Rabbi Weingort's letter. They have already been in the public domain for some time and anyone who so desired could have requested permission from the library's authorities not only to read them but even to publish them. And, who knows, perhaps having done so, they would not have exercised the same level of caution we did in placing ellipses regularly in order to avoid possible personal embarrassments. Can anyone argue that the *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom* still applies under these circumstances? Parenthetically, the public availability of the letters obviously disproves the preposterous charge of forgery. Indeed, in the final analysis, that charge

reflects much more on the one who raised it than it does on us.

One final consideration is important here. Can one state with absolute confidence that this *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom* applies also after the death of the letter-writer? This matter actually depends upon the various halakhic considerations that have been suggested as lurking in the background of this *herem*. Most common is the argument of *sho'el sbelo mi-da'at*, i.e., that by reading (opening?) someone's mail, one is taking ("borrowing") something of his without his knowledge and permission which is prohibited.<sup>175</sup> This reasoning, however, does not apply to an individual who has passed away because the object is no longer his; it does not belong to him any longer. *Genevat da'at*, another underlying halakhic reason suggested for this *herem*,<sup>176</sup> also does not apply to someone who is deceased. Finally, I have already partially addressed and will return to the question of whether or not some of the other halakhic underpinnings of this *herem* are relevant here, e.g., *rekbilut*, *ve-abavta le-re'akha kamokha*, or *hezek re'iyah*.<sup>177</sup> They all revolve around the question of whether or not Rabbi Weinberg was damaged by the publication of these letters, once again keeping in mind everything we already knew about Rabbi Weinberg as well as the fact that they were already in the public domain.

Finally, my most significant proof for the inapplicability of this *herem* to our context and the permissibility of generally printing *divrei Torah* after their author's death is simply *ma'aseh rav*. Significant precedent is, indeed, available for both these activities. What is the essential content of Torah journals like *Moriah* and *Kerem Shlomo*, for example, and countless memorial volumes for deceased *gedolim* if not precisely this, publishing private letters and *divrei Torah* of *gedolei Yisrael* after their deaths when neither they nor members of their family are available to grant permission? Furthermore, dozens of collections of letters of *gedolei Yisrael*—including much personal material as well—have been published without permission. To give just one example from my current work, which member of the family of R. Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai (the *Ḥida*) gave permission to print his private correspondence, and to do so more than once?<sup>178</sup> There are, indeed, countless examples of letters and *divrei Torah* being published posthumously.

In addition, letters have been published posthumously which sometimes include embarrassing statements or sharply worded pejorative comments about other great rabbis and Torah institutions. For example, in a letter written to Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz in 1935, Rabbi Ḥayyim Eleazar Shapira, the Munkacser Rebbe, begins "אדמהו אכנהו ולא אדעהו אך מכתלי מכתבו ניכר כי בן תורה הוא". Is this not embarrassing for R. Mendlowitz who, by then, was one of the great-

est leaders of American Orthodoxy.<sup>179</sup> Also, in a few letters, R. Ḥayyim ‘Ozer Grodenski expressed himself harshly about the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary, referring to it as a “בית חרושת לרבנים” (“a factory for rabbis”).<sup>180</sup> Are these kind of letters appropriate to be published? Can one be absolutely certain that R. Ḥayyim ‘Ozer would have wanted these letters to be made public for posterity?<sup>181</sup>

However, what is most significant for our discussion is that *divrei Torah* and private letters of Rabbi Weinberg himself have already been published after his death and obviously without his permission. Volume four of *Seridei Esb* was published posthumously. Rabbi Weinberg’s responsa were published after he died in the printed works of the late Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Isser Yehudah Unterman and Rabbi Barukh Halevi Leizerowski,<sup>182</sup> and in the Torah journal *Tehumin*,<sup>183</sup> the very same journal which a few years earlier printed the article outlawing the publication of one’s Torah without permission cited by Rabbi Weingort. Also, his personal letters were printed in the Torah journals *Ha-Pardes*, *Ha-Ma’ayan*, *Ha-Darom*, *Ha-Ne’eman*, *Noam*, in the collection of letters of Rabbi Abraham Yizḥak Hakohen Kook and by Rabbi Weingort himself in his introduction to his published work of his teacher’s talmudic novellae.<sup>184</sup> Some of them printed in *Ha-Ma’ayan* are especially personal and contain criticism of “הקנאים”, “חוגים ידועים של אגודת ישראל”, “אנשים גדולי תורה וחכמה”, “הנבערים מדעת”. Who gave the editor of *Ha-Ma’ayan* permission to publish these letters? Who gave Rabbi Simcha Elberg permission to publish some twenty seven personal letters he received from Rabbi Weinberg in his *Ha-Pardes*, including some that contained less than positive evaluations of prominent Jewish leaders? Indeed, in one case, a letter of Rabbi Weinberg was published that he specifically requested not be made public! At the end of one of the letters printed in *Ha-Ma’ayan* Rabbi Weinberg wrote: מובן שכל מה שיכתוב אלי ישאר בסוד כמוס ואני מבקשו ג”כ שלא לפרסם את הנ”ל. כבודו של הרב ראשי וכבודה של הקהלה הגדולה גדולים בעיני ואני חייב להזהר בהם.<sup>185</sup> Who gave permission for this letter to be published? What happened to the *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom*? What happened to the confidentiality to which Rabbi Weinberg should have been entitled?

The final, and to my mind most serious and compelling, criticism directed against me is the one raised by Rabbi Weingort when he writes that there is no doubt that Rabbi Weinberg would not have wanted these letters published. Perhaps it is this that distinguishes the publication of these letters from those of the Ḥida and others mentioned earlier. Perhaps those involved in the publication of those letters were convinced that their authors would have had no objection to their appearing in print. The principle would then be that only where

their author would have been opposed to the appearance of his letters (when they would include “שום סוד שמקפיד חבירו”) would the *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom* or prohibition against printing unauthorized *divrei Torah* apply. In the case of Rabbi Weinberg, therefore, no such printing would be justified.

A few preliminary remarks are in order. As already noted in connection with some letters of the Munkacser Rebbe and R. Ḥayyim ‘Ozer Grodzenski, it is very difficult in general to speak with absolute certitude about another person’s desires. In the case of Rabbi Weinberg, as well, claiming absolute certitude with regard to what his personal opinion would have been is also a difficult matter. For example, Rabbi Weingort draws attention to Rabbi Weinberg’s statement in *Seridei Esh* 2:110 where he writes that he was sorry that a letter he wrote had been published because, in it, he expressed himself in a less than respectful way about an “*adam gadol*.” The point was made how careful Rabbi Weinberg was when it came to determining the appropriateness of what he would want to have published. But it is precisely this example which proves the complexity of asserting with certainty what Rabbi Weinberg’s thoughts would have been. *For Rabbi Weinberg printed that very letter in the second volume of Seridei Esh immediately prior to the one in which he made this comment about it.*<sup>186</sup> It is true that, this time, he referred to the book he attacked only by the first letters of the words of its title rather than spelling it out fully as he did in the original, but he did print his letter and in a footnote even identified where it had first been published, thereby making it easy for any of his readers to consult the original version.

Furthermore, evidence has already been adduced to indicate that Rabbi Weinberg did not always act in a way that would ensure his being accepted by all segments of the community. We have already shown that at least on two different occasions he was prepared to act publicly in a way that he knew would arouse the criticism of the “*kana’im*.” This was true regarding his previously cited insistence on publishing letters from Professor Atlas in his *Seridei Esh*<sup>187</sup> and also with regard to his participation, at least by letter, in the Second World Congress for Jewish Studies that was held in Jerusalem in 1957. In one of his letters to Professor Atlas translated by Dr. Shapiro, Rabbi Weinberg wrote:

They also invited me to come to the Congress and sent me an airplane ticket, but due to my weak health I was prevented from going. However, in Jerusalem it was publicized that I intended to come, and I was flooded with letters strongly urging me not to



come and participate in a gathering of deniers and heretics. I did not pay attention to these warnings and sent a letter of blessing and apology that I could not come. This letter was read in public.<sup>188</sup>

Nevertheless, having made all these points, I do accept Rabbi Weingort's essential argument and, in the final analysis, after having read his letter to me as well as about a dozen letters he sent to Dr. Shapiro regarding the matter since 1995 (and which both Rabbi Weingort and Dr. Shapiro made available to me), I am prepared to consider the possibility that I should not have published these letters. I believe Rabbi Weingort when he writes that his *rebbe* would himself never have wanted them to be published. Indeed, there is no one today who has as intimate a knowledge of Rabbi Weinberg as has Rabbi Weingort. Rabbi Weinberg knew and respected three generations of the Weingort family. He made the acquaintance of Rabbi Weingort's grandparents in Europe in the 1930s and, when he lived in the Warsaw Ghetto at the beginning of the Second World War, would meet other Jewish leaders in the Weingort home there. Their son, R. Shaul, was an outstanding student of Rabbi Weinberg's in the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin and, at Rabbi Weinberg's recommendation, married the daughter of Rabbi Eliyahu Botchko, the founder of a yeshiva in Montreux. On Lag B'Omer 1941, Rabbi Weinberg joined with the senior Weingorts and other distinguished Jews in the ghetto to celebrate the marriage of R. Shaul then taking place in that Swiss city and, in honor of the occasion, Rabbi Weinberg suggested to those assembled that a special Torah volume be published. After Rabbi Weinberg was transferred to a detention camp, Mrs. Weingort sustained him with special food daily. "She saved me from death," he was to write a number of years later. After the horrors and ravages of the Second World War, R. Shaul invited his *rebbe* to live with him in Montreux, and Rabbi Weinberg accepted the invitation. R. Shaul and his wife treated Rabbi Weinberg with unusual respect and devotion, helping this esteemed scholar and teacher try to repair his life that was shattered by the Holocaust. Rabbi Weinberg wrote about R. Shaul that "I loved him like the love of a father for his only son."<sup>189</sup> After R. Shaul was killed in a tragic accident, his young widow and her three small children (one of whom is the author of the letter under discussion here) further maintained their strong closeness to Rabbi Weinberg. Their home was constantly open to him and he found there a great source of physical sustenance and emotional stability. After Rabbi Weinberg's death in 1966, Rabbi Avraham Abba Weingort remained particularly attached to the memory of his beloved *rebbe*. In 1995 he published a volume of Rabbi Weinberg's novellae on the

Talmud with a biographical introduction<sup>190</sup> and also devoted a number of articles to him.<sup>191</sup>

It should, therefore, be clear that Rabbi Weingort is uniquely suited to attest to the feelings and desires of his illustrious *rebbe*, and I defer to his opinion. If there is, indeed, no doubt that Rabbi Weinberg would not have wanted them to be published, I should not have done so. The issue here is not one of a cover-up or censorship or distorting historical truth; it is, rather, simply being sensitive to what Rabbi Weinberg, according to the testimony of his closest, most beloved and fiercely devoted disciple, would himself have wanted. Perhaps it is true that he “would not have wished to jeopardize his standing in the eyes of the so-called yeshiva world, for despite all his criticisms, his deep love for the yeshivot and desire to be accepted by them was never in question.”<sup>192</sup> Although personal letters of Rabbi Weinberg expressing somewhat similar sentiments have already been published, although the letters under discussion here are already available in the public domain, and although historical truth would certainly be enhanced by publicizing them, the elementary courtesy of maintaining Rabbi Weinberg’s personal privacy dictates that if he would have been opposed to their publication, they should not have been published. If the publication of these letters in any way tarnished the image of Rabbi Weinberg in the eyes of any segment of the Orthodox community, and if this is something Rabbi Weinberg himself would not have wanted, they should not have been published. The matter is as simple as that.

But yet, the matter from a broader perspective is really not “as simple as that.” Would this argument apply to actions as well as to personal letters? What if we knew that Rabbi Dessler would not want anyone to know that he read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? Would his biographer be enjoined from revealing that very important piece of information? Are the wishes of the subject of any biography always decisive and do they always take precedence over any other considerations?

Also, would every close student be in a position to determine the legacy of his *rebbe*? What if that student was not as close to his *rebbe* as Rabbi Weingort was to Rabbi Weinberg but, yet, claimed that he was? What if, in truth, he was reflecting more of his own opinion than that of his *rebbe*? Does this not place too much power into the hands of *talmidim* to shape the legacy and destiny of their *rebbeim*? Does this not open up the possibility for anyone to say, “I knew him better than you did and I *know* what he would have wanted”? Should not the actions and writings of the *rebbe* himself, indeed his “Torah,” speak for him?

And, finally, let us not let the debate over whether or not these letters should have been published deflect us from the force of their contents. The fact is that Rabbi Weinberg *did* write these letters and, for better or for worse, they *were* published. What can we learn from them about the sensitivities, attitudes, feelings and Torah positions of their author? For me, ultimately, this is the most important question.

A few months after these letters were published I paid a special visit to Rabbi Weinberg's grave on Har Hamenuhot in Jerusalem to ask his forgiveness if I did anything that might have caused a lack of *nahat ru'ah* to his *neshamah* and I ask his forgiveness again now in print.

חטאתי לאלקי ישראל ולהרב יחיאל יעקב בן ר' משה ושיינה רבקה זצ"ל שחטאתי לו.<sup>193</sup>  
תהא נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים.

### Notes

My thanks to Dr. David Berger, Dr. Elisheva Carlebach, Rabbi Kenneth Hain, and Dr. Shnayer Z. Leiman for their very helpful comments on a previous draft of this paper. Special thanks to Dr. David Shatz for his most thoughtful suggestions.

1. See Aryeh Carmell, "HaRav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler *zt"l*," *Yated Ne'eman* (24 Teves, 5754; January 7, 1994):12. For information about R. Simḥah Zissel's yeshiva in Grobin, see Dov Katz, *Tenu'at ha-Mussar* 2 (Tel Aviv, 1973), 200-19. The reference to the secular studies in the curriculum is on p. 208. See also Yehudah Levi, *Torah Study* (Jerusalem, 1990), 272-73; Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness to General Culture in the Early Modern Period in Western and Central Europe," in Jacob J. Schacter, ed., *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?* (Northvale, 1997), 215, n. 181. For more on R. Reuven Dov, see D. Katz, *Tenu'at ha-Mussar* 5 (Tel Aviv, 1963), 151-90.
2. R. Shlomo Brevda, *Yated Ne'eman* (16 Shvat, 5754; January 28, 1994):53.
3. It is interesting to note that in R. Carmell's brief biography of Rabbi Dessler printed as an introduction to the first volume of *Sefer Mikhtav me-Eliyabu*, which he co-edited, there is no reference at all to any involvement of his *rebbe* in secular studies. See "Hakdamah," *Sefer Mikhtav me-Eliyabu* 1 (Jerusalem, 1959), 13-14. However, in the biographical introduction to his English translation of selections from that work, R. Carmell wrote that, "In accordance with the principles laid down by Rabbi Simcha Zissel, the boy's course of studies included the Russian language and elementary mathematics. His reading also included some selected classics of world literature in Russian translation." See his *Strive for Truth!* (Jerusalem and New York, 1978), 10. Only the reference to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is missing from this earlier passage. R. Carmell also edited a selection of passages from *Mikhtav me-Eliyabu* entitled *Sod ha-Mussar* (Jerusalem, 1995). There, in his brief biographical introduction (pp. 9-10), he does write that, "The program of his studies included also the Russian language, mathematics, etc. in accordance with the position (*sbitab*) of R. Simḥah Zissel Ziv." See also the brief remarks about R. Dessler's childhood in Aharon Suraski, *Marbizei Torah u-Mussar* 3 (Tel Aviv, 1976), 52-55 which do not make any reference at all to secular studies in his curriculum.

For Rabbi Dessler's absolutely negative attitude as an adult to combining secular studies with Torah, see his *Sefer Mikhtav me-Eliyabu* 3 (Bnai Berak, 1964),

355-58. For an analysis of this position, as well as the reaction it generated, see Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness," pp. 214-16. In this connection it is interesting to note that Rabbi Dressler's brother-in-law, Rabbi Daniel Movshovitz, who was head of the yeshiva in Kelm between the two world wars, was very familiar with the writings of Immanuel Kant and on occasion quoted sections of Kant's work by heart to his students. R. Carmell speculates that this brother-in-law's conversations with Rabbi Dessler may account for the affinity between the position of Kant and Rabbi Dessler on the issue of free will and determinism. See *Strive for Truth!* 3 (Jerusalem and New York, 1989), 172-73. R. Carmell, then, is prepared to consider the possibility that Rabbi Dessler *was* influenced by Kant in formulating his own position on this crucial matter. My thanks to Dr. David Shatz for bringing this reference to my attention.

I am also mystified by R. Carmell's assertion that "the reason for this choice [of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*] is not far to seek." Why did R. Reuven Dov think that this work would make particularly appropriate reading for "little Elia Laizer"? Related to this, it is interesting to note that a recent treatment of this novel underscores its extraordinary spiritual and religious force. See Alfred Kazin, *God and the American Writer* (New York, 1997), 74-85, esp. p. 80: ". . . *Uncle Tom's Cabin* showed the power of religious sentiment as no other American work of literature had done." Is it possible that R. Reuven Dov appreciated this some one hundred years ago? My thanks to Mr. Shlomo Gewirtz for bringing this work to my attention.

For a strong defense of truth printed in the *Yated* in a different context, utilizing arguments very relevant to the discussion here, see R. Nosson Zeev Grossman, "The Unbending Truth," *Yated Ne'eman* (5 Cheshvan, 5757; October 18, 1996):29-30.

4. For this formulation, see Lionel Kochan, *The Jew and His History* (Plymouth, 1977), ix.
5. A. Momigliano, "Persian Historiography, Greek Historiography, and Jewish Historiography," in A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, 1990), 23. Michael A. Meyer offers another explanation of this phenomenon: "Thus the Rabbis lavished their attention upon the biblical narratives, elaborating them with midrash and fanciful commentary, but they paid little attention to the historical events which followed. *Bereft of a continuing political history extending into their own time*, they immersed themselves in the sacred history of a closed period which they continually experienced anew" (emphasis mine). See his *Ideas of Jewish History* (New York, 1974), 13. I believe that Momigliano's interpretation is much more compelling.
6. See, for example, Ephraim E. Urbach, "Halakhah and History," in *Jews, Greeks and Christians, Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies* (Leiden, 1976), 112-28; *idem.*, "Halakhah ve-Historiyah," in *Hevrah ve-Historiyah* (Jerusalem, 1980), 411-23; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London, 1982), 16-26; Yitzhak F. Baer, *Galut* (New York, 1947); Jacob Neusner, "Judaic Uses of History in Talmudic Times," in Ada Rapoport-Albert, ed., *Essays in Jewish Historiography, In memoriam Arnaldo Dante Momigliano (=History and Theory 27)* (1988):12-39 (reprinted as a book [Atlanta, 1991]); Isaiah Gafni, "Concepts of Periodization and Causality in Talmudic Literature," *Jewish History* 10:1 (1996):21-38.
7. See Saul Lieberman, "The Martyrs of Caesaria," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 7 (1939-1944):395.
8. Moshe D. Herr concluded an article on this subject with the following sentence: "It appears that in their world [i.e., that of Ḥazal] there was no question as boring and as meaningless as that regarding the need and use of describing what really happened." See his "Tefisat ha-Historiyah ezel Ḥazal," *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-'Olamī ha-Sbishi le-Mada'ei ha-Yahadut* 3 (Jerusalem, 1977), 142.
9. See Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, pp. 31-75 (the quote in the text is from p. 31);

*idem.*, "Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century," *American Academy for Jewish Research Jubilee Volume 2* (= PAAJR 46-47 [1979-1980]) (Jerusalem, 1980), 607-38.

10. See his *Perush ha-Mishnayot, Sanhedrin* 10:1. For various treatments of the Maimonidean position, see Salo Baron, "The Historical Outlook of Maimonides," PAAJR 6 (1935):5-113, esp. pp. 7-8; repr. in *idem.*, *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia, 1964), 109-63, 348-404, esp. p. 111; Amos Funkenstein, "Maimonides: Political Theory and Realistic Messianism," *Miscellanea Medievalia* 11 (1970): 81-103; repr. in *idem.*, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, 1993), 131-55; trans. as "Tefisato ha-Historit ve-ha-Meshilhit shel ha-Rambam," *Tadmit ve-Toda'ab Historit be-Yabadut u-be-Sevivatab ha-Tarbutit* (Tel Aviv, 1991), 103-56, 317-22; *idem.*, *Maimonides: Nature, History and Messianic Beliefs* (Tel-Aviv, 1997); Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakbor*, pp. 114-15, n. 5; Louis Jacobs, "Historical Thinking in the Post-Talmudic Halakhah," *History and Theory* 27 (1988):66, 70-73; Shlomo Zalman Havlin, ed., *Seder ha-Kabbalah le-Rabbenu Menahem ha-Meiri* (Jerusalem and Cleveland, 1991), introduction, pp. 18-19; Ya'akov Yehoshua Ross, "'Ha-Rambam ve-ha-Kidmah—Ha-Tefisah ha-Historit shel ha-Rambam," in *Hevrah ve-Historiyah*, pp. 529-42; Yonah Ben-Sasson, "Mishnato ha-Historit shel ha-Rambam," *ibid.*, pp. 543-630, and reprinted in his *Hagut Yebudit* (Jerusalem, 1987), 33-110. My late teacher, Dr. Isadore Twersky, has shown that it is simplistic to assume a complete lack of historical consciousness on the part of the Rambam. See his *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven, 1980), 220-28.

For examples of historical writing in the Middle Ages, which illustrate the dangers of a simplistic overgeneralization negating its existence, see Hayyim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Le-Megamot ha-Khronografiah ha-Yehudit shel Yemei ha-Benayim u-Ba'ayotehah," in *Historiyonim ve-Askolot Historiyot* (Jerusalem, 1962), 29-49; repr. in *idem.*, *Rezev u-Temurah* (Jerusalem, 1984), 379-401, 485-87; Moshe A. Shulvass, "Ha-Yedi'ah be-Historiyah ve-ha-Sifrut ha-Historit be-Teḥum ha-Tarbut shel ha-Yahadut ha-Ashkenazit be-Yemei ha-Benayim," in *Sefer ha-Yovel le-Rabi Hanokh Albek* (Jerusalem, 1963), 465-95; updated and translated as "Medieval Ashkenazic Jewry's Knowledge of History and Historical Literature," *The Solomon Goldman Lectures* 4 (Chicago, 1985), 1-27; Salo Baron, "Histories and Homilies," *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* 6 (New York, 1958), 152-234, 399-440; L. Kochan, *The Jew and His History*; Robert Chazan, "Representation of Events in the Middle Ages," *History and Theory* 27 (1988):40-55. For a later period, see Bezalel Safran, "Leone da Modena's Historical Thinking," in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987), 381-98.

11. See Robert Bonfil, "How Golden was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?," *History and Theory* 27 (1988):78-102; *idem.*, "Jewish Attitudes Toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times," *Jewish History* 11:1 (1997):7-40, and the reference to additional articles on this subject by Bonfil cited there, p. 34, n. 8.
12. R. Y. H. Lipschitz, *Sefer Dor Yesharim* (Petrokov, 1907), 8. This *baskamah* was reprinted in Aharon Suraski, ed., *Ahiezzer: Kovev Iggerot* 2 (Bnai Berak, 1970), 583. See too Shimon Finkelman, *Reb Chaim Ozer* (New York, 1987), 61-62.

I cited this passage a number of years ago in my "Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Close of the Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1892," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 2 (1990):110. See also S. Z. Havlin, "Al 'ha-Ḥatimah ha-Sifrutit' ke-Yesod ha-Ḥalukah le-Tekufot ba-Halakhah," in *Mehkarim be-Sifrut ha-Talmudit* (Jerusalem, 1983), 149, n. 2; *idem.*, *Seder ha-Kabbalah*, pp. 20-21; introduction to *Sefer Shibbolei ha-Leket* 2 (Jerusalem, 1988), 10; I. Gafni, "Concepts of Periodization," p. 21.

13. See his commentary on *Mishnah, Sanhedrin* 10:1: ובכלל זה הקורא בספר דברי הימים... שלמלכי עובדי ע"ז שאין בהם חכמה ולא תועלת אלא אבוד וזמן בלבד.

- similar to that used by Maimonides in his commentary on this same *Mishnah* passage. See above, at n. 10.
14. See J. Emden, *Sefer Seder 'Olam Rabbah ve-Zuta u-Megillat Ta'anit* (Hamburg, 1757).
  15. R. Emden's short notes on the margins of his personal set of the Talmud, partially reprinted in the back of various tractates of the standard edition of that work as either *Hiddushim ve-Hagabot* or *Hagabot ve-Hiddushim*, include a number of comments generally relating to rabbinic chronology. See, for example, *Berakhot* 7a, 48a; *Shabbat* 33b, 37b. See also below, n. 17.
  16. See J. Emden, *Lehem Shamma'im* on *Mishnah, Sanhedrin* 10:1.
  17. For an analysis of R. Emden's attitude toward and knowledge of history, see my *Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works* (unpublished doctoral dissertation; Harvard University, 1988), 516-29, 605-17. For references to more talmudic marginalia which reflect the significance of history (see above, n. 15), see pp. 608-09.
  18. R. Bonfil, "Jewish Attitudes Toward History," pp. 31-33.
  19. This letter was printed at the beginning of the first volume of the Neziv's *hiddushim* on Shas, *Sefer Meromei Sadeh* (on *Berakhot, Shabbat* and *'Eruvin*) (Jerusalem, 1956) as a justification as to why its printers did not include a biography of the Neziv at the beginning of that volume. My thanks to Rabbi Mechel Gruss who brought this text to my attention a number of years ago via Mr. Alexander Sharf. For a recent translation of this letter (without providing its source), see B. Nehorai, "HaRav Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Leib Berlin—The Netziv," *Yated Ne'eman* (29 Av, 5758; August 21, 1998):17-18.
  20. There is a large and growing literature on this subject. See, for example, M. Graetz, *Anfänge der modernen jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung* (Wolfenbüttel, 1985); Reuven Michael, *Ha-Ketivah ba-Historit ba-Yehudit me-ba-Renisans 'ad ba-'Et ha-Hadasah* (Jerusalem, 1993); Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover and London, 1994); Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah ve-Historiyah: Toldotehah shel Hakarat-'Avar Yehudit Modernit* (Jerusalem, 1995); Michael A. Meyer, "The Emergence of Modern Jewish Historiography: Motives and Motifs," *History and Theory* 27 (1988):160-75. See p. 164: "The study of history, as some of the more radical German maskilim saw it, would liberate their fellow Jews, especially the benighted ones in Poland, from the shackles of a tradition they had never before examined critically. They would come to realize that their plight was of their own making. Historical study would serve not as a source of pride but as a rebuke."
  21. Y. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 86.
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. See above, n. 12. See also the other approbations to *Sefer Dor Yesbarim* by the then leading Torah authorities like R. Eliezer Gordon of Telz, R. Izeleh Ponovizher, and others who, like R. Haim 'Ozer, stressed the importance of this type of historical effort to defend the tradition. Similar sentiments were expressed by other leading rabbinic authorities in their approbations to the first volume of R. Ya'akov Halevi Lipschitz's *Zikbron Ya'akov* (1924-1930). See, for example, the *baskamot* of R. Avraham Kahana Schapiro (the Kovno Rav), R. Yosef Yehudah Leib Bloch of Telz, R. Yosef Yizhak Schneerson of Lubavitch, R. Moshe Mordecai Epstein of Slabodka, R. Meir Don Plotski of Ostrov, R. Menahem Krakowsky of Vilna and R. Haim 'Ozer Grodzenski, among others.
  24. This phrase comes from the title of an article by Ismar Schorsch printed in the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 35 (1990):73-101 and reprinted in *idem.*, *From Text to Context*, pp. 303-33.
  25. For more on Orthodox historiography in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Israel Bartal, "True Knowledge and Wisdom: On Orthodox Historiography," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (= *Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and the Historians*) (1994):178-92; *idem.*, "Zikhron Ya'akov" le-R. Ya'akov Lip-

schitz: Historiografyah Ortodoksit?," *Milet* 2 (1985):409-14; *idem.*, "Shimon ha-Kofer: Perek ba-Historiografyah Ortodoksit," in *Ke-Minbag Ashkenaz u-Folin: Sefer Yovel le-Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem, 1993), 243-68; Ada Rapoport-Albert, "Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism," *History and Theory* 27 (1988):119-59; Yoav Elstein, "Sippur Ledat ha-Besht be-Yiddish—Ma'aseh Ziyuf o Yezirah Sifrutit," *Hulyot* 2 (1994):51-68.

Isaiah Gafni recently published an article in which he demonstrated how the debate between *Wissenschaft* and traditionalist conceptions of Judaism in the nineteenth century animated opposing historical reconstructions of the history and character of talmudic Judaism in general and of the Babylonian rabbinic tradition in particular. See his "Ben Bavel le-Erez Yisrael: 'Olam ha-Talmud ve-Immutim Idiologiyyim be-Historiografyah shel ha-'Et ha-Ḥadashah," *Zion* 62:3 (1997):213-42.

For the phrase "alternative history" in this context, See I. Bartal, "True Knowledge and Wisdom," p. 183; *idem.*, "Zikhron Ya'akov," p. 409; *idem.*, "Shimon ha-Kofer," pp. 250, 251, 255, 267.

26. For examples of this phenomenon, see, especially, the works of Bartal and Rapoport-Albert cited above, n. 25. See also A. Rapoport-Albert, "Ha-Tenu'ah ha-Ḥasidit Ḥare'i Shnat 1772: Reẓef Mivni u-Temurah," *Zion* 55:2 (1990):228-32; Rachel Elijor, "Vikku'ah Minsk," *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahsbevet Yisrael* 1:4 (1982):183; Gershon Scholem, "Aharon Markus ve-ha-Ḥasidut," *Behinot* 7 (1954):3-8; Gershon Kitziš, "'Ha-Ḥasidut' shel A. Markus," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 21:1 (1980):64-88; Zeev Gries, "Hasidism: The Present State of Research and Some Desirable Priorities," *Numen* 34:1 (1987):101-03; David Asaf, "Ḥasidut Polin be-Me'ah ha-Yod Tet: Maẓav ha-Mehkar u-Sekirah Bibliografit," in Rachel Elijor, Yisrael Bartal, and Chone Shmeruk, eds., *Zaddikim ve-Anshei Ma'aseh* (Jerusalem, 1994), 361-63.
27. See above, n. 12.
28. Y. Lipschitz, *Zikbron Ya'akov* 1 (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1924; repr. Jerusalem, 1968), xxxvii, xxxix. For an analysis of this work, see the forthcoming Columbia University dissertation by Yael Levi.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. iii-iv. A number of the *baskamot* on this work (above, n. 23) stress the significance of truth for R. Lipschitz. See especially the one by R. Meir Atlas on pp. xxv-xxvi.
30. Z. Jawitz, "Le-Hashiv Davar," in *Sefer Toledot Yisrael* 14 (Tel-Aviv, 1940), 220. Nevertheless, it has recently been shown that, in spite of this clear programmatic statement, Jawitz himself was guilty of a measure of distortion. See Reuven Michael, "Zev Yaveẓ: Talmid Ḥakham Kotev Historyah," *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-'Olami ha-'Asiri le-Mada'ei ha-Yabadut* 2:1 (Jerusalem, 1990), 275-76 and n. 8; *idem.*, *Ha-Ketivah ha-Historit ha-Yebudit*, pp. 424-65.
31. A. S. Heilman, "Davar el ha-Kor'im," *Bet Rebbe* (Berdichev, 1902), 4. In all citations in this paragraph the emphasis is mine. *Bet Rebbe* is a biography of R. Shneur Zalman, founder of Ḥabad, his son, R. Dov Ber, and grandson, R. Menahem Mendel, author of the *Zemah Zedek*. For an analysis of Heilman's historical methodology, see Naḥum Karlinsky, "Ben Biografyah le-Hagiografyah: Ha-Sefer *Bet Rebbe* ve-Reshitah shel ha-Historiografyah ha-Ḥasidit-Ortodoksit," *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-'Olami ha-Aḥad-'Asar le-Mada'ei ha-Yabadut* 3:2 (Jerusalem, 1994), 161-68.  
See also the very interesting letter by R. Yosef Yiẓḥak Schneerson of Lubavitch in which he accuses academic scholars of Hasidut of "sinking. . . in a sea of falsehood (*be-yam shel sheker*)" and describes his efforts to set the record straight. See R. Yosef Yiẓḥak Schneerson, *Iggerot-Kodesh* 2 (Brooklyn, 1983), 499, #618.
32. These quotes were cited by Shlomo Zalman Havlin, "'Al 'ha-Ḥatimah ha-Sifrutit,'" p. 148, n. 2; *idem.*, *Seder ha-Kabbalah*, p. 21.
33. See J. Katz, "Historiyah ve-Historyonim, Ḥadashim ke-Yeshanim," *Alpayim* 12

- (1996):12-13. This article was reprinted as the first chapter of Katz's last book, *'Et Laḥkor ve-'Et le-Hitbonen* (Jerusalem, 1999), 11-45.
34. See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988), 2. The emphasis is mine. This entire work deals with this matter. In addition, there is a large and growing literature on the subject. The references in the following notes reflect only those works I found most useful. See also, most recently, Chris Lorenz, "Can Histories Be True? Narrativism, Positivism, and the 'Metaphorical Turn,'" *History and Theory* 37:3 (1998):309-29; Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood, *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past* (Princeton, 1998).
35. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990), 12-13.
36. I subsequently came across the following quote: ". . . one cannot know *something* about an event because one cannot know *everything* about it." See P. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 263.
37. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York, 1961), 26.
38. C. L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37 (1932):221-36. The essay was reprinted in Robin W. Winks, ed., *The Historian as Detective: Essays on Evidence* (New York, 1969). See p. 19. See also C. L. Becker, "Detachment and the Writing of History," *The Atlantic Monthly* 106 (October, 1910):524-36, reprinted in Phil L. Snyder, ed., *Detachment and the Writing of History* (Ithaca, 1958), 3-27. See, for example, p. 12: "The 'facts' of history do not exist for any historian until he creates them, and into every fact that he creates some part of his individual experience must enter."
39. C. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," *American Historical Review* 39 (1934):226. See also Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 257; Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York, 1994), 216.
40. Cited in P. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, pp. 37-38.
41. Cited in C. L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," Winks ed., p. 18.
42. Lord Acton, in William H. McNeill, ed., *Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History* (Chicago, 1967), 399. See too E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, p. 6; Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago, 1983), 284; Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, p. 76; Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (Cambridge, 1979), 87-88.
43. E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, p. 9.
44. For example, assessing the medieval Jewish experience under Islam (see Mark R. Cohen, "The Neo-Lachrymose Conception of Jewish-Arab History," *Tikkun* 6:3 [May/June 1991]:55-60); interpreting the place of the Sabbatian movement within Jewish history as a whole (see Zevi Werblowsky, "Hirhurim 'al 'Shabbetai Zevi' le-G. Sholem," *Molad* 15 [1957]:539-46; Barukh Kurzweil, "He'arot le-'Shabbetai Zevi' shel Gershon Sholem," in *idem.*, *Bi-Ma'avak 'al 'Erkhei ha-Yabadut* [Jerusalem, 1970], 99-134; Yeshayahu Tishby, "'Al Mishnato shel Gershon Sholem be-He'ker ha-Shabbeta'ut," in *idem.*, *Netivei Emunah u-Minut* [Jerusalem, 1994], 241-45); considering issues revolving around the settlement of Jews in the Land of Israel, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Yaakov Barnai, *Historiografyah u-Le'umiyut: Magamot be-He'ker Erez Yisra'el ve-Yisbu'uv ha-Yebudi, 634-1881* [Jerusalem, 1996]); or even understanding the significance of Columbus' discovery of America (see David Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* [New York, 1992]). In general, Kurzweil takes strong issue with the notion that it is possible to speak of "historical truth." See *Bi-Ma'avak 'al 'Erkhei ha-Yabadut*, pp. 135-240.
45. For a good recent presentation as well as a cogent refutation of their arguments, see Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past* (New York, 1997).
46. See A. Pork, "History, Lying, and Moral Responsibility," *History and Theory* 29:3 (1990):321. For an extraordinarily graphic description of the level of distortion



perpetrated particularly in the former Soviet Union under Stalin, see the recently published book by David King, *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* (Salt Lake City, 1997). Not only is history distorted; photographs are brazenly falsified, with political enemies simply air-brushed out with no trace of their presence at the particular event being recorded for posterity. This book demonstrates that the scale on which this was done during that time is mindboggling.

47. *Ibid.*
48. S. D. Marble, *Before Columbus* (Cranbury, 1989), 25.
49. See Homer Carey Hockett, *The Critical Method in Historical Research and Writing* (New York, 1955), 55-56. For other examples, see pp. 54-61.
50. F. FitzGerald, *America Revised* (Boston, 1979), 16. My thanks to Mrs. Esther Nussbaum for bringing this book to my attention.
51. D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), 325. For a number of examples, see pp. 324-62.
52. B. Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton, 1975), 13.
53. Marcel Ophuls, quoted in Ronald Koven, "National Memory: The Duty to Remember, The Need to Forget," *Society* 32:6 (1995):56.
54. André-Marc Delocque-Fourcaud, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 57.
55. This point was made in a paper delivered by Ian Bell at the 1990 annual meeting of the Association of Living Historical Farms and Agriculture Museums, cited in David Lowenthal, "Memory and Oblivion," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 12 (1993):174.
56. Joan Delfattore, *What Johnny Shouldn't Read* (New Haven, 1992), 1-2.
57. See B. Morris, "The New Historiography: Israel and Its Past," *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford, 1990), 3-7.
58. See B. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge, 1987); *idem.*, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (see n. 57 and revised edition [Oxford, 1994]); A. Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford, 1988); *idem.*, *The Politics of Partition: King Abdullah, the Zionists and Palestine, 1921-1951* (New York, 1990); I. Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-51* (London, 1988); *idem.*, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-51* (London and New York, 1992). These authors also presented their arguments in a number of articles written both before and after these books, some of which are cited below. See also Simha Flapan, *The Birth Of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York, 1987).
59. See S. Teveth, "Charging Israel With Original Sin," *Commentary* 88:3 (September, 1989):24-33; *idem.*, "The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem and its Origins," *Middle Eastern Studies* 26:2 (April, 1990):214-49; *idem.*, "Nikyon Kapayim ve-Shikhtuv Mismakhim," *Alpayim* 13 (1996):233-56; E. Karsh, "Rewriting Israel's History," *Middle East Quarterly* 3:2 (1996):19-29; *idem.*, *Fabricating Israeli History: The "New Historians"* (London, 1997). See too Itamar Rabinovich, *The Road Not Taken: Early Arab-Israeli Negotiations* (New York and Oxford, 1991). The quotes are from E. Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History*, pp. 2, 10.
60. B. Morris, "Falsifying the Record: A Fresh Look at Zionist Documentation of 1948," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24:3 (Spring, 1995):44. See too p. 60: "The aim, throughout, was to hide things said and done and to leave for posterity a sanitized version of the past;" *idem.*, "'U-Sefarim u-Gevilim be-Ziknah Regilim.' Mabat Hadash 'al Mismakhim Ziyoniyim Merkaziyim," *Alpayim* 12 (1996):73-103.
61. E. Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History*, p. 7. See too pp. 43-51, 199; *idem.*, "Rewriting Israel's History," p. 20: ". . . they fashion their research to suit contemporary political agendas; worse, they systematically distort the archival evidence to invent an Israeli history in an image of their own making." See too p. 29; S. Teveth, "Charging Israel With Original Sin," p. 33: "What, in the end, is one to make of the farrago of distortions, omissions, tendentious readings, and outright

falsifications offered by the 'new' revisionist historians?" For recent analyses of this debate, see Joseph Heller, "The End of the Myth: Historians and the Yishuv (1918-1948)," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (1994):123-25; Anita Shapira, "Politics and Collective Memory: The Debate Over the 'New Historians' in Israel," *History and Memory* 7:1 (Spring/Summer 1995):9-40; trans. as "Politikah ve-Zikhron Kolektivi—Ha-Viku'ah 'al Odot 'ha-Historiyonim ha-Ḥadashim," in her *Yebudim Ḥadashim Yebudim Yesbanim* (Tel Aviv, 1997), 19-45.

For the most recent example of a revisionist history of Zionism, see Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkeley, 1998).

62. For an extraordinary example of this argument, see R. Yizḥak Hutner, *Sefer Paḥad Yizḥak: Iggerot u-Ketavim* (New York, 1991), 217-19, #128. In the course of his remarks written to a *yeshiva bochur* who had turned to him seeking encouragement in his *milḥemet ba-yezer*, R. Hutner stated:

רעה חולה היא אצלנו שכאשר מתעסקים אנו בצדדי השלימות של גדולינו, הננו מטפלים בסיכום האחרון של מעלתם. מספרים אנו על דרכי השלימות שלהם בשעה שאנחנו מדלגים על המאבק הפנימי שהתחולל בנפשם. הרושם של שיחתנו על הגדולים מתקבל כאילו יצאו מתחת יד היוצר בקומתם ובצביונם. הכל משוחחים. מתפעלים ומרימים על נס את טהרת הלשון של בעל החפץ-חיים זצ"ל אבל מי יודע מן כל המלחמות, המאבקים, המכשולים, הנפילות, והנסיגות לאחור שמצא החפץ-חיים בדרך המלחמה שלו עם יצרו הרע משל אחד מני אלה.

My thanks to Rabbi Kenneth Hain for bringing this letter to my attention a number of years ago.

See also Ze'ev Lev, "Teshuvah le-Bikkoret," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 32:4 (Tammuz, 1992):48.

63. A similar lament for the lack of an elementary awareness of distinctions between different *gedolei Yisrael* was recently expressed by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict," in *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures*, p. 288:

One reflected in dismay and disbelief that a listener [at the funerals of R. Aharon Kotler and R. Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל] who had had no previous knowledge of either would have come away from both funerals with the impression that there was relatively little difference between the *gedolim*. He could think of both under the rubric of several abstractions and genuinely mourn their loss. But he would have very little idea of who, specifically, they had been. He would surely have no inkling of their being, respectively, a perpetual dynamo, almost a firebrand, and a remarkable blend of boldness and meekness; of their approaching both the study and the implementation of Torah in very different ways. It is astounding that *talmidei hakhmamim* who were habituated to noting the finest distinctions in a halakhic *sugya* could so utterly fail to delineate and define persons they had known and admired; and it seemed unlikely that this was simply because they were now overcome by grief. I sensed that the requisite powers were simply lacking; and I reflected that a measure of certain aspects of general culture could have remedied the deficiency.

64. A. Feldman, "Gedolim Books and the Biography of Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky," *The Jewish Observer* 27:8 (November 1994):32-33.

65. For the most recent treatment of this issue, see Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness," pp. 146-50. See also the article by E. Etkes, below, n. 68; Allan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdim: Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture* (Baltimore and London, 1997), 127-29; and the article by Dr. Raphael Shuchat elsewhere in this volume.

66. R. Barukh of Shklov, *Sefer Uklidos* (The Hague, 1780), introduction.

67. See Bezalel Landau, *Ha-Gaon be-Ḥasid mi-Vilna* (Jerusalem, 1978), 217, 225-26, n. 16. It is interesting to note that in the text Landau writes that it is a "*safek*" if the Gaon made this statement, at the beginning of the note he writes that it is a "*safek gadol*" and by the end of the note he refers to this report simply as a

- "*sbmu'ab bilti mevuseset*" without any qualification whatsoever. See also the English "adaptation" of this work by Yonason Rosenblum, *The Vilna Gaon: The Life and Teachings of Rabbi Eliyahu the Gaon of Vilna* (New York, 1994), 153-54.
68. See, for example, Isaac Ber Levinsohn, *Te'udab bi-Yisrael* (Vilna and Horodna, 1828), 151; Shmuel Yosef Fuenn, *Safab le-Ne'emanim* (Vilna, 1881), 139.
- For an analysis of the role the Gaon played in early Haskalah, see Emanuel Etkes, "Ha-Gra ve-ha-Haskalah—Tadmit u-Mezi'ut," in *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Hevrah ha-Yehudit be-Yemei ha-Benayim u-va-'Et ha-Hadashah* (Jerusalem, 1980), 192-217. See esp. p. 192. This article was recently reprinted in an updated form in Emanuel Etkes, *Yahid be-Doro: Ha-Gaon mi-Vilna—Demut ve-Dimuy* (Jerusalem, 1998), 44-83. See also the article by Dr. Shuchat in this volume.
69. For the phrase "Torah only," as opposed to "Torah and," see R. Shimon Schwarz, *These and Those* (New York, 1967), 7.
70. See S. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness," pp. 148-49 and p. 149, n. 12. See too Yehudah Levi, *Torah Study*, pp. 248-49 and n. 61.
71. David Fishman, "A Polish Rabbi Meets the Berlin Haskalah: The Case of R. Barukh Schick," *AJS Review* 12:1 (1987):95-121, esp. pp. 110-11, 113-14; *idem.*, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York, 1995), 22-45; E. Etkes, "Ha-Gra ve-ha-Haskalah," p. 211.
72. For these arguments, see "Kin'at ha-Mitnagdim le-Minhagei Ashkenaz," *Kerem Habad* 4:1 (1992):155, n. 8. For more on the authenticity of this text, see Yisrael Zinberg, *Toledot Sifrut Yisrael* 3 (Tel-Aviv, 1958), 365, n. 11; Yisrael Ya'akov Dienstag, "Ha-Im Hitnaged ha-Gra le-Mishnato ha-Filosofit shel ha-Rambam?," *Talpiyot* 4:1-2 (1949):255-56; E. Etkes, "Ha-Gra ve-ha-Haskalah," p. 202; Raphael Shuchat, "Ha-Gra mi-Vilna ve-Limmud ha-Hokhmat ha-Kelaliyot," *BDD* 2 (1996):92-93; S. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness," p. 149, n. 12.
- This quote has been cited many times with no one ever questioning its authenticity. See, for example, Yosef Klausner, *Historiyah shel ha-Sifrut ha-'Ivrit ha-Hadashah* (Jerusalem, 1953), 17; Ze'ev Yavez, *Toledot Yisrael* 13 (Tel Aviv, 1937), 231; Ben Zion Katz, *Rabbanut, Hassidut, Haskalah* 2 (Tel Aviv, 1958), 40, 134; Shmuel Yosef Fuenn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah* (Vilna, 1915), 146; Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia* 1 (New Haven, 1944), 22; Ben-Avraham, "Le-Mil'ot Me'ah Shanah (le-Zekher ha-Gaon Rabbenu Eliyahu mi-Vilna)," *Lu'ah Ahi'asaf* 6 (1898):n. p. (pp. 2-3 in the article); Reuven Brainin, "Ha-Gaon mi-Vilna," *Mi-Mizrah u-mi-Ma'arav* 4 (1899):6. R. Avraham Y. Kook also quoted this passage on a number of occasions. See R. Moshe Zevi Neriah, *Sifot ha-Re'iyah ve-Orot Mishnato* (Tel-Aviv, 1979), 239.
73. See R. Yehoshua Heshel Levin, *Sefer 'Aliyot Eliyahu* (Vilna, 1856), 30a; R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, cited by R. Shuchat, below, p. 285. See also E. Etkes, "Ha-Gra ve-ha-Haskalah," p. 204. R. Moshe Meiselman was correct when he wrote ("The Incomparable Gaon of Vilna," *Jewish Action* 58:1 [Fall 1997]:35), "Some try to make a point of the Gaon's involvement in intellectual areas other than Torah. The Gaon used these as a means of developing a total understanding of Torah. They were a means to his ends and never became ends in themselves."
74. *Bi'ur ha-Gra, Yoreh De'ab, Hil. Me'onen u-Mekbasbef* 179:13.
75. S. Y. Fuenn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, p. 160. R. Katzenellenbogen made the same claim about another statement of the Gaon in his commentary to a gloss of R. Moshe Isserles in *Yoreh De'ab, Hil. Talmud Torah* 246:18: אבל לא ראו את הפרדס לא אכל ולא הרמב"ם הוא ולא הרמב"ם. See also Reuven Brainin, "Ha-Gaon mi-Vilna," p. 3, n. 2.
76. See Ben-Avraham, "Le-Mil'ot Me'ah Shanah," n. p. (pp. 8-9 of the article).
77. R. Israel of Shklov, introduction to his *Taklin Haditin* commentary on the *Talmud Yerushalmi* of *Massekhet Shekalim* (Minsk, 1812), n. p.
78. See Ben Zion Katz, *Rabbanut, Hassidut, Haskalah*, Vol. 2, pp. 38-40; Y. Y. Dienstag, "Ha-Im Hitnaged ha-Gra le-Mishnato ha-Filosofit shel ha-Rambam?," pp. 253-57. For more on the Gaon's less than enthusiastic attitude towards philosophy, see R. Israel of Shklov, introduction to *Sefer Pe'at ha-Shulhan* (Jerusalem,

1959), 5a (he studied it all and found only two points worthwhile).

In general, there are many examples of figures whose historical legacy was distorted by those who later sought to present them as partisans of their own particular perspective. This occurred primarily to the Gaon of Vilna and to the Rambam, but to other figures as well. In addition to the sources cited earlier regarding the Gaon, see, for example, Gershom Scholem, "Mi-Ḥoker le-Mekubbal," *Tarbiz* 6 (1935):90-98; Michael Shmidman, "On Maimonides' 'Conversion' to Kabbalah," in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* 2 (Cambridge, 1984), 375-86; James H. Lehmann, "Maimonides, Mendelssohn and the Me'asfim," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 20 (1975):87-108; Zemaḥ Tsamriyon, "Tupu'ah ha-Haskalah ve-ha-Ḥinukh be-ha-Me'asef," *Iyyunim be-Ḥinukh* 28 (1980):9-10; Michael Stanislawski, "The Tsarist Mishneh Torah: A Study in the Cultural Politics of the Russian Haskalah," *PAAJR* 50 (1983):165-83; Jay Harris, "The Image of Maimonides in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Historiography," *PAAJR* 54 (1987):117-39 (his discussion of "historiography in the service of ideology" [p. 117] is very relevant to the presentation here); and my *Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works*, pp. 717-19.

79. See S. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness," pp. 180-201. See also the references I cite, on both sides of this issue, in my "Introduction" to *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures*, pp. xiii-xiv, n. 7.
80. Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer, "Torah im Derech Eretz—*ההרואת שעה*," *Mitteilungen* 26 (August/September 1965):1-2. *Mitteilungen* is the bulletin of the K'hal Adath Jeshurun ("Breuer's") community. My thanks to Mrs. Edith Silverman, daughter of Rabbi Breuer, for bringing this article to my attention a number of years ago. A Hebrew version appeared as "Torah 'im Derech Erez—Hora'at Sha'ah?," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 6:4 (1966):1-3. See too below, pp. 241-42.
81. See R. B. H. Epstein, *Sefer Mekor Barukh* 4 (Vilna, 1928), Chapter 46 ("Ḥokhmat Nashim"), pp. 1948-77. This chapter was analyzed by Don Seeman, "The Silence of Rayna Batya: Torah, Suffering, and Rabbi Barukh Epstein's 'Wisdom of Women'," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 6 (1995-1996):91-128.
82. *Sefer Mekor Barukh*, pp. 1949-50.
83. M. Dombey, *My Uncle The Netziv* (New York, 1988), 156.
84. I have already drawn attention to this lack of precision in my "Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Close of the Yeshiva in Volozhin," p. 113, n. 5. See too D. Seeman, "The Silence," p. 96 and p. 118, n. 17. It is quite clear to me from reading R. Epstein's entire chapter about his aunt that she, in fact, studied *Mishnayot*, not only read them superficially without understanding their meaning.
85. See my "Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Closing of the Yeshiva in Volozhin," pp. 76-133. The quotes are from pp. 77, 112.  
To my surprise, my article has been cited in support of the very proposition it sought to disprove. See, for example, Jonathan Sacks, *One People?: Tradition, Modernity, and Jewish Unity* (Oxford, 1993), 61 and Shaul Shimon Deutsch, *Larger Than Life: The Life and Times of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson* 2 (New York, 1997), 71 and p. 309, n. 2. Both write that the Netziv closed Volozhin rather than introduce secular studies into its curriculum and cite my article as supporting evidence for that assertion.
86. R. Zevi Schachter, "Mi-Peninei Rabbenu, z"l," *Bet Yizhak* 28 (1996):26.
87. Military service in inter-war Poland lasted from two to three years, depending on the unit to which one was assigned. My thanks to Dr. Michal Galas of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow for providing me with this information.
88. See R. Meir Bar-Ilan, *Iggerot* 1, ed. Natanel Katzburg (Ramat-Gan, 1976), 181-82. The emphasis is mine. I first came across this reference in Shlomo H. Pick, "The Rav: Biography and Bibliography—A Review Essay," *BDD* 6 (1998):34-35.
89. See S. H. Pick, "The Rav," p. 35; p. 43, n. 34: "If Rav Moshe wanted his son to flee, why have him go to study secular studies in Berlin, when he could be a Rosh Yeshiva in New York?"

90. For an analysis of R. Barukh Ber's position and the circumstances under which it was formulated, see my "Torah u-Madda Revisited: The Editor's Introduction," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 1 (1989):1-2. It was first published posthumously as "Be-'inyan Torah 'im Derekh Erez," *Ha-Pardes* 13:10 (January, 1940):16-22, and reprinted with some changes, including the title, in *Birkbat Shmuel, Kiddushin* #27.
91. R. Yitzchak Twersky, "The Rov," *Tradition* 30:4 (Summer 1996):30-31; reprinted in Menachem D. Genack, ed., *Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik: Man of Halacha, Man of Faith* (Hoboken, 1998), 26-27.
92. Although there is a significant, and growing, body of secondary literature on this subject, I will limit my evidence only to statements made by the Rov's sons-in-law, sister and father, and, in conclusion, by the Rov himself.
93. R. Aharon Lichtenstein, "R. Joseph Soloveitchik," *Great Jewish Thinkers of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Simon Noveck (Clinton, 1963), 283-84.
94. Shulamit Soloveitchik Meiselman, *The Soloveitchik Heritage: A Daughter's Memoir* (Hoboken, 1995), 177.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 214. The emphasis is mine. See also pp. 226-27 for a remarkable story about Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik's commitment to his son's secular education in the face of serious criticism.
96. Manfred Lehman, "Av Me'id 'al Beno," *Sefer ha-Yovel li-Khvod Morenu ha-Gaon Rabi Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik* 1 (Jerusalem, 1984), end. See too Y. Twersky, "The Rov," p. 18; pp. 8-9. The significance of these words here is highlighted by comparing R. Moshe's letter to the other well-known letter of recommendation written on behalf of the Rov by Rabbi Avraham Shapiro, the Kovno Rav, to which R. Moshe here refers. There the language is fully traditional, without any reference whatsoever to any secular accomplishments. R. Shapiro's letter was first published in *Ha-Pardes* 6:7 (October, 1932):6 on the occasion of the Rov's arrival in America, and reprinted in *Mesorah* 9 (1994):7. See also Aaron Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel: Builder of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Philadelphia, 1972), 128; Hillel Goldberg, *Between Berlin and Slabodka: Jewish Transition Figures from Eastern Europe* (Hoboken, 1989), 195, n. 55.
97. See Manfred R. Lehman, "Re-writing the Biography of Rav Soloveitchik," *Algemeiner Journal* (November 4, 1994). This article was reproduced in its entirety in S. S. Deutsch, *Larger Than Life*, p. 283. See also S. H. Pick, "The Rav," pp. 30, 32.

For more of a discussion of this issue, see the forthcoming biography of the Rov by R. Aaron Rakefet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Joseph B. Soloveitchik—Biography and Insights* (Ktav Publishing Co.), Chap. 1, at nn. 8, 9, 11. My thanks to Rabbi Rakefet-Rothkoff for making these pages available to me in typescript. See also *idem.*, "Biografyah shel ha-Rav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik," in Avi Sagi, ed., *Emunah bi-Zemanim Mishtanim: 'Al Mishnato shel ha-Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik* (Jerusalem, 1996), 20; *idem.*, "Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik: The Early Years," *Tradition* 30:4 (Summer 1996):195-96.

For the general phenomenon of R. Soloveitchik revisionism, see Walter S. Wurzbarger, "Confronting the Challenge of the Values of Modernity," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 1 (1989):107. See also the article by R. Soloveitchik printed in this volume. It surely reflects the worldview of someone whose thinking was not focused exclusively on the intricacies of *bezek re'iyah*, *bakhanah de-Rabbah*, *hazi shi'ur*, or *ye'ush shelo mi-da'at*.

I want to take this opportunity to clarify another story Rabbi Schachter relates that he heard regarding the Rov. In a later article ("Mi-Peninei Rabbenu, z"l," *Beit Yitzhak* 29 [1997]:214), he records the following:

אחד מהרבנים המודרניים הצעירים ממוסמכי הישיבה רצה להנהיג מקרא מגילה לנשים במיוחד. שתקרא אחת מהנשים בעד השאר. ורצה לשאול את פי רבנו בזה להסכמתו. אלא שחשש פן לא יסכים עמו ויגיד לו שאסור. ע"כ עשה בערמה ושלח רב אחר לשאול והשיבו רבנו. דאין לעשות כן. דלפי המבואר במדרש הנעלם לרות (המובא במג"א לסי' תרפ"ט סק"ז) אשה לא תקרא לעצמה. רק תשמע מהאנשים. וכשמסר הרב השני את דברי רבנו אל הרב הראשון המודרני. החליט הלא

להנהיג את הנהגתו המיוחדת, למרות מה שרבנו התנגד לה. היות שהוא בעצמו לא שאל לרבנו, ורבנו לא אסר לו אישית. . . . (שמעתי).

As presented, this story is an extremely serious indictment of the rabbi who proceeded with the Megillah reading in spite of what he knew to be the Rov's objection to it. The argument of, "Well, the Rov didn't tell *me*," is obviously absurd and ridiculous.

I suspect that I am one of the figures in this story because it is very similar to one I had told in a number of public lectures shortly before this article appeared. If, in fact, that is the case, then I want to take this opportunity to clarify exactly what happened. If that is not the case, then, at the very least, I would like to add my story to the one described here.

During the Spring of 1980 (or maybe it was 1979, I do not remember for sure), two women who were members of my congregation at that time, the Young Israel of Sharon, MA, approached me with a request to allow a women's Megillah reading (by women and for women) on Purim. I told them that I was uncomfortable with it and they dropped the matter. On the Sunday before Purim, I was visiting New York and had an appointment with Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, then rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue. At the end of our meeting, Rabbi Riskin asked me to do him a favor. A number of women in his synagogue had made the same request of him and he had agreed to allow it. However, just the day before, on the Shabbat before Purim, as he was about to announce this reading, his eyes caught the statement in the *Magen Avraham* opposing it and he decided, at the last moment, not to make the announcement. After davening, the women who had expected his support were upset when it was not forthcoming.

Rabbi Riskin told me that he had already asked the Rov many questions regarding women and synagogue ritual, and he sensed that he would get a more objective answer from him if someone else, like myself, were to pose the question to him. Since women in my congregation had, indeed, asked me that very question, I agreed to do so.

Upon returning home, I called the Rov, asked him the question and, after a brief pause, his answer was a one word "No." Aware of Rabbi Riskin's predicament, I pressed the Rov for a reason. We proceeded to engage in a discussion of the issue, the Rov marshalling arguments explaining his position and I arguing with each of them, one by one. As one of his arguments (unfortunately the only one I remember from that conversation), the Rov invoked the *Magen Avraham*. In response, I recall saying to him, "Rebbe, since when do we *pasken* like a *Midrash ha-Ne'elam* of the *Zohar*?" Finally, after a few minutes, I sensed he was becoming exasperated with me and he said, "Schechter [he called me by the Yiddish or Hebrew pronunciation of my name], if you want, I can give you a *beter*; but *you* shouldn't do it." At that point, I thanked the Rov for his time and hung up the phone.

There is no doubt in my mind that in 1979 or 1980 the Rov was very uncomfortable with this practice and was prepared to allow it only when I persisted in pressing him on the matter. Yet, at the same time, his "If you want I can give you a *beter*, but . . ." is quite different from his unequivocal rejection in the version of the story cited above.

For a recent discussion of the Rov's position on this matter, see Aryeh A. Frimer and Dov I. Frimer, "Women's Prayer Services—Theory and Practice; Part I, Theory," *Tradition* 32:2 (Winter 1998):44-45.

98. For a description of the achievements of this most remarkable man, see Alexander S. Gross and Joseph Kaminetsky, "Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz," in *Men of the Spirit*, ed. Leo Jung (New York, 1964), 551-72; Aharon Suraski, *Sbluḥa de-Rahmana* (Jerusalem and New York, 1992). Most recently, see Yonason Rosenblum, "Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz לברכה זכר צדיק לברכה: A Revolutionary for Our Time," *The Jewish Observer* 31:8 (October, 1998):14-22. This article was published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his passing on 3 Elul 5708 (1948).

99. See A. Suraski, *Sbluḥa de-Raḥmana*, pp. 173-74.
100. For information about this extraordinary story, see William B. Helmreich, *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry* (New York, 1982), 47, 50. A more fundamental critique of this version of the story centers on R. Mendlowitz's attitude towards secular studies in general and college attendance in particular. He was much more favorably disposed to both than the impression given in R. Suraski's book.
- For another criticism of this book, i. e., that it ignores the fact that R. Mendlowitz regularly gave a *shiur* in Mesivta Torah Vodaath on the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Yiḥzak Hakohen Kook, see Ze'ev Lev, "Teshuvah le-Bikkoret," p. 49. It is also interesting to note that R. Mendlowitz celebrated the founding of the State of Israel in his yeshiva, Bais Medrash Elyon, with the recital of the "*Shebeḥiyani*" blessing which he recited "*bi-billabavut azumab.*" See Hillel Seidman, *R. Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz* (New York, 1976), 106. No such information appears in the book by R. Suraski.
101. R. S. Y. Zevin, *Ha-Mo'adim ba-Halakhah* (Tel Aviv, 1955), 371. The emphasis is mine.
102. *Idem.*, *The Festivals in Halachah 2* (New York, 1981), 294.
103. This "change" was already pointed out by Jack Feinholtz in a letter to the editor of *Tradition* 22:4 (1987):120. The "General Editors" of the publishing company under whose auspices this book was printed responded (*ibid.*, pp. 120-21), but their explanation was refuted by Terry Novetsky in the next issue of *Tradition* (23:1 [1987]:98-99). Regarding this matter, see also Marvin J. Spiegelman, "The Truth of Torah—The Role of Text Transmittal," *Ten Da'at* 3:2 (Adar 5749; Winter 1989):34; Eliezer Wise, "Current Factors Affecting the Publication and Distribution of Traditional Jewish Literature in the U. S.," *Judaica Librarianship* 5:1 (1989-1990):69; Joel B. Wolowelsky, "Selective Citations," *Ten Da'at* 6:1 (Nisan 5752):13.
104. R. S. Y. Zevin, *Ischim ve-Shitot* (Tel Aviv, 1966), 18. My thanks to Rabbi Barry Gelman for bringing this source to my attention. Regarding this statement of the Gra, see the interesting testimony cited in R. Barukh Halevi Epstein, *Sefer Mekor Barukh* 3 (Vilna, 1928), 1166-67.
- For another issue regarding the possibility of R. Zevin revisionism (drafting Yeshiva students into the army in Israel), see R. Alfred Cohen, "Editor's Note," *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 24 (1992):153-55.
105. For a copy of the program, see below, pp. 274-276.
106. J. D. Epstein, *Mizvat ha-Shalom* (New York, 1969), 605-07. In an editorial note, R. Epstein noted how this letter serves as an excellent model as to how one relates to people and ideas with whom and with which one has great disagreement. The book contains *baskamot* from R. Avrohom Jofen (Navarodok), R. Elazar Menaḥem Shakh and R. Yehezkel Levenstein (Ponevez), R. Ḥayyim Leib Shmuelvitz (Mir), R. Yehezkel Sarna (Ḥevron), R. Moshe Feinstein, R. Shlomoh Zalman Auerbach, and R. Shlomoh Yosef Zevin, among others. I doubt, however, that they saw every page of the book in advance.
- The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* entry on R. Bloch (Vol. 4 [1971], p. 1097) concludes with, "Bloch actively supported Israel."
107. J. D. Epstein, *Mizvat ha-Shalom* (New York, 1987), after p. 604. My thanks to Rabbi Solomon F. Rybak for bringing this to my attention. Rabbi Elazar Muskin, whose late father, Rabbi Jacob Muskin, served as a rabbi in Cleveland and participated in this program, is preparing an article about this entire remarkable episode.
108. See Mendel Piekartz, *Ḥasidut Polin: Magamot Ra'ayoniyot ben Sbtei ha-Milḥamat u-be-Gezerot Taf-Shin—Taf-Shin-Heb (ba-Sboab)* (Jerusalem, 1990), 412-34; Lawrence Kaplan, "Daas Torah: A Modern Conception of Rabbinic Authority," in Moshe Z. Sokol, ed., *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale, 1992), 56-60; trans. and revised as "Da'at Torah—Tefisah Modernit shel ha-Sam-

khut ha-Rabbanit," in Avi Sagi and Zeev Safrai, eds., *Ben Samkbut le-Otonomiyah be-Massoret Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1997), 123-26 (my thanks to Mr. Lawrence A. Kobrin for bringing this reference to my attention); Eliezer Schweid, *Ben Hurban le-Yeshuab* (Tel Aviv, 1994), 65-88. For recent defenses of the Belzer Rebbe, see Moshe Ben Shmuel, "The Last Days of the Belzer Rebbe in Europe," *Yated Ne'eman* (8 Adar, 5758; March 6, 1998):26-33; Elad Melik, "He Shall Live by Them: The Way of the Belzer Rebbe, Aaron Roke'ah, in the Holocaust," in Yehezkel Fogel, ed., and Edward Levin, trans., *I Will Be Sanctified: Religious Responses to the Holocaust* (Northvale, 1998), 183-210. The issue was raised most recently by B. Michael, "BaGaZ Pifiyot," *Yedi'ot Ahronot* (December 11, 1998), Ha-Musaf le-Shabbat, p. 9.

109. Compare the version in Aharon Ben-Zion Shurin, *Keshet Gibborim* (Jerusalem, 1964), 202, and "Le-Toledot ha-Mehabrim Rashei ha-Yeshiva, Zikhronam li-Vera-khah," *Sefer Yovel ha-Yovelot* (New York, 1986), 206-07 with the impression one gains from Shmuel Noah Gottlieb, *Sefer Oholei Shem* (Pinsk, 1912), 29 and A. Suraski, *Marbizei Torah u-Mussar*, Vol. 3, pp. 162, 167. *Sefer Oholei Shem* would appear to be more reliable since it carries a *haskamah* from R. Hayyim Soloveitchik himself. Clearly he would have insured that, at the very least, his own entry was correct. My thanks to Mr. David Israel for bringing this reference to my attention.
110. The entire issue surrounding this story is presented in an article I co-authored with Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Ninety-three Bais Yaakov Girls of Cracow: History or Typology?," in Jacob J. Schacter, ed., *Reverence, Righteousness, and Rabbamatut: Essays in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung* (Northvale, 1992), 93-130.
111. See R. Moshe Feinstein, *Iggerot Mosheh, Yoreh De'ah* 3:114-15. See too Gershon Brinn, "Kavim le-Perush ha-Torah le-R. Yehudah ha-Hasid," *Te'udab* 3 (1983):215-26; Yisrael M. Ta-Shema, "Mashehu 'al Bikkoret ha-Mikra bi-Ashkenaz bi-Yemei ha-Benayim," in Sarah Yefet, ed., *Ha-Mikra be-Re'i Meforshev: Sefer Zikaron le-Sarah Kamin* (Jerusalem, 1994), 453-59.
- Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the statements made by R. Yehudah ha-Hasid were not as radical in the Ashkenazi High Middle Ages as one might have thought. See, most recently, Yisrael M. Ta-Shema, "Perush Anonimi Bikorti (bi-Khtav Yad) le-Sefer Tehillim," *Tarbiz* 66:3 (1997):417-23.
112. See Avi Shafran, "The Enigma of Moses Mendelssohn," *The Jewish Observer* 19:9 (December, 1986):12-18; Ernst Bodenheimer and R. Yaakov Perlow, "An Editorial Statement," *The Jewish Observer* 19:10 (January, 1987):13; R. Simon Schwab, "To Distinguish Between Light and Darkness," *The Jewish Observer* 20:5 (Summer 1987):21-23.
113. In Aharon Haber, "Larger Than Life," *Hamevaser* (Adar Rishon 5749; February 1989):12, Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler is quoted as having said:

Occasionally intentional falsehoods are included [in biographies of *gedolim*] to pervert the truths of their lives. . . . By [a biography of my father-in-law, Rabbi Feinstein] perpetuating such falsehoods as Reb Moshe never reading the newspapers when in fact he read them "cover to cover" daily, they sought to remake him into their perverted image of what a *gadol* should be. The fact that neither I nor my wife or children were interviewed by them nor shown the galleys confirms the intentional plan to present a fraudulent life story for some less than honorable purposes.

Ze'ev Lev, "Teshuvah le-Bikkoret," p. 49, also criticizes a biography of R. Moshe for the same reason. In a recent work, Rabbi Tendler takes pains to stress the fact that his father-in-law "read the newspaper every morning at the breakfast table, whatever newspaper it might be—the socialistic *Forward*, or the *Tag*, or the *Morning Journal* and then the *Algemeiner Journal*." See his *Responsa of Rav Moshe Feinstein* 1 (Hoboken, 1996), 16.

However, I am unable to find any reference in the work referred to above (Shimon Finkelman, *Reb Moshe: The Life and Ideals of HaGaon Rabbi Moshe*



*Feinstein* [New York, 1986]) to the fact that R. Moshe never read newspapers. On the contrary, it includes a story (pp. 180-81) told by his devoted student, the late Rabbi Nissan Alpert, about R. Moshe buying a newspaper and notes that R. Alpert was only surprised by the fact that his *rebbe* would want to buy one on *Erev Pesah*.

114. Compare the Jerusalem, 1965 edition (p. 263, n. 203) with the Jerusalem, 1979 edition (p. 502, n. 44). See already Alan Unterman, "Censorship and Heresy," *Niv ba-Midrashia* 22-23 (1990):56-57.

For other references relevant to this discussion, see also Eliyahu Ki Tov, *Kaushei de-Rahmana* (Jerusalem, 1997 [1987?]), 5; David Asaf, "Kevod Elokim Haster Davar: Perek Nosaf ba-Historiografiyah ha-Ortodoksit shel ha-Hasidut be-Erez Yisrael," *Catbedra* 68 (1993):57-66, and the sources cited there, esp. p. 58, n. 4; Avraham Shisha Halevi, "Me-ha-Hatam Sofer ve-'ad Herzl," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 7:1 (1967):57, 67; David Haneshke, "Maḥloket le-Shem Shamayyim," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 13:4 (1973):421-51; Binyamin Shlomoh Hamberger, "Bikkoret–Herev Pifiot," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 33:1 (1992):55; Amnon Levy, *Ha-Haredim* (Jerusalem, 1988), 240f; Shmuel Hakohen Weingarten, "Teshuvot she-Nignezu," *Sinai* 29 (1951):90-99 (a particularly fascinating article); Marc Gopin, "An Orthodox Embrace of Gentiles? Interfaith Tolerance in the Thought of S. D. Luzzatto and E. Benamozegh," *Modern Judaism* 18:2 (May 1998):176 (My thanks to Rabbi Dov Weiss for bringing this reference to my attention); Leon Wieseltier, *Kaddish* (New York, 1998), 177-78; Michael Stanislawski, "The Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah*: A Study in the 'Ashkenization' of a Spanish-Jewish Classic," in E. Carlebach, J. M. Efron and D. N. Myers, eds., *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover and London, 1998), 134-49; Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Who is Buried in the Vilna Gaon's Tomb?," *Jewish Action* 59:2 (Winter 5759/1998):36-41; and see the references cited above, n. 25.

115. See William L. Burton, "The Use and Abuse of History," *American Historical Association Newsletter* 20:2 (1982):14.

116. This is the title of a book by William Zinsser (Boston, 1987). The subtitle is, "The Art and Craft of Memoir."

117. For the following point, I am indebted to Yehudah Brandis, "Bemai Kamiflagi," *Megadim* 26 (1996):107-27; *idem.*, "Ha-Hakdamot ha-Hekhrahiyot le-Khol Perush," *Megadim* 28 (1997):107-22.

118. *Sifri*, Parshat Shelah #113. See too *Sifri*, Parshat Beha'alotkha #195; *Shabbat* 96b.

119. There are different textual variants for this last sentence.

What requires further explanation is why, in a case where the Torah hides the sin (i.e., *Zelafhad*), one opinion allows it to be revealed while in cases where the Torah itself records the sin, no opinion is mentioned here which permits revealing it.

That this matter is complicated is also evident from a statement of Rashi in his commentary to Judges 18:30. The verse states that Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Menashe was involved with idolatry. However, the word "Menashe" is spelled with a "hanging *nun*." Rashi comments that his name really was Moshe, but to avoid embarrassment to him that he had such a grandchild, his name was camouflaged. Nevertheless, Rashi concludes, "It was written hanging to indicate that it was [in fact] not Menashe but Moshe." Here the truth may be camouflaged but it is still presented in the text for all to know. My thanks to Rabbi Steven Pruzansky for bringing this source to my attention.

120. See *Megillah* 25b and commentaries.

121. Who the "his" is here is the subject of a disagreement between Rashi (Reuven) and the Ran (Ya'akov).

122. This follows the opinion of *Tosafot*, *Megillah* 25b, *s. v. ma'aseh*, based on the *Talmud Yerushalmi*. See too Maimonides, *Perush ba-Mishnayot*, *ad. loc.*

123. In the case of Reuven, this is not the only rabbinic position on the matter. See the passage from *Shabbat* cited below, at n. 133.

124. See the commentaries of Ramban and R. Abraham ibn Ezra on Genesis 18:13.
125. See also the rabbinic ruling in *Bava Mezi'a* 23b-24a which permits a learned man to lie in three specific instances. This is cited as normative Jewish practice. See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hil. Gezeleb va-Avedab* 14:13; *Sbulhan 'Arukh*, *Hoshben Mishpat*, *Hil. Avedab u-Mezi'ah* 262:21. For more on the issue of the parameters of truth-telling in Jewish tradition, see Hillel David Litwack, *Midvar Sheker Tirhak* (New York, 1978); Ya'akov Y. Fisch, *Sefer Titen Emet le-Ya'akov* (Jerusalem, 1982); Mark Dratch, "Nothing but the Truth?," *Judaism* 37:2 (Spring 1988):218-28; Norman Lamm, "Peace and Truth: Strategies for Their Reconciliation—A Meditation," in *Reverence, Righteousness and Rabamanut: Essays in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung*, pp. 193-99; Ari Zivotofsky, "Perspectives on Truthfulness in the Jewish Tradition," *Judaism* 42:3 (Summer 1993):267-88.
126. *Beresbit Rabbah* 8:5.
127. A. Feldman, "Gedolim Books," p. 32.
128. This phrase comes from James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology* (Philadelphia, 1990). For passages particularly relevant to perceptions about the role of *gedolei Yisrael*, see pp. 22-23, 75, 156. See also Michael A. Williams, ed., *Charisma and Sacred Biography*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religious Studies* 48:3-4 (1982).
129. For this phenomenon during the Middle Ages, see M. A. Shulvass, "Medieval Ashkenazic Jewry's Knowledge of History and Historical Literature," pp. 15-16; Tamar Alexander, "Rabbi Judah the Pious as a Legendary Figure," in Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan, eds., *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism* (Berlin and New York, 1995), 123-38. For early modern times, see A. Rapoport-Albert, "Hagiography with Footnotes," pp. 122-24, and the sources cited there, p. 123, n. 22; Zeev Gries, "Hasidism," pp. 102-03, 194-95; S. Feiner, *Haskalah ve-Historiyah*, pp. 76-79; Mor Altshuler, "*Kevuzat Ya'akov*: Ben Biografiyah le-Sifrut Shevakhim," *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-'Olami ha-Ahad-Asar le-Mada'ei ha-Yahadut* C2 (Jerusalem, 1994), 153-60. See also above, n. 25; below, n. 132.
130. H. Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28:4 (Summer 1994):84-85. See also the version of this article entitled "Migration, Acculturation, and the New Role of Texts in the Haredi World," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* (Chicago, 1994), 211. For a critique of this argument, see Isaac Chavel, "On Haym Soloveitchik's 'Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodox Society': A Response," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 7 (1997):129-31. In his response, "Clarifications and Reply," Dr. Soloveitchik notes, ". . . these works must be both understood and judged as ideological literature, written to secure a future, rather than as an historical one, written to describe accurately a past" (pp. 147-48). Parenthetically, I am mystified by Dr. Soloveitchik's point in n. 10 (p. 149). Does he mean to suggest that distorting truth is acceptable since academics also engage in it?

Jewish tradition is not the only one concerned with protecting the reputations of its great figures. In secular literature, as well, examples abound of conscious decisions not to tell the whole truth about respected individuals. There is substantial evidence, for example, that in order to protect the reputation of his most famous subject, Samuel Johnson, Boswell withheld much material about him, omitting less than favorable information about his drinking and sexuality. Yet, some considered even his work as being too revealing, and one reviewer commented that, "We wish him to copy the example of Plutarch, who, though he followed his heroes to the recesses of private life, and exhibited them in the hours of social ease, yet generally left in the shade what tended to diminish their greatness, or sully their virtues." Another critic wrote, "Johnson's faults were balanced by many and great virtues; and when that is the case, the virtues only should be remembered, and the faults entirely forgotten." See James L. Clifford, "How Much

Should a Biographer Tell?: Some Eighteenth-Century Views,” in Philip B. Daghlia, ed., *Essays in Eighteenth-Century Biography* (Bloomington and London, 1968), 84-85, 88-92.

131. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (Cleveland, 1964), 722.  
 132. This talmudic statement is discussed at great length in Ya'akov Medan, “Megillat Bat-Sheva,” *Megadim* 18-19 (1993):67-167. Rabbi Medan also indicates that by no means was this opinion universally accepted. Highly respected authorities continued to assert the guilt of these great biblical figures.

For more on the favorable treatment of biblical figures in rabbinic literature, see David Berger, “On the Morality of the Patriarchs in Jewish Polemic and Exegesis,” in Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod, eds., *Understanding Scripture: Explorations of Jewish and Christian Traditions of Interpretation* (New York, 1987), 49-62; repr. with revisions in Shalom Carmy, ed., *Modern Scholarship in the Study of Torah: Contributions and Limitations* (Northvale, 1996), 131-46; Eliezer Margaliyot, *Ha-Hayavim be-Mikra ve-Zaka'im be-Talmud u-ve-Midrashim* (London, 1949); Leivy Smolar and Moses Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York and Baltimore, 1983), esp. pp. 1-61, *passim*; Allen M. Schwartz, *Rabbinic Reflection on Violations of Pentateuchal Law in the Books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel* (unpublished Master's thesis, Yeshiva University, 1984). My thanks to Rabbi Schwartz for bringing these last three references to my attention.

For expressions of the position which argued for the absolute perfection of biblical figures, see R. Hayyim Yizhak Isaac Sher, *Avraham Avinu* (Jerusalem, 1946) (on this work, see Aharon Suraski, *Marbizei Torah u-Mussar* 2 [Tel Aviv, 1976], 268-72); R. Aharon Kotler, “Ha-Derekh ha-Nekhonah be-Hora'at ha-Tanakh,” *Sbma'atin* 15 (1967):8-13 (see also the reactions to this article in *Sbma'atin* 16 [1968]:86-87; *Shema'atin* 17 [1968]:5-7); *idem.*, *Mishnat Rabi Aharon* 3 (Lakewood, 1988), 173-87; R. E. Dessler, *Sefer Mikbtav me-Eliyahu*, Vol. 1, pp. 161-69; “Approaching the Avos—Through Up-Reach or Drag-Down?,” *The Jewish Observer* 24:2 (March 1991):48-51; R. Hayyim David Halevi, *Aseh Lekha Rav* 5 (Tel-Aviv, 1983), 400-01. Also relevant is R. Elazar Menahem Man Shakh, *Sefer Mikbtavim u-Ma'amarim* (Bnei-Berak, 1990), 35-40 (a harsh attack on R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Hamesh Derashot* [Jerusalem, 1974]).

Another relevant text here is Rashi's comment that the reason the Torah presented Terah's death before describing Abram's journey from his parental home (Genesis 11:32-12:1) even though, in fact, Abram left long before his father died is “in order that this matter not become known to all, lest people say that Abram did not fulfill the honor due his father for he left him as an old man and went on his way.” One could argue that the Torah here explicitly does not tell the truth for the sake of maintaining a reputation, but the matter is not so clear cut for Rashi goes on to suggest that the phrase “*va-yamat Terah be-Haran*” need not necessarily refer to Terah's death but could also be an appropriate designation for a wicked man who is still alive. Clearly Rashi was uncomfortable with leaving this distortion in full force.

133. See above, n. 127.  
 134. In a recent article, R. Aharon Lichtenstein underscores “the need for historical knowledge and sensitivity” on religious grounds. See A. Lichtenstein, “Torah and General Culture,” pp. 239-42. Once again, this could only be possible if one assumes that the history one is reading is true.

For a position similar to Rabbi Feldman's, see R. Zevi Schachter, *Nefesh ha-Rav* (Jerusalem, 1994), 280-81:

שערי גדולי ישראל מתגלית השכינה. לא רק במה שמסרו לנו ששמעו להדיא מפיו ית'. אלא מעצם חייהם עצמם—פון זייער ביאגראפיי ווייל די שכינה ווערט אפגעשפיגעלט פון די גדולים. והיינו שקראו הקב"ה ליעקב קל, שעל ידו יפורסם שמו של הקב"ה. ולזה נתכוונו רז"ל במה שאמרו שדמות דיוקנו של יעקב חקוקה היא על כסא הכבוד. אז די כסא הכבוד שפיגעלט זיך אפ פון יעקב'ס דמות. [ובתוך דבריו הזכיר רבנו. שלפיכך נהגו לכתוב תולדות חייהם של גדולי ישראל.

דמהנהגותיהם אפשר לנו ללמוד דרכי ד', וכאמור. אך מתח קצת בקורת על אלו שכותבים על יחס האדם הגדול לחותנתו וכדו'. דברים של מה בכך. שהם סתם היסטורי בעלמא שאין מזה שום לקח ולימוד לחיינו אנו.]

All this presupposes, of course, that their "biography" is truthful.

135. J. R. Lowell, *The Rebellion: Its Causes and Consequences* 6 (1864), 145; cited in D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p. 324. See too Tony Judt, "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu," *The New York Review of Books* (December 3, 1998):51: "This one instance can stand for many where a false past has been substituted for the real one for very present-minded reasons."
136. For a similar point, see Yehezkel Kaufmann, *Me-Kivshonah shel ha-Yezirah ba-Mikra'it* (Tel Aviv, 1966), 253: שהיא מניס לתכבם מתקן ועושה פסוקים במו: ידי . . . וחורר ומוצא בהם כל מה . . . שהוא מניס לתכבם. What is happening here, however, is not on the narrower canvas of textual emendation but on the much broader one of Torah practice. This statement is cited by David Berger, "Li-Havharot Piskah Kashah be-Ferusho shel R. Yosef Kara le-Yish'ayahu," *Zion* 52:1 (1987):116. My thanks to Dr. Berger for bringing it to my attention.
137. Hazon Ish, *Kovez Iggerot* 2 (Bnai Berak, 1956), 121-22, #133. This letter was brought to my attention by S. Z. Havlin, ed., *Seder ha-Kabbalah le-Rabbenu Menahem ha-Meiri*, introduction, pp. 22-23, n. 32.
138. R. S. Schwab, *Selected Writings* (Lakewood, 1988), 234. I quoted this remarkable passage at greater length in my "Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Close of the Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1892," p. 111.
139. R. Dessler, *Sefer Mikhtav me-Eliyahu*, Vol. 1, pp. 94, 96. See also A. Carmell, *Strive for Truth*, pp. 267, 271.
140. David Lowenthal, "Fabricating Heritage," *History and Memory* 10:1 (1998):5-24, esp. pp. 7-8, 9, 11, 19. For a further elaboration of this point, see *idem.*, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (London, 1997), esp. Chapters 4-7.
141. Marc B. Shapiro, "Scholars and Friends: Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg and Professor Samuel Atlas," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 7 (1997):105-21.
142. See Marc B. Shapiro, *Between East and West: The Life and Works of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg* (unpublished doctoral dissertation; Harvard University, 1995); Judith Bleich, "Between East and West: Modernity and Traditionalism in the Writings of Rabbi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg," in Moshe Z. Sokol, ed., *Engaging Modernity: Rabbinic Leaders and the Challenge of the Twentieth Century* (Northvale, 1997), 169-273. See also *idem.*, "Rabbi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg: Innovator and Conservator," in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies* B3 (Jerusalem, 1994), 281-88.
143. (Berlin, 1937-1938), 30, 90. This work was reprinted in *Seridei Esh* 4 (Jerusalem, 1969). See p. 67 where he refers to Atlas as מהר"ש אטלס. Atlas dealt with this work in his "Le-She'elat Hilkhot 'Idit," *Horev* 9 (1946):59-78. He also refers to Rabbi Weinberg as "ידידי" and notes that R. Weinberg mailed him several copies of this work from Berlin to London several months before the war (see p. 59, n. 2).
144. See *Seridei Esh* 2:78. It is dated March 12, 1956 and addressed to לידיני הרה"ג החכם המופלא וכו' מהר"ש אטלס שליט"א.
145. See his *Hiddushei ha-Ra'avad 'al Masekhet Bava Kamma* (Jerusalem, 1963), 362-85.
146. This extremely complimentary letter was printed by Atlas in his *Netivim ba-Mishpat ha-Ivri* (New York, 1978), 153-55. For this quote, see p. 154. This letter was one of those translated by Dr. Shapiro in the article under discussion here. See also pp. 137-39 for another very respectful and complimentary letter from Rabbi Weinberg to Atlas dated January 19, 1965. Dr. Atlas joined the faculty of the Hebrew Union College in the 1940s.
147. See his "Ha-Gaon Rabi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg zz"l: Kavim le-Demuto," *Sinai* 58:4-6(1966):281-92.

148. *Ibid.*, pp. 281, 292.
149. S. Atlas, "Al ha-Rav Y. Y. Weinberg *zz"l*," *De'ot* 32 (1966):125-26. For other very respectful letters by R. Weinberg to Atlas, see Melekh Shapiro, ed., *Kitvei ha-Gaon Rabi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg *zz"l** (Scranton, 1998), 128-29, 176-79, 180-83, 183-85.
150. See R. Ben Zion Shapiro, ed., *Iggerot le-Re'iyah* (Jerusalem, 1990), 128, #81. See too S. Atlas, "Ha-Gaon Rabi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg *zz"l*," p. 286.
- It is also interesting to note Rabbi Weinberg's comment that one of the reasons a couple married by a "*rav hofshb"l*" need not redo their marriage ceremony is "כדי שלא לעורר לזות שפתים על הרב." See *Seridei Esh* 3:18, end.
151. See also M. Shapiro's dissertation cited above, n. 142, and J. Bleich, "Between East and West," pp. 225-43; *idem.*, "Rabbi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg," pp. 283-84. For just one small example, see *Seridei Esh* 4, p. 270, where Greek appears in the text along with references to German Christian scholars. See also R. Weinberg's treatment of the issue of women's hair covering in *Seridei Esh* 3:30.
152. See Yizhak Refael, "Gedolei Yisrael Meshivim le-R. S"Z Shragai," in Mordekhai Eliav and Yizhak Refael, ed., *Sefer Shragai* (Jerusalem, 1981), 275. Part of this letter, printed by Mosad Harav Kook, was translated by J. Bleich, "Between East and West," p. 220. Dr. Bleich obviously did not consider it inappropriate to translate a section of the sharply worded portion of this letter into English. For another criticism of "schnorrers" and "nekhadim," see R. Weinberg's letter printed in *Ha-Pardes* 40:7 (1966):5.
153. See R. Yosef Yehoshua Apfel, "Kavim le-Demuto shel Mori ve-Rabi Maran ha-Gaon R. Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg *zz"l*," *Ha-Ne'eman* 57 (1983):52, #10. The reference here is to R. Weinberg's article, "Iy Mutar la-Hog Hāgigat Bat-Mizvah," *Ha-Pardes* 37:3 (December, 1962):8-12; 37:4 (January, 1963):6-9; 37:5 (February, 1963):5-7; 37:7 (April, 1963):7-9; reprinted in *Seridei Esh* 3:93.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 53, #14. There are more *teshuvot* to the recipient of these letters, Rabbi Y. Apfel, in *Seridei Esh* than to anyone else.
155. Melekh Shapiro, "Mikhtavim me-ha-Rav Y. Y. Weinberg *zz"l*," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 32:4 (1992):18-19. For the second letter, see Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness," p. 212. *Ha-Ma'ayan* is published by Poalei Agudat Yisrael.
156. *Seridei Esh* 2:8 (and other quite harsh comments found there; see S. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness," pp. 201, 212). See also *Seridei Esh* 2:14:
- אני מרגיש בצער, צער רב, מורה ומחנך בשעה שהוא רואה שאנשים יראים, אבל אין להם ידיעה כלשהי בתורת החינוך עומדים נגדו ומתריעים עליו . . . והם מסתפקים במועט, במנין המצומצם שלהם ומפקירים כלל ישראל.
- In addition, see M. Shapiro, *Kitvei ha-Gaon*, p. 16: ולצערנו התגברה מאוד הקנאות ואי 16: and see also Rabbi Weinberg's words in *Yad Sha'ul*, cited by Rabbi Weingort in his letter below, p. 334.
157. *Seridei Esh* 3:66.
158. *Le-Perakim* (Jerusalem, 1967), 166.
159. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-293. The reference to the opinion of the Meiri is on p. 289. See also M. Shapiro, *Between East and West*, pp. 64-65, 229-33 (a copy of a letter on this matter from Rabbi Weinberg to the well-known Gentile Semitic scholar, Gustaf Delman); *idem.*, *Kitvei ha-Gaon*, pp. 150-54; J. Bleich, "Between East and West," p. 225, n. 137.
160. See *Seridei Esh* 3:54. The reason Rabbi Weinberg gives for this is that, according to the accepted rules of *pesak*, the law should have been lenient in this case. He writes: "עפ"י כל הנ"ל אפשר למצוא פתח להיתרא. אבל מרן המחבר וכן רבינו הגר"א סגרו לפנינו את הדרך ואין יוצא ואין בא.
161. For a discussion of this issue, see above, pp. 216-17. For presentations of Rabbi Weinberg's position on this matter, see his "Rabbiner Samson Raphael Hirsch zum Problem Judentum und Weltkultur," *Nachalath Zwi* 7 (1937); *Das Volk der Religion* (Geneva, 1949), 69-70; "Mishnato shel R. Shimshon Rafael Hirsh," *Tal-*

- piyot* 8:1-2 (1961):180-99; *Seridei Esb* 4, pp. 360-74; "Torat ha-Ḥayyim," in Yonah Emanuel, ed., *Ha-Rav Shimsbon Rafael Hirsch: Misbnato ve-Shitato* (Jerusalem, 1962), 185-99. See also I. Grunfeld, *Three Generations* (London, 1958), 118-19; Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, "The Spiritual Legacy of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg זצ"ל," *Niv Hamidrasha* 11 (1974):95.
162. J. Bleich, "Between East and West," p. 227. See too *idem.*, "Rabbi Yehi'el Ya'akov Weinberg," p. 283.
163. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-74. See also R. Avraham Abba Weingurt, *Hiddushei Ba'al Seridei Esb, ha-Gaon ha-Rav Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg זצ"ל, 'al ha-Sbas* (Jerusalem, 1995), introduction, pp. 5, n. 11, quoting from a letter of Rabbi Weinberg: עוד מכה יעד מכה גדולה שוררת בימינו. אי-ההודאה על האמת שבדברי המתנגדים לדעותינו. For an example of the paramount importance of honesty for Rabbi Weinberg, see the story he told, recently printed by R. Weingort, "Adam Gadol Nimdad be-Sheloshah Devarim," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 38:2 (1998):61-62.
164. In fact, this revisionism extended to a rewriting of Rabbi Weinberg's very essay on Rabbi Hirsch where he warned against historical revisionism! See J. Bleich, "Between East and West," p. 231, n. 153; M. Shapiro, *Between East and West*, p. 196, n. 72. This tendentious rewriting of his text is surely something that would have greatly upset Rabbi Weinberg. I suspect that he would also have been upset by the blatant revisionism practiced by R. Ḥayyim Ḥaikel Greenberg who opposed anyone revealing Rabbi Weinberg's ties to Haskalah in his youth on the grounds that this would be a desecration of his memory. See his *Koveẓ Rabbani Torani: "Aḥiezer"—"Torat Ḥayyim"* (Tel Aviv, [1967?]), 18, cited by M. Shapiro, *Between East and West*, p. 17, n. 71.
165. The parameters of the *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom* have been widely discussed in the scholarly literature. See, for example, F. Rosenthal, "Einiges über die Tekanot des Rabbi Gershom b. Jehuda der 'Leuchte des Exils,'" *Jubelschrift zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. Israel Hildesheimer* (Berlin, 1890), 37-53; Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1964), 20-35, 111-38, *idem.*, "Zu den Takkanot des Rabbenu Gershom," *MGWJ* 74 (1930):23-31; Fritz Baer, *MGWJ* 71 (1927):392-97; *idem.*, "Nachwort zu diesem Aufsatz," *MGWJ* 74 (1930):71-34; *idem.*, "Ha-Yesodot ve-ha-Haḥalot shel Irgun ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit Bimei ha-Benayim," *Zion* 15 (1950):30-31; Shlomo Eidelberg, "RGM"H ha-Metaken, ha-Meshiv ve-ha-Payyetaḥ," *Sinai* 36 (1955):57-60; *idem.*, ed., *Teshuvot Rabbenu Gershom Me'or ha-Golah* (New York, 1955), 16-25; Joel Hakohen Miller, ed., *Teshuvot Hakhmei Zarefat ve-Lotir* (Vienna, 1881; repr. New York, 1959), XXXVI; Simon Schwarzfuchs, "A propos des Takkanot de Rabbenu Gershom et de Rabbenu Tam," *REJ* 115 (1956):109-16; Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* 6 (Philadelphia, 1958), 131-41; Ben-Zion Dinur, *Yisrael ha-Golah* 1/3 (Tel Aviv, 1961), 269-75; Perez Tishby, "Ha-Im ha-Takanah shelo Las'et Shte Nashim, me-Rabbenu Gershom Hi?," *Tarbiz* 34:1 (1964):49-55 and the reactions to that article by S. Eidelberg in *Tarbiz* 34:3 (1965):287-88 and by Yisrael Ta-Shema and Ze'ev Falk in *Tarbiz* 35:2 (1965):193; Shlomo Zalman Havlin, "Takkanot Rabbenu Gershom Me'or ha-Golah be-'Inyanei Ishut be-Teḥumei Sefarad u-Provans," *Sbnaton ha-Mishpat ha-'Ivri* 2 (1975):200-57; *idem.*, "Ḥerem de-R"G be-'Inyanei Ishut ve-Hagbalat Zemano," *Orayta* 15 (1986):277-80; *idem.*, "Berurim Ḥadashim be-'Inyanei Takkanot RGM"H, Yiḥusan, Teḥulatan ve-Hitpashtutan," *Sbnaton ha-Mishpat ha-'Ivri* 11-12 (1984-1986):317-35; Avraham Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1981), 132-49; Yom Tov Asis, "Ḥerem de-Rabbenu Gershom' ve-Nisu'ei Kefel bi-Sefarad," *Zion* 44:4 (1981):251-77; "Herem de-Rabbenu Gershom," *Enzyklopediah Talmudit* 17 (1983), 378-454, 757-72; Elimelech Westreich, "Ilot le-Hatarat Ḥerem de-Rabbenu Gershom Bimey ha-Benayim ha-Me'uḥarim," *Diné Israel* 16 (1991-1992):39-95. See also Yisra'el Schepansky, "Takkanot Rabbenu Gershom Me'or ha-Golah," *Ha-Darom* 22 (1965):103-20; *idem.*, *Ha-Takkanot bi-Yisra'el, Takkanot ha-*

*Kebillot* 4 (Jerusalem, 1993), 78-128; Ya'akov Shmuel Spiegel, *'Amudim bi-Toledot ba-Sefer ha-'Ivri* (Ramat-Gan, 1996), 101-15.

With regard to the matter of reading someone else's mail, it is, for example, not included in the list of Takkanot of Rabbenu Gershom printed at the end of the *Mahzor Vitry*, Shimon Halevi Horowitz, ed. (Jerusalem, 1963), 798, #576. For a discussion of whether or not this text represents the earliest version of these ordinances, see S. Z. Havlin, "Takkanot Rabbenu Gershom," p. 202, n. 6; *idem.*, "Berurim Hadashim," pp. 323-24. See also Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* 6, p. 139: "More questionable is Gershom's authorship of the much-quoted regulation safeguarding the privacy of correspondence by forbidding anyone to read letters without the writer's or the addressee's permission." See too *idem.*, p. 395, n. 161: "Like the ordinance against plural marriages, that protecting the letter writer's privacy is nowhere recorded in full."

166. *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharam be-R. Barukh*, Prague ed., #1022 (Budapest, 1895), 160a; *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharam Minz* #102. See too L. Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, pp. 178, n. 22; 195; 211; B. Z. Dinur, *Yisra'el ba-Golah*, p. 275, #32. For a slightly different formulation, see *Be'er ha-Golah*, *Yoreh De'ab* 334:123: חרם שלא לראות בכתב חבירו שלא ברשותו אא"כ זרקו.

Cf. the formulations which do not include this condition. See, for example, *Sefer Kol Bo* #116 (Jerusalem, 1997), 488: ושלא לראות בכתב ששולח אדם לחבירו בלא ידיעתו ובלא רשותו; the three versions printed in L. Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government*, p. 178: ושלא לראות בכתב אומר שיש חרם קדמונים שלא לקרות כת' בלא רשות בעל הכתב; ושלא לראות בכתב חבירו; ושלא לראות בכתב ששולח אדם לחבירו בלא ידיעתו ובלא רשותו.

See also J. Miller, *Teshuvot Hakhmei Zarefat ve-Lotir*, p. XXXVI, n. 11, end; Y. Schepansky, *Ha-Darom* 22, p. 114; *idem.*, *Takkanot ba-Kebillot*, p. 95, #7; A. Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz ba-Risbonim*, p. 135; *Enzyklopediab Talmudit* 17, p. 768. It is interesting to note that Rabbi Schepansky, in both references cited above, points out that this practice was more widespread among Sephardim than Ashkenazim.

167. R. Y. Hāgiz, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Halakhot Ketanot* 1:59. ופריך גדר ישכנו = פגיון דרגמיה = נחש דרבנו גרשם מאור הגולה a phrase commonly written to indicate the letter writer's desire for privacy. See more below.
168. *She'elot u-Teshuvot Hikekei Lev*, *Yoreh De'ab* #49. He bases this on the formulation of the *Shiltei ha-Gibborim* cited below, at n. 171. It is only an alternate citation of the *Shiltei ha-Gibborim* by later authorities which leads him to suggest that this may not be necessary.
169. Cf. the formulation in the *Enzyklopediab Talmudit* 17, p. 453 which reads: אם בעל הכתב זרקו . . .
170. R. Moshe ben Hābib, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Kol Gadol* 1:102 (emphasis mine). R. Schepansky, *Takkanot ba-Kebillot*, p. 96, n. 7, takes issue with the part of this responsum which requires an oral articulation for the *herem* to apply.
171. See his commentary on the Rif at the end of the fifth chapter in *Massekhet Shavu'ot* (p. 17a in the pagination of the Rif). The emphasis is mine.
172. *Yoreh De'ab* 334:22, commentary on the Rama. The emphasis is mine. See too *She'elot u-Teshuvot Bet David*, *Yoreh De'ab* #158; *Enzyklopediab Talmudit* 17, p. 452, at n. 880. It is interesting to note that R. Hāyym Palaggi, in his previously cited responsum, also writes: ומ"ם נראה דעיקר החרם הוא שלא יפתח האיגרת בלא רשות חבירו but he follows this with: וכ"כ להדיא בספר הכלבו סימן ק"י ובספר באר הגולה סס"י שלד ע"ש. However, neither the *Kol Bo* nor the *Be'er ha-Golah* (above, n. 166) make any specific reference to the *herem* being against opening the letter. Perhaps I am reading too much into this word here.
173. R. Y. Hāgiz, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Halakhot Ketanot* 1:173. The emphasis is mine.
174. Cf. *ibid.*, 1:276: שאלה מה שנוהגין לכתוב ע"ג האגרות ופגיון אם יש בו ממש. תשובה בלאו הכי נראה. While one thus transgresses the prohibition of *rekbilut* even without "ופגיון" being written on

the letter, it would still seem that the additional *herem de-Rabbenu Gershom* against such activity applies only when the phrase does appear.

See also the relevant responsum of R. Ḥayyim Shabbetai, *Torat Ḥayyim* 3:47, which also deals with a circumstance where both of these criteria are present. Of course, there is no evidence here that R. Ḥayyim Shabbetai would necessarily limit the application of the *herem* only to such a case.

175. See R. Ḥayyim Shabbetai, *Torat Ḥayyim* 3:47, cited by *She'elot u-Teshuvot Ḥikikei Lev, Yoreh De'ab* #49. See too *Enzyklopediab Talmudit* 17, pp. 452-53.
176. See *She'elot u-Teshuvot Ḥikikei Lev, ad. loc.*
177. See R. Y. Ḥagiz, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Halakhot Ketanot* 1:276; *Torat Ḥayyim* and *She'elot u-Teshuvot Ḥikikei Lev, ad. loc.* These reasonings are summarized in *Enzyklopediab Talmudit* 17, pp. 452-53.  
Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer deals with this issue in a tape entitled "Opening Other People's Mail" (note that the title is not "Reading Other People's Mail") distributed by the Moshe and Esther Brandman Memorial Tape Library (No. CH86) in Skokie, Illinois. At the end of his lecture, he concludes that "I have no resolution of the question of whether one is allowed to read the letter of a dead person or not. It's not clear at all." My thanks to Rabbi Bechhofer for helping me clarify the complexity of this issue.
- For more on the applicability of this *herem*, see R. Ḥayyim David Halevi, *'Aseh Lekha Rav* 1 (Tel Aviv, 1976), 127-32, #42; 5 (Tel Aviv, 1983), 394, #108; R. Yehudah Herzl Henkin, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Bnai Banim* 3 (Jerusalem, 1998), 60-65, #17.
178. See *Iggerot ha-Rav Ḥida zẓvk"l* (Livorno, 1867); C. Rosenberg, "Iggerot de-Rav Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai zẓ"l," *Ha-Zofeh le-Ḥokhmat Yisrael* 11 (1927):241-309; printed as a separate volume (Budapest, 1927); Meir Benayahu, "Iggerot ha-Ḥida le-Aviv Rabi Rafael Yizḥak Zerahyah Azulai," *Sinai* 43 (1958):223-36; *idem*, "Iggerot Mizrayim," in M. Benayahu, ed., *Sefer ha-Ḥida* (Jerusalem, 1959), 7-27. These collections of letters (and others) are discussed by M. Benayahu in his *Rabi Ḥayyim Yosef David Azulai* (Jerusalem, 1959), 225-30. Benayahu even published a letter on the outside of which the Ḥida wrote ופניך! See M. Benayahu, *Taglahat be-Holo shel Mo'ed* (Jerusalem, 1995), 203, 206.
179. See B. Weinberger, ed., *Iggerot Shapirin* (Brooklyn, 1983), 140-41, #157. The original of this letter was printed in A. Suraski, *Sbluḥa de-Rahmana*, pp. 177-78. For R. Mendlowitz, see above, pp. 222-23. This letter also includes a reference to the "רע-בנים" produced by Yeshivat Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchanan in New York City.
180. See A. Suraski, ed., *Aḥiezer, Koveẓ Iggerot* 2 (Bnai Brak, 1970), 444, #290; *Iggerot le-Re'iyah* (Jerusalem, 1986), 219, #202. For a discussion of this phrase, see Christhard Hoffmann and Daniel R. Schwartz, "Early but Opposed—Supported but Late: Two Berlin Seminaries Which Attempted to Move Abroad," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 36 (1991):298, n. 124; Daniel Schwartz, "Ben Berlin, Lita ve-ha-Mizraḥ ha-Rahok: 'Al Kamah Shu"t ve-'Tikkun bi-Hashmatah,'" *Kiryat Sefer* 64:3 (1992-1993):1077-87.
181. Would Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan be happy with the publication of his aforementioned letter (p. 219) including a critique of what he considered to be R. Moshe Soloveitchik's overly favorable attitude towards his son?
182. See R. I. Y. Unterman, *Shevet mi-Yebudab* (Jerusalem, 1993), 261-67; R. B. H. Leizerowski, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Ta'am Barukh* 1 (Philadelphia, 1979), #22, 25, 28, 81. Note also the fact that these responsa contain passages I wonder if Rabbi Weinberg would have wanted published. For example, in #22 he wrote: את הפרדס כמעט שאיני קורא ולפעמים אני מעיף בן עין אבל איני מעיף בו. Cf. this to the impression one gets from the letters of Rabbi Weinberg to Rabbi Simcha Elberg, the editor of *Ha-Pardes* (see below, n. 184). That same responsum also contains personal information about his relationship with a rabbinic colleague in Zurich. It is reprinted in M. Shapiro, *Kitvei ha-Gaon*, pp. 7-9.



183. Rabbi Y. Y. Weinberg, "Nituhei Metim be-Medinat Yisrael," *Tehumin* 12 (1991):382-84.
184. See *Ha-Pardes* 40:7 (1966):4-7; 40:8 (1966):38-39; 40:9 (1966):38-40; 40:10 (1966):36-37; 41:2 (1966):33-34; 41:3 (1966):42; 41:5 (1967):38; 41:6 (1967):39; 41:8 (1967):40; 41:9 (1967):37; Yonah Emanuel, "Sarid ha-Esh," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 6:3 (1966): 66 (only the last page of this article contains previously unprinted letters); Melekh Shapiro, "Mikhtavim me-ha-Rav Y. Y. Weinberg zz"l," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 32:4 (1992):6-20; *idem.*, "Mikhtavim me-ha-Rav David Zevi Hoffmann, ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein, ve-ha-Rav Y. Y. Weinberg," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 34:2 (1993-1994):12-20; *Ha-Ma'ayan* 33:1 (1992):38; R. Hayyim Dov Chavel, "Me-Zeror Mikhtavim shel ha-Rav Weinberg zz"l," *Ha-Darom* 24 (1966):16-20; R. Y. Y. Apfel, "Kavim li-Demuto," pp. 51-54; R. Yisrael Rozin, "Le-Hofa'at Shnei Kerakhim me-Mif'al ha-Shas ha-Shalem," *Noam* 16 (1973):160-64; R. B. Z. Shapiro, ed., *Iggerot ha-Re'iyab*, pp. 126-27, #79; p. 128, #81; p. 322, #210; pp. 324-25, #214; pp. 486-87, #347; R. A. A. Weingort, *Hiddushei Ba'al "Seridei Esh"*, pp. 3, n. 5; 4-5, 5, n. 11; 5-6; 14, n. 40. See also the end of that work, pp. 566-71, 594-95.
- One of his personal letters printed by Rabbi Menahem Kasher, "Be-Inyan Tenai bi-Nisu'in," *Noam* 12 (1969):347, regarding a book authored by his student, Dr. Eliezer Berkovits was challenged as having been a forgery. See M. Shapiro, *Between East and West*, pp. 238-39, n. 60; *idem.*, *Kitvei ha-Gaon*, pp. 247-51.
- I have included here references only to Torah journals. Other letters of Rabbi Weinberg, some extraordinarily private, have been published elsewhere. See, for example, H. L. Gordon, "Aharei Mitato shel ha-Rav R. Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg z"l," *Ha-Do'ar* 45:15 (February 11, 1966):235; Zevi Matheson, "Ha-Tragedyah shel Adam Gadol," *Ha-Do'ar* 45:18 (March 4, 1966):284-85; R. Pinhas Biberfeld, "Le-Zekher ha-Gaon ha-Amity Maran Rabi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg z"l," *Ha-Ne'eman* 18 (1966):33; Hayyim Haikel Greenberg, *Mi-Gedolei ha-Dor* (Tel Aviv, 1967), 10 (n. p.). See also R. Ze'ev Aryeh Rabiner, *Maran Rabbenu Meir Simḥab Kohben zz"l* (Tel-Aviv, 1967), 293-99; *idem.*, *Ha-Gaon Rabi Eliezer Gordon zz"l* (Tel Aviv, 1968), 17-18; R. Mordekhai Ilan, *Ner Mordekhai* (Bnai Brak, 1982), 289-90; Gavriel Hayyim Cohen, "Devarim le-Zikhro shel ha-Rav ha-Gaon Dr. Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg zz"l," *De'ot* 31 (1966):10, n. 13; Aharon Suraski, introduction to R. Y. Y. Weinberg, *Et Aḥai Anokhi Mevakesh* (Bnai Berak, 1966), 27, and the letter to S. Z. Shragai reprinted above. Rabbi Weinberg's letter of approbation for *Shemirat Shabbat ki-Hilkatab* by R. Yehoshua Neuwirth was printed only in the revised 1979 edition (after R. Weinberg's death) and not in the original 1965 edition.
185. *Ha-Ma'ayan* 32:4, p. 15.
186. *Seridei Esh* 2:109.
187. See above p. 237, [at n. 146] See too M. Shapiro, *Kitvei ha-Gaon*, p. 184.
188. M. Shapiro, "Scholars and Friends," pp. 111-12. A copy of "this letter" which Rabbi Weinberg sent to Professor Ephraim Urbach was printed by Dr. Shapiro, p. 119.
- With regard to Rabbi Weingort's reference to the article that prohibits publishing anyone's *divrei Torah* without permission, it must first be noted that the article begins with a letter by Rabbi Shlomo Goren in opposition to this ruling. See "Pirsum Divrei Torah le-lo Kabbalat Reshut mi-Mi she-Amaram," *Tehumin* 4 (1983):354-56. For another example of an opposing position, see R. Ephraim Greenblat, *Revivot Ephraim* 7:382. My thanks to Dr. Shapiro for bringing this reference to my attention.
189. For information about Rabbi Weinberg's closeness to the Weingort family, see his own description in the introductory essay he wrote to the volume printed in memory of R. Shaul Weingort, "Le-Zikhro," *Yad Sha'ul*, pp. 3-19. See also *Seridei Esh* 2:31, p. 65.
190. See above, n. 163.

191. See his "Mi-Derekh Limudo shel Ha-Rav Yeḥiel Ya'akov Weinberg," *De'ot* 31 (1966):19-22; "Iyyun be-Mishnato shel ha-Rav Y. Y. Weinberg, zẓ"l," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 37:3 (1997):24-32. See also his "Letter to the Editor, below, p. 334-36.
192. M. Shapiro, *Between East and West*, p. 235.
193. See *Shulḥan 'Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 606:2. It is interesting to note that both of Rabbi Weinberg's parents' names are inscribed on his tombstone.





