

INTROSPECTION

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Tolerance

And Rabbi Hiyya b. Abba, even father and son, master and disciple who study of Torah at the same gate become enemies of each other; yet, they do not stir from there until they come to love each other...

T.B. KIDDUSHIN 30B

[TRANSLATION FROM THE SONCINO TALMUD]

The call for mutual love and respect amongst Torah scholars is an ideal to which we all aspire. Rabbi Hiyya b. Abba's presentation of the path that must be undertaken to achieve this ideal of mutual love, though, must be seriously contemplated. First, scholars locked in Talmudic and *Halachic* disagreement must "become enemies of each other." Only then, once they have been locked in heated battle, can they achieve the goal that "they come to love each other," even as they continue to disagree. In general, we pursue feelings of love and respect by focusing on areas where people agree while attempting to avoid areas of disagreement. Rabbi Hiyya b. Abba, however, is arguing that the path to achieve these goals within the realm of Torah is through the opposite, through the very areas of disagreement.

NORMATIVE VISIONS OF TOLERANCE

At issue is our understanding of tolerance and the goal of mutual respect and mutual love. By definition, a call for mutual love and respect declares that in fact what

already exists is a lack of these affirmative emotions amongst a set group of individuals. The promotion of tolerance further implies that what exists within the group is not only indifference but animosity. We perceive there to be some sort of barrier causing individuals to develop negative feelings for each other and preventing the development of positive emotions within the group. The call for tolerance normally is a call to ignore such barriers, to look beyond that which causes enmity and see the essential common nature within each individual member of the group.

There are times when such tolerance is achieved by showing that the barrier itself has no merit and should be summarily discarded. This is what occurs when racism is challenged. We do not simply argue for the barrier of race to lessen in value in the face of the common bond of humanity; we argue for the declaration that this barrier is irrelevant. Tolerance in such situations is a call for the

crumbling of the barrier - for a declaration of its illegitimacy.

There are situations, however, where the barrier cannot be simply ignored, where the cause for friction has legitimate value. This is the case with a disagreement in the realm of ideology; obstacles and differences in values and ideas cannot be simply dismissed. The call for tolerance in such cases is usually for a shift in prioritization, for the ideas that create dissent to assume a secondary importance in relation to the common quality - such as humanity - that bonds.

There are different methods by which this shift in prioritization may be effected. One is through a process of imposition whereby those in favour of

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tolerance, through various methods, simply try to have the members of the group attach a greater importance to the unifying values over the values in dissent. The favoured prioritization is accepted by proponents as a given; the objective, through various methods of emotive persuasion, is to have others also accept this given. Such an approach is witnessed in those who simply declare that the value of Jewish unity should override any other concern, believing wholeheartedly that a consistent reiteration of such a stand will in itself provide a solution. Tolerance is promoted through the drumming of the beat, through the power of the bandwagon.

Prioritization can also be attempted in earnest through education and forthright arguments explaining why concepts which bond should have priority. Arguments for Jewish unity based upon the Holocaust often fall within this perspective. Tolerance and the priority given to the values of unity are supported through reason. The value is not necessarily a given; it is explained. Yet, whether through imposition or education, the attempt is to

create tolerance through a shift in value priority, to describe the value of unity as more important than any other value.

A shift in prioritization, however, is not always possible. The value that forms the barrier, in

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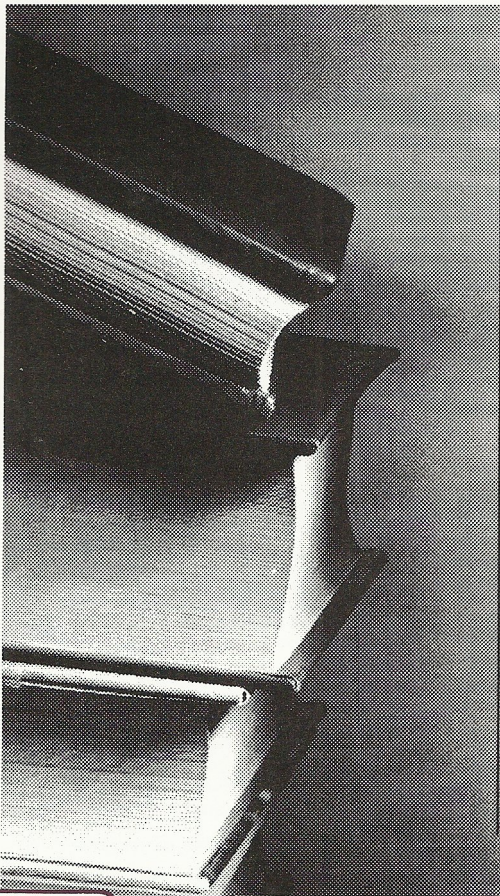
various situations, cannot always be easily displaced; the value of unity cannot always be unilaterally declared dominant. In such situations an argument for unity and tolerance must also maintain the force of value of the barrier ideology. In such cases, goals of tolerance and bonding may still be attempted by separating the person from the idea.

Opposing ideas cause personal friction within a group because we inherently connect an individual who accepts a conflicting viewpoint with the view. As ideas collide so do the individuals collide. If the connection between the individual and idea can be broken, the disagreement in ideas need not result in a rift amongst the people and positive feelings can flow on the person-to-person level. The value in dissent can still be shunned with no relaxation in the intensity of the negative reaction to this shunned value. The person, though, can be approached with positive feelings as the person and the barrier value are separated.

Of course, this approach could be attempted by simply arguing a funda-

mental separation of person and idea. Such an argument, however, is ultimately untenable. We evaluate people by the ideas and values that they maintain; to do otherwise is to remove moral definitions from the human being. It would be morally unacceptable to us for a society to treat the anti-Semite in a manner totally similar to others unless this society could explain why the anti-Semitism should not taint any person's individual rights. The individual is responsible for and inherently connected with his/her ideas and beliefs. As such, in situations where we argue for the separation of individual and idea, there must be a defense for such a position. There is a reason to connect individual and idea, albeit that this can result in emotions of dissension. There must also be a reason for the separation of individual and idea; the resultant feelings of fraternity is not enough.

An example of this approach to tolerance is **Rambam's** application of *tinok she'nishba*, the law of the captured child, to second generation Karaites.¹ In arguing for the development of positive feelings towards second generation Karaites, Rambam clearly maintains that values of unity do not necessarily override other values. He, in fact, believes that Karaite ideology should cause a negative response in the general Rabbinic Jewish community;² the first generation Karaite is, thus, not to be extended positive emotions. The second generation Karaite, though, is deemed, through the application of *tinok she'nishba*, not responsible for having these ideas, thus not accountable and, thus, not deserving of negative feelings from others. The relationship between the individual and the idea is broken and thus the idea need not be a barrier to feelings of love being extended to this individual. Feelings of mutual love and respect are not more important than the value in dispute. The value retains its force of significance. The value is, though, not deemed a barrier to positive emotions because the individual's connection to the disputed value is discounted. Tolerance is advocated because the individual is **not** to be identified with the disputed value for the individual is deemed not responsible for maintaining this disputed ideology. **There** is tolerance for



the individual, not the idea.

This approach does have its limitation. The one tolerated may have difficulty with the implied condescension inherent in this approach. The contested ideology is not tolerated in any way. The individual is only tolerated because he or she is deemed to not be responsible for maintaining this incorrect viewpoint. If such an individual argues for tolerance for the idea or reacts negatively to this projected statement of inability, then the very basis of the bonding will be inherently challenged.³ In extreme cases, tolerance is actually only forthcoming as long as the tolerated individual maintains the expected distance between person and idea. Notwithstanding the argument for non-culpability, in these extreme cases, any attempt by the individual to show connection with the unaccepted belief or viewpoint will result in the rejection of tolerance.⁴ This form of tolerance places a most interesting onus on the one being tolerated in order to maintain the fraternity.

RABBI HIYYA'S **MODEL OF** **TOLERANCE**

None of the models - (1) outright removal of the barrier; (2) prioritization; (3) separation of person and idea - reflects Rabbi Hiyya's model of tolerance. In these models, tolerance is achieved by circumventing the idea in dispute. Feelings of fraternity are maintained by avoiding the points of contention. Rabbi Hiyya, paradoxically, calls for bonding through the very acceptance of the dispute. It is the dispute itself that actually is deemed to create the love.

Rabbi Hiyya's view of tolerance, it must be recognized, is not universal. It is not a formula that can be applied in all realms of disagreement. Its context is the world of Torah. It is within this realm, in describing the arguments between *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*, that we are introduced to the guiding principle in understanding arguments within Torah - *eilu v'eilu divrei Elokim chayim*,⁵ "these and

those are both the words of the Living God." Torah words, even in dispute, are given value. In fact, one of the reasons given in **T.B. Eruvin 13b** for why the law eventually followed *Beit Hillel* was because of their respect for the words of *Beit Shammai*: *Beit Hillel* always quoted *Beit Shammai*'s view first. In the realm of Torah, it is not only the individual that is tolerated but the idea itself.

Rabbi Hiyya ultimately is extending this concept to indicate that the tolerance of ideas within Torah actually fosters fraternity. Yet, what does it mean to tolerate an idea, especially a conflicting idea? Often one can argue for the tolerance of another's idea if one does not consider the issue in dispute to truly be of major consequence. This, however, is not the case in point. Initially, precisely because the ideas in dispute are of such value and importance, Rabbi Hiyya states that there is hostility. Maintaining the correct view in *Halacha*, in philosophy, is of the utmost importance. What thus occurs to bring forth this tolerance of the opposing idea and

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Rabbi Moshe Feinstein⁶ states that the answer lies in the very pursuit of truth itself. Rav Moshe explains that by its very nature Torah breeds disagreement for the Jew approaches Torah with an intense drive for truth. As this passion for truth confronts the realm of Torah, it is virtually impossible for there not to be disagreements, thus the many differing views within the Torah corpus.⁷ This is Torah and all

views developed within this world of thought are deemed *divrei Torah*, words of Torah. Thus originally as individuals argue for the correct view of an issue within Torah, there is hostility. The passionate search is for truth, for the correct definition of the Will of God, and each argues that they are right. But then, each is to see in the other the mutual passion for Torah truth, the commitment to the ideal of finding the Torah truth, as evidenced by the very intensity of the debate - and love is to emanate. Each sees the other as joining in the true shared ideal - the pursuit of the Torah idea. And each recognizes in the other's idea that it is also a word of Torah with standing as a legitimate idea within the corpus of Torah thought.

Furthermore, through debate, each one further understands that their own view and knowledge of Torah increases. No story more vividly portrays this concept than the famous reply of Rabbi Yochanan in explaining his great sadness over the death of Resh Lakish, his *talmid-chaver*,⁸ brother-in-law and greatest protagonist.⁹ Upon the passing of Resh Lakish, the Rabbis sent Rabbi Eleazer ben Pedath to comfort Rabbi Yochanan but to no avail. For every statement of Rabbi Yochanan, Rabbi Eleazer ben Pedath would bring a proof. Rabbi Yochanan replied that Resh Lakish would ask twenty-four questions to which Rabbi Yochanan would present 24 answers thus leading to a greater comprehension of Torah.¹⁰ As Rabbi Hiyya declares, it was precisely because Rabbi Yochanan and Resh Lakish were protagonists - each questioning the other, each in disagreement with each other - that their love grew. The bond of Torah commitment is not found in shared practice. The bond of Torah commitment is in the shared search for Torah truth. The opposing idea is, indeed, challenged for commitment to truth demands arguments against opposing viewpoints. Thus the protagonists within Torah hold back nothing in the battle for whose view shall triumph. Yet, simultaneously, the opposing idea is more than tolerated; it is cherished. It is also part of Torah, the product of one who is also committed to the search for Torah truth. It further challenges one to strengthen his/her own understanding of Torah - to ensure the correctness of their view while also being open to correction.

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The opposing idea, as much as it is opposed, is tolerated and the possessor of the idea, although constantly locked in dispute, is loved.¹¹

This understanding of Torah tolerance has major repercussions within our modern community. We often share lives and Torah discussion solely with those who share our basic ideas and practices. It is true that Torah practice is the ultimate practical ideal of Torah; commitment to Torah demands commitment to practice. Yet in not allowing ourselves to be stirred to debate within the whole corpus of Torah, by not sharing in Torah study with all segments of the Torah world, we lose the ideal of Torah knowledge and the ultimate

bond and expression of Torah. In what *beit midrash* today can all segments of the Torah world join in Torah debate? We must again build such a *beit midrash*.

ENDNOTES

- 1) See **Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mamrim 3:3.**
- 2) See, further, **Rambam, Perush HaMishnayot, Sanhedrin, c. 10 (Chelek).**
- 3) See **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, One People?, pp. 151-154**, who discusses this concern within the context of the present day issue of Jewish unity.
- 4) This view of tolerance, though, does not necessarily have to result in such extreme formulations. Once an argument for non-connection of person and idea is accepted, a model of tolerance, even as the individual continues to promote the unaccepted view, is also possible.

- 5) See **T.B. Eruvin 13b.** For further discussion, see, also, **Rabbi Michael Rosensweig, Elu va-Elu Divre Elokim Hayyim: Halakhic Pluralism and Theories of Controversy, Tradition 26:3 (Spring 1992).**
- 6) **Iggrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:28.**
- 7) Rav Moshe states that this is unique to Torah. In the physical realm, this is not the case and the pursuit of truth should result in the one correct opinion.
- 8) Student-colleague.
- 9) The disagreements between Rabbi Yochanan and Resh Lakish are found throughout the Talmud.
- 10) See **T.B. Baba Metzia 84a.**
- 11) Further to this concept, see the **Shach's Introduction to his Nekudat Hakesef, Yoreh De'ah.**

Study Question

Perhaps one of the most perplexing laws within *Halacha* is found in **Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 223:2:**

"If someone's father passes away, one should recite the blessing *dayan haemet* [marking tragedy]. If the father left an inheritance...the blessing of *she'hechiyanu* [marking a positive event] should also be recited..."

The question is obvious. In the context of the tragedy of the passing of a father, how can it be considered proper to be concerned about the inheritance and thus to recite *she'hechiyanu*? This would seem to be extremely callous.

Commentators are obviously bothered by this question. **Mishneh Brura note 9** points out that the blessing of *she'hechiyanu* is not in response to *simcha*, joy, but rather reflects *to'elet*, utility. Obviously the overriding desire is that the father not die and there be no inheritance, yet the inheritance does provide for greater utility. Although this utility is accompanied by great pain (the loss of the father), it is still appropriate to mark it with the blessing of *she'hechiyanu*. To the *Mishneh Brura*, the potential callousness that could be associated with the saying of *she'hechiyanu* arises from a misunderstanding that we are reflecting a positive subjective emotion in the midst of a tragedy. In fact, the *Mishneh Brura* is contending that the blessing reflects an objective response to reality and is to be recited in the same way that other blessings that mark reality are to be recited notwithstanding the personal misfortune.

Leviat Chein, Parshat Bo argues that it is the natural progression of life that provides the justification for the recitation of *she'hechiyanu*. In a broader perspective, amidst

the tragedy, *she'hechiyanu* marks the *zechut*, the privilege, that was received in the natural flow of existence, including that the child survived the parent and was able to ensure a proper burial for the parent - a matter that the *Halacha* deems to be of no small concern. (See also **Teshuvot HaRashba 4:77.**) To *Leviat Chein*, *she'hechiyanu* is not a callous disregard for the tragedy but a statement of mitigation that places the tragedy in perspective. As such, *Leviat Chein* argues that in the case where a child dies leaving an inheritance for the parent, *she'hechiyanu* is not recited as the tragedy is all encompassing.

At issue may be our very perspective on the human condition. It is difficult to mix emotions. It is not just awkward psychologically; it is confusing philosophically. The challenge is that life is complex and often the same stimulus may elicit conflict. The same event may spark both joy and sorrow, anger and affection. The question is how we respond or how we should respond. Do we feel both emotions? Should we feel both emotions? How do conflicting emotions co-exist? There are times when the *Halacha* seems to command that we see the entire picture and feel the conflict inherent in reality. At the *Passover Seder* we are called upon to, in some small way, recognize the pain of the Egyptians as we remove wine from our full goblets. At a wedding, we mark the continuing tragedy of exile by breaking a glass. This law may be a continuation of this perspective - that we are to see and feel all perspectives. Yet, as evidenced by the views of the cited commentators, there is also a recognition that there may also be times when a dominant perception and emotion should be allowed full reign and the attempt to see and feel all is inappropriate. How we answer these questions may effect our entire lifestyle as a Jew and as a human being.

LIVING IN THE SHADOW

In the previous edition of Introspection, Rabbi Hecht presented the idea that the recent popularity of "maximum position compliance"¹ reflects a societal loss in awareness of the process through which *halachic* decisions are rendered. He also pointed out that this habit is connected to the modern *hashgacha* and what it represents: the perception that it is acceptable to interact only with the symbols that stand for *halachic* conclusions, instead of participating in the process that leads to these conclusions. Without involvement in this process, and armed with the desire to interact only with symbols, the average Torah individual must naturally come to see *halachic* conclusions in a way that is divorced from their genesis. After *halachas* are orphaned in this way, there remains only one way of comparing them: as though they reside on a simple one-dimensional scale, from less strict to more strict. This contemporary relationship with Torah is much like holding an intricate tapestry up to the light; on edge, so as to cast a shadow that appears as a thin dark line -- and then taking interest only in the shadow.

It seems that *Halachic* Judaism is rapidly losing ground to its one-dimensional competitor: Linear Judaism, for lack of a better term. However, a cultural change of this magnitude does not occur in a vacuum. What are the forces that have made this metamorphosis possible, and where might this transformation lead? The purpose of this essay is to offer, for the reader's consideration, an hypothesis to address these questions.

Before the Industrial Revolution (in some countries this continues even today), the average Jew was a serf or otherwise earned barely enough income to survive. Difficult *halachic* choices were commonplace (whether to discard a piece of food, to ignore a religiously-compromising business opportunity, and so on). It was under these historical conditions, having to make choices in the face of limited options, that the *halachic* process had evolved its sophisticated analytical tools and procedures. In those times, a decision to waste materials or opportunities might have led to a great deal of suffering. The *posek*, charged with making *halachic* decisions, was regularly faced with the challenge of minimizing suffering while maintaining full

loyalty to the *Halachic* system. Any decision, whether it caused a loss that was difficult to bear, or whether it granted permission to avoid the loss, was subject to critical attack. Therefore, decisions had to be justified by a very rigorous process that clearly analysed how the case at hand related to various *halachic* categories, concepts and analogies. In order to do

Howard A. Pasternack

justice to the Torah principles at stake (whether humanitarian, social or *avodat Hashem*), a careful and comprehensive analysis of the scenario was necessary to generate a high level of precision in the conceptualization of the problem. This often required much participation by individuals in offering data about the various aspects of the scenario at hand.

Now, however, widespread wealth and the availability of various technologies have significantly reduced our need for this level of involvement and precision in Torah interaction. The 20th century left us with mass production, quality control and other methodologies that have made all kinds of *halachic* stringencies or *chumras*² affordable even to people whose incomes are modest by current standards. This means that most Jews can usually afford to waive the right to "take advantage" of very precise *halachic* decisions (now sadly perceived as leniencies or even as violations rather than as a form of precision) which would have represented normal practice in any other era. It also means that there is rarely any real need for careful *halachic* analysis of daily difficulties any more -- instead, one may simply select a level of *frumness* that suits one's level of disposable income. This vacuum of regular *halachic* challenge must invariably produce a culture-wide atrophy of analytical skills.

Now, is this necessarily a bad thing? After all, I have met numerous people (and I'm sure you have too) who structure their entire lives around "instant reference" *Halacha* publications under the premise (and in their own words): "It's such a relief not to have to think". In their

defense, the 613 *mitzvot* do not explicitly include a duty to develop the analytical skills required to make daily Torah decisions. (Although **Rambam** infers such a duty from the command to learn Torah.³ This duty is also evident from the command to write one's own copy of the Torah, when one realizes that making a copy is for the purpose of using it rather than letting it collect dust, and that the Torah cannot be applied without knowledge of the Oral Law, which includes an application methodology).

Nonetheless, this approach to Torah life does not come without a price. In **Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's** discussion⁴ of the kinds of mental processes involved in *halachic* reasoning, as exemplified in the Talmud, he argues:

"... study of the Talmud cannot be confined to mere mechanical memorization It places unparalleled emphasis on the theoretical, analytical, and critical aspects of human thought. No individual can study Talmud without being or becoming an eternal skeptic. ... The search for truth is undoubtedly reflected not only in the Talmud itself but in all the spheres of life with which its students dealt. ... The refusal to remain content with simplistic solutions generates the desire to see matters in a different light. ... The critical sense is later levelled at social, scientific, and economic problems and sometimes creates the spark of genius that can reveal the 'other possibility', the opposite of the existing order. The Talmud is also a powerful weapon for disseminating levelheadedness. The Jewish spiritual world was always exposed to a high degree of social, economic and intellectual tension, and such pressures inevitably encourage extremism -- from concentration on the material aspects of life to the attempt to escape into a sphere of mysticism remote from the everyday world. The Talmud constituted a stabilizing factor, a voice of sanity in a discordant and disunified world."

In other words, the critical reasoning skills that one develops in the process of learning the Talmud's forms of analysis are powerful tools for penetrating the superficial perceptions of the world that we all generate, through careless assumptions stimulated by unchecked emotion and intuition. Students of Jewish history are especially aware of the dangers of failing to apply critical reasoning to crisis situations, which are particularly vulnerable to irrational temptations. For example:

1. In the 70 C.E. rebellion against Rome, the walled Jerusalem had enough stored food to hold out against the foreign armies for 21 years,⁵ offering a chance to defeat a superior force by attrition (or more realistically, to negotiate an acceptable peace from a position of strength).

Unfortunately, the zealots destroyed the stores in order to force the need to fight, since they had come to believe that they had special knowledge of God's Will: He was willing to help them survive through battle -- but not through attrition or negotiation. History proved them wrong as the Romans conquered the desperate army and sacked the Temple. Had the zealots paused for a moment to consider how they knew these things and whether the process through which they came to this knowledge was a reliable one, the outcome of history may have been different. But this is, of course, why we call them zealots: they are driven by their inclinations camouflaged by a religious veneer, and have no interest in throwing the cold water of targeted questions upon indulgent fantasies.

2. Abraham Abulafia, David Reuveni, Shabbtai Tzvi, Jacob Frank and other false messiahs have led Jews into rejection of *Halacha*, conversions to other religions and bizarre cults, and even the grave. These consequences could have been avoided if only their alluring supernatural or existential promises were consistently challenged by a less credulous multitude, and if skeptics were more widely heeded when they demanded conclusive evidence of messiahhood.

The absence of challenges that stimulate development of theoretical, analytical and critical skills also has consequences for the individual today. For example:

1. Complete nonparticipation in intellectual endeavour, combined with regular exposure to the anti-intellectualism of popular culture can make one distrustful of those who regularly engage in intellectual pursuits. In the past, this phenomenon has been the basis for some kinds of anti-Semitic sentiments. It is somewhat ironic to see a similar process occurring within the Jewish world. For example, a *halachic* conclusion that is not at the top of the strictness scale is often mistakenly perceived as a "lenient" opinion that comes danger-

ously close to violating Torah law, which is made to appear permissible through some convoluted logical sleight-of-hand. This perception does a disservice to a Rabbi who renders even one "lenient" opinion, partly since it fails to recognise the real process involved, but mostly since it fails to see the presence of Torah in the Rabbi's process. This can (and does) lead to false perceptions about the Rabbi himself, and is the cause of serious *sinas chinam*.

2. The phenomenon of *halachic* anxiety. Twisting *yirat Hashem* (or perhaps a need for social acceptance) into a kind of neurosis, the individual lives in a constant state of nervousness that his religious actions do not rise to the expectations of God (or his peers) -- in spite of the availability of *halachic* opinions to the contrary. This anxiety comes from a failure to take the time to develop one's intellect to enable one to perceive how daily *halachic* choices can flow from relevant sources, and how those sources themselves are justified through argument and *hashkafa*. Failure to fully understand the basis of one's decisions, *halachic* or otherwise, naturally leaves one with the feeling of being in an unstable position.

3. Most seriously, it can lead to the complete circumvention of critical *Halachic* analysis, sometimes with severe consequences. In response to the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin by Yigal Amir, **Rabbi Yehuda Amital** concluded: "A law student, an educated person, thought that by killing Rabin he would solve all of Israel's problems!? In our school and youth movements, have we educated so shallow a generation, where slogans have replaced critical thought?"⁶ At the time, Prime Minister Rabin was declared by some to be a *rodef*,⁷ under the speculative assumption that the peace negotiations would lead to more Jewish deaths than would a more aggressive position. The complex sociopolitical atmosphere made the future results of any policy unpredictable -- reflection upon the broader context, and its unknowns, could have prevented the extreme behaviour of the assassin and his like-minded supporters.⁸ As **Rabbi Yaakov Perlow** points out, the *halachic* comparison to *rodef* was flawed not only theoretically but causally for "[r]ather than save the presumed nirdaf [the one being pursued] and protect the

settlers, this murder has left them in a state more precarious than ever."⁹ This tragedy, unfortunately, offers a clear example of how failure to critically challenge one's assumptions can distort the *halachic* process.

The spectre of instability also haunts the future of Torah itself. What if, after these skills have atrophied from disuse, they are once again needed? After all, there is no historical basis to believe that the wealth of this era will last forever. One day, we may have to put Linear Judaism to a real test and see how it stands up to the challenges faced by a population under more restrictive conditions. The likely result of such a test would be a failure to confront the multifaceted character of reality, causing general frustration, disillusionment, and further fragmentation of Jewish theology -- ultimately leaving the few remaining adherents to turn Orthodoxy into precisely the kind of religion that liberal Jews already believe it to be.

The lure of simplicity and convenience may, eventually, completely replace the intellectual rigours of the *Halachic* system with blind obedience to arbitrary symbols bearing only a superficial relation to Torah. Perhaps the most lamentable thing about this is not the *sinas chinam*, or the lost opportunities for personal development, or the distant threat of further fragmentation. Rather, it is the *de facto charezm* of that character of the Torah process that most clearly distinguishes *Halachic* Judaism from other religions.

A funny thing about tapestries: after you burn them, they no longer cast a shadow of any kind.

Endnotes:

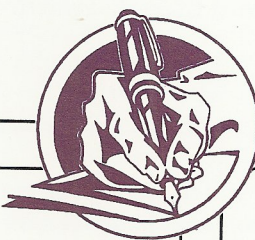
1. **Introspection**, 5760 No. 2, **Process**, pp. 2-4.
2. Adopting *chumras* often involves higher costs due to extra materials, labour, rare items, specialized workmanship, wasted materials or other complications.
3. **Rambam**, *Mishneh Torah*, **Hilchot Talmud Torah** 1:11, 12.
4. **The Essential Talmud**, pp. 268-270.
5. **T.B. Gittin** 56a.
6. **Yeshivat Har Etzion**, *Virtual Beit Midrash*, Nov. 7, 1995.
7. *Rodef*: one who stalks to kill. Under Jewish Law, one is obliged to kill a *rodef* in order to save the one being pursued.
8. See, also, **Rabbi Benjamin Hecht**, *Lfi Aniyat Da'ati*, **Nishma Spark of the Week**, 5756-5.
9. See "A Crisis in the Family of Jews", **The Jewish Observer**, December 1995.

Dialogue

[In Rabbi Hecht's] recent Introspection article [Process, Introspection 5760 - 2]... my own writing on the subject of the contemporary ba'al teshuvah phenomenon is quoted at length and approvingly. For that I am grateful. However, by identifying me as "a graduate of Conservative Judaism's Jewish Theological Seminary," you make a somewhat misleading impression. It is true I am a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Nevertheless, I resigned from any affiliation whatsoever with the Conservative Movement in 1989. I am a founder of the Union for Traditional Judaism, which is a separate denomination, one fully committed to the authority of traditional Halakhah (unlike the Conservative Movement). I also am a member of an Orthodox synagogue here in Toronto. Therefore, I respectfully request that you correct this misleading impression of who I am in the next issue of Introspection.

Thank you for your consideration.

David Novak
University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada



I am writing to compliment the editors of Nishma on the fine article entitled "Process" [Introspection 5760 - 2]. I thought it was a truly insightful work that well addressed a structured problem in Orthodox society.

Michael J. Broyde
Emory University School of Law
Atlanta, Georgia

We thank Rabbi Broyde for his kind comments. – RBH

I completely agree with [Dr. Novak].

It would be an understatement to say that baal tshuvahs are more stringent and less tolerant than life long orthodox Jews...I think that there are several different things going on here. First, most of the institutions that create the ba'al tshuvahs are themselves highly rigid...

Second, the institutions that train the ba'al tshuvahs are afraid that these people, because of their lack of background, are more likely to give up their new faith. For that reason they train them to be as rigid as possible as a sort of "safety catch" as it were.

Finally, ba'al tshuvahs have a general attitude problem...Since they themselves were once secular, they now have the least tolerance for secular people...

The bottom line is, while it's a good thing that so many people are being brought back into the religion, nothing has been done to teach them how to interact with the people who were already religious. Also, just because you teach a secular person to become more religious doesn't mean that you have to teach them that the most stringent path is the only path.

Gil Tanenbaum
Jerusalem Israel

I apologize for any improper presentation.

My intent in making reference to Dr. Novak as a graduate of JTS was not meant in anyway to present an incorrect perception. My objective was to avert a projected critique in advance. There are those who, not wishing to listen to the message in his words, will simply attempt to discount his critique by attempting to challenge him as a graduate of JTS. I was simply trying to say that such an attempt would be incorrect.

I thank Dr. Novak for writing so that we can clarify this matter with our readership.

RBH

While Mr. Tanenbaum's observations should be given serious attention, I believe we must also be careful about over-generalizations. There are many individuals, born observant - across the spectrum of Orthodoxy - who are rigid and dogmatic. This is also true across the entire Jewish world; dogmatism is not only found in segments of right-wing Orthodoxy. There are also many ba'alei tshuva whose process of Torah would challenge Mr. Tanenbaum's perception. Open-minded individuals are also found within populations we colour as closed. In general, we must be careful of extending observations of incorrect behaviour by some to the group as a whole.

*Yet, Mr. Tanenbaum's points to a reality that demands further investigation. His observations cannot be simply discounted. The ba'al tshuva does go through a major transformation. This process of change - both in terms of factors involved in the transformation and the effects - need to be further studied. In this regard, it is also important to recognize that change, with its instability, causes anxiety. While we must identify and challenge incorrect behaviour, we must also be understanding of these forces of anxiety. On this topic, one may wish to look at Rabbi Yaakov Feldman, *Change Completely or Stay the Same?*, Nishma Journal 10.*

R B H

*If the thing is impure, it is impossible that it will not have some purity within it,
Likewise, if the thing is pure, it is impossible that it will not have within it some impurity.
And Man too is variform in thought.
It is impossible that all human thought will follow one path.*

MAHARAL
Be'er HaGolah

LIFE IS COMPLEX. DECISIONS ARE COMPLEX. TORAH IS COMPLEX.

God presented us a Book of Knowledge that demands analysis and the involvement of the Human Mind - and thereby awarded us the opportunity for greatness.

"...for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, who shall hear all these statutes, and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Devarim 4:6

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*Heart and
mind are frequently
synonymous words within
the Torah because there is
no passion without reason
and there is no true
reason without
passion.*

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