



Yitro

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Amidst the war unfolding in Israel, we have decided to go forward and continue publishing a variety of articles to provide meaningful opportunities for our readership to engage in Torah during these difficult times.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: RESPONSES TO TZVI GOLDSTEIN ON CENTRIST ORTHODOXY AND HAREDI ORTHODOXY

Letters to the Editor

Editor's Note: The following piece is in response to "[Rack Up Those Mitzvot!](#)" by Tzvi Goldstein.

An unnamed *yeshiva's* "scoreboard" of *mitzvot*, potentially able to be racked up by an hour of serious *limmud ha-Torah* (2,942,400,000,000 *mitzvot* before multiplying by the number of *chavrutot* and doubling that sub-total if in the land of Israel), is the jumping off point of [Tzvi Goldstein's meditation](#) on the respective approaches to what he refers to as Yeshivish/Haredi and Centrist/Modern Orthodox camps. Despite acknowledging what he calls their "video game nature," the *mitzvah*-points to be

accrued via *talmud Torah*, by their sheer astronomical numbers, cause Goldstein see them as reflective of the Yeshivish/Haredi worldview—one which, so he says, focuses on *Olam ha-Ba*, the Next World, over the here and now, and which chooses, with singular purpose and tenacity, to focus on *talmud Torah* over and above other *mitzvot*—never mind the secular and profane. Modern Orthodoxy, as Goldstein sees its tenets expressed through the words of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch as well as Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik, is, in contrast, about building a Godly world in the here and now; it focuses more on *Olam ha-Zeh*, or, as Rabbi Hirsch famously put it, on the fact that *ikar Shekhinah ba-tahtonim*: a priori, it was God's desire to see this—the physical world of man—turned into a model Torah society wherein His Presence would find its main abode. Although I am not entirely in agreement with

Goldstein's reference to Rabbi Hirsch's conception of *Torah im derekh erez* as being a synthesis—it is, in fact, a much more holistic worldview—any Hirschian would fully endorse Goldstein's description of *TIDE* as a critical one, one wherein the Torah is the arbiter, and through whose lens any given society (the Hirschian definition of *derekh erez*) and all of that society's arts, sciences, and culture, is to be appraised. The Torah, as Rabbi Hirsch makes clear numerous times, is there to elevate man and civilization (who have never yet reached the pinnacles of its lofty heights), and is never to be lowered to the depressed state that may currently be in vogue in a given society: that which does not match the yardstick of Torah is to be rejected. Any reevaluation or change of circumstances and views must be “progress to the Torah height, not, however, lowering the Torah to the level of the age, cutting down the towering summit to the sunken grade of our life.”

While Goldstein sees the over-focus on *talmud Torah lishmah* and *Olam ha-Ba* as cause for some of the problems faced by the Orthodox world today, I would argue that it is the failure to adopt *TIDE*'s critical approach that has caused major problems, in both the Yeshivish/Haredi and Modern Orthodox camps. Ramhal is no less revered in the Modern Orthodox world than he is in Yeshivish circles. It is the way that many in both camps relate, or fail to relate, to *this* world, that causes trouble, not one camp's alleged prioritization of the World to Come over the current, temporal one.

To personify these two groups, Goldstein conjures up before us two friends—Shlomo, from, perhaps,

Teaneck, the M.O. representative; and Shloimie, who now resides in Lakewood, and is the Yeshiva world's faithful delegate to this symposium. Growing up, Shlomo followed some sports, was on social media, and was not overly devoted to his Torah learning, while Shloimie had access to a talk-and-text phone only, was involved in numerous extra-curricular Torah-learning activities (where, we may assume, he was busy racking up those very *mitzvah*-points), and went on to post-high school *yeshiva* and *kollel*, before eventually and grudgingly seeking some kind of income-generating activity for his growing family.

Our author is very kind to both of these young men—almost, one might say, to the point of naïveté. If Shloimie did not own a kosherized smartphone, his parents or older siblings very likely did; WhatsApp is high up in the Yeshivish ways-to-communicate totem pole. We hear nothing of the de rigueur gadgets, tech, and clothing brands and styles he was expected to, and gladly did, care about. Shlomo may now dress in black and white, but there is a very good chance that he in fact attended any number of *minyanim* when off from school attired in Adidas warm-up pants and the coolest sneakers his parents, school, and/or wallet could handle.

In turn, while M.O. Shlomo is described as having always been careful about keeping Shabbat, we hear nothing of his struggles—and perhaps they were a lost cause to begin with—with such issues as *kol ishah*, *nivul peh*, being *shomer negi'ah*, and keeping a modicum of *shemirat einayim*, when watching movies and TV, listening to the latest music, and having everything available—and sometimes popping up without warning—literally

in the palm of one's hand, on one's smartphone, lightly filtered or not. Truth be told, many "Shloimies" (categorized as such based on family background and *yeshivot* being attended) struggle with these issues as well.

Our author has also neglected mention of the boys' sisters, Shlomit and Shulamis. While they perhaps varied in their seminary, college, and career choices (Shlomit attended Migdal Oz and Stern College, followed by SUNY downstate, while Shulamis attended BJJ, earned her degree through a *frum* college program and ventured to Touro for grad school), they are surprisingly similar as well. Both make use (one hopes only good use) of the latest tech; both are keenly up on styles and trends; both, unfortunately, and despite a Yeshiva day school or Bais Yaakov background, tend to engage in little textual Torah study past their last seminary or college Judaic studies course. In short, both are very much the products of the modern world.

A *critical* appraisal of what the wider world has to offer is seldom seen in either segment of the Orthodox world under discussion. Indeed, the Yeshivish/Haredi camp would claim no need of any sort of critical apparatus—it wants no part of the wider world in any case, or so it asserts. It should be noted, however, that the "world" under discussion here, the world which the Yeshivish camp wants out of, is not "this world" as opposed to the next, as Goldstein posits, but the "*treif, peritzusdik*" *outside* world, as opposed to the "Torah *velt*." One may hear all the stories one wishes of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa or Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and their ascetic, other (next) worldly, lifestyles—but it is every likelihood that

one will be doing so at an Avos uBonim *melaveh malka* with pizza, or at a Thursday night *mishmar* with cholent, while trying to avoid getting the cuffs of one's Italian-made jacket dirty. Prestige, status, connections, know-how, and money (even including the proud *non*-possession of the last) do not strike one as terribly next-worldly mindsets and values.

Generally speaking, the more practically useful aspects of today's civilization—technology and science, just to mention a couple—are accepted without much background context or thought by the Yeshivish/Haredi camp. Ironically, though this camp is generally described as Torah-only, many of its members seem intent on bringing all of today's culture of materialism into its Torah citadel, with only a perfunctory "kashering." Moreover, precisely *because* ostensibly "only" Torah is to be permitted entry, every new gadget and luxury, as well as the most ephemeral opinion, must become a part of the Torah world that one is to never leave. Phones and gadgets, luxury brands and luxury lifestyles, all slip in once having donned a kosher varnish. Sometimes, indeed, the varnish is almost invisible. Why everything from toilet-training books to real estate investment guides must be beatified with the descriptives "Torah" or "*frum*" is less than immediately apparent, and how or why support of MAGA and anti-vaccine ideologies became a Jewish—never mind "torahdik"—mindset will have to be left to later and wiser researchers than this author. A walled city from which one never has occasion to leave may be appealing—one must wonder, however, if the solution is truly to bring everything, lock, stock, and garbage dump, inside its perimeter.

Conversely, too many in the Modern Orthodox world, in practice, seem too busy munching popcorn at the latest movie to be overly critical of the outside world, to begin with. This is not to say that thinkers and writers within the M.O. sphere do not engage critically with the world, and critique and criticize it in good measure, but a *TIDE* “critical approach” obliges a consequent *abstention* from anything which has failed the criteria. Much of Modern Orthodoxy seems to have left the citadel for good, to go wandering through an unfenced and unpoliced big wide world outside. On the more innocuous side of things, we are invited by an M.O. congregation to “come watch *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* and elevate your *melaveh malka* with a ramen bar (*pareve*)!” On the more worrying side, we are faced with educators and others, all supposedly well-imbued with Torah-knowledge and Torah-views, who seem incapable and unable to pull back from the regnant, liberal positions on such issues as homosexuality and transgenderism, even as these views which they endorse veer towards explicit conflict with *halakhah*. To put it mildly, this is hardly a critical engagement with the world—this is capitulation, and the *Shekhinah* can hardly be expected to look forward to dwelling in such current *tahhtonim*.

TIDE sees no walls, no dichotomy, between Torah and world civilization, yet values each differently, and finds the place and the value for the latter based solely on the dictates and halakhic and moral imperatives of the former. A *TIDE* civil engineer would recommend replacing our citadel’s walls with, instead, careful fencing around those areas outside which must be avoided. But for all that is acceptable—to use it,

use it mindfully, and use it in the context in which it belongs—as *derekh erez*, but not as Torah.

This mindfulness and critical approach are what is all too often lacking today, across the board, and no amount of Yeshivish “*geschmak*” or M.O. ramen *melavei malka* will substitute.

R.A. Alpert

Washington Heights, New York

I was disappointed to read Tzvi Goldstein’s essay “*Rack Up Those Mitzvot!*”

While I appreciated and welcomed some parts of the essay, it presents a reductive view of Haredi Judaism, one that oversimplifies and errs in its understanding.

The principal error of this piece is the claim that Haredi Judaism is chiefly defined by some form of strategic spirituality or utilitarian piety. In Rabbinic terminology, this sort of instrumentalist’s intentionality already has a term: “*shelo lishmah*,” or “not for its own sake.” Goldstein’s wholesale characterization misses the clear tradition that controverts his analysis.

To substantiate his view, Goldstein draws on just a single passage from the eighteenth-century text *Mesilat Yesharim*, interpreting it in a way that reduces the Haredi “worldview” to a mere transactional spirituality. He argues that the Haredi “worldview” is best understood as treating “this world [a]s an opportunity to invest... so as to

earn for oneself the highest berth possible in the World to Come.” Or, that “preparing for the promised pleasure of the World to Come, is not oriented towards building anything meaningful in this world. Instead, each individual is directed to do what he can to maximize his time in this world for the best ROI in the next world possible.”

Goldstein’s construct fundamentally misconstrues the traditional perspective on utility-driven religious behavior. The *Sifrei* long ago interrogated the validity of pursuing reward in the World to Come as a primary motive in religious behavior.

“To love the Lord your God”: Lest you say, ‘I shall learn Torah to be rich, to be called Rebbe, to receive reward in the world to come’ — it is therefore written, “To love the Lord your God.” All that you do shall be out of love alone (*Sifrei*, Deuteronomy, 41).

There are numerous other rabbinic exhortations against Torah study as a tool for self-promotion. Instrumentalist approaches are at worst met with the Sages’ admonition that “anyone who engages in Torah not for its own sake, it will be for him an elixir of death,” and that it’s “preferable for him had he not been created” (*Ta’anit* 7a; *Berakhot* 17a). At best, the sages acknowledge that while still inferior, “a person should always engage in Torah and *mitzvot*, even if not for their sake (*shelo lishmah*), as through not for their own sake he will come [to engage in them] for their own sake (*lishmah*)” (*Pesachim*, 50b).

If by “worldview” the author means a prescriptive philosophy, it’s implausible that the Haredi community would prioritize what is universally considered a lesser method of Torah study. Granting the primacy of Torah study, autonomous validity should not be equated with simple utilitarian motivations.

Offering a comprehensive assessment of Haredi theology is a complex undertaking. In my view, the theoretical contest between Modern Orthodoxy and Haredi Orthodoxy has been sufficiently exhausted. Still, a more accurate accounting would acknowledge the diversity and sophistication of Haredi religious approaches, which go far beyond, and likely exclude, any utilitarian approach suggested by Goldstein.

For starters, Goldstein, in a footnote, unceremoniously dispenses with the view held by no less than three of the most influential figures in the Haredi world: R. Hayyim of Volozhin, R. Yisrael Meir Kagan, and R. Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik. A succinct account of this position, with an emphasis on R. Hayyim’s presentation, is warranted.

R. Hayyim championed the independent theological value of Torah study. As he sees it, the purpose of creation, the sustaining of that creation, and the ultimate communion with God, rest on the study of Torah. “Through the study of the holy Torah,” as he puts it, “one fulfills the divine intention in creating the world, namely, to have Israel engage in Torah” (*Nefesh ha-Hayyim* 4:13).

For R. Hayyim, unlike other creations, Torah is not an emanation from God; it pre-exists from the mysterious most upper root of “*ein-sof*” (*Nefesh ha-Hayyim* 4:10). A natural consequence is that Torah is the telos of all existence. Therefore, “without any doubt at all, if the entire world, from one end to the other, would be empty literally for even one moment from our involvement with and contemplation of the Torah, immediately all of the worlds would be destroyed” (*Nefesh ha-Hayyim* 4:11).

The study of Torah, then, is a communion with a timeless entity that originates in the uppermost root of existence. In a celebrated passage, R. Hayyim proclaims that “[d]uring the time of the study of Torah it is certainly unnecessary to be conscious of *deveikut* (attachment), for by the very act of study, one is attached to the Will and Word of God, and He and His Will and His Word are One” (*Nefesh ha-Hayyim* 4:10). As R. Norman Lamm put it in *Torah Lishmah*, his classic study of the thought of R. Hayyim, “the study of Torah, without any concomitant religious experience, even without the consciousness of its vast spiritual efficacy, itself constitutes an act of communion, or *deveikut*.” This concept of study is far from a transactional theology.

Goldstein’s portrayal of Haredi Judaism, while provocative, simplifies a complex tradition. Far from being monolithically transactional, a

prominent view sees Torah study as the most profound communion with the Divine. Recognizing this is essential for a fair representation and broader understanding of Haredi Judaism.

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POEMS FOR A WORLD BUILT, DESTROYED, AND REBUILT¹

Elhanan Nir is an Israeli poet, writer, and editor who teaches in Yeshivat Siach-Yitzhak in Efrat.

Since the horrors of October 7th, Jewish artists and writers have been trying to find ways to capture, grapple with, and express both what happened and where we are now. Both in Israel and around the world, Jews of all stripes have sought out creative ways to respond to the end of the world we knew and the birth of a new world marked by violence, loss, and insecurity. For many, all of the old words and images seem worn out or somehow broken, and so we need to make something new.

R. Elhanan Nir is a noteworthy Israeli poet, writer, and editor who also teaches in Yeshivat Siach-Yitzhak in Efrat (founded by Rav Shagar and R. Yair

¹ The title is a reference to the [midrashic](#) image of God creating and destroying worlds. This image underlies as well the title of [a book](#) about the thought of R. Yehuda Amital, who grappled with the destruction wrought by both the Holocaust and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, to which October 7th has in some ways been compared. The Holocaust and the Yom Kippur War were also key

influences on the thought of Nir’s teacher, R. Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (Shagar). [Shagar once remarked to Nir](#) that when he, Shagar, had been recovering in a burn ward in Haifa during the war, he realized that the Torah, like him, was hospitalized and covered in bandages, and that it needed to be brought out into life, a call that finds echoes in Nir’s poem, “Now We Need a New Torah.”

Dreifuss). His work often grapples with themes of being passionately religious in modern society where everyday life can seem so banal, as well as with the tensions between his more right-wing background and the more open Religious Zionist community in which he finds himself, and he is a sought-after speaker. (His poems have appeared on this website [here](#); a review of one of his books, [here](#); and a discussion of some of his theology, [here](#).)

Nir wrote the six poems below in the months since October 7th. Most were published on December 26th in the mainstream Israeli newspaper [Haaretz](#) (“When to Get Up” is being published here for the first time, and “No Savior” was published in [the sixth volume of Hineni](#), a collaboration between [the IDF Education Corps](#) and the religious poetry journal [Mashiv Ha-Ruah](#)). Readers responded strongly (particularly to the last poem, “Now We Need a New Torah”; [see the posts here](#)), and teachers of both Torah and poetry have included them in their classes. Nir reacted to this powerful response with [a shi’ur](#)

exploring more deeply the idea that “Now We Need a New Torah.”

At times quite raw, the poems capture the very human phenomena of loss and violence from a specifically religious perspective and using traditional Jewish language, but they also trouble that distinction, putting poets and poetry alongside traditional Jewish texts and authors. When he says we need “a new *Mishnah* and a new *Gemara*” but also “new literature and new cinema,” I am reminded of Rav Kook’s essay, “The Four-fold Song” (“*Shir Ha-Meruba*”; notably, “*shir*” in Modern Hebrew can also mean “poem”). Working off the *Tikkunei Zohar* (Tikkun 21), Rav Kook describes 4 songs: a song of the self, a song of the nation, a song of humanity, a song of the universe. Each person, he says, sings all these songs to different degrees, and the ideal is to harmonize them all. Perhaps something like this is what R. Elhanan Nir has in mind.

Preface by Levi Morrow. Poems translated by Heather Silverman, Michael Bohnen, Rachel Korazim, and Emunah Eilon.

Run

The Torah, the scrolls, the prayer, the words, the novel, the poems,
everything
We would throw them away in an instant
If only Your rage* at us would come to rest.
Everything to the fire, everything, right now:
The wedding albums,
Grandma's china plates trimmed with silver,
The simple drawings of houses from Dinah's kindergarten
(All with red roofs and no floors),
We have no time left
They are coming, we can hear them loud,
They've breached everything – the fences, the wall, the towers,
They desecrated the oil**, Tell us, when are You coming,
Quickly, be stronger, everything is already up in smoke,
Look, we are here,
We have nowhere else
To run

*Cf. Jonah 1:15

** Cf. "[Ma'oz Tzur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%27oz_Tzur)"

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%27oz_Tzur

We Knew Them All

We are here, in the shelter.
Every bark, every stomp,
All the bared souls are now outside
Their skin has been flayed from them
They fly from one end of the world to the other screaming:
Where?
Where?
Night falls and the dead come to us.
They already number more than a thousand, and we knew them all,
At midnight on *Hoshanah Rabbah* we met many of them in the valley,
Squeezing in, filling the crowded room, standing on top of us.
Standing silently, standing and bending over us:
You!
You!
They have no faces, some are slashed in unknown places
And we are shocked, retreating to inner rooms whispering:
If you see him, tell him*

לברוח

הַתּוֹרָה, הַגּוֹיִלִים, הַתּפִּלָּה, הַמַּלִּים, הַרוֹמָן,
הַשִּׁירִים, הַכֹּל
אֲנַחְנוּ זוֹרְקִים בְּרָגַע
רַק שִׁינוּחַ בְּנוֹ זַעֲפָה.
הַכֹּל לְאֵשׁ, הַכֹּל עֲכָשׁוּ:
אַלְבוּמֵי הַחַתּוּנָה,
צִלּוּחֹת הַחֹרְסִינָה עִם פֶּס הַכֶּסֶף מִסְבָּתָא,
צִיּוּרֵי הַבַּיִת הַרְכִּים מִגֹּן דִּינָה
(כָּלֶם עִם גַּג אָדָם, בְּלִי רִצְפָּה),
אִין לָנוּ עוֹד זְמַן
הֵם בָּאִים, שׁוֹמְעִים אוֹתָם חֲזָק,
פָּרְצוּ הַכֹּל - הַגְּדֵרוֹת, הַחוּמָה, הַמְּגִדָּלִים,
טִמְאוּ הַשְּׂמָנִים, תוֹדִיעַ, מְתֵי אֶתְהָ בָּא,
מֵהָר, הַגִּבּוֹר, הַכֹּל כָּבֵר עָשׂוּ,
תִּסְתַּכַּל, אֲנַחְנוּ כָּאוּ,
אִין לָנוּ עוֹד לָאוּ
לְבָרַח

את כולם הכרנו

כָּאוּ, בְּמִקְלָט, אֲנַחְנוּ.
כָּל נְבִיחָה, כָּל שַׁעֲטָה,
כָּל הַנִּפְשׁוֹת הַנִּפְשָׁטוֹת עֲכָשׁוּ בַחוּץ
נִקְרַע עוֹרֵן מֵעֲלֵיהֶם
טְסוֹת מִסוּף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוּפוֹ בַצְּרָחָה:
אֵיָה?
אֵיָה?
הַלֵּילָה יוֹרֵד וְהַמֵּתִים בָּאִים אֵלֵינוּ.
הֵם כָּבֵר לְמַעַלָּה מֵאֵלַי, אֶת כָּלֶם הַכָּרְנוּ,
רַבִּים פָּגְשָׁנוּ בְּהוֹשַׁעְנָא רַבָּה בַּחֲצַת בְּעַמְקָה,
נִדְחָקִים, מִמְּלָאִים אֶת הַחֲדָר הַצָּפוּף, עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ.
עוֹמְדִים וְשׁוֹתְקִים, עוֹמְדִים וְגוֹהָרִים:
אֶתְהָ!
אֶתְהָ!
אִין לָהֶם פָּנִים, חֲלָקֶם חֲתוּכִים בְּמִקּוֹמוֹת שְׁלֵא יָדְעָנוּ
וְאֲנַחְנוּ נְבִהִים, נְסוּגִים אֶל הַמְּבִטָּן, לוֹחֲשִׁים:
אִם תִּרְאוּ אוֹתוֹ, תִּגִּידוּ לוֹ

10/10/2023

9:48 pm, a WhatsApp message:

If you know of people who are willing
To dig graves
Send them to me, there is a shortage now.
We will meet at ten on Mt. Herzl.
Come with shovels and a bottle of water

When to Get Up

We left for a moment
To drink some water,
To lay them in the mound of soil.
We are here, with the gravediggers
And with Yedidya and Adi, Amitai and Zehava,
Aner and Tehila, Yasmin and Yaniv,
Just a moment.
The earth.
The trees go on blooming,
Rockets tear up the skies
The law man instructs us to lie on the ground
Face down
Hands on your head.
Don't move.
When to get up, no one asks.
The knife* in our heart—
Grenade shrapnel and the burning bush**

* Cf. Genesis 22:6

** Cf. Exodus 3:2

10.10.2023

21:48, הודעת ווטסאפ:

אם אתם מכירים אנשים שמוכנים
לחפר קברים
תשלחו אותם אלי, יש כעת מחסור.
נפגש בעשר בֶּהַר הַרְצֵל.
לבוא עם אתים ובקבוק מים

מתי לקום

יצאנו רגע
לשתות מים,
להניח אותם בתלולית העפר.
אנחנו כאן, עם הקברנים
ועם ידידיה ועדי, אמתי וזֶהבָה,
ענר ותהלה, יסמין ויניב,
עוד רגע.
האדמה.
העצים ממשיכים לפרח,
רקטות פוסקות את השמים
ואיש החק מורה לשכב על הארץ
את הפנים כלפי מטה
ידיים על הראש.
לא לזוז.
מתי לקום, אף אחד לא שואל.
בלבנו המאכלת
רסיסי הרמונים והסנה הבוער

No Savior*

A man returns.
He hasn't been here for weeks
The smell of the place has already left his body,
Domestic items were forgotten,
Even his loved ones disappeared from within him.
But now he is here.
Trying to get in. To take off the uniform.
To ask about the children. About her fears at night.
He says he stopped for a minute on the way to buy her something small.
Now he is trying to change the language.
To draw close, to bring,
But he is still the field
But he is still the scream
But he is still the blood which is the soul**
And there is no one to save him

A woman tries to draw close.
To whisper to him as before, through the crevices***,
To be with him as they were before
To pull him out of there, all of him,
Without leaving behind a single body part, not a single scream,
To keep him breathing, just like that, forever, until he is back.
But right now, how to be with him right now
How to open wells that were sealed and filled with earth****.
And there is no one to save her

*Cf. Isaiah 43:11

**Cf. Deuteronomy 12:23

*** Cf. Song of Songs 2:9

**** Cf. Genesis 26:15

ואין מושיע

איש חוזר.
הוא לא היה כאן כבר שבועות
ריח המקום כבר פג מן הגוף,
חפצי הבית נשכחו,
אפלו אוהביו נעלמו בו.
אבל עכשו הוא כאן.
מנסה להכנס. לפשט מדים.
לשאל על הילדים. על פחד שלה בלילות.
אומר שעצר רגע בדרך וקנה לה משהו קטן.
עכשו הוא מנסה להחליף את השפה.
להתקרב, להביא,
אבל הוא עדין השדה
אבל הוא עדין הצעקה
אבל הוא עדין הדם הוא הנפש
ואין מושיע לו

אשה מנסה להתקרב.
ללחש לו כמו פעם, מהחרכים,
להיות איתו כמו אז
למשות אותו משם, את כלו,
בלי להותיר שם אף איבר, אף צעקה,
ולהנשים אותו ככה, כל הימים, עד שישוב.
אבל עכשו, איך להיות איתו עכשו
איך לפתח הבארות שנסתמו ומלאו עפר.
ואין מושיע לה

Now We Need a New Torah

Now like air to breathe
We need a new Torah.
Now, gasping for air and with choking throats
We need a new *Mishnah* and a new *Gemara*
And a new *Kabbalah* and new ascents of the soul*
And inside all the brokenness and the salt and the desolation, now
A new Hasidism and a new Zionism
And a new Rav Kook** and a new Brenner***
And a new Leah Goldberg**** and a new *Yehaveh Da'at******
And new art and new poetry
And new literature and new cinema
And new-old words*****
And new-ancient souls from the storehouse,
And a new love out of the terrible weeping.
For we were all washed away in the rivers of Re'im and Be'eri
And we have no mountain within us nor other tablets
And no Moses and no strength
And now everything
Is in our hands

* An experience described in [a letter](#) of Ba'al Shem Tov

** [R. Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Kohen Kook](#)

*** [Yosef Haim Brenner](#), secular Zionist poet and interlocutor of Rav Kook

**** [One of the great poets of modern Hebrew literature.](#)

***** Responsa by [R. Ovadia Yosef](#)

***** Cf. *Zohar*, *Tetzaveh* 9:81

https://www.sefaria.org.il/Ben_Porat_Yosef%2C_Baal_Shem_Tov's_Letter?lang=bi

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leah_Goldberg

עכשו אנחנו צריכים תורה חדשה

עכשו כמו אויר לנשימה
אנחנו צריכים תורה חדשה.
עכשו בתוך האויר שנגמר והצואר
שנמחק
אנחנו צריכים משנה חדשה וגמרא
חדשה
וקבלה חדשה ועליות נשמה חדשות
ובתוך כל השבר והמלח והחרבה, עכשו
חסידות חדשה וציונות חדשה
והרב קוק חדש וברנר חדש
ולאה גולדברג חדשה ויחיה דעת חדש
ואמנות חדשה ושירה חדשה
וספרות חדשה וקולנוע חדש
ומלים חדתין-עתיקין
ונשמות חדשות-עתיקות מהאוצר,
ואהבה חדשה מתוך הבכיה הנוראה.
כי נשטפנו כלנו בנהרות רעים ובארי
ואין בנו הר ואין עוד לוחות
ואין לנו משה ואין בנו כוחות
ובדינו עכשו הכל
נתן

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