LEHRHAUS

OVER SHABBOS AND PESACH 5778

Schrodinger's hametz

Leah Cypess

Rabbi Katz had never approved of quantum *hametz* zappers, and it was not because he considered it part of his job to disapprove of newfangled things. On the contrary: he had a *ke-zayit*-measuring app on his phone, he believed the hyperspace drive was a possible sign of the Messianic Era, and he contributed heavily to the researchers who traveled back in time to retrieve lost manuscripts by Rav Yehuda He-Hasid.

It also wasn't because he disapproved of shortcuts. It was true that he had once viewed anything faster, easier, and more popular with deep suspicion. In his old age, though, he'd come to appreciate the opportunities for new *humrot* that changing technology provided.

Still, he wasn't fond of gadgets that made everyone else's life easier, but made *his* life harder.

And the *hametz* zapper was definitely one of those.

In the past, people had started preparing for Pesach months in advance. His own mother, he often told his children, had made him eat outdoors in the snow for two weeks both before *and* after Pesach! He remembered it fondly: the scrubbing, the sweeping, the steaming, the endless reading of articles telling them that (a) they were doing too much, it didn't have to be so hard, and (b) there were a dozen more things to do that they had never even considered.

Those had been simpler times.

But the *hametz* zapper, according to its inventor (and also the OU, the Star-K, and the CRC), could take care of all that in *minutes*. Thirty seconds to set the quantum field, two minutes to remove all *matzah* from the home (the *hametz* zapper couldn't distinguish it from leavened bread, a fact that had caused great crises of *emunah* for some), and—*zap!* (the literal sound the device made)—the zapper broke the *hametz* down into its subatomic particles. Which, according to many *poskim*, was sufficient, *bedieved*, to destroy them.

No more cramming into tiny pizza shops! No more subsisting on grilled chicken and potato starch! You could do all your Pesach cleaning the day before Pesach! (Or the day before you started cooking, if you didn't live close to Pomegranate.)

And that was exactly what people did.

Until they discovered, twenty-four hours before Pesach, that their *hametz* zapper was supposed to be pre-tested, because, due to unavoidable quantum fluctuations, a quarter of them didn't work.

And then—*then* —they called the rabbi.

In the four years since the *hametz* zapper had gone on the market, Rabbi Katz had given up all of his usual *erev Pesach* activities. He no longer prepared *afikomen* hiding places. He no longer made his famous quadruple-egg *kugel*. He no longer added to his long-running lecture series of *divrei Torah* on the first two pages of *Maggid*.

Instead, he answered panicked questions about *hametz* zappers.

He had grown resigned to that. Previous rabbis, he figured, had felt the same way about dishwashers, microwaves, and teleportation. None of those things had gone away.

But *this* question—on *Hol ha-Moed*!—was enough to make him consider whether some of the signatures on that *hametz* zapper ban had actually been real.

"We should have read the instructions more carefully!" the man on the phone admitted, after introducing himself as Mr. Schwartz. "But you know how erev Pesach is! After my wife pressed the button, we assumed it was *done*. We didn't realize we had merely translocated the *hametz* into its quantum bag!"

"I see," Rabbi Katz said, adopting what he thought of as his soothing tone. He had great confidence in the effectiveness of this tone, despite a complete lack of evidence that it had ever worked. "So the *hametz* is still in the bag?"

"Yes! And no!"

"You don't know?"

"No, I mean it both exists and doesn't exist!"

"Ah," Rabbi Katz said. "I see. I'll have to consult a physicist, and then I'll call you back." He could tell his caller was modern Orthodox, because the man addressed him in second person singular; and his modern Orthodox congregants were always impressed when he said he would consult a scientist.

They seemed to think he had a control board with the numbers of experts in every field, all of whom were happy to spend hours explaining how their specialties meshed with *halakhah*.

What he in fact did, after hanging up, was pull up Wikipedia.

He was halfway through an article about Einstein's early interest in Talmud (having gotten a little sidetracked) when the phone rang again. Perhaps Mr. Schwartz had texted some other rabbi while waiting, and Rabbi Katz was off the hook? Rabbi Katz picked up the phone, cleared his throat, and said, "I was investigating —"

"My wife just got home," Mr. Schwartz said. "She's a physicist. Would that help?"

***

In the end, it was deemed best for Rabbi Katz to visit the Schwartzes at their home. They met on the front porch, where Mrs. Schwartz explained, over a plate of various potato starch confections, that reality doesn't exist. ("Ah, yes," said Rabbi Katz. "As the *Mikhtav me-Eliyahu* already knew.") At the subatomic level, everything exists only as a range of probabilities, until observation forces the probabilities to choose one reality.

"The zapper is based on those quantum probability waves," Mrs. Schwartz finished up, around a mouthful of macaroons, "so until we open it and look inside to see whether the *hametz* has been broken down, the probability waves haven't collapsed into an actual, observable reality. So right now, the *hametz* both exists and doesn't exist."

"Hmm," Rabbi Katz said warily. Clearly, they had left the realm of R' Dessler behind. This sounded either like *kefirah*, or like something the Rambam might have said.

"So you see the problem," Mr. Schwartz said. "If we open the zapper, and the *hametz* is there, we'll have owned it on Pesach. In which case, it needs to be burnt. But we'll only have a split second before the *hametz* dissolves into subatomic particles. At which point, it can't be burnt."

"Ah," Rabbi Katz said.

"On the other hand, if the *hametz* isn't there, it was *never* there!"

That sounded like it would be best.

"But if we look, we force one reality to happen," Mrs. Schwartz said. "In which case, we're actually making the *hametz* exist on Pesach!"

Which was probably an *issur de-oraita*. At least.

"Are we sure this whole quantum probability thing is true?" Rabbi Katz said suspiciously.

The Schwartzes exchanged glances. Mrs. Schwartz said, "Yes. I'm sure."

"More or less sure than you are about evolution?"

Mrs. Schwartz cleared her throat. "There are numerous experimental and mathematical proofs."

"Besides," Mr. Schwartz said, "quantum theory refutes the previous scientific claim that the world is completely deterministic. It's evidence for the existence of free will."

"Oh." Rabbi Katz made a mental note to use that concept in a *shiur* sometime. "Okay. Give me a moment."

He buried his face in his hands. For several minutes, all was silent. Mrs. Schwartz wondered if it was possible that Rabbi Katz was both napping and not napping.

Then Rabbi Katz looked up, his face alight.

"Quantum, shmantum. This is simply a question of whether uncertainty cancels certainty, and the Talmud has already dealt with the issue." He thrust his thumb into the air. "The quantum trigger is exactly the same as a weasel!"

Mr. Schwartz frowned. "But the whole point there is that a weasel might eat some *hametz* and leave the rest over."

Rabbi Katz brightened. "Aha! You know the *gemara*."

The *gemara*, indeed, discussed the question of what happened if a weasel ran into a house with *hametz*, then ran out without the *hametz*. It addressed issues of certainty, uncertainty, weasels' eating habits, and also ancient burial customs, tithes, and the laws of ritual purity (similar, in many ways, to Rabbi Katz's earlier internet-browsing research). It would certainly simplify things, Rabbi Katz thought, if he didn't have to explain all that.

"But based on that *mishnah*," Mr. Schwartz said thoughtfully, "don't you think quantum probability waves are more equivalent to the dwelling place of a star-worshipper?"

On the other hand, maybe it wouldn't simplify things at all.

“Although, the *hametz* zapper is *intended* to get rid of the *hametz*,” Mr. Schwartz went on.

“Perhaps that means we should rather analogize it to the storehouse of a dead sage?”

That particular *mishnah*, Rabbi Katz knew, ended with the phrase *Ein Sof Li-Davar* (*there will be no end to the matter).* Clearly, that was not just a reference to the multiverse theory.

“There's only one choice,” Rabbi Katz said firmly. “You have to open the *hametz* zapper and force one version of reality to take place. If there's no *hametz*, we can all breathe a sigh of relief. And if the *hametz* is there, at least you will have destroyed it in the process of opening the zapper.”

Mrs. Schwartz squared her shoulders. “All right.”

She disappeared into the house and emerged with the *hametz* zapper, which looked sort of like you would expect a *hametz* zapper to look, except a lot more colorful—the children had covered it with Trader Joe’s stickers. She took a deep breath and pressed a small blue triangle on the side.

Both men leaned forward. Three sets of breath were held.

Nothing happened.

“Maybe you have to press harder,” Mr. Schwartz said.

“No, that's not it,” Rabbi Katz said. “Those buttons are so sensitive that a stiff enough *sheitel* can accidentally turn them on.” Mr. Schwartz raised his eyebrows, and Rabbi Katz shook his head. “A story for another time. You just have to plug it in.”

“Plug it in?” Mrs. Schwartz repeated.

Rabbi Katz stared at her. “You didn't realize that you have to plug it in?”

“I'm a physicist,” she said defensively, “not an engineer.”

“If you never plugged it in,” Rabbi Katz said, “it never worked. There's no *hametz* in there at all, because the *hametz* zapper did nothing.”

Mrs. Schwartz looked embarrassed. “I'm sorry to have bothered you.”

“Don't be sorry!” Rabbi Katz assured her. “I'm happy to have clarified the subject of quantum mechanics as it applies to the laws of Pesach.” In fact, his next lecture for AMillionOnlineShiurim.com was practically written, which would leave him time to make another *kugel*.

“Wait,” Mrs. Schwartz said. “If the *hametz* zapper never worked at all—and I was relying on it to clean for Pesach—don't I now have a much bigger problem?”

“Bigger,” Rabbi Katz said, “but simpler.”

He gave the Schwartzes the number of a rabbi in Israel who specialized in Pesach leniencies, then walked out the door, already mentally composing his second (and probably far more popular) *shiur* on The Dangers of Technology.

Leah Cypess is the author of four young adult novels, including Mistwood *(HarperCollins 2010), and of numerous short stories. You can read more about her and her writing at www.leahcypess.com.*

Rav Lichtenstein on *Wissenschaft* in his Own (Yiddish) Words

Shlomo Zuckier

The State of the Question

Many leading Jewish studies scholars had their first exposure to advanced Talmud study at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For that reason, and many others, the recent *Lehrhaus* debate on this question is an important one: how did Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, *zt"l*, Yeshivat Har Etzion's academically-oriented Rosh Yeshiva, view the endeavor of *Wissenschaft*? Until recently, no extensive treatment of the issue had been available, neither by way of Rav Lichtenstein's own pen nor in secondary literature.

Both Prof. Rami Reiner's article on Rav Lichtenstein's view and Prof. Lawrence Kaplan's rejoinder call attention to this important topic by culling the various relevant strands of evidence, both from Rav Lichtenstein's writings and from his administrative activities as Rosh Yeshiva over the years.

Both writers understand that Rav Lichtenstein was not the strongest proponent of academic Jewish studies. Reiner and Kaplan differ on two issues: whether Rav Lichtenstein warmed to academic Talmud over the years, and the fundamental reasons for the objection overall. Reiner believes that the primary point of Rav Lichtenstein's opposition was that this form of scholarship did not "advance his major life-goal: serving God by studying and teaching Talmud according to the traditional Brisker method," and he sees the intensity of this opposition diminishing over time. Kaplan, by contrast, understands that Rav Lichtenstein's position was consistent throughout his life, concerned with the dual risks that academic Talmud will "undermin[e] respect for *Hazal*" and engender a "corrosive historicism, leading to relativism."

Both contributions advance our conversation considerably. Despite these scholarly treatments, the public record on this issue still features a lacuna. As Lawrence Kaplan notes, "Nowhere … does Rav Lichtenstein discuss this matter in an extended and systematic way."

Until now.

This article will introduce a new source to the discussion, an important, Yiddish-language talk given by Rav Lichtenstein himself entitled "Higher Jewish Learning in America," which

relates to the distinction between academic and traditional Talmud study.[1] Considering this source, newly available in translation, will serve to extend the temporal frame of this question, to confirm some of the points made by both Kaplan and Reiner, and to sharpen some of the categories being used.

The History and Significance of the "Higher Jewish Learning in America" Lecture

Rav Lichtenstein's talk, presented in 1968 to the YIVO Institute,[2] is important for several reasons. First, it is the only extended articulation by Rav Lichtenstein of his views on *Wissenschaft* that has been preserved. Second, it is by far the earliest treatment of Rav Lichtenstein on the topic. Finally, relatedly, and likely most importantly, the basis and framing of his position on these issues are clarified in various ways, connecting to a wide variety of Rav Lichtenstein's other writings.

The lecture primarily offers two distinctions between the yeshiva approach and a more academic approach to the study of traditional Jewish texts.

Defining the "Traditional Approach"

For Rav Lichtenstein, traditional approaches to text are distinguished by the relationship they presume between the student and the text – both that the student will employ traditional methods and that (s)he will hold a certain stance vis-à-vis the past:

---

[1] As providence would have it, precisely such a treatment has just now been uncovered. Several months ago, my friend and Yiddishist Rabbi Shaul Seidler-Feller translated a lecture by Rav Lichtenstein analyzing different streams of traditional Talmud study that was presented in Yiddish at YIVO in 1968. A fascinating lecture, it related tangentially to academic Jewish studies, referring to a prior discussion on the topic of the relationship between academic and traditional modes of Jewish text study. After an extensive search, and based on some sleuthing from our mutual friend Rabbi Noach Goldstein, it was discovered that this lecture was hiding in plain sight, on the YUTorah repository of lectures! Seidler-Feller went about his characteristically precise and painstaking translation work, and has prepared a preliminary English text of the Yiddish audio. Entitled "Higher Jewish Learning in America," this is precisely the lecture to fill the void that Kaplan noted and shine light on our topic, with its broader scope and explicitly comparative context.
I must add that this is not the first providential moment I have experienced regarding this topic. Mere weeks ago, as I was preparing the syllabus for a course I am teaching this semester entitled "The Thought of Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein," I was agonizing over whether to include the topic of Rav Lichtenstein and academic Jewish studies. While the question is certainly an important one to consider, for the reasons laid out above, it was neither treated extensively by Rav Lichtenstein nor (at the time) by anyone else. With neither primary nor secondary materials, how could I formulate a lecture on the topic? Sure enough, the very next day *The Lehrhaus* received Professor Reiner's submission. Apparently, the time has come for this topic to receive its due.
My analysis of this topic will draw upon both the Yiddish-language lecture as well as some of Rav Lichtenstein's other writings, with this piece serving as a keystone of sorts in piecing together a larger picture. *Berikh rahamana de-sayye'an.*

[2] In June 1968, YIVO commissioned a pair of lectures by Rav Lichtenstein, then a Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS, and by David Rudavsky, research associate professor of education in New York University's Department of Hebrew Culture and Education. The latter presented on "A Century of Jewish Higher Learning in America – on the Centenary of Maimonides College," and the former was assigned to speak on the topic of "A Century of Traditional Higher Jewish Learning in America."

> When we describe learning as "traditional," we refer to a methodology that is not only old, but that is rooted in – and, to a certain extent, implants within the student – a particular relationship to the past, or to certain facets thereof; in other words, an approach to learning through which the student absorbs a certain attitude to the Jewish past.

When applied at a more granular level, this leads to several points of distinction between "yeshiva" and "academic" approaches. The academic approach is more historically oriented, collecting the various relevant facts and contexts for understanding their text. On the other hand, Rav Lichtenstein explains, the yeshiva approach is more analytically oriented, building a particular conceptual structure that draws upon the details contained within the text.

For the yeshiva student, "the main empahsis is... on understanding what the *gemara* itself says, what kind of ideas are expressed therein, what sort of concepts are defined therein." Summarizing the overall distinction in method between yeshiva and academic study, Rav Lichtenstein states: "The focus [of the traditional approach] is not so much on facts as it is on ideas; it is more of a philosophical than a historical approach; it is concerned more with the text than with the context."[3]

At the same time, Rav Lichtenstein does assert that the yeshiva method is concerned with the text—albeit maybe as a path to arriving at ideational content—which might speak to his support for being mindful of textual variants, as noted by both Reiner and Kaplan.

History and Literature, Text and Context

In a manner befitting a literature PhD, Rav Lichtenstein develops this distinction between methods that focus on the history surrounding the text and those focusing on the text's ideas themselves by drawing an analogy to a then-raging debate in the field of literature. He points to a 1951 conference at which Arthur S.P. Woodhouse and Cleanth Brooks espoused widely divergent views on how to properly read Milton, with the former supporting "historical criticism" and the latter "new criticism." The methodological question facing these scholars was whether one must delve into the historical context and circumstances of the author and his interlocutors or whether one should focus on the poetry's form and substance alone, connecting the questions of scholarly goals and methods.

Rav Lichtenstein concludes his analysis by quoting an oft-cited and controversially attributed quip on the difference between yeshiva and academic aims: "If you want to know what Rashi

[3] It is worth noting that this is a particularly Brisker understanding of yeshiva study; adherents of the Hazon Ish's method would probably assert that the facts are more significant than the ideas, certainly where there is no conceptual *problem* with the facts as presented. (See especially n. 33 in Kaplan's linked article; but see also newer trends in rabbinics noted by Moshe Simon-Shoshan.)

looked like, what clothing he wore, and so on, go consult [Leopold] Zunz. But if you want to know who Rashi was, what he said, better to study with me."

If this distinction between yeshiva and academic study sounds familiar, that is because it is summarized neatly in Reiner's formulation that the academic method falls short by failing to advance Rav Lichtenstein's goal of "serving God by studying and teaching Talmud according to the traditional Brisker method." Such is the difference between a study focused on history and one focused on the text and its concepts.

This distinction between reading with an eye to historical context and to appreciating the text itself is also made significantly by Rav Lichtenstein in several other places, where it is deployed both explicitly and implicitly.

In his 2008 analysis of a Robert Frost's poem presented at Yeshivat Har Etzion, Rav Lichtenstein raised this fundamental question of whether to read literature in historical context or as a self-contained entity. As was often his wont, Rav Lichtenstein preferred incorporating both methods into his analysis of Frost, although a reading of the published comments might leave one with the impression of a somewhat greater emphasis on the historical aspects of the poem.

Similarly, but on a far larger scale, Rav Lichtenstein's doctoral thesis-turned-monograph spends a significant amount of time analyzing the historical context of Henry More before undertaking conceptual analysis and a critique of his primary themes.[4]

While a preference for "historical criticism" over "new criticism" animated Rav Lichtenstein's study of English literature, both early (1962) and late (2008), his 1968 Yiddish lecture makes apparent that his preferences for the yeshiva student in learning Jewish literature are squarely on the side of internal textual analysis, i.e., an approach akin to "new criticism."

It is worth noting two surprising features of this point. First, for someone who incorporated his Harvard literary training to such a degree, eschewing that historical-literary training so central to Rav Lichtenstein's *oeuvre* when studying Talmud is surprising. And the surprise

[4] The book's subtitle, *The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist,* explicitly places Henry More within his sociohistorical context, and it describes its aim as centered on attaining a broad historical scope: "This book is concerned with Cambridge Platonism generally" (ix). The work adopts a historical approach when analyzing the material rather than a textual one. Close readings are not featured; rather, the book includes surveys of the relevant writings, accompanied by conceptual analysis. As Rabbi Shalom Carmy puts it (227): "If you didn't know the doctorate was in English literature you would certainly take it for an essay in intellectual history, about a 'minor writer' who dealt with 'major problems'."
It is thus clear that Rav Lichtenstein's method in studying English literature has a strong historical bent as well as a preference for conceptual analysis, even as there is at least something of an attempt to consider matters of literary form and style. In this sense he follows his doctoral advisor, Douglas Bush, in "reject[ing] many aspects of new criticism."

only increases as the context is considered more closely – while most literature's authorship is in the background, the Talmud's varied authorship is featured prominently within the text, as Tannaim and Amoraim assert varying positions, organized, pitted against one another, and/or resolved by a redactor. One would have expected that someone with literary training in "historical criticism" to revel in the text's explicit disclosure of the varying positions of its historical characters.

And yet Rav Lichtenstein very clearly rejects this position and favors a consideration of literary-conceptual matters over historical ones. This can partially be explained by a Brisker preference for concepts. But there is another objection to applying the historical method to Talmud, as well.

A Critique of Criticism

Rav Lichtenstein goes on in the lecture to discuss another difference between use of the traditional and academic methods.

> I wish to emphasize: when we speak here of a historical, academic methodology, we refer not only to research and investigation. Those who adopt such an approach go much further, undertaking not only historical research but also historical criticism. In other words, after one has studied all the minutiae through various investigations, one can assess to what use they can be put and what light they can shine on some dark corner of Jewish history.

An academic scholar's goal in reading a text, by nature of his or her study, is not only to uncover historical facts but also to weigh and critique them. This is certainly the case for some literary critics, even if the field of history proper might work somewhat differently.[5] At the very least, the scholar needs to determine what relevance the particular text under discussion holds for the field of study: how central or "important" is this text to the field? To what degree does it diverge from, or integrate with, other pieces of evidence?

The yeshiva student's goals, however, are not historical but religious. Thus, (s)he not only values ascertaining facts about the text, but sees inherent worth in engaging the text itself. The student "is bound up in a personal encounter wherein the individual, the student, is wholly attached and connected to what he learns and feels that he is standing before the Divine Presence as he learns."

[5] See Rabbi Lichtenstein's summary of this in his "Criticism and Kitvei ha-Kodesh" (based on a 1962 lecture, p. 24): "Drama critics grade playwrights, music critics weigh the merits of sonatas, and book reviewers assess the worth of current novels." This important essay also explicitly advocates for an embrace of "new criticism."

Rav Lichtenstein offers a helpful spatial metaphor distinguishing the academic from the traditional scholar of the text, clarifying further what is at stake:

> The question turns mainly on what direction one is looking in: from outside in, so to speak, or vice versa. Does one stand with both feet in the *gemara*, so to speak, or does one stand outside and look inward?

Rav Lichtenstein makes this distinction from the vantage point of his field, literature, and drawing on the debates between proponents of "historical criticism," with its focus on external historical parallels, and of "new criticism," with its focus on internal literary considerations.[6]

The Stance of the Traditional Reader

For Rav Lichtenstein, the entire enterprise hinges on this question. Whether one's learning merely aims at intellectual activity to satisfy historical curiosity or whether it serves as a religious endeavor depends on one's approach and stance towards the text. To successfully accomplish the *mitzvah* and spiritual goal of *talmud torah*, the study must be based on a "personal encounter wherein the person … feels that he is standing before the Divine Presence as he learns." This can only work, asserted Rav Lichtenstein, from the inside perspective, in this case one where the student approaches the text with reverence.

Rav Lichtenstein's later writings develop further the stakes of this question, offering two alternative modes with which one views the Talmudic or other Halakhic texts. This is clearly echoed in the important quotation, noted in his essay "Why Learn Gemara?," on the importance of Talmud study (11): "To open a gemara is to enter into [Hazal's] overawing presence, to feel the force of their collective personality – and not as in a historico-critical mode, in order to pass judgment upon them, but so as to be irradiated and ennobled by them." This comment is meant to build upon the point made earlier in the essay (3): "Without doubt, the Jew, like other people, confronts the *Ribbono shel Olam* as redeemer, benefactor, and judge. Primarily, however, he encounters Him as commander."

The concept of encountering God-as-Commander is essential to the reason for focusing on Talmud study in the first place; it appears throughout Rav Lichtenstein's writings, both about Torah study[7] and about Halakhah.[8] If Talmud study not only fails to engender an encounter

---

[6] Similar distinctions between the inside and outside "reader" of a cultural system have been made in other fields as well: both in legal theory, with H.L.A. Hart's distinction between internal and external points of view of the law, and in anthropology, with its "emic" versus "etic" distinction.

[7] See "Study," p. 933 in original; "Nature and Value of Torah Study"; and *Talmud Study in Yeshiva High Schools*, p. 8.

[8] See "Does Jewish Tradition Recognize an Ethic Independent of Halakha," p. 50 in *Leaves of Faith* 2; "*Mah Enosh*," p. 24; "Human and Social Factor," p. 18; and "Law and Spirituality" p. 13.

leading the student to commit to God but, to the contrary, spurs him or her to criticize the text and its transmitters, the study becomes irredeemably counterproductive.[9]

This 1968 lecture thus presages a second important layer to the "wall" separating yeshiva from academic approaches. Not only is the greatest meaning found in pursuit of conceptual rather than historical matters in learning, but yeshiva methods are essential for experiencing God in learning, as well. The student must take an internal approach to the Talmud for that study to increase the student's reverence and submission to the law and its Commander. As the Talmud stems from the divine word and is presumed not to be historically contingent, it follows that what one should focus on is the conceptual structure of the texts themselves rather than on outside historical circumstances.

Kaplan's article points to various places in Rav Lichtenstein's writings where he expresses the concern that academic methods will "undermin[e] respect for *Hazal*," on the one hand, and engender a "corrosive historicism, leading to relativism," on the other. This is indeed true. And as this Yiddish lecture indicates, both of these worries lead back to the same fundamental concern: Torah study must offer an experience of standing before God, such that one is an overawed, submissive student rather than an inflated, judgmental critic. It is imperative to use methods that probe the deep conceptual meaning of Torah, giving one greater insight into the Divine, rather than methods that historicize its teachings, reducing them to mere relativistic contingency.

Furthermore, the early date of this lecture indicates that the opposition is to a *mode* of study rather than to a particular *method*. This will stand in contrast to Kaplan (and, to a lesser degree, Reiner), who attempts to contextualize Rav Lichtenstein's objections to *Wissenschaft* against the writings of two leading academic Talmudists over the past half-century, David Weiss Halivni and Shamma Friedman. Significantly, however, in 1968 these methods were only in their embryological stages of development and were not available to the scholarly public.[10]

In this lecture, Rav Lichtenstein refers to Leopold Zunz, Abraham Geiger, and, more generally, to "German *Wissenschaft*," which influenced "the historical approach." He never did identify his direct targets for criticism on this issue.[11] It is thus sensible to conclude that Rav Lichtenstein's objections to academic Talmud, which are clearly discernible at this early stage,

---

[9] Rabbi Lichtenstein's position on the study of biblical material, which rejects biblical criticism but affirms the use of literary criticism along the lines of "new criticism," follows the same paradigm, although it is complicated by particular features of traditional Jewish belief's conflict with the assumptions of the Documentary Hypothesis, such that opposition to biblical criticism is overdetermined.

[10] Halivni had just published the first in his *Mekorot u-Massorot* series and Friedman had not yet published any of his works at that point.

[11] It is possible that Rav Lichtenstein was aware of seminal methodological essays by Julius Kaplan and Hyman Klein from the 1930s to 1950s on the diachronic method in analyzing Talmudic literature, or of classic works by Zecharias Frankel, D.Z. Hoffman, and J.N. Epstein, although he never cites them.

were responses not to particular methods but to his presumption of what a certain scholarly-judgmental stance towards the text might entail.

Can Any Historical Model be Compatible for Rav Lichtenstein?

We are left, then, to ponder the question, raised explicitly by Kaplan—and also implicitly by Reiner—as to whether it is "possible to [adopt] the diachronic approach in such a way that it would not be subject to the criticisms leveled against it by Rav Lichtenstein." The question is too large to treat adequately in so few words, but it is still possible to offer basic directions towards a response.

It is important to consider both concerns raised by Rav Lichtenstein in the lecture. In terms of the focus on the text rather than the context, the diachronic method of Talmud study is "safely" on the side of text, in that it remains within the rabbinic textual corpus, while positing that rabbinic literature comprises different layers across the generations.

Furthermore, as indicated above, awareness of the relationship between rabbinic texts can actually *contribute* to textual and conceptual analysis by bringing to bear new perspectives. Indeed, Rav Lichtenstein's consistent use of the Yerushalmi, Tosefta, and Midreshei Halakhah as conceptual contrasts to the Bavli—not to mention the inclusion within his Socratic method repertoire of the question, "Does our Gemara capture the straightforward meaning of the Mishnah?"—indicates that he was at least partially amenable to this approach.

The larger challenge stems from the second concern, that a historical approach to the text leads one to criticizing or judging the Talmud rather than being religiously edified by it. Keeping in mind that the objection is to an overall mode of study and stance towards the text rather than a particular method would seem to broaden the objection.

Any consideration of how this concern might be mitigated for Rav Lichtenstein must engage with two other articles. Rav Lichtenstein deals with this question at some length in Of Marriage: Relationships and Relations" and "*Torat Hesed* and *Torat Emet*," taking a different approach in each. The former deals with questions of halakhic development over time, and the specter of historical influence, while the latter runs into issues of authorial intent and the license, if not obligation, for students of Talmud and *Halakhah* to offer creative readings of the text. There is much to discuss on this count. *Od Hazon la-Moed.*

Conclusions

As we have seen, the "Higher Jewish Learning in America" lecture sheds significant light on our topic. Serendipitously, it confirms the suggestions of both Reiner and Kaplan regarding the reasons for Rav Lichtenstein's preference for traditional yeshiva study and rejection of the academic method. *Berukhim she-kivvenu.*

Simultaneously, it also situates the objection early enough that it stands outside of any historical context relating to Yeshivat Har Etzion or the methods of late 20th century Talmudists in particular. In other words, conceptual analysis of Rav Lichtenstein's various writings on the topic is more helpful than historical consideration, given his consistent position.

One final reflection on this text. Aharon Mishnayot, cited by Reiner, notes that in his interaction with Rav Lichtenstein, the latter "never addressed the content of the claim" he made regarding the relationship between the Yerushalmi and Bavli. Similarly, in this lecture, Rav Lichtenstein's preference for one method over the other is based on the goals a student should have. The academic and yeshiva approach are simply presented as two alternative methods, with distinct goals. The preference is based on what the expected goals of study are for the God-believing yeshiva student: one method leads to spiritual growth, while the other leads to danger.

The question sidesteps any truth claims, and even avoids the question of who is a "legitimate" reader of the text. No ad hominem attacks are offered; no contemporary academic talmudists are noted at all. The argument is really about one's educational goals, relating to the fundamental question of the value of Torah study, preferring (strongly) one overall stance towards the text while rejecting the other.

Newly accessible and relevant, Rav Lichtenstein's seminal 1968 Yiddish lecture thus offers several novel points. It confirms both Reiner's and Kaplan's explanations for Rav Lichtenstein's opposition to the field, but also complicates their view of his interlocutors by pushing back his opposition to a time before Shamma Friedman. The opposition is clearly based in principle and broad in basis, insisting that the yeshiva student engage the text as a wisdom-seeking insider rather than a critical outsider.

Many thanks to Chaim Saiman and Shaul Seidler-Feller for their feedback on earlier drafts of this article.

Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier is a PhD candidate in Ancient Judaism at Yale University, a member of Yeshiva University's Kollel Elyon, and is a Lecturer at YU's Isaac Breuer College. Previously he served as Director of the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Yale University. Shlomo is an alumnus of Yeshivat Har Etzion and Yeshiva University (BA, MA, Semicha), as well as of the Wexner, Tikvah, and Kupietzky Kodshim Fellowships. He has lectured and taught widely across North America, and is excited to share Torah and Jewish scholarship on a broad range of issues. Shlomo serves on the Editorial Committee of Tradition, is co-editor of Torah and Western Thought:

Intellectual Portraits of Orthodoxy and Modernity, and is editing the forthcoming Contemporary Forms and Uses of Hasidut.

Elijah's Elusive Cup and the Challenge of Memory

James A. Diamond

While the Passover *Seder* is meant to commemorate the Jewish liberation from slavery, it is also permeated by loss. Maimonides's compendium of *Seder* conduct emphasizes the absence of an irretrievable past with repeated reminders of how Jews can no longer ideally celebrate the *Seder*.

Two types of meat must decorate the *Seder* plate *in remembrance* of the holiday sacrifices; four questions revised to address a ritually debilitated present when we *no longer have sacrifice* launch the evening; the participants point to meat signifying the Passover lamb *which our forefathers ate at the time the Temple stood*; the celebrants recite a prayer anticipating a future when they will once again *eat there the Passover sacrifice;* the *matzah* calls for a blessing *in the present when there is no longer sacrifice*; one prepares a sandwich of *matzah* and bitter herbs *in remembrance of the Temple*.[12] The list is unrelenting.

Rather than commemorating liberation, we commemorate how Jews once commemorated it. The obsession with what can no longer be authentically memorialized threatens to overwhelm the core memory of freedom.

Enter the "fifth" cup. If the carefully scripted *Seder* calls for four cups, why is there a fifth? Its rabbinic origin remains tentative. The standard Talmudic editions, endorsed by Rashi and his grandson Rashbam, two of the greatest Talmudic commentators, cite Rabbi Tarfon, Rabbi Akiva's mentor, who advocates for a fourth cup to preside over the *Seder's* conclusion (*Pesahim* 118a). However, other major Talmudic experts apparently had a variant of the text that read "fifth."

Maimonides, for instance, recommends Rabbi Tarfon's position in his legal magnum opus as the fifth cup, but only as an optional ritual. The cup sits there then, emblematic of the fragility of historical transmission and *masorah*, disrupting the rhythm of rituals, texts, and prayers designed precisely to preserve Jewish history. It is the *Seder* maverick, a potent reminder of the vulnerability of memory.

A bewildering myriad of customs prescribing what one does with this cup merely accentuate its questionable character. Is it poured at the commencement of the *Seder* or when the guests shout out the plea for a *pouring* of divine wrath on the enemies of Israel? Does one just pour it or drink it as well? Do all the *Seder* participants partake of it, or just the master of ceremonies? Is it consumed in a reclining position as the other cups? Does it signify a fifth biblical term of liberation that would place it in the company of its sister cups? Or, does it evoke Pharaoh's cup that instrumentally launched Joseph's meteoric rise to the upper echelons of the Egyptian hierarchy? How do we even refer to it? Is it the fifth cup or Elijah's cup?

[12] *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of *Hametz* and *Matzah* 8:1, 3, 4, 5, 8.

Tradition identifies Elijah as the one who will resolve moot halakhic debates in that utopian future he is destined to herald.[13] His image itself then signals an enduring question mark. The cup's indeterminateness inserts an intoxicating ambiguity into the age old rigidly structured gathering characterized as "order."

Its identity as Elijah's cup, however, is critical in preventing the celebration from slipping into a morose longing for an era gone by. When Elijah's time came to die, his beloved disciple Elisha would not let go of his master whom he considered his spiritual father. Exasperated, Elijah finally offered him the potential of surpassing his own prophetic power, on the condition that Elisha witnesses his death— *if you see me as I am being taken from you, this will be granted to you; if not it will not* (II Kings 2:10).

What this dramatically conveys is that Elijah's successor/heir needed to accept the end of an era, the cessation of the past, and the impossibility of simply duplicating and parroting his spiritual father. By conditioning Elisha's future on the capacity to observe his own departure from the scene, Elijah teaches a valuable lesson— that continuity with the past must also be balanced by a sober acknowledgment of its passage.

Elisha, in what surely is the shortest eulogy in Jewish history, laments *Oh father, father! Israel's chariots and horsemen.* He has been released by Elijah to shape his own destiny. This tension between generations is described in excruciating honesty by Franz Kafka, one of the most innovative spirits in modern times. In his *Letter to His Father*, he expresses precisely this suffocating influence of a father who values the son strictly in terms of himself.

As Franz heartbreakingly wrote, "You encouraged me, for instance, when I saluted and marched smartly, but I was no future soldier, or when I was able to repeat songs, singing what I had not understood, or prattle to you using your own favourite expressions, imitating you, but nothing of this had anything to do with my future. And it is characteristic that even today you really only encourage me in anything when you yourself are involved in it, when what is at stake is your own sense of self-importance." Breaking away was the instrument of Franz's literary breakthrough. He overcame the stifling parental presence he felt "would simply trample me underfoot so that nothing was left of me." In contrast to Hermann Kafka's suppression of any semblance of autonomy by his son, Elijah stages his death so that his 'son' could surpass his own prophetic reputation.

The ancient Bnei Brak gathering the *Haggadah* recalls similarly presents the danger of being engulfed by the past. "It happened once [on Pesah] that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon were reclining in Bnei Brak and were telling the story of the exodus from Egypt that whole night, until their students came and said to them, 'The time of [reciting] the morning Shema has arrived'." Rabbi Tarfon and his colleagues' immersion in the past was so intense as to reach the point of obliviousness to their own time and the dawning of a new day. Their students, or spiritual children, needed to jolt them back into responding to the demands of the present.

[13] The Aramaic term *teku,* meaning the matter "stands" for rabbinic disputes that cannot be resolved, came to be known as an acronym for "Tishbi [Elijah] will resolve questions and contradictions."

Elijah, the embodiment of ultimate historical redemption, hovers over that fifth cup as a reminder to commemorate the past in a way that enables advancing beyond it. The biblical source for Elijah's messianic role anticipates far less grandiose achievements than international disarmament and global harmony. The prophet Malakhi entrusts Elijah simply with *reconciling the hearts of fathers with their children, and the hearts of the children with their fathers* (Malachi 3:24). Elijah's death scene in his own life's drama presages the nature of that universal crisis of friction between parents and children Malakhi contemplated.

The greatest source of conflict between generations is a result of parents viewing their children as clones of themselves rather than independent human beings with their own dreams, aptitudes, and aspirations. Like Elijah, they must encourage children to let go. The fifth term of liberation which Elijah's cup signifies conforms precisely to this notion because it is the only one that places liberation terminology in the context of children as successors to their parents: *I will bring you in unto the land, concerning which I lifted up My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am the Lord* (Exodus 6:8). The verse records two divine *givings*, one to the ancestors and one to the descendants.

The parents leave behind a legacy. The children can remain satisfied with what was "given" to the parents or renew a second "giving" by building on the former. The messianic age can never materialize if growth is measured in terms of how closely one generation duplicates the previous one. Elijah therefore reconciles successive generations by warning them that their love for each other does not entail acting as mirrors of each other. To be trapped by the past is to preclude advancing beyond it.

Perhaps this explains why Maimonides concludes his codification of the laws governing the *Seder* format with a curious addendum concerning venue. In what appears to be a bold contravention of the halakhic protocol that draws the ire of his halakhic opponents, Maimonides grants the prerogative to play the last act out, when the fifth cup accompanies the final Haggadic recitations, "in any place one wants, even if it is not in the same place as the meal" (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of *Hametz* and *Matzah* 8:10).

Maimonides provides for an independent exercise of will against the background of a strictly regulated format that might all too easily inhibit creativity. The particular dispensation to move out of the narrow confines of the familiar and the standard, to anywhere one might wish, indulges precisely the spirit of Elijah's cup. Uniform rules and recalling of a common past tend to encourage mimicking and replicating. This fifth cup, released from the weight of obligation, presides over the stage exit, allowing for escape from a restrictive space that can stifle. It expresses itself in the freedom to roam and venture beyond the confines of home, parents, tradition, and past. Elijah's cup allows the *Seder* to provoke the kind of independent questioning by the next generation that averts being "trampled underfoot" by the previous one.

James A. Diamond is the Joseph and Wolf Lebovic Chair of Jewish Studies at the University of Waterloo and former director of the university's Friedberg Genizah Project. His most recent book is Maimonides and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon *(Cambridge, 2014)*

Magid, Moshe, Story-Telling, and Story-Living

Jennifer Raskas

Towards the end of the *Magid* section, the *Haggadah* states: "*Be-khol dor va-dor, hayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim,*" In every generation, one must see himself as if he came out of Egypt.

Why must we see ourselves as if we personally left Egypt? Is it not enough that one follows the commandment of *sippur yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, telling the story of leaving Egypt? Why must one not only be a storyteller of the Exodus, but also become part of the story?

We can gain some insight by juxtaposing the story of Moshe's personal ascendancy to leadership, with the story of the Israelites' ascendency from slavery to revelation. Analyzing these stories together and seeing the striking similarities between them, shows that Moshe not only helped shape the Israelites' Exodus story, he also personally lived it.

The national story of the Israelites in Egypt begins with Yosef's strong ties to Pharaoh and the Egyptian palace. Likewise, Moshe's early life in Egypt takes place in Pharaoh's palace. Moshe then leaves Egypt in a hurry, "*Va-yivrah Moshe,*" after killing an Egyptian. He names his son "*Gershom," "ki ger hayiti be-eretz nokhriyah,*" because I have been a stranger in a strange land (Shemot 2:15, 22). The Israelites also leave Egypt in haste and are constantly reminded that "*Gerim hayitem be-Mitzrayim,*" they were strangers in the land of Egypt (Shemot 22:20).

At the end of Moshe's personal journey to leadership, he experiences a transformational, divine revelation through fire, at the burning bush on top of Mount Horev. He is told not to come too close, "*Al tikrav halom*", to the revelation, for the land on the mountain is too holy (3:5). The people, upon leaving Egypt, encounter God on that same mountain, Horev, also called Mount Sinai, where, as Moshe describes in Devarim, *"Panim be-fanim diber Hashem imakhem ba-har be-tokh ha-esh,*" face to face God spoke to you on the mountain from amidst the fire (Devarim 5:4). The people, similarly to Moshe, are told not to climb or touch the mountain (Shemot 19:12).

Finally, on the mountain, Moshe is given three *otot,* signs, that God is with him: his staff turning to a snake, his hand getting leprosy, and water turning to blood. He descends the mountain after accepting his mission to lead the people. These very people too are given an *ot*, a sign on the mountain: "*Akh Shabtotai tishmoru,*" My Sabbaths you shall obey, "*ki ot hu beini*

u-veineikhem le-doroteikhem," for it is an *ot*, a sign, between Me and you throughout the generations (Shemot 31:13). Here the children of Israel also accept their mission stating, "*na'aseh v-nishma*," we will do and obey (Shemot 24:7).

Moshe's ascendancy out of Egypt to leadership with its climactic, transcendental, encounter with God at the burning bush then, is a harbinger of the people's own passage out of Egypt towards their transcendental encounter with God on Mount Sinai.

According to Ramban (Shemot 4:19), Moshe makes a concerted effort to keep his story parallel to the story of the Israelites even after the episode of the burning bush, when he moves his wife, Tziporah, and their sons out of comfortable Midian in order to join the people of Israel who are slaves in Egypt. Moshe realizes that only by bringing his family down to become part of the people's story will the people of Israel fully believe that he sees himself as one of them, plans to truly redeem them, and genuinely has their best interests at heart. Only by continuing this shared story, will he be trusted to lead the people forward.

One of the roles of a leader is to be a storyteller, to be able to articulate the history, identity, values and emotions of the people. Moshe, however, went one step further by not only telling the people's story, but also by living it.

Now we can better understand the verse in the *Haggadah*, *"Be-khol dor va-dor, hayav adam lir'ot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-Mitzrayim*," In every generation, one must see himself as if he came out of Egypt.

By seeing ourselves as if we personally left Egypt, we, like Moshe, demonstrate that we are not only ready to transmit the Jewish people's story, but also help shape and lead it's future.

Jennifer Raskas teaches classes on Hebrew literary approaches to readings in Tanakh across the United States and Israel. She is the Director of the Israel Action Center at the JCRC of Greater Washington. Jennifer received her Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University and her Master's in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. She studied in Jerusalem, Israel at Midreshet Lindenbaum and is a trained educator for the Matan Women's Institute for Torah Studies program — Jewish Women Through the Ages.