LEHRHAUS

OVER SHABBOS

RE'EH

5778

This Week's "Lehrhaus Over Shabbos" is sponsored by
Rachel, Steve and Michael Klein
in memory of their sweet niece and cousin Chaya Gaines on the occasion of her second Yarhzeit. May her neshama have an aliya.

Haggai: Prophet of Elul

Tzvi Sinensky

This is part of an occasional series arguing that there are unexpected biblical roots for many Jewish holidays and practices. By exploring these foundations, we gain fresh insight into many well-trodden aspects of the Jewish tradition.

On what basis is *Hodesh Elul* seen as ushering in the season of repentance?[1] Conventional wisdom maintains that, after having been granted atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses reascended Mount Sinai on 1 Elul. This launched a second period of forty days and nights spent in celestial study, after which Moses descended with the second tablets on 10 Tishrei, Yom Kippur.[2] This position, popularized by Ran (*Rosh Hashanah* 12b *be-alfas* s.v. "garsinan") and *Tur* (*Orah Hayyim* 581), is based on the the midrashic account of *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (chap. 46):

> Rabbi Joshua, son of Korhah, said: Moses was on the mountain for forty days, reading the Written Law by day and studying the Oral Law by night. After forty days he took the tablets and descended into the camp on the seventeenth of Tammuz, shattered the tablets, and slew the sinners of Israel. He spent forty days in the camp until he had burnt the calf and powdered it like dust of the earth, destroyed idol worship from Israel, and established every tribe in its place. Upon the new moon of Elul the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Come up to me on the Mount" (Exodus 24:12), and have them sound the *shofar* throughout the camp, for Moses has ascended the Mount, so that they do not go astray again after the worship of idols. The Holy One, blessed be He, ascended with that *shofar*, as it states, "God ascended with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet" (Psalms 47:5). Therefore the Sages instituted that the *shofar* should be sounded on the new moon of Elul every year.

The *midrash* is intriguing, particularly in its mysterious description of God's ascent with the *shofar*, to which we will return. Regardless, following *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*'s chronology, we can well understand the commentaries' depiction of Elul as ushering in the season of repentance: it was during these forty days leading to Yom Kippur that Moses reestablished the relationship between God and His people.

---

[1] Of course, there are numerous associations between the term Elul and repentance. For instance, the classic association between Elul and the phrase "*Ani le-dodi ve-dodi li*" (cf. Song of Songs 6:3), as well as the Hasidic bon mot "the king is in the field" suggest a heightened level of divine intimacy during Elul. Meiri (*Hibbur ha-Teshuvah, Meishiv Nefesh* 2:2) posits that during Elul God uniquely enables us to prepare for the approaching Days of Judgment. In support of this view, Meiri, based on a *midrash*, extends the Talmud's application of the verse "Seek the Lord while He can be found, Call Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6) from the Ten Days of Repentance to *Hodesh Elul*. These explanations and others, however, do not explain why the entire month of Elul is specifically selected for this period of intimacy or preparation; as *Arukh ha-Shulhan* (*Orah Hayyim* 581:1) maintains, they are best characterized not as full-fledged sources but as allusions.

[2] Or third period of forty days, see *Tanhuma* , *Ki Tissa* 31:1.

However, its popularity notwithstanding, this conclusion is not necessarily warranted. Nowhere does the *midrash* identify the month of Elul with repentance; in fact, it does not even mention the practice of blowing the *shofar* throughout the remainder of the month. It is only after citing the *midrash* that *Ran* (ibid.) adds, "On this Ashkenazim relied to blow throughout the month of Elul, morning and night; and from here we may account for those places where they arise early [for *Selihot*] beginning with *Rosh Hodesh Elul*."[3]

What is more, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*'s timeline has no explicit basis in the biblical text. Even granting the *midrash*'s general timetable, a quick calculation indicates that Moses would have been required to ascend the mountain not on 1 Elul (which only contains 29 days, equalling just 39 days with the addition of Tishrei's first ten days) but on the last day of Av. While one might respond that the standard of a 29-day Elul was only set during the time of Ezra (see *Rosh Hashanah* 19b), *Seder Olam Rabbah* (6), followed by *Bekhor Shor* (Deut. 10:10), record Moses' ascent as having taken place on the final day of Av. There is considerable debate, then, whether or not Moses ascended on 1 Elul.[4] Given these concerns, might there be an alternative basis for the significance of *Hodesh Elul*?

In fact, there is an extremely strong candidate for this distinction: the opening prophecy of Haggai. Let us set the stage by reviewing the biblical background to Haggai's prophecies, delivered during the years immediately prior to the Second Temple's construction. Earlier, Cyrus had called upon the Jews to return from exile and rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1). The Samaritans, however, furiously opposed the reconstruction efforts, and, during the reign of Artaxerxes, petitioned successfully for a royal command halting the work (Ezra 4:7-23). The Jews became dispirited, and abandoned the project until a year after Darius' ascent to the throne (Ezra 7:24).

Enter Haggai. The two chapters of his book, particularly the first, are dedicated to urging the people to overcome their hesitation and proceed with the reconstruction. Haggai delivers his first prophecy on 1 Elul, repeatedly invoking the language of repentance:

> In the second year of King Darius, **on the first day of the sixth month**, this word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbavel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Yehotzadak, the high priest:
>
> Thus said the Lord of Hosts: These people say, "The time has not yet come for rebuilding the House of the Lord."
>
> And the word of the Lord through the prophet Haggai continued:

---

[3] Relatedly, as noted by *Bah* (*Orah Hayyim* 581 s.v. "tanya"), *Ran* and *Tur* seem to have a somewhat different text of *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*. In *Ran*'s version, the *midrash* concludes by recording that on the basis of the events at Sinai, the Jews began blowing the *shofar* on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* to inspire the people in repentance and to confuse Satan. Even according to this text, as *Ran* makes clear in the continuation, the *midrash* speaks exclusively about blowing the *shofar* on *Rosh Hodesh* proper. *Tur*'s (ibid.) citation of the *midrash* does include a reference to blowing the *shofar* throughout the month, but this appears to be a far later and less reliable citation.

[4] See also *Rashi* to Exodus 33:11, R. Eliyahu Mizrahi ibid., *Tosafot Bava Kama* 82a s.v. "kedei," and *Bah* (*Orah Hayyim* 581) s.v. "be-Rosh."

> Is it a time for you to dwell in your paneled houses, while this House is lying in ruins?
>
> Now thus said the Lord of Hosts: **Consider how you have been faring [*"simu levavkhem al darkheikhem"*]**!
>
> You have sowed much and brought in little; you eat without being satisfied; you drink without getting your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one gets warm; and he who earns anything earns it for a leaky purse.
>
> Thus said the Lord of Hosts: **Consider how you have fared [*"simu levavkhem al darkheikhem"*]**:
>
> Go up to the hills [*"alu ha-har"*] and get timber, and rebuild the House; then I will look on it with favor and I will be glorified, said the Lord. (Haggai 1:1-8)

Given that the biblical year generally begins in Nissan, it is evident that the sixth month refers to Elul (R. Yosef Kara to Haggai 1:1, *Da'at Mikra* ad loc.).[5] On *Rosh Hodesh Elul*, then, Haggai exhorts the people to recognize that their agricultural failure is a direct outgrowth of their misplaced priorities: "Because My House which lies in ruins, while you all hurry to your own houses!" Haggai thus appears to provide an explicit biblical basis for 1 Elul launching a period of repentance.[6] Indeed, *Kaf ha-Hayyim* (*Orah Hayyim* 581:15; see also *Kaf ha-Hayyim Orah Hayyim* 429:6) cites *Nezirut Shimshon*, who goes so far as to recommend that one read the beginning of *Sefer Haggai* on the first of Elul. Further, the verses go on to state that "They came and set to work on the House of the Lord of Hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month" (Haggai 1:14-15), indicating that Elul opens with a call to repentance a and continues with this theme throughout the month.

What are we to make of this biblical precedent? We may begin by noting a subtle textual similarity between *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* and Haggai: the verse describing Moses' ascent to the mountain reads *"aleh eilay ha-harah,"* "ascend to Me to the mountain," paralleling Haggai's charge of *"alu ha-har,"* "ascend to the mountain," to collect materials for the construction of the Temple. In both instances, the charge of climbing a mountain inaugurates the period of repentance.

Yet this correspondence primarily underscores the extent to which these models for *Hodesh Elul* diverge. The respective ascents differ in regard to the nature of the mountain, who is instructed to go up, and for what purpose. Moses climbs the mountain of God. Haggai's listeners, however, go up to an anonymous mountain. In Exodus, only Moses ascends, whereas in Haggai the entire nation must alight. Moses, according to the midrashic literature, studies Torah with God for forty days and nights, while the Jews of the Second

---

[5] While in *Sefer Ezra* there are indications that the months are actually counted from Tishrei, *Da'at Mikra* (ibid.) convincingly argues from internal evidence that Haggai's book certainly follows the bulk of Tanakh in counting the months from Nissan.

[6] Rabbanit Shani Taragin makes this point in a brief lecture available at: http://www.hatanakh.com/en/lessons/chagais-rosh-chodesh-elul-teshuva-derasha.

Temple period engage in the decidedly mundane process of wood collection, albeit to construct the Temple.[7]

These glaring differences are presumably born of their respective contexts. In Exodus, the nation had effectively shattered the Sinaitic covenant by sinning with the Golden Calf. What is more, at no point does the nation repent for its misdeeds. To the contrary, while God accepts Moses' pleas and is persuaded not to decimate the Israelites, His reconsideration is an outgrowth of Moses' argument from the desecration of God's name, as well as his invocation of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, rather than a result of actions taken by the Jews themselves.

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer reinforces the motifs of the Exodus narrative. According to the *midrash*, the *shofar* blast announces Moses's ascent to the mountain in order to avoid the very real possibility that, thinking Moses has died, the people will again be ensnared by the sin of *avodah zarah*.[8] Apparently, while the nation has been granted clemency, there is little reason to conclude that they have repented as a nation. Moreover, the *midrash*'s esoteric depiction of God's concurrent ascent with the *shofar* blast suggests that He, along with Moses, withdraws His presence from the nation, indicating His continued displeasure with their actions.[9]

The contrast to Haggai could not be more clear. Here, while the people have erred, they have not sinned egregiously, and the prophet addresses himself to the entire Judean community (albeit numbering only some 50,000 strong). Specifically, instead of engaging in an act of rebellion, the people are guilty of hypocrisy and apathy. Their sin is not one of commission but of omission: they have failed to overcome the challenges confronting the rebuilding project.

Seeking to stir the people, Haggai exhorts four times in his sefer, "*simu levavkhem al darkheikhem*" (1:5,7; 2:15,18). As *Da'at Mikra* notes (1:5 note 12), this locution is unique to *Sefer Haggai*. Quite literally, the prophet urges the people to "pay attention." And it is not so much a spiritual message as a practical, albeit religious, one. Haggai is the pragmatic Religious Zionist, calling on all people to drop the excuses, roll up their sleeves, and engage in the rebuilding efforts.

---

[7] This is similar to the call in Nehemiah 8:15 for the Jews to climb to the mountain and collect materials with which to construct *sukkot*.

[8] In this, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* adopts the view that the Jews sinned upon arriving at the erroneous conclusion that Moses had died on the mountain; see also *Tanhuma* (Buber) *Ki Tissa* 13 and *Rashi* Exodus 32:1. It is also worth noting that *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*'s *shofar* blast, which indicates God's ascent from the mountain, provides a bookend of sorts with the initial *shofar* blast of Sinai, which signaled God's descent onto the mountain.

[9] See also *Nedarim* 38a, which claims that "the Torah was given initially only to Moses and his descendants, as it is stated: "Write for you" (Exodus 34:27), and it is also stated: "Hew for you" (Exodus 34:1), meaning: Just as their waste is yours, so too their writing is yours. However, Moses treated the Torah with generosity and gave it to the Jewish people. And about him, the verse says: "He that has a bountiful eye shall be blessed, as he gives of his bread to the poor" (Proverbs 22:9)." Note that both proof texts are drawn from the narrative regarding the second set of tablets, suggesting that Moses's final forty days primarily are not centered on the relationship between God and the Jewish people, but between God and Moses.

Further, unlike Moses, who must separate from the nation, Haggai and his contemporary Zekhariah may have personally joined the people by engaging in manual labor themselves. The verse states, "Thereupon Zerubbavel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Yehotzadak began rebuilding the House of God in Jerusalem, with the full support of the prophets of God" (Ezra 5:2). *Malbim* (5:1) appears to maintain that the prophets were instrumental merely inasmuch as they called on the populace to build. *Rashi* (ibid., s.v. "ve-sarav"), on the other hand, seems to take the verse at face value: the prophets practiced what they preached, engaging in heavy lifting as they concomitantly urged the people to follow suit. The contrast to the aftermath of the Golden Calf, whereupon Moses was specifically separated from the nation, could not be thrown into sharper relief.

It is no surprise, then, that Haggai's universal, practical message and personal model resonated with the entire nation:

> Zerubbavel son of Shealtiel and the high priest Jeshua son of Yehotzadak and all the rest of the people gave heed to the summons of the Lord their God and to the words of the prophet Haggai, when the Lord their God sent him; the people feared the Lord. (Haggai 1:12)

Yet a glaring question remains. With few exceptions, the classical commentaries omit *Sefer Haggai* in their discussions of *Hodesh Elul*. Why?

A number of factors may be at play. First, as noted elsewhere, the rabbis sought to link nearly all the biblical holidays to the Jews' first year as a nation, suggesting that the annual cycle of holidays mirrors that original yearlong series of events. The *midrash* does just this. Second, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*'s narrative enables us to view Elul as a period of preparation for Yom Kippur, heightening the stature of this holy day and extending its "footprint"; this is lacking in Haggai's prophecies. Third and perhaps most interesting, Haggai's prophecy was delivered during a period of Judean resettlement, with lessons that were particularly poignant at that time, but less so in later stages of Jewish history. The events of the Golden Calf and its aftermath, leading to Yom Kippur, were seen by the Rabbis as models for the full sweep of Jewish history.

If this final reason for the historical sidelining of Haggai's prophecy is correct, today's period of a renewed return to Zion might be precisely the moment to reintroduce Haggai's clarion call. As Rav Soloveitchik argued passionately in his classic 1956 plea *Kol Dodi Dofek*, albeit at a very different moment in Israeli history, we can in no way be lackadaisical in our support of *Medinat Yisrael*. Stated in 2018 terms, as American Jews we cannot take for granted the next generation's support for Israel, both materially and attitudinally, nor can we take for granted the relationship between the diaspora and Israeli Jewish communities.

Further, Haggai's exhortation of "*simu levavkhem*," an attack on apathy, is acutely relevant in our time, although ironically perhaps most of all in Jewish communities beyond Israel's borders. The great challenges confronting our generation, at least on Modern Orthodox American soil, resemble less the outright rebelliousness of the generation of the desert and more the dispassion and misplaced priorities of Haggai's returnees.

This year, I will be following *Kaf ha-Hayyim*'s recommendation to read *Sefer Haggai* on *Rosh Hodesh Elul*. Indeed, perhaps the time has come for a renewed appreciation of Haggai's inspiring message not only for 1 Elul, but the entire month to come.

Rabbi Tzvi Sinensky is the incoming Director of Interdisciplinary Studies and Educational Outreach at the Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School in Livingston, NJ, where he will be teaching Judaic Studies classes, collaborating with faculty to deepen the culture of interdisciplinary student learning throughout the school, and developing educational outreach programs for the school's families and partner communities. He previously served as Rosh Beit Midrash of Kohelet Yeshiva in Lower Merion, PA. A popular lecturer and author, Rabbi Sinensky recently completed book-length treatments of the Jewish return to Zion during the Second Temple period and the mitzvah of Torah study, published by Yeshivat Har Etzion's Virtual Beit Midrash. He is active on the Sefaria website, and is pursuing a PhD on the intersection between Jewish thought and gender studies at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. His interdisciplinary high school course on Jewish & Western philosophy and the humanities was recently awarded the inaugural Kohelet Prize.

Notes on the Conversation surrounding Faith Shattered and Restored / Post-Modern Orthodoxy

Marc Dworkin

As it has come up on over a year since *Faith Shattered and Restored: Judaism in the Postmodern Age*[10] introduced many English-speaking readers to the writings of Rabbi Shagar, and, specifically, his grappling with Jewish Orthodoxy in the Postmodern moment, it may be an opportune time to revisit *The Lehrhaus* discussions generated by its publication.

The contemporary interest in Rabbi Shagar's teachings stems from a growing perception that Modern Orthodoxy has failed. The circumstances of this failure are, as described by Rabbi Shagar, the fate of a synthesis: "As modernity's allure waned…Modern Orthodoxy, whose authenticity and credibility, like those of other syntheses, were in doubt from the outset – lost its relevance…solutions that aimed to integrate Judaism and modernity were rendered obsolete."[11] The obsolescence of Modernity is necessarily also that of Modern Orthodoxy. Rabbi Zach Truboff, in his examination of the thought of Rav Shagar on these pages, offers a slightly different variant: "Modern Orthodoxy" need, or rather ought, not be a static synthesis hitched to a narrowly temporalized Modernity. Rather, it has failed only in being unable to sustain "authentic engagement between Torah and contemporary culture…Rav Shagar dedicated his life to showing that th[is] kind of engagement…is not only possible but necessary."

What has replaced Modernity is Postmodernism, which exists as "an intellectual, social and cultural movement."[12] More precisely, Postmodernism begins as a genre of philosophy, extending to popularized social, or political, and cultural offshoots. Modern Orthodoxy first comes into contact, and conflict, with Cultural Postmodernism. Cultural Postmodernism, as relayed by Rabbi Gil Perl on the basis of extensive interaction with students, is characterized by relativism, it reflects a "lost faith in the idea of a cohesive world with a single, comprehensive meaning, a world governed by a clear and consistent set of principles." As Rabbi Perl observed, "see[ing] the world through a very different lens than that of their parents...students coming of age seeped in a postmodern cultural milieu [struggle] to find guidance in learning to live with the questions." Rabbi Perl suggests that by offering "a glimpse into what exactly Postmodern Orthodoxy might mean," Rabbi Shagar offers an effective approach to engaging Modern Orthodox Millennials.

---

[10] Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2017.

[11] *Faith Shattered and Restored*, 43.

[12] *Id.*, 85.

Rabbi Perl's suggestion was met with three lines of response.

For Rabbi Rafi Eis, Postmodernism is entirely misbegotten – it "correlates with increasing rates of mental illness" and "corrodes the human psyche" – no educator, let alone a Jewish one, ought dabble in it. On the contrary, our responsibility, as *frum* Jews in these degenerate times, is not to merge or reconcile, but to set a counter-cultural model.

Rabbi Shalom Carmy aligns with Rabbi Perl in viewing Rabbi Shagar as a much needed "master diagnostician of the human soul under postmodernism," and Rabbi Gidon Rothstein articulates openness, within parameters, to a Postmodern Orthodoxy. Both, however, stress that the subjectivism inherent in Postmodernism stands in "total opposition" to the Objective Truth that is the Torah.

The third line of response, from Dr. Miriam Feldmann Kaye, is far less skeptical of the alignment of Judaism and Postmodernism. However, she remains concerned whether Rabbi Shagar's particular, neo-Hasidic, formulation presents "a viable way forward when the new and growing movement is associated largely with hippies and hilltop youth."

The question of whether Rabbi Shagar's teachings can, or should, be put to pedagogical use, is separate from the question of whether they are fully consistent with *Amitah shel Torah -- mitokh she-lo lishmah ba lishmah*. Still, a teaching can be used for pedagogical purposes only if it can lead to Torah Observance. A primary concern of Rabbis Carmy and Rothstein is that the subjectivity inherent in Rabbi Shagar's teachings does not, in the end, or writ-large, lead to the halakhic Life.

But is that so? The difference in generational lens that Rabbi Perl describes, can perhaps be summarized along these lines: Where past generations may have sought truth, the new one seeks meaning and community. Or rather: Where past generations sought truth, as measured by proof and evidence, the new one seeks truth, as measured by richness of meaning and connection to community. As all of us who live, or aspire to live, halakhic lives agree that they offer abundant meaning and deep communal bonds, there should be no question that the latter lens can support a compelling basis for halakhic adherence. To be sure, as summarized by Rabbi Truboff and Rabbi Dvorkin, Halakhah under Postmodernism, while bound by internal logic, is more natural and interpersonal than academic or systematic. But that may well represent a return to, rather than rejection of, traditional norms.

In fact, or in-practice, the argument can be easily inverted. As described by both Rabbi Perl and Dr. Feldmann Kaye, enforcing an inevitably superficial, or reductive, "amalgamation" as prerequisite to Modern Torah observance creates an exhausting dissonance that has turned off, or pushed away, many from living halakhic lives. As Dr. Feldmann Kaye asks: "Could postmodernism be worse for us than any of these other syntheses?"

Rabbi Eis believes so. He is certainly not alone in his carefully documented fundamental objections to Postmodernism; he stands with contemporary political conservatism, athwart history, yelling "Stop!". While that may be a noble stand, it forces Modern Orthodoxy into an awkward position. Authentic engagement between Torah and any contemporary culture entails danger and has thus always engendered controversy. Criticisms of Rabbi Shagar can be seen to trace in form, if not intensity, historical controversies surrounding *Moreh Nevukhim*. Modern Orthodoxy risks devolving into a more Zionist *Haredi*-ism, on one hand, or Social-Orthodoxy, on the other, if it cowers rather than face them.

Moving beyond pedagogical concerns, Dr. Feldmann Kaye suggests that, "attempting to incorporate the postmodern critique with traditional values" offers something positive, "it allows us to reconceive all sorts of terms afresh." As she summarizes it, the postmodern critique is that "'logical' or 'rational' modes of dialogue…are pretentious 'meta-narratives'…formed and sustained in order to hold power over others' truth-claims, and therefore no singular theory can be entertained as absolutely and objectively 'true.'"

It is in this, its social, or political, framing – which, as often formulated, calls Authority, as much as Truth, into question – that Postmodernism seems most inconsistent with Torah norms. A *frum* Jew cannot treat, or suspect, the Authority of the *Mesorah* as being formed or sustained in order to hold power over others. Still, the postmodern political project which, as generally expressed, seeks to "deconstruct" (traditional) Authority in order to cultivate (historically) suppressed voices is very much in the spirit found in, or even founded by, the call to social justice of Deuteronomy 16:20 and concern for the marginalized demanded by Exodus 22:21. While contemporary Orthodoxy may stand on the principle that Judaism cannot be reduced to social action, it is hard to see how a Modern Orthodoxy that seeks authentic engagement with contemporary culture could fail to also meaningfully incorporate it.

Be that as it may, or to put the political aside, is the Postmodern "disrobing of objective truth" radically inconsistent with Orthodoxy? Dr. Feldmann Kaye raises the remarkable suggestion "that the marriage of objective absolutism and Jewish belief was a category error, one which we are only now beginning to unravel." She suggests the argument that the notion of objective truth is Greek in origin, and postdates the establishment of Jewish civilization.

Whatever the ancient history, with the advent of the modern age, the opposition of Objective and Subjective creates a particular trap for religious thought: In the modern world, if there is any Objective truth, it is Scientific Truth – empirical, quantitative, testable. Religious Truth is clearly not that. Attempts to hold Religious Truth to the standards of Scientific Truth produce creationism, bible codes, and the like. Better is what Rabbi Shagar calls a "Two Worlds" approach, which "establishes a boundary between the internal and the external, between one's faith and the world in which one resides." [13] In its widely adopted

[13] *Id.*, 26.

form, a Two Worlds approach may assert "objective" religious truths, but it does so -- like mountains hung from a hair -- entirely on subjective existentialist ground. It is hard to see how, with any self-awareness, this sort of theology can critique any other as subjective. It is not clear, to take one paradigmatic example, that the writings of Yeshayahu Leibowitz are free, themselves, from any taint of nihilism or, in Rabbi Carmy's potent phrase: worshipping "the Golden Calf of the self."

Or, to restate: Postmodernism may surface, but doesn't create, or cause, a set of problems. Rabbi Carmy describes himself as comfortable, or at least resigned-to, accepting things as not-ideal and moving on. What Rabbi Carmy avoids, Rabbi Shagar acknowledges and – this seems to be the point of contention – embraces. In either case, the elephant – Religious Truth's inability to measure up to the objectivity of Scientific Truth -- remains in the room.

To be sure, while Rabbi Rothstein may insist that "Judaism very much believes that objective truth exists," he does also acknowledge that "there is certainly pluralism in the Torah world as well." He draws the line at the heresy he, perhaps unfairly, ascribes to postmodernists and Rav Shagar that "all views have some legitimacy."

To add personal color: I experienced with Rabbi Perl, "the cultural climate of a university campus at the turn of the millennium, with its unrelenting emphasis on deconstruction and relativism, its wholesale embrace of previously countercultural social mores." For me, coming from a more *Haredi* milieu, this climate, at least intellectually, resonated (at the time, I might have said "*shtimmed*") with, rather than challenged, my Yeshiva education.

For example: Deconstruction was introduced as the notion that the meaning of a text wasn't limited to authorial intent which, in turn, brought readily to mind a Yeshivish joke (which itself mirrored *Menahot* 29b) involving Rambam meeting Reb Chaim Brisker in *Gan Eden,* complimenting him on the latter's creative readings of *Mishneh Torah*, but insisting they had absolutely nothing to do with anything he meant. More substantively, from *Seder* to *Seder* the meaning of a line in *Rashi* or *Tosafot* could be, as prescribed by *Ben Bag Bag,* thoroughly rotated and inverted. (Later in life I encountered Levinas' pregnant description: "the process of rubbing the text to make it spurt blood,"[14] "to arrive at the life it conceals.") *Elu ve-elu*, was understood to mean, not just, as Rabbi Rothstein would have it, that all these differing and conflicting potentialities each "captured elements of truth", rather that they each stood, independently, as *Emet La-Amitah shel Torah.* Which is to say that Torah Truth, so far as we can make out, can be fractured and conflicting. While this "pluralism" was not without limits – *hiddush*, central to the activity within the *Beit Midrash,* was understood to be *Asur min Ha-Torah* without – there is no questioning the place of *Talmud Torah* within any Torah perspective.

[14] Emmanuel Levinas, "The Temptation of Temptation ," in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 46.

Rabbi Perl astutely locates a nexus in Halakhah-as-a-model. Halakhah, in the context of my yeshiva education, was less than an afterthought. The codification of Halakhah was viewed as, at best, *et la'asot*; it is only unfortunate necessity that compels collapsing the universe of conflicting meaning hovering above the Talmudic text – its *shiv'im panim* – into one, narrow, authoritative halakhic norm. The halakhic system was seen, not as some paragon of systematic determinism, but as, to some degree, localized and arbitrary. Or, more precisely: one found Halakhah not by systematically applying logical rules, but in *aseh lekha rav* and the physical activity of consulting a *posek*. One was bound to Halakhah, not by the force of its logic, but by the manner Halakhah, in turn, links to Community and *Mesorah*. To recall the old controversy: *Da'at Torah* is plainly inextricable from this halakhic process (a *posek*, in the absence of deterministic guidance, ultimately has no alternative but to rely on his sense of *Da'at Torah* in order to *pasken*), in a way that the Modern Orthodox, with their protractors, could never grok.

Above all: the encounter with Postmodernism, for me, was a breath of fresh air, disarming the cultural pressure to demonstrate, or prove, my faith, for which there was never authentic response, while emphasizing and valuing precisely what my yeshiva education emphasized and valued. I later came to understand that this was no coincidence: Philosophic Postmodernism arose, in part, as a rebellion against the stricture of the same Scientific-Objectivity that ensnarled religion.

To be clear, in concluding, none of this is to suggest that the broadly aligned concerns articulated around the nature of an Orthodoxy inspired by Rabbi Shagar's neo-Hasidism are misplaced. As Leo Strauss, *havruta* of (Nechama) Leibowitz, lecturer at the original *Lehrhaus* and, while not himself Orthodox, perhaps the first teacher of Postmodern Orthodoxy cautioned: "The victory of orthodoxy through the self-destruction of rational philosophy was not an unmitigated blessing, for it was the victory, not of Jewish orthodoxy, but of any orthodoxy, and Jewish orthodoxy based its claim to superiority to other religions from the beginning on its superior rationality (Deut. 4:6)."[15]

Marc Dworkin is a software developer who lives in Manhattan with his family.

[15] Leo Strauss, "Preface to Spinoza's Critique of Religion," in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought- Leo Strauss*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany State University of New York Press, 1997), 172.

The Earth-Shattering Faith of Rav Shagar

Zach Truboff

(EDITORS' NOTE: This article was originally published by The Lehrhaus *on July 3, 2017. It has been republished in conjunction with Marc Dworkin's article on Rav Shagar, and in celebration of Zach Truboff's recent aliyah to Israel, where Rav Shagar lived and taught throughout his lifetime.)*

To read Rav Shagar is to encounter a thinker unlike any that American, Modern Orthodox Jews are familiar with. His writings seek to address the most pressing intellectual, spiritual, and cultural issues of the day by mining the depths of Hasidut and Kabbalah, along with modern and postmodern philosophy. A new collection of his translated essays, Faith Shattered and Restored, arrives at a good time, as Modern Orthodoxy in America is in the midst of an identity crisis as it struggles to navigate its inner contradictions in the twenty-first century.

Torn between the truths of Torah and contemporary culture, many in Modern Orthodoxy feel the tension can only be resolved by choosing one or the other. In Rav Shagar they will find a teacher who understands this dilemma on a deeply personal and existential level, yet remains committed to authentically living in both worlds. His teachings represent a powerful model of engaging the broader intellectual currents within which one lives while maintaining an unyielding commitment to Torah. Collecting nearly a dozen of his most significant essays, this new book is an excellent effort to make his writings accessible to an English-speaking audience. The book's subtitle, "Judaism in the Postmodern Age," evokes the awareness that answers from the past are no longer sufficient to address the challenges of the current moment.

Who was Rav Shagar?

Born one year after the establishment of the State of Israel to Holocaust survivors, Rav Shagar's world was sharply defined by contradictions. His was the first generation to grow up with the State of Israel as a spiritual reality, and he deeply felt its redemptive possibilities. Nevertheless, as a second generation Holocaust Survivor, the traumas of the *Shoah* were never far from his spiritual consciousness. He attended prominent religious Zionist schools as a child, followed by Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, the first yeshiva to combine Torah study with army service.

However, as was typical at that time, most of the teachers were *haredi*. Despite his commitment to Religious Zionism, Rav Shagar would retain a deep appreciation for the love of Torah and religious passion that is characteristic of the *haredi* world. While still a student in yeshiva, Rav Shagar was called up to fight in the Yom Kippur War. In the early days of

combat his tank was hit by Syrian fire, killing two members of his crew and leaving him seriously injured. Despite having been raised on the messianic dreams of Religious Zionism, the pain of the war left its mark on him, teaching him that faith can be neither simple nor absolutely certain. At a young age, he was invited to teach at Yeshivat HaKotel, where he would begin his path of innovative Torah study. Rav Shagar's efforts centered around methodologies of teaching and learning, which prioritized questions of meaning alongside a serious engagement with Hasidic and academic thought. Feeling constrained by the limits of traditional yeshivot, Rav Shagar would go on to found a series of trailblazing institutions such as the Mekor Hayim yeshiva, Maale *beit midrash*, and Beit Morasha. Rav Shagar's dedication to education made him particularly sensitive to the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual challenges of the younger generation, and he saw himself as responsible for addressing their concerns. Each one of his institutions was known for its attempt to combine traditional yeshiva study with disparate elements, including Hasidic spirituality, academic studies, and artistic creativity.

These goals were seen as revolutionary, if not inconceivable, by mainstream Religious Zionist *yeshivot*. In 1997, ten years before he died, he would found his final institution, Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak. Earlier in his life, Rav Shagar had been drawn to existentialist philosophers, but it was in his later years that he delved most deeply into the dilemmas and opportunities posed by postmodernism. His final years were perhaps his most creative and productive; all the essays in *Faith Shattered and Restored* come from this period of time.

It's important to note that Rav Shagar's writings are not systematic, but explore key religious and philosophical questions from a variety of different perspectives. Many of the essays were adapted from his recorded lectures or edited together from his notes after his death. Consequently, they have a patchwork quality to them, but they also retain the raw power of being in the room with a thinker still in the midst of working out his or her ideas. Each essay within the book is overflowing with insight and even his digressions can be extremely thought provoking.

Rav Shagar and Postmodernism

The term postmodernism is one of the most debated and confusing to emerge in recent decades. Associated with French thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jean-François Lyotard, it is accused of everything from obscurantism to nihilistic relativism. Without wading into the thicket of academic debate on the issue, it is perhaps most constructive to utilize the definition offered by Rav Shagar. He explains that postmodernism "is, at bottom, not so much a philosophical theory as a mode of life and a state of consciousness—a cultural situation some would even say. At its root is a loss of faith in grand narrative, in metaphysical goals, and in comprehensive theories" (85).

Postmodernism, however, did not limit its critique only to political and economic ideologies, but in fact sought to prove that the construction of all knowledge was subject to unseen biases and prejudices that rendered the idea of objective truth a fallacy. In Rav Shagar's words, postmodernism rejects the absolute certainty of modernity and brings about the sense that, "There is no truth, certainly not with a capital T. In such a word, truth is a cultural product or artifact. Every truth hinges on specific cultural contexts and is perceived as something that benefits specific interests" (106).

Rav Shagar's engagement with postmodernism can best be understood in light of broader developments within Israeli society over the last few decades. (See Baruch Kahana's survey of the response to postmodernism in Israeli religious thought.) While postmodernism has perhaps had a more limited influence on American culture, its impact has been strongly felt in Israel. This is a direct result of modern Israel having been built upon one of the most successful Jewish grand narratives of the twentieth century, namely Zionism. For decades, the story Israel told itself was one of pioneering, heroism, and faith in the superiority of the Jewish state and its institutions.

The miraculous victory of the Six Day War seemed like the ultimate confirmation of this narrative; yet, it would begin to unravel just a few years later with the failures of the Yom Kippur War and the collapse of secular Ashkenazi political and cultural dominance. It was further challenged by the New Historians of the 1980s and 1990s, who produced research claiming that perhaps Israel was not as righteous as it had perceived itself during its half century long conflict with the Palestinians. There is no question that the effects of postmodernism can be felt across Israeli society today. Israel has become significantly more fragmented and many have come to question the underpinnings of Zionism long taken for granted. Some have even argued that Israel has entered a period of post-Zionism.

Postmodernism's criticism of grand narratives and objective truth presents a particularly strong challenge to Orthodox Judaism. The instinctive response from a traditional religious perspective is to view postmodernism as *kefira*, heresy, of the highest order; nevertheless, Rav Shagar explains that this was not an option for him. He writes "I do not intend to sanctify Postmodernism, and I do not wish to hide from its problems. However, the Postmodernism position is not at all marginal; it exerts its influence throughout society. We must come to terms with it." In his engagement with postmodernism, he saw himself as following in the footsteps of Rav Kook who was able to redeem the holy sparks found in the heresies of modernity, "Walking the path of Hasidim and Rabbi Kook, I will be able to identify the divine in all things, without devaluing my own faith, but rather reinforcing it" (117).

Rav Shagar did not have any formal academic training and was instead self-taught. He does not approach postmodern thought with the eyes of an expert scholar, which serves to liberate

him from the dogmatic thinking one sometime finds in academia. The chapters directly engaging with the most challenging ideas of postmodernism are "Living with Nothingness," "Justice and Ethics in a Postmodern World," and "Mysticism, Postmodernism, and the New Age."

Rav Shagar argues that it is postmodernism's denial of objective truth that allows for new religious opportunities. Instead of leading to meaninglessness, the loss of absolute certainty can open one up to a mystical perspective. Rav Shagar explains that "In kabbalistic and hasidic terms, postmodernism reveals the *ayin*, or nothingness: Truth has no metaphysical mooring in heaven above, no bedrock to bear it upon the earth below" (92). In Kabbalah, the concept of *ayin* is used to describe God's infinite nature, which transcends human comprehension and functions as the very beginning of the *sefirot*. In the words of Daniel Matt, "Everything emerges from the depths of *ayin* and everything eventually returns there … Since God's being is incomprehensible and ineffable, the least offensive and most accurate description one can offer is, paradoxically speaking, *nothing*." Postmodernism enables us to grasp this mystical concept in ways unappreciated before. "Stacked up against the divine infinitude, everything is absolutely equal—not equally valuable, but equally paltry. The innovation of postmodernism lies in turning the godly perspective into a human one" (96).

Rav Shagar further develops this idea through the thought of Rabbi Nahman of Breslov, one of his rabbinic heroes. Again and again throughout his writings, he returns to Rabbi Nahman's most famous teaching that there is an unsolvable contradiction at the heart of the existence. Rooted in Lurianic creation myth, Rabbi Nahman explains that an infinite God has no choice but to engage in *tzimtzum*, self-contraction, in order to make a space for creation. However, the act of *tzimtum* has a radical consequence. It creates the *halal ha-panui*, a void that is empty of God. Paradoxically, creation exists both in the void absent of God and yet must be fully part of the Divine, for how can anything exist separate and apart from God? Rav Shagar likens this to our current moment, in which postmodernism shows all truths to be subjective while traditional faith demands that Torah and Judaism are objectively true.

Such a paradox, Rabbi Nahman cautions, cannot be resolved on the intellectual plane, and instead it must be approached with a silence that embodies both humility and faith. It is a silence that requires one to live with contradiction rather than resolution. Though it may be felt as rupture, silence also contains the possibility of transcendent meaning. Through silence, the religious believer "vaults over the paradoxical conundrums of the *halal hapanui* without obscuring or running from them" (99). As Rav Shagar describes it, a religious believer in the postmodern era "is willing to concede that truth is a human construct, because he knows that human constructs are true creations, manifestations of God in a world that is "filled with His glory," rather than an empty meaningless game" (116). In the end, "The doubting of faith's universal absoluteness—postmodernism excels at this—has a balancing, productive role: It does not stifle our capacity to experience and believe in ourselves, but it

does generate boundaries. The postmodern believer's awareness of the contradictions between various faiths, and of the paradoxes inherent in his own world, can stabilize him, rendering him more sensitive, ethical, and humble" (117).

Rebuilding the Shattered Vessels: The Reinterpretation of Tradition

Rav Shagar fervently argues that another key feature of postmodernism is its potential to breathe new life into traditional religious ideas by allowing them to be reinterpreted in new and exciting ways. Citing the Lurianic creation myth of the broken vessels, Rav Shagar explains that postmodern hermeneutics such as deconstruction aim to show that "human creative works are never brought forth *ex nihilo*, but are always adaptations of elements from earlier works, which is why every such creation can be deconstructed and then reconstructed differently" (128). Instead of seeing such reinterpretations and translations as fundamentally destructive, they must instead be viewed as attempts to take traditional religious concepts and "make them supple, thus opening up new pathways for inspiration and illumination" (128). In affirming this, Rav Shagar is not different from earlier Modern Orthodox thinkers such as Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik who reinterpreted traditional concepts of prayer and *teshuvah* in a modernist tone by demonstrating how they could reflect ideas of self-discovery and self-transformation. Whereas Rabbi Soloveitchik utilized Maimonides along with Neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, and mid-twentieth century existentialism, Rav Shagar turns to kabbalah, Hasidut, and postmodern thinkers. He embraces mystical language because of its inherent flexibility and capacity to render the world according to the contradictions, paradoxes, and ironies that postmodernism reveals. *Faith Shattered and Restored* demonstrates several examples of this in which Rav Shagar explores issues such as love and marriage, freedom, and the relation between the self and society.

Two essays in particular stand out for their relevance to Modern Orthodox life. "Religious Life in the Modern Age" and "Seventy Bullocks and One Sukkah" grapple with two of the critical issues that have come to define Modern Orthodoxy; its approach to *halakhah* and the modern State of Israel, both of which have not been without dispute. Unlike those to its left, Modern Orthodoxy maintains a traditional commitment to *halakhah* and rabbinic authority, and, unlike those to its right, it views the State of Israel as having great religious significance. Rav Shagar argues that postmodernism can help Modern Orthodoxy understand these issues in new and important ways.

In the essay "Religious Life in the Modern Age," Rav Shagar defends the integrity of *halakhah* in the face of historical and sociological criticism. His goal is similar to Rabbi Soloveitchik's defense of *halakhah*; however, Rav Shagar argues that *halakhah* need not depend on absolute metaphysical truths. Rather, postmodern thought shows how *halakhah* is best viewed as a language whose fluency grants one's life transcendent meaning. (See further discussion of this theme in Tamar Ross's essay, "Religious Belief in a Postmodern Age.) He quotes Rav

Nahman's description of *halakhah* as the orderly flow of blood pouring through our veins, and it is this blood flow that provides a living framework for our very existence.

Rav Shagar explains that "We learn from Rabbi Nahman that halakha, the Jewish way of life, constructs a world through which one can come to know God—faith becomes a concrete fact of one's life … It is an order that elicits thanks—for the fact that it is halakha that provides the world with a framework of life, stability, and meaning and, one might add, an acknowledgement of truth: of the existence of God and the religious way of life" (49). Rav Shagar turns to Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language in order to ground this assertion. Wittgenstein claimed that no language is meant to be understood as an absolute representation of reality. Rather, language is a collection of words and symbols which are "derived from the lifestyles of those who employ it, and from their lifestyles it derives its significance" (49). In this sense, language has the ability to shape our very perception of reality. Rav Shagar applies this insight to *halakhah*, which "Like every language … constructs a world with its own set of laws, establishing meanings and connotations that derive their power from the halakhic lifestyle" (52).

The only difference is that "when it comes to the halakhic language game, these meanings go beyond mere mundane human meanings, establishing a divine ideal—holiness—striven for by human action" (52). To illustrate this point, he offers the following: He once saw a man buy *hallah* from a bakery in Jerusalem on *erev* Shabbat. Instead of setting it aside to eat at the Shabbat table, the man shocked Rav Shagar when he immediately tore into it and devoured it right outside the store. To Rav Shagar, "the halla is not merely a loaf of bread; its context turns it into something entirely different—a Shabbat halla, one whose very flavor differs from that of commonplace, weekday bread." By eating in such a fashion, the man was profaning its potential holiness. Rav Shagar elaborates that the power of halakhic language to shape our perception of reality "is the meaning of the kabbalists' statements about the words of the Torah raising up and sanctifying physical objects: Language structures the world, and the words of the language of the Torah—the halakhot, blessings, and prayers—sanctify objects, including halla" (52).

Such an approach has significant ramifications for the nature of halachic change. On the one hand, it accounts for the ways in which *halakhah* evolves over time, "For, like other languages, the halakhic language is dynamic, adapting itself to time and place, enabling a variety of expressions" (54). However, Wittgenstein also argues that each language has its own internal grammar and logic that cannot be judged from the outside. Fluency depends not only on using the proper words but also on internalizing a language's inner culture. Rav Shagar thus concludes that a group of Jews cannot be considered Orthodox if "they are unwilling to accept and play the halakhic language game as is, instead subjecting it to external criticism and an external values scale, in light of which they update it" (55).

In the essay "Seventy Bullocks and One Sukka," Rav Shagar attempts to broaden the traditional Religious Zionist narrative and implicitly acknowledges the failure of Religious Zionism to recognize the religious significance of Exile and universalism. Religious Zionism's exclusive focus on Israel can be traced to the grand narrative of Rav Kook's teachings, in which the Land of Israel is at the center. However, the dissolution of grand narratives enables Rav Shagar to see a more complex picture in which the Diaspora is also an authentic expression of Jewish existence. In doing so, he offers an interpretation that may be appealing to Religious Zionists who live in America and have no plans to make *aliyah*. Basing himself on the Maharal, he explains that the Jewish people unquestionably have an essential connection with the Land of Israel, yet the fact that they were able to sustain themselves through two thousand years of dispersion across the world indicates that universalism is also part of their nature. Rav Shagar further explains that, "Indeed, the entire world is their place, they are cosmopolitan, and their state of dispersion is a function of their virtue…. Its place is beyond geography, and its identity transcends the constricted boundaries of nationhood" (181). The *sukkah* is a unique symbol that demonstrates the ways in which Diaspora and the Land of Israel must dwell together along with universalism and nationalism. The *sukkah* is a symbol of exile because it requires us to leave our secure home and all that is comfortable.

However, it is also a profound symbol of the Land of Israel because it is deeply connected with the agricultural cycle. Rav Shagar writes that, "The insecurity of the Diaspora must deeply inform our confidence as the inheritors of the land. Otherwise, confidence will degenerate into hubris, into the sense that all is due to 'my power and the might of my hand'" (185). It is essential for nationalism "if it is not to turn rigid and callous, it must be tempered by universalism" (186). The same is also true in reverse for without nationalism, universalism can be dangerous. It can turn into "an abstraction in that it "makes" all human beings identical, effacing the very real differences between people" (186).

Rav Shagar finds insights from the writings of Franz Rosenzweig and Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek to help elucidate how Jewish nationalism and universalism can coexist. Rosenzweig speaks about the Jewish people as "*she'erit ya'akov*," the remainder of Jacob. Jews inevitably are both rooted and transient in ways unlike other peoples. Rosenzweig writes that the individual Jew "is always somehow one who remains, an inside whose outside was seized by the river of the world and driven off, whilst he himself, that which remains of him, remains standing on the shore" (187). To be a remainder is to be "the extra piece of the puzzle. Mathematically speaking, it is the remainder left without a "place" after division" (187). In the words of Zizek, it is to be "a foreign body within the social texture, in all dimensions" (187). This position of Other is quintessentially Jewish and is a necessary consequence of a Jewish nationalism oriented towards transcendence. Rav Shagar explains that "In cleaving to the Torah, the Jew alienated himself from a world that relies on the natural order, and from the spaces of all nations, thus, by dint of his alienation, becoming

Other" (188). The "remainder" therefore acts as a constant reminder of the uniqueness of every individual and stands as a rejection of uniformity.

Sukkot is a holiday that brings all these contradictions together and shows the potential for their resolution. It is both true that the Jews are a nation that dwells apart and that all nations still come to Jerusalem in order to worship God on Sukkot. By dwelling in the *sukkah*, Jews celebrate both the harvest season of the Land of Israel and the experience of Exile.

Is Rav Shagar Relevant to American Modern Orthodoxy?

Those who dismiss postmodernism as a passing phase will have little patience for Rav Shagar's writings. Instead, they will retreat into tradition, drifting ever further towards religious fundamentalism. For others, this may not be an option. Postmodernism's impact can be felt on a variety of levels, and one need look no further than our fractured political discourse to see that objective truth can no longer be taken for granted. The ground is shifting underneath the Jewish community as well. More and more young Jews eschew the idea of denominational labels, viewing them as remnants of a bygone era whose narratives no longer capture their lived experiences.

Modern Orthodoxy can only thrive under such conditions when it sustains an authentic engagement between Torah and contemporary culture. It cannot rely only on models from the past that may no longer be relevant for today's generation. Rivka Press Schwartz, a scholar and veteran Modern Orthodox educator, recently offered a harsh but correct critique that Modern Orthodoxy "has frozen its conception of religiously permissible Madda at that which the Rav engaged at the University of Berlin in the 1920s (or, perhaps, with that which Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein engaged at Harvard of the 1950s.) In this, it is reminiscent of an aging Albert Einstein, whose comfort with modern physics ended with his Theory of General Relativity but never extended to the indeterminism and seeming senselessness of quantum theory."

Rav Shagar dedicated his life to showing that the kind of engagement described by Schwartz is not only possible but necessary. In the last letter Rav Shagar wrote to his students before his passing, he explains that "The word "and," so typical of the national religious movement—yeshiva *and* military service; yeshiva *and* academia; Torah *and* secular studies—does not represent an artificial synthesis, and certainly not, as some have alleged, a sort of idolatry by association. It should be interpreted in the vein of Franz Rosenzweig, who described the "and" as the keystone that supports the entire edifice and imbues it with meaning" (xiii). Now, more than ever, the "and" must be embraced and made a central part of Modern Orthodox identity.

In a beautiful essay on Hanukkah that is not included in this volume, Rav Shagar writes (*Leha'ir Et ha-Petahim*, 204) that, "For better we are citizens of multiple cultures and live in

more than one world of values. We are not able and also we do not want to deny this situation because this denial is a self-falsification that will cause radical and profound damage to religious faith itself." He further clarifies (*Leha'ir Et ha-Petahim*, 201-2) that "This is not a double identity in which one is half religious and half secular for the price of a double identity is superficiality or even self-deception. Rather it is an identity that lives the duality as a creative tension and as a religious tension … Each one of the worlds appears in their full essence, and as the distance between them grows so too does the explosive religious power found in the encounter between these two different foundations." The essays in *Faith Shattered and Restored* draw the reader into the explosive religious power that Rav Shagar describes. Modern Orthodoxy in America will only benefit from further exposure to his teachings.

Zachary Truboff is rabbi of Cedar Sinai Synagogue in Cleveland, Ohio and an officer of the International Rabbinic Fellowship. He studied and taught at the Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem and received semikha from HaRav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. He received an additional semikha and professional training from Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School.