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THE RAV AT JUBILEE: AN APPRECIATION

Any account, testimonial or critical, of the significance of a major spiritual figure must refer to two intersecting axes: the vertical and the horizontal. On the one hand, he is to be perceived within his own field, as a laborer in its vineyards—relating in part to current peers, but as a link in a historical chain, to be measured primarily against predecessors and successors. On the other hand, he is to be regarded within the ambience of his broader contemporary milieu, with which he interacts and upon which he presumably impacts.

This point is particularly salient with respect to *moreinu ve-rabbeinu*, the Rav *z.t.l.*, inasmuch as this dichotomy dovetails with a second distinction, pertinent to the Rav generally, and to his first major work, *Ish haHalakha*, particularly. The Rav always had, of course, a penchant for positing antitheses and antinomies; and one of these—classically rooted in *Hazal* and *rishonim*, and constituting a major crux of general religious thought—was the relation of *talmud* and *ma'ase*. Throughout *Ish haHalakha,* a dual—at times, even an ambivalent—attitude obtains with respect to the issue. At one juncture, we read:

> And when many halakhic concepts do not correspond with the phenomena of the real world, halakhic man is not at all distressed. His deepest desire is not the realization of the Halakhah but rather the ideal construction which was given to him from Sinai, and this ideal construction exists forever.

Indeed, disengagement is idealized even with reference to Torah activity proper, so that abstinence from *pesak* is not just reluctantly countenanced but virtually celebrated:

> The foundation of foundations and the pillar of halakhic thought is not the practical ruling but the determination of the theoretical Halakhah. Therefore, many of the greatest halakhic men avoided and still avoid serving in rabbinical posts. They rather join themselves to the group of those who are reluctant to render practical decisions . . . The theoretical

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> Halakhah, not the practical decision, the ideal creation, not the empirical one, represent the longing of halakhic man.[1]

This formulation is fully consistent with the Volozhin tradition's emphasis upon *Torah li-shma*, on the one hand, and with an ardent interest in the abstruse abstractions of neo-Kantian metaphysics and epistemology, on the other. Yet, elsewhere, a very different chord is struck. At one point, *talmud* and *ma'ase* are defined, objectively, as twin coordinates of halakhic existence:

> If a Jew lives in accordance with the Halakhah (and a life in accordance with the Halakhah means, first, the comprehension of the Halakhah per se, and, second, comparing the ideal Halakhah and the real world—the act of realization of the Halakhah), then he shall find redemption.[2]

Indeed, at one point, realization seems to be regarded as the ultimate telos, to which instrumental study is possibly subordinate:

> Halakhic man does not long for a transcendent world, for "supernal" levels of a pure, pristine existence, for was not the ideal world—halakhic man's deepest desire, his darling child—created only for the purpose of being actualized in our real world?[3]

At the subjective plane, similarly, practical implementation is described as a desideratum of Halakhic man—perhaps, as *the* desideratum: "Halakhic man implements the Torah without any compromises or concessions, for precisely such implementation, such actualization is his ultimate desire, his fondest dream."[4]

This antithesis—ultimately, I believe, unresolved in the essay—is reflected in the Rav's life as well. As he and his father *z.t.l.* spent days and long winter nights by the hearth of the Khaslavitch *bet ha-midrash*, poring over the niceties of *hatfasa bi-shvua* or of *holakhat ha-ketoret beYom haKippurim*, could any flight of the imagination have led either to envision him as battling, in later years, for the welfare of as yet ununionized *shohetim*, scraping to meet weekly Maimonides School salary deadlines, or regularly addressing RCA or Mizrachi conventions? Yet, both aspects, the contemplative and the active, engaged the Rav throughout; and each, as well as their interaction, must be discussed in any survey of his achievement.

Between the distinctions I have posited, there is, to be sure, no correspondence. There is, however, a measure of correlation—the world of *ma'ase* being viewed primarily with reference to the contem-

porary, while that of *talmud* looks before and after. Beginning, then, with the vertical axis, we focus initially upon the Rav's place within the historical continuum of *hakhmei ha-mesora*. His role in this capacity is itself dual, spanning the realms of halakha and *mahshava* respectively. I believe that his position with respect to both differs markedly, however. Any objective description of the Rav as a *gadol* in the world of "learning" begins perforce by referring to his place within the Brisker tradition—begins, that is, by positing that in this sphere, he has not so much innovated a course as pursued one. The element of *hiddush*—as measured, say, against the achievement of the Rav's grandfather, Reb Haym, or of a Rabbeinu Tam—is, therefore, in a meaningful sense, constricted.

This is, of course, stated without the slightest trace of deprecation. By definition, genuine methodological innovation in any field is unusual—all the more so in the Torah world, so oriented to *mesora*; and it would be singularly rare for a person reared, like the Rav, in a highly self-conscious and articulate tradition, at a stage at which one could yet meet its founder. Moreover, excessively frequent sharp methodological shifts are, from an overall perspective, not only unlikely but undesirable, the value of novelty being very much a function of its historical context. Surely, however, such radical originality is not the litmus test of intellectual greatness—within the Torah world, or elsewhere. Does anyone challenge the credentials of Rash of Sens or Rashba simply because they trod in the footsteps of Ri or Ramban, respectively?

If the Rav did not found a tradition, he certainly proved himself, within the parameters of the Brisker mode in which he was reared, a remarkable *me-haddesh*. Over the years, the Rav's creative powers awed *talmidim* repeatedly and, more than any other factor, charged the atmosphere of so many *shiurim*. The fusion of imagination and precision, of energized sweep and rigorous discipline, continually resolved cruces and informed insights. At its most electric, however, it enlarged the bound of halakhic empire by enriching its lexicon with fresh concepts. Ideas such as the *safek* of *tarti de-satri*—doubt resulting from unresolved tension of conflicting elements rather than lack of knowledge—or of *mitsvot* whose *kiyyum* is inwardly experiential although their implementation entails a normatively mandated physical act, may perhaps be retrospectively traced to some inchoate precedents. Unquestionably, however, as developed concepts, they bear the Rav's stamp, and it was he who implanted them within the Torah world.

Moreover, his creative energies ranged far afield. He was instrumental in significantly extending the scope of *lomdut*, particularly with

respect to many areas of *Orah Hayyim*. What the Rav said of Reb Haym—that he had transmuted the *siddur* from the preserve of *shamashim* and *ba'alei batim* into the domain of *talmidei hakhamim*—was even truer of himself.

And yet, at bottom, the Rav's achievement in the realm of halakha, remarkable as it was, bore fruit within a familiar field, one Reb Haym had tilled and sown; and he acknowledged this readily and gratefully. The situation is quite different with respect to the sphere of *mahshava*. The areas of experience explored, the mode and level of inquiry, the resources employed, the problems formulated, above all, the ideas and emotions expressed—these indeed, constitute, conjunctively, a new departure. As regards halakha, the Rav's achievement had, at least, analogues within the panoply of his peers—especially among those who moved within a common orbit and, hence, paralleled some of his *hiddushim*. None, however, even remotely approached the range and depth, the subtlety and complexity, of his *mahshava*. And it was truly his—neither an extension nor an expansion of an existing defined tradition, but genuine innovation. After one has peeled away some of the homiletic component, for which there was ample precedent, so much of his work—and, particularly, the entire constellation—remains remarkably original, as regards both form and substance. Raw material he, of course, mined from many sources; but he was, in no sense, eclectic, and the product bore the imprint of his innermost thought and being. If there have been recent significantly comparable antecedents in the Torah world, I am unaware of them. Only Rav Kook, with whose views the Rav agreed in certain areas but from which he diverged sharply in others, provides any basis for comparison; and both his primary concerns and his philosophic focus were very different. With regard to some aspects of the Rav's work, there were, of course, analogues in general culture, and this is obviously of interest to students of his thought or to intellectual historians at large. However, for *benei Torah*, in quest of spiritual direction, this fact does little to alter our perception of the uniqueness of the Rav's total *hashkafa* and experience.

His contribution was particularly significant at the interface of his two primary interests—in his attempt to formulate and enunciate a philosophy of halakha. The attempt is not, of course, novel; but its undertaking by a *gadol* of the first rank, endowed with a rigorous philosophic training, is—at least, in the modern period—most striking. In approaching the issue, the Rav evidenced traces of both rationalism and fideism—and yet, in the spirit of *na'ase ve-nishma*, transcended both. While seeking, in a sense, to interpret halakha in terms of general categories, he had

little propensity for *ta'amei ha-mitsvot* in the tradition of, say, the *Sefer haHinukh* or Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch. For one thing, he eschewed the recourse to utilitarian considerations, if not the outright apologetics, which often typify this tradition. Rather, he persistently stressed that while the halakhic regimen is, as the Torah describes it, ultimately, *le-tov lakh*, its short- and intermediate-term message is that of demand and sacrifice. Beyond this, however, he had no predilection for explaining—much less, explaining away—the nitty-gritty of minutiae, and manifested no sense of responsibility to do so. He preferred, instead, broader vistas—addressing himself to overarching concerns, delineating underlying assumptions and ultimate goals, positing values and direction, defining the nature and thrust of halakha as a normative order. In doing so, he sought—in the spirit of a much-cherished analogy to modern science—to focus upon the "what" rather than the "why." He insisted upon rigorous analysis of a halakha, in its own legal terms, as a prerequisite to philosophizing about it; and he differentiated, radically, between rationale as extraneous to a mitsvah and that which may be of its woof and warp.

The enterpise is, admittedly, at times, delicately balanced. The Rav was vehement in rejecting the intrusion of subjective pseudo-philosophic explanations as an instrument of interpreting objective halakhic material. And yet, with respect to mitsvot whose halakhic essence itself bears moral or theological import—*tefilla* is a prime example—the Rav's own *hiddushim* clearly reflect his philosophic orientation. He insisted, vigorously, upon the autonomy of halakha, regarding as quasi-heretical attempts to ascribe its content to historical, sociological, or psychological factors. And yet, the very notion of a "philosophy of halakha" entails, by definition, viewing—although not, of course, judging—*devar Hashem* through the prism of universal categories. Moreover, the use of detail—to which recourse may be had to buttress a thesis but which can be neutralized, fideistically, as technical and inscrutable when inconsonant with it—opens up the charge of selectivity.

These issues are legitimate concerns, and certainly need to be addressed in any serious analysis of the Rav's work. And yet, delicate or not, balance there is. The fundamental difference between a philosophic orientation which is grounded upon halakha and that which is imposed upon it, is clear. Even if, as applied to borderline cases, the distinction is nice, it is, nevertheless, conceptually sharp. Fine though the line may be at times, the Rav regarded it as a Rubicon. Unless mandated by the raw halakhic data proper, he was consistently wary of sacrificing formal to teleological considerations. Whether with respect to *bein adam la-Makom* or *bein adam la-havero*, he rejected, categorically, inclinations

to substitute contextual for normative thinking—unless, again, there was built-in flexibility within the halakhic base. Hence, he enriched our Torah world with a philosophic perception which is both authentic and insightful. The Rav's was an authoritative voice, elucidating the substance of halakha, in all its ramifications, on the one hand, and relating it to general axiological and human concerns, whether personal or collective, on the other. In so doing, he broke fresh ground and put us all very much in his debt.

Sheer novelty or even singularity apart, what, in the Rav's thought and expression, has so powerfully gripped us? In part, of course, the force of his charismatic personality—especially as we have, at times, been alternately overwhelmed and enchanted by it, in the course of mesmerizing *derashot* and stimulating *shiurim*. Ultimately, however, his hold upon us has been far more substantive. W.B. Yeats once commented that a person writes rhetoric about his struggles with others and poetry about his struggles with himself. As an orator, the Rav had no peer in the Torah world. But it is the poet in him which has so touched and enthralled us. He has opened for us new vistas of spiritual experience, vistas within which the drama of human existence, in the form of confrontation with oneself, the cosmos, and, above all, the *Ribbono Shel Olam*—all within the context of halakhic existence in its most rigorous Brisker formulation—is charged with hitherto unperceived force and meaning. It is not as if we had engaged in the quest of *U-Vikkashtem miSham* and had faltered. We had simply never thought in those categories. It is not as if we had felt tremulous anxiety as lonely men and women, but in a minor chord. Mired in the pursuit of mundane daily concerns of faith, most of us had simply never confronted that reality. The Rav did. What we have missed, he experienced—in terms of the dichotomy so cherished by him—at both ends of the scale: *gadlut ha-mohin*, the depth and force of a powerful mind mastering its environment and impacting upon it, and that of *katnut ha-mohin*, the simplicity of the child—not as the epitome of intuited holistic existence idealized by the Romantics, but as the archetype of a helpless humble spirit groping towards his Father and seeking solace in Him and through Him.

Something of that experience he, through various channels, communicated to us; and, in so doing, he has sensitized us to the need for a fuller dimension of our own *avodat Hashem*. Flashes of what he saw and showed both engage and haunt us; chords of what he heard and said resonate in our ears; strains of what he felt palpitate in our hearts. Beyond detail, however, we have been gripped and stirred by *demut diyukno shel rabbeinu*—magisterial but sensitive, winsome and yet, ultimately, in-

scrutable—and his spiritual odyssey. At home we have hanging one picture of the Rav with an engaging smile on his face; another of him, bent over pensively, with a somber, almost brooding expression. In looking at the latter, I am frequently reminded of Wordsworth's portrayal of the statue "Of Newton with his prism and silent face, / The marble index of a mind for ever / Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone." Only not just a mind but a soul, not just thought but experience, and, above all, not marble, but a passionate human spirit.

From the realm of *talmud*, broadly conceived, we move to that of *ma'ase*. Some of the Rav's activity in this sphere might be perceived as *askanut*—quasi-political, in a sense, and yet of genuine spiritual import. Two instances spring to mind immediately. The first is his stand vis-a-vis the Conservative and Reform movements. Hearing some current dilettantes, one might get the impression that the most eloquent and vigorous statement the Rav made with respect to the non-Orthodox was his protracted silence about the Synagogue Council of America. But those who remember the 50's accurately know better. Who issued the radical *pesak* that, if one had to choose between forgoing *tekiat shofar* and hearing it in attendance at a mixed temple, he should opt for the former? Who, in the public mind, gave Orthodoxy intellectual respectability and credibility in its confrontation with other movements? To whom did *me-tukanim she-ba-hem*, right-wing Conservative rabbis seeking to stem the tide of tinkering with halakha—whether with respect to gentile wine or women being called up to the Torah—turn for guidance? Of course, the Rav knew, as we ought to know, that many, rabbis and laymen both, in deviationist movements, are genuine *me-yakshei Hashem*, sincerely seeking the *Ribbono Shel Olam* within the context of *yahadut* as they perceive it; and to these, he accorded both respect and understanding. But, as a custodian of tradition, he was, in thwarting institutionalized revisionism, adamantly unwavering. One can truly apply to him Ramban's encomium, in his letter to the Northern French *rabbanim*, of Rambam: "*Mi hika ha-tseddukim asher hayu ba-giborim bosim, mi natan ha-baytusim le-shusim, ha-lo haRav z"l ki Hashem imo.*"[8]

The second instance concerns interfaith, rather than intra-communal, relations, although it, too, had internal ramifications as well. I refer, of course, to the Rav's adamant stand against Jewish-Christian theological dialogue. Concerned, in the wake of Catholic overtures encouraged by the thaw in anti-Semitism mandated by the Second Vatican Council, that the sense of the singularity and uniqueness of *Kenesset Yisrael* might become jaded, both within and without the Jewish world, the Rav fought vigorously against incipient ecumenism. He, and only he,

had both the stature and the courage to restrain those who, whether *le-shem Shamayim* or otherwise—the prospect of having one's picture with the Pope appear on the front page of the *New York Times* is no mean temptation—sought the warm embrace of our erstwhile contemners; and the policy he enunciated—assent to dialogue about moral or social issues but rejection of discussions of faith and dogma—has stood the Orthodox community in good stead. In retrospect, some may feel that the Rav's anxiety about missionary impulses and possible mass apostasy was exaggerated. Be that as it may, however, the episode—and it was more than that—boldly manifested the Rav's engagement in communal affairs and the leadership he exercised in that capacity.

Even in the realm of *ma'ase*, however, sociopolitical activity was not the Rav's forte. His primary practical role was realized, rather, through the interface of *talmud* and *ma'ase*—through teaching, which Aquinas aptly defined as the ideal fusion of the active and the contemplative life. This interaction probably lies at the heart of the *Gemara*'s discussion, as understood by Rashi, about the comparative merits of *talmud* and *ma'ase*. Resolving an apparent contradiction about their respective priority, the *Gemara* concludes: "*Lo kashya, ha-hi le-migmar, ha le-agmurei.*" Rashi explains: "*Le-migmar le-atsmo, ma'ase adif, aval le-agmurei le-aharinei adif mi-ma'ase.*"[9] Presumably, the intent is not simply that teaching is more meritorious, qua *talmud*, than *ma'asse*, but rather that, in effect, it incorporates both, in the spirit of *Hazal*'s formulation: "*Torah li-lamda, zo hi Torah shel hesed; she-lo li-lamda, zo hi Torah she-eina shel hesed.*"[10]

As regards the Rav, then, his primary practical contribution was as *moreinu ve-rabbeinu*, our master teacher. And this, in two respects. First, of course, in the narrow sense of exposition, explication, and instruction. He often—albeit, at times, with a note of conveniently feigned self-deprecation—described himself as a *melamed*; and that he was, without peer. His capacity for formulating pivotal questions, with an eye to the relation between principle and detail; his sheer pedagogic skill, in stimulating curiosity and insight; above all, his fertile and suggestive solutions—these continually left their imprint upon students, over the span of half a century.

He addressed himself to this task with conscious dedication—dictated, in part, by his professional responsibilities as a *rav ha-ir* or as a *rosh yeshiva*, but driven, far beyond what those duties required, by the impetus of mission, that pervasive sense of *shelihut* of which he often spoke, so fervently and so eloquently. This was, obviously, primarily manifested in the course of regular *shiurim*, whose sheer scope is strik-

ingly impressive; but its also impinged upon his *harbatsat Torah* as a whole. It largely influenced, for instance, the choice of topics for the *Yahrtseit shiurim*—so heavily tilted toward *Orah Hayyim*, and almost wholly devoid of more abstruse areas such as *Kodashim*, which had been his father's forte and, in a sense, his own first love. I vividly recall how one year, several decades back, he began to prepare a *Yahrtseit shiur* to deal with *kinyan hatser*, but then dropped the idea out of concern that the infrastructure might not be sufficiently familiar to many in the audience. In a similar vein, when, in later years, his interest in publication intensified, he was firm in encouraging the assignment of primacy to writings which would serve the general Torah public best, rather than to those which were geared to his indigenous "*lomdische*" constituency.

In the Rav's thought and experience, his role as *moreinu ve-rabbeinu* went in tandem with a second—that of *me-turgeman*. He once remarked to me that, basically, it is the function of *marbitsei Torah*, in each generation, to render its content into the language and categories of their contemporaries; and there is no question but that this facet was an integral component of any self-portrait he limned. That rendering was, of course, interpretation rather than mere translation; and very much in the spirit of the *Gemara* in *Kiddushin*: "*Tanei, Rabi Yehuda omer, 'Ha-metargem pasuk ke-tsurato, harei ze badai, ve-ha-mosif alav, harei ze me-haref u-me-gadef, ela mai Targum—Targum didan.*"[11]

As a halakhic entity, *Targum didan* is related to an area much developed by the Rav, *keriat haTorah*. Explicating a *pasuk* in *Nehemiah*, describing Torah reading upon the return from exile, the *Gemara* explains:

> *Amar Rav Hananel amar Rav, "Mai dikhtiv, 'Va-yikre'u ba-sefer be-Torat ha-Elokim me-forash ve-som sekhel va-yavinu ba-mikra'? 'Va-yikre'u ba-sefer be-Torat ha-Elokim,' ze Mikra, 'Meforash,' ze Targum, 'Ve-som sekhel,' eilu ha-pesukim, 'Va-yavinu ba-mikra,' ze pisuk te'amim, ve-amrei la, elu ha-mesorot."*[12]

In this connection, the Rav repeatedly developed a distinction between the *keria* of mid-week or *minha* on Shabbat, primarily geared to maintaining continual contact with Torah as a vivifying force, and that of Shabbat morning, intended to provide not only inspiration but instruction and direction. Hence, he contended that *targum* was confined to the latter, as a vehicle for the realization of public *talmud Torah*, for which an intermediary interpreter could be pivotal, in line with the prescription of an oft-quoted *Yerushalmi*:

Ke-shem she-nitena al yedei sirsur, kakh anu tserikhin linhog ba al yedei sirsur. A'al Rabi Yehuda bar Pazi ve-avda she'eila, 'Anokhi omed ben Hashem u-veineikhem ba-eit ha-hi le-hagid lakhem et devar Hashem.[14]

The Rav was central to our weekday and Shabbat *keria* both—as our link to the *mesora*, infusing us with the substance of Torah, on the one hand, and through creative explication, halakhic and philosophic, relating it to the realities of the modern world on the other. This dual integrated function of *rav-me-turgeman* is a difficult and delicate enterprise. Interpret too literally, and you run the risk of ossification and obscurantism—*harei ze badai*; range too far afield, and you raise the specter of blasphemous deviation—*harei ze me-haref u-me-gadef.* Only *Targum didan,* traditional creative exposition, in the hands of a thoroughly responsible and richly innovative master, hits the mark. And we are all deeply in the Rav's debt for having embarked on this undertaking.

The Rav's dual role as spiritual mentor was, for him, a source of immense gratification. However, it was also, perhaps inevitably, a cause of considerable frustration. That frustration centered, primarily, on the sense that the full thrust of his total *keria-targum* was often not sufficiently apprehended or appreciated; that by some, parts of his Torah were indeed being digested and disseminated, but other essential ingredients were being relatively disregarded, if not distorted. In a moment of striking candor, when my colleague, Rav Yehuda Amital, first visited these shores, almost twenty years ago, the Rav commented to him: "You know, I have devoted *talmidim*—very devoted *talmidim.* If I were to announce a *shiur* at two o'clock in the morning, they would come *en bloc.* And yet, deep in their hearts, they think I'm an *apikoros.*" The remark was laced with characteristic humor and confined, presumably, to a select group. Nevertheless, it gave vent to a genuine, if painful, sentiment.

The ideological fault aside, however, he often felt—and this, with respect to a far broader group—that even among *talmidim*, some of his primary spiritual concerns were not so much rejected as ignored; indeed, that spirituality itself was being neglected. He was, like Rambam, persistently perturbed by religious vulgarization, practical or conceptual, and by shallow ritualization, of either the "modern" or the "*frum*" strain; and the tension between the subjective and the objective, between action, thought, and experience, was a major lifelong concern. The sense that he was only partially successful in imparting that concern gnawed at him, and impelled efforts to redress the imbalance; but these, too, were only partly successful. After his wife's death in 1967, he initiated inten-

sive *shiurim* for *talmidim* who would come to Brookline to learn during the summer. One day (*ca.* 1969-70), he stunned the group by announcing that, inasmuch as he found them spiritually desiccated, he would now, in addition to the regular *shiurim* on the *massekhet*, learn the *Likutei Torah* of the *Ba'al haTanya* with them; and he started, the following day, with the section on *Ani le-dodi ve-dodi li.* "But," he confided to me subsequently, "it didn't really help."

The most forceful expression of this sentiment is to be found in a brief essay which I regard as the single best introduction to the Rav's thought—all the more so, as it bears the stamp of total genuineness, having been conceived and composed during and shortly after his bout with cancer in the winter of 1959-60. After lamenting that the current Torah world has produced aspiring *talmidei hakhamim* who are intellectually assertive but experientially deficient, he goes on to assign part of the blame to himself:

> Therefore, I hereby announce that I am able to identify one of those responsible for the present situation—and that is I myself. I have not fulfilled my obligation as a *moreh derekh ve-hora'a* in Israel. I lacked the spiritual energies which a teacher and rabbi needs, or I lacked the necessary will, and did not dedicate everything I had to my goal. While I have succeeded, to a great or small degree, as a teacher and guide in the area of "*gadlut ha-mohin*"—my students have received much Torah from me, and their intellectual stature has been strengthened and increased during the years they have spent around me—I have not seen much success in my efforts in the experiential area. I was not able to live together with them, to cleave to them and to transfer to them from the warmth of my soul. My words, it seems, have not kindled the *shalhevet y-a* in sensitive hearts. I have sinned as a *marbits Torah she-ba-lev*, which has been given over in a fashion which has been *me-ma'et ha-Demut* to the point of *katnut ha-mohin*. Blame me for the mistake.[15]

That, too is part of the Rav's legacy. Not just spellbinding *shiurim,* magnificent *derashot,* and electrifying *hiddushim,* but the candid recognition of failure—failure which is transcended by its very acknowledgement. In his own personal vein, so aristocratic and yet so democratic, he has imbued us with a sense of both the frailty of majesty and the majesty of frailty. He has transmitted to us not only *Torat Moshe Avdi*, but the Midrashic image of Moshe Rabbenu constructing and then dismantling the *mishkan* daily during *shivat yemei ha-milu'im*—whose import the Rav interpreted as the fusion of radical, almost Sisyphean

frustration with ultimate hope. He has initiated us, far from the admiring crowd, into the anguished quest—unlike Plotinus, he did not necessarily experience it as a flight (as either ascent or escape)—of the alone for the Alone. He has left us not only memories of packed audiences, dazzled by his multifaceted powers, but the riveting sense of the message of the *Mishna,* so humbling and yet so inspiring, "*Minayin she-afilu ehad she-yoshev ve-osek ba-Torah, she-Hakadosh barukh Hu kove'a lo sakhar? She-ne-emar, 'Yeshev badad ve-yidom ki natal alav.'*"[17]

The Rav repeatedly referred to this *Mishna* when expatiating upon the experiential character of *talmud Torah*; and the meeting envisioned by it may be regarded as the epitome of the Rav's *talmud* and *ma'ase* both. His quintessential aspiration was the fusion of spirituality and *lomdut*. We, who come after, cannot retrospectively imagine the past half-century without him. Prospectively, as dwarfs on a giant's shoulders, we feel charged to persist, impelled by his spirit, in the implementation of his goals—to learn, to teach, to realize. To the best of our abilities, we are called and we are pledged to continue, in the *bet ha-midrash* and in the community, his multi-faceted enterprise—*le-hagdil Torah u-le-ha'adira.*

NOTES

I have titled this piece, a slightly expanded and embellished version, with appropriately revised tenses, of a talk originally delivered before the OU Convention in 1992, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Rav's becoming *rosh yeshiva* at Yeshivat Rabbenu Isaac Elchanan, "An Appreciation." It is presented, properly, as a labor of love and gratitude, rather than as a critical analysis—not even in the vein of Walter Pater's Appreciations. But I have aimed throughout for objective descriptive accuracy, although certainly not for a dispassionately objective tone.

Readers who also heard or read the *hesped* of the Rav *z.t.l.*, which I delivered a year and a half later, will note, not surprisingly, some overlap, although I did not have the earlier talk before me while preparing the latter, and certainly did not consciously strive to recall or reproduce it. Nevertheless, I have assented to the invitation from TRADITION to publish this piece, on the assumption that its difference from the *hesped* warrants as much.

1. *Halakhic Man*, p. 23. With respect to the substance of this specific passage, several points may be noted:
   1) The examples subsequently cited all refer to modes of dealing with deviant phenomena, whose failure to materialize, so that the relevant *halakhot* can be applied, is obviously not to be lamented. It does not follow from this, however, that a *talmid hakham* may be equally apathetic about the fate of positive or even ideal elements.

2) Abstinence from *pesak* out of *yirat hora'a* may not reflect indifference to implementation but, rather, responsible concern about it—and hence, anxiety over possible error.

3) The statement about the reluctance of *gedolim* to enter the lists of *pesak* probably requires some qualification. It is true of some venues—nineteenth century Lithuania, out of whose tradition the Rav sprang, possibly being a case in point—but, as historical generalization, strikes me as somewhat sweeping.

2. *Ibid*, p. 38.
3. *Ibid*, p. 30.
4. *Ibid*, p. 79.
5. See the account of Reb Haym's method in the Rav's *hesped* of his son, Reb Yitshak Zev, "*Ma Dodekh miDod,*" in *Divrei Hagut veHa'arakha* (Jerusalem, 5742), pp. 79-80.
6. How much the formal philosophic discipline—as opposed to general cultural orientation—contributed to the Rav's overall *mahshava* is worthy of study. In *Halakhic Mind*, the impact is of course powerful; but that work, while published only recently, is relatively early (1940's), and the question can be raised with respect to later phases.
7. "The Prelude," III, 61-3.
8. *Kitvei haRamban* (Jerusalem 5746), 1:341.
9. *Baba Kama* 17a; *Rashi, s.v. le-migmar.*
10. *Sukka* 49b.
11. *Kiddushin* 49a.
12. *Nedarim* 37b.
13. See *Shiurim leZekher Abba Mari Z"l* (Jerusalem 5743), 1:100, 5-10.
14. *Yerushalmi, Megilla* 4:1.
15. "*Al Ahavat haTorah uGe'ulat Nefesh haDor,*" in *Besod haYahid ve-ha-Yahad,* Jerusalem.
16. See *Rashi, Vayikra* 9:23.
17. *Avot* 3:2.