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'Massekhet' is a periodical established in memoriam to Esther Aumann, one of the first students in the Matan *Beit Midrash*. Esther, who devoted her life to her home and to raising her family, began attending the *Beit Midrash* at the age of sixty-two and for the first time in her life delved into the depths revealed in the study of Gemara, Tanach and Jewish Philosophy. Six years later she passed away of cancer. The story of her life epitomizes the complete metamorphosis that women's Torah study has undergone in the last generation.

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Teaching the Alef-Bet

Women teach at *Talmud Torahs* in Italy

Tali Berner

This article discusses an exclusive occurrence in the history of Jewish education where women taught in *Talmud Torahs* (Jewish elementary schools) in Jewish communities of three Italian cities: Modena, Ferrara and Mantova. This occurrence is documented in the legal ordinances of the *Talmud Torahs* that were arranged in the second half of the eighteenth century and they seem to reflect earlier rulings. In the *Talmud Torahs* that are reviewed the teachers were part of the regular teaching staff of the institution and their roles were to teach the younger students from the ages of three to six years old. The teachers taught the letters of the *Alef-Bet*, recitation of the cantillation marks, Torah verses, prayers and blessings, and prepared the young pupils for their next level of learning at the *Talmud Torah*.

This article also delves into the character of the female teachers and describes, on the basis of additional ordinances and sources, who they were, the attitude of the society towards them, and what their education was. Accordingly, the relationships among these teachers and the *Talmud Torah* are examined by reviewing the financing, overseers, and members of the *Talmud Torah* society.

The phenomenon of female teachers is examined against the background of the seemingly dichotomous division between the

public male world of Torah learning and that of the feminine sphere taking place in the home. As an occurrence that crossed physical and metaphorical boundaries, it serves as a test case for the era of these dichotomous divisions.

Rabbi Soloveitchik and Rabbi Kook on Partnership and Equality

Hanna Kehat

This article determines the position of Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Soloveitchik in regard to women's status and the nature of partnership between man and woman. This review was assessed against the underlying principle that the traditional world was conservative, patriarchal, and chauvinistic.

Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Soloveitchik lived in the twentieth century and were both exposed to the feminist movements of their generation. Despite this, they express opposite reactions.

Rabbi Kook demonstrates a conservative and surprisingly chauvinistic approach. Contrary to other subjects, where he conveys open, progressive, and pluralistic thought; in relation to women Rabbi Kook is most conservative.

Compared to Rabbi Kook, Rabbi Soloveitchik takes a feminist-humanist approach, where the value of man and woman is equal and their partnership is first and foremost a friendship between members of a team. In his view man and woman create the ideal friendship and community.

Women's Suffrage as a Mirror of the Image of Women in the *Yishuv*

Margalit Shilo

The struggle for Jewish women's suffrage in Palestine from 1918 to 1926 took place right after the British conquest of the country. The establishment of the first national representative institutions of the Jewish community gave rise to a most heated debate concerning women's ability and competence to take part in public affairs. Many segments of the Jewish community, such as workers circles, religious circles, bourgeois and women activists discussed and published pamphlets and articles addressing the question: Is a woman equal to a man?

This paper analyzes the various opposing views and concepts of those who saw women as inferior human beings and those who expressed their views that women were equal to men, those who were afraid that women would lose their feminine traits and those whose sole concern was their equal civil rights. All who took part in this debate were aware that the answer to the question of whether women would take part in political public life would shape the new social order of the Jewish national home.

Prophets' Wives Are Prophetesses Themselves

Yisrael Rosenson

The prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel refer to their wives in the course of their prophecies. References to the prophets' wives are not many in number, however they have an interesting meaning in regard to the manner of prophecy and influence on its content. According to the proposed commentary, 'the child bearing maiden' and 'the prophetess' both refer to Isaiah's wife. 'Hosea's wives' reflect the instruction from G-d to marry them. The circumstances with Jeremiah are different; he is guided not to marry nor raise a family. In the case of Ezekiel the experience that is depicted is especially difficult - the death of his wife. In all of these instances a deep and essential connection between the role - actual or potential - of the 'prophet's wife' and the prophet can be found. This is not speaking of a wife merely as a part of the subject matter or as a source of inspiration. Due to the fact that the message is firstly intended for her, the prophecy is influenced by her personality and her position in a stronger way that justifies her being called 'prophetess'. Behind this conclusion lies the assumption that the prophetic process does not only occur between G-d and the prophet - the messenger; the prophecy is also created with the dialogue that takes part in the linguistic-religious sphere between the prophet and his listeners.

'And Hannah Prayed'
The Biblical Portion of Hannah in Liturgy

Yael Levine

The present article traces the uses of the biblical portion of Hannah in liturgy. Both the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds state that the nine benedictions which comprise the *musaf* prayer of *Rosh Hashanah* correspond to the number of times that the name of God appears in Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving. The biblical portion of Hannah is also the *haftarah* reading for the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*.

In the *Tosefta* and the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds various laws concerning prayer are derived from the biblical portion of Hannah. In the literature of the *gaonim* it is noted that Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving correspond to the eighteen benedictions of the daily *Amidah*. This concept appears with some variation in several sources in the literature of the *Rishonim*. In several places in the writings of Rabbi Eleazer of Worms it is mentioned that the sum total of words in the concluding benedictions of the *Amidah* is 113, corresponding to the number of words in Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving.

Hannah's prayer is also recited in several non-obligatory liturgical contexts. Her prayer is recited in some communities, primarily Sephardic, every morning at the opening of the *shaharit* service, out of recognition of the importance of her biblical portion as a

source for rulings concerning prayer. In his known work *Sh'nei Luhot Ha'Brit* , Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz mentions a tradition he received that following the lighting of the Shabbat candles a woman should read the *haftarah* concerning Hannah that is read on *Rosh Hashanah*. Hannah's prayer is recited as part of the *Tikkun Leil Shevi'i shel Pesah* according to many customs, and the first three verses of the biblical portion of Hannah are recited according to some customs as part of the *Tikkun Leil Shavu'ot*. The recitation of the first two verses of Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving by the Bat Mitzvah girl is mentioned in a responsum written in 1964 by Chief Rabbi Isaac Nissim concerning the Bat Mitzvah celebration. In his commentary to Miriam's song, Rabbenu Bayhe lists significant contributions by biblical women, including the order of prayers that was learned from Hannah.

With His Staff and Haversack

The wandering Jew in the many periods and genres of Bialik's works

Ziva Shamir

The prototype of the wandering Jew appears in Bialik's writings of all periods and genres. In his unpublished dramatic allegory *Jacob & Esau*, Bialik depicts the eternal vicious circle that compels Jews to leave their dwellings and to unwillingly turn to the staff and haversack. This immature juvenile poem contains, in a nutshell, Bialik's entire world of ideas: it reflects his staunch belief that anti-Semitism cannot be uprooted or abolished therefore expressing that the pathetic effort of the emancipated Jew to approach his neighbours and assume their way of life is useless and degrading. The article traces Bialik's historiosophic ideas in his unpublished works as well as in his 'canonical' works, in his poetic as well as his prose writings. All of them portray, in many variations, that the assimilation of Jews is never complete and always leaves a hint of difference that breeds hostility and aggression. In his extra-literary works Bialik argues that the separation of Jews from their Gentile neighbours is not a matter of racism, since Jews have never based their separatism on physiological characteristics (such as blue eyes and fair hair), but rather on ideas and beliefs. It is interesting to discover that even in his late poems, written in *Eretz Yisrael* in the new Sephardic pronunciation, Bialik continues

depicting the wandering Jew that is now an exile in his own land. In *Eretz Yisrael* he is among adversaries who are unwilling to accept him since he retains the old habits of the old Jew, who is the product of Diaspora

In the Trail of a Shadow

On proselytes, Christians and remote Jews

Andre Hajdu

This article tells of three encounters: the first in Kibbutz Yavne about 20 years ago, the second in Oppido Lucano in southern Italy last year and the last one in Warsaw this year, the day of the burial of the Pope. These encounters and journeys lead to stories and afterthoughts. They concern the behavior of a non-Jewish group confronted by the Jewish presence throughout history, as experienced through the prism of the Bible or the Holocaust.

The first part tells the story of a small Italian community, created by Donato Manduzio around 1930. He was a visionary shepherd who tried to reconstruct and fulfill the commandments of the Bible, ignoring the existence of the people described therein.

The second part describes parallel discussions of historians and musicologists gathered in the town where Obadia the Proselyte was born more than 900 years ago. Their topic is the life of Obadia, the first to transcribe in early musical notation a few melodies sung in Hebrew. This section also discusses the behavior of the people of the village during the conference.

The last part takes us to Warsaw, where an unusual scene takes place at the town's synagogue, staging a thousand Poles and some local Jews.

All this leads further to very remote Jewish groups from Abyssinia, India and Portugal. These communities had been cut off from the main body of Jewry for hundreds of years. The article discusses the impact of the communities meeting again.

This is not a scientific article, but rather a description of a journey with some personal musings on historical facts.

Fools, Wanderers, and Don Quixote

Hananel Mack

The greatest work of Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, undoubtedly influenced Modern Hebrew literature, which developed at least two wandering couples marked with the stamp of Don Quixote and Sancho: Benjamin the Third and with him Sendrel 'The Woman' - the heroes of *The Travels of Benjamin the Third* by Mendele Mocher Seforim, and the wandering Reb Yudel Hasid with Nuta the Waggoner through the streets of Galicia in S.Y. Agnon's work *The Bridal Canopy*. We can add to these characters additional couples from Jewish literature in which Cervantes' pair is recognizable, but his influence on them is uncertain. Alternatively there is room for the assumption that the broad literary backdrop of Don Quixote and Sancho and the way in which they reveal the scenes of Spain to the reader, the embroidery of life and the wealth of characters, is built largely on a formula that was designed by a Spanish Jew who preceded Cervantes by nearly four hundred years. In the twelfth century Rabbi Joseph Ibn Zabarah of Barcelona composed a tale called *The Book of Delights*; at its center are the wanderings of the narrator, told in first person, and with him is a strange man who reveals that he is half-man half-devil in the end. Their journeys over the face of Spain and Provence, the personal relationships that develop between them, the wealth of characters and events that occur on their way, the conversations between

themselves and others - all of this and more also rises in the thoughts of one who reads *Don Quixote*. Zabarah's story is echoed by the people, scenes and tales in Cervantes' novel. *The Book of Delights* belongs to the genre of Maqama of Arabic and Hebrew literature of the Middle Ages. While several elements distinguish this work as part of Maqama, they also appear much later in *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. Researchers have dealt with some of these shared aspects in the past. It is impossible to prove that Cervantes knew *The Book of Delights*, however the high reasonability that Cervantes came from a family of Marranos, and the presence - albeit limited - of *The Book of Delights* among Jews of the late Middle Ages, strengthens the possibility that *Don Quixote* was significantly influenced by *The Book of Delights*.

'By justice a king establishes a land...' (Proverbs 29:4)

Adina Sternberg

This article deals with the Torah's attitude towards monarchy. Throughout the Bible there is certain ambivalence towards monarchy. On the one hand there is a mitzvah in the Torah commanding the appointment of a king, and there are very positive references to the monarchy of Solomon and David and to the monarchy of the future King of Salvation. On the other hand, when the Children of Israel request Samuel to crown a king for them the reaction of both Samuel and *Hashem* is very negative and there is an explicit comparison between the request for a king and idol worship. Furthermore, the Book of Judges, which precedes the Book of Samuel, also draws an ambivalent picture. On one hand the moral troubles of the nation are blamed on the fact that there is no king, yet when there is a request from the nation for Gideon to assume the crown he refuses. When his son Avimelech takes the throne his other son Yotam conveys his famous parable, the point being that the Children of Israel have not done wisely by crowning Avimelech.

I would like to propose (in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer in the Talmud) that the ambivalence shown in the Bible towards monarchy does not stem from a difference of opinions, but rather relates to different kinds of kings. I would like to suggest that the ideal role of a king is that of a judge, a ruler whose purpose

is to bring the word of *Hashem* into the daily life of the nation. The role of a king, to which the Torah objects (or at least to its primacy) is the role of a military commander, warrior and savior. In places where the request of the people is for a warrior, the attitude of the Bible is very negative. Whereas the ideal role presented for the king and brought forth throughout the reign of David and Solomon is the role of a king who brings justice to the land.

This idea is apparent in the story concerning the appointment of Saul as king. Both *Hashem* and Samuel make it apparent that the nation's request for a king as a savior is the cause of their disapproval, since the people assume that salvation comes from a king of flesh and blood and not from the King of the Universe. The downfall of Saul's dynasty stems from the fact that the people request a warrior king and Saul attempts to fulfill the nation's wishes rather than obey the divine word. By adhering to the role that the nation prescribes for him Saul gives up the role of king as *Hashem* had wished it to be, thereby losing his dynasty.

Gideon, on the other hand, refuses the kingship since he realizes that the request to appoint him as king is due to his victory in the war against the Midianites. Yotam, too, is reproofing the people not for wanting a king, but for wanting the wrong kind of king, a thorn bush which deters enemies. The need for a king for the right purposes is then portrayed in the rest of the Book of Judges, which blames the moral problems of the nation on the lack of a king, rather than the military problems which are solved by judges that *Hashem* sends.

The details of the laws of a king represent the concept which has been described above. The king should stay away from military and political assets by limiting his number of horses, not sending the people back to Egypt, and not having too many wives. Additionally, he must be an Israelite chosen by *Hashem* while keeping the Torah close by to guide and direct him in his true role.

Is the damager given permission to damage?

Smadar Ben-David

'Abaye said: Rabbi Yehudah and Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and Rabbi Shimon all hold: anywhere that the sages gave someone permission to do something and he causes damage - he is exempt from punishment'. Simply put, Abaye concludes a detailed and complex debate that deals with the question: What is the ruling when a man does an action with permission and by doing so causes harm to his fellow? Abaye words the opinions of the three *Tana'im* in a manner that follows commonsensical logic - that there is no legal, lawful and ethical justification to obligate a man with payments for damage that he caused through a permissible action, especially when permission was given to him with an acknowledgement that he could cause damage to his surroundings. Despite Abaye's reasonable understanding, a more precise study of the opinions of the *Tana'im* as they appear in detailed discussions that run through the Gemara throughout the tractate *Nezikim* (damages) illustrates a more complicated picture. The Gemara begins most of these discussions with a conflict between different sources, however the questions that it asks, almost incidentally, are essential to our matter as well as to the subject of damages in general: What is the relationship between the forbidden and the obligated, between the permitted and the exempt? Is there a difference between various types of permission, such as:

permission due to the fulfillment of a mitzvah, permission to act within one's private domain, and permission to use something for various needs within the common public domain?

