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Friday, February 1

It's All in the Angle

By Jack Riemer

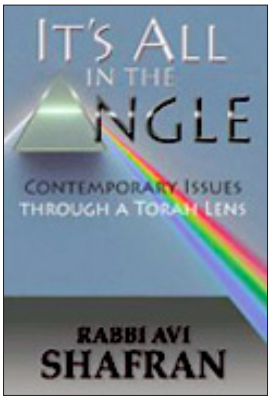
When I was growing up, the debate between Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox rabbis on the one side and ultra-Orthodox rabbis on the other was no contest. Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox rabbis spoke English; ultra-Orthodox rabbis did not. And so it was not really a fair fight—at least not in the minds of the native-born Jews of my generation.

Today, it is something of a new ballgame, as Rabbi Avi Shafran's new book, *It's All in the Angle* (Judaica Press), demonstrates. Rabbi Shafran is a spokesman for the Agudath Israel, which is an organization on the far right of the Orthodox spectrum, but he is obviously erudite and sophisticated, knowledgeable in secular matters, and acquainted with science. And in this collection of short essays, he demonstrates talents that should make those who disagree with him take notice that they are dealing with a writer of substance, who cannot be dismissed as a mere anachronism.

For example, he has a short essay called "Blind Faith and Physics." Don't be misled by the title. He does not argue that blind faith is to be preferred to the wisdom of science, as one might expect. Instead, he points out that there is blind faith within the scientific community, not only the religious community.

He begins the essay by citing a certain professor at MIT who, back in the 1990s, said, "We are closing in on a vision of the universe in which everything will soon be calculated, predicted, and understood." But as Shafran shows, scientists today are not all so brash. Careful calculations indicate that if the parameters of the universe had diverged even a little bit from what they actually are, life on this planet simply could not exist. If the nuclear force were a few percentage points stronger than it is, all hydrogen atoms would fuse and become helium. And it is clear: no hydrogen, no water; no water, no life.

So what do some of these scientists say now? To avoid the embarrassing conclusion that there is intentionality in the universe, which would refute the dogma that they want to hold on to, they posit that there is an infinite number of other universes in the cosmos, and that ours just happens, by chance, to be the one that has the configuration necessary to support life. As one of them puts it, "From the cosmic lottery that contains zillions of universes, we humans happen to have drawn the one universe that allows humans to exist." In other words, human life is a matter of the luck of the draw, and the fact that it exists is no proof of Divine purpose. Rabbi Shafran, for his part, fiercely contests the view that dumb luck is really a sufficient explanation for the order in the cosmos, and concludes with these words from George Orwell: "It is a formidable struggle for some people to see what is in front of their eyes."



Can you imagine an ultra-Orthodox rabbi of the previous generation knowing who someone like George Orwell was, or using him to make the case against the fanaticism of some scientists? Rabbi Shafran is clearly not your grandfather's ultra-Orthodox spokesman.

Rabbi Shafran takes on the dogmatism of some scientists and the challenges of some of the other secular idolatries within our culture, and makes the case against them very well. But his book is not without its shortcomings.

The first is an unwillingness or inability to deal with some of the valid challenges that come from the natural or social sciences. In one essay, for example, he says that when he was growing up he was troubled by the fact that the Code of Hammurabi, which is clearly much older than that of Moses, bears striking resemblances to some of the laws in the Torah. So he went to his teacher, who solved his problem with just one sentence: "Avi, what do you think Abraham our father spent his entire life doing?"

I don't know how to begin to deal with the idea that Abraham could have been Hammurabi's teacher, or how to respond to someone who takes such a notion seriously and thinks it suffices to refute two centuries of serious biblical scholarship.

The second shortcoming of these essays is their author's frequent assertion that the main reason the Reform and Conservative movements have made the changes they have is to win the favor of the culture around them. Is it fair to deny the moral integrity that led these groups to take some of the stands they have taken? Was it really only a desire to keep up with their neighbors that led rabbis to fight for the rights of lettuce workers, and to declare lettuce harvested by immigrants receiving less than subsistence wages to be *treyf* because of *oshek*, the outright mistreatment of workers? Was it only a desire to keep up with the culture that led rabbis to fight for civil rights, some of them at the risk of their lives?

My greater concern is that there is no explanation in these essays for the thunderous silence within the ultra-Orthodox community over some of the moral issues that the rest of the community is alarmed about. Is there not a qualm of conscience to be found among those who are silent about the pain caused to animals in kosher slaughterhouses or the rights of workers in these places, or is kashrut their only concern? If this group can be concerned about the need to use microscopes in order to make sure that there are no invisible

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bugs in the water we drink, should this group not be equally concerned about social injustices that require no microscope to see?

All of the columns in this collection are written with elegance and erudition, and many of them are persuasive, but Rabbi Shafran seems unable or unwilling to find a place within them for the valid challenges to tradition that need to be wrestled with, and not just dismissed by saying, "It is up to the Sages, who know more than we do, to deal with them." And this is why, with all the brilliance he demonstrates in this book, I doubt that his camp will have any chance of winning the debate for the minds and hearts of an inquisitive and independent generation. Nevertheless, it is very good to have him in the conversation, and there is much that all of us can learn from him and the viewpoint he represents. We need to reckon with what he says, and we need to hope that he and his camp will reckon with the challenges that we raise as well. If that happens, we will have a vital and vibrant community, with mutual respect, and not be silos standing side by side, ignoring each other.

Monday, February 4

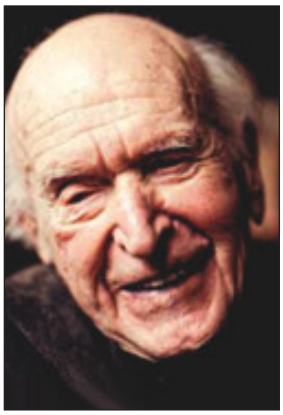
Life Goes On

By Jonathan Gondelman

There is a story behind the recent publication of Hans Keilson's *Life Goes On* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). It was the Jewish author's first novel, based on his youth and early adulthood in Depression-era Germany. When the book was published in 1933, Keilson was just 23 years old and finishing medical school. A year later the Nazi Party banned the book and forbade him to practice medicine. In 1936, a year after the passage of the Nuremberg Laws, Keilson left Germany for the Netherlands, where he lived under a false name and established a pediatric practice. When the Germans occupied the Netherlands, he joined the Resistance and traveled around the country treating Jewish children who were separated from their parents and living underground. He wrote two more novels, *Death of the Adversary* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) and *Comedy in a Minor Key* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), both about the war. Then he stopped—he thought he had no audience—and developed a distinguished career in psychotherapy. When he was 100 years old, the two wartime novels were rediscovered, translated into English, and deemed masterpieces. But *Life Goes On* appeared in English only in 2012. Keilson, having died in 2011 at the age of 101, did not live to see the translation.

Life Goes On recounts the interwar travails of the Seldersen family. Johann Seldersen, a decorated soldier, has worked for 25 years to establish his clothing shop. Though it is not as large as stores opening elsewhere in town, Herr Seldersen is proud of his shop, his customers, and his family's status. Frau Seldersen works in the store when needed and provides a comfortable, respectable household for her husband and son. The son, Albrecht, a student, spends his spare time playing his violin or hiking in the woods.

As the novel begins, Herr Seldersen's landlord announces that he wants to expand his own business into Seldersen's space. He offers Seldersen another location. True, Seldersen's shop has been at the same location for 25 years; and, true, the new location is smaller; but it is not an undue burden on the Seldersens. They can make do, just as they made do during the war and even the post-war hyperinflation. Thus begins the series of humiliations that befall the Seldersens, as they befall all of Germany, during the Weimar years. As successive pains are inflicted on Herr and Frau Seldersen by competitors, creditors, and customers who buy on credit and never seem to remember to settle their accounts, the couple tries to hide the deepening crisis from Albrecht.



Albrecht is not oblivious; but he takes a wait-and-see attitude, seeking refuge in his books and his violin. When Dr. Köster, a judge, arrives in town and lectures to the literary society on Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger*, Albrecht falls under his influence, finding in him not just a kindred spirit who values the life of the mind but also a role model. Dr. Köster is not unaffected by the economic and political crises that are rocking Germany and destroying the Seldersens, but he disdains the "bomb throwers, thugs and male hysterics" of all political parties and urges Albrecht to remove himself from such vulgarities. "The life of the mind is what saves us," Dr. Köster says, "and it alone allows us to act in the world." Albrecht wants to believe him. But as the Seldersens' troubles close in on him—as his difficulties at the university grow, and he is forced to neglect his studies to earn money as a traveling musician—he is led to his own, very different conclusion about what it might mean to reconcile the life of the mind with action in the world.

Keilson's subject matter brings Hermann Hesse to mind: a young intellectual without economic prospects struggles to establish himself in a world hostile to intellect. And in many ways Keilson's Albrecht resembles a number of Hesse's characters. Unlike Hesse, however, Keilson is not given to mystical flights of whimsy, nor does he dwell intently on individual psychology. Instead of retreating into fantasy, the characters in *Life Goes On* face their lives and their situations "straight-on," as they put it. During a difficult conversation with Dr. Köster, Albrecht refuses the offer of a cigarette: "Let's not make the conversation look sweeter and prettier through a haze of smoke." Where Hesse over-expounds, Keilson is quiet and resolute. *Life Goes On* is filled with pauses and silences, moments in which the characters are unable or unwilling to respond to one another. By restraining his characters and his prose, Keilson allows the pain of poverty to make itself felt, as slowly and inexorably as Herr Seldersen's final bankruptcy and humiliation.

Considering the book's origins, *Life Goes On* is curiously silent on the experience of being a German Jew during the Weimar era. In a later afterword to the original German version, Keilson noted that he had told the other, "Jewish" part of his story in *Death of the Adversary*. Still, religion—of any kind—is conspicuously absent. If the Seldersens are Jewish, they observe no Jewish rituals. Albrecht has a friend, Fritz, who appears to be Christian; Fritz does not attend church. Keilson also omits other sorts of specifics

that one would normally expect. For example, he mentions no political parties by name. Keilson may have been attempting to evade the censors: thus, the book's editor changed an explicitly Communist march at the end of the book to an event more closely resembling a Nazi rally. Keilson acquiesced, though he left the event's actual political identity ambiguous.

Still, there may have been more than censorship at issue: Keilson may have been trying to make his novel as universal as possible. The book concerns the dilemmas of the human spirit in difficult times; its central conflict is the conflict between the eternal life of the mind and the need to act in specific, limited political situations. Perhaps Keilson's afterword was accurate: maybe he was really saving the more concrete half of his story for a different novel.

Considered in this way, *Life Goes On* is not only a memoir of Germany between the wars but an entry in the canon of existentialist novels, perhaps treading familiar thematic territory but doing so in an unfamiliar, peculiarly reserved and powerful voice. It is a testament to the book that it embodies the conflict it describes. A work that argues for political engagement, it languished for years in an obscurity to which political circumstances consigned it. The book should be read not only because the conflict it describes is universal but also because it has traveled a long distance to tell us so.

Tuesday, February 5

The Halakhah of Selling Arms

By Shlomo M. Brody

According to recently released data, Israel exported approximately $7 billion of military equipment in 2012, mostly to the United States and Europe, but also to Southeast Asia and South America. This is no doubt a lucrative enterprise, but is it the right thing for the Jewish state to be doing—from the point of view of Jewish law? As a previous article argued, halakhah frowns on store owners who sell guns to irresponsible or violent customers. The notion that salespersons may simply close their eyes to the potentially harmful or unethical use of weapons remains foreign to Jewish law. But how does this apply when it is a question of countries and armies?

Legal perspectives on this question evolved in the course of the talmudic period and in later centuries, with Jewish law ultimately concluding, albeit somewhat hesitantly, that it is permissible to sell weapons to nations that will use them responsibly and protect the safety of Jews. Although the talmudic Sages had initially drawn up an exhaustive list of weapons that one was forbidden to sell to pagan nations, a later passage in the Talmud raises the question, "Why then do we sell them [weapons] nowadays?" The answer of Rabbi Ami is, "We sell [them] to the Persians who protect us." By the 5th century, it seems, Jews in Babylonia were selling arms to local authorities, reflecting a generally cooperative relationship with them. Christine Hayes has further argued that exceptions to the gun sale ban might have already existed in the land of Israel in the 3rd century, as a parallel text in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah* 2:1) seems to indicate. In that text, the Talmud asserts that the prohibition applies only to cities in which no Jews reside. Once Jews live there, weapons sales remain permissible either because they will serve to protect Jewish as well as non-Jewish residents or, alternatively, because the peaceful habitation of Jews within the city shows that these Gentiles are not hostile to them.

Medieval commentators explained this Persian dispensation differently, possibly in partial reflection of their position within their own society. Rabbi Menachem Ha-Meiri took a moral approach. We need to do our share to help our society, he maintained, arguing that the original prohibition applied only to the godless barbarians of yesteryear. Others made more pragmatic calculations: we need their help now, and we hope they won't later turn their weapons against us (*Nimukei Yosef*). Maimonides formulated this dispensation in terms of an alliance: "If Jews live among idolaters and have established a covenant with them, it is permitted to sell arms to the king's servants." In the 13th century, Rabbi Yitzchak of Vienna further deemed such a sale permissible even if the local ruler was at war with a city that had a known Jewish population, though he hoped that no harm would come to those Jews (*Or Zarua Avodah Zarah* 132). Others argued that no unvarying rule could be made, since the nature of Jewish-Gentile relations varied according to time and place (*Riaz al ha-Rif*). It remains clear, however, that this was not a mere theoretical discussion: many sources affirm that Jews throughout the Middle Ages sold weapons or their components to their Gentile neighbors, because it benefited both parties and because they believed that the non-Jews could in any case acquire weapons by other means.

These talmudic dispensations allowing the sale of weapons to non-Jews developed at a time when the Jews lacked a sovereign state. What are the implications for the State of Israel's arms industry? One of the first scholars to address this question was Rabbi Chaim David Halevi, Tel Aviv's Sephardic Chief Rabbi. In a brief responsum written in the late 1970s, he cited the rationales offered by Maimonides and Meiri in arguing that any sales made to allies would secure mutually beneficial results. While noting that Israeli sovereignty placed Jews in a radically different position from the one they occupied in 5th century Persia, he nonetheless contended that the medieval justifications made it "absolutely permissible" for the State of Israel to sell weapons to friendly nations in exchange for strategic benefits (*Aseh Lecha Rav* 1:19). Rabbi J. David Bleich reached a similar conclusion, though he indicated his uncertainty as to whether current Israeli policy fully complied with halakhic criteria: "Sale of arms to nations allied with Israel by means of a formal or informal security pact would be justified. Absent such agreement, arms sales would be forbidden unless absolutely necessary by virtue of other considerations in order to protect life, e.g., as part of a barter arrangement designed to secure material necessary for self-defense" (*Tradition* 20:4). Those "other considerations," of course, might be interpreted quite broadly.

It would certainly justify Israel's bribing Ethiopian and Sudanese leaders with weapons in the 1980s to free Ethiopian Jews. But would it justify arms deals with rogue nations or unethical leaders who offer indirect political favors or assistance in covert activities? And what happens when the sales are made simply to obtain revenue in order to keep the arms industry in the black?

These concerns led other scholars to raise serious objections to the Israeli arms industry in the early 1980s. Rabbi Yehuda Gershuni contended that international arms sales could be justified only when they involved nations that had Jewish citizens to protect or would adhere to principles of ethical warfare. Otherwise, Israel was providing a "stumbling block" that encouraged unethical behavior by aiding and abetting rogue nations. The fact that these countries could purchase weapons from other dealers could not justify any Jewish participation in the shedding of blood, especially if the Israeli weapons were deemed uniquely advantageous. Dr. Meir Tamari, a senior economist at the Bank of Israel and a pioneering figure in Jewish business ethics, leveled a more trenchant critique. The Israeli arms industry had become an industrial behemoth, he argued, and had expanded far beyond what is required by military necessity. He further warned that its clandestine arms trade would embroil Israel in very dubious business, a warning that was partly vindicated when Israel's role in the Iran-Contra Affair was revealed. Most significant, Tamari bemoaned the fact that economic considerations, as well as moral carelessness, had led to the sale of Israeli arms, via direct or indirect channels, to countries like Chile, Iran, South Africa, and North Korea, whose human rights records were poor, to say the least. Indeed, it should cause great shame to the Jewish state to learn that Israeli-made weapons (almost certainly without governmental approval) arrived via Eastern Europe in Rwanda during the height of the massacres of the Tutsis in the mid-1990s, despite the fact that the Defense Ministry had banned sales to that country.

Yet defenders of the Israeli arms industry, including Rabbis Yaakov Epstein (*Techumin* 11) and Joseph Polak (*Tradition* 24:3), have responded that even when mistakes are made, the legacy of the Persian and medieval European scholars fully legitimizes selling weapons to foreign nations if the goal is to buttress Israel's own defense. Just as medieval Jews sold weapons to their neighbors in hopes that the weapons would not later be used against them, so Israel must remain active in weapons exports and hope that what it sells will be used only as appropriate. Although military exports bring Israel into murky moral waters, they are merely part of the complexity of foreign affairs in a world in which swords, not plowshares, continue to hold sway. Fortunately, in the last decade, Israel has made great strides in supervising the sale of Israeli-made weapons, including the creation of a Defense Export Control Agency. This development followed American critiques of aborted Israeli arms sales to China but grew more generally from a greater international awareness that genocide can be prevented only if the world tightly regulates its weapons. Thus, Israel has pledged not to sell weapons to human rights abusers and taken further measures to prevent shady figures from becoming intermediaries.

Yet there is no doubt that military exports will continue to play a major role in Israeli foreign affairs. Take Israel's covert war against Iran. Beyond sanctions and cyberwarfare, Israel has used arms exports to strengthen its strategic hand against Iran. Russia, for example, canceled the sale to Iran and Syria of S-300 long-range anti-aircraft missiles, which military experts deemed critical to stopping foreign attacks on Iran. A few weeks later, Israel announced a new sale to Russia of unmanned aerial vehicles, drones, which the Russians realized they needed after Israeli-made drones were effectively used against them by Georgia in 2008. Similarly, Israel continues to provide drones to Azerbaijan, where tensions with Armenia might explode into a broader conflict. Yet Azerbaijan also borders Iran, thereby providing Israel with a central location for reconnaissance and possible refueling in the event of an air strike. Of course, arms sales always remain a gamble, as today's ally might turn into tomorrow's foe. America learned that when it armed Afghanistan against the Soviets; Israel today worries about what will done with the arms it previously sold to Turkey, and who will ultimately control the American weapons sold to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among others.

Can halakhah provide a definitive answer to this political and moral dilemma? Perhaps not. Yet, as previously argued with regard to the American gun control debate, it does provide a framework of values to consider when setting policy. One hopes that Israeli officials will take these principles into consideration and that Israeli voters will ask themselves which candidates combine the strategic wisdom and moral fortitude to manage Israel's booming defense industry appropriately.

Wednesday, February 6

Denominational Delusions

By Andrew Apostolou

American Jews are caught in a crisis and their rabbis aren't helping. Synagogues are closing, congregations are ageing, and the non-Orthodox majority is dwindling. For every 100 non-Orthodox Jews in their 50s, there are just 55 children with the same religious orientation. If the Jewish community does not take action, its numbers will shrink. The era in which Jews played a vital role in American life will end as the entire community becomes demographically diminished and socially insular.

Yet the main Jewish religious movements are not grasping the root of this problem—the failure of Jews to marry other Jews. None is explicitly pursuing strategies to promote marriage within the community. Reform Jews are making matters worse. The Conservatives are confused. The Orthodox are fooling themselves into believing that they are the answer. The decline of their non-Orthodox coreligionists harms them as well.

Reform Judaism, currently the largest denomination, is encouraging demographic failure. The movement accepts intermarriage despite evidence that its occurrence leads to fewer Jews. Most intermarried couples do not raise their offspring as Jews and, not surprisingly, these children themselves marry non-Jews at a rate of 76 percent. The result is that now there are not enough young people in Reform synagogues to keep them going. According to one survey just eight percent of Reform synagogue mem-

bers are young adults—while 22 percent are over the age of 65.

Reform Judaism continues to welcome intermarriage despite this evidence. Around half of all Reform rabbis conduct marriages between Jews and non-Jews, with increasing numbers of rabbis joining their ranks. Instead of encouraging Gentiles to convert to Judaism to marry Jews, some Reform rabbis question the whole point of conversion. They even perform marriages jointly with non-Jewish clergy, in contravention of the rules of the Reform rabbinic body, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).

Reform rabbis now propagate the notion of patrilineal descent without any qualification, which is both false to the text of the CCAR's 1983 resolution on "The Status of Children of Mixed Marriages" and self-defeating. It is false because the resolution acknowledged as potentially Jewish only the children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers who were raised within the Jewish fold. It is self-defeating because it weakens the Jewish identity and commitment of Reform youth. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, previous president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said that "if current trends continue, approximately 80 percent of the children who have a bar or bat mitzvah in our congregations will have no connection of any kind to their synagogue by the time they reach 12th grade."

Meanwhile, the Conservative movement is in even worse demographic shape than the Reform. During the first decade of this century the number of Conservative synagogues fell by six percent, while membership declined by 14 percent. In 2010, only nine percent of adult members of Conservative congregations were under 40—those over the age of 65 outnumbered young adults three-to-one. The Conservative intermarriage rate is 33 percent and rising.

The Conservative movement is confronting its intermarriage problem with resolute confusion. The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the movement's synagogue organization, mentions intermarriage as an issue in its latest strategic plan, but makes no suggestions for encouraging marriage to other Jews.

At the same time, the Conservative rabbinic corps is drifting toward accommodating the intermarried and discouraging the conversions needed to prevent it. The Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards voted in 2010 to allow the burial of non-Jewish spouses in a separate section of a Jewish cemetery. The sole opponent on the committee, who lives in Israel, argued that the decision removes any incentive for non-Jews to join the Jewish people: "Why would they bother converting?"

The only source of good news appears to be the growing Orthodox population. The Orthodox intermarriage rate is around six percent. Just as important, the Orthodox have no difficulty reproducing, a task that has befuddled the other denominations. The Jewish population of New York, Westchester, and Long Island rose by nine percent in the decade to 2011 in large part because of the high Orthodox birthrate, according to the 2011 UJA-Federation study. Orthodox children are now close to two-thirds of the Jewish children in the New York metro area.

It appears that Orthodoxy will flourish while the other movements languish or perish. As Rabbi Norman Lamm, the chancellor of Yeshiva University, has said, "With a heavy heart we will soon say kaddish on the Reform and Conservative movements." Other Orthodox rabbis have openly expressed pleasure and dismay at the waning of the non-Orthodox. Rabbi Yitzchock Adlerstein wrote that the "mixed emotions" stirred by the New York population survey were best communicated by imagining that you are "watching your sworn enemy go over the side of a cliff in your new Lotus." Adlerstein hinted that result could be increased anti-Semitism, because without the connections that the non-Orthodox have made to non-Jews, Jewish life would become less easy in America "in times of stress."

The Orthodox assumption that they will replace the non-Orthodox is a delusion. Orthodox Jews constitute less than 15 percent of the American Jewish population. Their high birthrate cannot compensate for the massive losses among the other denominations and the unaffiliated. Also, the substantial reproduction rate among haredi Jews, the so-called ultra-Orthodox, may not continue indefinitely. As they climb the economic ladder, their families are likely to become smaller.

The decline of the non-Orthodox will damage the Orthodox in three ways. First, a substantial part of the growth in Orthodoxy, particularly Modern Orthodoxy, has come from non-Orthodox groups. The *baalei teshuva*, "repentant" Jews who reject non-Orthodox Judaism, have more than compensated for those leaving Orthodoxy. They also provide a connection to non-Orthodox communities through their extended families. In some cases they are the first observant Jews in their families for generations. This pool of potential recruits would be gone without Reform and Conservative Judaism.

Second, without Reform and Conservative Judaism, American Jews will have fewer choices in the future for their religious practice. The options will be Orthodoxy or other religions.

Third, the non-Orthodox movements, and to a much lesser extent Modern Orthodoxy, connect Jews to American society. The Orthodox often have difficulties in dealing with other Jews, let alone maintaining any meaningful relationship with other religions. Orthodox life can be insular because it is so all-enveloping. America accepts closed communities, like the Amish, but the price of social isolation is a lack of cultural and political influence.

American Orthodox rabbis lead congregations filled with Torah study and bursting with children. After decades of being dismissed as relics or characterized as extremists by the non-Orthodox, the Orthodox are witnessing what looks like the irreversible decline of the religious competition. That feeling of vindication, however, will prove brief when they realize they will also suffer from the demographic self-destruction of today's non-Orthodox majority.

Signs of the *Times*

By Alex Joffe

A new report from the watchdog group CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) presents a detailed look at the *New York Times*' reporting on Israel in 2011. It follows a long line of such reports—none of which have made much of an impact on the newspaper. Why?

The new CAMERA study, which focuses mainly on the second half of 2011, shows the *Times*' pattern of criticizing Israel far more than Palestinians, in both reporting and editorials. The *Times*' coverage of the peace process and the Palestinian Unilateral Declaration of Independence presented Palestinian views twice as frequently as Israeli ones. Its coverage of the Turkish Gaza blockade-running ship *Mavi Marmara* dramatically emphasized Israeli actions and downplayed "activist violence." Palestinian violence, including the horrific slaughter of five members of the Fogel family in March, was buried on page five, and Palestinian incitement was almost completely ignored.

CAMERA's critique is damning but not entirely new. The organization put out a similar study in 2002. In the 1980s, two books, *The Media's War Against Israel* (Shapolsky) and *The Media's Coverage of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Shapolsky), addressed the 1982 Lebanon War and the First Intifada, respectively; both featured critiques of the *Times*.

Beyond the *Times,* the anti-Israel biases of the BBC, the *London Review of Books*, and the *Guardian* are well known, as are those of news services like Reuters. Journalist Marvin Kalb meticulously dissected coverage of the 2006 Lebanon war and the ways in which media manipulation was central to the Hezbollah's strategy—and alarmingly successful. Organizations like CAMERA, Honest Reporting, the Huffington Post Monitor, as well as the greatly missed Just Journalism in the United Kingdom, have kept watch on ever-changing media. But to what changes, if any, has all of this led?

In a recent study, former *Times* reporter Neil Lewis tracked more than 3000 *Times* articles from 1948 to 2007. His conclusions match the conventional wisdom about the paper's increasing hostility to Israel. Reporters like underdog stories, and Israel is no longer the underdog; the 1977 election of the Begin government and the 1982 Lebanon War were watersheds that alienated the *Times*' writers and editors, as did the settlement enterprise. Moreover, in recent decades Israeli and Palestinian NGOs have become major sources of information; and "assorted acts of horrifying terrorism committed by various Palestinian groups," says Lewis, "produced a dividend of greater attention to their cause."

Lewis' portrayal of the insiders' logic is disheartening. The *Times* thinks of itself as occupying responsible middle ground, but it fails to "cover fully the range of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel invective that is depressingly common in parts of the Arab media and clergy." It treats all of this discourse as nothing more than "background noise." Only when it rises above this level does the *Times* feel compelled to notice it. It paid attention most recently when videos of surfaced of Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi calling on Egyptians "to nurse our children and our grandchildren on hatred for them—for Zionists, for Jews," whom he characterized as "these bloodsuckers who attack the Palestinians, these warmongers, the descendants of apes and pigs."

The *Times* was careful to note that Morsi was speaking about Zionists, which he regrettably conflated with Jews. In an editorial the newspaper condemned such language and plaintively asked, "Does Mr. Morsi really believe what he said in 2010? Has becoming president made him think differently about the need to respect and work with all people?" It also reported with a straight face Morsi's ludicrous claim that his remarks had been taken out of context. The *Times*' disapproval is indexed to its investment in Morsi and Egyptian democracy, not his anti-Semitism.

To some extent the *Times*' treatment of Israel has no doubt been the result of the complex attitude toward Judaism and Jewish nationalism on the part of its owners, the Sulzberger family. This explains the stance of the *Times* editorialists who in 1947 expressed "doubts concerning the wisdom of erecting a political state on a basis of religious faith." The Sulzbergers' unwillingness to be seen supporting other Jews, as Laurie Leff detailed in her powerful book *Buried by the Times* (Cambridge University Press), shaped the newspaper's coverage of the Holocaust. The genocide of European Jews was too parochial an issue on which to expend ink and influence.

But the *Times*' treatment of Israel over the past 40 years must also be seen as an example of journalism's growing issue-orientation, which de-emphasizes the reporting of facts and events in the present and concentrates on shaping public understanding for the future, in furtherance of progressive politics and specific political positions. This points to journalism's largest problem, its self-conception as a co-equal branch of government, not merely an external observer and sometime check but a full-fledged policy development and consensus-manufacturing entity.

Then-outing *Times* "public editor" Arthur Brisbane confessed this utterly obvious fact in 2012, saying, "Across the paper's many departments, though, so many share a kind of political and cultural progressivism—for lack of a better term—that this worldview virtually bleeds through the fabric of the *Times*." He was quickly rebutted by executive editor Jill Abramson, who disagreed with Brisbane's "sweeping conclusions" but conceded that "in covering some social and cultural issues, the *Times* sometimes reflects its urban and cosmopolitan base."

The irony is that this cosmopolitan arrogation of power has peaked just as news-gathering and information dissemination have become massively decentralized thanks to the Internet. Informed citizens no longer need newspapers, unless they prefer to obtain their viewpoints predigested. And newspapers themselves are in various states of collapse. The *Times* is as mismanaged as any; Abramson recently announced that the voluntary buyout period for newsroom employees was ending and that layoffs might be necessary. It may be that viewpoints are all that newspapers have to sell. For leading institutions like the *Times*, this may lead to the even more strident promotion of opinions as a means of survival in a shrinking marketplace.

The *Times*' hostility toward Israel, its sparse coverage of anti-Semitism, and its anthropological remoteness from Jewish issues except for culture evoke only occasional protest. Its repeated condemnations of Israel and whitewashing of the Palestinian national project are post-modern morality tales. Its indulgent and apologetic coverage of most things Islamic is equally uninformative. And, as CAMERA's new report reminds us, the newspaper has not been on the road to improvement. Let us hope that shifting business imperatives do not make it even worse.