

OPEN ACCESS

WELCOME TO A NEW EXPERIMENT IN
THE DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Meet scholars and discover
their latest insights

Debate their findings and
offer your own views

AT YASHAR BOOKS' OPEN ACCESS PROJECT
WWW.YASHARBOOKS.COM/OPEN

Yashar Books is a new venture in Jewish scholarship. It was founded by Gil Student and Moshe Schapiro, two young Orthodox rabbis with a mission: to give Open Access to the world of Jewish inquiry.

This contribution to the Open Access Project is an essay by the prominent talmudic scholar Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin about the theological meaning of the State of Israel, excerpted from his book *Equality Lost* (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 1999). Its addition to the Open Access Project is timed to coincide with *Yom Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem Reunification Day, in the hope that it will inspire honest thought about the meaning of the historically dramatic developments in the land of Israel over the past century.

Open Access
www.YasharBooks.com/Open

THE STRENGTH TO REPENT

What are we to make, theologically, of the establishment of the State of Israel? The crashing dissonance between the extremes of good and bad, between the restoration of Jewish national independence on the one hand and the secularization of much of Jewry on the other, has led many religious Jews to wonder how this juxtaposition can be reconciled with faith. How can it be that from among all the generations, this one, so marked by abandonment of G-d's worship and violation of the *mitzvot*, was restored to its land? Even those who, until recently, were convinced that the State represents *atchalta d'geula*, the beginning of the final Redemption, are today beset by doubts.

One response to this problem has been to deny that it exists. There are those who dismiss the epochal nature of independence. "Jerusalem is still in *golus*!" they say (or think)—emptying the word "*golus*" (exile) of its meaning. Others stress the hopefully temporary nature of the flight from Tradition. Both positions are profoundly a-historical and are essentially attempts at denying inconvenient reality.

A second response has been that, as in the case of the Holocaust, we are simply unable to understand G-d's reasons or purposes. But there is a limit to how much national experience we can rule off-limits to religious comprehension, before we make G-d irrelevant to history altogether. Moreover, agnosticism on this issue is untenable in practice, and particularly so in Israel, where behavior often hinges on belief one way or the other about the role of the State in the Divine scheme of things. Without a coherent alternative, we are left with a Hobson's choice of Messianism versus Satmarism¹, most people's denial of formal adherence to the extreme positions of either notwithstanding.

Is there a third possibility, one that takes into account both the immensity of Israel's good fortune and the extent of its religious failure?

The Strength to Return

There is, in my opinion, a clear and simple explanation for the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in *Eretz* Israel in our time. Numerous prophecies declare that Israel will not degenerate wholly into sinfulness, such as is recorded in Zephaniah (3:13) "The remnant of Israel will not do evil." To prevent the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem from leaving behind a religious wasteland as well as a physical one, Yirmiyahu at the end of *Eichah* pleaded that G-d take the initiative: "Return us to you, *haShem*, and then we will return." The exiles lacked the strength to return, and it was necessary for G-d to take the first step.²

How much more does this apply to our own time, after 1,900 years of exile and 200 years of assimilation, after the inroads of Socialism and Communism and secularism³ and Reform! The Jewish people was on the verge of losing its ability to do *teshuvah*. It was necessary to remove us from the countries that had bred these plagues, and concentrate us in a country of our own, lest we completely lose our spiritual strength---not to force us to repent, but to preserve our ability to do so.

We can derive from *midrashei hageulah* that G-d will not allow Israel to degenerate completely. Central to these *midrashim* is the dichotomy formulated by R. Yehoshua b. Levy between redemption *b'ito* "in its appointed time" regardless of circumstances, and redemption *achishenah* which means "I will hasten," should Israel merit it (*Sanhedrin* 98a). This differentiation has been generally accepted, both because of its innate plausibility and because the prophet Eliyahu himself confirmed it in an episode related on the same page of the Talmud.

All *midrashei hageulah* can be classified according to R. Yehoshua b. Levy's categories. For instance, "Were Israel to observe two Sabbaths, they would be immediately redeemed" (*Shabbat* 118a) refers to a redemption *achishenah* earned by merit, which will come without delay or pre-messianic pangs. *Midrashim* such as "In the first year the rains will be selective, in the second year there will be famine," etc. (*Sanhedrin* 97a) on the other hand, describe redemption *b'ito* in its appointed time.

What are we to make of R. Yochanan's statement, "The *Mashiach* b. David will only come in a completely worthy or completely culpable generation" (*Sanhedrin* 98a)? The former is *achishenu*, but why should a wholly culpable generation be redeemed? Perhaps because if Israel becomes altogether wicked there is no hope for future *teshuvah*, and therefore no point in history continuing. Another explanation might be that G-d's providence is needed to prevent Israel's spiritual decay as a nation, just as R. Shimon b. Lakish said about the individual (*Sukkah* 52b). Israel as a nation would have long ago corrupted its ways, were it not for the Divine promise that "the remnant of Israel will not do evil." Prior to redemption "in its appointed time," G-d will remove His protection and Israel will degenerate of its own accord, perhaps to prove that the redemption--followed by *teshuvah*--came totally from G-d and not as a result of merit.

In any case, according to R. Yochanan the messiah will only come when a generation is "completely worthy or completely culpable." It follows that every generation in which *mashiach* does *not* come, is neither completely worthy nor completely culpable. Just as we do not doubt that G-d performs miracles to prevent our physical extinction, for "*netzach Yisrael*" will not renege on His promise that Israel will not disappear, so too we should not be surprised that He performs miracles to prevent our complete degeneration and thereby the loss of the strength to repent.

Historic Salvation

There is powerful Scriptural support for saying that G-d may initiate even a historic salvation as merely a tactical move. We read in II Kings (14:23-27):

In the fifteenth year of the king of Judah, Amatzahu b. Yoash, Yeravam b. Yoash acceded to the throne in Shomron and ruled for forty-one years. He did evil in *haShem's* view, and did not deviate from [following] all the sins of Yeravam b. Nevat who corrupted Israel. He expanded Israel's borders from Levo Chamat until the Aravah Sea [=the Dead Sea], in keeping with the word of *haShem*, G-d of Israel, spoken through His servant Yonah b. Amitai of Gat-Chefer. For *haShem* saw Israel's extremely bitter affliction and [saw] that no one was left to lead or be led and no one was helping Israel.

HaShem had not decreed that Israel be obliterated, and He delivered them through Yeravam b. Yoash.

We read with astonishment that Yeravam b. Yoash followed in the footsteps of his namesake who had set up golden calves and corrupted the ten tribes, yet he expanded the borders of the land of Israel and through him G-d delivered Israel. His victories were of such magnitude that the *Sifrei to Devarim* (1:8) avers that the Torah alludes to them:⁴

“To give them”--these are the Israelites who entered the Land; “and to their descendants”--these are their children; “after them”--these are the conquests of David and Yeravam, as it is said, “He expanded Israel’s borders from Levo Chamat until the Aravah Sea.”

His conquests are mentioned in one breath with those of King David! To such an extent do the wicked prosper!?

The midrash *Eliyahu Rabba* (17) explains the reason for Yeravam’s achievements. In Amos (7:10-11) Amatziah, priest of Bet-El, notified Yeravam that “Amos is conspiring against you....This is what Amos said: ‘Yeravam will die by the sword and Israel will be exiled.’ ” Nevertheless, Scripture reports no action taken by Yeravam against Amos, and the midrash elaborates:

Yeravam rebuked Amatziah and threw him out. He told him, “G-d forbid, Amos never prophesied such a prophecy, and even if he did he didn’t do so on his own but because Heaven told him to.” At that moment G-d said, “this generation together with its leader are idolators, [nevertheless,] the territory I promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that ‘I will give it to your descendants’ I hereby give into the hands of this one, because he did not accept slander against Amos.”

But how could non-acceptance of *lashon hara* outweigh Yeravam's idolatry and his leading all Israel to sin?⁵ By analogy, if Ben-Gurion honored the *Chazon Ish*, would that be sufficient merit to entitle him to end the current exile?

In fact, the midrash is quite simple. The question was not whether or not to rescue Israel, for the Book of Kings states clearly: “For *haShem* saw Israel's extremely bitter affliction.... *HaShem* had not decreed that Israel be obliterated.” G-d decided to save Israel for His own reasons, and the only question was: who should bring it about? Yeravam b. Yoash, or perhaps his father or son?⁶

Yeravam’s merits did not cause Israel’s deliverance; rather, because of them G-d chose him and not someone else to be His instrument to save Israel. That is the meaning of the midrash’s introductory question, “How was Yeravam b. Yoash different from all the kings of Israel who preceded him?” and its ending: “I hereby give [the victory] into the hands of this one [Yeravam],” i.e., and not into the hands of someone else.

This is even clearer in the midrash *Eliyahu Zuta* (7) which repeats all the above and concludes, “From this they said, good things are brought about via the worthy and bad things via the culpable. G-d applies this principle to all Israel, everywhere, and to all

idolaters and nations on earth.” This means that G-d chooses relatively worthy people, even among idolaters, to be the vehicle of His doing good (and relatively culpable people for the opposite)---good (as well as bad) which would come about in any case.⁷

In our time as well, G-d chose sinful leaders to bring about the salvation He had already decided upon. It is not hard to find merits in those who established the State, even if in the final analysis they corrupted Israel as much as did Yeravam b. Nevat and Yeravam b. Yoash. We are not dealing with the total balance of merit in a person, but with specific merits, or acts of righteousness, alone.

The righteous minority living at the time of Yeravam b. Yoash faced a double trial. On the one hand, they had to reject adopting his idol worship and way of life. How easy would it have been to be swept away by his victories and mistakenly conclude that his policies had proven themselves, including his idolatrous practices, for had they not resulted in the expansion of Israel’s borders? On the other hand, they needed not to deny G-d’s goodness and assert that it was impossible for salvation to have come via a wicked king and therefore the salvation they experienced was not real, was not from G-d and they need not praise Him for it. The salvation *was* real, and with it came the obligation to praise G-d.

Many likely failed the first trial, and others the second. Few were at the same time unswayed by the success of the wicked and yet thankful to G-d for saving Israel. In our day, as well, too many err in the mistaken belief that the question of the establishment of the State of Israel is one of our attitude to a secular state and not of our attitude to G-d and His works. Happy are the righteous who succeed in both trials!

Praise of the Miracle

Any comparison of our times to those of Yeravam b. Yoash is chilling, for only 26 years after his death his kingdom was destroyed by Assyria. Apparently, the existence of *Shomron* and its inhabitants was by then no longer necessary for the survival of the Jewish people. What value were Yeravam’s conquests if a generation later his country was wiped out?

His victories, in fact, helped bring about the destruction, for G-d’s deliverance incurs a corresponding obligation. To understand this, it should be noted that if “no one was helping Israel” was the only factor, G-d could have defeated their enemies without magnifying the victory to such an extent that Israel conquered all the way to Levo Chamat, sixty miles north (!) of Damascus. There were, however, two purposes to G-d’s salvation of Israel through Yeravam: first, to remove foreign ascendancy over Israel, which corresponds to the victory in 1948, and second, to prove to Israel that G-d blesses them and seeks their good, in order to encourage them to return to Him, which corresponds to the victory in the Six Day War. G-d awakens Israel to do *teshuvah* in these two ways, both through punishment in order to show sinners the error of their ways, and through goodness to show them G-d’s love. For this reason the prophets alternate between warnings of disaster and promises of comfort and redemption.

But rescue has its costs. When foreign domination is removed, Israel can no longer claim that it is not free to worship G-d. A parallel case is described in II Kings (17:1-6):

In the twelfth year of the king of Judah Achaz, Hoshea b. Eilah acceded to the throne in Shomron and ruled for nine years. He did evil in *haShem*'s sight, but not as much as the kings of Israel who preceded him. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, attacked him....In Hoshea's ninth year, the king of Assyria captured Shomron and exiled its inhabitants to Assyria.

The problem is obvious: if Hoshea was less wicked than his predecessors, why was Shomron destroyed during *his* reign and not during theirs? The answer is that he permitted the ten Tribes to go on pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem for the first time since Yeravam b. Nevat closed the borders as related in *Gittin* 88a, but they did not go. The midrash explains:

Until then, idol worship was connected with an individual [the king], and *haShem* is reluctant to exile the masses for the sin of an individual. Once Hoshea b. Eilah came and removed the border guards and proclaimed that everyone who wanted to go up to Jerusalem could do so, but didn't *tell* them to all go up, therefore it is recorded that "He did evil in *haShem*'s sight, but not as much as the kings of Israel....Shalmaneser attacked him," because he removed the collar from his own neck and transferred it to the neck of the people.⁸

That is to say, until the time of Hoshea the people could blame the king for their not worshipping G-d in Jerusalem, but during his reign they had no one to blame but themselves, and consequently were punished..

Yonah b. Amitai, the prophet who foretold Yeravam's victory in II Kings (as quoted above), is the same prophet who resisted G-d's sending him to Nineveh, capital of Assyria. Yonah could hardly have thought that if Nineveh did not repent and was therefore overthrown Israel would be able to escape punishment, for certainly G-d has many means at His disposal and would choose others to carry out His decrees. Rather, he refused the mission lest it result in an indictment against Israel, as the *Mechilta* (*Bo* 1) and Jerusalem Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 11:5) explain: "Yonah said, 'I will go abroad where the *Shechinah* is not revealed, because the nations repent easily,' so as not to incriminate Israel." Repentance by the residents of Nineveh would highlight the obstinacy of the people of Shomron, who did not repent in spite of all the efforts of Amos and other prophets.

The Talmud (*Yevamot* 98a) derives from the verse in the book of Jonah (3:1), "The word of G-d came to Yonah a second time," i. e. that G-d spoke to him only on two occasions in his life, and not more.⁹ It then questions this supposition because of the verse in II Kings quoted above, "He expanded Israel's borders....in keeping with the word of *haShem*, G-d of Israel, spoken through His servant Yonah b. Amitai ." Was not that the third time G-d spoke to Yonah?

R. Nachman b. Yitzhak answered that the phrase “in keeping with the word of *haShem*...” meant that “just as the fate of Nineveh changed from bad to good, so Israel’s fate in the time of Yeravam b. Yoash changed from bad to good.” Yonah’s prophecy to Israel was similar to and an extension of his message to Nineveh, and so it was not counted separately. This is based on the statement in *Sanhedrin* (89b) that when G-d told Yonah “Nineveh will be turned over (*nehpechet*) in forty days,” Yonah did not know whether “turned over” predicted good or bad for the city: good if it meant that Nineveh would turn over a new leaf and repent, or bad if it meant that the city would be overturned and destroyed. When Nineveh repented it emerged that his prophecy had indeed foretold good for the city, and so, too, his prophecy about Yeravam foretold good for Israel.

It is startling to equate Yonah’s mission to Nineveh in order that it repent, to G-d’s promise conveyed through him of Yeravam’s victory. If, however, the latter’s triumphs were for the purpose of encouraging Israel to do *teshuvah*, then the two prophecies are very similar. Moreover, just as Nineveh’s repentance served as a reproach to Israel so, too, Yeravam’s successes incriminated Israel for not recognizing and not thanking G-d for His salvation. In this way, the deliverance itself hastened the destruction.

The importance of thanking G-d can also be learned from King Chizkiyah. In *Sanhedrin* (94a) Bar Kapara expounded:

G-d wanted to make Chizkiyah the Messiah and Sancheriv *Gog* and *Magog*. Justice protested before G-d: “...Chizkiyah, for whom You performed all these miracles and [who] didn’t sing a song of praise before You, will you make the Messiah?”

A song of praise (*shirah*) is one of public thanksgiving, such as *shirat hayam* which Moses and Israel sang after the drowning of the Egyptian army. In his private prayers Chizkiyah undoubtedly gave thanks for Sancheriv’s defeat, but had he aroused Israel’s enthusiasm so that they publicly thanked G-d with all their hearts, their merit would have been great enough to bring the messiah. Perhaps they didn’t sing *shirah* because they were in mourning for the dead of Lachish and other Judean cities that had fallen to the Assyrians. But that was a mistake, for man must give thanks for the good, and not keep accounts with his Creator.

In *Sanhedrin* (37a) R. Hillel said, “There is no messiah for Israel, because they already used him up in the days of Chizkiyah.” R. Yosef retorted “May G-d forgive him” for such an opinion, and indeed it would be amazing if R. Hillel denied the coming of the messiah which is one of the principles of the Jewish faith.

To understand R. Hillel’s statement, we must note that Chizkiyah did not see himself as the messiah nor did his contemporaries consider him as such, yet he could have become the messiah had he and his generation sung *shirah*. R. Hillel did not deny the coming of the messiah, but he thought that only during Chizkiyah’s time was there an opportunity to transform an ordinary generation into a messianic one, and that the opportunity would not come again prior to the coming of the messiah in G-d’s “appointed time.” The Sages, who disagreed with him, held that any generation that

witnesses a great salvation can bring the *mashiach* in a hastened manner, if they sing G-d's praise with all their hearts.¹⁰

Chance Events

One does great evil not to thank G-d for his miracles. Such a person ascribes randomness to G-d acts, as Rambam wrote in *Hilchot Ta'anit* (1:3):

If they do not cry out and trumpet [in distress], but say "this event is a natural occurrence and this misfortune came by chance"...that is what is written in the Torah "I will treat you with the fury of randomness," i.e., when I bring misfortune upon you in order that you repent, if you claim that it is random (*keri*) I will increase the fury of that occurrence.

Although Rambam is discussing one who ascribes disasters to chance, the same applies to one who ascribes deliverance to chance, for both deny G-d's guiding hand.

This is what is referred to in the *tochechah* in *Vayikra* (26:40) as "their misuse of Me and their treating Me randomly." Misuse (*me'ilah*) means use of the holy for profane purposes, and indeed those who ascribe randomness to G-d's actions which are manifestations of his holiness, transmute them into profane events.

This also explains why the violation of the sabbatical year is emphasized again and again in the *tochechah*, although no other specific sins are even mentioned.

Then the land will regain its sabbaths...then the land will lie idle and regain its sabbaths. It will lie idle...for the time it did not lie idle during your sabbatical years when you lived there" (26:34-5).

In violating *shemittah*, Israel denies that the country was G-d's gift to them; instead, they act as if they live there by chance and have no reason to thank G-d for it. Those who mistake G-d's goodness for a chance event, are destined to incur His wrath and mistake that too for chance events.¹¹

One who does not thank G-d for His deeds commits an additional evil. The first of the Ten Commandments is "I am *haShem* your G-d, who took you out of Egypt"; it means that because of the Exodus we know that He is our G-d. The most salient proofs of the existence of G-d are the miracles He performed. So we say at the *Pesach seder*, "Even if we are all learned, all wise, all elders, all conversant with the Torah, we are still required to retell the Exodus, and the more the better." Yet if we all know the Torah, why repeat the same things over and over? Because the Exodus is the basis for our belief in G-d, and the more we retell it the more we strengthen our faith.

Moreover, one must recount G-d's deliverances of Israel throughout history, and especially contemporary ones, for hearing about salvation is not the same as actually seeing it. This is what Yirmiah meant in Jeremiah 16:14-15 and again in 23:7-8:

No longer will it be said, “*HaShem* lives, who brought Israel up from Egypt,” but rather “*Hashem* lives, who brought Israel up from the north country and from all the countries where He had distanced them.”

“*HaShem* lives” means: *haShem* exists! The proof of His existence will be the salvation they see with their own eyes.

Let us now protest against those who do not thank G-d for His salvation. The foolish among them imagine that there was no good done to them at all, for they have not the hearts to understand, the eyes to see nor the ears to hear what would have been the condition of Jews in the world had not the State of Israel been established in 1948, and what would have been the fate of Israel in its land were it not for the victory in 1967. Regarding them the Sages taught in the Haggadah, “One must see himself as having himself left Egypt,” i.e., first imagine being a slave and only then imagine being redeemed, for one who is ignorant of the bad cannot give thanks for the good.

However, we are not protesting against the dull but against intelligent men, who know there has been a deliverance but fear to give thanks lest they seem to approve of the secular State of Israel. Let them privately sit in sackcloth and ashes on *Yom Haatzmaut* and Jerusalem Day if they want to, but they must thank G-d at some time.¹ It seems to me that the proper time for them to thank G-d for restoring Jewish sovereignty is at the *seder* each year, for the story of leaving Egypt includes the story of all the deliverances G-d wrought throughout history. This can be learned from the Haggadah: “...and that (*v’he*) is what stood our fathers and ourselves in good stead. In every generation [enemies] rise up to destroy us, but G-d rescues us from their hands.” The Hebrew pronoun “*he*” [fem.] refers to the covenant (*brit* [fem.]) in *Bereishit* 15:9-18 which is quoted directly beforehand in the Haggadah, in which G-d promised:

Know with certainty that your descendants will be alien in a land not their own, and they will enslave and torment them [for] 400 years; I [will] also judge the nation that will enslave them. Afterwards they will leave with great wealth.

Although this seems to refer only to the bondage in Egypt, the Sages generalized from the slavery in Egypt to all enslavements and from the redemption from Egypt to all redemptions. Scripture supports this by not mentioning Egypt or the Egyptians, but only “a land not their own” and “the nation which will enslave them.”

There are also those who refrain from publically praising G-d lest others err and be drawn to the secular State. But they have no permission to do this, to enact *gezeirot* to annul the obligation to praise G-d and teach their students to treat Him with *keri* and not reflect on His miracles.

And so, we return to the challenges that faced the generation of Yeravam b. Yoash just as they face ours: not to be misled by the success of the sinful, and at the same time to rejoice and praise G-d for His salvation.

Notes

1. Messianism views the establishment of the State of Israel as heralding the Messianic age, while Satmarism sees it as, literally, the work of Satan. On what constitutes belief in the coming of the Messiah, see *Bnei Banim*, III, *ma'amar* 3 and also p. 42.
2. Zechariah (1:3) and Malachi (3:7) both said, “[first] Return to Me, and then I will return to you,” but that was after *shivat tzion*.
3. This is not the place to detail the disintegration of religious life in the shtetl, the non-Orthodox majority in Warsaw, etc. idealizations of history notwithstanding.
4. II Kings itself hints that the Torah refers to Yeravam’s time. In 14:26, “no one was left to lead or be led (*v’ephes atzur v’ephes azuv*)” (the translation follows Rashi on the Torah) is virtually the same wording as in *Devarim* 32:36 (*v’ephes atzur v’azuv*) .
5. A similar question is raised by the attribution in *Yoma* 9b of the destruction of the second Temple to baseless hatred, outweighing Israel’s occupation with “Torah, commandments and acts of kindness,” discussed in chapter 12.
6. G-d normally brings about military victory through a king or general, and not through a prophet or rabbi.
7. What prompted both of these *midrashim* is II Kings 14:27 “and He delivered them through Yeravam b. Yoash”; the ending “through Yeravam b. Yoash” seems superfluous, as we already know this from 14:25. The midrash explains that the point is to why G-d effected the rescue specifically through Yeravam, not the fact of the rescue itself.
8. *Yalkut Shimoni*, part II, sec. 234.
9. The inference comes from the words “a second time” which seem superfluous, since we can count how many times ourselves.
10. For the proposal that a window of opportunity for bringing the *mashiach* arises from time to time, see Resp. *Chatam Sofer*, VI, no. 98, *s.v. Hareini*.
11. For further discussion of *halicha b’keri* (mistaking G-d’s acts for random occurrences) and its causes, see my *Chibah Yeteirah—Chidushim b’Peshat haTorah*, p. 65.
12. To *publicly* mourn on *Yom Haatzmaut* and Jerusalem Day, however, falls under the category of “rebellious against the nations,” see *Ketuvot* 111a, and see *Kitvei haGri”a Henkin*, vol. 2, p. 214 and 217 in the name of R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, “because the Israeli nation is also a nation.”

Books available from Yashar

The Students' Guide through the Talmud

by Zevi Hirsch Chajes, translated by Jacob Shachter

Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Chajes, frequently known as “Maharatz Chayes,” wrote an overview of Talmudic literature and history titled *Mevo Ha-Talmud*. Long acknowledged as one of the landmarks in Rabbinic scholarship, this work is being republished in English for the first time in over forty years, more than 150 years since the work's original publication in Hebrew. *The Student's Guide Through the Talmud* dates from the illustrious author's later years and in it he attempts to formulate the nature, extent and authority of tradition.

The Right and the Good: Halakhah and Human Relations (Revised Edition)

by Daniel Z. Feldman

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman explores the vital role that the masters of Jewish thought have ascribed to laws of interpersonal relations. The author explains—with style and grace—what Jewish law really has to say about ethics and human relationships. He answers the skeptics who dismiss *halakhah* as anachronistic “ritual” and gives new sense, meaning and relevance to traditional observance. Feldman gives a detailed, scholarly overview of the laws of ethics, citing a wide range of rabbinic opinions in a highly readable work accessible to all.

Rabbi Israel Salanter: Religious Ethical Thinker

by Menahem G. Glenn

Rabbi Israel Salanter was one of the most influential nineteenth century Jewish thinkers who sought to innovate the yeshiva system as well as lay society from within, while simultaneously warding off the modernizing elements of less committed Orthodoxy. This book presents an academic biography full of interesting tidbits of information as well as an overview of Salanter's innovative ethical system. It was published once before in 1953 but did not receive the acclaim it deserves.

Bnei Banim volume 4

by Rabbi Yehuda Henkin

Bnei Banim is a book of Hebrew responsa – collected letters of halakhic rulings of Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin. But it also includes essays on timely topics and the weekly Torah portion, investigations into the simple meaning (peshat) of Biblical passages, and recollections of the author's illustrious grandfather. Rabbi Henkin, grandson of one the most eminent rabbis in America in the twentieth century – Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin, is an estimable scholar in his own right. His work appeals to a wide range of readers by dealing with the most difficult halakhic issues that arise in the Modern Orthodox world, from the place of women in Jewish society to deviant youth to messianism.

www.YasharBooks.com