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Volume 1 Number 8

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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 the Nine Days period before *Tisha B'Av*, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

WHY WAS THE SECOND TEMPLE DESTROYED?

Rabbi Yehuda Henkin

Rabbi Zechariah's Mistake

To understand the events of our time, we must first understand what caused the Exile that preceded them. The main Talmudic discussion of the destruction of the second Temple, *bayit sheini*, is found in *Gittin* (55b). At first glance the account is perplexing and only upon reflection does it make perfect sense; we will examine it in detail and see what the Gemara is trying to teach us.

R. Yochanan said, "What does this verse refer to: 'Fortunate is the man who is always afraid, and one who stiffens his heart falls into calamity' (Proverbs 28:14)?"

Jerusalem was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza....A certain individual had a friend named Kamtza and an antagonist named Bar Kamtza.¹ He prepared a feast and instructed his servant to invite Kamtza, but the servant mistakenly invited Bar Kamtza. The man arrived at his feast and found Bar Kamtza sitting there. He told him, "Since you're my enemy, what are you doing here? Get out." Bar Kamtza said, "Since I'm already here, let me be and I'll pay you for what I eat and drink." The man refused. Bar Kamtza said, "I'll pay you half the cost of the feast." The man refused. Bar Kamtza said, "I'll pay you the *entire* cost of the feast." The man refused, took Bar Kamtza's arm, stood him up and threw him out.

Bar Kamtza said, "Since there were rabbis there and they didn't protest [such behavior], evidently they approved of it. I'll go and slander them to the authorities." He went and told the [representative of the] Emperor,² "The Jews have rebelled against you." [The official replied,] "How can we be certain?" Bar Kamtza said, "Send a sacrifice in your name to the Temple,³ and see if they accept it."

[The representative of the Emperor] accordingly sent a corpulent cow via Bar Kamtza, to bring to the Temple as a sacrifice. Along the way, Bar Kamtza blemished the animal in its upper lip---some say in a spot in its eye---in a place where we consider it a blemish but they (the Romans) don't. The rabbis advocated sacrificing it anyway for the sake of peace with the government, but R. Zechariah b. Avkulas told them, "People will say that blemished animals can be sacrificed on the altar." They advocated killing Bar Kamtza so he would not report back, but R. Zechariah b. Avkulas told them, "People will say that blemishing a sacrifice is punishable by death."

R. Yochanan said, "R. Zechariah b. Avkulas' forbearance (*anvatnuto*) destroyed our home and burnt our sanctuary and exiled us from our land."

Later we will dwell on R. Yochanan's conclusion that the destruction of the Temple was the result of one leader's mistake and not of sin, but first we have to understand R. Zechariah b. Avkulas' rulings. He was a judge of the Sanhedrin or some

other high Halachic authority, and he prohibited sacrificing a blemished animal even as an emergency measure, lest people mistakenly think that normative Halachah permits it. Similarly, he prevented the killing of Bar Kamtza, lest people who were unaware that he was killed as an informer conclude that blemishing a sacrifice is a capital crime. Their sacrifice having not been accepted, the Romans concluded that the Jews had indeed rebelled, and the eventual result was the destruction of the city and the Temple and the beginning of the Exile.

How was it possible that R. Zechariah concerned himself with relative minutiae such as not fostering mistaken impressions in Halachah,⁴ when faced with the possibility of the destruction of *klal Yisrael*? Let people think what they want and err as they might, nothing stands in the way of *pikuach nefesh* and certainly not before the fate of the entire nation!

Undoubtedly, R. Zechariah did not simply act on his own accord. He must have found some source for deciding that one may not foster a mistaken concept in Halachah even when faced with a threat to national existence. In my opinion, he derived this from the account of Pinchas and Moshe in *Bamidbar*, chap. 25:

Israel settled down in Shittim, and the people began to whore with Moabite women; they invited the people to the feasts of their gods, and the people ate and bowed to their gods. Israel attached itself to *Baal Peor*, and *haShem* was angry with Israel [and brought a plague on the people].

HaShem said to Moshe, take all the leaders of the people, and, for *haShem*, hang the sinners in broad daylight so that *haShem*'s fury with Israel will be removed. Moshe instructed Israel's judges, "Everyone should kill those of his men who attached themselves to *Baal Peor*."

Just then an Israelite man (Zimri) came, and together with the Midianite woman approached his fellows; they (the leaders) were crying near the entrance to the meeting tent. Pinchas, the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the priest saw [what was happening], and he got up from among the assemblage and took hold of a spear. He followed the Israelite into the chamber and stabbed both of them, the Israelite and the woman through her stomach. The plague in Israel was halted; 24,000 had died in the plague. (25:1-9)

Pinchas killed Zimri even though Zimri had not committed idolatry but had merely whored, based on the Halachah given orally at Sinai, "*habo'el aramit, kanaim pogim bo*" (zealots attack someone who [publicly] has relations with a non-Jewess), as explained in *Sanhedrin* (82a). The Gemara then asks why Pinchas decided the law by himself without consulting Moshe, since a student is normally forbidden to issue Halachic rulings in place of his teacher. The *amoraim* tied the discussion to the verse "Pinchas... saw": what did he see that others didn't, and why did he see fit to do the deed himself and not wait for Moshe? They gave three answers:

"Rav said: 'He saw what was happening and remembered a Halachah. He said to Moshe, 'Granduncle, when you came down from Mt. Sinai, didn't you teach me that zealots attack someone who has relations with a non-Jewess?' Moshe replied, 'He who reads the letter should be the emissary [to carry out its message].'" According to Rav,

Pinchas violated no prohibition, because he first mentioned the Halachah to Moshe who himself obliquely gave him the green light to act.

“Shmuel said, ‘He saw that ‘there is no wisdom, understanding or counsel against *haShem*’ ” (Proverbs 21:30); where *chilul haShem* is present one does not defer to a teacher.’ ” Pinchas did not need to consult Moshe because Zimri, head of the tribe of Shimon, had profaned the Name by publicly consorting with a Midianite woman.

“R. Yitzchak said in the name of R. Eliezer, ‘He saw that an angel had come and was decimating the people.’ ” In a life-and-death emergency one doesn’t stand on protocol.

One may ask, following Rav’s explanation, when Moshe was reminded of the Halachah, why didn’t *he* implement it himself? Moshe had himself been a zealot, “He killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand” (*Shemot* 2:12). This is particularly problematic in that Moshe put Pinchas in danger, since Zimri’s tribe would certainly seek to avenge the killing of their leader, as recounted in the Midrash.⁵ The Talmud also states that had Zimri in self-defense overcome and killed Pinchas he would not have been guilty of murder.

In fact, however, Moshe was ineligible to act on his own. The Talmud records the Halachah that “if he consults *bet din*, they do not instruct him” to kill the violator. The zealot must act on his own initiative and not with the sanction of the judiciary. Moshe was the head of the Sanhedrin and any act by him would be interpreted as embodying normative Halachah; therefore, he could not play the role of a zealot and kill Zimri, nor could the other elders.

But the critical question remains: even if Moshe’s killing Zimri might be misconstrued, even if people would mistakenly conclude that Zimri had been judicially liable to the death penalty and not merely to extra-legal punishment at the hands of a zealot, wasn’t it a time of national emergency? The same question applies to Shmuel’s and R. Yitzchak’s explanations. Whatever the technical reason why Moshe did not kill Zimri, whether he forgot the Halachah about zealots or was otherwise precluded from carrying it out, why didn’t he order him killed as an emergency measure to save Israel from destruction? Moshe knew that the danger existed: G-d had told him “Take all the leaders of the people...so that *haShem*’s fury (*charon af*) with Israel be removed”. The fury and wrath (*cheimah*) of G-d precipitate destruction, as G-d said, “Pinchas...removed my wrath (*cheimati*) from the Israelites, and I did not wipe them out in My wrath” (*Bamidbar* 25:11).

This, then, may have been the precedent for R. Zechariah’s ruling that one may not foster a mistaken concept in Halachah even when national existence is at stake. Moshe did not take emergency measures against Zimri lest people conclude that *haboel aramit* is to be executed by law, even when faced with the danger of G-d wiping Israel out in a plague, and so, too, R. Zechariah prevented the killing of Bar Kamtza lest people think that blemishing a sacrifice is a capital crime, even when faced with the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple. R. Yochanan’s terminology is precise: “R. Zechariah b. Avkulas’ forbearance (*anvatnuto*) destroyed our home....” *Anvatnut* is *anavah*, and *anavah* was the characteristic of Moshe, as in *Bamidbar* (12:3), “The person Moshe was very forbearing⁶ (*anav*)....” R. Zechariah learned from Moshe.

“That Refers to *Divrei Torah*”

If R. Zechariah based himself on Scripture, we have to understand why R. Yochanan blamed him for the destruction of the Temple. But, in fact, that is exactly what R. Yochanan warned against in his introductory citation, “Fortunate is the man who is always afraid, and one who stiffens his heart falls into calamity.” He meant: fortunate is he who is afraid lest he learned Torah inadequately, lest he erred in his reasoning, lest he took insufficient care in reaching conclusions and lest his teachings and rulings bring disaster.

This explains the first and only other discussion in the Talmud which quotes the verse “Fortunate is the man who is always afraid....” In *Berachot* (60a):

A student was walking behind R. Yishmael b. R. Yosi in the Zion market. He sensed that the student was frightened, and said to him “You are a sinner, as is written ‘Sinners were frightened in Zion’ (Isaiah 32:14).” The student said, “Isn’t it written, ‘Fortunate is the man who is always afraid?’” R. Yishmael replied, “That refers to *divrei Torah*.”

Yehudah b. Natan was walking behind R. Himnuna. Yehudah groaned, and R. Himnuna said to him, “A person like you invites suffering, as is written, ‘I feared a fear and it caught up with me, and that which I dreaded will occur’ (Job 3:25).” But isn’t it written, “Fortunate is the man who is always afraid?” That refers to *divrei Torah*.

Commenting in tractate *Berachot* on “That refers to *divrei Torah*,” Rashi takes it to mean that one should always be afraid of forgetting the Torah he learned, and therefore review his studies constantly. But such is not the sense of the rest of the verse “...one who stiffens his heart will fall into calamity.” From R. Yochanan’s words in *Gittin*, rather, it is clear that “That refers to *divrei Torah*” means that one should be afraid that he may have misunderstood the Torah and erred in the conclusions he drew from it, as R. Zechariah b. Avkulas erred in equating the case before him with the situation facing Moshe. For he could have explained Moshe’s behavior differently, as for example, it seems to me that when G-d told Moshe “Take all the leaders of the people....so that *haShem*’s fury with Israel will be removed,” this was a promise that if he ordered the idolaters killed it would be enough and he would need do no more. R. Zechariah, at any rate, should have considered the possibility that the precedent he found might not be relevant to his day.

Moshe’s not ordering Zimri’s execution caused no damage, while R. Zechariah’s not taking action against Bar Kamtza led to the Temple’s destruction. The zealotry displayed by Pinchas saved Israel, but zealotry of a different sort destroyed *bayit sheini*, when the Zealots brought about civil war and the fall of Jerusalem. “Fortunate is the man who is always afraid....”---that refers to *divrei Torah*!

Two Types of Leadership

The lesson that a leader must consider the possibility of error and not endanger Israel merely on the strength of his understanding of Torah, is also the point of the Jerusalem Talmud in *Berachot* (9:5) and *Sotah* (5:5). In both places, the account of the death of R. Akiva *al kiddush haShem* is followed immediately by his exposition of *Devarim* 6:13: “R. Akiva said, ‘You shall fear *haShem*, your G-d’ (*et haShem elokecha tira*)---fear Him and his Torah (*oto v’et torato*).” This is commonly taken to mean the same as the version quoted by the Babylonian Talmud in *Pesachim* (22a), “R. Akiva said...fear Torah scholars as well” (*l’rabot talmidei chachamim*), but the wordings in the two Talmuds are very different. Rather, R. Akiva had declared, based on his studies, that Bar Kochba was the Messiah, and was therefore partly to blame for the revolt that cost hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives. Before his death at the hands of the Romans, he acknowledged⁷ that he should have been more afraid of the possibility of error, for a scholar must fear the *Torah* as he fears G-d. “Fortunate is the man who is always afraid...”---that refers to *divrei Torah!*

This explanation also illuminates a discussion in *Rosh HaShanah* (25a). The Talmud discusses the authority of a leader, and comments on the Torah’s not having recorded the names of the seventy elders who were appointed to help Moshe, in *Bamidbar* chapter 11. “Our rabbis taught, why weren’t their names listed? So that no one [today] will say: ‘Is X like Moshe or Aharon?’ ‘Is Y like Nadav or Avihu?’ ‘Is Z like Eldad or Meidad?’ ” i.e., even if contemporary leaders cannot be compared with Moshe, Aharon and so forth, perhaps they can be compared with the elders whose names are not mentioned but who nevertheless had the Divine spirit rest on them.

The Talmud continues:

It is stated, “Shmuel said to the people, ‘*HaShem*, who made Moshe and Aharon,’ ” and it is [also] stated, “*HaShem* sent Yerubaal, B’dan, Yiftach and Shmuel” (I Samuel 12:6,11). Yerubaal is Gideon...B’dan is Shimshon.... It is [also] stated, “Moshe and Aharon among His priests, and Shmuel among those who call His Name” (Psalms 99: 6).

[The fact that] Scripture equated three lightweights with three heavyweights [comes] to teach you: Yerubaal in his generation is like Moshe in his generation; B’dan in his generation is like Aharon in his generation; Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel in his generation.

If someone at the time of Gideon questioned his authority, he could be answered “Yerubaal in his generation is like Moshe in his generation.” Similarly, in Shimshon’s time one could say “B’dan in his generation is like Aharon in his generation.” In Yiftach’s time, on the other hand, Shmuel had not even been born. What, then, is the point of “Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel in his generation”?

The point is that there are two types of leadership. Sometimes a leader needs to do what other leaders already did before him, and people should not object that the others had the stature to do so but he doesn’t; concerning him the Sages said, “Yerubaal in his generation is like Moshe in his generation.” But sometimes a leader needs to do what has not been done before, in circumstances for which there is no clear precedent. He cannot always base himself on the past. The Sages said, “Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel

in his generation,” for even if it seems that he lacks the authority to innovate, future leaders will arise and endorse his actions.

R. Zechariah b. Avkulas found what he considered an exact parallel in the Torah to his situation, and based his policies wholly on the comparison. For that reason R. Yochanan mourned that his lack of leadership⁸ “destroyed our home and burnt our sanctuary and exiled us from our land.”

Baseless Hatred

Whatever we make of R. Zechariah’s rulings, they are not in the category of sins, and certainly not sins punishable by destruction and exile. What, then, is the meaning of R. Yochanan’s statement, which attributes the *churban* to the mistakes of one leader and not to sin?

In fact, though, the other key Talmudic explanation of the destruction of the second Temple also does not attribute it to sin. We read in *Yoma* (9b):

Why was the first Temple destroyed? Because of three things which were present: idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder....But the second Temple, [when] they were occupied with Torah, *mitzvot* and acts of kindness (*gemilut chassadim*)---why was it destroyed? Because of baseless hatred which was present. To teach you, that baseless hatred (*sinat chinam*) is equal to the three sins: idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder.

The term “baseless hatred” requires clarification. Hatred is prohibited in *Vayikra* (19:17), “You shall not hate your fellow in your heart,” but this is not the *sinat chinam* the Gemara is referring to. The verse refers to hatred “in your heart,” i.e., surreptitious or masked enmity, whereas to illustrate *sinat chinam* the Gemara in *Yoma* quotes Ezekiel (21:7), “Groups [armed] with the sword were with my people,” and explains, “These are men who eat and drink, and stab each other with verbal swords,” out loud and in public.

In *Vayikra* 19:18 the Torah commands, “Love your fellow as you do yourself,” and R. Akiva considered this “a basic principle of the Torah.”⁹ But violating this principle and refraining from neighborly acts of kindness and brotherhood is also not what the Gemara is referring to, for we already read that during the second Temple period people were occupied with “Torah, *mitzvot* and acts of kindness.”

Underlying these difficulties is a fundamental problem. If *sinat chinam* refers to the above or any other sins, where is there warning of punishment for it, let alone destruction of the Temple and exile? G-d does not punish without prior admonition. Nor is *sinat chinam* listed among the sins which incur exile, in *Avot* (5:9): “Exile is brought to the world by idolatry, by illicit sexual relations, by murder and by [non-observance of] the Sabbatical year.” Similarly, in *Shabbat* (33a) the Sages said, “Because of the sins of idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder and the abrogation of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, exile is brought to the world and they are exiled”; and also “because of the sin of murder the Temple is destroyed.” They cite verses from the Torah which warn of the consequences of each of these sins. *Sinat chinam* is not mentioned at all.

But in fact, the Gemara in *Yoma* does not cite *sinat chinam* in the context of sin and punishment. "...To teach you, that baseless hatred is equal to the three sins: idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder." It calls idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder sins, but does not say "the sin of baseless hatred." Rather, the Gemara's attributing the destruction of the second Temple to *sinat chinam* is similar to R. Yochanan's attributing it to R. Zechariah's mistake and not to sin. *Sinat chinam* refers to the internecine warfare among the Jews, who quarreled and fought and killed each other instead of uniting against the Romans. Rabbeinu Chananel in *Yoma* comments that "had they ascended together, like a wall" they would not have been crushed, and Maharsha cites the incident of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza as an example of factionalism and its consequences. Because of baseless hatred and disunity, the Temple was destroyed and we were exiled.

We can now understand the statement, "to teach you, that baseless hatred is equal to the three sins: idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder." It would be astonishing to equate the three cardinal sins, concerning which Halachah demands that one give up one's life rather than violate and which carry the death penalty, with the relatively minor sin of hatred which is not even punishable by the lash. Rather, the term "is equal to (*shkulah k'neged*)" involves comparison of another sort. It is found a number of times in the Talmud, such as in *Nedarim* (25a), "The mitzvah of *tzitzit* is equal to all the *mitzvot* in the Torah," and (32a) "Great is circumcision, which is equal to all the *mitzvot* in the Torah," and in the Jerusalem Talmud, "*Shabbat* is equal to all the *mitzvot*."¹⁰ It does not mean, for example, that one who wears *tzitzit* and observes nothing else earns the same merit as one who observes the rest of the Torah, or that circumcision is as important as all the other *mitzvot* put together.

Instead, to be equal or equivalent to all the commandments means one of two things: either that certain *mitzvot* are preconditions for or lead to observance of all the others, as the Torah states concerning *tzitzit* "you will see it and remember all *haShem's mitzvot*, and do them" (*Vayikra* 15:39). Or, that they have similar results even though they work in different ways, as the *Sifrei* in *parshat R'eh* says "Dwelling in the Land of Israel is equal to all the commandments." Observing *mitzvot* in the aggregate leads to awareness of G-d and so, too, does dwelling in Israel, as stated in *Ketuvot* (110b), "Everyone who lives in the Land of Israel is as if he has a Deity, as it is stated, '...to give you the land of Canaan, to be your G-d' (*Vayikra* 25:38)."

In this sense *sinat chinam* is indeed equal to idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder: it brought about the destruction of the second Temple just as surely as the three sins brought about the destruction of the first, albeit in very different ways.

The First and Second Temples

We can now understand the comparison the Gemara makes between the two Temples, for there are two types of relationships between G-d and Israel. When Israel is wholly righteous no people or nation can rule over them, and by the same token if they are overwhelmingly wicked the opposite is true: even should the balance of forces and the international geopolitical situation seem to pose no danger, G-d will manipulate events to destroy the sinful Jewish people, as in Jeremiah (5:15), "I hereby bring a nation

from afar upon you.” Thus, the first Temple was destroyed in direct punishment for the sins of idolatry, illicit sexual relations and murder; Nebuchadnezzar was “G-d’s servant”¹¹ in carrying out His will, as before him Assyria was “the rod of My wrath.”¹²

Nowhere in the Talmud, on the other hand, is it claimed that G-d brought the Romans in order to destroy the second Temple or that Titus was G-d’s servant. During the second Temple people were occupied with “Torah, *mitzvot* and acts of kindness,” and they certainly were not so sinful as to warrant the destruction as Divine punishment. However, neither were they righteous and blameless enough to merit Divine intervention to manipulate events in their favor.¹³

This marked the second type of relationship, when G-d hides his face and does not openly intervene. In circumstances of *hester panim* and the absence of prophecy, Israel engaged Rome in a war it could not realistically win, and defeat came not as punishment for sins but through *sinat chinam* and other human factors. The Gemara uses identical language to ascribe the destruction to three different causes: in *Gittin* (56a), “R. Zechariah b. Avkulas’ forbearance destroyed our home and burnt our sanctuary and exiled us from our land,” and (57b) “The wicked kingdom (Rome) destroyed our home and burnt our sanctuary and exiled us from our land” and in *Berachot* (3a) G-d said, “because of Israel’s sins I destroyed My home and burnt My sanctuary and exiled them among the nations.” There is no contradiction, for if not for poor leadership there would have been no war, if not for a foe like Rome there would have been no defeat, and if not for Israel’s sins-- non-cardinal as they were-- G-d would have intervened to save them from the consequences of their mistakes.

This is the reason for the fear which surfaces each year during the period of *bein hameitzarim* and *Tishah B’av*. Had the second Temple been destroyed as punishment for a specific sin or sins, we could, perhaps, hope and pray that we are not guilty of them today. But according to R. Yochanan and the Gemara it was destroyed despite Israel’s being generally occupied with Torah, *mitzvot* and *gemilut chassadim*, because of incompetent leadership and national disunity.¹⁴ *Tishah B’av* teaches us that when Israel is not wholly righteous even though not all wicked, they cannot be assured that G-d will intervene to save them from their mistakes, and this is a chilling message for our time.

“Fortunate is the man who is always afraid, and he who stiffens his heart will fall into calamity.” The words are addressed to those of us who imagine, because of what they have learned or what others have assured them, that there is nothing to fear. “That refers to *divrei Torah*”(!)— not to rely blindly on teachings or on one’s mastery of the Torah when faced with danger to *klal Yisrael*.

Notes

1. Literally, “son of Kamtza.” If so, the provider of the feast was friendly with the father but bitterly at odds with the son, perhaps indicating a severe generations-gap.
2. I.e., the Roman procurator of Judea.
3. Gentiles are permitted to send sacrifices to the Temple, v. BT *Menachot* 73b.

4. See *Bnei Banim*, III, *ma'amar* 2, on the permissibility of violating one of the cardinal sins to save the entire people. *Yam Shel Shlomoh*, *Yevamot* 4:9, rules that falsifying Halachah is prohibited *yeihareig v'al yaavor*, but he is referring to outright misrepresentation and not to merely fostering a mistaken impression as in the case of R. Zechariah, and also not to a threat to the entire nation. For an evaluation of his view see *Bnei Banim*, II, p. 43, and III, p. 146.

5. *Bamidbar Rabbah*, 20:25.

6. Alternatively: "humble." Cf. *Tosefta Shabbat* 17:4, "The school of Hillel says, 'one may remove [leftover] bones and peels from the table' (after the meal on Shabbat, in spite of *muktzah*). The school of Shammai says, 'one moves the entire table and shakes them off.' R. Zechariah b. Avkilas didn't follow either ruling, but threw them behind the bed" (i.e., one peel at a time while eating, without putting any peels on the table, thus avoiding the issue). R. Yosi said, 'R. Zechariah b. Avkilas' humility (*anvatnuto*) burnt the sanctuary.' " What does that have to do with the question of *muktzah*?

R. Zechariah declined to decide between the two opinions, presumably because he did not see himself as worthy of doing so, and his similar indecision in the case of Bar Kamtza led to the destruction. According to this, the proposals to sacrifice the blemished cow and to kill Bar Kamtza were competing and not complementary positions, and R. Zechariah refused to choose between them.

7. See *Teshuvot Ivra (Kitvei haGri"ra Henkin*, vol. 2), no. 107 and *Bnei Banim*, II, p. 83 (end).

8. See note 6 above. Yet the same R. Yochanan elsewhere in *Gittin*, in pages 19a and 37a, twice commented on a Halachic conclusion that "just because we imagine [such to be the law], are we going to act on it?" (*vechi mipnei shemidaminun na'aseh ma'aseh?*) A policy of refraining from action when in doubt (*sheiv ve'al ta'aseh, adif*) may be sound Halachah, but it is perilous statecraft.

9. Jerusalem Talmud, *Nedarim* 9:4.

10. TB *Berachot* 1:5.

11. Jeremiah 25:9; 43:10.

12. Isaiah 10:5.

13. TB *Shabbat* 119b and *Bava Metzia* 30b: "Jerusalem would not have been destroyed were it not that within it they denigrated scholars....cancelled children's Torah lessons... refrained from reciting *Shema* morning and evening...." etc. The wording "Jerusalem would not have been destroyed were it not...." (as opposed to "Jerusalem was destroyed because....") is suggestive that these sins were necessary to enable the destruction to occur, but insufficient to cause it.

14. This may explain the indeterminate length of the second Exile. In *Yoma* 9b after the comparison of the two destructions, "R. Yochanan and R. Elazar both said, Because the sin of the [people of the] first [Temple] was revealed, their end date was revealed (*nitgaleh avonam nitgaleh kitzam*), while because the sin of the [people of the] second [Temple] was not revealed,

their end-date was not revealed.” That is to say, the destruction of the first Temple was manifestly a punishment for transgressing the three cardinal sins, and since it was G-d who punished them He also notified them of the date when the punishment would be completed. But no specific sins were highlighted by the destruction of the second Temple, which occurred as a result of *sinat chinam* and faulty leadership as R. Yochanan himself said. Since G-d did not exile them as a punishment, He also did not declare the date of the end of the exile.

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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.

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