



Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt

Communitati et Orbi

To the Community and to the World

Communitati et Orbi

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Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt

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To my beloved wife and life partner, Dara Lynn

“I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown.”

Jeremiah 2:2

FOREWORD

by Frans Timmermans

First Vice-President of the European Commission

Soon after taking office as First Vice-President of the European Commission, one of the first meetings that I had in November 2014 in the context of the European Commission's dialogue with diverse religions and communities of convictions was with Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt and the Conference of European Rabbis, the organization over which he presides. We discussed the many challenges the Jewish community is facing across Europe: the deterioration of Jewish heritage in some parts of Europe, the discussions about *shechita* and *brit milah*, and above all the perceived security threats of rising anti-Semitism and the daily fear that comes with it.

I undertook this dialogue because of the deep conviction that a dialogue with religious leaders about various European policies would contribute in a positive way to our policymaking. Talking with each other rather than about each other is essential in order to move our societies forward and to reap the benefits of the diversity in our societies. Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt and the larger Jewish community have been leading by example

interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and this book is another clear demonstration of this.

True dialogue means looking deep into the mirror of one's own convictions. Jewish history is full of scholars and rabbis who embraced discourse in order to evolve and advance not only spiritual life but also the world as a whole, as *tikkun olam* teaches. "Two Jews, three opinions" is a saying that expresses the admiration and respect that Jews attach to disagreement, which is deeply rooted in Jewish history. Although not always easy, it is certainly an inspiring example for all of us. Nowhere is discourse so lauded as within the Jewish community and Pinchas Goldschmidt is its advocate, not only through the writings in this book.

Religion remains an important part of the lives of many citizens. It cannot be removed like a coat when in the public space. Such demands would alienate believers from the public space and from mainstream society. To be sure, religion must be separated from government while at the same time government must be separated from religion. True freedom of religion and belief allows space for all faiths, as well as non-faith or secularism, as long as their expression is in line with our common fundamental values and the rule of law.

In October 2015, I had the pleasure of welcoming the Conference of European Rabbis to the Commission's First Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights that focused on preventing and combating anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred. While we fully acknowl-

edge the differences in history, origin, and impact of the threats that both communities currently face in Europe, we should not shy away from joining our efforts to more effectively fight the root causes of anti-Semitism and racism in order to achieve sustainable success. Thus coalition building between communities was one of the underlying themes of the meeting that brought together for the first time representatives of the European Jewish and Muslim communities.

There have been very few periods in Europe when the Jewish communities could live free of threats, worshipping and studying as they wished. The Jewish communities suffered persecution, exclusion, and pogroms, and yet, under all this duress, eminent Jewish scholars like Rashi enriched the world and contributed to the advancement of the culture, economy, politics, and art in Europe. European-Jewish heritage is not a matter of the past, but a source of pride for the Jewish communities all over the world, as well as a source of guidance for Europe toward the future.

In the face of rising anti-Semitism and as more and more survivors of the *Shoah* pass away, we are exploring new ways of teaching new generations not only about the Holocaust, but also about vibrant Jewish life in Europe. Such comprehensive education will help our young people to become more resilient, and to develop civil courage and responsibility for society at-large, which is a prerequisite for any healthy body politic. As the late Elie Wiesel used to say, "The opposite of love is

not hate; it's indifference. The opposite of beauty is not ugliness; it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy; it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, but indifference between life and death."

I am very concerned—not only for the Jewish people, but also for Europe—that more and more Jewish citizens are feeling insecure in Europe and are considering emigration for themselves and their families. Every attack on a Jew is an attack on all in which Europe takes pride. The way we treat Jews and other minorities for that matter is a litmus test of the health of our European open society.

I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt for his tireless work in building Europe's future—a future when we can all live together with mutual respect, in freedom and in peace.

INTRODUCTION

The last six years in Europe have been years of turbulence, uncertainty, and change. The Jewish community in Europe, and especially its rabbinate, has been on the forefront of the battle to ensure the future of a safe, pluralistic Europe, whose values are based on its millennia of coexistence and tolerance between diverse nationalities and minorities.

I myself have been blessed with the task of serving Europe's Jewish community at the helm of its rabbis in my capacity as president of the Conference of European Rabbis. This venerable institution was founded in 1956, over a decade after the ovens of Auschwitz grew cold. Founded by the chief rabbis of Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands, it grew to encompass 700 rabbis from Dublin in the West to Vladivostok in the East.

As we approach our 30th Jubilee Convention in Amsterdam, sixty years after we convened there for the first time in 1957, our Board of Patrons deemed that it would be of great importance and significance to publish selected writings and speeches in which I addressed the issues facing Europe and its Jewish community during the last years.

This is not a classic collection of rabbinical sermons, as many of my colleagues choose to publish, since none of my synagogue sermons are included in this book. The essays and speeches have been presented *communitati et orbi* at events, conferences, meetings, and op-eds written for the wider community and the world, and therefore I decided to entitle this book, *Communitati et Orbi*, to the community and to the world.

I would like to thank my rabbinical colleagues for their great work and leadership, and the Board of Patrons led by Mr. Boris Mints for their support to our organization and our mission.

A special thanks to Mrs. Joelle Aflalo from Luxembourg for her initiative to publish this book and her dedication to push that it see the light of day, and much kudos to Ami Bouganim for overseeing the editing and the publication, and to my editor, Dania Valdez.

Mr. Frans Timmermans, the First Vice President of the European Commission, thank you for writing a foreword for this book. Thanks also to all my friends who wrote a short blurb for this book.

Moscow, 1 March 2017 / 3 Adar 5777

Communitati—to the Community

Conversions—a Blessing or a Curse?

In his speech at the 115th Jubilee of the Shomrei Torah Verein in Basel on November 7, 2010, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt examines the controversial issue of conversion and the universal mission of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Elazar said: “Jews were dispersed among the nations mainly in order to attract converts.” (Bab. Talmud, *Pesachim* 87b)

Rabbi Yitzchak said: “Terrible after terrible events should afflict those who accept converts, as Rabbi Chelbo said, ‘converts are as harmful to the Jewish people as leprosy.’” (Bab. Talmud, *Yevamot* 109a)

We are confronted with two opinions about conversion that appear to represent two totally irreconcilable, conflicting world views. One is inclusive and universal; the other one is exclusive and even seems to be xenophobic and ultra-nationalistic. In order to understand this apparent contradiction, we begin by analyzing a statement by Rabbi Elazar that reveals the secret behind the very unique and difficult history of the Jewish people, the reason for the two-thousand year exile that we barely survived. According to Rabbi Elazar, the Jews were without a homeland for two thousand years not only because of

our own sins and shortcomings, but mainly because of the mission of the Jewish people on behalf of human society as a whole. We must then ask: What is the mission statement or the theology of the Jewish people?

While the Written and Oral Law deal with the history and the laws of the Jewish people, a comprehensive theology or mission statement has never been composed. The difference between the Torah and theology is that the Torah reveals G-D's thoughts concerning humanity while theology expresses man's thoughts about G-D. It was only in the 14th century that Maimonides, also known by his acronym, Rambam, and Rabbi Yosef Albo of Spain defined the theology of the Jewish nation as each one understood it. Forced by the government to represent Judaism in religious debates with representatives of the Christian faith, Rabbi Yosef Albo composed a system of beliefs based on the liturgy of the High Holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, compiling the fundamentals of Judaism in his classic work, *Sefer Ha'Ikarim* (*The Book of Principles*). Religious Jews who immerse themselves all year long in the practice of Judaism and in the study of the Talmud, which underscores the perfection of the individual and of the Jewish nation through the performance of the commandments of the Torah, are challenged by the holy liturgy of the Jewish New Year. The third blessing of this liturgy, in contrast to the rest of the liturgy, is universal and eschatological. It describes the messianic hope of the Jewish people who implore G-D to hasten the messianic process that

will bring humanity to its goal: the recognition of the role of the Jewish people and Jerusalem in pioneering the fulfillment of the One indivisible G-D's demand that his subjects establish justice and charity as the basis for a moral human society. Upon reciting these beautiful words about the universal mission of the Jews, I repeatedly find myself wondering if we are sufficiently aware of the mission that has been entrusted to us.

Having had the opportunity to participate in a program at the Harvard Kennedy School for Government, I attended a course by Professor Gordon Bloom from Stanford University on Social Engineering in which he elaborated on the importance of defining the mission and the goal of any organization or movement that strives to change the world, or at least a part of it. It is important to base the mission statement, or project proposal, on a theory of change that demonstrates the feasibility of the plan, outlines the changes that must be made in order for the organization to reach its goal, and specifies the output in order to evaluate the results of the implementation of the proposal.

As we read the liturgy of the Days of Awe, which begins with the words, "*U'vchen ten pachdecha*"—"Let your fear rest upon your creations"—the mission statement of Jewish destiny could not be stated more clearly. It places us in the avant-garde of humankind, calling upon the Jewish people to disseminate the idea of monotheism and emphasizing the strong correlation between national and individual morality to achieve

prosperity and peace. The beautiful words of the New Year's prayers prompt us to address the difficult questions posed by the requisite theory of change. How are we trying to influence and engage the totality of humanity in the mission entrusted to the Jewish people? How can we convert the world to acknowledge that on the Day of Judgment G-D will be One and His Name will be One, when the Jews do everything possible to discourage anyone from joining our ranks? Despite this, the influence of Judaism has spread far beyond the Jewish people through the two other major monotheistic faiths, Christianity and Islam, which descended from the Jewish faith and served to convert billions of pagans to the belief in some form of monotheism.

Maimonides writes about the messianic age in the censured version of his *magnum opus*, *Yad Ha'Chazaka* (*The Strong Hand*), and takes issue with the universal mission of the Jewish people. He affirms that the monotheistic religions that are based on Judaism are part of G-D's messianic plan and are precursors of the messianic time when the world will be reunited by faith in the only G-D. However, if this is the manner in which the Jews are supposed to change the world, this theological premise poses a great difficulty: neither Christianity nor Islam willingly reveres and respects Judaism as their mother, and Judaism itself was not a willing parent to these world religions. For centuries, Christians and Muslims believed in the replacement theory that claims that with the rise of their religions they actually replaced

the Jewish people as the chosen people. This theology triggered anti-Semitism in both world religions and as a result, the Jews withdrew from any dialogue for most of the history of our coexistence. At the same time, many Jews take pride in the disproportionately high percentage of Jews who have succeeded in the arts and in the sciences, thus contributing to the Judeo-Christian heritage that Europe is so proud of today. In this sense, these Jews may claim to have achieved a secular form of messianism. Although it is impossible to deny the statistics and the actual heroic and brilliant achievements that Jews have accomplished in secular domains, the fact remains that most of these very successful Jews were not proud of their Jewish heritage and were often ready to abandon their religion when it hindered their complete acceptance and acculturation in an anti-Semitic milieu.

According to Rabbi Elazar, Jews are supposed to seek converts. This is why we are in Basel, for example, and not in Jerusalem. But are we looking for converts? We usually encounter Jews who seek to “convert” secular Jews by encouraging them to put on *tefillin* or by introducing them to Jewish tradition. Those who leave their secular lifestyles and become religious are called *baalei teshuvah*. I would like to point out that Maimonides used the term *chazru* for converts, a term that has the same meaning as the word we use today to designate Jews who become newly observant *baalei teshuvah*. According to Maimonides, the convert is actually a “lost soul” who returns to Judaism, not unlike the Jew

who comes back to G-D. Three times a day we pray specifically for the righteous and for the learned, for the houses of learning and for the converts. This prayer concludes: "Let our lot be like theirs and may we also be blessed like the converts." In this sense, Jews strive to become converts. This is one side of the coin.

Let us now analyze the second statement by Rabbi Chelbo: "Converts are as harmful to the Jewish people as skin disease." A skin disease is not life threatening in general, but it is highly unpleasant. The words of Rabbi Chelbo are preceded by the words of Rabbi Yitzchak who curses the rabbis who are ready to accept converts. "Terrible after terrible events should afflict them." Why does he curse the rabbis and not the converts? According to Maimonides:

Because of this the Sages said converts are as bad for Israel as *tsara'at*, a skin affliction, since most of them resume their original ways for some reason and lead Israel astray, and it is difficult to separate from them once they convert. Go and learn what happened in the desert with the Golden Calf and at *Kivrot ha-Ta'avah*. In most of the trials, the converts were involved first.

There are essentially two reasons for the reluctance to accept converts: First, converts are suspected of having ulterior motives. Second, those with ulterior motives do not really become full-fledged Jews by deed and faith. Thus Jews are historically not inclined to accept converts and instead attempt to dissuade the prospective converts so that they abandon their spiritual journey.

The actual source of the practice of discouraging conversion may be traced to the story of the conversion of Ruth and the near-conversion of Orpha, the two Gentile widows of the sons of Elimelech from Judea. Elimelech and his family had escaped Israel during a famine in order to establish their new homes and take wives in the mountains of Mo'ab. Then and now the question of conversion has been directly or indirectly related to the issue of intermarriage.

One of the most difficult issues facing the Jewish world today is the issue of intermarriage. In terms of real numbers of Jews lost to the Jewish people, more damaging than anti-Semitism, intermarriage is chipping away at the core of many communities in the Diaspora. In most European countries, the number of intermarriages exceeds the number of marriages between Jews. As stated in the Talmud and repeated by Maimonides in *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah Hilchot Gerim Siman 268*:

When someone comes to convert, check if his motive to convert is financial gain, the desire for authority, or fear. If the person is a man, check if a Jewish woman caught his eye. If the person is a woman, perhaps a Jewish man has caught her eye. If this proves to not be the case, inform them of the yoke of the Torah and of the difficulty that the people of other nations have obeying its laws in order to dissuade them so that they leave. If they accept the honor of the yoke of the Torah and return out of love, accept them.

According to this talmudic text cited in the *Shulchan Aruch*, conversion for the sake of marriage is not a valid

reason for conversion. In *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Issureu Biah* 13, Rambam affirms:

Therefore converts were not accepted in the days of David and the days of Solomon; in the days of David lest they converted out of fear, and in the days of Solomon, lest they converted for the sake of the benefits that came with being a Jew under a good and grand monarchy. Any non-Jew who converts for the sake of the vanities of the world is not a righteous convert. And though many converted in the days of David and Solomon, they converted before suspect courts. However, the High Court did not revoke their conversions because they had immersed but suspected them until the end of their lives.

Maimonides goes even further by saying that the personal status of those who converted for ulterior motives, political or personal, is uncertain. They are considered neither Gentiles nor Jews and they remain in a state of limbo pending their actions until the day they depart from this world.

There is an additional reason for the rabbis' reluctance to accept converts. From a *halachic* perspective, the conversion process must include a declaration of acceptance of the yoke of the *mitzvot*, following the acceptance of the principle of monotheism. As long as most Jews were observant and religious as they were until the Enlightenment, it was easy to assume that anyone who made such a declaration and underwent the process of conversion would join the majority of Jews in the observance of the Sabbath and the rest of the 613 *mitzvot*. However, with the onset of the Enlightenment and the

acceleration of a secularization process in Jewish communities, the majority of Jews were no longer observant and many non-Jews were apt to join the people of Israel without accepting a religious lifestyle. Consequently for the last 150 years, most rabbinical authorities have opposed conversions when they suspect ulterior motives as they would facilitate *de facto* intermarriage.

Nonetheless, as secularism progressed and Jews became increasingly inclined to marry out of their faith without even the formality of a conversion, rabbis such as Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzhensky of Vilna and others decided that since the intermarried couple intended to live together in any case, a conversion could be considered *leshem shamayim*, that is, without ulterior motives. This approach, which permits conversion as a remedy for an actual intermarriage *ex post facto*, has become the *modus operandi* of most Orthodox rabbinical courts in the world. That said, although a conversion is permitted with the caveat that the converts assume a religious lifestyle, this is a very difficult task for most intermarried couples since those who intermarry tend to be the weakest and most assimilated elements of the community to begin with.

Most leading rabbinical authorities of the post-*Shoah* generation, such as Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, as well as most rabbinical authorities today are of the opinion that when an applicant nominally accepts the *mitzvot* but then continues to lead a secular lifestyle, the conversion is considered invalid. This opinion is based on

a law in the Babylonian Talmud that states that a convert who refuses to keep even one of the minor commandments is not considered a convert. There are of course minority dissenting opinions. Rabbi Benzion Chai Uziel, the first Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, as well as Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, the head of the Volozhin Yeshiva in Belarus, were of the opinion that the actual performance of the commandments or lack thereof does not *ex post facto* infringe on the legality of the conversion as long as the person fully understands that he or she accepts all the obligations *de jure*. In other words, they suggest that the Talmud negated a conversion only in the case of an initial partial acceptance of the *mitzvot*, but if a person fully accepted the authority of the Torah in general and then transgressed some laws because of personal weakness, the conversion is not invalidated.

In my view, the question of conversion has become the *casus belli* of the Jewish community in the Diaspora. The philosophical reasoning behind the demand that the convert lead a religious lifestyle as an integral part of the conversion process is actually intended to oblige the family that was initially on the periphery of the community to become more actively involved. The hope is that more fully biological Jews will be drawn into the community. On the other hand, when conversion is administered blindly to any applicant, the message to the community's youth is very straightforward: you can marry whomever you wish since the rabbi will take care of

any legal issues and will Judaize anybody in due time. In Italy, where intermarriage had been rampant for years, the rabbinate decided to convert the children of intermarried couples without converting the parent, which is referred to as *giyur katan*. As a result of this policy, the conversion in most cases was *pro forma* and the child did not feel any connection to the Jewish community. This proved to be so devastating to many communities that the rabbis of Italy held a convention in 2008 to change this policy, demanding the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse as well as the children. This may shed light on Rabbi Yitzchak's criticism of rabbis who handle conversions—a double curse was voiced, *raah achar raah*. His criticism is twofold: first, the conversion is in itself *a priori* not recommended and secondly, as somebody once said, for every converted intermarried couple, there is a Jewish girl or Jewish boy who cannot find a *shidduch*.

In the past, the accepted norm in the rabbinical world maintained that it was contrary to Jewish tradition to try to influence non-Jews to convert, especially when ulterior motives were suspected. In the most classic of cases, that of intermarriage, neither the community nor the *Beth Din* would encourage the non-Jewish member of the intermarried family to undergo conversion. The *halachic* authorities in Israel and in the United States have since changed their views considerably and have become more pro-active. Today rabbis and spiritual leaders deal with intermarriage by making every effort

to convince the non-Jewish spouse to convert. The fact is that Jews actually cause Gentiles to convert either by marrying them or by example.

This raises the question of how we can fulfill the task of becoming a “light to the nations,” and influence the world—“*letaken olam bemalchut Sha-dai*”—“to perfect the world under the reign of G-D.” In order to attempt to answer this question, I will use the terminology of both “Zionist Religiosity” and “Pro-Active Judaism” to define a new approach to the universal task of Judaism. For centuries, Jews prayed, hoped, and longed to return to Zion and Jerusalem in anticipation of the messianic days. The establishment of the Zionist movement in Basel signaled a change in the Jewish people’s *modus operandi*. Instead of waiting for some cosmic supernatural process from above, many Jews decided to take their future into their own hands and created the Zionist movement to solve the exacerbating problems of the Jews in exile. “Zionist Religiosity” and “Pro-Active Judaism” offered the same solution to the quest of Jewish universalism. Rather than waiting for the world to be influenced by some accident of history, they demanded Jewish activism beyond the borders of the Jewish people. This new approach, which was a strong departure from Jewish tradition, redefined the religious agenda of the Jews.

The issue of conversion in Israel has been in the headlines since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The Law of Return, which is the defining law that

establishes Israel as a Jewish State, grants citizenship to those who convert. The questions of which conversions are recognized as valid and who has the authority to perform conversions are still being debated in Israeli society today. More than ever before, we witness discussions, political fights, and scandals related to the issue of conversion. Thirty years ago, an Israeli government was brought down because of the unresolved crux of conversion, which touches the very essence of the Jewish character of the State of Israel. Perhaps Rabbi Chelbo was referring to this potential issue when he said that converts are as harmful to the Jewish people as skin disease.

Upon analyzing the words of both rabbis in the Talmud, we may reach the conclusion that both arguments, the one for conversion and the one against conversion, do not contradict each other and do not represent two opposing world views but actually address different types of conversions—conversions for the sake of heaven and conversions for ulterior motives. But is the demarcation line so clear and is this in reality a black and white situation? According to *Tosafot, Mishnah Yevamot* 109b:

Those who accept a convert compound evil when they persuade him to convert or accept him immediately. However, if a person strives to convert, we should accept the convert for we find that Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were punished for not accepting Timna, who came to them to convert. She then went and became Elifaz ben Esav's concubine and had Amalek who would afflict Israel. (*Sanhedrin* 99b)

On the other hand, Yehoshua accepted Rachav, the innkeeper, and Na'amah and Ruth, the Mo'abite, were also accepted as converts. (*Shabbath* 31a)

Hillel converted the man who said "convert me on condition that you will make me *kohen gadol*" and the man who said "convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah [on one foot]." Even though they were not striving to convert, Hillel knew that they would become sincere converts as indeed happened in the end.

We see that even in the case of Timna, in which there was the ulterior motive of marriage, the rabbis criticize the stringency of our forefathers as she also wanted to convert for the sake of heaven.

There are indeed different kinds of converts—those who contribute greatly to the Jewish people, like Onkolus, the nephew of the Roman Caesar, who wrote the Aramaic translation to the Torah, and Ruth and Yithro, Moshe's father-in-law. Examples of modern day converts include immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, such as Avital Sharansky, Nathan Sharansky's wife, who saved him from the Gulag and led the Refusenik Movement, as well as Avigdor Eskin, who called for the murder of Yitzchak Rabin.

The Talmud recounts that when David assumed the throne after Saul's death there was a three-year famine in Israel. The prophet explained to David that the famine was a result of Saul's decision to kill the priests of Nov who had harbored David when he was a fugitive. Consequently the Giv'onites, questionable converts

who were protected by a treaty signed by Joshua and who worked for the priests of Nov, were impoverished. In order to pacify the Giv'onites, King David met with them. They demanded that the sons of Saul be put to death in retribution for Saul's policies, and David acceded and hung the sons of Saul. The Talmud says that although according to the letter of the law children cannot be liable for their father's crimes, an exception was made in order to prevent defiling the name of G-D. The story concludes by stating that because of this political act, which demonstrates King David's concern for the rights of this minority, 150 thousand Gentiles converted to Judaism at that time, as recounted in the Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 79a:

He said to the Giv'onites: "What will I do for you and how should I make atonement to bless the inheritance of the Lord?" And they said to him: "We do not have silver or gold with Saul or his house, neither do we have any man to offer... Let seven men of his sons be delivered to us and we will hang them before G-D." He tried to pacify them but they would not be pacified.

Rabbi Johanan replied in the name of Rabbi Simeon b. Jehozadak: "It is preferable that a letter be rooted out of the Torah so that the heavenly name shall be publicly hallowed." There were passers-by saying, "What kind of men are these?" "These are royal princes." "And what have they done?" "They reached out to questionable converts." Then they exclaimed: "There is no nation as worthy to join as much as this one. If such happens to the royal princes, how much more to the common people, and if such is done to questionable proselytes, how much more so to the

Israelites?" A hundred and fifty thousand men immediately joined Israel.

The Ritva, Yom Tov Ashvili, who was born in 1250 in Seville, examined the validity of the conversion of those 150 thousand Gentiles. In his novel commentary on this Mishnah, he sanctioned breaking a certain law in order to actively encourage the conversion of non-Jews to Judaism provided that no ulterior motive is involved.

In fact we now understand that the reluctance to accept converts is only in order to make sure that converts are truly *gerei zedek*. If we can assume that the convert has no ulterior motives, we are actually required to accept the convert. According to Nachmanides, also known by his acronym, Ramban, the commandment to love the *ger*, enjoins us to accept the convert. Our task is to be a holy nation that attracts the world to join us in the worship of G-D and thus we can directly or indirectly influence people to convert. As written in Deuteronomy 4: 6 – 8:

⁶ Observe them carefully it is your wisdom and intelligence in the eyes of the peoples, who will hear all these laws and say: This great nation is a wise and intelligent people. ⁷ For who is this great nation who has G-D close to us, who can turn to G-D at all times; ⁸ And who is this great nation, who has such just laws and ordinances, as are in this Torah which I am giving you today.

These verses actually describe the way our tradition seeks to influence non-Jews to convert by virtue of indirect attraction through the set of moral laws in the

Torah that the children of Israel received. Thus the interest of the world should be sparked by two extraordinary events that can attract both the secular and the religious. The first verse describes the spiritual closeness of the House of Israel to our G-D who listens to our prayers. In fact the nations of the world are able to see the relationship between the natural and the supernatural, and the benefit of being part of this people who has a special connection to G-D. However, the secular *intelligentsia* is hardly attracted to a society and system whose only apparent benefit would be having supernatural solutions to the regular problems of normal mortals. Their primary concern is the morality of the society to which they belong, especially with respect to the protection of the weaker elements of society, including the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the poor.

Today for the first time in two thousand years, the Jewish people are a majority in the sovereign Jewish State in charge of other minorities and other underprivileged members of the Jewish society. We are no longer a helpless minority dispersed in exile, but a nation responsible for our destiny that has additional responsibilities and capabilities to influence the world in ways that were not possible for thousands of years. We live in the age of Internet in which ideas can travel in a few seconds throughout the whole world. In fact, more words are transmitted through the Internet in one day today than the words printed in books throughout the last hundred years.

Is it so difficult to imagine that millions and millions of Gentiles would want to convert to Judaism? In Germany today, there are scores of converts, children and grandchildren of Nazi officers who were the perpetrators of the *Shoah*. In Russia, whole villages in the Voronezh region consider themselves to be descendants of Russian Orthodox peasants who converted to Judaism more than two hundred years ago. With all the millions of people who are looking for authenticity and meaning, and are looking for a way to reach G-D and holiness, do they or do we consider Judaism an alternative? Are we prepared to provide an alternative to all those who are horrified by the violence, terrorism, and hate perpetrated in the name of religion today? How do they view us? Are we more moral, more spiritual, or are we mired by the technicalities of the *mitzvoth* in Judaism as the prophet Isaiah complained: “*Tzav le'tzav, tzav le'tzav, kav le-kav, kav le-kav, ze'er sham, ze'er sham*”—“Precept upon precept, a rule for another rule, a little here, a little there.” A *mitzvah* here and a *mitzvah* there decries a technical relationship to the *mitzvoth* that lacks an understanding of the totality of the message of the Torah, which demands that we become better and more moral people through their performance. As written in Isaiah 28: 9–13:

⁹ To whom will one teach knowledge and to whom will one explain the message? To those weaned from milk, removed from the breast? ¹⁰ For it is precept upon precept, a rule for a rule, a little here, a little there. ¹¹ With distorted speech and in another language will one speak to this people. ¹² When he said

to them, “This is rest, give rest to the weary; this is serenity,” but they would not listen.¹³ Therefore the word of G-D was to them precept upon precept, a rule for a rule, a little here, a little there that they might go and stumble backwards, and be broken, stricken, and trapped.

Are we really ready to proclaim that we present an alternative? Are we actually prepared to embrace thousands of prospective converts who want to join the Jewish people out of deep religious convictions?

We are celebrating today the 115th year of Shomrei Torah Verein in Basel. A society that engages in *limmud haTorah*, learning Torah—the best if not the sole vehicle to renew and test our religious convictions and beliefs on a daily basis—is the guarantor of Jewish continuity and creativity. For the People of the Book, and especially for those who consider themselves religious, the question of religiosity and morality cannot be confined only within the Jewish people. For better or for worse, the voices and the opinions of humanity must be encompassed in order to be faithful to the historical mission of the Jewish people. We have a universal mission as Jews and as agents of change to become stalwart examples of a moral society that finds merit in the eyes of G-D and man. We are a nation of converts; our forefathers converted at the time of the formation of the Jewish people and our arms are open to all those who follow the examples of our forefathers.

To conclude, I would like to propose rereading the statements of Rabbi Chelbo and Rabbi Elazar with the

understanding that these two statements actually complement rather than contradict each other. Rabbi Elazar affirms that the aim of the *galut* was to attract converts. Rabbi Chelbo says something similar by referring to a skin disease in Biblical times that required that the person with *tsara'at* leave the camp or the city to dwell alone. Both rabbis associate the exile with the issue of conversion. The question now is whether exile is the cause or the effect. According to our theory of change, our nation was formed in exile and lived for the most part in exile. Even now that we are back in our homeland, we must not forget that we were the people of exiles. Our lives and our history comprehend the idea of openness to the just and the sincere among the human race in order to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven in our hearts and in this world.

Lighting Our *Menorah*

At the invitation of Chief Rabbi Bernheim to speak before the rabbinical body of the Consistory of France in 2011, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt discusses the subject of rabbinic authority, beginning his address by expressing sorrow about the passing of Chief Rabbi Messas of Paris and conveying best wishes for success to Chief Rabbi Guggenheim.

Last Sabbath we read the Torah portion of the week that describes the sacrifices offered by the *ness'im* of the tribes of the Children of Israel, and the distinct mission of the tribe of Levi and of the High Priest Aharon, Moses' brother. We know were little about the princes, the heads of the tribes of Israel. They generally appear in the context of the enumeration of the Children of Israel and the distribution of the land of Israel, with the exception of some rare scandal. An overall view of the situation of the Jewish people in the desert indicates that the *ness'im* did not play a major role among the Jews. Our rabbis take a critical approach to the tribal leadership of the Jewish people concerning their tardy initiative to build the *Ohel Moed*, the Tent of Meeting, which came at the end, if not in last place. Moreover,

when the *ness'im* brought their offerings, the offerings were identical to each other, which did not prevent the Torah from giving an account of the individual offering of each tribe, making this chapter one of the most repetitive in the Torah.

Today I would like to speak to you about rabbinical authority, about the *ness'im* of our times, the leaders of the Jewish communities in Europe. Many years ago, Rabbi Steinsaltz addressed this topic at an inter-faith meeting of cardinals and rabbis. I would like to introduce my speech today by referring to his speech. He said that in the past, the rabbi was called the *Mara d'Atra*, the mayor of the city. This title actually defined the real power vested in the rabbinate, which granted the religious leader of the community the right to make all decisions—religious, legal, financial, and political—concerning the governance of the community. The role of the rabbi, who had the right to imprison and liberate people, was almost identical to that of his Christian counterpart, the bishop, who also wielded great political and financial power. Rabbi Steinsaltz concluded his address by saying that as long as the religious leaders were vested with real power, it was impossible for them to sit together at the same table, but today when bishops preside over empty churches, where there are only a few elderly grandmothers in attendance on Sunday, and when rabbis in most of the synagogues cannot decide who will be the fifth or sixth person called to the Torah, a dialogue between the leaders who have been stripped of their former powers is possible. However,

I must add that there are still a few people with a sophisticated sense of humor who call us by our former historic title of *Mara d'Atra*.

Today I would like to dwell on this topic before addressing the main subject of my speech. When Napoleon Bonaparte came to power in France, he wanted to disempower the priests and the other religious leaders in order to concentrate power in the hands of the secular, and thus he created what is known today as the Consistory. The rabbi of the Consistory was to act as the presiding minister, an employee of religious services—not at all a *Mara d'Atra*. In Eastern Europe, the rabbinate was also assailed by the Tsarist regime, which tried to force the Jewish community to assimilate by creating a dual rabbinate, one recognized by the state and the other by the people. Yet the Jewish world rose to the challenge and found a solution to the weakening of the position of the rabbi in the city. In Eastern Europe, a new type of rabbi, the Hasidic *Tzaddik*, created the Hasidic school of Jewish thought, thus once again concentrating great spiritual and temporal power that was not limited by geographic or political boundaries. The *Mitnagdim* also created a new type of spiritual leader, the *Rosh Yeshiva*, who for the first time did not have to preside over an existing community, and who as head of a Jewish academy instead established a select, elite body that accepted his absolute authority.

During the second half of the last century, we witnessed a new kind of phenomenon, the Chabad house

where the rabbi is not an employee, but the leader of a franchise who is in charge of every aspect, financial and political, of the community that he creates. We, the consistorial rabbis in Europe, including France, the rabbis of large or “*status quo*” communities, as we are called, must take on a great many challenges. Internally, we are confronted by the secular leadership of the community that espouses Napoleon’s concept of the presiding rabbi, the rabbi as an employee of religious services. Externally, there are various types of communities, to the right and to the left of us, where the rabbi is accorded more respect and authority than in our own communities. If this was only a problem of the rabbi and not of the communities as well, it would not be such a major problem.

I see a trend in Europe, including France, which can be statistically proven. The percentage of Jews who are affiliated with traditional consistorial communities is constantly decreasing. This trend is being supported by other religions, general apathy, and assimilation. It is not inconceivable that in the near future in certain large European cities, the consistorial community that was once considered the major representative and collective body of the Jewish community will be replaced by Chabad, the secular, the ultra-Orthodox, or the reform communities. In the United Kingdom, for example, up to 75% of British Jews were affiliated with the United Synagogue in the past. Today the affiliation rate is only slightly more than 50%.

The first message today that I would like you to convey to your community presidents and secular leaders

is that if we continue to do what we have always done up to now without altering our *modus vivendi*, to proceed to do in the same manner what rabbis have been authorized to do, the downward trend that we have observed throughout Europe will inevitably continue. The Conference of European Rabbis believes that a change must occur and above all that we should change our own self-perception before we can expect others to perceive us differently.

Together with HULYA, the Conference of European Rabbis has organized a series of seminars for rabbis in order to assist them to lead and to interact with every member of their communities, whether affiliated or unaffiliated. These seminars address the issues of fundraising, public speaking, psychology, and Internet based social networks with the aim of assisting the community rabbis to be as efficient as possible. Once the rabbi becomes the cornerstone of financial support for his community, the position of rabbi will radically change from that of an employee to much more than a *Mara d'Atra*.

I would like to address an additional aspect of our work as rabbis, which also calls for change. Looking at other cities in Europe, I observe another troubling trend. A united Europe has greatly facilitated professional mobility and as people are moving to other cities more frequently, I see more and more unaffiliated young professionals who have never joined a community or who have left their communities. Many of the most influential and prosperous Jews are unaffiliated, choosing

to remain outside of the local community. In order to remedy this, we must proactively seek out these Jews and invite them to join our communities.

Why are all the Jews who live in France not affiliated to a Jewish community or to the Jewish people? The answer may be found in the fact that the challenges that we are confronting today are different from yesterday's challenges and from the challenges of yesteryear, but they are daunting challenges just the same. In the Torah portion of the week, *Beha'alotcha*, the High Priest, Aharon, is commanded to light the *menorah* every day. From this we can deduce what the Torah expects from a spiritual leader. The daily task of kindling the light of the Torah and the light of holiness, of making that light shine as it should from the inner Tabernacle outward, is the primary mission of the community rabbi today. The preparation of these lights—preparing a new way to illuminate, to enhance the candles, *leheitiv et hanerot*—may be even more important than lighting them. Every generation, unfortunately even every day, we are confronted with a new paradigm and a new challenge that requires us to make manifest the light of the Torah in a new way, as never seen before. We must constantly renew our commitment to kindle the light of the Torah, making no compromises that would distance us from the original lights lit by the High Priest, Aharon, as it is said, “thus Aharon did, which teaches us that this has not changed.” This is our challenge: to yet again light our *menorah* in a completely new manner, but in such a

way as to reveal its continuity and without any modification. This explains the repetition in the Torah of the description of the offerings of the *ness'im*, a seemingly unnecessary eleven-fold repetition of an identical offering. The message here is that while we respect the principle of unity and conformity, we also value the individuality and uniqueness of each one of the chiefs.

Once again I would like to thank Chief Rabbi Bernheim for his kind invitation and to express my hopes for greater interaction and cooperation between the Conference of European Rabbis and the rabbinical body of the Consistory of France in the future.

Celebrating the 150th Jubilee of *Israelitische Cultus Gemeinde*

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt was invited to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Israelitische Cultus Gemeinde in Zurich, his home town, on March 18, 2012. In his address, he presents an overview of the history of the Jews in Zurich.

We are gathered today in the city of my childhood to celebrate the monumental occasion of 150 years of the *Israelitische Cultusgemeinde Zürich* (ICZ), the largest Jewish community in Switzerland.

The Book of Exodus, whose Hebrew title is *Shemot*, the Book of Names, ends in anticlimax. The last weekly portions of the Book of Exodus, over four hundred verses, are devoted to describing the building of the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle, the major unifying fundraising and building project of the newly formed Jewish nation, and this right after the Jewish people had experienced its two most defining moments in history: the Exodus from Egypt and the Receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. We are given a very detailed description of the structure and its measurements, of the wonderful artists and

architects, designers and engineers, woodcutters and silversmiths, wool weavers and leather tanners, donors and collectors—the women and men who created the first community and the first synagogue in the world, the “*Mishkan Ha'Edut*,” the meeting place that bears witness to the relationship between G-D and the Children of Israel.

I love to quote the question that the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair, asked the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Lord Jonathan Sacks, during one of their weekly discussions on the Torah. Why does the Bible dedicate four weekly portions, more than four hundred verses, to the building of the Tabernacle while the creation of the whole universe is compressed in the Book of Genesis in less than forty verses, one tenth of the number of verses devoted to the building of the Tabernacle? The Chief Rabbi replied that it is much more difficult for man to build a place for G-D than it is for G-D to create a place for man.

When the construction is completed and the master architect, the manager of this whole historic project, wants to enter the Tabernacle and see the result of the many months of work, the most unbelievable thing happens. Moshe, the great chief of chiefs, cannot enter the *Mishkan*, and thus the Book of Exodus ends. The Jews contributed a great quantity of precious materials to build the most magnificent edifice in the world and there is one small problem. Nobody may enter it. It is off

limits! No Entry! What an anticlimax! How many times does it happen in our personal lives that we invest all our efforts into building a business, a family, a home, working year after year, only to discover that what we built is a white elephant that is not working out or is falling apart?

Today we are celebrating 150 years of the largest Jewish community in Switzerland. After the Emancipation when Jews were allowed to leave Emdingen and Lengnau, the Swiss version of the Pale of Settlement of the Medieval ghetto, Jews came to live in Zurich as Jews, as members of a minority, more often hated then loved, more often misunderstood then understood, and more often discriminated against than entitled to full equal rights. The Jews who came to Zurich, the Blochs, the Dreyfuss, the Bollags, had a choice to continue to live as Jews, as a minority, different and ridiculed, or to take the easy path, to assimilate and to convert to the majority religion—a path taken by Heinrich Heine and hundreds of thousands of German-speaking Jews, a path intended to serve as the ticket to the elite and privileged high society. More than 50% of Berlin Jewry converted to Christianity during the 1850s, including the grandson of the philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn, Felix Bartholdi Mendelssohn, who once told Heinrich Heine when discussing his grandfather: “I hope G-D will forgive my grandfather for not converting to Catholicism.” Heinrich Heine laughed. It was actually in Zurich in the year 1769 that Johann Kaspar Lavater tried to convert Mendelssohn by sending

him a translation of Charles Bonnet's "*La Palingénésie philosophique*," demanding that he either publicly refute Bonnet's arguments or convert. Mendelssohn refused to do either and many prominent intellectuals took Mendelssohn's side, including Lichtenberg and Herder. The pressure to assimilate in the country of Zwingli and Calvin, in a country where the disdain of the foreigner and of anything foreign was a matter of national ideology, did not abate nor cease even as Switzerland entered the modern Age of Enlightenment.

We celebrate today the wisdom and the strength of the hundreds and thousands of Zurich Jews who had the moral sinew to withstand the pressure to become part of the majority and the fortitude to be different, to think differently, to adhere to the tradition of our fathers even when most of our fellow Jews had only a very faint idea of what our tradition was all about. We were constantly tested as a small Jewish minority in Switzerland. A ban on kosher slaughter has been enforced in Switzerland since 1897 when the people supported this measure through a referendum with clear anti-Semitic undertones. At the time, Jews had recently been granted full civil rights and some Swiss citizens feared an invasion of Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe, whom they considered to be unassimilable, foreign, and unreliable. By banning the performance of a core Jewish ritual, the Swiss people found a disguised way to limit the immigration of Jews to Switzerland.

Swiss Jews were tested again during the terrible period of the *Shoah* when we were confronted with rising anti-Semitism in this country. Thirty thousand Jewish refugees were admitted and interned; another twenty thousand were turned back at the border under the pretext of “*Das Boot ist voll*”—“the boat is full.” We lived with the paralyzing fear that the consuming fires of the *Shoah* would spread to this beautiful country, and with the feeling that whatever we would do to help our brothers and sisters who were being murdered by the millions would not be enough. As the fires in the chimneys of Birkenau were extinguished and the many remnants of Jews in Europe were demoralized, convinced that the end of Jewish history had arrived and that there was no future for the Jewish people, once again thousands of Jews sought refuge from their Jewish destiny through assimilation.

The creation of the first Jewish State after two thousand years revitalized the spirit of the Jews, although most Swiss Jews thought that the Middle Eastern country should serve as a haven for the survivors of the *Shoah* while they should continue to build their future in Switzerland. This view slowly changed as more and more Swiss Jews realized that their future is in the land of our forefathers. Just as every generation has had its own challenges, we too are being challenged. To be a Jew today in Zurich is different than it was fifty years ago and even more different than it was a hundred years ago—we are no longer a people forgotten and despised for our backwardness and our distinctiveness.

I was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2012 where two hundred of the Forum's guests who joined us for the traditional Friday night dinner happened to be Jewish. This is a much bigger percentage than the actual percentage of Jews in the world. Notable attendees included Marc Zuckerberg's sister, the President and the Minister of Defense of Israel, directors of banks, and Noble Prize recipients. The former president of the Bank of Israel and the current president of JP Morgan, Jacob Frenkel, who recited the *Kiddush*, and the United States Under-Secretary of State, Stuart Eizenstat, who delivered a *dvar Torah*, were among the honored guests. Bearing in mind that in 1935 a Swiss court in Bern determined that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was a forgery, as I looked at those assembled in that room on that Friday night, it was clear to me that they were very proud of being part of this elite society of the Jewish people.

The questions I must ask myself is: If today there is no outside pressure to assimilate and it is "in" to be Jewish, and we have the State of Israel, which began as a third-world country that rapidly became a first-world country in many different aspects in spite of having fought five wars since its establishment, why are so many Jews assimilating today? Why isn't every Jew who lives in Zurich affiliated with the Jewish community and with the Jewish people? The answer is that while the challenges of today differ from the challenges of yesterday, they are no less formidable.

In a world of wide access and connectivity made possible by the Internet, more information is transmitted in one day than in books printed in the last hundred years. The possibility of connecting and inventing a virtual life that replaces the realities on the ground has brought down governments and financial systems, empowered the disenfranchised, and created a new world. The Talmud describes this well: “I saw a defective world. I saw the lowly rise to the top and the lofty plummet to the bottom.”

“The Secular Age,” as our era has been called by the famous Professor of McGill University, Charles Taylor, who was awarded the Templeton Prize and the Kyoto Prize, brings its own challenges. It is not that people are no longer interested in spirituality and religion, but rather that the individual wants his own tailor-made religious experience and spurns the dictates of a religious authority or a congregation that tell him what to think and do. It is no coincidence that the two most popular Hasidic movements of our times, the Breslev and the Lubavitch, do not have a living leader. It is much easier to have a rabbi in a grave than to have a rabbi telling you what to do. You may speak to him whenever you want, and whenever you do not wish to speak to him, that is not a problem.

Looking around us in the cities of Europe, wherever there is a “*Einheits Gemeinde*,” a united community like the *Israelitische Cultusgemeinde Zürich*, in France, in the United Kingdom, and in Germany, I observe a worri-

some trend. As the greater mobility afforded by a united Europe allows people to change jobs and cities of residence quite often, there are more and more unaffiliated young professionals who choose not to actively join any community. This may lead to some very extreme situations. I visited the city of Nizza in Italy during the summer of 2010 to spend the Sabbath with the local community and discovered that it was literally bankrupt, as evidenced by its dilapidated and sad synagogues. Yet there was a vacation community of the largest concentration of wealthy Jews in the world from the former Soviet Union, Europe, and the United States within a few square kilometers of the city. The local Jewish community, the *Consistoire*, had done nothing to try and reach out to these hundreds of Jews. The axiom that a person should seek a rabbi, or in our context, a person should seek a Jewish community, may have worked very well in the past, but not anymore. Jewish community leaders must proactively seek out fellow Jews on the streets, in the market place, on Facebook, and on Twitter.

Why is it impossible for Moshe to enter the Tabernacle upon its completion? The message of G-D and the Torah to us is very simple: the Tabernacle was not constructed for Moshe. Yes, thanks to Moshe, the Children of Israel raised the funds and built it. However, as long as Moshe is the only one who tries to enter it, he cannot enter because its sanctity is based on the presence of the Children of Israel, on the entire community. If the community does not enter the Tabernacle, there is no

Tabernacle. Thus we begin reading the Book of *Vayikra*, the Book of Leviticus, which opens with a call from G-D from within the Tabernacle to Moshe: Go and speak to the Children of Israel and tell them. To speak and to tell appears to be redundant. What are we to understand from this repetition? The Netziv of Volozhin, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, explains that the first commandment—speak to the Children of Israel—instructs Moshe to first assemble them. Only then can he tell them about the Tabernacle and the offerings. This first commandment calls upon us to reach out to all Jews today, to assemble them, and to create a community. The question now is how?

The weekly portion that we read today relates to the same theme: “*Vayakhel Moshe et kol adat b'nei Yisrael*”—“Then Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together.” It begins with the commandment to Moshe to go and assemble the Jewish community, not to talk about the Tabernacle but to talk about the great secret of Jewish survival, the Sabbath. A few months ago, we organized an interfaith meeting in Vienna with the Catholics and the Russian Orthodox to discuss the “Family in Crisis in Europe.” We discussed the invasion of various types of media into our homes and their effects on our families, comparing the amount of time that children spend with their fathers with the amount of time that they spend on the computer per week. On the average, children spend dozens of hours on computers while only six minutes talking with their

fathers per week. Our Catholic colleagues suggested adopting the Mormon custom of consecrating every Monday evening for a family dinner, excluding any kind of electronic media. I replied with a smile that we had come up with this idea a few years earlier, banning the use of any kind of electronic media on the Sabbath and thus creating a green zone for the individual and the family.

When I was young, before the onset of the personal computer and the Internet age, people who were not proficient in the Torah often asked me why religious Jews do not use electricity on the Sabbath, which does not involve any physical work. Something very interesting is happening today. With the onset of PCs and iPods, Blackberries and iPhones, SMS and MMS, Twitter and Facebook, two children playing in the same room may communicate with each other using their mobile phones, and even infants may try to enlarge the illustrations in old-fashioned books by pulling their fingers in opposite directions until they understand that this does not work on books that actually have real pages. In this day and age, nobody asks me if we may use these devices on the Sabbath because everybody understands the human need to disconnect from the rest of the world in order to set apart some time to listen to oneself and to communicate with those who are near and dear. Green movements and political parties that lobby for the preservation of nature recognize the need to restore the green natural earth of the Garden of Eden. There is also

a need for a day for human beings to resume the natural way of life of the Garden of Eden. Especially in our times, it is necessary to designate a day to rekindle the very special spirit of the Sabbath, which the Jews have maintained for centuries, long before the world became so interconnected.

Today we completed the weekly reading of the Book of Exodus that ends with an account of Moshe's inability to enter the Tabernacle. Upon reading the last weekly portion of one of the Five Books of the Torah in the synagogue, Ashkenazi Jews say "*Chazak Chazak Venitchazek*"—"Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened"—the words that were spoken by Moshe when he transferred the scepter of leadership to Joshua, exhorting him to be strong, to become ever stronger. With these same words, *Chazak Chazak*, at this 150th jubilee celebration of the *Israelitische Cultusgemeinde Zürich*, we fete the strength of this community that has withstood the tests of emancipation and modernity, anti-Semitism and assimilation. This is truly a wonderful historic achievement.

With the passage of time, as we confront a new world and a new concept of community, we must not only persist, but we must become stronger. The highest mission of a rabbi in our times is to teach Torah to everybody through every means, including the Internet and social networks, to reach out and seek out every Jew who has not yet found his way to a Jewish community. I salute Rabbi Marcel Yair Ebel, my great colleague

in the Standing Committee of the Conference of European Rabbis, and his assistant, Rabbi Michael Goldberger, for the wonderful work being accomplished in this community. This is the *Venitchazek* that is so very much needed today.

A Tribute to Ariel Sharon

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt issued the following tribute to Ariel Sharon, Israeli general and the 11th prime minister of Israel, who died on January 11, 2014.

The Jewish people and the State of Israel lost one of the greatest heroes of the generation of the founding fathers of the Jewish State. Ariel Sharon will always be remembered as the general who took the decisive initiative during the 1973 war to land his troops in Africa and encircle the 3rd Egyptian Army, thus changing the fortunes of the war. A bold, fearless man in times of war and in times of peace, he dedicated his life to the protection and welfare of the State of Israel and the people of Israel. A fierce leader, he did not shrink from assuming responsibility for his decisions in war and diplomacy, which sometimes sparked great controversy and division.

I had the opportunity to spend hours with him when he visited Moscow as Minister of Infrastructure. During his first visit to the Moscow Choral Synagogue, we discussed a large tablet inscribed with the prayer for the

Soviet State, the “keeper of peace in the whole world,” and a prayer for peace in the world—a rather comic reminder of the Soviet authorities’ use of religious leaders to influence the Western disarmament movement. I told Sharon that when Israeli President Ezer Weizman had visited Moscow a year earlier for the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, he was offered this tablet as a souvenir. In his characteristic manner and in the presence of thousands of Jews gathered in the synagogue, he refused to accept the gift. Sharon straightaway asked me with his distinctive smile: “Do you have to be a president to get it, or is it enough to be a general?” I gave it to him and believe that it remains at his family farm to this day. Every time that Sharon met with Jewish leaders during his visits to Moscow, he invariably began his speeches by declaring that he is first and foremost a Jew—not an Israeli, but a Jew. Not every Israeli leader shares or voices this noble sentiment.

On a later occasion in Israel, when Ariel Sharon was prime minister and was in the midst of coalition negotiations to form an Israeli government, he joined us for a dinner hosted by mutual friends. The wife of an Israeli minister made an offensive ethnic joke against Sephardic Jews about the need to conduct the negotiations during daylight hours since it is impossible to see the representatives of the Shas party at night. In a thunderous voice, Sharon promptly reprehended the woman’s racist comment in front of the assembled party. I will remember this for the rest of my life.

I would like to commend the immediate family members of the deceased prime minister for their tireless and loving care as he lay in a coma during the last eight years of his life after he suffered a disabling stroke. In the true spirit of Judaism, which places the highest value on the preservation of life, Sharon's family did the maximum to maintain and support him during the twilight years of his life. May his memory be cherished and may he rest in peace.

The Rabbi's Role

In his speech at the rabbinical ordination ceremony by the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminar, a public event for the larger Jewish community in Wurzburg Germany held on November 3, 2014, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt celebrates the ordination of two young rabbis and the survival and new vitality of German Jewry.

The ordination of a rabbi may be a private occasion between a scholar and his disciple in which the teacher informs his disciple that he has gained sufficient knowledge and has the requisite spiritual and religious commitment to become a teacher and a *posek* in Israel. Not unlike a mother bird, the rabbi watches his “offspring” leave the nest and fly toward heaven to uncharted horizons.

The *semicha* as we know it today in the Jewish world is only a reflection of the actual *semicha* of Joshua by Moses. This ceremony continued from generation to generation until it was forbidden under pain of death by the Romans during their occupation of Judea. It was revived a millennia later by rabbis in Europe to authorize a person to teach independently in the presence of his teachers and masters.

The *semicha* that we celebrate here today is anything but a private solemn moment. It is a public event for the larger Jewish community of Germany and for Germany in general that celebrates the survival of Judaism and German Jewry in the face of the most savage onslaught in human history. The new vitality of German Jewry that blossomed and produced offspring is bound to its Ashkenazi sources, the great German Jewish tradition. It stands proudly on its feet in a modern, democratic, reunited German, facing the East toward the reemerging Third Jewish Commonwealth in the land of our forefathers.

I would like to share with you a conversation between a rabbi and his disciple that is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 130b. No information is provided about the context of this conversation, but it seems that it took place when the student was ordained by his master and was about to take leave of him.

Raba said to Rabbi Papa and to Rabbi Huna the son of Rabbi Joshua: When a legal decision of mine comes before you [in a written form], and you see any objection to it, do not tear it up before you have seen me. If I have a [valid] reason [for my decision] I will tell [it to] you; and if not, I will withdraw [it]. After my death, you shall neither tear it up nor infer [any law] from it. You shall neither tear it up since, had I been there, it is possible that I might have told you the reason; nor infer [any law] from it because a judge must be guided only by what his eyes see.

This exchange between master and student touches the core of the transmission of our tradition from genera-

tion to generation, revealing the secret of the longevity of rabbinic Judaism versus the more fundamentalist Judaism of the early Judaic sects, such as the Sadducees and the Karaites, who disappeared in the dustbin of history. Once a student has been taught and ordained, he is granted the right to ask questions, to disagree with his teacher, and to interpret *halacha* differently than his teacher. However the caveat of the right to question the opinions of his teacher and disagree with them is the requirement to respect the teacher's opinion and to hear the opinions of others in order to discuss and debate them before rendering a new *halacha*. Last but not least, the judge must be guided only by what his eyes see.

The more liberal streams of Judaism call us Orthodox. I do not like this word for two reasons: it is not a Hebrew word and it has been taken from another religion. Rabbinic or traditional Judaism, as it is referred to by scholars, is mainstream in Israel and in Europe, and it is growing rapidly in the United States where it is the clear choice of the great majority of the reestablished Ashkenazi communities. We are blessed with a double tradition—the Written Law and the Oral Law—that must be interpreted by the “prophets who will live in our days,” the rabbis and students who discuss and reinterpret the Torah of our fathers in every generation.

The Talmud, an accumulation of centuries old rabbinic debates and wisdoms, which Heinrich Heine called “the cathedral on which Judaism was built,” holds

the fundamental key to understanding the values that have defined our families and our education for millennia. Indeed talmudic, mishnaic, and midrashic literature comprise for the most part anthologies of argument. “Rabbi X says this, Rabbi Y says that.” There is no attempt to gloss over the differences. On the contrary, the arguments rather than the conclusions of the debates are preserved. And here, the exception proves the rule. In the 12th century, Moses Maimonides wrote the greatest of all codes of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*. In doing so, he made a conscious editorial decision. He eliminated the debates and recorded only the final law. The *Mishneh Torah* is the Talmud with the arguments edited out and as such has sparked more dispute and debate, and produced more commentaries and counter-commentaries than almost any other work of Jewish Law.

In Judaism, argument is not incidental but of the essence. The sages gave the phenomenon a name—argument for the sake of heaven—and thus it has a spiritual dignity of its own: “These and those are the words of the living G-D.” G-D lives in the cut and thrust of the house of study. He does not say, X is right and Y is wrong. He does not deliver a verdict. He empowers His sages to do that. It may be said that the word of the Almighty gives rise to wars—wars without violence, bloodshed, or conquest.

When a typical six-year old child is confronted with the dilemma of two persons in court holding one gar-

ment, each one claiming to be the rightful owner, and the child is asked to think of the situation as a lawyer, as a judge, as a claimant, and as a witness, this immersion in the sea of the Talmud helps the child soar to ever greater heights in his adult life and makes the quest of wisdom an easy path to follow. I believe that religious tradition should definitely prompt us to discuss and to learn from everyone and everything around us, the new and the strange, but it must never succumb to becoming a rubber stamp for all the “isms” and hypes of modern culture and life, and thus irrelevant and redundant.

The two young men who are to be ordained today as rabbis by the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminar assume the tradition of 3500 years from Sinai, carrying it into the 21st century. As teachers and shepherds of their flocks, they will be called upon to reinterpret and find their own way of making Judaism relevant to their communities, using the gifts bestowed on them by G-D. I would like to conclude with the priestly blessing in Numbers 6: 22-27:

²² The Lord said to Moses, ²³ Tell Aaron and his sons: This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ²⁴ The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. ²⁷ So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

In Memoriam of Rabbi Motel Lifschitz

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt published a special farewell article on November 3, 2014 in the Kikar HaShabat website in Hebrew, in honor of the late Rabbi Baruch Mordechai Lifschitz of Moscow, of blessed memory.

Last Thursday, Rabbi Baruch Mordechai Lifschitz, commonly known as Rabbi Motel the *Shochet* of Moscow, one of the most fascinating and exemplary personalities of the Soviet Era, was escorted to his final resting place by a large crowd in Brooklyn. He was one of the four pillars of the “Second Room” at the Moscow Choral Synagogue, where G-D-fearing worshippers used to pray because the main sanctuary used a microphone on the Sabbath during the Soviet Era. The four wise scholars—Rabbi Getzel Wilensky, Rabbi Shimon Trebnik, Rabbi Abraham Miller, a student of the Chofetz Chaim, and Rabbi Motel—were the Western Wall of Judaism in the Soviet Union during the cold years of state atheism, when darkness covered the earth and fog enshrouded the nations.

The “Second Room” had already become a center for underground Torah learning when in 1934 the young rabbi of Lyuban, Belarus, the brilliant Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, escaped the terror of the *Yevseksiya*—a branch of the Soviet Union Communist Party, which was established as a rival to the Zionist and Bund parties with the aim of suppressing Judaism—and fled to Moscow. During the course of that year, Rabbi Feinstein made efforts to get an entry visa to the United States.

In the years after the Six-Day War, the spark of Jewish pride was kindled by the victory of the “imperialist Zionist entity” over the Arab world, which had been backed by the Soviet Union. Young Jewish students began congregating in masses on the famous Archipova Street, flaunting their Jewishness, especially on the night of Simhat Torah. Other than knowing that they were Jewish, many of these young Jews knew nothing about Judaism. They came to the “Second Room” of the synagogue where they began to intensively study first Hebrew and Torah, and then the Talmud under the tutelage of these four elders who fearlessly and proudly continued to observe the commandments and teach Torah just a few steps from the Kremlin. By the benevolent grace of God, these four sages survived to transmit the tradition of the Torah to the new generation of Jewish leaders in the Soviet who were interested in returning to the sources. The leaders of the underground groups who influenced thousands of Jews, such as Rabbi Eliyahu Essas of the Agudath Israel group, Dr. Zeev Da-

shevsky and Rabbi Pinchas Polonsky, the founders of Machanaim, and Rabbi Uri Kamyshov and Rabbi David Karpov of Chabad, learned the Torah from these great masters. If not for them, the Torah of Israel would have been forgotten in Moscow.

Rabbi Motel, a *shochet* and a *mohel*, was an erudite Torah scholar and expert in the works of the later Jewish commentators and of Jewish law. He had firmly mastered with steadfast observance every detail in the *Shulchan Aruch* even during the most terrible periods. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, one of the heads of the Yeshiva Torah Vedaas in New York, told me the following story: There was another ritual slaughterer at the great synagogue who was not considered an expert, but who was allowed to act as a slaughterer under the supervision of Rabbi Motel. One day when Rabbi Motel had to go on a trip, a woman turned to the other slaughterer to slaughter a chicken. After the chicken was slaughtered and opened, a deformity of the *tzomet ha'gidin* was discovered, which rendered the animal not kosher according to the view of the Rema, who wrote in the *Shulchan Aruch* that “today we are bereft of the knowledge of which deformity is and is not kosher,” and therefore the animal was to be considered not kosher. The slaughterer, however, did not want to upset the owner of the chicken and told her after much pressuring that the chicken was indeed kosher. When Rabbi Motel returned to Moscow and heard the story, he immediately exclaimed that while the Rema was not an expert of

tzomet hagidin, this slaughterer was! After some time, all the worshippers at the synagogue began to repeat the words of Rabbi Motel until the slaughterer in question was compelled to leave Moscow in shame.

There was another Jew, a member of the “Second Room,” assisting Rabbi Motel as a *menaker* who removed non-kosher fat from ritually slaughtered animals. Berel Torbatshkin had served as a former commander of a *straffbattalion*—an army unit of sentenced criminals who had been released from prison to fight the Nazis. Naturally the relationship between Rabbi Motel, a refined and learned scholar, and Rabbi Berel, who was very observant but also as tough as a former officer in the Red Army could be, was not always easy. When their relationship would deteriorate as it sometimes did, the Jews in Moscow had to abstain from eating kosher meat until the storm blew over.

Rabbi Motel was “entitled” to sit in the Gulag for five years at Comrade Stalin’s invitation thanks to the circumcisions that he had performed in violation of Soviet law. Although his sojourn in the Soviet Union endangered him and his family often invited him to leave “Paradise on Earth” to move to the United States, his mentor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, instructed him to remain in Moscow to continue teaching Torah until the storm would pass. With all his admiration for Chabad, when Western emissaries began a messianic campaign in the synagogues in Moscow, he responded with his characteristic artlessness and wisdom: “Why are these

lunatics talking about the messiah! What matters is that the Almighty bless the Rebbe with a full recovery!”

During the final years of the Soviet Union, after the death of Rabbi Israel Schwartzblatt of Odessa, Jews seeking a divorce came from every corner of the empire to Moscow even though there was no judge who specialized in Jewish divorce proceedings. Rabbi Motel took a young scribe under his wings to write the divorce bills. He would consult with none other than Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the great *halachic* authority in New York, who on the other end of the telephone line would give specific instructions on how to arrange a divorce according to Jewish law.

When I was invited to serve as the rabbi of the great synagogue in 1989 (5749) and I arrived at the “Second Room” for the first time, the chief rabbi sat to the right in the front of the room and Rabbi Motel sat to the left. Rabbi Motel immediately rose from his chair to offer it to me and proceeded to sit in the second row. I told him that I had not come to Moscow to take the place of Rabbi Motel. As long as he remained in Moscow until he moved to the United States, he sat in the front, while I sat in the second row, honored to be seated behind this *tzaddik*.

I remember that when his wife died and rabbis from all over Moscow attended the funeral, he was troubled by a decision he had made on his own during Soviet times, without consulting a rabbi. This was the question that disturbed him: It is known that when a *mohel* is

in the synagogue to perform a circumcision, the public does not recite *Tachanun*. When Rabbi Motel had been invited to secretly perform a circumcision by a certain family, he feared telling the *shaliah tzibur* not to recite *Tachanun*, because there were surely “ears” among the attendees and worshippers who would communicate this to the authorities. I told him that there was no doubt that he did the right thing by not telling the prayer leader not to recite *Tachanun*, because it is better to bring the children of Israel into the covenant of Avraham our father and not return to the forced labor camps than to not recite *Tachanun*.

Rabbi Motel had a small room in the courtyard of the synagogue next to the slaughter room, where he used to stay during the Sabbath and the holidays because he lived too far from the Moscow Choral Synagogue. It was always possible to see him sitting there learning. On Purim, Rabbi Motel would firmly hold the *Megillat Esther* as he read it to the public. When he would get to the verse, “And Mordechai did not bow down or prostrate,” he would bellow these words in a special tone, and all the insiders knew that Rabbi Motel was not only referring to Mordechai the Jew of the capital of Shushan, but also to Baruch Mordechai Lipschitz of Moscow, who did not bow down and did not prostrate to the communists.

Rabbi Motel, a Chabad Hasid who was not messianic, was highly honored by every stream of Judaism. Interestingly it was the Lithuanians that published a

biography about him, and recently, Rabbi Tzvi Patlas, one of the teachers of the Yeshiva Torat Chaim, who produced a documentary about him.

Rabbi Motel was blessed to raise a large family of G-D-fearing generations, and was granted a remarkably long life, almost reaching the grand age of 98 with a lucid mind and good health. His death marks the end of another tractate in the history of the Jews of the Soviet Union.

Chief Rabbinate and Community

In order to meet the challenges posed by the shrinking of the Jewish communities of the United Synagogue and to secure the primacy of the position of the chief rabbi within United Kingdom Jewry, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt proposes measures to redefine the mission of the incoming chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, which he submitted in August 2015.

The United Synagogue of the British Commonwealth is a normative community that unites a membership that ranges from secular to Orthodox, a Modern Orthodox Chief Rabbinate, and a *Beth Din*, which is recognized as the most respected in Europe, surpassing even the rabbinical courts of Orthodox communities.

While the position of chief rabbi was greatly enhanced during the tenure of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, who has since become the prime spokesman for European Jewry, the status of the United Synagogue's Modern Orthodox Jewry has deteriorated in real numbers, losing membership to the Orthodox and to Chabad on the right, to the *Massorati* on the left, and to assimilation and to a secular lifestyle in general. Even though the shrinking of the Jewish communities of the

United Synagogue has not yet reached a critical point, the continuation of this tendency might jeopardize the claim of primacy of the position of chief rabbi within United Kingdom Jewry in the future. In the spring of 1988, Lord Jakobovits wrote in a letter to Rabbi Irving Greenberg (*Ktav Publishing House*, 1995):

At this stage, the Conservative Movement does not appear to me to present a major threat to established Orthodoxy. If it had, the “Jacobite” rebellion of 25 years ago would have gathered momentum long ago, instead of petering out virtually without a trace as has happened. They succeeded in establishing two or three quite successful “*shtiebel*” congregations, but I see no present indications for the potential growth into a significant factor on the Anglo-Jewish religious scene.

Jakobovits proceeds to concede that Anglo-Jewry’s traditionalism is slowly declining and finds that concessions to the left would not halt this phenomenon but would hasten it.

On the other side of the spectrum, in her book, *Orthodox Judaism in Britain Since 1913, An Ideology Forsaken*, Miri Freud Kandel of the University of Oxford advances the theory that Anglo-Jewry’s United Synagogue essentially moved to the right, forsaking *minhag anglia* to moderate Orthodoxy as espoused by Rabbis Salomon Schechter and Joseph Hertz, and away from the Eastern European mode of traditionalist Orthodoxy. She bemoans the weakening of the chief rabbi’s position versus the *Beth Din* where real religious authority is vested.

In order to meet these challenges, it is necessary to redefine the mission of the next chief rabbi in accordance with the following recommendations:

1. Maintain and augment the visibility of the position.

One of the problems that should be addressed is the need for a building that is identified with and reflects the high status of the chief rabbi as in other countries, where the chief rabbi and the leaders of other religious groups have magnificent edifices housing their prime headquarters. The position of chief rabbi of Israel actually lost prestige and visibility when its headquarters were moved from Hechal Shlomo, the landmark building in the center of Jerusalem, to a nondescript building on the outskirts of the city. While the Bevis Marks Synagogue is a landmark that belongs to the Spanish Portuguese Community, the United Synagogue lacks a magnificent central synagogue.

2. Maintain and increase the membership of the United Synagogue.

- a. Create alternative settings for communal prayer.

The United Synagogue should diversify to attract new members from among those who feel uncomfortable in a formal synagogue setting by offering the possibility of creating different types of *shtiebels* for Carlebach, Sephardic, and beginner *minyanim* services to accommodate the interests of all.

- b. Make pro-active efforts to greet the stranger in our midst.

When a Russian Jewish oligarch moves to a city and arrives at the city's synagogue and is not greeted by anybody, he will decide instead to attend the Chabad synagogue where he is welcomed as a long lost brother and given tender loving care. This bolsters his ego and as a result he may be more inclined to build a new synagogue and community center for the Lubavitch rabbi. This actual occurrence is symptomatic of the problem with today's European *status quo* communities, which have become fossilized, listless, and incapable or unwilling to reach out to newcomers and to the totally unaffiliated, including many Israelis who have never experienced communal life in the Diaspora.

c. Maintain our tradition while simultaneously acting as an agent for change and reinterpretation.

I will quote one of my predecessors, the Chief Rabbi of Moscow, Rabbi Yaakov Mazeh, who served at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. He was known as a great Jewish leader who coordinated the defense during the Mendel Beilis blood libel trial in Kiev 1912. A great Zionist leader, a friend of Tolstoy, and a brilliant autodidact who himself never formally learned in a *yeshiva*, Rabbi Mazeh identified four different types of Jews: *Shabbatists*, Jews who practice their Judaism and come to the synagogue every Sabbath; *Yomtovists*, Jews who practice their Judaism only during the festivals; *Yahrzeitists*, Jews who remember their Jewishness only when somebody dear to them dies; and *Pogromists*, Jews who only remember that they are Jewish

when there is a pogrom. If we look at a typical mainstream Jewish community, we may draw a parallel to a stone that is tossed into the water, creating ever widening circles around the stone. The rabbi at the center of these circles must make it his life's mission to draw every Jew in each one of the circles closer to the center by working with everyone individually, while advancing the community together as a whole. He must at once be both the custodian of our tradition, and also an agent for change and reinterpretation, which is a very daunting task indeed.

d. Create outreach and "in reach" *kollels*, such as Torah Mitzion, in mainstream communities to reenergize them and head off the process of assimilation.

3. Assume the role of religious authority for United Kingdom Orthodoxy.

In the broader sense of the word, assuming the role of religious authority for United Kingdom Orthodoxy includes the Sephardic and the *Haredi* communities. The chief rabbi should not only serve as a symbol, but as a true religious authority of the United Kingdom rabbinate, voicing his opinions on both philosophical and *halachic* matters. He should deliver a bi-annual *halachic* discourse on *halachic*-talmudic matters in the great tradition of the rabbinical world, preferably during *Shabbath Hagadol* and *Shabbath Shuvah*, in one of the Orthodox neighborhoods of London and with the attendance of laymen and rabbi alike in order to cement his authority on *halachic* matters for the entire United

Kingdom Orthodoxy. The chief rabbi should be readily accessible to both the United Synagogue rabbis and to laymen to answer *halachic* questions.

Relations with the rabbinical establishment in Israel, the chief rabbinate of Israel, or other leading rabbis and religious authorities must be carefully nurtured and maintained. Israel is gaining importance in the Jewish world as the largest Jewish community and as the center of Torah learning. It is of the highest importance that the Israeli religious establishment continue to consider the chief rabbi and the United Synagogue as its main partners in the United Kingdom. Unfortunately in some major European countries, the chief rabbinate of Israel has bestowed more legitimacy on other organizations, while ignoring the mainstream community altogether.

4. Act as the spokesperson for the entire United Kingdom Jewish community.

The chief rabbi must take an unequivocal stand against anti-Semitism and attacks on Jewish ritual, and must defend Israel. United Kingdom media and body politic have been historically critical of Israel, especially on the Palestinian issue. However, when criticism becomes demonization and delegitimization, the chief rabbi must speak up to defend Israel. As the European Union is gaining political clout, Jewish organizations are unsuccessfully scrambling to create a central lobby in the capital of Europe due to political rivalries among the competing Jewish organizations. The chief rabbi

can and must be a unifying force, bringing everybody to the same table.

5. Be a rabbi's rabbi.

a. Reduce the disparity between the chief rabbi's status and that of the rank and file United Synagogue rabbi.

There is a wide gulf between the international acclaim and respect that the chief rabbi enjoys and the respect and financial status of the rank and file United Synagogue rabbi, which exceeds the disparity between the chief rabbi's status and that of the communal rabbis in France and in other European countries.

b. The chief rabbi and the United Synagogue must motivate—both spiritually and financially—the community rabbis in order to serve as agents of change in their communities, and not simply as administrators who deal with life cycle events.

c. It is necessary to address the question of the traditional model of the rabbinate: Is the communal rabbi presenting a model for the present and the past as well as for the future?

In an article published in June 2005 following a visit to Finland, Professor Neusner declared that the days of the “*status quo*” rabbinate had come to an end and that either Chabad or Reform should take over. The following incident supports this position: In 2004, a tsunami killed most of the members of a Jewish family from Helsinki. The Christian wife and three Jewish children died

in the catastrophe. The Jewish husband survived and wanted to bury his wife and three sons in the Jewish community's cemetery. The lay president and Orthodox rabbi refused to allow the wife to be buried there on the grounds that it would offend those already buried in the cemetery if a Christian body were to be interred. The woman's Christian family was horrified by the notion that their daughter's remains would offend the remains of Jews, since she had borne and raised three Jewish children.

Reform Judaism and Chabad Judaism are proving to be essential streams of Judaism: the former humanely mediates between the law of Judaism and the real life of the Jewish people, while the latter builds and nurtures Jews to embrace Judaism. It is conventional to dismiss Reform as inauthentic or assimilationist, and to condemn Chabad as divisive and dubious by reason of its messianic claims made on behalf of the late Rebbe. Some say that Chabad is nothing more than *halachic* Christianity while Christians apprised of the Rebbe's coming resurrection respond, "Right idea; wrong man." In Helsinki, I missed Reform Judaism, while Chabad Judaism gave me a sense of hope. It is possible and important to benefit from the quarrels that produce the various streams of Judaism. Unable to propose the existing *halachic* solutions and lacking the experience required to make *halachic* decisions of this nature, I could not help but think that what Finnish Jewry needs to prevent completely botching such sensitive issues as this one is a Reform Movement, which is able and willing to cope with problems that Orthodox *halacha* treats as cut and dry. There is a human dimension that must be taken into account that Reform Judaism takes into

account while the Orthodox, represented by the lay leadership of the nominally Orthodox Jewish communities of continental Europe, does not. A Judaic religious system that opts for humanity and common sense as the principal criteria for *halachic* decision making can only serve to strengthen all of the communities of Judaism.

The other community of Judaism that I have encountered in Finland is Chabad Judaism, which is represented by a fine young rabbi, Benyamin Wolff, and his wife, both young Americans born into Chabad families. They are devoting their lives to building a Chabad community in Helsinki, studying the notoriously difficult Finnish language as they plan to build their lives there as well. Rabbi Wulff had attended my lecture at the Jewish community and invited me and my wife to join them for Sabbath lunch at his home, where he had assembled a mixed group of Israeli, British, American, and Finnish Jews. He struck me as the most welcoming, unpretentious, good-natured rabbi I had ever known, drawing out each person in turn, asking questions more than giving answers. The power of Chabad to cherish the sparks of holiness in every Jew sustains this remarkable couple as they bring light to the assimilated, rapidly declining Jewry of Finland.

What Neusner actually suggests is that although the Reform Movement and Chabad are on the opposite spectrum of the denominational divide, they are very much alike in their inclusiveness. Chabad, unlike Reform, tries to be inclusive by refraining from activities that might turn people away. While the Chabad synagogue, which is constrained by denominational battles and *halachic* directives, is a necessary evil, the core of

Chabad's activities takes place outside the synagogue. Helsinki is a wonderful case study. The Jewish community there is small, isolated, and almost totally assimilated, but Orthodox in ritual. The members lead an almost totally secular lifestyle, maybe more than American Reform Jews. If a Reform rabbi would take over the community and change the denominational affiliation, it is doubtful that there would be any other significant change in the community. If the local Chabadnik would take over the community, it is also doubtful that anything would appear to change significantly since the Chabad "*shtick*" is "Orthodoxy with a human face." However, as soon as the Lubavitch *shaliach* is called upon to handle marriages, conversions, and burials, the "Orthodox with a human face" would have to apply Orthodox *halacha* at least to some extent.

It is very easy to be the nice Orthodox Chabadnik serving *cholent* and gallons of Vodka with Jews and Gentiles alike discussing the Rebbe and the stock market. It is totally different once this emissary shoulders the communal responsibility of deciding who can marry and be buried within the community. As Neusner describes it, Chabad basically deals with the positive side of the Jewish experience while the local Orthodox rabbi handles life cycle events, which is a nightmare for any Orthodox rabbi when dealing with intermarried families.

Neusner is right in his anecdotal analysis, but he is dead wrong if he wants to use this case study to propagate change in Europe based on the Helsinki model.

Helsinki is to Jewish Europe what Albania is to general Europe. The real issue is that the rabbinate in Europe, and especially the consistorial model, has not been able to provide a solution to and a guarantee against intermarriage and the ensuing process of assimilation. The solution may be provided by the rabbis who teach the Torah and incorporate the teachings of the various modern Jewish outreach movements, such as Hasidism, and of Lithuanian style Orthodoxy in order to enable the members of their communities to discover their Jewishness anew.

d. The old communal model must be challenged.

The consistorial model of *status quo* communities of the last two centuries in Western Europe cannot claim great successes. The greatest minds and the greatest political leaders in the Jewish community have not entered the communal rabbinate during the last year. They have chosen instead the towers of academia or the safety of the closed atmosphere of the world of the *yeshiva*, leaving it to activist rabbis to establish their own organizations for active outreach in the field.

Is the ideal rabbinical communal leader elected and paid by the community, or an independent operator who offers services? The new-old model of the Lubavitch emissary, the franchisee instead of the employee ceremonial rabbi, has been successful in many communities. Challenging the old communal model, they have forced the lay leadership to offer alternative resources and services to the community. European leaders have

begun to respond in various ways to this most serious challenge to communal authority and traditional authority by initiating various programs to educate and launch teams of communal activists and community builders to offset the singularity of the Lubavitch approach. For example, The European Institute for Jewish Studies, a non-denominational academic framework, was established in 2000 in Paideia, Sweden with funding from the Swedish government to renew Jewish culture in Europe, to actively support cultural diversity, and to disseminate humanistic values.

e. It is important to enhance the role of the wives of the rabbis who in many instances can do more work for the community than their respective husbands.

f. In order for the rabbi to be a social and religious entrepreneur, he must act as an agent of change who has a clear idea of the changes he seeks to make and a detailed implementation plan.

Unfortunately, when Jewish communities today wish to hire rabbis, they look for people who will maintain the *status quo* and who will not rock the boat. Live fish swim against the stream; dead fish follow the stream. Very often rabbis arrive with a definite agenda of change, but cede after encountering communal opposition and then basically vegetate in their communities until retirement or death brings them salvation.

The consistorial model has disempowered the spiritual leader of the community, making him a servant

of ceremony. In Czarist Russia, the government rabbi was limited to keeping the records of the personal status of his congregation, while in other countries he served as a decorative item.

In order for the communal lay or religious leaders to act as entrepreneurs of change, they must first establish a framework in their communities that may be initiated during a weekend seminar, in a youth group, at an advanced institute, or at a more traditional *yeshiva* where they can have an impact in a controlled environment without the interference of communal politicians. Judaism is much too important to leave in the hands of politicians.

g. Rabbis must learn to use the latest tools of mass communication and should invite specialists to explain the most practical ways to mobilize communities through the use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. As one young rabbi from Germany expressed it, "If it can bring about revolutions in the Middle East, maybe it can bring about change in our communities."

h. It is necessary to address burnout resulting from the pressures, particularly on young rabbis and their families, who are often the only religiously-observant figures within their small communities.

Some sort of educational structure that is suitable for the rabbis' offspring is required to persuade young rabbis to go to some communities. Toward this end, the European religious-Zionist rabbis have developed a new

program to supplement religious education through Internet learning and teaching.

i. An annual retreat for the communal rabbis and with the participation of the chief rabbi should be offered to provide a learning environment where specialists from the field of communications, psychology, and outreach will assist the rabbis to recharge their batteries and acquire tools to become more effective.

j. A few small but significant steps must to be taken in order to give the communal rabbi more visibility and respect in the general Orthodox world and in the Orthodox press in Israel and in the United Kingdom.

6. Efforts should be made to pro-actively reach out to the immigrant communities in the United Kingdom, in general, and to the elite, in particular, through special programs designed to integrate them into the United Synagogue.

Large numbers of Russian-speaking immigrants consider England their new home, but because most of them were never affiliated with a Jewish community in Russia and since they are often hampered by a cultural and language barrier, they do not find their way to the mainstream synagogues of the United Synagogue. There is a concentration of Russian-speaking millionaires and billionaires in London, some who are already active in Israel and in international Jewish organizations, but who have no ties with the United Synagogue. Outreach programs and events targeting these families

may bring a new source of support to the strapped coffers of mainstream United Kingdom Jewry.

7. Create a rabbinical training center for future rabbis.

Yeshivot do not prepare their students to be agents of change. They prepare scholars, saints, and idiots. Most gifted students do not pursue the communal rabbinate not only because the remuneration is limited, but also because of the limited standing of the communal rabbi in the Orthodox world—the United Synagogue rabbis draw their legitimacy from the ultra-Orthodox. The gifted students seek appointments as heads of *yeshivot* or choose a laymen's profession.

When the rabbinical school at Jews College closed its doors many years ago, a vacuum was created by its demise that has impacted the United Synagogue. There is a need to recreate a center for rabbinical training for United Synagogue rabbis, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere in Europe. Rabbinical seminaries of the past may be given a second chance if they can be converted from academic and pseudo-talmudic institutions to institutions that will prepare their students to head a modern outreach rabbinate.

The rabbinical students will have to be deeply religious and inspired by Jewish spirituality and the wisdom of the Torah and the Oral Tradition, as well as by the philosophical works of the Jewish giants, in order to inspire others. Those who have the intellectual ability should also study general philosophy in order to appeal

to a more educated audience. The formation of pseudo-academics to lecture the public about some historical artifacts relating to Judaism will not inspire young Jews to remain Jewish.

The rabbinical students must also learn how to organize a Jewish community from scratch and how to gather support, acquiring the tools required to reach out to every affiliated and non-affiliated person in the community. Every new rabbi fresh out of rabbinical school should be required to do an internship in another community to learn the ropes of the rabbinate and become skilled in leadership training, counseling, fundraising, and teaching.

Placement bureaus must be set-up to assist the rabbinical school students find suitable positions. A central coordinating office should also be created to supply the rabbis in the field with materials and ideas for outreach that reflect the current political and cultural trends of the general society, ranging from Rosh Hashana cards, to introductory *Kabbalah* courses.

Matanel Foundation established HULYA, the Hebrew acronym of “*Huḡ Lelimudei Yahadut Europa*,” in 2015 to serve as a support center for young European rabbis. This center is dedicated to assisting and training rabbis, providing them with resources to empower them in their community, and establishing a social network for them. A think tank for generating new ideas and resources for communities has also been created.

Every year, rabbis leave the field in order to recharge their batteries and dedicate time to learning instead of teaching. Seminars should be organized in the summers or during the New Year vacation. HULYA has already held similar though smaller events for young rabbis in Luxembourg and Paris. This concept is the brainchild of Matanel Foundation, which has long been involved in supporting European-wide projects for Jewish community development. Heading Matanel Foundation, Rome's Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, Rabbi Bruno Fiszon of Metz in northern France, and I have taken a very unusual hands-on approach to the daily organizational activities of HULYA.

The Jewish Robinson

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt reflects on the Western Wall compromise, passed on January 31, 2016 by an Israeli cabinet decision, which provides a permanent prayer platform for the liberal movements of Judaism in an area known as Robinson's Arch, following years of antagonism and strife between the Orthodox establishment of Israel and the more liberal movements. The Hebrew version of this article appeared on the ynet-Yediot Acharonot website on February 2, 2016.

One of the most famous anecdotes relating to synagogue life is about a Jewish Robinson Crusoe who was discovered after years of a solitary existence on a remote island. Jewish Robinson showed the ship captain who rescued him his house, his agricultural achievements, and finally two synagogues. The astonished visitor asked him why a lone man needed two synagogues. Robinson replied: "One synagogue is where in principle I never set foot; the other one is where I pray."

We now have a new synagogue story relating to Robinson—not Robinson Crusoe but Robinson's Arch—a platform next to the Temple Mount and to the Western Wall designated to serve as an alternative praying site

for the liberal movements of Judaism. This new platform is intended to put to rest years of antagonism and strife between the Orthodox establishment of Israel and the more liberal movements mainly found in the United States. For years, "Women of the Wall," a feminist Orthodox group raised the ire of fellow worshippers at the Western Wall Plaza by organizing women's prayer groups, which ended with police interventions and the occasional symbolic arrests of some of the organizers.

Few if any at all saw the historical irony of the situation. The Reform Movement does not believe that there will be a Third Temple in Jerusalem in the future and eliminated the *Mussaf* prayers altogether from the liturgy of the festival and Sabbath prayers, while the Conservative movement also doctored its prayer book and censored the hope for the return of a sacrificial altar from the *Amidah* prayers, yet both are fighting for a place in the ante-plaza of the Temple of Jerusalem. One of the most significant differences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox synagogues is their orientation toward Zion and Jerusalem, or in the case of the Reform Temple, the lack of it. While the Reform Movement shed its historical, assimilationist anti-Zionism after the *Shoah*, this new Robinson Plaza will signify a further slow return to some aspects of classical Judaism. The greatest irony, however, is that this latest achievement of the tardy recognition by Israel of the liberal movements is the result of the activities of a grassroots feminist movement that emerged in Orthodox circles.

A leader of Reform Jewry for many years and a personal friend, Rabbi Asher Hirsch, once told me that the impetus to build his movement's world headquarters in Jerusalem was his concern that if they did not do so, the movement might evolve into another Episcopal denomination and distance itself from Judaism altogether. As it is, the relationship between Israel and American Jewry is far from rosy and simple. Dominated by the liberal religious streams and organized by religious affiliation and along denominational lines, Jewry in the United States is losing its Jews to secularism and assimilation. According to the latest Pew Report, the liberal religious streams are slowly sinking as the house of worship is being abandoned for the Internet. In Israel, on the other hand, the mainstream is changing its colors. Key positions, such as those of the heads of the police and of the *Mossad*, the Attorney General, the *Knesset*, and a large part of the lower officers corps in the army are being occupied by Jews who define themselves as Orthodox and observant. As Israel becomes more observant, the United States is becoming more liberal and more secular.

The Orthodox stream in the United States differs from the more populous liberal movements not only in terms of observance, natural growth, and numbers, but also in its policy toward Israel. While Orthodoxy, excluding Satmar, supports the policies of the Israeli government, the more liberal movements have opposed the religious-nationalist coalition in Israel for almost thirty years. The disenchantment of American, liberal,

Jewish, religious leaders with Israel's policies—whether its opposition to Obama's nuclear deal or its settlement policies—has deeply influenced their youth movements. Distancing themselves from the Jewish establishment in the United States, they are turning to alternative bodies, such as the New Israel Fund, Open Hillel, and J-Street, which openly oppose the Israeli government's policies and undermine the bond between American Jews and Israel.

As Reform leaders fight for their place next to the future Temple, the question arises: To what extent does the rank and file affiliated Reform Jew care about it? Is this issue a storm in a teacup or has it divided the Jewish people? Agudath Israel of America issued a statement that “the decision of the Israeli government to designate Robinson's Arch as a prayer space for the liberal streams profanes the holiness of this site.” Is the whole space outside the Temple wall actually “holy”? Since when? Even if the Western Wall Plaza has been rendered holy by the prayers of millions of Jews, much like the plaza used during the mishnaic fast days, it is still only a provisory ante-plaza to the Temple. Assuming that the Western Wall has gained the sanctity of a synagogue, when did all the space outside the Temple wall become sanctified? The issue is definitely not profanation. It is the beginning of an inter-Jewish struggle for influence in the Third Temple. The last Temple of Jerusalem was for years the main area of dispute between the various denominations of Judaism. The Mishnah even tells us of

an instance when a Sadducee High Priest was stoned with *etrogim* during the holiday of Sukkoth because he disregarded the water offering ceremony held sacred by the Pharisees.

A myriad of obstacles and perhaps centuries stand in the way of the rebuilding of the Third Temple of Jerusalem. The main obstacles to renewing the Temple are the political reality of the *status quo* of the Temple Mount, which is occupied by a major house of worship of Islam; numerous *halachic* issues concerning the Temple structure and its religious services that have not been conducted for millennia; and the lack of an accepted central religious authority to resolve these issues. The groups of Orthodox zealots who are trying to make a statement or to change the *status quo* on the Temple Mount by organizing impromptu prayers there do not simplify matters at all. Besides the questionable practical benefit and the *halachic* permissibility of such a manifestation of Jewish sovereignty over the Temple Mount, the retaliation of the Arabs of Jerusalem has already destroyed too many lives and families.

The Temple has not yet been built, but officially the Jewish people have already begun to fight over what the religious service in the Temple will look like. The issues will most probably be different from those of over two thousand years ago. Perhaps we will face a major controversy over women priests. Are we ready to begin to deal with these monumental issues while other existential issues at the core of the young Jewish State are

still being fiercely debated? Is the Jewish world cohesive enough to start a new discussion, or are we bound by more pressing existential issues? Perhaps all Jews need a minimum of two synagogues. We may never walk into one of them, but when it comes to the Jewish people, Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple Mount, we only have one of each for all of us to share.



This caricature appeared in the Israeli press following the struggle for an egalitarian plaza next to the Western Wall. It depicts Jews fighting among each other at the Western Wall, while the Arabs on top of the Temple Mount say, “The Temple Mount is in our hands”— the exact words spoken by General Mota Gur in 1967 after his troops conquered the Temple Mount.

Universalism versus Particularism

In his message to the World Jewish Congress on August 12, 2016, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt reflects on the significance of commemorating the 9th of Av in the face of the present-day internal danger of rift within Israel, as a nation and a people, and the growing estrangement of Israel from the Diaspora.

Israel, the start-up nation, is prospering and growing, notwithstanding occasional terrorism, its location in an unfriendly neighborhood, and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Seventy years ago, parents had to explain to their children why we should celebrate Passover. Today, it is necessary to explain to our children why we should continue to commemorate the 9th day of Av.

King Solomon, the son of King David and Bathsheba, enjoys a special place in the pantheon of Jewish leaders. He provided Israel and the Jewish people with a golden era, one of peace and development, and built the First Temple in Jerusalem. Under King Solomon, Israel became a regional superpower, drawing leaders from near and far to Jerusalem to benefit from the wisdom and justice of Israeli society. King Solomon successfully

created far-reaching political alliances with Egypt and many other nations through marriage. Israel seemed to be more secure and prosperous than ever. However, this golden age did not last forever. Soon after the death of the wisest of kings, the Kingdom of Israel was split into two hostile states with different religious and political aspirations, bent on a downward spiral. This led to the demise of both kingdoms and the termination of Jewish sovereignty. This golden era was gone forever.

King Solomon's thoughts and writings have become part of the *Tanach*. A midrash expounds on Proverbs 31: "The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him." *Midrash Raba Proverbs* 31 allegorically addresses the tensions that existed in Solomon's kingdom, as follows:

Said Rabbi Ishmael, the very night that Solomon completed the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, he married Pharaoh's daughter, and the people of Jerusalem attended both celebrations, going from one to the other. The rejoicing at the wedding ball was greater than the rejoicing in celebration of the completion of the Temple. At that time a thought came before the Almighty to destroy the Temple.

On the one hand, there is the quest for Jewish particularism, symbolized by the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, that brings to fruition the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 12:10–11:

¹⁰ When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security, ¹¹ then it shall come about

that the place in which the Lord your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the Lord.

On the other hand, there is the quest for universal improvement and justice as symbolized by the marriage to the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Another version of this midrash in *Pesikta Zutrata* on the Book of Lamentations, *Midrash Lekach Tov Eich* 2:8 adds a nuance to this critique:

He thought to destroy, on the day of the consecration of the Temple did Solomon wed the daughter of Pharaoh, and the rejoicing of the wedding ball was as joyous as the one in celebration of the completion of the Temple.

A priori, this midrash suggests that the union of King Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter, whether or not politically motivated, was viewed in a negative light by the sages. This reflects a critical attitude toward universalism. Yet our sages equated the reign of Solomon with the messianic age as indicated in the Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 24: "In the times of David and Solomon as in the times of the messiah, converts are not welcome." The peace and prosperity of Solomon's reign was due both to the high level of spirituality of the Jewish people, referred to by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik as "the sanctity of the covenantal community," and its universalism and outreach to other nations. It was not

the marriage, *per se*, of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter, which is criticized in this midrash. The criticism is directed at the fact that the event of the consecration of the Temple of Jerusalem, which was of monumental spiritual importance to the Jewish people, was actually overshadowed by the celebration of Solomon's great diplomatic achievement. This juxtaposition of events minimized the glory of the inauguration of the Temple, diminishing its primacy and reducing it to a diplomatic event of secondary importance.

According to some commentators, both forces and quests that characterized the golden age of Israel continue to compete for primacy and status in the Jewish State. Israel today is divided between the "State of Tel Aviv" and the "State of Jerusalem," split between those who want to become a light unto the nations by creating new startups and technology, and those who think that the Divine presence will herald the fulfillment of the prophecy: "From Zion shall come forth the Torah and the word of G-D from Jerusalem."

A parallel may be drawn to the many Jews living in the Diaspora who have adopted the idea of *tikkun olam* and have made it the sole expression of their Judaism, neglecting all other national and religious aspects of our faith. I have seen many people in a community becoming very involved in religious dialogue with other faiths, while totally neglecting the internal problems and challenges within our communities in the fields of education, welfare, and security.

Others interpret the words of the midrash as negating the need for universalism and the importance of this component to the composition of the Jewish State. They seem to forget the history of our people, tending to overlook the universal values shared by the human race, and they must be reminded that the words of the midrash are built around a chapter in Proverbs 31, which quotes Lemuel, King of Massa, a non-Jewish ruler who relates his mother's words of vision—in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew:

² Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb! Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers! ³ Do not spend your strength on women, your vigor on those who ruin kings. ⁴ It is not for kings, Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, ⁵ lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.⁶ Let beer be for those who are perishing, wine for those who are in anguish! ⁷ Let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more. ⁸ Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. ⁹ Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Solomon heeded the advice of his mother, or the mother of his colleague-king, and administered justice to the lowest caste of his citizenry, namely, the two harlots who came to him, each carrying a child, one living and the other dead. Solomon applied his wisdom to determine the true mother of the living child whom they were both claiming. This famous judgment found its place in the liturgy of the *haftarot*. This *haftarah* reading follows the reading of the Torah portion of *Miketz*, but is rarely

read—perhaps once in fifteen years—because the weekly portion of *Miketz* falls almost every year on the festival of Hanukkah. The words of the Prophet Zachariah speaking about the Temple, the High Priest, and the *menorah*, the seven-branched candelabrum used in the Temple, take precedence over the heavenly universal justice of Solomon.

The ambiguity surrounding King Solomon goes further. *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 10:2 lists the three kings who lost their place in the world to come, and in the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 104b, Rabbi Yehudah mentions that a fourth king was discussed without mentioning his name. However, in *Bamidbar Raba* 14:1 and *Tanchuma Metzora* 1, Rabbi Yehudah is quoted as saying, “They wanted to include Solomon among them.” Mark Shapiro, author of *Changing the Immutable*, claims in his book that this talmudic text was censured. Not only was Solomon on the brink of being declared a heretic, his writings were also subject to scrutiny and were only included in the Holy Scriptures after a lengthy debate among the *Tannaim*, a group of scholars active during the 1st and 2nd centuries of the Common Era, when Rabbi Akiva declared that “all the books are holy, but the *Song of Songs* is the holy of holies.” Solomon’s era was a golden era, but following his death, his mediocre son who succeeded him ignored his father’s counselors and lost the greater part of the kingdom in a civil war in which more than half a million warriors lost their lives, as recorded in *Chronicles II* 13:3.

Today we can celebrate almost seventy years of Jewish sovereignty in the Holy Land, the ingathering of the exiles, and the return of Torah to Zion and Jerusalem. However, the perils and the challenges of the past are still with us. We are in danger of splitting into a “State of Tel Aviv” and a “State of Jerusalem.” We are also in danger of a rapid estrangement of Israel from the Diaspora. It is noteworthy that the two Jewish candidates in the 2016 presidential primaries in the United States, Dr. Jill Stein and Bernie Sanders, are more disposed against the Jewish State than all of the non-Jewish candidates. Diaspora Jews, who by definition are bicultural, are finding it more and more difficult to feel and identify with the particularism and nationalism of Israeli Jews, which is rendering our people weaker and more vulnerable.

The Custodians of Our Communities

In his address at the installation of the new communal rabbi of Frankfurt, Germany on September 26, 2016, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt discusses the fundamental role of the communal rabbis as custodians of the community, a role that Rabbi Avichai Apel assumes, joining Rabbi Julien Chaim Soussan.

I am happy to be present today at the installation of the incoming communal rabbi, Rabbi Avichai Apel, and extend my greetings to the communal rabbi, Rabbi Julien Chaim Soussan.

Our weekly reading this week begins with the commandment to appoint judges in all our communities, which according to our rabbis and commentators, applies to both the land of Israel and the Diaspora. Based on this commandment, Jewish communities throughout the generations have nominated and chosen Torah scholars to head their communities to teach, to judge, and to guide their communities in the light of the Torah.

The Torah portion continues with the instruction that the judge should pursue justice, not take bribes, and not change the law to promote personal loyalties and interests.

Basing his commentary on an exegesis of the *sifri*, the commentaries on the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy written in the 2nd century C.E., Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the famous rabbi of Frankfurt, explains that in this verse the Torah is not speaking about the pursuit of justice by the judge as in other verses, but of the necessity of communal leaders to choose the right judges and rabbis on the basis of their personal integrity, intelligence, and knowledge of the law rather than on the basis of personal sympathies and political connections.

How many communities have suffered for years and years from the biased appointments of unqualified candidates and the consequent scandals and fiascos that have left communities bereft of sound leadership? As you know, I come from a rabbinic family and my great grandfather, Rabbi Dr. Tobias Lewenstein of Zurich, also shared the pulpit with another rabbi. It is never easy to share a pulpit, so my great grandfather, a renowned orator who was considered to be a better speaker than the other rabbi, once asked one of the congregants, who he thought was the better speaker. The congregant responded that the other rabbi was, of course, the better speaker. Astounded, my great grandfather replied that everyone said that he was the better speaker, to which the congregant responded by explaining that while the other rabbi would speak, he could fall asleep, but while my great grandfather would speak, it was impossible to sleep.

While Rabbi Soussan is most probably known as the best orator among the rabbis in Germany today, the addition of Rabbi Apel to the Frankfurt rabbinate will strengthen the *halachic* authority and integrity of the Frankfurt rabbinate. There is no question that the presence of two such prominent rabbis will be of great benefit to the Frankfurt community.

I have had the opportunity to follow Rabbi Apel's rabbinical career from early on, as Director of the Torah Mitzion Kollel in Moscow, to the rabbinate in Dortmund, as the head of the *Orthodoxer Rabbiner Verband im Deutschland* (Orthodox Rabbis Association in Germany) and recently to his election as Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Conference of European Rabbis. The challenge of leading such a large community such as Frankfurt is immense. The thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union have yet to be integrated and to find expression for their Judaism. It is very troubling, to say the least, to see at the meetings of the community boards the lists of scores of immigrants from the former Soviet Union who leave the community once they attain financial independence.

Allow me to repeat what I have told many other communities: the key to Jewish survival and to Jewish continuity is Jewish learning, whether formal or informal. Kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools where Torah is being taught are the key to Jewish survival. Today you are a Jew by choice only because you want to be, but if our youth does not study Judaism in order

to understand why they are Jewish, they might decide to opt out.

Rabbi Soussan and Rabbi Apel, you are the custodians of this community and the future of this community depends on you. May G-D bless you with patience and wisdom to teach and to do justice with love and respect for each other and for your community members as instructed in the Torah. *Mazel Tov and Behatzlacha!* Congratulations and best wishes for great success!

Silent Lights, Holy Lights The Story of the Silence of the Rabbis on Hanukkah

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt reflects upon the significance of Hanukkah in an article that was published on the World Jewish Congress website in December 2016.

Hanukkah, more than any other Jewish holiday, has been adopted by every segment of the Jewish people and has served to validate and celebrate each community's particular understanding of Judaism.

In the talmudic academies, Hanukkah, which is not mentioned in the Scriptures, is celebrated as the festival of the Oral Torah. In Hasidic courts, Hanukkah commemorates the victory of the light of Judaism over the darkness of Hellenistic assimilation. The Zionist movement adopted Hanukkah as a national holiday, an Independence Day celebration of the Maccabean State of Israel, while the liberal traditions of Judaism and the Jews of the former Soviet Union embraced the Hanukkah story as a festival of religious freedom.

We are all familiar with the famous Jewish anecdote about two men entering the rabbi's study to resolve a dispute. The rabbi listens to the plaintiff and responds by saying, "You are right." After listening to the defendant, the rabbi says to him as well, "You are right." At this time, the *rebbetzin* interrupts the proceedings and asks the rabbi, "How can they both be right?" To this the rabbi responds, "You are also right."

As it happens sometimes in the history of civilizations and religions, it is difficult to pinpoint the most authentic narrative of a historical event. The Hanukkah story is no exception. There are few references to Hanukkah in rabbinic sources, and each movement within modern Judaism chose to highlight its significance as it corresponds to its own narrative. This individualized adaptive approach would be much more difficult to apply to any other Jewish festival. The major Jewish festivals are defined by the many references to them in verses in the Torah and Scriptures. There are many tractates dedicated to most of the holidays in the Mishnah and in the Talmud where the laws and essential ideas of each are explained and debated. The question therefore arises: Why is Hanukkah different from all the other festivals?

Hanukkah was established after *chazal*, the mishnaic sages, canonized the Bible and therefore it does not appear in the Scriptures. However, except for a few sporadic references to Hanukkah in the tractate, *Mishnah Bava Kama*, which discusses the possibility of a traffic accident occurring when a camel's load is set aflame by

a Hanukkah candle, and in the tractate in the Talmud, *Shabbat*, which mentions the Hanukkah candles in relation to the *mitzvah* of lighting the Sabbath candles, the Hanukkah story does not appear at all as a separate subject in the entire corpus of mishnaic, talmudic, and midrashic literature. Indeed, this enigma is discussed by rabbinic and academic scholars alike. In a letter written by the son of the Gaon of Vilna, he states in the name of his father that there actually was a Hanukkah tractate in the collection of the *masechtot ketanot*, but that this tractate was lost.

There are three approaches that attempt to resolve the omission of the Hanukkah festival in the Oral Law. The most famous is that of Rabbi Moses Schreiber of Frankfurt and Pressburg (today's Bratislava). He argues that the silence of the rabbis was intentional and was *quasi*-equal to a rabbinic taboo. Why a taboo? The Hasmonean dynasty of the High Priest, which reestablished Jewish statehood in the land of Israel, did so by disregarding the historic and religious mandate of the descendants of the house of David to the throne of Judea. Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi, the codifier of the Mishnah, was himself a descendant of the House of David. To highlight the problematic issue of the usurpation of the Davidic crown by the Hasmoneans, the Mishnah minimized the importance of the festival of lights by engulfing it in rabbinic silence.

In a modern context, we can identify with the rabbinic criticism of the Hasmonean kings. They abandoned

a long tradition of separation of powers, where the power of the king, the High Priest, and the judiciary, the *Sanhedrin*, remained distinct, as recorded in the Mishnah. This separation of power is the basis of the modern state, where power is not vested in one man or institution alone. The Hasmonean dynasty, which had gloriously restored independence to the Jews after hundreds of years of living as a vassal of Babylon and Persia, vanished in the times of Herod, when Judea once again became a forlorn province of the Roman Empire ruled by a foreign despot.

The second approach is based on a text in the Jerusalem Talmud. This text, *Sukkah* 5, suggests that since Hanukkah celebrated the independence of the Jewish State, once Judea was conquered by the Roman Empire, it became politically incorrect to celebrate this spirit of independence. In order to preserve this festival in our calendar, our sages downplayed the political nature of the victory, while maintaining the symbol of the *menorah* and the significance of the dedication of the Holy Temple in the religious literature. It is noteworthy that the good relations between the leader of the Jewish autonomy, Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi, and the Roman authorities allowed for a flourishing period of Jewish learning during this time.

The third approach is religious-spiritual. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner and other rabbis explained that the festival of Hanukkah, by virtue of not having been mentioned in the Scriptures, became the symbol of the Oral

Tradition, and as such was kept off the books. According to this explanation, Hanukkah was maintained purely in its oral form, passed from generation to generation without being codified in written form. This holiday was the exception to the rest of the Oral Law, which the rabbis decided to commit to writing in order to guarantee its survival.

Hanukkah today is celebrated in a much more festive and public manner than in the past, and consequently its celebratory message to the Jews in Israel and around the world has gained in importance. As we celebrate Hanukkah as the Independence Day of the Maccabean Jewish State, we should reflect on the challenges facing the modern Jewish State. We know that we must cherish and nurture the liberties and institutions that are the pillars of the Israeli democracy, and that it is necessary to preserve the separation of power between the different branches of the government, which protect the nature of the Jewish State. But we also have a modern day Hanukkah story. On this holiday, we should remember and be inspired by the great heroes of Soviet Jewry.

We tend to mention the famous refuseniks and the Prisoners of Zion who led the Jewish renaissance movement within the Soviet Union. However, we must also remember the forgotten heroes, the thousands of Soviet Jews who by assembling during the festival of Simchat Torah in front of the Soviet synagogues defied the Soviet State. We should cherish the hundreds of thousands of Jews who under the terrifying threat of the

Gulag circumcised their children and bought *matzah* in anticipation of *Pesach*. The great majority of Jews who refused to succumb to state anti-Semitism by changing their nationality and family names in their internal passports paid a steep price for being Jews. The quiet heroism and civil disobedience of so many of our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union, and their refusal to have their spirit crushed by the Soviet Empire is the Hanukkah story of our generation. Today, Soviet Jews have reconnected with the Jewish world and are part and parcel of the State of Israel, as well as of the Jewish communities of Germany, the United States, and Australia. The Jewish communities in Russia itself have seen a miraculous renaissance and are contributing and will continue to contribute immensely to our Jewish landscape, both now and in the future.

As we light the Hanukkah candles this year, we are entering a new and very uncertain world order. Constants which were part of our world in the past have become the variables of the future. Truth has become relative and many of our values have become subject to reinterpretation. As we light the flames of Hanukkah, we are making a statement not only to ourselves but to the whole world. The Hanukkah candles should be seen by all those who are in the public domain, by Jew and Gentile alike.

We as Jews have never remained silent. Our lights, as well, do not remain silent. The blessing on the Hanukkah lights breaks the silence. It states our belief in

miracles in those and in our times. Jews have never been constrained by the realm of the possible. We have always sought the next frontier, the seemingly impossible survival against all odds, and the realization of the mandate to be a blessing to the nations of the world. As Ben Gurion said, “A Jew who doesn’t believe in miracles is not a realist.” In spite of the fact that Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Scriptures and is largely absent in other written sources, the power of our tradition that has passed from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation has enabled us to celebrate these nights and these holy lights in many different ways, in our homes and in our synagogues, in our schools and in our shops, in the public square and, most important, in our hearts.

Changing of the Guard

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt was invited to speak at the Israelitische Cultus Gemeinde in Zurich in January 2017. In his address, he bade goodbye to the outgoing ICZ rabbi, Rabbi Marcel Ebel, and welcomed, the incoming rabbi, Rabbi Noam Hertig, who assumes the rabbis' role as a keeper of tradition and an agent of change.

Today we are witnessing the great political cataclysm resulting from the very new way humanity converses and exchanges information through the media of the Internet. We do not know what is in store for us during the new cycle of revolution in media and communication. We live in a new world order, in a new world. Will the European Union survive? Will NATO still exist a year from now? The policeman of the world, the United States, has just announced its retirement after one hundred years of faithful service to the world and we do not know how the future will look.

The Internet like any other creation, whether physical or spiritual, can be used to advance humanity to bring peace, health, freedom, and prosperity, but in the hands of those who want otherwise, it can become a

tool of destruction and hate, of war and tyranny. We have seen the spread of terror and Islamic fundamentalism through the Internet, and we as Jews have become the prime target of this new menace. What is drawing young Europeans and young Muslims to such unspeakable and atrocious acts of terror and barbarism? The answer lies in the quest of the human being for authenticity and meaning in life. A very good friend of mine, the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Russia, has written a bestseller, *Letters to a Young Muslim*, which is a compilation of letters written to his son in which he explains why al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other forms of Islamic extremism are not authentic Islam—the first such book in the Muslim world.

There is, however, good news to counter the bad news. Our tradition, the Jewish tradition, is very well equipped to cope with change. The reason is that our tradition is complex and hybrid, and built for change since it encompasses the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. Oral transmission is the guarantee against fundamentalism and the catalyst for change. History has shown that all Jewish sects that have rejected the Oral Tradition, such as the Karaites and the Sadducees, have all but disappeared. However, after being almost totally destroyed during the *Shoah*, rabbinic Judaism is reviving, thriving, and attracting thousands and tens of thousands of young people who are searching for authenticity and meaning in their lives.

Not long ago on a flight from Tel Aviv to Europe, a person without a *kippah* sat next to me intently study-

ing a talmudic text. When I asked him who he was, he answered that he is an executive at a hi-tech company in Europe who is not religious but who decided that he had to do something Jewish in order to be a Jew. He chose to study a page of the Talmud every day. To be Jewish is to live with contradictions, to deal with challenges with sophistication, and to understand and respect nuances. It means that when it says in the Written Torah, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” we interpret it according to the Oral Torah, which means that when a person damages the eye of another person, he has to pay the worth of the missing eye to that person, and not literally as done in Saudi Arabia.

We have always fought for our right to think differently, to believe differently, and to live differently. The Christian calendar is solar and therefore the months do not correspond to the astronomic cycles of the moon. The Muslim calendar is lunar, which does not correspond to the yearly cycle of the earth. Our calendar is both; it reconciles the solar and lunar cycles with a recurring leap year.

Jewish exceptionalism is based on our great tradition of learning and our insistence that learning is not the privilege of the few and of the elite, but a necessity for everyone. *Limmud Torah*, learning Torah daily, is even more important than other elements of our tradition—“*Talmud Torah kneged kulam*.” Learning encompasses every aspect of our lives and offers us the possibility to understand, to adapt, and to embrace

change. This ability is human, as the Talmud says, “*Lo bashamayim hee!*” The Torah was given to the human being for interpretation and this is where rabbis come into the picture. Rabbis are teachers and interpreters of the Torah.

The *Israelitische Cultus Gemeinde* in Zurich (ICZ) has been blessed with great rabbis and I have been blessed with the friendship of your outgoing rabbi, the first Swiss-born-and-bred rabbi of the ICZ, Rabbi Marcel Ebel. Rabbi Ebel’s love for his community and each one of his congregants is apparent and manifested by all those who came to say good bye. However, as I say at installations of new rabbis, the problem with Jews is that it is difficult for us to say good bye. They say that the difference between Englishmen and Jews is that Englishmen leave a party without saying goodbye, while Jews say goodbye and don’t leave.

I would like to welcome the incoming community rabbi, Noam Hertig, by telling him that even though he is young, as a Jewish leader he will have to speak up. Jews sometimes fear speaking up. There is a famous Russian Jewish anecdote of two Jews who are about to be executed by a firing squad. The officer started the countdown, “10, 9, 8,” at which point one of the Jews began to recite the *Shema* in a loud voice, to which the other Jew exclaimed: “Chaim, keep quiet. You are going to get us in trouble!”

If we look at the beginning of the book of *Shemot*, the Book of Exodus, we see how young Moses discov-

ers his inner voice, well before G-D addresses him and appoints him as an emissary. The first story relates the incident of Moshe who upon leaving the royal palace witnesses an Egyptian guard hitting a Jewish slave and intervenes to save the Jew from his attacker. The second story is about Moshe's involvement in a physical fight between two Jews who dispute his authority. In the third story, Moses is a refugee in a foreign land who helps the weaker members of the society, the daughters of Yithro, to gain equal access to water, the most precious commodity in the Middle East.

The Belzer Rebbe explains that these three stories in the Torah reveal the essential qualities that a *bona fide* Jewish leader must have in order to lead the Jewish people. It is not enough to be a “nationalist,” to speak up when Jews are attacked and to fight anti-Semitism. It is also not enough to be only concerned with justice within the Jewish community. A true Jewish leader has to raise his voice and care when injustice happens in the wide world among non-Jews as well.

As the rabbi of the largest community in Switzerland, Noam Hertig will have to speak up for Jews, for Israel, and for justice like Moshe *Rabbenu*, which today has become even more complicated than in the past. In the old world order, we used to have friends—friends who supported us as Jews, as a minority in Europe, and who also supported the State of Israel—and enemies. Today those who support us as a religious minority with our rights can be the biggest critics of Israel, and those

who support Israel might be our political adversaries as a minority community.

When Europeans criticize Israel for the ongoing occupation and settlements, we can tell everyone in Switzerland that there is more freedom of religion for Muslims in Israel than in Switzerland. In Zurich, not even the Catholics are allowed to sound their bells and the Muslims cannot build their mosques, and I am not even talking about the anti-*shechita* law. In Israel, the call to prayer of the *muezzins* wakes up my children and grandchildren in Jerusalem's old city every morning at sunrise.

When it comes to the refugee issue, it is also not black and white. We as Jews know what it is to be a refugee. We know that the stranger is mentioned in the Torah over 26 times, enjoining us to welcome the stranger. However what should we do if the stranger comes from a land and a country where he was indoctrinated with anti-Semitism? The Conference of European Rabbis grapples with this issue, and as Europe changes before our eyes, we rise to the daily new challenges presented to us by the ever-changing landscape. We will work together with the Swiss rabbinate to surmount these challenges.

For the first time, we will attend the Munich Security Conference this coming month with a message to all European governments that the security of the Jewish institutions in Europe cannot be the responsibility of the communities alone. The respective governments

are responsible for all of their citizens, and the security of the Bollags, Dreyfuss, and Gugenheims is no less important than the security of the Pestallozis, Streulis, and Burkhalters.

Rabbis are at once the keepers of tradition and also the agents of change. As media changes, the form changes but the essence is remarkably intact and constant. It is in this spirit of continuity and stability that the change of guard of the Zurich rabbinate will ensure the future of the Jewish community. The Torah is likened to a tree that grows, changing the colors of its leaves as the seasons of the year change—the tree gives life to those who seek its shade and those who sustain it will be sustained.



Speaking at the CER Gala at the Jewish Museum in Berlin,
November 2013.



Top: Meeting Israeli Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked to pass the Diaspora Agunah law, Jerusalem 2015.

Bottom: With President Nicolas Sarkozy and Marc Meyer at the CER Gala in London, January 2016.



Heading the CER delegation to meet with Pope Francis,
April 2015.



Top: Speaking at the CER Standing Committee meeting at the Vienna City Hall, May 2016.

Right top: With Chief Rabbi Guigui of Brussels, awarding the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2013 to German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the Great Synagogue of Europe in Brussels, May 2013.

Right bottom: Awarding the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2014/2015 to French Prime Minister Manuel Valls, with CER Chairman of the Board of Patrons, Mr. Boris Mints, Chief Rabbi Efraim Mirvis of the UK, and Chief Rabbi Aryeh Folger of Vienna in Paris, May 2015.







Left: Preparing for the Day of Atonement Service,
Moscow Choral Synagogue, 2010.

Right top: Greeting Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian
Kurz at the reception of the CER Standing Committee
meeting in Vienna, May 2015.

Right bottom: EU meeting with high-level religious leaders
in Brussels, June 10, 2014.



Top: Posing with King Felipe VI of Spain, the recipient of the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2016, and the CER delegation at the El Pardo Palace in Madrid, December 2016.

Right top: Meeting with Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission; (left to right) Mr. Shimon Cohen, Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich of Poland, Acting Chief Rabbi Michel Guggenheim of France, Chief Rabbi Albert Guigui of Brussels, President Manuel Barroso, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, Chairman of the Board of Patrons, Mr. Boris Mints, Chief Rabbi Chaim Eisenberg of Austria, Rabbi Moche Lewin, CER Executive Director, 2014.

Right bottom: CER Conference participants at the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, 2013





With wife and partner, Dara, in Moscow, August 2016.

Orbi—to the World

Unmarked Graves and Unmarked Consciences

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt praises the moral courage of Judge Baltasar Garzón to publicly expose and document acts of repression and crimes against humanity during the Spanish Civil War, and that of Father Patrick Desbois to identify and mark the mass graves of thousands of victims of the Shoah, and exhorts other leaders and organizations in Europe to take responsibility for their past. A Spanish version of this op-ed was published in the Spanish daily, El Pais on March 9, 2009.

We are bearing witness today to diametrically opposed, historical tendencies in Europe. While some individuals, organizations, and states are trying to come to terms with their past and are involved in a historic soul-searching process, others are trying to rewrite history and hope that their checkered past will not take center stage.

I arrived in the Soviet Union in 1989 to serve as rabbi at the Moscow Choral Synagogue. Among all the memorial tablets, there was no trace of one of my predecessors, Rabbi Yehudah Lev Medallie. He was arrest-

ed and killed by Joseph Stalin's state security police in 1938 after having tried for a decade to maintain religious life in the Soviet capital. His son, Hillel Medallie, Chief Rabbi of Antwerp, did not discover the fate of his father until the 60s. Rabbi Medallie's place of burial and those of the thousands of other oppressed clergy in the Soviet Union remain unknown to this day. The Russian Orthodox Church has established a memorial chapel in one of Moscow's suburbs, which is believed to be the killing grounds and graveyard for much of the religious leadership of the Soviet state.

In 2008 in Spain, Judge Baltasar Garzón publicly declared that the acts of repression committed after the Spanish Civil War under the regime of the dictator, General Franco, which resulted in the murder of more than 100,000 people, were a crime against humanity. He also ordered the exhumation of the murdered citizens and demanded access to the files that would lead to the graves of the thousands of nameless victims. This thrust toward truth and justice is not unopposed. Today Judge Garzón remains under constant attack and pressure to leave office by those who would prefer to keep the past buried and untouched.

In 2006, the Conference of European Rabbis and the Claims Conference created the organization, *Lo Tishkach*, to record and preserve the memory of an estimated 20,000 Jewish cemeteries and mass graves in Europe, most in places where a Jewish community ceased to exist after the *Shoah*. *Lo Tishkach*, which means "do not

forget,” is making this information available in a publicly accessible online database while working to physically mark and identify every burial ground on site. This marking—both publically for the historical record and physically on site—is the best way to guarantee that history cannot be denied and therefore repeated. While the story of the industrial killing machine of the Nazi concentration camps has been well documented, the stories of the 1.5 million Jews who were killed and buried in the same villages where they and their ancestors had lived for hundreds of years are increasingly entering the public domain.

Patrick Desbois, a French Catholic priest, has been traveling around Ukraine and Belarus in search of information about the exact locations of *Shoah*-era mass graves. Father Desbois’ team is interviewing the few remaining witnesses of the mass shootings in an effort to locate the mass graves dug by the victims shortly before their murder. In contrast to Western Europe, where local collaboration ended at the train station when Jews were crammed into overcrowded freight cars *en route* to the concentration camps and the final solution was shrouded in secrecy, in Eastern Europe, the Jews were publicly executed and local collaborationist police and paramilitary organizations helped the Germans round up and kill them themselves.

According to *Lo Tishkach* and Father Desbois, there are at least 1,500 *Shoah*-era mass graves in Ukraine alone, with probably hundreds if not thousands more in

Belarus, Russia, and the Baltic States. Some of these sites have been marked and attended to, but many remain unmarked and unidentified. The Conference of European Rabbis fervently hopes that Father Desbois will make his findings available to the wider public in the most transparent manner. The protection and marking of these sites necessarily entails making the information about them publicly available and not simply storing it in some dusty cellar. It must be noted that even the Vatican, which was quite defensive of its record during World War II, has now begun to publish some of the classified documents from that period on the Internet. We greatly welcome this long overdue initiative.

There are forces in Europe that prefer to remain silent and even try to rewrite history in order to clear their national conscience. Victor Yushenko, the outgoing president of Ukraine, in his last act before leaving the presidency, awarded the country's highest honor posthumously to Stepan Bendera. Bendera, a Ukrainian nationalist who at times collaborated with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union, had thousands of his followers infiltrate the local police force to take an active part in the mass shootings of Jews in the Ukrainian villages under German occupation. Monuments to Bendera can be seen in quite a few cities in Ukraine where he is hailed as the forefather of Ukrainian independence. I certainly hope that the newly-elected president of Ukraine will have the moral courage to address this issue honestly once he is sworn into office. In Lithuania, where local

anti-Semitic militias began to kill Jewish civilians even before the Nazis arrived to do so, the government takes pride in the few Lithuanians who happened to save some Jewish lives during the Nazi occupation of the country while consistently refusing to bring to justice any of its own war criminals, including those extradited to them from the United States. In Latvia, *Waffen SS* veterans still march proudly with impunity in Riga to the horror of the last remaining members of this once major Jewish community.

Judge Garzón was originally educated to serve in the priesthood, but instead decided to dedicate his life to fight sin and evil in a different way. A question of morality to a philosopher is a question of sin and merit to the religious man, and a question of criminality and innocence to a man of the law. Judge's Garzón's quest for justice—as painful as it is for those who collaborated with the Franco regime—is not only an important issue for Spain but one that also has major ramifications for all of Europe. If every country in Europe would have its own Judge Garzón, perhaps Europe would become a more moral and thus better and safer place for us and for future generations.

Europe's Identity Crisis

In the wake of the ban on minarets in Switzerland and on burqas and niqabs in France, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt responds to the measures to restrict various forms of religious expression in Europe and calls upon the European governments to take the lead in demonstrating tolerance of religious pluralism in order to build a world free of terrorism and hate in the op-ed that he wrote for The New York Times, published on June 2, 2010.

It is perhaps ironic that Switzerland, a country that has prided itself on centuries of neutrality, should suddenly seek a religious conflict while France, the home of liberty, should seek to dictate how people should dress. Nonetheless, the vote of the large majority of good burghers of the German-speaking cantons in Switzerland in support of a referendum calling for a ban on minarets when there are virtually none in sight disguises an alarming identity crisis in Europe. It is true that Switzerland has long made its own rules. Some cantons delayed women's suffrage until the latter part of the 20th century. Prior to World War I, an earlier manifestation of Swiss intolerance saw the country ban its Jews from slaughtering animals for their own consumption

in accordance with Jewish law—a ban that remains in place today.

Similarly, notwithstanding more pressing local issues, such as the state of the economy or the war in the courts between the president and the former prime minister, the French parliamentary committee's call to ban the *burqa* does seem, on the face of things, rather perverse. All the more so when the *burqa* is virtually nonexistent in France and even the *niqab* is a very rare feature on the streets and boulevards of the Fifth Republic.

Both proposed measures attack what we might term “soft” targets—at least from the point of view of the extremists—while hiding behind the perceived legitimacy of attacking extremism itself. Rather than address the issues of either building permits for minarets or the rights of women, these measures attack the very visibility of the Muslim presence in Europe. Sixty-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Europeans may permit themselves to be squeamish about the onset of certain occurrences and, if left unabated, about the end result. It is necessary to quickly address perceived fears of losing national identity in order to prevent being lead down a very dangerous path. In order to do so, we must begin by asking: Is there something we can genuinely call a normative European identity, or has Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage been swept away in the nihilism of a mixture of radical secularism and misdirected multiculturalism? As the rest of the world reasserts

their local heritages, proud of their folk, ethnic, and religious traditions, is Europe ashamed of its own?

As a rabbi, I am uncomfortable with any restriction of religious expression, not only mine, and I naturally err on the side of the maintenance of traditions, which provide a moral compass and a secure footing in an ever-changing technological and impersonal world. Traditions indicate where we have come from and where we are going—the basis of the humility of man and of the ultimate equality and mutual responsibility of all of us.

The Bible, the root of our common Judeo-Christian heritage, states over and over again the importance of welcoming the stranger. This too is part of our European identity. If we acknowledge that we have a common identity, we should seek to share it with others. If we support pluralism, we should not seek to deny it but should instead rigorously promote it everywhere. The proposals to ban the *burqa* in France and minarets in Switzerland, wrong in and of themselves, are not the answer but are rather knee-jerk reactions to the influx of immigrants from the Middle East to Europe and to the intensification of their religiosity when they get here. Having never been exposed to the enforced permissiveness and radical secularism that they encounter in Europe, they lack the societal tools required to be able to deal with them.

Ultimately, a mosque without a minaret can continue to exist and any kind of religious tolerance or intolerance may be taught there. My own personal experience

confirms this. The dome of the building where I serve as rabbi, the Moscow Choral Synagogue, was removed by the Czarist authorities over a century ago in order not to offend local Christian Orthodox sensitivities and was only replaced about ten years ago. Similarly, a *burqa* can also be removed from a woman's face, but she can still choose to teach her children to love and respect all God's creatures or to choose the path of extremism and teach them to hate everything Europe stands for. The key to the successful integration and assimilation of Europe's immigrants is dependent on their integration into the public school system and later into the universities and workforce.

The custom of proscription and banning is alien to European culture and to preserving identity. It moreover communicates exactly the opposite message of what it seeks to convey. If we want to instill the immigrants from totalitarian societies where all alternative religious expression, including Christian prayer-groups for foreign workers, is proscribed, with the notion of pluralism and a "live and let live" mentality, Europe should take the lead in demonstrating tolerance of religious pluralism. The path of religious pluralism will lead to the building of a world free of terrorism and hate.

Commemoration and Celebration

On November 9, 2011, the 73rd anniversary of Kristallnacht, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt lauds the inauguration of the rebuilt synagogue in the city of Speyer as a fitting commemoration of the Third Reich's Kristallnacht pogrom.

Today, the 9th of November 2011, we are commemorating the Third Reich's *Kristallnacht* Pogrom with the inauguration of a synagogue in the city of Speyer, an event that symbolizes both the rebirth of one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world and the fact that the government of Germany has continued on the path of repentance, of *teshuvah*, with respect to the Jewish people and to mankind.

I first learned about the *Kristallnacht* Pogrom as a child in the synagogue in Zurich, Switzerland, where there was a memorial plaque with electric red bulbs in front of the synagogue. Every year on the 9th of November, the memorial lights were turned on in memory of the deceased members of the community and in memory of all the synagogues destroyed in Germany that night. I remember listening with great fascination and admiration to my grandmother, the daughter of the rab-

bi of Zurich, Franzie Goldschmidt from Montreux, Switzerland, telling me the story about joining a delegation of the Swiss Red Cross as a mother of five children to save and bring the children in the Jewish orphanage in Frankfurt to safety in Switzerland soon after the Third Reich's *Kristallnacht* Pogrom.

This small city of Speyer in a forgotten part of Germany, well off the beaten track for most Germans or Europeans, is the cradle of Ashkenazi Jewry. The city and the Jewish community of Speyer testify to the millennia of spiritual, cultural, and economic interaction between the Jews of Germany and the German people. The Speyer region is forever ingrained in the liturgy and in the memory of our people. The words of great rabbis like Riva and others who taught in the *yeshivot* in this region are being studied by young students in rabbinical schools and by laymen throughout the world. Speyer, Worms, and Mainz—referred to in Jewish literature as Shapirah, Wormaiza, and Magenza—are the three oldest Jewish communities in Germany. The family name, Shapiro or Shapira, one of the most common names among Jews, originated in Speyer. The three communities, referred to by the acronym, “*Kehilot Shum*,” enacted a series of decrees aimed at strengthening the family values and Jewish identity of the Jewish communities in the Rhine region, and integrating the Jewish community in that area.

Speyer, or Shapirah, also figures in the eulogies of the Ninth of Av, the saddest day on the Jewish calendar,

which commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples. The liturgy of the Ninth of Av in all the synagogues throughout the world commemorates the martyrs of Speyer and the communities of Mainz and Worms who were murdered by the crusaders in 1096:

Water will stream from my eyelids, running over with tears as I bitterly bemoan the slain victims of Speyer.

It happened on the eighth day of the second month (*Iyar*), on the day of rest.

My calm was turned into a tempest.

Pleasant young men were murdered with venerable elders.

They assembled together and decided to surrender their souls for the name of the One G-D.

Heroes, youth and elderly, expired, all of the ten.

Approximately no less than then two million Jews read this lamentation every year almost a thousand years after ten men were killed in Speyer. This lamentation is actually recited by many more Jews than the lamentations that were written more recently after the *Shoah*.

It takes time for new prayers to find their place within our tradition. In the end, the perpetuation of memory is the greatest challenge to mankind. How do we keep the memory alive? How do we transmit memory to the next generation? Holocaust museums have been built, but how many years will they stand? How many people will visit them? How long? The building of this synagogue is the right response to the question of the perpetuation of a sacred memory. The hallowed mission is

to remember and not to forget lest this horror happen again. We live in a new world after World War II and after the end of the Cold War, which some even considered the end of history. We face new challenges as the world changes before our eyes.

I would like to thank the German government represented today by German President Christian Wulff for resurrecting this synagogue and reviving a community that was decimated by the *Shoah*. The 9th of November 1938 is a day of infamy, a day when German Jewry realized that they were not only dealing with another medieval tyrant who would revoke all the rights accorded to the Jews since Emancipation but that it signaled the end of German Jewry. It was the beginning of the end. But today the 9th of November 2011 is also a day of hope. Standing in this synagogue with you, I am hopeful that the end has not yet come and that there is still another chapter on German Jewry to be written. However, as history has taught us, synagogue buildings are not enough to keep communities alive.

A synagogue without a rabbi is like a body without a soul. In postwar Germany, most rabbis were trained abroad and so to many of them, German culture and the German language were foreign. The Conference of European Rabbis has been instrumental in helping to reestablish the major Orthodox institution of Jewish learning, the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminar in Berlin, the spiritual center of German Jewry today where the future rabbis of the Jewish communities in Germa-

ny are being qualified. It is important to thoroughly prepare the clergy in order to reestablish these synagogues as the center of Judaism, especially if we wish to attract the great majority of new German Jews from the former Soviet Union who lack any knowledge of Judaism after having lived under communism for most of their lives.

In the name of the rabbis of Europe, I call upon the German government to join us in this endeavor to create life and hope where there was despair and death, to build what was destroyed and revive the body of German Jewry. I salute the rabbi of Karlsruhe, my good friend, Rabbi Wolf Rubens, and thank him for his wonderful leadership and friendship. His community is very fortunate to have such a wonderful, young spiritual leader.

In Those and Our Times

In his holiday greeting, published in The Huffington Post in December 2011, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt summons us to celebrate the coinciding Jewish and Christian holidays in the spirit of freedom and the recognition of the supreme value of the life of every human being.

As the year 2011 draws to a close, the Christian world is decorating its streets and store windows as it prepares to celebrate Christmas. In many countries, a Hanukkah *menorah*, the nine-branched Hanukkah candelabra that is also called a *hanukkiah*, may be seen in the storefronts, a sign of respect and appreciation of the Jewish minority there. This year both festivals coincide, accentuating the common origins of both religious traditions. Were it not for Hanukkah, Christmas would not have existed. If the Maccabean revolt in 200 BCE against the Seleucid Empire had failed, the Judeans would have been forcefully assimilated into the Hellenistic world and Christianity would not have had the opportunity to arise and thrive.

It is very intriguing that while Hanukkah is celebrated by Jews as the festival of religious freedom, the

actual story of the struggle as recorded in the Books of Maccabees is absent from the Jewish canon and is only included in the Catholic and Orthodox Christian versions of the Bible. Many explanations have been given for this very striking “omission” of the Maccabean heroes from Jewish liturgy and canonical history, although no one doubts nor disputes the conclusion of this chronicle—the reconstituted Jewish independent state run by the Maccabean dynasty disintegrated after a few generations due to civil war, tyranny, and corruption, and ended in occupation, destruction, and exile. Nahmanides of Girona, the leading Medieval Jewish philosopher and scholar, ascribed the demise of the Maccabean state to the fact that after the successful revolt, the Maccabean priests appointed themselves kings, circumventing Biblical wisdom that proscribes separation between the priesthood and state authority. The demise of the Maccabean State should serve as a reminder to all national religious entities—the Church, the Synagogue, and the Mosque—that the quest for earthly political power brings with it the danger of corruption. As Lord Acton said, “absolute power corrupts absolutely,” and while revolutions may be inevitable, it is of primary importance to anticipate what may happen after the revolution.

This past year has been marked by a series of revolutions in the Middle East, prematurely christened the “Arab Spring.” In country after country, the population has risen against longtime, corrupt dictators and the me-

dia has expressed the hope that these revolutions will finally bring about some form of liberal democracy based on the concepts of human rights and religious freedom in their countries. Twenty-two years ago when the Iron Curtain fell, Eastern Europe began its journey toward personal and national freedom, but not all the countries succeeded. Political analysts today have widely discussed the reason for this phenomenon. Is it because of the lack of a democratic history in those countries; or the dearth of exceptional leaders, such as Vaclav Havel, the first president of post-communist Czechoslovakia; or is it due to their judiciaries' lack of independence of the parliament and the executive? The road to freedom, democracy, and the recognition of basic human rights is a continuous, long, and difficult struggle that requires the support and the active interest of everyone affected.

The Middle East, the home of all three Abrahamic religions, has increasingly become hostile to Christians who are being terrorized and killed. The number of Christians living in Arab countries is dwindling to insignificant numbers, making Israel the only safe place for Christians in the Middle East. But religious intolerance is not confined to the Middle East. Europeans have grown less and less tolerant of the stranger in their midst, which has manifested itself in restrictive legislation in Europe. In Switzerland, mosques are to be circumscribed as minarets are being banned. In France and Belgium, women are being told how to dress. In the Netherlands, the lower house of the parliament is

attempting to tell the Jews and the Muslims what to eat. Such legislation against religious freedom will not make Europe freer, more secure, or more prosperous.

The right of a minority to be different, to think differently, and to worship in a different way is the cornerstone of our civilization. The people at Tahir Square should remember that their personal freedom in the future will depend on the way they are dealing today with the minorities in their midst. If they allow the mob to continue to destroy churches and kill Copt Christians, their own lives will be less secure. The human hope for the recognition of the supreme value of the life of every human being and the right of any group to religious freedom is symbolized by a lone candle glowing in the dark. The spirit of freedom is the greatest gift the human being has and it is in this spirit that we should celebrate our holidays.

Honoring Professor Jerzy Buzek Recipient of the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2012

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt presented the Harav Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2012 to Former President of the European Parliament and Former Prime Minister of Poland, Professor Jerzy Buzek, in recognition of his achievements in the fight against anti-Semitism. The ceremony took place at the Central Synagogue of Europe in Brussels on March 27, 2012.

A mother and widow is leaving her house of mourning in Jerusalem today to visit the fresh graves of her two young children and her husband who were murdered a week ago at their school in the city of Toulouse. At first, the French authorities thought that since the gun that killed these Jews was the same gun that killed French Muslim soldiers a week before, the killer was a member of a racist ultra-right-wing group not unlike the Norwegian killer, Braivik. But as details began to emerge, we came to face the reality that the killer had been influenced by religious fanaticism and fascism of another

kind—one that does not differentiate between Jew, Muslim, or Christian. The Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority publicly denounced this brutal attack and called for an end to the killing of innocent children in the name of his cause.

We are assembled in the Central Synagogue of Europe today, together with the political leaders of the European Union whose mission is to create a new Europe, an assembly of minorities, as so well described by President Romano Prodi, “that is free of racism and of terrorism, whether religious or secular, where all minorities and religious traditions are respected.” There are those who think that we can counter the terrorism of a tiny but very dangerous minority of Muslims by imposing broad sanctions against a faith community. Some believe that this will only drive the youth and the moderates toward further extremism and hate. We all agree that we cannot acquiesce to terror of any kind and that those who disseminate hate and terror, whether in a religious institution or on the street, must be stopped and punished. Toward this end, the police should be authorized to check those who have been identified as security risks and who have previously demonstrated their disdain for the rule of law and peace by their acts and for possession of weapons and bombs.

The peace loving majority should not fear granting these additional powers to the police. In fact, the Conference of European Rabbis is turning to the European Parliament and to the European Commission to ask the

governments of Europe to provide heightened security at institutions and places of worship of those minorities in Europe who have been targeted by extremists. Local faith communities, especially in Eastern Europe, do not have the means or the know-how to provide for their own security without the support of state security organizations. All Europeans should have the security of knowing that when we send our children to school in the morning, they will not return in coffins. This is every parent's right.

Today we face challenges on many fronts. Some religious traditions are being delegitimized by populist politicians who under the guise of animal rights seek to infringe on the basic human rights and religious freedoms of some of the oldest religious traditions in Europe. In France, the mundane matter of what Muslims and Jews eat for dinner unexpectedly became a major election issue in the last French presidential elections. Marine Le Pen, the far right candidate for the French presidency, demanded a limit to the number of animals slaughtered according to *halal* and kosher traditions. This was of course no surprise at all as the far right is notorious for shouting about the strange and troublesome minority communities. What was surprising and unfortunate was that some mainstream politicians took the bait and did not distance themselves promptly or emphatically enough from these very insulting voices.

The popular target today is the Muslim community; in the past it was all too often the Jewish community.

In 1893, after the Swiss government had announced to the Jews that they were free to leave their ghettos in Lengnau and Endingen and had granted them full citizenship, the fear that they had created an environment too appealing for Eastern European Jews led to a swift ban on *shechita*. Following his election as chancellor of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler enacted a similar law in order to encourage Jews to leave the Reich as soon as possible. Adolf Hitler famously cultivated his image as an animal lover and vegetarian, but had no qualms about the brutal mass murder of millions of human beings.

We are here today, a few days before the Jewish world celebrates Passover, the festival of freedom, with a *Seder*, to call upon all European politicians to exercise caution and refrain from using populist, insincere, bigoted, and prejudiced political comments, which endanger the future of the common European home that we are building together. The photograph of demonstrators in Toulouse, led by the Chief Rabbi of France, Gilles Bernheim, marching hand in hand with the city's imam and other Muslims in the first row that appeared in yesterday's *International Herald Tribune* evoked the memory of the famous photograph of Martin Luther King Jr., walking hand in hand together with Rabbi Avraham Joshua Heschel in 1965 in Montgomery, Alabama, in their march against racism and prejudice, and for freedom for all. A half century later, the first Black American President made it a point to attend the *Seder* held in the White House to celebrate his freedom with the Jewish people.

I too have a dream that the hundreds of people who walked hand in hand in Toulouse—Muslims, Jews, Christians, and secularists—will convey a renewed message of freedom and hope for Europe as they struggle together against racial incitement and religious terrorism in order to secure a peaceful Europe where children can go in peace to school, where synagogues do not have to be under guard, and where religious freedom and pluralism is respected. I would like to see more and more Muslim leaders repeat the words of the mother of the terrorist: “You are not my son!” As Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel said so poignantly, the gas chambers in Auschwitz were not built by brick; they were built by words. Words can create and words can destroy. According to the Scriptures, the tongue has the power of life and of death.

I would like to salute the newly elected President of the European Parliament, Mr. Martin Schultz, who is renowned for his commitment to democracy and the rights of minorities, as a partner in fighting prejudice, racism, and anti-Semitism in Europe, and as a friend of Israel. The Jewish community of Europe is honored by his presence in this synagogue today.

I am proud to announce that the Conference of European Rabbis has decided to award to the first *Harav* Lord Jakobovits European Prize 2012 to Former President of the European Parliament and Former Prime Minister of Poland, Professor Buzek, in recognition of his achievements in Europe. A Protestant who served

as prime minister of a Catholic country, Professor Buzek pledged to promote human rights, and courageously asked his countrymen to face the history of anti-Semitism in Poland, including its role in the pogrom in Jedwabne.

Our late President and Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and British Commonwealth, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, had to leave the land of his birth and upbringing as the Nazi jackboot came down on his family and people. It would have been so easy for Rabbi Jakobovits to reject the European culture and society that had led to the deaths of six million of our brothers and sisters. Instead, he served as Chief Rabbi of Ireland, as the spiritual leader of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York, and then as the British Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Jakobovits chose to fully participate in European society, not in spite of his own past but because of the lessons of Jewish history, to contribute to the building of Europe. As Pope Benedict the 16th said in his speech to the German Parliament, Europe was built on three foundations: on the Torah from Sinai, on the philosophy of Athens, and on the politics of Rome. The Lord Jakobovits European Prize is awarded to outstanding leaders who endeavor to build a better Europe on these solid foundations. We are proud to present this very much deserved award to Professor Buzek.

Is the Medieval Blood Libel Alive and Well?

January 11, 2012, Austria MEP Andreas Mölzer tabled a parliamentary question to the European Commission entitled "Child Deaths Caused by Halal Meat," in which he referred to both halal and kosher meat. Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt published this op-ed in The Huffington Post on May 30, 2012 in protest of the extraordinary indifference in the media and among European parliamentarians in general to the wild accusations and generalizations about minorities that were voiced.

There was a time when it was socially acceptable, even rewarding, to spread hateful invective about the direct responsibility of Jews for the deaths of infants in order to observe their archaic, bloodthirsty rituals. There was a time when it was considered so socially acceptable that even elected officials, representatives of the people, thought nothing of making these claims in public and without fear that they would be challenged or criticized for doing so. As incredible as it may seem, that time was just a matter of weeks ago at the European Parliament.

It has become very common for people to accept the suggestion that Europe is becoming more tolerant with-

out giving it a second thought. By simply looking at the emphasis that governments place on human rights and equality legislation, and the great public support that global anti-racism campaigns receive, not to mention the fantastic work done by countless NGOs, Europe is more just than it has ever been, so they say. It certainly is true that we should be more tolerant and accepting of differences than we have ever been. Yet last month, when an Austrian Member of the European Parliament, Andreas Mölzer, tabled a formal question to the European Parliament entitled “Child Deaths Caused by *Halal* Meat,” he proceeded to refer to both *halal* and kosher meat. Mölzer began by noting that “hundreds of children” die in France of “bacterial infections caused by contaminated meat,” and then questioned “to what extent the increase in *E. coli* contamination of minced or ground meat is linked with the increasing consumption of *halal* or kosher meat.” There is, of course, no evidence to support the ludicrous claim that *halal* or kosher meat is more susceptible to infection or is dangerous in any way, but nevertheless that assumption was the basis of his question. Mr. Mölzer went on to request that an upcoming study examine this important issue. I have no idea whether Mr. Mölzer fully understands how offensive his question is or whether he truly believes this is a legitimate scientific concern that requires discussion. What concerns me is the nature of the response to the question that he raised—deafening silence. The response of the media and other politicians in general has been extraordinary in its indifference.

On behalf of the Conference of European Rabbis, I am impelled to express our displeasure and I hope that others in the community will read this and do the same, because the fact is that it has become more acceptable than at any time in recent memory to make wild accusations and generalizations about minorities. In the United Kingdom, the far right has all but entirely imploded as a political force. Recent local elections left the British National Party (BNP) with just four councillors nationwide. Yet on the continent—in France, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Norway, Greece, Finland, and even Germany—the far right is gaining in popularity and influence. Jews may no longer be their first target as the Muslim community tends to bear the brunt of their hatred, but make no mistake, they are not attacking Islam; they are attacking difference.

I recently joined other European religious leaders and the Prime Minister of Norway at a ceremony to pay tribute to the victims of the brutal shooting spree by Anders Breivik in 2011. Following a minute's silence, we made a commitment to respect and cherish difference so that it can never again become a source of intolerance or hatred. I fear that it is one thing to make that commitment, but quite another to have the courage to honor it. How many of us can really say that we make it our priority to reach out to those who are different from us? In an age when society is not as tolerant as we perhaps would like to believe, each one of us shares the responsibility of identifying and challenging hatred

in every area of life—at home and at work, in the United Kingdom and across Europe.

Dialogue and Peace

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt delivered this address at the opening of KAICIID, The International Dialogue Center, in Vienna on November 26, 2012, before an audience that included the Secretary General of the UN, royal, political, and religious leaders, and laypersons.

The 20th century began with the hope that the enlightenment of the advance of technology and industry, which also brought with it secularism, would be a century of peace and prosperity. However, the secular century brought us two world wars, the *Shoah* for the Jews, and the almost total annihilation of the world through a nuclear conflict between the East and the West, a conflict that, thank G-D, remained cold. The 21st century is marked by a return of religion to the center of attention of world politics. 9/11 showed the world that religious leaders and religious ideas have enough power and passion to build or destroy the world, to make peace or war.

The opening of this center today signifies a new beginning and a new attempt to create dialogue between different faiths and cultures. It can definitely be considered a historic day. We know that all over the world there are

institutes, organizations, and meetings that promote dialogue, but I think that the initiative of King Abdullah of the House of Saud, the custodian of the main holy places of Islam, together with the governments of Spain and Austria, is very special and significant indeed.

The general problems of interreligious dialogue that I have witnessed in the past have been two-fold. First, as it was so bluntly expressed during a presentation by Rabbi Steinsaltz at a meeting of cardinals and rabbis in 1999 in New York, many times the participants of the interreligious conferences are disenfranchised religious leaders who represent empty buildings and populations who vote with their feet, and thus they lack the real power and *gravitas* to change and influence their surroundings. While some religious leaders can bring hundreds of thousands of people to the streets with a few words, some can at best only influence their private secretaries with their statements. Second, more often than not, it is the liberal wings of the different faiths that find a way to communicate with each other, while the leaders of their religions refuse to publicly participate in any dialogue with the other. Therefore, I am here today as a representative of the Jewish faith and the Jewish world to welcome this very important initiative that comes from the very heart and soul, the center of the Islamic world—the center of its combined spiritual and worldly power, which is the most important sponsor of Islamic religious life in Europe—with hope and prayer for dialogue and peace as it opens its doors to the other cultures and religions in Europe and in the world.

The Jewish people have given many gifts to this world and have also received many gifts from other cultures and civilizations. One gift that we share with the Christian, Muslim, and secular traditions is what Christians call the Ten Commandments, which are referred to in the Quran as the Two Tablets, and is known in Jewish tradition as the Ten Phrases, or the Ten Words. We consider the Ten Commandments to be not only the law, but also a dialogue—a dialogue between humanity and the Divinity, which is fundamental for any relationship and society. Now more than ever, this dialogue is necessary in order to make sure that this century will not culminate in bloodshed and war, in despair and hate, as did the last one.

As the character of Europe is changing today with the arrival of new immigrant societies and groups, I think that we, the Jews who after having lost our country and homeland not only survived, but lived and thrived as a minority for centuries and millennia, want to share our experiences and expertise with others in order to make Europe and the world a better place, a safer place for our sake and for the sake of generations to come.

Honoring Chancellor Angela Merkel Recipient of the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2013

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt presented the Harav Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2013 on behalf of the Conference of European Rabbis to German Chancellor Angela Merkel in recognition of her leadership and her unwavering battle against any resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe. The ceremony took place at the Great Synagogue of Europe in Brussels on May 22, 2013.

The Talmud describes the challenging times of the pre-messianic era in the following terms: “The face of the generation will be like the face of a dog.” The modern commentaries on the Talmud interpret this strange statement of the sages as follows: When a dog walks in front of his master, he can take no more than a few steps without looking back to see if his master is following him, and if not, he will return to his master without delay. This alludes to the flaws of political leaders who lack the courage to maintain their convictions and ignore what is right in favor of what is popular. Like a

simple domestic pet, they may appear to be in front, but they are certainly not leading.

As Europe slowly continues to move away from its religious Judeo-Christian heritage, becoming more secular and increasingly intolerant of religious minorities and all things different, conformity has become the new “religion.” Chancellor Merkel courageously decided to personally intervene in the debate about circumcision in order to protect the rights of minority faith communities with the knowledge that it might not be a popular move. It was a decision based not on opinion polls and a populist agenda, but on the deeply held conviction that it was the right thing to do for Germany and for Europe, and that a law banning circumcision in Germany would in effect mean a Germany without Jews—*Judenrein*. In 2009, Madame Merkel had also stood up to voice her criticism of a German Pope’s decision to readmit the *Shoah* denier, Bishop Williamson, back into the Catholic Church. Her leitmotif and deepest conviction that Germany and Israel will remain forever tied together through the remembrance of the *Shoah* has been a cornerstone of her foreign policy. It is unfortunate that even today we are plagued not only by individuals but also governments that continue to deny the *Shoah* on one hand, and threaten us with another one, on the other hand. The menacing words uttered in Teheran are not abstract words. Jewish community centers in South America have been destroyed, and Jews were murdered in Bulgaria not long ago. We all remember the terri-

ble attack against a Jewish school in Toulouse, where teachers and their students were slaughtered by terrorists inspired by Iran's hate campaign.

I often quote the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, Lord Sacks, who says that anti-Semitism is like a virus. When the majority of Jews were religious, anti-Semitism attacked our religious doctrines. When Jews became more secular, anti-Semitism mutated into racism. Today anti-Semitism is cloaked in the language of human rights. The disgraceful efforts to delegitimize and demonize Israel and its religious traditions, which have been closely guarded by millions of people for millennia, coupled with claims of protecting human rights, children's rights, and animal rights is the new anti-Semitism. Needless to say, not everyone who has promoted a secularist agenda in Germany and elsewhere may be called an anti-Semite. However, it has become clear that such a philosophy has provided fertile ground for xenophobes to rant about the cruelty and barbarism of our faith.

The Conference of European Rabbis has decided to award this year's *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize for European Jewry to Chancellor Angela Merkel for her leadership and her unwavering battle against any resurgence of anti-Semitism. It was not easy for a group of rabbis, many of whom lost family in the *Shoah* to give this award to a German chancellor. Not an easy decision, but the correct one. When I look at the history of Chancellor Merkel's parents, I cannot help but see parallels

with my own history. It took a great deal of courage for a young married pastor from Hamburg in Germany to leave the amenities of the West for East Germany, the German Democratic Republic, even before there was a wall. I too decided to leave the West and go to the Soviet Union to rekindle Jewish life in a Communist country. I cannot but think that our children had similar experiences growing up as the children of a member of the clergy in an environment that opposed our values of religious freedom.

Other countries with a totalitarian history have failed to fully overcome their dark legacies. Two weeks ago, I went with hundreds of Jewish leaders to Hungary to lend support to a community terrorized by the resurgence of political anti-Semitism in a country where a former ally of Adolf Hitler is glorified and Jews, including myself, are attacked in the streets. Where there has not been any “*vergangenheitsbewältigung*”—“coping with the past”—the demons of the past are coming back to haunt us today. It is frightening to see national governments incapable of fighting this resurgence of hate and racism. The European Union must take on the challenge to find political tools to punish and to isolate the voices of racism and anti-Semitism in its midst. Just as different countries have implemented legislation imposing travel and fiscal sanctions against officials responsible for human rights abuses, the European Union should contemplate the implementation of sanctions against parliamentarians who advocate racism and anti-Semitism.

Germany has risen from the ashes of World War II and under Chancellor Merkel's leadership and in the tradition of all post-World War II chancellors, has become a true friend of the Jewish community. Supporting the Jewish community in word and deed, Chancellor Merkel is a tower of strength against the resurgence of anti-Semitism and intolerance across Europe. The new united Europe is experiencing a very difficult economic period, and the transition from an economic union to a political union with a single currency is under threat. Were it not for Chancellor Merkel's leadership and example, the entire experiment of a European Union might have failed altogether. My greatest wish is that her principled leadership will serve as a model to the leaders throughout Europe and the whole world. It is a great honor to present the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize for European Jewry to Chancellor Angela Merkel, a true leader in Europe at this time of crisis and uncertainty.

Remembering *Kristallnacht*

In his keynote address at a convention of the Conference of European Rabbis held in Berlin on October 11, 2013, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt summons Europe to remember Kristallnacht, which ignited the war against the Jews, and to work with all the diverse communities of faith in order to avoid another catastrophic clash of civilizations.

Seventy-five years and two nights ago, a great European nation and a great European culture decided that there was no longer a place for houses of worship of a minority faith. Over six hundred synagogues throughout the Reich were set alight and destroyed, Torah scrolls were desecrated, rabbis were beaten and killed in the streets of Berlin, and thirty thousand Jews were sent to concentration camps. Jews were declared “*untermenschen*,” “sub-humans.” That was the beginning of the end for the Jews, the beginning of the *Shoah*.

When the war had finally ended and the camps had been liberated, some of the survivors decided to remain in Europe with the hope against all hopes that perhaps there might still be a future for Jews in Europe, a new beginning for Jews in a country that had declared total

war against the Jewish people. After very slowly rebuilding their lives during the many decades that anti-Semitism in Western Europe was banned as politically incorrect and not “*salonfaehig*,” “socially acceptable,” it resurfaced in a camouflaged version as anti-Zionism.

During the last few years, we have witnessed Europe’s renewed attack on Jewish ritual as well, especially against circumcision, *brit milah*, and kosher slaughter, *shechita*, as part of the Europeans’ response to the unprecedented massive influx of Muslims into Europe over the past four decades as the European birth rate plummeted. The renewed assault against religious freedom in Europe is an unholy trinity of intolerance of religious minorities mixed with intellectual anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, which serves the interests of both the extreme right and the extreme left. In some countries, the attacks against Jewish ritual—demonizing and delegitimizing Jewish traditions—are conducted in tandem with efforts to demonize and delegitimize the Jewish State, the State of Israel.

In her acceptance speech of the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2013 at the Conference of European Rabbis in May in Brussels this year, Chancellor Angela Merkel openly stated that during the circumcision debate that culminated in the recommendation by the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly to adopt the resolution to ban male circumcision altogether, many racist and anti-Semitic statements were voiced. It is a well-known fact that one of the first an-

ti-Semitic laws passed by the Third Reich in 1933 was the law against kosher slaughter.

I know that some will say that this new drive against religious freedom, as Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks said not long ago, is the result of the failure of the experiment of multiculturalism in Europe where everyone behaves as if Europe was a hotel that belonged to no one, and not a home, because nobody cares about Europe itself. While I agree that the multiculturalism experiment has failed, I maintain that Europeans must assume a dual identity as the carriers of their own national culture, language, and religion while sharing the core values, moral codes, and responsibilities of Europeans living together in the same home.

During the last century, Europe suffered two wars that decimated, destroyed, and finally divided Europe for almost half a century. We have the responsibility to recreate an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect between the secular modern state and the religious movements in order to make sure that the multicultural experiment that is Europe does not fail. The two hundred communal rabbis who represent over 700 communal rabbis in Europe have proven their extraordinary dedication and common efforts to promote the interests of our community and our continent. As it is written in our Torah portion, Yaakov was dependent on his emissaries to go and reach out to his brother in order to restore peace in his family and in his community. It is thanks to your respected positions in your countries

as spokespeople for the Jewish faith and the Jewish people that we have been able to build bridges with governments, European institutions, and other religious communities. The question of whether there will be Jews in Europe twenty years from now or not depends to a great extent on you.

I would like to thank the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, for coming to Berlin tonight to reassure us that the voice of reason, the voice of diversity, the voice of the foundation of a liberal democratic Europe is not a lost voice on this continent, that Judaism is still welcome in Europe, and that the European institutions will work with all the diverse communities of faith to avoid another catastrophic clash of civilizations. As Europe is in the process of redefining itself and who is European, I hope that there will indeed also be a place for Jews in Europe. I will close with a quote from Chancellor's Merkel's speech at the Great Synagogue of Europe:

Europe—this is unified diversity. We share common values, beliefs, and our respect for the indivisible dignity of man, our appreciation of democracy and the rule of law, and our love of freedom. Freedom has many facets. This includes the human right to belong to a community of faith and practice that belief. Only a society in which there is also freedom of religion, deserves the term, liberal democracy. It is an act of self-assurance to always ask ourselves how we meet the criteria of free religious practice.

We must always remember what happened in Germany, when this country decided not to allow another

civilization, another culture, another religion, to live within its midst. The fire that ignited the war against the Jews during *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Broken Glass, went on to burn down much of Europe, killing more than eighty million people, including our six million Jews, and making World War II the deadliest war in human history. Let us remember *Kristallnacht*.

Is There a Future for Jews in Europe?

Marking seventy years after the end of World War II and the Shoah, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt addresses the campaign against Jewish ritual in Europe and the question of the future of Jews in Europe in the speech he delivered at the Conference of European Rabbi's Convention on November 9, 2013.

Seventy years ago, our greatest tragedy, the *Shoah* came to an end as the Allied armies liberated Europe from National Socialism, the most evil and most vicious regime mankind has known. The war ended, the camps were liberated, and some of the survivors decided to remain in Europe with the uncertain hope that there was still a future for Jews in Europe. Slowly, slowly, survivors recreated their destroyed communities, rebuilt their synagogues, had children again, and recreated their families, believing there was a future for the Jewish people in Europe.

For many decades, anti-Semitism in Western Europe was banned as politically incorrect, but it soon resurfaced in a camouflaged version as anti-Zionism. However, in the last few years, we have witnessed

Europe's renewed attacks on Jewish ritual, especially against *brit milah* and *shechita*, as part of the European response to the huge influx of Muslims into Europe. In the past four decades or so as the European birth rate has plummeted, immigration from Muslim countries has reached unprecedented heights. Today in France there are more Muslims going to mosques on Friday than there are Christians attending church on Sunday, and one-fourth of the children in the Netherlands school system are Muslim.

The reaction of many Europeans has been one of increasing antipathy towards Islam. According to an Ipsos-*Le Monde* poll, 74% consider Islam "intolerant" and 80% believe it is "forcing its ways on French society at large." A parallel poll conducted in Germany last year yielded similar results with 70% associating Islam with "fanaticism and radicalism," 64% calling it "prone to violence," and 60% citing its penchant for "revenge and retaliation." Most importantly, 53% of Germans foresee a battle between Islam and Christianity. They are wrong—the battle is not between Islam and Christianity, but between Islam and an intolerant anti-religious Europe. As Mati Wagner so incisively stated in his anti-Muslim offensive, while Islam may be the primary target of the latest xenophobic European campaigns against circumcision and ritual slaughter, European Jewry is the "collateral damage."

The increasing attacks against Jewish ritual have culminated in the resolution by the Parliamentary Assem-

bly of the Council of Europe (PACE) that recommends banning male circumcision altogether. Even though PACE's resolutions have only an advisory character, there is no question that this declaration is a direct attack against the Jewish faith and the Jewish people. I am certain that while the initiators of this resolution are well aware of the ramifications of their recommendation to permit circumcision only on a child "old enough to be consulted"—the author recommends the age of fourteen—the other lawmakers may not be fully cognizant that should it be enacted as a binding law throughout Europe, the majority of approximately 1.7 million Jews living in Eastern and Western Europe will feel intensely unwelcome. Muslims who are circumcised at a later age to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood will find it easier to live with this law.

This resolution is actually reminiscent of the infamous Soviet law criminalizing the teaching of religious texts to minors under the age of sixteen. It appears that history tends to repeat itself in unexpected ways. Professor Robert Wistrich writes that the latest attacks in Europe against the ritual practices of Judaism, such as *brit milah* and *shechita*, are perceived by the Jewish communities of Europe as more dangerous to organized Jewish communal life than other forms of anti-Semitism, such as anti-Zionism. The new campaign against Jewish ritual in Europe is in fact the new face of politically correct anti-Semitism. To prove my point, allow me to quote the German Parliament Member, Marlene Rupprecht,

who introduced the legislation in the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe stating: “that circumcision is the ‘dark side’ of the religion, traditions and, finally, identity” of the Jews and the Muslims. So much for her “impartial objectivity.”

There are those who oppose circumcision on the grounds that it is a medical procedure that has no apparent medical benefit—an assumption that is strongly contested by a large part of the medical community. Even if we accept that this assumption is correct, is circumcision really the only medical procedure that liberal secularists question? What about cosmetic surgery? Is it in fact performed for legitimate medical purposes and benefits? Or does our Western culture’s decision that a certain look is beautiful while another is unattractive justify putting children under the knife of a surgeon? What about parents’ right to pierce the earlobes of their daughters? Is this also done for medical reasons? Perhaps the state should intervene and not allow parents to take their children skiing since a certain percentage of the children will be hurt by injuries ranging from broken bones to fractured skulls? Just as modern liberal democracies long ago decided that it is not the task of the government to enter the bedroom of its citizens, they also established that parents had the right to educate their children in the spirit of their religious beliefs, and that governments would not interfere with the educational choices of the parents unless the welfare and the future of the child were at stake.

Europe will not be saved by adopting Middle Eastern practices of intolerance toward minorities but by introducing the immigrants to Europe to the values of pluralism and mutual respect, and by expelling from our midst those voices, whether religious or secular, that seek to destroy the common home, as opposed to a hotel, that we are trying to build. The voice that summons the faithful in a mosque to bomb airplanes and the voice that calls for ending freedom of religion in Europe are equally dangerous to the future of Europe. These voices are becoming increasingly widespread in Europe and it is imperative that local communities coordinate their responses with the European Jewish institutions that champion the values of pluralism and mutual respect. Otherwise, to quote Benjamin Franklin, “we will have to hang together because, if not, we will hang separately.”

The Conference of European Rabbis together with the local rabbinate is tirelessly working at all levels to defend the religious freedom of Jews in Europe. As Europe is in the process of redefining itself and its values seventy years after the end of World War II and the *Shoah*, I hope that there will still be a place for Jews in Europe.

Religious Law versus the Law of the Land A Clash of Civilizations?

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt offers a historic overview of the challenges of two coexistent legal systems, halacha and the secular law of the land, in his delivery of the first Rabbi Dr. Ezriel Hildesheimer Memorial Lecture on December 11, 2013 at Humboldt University in Berlin.

This is the first memorial lecture dedicated to Rabbi Dr. Ezriel Hildesheimer, the leading rabbi of German Orthodoxy in the 19th century, who believed as I do and as do millions of Jews today that traditional Judaism is compatible with the equal rights and obligations of the modern emancipated Jew and loyal citizen of the European countries.

Jews were not subject to the laws of the land as citizens of their country of residence during the Middle Ages because of the very simple fact that they were not considered citizens. Their stay in a certain city or country was subject to a special decree by the king or prince that permitted a group of Jews or a Jewish community of a limited size to dwell in a certain place, subject to spe-

cial taxes and to residential and professional limitations. Their status as a community rather than as individuals allowed them to maintain law and order through their own communal structures, which granted the rabbinate the power to judge and punish the members of the Jewish community. Although there were different variations of the regulations, this was the general law that applied to Jews during the Middle Ages.

The Emancipation cleared the way for Jews in Europe to gradually become citizens subject to the law of the land with the same rights and obligations as other citizens. Consequently Jews were no longer obliged to become members of a Jewish community or to be subject to Jewish religious laws, and the position of the communal rabbi as *Av Beth Din* assumed secondary importance since the communal Jewish court, also known as the rabbinical court, now had very limited if any power to enforce its decisions. The rabbi's responsibilities were now limited to purely religious functions, such as supervising kosher products, administering religious divorce, and arbitrating monetary disputes between members of a community when the two litigants agreed to submit to the rabbinical court as a court of arbitration.

This dual law system, whereby a Jew was subject to the laws of the Torah and to the laws of the land, created its share of problems. We are all familiar with the talmudic idiom, "*dina d'malchuta dina*," which means that the law of the land is binding and is considered to override Jewish law. However, the caveat of this rule is

that this only applies to monetary issues, such as commerce, taxes, and questions of ownership. The law of the land does not supersede any religious obligations of a Jewish person and lacks the power to force a Jew to do anything contrary to Jewish law. For example, after creating the Consistory, which to this day is the communal structure in all French-speaking nations of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte's first decree limited the power of the clergy. In order to integrate the French Jews into civil society and to do away with subjecting Jews to a dual law system, he implored the newly created Sanhedrin of France to allow secular law to affect religious law also in matters of personal status, such as marriage and divorce. Needless to say, in spite of Napoleon's powerful influence over France and the traditional Jewish approach of not fighting the state power, such a proposal was a non-starter since there was no basis for it in Jewish law and was contrary to Jewish law. The same would occur today if a broad-based regulation or law would be passed in Germany or elsewhere in Europe outlawing major Jewish rites, such as *brit milah*. In this case, the law of the country definitely would not have the status of *dina d'malchuta*:

"It is not in the power of the King (or the state) to command a person to transgress the commandments of his religion since there is no national interest in having anyone harm his religion or in forcing him to do anything opposed to his religion." According to Professor Nachum Rakover, that means that any ruling whose immediate goal is to overturn a Jewish (or other) religious law, contravenes not only the es-

sence of Jewish law, but also a general understanding of constitutional law.

Jewish tradition demands the loyalty of the Jewish subject to his country and its rulers, which explains why historically almost all Jewish revolutionaries, such as Jacobi in Germany, Trotsky in Russia, and Bela Kun in Hungary, were only marginally tied to the Jewish community. The tradition of political loyalty is based on a verse in Jeremiah 29:4 – 7:

⁴ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

This directive was later expounded in *Pirkei Avot* (*Sayings of the Fathers*), which calls upon Jews to pray for peace for their kingdom, reinforcing the long historical tradition of Jewish religious leaders in the Diaspora to refrain from criticizing their countries' political systems. On the other hand, in Maimonides' *Igeret Ha-Shemad* (*Epistle on Religious Persecution*), he responds to the harsh religious persecution that the Jews of North Africa and Spain suffered during the 12th century, asserting that once the government of a country has been declared *memshelet hashemad*, a government that ad-

vocates destroying the Jewish community and its customs, the community and the individual Jew are commanded to leave their country of residence as soon as possible in search of greener pastures.

The question then is: How flexible is *halacha*, if at all, to accommodate the law and the culture of the land? Are there any rules in this domain? The famous orthodox feminist, Blue Greenberg, once said: Where there is a rabbinic will, there is a *halachic* way. In an article published in the October 25, 2013 issue of the journal, *Tachles*, Alfred Bodenheimer wrote:

Judaism is a religion whose law is strongly oriented towards the Diaspora, which imbues it with a strong pragmatism as well as an awareness of the limits of flexibility. The Torah is not in heaven. Judaism is basically a culture of religious arrangement. In different locations throughout its history, it was always been subject to various restrictions. These often changed and whether these changes were arbitrary because of a change in rule or as a result of the implementation of the latest scientific knowledge was of secondary importance. The Jews developed strategies to interpret their autonomy such that they themselves decided which laws made life impossible in a locality and where they could compromise as long as this was a condition of their continued existence in that place. As a rule, Jewish communities actively subverted legislation only when that legislation was directed specifically against the exercise of Jewish practice and specifically against Judaism itself. In the times of the Soviet Union, the Western Jewish communities considered it almost a duty to support the Jews there in the practice of their religion in the face of the restrictions imposed on them by the government.

Bodenheimer asserts that *halacha* allows for some flexibility, but warns us that there are limits to that flexibility—this is the main difference between *sharia*, Islamic law, and *halacha*, Jewish law. If Bodenheimer is correct and *halacha* is flexible, what are the limits? Who has the authority to define them and how are they determined?

Rabbi Naftalie Zvi Yehuda Berlin of Volozhin, a *halachic* authority and Biblical and talmudic commentator who lived from 1816-1893, refers to the difference between the Divine first tablets and the second human tablets in his Torah commentary, *Ha'amek Davar (Delve into the Matter)*, on Exodus 34:1, “Hew for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones. And I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke”:

Ibn Ezra opposes the view of a *Gaon* [a rabbi of the Geonic period that dates from the 5th to the 9th century] who affirms that the second tablets were more exalted than the first ones, because the first tablets were Divine. Rabbi Berlin defends the Gaon's view by explaining that the second tablets, or the second coming of the Torah, allowed for human interpretation according to the rules set forth at Sinai, a flexibility that admitted novel interpretations, necessary for the survival of the Jewish people.

Having said this, it is important to clarify that there is a major difference between our traditional view of the development of *halacha* and the Reform Movement's interpretation, or total or partial rejection, of *halacha* in conformity with the latest trends and “isms.” Our basic belief in the Divinity and in the eternity of the Torah is

theologically closer to Catholicism in this respect than to Reform Judaism. We are the People of the Book; if there is no book, there are no People of the Book. *Halacha*, like other sciences and systems of law, has rules of its own and cannot be changed by external pressure or by disregarding the rules of *halacha*. According to Heinrich Heine, it is the myriad of little rules and laws based on the Talmud that built the cathedral of what is now known as rabbinic or Orthodox Judaism. This is what has kept Judaism alive in the most adverse circumstances as it will continue to do so now and in the future.

There are quite a few theories about the decline of religion in our Western Hemisphere, such as the theories expounded by a Christian author, Mary Eberstadt, in her book, *How the West Really Lost God*, and by Calum Brown in his work, *The Death of Christian Britain*. A 2013 Pew Poll revealed a great increase in Orthodox observance and a steep decline of the liberal movement during the last twenty years. The findings of these books and polls suggest the same pattern—that liberal denominations fail in the long run to hold on to their followers.

As is common in many disciplines and sciences, I will address the subject of religious law versus the law of the land by referring to extreme borderline cases to illustrate and elucidate the issues and the problems. The first case is presented in the Babylonian Talmud, *Mishnah Ketubot 3b*:

A virgin should get married on the fourth day of the week and from [the time of] danger and onwards the

people made it a custom to marry on the third day of the week and the Sages did not interfere with them. The Talmud asks: What [was the] danger? If a government decrees that, “a maiden that gets married on the fourth day [of the week] shall be killed [because she followed a Jewish custom],” then this rabbinic decree should be entirely abolished! Rabbah said: The government decreed that “a maiden that gets married on the fourth day [of the week] shall have the first sexual intercourse with the prefect.” The Talmud then asks: [You call] this danger? [Surely] this [is a case of] constraint! The Talmud answers: Because there are chaste women who would rather surrender themselves to death and [thus] come to danger. But [then] let one abolish it? A decree is likely to cease, and [therefore] we do not abolish an ordinance of the rabbis on account of a decree. If so, on the third day he [the prefect] would also come and have intercourse [with the bride]? Out of doubt, he does not move himself.

Here we indeed have a talmudic source that is tantamount to establishing the fact that in the face of adversity and the law of the land, the rabbis agreed to a temporary dispensation of a rabbinic decree, but opposed a change in legislation because of the temporary nature of a governmental decree versus the eternal character of religious law. We actually see in the same case and in the same law a certain limited flexibility. It should be noted that according to certain sources, this decree that gave the governor of Judea the right of the first night with the bride incited the revolt of the Maccabees against the Hellenist power, which culminated in the victory of Hanukkah and the reestablishment of Jewish sovereign-

ty in the Holy Land. To paraphrase Blue Greenberg's statement, in this case as in many others, there was no rabbinic will to accommodate the state power.

Another example may be drawn from more recent history when the last rector of the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary, Dr. Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg, was obliged to issue a ruling in a controversy about *shechita*. In April 1933, the Nazi regime banned *shechita* unless certain "humanitarian reforms" were introduced, including the prior stunning of the animals. These demands were tantamount to banning *shechita* altogether, since this requirement would have rendered the animal ritually unfit for consumption regardless of how it was killed. The existing *halachic* material seemed to offer little hope for a way out, and yet there was serious concern that if a *halachic* solution was not found, German Jews would simply begin to eat non-kosher meat. Painfully aware of this pressing state of affairs, Dr. Weinberg penned a series of detailed responsa, arguing that animals slaughtered in the manner stipulated by the government could be eaten, but made this leniency conditional on the agreement of other major *halachic* scholars. The Orthodox rabbis of the *Einheitsgemeinde* headed by Rabbi Unna were in favor of a lenient ruling, since they feared that their membership and the official institutions of their communities would begin to eat non-kosher food altogether, while the rabbis of the Orthodox *Austritts Gemeinden* were of the opinion that there is no *halachic* way to permit the meat of animals

stunned before being slaughtered. Dr. Weinberg went to Poland to consult with the great *halachic* authorities, such as Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzhensky, the spiritual rabbi of Vilna, and a dozen other authorities, and the broad consensus was to not allow the consumption of meat of animals electrocuted before *shechita*. Dr. Weinberg returned to Germany and ruled against the consumption of meat from such animals and in effect drove the *Einheitsgemeinde* to eat non-kosher meat since the Nazis also forbade the importation of kosher meat.

There is a lack of agreement in academic circles concerning whether this decision of the Polish *halachic* authorities was strictly *halachic* or also *meta-halachic*—that is, based only on the textual proofs and precedents or founded on a more general *weltanschauung* of the rabbis, and in the spirit of the law. It is obvious from Dr. Weinberg's writing in his *magnum opus*, *Seridei Eish (Remnants of the Fire)*, a book of responsa dealing with *halachic* questions concerning the personal, social, and technological problems of modern life, that he considered the attempt of the Nazis to forbid traditional kosher slaughter on the basis of humanitarian grounds of non-humane slaughter a grave demonization of Jewish ritual and the Torah itself. Therefore he was not inclined to make a dispensation even though most Jewish communal kitchens in Germany, which were kosher up until that time, would cease to be kosher.

Clearly many rabbis and lay leaders of the Jewish community at that time were highly critical of this *hala-*

chic approach of “let the law move the mountain.” As a result of the lack of flexibility of Jewish law, many rabbis did not support the decision and German Jewry as a whole ceased to eat kosher. However, if we now look back with the benefit of historical hindsight, which may not be fair but may allow us to have a more accurate perspective than we are able to have on current events, we can definitely state that Dr. Weinberg’s *halachic* decision conveyed the message to Orthodox German Jewry, estimated at that time to be around 15% of the half million Jews living in pre-war Germany, that it is impossible to continue to live as observant Jews in Nazi Germany. Consequently, the observant minority was compelled to emigrate well before the majority of German Jews did and thus many lives were saved.

I have presented an extreme case of a hostile government using anti-Semitic legislation to make life difficult for Jews, providing two examples of the response of *halacha* to this challenge from two totally different periods of history. There are also cases in which a conflict between *halacha* and secular law is circumstantial rather than intentional. My favorite example is the following case discussed by Rabbi Yair Bacharach, a major 17th century *halachic* authority from Koblenz and Worms, who was asked to render a decision. A Jewish group traveling from one German city to another arrived at a border control station where it was necessary to prove that the woman traveling with the man was actually his wife in order for them to establish residency. In an effort

to establish this fact, the police demanded that the man kiss the woman. Now the question that Bacharach was asked had to be divided into two parts. First, is a husband allowed to kiss his wife during her menstrual period when it is forbidden to do so according to *halacha*? Second, in case the woman is actually someone else's wife, is he allowed to kiss her for the sake of crossing the border? Interestingly enough, Bacharach allows the former, but forbids the latter, in effect relaxing the law in order to prove the truth but not to prove a lie.

In another responsa in *Havot Yair*, Bacharach addresses the question that was a recurring issue during the Middle Ages when court cases of Jews against non-Jews were often brought before a judge known to be an anti-Semite: Is a Jew allowed to bribe the judge, not in order to be favored by the judge, but only to restore the equilibrium required to receive a fair trial? Without going into the ensuing discussion among later rabbinical authorities, it seems that the natural bias of the Gentile judges, who professed anti-Semitism in a city and country where the rulers and the citizens were convinced of the basic immorality of any Jew, was to presume the Jew guilty until proven innocent. It is important to note that the supplicant was not interested in knowing the position of secular law on the issue of bribing the judge, nor was he interested in knowing the possible punishment. He simply wanted to know the *halachic* view on this issue. Moreover, even though the existence of Jews in the Middle Ages was very tenuous as it was dependent on

the goodwill of the local prince who allowed the hated Jews to continue to reside in his lands for a hefty bribe, the Jews of the Middle Ages still had moral qualms about offering a bribe in an actual court case. This was a recurring problem up until the Emancipation, when Gotthold Ephraim Lessing mounted his play, *Nathan the Wise*.

The question now is: What is the position of *halacha* concerning the laws of a country that is not hostile to its Jewish minority but that restrains its minority from fulfilling its religious commandments? Would the *halachic* response to this question in this situation be similar to its response in the previous one? We can think of many different situations in which Jewish observance is hampered by the regulations and the laws of the state, for example, by mandatory military service. What is special about this situation that makes it mandatory and not voluntary as compared with a situation in which students who choose to study in universities must attend classes during the Sabbath? As a rule, in the world of *halacha* there is a great distinction between accepted norms of observance and minimal observance. In other words, even though Jewish schools are generally closed during the Sabbath and the Sabbath is consecrated to spiritual and religious endeavors, since *halacha* does not forbid the study of sciences during the Sabbath, communities made special arrangements to hold special early morning services for students who are required to attend classes on the Sabbath. In terms of military service, *hala-*

chic dispensations were granted based on the extreme situation in which Jewish citizens are expected to serve their countries as soldiers. It should be noted however that the army as a rule does not affect the whole population but only the conscripted, and situations of war in general are an exception to the rule. When necessary, the general principle of *pikuach nefesh* not only offers a general dispensation from all religious obligations but in fact obliges a person to desecrate the Sabbath in order to save somebody's life.

In this context, I would like to mention an issue that is related to our topic of discussion but merits special attention—the issue of medical ethics. My predecessor and Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, of blessed memory, the great innovator in the field of medicine and *halacha*, was the first to address this issue. The question of when life begins and when life ends must be determined in order to respond to questions of medical ethics, such as the right of terminally ill patients to refuse further medical help and many other related issues that are being discussed today by *halachic* authorities, as well as in the secular world. I believe that since *halacha* is based on Biblical and talmudic sources, it can and should definitely serve to influence the decisions of secular law and ethics.

I would like also to mention a case regarding a different matter that occurred in the United States in 2013 as reported by CNN: Two rabbis faced kidnapping charges after allegedly arranging assaults against Orthodox

Jewish husbands in order to persuade them to grant divorces to their wives. FBI raids led to the arrest of the men after a criminal complaint was filed, alleging that the rabbis had charged Jewish wives tens of thousands of dollars to orchestrate kidnappings, and had accepted \$20,000 for such an operation from undercover FBI agents. According to the rabbis, their goal was to obtain a *get* from the husbands. In the Orthodox Jewish world, a *get* is more important than any document drawn up in civil courts. The source of this law is found in Deuteronomy 24:1 – 2:

¹ When a man marries a woman or possesses her, if she is displeasing to him...he shall write her a bill of divorce and place it in her hand, thus releasing her from his household. ² When she thus leaves his household, she may go and marry another man.

Without a *get*, a woman is considered an *agunah*. The implications of not receiving a *get* are serious since a woman is not permitted to another man without it. Should the woman have intimate relations with a man and should a child result from the union, the child will be considered a *mamzer*. According to Deuteronomy 23:3, “A *mamzer* shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.”

Unfortunately, this predicament has intensified in the modern era. In some cases, husbands demand exorbitant payments from their wives in exchange for granting a religious divorce. These women cannot remarry without the proper religious divorce proceedings. How-

ever, unlike in the Middle Ages, their lives—and the lives of their husbands—are no longer governed by the edicts of a rabbinical court, the authority that imposed violent sanctions aimed at freeing these chained women. Thus although Jewish law may be considered the law of these communities, it lacks the power of enforcement that, while violent, could protect some of the community's most vulnerable members.

In the face of this uniquely modern dilemma, two responses have emerged. The first response, as mentioned above, embraced violence, using deception and torture that not only violate United States law, but may also violate Jewish law. Any rabbinical court divorce decree secured through bribery is wholly invalid since any violence inflicted on a husband to induce him to grant the *get* would result in a tainted decree, and because in this way, the use of violence all too frequently entails the extortion of money from those seeking protection.

A second solution, proposed by other sectors of the Jewish community, entails a contract rather than coercion. In the early 1990s, the Beth Din of America—one of America's most prominent rabbinical courts—drafted a prenuptial agreement for use within the Jewish community that successfully navigates a variety of legal complexities. The prenuptial agreement requires a husband to provide his wife with a daily support payment, typically \$150 for each day that the two no longer live together for as long as the husband refuses to grant his wife a religious divorce. Because the daily payment

simply enforces the husband's obligation to support his wife, it cannot be considered financial coercion. The prenuptial agreement does not require the husband to grant a religious divorce but only to make payments if he fails to do so, thereby enabling courts in the United States to enforce the agreement without violating constitutional prohibitions. Indeed, in January 2013 a Connecticut court enforced this so-called "Jewish pre-nup," overriding constitutional objections by noting that the terms of the agreement did not undermine the separation of church and state. The success of the Jewish prenuptial agreement offers an important lesson for the future of religious communities in the United States.

Like many religious traditions and doctrines, Jewish divorce law must cope with the important challenges posed by modernity. Some religious authorities have chosen to simply circumvent these challenges through the use of subterfuge, deceit, and even violence, which exacerbate the problems and leave women subject to extortion at the hands of not only their husbands, but also their would-be rescuers. However, modernity can provide new opportunities to the religious authorities and not only obstacles that must be overcome. By joining forces with America's legal system, Jewish communities have found the resources necessary to protect otherwise vulnerable women. Accordingly to Michael A. Helfand, Associate Professor at the Pepperdine University School of Law and Associate Director of Pepperdine's Glazer Institute for Jewish Studies, instead of trying to

circumvent the law, the Jewish pre-nuptial agreement serves as an example of how embracing modernity can enhance religious life in the United States.

At our last convention, the Conference of European Rabbis not only adopted the pre-nuptial agreement of the Rabbinical Council of America, but also spear-headed legislative initiatives in Europe, similar to those already in force in the United Kingdom and in Amsterdam, to make civil divorce contingent on ending religious marriage, if there was one, and to legislate stiff sanctions and criminal proceedings against reluctant husbands in Israel.

The two legal systems—the *halacha* and the secular law of the land—do not necessarily have to collide with each other, and in many instances secular law may actually influence *halacha* in a very profound way. The final example that I would like to present is the landmark decision of Rabbi Moses Feinstein, the prime *halachic* legalist of the second half of the last century in the United States. According to *halacha*, the production of milk must be supervised by a Jew in order to be considered kosher because of the possibility of mixing cow milk with milk of other non-kosher species. Rabbi Feinstein decided that since the law of the country also forbids the mixing of cow milk with the milk of other species unless this is specified on the product packaging, and since the state power has implemented a supervisory system to check and punish violators of the law, state supervision could be considered equivalent to rabbinic

supervision. Thus milk and a myriad of different milk products became available around the world to observant Jews based on the ruling that *halacha* may rely on secular law and secular supervision in this particular case. This example as well as the example of the prenuptial agreement demonstrates the extent to which Jewish religious law in concert with the law of the land may contribute to modern Judaism to the great benefit of the Jewish communities in their respective countries.

It should be mentioned that Rabbi Feinstein, a political refugee from communist Russia to the United States in the first half of last century, was very eager to highlight in his response the new position of the Jews in the United States: No longer exposed to discriminatory laws and judges who were known to be anti-Semites, Jews are required to scrupulously follow the letter of the law of the land of residence. This idea was understandably not too popular among *Shoah* survivors. On the other side of the spectrum, we see the great influence that Jewish law can have on the system of law in Europe where, for example, laws to preserve mass graves of Nazi victims in some European countries are drawn from *halachic* sources.

I began this discourse with the credo of the Hildesheimer School of integrating Judaism into modern European culture and creating a modern Jewish community that is both true and loyal to Judaism, and integrated into modern Europe. There are some voices that claim that such a symbiosis is impossible because

the *Shoah* destroyed any hope for such coexistence and thus for any Jewish future in Europe. Jews can of course continue to live in Europe in spiritual ghettos of their own making, divorced from European culture, but can we again reeducate a whole community to instill the hope for the coexistence of these two cultures?

I was raised in the spirit of Torah and *derech erez*, and with a sense of the obligation of a Jewish community to live in communion with the culture and the laws of the land, to enrich our Jewish tradition by drawing from the vernacular culture while at the same time drawing from our Judaic culture to contribute to the enrichment of European heritage. Any partnership must have at least two willing partners. My hope is that Europe will not prove again to be an unwilling partner in this unique experiment in the history of humanity.

Surrogate Motherhood

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt addresses the moral, ethical, and legal questions raised by surrogate motherhood in an article that appeared in the Russian daily, Izvestya, on January 30, 2014 as a Jewish response to the debate about surrogate motherhood in Russia following the Russian Orthodox Church's request that the Russian Federation pass a law to render surrogate motherhood illegal.

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It is an inherent truth, evident from human behavior as it is from the Holy Scriptures, that a man and a woman as a rule want to have children, and that a person without children is deprived of a fundamental human experience. The desire for children may be understood in the context of the creation of man and woman in the image of G-D who in their quest for *imitatio Dei* seek to be creators like the Creator and yearn for eternity. Offspring promise some kind of eternity, which is symbolized by the story of Adam and Eve's desire to eat from the fruit of the tree of life, a yearning that has persisted throughout the development of every form of human civilization.

A more recent explanation for this quest that is based on psychology, a quite new and modern science, is that

man cannot live without love and giving to others. There are many more reasons for a normative human being's need to have children, and there are always exceptions, but as a rule, I am sure that there is a consensus on this issue. The lack of children, or the inability to have children, deprives an individual or family of a basic human experience, rendering many childless couples unhappy and anxious to find a solution for this common problem.

In the Biblical narrative, when the patriarchs and matriarchs were confronted with the inability to conceive, a major and repeated theme of the book of Genesis, they solved the matter either by prayer and miracle, or by offering a surrogate wife to the Patriarch, an acceptable solution at a time when polygamy was an accepted norm of civilization. In Antiquity, in the Code of Hammurabi as later in Roman times, laws were created to define adoption—the responsibilities and the rights of the adoptive parents and the adopted—thus creating the possibility of legally having children without genetic bonds between the parents and the children. The Jewish system of law, although not anti-adoption as an institution, does not recognize the possibility of creating a parent-child bond through legal contract if the child is not the genetic child of the father and mother.

Modern science has made it possible to conceive a child, not through the act of sex, but through *in vitro* fertilization (IVF). As medicine became more advanced, doctors acquired the ability to take the semen from a man who wanted to be a father and the eggs of the

woman who wanted to be a mother, to fertilize the eggs, and to implant the fertilized eggs in the womb of a another woman, the surrogate mother, who would carry the embryo during the pregnancy and give birth to the child. Various moral, ethical, and legal questions have arisen from the emergence of surrogate motherhood. From the religious perspective, which in general seeks to link the sexual act, procreation, and marriage, this link is stretched to a new level by this arrangement. Moral questions from a human secular perspective have also been raised: To what extent is a person allowed to use her body in order to be a birth machine for other women? Is it moral for a healthy normative woman to give away the child she carried to another woman?

In Judaism, a religion based on law, the questions of ethics and morality must be based on law, on Jewish religious law, *halacha*. From a *halachic* perspective, since adoption is not legally recognized, the main question that arises from the practice of surrogate motherhood is the question of who is the mother of the child. Is she the genetic mother or the surrogate mother? Since it is assumed that a person can have only one mother and one father, the next question arises: What establishes the status of the mother? Is it the pregnancy and birth, the passage out of the womb? Or is it the eggs and the cells that carry the DNA of the woman that make her a mother?

There are very few talmudic and midrashic sources that may serve as the absolute basis to legitimize

any point of view for the very simple reason that all the sources that discuss legal issues regarding pregnancy and birth do not directly deal with this issue. However, it must be said the *halachic* authorities of the last generation have been inclined to declare that the genetic mother is to be regarded as the real mother, since as we write these lines, modern medicine is continually reducing the minimal time an embryo must develop in the womb in order for a healthy baby to be born. It is therefore very feasible that in the near future an incubator will be invented that will make the human womb redundant by allowing a healthy child to be born following *in vitro* fertilization and without having entered the womb of a woman. However, in practice, because of the lack of explicit sources, *halacha* leaves this question open, and the status of both the genetic mother and the surrogate mother remain indefinite.

The ethical question of conceiving children in this manner touches upon many different issues. One of the main problems already raised one generation ago by the leading *halachists* of past generations is the question of impregnating a woman, sometimes a married woman, by artificial insemination with the semen of a man who is not her husband. Some of the Hasidic rabbis declared this practice immoral and a sin, declaring the child from such an insemination illegitimate. It is important to remember that according to Jewish law a child is deemed *mamzer* only if born to a married woman and a man who is not her husband. However, the leading *hala-*

chic authority of the second half of the 20th century, Rabbi Moses Feinstein, who was originally from Russia and immigrated to the United States in 1934, ruled in a landmark decision that illegitimate children can only be the result of a forbidden sexual relationship, hence if fertilization was done *in vitro* without sexual contact, the child is considered legitimate.

Rabbi Feinstein's decision, which was vehemently debated in rabbinical circles, was accepted as normative by the mainstream. The fact is that every case in which such procedures were required due to the infertility of one or both spouses was indeed defined by Jewish law as an extreme case of *she'at hadechak*, given the urgent nature of the longing of a husband and wife to procreate and have children. Moreover, Rabbi Feinstein acknowledged that leaving a couple without the benefit of children when modern technology makes it possible for them to have children would be robbing them of the human experience of creating and building, seeking eternity, and loving in the image of G-D. Therefore, it would be false to state that Judaism is categorically opposed to surrogate motherhood and that we would support secular legislation to forbid this practice.

Manifesto for Combating Religious Extremism

The Manifesto for Combating Religious Extremism was initially published in the World Economic Forum blog in January 2015 following the January attacks against Charlie Hebdo and the Hyper Cacher Market in Paris, and subsequently sent to all the ministers of interior of Europe. Some countries have responded and some countries in Europe, such as Austria and France, have adopted these recommendations.

Introduction

The threat posed by religious extremists is global, immediate, violent, and deeply rooted in issues of identity, theology, and faith. While countless governments, think tanks, and NGOs spend millions of dollars every year, debating and redeveloping strategies to deal with religious extremism, the Conference of European Rabbis maintains that it is the responsibility of the religious communities themselves to assume the urgent task of offering tangible solutions to this intractable global problem. Nobody better understands the strengths, weaknesses, and subtleties of a religious community and the deeply committed adherents to that faith than its leaders. They

are uniquely positioned to create meaningful change and therefore must recognize their responsibilities in this area. Platitudes and strongly worded statements distancing mainstream religious communities from acts of terrorism are entirely inadequate. This problem calls for tangible and measurable steps that will allow for the straightforward evaluation of progress. Transparency, accountability, and theological integrity are essential for rebuilding trust across religious communities.

This manifesto, which proposes a highly challenging set of principles, was composed by and in consultation with Christian, Muslim, and Jewish senior religious leaders across Europe. It is our hope and prayer that all the leaders of the religious communities across the continent will endorse this manifesto, voluntarily committing themselves to implementing its principles and promoting its ideals and objectives. We welcome all constructive feedback from those who are engaged in the struggle against religious extremism, and hope that this document proves to be a platform for further discussion and more meaningful involvement to address the problem.

Training of Religious Leaders

Religious leaders are at the heart of the issue of extremism. Since by definition, religious leaders may play a fundamental role in the cultivation of a religious, extremist ideology, it follows that they have a unique obligation to preach an ideology of peace and tolerance. Re-

ligious communities have a responsibility to establish recognized training structures to reckon with the threat of extremism. In some cases, where such training is already in place, they may be undermined when scholars outside of Europe who may promote extremism move to Western liberal democracies to preach an ideology of hatred. In an effort to counter this, while it may be impractical to refuse residency to scholars who have been trained abroad, it is certainly possible to insist that they undergo further training in Europe that specifically addresses the dangers of extremism. Alternately, Europe could come up with a system of certification of schools outside of Europe to guarantee the absence of extremism in establishments charged with the task of preparing the spiritual leaders of the next generation.

It is also important to insure that their salaries like those of native European religious leaders are paid from internal European sources. The argument that extremism represents the will of G-D must be challenged head on and religious leaders should compile a body of religious literature and commentary that focuses on the questions raised by extremism, which should include contributions from the most prominent religious scholars in this field.

Transparency in Funding

It is an undeniable fact that the most direct way of influencing the activity and policies of an organization is by exerting some form of control over its funding. We must

prevent foreign extremist bodies from unduly influencing communities in Europe by insisting that all funds donated to an organization that exceed 5,000 Euros are made public. Any donation from outside Europe should be subject to much closer scrutiny—ideally by an independent body. These measures will reduce the covert influence of groups like Al-Muhajiroun and the Muslim Brotherhood. Groups that receive a large proportion of their funding from countries where there is a great deal of support for extremist groups will be more quickly identified as high risk, and high-value donors will be held accountable for the organizations they support if they are found to be promoting an extremist agenda. Although it is possible to circumvent these measures by making donations to religious organizations from abroad through grant-making foundations based in Europe, these foundations will themselves be subject to careful scrutiny. The more transparency there is in the way that non-profit, faith-based organizations receive their funding, the easier it will be to identify and root out extremist organizations.

Extremism Prevention Officer

It has become a common practice in a number of European states for organizations of various kinds to appoint a child protection officer who is well trained to appropriately act when concerns are raised about the welfare of children connected to the organization. Similarly, every religious congregation should appoint an extremism prevention officer. Following the example of child

protection procedures, this individual will be expected to create a protocol for identifying and reporting concerns about extremism, producing regular confidential reports that specify issues of concern, and submitting them to the relevant authorities. This will provide law enforcement with a direct link to the religious communities and will also help to ensure that the communities themselves take responsibility for identifying and reporting incidents of concern.

Registration of all Religious Congregations

The measures recommended in this manifesto will require a great deal of commitment both in terms of time and money. Yet those who endorse this manifesto and commit to implementing its principles will set themselves apart as recognized beacons that promote its ideals and objectives by applying them. Those who are prepared to commit themselves to fighting the scourge of extremism by taking on all of these measures will be added to a national register of religious congregations. This register will in effect provide a list of all the congregations that have set the highest possible standards to tackle extremism, and they will be recognized as such by parliamentarians, the media, and the public. Registration will serve to identify law-abiding religious groups and will significantly enhance their credibility.

Conclusion

The true power of these proposals lies in the fact that they are being proposed and championed by various re-

ligious groups themselves, rather than being imposed on religious communities by external agencies. The Conference of European Rabbis has identified a number of measures that could radically change the way that organized religious institutions deal with extremism. The net result of these measures will be to create an atmosphere of confidence as religious communities assume responsibility for dealing with extremism, which will in turn inspire more and more communities to adopt them. The Conference of European Rabbis will now seek to build support for these measures among relevant stakeholders and invites those who are interested in adopting them to participate in the further development and refinement of these proposals.

To summarize, the Conference of European Rabbis proposes:

- Establishing recognized, formalized training of religious leaders
- Ensuring that religious leaders are trained in Europe
- Ensuring that religious leaders are paid in Europe
- Creating a body of religious discourse addressing the issue of extremism
- Requiring the declaration of all donations over 5000 Euros
- Ensuring the independent review of donations from outside Europe
- Appointing an extremism prevention officer
- Compiling and submitting regular reports to relevant law enforcement authorities about concerns related to extremism and the measures taken to address them
- Creating a national registry of all religious congregations

The Buried Jewish Past of Boris Nemtsov

Following the murder of Russian political activist, Boris Nemtsov, in February 2015, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt examines the dilemmas of the Jewish politician in Putin's Russia in an article originally published on March 5, 2015 in the online magazine, Tablet, and republished in various Russian publications.

Boris Nemtsov was killed on Friday, February 27, 2015, a mere few hundred meters from the Kremlin walls not far from his apartment on Bolshaya Ordynka St.—the street where the Israeli Embassy is located—between the Kremlin Red Square and St. Basil's Cathedral. The site of this murder could not be more symbolic for Russian Jewry, a community that after forced secularization under Communism redefined itself with the onset of the modern Russian State.

When leading Jewish bankers created the Russian Jewish Congress in 1996, they of course invited Mr. Nemtsov, the son of a Jewish woman, to join. Mr. Nemtsov, a young promising politician under Boris Yeltsin at the time, declined the invitation, quoting his

mother who cautioned that the creation of a Jewish community would be dangerous. When I approached his friends and relatives to offer to organize the Jewish component of his funeral, my offer was declined because Mr. Nemtsov had converted to Russian Orthodoxy. Many other Russian politicians of Jewish descent, whether part of the opposition or supporters of Putin, are more reluctant today than ever before to express their Jewishness openly. They try to hide their Jewish descent behind the facade of a religious conversion, like the Jews in 19th century Germany, including Heinrich Heine, the famous German Jewish writer who considered his conversion to Christianity to be the ticket to European culture. Like many public figures of Jewish descent in Russia, Mr. Nemtsov chose to build his future with the Cathedral and not with the Jewish people. Yet when Mr. Nemtsov was asked why he was involved in dissident politics, his reply was: "We are Jewish; we must fight for truth and freedom."

With each passing day, the Orthodox Church is becoming more visible and present in the Russian state and government, not unlike during pre-revolutionary times when the state and the church were one. This state of affairs has had many ramifications at different levels. Practicing Jews in high government positions are afraid to hold life cycle events in public and are often approached by representatives of the church with soft sell advice to convert to the state church. Jews who convert do not necessarily find greener pastures on the other

side of the fence, and there is no guarantee that they will not be considered Jews by anti-Semites. Furthermore, Israeli law is much stricter than Jewish religious law with regard to converts: a Jew who converts to another religion forever loses his right of return to Israel while *halacha* allows returning souls to rejoin the Jewish people.

In spite of his ambivalent relationship with Jews, Leo Tolstoy described the Jew who is commanded in the Torah to “love the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” as “a pioneer of freedom and a symbol of civil and religious tolerance.” However, in terms of tolerance, the Jewish religion is far from recruiting adherents. Quite the opposite, the Talmud prescribes that if a non-Jew wants to convert to the Jewish faith, it is necessary to explain to him that it is extremely difficult to be a Jew and that the righteous of other religions also inherit the heavenly kingdom.

Was Mr. Nemtsov’s mother right? Does conversion to Russian Orthodoxy guarantee security and a future for Russian Jews? While the quest of Jews to promote democracy and a Western orientation in Russia may be honorable and might even bring some tangible results, the flight from their Jewish roots to the bosom of the Orthodox Church will bring neither security nor recognition by anti-Semites. Even those Jews who chose to serve the church have suffered discrimination and some of them, such as the highly popular Father Alexander Men, have shared the fate of Boris Nemtsov.

Mr. Nemtsov thought that by joining the state religion he would be protected and although he was clearly not killed because he was Jewish, he remained a Jew to his enemies.

The life and trials of Boris Nemtsov represent to some extent the challenges faced by modern-day Russian Jewry. The conflicting centrifugal powers of the Red Square and the Israeli Embassy on Bolshaya Ordynka Street are dividing hundreds of thousands of Russians of Jewish descent, further weakening and diminishing the historic community. Some of the more prominent Jews think they may fare better under the shadow of the Cathedral. Others are becoming increasingly affiliated with synagogues and Jewish organizations, such as the Russian Jewish Congress, and are expressing their Judaism openly. The tension between St. Basil's Cathedral and the Synagogue will continue to define the lives of many Russians of Jewish descent as it did the life of Boris Nemtsov.

The time has come for the members of the Jewish financial and political elite who exchanged their Communist Party membership for a baptismal certificate to wake up and remove their masks, which hardly disguise their origins and their creed. If they do not respect themselves, they cannot expect others to respect them.

Honoring Prime Minister Manuel Valls Recipient of the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2014/2015

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt presented the Harav Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2014/2015 on behalf of the Conference of European Rabbis to Prime Minister of France, Manuel Valls, for his "exemplary determination to protect the Jewish community of France," in a ceremony in Matignon Palace, during the Standing Committee meeting in Paris in May 2015.

During a meeting with Pope Francis in Rome two weeks ago, I described the situation of Jews in Europe today as one in which two trains with ever increasing speed are racing towards each other as we the Jews stand on the rails, not knowing which train is going to hit us first. On one hand, our synagogues, our schools, our museums, our elderly, and our youth are being attacked and killed in many Western European countries by radicalized immigrants from the Middle East. This is one train.

The other train is the reaction of secular "old Europe" to the onslaught of Muslim radicalism. Instead

of fighting the radicals, we have witnessed a backlash of “old Europe”—a broadside attack against Islam that includes forbidding the building of minarets and the wearing of traditional covering for women, as well as an attempt to outlaw *halal* meat and circumcision. While Islam may be the primary target of the latest xenophobic European campaigns against circumcision and ritual slaughter, European Jewry is the “collateral damage” in this anti-Muslim offensive. The most glaring example of this is the endorsement by one party during the French presidential elections of a ban on religious headwear, including *kippot*, in public. This is the other train. This is the bad news.

The good news is that since the attack against *Charlie Hebdo* and the Hyper Cacher supermarket in Paris, Europe understands that Islamic terrorism, which is defined by deep rooted anti-Semitism, is not only a problem for Jews but a grave danger for the future of Europe. Following the attack, Prime Minister Valls promptly declared: “History has taught us that the awakening of anti-Semitism is the symptom of a crisis of democracy and a crisis of the Republic. That is why we must respond with force.” The Conference of European Rabbis decided to award Prime Minister Valls the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize after he decisively stopped mobs who were about to carry out a pogrom in the streets of Paris against Jews and synagogues last summer. We in Russia know all too well what a pogrom is. It is an attack by a mob against a minority that the police and

government do nothing to stop. Little did we know then that a few months later, France and its Jewish community would be challenged in a way that has not occurred since World War II.

The Conference of European Rabbis is proud to award the Third *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry to Prime Minister Manuel Valls and commends him for his courage to speak out when other politicians in Europe were too timid to speak out, for acting when others did not act for fear of losing their popular ratings in public polls. The future of Europe and the hope to face this challenge depends on politicians and leaders like Prime Minister Valls who for their countries' sake are prepared to ignore the cost of popular support in order to do the right thing. We commend Prime Minister Valls for the steps he took against the anti-Semitic comedian, Dieudonné, and for the appointment a few months ago of a new interministerial delegate to fight racism and anti-Semitism. France has taken very important steps to insure the safety of its Jewish community. The French government is investing more than one million Euros per day to provide security to the Jewish institutions in addition to the new program of 100 million Euros to combat anti-Semitism. These are the right decisions.

There are some voices asking if there is a future for Jews in France and if there is a future for Jews in Europe? The governments of Europe must answer these questions. An affirmative response will be possible only

if more European political leaders will follow the example of the great leadership of Prime Minister Valls. There are thousands of potential walking time bombs radicalized by ISIS on the way to the Middle East or back who pose an existential threat to Europe. In the long run, the problem of radical Islamic terrorism will have to be addressed head on with no compromises. As Prime Minister Valls has said, this is a war that has to be fought and won. It cannot be fought by any country alone but by all the European countries together.

The *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry was established by the Conference of European Rabbis in 2011 to award personalities who have provided outstanding support to European Jewry by defending their religious rights and combating anti-Semitism. This prize was awarded to the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Jerzy Buzek, in 2012 and to German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2013. The prize is usually awarded in a festive ceremony in the Great Synagogue of Europe in Brussels in the presence of the leadership of the European Union and the Jewish leadership of Europe. In light of Prime Minister Valls' very busy schedule, an exception was made to award the prize in the French capital. Due to the dramatic events in this city and in this country, this ceremony was postponed until today.

Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, for whom the award is named, was the second President of the Conference of European Rabbis and Chief Rabbi of the United He-

brew Congregations of the British Commonwealth. He dedicated his life to the pursuit of a philosophy that advocated religious commitment with unyielding love and consideration for his fellow man. The ability to bring communities together while recognizing the value of faith in a modernizing world is one that he treasured throughout his life. It is this character trait above all others that this prize awards.

This prize was designed by Georgy Frangulyan, a world renowned artist born in Georgia whose most notable works include the monument of Alexander Pushkin in Brussels and the monument on Boris Yeltsin's grave at the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow. This sculpture depicts an open Torah scroll lying on three closed Torah scrolls, symbolizing the mission of the Conference of European Rabbis to recreate a Jewish presence in Europe after the extermination of one third of the Jewish people in the *Shoah*.

Does Europe Have a Future?

Following the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, and Copenhagen in 2015 and the rise of far-right parties in some European countries, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt questions the future of Europe in his speech at the Vienna City Hall in May 2015 at a gathering of the Conference of European Rabbis. A shorter version of this speech was delivered to the European Parliament in Brussels on September 27, 2016, during a conference, "On the Future of Jewish Communities in Europe," and was then featured in the United Kingdom's Independent on October 1, 2016.

When we gathered together three years ago in Berlin at the convention of the Conference of European Rabbis, the overarching question was: Do we as Jews have a future in Europe? After the shock of *Charlie Hebdo* and the terrorist attacks at the Hyper Cacher supermarket in Paris in January 2015, the subsequent horrific attacks again in Paris in November, and the terrorist attacks in Brussels and then in Copenhagen, a new question has emerged: Does Europe itself have a future? For the first time since World War II, politicians from the far right are emerging and with the looming of Brexit, the urgency of a response to this question is increasing daily.

This coming Sabbath in the synagogue, we will begin reading the Book of Numbers, known in Jewish tradition as *Bamidbar*, which deals with the wanderings in the desert of the Children of Israel. It describes the dwelling of the twelve sons of Israel represented by the twelve tribes in the middle of the desert around the Tabernacle, presenting the ideal of the different families and tribes of the Jewish people united in perfect order. We know that not only the Jews take example from the Biblical narrative, but that other Abrahamic faiths do as well. As Pope Benedict the 16th put it during his speech to the German Parliament, Europe is built on three foundations—the Torah from Jerusalem, philosophy from Athens, and politics from Rome.

Europe in 2016 may be likened to 19th century United States of America, which lacked a central army and government that rendered it totally ineffective and vulnerable to the forces threatening its fledgling independence. It was only the creation of a federal army and a unified legitimate presidency with its seat in the capital that ensured the construction and development of the United States as we know it today. But can this model be applied in Europe where the countries could not be more disparate? We have learned from bitter experience that a “one size fits all” approach does not work across this continent.

Europe is structured in three distinct circles. The outer circle comprises the member states of the Council of Europe, which amounts to no more than an assembly of

countries that nominally ascribe to common principles and values, not unlike the United Nations. The middle circle is defined by the countries that are members of the European Union that did not join the Eurozone and that keep their borders closed to the Schengen area. Their commitment to a united Europe is limited and prone to reconsideration, as proven by the referendum in the United Kingdom. The inner circle of Europe is defined by the Eurozone and the Schengen area—an area that includes twenty-six European countries that have abolished passports and any other type of border control at their mutual borders. These countries are totally reliant on each other, particularly France and Germany, and are now being called upon to take new measures to secure their future, including the creation of an anti-terrorist task force that will be accountable to the European Commission in order to coordinate the war against Islamic terror. A similar task force will be required to protect its outer borders and rein in the waves of millions of immigrants from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia who are flooding Europe and threatening the future character of the European continent. Protecting the borders to prevent the entry of billions of potential immigrants by creating physical obstacles, however, is only a partial, temporary solution.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his sons were compelled to leave the Land of Israel, seeking food and sustainability during a drought, as recounted in the Book of Genesis. Prominent economists have identified the

drought of the last years in Syria as the cause of the civil war that has compelled countless of Syrians to flee. Yet the mass migration of billions of people and the speed of this mass migration differ today greatly from that of our forefathers. It is our moral obligation as humans and Europeans to distinguish between refugees from Syria, for example, who are running for their lives, fleeing a devastating civil war, and the potential mass migration of two billion citizens of the Third World who are fleeing to better their economic conditions and who choose to immigrate to Europe.

The real solution to stop the mass migration of billions of the citizens of the Third World is to improve the economic and political conditions in their countries of origin. Moreover, in order to sustain a world whose population is expected to rise in a few years to more than 10 billion inhabitants, it is crucial to ensure that there will be enough water for irrigation throughout the world using new technologies like the Israeli drip irrigation technology, which is already changing the fate of millions of people. The Conference of European Rabbi's Chairman of the Board of Patrons, Mr. Boris Mints, has created a new institute for strategic policy at Tel Aviv University to deal with these challenges.

The refugee crisis has affected us all and Europe must invest time and resources to integrate the refugees who have already reached our shores into the European value system, making sure that they become Europeans in the full sense of the word and denounce the rabid anti-Sem-

itism and radicalism, which unfortunately is rampant in the Middle East. The inner circle of Europe will have to create both the effective leadership and decision-making mechanisms that will transform it into a formidable force to preserve the values of the European continent as we know them today. It is commendable that many Jewish organizations in Europe have welcomed the refugees and continue to do everything to alleviate the human suffering of those thousands of men, women, and children who have sought refuge in Europe.

Europeans today are understandably very worried about their own security, the security of their children, and their future economic prosperity. They are protective of their secular democratic space and their religious freedom, and they fear losing Europe to the Middle East. It is for these reasons that Europeans are increasingly voting for far-right party candidates who promise to recreate both the sense of security of yesterday and a renewed sense of national patriotism by closing the borders and by promising to rein in the terrorists. People, states, and countries may be willing to unite and give up some of their sovereignty to adopt a federal model, provided that this compromise will bring with it economic gain and better security. If the European Union fails to fulfill this aspiration, the forces that advocate disunity will continue to push for the disintegration of European cohesion.

It is clear that the core of Europe's inability to move ahead and deal with the strategic threat of terror, to

curb the overflow of immigration, and to globally plan the integration of refugees is leading to the creation of parallel societies in the ghettos and the suburbs of its capitals. Unless the *status quo* changes radically, Europe will be threatened by the imminent danger of the collapse of the European Union, thus confining this failed experiment to the annals of history. Will Europe be divided into component states under either the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood or the radical far-right in thirty years? Or will Europe be strong, united, free, and democratic—a place where Europeans and European Jews will want to live?

In Vienna, the capital of what was once the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the central power in Europe, a historic event triggered World War I, leading to its demise and paving the way for the emergence of the Third Reich in Germany and its noxious, fascist, Nazi ideology. Today we must contend with the populist initiatives of the anti-immigration forces to outlaw circumcision and religious slaughter to prevent or stop Middle Eastern emigrants from entering Europe. These measures are as effective as outlawing mendacity on the streets, or enforcing a specific dress code for woman to prevent rape, and are bound to fail. I appeal to all citizens of Europe to stop wasting their time and their votes on populist measures that will neither solve the refugee crisis nor the terrorist problem. In order to deal with the religious radicalism in our midst, European clergy should be trained at the grassroots level, religious in-

stitutions should be financed by local worshippers, and local members from within our communities should be systematically monitored for radicalism. It is unthinkable that in some houses of prayers in Europe, clergy are calling for their followers to rein in their wives by beating them into submission and promoting the virtues of honor killings.

Today we are facing a very grave problem in Europe. The events in Kosovo are a threat to Europe where religion and the fact that it can be both a potent constructive and destructive force have been disregarded for too long. The French call this disregard of religion, *laïcité*, secularism. As long as we are afraid to name the enemy in our society, we cannot defend ourselves against it. Radical Islam, the major threat confronting Europe today, has yet to be defined. Where is the border between moderate and radical Islam? In January, I asked Commissioner Frans Timmermans to elaborate a definition of radical Islam in order to make it possible to stop the onslaught of moderate Muslims and to help us fight to eradicate the fascist elements of Islam. We have not yet received a response. The Conference of European Rabbis sent a copy of the measures we recommend to deal with the religious radicalism in our midst to all the ministers of interior of the European countries and we received many very positive responses. Moreover, the recent legislation passed in Austria adopted many of our recommendations.

Is there a future for Jews in Europe? Is there a future for Europe? For quite a while, when the Jews were the only target of attacks in Europe, whether in Vienna, Toulouse, Paris, Copenhagen, or in the Jewish Museum in Brussels, Europeans thought that it was not their problem, it was a Jewish problem. Today, after the major Paris attack in November 2015 and even more recently the attack on the Brussels airport that paralyzed the capital of Europe for almost a week, we can say that Europe has understood that this is not only a Jewish problem, but an existential problem that is threatening the very fabric of Europe. We are not facing this alone anymore, and that is the good news.

The Conference of European Rabbis will continue to do everything possible to maintain and strengthen the Jewish communities in Europe. Jewish communities do not have the means to totally secure their institutions without the help of their governments, and governments have the responsibility and the obligation to help their various communities. We are committed to helping smaller communities garner their resources to sustain Jewish life, even as their numbers dwindle and their resources become increasingly scarce. We will persist in fighting for our right to practice Judaism, to circumcise our children, and to eat kosher food in each and every European country. We will continue to unmask those bigots and anti-Semites who want to attack Judaism under the politically-correct flag of “children’s rights” and “animal rights.”

The enemies of Judaism have been able to pass new laws and regulations against *shechita* and *brit milah* in only one country, Denmark, where the issue was philosophical and not practical. Every member of the Conference of European Rabbis, the Standing Committee, the rank and file rabbis, the presidium and the cabinet, our executives and our advisors, and especially Mr. Shimon Cohen of the United Kingdom, take pride in the achievements of our struggle for freedom of religion. I would like to thank my colleagues here tonight for their commitment and faith, their optimism and their tenacity to serve, teach, assist, protect, save, and pray; for their courage, their leadership, and also for their vote of confidence in my service.

Leviticus 25:10 instructs us to "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." This verse is inscribed on the Liberty Bell, an iconic symbol of American independence. The *shofar* served as the inspiration for the independence bell to pronounce freedom and a new union in the New World. If radical Islam wins the war against Europe, it will not be by virtue of its strength, but only because of the weakness of the European Union. I am not only referring to its structural and organizational weaknesses, but also to the multiculturalism and secular individualism of Europeans that have caused them to forget their spiritual roots and their identity, and to exchange commandments for entitlements, weakening their quest to live by and to fight for the values and freedoms that are expounded in the Bible.

The example of the various tribes of the Children of Israel—each one retaining its identity, mentality, and language—camping around the Tabernacle in the desert, provides us with guidelines and a direction for the future of Europe. United around a central unifying ideal, common values and hopes, a joint security system, as symbolized by the Biblical clouds of smoke and fire, and a joint economic system, as symbolized by the manna, while preserving their languages, their cultures, and their identities, the European Union will be sustained as the Jewish people were sustained in the desert.

Fifty Years of *Nostra Aetate*

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, Chief Rabbi of Moscow and Chairman of the Brussels-based Standing Committee of the Conference of European Rabbis, represented the Jewish people at the international conference marking the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's declaration of Nostra Aetate held on October 26-28, 2015 at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

This year we celebrate fifty years of *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II's "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," which declared:

That the church, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Nostra Aetate, Latin for "In Our Time," marked a new beginning in the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people. Fifty years constitutes a full cycle and like the Hebrew word, *le'olam*, forever, it signifies an eternity that the passing of a Jubilee cycle denotes, inaugurating a truly new world. We are honored to be

here today, invited by H.E. Cardinal Koch and Father Norbert Hofmann, to celebrate this monumental jubilee at this conference convened by the Holy See and Pontifical Gregorian University. We celebrate all further advancements in the relationship between our religions, including the establishment of diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, and especially thank His Holiness Pope Francis for all his efforts to promote and deepen the relations between our two faiths in the spirit of *Nosstra Aetate*.

The Jewish people consider *Nosstra Aetate* an act of *teshuvah*, the Hebrew term for penitence and repentance. The literal meaning of *teshuvah* is “return.” But we are not the only people who understand *Nosstra Aetate* in terms of *teshuvah*. No one could have expressed this more eloquently than Pope Jean Paul II in his letter to G-D at the Western Wall in Jerusalem in the year 2000:

God of our fathers, You chose Abraham and his descendants to bring Your Name to the Nations. We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of Yours to suffer, and asking Your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the People of the Covenant.

Allow me to conclude with the words of one of our great modern religious philosophers, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, in his *magnum opus*, *Orot HaTeshuvah* (*The Lights of Repentance*), which, in my view, most vividly describes *Nosstra Aetate*:

The currents of *Teshuvah* rush along.

They are like streams of flame on the surface of the sun in an unceasing struggle to break out and ascend.

They endow life to many worlds and countless creatures.

It is impossible to absorb all the colors that emanate from this fiery sun of *Teshuvah*, which illuminates all the worlds.

They are so many; they come with such mighty sweep, with such wondrous speed.

They come from the source of life itself, for whom time is only a limited expression of His providential design.

The individual and the collective soul, the world soul, the soul of all realms of being, cries out like a fierce lioness in pain, demanding *tikkun olam*, perfected reality.

We feel the pain and it purges us, like salt which sweetens the meat, it sweetens our bitterness.

Words cannot express this deep thought.

We will place things in the context of the Divine Unity; we will invoke the mystical meanings of the names of God:

A punctuation mark...a new heaven and a new earth and all their fullness are contained in it.

A letter...and all worlds are revealed.

Words...and thousands of worlds and many creatures, tranquil and joyous, abounding with a mighty gladness, full of peace and truth.

And the Soul of the world grows toward perfection.

Through *Teshuvah*, everything returns to Godliness.

Through the power of *Teshuvah*, all returns to the essence of the Divine Plan.

Faith and Secularism

A European Perspective in a New Global Context

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt reaches out to the diverse Christian communities, Muslim communities, secular groups, governments, and parliamentarians to create an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect between the secular modern state and the current religious movements in an effort to help stop the brewing antagonism and conflict that is threatening the unity and safety of Europe.

The 20th century was the most secular century in history and it was the bloodiest ever recorded. Two secular ideologies, National Socialism and Communism, swept the European continent. National Socialism was destroyed by the Allies and Communism imploded peacefully. The West built a secular, post-Christian society that relegated religion to the back burner.

The 21st century returned religion to the forefront of politics. 9/11 brought the struggle of Islamic fundamentalism to the shores of the civilized world, changing it dramatically. The United States, which prided itself on its openness and its accessibility, has become a fortress

where every foreigner is eyed with suspicion and each visitor is fingerprinted. Private banking and numbered accounts are disappearing worldwide as it struggles to stop the flow of funding to terrorist organizations.

The wars, struggles, and instability in the Middle East have brought millions of Middle Eastern immigrants to the shores of Europe, altering the European religious and electoral landscape. The immigrants from Muslim countries who have flooded Europe have also brought terror with them as Islamic terrorists target planes, trains, and subways in England and Spain, forcing almost all air travelers today to take off their shoes and discard their toiletries before boarding a plane. The Jews are the prime target of the Islamists. Three of the brutal terrorist attacks on European soil, one against a Jewish school in Toulouse in 2012, one in a Jewish museum in Brussels in 2014, and more recently, the attack in Paris at the Hyper Cacher supermarket, put Europe on high alert, compelling the European Union that sought to limit itself to establishing a strong economic union to create a common security policy.

Currently more than 1,500 young Europeans are believed to have gone to the Middle East to join the Jihad of ISIS or of other Islamists groups. Their return to Europe creates an alarmingly new challenge. As a result, Islam has become anathema to many Europeans. In February 2016, 15,000 Germans demonstrated in Dresden against the “Islamization of Europe.” A year ago, a Tilder-Institut Montaigne poll found that all

religions in France are regarded positively by 73% of Frenchmen, with the exception of Islam, which is regarded negatively by 73% of Frenchmen.

The rise of Islam in Europe and the fear of the Islamization of the continent have triggered growing support for the far right in France, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia, and for immigration quotas and laws that limit religious expression in architecture, dress, and diet. In other countries, neo-fascist parties, like Golden Dawn in Greece and Jobbik in Hungary, are raising the flag of political anti-Semitism. The most glaring example of this was the endorsement of a ban on religious headwear in public, including *kippot*, by Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front Party who won 18% of the vote in the 2012 French presidential elections. *Shechita* and *brit milah* are also under renewed attack in Poland, Norway, Denmark, and France. The increasing attacks against Jewish ritual have culminated in the recommendation by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly to adopt the resolution to ban male circumcision altogether.

The situation in Europe today may be likened to two trains on a collision course racing towards each other on the same track. On one end of the track, Jewish synagogues and youth are being increasingly attacked by extremists. A quarter of respondents in a survey of Jews from nine European countries said they avoid visiting certain places wearing symbols that identify them as Jews for fear of anti-Semitic attacks. According to the

preliminary results of the survey, 40% of approximately 1,200 Jews in France said that they avoid wearing such items in public, followed by Belgium with 36%. In total, 22% of the respondents said they avoid “Jewish events or sites” because of safety concerns. Thousands of French Jews have emigrated from France and thousands more are in the process. At the other end of the track, another train—that of old Europe—is returning, manifesting relatively new forms of disguised, politically correct, anti-Semitic expressions that had remained largely latent since the *Shoah*. These trains must be halted before it is too late.

As the representative of one of the oldest European minority faiths on this continent, I reach out to the diverse Christian communities, Muslim communities, secular groups, governments, and parliamentarians in an effort to help stop this brewing antagonism and conflict, which may prove to be the greatest danger to the unity and safety of Europe for many years to come. I believe that we have the responsibility to create an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect between the secular modern state and the current religious movements in order to make sure that the experiment called the European Union does not fail.

The broadside attack against religion in general and Islam in particular, as manifested by the recent restrictive laws against religious expression and the widening circles of protests against Muslims in Germany by PEGIDA, the abbreviation of *Patriotische Europäer*

gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West), is wrong and counter-productive. Islam can be practiced peacefully by the millions of people who consider Europe their new home. On the other hand, the thousands of youths who sympathize with ISIS and the hundreds who join them on the battlefield and then return to Europe pose a greater danger than Al-Qaida did to the United States. The radical fundamentalists who are a menace to all of Europe must be targeted.

In their extreme forms, Nationalism and Socialism, two powerful moderate movements in the politics of democratic states, have proven to be mortal threats to democracy and driving forces for armed conflict. The distance between radical Islam as practiced by ISIS, Hamas, and Al Qaida, and mainstream Islam is as great as the distance between National Socialism and Moderate Nationalism. Rather than alienating the vast majority of peaceful Muslims who seek a dignified existence in Europe with broadside attacks against the soft-target religious symbols of Islam, such as *halal*, circumcision, minarets, and the *burqa*, every effort should be made to identify and neutralize radical Islamic preachers, websites, movements, and cells. The cheap demagoguery of the extreme right against Muslim immigration not only fails to solve the problem, but instead pushes the moderate immigrant into the claws of the extremists. The Conference of European Rabbis calls upon the European Union and its member countries to adopt and

implement our “Manifesto for Combating Religious Extremism.”

Once again, the Jewish people are in the eye of the brewing storm of the clash of civilizations in Europe. We are the world experts on surviving and thriving as a small minority in the midst of a society and culture that is very different from our own, and we extend a hand to all Europeans in order to establish equilibrium among all the diverse populations in our civil society. We are the people standing on the tracks, watching both trains moving toward each other at ever increasing speeds. It is our mission to make our voice heard in our communities and in our cities, declaring that G-D has created every man and woman in His image, that every person has his own unique and distinct human image, and that there is no hope for humanity if we do not respect each other and are not tolerant of each other's differences. For thousands of years we have fought for the right to think differently and to eat differently, to rest on a different day, and to speak a different language. It is this message which we must bring to all Europeans.

European countries and European institutions must introduce the new Europeans to the values of pluralism and mutual respect, expelling from our midst those voices, whether religious or secular, that call for the destruction of the common home that we endeavor to build, and opposing the adoption of Middle Eastern practices of intolerance toward minorities. The voice that calls upon the faithful in a mosque to bomb planes and the

voice that calls for ending freedom of religion in Europe are both equally dangerous to the future of Europe. In order to save Europe, we must prevent the collision of both trains by stepping out, seeing each other, speaking with each other, and respecting each other.

Honoring His Majesty
King Felipe VI of Spain
Recipient of the *Harav* Lord
Jakobovits Prize
of European Jewry 2016

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt presented the Harav Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2016 to King Felipe VI of Spain in recognition of his steadfast support of the Jewish community in Spain and of Spain's unique legislation to allow Jews who can prove their Spanish heritage to return to Spain. The ceremony took place at the El Pardo Palace in Madrid on December 13, 2016.

This is the first time that the Conference of European Rabbis, which was established in 1956 by the chief rabbis of the major Western European countries to reestablish the Jewish communities that had been destroyed in Europe during the *Shoah*, officially visits Spain.

We have come here as Spain is opening a new page and a new relationship with the Jewish people. On one hand, Spain has become an integral part of our Jewish tradition; 16% of the Jews in the world refer to them-

selves as *Sefaradi*, as Spaniard, and the prayer rite of the majority of Jews in the world is called in Hebrew, *Nussach Sefarad*. Spain for us symbolizes the “Golden Age” of Jewish participation in the building of the Spanish kingdom into a world superpower. It is in this country that Jews for hundreds of years were able to live as full citizens and to lead a full Jewish life, writing a glorious chapter in the Biblical and talmudic exegesis. But as the winds of intolerance swept the European continent and finally reached Spain, mounting pressure was exerted by the Crown and the Church to solve the Jewish question through conversion and expulsion. Although Jews began to quietly return to Spain in the 19th century, only in 1968 after *Nostra Aetate* was the expulsion decree of King Ferdinand and Isabella officially rescinded. The Jewish community has slowly been rebuilding itself and in some communities in Spain, we are witnessing some descendants of the *conversos* rediscover their Jewish roots and seek Jewish knowledge and identity. We are in Spain today for the first time to celebrate with Spain and its Jewish community the rebirth of a Jewish spiritual and communal presence on the Iberian Peninsula, and especially in Spain.

The Conference of European Rabbis decided to award the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2016 to His Majesty King Felipe VI and, through his throne, to the Kingdom of Spain based on the fact that in an era when anti-Semitism is on the rise throughout Europe, Spain has implemented measures to make Jews feel welcome. Not only has His Majesty

King Felipe acknowledged the expulsion as being what he has called a “historic mistake,” but he has ensured that action is taken to rectify it. He has not only welcomed but has also endorsed the legislation to allow those who can prove their Spanish heritage to return to Spain, which has been well received by Jewish communities throughout the world. The King has been a pillar of support for the Jewish community and has attended Holocaust commemorations. His Majesty King Felipe has also demonstrated his friendship to the Jewish State, the State of Israel. The King celebrated 25 years of bilateral relations by traveling to Israel at that time, and represented his kingdom at the funeral of Israeli President Shimon Peres. Israel and Spain recently marked 30 years of diplomatic relations, and take pride in the bilateral trade between the two countries that is worth billions of dollars every year.

The *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry was established by the Conference of European Rabbis in 2011 to award personalities who have provided outstanding support to European Jewry by defending their religious rights and combating anti-Semitism. This prize was awarded to the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Jerzy Buzek, in 2012 and to German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2013. In 2015, we awarded it to the Prime Minister of France, Mr. Manuel Valls, as a token of gratitude to the French government for its commitment to secure and protect the Jewish community of France in light of the wave of terrorist attacks.

Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, for whom the award is named, was the second President of the Conference of European Rabbis and Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth. He dedicated his life to the pursuit of a philosophy that advocated religious commitment with unyielding love and consideration for his fellow man. The ability to bring communities together while recognizing the value of faith in a modernizing world is one that he treasured throughout his life. It is this character trait above all others that this prize awards.

The *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry was designed by Georgy Frangulyan, a world-renowned artist born in Georgia whose most notable works include the monument of Alexander Pushkin in Brussels and the monument on Boris Yeltsin's grave at the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow. This sculpture depicts an open Torah scroll lying on three closed Torah scrolls, symbolizing the mission of the Conference of European Rabbis to recreate a Jewish presence in Europe following the extermination of one third of the Jewish people in the *Shoah*.

We are honored today to award the *Harav* Lord Jakobovits Prize of European Jewry 2016 to His Majesty King Felipe IV of Spain, presented by the Chairman and the Vice-Chair of our Board of Patrons, Mr. Boris Mints and Mrs. Joelle Aflalo, on behalf of the Jews of Europe.

The Conference of European Rabbis Internet Entrepreneur Prize 2016

On January 16, 2017, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt presented the annual Conference of European Rabbis Internet Entrepreneur Prize 2016 at the Digital Life Design (DLD) Conference in Munich, Germany to Erich Lehmann from Germany, Hanan Lipskin from Israel, and Olga Fler from Russia, for their contributions to making the world a better place through the Internet.

When the media changes, the world changes. We live in a world in which the Pope is on Twitter, rabbis communicate on Facebook, and G-D is sending us messages through WhatsApp, which is most probably a valid interpretation of the question of G-D to man, *Ayekha?*—what's up with you?

We are living in an age that has been recently named the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is distinguished by the speed, scale, and force of the transformation of entire systems of production, distribution, and consumption today. How is technology changing our lives and that of future generations, and reshaping the economic, social, ecological, religious, and cultural con-

texts in which we live? We cannot ignore the fact that today in one day more information goes through the Internet than all the information collected in books printed over one hundred years throughout the whole world.

Another monumental change in communication and media took place half a millennium ago when the printing press was first used in the West to print the Gutenberg Bible. Rare manuscripts and exclusive knowledge became much more accessible and affordable, but according to historians, the printing press also led to the Protestant Reformation and divided Europe with wars and conflicts for decades.

Today we are witnessing the great political cataclysm resulting from the very new way that humanity converses and exchanges information through the media of the Internet. However, these changes do not necessarily mean that life for the human being has changed for the better. Social media has become a favored tool for communication and recruitment by terrorist groups such as ISIS. This is the first time that non-edited content of news is available for mass consumption, causing political turbulence and uncertainty, and presenting us with a new world order.

It is within this context that I would like to express my admiration and thanks to a dear friend and accomplished individual, Dr. Hubert Burda, for being a beacon of light and of reason, of stability and values in this new world. At a time when populism and nationalism is on the rise, and isolationism and a short historical

memory are the order of the day, Digital Life Design and the partnership between Dr. Hubert Burda and Dr. Yossi Vardi actually represent above all the values that we seek to promote with this prize. It is a partnership between the new post-*Shoah* Germany and the relatively young Jewish State, which aims to build bridges and make the world better and safer.

The Internet like any other creation, whether physical or spiritual, can be used to advance humanity to bring peace and health, freedom and prosperity, but in the hands of those who choose otherwise, it can become a tool of destruction and hate, of war and tyranny, spreading lies and terror, and destroying humanity and civilization. We believe that all those who engage in the new industrial revolution should ask themselves the ultimate question, which is the question that the ultimate Creator has asked Himself since creation: Is this going to make our world a better world or not? The imperative to reflect on the benefit of our deeds in the digital world is actually the central idea of the Sabbath, the seventh inner dimension, the central focal point of the six-sided cube, which is tridimensional and represents the physical world and the reality in which we live.

Five years ago, the Conference of European Rabbis decided to create the Internet Entrepreneur Prize to award individuals and startups that had created working apps and sites to benefit humanity and civilization in the spirit of *tikun olam* to better the world through the Internet. I would like to emphasize that this prize is

not limited to Jewish applicants, but is open to anybody who shares our ideals and seeks to make the world a better place.

The first prize of 26,000 Euros reflects the number, 26, which represents the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton, the Hebrew name of G-D; the second and third prizes of 18,000 Euros represent the numerical value of the Hebrew word for life, 18, to live, *chai*. Over three hundred candidates presented their projects for the 2016 prize, which is being awarded for the fourth time by the Conference of European Rabbis. The first prize was presented in 2013 in Luxembourg; the second, at the end of 2014 in Rome; and the third, in January 2016 in London.

I would like to thank the members of the jury, Mrs. Steffi Czerny, co-founder of Digital Life Design, Leonid Solovyev, Digital Life Design adviser, and Ilja Gorelik, a member of the Board of Patrons of the Conference of European Rabbis, for taking the time to choose the winners of this year's competition: Erich Lehmann, Germany (Academy: www.lehrplan.org/en), Hanan Lipskin, Israel (Keepers: keeperschildsafety.net), and Olga Fler, Russia (MeetForCharity: www.facebook.com/meetforcharity). Each of them in their own way has made this world a better world, and we thank them very much.

Glossary

Transliterated Hebrew, Yiddish, and Arabic Words

A

Adar last month in the Jewish calendar that usually falls in February and March

agunah a woman bound to a man who refuses to divorce her

Amidah “Standing” prayer, the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy that is also called the *Shmoneh Esreh*, “The Eighteen,” in reference to the original number of constituent blessings, although there are now nineteen

B

baalei teshuvah Jews who have returned to the fold

Beth Din Jewish community law court

brit milah circumcision

burqa loose enveloping garment that covers the face and body that is worn in public by certain Muslim women

C

chazal the Mishnaic sages

chai, chaim 18, life

chazru returned

cholent Yiddish name of a Jewish Sabbath-day dish of slow-baked meat and vegetables

D

derech eretz courtesy, the desired mode of behavior

dvar Torah Biblical discourse

E

etrogim a type of citron

G

galut the dispersion of the Jews among the nations

ger convert to Judaism

gerei tzedek converts for the sake of heaven

get a document that Jewish law requires a husband to present to his wife in order to grant a divorce

giyur katan the conversion of the children of intermarried couples

H

halacha; halachic Jewish law; according to Jewish law

halal ritual slaughter according to Islamic law

hanukkah the nine-branched Hanukkah candelabra

haftarot selections from the books of the Prophets of the Hebrew Bible that are publicly read in the synagogue

Haredi ultra-Orthodox Jews

Hasidim members of a Jewish mystical sect founded by the Ba'al Shem Tov in Poland around 1750 in opposition to rationalism and ritual laxity

I

imam Muslim religious leader

K

Kabbala the Kabbalah is an ancient Jewish tradition which teaches the deepest insights into the essence of G-D, His interaction with the world, and the purpose of Creation

Kiddush the sanctification of the Sabbath or a festival with a blessing over wine before the evening and noon meals

kippot skullcap

Knesset Israeli parliament

kollel full-time adult institute of Jewish Studies

kochen gadol High Priest of the Temple

L

le'olam forever

leshem shamayim for the sake of heaven

limmud haTorah the learning of Torah

M

mamzer a child that is the issue of an adulterous or incestuous union

masechtot ketanot the minor late tractates of the Talmud

massorati traditional

matzah unleavened bread eaten during Passover

megillah scroll

memshelet hashemad government that advocates destroying the Jewish community and its customs

menaker the person who removes non-kosher fat from the animal

menorah the seven-branched candelabra used in Jewish worship since ancient times

minhag anglia British custom

minyan, minyanim quorum/ quorums of ten men required for public prayer services

Mishkan the Tabernacle

Mitnagdim the opponents of the Hasidim whose founder was the Gaon of Vilna

mitzvoth the commandments of the Torah

mohel Jewish ritual circumciser

Mossad Israel's central intelligence agency

Mussaf additional prayer service that is recited on the Sabbath, the holidays, and the beginning of a new month

N

ness'im princes

niqab a veil covering the hair and face except for the eyes that is worn by some Muslim women

Nussach Sefarad Spanish rite

O

Ohel Moed the Tent of Meeting of Moses

P

Pesach Passover

pikuach nefesh saving one's life or the life of others

posek adjudicator of Jewish law

R

raah achar raah a double curse

rebbetzin title in Yiddish used for the wife of a rabbi, typically from the Orthodox, or *Haredi*, and Hasidic Jewish groups, or a female religious leader

Rosh Yeshiva head of a Jewish academy

S

Sanhedrin the 70-member supreme council, or court, in ancient Israel

Seder Jewish ritual service and ceremonial dinner on the first night or first two nights of Passover

semicha ordination of a rabbi

shaliach emissary

shaliah tzibur prayer leader

she'at hadechak pressing circumstances

shechita the ritual slaughter of animals for meat according to Jewish law

Shema central prayer of affirmation of Judaism and declaration of faith in One G-D; the first line is "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-D, the Lord is One"

shidduch a marriage match

Shoah the Holocaust

shochet Jewish ritual slaughterer

shofar a ram's horn trumpet that was sounded at the beginning of the Jubilee year in the Jewish tradition

shomrei Torah guardians of the Torah

shtick Yiddish term that means characteristic or customary behavior

shtiebel Yiddish term that means a smaller and more casual place for Jewish communal prayer than a synagogue

Shulchan Aruch the codex of Jewish law authored in Safed by Yosef Karo in 1563 and published in Venice two years later. Together with its commentaries, it is the most widely accepted compilation of Jewish law ever written.

sifri commentaries on the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, written in the 2nd century C.E.

T

Tachanun a supplication prayer not recited on festivals and joyous occasions

Tanach the Hebrew Bible

Tannaim one of a group of Jewish scholars during the 1st and 2nd centuries of the Common Era whose teachings are found chiefly in the Mishnah

tefillin phylacteries, which are two small square leather boxes containing slips inscribed with scriptural passages and traditionally worn on the left arm and on the head by observant Jewish men during morning weekday prayers

teshuvah Hebrew term for penitence and repentance whose literal meaning is return

tikkun olam repairing the world

tsara'at a skin affliction

tzaddik a righteous person

tzomet hagidin the tendons where the three sinews or muscles are joined

Y

yeshivah/yeshivot Jewish school/ schools for talmudic study

"For many years now, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt has been a leading force in European Jewish life. In these essays and addresses, he relates Judaism to some of the most pressing social, moral, and spiritual challenges of our time. His is an important voice, consistently interesting and well worth heeding."

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

"A fascinating series of essays from one of the great leaders in today's Judaism. His voice deserves to be heard by all who are willing to listen to his words of discernment and wisdom. I dare to say: Prophetic words!"

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn
Archbishop of Vienna

"Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt is a man of depth and wisdom, and his intelligence and insights shine through his written words. We all benefit immensely from his collected works."

Omar Saif Ghobash
Ambassador of the UAE to the Russian Federation and best-selling
author of *Letters to a Young Muslim*

I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt for his tireless work in building Europe's future—a future when we can all live together with mutual respect, in freedom and in peace.

From the Foreword by Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President
of the European Commission

In this wide ranging collection of writings and speeches, Rabbi Goldschmidt shares his thoughtful insights, gleaned from his extensive experience as a longtime leader of Russian and European Jewry, on many pressing religious, cultural, and social issues that affect the Jewish people as a whole. This book provides an important and unique viewpoint on how the Jewish world can meet its current challenges and insure its vibrant future.

MK Yuli Edelstein
Speaker of the Knesset

