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## HALAKHIC VALUES AND HALAKHIC DECISIONS: RAV SOLOVEITCHIK'S *PESAK* REGARDING WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUPS

### I

The discussion regarding women's *tefilla* groups has regrettably focused excessively on technical issues and legalities. It has been framed by limited halakhic queries such as: may the participants forgo *tefilla be-tzibbur* to attend these groups? May menstruant women touch *sifrei Torah*? Undoubtedly such technical perspectives and narrow questions are necessary to ensure our compliance with all minutiae of halakha. Torah, however, consists not only of halakhic details, but also of halakhic values. Unfortunately the latter have been neglected in the discussion concerning women's *tefilla* groups. When halakha is fragmented and truncated in such a fashion, it can be neither interpreted nor implemented correctly.

The approach of Rav Soloveitchik זר"ל differed. The Rav's consistent opposition to women's *tefilla* groups was dictated by *halakhic values*, not halakhic details. This article attempts to elucidate the Rav's axiological opposition to these groups. As a prolegomenon to such a discussion, we are obligated to review, at least partially, some major halakhic values and reiterate their centrality. In so doing our efforts are best characterized by the resonant introductory words of the *Mesilat Yesharim*:

I have written this work not to teach men what they do not know but to remind them what they already know and is very evident to them; for you will find in most of my words only things which most people know and concerning which they entertain no doubts. But to the extent that they are well known and their truths revealed to all, so is forgetfulness in relation to them extremely prevalent.<sup>1</sup>

## II

The dimension of Torah which we are reviewing is composed of concepts, values, attitudes, emotions and the like. In some instances these broad imperatives constitute separate *mitsvot*, while in others they are integrated with concrete particulars in the same *mitsva*. For instance, in addition to the *issur melakha* which bans specific forms of labor on *Shabbat*, the Torah ordains that the character of *Shabbat* must be safeguarded—i.e., it must be a day of rest and repose. This requirement of *Shabbaton* is not defined in terms of a particular action or actions; rather, it obligates us to maintain the spirit or elan of *Shabbat*.

Nahmanides elaborates upon the concept of *Shabbaton*:

It appears to me that the *midrash* [according to which “*Shabbaton*” bans non-*melakha* activities as well] teaches that we are commanded to desist on the holidays even from things which do not constitute *melakha*—that one should not exert himself all day to measure grain and weigh fruits and fill barrels of wine, and move utensils and even stones from house to house and place to place . . . and the marketplace would be crowded for all transactions . . . since all this would have been permitted on the holidays and even on *Shabbat* itself because none of these activities involve *melakha*, therefore the Torah said “*Shabbaton*” that it should be a day of rest and repose, not exertion . . .<sup>2</sup>

In observing *Shabbat* our behavior must be technically correct—i.e., we must not perform *melakha*. But we are also obligated to maintain the elan of *Shabbat*. This requirement, as detailed by Nahmanides, precludes a wide range and array of non-*melakha* activities. A contemporary addition to Nahmanides’ list of prohibited non-*melakha* activities would be taking advantage of an *eruv* to dress in shorts and t-shirts and engage in sports on *Shabbat*. Such anomalous behavior does not involve any technical violations of the particulars of *Shabbat*, but it certainly conflicts with the principle of *Shabbaton*, the elan of *Shabbat*,<sup>3</sup> such behavior is therefore unequivocally wrong.

Nahmanides’ sensitivity to the principles of Torah, elan of *mitsvot* and values of halakha forms a spiritualizing leitmotif of his exegetical oeuvre. Perhaps the most famous instance of this sensitivity is his exposition of the *mitsva* of *kedoshim te-hiyu* (“be holy”).<sup>4</sup> Nahmanides elaborates upon the terse comment of Hazal, who define holiness as abstinence. He graphically depicts how, lacking an imperative of *kedusha*, one could have technically conformed to all laws and by-laws of the Torah,

and yet lead a brutish existence. In Nahmanides’ coinage, one could have been a “scoundrel with license from the Torah”. Gluttony, vulgarity, and excessive conjugality *inter alia* are all possible without violating any particulars of Torah. The principle of holiness closes this gaping breach in the wall of spirituality. It demands that our behavior be not only technically correct and legalistically acceptable but also spiritually consistent and religiously worthy.<sup>5</sup>

The particulars of Torah—prescriptions and prohibitions for well defined circumstances—dictate behavior and govern actions. As such, they must be studied diligently and implemented meticulously. Such study can make one proficient and even an expert in these areas of Torah. The elan of Torah—its religious principles, values, and attitudes—nurtures the personality and molds the matrix of actions. Consequently, study must be coupled with experience. One must initially observe and ultimately share the experience of Torah with Torah personalities. Torah values are absorbed by osmosis. This is the essence of Hazal’s teaching that

apprenticeship to [a] Torah [scholar] is greater than the study of Torah as is stated [regarding the prophet Elisha] “who poured water over the hands of Elijah” the verse does not say “who studied”, rather “who poured”.<sup>6</sup>

One who studies with a Torah sage can master the technical prescriptions, prohibitions and legal formulae of Torah; one who apprentices himself to a Torah sage can assimilate the existential rhythm, ontological emotions, and cardinal values of halakhic living.

A striking formulation of the need for an existential link with Torah sages is provided by the *Sefer Hasidim*, interpreting the rabbinic aphorism that “a person should always be cunning in his fear of God.”<sup>7</sup> *Sefer Hasidim* explains that in situations not specifically addressed by the Torah one is obligated to intuit and subsequently, in accord with this intuition, comply with the divine will. Significantly, reflecting the previously quoted teaching of Hazal, *Sefer Hasidim* emphasizes that such powers of intuition cannot be gleaned from book knowledge; rather they must be fostered as part of the oral transmission from master to disciple.

There may be a devout person whose heart turns to do God’s will and yet he does not perform as many good deeds as the wise devout person, because the latter received [the complete *mesora*] from his master, and

## III

his friend did not perform as many good deeds because he did not receive [the complete *mesora*] from his master. Had he known he would have fulfilled because [our sages] said, “one should always be cunning in his fear of God” . . . and we find in the Torah that one who can discern [God’s will] even though he was not commanded to implement it, is punished for failure to do so. As it says, “Moshe became angry with the officers of the army . . . and he said to them, ‘have you spared the womenfolk?’” And why did they not answer him “and why [should we have killed them]? You did not instruct us to kill the women?” But Moshe knew that they were wise and expert to reason . . .<sup>8</sup>

Rav Soloveitchik *zt”l* constantly highlighted the symbiotic coupling and indispensable complementarity of particulars and principles, law and spirit. Normative action must be anchored in a religious personality, technical conformity must be consistent with the clan of Torah.

There are two covenants: the first which God concluded with the patriarchs, and the second which God concluded with Moses on Mt. Sinai. The nature of the Sinaitic covenant was a commitment to the fulfillment of commandments. It is a bond of obligation. The patriarchal covenant on the other hand, has no commandments included in it with the exception of circumcision. Yet the two are connected . . . The Sinaitic covenant relates to the human deed. The patriarchal covenant relates to the fundamental essence of a person. It teaches man how to feel or to experience as a human being.<sup>9</sup>

*Mesora* encompasses not only analytic novella, abstract theories, halakhic formulae and logical concepts . . . but also ontological patterns, emotions and reactions, a certain existential rhythm and experiential continuity. Complete transmission of the *mesora* is only possible by means of intimate connection with the previous generation.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, halakha is a two-tiered system consisting of concrete, particularized commandments governing our actions as well as abstract, general imperatives governing the matrix of our actions. Some abstract imperatives focus exclusively on the clan of a specific *mitsva*; e.g., the commandment *Shabbaton* ensures the spiritual character of *Shabbat*. Others are all-encompassing, establishing universal values and standards of conduct; e.g. *kedoshim te-biyu*. The Torah legislates not only actions, but also *de’ot* (ethical-moral-religious-intellectual dispositions). It prescribes ritual but also establishes boundaries for the concomitant religious experience.

The reason for halakha’s binary system is self-evident. The Torah is not content with ensuring technically correct behavior; it also seeks to mold the human personality. Accordingly, it is concerned not only with our actions but also the etiology and telos of those actions as well. The dual focus of Torah law has important repercussions for the methodology of *pesak*. Any contemplated action or course of action must be evaluated on two levels. We must investigate if it is technically correct and permissible—viz, are any particulars of Torah violated. In addition, we must determine if the proposal is consistent with Torah principles, attitudes, values and concepts. The permissibility or appropriateness of any particular action or initiative can only be determined after such a two-pronged analysis—practical and axiological.

This latter concern, which we have dubbed axiological, may alternatively be described as *bashkafic* or public policy. Phraseology and nomenclature *per se* are unimportant. It is, however, vitally important that we recognize that the axiological concern is not optional or supererogatory. It is not, in halakhic terminology, merely a *middat hasidut* or *mitsva min ha-muvhar*. Instead it is an integral part of our Torah and tradition, and compliance therewith is mandatory. Accordingly, *hakhmei ha-mesora* transmit and implement both tiers of our *mesora*—viz, the technical-practical as well as the emotional-axiological. Questions regarding the *hasbrut* of food are submitted to Torah sages; so too are inquiries regarding aspects of *kedoshim te-biyu*.

Moreover, the axiological questions are oftentimes more subtle and intricate. It can be exceedingly difficult to discern in which situations abstract or broadly formulated concepts are relevant. A profound understanding of Torah coupled with keen insight into reality is necessary to initially recognize and ultimately resolve axiological questions.

The responsa of R. David Tsevi Hoffman *zt”l*, the universally acclaimed Torah sage who headed the rabbinical seminary in Berlin during the first two decades of the twentieth century, illumine and illustrate the dual concern and expertise of *hakhmei ha-mesora*. Rav Hoffman, as did many contemporary *gedolei Yisrael*, responded to the proposal of French rabbis to institute conditional *kidushin*—i.e., the betrothal would be predicated upon the condition that the couple remained together. In the event that the marriage failed and resulted in civil divorce, then the pre-condition of the *kidushin* would not have been satisfied, thereby invalidating the *kidushin* and obviating the need for a religious divorce.

The French rabbis advocated a similar approach to avoid *halitsa* as well. In his responsa, Rav Hoffman enumerated many insurmountable technical problems. Then, writing with great pathos, he added

I will say one more thing which to my mind is exceedingly important . . . if we who are zealous for the word of God will imitate the heretics to negate the institution of *gittin* and *halitsa* by means of conditional *kidushin*, even if we would say that it is being accomplished in a permissible fashion, nevertheless what will the reformist rabbis say: behold those Orthodox [rabbis] have conceded that their laws are no good and the temper of the times cannot tolerate them . . . and they have thereby conceded that the temper of the times is mightier than antiquated laws. And what can we possibly say in response? Is there, God forbid, a greater desecration of God's name? Consequently in my opinion conditional *kidushin* should not be instituted under any circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

Rav Hoffman clearly evaluated the proposal practically and axiologically. Accordingly, he concluded that even if one could practically design conditional *kidushin* and avoid violating the particulars of halakha, nevertheless it would be absolutely wrong to do so because etiologically it would signify ideational assimilation, thereby profaning God's name. Only a sage completely sensitized to the axiological framework of Torah would be in a position to make such a ruling.

Practical or active assimilation is overt and conspicuous. The assimilationist performs *melakha* on *Shabbat* or consumes non-kosher food, etc. Ideological or ideational assimilation by contrast, which almost always precedes and inexorably results in practical assimilation, is oftentimes subtle and beguiling. It can be clothed in technical halakhic compliance, thereby masking the ideological deviation. Rav Hoffman discerned this phenomenon in the French proposal, and issued his halakhic ruling accordingly.

## IV

Advocates of women's *tefilla* groups reason that these gatherings provide women with active, participatory roles in prayer, thereby enhancing the *tefilla* experience. No longer cloistered behind a *mehitsa*, women actively lead the *tefilla*, deepening their religious experience. The proponents hasten to add that if *devarim she-bi-kdusha* are omitted and *keriat haTorah* is not simulated then no technical violations occur. Ergo, opposition to such groups appears misogynist or reactionary.

The foregoing, unidimensional analysis is seriously flawed. It fails to axiologically evaluate women's *tefilla* groups. By contrast, the Rav's analysis of such groups extended beyond the technical prescriptions and prohibitions of *tefilla*, and focused upon its axiology. What is the Torah's concept of prayer, and does it allow for women's *tefilla* groups?

Rambam, reflecting the words of Hazal, conceptualizes and codifies the obligation and act of prayer as follows:

It is a positive commandment to pray daily as it is stated, "and you shall serve Hashem your God". Tradition teaches that this service is prayer, as is stated "and to serve Him with all your heart". The sages said, "what constitutes service of the heart? prayer."<sup>12</sup>

Halakha defines prayer as service of the heart. As formulated by the Rav in halakhic terminology, recitation of the text of *tefilla* merely constitutes the formal *ma'ase ha-mitsva*; the *kiyyum ha-mitsva*, however, is a *kiyyum she-ba-lev*.<sup>13</sup> Authentic prayer is an inner experience; a person calls out to God from the innermost depths of his being and attempts to articulate the fundamental religious emotions of love, fear, and absolute dependence.<sup>14</sup>

In a remarkably powerful article—in truth more a soliloquy—the Rav amplified the concept of *avoda she-ba-lev*, graphically depicting the spontaneous expression of inner religious life and emotions. Such an existential outpouring has no need for externalities; thus Judaism has traditionally excluded pomp and circumstance from the synagogue. With an almost palpable sense of anguish, the Rav decried the extroversion of prayer resulting from increased artificiality and ceremonialism.

An overflow of heartfulness and soulfulness, the sound of "out of distress I called", "from the depths I have called you, Hashem"; this is the melodiousness of service of the heart, in which form drowns in content, prose in emotion, and outwardness in inwardness. Here the heart and truth react. I imagine to myself the awe of *Tom Kippurim* in the *beit midrash* of the Ba'al Shem Tov or the Ba'al haTanya, ob"m. There they certainly did not employ music, choirs and pomp. There were no platforms decorated with rugs, flowers and rabbis trained in linguistic expression and pleasant manners . . . Does a spring which gushes forth from the ground with mighty primordial power need any artificial form to grant it majesty and dignity? Does the lava which is spewn from a volcano need to flow according to the rules of hollow and empty decorum? Their beauty, the majesty of strength, is revealed precisely in their naturalness, originality and spontaneity. And is not man who suppli-

cates his Creator a gushing spring or even a mountain spewing fire? It is clear that prayer is the antithesis of ceremony with regard to the relationship between content and form, heart and word. Thus all these aesthetic emendations in prayer, instead of deepening the experiences will rob it of its content and soul.

The other characteristics of ceremony are also exposed as [an inauthentic] hybrid with service of the heart. If *genuine prayer* is performed in the heart, there is no need for a master of ceremonies who will mediate between the congregation and the Creator . . . There is no need for the rabbi to stand on a platform, bedecked in “priestly vestments”, and conduct services. He and the simple Jew are of equal lineage before the Omnipresent and it is incumbent upon [both of] them to pray on the lower level of the synagogue without any distinction . . .<sup>15</sup>

The Rav authored this soliloquy over thirty years ago, long before women’s *tefilla* groups were conceived. Nevertheless, his impassioned words also articulate with remarkable prescience and precision his unwavering opposition to such groups. We need only to shift the critical lens from inauthentic ceremonialism to misplaced emphasis on active participation and leadership. The Torah defines *tefilla* as service of the heart; how can this inner religious experience be genuinely enhanced by extroverted, active participation? Genuine prayer abhors ostentatiousness and flees from the public eye. The prophetic account of Hanna, which is the source for many basic *hilkhot tefilla*, graphically portrays her as totally engrossed in prayer, oblivious to the negative impression forming in Eili’s mind.<sup>16</sup> Hanna, the quintessential supplicant, seeks neither approbation nor active participation, nor leadership; instead she seeks and beseeches God to find solace for her troubled soul. The desire for and emphasis upon active participation and leadership are antithetical to genuine service of the heart and contribute to the extroversion of prayer. Technical compliance with the particulars of *hilkhot tefilla* notwithstanding, women’s *tefilla* groups distort the fundamental concept and experience of *tefilla*.

The section from the Rav’s soliloquy quoted above concludes with the following axiological perspective:

It is not my intention to enter into the halakhic details with regard to the prohibition of standing on a platform for *tefilla*, but one thing I know, that standing in a place above that of the congregation is at odds with service of the heart, which expresses the sentiment of “from the depths.”

In his unwavering fealty to and sensitive understanding of halakha, the Rav could not be content with technical halakhic conformity while extroverted ceremonialism distorted the concept of *tefilla*. Accordingly, the Rav forcefully registered his disapproval.

The Rav’s consistent, unequivocal opposition to women’s *tefilla* groups was of the same ilk. Once again a shift in focus (but not substance) directs the Rav’s words to the contemporary issue and provides the compelling rationale for his steadfast opposition to such groups: It is not my intention to enter into the halakhic technicalities of women’s *tefilla* groups, but one thing I know, that desiring and emphasizing active participation and leadership are antithetical to authentic service of the heart., which expresses the sentiment of “from the depths”.

The foregoing analysis of the Rav’s axiological opposition to women’s *tefilla* groups illumines his careful choice of words in expressing his unequivocal opposition. The Rav consistently ruled that these groups were wrong, but did not invoke the term *assur*. The reason for the Rav’s nuanced formulation is that Hazal in many instances highlighted the difference between technical and axiological infractions by delineating different categories of impermissible behavior. Whereas the former are always labeled *assur*, the latter, though categorically wrong and impermissible, are classified as *ein ruah hakhamim nohe mi-menu*, or alternately without classification unequivocally censured. For instance, the Talmud states explicitly that it is impermissible to renege on an oral commitment to finalize a business transaction and yet conspicuously avoids the term *assur*; opting instead for the phrase *ein ruah hakhamim nohe mi-menu*.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, although betrothing in the marketplace is not technically *assur*, nevertheless, according to halakha, this vulgar practice is clearly wrong and, as such, is punishable by lashes. The same strict punishment is imposed upon one who betroths without prior engagement, though this act too is not technically classified as *assur*.<sup>18</sup> In sum, although axiological principles are sacrosanct and any deviation therefrom is severely censured, nevertheless the term *assur* is often reserved for technical violations. And thus, while the Rav consistently opposed women’s *tefilla* groups on axiological grounds, he avoided the term *assur*.

Before concluding this section, the following must be briefly noted. While the Rav’s opposition to women’s *tefilla* groups in general was axiological, he opposed women’s *megilla* readings (wherein a woman reads the *megilla* for other women) in particular for technical reasons as well, citing *inter alia Magen Avraham’s* ruling disallowing this practice.<sup>19</sup>

## V

Women's *tefilla* groups distort not only *tefilla* but also the standing and status of women within *Yahadut*. Consistent with the axiomatic meta-physical equality which it bestows upon the genders,<sup>20</sup> the Torah manifests profound and equal concern for the spiritual welfare of women and men, and directs both genders along the path of religious fulfillment and perfection. By contrast, women's *tefilla* groups *volens volens* lead to the inevitable conclusion that the Torah has, God forbid, shortchanged women.

This inexorable logical process unfolds as follows. Prayer, as the Rav explained, is a staple of our religious existence.

It is impossible to envision service of God without prayer. What is prayer? The expression via the oral medium of the soul which yearns for God . . . If the Torah had not charged [us] with prayer as the sole medium of expressing inner service- we would not have known what a person whose soul thirsts for the living God should do when he seeks God. Is it conceivable that Judaism wanted man to suppress his experience? On the contrary! The halakha has always been concerned with the expression of the inner life.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, if, God forbid, halakha were to discriminate against women in the realm of *tefilla*, it would *eo ipso* suppress their religious experience and stifle their spiritual aspirations. Such a religious handicap would relegate them to spiritual mediocrity.

This false, egregious conclusion replete with potentially tragic ramifications is dictated by women's *tefilla* groups. These groups are predicated upon the mistaken notion that the experience of *tefilla* is enhanced by assuming active roles and conversely is stunted when such roles are off-limits. And yet women's *tefilla* groups, conducted with even minimal technical allegiance to the particulars of halakha, cannot provide their participants with the same or even equivalent active roles to those that are available to men praying with a quorum. Within such groups it is impossible to recite *devarim she-bi-kdusha* as such, fulfill the *mitsva* of *keriat haTorah*, etc. And thus, according to the mistaken premise of the *tefilla* groups, women's religious life remains muted even within such groups.

The participants in women's *tefilla* groups will, within the present generation, become intellectually and existentially aware of the failure of such groups and the concomitant false yet inevitable conclusion re-

garding women's standing within *Yahadut*. We must recognize that the possible ramifications of this falsehood are especially frightening and particularly tragic. Propelled by negative momentum and misguided by erroneous teachings, some women, God forbid, could reject all remaining halakhic constraints in an unrestrained attempt to enhance their (inauthentic) *tefilla* experience in particular and religious experience in general. Needless to say, this development would be especially tragic.

Accordingly, we presently have a grave responsibility to act wisely, and not be drawn into a fool's paradise of religious accommodationism. We must understand and help others to understand that women's *tefilla* groups, sincere intentions notwithstanding, both reflect as well as generate distortions of Torah principles. Instead of forming such groups we must disseminate authentic Torah teachings regarding *tefilla*, thereby fostering genuine, profound religious expression and experience.

Some women articulate a different rationale for the *tefilla* groups. It is especially gratifying for them to see women filling roles such as *shaliach tsibbur* etc., traditionally exclusively reserved for men.

This very rationale, however, invalidates such groups. While the Torah does not discriminate *against* men or women, it certainly does discriminate between them. A major component of our service of God is gender specific, and thus any attempt—formation of women's *tefilla* groups or otherwise—to blur gender differences and create a unisex egalitarian orthodoxy clashes with Torah principle.<sup>22</sup>

The testimony, albeit sincere and accurate, offered by some women that the *tefilla* groups indeed enhance their prayer experience in no way justifies the practice. Subjective experience cannot establish objective truth because often it simply reflects and is pre-determined by one's *a priori* hopes and desires. Case in point: if one desires to assume an active, leading role within *tefilla*, upon achieving that goal one naturally feels fulfilled. This subjective, personal experience however only mirrors preliminary aspirations; it does not establish objective truth.

A modicum of introspection regarding women's *tefilla* groups exposes a pervasive malaise in our community affecting men and women equally. Our experience of *tefilla* is at best impoverished. On weekdays, we race the clock in an attempt to make *tefilla* conform to our hectic schedules. Instead of immersing ourselves in the heartfelt and soulful experience of prayer, we squeeze it, heartless and soulless, into our routine. On *Shabbat* and *Tom Tov*, *tefilla*, punctuated and at times overwhelmed by congregational chatter, has deteriorated into recitation by rote and mechanical mouthing of words. In this experiential vacuum, where authentic religious experience is all too often lacking, active

leading roles appear—to men and women—very significant. Frustrated by the shallowness of our *tefilla* experience, we (men and women alike) misguidedly try to gratify ourselves by seeking active participatory roles. In truth, however, such pursuits which further externalize prayer only exacerbate the real problem.

Thus, a vital task awaits us. We must educate and train ourselves to experience in the most profound fashion genuine service of the heart. Such an educational program cannot be fully set forth in the present forum, and thus the ensuing remarks are, at best, schematic and illustrative, but clearly inadequate and incomplete.<sup>23</sup>

The process must involve careful study of *halakhot* of the synagogue and *biur ha-tefilla*. Compliance with these *halakhot* would eliminate all idle talk at all times from the synagogue, and create an atmosphere conducive for *kavana*. By virtue of such habitual compliance, we could condition ourselves to banish from the sacred domain of the synagogue all thoughts of politics, the stock market, sports, and the like. Upon entering the *bet keneset* our mood would instinctively change and become reflective; our attention would be focused upon the impending encounter with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Devoting a few minutes in this rarified spiritual atmosphere to prepare for *tefilla* would further facilitate our experiencing genuine service of the heart. And finally, engaging in *tefilla* with the benefit of prior study of the various prayers—their basic themes, structure and vocabulary—would allow us to recite these *tefillot* thoughtfully, contemplatively focusing upon each word and its religious content rather than mindlessly flipping pages.

Similarly, we ought to respond educationally to the secular egalitarian impetus for the *tefilla* groups. We need to expound and internalize the Torah's axiom of dissimilar equality of the two genders. Moreover, we must elucidate the vitally important, heightened spiritual dimension of the feminine role, as delineated by the Torah and our sages.

Such educational initiatives will, God willing, foster genuine religious experience and satisfaction in general and enhance the *tefilla* experience in particular. The religious crisis which has spawned women's *tefilla* groups would thereby be authentically resolved.

NOTES

1. *Mesilat Yesharim*, Introduction (Feldheim, second ed.), p. 3.  
 2. Commentary to *Leviticus* 23:24. See also Maimonides, *Mishne Torah*,

*Hilkhot Shabbat* 24:12-13.  
 3. Vide *Arukh haShulchan, Orach Hayyim* 308:70.  
 4. Commentary to *Leviticus* 19:2.  
 5. My greatly beloved and lamented father and master, the Talner Rebbe *hsk"m*, drew my attention to the following remarkable passage in Nahmanides' commentary to *Deuteronomy* 21:18, regarding the wayward son (*ben sorer u-more*) who is punished with death.  
 He is punished for two offenses: the first, he disrespects his father and mother and rebels against them, and the second, he is a glutton and drunkard who transgresses the commandment "you shall be holy". *Kedusha* is the life-blood which sustains religious existence, and without which such existence is impossible.  
 Nahmanides again underscores the centrality of Torah values in his commentary to the verse "and you shall do that which is just and right" (*Deuteronomy*. 6:18). The interpretation of *lifnim mi-shurat ha-din* which emerges therefrom provides the key for understanding Hazal's comment in *Bava Metsia* 30b about the destruction of Jerusalem.  
 6. *Berakhot* 7b. Of course the need for apprenticeship exists in other areas of Torah study as well; nevertheless, the need is greatest in the area of halakic values.  
 7. *Ibid.* 17a.  
 8. Section 153. Vide Rav Akiva Yosef Schlesinger, *Lev haIvri* vol. II, p.161 (originally published in Hungary, 1869, re-issued in Jerusalem 1989), who cites this passage in connection with contemporary reformers. He compares their conduct to that of Zimri, who insolently questioned Moshe Rabbenu regarding the permissibility of consorting with a Midyanite woman. In fact, Zimri posed his question before the halakha prohibiting gentile women had been communicated to the Jewish people. Nonetheless, the relevant prohibition concerning such anathematic behavior could—and should—have been easily intuited. Accordingly, the very question bespeaks hubris, cynicism and abandonment of Torah. Contemporary reformers, concludes Rav Schlesinger, are equally culpable.  
 9. Rav Soloveitchik, *Shuarei haRav*, p. 51.  
 10. *Idem.*, *BeSod haYahid ve-haYahad*, p. 270.  
 11. *Melamed leHo'ei* III, 22, 51.  
 12. *Mishne Torah, Hilkhot Tefilla* 1:1.  
 13. Vide e.g. *Al haTeshuva* pp. 41-44.  
 14. Rav Soloveitchik, "Ra'uyantot al haTefilla," *HaDarom* XLVII.  
 15. "Tefillatam shel Yehudim," in *Mayanot*, vol. VIII, pp. 9-11.  
 16. *Samuel* I, 1. B.T. *ibid.* 31a.  
 17. *Bava Metsia* 48a, 49a.  
 18. *Kidushin* 12b. See my article in *Jewish Action* vol. LVII, no. 4 for additional Talmudic references and examples of unequivocally wrong behavior which are not technically labeled *asur*.  
 19. Vide *Magen Avraham* 6897, subsequently cited by *Mishna Berura* ad loc. and *Hayei Adam* ch. 155. For another relevant source, vide Rama's gloss to 690:8.  
 20. See my article in *Jewish Action*, *ibid.* n. 18.  
 21. *Ibid.* n. 14 pp. 85-6. Cf. *Berakhot* 20b. The Talmud explains that although

*tefilla* is a *mitsvat ase she-ha-zeman gerama* (a positive commandment caused by time) and women are ordinarily exempt from such *mitsvot*, nevertheless they are obligated to pray because prayer is supplication for divine mercy. And thus it is inconceivable that women should be exempt. We might add by way of amplification that it is equally inconceivable that women not be allowed to fully experience prayer.

22. Cf. my article in *Jewish Action*, op. cit. n. 18.
23. I am indebted to Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan *sz"l* for his brief but exceedingly rich article entitled "*Davening with Kavana*" [*The Jewish Observer*, vol. XVI, No. 8] which provides many of the suggestions presented here.