

A Eulogy for R. Hayyim Heller

*This essay contains an analysis of *avelut* and our relationship to the dead; a statement of the significance of communion between generations; and a moving evaluation of R. Hayyim Heller, his personality and his way of thinking. Several footnotes of halakhic interest can be found in the original version. This article was adopted by the translator in memory of David Carmy z"l.*

1. "The Reward of the Eulogy—the Mournful Cry"

Although eulogy (*hesped*) is one aspect of *avelut*, it differs in its legal manifestations from *avelut*, which is expressed through *shivah* and *sheloshim*.

1. The obligation of *shivah* and *sheloshim* devolves only upon immediate family while the obligation of eulogy includes the distant as well (our Sages spoke severely of neglect in eulogizing a scholar, or for that matter, any decent person).

2. The eulogy, as opposed to *avelut* of *sheloshim* and *shivah*, is not removed from the sphere of its practice by a particular act. The external act of eulogy, enunciating words of grief and lamentation, is no more than an instrument through which the goal is realized—"grief or heartfelt sorrow."

The phrase "grief or heartfelt sorrow" (*avelut o aninut-shebalev*) indicates a dual act—intellectual and emotional. "Heart" as a figure of speech, is the subject of objective cognition and subjective experience. Mourning in the heart evolves, in rectilinear fashion, from the cognition to the experience. Its point of origin is the honest inspection of the character of the deceased, with its specific nature, and all its abilities, its powers, and its virtues, from which arises the valuation of his importance, as individual and as social man, in his life, and the greatness of loss in his absence. The telos of mourning is the total spiritual shudder of the mourners, the eruption of the experience of suffering, which is replaced by a grasp of the vacuity and desolation of human existence in general, and the whole tragedy connected with the loss of a human being and the absence of a friend in particular.

It is therefore the duty of the eulogist to describe completely and concisely, in logical, confident categories, the full stature of the deceased, to stress the whole wonder woven into that concrete, personal reality, with which we have shared, so to speak, "a lodging for the night," and also to project, with the dimensions of an alert sensitivity, the sorrow arising, in all its realness and direness, from that opaque event we call death. The eulogist is an excellent pedagogue, the messenger of a cool, calm intellect, but also an artist, representing the frenzied experience of the man who stands before something opaque and dreadful. The eulogist explains and interprets, portrays and creates. Clear



understanding is transmuted with emotional impression—"the reward of the eulogy is the mournful cry" (Brakhot 6b). The tremor of the soul, as revealed in the cry, the voice uplifted in mourning, is the root, the innermost part of the eulogy. "Be fervent in my eulogy, as I will be there" (Shabbat 153a). Speak the words of eulogy with an honest true recognition, but also with heart-warming feelings: my image will stand before you; do not distort it by exaggeration or understatement, indifference or cheap sentimentality.

Therefore, determined the Rabbis as *halakhah* and as *musar*, that "Just as the dead are punished, so are the eulogists and those who respond to them" (Brakhot 62a). The eulogy, intellectually speaking, must excel in exactitude and objectivity. One may not overstate the truth or minimize it. Excess or deficiency both lead to deformation of the likeness.

II. "From Afar The Lord Appeared To Me"

Grief within the heart is rooted in man's queer nature as an axiological creature and in his particular retrospective act: "From afar the Lord appeared to me; and with an everlasting love I have loved thee." (Jeremiah 31, 2). I see God far far away from me. At an immeasurable distance my eyes were opened. Once he was close, then I was blind. Therefore, I forfeited His nearness; He became hidden from me. As long as the Creator was near, His *Shekhinah* hovering over me, I did not sense the shining happiness streaming from this wondrous closeness. When I kept *Shabbat* and *Moadim*, when I wore *tephillin*, prayed, sanctified my life, my ways, my activities, I was often bereft of the sense of majesty with which my life was infused; I did not properly value all the sublimity and the clear light, flowing over a God-nourished reality. I did not always rejoice over the ability given me, to stand before my Creator, and to cleave unto him. That I, a mortal, denizen of a house of clay, may enter the House of God, to subjugate myself to His Infinite Will, is the greatest *chesed* I have received. Spiritual boredom, however, eroded this *chesed* under the wheels of a fast-moving and tasteless life, sin, and my alienation from my Creator. I the creature, squandered His nearness; I lost everything. I remained utterly alone, exiled, and banished; sempiternal ruin. I have nobody to plead with, nobody to cry to, from the depths. The gates of heaven are closed to me; my path is twisted. But suddenly the wonder takes place; my consciousness is shaken to cry to the foundations. "From afar the Lord appeared to me". From an infinite distance, breaks forth the image of *shekhinah* I had exiled from my home, I hear the soft whisper from an awe-suffused silence, consoling tidings: "An everlasting love I have loved thee!" I, the homesick sinner, begin to sense the ugliness of a pitiful, impoverished, God-separated existence, as against the heartening brightness of an existence filled with the Glory of His Majesty. I see from afar, and the distance intensifies my longing . . . The separation was easy. The rapprochement is difficult. My going away was simple: the turning on my heel is difficult and severe. Nevertheless, my eyes are to God and His *shekhinah*; I will not cease seeking; otherwise my life is frenzied and tempest-tossed. The distance enchants, captures my heart, dragging me on, on . . .

The same tragic paradox is true of our relation to a great man. So long as he is in our midst, we meet him in the street and salute him, we hear what he says and gaze upon his

face, we are not aware of the great *chesed* which God granted us, enabling us to be with him. With gelid heart, stupidly, we fail to notice him, passing on to our gray schedule and trivial habits. Suddenly, the man has departed to other worlds and a different realm of being; and his image begins to attract us from mystery-draped distances like a nited star twinkling from a sky of midnight blue. Suddenly we fix a longing gaze on the beautiful, captivating image. We stretch out our arms to embrace it; but an infinite gap stretches between us. Just a moment ago he was so close. Then we didn't notice, only now we begin to yearn. But it is too late for longing. We are swept powerfully towards someone who is no longer to be found. Eulogy is recognition of the person and the desire for him, after he has slipped away, the absurd will to turn the third person into the second person, having betrayed the real live presence when it faced us. Mourners and eulogists occupy themselves with the building of bridges across that gap that will never be bridged. Nevertheless, it is this "absurd" that is the essence of mourning in the heart. The disciples of Elijah went out to seek their master after his ascension in the tempest. Three days they sought him upon mountains and in valleys. They sought but did not find him.

III. "It Happened at the Inn"

How beautiful the Midrash (*Breishit* R. on *Miketz*): "When R. Simon died, R. Levi said: Joseph's brethren found something, yet Scripture states: 'Their heart went out'; we, who have sustained the loss of R. Simon, how much more!"

Finding the money in their sacks caused the brothers great fear. A deathly dread leapt upon them. A small error of timing brought about this agony. Had they opened their bags immediately after they left Egypt, they would never have been tortured by the fear of false accusation. They could have returned the money to that queer person, to straighten things out. But they tarried a bit in checking their sacks, and when they did, they were already far away. "It happened on the way, at the inn, that one opened his bag . . . and saw his money." It would be a long way back. To return would be difficult; to approach the strange viceroy, dangerous. The direct way to rectify the mistake was blocked. Therefore, their hearts went out and they trembled. The Rabbis evaluated the reaction of the brothers to the finding of the money: "They should have checked their sacks before leaving—had they been given wheat or barley!"

A shaft of bitter irony is apparent in R. Levi's eulogy for R. Simon. Here we are, "at the inn," says the eulogist. R. Simon has disappeared: a living bond is snapped, the friendship is over. There were better days; then the distant R. Simon was very near. But then we didn't bother to understand him properly. We hadn't the leisure to study his face. Only now, when we have lost him, do we try to find him; we sit and wonder: This R. Simon—who was he? Who was this wondrous individual? Now we open the sack—the casket—of R. Simon and stare at it, trembling. Now we discover the treasure, hidden from us all that time that he dwelt among us. But this recognition came too late. Again the tragic paradox of the prophet of destruction: "From afar the Lord appeared to me; and with everlasting love I have loved thee." We raised our eyes to unlimited spaces, beyond our conception, to confront one who has to there removed.

IV. "The Remnant of Their Scribes"

Who was this man who departed us in silence and graceful humility? Who was R. Hayyim (Heller), who did not accept a public position, and had no use for the customary titles, his entire greatness expressed by two simple words: "Reb Hayyim"?

Several years ago, at one of the *Chaggei Semichah* of RIETS, when Rabbi Samuel Belkin introduced R. Hayyim to the large congregation in the packed hall, he quoted from *Shemoneh-Esreh*: "From the righteous . . . and the elders of thy people the House of Israel and the remnant of their scribes"; "R. Hayyim," continued Rabbi Belkin, "is one of the remnant of the scribes of Israel." In this he captured what was unique about the man! I was sitting on the dais, next to R. Hayyim, and I noticed him, introverted, closed in himself, singled as it were by the glances of the people; on his face, the sad perplexity of a lonely man pushed willy-nilly into the midst of a noisy, boisterous crowd. I asked myself: Why did the redactors of the prayers use this phrase? Why not simply: "for their scribes?" According to tradition, the *Shemoneh Esreh* was formulated twice: at the time of Ezra and at Yavneh. During both periods the Jewish community was full of scribes and sages. Why did the formula of the *brakha* emphasize the remnant of past generation, instead of praying for the welfare of present sages and scribes?

The answer is not, I believe, esoteric. It does not matter how many *talmidei chachamin, gedolim*, or writers, with all the sweep and scope of their Torah creativity, a generation is blessed with—it cannot be linked to the great chain of Tradition, unless it includes a remnant of scribes from the lofty past, bridging the gap between generations. There can only be Tradition where the individual becomes the interaction of eras. To transmit and to receive is to fold up the generations underneath the religious present; "now" to be anchored in "once." In every generation we meet, miraculously, the soul of an ancient generation planned in the present, emanating the aura of the old, the pulchritude of age. Living figures wander, roam, from generation to generation. Tradition includes not only theoretical innovations, abstract concepts, *halakhic* formulas, logical principles, but also types of being, feelings, reactions: a certain existential rhythm and experiential continuity. One cannot achieve a full tradition without personal *dvekut* in a previous generation. In each and every era, we, the receivers, need at least one individual who can connect the generations, about whom we can say, this is the witness to the lofty events of the distant past: "Your eyes seeing your teachers," so to say.

This is the major motif of the legend that Serach, daughter of Asher, survived until the times of Moses (*Sotah* 13a) (According to another legend, she lived even longer). Even the generation of Moses, the miracle generation of the Exodus, that witnessed Sinai and accepted the Torah, needed an ancient figure, Serach daughter of Asher, who in childhood sat in grandfather's lap and amused herself with the hairs of his head and his beard. Without her, the personal continuity of generations would have been broken. Moses himself proclaimed in his song: "This is my God . . . the God of my fathers, and I shall exalt Him"—Even if we are greatly loved by Him, even if he revealed Himself to us on the sea and in Egypt, we must still confront the image of our forefathers and introduce them into our consciousness. One cannot say "This is my God" unless the song of the present is entwined in that of the past: the God of my fathers. Only an aged mother,

her back bent and her cheeks rutted, who once called an old man "Grandfather," knows

the mystery of linked generations, the tying of those times with these. And if this was so at the time of Moses, how much more so in our generation, which has witnessed the erosion of the pillars of tradition. When the few must struggle against the many, the need to draw yeoman's courage from living tradition, as refilled in a real personality attired in the majesty of time—a mediation, a bridge, between fathers and sons, between strength and weakness, becomes much greater. Under such conditions, the trembling, wrinkled handshake with its rhythm of generations; the fatherly or motherly glance, in which dwells the mystery of the past; the strains of a shaky voice, in which is preserved the silence of Eternity; tales of strange and wondrous persons, of events wrapped in the mist of passing time—these can turn the balance in favor of *Kodesh* against *chol*. Not for nothing did the Rambam stress (Introduction to the *Yad*, citing *Baba Batra* 122b) that "Achiyah Ha-Shiloni . . . was a Levite, and studied under Moses, and was a child in the time of Moses." This statement is very important. A generation that saw the breakdown of *Bet David*, the erection of two golden calves, needed Achiyah Ha-Shiloni, who had raced, leapt, played in Moses' courtyard (he was a Levite, and lived in the camp of Levites), who had run after him in the spacious desert, who strode with him, hand in hand, on yellow, sunburnt sand. Only such a man, a prophet of God, vestige of an old, old era, a remnant of the scribes of the past, could strengthen weak knees and revive the hearts of the despondent.

Rabbi Belkin was right to call Rav Hayyim one of the remnant of scribes. A spark from the soul of Achiyah ha-Shiloni, who had clung to Moses as a child, sank into his soul. As long as R. Hayyim was with us, among us, there existed a strong tie between us and earlier generations. When he went away, the knot was undone . . . /there follows an enumeration of Gedolim with whom R. Hayyim was close/ . . . He had perpetual discussions with them. When I visited him at home, on the West Side of Manhattan, with its congeries of bustling, hollow, Jewish life; with its Synagogues, Societies, clubs, and their auxiliaries, I always felt as if I were entering another world, as if I had breached some border separating two realms of being—the realm of earlier generations, *Shakh, Taz, Gra*—and that of modern Orthodoxy with its snipped wings and rootlessness, unable to fathom the depths of religious experience. When I opened the door to his room, I found him in his old armchair, spectacles on his nose, engrossed in *Bet hal Levi, Meshiv Davur*, or *Malbushet Yomtov*. When he noticed me, he did not cease his thinking. With a slight smile and the motion of a finger, he invited me to sit down next to him. Sometimes I didn't know if he was aware of my presence or not. He was totally involved in his dialogue with one of that *chavurah*, in which, as a child, he had found himself. His facial expressions, with their mixture of good humor and melancholy, indicated something of the content of that conversation. Sometimes he nodded his head, his face exuding satisfaction, as if in agreement with the absent friend; sometimes he raised his eyebrows with wonder, stretched the fingers of his right hand as if to ask: Is it possible that R. Shabrai (*Shakh*) differs? When R. Hayyim told stories about Gedolei Yisrael, whether he had known them or they had been dead for centuries, he uttered, not desiccated words, but living experiences full of warmth and movement . . . Moved by old, forgotten tales, he chuckled and sorrowed with his heroes. Images he described came to life, pushed their way into his

modest room. Do you know where this power came from? Not from any art of speech or of imagery! He never used a metaphor. He lived the events he recounted. He himself belonged to those generations, whose greatness he transmitted to us. He spoke their language and understood their spirit. A lonely wanderer in the lanes of the present, at home in near and distant past—that was this man. There was something special about him, something that flowed from the days when there were spiritual giants in the land, the men of name in the world of Torah. O he was a remnant of the ancient scribes!

V. "Why Were the Ancients Called Scribes?"

What is the meaning of the word *sofirim* (scribes)? The Talmud (*Kiddushin* 30a): "Why were the ancients called *sofirim*?—Because they counted (*safnu*) all the letters in the Torah." Only one who is so knowledgeable that he can count the letters, has the ability to join the rare society of *sofirim*. R. Hayyim fulfilled this condition. He knew so much! He could be careful not only with the text of a *tosafot* but also with a phrase in *Meirat Enayim* or *Shakh*. His two-volume "*Le-Chikre Halakhot*" on *Hoshen Mishpat*, attests to his unusual knowledge. He was loyal to the entire house of *Halakhah*, including the later works of Sephardic *gedolim*, whose very names escape us (many of them are quoted by *Shakh* on H.M.). Many times he showed me delicate points in these books, a slight emendation of style resolving the difficulties of criticism.

However, there is another definition of *sofirim*. Yer. *Shekalim* explains: "Because they enumerated the whole Torah (*Misparim*).” On this view it is not enough to know the letters. The crown of *sofirim* only befits one for whom *halakhot* are organized and fluent. Understanding of learning, classification, organization—not only external knowledge—present the scholar with the honorable title of *sofer*. R. Hayyim knew how to enumerate his Torah. He was an expert at classification and systematic method. He always began by clarifying the text and distillation of verbal forms; then he turned to conceptual analysis. He began by counting letters—and ended with systematic enumeration.

VI. "The Long Formula and the Short Formula"

In *Halakhic* research, as in *Brakhot*, there are two forms: the long formula and the short formula. These symbolize, so to say, two forms of *kapparah* in the *Mikdash* (See *Yoma* 58b). According to R. Eliezer: the *kohen*, when sprinkling the blood of the "inner" sin-offerings on the gold Altar in the *heikhal*, would stand in one place. When blood of the "outer" sin-offerings was sprinkled in the *azarah*, the *kohen* would walk around the Altar, from corner to corner. *Avodah* on the inside (*Heikhal*) is characterized by the short formula—the *Kohen* does not walk around the *mizbeach*. On the outside, (*azarah*) we find the long formula—the must walk around the *mizbeach*; the former finished their work straightaway, the latter needed to walk around. There are analogously, two ways of studying Torah: There are those who, like the *Kohanim* in the *azarah*, exhaust the matter on foot, so to say; moving from corner to corner. The problem to problem, until *halakhic* truth is revealed. This is the long formula. The *kohanim* of the *heikhal* do not need this indirect path. They immediately touch the heart

of the matter. Without moving from their place, without the complications of extraneous *pilpul*, within a short time stands the *halakha*, so unclear a moment ago, as if illuminated by a spotlight. Both formulae—the long and the short—are the words of living God, but from the pedagogic viewpoint, one prefers brevity to length, concentration to diffusions. R. Hayyim's formula was exceptionally short. He had a definite logical simplicity, which he used as a shortcut to reach an unperplexed, confident, *halakhic* conclusion.

[There is a brief discussion of R. Hayyim's contributions to the study of Bible].
VII. "Is there a Man Who Can Formulate the Benediction of the Heretics?"

This R. Hayyim was chosen by Providence and equipped to accomplish a difficult task. In order to grasp the nature of this task we must turn to our history and understand it within an historical context. The *braita* (*Brakhot* 28b) tells us: "Simon Pakuli prepared eighteen benedictions before Rabban Gamaliel. Said Rabban Gamaliel to the Rabbis: 'Is there a man who can formulate the benediction of heretics?' Shmuel Hakatan stood up and formulated it." One's impression is that the benediction of the heretics (*Birkhat haMivrim*) aroused difficulties that had not existed previously, when the other eighteen were formulated. Rabban Gamaliel, we are told, needed to proclaim-requested that someone step forward for the task, and that only one man was fit to undertake it. What does this mean?

At the time of Rabban Gamaliel in Yavneh there occurred a turning point in the struggle of loyal Jewry with the movement that would betray the tradition and the uniqueness of the nation. The dimensions of the struggle were fundamentally altered. Active conflict replaced passive shutting of eyes. The major reason for this was the terrible calamity that descended upon the nation with the destruction of the Temple. In truth; the flourishing of heretics in this generation was nothing new or startling. The contempt of enemies within was an old story in the annals of the Jewish people. Hatred of Judaism were particularly active during the Second Commonwealth. The *Mishnah* (*Yoma* 18b) tells us that the high-priest was sworn on Yom Kippur Eve that he would not conduct himself as a Sadducee: so great were the breaches in loyalty to the Tradition, even among the sons of Aharon. Yet no benediction was formulated with reference to these scoffers and heretics. Why? Because the Rabbis were blessed with great patience. They were not among those eager for the destruction of sinners, however these may plot the distortion of our religious reality. Prayer is founded, according to *halakha*, on the Attribute of Mercy. (*Brakhot* 20b and 26a). "Eighteen benedictions correspond to eighteen Tetragrammatons in Psalm 29" (*Brakhot* 28b). Each benediction reflects the revealed-concealed light, shining from the letters of the Tetragrammaton, the nature of which is great mercy, delicate, pure love, grace and peace. We plead with God for succor, health, salvation; but vindictiveness does not cry from our throats. Even when the Jew enumerates his cares, tells his Heavenly Father of his oppression and penury, his loneliness, the denial of his rights, humiliation and insult, the malice of his enemies (in "*Reh na be-onyenu*"), the cry for revenge is not heard. He prays for himself and his people, but does not mention his malefactors, does not ask of God to do to them what

they wished upon him, and did to him. When and how will the evil be judged? The praying Jew had not thought about them; he ignored them, swallowed his agony and anger. Even when their image confronted him in full height, he did not raise his voice, bitterly, before God, but prayed that they return to their Jewish source, and to their Divine root, that they may cease their evil. Post-Maccabean Jewry preferred, under certain circumstances, to ignore evil, rather than to attack it frontally. Evil, idolatry, is called "*elilim*", lacking reality and value, concern with which is a waste of time, and of physical and spiritual forces, so to say "Do not answer a fool according to his folly."

Until the age of Rabban Gamaliel, the Sages of Israel, with their penetrating historical insight, tended to ignore evil, to hope that it would cease of itself. Then came the *churban*, the nation drenched in blood. Jerusalem was a pile of ruins, the spiritual centers were destroyed, and the best of her sons were dead. The enemy within betrayed Israel at this time of chaos. The antagonism against the Tradition and the continuation of Jewish existence as a unique destiny reached new heights. Many apostates made peace with the foreign oppressor, spread malice against the people, plotted its spiritual and physical death. "*Elilim*" suddenly had become "alien gods," with power and rule. Our Sages felt, that in these circumstances it was impossible to shut one's eyes to the *Mirim*. With regard to *elilim* one could fulfill the Scriptural verse "Thou shalt not turn to them"—i.e., do not pay attention to them; but they could not be silent in the face of the Satanic attack, organized by "alien gods." The struggle was joined; the framework of prayer was broadened. Not only help, salvation, forgiveness, were subjects of prayer, but also the flattening of wicked pride. Judaism demanded active participation in its *polemos rachamin*; but these, too, are at war with evil! They sought, and found a proof (in Psalm 29): "The God of majesty thundered over many waters." Even the Attribute of *Chesed* sometimes thunders over the waters of wickedness and struggles against them. A determination, with weighty consequences, was proclaimed by Rabban Gamaliel: *Rabbotai*, the time has come to formulate a benediction for heretics! Who is the man, who has the power to formulate it?

B

For whom was Rabban Gamaliel searching? What did he expect of the man whose spirit would move him to innovate this benediction? One can answer this question, if we see it against the backdrop of the metaphysical concept of the personality within Judaism. Man is created in the Image of God. He carries within him the perpetual revelation of God to His creatures. The vectors of essence and character that are hidden in man, with all their variety, flow from a transcendent source. Therefore it is the obligation of the creature to become alike to the Creator, to imitate the ways of His Revelation: "As He is Gracious and Merciful, so you be gracious and merciful." The spiritual tendencies with which man was blessed express his participation in the Infinite Attributes of God. Judaism, through this ethical-metaphysical perspective, viewed its great representatives as bearers of His Majesty. One personality may shine with the Attribute of *Chesed*; another may demonstrate those of *Gurrah* and absolute justice. Sometimes, one meets a wonderful individual in which *Chesed* and *Din* have met, and formed one perfect whole.

In Abraham was revealed pure *chesed*; in Isaac was bared *gurrah*; in Jacob—*tiferet*. Our Sages saw, in the master of prophets and his brother the high-priest, the realizations of *chesed* and truth, justice and peace. Each one of *Gdolei Yisrael*—the candle of God is lit in his soul; and he wanders in his special path, for his rendez-vous with God.

C

The man whom Rabban Gamaliel invited to formulate the benediction of heretics was totally grasped by the Attribute of *Chesed*. It flowed from him forcefully and with boldness. If the force of circumstances necessitated a deviation from consistent mercifulness and affection to all flesh, to stand courageously and heroically against a hard, dastardly enemy, distorting the face of the nation and its faith—then the permission to lead the assault could only be given to a man, whose soul had sucked from the sources of *Chesed* rather than *Gurrah*. Only such a man could formulate the benediction of heretics to demand of his Heavenly Father the cessation of evil and destruction of the wicked. They found Shmuel hakatan, whose motto was the verse "When thine enemy falters do not rejoice, and when he stumbles, do not let thy heart be merry" (Avot 4,9). Shmuel, the *chasid* and the humble, who had never tasted the desire to settle accounts with malefactors, who had never complained about insults caused him, was chosen to fulfill this necessary task. This man, overflowing with *chesed*, forgiveness to all men, stood in the presence of the *Nasi* and coined a new benediction for the *Shmonah Eserh*. This benediction, which cries to God for the destruction of evil, grew from the soil of love and *chesed*. It was directed against evil and the reign of wickedness in their ideal form, so to say "May sin cease; not sinners."

D

What happened to fathers is a sign for the sons. We Jews, observant of Torah and *Mitzvot*, have suffered a lot from the new heresy of Bible Criticism, which aimed to dissolve the Tradition, to breach the external covenant between nation and Torah. For many years we tried to ignore the evil, to eliminate it from our public arena. This method of indifference proved its utility over a long period, as long as the Jewish people vibrated with living religiosity, and did not attend to blasphemous words. But times changed. What was permissible when traditional Jewry stood firm, *Mirutz* blazing only at the periphery of the camp, cannot be done at a time when spiritual schism has reached its apex. We are again witnesses to the transformation of *elilim* into "alien gods." There was no choice: ignorance of evil must be replaced by destruction of evil.

Judaism found itself in the narrow pass; it was impossible to evade confrontation with the enemy at the gate: "Is there one who can formulate a benediction for heretics?"; is there one who can indicate the errors, the forgeries, the calculated conspiracy against our spiritual existence, that derive from this heretical literature? R. Hayyim 2nd, he was the Shmuel hakatan of our generation! Providence elected him for this task not merely for his intellectual qualifications, but for his great soul, entirely suffused with nobility and love and mercy for all creatures in the Divine Image. He was charitable in his person, in his pocket, even in his speech. His whole life-style was sensitivity and fatherly goodness. I never heard him use derogatory language. He never cursed another or called

names. Others, at times, abused him, hurt him, but he did not complain or speak badly of them. When he recalled such an unpleasant episode, his eyes were dimmed by a heavy sadness, expressing pain and sorrow. He was trained in suffering, knowing how to suffer with a smile, to suffer and to laugh. Who like him fulfilled the words of the Mishnah (*Brakhot* 9, 5): "With thy all—with all measures that are measured thee." Shmuel haKatan of our generation was appointed by Providence to coin the benediction of the heretics. Only he, who radiated freshness, joy, love, was qualified for this difficult work!

VIII. "Israel was a Lad; and I Loved Him"

Why was Shmuel given the nickname "haKatan"? This epithet can be given four meanings: 1. Physical shortness of stature; 2. Humility, he made himself small (*Yerushalmi* and of *Sotah*); 3. Relative smallness—compared to the prophet Samuel (*Yer. Ibid.*); 4. Childlikeness (*Katan* in the sense of a child). If we accept the fourth interpretation, we can cross out the phrase "Shmuel haKatan" and exchange it for a new phrase: Shmuel the Child.

A strange polarity characterizes the world of authentic Judaism. It swings like a pendulum between the two ideals of maturity and childlikeness. The great man, whose intellect has been raised to a superior level through the study of Torah, gifted with well-developed, overflowing powers—depth, scope, sharpness—should not be viewed as the totally adult. The soul of a child still nestles within him. On the one hand, he is knowledge-sated, strong of intellect, rich in experience, sober-sighted, crowned with age, natural enthusiasm, eagerness and spiritual restlessness, have not abandoned him. If a man has aged and completely become adult, if the morning of life has passed him by, and he stands, in spirit and soul, at his high noon, bleached of the dew of childhood, if he has grown up completely, in thinking, feeling, desire, trust—he cannot approach God. The adult is too smart. Utility is his guiding-light. The experience of God is not a businesslike affair. Only the child can breach the boundaries that segregate the finite from the infinite. Only the child with his simple faith and fiery enthusiasm can make the miraculous leap into the bosom of God. "Israel was a lad and I loved him" (Hosea 11,1): "Is Ephraim my dear son, a playful child, that when I speak of him, I remember him again" (Jeremiah 31, 19). The giants of Torah—when it came to faith, became little children, with all their ingenuousness, gracefulness, simplicity, their tremors of fear, the vivid sense of experience to which they are devoted. Where you find their maturity you find their childlike quality. What was my grandfather, R. Hayyim of Brisk? On the one hand, he was a great abstract thinker, who introduced basic conceptual transformations in the field of *halakic* methodology. On the other hand, he was a child, unable to restrain his warm emotions, his yearning for something beautiful and elevated, his dreams and hopes. He, the man of iron discipline in the intellectual sphere, who captured the richness of *Halakha* in acute, exact, logical molds, was swept without reservation in a bold stream of simplicity, innocence, sensitivity, perplexity, childish confusion, but also immeasurable confidence: R. Hayyim *haKatan*! What was my father *z"l*? A genius and a child! Supersensitive powers of abstraction and the innocence of a babe. A spark from the soul of the master

of Prophets, the father of sages in all generations, is contained in the soul of all *Gedolei Yisrael*. "She opened and showed the child; and behold, it was a crying lad." The whimper of a baby rent the air on the shore of the Nile. But it was not only then that Moses cried. Whenever he fell before God, he cried like a child. Who can fall before his father, raise his eyes to him alone, to seek consolation and salvation, if not the child! The weeping of a child accompanied *Rabbam shel Yisrael* from the Nile to Sinai, to the Tabernacle, to Nevo. Only the child could cry, could shed a tear. The mature, the adult, are not capable of the all-embracing, all-penetrating outpouring of soul. The most sublime crown we can give a great man, sparkles with the gems of childhood. It is not strange, therefore, that this crown was offered Shmuel with the epithet "haKatan".

R. Hayyim Heller *z"l*, also united the two poles: intellectual greatness and innocence of heart, unusual knowledge of Torah and the delightful simplicity of a small boy. Our own "Shmuel haKatan" knew nothing of politics, infighting, formality, or ceremony. He never said anything to gain another's approval or to impress a crowd. His language was not decorative or flowery; he did not use fancy phrases to lend his ideas a meaningless luster. He detested complicated terminology. When I asked him to cut down on the quantity of material presented in his lectures, in order to improve the format, so that his listeners might be able to assimilate his rich bounty, he refused. "Give them, R. Hayyim, a little bit, let them digest your words," I said to him. "What do you want, R. Yoshe Ber, that I waste time, mislead people?" he would answer. He once told me that he had resigned the Rabbinate of Lomz, because he felt that as a communal Rav, things he disapproved of would be forced upon him and upon his leadership. "It states in Proverbs (3,4)", he ended this conversation: "He shall find favor... in the eyes of God and man". Man must seek to fulfill his obligations before God, then he should find favor in the eyes of man. Inverting the order, one loses both worlds.