

Meorot

A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse

(formerly *Edah Journal*)

***Marheshvan* 5768**

CONTENTS

Editor's Introduction to the *Marheshvan* 5768 Edition
Eugene Korn

ARTICLES

Farteicht un Farbessert (On "Correcting" Maimonides)
Menachem Kellner

Ethics and Warfare Revisited
Gerald J. Blidstein
Michael J. Broyde

Women's Eligibility to Write *Sifrei Torah*
Jen Taylor Friedman
Dov Linzer

Authority and Validity: Why *Tanakh* Requires Interpretation,
and What Makes an Interpretation Legitimate?
Moshe Sokolow

REVIEW ESSAY

Maimonides Contra Kabbalah: A Review of *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism* by Menachem Kellner
James A. Diamond



Meorot 6:2
Marheshvan 5768

A Publication of
Yeshivat Chovevei Torah
Rabbinical School
© 2007

Meorot

A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Meorot: A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse (formerly *The Edah Journal*)

Statement of Purpose

Meorot is a forum for discussion of Orthodox Judaism's engagement with modernity, published by Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School. It is the conviction of *Meorot* that this discourse is vital to nurturing the spiritual and religious experiences of Modern Orthodox Jews. Committed to the norms of *halakhab* and Torah, *Meorot* is dedicated to free inquiry and will be ever mindful that "Truth is the seal of the Holy One, Blessed be He."

Editors

Eugene Korn, Editor
Nathaniel Helfgot, Associate Editor
Joel Linsider, Text Editor

Editorial Board

Dov Linzer (YCT Rabbinical School), Chair
Michael Berger
Moshe Halbertal (Israel)
Naftali Harsztark
Norma Baumel Joseph
Simcha Krauss
Barry Levy
Adam Mintz
Tamar Ross (Israel)

Meorot will publish two online editions per year, and will be available periodically in hard-copy editions. Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors only and do not necessarily represent the views of YCT or the editorial board. YCT retains copyrights to all material published in the journal.

Directions for Submissions

Meorot invites submissions of original scholarly and popular essays, as well as new English translations of Hebrew works. Popular essays should be between 800-2000 words. The journal particularly welcomes halakhic, philosophic, and literary studies relating to *qedushah* in modern experience, the religious significance of the State of Israel, Jewish ethics, emerging Torah conceptions of and opportunities for women, *Talmud Torah* as an intellectual and spiritual discipline, pluralism, and Judaism's relation to gentiles and contemporary culture.

Submissions to *Meorot* should be sent online to meorotjournal@yct Torah.org, or mailed in duplicate to Editor, *Meorot*, c/o YCT Rabbinical School, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 244, New York, N.Y. 10015. Submissions should include a one paragraph abstract and one line biography of the author. Paper submissions should be accompanied by a diskette with essay in RTF, TXT or MSWORD format. Notes should appear as footnotes. Communications should be directed to the above email address.

Reader responses should be sent to the editor at meorotjournal@yct Torah.org for possible electronic publication at the journal's website.

Graphic Design: Erica Weisberg
Technical Assistant: Michelle Green



Meorot 6:2
Mar^heshvan 5768

A Publication of
Yeshivat Chovevei Torah
Rabbinical School
© 2007

Editor's Introduction to the *Marheshvan* 5768 Edition

Eugene Korn

Welcome to the 6:2 *Marheshvan* 5768 edition of *Meorot*! This edition contains a number of important articles and interchanges, emanating from America and Israel.

Soon after Maimonides died in 1204, his works aroused bitter controversy in the Jewish communities of Spain and France. *Sefer Mada'a*, the first part of his great legal code, *Mishneh Torah*, as well as his most important philosophical work, *The Guide to the Perplexed*, were even burned. Of course, we no longer burn problematic texts, but as Prof. Menachem Kellner shows in his incisive article, *Farteicht un Farbessert*, many religious Jews have always found difficulty with Rambam's statements and some adopted perhaps a more effective stratagem to subvert what Rambam wrote. Kellner demonstrates how Rambam's texts were "corrected" to meet the prevailing religious views of some of Rambam's later day readers—sometimes even completely reversing the original meaning of his statements. And Rambam's universalism, it seems, remains as problematic today as it was in the past among those Jews claiming a more parochial religious *Weltanschauung*.

Meorot 6:1 included an interchange of views on the role of conventional *halakhab* and Jewish moral values in the theater of war. Prof. Michael J. Broyde argued forcefully that war suspends the peacetime prohibition against killing innocents and civilians. In this edition, the *Hatan Pras Yisrael* (recipient of the Israel Prize), Prof. Gerald J. Blidstein, questions some of Broyde's claims and asks whether the Torah does not demand a higher morality of Jews than those international norms (e.g. the Geneva Convention) established by and for gentile nations. Prof. Blidstein finds the application of "*dina de-malkhuta dina*" (the law of the [gentile] sovereign is the law [for Jews]) to be one suited only for the Diaspora and inapplicable to Israelis in their moral

dilemmas during the heat of battle. Prof. Broyde offers a partial response to Prof. Blidstein.

In the past decades, both men and women have explored the halakhic parameters of women's roles and privileges and attempted to push the envelope in nearly all areas of life. No domain has raised more debate than those of synagogue and ritual. In a long detailed study, Jen Taylor Friedman lays out her halakhic analysis for the eligibility of women to be *sofrot*—scribes writing valid Torah scrolls. Basing her argument largely on texts in *Masekhet Soferim*, she distinguishes between two classes of *sifrei Torah*, those that are valid for the *mitsvah* of writing a *sefer Torah* and those written for the purposes of discharging the community's obligation of reading the Torah in synagogue. R. Dov Linzer, *rosh ha-yeshiva* of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, responds to Ms. Friedman. While sympathizing with her desire for more women's participation in ritual life, R. Linzer finds her arguments to be halakhically invalid.

Prof. Moshe Sokolow demonstrates the need for interpretation—including untraditional commentators—in Orthodox Bible study and discusses the grounds for authority and legitimacy in interpretations of *Tanakh*. He offers a glimpse of what a Modern Orthodox *Tanakh* with interpretation might look like by providing a sample interpretation of Genesis 18.

We are pleased to present Prof. James Diamond's review essay of Prof. Kellner's recent study of Rambam, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism*. Diamond emphasizes how Maimonides debunks the popular meanings of common categories of halakhic life, such as *qedushah*, *tabarah*, the transcendent character of Hebrew and Temple ritual, and demonstrates that while Rambam and mystics practice the same religion, they subscribe to entirely different belief systems.

I trust you will enjoy the variety and depth of the articles in this edition of *Meorot*, and invite you to send your responses to meorotjournal@yctora.org.
B'verakhab,

Eugene



Meorot 6:2
Marheshvan 5768

A Publication of
Yeshivat Chovevei Torah
Rabbinical School
© 2007