

## *Book Review*

*Jewish Thought in Dialogue: Essays on Thinkers, Theologies, and Moral Theories* by David Shatz, Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009, 442 pp.

**By: HESHEY ZELCER**

“The separation between philosophy and religion has been rather brief.” (p. 412, n. 5)

*David Shatz*

*Jewish Thought in Dialogue: Essays on Thinkers, Theologies, and Moral Theories* is a collection of fifteen Jewish-philosophy essays by Rabbi Dr. David Shatz. The first section, *Essays in Interpretation*, contains six articles that analyze Jewish texts and philosophy of others. The second section, *Theology, Metaphysics and Ethics*, contains eight articles on topics suggested by its title. The last section, *Concluding Reflections on Religious Belief*, contains a single article describing how Shatz reconciled his religious beliefs and his philosophical studies.

David Shatz is a professor of philosophy at Yeshiva University, the editor of *Torah u-Madda* and a prolific author. He earned his PhD in general philosophy from Columbia University and received ordination from Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.

Many readers may be put off by the dense title of this book. Indeed, many of the articles appear designed for the scholarly audience, yet even the general reader, who may lack advanced philosophical training, will, nevertheless, greatly benefit from this work—the author is careful to explain many of his most complex ideas in a straightforward manner.<sup>1</sup>

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Heshey Zelcer, a businessman, is the author of *Companion Mishnayot: Tractate Niddah* (1994) and *A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud* (2002).

To put Shatz and his work into context, it is useful to list the Jewish philosophers who appear, from this work, to have had the greatest influence on his thought. These include Rambam, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik and R. Abraham Isaac Kook,<sup>2</sup> of whom the first two seem to serve as his foundation to Jewish philosophy<sup>3</sup>—a foundation that includes a rationalist/non-mystical approach to Judaism, and an openness to science, mathematics and philosophy. It also appears that Shatz’s contemporary role models, especially in relation to his ideal of integrating Torah and his pursuit of philosophy, are R. J. B. Soloveitchik, R. Aharon Lichtenstein and R. Norman Lamm (pp. 404–406). Let us examine some of his essays.

In *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and the Ambiguities of “Openness”* (pp. 118–137) Shatz points out that Rav Kook espoused many views that are today the hallmarks of modern Orthodoxy: Zionism, openness to secular culture, breadth and balance in yeshiva curricula, tolerance of the irreligious and a non-literal understanding of certain biblical passages (p. 138).

Shatz notes, however, that the underlying beliefs that led Rav Kook to espouse these values are not consistent with the underlying

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<sup>1</sup> Not all philosophers have been known to write clearly. George N. Schlesinger, in “Truth, Humility, and Philosophers,” *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason*, ed. Thomas V. Morris, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 259, describes facetiously how philosophers should (and often do) write scholarly papers: “It is also essential to introduce a certain amount of opaqueness into your paper, not only to ensure that a potential critic will be at a loss in formulating the thesis he would like to attack, but also because, to many people, “clear, and easily understood” is synonymous with “superficial or trivial.” However, great care should be taken with the fuzziness with which one endows one’s paper. It has to be subtle enough to make its source undetectable and highly suggestive, to provide ample scope for the imaginative reader to ascribe a variety of unstated profundities to the text.”

<sup>2</sup> In the book’s index the entry for Rambam spans 118 lines, that of R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik 103, Rav Kook 89, David Hartman 24, R. Walter Wurzberger 20, and Ramban 19.

<sup>3</sup> Not only does Shatz devote a total of three articles to Rambam and R. Soloveitchik but, unlike with the other great philosophers analyzed in this work, their ideas are seldom refuted.

values of modern Orthodoxy, and thus modern Orthodoxy should be careful about holding up Rav Kook as their model. For example, Shatz argues that Rav Kook's philosophy was grounded in both a) Kabbalah and b) the evolutionary, progressivist philosophy (that society improves over time) as espoused in the nineteenth century (p. 121). Nineteenth century progressivism was refuted by history a few years after Rav Kook's passing in 1935, and as for Kabbalah it is hardly a battle cry for the rationalist mindset of modern Orthodox Jews (p. 121).

In his essay, *The Integration of Torah and Culture: Its Scope and Limits in the Thought of Rav Kook* (pp. 93–117), Shatz points out that Rav Kook often wrote about the need to integrate Torah and secular knowledge: that through the conjunction of natural piety, and secular disciplines, the secrets of the Torah are brought to light and elucidated (p. 93). Rav Kook also saw this ideal as applicable to the Jewish nation as a whole. The Jews have the distinct capacity to absorb, synthesize and transform the best elements of surrounding cultures. The mission of the Jews is to exercise their talent for integration and creativity and then to bring to the outside world the new product they have fashioned. Only in this way will the Jewish people be able to execute its sacred task: to elevate all of humanity (p. 93).

We would therefore expect Rav Kook to be a proponent of reconciling apparent contradictions between Torah and secular knowledge. Yet, according to Shatz, Rav Kook was against any attempt to do this. He believed that science evolves gradually and erratically. Ideas and theories that are accepted by science today may very well be discarded tomorrow (p. 103). Furthermore, Rav Kook also saw our understanding of Torah as constantly evolving. It is therefore unnecessary and useless, according to Rav Kook, to try to reconcile Torah and science, both of which are in a state of flux.

In *Science and Religious Consciousness in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (pp. 138–176) Shatz writes:

R. Soloveitchik's thought concerning the role of science in religious life evolved over a twenty-year period. That period begins with the publication of *Ish ha-Halakhah* in 1944, includes the completion of *The Halakhic Mind* in that same year and the writing of an early draft

of “*U-Bikkashtem mi-Sham*” in the late 1940s, and concludes with the appearance of “Confrontation” and *The Lonely Man of Faith* in the mid 1960s (p. 138).

Shatz claims that in his earlier work, *Halakhic Man* (the English translation of *Ish ha-Halakhah*),<sup>4</sup> R. Soloveitchik advocates that halakhic man not master science:

The purposes of the essay *Halakhic Man*, I submit, necessitate that things be this way, that halakhic man *not* master scientific knowledge (p. 141).

and that actual halakhic men did not study science:<sup>5</sup>

The specific people whom R. Soloveitchik seems to regard as halakhic men—with the exception of Maimonides and the Gaon of Vilna—did not study science. Moreover, the very idea that one needs to turn to secular disciplines in order to live the life of halakhic man threatens the thesis that immersion in Halakhah is self-sufficient for ensuring freedom, creativity and individuality (p. 143).

Only later, in *The Lonely Man of Faith*, argues Shatz, does the Rav make science part of the worldview of Halakhic Man, when he makes the case that technological advances fulfill a divine mandate to improve the life of the community (p. 161).

This is not my understanding of *Halakhic Man*. While Shatz seems to understand that the Rav is defining the entire *weltanschauung* of actual halakhic men, the Rav is actually using the term in a much narrower sense. We therefore cannot make any judgment regarding the Rav’s view of the role of science for an actual halakhic man.

David Hartman also understands the Rav’s definition of Halakhic Man in a narrow sense, and I believe his definition is correct:

[R. Soloveitchik] is not writing an exhaustive phenomenology of “rabbinic man” or “halakhic man” in the broadest sense of those terms. Rather, he is constructing an ideal halakhic type whose approximation is best illustrated by the approach of his father and

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<sup>4</sup> Soloveitchik, Rabbi Joseph B. *Halakhic Man*, translated by Lawrence Kaplan. Philadelphia: JPS, 1983.

<sup>5</sup> In this section I use “*Halakhic Man*” for the book; “Halakhic Man” for the model portrayed in the book; and “an actual halakhic man” for a living breathing person who has mastered the “Halakhic Man” model.

grandfather to Judaism (p. 24). Both R. Soloveitchik's father and the Habad Hasid build their lives around the normative halakhic tradition. Both are "halakhic men," if by that term we designate persons whose religious life is governed by the normative obligations of traditional Judaism. But R. Soloveitchik prefers to use the term "halakhic man" to refer specifically to his father's approach to mitzvot (p. 25).<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the first time the Rav uses the term "Halakhic man" he provides a footnote that seems to support a narrow definition of Halakhic Man:

Obviously the description of halakhic man given here refers to a pure ideal type, as is the case with the other types with which the human sciences (*geisteswissenschaften*) are concerned. Real halakhic men, who are not simple but rather hybrid types, approximate, to a lesser or greater degree, the ideal halakhic man, each in accordance with his spiritual image and status. (p. 139, n. 1)

In *Halakhic Man* R. Soloveitchik portrays three models of how people view God and the world: 1. Cognitive Man is a model of a scientist who understands the world through his perception and reasoning. 2. *Homo Religiosus* is a model of a mystical/spiritual person (Jew, Christian or otherwise) who yearns to leave the crude physical world, ascend to spiritual heights and cleave to his Creator, and 3. Halakhic Man brings spirituality down to this world by mastering halakhah, being creative with it and interpreting everything he encounters through its prism.

The model Halakhic Man is surely the most important of the three models, but actual halakhic men, what the Rav calls "hybrid types," internalize and may use other models—in various degrees—including the science of Cognitive Man and the mysticism of *Homo Religiosus*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hartman, David. *Love and Terror in the God Encounter: The Theological Legacy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Light Publishing, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> In *U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham* the Rav incorporate aspects of Cognitive Man and *Homo Religiosus* into the Halakhic Man model. In a letter to Dr. Samuel K. Mirsky written in 1963, concerning an early draft of *U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham*, the Rav states: "As you will recognize and note from the title, this essay is a continuation of my first essay on the halakhic man which appeared in *Talpiyot* [1944] many years ago. Here, I trace

In summary, in *Halakhic Man* the Rav does not define the full characteristics of actual halakhic men. He deals only with their mastery of halakhah, their creativity with it and how they bring holiness down to this world. We therefore cannot make any judgment, based on *Halakhic Man*, regarding the Rav's view of whether an actual halakhic man should or should not study or master science.

*Divine Intervention and Religious Sensibilities* (pp. 179–208) discusses different views regarding the extent of God's intervention in our world through miraculous acts. A naturalist view argues that God's intervention in the world is minimal or non-existent. An interventionist view argues that God does involve himself in the world by performing miracles from time to time.<sup>8</sup>

Rambam's view is a prime example of a naturalistic theology. He believed that prophecy is the outcome of a natural process that involves the self-initiated development of moral character, intellect and imagination. Providence is a natural outgrowth of accomplishment: reward and punishment represents not divine incursion into the natural order but rather benefits and adversities that flow naturally from human intellectual efforts and achievements. Finally, stories of miracles that are recorded in the Bible are to be understood either as reports of dreams and visions or else as a description of events that, though unusual, can be explained in terms of natural laws that were programmed into nature at creation. For Rambam the statement "God does X" actually means "within the natural order ordained by God, X occurs" (p. 179).

From a traditional standpoint, naturalism would seem heretical. Traditionalists see naturalism as an accommodation to a secular

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out the portrait of the character of the halakhic man in terms of his inner world, his obligation and his desire to run toward the Holy One Blessed be He." See *Community Covenant and Commitment: Selected Letters and Communications*, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, ed. Nathaniel Helfgot, Ktav, 2005, p. 321.

<sup>8</sup> There is an even more extreme interventionist view called "occasionalism"—that objects in nature have no causal power and that God is the cause of all seemingly natural events.

understanding that runs counter to biblical and rabbinic teachings concerning God's role in history.<sup>9</sup>

In recent years, however, people<sup>10</sup> have argued that a naturalist understanding is actually superior to an interventionist theology. The argument is as follows: The Torah was given by God to perfect people (*le-zaref bo et ha-briyot*) and society. To judge whether a certain theology is correct it thus make sense to examine the type of person that emerges and the quality of the community that is produced by those who accept a certain theology. Interventionism, it is said, creates an undesirable mindset of human dependence and helplessness. It sees religious activities as designed to get God to satisfy human needs in a miraculous fashion. Interventionism thus encourages preoccupation with self-interest. Furthermore, because interventionism stresses reward and punishment, it creates deplorable patterns of actions based on ulterior motives, "*lo lishmah*." Also, the belief that God intervenes in human affairs tends to diminish one's responsibility for concrete, pragmatic action and initiative, in defiance of Jewish norms that require people to utilize the natural order in such pursuits as medical treatment, economic effort, war and general security, following the dictum "we do not rely on miracles" (p. 180).<sup>11</sup>

Interventionism celebrates brute divine power manifested through miracles, at the cost of implying that God originally created a flawed universe that requires His miraculous interven-

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<sup>9</sup> Naturalists would counterclaim that interventionist statements, so common in the bible and in rabbinic teachings, are a concession to the masses who need an unsophisticated understanding of religion and a concrete this-worldly rationale for observing the commandments.

<sup>10</sup> See for example the article *From Anthropology to Metaphysics: David Hartman on Divine Intervention*, in our book, pp. 209-223.

<sup>11</sup> In his following article, *From Anthropology to Metaphysics* (pp. 209-223), however, Shatz cautions us against assuming that interventionists are therefore content to sit back and wait for God to take care of His world. On the contrary, he argues, people in interventionist communities seem to excel in acts of *hesed*.

tions. Naturalism by contrast, celebrates the divine wisdom manifest in the original creation (p. 181).<sup>12</sup>

*“From the Depths I have Called to You”*: *Jewish Reflections on September 11<sup>th</sup> and Contemporary Terrorism* (pp. 257–290) is a timely and important article that is eloquent, inspiring and lucid. Not only does it deal with the philosophic questions brought to the fore by the 9/11 attack, it also provides a much needed spiritual balm for those troubled by this terrible and tragic event. Addressed in detail is the ancient philosophic question of why bad things happen to good people.

Shatz also raises and answers other important questions: If the 9/11 attack was religiously motivated, were its perpetrators simply obeying the dictates of their religion? If yes, how were their actions

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<sup>12</sup> In *Shabbat* 118b we find the following: “R. Yosi said, ‘May my portion be with those who recite the entire *hallel* every day.’ The Gemara asks, ‘This is not so, for a Master said: He who recites *hallel* every day it is as if he blasphemes and reproaches [the Divine Name]?’ [R. Yosi answered,] ‘We refer to *pisukei di-zimra*.’ ”

R. J. B. Soloveitchik elaborates: Why indeed is *hallel ha-mitzri* different from *pisukei di-zimra*? Don’t they both praise God? Why is it that the recitation of *hallel ha-mitzri* on a daily basis is a severe sin, while the recitation of *pisukei di-zimra* on a daily basis is praiseworthy? The Rav answers that when we recite *pisukei di-zimra* we are testifying to the greatness of God’s world as he created it and as we see it on a regular basis. Since we get accustomed to it and we see it as a natural occurrence, it takes great effort to see God’s hand in it and therefore this type of praise, which is more difficult to comprehend, is very special, and is appropriate even on a daily basis. When we recite *hallel ha-mitzri*, however, we are praising God for intervening in a miraculous way. It is one thing to proclaim on a few days during the year that God intervened to set His world straight, but to harp on this on a daily basis implies that God’s world, as he created it, might be flawed and needed intervention.

I heard this lecture many years ago from an audio recording of the Rav. In an email correspondence with Prof. Lawrence Kaplan he informed me that this lecture was addressed to the Rabbinic Alumni of RIETS in about 1957 and that there is a Hebrew transcription of it, “*Ramattayim Tzofim*,” in *Ha-Adom Ve-Olomo*.

Other permutations of this idea, that miraculous intervention might imply a flawed Creation, can be found in Shatz’s book on p. 201, fn. 9.

different, for example, than that of our forefather Abraham who, in obedience to God, was prepared to slaughter his only son? Also, do some observant Jews contain within themselves the potential for fanatical religious zeal, and if yes, how can we teach Judaism to impress upon our youth and upon our coreligionists that terrorist acts, even when perpetrated to further religious ideals, are never justified?

The Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard argued that to believe in religion because it is “rational” or because the “facts” support it, is a secular gesture, not a religious one.<sup>13</sup> Religious passion and intensity are measured by what we are willing to give up for our religion, and part of the required price is to surrender our intellect and our willingness, when religiously necessary, to act against all odds and evidence. Furthermore, a religious act, according to Kierkegaard, is not to be confused with an intellectual one. Doing what is morally correct, although valuable and praiseworthy, does not, in and of itself, make someone a religious person. On the contrary, a religious person must be prepared to do the opposite of what is intellectually sound (p. 260).

Kierkegaard reads this lesson into the narrative of the *akeda*. When Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac, his religious commitment requires him to do so, even though from a moral point of view it would constitute murder. To Kierkegaard this is the point of the *akeda*. Religious commitment finds its highest, clearest expression when it overrides other modes of thinking and feeling that conflict with the religious demand (p. 265).

Shatz argues, however, that Judaism has a different understanding of the *akeda*. First of all, Judaism sees the *akeda* not as a conflict between morality and the will of God, but rather as a conflict between Abraham’s parental love for Isaac<sup>14</sup> and obeying the command of God. Secondly, there is also another act in the *akeda* drama. Abraham never kills Isaac; an angel enjoins him from doing

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<sup>13</sup> This is in contrast, for example, to the first chapter of *Mishneh Torah*, which lays out a religious imperative to know that God exists.

<sup>14</sup> From the morning prayers יהיידו מבן יהיידו את רהמיו מכן יהיידו, “as Abraham our forefather suppressed his mercy for his only son.”

so.<sup>15</sup> Being committed to God implies that we are to be ready to do what God commands; but God will not allow child sacrifice (p. 265). In the end, the *akeda* testifies that Divine Will cannot contradict natural morality (p. 266). In Rav Kook's words, "Man is not forced to choose between the throbbing savagery of pagan enthusiasm and the shallow frigidity of lifeless detachment. Abraham finally expresses his deepest religious striving without having to take the final step of killing his son" (p. 266).

Like so much else in Judaism, the *akeda* has conflicting messages. On one hand Abraham is praised for his readiness to sacrifice his son for God, but on the other hand he is enjoined from murdering him. Which of the two conflicting messages should we stress when we teach the *akeda*? According to Shatz, it "depends upon circumstances, and on how the *darshan's* words reverberate and are processed in the immediate community and the larger world. In our time, the ending of the story, not its beginning, is the punch line we need to get across. We must not allow anyone to conflate *akeda* and al Qaeda" (p. 266).

Shatz suggests how we ought to interpret our religion to assure that we, as Jews, do not succumb to the excesses of religious zealotry. Unlike those who argue that there is no intrinsic morality—that for religious Jews only the halakhah defines what is morally good or bad—Shatz shows that morality qua morality, even when not defined or mandated by halakhah, has religious value. Among his various proofs he illustrates this simply from the verse "Give thanks to the Lord because he is good (*hodu la-Shem ki tov*)."<sup>16</sup> (PS. 18:1, 136:1) As Shatz explains, "We thank God for Good things He has done and also praise Him for His actions—based on our estimation of what is good." If we could not independently determine what is good, we would not be able to praise God for His goodness.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> On p. 283, fn. 27, paraphrasing Carmy, the author notes that "whereas God Himself commands the *akeda*, an angel calls it off... This point should prevent us from extrapolating ongoing duties from special, occasion-specific divine commands in the Bible."

<sup>16</sup> Leibniz in his *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686) expresses this idea as follows: "So in saying that things are not good by any rule of goodness, but

Shatz argues further that although we must never compromise the religious framework, nevertheless our religious passion must be tempered by morality and rationality. Morality and rationality must be part and parcel of religion and not external to it. “Such an approach, which is called “dialectical,” sees religion as requiring not a single-minded commitment to one of a pair of values—freedom vs. submission, fear vs. love, self-negation vs. self-affirmation, emotion vs. intellect, and so on—but rather a careful calibration and balancing of them, perhaps an oscillation (or dialectic) between one and another” (p. 263). Supporting this dialectical approach, Shatz quotes Rav Kook: “It is forbidden for the fear of Heaven to push aside man’s natural morality. There is a sign showing that the fear of Heaven is pure, when the natural morality, planted in man’s honest nature, ascends through... [the fear of Heaven] to higher levels than it would attain without it.”

The tragic events of 9/11 caused many people to once again question why bad things happen to good people. Why were so many innocent people allowed by God to perish within the Twin Towers? Addressing this age-old question, Shatz elaborates on the approach of Rav Soloveitchik, who refused to provide a theodicy, i.e., he refused to speculate on why specific tragic events were either justified or necessary. Rav Soloveitchik argued that by providing a theodicy, we relieve ourselves of the responsibility to help those affected by evil.<sup>17</sup> For example, the Gemara provides a theodicy that people suffer because of their sins.<sup>18</sup> The result of accepting such a

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sheerly by the will of God, it seems to me that one destroys, without realizing it, all the love of God and all his glory. For why praise him for what he has done if he would be equally praiseworthy in doing exactly the contrary?”

<sup>17</sup> The author does, however, note that there are approaches to theodicy that do not relieve us of our responsibility to address evil (p. 287 fn. 57). For example, a theodicy that God allows evil to preserve free will imputes no fault to the sufferer.

<sup>18</sup> See for example the opinion of R. Ammi in *Shabbat* 56a that “there is no death without sin, no suffering without transgression.” The Gemara there, however, rejects the opinion of R. Ammi. There are also other opinions in the Gemara—that innocent people suffer. These include the idea of suffering for love (*yesurim shel ahava*, *Kiddushin* 39b, *Berakhot* 61b)

theodicy, however, is that it might cause people to conclude that those who suffered deserve their punishment, and if so, there is no need to help them. Rav Soloveitchik therefore felt that when evil occurs, our primary response should be not to try to understand why God allowed the evil to occur, but rather to focus on doing everything we can to help those suffering from the evil tragedy.<sup>19</sup>

The final article *The Overexamined Life is Not Worth Living* (pp. 387–412) was originally published in an anthology of autobiographical essays by religiously committed professional philosophers. In it Shatz explains how he reconciles his religiously observant life and his profession as a philosopher.

First let me tell you what Shatz does not do. You will not find the kind of statement “There was a dark period in my life when I had doubts...”<sup>20</sup> You will also not find a dismissive statement such as “My religious beliefs were never shaken by my study of philoso-

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*nissayon* (trial), and vicarious atonement. Rav in *Mo'ed Katan* 28a says that “length of life, children and sustenance” are due to astrological causes (*mazzala*). R. Jacob in *Kiddushim* 39b states that “the reward for a mitzvah is not found in this world” (pp. 272-273.)

<sup>19</sup> R. Soloveitchik also gave other reasons why he refused to provide a theodicy for evil. For example, in “Sacred and Profane: *Kodesh* and *Chol* in World Perspectives” *The 1995 Book of Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Ch. Sosevsky, Orthodox Union and Yeshivat Ohr Yerushalayim, p. 57, he writes “The grandeur of religion lies in its *mysterium tremendum*, its magnitude, and its ultimate incomprehensibility... When a minister, rabbi, or priest attempts to solve the ancient question of Iyyov’s suffering, through a sermon or lecture, he does not promote religious ends but, on the contrary, does them a disservice. The beauty of religion, with its grandiose vistas, reveals itself to man not in solutions but in problems, not in harmony but in constant conflict of diversified forces and trends.”

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, David Berger’s statement in *Tradition* 33:4 p. 87 “In my mid-teens, I experienced periods of perplexity and inner struggle while reading works of biblical criticism. While I generally resisted arguments for the documentary hypothesis with a comfortable margin of safety, there were moments of deep turmoil. I have a vivid recollection of standing at an outdoor *kabbalat Shabbat* in camp overwhelmed with doubts and hoping that God would give me the strength to remain an Orthodox Jew.”

phy...”<sup>21</sup> Instead you will find a detailed explanation of how Shatz grappled with the occasional seemingly conflicting beliefs and values of Torah and philosophy, his different answers at different stages of his life, and his general contentedness with his community, his religion and his profession.

Almost as an aside, Shatz explains that although there were times in his life when he had to erect a wall between his religion and his philosophy, he was able to overcome this separation “not by bringing reason and religion together on every point, but by utilizing philosophical methods, categories, and distinctions to clarify my tradition and to reveal layers of richness that would otherwise have eluded me” (p. 403). In this Shatz seems to have taken to heart Rav Kook’s advice that “We should not immediately refute any idea which comes to contradict anything in the Torah, but rather we should build the palace of Torah above it.” Shatz explains, “I take that to mean that if people believe that a particular doctrine of the Torah is true, then other things they accept can only deepen their understanding of that doctrine. If no Darwinist had ever lived, religious intellectual life would now be easier; but it would not be richer, nor closer to the truth. Likewise, if the world had never discovered the complex causes of disease and natural disasters, theology would be much simpler—but not only would we have lesser capacity to heal and alleviate suffering, we would present a skewed picture of how God operates in the world” (p. 245).

This essay is superb and should be read and reread, but I will not present any more details—buy the book. To bring this review

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the statement by R. J. B. Soloveitchik in *The Lonely Man of Faith*, New York: Doubleday, 2006, p. 7 “I have never been seriously troubled by the problem of the Biblical doctrine of creation vis-à-vis the scientific story of evolution at both the cosmic and the organic levels, nor have I been perturbed by the confrontation of the mechanistic interpretations of the human mind with the Biblical spiritual concept of man. I have not been perplexed by the impossibility of fitting the mystery of revelation into the framework of historical empiricism. Moreover, I have not even been troubled by the theories of Biblical criticism which contradict the very foundation upon which the sanctity and integrity of the Scriptures rest.” How we wish the Rav would have provided us with a detailed explanation as to why he was not bothered by any of this.

full circle, however, I would like to come back to a point alluded to in the opening quote of this review. Until the 1600s philosophers nearly always believed in God and religion, and it was only some of the details of their beliefs that occasionally led to accusations of heresy. The Enlightenment,<sup>22</sup> however, changed everything by questioning all assumptions about religion and God. Today, however, the pendulum has swung back and it is once again becoming acceptable for a philosopher to believe in God.<sup>23</sup> As David Shatz so aptly writes, “The separation between philosophy and religion has been rather brief.”<sup>24</sup> ❧

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<sup>22</sup> For an argument during the Enlightenment against the study of philosophy see, for example, the responsum of R. Jacob Emden, quoted in my “The Jewish Enlightenment” *Hakirah* vol. 6, p. 93, fn. 11.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, the previously mentioned book *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason*, which contains a collection of twenty articles by philosophers explaining how they reconciled their faith with their philosophy.

<sup>24</sup> I would like to thank Rabbi Asher Benzion Buchman and Prof. Lawrence Kaplan, the former for his many suggestions for clarifying and improving this article, the latter for reviewing an earlier draft and critiquing various passages. Any and all mistakes, however, are mine.