LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Aṭḥalta De-Geulah

Rabbi Dovid Bashevkin,
Founder and Host of 18Forty, writes:

I read with great interest Heshey Zelcer's article in *Ḥakirah,* vol. 37, "Aṭḥalta De-Geulah as Envisioned by Ḥiddushei HaRim." The essay highlights comments by R. Yitzḥak Meir Alter in *Ḥiddushei HaRim* about the messianic significance of the year 1840, suggesting that *ḥasidut* may have been "the antidote sent down from Heaven to counter the effects of the Enlightenment." While the author notes, via an anonymous footnote, that "it is difficult to know with certainty what *Ḥiddushei HaRim* had in mind with this *d'var* Torah," I believe a fuller exploration of the broader Hasidic and Kabbalistic treatment of this year would have yielded a more substantive analysis.

The year 1840 (5600) occupies a central place in many Jewish mystical and messianic traditions. Israel Bartal, in *Messianism and Nationalism: Liberal Optimism vs. Orthodox Anxiety*, discusses its significance in the writings of Yakov Lipschitz (secretary to R. Yitzchok Elchanan and great-great-grandfather of Reb Pinny Lipschutz, founder of *Yated Neeman*), as well as in the Reform movement and in the nationalistic vision of R. Yehudah Alkalai—who, notably, was the rabbi of Theodor Herzl's grandfather.

Within *ḥasidut*, the year 1840 also carried weight. The Ischbitz school—closely connected to Gur through their shared teachers, R. Simchah Bunim and the Kotzker Rebbe, though with differing orientations—assigned special significance to this year. In fact, it was on *Simḥat Torah* of 1839–1840 that R. Mordechai Yosef Leiner formally broke from Kotzk to establish Ischbitz Ḥasidut, a rupture often read through the very mystical and historical lenses that mark the importance of that year. In his ambitious *Hakdamah U-Pesichah*, R. Gershon Henoch Leiner, grandson of the founder of Ischbitz, presents 1840 as a turning point when access to Hasidic and Kabbalistic teachings would deepen among the broader Jewish people.

Other streams of thought echo this theme. R. Wolbe, drawing on a teaching of R. Yisroel Salanter, connected 1840 to a new era of spiritual personalization—when Torah would serve as a tool for greater self-understanding. In 1978, the Lubavitcher Rebbe devoted an entire discourse (later published in *Likkutei Sichos,* vol. 15) to the Zohar's words on the unique role of 1840. And for readers seeking a secular account of the social and technological revolutions of that era, Orlando Figes's *The Europeans: Three Lives and the Making of a Cosmopolitan Culture* offers valuable perspective.

My own interest in this topic is personal. In 2020, I launched a Jewish media site dedicated to non-hierarchical, thoughtful conversation on issues of Jewish life and belief. Inspired by the Zohar's framing of 1840 as an age of greater access to

hidden wisdom, I see our own moment as another turning point—one in which more Jews can grasp and integrate the depths of Jewish thought into their daily lives. I named the project *18Forty*, in honor of that most auspicious year.

My deepest admiration and appreciation.

Heshey Zelcer responds:

Thank you, Dovid Bashevkin, for your interesting letter showing how the Zohar's prediction for the year 1840 inspired various *ḥasidic* and other personalities. Also, thank you for your *18Forty* podcast, which I greatly enjoy. It analyzes—with intelligence, clarity, and sophistication—important issues and trends affecting the Jewish community.

I am a descendant of Gur *ḥasidim* and whether at home or in the Gur *shtieble*—where I *davened* as a child and as a young adult—I never heard a bad word spoken about the State of Israel or Zionism. On the contrary. I remember entering my parents' home one day and hearing my father exclaim, "Did you hear how many airplanes the *Yidden* shot down today?!" However, I never saw an Israeli flag at home or in the *shtieble*. Neither did I ever witness any celebrations of the Jewish State or its holidays. I was thus thrilled to find *Ḥiddushei HaRim* using what would become a *dati-leumi* Zionist phrase, *aṯḥalta de-geulah*, the beginning of redemption. That was the motivation for my article.

As an afterthought, I would like to note that now—more than ever—we can appreciate how the twinning of science (including technology) and spirituality (especially *ḥassidut*), as envisioned by *Ḥiddushei HaRim* and others, was truly *aṯḥalta de-geulah*, the beginning of our redemption. Can anyone imagine Israel surviving October 7, its subsequent and previous wars, without the technological edge made possible by Jewish people embracing the educational ideals of enlightenment? Also, can anyone imagine the survival of the Jewish spirit without the warm infusion provided by the various *ḥasidic* sects including: Lubavitch, Gur, Klausenberg, Breslov, and others?

In closing, I want to add one additional personality to Bashevkin's list of those who expressed excitement and anticipation for the year 1840. The Gaon of Vilna (the Gr"a), a brilliant *halakhist* and kabbalist, took the Zohar's prediction seriously. In ca. 1780 he set out for *Eretz Yisrael* to help pave the way for *Mashiaḥ*. In mid-journey, however, he turned around and headed home. Late in his life, after repeated requests from his son, the Gr"a explained that he did not complete his journey because "he had not received permission from Heaven."

Some of his disciples, however, did complete the journey. In the early 1800s, in what became known as *Aliyat Talmidei Ha-Gr"a,* they reached the Holy Land and settled in Safed and Jerusalem.

Fine-Tuning Argument

Nathan Aviezer, professor of Physics and former Chairman of the Physics Department of Bar-Ilan University, writes:

In their article ("The Fine-Tuning Argument for God's Existence," Summer 2025), Rav Elie Feder and Rav Aaron Zimmer claim that the fine-tuning of the universe provides clear proof of God's existence. The purpose of this letter is to point out that this central claim of these authors is incorrect.

Let me begin with the concept of fine-tuning. As the authors correctly point out, scientific evidence demonstrates that very stringent laws of nature are required to permit the existence of living creatures and that all these stringencies exist in our universe.

One should note that the fine-tuning laws of nature do not, in themselves, guarantee the existence of life. Certain very stringent conditions must also be met for life to develop from inanimate matter. Let me quote some leading experts:

Nobel laureate Francis Crick (awarded his Nobel Prize for elucidating the structure of DNA, the molecule of life) is quoted as follows (*Scientific American*, February 1991):

> The origin of life appears to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to be satisfied to get life going.

Crick does not mean "miracle" in the religious sense. He is an atheist, as are all the scientists that I quote.

Harold Klein, chairman of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences committee that reviewed origin-of-life research, is quoted as follows (*Scientific American*, February 1991):

> The simplest bacterium is so damn complicated that it is almost impossible to imagine how it happened.

The fine-tuned laws of nature and the required stringent conditions might lead to living creatures. But this was not sufficient to produce sentient human beings. Scientists have discovered that a number of highly improbable events had to occur to lead to human beings.

The most famous of these improbable events was the impact with the Earth of a large meteor that destroyed all the dinosaurs. As Nobel laureate Luis Alvarez writes (*Physics Today*, July 1987, p. 33):

> From the human point of view, that impact (of the meteor with the Earth) was one of the most important events in the history of our planet. Had it not taken place, the largest mammals alive today might still resemble the small rat-like creatures that were scurrying around then trying to avoid being devoured by the dinosaurs.

Alvarez goes on to write:

> If the impact had been weaker, no species would have become extinct, the mammals would still

> be subordinate to the dinosaurs, and I (Alvarez) wouldn't be writing this article. If the impact had been stronger, all life on this planet would have ceased, and again, I wouldn't be writing this article. However, the impact was just the strength to ensure that the mammals survived, while the dinosaurs didn't.

It has become clear to scientists that the sudden destruction of the world's dinosaurs was only one of a long series of completely unexpected, highly improbable events whose occurrence enabled the appearance of human beings. As Stephen Jay Gould, of Harvard University, put it (*Wonderful Life*, pp. 14, 319):

> We are an improbable and fragile entity … the result of a staggeringly improbable series of events, utterly unpredictable and quite unrepeatable … Let the "tape of life" play again from the identical starting point, and the chance is vanishing small that anything like human intelligence would grace the replay … It fills us with amazement (because of its improbability) that human beings exist at all.

These are the scientific facts. What conclusions can one draw from these scientific facts? Rav Elie Feder and Rav Aaron Zimmer leave no doubt regarding the conclusions that they draw (pp. 121, 122):

> The fine-tuning argument … points directly to the God of Abraham as the only satisfactory explanation for the fine-tuning of the constants (of nature) … the constants are not arbitrary, random numbers but are rather precise values selected by an intelligent cause, God, for the purpose of bringing about our complex universe.

The mistake in logic of these authors has been pointed out by Stephen Jay Gould (*Bully for Brontosaurus*, essay 7, pp. 114, 115):

> This assumption—the easy slide from current function to reason of origin—is the most serious and widespread fallacy of my profession … I like to identify this error of reasoning with a phrase that ought to become a motto: *Current utility may not be equated with historical origin* (emphasis in original) … A few thinkers have drawn the wildly invalid inference that human evolution was prefigured into the ancient design of the cosmos … the current fit of human life to physical laws permits no conclusion about the reasons and mechanisms of our origin. Since we are here, we had to fit.

Consistent with Gould's statement, Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein wrote the following in his article that immediately preceded the *Ḥakirah* article of the authors:

> God created the world in a way that one can interpret it both from a believing and a non-believing perspective … One can view the universe through the spectacles of belief, but one can

> also observe it from a secular and atheistic viewpoint … I do not subscribe to the idea that nature can provide unequivocal proof of God's existence.

However, this does not mean that nothing can be gained by studying the natural world. Rav Lichtenstein also wrote:

> I do believe that one can feel God expressed through nature. If a person has faith and he can experience religious emotions, he will feel God expressed through nature.

Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein's view was shared by his illustrious father, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, and by his even more illustrious grandfather, Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who wrote: "God's existence cannot be deduced from nature." But Rav Soloveitchik also wrote: "God's presence can be experienced through the natural world."

There is a very long history of trying to prove the existence of God, dating back to Rambam and Thomas Aquinas, through William Paley ("watchmaker argument"), and continuing down to our own day. All these "proofs" have been shown to be invalid. We have recently been confronted with the proposed "proofs" of the Bible Codes and of Intelligent Design. H. Allen Orr, evolutionary biologist from Rochester University, has clearly demonstrated that the basic claim of Intelligent Design is wrong (*Boston Review*, December 1996, pp. 34–46). Nevertheless, praise of Intelligent Design continues unabated.

It is time for Jews to recognize that our *emunah* is based on faith, and not on proof.

Elie Feder and Aaron Zimmer respond:

Thank you, Nathan Aviezer, for engaging seriously with our article. Your argument rests on a conflation of the design argument from biology with the fine-tuning argument from physics, and it overlooks the important distinctions we drew in our section "Fine-Tuning in Physics vs. Design in Biology." Your central claim can be summarized as follows:

1) The fine-tuning of the constants is a necessary prerequisite for the emergence of life.
2) Beyond this prerequisite, many additional highly improbable events were also needed to produce human beings.
3) These later improbabilities can be explained through natural chance processes operating within the universe.
4) Therefore, by analogy, the fine-tuning of the constants can also be attributed to chance.

This line of reasoning is flawed. The fact that improbable events can occur by chance within a universe that already operates according to fixed physical laws does not imply that the laws themselves can be explained in the same way. Later biological or historical contingencies unfold after the universe exists.

The fundamental constants of nature, by contrast, are part of the fixed framework that determines what kind of universe is even possible. They are not produced by a natural process; they are the preconditions for all natural processes. Therefore, the power of chance to explain later events has no bearing on the fine-tuning argument. The point remains: the foundational laws are fine-tuned, and that fine-tuning points to an intelligent cause.

A simple analogy clarifies the issue. Suppose a computer program randomly generates poker hands and eventually produces a royal flush. That improbable outcome can indeed be explained by chance given enough trials. But that does not mean the design of the computer program itself can be attributed to chance. The program must be in place before chance can operate at all. Similarly, that chance can explain contingent events within our universe says nothing about the origin of the fine-tuned laws that allow such events to occur in the first place.

This helps frame Gould's well-known observation about the contingency of biological evolution. Gould argued that replaying the "tape of life" would almost certainly not produce human beings again, and on that point we can agree. One cannot use the design of biological organisms to prove that the universe was specifically designed for humans.

But that is not what the fine-tuning argument claims. The fine-tuning argument states that the universe is fine-tuned for a structured, ordered, complex reality capable of supporting any chemistry, astronomy, or biology at all. If you "replay the tape" of the universe with different constants, you do not get different forms of life; you get no structure or complexity whatsoever. You get a universe of only fundamental particles, or one that collapses instantly, or one that expands too rapidly for stars or galaxies to form. Even a universe containing nothing more than hydrogen atoms requires extraordinarily precise constants. These constants point to an intelligent cause who set them in the narrow ranges needed for a complex universe to exist.

You also raise an important point about faith, namely that God created a world that can be interpreted through both believing and non-believing perspectives. On this we disagree. Modern physics has shown that to interpret the world without a Creator, one must accept the multiverse: an infinite collection of unobservable universes that generates a host of scientific and philosophical absurdities. We do not regard this as an equally valid alternative to the straightforward conclusion that an intelligent cause fine-tuned the constants.

Still, as we wrote, the fine-tuning argument does not claim to offer absolute proof of God. Rather, it provides strong rational support for belief in a Creator and offers a substantive response to skeptics. The question is not whether *emunah* necessarily rests on irrefutable demonstration, but whether modern physics strengthens the intellectual foundation for belief. We argue that it

does.

Regarding the views of Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Lichtenstein, it is important to note that the fine-tuning argument in its modern form was simply not available in their time. The most dramatic example of fine-tuning—the cosmological constant—was only discovered in 1998, and even today its significance has not penetrated the broader public. While the intelligent design argument from biology was available to them, as we wrote above and in our article, the argument from fine-tuning in physics is qualitatively better. It is unclear what these great thinkers would say if they were presented with the modern scientific picture.

What we do know is that there is a long tradition of great Jewish thinkers—from Rambam to Saadiah Gaon to the *Ḥovos HaLevavot*—who maintained that reason can offer strong arguments for the existence of God. Our contribution is to continue that tradition by showing that the scientific discovery of fine-tuning provides such an argument

Finally, the article by Allen Orr that you cite is not relevant to the issue at hand. Orr's critique, like your argument, is directed at the biological design argument and relies on gradual evolutionary mechanisms to explain the emergence of complex biological systems. But the fine-tuning argument is not about biology at all. It is about the precise quantitative features of the laws of physics that have remained fixed since the beginning of the universe. Evolutionary explanations address contingent biological development, not the origin of the constants that make any complex universe possible in the first place.

Thank you again for engaging with our work. We hope this clarifies the issues you raised and helps advance the discussion.

David Chasman of Englewood, NJ, writes:

Messrs. Feder and Zimmer replace various arguments for God's Existence with yet another argument that is inherently problematic.

The argument for a divine creator based on the fine-tuning of physical constants, as recently articulated by Feder and Zimmer, rests on a pair of questionable assumptions.

Their central claim requires proving that the set of constants we observe is the *only* one possible for a life-permitting universe. They provide no such proof. They must show that a small change in one constant could not be offset by changes in others. To use an analogy, their logic applied to houses would suggest that a 20-foot house *must* be built from two 10-foot floors, ignoring the countless (literally infinite number of) other combinations that achieve the same height.

This premise is weakened by studies, not cited by the authors, exploring "islands of stability," where various sets of constants could still result in a viable "universe as we know it."

Let us assume that there is a unique set of constants resulting in

"the universe as we know it." Should we be surprised to find ourselves in a cosmos whose physical laws support our existence? This is a simple selection effect. A universe hostile to life would have no observers to ponder its nature. Has the universe served God up on a silver platter or have we brought God along in our picnic basket?

Elie Feder and Aaron Zimmer respond:

Thank you, David Chasman, for sharing your comments. They raise important issues addressed extensively in the scientific literature, and we appreciate the opportunity to clarify how fine-tuning is understood by physicists.

To begin with, the fine-tuning argument does not claim that our particular set of constants is the only one capable of producing a complex universe. That level of uniqueness is neither required nor assumed. The scientific point is that within the vast space of possible values for the constants of nature, the region that permits a universe with atoms, chemistry, planets, stars, and life is extraordinarily small. In other words, the issue is not that only one precise combination works, but that the complexity-permitting combinations form a strikingly rare subset of all possible options. This conclusion is well established in decades of fine-tuning research.

Your concern that a shift in one constant might be offset by changes in others is something physicists have examined in depth. While we did not delve into this technical point in our brief article, the literature certainly does. Physicist Luke Barnes has emphasized that most fine-tuning studies—from the earliest papers in the 1970s until today—vary many parameters simultaneously. When this is done, additional life-permitting combinations do appear, but the overall picture remains the same. These combinations form isolated, narrow pockets within a much larger space of possibilities, and the probability of randomly hitting all the required values at once remains astronomically small. Allowing many constants to vary does not eliminate the fine-tuning problem; it simply reveals that the life-permitting region is small and scattered rather than a single thin interval.

As Barnes writes when addressing the misconception that fine-tuning research varies only one constant at a time:

> This is a myth. The claim quoted by our questioner is totally wrong. The vast majority of fine-tuning/anthropic papers, from the very earliest papers in the 70's until today, vary many parameters… The scientific literature does not simply vary one parameter at a time when investigating life-permitting universes. This is a myth, born of

(at best) complete ignorance.[1]

Your building analogy is useful in illustrating this point, but it requires adjustment. A building whose only requirement is to reach a height of 20 feet can indeed be constructed in infinitely many ways. But fine-tuning is not like that. A closer analogy would be a building that must be 20 feet tall *and* structurally stable, where stability is possible only if the first floor lies within a few very narrow height ranges and the second floor lies within a few narrow ranges, and only certain pairings produce a viable structure. Even if several such ranges exist, the set of acceptable combinations is still tiny relative to all possible ones.

This is closer to the situation in physics. Whether one varies a single constant or many at once, the values that give rise to a complex, ordered universe occupy an extraordinarily small region in the full parameter space. This extreme rarity is precisely what physicists mean by fine-tuning, and it is why the phenomenon is taken so seriously in contemporary cosmology.

Regarding your second point, the appeal to a simple selection effect—namely, that we should not be surprised to find ourselves in a universe that allows observers—only makes sense if one assumes the existence of many universes. In that framework, one could argue that we observe a fine-tuned universe simply because observers cannot arise in universes whose constants do not allow for structure or complexity. This is the anthropic principle, the philosophical centerpiece of the multiverse proposal, which posits an infinite collection of unobservable universes with different constants.

While the multiverse is intended to explain fine tuning without invoking an intelligent cause, it faces significant scientific and conceptual difficulties. The most serious is *the measure problem*—a problem that emerges from the difficulty of assigning meaningful probabilities in an infinite ensemble of universes. This problem undermines the ability of the multiverse to function as a coherent scientific theory. In addition, an infinite collection of universes brings with it numerous further absurdities. We discuss these issues in detail in season 2 of the *Physics to God* podcast and hope to present a fuller written treatment in a future article.

No Blessing for the New Month of Tishrei

Jerome M. Marcus, a lawyer from Lower Merion, PA, writes:

Thank you for Rabbi Ron's article on skipping *Birkhat Ha-Ḥodesh* for Tishrei, a *minhag* that has long confused me. I wonder whether, in addition to the reasons he presents,

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[1] https://letterstonature.wordpress.com/2013/08/01/fine-tuning-and-the-myth-of-one-variable-at-a-time/.

we also have this practice because every other *Rosh Ḥodesh* is a זמן כפרה, a time of atonement. But Rosh Hashanah is not that, at least not all by itself. It is just a part of the period for *kaparah*, ending of course ten (or nine) days later on Yom Kippur. Perhaps that is also why the *Musaf* for Rosh Hashanah is categorically different from the one we say at every (other) *Rosh Ḥodesh*, because on those days the *Musaf* focuses our attention on precisely this element, and for Rosh Hashanah that would not be appropriate.

Dr. Ben Zion Katz, professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University, writes:

I enjoyed the article by Zvi Ron, "The Custom Not to Recite the Blessing for the New Moon of Tishrei" in the latest issue of *Ḥakirah*. I have often thought of another reason to "cover up the real date of *Rosh Ḥodesh* Tishrei" which would also explain why the *shatz* holds a *sefer Torah* during the blessing of the new moon. It always seemed to me that the reason a *sefer Torah* is held is that a communal oath is being proclaimed, if you will, as to when *Rosh Ḥodesh* will be, despite when the *molad* is announced and the new moon actually visible. There are times when, due to rules regarding the automatic calendar, the new moon is visible but that day is not *Rosh Ḥodesh*, and this is especially likely for Tishrei for two reasons: First, Rosh Hashanah can only occur on 4 days (it cannot occur on Sun., Wed. or Fri.) while the new moon, of course, can occur on any day. Second, there are times when the *Rosh Ḥodesh* of Tishrei may be delayed even further due to the *molad zakan* or other rules. Thus, 60 percent of the time the new moon of the 7th month is not on the day of the *molad* (A. Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, 3rd, revised edition [NY: Feldheim, 1986], p. 15) and may be visible before Rosh Hashanah. Since people might find this disturbing, no announcement is made "to cover up the real date."

Elyakim Berman, a veterinarian living in Israel, who studies the Jewish calendar as a hobby, writes:

קראתי את מאמרך המענין על מנהג אי ברכת החודש של חודש תשרי. המאמר מעניין אבל לדעתי כדאי להוסיף מנהג לא נכון שקיים עקב אי ברכת חודש תשרי.

לפי מנהג אשכנז במאות השנים האחרונות וגם עבר קצת לנוסח עדות המזרח, מכריזים על זמן המולד. זה לא חלק מברכת החודש שהרבה יותר ישן אבל היום לפחות אצל האשכנזים זה חלק בלתי נפרד מברכת החודש.

למה מכריזים על שעת המולד? מופיע בכמה מקומות שמצוה לדעת את זמן המולד. בנוסף יש שאומרים שכדי לדעת מתי אפשר לעשות קידוש לבנה חייבים לדעת את זמן המולד. הבעיה עם סיבה זאת היא שהזמן שמכריזים הוא לא לפי השעון שלנו (אופק קהיר, שעון קיץ וסיבות נוספות) ולכן לעיתים רחוקות יהיה טעות בזמן קידוש לבנה על סמך השעה שהכריזו.

אבל הסיבה החשובה שחייבים לדעת זמן המולד (בלי קשר עם ברכת החודש) הוא כדי לדעת באיזה יום בשבוע יהיה ראש השנה ואיך יהיה הלוח בשנה הבאה. ולזה חייבים לדעת זמן המולד של חודש תשרי!!

לסיכום, יש מנהג כפי שהסברת לא לברך את חודש תשרי אבל חייבים להכריז על זמן המולד במיוחד של חודש תשרי!!

Emunah

Nathaniel Helfgot, rabbi of Cong. Netivot Shalom, and on the Judaic Studies faculty at SAR HS, writes:

I want to commend my former high school *talmid*, David Schwartz, and *Ḥakirah*, for publishing in the previous issue, the wonderful symposium on *emunah* containing contributions from some of the rabbinic leaders of the Modern-Orthodox community. I was especially taken with the contribution of my longtime friend and *ḥaver le-safsalei beit hamidrash,* Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein, whose authentic and stunningly candid insights made a deep impression.

One discordant note that did emerge, however, was the lack of diversity in choosing respondents. All the distinguished contributors were *roshei yeshivah* (except for an emeritus long-time pulpit rabbi and educator), all were 65 and older (with three, *Barukh Hashem,* 80 years old or close to 80), with no contribution from any younger members of our community's elite. Moreover, no lay people nor thoughtful women or voices from the Sefardic Modern community were included.

In the introduction to the symposium, it was noted that it was based on the famous symposium in *Jewish Action* Fall 1992 in which my revered teacher, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, *zt"l,* published his celebrated contribution, "The Source of Faith Is Faith Itself." That symposium included a number of women thinkers, male and female writers, religious artists and a poet, *kiruv* rabbis alongside a number of prominent *roshei yeshivah*. While a number of the participants were over the age of 65, most were in their 40s or 50s, (Rav Lichtenstein was not yet 60) and two were in their 30s.

Learning from the experiences and deep thinking of a broad array of lay people, rabbis and thinkers can only add to our growth in *avodat Hashem* and strengthening our faith commitments.

David Schwartz responds:

I think Rabbi Helfgot's point about diversity is a good one. As I alluded to in my introduction, my original proposal included a much broader roster of scholars, thinkers, and leaders, including several female and younger voices. The *Ḥakirah* editors narrowed the list largely to the contributors you see in the published symposium. While I can certainly see logic in their choices, I defer to them to explain the decision to forego a more diverse group.

Rabbi Asher Benzion Buchman, the Editor of Ḥakirah, responds:

When David Schwartz proposed this project to us, he introduced it by saying that, "in the last, say, 20 years there has been surprisingly little discussion or coverage of the

topic of belief, on a personal level." I did not agree with his assertion and pointed out that *Ḥakirah* 33 had a review by Bezalel Naor on *Strauss, Spinoza and Sinai: Orthodox Judaism and Modern Questions of Faith* in which the editor "solicited articles from rabbis, PhDs, and other thoughtful Orthodox Jews." I feel there is no dearth of Jewish "thinkers" who want to talk about and give their opinions about belief. For *Ḥakirah* to make a unique contribution, I felt it would be in presenting the thoughts of leading *roshei yeshivah*. I told Rabbi Schwartz that I did not believe he would be able to recruit them for this project. I had been told that *roshei yeshivah* would never agree to speak about their personal feelings. That Rabbi Schwartz was successful (in five out of six attempts) is a testament to his perseverance, and even more so to the *anivus* of these *roshei yeshivah*.

Yom Yerushalayim in Tanakh

Yaakov Jaffe, rabbi of the Maimonides Kehillah and the dean of its Maimonides School, in Brookline, MA, writes:

Natan Kopeika's article on "Yom Yerushalayim in Tanakh" surveys many Midrashic and Tannaic sources about the 28th of Iyar and connects them to the Biblical accounts in the middle of Shmuel *Alef*. However, Kopeika seems to have neglected the most explicit Biblical event to happen on the 28th of Iyar, Chizkiyahu's grand festival in Jerusalem.

As I demonstrate in my book *Isaiah and his Contemporaries* (2022, pp. 256–257), *Divrei Ha-Yamim Bet* 30:26 took place on the 28th of Iyar. That verse reads: "And there was a great happiness (*simḥah*) in Jerusalem. For from the days of Shlomo, son of David, King of Israel, there was nothing like this in Jerusalem."

One searching for a Biblical precedent for the redemption and celebration of Jerusalem on the 28th of Iyar need look no further than this verse, which is just as direct a prediction for the modern-day holiday as the sources Kopeika cites.

Natan Kopeika responds:

My friend and colleague Rav Avishai Grosser was also unaware of the opinion that part of the celebration by King Chizkiyahu occurred on 28 Iyar. However, he succeeded in finding much material on this. It seems that this idea, although unknown in our circles, was subject to a great deal of argumentation. It seems that neither of the two *shitot* about the timing of the second 7 days during the time of King Chizkiyahu has been universally accepted.

Indeed, it seems the *shitah* advocated by Rabbi Jaffe apparently involves making Nisan a "leap month" instead of Adar. Material is based on Chronicles 2:30; 2–4 [Radak], *Berakhot* 10b, *Sanhedrin* 12a,b, Tosefta *Sanhedrin* chapter 2, etc. This viewpoint is that that year Passover was celebrated in Iyar be-

ginning *Pesaḥ Sheni* because purification of the Temple was not completed in time for the first Passover in Nisan. Celebration was 7 days and 7 days, culminating on 28 Iyar.

Y*ashar koaḥ* to Rabbi Jaffe for catching this. I apologize for my ignorance of this question and for being unfamiliar with Rav Jaffe's book.

Fathers Teaching Children to Swim

Marcel Glickman Porush, a practicing dentist in Manchester, UK, writes:

I enjoyed reading/learning the latest *Ḥakirah*. How-ever, I could not help but chuckle at pp. 452 and 453.

In the *teshuvah* of the *Aruch la-Ner* regarding the *chiyuvim* of a father to his son, he writes

> ב"ה אלטאנא, בחודש כסליו תר"י
> לפ"ק, לק"ק מאסבאך

The author translates this:

> In the holy city of Altona, in the month of Kislev 5610 [responding] to the Holy City of Mosbach.

Bet hei is *be-ezrat Hashem* and לק"ק is an abbreviation for *le-kehilah kadisha,* the holy congregation.

Nobody over the years would have given a city in *ḥutz la-Aretz* the title *ir ha-kodesh*. Even in Eretz Yisrael, not every city has the title *ir hakodesh*.

Shaul Lent responds:

Thank you for pointing this out. You are correct that ב"ה stands for בעזרת ה׳, and לק"ק means "to the holy congregation." I appreciate your careful reading.

A Pesach Guide

Tzvi Rubinfeld, who runs the Ohr Mattisyahu night seder in Lakewood, NJ, writes:

Thank you, Shmuel Lesher, for your important and informative "A Pesach Guide for Those with Food Allergies and Sensitivities," *Ḥakirah* 37, Summer 2025.

I would like to clarify two points regarding R' Moshe Feinstein's measurements.

1. R' Moshe Feinstein's *shiur* for a *revi'is s* is quoted as 3.3 oz., while the footnote acknowledges a divergent *shiur* of 2.9 oz. In fact, R' Moshe did not offer an amount for a *revi'is* but rather wrote how one should calculate a *revi'is*. His son, R' Dovid Feinstein, measured the *shiurim* based on his father's ruling and came out with a *revi'is* of 3.3 oz. Several years later, R' Dovid Feinstein repeated the measurements and came to a different conclusion: that of 2.9 oz., and this is the *shiur* included in the later editions of *Haggadah Kol Dodi.*
2. The *shiur* of 2.9 oz. is what R' Dovid Feinstein ruled could be relied on for a *revi'is* for *mitzvos di-rabbanan*. For *Kiddush* on Friday night, which is *de-Oraysa*, the larger *shiur* of 4.42 oz. should be used. Since the 4 cups of wine on Pesach are *di-rabbanan,* 2.9 oz. would be enough. When Pesach

falls out on a Friday night, however, the first cup is also the cup of *Kiddush* and so the larger *shiur* of 4.42 oz. should be used for the first cup.

Shmuel Lesher responds:

Thank you for your interest in my article. I am happy to provide a more comprehensive presentation of the sources regarding R. Moshe Feinstein's position on the size of a *revi'is*.

1) In his *Kol Dodi Haggadah* on p. 4, R. Dovid Feinstein writes: "Since a *revi'is* is 1 ½ times the size of an egg, a *revi'is* by this measure is 2.9 fluid ounces. However, it is more likely that the water-displacement of an egg is 2.2 fluid ounces; thus, a *revi'is* is 3.3 ounces." In footnote 2 he adds, "In earlier editions of *Kol Dodi*, the calculation was given as 2.2 fluid ounces for an egg, and 3.3 for a *revi'is*."
2) In the revised edition of *Do it Right on Pesach Night: What? When? How Much?* published by Beth Medrash L'Torah V'Horoah (the Kollel located at Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem (MTJ), 145 East Broadway, New York, NY) reprinted from *Olomeinu*, *Our World* (Torah Umesorah, 1974), it cites R. Moshe's position as 2.9 oz.
3) In another document I cited from in my article published by Beth Medrash L'Torah V'Horoah, it states that "when the Seder is on Friday evening, the Kiddush cup should be at least 4.42 fluid ounces in size. This also applies to the Kiddush Cup used every Friday evening, throughout the year. Note: If one recites the Kiddush on behalf of the assembled when the Seder occurs on Friday night; then the Cup of the one reciting the Kiddush must be at least 4.42 fluid ounces, while the cups of the assembled (who must each drink his or her cup to fulfill the Mitzvah of the First of the Four Cups) can be 3.3 fluid ounces in size."
4) In *Sefer Kol Dodi, Hilchos Pesach*, published by R. Dovid Feinstein in 1970, it is recorded that the correct *shiur* of a *revi'is* is 3.3 oz. based on R. Moshe Feinstein's *teshuvah* (*O.C.* 1:136) on how to measure an *amah*. However, in a note he says that was a stringency. It is more logical or correct to say 2.9 oz. is the *shiur*.

In sum, in some places R. Dovid writes the *shiur* of a *revi'is* is 3.3 oz. and in some places he says it is 2.9 oz. I assume he is representing his father's opinion in all his positions, as he mentioned he used his father's method of calculating his *shiur*.

I agree that it would have been better to add the note that one needs a larger *shiur* (4.42 oz.) for a Seder that occurs on Friday night, when *Kiddush* is a *mitzvah de-Oraysa*.