

## The Moon's Lost Light

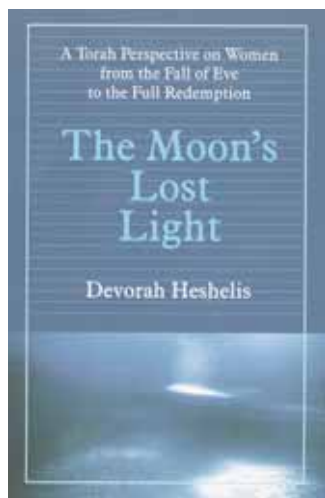
By Devorah Heshelis

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Reviewed by Mayer Twersky



Questions regarding the role and place of women within Judaism have spawned an ever-burgeoning literature. The questions themselves are no longer new. Are women equal to men in the eyes of the Torah? Why are there constraints regarding teaching Torah to women? Et cetera. Answers and perspectives, learned and insightful, have been offered from traditional points of view. In fact, the contributions, both books and articles, to this literature have been so plentiful and prolific that one would doubt if it were possible to offer a totally new, yet traditional perspective.

Mrs. Devorah Heshelis (which is a pen name) has done just that. Her monograph, *The Moon's Lost Light*, is a

remarkably creative and extremely erudite contribution to the Torah-and-women literature. Her monograph is important and delightful—important because it provides a comprehensive, conceptual framework for understanding the Torah's treatment of women and delightful because of the intellectual excitement which her conceptual breakthrough generates.

Hitherto traditionalists have, in essence, argued as follows. Women are endowed with *kedushat Yisrael* (sanctity) equal to that of men.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the halachah of matrilineal descent and women's primary role in childrearing mean that women guarantee Jewish continuity, et cetera. These representative facts simply belie the allegations of disparagement of women. Indubitably, these points are true and need to be emphatically asserted. Nevertheless, without doubting these truths, some people feel that while erroneous conclusions have been rebutted, some of the especially sensitive, crucial questions raised have not been adequately addressed.

*The Moon's Lost Light* focuses upon such questions. The following are two of the questions Mrs. Heshelis undertakes to answer: "Why do women sometimes appear to have a secondary position in Judaism? Why are there some rabbinical descriptions of women that don't seem to correspond to the reality we know?"<sup>2</sup>

In answering these questions, Mrs. Heshelis develops an exciting, new historical framework, which provides perspective on the women-and-Torah issue. Although a full sweep of the author's analysis is beyond the purview of this review, it should at least be noted that her framework also offers a fascinating perspective on major movements of modernity—not only feminism, but also

communism, Zionism and Reform and Conservative Judaism. A brief summary such as the following cannot do justice to the grand historical framework that Mrs. Heshelis constructs. It is, however, necessary, and thus will have to suffice. Man and woman were originally created equal, but because Chava (whose soul contained the souls of all future women<sup>3</sup>) led Adam to sin, woman's "light" (i.e., abstract intelligence, capacity for studying Torah) was subsequently diminished. There were social and emotional changes as well. Because Chava abused her influence over Adam and led him to sin, she was punished measure for measure with "he shall rule over you."<sup>4</sup> This accounts for women's secondary position in Judaism.

These punitive measures, however, were not ordained for all eternity. One aspect of the ultimate redemption, as prophesied by Yirmiyahu HaNavi,<sup>5</sup> is that "*nekeivah tesoveiv gever*," a female will turn into a man. That is, women will become equal with men (reversing the curse of "he shall rule over you") and also "women will once again have [abstract] perception equal to that of men."<sup>6</sup> In particular, according to Targum Yonatan ben Uziel, *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* means that women will utilize their newly regained "light" to study Torah. Moreover, according to the teaching of the Gaon of Vilna, as recorded in *Kol HaTor*, starting with the year 5500 from Creation (1740 C.E.), the powers of redemption would begin to enter the world. "Everything that will be in the full redemption enters the world ... little by little in this period."<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, in the modern era women have incrementally begun to enjoy equality and, in ever increasing numbers, demonstrate a high degree of abstract intelligence. Thus in our day, we have witnessed the initial, partial ful-

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fillment of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever*, as interpreted by Yonatan ben Uziel.

Women are studying Torah.

Mrs. Heshelis' historical approach suggests that women are somewhat different today than they were throughout pre-modern history. This accounts for the discrepancy between the rabbinic depictions of women and the contemporary reality of women. The descriptions found in the Talmud were accurate at that time. We observe increasing numbers of women whose intellectual profile differs because "when the power of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* started affecting the world, woman's abstract abilities began to change."<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that Mrs. Heshelis' monograph is preceded by a very impressive collection of approbations. Outstanding rabbinic authorities and luminaries such as Rabbi Yisrael Belsky vouch for the traditional character of her ideas. Thus the reader—and reviewer—may confidently proceed to delve into and discuss her extremely erudite, highly stimulating monograph.

### The Legitimacy of Questions

Before we reflect upon the answers put forward by Mrs. Heshelis, we must first consider the questions that prompted her to write the monograph. Are the questions themselves both accurate and legitimate?

The first question posed is, "Why do women sometimes appear to have a secondary position in Judaism?"<sup>9</sup> I am uncomfortable with the description of women's "secondary position."<sup>10</sup> Our *gedolim* have affirmed the axiological, ontological equality (i.e., equality of value) of men and women within *Yahadut*.<sup>11</sup> "Secondary," however, is easily misconstrued as to deny such equality. The question, if it is to be asked, should be re-worded to focus upon women's supporting role.

But is either form of the question—secondary or supporting—legitimate? After all, not every question is legitimate. Some questions surpass the limitations of the human intellect. In this context it is worth quoting the

timeless words of Rabbi Yehudah Halevi.<sup>12</sup> The question he addresses is, why was Torah not given to all of mankind? Would not that have been more appropriate for the Divine wisdom? In other words, why did HaKadosh Baruch Hu single out the Jewish people from the rest of humanity? Rabbi Yehudah Halevi's response: "And would it not have been more appropriate that all animals be created as humans?" In other words, why did HaKadosh Baruch Hu single out human beings by endowing them with intelligence and free will? Clearly such questions can never be answered, and, accordingly, they are neither meaningful nor legitimate. There are fundamental facts and axioms within HaKadosh Baruch Hu's creation. Man is able to accomplish so much with two hands. Imagine how much he would be able to do if he had been created with three hands! The response is *kach gazra chachmato*, this is what Hashem in His inscrutable wisdom decreed. We cannot question the basic facts of Hashem's world. This, in essence, is Rabbi Yehudah Halevi's response.

The ontological hierarchical distinctions, which Rabbi Yehudah Halevi was addressing, are elemental facts of Creation. The differences between men and women, although not axiological or ontologically hierarchical, are equally elemental. Men and women, though axiologically equal, differ—biologically, emotionally, psychologically, et cetera. Why? Since the mold for Adam was perfect, why create Chava differently? Since the mold for Chava was perfect, why create Adam differently? *Kach gazra chachmato*.

Thus the legitimacy and appropriateness of the author's first question is itself open to question. Moreover, ultimately Mrs. Heshelis must also invoke this teaching of Rabbi Yehudah Halevi. In her words, "The principle of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* does not mean that women will become altogether identical with men ... men and women will each have primary virtues, while also having abilities on the other

side."<sup>13</sup> So writes Mrs. Heshelis, and, undoubtedly, she is absolutely correct. But why will they not be identical? The response, of course, is *kach gazra chachmato*. The initial "why" question—"Why do women sometimes appear to have a secondary position [supporting role] in Judaism?"—warrants a similar response.<sup>14</sup>

I am inclined to think that Mrs. Heshelis would agree with the preceding analysis. Perhaps she intended only to offer a perspective on women's secondary/supporting role and introduced the issue with a rhetorical question. First appearances notwithstanding, she also disavows the meaningless "why" question.

The author's second question, which focuses on the disparity between rabbinic descriptions and contemporary impressions of women, raises a different methodological issue. The question axiomatically assumes that not only rabbinic statements but also our impressions are sources of truth. Clearly if our impressions have no epistemological validity, the second question simply disappears. Thus the methodological issue is, are our impressions (especially when apparently in conflict with the words of our Sages) to be regarded as a source of truth or knowledge?

The answer from a Torah perspective, I believe, is "yes, but..." Rabbi Sa'adiah Gaon substantiates the "yes" component of the response. He writes in the introduction (par. 5) to his *Emunot VeDeot* that both sensory perceptions as well as logical inferences from these perceptions are sources of truth. We observe increasing numbers of women succeeding and even excelling in pursuits that require a high degree of abstract intelligence. Ergo, we infer that these women possess keen abstract intelligence. According to Rabbi Sa'adiah Gaon, both links in the chain—our perception as well as our inference—are epistemologically valid. Thus we know that women possess a high degree of abstract intelligence, yet our Sages seem to indicate otherwise. Accordingly, Mrs. Heshelis' second question is entirely legitimate.

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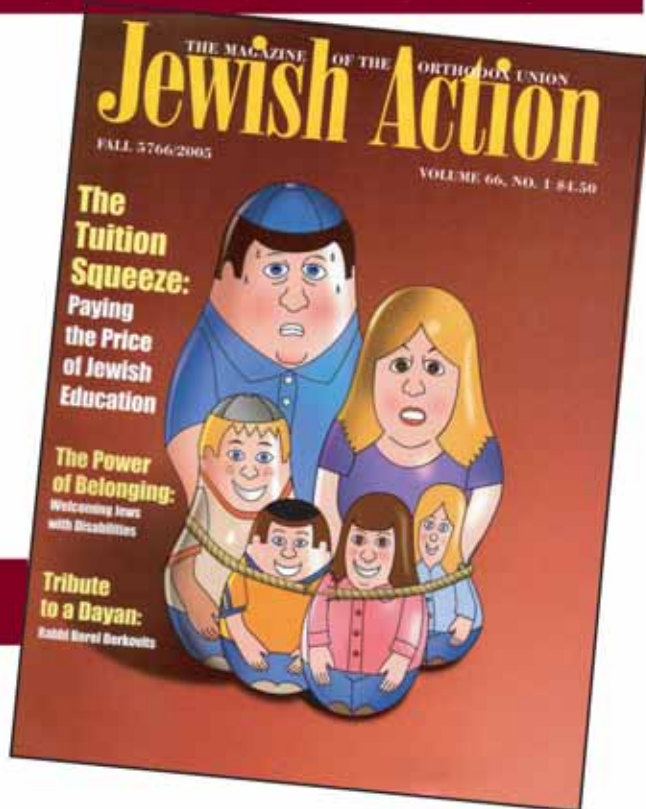
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There is, however, a “but.” Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains and illustrates the epistemological “but” in one of his responsa<sup>15</sup> concerning deaf-mutes (*cheresh*). It is, of course, widely known that the Talmud classifies deaf-mutes, alongside the deranged and minors, as people lacking “*da’at*,” legal competence. Accordingly, they are exempt from *mitzvot*, cannot betroth (according to Torah law), set aside *terumah*, et cetera. But what status do contemporary educated deaf-mutes enjoy? Did our Sages classify deaf-mutes as legally incompetent because they were ineducable and thus de facto incompetent? Does the ruling of our Sages extend to contemporary deaf-mutes?

Rav Shlomo Zalman thinks that deaf-mutes are considered legally incompetent because of their de facto incompetence. Nevertheless he opines that even today all deaf-mutes are, according to our Sages, still classified as legally incompetent.<sup>16</sup> Rav Shlomo Zalman comments that our observations of contemporary educated deaf-mutes do not accord with our Sages’ ruling. Even so, writes Rav Shlomo Zalman, “We must say that our Sages, in their great wisdom, knew that a deaf-mute is a person who cannot be viewed as responsible for his actions. Thus we do not take his actions into account even if, according to our understanding, he possesses a quick and sharp mind and all his actions are carried out with alertness and complete understanding.” In other words, when our observations and conclusions clash with those of Chazal, there need not be an answer. We are less perceptive and understanding than Chazal; accordingly, we may not know what subtle, intangible quality (or qualities) to look for, and, as a result, we may err.

Rav Shlomo Zalman’s position does not conflict with Rabbi Sa’adiah Gaon’s epistemology; instead, it adds an important caveat. Our impressions and inferences are indeed sources of truth. When, however, these impressions or conclusions or both contradict

a teaching of the Sages, we must humbly remind ourselves that our understanding is superficial whereas theirs is profound.

What then should our attitude be towards Mrs. Heshelis’ question regarding the disparity between our impressions and our Sages’ depiction of women? As per Rabbi Sa’adiah Gaon’s epistemology, the author is absolutely right to search for a way to harmonize these apparently conflicting sources of truth. As per Rav Shlomo Zalman’s caveat, however, the search has to be conducted humbly, with the realization that there may not be an answer. We may simply be in error. We may not be sensitive to a subtle, yet crucial difference between men and women that our Sages, in their profound wisdom, recognized.

At this juncture it should be emphasized that *The Moon’s Lost Light* is written with unreserved and unabashed reverence for Torah and our Sages. And Mrs. Heshelis indeed conducts her search with the appropriate, requisite humility.

### The Moon’s Lost Light

Following are a few observations concerning the central thesis of *The Moon’s Lost Light*. The Talmud<sup>17</sup> enumerates ten curses imposed on Chava; the loss of abstract intelligence is not included. Mrs. Heshelis, of course, does provide sources from Kabbalah to document this loss in the aftermath of the sin. Nevertheless the question is worth pondering: Why is this curse omitted from the Talmudic list? Does its omission preclude from a Talmudic perspective Mrs. Heshelis’ approach or is this simply an instance of *tanna vesbeyer*,<sup>18</sup> our rabbis not always intending to provide an exhaustive list?

Though the aforementioned Talmudic passage is inconclusive, three of the greatest medieval Talmudists—Ra’avad, Rashba and Rabbeinu Ya’akov Ba’al Haturim—do not subscribe to elements of Mrs. Heshelis’ approach. Mrs. Heshelis describes the partnership between Adam and Chava before their

sin as follows. “There was wisdom that Adam, representing intellectual knowledge, perceived first and then passed on to Chava, who then absorbed this wisdom into her heart, adding her emotional understanding to it.”<sup>19</sup> Woman’s supporting role, according to Mrs. Heshelis, emerges only in the aftermath of the sin.<sup>20</sup> This appears to be at odds with the depiction of Creation provided by the aforementioned sages.<sup>21</sup> In his introduction to his classic *Ba’alei Hanefesh*, Ra’avad states that Hashem’s original, ideal thought (*bemetziut hamachshavah hakadmonit . . . ra’ah betovat ha’adam*), which he implemented, was to create woman from man’s side (unlike all other species where male and female were created individually) so that she would have a natural affinity for her supporting role. (In the animal kingdom the female does not adopt such a role.) Similarly, in a responsum<sup>22</sup> Rashba explains that the ideal plan for Creation was to create woman from man to signify her supporting role. He also approvingly cites Ra’avad’s explanation.<sup>23</sup> Rabbeinu Ya’akov Ba’al Haturim, in his introduction to *Even Haezer*, also adopts Ra’avad’s explanation.<sup>24</sup>

Both Ra’avad and Rashba are interpreting Hashem’s “original thought” as to the ideal mode of creating man and woman. Thus both Ra’avad and Rashba indicate that woman’s supporting role was part of Hashem’s original plan, and was not imposed as punishment for Chava’s sin.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, in addition to the sources that Mrs. Heshelis cites, there are also other sources that buttress elements of her approach. One crucial element of Mrs. Heshelis’ approach is that “man and woman were originally created equal, but that woman’s ‘light’ was subsequently lessened.”<sup>26</sup> The Vilna Gaon explicitly says this.<sup>27</sup> “Initially [Adam] called her *ishah* because she was taken from *ish*’ to assist him in intellectual pursuits [*muskalot*], and the two of them were equal . . . . But after the sin she does not desire intellectual pursuits . . . .”

Another crucial element is the interpretation of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever*, that “a female will turn into a man,” meaning that women will then have “male capabilities and privileges.”<sup>28</sup> Rabbi Yechiel Michel Zilber, building upon the Chatam Sofer, develops this very idea; he, however, interprets it as a purely futuristic prophecy, with no bearing on this world’s realities or developments.<sup>29</sup>

The time frame for *nekeivah tesoveiv gever*, women regaining intellectual, social and economic parity with men, is absolutely vital to Mrs. Heshelis’ thesis. The author herself, displaying the erudition and intellectual honesty which characterize her monograph, cites the Ma’or VeShemesh and Kli Yakar whose time frame differs from hers. Ma’or VeShemesh says that *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* will happen only after the complete rectification of the world, while Kli Yakar says that this transformation will happen only after the revival of the dead. As noted above, Rabbi Zilber also interprets *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* as a purely futuristic prophecy. Mrs. Heshelis, however, suggests that, according to Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel, the prophecy of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* is linked to the ingathering of the exiles to the land of Israel. Since the ingathering is already happening incrementally, the prophecy of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* is also gradually materializing. Once again the argument is enticing and plausible, but questionable. As noted by Mrs. Heshelis, Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel himself does not give any time frame. Mrs. Heshelis, based upon the context of chapter 31 in Yirmiyahu where *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* appears, is arguing ex silentio that Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel accepts an earlier time frame, which is linked to the ingathering of exiles. She may be correct. But arguments ex silentio are often questionable. Specifically, in this instance, the context of chapter 31 did not preclude the views of Ma’or VeShemesh and Kli Yakar. Thus the context certainly does not indicate that Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel disagrees with them. Moreover,

even if Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel’s time frame for *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* is linked to the ingathering of the exiles, perhaps this means the ingathering of all the exiles. As this has certainly not yet transpired, we would not be witnessing the beginning of the fulfillment of that prophecy.<sup>30</sup>

Mrs. Heshelis’ approach rests upon an assumption. Women have changed. In the second half of the sixth millennium there are more women who possess a high degree of abstract intelligence than at any other time in history. This is, *prima facie*, a reasonable assumption. It provides a very cogent explanation for the dissatisfaction that some contemporary women feel with a purely domestic role. Nonetheless, given the dearth of historical data, it does not seem possible to document or otherwise verify that there has been a change.

Mrs. Heshelis’ assumption is entirely reasonable, but it is important to realize that it is, after all, only an assumption.<sup>31</sup>

Mrs. Heshelis maintains that the descriptions of women found in the Talmud were accurate at that time, but were never intended for our era, when the powers of redemption have started entering the world.<sup>32</sup> This is definitely a plausible interpretation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the sources themselves,<sup>33</sup> which contain these descriptions, do not hint at any such caveat.

### Relativism

Mrs. Heshelis’ approach is very effective in harmonizing our impressions with our Sages’ pronouncements. But, at first glance, it also seems potentially troubling. There are immutable<sup>34</sup> *halachot* predicated upon the curses imposed upon Chava. “Rav Yehoshua son of Levi says, ‘A man is obligated to consort with his wife before embarking on a journey [as it is written] “and your craving shall be for your husband”—this teaches that a woman craves for her husband when he embarks on a journey.”<sup>35</sup> In several places<sup>36</sup> the Gemara articulates a *chazakah*, presumption, about women’s attitude to marriage. “It is better to live as two together than to

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live alone.” Based upon this *chazakah*, we assume that a woman is very eager to marry and remain married (more so than a man). This *chazakah* has far-reaching, halachic repercussions. For example, because of this *chazakah*, “a divorce, even in a situation of conflict, is deemed disadvantageous to her, and if granted through an unauthorized third party the divorce does not take effect.”<sup>37</sup> Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik’s emphatic words in identifying the source of the *chazakah* are especially relevant to our discussion:

*Not only the halachot but also the chazakot which chachmei Chazal have introduced are indestructible. We must not tamper, not only with the halachot, but even with the chazakot, for the chazakot of which Chazal spoke rest not upon transient psychological behavioral patterns, but upon permanent ontological principles rooted in the very depth of the human personality, which are as changeless as the heavens above. Let us take for example the chazakah that I was told*

about: the *chazakah* “It is better to live as two together than to live alone” has absolutely nothing to do with the social and political status of women in antiquity. This *chazakah* is based not upon sociological factors, but upon a verse in *Bereishit*—“I will greatly multiply your pain and your travail; in pain you shall bring forth children, and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.” It is a metaphysical curse rooted in the feminine personality; she suffers incomparably more than the male who is in solitude. Solitude to the male is not as terrible an experience, as horrifying an experience, as is solitude to the woman. And this will not change *kemei hashamayim al ha’aretz [forever]*. This is not a psychological fact; it is an existential fact, which is due not to the inferior status of the woman, but rather to the difference, the basic distinction between the female personality and the male personality. . . . She was burdened by the Almighty, after she violated the first [law].”<sup>38</sup>

Thus, according to the Rav, *halachot*, by definition immutable, are rooted in the curse imposed upon Chava.

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in his magisterial *Meshech Chachmah*,<sup>39</sup> also invokes this *chazakah* in explaining women’s timeless exemption from the commandment of procreation.

A crucial question now emerges. Can it possibly be true that Chava’s curses have begun to ameliorate and, accordingly, women are different? Can this be reconciled with the fact that immutable *halachot* are predicated upon these curses? The author is appropriately very sensitive to these questions;<sup>40</sup> in essence, she unequivocally responds that the partial changes in women’s reality in the pre-messianic period do not countenance changes in halachah. In other words, it is Hashem’s judgment that the incremental changes that occur in the pre-messianic period are not significant enough to warrant any change in halachah. Everything remains unaltered until the final redemption is complete. Moreover, our Sages also anticipated these changes. “They were simply describing the situation as it existed

throughout most of world history, before the powers of redemption started entering the world.”<sup>41</sup>

Mrs. Heshelis clearly disavows any practical changes. Nevertheless, in the area of Talmud Torah for women she passionately advocates that for some women Talmud Torah is crucial. “But for a woman with a strong abstract nature, abstract activities in her life aren’t only a positive addition, they are essential . . . if a woman with a strong abstract nature does not have abstract activities in her life [in context, “abstract activities” denotes Talmud Torah], she is likely to experience frustration and possibly depression.”<sup>42</sup> But is this advocacy consistent with her repeated, emphatic disavowal of change? Why should the beginnings of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* have implications for women studying Torah but not for other areas of halachah?

The answer is rooted in a correct understanding of our Sages’ position regarding women and Talmud Torah. Chazal never forbade women from studying Torah. Instead they prohibited a father from imposing Talmud Torah on his daughters because “most women’s minds are not attuned to being taught.”<sup>43</sup> When, however, women themselves initiate serious Torah study, they thereby demonstrate that they do not belong to the majority who are not suited for Talmud Torah.<sup>44</sup>

In light of Chazal’s nuanced position regarding women and Talmud Torah it becomes clear that *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* is not affecting any change in halachah. *Nekeivah tesoveiv gever* has affected some women. As a result without any change in halachah, more women simply qualify for Chazal’s original exception. The exceptional has become more commonplace.

### Studying Torah Lishmah

Mrs. Heshelis repeatedly emphasizes the indispensability of sincere motivation in harnessing the powers of redemption such as *nekeivah tesoveiv gever* that are incrementally entering the world.<sup>45</sup> For instance, when women ful-

fill *mitzvot* from which they are exempt and, in particular, study Torah, they are harnessing the powers of *nekeivah tesoveiv gever*. Such supererogatory behavior is both meritorious and laudatory, provided they do so *l’shem Shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven).<sup>46</sup>

It should be noted that women studying Torah for some ulterior motive is especially problematic. Rambam<sup>47</sup> writes, “At the future judgment, a man will first be called to account in regard to the study of Torah. Therefore the Sages said, ‘A person should always occupy himself with the Torah, whether for its own sake or for other reasons. For study of the Torah, even when pursued from ulterior motives, will lead to study for its own sake.’” Rambam indicates that Chazal’s dispensation to study Torah *shelo lishmah* is due to the primacy of the obligation to study Torah. Otherwise *Talmud Torah shelo lishmah* would have been prohibited because such studying is a sacrilege.<sup>48</sup> The halachah, however, is determined to facilitate Talmud Torah. Accordingly, since learning even with ulterior motivation (*shelo lishmah*) will bring one to learn Torah for its own sake (*lishmah*), the halachah allows and, when necessary, even encourages learning *shelo lishmah*. This chain of reasoning, however, only applies to men for whom Talmud Torah is mandatory. When a woman engages in optional study, *Talmud Torah shelo lishmah* is prohibited.<sup>49</sup>

### Reflections

Mrs. Heshelis suggests that the *berachah* of *shelo asani ishah* which, apparently, indicates a preference for the masculine gender, reflects “what is felt as human reality, rather than what we know to be the ultimate Heavenly truth.”<sup>50</sup>

*The woman’s role, which entails exemption or exclusion from certain mitzvos—including the supreme one, Torah study—is a lower level of service and is, therefore, from our human view, less desirable. . . . [The berachah] does not reflect objective Heavenly truth, for it does*

not show a person's true spiritual worth . . . . But blessings are said on what is felt in this world, and not on objective Heavenly truth.<sup>51</sup>

Mrs. Heshelis' perspective on the *berachah* of *shelo asani ishab* resonated with me because I have had similar thoughts. Moreover, it seems to me that there are other instances wherein halachic interpersonal distinctions are not intended to reflect ultimate Divine value judgments.

The concluding *mishnah* in *Masechet Horiyot*<sup>52</sup> contains a triage protocol. "A Kohen precedes a Levi; a Levi precedes Yisrael; a Yisrael precedes a *mamzer*; a *mamzer* precedes a *nasin*; a *nasin* precedes a convert; . . ." It is intuitively obvious that, by the standard of objective Heavenly truth, a Levi who realizes his full potential in service of Hashem is greater than a Kohen who realizes only three quarters of his potential. And yet a Kohen precedes a Levi. Most conspicuously, a convert will very often be greater than all those who precede him in the triage protocol.<sup>53</sup> The inescapable conclusion is that the generic, largely genealogical distinctions<sup>54</sup> inherent in the triage protocol, like the distinction implied in the *berachah shelo asani ishab*, do not reflect Divine value judgments.

These two cases differ as to why Divine value judgments are not applied. With regard to the triage protocol, the halachah does not operate with ultimate value judgments because humans who implement the halachic system are incapable of making such Divine judgments. With regard to *berachot*, the rationale differs. *Berachot* relate to human experience; hence they do not necessarily reflect Divine value judgments. The common denominator is that halachah, though itself Divine, even when it introduces interpersonal distinctions, is not necessarily reflecting Divine judgments about the relative value of people.

Another reflection: In describing the time of redemption, Mrs. Heshelis writes, "the Jewish people will no longer relate to God primarily through fear, but rather through love."<sup>55</sup> Commenting on contemporary religious reality she observes, "This too has already begun to happen. Nowadays, there is a greater stress on serving God with love and joy, in contrast to the previous approach, which stressed fear of punishment."<sup>56</sup> Mrs. Heshelis' observations are instructive. Nevertheless in order to gain a correct, nuanced perspective on contemporary religious reality, some clarification and elaboration regarding the relationship between fear of and love of Hashem are necessary.

Rabbeinu Bachya<sup>57</sup> distinguishes different types of love of Hashem. One may love Hashem for all the blessings He showers upon us or for His compassion in forgiving our sins. In both of these instances, there is a selfish element because we love Hashem for what He does for us. The pure love to which the Torah mandates that we aspire consists of loving Hashem "for Himself, for His glory."

But Hashem "for Himself," in "His glory," inspires awe. One cannot possibly love Hashem without fearing

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Him. Moreover, explains Rabbeinu Bachya,<sup>58</sup> fear of Hashem with its concomitant abstinence from wordly pleasures is a sine qua non for pure love of Hashem. Pure love of Hashem is impossible without a foundation of awe.<sup>59</sup>

Mrs. Heshelis' assessment as to the muted role of fear and awe within our service of Hashem is entirely accurate. When fear, however, is absent or even muted, pure love of Hashem is impossible. The love of Hashem that we observe, albeit valuable, is not the pure love of the eschatological era. Thus, the de-emphasis of fear is not a virtue, which signifies the beginnings of redemption. Instead it indicates that whatever strides have been made in our service of Hashem, we need to continuously strive and incessantly work towards achieving genuine fear and love of Hashem.

## Final Thoughts

There are many stimulating ideas and observations deserving of careful study in *The Moon's Lost Light* that have not even been mentioned in this review. Indeed, it is a testimony to the richness of *The Moon's Lost Light* that these concluding remarks are somewhat premature.

*The Moon's Lost Light* is an excitingly original and remarkably erudite monograph. The handful of critical points and differing perspectives contained within this review do not, individually or collectively, refute the author's essential thesis and historical framework. They do, however, indicate that the author's approach, though suggestive and enticing, is neither definitive nor exclusionary.<sup>60</sup> Her approach clearly cannot lay claim to a *consensus omnium*. On some points, there are clearly contrary views. On the other hand, her monograph, even after scrutiny, remains unquestionably exciting, valid and important. I find myself in agreement with Rabbi Zev Leff's comment in his approbation, "This [*The Moon's Lost Light*] is definitely one valid Torah perspective on this [women's] complex issue."<sup>61</sup>

## Notes

1. See n. 11 below.
2. *The Moon's Lost Light* (TMLL), p. xxi
3. Although Mrs. Heshelis does not provide an explicit source for this, her reasoning appears to be very cogent. See *ibid.*, p. 79, n. 19.
4. Bereishit 3:16
5. 31:21
6. TMLL, 40
7. *Ibid.*, 44-45
8. *Ibid.*, 60
9. *Ibid.*, xxi
10. In her phrasing of the question, Mrs. Heshelis writes that women *appear* to have a secondary position. Subsequently, however, she indicates that as a result of Chava's sin this is actually the case. See p. 38.
11. In my *Jewish Action* article, "Torah Perspectives on Women's Issues" (summer 1997) p. 25 and p. 29, n.13), I provided references to Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, both of whom unequivocally affirm the equality of the two genders. See also Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Haishah Hayehudit*, 11, who similarly affirms this principle. He also affirms the principle of equality in his commentary to Bereishit 2:18. "And *eizer kenegdo* certainly expresses no idea of subordination, but rather complete equality . . ." Mrs. Heshelis also affirms the axiological equality of the genders. See TMLL, 17-19.
12. *Kuzari*, part I, 102-103
13. TMLL, 59
14. In truth, the "why" question can never be asked about Hashem or His actions. Rav Soloveitchik often emphasized this point. See, for instance, *The Halakhic Mind*, 87ff.; *Reflections of the Rav*, 103 and *Man of Faith in the Modern World*, 93-95.
15. Responsa *Minchat Shlomo*, vol. I, no. 34. The reliability of sensory impressions and interpretations thereof is relevant in other halachic contexts as well. In particular, in the present epistemological context, it is interesting to note the position of Rashi to *Ketubot* 9a, s.v. *ha'omer*, regarding the claim of a bridegroom that his encounter with his bride on their wedding night proved to him that she was not a virgin. Rashi indicates

that if his claim is contradicted by the presence of blood, *beit din* instructs him to disregard his own sensory impressions. Of course, this case is not entirely parallel to that of Rav Shlomo Zalman, nevertheless the juxtaposition of this case is enlightening.

16. Rav Shlomo Zalman's approach does not represent a *consensus omnium*. Some *posekim* consider contemporary, educated deaf-mutes to be legally competent. Others concur with Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling, but reason differently. They maintain that the status of deaf-mutes as legally incompetent is a *gezeirat hakatuv*, which is not linked to their actual competence. For a review of this topic, see Rabbi J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, vol. II, 368-375. See also Rabbi Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg's discussion in *Techumin*, vol. VII, 231-248.

17. *Eruvin* 100b

18. See Tosafot to *Kiddushin* 16b, s.v. *veha*, who maintain that the principle of *tana vesheyer* applies even in cases where the list is introduced with a figure. Thus presumably it would be applicable even to the list in *Eruvin*, which begins with "Ten curses. . . ." See, however, *Halichot Olam* 3:3 and the comments of Rabbi S. Portnoy *ad loc.*

19. TMLL, 6

20. *Ibid.*, 14-15

21. One could argue, as Mrs. Heshelis does in n. 33 to resolve a similar difficulty posed by a comment of the Malbim, that Ra'avad and Rashba are describing Hashem's ideal creation, which, based on His foreknowledge, anticipated Adam and Chava's sin and subsequent curse. Such an argument is difficult to sustain, however, because neither Ra'avad nor Rashba give any indication that this is their intent. *Ikar chaser min hasefer*.

In truth, Mrs. Heshelis' interpretation of the Malbim is even more difficult to accept. Hashem, with His foreknowledge, knew that Adam and Chava would sin and thus created them with capacities that would only be needed and actualized after the sin. Thus it is entirely reasonable to suggest that "descriptions, although connected to the creation of man and woman," include elements "that would come into being only after the sin"

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(TMLL, p. 83, n. 33). It is far less reasonable to suggest that a description of creation of man and woman omits aspects of the creation that were present at that time because they would be forfeited after the sin. I am indebted to my son, Netanel, *n”y*, for this point.

22. I, 60

23. The difference between Rashba’s interpretation and that of Ra’avad is the following: To Rashba, woman was created from man to signify her supporting role, whereas to Ra’avad it was to create a natural affinity for that role.

24. All three of these sources are cited and discussed by Rabbi Zilber in his *Bayam Derech, Shemot*, 15-18. I thank my son Meshulam, *n”y*, who, with the help of *Otzar Hachachmah*, brought this important source to my attention.

25. The following question arises. The phrase “and he shall rule over you” appears in Hashem’s curse, which he imposed upon Chava after the sin. How then can Ra’avad and Rashba maintain that women’s supporting role was ordained from the time of Creation? The answer is that, according to Chazal (*Eruvin* 100b), the verse “and he shall rule over you” does not refer to woman’s supporting role. Instead it should be understood in light of the preceding phrase. “And your desire shall be to your husband” for marital relations, yet “he shall rule over you.” That is, women’s innate modesty will prevent them from explicitly asking to fulfill their desire. See the commentary of *Gur Aryeh ad loc.* He explains that Chazal interpret the verse in this fashion because women’s supporting role had already been ordained before the sin at the time of Creation when Hashem said “*vechivshubah*” (*Bereishit* 1:28, see commentary of Rashi *ad loc.*)

26. TMLL, 5

27. See *Aderet Eliyahu* to *Bereishit* 3:20. (I thank Rabbi Matis Greenblatt for bringing this source to my attention.) Cf., however, *ibid.*, to 2:18.

28. TMLL, 40

29. See n. 24 for the reference to Rabbi Zilber. He provides the reference to the *Chatam Sofer Al HaTorah, Parashat Bereishit*.

30. This last objection also applies to Mrs. Heshelis’ argument (p. 123) that

her conclusions are warranted even without relying on *Kol HaTor*.

31. Moreover, Rav Soloveitchik (see the quote from the Rav cited in the text) would presumably reject this assumption. The Rav states that the effects of the curse on Chava will not change “*kemei hashamayim al ha’aretz.*”

32. TMLL, 60

33. See, for example, the sources cited by the author in n. 1.

34. See Rambam, *Peirush Hamishnayot hakdamah leperek chelek*, principle nine of the Thirteen Principles of Faith.

35. *Yevamot* 62b

36. See *Kiddushin* 7a and parallels.

37. See n. 60 in the Schottenstein edition to *Yevamot* 118b, and *Even HaEzer* 140:5.

38. This quote is taken from a transcript of a *shiur* delivered by the Rav in 1975.

39. *Parashat Noach, s.v. od.*

40. TMLL, 68-69

41. *Ibid.*, 61

42. *Ibid.*, 63

43. Rambam, *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 1:13.

44. See the sources cited by the author in appendix I. In addition, see Responsa *Tzitz Eliezer*, vol. 9, no. 3 (especially the dispute between the Chida and the *Meshoret Moshe*); *Az Nidberu*, vol. 14, 3:7. I thank my son Netanel, *n”y*, for bringing the latter source to my attention.

45. TMLL, 67

46. *Ibid.*, 118

47. *Hilchot Talmud Torah* 3:5

48. “Do not make [the Torah] a crown with which to glorify oneself, nor a spade with which to dig. So too would Hillel say: He who exploits the crown [of Torah] shall fade away. Thus you have learned: whoever seeks personal benefit from the words of Torah removes his life from the world” (*Pirkei Avot* 4:7; Rambam, *ibid.*, 3:10).

49. The obvious should be reiterated at this point. Some Talmud Torah (fundamentals of faith, practical *halachot*, et cetera) is mandatory for women. For further elaboration and sources, see my article *op cit.* n. 11.

50. TMLL, 27

51. *Ibid.*, 29

52. 13a

53. In his letter to Ovadiah the convert (see my father’s *A Maimonides Reader*, 476), Rambam writes, “Do not consider your origin as inferior. While we are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov, you derive from Him through whose word the world was created. As is said by Yeshayahu: ‘One shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Ya’akov’” (*Yeshayahu* 44:5).

54. This apt characterization is suggested in the Schottenstein English edition of the Talmud.

55. TMLL, 57

56. *Ibid.*, 57-58

57. *Chovot Halevavot, Sha’ar Ahavat Hashem*, chap. 2

58. *Ibid.*, introduction

59. This fundamental concept is reflected in the writings of Ramban, as well. Ramban explains that the nighttime component of Shabbat represents *shamor*, which is rooted in the aspect of fear, while the daytime component represents *zachor*, which is rooted in the aspect of love. Accordingly, Ramban explains, the *kedushah* of the daytime is greater. Nevertheless, the *kedushah* of the daytime is only possible because it follows the night. Fear must precede love. In fact, the entire *Mesillat Yesharim* is founded on this principle. The *sefer* analyzes twin *middot* such as *zehirut* and *zerizut*. Ramchal explains that they are essentially the same. The former relates to scrupulousness regarding *mitzvot lo sa’aseh* (fear), the latter *mitzvot aseh* (love). In each instance Ramchal first analyzes the *middah* relating to *mitzvot lo sa’aseh*. Clearly he does so because *mitzvot lo sa’aseh* are associated with fear while *mitzvot aseh* are associated with love, and fear is the foundation for love. See also commentary of Ohr HaChayim to *Devarim* 10:12.

60. I think that Mrs. Heshelis does not intend her approach to be either definitive or exclusionary.

61. I would like to thank my daughter Sara Enna, *n”y*, for her helpful, perceptive comments on the penultimate draft of this article. 