

*Eliezer Liepman Prins*  
**Parnas L'Doro: His Scholarly Correspondence**



Ktav Publishing House, Inc.  
 Hoboken, NJ, 1992  
 503 pages

**Parnas L'Dorot: His Scholarly Contribution**



Ktav Publishing House, Inc.  
 Hoboken, NJ, 1999  
 496 pages

**Reviewed by Yona Emanuel**

Until now, very few have heard of Reb Eliezer Liepman [Liepman Philip] Prins. Some may have seen his notes to Tractate *Chulin* of the Vilna edition of the Talmud. We know little concerning this unique personality who was a scholar and owner of a library in excess of 6,000 volumes, and who cor-

responded with the greatest rabbis of his time, including Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the Netziv, Rabbi Chaim Berlin, Rabbi Yitzchak Shmelkish, Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen of Vilna, the Chofetz Chaim, as well as with the leading scholars of the time such as Solomon Buber and A.A. Harkavy. With the publication of these two huge volumes, we discover the greatness of the man.

Eliezer Liepman was born in 1835 in Arnhem, a small village in eastern Holland. The community contained about 300 Jews; Yoel Franfort served as the rabbi. Here the young Eliezer was raised, attended the general school and lived for 41 years, where he became a great *talmid chacham*, fully knowledgeable of *Tanach*, both *Talmudim*, *rishonim*, *achronim*, *piyyutim*, grammar, *halachah*, the *minhagim* of Israel and also works of research.

Let us picture a boy in a small town in Eastern Europe or America, who never studied in a yeshivah, and yet he becomes a well-known *talmid chacham* who disputes with the greatest rabbis of the time concerning the fitness of a *lulav* and the most complex topics in the Talmud. He received seven letters from the Chofetz Chaim, who sent him a number of his own works and who blesses Reb Eliezer Liepman warmly and signs off, his "friend, Yisrael Mayer HaKohen." The Chofetz Chaim answered in matters of *Kodoshim* and revealed unknown facts about the publication of the *Mishnah Berurah*. All this is contained in the first volume, *Parnas L'Doro*.

Reb Eliezer managed a family carpet

business for many years. He served as a *mohel* and established an association of *mohelim*; he labored on behalf of *Eretz Yisrael*. He spoke to Baron Karl Wilhelm Rothschild of Frankfort about the Chofetz Chaim and the baron sent the Chofetz Chaim 5,000 marks annually, considered a large sum in those days.

The editors, Mrs. Els Bendheim (Reb Eliezer Liepman Prins' granddaughter) and Rabbi Dr. Mayer Herskovics, assisted by Rabbi Neria



Gutel, have made a significant contribution in gathering all of the Hebrew writings and correspondence of Reb Liepman Prins with the scholars of his day. The two volumes under review are magnificent in their outward

beauty and in the meticulous scholarship invested by the editors. They are reflective of love and respect for their subject.

I was not born in Holland, but I did grow up there, attended general school and studied with Jewish teachers. Dutch Jewry possessed positive characteristics not found in most of the communities in central and western Europe. There were no Reform communities; the communities were unified, as were the rabbis. But Torah learning was not a strong point. Eliezer Prins was raised within this "weak" Judaism, and the fact that such a Jew was able to develop there makes one pause to ponder the powerful latent forces which must have been present. The atmosphere was not one of unremitting devotion to Torah study and yet a young person arose to demonstrate the possibilities hidden within a serene Dutch Jewry, which knew neither wars nor pogroms.

Reb Eliezer Prins saw in Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch his educational guide, and consulted with him on the establishment of a school in Amsterdam, patterned after the school established by Rav Hirsch in Frankfort. At the age of 41, Prins moved from Arnhem to Amsterdam and ten years later – in 1887 – two years before Rav Hirsch died, he moved to Frankfort. The subsequent years were devoted to study, to writing and to enlarging his library. Reb Eliezer had strong yearnings for the Land of the Patriarchs and set off for the Holy Land, but was forced to return due to his wife's illness. He helped in the acquisition of Rav Yaakov Emden's *Shas* for the Romm Vilna edition of the *Shas*, which included the latter's notes and emendations. This is mentioned in the "Final Word" of the Vilna *Shas*, page seven.

When the Zionist movement arose, Reb Eliezer joined, an unconventional step among the Frankfort Orthodox. He openly supported the movement and published his view in a number of articles. He saw well the dangers of assimilation in the Diaspora and therefore supported the new movement. He was pained that many of the Zionist leaders were not observant. Almost 100 years ago he wrote that he was certain that the non-observant of the present would become *baalei teshuvah* in the future, and that they or their children who returned to *Eretz Yisrael* would don *tallit* and *tefillin*. He pointed out that in the time of King Achaz, the people were not fulfilling the *mitzvot*, yet in the days of Hezekiyah, his son, all Jewish children were even familiar with the laws of *tumah* and *taharah*. Reb Eliezer wrote that the Zionist leadership will recognize that it is possible to speak of a Jewish State only if its inhabitants are observant of Torah and *mitzvot*.

*Parnas L'Doro* contains Prins' correspondence with the great scholars of his day; *Parnas L'Dorot* contains his notes and comments on a vast range of *sefarim* with which he was occupied. Besides his preoccupation with printed works, Reb Eliezer also worked on

manuscripts. He purchased the commentary of Reb David Abudarham to the Yom Kippur service, and in 1900 published the *Sefer Tashlum Abudarham*, which also included *piyyutim* and *selichot* by a number of medieval poets, all with the commentary of the Abudarham. Reb Eliezer wrote notes and annotations as well as an extensive introduction to this work.

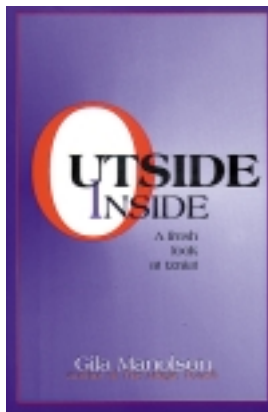
Though not a rabbi, he attained a high level of scholarship and an unusual breadth of knowledge and was a true *talmid chacham*. Though occupied with *derech erez*, he did not neglect the Torah and he serves as a shining example of a lifestyle which could be successfully emulated by many. The success of his approach is also demonstrated by his many descendants living in Europe, America and mainly in Israel, who occupy positions in the whole gamut of human endeavor, the majority of whom have continued to follow in his path.

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### Outside/Inside: A Fresh Look at Tzniut

By Gila Manolson



Targum/Feldheim  
Southfield, MI, 1997  
100 pages

**Reviewed by Sarah Shapiro**

The feminist Germaine Greer once

described an unpleasant lunch hour she'd had one day in a trendy Manhattan restaurant. For three decades a figure of some renown and influence in the American women's movement, Ms. Greer was finding it difficult that afternoon to get her waiter's attention. As she sat there impatiently, trying to catch his eye – any waiter's eye – she noticed that a number of younger women didn't seem to be having the same problem. In fact, at the next table over, not only was a waiter responding diligently to a good-looking diner's every request, but to make matters worse, the young woman in question was accompanied for lunch by someone just about Ms. Greer's own age, an enthralled middle-aged man.

That's when it hit her, said Greer: she'd become invisible.

For a female who has absorbed, from adolescence on, the notion that to be lovable is to be attractive, watching one's youthful beauty ebb and at last vanish is like presiding helplessly over the disappearance of one's very own self; to be invisible to the male gaze is, in a certain sense, to not be there at all.

How can a spiritually-inclined woman, who has been raised in such a society, escape from the petty tyrannies of her own vanity, and from her environment's prevailing attitudes? Short of reincarnation as a man, one way out would be a nun-like withdrawal from the world, whereby one would be free to develop the inner self without outside interference and influence. Another would be to practice a Saudi Arabian-style obliteration of one's female form and individuality altogether.

Gila Manolson, author of *The Magic Touch* and a *magna cum laude* graduate of Yale University, delves into Judaism's approach to these issues in a book entitled *Outside/Inside: A Fresh Look at Tzniut*. *Tzniut*, which is inadequately translated as modesty, is an unpopular subject. Not many of us like being lectured about hemlines and stockings and hair coverings, and in