

Campus Observations

■ I enjoyed reading Leah Lightman's article, "Keeping the Faith: How College Life Affects our Youth" (summer 2003) about the initiative of my colleague, Rabbi Menachem Schrader, to provide campuses with couples who offer *shiurim* and other Jewish activities. My visits to campuses confirm that such couples make an immense difference. I just want to correct one error. The article refers to Yeshivat Hamivtar as a post high school yeshiva for Anglo students. While for a time we recruited yeshiva high school students, currently, the yeshiva is exclusively for older students, either mid- or post-college. The age of our students helps generate a mature, serious atmosphere and raises the level of discussion.

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I would like to congratulate Rabbi Joseph Polak on his article "On Orthodox Youth: A Debate" (summer 2003). I am an alumnus of Boston University and was an active member of Boston University Hillel where Rabbi Polak has served for over thirty years. There is not a finer Hillel rabbi in the world who understands the troubling trends among Orthodox college students. Wearing rose-colored glasses, like Rabbi Schiller, who wrote the counterpoint response to Rabbi Polak's article, is not very helpful.

A story: I am invited for Shabbat lunch by a couple in my community. The food is magnificent and the wine couldn't be finer. I ask my host what the rabbi spoke about in shul that morning. He replies, "I got to shul a little late and then went to the 'kid-dush club' during the *derashah*." I ask

him if he learned anything during the week. He says that since he has been working so hard, he had no time to look over anything. I then suggest we sing a *zemer*. What do we sing? "*Sbir Hama'alot...*" The kids then go to the basement to have their weekly Shabbat ping-pong tournament.

Unfortunately, far too many families I know have Shabbatot that mirror the one described above. It seems to me that in many cases, families that are weak in the "spiritual" aspects of Shabbat are "*frum* from birth" Modern Orthodox Jews. On the other hand, families who infuse "spirituality" into their Shabbatot seem to be *ba'alei teshuvah* or children of *ba'alei teshuvah*.

I realize that I am basing my observations on my experience with one Modern Orthodox community, but I believe that the trend Rabbi Polak speaks of—that of Modern Orthodox youth shedding their *tefillin* on the campus—originates in homes that lack a sense of spirituality.

Mark Leibowitz
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Rabbi Polak responds

I am grateful for the support given by my former *talmid*, Mark Leibowitz. His words resemble those of countless others who have e-mailed, written and phoned me from all over the United States and Canada, all of them nodding, saying that I was on to something.

And I do think that Mr. Leibowitz is also on to something. On the last Shabbat on campus in the spring of 2003, in response to the exhortation in the *parashah* to be fastidious in the use of fair weights and measures, I developed the following scenario: Next Monday you have an exam. The professor has given you twelve questions, say-

ing that five of them will appear on the exam, naturally not telling you which five. The Friday before the exam you happen to have an appointment with him, and as you're speaking to him, you spy from the corner of your eye, a pile of the exams—with the five questions perfectly clear on the face of the top page. His phone rings, and he turns around to take the call. Do you, I asked the students, look at the questions?

There was no difference among Reform and Conservative students in response to the question; fifty percent said they would look at the questions, and fifty percent said that they wouldn't. At the Orthodox service I was running late and did not ask for a show of hands. But what I did get was far more astonishing: all the students who were horrified at the idea of glancing at the exam were *ba'alei teshuvah* who had attended secular high schools. The students from the yeshiva high schools told me, with much calm and some bemusement at my naiveté, that cheating for secular exams was entirely common in their culture, and that they had the impression that it was mostly not frowned upon by their *rebbeim*.

So thank you Mr. Leibowitz for reminding the rest of us how easy it is to slide into complacency—spiritual, and perhaps moral.

Rabbi Schiller responds

I never thought the day would come when I would be seen as viewing Modern Orthodoxy through "rose-colored glasses." I have always sought to avoid partisanship and simply call 'em as I see 'em. It is unfortunate that Mr. Leibowitz has encountered families that are cold to the soul of Shabbat.

However, personal anecdotes are a poor means to evaluate social change. I had attempted to describe a broad based and nuanced, yet clearly positive, trend taking place in a community that I have serviced for twenty-seven years.

But, if it is anecdotes one wants, all right. I teach a tenth-grade *shiur* at Yeshiva University High School for Boys in New York. Except for monthly school-wide *mishmar* programs, each *rebbei* is free to provide whatever learning he chooses on a voluntary basis on Thursday evenings. The *talmidim* are free to opt out. In fact, the school transportation leaves at the end of the regular yeshiva day. Nonetheless, our *mishmar*, as well as that of many other *shiurim* at MTA, are attended by over ninety percent of the *talmidim* on a completely voluntary, no incentive basis. Plus, over one hundred *talmidim* from other schools in the area such as Torah Academy of Bergen County and The Frisch School also come to Yeshiva University on Thursday night to learn, after their own school days conclude. It would require the darkest of glasses not to view these broad based facts as anything other than a splendid Torah renaissance.

Burning Questions

■ I read "Burning Stones: Rabbi Leibel Reznick Asks: When was the Second Temple Really Destroyed?" (summer 2003) with great interest. His imaginative reconstruction of the last moments of the Dura-Europos synagogue is delightful. As to Rabbi Reznick's question, "When was the Second Temple Really Destroyed?" anyone who reads Josephus' description of the carnage and then visits the Western Wall excavations can see the damage the immense stones of the Beit Hamikdash did as they fell to the street below in 70 CE. Rabbi Reznick's real question, then, is whether the hulk of the ruined Temple remained on Har Habayit after the *Churban*. It is not unlikely that during the years after 70 CE and before Bar Kochba (132-135), significant ruins of the

Temple remained on the Temple Mount. In the years just before or after the Bar Kochba revolt, the emperor Hadrian built a temple to Jupiter of the Capitoline on the site of the Beit Hamikdash. This is stated explicitly by the Roman historian Dio Cassius (*Historia Roma* 69:12). Rabbi Reznick's comment that "Hadrian did not dismantle the Temple ruins but converted the structure into a pagan Temple" has no basis in the historical record. Similarly, the image of the Temple at Dura is not evidence of the continued existence of the Temple ruins into the third century but perhaps of a measure of iconographic continuity. (I would not be surprised if Bar Kochba coins were the conduit.) The images of the Temple at Dura are evidence for artistic contiguity between Jewish architecture and the art of the Greco-Roman period.

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Permit me to make a few comments on Rabbi Reznick's article.

1. Rabbi Reznick raises the following questions: How did the Roman invaders burn down the Second Temple? Weren't the walls made of stone?

The Gemara in *Baba Batra* says the walls were indeed made of stone but that the stone was overlaid both inside and out with other material. The inside was fully overlaid with gold, the outside with chalk or limestone (*sid* in Hebrew).

Josephus reports that when the Romans entered the Beit Hamikdash, they piled logs into the Heichal and ignited them. The heat melted the gold plating off the inside of the doors to the Kodesh Hakedashim, thereby exposing the wooden doors which then burned and were destroyed. It is reasonable to assume that this method was also used to remove and plunder all the gold on the inner walls of the Beit Hamikdash. The Romans would have done the same on the outside walls

since *sid* is a flammable material (Ibn Ezra and Malbim to Yeshayah 33:12). This would corroborate *Chazal's* statement that the Beit Hamikdash burned for a full day.

2. Rabbi Reznick states that "plowing up" refers to a formal ceremony well known to students of Roman history. The only problem with this thesis is that we are not reading this in a Roman account but in *Chazal*. Rashi (*Taanit* 29a) clearly explains it to mean a *complete* plowing over.

3. Rabbi Reznick posits that the stone walls of the Beit Hamikdash were not demolished until 260 years later. I believe that *Chazal* indicate that the walls were demolished anywhere between fifteen and fifty-five years after the burning of the Beit Hamikdash.

In the list of events occurring on Tishah B'Av, the *mishnah* in *Taanit* places "plowing up the city" after the destruction of Betar (traditionally set at fifty-two years after the *Churban*).

The Netziv (Bechukotai 26:31) understands this to be immediate, i.e., it occurred as part of the aftermath of quashing the Bar Kochba revolt and therefore took place shortly thereafter—probably the year after *Churban Betar*. In keeping with Rashi's explanation of "plowing over," the Netziv posits that the *mizbayach* was also demolished at this time, resulting in the cessation of the *Korban Pesach*. The Netziv's position is supported by the *Midrash Rabbah* in Devarim (3:13), which attributes the words "*nipetz avnei mikdash*" ("he smashed apart the stones of the Beit Hamikdash") to Hadrian, the emperor whose decrees precipitated the Bar Kochba revolt, which he ruthlessly quashed.

The only problem with the Netziv's position is that the Gemara in *Taanit* (29a) quotes a *beraita* that chronologically equates the event of the "plowing over" with a decree made on the life of the *nasi* Rabban Gamliel. We know that Rabban Gamliel passed away before the events leading up to the Bar Kochba revolt, so obviously the "plowing over" event took place before

Churban Betar.

In *Dorot HaRishonim*, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac HaLevi places the decree on Rabban Gamliel's life (and consequently the "plowing over" event) at approximately fifteen years after the *Churban*.

The difficulties with this position are that it would be inconsistent with the *midrash* that says that Hadrian said "*nipetz avnei mikdash*." It also requires that we accept that the *mishnah* lists the events commemorated by Tishah B'Av not in chronological order.

A simple reading of the Gemara reveals that there were three separate events:

1. *Sereifat Habayit*—the burning of the outer overlay of the walls, which took place 9-10 Av 68/70 CE.

2. The remaining stone edifice (Heichal) was demolished fifteen years later—coincidental with the decree on Rabban Gamliel's life.

3. Hadrian, in the aftermath of the Bar Kochba revolt, thoroughly "plowed over" the city, which included 1. Har Habayit and; 2. smashing apart the stones of the previously demolished walls.

The consensus of *Chazal* is that within sixty years of the *Churban* the entire Temple Mount was reduced to a plowed field with none of the former structures still standing. Hadrian then went about erecting new edifices for the Roman pantheon.

4. The Beit Hamikdash was something that would be described to children by parents. In an era when photographs were not available, verbal descriptions with some rudimentary drawings were most likely used to depict what it looked like. This would account for both the similarities and differences that are found in comparing the Bar Kochba coins and the Dura-Europos paintings.

Rabbi Yehoshua Kaganoff
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Rabbi Reznick responds

I will address Rabbi Kaganoff's well-

considered letter, point by point.

1. *Sid* is plaster, which is not a flammable substance. In the Temple, it was watered down and used as a whitewash, applied with a rag (see *Middot* 3:4). The thickness of the non-combustible layer was negligible. Plaster is manufactured by baking limestone in a furnace for about thirty-six hours. The prophet Isaiah (33:12) refers to the fiery furnace and not to flaming plaster (see Metzudot). Also, bear in mind that the walls of the main Sanctuary were solid stone—seven-and-a-half to nine feet thick. Even a flammable coating on the walls would not seriously affect these thick walls.

It is true that the Romans built fires near the doors of the Temple to burn them down. The doors were metal-plated wood. Wood is combustible; stone walls are not.

2. *Chazal* are referring to the Roman ceremony of the "plowing up."

3. The *Midrash Rabbah* (Devarim 3:13), that mentions that Hadrian smashed the stones of the Temple, is interesting. I, too, used to think that it meant that Hadrian completely demolished the entire Temple complex. However, why would he raze the Temple structure and then turn around and build a pagan temple on the same site? The architectural style of the Beit Hamikdash conformed to classical Roman architecture. Why not simply convert the old structure, which was one of the marvels of the ancient world, into a new temple? Also, from where did the Dura-Europos artists get their image? These questions lead me to believe that Hadrian did not completely remove every Temple stone. He merely modified the existing structure to suit his needs. Keep in mind that the Temple complex consisted of dozens of buildings. Undoubtedly many were destroyed by Hadrian. My suggestion is that the main Sanctuary still remained.

The Rashi in *Ta'anit* that Rabbi Kaganoff cites does indeed give the impression that Zion resembled a completely plowed field.

4. I think the notion of parents telling their children about the esoteric nuances of classical Roman architecture—Corinthian columns, their numbers and size, et cetera—is a bit far-fetched.

I do appreciate Rabbi Kaganoff's comments and the time and effort spent compiling them.

I would like to thank Professor Fine for his remarks.

As one who has written four books and numerous articles on the destruction of the Second Temple, I am well acquainted with the description of the carnage as recorded by Josephus. As many readers of *Jewish Action* are aware, I have studied and written about the Western and Southern Wall excavations for over twenty years and am quite familiar with them. However, the question still remains as to who threw the great ashlar (stone blocks) off the Temple Mount. Did that occur during the Roman conquest under Vespasian and Titus or perhaps at a later date, as late as the early Byzantine era as I suggest?

Professor Fine commented that there is no historical record for the claim that the Beit Hamikdash still stood during the reign of Hadrian. In my article, I referred to the *Midrash Shemot Rabbah*, which states that Hadrian entered the Kodesh Hakedashim. Also note the *midrash* cited in Rabbi Kaganoff's letter. These *midrashim* are not confirmed by any outside historical source because there is no outside contemporaneous historical source. When the Hadrianic Temple to Jupiter was built, Josephus was dead and Dio Cassius wasn't born until decades later.

As to the issue of whether or not the Bar Kochba coins served as the source for the Dura-Europos image, as I stated in my article the coins have Doric columns in front of the main Sanctuary whereas the Dura-Europos image has Corinthian columns, which coincides with Josephus' description of the Temple. If the coins served as the historical conduit, the two images should be the same. 