

ARTSCROLL

TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

Recently, (*Tradition*, Spring 1981) a review-article, whose tone sheds no honor on its author, nor on your magazine, has slipped into the pages of *Tradition*. In *Tradition*, we expect all material to be presented in a dignified, respectful manner, regardless of the views expressed. Between the opening sentence, "The pig is a deceptive animal . . .", and the closing one, "*Caveat Emptor*. Not every Hebrew sign in a butcher's window means that the meat sold inside is kosher," we might think that we would find a description of a non-kosher entity masquerading as a kosher one. Instead there is a diatribe against volumes of Torah source material.

The ArtScroll Mesorah Series has had the *zekuth* to be a strong force of *harbatsath Torah*, the spread of Torah knowledge among a large spectrum of the Jewish public. Like any other publication, they can expect criticism or approbation or both. But, to deprecate in this crass fashion, the efforts of those, who, like the supporters of *Tradition*, labor in the vineyard of the Lord, is downright destructive.

Yes, *Caveat Emptor*—"Buyer Beware." Beware, editors and readers, of the articles you "buy."

Els Bendheim
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TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

I am writing to express my deep chagrin and consternation caused by the review article by Professor Levy entitled "Judge Not A Book By Its Cover." To begin with this article is not truly a review of the ArtScroll Bible commentaries as it purports to be, but rather a diatribe unworthy of being published in any so-called scholarly magazine, certainly not within the pages of *Tradition*.

My objections are not to the contents of the article as they relate to the quality or otherwise of the ArtScroll commentaries, as much as to the manner and tone in which it is written.

Like Professor Levy, I am a member of the academic community involved in Jewish studies, but my main

calling is in the congregational area of the rabbinate and thus I am probably far more familiar with the benefits that accrue to the Jewish lay community through ArtScroll publications than is Professor Levy.

I do not intend to examine closely the objections raised by Professor Levy; indeed, close examinations will show them to be unfounded and superficial. I do not intend to engage in polemics with Professor Levy who has seen fit to define the purposes and aims of ArtScroll and then to tear them down when, in fact, ArtScroll lays no claim to the purposes ascribed to it by Professor Levy.

I do have two major objections which cause me to be somewhat vehement in my comments.

Firstly, Professor Levy puts into the same basket names like "J.B. Soloveitchik, A.J. Heschel, M. Buber, N. Leibowitz, U. Cassuto, A. Kook and M. Schneerson." As one who considers himself to be a devoted talmid of HaRav Soloveitchik I must object to the reference being made to him in the manner in which it was done. I cannot possibly understand how to Professor Levy the name of the Rav or HaRav Kook and the Lubavitch Rebbe assume the same importance as *lehavdil* that of Martin Buber and even that of A.J. Heschel. It is unworthy to permit the linking together of these names in one group. Professor Levy may not see the difference but certainly the members of the RCA do or at least should be sensitive to this matter.

Secondly, ArtScroll is rendering a tremendous service to the Jewish community by presenting to the average *baale batim* and their families an important means of making Torah and its study accessible to all. Unless Professor Levy can demonstrate that he is rendering equal service to the larger Jewish community beyond that of the ivory tower of Academe he should withhold his criticism of a work which has helped the average rabbi in creating a desire for Torah study within his congregation.

Professor Levy discloses perhaps

many more of his thoughts and ideas than he realizes when he speaks on page 94 of "the right to reject *unreasonable* midrashim". Anyone who pretends to believe in the principles of tradition and of *Tradition* has himself no right to speak of midrashim as being "unreasonable." There are midrashim, of course, which are difficult to understand and it may make little sense to those who read them, but then the fault is that of the reader and not of the midrash.

I remember the Rav in his *shiurim* once saying to us that there is no such thing as a "*shverer* Rambam," there is only a "*shverer* kopp". At the risk of being called reactionary and close-minded by Professor Levy and those who think like him (which may include some of the editors of *Tradition*) I hold that anyone who wishes to "reject unreasonable midrashim" has no business reviewing in the pages of a publication issued by the Rabbinical Council of America.

I must express my resentment also to Professor Levy for creating a new group of Jews whom he sarcastically and contemptuously calls "East-European Orthodoxy." I suppose that he is of pure genealogy, untainted by Eastern European heritage. It is the kind of phrase which German Jews liked to use when referring with equal contempt to the Polish and Russian Ostjuden.

Finally, I wax seethingly vehement at the comparison of ArtScroll to the pig. It is in every sense of the word a veritable *hilul Hashem* to take commentaries on the Torah and to compare them to the pig as Professor Levy has done. In his last sentence he reminds us that not every Hebrew sign in the butcher's window means that the meat sold inside is kosher. Does he, therefore, suggest that the material presented by ArtScroll is *treif*? Professor Levy ought to remember the saying of our sages, "*kol haposel B'mumo posel.*"

Fabian Schonfeld
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TO THE EDITOR OF *TRADITION*:

Stricken as I am with an interminable desire to amend the written word, I wish to append the following notes to my recent essay on remembering and psychological awareness and Halakhah (*Tradition*, 1981, vol. 19, no. 1:59-75).

(1) On page 61, third paragraph, "R. Shlomo b. David" should read: "R. David b. Shmuel" who, of course, is the *TaZ* referred to in note 11.

(2) On page 69, I refer to R. Yosef Rogozover's statement that *bemakom she-yesh geder re'iyah lo shayakh zekhirah*" (see note 59). I have since found an almost identical statement in R. Barukh Halevi Epstein's *Torah Temimah* to Lev. 26:42 ("*ba-davar she-ro'im le'eynayim . . .*").

(3) In the first footnote, I mention the specific instances in the Bible which are deemed "*zakhor* imperatives," four of which were included by the *Ari z"l* for daily recitation, and 2 others by custom. I recall now (only too late) that the Vilna Gaon compiled a list of no less than 10 *zikhronot* for daily recitation. Aside from the *zikhronot* already mentioned, the *Gra's* list includes Deut. 8:18 (*ve-zakharta et Adon-i Elo-kha ki who hanoten lekha koah la-asot hayil*); Deut. 8:2 (*ve-zakharta et kol ha-derekh . . . va-ya'akhilkha et ha'maan . . .*); Ps. 137:5 (*im eshkahekh Yerushalim . . .*); and Michah 6:5 (*Ami zekhor na mah ya'az Balak . . .*).

(4) The problem of second-hand versus immediate historical knowledge is also addressed by Rambam in *Moreh* 3:50, explicating the purpose of Num. 33:2.

(5) In a forthcoming essay I will discuss the relationship between the concept of field-dependence and field-independence, adience-abience, and the halakhic role of *re'iah* and *zekhirah*.

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