

I wish to thank Dr. Dynner for drawing attention to my book, as its appearance is not widely known, and for devoting time to reviewing it. *

I will address all the specific criticisms of Dr. Dynner subsequently. I wish first to make several general observations.

Dr. Dynner concentrates his initial fire on my contrast of the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* and the *Mishnah Berurah*. That constitutes and page and a half of the introductory section of the essay. One can easily remove those three paragraphs, substitute a transitional sentence or two, and their absence will not be noticed--stylistically or substantively. Indeed, much of his critique is devoted to statements made in the footnotes of those three paragraphs.

My essay was a study of the religious changes undergone by the Orthodox community in my lifetime. The first two sentences of my essay written in 1994 are: "This essay is an attempt to understand the developments that have occurred within my lifetime in the community in which I live. The Modern Orthodox community in which I and other people my age were raised scarcely exists anymore."¹ I was then living in twentieth century and not in the nineteenth. Other than describing when the authors of the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* and the *Mishnah Berurah* lived (which I will further address), I mentioned the nineteenth century twice simply to contrast it to the situation in latter half of the twentieth, and its use was banal.² The same is true of 'secularization'.³ Both were and are wholly peripheral, if even that, to the subject of the essay.

* Seeing that many readers will not have seen my book, I have given full quotations from it. This is a much-abbreviated response to Dr. Dynner's review. The full response more than three times the length of the response here published in <H—Judaica> can be found in my website <haymsoloveitchik.org>.

¹ P. 1.

² P. 8: 'The old ways came, in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early ones of the twentieth, under the successive ideological assaults of the Socialist and Communist movements and that of Zionism. In the cities there was the added struggle with secularism, all the more acute as the ground there had been eroded over the previous half-century by a growing movement of Enlightenment.'

P. 19: 'The legitimacy of physical instinct is the end product of Orthodoxy's encounter with modernity, which began in the nineteenth century, as the emergent movements of

More specifically, I was asked by the Fundamentalism Project of the American Academy of Arts and Science to treat ‘the new role of texts in *Haredi* society’ and my original article was entitled ‘Migration Acculturation and the New Role of Texts in Haredi Society.’⁴ The spread of activist fundamentalism is a phenomena of the latter part of the twentieth century, and it was that period that I treated. My essay addressed the tendency towards stringency (*humra*), the loss of the family’s role as arbiter of the right and proper, the mass attendance of yeshivot and their new role in shaping the norms of behavior and Jewish identity. It also sought to explain whence the political deference accorded to the *roshei ha-yeshivah*, the wonder-working power currently attributed to these outstanding scholars, the difference between an enclave in a multi-culture and a traditional society, the lack of God’s direct involvement in day-to-day human affairs, and finally, the absence of primal fear, the scarcity of terror when a Day of Judgement was near. I doubt, perhaps unjustly, whether the reader would know what my essay was about from Dr. Dynner’s presentation or, if you wish, critique.

Dynner begins his critique in the second paragraph Soloveitchik. The first sentence reads: ‘Soloveitchik argues that the initial rupture and reconstruction in Eastern Europe was a product of the product of the process secularization process which he attempts to illustrate by contrasting two classic nineteenth century publications, the ‘*Arukh ha-Shulhan* by Rabbi Yehiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908) and the *Mishnah Berurah* by R. Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933), known as the ‘Hafetz Hayyim’.’ Seeing that I addressed neither the eastern Europe not the process of secularization in my essay, it’s somewhat difficult, for me at least, to see the point of the critique.⁵ As I

Enlightenment, Zionism, and Socialism began to impact upon the Jews in eastern Europe’.

³ Above, note 2, first entry and p. 22: ‘Admittedly, the revival of the Hebrew language in Israel and its attendant secularization have diminished some of its aura as the ‘sacred tongue’; nevertheless, the emergence of a rich and sophisticated halakhic literature in English stems less from the fact that Hebrew has been desacralized than from the fact that English is now the mother tongue of Anglo-Saxon haredi society, as is modern Hebrew to its Israeli counterpart’.

⁴ In Martin E. Marty and C. Scott Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamics of the Movement* (Chicago, 1994), 197--235.

⁵ Admittedly, in the Preface I wrote: ‘The Afterword presents my thoughts on the developing religiosity and on the nature of the differing-religiosities of American and east European Jews in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and up to the First

was addressing the transformations of religious Jewry (the subtitle of the study is ‘The Transformation of Modern Orthodoxy’), those who had been fully or mostly secularized and, as it were, ‘left the fold’, did not figure in my account.

Moreover, Eastern Europe never experienced what I called ‘rupture and reconstruction’. ‘Rupture’ referred to the migration of eastern European from a deeply, entrenched traditional society, inward-turning and embedded for well over 500 years to the New World with its multicultural urban centers, and consequent acculturation of the religious immigrants, be it the acceptance of humanistic values of the Modern Orthodox, or in the Haredi world, the loss of the ascetic ideal and the acceptance of personal gratification and pleasure of the surrounding society.⁶ ‘Reconstruction’ meant the transformation of the spirituality that was entailed by their encounter with a mechanistic cosmology, by their shift from a religious cosmology with its ‘intimate anthropomorphism’⁷ to an indifferent mechanistic one. As I wrote:

the shock of both the loss of the accustomed societal framework and the ubiquitous transformations wrought by a mechanistic universe were sudden and overwhelming, and they dictated a ‘reconstruction’. The intimate anthropomorphic God would no longer do. A change in the way the universe was run demanded, consciously, or not, a change in the God who was running it.⁸

He continues: Epstein according to Soloveitchik, ‘stood firmly in a traditional society, unassaulted and undisturbed by secular movements’ (pg. 85).

It would have been somewhat clearer to the reader, as we shall immediately see, if the source of the quotation had read ‘pg. 85, n. 6’.

World War and, quite possibly, the Second World War.’ However, any reading of the Afterword will show that I addressed only the difference between the supplicative religiosity of the old world and the emigrants from that world and that of the Modern Orthodox and Haredi society in America, in the last 50 years. (See pp. 69 [point 3]--71.) See below, p. 14.

⁶ Pp. 8-26.

⁷ P. 42. The entire section, pp. 38-43, is devoted to this change

⁸ P. 68.

Dynner then proceeds to challenge the distinction I made between the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* and the *Mishnah Berurah*. The next footnote of mine on p. 85, (i.e., n. 7) gives a number of examples and further illustrates the differing approach of the two:

Contrast the differing treatments of the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* and the *Mishnah Berurah* at 'Ora{h.} {H.}ayyim', 345: 7, 539: 15 (in *'Arukh ha-Shulhan*), 539: 5 (in *Mishnah Berurah*); 668: 1, 560: 1, 321: 9 (*'Arukh ha-Shulhan*), 321: 12 (*Mishnah Berurah*). See also the revelatory remarks of the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* at 'Ora{h.} {H.}ayyim', 552: 11. For an example of differing arguments, even when in basic agreement as to the final position, compare 202: 15 (*'Arukh ha-Shulhan*) with 272: 6 (*Mishnah Berurah*). This generalization, like all others, will serve only to distort if pushed too far. The *Mishnah Berurah*, on occasion, attempts to justify common practice rather unpersuasively, as in the instance of eating fish on the Sabbath (319: 4) cited above (n. 3), and it ratifies de facto the contemporary *'eruv* (345: 7). Nor did the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* defend every common practice; see e.g. 'Ora{h.} {H.}ayyim', 551: 23. (Dr S. Z. Leiman has pointed out to me that the distinction between the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* and the *Mishnah Berurah* is well mirrored in their respective positions as to the requisite minimal size of the standard *tallit katan*, noted by Rabbi E. Y. Waldenburg in the recently published twentieth volume of his *Tsits Eli'ezer* [Jerusalem, 1994], no. 8, a responsum that itself epitomizes the tension between the mimetic culture and the emerging textual one.)

If Dr. Dynner wants to contest these examples, I am more than ready to listen. If he doesn't, then the argument still stands.

The next paragraph begins:

It is difficult for the historian of Eastern Europe to accept these initial claims. Soloveitchik asserts that that *Arukh ha-Shulhan* was printed 'late in the life of the author and parts of it even published posthumously'. However, the first volume was actually published earlier, in the winter of 1883.

I fail to see the relevance of this critique, as I made no assertion when the first volume was published.

Dynner continues then to challenge the publication dates of the two works in my footnotes.

I took these dates from the standard bibliographical work at the time of writing, the *Beit 'Eked Sefarim* of H. D. Friedberg.⁹ Where Dynner got his dates is not documented by him. Dynner is correct, seeing that I gave 1898 as the beginning of the printing of *the Mishnah Berurah*, as the date given by Friedberg was 1892 (he was unaware of the 1884 printing), and Dynner may also be right that I should have--in the republication of 2020--updated them by the online bibliographies. However, the exact dates were so irrelevant to my argument that I ignored them. *Mea culpa*.

He continues: Perhaps Soloveitchik means that they were divided by their respective geographical contexts.....

Seeing that I never discussed Eastern Europe in the essay, what relevance has the geographic location or the size of the cities. I was discussing the nature of the two works, and to refute my position, Dynner must relate to the above-cited n.7 of the book.

Dynner proceeds: Perhaps the authors' motivation differed? Yet, if we read their introductions, we find that their aims were virtually identical: to overcome the confusion caused by numerous commentaries on the *Shulhan Arukh* and other codes. The Hafetz Hayyim did not involve any manifestation of secularization, as Soloveitchik would have us to expect.

Perhaps Dynner expects this, but not many readers would share this expectation, seeing that I never discussed the purposes of these publication nor secularization in the essay.¹⁰

Dynner then writes: We do find evidence over textuality in the realm of women's education.....

The relationship between rupture and reconstruction and the innovation of textual instruction of women was first asserted by me in the introductory note of my original essay.¹¹ However, in the expanded 2020 reprint I retracted it, writing:

⁹ 4 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1951-1957)

¹⁰ See above, nn. 2 and 3.

¹¹ P. 85, n. 8.

The entrance of women into talmudic studies, while coeval with the shift from a mimetic society to a text-based one, was not predominantly a product of the same forces. It was not a product of ‘rupture and reconstruction’. Running a household had been from time immemorial an overwhelming task, one that required far more than twenty-four hours in the day to get done: ‘Man’s work is from sun to sun; woman’s work is never done.’ The introduction of electricity and plumbing eased that lot, and the average woman was no longer a worn-out drudge by the age of 35. Nevertheless, housework remained a full-time job entailing a twelve-hour day, seven days a week. The introduction in the 1960s and seventies of labor-saving devices---the washing machine and dryer, the dishwasher, the freezer, and the microwave oven to mention but a few---freed large tracts of time for women. Middle-class and working-class women could now take full-time employment outside the house without slighting their family duties, and the feminist revolution, itself partially a product of this free-time revolution, made the influx of women into all-male professions a certainty. The same forces that moved a woman of the 1950s and 1960s from being a nurse, that is, the helpmate or enabler of a doctor, to being a doctor herself in the 1970s and 1980s moved the religious woman from being an enabler of Talmud studies of others to be a ‘Talmud-studier’ herself. To be sure, studying Gemara and *daf yomi* was far more meaningful than simply having an outside profession, but the factors which enabled both processes were predominantly the same. The *embourgeoisement* of religious Jewry, the rise in wealth of this community in these decades, also enabled the growth of kosher eateries and take-out food, which further freed women---even in times of maximum pressure from their job---from the necessity of devoting several hours a day to preparing hot meals for their family. I see no reason not to believe that, had the Holocaust not occurred, and the labor-saving revolution and take-outs had come to the flourishing Jewish communities in eastern Europe, as would have the world-wide feminist movement, a similar influx, *mutatis mutandis*, of religious women into the ranks of Talmud studies would have occurred.

A society can be transformed on its native grounds, and, as I noted in the preface to the Notes, the initial stages of some of the traits described in the essay could already be discerned in eastern Europe in the interwar period (1919--39). Nevertheless, all this would not have resulted in a rupture of traditional life, nor would there have been any need to reconstruct one’s religiosity anew. Societies do change over time and some segments radically and swiftly. However, there still would have been hundreds of thousands, perhaps even over a million, religious Jews in eastern Europe continuing

their old ways in religious practice. In small towns, Jews were often the majority, and they constituted a large percentage of the population in the great cities of Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, Riga, and Vilna. Many in a family may have become Communists, Socialists, Zionists, Nihilists, or whatever, but there were enough members of the extended family to preserve its traditions. Villages had their local venerated practices, some going back half a millennium, and Hasidic courts, large and small, would have dotted the landscape. The mimetic tradition might have been altered in some ways (traditional societies must change so as to remain the same), but it would still have been very much in existence and could make a legitimate claim to people's allegiance, something it could never do in the New World, especially in the urban centers where the immigrants from the Old World were concentrated.

It's a shame that Dynner didn't notice these two paragraphs in the supplements of the enlarged 2020 edition of *Rupture and Reconstruction*. It would have saved him his discussion of the Hafetz Hayyim's attitude to feminine education, though I am in his debt in alerting me to Rachel and Charles Manekin's splendid article on this subject on the Seforim Blog, May 27, 2020.

Dynner opens the next paragraph writing:

Nevertheless, the 'dual tradition of the intellectual and the mimetic' does not seem to have begun to 'break down', as Soloveitchik puts it. Instead, the *Mishneh Berurah* and the *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* continued both the intellectual and mimetic traditions, which were 'two different but longstanding and well-established traditions', according to Michael J. Broyde and Shlomo C. Pill (indeed, both variant methods were employed at least as far back as the Middle Ages). [8]

I am delighted that Dr. Dynner has discovered through Broyde's and Pill's fine article¹² that the textual and mimetic traditions go back to the Middle Ages. I have spent some 45 years detailing how uniquely powerful the mimetic tradition was in Ashkenaz. The text of the Talmud was reinterpreted to accord with the ancient traditions or uniform practices of the communities of medieval Germany and France. In all other European Jewish cultures of that period, be it Provence and Catalonia, Muslim Spain and

¹² 'Building the Set Table: An Introduction to the Jurisprudence of R. Yehiel Mikhel Epstein's *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* in Contrast to the *Mishnah Berurah*', *Diné Yisrael*, 33, no. 1 (2020), 1-69. (Dynner refers to p. 36.)

Morocco, Christian Castile and Aragon, Languedoc and Provence, most discoveries of contradiction between the mimetic tradition and the talmudic text led to a bi-furcation of elite and popular conduct, with attempts, at times serious, at times desultory, to have the common folk change their ways.¹³ This is vivid evidence of the enormity of the change of the recent rupture and reconstruction. For the first time in over a thousand years, the Ashkenazic community the world over is without a mimetic tradition and must shape its conduct and beliefs by the canonical texts, as understood by the talmudic masters and Hasidic rabbis.

Dynner begins the next paragraph by writing:

WWI did arguably create something of a rupture and reconstruction, as the Jewish population was plundered, exiled...and communities were disbanded.

While not arguing with the tragic facts of destruction caused to Jewish society by the First World War, it has nothing to do with ‘rupture and reconstruction’ of my essay. As I wrote before:

Eastern Europe never experienced what I called ‘rupture and reconstruction’. ‘Rupture’ referred to the migration of eastern European from a deeply, entrenched traditional society, inward-turning and embedded for well over 500 years to the New World with its multicultural urban centers, and consequent acculturation of the religious immigrants, be it the acceptance of humanistic values of the Modern Orthodox, or in the Haredi world, the loss of the ascetic ideal and the acceptance of personal gratification and pleasure of the surrounding society.¹⁴ ‘Reconstruction’ meant the transformation of the

¹³ See Jacob Katz, ‘Alterations in the Time of the Evening Service (*Ma’ariv*): An example of the Interrelationship between Religious Customs and their Social Background’, in id., *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem, 1998); Heb. original: ‘Ma’ariv bi-Zemano u-she-Lo bi-Zemano: Dugmah le-Zikah bein Minhag, Halakhah ve-~~{H.}~~evrah’, *Zion*, 35 (1970), 35—60; Haym Soloveitchik, ‘Religious Law and Change: The Medieval Ashkenazi Example’, *AJS Review*, 12 (1987), 205—21, reprinted in my *Collected Essays*, v. 1 (Oxford, 2013), 239-257, together with my re-evaluation at that time ‘Religion and Change Revisited’, 258-277. My final statement on this complex issue is to be found in the last chapter of the forthcoming *Jews and the Medieval Wine Trade: Principles and Pressures*, an expanded version of *Yeiman: Sahar be-Yeinam shel Goyyim--‘al Gilguah shel ha-Halakhah be-‘Olam ha-Ma’aseh* (Jerusalem, 2016).

¹⁴ Pp. 8-26.

spirituality that was entailed by their encounter with a mechanistic cosmology, by their shift from a religious cosmology with its 'intimate anthropomorphism'¹⁵ to an indifferent mechanistic one.

Nothing that happened in Eastern Europe has any bearing upon my study,¹⁶ other than the migration it generated to the United States, and this influx was stemmed by the USA in 1924.

Dynner goes on to speak about the hasidic revival that followed this catastrophe writing: 'Hasidic leaders responded to threats to tradition by institutionalizing Torah studies on a vast scale. An unprecedented number of Hasidic yeshivot sprung up, around a dozen of which became world-famous.' I fail to see the relevance of his description seeing that I wrote in the Preface of the essay, that I am addressing non-hasidic religious Jewry only.

Several points need emphasizing at the outset. The Orthodox community described here is of European origin. This essay does not discuss religious Jewry issuing from Muslim countries, commonly called Sephardim, primarily because, unlike their Western brethren, they encountered modernity very recently. Second, it deals with mitnaggedic and not hasidic society, though I do believe that my observations apply to those hasidic groups with which I am most familiar, such as Ger, for example. Nevertheless, hasidic sects are so varied and my acquaintance with their full spectrum so spotty that, despite their occasional mention, it seems wiser not to include them in the analysis.

I am surprised that Dynner did not critique what I had written in 'Rupture and Reconstruction', where I contrasted the current widespread hasidic networks of yeshivot and its absence in prior generations. (One can be as ignorant of hasidim as I am, but nevertheless know that there are presently many such yeshivot.)

Just how essential this instruction and apprenticeship are, even in the haredi world, indeed, even for its most insulated sector, may be seen in the numerous hasidic yeshivot now in existence---and almost all of recent origin. For close to 200 years, hasidism had looked askance at the institution of yeshivot, viewing them not only as competing sources of authority to that of the hasidic rabbi

¹⁵ P. 42. The entire section, pp. 38-43, is devoted to this change. See below, pp. 9-13 for a partial quotation of that passage.

¹⁶ See above, n. 4.

(*rebbe*), but also as simply far less effective in inculcating religiosity than the home and local synagogue (*shtibl*), not to speak of the court of the *rebbe* himself. To be sure, several dynasties with a more intellectual bent had founded their own yeshivot in the nineteenth century.⁷⁸ These, however, were the exception and not the rule. Moreover, these institutions addressed a tiny, elite body only, and their role in the religious life of the community was peripheral. Within the past thirty years, hasidic yeshivot have become a commonplace and attendance is widespread, as hasidim have decisively realized that, in the world in which they must currently live, even the court of the holy man may well fail without the sustained religious apprenticeship of the school.¹⁷

Perhaps Dynner hadn't noted this paragraph.¹⁸

¹⁷ P. 10 7

¹⁸ It is also possible that he omitted any critique because I had muted somewhat the newness and reported what I had been told of the hasidic yeshivah revival in interwar Poland, something I could not document, so I let the newness stand in the text and left oral testimony to the footnote, n. 78):

Notably the dynasties of Ger (Gora Kalwaria), Sochaczew, and Alexandrów. Lubavitch established a yeshivah towards the end of the nineteenth century. (Not that Torah study (*talmud Torah*) was peripheral to hasidism; rather, its institutional expression in the form of the yeshivah was. I am unaware of any study of hasidic yeshivot. Some basic data may be obtained from S. K. Mirsky, ed., *Mosedot Torah be-{'Eiropah be-Vinyanam u-ve-{H.}urbanam* (New York, 1956). There is much information on the rise in the axiological standing of Torah study in Polish hasidism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in M. Piekarz, *{H.}asidut Polin: Megamot Re'ayoniyyot bein Shetei ha-Mil{h.}amot u-vi-Gezerot Tash--Tashah ('ha-Sho'ah')* (Jerusalem, 1990), 50--81. He [Pikarz] sees this rise as a response to the growing inroads of secularization, which would, *mutatis mutandis*, dovetail with my basic thesis, as would equally what others have told me, that the yeshivah played a progressively more central role in Ger during the interwar period. Eastern European *haredi* communities were severely affected by the dislocations wrought by the First World War and the Russian Revolution. In fact, the more one studies the interwar period, the more one senses that a number of the traits of the text culture outlined in this essay first began to take shape then. (Emphasis now added). See S.

Dynner then writes:

The concluding 'Replies to Critics' section unfortunately reinforces many myths as it dispels: the fictional Tevye is invoked to represent bygone Jewish religiosity in both market towns and cities, where most Jews lived, leading to a veritable clash of subculture.

Allow me to point out to my distinguished critic, that Tevye did not suddenly appear in the Afterword, he played a major role in the body of the essay, pp. 38-43. For the reader's convenience, I will quote parts of it:

I have discussed the disappearance of a way of life and of the mimetic tradition. I believe, however, that the transformations in the religious enclave, including the haredi sector, go much deeper and affect fundamental beliefs. I can best convey my impression....by sharing a personal experience.

In 1959 I went to Israel before the High Holidays. Having grown up in Boston and never having had an opportunity to pray in a haredi yeshivah, I spent the entire High Holidays period---from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur---at a famous yeshivah in Benei Berak. The prayer there was long, intense, and uplifting, certainly far more powerful than anything I had previously experienced. And yet there was something missing, something that I had encountered before, something that perhaps I had taken for granted. Upon reflection, I realized that there was introspection, self-ascent, even moments of self-transcendence, but there was no fear in the thronged student body, most of whom were Israeli born. Nor was that experience a solitary one. Over the subsequent thirty years, I have passed the High Holidays generally in the United States or Israel, and occasionally in England, attending services in haredi and non-haredi communities alike. I have yet to find that fear present, to any significant degree, among the native-born in either circle. The ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are now Holy Days, but they are not *Yamim Nora'im*---Days of Awe or, more accurately, Days of Dread---as they have been traditionally called.

Stampfer, 'Hasidic Yeshivas in Interwar Poland' in his *Families, Rabbis, and Education: Traditional Jewish Society in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2010), 252, n. 3

I grew up in a Jewishly non-observant community and prayed in a synagogue where most of the older congregants neither observed the Sabbath nor even ate kosher. They all hailed from eastern Europe, largely from *shtetlakh*, such as Shepetovka and Shnipishok. Most of their religious observance had been washed away in the sea-change, and the little that was left had been further eroded in the 'new country'. Indeed, the only time the synagogue was ever full was during the High Holidays. Even then the service was hardly edifying. Most didn't know what they were saying, and, bored, wandered in and out. Yet at the closing service of Yom Kippur, the *Ne'ilah*, the synagogue filled and a hush set in upon the crowd. The tension was palpable, and tears were shed.

What had been instilled in these people in their earliest childhood, and which they never quite shook off, was that every person was judged on Yom Kippur, and, as the sun was setting, the final decision was being rendered, in the words of the famous prayer, 'who for life, who for death, who for tranquility, who for unrest'. These people did not cry from religiosity but from self-interest, from an instinctive fear for their lives. Their tears were courtroom tears, with whatever degree of sincerity such tears have. What was absent among the students in Ponevezh and in other contemporary services--and, lest I be thought to be exempting myself from this assessment, absent from my own religious life too---was that primal fear of Divine judgment, simple and direct.

To what extent God was palpably present on Yom Kippur among the different generations of congregants in Boston and Benei Berak is a matter of personal impression, and it is one about which opinions might readily and vigorously differ. The pivotal question, however, is not God's sensed presence on Yom Kippur or on the *Yamim Nora'im*, the ten holiest days of the year, but on the 355 other---commonplace---days: to what extent is there an ongoing experience of His natural involvement in the mundane round of everyday affairs? Put differently, the issue is not the accuracy of my youthful assessment, but whether the cosmology of Benei Berak and Borough Park differs from that of the *shtetl*, and if so, whether such a shift has engendered a change in the sensed intimacy with God and the felt immediacy of His presence. Allow me to explain.

We regularly see events that have no visible cause: we breathe, we sneeze, stones fall downwards, and fire rises upwards. Around the age of 2 or 3, the child realizes that these events do not happen of themselves, but that they are made to happen, they are, to use adult terms, caused. He also realizes that often the forces that make things happen cannot be seen, but that older people, with more experience of the world, know what they are. So begins the incessant questioning: 'Why does . . .?' The

child may be told that the invisible forces behind breathing, sickness, and falling are 'reflex actions', 'germs', and 'gravitation'. Or he may be told that they are the workings of the 'soul', of 'God's wrath', and of 'the attractions of like to like' (which is why earthly things, as stones, fall downwards, while heavenly things, as fire, rise upwards). These causal notions, imbibed from the home, are then reinforced by the street, and refined by school. That these forces are real, the child, by now an adult, has no doubt, for he incessantly experiences their potent effects. That these unseen forces are the true cause of events seems equally certain, for all authorities, indeed all people, are in agreement on the matter.

When a medieval man said that his sickness was the result of the will of God, he was no more affirming a religious posture than is a modern man adopting a scientific one when he says that he has a virus. Each is simply repeating, if you wish subscribing to, the explanatory system instilled in him in earliest childhood, and which alone makes sense of the world as he knows it. Though we have never actually seen a germ or a gravitational field, it is true only in a limited sense to say that we 'believe' in them. Their existence to us is simply a given, and we would think it folly to attempt to go against them. Similarly, one doesn't 'believe' in God in the other explanatory system; one simply takes His direct involvement in human affairs for granted. One may, of course, superimpose a belief in God, even a passionate and all-consuming one, upon another causal framework, such as gravity or DNA, but a God 'believed in' over and above an explanatory system, functioning through it as indirect cause, in brief a God in a natural cosmology, is a God 'believed in' in a different sense than the way we now 'believe' in gravitation or the way people once 'believed' in God in a religious cosmology, a God whose wrath and favor were the explanatory system itself.

God's palpable presence and direct, natural involvement in daily life---and I emphasize both 'direct' and 'daily'---His immediate responsibility for everyday events, were a fact of life in the east European *shtetl*, as recently as several generations ago. Let us remember Tevye's conversations with God portrayed by Sholem Aleichem. There is, of course, humor in the colloquial intimacy and in the precise way the minutest annoyances of daily life are laid, package-like, at God's doorstep. The humor, however, is that of parody, the exaggeration of the commonly known. The author's assumption is that his readers themselves share, after some fashion, Tevye's sense of God's responsibility for man's quotidian fate. If they didn't, Tevye would not be humorous; he would be crazy.

Tevye's outlook was not unique to the *shtetl*, or to Jews in eastern Europe; it was simply one variation of an age-old cosmology that dominated Europe for millennia and

which saw the universe as directly governed by a Divine Sovereign. If regularity exists in the world, it is simply because the Sovereign's will is constant, as one expects the will of a great sovereign to be. He could, of course, at any moment change His mind, and things contrary to our expectations would then occur, what we call 'miracles'. However, the recurrent and the 'miraculous' alike are, to the same degree, the direct and unmediated consequence of His will. The difference between them is not of kind but rather of frequency. Frequency, of course, is a very great practical difference, and it well merits, indeed demands of daily language, a difference in terms. However, this verbal distinction never obscures for a moment their underlying identity.

As all that occurs is an immediate consequence of His will, events have a purpose and occur because of that purpose. Rationality, or, as men of the 'old world' would have had it, wisdom, does not consist in detecting unvarying sequences in ever more accurately observed events and seeing in the first occurrence the 'cause' of the second. Wisdom, rather, consists in discovering His intent in these happenings, for that intent is their cause, and only by grasping their cause can events be anticipated and controlled. The universe is a moral order reflecting God's purposes and physically responsive to any breaches in His norms. In the workings of such a world, God is not an ultimate cause; He is a direct, natural force, and safety lies in contact with that force. Prayer has, then, a physical efficacy, and sin is 'a fearful imprudence'. Not that one thinks much about sin in the bustle of daily life, but when a day of reckoning does come around, only the foolhardy are without fear.

Such a Divine force can be distant and inscrutable, as in some strains of Protestantism, or it can be intimate and familial, as in certain forms of Catholicism. In eastern Europe it tended towards intimacy, whether in the strong Marian strain of Polish Catholicism or in the much-supplanted household icon, the center of family piety in Greek Orthodox devotion. And much of the traditional literature of the Jews, especially as it filtered into common consciousness through the commentaries of Rashi and the *Tsene Re'ene*, contained a humanization of the deity that invited intimacy. God visits Abraham on his sickbed; He consoles Isaac upon the death of his father. He is swayed by the arguments of Elijah, the matriarchs, or by any heartfelt prayer, and decisions on the destiny of nations and the fate of individuals, the length of the day, and the size of the moon are made and unmade by apt supplications at the opportune moment. The humor of Sholem Aleichem lay not in the dialogues with God, but in having a 'dairyman' rather than the Ba'al Shem Tov conduct them. The parody lay not in the remonstrances but in their subject matter.

The world to which the uprooted came, and in which their children were raised, was that of modern science, which had reduced nature to 'an irreversible series of equations', to an immutable nexus of cause and effect, which suffices on its own to explain the workings of the world. Not that most, or even any, had so much as a glimmer of these equations, but the formulas of the 'new country' had created a technology which they saw, with their own eyes, transforming their lives beyond all dreams. And it is hard to deny the reality of the hand that brings new gifts with startling regularity.

There are, understandably, few Tevyes today, even in haredi circles. To be sure, there are seasons of the year, moments of crest in the religious cycle, when God's guiding hand may be tangibly felt by some and invoked by many, and there are certainly occasions in the lives of most when the reversals are so sudden, or the stakes so high and the contingencies so many, that the unbeliever prays for luck, and the believer, more readily and more often, calls for His help. Such moments are real, only too real, but they are not the stuff of daily life. And while there are always those whose spirituality is one apart from that of their time, nevertheless I think it safe to say that the perception of God as a *daily, natural* force is no longer present to a significant degree in any sector of modern Jewry, even the most religious. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that specific Divine Providence, though passionately believed as a theological principle---and I do not for a moment question the depth of that conviction---is no longer experienced as a simple reality. With the shrinkage of God's palpable hand in human affairs has come a marked loss of His immediate presence, with its primal fear and nurturing comfort. With this distancing, the religious world has been irrevocably separated from the spirituality of its fathers, from the religious mood of intimate anthropomorphism that had cut across all the religious divides of the Old World.¹⁹

¹⁹ Pp. 38-43. This is simply my restatement of what has been written about this transformation in Western Europe in earlier centuries, as I noted in n. 100 of the essay: e.g., Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in the Sixteenth and Seventeen Centuries* (London, 1971); D. D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, 1989); W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an Immigrant Group* (Boston, 1918) vol. I, 205--306.

As for Tevye's appearance in the Afterword, I responded to the widespread impression that I preferred his religiosity to that of contemporary religious Jewry, writing:

As for my preference for the religiosity of Tevye: first let me state that Maimonides would have found Tevye's religiosity vulgar, indeed, revolting, and most other religious philosophers would have had serious reservations about Tevye and his perception---to use a Leibowitzian phrase---of 'God as public utility'. A spirituality which sees God primarily as a nurturing if occasionally stern father (*avinu malkenu*) will perceive God as a child perceives parents---suppliers of one's physical and emotional needs. To be sure, such an element is present in most forms of religiosity. However, being present in religiosity and being the primary component of religiosity are two wholly different things. Tevye's conversations and prayers, touching as they may be, are, nevertheless, religiously problematic, as is supplication generally, for supplication is sacrilege. Sacrilege means using something that exists for its own sake, in other words, something absolute, in this case God himself, for one's own private ends. Again, there probably can be no religion without supplicative moments, even many such moments; however, a spirituality in which supplication is the predominant trait is one that many may find religiously wanting. A spirituality bereft of self-surrender, destitute of or scant on Bahyan *bitta{h.}on* (trust in God), is, arguably, far from an apex of religious excellence, perhaps not even a lesser height to which one should aspire.²⁰

Dynner concludes his critique by offering other reasons for the absence of tears nowadays in the *Neilah* service.

However, there are other, equally compelling explanations for the textual turn; most important, the prodigious American printing enterprises were likely also products of the relative cheapness and availability of printing and a stronger consumer base. Additional features of the American context might help explain other departures from old cultural patterns, such as the Protestant discouragement of emotive worship (e.g., weeping) and demonic belief.

Though I have some doubts about the cogency of some of his alternative explanations (e.g., courtroom tears in criminal trials are regular occurrences), I will simply repeat what I said the Afterword (pp. 51-52), that there may well be other factors that are

²⁰ Pp. 70-71.

involved in the transformation that I described, however, I wrote an essay, not a book, something 'I would never undertake because of my ignorance of America Jewish History.'

A former student of Salo Baron once told me, that soon after he finished his doctorate, he received a note from Baron asking him to stop by his office. When the student entered, Baron gave him a book and suggested that he review it. The student began to discuss the various ways of reviewing books. Baron listened and when he finished, said 'Any of these approaches will do. There is only one rule in reviews—read the book first.'