

S.Y. AGNON was the supreme literary alchemist, transforming the raw stuff of folklore to shimmering literary nuggets. In his short story, "That Tzaddik's Etrog," we have a clear example of his artistic magic. He uses sleight of pen to give us the literary equivalent of an M.C. Escher drawing. At first we see only the white angels, but then the black devils formed by the interstices come to the fore and impinge on our perception. Which is the real Rebbe Mikheleh - tzaddik or scoundrel?

THE STORY BEGINS with a puzzling introduction, which seems to be just so much superfluous dross. Another apparently unnecessary paragraph is tacked on to the end. Both segments could be omitted without changing the essence of the story one whit. But those "extraneous" opening and closing lines which frame the story, are components of Agnon's wit. He must convince us that *his* version is, indeed, the true

quire an etrog by selfless sacrifice of a precious possession, not stooping to nickel-and-dime the seller over the change. His most impressive characteristic is complete self-control over himself when his "unspiritual" wife ruins his etrog because a broken *pitam* (stem or protuberance) invalidates an etrog, rendering it unfit for ceremonial use. Reb Mikheleh could well serve as a role model, symbol of that rare contemporary man of utmost self-discipline who resists the materialistic and hedonistic pressures of his environment.

Perhaps that is why Rabbi Baruch counsels us in the very last line, "This is a story worth hearing twice." Heeding that advice, let's hear it a second time.

THE SECOND TIME AROUND, we begin to see some of the black emerging from the interstices between the lines: Reb Mikheleh may not be such a righteous man after all. The key to understanding that Agnon may really be painting a highly

etrog at the climax. In Agnon's critical portrait of the couple, Reb Mikheleh comes off second best to his wife's innate and quiet forbearance.

Another technique up Agnon's sleeve is the use of an idiom associated with a certain object in order to transfer the latter's qualities to a different object. He describes the etrog as

"a feast for the eyes and truly fit for the benediction."

This is almost exactly how Genesis [3:6] describes the first problematic fruit which had such a disastrous spinoff in the Garden of Eden:

"... the woman saw ... it was a feast for the eyes and truly fit to make one wise."

In fact, *midrash* suggests Eve's forbidden fruit was an *etrog*. But for Agnon,

b) Hidur mitzvah

Tradition definitely encourages enhancement of mitzvot. This principle is based, surprisingly, on the halakhic decision that circumcision be done as aesthetically as possible, even at the expense of certain Sabbath infringements. A beautiful etrog is one of the objects singled out by the Talmud for aesthetic enhancement (along with tallit, shofar, and Torah scroll!). But an upper limit for enhancement is indicated as well, "For the sake of *hidur* one should spend as much as a third more than the cost of the mitzvah." It seems the tzaddik went overboard according to this criterion as well.

c) Family support

Although it seems superfluous to legally legislate a man's responsibility to support his family, halakha recognizes that this is not a self-evident principle and prescribes minimal levels. The case of Reb Mikheleh, along with the thousands of contemporary child-support cases in courts, testifies to the need for such legislation, halakhic or civic.

d) Rejoicing

Reb Mikheleh's quest is rationalized at one point with a quote about Succot from Leviticus (23:40), "You shall take a fruit of the beautiful tree [etrog] ... and rejoice..." But the format that rejoicing must take is not left to our whim. The hero knew full well that halakha, in its wonderful specificity, delineates the concept of festival rejoicing. The Maimonidean formulation dictates that:

"the festivity... include the appropriate rejoicing of each man and his children and the members of his household. The children, for example, should be given parched grain, nuts, and sweetmeats; the womenfolk should be presented with pretty clothes and trinkets according to one's means; the menfolk should eat meat and drink wine."

AGNON'S ETROG: TRANSMUTING LITERATURE FROM FOLKLORE

By Esther Azulay and Shira Leibowitz

version of a tale we have heard elsewhere. He establishes his credibility in two ways: he *name drops*, and he trots out an *eye-witness*.

The name dropping reads almost like the opening paragraph of an article in a chemistry journal, where an author cites, and omits, names which serve to establish his credentials with the reader and to add to the aura of veracity. With the aid of good references, Agnon wishes to create an unassailable claim to the truth of his story; after all *his* version is from Reb Shlomo of Zvibel, a descendant of Reb Mikheleh of Zloczow (pronounced *zlow'-chow*). To erase any lingering doubt he drops two more references at the end of the story, Rabbis Yosef of Yampol and Baruch of Mezbizh.

Furthermore, he boasts an *eye-witness*: the daughter-in-law of the holy preacher himself. Agnon goes to great lengths to establish his claim of veracity, because he is not neutrally retelling a well-known tale, but creating his own radically ironic version, drawn in Escheresque now-white/now-black ambiguity.

ON FIRST READING, we meet Reb Mikheleh in his white purity. He is a tzaddik who, despite his own impoverishment and bare cupboards, sequesters a loaf of bread to save beggars from humiliation, should they knock at his otherwise empty home. He is not only immersed in good deeds, but in prayer and study as he concentrates in his solitude room. Disdainful of materialistic concerns, he rises above his own bodily needs, worrying only about the needs of the Divine. Nevertheless, he can act with alacrity when there is a precept to fulfill. He dashes to the etrog-seller and exudes joy when he is finally able to ac-

critical portrait in his clever use of a phrase from Proverbs, which he excises from its context (kindness to animals, Proverbs 12:10) and flips over for added irony. The first time the tzaddik's wife comes on stage, she is described as a woman who "understood the soul of her righteous husband." Agnon banks on the reader's hearing the reverberations from the book of Proverbs. When the description of the Rebbetzin is juxtaposed to the original Proverb, the full irony becomes obvious.

Proverbs: Yo'elesh tzaddik Nefesh behemo
Agnon: Yo'asaf Nefesh ba'alah
(*ishto shel oto tzaddik*)

Proverbs: A tzaddik understands
the soul of his beast.
Agnon: The wife of that tzaddik understands
the soul of her... *husband*.

One can hear Agnon chuckling to himself as he slips this *verse-play* into the story, transforming the Rebbetzin into the real tzaddik and making "that tzaddik" ... beastly.

She is, indeed, saintly: while he secludes himself in his solitude room, she frees him from family burdens, is logical and practical. These sterling qualities earn her the rebuke, "You are worried about meat and fish, and I am worried about not yet having my etrog." Despite his reproach, and his jarringly egotistical "my etrog," she patiently exits. With her lips, she kisses the mezuzah and swallows her disappointment. She doesn't repeat to herself, as he does at the end of the story, "But I will not be angry. But I will not be angry." She simply is not angry, although she would be justified to be enraged. In contrast, we can imagine him gritting his teeth to control his fury when he is devastated by the ruined

again plucking a verse out of context, it is the man who is seduced by the goodly fruit.

ANOTHER UNDERCURRENT of irony is created in the unstated conflict between personal piety and codified law. The hero seems to be impelled by his obsession with obtaining a perfect etrog, not pausing to ask what would be the halakhically correct decision at each point in the plot. There are at least four areas of halakha which impinge upon the story.

By contrasting Agnon's work with this sampling of folk-versions, we discern clearly the role reversal he has shrewdly performed, turning the shrew into a saint and the tzaddik into an obsessive egoist.

a) Allocation of scarce resources

Halakha defines not only minimal standards, but operational priorities in situations demanding choices.

"If a [poor] person must choose between Sabbath lights and Chanukah lights ... the lighting of his home (by Sabbath candles) takes priority, so as to sustain peace in the house."

When mitzvot have to square-off, there are guidelines. Etrog vs. tefillin? Tefillin. Etrog vs. holiday meals? Holiday meals. Given Reb Mikheleh's predicament, not just our gut reaction, but halakha itself would come down on the side of the Rebbetzin.

In the light of this standard, the tzaddik's behavior is capricious. The Succot harvest demands a sober, carefully delimited rejoicing.

Thus, even by the yardstick of the tzaddik's own halakhic tradition, he was guilty on several counts. It's not his last line that makes us dislike him, "But I will not be angry." If only he had added at this point "... and my children are hungry. But I will not be angry." However, he doesn't. All he cares about his is self-control.

Agnon critics have read additional perspectives into this short story. Rivka Gurfein sees Agnon-the-philosopher at work here, in a parable where a "fine line separates holiness from impurity, mitzvah from sin," and which reminds us of the

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angel/devil motif in the Escher woodcut. Zvi Massad sees Agnon-the-moralist here, presenting Mikheleh as the paragon of self-restraint and endurance. But only by comparing Agnon's miniature masterpiece to the raw material, can we tease out his probable intentions.

ELSEWHERE we have heard this story, at least so Agnon insists. "You heard the story from whomever you may have heard it." The very title indicates that he assumes the reader is familiar with the tale, "That tzaddik's etrog" i.e., the same tzaddik we know from some other recounting we have heard. It is the impassioned conviction of the teller that his version is right and those told by others, wrong. There is an inner tension within one and the same person, of knowing that he is right and knowing that this conviction has to be proven to others' satisfaction, in this case through the references and eye-witness in the first and last paragraphs, respectively, who could vouch that this is the "very stuff of the original ... not adding a word ... except for clarification."

A comparison of Agnon's story with several renditions of the folktale reveals the differences between great literature and folklore. The three accounts below (there are others) all belong to the genre of Chasidic tales which impart moral-ethical teachings. In this case, all three emphasize, through their differing endings, the great and rare virtue of not succumbing to wrath, epitomized in the hero's self-control at the end. Note, too, the unequivocal portrayal of the hero in these three versions as a role model to emulate.

One version appears in a Chasidic Anthology, where the tales are arranged according to alphabetized topics. The first of a dozen tales under the heading "Anger" is the story of a wealthy Jew who lent his thousand-zloty etrog to a neighbor who dropped and damaged it.

"The wealthy man bethought himself of the large sum he had spent on the etrog ... He reminded himself however, that should he feel anger against the borrower ... this would be displeasing to the Lord. He there-

fore took back the spoiled etrog without a word or reproach and in complete calmness of spirit."

This is the most artless of the folk versions. It is difficult to feel very sorry for the wealthy owner, who can probably replace his prize etrog with another one.

In a second version, Rabbi E. Kitov presents the story in the chapter on Succot in his book on holidays. Here the wife is an active etrog despoiler, while the tzaddik remains a tzaddik to be emulated.

"An impoverished tzaddik ... sold a precious pair of inherited tefillin ... and bought a beautiful etrog ... His wife felt intense anguish which turned to anger against her husband. She threw the etrog to the ground, ... whereupon the tzaddik said: 'Tefillin I have sold, the etrog I have lost, should I also fall into the pit of anger?'"

Rabbi Kitov's purpose is to exemplify the principle that "intention in performance of a mitzvah is proper if it does not lead to anger."

The most vicious ending appears in a recension where the wife is positively villainous. Rabbi Shlomo Zevin retells it in his holiday anthology. Reb Mikheleh of Zloczow inherited a set of valuable tefillin. He had turned down an offer of 50 reinit for them; despite his destitution he wouldn't hear of selling. His wife nagged him to sell them, since he had an ordinary spare set he used for prayer.

"Once on Succot eve there was no etrog to be found in all of Zloczow. At the last minute someone brought a perfect etrog to town for sale for 50 reinit. R. Mikheleh rushed to sell his father's tefillin, and bought the etrog. When his wife learned of this, she was furious and bombarded her husband with curses and insults: 'How dare you? How many times have I implored you to sell the tefillin for household necessities, and you refused? And now ...' She worked herself into a rage finally grabbing the etrog from the table. She bit the stem off with her teeth, and spit it to the ground. R. Mikheleh watched, not uttering a word of reproach. 'If the Holy One Blessed

be He desires that my etrog be spoiled, I accept this with love.' Later, his father appeared to him in a dream, saying approvingly that Mikheleh's forbearance made an even greater impression in Heaven, than did the initial act of piety in purchasing an etrog at a great financial sacrifice."

This ending sharpens both the Rebbeztin's shrewdness and R. Mikheleh's saintliness. She is the ultimate *klafia*, he the paragon of endurance.

By contrasting Agnon's work with this sampling of folk-versions, we discern clearly the role reversal he has shrewdly performed, turning the shrew into a saint and the tzaddik into an obsessive egoist. Agnon's conceit is that, while the reader may be familiar with the folktale in one of the above formats, only Agnon's Rebbeztin and Rebbe are the real McCoy's.

A comparison of Agnon's story with several renditions of the folktale reveals the differences between great literature and folklore.

WHILE AGNON is busy turning legend into literature, he is not too busy to take a stand on a socio-historic controversy as well. A.A. Rivlin has noted that the appearance of historical Chasidic leaders in the final paragraph is not irrelevant to the plot. The casual reader may stop following the story when the action ends with the tzaddik's last words and just skim the final paragraph considering it a list of Chasidic rabbis arbitrarily mentioned for no ostensible reason. Agnon was rarely arbitrary.

One end of the Chasidic spectrum in Galicia was represented by R. Yehiel Mikheleh (died about 1786), a dour ascetic. Huber describes him as one who remained pure and didn't understand the temptations of men. "According to a report which all but crosses the border between the sublime and the ridiculous, he never warmed himself at the stove, for this would have been a con-

cession to sloth; never bent down to his food, for this would have been yielding to greed; and never scratched himself, since this would have verged on voluptuousness." Opening the chapter he devotes to R. Mikheleh, Buber retells a vignette about this Rebbe's happiness despite (or because of) his poverty. "Someone challenged Reb Mikheleh, who lacked so much, about how he could say the morning blessing, 'Blessed be Thou ... who has supplied my every need.' R. Mikheleh responded, 'My need is for poverty, and that is what I have been supplied with.' This same Weltanschauung is echoed in the Agnon story when the tzaddik says, upon acquiring his etrog (while his home is still bereft of food), 'Praised be the Blessed and Sublime Name for ... fulfilling my every need.'

At the other extreme is Rabbi Baruch of Mezbizh (died 1811), described by Buber as a man of wealth, power, pride, and splendor. Even if this is somewhat exaggerated, he did represent a view opposed to R. Mikheleh's asceticism.

THUS it is no accident that Agnon brings R. Baruch on stage at the end to request a retelling of the story lest we, on first hearing, mistake Reb Mikheleh for an unqualified tzaddik. Agnon, perhaps speaking through the Rabbi of Mezbizh, saves the last word *not* for R. Mikheleh, but for Rabbi Baruch, "This is a story worth hearing twice." Should we hear it to learn how to be, or how not to be? That is the question.

NOTES:

1. S.Y. Agnon, "That Tzaddik's Etrog," translated from the Hebrew by Shira Leibowitz and Moshe Kohn, with permission from Schocken Publ. House, Tel Aviv; The Translation appeared in the Jerusalem Post Weekend Magazine, Oct. 5 1990. The original appeared in the collection *Ha'tash V'ha'tezim*, Schocken, Tel Aviv, 1966.
2. M.C. Escher, "Circle Limit IV (Heaven and Hell)" Angel/devil motif on woodcut printed from 2 blocks. In *The Graphic Work of M.C. Escher*, by M.C. Escher, trans. J. Brigham, Ballantine, New York, 1960, p. 12.
3. Maimonides, *Laws of Chanukah*, end of Ch. 4. In P. Birnbaum, *Maimonides' Mishneh Torah*, Hebrew Publ. Co., New York, 1985, p. 111.
4. *Talmud Shabbat*, 133b. "Have a beautiful Succa in (God's) honor, a beautiful lulav and etrog, a beautiful shofar, a beautiful tallit, a beautiful scroll of law ... and wrap it with beautiful silks."
5. *Talmud Baba Kama*, 9b.
6. *Mishnah Ketubot*, Chapter 5.

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Modern historians have, indeed, come to concur in recognizing that mundane history in itself bears neither meaning nor truth. Thus, the Torah perspective, presented as it is in this very first verse, with Rashi's elucidation of its most simple meaning, converts completely the spurious assertions of the *Wissenschaftliche* adherents of the Clio myth millennia before they were even conceived. Whatever else Jewish history can be, it can never serve as the *source* of Torah and mitzvot.

On the other hand, the Torah's narratives clearly validate the study of history when conducted within the appropriate contexts.⁸ As Rashi explains, the Torah's historical accounts narrate events illustrating the relationships occurring among Divine Providence, the Children of Israel, and the remainder of humanity. These relationships, however, are established beyond history as a consequence of the momentous events which transpired at Sinai. For its part, Jewish history's focal interest is the often turbulent results over time of that bond between God and the

Jewish people established at Sinai.

Thus, in the final analysis, it is Torah which alone authorizes Jewish history and which provides its narrative with thematic orientation. Meaning in historical accounts always must be introduced from beyond

The Jewish variant of the Clio myth, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, suffers from precisely the same flaws as all programmatic speculative philosophies of history.

the perimeters of history itself, either consciously or accidentally. Torah insists, from the outset, that meaning be introduced deliberately and provides that definitive meaning which orients and evaluates all historical narration. Without

this authorization and orientation, Jewish history must remain, as the artifacts of the *Wissenschaftliche* school empirically illustrate, merely the fallacious recounting of misconstrued, disparate incidents and episodes without internal coherence or significance.

Any genuine treatment of our past must firmly acknowledge and reflect Rashi's initial, and consequently crucial, comment on Bereshit: it is not the history of the Jewish people that created the Torah but, quite the contrary, it is the Torah that creates the Jewish people and their unique history.

NOTES:

1. "Clio" was the Greek muse of history and is frequently employed by historians to refer to their discipline.
2. The standard English translation, by T.G. Bergin and M.H. Fish, is of the 1744 third edition of the *Scienza nuova*, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, (Ithaca, 1984).
3. See Paul L. Rose, in *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany*, from Kant to Wagner, (Princeton, 1990), for a very powerful study of the relationship between German Romantic Idealist thought and the roots of Nazi and Marxist antisemitism.

4. Vico cannot be faulted for the common neglect of this central argument of his work. He explicitly states that its principles apply only to the "Gentes," i.e., the Gentiles.

5. For example, Vico writes, "The Hebrew religion was founded by the true God on the prohibition of divination on which all the gentile nations arose ... This axiom is one of the principal reasons for the division of the entire world ... into Hebrews and gentiles." Vico, p. 68.

6. Of course, *Tanach*, particularly in the Prophets and Writings, poetic expression is quite commonly employed. But the Torah has preceded these works and communicated very powerfully its anti-mythic message. Poetry, theologically neutral in itself, once liberated from its degradation into the bondage of paganism, can now be elevated to serve as a fit vehicle for the sacred.

7. Rashi, Bereshit 1:1.

8. A study of the ancient world's literature suggests that not only does Torah approve of history, but that Torah's narratives, in fact, "invented" history as a subject worthy of human endeavor. Other cultures, such as the Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Indians, and Chinese, immersed as they all were in the mesmerizing fantasies of mythology, were quite late in arriving at an appreciation of the usefulness of factual history.

Joseph H. Udelsan is a Professor of History at Tennessee State University and a Corresponding Editor of The Jewish Review.

Checkbook Judaism:

Are we paying too high a price?

By Rabbi Stewart M. Weiss

They call us Jews the people of the Book. For years, I thought that meant the Holy Book, the Torah, the Book of Law and Mitzvot. Now, it seems, the Good Book is being replaced by another, less sacred text: the Almighty Checkbook.

What really started my engine on this was an incident that took place a few months ago, right before Pesach. As I have done each year for a quarter century, I called my brother to wish him a Happy Passover. I reminded him that Mom and Dad had decided that he, and not I, would be the B'chor, the first-born of the family. As such, I tell him, - as if he didn't know already - he has two choices on Erev Pesach. He will either have to get up early to attend a minyan and participate in a festive siyum to conclude a tractate of the Talmud so that he can eat, or he will have to fast with the other first-born in recognition of being saved from the 10th Plague, the killing of the first-born in Egypt.

"Not this year!" he tells me excitedly. "I have discovered I have a third, more convenient, option!"

No Fast, Just \$\$\$

And then, to my amazement, he tells me that he has received a bulletin from his

local synagogue advising him that, "according to our Law," he can either fast, or he can "redeem" himself from this obligation by - you guessed it - making a donation to the synagogue. Just send a check, and eat to your heart's delight.

As I contemplated the issue further, my amazement at the absurdity of all this gave way to a realization that it was only a more extreme manifestation of a phenomenon becoming more and more prevalent in Jewish practice today. Examples, alas, abound.

Consider the mitzvah of *shalach manot*, the giving of gifts on Purim day. Once, we took the time to lovingly prepare

No amount of Israeli bond purchases can equal one trip to Israel, and no check, regardless of its size, can match the reward gained from living and practicing Judaism.

baskets of ready-to-eat goodies, then delivered them to our friends and neighbors. Now, we are besieged by dozens of companies who do the preparing, packaging and delivering for us, and we never have to leave our homes or bake a single hamantash. All we do is write the check.

Or the yeshivot which inform me that "surrogate students" are waiting to study anything from Torah to Talmud in my name and on my behalf, aware as they are that I,

like most Jews, probably am too busy to set aside time each day for learning. For a small fee, they will gladly fulfill this obligation for me. Instant scholarship, checkbook-style.

Of course, the most obvious example of checkbook Judaism, long on the American scene, is the pay-for-prayer approach to kaddish. Virtually every synagogue and Jewish institution now "arranges" for kaddish to be recited in memory of the deceased, allowing the mourner to continue his schedule uninterrupted and unhampered by the "hassle" of having to be in a minyan morning and evening. For a price, we are told, our loved ones can rest easy in Heaven, and their survivors' obligation can be fulfilled as quickly as they can sign their own names.

Opting Out of Judaism

The problem with all these "innovations" to Jewish practice, so tempting and seemingly *appropos* in a society as affluent as ours, is simple: They are not Judaism. They represent an attempt, based on wealth and wherewithal, to opt out of Judaism and assign our duties and obligations to others. They create a class system in Jewish society: those who do and those who get others to do for them.

But Judaism is not a spectator sport; it does not allow some to observe through action and others to simply observe *them* as they perform the rituals. Yes, it is true that in some other religions the cleric may issue "dispensation" for a certain sin or obligation: in other sects, like the Druze, only a few of the elite, priestly class perform the rituals for the masses. But Jewish law is quite clear on this subject: When it comes to the performance of mitzvot, it is

every man for himself. Light your own menorah on Chanukah, swallow your own matzah, hear the shofar with your own ears, nail up your own mezuzah. The list of commandments we can fulfill through an effortless "Amen" or quick donation is shorter than Federation budgets with a surplus.

The real tragedy of the non-involved approach to Judaism is that the "giver" invariably becomes the loser. For it is only in the actual *doing* that we come to appreciate the beauty of Judaism. The mourner who attends services each day and recites kaddish avoids the tendency to withdraw after a loss and becomes re-integrated into society. The student who opens the book and studies, at his own pace, becomes the scholar and feels fulfilled. The woman who bakes her own challah, the boy who learns his own Musaf, the family that prepares its own seder at home are the ones who get the most "bang for their buck." They experience Judaism, and all its concomitant rewards, while the others merely relieve their guilt, but miss out on all the personal emotion and satisfaction that being Jewish has to offer. No amount of Israeli bond purchases can equal one trip to Israel, and no check, regardless of its size, can match the reward gained from living and practicing Judaism.

There is an old Yiddish expression which says that, "If the rich could pay the poor to die for them, the poor would all die rich." I am afraid that if the trend towards checkbook Judaism continues unabated, we may find the Jewish people has paid far too high a price. □

Stewart M. Weiss is the rabbi of Tiferet Israel Congregation in Dallas, Texas.

MITZVOT ...

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versions of the text reflect two distinct philosophies, both of which are illustrated in a talmudic discussion in Tractate Megillah. The talmud raises the question, "Why is it that on Purim we do not recite the Hallel (the thanksgiving hymns of the book of Psalms) as on Passover?"

R. Nahman says, the reading of the Megillah is itself the Hallel. Rava said, at the time of the Exodus the Jews were justified in reciting the Hallel, singing "Praise Him, O servants of the Lord" (Psalms 113:1) - by inference, the Lord's servants and not Pharaoh's servants. However, on Purim could they sing "Praise Him, O servants of the Lord" [and by inference] and not the servants of Ahasverosh - but we are still servants of Ahasverosh! [i.e., the Jews remained in exile following the miracle of Purim].²⁰

According to Rav Kasher, the argument between R. Nahman and Rava concerns the nature of servitude. In Rava's opinion, at a time when the Jews are physically subjugated, it is improper to recite the Hallel. R. Nahman, however, believes that physical subjugation is irrelevant. After the Exodus, after the Jews received the Torah at Sinai, have always been spiritually free and the recitation of the Hallel is always appropriate. On Purim, however, the reading of the Megillah itself is a replacement for the Hallel. Rav Kasher concludes with the following:

This is the meaning of the phrase in the Hagaddah "In every generation one ought to look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt ... Not only our ancestors alone did the Holy One, blessed be He, redeem, but also us has He redeemed with them." This unique virtue - that fact that we feel ourselves to be eternally free men - was installed in our breasts at the time of the Exodus, as it is written: "According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not." (Haggai 2:5) That spirit of the Eternal, that spirit of freedom which He has implanted within us, shall not depart from us unto eternity.²¹

This is the challenge the observant Jew faces each and every day of his life, every time he or she performs a mitzvah - the challenge to view the mitzvot not as a burden, but as a path to man's liberation. May we all be blessed to meet this challenge accordingly, fulfilling the dictum "there is no man so free as he who engages in Torah."

Notes:

1. T.B. Berachot ix, 5. See also Tosefta Berachot vi, 31.
2. T.B. Menachot 43b
3. Tanhuma, ed. Buber Shelah, sect. 28
4. Deut. Rabba vi, 3
5. Yalkut Shlomo, Numbers 750
6. See the commentaries of Rashi and Abraham ibn Ezra to the verse, as well as Onkyles' translation.
7. Leviticus Rabba xviii, 3

8. Pirket Avot, vi, 2.
9. Contained in Hebrew Poetry in Spain and Provence, ed. H. Sherman, Bialik Institute and Dvir Co., 1960 p. 521.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 494, 499
11. The Book of the Khuzari, Book V, 24-25.
12. The Social Contract and Other Discourses, trans. G.O. H. Cole (1913) Everyman's Library, ed.
13. From the essay *Economy in Walden*. See *The Works of Thoreau*, ed. Carl Bode, Viking Press (1947).
14. Situations, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gallimard, Paris (1949) iii, 11-12.
15. Man is not Alone, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Jewish Publication Society, p.142.
16. Ma'amare Hareilah, A.Y.H. Kook, Jerusalem (1984).
17. Rav Soloveichik refers here to any set of rules or laws that govern phenomena, such as the laws of nature, the law of survival, or the laws of animal behavior, for example.
18. In *Aloneness, In Togetherness*, Rabbi Joseph D. Soloveichik, Orot, Jerusalem (1976) pp. 184-6.
19. *Judaism, the Jewish People and the Nation of Israel*, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Schocken, 1979 pp. 29-30.
20. T.B. Megillah 14a
21. See the first appendix to the second edition of *Hagaddah Shelemah*, ed. Rabbi Menachem Kasher, (1977).

Dr. Saul Stokar is a physicist who does research on magnetic resonance for Elscint Corporation. He lives in Israel.

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7. Maimonides, *Laws of Festivals* 6:18. In P. Bimbaum, *Maimonides' Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*, p. 83.
8. One could contrast the halakhic ideal of restrained rejoicing following a harvest with other depictions, e.g., Bruegel's painting of *The Harvesters*, Reynold's description of frivolity in his Nobel-prize winning novel *Summer*; or Vivaldi's musical depiction of the peasant dance of the autumn harvest in his *Four Seasons*.
9. Rivka Gurlein, *The Episode of the Etrog*, Dvar Hapoelet, Sept. 1971.
10. Zvi Massad, *Two Etrogim of S.Y. Agnon*, *Haaretz*, March 12, 1971.
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Esther Azulay loves and teaches Hebrew literature in the Amut Religious High School, Beer Sheva, Israel. She also writes educational programs for the Ministry of Education. Shira Leibowitz teaches English as a Foreign Language in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and is currently writing a series of essays on science and Jewish tradition.

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