



SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE מכון  
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## **Boys will be Boys? Changing Images of Masculinity in Jewish Tradition**

**Paul E. Nahme**

Judaism, #metoo and Ethical Leadership:  
Perspectives from the Created Equal Project

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**1. Sarah Imhoff, *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), pp. 6-7**

“Gender is not, in this sense, invented solely as an individual act of will. Nor does it change instantaneously...Gender is a social construct, but it is nevertheless very socially real, durable, and powerful. Gender norms...seem to be simultaneously ideals and expectations.”

**2. Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, p. 156**

“Gender, in short, in rabbinic culture and thus gender domination are forged via the construction of the ideal male as Torah scholar. Torah study is the functional modality by which male dominance over women is secured in rabbinic discourse, thus fulfilling the functions that physical domination secures in various other cultural formations. Male power remains secure, insofar, at least, as the Rabbis, an all-male group, held power over women.”

**3. Max Nordau, “Muscle Judaism”**

“in the twilight of sunless houses, our eyes adjusted to a shy wink; In the constant fear of persecution, the power of our voice vanished into a fearful whisper...Let us rejoin our oldest traditions: let us again become deep-seated, stout-minded, bold-looking men.”

**4. Zalman Epstein, "The Yeshivah of Volozhin" in Immanuel Etkes and Shelomoh Tikochinski, *Yeshivot Lita: Pirkei Zichoronot*, (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2004), 74**

There were always a great number students, who lived in the big cities, who dressed in European fashion and were cultivated with good manners and opinions, and their membership served the good of the many other students, in the sense that they modeled the moral development and manners of an intellectual. The student from a small town, after studying for a few years in Volozhin, in addition to fulfilling his studies, turned into what seemed like altogether other man, even in the way he dressed, in the way he spoke, in the way he conducted himself, and he returned home to this or that place in Polesia or Wohlin, and drew everyone's attention to this spritely young gentleman and well dressed and good mannered with good tastes, and he would become a good example for the other youths in his town, perhaps no less than the student of the contemporary [secular] Gymnasium, in returning to his home and small town during his holidays, whose gleaming buttons are the talk of the town.

בולוז'ין נמצאי תמיד במספר רב תלמידים  
מתושבי הכרכים הגדולים, מלובשים  
אירופית ומחונכים בטוב ודעת, וחברותם  
פעלה לטוב על יתר התלמידים במובן  
ההתפתחות הנמוסית ודרך ארץ של האדם  
האינטלגנטי. בן העיר הקטנה, בלמדו  
בולוז'ין מספר שנים, מלבד ההשתלמות  
בלומדים נהפך כמו לאיש אחר גם במראהו  
החצוני, במלבושיו, במדברותיו, בתנועותיו,  
ובשובו לביתו, לאיזו פוליסיה או וואהלין,  
משך עליו עיני כל בתור צעיר חי והדור  
בלבושו ובהליכותיו ובטוב טעמו, ויהי  
למופת ליתר הצעירים בעירו, אולי לא פחות  
מן תלמיד הגימנזיום עתה, בשובו לביתו  
לעירתו הקטנה על ימי החפשה, אשר  
בכפתוריו המתנוצצים יהיה למלה בפי כל.

**5. Zalman Epstein, continued, pp. 73, 77:**

זלמן אפשטיין "ישבת ולזין"

[we] studied Torah, Gemara, and the medieval commentaries not out of fear of heaven, and not because it is a mitzvah but rather because it was something real, science, knowledge, the matter of greatest value and the most primary aspect of Jewish life, and thinking finds so much satisfaction in it. They studied with desire and regularity, and they delighted in the war of Torah, in the broad sea of Talmud, that streams and flows and inundates in every direction, without beginning and without end...

...The student was no longer zealous or obsessive, dim, inclined toward excessive piety. This was already a force revealed, open, and alive and prepared for development and progress. This was no longer the archaic and rigid power of the old Jewish street, which neither thunder nor lightning could move: covered with a layer of mud as though no life remained—and exempt [on account of being ignorant]!  
(Patur)

למדו תורה, גמרא וראשונים, לא מתוך יראת שמים, ולא בשביל שהיא מצוה, רק בשביל שהוא דבר של ממש, מדע, חכמה, ענין רב הערך וראש וראשון בחיי היהודי, והשכל מוצא בו כל כך קורת רוח. למדו בחשק ובקביעות והתענגו על מלחמתה של תורה, על ים התלמוד רחב הידים הזורם ושוטף ומשתפך לכל העברים בלא ראשית ובלא תכלית.

התלמיד הבינוני, בצאתו משיבת ולזין, לא הביא אתו ממנה פריקת עול, אבל העול הכבד כמו התרכך, קבל רוח של חיים, של תבונה. והתלמיד ההוא לא היה עוד קנאי, חשוכי, מתחסד. זה היה כבר כח נגלה ופתוח וחי ומוכשר להתפתחות ולהתקדמות. זה איננו עוד אותו הכח המאובן והנקשה של רחוב היהודים הישנה, אשר גם הרעם בגלגל ונגה הברק לא יזיזוהו ולא יאירוהו: כסה עליו עבטיט וכמו איננו עוד בחיים—ופתור!

**6. Letter "Soloveitchik to the Madrikh of Pressburg, 1882" in *Iggerot mi-Beit Ha-Levi*, (Bnei Brak: Pardes Bnei Brak, 1993)**

...anyone who tastes the sweetness of Torah in labour and ambient perspiration in their youth will not depart the worlds even when he grows old. And if you encounter one student whose countenance slips from focus upon God, you should know for certain that even in his youth his Torah was only from his words and not from his labour and not in exertion, only in word upon his lips and because of this he will lose it.

**7. Responsa She'elot u-Teshuvot Beit Ha-Levi, Sermon 15:**

"And it is written, as Kohelet says, that "God made man upright, but they sought for many accountings." And it has already been explained in [R. Hayyim of Volozhin's] *Nefesh HaChaim* the meaning of this text, that at the time of creation, Adam HaRishon was created upright and the draw toward and desire for evil was not in his nature, or arising from his being. Rather, he was given choice and the possibility to choose evil. But the desire and the draw towards evil were not in his nature at all, only temptation and incitement coming from outside of his body. Thus, the serpent came upon him from outside to incite him to sin. And it is said that when the snake came upon Eve, he placed corruption within her, and that the corruption was then internalized by Adam until the desire for transgression entered into the nature of man, and arising out his own being he had a material force inclining him to evil. Thus, we no longer need to speak of the outside temptation. And from this, we can also interpret the words of Midrash Rabbah (21) on the verse, "Behold, man has become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22) And the rabbis interpreted this in the Midrash, that it is "like a snail whose garment is part of its body." For in the beginning there were two separate powers. In his nature, there was desire and the longing for good and evil was outside of him. But after the sin, the two forces joined together as one, and both good and evil were internalized in man's being. And this is why they interpreted, "like a garment that is part of his body"

ונאמר הכתוב אומר בקהלת כי האלהים עשה את האדם ישר והמה בקשו חשבונות רבים וכבר מבואר בספר נפש החיים ביאור הכתוב דבעת הבריאה נברא אה"ר ישר ולא הי' לו בטבעו המשכה ותשוקה להרע מצד עצמו רק ניתן לו הבחירה שיכול לבחור ברע אבל תשוקה והמשכה להרע לא הי' בטבעו כלל אם לא בהסתה ופיתוי מאחר שמחוץ לגופו והנחש בא עליו מבחוץ להסיתו לחטא ואמרו משבא נחש על חוה הטיל בה זוהמא דהזוהמא נכנסה בפנים אל תוך האדם עד שהתשוקה אל העבירה נכנס אל תוך האדם בטבעו ומעצמו יש לכח החומר שלו נטי' להרע ושוב אין צריך לדבר מבחוץ שיסיתנו, ובזה נוכל לפרש דברי המדרש רבה על פסוק 'הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע' ואמרו במדרש כהדין קמצה דלבושיה מניה וביה דבתחילה הי' בו שני כוחות נפרדים דבטבעו הי' תשוקה והמשכה לטוב והרע הי' חוץ ממנו ואח"כ נתחברו בו שני הכוחות כאחד הטוב והרע שניהם בו באדם בעצם, וזהו כוונתם דלבושי' מני' ובי'

## 8. Responsa Beit Ha-Levi, Introduction

שו"ת בית הלוי, הקדמה

"The reason for this is that the Talmid Ḥakham is not considered the vessel of holiness but in the essence of holiness, as it can be explained from *Orah Hayim*, 43 (not there!) that the parchment upon which the *Sefer Torah* is written is not a vessel of holiness but the essence of holiness, similarly, the body of the Talmid Ḥakham becomes the parchment of the Oral Torah, as it is written, "write them upon the tablet of your heart" (Proverbs 3:3)....

...the Talmid Ḥakham is considered under the aspect of the essence of holiness, therefore it is said that anyone who accepts upon themselves the yoke of Torah they also divest themselves of the yoke of other things (א"ד) for as soon as he accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, his body is sanctified in the holiness of Torah; this is only the case with one who learns Torah for its own sake...

והטעם לזה דהתי"ח לא הוי בבחי' תשמיש קדושה רק בבחי' עצם הקדושה וכמו דמבואר באו"ח סי' מ"ג דהקלף שכותבין עליה סי"ת לא הוי תשמיש קדושה רק עצם הקדושה וכמו כן התי"ח הוי גופו הקלף של תורה שבע"פ וכמאה"כ כתבם על לוח לבך

...דהתי"ח הוי בבחי' עצם הקדושה ומש"ה אמרו כל המקבל עליו עול תורה פורקין ממו עול ד"א דמיד שקיבל עליו עול תורה נתקדש גופו בשדושת התורה רק זהו בלומד תורה לשמה...