What All Jews Can Learn From Great Sephardic Rabbis of Recent Centuries

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To limit Sephardic tradition to those of Sephardic ancestry is like limiting Shakespeare to Englishmen. While persons born in the British Isles may rightfully take pride in their illustrious countryman, his genius is relevant to all people, and is not contingent upon his place of birth. So too, with regard to central values and religious orientations found in the writings of Sephardic rabbis of recent centuries: their import extends beyond Sephardim by birth, to all Jews attempting to chart a course for a personal and communal life in which authentic Judaism and humanity go hand in hand.

In the following pages, I briefly set out examples of such Sephardic ideas and values, gleaned from over three decades of involvement in research of this field, that may be of interest to the readers of “Conversations”. The translations are mine, as are the caption of each source text.

Tradition as Responsive to Change

Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uzziel (1880-1953), born in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City, was chief rabbi of Jaffa-Tel-Aviv from 1912 to 1939, and chief rabbi of Israel from 1939 until his death in 1953. In the introduction to the first volume of his halakhic responsa Mishpetei Uzziel, he writes:

In every generation, conditions of life, changes in values,
and technical and scientific discoveries -- create new questions and problems that

require solution. We may not avert our eyes from these issues and say 'Torah prohibits the New', i.e., anything not expressly mentioned by earlier sages is ipso facto forbidden. A-fortiori, we may not simply declare such matters permissible. Nor, may we let them remain vague and unclear, each person acting with regard to them as he wishes. Rather, it is our duty to search halakhic sources, and to derive, from what they explicate, responses to currently moot issues.

Several significant points are contained in this brief passage. While Torah is eternal, it's goal is not to create an existential bubble in which Jews conduct their lives detached from, and impervious to, the vicissitudes of contemporary human life. Rather: Jews must be sensitive to such changes, not only in science and technology but also in general conditions of life (e.g. social and ecological conditions) and in values held by human beings in their time. The attitude Jews should cultivate towards such changes should be neither one of passivity – simply swaying with the current of human affairs – nor of overall resistance. The phrase rabbi Uzziel uses to signify such resistance is noteworthy: 'Torah prohibits the New'. This phrase, coined by rabbi Moshe Sofer (1761-1839) was the catchword of 19th century European Orthodoxy, and is a core value of contemporary right-wing Orthodoxy around the world. It identifies true commitment to Torah with powerful resistance to change. Rabbi Uzziel knew this full well – and deeply disagreed: responsiveness always was, and must remain, a hallmark of Judaism. But such response should not be arbitrary nor Jewishly uninformed: tradition in general, and the richness of halakhic texts in particular, should and can serve as a vast trove of resources for creative Jewish response to change.

Integration of Torah and General Learning

A necessary condition for a personal and communal life in which authentic Judaism and humanity go hand in hand is, for a Jew to be intellectually at home in both Jewish and general knowledge. This is not a concession to the need to make a living, but an a priori religious and cultural ideal. Rabbi Yitzhak Dayyan (1877-1964) was born in Aleppo, and later moved to Israel; he was considered the leading Aleppan-born rabbi of the 20th century. In his essay The Torah of Israel and the People of Israel (Aleppo, 1923), he writes:

The first intellectuals [maskilim] in the period of the wise men of Spain realized and knew well the depth of the spirit of Judaism and its glorious power. The Torah and rational knowledge walked among them like twin sisters. And there was a true peace among their spiritual tendencies. And therefore in their wisdom and their intelligence they strengthened and validated the Torah and the tradition, and made them intellectually accessible.

Later in his essay, rabbi Dayyan criticizes modern European maskilim, who felt that one must choose between modern culture and Judaism – and therefore severed their commitment to, and involvement with, traditional Jewish life and learning. In the paragraph cited above, rabbi Dayyan presents two central characteristics of

classic Jewish culture at its height in medieval times. One is more obvious: not a division of labor in which some Jews would be involved in Torah and others in human knowledge, but a situation in which (ideally) all Jews would be simultaneously involved in both. The other is less obvious: some versions of Torah ‘im Derekh Eretz (Torah with General Knowledge) idealized a bifurcated Jew who was acquainted with both general and Jewish material, but whose Judaism remained ‘unsullied’ by his exposure to non-Jewish sources. This is not the ideal outlined by rabbi Dayyan; rather, the ideal Jew is a person who successfully integrates these two realms, as was done by the great rabbis of Spain’s golden age: The Torah and rational knowledge walked among them like twin sisters. And there was a true peace among their spiritual tendencies.

Rabbi Joseph Hayyim of Baghdad (1835-1909), halakhist, kabbalist, poet and (moderate) maskil, was the greatest scholar and religious leader of Iraqi Jewry in modern times. In 1903 he was invited to present the keynote address at the inauguration of a new building for an Alliance Israelite Universelle school in Baghdad. The central theme of his address was the ideal of a program of Jewish education in which children would be exposed simultaneously to both Jewish and general studies. Here are some excerpts:

[…] It is known that the good and appropriate time for a person to study is only when he is still of a young age, when the burden of his physical sustenance is not upon him, nor is he responsible for bearing the burden of sustaining a wife and children. And by nature, his mind is clear and what he learns will be inscribed upon the tablet of his heart and will not budge. And therefore it is appropriate to deal with youth in their early years in both of these realms of learning: one, that of our Holy Torah, and one of Derekh Eretz, i.e., languages, writing and the like. And they should deal with them in both of these realms of study simultaneously, during their youth, when their mind is clear.

And it is with regard to this that the Tanna says in The Ethics of the Fathers (2:2): “Beautiful is the study of Torah with the way of the world, for the toil of them both causes sin to be forgotten,” i.e., it is right and proper to be involved in both the study of Torah and of Derekh Eretz at the same time, for the toil of both of them together causes sin to be forgotten – that is, the evil inclination found in the heart of humans because of our murky substance. Since his toil will be in the realms of the intellect, and therefore the evil that is within him will not move from potential to actual, to perform sinful acts.

And this is what the Bible alludes to “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me” (Shir haShirim 2:6) […] The realm of Torah is called “right” for it is strong and adept, while the realm of Derekh Eretz that relates to this world is called “left” for it is the less dexterous. And thus he says “His left hand is under my head” i.e., the matters of Derekh Eretz are under my head and I engage in them, and also “His right hand” – that is the realm of Torah – “doth embrace me”, i.e., I engage in it at the same time that I engage in derekh eretz, taking hold of

both this and that simultaneously, for in such a manner a person sees blessing in his studies.

According to some views, the proper order of study for a Jew should be, first Torah and then – only after achieving mastery of Torah – mundane studies. This of course relegates acquirement of general knowledge to a later period in one's life, with the formative years being devoted to Torah alone – thereby ensuring that one's character, values and outlook will not be influenced by 'alien' sources. Only when one is older and presumably irrevocably a "Torah true" Jew, may one be exposed to other sources of knowledge which (hopefully) will by then be unable to do any harm.

The educational guidelines sketched by rabbi Joseph
Hayyim are quite different. On his view, it is specifically when the student is youngest and most impressionable that s/he participate in a program of study that includes both Torah and general studies (derekh eretz), for we are interested that both of these 'will be inscribed upon the tablet of his heart'. In addition, it is not only Torah but also general studies – together and in tandem – that have a formative and corrective influence upon the child's character: 'it is right and proper to be involved in both the study of Torah and of Derekh Eretz at the same time, for the toil of both of them together causes sin to be forgotten'. The notion that the ideal Jewish person should be influenced by Torah alone is, therefore, mistaken.

Of special interest is the final paragraph cited from rabbi Joseph Hayyim's address, in which he alludes to the Song of Songs. As is well known, there was opposition on the part of some ancient rabbis to include this deeply erotic text in the Bible; however, the view that finally prevailed was that of rabbi Akiva and his peers, who identified the Song of Songs as expressing the intense relationship between God and the People of Israel. Thus, when rabbi Joseph Hayyim quotes here from the Song of Songs, he is expressing a deep idea concerning a Jew's experience of the Divine: just as our acquaintance with God and our feelings of closeness and involvement with Him are cultivated by study of Torah, so too should they cultivated by, and experienced through, our study of worldly knowledge. God is manifest both in Torah and in Creation, and only our experience of both of these simultaneously is an experience of His full embrace: '"His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me".

Response to Secularization and its Consequences

According to the sources we have seen above, the ideal is for a Jew to successfully integrate Jewish and general human influences upon his personal life and development. In all generations there were many who were unsuccessful at achieving this ideal. However, this has become increasingly so in recent centuries, as secularization has led to the divorce of religion from daily life. A major challenge facing Jews, and rabbinical leaders in particular, is: how to relate to Jews who are alienated from traditional Jewish praxis and commitment? One mode of response,

advocated by a leading faction in German Orthodoxy and followed (either in principle or in fact) by many committed European Orthodox Jews, is: to form congregations exclusively composed of fully observant individuals, thereby assuring that synagogue life will not be corrupted by the presence of secularized Jews. While continuing to assert that “a Jewish sinner is still a Jew” (af ‘al pi she-hatta, Yisrael hu), the creation of such communities entailed a disassociation from the mass of non-observant Jews, and a de facto non involvement in ensuring a Jewish future for them and their children.

This mode of response was not the one taken by leading Sephardic rabbis. Rabbi Ya’akov Mizrahi (1888-1948) was born in Beirut and educated in Damascus. In 1909 he emigrated to Argentina and served as a rabbi and educator affiliated with the Damascene Jewish émigré community in Buenos Aires until his death in 1948. The following quotation (from his collected oeuvre veZarah Ya’akov, Lydda 1994, derush 22) succinctly expresses a Sephardic rabbinic critique of the European Orthodox approach described above:

Even in a generation of Ba’al worship, in a time when “They do not know Me, says the Lord” and when “all are whores, a convention of traitors”, even in such a generation, the prophet only says “might I leave my people and go from them, to be in a desert inn” (cf. Jeremiah ch. 9). But in fact, he does not leave his people, has ve-halila, and does not walk away from them. He does not split off from the public, does not collect around him persons who are God-fearing and wise in their own eyes, halila. He does not establish for himself a separate congregation, saying “Peace will be mine”(cf. Deuteronomy 29:18). That is not the way of sincere, straight, devoted Judaism. Rather, that is a tactic of Galut, that pollutes Israel (‘okher Yisrael) and lengthens the Galut. Furthermore, we believe with a perfect belief, that the repair (tikkun) of our souls and of our spiritual level that has declined to the lowest rung, will not be achieved by splitting off, but rather by unity. The new generation, whom we see sinking into 49 gates of impurity while our eyes look on and long for them, will not be saved by (anyone) splitting off. They will not be brought under the wings of the Shekhina except by unity and drawing close: “I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on My arms” (cf. Hosea 11:3).

In this remarkable passage, Rabbi Mizrahi relates to the topic at hand by referring to several Biblical sources. Jeremiah was faced by a situation even more discouraging than that of rabbis in modern times: not only were Jews abandoning God, they were actively betraying Him by choosing alternate religions and other gods. But, however much Jeremiah was repelled and disgusted by the actions of these Jews, and however much he yearned to find solace in seclusion, he resisted that temptation. The phrase that rabbi Mizrahi employs to describe those who succumb to such temptation is striking. He refers to them as saying “Peace will be mine”, thus pointing the reader to Torah’s description of a person who splits off from the Jewish people to do what he considers to be advantageous for himself as an individual, declaring “Peace will be mine, though I follow the hardness of my

heart” (Deuteronomy 29:18). According to Torah, such willful selfishness will not be overlooked by God:
(19) the Lord will not be willing to pardon him, but then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall be kindled against that man, and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven; (20) and the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that is written in this book of the law.

In the case at hand, the selfishness of these persons is a religious one: they are out to enjoy a frum communal milieu, unencumbered by the irritating presence of sinners or slackers. Rabbi Mizrahi does not see this as qualitatively different from other manifestations of selfishness. If the ideal path for a human being is, as Maimonides taught us, imitatio Dei, then we must seek to act in the manner He is described as acting. The prophet Hosea states that the Israelites “sacrificed unto the Baalim, and offered to graven images” (Hosea 11:2). God’s response (as quoted by rabbi Mizrahi, above) was: “I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on My arms”, i.e., God sought to guide those who strayed into sin by taking them upon His arms and providing close, personal guidance for them. Indeed, in the next verse (Hosea 11:4) God goes on to say: “I shall draw them with cords of a man, with bands of love”. The conclusion drawn by rabbi Mizrahi is, that true care for the future of Judaism should be expressed by inclusiveness and care for all Jews:

“The new generation … will not be saved by (anyone) splitting off. They will not be brought under the wings of the Shekhina except by unity and drawing close”. In the following sections we will see how this ideal was manifested in halakhic decisions by two leading Sephardic rabbis of the 20th century.

“Great is Peace”: Rabbi Joseph Mesas responds to widespread secularization in North Africa

Rabbi Joseph Mesas (1892-1974) was one of the greatest and most creative halakhic decisors of the 20th century. In 1939, the following question was addressed to him by the rabbi of Port Lyautey, Morocco
(Otzar Ha-Mikhtavim, vol. II, #1302):

Many of the amei-ha-aretz publicly desecrate the Sabbath, some in order to make a living. But there are also rich people who have been accustomed to this from their youth. However, they all believe in God, and perform philanthropic mitzvot. Does their touch render wine prohibited?

This question reveals the inaccuracy of the view that North African Jewry was religiously observant until the mass migration to Israel and to Europe. Even before WW2, a significant sector of Moroccan Jewry was working on Shabbat or otherwise publically performing acts absolutely forbidden by halakha. Some justified this by the need to make a living; others had been accustomed to such behavior from their childhood and thus saw no need to justify it. According to classic halakha, Jews who publically desecrate the Shabbat are considered as-if

they are Gentiles. Also according to classic halakha, wine touched by a Gentile is considered non-kosher. If so, wine touched by a Jew who is ‘as-if’ a Gentile – is unkosher. However, in the case at hand, these same Jews declare their belief in God, identify as Jews, and are supportive of fellow Jews who are in need. How, then, should we relate to them—qua ‘as-if’ Gentiles or qua fellow Jews?

Rabbi Mesas surveyed the halakhic literature and concluded that it clearly determines what status should be accorded to public desecrators of the Shabbat: they are as-if Gentiles, and therefore “according to the law as it stands, there is no permission for wine they touch”. One would expect that these words would be the ‘bottom line’ of his ruling; but they are not. Rabbi Mesas proceeds to write:

But, we can mend their situation on the basis of another consideration, namely: Because of our many sins that prolong our exile, the amei-ha-aretz who desecrate God’s Sabbath and Holidays are numerous. Most of our give and take is with them, and they are in continuous social contact with us: they enter our homes, and we enter theirs. And there is not one banquet, whether mandatory or optional, in which we do not sit with them, in their own homes, such as Zeved ha-Bat, circumcision, redemption of the first born, marriages etc.

So, if we came to forbid wine they have touched, by even the slightest gesture or hint, we would rapidly become involved in conflict and would fan the flames of controversy to the heart of the heavens. By doing so we would be causing ourselves great injury, through their enmity and hatred; and it is possible that as a result they would spurn even the few commandments that they do fulfill, and totally reject everything, God forbid.

Despite the (mis)behavior of these persons with regard to the norms of Shabbat, they and the observers of Shabbat constitute one, interactive community. This is evident in the ongoing joint participation of Jews, whose level of observance varies radically, in all manner of joint social events, many of which are of a religious or quasi-religious character. Such mutuality is of course contingent upon the recognition that all participants are equally Jewish. Following the halakha that defines many of the participants as ‘as-if’ Jews would, of course, bring the ongoing conviviality to an abrupt end. Both ‘sides’ would suffer: the Sabbath-observers would be regarded with hate and enmity by those they had stigmatized, and the desecrators of Shabbat would now distance themselves from tradition, and cease observance even of those few mitzvoth that they had until then been observing. One might say: “Well, if that is what halakha requires, then – that is what religious Jews must do, whatever the consequences!”. But rabbi Mesas holds otherwise:

Therefore, it is right to be lenient in this matter, even for the sake of Peace alone, whose power is great. For, for the sake of Peace they [=the rabbis, Hazal] permitted the performance of acts that are rabbinic prohibitions, and the non-performance of acts mandated by positive commandments of the Torah [see: S’deh Hemed, Pe’at HaSadeh, section Gimmel, paragraph 36]. This is all the more

so with respect to this prohibition which is quite light, for even the Christians and Muslims of our time are not worshippers of other gods, and therefore if they accidentally touch our wine it is permitted even for drinking [as Maran – rabbi Joseph Caro – wrote in Yoreh De'ah section 124 clause 7].

For these reasons, we are lenient, and permit them to be called up to the Torah, and to read the Haftarah, and we count them for a minyan and for all other ritual matters.

According to Rabbi Mesas (and a good many other rabbis), when halakha instructs us to follow a certain norm, this should always be understood as saying: "Do X – barring other weighty constraints". Thus, while there is a rule instructing us to regard those who publically desecrate the Shabbat 'as-if' they are Gentiles – in the case at hand there is another VERY weighty counter-indication: the disruption and uprooting of intra-Jewish peace. The preservation and cultivation of peace is a major and high-ranking value, in the eyes of Torah. So much so, that when observance of other halakhic norms might conflict with the preservation of peace, the observance of those other norms should, in most instances, be suspended. So it is with regard to all norms of rabbinic origin (de-rabbanan): if I am commanded by rabbinic law to perform a certain act, or if I am forbidden by the rabbis to perform some act, and compliance with that rabbinic law will entail a disruption of the public peace – I must (in this instance) disregard the rabbinic norm. Thus, if there is, e.g., some food that is non-kosher de-rabbanan but my refusal to eat it will impair the communal peace – I must eat that food. Similarly, if Torah law itself commands me to perform a certain act (mitzvat 'aseh), but performing that mitzvah will disrupt the peace – I must (in this instance) refrain from performing that commandment. Only with regard to an act that is prohibited by Torah (mitzvat lo-ta'aseh de-Oraita) is this not so: even at the cost of disrupting the peace, I may not perform an act forbidden by Torah.

To ostracize a Jew for publicly desecrating the Shabbat is not a Torah prohibition, and therefore, it is trumped by the mitzvah of preserving and cultivating peace between all Jews, whatever their degree of observance. This, rabbi Mesas concludes, applies not only to their wine, but to their participation in all other realms of religious life from which they would have been excluded by an "as-if-Gentile" status: "For these reasons, we are lenient, and permit them to be called up to the Torah, and to read the Haftarah, and we count them for a minyan and for all other ritual matters."
This inclusive attitude is manifest – and even broadened -- in the following case, dealt with by rabbi Moshe haCohen Dreihem.

The Broader Bounds of Inclusivity:

Accepting a convert who will be non-observant, for the sake of a Jew and his non-Jewish descendents

Rabbi Moshe HaCohen (1906-1966) was born into the Jewish community on the island of Djerba in Tunisia and there received his religious education; to differentiate between him and other contemporaries of a similar name, he received the additional surname ‘Dreihem’. He became the chief rabbi of the "small quarter" of the island and head of its yeshiva, and was considered one of the leading scholars of this special community. In 1958 he immigrated to Israel and was appointed a member of the rabbinical court in Tiberius, and in that capacity became aware of a major historical and social issue requiring rabbinical attention: Many Jews married Gentile women after the Second World War and have fathered sons and daughters with them. According to the law, the children’s status follows that of their Gentile mother [i.e. they are not Jewish]. When they come to Israel, the husband brings the children [to the court] for giyyur, sometimes with their mother and sometimes on their own. The trouble is that they reside in places in which the people do not observe the tradition: they eat forbidden foods and desecrate the Sabbath and the holidays. It is clear that after giyyur they will behave similarly to the Jews among whom they live, since it is almost impossible for them to be observant (responsa Veheshiv Moshe, Tiberias, 1968, #51)

According to the Shulhan Arukh, one of the stages of giyyur is "acceptance of the commandments" (kabbalat ha-mitzvot), and a widely held halakhic opinion with which R. HaCohen was familiar held that there is a clear contradiction between ‘acceptance of the commandments’ and intention to violate them. In fact, a baraita cited in the Talmud indicates that a gentile should not be accepted for giyyur if he specifically rejects even one halakhic norm. How, then, could rabbis accept a candidate for giyyur whom they knew would almost certainly lead a secular life? Researching this halakhic issue, rabbi HaCohen reached what he considered to be a better overall interpretation of the primary sources, concerning the core requirements of a halakhic giyyur.

One such requirement is, that a proselyte “accept the commandments”. Based upon painstaking analysis of the sources, R. HaCohen wrote:

The requirement of kabbalat mitzvot does not mean that he commits himself to observe all the mitzvoth; rather, that he accepts the commandments of the Torah with the awareness that if he violates some of them, he will be punished accordingly. Thus, although subsequently [after the giyyur] he violates some of the commandments of the Torah, this does not impugn his acceptance of the yoke of mitzvot [kabbalat ‘ol mitzvot], for “even though he sinned, he is a Jew.” Indeed, even if at the moment that he accepts the mitzvot he intends to violate some of them, he did accept them – on the knowledge that if he transgresses, he may be punished. Therefore, he is a good, fine ger.

The halakhic requirement that a convert "accept the burden of the commandments" means, that the candidate is required to recognize that as a Jew he will be subject to the system of halakha, and is prepared to accept the consequences of non-compliance. The halakhic duty of the court is to ascertain the Gentile's awareness

of the system of halakha, rather than his intent to follow its rules. That having been determined, the following question arose: if halakha does not make giyyur conditional upon the convert's intention to fulfill all the commandments, is there some other intention that halakha poses as a condition for accepting a Gentile into the process of giyyur?

Rabbi HaCohen's answer was positive: accepting a person for giyyur is conditional upon the existence of a real intention to become part of the Jewish people. Such intention becomes apparent if, after the giyyur, the proselyte follows a lifestyle that – in the context of his time and place – marks him/her as a Jew. Rabbi HaCohen's assessment of the lifestyle normally led by secular Jews in the Israel was that they indeed behaved in ways that were markedly Jewish. He therefore ruled that according to halakha, the children and spouses of secular Jews in Israel may unhesitatingly be accepted for giyyur – even if afterwards the family will continue to live in a secular neighborhood, to send its children to secular schools and to lead a Jewish-Israeli-secular lifestyle.

But, one might well ask: what good would be achieved by transforming Gentiles into secular Jews? Rabbi HaCohen sets forth the relevant considerations clearly and unequivocally:
They [the Gentile woman and her children by the Jew] should be accepted for giyyur to save the man from a more grievous offence [i.e. intermarriage] that according to ancient tradition is punishable by karet, and that makes one liable to attack by zealots. And also, to save the children who will be born to them as well as to accept for giyyur the children they already have, to bring the whole family under the wings of the Shekhinah [Divine Presence], 'that none of us be banished'. (2 Sam. 14:14).

In the case of intermarriage, the values of communal solidarity should lead rabbis to follow the path of inclusivity with regard to the Jewish spouse: by accepting his wife (or her husband) for giyyur, the Jewish partner is being rescued from a serious state of sin.

Furthermore, this inclusive imperative extends not only towards the couple, but also towards their children. This is clearly the case with regard to the children of a Gentile father and a Jewish mother, who are halakhically Jewish. However, rabbi HaCohen extends this imperative also towards the children of a Jewish father and a Gentile mother, who from a formal halakhic point of view are not Jews. Rabbi HaCohen justifies concern for their future by referring to the biblical phrase 'that none of us be banished'. In post-Talmudic sources, this phrase is employed to convey several meanings. With regard to the Jewish community, it expresses the duty of rabbis and leaders not to treat sinners and social deviants in a manner that will cause them and their descendants to be severed from the community, but rather to mend a breach in the correct order of reality by an act of inclusion. With regard to giyyur its implication is, that according to the underlying principles of Torah, it is right and proper to to utilize giyyur in order to include persons of Jewish

descent into the community, even though they are not halakhically Jewish. Rabbi HaCohen's position thus reflects an over-arching perspective regarding the extension of the group towards whom rabbis bear responsibility. This group includes not only those who are halakhically Jewish but also other descendents of Jews.

Conclusion

At the outset of this article, I set out to provide examples of Sephardic ideas and values that could be of benefit to all Jews attempting to chart a course for a personal and communal life in which authentic Judaism and humanity go hand in hand. The examples I focused on included the ideal of Tradition as responsive to change; the view that integration of Torah and general learning is a major religious ideal; and the value of response to secularization not by separatism but rather by maintenance of communal unity.

The ideal of communal inclusiveness and its halakhic implications for rabbis and leaders was illustrated by two examples: inclusiveness towards public desecrators of Shabbat in order to preserve peaceful interaction and relations within one, diverse Jewish community; and inclusiveness towards intermarried secular Jews and their children by accepting their spouses and children for giyyur. It is hard to overstate the implications for the entire fabric of contemporary Jewish life, if these values and policies upheld by great Sephardic rabbis were to be actually accepted and applied within Orthodox and halakhic Judaism.