

Notes of An Unrepentant Darshan

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The art and science of homiletics have fallen into disfavor and even disuse in the course of a generation or two. Sociologists of contemporary Orthodox Judaism have yet to take note of this phenomenon, although it will surely some day merit at least a footnote in some historian's tome on the American Orthodox rabbinate in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

When I began my Semikhah studies at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) of Yeshiva University, and when I entered the rabbinate two years later, *derush* was taken seriously by those of us who considered the rabbinate as a life-long career. True, the amount of time devoted to it in the curriculum was minimal relative to Talmud and *Poskim*. But at the end of the fifth and beginning of the sixth decades of this century, there was still a consciousness of *derush* as a respectable discipline with its own skills and traditions and methodology as well as an invaluable asset for the practicing rabbi. The significance of preaching was almost as overemphasized 35 years ago as it is underestimated today.

I do not pretend to be an historian of the rabbinate, and I have not consulted whatever data are available. My comments are subjective and impressionistic, and I offer my observations and anecdotal fragments for whatever use they may be, if any, to scholars who may ponder the fate of this genre of rabbinic literature and professional activity. I do so because I love *derush* and rue its eclipse in recent times.

When I say that *derush* was taken seriously in the '40's and '50's, I do not mean to imply that there was unanimity of opinion as to the value of any particular form of *derush*. The "generation gap" was particularly acute in that period. Older, European trained rabbis looked with undisguised contempt upon what they considered the blather that the younger, American born or educated rabbis were preaching to their con-

gregations. The latter were amused at the irrelevant, arcane, and often involuted *derashot* of their older colleagues. But each group was generally respectful of the genre as such.

The situation today is different—and worrisome. Senior rabbinical students and a growing number of young rabbis generally do not regard *derush* as a serious enterprise worthy of the attentions of a *lamdan*, and their aptitudes are usually commensurate with their attitudes. “*Derush*” has, for some, become a pejorative synonym for a form of rhetoric that is pretentious, superficial, and lacking in intellectual value or respectability. Moreover, those laymen who are more educated in Talmud and traditional Jewish lore, and whose world-view is more pronouncedly halakhocentric, expressly prefer rabbis who are *talmidei hakhamim* and who will *not* preach on Shabbat or Yom Tov. A *she’ur*, yes; a *derashah*, no. An inverse snobbism seems to be developing: incompetence in *derush* is taken as a distinguishing characteristic of the “real” scholar.

I recall talking to a newly minted *musmakh* of RIETS three or four years ago. I was interviewing him for entry into one of our Kollelim, and after a period of “talking in learning” (a less threatening form of *behinah*), I asked him about his career plans. He professed interest in a congregation—but was careful to inform me that he intended to give *she’urim* in place of sermons. This piece of good news was accompanied by a triumphant smile of self-satisfaction. I reminded him that Tannaim such as R. Meir and R. Akiva and R. Judah ha-Nasi gave *derashot*; that his “rebbe” and mine, the Rav (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik), שליט”א, is one of the most gifted and distinguished homileticians of our generation; and that his future congregants may seek instruction not only in the practical aspects of *melihah* or the construction of an *eruv*, but also in problems of morals and questions of destiny and death and how to react to current issues—matters that do not always lend themselves to solutions readily available in *Mishnah Berurah* or *Iggerot Moshéh*. He was not impressed. But apparently the word got out that I was easily swayed by a *gut vort*, and thereafter senior students who came to my office for brief sessions of scholarly discourse before being certified as *rabbanim* by the Yeshiva appeared well armed with homiletic nuggets of all sorts. I had to force them back to discussions of Halakhah. After all, my reputation was on the line. . . .

In truth, this attitude is not as radically new or unique as I have implied. Practitioners of “hard” disciplines generally tend to dismiss those in the “softer” areas. Natural scientists feel superior to social scientists, psychologists ridicule social workers, and historians refer to shoddy scholarship in their field as “journalism.” In the same manner, homiletics is less demanding intellectually and therefore less prestigious

than Halakhah. Indeed, the analytic prowess necessary for successful execution of halakhic discourse is far greater and deeper than, as well as different from, the cognitive abilities required for good *derush*.

But this, of course, begs the question. Granted that Halakhah is more impressive in its rational powers, and more important for Jewish continuity, and occupies a higher role in the hierarchy of Jewish values than *derush* or Agadah—does this imply that the latter is of no significance? Granted that *devar Hashem zu halakhah*—is not all of (non-halakhic) Genesis too “the word of the Lord?” Bread may be “the staff of life,”—but how many of us are satisfied with bread alone and willing to forego the other staples of our normal diet? If Halakhah is the science of Jewish religious life, *derush* is its art, and esthetics needs no apology in its claim to a rightful place in the sanctuary of Torah.

Whence the low esteem of homiletics and preaching in general?

A number of different elements seem to have coalesced in creating this shifting pattern. For one thing, it is a reflection of the new found strength of the Roshei Yeshivah as opposed to congregational or communal rabbis. This phenomenon is, in turn, but one aspect of an interesting sociological change in our community which in many ways parallels the communal structures introduced by Hasidism, except that today the role of the Hasidic Rebbe is being filled by the Mitnagdic Rosh Yeshivah. Where once the religious authority of the community was vested in the Rav of the Kehilah, Hasidism substituted for this geographic form of authority an ideological cohesiveness: you were subject not to your local Rav, but to the Rebbe, no matter how far away his locus. Today too, many a young professional or businessman who spent his formative years at a yeshivah will consult not the Rav of his Shul (if he has one—more often he will “daven” in a “Shtibel” whose pride lies in its *not* needing a Rabbi) but his Rosh Yeshivah from his yeshivah days. But the strength of a Rosh Yeshivah (despite any talents he may possess in *derush*) lies in his halakhic scholarship, the medium of his discourse and the badge of his authority; whereas the Rav, who may be equally learned or perhaps an even greater *lamdan* and may spend most of his time and intellectual energy in his capacity as halakhic decisor and teacher, must reach his *entire* community, not only his pupils, and his medium of religious communication is more the *derasha* than the *she'ur*. The downgrading of *derush* is therefore a reflection of the unconscious grasp for the symbols of power and authority.

A second contributor to the phenomenon we are investigating is the need to establish a sharper ideological identity. The growing polarization in the Jewish community between Orthodox and non-Orthodox results in increasing emphasis upon what sets us apart from each other rather

than upon unifying factors. Hence, the search for easily identifiable differentiae such as darker clothing (especially the black fedora) and the peculiar yeshivah patois that has become the "insider's language" in our *frum* or *frummer* community. The same intuitive reasoning leads to the conclusion that in our professional rabbinic activity we must stress our differentness, and if the non-Orthodox, for whom Halakhah is marginal, express their clerical roles by means of the sermon, we must choose the lecture or *she'ur*. (The same dynamic may account, at least partially, for the rather skimpy record of Orthodox rabbis on social justice issues—even when the cause is Russian Jewry and the like.)

A third element is one that is common to all segments of American society: the loss of verbal potency. Teachers throughout the country—and perhaps much of the world—complain about the disrepute into which language has fallen in the eyes of young people. Not only do students lack facility in language, and ignore its powers, subtleties, and nuances, but they consciously deprecate it. Now, preaching is a form of communication; rhetoric demands verbal skills. And the art of homiletics therefore suffers along with all other forms of verbal communication. Even if one is endowed with the requisite talents of imagination in interpreting a text, he lacks the skills needed to express himself cogently.

Fourth, I suspect that many of the younger men who express a measure of disdain for *derush* simply have not heard good *derush* and therefore generalize from their very limited experience. Those who grew up in more formal *shuls* and were exposed to competent and inspiring preaching know how valuable, edifying, and inspiring a first class *derashah* can be. A good sermon, like a *mitzvah*, begets other good sermons.

There are, I believe, also more profoundly theological reasons that go back almost two centuries. All contemporary yeshivot are, in one way or another, derivative of the Yeshivah of Volozhin, founded by R. Hayyim Volozhiner. It is R. Hayyim's thought, most clearly formulated in his *Nefesh ha-Hayyim*, that shaped the character of the whole Mitnagdic yeshivah movement. R. Hayyim raised the study as well as practice of Torah to unprecedented heights, and in Torah itself it was Halakhah that was considered preeminent. R. Hayyim refers to a statement by the Sages that King David prayed that the reading of his Psalms be accounted as worthy as the study of *Nega'im* and *Ohalot*. Since we nowhere find that his prayer was answered, we conclude that the reading of Psalms (or other non-halakhic parts of Tenakh) is less praiseworthy than halakhic study. The burden of this attitude, as well as the rest of his *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* (which is largely a statement of the

Mitnagdic ideology in response to the challenge of Hasidism), is thus the centrality of Halakhah with the concomitant downgrading of all other branches of Torah study. This halakhocentrism appears in our own days in both the high status accorded to Halakhah and the negative evaluation of *derush* as well as Agadah, Tenakh, etc.

Closer to our own times, the publication by the Rav of his *Ish-ha-Halakhah* some forty years ago had a profound influence over two generations of Orthodox Rabbis raised under his tutelage. This powerful essay, a species of intellectual psalmody in honor of the archetypical "Man of Halakhah," gave philosophical grounding and analytical respectability to the classical Mitnagdic esteem for the study of Halakhah over all else. The Rav's magisterial authority and elegant conceptual prowess has thus given credence (unintended, to be sure) to this deprecation of all non-halakhic expressions of Torah Judaism.

However, the question that must be dealt with in the education of our Semikhah students is: Are these explanations also excuses? Are these conclusions valid, given the premises, or are they wanting? Granted the preeminence of Halakhah (and not only for argument's sake), is the teaching and practice of *derush* illegitimate, a waste of time?

I feel most strongly that *derush* is an integral part of the authentic Jewish experience, that it remains and will indeed become even more significant as a medium of religious communication with our Jews in the years to come, and that rabbis ignore it at their own peril.

The rationales, both explicit and implicit, conscious or unconscious, for the disesteem of *derush* in the eyes of some of our younger Orthodox rabbis are inadequate and fallacious. The Rosh Yeshivah may indeed take more naturally to rigorous halakhic analysis than to the exhortations and imaginativeness of *derush*, but congregational rabbis are heirs to an old and worthy tradition and they should aspire to be what they intended to be, not what is more popular or prestigious or powerful, or what they would want to be in another *gilgul*.

Halakhic fealty and creativity may be more characteristic of Orthodox rabbis and set them off from others, but that is no reason for abandoning homiletics, a form of religious communication and expression that is thoroughly Jewish. The authenticity of the Orthodox rabbi should consist of the content of his message, not in rejecting whole genres of rhetoric or literature because ideological antagonists make use of them. Historians tell us that the reverse process took place during the period of the Geonim and Rishonim: When the Karaites developed the field of Biblical exegesis and grammar, Rabbanites such as R. Saadia and Ibn Ezra accepted the challenge and did not shy away from the field; they entered it with gusto and mastered it.

The centrality of Halakhah does not imply a deprecation of other modes of legitimate religious expression. R. Hayyim Volozhiner did occasionally preach *derashot*, although not of course the weekly regimen contemporary rabbis struggle with. And the Rav, for all his greatness as a giant of Halakhah, is the most creative *darshan* and most effective speaker I have ever heard. Setting up Halakhah and *derush* as opposites is erroneous—and silly.

Moreover, halakhocentrism is a theory that is always articulated in a non-halakhic medium! The *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* is a theological tract (I know of no better way to describe it), not a halakhic essay or responsum. And the Rav has elaborated his conception of Halakhah in philosophical idiom and in a variety of *derashot* throughout the years. (One should add that *derashot* may make use of halakhic material as well as agadic sources, depending upon the erudition and resourcefulness of the *darshan*.)

It is true, of course, that Judaism is unthinkable without Halakhah; but it is equally inconceivable without Agadah and *mahshavah* and *derush*. After all, what is life without poetry? *Derush* has been ubiquitous throughout the history of Rabbinic Judaism and is coextensive with it. There is no reason for authentic *derush* not to serve a creative function for our times as well. It is fortunate that more people want to “learn” today and that they recognize the spiritual hegemony of the Halakhah—although there remain thousands of members of Orthodox synagogues whose knowledge is still quite limited and compares inadequately either to their aspirations or pretenses. But people not only want to know. They—*benei Torah* as well as “ordinary” *baalei batim*—also seek and need to be inspired and motivated. “If you want to know Him through Whose word the world was created, study Agada, for thus will you get to know the Holy One and cleave to His ways,” said the Sages (Sifre, Ekev 49). It is the *derashah* which can most effectively engage both intellect and emotions and tap into the vast unconscious reservoir of Jewishness. An irrepressible hunger for the spirit abounds in the land, and it will seek out not only metaphysical ends and halakhic discipline but also the esthetics of the agadic tradition. The *neshamah* as well as the mind of a Jew thirsts for the *devar ha-Shem*, and it is sinful to neglect it. It is one sure case where “the medium is the message.”

The question, to my mind, is not whether *derush* will survive, but what form it will take and how it can best be oriented to serve a vital function in the teaching of Torah.

Several paragraphs back I mentioned the criticisms leveled at each other by the older and younger generations of Orthodox Rabbis in the early and middle years of the century. Both, I believe, were correct in

their assessments. The older, European trained Rabbis were usually irrelevant to their congregants, mostly because of their cultural orientation and the form of their homiletics—and not only because of their difficulties with the English language. And the American Orthodox rabbis, in their desire to be as relevant as possible, met their audiences not half way, but all the way, and thus diluted the message of Torah in a thin soup of superficial “relevance.” I suspect that neither group truly respected its audiences. The Europeans therefore retreated into a mode of traditional *derush* that they found personally comfortable even though it was alien to their congregations, and the Americans gave their listeners what they thought they wanted and could absorb—which was poor pabulum indeed, and which neither elicited nor deserved respect.

The Americans, moreover, failed in another way. The more thoughtful and worldly of their people were troubled by genuine philosophical and theological problems occasioned by the clash of cultures in open, pluralistic America: the Holocaust; the rise of the State of Israel; a society becoming progressively more hedonistic; the dogmatic aggressiveness of scientism, relativism, certain schools of psychology, etc. They sought guidance for these problems—often inchoate and only vaguely intuited—and received few answers that addressed their concerns seriously and directly. Instead, they received “*derashot*”—a *bon mot*, a Hasidic story, an awkwardly interpreted Midrash or *maamar*—which not only were totally inadequate but, in their evasiveness, betrayed a lack of sympathy for the religious crises Jews were experiencing. This did not give *derush* a good name.

It was the *darshanim*, not *derush* that failed.

Yet there were a number of gallant exceptions, and they have much to teach us about what is right about homiletics and how it must be reconstructed for our age. Some have published their sermons, whether in separate volumes or in the *RCA Manual*, and I have heard others’ *derashot* recounted by them or in their names. I had the privilege of hearing still others directly, upon delivery.

An autobiographical note is in order. When I first began my rabbinic career, I discerned three sources of influence on my homiletic development. One was my uncle, Rabbi Joseph M. Baumol, שליט”א, then of Crown Heights Yeshiva and now retired in Israel, representative of a whole class of men in the Bronx and Brooklyn, many of whom are still “darshening” today. The second was the late Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, ז”ל, my teacher of homiletics at RIETS and whose assistant I later became. And the third was our master and teacher, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “The Rav,” יבלח”ט. These three Josephs taught me to inter-

pret not dreams but texts and ideas. Each had his own characteristic approach—"no two prophets prophesy in the same style"—and both their differences and similarities are instructive.

Each of them succeeded because he spoke to *his own* listeners, not to some imagined or stereotyped or idealized audience.

My uncle, who first taught me how to take advantage of the marvelous adaptability and versatility of a text, spoke to a largely immigrant and first-generation congregation whose members were intelligent if culturally limited. The basic sources of Judaism were familiar to them, even if not always with great detail or accuracy. His sermons could be peppered and nuanced with classical Jewish references, without having to translate or identify every source. The form of the sermon—basically the one most of us were taught and used—was quite stylized although not rigidly so. There was a text, an interpretation (usually in the form of question and answer), illustrations, applications, a "story" thrown in here and there, and an occasional Hasidic or Musar *vort*.

Rabbi Lookstein, who was a master rhetorician, practiced a kind of schizoid homiletics. Reading or hearing his weekly Shabbat sermons and his High Holiday talks, one would not suspect that they came from the same source. His Shabbat and Yom Tov *derashot* were on the pattern as those I learned from my uncle. The differences were mostly those of personal taste and style: his skillful use of epigram and his splendid sensitivity to the English language. His dramatic pauses and his perorations were often spectacular; they seemed to come so naturally to him—sometimes too much so. But at bottom these were the same fare his Brooklyn and Bronx colleagues were giving to their congregants, with the necessary rhetorical shift for speaking to an Upper East Side audience. This was not the case when it came to the High Holidays. (The late Rabbi Harry Wohlberg, שליט, who taught me Midrash at RIETS, used to say that, for Rabbis, *Yamim Noraim* should be translated not as "The Days of Awe," but as "The Awful Days." He had a point, other than the humor involved: the three-times-a-year people changed the character of the congregation, and as a result Rabbis tended to overprepare their sermons and succeeded in sounding strained and stultified.) Then, he would depart from this norm, and almost always give a "project sermon," i.e., one centered on a theme rather than a text. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur he preached (not "*darshened*") to his elegant and wealthy Park Avenue worshipers (not really "daveners") who were relatively estranged from full Jewish observance, and both his style and substance were radically different. Stylistically, one could tell that he had been influenced by Harry Emerson Fosdick. Even when he creatively introduced a *gut vort*, it was—well, uncircumcised. The sense of Jewish

immediacy was simply absent; it was like the "yeshivah bochur" who returned to his *shtetl* after a couple of years in America—you recognized his eyes and ears and voice, perhaps even his conduct, but somehow the language and dress and mannerisms made him no longer the same person. But it was not only the style—the Looksteinian turn of phrase, the wit and sarcasm and irony, the "project" construction—that was different; the substance, or at least the content, changed too. The outlook was more universal—often at the expense of the particularistic bias of Judaism. The use of classical texts was augmented if not partially displaced by the tokens of Western sophistication: Shakespeare and Wordsworth and Freud and Buber and other icons of the pantheon of rapidly acculturating Jews. Yet, considering the nature of his High Holiday congregation, his commitment to keep them within the Orthodox fold, and his highly sensitive attunement to the subtleties of effective communication, he was no doubt correct in his change of stylistic pace. And the results were gems of construction, style, and creative interpretations—and they helped keep more than one generation of upper class Jews close to Judaism.

The Rav as *darshan*, as in all else, is in a class by himself. His use of language (including English), his facility in formulating profound ideas clearly and cogently, his dramatic perorations, his creation of a sense of excitement and anticipation, the elegant architectonics of his addresses, his almost theatrical flourishes at exactly the right time—all these are aspects of his virtuosity of technique. But they are as nothing compared with his insistence upon the *derashah* as a medium for the teaching of ideas. He has essentially resurrected, in his own personal style, the medieval tradition of philosophical *derush*, geared to contemporary man.

My desire to use him as a role model caused me no end of grief. Every time I heard him, I suffered genuine frustration—not only because his genius created a chasm which made imitation all but impossible, but also because he was able to use any and all sources without having to explain them in a most elementary manner, and because he was able to ignore that most tyrannical of all disciplines—the clock. The Rav did what none of us could afford to do—he *luxuriated* in his *derashot*, freely choosing his texts not only from Midrash and Agadah and classical exegetes, but also from Halakhah and Kabbalah and Jewish thought and family traditions, and all these supplemented by the whole range of Western philosophy and mathematics and history of science, cited for their substance and not as mere ornamentation. And all this—with aristocratic disdain for the hour hand! Could the inspiration and religious experience of a Soloveitchik *derashah* be duplicated by me, even in miniature, given the absence of his virtuosity, the restraints on the kind of source material my audience

would find congenial and even comprehensible, and the constraints of a twenty minute discourse? The answer was obviously No. But the challenge to learn from him how to inform and inspire at the same time, teaching and preaching simultaneously; how to lend passion to the cognitive and intellectual dignity to the emotive; and how to evince a healthy respect both for one's audience and his source material—that challenge was too great to abandon. Hence, the frustration.

But this frustration was terribly important for me. I could not hope to duplicate what was *sui generis*; I was not speaking to an audience of elite *lomdim*; I had to conform to the strictures of a limited "service." But I could, nay had to, speak about *real* issues, *real* ideas, *real* concepts. I tried to learn from him to trust my listeners' intellectual capacities if not their erudition, to impart to them a sense of excitement about ideas in general and Jewish teachings in particular, and to share with them the awareness of the pertinence of even the most abstract of concepts. Somehow, I too must learn the secret of this homiletic and rhetorical wizardry by means of which the message I chose seemed both authentically Jewish, indeed necessary, and yet swam gracefully and freely with the greatest ideas and discoveries in the currents of Western man's mentality and culture. If I could not be the Rav, I had to be a responsible *talmid* of the Rav. The frustration would always be a creative one, at least subjectively, even if the results objectively fell far short of the ideal.

All these point to indications for a new effort at *derush*. The current lugubrious indifference to homiletics will not endure. It cannot, because there has to be a way, other than direct teaching of Halakhah, for inspiration to occur and for metahalakhic ideas to be imparted.

What kind of *derush* will emerge? With a few notable exceptions, I believe that for the near future technique and form will be mediocre. Two generations of sloppy language teaching throughout the United States will not be rectified in two hours of "Homiletics" per week as part of "Supplementary Rabbimics." At RIETS we do what we can in the few hours at our disposal; there is no way or reason to expand the hours much beyond what they are now. "Lomdus" is and always will be given priority. We shall explore new ways of instruction. We now emphasize, more than before, rabbinic *shimmush* or internship. With all this, the differences will not be marked. Personal talent and disposition will, as always, play a greater role than formal instruction.

What will change, I believe, is the content of the sermons the new generation of rabbis will be delivering. Their inherited approach and their own ideas will be modified by their experiences with a new type of congregant—one who will still demand of his rabbi inspiration and guidance in current communal and international affairs, but who will be

more committed to Torah and especially to Halakhah, and who will take the whole religious enterprise with a great deal of seriousness. Rabbis will be forced to deal with real and cogent ideas and to support them from the array of sources available to them as a result of their years of study at Yeshiva. They will have to supplement, on their own, the study of theological, Hasidic, and Musar material sacrificed, during their student years, in favor of ever more intensive study of Gemara and Rishonim. If they are sensitive, experience will force them to acknowledge in practice what we teach them expressly: that each kind of talk requires a different methodology, that a sermon and a *hashkafah* lecture and a *parashat ha-shavua* talk and a halakhic *she'ur* each has its own immanent rules and makes its own individual demands on the rabbi. As congregations become more conforming with Halakhah, as the nature of their memberships changes, and as new Rabbis emerge to deal with them, the *derashot* will, I suspect, be more substantive and more meaningful, though less effectively constructed or delivered and less resourceful in taking full advantage of the classical modes of *derush*. The *gut vort* will remain in eclipse until such time as halakhically committed rabbis and laymen will feel enough self-confidence to foray into those areas of Torah discourse that are more fanciful, imaginative, symbolic, esthetic, and subjective, and do so in a disciplined manner.

The ascendancy of the cognitive in the fine equilibrium between substance and technique is nothing to rue. If indeed one has to choose, clearly the substantive must take precedence. What is regrettable is the feeling that one is forced to make a choice, that the two are incompatible.

But if *derush* is to have a future, with benefit for both rabbis and congregations, there must be some changes in the way rabbis approach their craft.

For one thing, the rabbinate that is now emerging will have to exercise more homiletic discipline. Homiletic talent often brings with it the danger of abuse. *Derush* is appropriate to a *derashah*; it is awkward and out of place in a philosophical article or an analytical discourse on *Mahshavah*. A serious essay may occasionally benefit from a homiletical flourish, especially in the hands of a master craftsman, but the overuse of *derush* in a genre for which it is unsuited and alien succeeds only in holding up to opprobrium the whole homiletic enterprise as superficial and dilettantish.

A second area of self-restraint that *darshanim* must exercise if they are to be taken seriously is the tendency to stray too far from the original intent of a passage. *Derash* is not the same as *peshat*, but it is most certainly limited by it to a large extent. The untrammelled use of plays on words and exploitation of homonyms and language similarities to

make a point at the expense of completely ignoring the *peshat* is a form of *megaleh panim bi'derush*. Too often, a pedestrian pun displaces a significant text or a cogent idea as the focus of a sermon, and the result is a banal sermon that does not deserve the attention of a congregation. Even in the realm of imagination, symbol, and inspiration, one must play the game by rules, lest the game be discredited and the players be dismissed as impostors.

I have always felt that the seductive powers of a novel homiletic insight are often so overpowering, that I exclude almost all *derush* from writing and speaking on Halakha, *Mahshavah*, history, or whatever. The *darshan* has to play it safe if his work off the pulpit is to be considered as sober and thoughtful. Hence—my apology for the absence of *derush* in this essay on *derush*. . . .

Finally, both rabbis and congregations will have to understand that changes must be made in the scheduling of sermons. It is simply impossible to be creative on a weekly schedule. Neither babies nor rabbis respond well to nourishment by the clock.

For the rabbi to say something significant, he must prepare—and that means learning and reading and thinking as well as organizing and writing. And the burden of being fresh and original every week is beyond the powers of most mortals.

For most of my 25 years in the rabbinate, I was fortunate in being able to alternate with Rabbi Leo Jung in the pulpit of The Jewish Center. During those times when I occupied the pulpit alone, I kept to the weekly schedule. But the results were evident to me, and probably to my people—and I resented it.

Hence, some new system will have to emerge whereby teaching and preaching will alternate, without a consensus necessarily developing as to its exact forms. Different experiments are already being conducted here and there, allowing rabbis and congregations to adjust to each other's needs.

In the long run, all will have to remember that the choice of *derashah* or *she'ur* is a question of medium. The end of both is and should be identical—*le'hagdil Torah u-le'haadirah*.