

Rabbi Eliezer Ben Zion Bruk, z"l, (?-1985).

Musar for Our Times: The Missing Ingredient



Photo courtesy of Agudath Israel Archives

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, z"l,
(1875-1936).



Photo courtesy of Agudath Israel Archives

Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch, z"l,
(1860-1930).

Photo: Joel Orent

It has been 120 years since Reb Yisrael Salanter passed away. Though he was recognized by thousands and lived long after the advent of photography, there are no photographs or portraits of him (for that was his wish). He shunned the spotlight, yet his impact was indelibly impressed on all those who met him. Most people either concentrate on their own development or lead others. Reb Yisrael was a marvelous mix: he was able to focus on the shortcomings and needs of Klal Yisrael and on his own personal inner development, both in an all-consuming manner.

Reb Yisrael taught us how to know ourselves as well as how to sensitize ourselves to the needs and

pains of others. He taught us that the prohibition against causing pain to others is every bit as severe as the prohibition against eating pig. Reb Yisrael was also a subtle and profound thinker [See Mark Steiner, "Rabbi Israel Salanter as a Jewish Philosopher," The Torah U-Madda Journal, 9 (2000)]. He wrote about the unconscious many years before psychoanalysis, and raised the question of why a person is created in such a way that his actions may be determined by unconscious motivations (see Reb Yisrael's profound essay in Etz Peri). His teachings help create Jews imbued with the totality of Torah and help to foster unity in a sorely split world.

The Revival of Musar: A Modern Movement

By Alan Morinis

Musar is a little-known and less practiced Jewish discipline making its way back onto the Jewish agenda in a way not seen since the Musar Movement of nineteenth-century Europe. By *musar*, I mean the teachings and methods that were part of the Musar Movement started by Rabbi Yisrael Salanter in Lithuania around 1850 (though some *musar* texts and practices are much older). *Musar's* purpose is to help people understand the ways of the soul and to guide them in overcoming the obstacles that keep them from inner wholeness (*shelemut*), holiness (*kedushah*) and closeness to God.

Only a generation ago *musar* seemed destined for oblivion. So many of the teachers and institutions that were the cornerstones of *musar* learning and practice had been swept away in the ravages of the Holocaust. Then, after the War, *musar* fell into neglect as the Jewish world focused on rebuilding the basic institutions of communal life, like yeshivot, *mikvaot*, et cetera. This was the obvious priority, ahead of *musar's* concern for refining the qualities of the individual soul. *Musar* continued to be taught in the post-Holocaust period,

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but seldom as anything more than a subject on the curricula of some yeshivot. Typically, a few lines of a classic *musar* text would be expounded, but this is only a pale shade of the teachings, personal practices, deep introspection and intense exercises that were integral to *musar* in prewar times.

Musar learning and practice is once again taking root. Currently, hundreds

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and probably thousands of people are learning *musar*. This past June, over one hundred people attended a forum called "How to Do Mussar" that I convened in New York. The Torah Learning Center of Northbrook, Illinois, a leading center of Jewish outreach, recently added *musar* to its curriculum. Partners in Torah, an organization that provides men and women with their own personal Torah study partners, has been receiving an increasing number of requests for *musar* learning. My own distance-learning course

in *musar* has one hundred students, and I am aware of at least a dozen similar programs running in various cities.

Musar study groups can also now be found in cities across North America, from Danbury, Connecticut, to Portland, Oregon. Such groups, which meet in private homes, synagogues, *yeshivot* and *kollelim*, are delving into classic *musar* texts like *Chovot Halevavot* (*The Duties of the Heart* by Rabbi Bachya ibn Pakuda) and *Mesillat Yesharim* (*The Path of the Just* by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto). These groups are also bringing to life the methods that were developed in *musar* circles in past centuries, including contemplation, chanting, diary keeping and other practices. Additionally, several *musar*-focused societies have recently been founded. The AishDas Society, started in 1994 by Micha Berger of Passaic, New Jersey, is committed to advancing meaningful worship and mitzvah-observance in the Orthodox Jewish community. The Salant Foundation, named for Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Musar Movement, promotes *musar* study and practice. Started by Rabbi Zvi Miller, this Israel-based foundation is bringing out a translation and annotation of *Ohr Yisrael*, the writings and teachings of Rabbi Salanter.

There is no question that we are witnessing a revival of *musar*. The question is why? I will present a few of the major factors I

see to be at work, though there are undoubtedly others as well.

With the blessing and the help of God, the Orthodox community has largely succeeded in rebuilding itself in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Most large cities now boast thriving synagogues, schools, kosher bakeries, *batei medrash* and all of the other facilities that support an observant life. With these institutions firmly in place, people are turning to focus on making their religious lives more meaningful. As a result, the needs of the soul have risen in priority, and since these needs happen to be the age-old concern of the *musar* masters, the wisdom of *musar* has suddenly become relevant.



Photo courtesy of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

The synagogue of Navardok.

People today are looking for a deeper, livelier connection to their Judaism as well as sources of meaning to guide their inner lives. People are searching partly because of the tumultuous events of the last few years, including not only acts of terrorism and the situation in Israel, but also the emotional and financial stresses on family life that seem to be ever-increasing. Furthermore, our confidence in business and government leaders has been shaken by repeated ethical scandals. In these unsettled times, even people who do not necessarily see themselves as “spiritual” are searching for, and finding value in, the kind of guidance *musar* provides. There is great appeal, for example, in the *musar* teachings and spiritual practices that show a person how to cultivate *bitachon* (trust in God), which sets a person on steady ground in the midst

of a very shaky world.

An all-too-common complaint is that Judaism is all ritual code and no soul. Judaism can also be overly intellectualized or reduced to being little more than a cultural or an ethnic

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identity. A Jewish life oriented in any of these ways is bound to be spiritually unsatisfying. Some people who have felt their Judaism to be less than fulfilling are finding the missing satisfaction in *musar*'s time-tested methods, which help bridge the gap between mind and heart. There are also Jews who have, for whatever reasons, wandered away from Judaism to explore

other spiritual traditions. These seekers assumed they had to go outside of the Jewish world to find contemplative spiritual practices, but exposure to *musar* introduces them to a Judaism that embodies psychological insights and effective methods for fostering a life of spiritual awareness. Having taught *musar* to diverse groups, I have heard many Jews, who were more familiar with Hinduism or Buddhism than with Judaism, express heartfelt relief upon discovering that *musar* can be a doorway to a spiritual life that invites them to live Jewishly too.

The general popularity of self-help programs in America has also drawn people to *musar*. There are innumerable self-help programs, and self-improvement books fill shelves in secular bookstores. This development has spilled over into the Jewish world as seen in the many *musar*-based Torah self-help books that have been published in recent years.

There are also those who are finding in *musar* an effective set of tools to help counter the negative, materialistic culture that surrounds us all. This culture is

relentless in inventing ways to invade and direct our lives. As long as one rides on the advertising-saturated public transit or uses a cell phone (all of which will soon be Internet equipped) or even walks down the street amid the billboards, newspaper headlines and innumerable other provocations, one is vulnerable to these negative influences.

This is especially problematic in regard to our youth. Walls and physical separations offer no real barrier against these negative impacts, and every day our children, who are often competent with electronic media, are liable to receive all sorts of messages that conflict not only with Torah values but also with simple decency and wholesomeness. Even if you ban television and movies and try valiantly to monitor the influences to which your child is exposed, in this increasingly wired world in which the Internet will soon be the only way to book an airplane ticket or do banking or send a letter, there is no longer any effective way to separate children from the undesirable messages coming their way.

Many have come to the conclusion that if external walls can no longer protect our children, we must strengthen them from within. *Musar* helps in this regard because its purpose is to teach one how to fortify his or her inner spiritual core. In response, many children's books that have recently been published focus on *musar* subjects like the development of good character traits (*middot*).

Back in the nineteenth century, the Musar Movement helped Jewish youth resist the new and disturbing influences that prevailed at the time—Zionism, Socialism, Communism, secularism and the Jewish enlightenment movement (the *Haskalah*). The *musar* methods used at that time, however, can seem harsh and even nasty to contemporary sensibilities. When I tell yeshiva-educated people that I have a special

interest in *musar*, I am often greeted with amazement. This reaction is usually followed by a story about the *musar* class the particular individual was forced to endure as a teenager and how that session was either the most boring or the most frightening hour of the week. One of the reasons *musar* is gaining in popularity today is because contemporary *musar* teachers have been finding ways to make its insights more palatable for contemporary students.

The *musar* of previous generations tended to be of the fire-and-brimstone variety, threatening people

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with ferocious punishment for their misguided actions. Few people seem to be motivated and inspired by that message today, and so contemporary *musar* has shifted toward emphasizing a positive message about cultivating virtuous and balanced inner traits—a shift from fear to love. Modernizing *musar* like this has not affected the authenticity of the teaching; every generation has found it necessary to reformulate *musar* for its times. As *musar* supervisor (*mashgiach*) at the Ponevezh yeshiva in Israel right after the Holocaust, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler did not teach *musar* the way he had learned it during his twenty-two years at the famous Kelm yeshiva. So innovative was his approach that he reported that the other *mashgichim* in Israel at that time considered his teaching “*nit musar*”—not *musar*. Once, after humbly receiving the criticism of a well-known *mashgiach* on account of

his innovations in *musar*, Rabbi Dessler responded, “What should I do? If I give them *musar* as it used to be given, they will just run away.” The same is true today.

Contemporary *musar* is again different from what Rabbi Dessler offered to his war-torn generation. But just like Rabbi Dessler and all the *ba'alei musar* before him, contemporary *musar* is concerned with helping people foster the inner clarity, wholeness and holiness that the Torah tells us is both the obligation and the promise of being part of *Klal Yisrael*.

Of all the remarkable achievements of the Jewish people throughout our history, surely one of the most remarkable is that we are still here. Where today can you find the Hittites and the Jebusites, Amalekites and Moabites who were once our contemporaries? We have always been free to turn away from doing the Divine Will, and have continually done so, though never to the point of being totally destroyed. What has saved us, repeatedly, is our return to Hashem through the reinvigoration of our interior lives. The current revival of *musar* reveals this same theme. In fact, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, one of the senior *musar* leaders of our generation, has defined *musar* as “creating an interior life.”

Many people today have material security, even to the extent of having exhausted the allure of “shiny things.” Paradoxically, the world situation is creating greater uncertainty than this generation has previously known. We are also blessed with a vibrant community that sustains a full range of Jewish institutions. Now—as we mark the 120th *yahrzeit* of Rabbi Salanter (he passed away on 25 Shevat, 1883)—all of these factors are propelling the pendulum of Jewish life to swing toward making the life of the soul a higher priority. With that swing has come a revival of interest in the insights and practical wisdom of *musar*. No one can say how far this revival will go, but as long as the conditions that prompted it persist, I expect to see an ever-increasing number of people looking for guidance from the *musar* masters. **JA**

Beyond Psychology: Musar in Our Times

By Meir Levin

What is Musar?

The Torah has much to say about human behavior.¹ From the intricately woven Biblical narratives to the pithy statements of Chazal to the complexity of kabbalistic and Chassidic literature, the Torah presents a wide panorama of what it means to be a human being in God's world. Yet until fairly recently, the Torah sources on human behavior did not clearly spell out strategies² to improve behavior.³

Over the past 120 years, the Musar Movement has set out to accomplish precisely this. Its legacy to us is a systematic presentation of how and why people do what they do and an array of tools and techniques to transform human nature.⁴ As a movement, a set of teachings and a spiritual discipline, it presented an account of how the soul expresses itself through its characteristics (*middot*), it specified the role of unconscious motives in behavior and it fleshed out its teachings with a unique approach to Biblical interpretation.

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Of crucial significance, the Musar masters developed realistic strategies for perfecting character. These strategies (which I will express in psychological language for the purpose of comparison)⁵ included group therapy (*va'ad*), individual counseling and mentoring (*mashgiach*), a self-directed educational program (*musar seder*) and autosuggestion⁶ in a *musar kloiz* (a special "musar house" dedicated to individual *musar* study). The masters also stressed individualization⁷ and eclecticism. Some of the branches of the movement employed other novel methods for perfecting one's character, for example, Kelm's use of concentration to attain self-control and Navardok's *birzhe*⁸ and *peulot*⁹ (which we now call cognitive/behavioral therapies).

What is the theoretical framework of *musar*? How does *musar* view the building blocks of personality? The Musar Movement explained everyday behavior as resulting from qualities of the soul that we are either born with or acquire. Every individual possesses these qualities in different proportions. These qualities include desire, anger, jealousy, pride as well as the more "positive" ones such as the longing for purity, the sense of awe and wonder, gratitude, generosity, patience, forbearance and the fear of Heaven.¹⁰

Musar is an exceedingly broad discipline. Its theoretical underpinnings include the breadth of Jewish scholarship: Talmud, *aggadah*, ethical and inspirational treatises, Biblical commentary and kabbalistic writings. Moreover, Reb Yisrael Salanter stressed the need to examine interpersonal relationships to

help understand the behavior of others as well as oneself.¹¹ Reb Salanter taught that one discovers his own weaknesses by analyzing instances when he behaved in a way that is inconsistent with his beliefs, worldview or self-image. After thus being identified, the weaknesses can then be worked on. A person must also learn from observing others, for he can recognize his own failings in them, unobscured by self-interest and self-love.

While *musar* recognizes that each person has a unique mixture of soul-qualities, it is less interested in tracing how this blend came to exist than in accurately diagnosing the proportion of each quality in the mixture. Thus, for example, a person with a temper might suffer from pride, impatience, insufficient faith, a lack of acceptance of Divine decrees and an inability to foresee the effects of his actions. Similar behavior may be occasioned by different combinations of these qualities.

Musar and Psychology

Several decades after Reb Yisrael began his *musar* work, another discipline, which considered similar questions, was born. Psychology also attempted to understand and classify the psyche and to develop tools that could be used to modify behavior. It is quite understandable for one to see psychology and *musar* as sister disciplines, for they both focus on the psyche.¹²

It is important to understand, however, that *musar* and psychology are different in many crucial respects. From the beginning, *musar* was envisioned as medicine for the soul.¹³



Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna, z"l,
(1890-1969).

recently begun misrepresenting it as a kind of psychological teaching. The bastardization of *musar* takes various forms. A number of self-help volumes targeting the Orthodox community have recently been published. While some of the authors of these books explicitly aim at the legitimate synthesis of psychological and *musar* approaches or at restating *musar* principles in the language of psychology,¹⁴ others use *musar* to Judaize psychological teachings.

Like the Jewish nation, *musar* is in *galut*.

Unfortunately, Musar as a therapeutic modality has been neglected. Much attention has been lavished on psychology; much talent and time have been expended in developing, testing and popularizing its principles. The powerful tools of Musar, however, remain dormant in the pages of dusty tomes in yeshivah libraries, familiar only to a few individuals in each generation. Imagine how different the world would have been had even a fraction of the resources devoted to psychology been given to research the theory and practice of *musar*. Like the Jewish nation, *musar* is in *galut*.

Psychology and Musar Are Not the Same

Because of the lack of appreciation of the uniqueness of *musar*, some have

One must not minimize the beneficial effects that the spread of psychological insights can have in our communities. And those who do this work are well intentioned. In fact, practitioners of *musar* would do well to pay at least some attention to advances in behavioral sciences. Yet, psychology is not *musar* and *musar* is not psychology. The conflating of the two detracts from each one.

Ppsychology sees itself as a science and, following the rational tradition of its largely Germanic antecedents, carries within it a bias toward intellectualism. Psychology sees the intellect as the key to understanding the subconscious causes of behavior. While certainly not dismissive of emotion, most (although not all) psychotherapeutic schools de-emphasize using emotion as a technique to bring about change. It is common for a therapist to view undesirable behavior as a problem to

be solved, not through bringing feeling and emotion to bear on it but by utilizing intellectual analysis and reflection. The Musar Movement, on the other hand, sees controlled and directed use of emotion as the centerpiece of its methodology. One inculcates the desired awareness into oneself through *hitpalut* (emotional arousal), habit formation, repetition of sacred texts and guided emotional experiences. *Musar* favors the chanting of *aggadic* pronouncements with feeling to force the meaning and import of these texts into the subconscious.

Emotional arousal and habituation are the primary tools of *musar*, although there is also the theoretical basis of *musar*—the entire spectrum of Torah literature and specifically *musar* works.

We need to note at this point that each school of psychology follows its own theories. For example, some believe that the primary human drive is the fear of annihilation of the self, others believe it to be the desire for power and control, still others believe it to be the need for meaning. Schools of social or evolutionary neurobiology offer their own explanations for the good and bad in humanity. A good therapist is an eclectic user of different approaches, since no one particular theory is comprehensive. In many ways, *musar* is broader than any single psychological theory, for its substrate is all of traditional Jewish knowledge combined with the wisdom of personal experience.

Unlike psychology, which operates by tracing the individual history of pathology and how the events and relationships of the past affect one's perceptions and beliefs today, *musar* is relatively uninterested in the past. This is because it sees all of humanity as suffering from the same or similar ills, only in different degrees. A therapist needs to look at how the experiences of the past shape a patient's current perceptions to motivate him to "own" his particular problem and to accept the therapeutic analysis. This process is called "buying-in." The process of examining the past hopefully inspires

the patient to work on his deficiencies. *Musar*, in contradistinction, relies on the authority of its texts to ensure acceptance; in other words, it relies on the authority of religion to encourage inner change. One needs to change because one must change. According to the principles of *musar*, it is more important to understand “what” than to understand “why.”

Psychology’s goal is to have a person resume normal functioning. Psychology seeks to correct the factors that impede interaction with family and society; it has no higher goals. *Musar* seeks to lift an individual above the level of average men; it seeks to have man walk among men but also to have him consort with angels. *Musar* begins where psychology ends. In this sense, psychology may occasionally play an important role, that of preparing a psychologically impaired individual for *musar*.

There is a general consensus among contemporary *ba’alei musar* that certain prerequisites are needed before beginning a *musar* program. These prerequisites include the ability to engage in honest introspection, a passion for the truth no matter how uncomfortable the truth may be and a sincere commitment to grow and advance spiritually. Counseling can sometimes help dissolve the blocks that impede growth. One who does not possess these basic requirements can misuse *musar* to control or manipulate others while deluding himself.¹⁵ Psychological impairment is an obstacle to the proper application of *musar*.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, while psychology is secular, *musar* is, as stated above, the medicine for the Jewish soul. A therapist must be trained in counseling and understand certain psychological theories, but a true practitioner of *musar* should be a *talmid chacham*, comfortable in the sea of the Talmud

and in the highways and byways of Jewish thought, philosophy and exegesis. A non-psychoanalytically-oriented therapist need not have undergone personal analysis, but a teacher of *musar* must have spent years struggling to grow and improve. A psychologist provides insight to every man but the *musar* sage provides insight only to the Jew.

Psychology as a Model

The behavioral sciences can serve as a model for the possible revitalization and regeneration of *musar* in our day. When I propose that *musar* and psychology be compared, it is not for the truth or eternal value of their respective contents but for their potential to influence society. Had *musar* been given half the opportunity that psychology had, *musar* would have developed to the same or higher degree. Comparing the two as they are today is hardly instructive. Psychology is a fully developed discipline that has benefited from almost a century of intense study and experimentation, while *musar* flowered for a few decades and in much more limited circumstances.

It is far more revealing to compare psychology and *musar* as they were in the late 1920s. At that time, both consisted of only a few schools of thought, both began to report significant successes in transforming lives and society and both produced a large volume of research and theories on the human personality. Unfortunately, *musar*’s development as a discipline was cut short by the upheavals of the twentieth century while psychology continued to grow and develop into the multifaceted set of teachings that characterizes it today. Thus, nowadays, one finds psychological thought centering on industry, education, business, medicine, the military and popular culture.

Today, true *musar* has minimal

Rabbi Naftali Amsterdam, z”l,
(1831/2-1916).

impact on our world. Its ability to change lives and affect communities has been vitiated by its inaccessibility. *Musar* is also perceived by many as being a non-affirming, critical body of teachings and an irrelevant discipline of the past. You might say that *musar*, the Torah spiritual discipline, came to be identified with the Musar Movement. Using the discipline of psychology as an example can help us understand the powerful effect that *musar* can make on the modern world, which so thirsts for meaning and a more elevated understanding of human potential.

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Photo courtesy of Agudath Israel Archives

In fact, recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in *musar* in the wider Jewish world. Several individuals have begun the work of popularizing *musar* teachings. A variety of translated *musar* works has appeared, and symposia and forums have been held. Alas, most of this activity has been disorganized and without a central thread. For *musar* to come alive, students of *musar* must clarify the theoretical underpinnings of the various schools of *musar* and their relationship to both the culture in which we live as well as to the massive body of insight that the science of human behavior has made available. This includes not only psychology but also the neurosciences,



Rabbi Yehuda Leib Nekritz, z”l, (1907-1984).

learning theory and business and organizational behavior. *Musar* can incorporate much of this knowledge within its own unique worldview; the question is how and in what manner.

Where to, Musar?

Where would a resurgence of *musar* find its place? Several authorities who

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were asked this question have encouraged the popularization of *musar* beyond the narrow Orthodox world. Paradoxically, because the non-Orthodox world is a place where *musar*’s uniquely spiritual voice has never been heard, it is likely to have a wide appeal. *Musar* can be an effective *kiruv* tool; the very power of *musar* ideas can change lives. In our society, the idea that human beings can transform themselves—that we are not captive to our mental and emotional configurations—has tremendous power. Society tells us that we are who we are and that we can be no different. It is the job of others to accept us and support us in expressing what we are, what we were born with. “Kiss me, I’m Irish (Polish, Republican, gay, et cetera...)” is the motto taught to us from an early age. *Musar* strongly rejects this idea.

In a certain way, those of us who have been privileged to grow up with *musar* as a part of our spiritual background severely underestimate its power and its redemptive potential. I speak from personal experience, having been involved with *ba’alei teshuvah* from various backgrounds. We live in a world that drums the message, “I am

what I am, and if you don’t like it, you are a bigot.” So many of our brothers and sisters are deeply dissatisfied with the shallowness and spiritual minimalism of their lives; many search for something more elevated, something more powerful and more authentically Jewish. These people go from one psychotherapeutic school of thought to another, engaging in years of unproductive counseling or in flirtations with foreign spiritual thought systems. At times, they may succeed in easing some of the frustrations of daily life; at times, they are aided in the challenges of relationship building. Ultimately they remain as spiritually dissatisfied and as forlorn as before. When *musar* enters the public arena it may first be seen as another self-help technique, but before long its effectiveness as a profoundly Jewish and uniquely spiritual discipline will be recognized on a broad scale. At that point, extensive interest, funding and resources will surely follow.

When individuals undergo a spiritual transformation, they can impact their communities and the very language of communal discourse. It is told that the Chofetz Chaim’s harping on the importance of humility succeeded in changing the place of honor in his synagogue from the traditional eastern wall to the benches in the back. After that, the rich argued about who was best suited to sit in the back. “What have you accomplished?” the Chofetz Chaim’s students asked him. “Before they argued about who sits at the eastern wall, and now they fight about the back benches?” “Much has been accomplished,” he responded. “Their values have changed.”

Undoubtedly, there are risks to an activist approach; however, there is ample precedent in *Musar* history. Witness the saga of Navardok *musar* and its amazing success and growth in the most inhospitable environments. Inspired with zeal, adherents of Navardok did not shirk from successfully reaching out to the assimilated—even Communists—or from

capturing and remaking communities according to their teachings.¹⁶ There are, of course, dangers on this path, and rabbinic guidance and oversight are absolutely essential. Yet, the opportunity beckons and we dare not forgo it. The founders of the Musar Movement, Reb Yisrael, the Alter of Slabodka, the Alter of Kelm, Rav Eliyahu Dessler and countless others, of blessed memory, carried the message of *musar* into new environments in their desire to benefit others; shall we do less in our own time when society is calling out for spiritual renewal? **JA**

Notes

1. Throughout the article, *musar* signifies moral and ethical teachings; when capitalized and not italicized, it refers to the Musar Movement.

2. Before the Musar Movement, ethical-religious works aimed to present the ultimate goal of Divine service but did not provide a prescription of how to get there. Reb Yisrael was an educator more than a preacher, and he aimed to lessen the distance between the ideal and the current state of an individual. He sought to demonstrate how to traverse the distance between the actual and the desired (Immanuel Etkes, "Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement," *Seeking the Torah of Truth* (Pennsylvania, 1993), 96.

3. As Reb Yisrael explains, previous generations did not require his methods because of the religious sensitivity that prevailed, but subsequent generations required novel methods of spiritual arousal. *Ohr Yisrael* (Vilna, 5660), *Shaare Ohr*, 5.

4. *Ohr Yisrael*, ch. 10

5. A. Rachlis, "The Musar Movement and Psychotherapy," *Judaism* 23 (1974): 337-345.

6. A technique of repeating messages to oneself.

7. *Ohr Yisrael*, ch. 20.

8. Literally "stock market," a gathering of individuals for the purpose of discussing *musar* in small groups. Individuals in the *birzhe* explored *musar* concepts and how they applied to life. This took place

while walking and included a great deal of gesticulating, shouting and animated discussion, reminiscent of the stock market. Hence, the name.

9. Specific actions for training in particular *middot*. For example, buying a one-way ticket to a distant location and returning to the yeshivah without asking for help from anyone, in order to practice the trait of reliance upon God.

10. Reb Yisrael appeared to see both the "negative" and at least some of the "positive" *middot* as residing in the same "animal soul." He felt, therefore, that both positive and negative *middot* should be subject to the same methods of *musar* training (Etkes, 126-127). This view contrasts with both the philosophical and kabbalistic traditions. In philosophy, good *middot* are an expression of "form," (spiritual within man) and bad ones come from "matter" (physical within man). Kabbalah attributed them to the "lower" and "higher" soul, respectively. (See *Moreh Nevuchim*, 3,8 and Rav Chaim Vital, *Shaarei Kedushah*, ch. 1-3). By breaking with this understanding, Reb Yisrael made good and bad *middot* correctable with the same techniques. The antecedents of Reb Yisrael's view may have been in the writings of the Gaon of Vilna; see Commentary to *Yonah* 1,6.

11. See Etkes, 106-108, for a discussion and comprehensive comparative analysis of several passages from Reb Yisrael's writings regarding this point.

12. Etkes, "Rabbi Israel Salanter and His Psychology of 'Mussar'" *Jewish Spirituality* 2:206 (1987): 244.

13. See the first line of the introduction to *Ohr Yisrael*.

14. Andrew R. Heinze, "The Americanization of *Mussar*: Abraham Twerski's Twelve Steps," *Judaism* 48 (fall 1999): 450-469.

15. Reb Yisrael writes about the misuse of *musar* in *Ohr Yisrael*, ch. 2

16. Meir Levin, *Novarodok: The Movement that Lived in Struggle and its Unique Approach to the Problem of Man* (New Jersey, 1996), intro.