LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

In the otherwise excellent article "Self Effacement in the Bible" (Vol. XXXV:3, July-September 2007), Dr. Wiederkehr-Pollack makes two related and significant errors.

The first occurs when she compares the reactions of David and Michal to his dancing with the masses when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem. Seemingly basing herself on the Malbim, she said that one [Michal] viewed man as apart from God, while the other viewed man as part of God. This is a serious error, as in Judaism man is never viewed as part of God, and the Malbim never hints at such a position. Finite mortal men of flesh and blood can never be "part of God," the infinite and totally Other.

Further in the article, when discussing the festival pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the disregard for property left at home and the bowing down in the Temple in what was originally an impossibly crowded space, she notes that this miraculous occurrence has been attributed to the ability to achieve absolute nullification and *union with God* (emphasis mine). Again, Judaism never has acknowledged the possibility of man having "union with God," just as he cannot be "part of God." Other religions may have endorsed this possibility, but Judaism has consistently drawn the line at this point. I personally recall Joseph B. Soloveitchik sharply rebuking a student who had made such a statement.

Allow me to conclude by referring to an aggadic formulation in Succah (T.B. 5a): "We learned in a Baraita: R. Yose said: The Shechinah never came down to this earth, and Moses and Elijah never ascended to the highest levels of Heaven. For it says, *The heavens belong to God, but the earth He gave over to man* (Ps. 115:16). [The Gemara asks:] But did not the Shechinah come down to earth? Doesn't it say, in fact, *God came down on Mount Sinai* (Ex. 19:20)? That was above ten handbreadths. But did not Moses and Elijah ascend to Heaven? Does it not say, in fact, *And Moses went up to God* (Ex. 19:3)? That was to a level of ten handbreadths [below the highest sphere of Heaven]."

Ten handbreadths symbolized a partition, a barrier. As close as Moses (and Elijah) came to God, there remained an impassible barrier between them, for man can neither become part of God nor unite with God. For God is in heaven and man is on earth.

Pinchas Kahn
Jerusalem, Israel

Sir,

After the publication of my article "Balaam, Shakespeare, Shylock" (Vol. XXXV:4, October-December 2007), I was made aware (by Rabbi Dr. Raymond Apple) of an essay on Shylock by the late Harry Golden in *Only in America.* I learned then that Golden anticipated three points I make in my article: Shylock as a Jewish hero in anti-semitic Venice; Shakespeare's criticism of his fellow Christians; and the disgust Shylock feels at the end of his trial. None of the many bibliographies and dozens of articles I scoured when preparing my own work mentioned Golden's essay. I regret that I did not know of Golden's essay, for I would certainly and happily have cited it in my notes. I hope that this statement makes adequate restitution.

Dan Vogel
Jerusalem

NEWS OF THE JEWISH BIBLE ASSOCIATION

TRIP TO MEGIDDO

Members of the association recently toured Megiddo, the most important archaeological site in Israel. Despite the heat, our tour guide, Walter Zanger, managed to keep us all going via the various sites he pointed out (e.g., the best preserved "*bamah*") and readings not only from the Tanakh but even from a fascinating pre-biblical text from ancient Egypt which was the first description of how Egyptian troops should fight against their enemy in Megiddo.

WELCOMING NEW DEPUTY EDITOR

Mark Elliott Shapiro, the new Deputy Editor of the *JBQ* was born in Toronto and has been living in Israel since 1970. He has a B.A. in English from the University of Toronto, an M.A. in English Literature and a second M.A. in Contemporary Jewry from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In addition, he has studied English Literature at the doctoral level at the University of Toronto and York University. A poet in Hebrew and English, he is scheduled to appear this fall in a mini-anthology of Canadian poetry in English and Hebrew translation that he will be publishing.