

From the Archives

A protest by Rabbi Aaron Kotler against the trivialization and profanation of the Avos in "Chumash Motifs," an ongoing newspaper series. This essay appeared in Warsaw's *Der Judische Togblatt*, Poland's only religious daily newspaper, 13 Nissan, 5695/April 16, 1935.

I was recently shown the last few issues of the newspaper *Heint*. How shocked I was to see the terrible blasphemies and the violation of the sanctity of our Holy Patriarchs and Matriarchs that they contained!

The laws of our Holy Torah obligate me to react to this unheard-of profanation of truth, *Chillul Sheim Shomayim* and violation of the dignity of the Jewish Nation. I thus feel compelled to depart from my usual practice and to issue the following public statement:

The holy forefathers—who were the most luminous, loftiest, and purest personalities, the holiest creatures—represent the foundation of eternal spiritual vitality, the wellsprings of blessed and the full range of positive attributes, for the entire world, for all of mankind. The Avos are, in fact, held in the highest esteem by every nation on earth. The worst enemies of the Jews did not dare tamper with their luminous and holy image.

How deep the shame and how profound the anguish, then, that this despicable blasphemy should appear in a Yiddish, so-called nationalistic paper! Worse yet is the shame that this very newspaper, which compromises every principle for financial gain, did not realize that its violation of the dignity of the Avos would arouse protest from its broadest circle of readers! This protest, besides curtailing this outrage, also serves as a source of encouragement to the religious community. Did the publishers really expect people to ignore such

defamation of the Creator, His Torah, and the holy Patriarchs, who form the very basis for the continued existence of *Klal Yisroel*?

The worst victims of this betrayal are our youth, for whom these stories are an insidious venom which can poison their entire way of thinking... especially in this era of widespread ignorance, when so many young people are not even vaguely familiar with what the *Chumash* writes

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about the holy forefathers, and certainly do not know what *Chazal* say about them. They will instead learn about the Patriarchs from a *Heint* perspective, culled from the "Chumash Motifs" which are permeated with cynical ridicule and the spirit of the *Yevsekzia* (the Jewish Communist division).

Every Jew possessing a spark of

faith, to whom the honor of *Klal Yisroel* is dear, is thus forbidden to allow such heretical writings (which the *Rambam* deems worse than idolatry) to enter his home, so as not to transgress: "You shall not bring anything despicable into your home."

It must be emphasized that Torah law considers whoever reads this newspaper culpable as "an accessory to a transgression," for this travesty is written and published with the reader in mind.

Every Jew must spare his household from the destructive influence of such literature. Moreover, if we continue to tolerate such falsehoods in our homes, how can we continue to beseech G-d to answer our prayers in the merit of the very same Patriarchs and Matriarchs that these columns malign?

Understandably, it is impossible to fully convey even one of the myriad facets of this subject in the confines of a letter. This inadequacy on our part, however, does not give us license to remain completely silent, either.

I appeal to *Rabbanim*, *Gaonim*, *Talmidei Chachamim*, as well as to ordinary G-d-fearing Jews to protest this sacrilege as strongly as possible!

Who knows but what our previous silence on other matters of outrage caused this present outrage to take place!

May *Hashem* heal the breaches within His People, and rebuild its spiritual ruins.

(signed) Aaron Kotler, *Rosh Mesivta* of Kletzk, who writes these words and signs them, grieving over the shame inflicted on the Torah and the People of Israel.

Free translation by Rabbi Moshe Kolodny, director of the Orthodox Jewish Archives of Agudath Israel of America.