

MESSIAH ON THE BUS: IDOLATRY AND THE TORAH

by Rachael Kohn

Standing at Circular Quay, several months ago, an incredible sight came into view. The acclaimed Jewish messiah appeared — on the back of a Bondi bus! There he was, black hat, long white beard, the message underneath him saying, "Do an act of charity and kindness today, the messiah is on his way."

I knew that this message contained an ambiguity. It was well known to me that the man pictured, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the head of the Lubavitch sect of Hasidic Judaism, was believed to be the messiah by his followers. For them, the messiah was not so much "on his way" as already here. So the first ambiguity was that for the Lubavitcher's he was already here and yet still to come.

It's also known to me that Jewish tradition relates the coming of the messiah to the fulfillment of Torah commandments. In what's been called "rabbinical reserve," the Talmudic commentary on the tractate Sanhedrin, Chapter XI, favours the idea that the messiah's rule is merited, not simply given, and that Israel must submit to the Torah as a condition of his coming. It's an idea that receives much discussion and debate in the tractate and is not conclusively affirmed. There's the issue, for example, of how much Israel can "determine" the outcome, the rabbis being uneasy with a kind of crude equation of deeds and their messianic reward. There's another issue of Israel's suffering, and whether that should be the determining factor. But either way, the equation of the fulfillment of Torah and the messianic age remains the most enduring of Jewish messianic beliefs and has received wide popular acceptance throughout the centuries.

Still, there is a long way between believing Torah fulfillment is a requirement for the messiah and accepting that it's actually happened. Indeed, the perdurance of Jewish messianism is precisely in believing in it without actualising it. Perhaps self evident to many, this was one of the enduring insights of an early

scholar of Jewish messianism, Joseph Klausner, who incidentally wrote the first "Life of Jesus" in Hebrew. The great scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem came to a similar conclusion.

In pondering the message on the back of the bus — and having a fair familiarity with New Testament scholarship on the question of *Jesus'* messiahship, as well as Jewish thought on the messiah

— I realised that the Messiah who is recognised is destined to be both here and yet to come. For New Testament scholars this was the classical *existential* solution to the conundrum of Jesus' messiahship in his time and also in the present.

But it is essential to recognise him. Only the messiah's followers, and in this case, the Lubavitchers, recognise him and receive his benefits, since they *do* attempt in their daily lives to fulfill all the commandments (*mitzvahs*). No surprise, therefore, that the messiah appeared among *them*. The rest of the world will have to wait for his blessings — until it too fulfills the commandments. And Lubavitchers, by the way, include in this task both Jews and non-Jews, with the latter requiring only the fulfillment of the 7 Noachide commandments.

Later, in June 1994, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, died at the age of 91. The "messiah on the bus" was still wending its way along the Bondi bi-ways. To his followers, the Rebbe's claim to messiahship was in no way diminished. Resurrection of the righteous, after all, is a Jewish belief. And who is more deserving for resurrection than the messiah himself? Thus, from the leadership, Rabbi Goren, the Rebbe's emissary in Melbourne, came a confident reply to the nay-sayers. (Some of you might have heard his emphatic response to me on Radio National in the middle of last year.) "He will come again when the world is ready." And no, there will be no replacement of the Rebbe at the head of the Lubavitcher movement by a lesser mortal. There is *no one* who can replace him anyway, so why confuse the issue — the issue being that the Rebbe is the messiah.

Now all this struck many Jews outside the Lubavitcher movement, and a few *inside* it, as an unfortunate development. Not that he died, although that *was* regarded as a loss. He was by all counts a remarkable leader, and, after all, the Lubavitchers did manage to keep alive a corner of "Torah-true life" that even the

non-observant found admirable. It was the messiahship business that was most unwelcome — an embarrassment, and for many a most un-Jewish phenomenon. But how could a Jewish idea be so un-Jewish?

You don't have to be the great scholar of messianism, Gershom Scholem, to realise that the presence of a living messiah creates expectations that are readily disappointed, with the outcome being more precarious than before. The scenario unfolds predictably: the proclaimed messiah and his followers are ridiculed or at the least, simply ignored by a disbelieving public, which continues in the mainstream Jewish tradition, more or less as their forefathers have.

You also don't have to be aware of the great 17th Century messianic pretender, Sabbatai Zevi, or any of the lesser messianic claimants before and after him, to realise that the danger of messiahship is not mere disappointment in the proclaimed messiah (which in many respects is a desired outcome for his critics), but the abandonment of Torah. For, as we noted, the Torah is intimately linked with messianic belief, and the failure of the latter may annihilate the former.

This has not happened to any significant degree in the Lubavitcher movement, so far as I can tell, because the belief in the Rebbe is still strong. And it's been buttressed in many ways by the movement — one of the most pervasive being the proliferation of pictures and videos of the Rebbe amongst his followers. The average Lubavitch household has about a dozen pictures of the Rebbe. Large paintings, framed photos, pictures in a wallet to carry with you, a Rebbe bookmark used in the psalter that Lubavitch women read every day. The "messiah on the bus" is just one of the more public examples of helping followers keep the faith. For that — keeping the faith — is the explanation given for the numerous pictures of the Rebbe. They are devices for keeping the mind and the heart on the message of Lubavitch Hasidut, or Lubavitch way of life, which is to uphold Torah and prepare for the imminent coming of the messiah. As one informant told me, when a friend was desolate with anguish over the injury of his child in a car accident, it was only when he saw the Rebbe on the back of the bus in his rear view mirror, that his faith was strengthened. And the Rebbe after all could work miracles.

Now, for the average Jew, the idea of the messiah in the present is a worrisome thing for a host of reasons, not least of

which that it resembles the very phenomenon that separates Jews from Christians — a point which also worries the Lubavitchers. The proliferation of pictures of the Rebbe appears at the very least as a personality cult gone wild, and at the worst, with claims that he is the messiah, as positively idolatrous, indeed anti-Jewish to mainstream Jewry.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, denunciations of idolatry warn Israelites away from worshipping strange gods. Lionel Kochan (*Jews, Idols and Messiahs* 1990:131) has summed it up as a contest between Torah and the material means employed in the worship of "other gods," in which "imagery, in whatever guise and in whatever medium is a genuine enemy". Kochan notes that the rivalry between the Torah's unnamable, immutable God and the golden gods made by devoted craftsmen is not based on the fact that these images, shaped by hands, are impotent, but that they are objects of fascination, and in that sense they have a powerful effect. And it is perhaps for this reason that the first commandment, prefaced by the declaration that the Lord is Israel's God who brought her out of the Land of Egypt, is constituted of the two-fold prohibition of the worship of other gods and of making a graven image (Ex 20:2-4).

Its a prohibition which is repeated in the episode of the golden calf (Ex 32:7-8), and in Leviticus (26:1) "He shall make you no idols, neither shall ye rear-up a graven image, or a pillar, neither shall ye place any figured stone in your land, to bow down unto it, for I am the Lord your God". Again in Deuteronomy (4:14-16), Moses tells the Israelites that "the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves — for ye saw no manner of *form* on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire — *lest ye deal corruptly and make you a graven image*". Not only is this commandment repeated in at least three other passages (Deut: 4.25, 4:6-7; 16:16-22), but the first "curse" in the Deuteronomic series of curses is reserved for "the man that maketh a graven or molten image — an abomination unto the Lord, a thing made by the hands of the craftsmen — and setteth it up in secret" (27:15; Kochan 1990:132).

Jewish tradition did not turn the rejection of idolatry into a rejection of beauty. Representational art did find a place in synagogues and embellishment of texts, especially of such beloved

books as the Passover Hagadah, thrived. The saying from Exodus 15:2, "This is my God and I will adorn him" simply limited most visual art and representation to birds and animals. The clever device of including incomplete human figures was permissible. But the first commandment, which in Hebrew refers to the strange and alien worship of other gods as *avodah zarah* (for there is no real Hebrew equivalent to the term "idolatry"), did incline Jewish tradition to diligently avoid setting up a singular figure that would become the sum or the focus of Jewish faith.

This is no more evident than in the Hagadah — one of the earliest composite liturgical texts recounting the central drama of the birth of Israel as a nation, and the confirmation and fulfillment of the covenant. Everyone knows that the story told in the Hagadah of the Exodus and Sinai revolves around the historical figure of Moses, and his determined leadership of Israel. Yet in this most beloved of texts, Moses figures almost not at all. Moses as a personality is an unknown, and as an authority Moses is almost a nonentity. In fact, the Hagadah is the story of God, and his covenant, his miracles and finally his "outstretched hand" which brings Israel out of Egypt, into the desert and to the threshold of *eretz Israel*. Moses is merely God's trusted assistant.

Moses might well have been an adored figure in Jewish tradition, since he received the Torah on Sinai. But he is not the object of adoration, nor is he pictured, but extremely rarely. For this might lead to a person bowing towards him, especially if he were pictured on a synagogue wall or on a curtain which was hanging before the Ark — and thus would be tantamount to the worship of other gods. It's worth noting that, in contrast, Biblical scenes such as the binding of Isaac and Noah's Ark, or a representation of the Holy cities of Hebron and Jerusalem, were pictured in a select few Renaissance synagogues in Poland (Kochan 1990:134). But such a tableau could not be regarded as a focus of adoration, and therefore eschewed the condemnation of the local rabbis.

But in other circumstances the concept of *avodah zarah* did interdict the beautification of synagogues. For such was the understanding of some rabbis, like R. Isaac Ben Moses Or Zarua, that any distraction to prayer constituted *avodah zarah*. Trees and birds depicted in the medieval synagogue at Meissen were denounced on those grounds. And so too was the coat of arms of a benefactor, which included a lion in marble bas-relief, since

the "heavenly chariot" itself was born by a lion, and moreover it imitated Christian custom (Kochan 1990:135).

While banishing figures from depiction on synagogue walls was one way of dealing with *avodah zarah*, the forestalling of Moses' elevation to a figure of adoration, was primarily achieved by subsuming him in the rabbinical tradition. "Moshe Rabbenu" is the way he is most affectionately called. "Moses our master," the first and the greatest rabbi. For it is he who received the oral tradition of the Torah on Mt Sinai, the tradition that was vouchsafed the rabbis, and elaborated over centuries of discussion, debate, and discernment. Moses was therefore symbolically the first of a long line of interpreters of the law, inaugurating a process that would be the hallmark of rabbinic Judaism, where revelation gave way to reason.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe is, of course, also in this tradition, but for Lubavitchers he is at the end of the line, rather than somewhere along the continuum. And interestingly, and quite surprisingly for those who are outside the Lubavitch movement, as well as for some in it, the Rebbe is regarded as the most unique and "the greatest person in history". This view was put by Lubavitch emissary Herschl Greenberg when he visited Australia in October 1994. In response to a challenge by another Lubavitcher, Rabbi Greenberg stood by his opinion that Menachem Mendel Schneersohn was the greatest man that history ever produced, surpassing even Moshe Rabbenu.

It goes without saying that if the Rebbe surpassed Moses himself, then he also outshone the great rabbinic sage whose writings ironically provide the criteria on which the Rebbe's messiahship is judged. Moses ben Maimon, or Maimonides, also known by his acronym, the Rambam, is the 12th Century rabbi-philosopher whose writings have been regarded as the pinnacle of halachic and philosophical Judaism. He also identified the characteristics and achievements which a candidate for messiahship would need to fulfill. And it is these which Lubavitchers believe Menachem Mendel Schneersohn has unquestionably possessed and exhibited. For example, they claim his descent is from the line of David; and they also point to his enormous learning and knowledge of both Torah and the sciences. In fact, to hear him described even by those who shy away from the messianic claim, there is nothing about which the Rebbe is not profoundly knowledgeable; but most important amongst his

messianic qualifications is his unparalleled world-wide impact (as Lubavitchers see it), his global campaign of bringing wayward Jews, many in the former Soviet republics, back to Torah. And of late, he is also portrayed as concerned with bringing non-Jews to righteousness. And there were also the daily faxes from the Crown Heights headquarters in New York to Lubavitch followers around the world, informing them of the Rebbe's miracle working, and his uncanny foreknowledge of events.

It is ironic that to remind doubting Jews of the traditional basis of the messianic claim, the Lubavitchers frequently advert to Maimonides' messianic criteria, as well as his 13 principles of the Jewish faith, which include belief in both the coming of the messiah and in resurrection of the dead.

For one thing, Maimonides believed his own time, the 12th Century, was likely that of the dawning of the messianic age. Having witnessed forced conversion, despair and impoverishment of the Jews of Yemen and North Africa during the time of the Crusades, not to mention his own family's escape from Spain, along with many others, during the invasion by the violent Almohades, Maimonides was encouraged to think that all the suffering of his time signalled what is known as the "birthpangs" or "travails of the messiah."

Yet, no one more cautious and ill-disposed to extravagant messianic claims could be found than Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, the Rambam. He had, after all, written to the Jews of Yemen, in the midst of all their hardship, advising them that the man who appeared among them making messianic claims could not be the messiah. For the man in question had not been a sage, and could not possibly qualify as a prophet. Maimonides, in fact, had outlined the characteristics of the messiah, very much reflecting the supreme role he allotted to learning and his rejection of mystical and fantastic descriptions. "Do not permit yourself," he wrote

to suppose that the King Messiah needs to perform signs and wonders or to bring innovations into the world, or resurrect the dead, or anything of that kind. It is not so ... If a king of the house of David arises who is learned in the Torah and fulfills the commandments like David his forefather, in accordance with the Torah and the Oral Law, and if he commands all Israel to observe the Torah and he repairs its breaches, and wages the Wars of the Lord then indeed he qualifies as the

Messiah. If he has done these things successfully and built the Temple in its rightful place and gathers together the dispersed of Israel, then indeed he assuredly is the Messiah. And he will bring the Restoration of the World, to serve the Lord together. (*Yad Hachazaka*, XI, para3-4)

In fact, despite his mention of the Wars of the Lord, Maimonides rejected the desire for vengeance and world domination, and stressed instead hopes for a world of material ease and spiritual, religious and intellectual richness (Ben Sasson, 1976: 534).

Maimonides was a keen rationalist, whose merging of Aristotelian philosophy with Torah, caused him to jettison any popular Jewish beliefs that contradicted reason — such as anthropomorphic notions of God, blind trust in tradition, or the belief in astrology, to name just a few. Even descriptions of the messianic age drawn from Isaiah (11:6), Maimonides was inclined to interpret figuratively. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" and "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore," meant, according to Maimonides' more realistic perspective, that Israel shall live with her neighbours in peace.

While it is true that the Lubavitchers accept Maimonides' naturalistic descriptions of the messianic age and the messiah, and apply it to the Rebbe, they are free to embellish them. And in this, a conflict exists between the 12th Century sage and the Lubavitch phenomenon. It's anachronistic, to be sure, because the Hasidic movement did not emerge until the end of the 18th Century. However, its precursor, the French school of rabbinic Judaism, was heavy with mysticism drawn from the burgeoning Kabbalistic movement, and is regarded as the early expression of Hasidic Judaism. It was this nascent Hasidism which was in stark contrast with Maimonides' rationalist Judaism. It rejected his teaching and got the church to burn his books as heretical.

The tension between Maimonides and the Hasidim lies in the Rambam's unrelenting commitment to common sense reasoning and his rejection of the attributes of God, the obscure depths of man's soul, the unconscious, and a good deal of the miraculous, since these defied common sense, could not be grasped by the intellect, and were of no practical use. In his separation of "the world of superstition" from the transcendent, unnamable God, Maimonides' gave supreme expression to the Torah's rejection of idolatry, a

commandment which he regarded as equivalent to the whole Torah. Indeed, he argued that the first aim of the Torah was to extirpate idolatry *oravodah zarah* (Kochan, 1990: 133) from the world.

But the Lubavitchers, on the contrary, belong to a tradition within Judaism, the Kabbalistic and mystically imbued tradition of Hasidism, which enthusiastically imagined God, and his emanations, in quite material and fantastical terms. Moreover, the Kabbalistic secrets were not deduced from philosophical principles by cool reasoned argument, but revealed to some of the earliest Kabbalists. One such is Rabbi David, who's secret knowledge was revealed to him, according to legend, by the prophet Elijah, and it is Rabbi David's son, Abraham ben David, a Kabbalist, who wrote the first critique of Maimonides' major work, *Mishneh Torah* (Zinberg, 1973, III:11).

Chief amongst the Kabbalistic ideas is that the sparks of creation reside in every living thing, and need to be lifted back to their divine source by each and every Jew. This almost immanentist view of God finds expression in a variety of potent ways in Hasidic Judaism that culminates in the idea of the *tzaddik*. The *tzaddik*, the term for a Hasidic leader, and the traditional term appropriate to the Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, was believed, contain more sparks than other beings. The *tzaddik* was in fact imbued with the spirit of Torah, which in rabbinic and Hasidic legend, pre-existed creation, and is the expression of God in the world. Therefore, learning or being with the *tzaddik* was superior to the study of Torah alone, because the *tzaddik* possessed the compassion and righteousness which is the aim and the fulfillment of Torah.

All this goes some way to explaining how it is that the Rebbe could so easily be acclaimed by his followers to be the messiah. It was said, after all, that his predecessor, his father-in-law, was in fact the messiah. And some of his followers today, claim that he never referred to himself as the messiah, but in characteristic humility referred to his father-in-law as such. Yet even Lubavitcher Rabbi, Herschl Greenberg, who noted this, also admitted that *Schneersohn left no other option open to his followers than to acclaim him as the messiah* — for one of the characteristics of the messiah is his utter humility. Incidentally, humility is also one of the chief characteristics of the *tzaddik* — supposedly, distinguishing him from "the haughty and arrogant

rabbis" to whom the *tzaddikim* were historically in opposition. The identity of the *tzaddik* and the messiah grows even closer when one considers that it was customary in hasidic circles to call a great *tzaddik*, "messiah," apparently in a gesture of reverence (according to Lubavitch rabbi, Ben Zion Melecki, in Sydney).

The ultimate convergence of the *tzaddik* and the messiah seems to be at the point of what it is they are called to do — to transform, and to redeem the world — not merely to "keep a fence around the Torah" — a famous rabbinical maxim. The *tzaddik*, by some supernatural feat of spirituality — actually called, *tzim tzum*, or contraction (M. Rotenberg, *Dialogue With Deviance* 1984) — is able to effect what is called a descent to the lowly and the wicked, and to turn them to righteousness and raise them up. One of the scriptural foundations of this is found in Jeremiah 22:25, "Thus saith the Lord, Surely my covenant is with day and night; surely I have appointed the laws of heaven and earth". Following this, the *tzaddik* is metaphorically called "the covenant of day and night." (And one might say also "the covenant of heaven and earth" for there are many stories of *tzaddikim* travelling up to heaven in a dream, and seeing the messiah or having some other fantastic encounter, and returning to earth to radically change the course of someone's life.) Through his mission, which is to move between the wicked and the righteous, the *tzaddik* effects the redemption of the wicked: "to turn many from sin; to change night into day" (Dresner 1974: 150). This turning of night into day is in effect what Lubavitchers believe the Rebbe has done both personally and through his emissaries in the lives of thousands of Jews and even non-Jews.

And like the messiah, who will preside over the redemption of the whole world, in all its stages, the Rebbe is also associated with the transformation of the world (including the fall of Communism) and the beatific messianic age, when the Jewish people will be fully restored to *eretz Israel* and the Temple will be rebuilt. Are not there already those in the movement who have diligently studied the role of the priesthood, the exact details of their garments, and the decoration of the Holy of Holies, for the eventual rebuilding of the Temple?

But if the messianic age can be imagined and embellished, the messiah himself is a more complex figure, whose characteristics have been disputed. Maimonides tried to leave the matter in little doubt. Even as King, the messiah was a mere man who would

eventually die (*Perek Helek* in Kochan 1990:167). Certainly, the personality of the messiah has periodically been sketched-in by one or another pretender, with greater or lesser disastrous consequences. But Jewish tradition prefers to keep discussions of the messiah at the level of the functional or philosophical purpose of the messiah and the conditions for his rise, rather than on the person of the messiah himself. Indeed, Reformed Judaism has largely dropped the idea of the messiah, preferring instead a concept of the messianic age, which everyone can work to bring about. For there is, even in the present case amongst Lubavitchers, a fair degree of uneasiness that the Lubavitcher Hasidim are beginning to sound rather Christian. Lubavitcher Rabbi in Melbourne, Chaim Gutnick, believed this to be the biggest stumbling block to the messianic movement, but he was nonetheless quick to deny the similarities between Christianity and Lubavitch Hasidism.

Again the ambiguity was unmistakable. Rabbi Gutnick did see the parallels, as anyone would, to the Christian messianic experience, but he, and others, such as Rabbis Herschl Greenberg and Ben Zion Milecki, were at pains to point out that the Rebbe in no way resembled the Christian messiah. For one thing the Rebbe did not annul the Torah. On the contrary, the individual's fulfillment of *halachah* was all the more imperative. Although many in Lubavitch circles related the Rebbe's illness to the "suffering servant" of Isaiah's prophecy, as yet another proof of his messiahship, it was readily pointed out that his was not a vicarious, redemptive suffering as was that of the Christian messiah. The contrast between the Rebbe and Jesus went further, the Rebbe being a man of vast learning, and prolific output over a period more than four score and ten years, was anything but the simple parable teller of the gospels who belittled the scholars and scribes of Pharisaic Judaism. (In fact, in this, the founder of the Hasidic movement, Israel ben Eliezer, the Bal Shem Tov, had far greater similarities to Jesus.)

Lubavitcher Hasidim quite naturally believe that Jesus was not the messiah, but that hasn't in any way dissuaded them from using the same prophetic texts and traditional Jewish expectations that are applied to Jesus. It also apparently doesn't prevent them from surrounding themselves with numerous pictures of the Rebbe-Messiah in a way that can only recall the Christian propensity to picture the man that embodied their faith.

Pictures of the Rebbe have been fanciful, such as an oil painting picturing him in the heavenly firmament, on the moon, poring over a text. Another picture, perhaps more conscious of the prohibition of representation, showed his portrait, not in brush strokes, but actually made up of the entire text of his first commentary. And of course, there are the numerous photos of the Rebbe, some with his right hand up, reportedly in a gesture he made, after his stroke rendered him speechless, to signal, apparently, a positive response to the question from his followers "are you the messiah?"

How is this proliferation of imagery — in videos, posters, photographs and art work, permitted by the Lubavitchers? The *tzaddik*, and all Hasidim, it is remembered, must keep God before their eyes at all times — that is the practice of *devekut* or cleaving towards God. But what of the Lubavitcher who keeps the figure of the Rebbe before his eyes at all times? Doesn't this go against the Maimonidian prohibition of coupling God's name with anything else, echoed by Rabbi Moses Isserles (of 16th Century Poland) who said, "making an intermediate between himself and God will bring down the whole Torah, for this is the causative factor of unbelief in God, and if man says that this is only an intermediary it is as though through this, *avoda zarah* proliferated in the world" (*Torat Ha Olah* in Kochan 1990, 138).

Although Jewish authorities did not always agree on what constituted these breaches that Isserles and Maimonides and many other rabbis before and after warned of, it nonetheless seems that the Lubavitcher Hasidim do tread on a knife edge, between the breaking of the first commandment and upholding the Torah. But that is born of the Hasidic movement's rejection of what they regarded as mere rabbinic rationalism and scholasticism as the means of upholding Torah. The Hasidim saw it as an exclusive, elitist way of interpreting the Torah, which was out of reach of the simple folk. A movement with a mission to the uneducated peasants of the 18th and 19th centuries, who were derisively called the *am ha'aretz*, and in the 20th Century, to the secularised Jews or, let's be honest, to any Jews who aren't Lubavitch, the Hasidim have always been more comfortable with using the ways of the world to mediate their message and effect the "turning back to Torah".

The Lubavitch are the first to admit that they regard the media and computer technology of all kinds as the most

appropriate means of communicating the message of Lubavitch — since theirs is not a message about maintaining a "fence around the Torah" but getting as many Jews as possible through its front gate. For the situation that the Lubavitchers are working in is not that of the early rabbis, when the Torah was the great estate (or is it the ghetto?) in which the Jews lived, needing only to mend the occasional breach in the fences. The Lubavitchers live in a world where the Torah is a diminished manor, once grand, where fewer and fewer are born and more and more leave by the back door, never to return.

In the meantime, the messiah on the bus still wends his way through the streets of Bondi ever watchful that his followers are keeping the Torah, and perhaps bringing the odd person up to its open gate.

RELIGION TODAY, Radio National, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.