

*“Cogito Ergo Sum”*

**Robots, Minyan and Halachik Sensationalism**  
***Can Robots Be Deemed People? Jewish?***

***Rabbi Moshe Taub***

*What follows is published article (originally published in Ami Magazine as a two-part article) on the subject of anthropomorphic robots in Jewish law.*

*These were written in direct response to an opinion piece written by a researcher from Emory University that was published at CNN.com, as well as an interview in the JTA with that same writer.*

*A published letter to the editor from this researcher in defense of his positions as well as his corrections to my reading of them will follow my article, as well as my published rebuttal to his points.*

Eugene Gootsman is strange. He himself asserts that he is the “weirdest creature in the world.” He claims to be a 13-year-old boy living in Odessa, Ukraine—but I happen to know he is lying.

In fact, I will go on record as saying that Eugene Gootsman is not even alive...or human! I can say this with certainty, even though over 30 percent of the scientists and professors who spent time with him thought he was a real, live person.

Eugene Gootsman, you see, is a computer program.

It all began in 1950, when Allen Turing, the father of modern computing, proclaimed that by the turn of the century scientists would develop a computer program so advanced that the average person would have no more than a 70 percent chance of ascertaining whether he was talking to a man or a machine. His goal, and that of many in the computer science field, is to develop a computer that can “think.”

Each year various “Turing tests” and contests take place all over the world. With some variation, here is how they work: Four judges sit in a room, each with a computer screen in front of him. Each communicates by text-messaging with a different subject, one of whom is actually a computer. The judges alternate so that each one has the chance to speak to all three humans and the computer, and they must then vote on which were people and which subject was artificial.

This year for the first time, a computer—claiming to be Eugene Gootsman of Odessa, Ukraine—fooled more than 30 percent of the judges.

While many respected news outlets questioned whether this Turing victory, for technical reasons, was even legitimate, some could not resist running with the story, and some even tied it, oddly, to *inyanei halachah*.

In a CNN interview with the JTA, Mark (Moshe) Goldfeder, a professor at Emory University, *musmuch* and former clerk at the Beis Din of America, makes a sensational though misguided claim:

**JTA:** Theoretically speaking, say a robot walked into your office and said, “Rabbi, I want to count in the *minyan*.” Would that be enough evidence for you to count him?

**Goldfeder:** Not necessarily. For the purposes of this discussion, I would accept the position of the Jerusalem Talmud in the third chapter of tractate *Niddah*, [which states] that when you are dealing with a creature that does not conform to the simple definition of “humanness”—meaning it has been born from a human mother or at least possesses human DNA—but which appears to have human characteristics and is doing human things, one examines the context to determine if it is human. When something looks human and acts human, to the point that I think it might be human, then *halachah* might consider the threshold to have been crossed... I have a responsibility to treat all that seem human as humans, and it is better to err on the side of caution from an ethical perspective.”

Wow. He is suggesting that it is within the realm of possibility for a robot to be invented that would be considered not only human and male, but Jewish!

I imagine most readers would intuitively reject this; I know I do.

Would Rabbi Goldfeder say that turning such a robot off would be tantamount to killing? That would give new meaning to “pulling the plug”!

And would he say that one can load *Shas* and *poskim* into this “human” and ask it *sh'eilos*? Would that upload count as *mitzvas talmud Torah*? That would give new meaning to the injunction “*Aseh lecha rav*”—literally, “*Make for yourself a rabbi*”!

There are many other ramifications of this issue. For instance, what about *bechirah*, free will?<sup>1</sup> How does Rabbi Goldfeder account for the fact that a robot has no *neshamah* and that a woman did not give birth to it (*yulad ishah*)?

If we did accept his argument, would that mean that a robot would be obligated to keep the *mitzvos*? And if not, how could a being that is not obligated in *mitzvos* count for a *minyan* (see *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 55:8)? In addition, would one fulfill the *mitzvah* of *pru u'revu* by creating such a robot? Based on Rabbi Goldfeder’s ideas, the answer would have to be yes (see *Sanhedrin* 19).

In the interview, Rabbi Goldfeder quoted a piece of Gemara in Talmud Yerushalmi as proof of his position. Let’s discuss this proof. Here is how he interprets the Yerushalmi source in an article he is now working on:

“The Jerusalem Talmud in tractate *Niddah* has a fascinating discussion: ... ‘Yet suppose [the creature] is entirely human but its face is animal-like and it is learning Torah? Can one say to it, “Come and be slaughtered”? [One cannot]. Or consider if it is entirely animal-like but its face is human and it is plowing the field [behaving like an animal]; do we say to it, “Come and perform levirate marriage [*yibum*] and divorce [*chalitzah*]”? [We cannot.]’

“The Talmudic conclusion seems to be simple. When you are dealing with a ‘creature’ that does not conform to the simple definition of humanness—i.e., born from a human mother or even possessing human DNA—but it appears to have human characteristics and is doing human things, one examines the context to determine if it is human. Does it study Jewish law—or, because this is not a matter of ‘Jewishness’ but rather a matter of general humanness, does this ‘creature’ do differential equations or some other act involving serious mental contemplation? Or is it at the pulling end of a plow?

“According to the Talmud, when we *cannot* apply the usual biological definition of a human— which may in fact still be the *general* default definition for the status of personhood—then we apply the contextual definition of a human, if it fits.”

An amazing *Chazal*, right?

Let’s put this in context first and then revisit the quote. The discussion begins as a *mishnah*, with a corresponding *gemara* in the Bavli. It is even recorded as law in the *Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 194:3)*.

Here is the background: The rule is that when a woman gives birth to a child, she becomes *tamei* for either 7 or 14 days and then is *tahor* for either 33 or 66 days, depending on whether the child is a boy or a girl.<sup>2</sup> The Torah laws of *leidah* apply to miscarriages as well.

In the third *perek* of *Niddah*, the Mishnah asks about a woman who miscarries at some point after 40 days of gestation. At what point can we say with certainty, or rule stringently due to doubt, that the issue—specifically one that looks abnormal—was once a viable fetus, thus activating the laws of a *leidah*?

The Mishnah records a debate between Rav Meir and the *chachamim* about whether the laws of *Tazria* apply to a mother if she evacuated an entity that *looks* like an animal (but is not actually an animal!).<sup>3</sup> The thrust is that if it has the form of an

animal or entity for which the term “*vayitzar*” (“and He formed”) is used in the Torah, it would activate the laws of *Tazria*.

The Gemara then redefines the Mishnah’s debate, where everyone is in agreement that if the head looks like a human’s and the rest looks like an animal, the laws of *Tazria* apply; but if the head is like that of animal and the rest looks human, all agree that we do not consider it to be a halachic “birth.” The debate in the Mishnah only applies when parts of the head look like those of a human fetus and other parts do not (for example, one eye is animal-like and one eye is human-like).

In sum, the Gemara is teaching is that for the mother to become *tamei*, she must issue something that is a natural being.

Based on this discussion in the Talmud, Rabbi Goldfeder reported to the world that it may become possible for a robot to be counted in a *minyan*. That is like saying that if one is allowed to buy meat from a kosher supermarket based on a presumption of innocence (*chezkas kashrus*), then even if he saw the workers put *treif* meat in the packages, he can still eat there! The *gemara* under discussion was only speaking about a case where we *know* that the miscarried being came from a human; we can’t extrapolate from that to a case where we have no idea where it came from—and certainly not to a case *where we know it came from a computer lab and not from a woman!*

Indeed, so uncontroversial is this *gemara* that, far being a discovery, it is recorded in the *Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 194:3)*!

Furthermore, the Gemara does not discuss this with respect to the being actually surviving, but only to determine whether we consider the miscarriage a case of *leidah*. It is when the Yerushalmi (see also Bavli, *Niddah 23b*) makes this very point (7b in Slovia edition) that Rabbi Goldfeder misses the humor or sarcasm implied and takes it at face value.

Here is the simple reading (and, more importantly, the *Pnei Moshe*'s) of the paragraph he quoted above:

“Says Rav Mana [according to the *chachamim* who teach that an issue that looks like an animal with the head of a human is considered a fetus, and the other way around is not], would this mean that this human with an animal head can be learning Torah one day in the future and then be told, ‘Come to your slaughter’?! And that one with an animal body and a human head can one day be found working the field all day (like an animal) and then be told, ‘Come perform *chalitzah* or *yibum*’?!”

The *Pnei Moshe* (s.v. *kulo*) explains that Rav Mana’s point is that the discussion could not have been about a viable fetus that could live on as half man-half beast, and that *Chazal* deliberated the issue as it relates to the laws of *Tazria* only—nothing further.

Yet it is from this statement *limiting* the discussion that Rabbi Goldfeder, very publicly, seeks to *expand* it...to include robots!

*Similarly, when chazal in other places describe a deformed fetus as a looking like a ‘sandal’ they are not suggesting that shoes, too, could be deemed Jewish and potentially counted in a minyan!*

There are also more serious related matters, matters of life and death. In addition to Rabbi Goldfeder’s assertions about counting a robot in a *minyan*, another law of *minyan* must be considered: The same *pesukim* that instruct a *minyan* to sanctify G-d’s name publicly (which we fulfill by saying *Kaddish*) also demand that we die *al kiddush Hashem* in front of a *minyan* if we are ordered to commit a sin—any sin—in public. This is a law that is not well known; in addition to allowing himself to be killed rather than commit the three cardinal sins (murder, idol worship, or immorality), a person must choose martyrdom if he is told to commit *any* sin—for example, eating *treif*—in front of people.

(*Sanhedrin* 74b; *Shulchan Aruch* 157; Rambam, *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, ch. 5).

As I have written often, there is no such thing as a pure leniency in *halachah*, and a “leniency” regarding whom (or what) one accepts as part of a *minyan* may lead to a stringency in the laws of martyrdom. In fact, the same verses are used to prove a *minyan* in shul and that for martyrdom (see *Megillah* 23 and *Sanhedrin*, *ibid.*).

I contacted Rabbi Goldfeder, who had clearly spent a considerable amount of time researching this issue. While I disagree with him completely about the possibility that an invention of man can ever have human or Jewish status, the issue of human-created entities and anthropoids *has* been discussed in classic sources. In the next few columns, I will cite sources including Rav Chaim Soleveitchik, the Chazon Ish, and other *poskim* who discuss this topic.

Let’s begin with the case of a *golem*.

A *golem* is a humanoid being created through the *Sefer Yetzirah*, one of the oldest works of *Kabbalah*, which is mentioned in the Gemara and is often attributed to Avraham Avinu. The most famous discussion of these beings is that of Rav Tzvi Ashkenazi (d. 1718), who wonders in his *Shu”t Chacham Tzvi* (*siman* 93) whether a *golem* would count in a *minyan*. One possible support for this, he says, is based on the *gemara* in *Sanhedrin* (19b) stating that if someone teaches the son of his friend Torah or raises an orphan in his home, it is as if he gave birth to him.

However, the Chacham Tzvi brings another *gemara* (*ibid.* 65b) to prove otherwise. There the *gemara* tells us that the great *Amora* Rava once created a *golem* using the *Sefer Yetzirah*. When he finished it, he sent it to his friend Rav Zeira, who tried to converse with it. When he saw that the *golem* was unable to respond, Rav Zeira said, “You are a creation of my colleague; return to dust,” in effecting “killing” it.

The Chacham Tzvi explains that Rav Zeira was allowed to “kill” this android because it was not born of a human mother. Based on *Bereishis* 9:6, only someone born of a mother has the full status of a human being (see, however, *Gilyonei HaShas* of Rav Yosef Engel, *Sanhedrin* 57b).

It is interesting to note<sup>3</sup> that when Rava created this entity, the Gemara uses the language “*Rava bara gavra*.” The words *Rava* and *bara* are made up of the same letters, with the *beis* and *reish* switched; *gavra* is the word *bara* with a *gimmel* added to it.

These ten letters equal 612. This is significant, for in discussing the creation of man (*Bereishis* 1:27), *Targum Yonasan* teaches that the number of a person’s limbs is 248 and the number of blood vessels is 365—a total of 613.<sup>4</sup> It could be that the Gemara, in contrasting the number 612 to the full value of 613, is alluding to the fact that a *golem* is *almost* a human but not quite. (Interestingly, in relation to creating a *golem*, some suggest that the term “abracadabra” comes from “*Abra k’adabara*—I will create as I speak.”)

The Chacham Tzvi’s two sons defended their father’s position.

One son, Rav Avraham Meshulam Zalman (*Shu”t Divrei Rav Meshulam*, #10) cites the holy *mekubal* the Ramak, Rav Moshe Codovero (d. 1570), who comments that Rava was allowed to “kill” the *golem* because it had no *neshamah*, no *nefesh*, and no *ruach*; it was just a “living thing” (“*chiyus ba’alma*”).

In fact, the *Shu”t Yehuda Ta’aleh* (1:26) strengthens this proof with the words of many *poskim* who teach that a sleeping person cannot be counted in a *minyan* precisely because parts of the soul leave the body when one is asleep; all the more so is this the case for an entity that has no soul!

The Chacham Tzvi’s other, more famous son, Rav Yaakov Emden (*Sh’eilas Yaavetz* 2:82), demonstrates that a *golem* has no halachic status whatsoever. He states that membership in a *minyan*

has nothing to do with its status as a living being, pointing out that a woman is a living being and yet is not kosher for a *minyán*.

Further, teaching a dog to fetch does not make it human, even though you have given it powers!

*Chazal* speak of other beings created with the use of the *Sefer Yetzirah* (e.g., a calf for Shabbos; see *Sanhedrin* 65b). If a *golem* is considered human simply because it was created by a human, why not all other things created by a miracle? (See *Shalal Rav, Bamidbar*, p. 50.)

Rav Yosef Engle (see *Tiferes Yosef, Bereishis*, p. 53ff footnote 180) seems to find a middle ground, stating that a *golem* may be human, but it is neither a Jew nor a gentile.

Although “Gootsman” would make a fine Jewish last name, that is as close as Eugene Gootsman will ever come to being a Jew.

## NOTES

1. See *Beirishis Rabba* regarding man being defined by *bechirah*. See, however, *Meshech Chochmah*, introduction to *Sefer Shemos*.
2. This is all found at the beginning of *Parshas Tazria* and does not come up nowadays for reasons beyond the scope of this article.
3. Based on *Sanhedrin* 58 and a *Tosefta*, a human and an animal can never create a child, so that is certainly not what the *gemara* is talking about here.
4. See Rav Aryeh Kaplan’s *Sefer Yetzirah*, p. xxi.
5. Compare *Makkos* 23b, where the comparison is made between the 248 positive *mitzvos* and the same number of limbs in the human body; yet the 365 negative *mitzvos* are compared to the rounded days in the solar year. See, however, Shlah in *Toldos Adam, beis chama, tanyana*, #30, and *Zohar* 1:170b, where they reach a conclusion similar to that of *Targum Yonasan*.

---

***Mr. Goldfeder composed a letter - that was published in Ami Magazine - in response to these columns:***

*I am writing to clarify a position of mine that was unfortunately misrepresented in this magazine.*

*I recently gave an interview with the JTA in which I discussed the idea of robots in halacha. The entire interview had a disclaimer, which appeared in print, that it was not to be taken l'maaseh, and was only a theoretical conversation.*

*In that interview I referenced a famous Gemara in Sanhedrin, where the Talmud discusses the idea of a golem, a humanoid automaton, interacting with human beings. While Rashi writes that the golem here was made by 'Sefer Yetzirah,' which usually refers to a mystical text, medieval kabbalists such as Rav Moshe Cordovero explain that the sefer yetzirah referred to here was actually a book of natural science, and that the golem was not spiritual, just 'a form, made out of dust, and by natural means it was made to appear like a man.' This gives us our clear analogue to the idea of a robot.*

*Halakhists throughout the centuries have been fascinated with this story. Famously, the Chacham Tzvi, and his grandson, Rabbi Yaakov Emden, both address the possibility of this golem counting in a minyan. They conclude that this golem could not, as it lacked any 'intelligence whatsoever...he is no more than an animal in a human shape." They did, however, leave open the possibility of a different golem actually passing that threshold. Interestingly, the Medrash tells us that Yirmiyahu HaNavi actually did it, he created a full human being, and he only destroyed it out of fear that people would begin to treat him like a god.*

*The reason I am writing though is not to argue about whether or not these aggadas are true, or worth thinking about; people are free to agree or*

*disagree that they are interesting. My point is that it is irresponsible and potentially harmful when a writer takes a quote from a piece like this out of context, and neglects to include the original disclaimer. I wish to make three points:*

*1) Obviously I am not of the opinion that a robot can actually count in a minyan, as I reiterated to the Ami author over the phone before the article was even written. I reiterate again that the entire discussion about robots in minyanim was only theoretical as stated in the original interview.*

*2) Even regarding the rhetorical strawman that the author builds to tear down, unfortunately he got it wrong. After I had mentioned the discussion in poskim about golems in a minyan, the JTA interviewer asked me if, theoretically speaking, a human-like robot (which does not yet exist) would count. My response was "not necessarily," even in this theoretical plane. I then made a related ethical point, based on a gemara in the Yerushalmi (the Gemara discusses the concept of treating something that looks human-like as a human, even when we are not sure,) because as ethical actors we should be machmir. The author of the Ami article ignored the earlier discussion about Sanhedrin, took that Yerushalmi, and wrote that "based on this discussion Rabbi Goldfeder reported to the world that it is possible for a robot to be counted in a minyan." That is in no way true; I never made such a claim (explicitly stating that even in a theoretical world such a claim would not necessarily fly), and certainly any discussion of even theoretical minyanim was based on the gemara and poskim I had mentioned, not that Yerushalmi.*

*3) While it is fine to disagree, even in theory, putting claims in another person's mouth has no place in a Torah conversation.*

**Rabbi Dr. Moshe Goldfeder, Esq.**

Senior Lecturer, Emory Law School

Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of Law and Religion

Director, Law and Religion Students Programs

Adjunct Professor, Emory University Department of Religion

Adjunct Professor of Law, Georgia State University College of Law

Phone: Office- (404) 712-0213 Cell- (917) 301-8746

Email: [mark.aaron.goldfeder@emory.edu](mailto:mark.aaron.goldfeder@emory.edu)

---

*My response to Mr. Goldfeder, also published:*

I am certainly not the vanguard of *halacha*. My [weekly] column, while often touching upon *halacha*, does not make it a habit of zeroing in on what this or that rabbi said.

However what was published and publicly said [by Mr. Goldfeder] was, in my opinion, so over the top, and all done so publicly, that it earned a response.

Mr. Goldfeder wrote a piece for CNN,<sup>1</sup> and then gave an interview with JTA<sup>2</sup>—available for any reader to read and judge for themselves—where he expressed the strong possibility of one day—<sup>““</sup>*probably 30 years’-years”*—a robot counting as a Jew and in a *minyan*.

It was that last focus of his from which ~~we-I~~ quoted *verbatim*—: JTA’s direct question about a robot joining a *minyan* and his direct response and source chosen.

While I do not recall being told, and having it reiterated, that he ‘obviously’ does not believe a robot could ever count for a *minyan*—and I can certainly marshal evidence to the contrary—I do not doubt that the writer is sincere in that complaint.

A public charge like this will have to await the *yom hadin hagadol*.

---

<sup>1</sup> As they appeared on the day of this writing: <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/10/opinion/goldfeder-age-of-robots-turing-test/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jta.org/2014/06/12/life-religion/should-robots-count-in-a-minyan-rabbi-talks-turing-test>.

I kindly remind the writer that as a courtesy he was sent an early draft of my article, which he heartily approved.

-Due to events in Israel the robot column was suddenly delayed, and while the final draft was different in many —ways, what he’s complaining about here was already in the draft he approved, including:

1. — ~~T~~The same one and only quote from JTA,
2. — ~~M~~ my characterization of his belief that a robot could potentially be a Jew, and
3. — ~~T~~that I and the readers would intuitively reject this as even being a remote possibility.

In the final published article, not one further quote of his was taken out, nor was any added, save for his translation of the Yerushalmi for which I requested (via emailed) permission (and received).

If he feels that these points are not accurate, and with his permission, I would share that first draft, his response to it, and all our email exchanges.

In addition, had he said to me what he is claiming here (that he would obviously never claim a robot could ever be accepted for a *minyan*), then, and and with all due respect, I would have looked at it not so much as a clarification, but as a retraction. Nor would I have been the only one with such a take-away.

~~(JTA)~~The JTA reported: “‘From the practical legal perspective, robots could and should be people,’ Rabbi Mark Goldfeder wrote in an article published on CNN’s...”

And this:

Formatted: Normal, No bullets or numbering, Tab stops: Not at 0.5"

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 14 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 14 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 14 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 14 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 14 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 14 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 14 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 14 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 14 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 14 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 14 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 14 pt

Formatted: Normal, No bullets or numbering, Tab stops: Not at 0.5"

“...(*Goldfeder*) -In halachic terminology we would consider him [the robot] “*nolad mahul*” (i.e. born circumcised).” (!)

Formatted: Left

And it goes on (also see the quote brought in the initial column).

Formatted: Left

Should his beliefs be as expressed here in his letter to *Ami*, then I would think his grouse would be with CNN and JTA for initially misquoting him—both deeply respected news outlets—and not with me or *Ami*. Has he contacted them yet?

Formatted: Font: Italic

It is noteworthy that his arguments here focus on many things *other* than the actual *halachik* arguments I made; nor does he even try to defend his proof from the Yerushalmi, the only error I had actually focused on.

To his other points, in no particular order:

I—*We-I* never claimed he was issuing a *psak*, and the words ‘potentially’, ‘maybe’, etc., always appeared when discussing his views.

~~Yet~~At the same time, this is not “*nisht oif Shabbos geret*,” and one does not have *carte blanche* to say *anything*, nor is one granted immunity from criticism when expressing a stunning ~~halachik-halachic~~ view to the lay press, simply by saying, “*It was theoretical*.”

Formatted: Font: Not Italic

Certainly no malice is intended when a publicly made wild claim is tested, and a source is shown to be in error.

There was nothing in my column that one would not find in letters to the *RJJ Journal of Halacha*, and, indeed, in what I have received in response to my own errors.

While my column never attacked this writer personally, I fear he took it that way, which was never my intention in critiquing his public Torah statements.

2— He mentions a disclaimer, in print, that the entire article had, that this was not *l'maaseh*.

I checked again, and there is no banner or warning, or even the word ~~“disclaimer”~~ in the articles I quoted.

What I can only guess he is referring to is the following. In the midst of his exchange he says:

*“I should of course clarify that this entire discussion is l'halacha v'lo l'maaseh,” a theoretical outlaying of views.*

All *bnai Torah* know what is meant by ~~l'Halacha l'halacha~~ v'lo l'maaseh.

Formatted: Left

Formatted: No underline

Formatted: No underline

Why, in his letter here, did he expunge this one crucial word from his quote?

His were serious ~~halachik~~ halachic arguments in defense of something he thinks/thought is/was a real possibility.

Besides, most *sefarim* are expressly shlo k'halacha, and even those are tested for their logic and sources. Perhaps academia has other standers, but I think his colleagues would side with me and argue that a source given in support of even a theory, and certainly when published, is open to fair criticism, especially if it is a source that was so demonstrably misread.

Besides, and humbly, even if he had JTA publish a clear disclaimer, ~~one~~ I would still be in ~~their~~ my right to challenge his very public assertions and

connections. I am surprised that a professor, instead of explaining how my critique of his proof was wrong, would rather argue against my *right* to dare argue in the first place.

3— He points us to his other sources.

But We I chose used his chosen response/source to the direct question of *minyan*.

One should not expect salutations for quoting another *gemara* or source correctly, but should expect, and even desire, to be corrected for those taken out of context or in error.

Besides, now that he explained that he would never believe that a robot could count for a *minyan*, I fail to understand what these are even sources for.

For the edification of the reader, and in my opinion, none his other sources brought here or in his article/interview are any more relevant to robots. Should Ami allow I would gladly write a another column explaining why that is so.

(Also, and for the benefit of the reader, the Chacham Tzvi was the *father* of the Yaavetz, not *grandfather*.)

4— He writes here,:

“My response [in the JTA] was *“not necessarily”* even in this theoretical plane.”

Formatted: Left

Formatted: Left

I agree, and that is why “*Not necessarily*” was included in the published article in *Ami*.

Formatted: Font: Italic

5—2 -As the saying goes, ‘Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proofs.’

Perhaps one day a *chachom* will make the case for a robot *minyán* being a theoretical possibility. Maybe it will be this same writer.

Thus far, I contend, he has failed to do so, as well as failed to convince us that he didn’t try.

I do not know this writer, whom I have every reason to believe is a fine Jew and *yorei shomyaim*. Surely he was aware why the JTA chose to call him, that his words were sensational, and what the response would be.

At best, he made public remarks to international lay news outlets that could be easily *misunderstood* as suggesting that something he now says is obviously not possible —asis possible.

While I stand by my reading of his words, *bl'n-bl''n* from this point forward, if I ever mention this subject again—short of a correction from JTA —I will include *all* his statements, why I disagree with them, as well as his very clear statement here that robots could never, obviously, join a *minyán*.

Moshe Taub

|

