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THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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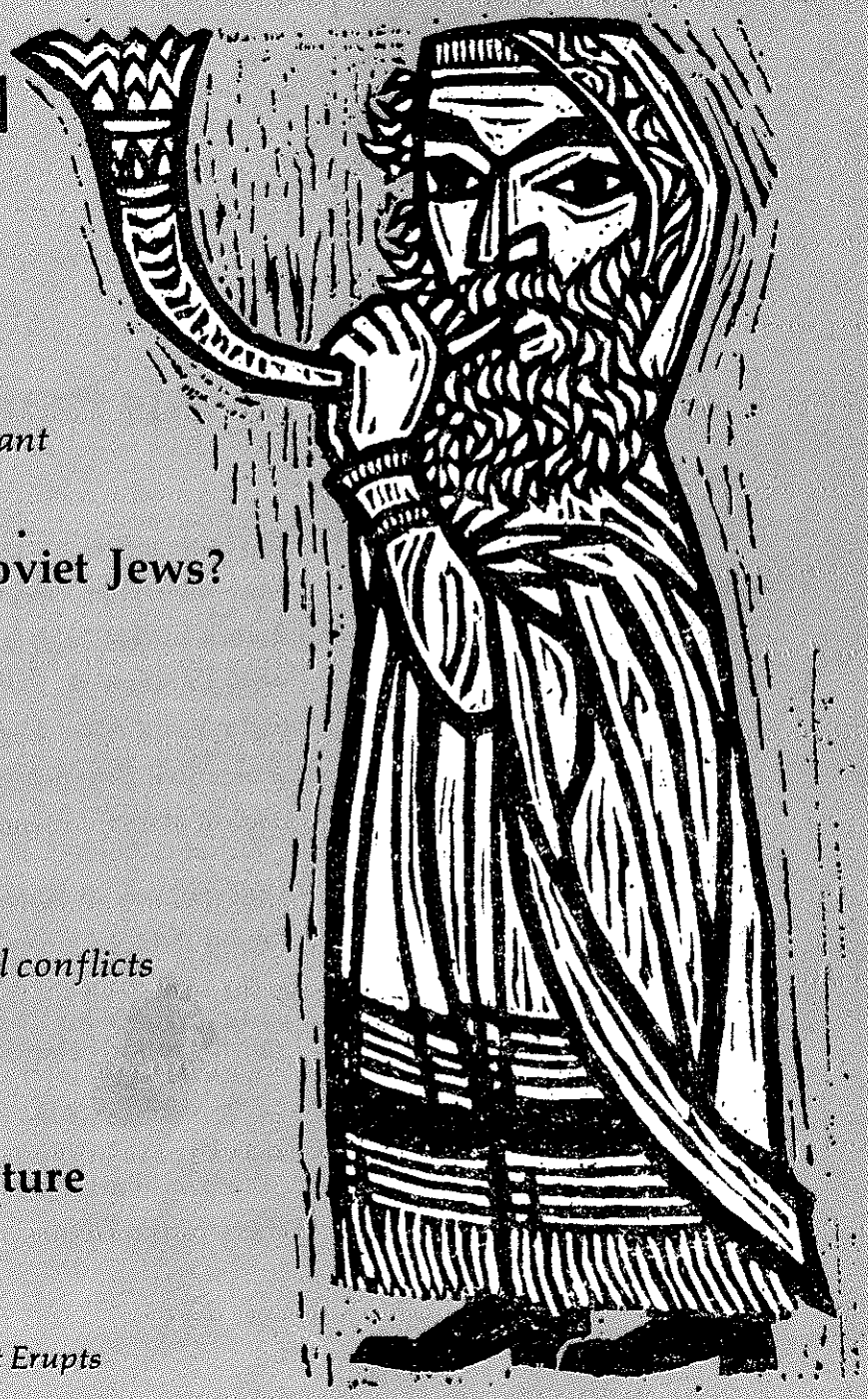

The Satmar Rav זצ"ל
Farewell to a Chassidic Giant

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Who's Building the Galil?
A pictorial feature

"Viduy"—Why Confess?
A timely essay

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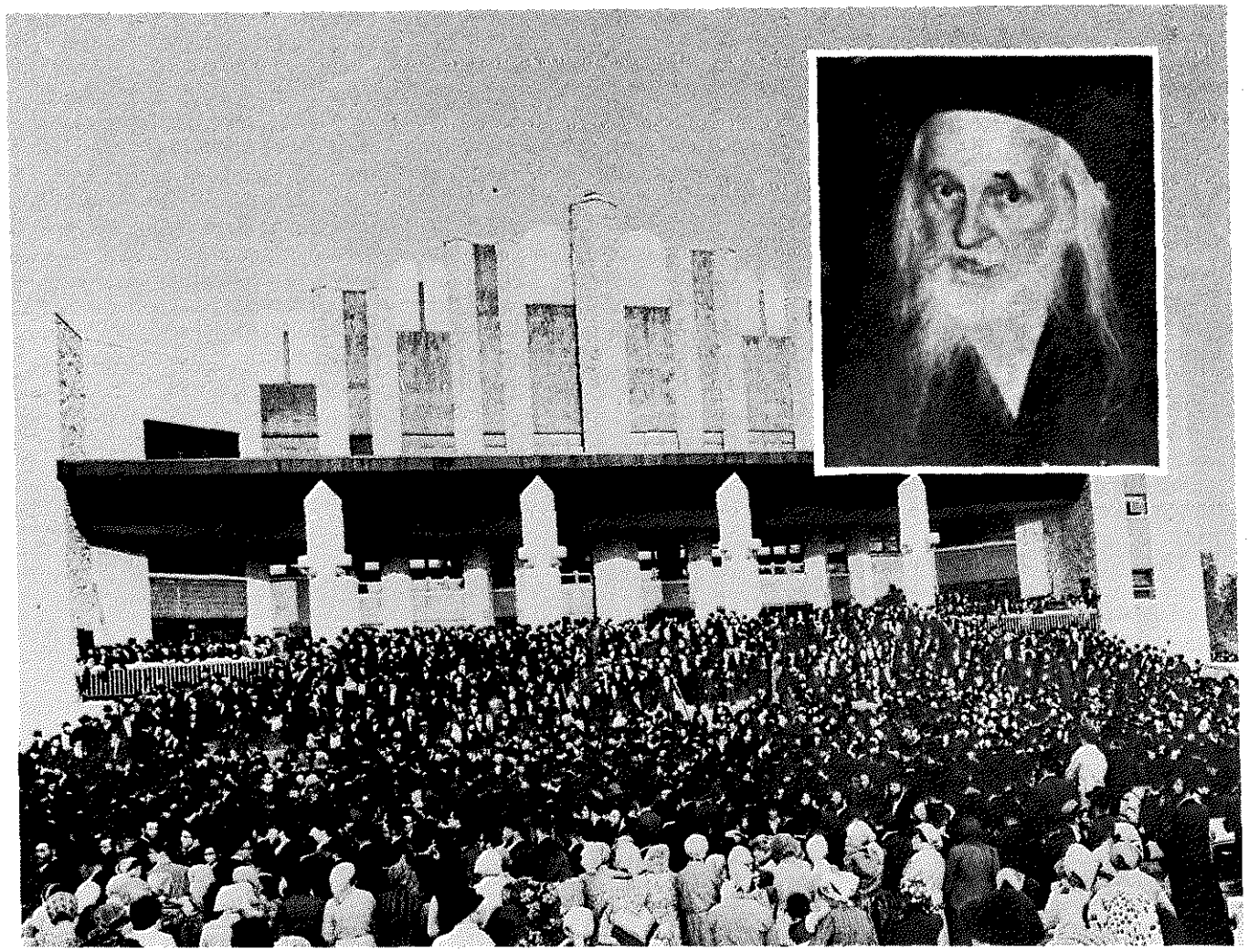
The Satmar Rav זכר צדיק לברכה



Part of the crowd outside the 10,000-seat synagogue in Kiryas Yoel, during the funeral of the Satmar Rav זצ"ל.

As we go to press, we take note of the irreplaceable loss suffered by *Klal Yisroel* with the passing of the late Satmar Rav, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum זכר צדיק לברכה on 26 Menachem Av/August 19, at the age of 92.

The Satmar Rav, a direct descendant of both the famed "Yismach Moshe" and the "Chavas Daas" was recognized as a young man for his unusual *lomdus, hasmada* and *tzidkus*—Torah scholarship, diligence and piety, assuming his first rabbinical position as *rav* of Muzheyer at the age of seventeen. During the forty years following his Bar Mitzva, he never slept on a bed, except on *Shabbosos*, so involved was he in Torah study. By the outbreak of World War II, he was *rav* of the thriving community of Satmar and had emerged as one of the leading figures in Hungarian Jewry. (Rabbi Reuvain Grozovsky זצ"ל quoted his father-in-law, Rabbi Boruch Ber Lebowitz זצ"ל: "The Satmar Rav was *the* person to contact whenever the Polish and Lithuanian leadership had need to communicate with Hungarian Jewry.") He distinguished himself with his heroic adherence to Torah under the most brutal conditions of the Nazi concentration camps. After a brief stay in *Eretz Yisroel*, the Rebbe came to America in 1946 and settled in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

It was in Williamsburg that the Rebbe painstakingly helped thousands of fellow survivors reconstruct their lives, at the same time reconstructing a thriving Chassidic community—taking advantage of all technological advances of contemporary America, while shunning its values and the more apparent aspects of its life-style. As a result, at the time of his passing, the Rebbe presided over a tight-knit, highly disciplined community numbering in the thousands, with major settlements in Williamsburg and else-

where, including their flourishing Kiryas Yoel in New York's Monroe Township, Monsey, Montreal, and, of course, Jerusalem, where he was *Rav* of the *Eida Hachreidis*.

Indeed, the Satmar communities are all distinguished by a *kehilla* system that include complete control of *shul, kashrus*, education, and in many cases, social welfare. Thus, the Brooklyn *kehilla* embraces an educational system of 5,000 students embodying a complete girl's school and yeshivos spanning nursery through Kolel; as well as an extremely effective *tzeddaka*-medical-welfare system and wide-reaching Bikur Cholim network, directed by the Satmar Rebbitzin. This, in a smaller format, is duplicated in the rolling expanses of Kiryas Yoel—the Satmar sponsored suburban settlement.

The Satmar Rav's relentless demands for the highest religious standards proved to be an important contribution toward changing the complexion of a significant segment of Orthodox life in America. Witness: Holocaust survivors and their American-born grandchildren—*dayanim* (rabbinical judges), and *rabbonim*, diamond polishers, computer technicians, and gas-pump attendants among them—who proudly walk the streets of the New World in traditional garb, making the *shtreimel* an every-week feature of many communities.

The Rebbe was renowned for his extremely strong stand against Zionism, even refusing to accept the existence of the State of Israel—differing markedly with Torah authorities of Agudath Israel in this. For that matter, he opposed the very concept of an organized coalition-structured Orthodoxy as personified by Agudath Israel. Nonetheless, he was respected—even revered—in other circles for his vast scholarship, *tzidkus*, personal humility, astute wisdom, and unwavering tenacity. (He was once advised by a close associate, "Don't let yourself get so upset!" The Rebbe replied, "There are a thousand reasons not to reveal the *Emes*. If one gets upset, he can forget himself for a moment, and then at least a bit of the *Emes* comes through.")

As much as he was held in awe by his followers, he was also loved by them as a father. (How often did he ask a *chossan*, approaching him for a blessing on the eve of his wedding, if he had purchased a watch for the *kalla*, and then dispatched him to the Rebbitzin who gave him the necessary funds . . .)

The 100,000 people that crowded the streets of Monroe to bid farewell to the Satmar Rav included followers and admirers, Chassidim and Misnagdim, Europeans and Americans, paying homage to one of the greatest of contemporary Jewish leaders, who had taught and led his people as a "*rav*" for seventy-five years. . . . And the masses of disciples ripped their garments in *kriya* mourned for the loss of their father who had cared for their every need, both spiritual and material. He will be missed—not only by those who followed his particular ideology, but by Orthodox Jews of contrasting viewpoint as well who saw in him a tower of principled leadership.

יהי זכרו ברוך

Regina Presser

In the past, we did all within our means to influence the Russians to release our Jewish brethren.

And Now That They're Here . . .

My husband recently stopped in at the Karnovsky's—a Russian couple in our neighborhood—and noticed a Russian-language copy of Watchtower Magazine *lying on the table. When asked about its source, Mr. K. explained that someone had been handing out copies in front of his building (a fifty-family apartment house, 90% of its tenants are Russian immigrants) and that it seemed interesting—there was an article about "oneness" that was especially appealing. When my husband explained that this was a Christian missionary publication that had no place in a Jewish home, Mr. K. was very surprised and we're still not sure if he understood the objection.*

* * *

Our neighborhood—the Kensington section of Brooklyn, which straddles the line between Boro Park and Flatbush—has between 1500 and 2000 newly arrived Russian families, and dozens more are moving in each week. (One Russian lady said she thought that all of Brooklyn was Russian because on her block of Ocean Parkway, she hears only Russian spoken). There are much bigger Russian clusters—in Brighton, Upper Manhattan, and parts of Queens, with many more spread out all over the city—as well as in other urban areas, such as Cleveland, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. And informed sources report that arrivals are expected to continue at the rate of 2500 a month, with 10,000 Russian emigrants now in Italy waiting to enter the USA.

At first, we paid little attention to them, these Russian men and women walking the streets of our neighborhood—the women were dressed in pants suits, the men went bareheaded, trying desperately to look American. Yet, we could detect that Russian something in their eyes: confused, anxious, seeking—seeking what? Then, one or two stepped into our *shul*. They had left Russia to come to a land where they could openly acknowledge their Jewishness, could fill in forms and questionnaires, such as RELIGION: and write down *"Jewish"* fearlessly, unashamedly. But *real* Jewishness? Most never knew that there was anything more to being Jewish beyond the free, open declaration. What more? *Shabbos? Yom Tov?* Kosher-slaughtered meat? *Davening? Alef Bais?* These were outside of their experiences.

In fact, most of them know nothing more than the fact that they are Jews, and *that* because Russian anti-Semitism would not permit them to forget. Their personal identity papers were stamped "Jew," and since papers are necessary for just about everything in the USSR, from securing employment or/and apartments to traveling, they were forced to remember who they are. In America, Land of the Free, they can soon lose even that.

Most Russians are not only ignorant of Judaism, they know nothing about *any* religion. Which American—believer or atheist—has not heard of the Ten Commandments, of Noach and the Flood, and at least *some* other Bible stories! Most younger Russians had never heard of any of these concepts or events.

A young Russian couple was invited for a Shabbos *meal by religious neighbors. They appeared very interested but somewhat puzzled as the host explained the meanings behind the rituals and special foods. Suddenly the wife started talking very excitedly in Russian to her husband and then turned to her host and said,*

Regina Presser *lives in the Kensington section of Brooklyn and is active in aiding Russian immigrants adjust to American Jewish life.*

"My grandmother told me! This is Shabbos! *This is* Shabbos!*" Then in broken English, she explained that just prior to leaving Russia, she was taken aside by her grandmother who told her that now she felt she could relate to her whatever she had remembered from her childhood—things that she had been afraid to reveal to her all these years. . . . She had spoken about the* Shabbos *table in her father's home—and now this young woman suddenly realized that* this *must be the* Shabbos *her grandmother had told her about.*

* * *

Occasionally, one comes across a lone individual or family that was faithful to whatever they knew regarding *Yiddishkeit.* They somehow managed not to work on *Shabbos,* or went without meat because there was no *shechita* (kosher slaughter of animals), but very often did not know much more.

Because he lived in a rural area, Mr. S. could avoid working on Shabbos. *He also kept his own cow so he could drink* Cholov Yisroel *(milk supervised by a Jew, as per rabbinic law). But since there was no* shul *in his vicinity, he "observed"* Shabbos *by listening to a cantorial record—his most treasured possession.*

What Do We Do?

Some maintain that 90% of the Russian immigrants are indifferent to religion, or even hostile. Perhaps . . . Consider, however: If but 10% of the immigrants *want* to learn about *Yiddishkeit,* this in itself would constitute a vast number of people who are waiting for our help, besides all the many more who might be interested with some encouragement.

The Belsky family (formerly of Williamsburg, currently in Kensington) had mailed out a circular in Russian through NYANA, inviting anyone interested in spending Pesach *or a* Seder *with an American Jewish family to call their home telephone number. Their phones started to ring all through the day. Some callers spoke in halting English, others in a slow, hazily remembered Yiddish: "Where is* Pesach? *Where the* Seder?*"* Ich vill kumen.*" "*Mine Tate vill seder.*" "NYANA letter . . ." "Please—*Seder . . .*" "What is* Pesach*—do we fast?"*

They approached their neighbors in Kensington and the response was most gratifying: "Yes, of course we'll take a Russian family. How many are there—three-four-six people? (Very often it was three-generations involving grandparents, parents and one or two children.) . . . Of course . . . We're not short of anything. Anyway, the stores are open—we'll buy more food, more dishes, we'll squeeze in chairs. . . . Give me their phone numbers." (The host families had been asked to call their guests, to invite them, asking them to make a brief introductory visit before Pesach.)

The hosts were warned: these people are not frum. *But understand, they are* anusim*—victims of circumstances—they are lost. Go slowly.*

Forty-five families were placed—forty-five families who never saw or knew or heard of Pesach. *Reports from this past* Pesach *are still filtering in. The guests cried and the host-families cried with them. Then they laughed together and acknowledged their kinship. These "dry bones" awakened and asked a thousand questions, and devoured the* Hagaddah *(transliterated and translated into Russian by Yehudah Gordon of Al Tidom, which were given to the host families). These* Hagaddos, *as well as* brachos *booklets (same source), meant even more to the guests than*

Russian Jews getting introduced to Tefillin and Mezuzos . . .

the tasty festive meals served them. Wide eyed, with tears glistening, they wondered: Can we learn?—at this age?—and burdened with so many problems of living in a new country, learning a new language, job searching, apartment hunting, health problems? . . . Yes, we can learn—but, please teach us!

Many families are following through with their guests—some on their own, some after being urged to do so. Their homes are sporting Russian "souvenirs"—children's books, carved wooden dishes, and toys—for the Russian guests had bought afikomen *gifts for the children. The "*Pintele Yid*" within each yearns to be accepted, to become part of the Jewish community. . . . These Jews hunger and thirst to participate in Jewish life without even knowing what it entails.*

The changes came slowly, requiring much physical labor and emotional strain. But, can we let the opportunity by?

After their *Pesach* venture, the Belskys decided to set up an adult education program for Russians. They had a circular translated into Russian, offering new immigrants classes in English reading, writing and con-

versation, Hebrew, Prayer, Jewish history and so on. This offer was inserted with a NYANA bulletin . . . and their school was opened.

Friends, family and neighbors all pitched in to teach and to help in dozens of other ways. By June, they had over 125 enrollees from ages 11 to 75 (approximately 30 people serving as teachers for various sessions), with 25 to 45 people attending each class—all enthusiastic, all begging for more. After classes, the English teachers introduce aspects of *Yiddishkeit* in their private conversations. The approach is one of soft-sell, avoiding any overt pushing; yet by offering material help, such as finding apartments, clothing, and jobs for them, they had been able to arrange many *brisim*, explain the meaning and importance of *Chuppah* and *kashrus*, and follow through with actual observance.

. . . in a Jewish Living class sponsored by Project Rise.

Adopt a Family

This past Shavuos, *Yuri Frankoff got off the train and walked down the street looking for assistance. He spotted Mrs. Epstein, and approached her. He needed two things—an apartment (he has just been here for one week and was still in one of the hotels that NYANA uses), and a Yeshiva for Natalya, his 15 year-old daughter. She had attended Jewish classes during their temporary stopover in Italy, and she was determined to be religious.*

The Epsteins explained that it was both Yom Tov *and* Shabbos, *and offered to help him the following day. He returned and they succeeded in finding him an apartment. We got together with the Epsteins to find a suitable school for the girl. We also encouraged Mr. Frankoff to look for a* Shomer Shabbos *job, helped him obtain furniture and solve countless other problems. Since then, we arranged for his daughter to be engaged as an assistant counselor in a religious day camp. The Frankoffs now keep kosher, and he attends* shul *every Shabbos, although still learning to daven.*

This was just one case. If every family would but adopt one Russian family, so much could be accomplished!

To be sure, this is not as simple as it sounds. There are at least three hurdles to achieving this. First of all, many people approached to help are completely unaware of the situation: "I thought just a few Jews are trickling out of Russia"; and: "I didn't know there were any Russian immigrants in Brooklyn"—both common reactions.

Another problem is convincing the *frum* community to accept their own Russian brothers into their midst. Answers like: "Fine, but not for me; take them somewhere else"; "But they're not *frum!*" are standard. Another concern often voiced is: "Will they touch my wine?"* People fail to realize that these Russians are fugitives from sixty years of Communist rule, where atheism is drummed into their heads from infancy. Many of us would be in their very situation if our grandparents had not come to America at the right time. For that matter, these recent immigrants may well include our own distant cousins—yours, mine—with whom we have lost contact because of the vast political gulf separating our two countries. Their lack of religiosity is not by choice. Now they are merely empty vessels waiting to be filled by whoever gets there first—freethinking Jews, materialism-oriented America, J's Witnesses, *or* the Torah community.

The Third Dimension

The problem has a third aspect to it, as the following incident illustrates:

> *We recently tried to help the Karnovskys—the couple in whose apartment we had found the Witness' magazine—find a Yeshiva for Gregori, their 4½ year old son.*
>
> *One Yeshiva refused on the basis of "He'll ruin the whole class—do you know what a terrible influence he might have? We already accepted one such child and he told the other children that he eats milk with his meat at home."*
>
> *I suggested that this might be an ideal* chinuch *opportunity: other children should be told about the little boy's background and how they must help him learn to be a good Jew. I was told in the strongest of terms that I don't know what I'm talking about. Furthermore, what will other parents say if all the children in their Yeshiva are not from the best homes?*

While I'm aware that others share this view, I am convinced that *most* parents would not object once the situation was properly presented. Could a 4½ year old *really* ruin his class? I am also certain that if we do not accommodate this child, whose parents are so insistent about sending him to Yeshiva, we will one day have to

**Ordinarily, wine handled by a deliberate Sabbath violater cannot be used.*

answer to Someone of much more importance than a few vociferous parents. . . .

Fortunately, the incident did not end there. Several other schools in our neighborhood were as concerned about this problem as I am. They had sought the advice of some highly regarded Torah authorities, and determined the optimum number of children they could absorb in regular classes. The catch was that in Gregori's age bracket their enrollment was filled. I did find a school that made room for him in their summer day camp, but I was warned that the day the mother enters the school building not dressed properly, would be the child's last day there. What she did elsewhere was her own concern. "In this school we don't have any such children and . . . it doesn't look right." In other words, someone might see.

A little more searching brought me in contact with the principal of a yeshiva who openly admitted that little Gergoris taxed the time and resources of his struggling school, but "to refuse him would be unthinkable. We'll just have to try a little harder."

This frustrating incident and twenty more like it illustrate the point: before we can start educating the Russians, we must educate the Americans. True, we must have guidelines from our *Gedolim*, and we must be in constant consultation with them to ascertain that we are doing the right things in the right manner. But, first we must develop the *desire* and *Ahavas Yisroel* to help bring these fellow Jews back into the fold.

A mother of a Pre 1A child in a girl's school told me that at her daughter's graduation, only one child in the class had a solo in the skit they put on. After the performance, the principal of the school addressed the parents and asked if anyone had noticed that just one child had a solo. He said, "For sixty years we have been waiting and praying for this girl to be here with us. And there's something I have to tell you about her. When she came to our school at the beginning of this year, her family had just recently come from Russia. She was very hard to handle, a real discipline problem. But ב"ה *now she's learning three languages (her song was in Hebrew and English) and most important, she's learning how to be a Jew."*

*Then he turned to smile at the mother who was sitting among the group of parents in a sleeveless dress, and continued: "*Baruch Hashem, *the whole family is learning about Yiddishkeit. Her mother just very proudly told me that they were sitting on the bus the other day and the child turned to a non-Jew sitting next to her and in a very serious tone said, 'You know, you have to keep Shabbos.'"*

A group of parents in this particular school had complained about having "them" (Russian children) in the same class as their children. The principal tried to explain how deeply obligated we are to help them come back and how much can be done. "If I ignore these kinderlach, *then all my* tefillos *for them for the last fifty years were a mockery." With that he was too overcome to continue, and with eyes filled with tears he left the room.*

The Slow, Painful Process

In the past we wrote letters to Congressmen, said special *tefillos*, gave sums of money, attended rallies, and did who-knows-what-else to influence the Russian government to let our Jewish brethren leave. Now that they are here, our help—and our hearts—are needed more than ever. If we do not begin at once, by the time we do wake up it will be too late for some. Every gesture, every attempt to reach another Jew leaves its mark, no matter how imperceptible it may seem.

One family went out of its way to help a Russian man with finding an apartment, furniture, and other necessities. The man had already explained to them that he was not religious and "did not believe in anything." He was about to leave their house on Shabbos *after enjoying a meal to which they had invited him, and he thanked them profusely. Then, as he turned to leave, a thought occurred to him and he stopped again to say something he had never said before: "*Oib s'iz emes do iz a Gott oif der velt, zoll er eich bentchen. *(If it is true that there is a G-d on earth, may He bless you.)"*

Editorial Postscript

Mrs. Presser's less-than-flattering portrait of some communal institutions' response to the needs of Russian immigrants does not convey the full situation. There are some groups that have truly distinguished themselves in helping new immigrants. Lubavitch-sponsored FREE (Friends of Refugees from Eastern Europe) has been doing a yoeman's job in countless aspects of the problem. Agudath Israel's COPE has special counselors trained to deal with employment needs of new immigrants, and its Project RISE is on the threshold of a major new expansion of its efforts on behalf of Russians. Community Councils all over the country—including those of Washington Heights, Forest Hills, and Brighton Beach in New York City—have been concentrating on helping families getting settled, Zeirei Agudath Israel's JEP ran a day camp for Russian children this past summer, and is opening a yeshiva for them this fall. Several yeshivos have established special programs for Russians—all in all, more than a dent, but not enough.

The major task to be done is on the one-to-one grassroots level, as Mrs. Presser points out. Here, her every plea should be taken to heart and acted upon.

RETURN TO THE GALIL

Yaffa Ganz

The Galil . . . northernmost section of *Eretz Yisroel*, home of Naphtali and Asher, Yissachar and Zevulun. Fertile valleys and swelling mountains which rise gently, invitingly, and then soar up to the sky. Mountains covered with green carpets of olive, fig and carob trees growing wild. Mountains towering above the vividly blue, harp shaped Kinneret. Perhaps there are more beautiful places in the world, but the Galil is the pristine beauty of *Eretz Yisroel* — unparalleled in the eyes of a Jew. Center of Torah, home to *chachmei haTalmud* whose graves are scattered throughout its hills. Gathering place of the Sanhedrin, the Galil was the pivotal point around which the Jewish world turned after the revolt of Bar Kochba.

Even when the great centers of Torah shifted to other countries, a constant Jewish presence remained in Tzfas (Safed), crown of the Galil and highest city in Israel. In the 16th century, Tzfas was a beacon whose light lit up the far corners of the world as *HaAri Hakadosh zl'*, Rabbi Chaim Vital, Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabez, and Rabbi Yosef Caro lived and learned in the city. Two hundred years later, a stream of *aliyot* to *Eretz Yisroel* brought the *Chida*, the disciples of the *Besht*, and the students of the Vilna Gaon to the city of Tzfas.

One of the four "Holy Cities" of *Eretz Yisroel*, Tzfas was renowned as a place of Torah until the 19th century when the history of the Galil turned into the sad story of a diminishing Jewish community. By 1948, there were only 2000 elderly Jews left in Tzfas. Today, Tzfas is a city of 15,000 people, but the legacy of a Galil long bereft of a thriving Jewish community continues to plague the State of Israel. Still only sparsely populated by Jews, the Galil is in danger of turning into an Arab enclave within the State, thanks to the high Arab birthrate and the lack of Jewish settlement.

In addition to the obvious dangers of such a situation, religious Jewry experiences the additional heartache of seeing streets once filled with yeshivos and shuls now filled with artist colonies and discotheques. One cannot help but feel that the strains of *L'cha Dodi* are more in tune with the landscape of Tzfas than disco music. The *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* who are buried throughout the Galil must shed silent tears as they wait for the Galil to be filled again with the sounds of Torah. The opportunity and challenge belong to Torah Jewry.

Yaffa Ganz *is a Chicago native who moved to Israel with her husband fifteen years ago. A regular contributor to* Olomeinu *and other Jewish periodicals, this article marks her first appearance in JO.*

Housing & Headaches

One of Israel's most acute problems is the lack of housing in the big cities. Despite attempts by the government to attract people to development towns and areas (foremost of which is the Galil), people continue to stay in the big cities. Since rental housing is practically nonexistent in Israel (except for a small number of private apartments which are very expensive), the average family has no choice but to buy a home. But the high rate of inflation and the general shortage of housing in the big cities has raised the price of housing to astronomical heights. A four room flat in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or Bnei Brak (three bedrooms, living room, kitchen) costs anywhere between $90,000 - $120,000, depending on the location. Maximum mortgages available are approximately $15,000, so buying an apartment is prohibitive even for many American Jews. Consider what it means to Israelis whose earning capacity in dollars is less than half of their American counterparts!

This dilemma is particularly difficult for religious Jews. Geared to a Torah environment, in need of yeshivos, proper schools, stores which stock the foods they use, a *mikva, shuls,* they are rarely able to avail themselves of whatever special housing arrangement the government makes for young couples. In addition, the religious community in Israel has, *baruch Hashem,* grown by leaps and bounds in the past 30 years. While in the midst of a continuing population explosion, there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of weddings every year. Where will all these new families live? Most of the established religious centers and neighborhoods are quite full and finding an apartment (even if you can afford the price!) is difficult. And how can the average family finance apartments — not for one, but for two or three or more children? One often finds that when arranging a *shiduch* for a son or daughter, one is forced to consider the *mechutan*'s bank account as much as the *chassan* or *kallah*'s character, and fine young men and women find themselves "ineligible" if their parents are unable to raise money for their share of an apartment.

People are, and have been, aware of the enormity of the housing problem, but dealing with it requires some sort of communal effort. For the most part, everyone was left to do the best they could on an individual basis. Until recently.

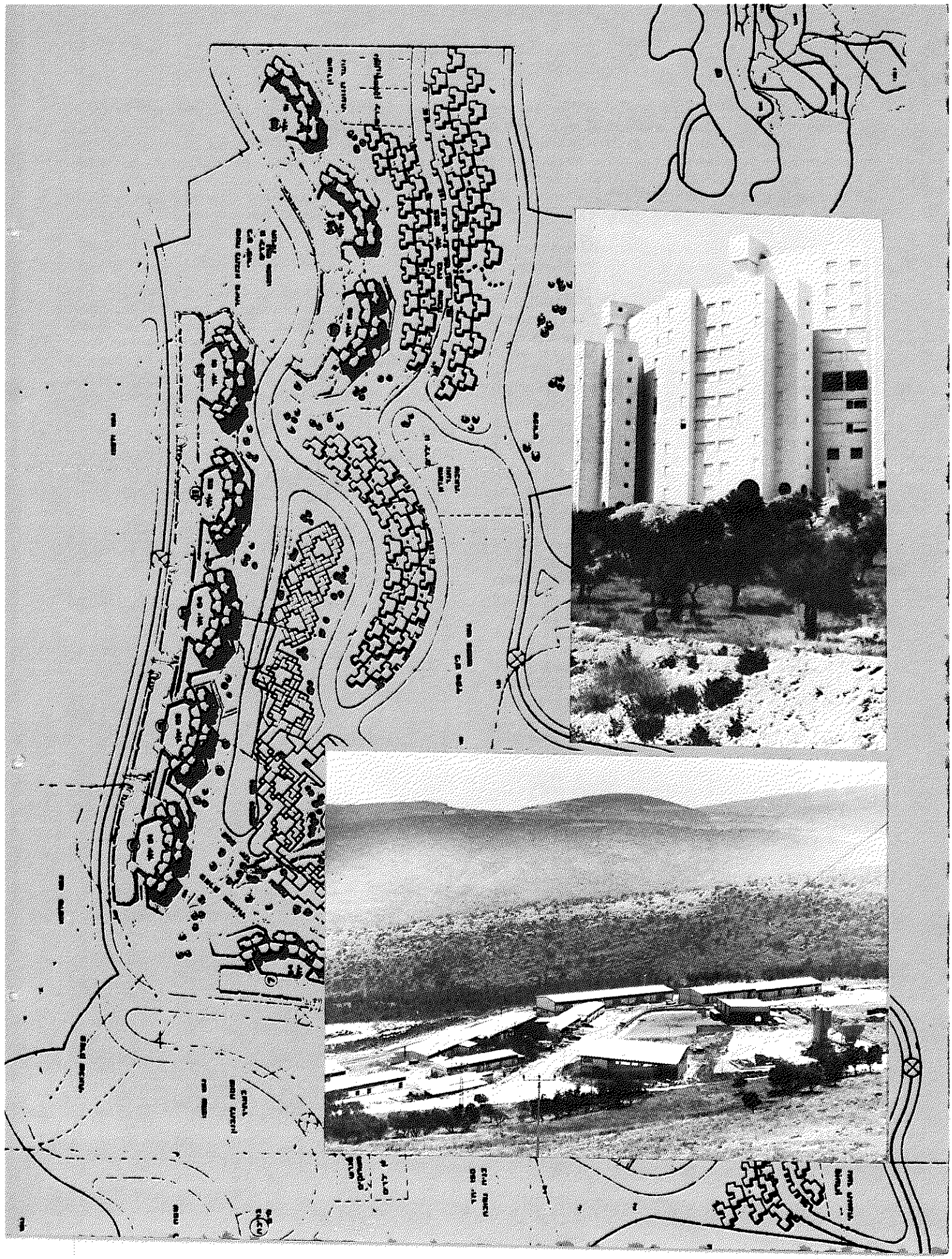
Perhaps it was only natural that the initial attempts to cope with the housing problem should come from large Chassidic communities where a decision from a *rebbe* means marshalling of forces and concerted action in a way that no individual could manage. Since: 1) inexpensive housing in Israel is available only outside the big cities; 2) the government is vitally interested in additional Jewish settlement in the Galil; 3) and remembering what the Galil once signified in Jewish terms, the *shidduch* between religious Jewry and the Galil seemed the obvious and natural solution to the housing problem. Yet the way was strewn with difficulties and it is only in the *zechus* of highly unusual *admorim* (Chassidic Rebbes) and their dedicated followers that we are privileged to see the first three large "pioneering" communities in the Galil today.

Kiryat Meor Chaim — Tzfas

The New City of Tzfas is like other small towns in Israel — bustling, busy, sometimes gaudy. The pride and joy of the city is no longer its religious institutions, but the government's huge hospital complex. Yet the winding streets of Tzfas still retain an aura of *temimus* (wholesomeness) and charm other cities do not have.

In one section of Tzfas, an entire mini-city is rising — an immense project which will eventually בע"ה include 1000 apartments, a network of schools from kindergarten to *kolel,* a tourist hotel, a senior citizens' wing, a shopping center, *mikva,* parks and an industrial center which, as of this writing, will house a diamond polishing center, a textile mill, workshops for the production of religious articles, and a bakery. This remarkable project, Kiryat Meor Chaim, is the work of Rabbi Moshe Ernster, son in law of the late Vishnitzer Rebbe, Rabbi Chaim Meyer Hager זצ"ל, who dreamed of a model Torah community in the Galil. Rabbi Ernster accepted the task of turning the dream into reality.

Standing in front of the huge apartment buildings and listening to the impressive plans already underway, one wonders if, given the reality of Israeli bureaucracy, Rabbi Ernster has not bitten off more than he can chew. But anyone familiar with the remarkable accomplishments Rabbi Ernster already has to his credit will not doubt his ability to add Meor Chaim-Tzfat to the list. Deeply distressed at the housing situation in Jerusalem, he personally financed and built Kiryat Meor Chaim-Jerusalem in 1967, and then went on to sell the apartments at no profit (and sometimes at a loss) to large religious families who were in need of housing. Today it is a humming, vibrant neighborhood with a complete network of communal services.



Envisioning more of the same, Rabbi Ernster advertises the Kirya in Tzfas as "a veritable city within a city . . . containing all of the modern technological improvements." And then, in a thick black outline "ALL SHADES OF TORAH JEWS ARE WELCOME." All applicants are expected to sign an agreement to live up to the religious standards of the Kirya and to send their children to its schools.

360 apartments in four mammoth buildings are now almost ready for occupancy. Built by the Ministry of Housing, they stood empty until Rabbi Ernster appeared on the scene. The first 100 Israeli families are due to arrive during the summer 5739 and teachers, kindergartens, and 16 classes (eight for boys and eight for girls) are already set up so that the schools can begin functioning immediately. 50 odd apartments will initially house the schools and other institutions which are in the process of being built. 80 apartments have been reserved by American families, and another 80 were allocated for additional *olim*. At present, the 150 apartments offered to Israelis are all taken.

The administration of Meor Chaim is working on a unique plan for *kolel* families from *Chutz La'Aretz*. They hope to make a number of furnished apartments available for two year terms for *avreichim* who will learn in Meor Chaim's *kolel* and whose wives will be able to attend an Ulpan. Even if a couple decides to return to *Chutz La'Aretz*, they will have had the opportunity of learning in *Eretz Yisroel* for two years under practically ideal financial conditions and with no obligations. Surely an attractive opportunity.

The Meor Chaim administration is lavish in its praise of the government agencies, who are extremely interested in the success of the Kirya. The Tzfas Municipality is also cooperating fully and projects are being coordinated on a broad scale. One example is the bakery which will be housed in the industrial section of the Kirya at the expense of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, set up and run by three young men from Tzfas, under the supervision of Meor Chaim, and under the "patronage" of the Municipality which has promised to drum up as many contracts and orders as possible in the Galil.

What will it cost to live in Meor Chaim? Rent for a four room apartment will cost $40 monthly; selling price is $22,500 with a $10,000 mortgage and a $2500 loan/grant after five years. Larger families can request to connect two adjoining apartments. All rental money is applied towards the price of the apartment.

One cannot yet describe what life in Meor Chaim will be like, only what Rabbi Ernster envisions it to be — a large, heterogenous, vibrant Torah community — a "city within a city." The presence of such a large *frum* community in Tzfas is bound to influence and change the character of the city and many of its institutions. Meanwhile, the first families who move in will be the pioneers. The beginnings will undoubtedly be trying. Until the sidewalks and roads are finished, the telephones installed, the shops filled, there will be inconveniences. But when one contemplates the end result, one can only be filled with a sense of wonder at Rabbi Ernster's scope of vision, determination, know-how and *mesiras nefesh*.

Meor Chaim is a welcome giant step forward in the city's physical reconstruction and spiritual restoration.

Chabad and Tzfas

Over the years, various religious groups tried to settle in Tzfas, but none struck roots until the Lubavitcher Rebbe שליט"א sent a first group of Chassidim to the city in 1973. Perhaps they did not consider themselves "firsts" since they followed in the footsteps of the Lubavitcher Chassidim who came to Tzfas over 150 years ago. But this was indeed the first, organized, contemporary effort at "redeeming the Galil." Chabad emphasizes that they did NOT go to Tzfas to solve the

housing problem, but as a result of their settling in the city, Kiryat Chabad was built. Today Chabad can boast a network of 4 kindergartens, a day care center, the first three grades of grammar school, a girls' high school, the beginnings of a boys' vocational yeshiva, a *kolel*, a small yeshiva, and a Torah library open to the residents of Tzfas. In keeping with Chabad's idea of bringing Torah to Tzfas, most of their educational institutions are spread around the city and serve the general population as well as their own children.

Comprehensive plans for the *Kirya* include 350 apartments. Two of the buildings, containing 160 apartments, are completed and 110 families are either already living in the Kirya or will move in by the summer of 5739. Half of the inhabitants are Anglo-Saxons and there are some 20 non-Chabad families. Built by the Ministry of Housing in accordance with Chabad's specifications, the buildings have elevators, central heating, 2 sinks in the kitchen, place for a *sukkah* and nicely landscaped grounds. But the most impressive feature is the spectacular scenery. One has a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains, and the Kinneret, in all its loveliness, can be seen from the higher apartments. It's the kind of view that makes you wake up in the morning and thank *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* for the privilege of being in *Eretz Yisroel!*

But much remains to be done. The *shul* is temporarily housed in one of the buildings; it will take a while until the telephones are installed, and the stores are not yet functioning. The city is a ten-minute walk away, but it's easier to take the winding bus ride up to town and then walk back down to Kiryat Chabad by foot.

The community is young, new, and has an open friendly feeling to it. The director, Rabbi Leibel Kaplan, said that Kiryat Chabad is open to everyone — Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Israelis and *olim*, so long as they adhere to certain stipulations. As in other religious communities in Israel, these stipulations guarantee the desired level of observance in the community and include items like married women covering their hair, general conformity to the laws of *tznius*, and sending the children to Chabad's schools (although it is tacitly understood that there is leeway in this, depending on the needs of the child).

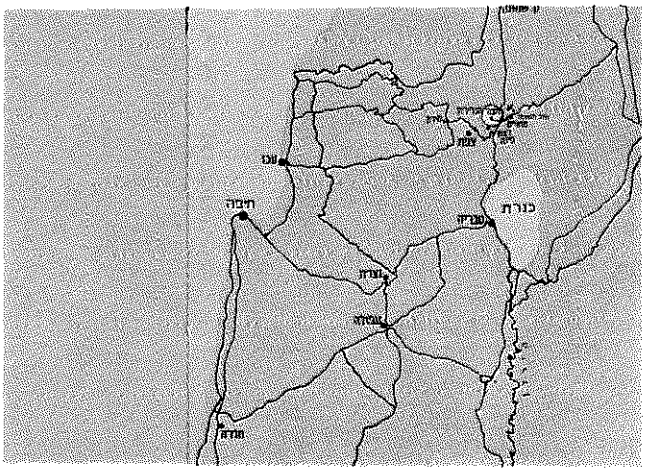
In comparison with the $100,000 one needs to buy an apartment in Jerusalem, one can purchase a four room apartment in Kiryat Chabad for $22,500. With a government mortgage of $10,000 and a loan of $2500 which turns into a grant after five years residence in Tzfas, one can purchase an apartment here for a down-payment of $10,000, (Note: All figures in this article are from Iyar 5739. They are approximate figures based on an exchange rate of 20 IL = $1.00) One can rent rather than buy, at the cost of 650 IL a month for a 4 room apartment for an Israeli (compared to 4000-6000IL in

Jerusalem!) and 300IL for an *oleh* due to special arrangements with the Ministry of Absorbtion. All rent paid is applied to the price of the apartment if the tenant decides to buy.

Kiryat Chabad is off the side of other neighborhoods, yet it is still close enough to the city not to be isolated. The apartments are pleasant; the children are obviously enjoying themselves; and the adults seem gratified to be living and working in a compatible Torah environment *davka* in the Galil. There is no doubt that Kiryat Chabad is leaving its mark on Tzfas while offering religious couples a new and very appealling place to live.

Kiryat Chassidim — Chatzor Hagalilit

Like his predecessor Rabbi Yisroel Alter זצ"ל, the present Gerrer Rebbe, Rabbi Bunim Alter שליט"א, is highly attuned to the economic reality of life in Israel. Concerned with the physical as well as the spiritual welfare of their Chassidim, the *admorim* of Ger are known as promulgators of "revolutionary" economic edicts. One of the pioneers to attack the housing problem, Ger set up a *kirya* in Ashdod and just recently sent one of their yeshivos from Jerusalem to Ashdod. In Adar 5739, the Rebbe ruled that no family could purchase an apartment for more than 500,000IL — a ruling which effectively eliminated apartments in any larger city in Israel. Furthermore, new couples from Ger were told that they must live outside the big cities for at least the first five years of their marriage. Besides Ashdod, where could they go?

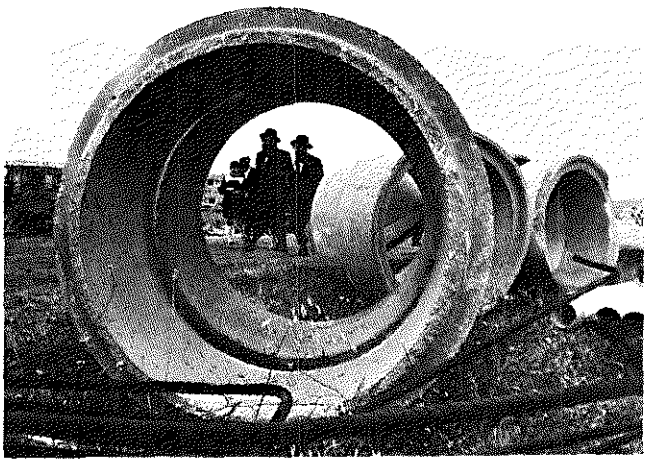


Six years ago, Ger turned northwards and embarked upon an ambitious new program in Chatzor. Chatzor is a development town of 6000 people, a 15 minute ride east of Tzfas. Populated almost exclusively by immigrants from North Africa, it was one of the towns which never quite made it. Its claim to fame was the *kever* of Choni Ha-magel on the outskirts of the city. When Ger expressed interest in establishing a new community of several hundred families in the town, the Government, which was very interested in the project, offered generous terms and exceptional conditions which would not have been available in other locations. Ger accepted and went to work. The results are astounding.

Not a mini-city; not blocks of apartment buildings; but a different concept in Israeli living came into being. Staggered, habitat-like houses, a cross between rural living and suburbia, sprouted on the gently rising hill where Kiryat Chassidim would be. It looked like a town of the future — sleek and modern, yet *heimish* and very comfortable. Wide streets were laid out in squares around the living areas, which were closed to traffic. Lovely gardens surround the houses and the public buildings. The Kirya is clean and pleasing to the eye. Mr. Eliyahu Levi, the administrator, said that special workers are hired to clean the streets and tend the gardens. Kiryat Chassidim is a startling contrast to many of the religious neighborhoods in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. It is a delight to behold.

Each building has from three to nine apartments, each with a separate entrance and a maximum of privacy (windows in adjacent buildings do not face each other), airy rooms, large kitchens well designed for kashrus requirements, and large areas for a *sukkah*. The homes seem more like private luxury homes than a Housing Ministry project.

The Kirya will eventually cover an area of 411 dunam and will total 600 apartments. 100 have already been built and 70 families (10 of whom are from the



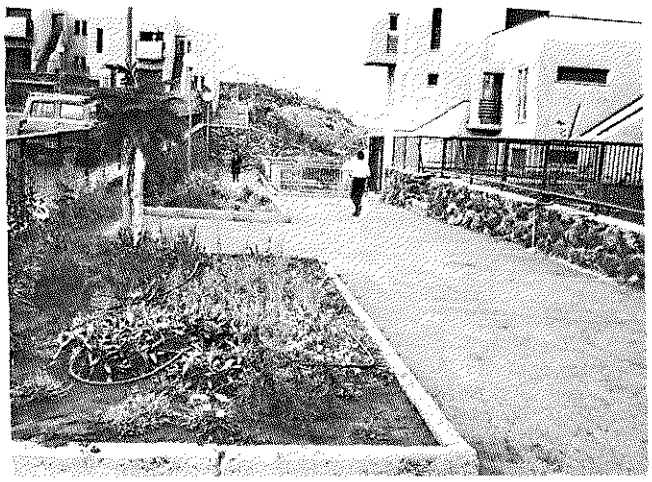
U.S.) are living there. 15 apartments are still being used as classrooms and work has already begun on the second stage of construction. Similar to the price in Tzfas, rental for a 4½ room apartment is $25; selling price is $20,000 with a $10,000 mortgage and a $2500 loan/grant available. But at this stage, the Kirya is only renting.

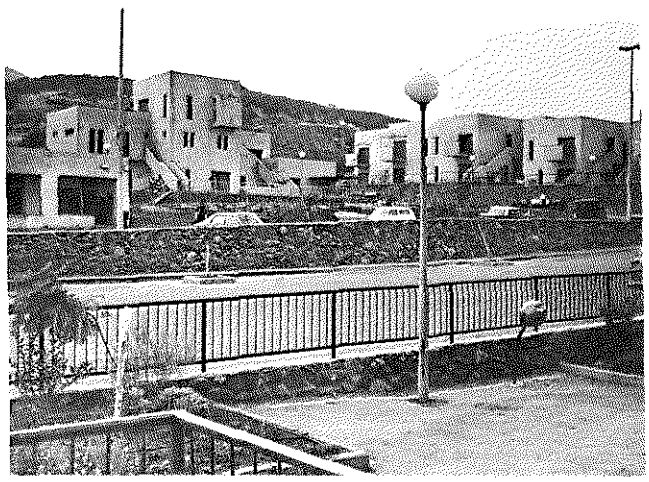
Although far from complete, the Kirya is full of life. All additional construction will be in adjacent areas and

not in the midst of the already populated area. There are 50 children in the kindergartens, 70 in the Beis Yaakov and Talmud Torah elementary schools, 40 boys in the *yeshiva ketana,* and 5 girls in the brand new Beis Yaakov Seminary. The *shul* is still in temporary housing but the stores should be functioning by the time this article is printed. There is no large shopping center planned, in keeping with the administration's intention to integrate commmercially with the town.

Mr. Levi said that in order to guarantee a stable, self-supporting community, applicants must have a potential means of supporting themselves before being accepted (i.e. they must learn in a *kolel,* own a business, or have a job in Chatzor or surrounding area). The Kirya, while not owning or running any businesses, nonetheless helps applicants set up their own businesses, find jobs, and so on. The government give generous loans and grants to new enterprises in the Galil and several of the residents of the Kirya have taken advantage of them. A furniture factory, a printing company, a jewelry manufacturer and a clothing factory, all owned by people from Kiryat Chassidim, are functioning profitably in Chatzor. Other people work as accountants, social workers, teachers, insurance salesmen, *mashgichim,* and *shochtim;* one family owns a restaurant in Tzfas. The *kolel* allowance is high by Israeli standards and wives who wish to work, can easily do so.

Kiryat Hachassidim is both beautiful and impressive. Ger was the prime force in its creation, and Gerrer





Chassidim comprise the majority of its inhabitants although it is not officially a "Gerrer settlement." The Kirya's official name — Kiryat Hachassidim-Chatzor Hagalilit — means just that. Mr. Levi emphasized that it is open to all "brands" of *Chassidim.* When asked if there was a possibility of accepting non-Chassidic families as well, he answered that it was technically difficult to set up two *shuls* in such a small community, but in principle if a family met the religious requirements, davened the same *nusach,* and felt comfortable in a thoroughly Chassidic community, they were welcome to apply. Applicants are approved selectively to insure both a high level of Torah observance and stable people who seem likely to acclimate themselves to the community.

The general guidelines of the Kirya are contained in the moving M'gilat Ha-ysod, which proclaims that the Kirya "will be built and established with the help of G-d here, in the Holy Land, in the town of Chatzor in the Upper Galil, cradle of the Mishna, and Talmud, home of our teachers, the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* . . . We thank the Almighty for his *chessed* in allowing us to begin building the Kirya, thereby fulfilling the *mitzva* of *yishuv Eretz Yisroel* . . . We accept the goal of contributing to the rebuilding of our Holy Land . . . and we follow in the footsteps of the giants of Chassidus who came up to the mountains of the Galil 200 years ago and, with much sacrifice and devotion, laid the foundations for the renewed settlement of Jews in *Eretz Hatzvi.*" To be part of such an enterprise is surely a *zechus.*

But interestingly enough, the Galil has left its mark upon the Chassidim as much as the Chassidim have left their mark upon the Galil. The physical separation between Chatzor and the Kirya is fairly complete. Although just a few minutes walk from the city, the Kirya has its own entrance road from the main highway and only a footpath connects it to the city. While the inhabitants use the shopping and medical facilities in town, the Kirya is a separate entity, with its own distinct atmosphere. But instead of segregating themselves even more, the Chassidim have found themselves involved in myriads of activities in *batei knesset* and schools in Chatzor, and in 20 surrounding irreligious settlements. Networks of *she'urim* and activities were set up (helped along considerably by the latest coalition

agreement whereby the government gives Agudath Israel 15,000,000IL a year to finance work with underpriveleged children) and over 300 children were involved during the last school year.

Rabbi Asher Neihauz, Rosh Hayeshiva in Chatzor, speaks quietly but confidently about the benefits — both physical and spiritual — of life in the Kirya. Thanks to the vision of their *Admorim* and the determination of men like Rabbi Neihauz and Mr. Levi, Kiryat Chassidim is a dream come true . . . both for the Galil and for the Torah Jews who are fortunate enough to live there.

In Conclusion . . .

This article dealt with new, *frum* communities in the Upper Galil, but it is worthwhile to mention several other interesting developments in other sections of Israel as well. Belz, Ger, and Agudath Israel all have housing developments in the port city of Ashdod. In Ashkelon, 160 apartments were allocated to Agudath Israel by the Ministry of Housing and were immediately taken by young yeshiva couples from all over the country. Plans are now being discussed to acquire or build additional apartments nearby. Ger has just concluded an agreement in Migdal HaEmek (lower Galil) where they will take over several hundred apartments which are ready for occupancy but have been standing empty a long while.

How does all of this affect potential religious American *olim?* For the first time, the possibility of inexpensive rental housing exists in Israel, in Torah communities large enough to sustain the full spectrum of religious needs. It is true that life in Tzfas or Chatzor is a far cry from life in a big American city. But on the hand, there is a lot of acclimating for an *oleh* to do even in Bnei Brak or Jerusalem. Living quarters in Israel are generally smaller; financial problems are often larger. Things are done differently here; and all beginnings are difficult. While life in a smaller town might feel initially "confining" or "out of things," these very qualities often turn out to be very appealing in the long run. These communities are trying to, and are succeeding in building — not islands — but *centers* of Torah where the environment is based on Jewish values and cultural forms, and where the sounds and sights of the "street" are *kosher l'mehadrin.* In addition, there is no doubt that small-town-life has a more leisurely pace. And even in Israel, one feels the need to be more of a person, and less of a number in a computer!

The average American family would probably have many adjustments to make in Tzfas or Chatzor. But through the ages, *Eretz Yisroel* has been acquired through *yisurim* . . . *yisurim shel ahava* (suffering out of love). The *yisurim* are always around. The trick is to have the *ahava.*

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A. Scheinman

Why Confess?

The Role of "Viduy" in the Teshuva Experience

I

Two of the basic elements of *teshuva* (repentance) are well known—remorse for past misconduct and a commitment not to repeat the offensive behavior in the future. Not everyone is aware of the importance of the third element—*viduy*, confession of the sin. Yet, the *Rambam* in both *Sefer Hamitzvos* and *Yad HaChazaka* puts major emphasis on *viduy*. In Mitzva 76 he says: "We are told to confess our sins which we have sinned to the Almighty, and to enumerate them as part of our repentance."

In the *Yad Hachazaka* (*Hilchos Teshuva* I, 7) he writes: "Should a person intentionally or unwittingly transgress any command in the Torah, be it a positive or negative command, when he repents from his actions, he is required to confess, as is written (in the Torah). . ." Again one's impression is that *viduy* is not ancillary to the *teshuva* experience but rather one of its major aspects. What, then, is the deeper significance of *viduy*?

II

When Kayin (Cain) killed his brother Hevel (Abel), he was punished twice. He, too, met a violent end, (see Rashi on *Bereishis* 4:15); and he was made into a nomad ("You shall be a wanderer on earth"), never finding rest for his tortured soul. Why did he suffer two punishments for one sin?

It is axiomatic that G-d's retributions are meted out *midah k'neged midah*—that is, measure for measure. Any suffering a person endures is meant to somehow correspond to the sin. While people accept this concept in regard to punishments of supernatural scope, such as the Deluge of Noach's time, and the drowning of the Egyptians and the Splitting of the Sea at the Exodus, it is equally true in regard to even the smallest measure of suffering one experiences, no matter how much it may seem to be part of a natural chain of events. This is obvious in the countless explanations of the *Chazal* (Rabbis of Blessed Memory) as to how specific transgressions cause different diseases and demises. (The reader is also referred to Rabbi Dessler's essay on Purim in *Michtav M'Eliyahu* wherein he explains the obligation of recognizing the Divine process in "natural" occurrences.)

Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, זצ"ל, the late Ponovezh *Mashgiach*, pointed out that until the most recent generations, people died mainly from plagues or bacterial diseases. The people themselves had been perfectly healthy, except for the effects of attacks from outside forces, such as microbes and disease-bearing bacteria; only then did they succumb. Today, we find that it is not the "outside forces" that claim human lives; rather, man falls victim to the products of his own body. His system becomes filled with excesses—be they cholestrol clogging the arteries, or malignant cells crowding out the vital organs, interfering with their life-sustaining processes—which finally kill him.

"How closely this reflects the shift in spiritual patterns," reflected Reb Yechezkel. "For many generations people were apparently 'healthy' in the spiritual sense, yet a sudden assault by a Shabtai Tzvi or a wave of Haskalla (in its early stages) came and claimed hundreds of thousands of souls, parallelling the physical situation. Today the problems arise from within us. While we are able to cope with destructive forces from the outside, spiritual debilitation takes place as a result of the little 'extras' that accumulate over the years,

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Rabbi Scheinman, *an American studying in a Jerusalem yeshiva, was represented by "Growing Into Marriage" in the Jan. '79 JO.*

quietly starving the 'heart' of its necessary 'oxygen,' slowly disabling the vital 'organs.' Until one day, the seemingly healthy organism crumbles away."

III

When a person commits an *aveira*, he inflicts a spiritual wound in himself. The injury can be healed—by a process called *kapora*, forgiveness. People generally are unwilling to accept the thought that they suffer defects, so instead of embarking on the time-consuming and laborious path of *teshuva* and *kapora*, they apply a touch of cosmetics to disguise the wound, and continue on with life as usual. But covering up a wound permits the infection to fester further, requiring even more cosmetics, plus a generous dousing of perfume to mask the foul odor emanating from the wound. Thus they continue to fool themselves and others, not realizing that if they continue this way, they will succumb from the progressive rotting away of their flesh.

The Prophet describes the phenomenon: "They pull the sin with cords of naught, like wagon ropes, the transgressions" (Isaiah 5, 18). The *Malbim* explains this to mean that every time a person commits an *aveira*, he becomes saddled with two "wagon-loads." One is the transgression itself, pulled by "heavy ropes"—for the individual most likely had a strong desire to commit the illicit act. The second wagon is loaded with rationalizations and excuses; these are held by flimsy strings—"cords of naught." He does not really believe its freight of explanation at all, but just pulls it along because it covers for his shortcomings.

Thus the otherwise religious Jew may indulge in various practices that are destructive of time or violate Torah standards of conduct. He shrugs off the ill effects claiming, "After all, I *do* have to make a living," or "Isn't it important to be worldly?" or other such rationalizations. Once a person has saddled himself with the *"mitzva"* of pursuit of comforts at all costs, or worldliness, he discovers many *hidurim* (enhancements) in the *mitzva*, which affect countless aspects of his life—from minor matters to major goals and values—doing further violence to the Torah quality of his life. . . . The cords of rationalization introduce many new aspects to his initial foray into violation of Torah.

With this insight into the effects of a transgression and its ramifications, one can better understand the punishments that were imposed on Kayin for having murdered his brother. His atonement for the act itself was that he, too, was killed. Kayin, however, had gone one step further. He rationalized his crime, saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He attempted to remove the horrid crimson stain of fratricide by painting it over, instead of eradicating it. For this he suffered the punishment of "being a wanderer," demonstrating that man's soul can have no respite from its inner turmoil until it comes to grips with its condition. "You will have no rest," says G-d, "until you face your transgression squarely." Thus, the wanderings of his body were reflective of his soul's inner tortures.

This may well be the intention of the statement by Rabbi Yehuda brei d'Reb Chiya: "Exile atones for half of a sin" (*Sanhedrin* 34a), the "half" referring to these rationalizations and self-deceptions that require *galus* for forgiveness.

Viduy performs this function: *it forces a person into the realization that he has indeed sinned.* It is the necessary first step in *teshuva*, for as long as a person deludes himself, thinking that he has not sinned, he will never come to *teshuva*.

Another *Midrash* relates that as soon as Kayin confessed: "My sin is too great to bear"—the curse of wandering was removed from his head, demonstrating the interfacing between *galus* and *viduy*. Kayin either was to come to grips with his *aveira* through *viduy*, or he was forever doomed to wander the length and breadth of the earth, a fugitive from the haunting truth (*Vayikra Rabba* X).

V

Recognizing the pivotal role of awareness of the sin in *teshuva*, we gain a new understanding into two of the punishments that the Torah has meted out. The first is the imposition of exile for some cases of unintentional murder. In a sense, this punishment is the same as Kayin's. For just as Kayin attempted to exonerate himself with his excuse of "Am I my brother's keeper?", so too does a person guilty of manslaughter tend to deceive himself that the lack of premeditation frees him of guilt. Yet the awesome truth remains: Man is responsible for the results of his every action that he can control, and it is his duty to insure that no harm emanate from what he does. Not having been faithful to his duty, he remains a shedder of blood, premeditated or otherwise. It is the haunting inner cry of "The voice of your brother's blood calls out to me" that forces him into exile where he must come to grips with his sins (*Midrash Tanchuma HaYashan*).

The *korban asham* is another "punishment" with a similar purpose. Every category of *korban* has a specific thrust to it, designed to bring about a specific atonement for a specific type of falling. For instance, the various types of *korban chattos* atone for transgressions of the harshest type—acts that earn the perpetrator *koreis* (cutting short of one's lifespan) when committed intentionally; the *korban olah* atones for having missed an opportunity to perform a positive command; the *korban shlomim* brings the owner closer to G-d. By contrast, the *korban asham* seems to be required for a random collection of sins, with no commonality of weakness to them. They are: perjury under oath in monetary matters; use of Temple funds for personal benefit; doubt regarding unintentionally committing an *aveira* that when definitely done would require a *chattos*; and having had relations with a half-freed slave

woman who was betrothed to someone else. (There are two more *ashomos—nazir* and *metzora,* but they are of a different category.)

Perhaps one can find one common factor among them: *The relative ease with which people absolve themselves of guilt in all these "aveiros."* Be it perjury, or embezzelment, or doubt whether one has sinned altogether, or even "semi-adultery"—a person manages to avoid thinking too much about it. And that is why he is required to bring a *guilt-offering*—to realize the full extent of his guilt! The entire procedure, from setting aside the lamb for the purpose of the *korban* through the completed ritual, dramatically reminds the *asham*-bringer that he is indeed guilty.

VI

The *Gemora* relates that Rabba bar bar-Chana once came upon the spot where Korach had been swallowed up in the earth. Great quantities of smoke were billowing forth. Upon listening closely, he heard voices in the abyss proclaiming: "Moshe is true, his Torah is true, and we are liars!" A strange combination of punishments, but very fitting indeed.

Which other sinner had ever constructed such a grand edifice of spurious arguments, rationalizing his actions, as did Korach? (1) He argued with seemingly infallible logic that just as a completely blue *tallis* (*kulo techeilis*) should not (to his reasoning) require the requisite blue *tzitzis*-thread, so too "A nation that has been proclaimed holy by G-d has no need for a special holy caste." (2) He marshalled proofs from the Torah itself that under the laws of inheritance he was entitled to the positions of power that he had coveted. (3) His designs were reinforced by the knowledge imparted to him by *ruach hakodesh* (divine inspiration) that his progeny would be leaders of *Klal Yisroel.* All these "proofs" were, of course, projections of his inner desire for power.

His punishment reflects the dualty of his crime. The fires of *Gehinom* can purge him of the sins of strife and contention; but to rid his soul of those layers and layers of rationalization, he must proclaim: "Moshe is true, his Torah is true. . ." until the day *Moshiach* comes, when knowledge will cover the earth and there will be no more possibility for falsehood.

VII

This, then, is our preparation for the day of judgment. In those precious few moments when we stand silently in the presence of our Maker, we bend our stiff necks and we utter: "*Ashamnu*—We are guilty!" (Guilty?—Of what? I *daven* three times a day—never miss! . . . My *kavana*—well lacking, more often than not . . . My record for honesty is unimpeachable—but off the record . . . *Oshamnu,* indeed!) "*Bogadnu*—we rebelled." (Rebelled against G-d! What an extreme, unforgivable breach of fidelity! That surely does not apply to a Sabbath observer like me. I adhere to the very letter of the law, comes *Shabbos.* My hands are absolutely tied—except for picking up a recent newspaper or best seller lying around the house; and an occasional lapse into stock-market banter, but *rebel* against G-d's sovereignty. . . . On the other hand: *Bogadnu. . .*)

Slowly and painfully a few strips of the self-righteous veneer peel away, and each layer removed brings the confessor one measure closer to G-d. . . .

Every year during the *avoda* in the Yom Kippur service, we close our eyes for the moment and travel back centuries . . . to that awesome place called the *Beis Hamikdosh.* We see the *Kohein Gadol* at the pinnacle of his glorious sanctity standing before us, donned in his eight vestments.

In a voice that echoed through the Land of Israel ("His voice was heard in Jericho") he would proclaim: כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל חטאכם לפני ד'. . . "Today you will be forgiven all your sins. . ." But he would add one point, and demand: "תטהרו . . . Cleanse yourselves!"

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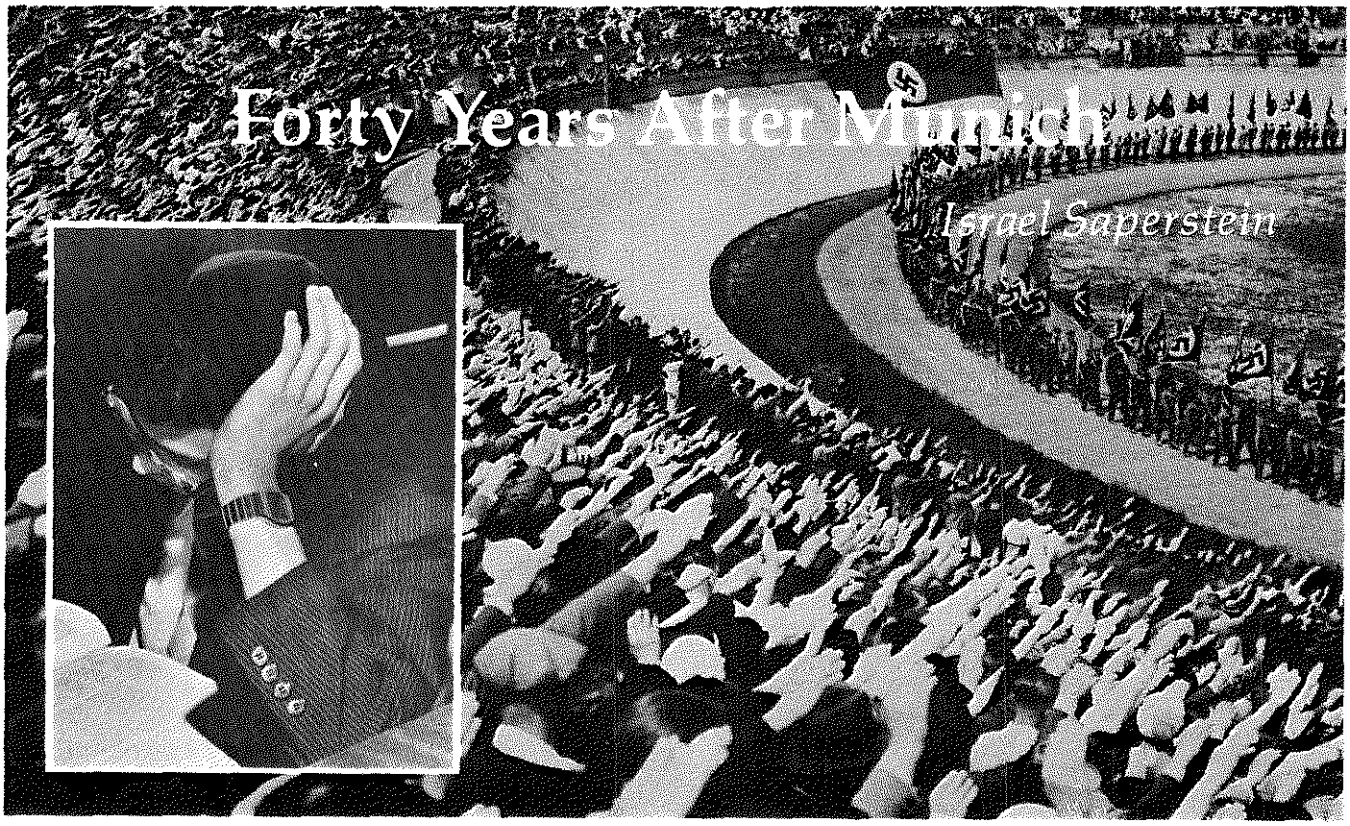
Forty Years After Munich

Israel Saperstein



"And G-d did not give you a mind to comprehend, eyes to see and ears to hear until this day . . . and G-d led you forty years. . ." (*Devorim* 29:3-4).

The *Alshich* comments that this passage indicates that *Klal Yisroel* could not properly interpret the events that had occurred to them until forty years later. We, too, find ourselves forty years distant from an historically significant time, the year 5699 (Sept. 26, 1938—Sept. 13, 1939), which began with the Munich Conference (Sept. 29 30, 1938) and ended with the invasion of Poland (Sept. 1, 1939), triggering World War II. It holds significant lessons for us, both collectively and individually, if—forty years later—we are willing to learn. After examining the events on the global scale, we shall trace how these insights help us understand the even greater battles that rage within each of us.

I. The Munich Conference

Much insight can be gained from captured documents of that troublesome era as well as from the Nuremberg testimony following the war. One is stung by the irony of the Allies' strategy of appeasement; how the leaders of Britain and France had deluded themselves that they had secured "Peace with Honor" by fulfilling Hitler's demands for Czech territory, when they actually had weakened their own positions and strengthened Germany to the point that conflict became inevitable.

Rabbi Saperstein, *formerly of Brooklyn, is a member of the Kolel Aram Zoba of Mexico City. His article "Like Sheep?" was featured in the June '76, Jewish Observer.*

Background of Munich

On April 21, 1938, eleven days after the Nazis' *Anschluss* of Austria, Hitler began readying "case green"—the code name for the attack on Czechoslovakia. Starting from May, the political situation became tense as Germany prepared for aggression, and Britain and France sought to avoid being drawn into war on the side of their Czech allies.

Eleven days before *Rosh Hashana* of 5699—Sept. 15, 1938, Chamberlain made his first trip to Germany to try to ascertain what the Nazis' precise demands were, and then pressure the Czechs to accept them. He returned a week later to German, to completely meet the Nazi demands, surprising Hitler with how easy it had been to domineer the major powers. Like every good

blackmailer, Hitler simply upped his demands once more. An astonished Hitler asked Chamberlain, "Do I understand that the British, French and Czech governments have agreed to the transfer of Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia to Germany?" To which the British Prime Minister replied, smilingly, "Yes!"

"I'm terribly sorry, but after the events of the last few days, this plan is no longer of any use," Hitler answered, and immediately apprised Chamberlain of his new demands.

The final surrender came after *Tzom Gedalia* 5699, Sept. 29-30 1938, at Munich, when the British Prime Minister and the French Premier, Daladier, agreed with everything Hitler wanted. They signed the "Munich Agreement" based on the proposals ostensibly put forth by "neural" Mussolini, representing Italy—but in reality, formulated in Berlin. The Czechs, deserted by their allies, peacefully surrendered the Sudetenland section of Czechoslovakia, which contained the strongest defensive fortifications that stood in the way of the Reich's expansion eastward, plus most of the industrial strength of that beleagured nation.

The naive Chamberlain returned to London—as did Daladier to Paris—in "triumph." Chamberlain announced to the crowds outside 10 Downing Street: "There has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor. I believe it is peace in our time." "Our time" lasted about 11 months, until the Munich-weakened Allies were forced to face reality and declared war on Germany which they themselves had strengthened through their catastrophic mistake.

Three Basic Errors

The Allied leadership's conduct at Munich was due to three basic errors: *Firstly, the Allies did not understand the nature of the enemy confronting them.* They failed to realize that Hitler's goal was nothing short of complete domination of Europe (if not the world). Peacefully ceding valuable territory to Germany did nothing to maintain peace; rather it just positioned Hitler closer to his next conquest. This blunder seems to be the result of deliberate blindness, when we consider that Hitler had explicitly stated his goals in *Mein Kampf.* The Czechs, however, had nothing to gain by self-delusion, and saw the future quite clearly. Krofta, the Czech foreign minister, told the Allies: "Now everything is at an end, today it is our turn, tomorrow the turn of others"—prophetic words, as history was to prove.

Secondly, they grossly underestimated their losses and Hitler's gains with the Munich Agreement. The tangible results were that the Allies lost the vast Sudetenland fortifications, manned by 35 well-trained and well-armed Czech divisions, which could have contained the Nazi hordes from spreading eastward; and that the Reich gained the industrial strength of the Czechs. This area contained two-thirds of Czechoslovakia's coal and about three-quarters of its iron, cement, chemicals, textiles and electrical power.

The intangible results were no less important. The German masses' faith in Hitler grew immensely as their Fuehrer expanded the Reich without shedding a drop of blood. Worse, some German generals, who were previously planning to overthrow Hitler for threatening war when the German armed forces were in poor shape, began to see the Fuehrer in a more favorable light. Hitler himself, who had been worried about Allied counter-moves to his military building-up, now began to refer to the heads of Britain and France as "little worms."

Outside of the Reich, Munich was viewed as proof that the future belonged to Germany. Stalin noted in his speech that year to the 18th party congress, "The weakness of the Democratic powers . . . was evident from the fact that they had abandoned the principle of collective security and had turned to a policy of non-intervention"; and began considering closer ties with Russia's former enemy, Germany. Their political rapproachment rapidly led to a treaty that spared Germany the threat of a feared two-front war as they planned their attacks against Poland and, later, the West.

It thus seems incredible that the *Times* could declare, referring to Chamberlain's "accomplishments" at Munich: "No conqueror returning from a victory on the battlefield has come adorned with nobler laurels." Furthermore, when the voice of sanity did speak, it was disparaged. Churchill was forced to pause until the storm of protest had subsided, during his famous speech in the House of Commons: "We have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat . . . we are in the midst of a disaster of the first magnitude. The road down the Danube . . . the road to the Black Sea has been opened . . . All the Countries of Mittel Europa and the Danube Valley one after another will be drawn in the vast system of Nazi politics . . . radiating from Berlin . . . And do not suppose that this is the end. It is only the beginning."

The last, most painful, point is that there was no actual cause for the Allied leadership to act so spinelessly. If an individual, or a nation, is in a hopeless situation, then it is human nature to fool oneself into viewing events in the most optimistic light. But, if one commands superior forces and still tries to buy a fragile peace by weakening himself and strengthening his opponent, this is surely madness. Yet such was the case at Munich; for the military strength of Germany vis-a-vis the Allies' at that time was as follows:

☐ The armies of France and Czechoslovakia, alone, outnumbered the German forces two to one. (In addition, Russia had a treaty with the Czechs stipulating that as soon as France marched on Germany from the west, the Russians would attack from the east).

☐ By concentrating the German troops in the east for the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the western front of the

Reich was defended by only five regular divisions and seven reserve divisions against *100* French divisions! Hitler himself noted that their only hope was defeating Czechoslovakia so rapidly that troops could be immediately transferred west to battle the French. But—

☐ not only was a German blitz through Czech fortifications impossible, mere penetration would have been quite difficult. As Speer, the minister of armament for the Reich, noted in his diary: "The Czech border fortification caused general astonishment . . . A test bombardment showed that our weapons would not have prevailed against them. Hitler himself went to the former frontier to inspect the arrangements and returned impressed. The fortifications were amazingly massive, making prime use of the terrain. Taking them would have been very difficult and would have cost us a great many lives." But, as Hitler happily pointed out: "Now we have obtained them without loss of blood . . . What a marvelous *starting position* we have now. We are over the mountains and already in the valleys of Bohemia."

What a radical change from July 16, 1938, eleven weeks before Munich, when General Ludwig Beck, the German army chief of staff, wrote to Hitler: "I feel it is my duty to urgently ask that the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (Hitler) call off his preparations for war, and abandon solving the Czech question by force . . . For the present *I consider it hopeless, and this view is shared by all the higher officers of the General Staff.*"

In addition, when Hitler convened the staff chiefs of the army and air force, on August 10, he was told by General Wietersheim, the ranking officer at the gathering, that with forces committed to Czechoslovakia, *Germany was defenseless in the west* and would be overrun by the French.

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As the tragedy of Munich unfolds before us, we can almost feel the foolishness of the Allied leaders. How blindly they acted by attempting to placate an insatiable foe, instead of utilizing their superior forces to fight a quick and successful campaign. Consider the costliness of their mistakes in view of the death and suffering of millions that resulted from the protracted war that the Allies eventually fought. World War II lasted almost six years because it was *not* fought from the position of military superiority that existed up until the Munich Conference, but from the Munich-weakened position of a year later, against the Germany that the Allies themselves had help strengthen—at Munich.

II. The World in Man

"Very interesting, but what does that have to do with me?" one asks. After all, most of us are not involved in the shaping of world events or in the arena of international politics, which would seem to be the only field where Munich's profound lessons can be applied. However, if we stop to think, we will realize that the understandings gained over the forty years since Munich has much to teach us—about ourselves and can guide us in making the myriad decisions that confront us in our daily lives.

The Point of Decision

The opening *pasuk* in *Re'ei* states: "Behold I have set before you today *bracha* and *klalla* (blessing and curse)." Two paths are open to the Jewish individual, challenging him at every moment of decision. The first: the path of *bracha* devoted to the pursuit of those goals for which the human personality was designed, capable of providing deep satisfaction. An alternative is also offered: *klalla*, the weightless (*kal*) life, the mundane existence devoted solely to satisfying man's lower instincts. This attempt is doomed from the outset for "One does not die with even half of his base desires fulfilled"—the momentary happiness experienced at the time of each new acquisition is dampened by the renewed realization that there are so many other things that are still lacking. The life of *klalla* closes with the bitter realization of this frustrating reality—a realization that comes too late.

While one can easily grasp these noble concepts intellectually, a vast gulf separates our ideals from our feelings at the actual time of confrontation. Standing at the crossroads of decision, one views the world's pleasures and attractions very receptively, while the anticipation of a spiritual achievement is simply not that urgent. It would certainly be helpful if one could imbue his feelings with his intellectual concepts—that it is certainly preferable to forgo material pleasures for "the path of *bracha*" and build a meaningful life, than to take the path of appeasement and follow our lower instincts, only to eventually confront an every stronger,

an ever more demanding *yeitzer*, from a weakened position.

But from where can this help be attained?

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter—the great 19th century teacher of *Mussar* (ethical awareness and self-improvement), who is viewed as founder of the Mussar Movement—gave much thought to this problem. In *Sha'arei Ohr* (Chapt. 9), his disciple, Rabbi Yitzchok Blazer, records Reb Yisroel's advice: "Mental pictures are extremely useful for the learning of *Mussar*, to awaken the *nefesh* with physical experiences, guiding the intellectual concept inward, penetrating our emotions."

This technique was utilized by our great teachers throughout the ages. Indeed, a frequently cited theme in rabbinic literature likens personal struggles to military battles:

> ☐ *A band of victorious soldiers was returning home after a difficult campaign, laden with booty. A Torah-philosopher greeted them: "You have returned from the small war victorious, but now you must prepare for the great war." The astonished soldiers inquired, "What is the great war?" To which he replied:* "Milchemes hayeitzer—*the internal struggle within each person.*" CHOVOS HALEVAVOS—SHA'AR YICHUD HAMA'ASEH
>
> ☐ *And you should know, my son, that Pharoah, king of Egypt is the* yeitzer hora *(evil inclination).*—RAMBAM, IGGERES HAMUSSAR
>
> ☐ *In reality this is one of the clever devices of the* yeitzer hora—*to mount pressure unrelentingly against the hearts of men so as to leave them no leisure to consider the nature of the life they are leading,* similar to the strategy of Pharoah *who decreed "intensify the men's labors."* MESILAS YESHARIM *Chap. II*

Obviously, a parallelism exists between worldly events, such as war or the strategy of an oppressor like Pharoah, and man's inner struggle. And this parallelism suggests any number of heart-penetrating parables.

Yet a parable is limited, its impact is diminished by the fact that it is, after all, just a story. By contrast, an historical incident more than serves as a concrete illustration of a concept; it also "hits home" because it really happened, and therefore can more effectively evoke an emotional response. Moreover, if the incident occurred in recent times, and in places accessible to us, its impact as an object lesson is all the more effective. It is in this light that the Munich experience is most valuable to us, for it parallels our own inner struggle so closely.

The "Neshama" at Munich

The three tragic errors that caused the Allies to choose the wrong course of action, mirror our own blunders at crucial times of decision. Studies of historical accounts of these failures and the price paid for them are a source of painful recognition to us, the generation of survivors. They also offer us an opportunity to add an emotional dimension to our *Mussar* concepts.

Knowing Your Enemy

We follow the path of the blundering Allied leaders who, lacking the will to fight, deluded themselves into thinking that they could quiet a troublesome Hitler with concessions, even as each attempt at appeasement was met with greater demands. We too tell ourselves in self-delusion, "Let's just give in a little," ignoring the reality of the dynamics of the *yeitzer hora*. "*Masbio re'eiva*—attempting to satisfy its demands, one merely whets its appetite further."

The Cost of Appeasement

Unless one is willing to accept total collapse, the path of appeasement ultimately proves self-defeating, for a point is reached where conflict is inevitable. To begin the battle at this late date is extremely difficult, for the cumulative effect of appeasement is to weaken one's own forces and strengthen the enemy's . . . just as the British and French defection at Munich both strengthened Germany and weakened the Allies. In addition, it caused the other major power (Russia) previously alligned with the democracies to abandon the anti-Nazi camp; so, too, do our efforts at appeasement serve only to strengthen our inner opponent while repelling our primary Ally . . . How?

Rabbeinu Yonah, in his commentary to *Avos*, pointed out two factors in explaining why "*Aveira*

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gorerres aveira—one sins brings another in its wake." Firstly, each *aveira* creates within the human personality a tendency toward the committing of further *aveiros*. The result is that the *yeitzer* becomes vastly strengthened, as *aveira* becomes a habitual way of life. Secondly, as we defect from the path of *bracha*, our Ally—G-d Himself—is repelled by our misdeeds. As a creature of habit, a person finds it increasingly difficult to battle against the very tendencies that he developed within himself, with a lessened amount of Heavenly assistance.

The dire spiritual straits in which one finds himself at this point are especially regrettable, considering that at the outset the *yeitzer* could have been more easily overcome. Here again there exists a striking parallelism between the physical and metaphysical world:

> *In the future, G-d will slaughter the* yeitzer hora *before the righteous and the wicked. The latter, noting that the forces of evil are but like a thin strand of hair, tearfully cry out: "How was it possible that we did not conquer this insignificant force!"* Succah *52a.*

This prophetic vision is mirrored in the historical experience at Munich, as the author of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* points out in bewilderment:

> *If, as the German generals conceded, Hitler's army lacked the means of penetrating the Czech fortification and Germany, in the face of France's overwhelming strength in the west, and was in a militarily impossible situation; and further, since there was such grave dissension among the generals that the chief of the Army General Staff was prepared to overthrow the Fuehrer in order to avoid a hopeless war, how could the heads of government of Britain and France be forced at Munich into sacrificing so much of their nations's vital interests? In seeking answers to such questions, we confront one of the mysteries of the Munich period which has not yet been cleared up. (p. 434)*

Recognizing Your Own Strength

There remains to point out the last and most important of the three lessons: The Allies finally did wake up and they fought. In the beginning, they suffered serious setbacks due to their Munich-weakened military position. But with firm determination they declared: *"Even though large tracts of Europe . . . have fallen into the grip of the Gestapo . . . we shall not flag nor fail . . . we shall go on to the end; we shall fight in the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence . . . whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender."* (Winston Churchill)

Ultimately, it is the degree of our own firm resolution that will determine whether we will be successful in fulfilling our goals in this world.

> *The Holy One Blessed be He has put man in a position where the forces that draw him further from the Blessed One are many. These are the earthly desires, which if he is drawn after them, cause him to be pulled further from the true good. It is seen, then, that man is veritably placed in the midst of a raging battle, for all the affairs of the world, whether for the good or for the bad, are but trials to man: Poverty on the one hand and wealth on the other, as Solomon said (Proverbs 30:9), "Lest I become satiated and deny, saying 'Who is G-d?'; or lest I become impoverished and steal" . . . Serenity on the one hand and suffering on the other; so that the battle rages against him to the fore and to the rear. If he is valorous, and victorious on all sides, he will be the complete Man who will succeed in uniting himself with his Creator, and he will leave the corridor to enter into the Palace to glow in the light of life.—* MESILAS YESHORIM *Chapter 1*

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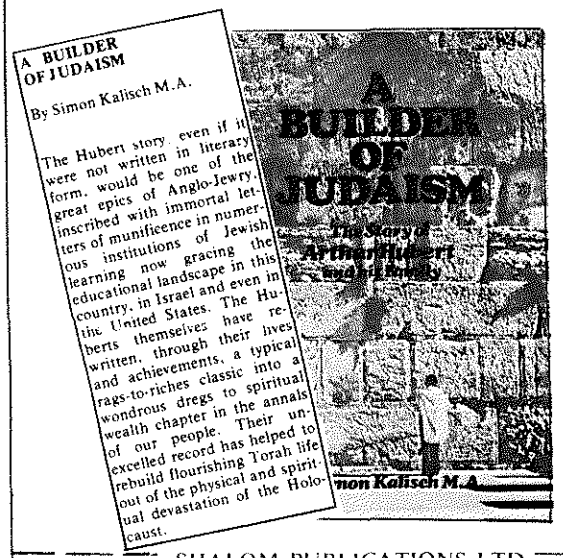

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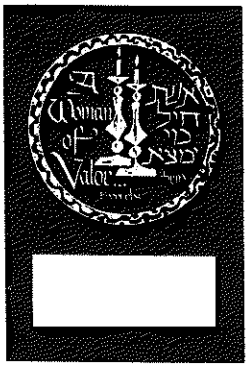

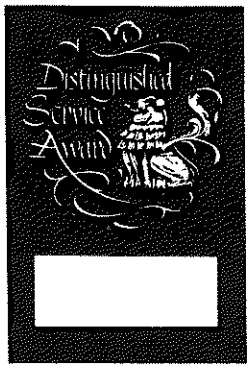

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When the Divinity of the Bible is repudiated, that is the point . . .

Where Evil is Spawned

In the spring of 1902 there appeared in Leipzig a book with the curious title "Bible or Bable." Its author was the professor of Assyriology, Friedrich Delitzsch. The book—a collection of lectures—caused a furor way beyond the circle of biblical scholars. What it claimed was no less than this: All the great religious and moral teachings that Judaism had bequeathed to the world, were, in truth, not a legacy of Judaism but—of Ancient Babylonia. A gigantic fraud had been perpetrated on an unsuspecting world. Cleverly adopting Babylonian wisdom, the Jews had then presented it to mankind as their own.

Today we might look at this whole incident as an absurd and isolated manifestation of a prejudiced mind; we would be grievously mistaken. Delitzsch's pamphlet was but a symptom of a lingering sickness, part of a groundswell of hidden resentment, the proverbial visible top of a huge submerged iceberg of hostility.

Friedrich Delitzsch's work was one, albeit perhaps the most outspoken one, in a long line of publications aimed at undermining the veracity of the Bible. Beginning with the writings of Ferdinand Astruc (who found support for his thesis in the works of Spinoza), continued and expanded by De Wette, Eichorn and culminating in Wellhausen's dissection of the Bible into literary fragments, there had spread in German universities the disastrous discipline of "Bible Criticism"—which treated the Bible simply as another ancient literary document.

Judaism's, and indeed humanity's, priceless heritage was subjected to an unending process of vivisection and dismemberment until it all but gave up its ghost. Highly skilled in their respective fields of Archaeology, ancient languages, etc. these scholars were, however, quite ignorant of our classical Bible commentators, or willfully ignored them. As far as the fact of the literal fulfillment of Divine predictions in Pentateuch and Prophets, made thousands of years ago, was concerned, they simply closed their eyes to it.

Why 19th Century Germany?

How can this sudden concentric attack against "The Book" that had fathered the three great religions of the Western World be explained? Why at that particular point in space—Germany, and at that particular point in time—the 19th Century? Whence its widespread popularity?

We shall see that the answers to these questions will provide far more than an explanation of a theological controversy. They will throw a novel and revealing light on that great catastrophe of our time: the rise of National Socialism in Germany, an event that seems as inexplicable in the suddenness of its appearance as in the bestial brutality of its methods. A straight causal line connects the diligent activity of those German professors busily chipping away at the authenticity of the Bible and the sadistic excesses of the storm-troopers.

No historic occurrence exists in isolation; each is a link in the complex web of the Master's design. In order to understand the Genesis of Bible Criticism we have to know the historical context in which it arose.

The Germany that evolved during the 19th and early 20th centuries was one of a growing deep national sentiment. It was the age of Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor" whose appeal to German unity led to the resto-

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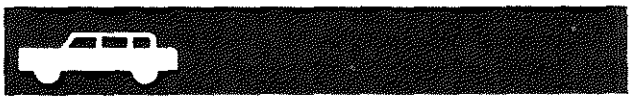

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ration of Imperial Germany after centuries of fragmentation. The historian Treitschke spellbound his students with his teachings of the supremacy of Germany as the true heir of the Holy Roman Empire. It was an age of a search for "National Glory and Military Success, of a collective descent into the German soul." Motivating this historical development was a keen intellectual and emotional fixation on the ideas of "Racial thought, German Christianity and Volkish nature mysticism." (George R. Mosse in "The Crisis of German Ideology") The Romantic authors of the period resurrected the German past in their writings and collections of ancient fairy tales and legends.

Racial Purity and National Destiny

Perhaps the most typical of the exponents of this era is that evil genius Richard Wagner, who with the bewitching power of his music, brought back to life the "Nibelungen Song," that ancient German saga of bloodshed, sorcery and deceit.

The philosopher Nietzsche was the eloquent spokesman of the movement. He may or may not have been an antisemite, but he provided some of the key ideas for the right of Germany to dominate the world. He claimed boldly that the German "Superman," "The Blond Beast," was destined to rule by a "Master Morality," above the restriction of ordinary human justice.

The world view of the Germans that evolved, based on notions of "a mystic communion with the soul, racial purity and a unique national destiny" excluded any influence that may have stemmed from the Jewish or Judaeo-Christian tradition. (We may note that Nietzsche, for one, was powerfully opposed to Christianity and its dominant influence on Western history). Specifically, of course, the Jews and Judaism came under attack.

There was no possibility of compromise or harmonization between the Jewish teachings of universal justice, the brotherhood of all men and the ideal of humility, and those of the inherent right of the stronger, the superiority of the German race, the worship of the all-conquering hero.

Hence Judaism and its heritage had to be proven historically antiquated and morally inferior. It is, therefore, no coincidence that this era produced an entire literature of tendentious writings presenting the Old Testament as a second-rate adaptation of Babylonian epics and legal codes, the Talmud as a repository of a primitive morality.

Prime Target: the Bible

The attacks focused on the Bible. Talmud and Jewish law Codes might provide convenient targets to demonstrate the inferior character of the Jew, but it was the Bible, common source of Judaism as well as Chris-

tianity, that was the real obstacle in the path of German glory. Its credibility as a source of morality had to be utterly destroyed. This Bible criticism set out to do.

Much of the foundation of this assault against the Bible was rooted in the Graf-Wellhausen theory of the composition of the Old Testament. In fact, as a modern scholar, Erich Voeglein recently wrote: "The critical work of the Wellhausen school moves methodologically in a haze, because it is insufficiently aware of the difference between empirical, philological work and the interpretation put on its results" ("Order and History", Vol. I, p. 153); but many, and not only laymen, were taken in by Wellhausen's barrage of quotations and the peremptory assurance of his conclusions.

The Defenders

German Jewry was not quite unprepared for the onslaught. True, the majority of German Jews, assimilated as they were, were supremely disinterested in this conflict. But a small group took up the challenge. There had been founded in 1872 by the great Rabbinical Scholar Rabbi Israel Hildesheimer זצ"ל the Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin to train Jewish scholars to become familiar with the methods and results of modern Science. He attracted to his staff Biblical and Talmudic Scholars of world renown. The most brilliant of these Scholars was probably Professor David Hoffman זצ"ל who published pioneering works in almost every sphere of Jewish learning. Of special interest here are his commentaries to the Pentateuch (originally written in German and recently published in Hebrew translation by the Mossad Horav Kook).

In these commentaries, Prof. Hoffmann set out to disprove the theories of Bible Criticism, meeting them on their own ground. Gifted with an encyclopedic knowledge and razor sharp intellect, he systematically demonstrated that Bible Criticism's theories were flimsy castles in-the-air supported only by the will to believe.

And the effect of his writings? As far as the academic world was concerned: nil, he was simply ignored. His biblical fundamentalism did not fit into a society nurtured on evolutionism and a Germanic Christianity.

That does not mean that Hoffmann's work (and that of his colleagues at the Seminary) was in vain. There were many, even among believing Jews, who were enticed by the persuasive phraseology, the scientific apparatus, the sheer mass of published material of Bible Criticism.

Hoffmann's and his confreres' works pointed out the weaknesses of the hypotheses of Bible Criticism and gave renewed confidence to many perplexed by this assault on faith and tradition.

But for the Germans, the road towards world domination was now cleared. If the Bible was fallible, then so were its ideals. In their place was set the rule that might gives right. On the horizon loomed two World Wars and untold suffering.

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Heroes: Remembering and Understanding

Remembering the destruction of World War II is important, but it ends up as an unrelieved study of martyrdom and becomes depressing. So we look for heroes to admire. . . . Are the only heroes those who fought physically? We know that there were so few who succeeded in joining resistance groups. Furthermore, one questions the way in which their course of action is used for staging responses to contemporary situations. Why highlight examples of heroism that serve to set up models not always meant to be emulated? The attention focused on Ghetto Uprisings is a case in point.

(I was addressing my question to Oizer Becher, a thoughtful friend, survivor of two ghettos and a labor camp, who manages to be dispassionate yet understanding at the same time.)

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising has always been a highly emotional focal point for our feelings regarding World War II. Pity, horror, valor and brutality, all peak in remembering the events that transpired there. The Warsaw Ghetto was the largest and most crowded of those cramped city quarters into which the areas' Jews were forced. Valiant attempts were made at assuring that "life as usual" continue within its suffocating confines. Torah study, *mitzva* performance, and a sense of responsibility and concern for one's fellow were maintained under the most harrowing conditions. And, then, there was the uprising, with all that it signified.

Every year, the anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising is marked with a grandiose memorial assembly in New York's Temple Emanuel, as well as a number of smaller regional gatherings. Again, the mixed emotions churn. Many people seek a legitimate format for remembering, but are offended by the choice of the cathedral-like setting of a Reform Temple—especially for honoring the memory of those who were so loyal to Torah Judaism. . . . Sure, they want to remember and cry, but not during the Month of Nissan when expressions of mourning are proscribed by *halacha* . . . . They are proud that some denizens of the Ghetto were capable of rising above the oppressive Nazi rule and taking their fate into their own hands. Yet, those who maintained their Jewish identity of *emuna* and *bitachon* (faith in G-d) in face of death were equally brave if not more so.

Some use the anniversary to argue that the Uprising was an historical turning-point in the fortunes of the Jewish People, for with the bold shots fired at the German soldiers, the brave battlers of Warsaw demonstrated that the role of passive victim was giving way to that of active determinant of their own fate. This, too, is discomfitting, for obviously our destiny as a people is not determined by show of force. Not for our physical might nor for our military prowess did we survive nineteen centuries of *golus*. A *"Shma Yisroel"* shouted defiantly in the "showers" of Auschwitz, or matzos baked under the shadow of death in Bergen-Belsen could well be selected as a more viable symbol of Jewish perserverance and eternity.

One can debate these points without wincing. After all, emotions should be examined without compunction. One has every right to go beyond feelings of respect or reverence or grief to justify participation in one particular gathering or another.

To Avoid Indelicate Discussion?

One specific point, however, is far more sensitive and one tends to gloss over it to avoid indelicate discussion. Once it has become part of the public domain, its status is different. Thus we permit ourselves to discuss it: there is a possibility that more lives were lost as a result of the Uprising than had the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto remained passive. When death was a certainty in either case, some questioned whether it might not be worthwhile sacrificing hours or even weeks of life to drag the enemy down with them—echoing Samson's "Let my life expire with the Philistines!"—The question

is a difficult one, and indeed, halachic authorities reputedly had lent their guidance in making the grave decisions regarding "to fight or not to fight."

But what about the feeling of "going down like a man" as a justification for loss of life—how does *that* fit into this perspective? This, for sure, is a sentiment foreign to Jewish values, and should not find its way into the heroic aspects of our tearful rememberences.

Yet, Dan Kurzman in his book *The Bravest Battle* injects this attitude in his description of a key incident prior to the Uprising:

> *It was on January 18, 1943, that Mordechai [Anczielewicz] finally* made *the people listen. The Germans, without warning, swooped down once again on the Jews. Mordechai and nine comrades, each armed with a pistol or a grenade, joined a terrified procession of Jews being led to Umschlagplatz. Suddenly one fighter hurled a grenade at the German guards, and a firefight broke out, Mordechai emptied his pistol at the Nazis, then snatched one from a German and continued firing until a comrade pulled him into a courtyard. Mordechai emerged from the battle as the only survivor.*
>
> *But this show of resistance, together with other spontaneous actions and the threat of a simultaneous Polish uprising, forced the Germans*

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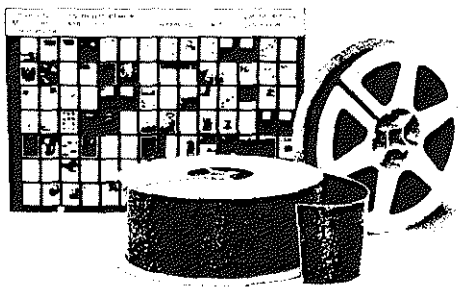

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to end the Aktion *after four days. And the surviving Jews, euphoric over the revolt, realized at last that if they had to die, it was best to fall proudly in battle. Besides, many thought now, why give up so easily when German defeats at Stalingrad and in the Middle East signaled an early end to the war? (pp. 37-38).*

The possibility of their foray bringing the *Aktion* to an early end was an honest consideration, not to be dismissed. But why—at least according to Kurzman's account—did Anczielewicz not have any doubts about leading nine other men to their death? Why is "it best to fall proudly in battle"? As this story is being preserved and retold, the heroic image of the "macho" Jew truly is the one worth commemorating—but is it?

(*I eyed Oizer Becher's thoughtful countenance, and awaited his comment.*)

"I don't accept Kurzman's evaluation of the good life or the noble death," Reb Oizer offered. "But in some ways, the death of the nine at that particular time and in those particular circumstances, was a source of life support to the rest of us—a martyrdom of *hatzolas nefoshos*. I do not offer a halachic opinion on the matter. That is beyond me. But I will tell you how such defiant acts, which today we might view as gestures of futility, were the source of life to others."

Reb Oizer paused a moment, stroked his graying beard, and shuddered.

"If you would have seen Yiddel Streicher before the war—or if you could see him now, in Bnei Brak—you could never picture him without his confident smile, his gut vort. *We were in the Aschlog Labor Camp together. We had just broken ranks after a line-up. A visiting colonel with a penchant for dachshunds had just completed an inspection. He was walking away, jauntily swinging his riding crop, with two puppies yapping at his heels.*

"'How I envy him,' Yiddel sighed.

"'You envy that murderer?' I asked, astonished.

"'No, no,' said Yiddel. 'The little dog—his liveliness, his energy, his freedom to go where he wishes.'"

"You see," said Reb Oizer, "Yiddel Streicher, one of the proudest Jews I know—a man who inspired others with his *bitachon*, his trust in G-d, and consideration of others—at times felt lower than the dachshund at a Nazi colonel's heels. I would have done anything to pick up his spirits, but I was at a loss. In such a setting, what could be dismissed today as a hollow gesture of defiance was a lifegiving act of encouragement. The death of the nine, at that time and in that place, raised us at least to one notch above the bottom."

Heroes: Remembering and Emulating

So we can appreciate the need for heroes of physical prowess under those crushing circumstances, in the ghettoes and camps. We needed heroes larger than life to simply feel alive and of the least value. And I've heard of the rare hero of spirit that rose even higher. But where does that leave everybody else?

(My question was directed at Joseph Friedenson editor of Dos Yiddishe Vort, *veteran of the Warsaw Ghetto and four concentration camps—including the notorious Auschwitz and Buchenwald.)*

"I cannot speak for others," he said. "But as for me, I have countless people who inspired me: some who

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Those individuals who possess the fortitude and determination to commit themselves to total immersion in *Limud HaTorah* could well become *Gedolei Torah* if only extended sufficient financial means, and given the proper setting and environment.

The Solution

A search was launched for young men who have excelled in Torah scholarship and who have demonstrated a strong resolve to dedicate their lives to *Limud HaTorah,* with the plan of affording them the opportunity to devote all their time and energy to fulfill their aspirations. After many months of careful screening, a group of ten promising young men were chosen. They were considered not only for their *lomdus* (scholarship), *hasmada* (diligence), and *yiras Shomayim,* but also for their ability to function as one unit.

Monsey, New York, was chosen as the setting for this project—a community that has justly earned the reputation as a veritable Torah metropolis and would therefore afford the natural environment for this great venture. Also, Monsey provides attractive schooling and the desired atmosphere for the *chinuch* of the children of the Kolel members' growing families.

After several meetings, the young scholars—under the guidance of a *Gadol BaTorah,* formulated their long range goals and adopted *takanos* (resolutions) to guarantee the fulfillment of these goals.

Realization of the Plan

Rosh Chodesh Elul 5737 (1977) at 7 AM, the new Kolel in Monsey embarked upon its long range ambitious program. Now in its second year, the Kolel has been acclaimed in the Yeshiva World as a Torah citadel of the highest caliber.

—Each member in the Kolel already has a background of years of intensive study in renowned Kolelim of Eretz Yisroel and America.

—The Kolel schedule spans the day from *Shacharis* at 7 AM to 11 PM, almost totally eliminating any outside interruptions or distractions, other than for mealtimes. (Breakfast is served at the Kolel.)

—The Kolel members have developed methods of achieving great strides both in the quality and the quantity of their learning.

—In its short span of existence, the Kolel has thus far completed two entire large volumes of *Shas* with *Rishonim* and *Halacha,* in depth, advancing toward its goal of covering a major portion of *Shas* and *Shulchan Aruch* in the years ahead.

—Gedolei Torah are invited periodically to lecture to the Kolel in *Halacha* and *Mussar.*

—The economic needs of the Kolel members are fully met through substantial financial stipends on a regular basis, affording them the *menuchas hanefesh* (peace of mind) to be totally immersed in their studies.

It is the conviction of those involved in guiding the Kolel that it has all the markings of fulfilling its demanding goals, making a salutory imprint on Torah life on the American scene. (See the letter from Hagaon Horav Reb Yaakov Kamentsky שליט"א)

The reputation of the Kolel has become so widespread that many outstanding scholars from yeshivos throughout the world are applying to join. At the present, the Kolel is being underwritten privately; if expansion is to be considered, the financial base would have to be broadened.

No government funds are used in this project, as it is felt that an institution of this caliber merits support *BeKedushah Ve'Chulah Li'shmoh.*

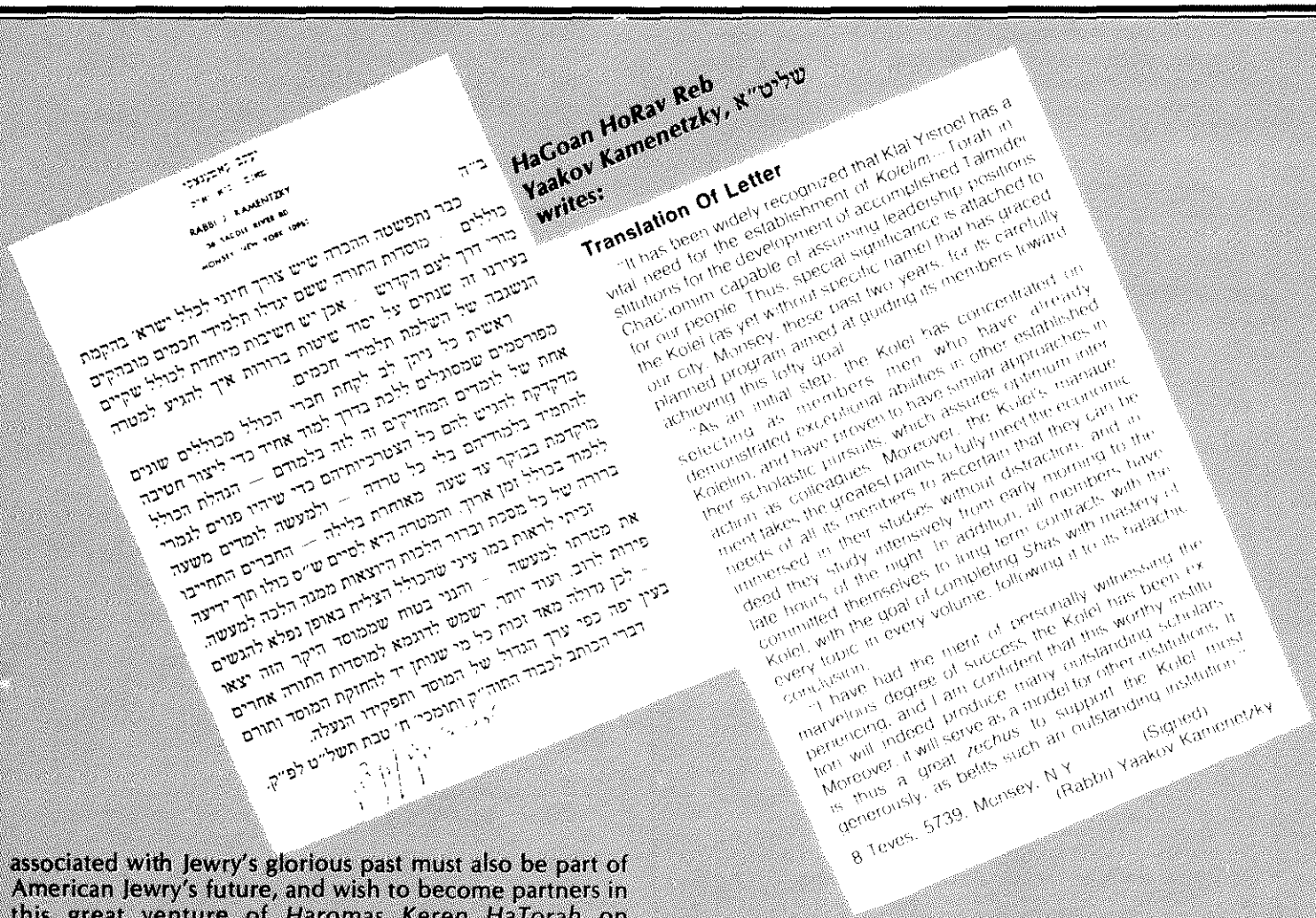
The Kolel does not have any administrative expenses.

We therefore extend an invitation to those individuals who believe that excellence in Torah scholarship

taught me how to die—if need be; and others who taught me much to apply as we continue to live, with G-d's help. For instance, there was. . .a fifteen year old girl from Chust:

Aviezer, a colleague of mine from the Yeshiva in Lublin, and I were assigned the unsavory task of transporting the refuse. We lugged an empty wagon to the various depositories—outside the kitchens, the latrine, and so on—filled the wagon, and emptied it into the dump. No one would call the job a pleasant one, but it was considered the best in the camp. I got it through pull—I was recommended by Reb Yosele Perlow (the young Novominsker Rebbe, of Warsaw). Its value? This job kept us alive, for morsels of food could be found in the kitchen scraps, and our appointed rounds gave us a certain freedom to roam the camp at will. We were once pushing our malodorous cart past the ditch that separated us from the women's compound when we caught sight of a young girl, waving frantically at us.

"What's the matter?" Aviezer asked. "Is



associated with Jewry's glorious past must also be part of American Jewry's future, and wish to become partners in this great venture of *Haromas Keren HaTorah* on American soil.

—support a Kolel fellow in his studies.

—become a shareholder in the Kolel by contributing annually.

—participate in a broadly comprehensive plan to accommodate young, growing Torah families with suitable housing—a dire necessity in terrible short supply in Monsey.

—alert charity foundations and trust funds to include the Kolel in their long-range planning.

—include provisions for the Kolel in yoir own will.

—inquire regarding other opportunities, such as the endowment of the Kolel—or the building that houses it—with a name, to serve as a living memorial to someone beloved or admired. (For the interim, the Kolel has not been named.)

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something wrong?"

*A strong wind was blowing toward her, and her voice did not carry well. She held her arms together, and shiveringly called out "*Kent yir mir kriggen a. . .vetter!*"*

Reb Leib looked at me for an explanation. "It's cold. I think she wants a sweater," I offered.

His first reaction was a shrug of the shoulders: Where does one get a sweater in Birkenau!

Several days later, we passed a warehouse that stored clothing and personal effects of the korbanos *of the gas chambers. Aviezer slipped through the door and emerged a few minutes later looking no different. As he took his place next to me, pushing our cart, he said, "I put on a warm woolen sweater under my prison tunic." In his emaciated condition one could not detect the difference.*

Next day, we passed the women's compound again. The girl was standing at the same spot, as if waiting for us. Aviezer took off his jacket, removed the sweater and hurled it over the barrier. She picked it up, shook it out and looked at it quizzically.

"What's this?" she shouted (the wind was on her side).

"A sweater," he replied. "You said you need one."

"Sweater? *No!" she cried out. "I wanted a* Siddur! *Next week is Rosh Hashana!"*

We looked at each other sheepishly. We were so occupied with mere physical survival, it never dawned on us that such a young girl had wanted a Siddur *to warm her soul. The next time we passed the storage areas, Aviezer made sure to sneak in and smuggle out a* Siddur, *which eventually found its way into the girl's hands.*

Later Aviezer and I attempted to evaluate why we did not daven *during the day. The main impediment was the load that wafted its offensive message our way, as we pushed the refuse cart from station to station. Finally we hit upon a solution: We would pull the cart rather than push it, putting our putrid load out of sight and (when facing a headwind) out of mind.*

Aviezer and I would start from the beginning of davening—Ma Tovu, Berachos, *and so on, helping eachother when memory didn't work. . .picking up a cue from the girl from Chust, who was cold without a* Siddur.

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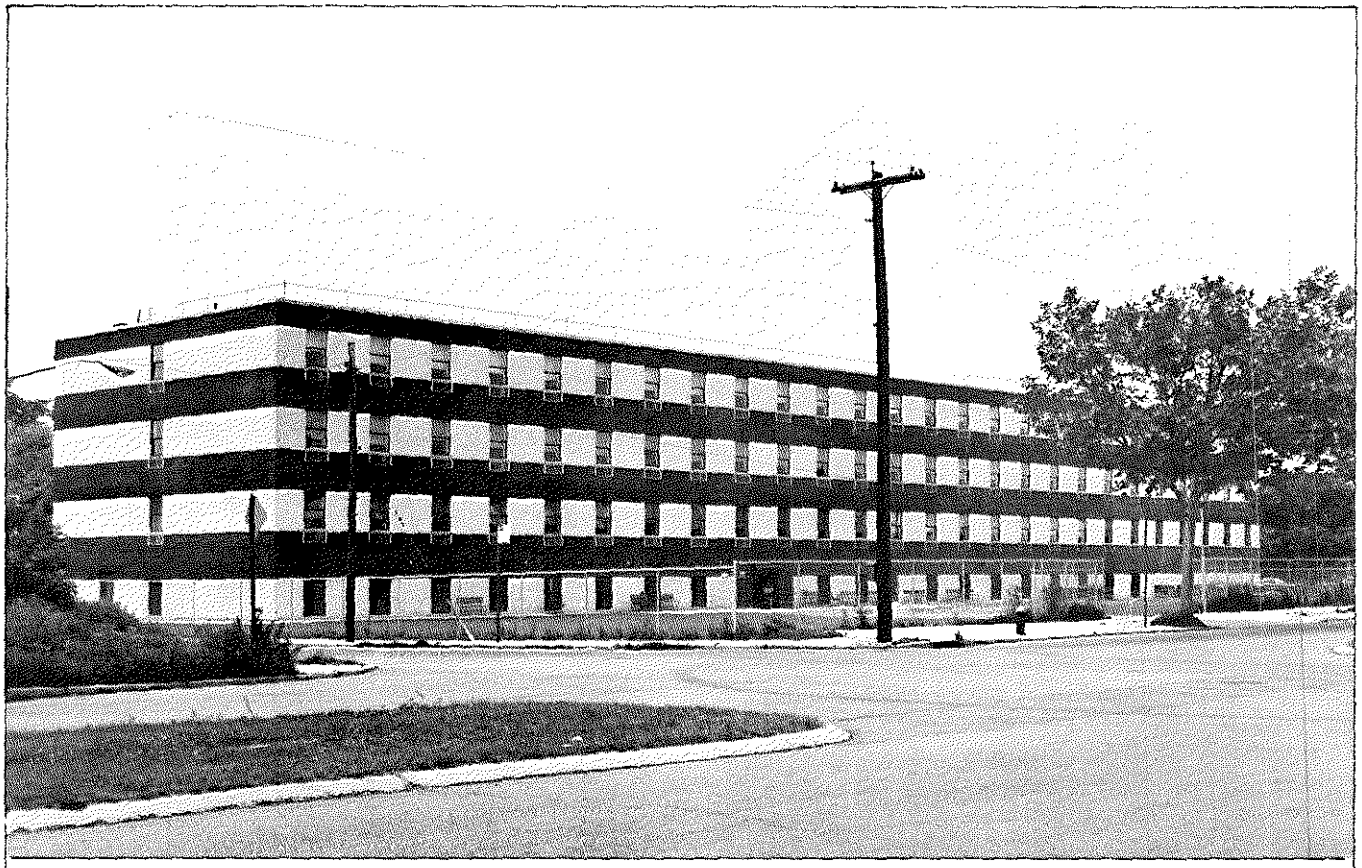

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Another Look at Holocaust Literature

a review article

BARELY A DAY PASSES without a new book on the tragedy of European Jewry. This is due to many factors. There is a healthy conviction that we must remember, so that we live up to the obligations which the destruction of European Jewry imposes upon us. There is a need, which many feel, for catharsis, to be attained through living once more through the horrors of the war years. There are many aspects of the catastrophe about which we want to know more so we can learn from them. At the same time, this focus on the Holocaust has dangers. Sometimes we sense an unseemly exploitation of the tragedy, with Holocaust theses, academic chairs, publications, and careers all built on the unspeakable suffering of the victims. Often we find the Holocaust used to support slogans—theological ("G-d and Aushwitz?!") or political ("Never Again!")—which are utterly at variance with a Torah viewpoint, and frequently represent mere myth-making ("The victims must be blamed for going like sheep to slaughter," "There were never any extermination camps").

The Holocaust and the Neo-Nazi Mythomania *edited by S. Klarsfeld* (Beate Klarsfeld, New York, 1978, $8.95).

It is deeply saddening that recently an entire book had to be devoted to dealing with some of the myths created by the defenders of the Nazis: *The Holocaust and the Neo-Nazi Mythomania* edited by S. Klarsfeld. It contains scholarly studies which document the fact that Hitler himself was behind the "Final Solution," that gas chambers did exist, and that millions were gassed; as an appendix to the book, this volume

If you understood the words in your siddur,
If you can pick up a sefer and learn,
If you have been guided thru spheres of mussar,
If you have come to a fork and know where to turn,
IF YOU CAN READ THIS—
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In so many ways we are indebted to our mechanchim.
Mechanchim who always tried to set us on our feet,
Mechanchim who never knew what the last school bell meant,
Mechanchim who would never ask for anything in return.
This debt is not always easy to repay,
Many of us do not know where our mechanchim are now. Some of us may never again have a chance to repay them.

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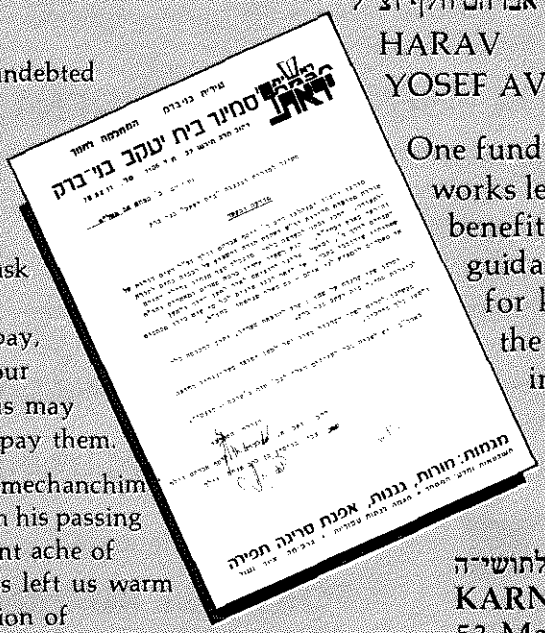
He has left us and yet he has departed for us.
The last school bell rang—
But once again it was not heeded.



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includes both the original and a translation of the Himmler-commissioned Korhern Report on how many Jews were killed from 1939 to 1943. The evidence is extraordinarily detailed—but it is this reviewer's conviction that it will never catch up with the lies of the Butz'es and their ilk.

The Jewish Resistance *by Dr. Lester Eckman and Chayim Lazar* (Shengold Publishers, New York, 1977, $6.95).

Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution *by Dr. Isaiah Trunk* (Stein & Day, New York, 1979, $15.95).

THE SUBJECT OF THE JEWISH REACTION to the "Final Solution" is treated in two new books. *The Jewish Resistance* was written by Dr. Lester Eckman, a historian, and Chayim Lazar, a war-time resistance fighter and presently director of the Museum for Combatants and Partisans in Tel-Aviv. It deals with Lithuania and White Russia: two companion volumes in preparation will be devoted to Poland and Russia, and to the Western countries. The first part of the book provides a graphic historical survey of armed resistance to the Nazis, area by area, while the second part consists of 29 articles and stories written by Holocaust survivors (some of the articles do no really belong in this book, and take away from its impact, as they deal with post-war developments and the organization of former partisans). The authors make abundantly clear the enormous odds that existed against Jews successfully escaping from the ghettos and offering armed resistance; the incredible and murderous enmity toward them of the non-Jewish civilian population and guerillas; and the fact that, despite all this, Jews did escape and some—a tiny minority—did indeed survive.

Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution by Dr. Isaiah Trunk, the noted author of *Judenrat* has chosen a somewhat different and wider-ranging approach to his topic. In a historical introduction and analysis, he points out the fact, all too often overlooked, that Jewish resistance took many crucial forms—not only military (limited by necessity), but political, social, and above all, spiritual.

The Nazis succeeded in killing six million Jews, but they never succeeded in dehumanizing the Jews or reducing them to rabble. The Jews never were mere passive objects of oppression, but mustered all their scant resources and their incredible inner strength to live—and to die—with their heads held high. Of particular interest, in this connection, are the author's comments on the reaction of religious Jews to ghetto and gas chamber (pp. 21-25). The main part of the book then provides 62 eyewitness accounts of Holocaust survivors chosen so as to illustrate the varied responses to Nazi persecution. These accounts are truly heartbreaking; but they also give the reader a little more of an idea what living under the Nazis was like. Incidentally, this book too throws a vivid light not only on the cruelty of the Master Race but on the betrayal of the Jews by most of their Gentile neighbors—with some truly remarkable exceptions.

In Face of Danger *by Mara Kay* (Crown Publishers, New York, 1979 $6.95).

HISTORICAL RESEARCH puts the role of victims, murderers, and onlookers into quite a clear focus. When we approach the area of historical fiction, however, great caution is needed, for it provides authors with the opportunity to project an image of the past which, wittingly or unwittingly, is colored by their own wishful

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thinking of what the past should have been like, or by their desire to convey a particular viewpoint or lesson. A good example is *In Face of Danger*. Written for children, it is bound to hold their rapt attention; it is excellently written and the story maintains suspense throughout. Moreover, the book perfectly reflects the atmosphere of fear and oppression, and the sheer terror in which Jews and other "enemies of the State" lived in Nazi Germany.

But how representative of actual conditions, by and large, is the actual plot? It centers around a German family hiding some Jewish children, about the extraordinary efforts of an entire nunnery to help the Jews, and the heroic self-sacrifice of a Jewish woman married to a German aristocrat and turned nun, who gives her life so that the children's mother survives. Quite apart from our objections on how assimilation, intermarriage, and *shmad* are handled in this book, does it convey to children an accurate picture of the relationship between Germans, the Church, and the Jews? Surely no. Right now, we live in a stage where survivors' autobiographical accounts and historical studies dominate Holocaust literature; but, as this material becomes exhausted, historical fiction will undoubtedly become more and more important—and this will open the doors to "interpretations" and misrepresentations of a particularly dangerous kind, against which we must be on guard.

Eyewitness Auschwitz *by Filip Muller* (Stein & Day, New York, 1979, $10.95).

Of course, autobiographical accounts raise their own questions. A recent volume *Eyewitness Auschwitz*, subtitled "Three Years in the Gas Chambers," is a good example. It is a profoundly moving document which describes the author's service on the "Sonderkommando" which served in the gas chambers and crematoria. The Nazis went out of their way at regular intervals to kill the *Sonderkommando* personnel, which knew too much for their liking. The author was one of perhaps a handful who survived, and his account centers around the central moments of the Jewish agony—the gassing in the "showers" and the disposal of the bodies. To read it is to be forced to face many horrors which more general accounts have spared us; and it also raises extraordinarily difficult questions, some of which the author himself agonizes over. Were the *Sonderkommando* members justified in playing along with the Nazi deception that the gas chambers were "showers" or should they have warned the victims? At one point, the author tried to commit suicide by entering the gas chamber with a group of victims; what about this form of "escape" from the work he was forced to do? Even though Müller reports rather than judges—or maybe because of this—his book is not only devastating to read, but also gives many insights. It shows us the varied reactions of prisoners, from those who aped their masters to those who resisted, in body or in spirit. At the same time, it draws a portrait of the German Master Race which the most forgetful of men will not be able to dismiss from their minds.

The Holocaust in Historical Perspective *by Professor Yehudah Bauer* (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1978, $8.95).

IT IS YET ANOTHER recent volume *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* by Professor Yehudah Bauer, which seeks to provide a more detailed analysis of this issue, as well as certain other questions not only central to the historian's knowledge of the Holocaust, but with very definite *hashkafa* implications to everyone of us.

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מכון להוראה
Mechon Hahoyroa

Progress Report from Machon Hahoyroa—for the year 5739

- The Three Kolelim under the Machon are continuing on their prescribed course of completing the Four Sections of the Shulchan Aruch, in accordance with their ten-year schedule.
- Printing has been completed of the first section of a book of responsa, *Yissachar BeOhalecha*, an anthology of halachic discussions prepared by members of the three Kolelim. Copies will be available for the public בס"ד by Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan.

From a letter from **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein** שליט"א:—It is a sacred obligation on every Jew to participate in supporting this sacred institute from which Torah decisions will emanate for all Israel, please G-d.

(Rabbi) Moshe Feinstein

From a letter from **Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky** שליט"א:—Kolel Mechon HaHoyroa in Monsey's fellows have reputations as Torah giants, and I can personally testify to the veracity of these reports. . . . It is indeed an act of very great virtue to generously support this institute, which will endow all Israel with great benefit in the near future with the help of G-d.

(Rabbi) Yaakov Kamenetzky

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The first of the four studies which make up this volume traces the main stages of the Nazi drive toward the "Final Solution"—and the reaction of Jewry in the free world. Between March and June 1942 the salient facts became known, yet American Jewry reacted with confusion and uncertainty. The idea of putting pressure on Roosevelt seemed unthinkable, and Stephen Wise actually agreed to keep from the public the devastating news which he received from overseas. "Zionists, including leaders of the World Jewish Congress, were absorbed in postwar planning and were paying little more than ceremonial attention to what was happening in Europe," as shown by the Biltmore Declaration calling for "a Jewish State to absorb all the millions of uprooted Jews from Europe" when it had already been well established that they were no longer alive. Our failure in those years to react properly and responsibly must remain a lasting warning for *Klal Yiroel.*

As for the reaction of the Gentile world, treated in another chapter, the author stresses that generalizations are more difficult. Generally speaking, Denmark, Belgium, France and—strangely—Bulgaria saved most of their Jews; in most other countries under German control, except Holland, the Jews were doomed by their neighbors' attitude which ranged from hostile indifference to active persecution. In the free countries, again, there was apathy and disinterest, on the whole; thus, in a war fought for certain moral values, there was no sense of obligation to interfere with the "Final Solution." Referring to Rabbi Michoel Ber Weissmandl זצ"ל, the author writes: "It seems strange that the very sensible idea of using Allied military power to prevent the murder of Hungarian Jews (by bombing rail junctions) should have occurred first to an ultra-Orthodox Slovak rabbi, but that is a fact. It is even stranger that the idea was not acted upon by the military men. . ." Much later, it was Ben Gurion who asked: "What have you done to us, you freedomloving peoples, guardians of justice. . . ? If, instead of Jews, thousands of English, American, or Russian women, children had been tortured every day, burnt to death, would you have acted in the same way?"

Yet there is also the question of the role of the Jewish leaders themselves which needs examination—and Professor Bauer devotes one chapter to the famous mission of Joel Brand to barter Jewish lives for trucks. According to Bauer, "the awesome responsibility for his failure, he claimed, lay with the Jewish Agency, the left-oriented leadership of the Zionist movement, and the British." Professor Bauer consider's Brand's version of what happened untrue, a fabrication by right-wing politicians to embarrass the Mapai government at the Kastner trial. It is difficult to pass on such a charge without going back to the different sources cited by Bauer which, he admits, are difficult to evaluate. Certainly enough is known, from the writings of Rabbi Weissmandl down to the research work of Beth-Tzvi, and even from some of the data brought by Bauer, not to absolve the leaders of the Jewish Agency and of the WZO in general from guilt for neglecting and even interfering with rescue possibilities. This is a truly painful chapter of our history; but it, too, has a vital lesson to teach us.

The Incident at Massena *by Saul S. Friedman* (Stein & Day, New York, 1978, $9.95).

AS A FOOTNOTE to any discussion of the Holocaust, mention should be made of an interesting study of "whether it can happen here": *The Incident at Massena,* by Saul S. Friedman, which deals with an episode that took place in September, 1928, in upstate New York. It involved the disappearance of a little girl, and a resultant outburst of antisemetic hysteria against the small local Jewish community. The Rabbi, a disciple of Slobodka and a remarkable personality, was called in by police and questioned on whether Jews offer human sacrifices. Fortunately, the incident was defused in time; but the fact that a blood libel could almost lead to a pogrom in this country is an indication of how easily anti-Jewish feelings can be stirred up. And the egocentric national Jewish leaders—Stephen Wise and Louis Marshall—who competed for the glory of solving the crisis at the danger of prolonging it, may serve as a reminder of the need for leadership that *Klal Yisroel* can trust.

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Mordechai Schiller

Taking Reb Nachman Literally

THE THIRTEEN STORIES OF REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLEV
E. Koenig, Translator and M. Kramer, Editor
(Jerusalem, Hillel Press) paperback

I have a friend named Moshe. Moshe is a perfectionist. And he is in love with language. Moshe is also deeply involved with Chassidus—particular Breslover Chassidus.

All of this would seem to make Moshe a perfect translator of Reb Nachman's works. It does and it doesn't. Perfectionist that he is, Moshe is striving for a translation in English that says exactly what "the Rebbe" meant to say.

"Impossible!" you say. You're right. In the few years that I followed Moshe's work, he published one piece (anonymously, of course): a one-paragraph "Prayer For Peace" from *Lekutei Tefillos* (Collected Prayers).

I used to ask him about his translation of the *Seven Beggars Tale*—"How's it coming?" "Yes, yes, I must finish it. But it's not quite right yet." Then he would smile and raise his face and his hands in an eloquent gesture of joyous futility.

It always used to bother me that there was no "kosher" translation available of *Sippurei Maasiyos*—Reb Nachman's Tales. The versions by Buber, Levin, Schachter and others are creative—revealing more of the thoughts of the translators than the translated. Even Buber himself, Moshe tells me, renounced his translation of the *Tales* when he was older—not wanting them in his collected works.

For some strange reason, able "insiders" like Gedalia Fleer and Aryeh Kaplan never translated the *Tales*. They could not have considered *Sippurei Maasiyos* not important enough to translate. Perhaps, like my friend Moshe, they felt unworthy of the task.

Now, finally, there ia a "glatt Kosher" translation. And it was prepared by no less than Esther Koenig, o.b.m., the mother of Reb Gedalya Koenig. Reb Gedalya, himself, is one of the major leaders of and spokesmen for Breslov today.

Mordechai Schiller *was associated with Yeshiva Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, as editor of its Shma Yisroel* magazine, among other responsibilities. He has recently joined the staff of Agudath Israel of America.

One might almost call *The Thirteen Stories of Rebbe Nachman of Breslev* the "official" translation of the tales. The book itself is an exercise in authenticity. The language is—intentionally—loaded with Yiddishisms. First of all, this shows faithfulness to the original. Secondly, it retains some of the flavor. As a matter of fact, this translation would have been best printed in a tri-lingual edition with the original Hebrew and Yiddish.

> We have maintained all efforts to keep in mind Rebbe Nachman's statement and admonition, that every word of these stories has great meaning, and anyone that changes one word of the stories from what he himself said, detracts from them greatly. Just as medicine contains various ingredients which make up the final compound, so have we endeavored to accurately preserve the Rebbe's words.
>
> The stories were originally told by Rebbe Nachman and later his spoken words were written down exactly as he said them. It is this spoken style which we have sought to preserve, rather than pervert it for the sake of English prose.

This approach really raises a fundamental question about translations in general. What is the purpose in bringing a work over into another language? Many sages and scholars have written about the problem of translation. For some reason, though, what comes to mind is a comment of James Thurber.

A woman once told Thurber that she had read a story of his in French, and she enjoyed it even more than in English. "Yes, he answered, "my stories do lose something in the original."

Translating means changing the original. Otherwise it would be called *transcribing*. It's almost cliche—and therefore an acknowledged fact—that translations are, by nature, interpretations. This leads directly to the issue of faithfulness. Is "faithful" to stick to a literal word-for-word rendering? Or is "faithful" to follow the thought and spirit of the original? And who, if anyone could do just that? Perhaps my friend Moshe's shrug is the best translation of Reb Nachman.

Still, the stories are all there. And as Reb Nachman himself said: "How could anyone object to them, for in any case, they are pleasant stories to tell." And as his disciple/secretary, Reb Nosson, said, "All those who have eyes will see, and all those with a heart will understand."

BOOKS

My First Siddur, *by Yocheved Ehrman* (Bloch Publishing Co., New York, 1978, $6.95)

A new book for pre-readers and beginners is *My First Siddur,* by Yocheved Ehrman. It is subtitled, "an illustrated introduction to the Siddur," and most admirably lives up to this billing. Through pictures and text, the child is introduced to synagogue and prayer as well as to many *brachos,* and the *mitzvos* over which they are recited (brief phrases from the *tefillos* and a number of *brachos* are given in Hebrew with English translation); the adult who goes over this book with a child can easily find in the text and illustrations opportunities for branching out and bringing in other topics of importance. The author, moreover, has had a further objective in mind: this book can fittingly be given to a pre-reader to look at in *shul* to keep him (or her) from fidgeting and disturbing the adults; in fact, it is for this reason that she called it "My First Siddur." While one might perhaps question the appropriateness of this title (after all, the term "Siddur" stands for a very specific *sefer*), the objective is most laudable and the author has certainly served us well with this book.

Birthday in Kishinev, *by Fanni Steinberg* (Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1978, $5.95)

Another book newly offered to our children unfortunately is disappointing. *Birthday in Kishinev* echoes the early memories of the author herself, who as a young child escaped with her family to America following the Kishinev pogrom in 1903. It is important for our children to know how Jews lived in the olden days, and what befell them. For this reason, one would have welcomed a book correctly reflecting the life and events of those days. Unfortunately, however, the author's memory—and understanding—of those days does not serve her well. It is not just some minor mistakes that flaw her book, but a basic misreading in various respects of the pious home that she seeks to describe. Thus, for example, what shall we make of the mixed dancing participated in by the pious and scholarly father and the rest of the family—while on the other hand, everybody is taking it for granted that a girl does not see her prospective husband *even once* before the wedding? The author stresses the father's aversion to going to America, but does not really make clear the basic reason why pious Jews refused to go—because they considered it next to impossible to observe *mitzvos* in America. In short, the book is beautifully and sympathetically written, but does not do adequate justice to the world that it deals with.

In the recent article of children's books (JO April '79), reference was made to the fine books published by the LCS (Lakewood Cheder School) Publications. By error we omitted the address of the publishers of these books, which is: 601 Private Way Lakewood, NJ 08701. They are also available in most Hebrew book stores.

Sefer Shemos *by Rabbi Zvi Mond* (660 Englinton Ave. West, Toronto, 1978, $10).

SEFER SHEMOS WITH ENGLISH COMMENTARY, *by Rabbi Zvi Mond* (660 Englinton Ave. West, Toronto, 1978, $10.00—together with SEFER BERESHIS $15.00). This volume contains the entire Hebrew text, with *Rashi,* of *Sefer Shemos,* and the commentary through *Yithro;* it follows the same lines as that on *Bereishis,* previously reviewed, and should prove of equal interest.

The Sinai Hagada *by JH Sinason* (Dist. by Lehman Hebrew Booksellers, 20 Cambridge Terrace, Gateshead, England, 1978).

THE SINAI HAGADAH with a new translation and commentary, by *J.H. Sinason* and A GUIDE TO THE LAWS OF THE SEDER by *Rabbi A. Weiss* (distributed by Lehman 20 Cambridge Terrace, Gateshead, England, 1978). The author has sought to provide a clear English translation and commentary that concentrates on elucidating the plain meaning of the Haggada text. Hebrew footnotes have been added for those who seek more elaboration.

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second looks at the jewish scene

Ezriel Toshavi

Women in a Progressive Society

DATELINE: THE KNESSET

Twenty six years ago, Ben Gurion's Labor dominated government passed a law requiring all women who are exempt from army service on religious grounds to Sheirut Leumi—compulsory national service. The government had meant this law to be a concession to those who had objected to army exemptions for religious girls, but they were unprepared for the Torah community's vehement protest. Every Torah authority in the Holy Land—beginning with the Chazon Ish, the Brisker Rav, the Chebiner Rav זכרונם לברכה and the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel of *Eretz Yisroel*—found this law an intolerable compromise of Jewish womanhood. The law would make a girl, her personal plans, and the circumstances of her career into wards of the state rather than the private domain of the girl and her parents. As such, it subjugated young women (many of them leading a totally sheltered existence) to the jurisdiction of others, exposing them to outside influences—which can lead to paths strewn with moral compromise.

Girls were thus instructed to resist induction regardless of the personal sacrifice involved—whether social ostracism or jailing—as expressed by the ultimate of *yehoreig*, martyrdom. Indeed, Torah authorities had linked Sheirut Leumi with immorality, one

of the three cardinal sins that require resistance to the point of martyrdom: *yehoreig v'al yaavor*. Other rabbinical figures, including the Chief Rabbis of that period, added their voices to the growing consensus against *Sheirut Leumi*, and this view was articulated on the Knesset floor by the Agudath Israel representatives. What resulted was a remarkable demonstration of massive protest—with huge public rallies in America, as well—indicating to the government that it faced

the threat of civil disobedience of such scope, that the government deemed it wiser to shelve the matter.

So although the National Service Act was passed it was never enforced; and while over the years as much as 20% of the girls eligible for military draft have been opting for exemption on religious grounds, they have never been conscripted into *Sheirut Leumi*, and remained in private civilian life. Time and again, the law was dusted off by leftist instigation, and religious girls were threatened, but the ensuing protest was so strong that the law was not enforced by tolerance of the government.

Even more than the *Giyus Nashim* (Army Conscription Law) the Sheirut Leumi law stood as a perpetual reminder of the vast gulf that separates the Torah community from both the secular Israelis and the Religious Zionists (Mafdal) many of whose daughters do participate in Sheirut Leumi.

Defrosting the Old Law

Recent events have dramatized this difference in outlook, when one of the stormiest sessions in the history of the Israeli Knesset centered on a special bill sponsored by Augdath Israel aimed at allowing the government to keep in deep-freeze the Sheirut Leumi national service law for girls as long as it sees fit.

The bill became necessary when the government was challenged in Israel's Supreme Court for not implementing the old national service law. Acting on a law suit by Labor Party elements, the high court gave the government an ultimatum to either implement national service or change the law. The bill to permit continued deep-freeze was passed by a vote of 51 to 46. While still not eliminating national service, the newly enacted bill puts the implementation at the discretion of the government. The Begin administration is committed to not implementing the bill, as previous Labor administrations did not enforce the law, on an ad hoc basis.

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This particular battle was won, but the vanquished were hardly gracious in their defeat. In the filibuster session that preceded the vote, 30 members of the Labor opposition marched to the podium to criticize Agudath Israel for more than five-and-a-half hours. Knesset member Grossman said, "How is it possible that a small Knesset faction (Agudath Israel) should force an entire nation to its knees?" Knesset member Almoslino added: "Agudath Israel and its four members rule in the Knesset. They impose their will on the entire nation. This law is a heavy tax to secure the four votes of Agudath Israel."

The press was equally harsh in its criticism. Calling the new bill a "sellout," the *Jerusalem Post* said: "The record of Begin's government submission to Agudath Israel on a long list of issues had removed any element of surprise from its latest action." *Al Hamishmar* began its report of the Knesset events saying, "Yesterday the most powerful faction in the Knesset, Agudath Israel once again succeeded . . ."

The furor over national service for women followed Agudath Israel's earlier victory in women's military draft: a mere declaration of religiosity by a girl is now adequate, replacing the cross-examinations before draft boards of earlier years.

The anti-religious forces in the Knesset led by Shulamit Aloni expect to continue their battle for national service for all girls. Feminist leaders and others have vowed to wage a bitter campaign against Agudath Israel, including the threat of pickets in front of its headquarters and the refusal of girls from Kibbutzim and other areas to report for military or national security duty.

Politics or Ideology?

Perhaps this particular parliamentary storm in the Knesset reflects political opportunism more than ideological difference. One might suggest, however, that underlying the social/political schism between the various factions in this dispute is a basic difference in view of the role of women in society, and how she can best experience fulfillment of her potential. The Torah society recognizes the inherent distinctions between the sexes and accepts that each has its own role in life. A girl entering womanhood should not be subjegated to any sort of conscription; and the more "contemporary" the setting, the more objectionable the prospect of anything coerced. By contrast, those of secularist bent maintain that the more contemporary the setting and the more liberated the woman, the more she should be treated as a "person" without considerations of gender. The end result, however, must be a denigration of womanhood, for when a woman is treated as a person of non-specific gender, her womanhood perforce suffers.

A most extreme expression of this indifference to the special needs of a woman was evident in another Knesset session that took place one week earlier. Here the subject was a bill to legalize prostitution. The bill was presented by among others, Shoshana Arbeli, who was chairing the Knesset. The rationale for the bill? One of the sponsors, Sarah Doron (Likud-Liberals), maintained that "adult women who engage in prostitution voluntarily, have the right to be free of pressures, threats and exploitation, and to go about their 'business' without interference by the public."

The bill officially passed by a 20-19 margin but Agudath Israel's MK Menachem Porush demanded a recount. When this was denied, he repeatedly objected, saying to Arbeli, "You are showing contempt for the Knesset!"

The deputy speaker brought up a motion to expel Rabbi Menachem Porush from the Knesset floor for his vigorous fight against the bill and his insistence that the vote was miscounted, but this was defeated

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by a vote of 18-10. It was the first time in the annals of the Israeli Knesset that a speaker's motion to expel a member was rejected.

According to the chairman of the Knesset Law Committee, David Glasse of the National Religious Party, the bill will be buried in the committee with no chance of it being passed before the 9th Knesset ends its term.

So the bill as such is not an immediate threat to Israeli society. Nonetheless, the mere fact that such a law could even be considered should be understood as an indication of the direction in which a permissive, liberated society can be heading . . . one generation after it passed Sheirut Leumi.

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Why Protest Reform Statements?

To the Editor:

You fume and fuss over Alexander Schindler's announcement that the Reform expect to proselytize, that they are misrepresenting true Jewish religious values, and so on (JO April, June '79).

Why do you waste ink on such ridiculous misgivings? Reform Judaism does not accept Torah as the word of G-d, and as a result must have a different concept of the Jewish Peoplehood and its beliefs.

Upon further consideration, however, Orthodox objections are very much in place. After all, such Orthodox groups as the Union of Orthodox Congregations of America and its rabbinical affiliates are forever hobnobbing with the Reform movement and its leaders in one format or another. For instance, UOJC and RCA both belong to the Synagogue Council of America, and the RCA members participate in the New York Board of Rabbis—even though both groups include official Reform Temple and/or rabbinical membership. If that isn't official recognition and status, what is? So naturally, you've got to stand up and holler everytime Schindler and company says something objectionable (which could be a full-time occupation for you).

In my opinion, they are worthy of neither recognition nor protest.

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500 Enrolled in Tri-State Yeshivos by Agudath Israel Agency

A record number of 500 children were placed in Yeshivos in three states during the 1978-1979 school year by the Jewish Education Program (JEP), the reach out agency of Zeirei Agudath Israel of America. In issuing its report for the tri-state region for the past year's activities, Rabbi Mutty Katz, director of JEP, revealed that 300 of these children were Russian immigrants, while 200 were native Americans fom non-committed Jewish homes. Many of the children benefited from scholarships, $5,000 of which came through the JEP scholarship fund, which is largely proceeds from recordings and other educational material issued by JEP.

The evolvement of JEP into a major Yeshiva placement agency comes as a result of its overall expansion in programs and activities to encourage Jewish families to educate their children in Yeshivos. As part of this program, 200 volunteer Yeshiva students regularly visited twenty day schools in New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia to encourage children to continue their Jewish education beyond elementary school. The volunteers adopted some of the students in a "big brother" or "big sister" relationship. Educational and musical programs were used to imbue the youngsters with a desire to continue an intensive Jewish education.

For 300 children enrolled in public schools, exposure to authentic Judaism came regularly, once a week, during "release hour" at 20 public schools throughout the city. Using neighboring synagogues or Jewish schools, the one hour programs enabled the youngsters to learn the Jewish alphabet, laws, customs, and songs. Some of these children were part of 1500 boys and girls who participated in the Shabbaton program, where youths visited with families in established Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods. In the 1978-1979 school year, communities visited included Boro Park, Flatbush, Monsey, Scranton, Lakewood, Far Rockaway, Staten Island, Edison (N.J.) and Kingston (N.Y.).

In another unique JEP endeavor, 200 volunteer Yeshiva and Beth Jacob students hosted 400 day-school children during regular study-companion, "Chavrusa" sessions. In some of the major Yeshivos in New York City, two day-school students would be teamed up with a Yeshiva student to delve into *Mishna* and *Gemora*.

This summer, 100 children spent time at Orthodox Jewish camps as a result of another project by JEP. The camp program as well as some of the others listed in the JEP report were all in line with the goals of the Agudath Israel agency, to encourage American Jewish youngsters to pursue a Jewish education.

In addition to its central office in New York City, JEP has offices in Toronto, Canada, and annex programs throughout the United States.

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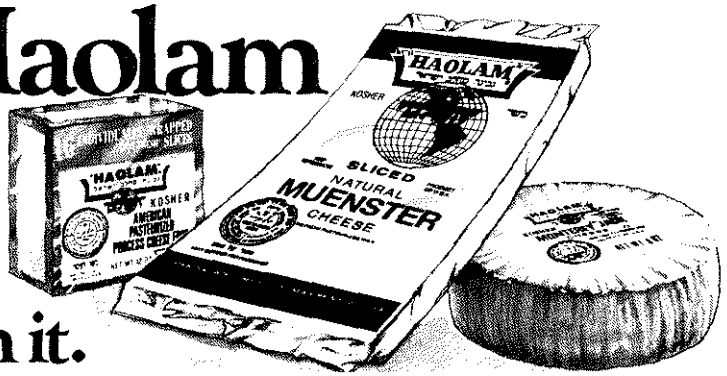

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17,000 Children in Agudath Israel Camps Worldwide

A record 17,000 children are participating in various programs at 55 summer all-day and sleepaway camps operated by the international Agudath Israel movement, according to Meir Frischman, head of the Camps Division of Agudath Israel of America.

The vacation retreats, most of which bear the name Camp Agudah (for boys) or Camp Bnos (for girls), are located in New York State, Illinois, Ohio, the Canadian provinces Quebec and Ontario, Argentina, England, Israel, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy. This year, Los Angeles joined the roster of Agudist summer camps with the opening of Camp Agudah West in the Bear Mountain region.

New York's two summer camps (popularly known as "Ruach Country" because of their unique Torah spirit) opened their 37th season on June 27th with many physical improvements, and are continuing their tradition of accepting among their campers hundreds of children from poor Jewish homes. In addition to children from 26 cities, a large contingent from Latin American countries returned this year for their annual experience in authentic Judaism. Several of the campers are children from uncommitted Jewish homes who were recruited by the Jewish Education Program (JEP), the reach-out division of Agudath Israel.

Russian immigrant children are the subject of special emphasis by the Agudath Israel camps. In New York City, a day camp for Russian immigrant children was featured for the second year in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn.

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U.S. Dept. of Labor Bends on CETA Funds Use in Yeshivos

After a half year of wrangling, the U.S. Department of Labor last week published regulations on the use of funds from CETA (the government's Comprehensive Employment and Training Act Program) in Yeshivos and other sectarian schools, completely reversing its original, totally negative position on this issue. The fight for non-public school rights was conducted by Agudath Israel of America, representing a coalition of Orthodox Jewish groups involved in activities funded by CETA, and by the U.S. Catholic Conference.

Yeshivos and other non-public schools have participated in CETA programs for the past decade. However the extent of such participation became a national issue in terms of constitutionality last October when the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit in federal district court in Milwaukee against CETA participation by Catholic schools there. The suit, *Decker vs. U.S. Department of Labor*, is still pending.

As a result of this law suit, the Department of Labor last December circulated a draft proposal of new regulations, which would have banned CETA workers from being employed "in any capacity" in Yeshivos and other non-public schools or houses of worship.

During the ensuing months, when the Justice Department obstinately refused to soften its position, despite efforts by Congressional leaders and constitutional experts, the religious groups continued marshalling support for their stand. Meetings were held with the White House and the Department of Labor, with a strong assist of the staff of Senator Javits.

Finally, after the religious groups put up a stiff resistance to these attempts to deny their schools CETA workers, the Department of Labor on June 20th published in the Federal Register new guidelines, which are in sharp contrast to its intentions a half year ago when "any capacity" was outlawed. While still banning CETA workers in religious schools from positions that can be interpreted as benefiting the religious aspect of the school, the new regulations permit them to be employed in "adult education, recreation, summer programs or other similar activities including remedial tutorial activities," providing that these programs are not part of the regular school curriculum and do not involve religious activities. Also permitted are cafeteria and related work, diagnostic or therapeutic speech and hearing services, nursing or health service and related activities, and custodial child care after school hours.

The Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America met on Tuesday, July 3rd with its coalition of Orthodox Jewish groups involved in CETA programs to assess the new regulations. The meeting sent off a letter to the Department of Labor requesting specific revision of several aspects of these guidelines which the religious leaders considered unsatisfactory. A spokesman for Agudath Israel declared that "although the results of all these months of efforts to protect the rights of the Yeshivos represents a substantial turnabout in our favor by the Department of Labor, we will continue this struggle until full justice is won for the non-public schools of our nation."

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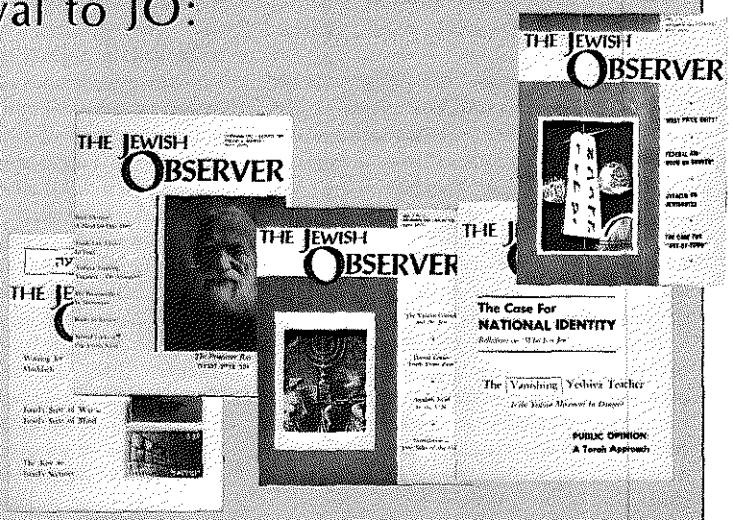

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