

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

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In the Age of Computers,
Where is Mankind?

A Tribute to the
Skullener Rebbe

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A Rosh Hashana Trilogy

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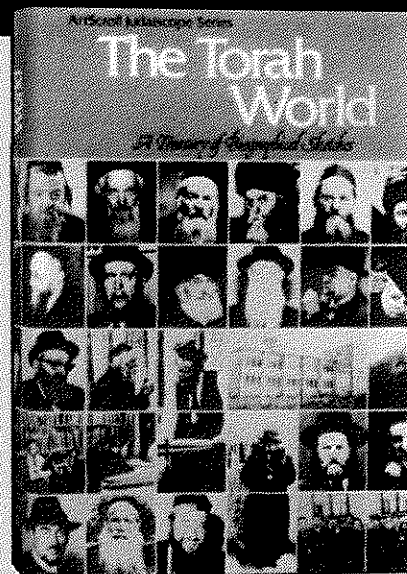
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MAN WHERE ARE YOU?

"Ayeka"—The Existential Query

An outstanding Torah scholar* of a bygone generation was once asked to explain the verse in *Bereishis* (3): "And the L-rd G-d called to Adam and said to him, 'Ayeka—where are you?'" Didn't G-d know his whereabouts?

The scholar responded that G-d was not asking about Adam's physical whereabouts. Rather, after his first sin, Man was challenged with the most basic of all questions—that of his identity: Where do you place yourself within the structure of creation? Have you tested and weighed the facets of your personality which, when taken together, grant you the name "Man"?

This question, posed to Adam on the day of his creation, has been asked continually from that day on. This Heavenly voice echoes through our lives, asking each of us, "Where are you?" and every thinking individual at some point asks the same of himself, questioning what it is that characterizes him as a human being.

*attributed to the first Lubavitcher Rebbe: Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi, author of *Sefer HaTanya*.

This article originally appeared in MACHSHEVET, a Hebrew language periodical published by Moreshet Avot, a Bnei Brak-based reach-out organization.

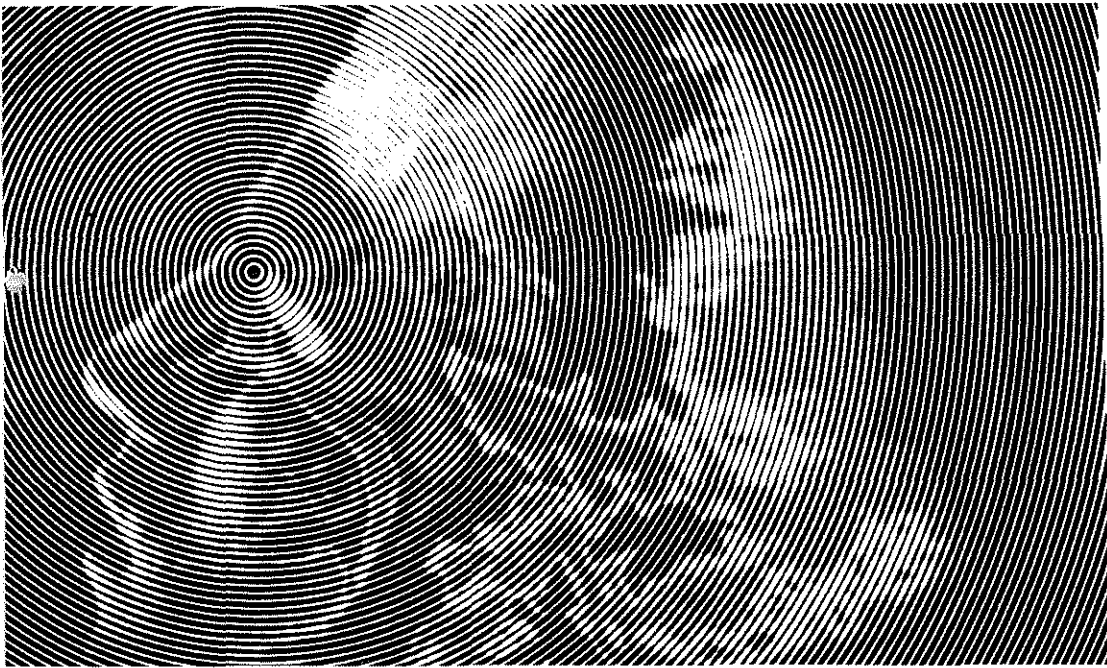
Rabbi Silverman is currently studying in the Mir Yeshiva in Brooklyn.

This question takes on an added dimension in a Jewish worldview. The Torah teaches us that Man is unique among all creatures. Certain powers implanted in him distinguish him from the rest of creation, and as a result, he is called upon to fulfill demands not made upon any other creature. After taking into account the demands for personal morality, ethical conduct, and so on, one wonders if perhaps too much is not being demanded of Man. What actually elevates him that much above all else? Or as *Dovid Hamelech* phrased it: "G-d, what is Man that You should know him; the child of mankind that you should consider him?" (*Tehillim* 144,3).

In physical prowess, man lags behind many animals—he is not particularly rugged; and like them, he is limited in his years: "Man is like a breath of air, like a passing shadow" (*Tehillim* 144). His greatness surely lies in other realms.

I. Intelligence: Man's Superiority Over Animals

It is, of course, the ability to reason that makes man not only a well-developed animal, but a unique creature, the crown of Creation. Thus the scholars who composed the *Shemona Esrei* placed the blessing petitioning: "... grant us wisdom, understanding," first among the requests made in our prayers, expressing our prime concern. The yearning for knowledge and wisdom must



Man's intelligence is obviously the basis of his superiority over the rest of animal life. But now that man has created the computer, how secure is his position as the crown of creation?

precede everything else, for man is what he is by virtue of understanding and good sense.

True enough, animals also possess sufficient intelligence to defend and provide for themselves and their offspring, and even have a certain capacity for understanding. Man's obvious superiority, however, is not a matter of degree but of kind.¹

Man's advantage over animal life by virtue of intellect was put forth by some of our earliest sages of the post-Talmudic era²—among them Rav Saadya Gaon, who wrote (in *Ha'emunos V'hade'os*, Maamar 4): "Man has an advantage (over animals) in the wisdom given us, as it is written (*Tehillim* 94:10), 'He who teaches man wisdom.'

"Man can utilize wisdom to evaluate every past action and predict the many ramifications which will come about. . . . Through it, man draws water from the depths of the earth, causing it to run over the surface. . . . He fashions wheels that of themselves draw water. And with it, he builds beautiful buildings, wears lovely garments and prepares delicious foods . . . and understands the paths of the sun and the stars, and the physical forces that control them."

- The first characteristic that Rav Saadya Gaon underscored is the ability to analyze events and project the future. Whether in business, military strategy or a game of chess, man knows that he must first invest in

an enterprise to develop it, or even to sacrifice for ultimate gain. No other creature has the ability to initiate such a process.

- Humanity does not remain stagnant, for man has a capacity for invention, continuously improving the conditions of life. His unique reasoning power have no parallel in any other animal.

- Only man can deal with the abstract, or delve into knowledge for its own sake, with no motive of material gain . . . immerse himself into philosophy or the theoretical sciences . . . or be creative in the arts, music, and literature. These are unique to mankind.

II. The Computer—Superior to Man?

Accepting man's intellectual prowess as the quintessence of his superiority over animals confronts us with a problem today that did not exist previously: By this criterion is not a computer an improvement over man?

¹Rav Yosef Albo in his *Sefer Haikrim*, explains the verse (*Kohes* 3:19) "And the superiority of man over the animals is nothing," to classify man's superiority over animals as an actuality that cannot be physically sensed. This interpretation can be applied specifically to intelligence, in line with: "Wisdom is to be found from nothingness" (*Iyov* 28:12), describing human wisdom as an intangible entity.

²Rabbeinu Bechaye in his *Chovos Halevavos*, *Shaar Habechina* Chapter 5; Rambam in his Introduction to *Peirush Hamishnayos* and in *Yad Hachazaka*, *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, 4:8; see also *Moreh Nevuchim*, 1,72.

True enough, until now no computer has been constructed that can work with 10 billion details—the number of small nerve fibers in a man's brain, which are interconnected in a highly complicated web. This difference, however, is quantitative rather than qualitative. Moreover, scientists may someday succeed in building such a computer, perhaps even improving on the human brain.

Of greater significance, a computer can use its reasoning ability with greater efficiency than man. A person rarely draws on all of the knowledge he possesses. Many times, he acts in opposition to his better judgment. A computer would never do such a thing. Forgetfulness, also a human malady, never affects a computer. . . . At first blush, this would seem to indicate that man's singular superiority is actually under threat.

Man may find comfort in his control over the computer: it only can work within the framework of the information a person programs into it, and since the power of initiative is entirely in the hands of man, the machine, no matter how smart, is virtually on a lower level than man. Even so, might not a computer some day be designed that will monitor itself, and will be able to work in a completely independent manner?—What then? Will man have lost his claim to being the crowning touch of Creation?

Dealing with this question in depth is important—not only for reassurance, but to understand ourselves and to define our essence, so that we might then better comprehend what is expected of us in our lifetime.

III. Human Strengths . . . in Reasoning

Forgetfulness and Irrationality

Despite all of the foregoing discussion, there is, of course, no comparing man and machine, for man's so-called human frailties actually make him superior to all else in Creation.

At first glance, human forgetfulness is a true plague, especially when contrasted with one of a computer's main strengths—its infallible memory. Indeed, once facts have been fed into a computer, it never loses them. Information long programmed into the machine is just as significant in its rendering of a decision as freshly entered data. Yet, with all of the drawbacks of human forgetfulness, this weakness also works in positive ways for a person, helping him overcome the scars of painful memories, permitting him to overlook harm inflicted on him by others, allowing him to move ahead after suffering discouragement or defeat.³

Another point: computers work according to logical processes fed into it, responding in a manner that can be described as "rational." But it is impossible to construct a computer that will respond "irrationally." In contrast, man—by virtue of his reasoning power—is capable of

³See *Chovos Halevavos, Shaar Hachochina*, Ch. 5

Building a Superbrain

In Japan today a group of well-funded scientists is working to turn fantasy into reality: The Japanese aim to put the intelligence of a man into a machine.

Japan's most advanced computer laboratories have already begun their work. The latest generations of semiconductor chips have crammed so much computing power into so small a space that many specialists think it is now possible to make a real electronic brain. This summer two task forces of Japanese scientists and engineers, backed by pots of government money, began racing each other to come up with the world's first true artificial intelligence. The powerful Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) is backing a 10-year project to build the so-called Fifth Generation Computer, a machine that would have what one scientist calls a "man level" intelligence. Another research group, funded by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT), is trying to build a very similar machine.

"We'll be trying to set up in the machine an associative memory like the one in the human brain," says Tokyo University Prof. Tohru Moto-oka, a physicist who chaired the MITI working group that conceived the project. "In the present-day computers we can only find a memory if we know its 'address.' You have to tell the computer exactly where it is. In the mind, things don't work that way." The objective is a machine that can memorize images and store them by association. The MITI project has also set out to build a machine that will read, write and speak several languages; use common methods of communication including the telephone, television and facsimile, and most important, learn, think and figure out its own way to solve problems. "Our ideal," says Kazuhiro Fuchi of MITI's Electro-Technical Laboratories, who will lead the development team, "is to create a computer that programs itself."

Douglas Ramsey with Kim Willenson
NEWSWEEK, Aug. 9, '82

working against his own logic, to his ultimate advantage:

Two opponents hold a grudge against each other for years. Each of them marshals his forces and plots against his enemy, until by his reckoning, he is able to overcome the other. Cold logic dictates that any price in suffering that one would have to pay to win is worth the gains to be realized through victory. Yet, despite all of this, either of the belligerents is also capable of retreating from the confrontation and giving in. Capitulation

in this case does not flow from logic—but can in itself constitute a tremendous human victory.

In fact, some of mankind's most heroic achievements are in opposition to all rational considerations. The struggles of partisan groups in World War II against enemies that outnumbered them tenfold in manpower and ammunition were not rational, but they won the admiration of the world at large. . . . We Jews have always kept the *Shabbos*, even if it meant loss of income, even loss of one's job—an attitude that is not rational, yet to our view undeniably noble. . . . Most honorable, yet most defiant of rationality, is the willingness of intelligent individuals to forgo or abandon lucrative careers and even make a complete about-face in almost every aspect of their lives, and to devote themselves fully to Torah study and *mitzva* observance, as *baalei teshuva*—from the celebrated case of Rebbe Akiva through those of our own time. The highest of attainments can be those most void of conventional wisdom—that is, the kind of wisdom one programs into a computer.

By contrast, the Ten Spies used a rational argument in their opposition to entering *Eretz Yisroel*: "We cannot overcome the people, for they are stronger than we" (*Bamidbar* 13:31). Yet they were punished. They were expected to transcend simple mathematical calculations. Having done their figuring, they should have gone beyond the logic of numbers and acted on faith, before which all arguments—rational and commonsensical—must yield. (We will discuss the spiritual dimension of Man—its challenges and rewards—later.)

The Intuitive Leap

Even in making rational decision, man has something of an edge over a computer, for at times man can judge his various options and select what he feels is the most reasonable choice, never knowing for certain in advance what his criteria for selection will be. A computer works differently. When facing a problem, it must check out absolutely all possibilities, which can be just about limitless, and test them for suitability according to pre-programmed criteria. Since man could not possibly do this, he instead calls up from his vast storehouse of information only the few factors that he recognizes as being related to his subject of concern, and selects in an almost random manner the most likely candidates, testing only a portion of what might be considered.

How does man select from his stored information just those pieces of information that he needs? This is quite impossible to determine. Some have said that man's intuitive sense, which enables him to leap across gaps in knowledge and formulate opinions in all kinds of situations, is an expression of his being created in the image of G-d, of which we shall comment later. It is in regard to this intuitive sense of judgment in its pristine form that King Solomon said, "G-d made man upright" (*Koheles* 7:29).

IV. Beyond Logic: Sensitivity and Subjectivity

Man is an emotional creature. Unlike a computer, he has feelings that intrude into his thought process. He simply cannot avoid reacting personally to whatever he witnesses. This attribute, however, is considered a mark of humanity in a most positive way. "Inhuman" is a perjorative used to describe the person who fails to recoil in horror at the sight of human suffering. As an extreme case we have the infamous Adolf Eichmann who claimed not to be culpable for the murder of millions, which he had directed, because he was just a "cog in the machine," following orders, not passing judgment. Anyone with but a shred of humanity could never assume such a defense.

By contrast, a computer (a machine of sorts that is full of "cogs") cannot experience any sense of personal involvement. It merely measures and analyzes information. Should it be fed a baby's cry, a siren's wail, or the call of a *shofar*, it will measure power, pitch, the frequency of its wave length, and other such data, but it will not react. Imagine a person hearing any of these sounds and responding in such a cold, impersonal manner!

Human existence is enriched beyond anything mechanical by all the joys, sorrows, and excitements of life. These are exclusively man's to experience, for the entire world of emotions is unique to him. Love and hate, pity and cruelty, sorrow and joy—these are all expressions of man's essence. . . . When properly channeled, they inspire the striving for freedom and liberty, the will to achieve, a sense of pride, the quality of courage, the power of imagination. These noble impulses and drives are the exclusive realm of humanity, to inspire man, enrich his life, and influence his decisions.

Uppermost among all such suprarational forces within man is his capacity for faith in G-d; that crowning touch of humanity that makes him more than just a gifted animal. This faith, and the trust that it inspires, enables man to suffer all kinds of deprivations for a higher goal, and to strive to lead a better life. But this, too, will be dealt with later.

V. Dealing with Values: Free Choice and Accountability

One more facet of human intellectuality is the capacity to deal with relative values. To be sure, this is not an area to be measured or thought through the way that various masses and quantities are judged. Only man is charged with evaluating situations and then selecting good over evil; for only man is capable of doing so.

Just exactly how *does* one decide what is "good" and what is "evil"? Based on the information it is fed, a computer can conclude that one particular food is better in terms of nutrition or richer in caloric content. It can also quickly decide which medicine is most effective in a particular case, even in terms of the least side-effects. But a computer will never be able to come forth with: "It

is good for man to bear a yoke (of responsibility) in his youth." "Good" in this verse is qualitative not quantitative. All the more is a computer incapable of reaching the transcendent judgment: "It is good to praise G-d" (*Tehillim* 92,2).

Similarly, no computer will ever conclude that: "A good deed personally executed is greater than the act of giving charity"; or, "Better poor bread with tranquility than a house full of delicacies surrounded by dispute" (*Mishlei* 17,1). Relative worth in these cases is subject to judgment of a sort that cannot be measured, and is therefore beyond the purview of a computer. Similarly, the value of acting in accordance with the law—especially Torah law—cannot be appreciated by a machine, no matter how smart.

In a similar vein, preferring death to a life contrary to basic values that one considers inviolable is a human choice, one that is impossible to explain to a machine. A pang of conscience, a feeling of dissatisfaction—these are limited to man, who—in addition to a brain—has a soul . . . which brings us to the next crucial point.

VI. Striving for Spirituality

Humanity's greatest expression is in the area of religion, where man's wisdom not only sets him apart but also marks him as a spiritual, metaphysical being, created in the image of G-d. This exalted dimension is unique to humankind. Here he has no competition from other animals, and no machine can take his place.

The Divine spark in man demands that he shift his criteria for judgment from the material to the spiritual. From this elevated perspective, man is equipped to choose good and spurn evil, and through this, he is able to achieve communion with his Creator. The Torah instructs man on how to accomplish this through prayer and fulfillment of the commandments, which can even elevate man to prophecy. These are lofty spiritual characteristics, transcending all physical limitations. Here, man can achieve the epitome of human perfection.⁴ And through spiritual perfection, man can attain eternity when his soul ascends to the *Olam Hane-shamos* (World of Souls), even though his body is left to return to dust.

This potential is inherent to man from the very outset of his formation, as the Sages infer from the verse (*Bereishis* 2:7) "And the L-rd formed man." "And He formed," with an extra letter *Yud*, tells of two formings—one for this world and one for the World-to-Come (*Midrash Bereishis Rabba* 14:4).

The Flesh and the Spirit

It is understandable how logic and reasoning have a major role in guiding man in his strivings for spiritual-

⁴See *Kuzari*, V, 12.


ity. On the other hand, he must contend with other aspects of his humanity that are generally thought of as weaknesses—the urges and drives that are with him his entire lifetime.⁵ Rather than ignore his basic drives, he must utilize the entire range of his desires and urges, with proper judgment and wisdom. Of course, emotional drives can be a source of immense difficulties, but the battles that rage within man in effort to control these drives are precisely what make him human. It is within this framework that man must choose between good and evil. Only man is torn in this way, and only man is constantly called upon to exercise his power of choice.

Formed of both flesh and spirit, man is forever being pulled by both. According to the commentaries, the name "adam" (man) sums up man's essential condition, for the word *adam* is derived from two roots: the material basis of man "*adama*"—dust of the earth—and his spiritual aspect, the epitome of his striving—"adameh l'elyon"⁶—attempting to emulate the One above.

Men of Holiness

In view of man's unending emotional conflicts and struggles between good and evil, we might for a minute be envious of the angels, for they fulfill their commands with exactitude and incomparable efficiency, without conflict or hesitation. Among them, there is no hatred or rivalry.⁷

Upon a bit of thought, however, it should be obvious that any such envy is misplaced. The sages teach that despite everything, people—even though they are formed of mundane matter and suffer human weakness—are capable of rising above even the level of the angels.⁸ Angels have no choice but to do what is incumbent upon them, while man serves his Creator by his own free will and is thus far greater than they. After the *Akeida* (in which Avraham was ready to sacrifice his only son, Yitzchak, to G-d), the angel said to Avraham, "Now I know you fear G-d . . . from me," meaning to say "your fear of G-d is greater than mine." (*Sforno*, on *Bereishis* 22:12)

The Rebbe of Kotzk used to explain the passage (*Shemos* 22:30): "And you will be men of holiness for me," as implying that G-d has no lack of fiery, soaring angels. He wants us: that we, with our human feelings, shall be ever mindful of the concept of holiness, and be—not angels, but—men of holiness. 

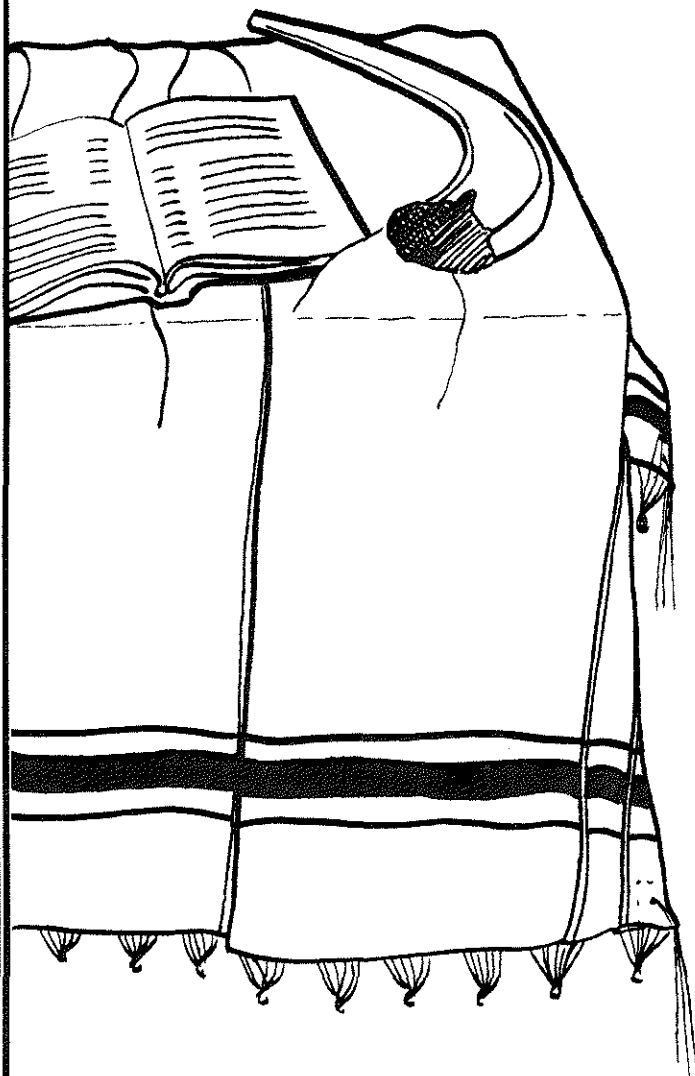
⁵The Sages explain the verse "And the L-rd G-d formed man—And He formed him—with two basic drives—the good inclination and the evil inclination" (*Bereishis* 2:7).

⁶*Ha'amek Davar*, *Bereishis* 1:26

⁷"And they grant one another permission, (to sanctify G-d's name)." —*Tefilla*

⁸In *Midrash Bereishis Rabba*, 1 Chapter 8, it is stated that if a person merits it, they say to him, "You preceded the angels (in creation)."

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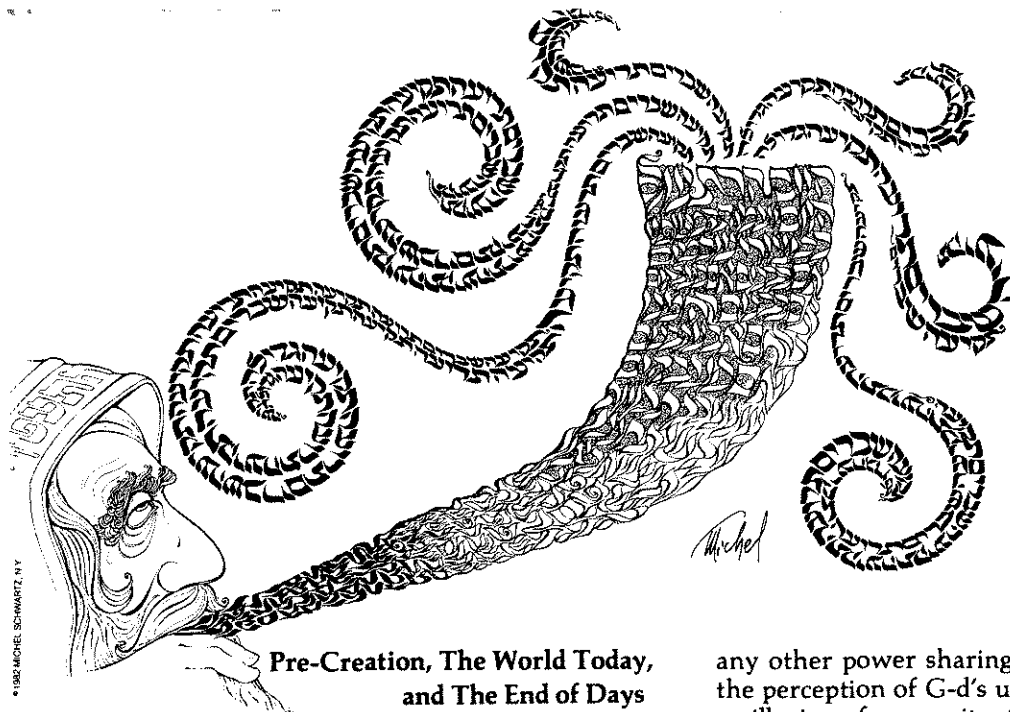
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Rosh Hashana-Trilogy of Unity



Pre-Creation, The World Today, and The End of Days

The essence of Rosh Hashana is summed up in the three parts of the *Mussaf* prayer: "*Malchios*"—the affirmation of G-d's rule over the entire world, "*Zichronos*"—the examination of mankind's deeds, and "*Shofros*"—various occasions of *shofar* blowing mentioned in the *Tanach* in connection with revelation and judgment. What theme binds together all three seemingly vaguely related topics? What is the axis around which *Rosh Hashana* as a whole revolves?

The *Ramchal** in *Daas Tevunos* explains that the only facet of the divine that is comprehensible to us is His unity, for G-d's Unity, as an absolute, can only be perceived in terms of what it is not: He is *not* divisible, nor does He share His power with any other force or being; He is *not* corporeal and can in no way be contained by limits of either time or space.

By contrast, any other aspect of the Divine is outside our realm of knowledge, beyond our grasp. G-d's wisdom is beyond the reach of human comprehension, as is His patience and His goodness. How can Man ever begin to fathom their infinite expanses?

Not only is unity comprehensible, it is the motif behind man's involvement in *Torah* and *mitzvos*. *Tosfos* (Gittin 9b) expresses this by saying that the term אמיתו של תורה (Truth of the Torah) refers to a *mezuzah*, which contains in it the "*Shema*," affirming G-d's unity. Truth in this case means inner essence, such as חכמת האמת (knowledge of truth), which refers to *Kabbala*—the inner essence of Torah. Employment of the term "Truth" as a reference to *mezuzah*, then, tells us that the unity of G-d forms the core or essence of Torah.

The *Ramchal* explains that G-d's unity is expressed in three different stages: During the pre-creation stage, G-d was one—exclusively so. There was no illusion of

any other power sharing His domain. After creation, the perception of G-d's unity became distorted, giving an illusion of non-unity. Good and bad, light and dark, and an endless variety of seemingly unconnected creations give the impression that there is no unifying factor in the universe. The third stage will be with us when *Moshiach* comes, and with one twist of the puzzle, each one of G-d's creations will slip into its proper position, all together proclaiming the unity of G-d.

If we are to sum up the *Ramchal*, we would say that even in today's cacophony of contradictions, two factors perforce unite the whole of creation: origin and purpose, past and future. Or to paraphrase the *Mishna* in *Avos*, "Know whence you originate, and where you are headed . . . and you will not sin."

Unity in Tefilla

Rosh Hashana, as the beginning of the year, must hold within it the essence of the entire year. (The Vilna Gaon says that the beginning of every prayer also contains within it the nucleus of the whole prayer.) Thus the axis upon which the beginning of the year revolves is G-d's unity, for "*Rosh*," besides meaning beginning, also means head; just as the head is the unifier of the body, allowing the eyes to absorb information that will direct the hands, and the ears to hear sounds that affect the feet (i.e. walking, dancing), and so on, so too does Rosh Hashana unite all divergent trends of the year.

This is inherent in the "*Malchios*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros*." segment of the Rosh Hashana *Mussaf* prayer. "*Malchios*" proclaims G-d's oneness as it was before creation, and as it is when untouched by His creation's misdeeds. "*Zichronos*" reflects the disharmony and disjunction present now: "For you have brought forth a statute of remembrance . . . to remember many deeds and an endless multitude of creations." The purpose of "remembering" is judgment of the world, which is an examination of how each being has advanced toward its goal. Our *Chazal* tell us that in judgment, each being enters individually, "one by one," reflecting the separateness and disun-

*Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746)

Rabbi Scheinman, a frequent contributor to these pages, studies in a Jerusalem kollel.

ity that prevails for the duration.

"*Shofros*" projects the revelation of G-d, proclaiming His unity. Whether it was Hashem's revelation at Mount Sinai with the blast of the *shofar*, showing there is no one but He, or the call of the *shofar* of *Moshiach* gathering in the scattered Jews lost around the globe, the *shofar* brings out the unity in that which is seemingly discordant.

Moreover, the sounds of the *shofar* itself contain all three elements: The *Ramban* in *Beha'alos'cha* explains that *teki'ah* is the sign of unity, being one continuous blast, while *teru'ah*—the series of short spurts of sounds—symbolizes fragmentation. That is why an assembly—the gathering together of Israel's people in the wilderness—was signalled with a *teki'ah*, while a journey—the breaking up the camp into separate traveling units—was proclaimed by a *teru'ah*.

Rosh Hashana is described in the Torah as "day of *zichron-teru'ah*—a remembrance of the *shofar* blast," the remembrance of judgment is linked to the short blasts of the *teru'ah*. There is also a requirement that a *teru'ah* must be preceded by a *teki'ah* and followed by a *teki'ah*, for even as we mark the world's current state of disharmony and disunity, we also bear in mind that all started with an evenly sounded *teki'ah*, and someday all will come together with one.

The Core of the Day's Theme

Unity as the essence of Rosh Hashana is reflected in many facets of the day:

- Rosh Hashana is celebrated not on the initial day of the creation of the world, but on the day of the creation of man because man is the uniting element of creation. The only common element shared by a kangaroo and a bat, for instance, is that they both—like all creation—are intended to serve man. The *Ramchal* in *Mesilas Yesharim* explains that anything used by a *tzaddik* finds fulfillment by being an auxiliary to the service of G-d. Rosh Hashana is the day when all of creation was granted the potential of unification by virtue of man's emergence on the scene.

- The two days of Rosh Hashana are considered, for halachic purposes, a "*Yoma Arichta*" or "one continuous day." Thus, whatever triggered the rabbinical ordinance of instituting the second day, the two days are united as one, and are treated as such.

- Rosh Hashana unites the seemingly conflicting emotions of joy and trepidation. We are enjoined to express both the solemnity of the day of judgment and all the joy of Yom Tov, with confidence that our verdict will be favorable.

- Torah and prayer are usually thought of as occupying the opposite ends of the spectrum. Someone who is totally immersed in Torah study (תורתו אומנתו) is absolved from praying.

Prayer and Torah are also different in form. Prayer has its distinct, prescribed times, while Torah is to be

studied "day and night" without interruption. The Ark that held the Tablets of the Law in the Temple was beyond spatial limitations—it stood in a place that according to simple mathematical calculations, could not possibly contain it. By contrast, the *mizbe'ach* (altar), symbolizing sacrifice and prayer, required a very precise place (see *Rambam*). Similarly, one must establish a definite place for prayer. Also, *korbanos* (sacrifices) as well as all Temple service could only be performed by a *Kohein* (priest), while Torah is described as lying in a corner waiting to be picked up by anyone willing to do so.

The reason for this divergence is that Torah and *tefilla* represent two opposing processes uniting the spiritual and the material. Torah preceded creation, making its roots unfathomable to us. The world was then created along the guidelines of the Torah, to give material expression to ideas and concepts that are transcendental.

Prayer, on the other hand, originated with man, as *Rashi* comments: Until man was created, there was no one to pray for rain. Prayer starts with the material sustenance, healing, and other mundane-related needs. The purpose of prayer is to elevate the material by associating it with G-d.

The prayers of Rosh Hashana, however, reflect the junction of these two processes. Our Rosh Hashana *tefillos* must consist of verses of Torah. (While *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* prayers also contain verses from Scripture, their inclusion is not obligatory.) Torah becomes incorporated in prayer, and prayer consists of Torah. It is the point where "heavens and earth kiss." If we probe these two activities to their innermost point, we will reach the core that is essence to both.

The Emerging Unity of Today's World

A person with a broader sense of the sciences sees this process taking place in science as well.

Matter was once thought to be made of different basic elements. Today we know that atomic particles are the building blocks of all elements. We are beginning to break down the different particles within atoms themselves to still smaller units of matter.


Energy and matter were shown to be interchangeable. Energy itself is being classified into ever smaller groupings.

Mathematics contains formulae that are useful for measuring the growth rate of bacteria, as for infinitely compounded interest rates. Statistical predictions are as valid for the eating habits of turtles as they are for the traffic fatalities on a holiday weekend.

The fact that scientists strive for the simplest set of rules is not just a matter of expediency. Theirs is an innate intuition that truth lies in simplicity. Even in regard to the origin of the world, there is mounting evidence that it all began in one spot, with one event, from one piece of matter. True, science alone cannot bridge the gap separating the "bang" and the producer

of the "bang," but the recognition of the oneness as expressed in the genesis of the world is a beginning.

There are times when one faces the world and it seems to be a meaningless array of numbered points, but there are directions on how to join these points to

one another. As they become connected, the entire field assumes more meaning, until the day arrives that one complete picture in its entirety stands before our eyes, and the unity of the origin is reflected in the unity of the end of days. 

FOR US, DEAR CHILD?

Mother Father
I remember your souls
today.
It is Yom-tov;
The Yizkor I'm going
to say.
Yes, those are tears that
you see in my eyes—
For you!

For us? Dear Child.
If we could
we would tell
you
that
we are crying
for your soul . . .
for the many times
that you "forgot"
to 'phone
to visit
to provide
the wrinkled needs
of aging hearts.

We would tell you,
furthermore,
that we are also
praying—saying
Yizkor:

Yizkor, Elokim
Please, please,
remember, Hashem,
that she didn't mean to sin.
She was busy,
always so busy,

impressing
addressing
arranging
changing
gravelling
travelling
scanning
planning
and manning
all kinds of
Good Things and
Worthy Causes.
(How heady the public
praises and the applauses!)


And then . . .
and then, Hashem,
It was not
her fault . . .
It was we, her parents
who were
the errants.
We gave and
did for her
providing
delighting
protecting
deflecting
profusely
excusing,
and she learned
to take and take
for granted.
We never
taught her to give
and that
there would come
a time
when
her giving to us
would constitute
our soul life-line.

Yes!
We should have
demanded, Hashem,
for her sake
as well as
Your mitzvah of
kibud ov vo'eim.
But . . .
to her credit,
one most
important things:
She did do
all she could,
whenever
sickness set in.

Really, that meant
a lot;
it's a comfort
too many parents
haven't got.

And now, say Yizkor,
Dear Child, and
give Tzedokoh for us.
But let
your crying be
mostly for
yourself.
So that your days may be long,
and so that some day
your children
will not do
the same
to you.

—RUTH FINKELSTEIN

Mrs. Finkelstein, a Lakewood resident, is a professional writer whose "Mendel the Mouse" has been instructing and entertaining OLOMEINU readers for fifteen years. 



Entering its seventh year, the Mechon HaHoyroa concept continues ב"ה to demonstrate its effectiveness

Achievements thus far:

- Over 110 advanced Talmudic scholars are currently under full Mechon HaHoyroa programs to complete the entire Four Sections of the Shulchan Aruch. Five men from the original seven that launched Mechon HaHoyroa will complete Choshen Mishpat (Business Law) after 6½ years of intensive study.

- Ten men have already received Yadin-Yadin ordination, after examination by Gedolei Torah in Eretz Yisroel on 262 chapters of Choshen Mishpat with Nosei Keilim (major commentaries), as well as on pertinent chapters on Hilchos Ribbis.

- Mechon HaHoyroa has founded, and now guides and supports 7 distinct Kollel groups: 4 in Jerusalem, 1 in Ashdod, 2 in Monsey.

- The Mechon HaHoyroa kollelim are handling *dinei Torah* in the full context of Shulchan Aruch, and are dealing with a steady stream of halachic queries, producing an impressive volume of שו"ת responsa.

- The ripple effect from Mechon HaHoyroa has reached many other yeshivos and kollelim, inspiring the setting of long-range goals and the introduction of more substantial stipends in these other institutions.

- Mechon HaHoyroa sponsors an incentive plan to encourage enrichment programs for teenage students. Its "Veshinantom" organization offers cash incentives to yeshiva students to broaden their knowledge of Talmud, rewarding them for passing comprehensive *bekiyus* examinations on 50 or more *blatt Gemora*. Over 250 boys from a wide range of Jerusalem yeshivos participated last year, with their prize money credited to them in special bank accounts.

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*We offer a brief summary of the premise of the Mechon HaHoyroa for the sake of those who did not have an opportunity to learn about it:

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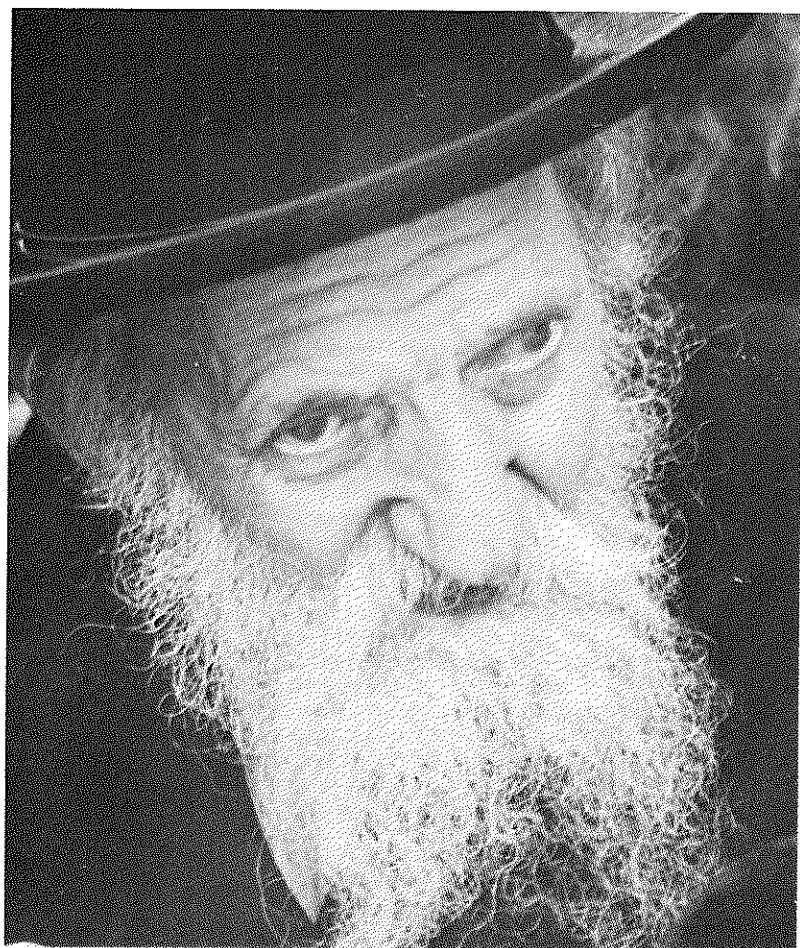


Photo: DOVID YANKELEWITZ

A Rebbe Passes Away, and the World Weeps The Skullener Rebbe זצ"ל

It is rare that the passing of an elderly saintly Chassidic Rebbe should attract attention beyond his circle, and stir the hearts of the widest possible spectrum of world Jewry. Such was the case on 29 Elul/August 18 with the *petira* (death) of the Skullener Rebbe, Rabbi Eliezer Zisya Portugal זכר צדיק לברכה, at the age of 86.

The Rebbe was a *tzaddik* of unusual stature who had become a legend in his own time. While his rare purity of character, his *tzidkus* and his boundless *Aharas Yisroel* (love for his fellow Jews) would have won him admiration in any era, they were especially awe-inspiring in his particular time and place.

• In this era marked by narcissism and selfishness, he devoted his life completely to helping others, saving countless lives! Immediately after

World War II, he adopted close to 400 orphaned children and, incredibly, took care of their needs as though they were his own children. His Rebbetzin cooked for them, and he led many of them to the *chupa*. He remained in Rumania after the Communists took control of the country and ministered to the personal and spiritual needs of countless others—persuading a girl not to marry out of the faith, bribing a prison guard to permit food to reach an inmate, “convincing” a state official to permit a fellow Jew to immigrate, while he stayed on, eventually serving several prison sentences under the most brutal conditions for his activities.

On one occasion he actually gave his hard-won exit visa to a head of a family of eleven. When the official whom he had “paid” for the visa, in a

fit of anger and confusion, accused him of renegeing on their agreement, the Rebbe replied, “Eleven souls are more important than one.”

Up until his final years—even when blind and frail—he personally administered his *Chesed L’Abraham* network of *hatzala* (rescue) and educational institutions, totally unconcerned about himself.

• In a land of brutality and oppression, he was the epitome of love, sensitivity, and forgiveness. After his arrival in America in 1960, he continued to work feverishly, tirelessly for the release of hundreds and hundreds of Jews, sending them packages, helping them travel to America or Israel, starting them out in business, paying for the education of their children.

An aide once pointed out that a woman whom he had brought over

from Europe had actually informed the Rumanian government of his religious activities, resulting in his arrest and imprisonment. Why go to such effort and expense to save a person of her ilk?

"You have no idea how much she suffered beforehand, and how tempting the authorities make it to inform," the Rebbe said with tears in his eyes. "Zie's doch a Yiddishe tochter—you'll see how she'll change!" Then he added, "What do you think Lot looked like when Avraham Avinu pleaded with God that he be spared destruction from Sodom?"

Numerous religious Jews, many in Chassidic garb, confess to having been *mechallel Shabbos befarhesya* (public Shabbos desecrators) in Rumania, before the Rebbe had gained their release; and only now—through the Rebbe's love and selflessness—did they come to realize the value of leading a Torah life.

- In a time of egocentricity, the Rebbe was the spirit of simplicity and humility, both when he was under a system that thrived on duplicity, and when in our own land of unabashed overstatement.

In an interview (to which the Rebbe consented so as to publicize his *Chesed L'Abraham Fund*) the Rebbe was asked how he and his Rebbetzin managed to care for the personal needs of so many children after the war. Replied the Rebbe, "*Der Heiliger Bashefer hott rachmones gehatt oif zeine kinder—The Holy Creator had mercy on His children.*" The Rebbe? His role didn't count!

In his *tzava'a* (ethical will), read at his funeral, he requested all assembled to forgive him if they ever gave him contributions for his holy work because they thought him a *tzaddik*—which (he protested) he was not. "So let all gathered say *Machul lach! Machul lach! Machul lach!* (We forgive you! We forgive you! We forgive you!)"

- In an age of shedding inhibitions and brazenness, this singular saint dealt with the moral dregs of society—high political officials and lowly prison wardens in Rumania—



and became involved in the personal problems of many a Jew who had lost or seemed never to have had the basics of *Kedushas Yisroel*. Yet his own life was a model of spirituality and sanctity: "Why don't we (in America) teach our children of the importance of *shmiras einayim* (guarding our vision from moral contamination)," he pleaded with an educator—only demanding of others what he himself did.

- When doubt and agnosticism have become fashionable, the Rebbe became a symbol of unyielding belief. "Help your children with the basics of *emuna*," he instructed a conference of youth leaders of *Pirchei Agudath Israel*—themselves senior yeshiva students. "Teach the children *Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith*. Inspire them with tales of spiritual heroism from the Midrash and the Talmud," he pleaded ... while he, in turn, represented a fresh chapter in the on-going saga of Jewry's eternal heroism.

- In our "do-it-yourself era" when every man pulls for himself, his *avoda in tefilla*—the hours upon hours

of all-encompassing concentration when he poured out his heart to G-d in his prayers, day after day—was staggering. *Shacharis* was a four-hour effort. Saying the *Shma* on an ordinary evening *Maariv* took twenty five minutes. ... It should be no surprise that when he said his customary *Shma* in the intensive care unit of a hospital during a recent illness, the doctors were alarmed when the cardiogram readings fluctuated wildly with every carefully articulated word.

- In the darkest of conditions, the Rebbe never failed to see the light of G-d's intervention.

"*Baruch gozeir umekayeim—We bless G-d for decreeing and sustaining,*" said the Rebbe. "He passes terrible decrees, but He grants us the strength to endure the worst: When the Communists imprisoned me, they tried to break my spirit. After days of starving me, only allowing me a bit of water, they gave me a bowl of steaming, tempting vegetable soup—with a piece of *treifa* meat floating in it ... and they gleefully watched as I hungrily picked up the spoon. But then I spotted the meat, and I would not give in. *Baruch gozeir umekayeim. G-d gave me the strength to refuse!*"

His joyful melodies celebrating hope and confidence in G-d's love for His people have become classics.

- In this time of alleged mutual exclusivity of heart and mind, thought and action, love and discipline, the Skullener Rebbe had mastery of both aspects of every paradox—immersed in the spiritual and Kabbalistic phases of each *mitzva* as well as the demands of *halacha*, down to its most minute detail ... devoted to the *Klal* and the individual—his body and his soul.

In this age of pinpoint specialization and general diletantism, the Skullener Rebbe was a broad-spectrum specialist: he devoted all his energies toward being a *gutte Yid*, and he succeeded in a manner that embraced his entire being, as he in turn embraced all Jewry.

Who will ever fill the void he leaves behind! —N. WOLPIN

Rejoice With/Without Trepidation

THE JEWISH OBSERVER recently featured two articles that discussed the current proliferation of English language literature on Torah subjects, ranging from translations of classics to original commentaries and halachic works. The first article, by Rabbi Hanoch Teller (March '82), sounded a note of trepidation—that there is a risk that a basic Jewish attribute, our distinctive language, is being lost; in addition, English language texts preclude the essential ingredient of *yegi'a*—expending effort on study. In his article (May '82), Rabbi Mendel Weinbach described the entire phenomenon positively—as a “further step in the pragmatic determination of educational priorities.”

Both writers, however, did describe the English language publishing explosion as cause for rejoicing—Teller: “Rejoice—With Trepidation”—nowhere does he suggest that these books should not be published. *Gedolei Yisroel* have gone on the record as encouraging these works as making major contributions to the spread of

Torah knowledge and neither writer would question their judgment, nor would JO publish such articles. And both recognize the need for exercising caution in using English language books—Weinbach: “From Trepidation to Joy”—he presents measures for graduating from total dependence on use of translations to independent study of the originals.

The basic differences between the two lie in stress and in how seriously the attendant problems are to be viewed.

Readers expressed a keen interest in the discussions, and submitted a number of letters on the topic to the JO editorial office, many underscoring points only on one side or the other. To print all the letters in their entirety would prove repetitive and present the arguments weighted far beyond the intentions of the original writers. Instead, we are selecting key paragraphs from the letters and presenting them by topic, in hope of clarifying the discussion point by point.

English: Acceptable or Ideally to be Avoided?

Several writers find English totally acceptable as a language of Torah study:

□ Most of us think in English and are at home with English terms—similar to Yiddish for the last few generations. When the Torah was given and explained in seventy languages, the term “explained well” was used. This should be the prime consideration: that it be well understood, employing whatever language best conveys the thought to the student.

MOSHE GOLDBERGER

Staten Island, NY

(Rabbi Goldberger, a member of the Kollel of the Yeshiva of Staten Island, is author of several *halacha* works in English)

□ To me at least, English is not simply a “gentile” language to be spurned, any more than America is simply and wholly a *treyfa medina*. Any language (including Aramaic of old) is an instrument of expression, like a violin. In the hands of a craftsman it can serve the Almighty's purposes: *aley higayon bechinor*. Translation is a method of communicating thought. It again is a craft. It's fraught with responsibility, requiring care. But there is firm evidence of its powerful impact and effect in bringing people nearer and into the world of Torah. It is doing its share in moving us on toward a supreme goal of having a *col bonayich limmudei haShem*—in *Lashon Hakodesh*.

CHARLES WENGROV

Jerusalem

(Mr. Wengrov, who is responsible for rendering into English such

books as: *Sefer Hachinuch*, *The Chofetz Chaim on the Siddur* and *A Tzaddik in Our Time*, has been called “the dean of the translators. . .”)

Others are appalled at the growing acceptance of these works.

□ It may sound funny for a woman to comment on an article decrying the effects of English *seforim*.

. . . Despite the abundance of *seforim* in English I cannot help feel abashed when I see men learning them. Maybe it is because I am from the old school, but aren't we all—or shouldn't we be?

At first I thought that these books weren't for men, but now I see that I was wrong. Rabbi Teller is right, we have lost a culture.

I shudder at the thought that my sons may *shuckel* to a translation

instead of over what their fathers and grandfathers had learned. I doubt that I am alone in my fears.

LEAH FOX
Montreal, Quebec

□ When English translations first came out it was clear whom they were intended for—only those who needed them. There was no attempt to win over the yeshiva crowd who was content spending their time and money on *seforim* in their original.

Now the English books are viewed as sacrosanct. If English books don't hug a *Shas*, then your *seforim* shrank is considered incomplete. Rabbi Teller is the first one to warn against these potential hazards.

SHMUEL BRADIE
Unsdorf, Jerusalem

Historical Precedents

The interpretations of historical precedents for Torah works in the vernacular also varied from writer to writer:

□ Rashi's words in Old French only bolster Rabbi Teller's point. Rashi uses these words just like the *Gemora* frequently cites indigenous delicacies, weights, coins, etc. to help grasp something hard to describe in a Jewish tongue. Rashi did NOT write his monumental works in Old French and if he would have he would not be Rashi.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST
(affiliated with a Brooklyn yeshiva)

□ Mr. Teller mourns the loss of past glories, when all was written in *Lashon Hakodesh*, or at least in Hebrew characters. The Talmud took form and was recorded in Aramaic, not Hebrew. It was the *lingua franca*, but a foreign language. *Rambam* wrote his Arabic-language works in Hebrew characters (and so too R. Saadya Gaon, R. Bachya ibn Pakuda, R. Yehuda Halevi, et al.) because only a select few in the entire world, Jews or non-Jews, could read Arabic script. It was not an age of literacy in Arabic. There is no evidence that *Rambam* (et al.) used Hebrew charac-

ters for reasons of *kedusha*, wishful thinking or imputation notwithstanding. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch may have studied his Torah commentary with untranslated bits of Talmud and Midrash, but ordinarily he preached and wrote in pure German (without the use of Hebrew characters).

CHARLES WENGROV

□ Teller would have us believe that the *Rambam's* commentary on *Mishna* written in Arabic but with Hebrew characters is somehow more "Jewish" than the ArtScroll/Mesorah *Mishnayos* containing the actual wording of the *Mishna* together with an English language translation and commentary. Presumably the *Rambam* used Hebrew characters because his reading public could not understand *Lashon Hakodesh*. Certainly the *Rambam* did not resort to utilizing Hebrew characters to provide a Jewish flavor to the *Mishna*. Many *Gaonim* and *Rishonim* did the same as did R' Yaakov Culi when he wrote *Me'am Lo'ez* in Ladino with Hebrew characters. They all used the only language and alphabet that would be understood.

SIMCHA SCHORR
New York City

Seeing the Original

Is there a definite advantage beyond sentiment and yegi'a to studying the Hebrew?

□ The study of Torah never should be considered similar to the study of other bodies of knowledge. True *limud Hatorah* involves *kedusha*, *ruchniyus*, *mesora*, and *ameilus* (don't ask me to translate these because English words cannot possibly do justice to these concepts). Also, what happens to the principle of *osiyos mach'kimos* (the very letters impart wisdom)?

The student of Torah must learn to think in the Torah language if his knowledge is to be Torah rather than merely information. It would take an article in itself to briefly discuss the essence of Torah learning within the context of our ability to

understand it. Each letter and the structure of every word is a world unto itself. Any knowledgeable Torah student knows that there is a world of meaning in the *Lashon Hakodesh*; many *drashos* of Chazal can be understood only in the context of *Lashon Hakodesh*. The goal of the serious Torah student must be to learn to think in the terms of the Torah language.

JOSEPH SITTNER
Far Rockaway, N.Y.

In response to this caution we find:

□ There is one very important point which I would like to emphasize regarding Feldheim books: Almost all our English translations are published together with the original Hebrew text (usually vowelized) on facing pages. Often we make special efforts to prepare a new Hebrew text using manuscripts and early editions. When we published the *Mishnah Berurah*, we innovated a black and gray color scheme to make it easier for the reader to follow the Hebrew text while using the translation. These methods should make it clear that our purpose is to encourage the reader to learn and understand the original and not to replace it.

YAAKOV FELDHEIM
Feldheim Publishers Limited
Jerusalem

(Feldheim Publishers are pioneers in the field of English language publications of Torah literature.)

The Margin of Error

Since most of the works put out by the established publishers are meticulously edited, is there genuine need for the note of caution sounded by Hanoach Teller in regard to inaccuracies? Here, too, there's no unanimity:

□ The danger of inept translations is well taken but Teller failed to cite such errors in any of the new books constituting this "literary deluge." Indeed, by fabricating his own hypothetical translations of the words

"chessed" or "adam," he indicates that he was unable to discover such errors in the works that he is criticizing. All will agree that all scholarly works in any language should be of high standard.

SIMCHA SCHORR

□ Teller is correct in pointing out (there are many more examples) that translations have been discouraged and have caused trouble in the past. There is no reason why they may not generate pitfalls in the future. Even those publishers concerned and conscientious enough to spend time and money on editing (and reediting) cannot ferret out every error and ambiguity. Aside from words which defy translation, many words and phrases are dependent upon context, nuance, taste, etc.

ELIOT KAPLAN
Brooklyn, N.Y.

□ In *Vayikra* 20:17, re: brother marrying sister, *chessed* cannot mean kindness. Fine. So what does it mean? If I had to translate it, I would first check *meforshim*, the more the better, taking notes. Then I might have to sit down and think, perhaps with a thesaurus in hand (remember *yegi'as haTorah*?), till I had something satisfactory. At most it might need an explanatory note. But the problem is not insurmountable, and no reason to stop all translation.

On *adam* translated as man, leading to an error in *halacha*, let me note that *soferim* also make mistakes, and no one has yet suggested they stop writing *sifrey Torah*.

CHARLES WENGROV

□ If Teller intended his essay for a lazy *yeshiva bachur*, he should have written it in a completely different vein. . . . The problem of the possible misuse of translations deserves serious treatment but there is no doubt that these books are needed and should be published.

I hope that soon the day will come when *ומלאה הארץ דעה*. Then we will

be happy to be the first Torah publishers to put out books only in *Lashon Hakodesh*.

YAAKOV FELDHEIM

The Yegia Factor

There is not even full agreement that use of translations in place of Hebrew text constitutes a loss of yegi'a for the more seasoned scholar. This difference of opinion was expressed by people in position to know; on the one hand:

□ I find it difficult to comprehend why someone with the background and the ability to read the original should read a translation. Translations should be used primarily by those who need it. I, too, fear [and I talk from experience] that people who should and could learn from the originals will allow themselves to be guided by the *Meforshim* and insights of the translator rather than their own efforts.

(RABBI) DOVID OPPEN
Menahel, Machon Devorah
Jerusalem

□ I do not understand the objections to Teller's article calling for caution in dealing with translations. The purpose of our work in the field of translations is to enable the student to advance to studying from the original.

SHRAGA SILVERSTEIN
Jerusalem

(Rabbi Silverstein is a noted translator of many classical works, including Luzzato's *Mesilas Yesharim* and *Daath Tevunos*, published by Feldheim)

□ Rabbi Teller made a point which, albeit eloquently written, he did not invent. Hanoach Teller merely transcribed *Aleph Bais* in *Yeshiva Chinuch*—avoid shortcuts.

The tragedy is that it sounds so radical today. Maybe it is a reflection of our generation who shuns using their head for anything—holy or secular.

NAME WITHHELD . . .
Brooklyn

In contrast we have:

□ Mr. Teller deplores the appearance of *halacha* in English: It may damage or diminish the *yegi'as haTorah* of our fine stalwart *bnei Torah*. To me, I fear, *yegi'as haTorah* connotes a certain attitude to learning: a zest for knowledge of what the *Ribono Shel Olam* gave us, starting from Sinai, and a willingness to work hard for it, for its own sake. And that (I believe) is inculcated by a really good teacher in a really good pupil. It is true, as *Chazal* state, that the Torah learned at the greatest cost of toil, effort and struggle is the best retained. But does that mean that all of Torah should be made an obstacle course, the bigger the obstacles the better? Or would it make more sense to postulate that where part of the Torah can be acquired easily and swiftly, go right ahead, and apply your *yegi'as haTorah* to other areas, which can't be learned easily and swiftly? Or do logic and common sense not come into this at all?

CHARLES WENGROV

Are There Any Exceptions?

□ In *halacha* works, the primary concern is to master requisite information to keep *Shabbos* properly, recite the *brachos* correctly and so on. If *yegi'a* is to be the determinant regarding which text one uses, and as a result the student is slow in amassing information, or errs in his understanding of the text, I would say that he has made a very poor choice, indeed!

DAVID ROSNER
Brooklyn, N.Y.

□ Mr. Teller notes that since reading Zelig Pliskin's excellent *Guard Your Tongue*, he no longer dips into *Chofetz Chaim*. From the little I know about the *Chofetz Chaim*, had he been told of something like this I

think he would have smiled indulgently, shrugged and waved his hand in dismissal. He would have been happy to know that another Jew was getting information about *lashon ha-ra* out of his source-book, even if from an English *kli sheyni*.

CHARLES WENGROV

□ Why shouldn't a linear 'Rashi translation be used by the many yeshiva students who skim through Rashi without understanding every word?

I think that many yeshiva students are embarrassed to admit it, but these English *seforim* are very useful to them, and they help them to really appreciate the original Hebrew and to eventually become a full-fledged *talmid chacham*.

MOSHE GOLDBERGER

□ A strong case may be presented that time spent (often futilely) in developing one's own concept of the weaving process and machinery when a description is readily available constitutes *bittul Torah*; so, too, not using available aids and quotes for translation purposes or technical information may be *bittul Torah*. I too have no particular desire to see the *Ketzos HaChoshen* in English, but if and when that occurs it would not diminish the *yegi'as haTorah* required in learning and understanding the *Ketzos*. A translation will not transform the *Ketzos* into light reading material.

SIMCHA SCHORR

Others have argued that easy reading does lead to superficial thinking, and an English language Ketzos should therefore never see light of day.

Original works in English are generally accepted as another matter:

□ Correctly defined, the problem is not one of a careful translator making errors, but of the student being tempted to read an English text where he would have had to study (and ponder) a Hebrew one. Thus, when e.g. Rashi is studied in the English translation, there is an al-

most irresistible tendency at superficial absorption: as a result there is a lack of understanding, or even misunderstanding. We most definitely do need translations—but also the strongest possible emphasis that they are crutches, only to be used as aids.

A VETERAN EDUCATOR
New York City

□ I was once approached by someone with a request to borrow a copy of the ArtScroll *Daniel* for a Rosh Yeshiva who was learning the *sefer* and wanted to see how it treated certain topics. This, too, is a lesson in *gadlus*: to use all the means at our disposal to grow in our understanding of Torah, instead of avoiding what is available only in English because of the stigma attached.

MOSHE GOLDBERGER

On Your Own

Once the advantages and hazards of using English translations have been spelled out, does the serious student maintain his sense of balance, and only consult them as much as is absolutely necessary? Different readers are of different opinion on the matter:

□ An eye-opening insight from an English *sefer* can go a long way in helping a *talmid shteig* to the point where he can use the original without such aids, which of course is essential to true *gadlus*.

MOSHE GOLDBERGER

□ Just as a dictionary is solely for reference, so too should English translations be used only as reference material. It should have no place as primary study material for the Yeshiva student. (This letter is not referring to adults who are limited in study time or in knowledge of Torah language.) Yet some teachers have encouraged its use as text material.

JOSEPH SITTNER

□ The decision to risk using English books "for the purpose of a students greater Torah knowledge," may in

fact be a myopic decision. The 16 year-old Yeshiva *bachur* hooked on a Soncino *Shas*, Hertz *Chumash*, Artscroll *Nach*, English *Mishnah Berurah*, *Mussar* books in English may know more than his less-liberal peer, but when he enters *Beis Midrash* this lead will plummet—unless they begin translating the *Rashba*, *Divre Yechezkael*, Reb Boruch Ber etc.

A BAAL TESHUVA

□ Having personally attended a Baal Teshuva Yeshiva, I am well aware of the assets of these books; aware as well of how difficult it is to be weaned away from them. (Where would I, and countless like me, be without the Linear translation of Rashi on *Chumash*? But on the other hand there comes a time. . . .) But I cannot emphasize enough how discouraging it is to see these same books being used indiscriminately by the students and graduates of distinguished yeshivos who should know better.

SHMUEL BRADIE

□ I believe that Rabbi Weinbach has taken some important steps to ensure that his students not obtain a distorted view on what is "learning." But how many *Bnei Torah*, outside the walls and influence of the Yeshiva, will exert this kind of self-discipline?

G. NACHUM BITOSZ
Brooklyn, N.Y.

A final editorial note:

□ As all agree, the proliferation of English language Torah works is a most encouraging sign, and cause for—yes, joy. How these works are to be used for maximum benefit will vary from *sefer* to *sefer* and from *talmid* to *talmid*.

The individual would best be advised to consult his Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi, or mentor to determine how best to chart his own course in Torah growth with the richness of English language works now becoming available.

N. W.

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A JEWISH DREAM

Portraits in Anguish

Visiting an old-age home is seldom a joyful experience, but looking in on Uncle Fishel after his wife passed away leaving no children, was a responsibility. He was alone, and his warm welcome made me feel like a better person. So once every two weeks I dropped in to see Uncle Fishel.

He had lived an active life in a world long gone. A grocer, who lived with his wife behind their busy little store in Brownsville, he was king in his local synagogue. Little of local community interest took place without him. He was vice president of the free-loan fund, occasional chairman of a herring-and-boiled-potato *Melava Malka*, and reliable member of the *Chevre Kadisha*. He was of a generation that studied *Midrash* on *Shabbos* afternoons and *Ein Yaakov* on Monday and Thursday evenings. Now that world was gone—someone locked the door and threw away the key—and with nowhere to turn, he was counting out his days in the routine of similar sad company.

He shared a room with a *Landsman* of his wife, a Galicianer who refused to share a different room with a Litvak. The two managed to keep out of each other's way, finding occasion to share a few words, although the roommate—Mr. Altman was his name—was a quiet fellow. Most often on my visits, I would meet him and exchange greetings, but little more.

It was from Uncle Fishel that I learned more about the other gentleman. He had lived in East New York—a shopworker who looked after his wife and two sons, a *shul Yid* who was a member of the *Chevre Mishnayos*. The older son went to public school and afternoon Talmud Torah until Bar Mitzva. The father, sensing the pull of forces beyond his control, enrolled the younger son in a yeshiva elementary school, struggling to meet tuition payments as he

hoped for a greater spiritual reward from him—"Kaddish insurance," he had called it.

The glamour of a new society asserted too strong a pull on both boys, and the father's poor command of the new language of opportunity was too weak to hold them. The older son left home for a job, the younger for college. Both dutifully wrote regularly, and called on Mother's Day and Father's Day. By the time Mr. Altman's wife passed away and he came to the old-age home he was embittered by hopes gone astray. He was in New York, with one son in California and the other in Florida, both married and with children who had never met their *Zaydie*.

These two old men, Uncle Fishel and Mr. Altman, were a portrait in anguish. The past gone, the future non-existent, the present bleak, each held on because it was the only thing to do. My uncle at least had me, but his roommate had less than that. And so, even after my uncle left this world, I kept in touch with the other man.

Since he wasn't my uncle, I didn't go that often. I sent cards for Rosh Hashana and Chanuka, and brought *mishlo'ach manos* for Purim. Although he wasn't friendly, I couldn't ignore this new association which was thrust upon me. After two years, a Chanuka card was returned to me by the home with a note, informing me of Mr. Altman's passing. A chapter in my life, I thought, was closed. At Uncle Fishel's *Yahrzeit*, I would reflect briefly on the other man.

Encounter at 30,000 Feet

Meanwhile, my own life made its demands: family, business, friends, and community, the normal current of concerns. Splashing in the mainstream leaves little room for contemplating have-nots. Live long enough, however, and threads of previous experiences re-appear.

Some years later, my wife and I took a trip to Israel. Aboard the plane was a UJA mission, middle-class committed Jews with little or no religious understand-

Rabbi Schwartz, rabbi of Congregation Kol Israel in Brooklyn, and public information advisor for Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools for Israel, is author of *American Life, Shtetl Style*.

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ing. When a sunrise *minyan* was assembled, one of the mission members joined in. Shiny yellow *yarmulka*, silk *tallis*, small *tefillin*, I assumed he was a *Kaddish*-sayer. But he wasn't. Then I recalled how at dinner the night before, he had a Kosher tray, while his wife didn't, though he ate with his head uncovered.

We struck up a conversation, and he told me his story. He was a salesman in St. Louis, with three children. The younger two were in a day school, which accounted for his own limited religious practices. His wife was reluctant to go along, consenting only to keep the house Kosher and light candles Friday evening. She agreed to the day school, but her motivation was not ideological: their oldest child, a girl, had taken to drugs while in public school and was now living with a gentile boy. To save the other kids, they turned to their local day school, at the price of bringing religious conflict into the home.

Follow-Up in St. Louis

This experience would have remained dormant in my mental file, except for a turn of events that two years later brought me to St. Louis on a business trip; among the people at a meeting I attended was none other than the mission member. He remembered me, and asked, since I was to stay at a hotel overnight, if he could take me to his home in the evening to meet his children. I accepted his invitation.

As we entered into his driveway, I could observe the Jewish version of the American dream: neat private house in a manicured neighborhood, two cars in the garage, an "I gave to Hadassah" sticker on the front door. Undoubtedly the family belonged to a country club, perhaps a synagogue too, and bought their share of Israel bonds. Academic achievement, economic accomplishment, community service—a beautiful shell with little content, a well-groomed body with a famished soul.

His wife joined us in the living room, and presented their fifteen-year-old-son and thirteen-year-old daughter. The boy wore a *yarmulka*, and the girl was modestly dressed—friendly kids—who along with their parents, made me feel at home.

I asked the children about school: their teachers, their study programs, their friends, and how it all compared to their public school days. At first, they said, change was difficult, but they slowly adjusted and grew into their new situation, which they were now content with.

I took in the scene, including the tell-tale bookcase: bestseller, dictionary, books on Israel, Bible in Hebrew and English, paperbacks, and a *Siddur*. And prominently displayed were framed photographs of two old couples: one, a traditional pair, primly dressed, the man in a skullcap; the other, of the Yiddishist school, his hair uncombed, hers drawn back in a bun. Two

worlds, I mused, long in conflict, both now gone. It accounted for my host's eating Kosher on the plane while his wife didn't. She had never seen it as a child.

But something was nagging at me, something I could not place. We continued talking. My host and his wife spoke of their satisfaction with their children's school, while my gaze kept returning to the pictures.

The Altman Chronicle

"Our parents," she said. "Neil and I met at work in Los Angeles. He was a boy from Brooklyn and I was from the Bronx, so we thought it natural."

I stood up and walked to the pictures. Taking a closer look, the pieces to the puzzle in my mind fell into place.

My host's name, I knew, was Neil Altman, pronounced "awult-min." There, in the picture of his parents, was Uncle Fishel's roommate, Mr. Altman, pronounced "ahlt-mahn."

"I knew your father," I said to my host.

He looked at me in amazement, partly from the "isn't-it-a-small-world" syndrome, partly from discovering a missing link to a treasure.

"You did?" It was his wife. "How?"

I sat down to spin my little tale to four speechless people.

Yet no one in that room was more astounded than myself. A story familiar to me took on a whole different complexion because of a totally unexpected framework of circumstances. It was exciting to associate the old-age home in New York with this split-level family home in a St. Louis suburb. But it was mind-boggling to suddenly realize how the chain of old Mr. Altman's life and tradition had a new claim to carrying on, even though he had died with a sense of it's having ended. He had given up on his sons, and had never met their children, yet here were two grandchildren who could be picking up where he had left off. Somehow, the world of the fathers came mysteriously back to claim the grandchildren.

At the same time, I thought of Neil's in-laws. They must have raised their daughter on Yiddish as her vehicle of Jewish identity. Yet not one Yiddish item could I see in their bookcase. And if they had been working-class Socialists, their daughter was certainly not living as one. Grandchildren in day school? Absolute heresy.

Neil and his family listened closely as I sketched before them the last sad image of their patriarch. Neil could tell his children how his father died, how he and his brother came to the funeral and returned some months later for the unveiling. But it was from me that they learned, however meagerly, of how he had lived.

More than that: I was also a functioning member of their grandfather's world. His values were mine, his

Continued on page 26

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אלו לאבותינו נהנו העד תפסו ברוי ודאי באמצע בעברות נבדות הקדוש השני, אבל חסרונות
הוא כי לא נהנו, כי חסרונות אחרים הראויים להיות ואשר הישיבה ובראשם כל דבר הנאמן
ר' אהרן שכלול ששאל, והישיבה העשירי לחתול כל שנהיה.

אבל זה עתה, שחיוניות חובשות על הישיבה חסרונות, והדבר יצ"ל בבערות כל ליאת
הכליה ודעה, ודע ודע לקיום הישיבה, וכעבור אה ח"ו לא יבא עוד מידות יש סבה לקיום של הישיבה.
לח אנוהו פורנס, וזה אנוהו נא לעזרתה, וכל אשר יאמר יתבאר כדון יפה, ושכור פי יעשורו.

ברוך אשר קיים את דברי התורה ודעת.

י"ח שבט תשנ"א
רבי שמואל זצ"ל
רבי אהרן קאהן זצ"ל

ideals my own. Though his world had not carried on through his children, there were others who took their place, and I was one of them. While Neil's children sought their link with their grandfather through their father, they found it instead in me. And I had to visit my uncle, take a trip to Israel, and come on business to St. Louis, in order to provide it.

Groping For Castaways

During the time Neil had known his father, he had rejected everything he was and stood for. Now he was reaching out, groping for those impressions once cast aside. Now, because of his children, those impressions became vitally important, giving substance not only to his image of his father, but more so, to his image of himself.

And the old man, who had died a lonely death, was now experiencing a sort of *tehiyas hamaysim*, the resurrection of the dead. His picture on the bookshelf took on a new luster. He was alive again, in the home of a child he had given up on, and he assumed a new life through the grandchildren he had never met.

Three months later, Neil was on a brief visit to New York, and made sure to have dinner at my home. He brought news of his children's progress, and of their hopes to visit too.

We kept up correspondence. Neil never spoke of his lost daughter, although he undoubtedly nurtured the hope that just as he had returned to his father's

world, so would his daughter return one day to his.

When the son finished high school, the whole family made a trip to New York. We spent a Sunday with them on a heritage tour: East New York, where Neil grew up; the Bronx, where his wife found her childhood memories; the old-age home, where my first link to this odyssey was established; and finally, the cemetery, to view the silent stone reminders of a newly vibrant voice.

The boy continued his Torah studies in Israel, and stayed on longer than planned, with no objections from home. His sister followed, and Neil and his wife enjoyed their two trips a year to visit their children, bringing us enthusiastic reports on their return. Neil's wife gave in here and there on religious practices for the sake of the kids. After all, they were leading normal lives, and this was a small enough price to pay for it.

By now, it almost sounds like a routine story. Both children are married—to religious spouses, of course—the daughter living in Baltimore, the son working with his father. Needless to say, their own children are getting a stronger Jewish education from the very beginning.

I make no claims to having been responsible for the children's development, although I'm entitled, I believe, to at least a share.

What I do appreciate most of all, however, is my privilege to witness dry bones rise again. It makes my own belief in Jewish eternity that much stronger. ✿

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BOOKS

LEARNING FROM HISTORY

A Review Article

Transmitters of Torah: Earlier Eras

The importance of the lessons to be derived from Jewish history is equalled by the lack of reliable information about our past. It is, therefore, a source of great satisfaction that a number of new works have appeared which can serve as reliable guides to our past.

Some years ago, Rabbi Zechariah Fendel published *Anvil of Sinai* and *Challenge of Sinai* (see J.O. Dec. 77, Dec. 78) as veritable textbooks of *Torah Hashkafa* for the contemporary Jew; in these works he included a review of the transmission of Torah from Mount Sinia to our days. He has now undertaken to expand this review into a work by itself. *Legacy of Sinai* (New York, 1981, \$10.95) is a "history of Torah transmissions with world backgrounds, from creation through the close of the Geonic Era." An introductory overview of the periods covered, detailed charts for each period, a clear and fully footnoted presentation of the main features of each period under discussion, as well as its main personalities and Torah works, and elaborate indices of personalities and subjects discussed, combine to form a most interesting and valuable work.

The emphasis is on the chain of transmission itself, rather than on the historic background, in keeping with the objective of the book; thus e.g. the institutions of *Zugos* is clearly described, but no explanation offered as to the historic circumstances that led to it. On the other hand, the author carefully provides source references for the chronological data and usually even for divergent views (an exception is the dating of the Chanukah story, where he chose the later date, and does not mention the controversy; cf. the discussion in the *Artscroll Chanukah*).

There is also a wealth of incidental information in this volume that will always anew surprise the reader; e.g. a full-page chart on historical happenings at the site of the Temple (p.89). It is to be hoped that we will soon see the publication of a companion volume on the last 900 years of Torah transmission.

• • • •

The value of a clear understanding of the chronological sequence of Jewish history surely need not be stressed. We should, therefore, take note of an interest-

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ing wall chart prepared by Rabbi Tzvi Black—a **Time Line Display of Jewish History** (Atlanta, P.O.B. 15022; 1981, poster edition \$15.00). This multi-colored chart shows the main periods and happenings in Jewish history, with some comparative dates from world history (the larger classroom edition features a supplementary list of important dates in the Jewish past). Accompanied by a guide for home and classroom use, this Timeline should be very helpful in furthering a clearer perception of the flow of Jewish history.

• • • •

Another new aid to the knowledge of our past is "**The Rishonim, Biographical Sketches of the Prominent Early Rabbinic Sages and Leaders from the Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries**," edited by Rabbi Hershel Goldwurm, on the basis of research by Rabbi Shmuel Teich (Artscroll History Series, New York, 1982, hardcover—\$10.95, softcover—\$7.95). Over 300 outstanding personalities

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of the later Middle Ages have their lives and literary creations described in this volume. Most of them are known to the student of the Talmud, at least by their name or that of their *seforim*; here he has the opportunity to learn more about when and where they lived, and about their place in the chain of Torah scholarship.

In the Publishers' Preface we are promised a companion volume on the *Acharonim*, the leading sages from the fifteenth century onward. It should perhaps be pointed out that there is no agreement on where exactly the line between *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* should be drawn (cf. Fendel's *Challenge of Sinai*, p. 480, note 175); the present volume includes scholars who had passed away by the time of the expulsion from Spain in 1492. They are listed according to the geographic centers in which they lived, and in chronological order; but there is also a full alphabetical index, as well as two useful lists: one of Hebrew place names and their English counterparts, and the other of major rabbinic works, with the names of their authors. A historical introduction provides the reader with a general background for the period of the *Rishonim*. This book should be of great value, not only for the study of Jewish history but to the student of Talmud.

• • • •

Movements in Recent Jewish History

While all of Jewish history is of importance to us, there is a special need for a correct understanding of the last few generations that, in effect, set the stage for our time—the movements that arose, the personalities that emerged and the ideas that were generated. The Art-Scroll Judaiscope Series, published by Mesorah Publications in conjunction with Agudath Israel of America, has put out two volumes edited by Rabbi Nisson Wolpin that contribute greatly to our knowledge of the recent past—**The Torah Personality** (New York, hardcover—\$12.95, softcover—\$9.95) and **The Torah World** (New York, 1982, hardcover—\$12.95, softcover—\$9.95), both treasures of biographical sketches, almost all of them culled from the pages of *The Jewish Observer*.

Due to the fact that they were written by different authors, for different occasions, and with different purposes in mind, the selections vary in approach and in length. Some stress the communal and historical background; some focus on the thoughts and writings of the personalities discussed; some are short and some are lengthy. Taken together, however, they provide a most remarkable panorama of Jewish life and Torah leadership in Lithuania and Poland; they take us to Germany, Hungary, the Sephardic countries, and present day Eretz Yisroel; and they trace the American experience from colonial days to the present day flowering of Torah. The growth of the Yeshivos and the *Mussar* movement, the labors of the great Chassidic leaders, the rise of the Beth Jacob movement, the heroism of Torah leaders during the war, and their selfless dedication to replanting

Torah in England, in America, in *Eretz Yisroel*, all emerge clearly from these pages, replete with moving anecdotes and incisive Torah observations. These books deserve to be used as textbooks in our educational institutions, to provide inspiration and guidelines for our age.

• • • •

Chassidus has, of course, been one of the most dynamic and formative movements in modern Jewish history—and, as such, it has suffered frequent distortion and misinterpretation from the likes of Martin Buber, Isaac Bashevis Singer or Chayim Bloch. J.O. reviewed some time ago the English translation of Rabbi Zevin's *Treasury of Chassidic Tales on the Torah*; this has now been followed by the two-volume **Treasury of Chassidic Tales on the Festivals** (Mesorah Publications, New York, Vol. I hardcover—\$12.95, softcover—\$9.95, Vol. II hardcover—\$11.95, softcover—\$8.95, hardcover set—\$26.95). Beautifully translated, and with a biographical index of the Chassidic personalities mentioned in this work, it makes a further valuable contribution to an understanding of the life of *Chassidus*, as well as to our experiencing of our *Yomim Tovim*.

• • • •

For an insight into the world of Chassidic philosophy, the reader can turn to a recent volume, **On the Essence of Chassidus**, a full translation of an essay by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, שליט"א, (Kehot Publ. Society, Brooklyn, 1978, hardcover—\$5, softcover—\$3), which seeks to provide "a definitive explanation of the nature and idea of *Chassidus*." It is a profound work which gives a deep insight into many of the most complex aspects of *Chassidus*, as seen by *Chabad*. In addition to the text itself, and to the Rebbe's own footnotes, which the translators have excellently translated, they have added explanatory notes which will enable those unfamiliar with Chassidic philosophy, and its terminology, to follow the author's presentation. Despite all this, it requires, of course, a major intellectual effort to absorb its full meaning.

Although a relatively slim volume, it touches on a very large number of important topics. Some of these help explain both the enormous impact *Chabad Chassidus* has had, and the determined opposition which it has aroused. It is well known that "there are seventy faces to Torah," and there has always been an understanding in *Klal Yisroel* that—from the time of the twelve sons of Yaakov on—there have been different ways of serving G-d; and *Chassidus*, in general, can certainly be seen as one of them. But this is not the view of *Chassidus* that this exposition presents; it sees *Chassidus* as the revelation and effusion of "a new life-force into the world," and the coming of *Moshiach* (in the words of the famous quote from the Baal Shem Tov) as dependent upon the spreading of its wellsprings. The implication that it is a higher level of perception of Torah, and the only authentic way

to bringing *Moshiach*, is obviously not accepted by non-Chassidim; but even they will find this a most illuminating and challenging work.

• • • •

In a very different vein, an insight into some aspects of *Chassidus* can be gained from a perusal of the writings of Bratslav Chassidim, the followers of Rabbi Nachum of Bratslav. Some of his renowned tales have been retold by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz in **Beggars and Prayers** (Basic Books, New York, 1979, \$8.95); each tale is followed by a commentary which seeks to elucidate its



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essential message. The interpretation is frequently based on in kabbalistic concepts, but does make clear to the reader the longing for purity, for redemption from the fetters of exile, and for closeness to G-d, which have played such a big role in the rise of Chassidism.

• • • • •

The counterpart to *Chassidus*, in Northern Poland and Lithuania, was the *Mussar* movement, which had its rise among the Yeshivos of the area. The growth of these Yeshivos themselves is highlighted, through the biographies of some of the personalities who had the greatest impact on them, in *Giants of Jewry*, translated from the Hebrew *Marbitzey Torah Umussar* of Rabbi Aaron Surasky (Vol. 1, Chinuch Publications, Lakewood, 1982, hardcover—\$9.95, softcover—\$7.95). This volume deals with the *Netziv*, the *Bais Halevi*, Rabbi Chayim Brisker, the *Chofetz Chayim*, and Rabbi Chayim Ozer; further volumes are projected. While each of these biographical sketches gives an outline of the life of its subject, his salient approaches to life and Torah are delineated by stories and extracts from his letters and writings (some quoted in the original in appendices). As a result, each personality emerges clearly, with his way of life a powerful lesson and inspiration to the reader.

• • • • •

Lest the reader think, however, that the Yeshivos in daily life did not live up to the noble aspirations of the

Gedolei HaTorah, he should read *Beyond the Sun*, by David Zaritsky, translated by Charles Wengrov (Aleph Publ., Jerusalem, 1979 \$9.50). In form, a loosely constructed novel, this book is really a tribute to the author's fellow students at the Chofetz Chayim's Yeshiva in Radun; their personalities and experiences, thinly disguised, are immortalized in this volume—and the picture it draws is of men climbing the greatest spiritual heights, while contending with all the obstacles that could conceivably be put in the way of a person's aspirations. Even renegades of the spirit that fell by the wayside, such as a recent newcomer to the bestseller lists, with his poisonous distortion of the Eastern Torah world, have not been able to deny that there was an ethereal quality in the life of the Yeshivos—as reflected so eloquently in Zaritsky's book.

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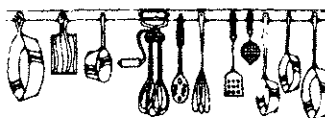
The Yeshivos, and the *Mussar* movement, in particular, have previously attracted treatment. Thus, *The History of the Musar Movement, 1840-1945*, by Lester Eckman, was published in 1975, and a biography of the Chofetz Chayim, by the same author, *Revered by All*, in 1974; these books contain much useful, historical material for the serious student of the subject, but particularly the volume on the Chofetz Chayim is seriously flawed by the author's inadequate approach to many Torah issues.

More recently there has appeared a scholarly modernistic study of *Israel Salanter, Text, Structure, Idea* by Hillel Goldberg (Ktav Publishing, New York, 1982, \$17.50), subtitled "the ethics and theology of an early psychologist of the unconscious." Yet this work, too, is disappointing, for different reasons. The author did not set out to write a full biography, but to concentrate on Rabbi Israel's thought. The final conclusion of the author, in the last paragraph of his last chapter, called "Summary and Evaluation", is undoubtedly correct: Rabbi Israel Salanter "dedicated himself to unveiling the Divine presence within man and within his relations with his fellow . . . he preached a doctrine of inner wholeness and serenity side by side with social responsibility and religious struggle" (p.206). Yet the author chose to reach his conclusions by a most exacting, almost microscopic analysis of Rabbi Israel's writings, and the reader, struggling to follow the intricate thread of the book, comes to suspect that not only the author's terminology but even the categories of analysis which he uses are borrowed from an academic world essentially alien to Rabbi Israel Salanter. Somehow, this reviewer admits, he felt overwhelmed by the heavy didactic prose—and missed any spark of the dynamic and vitality that is felt whenever a story or saying of Reb Yisroel is told over in a Yeshiva. Indeed, the interpretation of his writings may be correct, but the living personality himself somehow eludes our grasp.

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Take, in contrast, "Reb Elchonon, The Life and Idea of Rabbi Elchonon Bunim Wasserman of Baranovich," the first volume in the Artsroll History series, adapted from Aaron Surasky's Hebrew biography (New York, 1982, hardcover—\$13.95, softcover—\$10.95). This volume of over 400 pages is not as tightly organized as Goldberg's work, and the issues are not as profoundly analyzed—although this reviewer hastens to add that the scholarship is impeccable (in fact, the book corrects some historical errata that had gotten into the Hebrew original). But from every page, there emerges not only the towering figure of Reb Elchonon, but the Lithuanian Yeshiva scene in all its poverty-stricken grandeur. Across the pages there wander the great personalities of pre-war Lithuania—the Chofetz Chayim, Rabbi Chaim Ozer, and many others. We are given the opportunity, so to speak, to look over their shoulders and see how these *Gedolim* dealt with the problems of the time, as well as with the constant struggle for self-perfection which is demanded of every Jew, great or small. In fact, this volume may well be seen as a *Mussar* text; it is surely well neigh impossible to read it without being inspired to greater exertions in one's own service of G-d and fellow-men.

• • • •

It is interesting, in this connection, to recall the publication, in 1975, of an English edition of *Lev Elyahu* (published by Rabbi Pinski, Jerusalem, \$10.). This volume contains *Mussar* talks of Reb Elyahu Lopian, on a wide range of topics, and these talks, based on Biblical, Talmudic and Rabbinic quotations, interspersed with citations and stories of later Torah authorities, and rendered into excellent English, provide a rich source of guidance and inspiration (some of them, moreover, provide specific direction on why and how to study *Mussar*, cf. pp. 45, 266, and 317); it is, indeed, a pity that the book does not contain a subject index. But the reader may well feel that he gained the most from reading the first 34 pages, which contain recollections of Reb Elye, and where he truly experienced a face-to-face encounter with a *tzaddik* of a stature ultimately incomprehensible to us.

Along somewhat similar lines, *The Mashgiach, Rabbeinu Horav Yechezkel Levenstein*, by Rabbi Elchonon Joseph Hertzman, translated by Rabbi M.G. Bronstein (Jerusalem, 1981, obtainable from Rabbi Hertzman, 61 Harrison, Brooklyn, N.Y., 11211 \$5.50) represents an effort to provide the reader with an insight into the life and thoughts of the *Mirrer Mashgiach*. The volume contains personal recollections of the *Mashgiach*, as well as thoughts and entire talks as gathered by disciples of his. A more vigorous organization of the material would have made this book more effective; but even in its present form many worthwhile insights can be gained from it.

(to be continued)

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second looks at the jewish scene

Selection at Ben Gurion

The story by now is well known, but it is still worth reviewing for the sake of some reflection:

August 12—The Nesher limousine stopped at the curb outside of Ben Gurion airport, and the mixed group of travelers stepped out, picking up their luggage, checking their tickets, ready to go through the glass doors and the endless "processing" before boarding their EL AL flight to New York. Not everyone made it to those doors. Standing in their way were several hundred EL AL employees, barring entry to those whom they decided to exclude.

The lady in the pants-suit—OK. Her bare-headed companion—fine. The grey-bearded gentleman in the long black coat followed by his modestly dressed wife—*verboden!* It seemed that they were excluded because they were recognizable as religious Jews. . . . The bearded fellow had been carrying on an animated discussion with a sports-capped biology professor, when suddenly they were separated at the gate—by the EL AL workers, much to the shame of the professor. The detainee waved goodbye to his erstwhile travel companion, baring his arm . . . with a faded blue number tattooed on it.

A throwback to the *Selektzia* endured at Auschwitz forty years ago? Not exactly.

Those granted entry to the airport were Jews, no more, no less able-bodied than those excluded. Those denied entry were guilty of one sin only. They were most con-

spicuously identifiable as members of Agudath Israel—the party that is responsible for bringing Sabbath observance to the national airline of the Jewish State.

How were they identified? According to Gaby Saltzman, spokesman for the EL AL workers committees, "by their black kapotas (long coats) and *streimel* (fur hats)."

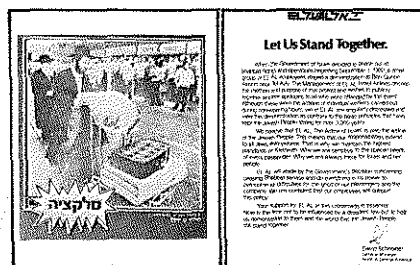
Discrimination, As Usual

No, this is not a repetition of the ignominious selection of the Nazi concentration camps. It is more similar to the discriminatory practices of the World Zionist-run Jewish Agency that limited visas for entry to British-controlled Palestine in the 30s to the non-religious, officially issuing only 6% of their assigned quota to Agudath Israel applicants . . . and, in reality granting even fewer, turning away thousands and thousands of Agudists, who clamored to enter the Holy Land. The heirs to pre-war Socialist-Zionism, the employees of EL AL, have not forgotten how to say No to Agudists.*

The sense of outrage at this ugly discrimination was not limited to Agudath Israel members. National Religious Party member Israel Mehlamed declared: "Today we are all kapota wearers." Haim Druckman called the workers action "open anti-Semitism." Deputy Foreign Minister Yehuda Ben-Meir tried to get the Knesset to recess for 15 minutes as a sign of protest at the airport incident. (JTA)

Offended travelers made no secret of their shock, and called EL AL officers all over the world to protest. In response, the airline quickly placed

advertisements in a number of Jewish publications (including JO) apologizing for the conduct of "a small group of EL AL employees . . . during non-working hours," much to the managements' "singular distress."



Apologies are in place, but of themselves are not quite enough. We expect that EL AL will see to it that *Shmiras Shabbos* will be ushered in smoothly, without delay at its appointed (overdue) time. In fact, the EL AL management stated as much in its ad: "EL AL will abide by the Government's decision concerning ceasing Shabbat service and do everything in its power to overcome all difficulties for the good of our passengers and the company."

In addition, we would like to see some public discipline imposed on the guilty employees, to truly make certain that the action is never repeated. We would like to join EL AL in being "confident that our employees will support this policy."

*As a *limud zechus* (vindication) of sorts, we might suggest that the disgusting behavior of the employees was motivated less by contempt for the religion and its adherents, than it was by old-fashioned greed; after all, with cessation of Sabbath activities, they will stand to lose an opportunity for triple overtime pay that was theirs until now for *Shabbos* work!

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צוזאַמען מיט די אַפּשאַצונגען וועגן נפטר און זיינע ווערק (ווי אויך אַביסל זכרונות וועגן זיין פאָטער הגאון ר' אהרן קאַטלער און זיין זיידן הגאון ר' איסר זלמן מעלצער, זכרונם לברכה); וועט די ספעציעלע אויסגאבע אויך האָבן פיל בילדער פון גרויסן נפטר אין די פאַרשידענע פאָזן פון זיין הייליק לעבן און שאַפן. דאָס וועט זיין אַ מאַמענטאַל-אינטערעסאַנטע און היסטאָרישע אויסגאבע, וואָס איר וועט וועלן האָבן אין אייער היים פאַר לאַנגע יאָרן און וועלן אויפהיטן פאַר אייערע קינדער און קינדס-קינדער. מאַכט זיכער, אַריינצושיקן אייער באַשטעלונג וואָס פריער.

פרייז פון אַ קאָפּיע: 4 דאָלער

אויב איר וועט איצט באַשטעלן "דאָס אידישע וואָרט" פאַר אַ גאַנץ יאָר, וועט איר באַקומען די דאָזיקע וויכטיקע אויסגאבע אינגאַנצן פריי. דער סובסקריפשאַן פרייז פון "דאָס אידישע וואָרט" איז 10 דאָלער אַ יאָר. אויב אַבער איר וועט איצט באַשטעלן, קענט איר עס באַקומען פאַר בלויז 9 דאָלער, און אויסער דעם וועט איר נאָך באַקומען פריי דעם גייסטרייכן

ימים נוראים אַלמאַנאַך

אַ זאַמל-בוך פון קרוב 100 זייטן מיט גייסטרייכע מאַמרים פון גדולי-ישראל און באַרימטע אַרטאָדאָקסישע שרייבער וועגן דער באַדייטונג פון ראש-השנה, יום כיפור און סוכות.

וויכטיק! אויב אייער אָדרעס איז אין קאַנאַדע אָדער אויסלאַנד איז דער יערליכער סובסקריפשאַן (צוליב די גאָר הויכע פּאָסט-קאָסטן) פרייז 15 דאָלער אַ יאָר. (און ביטע שיקט אייער אָפּצאָל אין אַמעריקאַנער דאָלאַרן און ניט אין אויסלענדישער וואַלוטע.)

באַשטעלט ביטע מיט דעם קופאַן

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- ☐ בייליגענד איז 9 דאָלער פאַר אַ יאָר סובסקריפשאַן און ביטע שיקט מיר פריי די ספעציעלע אויסגאבע לוכר פון הגר"ש קאַטלער זצ"ל ווי אויך דעם "ימים נוראים אַלמאַנאַך", פריי.
- ☐ בייליגענד איז 4 דאָלער און ביטע שיקט מיר די ספעציעלע אויסגאבע לוכר פון הגר"ש קאַטלער זצ"ל.

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Letters to the Editor



Kiruv Rechokim

To the Editor:

Although your publication has expressed its admiration for the noble efforts of *Kiruv Rechokim* leaders, I cannot help but feel that the J.O. has not done justice to the term "*baal teshuva*," be it the term or the individual.

To cite but a few examples, I take note of the article in the March 1982 J.O. entitled, "Planting Seeds of Return." Why must the *Baal Teshuva* always be associated with such turbulent backgrounds, as was illustrated by the articles' three case studies? Why must the term "*Baal Teshuva*" always conjure up images of disheveled hair, torn jeans, not to mention drugs, intermarriage, and other hard-core "*teshuva* cases." Concerning these, whether in photograph or words, I refer to the Summer 1981 issue. What was especially insulting was the statement made by Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb in an

article entitled, "The Amateur's Burden in Reaching Out." Rabbi Gottlieb states:

"*Baalei teshuva* come out of disillusionment, out of despair. Some simply cannot face the world, their lives are in shambles, and they suffer emotional problems, physical addictions and failure in their endeavors."

It was almost as if Rabbi Gottlieb was saying that children of religious families were immune to the above. I must take exception. The *baalei teshuva* in my circles have come from exemplary families (in areas such as *midos* and honesty, to say the least). My friends really haven't done all that much to be ashamed of; and are stable and happy human beings, before and after their commitment to Torah life. Many have been learning for quite some time, have learned through *Shas* and are so polished in every area that no one would ever suspect that they did not attend *Yeshiva Ketanah*—a side of the coin which was neglected by both articles. Why didn't the J.O. speak of various prominent rabbis and Roshei *Yeshiva* or Rabbi Akiva—to name but a few? Why didn't they photo-

graph pictures of *Rabbeyim* and *Mechanchim* who came from weak backgrounds?

Far-Reaching, Unpleasant Effects

Why all the fuss?, you ask. It's really very simple. No one wants to be placed in a category, to be known as different or singled out. An individual can reach his potential in a much more confident and effective way by not being bombarded with seemingly derogatory terms ("life in shambles," indeed!) and placed in the same category as an ex-"Buddhist Monk." Such associations have far-reaching and unpleasant effects. When a boy with non-*frum* parents has learned in *Yeshivos* for a number of years and the time has come for a *shidduch*, and some indiscreet *shadchan* tells a prospective girl the standard dialogue: He's such a fine boy and I'm sure it wouldn't bother you that he's a *baal teshuva*, wouldn't it?" (I won't even go into the *lashon hora* involved in relating to someone the level of religiosity of one's parents. Even if someone wanted to express it as a positive point, and praise the fellow for his drive in going against the grain and becoming *frum*, one would never catch a *shadchan* saying: "Nice boy, *frum* family, and even though the father's an unbelievable hot head and the mother is a lush, the boy has come through with fine *midos*."") Why shouldn't it bother her, what with all of the wonderful publicity in *The Jewish Observer*! After all, the boy might have a physical addiction and be a failure in his endeavors. If this girl were smart, she would stay clear of such fishy sounding prospects.

In closing, I suggest either that the all encompassing melting pot of the term, *baal teshuva*, be expunged from existence, or that we apply it, even, to those of us from the most prestigious family lineage who may have once spoken *lashon hora* and have reformed.

YITZCHAK KRAMER
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Rabbi Mandel replies:

Yitzchok Kramer correctly points out that (1) the term "baal teshuva" should apply to even those from prestigious family lineage who have done teshuva; and (2) not all baalei teshuva from non-Torah observant homes come from turbulent backgrounds. The underlying kiruv philosophy that I have learned from my Roshei Yeshiva is that teshuva is a process which must begin from an individual's positive points, such as his honesty and humanitarian instincts, and grow from there. To grow from one's positive nekudos (points) is in fact a useful approach for the already Torah-observant Jew to pursue, as well.

It is important to mention, though, that contrary to the tone of

Mr. Kramer's letter, the term *baal teshuva* is not a negative stigma but, as Rav Gifter, the Telshe Rosh Yeshiva, recently pointed out to a group of Ohr Somayach alumni, a badge of honor.

Even Mr. Kramer must concede that there is a distinction between one who may have spoken *lashon hora* and one who has eaten *treifos* and been *mechallel Shabbos*. I, in turn, would agree that rather than feel

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smug about our religiosity when confronted by a *baal teshuva* (a shortcoming shared by the "Frum-From-Birth" and the veteran "*baal teshuva*"), we should rather draw inspiration from the *baal teshuva* and realize that in fact *our* lives are in shambles as well and concentrate on the thrice-cited prayer *השכנו אבינו לתורתך* (Return us, our Father to Your Torah) formulated by the Men of the Great Assembly, men who appreciated and strove to become *baalei teshuva*.
(Rabbi) SHLOMO NOACH MANDEL
JEP/Ohr Somayach
Toronto, Ontario
(author of the article, "Seeds of Return")

Rabbi Gottlieb replies:

By quoting the first half of a paragraph, Mr. Kramer creates the impression that I believe all *baalei teshuva* start with life in shambles. The paragraph in full reads as follows: "*Baalei teshuva* come out of disillusionment, out of despair. Some simply cannot face the world, their lives are in shambles, and they suffer emotional problems, physical addictions and failure in their endeavors. Others, and I think they are the majority, have personalities too rich, ideals too high, and goals too profound to be satisfied with a two-car garage in the suburbs and trips to Europe as the highlights of their life. The lures of material success are empty for them and they come out of despair." The lives of the majority of *baalei teshuva* are very

successful in secular terms, and it is precisely the meaninglessness of that success which creates their unique sense of despair and which leads to their search for a new way of life.

Mr. Kramer believes that some *baalei teshuva* are stable and happy even before their *teshuva*. When one considers the enormous change in ideology and life-style which *teshuva* entails, are they displaying stability (which may not evidence psychological health but just rigidity and sterility) or creative and courageous change? Without a strong measure of discontent with secular life (either preceeding contact with the Torah world or as a result of such contact), no normal person would undertake such a radical transformation. This is the reason for the heavy stress in my article on providing Jewish experiences, rather than arguments: the experiences create the discontent which opens his mind to the arguments.

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To completely absorb *baalei teshuva* anonymously, as Mr. Kramer suggests, can have very cruel consequences. *Baalei teshuva* have very unique needs—specialized *shiurim*, sensitive counseling and *p'sak halacha*, *chevra* (companionship)—which will not be met by a community that wants to forget that they exist. At each stage in life a *baal teshuva* is trying to live according to a life style of which he had no personal experience until adulthood. It is our experience to help him fill that gap, not only one year after he makes his commitment, but throughout the rest of his life—even after he can pass for an F.F.B. through his dress and Torah knowledge. In many areas of life a *baal teshuva* never stops being a *baal teshuva*.

Perhaps Mr. Kramer should consult *Gedolei Yisroel* with respect to the *she'eila* of *lashon hora* in connection with *shidduchim*. I can only report my experience—that it is regarded as absolutely essential for the prospective *chassan* and *kallah* to know everything relevant about each other, which includes their schooling, family background, and so on. In this context, it is impossible, and indeed irresponsible, to hide the fact that someone is a *baal teshuva*. In other contexts, extreme caution and discretion should be used. No one has

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ever suggested that *baalei teshuva* be "bombarded with seemingly derogatory terms."

Finally, I must confess a certain sadness that even now there are people who regard the term "*baal teshuva*" as derogatory. One hopes that the struggles these people courageously undertake, and the unique strengths and sensitivities which they contribute to the Torah world, will one day win them the respect and admiration they deserve, instead of a classification which others are mercifully willing to help them conceal.

(Rabbi) DOVID GOTTLIEB

(The writer is on the faculty of Ohr Somayach/Tannenbaum College of Judaic Studies.)

Sins of Omission, Etc.

To the Editor:

May I point out to you a number of errors on the second page (sic) of the May 1982 issue which I like to describe, benevolently, as inadvertently. Agudath Israel was founded in the German city of Kattowitz; Kattowitz became Polish in 1918 and was then spelled Katowice. (Oberschlesien or Upper Silesia). The English translation on this page of the "Programm" ... ("Constitution") Numbers 1 is incomplete, omitting

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3 why did you leave out Eretz Israel from places where we will help our brethren?; 6 is also incorrect at the end....

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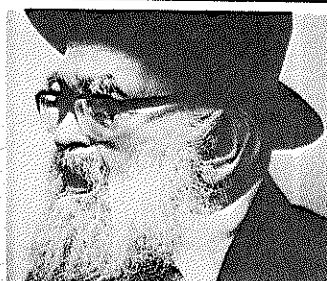
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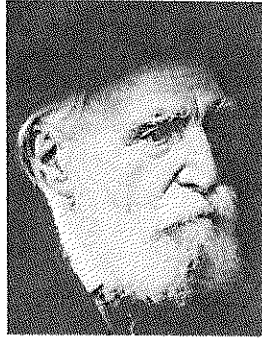
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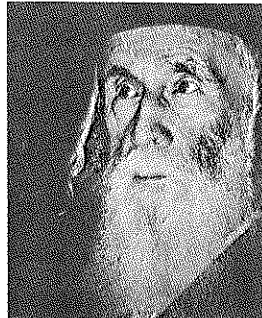
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N.Y.S. LEGISLATURE PASSES LANDMARK "GET" BILL

The Republican controlled New York State Senate, shortly before adjournment, followed the lead of the Democratically controlled Assembly and unanimously passed a measure which will help the menacing "Agunah problem." According to Professor Aaron Twerski, chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America, this bill is designed to alleviate the problem of those who would be barred from remarrying after a civil divorce. For Orthodox Jews, this becomes a reality if a husband refuses to grant a "get," blocking the woman from remarrying. In some cases, according to Prof. Twerski, the woman refuses to accept a get. The bill is to be presented at an appropriate time for his consideration.

The efforts began nearly two years ago when Agudath Israel convened a joint meeting of halachic and legal experts to come to grips with the Agunah problem that was said to have reached "epidemic proportions." The bill that was drawn up after this meeting which was chaired by Rabbi Moshe Sherer, President of Agudath Israel of America, following a lengthy consultation of the various authorities, provides that when one party to a civil divorce action complains of a barrier to remarriage imposed by the other party, the question will be submitted to a fact-finding and mediation panel to determine whether such a barrier exists and if so, whether either party can remove it. It also provides that the panel will make recommendations for the removal of a barrier and that the court may, at its discretion, withhold a final judgment of divorce if the party seeking the divorce fails to comply with the panel's recommendations.

The bill's chief sponsor in the Assembly was Sheldon Silver, who articulated the issues involved in the bill. It enjoyed the strong support of Speaker Stanley Fink and Arthur Kremer, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Silver worked closely with Agudath Israel as the bill inched its way through the N.Y.S. Legislature.

In the Senate, although the chief sponsor was Democrat Martin Connor, the bill was adopted by the Republican leadership. Senator John Marchi of Staten Island was particularly instrumental in persuading Majority Leader Warren Anderson to support the initiative. Key aides of both Senate leaders played a major role in the final push. Also lending an assist was Senator Norman Levy.

In the Orthodox Jewish community, the bill received the unanimous endorsement from a broad spectrum of halachic authori-

ties, including various eminent rabbinic leaders. Prof. Twerski called the bill "a low profile resolution to a high profile problem." He added: "We very studiously stayed away from the question of a court-coerced 'get' to avoid the thicket of constitutional or halachic questions. In fact, this bill is by no means a panacea. The Jewish community will still have its work cut out to come to grips with this problem."

מדוע רבה לאוריינת ישיבה חמדת ישראל

בעוה"ש"ת הוקם ישיבה לצעירים מגיל הבר-מצוה, אשר יהגו בתורה הק' בלבד מבקר עד ערב מבלי להזדקק ללימודים אחרים. הישיבה נסדרת בהתעצות והדרכת זקני וגדולי הדור שליט"א ובעידודם הלבבי, שהתבטאו על הענין שיש בו משום חזרת העטרה ליושנה, והצלחה עצומה לצעירים, שיוכו להיות שתולים בבית ה' על טהרת הקדש ולהתחיל התמדתם בעמל התורה וידיעתה עוד משחר ימי הנעורים.

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בשנה העברה זכו התלמידים כמעט לגמור מסכת בבא מציעא עם חוס' בדרך הג"ל, ועומדים לסיימה בקרוב בעוה"ש"ת.

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HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS MAY CORRECT BIRTHDATES FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

In response to numerous inquiries, the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America clarified a policy adopted by the Social Security Administration which in effect permits Holocaust survivors to correct their age for the purpose of receiving Social Security benefits. A claimant may establish his true date of birth if he states that his recorded age is incorrect as was adopted to avoid persecution and confinement in concentration camp or extermination at such a camp.

According to the Social Security Administration, a claimant under this procedure must prove that he is a survivor of the Holocaust and that his actual date of birth differs from the date currently on file with the Social Security Administration. Acceptable proof that the claimant is a Holocaust survivor includes tattooed numbers on the forearm or a scar indicating surgical removal of the tattoo, award letters or other correspondence from the West German government under the indemnification procedures, documents identifying the bearer as a displaced person or an inmate of a concentration or

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work camp, or any other identification which shows that the person, is indeed, a survivor and that his age was incorrectly stated.

The Social Security Administration will attempt to obtain a valid birth certificate or other official documents from the country in which the claimant was born. If the claimant is unable to submit evidence of his correct age, he may submit statements of friends or relatives who have knowledge of the claimant's correct date of birth. If no friends or relatives can verify the claimant's correct date of birth, the Social Security Administration will accept the claimant's own statement.

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The venerable sages were referring to a situation that has forced the temporary closing of the offices that administer four major units: finance, teaching schedules, *Revacha*—welfare programs, and transportation. In addition, the entire central administrative offices have been closed to the public until further notice.

The meeting determined that the Chinuch Atzmai network in Israel is in a deep crisis because it is the last to receive government benefits while the first to suffer cutbacks, following a pattern of deprivation and discrimination by the Ministry of Education. In truth, the Ministry has never treated the independent system of Torah education on a par with the two state-run systems.

The Ministry itself admits to a serious lag in physical accommodations for existing Torah schools.

- Whenever the Ministry of Finance cuts funding for education, Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools is the first to feel the cutbacks for its subsidized budget.

- The Ministry of Education has been withholding from certain schools, forcing the network to carry their full budget. Two examples of this baseless discrimination are the highly successful Chinuch Atzmai schools in the Old City and in Kiryat Arba.

- Even when the Ministry authorizes expenditures, it does not always follow through with the allocations. This situation has currently brought the system almost to a standstill, at this especially crucial time of preparation and organization for the new school year. For example, the Ministry approved the hiring of 300 additional teachers a year ago, in

view of the continued expansion of Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools. Yet, the funds to cover their salaries have not been allocated. This has forced the central administration of the network to draw funds already designated for non-subsidized projects, thus forcing the neglect of these other important projects.

- A bureaucratic conflict between the Ministries of Finance and Education caused the Education Ministry to hold back an allocation of millions of Shekel to Chinuch Atzma-Torah Schools for student transportation.

The network's leaders emphasized that these troubles come on top of a chain of difficult problems over the past year including: teaching schedules (it is still short of 2500 teaching hours per week); a freeze on the subsidized portion of the *Keren Hachinuch L'Torah*, which finances the independent Torah programs of the system; and the deficits of the network of Kindergartens, which amounts to about 20 million Shekel.

The Chinuch Atzmai leadership is looking to its friends and supporters all over the world to come to its rescue to enable it to fulfill its historic destiny.

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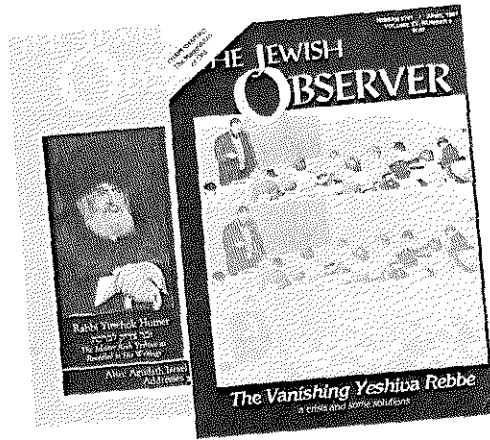
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Israel and Great Britain (air freight) \$20 per year

☐ Payment Enclosed

☐ Charge my credit card: ☐ Master card ☐ Visa

Account No.

Expiration date (month) (year) Signature _____

We are sorry, but due to high bank charges, all payments must be made in US dollars, drawn on a US bank.