

THE JEWISH OBSERVER

ADAR II, 5746/MARCH, 1986
VOLUME XIX, NUMBER 3
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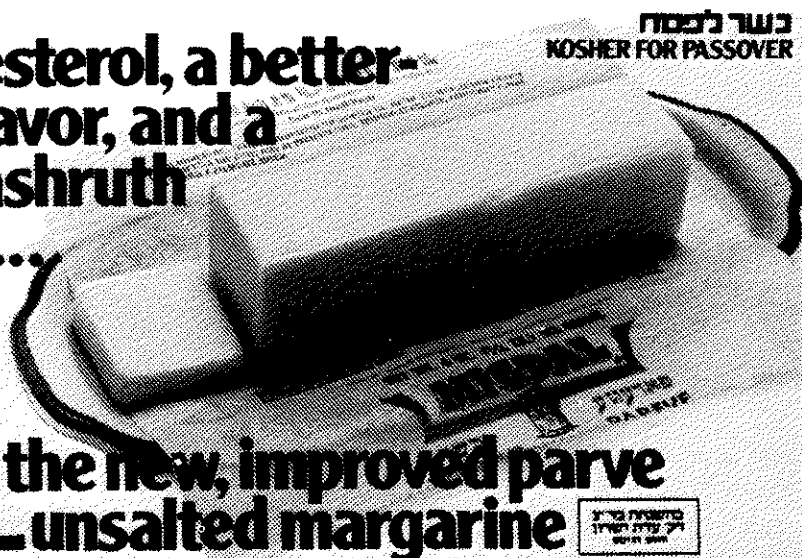
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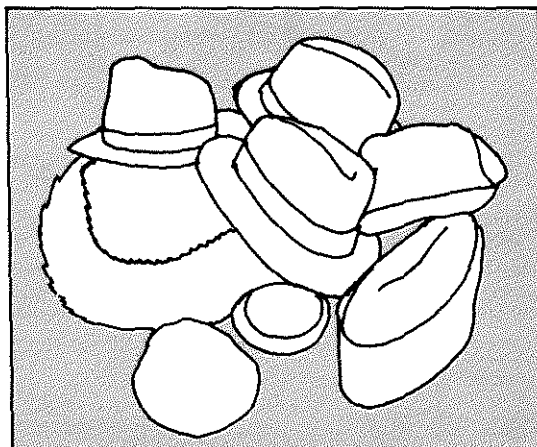
We go to press numbed and stricken at the report that the senior Rosh Yeshiva, Maran Hagaon Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל is no longer among us.

Though the Rosh Yeshiva had been severely ill, the knowledge of his presence brought comfort and security to the thousands who felt close to him and the myriads who cherished him as a repository of wisdom and greatness, as one of the few remaining embodiments of the golden age of "Litvishe" Torah Jewry. Whenever one attempted to define the elusive concept of Daas Torah, one thought instinctively of his unique and unassuming faith and piety, comforting smile, strength, compassion, humility, and ability to cut away chaff with his laser-like Torah insight and reduce complex questions to their essentials.

Reb Yaakov, as he was affectionately known, was always held in awe for his objectivity and encyclopedic knowledge of Torah, his wisdom and selfless devotion to Klal—as a talmid of the Alter of Slobodka (Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel זצ"ל), Rav in Tzitzeryan (Lithuania), Seattle, and Toronto, Rosh HaYeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, active member of Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel of America, Chairman of the Rabbinical Administrative Board of Torah Umesorah, and Honorary Chairman of the Board of Governors of Chinuch Atzmai.

"I was sure he would lead us to greet Moshiach." With these words the Rosh Yeshiva began his hesped of the venerable gaon and tzaddik Rabbi Yoseph Eliyahu Henkin זצ"ל. We thought the same of him. We were unworthy. But his 95 sterling years have surely brought Moshiach closer and left us with indelible memories of how great the Torah can make a human being.

THE JEWISH OBSERVER



ON OUR COVER: If the hat fits, wear it.
If not, respect it.

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THE JEWISH OBSERVER (ISSN) 0021-6615 is published monthly except July and August, by the Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N.Y. 10038. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Subscription \$15.00 per year; two years, \$27.00; three years, \$36.00. Outside of the United States (US funds only) \$20.00. \$25.00 in So. Africa and Pacific countries. Single copy: \$2.00; foreign: \$2.50. Send address changes to The Jewish Observer, 5 Beekman St., N.Y., N.Y. 10038. Printed in the U.S.A.

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ADAR II 5746, MAR. 1986
VOL. XIX, NO. 3

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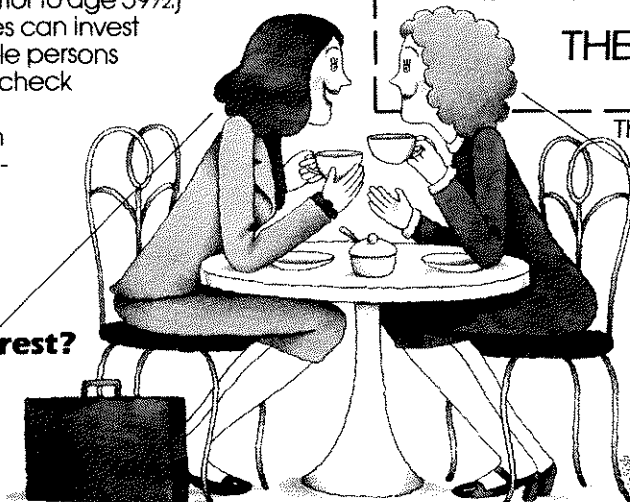
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INTRODUCTION

RELATING TO JEWS OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS



All Jews share responsibility for one another, in both the spiritual and material sense. This is so far-reaching that, as one *Kiruv* activist put it: "If I already said *Kiddush* on Friday night, and a guest enters my dining room, not yet having heard *Kiddush*, I can repeat it for his benefit. Why may I recite a *bracha* that I am not under obligation to say—even pronouncing G-d's name? Because my guest has not yet said *Kiddush*. His lack is my lack. In other words, one mil-

lion Jews in the New York area have not heard or said *Kiddush* on any given Friday night, and the *halacha* considers it as though I have an unfulfilled obligation—one million times over!"

Many barriers separate Jew from Jew, especially the Torah Jew from those who are estranged from Judaism or who have allegiance to its Conservative or Reform mutation. The ideological barriers are real and in many cases insurmountable. But the *personal* barriers in most cases should be removed. The lay people, and even many of the deviationist rabbis, are in the category of "*Tinokos Shenishbu*"—captive children, victims of circumstances who cannot be considered liable for their lack of commitment, for it is merely an outgrowth of their lack of knowledge.

How do we reach those who know so little of their true heritage? How do we break down the barriers of mistrust and bridge the gap of misunderstanding that separates us? How do we teach our searching brother? How do we help the Jew with a new commitment to Torah adjust to the Orthodox community? How do we help him feel at home, now that he is there?

These questions, and others related to them, were discussed at the recent (63rd) national convention of Agudath Israel of America. In the pages that follow, *The Jewish Observer* presents several essays based on convention addresses.



ALL JEWISH CHILDREN ARE "OUR CHILDREN"

based on an address by Rabbi Avrohom Pam שליט"א

MORE THAN CHARITY

Providing every Jewish child—and I emphasize every—with a Torah education is one of our supreme responsibilities. It is doubtful if we fully appreciate this obligation for what it truly is. On the one level, it can be viewed as an act of charity. Indeed, after recording the Rambam's eight levels of *tzeddaka*, the *Shulchan Aruch* adds:

"Teaching children Torah is the highest form of *tzeddaka*".

(Yoreh De'ah)

Moreover, the *Gemora* in *Sanhedrin* (91b) states: "To withhold Torah from a would-be student is tantamount to robbing him of his ancestral legacy, for Scripture says, 'Moshe commanded us the Torah, an inheritance of the Congregation of Jacob.'" Torah is virtually the child's inheritance.

Supreme charity, restoring a legacy to its rightful owners, and more: seeing to it that Jewish children study Torah is an act of *binyan Klal Yisroel*—building the body of Jewry in a most significant way. The rabbis

advised us that "Every man must ask himself, 'When will my actions reach those of my Avos—Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov?'" Such an expectation truly seems beyond us, until we analyze the word Avos—Patriarchs. These three men are called Avos because they built *Klal Yisroel*: all Jews are their children. When we provide Jewish children with Torah, they gain an appreciation of their membership in Jewish peoplehood. Thus, by bringing children to Torah study we too build our people, and our actions reach those of our Patriarchs.

Thus, as mentioned, no child should be excluded from the whole of *Klal Yisroel*. Every child must have an opportunity to learn Torah.

WHEN DIFFERENCES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The success story of our yeshivos in this generation has also created problems of exclusion. Yeshivos are crowded and thus have the option of selecting the brightest students, those from religious homes, and those with strong

motivation. As for children from a weaker background or of lesser ability, they are simply not accepted in many conventional yeshivos. There are guidelines of *halacha* and precedent to direct us in dealing with such problems:

If a child is disruptive or has a negative influence on others, he should not be accepted into a regular yeshiva. As the *Sefer Chassidim* puts it, אל יעשה אדם חסד במקום עבירה, "One should not perform kindness to one person at the expense of another person." He gives the example of Shimon, a wealthy Jew who engaged a *rebbe* to teach his child, as was then the custom in Europe. His neighbor Reuvain, a very poor man, asked that as a *chessed* he permit his child to learn with this *rebbe* as well. A *gevaldige chessed!* But the *Sefer Chassidim* cautions that if Reuvain's child does not behave properly, wastes time, and can have a bad influence on Shimon's children, he should not be permitted to join the others. In truth, this is an echo of the old dispute between Avraham and Sarah. Avraham was aware that Yishmael was not behav-



ing properly, but he argued that Yishmael would improve if he would be with Yitzchak, under the influence of their household. But Sarah pointed to the risk that Yishmael would have a ruinous influence on Yitzchak, and under such circumstances they had no obligation to keep him in their home. Yishmael should be banished. And G-d agreed with her.

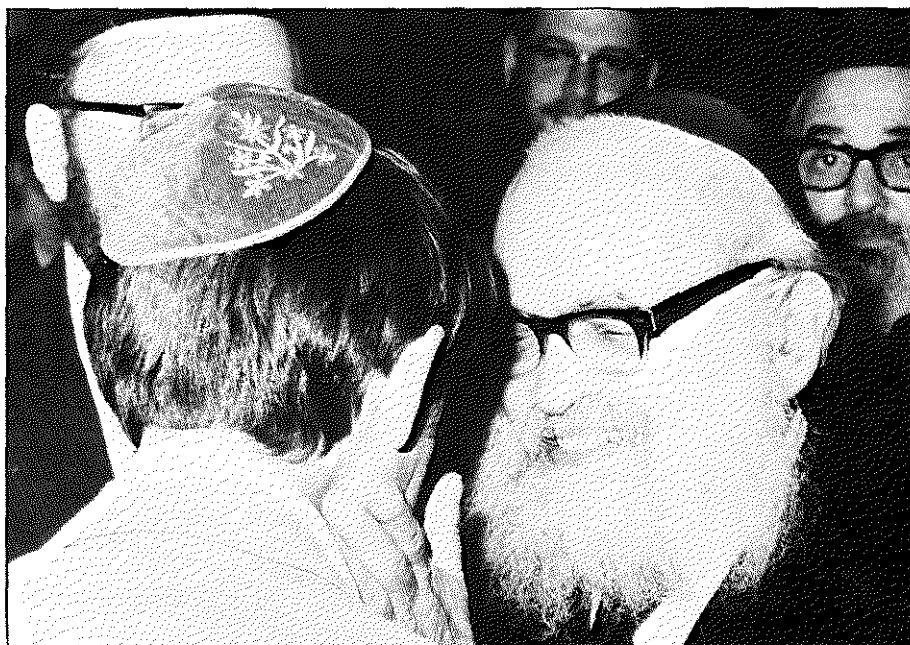
But one must not generalize. This only applies to circumstances where that danger exists. Not every child from a non-*frum* home constitutes a danger to his classmates. The *rebbe* must devote himself to such a child. True, he requires more attention, more warmth and friendship. So it is our task to see to it that the child is molded and guided by the yeshiva and that he develop into a good *talmid*. Which yeshiva has not had many cases of children from the worst of homes—children over whom the *Menahel* and the *Rebbeim* concerned themselves and saw to it that they grew to be fine *Bnei Torah*!

THE CHOFETZ CHAIM: FIND YOUR OWN SOLUTION

Children from good homes who have limited abilities, or cannot keep up with the other children, often apply to yeshivos to find themselves advised to "try elsewhere" because the schools have established higher standards. Such a policy cannot be justified. There are solutions for weak students—private tutors and teacher's aides, resource rooms and remedial programs. These already exist in many yeshivos whereby a weak student leaves the classroom for an hour or so to learn privately on an individual basis, and he is encouraged and eventually equipped to move along with his class. Some high schools maintain a *Mechina* (a preparatory program) to work with weaker students at their own level—and they eventually become true *Bnei Torah*. ... There are many solutions to such a problem which a conscientious *Menahel* could find if he would sincerely seek them.

The Rav of a small town once came to the Chofetz Chaim with a problem: A rubber factory in his

Seeing to it that Jewish children study Torah is an act of binyan Klal Yisroel and a supreme charity.



Rabbi Yaakov Kamnitsky with a student at Be'er Hagolah.

town operates on Shabbos, regardless of how much he has pleaded with the owners. The Rav begged the Chofetz Chaim to come to his town to speak to them. They will argue, he told the Chofetz Chaim, that they can't close for two consecutive days, because if the furnaces are cooled for two days, the material they work with will get ruined. The Chofetz Chaim should prepare practical suggestions for them.

The Chofetz Chaim replied, "We don't have to give them any suggestions. All we need do is help them understand the sanctity of Shabbos and the gravity of Chillul Shabbos (Sabbath violation). They are experts in their fields and will find their own solutions."

Menahalim and mechanchim—principals and teachers—know their business of understanding the Jewish child. We need only impress them that when a Jewish child comes to learn and wants to learn, we must accept him like a lost brother. We must do everything in our power to accept him, to help him, to encourage him. There are many solutions to the problems he brings in his

wake. Each *menahel* and *mechanech* will find them on his own. It is for us to recognize the problems and to help them in carrying out the solutions.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, SPECIAL APPROACHES

We have children in our midst who are members of disadvantaged communities, certainly through no fault of their own. Thousands of Russian children are now being brought up in the Land of the Free without any Jewish awareness whatsoever. Parents and educators keep their distance. They don't want to have anything to do with these children who have been raised in a tradition of *kefirah* (denial of G-d).

Be'er HaGolah is a school that functions exclusively for Russian children. I am very familiar with its work, and it is truly remarkable. The entire staff is devoted to these children, and they see gratifying fruits from their labor. The mere fact that children coming from a land that fosters atheism are sitting and learning *Chumash*, *Mishnayos* and

Gemora—learning Torah... this in itself is remarkable! This is just the beginning, yet it appears that the public does not appreciate the potential that lies in such children. For when the administration attempts to mainstream their children into a yeshiva after several years in Be'er HaGolah, they encounter difficulties. Several children have been accepted in yeshivos and Bais Yaakov schools, but it has not been easy.

And then there are several yeshivos in the New York area for American children from non-religious homes, some who were transferred out of public schools. One of them, Yeshiva R'tzhad, is in the heart of Brooklyn where the need is as great as anywhere else. This year, for instance, its enrollment increased with an additional hundred children, most of them from public schools. During a recent visit to R'tzhad I saw these children, wearing *tzitzis* and *yarmulkas*, learning *Chumash* and *Mishnayos*. The school has special instruction for groups and individuals, and is experiencing notable success.

I am aware that other institutions are involved in the same effort, but I single out these two institutions because I am in constant contact with them. Of course, these children are not on the same level as those enrolled in the well-known yeshivos who come from religious homes and have generations of religious commitment behind them. But these children are growing and learning Torah, and they are being reunited with their rightful claim to their inheritance—Torah.

THE ISRAELI DIMENSION

As pressing as the situation is in America, Torah education for every child in *Eretz Yisroel* is an even more desperate need, for in *Eretz Yisroel* a *Kulturkampf* is being waged—a battle for both the form and essence of *Eretz Yisroel* and *Klal Yisroel*. This war will be decided not on some remote battlefield but in Israel's classrooms. The form of the *chinuch* in Israel will determine the shape of its society tomorrow. It follows that whoever supports the Torah education of Jewish children in Israel thereby

guarantees generations of G-d-fearing Jews and is *locheim milchemes Hashem*, fighting G-d's battles, so to speak.

In *Hilchos Melachim* the Rambam says: "Whoever fights G-d's battles with all his resources, for the sake of Heaven, will merit that G-d will build him a 'house,' for him and his children, forever, and he will merit the World-to-Come." How much more so in this battle that has the future of *Klal Yisroel* at stake! For there is a profound difference in a child if he is enrolled in a *Mamlachti* (government) school or a *Chinuch Atzmai* school!

THE MITZVA OF "MAASER"

It has become a practice amongst religious Jews to follow the directive of *Chazal* to tithe one's earnings, giving *maaser* to *tzedakkos*. In his discussion on the topic in *Ahavas Chessed* (II, 20) the Chofetz Chaim ז"ל says that one tenth is a general requirement. הרוצה להתנהג בעין יפה צריך להפריש אחד מחמשה If one can afford to be more liberal, he should allocate a fifth of his earnings. And how should the fifth be distributed? It would be preferred that the funds be divided into two parts, in keeping with the double expression in *Chumash*—"aser te'aser." One *maaser* should be set aside for Torah support, to help Jewish children study Torah, similar to the *maaser* given to the Levites who devoted their lives to Torah study. The other *maaser* should be set aside for other *mitzva* purposes.

If people of means would follow the Chofetz Chaim's advice and give two *maasros*—of them, one for *chinuch*—the Torah institutions would be able to expand their work, and another thousand children would be able to attain their rightful inheritance.

(I am personally aware that the two institutions I mentioned previously have a waiting list of parents who want to enroll their children but cannot, for there is no room to accommodate them, and no money to expand facilities or engage more personnel.)

The Chofetz Chaim ז"ל adds that some people refer to the ruling that a person may not give more than a

WHY WE'RE HERE

The following remarks were made by Rabbi Joseph Loebenstein in response to recognition received for his support to The Lakewood Cheder School, where his grandchildren study.

The way in which each language expresses a universally felt idea reflects on the individual culture associated with the language. For instance, in America when someone thanks a person for a gift, the response is "You're welcome." That is, it was my pleasure to give you something of mine, and I'll be happy to do the same in the future.

In Yiddish, the response to thanks is customarily, "S'iz *nishto farvoss*—there's nothing for you to thank me for." Here the implication is that we're in this together, partners of sorts, or brothers. You're entitled to share in my good fortune anytime you feel the need.

In *Chumash*, this concept is carried one step further. When issuing the invitation to Jewry to participate in the construction of the *Mishkan* (sanctuary), G-d says, "Take for yourselves a gift offering." It may seem as though you're contributing to the *Mishkan*, but in actuality you'll be gaining a share in My Sanctuary. You'll be taking, not giving.

I'm being thanked for contributing to the support of the school my grandchildren attend, while their father continues his Kollel studies in Bais Medrash Govoha, in Lakewood. It may seem to some to be an extraordinary act of generosity. Why shouldn't my children pay for their own children's schooling? Why should I be involved? But I beg to differ.

Today, at sixty, I and my fellow grandparents are more youthful, more vigorous and more financially comfortable than our own parents or their parents and grandparents ever were at the same age. G-d's generosity to us must be for a good reason! Permit me to tell you my thoughts on the subject:

I grew up in Germany before and during Hitler's rise to power, and it is an experience that will dominate my memories. I especially recall my father ע"ה speaking of a meeting of wealthy members of a Jewish Trade Association in 1932, regarding the terrible plight of fellow impoverished Jewish tradesmen who lived in our community. Why not use some of the vast funds in the Association's treasury to help them? After a lengthy debate, the matter was put to a vote, and the majority decided: nothing. It was not within the purview of the Association to engage in philanthropy. It would be a misuse of funds.

Just two weeks later, Hitler called on all trade associations to "lend" him money. My father's group had no choice but to comply, never to see the money again. After that, it was too late for anybody to help anyone else, even if they were moved by the spirit of generosity. They had had their chance, but they did not use it. They were too rigid in their ways.

I would venture that we, members of the grandparent generation, have been so blessed with exceptionally unusual means and enormous potential to accomplish things, to enable our children to continue to advance in Torah knowledge, perhaps to compensate for the losses of the destruction of Europe. As we contribute to our grandchildren's education, we derive an unusual pleasure of witnessing the Torah development of the next two generations. Giving is a means of receiving.

Thanks? *Nishto farvoss!*

Rabbi Loebenstein, a *musmach* of Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin, lives in Vineland, N.J.

Which yeshiva has not had many cases of children from the worst of homes—and saw to it that they became fine Bnei Torah!

fifth of his earnings to *tzeddaka*, lest he himself become dependent on others as a result. But, suggests the Chofetz Chaim, this would only seem to pertain to a person who lives on a strict budget and uses his money exclusively for his personal needs.*

part of their parents. Instead of leaving these children begging at the doors of our yeshivos, some people of generosity and concern have been paying for their education, actually earning the status of being the children's *rebbe*. In fact, they are even entitled to the supreme respect that



A community such as ours that is blessed with so much affluence should surely sanctify this material blessing for the *chinuch* of Jewish children. With sufficient funding, so many more Jewish children would be able to return to *Yiddishkeit* and grow in Torah. It is deeply painful when Jewish children are lost to *Yiddishkeit* because of a lack of money! The Chofetz Chaim adds further that when one gives *maaser*, G-d enters into a partnership with him. It is a partnership that cannot fail to show profit.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Some children have no one to pay for their Jewish education—either because of poverty or because of indifference on the

*But this does not apply to people who spend freely on luxuries. Furthermore, to give money in excess of a fifth for *Hachzokas HaTorah* is not only permissible, but a great *mitzva*.

is normally accorded to a person's teacher of Torah.

Again, this is not merely a wise or generous option available to people of means. It is an obligation. We see that when Yaakov's son Reuvain could not find Yoseif in the pit where he had been thrown, he lamented, "The child is not here, where will I go?" Rashi elaborates: "Where will I flee from my father's anguish?" (*Be-reishis* 37, 30). As the eldest in the family, he carried prime responsibility for his brother, and it was he that would be accountable to Yaakov for Yoseif's disappearance.

Today, too, our Father is seeking His children. They are not in Torah schools, where they belong. Instead, they are being deprived of a Torah education, and—worse yet—they are being imbued with values contrary to Torah and even void of basic decency. To whom does G-d turn in His anguish? To the children's parents, who themselves are without basic knowledge or commitment to

Torah? Or to *Yidden* who are scrupulously particular regarding the Torah *chinuch* for their own sons and daughters? People who are such connoisseurs regarding their own children's development can surely appreciate the necessity of providing for G-d's other sons and daughters. G-d is as concerned that the children from non-religious families be exposed to the best Torah education as He is over the children of more fortunate circumstances. If we continue to ignore their plight, and children in large urban centers as well as across the broad countryside continue to join the shocking intermarriage statistics, "Where will we flee in face of our Father's anguish?"

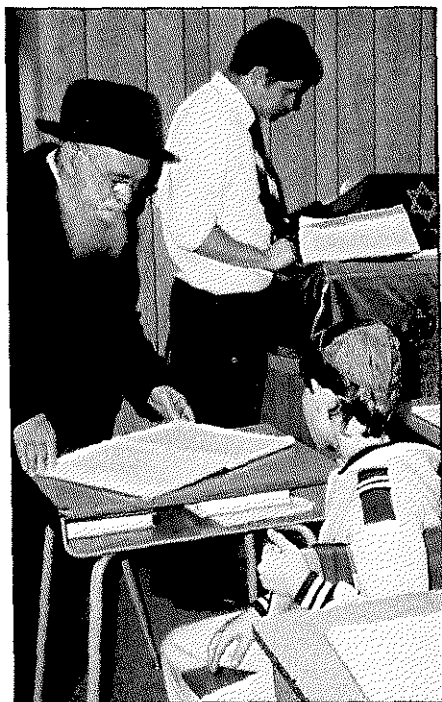
If the majority of children in *Eretz Yisroel* continue to grow up without Torah and join those forces battling Sabbath observance and protesting against so-called religious coercion, how indeed will we face our Father?

THE AWESOME ALTERNATIVE

There is a striking *Chazal* which highlights the gravity of the sin of depriving a Jewish child of a Torah education. The Gemora in *Nedarim* (32a) gives several reasons for the *Galus* in Egypt. Rabbi Yochanan explains it as follows: After Avraham was victorious over the four kings, freeing the subjects of the King of Sodom and his allies, the King of Sodom pleaded: "Give me the people, you keep the booty." Avraham refused to keep anything and yielded both the captives and the booty to the King of Sodom. In making this choice, he missed the opportunity to keep the captives and bring them "under the wings of the *Shechina*." It is because of this that Avraham's descendants were subjected to *Galus Mitzraim*.

If bypassing a chance to reach out to the people of Sodom can bring such severe punishment to the people of Israel, consider the consequences of ignoring the opportunities that are ours to reach out to Jewish children and teach them Torah.

These children are treasures, one and all. It is our obligation to invest our resources to develop their potential. □



Photos courtesy of Ratzhad School.

THROUGH THE PRISM OF PERSONALITY

DAY SCHOOLS: FRAMEWORK FOR OUTREACH

We in America, can be classified as *shotim* (irresponsible idiots) because a *shoteh* is defined in the *Gemora* as "one who loses what he has been entrusted with." The American Hebrew Day Schools have been entrusted with tens of thousands of Jewish children, a majority of whom do not continue in yeshiva high schools. They fall away from Jewish education and have almost as much a chance of marrying out of the faith as a child who never went to day school in the first place. If we do not work with the day school children, if we do not extend a hand to see to it

that they continue in yeshiva high school and become *Bnei Torah*, are we not *shotim*?

Day schools are not necessarily, in and of themselves, the medium for *teshuva*. But the day school sets up a framework into which the efforts for *teshuva* can be directed. More can be accomplished with a child when you take him or her out of a classroom and have a *shmooz* with him, take him to visit a yeshiva, take him to the big city—New York, Monsey, Cleveland, or any *Kehilla Kedosha*—but you must have a classroom from which you take him out.

An eminent educator, one of the heroes in the field of reaching out to day school children, who works in a community where there is no Orthodox presence whatsoever, once told me that the day school represents to him one opportunity: the opportunity to arrange for a child to

go to a *Shomer Shabbos* community for *Shabbos*, to see a *Shabbos* in an observant family.

"You don't have to be a professional to make people into *ba'alei teshuva*," he cries. "You don't have to have intellectual skills, you don't have to have communication skills. It's the closeness, the caring, the sharing, the exposure to the *kedushas Shabbos* that does the whole job. *Ahavas habriyos*—love for your fellow—is the medium through which we can speak to the hearts of our co-religionists and turn their hearts and souls closer to the Creator."

It is the unfortunate truth that the non-affiliated Jews and the alphabet soup of Jewish organizations all across the country look upon the Orthodox Jew with a jaundiced eye. It is a responsibility upon each and every one of us, when it is halachi-

Rabbi Fishman, noted educator and lecturer, is executive vice president of Torah Umesorah, the National Association of Hebrew Day Schools.

You may accomplish more with a child out of the classroom, but you must have a classroom from which to take him out.

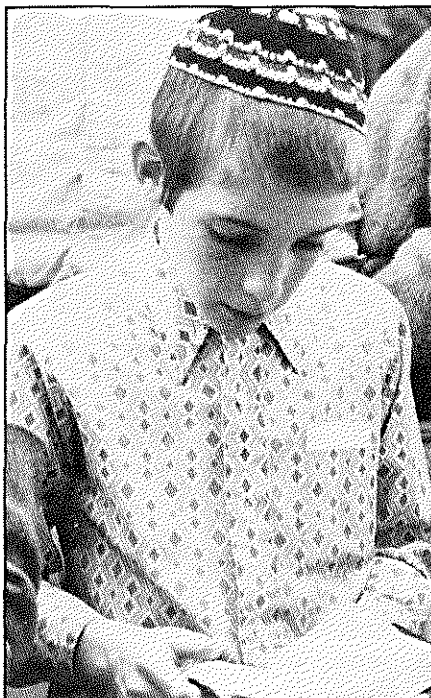
cally permissible, to convey our sympathy, our *ahava*, *achva*, *shalom v'reyus*—love, brotherhood, peace, and friendship. *Bein adam l'chaveiro*—between a man and his friend—is the medium that can convey the message. It is the medium that turns children and adults into *ba'alei teshuva*.

We all know that *Ruth the Moabite*, great-grandmother of *David HaMelech* and ancestress of *Moshiach*, was a convert. Did Ruth attend *shiurim* in *Michtav M'Eliyahu*? Did Ruth learn *Moreh Nevuchim*, *Machsheves Yisroel*, *Chumash with Ramban*? I don't think so. What brought Ruth *ger Tzeddek* and grandmother of David, to *Yiddishkeit* and opened her eyes to Torah? Ruth saw the glory of Torah and the truth of G-d through the prism of the personality of her mother-in-law, Naomi. It was Naomi's good morning, hello and goodbye, Naomi as mother-in-law, mother, and wife, that Ruth saw. When the time came and Naomi indicated that her daughter-in-law should depart, Ruth replied: I am with you, how and where you go, because through the prism of your personality, through your love, your goodness, I see that "your nation is my nation, your G-d my G-d."

SEARCH FOR SACRED REALITY

The Teshuva Movement is not an expression of the fundamentalism emerging in western society. Nor is it an expression of ethnicity that prevails in American society. It is not the *kishke*, *knishes* and *krepelach*, that correspond to totem poles and soul food.

The Teshuva Movement is an expression of disillusion with the secular kingdom of technology and culture, which has prevailed for two hundred years, and it represents a search for redemption and the dimension of sacred reality.



A famous literary critic took a UJA mission to Israel. The bureaucrats showed him the whole country, from Dan to Be'er Sheva back to Afula. At the end of the trip they took him to Meah Shearim in Yerushalayim. And he wrote, Labor party theoreticians know that ultra-Orthodox Jews have been anti-Israel for a long time, and apart from the extreme fanatics, there were Chassidic Jews who made life difficult for the government. These Jews are embarrassing from the Western super-sophisticated point of view, which the Israelis have. So I said to our tour leader, why did you take me to Jerusalem? Why did you take me to Meah Shearim? My contacts in the Israeli bureaucracy answered, because they are the ones who explain why we're here.

The Teshuva Movement exists in our world today because the *Chozrim beTeshuva* are looking for an explanation, *why are we here? Why are we Jews?* It is a search not for soul food but rather for food for the soul. It is a search for authenticity.

I recently met a parent in an out-of-town day school who was a *ger tzeddek*—a righteous convert. He had been converted by Conservative rabbis several years earlier and he became a member in good standing in the local Conservative Temple. He was a *Gabbai*, committee chairman and widely respected. And he sent his child to the local community day school, not the Torah Umesorah school. Suddenly, several years after his conversion, he turned up in the local Torah Umesorah day school to register his children. He was asked, "Mr. Smith, as a prominent member of the Conservative synagogue, why should you want to take your child out of the school affiliated with your temple and bring him to the Torah Umesorah school?"

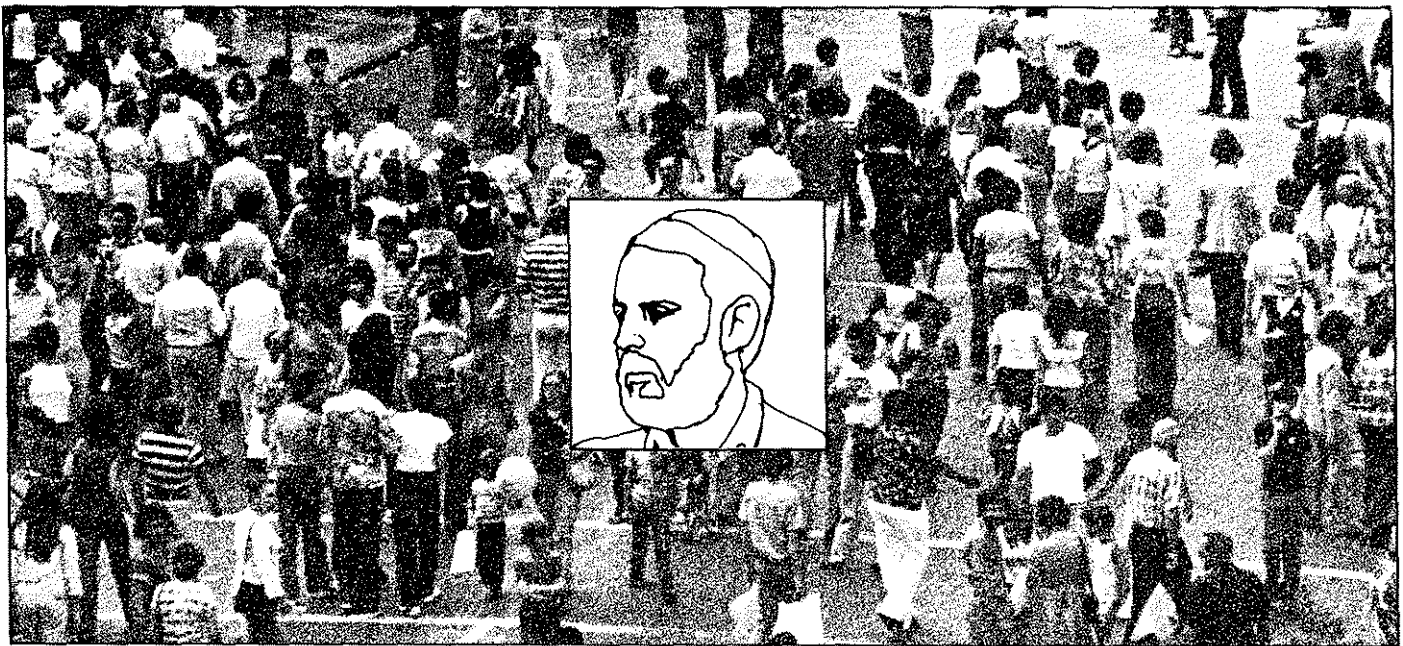
The man answered, "How can you have someone teaching Torah who has not demonstrated a belief in Torah? Would I invest in a company where the workers do not believe in the company?"

PICTURING THEIR SOURCE

In the office of a principal of my acquaintance hangs a picture of a Jew with a beard and *payos*, his wife's hair modestly covered by a kerchief. The picture had been taken in the early 1900's.

He is the *menahel* of a yeshiva where arriving *talmidim* are all *mechalelei Shabbos*—desecrators of the Sabbath. Someone once asked him: "Rabbi, are those your maternal grandparents or your paternal grandparents?" He answered: "Not my *bubbe* and *zeide*, but the *bubbe* and *zeide* of a child who was a student in this yeshiva!"

Who are these children with whom we are working? They're the grandchildren of the grandfather and grandmother with the beard and *payos*, with the kerchiefs. We owe it to them to do what we can to return their grandchildren to *teshuva*. □



The World Is Watching

THE MASSES CAN BE REACHED

How we, as observant Jews, should relate to Jews who do not subscribe to our Torah-true background, is a topic that thirty, even twenty years ago, could not have been a subject for discussion. In those days the question was not how to strengthen our ties with other segments of the Jewish community; the subject was not how to relate to them or reach them. We did not recognize the possibility of doing so. We were still in the process of rebuilding after the *churban* (the destruction of World War II)—or perhaps more accurately said of the American experience, of building for almost the first time. We were in the process of strengthening ourselves, building our confidence, proving—not only to the world around us, but to ourselves as well—that Torah could thrive in the United States. And many of us were trying to convince our people that we were not insane in our resolve to devote our

lives to Torah study and teaching.

And then came the new phenomenon, the phenomenon that people have been talking about for the last ten or fifteen years: the wave of *teshuva* that has engulfed our people.

In all honesty, the *teshuva* phenomenon caught us by surprise. That should not have been so—for, after all, had not by our *roshei yeshiva* and *rebbeim* taught us of the strength and magnetism of Torah? And yet we were surprised. It was a revelation to us that people in *Eretz Yisroel*, in America, graduates of elite universities and, more recently, people in Moscow, Leningrad and Riga, could sense the beauty of Torah though they had never been exposed to it. We learned that they felt a vacuum in their lives, a vacuum that only Torah could fill.

The numbers are not really important. As some Reform, Conservative and secular spokesmen never tire of telling us, the numbers of *ba'alei teshuva* in *Klal Yisroel* are so small as to be statistically almost negligible. Though it is not as bad as all that, it is not very good either. The masses of our people have not yet been reached. But we have learned that they can be reached. That is the major signifi-

cance of what has been called the *teshuva* phenomenon.

In almost any assemblage of *Acheinu B'nai Yisroel*, 90% of us feel no sense of participation in this triumph. We feel we have no personal share in it. Of course we admire the individuals and the institutions involved in outreach, but we cannot do it. We can't abandon our families. We are not ready to move "out-of-town." We are not ready to give up our livelihood. We don't have the personality; we lack the know-how. We don't know how to reach people.

Our personal relationship to the phenomenon of Torah's increasing strength, of Torah's taking root in what we used to think were arid deserts, is by and large similar to the pride that we take in the strides being made in the world of medicine. We're proud and thankful that there now exists a heart bypass operation which can save lives, but we're not surgeons and we did not develop the procedure. We're proud that a Jewish woman, a *shomeres Torah u'mitzvos*, won a Nobel Prize a few years ago, but neither we nor our children will win Nobel Prizes. We're proud of those who have created *ba'alei teshuva* in much the same way that a sports fan

Rabbi Scherman, noted author and lecturer, is general editor of *ArtScroll*, edits *Oleimeinu* (Torah Umesorah's magazine for children) and is a member of the Editorial Board of *The Jewish Observer*.

Most people admire the achievements of the Teshuva Phenomenon with the same pride that sports fans lavish on the hometeam —from the grandstands.

is proud of his heroes. But it's only a vicarious pride, and that is a very serious mistake.

RELATING EVERY DAY

We do relate to Jews of different backgrounds. We *do* relate to people who are as yet far from Torah and *mitzvos*. We relate to them every time we drive a car, every time we double park on a busy street and block traffic. And every time we pause at an intersection and wave on somebody who is trying to make a turn, we relate. We relate when we get up on a bus or subway and give our seat to an elderly man or woman or to a mother carrying a child. We relate in our businesses; we relate in our jobs. We relate every time we go to a restaurant by the way we talk, the way we sit, the way we behave, by how considerate and polite we are, by how truthful we are.

People look at us: we're identifiably Jewish, identifiably *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*. Every single one of us, without exception, relates.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky ז"ל told of when he became *Rav* in Tzitevyan, and he went to the post office for the first time. After purchasing a few stamps, he left the post office and counting his change, realized that the postman had given him too much. Reb Yaakov returned, told him of the error, and gave back the extra kopecks.

He detected a smirk on the postmaster's face, and Reb Yaakov suspected that the man had given him extra change on purpose. This was the new rabbi of the Jews, and the postmaster was testing him to see if he was honest.

Rabbi Kamenetzky related that he later heard from several war survivors that this postmaster had helped

Jews during the war. Who knows, he reflected, if the fact that a Jew showed himself to be honest and courteous, and came back and returned the change, had an effect on the way he viewed Jews and related to them.

RIPPLES OF CONCERN AND INTEGRITY

The *Gemora* gives us clear instructions on "relating" in the way it defines *Kiddush* and *Chillul Hashem* (Yoma 86). If one behaves in a manner that causes people dealing with him to say "Fortunate are his parents who taught him Torah, fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah; woe to those who did not study Torah. That person who studied Torah—see how beautiful are his ways, see how proper are his deeds." That is *Kiddush Hashem* and the reverse is *Chillul Hashem*.

Abbaye says that one fulfills the *mitzva* of loving G-d when he makes G-d's name beloved to others. That is fulfillment of the positive command of *Ahavas Hashem*—Loving G-d. If you care about *Ahavas Hashem*, you do not demonstrate it as much in your own personal life as you do in the impact that you make in the lives of others.

Relating to people in other communities does not necessarily mean turning them into *gedolei Torah*, *kollel Yungeleit*, people who are scrupulous in performing every one of the 613 *mitzvos*. It can merely be a matter of making G-d's Name beloved through you—having people look at you and admire the person who was fortunate enough to learn and live a life of Torah.

There are many areas where we can act, where we can accomplish things, even if we are not in the advance guard of the *Kiruv* Movement. We can

open our homes for a *Shabbos* to someone interested in *Yiddishkeit*, whether or not he is ready to become a *ba'al teshuva*. When you have a guest in your home, he is your guest and you control the environment. What are we worried about? That they might engage us in philosophical discussion? They won't. They want to see what a Jewish home looks like. They want to see what a Jewish *Shabbos* looks like. And if they ask a question that we can't answer, we can simply direct them to the right place, the right rabbi, the one who can give them the answers they seek.

The beauty of a Jewish home, the beauty of a Jewish *Shabbos* can and does work wonders. Many of us say that we don't want "that kind of influence" in our home because it will have a detrimental effect on our children. Yet many of those same people are quite ready and even anxious to send their eighteen-year-old sons and daughters to colleges or offices where we do not control the environment, and where the moral nature of the environment is such that we ought to blush at the very thought of its ramifications.

There is another, more important area where our excessive fears stand in the way of major achievements for Judaism. In many, many cases we do not open the doors of our yeshivos and girls' schools to children of weak background. I recall my own boyhood days in Torah Vodaath, where I was a dormitory student at the age of ten. We had nearly three hundred out-of-towners, including large numbers from Latin America. There were many young members of the *She'eiris Hapleilah*. Among these groups—and among the New Yorkers as well—there was a significant number whose background in learning and *shemiras hamitzvos* left much to be desired. Yet many of them grew up to

become distinguished *talmidei chachamim* and *marbetzei Torah*. Indeed, some are among today's Torah leaders. I wonder if they would be admitted to our yeshivos today.

How much greatness are we denying ourselves and our children by unnecessary restrictiveness in admitting children to our institutions? I do not even speak about our obligation to our Jewish brethren—which was movingly articulated by Rabbi Pam (see page 8 in this issue)—I speak about the harm we do *ourselves* by not opening our arms to those who desire to come closer to Torah.

RELATING AT THE CASH REGISTER

There is one important area where all of us relate, and that is in the area of our business dealings. A lot of people think that Orthodox Jews are less ethical in bus-

iness than non-Jews, less courteous in personal dealings than non-Jews.

The Torah says "ויותר יעקב לבדו"—Yaakov remained alone." He was alone because he had gone back to retrieve *pachim ketanim*, small, nearly worthless earthenware jugs that had been left behind. *Sefarim* explain that Yaakov Avinu went back to get them because he truly lived by the laws of *Choshen Mishpat*, and he had earned them in accordance with the law. Thus, they had actually become holy.

When the *Rambam* catalogues the obligations of the wage earner not to waste time and to be diligent on the job, and he cites Yaakov Avinu's experience with Lavan. Yet if anyone could ever have said that he was justified in taking advantage of an employer, it was Yaakov, who had been cheated by one of the greatest thieves and swindlers of all time—Lavan. Nevertheless, Yaakov would not compromise his own integrity.

Chazal say that the *malach* of Eisav was unable to affect Yaakov himself in his spiritual growth, but by damaging *kaf yereicho*, the organ of posterity, he was able to have an effect on the Jewish future. Yaakov's *pachim ketanim* were *kodesh kedoshim*, so he went back, risked all to get them. Perhaps it was in *pachim ketanim* that the *malach* of Eisav was able to harm future generations of Yaakov Avinu. And if so, it is in this area of our lives where we must examine ourselves very carefully, with full awareness of the potential of *Kiddush* and *Chillul Hashem* in these activities.

Relating to others of different backgrounds? We *do*, and therefore we must scrutinize our actions with a view of understanding their effects on others. When we look at our lives that way, we not only influence others, we grow ourselves and we win battles for the glory of Heaven. □

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
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A RAV FOR WARSAW ROSH HASHANA 5746

by Rabbi Moshe Lerer, as told to Nisson Wolpin

I was probably the only *musmach* in a radius of hundreds of miles. And I was responsible for leading the services for Warsaw's only remaining synagogue, the Nodzik Shul. That made me the *Rav* of Warsaw, a title so grandiose and ill-fitting that my tears had to fight my laughter.

The tears were not only for the contrast between the cavernous dimension of the *shul* and the sparse number of congregants that came for the *tefillas*. There was another contrast. As a child I was brought up on a steady diet of reminiscences of the greatness of Polish Jewry. The *Shalosh Seudos* (Third Sabbath Meal) at the Sumner Place *Shtiebel* (Brooklyn) of my youth was peppered with quotations from the *Chozeh* of Lublin, sharp insights from the

Rabbi Lerer, a *musmach* of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, is the Jewish Chaplain of the Central Islip (NY) Psychiatric Center, and is president of the New York State Jewish Chaplains Association.

Kotzker, the challenging commentary of the *Chiddushei HaRim* and his grandson the *Sfas Emes*... references to Warsaw's countless *batei midrashim* and teeming thousands of *lomdim* (Torah Scholars) and *yorei Shomayim* (G-d fearing Jews) all recalled by Jews who lived there. In spite of the undeniable reality of the destruction of the Holocaust, this part of Warsaw was somehow still alive to me.

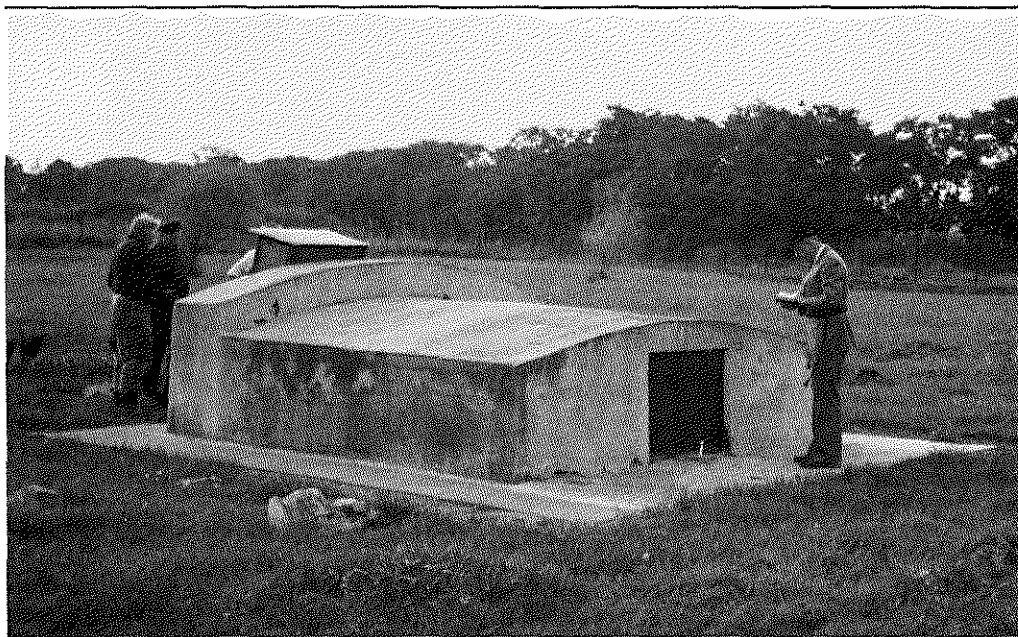
So when the call came to serve as *baal tefilla* (leader of the prayers) and *Rav* in the Nodzik Shul, I had to say yes because of my allegiance to the heavenly Warsaw, and because of my mourning for the tragedy of the earthly Warsaw....

Immediately after *Maariv* and *havdalla* on Saturday night, I left my home in Belle Harbor (a 20-minute drive from JFK) for my flight.

In the air over the Atlantic, as we flew toward the dawn, I said *Zechor Bris* of the *Erev Rosh Hashana Selichos* (penitential prayers). I recalled how as a child I would say *Selichos* aloud for Reb Dovid, a *Varshaver Yid* who had lost his sight. As I would point to the page, he somehow seemed to always be a word ahead of me. My finger touched the page in the plane high above the Atlantic, and I could hear Reb Dovid, remembering the *Selichos* he had said in his youth in Warsaw. "Reb Dovid," I said, "I'm going to your Warsaw. Too late for *Selichos*, but not too late for *Rosh Hashana Maariv*."

I was on my way to the Nodzik Shul: the Nodziks were a couple that built a *shul* where they would be remembered in the *Yizkor* memorial prayers uttered there. The *shul* was in effect a setting for the *Yizkor* for the lost generation of Polish Jewry, a generation without children.

Faded scrolls, truncated scrolls... I felt that Warsaw's condition could be read in everything we touched.



Rabbi Lerer at the kever of the Gerrer Rebbe.

My son—who accompanied me on the trip to blow *shofar* and *daven* *Schacharis* (morning prayers) for the *Kehilla Kedosha* of Warsaw—and I checked into the hotel, and put away our five meals worth of food. With two hours left until *davening*, we set out to keep a promise.

I had given my word to Rabbi Nachman Elbaum, who had organized our trip, that if there were enough time, I would visit the burial place of the *Chiddushei HaRim*, and the *Sfas Emes* in Ger, and pray for the health of their grandson, the present Gerrer Rebbe... The trip took forty minutes each way. Fifty years ago, the streets of this village would have been teeming with *Chasidim*. 1985, and only two Jews lived in Ger, both intermarried. They accompanied us to the cemetery, asked me for *yarmulkes*, and watched silently as I shed tears for "Simcha Bunim ben Chaya Radda Yehudis" in *Eretz Yisroel*.

Before *Maariv*, I ascended the *bima* to introduce myself to the congregants, and to usher in the New Year with a *Yiddishe Vort*. They could not contain their thirst for the Torah

thoughts I was sharing with them; one and all crowded around me so as not to miss one word. I then began the *Maariv* service interspersing whatever old melodies I remembered from my childhood (I did the same during *Shacharis* the next day), and one by one the hundred or so *mispallelim* joined me, drawing from their own childhood memories... a bridge of notes to the past in Warsaw's *yizkor shul*.

Reb Yankele, an old Jew who happened to be one of the only men in all of Warsaw to have a pair of *tzitzis* of his own, asked to lead the *Shacharis* instead of my son. We both agreed to the last minute substitution. As Reb Yankele prepared to *daven* *Shacharis*, the people searched for a *kittel*—the white tunic that symbolizes purity, while serving as a reminder of the *tachrichim* (shrouds) everyone ultimately wears. All they came up with was a set of *tachrichim*! He put on the top half and began.

When I unrolled the *sefer Torah* scroll before the reading, I found that the ink was faded in spots, and that the scroll could only be used in

the most mitigating circumstances (*bidieved*). I checked another *sefer Torah* and found it in perfect condition, as far as it went—the end of *Chumash Bamidbar* (Numbers). There was no *Sefer Devarim*! Faded scrolls, truncated scrolls... I felt that Warsaw's condition could be read in everything we touched.

Shalom, a Fullbright scholar who was spending the year in Warsaw told me that he made a practice of going to the weekly market fair, where the peasants sold Jewish artifacts amongst many other items. They had no idea what they were dealing with. Amongst the ornate candlesticks and silver goblets, he had found a *Megillas Esther*, and various Torah parchments which were being sold as shoe leather *לר*. Fragments were reverently put away, while complete Torah scrolls that were redeemed were put into the *Aron HaKodesh*.

Before *tekias shofar*, I spoke in Yiddish, recalling the Kotzker's comment that *Rosh Hashana* is a *Yom Teru'a* (day of trumpeting) and a *mikra Kodesh* (a holy convocation). *Teru'a* is described as *yelala*—a wailing sound. Said the Kotzker, if you make *Rosh Hashana* a day of shedding of tears and genuine sobbing, one can bring holiness upon the gathering... The tears flowed freely.

My son picked up the *shofar*—except for Shalom, he was the youngest man in the *shul* by scores of years. Warsaw's children and grandchildren were elsewhere, not in Nodzik...

Not just Warsaw, but other cities, towns, and villages were represented by the old, broken Jews who came to pray for one more year: several Jews in *kutch'kelach* and *shtievel* (peasant caps and boots), a blind man who said the entire *davening* by heart, recalling Reb Dovid of my childhood...

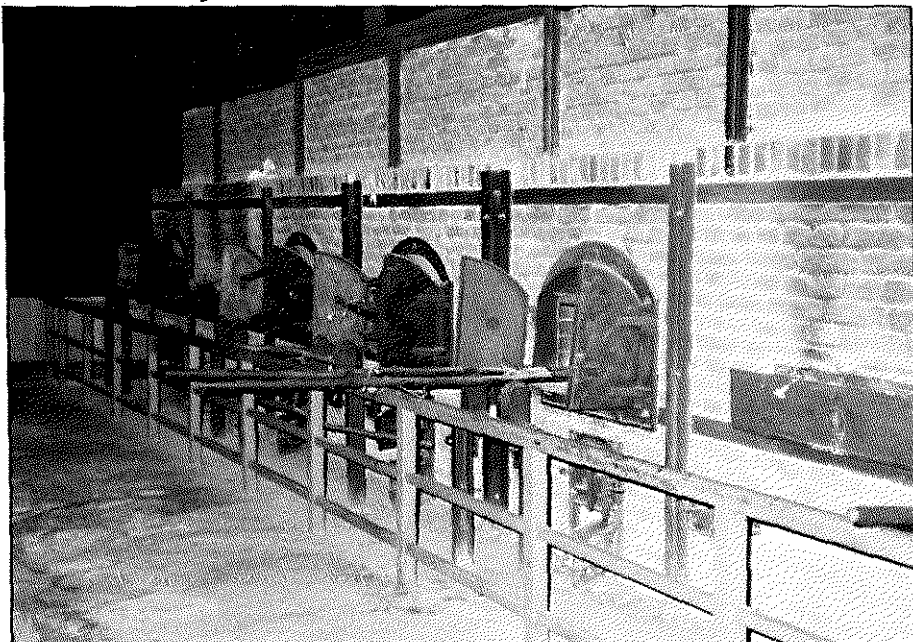
Two youngsters from Sochaczow came escorted to *shul*. Their mother, a physician, is Jewish, and she

wanted them to see a Jewish New Year's service. . . . Every yeshiva student, any Jew with a familiarity with Talmudic commentary, recognizes Sochatzow as the home of the great *Avnei Nezer* (19th Century Torah giant). What a devastation, that nothing remained from his town, save two little boys, children of an intermarried couple!

Four *Kohanim* ascended the *bima* (platform) for *birkas Kohanim*. One of the *Kohanim* had come from Bialystok with three friends to *daven* in Warsaw . . . four peasants (by appearance) in search of G-d. In the course of my conversation with him, I discovered that he—the *Kohein*—had studied in a Yeshiva in Bialystok in his youth. All that he had today was a faint recollection of those days.

We were scarcely a *minyan* at *Tashlich*, lining the banks of the Visel (Wisla) River. One of the men pointed across the waters to the Praga side of the River. "Last time we had a *minyan* at *Tashlich*," he said, "was forty five years ago. The great Rabbi Menachem Ziemba זצ"ל was standing over there, with tens of thousands of Jews." Once again, my laughter mingled with tears at the ridiculous contrast between myself as "Rav of Warsaw" and the towering stature of those who had presided over Warsaw in its glorious past.

Crematorium at Majdanek.



On Tuesday night after *havdalla*, a number of my new friends crowded my hotel room to wish me a safe trip back. We nibbled a bit before retiring (the next day was the Fast of Gedalya), and we gave the rest of our tins of food to the visitors. Their kosher diet consisted of one meal per day, courtesy of the Joint Distribution Committee, as well as whatever meat was provided by the *shochet* of Budapest.

Our last request from the Jews of Warsaw was that we arrange to *shtetl* a *chupah* (perform the marriage) for an elderly widow and widower who had been living together without benefit of *chupah-kiddushin*. I promised to send them a *Kesubah* with the next emissary to Warsaw, who would then arrange the *chupah*.

We arose at 3:00 a.m. to take a quick tour of places bearing hallowed names I had grown up with. Our first destination was Lublin, but the signposts along the way evoked the sanctity of bygone Poland: *Otwock*, pre-War host to so many fleeing Torah leaders (the old Modzitzer Rebbe, זצ"ל, whose sweet davening on his first *Shabbos* in America in the large *shul* on Van Buren and Sumner, still sings in my heart; the Amshinover Rebbe זצ"ל—on his way to Kobe and then Shanghai—whose sad, compassionate, wise countenance reflected the full weight of the *galus*; the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, זצ"ל, before he came to New York City;) *Bialystok*, headquarters for the Novaradok Yeshiva network; *Bilgoraj*, where the father of the Belzer Rebbe served as *Rav*; *Siedlce* . . . and then *Lublin*.

The car pulled over to the side of the road. A cottage with shuttered windows stood at the edge of the cemetery. Our guide held a flashlight and led us over broken branches and around bomb craters. No grave markers had remained standing from the war's destruction except for the large structure over the burial place of the *Chozeh* and a stone that stood over the resting place of the Lubliner Rav, Reb Sholom Shachne. The fear we felt as we recited *Tehillim* was one of *מה נורא המקום הזה*—"How awesome is this place!"

A dark road took us to Kotzk, the burial place of Reb Menachem Mendel זצ"ל whose spiritual vantage place for viewing the materialistic society around him provoked him to dismiss the entire corporeal world as "not worth a pinch of snuff (*nischt verd kein schmek tabak*)!"

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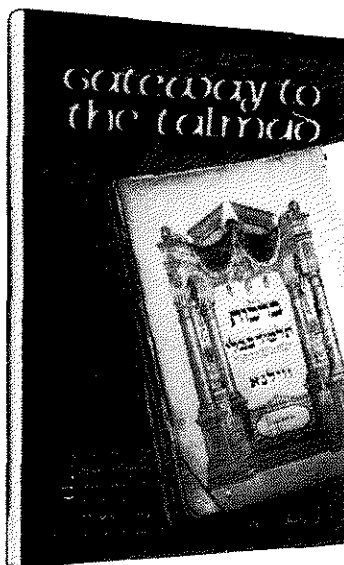
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One does not *daven* in a cemetery, for any prayer or blessing, any performance of a *mitzva* (except those related to the deceased) is not permitted, as *lo'eg larosh*—a mockery of the dead: We exercise our option to serve G-d and accrue merit, while it is too late for them to perform *mitzvos*. Time to *daven Shacharis* had arrived, and I was prevented by *halacha* from *davening* in close proximity to the Kotzker's resting place. My feelings then were that should I have stood any closer, I would have been the object of his mockery, by the poverty of my *tefillos*, rather than the reverse.

I asked the driver to stop at Majdenek, the infamous concentration camp, from which one can see the apartment houses of Lublin on the horizon. Yet the Poles of Lublin claimed not to know of the human remains going up in smoke from the smokestacks of nearby Majdenek! Strange how a hundred eighty years ago a saintly Jew of impaired vision earned the title of "The Chozeh"—the Seer of Lublin—because of his heightened perception of each Jew's soul and his sensitivity to each one's spiritual needs. And how only forty-five years ago Lubliners of the Nazi era, with full vision, did not even blink for Jewish cinders in their eyes!

Daf Yomi that day was *Nedarim* 4. The man who introduced the plan for uniting Jewry through the study of the same folio of Talmud daily, Rabbi Meir Shapiro זצ"ל, was *Rav* in Lublin, head of the Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin. Did anyone (other than me) within five hundred miles study *Nedarim* 4 on that day?

We boarded the flight back to the States, and—incredibly—we *davened Mincha* in our local *shul* in Belle Harbor. I had an *aliya*, and recited the *Birkas HaGomlin* (a prayer of thanksgiving for surviving a journey across the ocean): "*hagomail lachayovim tovos*—He bestows good upon the guilty..."

Someone quipped, "Moshe, what were you guilty of this time?"

I was not sure. Surviving? That's a *mitzva*.—Forgetting? Perhaps, but not again, for a long, long time. □

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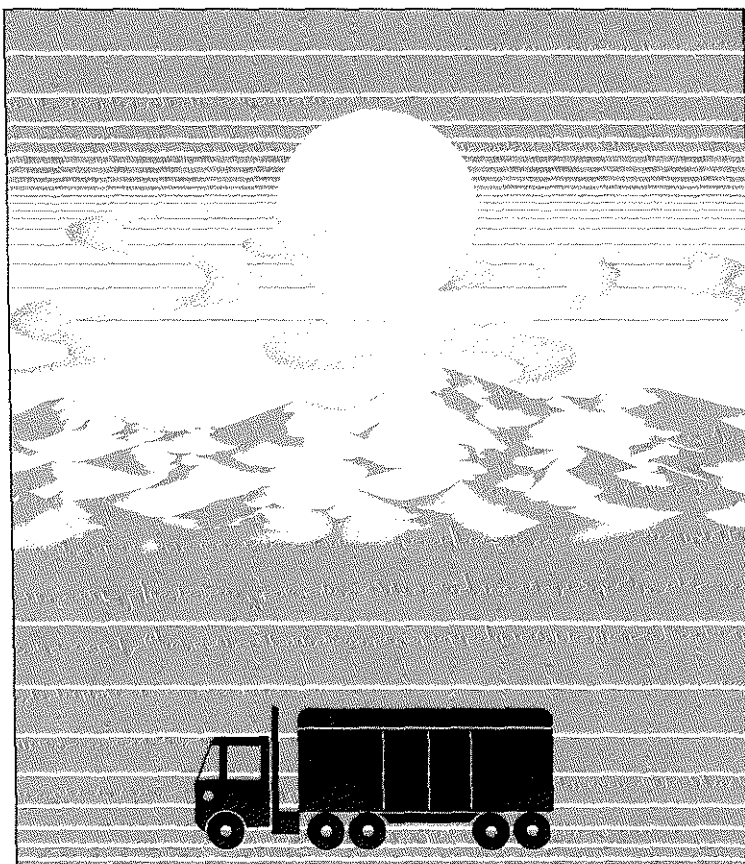
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THE SAFED MIDNIGHT EXPRESS

Shortly after midnight an alarm-clock rings and rouses Avraham Iluz, a 27 year old resident of Safed, from a deep but all-too-brief slumber. After donning his *tallis katan*, reciting the morning blessings and fastening a 45-calibre revolver to his belt holster, Avraham leaves his home in the dead of night and drives his small but sturdy pick-up truck across the town to pick up his brother Yakov and to begin his secret mission—a secret, at least, from his wife. No, Avraham Iluz is neither a Mossad agent nor a high level connection in a smuggling ring across the Lebanese border. In fact, his job is the distribution of fruit and vegetables, and he and his brother are on their way to the massive produce *shouk* in Haifa, which opens daily at 2:30 a.m. After purchasing the produce, Avraham and Yakov return to Safed. So, why the secret? Avraham is afraid his newly-wed bride would be very concerned about his health were she to know how little sleep he gets. So, as soon as he arises, he sets the alarm dial to five a.m. and when he returns from his nightly mission at eight o'clock in the morning for breakfast, she believes he's just come back from davening. That's how Avraham keeps his secret.

Yehuda Bernstein is an American *oleh* who lives in Safed (Tzfas).



But there is another factor that gives Avraham's nocturnal haul even greater significance; for Avraham makes no profit on the twelve tons of merchandise he delivers each week to Safed. In fact, the salary he earns is minimal even for Israeli standards. Avraham makes his deliveries to the Siyata Help Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to supplying produce and dry goods to low-income families at prices 30-100% lower than the regular market prices. But why must a man whose job involves the mitzva of *gemilas chassadim* carry a revolver? In truth, because he drives through Arab towns. But it comes in handy in other ways, and that's a long story which can best be explained in a brief glimpse of Avraham Iluz's life.

Born in Tiberias, the second child of Moroccan immigrants to Israel, Avraham moved as a young boy from his parents' moshav to Haifa. In the Six Day War, his father was killed in action in the Golan Heights and Avraham and his two brothers were forced into the role of breadwinners at an early age. In the fifth grade, every day before and after school he would transport crates of fruit and vegetables by horse-cart from the

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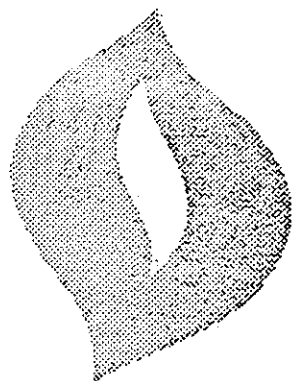
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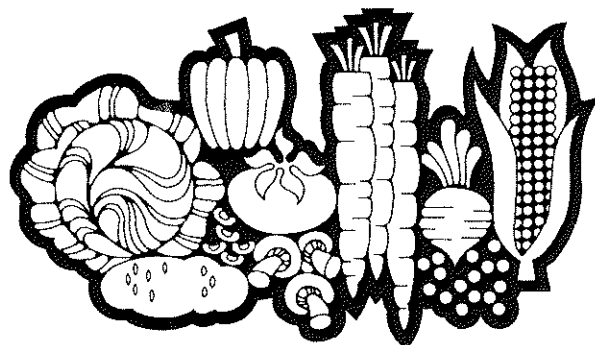
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producers to several local outlets. On Friday he sold flow-
ers on the street corners to passersby. Finally, after high
school, Avraham and his brothers entered into partner-
ship with a family friend and were soon distributing and
marketing fruit and vegetables at three different loca-
tions in Haifa. Due to his warm relationship with an old
classmate who inherited Haifa's largest supermarket
chain, Avraham got good deals on wholesale produce and
was able to retail at a price substantially less than his
competitors. Soon, however, he was being threatened by
the produce "mafia" to keep his prices in line with the
competition. His failure to comply with these threats
resulted in the lobbing of a hand-grenade into his shop.
Luckily, the pin was jammed and the grenade failed to
detonate.

The high pressures of the business and the hustle-
bustle of city life began to wear on Avraham's nerves. His
mother had since re-married, and he decided to set up a
business in Safed with his brother Yakov. His aim was to
provide Safed's residents with fruit and vegetables at a
low price. He was already familiar with the mountaintop
capital of the Galilee, since his grandparents had moved
there after emigrating from Morocco in 1951, and his
parents had lived there in the first few months of their
marriage. But Avraham had another important reason
for choosing Safed. Having been raised as a youngster in
a traditional Sephardic family, he had become painfully
aware that he was slipping into a secular lifestyle, moving
farther away from the values of his youth—hitting bot-
tom in many, many ways. Avraham hoped that Safed
would enable him to re-connect with those Jewish roots
that gave meaning to his life, and help pull him out of
the morass into which he had sunk.

STARTING OVER IN SAFED

He and his brother opened a grocery store on the
outskirts of Safed and his bargain prices at-
tracted clientele from all parts of the city. What's
more, he made a point of supplying his store with an
assortment of products with *hechsherim* accepted by
Safed's steadily growing religious community. In the
meantime, he was negotiating a deal to buy a large store
in a more central location in order to expand the scope of
the business, but eventually the deal fell through. Shortly
thereafter came the war in Lebanon, where Avraham
served in an infantry unit, as he had done previously in
the Litani operation.

In early 1984 he was approached by one of his clients—a member in the Kollel Nachalas Naftoli, headed by Rabbi Shmuel Feivelsohn—to contribute to the establishment of the projected Siyata Help Center.

Avraham Iluz readily agreed. In the spring the Siyata opened, and Avraham was transporting a half ton of produce per week to the new store, located in the old basement of the kollel in the Old City. The location meant a great deal of effort for Avraham because it took him over twenty minutes to negotiate the fifty feet of narrow alley way which leads from the main road to the kollel. Second, the consumer demand for low-cost food products had been grossly underestimated, and, in a matter of months, the Siyata had developed clients among hundreds of Safed's low-income families and became the largest distributor of fresh produce in the Galilee. In addition, the store added on a section for dry goods and household products. Since the organization's profit covers only the minimal running costs, Avraham has had to make do with a mini pick-up which averages four trips a week to Haifa and Tel Aviv.

NAILS IN THE ALLEY WAY

But there were other problems, less pleasant than the technical difficulties caused by inadequate location or unexpectedly high demand. Safed, too, had its vegetable "mafia," and, alarmed at the unbeatable prices the Siyata offered, they began to use young thugs in an effort to thwart the newly-found enterprise. These hoodlums littered the narrow alley way with nails, stole crates of fruit, and threatened to hang the Rosh Kollel's son, Rabbi Baruch Feivelson, "by his *tefillin* straps." They entered the shop and harassed the volunteer at the cash register, Reb Yonah Bloch, a pensioner, who finally refused to work until an electric buzzer was connected to the kollel upstairs. Finally, while trying to dissuade them from their harrassment, Yakov Iluz was hit on the head with an iron bar. This brought the entire kollel into action, and the attackers were soundly trounced. After this successful reprisal, Avraham paid a visit to one of the hoodlums, showed him the revolver which he now carries with him at all times, and let it be known that any further violence would be met in kind. The next day, three of the gang appeared in the kollel and apologized in public for the behavior. Since then, quiet has reigned in the Old City of Safed.

Avraham's job for the Siyata Help Center also brought him the close contact to Torah that he had been longing for. In October he was married to a girl from an observant family in Acco. Before the wedding, Rabbi Feivelsohn personally taught him the *halachos* relevant to married life and *shalom bayis*.

Asked to compare his new life with his secular life in Haifa, he smiles and says, "I feel a satisfaction beyond compare."

The Siyata is struggling to find a more suitable location and to purchase a larger vehicle and better equipment in order to offer better service to the needy of Safed. And with the devotion of people like Avraham Iluz one has every reason in the world to believe they will succeed. □



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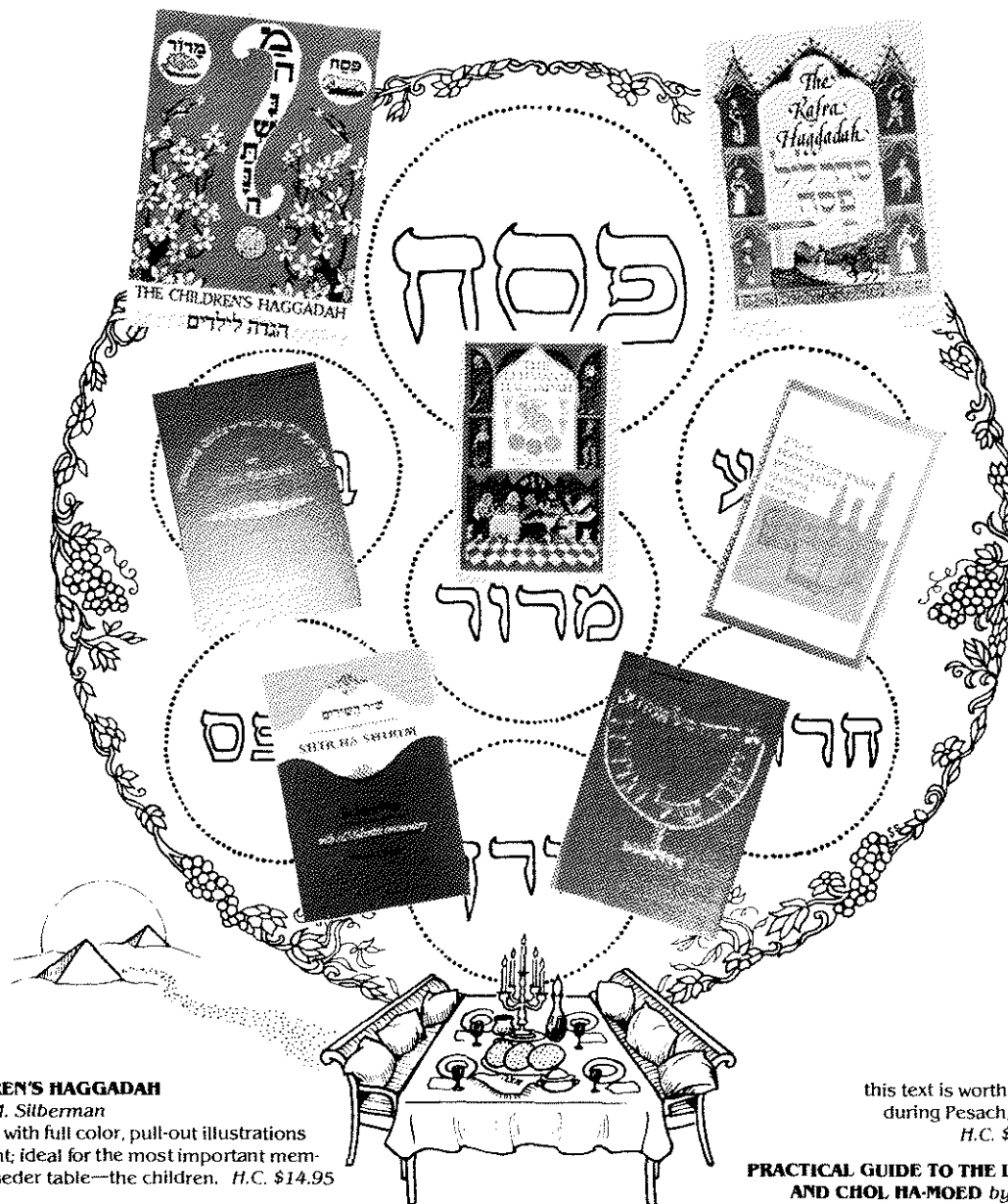
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AVRAHAM'S HOUSEHOLD

LOVE THE HUNGRY

There will come a day when I shall send a hunger into the land; [it shall be] neither a hunger for bread, nor a thirst for water, but for the words of G-d" (Amos 8,11). This is surely an apt description of the *teshuva* phenomenon emerging in so many parts of the world today.

A less-known side to the *teshuva* movement is the significant number of non-Jews who are also seeking something more satisfying than bread or water, and are finding it in Orthodox Judaism.

Gerei tzeddek (converts) are not new to Jewish history. The number of great people who were converts, as well as their influence on the Jewish nation, is phenomenal. From Yisro, Moshe Rabbeinu's father-in-law, to Ovadiah the Prophet, through Shmaya and Avtalyon, teachers of Hillel and Shammai... from Tzipora and Rachav (wives of Moshe and Joshua) through Ruth the Moabite, great-grandmother of David—converts have been prominent amongst Jewry's leaders. This was all merely history to me until the day I befriended a very special woman in Jerusalem and learned that she was a *gioret tzeddek* (female convert).

Since then, my awareness of the unique qualities and singular problems of *geirim* has increased considerably. What do today's righteous converts have in common with their distinguished 'ancestors'? They have a high level of sensitivity, which means that they are attracted to truth

and repulsed by corruption, immodesty, coarseness and lack of *chessed*. They are courageous people who leave the security of their families and friends (and, often, their countries as well) to break away to live where truth and *chessed* are found in larger quantities.

FROM ISOLATION TO PSYCHIC SUSPENSION

There are 33 references to converts in the *Tanach* alone, most of them saying something like: "Love the *ger*," and "Do not cause pain to the *ger*" (*Baba Metzia* 59b). No word is superfluous in the *Tanach*. Why should there be so many references to this one *mitzva*? We can find a clue to the answer in the fact that converts are frequently grouped with widows and orphans in *halacha*.

All three have no family; they are alone in every sense of the word. A convert leaves his family in order to live as a kosher Jew, and the family members will often consider him or her their black sheep. Communication is often broken off for good, effectively ending emotional security and support as far as the family is concerned. Everything from the past is suddenly pulled out from under their feet. *Rashi* speaks of their situation as follows: (*Bamidbar* 5, 8 referring to *Sanhedrin* 68b)

"Our rabbis asked: 'But can you find anyone in Israel who has no kinsman whatsoever—neither son nor brother nor other relative... going back as far as Ya'akov?' The person referred to is a proselyte."

The *dinim* that deal with the treatment of widows, orphans and converts are saying, in effect, that people

Fayge Levy is An American living in Jerusalem. This is her first appearance in these pages.

Don't be shocked by the questions. They are not emanating from incipient apikorsus, they're only a sign that a new soul is groping for truth.

who feel isolated need every bit of support and encouragement; and, conversely, every negative word—even those said inadvertently—hurt their recipients much more than they do people who enjoy more secure circumstances.*The Torah recognizes this extra sensitivity and deems it so important that it is mentioned thirty-three times.

The sudden loss of support is only the beginning. Next, the *ger* faces struggles on all levels—she** must discard old attitudes and concepts and take on new ones; *midos* must be changed; at least one completely foreign language must be learned (Hebrew), and sometimes a second (men learn Aramaic when they study *Gemara*), and some converts even take on a third, such as Yiddish

*About half the converts I have met during my five years in Israel did not have any of the experiences mentioned in this article; the other half did. Again, some of these experiences are familiar to *baalei teshuva* and a few also to new *olim*.

**I have written in the feminine gender because my contact with converts has been limited to women.

or Ladino. If Israel was chosen as "home," then there are still more changes. And all this happens at the same time.

This is still not the end. When a convert leaves the *mikveh* with her conversion certificate in her purse, she is officially Jewish and intellectually she knows she is Jewish. But it can take a while for her feelings to catch up with the new status: she has built up an identity for the past 18, or 25, or 35 years, and changing it is not as easy as taking off one jacket and slipping on another. For several years a convert may feel as if she is suspended in mid-air, not belonging... not being here or there. This is the identity problem.

OPENING UP TO A NEWCOMER

What can a well-meaning born-Jew do to give the *ger* a hand? One key word is "understanding"; it cannot be stressed enough. The convert is making a strenuous effort to find a niche in Jewish



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society. Realize that a perceptive, sensitive person has chosen your group or community because she admires something about it. Maybe it is the *chessed* that attracted her—perhaps it was your group's reputation for learning. Maybe the convert saw the way you live up to your ideals, and wants to be like you. Born Jews should make the effort, from their side, to understand where the convert is holding with regard to the community.

The second key word is "acceptance". This is a broad, general term with several subcategories, all of equal importance. *Welcome* is a good starting point. This means the friendly word in the street, the "hello" on the stairs, the small talk in the supermarket checkout line. One of the most important elements here is a smile. It means a lot to a newcomer; it says "I'm glad to see you" (as any new *oleh* can testify).

Conversely, "I'm busy, goodbye," thrown over a shoulder while passing on the sidewalk can hurt. Hurry away, if necessary—but say "hello" and *smile*. It leaves a warm little memory.

Welcome, too, in your home, if you can. *Shabbos* is an especially good time to invite a single person. Such a visit says "I care," for one thing. It is also an educational opportunity, for it is the only way a convert can see a Jewish home in operation. The non-Jewish home is not the same, and knowledge of how a Jewish home functions cannot be gotten out of books.

If a married convert moves into your neighborhood, talk to her. Invite her for coffee; introduce her to others in the neighborhood. If your neighborhood has a *chessed* organization, include the *ger* in its activities; she may decide to become a participating member.

Invite her to *bar mitzvas*, *brissim*, etc. Let her help you with them, too, if they are small, homey affairs. Introduce her to others at family festivities. If you are too busy as hostess, then introduce her to one of the guests who will make her feel part of the group.

Fortunate is the convert who lives in a *chessed*-oriented neighborhood—and blessed are her neighbors.

Differences: Acceptance also means accepting differences, ones that are an inseparable part of a person—part of her package, as it were. Don't come down heavily on things that concern identity, either the old or the (hopefully) budding new one.

The convert wears dresses that are longer than you are used to seeing? Let her—it's not against *halacha*. She might have worn jeans all her life and is now experimenting with styles to see which one is really hers.

She doesn't like some traditional Jewish food? Nothing in the *Shulchan Aruch* says she must. If you went to live in Japan—how would you feel about *sukiyaki* the first (or even the tenth) time it was set in front of you? If she observes *kashrus*, that's quite enough.

She refers her questions to a different *Rav* or *Rebbe* than you do? More power to her, if she has found an approach she feels close to. It is her anchor. Remember, she has given up her family and all the emotional support of a familiar environment. Her Jewish group is her family now, and any aspersion on it is painful. (All insistence that your *shita*, *Rebbe*, or group is *the* one, whether stated subtly or loudly-and-clearly, can be interpreted as aspersion.) If you don't approve of the group, *Rebbe*, *Rav*,

Continued on page 34

The Jewish Observer, March 1986

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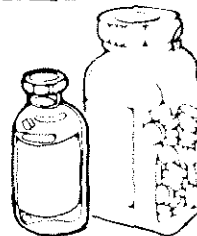
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A tale of

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he first time I saw Rafi was on a rainy evening in December. We were both riding an Egged bus in Yerushalayim. Our destinations were the same, although I would never have believed it, since I was on my way to the monthly "bechina" (examination) of MIFAL HASHAS.

The bus was very crowded and very wet and I was "chazzering" (reviewing) the last few pages of Mesechta Yoma! As the bus rumbled down R'chov Meah Shearim, an older man boarded carrying 2 baskets of groceries and a wet Talis "zekel" (case). Setting them down, he removed a torn purse from his coat pocket and fumbled for some change....but the purse was empty.

Within seconds, Rafi rose from his seat and paid the fare. The "zoken" (elder) began to cry and thanked Rafi gratefully. By now the entire bus was watching as Rafi carried the baskets and escorted the man by hand, past standing onlookers, and graciously seated him in his own seat.

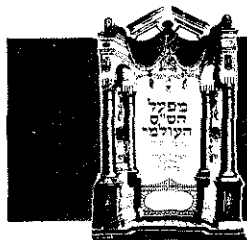
Despite my admiration for his "midos tovos" (fine character), I was nevertheless, quitesurprised, when, 20 minutes later, he filled the vacant seat beside me in the MIFAL HASHAS examination hall.

"He is young, 15 or perhaps 16 at most," I thought. And his l'vush (attire), from the knitted yarmulka to the hiking boots, somehow didn't fit my image of a Ben Torah. Yet, there he was next to me. Never looking up from the paper. Never stopping his writing. Seemingly, never even doubting an answer. His command of the 30 blatt of Gemora was flawless. As was his comprehension of a difficult Rashi and the apparent contradictions in Tosfos.

We waited together for the return bus home that night. The rain had stopped, but a chill filled the holy air. We spoke in learning all the way back. Of learning to come and of previous tests. He took out the check he received for last month's exam and humbly tried to hide the 96% grade marked at the top. "Lucky," he mumbled, putting the envelope away as his stop approached.

He extended his hand and a warm smile, as he got up to leave. "My name is Rafi," he said. "Lehitraot B'MIFAL HASHAS."

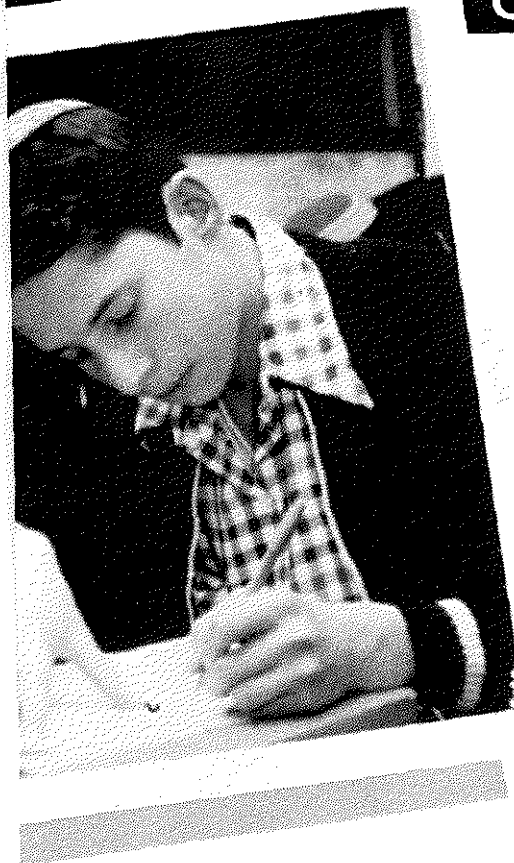
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He told me it would be an experience. A Shabbat in Kiryat Sanz always was especially the first one. He was right. Of course, Kiryat Sanz is a long distance from Kerem B'Yavneh - in *many* ways.

It was just 20 minutes before Shabbat when I entered Mottel's home. "Surie, please show Rafi where he'll be sleeping, schnell!" he said. A narrow cot had been neatly wedged on the enclosed porch and Surie, 9, oldest of 8 children, apologized for the lack of space. "For one night, I'll manage fine," I decided.

I had never seen Mottel in a shtreimel and bekeshe before since we only met each month at the MIFAL HASHAS bechina (test). He looked different. Older. Maybe taller. More relaxed. I was amazed at how he spoke to his four boys on the way to shul - as though *each* one was his *only* one. And

their loving faces expressed the same message in return.

He introduced me to everyone in shul it seemed. I blushed when he called me his "chavrusa" (study partner), and I tried to explain that we only learn together on the bus to and from the MIFAL HASHAS bechina. Instead of embarrassment from my "non-chassidic" look, Mottel seemed proud that our bond was Torah. Pure and everlasting.

It was past midnight when we returned home from my first "tisch". My soul was overwhelmed with inspiration and my body was filled with fatigue. Accompanied by tea and cake, Mottel placed two Gemorahs on the kitchen table. "The next test is just three days away," he announced, "lets chazzer."

Sleep overtook me in short order, but Mottel kept on. When I awoke at about 5:30 A.M., I found Mottel asleep where I left him five hours before. Mesechta Yevomot was still open, but he had advanced eight pages from when I left him. I covered him with a thin blanket and returned to bed.

Perhaps the distance between Kiryat Sanz and Kerem B'Yavneh was shorter than I thought. Mottel made it that way. MIFAL HASHAS was the bridge between us.

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(Continued)

Siddur, or customs she is in the process of adopting, it is best to say nothing.

Then there are the nuances of social behavior: the customs, the little gestures, reactions, facial and verbal expressions that are so natural and automatic that we are not even conscious of them... until we meet someone who has different ones. The problem here is the unconscious factor: there is something about the new person that is felt as different, and the gut-level reaction can be uneasiness, or even fear. (If you feel this uneasiness or fear because of insignificant differences, imagine how much more uneasy and fearful a convert could feel facing so many monumental differences all the time!)

The antidote, perhaps, is *awareness*—awareness of our own reactions and feelings, so as to bring them up out of their hidden depths and examine them in the upper chamber in the light of Torah and reason. At the same time, concentrate on the virtues of the convert, such as courage, and the deep spiritual sense that has drawn him (or her) toward Judaism. Try to find other connecting factors as well, and focus on them.

Visiting the Sick: Imagine yourself alone in a little room in Tokyo or Taiwan—with a 103° temperature. Wouldn't you be frightened? so might the convert (or any new *oleh*, for that matter), alone and sick in a little room anywhere in Israel. The average person, secure and comfortable in his own country, may find it difficult to realize that the convert (especially the one who lives in Israel) feels like she is in China. Nothing, but nothing,

beats a *bikur cholim* in these circumstances. The convert will bless you for the rest of her life. If you really can't go, pick up the phone and get someone else to go. And while on the phone, why not call and wish her well? Better yet, get several friends to drop in, one each day, to see how the sick person is doing. This is Torah Judaism in action. The convert's reaction is: "They really practice what they preach: I did the right thing by becoming Jewish. I want to be like that, too."

Help! The following situation is similar in some ways to the *bikur cholim* one above. A *ger* might come to you, saying that she is in need of urgent help. In Israel, this might mean that she needs to know where there is a room to rent, or a job opening. Or, she might be sick and not know where to turn. She might come to you because, in this particular period of her life, she is sometimes desperately lonely. (A person who has never made a major life change may even be afraid of the feeling of loneliness per se, which is also unfamiliar.)

Why is the convert coming to *you*? You might be the only address she has. Blessings upon you if you can tell her where to go to get the help she needs—or, better yet, if you can help her yourself.*

If you feel overwhelmed by such requests—or if this is your first contact with a convert—the best solution might be to say, "Why not have a cup of tea while I call so-and-so? She might be able to help you."

*I had so many questions of my own of this kind, as a new *olah* in Israel, that I started a looseleaf notebook with helpful addresses, which I now use to help others.

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"I'm busy" or "I don't have time" can deeply wound the convert. Like everyone else, she has dignity and she has had to swallow a considerable portion of it to personally ask a stranger for help. This alone should indicate to you that the situation must be urgent in her eyes. A curt "I'm busy" adds to the humiliation and can compound the identity problem too—for she can feel rejected both as a Jew and as a person (depending on the strength of her new Jewish identity at the time), even though the refusal was not meant that way. She will not respond this way, however, if you can give a warm smile, a kind word, and a cup of tea. On the contrary, she will go on her way with a blessing for you in her heart and on her lips.

Admittedly, it is not easy to deal with a request for help from someone with whom you feel you have nothing in common. But the Torah (*Mishpatim* 23, 5) mandates a course of action that points to a rather extreme example of such a choice: It requires a man to help load a donkey, even when the donkey belongs to an enemy. How much more so must one respond to a request for help from a person you have no rapport with!

Moreover, the *Gemora* puts a preference on helping an enemy load up his donkey over unloading an overburdened donkey belonging to a friend, because the former would promote control over one's emotions. Our situation, then, offers a twofold opportunity—helping a righteous convert and strengthening one's own *midos* at the same time.

Hospitality: Some converts (admittedly, not all) are deeply hurt when a born-Jew comes to their home and refuses to eat or drink. From the convert's point of view, this is another encounter with the identity problem. Illogical, perhaps, but feelings tend toward the illogical.

The convert feels that she is making a supreme effort to keep a super-kosher kitchen, with all the proper *hechsher* labels, and so on, and yet her hospitality is refused. She wonders if she is *treife* or *tamei*, and if her best efforts to become part of Jewish society are to no avail, and if her touch will forever necessitate throwing out the wine. . . .

If you know of such a convert and enjoy her company, ask your *Rav* or *Rebbe* if there is a way you can accept something to eat or drink in her home. If not, it is strongly advised not to visit the home of a convert who might be offended. It would be better to make a date to meet outside, perhaps to plan a shopping trip and end it with a Dutch-treat coffee in a shop of your choice.

Speech: Verbal support is important to a person who might feel as isolated as if standing alone in the middle of a desert on legs made of jello. *You long for a wall beside you somewhere, just so you can reach out and touch it once in a while*, I have been told, for reassurance's sake.

"Say, that's a nice dress," goes a long way, when the newcomer turns up in a new dress with high collar and low hem.

"I heard you are doing a great job on the *chessed* committee. What exactly do you do?"—is very encouraging.

If I were a man, I would probably be especially glad to hear a sincerely interested "How are the studies coming along?" once in a while.

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Permit each convert to find his or her own style of Yiddishkeit, a different Rav or Rebbe ... give them a chance. They've given up family and all the emotional support of a familiar environment.

Encouraging remarks or queries regarding any accomplishment that the convert has managed to rack up in her new life are sure to be appreciated—cooking, sewing, learning, children, *chessed* activities—whatever she happens to be involved in. A convert told me that one of the nicest things anyone ever said to her was that someone admired her courage.

Lashon Hora: *Lashon hora* is bad any time, but it can be especially harmful to anyone with a social disadvantage. When you hear *lashon hora* about a convert, it is a *mitzva* to speak up in her defense. Remember, she has no one to defend her; blessed is the born-Jew who does.

Lashon ha tov is a powerful helping tool. Wherever possible, throw in an extra good word about the convert (and about converts in general).

Sefer Hachinuch (*Mitzva* 63) comments about the vulnerability of the convert:

"... and he, having entered our Faith, is now an Israelite. Scripture added this caption about him for us, and the warning is even repeated, as on another occasion it is written: 'You shall not oppress him [the *ger*]' (*Vayikra* 19, 33). For the matter of oppression is close to him (i.e., more likely to happen to him) than to the Israelite, since the Israelite has redeemers (defenders) who would demand satisfaction for his disgrace."

Face to face: When a convert acquaintance of mine became engaged, a woman stopped her and said loudly,

in the middle of a crowded area of a neighborhood shopping center, "Oh, I hear you're engaged! Is your *chattan* Jewish?"

This might sound quite extreme, but it can serve as a magnified reflection of the kind of inconsiderate comments that can devastate a convert. What this woman probably meant was, "Is your *chattan* a born-Jew or a convert like yourself?"

So the woman was off-base on two counts: One, the public humiliation; and, two, reminding the girl that she is a convert. The *Midrash* (*Sifra*, *Vaykira* 19,33) says: "You should not say to him, 'Yesterday you were worshipping idols and now you have entered under the wings of the *Shechina*.'"

In this instance, the kindest thing would have been to contain curiosity and simply say, "*Mazal tov!* I'm so happy for you!"

Many converts do not want to be reminded, nor have it spread around, that they are converts. Some, however, do not mind. I have met both kinds. How can the born-Jew know which is which? You can't—unless the convert brings it up. Until that moment, however, the best policy is "better safe than sorry."

If a convert is quite open and comfortable about her status, there are "good" questions, which can be thought-provoking for both the convert and the born-Jew. I once heard a joint lecture by two converts on some

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of these topics, which included: "Why did you do it?" and "What do you find in Judaism?"

Discussing the convert's choice of approach to Judaism, her Rebbe's or Rav's *shita* and customs, are welcome—if asked with sincere, kindly interest. This can be a source of joy and enthusiasm for the newcomer, who may be happy to talk about her newfound 'family', her first tenuous emotional link with the Jewish people. And it can be instructive, inspiring, and fascinating for the listener. "What are you reading now?" and "What are you studying?" are also good lead questions.

To sum up with a standing-on-one-foot rule, it is best to be as careful not to say negative things about—or to—a convert as you would be regarding what you say about or to your Rav and his wife.

Shidduchim: Making a *shidduch* is one of the greatest *mitzvos* and even the effort to do so is greatly appreciated by the principals . . . If the effort is made with the utmost tact and thoughtfulness.

Imagine someone telling you about a nice-sounding possibility and you go to the first meeting with high hopes and a light heart . . . you sit down to talk and all goes well for the first half hour, then the other party leans forward in a confidential manner and says, with a meaningful smile:

"You know, I am the Moshiach." or "I must be extremely cautious . . . my room is bugged, THEY'RE after me."

A little superficial investigation turns up the obvious: He has just been released from the local mental institution. . . . Worse, yet, is when the discovery is made after the *chupah*.

This might sound like a ludicrous story—but again, it has happened more than once, and to *ba'alei teshuva*, as well.

If you really want to help a convert with a *shidduch*, *tizku lemitzvos!* But do check out the dates before suggesting them. If you don't know any normal ones, wish the convert well and let her know that you are praying that she will find the right match. *Tefilla* is one of the finest signs of caring.

There is a second type of *shidduch* interaction that falls into the "speech" category. A young friend of mine went to see a highly recommended person about a *shidduch*. This woman concluded the conversation with: "Don't be discouraged; I know of a girl with cerebral palsy who just got married—if she can, so can you!"

Apparently she thought she was encouraging the convert; instead, the comment turned out to be the last incident in a series that pushed this girl a significant distance from Judaism. What should have been said is something like: "I am sure you will have the Jewish home you want, probably very soon. I will keep looking for you."

Listening: A convert is likened to a newborn baby (*Yevamos 22a*). Little children are fascinated by all the new things they discover every day, and so is the convert in her new world. Children like to ask questions and share their exciting discoveries with someone; the same can be said for the convert.

The new Jew's discoveries may include points in Jewish history, *mussar*, *hashkafa*, *halacha*, customs—or just the happy feeling that life's great under the Wing of the *Shechina*. A willing ear is a *mitzva* at these moments.

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The convert has questions, too. Her religious questions will most assuredly not be anything like the ones the born-Jew asks his rabbi. You may be shocked by some of them—those that touch on subjects you started learning at age three—or some you never heard of. These queries do not come from *apikorsus* or anything equally threatening, they are just a sign that a new soul is groping for Truth. She is asking you because she doesn't know where else to turn. The best thing to do is to refer her to a Rav who is experienced in dealing with *ba'alei teshuva*. (Of course, without giving the impression that you are shocked by the question!)

The Rambam received numerous questions from converts; two of his letters to them still exist. One, addressed to an anonymous inquirer, concerns a question the convert had asked another rabbi. The Rambam's reply follows:

"... When your teacher called you a fool for denying that Moslems are idolators he sinned grievously, and it is fitting that he ask your pardon, though he may be your master. Then let him fast and weep and pray; perhaps he will find forgiveness. Was he intoxicated that he forgot the thirty-three passages in which the Law admonishes concerning treatment of 'strangers'? For even if he had been in the right and you in error, it was his duty to be gentle; how much more, when the truth is with you and he was in error?

"And when he was discussing whether a Moslem is an idolator, he should have been cautious not to lose his temper with a righteous convert and put him to shame, for our sages have said, 'He who gives way to his anger is comparable to an idolator.'

"How great is the duty the Law imposes on us with regard to proselytes. Our parents, we are commanded to honor and fear; to the prophets, we are commanded to hearken. A man may honor and fear and obey without loving. But in the case of 'strangers,' we are bidden to love with the whole force of our heart's affection. And he called you a fool! Astounding! A man who left father and mother, forsook his birthplace, his country and its power, and attached himself to this lowly, despised, and enslaved race; who recognized the truth and righteousness of this people's Law, and cast the things of this world from his heart—shall such a one be called 'fool'? G-d forbid!

"Not witless, but wise has G-d called your name, you disciple of our Father Avraham, who also left his father and his kindred and inclined toward G-d. He who blessed Avraham will bless you, and will make you worthy to behold all the consolations destined for Israel; all the good that G-d shall do unto us He will do good unto you, for the L-rd hath promised good unto Israel."

And, in another letter to a convert named Ovadiah, the Rambam writes:

"... Ever since [Avraham Avinu] whoever adopts Judaism and acknowledges the unity of the Divine Name, as it is prescribed in the Torah, is counted among the disciples of Avraham, our Father, ע"ה. These men are Avraham's household. ... While we are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, you stem from Him through whose word the world was created. As is said by Isaiah: 'One shall say, I am the L-rd's, and another shall call himself by the name of Yaakov.'"

Take good care of the converts in your community; they are precious to G-d. Who knows: you may even be nurturing another Onkelos or Ruth! □

Dear Avreich:

If you are inclined towards dedicating your energies for the klal, for a generation that חתורה or if your present financial circumstances are difficult, then you probably should consider the opportunity of Kollel Los Angeles.

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Presently the Kollel proper consists of four chevrusas. It seeks eight additional avreichim within the next few months. Giving shiurim is not a requirement, merely a positive attitude towards some eventual communal service. On the contrary, the immediate need is עשרה יושבי ביתך

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The "Aruch HaShulchan"

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein יצ"ל

If the words of Torah are our sustenance, the *seforim* which elucidate, illuminate, and explain the intricacies of Torah learning and thought can surely be likened to the table that stands set before us, arranged for sequential service, beckoning, awaiting our partaking of its food. Thus, Rabbi Yoseif Caro gave us the "set table"—the *Shulchan Aruch*—enabling Jews to nourish themselves with a Torah life for generations. And, following in this noble tradition, some three centuries later Jews were once again invited to partake at the table; this time, the table of the *Aruch HaShulchan*¹ of Rabbi Yechiel Michel HaLevi Epstein.

Rabbi Yechiel Michel was born in the White Russian town of Bobroysk, near Minsk, in the year 1829 (20 Shevat 5589). According to his son Reb Baruch, the family had its roots in Spain, where their name was Benvenisti. With the expulsion of

the Jews from Spain in 1492, the family made their new home in the Hessen (Germany) township of Epstein, and soon adopted that as their name.

When Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin opened the first yeshiva (before, boys would study Torah in *Batei Midrash*, and every *Rav* was also a Rosh Yeshiva), he issued a call in 1802 "to

all who are capable of opening a yeshiva and teaching as I am doing" to follow suit and establish yeshivos. In response to that letter a yeshiva was founded in Bobroysk by Rabbi Akiva Altshull.

Rabbi Altshull's wife ran a successful business, and he devoted himself solely to his yeshiva and his learning. Rabbi Chaim Volozhin

¹ Rabbi Epstein's major work, the *Aruch HaShulchan* clearly makes reference to its halachic precursor, the *Shulchan Aruch* of Rabbi Yoseif Caro.

Some have said that Rabbi Yechiel Michel was following the custom of other authors who chose a title based on a verse. They feel that the title comes from the *pasuk* in *Yeshayahu*, chapter 21.

With all due respect, I question this theory, for the grammatical context of the words differs sharply. The title defies the elementary rules of *dikduk* (Hebrew grammar). In Hebrew, the noun always precedes the adjective—hence, *Shulchan* (table) *Aruch* (set). *Aruch HaShulchan*, turning the tables on the usual syntactic order is not really the proper term (though some grammarians might argue that the "*hey hayediah*," the definitive article of "*haShulchan*," saves it from grammatical oblivion).

But I see a deeper truth in the title, which rises above the rules of grammatical usage. A similar term is used in *Berelshis* 16:12, when the Torah describes Yishmael as a wild man, a *pereh adam*. Here, again, the adjective precedes the noun, against the rules of proper usage. The *Chasam Sofer* explains that the Torah was underlining to us that Yishmael would be so totally and completely wild. His very being would be defined by its wildness—the wildness was, in fact, his essence, his "noun." He happened to have the shape of a human, and so the fact that he was a man was more of an adjective: human wildness.

In studying the carefully structured *Aruch HaShulchan*, one feels that *Aruch*, the setting, the careful preparation and precise writing, is the essence of the book—is, in fact, the noun. It must be placed on a table, it must be written down and so the table takes the position reserved for the adjective!

When the first volume of the *Aruch HaShulchan* was published, the *maskilim* ("enlightened" ones) were furious. They were very bothered by the publication of any new *seforim*, and jokingly said that they looked forward to the day when all the titles would be used up, and publishing would cease. Then came the *Aruch HaShulchan*. "Gevalt!" they cried. "Now they will merely reverse the old titles and publish anew!"

Rabbi Shapiro, a Baltimore resident, has written a number of articles for JO that evoke the Pre-War Europe of his childhood; many of these have been published in the *JudaScope* anthologies, *The Torah Personality* and *The Torah World*.

used to call him "the servant of HaShem without pay," for he took no salary for his efforts. Hence little Yechiel Michel did not have to wander to a far-off town to learn Torah. He stayed home and attended Rabbi Akiva Altshull's yeshiva, astounding his teachers with his quick wits and sharp mind.

THE PODRYACHICK IN BOBROYSK

The huge Russian army was always in need of clothing, footwear, food. Roads and railways had to be built to accommodate mass troop movements. To help fill these needs, many Jews became *podryachicks*—contractors to the army. Reb

Aharon Yitzchok Epstein, Yechiel Michel's father, was one such contractor, a wealthy resident of Bobroysk. Like many a father, he hoped that one day his son would join him in business, another *podryachick*.

The *Rav* in Bobroysk at that time was the *gaon* Rabbi Eliyahu Goldberg, who had studied in Volozhin in the days of Reb Chaim. The young and talented Yechiel Michel was unknown to him, for he was a modest and retiring child. When they finally met at a *simcha* of one of the townspeople, the *Rav* was amazed by the youngster's breadth of knowledge, his deep understanding of Torah. He began to talk to the boy's parents, convincing them that such a son must dedicate his life to Torah. He also impressed upon the youngster

himself the firm conviction that Torah, and Torah alone, should be his calling.

THE PODRYACHICK IN MIR

In Mir (home, of course, to the famed *Mirrer Yeshiva*) there lived a well-to-do contractor by the name of Reb Yaakov Berlin. His son had married the granddaughter of Reb Chaim Volozhiner, and would later succeed his father-in-law Reb Itzel to become Rosh Yeshiva in Volozhin, world famous as the *Netziv*—Rabbi Naftoli Zvi Yehuda Berlin.

The *podryachik* of Bobroysk met the *podryachik* of Mir, and a *shidduch* took place. Yechiel Michel Epstein married Michla Berlin, and the future *Netziv* became a brother-in-law to the future *Aruch HaShulchan*.

Years later, when the *Netziv* had been left a widower, a *shidduch* was proposed between Bashe Mirel, daughter of the *Aruch HaShulchan*, and her cousin, the son of the *Netziv*. "Why should I marry the son of the *gadol hador*," she asked reasonably, "if I can marry the *gadol hador* himself?" Thus, brother-in-law became father-in-law, as the *Netziv* married the daughter of the *Aruch HaShulchan*. Out of this union came the famed Rabbi Meir Berlin.

How is it that a *podryachik* in Mir can boast of a son who becomes a *Netziv*, and a son-in-law who would compose the *Aruch HaShulchan*? Perhaps the following episodes will shed light on the character of Reb Yaakov Berlin, the contractor of Mir.

As a rich businessman, he often travelled abroad, bringing home antiques, precious glassware, and other items of value. One day a maid broke a most expensive vase. His wife railed at the girl for her clumsiness and carelessness.

Said Reb Yaakov to his wife: "You have no right to scream at her."

"What? She breaks my most expensive vase, and I can't scold her?"

"If you have a monetary complaint to the girl," he replied, "call her to the *Rav* for a *din Torah*. But to scream—you have no right!"

His wife was delighted. "An excellent idea," she said. She turned to the maid: "Put on your coat, we are

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I could not sit down to the Seder knowing that the woman and her family would not have a piece of chicken for the holidays.

going to the Rav for a *din Torah*."

The two women donned their coats, as did Reb Yaakov.

"Where are you going?" asked the wife.

"To the Rav."

"I don't need you to be my advocate, I can speak for myself."

"I have no intention of being your advocate. I'm going to speak for the girl. She is scared and nervous, and won't be able to defend herself!"

When his daughter Michla married the future *Aruch HaShulchan*, Reb Yaakov presented a huge sum of money to the couple, to enable him to study Torah undisturbed.

Banks were unknown in the wasteland that was Russia, and it was customary to invest large sums of money with wealthy businessmen, in some sort of "partnership," to avoid the prohibition of accepting interest. The Epstein's *nadan* was invested with a man in Slutsk—and not long afterwards, the man went bankrupt!

The children ran to Reb Yaakov. Perhaps, they suggested, if he would travel to Slutsk he could save at least a portion of their investment. Reb Yaakov travelled to Slutsk, and returned empty-handed.

"Did you see the man?" they asked.

"No, I did not," came the reply. They looked at him, astonished.

"Why are you surprised?" Reb Yaakov asked. "I went to Slutsk, and did some investigating. The man is, indeed, bankrupt. Since that is the case, I am forbidden by *halacha* to see his face, for it would put him to shame!"

With the loss of the dowry, Mrs. Epstein opened a store, which met with little success. Rabbi Yechiel Michel soon saw that he would not be able to sit and learn with no financial worries, as he had hoped.

He met the Rav of Bobroysk, Rabbi Eliyahu Goldberg, and told him of his loss and his financial worries. The Rav quoted to him *Midrash Shochar on Shir HaShirim* (which also appears in *Tana D'Vei Eliyahu*): *A Talmid Chacham who stops learning to follow some other endeavor,*

and does not succeed, should see this as a good sign, for it proves that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* loves his learning." In the same way, the Rav intimated, *HaShem* was giving direction to Rabbi Yechiel Michel to change from his previous arrangement.

Having seen this potential for greatness in Rabbi Yechiel Michel, Rabbi Goldberg gave him *s'micha* (ordination) and encouraged him to become a Rav and a *posek* (decider of *halachic* matters).

"THE REBBE LOVES THAT LITVAK"

In 1864 Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, on the advice of the Rav of Bobroysk, became Rav in Novozivkov, a town divided between Chassidic adherents of Lubavitch and Chernobil. A strange place, perhaps, for a *misnaged* to begin a life of *Rabbanus*, but a fortunate choice for the Rav and for the town.

Although he was the scion of a family of *misnagdim*, Bobroysk, his

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home town, was very much a Chassidic city. The *misnaged* Rav Eliyahu Goldberg had close relations with the Chassidic Rav of Bobroysk, Rabbi Hillel of Poretz, who had been the right-hand man of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Dov Ber. This Reb Hillel had had a great influence on the town, and on Rabbi Yechiel Michel himself.

Since he was now serving as Rav of what was primarily a Lubavitcher community, Reb Yechiel Michel decided to visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Menachem Mendel, who was known by title of his *sefer*, as the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

The venerable Reb Mendele, as he was affectionately called, received the young Litvak with open arms. The

two would meet daily, sometimes twice a day, and "talk in Torah learning." They became fast friends, and after spending an entire month there, it was hard for them to part.

Before Reb Yechiel Michel's departure, the Rebbe presented him with a special, unasked-for gift—*s'micha*. Then the Rebbe in spite of his advanced age, accompanied him all the way down to the road.

The news spread fast among the Lubavitch communities throughout the land: *The Rebbe loves that Litvak!* Soon a number of Chassidic cities were after him to become their Rav.

It was in Novozivkov that he wrote his first *sefer*, *Or LaYesharim*, a commentary on the *Sefer HaYashar*

D'Rabbeinu Tam (published in Zy-tomir in 1868). It included approbations of Rabbi Yeshoshua Leib Diskin, then Rav in Shklov (and later of Lomza, Brisk, and then Yerushalayim); the *Tzemach Tzedek*; and Reb Aharon, the Chernobiler Rebbe.

In Novozivkov, too, he conceived of writing his monumental *Aruch HaShulchan*, and began to compose his work.

After nine years in Novozivkov, he was invited to take the *Rabbanus* of the town of Lubch, in the Novaradok district. It happened that the city of Novaradok was searching for a Rav when the news came that Reb Yechiel Michel Epstein was about to take the *Rabbanus* in Lubch. They rushed a delegation, and snatched Reb Yechiel Michel out of the hands of the Lubchers!

He served in Novaradok² for 34 years (1863-1907), until his *petira* on the 22nd day of Adar, 1907. Many cities appealed to him to become their Rav, but he refused all offers.

In Novaradok Rabbi Yechiel Michel wrote the *Aruch HaShulchan*, for which he is best remembered. It soon became a handbook for many *Rabbanim* and *poskim*. Rabbi Yerucham Yehuda Leib Perlman, the Rav of Minsk and famed "Minsker Gadol," who was much older than the Rav of Novaradok, never *paskened* a *she'eilo* without first checking the *Aruch HaShulchan*!

One can derive an almost physical pleasure when studying the words of the *Aruch HaShulchan*. Before stating the practical *halacha*, there is an introduction to clarify the spirit of the law. The *halacha's* background, its roots in the Torah and its interpretations by the *chachamim* and *poskim* are all presented. Only then is the final opinion offered.

HIS OTHER WRITINGS

In addition to the 16 volume *Aruch HaShulchan*, which took many years to compose, Reb Yechiel Michel wrote *Mical HaMayim*, a commentary on *Yerushalmi*, and *Leil Shemurim*, a commentary on the *Haggadah*.

²It was in this very town that Rabbi Yosef Yoizel Hurwitz founded the Novaradok Mussar movement. He became known as the "Alter of Novaradok" (see "The World of Novaradok," J.O. Feb.-March 1977).

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How did a "podryachik" in Mir merit to have a son who grew up to be the celebrated Netziv and a son-in-law who became the Aruch HaShulchan?

Once he had disposed of all city business and *she'eilos* (halachic queries), he would lock himself up in his "*Beis Din Shtub*" (he would write no where else!) and begin. His memory was phenomenal, and he never had a need to rewrite or edit. Other than paper, ink, and pen, the table had upon it a *Gemara*, *Rambam*, and *Beis Yosef*—and nothing more.

Printing in those days was very primitive. Every letter, every word had to be set by a man, the *zetter*. At the print shop, every *zetter* would fight to get his manuscript, because of the beauty and clarity of his handwriting.

THE VIEW OF THE "MAIK'L"

Rabbi Yechiel Michel was known as a *maik'l*—one who takes the lenient view—as opposed to a *machmir*—one who holds by the more stringent opinions. The concept of *maik'l* versus *machmir* is a difficult one to grasp, one which has often been misunderstood, and a few explanatory words would be in order.

Throughout the generations, there have been people who have complained about the burden of Torah. The past few centuries have seen many who wished to "reform" Judaism, to thrust off the "*ol haTorah*," the yoke of Torah.

A delegation of these reformers once came to Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer of Berlin. They tried to convince the *Rav* of the need to shorten prayers and ease the burden of Torah. This, they insisted, conformed with the way people were leading their lives anyway, and ultimately would attract more young men to *shul*.

Rabbi Hildesheimer replied with a parable. Once a businessman declared bankruptcy. He finally settled with his creditors for fifty cents on the dollar.

When the time came to pay, the man offered them notes. The creditors laughed in his face: "We settled for fifty cents on the dollar in order to get cash. Notes? We'd rather keep

the old notes, which are at least written for the full amount of what is owed!"

"You, *meine Herren*," concluded the wise *Rav*, "don't pay cash. You want to pay with new notes, which you have no intention of paying up. I would rather keep the old notes, the ones worth full price!"³

What, then, is a *maik'l*? It is certainly not one who tries to reform,

water down, or bend the *halacha* in any way.

In the development of *halacha*, received from Moshe *Rabbenu* at Sinai and handed down through generations, through the *Tana'im*, *Amora'im*, and *Geonim*, differing opinions are sometimes given. A *Rav* of stature, one with "*breite pleitzes*" (broad shoulders), may throw his weight, his Torah weight, on the side

³It is told that a delegation of *maskilim* once came to Rabbi Yoshe Ber Soloveichik in Brisk. "The Rabbonim are too rigid, too strict," they said, "all their *chumros* make life unbearable and should be eliminated!"

The *Rav* of Brisk listened most seriously, and then nodded. "I have given thought to these *chumros*," he said, "and have decided to do away with some of them in my next *sefer*."

Delighted, the *maskilim* respectfully asked if the *Rebbi* would mind letting them in on his secret. Which of the *chumros* would he abolish?

"Certainly," Rabbi Soloveichik replied. "I'll let you in on six of them:

"1) Some *poskim* insist that *Ma'ariv* can be prayed only until midnight. This is too harsh on people; I say let them *daven* until daybreak.

"2) Some claim that only a great *talmid chacham* may don *Rabbenu Tam tefillin*; I say anyone who wishes may do so.

"3) Some say that the *plyutim* in the prayers are considered a *hefsek* (interruption) and I say it's part of prayers.

"4) Some say that if one forgets to count *Sefira* for one night, he may not count with a *bracha* anymore. I say he may count with a *bracha*.

"5) Some say if *Erev Tisha B'Av* falls on a *Shabbos* you may not learn Torah. I say it is permitted, *l'kovod Shabbos*.

"6) Some say it is forbidden to fast on Rosh HaShana, and I say one may fast, even on both days!"

The *maskilim* realized, to their chagrin, that these *chumros* to be eliminated were being given "tongue-in-cheek" (and not halachically, of course). They left, resigned.

AN EMERGENCY APPEAL FOR HACHNOSAS KALLAH

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Detroit, Michigan

of one opinion or the other.

For instance, no *Rav* may unilaterally give a ruling that differs with that of the *Rambam*. But if *Rashi* had stated an opposing opinion, a *Rav* great in Torah learning and understanding may, under certain circumstances, choose to rule in accordance with *Rashi's* opinion, rather than *Rambam's*.

In some ways, it is easier to be a *machmir*, and generally choose the stricter view, rather than take the responsibility of a *maik'l* for abiding by the more lenient opinion.

How was the *Aruch HaShulchan maik'l*? A case in point illustrates his manner of making a ruling:

It was the second night of Pesach, and the *Rav* of Novaradok was pre-

paring to begin the *seder*. The family and guests sat around the table.

Suddenly, a woman entered the room, her hand clutching at something. "Rebbi," she said in a voice full of pleading, "I was cooking a chicken and I found this in the pot."

She opened her fist and inside was a single grain of wheat. *Chometz* on Pesach, forbidden even in the smallest amounts!

The *Rav* asked her to sit down, and apologized to his guests. "I must go into my *Beis Din shtub*." He locked himself in the room, and after more than an hour he finally came out. With his face dripping with perspiration, and his shirt collar soaking wet, he pronounced his verdict: *Kosher!*

After she left, he begged forgiveness of his guests, explaining: "I could not sit down to the *seder*, knowing that the woman and her family would not have a piece of chicken for the holiday. More, there is a question of the dishes, and there is an entire week of Pesach ahead! I had to find a *hetter* for her! And thank Heaven, I found one!"

Indeed, Reb Chaim Brisker used to say: "I'm not a *maik'l*, I'm merely a *machmir* when it comes to *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life) and therefore it appears that I am lenient in the laws of *Shabbos* when *pikuach nefesh* is involved."

Sometimes, his stubbornness in being a *maik'l* had some interesting results. When he first arrived in Novaradok, he immediately ordered that all *shuls* daven the *Kabbolas Shabbos* and *Ma'ariv* ushering in the Sabbath a good time before *shkiya* (sundown), while the sun was still high in the sky. He even ordered that *Kiddush* be recited, and the meal eaten, before *shkiya*.

In those days, it should be remembered, people did not own clocks or calendars. Women would light candles whenever the *shuls* began *Kabbolas Shabbos*. He would say: "By making *Shabbos* earlier, I'm ensuring that every wagon driver has stabled his horse before sundown. If we would begin to pray at sundown, we might cause the candles to be lit after *shkiya*, causing *chillul Shabbos* (desecration of the Sabbath)."

Naturally, there were those who did not accept this new ruling, and

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① Under the strict supervision of the Tzelemer Rav.

they wished to make a second *miny-an* after sunset. To put a stop to this, the *Rav* began a custom of ascending the *amud* immediately after his *Ma'ariv minyan*, and "talk in learning" with the yeshiva boys for hours. And then they could not make their second *miny-an*!

The fact that the *Aruch HaShulchan* was fluent in Russian was helpful to him. In his later years, when he attended conferences of *Rabbonim*, he was usually chosen to act as spokesman to the government officials in their efforts to halt anti-

Semitic acts. He was one of the few *gedolim* who could address the government officials without a translator.

His son Reb Boruch married the daughter of the *Rav* of Pinsk and settled there. Reb Boruch was a bookkeeper in Pinsk, yet he found the time to write the monumental *Torah T'mima* that we enjoy today.

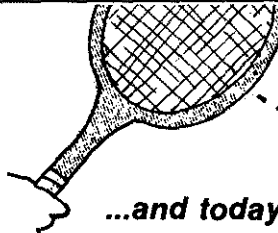
Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein truly left *Klal Yisroel* a heritage which enriches us to this very day—a table beautifully set, an *Aruch HaShulchan*, which helps to sustain us.⁴ □

⁴I would like to express a debt of gratitude to Rabbi Nisson Waxman, זצ"ל, son-in-law of the late Rabbi Avrohom Nachman Schwartz, the unofficial Chief Rabbi of Baltimore for 25 years. Reb Nisson studied in my hometown of Lomza (hence my connection with him: Lomza—Baltimore), Slobodka, and Mir. He was *Rav* in Lakewood, New Jersey, for 13 years. He influenced one of his *ba'alei batim* to leave his spacious mansion to house a yeshiva. It was here that Rabbi Aharon Kotler, זצ"ל, headed Beth Medrash Govoha.

During his last visit to Baltimore, Reb Nisson urged me to write about the *Aruch HaShulchan*. I explained that I normally write about people whom I had known or at least met personally, but he refused to accept my argument: "The English-speaking reader can only learn about Europe from your articles! I'll send you some information. Work it over, *knet* (knead) it like your mother used to *knet challah* for *Shabbos*!"

Sure enough, just before his passing he mailed me some material. He kept his word, so now I'm keeping my part of the bargain.

May his memory be blessed.



Cousin Jeff was more interested in tennis than Torah...

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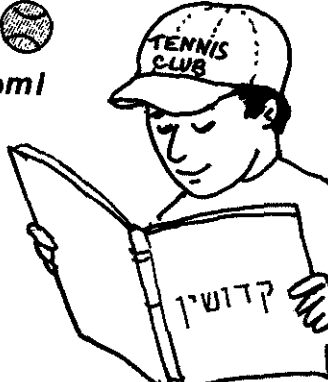
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Shir HaShirim Rabbah, Parsha 5



* Perkei Avot 6:6

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You will shortly be advised as to how this program is to be implemented. If you wish to have more information at once, you may write to:

Chevra Dor Yeshorim
33 Spencer Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11205
or call (718) 384-6060/(914) 425-4466

ATTENTION YESHIVA AND BAIS YAAKOV ADMINISTRATORS:

You will be receiving materials from Chevra Dor Yeshorim to distribute. Your cooperation is essential to the implementation of this program.

Tevet 19, 5746

These words are intended to give support and encouragement to the awesome undertaking of Chevra Dor Yeshorim, which has been founded for the public benefit to prevent the genetic diseases which, on occasion, strike Jewish families, especially those of Orthodox Jews of European origin. The extent of the anguish and suffering caused by the fatal effect of such diseases as Tay-Sachs is familiar to all, and it is therefore obvious that every effort must be made to take preventive measures so that these torments should not occur or spread in our community. Now, thank God, medicine has developed tests that can determine in advance which potential marriages could, God forbid, generate these diseases in their offspring.

A group of God-fearing and capable people, the Chevra Dor Yeshorim, has been established and, with the approval of our leading Rabbis, they are performing a great service for the Jewish people by organizing a proper and confidential approach to rid us of these plagues. We therefore consider it both correct and imperative to encourage them and to draw this to the attention of our fellow Jews, particularly those families with children in Yeshivos or Bais Yaakov schools in every locality, that they should follow the directives which have been determined through consultation with Torah scholars and qualified physicians; directives which ensure privacy yet are effective and will achieve the desired result. Furthermore, no individual should take it upon himself to do this in his own way, but he should follow the organized and approved program as established by Chevra Dor Yeshorim. And with God's help, this adversity and anguish will be eliminated from our community. May all be well with those who comply, and may they enjoy great rewards and blessings.

Signed:

יעקב קמינסקי
Yaakov Kaminsky
Rosh Yeshiva, Torah Vodaas

משה פיינשטיין
Moshe Feinstein
Rosh Yeshiva, Tiferes Yerushalayim

יחזקאל הלפין רודמן
Yitzhak Halevi Ruderman
Rosh Yeshiva, Ner Yisroel, Baltimore

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Avraham Yaakov Hacohen Pam
Rosh Yeshiva, Torah Vodaas

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Mordechai Gifter
Rosh Yeshiva, Telz

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Rosh Yeshiva, Chaim Berlin

יאקוב פערלעוו
Yaakov Perle
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לוי קרופנייטש
Levi Krupenye
Rosh Yeshiva, Kaminets

אלתר חנוך חנוך חאכטן לעבוביטש
Alter Chanoch Henoch Hacohen Lebovits
Rosh Yeshiva, Chotetz Chaim

יום ד' לס' ויחי יעקב, י"ג טבת, תשמ"ו לפ"ק

תהיינה השורות האלה לעזר ולעידוד עבור המפעל הכביר של חברת "דור ישרים" שנוסדה לזכות את הרבים ולמנוע המחלות הנקראת GENETIC DISEASES הפוגעת לפעמים במשפחות אחב"י וביתור בין היראים יוצאי אירופה. גודל היגון והסבל בעטים של המחלות האלה כגון טיי-סאקס וכדומה ידוע לכל, ולזאת פשוט שיש לעשות כל טעדיקי להסתייג ולהישמר לבל יופיעו ובל יעיצו המכאובים האלה בקרבנו. ות"ל שנתגלו בדיקות ואמצעים בחכמת הרפואה הקובעים ומודיעים מראש איזו קשרי שידוכין עלולים להביא חלילה להמחלות האלה בהילודים.

והנה קמו ויאזרו חיל קבוצת חרדים ואנשי מעשה, חברת "דור ישרים", ובהסכמת גדולי הרבנים שליט"א עושים טובה עם ישראל לכוון הדרך הישרה והצנועה להסיר המכאובים האלה מתוכנו. ולזאת ראינו לנכון ולנחוץ לחזק את ידם ולעזור את תשומת לב אחינו היקרים, ובפרט משפחותיהם של בני הישיבות ובנות בית יעקב די בכל אתר ואתר, לעשות כפי ההוראות שנקבעו בעצת חכמים ובהדרכת רופאים מומחים, הוראות צניעות ומועילות הקולעות אל המטרה. ולא יתחכם היחיד לסמוך על דעתו אלא ילך בדרך הסלולה והמוסכמת אשר קבעה חברת "דור ישרים", ושתסיר בעזרת השם צרה ועג"נ מקרבנו, ולהשומע יונעם ויוכה לנחת וברכה מרובה. וע"ז באנו עה"ח

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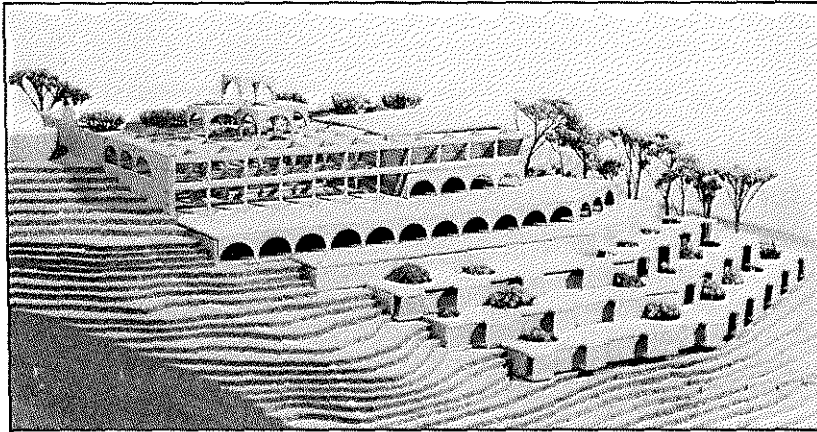
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Architect's model for Mormon Jerusalem Center.

WANTED: YOUR BOBBE AND ZAIDE BY THE MORMON CHURCH

The Theological Basis of Mormon Genealogical Interests

While Orthodox Jewry is protesting the on-going construction of the Brigham Young University Student Center in Jerusalem, out of concern for the vulnerable students of neighboring Hebrew University that might be drawn into the proselytizing activities emanating from there, there is another Mormon-sponsored project with appeal to a broader spectrum of Jewry, with potential pitfalls of its own. **Rabbi Shmuel Gorr**, head of the Jerusalem Research Institute for Jewish Genealogy, informs us of this highly ambitious plan:

BAPTISING THE DEAD

According to Mormon religious beliefs, no one can achieve spiritual salvation without converting to the Mormon religion. Believing that theirs is the true faith, coupled with their proclaimed love of all humanity, it is a basic doctrine of the Mormons to spread their faith to all peoples of the earth. The convert must

Rabbi Gorr wrote in *The Jewish Observer* about life as an Orthodox Jew in Australia (Sept. '68) as well as of his experiences as an *oleh* in Israel (Dec. '69, Oct. '70, and Sept. '72).

undergo ritual baptism to Mormonism to achieve his or her spiritual salvation. Based on this belief, all Mormons see it as a basic religious duty to spread their beliefs by active missionary endeavors. If theirs is the true faith, then Judaism should no longer exist. Hence the special efforts to convert Jews.

If one can achieve spiritual salvation only through Mormon baptism, then what is the position of the myriads of human beings who are already dead?

The Mormons devised a theological scheme which they turned into an international project to overcome the problem of baptising all the dead people of history: all

Deep in the mountain near Salt Lake City, in a weather-proof vault, is the largest genealogical archives in the world—for the incredible purpose of baptising all mankind, dead and alive, from the time of Adam!

non-Mormons after death are in a type of spiritual limbo until a descendant of theirs converts to Mormonism. On the strength of that baptismal act, all the converts' progenitors to Adam are considered baptised and hence Mormons. They are thus released from limbo and achieve spiritual salvation.

The remaining problem of ascertaining who were the ancestors of each new convert was overcome by initiating the greatest genealogical project in history. They started to search the whole world to find genealogical material on every living person... at the cost of millions. Since every Mormon in the world pays a tithe from his/her monthly income, they have millions of dollars at their disposal for their religious activities. The Mormons purchased a mountain site in Salt Lake City, they scooped out the interior, and built the greatest archival system in the world inside that mountain. For the preservation of documents and microfilms a steady and consistent temperature is provided.

All vital statistics—names of peoples, their dates of birth, marriage and death, parents' names, etc., that are

open to the public, were microfilmed or xeroxed and filed in the Mormon Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City.

They scoured the world for this type of information making their greatest scoop when they were permitted to microfilm the vital statistics from countries such as Poland, Hungary, Roumania, Germany and Czechoslovakia. The prize of their catch was the vital statistics of countless Jews from these countries.

THE VULNERABLE "ROOTS" SYNDROME

A further opportunity opened up with the "roots" phenomenon which has spread all over the world, especially in the USA, amongst Jews. Since Jews are sensitive to any project launched by the Christian missionary denominations, the Mormons purchased property in many cities all over the world (even in Australia) to establish non-religious reading rooms, containing complete indices of all genealogical holdings in the Mormons' possessions. One simply gives the index number to the monitor in charge and they arrange at a minimal price to get a copy of the needed document or microfilm to that particular "reading room" and the applicant is notified when it arrives so that he or she can come and do research.

Thousands of Jews, world-wide, avail themselves of this Mormon genealogical service. A Jew who has come to an impasse in his family tree search can probably get another few names of his or her ancestors through the Mormon records. And the Jew thinks, "I am only checking microfilms. The Mormons can't get to me religiously." The enticement to find vital statistics of one's ancestors is so strong, that many Orthodox Jews (including Chasidim) are making use of the Mormon genealogical services.

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Not every Jew who uses these "reading rooms" is directly approached by a Mormon with missionary intent, but many are, and even one Jewish brother or sister ensnared is a catastrophic tragedy for the Jewish people.

Another play used by the Mormons involves a Jewish convert to Mormonism who is in charge of those records dealing with Jewish vital statistics. He ostensibly is the translator of the Hebrew and Yiddish language records and assists the majority of the Jews using these "reading rooms," who do not read Hebrew or Yiddish.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH USING AN ARCHIVE?

That Jews of any persuasion openly use the Mormon services is in itself reprehensible—but that Orthodox and Chassidic Jews should freely attend the Mormon "reading rooms" is collectively a tragic *Chilul HaShem*. Permit me to explain:

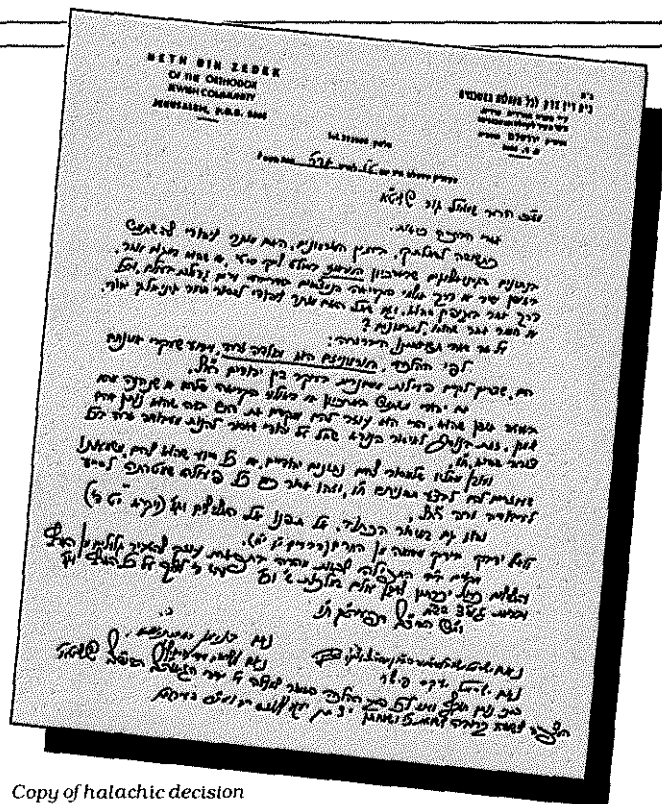
Through my local *Rav*, Rabbi Yehosef Ralbag שליט"א (Chief Rabbi of Kiryat HaYovel), I had a session with Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss שליט"א (the *Ravad* of Jerusalem's *Edia Hachareidis*). I explained the complete theological basis of the genealogical involvement of the Mormon Church, and presented him with two *she'elos*:

(a) Was it permitted for a Jew to utilize the vast genealogical records held in the Salt Lake City archives of the Mormons; or to make use of those records via the Mormon "reading rooms"?

(b) Was it permitted for a Jew to give Jewish genealogical material to the Mormons?

Rabbi Weiss's *responsa* were brief and to the point:

1. Mormonism is halachically *Avoda Zara*, and one that religiously believes in active missionary work, especially amongst Jews. By using their archives and "reading rooms," a Jew would be "aiding and abetting" their religion by giving it credence—besides the basic *issur* (prohibition) against *Avoda Zara* in any manner whatsoever.



Copy of halachic decision prohibiting use of Mormon genealogical resources.

2. By the above definition of Mormonism, it is obvious that to actively give them Jewish vital statistics, one is actually helping their program in a direct manner, which is hence forbidden as is any act that assists *Avoda Zara*.

A further tragedy is the fact that all journals of the American Jewish Genealogical Societies feel that they are performing a service to fellow Jewish genealogists by continually publishing all relevant facts about the Mormon genealogical records and are encouraging the use thereof. The standard excuse is: "No one can get to my *neshama*. I'm just using them." G-d forbid, but these could be famous last words. □



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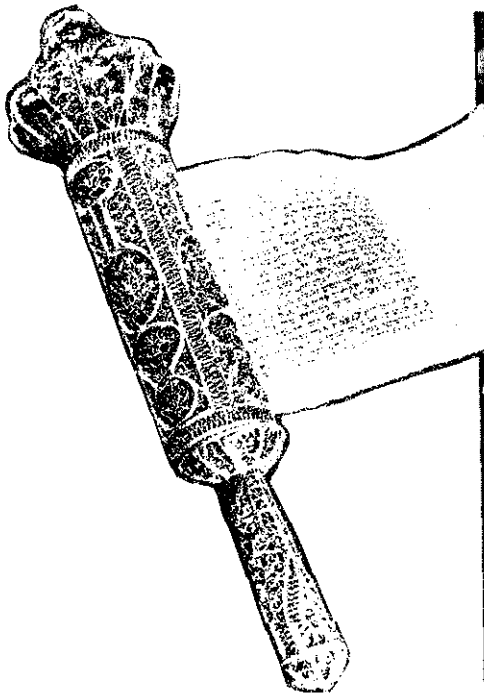


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MEGILLAS ESTHER and the NUREMBERG TRIAL

BEHIND THE VEIL OF EVENTS

We thrill to the chain of events that concluded with the celebration of the first Purim in Persia, in 3394, as recorded in *Megillas Esther*. We recognize that, as a part of Scripture, the *Megillah* has many, many layers of meaning, most of them beyond our reach. On occasion, we become aware of yet another dimension in the timeless account of events, and how it can even refer to yet another of the countless threats to Jewish survival that we have endured throughout our long history.

NOSSON M. MUNK, a vice-president of the Republic Bank of New York, studied in yeshiva in France as well as in Telshe (Ohio), and Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin, in Brooklyn. The author acknowledges Rabbi Mordechai Schwab, Rabbi Yochanan Wosner, and Rabbi Yoel Falk for providing sources for the material discussed in this article.

This theme derives from the *Megillah* itself, which states: "...and its remembrance will never leave their children ... and Esther wrote all the events."¹ "This teaches us," says Talmud Yerushalmi, "that the Book of Esther will be forever relevant."² How so? The ongoing course of history is G-d's handiwork; our task is to penetrate the veil that hides the Divine countenance within events.³

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev writes that, unlike other holy writings, *Megillas Esther* deals specifically with G-d's hidden control of events in *galus* from the time of Esther on. He demonstrates that the first or last letters of many words in the *Megillah* reveal G-d's name and His plans toward the Jews in Exile. He gives the example: "The King and Haman shall come today."⁴ The first letter of each word combine to the spell the Name of G-d.⁴

FROM PERSIA, 3394 TO POLAND, 5408...

The *Chasam Sofer*⁶ points out how the pogroms in Poland of *Gezeiras Tach Vetat* [5408/1648—5409/1649] led by Bogdan Chmielnitzki are alluded to in the *Megillah*. He quotes from the *She'eiris Yisroel*:

The sages indicate that the many oppressions in Poland in the year *TACH* all have their source in the decree of Haman. In his time, his decree was annulled by miracle. However, it became effective at that later time, as is alluded to in the *Megillah*: "**Vatichtov Esther Hamalko**—and Queen Esther wrote." The *Tof* in "**vaTichtov**"⁶ is larger than the other letters and so is the letter *Ches* in "**CHour karpas**."⁷ Together, these letters spell **TaCH** (5408).

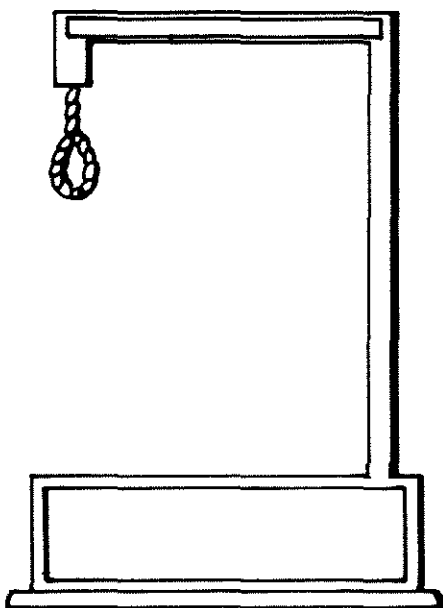
"Nothing exists not alluded to in

the Torah," including the idea that Haman and his decree stem directly from the original curse on Adam: "Thorns and thistles shall grow for you."⁸ The Midrash comments that Haman suffered a fitting end when he was hanged on a thorny tree, in keeping with: "Wicked men are like thorns."⁹

While Haman's annihilation plan was not realized in his own time, the thorns and thistles did take root to be safeguarded from generation to generation. Indeed, the Hebrew word for thistle, *dardar*, can be read "*dor dor*," implying perpetuation from generation (*dor*) to generation ... from the generation of Haman to the generation of Gezeiras Tach Vetat, when it was activated. In fact, "*dardar*" has a numerical equivalent to the numbers TaCH—408¹⁰.

... TO NUREMBERG, 5707

By the same token one could assume that the Nazi plan to annihilate world Jewry, the largest, most ambitious such plan,



should also be alluded to in the *Megillah*. Rabbi Mordechai Schwab שליט"א of Monsey shared with the author the following suggestion, which he once overheard in Jerusalem. It was attributed to, among others, the late Belzer Rebbe זצ"ל:

The *Megillah* lists the ten names of Haman's sons who were hanged. Three letters in this listing are much smaller than the others—a *Tof*,¹¹ a *Shin*,¹² and a *Zayin*,¹³ and one much larger—a *Vov*.¹⁴ Why? The answer suggested was that the *Megillah* is providing that in the year *Tof-Shin-Zayin*—707 (small letters for *mispar kattan*, "small count," referring to the year-and centuries-count)—of the six thousandth year, *Vov* (large for *mispar gadol*, "large count," referring to the millennia count)—or 5707, the major persecutors of Jewry will be hanged on one day. Indeed, on the morning of Hoshana Rabba, 5707 (October 17, 1946), while Jews around the world were singing *Hallel* and beating *hoshanos*, eleven monstrous Nazi commanders tried at Nuremberg were about to be hanged. However, Herman Wilhelm Goering, the deputy Fuehrer, suddenly committed suicide, so that exactly ten Nazi chiefs remained to be hanged. The most vicious anti-Semite of the group was Julius Streicher. Similar to Haman, who decreed "to kill and exterminate all Jews, young and old, children and women in one day," Streicher wrote repeatedly in his venomous periodical, *Der Stuermer*,¹⁵ such horrifying statements as:

"Now judgment has begun and it will reach its conclusion only when knowledge of the Jews has been erased from the earth."¹⁶

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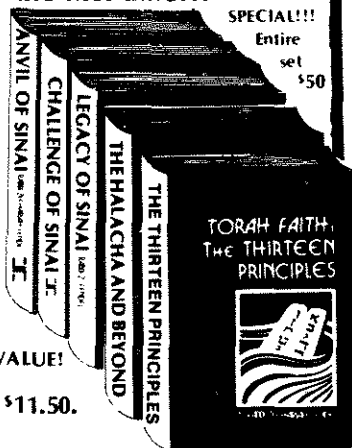
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Ten sons of Haman were hanged in Shushan; the eleventh cheated the hangman by committing suicide. Ten Nazi war criminals were hanged at Nuremberg; the eleventh, Herman Goering, cheated the hangman by committing suicide.

According to the New York World Telegram, just before Streicher was hanged:

"Streicher was swung around to face the audience in front of him. He glared at the Allied officer and eight correspondents representing the world's press. With burning hatred in his eyes, Streicher looked down at the witnesses and shouted—'Purim Fest 1946!'"

News media around the world and the Nuremberg Trial Court recorded this event but never explained Streicher's strange outburst.¹⁷

FURTHER PARALLELS

Using the Chasam Sofer's conclusion that the decree of Haman, and possibly the reincarnation of the persecutors, did reoccur from time to time, we can draw further similarities between the ten sons of Haman who were

hanged and the ten Nazis in Nuremberg. For instance, eleven Nazis should have been hanged, but Goering committed suicide. Haman too had eleven children, but one committed suicide when finding out that—not Haman—but Mordechai was riding on the king's horse.¹⁸

We can even attribute the entire outcome of the Nuremberg Trial to the prayers of Esther. A general rule formulated by our sages provides that wherever the Megillah refers to "the king" without specifying Achashveirosh, it alludes to The King of the Universe. It is therefore possible

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Before he was hanged, Streicher swung around and, with burning hatred in his eyes, shouted: "Purim Fest 1946!"

that when Esther begged: "If the King is kind, then grant tomorrow, too, to the Jews of Shushan to do what is celebrated today and that the ten sons of Haman be hanged on a tree,"¹⁹ that she was including a prayer to the King of the Universe: "If HaShem is willing, may He grant time to other Jews in a future *galus*, when they celebrate a special day (*Hoshana Rabba*), to witness the hanging of their ten persecutors."

Hoshana Rabba was the selected date to hear "Purim Festival 1946" from the lips of one of Jewry's worst enemies, and to witness the hanging of the ten Nazis. For the Midrash explains in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, "*Hoshana Rabba* represents the ultimate downfall of defiant nations, just as the entire Succos festival represents their progressive slide from dominance, as is symbolized by the reduction in the number of daily *Mussaf* sacrifices offered on their behalf."²⁰

SWEET, ELEVATING REVENGE

Taking revenge is alien to Jews, yet every morning we praise G-d in anticipation of "*laasos nekama bagoyim*—[when we will] exact vengeance upon the nations."²¹ The word *nekama*, vengeance, explains Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, derives from *kom*, to elevate. The purpose of a Divine vengeance is to create a *Kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of His Name, by elevating our awareness that Divine Justice prevails throughout universal history.²² When we proclaim "O G-d of vengeance, HaShem, O G-d of vengeance appear!" it is to see "Arise, O Judge of the earth."²³

Providence chose *Hoshana Rabba* to punish major perpetrators of the Holocaust. Let us pray that the Nuremberg trial, 40 years ago, marked the final downfall of Haman's decree and that never again will a nation dare attempt to eradicate *Am Yisroel* from the earth.

FOOTNOTES

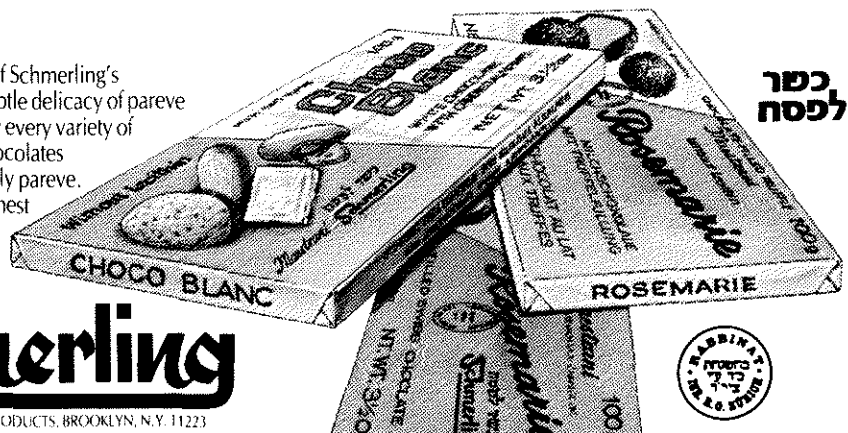
1. *Esther* 9, 28-29
2. *Yerushalmi Megillah* 1, 5
3. The *Gemora Chullin* 139 b, finds allusion for Megillas Esther in the Torah, in the words: "I shall surely hide (*haster astir*) My countenance from you" (*Devarim* 31, 8).
4. *Kedushas Levi*, *Kedusha Rishona*.
5. *Toras Moshe*, Parsha Tetzave, on *Esther* 7, 10
6. *Esther*, *ibid*
7. *Ibid*, 1, 6
8. *Bereishis* III, 18
9. *Toras Moshe*, *ibid*, 3, points out that Haman spelled in full letters *Hey*, Mem and Nun has a *gematria* of "Kots," thorn.
10. $4 = 1, 200 = 1, 4 = 1, 200 = 1$
11. *Esther* 9, 7—Parshandoso
12. *Parmashito*
13. *Yayezosso*
14. *Yayezosso*
15. *Esther* 3, 13
16. January 1941 issue of *Der Stuermer*
17. *Tyranny on Trial*, by Whitney R. Harris, p. 487
18. *Talmud Megillah* 16a
19. *Esther*, 9, 13
20. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 21; for an extensive treatment, see Overview by Rabbi Nosson Scherman on the *Hoshana Prayer* by Artscroll Menorah Series, p. xxxvi.
21. *Tehillim* 149, 7
22. *Chorev*, by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch
23. *Tehillim* 94, 1-2

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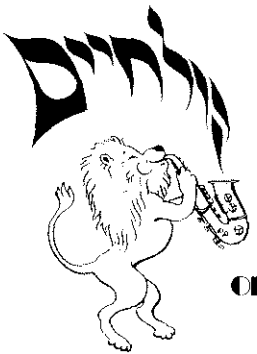
With Friends Like These...

Some Jews are so fearful of suffering persecution or prejudice because of our distinctive differences that they hesitate to speak up even when outrages are being committed against our spiritual survival. We might seem—well, too Jewish. I can not agree, but I do nonetheless understand when Jewish defense organizations take the wrong side on vital issues (such as government support of yeshiva education). But why must they resort to falsehood to underscore a point?

By now, it should be widely recognized that opposition to the construction of the Brigham Young University Student Center right next to the Hebrew University campus on Jerusalem's Mount Scopus is based on well-founded fears of the Mormons' aggressive proselytizing policies. How, then, does Anti-Defamation League director Perlmutter misrepresent this opposition in so demeaning—*defaming*—a manner? We quote:

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NEW YORK (JTA)—Nathan Perlmutter, director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, has indicated his support for the controversial Brigham Young University study center of the Mormon Church under construction on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. The ADL official noted that in medieval times, custom would not permit Jews to build synagogues taller than churches. "What really counts," Perlmutter said, "is that made-by-Christian medievalism . . . not be adopted by Jews, not in this already excessively punished century, and surely not in the city that should be a light unto all cities, Yerushalayim."



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New York City School Board Elections:

According to Mordechai Avigdor, Esq., executive director of the Agudath Israel Commission on Legislation and Civic Action, an impressive field of qualified candidates for local School Boards in New York City has come forth.

"It is now up to Orthodox Jews in their respective districts to exercise their rights by signing petitions to assure that the names of candidates sympathetic to our concerns appear on the ballot," said the Agudath Israel attorney.

Mr. Avigdor emphasized the "significant impact" that School Board composition can have even upon a community whose children primarily attend yeshivos and day schools—in such areas as the distribution of government funds to yeshivos, the determination of equivalency-of-instruction guidelines for non-

public school curricula, and the resolution of matters relating to handicapped children, in addition to their input in securing off-hour use of public school facilities for communal functions and their involvement in other neighborhood concerns. School Boards also carry substantial import, he said, for the career enhancement of Orthodox Jewish teachers and supervisors in the public school system.

School Board elections are to be held May 26.

Zeirei Agudath Israel Elects National Officers:

Zeirei Agudath Israel, the young men's movement of Agudath Israel of America, elected its new national officers for the coming year at its Mid-Winter Melave Malka, which was addressed by Rabbi Reuven Biala, author of *Time for Torah*, and Rabbi Shlomo Berger of Agudath Israel's Vaad L'Hatzolas Nidchei Yisroel.

The new officers are: Avrohom Biderman, President; Yehoshua Mehlman, Chairman of the Executive Board; Eli Cohen, Zev Sanders, Yosef Kirsch and Dovid Nadler, Vice Presidents; David Franco, Secretary; Heshy Friedman, Treasurer; and Levi Kramer, Controller. Rabbi Labish Becker serves as executive

director of the Torah youth movement.

Delivering updates on Zeirei Agudath Israel projects at the meeting were: Yussie Eisen, director of the Beis Medrash High School Program, Efraim Hettelman, head of the Chaim Yitzchok Menachem Topola Torah Partnership Program and Yosef Aszkenazy, Managing Editor of the Zeirei Forum. A special tribute was paid to Yisroel Greenwald, outgoing national president, who served in the post for the past three years.

Bnos Agudath Israel Advisors Convene for Youth Leadership Gathering—

65 girls' youth advisors from across the New York metropolitan area and New Jersey gathered in Brooklyn in January for a newly initiated annual Leaders' Melave Malka of Bnos Agudath Israel of America. The event brought together the broad circles of young women who advise the individual chapters of the Agudath Israel movement for girls for an evening saluting their volunteer efforts, ventilating practical ideas in effective programming, and assessing the overall accomplishments and direction of the organization.

Rebbetzin Henny Kahn, a veteran in the field of Torah education for girls, and Mrs. Suri Saposh, a long-time Torah *mechaneches*.



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Employers, Jobless Both Benefit from COPE Programs: Rabbi Dovid Seeve, director of Project COPE (Career Opportunities and Preparation for Employment) reported on a gratifying record of serving clientele of yeshiva background with job placement as well as Chassidic young people. "Employers who have signed on our clients, are as gratified with the program as the individuals who have gotten their lives on track with jobs."

Under incentives provided by Project COPE under the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), channeled through New York State and City agencies, such employers are reimbursed up to 50% of the gross wages for new workers they take on and train in new jobs.

The type of employment covered by ongoing Project COPE programs includes sales, clerical, bookkeeping, shipping, production management and manufacturing. Income eligible individuals with limited skills or lacking skills in a specific area of employment are qualified for the on-job training.

In another, special job program for dislocated workers, funded by the New York State Department of Labor, there is no income eligibility requirement. Dislocated workers are individuals who have been laid off from their jobs due to industry cutbacks and are not likely to return to their previous occupation.

DATELINE MONTREAL

Pirchei Agudah Mishnayos Contest Winners in Montreal: Hundreds of youngsters between the ages of 8 and 15, gathered from Baltimore, Lakewood, New York, and across Eastern Canada for the Fourth Annual Styum Mishnayos celebration of Pirchei Agudath Israel of Montreal. The event recognized regional winners in the annual Mishnayos B'al Peh contest of the national Agudath Israel youth movement, who collectively

learned thousands of sections of *Mishna* by heart—with comprehension—outside the demands of their yeshiva curriculum.

Among the dignitaries that graced the conclave were Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe of Boston, who spent *Shabbos* with the gathering; Rabbi Mordechai Weinberg, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Gedola of Montreal; Rabbi Moshe Glustein, Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva Gedola; and Rabbi Pinchos Hirschprung, Chief Rabbi of Montreal. Top honors were presented to Montreal youngsters Hillel Yosef Pfeiffer and Zev Hersfeld, and to Nachum Levovitz and Isser Zalman Olshin of Lakewood, New Jersey. Close to 60 boys were cited for membership in the "One Hundred Club" for at least 100 *Mishnayos* memorized.

The Saturday evening session was also addressed by Rabbi Shlomo Leib Mund, *menahel* of the Yeshiva Ketana of Merkaz HaTorah, and Pirchei Agudath Israel of America's national director Rabbi Joshua Silbermintz.

PROSPECTS FOR UNPRECEDENTED CHINUCH ATZMAI GROWTH ... The potential for Adar registration in the Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools for the coming school year, 5747, is considered at a peak because of two factors: Children of members of the growing Baalei Teshuva Movement, reaching into the outlying areas as well as in the central cities; and the proven success of the Chinuch Atzmai-Torah Schools movement in quality education and moral training. To meet the growing demands for the current school year, 5746, the network established 39 new classes, 18 new kindergartens, and 4 new schools.

Twenty-five areas have been targeted for canvassing and recruitment. In each location, featured speakers, publicity, and transportation are arranged for a public gathering, with subsequent follow-up efforts. The anticipated results are more new schools and additional children in existing schools, to the point of establishing parallel grades for boys and girls even in the first grade, where small classes are often coeducational.

California Democrats Meet with Orthodox Leadership: Los Angeles—An overflow audience of rabbinic and lay leaders from the broadest circles of Orthodox Jewish life in California met with members of the State's top Democratic leadership at a reception sponsored by the California chapter of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America. The gathering was addressed by Speaker of the California State Assembly Willie J. Brown of San Francisco, Majority Floor Leader, Assemblyman Mike Roos, and Assemblyman Richard Katz of the San Fernando Valley.

Orthodox Archives and Chizuk Team Up in Unique Outreach Event: The Orthodox Jewish Archives, established by Agudath Israel of America to preserve the record of Orthodox Jewish life on these shores and in pre-war Europe, and Chizuk—"The Torah Link," also an Agudath Israel agency, characterized by movement and action for *ba'alei teshuva*, pooled their resources in a particularly successful event that points up the potential of an under-utilized angle in the field of *kiruv rechokim*. An audience of young and older Jewish adults was captivated by a joint presentation of the two agencies, entitled "The World of Our Fathers" and designed to restore for Jews who have been cut off from their spiritual roots some small sense of intimate linkage with their past.

Pirchei Agudath Israel National Branch Directory: Pirchei Agudath Israel of America recently published a National Branch Directory, listing branches and activity of the youth organization across the United States and Canada. The directories are available free of charge in single copies or bulk, by writing: Pirchei Agudath Israel, Rabbi M. Mehlman, 5 Beekman Street, New York, New York 10038. Please enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

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tions on *Sefer Breishis* and *Vayikro* and
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1. The reference (JO, Jan '86, p. 19) to the Chassidic leader who wrote an approbation for the Hakham Abdallah Somekh's *sefer Sidre Taharat* should have read: Rabbi Gershon Henach Leiner, the Radziner Rebbe זצ"ל, also known as the *baal hatecheitless*, for his pioneering work in searching for the *chalazon*—the sea creature that serves as the source of the blue dye required for *tzitzis*.

2. The Latin heading for a letter on p. 41 of the same issue should have read: "Per Hominem Ad Hominem." (Courtesy of Rabbi Joseph Elias and Rabbi Chaim Feuerman, Ed.D.)

3. A letter to the editor (Nov '85) makes reference to Edgar Frank's *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology* (Feldheim '56). While we have been informed by the publisher that, contrary to the letter writer's assumption, the book is still available, we have also been advised by others that the book's author dismisses the opinions of *Rishonim* (Mediaeval Commentators) in a manner that necessitates making it clear that publishing the letter should not in any way be construed as an endorsement of the book.

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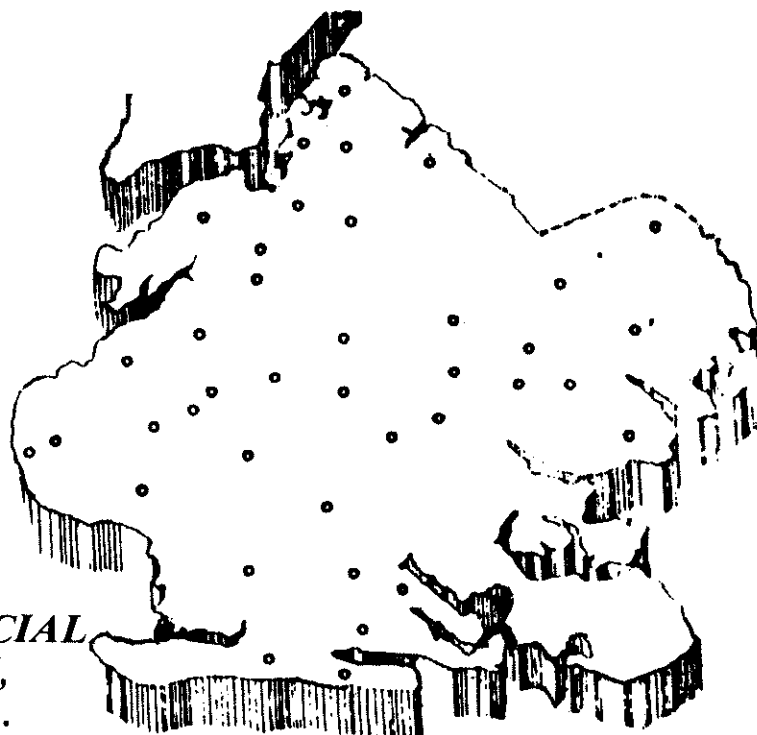
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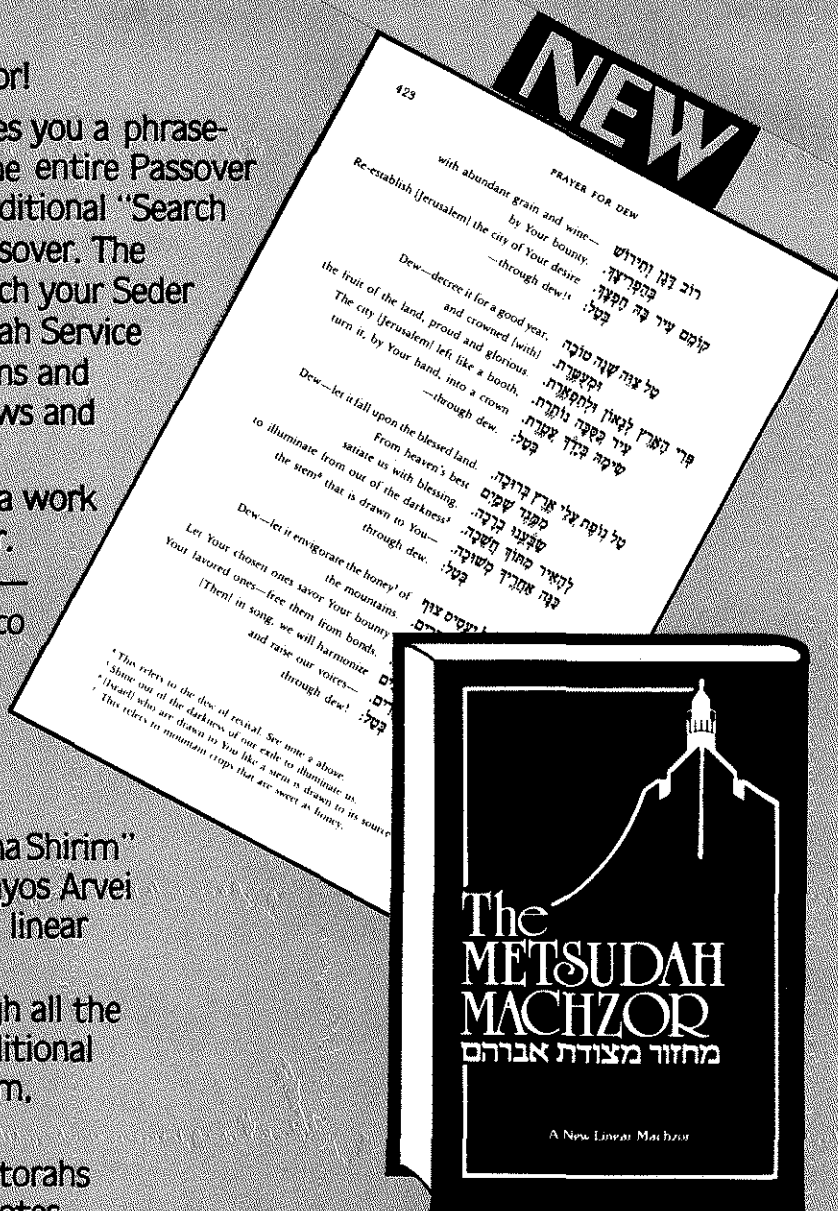
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