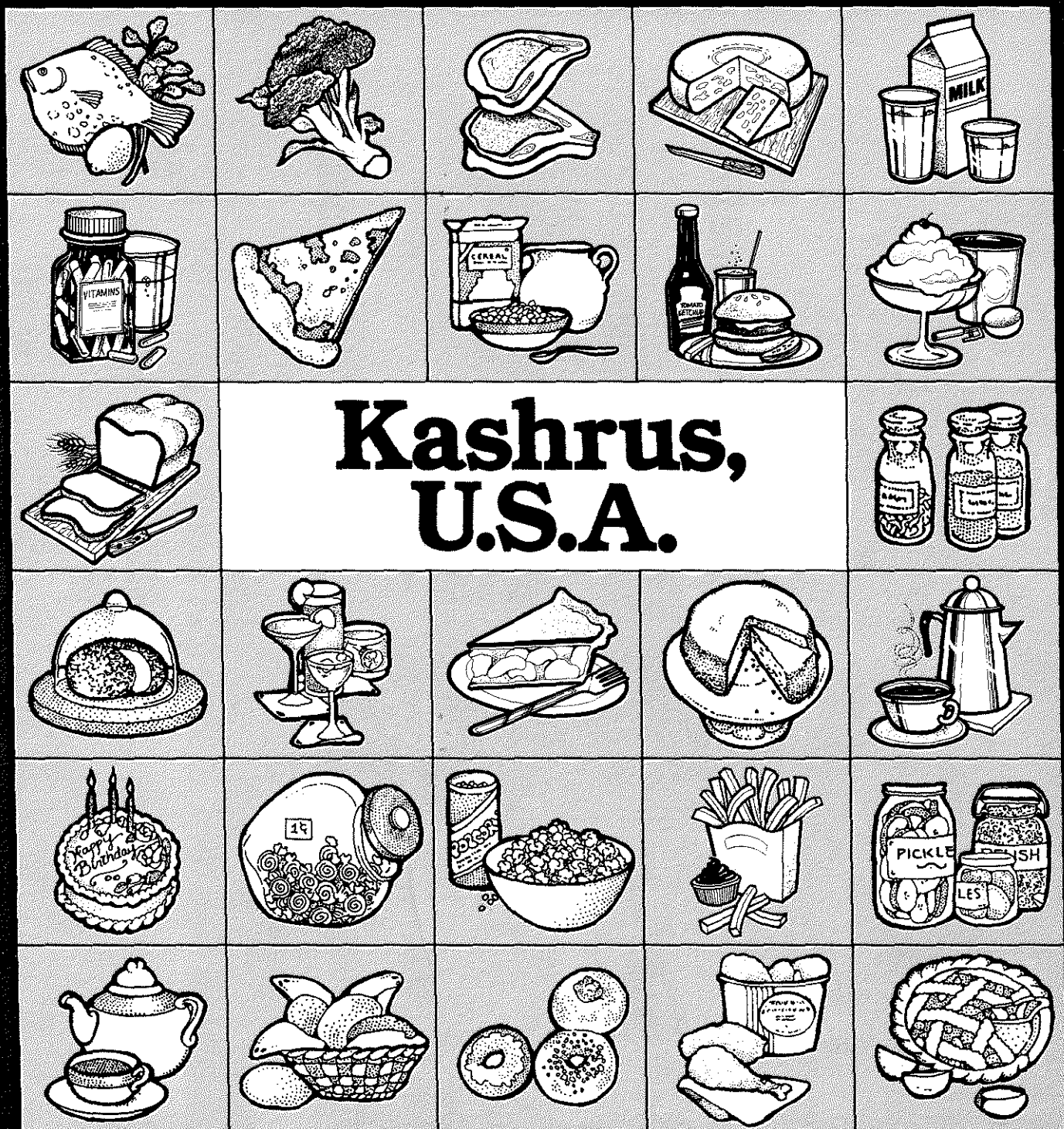


THE JEWISH OBSERVER

ELUL 5746 / SEPTEMBER 1986
VOLUME XIX, NUMBER 6
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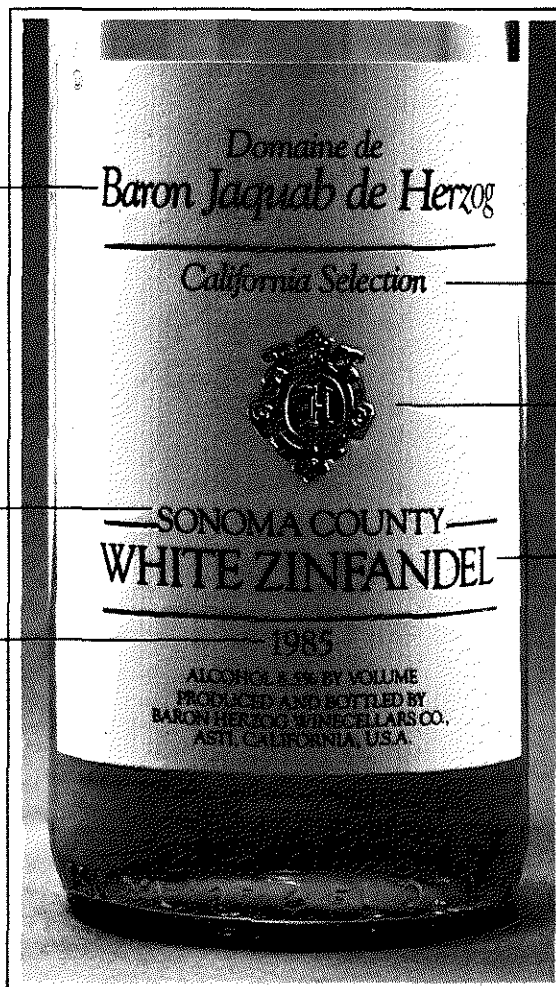
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THE JEWISH OBSERVER (ISSN 0021-6615 is published monthly except July and August, by the Agudath Israel of America, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N.Y. 10038. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Subscription \$15.00 per year; two years, \$27.00; 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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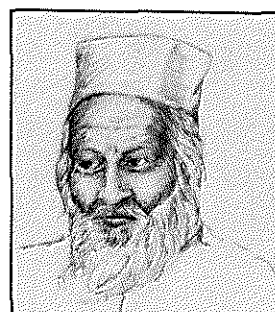
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Second Looks at the Jewish Scene

One Straw, How Many Camels?

Because of space considerations, no Letters to the Editor appear in this issue. They will be published next month.



THESE FLAMES COMING OUT OF TEL AVIV DIDN'T MAKE THE HEADLINES

We in America are horror struck at the tales of religious strife in Israel. But when the Ponivezer Rosh Yeshiva, Horav Schach שליט"א was asked to explain recent events, he said, "The more they say no, the more we will grow."

Today we can see it happening. The secular media write about synagogues being burned; they don't report even more startling events happening in and around Tel Aviv. In many areas that for years were known as totally irreligious strongholds, new flames are bursting forth — the bright flames of Torah.

In Nachlat Yitzchok and Neve Sharet, irreligious suburbs of Tel Aviv, they are begging Chinuch Atzmai to open a kindergarten for 40 children. The same is happening in at least 30 other places around Israel.

The winds of Teshuva are blowing. They are penetrating ever deeper into the heartlands of the secular state. What strife we are seeing is the frightened reaction of those whose careers and life are built around opposing Torah. Yeshivas and Bais Yaakovs are no longer a quaint tourist attraction in Jerusalem. Even the children and grandchildren of secular leaders are beginning to question the empty values and mores of their parents. When the son of a leftist politician is learning

Torah in a yeshiva in Jerusalem, when the most popular TV and movie idol in Israel is sending his children to Chinuch Atzmai schools (and spending his time studying in a yeshiva), we can see the hand of G-d.

But the answer must come from us too. Israel is still a land divided. As thousands of new students stream each year into our schools, the government budget cutters are reducing the allocations for Chinuch Atzmai even more.

Yes, we are accepting these children. We are bus-ing them to distant schools. We are cramming them into existing buildings, seating them two to a seat meant for one, holding classes in the hallways, on the front lawn, anywhere.

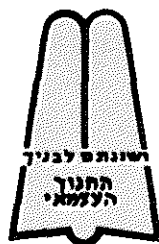
Yet thousands more may be refused. And if more school buildings were available, we could double our enrollment in one year. Imagine another 50,000 Jewish children learning Torah in Israel!

Each dollar you give today goes directly towards supporting the Torah learned in Israel by a Jewish child.

In our lifetime we can see the miracle happen. The miracle of an Israel where Torah is heard from every Jewish home. Let's make it happen.

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Kashrus, U.S.A.

Where It's Coming From, and Where It's Heading

The recent incidence of non-kosher vinegar being used as an ingredient in dozens of kosher products (and processes) is still fresh in the collective consciousness of the Kosher consumer. Aside from the specific *she'eilos* concerning product fitness, this incident provoked a number of reactions, ranging from responsible public (and private) response on the part of a number of major *Kashrus* organizations, to misleading and misinforming public statements on the part of others. (For those who knew the facts early on, the airy words about a "state law causing the question of *Kashrus* in vinegar"* are an insult to the intelligence and a fundamental failure to public service.)

Those speaking in the name of the "public" (in plain words, the paying customer) have, through various organs of the press, expressed outrage that these things can and do happen (and by implication, continue to happen). The immediate consensus, both inside and outside the *Kashrus* field, is that the integrity of *Kashrus* supervision is damaged, measurably.

*quoted from a memo circulated by a *Kashrus* supervision group, shortly after *Pesach*.

Rabbi Teichman, rabbi of Congregation Agudath Israel of Los Angeles, heads the local *Kehilla Kashrus* Supervisory Organization.

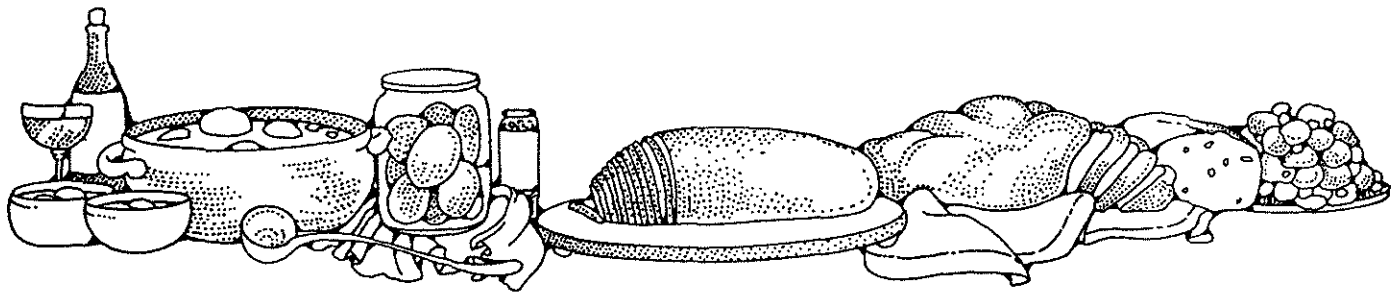
I have written this report with you, the individual, in mind. Some of what follows is quite technical and nitty-gritty, and many questions are asked—few answered. But, perhaps when you finish reading, you'll have an idea of how big the field of *Kashrus* is, where we are right now, and how we might improve the situation.

Kashrus, on a professional level, as currently organized has a number of distinct areas, each with its own problems, requiring specific knowledge, experience, expertise and, obviously, its own *she'eilos* and *halachos*. Let us take them one at a time.

SOURCE PRODUCTIONS (*Shechita*: meat, poultry; milk, cheese, wines, oils)

From the industrial point of view, these operations have the least additives and outside products involved in production. However, in halachic terms, a major portion of *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* is taken up with these foods.

A large portion of these laws deal with the laws of *shechita* and, in practice, are so complex that they cannot be treated fairly in the framework of this article. I would, nonetheless, like to touch on some developments



to watch: In the United States, beef and poultry slaughter, and increasingly the entire processing chain, are taking place closer to the producer farmlands and further from the consumer population centers. This process has evolved to the point where (conservatively) 85% of the *shochtim* in this country do not come home to their families at the end of the working day. This puts a limit on the quality of the personnel willing to leave home regularly for extended periods of time. And, obviously, the *Rav Hamachshir*, the *Rav* assuming the "buck-stops-here" responsibility for the *Kashrus* of the *shechita* operation, is equally far-removed. His relationship to, and influence over, the people responsible to him suffer accordingly. Many qualified personnel simply leave the profession because of the long distance and difficult working conditions.

There is a serious shortage of expert *Shuvim* (by *SHUV*, we mean *Shochet U'Bodek*), that is, people expert in all three areas of *Shechita*: *shechita*—slaughter; *bedikas pnim*—internal organ inspection; *bedikas chutz*—external organ inspection. This phenomenon is readily explained: the *shechita* team (sometimes eight to ten people in a large operation) usually functions as a group of equals and as such each member tends to gravitate to the position he is best at. Over a period of time, he never has the opportunity to improve himself in his weak area. It is difficult for the *Rav* to promote the necessary improvement and maintain the professional standard from a distance. Incidentally, the experts know of each other's work by reputation, and from a professional

viewpoint, there's no difference between a Satmerer, Lubavitcher, or *Amerikaner* practitioner. Expertise at the craft is determined by the same *Yoreh Deah*.

OILS AND OTHER RAW MATERIALS

Many basic materials are processed in their land of origin, often in the Far East, where controls are much looser than in Western countries and where supplies are subject to unpredictable depletion and haphazard substitution. Moreover, the *Kashrus* supervisors are not always on the site.

And then there is a matter of shipping. In oils, for instance, can we insist that shipments of kosher oil cargo from the Far East be in container holds dedicated exclusively to kosher oil, so that the obvious problems of non-kosher common-wall containers (wherein kosher oils are separated from *treife* oils by a single, 5" thick wall), transfer lines, (hot!), etc. are obviated? Can all *Kashrus* supervisions do this? Can the large corporations make this major adjustment with their suppliers—something that can involve great cost and even more trouble? And if they won't or can't, would their *hechsher* remain, or not?

CATERING

An interesting dichotomy exists here. Some businesses are run out of a central commissary and are also quite stable with respect to how often they change suppliers. After the initial set-up state, the *hashgacha* can

A postscript to the vinegar story: *Kashrus* would have been better served if public notice and subsequent disclosure had been spearheaded by the supervising agency responsible for the *hechsher* for the vinegar, together with all the *Kashrus* groups who had approved the product in their own productions. A data base and bulletin board would have provided to the public in days what dozens of people took weeks to compile. The administrator of a major *Kashrus* Vaad confided to me, "It could have happened to any of us." Perhaps. Not everyone, though, is prepared to deal with mistakes constructively, under pressure. All of us in *Kashrus* can and should learn from this incident.

—A. Teichman

Regarding the *pasuk* "*Kakaton kagadol tishmeun*—hear out the small as well as the large," Chazal tell us, "*Din pruta k'din mono*—the question of a tiny coin should be as important to you as one involving thousands." Obviously, Chazal meant for us not to neglect the petty case. However, in no way can we imagine that the *din mono*—the case involving thousands, is any less important for its size. Many issues in *Kashrus* today do involve large sums. In some cases the granting of a *hechsher* or its removal can make or break a business or its personnel, or for that matter can seriously affect the financial stability of the supervisory agency. Our posture does not always reflect this point.

—A. Teichman

No *hechsher* is totally independent. All supervisors must depend on others, for every product has either a multiplicity of ingredients or some additives.

be relatively problem-free. The other side of the coin (as is often the case) is the fellow who conducts his affairs out of his own head—his products and suppliers are constantly being changed. This is a difficult, if not impossible, situation to monitor. The caterer who is quite *frum* and well-meaning can at the same time be unaware and ignorant of the *Kashrus* hazards in the products he uses. "It's good, everyone uses it," can be a sincere statement—but at the same time, the public is relying not on "everyone," but on the specific *machshir*.

Chilul Shabbos (before and after *Shabbos*) is a serious possibility in view of the time pressures to produce a large affair; it is an area that is sometimes more hazard-prone than the *Kashrus* of the menu.

If the management is not observant, the adequacy of the on-site *mashgiach* is of fundamental concern.

HOTELS—INSTITUTIONS

Here, too, there are a number of distinct areas. Can the facility be kashered? Does the hotel have a separate set of dishes? Are they sealed away when not in use? How are the dishes cleaned after use? (Does the caterer take home dirty dishes?) Does preparation of the kosher affair take place apart from other, *treif* activities, or are kosher and *treif* prepared in proximity to each other in a central kitchen? The difference between the two methods may require five or more additional *mashgichim* in a large multi-storied hotel facility.

As important as any of the details above, are the relationship and operating procedure of the hotel vis-a-vis *Kashrus*. Has the hotel prepared and familiarized its staff with the kosher procedure? Does the executive chef/manager have a tight control over his own personnel or is it the case of a number of things going on at once—they have to check it out—they don't really know off-hand.

Institutions, especially nursing homes and the like, are very cost conscious—a source of serious problems in product approval. Products that you would not use yourself may in fact, because of cost consideration, be the standard fare in institutions. Can a nursing home claim to be kosher and not have separate meat and dairy kitchens? Is there, in fact, an active *hashgacha* or does the management merely make the claim?

In our own *shuls*, *yeshivos* and camps, serious *Kashrus* problems can arise because there is not one single individual who is in final control and authority. That leaves it up to someone else—that is, no one. Amazing, yet so commonplace.

RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS (*Butcher Shops—and everything else: bakeries, restaurants, take-outs, etc.*)

The *hashgacha* at a *Shomer Shabbos* butcher shop assures uniform, maintained standards. The *nikkur* (deveining) is done according to the *psak* of the *Rav* (not necessarily the way the butcher got his training); the *Rav* approves and disapproves the wholesaler suppliers. If you hear the butcher boasting of his own expertise and not referring the customer with a question to his *Rav Hamachshir*—then the *Rav* may not be knowledgeable in *nikkur* and other areas, and the butcher is the "real *machshir*." (The fuss several years ago about *nikkur* resulted primarily from lack of authoritative knowledge on the part of the responsible *hashgachos*.) The butcher may not be *Shomer Shabbos*, especially in small communities, and simply spot-checking by a *mashgiach* is, *l'halacha*, no assurance that the meat was soaked and salted properly.

The *mashgiach*, even if he is constantly on-site as the *Rav's* eyes and ears, needs to know the tricks of the trade. Otherwise his presence is no assurance of *Kashrus* at all.

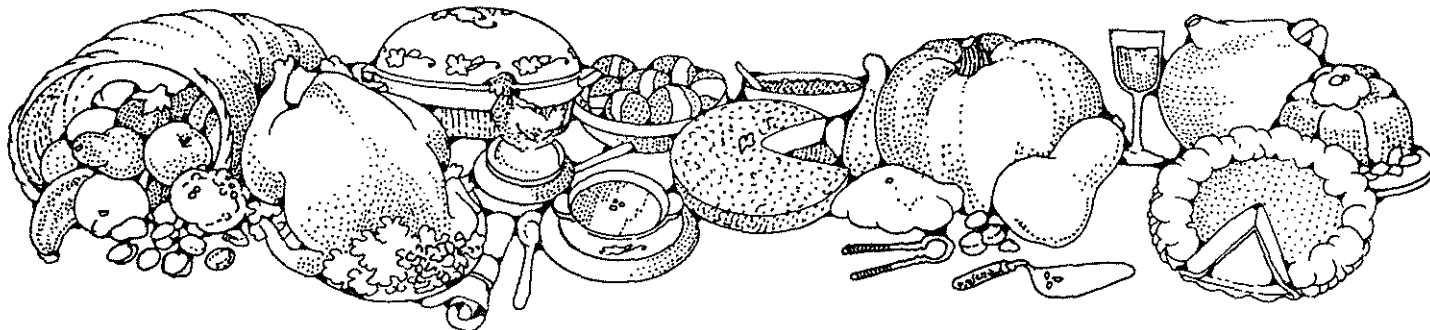
Other retail establishments. It is important for the store to minimize, wherever possible, changes in suppliers, thus better controlling the problems and resulting pressures of new and unverifiable suppliers. New products don't have to be taboo, but they should be approved as part of a deliberate procedure.

INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING

The factory that produces a kosher supervised product composed of a number of ingredients, may or may not require various levels of *hashgacha*: none at all (it's possible!) may be needed outside nominal inspections a number of times each year. An on-site constant *hashgacha* from beginning to end may be required—and after the end, too, when labels may need to be locked up. Other times, some level of *hashgacha* between these two extremes may be adequate.

Proprietary information. Some ingredients may be trade secrets and the company may be unwilling to divulge them, even if only for *Kashrus* purposes.

The proprietary "K". The "K" symbol simply may be a claim to *kashrus* by the company—but there is no *hashgacha* approval. Often, there is indeed a reliable *hashgacha*. This is an example of information not readily available to the lay consumer.



Label control. Here lies a source of disaster. Despite a reliable *hashgacha* during production, the plant might produce *treif* products under kosher labels by mistake. Are labels solely controlled by the *mashgiach*? If not, is the distribution system of the product so arranged that mislabeling can be immediately detected? What if the company (it can be that big) has its own print shop for labels? Should the *hashgacha* be removed if the mislabeling is a result of negligence rather than mere error? How would this be determined? How do we even organize ourselves to tackle this problem?

The ordinary customer, be he a *ben Torah* or otherwise, is surely a lay person when it comes to addressing the many, many challenges facing us in *Kashrus* today. Surely, the consumer rightly feels, that's the whole point of having organized *Kashrus* supervision. So right! And that brings us to the *Kashrus* organizations themselves. This, indeed, is where it's at.

THE SUPERVISION SYSTEM: A DESCRIPTION IN BRIEF

Community or proprietary? Orthodox Union (OU) Baltimore Vaad Hakashrus (Star K), are examples of community organizations. Their administrative staffs are responsible to a board of community group of rabbis and/or laymen. A dynamic administrator will of course carry great weight inside the organization, but policy-making and final responsibility rest with the community board.

Organized Kosher Laboratories (OK) and Kosher Supervision Service (Chaf K) are proprietary. That is, they are wholly owned by one person or a small group. Policy and final responsibility are often vested in one person, often the administrator.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל is no longer with us and we lack the broad shoulders to lean on when it comes to profound questions of *psak* in *Kashrus*. Among *Kashrus* Vaadim, policies involving *psak halacha* will need to be arrived at through a consensus of our *Morei Hora'a*, at this point. Our spiritual poverty may well contain the seeds of a blessing, bringing us closer together in cooperation and in practice.

—A. Teichman

Scope: Some operate on a national scale (OU, OK), while others may be regional (Community *Kashrus* Vaadim exist in Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Montreal, Toronto, etc.). Some are local (Vaad haRabbonim of Flatbush, for example). Some may be a single *hechsher* not reflecting any organization beyond the specific product (Debreiner Rav, for example). Some are divisions of larger organizations (*Beis Din* of Khal Adath Jeshurun, *Beis Din* of Hisachdus Horabbonim, Vaad Rabbonei Lubavitch, even OU is a *Kashrus* division of the larger organization.)

Symbols: There has been an explosion of trademarked *Kashrus* symbols marketed since 1970, primarily the result of two things: 1) the increasing sophistication of even the smallest *Kashrus* groups, and 2) the increased general public concern with food additives and product ingredients. You practically need a directory to be knowledgeable about the symbols. They have so proliferated that *Kashrus* symbols are no longer information symbols alone—they are increasingly viewed as important marketing tools. The financial significance of this situation has been lost on no one in the industry. Nor should it be lost on the consumer.

CURRENT EVENTS

The first meeting (ever!) among *Kashrus* groups took place last November in Chicago, hosted by the Chicago Rabbinical Council. Representatives of Community *Kashrus* Vaadim from twelve cities were present. The second conference took place in New York City this past February, hosted by the OU. Representatives from twenty-five different community Vaadim were present. The next conference is scheduled for early August in Baltimore, G-d willing.

The conferences to date were wonderfully productive, their greatest accomplishments two fold:

1) Vaadim compared notes and had the opportunity to learn from each other's problems and successes.

2) An umbrella group was created, The Association of Community *Kashrus* Organizations. This group (the ACKO), comprised at this point solely of community Vaadim, seems to have potential to be the instrument with which we (the consumer, the *rabbonim*, the professionals and the industry) can effectively deal with the challenges facing us today.

85% of the *Shochtim* in America do not come home to their families at the end of a working day. This puts a limit on the quality of personnel available . . . and it puts a distance between the plant and the *Rav* in charge.

THOSE CHALLENGES ARE, IN BRIEF:

Kashrus is in danger of being hurt by its very success.

Growing ever larger to meet increasing demands for supervision approval, means that the infrastructure may not be able to handle the workload (even if the ACKO ever does determine, as policy, what a proper *hashgacha* workload is). On the other hand, a large organization must sometimes seek to grow because of the need for greater income to maintain the existing establishment. This is not inherently contradictory to good *Kashrus* policy, as long as the infrastructure—that is, the corps of *mashgichim* and their supervisors—grows accordingly. But I suspect that growth for growth's sake lies at the root of many subsequent problems.

A number of *hechsheirim* are not acceptable within the *Kashrus* field. Only if we can develop common, minimum *hashgacha* standards subscribed to by all member Vaadim (and subsequent members) could a universal credibility be achieved. Some examples of areas where accepted procedures have been topics for discussion and remain to be developed are: *bishul akum* (cooking by a non-Jew, forbidden for consumption, per Rabbinic law); processing involving fish; and taking *challah* at large plants. Yet to be discussed: standards for Israeli imports (complicated by its own set of *hashgacha* problems, as well as numerous additional *Kashrus* requirements because of the "Land-bound" *mitzvos*, such as *teruma*, *ma'aser*, and *Shmittah*); foreign imports.

In this manner, any *hechsher* would or would not, on a professional basis for peer review, meet common standards. As I explain later, this offers a format for forewarning both the industry and the consumer.

And then, let us not forget the key man in the *Kashrus* operation, the *mashgiach*. Halachic expertise, technical knowledgeability, unimpeachable credentials as an Orthodox rabbi. . .

***Kashrus* is big business and needs a code of ethics, written and unwritten.** If a *hechsher* is removed for valid *Kashrus* reasons, it should not be snapped up by the competition. A food handler I know lost his original *hechsher* because of unethical practices, and now has his fourth *hechsher*! Wouldn't you expect *Rav*-number-four to discuss with the previous *Rav*—for background and recommendation purposes—the wisdom of giving the *hechsher*? And what about the acceptability of competition, undercutting, and all the other concomitant aspects of a free market in *Kashrus* supervision? Shouldn't there be a *modus operandi* among *Kashrus* groups so that general *Kashrus* will be enhanced and *kiddush shem Shomayim* promoted, rather than the opposite?

What about grievances? The last place to argue about *Kashrus* would seem to be the media: The Association would be the logical address. Much of the propaganda hype and irresponsible public posturing would be curbed and the layman, above all, would be less confused and cynical.

A blunt question was put to us at the first *Kashrus* conference: "Do you know of anyone who is willfully giving a *hechsher* on a product he knows to be *treif*?" (referring to the *hechsheirim* that were by consensus not accepted in the *Kashrus* field). Not a single participant responded in the affirmative. However, most of us in the field are directly or indirectly aware of those *machshirim* who don't want to know if their *hashgachos* have problems, whose standards are subject to change (as in hundred dollar bill) and whose *mashgichim* know little or nothing of what they are supposedly supervising. The *machshir* does not expect the *mashgiach* to do more than display his physical presence since everything has been taken care of before, and the *mashgiach* knows, by way of his

remuneration, that he need not look around too much in view of the kind of money he is being paid.

A *mashgiach* failed to appear for supervision of a kosher-for-Pesach production at a plant in our area. The company called the rabbi, and after a short conversation, the rabbi approved the product for sale. The company manager thought it a bit strange, but went ahead with distribution nevertheless. When management mentioned the story to the distributor, management concluded: "Why do we pay for extra supervision for Pesach if it is good without the *mashgiach* anyway?" The distributor was so incensed at this chicanery that he insisted that the supervision be cancelled by the company.

—A. Teichman

Kashrus symbols have so proliferated that they are no longer information symbols alone—they are also marketing tools.

The single most urgent need in Kashrus today is timely information. This last point is critical to both the Kashrus field and the consumer.

The insiders. No *hechsher* is totally independent. To a greater or lesser extent, we *machshirim* all depend on other *hechsherim*. Every product contains some other product. (Milk may contain vitamins A and D; meat is salted; oil, even without additives, has come into contact with various catalytic elements during refining; cheese contains enzymes, coagulants, coloring and more; a flavoring may contain an ingredient that itself contains 40 components!) Each *Kashrus* group has a critical need to have all its own information at its own fingertips and to simultaneously be able to communicate with its sister organizations in this same way.

The consumer. The various newsletters and alerts available today to the consumer are highly praiseworthy efforts at informing the consumer. The *Kosher Gram*, of the *Merkaz* in Detroit, is a shining example. They are, however, but a pitiful stab at addressing the need. A great deal of preparation and effort go into disseminating information that is weeks old at publication. The inevitable must be ushered in right now. A national data base and bulletin board is a priority of the Association of Vaadim. Hopefully, a model demonstration will be given at the next conference in Baltimore. The information in the central computer will be available to the computer terminals and printers of member Vaadim. They, at their discretion, may make the information available to their membership.

Information can be available within minutes on a professional need-to-know basis, and within days to the consumer membership.

ROLE OF THE CONSUMER

The individual consumer can do something. He can speak to his *Rav* and, in his own way, encourage him to involve himself personally in this endeavor, or he can become involved on his own through his nearest Community Vaad.

What people in the *Kashrus* field have recognized as imperative is now known to the reader—that is, the consumer. An idea whose time has come won't be denied; the consumer, with his individual voice and concern, can put this idea on the agenda for action sooner rather than later.

Though this report may strike the reader as too negative and revealing, no part, by itself, is foreign to any of us. It is the totality and complexity of the *Kashrus* field in our technological age that is overwhelming. Hence, the feeling of powerlessness and futility, of "Will we ever come to grips with all this?"

The answer is simple: do we *will* it? Do the *Kashrus* professionals within the organization and between the organizations—do they will it? Do the activists, do the consumers will it? If the response to the question of "will" is yes, then the necessary ingredient to confront and to conquer the *Kashrus* challenges of today (and beyond) is there. Conquer we must. We have no other choice. ■

"Can we stand the scrutiny?" a *Rav* at the second *Kashrus* conference asked us. He answered his own question this way: "Being scrutinized by my peers definitely makes me nervous and uncomfortable, but you can be sure I'll be at my conscientious best and that I'll be open to any suggested improvement in my *hechsher* that will gain your approval."—That's what real *Kashrus* is all about.

—A. Teichman

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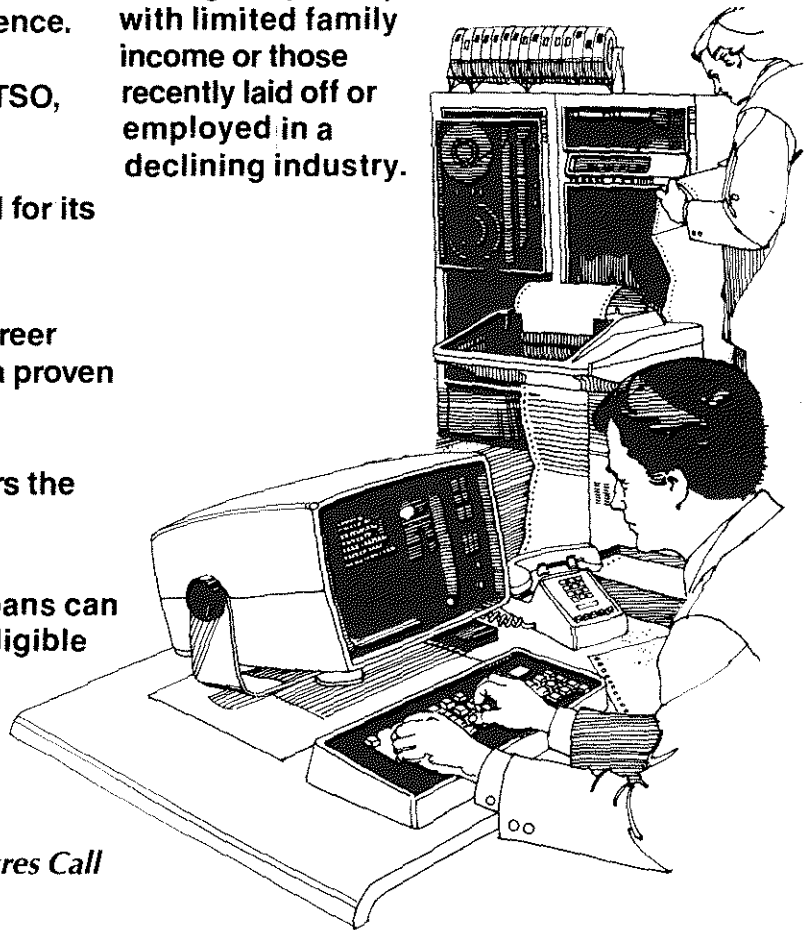
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Escalating Tensions



The past few months have been marked by unusual tensions between the religious and non-religious populace in Israel. The more violent expressions of these tensions—especially the desecration of synagogues, yeshivos and *seforim* (holy books) in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and other cities—captured media attention all over the world. As of late, the violence has all but disappeared from the scene, yet the deep-rooted causes have not. Confrontations have continued, but the battle lines have shifted to the Knesset and the media, ignoring the risk that with slight provocation, open conflict—if not violence—will surface once again. Precisely what took place? Why? And what should the response of Torah Jewry be to these events?

in Israel

A Report and Commentary

I. THE EXPLOSIVE EVENTS

For over a half year, the bus shelters throughout Israel had been displaying posters advertising women's swimwear that offend basic standards of decency. Incredibly, one such poster was affixed to a bus shelter on Rechov Meah Shearim where even the casual tourist is requested to dress with modesty. After continued protests to the municipality went unheeded, someone burned the shelter to the ground. Who was guilty, no one knows. The vandalism was condemned by virtually all, including the Eidah Hachareidis. But the offensive displays continued.

Protests mounted. Israel's anti-religious press—that is, the vast majority of its newspapers—only took note of religious protesters, whom they characterized as Khomeinis and medieval obscurantists, but in fact, the religious populace was joined by a broad spectrum of

people, including Israeli feminists who objected to the posters for their exploitation and demeaning treatment of women. Some members of the religious community resorted to spray-painting the offensive posters while unidentified vandals continued torching the shelters. The media (see cartoons attached) and leftist members of the Knesset did not differentiate between protesters, blackeners and burners. It was "the *Haredim* against the rest of us." For example, an editorial in *Ma'ariv* (June 5) proclaimed, "It is high time to put an end to the lawlessness of the *Haredim* and to the self-restraint of the police." Nor did the police differentiate, making wholesale arrests of scores of bystanders when suspects of any defacing were apprehended. Of note: not one religious Jew was ever caught or arrested for bus-shelter burning while non-religious Jews were. (Come to think of it, is it conceivable that a Meah Shearim Jew would take the three-hour trip to Haifa to set fire to a bus shelter there?)

The conflict reached an ugly climax on June 12th, when Tel Aviv's Bnei Binyomin Synagogue was set afire. A note left on the door read, "We will burn a synagogue for every bus shelter set ablaze," signed, "People against the ultra-religious."

After Shavuot, violence exploded again. Here we quote *The New York Times*:

Late Saturday night, vandals ransacked a Tel Aviv Yeshiva, scrawling in black paint on the walls, "Khomeinism," "Down with religious coercion," and "This is the last warning." The vandals ripped prayer shawls to shreds, shredded prayer books and tore apart phylacteries and left them in a heap in the middle of the Chiddushei Harim Yeshiva in Tel Aviv. The militants also smashed the Yeshiva's Holy Ark ... smeared swastikas on the walls of Tel Aviv's Great Synagogue. ...

In Yavneel, near Tiberias, secular militants broke into the state-run religious school and ripped apart prayer books and other religious articles.

Yeshivat HaKotel in Jerusalem was also vandalized.

Not one religious Jew was ever caught setting fire to a bus shelter, while non-religious Jews were. Nowhere is this indicated in the press.

Most quarters expressed outrage at the sacrilege, and passions cooled. Within several days, Israel's Attorney General ordered all provocative posters removed as violating the criminal code (Paragraph 173) which prohibits posting any signs or displays that offend the beliefs or religious sensibilities of others. The obvious question: Why was this law not enforced before? Yet, media commentators, such as Avrohom Schweitzer of *Haaretz*, outrageously decried enforcing the law *on behalf of the Haredim*.

A number of American Jewish organizations condemned violence on both sides. Four Orthodox groups—Agudath Israel of America, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, and the National Council of Young Israel—also condemned all violence, making it clear that the onus for starting it rests on those who provoked it, by invading the domain of deepfelt religious belief with offensive posters and other defiant acts.

These are the facts. And now for some background.

II. BEHIND THE BUS SHELTER DISPUTE

OBVIOUS IN THE USA,
BUT NOT IN ISRAEL

It may strike some readers strange that such a fuss be made over advertising posters, but many a small town American who visits New York or Los Angeles for the first time is also taken aback by some of the offensively bold advertising—and these were even worse (see letter to *Jerusalem Post*). Varying standards of propriety in different communities have been recog-

nized as a valid factor in determining what is legally acceptable in the U.S. In a case dealing with the conflict between obscenity and free speech, the Supreme Court decided that a local government can ban immodest display on the basis of "contemporary community standards." What is deemed acceptable in one part of the country can be prohibited as offensive in another. (*Roth v. United States*, 2d Cir. 1956.) Israeli society seems bent on ignoring this factor.

Moreover, placing the more risqué posters in Orthodox neighborhoods cannot be justified by either rules of consideration or economics. (How many swimsuits does Gotex sell in Meah Shearim in a year? On the other

hand, Emanuel Shalem, c.e.o. of Poster Media, responsible for the shelters and their advertising, was quoted in *Advertising Age*, July 14, 1986: "Nobody has pulled out of their contract because of the controversy... [which] has made people pay attention to the ads. And in my business, that's what I want.") Yet the "invasion" of the offensive advertising was ignored by the Knesset and media. Only the objection of the religious community was deemed noteworthy—and condemned.

Undoubtedly, some secularists harbor a deep reservoir of ill-feeling toward the *Haredi* community, an antipathy so severe that it blinds them to what would be obvious in other circumstances. Thus, in res-

PUBLIC PORN

7-20-86

To the Editor of The Jerusalem Post

Sir,

Like most Israelis... my world outlook, Jewish commitments and way of life... have much more in common with the secular than with the *haredi* community.

Notwithstanding all this, one may admit that the opponent, even if he continues in blatant aggression, is not necessarily always wrong. On the specific issue of the advertisements appearing at bus stations, the ultra-Orthodox have a case which merits the support of fair-minded people.

As a former American who travels to the U.S. quite frequently, I am appalled at the unbridled pornography displayed and peddled in Israel. The afternoon yellow press of New York is lily-white by comparison to the Hebrew afternoon dailies in Israel in their use of foul language, solicitous advertising of... [illicit]

relationships and the eroticism featured in their supplements for young people.

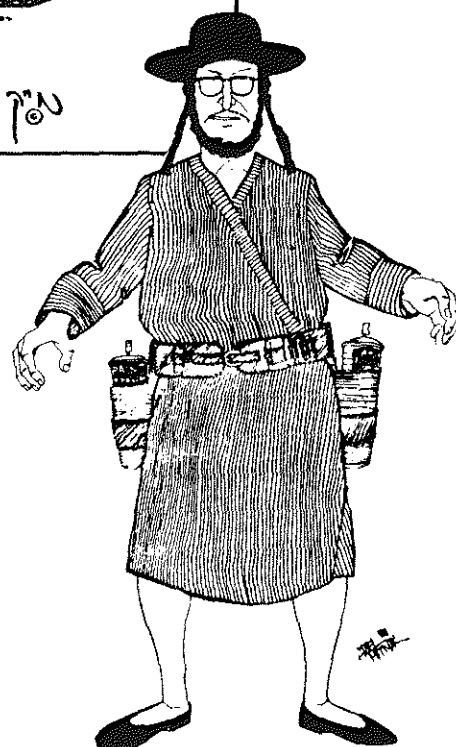
Nevertheless, only those who buy these newspapers are subject to this exposure. The bus stations, however, cannot be avoided.

If readers of *The Jerusalem Post* would look carefully at poster advertisements in some (though not all) bus stations throughout the city and then compare them with public advertising in London, New York or Chicago, they'd realize how low we have sunk.

In rejecting what the ultra-Orthodox stand for, let us not be so biased as to fail to see that on this issue, they may be right.

Though violence in any form is to be abhorred, we should yet understand why the ultra-Orthodox must resort to mass action.

GERSHON WINER
Jerusalem



THE MEDIA:
SPREADING THE BLAME

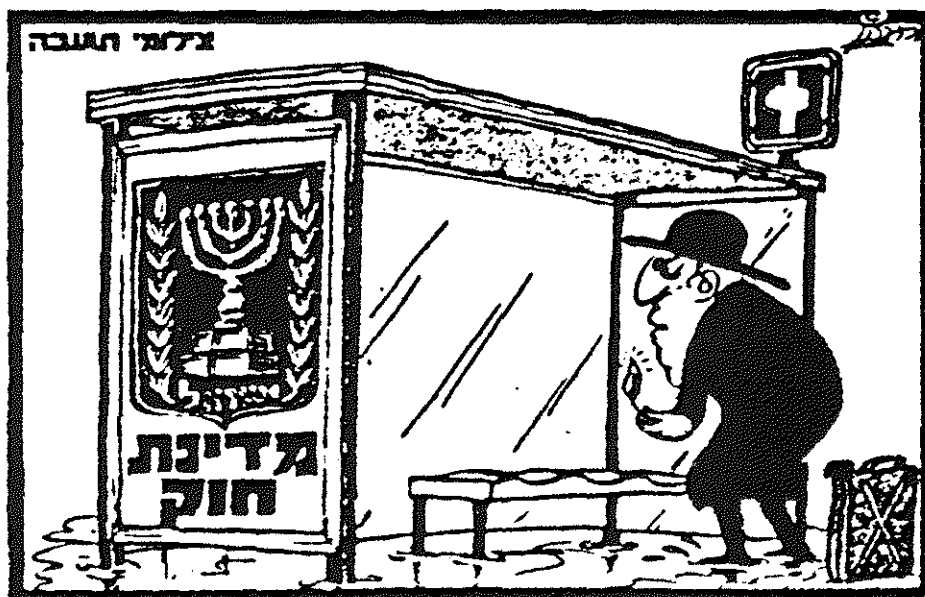
Israeli newspapers mock Haredim as (1) unsavory trash, (2) victims of their own arson, and (3) straight shooters of spray-paint aerosol cans. No religious Jew has been caught setting fire to bus shelters.

ponse to the burning and defacing of the synagogues and yeshivos during the week of Shavous—an outrage without precedent in Jewish history—some leftists newspapers knee-jerked with condemnation of the “ultra-Orthodox” for *starting* the violence. For example, an article widely syndicated throughout the English-speaking world, by *The Jerusalem Post* columnist Dr. Yosef Goell, asks: “Is the violence symmetrical? Nothing could be further from the truth. ... On the secular side, there has been virtually no resort to anti-*Haredi* violence in recent years. ... Left-wing parties such as the socialist Mapam and the Citizens’ Rights Movement ... have all come

out publicly against all violence while calling for police action against *Haredi* violence. ... On the other hand, the *Haredi* violence against the bus shelters, which has been going on with impunity, is but the latest example of such violence in recent years ... [such as] throwing stones at vehicular traffic on the road leading to the new neighborhood of Ramot.” As for “the recent horrendous incidents of attempted arson against one Tel Aviv Synagogue and the trashing and desecration of religious books and *teffilin*. ...” they are “retaliation.”

Not “unprecedented shameful acts,” spurred on by a vilifying Knesset and the media. Just “retaliation.”

Indeed, the media does bear a large share of the blame for the tightening of tension between the religious and secular communities. How else can one explain Goell’s observation that “At the personal level, relations are also more than civil between these parts—the vast majority of secular, traditional and Zionist Orthodox Jews—of the population and large numbers of *Haredi* (ultra-pietistic Orthodox) Jews.” Yet, a recent poll by Hanoch Smith for *The Jerusalem Post* shows that while 30% of the respondents are intolerant of Arabs, 67% expressed such feelings toward the “Ultra-Orthodox Jews” of Israel. If the different factions live at peace with each other on the personal level, how does a general negative attitude arise?—if not from the broad-brush smear of the media!



To the opinion-makers of Israel, there is absolutely no difference between the occasional rock-slinging juvenile from a *Neturei Karta* family and the tens of thousands of responsible adults who respect the words of virtually the entire Torah leadership, including the Ponevezher Rosh Hayeshiva, Rabbi Shach, and the Gerer Rebbe שיח, who have time and again condemned every kind of violence, for any purpose. In the Knesset, all are called "anti-Zionist parasites," and in the press they are all projected as coming from one *Haredi* or "Ultra-Orthodox" mold.

More of Geoll: "what are the sources of *Haredi* violence? They stem from an internal split in the extreme anti-Zionist *Neturei Karta* community which then spread into the larger *Eida Hacharedi*, which in turn had a strong impact on the 'Lithuanian yeshiva' wing of the mainline *Haredi* Agudath Israel. ... Are there any foreign influences at work? With the *Neturei Karta* and the *Eidah Hacharedi* it is a long established pattern to foment 'causes celebre' in the long hot summers to serve as propaganda vehicles for the raising of money in the *Haredi* communities in New York and elsewhere during the High Holidays season."

In other words, the grievances aren't real, only pretext for fund-raising for the needs of the 100-plus

families of the *Neturei Karta* ... and that's why leading rabbinical figures such as Rabbi Elazar Shach, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, and Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashuv שיח condemned the posters on the shelters!

Such nonsense, and yet the press sells it and much of the public seems to buy it. ... And this is not the worst that is being foisted on a reading public that has no personal contact with religious Jews ... that has no way of realizing that they are being served up with distortions and caricatures.

THE STATE:
NOT BASED ON RELIGION...
BASED ON LAW?

As mentioned at the outset, the recent tensions that peaked have been present for years, even generations. They grow from conflicting visions of what the Jewish people are, how they should live, and the ideal nature of Israeli society. These tensions were anticipated before the founding of the State, when David Ben Gurion met with representatives of Agudath Israel in 1947. All concerned recognized the necessity of making it possible for *frum* Jews to live a fully religious life in *Eretz Yisroel*, and of making the Jewish religion an identifying feature of the emerging nation. The sentiments of the secular

majority were, of course, also taken into consideration, but some basics of the Jewish religion were incorporated into the law of the land. Thus did the famous "Status Quo" agreement come into existence. Among the points of this agreement were rabbinical control of matters of personal identity (relating to conversion, marriage, and divorce), and the acceptance of *Shabbos* as Israel's official day of rest, with cessation of public transportation and closing of businesses and places of entertainment.

As of late, two trends have been taking place. Not only have we been confronted by a number of crises not provided for by the agreement, but the Status Quo itself is being increasingly undermined because of the impatience of the secular majority, goaded on by the liberal, left-leaning media. *Shabbos* especially has been under siege in a number of towns and cities, notably Jerusalem and Petach Tikva, as was reported in the May issue of *The Jewish Observer* ("Shabbos: Uniter or Otherwise?"). Yet, whenever a public act of defiance of the Status Quo is greeted by an objection by the religious community, the secular press shouts "*kfiya datit!*—religious coercion!"

Some secularists have made a veritable slogan of "*Medinat chok v'lo medinat dat*—A state based on law, not religion." It is important to realize that religious and secular law-breakers are not treated equally by the so-called "*Medinat Chok*." In fact, the government has repeatedly closed its eyes to violation of such laws as those dealing with abortions, unauthorized autopsies, and pornography. In some of these areas, there simply have been no prosecutions whatsoever.

For example, the Petach Tikva movie theater, to which we referred, was actually breaking the law when it showed films on Friday night, yet the *Rav* on the town, Rabbi Baruch Shimon Salomon, was arrested for leading an "unauthorized demonstration" against what was a violation of "*Chok Hamedina*." (See photograph of police treatment of a religious demonstrator against Sabbath violation in Petach Tikva.)

The press sells its anti-religious nonsense to a non-suspecting public, which buys it all . . . with no indication that it is being fed distortions and caricatures.

• Other examples: When Teresa Angelevic, a Christian woman married to a Jew, was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Rishon Letziyon two years ago, the *Chevra Kadisha* (the Jewish Burial Society) objected. Not only was the burial a violation of the law, it was a breach of trust to those already interred there, who had expected to be laid to rest with members of the same religious faith. After protests continued to go unheeded, two members of the *Chevra* exhumed the body and reburied it elsewhere. The press focused its attention on the "Black Body Snatchers," and created a lynching fever; the *Chevra* members stood trial and were sentenced to several years in prison. They were upholding justice, but were accused of imposing religion on the living and the dead. By contrast, no charges were ever brought

against the family for the illegal burial in the first place.

Similar cases are occurring with striking frequency in Ashdod, Rishon Letziyon, and other communities where both the Jewish and non-Jewish members of elderly intermarried couples are registered as Jews, and then after death, both buried in Jewish cemeteries.

When, in response to these cases, *Chevra Kadisha* groups recently combined efforts to prepare confidential lists of non-Jewish partners of such marriages to avoid similar deceptions, Knesset members viciously attacked them—even though they are charged by law to control burials.

• While a number of *Haredim* were arrested on suspicion of having defaced bus shelters (only to be released after lengthy detentions), a

well-known anti-*dati* activist, who on a recent *Shabbos* drove his car up and down a closed street in Meah Shearim and took pot shots at people there, was released on his own cognizance upon pleading "self defense." . . . The Minister of Police is "looking into the case."

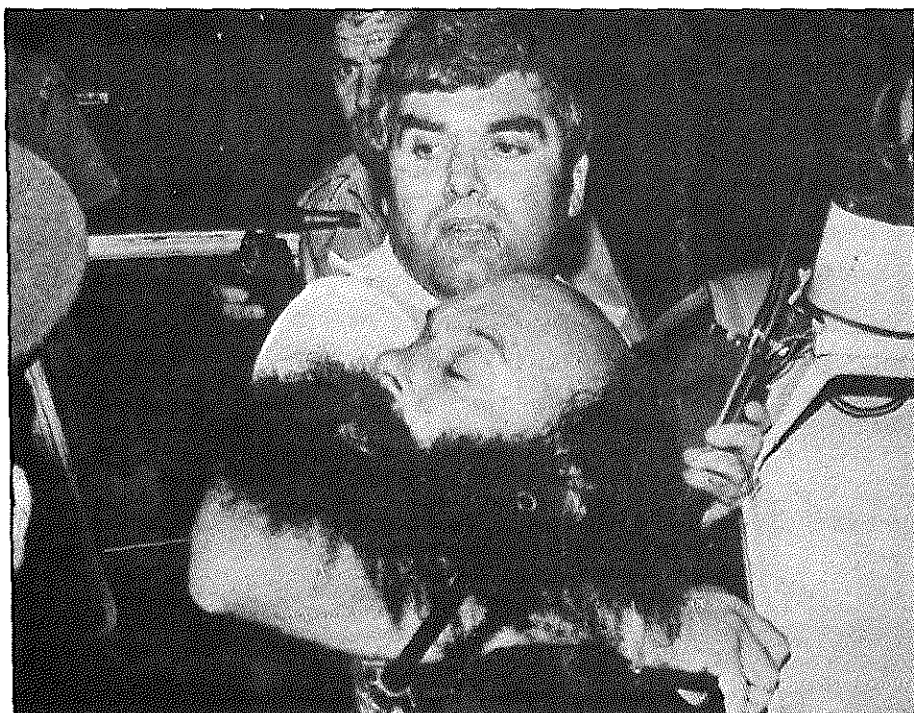
III. ALSO ON THE AGENDA

Once one has accepted that the bus-shelter incident is not simply a matter of an isolated dispute between freedom of expression in advertising versus traditional modesty, but a manifestation of a much deeper rift, one looks nervously for further expressions of conflict. And strangely enough—considering that tensions were on the verge of exploding into street violence—new confrontations are being forced on the religious populace of Israel.

• Without difficulty one can find with regularity a new pronouncement or executive fiat from the desk of Jerusalem's Mayor Teddy Kollek illustrating his vision of Jerusalem as a city for all peoples, as opposed to a stronghold of "Ultra-Orthodoxy." According to an interview in *Near East Review* (June 23, '86):

He believes that both Orthodox and secular Jews "have an exaggerated fear of the other." The secular Jews "have a psychosis that the religious are winning out and that in the short period this will be a city ruled by the ultra-Orthodox group."

Teddy emphatically rejects that fearful vision of the city's future. "We have made tremendous progress with regard to the general character of the city. We have theaters, music, an international arts festival, a cinemateque filled with a thousand people most evenings. We have a pedestrian mall where people sit out in cafes." . . .



A police officer subdues an ultra-Orthodox demonstrator during protest against Sabbath movies in Petah Tikva. (Photo—Jerusalem Post).

The Mayor sees Jerusalem's wealth of artistic and intellectual assets as a "counterweight" to the growing ultra-Orthodox segment of the population. These fears prevent the people from moving here. ... He does believe that the municipality must "satisfy the legitimate needs for schools and services" of the ultra-Orthodox sector.

Legitimacy has its own criteria in Kolleck's view. *Haredim* in Meah Shearim, Geula and Bayit Vegan are fine. But petition for a shul or a Chinnuch Atzmai school in Gilo, and the Mayor refuses. And when the yeshiva headed by Rabbi Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach and his son Reb Shmuel attempts to build a *bets medrash* or yeshiva dormitory in *Shaarei Chesed*, the Mayor says: "In Geula, not in Shaarei Chesed." A super stadium that will bring tens of thousands of *Shabbos*-desecrating autos into Jerusalem—yes! More accommodations for its burgeoning Orthodox population—no! The spread of Orthodoxy beyond its appointed enclaves threatens the cosmopolitan spirit of Kolleck's Jerusalem, and he will not tolerate it.

• The Jewish Agency, which is the conduit for channeling funds raised by the UJA to Israel, is responsible for assigning some of its subsidies to the yeshivos and Kollelim in Israel every year. This constitutes a relatively small proportion of its disbursements, but these funds are enormously important to the institutions affected. At the most recent Jewish Agency Assembly in Israel, during the first week of July, a resolution introduced by several American delegates was passed, stipulating that the Jewish Agency allocate

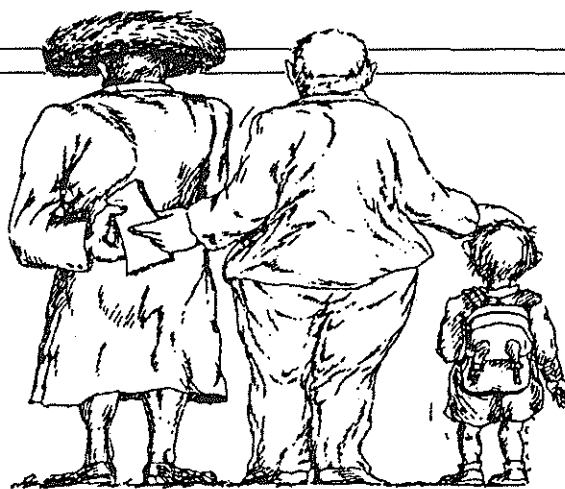
funds only to schools and institutions that recognize and support the State of Israel as the existing national homeland of the Jewish people, and which incorporate Zionist values in their curricula. The proposed criteria for judging whether an institution is "Zionist" include celebration of Israel's Independence Day, flying the Israeli flag and encouragement of service in Israel's armed forces or alternative national service. This would effectively cut off millions of dollars to institutions that until now have qualified for legitimate support from internationally raised funds.

Why was such precipitous action taken at this time? According to an interview with Miriam Gafni, a Philadelphia attorney who introduced the motion in the Youth Aliyah Committee of the Assembly: given the increasing polarity between the ultra-Orthodox and the non-Orthodox in Israel, the Assembly delegates felt "the time is now" to take some action (Philadelphia's *Jewish Ex-*

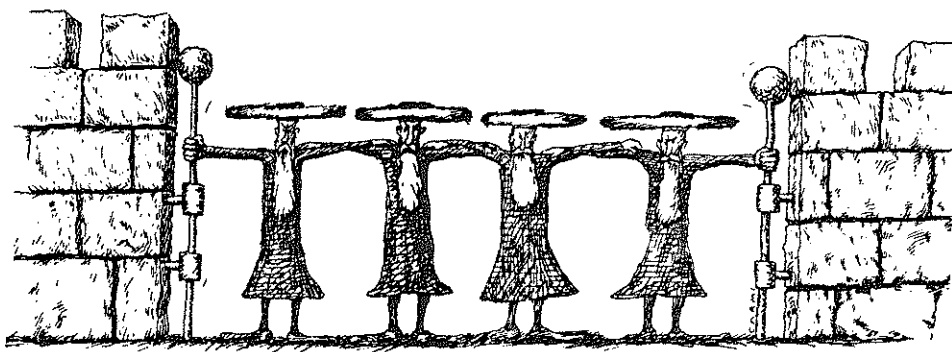
ponent, July 11, '86).

This unusual and highly damaging resolution was months in preparation. The groundwork began with a series of articles by Charles Hoffman in the *Jerusalem Post*, critical of Jewish Agency funding policies. Published in booklet form with "Sturmer" type cartoons, the Hoffman articles were distributed to the Assembly delegates. Somehow the booklet hit a responsive chord, especially among those Americans who yearn to "flex their muscles," and to tell the Israelis how to spend the monies they bring with them from the States. Seeing "an increasing polarity" amongst Jews, they are seizing the opportunity to enlarge the breach rather than heal the wound in the corpus of *Klal Yisrael*.

If the disbursement of the funds will follow the formula dictated by their narrow definition of support for the Land of Israel, it will not accomplish what it sets out to do. As of the past decade, the overwhelming majority of new *olim* are religious Jews. While there is scarcely a family in the Federation leaderships across America without intermarried memers, there is scarcely a family in the leadership and the rank and file of Orthodox Jews in America without a member studying or permanently settled in Israel. Whereas the families of the Zionist leadership in Israel are well represented in the academic and business circles of the Diaspora, Israel's *Haredi* families have a remarkably low ratio of *yor-*



Agency figure (center) passes money to Haredi on left while he pats "good little Israeli" on the head, on right.*



Caricature of Haredim excluding non-Orthodox movements from legitimacy in Israel.*

* Cartoons on this spread from a booklet distributed at the Jewish Agency Assembly.

Would Jewish Agency delegates countenance a "loyalty clause" for disbursement of funds to American schools of higher learning? Yet they demand it from "non-Zionist" yeshivos and Kollelim in Israel!

dim. We of the Torah community, naturally, have our own criteria for what is desirable about *Eretz Chemda* and why, but the Jewish Agency Assembly delegates should take note: loyalty to the Land based on transcendent principles of Torah and *mitzvos* is far more inspiring and possesses far greater staying power than a loyalty based on a narrow nationalism. If they want to promote a flourishing *Yishuv* in Israel that will withstand the pressures of economic slump and insecure borders, they are putting the Agency's money on the wrong horse.

Another point: Applying democratic principles inherent to their native America, would the Assembly delegates condemn the American Government for funding public schools and universities in the U.S. where students refuse to salute the flag? Can there be an ideological test to be passed with flying colors before a school can receive government funds? *Not* in the U.S.A. ... And in democratic Israel?

Unfortunately, this new policy can be chalked up as one more example of the power of the press being utilized to vilify the Torah Community, with the potential for serious harm to all concerned.

ARMY SERVICE

A other new area for conflict between the religious and secular camps in Israel is the challenge to the long-standing policy of exempting yeshiva students from army service. Now, virtually every country in the world, including the USSR, exempts divinity students from serving in the armed forces. Yet Knesset member Geula Cohen brought up a motion to end the army



deferment of students in non-Zionist yeshivos, whom Cohen had dubbed "enlistment refuseniks" (*Jerusalem Post*, July 18, '86). Defense Minister Yitzchak Rabin replied to Cohen that the deferment of yeshiva students goes back to the days of Ben-Gurion, since 1948, and nothing new had occurred to justify any change in policy. In fact, no Minister of Defense has ever recommended ending this deferment. Yet Rabin joined Cohen in voting that the motion go before the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Indications are that it will not be taken up for debate before November, and even then the Status Quo probably will be retained. Moreover, according to a report in *The Jerusalem Post*, Rabbi Avraham Shapira called it a "blood libel" to say that yeshiva students don't serve in the army. He surprised committee members by saying that he himself had done so. He said he could point to many ex-yeshiva students who had attained high rank in the army.

But this point is secondary to the incendiary atmosphere being fostered in the Knesset, where oppor-

tunities seem to be created to stir up hostility against the very *neshama* of our people—those who devote their lives to Torah study, and live by its precepts.

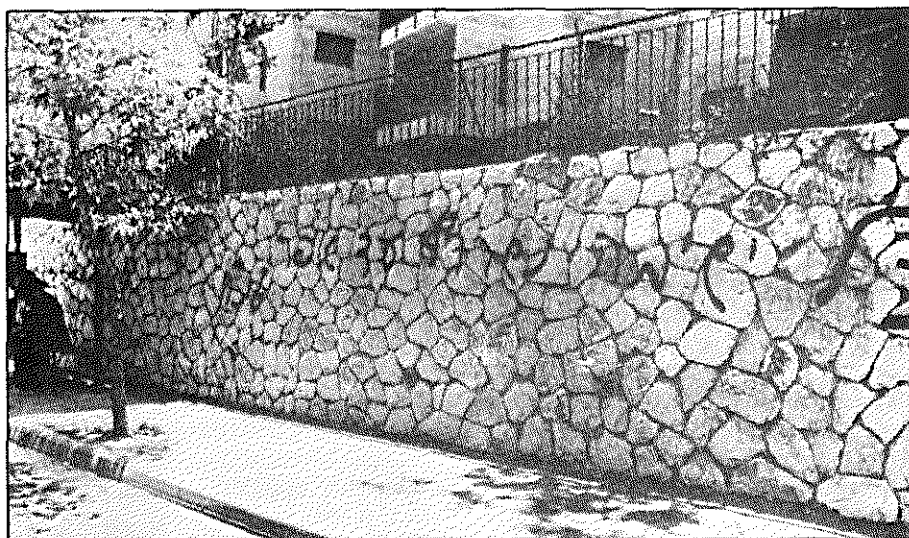
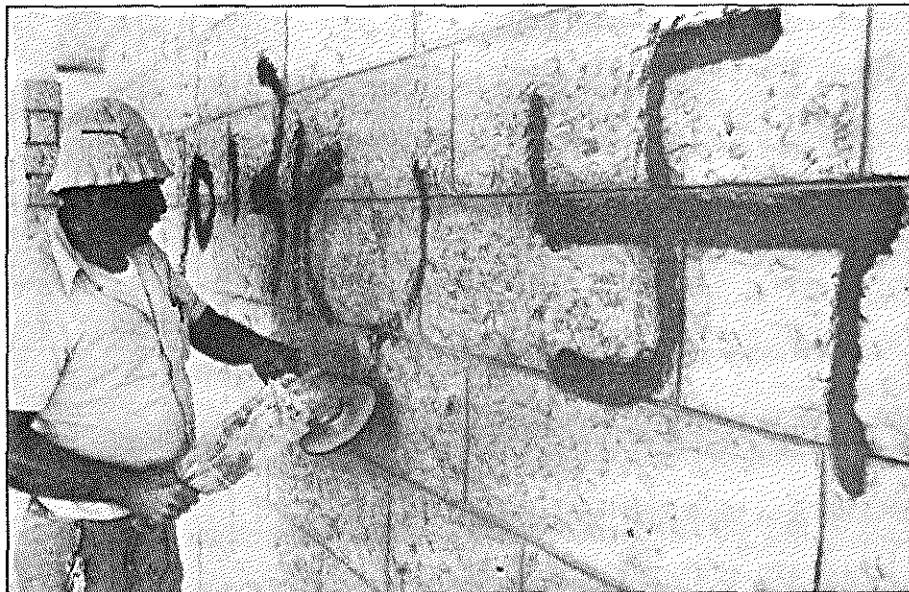
- The Knesset Armed Forces Committee has instructed the army to permit no more speakers for the *teshuva* movement to address troops, and to discontinue the policy of allowing officers to visit yeshivos that cater to *baalei teshuva*.

- A law against racism is being promoted in the Knesset that (at the time of this writing), by admission of its sponsors, will forbid the discouraging of intermarriage between Jews and Arabs. *Haredi* opposition to this bill is being characterized as closed-minded fanaticism.

IV. REACTION: AN UNWILLING OUTCRY ...

To be sure, our immediate reaction to the vandalizing of houses of prayer and sacred books and the general defamation of the Torah community is to express outrage and pain, even though this alone does not offer a solution to tensions. This was expressed by Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Telshe-Wickliffe, Ohio, in a special radio broadcast aired by Agudath Israel of America in major cities in America. The *Rosh Hayeshiva* referred to a Midrash that explains why Iyov (Job) suffered so terribly: Iyov was one of the three advisers Pharaoh consulted before persecuting the Hebrews. While Iyov opposed Pharaoh's plan, he did not voice his opinion because he saw that it would carry no weight in the decision.

The late Brisker Rav, Rabbi Yitz-



Newspaper photos show vandalism of property in religious neighborhoods.

chok Zev Soloveitchik זצ"ל, pointed out that Iyov's suffering may seem to be out of proportion when compared to his crime of silence. But he had reasoned: "Why holler when it will accomplish nothing?" Later, when he was afflicted with pain he did not hesitate to scream out. *Did it help? No, but when it hurts, one cries out ... demonstrating that had the proposal to oppress the Jews truly hurt him, he would have cried out then, as well.*

Said Rabbi Gifter, "When, in all of Jewish history, could we have thought that there would be hatred for the mode of living governed by Torah, expressed by our Jewish brothers in *Eretz Yisroel*? But it is taking place, and it hurts terribly. It cuts to the very heart of *Klal Yisroel*. And we cannot refrain from expressing that pain."

ORTHODOXY ON THE ALERT

Beyond outcry, however, we must make our weight felt. The media appear to have mounted a campaign to discredit Orthodoxy, whether out of anti-*dati* sentiment or old-fashioned sensationalism. This has spread to America where not only Jewish publications such as *Moment*,* *Present Tense*, and *Bnai Brith Monthly*** are running articles defamatory of "the *Haredi* population" of Israel, but even the general press is following the smear-the-Orthodox line. New York's *Newsday* recently ran a feature article about Orthodoxy in Israel entitled, "Fundamentalism on the March," with references to "Khroumenism," and descriptions of Meah Shearim as "the medieval, limestone-walled neighborhood with metal-barred windows," where visitors hesitate to enter and the deni-

**Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, by Lesley Hazleton. *Present Tense*, Spring 1986, pp. 10-19. "An ancient, fanatical Jerusalem seems to be reasserting itself. The city's entire past consists of the unholy alliance of religion and politics."

***Culture Clash in Jerusalem*, by Abe Rabinovich. *Jewish Monthly*, April 1986, pp. 12-14, 17, 27. A minority of religious zealots have been using violence against non-believers. As a result, the city is experiencing a growing polarization between the ultra-Orthodox and the secular community.

Beyond outcry, we must make our weight felt. The Torah community cannot tolerate defamation and distortion.

zens avoid leaving—except to burn bus shelters—fearing contact with the outside world! Surprisingly, *Near East Report*, a weekly news bulletin published by AIPAC joined the smear campaign and described the bus shelter controversy as follows: "The latest attacks on Jerusalem's bus stops—because they display photographs of male and female models [no further details]—demonstrate just how far the fanaticism has gone. ... Israel's problem with religious fanaticism hardly makes it a unique case in the Middle East. It is small comfort that the black-garbed extremists of Jerusalem have their counterparts throughout the region—Saudi Arabia and Iran are both run by Moslem fundamentalists ... every other Moslem country is home to strong fundamentalist movements. ... But Israel shouldn't be compared to its neighbors." Such defamation from a defense organization is completely out of place!

There is no better way to fight disinformation than with the truth, and as a very minimal step, every Jew who sees such vilification in the media must take pen in hand—and telephone, too—to set the record straight, with letters to the editor, and calls to the responsible news desk. We constitute a large, articulate, informed body of readers and consumers. We must let them know that we are here, and what we think.

To be sure, correcting misinformation will not in itself turn the tide of antagonism that seems to be spreading. We must also make it known that we—the Torah community, both in *Eretz Yisroel* and the Diaspora—represent a force that the secular establishment must reckon with. We must make our presence felt, not only in the media, but in the headquarters of the national Jewish organizations. For example, when the Jewish Agency



Assembly passed its infamous anti-yeshiva resolution, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, President of Agudath Israeli of America, cabled Jewish Agency chairman Arye Dulzin warning him that a policy of exploiting charity funds to impose ideology was looked upon with gravity by the American community, which considers such an approach totally unacceptable. If the agency did not reverse itself on its matter, he added, then the Orthodox community throughout the world would be forced to take steps which certainly would not contribute to the easing of tensions which both sides in the religious-secular confrontation are striving to achieve.

(The cable did not have to spell out any further warnings. It is understood that the Jewish Agency would not welcome an initiative by the worldwide Orthodox communities to create a fund-raising apparatus for Israel of its own.)

It is reasonable to assume that the Jewish establishment in America and elsewhere will respond with responsibility and justice once it is fully aware of the unfairness with which Orthodoxy has been treated, and that we will not take such treatment lying down.

THE ULTIMATE WEAPONS

In the long-run, information and warnings will help make a point, but they are not the ultimate weapons in a battle for Israel's soul.

Rabbi Avrohom Pam (*Rosh Hayeshiva* of Mesivta Torah Vodaath) addressed this very issue at a recent gathering for Chinuch Atzmai (we refer the reader to the next article, based on his remarks), at which he stressed that the only way that we can turn the tide in this battle is through education: Chinuch Atzmai and Beth Jacob schools for children, outreach efforts such as *Arachim* and *Moreshet Avot* for adults, schools and support groups for *baalei teshuva*.

It is a sad day, indeed, when Jews are not able to walk the streets of Jerusalem because their fellow Jews are so estranged from Judaism that they insist on exercising their rights to defile the vistas of the sacred city with obscene posters. Preventing this from occurring, however, is unto itself far from satisfactory. As Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, the Novominsker Rebbe, said in the radio program referred to above: "We call to all our brothers in the Land of Israel to put an end to the present ugly state of affairs; to seek ways and means to preserve the moral character of our nation and our land. That character, the ethos and spirit of the Jewish people, has been woven for us by the Torah and our history for more than 3,000 years. ... Let us all allow the Torah to teach us, to enrich our lives. Let us all together pursue the path of peace and sanctify the name of G-d in all aspects of human living."

Our feelings, our sensitivities, our commitment to Torah as a way of life, must be shared by our brothers. Until such time, we are a people divided, and as a result, a people under siege. ■

A Message to Our Readers:

My Dear Friend,

Would you consider joining us in what we see as our urgent task: bringing news, analysis and opinion on Jewish issues to our reading public?

While we don't pretend to be the last word on whatever we discuss, we do endeavor to present our topics from a Torah perspective—often with the words of leading rabbis and yeshiva deans, writers and thinkers.

Our readers talk back to us, and most of their messages are positive: the Kollel-fellow in Johannesburg, S.A., who finds JO's articles "indispensable for my reach-out activities" ... the newly religious engineer in Santa Monica who "gains new insights and understandings in the richness of Judaism from every issue" ... the yeshiva high school teacher in Queens who "finds something of value to share with my class month after month" ... a Rabbi in a suburban Ohio community, a Baltimore housewife. ...

We find the responses encouraging, but there is a negative side to the ledger: JO's financial status. The Jewish Observer was never expected to be a money-making journal—and it isn't. In fact, in recent months, production has been halted several times because of financial difficulties, to the point of threatening further publication of the magazine.

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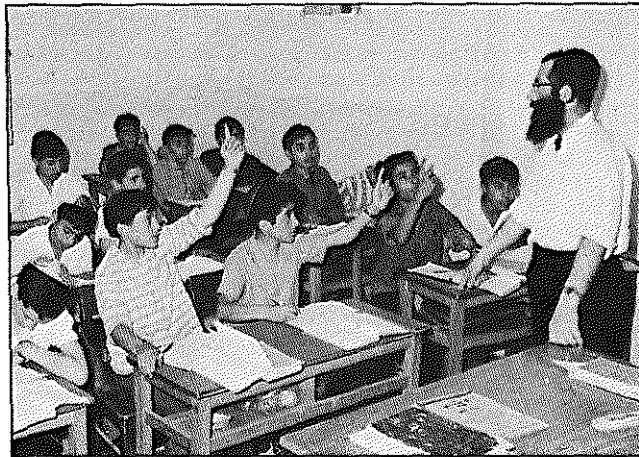
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Meaningful Protest

from an address by Rabbi Avrohom Pam שליט"א

The only way we can affect a change in the Holy Land is by educating a new generation with Torah. Only then will we do away with anguish.

BROTHERS IN CONFLICT

So many activities in Israel today cause us anguish—every day a new incident occurs, provoking our outcry, triggering our demonstrations of protest. We surely yearn to see an end to confrontations between the religious and irreligious populace, an end to these painful demonstrations! After all, with whom are we fighting? With our own dear brothers, who unfortunately did not receive a proper *chinuch*. They were educated in *mamlachti* (public) schools and lack an appreciation of our values. In their perception of things, we are intent on imposing upon them a lifestyle that they neither appreciate nor desire. Embittered as they are against religious Jews, they are fighting us as one fights for his very life. They fight against Sabbath observance, because they do not understand *Shabbos*. Such was the education they received. They feel that they must have a stadium,

theaters and cinemas open on *Shabbos*, so they can enjoy the pleasures of life. This is how they were brought up. We are pained by the situation, and from heartache we shout and demonstrate. But is this the solution to the problems? Will our outcry bring us a religious Torah-imbued *Eretz Yisroel*?

PROTEST: ACCORDING TO THE PROPHET . . .

The Prophet (*Yechezkel*, Chapter 9) describes how G-d dispatches *malachei chavalah*—angels to destroy Jerusalem. He saw six men, each equipped with a weapon to destroy Jerusalem. Gavriel, dressed in linens, with an inkwell at his side, is addressed by the Almighty: "Go through the City of Jerusalem and mark the foreheads of the righteous people who are sighing, groaning and screaming, the righteous whose hearts are pained and screaming from anguish over all

the abomination, corruption and sacrilege taking place in Jerusalem. Mark these righteous people that they not be touched. Destroy Jerusalem mercilessly, but these righteous people, who sigh and groan, who bear this mark, should not be touched."

A few words later, it is written: "*Mi'mikdoshi*—from My sanctuary shall you begin." Says Rashi: "*Mim'kudoshai*—from My sanctified ones, from the holy ones, from the righteous ones, from those same people whom you were told to mark with a sign of life on their foreheads—from them should the destruction begin."

Why this change of plan? The *Gemora* explains in *Shabbos*: "When informed that the righteous were to be spared, the *Midas Hadin* (the Divine attribute of untempered justice) argued 'Why are these different from those? They did not protest, they did not try to prevent [the corruption].'"

This is puzzling. Why does Justice

say that they did not protest? They suffered, they were broken over the desecration of Jerusalem. They screamed with anguish. How could Justice claim that they were not bothered?

Yes, their sighs and groans were genuine expressions of grief, but apparently sighing and groaning and screaming do not constitute adequate protest. A protest against wrong is measured in concrete acts aimed at changing the situation, in the making of a revolution, if need be. Of course, when one is in pain, one shouts and calls attention to the situation simply to show that there is a force of Jews who bleed over their plight, who want to see a holy *Eretz Yisroel*, with holy children, *zera beyrach Hashem*.

... AND TODAY

There are one million Jewish children in Israel, growing up, studying in schools without Torah! What a frightening thought!

1,000,000 Jewish children, children of Avrohom, Yitzchak, and Yaakov—picture their grandfathers and great-grandfathers ... G-d fearing Jews—and these children are being taught the very antithesis of fear of G-d by teachers who are avowed enemies of religion. It pains us, and we must demonstrate that there are those who cannot bear the pain. But will outcry alone effect changes, will it turn back society from its deterioration and move it onto a Torah way, so that all Jewish children, without any exception, "are ... all Your children, students of Hashem"? While we take pride in the 40,000 children who study in the Chinuch Atzmai schools, this is a trifle, far from enough, when we take into account all the others! Every Jewish child is a holy child, a limb of our body, a limb of *Klal Yisroel*. So we cry from pain. But will the crying alone reach the rest of the million children?

We can effect a change in the Land, make it a Torah-imbued *Eretz Yisroel* through *chinuch*, educating the new generation with Torah. In that

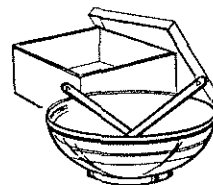
way we will do away with all the anguish, and we will eliminate the need to demonstrate. We will be through with confrontations, with hatred of religion, which grows from day to day. The secular elements are in control of the press, radio and television, and they do not begin to understand our way of thinking, because we did not teach them. They did not have the benefit of a Chinuch Atzmai education, in their childhood, nor of our yeshivos and seminaries as young adults. They attended public schools, and they do not understand otherwise.

If we establish a generation of religious Jews in *Eretz Yisroel*, then we will change over the Land, and with time, the entire shape of *Klal Yisroel* will change. We will do away with fighting one against the other, and all Jews will live together in love and brotherhood. The Almighty is the Father to us all and, thus, we are all brothers. We can achieve this sense of brotherhood through a Torah *chinuch*, raising a generation of Jews as they were meant to be. ■



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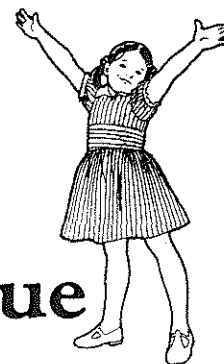
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The very factions that plead for peace and compromise with the Arabs—no matter what the price—are ready to fight to the end against the “religious tyranny” of the “Ultra-Orthodox”.

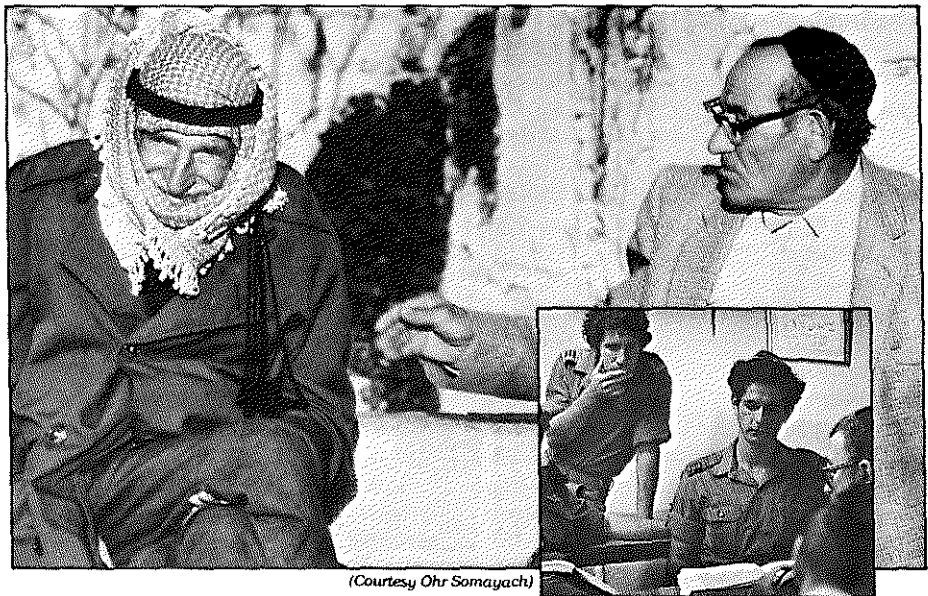
Peace Begins at Home

Translated from Ma'ariv, June 20, 1986

One of the great paradoxes of political life in Israel is the way that precisely those who seek peace with the Arabs will fight to the end against religious Jews, against “religious coercion,” against *Haredi* civil disobedience and terror that have increased in recent months. In regard to the Arabs, the rule of thumb is the pressing need to open negotiations with them at all costs—even with the P.L.O., whose avowed intentions towards the Jews are far from peaceful. As for the religious Jews, there is no room for negotiations or talk and certainly not for compromises (such as would be inevitable should we entertain serious negotiations with the Jordanians and Palestinians).

We have a long and bloody account with the Arabs and some 15,000 graves remind us of the skirmishes, wars and acts of terror they are responsible for. These should not, however, deter us from dealing directly with them and even compromising. Precisely because of the losses and heavy sacrifices suffered for the Land it is imperative that we do all in our power for the sake of peace. The Palestinian Covenant containing the intention to annihilate the State of Israel, the P.L.O. leadership's stubborn refusal to re-

Shmuel Schnitzer is former Editor of *Ma'ariv*, a popular daily in Israel.



(Courtesy Ohr Somayach)

PROMOTED: fraternization between Arabs and Jews. **BANNED:** Rabbis addressing army officers.

nounce terrorism and to seek peaceful solutions—these should not pose any obstacle whatsoever. First, we must create favorable conditions for the opening up of negotiations, with no preconditions. There should be no fear of concessions, however painful, so as to achieve peace—this is the line regarding the Arabs.

With respect to religious Jews, the approach is different. First of all, we must exact punishment to the full extent of the law for all past injuries, for damage to property and the physical assaults upon secularists reported by the press, for the hostile

pronouncements appearing in their newspapers, for their refusal to recognize the State and its institutions, for their evading service in the army, for the public funds “extorted” for the maintenance of their educational system. If there does exist an old arrangement called “status quo,” it should be ripped into shreds, for it violates individual freedom and the secular way of life. But most basic of all: any dialogue with them carries with it no small risk, because they will, for certain, exploit every such encounter to gain souls for their way of thinking. They are, as is well

known, missionaries who have many insidious means of influencing innocent youth and winning over their minds and hearts.

Furthermore, they are anti-Zionists and do not serve in the armed forces. To talk peace is possible only with Zionists and people who serve in the army (like the Arabs?).

* * *

I may seem to be speaking about one segment of our political field: the left-wing Zionists—Mapam, Citizens Rights, and Shinui—who champion both the cause of peace with the Arabs and a *Kulturkampf* with the religious camp. In actuality, I am talking about a broader cross-section, encompassing a significant segment of the political center.

Encounters between Jewish and Arab students are being promoted as education for democracy. Encounters between secular and religious students, however, are unacceptable, and would they take place, we could assume that they would be condemned by wide circles as dangerous.

The I.D.F. is without political allegiance, not to the right nor the left. Yet it limits appearances of religious lecturers at Army bases. Every report of soldiers exposed to the religious world-view earns outraged headlines in the news media. Returning to Jewish practices and belief is not a natural phenomenon, like *leaving* religion for secular culture; it is a scandal.

Anyone writing in the newspaper or hinting that all the Arabs are hostile and supportive of the P.L.O. would be denounced as a racist. When the Knesset finally passes the law against racial incitement, he will be liable for punishment. If someone writes, or implies, that all religious Jews are draft-dodgers, that they all extort public money for yeshivot, that they all burn bus stations and stone automobiles, they all consider Israeli Independence Day a holiday in which they have no part, that they all are attempting to convert the State into a vehicle for religious coercion—anyone making such claims would not be in an excep-

tional position and certainly would not face any punishment. He would find himself in good, progressive and enlightened company.

* * *

Whoever wants to understand the motives of those who set fire to a synagogue or destroyed holy books and objects in the yeshiva in Ramat Hachayal, their total insensitivity to Jewishness, their readiness to join (in action, if not in intention) the legion of antisemitic vandals in all the generations of exile, must pay close attention to the very long series of defamatory expressions and biased reports appearing in all the media throughout the years, and to the special lexicon employed in the newspapers when discussing religion or religious people.

Whatever the Knesset ratifies as law by majority vote is deemed law to be respected by all, but in the area of religion, a law enacted by majority vote is considered the product of coercion. Financial grants to the universities are considered a public investment in the future of the nation, upgrading its scientific and technological status; whereas government grants to yeshivot is considered money extorted by the religious parties.

When a small political party presents a demand to the government as a condition for joining the coalition, it is part of the normal parliamentary game of political give and take, but a religious party's demand is improper and to be condemned.

The unrestrained conduct of striking workers is legal and understood. Even the police know this. Such conduct on the part of the *Haredim* is always labeled "hooliganism," which should be punished to the limit of the law. The freedom to demonstrate is an inalienable right within the democratic society, but not a demonstration against showing films on *Shabbos* eve. An agreement with the religious faction is "surrender" and justifies finding any loophole to nullify it.

To grant a furlough to an imprisoned criminal is a humanitarian

act and part of standard procedure in an enlightened society; to free religious detainees before a holiday, however, is classified as a "political deal." Khomeinism is no longer related only to the fanatical and cruel Shiite regime of Iran, but is an acceptable term to describe *Haredi* Jews and their world-view. Racism is not a matter of Nazism in Germany but also one of the frequent definitions of Jewish *halacha*. Black refers not only to someone of African origin, but also to *Haredi* Jew from Meah Shearim or Bnei Brak.

When a secular person makes a provocative statement, he is only expressing his personal opinion. But when a religious man of public affairs says something not too bright or well-founded, he is not speaking for himself, but is the authoritative spokesman of the entire observant community, and what he says represents the Torah view—that is, the entire world of thought completely rejected by the secular man.

* * *

This list could be extended *ad infinitum*. It is possible to mention every single case in which the newspapers have had a heyday by blowing out of proportion the religious nature of a Rabbi or public figure suspected of criminal acts, as if this explained his actions. It is possible to sink into despair regarding the cumulative influence of all these public statements, which are countered—or rather, complemented—by an alienation stemming from a total ignorance of Judaism, its way of life and its fundamentals of faith. No wonder that anyone unfamiliar with religious people, except for what he reads in the newspaper or sees on the television screen, reaches the conclusion that he has nothing in common with people of such a strange and repelling image, who have such strange and repulsive mores, customs and values. The negative stereotype produced by the newspapers and television prepares the ground for hatred, and hatred creates a force of its own, no different from those that have propelled antisemitism throughout history.■



THE SHAR'ABIS OF JERUSALEM

Rabbi Mordekhai Shar'abi and his wife, Leah, were beloved *sadiqim* of Jerusalem. Instead of writing about the Rabbi's life only, I am writing about them together because I can't imagine one without the other; they are two parts of a whole. Their story is a special one for me, because I knew them personally.

JEWISH ORIGINS IN YEMEN

The Shar'abis came from Yemen. "Yemen" is a fairly recent name for the little strip of land across the bottom of Saudi Arabia. It has undergone several name changes since ancient times, "Sheba" being one of the oldest, it is said, with "Himyar" coming between the Second Temple and the Muslim conquest in 628.

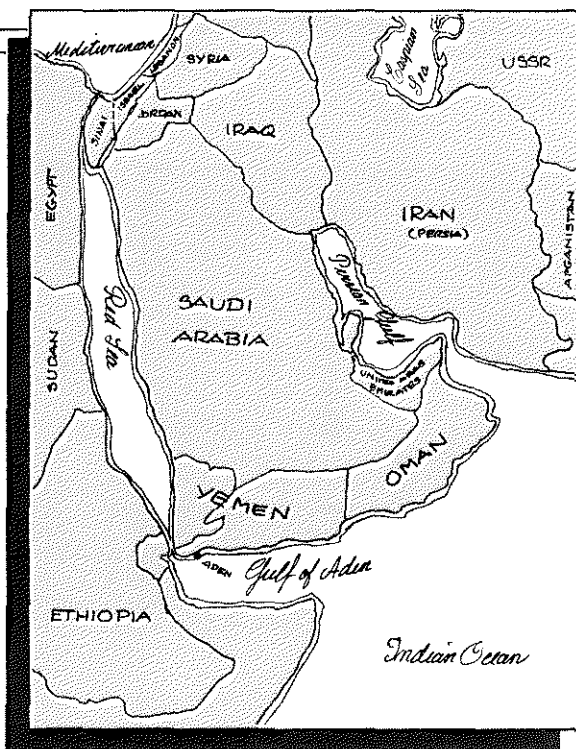
The richly interesting Jewish history of the country begins thousands of years ago. Tradition suggests that it

all started with the Queen of Sheba, who brought some Jews in her train when she returned from her visit to King Solomon.

King Solomon himself may have been responsible for another group of Jews who settled in Yemen. There are passages in *Tanakh* that speak of a trade treaty between King Solomon and Hiram of Tyre (Phoenecia, today's Lebanon). King Hiram sent Solomon "ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea, and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir." The land of Ophir is said to have been in Southern Arabia. And in I *Melachim* 10,15, we see that King Solomon "had gold from the merchantmen, the traffic of the spice merchants, and all the kings of Arabia."

Another wave of Jewish immigration to Yemen took place forty-two years before the destruction of the First Temple, the Yemenites believe. They say that when Jeremiah foretold the fall of Jerusalem, 75,000 Jews crossed the Jordan River. Following the path of Moshe Rabbeinu, they went into the desert and, when they reached Edom

Mrs. Nahmoud, a frequent contributor to these pages, resides in Jerusalem. In deference to the subject matter of this article, Hebrew words are transliterated in accordance with Sephardi pronunciation.



(roughly today's Kingdom of Jordan), they turned south and continued until they came to Yemen.

These Jews represented all walks of life: *Kohanim*, *Leviim*, army officers, slaves and aristocrats, including twenty-five of the noblest families in Jerusalem whose names are still remembered. Until recently two families still claimed they knew even from which of the twenty-four Temple watches they were descended.

The Yemenite Jews' moment of glory came in the Third Century CE, during the reigns of Jewish kings of *Himyar*. Records of their activities and adventures have been found engraved on stone in the area, as well as written in letters to a rabbi in Tiberias.

But fortunes changed abruptly in 628, when Muhammad's son-in-law took the country and the Jews were relegated to second-class citizenship. Helpless victims of the fanatical Shi'ite *imams**, their survival was a miracle. Yet not only did they survive for 1,300 more years, they

*approximately equivalent to an archbishop

managed to preserve their Judaism intact as well as the memories of their historic past. The Yemenite Jews were always in touch with Jewish centers of learning such as Bavel and Egypt. Every caravan carried precious letters and even books, which were immediately copied and re-copied and passed around the country. Sa'adia Gaon and the Rambam were among the notable correspondents.

The Arabs held all manual work in contempt, even the arts and crafts we now view as creative. As a result, the Jewish serfs became the basketmakers, potters, saddlemakers, weavers, goldsmiths, painters and blacksmiths of the nation. These weavers and goldsmiths, however, were also the spiritual backbone of the Jewish community, who kept the light of Torah burning brightly in this little-known backwater.

There were many *yeshivot* in Yemen, but they might be thought of as rather unusual when viewed from Boro Park or Bnei Brak in 1986. Craftsmen's studios and workshops were actually *yeshivot* in disguise. The repetitive motions of weaving, for example, requiring little concentration of an expert, left the mind free for other things, and Yemenite craftsmen studied the *Gemora* and the *Zohar* while they worked. One blacksmith's shop, mentioned in Sapir's travelogue, was a *beit-din* where three *dayanim* worked while they studied and heard cases.

SHAR'ABIS—WEAVERS OF TORAH LAW

The name *Shar'abi* means simply 'resident of Shar'ab,' a town where most of the Jews were weavers, but their workshop-*yeshivot* turned out eminent Kabbalists as well as carpets. The greatest name to emerge from Shar'ab was Sar-Shalom Shar'abi, the *Rashash*, who immigrated to Jerusalem and wrote a *siddur* with *kavanot* that is still used by kabbalists today.

Rabbi Mordekhai Shar'abi was also one of the outstanding products of this environment. Born in 5672 (1912), he was orphaned two years later and was taken in by his grandfather.

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Although Rabbi Shar'abi's natural modesty only permitted him the lowest of profiles, Dr. Wallach's keen eye for spiritual greatness picked out the Sephardi Chacham for special attention.

ties are obvious at an early age. Perhaps one could also speak of spiritual prodigies, those rare individuals whose greatness of soul can be seen shining through the mind and body of a child.

Mordekhai Yefet Shar'abi was certainly in this category, as his teachers in Shar'ab's *kutab* (heder) soon discovered. His grandfather supplemented the boy's studies at home, and in time Mordekhai was sitting in a class of much older boys, where he earned their respect by explaining passages from the *Gemora* that had stumped them.

The child's natural gift for teaching surfaced as he grew older. He gave lessons at the *kutab* for younger boys from time to time; one of these lessons is still remembered for its originality. The subject was weaving, from tractate *Shabbat*. Young Mordekhai set up a loom in front of the class and proceeded to explain the *Av Melakha* and its derivatives, demonstrating as he went along.

Mordekhai did not have a peaceful childhood; his stay with his grandfather was only temporary. He went through a series of residence changes, staying first with one scholar and then another, all the time learning and teaching, adding to his experience. The last stop before marriage and emigration was Aden, where he was welcomed into its *yeshiva*. There Mordekhai started his study of the Kabbalah with the *yeshiva*'s dean and some of the older men. The Kabbalists were amazed at the young man's questions and his grasp of the esoteric material.

Then, once more the future *sadiq*, now in his late teens, packed his things, and left the *yeshiva* to seek a wife and make a home. On his journey back to Shar'ab he stopped in the village of Achwiha, where he was introduced to a girl named Leah, an orphan like himself and known for her practice of the *misvot* of *hesed*. They celebrated their wedding shortly afterward.

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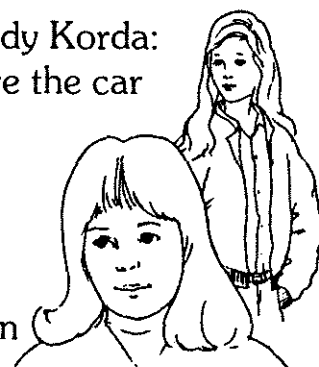


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GETTING SETTLED IN JERUSALEM

"If the Lord bring me to Eretz Israel, and I die on the morrow of my coming, that is all I would wish," said one Yemenite immigrant to Israel. To the Yemenite Jews (and for many other Oriental communities as well) yearning for the land of Israel was more than theoretical; *bone Yerushalayim* were words that brought tears to their eyes. Since the Yemenites had no access to newspapers or any other form of communication, save for a very occasional visitor, their concept of the Holy Land—their land—was more on the order of *Yerushalayim shel ma'alah*, the Heavenly City.

Like all the Yemenite Jews, Mordechai Shara'abi and his bride longed to make "next year in Jerusalem" a reality, *now*, and in 5691 (1931) they set sail in a dilapidated boat. When they landed at Yaffo, they found a caravan leaving for Rehovot where, they were told, there was work.

There was, indeed. The incoming work group's first assignment was to dig irrigation basins in an orchard. After producing only three basins in one day, a far cry from the output of the other beginners, the young rabbi was convinced that agriculture was not his thing, and the next day saw the Shar'abis on the train, bound for Jerusalem.

They found an apartment near the Sha'are Sedeq hospital, the bailiwick of its Chief Surgeon, Dr. Wallach, a *sadiq* from another side of the world. Although Rabbi Shar'abi's natural modesty never permitted more than the lowest of profiles, Dr. Wallach had a keen eye for spiritual greatness, due partly to his own and partly to the company he had kept—Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin of Brisk and Rabbi Shumel Salant, *inter alios*. Dr. Wallach found out about the living conditions of the new family and immediately offered to help them get on their feet with a monthly stipend of one *lira*, a goodly sum in those days.

"Beloved are the sufferings we bear for the sake of Torah, Aretz Israel and the Next World," Rabbait Leah used to say. Actually, the Shar'abi's conditions were on par with many Jerusalemites of the period. The couple moved into their permanent home at 8 Rehov Shilo, an alleyway behind the Mahane Yehuda bazaar. The apartment consisted of two small rooms and a tiny kitchen; the bathroom, which was outside, served several families.

SCHEDULED FOR GREATNESS

Rabbi Shar'abi quickly organized a daily schedule for himself that was to change little during his lifetime. It was a prototype Kabbalist's regimen, beginning at midnight with *Tiqun Hasot*, the lament for the destruction of the Temple. Study of *Es'Haim* came next, followed by prayer at sunrise according to the *sid-dur* of the *Rashash*.

Nothing, but nothing, stopped the Rabbi from his morning *minyan*. During the shelling of the 1948 war, the diminutive, *jalabiyya**-clad figure could be seen

*ankle-length robe worn by men in the Middle East

Oriental Jews seem to have never lost the virtue of chesed that we all are endowed with from Avraham Avinu.

every morning threading its way through the alleys of the Mahne Yehuda neighborhood. One day a Jordanian howitzer shell landed directly behind the Rabbi, on a spot his feet had touched only seconds before. He continued his walk unfazed—but not so the Rabbanit, who had seen the shell land.

There are many misconceptions concerning the life-style of a Kabbalist. The usual image is that of a man alone in his figurative tower, communing with the Almighty twenty hours a day. The only grain of truth in this picture is that the *mequbal* does have periods when he needs to be alone to meditate and pray. But if his tower is higher than that of others, it is also constructed on the solidest of foundations. Kabbalists do not cut themselves off from the rest of humanity. Quite the contrary: they

may teach *Gemora* to working men and *Mishna* to children; they may give lectures to the people in their neighborhood and write books on ethics. In addition, Kabbalists devote long hours every day to receiving visitors who come for blessings, comfort and counsel. Great Kabbalists are, of course, humble and may live very close to the people, which is why they are so loved, and surely one of the reasons why they are able to exert an influence wherever they are.

THE YESHIVA

Rabbi Mordekhai started a small yeshiva, *Nahar Shalom*, in the two-story building across the courtyard from his apartment. It opened at midnight. Students were given a well balanced curriculum



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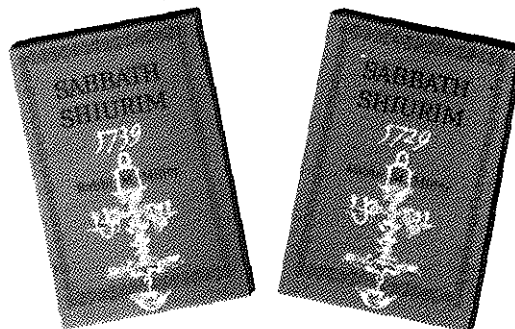
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which included *Gemora*, *Halakha* and *Mishna* as well as *Kabbalah*, but prayers were long because of the *kavanot*; for example, two hours was the norm for the morning prayers. After evening prayers, Rabbi Shar'abi gave a daily lesson for working men on *halakha* according to the Ben Ish Hai, the great Iraqi *poseq* and Kabbalist, followed by ethics from *Menorat Hame'or*. The *yeshiva* was always packed for these lectures.

The Shar'abis never had children of their own, but there was never a lack of children in their lives. The poor neighborhood where they lived was full of children of all ages, mostly on the streets, most not religious. Some of the children and youths always came to the Rabbi's evening lesson, however, and the Rabbi encouraged them by giving a small sum of money to each one who showed up regularly for *Minha* and *Arvit*—and any child who learned an entire Mishnaic tractate received 100 *liras*. The Rabbi always listened to each child say his *Mishnaiot*, correcting here and encouraging there; he hugged each boy as he gave out the prizes. *Lo lishma* turned into *lishma*, just as he had predicted, when many of these boys later entered *yeshivot*. Then a pair of seventeen-year-old Nahar Shalom students decided to start a *Tehillim* group on *Shabbat*, and the lives of more urchins from the alleys below took a different turn. The original group branched out to other, similar neighborhoods.

It did not take long for Rabbi Shar'abi's reputation to spread throughout Jerusalem, and soon he was spending several hours every morning receiving visitors. The courtyard was often crowded with people awaiting their turns, while the rabbi sat at the dining table in the book-lined front room and spoke to each person alone.

OPEN HOUSE

People came day and night. Of course the *Rabbanit* usually kept visiting hours limited to the official morning period, but there were cases, particularly health crises, for which the Rabbi left his bed or his nighttime studies to comfort a distraught person with sympathy, gentleness, and a blessing.

Rabbi Shar'abi did not resort to amulets and *segulot*—prayer was his only way. People left their names, and the Rabbi prayed for them at night; and during these hours no one, not even the *Rabbanit*, was allowed into the room. Especially difficult cases called for a *tiquin*. The Rabbi's *tiquinim* generally consisted of certain chapters of *Tehillim* and passages from the *Zohar*, learned with some of the men close to him in the *yeshiva*. After the learning, the Rabbi would take *pidton* money in one hand and the book *Ben Yahuyad'a* in the other and say the sixteen *tiquinim* written therein.

Rabbi Shar'abi was of one mind with his wife when it came to *hesed* of the most active kind—and there were plenty of opportunities for it in the neighborhood. A story is told about an elderly couple who, completely alone in the world, lived in misery. The old people lived on Rabbi Shar'abi's route to the synagogue in his pre-Rehov-Shilo days, and he would drop in to visit from time to time. One

rainy morning he opened the door and saw mice on the table. In spite of his natural squeamishness, Rabbi Shar'abi caught the mice with his hands and took them outside, saying, "They are not content to eat themselves, they invite all their friends to participate in the se'uda..."

In keeping with the *halakah* that a man should take part actively in welcoming the *Shabbat* by helping with its preparations, the Rabbi took it upon himself to go to the bazaar nearby and buy the supplies; and for Pesah, it was he who checked the food products, such as dates and rice.* (The latter must be checked three times.)

INDUCTION INTO THE RABBANIT'S ARMY

My involvement with the Shar'abis began in 5734 (1974). New to Israel and to religion, I came to the door one afternoon and introduced myself to the *Rabbanit*. I was invited to sit down for a cup of tea, and I told my story. From that day on I became a part of the scene at 8 Shilo.

Rabbanit Leah's "open house" hours were from 3:30 to 8 p.m., when the Rabbi was in the *yeshiva*. The neighborhood women came then to ask questions on simple household *halakha* and child psychology, or just to tell their troubles. *Rabbanit* Leah received her 'qahal' while peeling vegetables at the dining table. The visitors usually picked up one of the peelers (which I suspect were put there for that purpose; there is something calming about a neighborly potato-peeling session). *Rabbanit* Leah listened carefully to the questions and then launched into an impromptu lesson on some of the issues brought up. Not all of the women were religious, but *Rabbanit* Leah never seemed to notice slacks or uncovered heads.

Teenage girls abounded, quite a few of whom studied at religious seminaries. Some were *ba'alot teshuva*. These girls considered it an honor to do household chores for the *Rabbanit*, from floor scrubbing to serving tea to the women at the table in the front room. The girls were part of *Rabbanit* Leah's "hesed army," a one-woman enterprise which took care of the whole large neighborhood. I volunteered for this army most enthusiastically, because it was the *hesed* aspect which had attracted me to Judaism in the first place.

Each volunteer was assigned to a poor family, a bed-ridden sick person, or one of the many elderly who had no one else to care for them. I was given an elderly couple from Kurdistan; the man was 82 and in very poor health.

"Now, come back and tell me how they are and what they need; do they have enough blankets; enough kerosene for their heater? How is their food situation? Is the visiting nurse coming regularly? And here, take these sweaters—I saved these especially for them," said the *Rabbanit* as I went out the door. Every day after work I went to the old people, bearing a kind word from the *Rabbanit* and, from time to time, an article of clothing or a welcome package of something useful.

*The ban on rice and beans for Pesah does not apply to the Oriental communities.

ABRAHAM'S TENT ON REHOV SHILO

Pesah was the busiest season, of course, when 8 Shilo was the distribution center for matzot, wine, rice, sugar and tea. Many children came for new shoes and clothes then, too.

The old suitcase on the rickety table outside the door seems to me to be *Rabbanit* Leah's symbol or trademark. This suitcase was where people put contributions of used clothing when the *Rabbanit* was not at home; if she was at home, however, the contributor was invited in for tea.

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This kind of hospitality is endemic to the Middle East, a tradition which dates back to Avraham Avinu and which the Oriental Jews never lost through non-Jewish influence, since even the Arabs take great care in the practice of this virtue. But at the Shar'abis it was something special, the likes of which I had never encountered before. Eight Shilo seemed very close indeed to Avraham's tent.

One afternoon I came at 3 p.m., earlier than usual, when the Rav was just finishing his lunch. Sitting at the table with the Shar'abis were two young men, *kippa*-less and dressed in work clothes, finishing large plates of Yemenite home cooking. Listening to the Shar'abis conversing with them in Arabic (which is as much a *lingua franca* in some parts of Jerusalem as Ladino or Yiddish in others), I thought that they were probably local boys who were thinking of becoming religious. Then they put their napkins down and got up and started working on the telephone, and it suddenly struck me that they were Arab workers from the telephone company who had arrived during lunchtime and who had been invited to enjoy some real Middle Eastern hospitality, Shar'abi style. A discreet question confirmed my conclusion.

STAR BILLING

Torah lectures are very popular in Sephardi neighborhoods. Posters are pasted up all over these little quarters advertising the speakers and their subjects, and they are as well attended and discussed as movies (*lehavdil*) in other parts of the world. And, just as with movies, there are stars who draw SRO crowds. *Rabbanit* Leah was one of these, the only woman to ever receive top billing on a lecture program with such famous names as Rabbi Elbaz and Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

She told it like it was, in the language of the people. One usually describes Torah lectures as edifying, interesting and inspiring, never *exciting*; but Leah Shar'abi's were just that. She gave several lectures a week, one in her home and others as far afield as Bnei Brak, Kfar Saba and Kiryat Gat. *Rabbanit* Leah, like most Yemenite women, could not read and write when she arrived in Israel. Self taught, she prepared her lectures from sources such as the Ben Ish Hai and the Maguid of Mezeritch, illustrating them with Oriental *mussar* tales and some of her own personal experiences which, to me, were fascinating.

I did not realize what was happening when I saw *Rabbanit* Leah's face becoming increasingly drawn and lined. She smiled less and frequently reached for the bottles of medicine that stood on top of the refrigerator. But when I saw business as usual, meaning the lecture schedule and the *hesed* activities, I suspected nothing more serious than an ulcer. When I asked, I was told "not exactly" in a voice that brooked no further questions. Gradually the *Rabbanit* cut down on some of the activities, and when I saw her for the last time she was counseling women from her bed. Cancer claimed a holy and courageous victim in Adar of 5738 (1978).

THE RABBI'S INFLUENCE

Her husband went to the Yeshiva-on-High on 20 Marheshvan, 5744 (1983), but his deeds live on. Many are the stories about the effect of the Rabbi's prayers. These happenings are so numerous that to recount them would take many more pages than I am allowed. But here are two which left the deepest impression on me.

Romema, built in the late Fifties or early Sixties, is one of the neighborhoods presently euphemized as "underprivileged." It houses part of the massive wave of Oriental Jewish immigrants who arrived in the early Fifties. Some of its population is religious, some not. All such quarters have a neighborhood center, and Romema's is run by an irreligious staff. Activities include sports, various kinds of classes, and mixed dancing.

In 1978 the center's little newsletter joyfully announced that someone had donated an enormous sum for the purpose of building a swimming pool. The religious residents of the area set up a hue-and-cry, which was politely ignored by the pro-pool faction. The work proceeded. As the structure grew, so did the opposition. Finally the pool's proponents explained that the pool would be covered and that there would be days of separate bathing as well as days of mixed bathing. The religious side was not appeased, however, and in desperation one student of the great Sephardi *yeshiva*, Porat Yosef, went to Rabbi Shar'abi. "The pool will not be built," said the Rabbi simply.

Suddenly the city put a stop to the work on the project, and the anti-pool element breathed a sigh of relief. Then, just as abruptly, the workers were back pouring cement. Another delegation went to the Rabbi, who calmly repeated what he had said the first time.

At last the pool itself was completed, and work started on the roof. And then, one bright sunny day, the whole structure collapsed. Word got around of Rabbi Shar'abi's comments, and so far no one has tried again.

Although I was fairly well grounded in the principles and practice of *halakha* by the time I met the Shar'abis, my understanding of the spiritual life was due to come later. I had always prided myself on my scientific thinking, one of the tenets of which was Let's See Some Solid Proof.

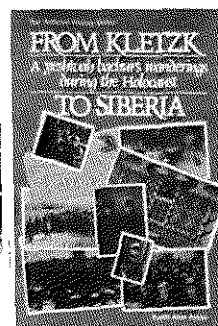
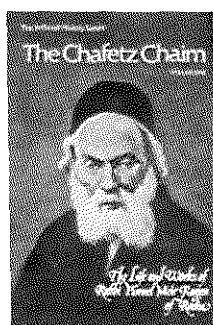
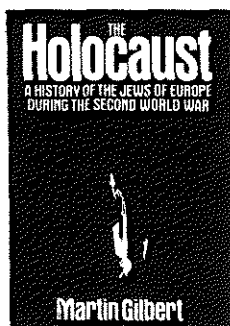
"Sure," I told myself, "so the swimming pool fell apart—who says the construction wasn't faulty, and that it wouldn't have disintegrated by itself?"

Around that time the *shidukh* thing appeared to be a dead end to me; I had met hundreds, it seemed, and not one was suitable.

"Why don't you go to the Rabbi and get a *tiquin*?" suggested a friend. I protested that I didn't really believe in that, but in the end I went. That morning the Rabbi gave me some comforting words and a blessing, and from there I went to visit a family I knew near Meah She'arim.

"Say, there is someone we'd like you to meet," began my friends. That evening I met my future husband.

Sure, it could have happened anyway. But still. . . ■



The Tragedy Of European Jewry

A Review Article

IN ADVANCE OF THE ONSLAUGHT

The Twentieth Century has been marked by the overwhelming tragedy of European Jewry. It has had many faces: the headlong rush to assimilation (most noticeable in Western Europe but having a profound impact in Eastern Europe too), the agony of Russian Jewry as it passed from Tzarist brutality into Communist oppression; and, beyond all else, the unspeakable suffering of the Nazi era. When we turn to books dealing with the crisis of European Jewry, the first to merit our attention is the two-volumes by **Rabbi Moses M. Yoshor, THE CHAFETZ CHAIM** (Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, 1984, 2 Volumes, \$29.95 hardcover, \$22.95 softcover), for the Chafetz Chaim's saintly figure stood like a guardian at the unfolding of this tragic period, warning, teaching, cajoling, trying to awaken his generation to the disasters that he saw coming. Rabbi Yoshor's book was originally published in Yiddish, many years ago, and underwent repeated revision at the hands of the

author before being presented to us in this English version. It paints a full picture of the Chafetz Chaim's personality and his crucial and multifaceted role in *Klal Yisroel*; and at the same time we encounter in its pages all the other great men of the time. Biography has its limitations; essentially, it means writing about a personality, rather than having the personality speaking to us himself, as his own writings do. Hence, there is an immediacy, a closeness, that one experiences in learning through the work of the Chafetz Chaim that no biography can rival. Yet it is important to know the life and work of *Gedolim*, and we must be most grateful for this comprehensive work—a truly remarkable ingathering of facts, stories, ideas and illustrations.

A NEW GENRE OF BOOKS

The Nazi Disaster, to whose impending coming the Chafetz Chaim so often alluded, is now more than a generation behind us. Yet the flood of books dealing with it has not subsided; if anything,

it has increased. While the earliest publications were largely concerned with describing the basic outlines of what happened; while, in due course, survivors put their torturing memories on paper; we now get more and more books dealing with specific facets of *Churban Europe*. That does not mean that the earlier genre of books can no longer be found; note, for instance **THE LAST OF THE NUMBERED**, by *Harry Rosmantier*, (Vantage Press, N.Y., 1984, \$12.95), a memoir by a man who survived twelve different camps in four and one-half years, doubly touching because it is unpretentious in presentation.

THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE by *Yisrael Gutman and Chaim Schatzker* (Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 1984) has been published as a textbook for the study of the *Shoa*: indeed a teacher's guide is available for it. From a pedagogical viewpoint this book has been most competently prepared. However, unfortunately, the usefulness of this book is vitiated by its strictly partisan Zionist approach—whether in the discussion of the youth organi-

zations and institutions active in the ghettos, the analysis of the rescue efforts made by the Jews in the free world, or the developments following the war (a sample quote from a report printed without comment: "With the exception of a small group of ultra-religious Jews from Hungary whose Rabbi was the Rabbi of Klausenburg, all the survivors [of the Holocaust] had become Zionists").

NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

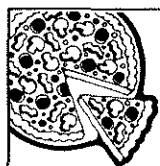
BEYOND BELIEF, by Deborah E. Lipstadt (Free Press, NY, 1986, \$19.95) is "a study of the American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945." The author set out to explore what was known about Nazi atrocities at the

time they happened and how much of it was told to the American public. Her conclusion: the facts were known from the beginning in large measure if not in full, but were played down as fairy tales, Jewish exaggerations, etc.—and were presented only in a very selective manner by the press, at a time when a correct presentation by the media could have had an enormous effect on American public opinion and saved many lives. Why the skeptical attitude of the press? The author offers various explanations: the desire to be "objective," a certain cynicism and incredulity about atrocity tales, a desire not to get too involved, a vested interest in participating in the Olympic Games in Berlin in spite of atrocities, and a desire to maintain restrictive immigration policies at any price. How-

ever, a careful reading of the material gathered by the author throws a sharper light than she herself does on the role of anti-semitism. This is particularly obvious in the incredible attitude of a good part of the Protestant press (notably the *Christian Century* and the *Christian Science Monitor*); but the feeling that it's only Jews who are involved and who really had it coming to them—and who wants them anyway—was remarkably widespread in one form or another.

FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

A remarkable volume is **HOLocaust**, by Martin Gilbert (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, N.Y., 1986, \$24.95). It is presented as "a history of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War"; but it really is less a historical account, analyzing and explaining what occurred, than a telling of what happened by means of a detailed, intricately woven tapestry of individual reports from survivors and extracts from diaries. The focus, as a result, is on the individual, the human angle, and it is difficult to read this volume without time and time again being shaken by the stories told; many of them are of the type that normally would never make the pages of a history book—but make the happenings of those years more real than volumes of statistics and analyses could.



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A book devoted to one particular tragic episode is **THE MURDERS AT BULLENHUSER DAMM**, by *Guenther Schwarberg*, translated by Irma Rosenfeld with Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984, \$17.50). It is the heart-rending story of twenty children from all over Europe between five and twelve years of age, who were "used" for medical experiments and were then murdered to remove all traces of the crime. Yet, however terrible the story itself, in some ways even more shocking is the picture that emerges of the unwillingness after the war of broad sections of German society, and notably governmental and judicial personalities, to face up honestly to their Nazi past. In a travesty of justice, typical of many war crimes proceedings, the S.S. officer responsible for the murders was not only freed but paid liberal compensation for the time he spent in jail. Perhaps we have been naive in being surprised by the Waldheim episode.

A similar message is conveyed by **THE "LAST" NAZI**, by Gerald Astor (Donald Fine, N.Y., 1985, \$18.95). This book, written after Mengele's death was established in Brazil, was based on thorough research and is devoted to "the life and times of Dr. Joseph Mengele." It is the author's contention that Mengele was not a psychopathic beast; he "is not a case-study in abnormal psychology

...to the contrary, he was part of the mainstream of his nation." It follows that his death certainly did not mark the passing of the last Nazi. "His life, his role in the Holocaust, and then as a man on the run" irresistibly point to the continuing reality of the movement he represented—the incarnation of evil, directed in particular against the Jew and all he stands for.

FATEFUL MONTHS, Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution, by *Christopher R. Browning* (Holmes and Meiter, N.Y., 1985). This volume focuses on the development of the

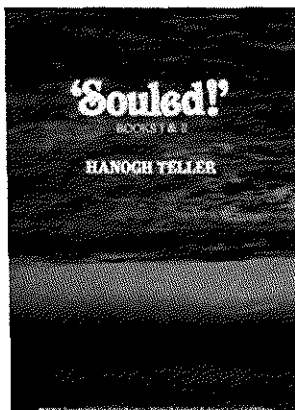
methods and machinery for the "final solution," and, above all, on the question of when it was decided upon. There have been those (notably Davidowicz) who hold that the total extermination of the Jews had always been Hitler's plan; whereas others have argued that the "final solution" resulted when other plans for a "Judenrein" Europe did not work out, and that it emerged by its own bureaucratic momentum from the earlier stages of persecution of the Jews. The author's conclusion is that neither theory is likely, and that it appears probable that there was a

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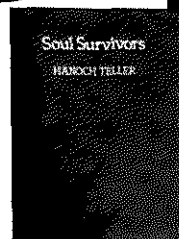
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formal decision by Hitler in 1941 to order the extermination of the Jews. It is interesting to note in this connection Rabbi S.R. Hirsch's commentary on *Berei'shitis*, where he points out that the Egyptian exile (which is the archetype of all later persecutions of the Jews) proceeded through three states: first the Jews are declared strangers, then they are enslaved, and finally they are killed—this pattern can easily be traced in the history of Nazi Germany.

If survival for those in the hands of the Nazis was tragically unlikely and escape from the ghetto and camp seemed like salvation, reality unfortunately showed that even the escapees found the odds heavily weighted against them. **SOLDIERS FROM THE GHETTO** by Sholom Chowalski (Barres, San Diego, 1980, \$9.95) was written by a man who played a leading role in one of the first ghetto uprisings, in Neshvitzh, and subsequently became a major figure in the Jewish partisan movement. His book chronicles the battles for survival and remarkable victories scored by these brave fighters. But even this author, brought up

from youth in the *Hashomer Hatzair*, feels compelled to make mention of the anti-semitism and even occasional acts of anti-Jewish violence not only by Polish partisans but Russian guerillas.

When we then turn to *Yechiel Granatstein's THE WAR OF A JEWISH PARTISAN* (Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, 1986, \$12.95 hardcover, \$9.95 softcover), we are presented with the same picture but in much more shocking colors. His is the story of a young partisan imperiled as much by his Russian "comrades" as by the Nazi conquerors. It is a heart breaking story which leaves us with admiration for the author and his comrades, and with yet a deeper awareness of the lonely role of the Jew in a world which does not seem to want him.

FROM KLETZK TO SIBERIA, by Rabbi Alter Pekier (Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1985, \$11.95 hardcover, \$8.95 softcover). Subtitled, "A Yeshiva Bochur's Wanderings During the Holocaust," this volume is the story of Rabbi Pekier's odyssey, from Kletzk, which he and his fellow students fled in the face of the enemy, through Lithuania to

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Russian labor camps in Siberia and thence to Khazakstan and finally, at the end of the war, back to Poland and to the United States. Rabbi Pekier's experiences, typical of those of many *bnei yeshiva* who escaped from the Nazis, are a remarkable demonstration of their *bitachon* and *mestras nefesh* in clinging to Torah. At the same time they show the extraordinary efforts and determination of the Roshei Yeshiva, notably Rabbi Aaron Kotler זצ"ל, to save their students. Many of the major personalities of Torah Jewry pass through these pages, as well as younger men who lived to become in due course leaders of the Torah community themselves.

Rabbi Pekier's book reflects the hostility of the Russian regime toward religion and, particularly, toward *Yiddishkeit*. A fuller insight into what it meant (and means) to try to live as a Torah Jew in Russia is conveyed in **IN THE SHADOW OF THE KREMLIN**, by Rabbi N.Z. Gottlieb, translated by Uri Kaploun (Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, 1985 \$12.95 hardcover, \$9.95 soft-cover). This book contains the personal sagas of Jews who persisted in keeping and teaching Torah in Communist Russia and suffered imprisonment, torture, and in many cases death for it. The accounts in this book relate to the Stalinist era in particular; they deal exclusively

with the *Chabad* community. As a result they do not cover all facets of the past and present of Torah Jewry in Russia—but every one of the memoirs in this book is a searing challenge to the reader to assess how his own dedication to *Yiddishkeit*, in a free and prosperous Western World, compares to that of these Russian Jews.

A treatment of the Russian Jewish scene in fiction form—and indeed in the garment of a starkly dramatized, exciting adventure story—is **OUR MAN IN RUSSIA**, by Mayer Bendet, translated by Jacob Ben-Zweig (Bash Publication, New York, 1985, \$12.95). Bendet is an excellent story teller and his book will keep the reader on the edge of his chair throughout. But at the same time the author does introduce the reader to some of the key personalities in the Russian Jewish drama: the young *baal teshuva*, the devoted underground workers dedicated to keeping *Yiddishkeit* alive, and even the occasional *apparatsnik* who has preserved a feeling for a heritage he has renounced.

INSIGHT, ANALYSIS, AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

A review article that highlights the hostility of the Russian world to the Jew and to Judaism, the horrors committed by the

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Nazis and their henchmen in the conquered countries, and the apathy shown by the democratic world to the fate of the Jews, should fittingly conclude by referring to **A PATH THROUGH THE ASHES**, a collection of essays from *The Jewish Observer*, edited by Rabbi Nissim Wolpin (Mesorah Publication, Brooklyn, 1986, \$14.95 hardcover, \$11.95 softcover). This volume, part of the Judaiscope series sponsored by Agudath Israel of America, contains essays and accounts dealing with various facets of *Churban Europe*: happenings and heroes of the war

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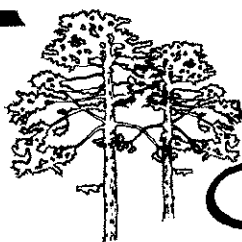
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years (including one episode from a Siberian labor camp), resistance—spiritual and physical—and rescue, remembering and trying to understand, and, last but not least, some conclusions. There is a wealth of material here, from a wide range of authors, and the reader would have been greatly aided by an introduction which would help him digest and organize in his mind the manifold and varied ideas and approaches (perhaps this can be added to a future edition). But even without such assistance the reader will come to realize that he is not only told about the past but led to think about the meaning of our bitter *galus* experience and what lessons he can learn from it. While there is an understandable reticence to assign a rational meaning to the horror of the Holocaust—and indeed human beings cannot claim to fathom the workings of Divine Providence—it is a fundamental principle of the Torah that G-d teaches us through our experiences and, guided by our *Gedolim*, we must seek to learn from them. The basic concepts of faith enunciated in the selections from the *Meshech Chochma*, the *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, and others, and the concrete demands addressed to us by Rabbi Elya Svei and Rabbi Avrohom Pam are sure to help the thoughtful reader come to some understanding of what *galus* suffering is meant to tell us. ■

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Second Looks at the Jewish Scene

One Straw, How Many Camels?

When (Reform) Rabbi Julie Schwartz was appointed as a military chaplain by the Jewish Welfare Board's Chaplain Commission, the Orthodox member of that Commission, the Rabbinical Council of America (the RCA), decided that it had had enough. "We do not want to splinter the Jewish community any further than it is, but it is quite clear that this was imposed on us and left us with little choice. Orthodox Judaism cannot accept women rabbis. . . . By bypassing the JWB and endorsing a female, the Reform rabbinate . . . shattered the commission." (*NY Times*, June 18, 1986)

Now that the RCA has stated its case in regard to working within a religious framework with organizations that accept female rabbis, we wonder how RCA members continue to belong to the New York Board of Rabbis, which includes Reform and Conservative rabbis in its membership, and most likely some ladies among them. For that matter, how do RCA and UOJCA continue to belong to the Synagogue Council of America, which also includes Reform

and Conservative rabbinical organizations in its membership?

More basically, how did the RCA ever join the Chaplaincy Commission before Rabbi Julie Schwartz entered the scene? How did they ever accept as "fellow rabbis" men who are neither learned in the basics of Torah nor committed to their up-keep? In what way are male Reform rabbis who do not believe in the divinity of Torah and preside over intermarriages superior to the female of the species? We do agree with the RCA that not they but the Reform rabbinate is guilty of "splintering the Jewish community," but not just with its most recent act of unilaterally appointing a lady as chaplain. Every deviant decision and act of every Reform and Conservative rabbi for the past century and a half has been shattering the unity of *Klal Yisroel*, which owes its basic identity to its fidelity to Torah.

A woman chaplain is the last straw—plus, many times over. The broken back of the Chaplaincy Commission is but one of many camels that have long been suffering from fractured vertebrae. ■



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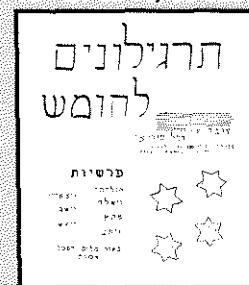
CORRECTION

Rabbi Avi Shafran's *Unreal Rabbis* (May '86, JO) was submitted with the following short explanatory note, which was inadvertently omitted:

This article, based on a talk the author gave at a Torah U'mesorah retreat at the New England Academy of Torah last year, is the result of interviews with *mechanchim* in various locales and schools.

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NEWS FROM AGUDATH ISRAEL

DATELINE: CALIFORNIA

Calif. Panel Bars Gov't Evaluation of Religious Organizations: Los Angeles—Attorneys for Agudath Israel of America and the California chapter of its Commission on Legislation and Civic Action hailed today what they called "a significant victory in the battle to preserve the independence of religious organizations in America," as a California panel charged with implementing state anti-discriminatory laws rejected a proposed regulation that would authorize it to evaluate the nature and practices of religious organizations.

Such authority would have included the right to evaluate whether a tax-exempt religious institution was in fact an organization whose primary purpose and function is religious, and, further, whether the theological tenets of such an organization in fact require it to discriminate in employment in a manner that would otherwise be forbidden by law.

The principal aim of the Commission's proposal had been to delimit the religious exemption by specifying that jobs that the state deemed "secular" would not be covered under its provisions.

In a written statement authored by David Zwiebel, Esq., Director of Agudath Israel of America's Office of Government Affairs, in collaboration with a prominent Los Angeles labor attorney, Robert

Millman, a member of the California chapter of Agudath Israel's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action, Agudath Israel told the Fair Employment and Housing Commission that its proposal would unlawfully infringe upon religious autonomy.

After hearings on its proposed amendments, the Fair Employment and Housing Commission abandoned its position by a 4 to 2 vote.

California Medical Community to Work With Jewish Groups on Time of Death Problem: Recent high level meetings in California have resulted in a commitment by the medical community to work with Agudath Israel of California and other concerned Jewish groups to protect the rights of Orthodox Jews who oppose on religious grounds California's statutory definition of death.

Agudath Israel Testifies for Tuition Tax Credits: Rabbi Chaim Schnur, director of Agudath Israel of California, testified before the Revenue and Taxation Committee of the State Assembly at the request of Assemblyman Tom McClintock, author of a bill that would allow a tax credit of not more than \$1000 to parents of private school children, for qualified educational expenses such as tuition and secular text books.

Gov. Cuomo Signs Bill Allowing Yeshivos to Issue Work Papers: New York State Governor Mario Cuomo has signed into law a bill, initiated by Agudath Israel

of America and advanced in the legislature through a major push by Assemblyman Dov Hikind, that grants registered yeshiva and other nonpublic high schools the authority to issue working permit papers to students under the age of 18. Such certificates are needed by young people seeking summer employment as well as part-time work during the school year.

Tax Reform Conferees Advised of Orthodox Jewish Concerns: In a memorandum to the 22 senators and congressmen hammering out the final details of the historic tax reform bill now before Congress, Agudath Israel of America's Commission on Legislation and Civic Action has alerted the legislators to several issues that are, in its view, of importance to the Orthodox Jewish community.

Among the issues the memorandum raises is continued favorable treatment of scholarships and fellowships received by students, including those attending *kollelim* across the United States; and charitable deductions for "non-itemizers." Existing law, set to expire by the end of 1986, permits a taxpayer to deduct charitable contributions even if he does not itemize deductions. The memo petitioned continuation of this policy.

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Pirchei Agudath Israel Kinus on Gedolim's Lives: Rabbi Henoch Leibowitz, Rosh Yeshivas Rabbi Yisroel Meir HaCohen (Chofetz Chaim) addressed a crowd of over 1,000 upper-elementary yeshiva students at special Assembly held last June in memory of the recently departed *Gedolei HaDor*, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein זכרונם לברכה, holding them up as models of inspiration for personal greatness in Torah study, character refinement and Klal leadership. Also on the gathering program were Rabbi Joshua Silbermintz, National Director of Pirchei Agudath Israel, Rabbi Yehudah Oelbaum, Menahel of Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Rabbi Dovid Trenk, Menahel of the Yeshiva of Adelphia.

DATELINE: VIENNA

New Educators in Vienna for Agudath Israel Refugee Project: Rabbi Chaim Waldman and Avrohom Cohen, both experienced Torah teachers who have worked extensively with Jewish youth, will conduct a specially planned summer program for the Vienna Project for refugee youth established by the Vaad L'Haatzolas Nidchei Yisroel—the rescue and rehabilitation arm of the Agudath Israel World Organization. The program will feature a series of classes based on the widely acclaimed Arachim approach to teaching Judaism. Mr. Cohen, a veteran of outreach program for Sephardic youth, has been a seasoned leader of Arachim retreats in the United States.

GEDOLEI TORAH RADIO BROADCAST TAPES AVAILABLE

Copies of the special radio broadcast, "Religious-Secular Tensions in Israel: A Response by Torah Jews," recently aired in cities across the continent, is being made available to the general public by Agudath Israel of America, producer of the program.

The half-hour segment, moderated by Rabbi Nisson Wolpin, editor of *The Jewish Observer*, features comments and observations by two leaders of Torah Jewry in America on the recent series of events in Israel that led to the desecration of synagogues at the hands of anti-religious extremists.

Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, Rosh HaYeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva, Cleveland, and member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah sages) and Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, Novominsker Rebbe and member of the Nesius/Presidium of Agudath Israel of America, are the featured speakers on the program, which was broadcast originally in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland, and Liberty, New York, and is being re-aired through radio and other hook-ups in Montreal, Toronto, Baltimore, San Francisco and other cities.

For information on purchasing tapes (\$3 each plus \$1 handling), or rebroadcasting in other cities, call **212-791-1800**.

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